

Oral History: Henry (Hank) Frank Rosenthal Company B, 1st Battalion, 318th Infantry Regiment, 80th Division

From Hank's son, Will:

I'm writing to pass along the letters my father wrote while in the 80th - 318th (Co. B) during WWII. Below you'll find transcripts of all the letters he wrote during the fall of '44. He was wounded at Ettelbruck (LUX) on Dec. 22, and ended up working in the post office in Paris for the rest of his time in the Army.

There a few videos where he reads his short memoirs of his experiences as well.

Company B gets surrounded at Laudrefang (FR). Hank captures a German.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mumohXvFEZY>

Henry describes shipping to Europe, landing at Omaha Beach in September 1944.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qa7Rl2Bycek>

Henry describes switching from machine gun to mortar squad. Remembers the fallen Frank Cerny.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d4BfCyZK2v8&t=70s>

VE Day in Paris: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XsoUjfMRe14&t=4s>

Shipping home - December 1945 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vlg_KdwDggM

Wednesday, September 7, 1944
Somewhere in Eastern U.S.

Dear Folks,

This is going to be an extremely interesting letter. To begin with I can't tell you where I am, what I'm doing or what I'm going to do so you can easily see that I am somewhat limited as to subject matter. Hence I have little reason to write unless it's to let you hear from your sweet elderly (last adjective acquired with voting privilege) son. By the way, I mailed in my ballot with only two X's on it - just included the president and the governor. My reason for only doing half a job was that I didn't feel as though I knew any of the other candidates well enough to vote for them. As a matter of fact I don't know those I did vote for exceptionally well. I also sent in my Power of Attorney and Joint Account Slip.

My letters as of this one will be censored. From now on will have to be less than five pounds. You can send me packages up to eight ounces without my asking for them.

I didn't tell you about my afternoon in Washington last Sunday. I ceased being bored upon mailing your letter. Ran into Tom Bremer (of Penns) and his girl was in town - naturally she had a friend - so we went to an amusement park - rode the roller coaster etc - had dinner at Childs, went to "Casanova Brown" - very funny - and then out to the Lincoln Memorial for a concert. Had a swell time and even got back to camp on time - Bremer was in my platoon at Attenburg.-
- About all -

Love
Hank

on US Army stationary

September 8, 1944
Dear All,

I just received your letter a few minutes ago - I'm glad you have something to write about - I have absolutely nothing to tell you - that is I have plenty of say, but no permission to relate it. I can mention that I do get three meals a day which are adequate but far from terrific.

You probably have my new address by now, but it is only provisional - however, write to it until you receive another - this is typically Army - how I love it - if you read with perspicacity you will note the simple and unadulterated sarcasm (How do you like the big words?)

Going to play a little cribbage now - sure glad I got that board -

So long for now

Love
Hank

September 14th, 1944

Dear Folks,

"Heck no, you'll never go overseas, Hank." Wish I had a nickel for every time I heard that - be a rich man!!

I still can't tell you much - I'm well and still not sea sick- yet --knock on wood. Time hangs heavy - we either read, sleep, or play cards - so one guy drop \$200 in one toss in a crap game. I've been playing cribbage, and have been in a couple of Blackjack games - still a couple bucks ahead.

Also, been catching up on my schooling. The Army gives excellent phrase books on all countries. They are extremely helpful. Tips on the people and culture of other nations are very interesting and should prove valuable.

Miller is still with us and as are several other fellows from my old company - also lots of us who were in college together.

Food isn't bad at all - coffee is absolutely boiling when we get it, but as far as that goes it's still coffee and not too bad. Fairly good variety in diet and well-cooked.

Guess you should write in v-mail.

About all,

Love
Hank

September 20, 1944

Somewhere in France

Dear Folks,

May I repeat - "They can't send me overseas." Again I have a great deal to say about the trials, tribulations and troubles of HFR, but have no authority (or drag with the censor) to say them. However, someday I'll be able to tell you. Anne may have been to Montpelier, but I have her now by a couple of thousand miles I guess. Gus's trip to Texas is a little short also.

We still have the gang together - for how long I don't know.

Norb Weider cut my hair on the boat so I now have a crew cut; comfortable, but slightly <niouasty?> in appearance.

Wish Burry a belated Happy birthday from me. I had a lovely party K-Rations to eat and 21 candles on my Sunshine biscuits.

The climate so far is ok, but it gets cold at night - my feet froze last evening. These tents are okay but they aren't like the Ritz.

About all - give my best to Spadina Parkway's elite and

Love

Hank

still not with 80th division:

September 27, 1944

Somewhere in France

Dear Folks,

I shall try to give you the lowdown on some of the things I've done and seen. We have been traveling extensively all around Jonathan's lawn. I visited Liverpool but didn't see much of it. I've seen quite a lot of France though. It is very much more realistic being here than reading the Rotagravune. France is quite a mess. Whole towns are in ruins - many people are homeless, are desolated - Argentan for example. The U.S. is lucky the war is over here. I can see where they get the idea Americans are millionaires. As we ride along we toss out C rations/candy and coffee etc to the populous. We all have French money now. A franc is two cents so I received 517 of them. We won't and haven't had much chance to spend it - we have purchased and been given several bottles of wine and several loaves of bread. Most of the country wine is a little stronger than water. The cognac is quite strong and the beer tastes like rust - thus the extent of my libation. By the way, if you would like to know what Infantry does, look closely at the newsreels - they give a good account.

My French is progressing well - if I could stay in any town for a month, I think I'd speak it fluently - perhaps not far-fetched. I have spoken with many people though and can make myself fully understood. If they speak slowly I can catch it all - just a matter of getting used to another tongue - you're slightly self-conscious at first - I know enough to get what I want in a cafe.

I'm awfully glad I took that cribbage board - I've played fairly steadily from the U.S. to here. It's a heck of a good game.

It's too bad we really haven't been able to see the places we've been to more closely. Perhaps we'll never get another chance to see these sights.

Guess that's about all I can say. I'm in excellent health and the food is ok - it's C ration, and we're all sick of it but it's good food. My tent is adequate for shelter. As usual I'm with a good bunch of guys - the officers are all swell-

Also I want to wish you, Mom, and Uncle Jim both very happy birthdays - I will write again soon - don't know how long it takes.

Love to all,
Hank

October 1, 1944
Somewhere in France

Dear Folks,

Here's my new address - Co B 318th Infantry APO 80. C/o PM NYC, NY - maybe I'll get some mail now -

I'm well and still getting good food- if you like K Rations.

All the boys have gone to different outfits but there's a good bunch here too.

All for now

Love
Hank

Oct 2, 1944
Somewhere in France

Dear Folks,

Still haven't gotten any mail - I hope you're getting my letters. I have no ink and I don't know if pencil photographs well - ink is too hard to carry -

They still don't let me stay in one place very long. Visited Verdun and it ain't very much of a town. The Versailles Palace is a real beauty though.

The feed we're getting is excellent- gets better as we go on. Played football this afternoon for a while - a treat, but I'm a little stiff.

Is Gus still in NYC - that lieutenant certainly has a tough life!!

Happy Birthday again to Mom and Uncle Jim. Does Isabel Shaw's little sister still come to the house very often? Guess she liked the food- I can't blame her.

Love to All
Hank

October 6, 1944
Somewhere in France

Dear Folks,

I haven't got much to say except I am well and still eating K Rations.

The weather is sort of cold and a little damp. However, I manage to keep fairly warm and dry.

We don't use a quarter of the stuff we carried all the way over here - I'll probably get rid of the rest of it - except absolute essentials - soon.

We cook in a C ration can - fill it with dirt and gasoline and light a match to it.

Met Sgt Conley from G. Co of the 106th. He's in B. Co with me now as a squad leader - the first guy I've met since I got here - it's good to meet someone you know.

Most of the guys in this outfit are from Tenn. and Kentucky - the one's I've seen are all good soldiers.

My only comment is that we sure were railroaded into this deal - I guess we're the fastest shipment ever to come through - I'll tell you about it some time -

About all for now - got back with the mortar by the way.

Love

Hank

use this address - send a scarf, chocolate bars and NO cigarettes.

Somewhere in France

October 11, 1944

Dear Anne,

How's everything out at the General Electric Plant? Bet it's a little more quiet there than here. Beautiful and sun shiny today - gives us a little time to dry out.

We live in lovely holes - deep too - I'm thinking of writing a song entitled "It Maybe a Hole to You But It's a Home to Me - Maybe "The Voice" will give it a try out, huh?

I got to wash and shave yesterday - first time in a week - also got a clean pair of pants this morning. I think someday according to the latest 'memorandum' that we're going to get a bath sometime during the next month- I do get my share of mudpacks though.

Been getting hot meals twice a day for the last couple of days.

I'll bet Mom is saying "those damn Germans" sixteen times a day now - I bet I beat her by a couple of hundred - those "Jerries" are nobody's fool.

By the by, did you hear about the orphan moron? He was nobody's fool.

About All

Love
Hank

Somewhere in France
October 13, 1944

Dear Folks,

Guess what I've been doing this afternoon - here's one for Uncle Sime and Isaac Walton - I've been fishing in a nearby river. Of course, being in the infantry, we don't use any orthodox methods - we simply take a German potato masher - hand grenade to you - and toss it in the water. The concussion knocks the fish out, and we take a net on the end of a pole and just pull 'em in. Thought you might be interested - it's just a little different anyhow.

I'm getting some 80th Div mail more - however I still get mostly 15480 APO mail. Can't make any comparisons yet concerning V- vs AirMail - Here's how I hear the news - John England is on his way home, he's got a new girl, and then he's engaged - next letter he'll probably be a grandfather.

Roufis <sp> not with me anymore - did Burry get the field jacket? I don't think Otis will be anywhere near me, although he is coming in here someplace - I may even run into him.

The bedroom slippers are thoughtful, but I don't usually take my shoes off - thanks just the same.

About all for now

Love
Hank

Wed Oct 18, 1944
Somewhere in France

Dear All,

Guess what happened last night? I got six letters - including my birthday letters from you, a letter from the Stentifords, and one from Sophie Musgrove. Boy! Did they make me feel good. I had time to read only one before blackout, but I turned and tossed on the others all night in my hole and finally came the dawn and I read them all several times - your first was dated Sept. 8th and it was Air Mail. They should come faster now - I hope these have been following me all over France - So Otis & John are on their way! Maybe I'll see them. I write you every other day - Keep well like me.

Love
Hank

Oct 20

Hi Folks,

Well, I've gotten seven letters in the past three day, not bad what?

So Gus thinks he's going to China - I thought they had all the lieutenants they needed over there. Too bad about Lt. Bremer - maybe he's just as well off if he's out of it for a while and isn't hurt too bad. He'll get a purple heart anyhow.

Shaved this morning and feel like a new man - all set to welcome Otis and John - and Marlene Dietrich who is rumored in the area - well, I've seen action and that's about all I can say - I'm in the 80th Division. I keep fairly well abreast of the news with the Stars and Stripes, the ETO newspaper. We now have sleeping bags and capes to keep them dry - they keep you good and warm - all we need now is overshoes, and we'll get them soon - I've written you every other day for the past couple weeks, hope you've been getting my letters. Keep numbering yours and I'll know if I miss any of them.

Everything is okey dokey -

Love to all
Hank

Tell Anne not to overdo in going to the show, bowling and riding.

Sunday October 22, 1944
Somewhere in France

Dear Folks,

Guess what - yesterday I had a pass to a town a little ways back. I was lucky to get away from here for at least a few hours. I heard it was hard to get food in the town, but "Little Hank" and his lousy French got by rather admirably. We got to town at noon and had a beer - that's all the liquor they had - I'm trying my best to give myself a birthday party yet. After that we looked for a restaurant and found one way off the 'main drag.' For 40 francs (80 cents) we ate from soup to nuts, Cabbage soup, cabbage and potatoes, beef, and nuts. Then we walked around town for a while - got a loaf of bread, and two pounds of steak - this is for two of us. Then we went back to the cafe; got it cooked, and hence had steak, bread and gravy and beer for chow - what a meal after eating K rations and C rations. We really filled up on steak - I was capacitated for once in a long while on steak baby!!! Thank the Lord for my French and a few black markets - that's the first time since I've hit this place that I've spent any money.

Got overshoes this morning - this mud is really wicked - maybe my feet will be dry sometime in the near future. Well, it sure was swell to get out of here for a while.

Love
Hank

Tuesday October 24, 1944
Somewhere in France

Dear All

I wish I had a nickel for every time I've dug a hole in this muddy and rain-soaked country. I'd be on my way to my first million. Yesterday we dug a deluxe three man foxhole complete with front door and porch, log roof and canvas tops. We got everything but running water and if the rain keeps up we'll have that too. And it's built like a pill box - at least we feel safe in it and plenty of room - even enough for all of us to lie on our backs.

Got a letter from Gus addressed to me at Meade (Sept. 6). He must be having some time in the big city. Didn't take him long to catch up with Ruth James again did it? Nice work if you can get it - I'll tell you about me and Marlene D sometime.

There was no charge at Meade for my power of attorney. I wrote Uncle Jim early in the month to wish him many happy returns; however you can wish him a belated one if he didn't get that letter. I haven't forgotten his birthday which is two days hence - you can send chocolate bars and gum if you like. Doesn't have to be pure chocolate - just as long as the outside is - Oh Hay anything

Love
Hank

Monday - October 26, 1944

UNCLE JIM'S BIRTHDAY
SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE

Dear Folks,

Now I'd ask you where else in the world but here is a guy able to do what I'm doing? Namely - lay in a hole all day with nothing to do but keep his head down and eat all day out of a lovely tin can - I've been saving rations so I have a little extra - drink cold cocoa, smoke all I want during daytime and flick the ashes on the blanket and hope it doesn't rain - no electric light to worry about, no furnace, no sheets to get dirty, no argument on wearing a necktie or cutting the grass - some guys would call that a picnic. At least this is one way to look at my situation - probably the best under the circumstances. For lack of something to do I'm going to give you an itemized account of my personal property which I am carrying at present in various and sundry pockets - 3 pieces candy, hard- 1 watch, excellent shape - 1 pair gloves - 1 hand grenade - 2 magazines of carbine ammo, 1/2 roll toilet paper, address book, 1 paybook and snapshots, 1 pencil, 1 pen, 1

spoon, G.I. 5 boxes matches, 2 packs cigarettes, - a handkerchief -razor blades - 1 fingernail file - a bottle, Hologaze pills, 1 wallet, 1 comb, and 2 safety pins. I know I've forgotten a few things, but you can get a rough idea of what I carry beside pack, rifle, etc.

Yours till the census of '50

Love
Hank

Saturday October 28, 1944

Somewhere in France

Dear All,

Enclosed is a hunk of paper which is good for another ten bucks per month for me. That 'exemplary conduct' stuff sounds like a lot of bull though. From the looks of it, B Company either has a large quota to give out or we were in a hotter place than other companies. I think it's a little of both. I also get a little blue medal with a wreath on it - that thrills me to extraction - that type of ornament - along with all the rest - don't do you much good over here - or in the States for that matter (except to distinguish you from the Service Command Commandos.)

Today smells like winter - a chilling breeze and what looks like snow clouds. Just so long as it doesn't rain it's okay by me though. The mud is still excessive however. I wonder who invented this outdoor life - some is all right, but "enough is too much" - to quote the Pater.

I received the game you sent me - thanks a lot. Already beat one of my buddies, but he'll catch on after a while and probably'll beat the pants off me next time.

Love to all,
Hank

Monday October 31 1944

Somewhere in France

Hi Folks,

Sound in a good humor don't I? Well I should, I received seven (7) letters last night (several from you and Anne, one from Jim and one from Burry) Read them all twice including my Hobart Alumni paper. Your letters we all dated between the 15th and 24th of September. You see they were all addressed to my 'saltwater APO' - I can't say how long it takes them to get to me because they follow me from Replacement Depot to Repl. Depot. As soon as I get 80th Div. mail, I'll give you the lowdown though. It isn't necessary to send me Christmas presents at all - except what I asked for - candy, gum, etc (no knife as I have one now).

I won't be able to carry the stuff with me, and we are forever moving around. I appreciate the thought, but the mail is irregular and we get about everything we need anyhow. Better to have a big party when I hit the old U.S.A. again with plenty of everything.

Nothing more to say - I'm well and still have plenty of humor left for rainy days - which is almost daily - weather's getting colder.

Love to All
Hank

November 1 1944
Somewhere in France

Dear Folks,

Well, they took the mortar away from me for a while. Right now I'm going to school again. Perhaps a little different from Hobart and Auburn, but it's school. Any old barn is the classroom. We have special classes in map reading; compass, and night combat in general. The class doesn't appeal to me, but it's excellent training.

We're learning the "Tommy gun" too - among others.

Tonight I have a lovely wood fire to keep me warm in my front room. My feet haven't been wet thru for the last week - amazing. I signed the pay book today - I should collect a small fortune sometime soon.

My mail is still very irregular and spasmodic. Heard from Gus, Uncle Jim and Stan Root. I received your checker game - thanks a lot - don't know how I'm going to carry everything, but I'll have to manage I guess - I manage everything else.---

Love
Hank

P.S. I haven't told you as yet because I didn't want to cause you the least anxiety, but I am to receive the Purple Heart. You get it for just about anything nowadays - from cutting your hand on a ration can to an ingrown toenail. Anyway I was nicked a while back and got a cut in the calf of my leg. There's nothing to it. I didn't even have to stop in the movement. They made me go to the Battalion Aid Station after the battle and they took my name - hence the P. Heart. I can use the points it gives me in demobilization anyhow. I wouldn't have told you this at all, but I was afraid the War Dept. would drop you a line - the cut is an inch long and constitutes all my misfortunes for the duration. I didn't lose any duty time with the company at all - it's only a cut and I could have got it playing hockey. Well, that's that. I know you worry, but you know I can take care of myself and I do.

Hank

Sunday, Nov, 5, 1944
Somewhere in France

Dear Anne,

Can't keep track of you any more, Anne. Are you still attending secretarial school? You must be pretty busy with your bowling, singing and riding. What do you hear from Rod in Italy?

I'm slightly busy myself. When we expect a little rest in the rear, we're disappointed because we have to train just like I.R.T.C. in the States. We get more rest on line than we do any other place. We have a fireplace in our foxhole now - it's ok during the day, but at night we have to watch that there's no light showing.

Today being Sunday is just like any other day - the noise is just as loud. Guess I have most of my mail now - except packages - those are usually slower in coming. Three things I'm sure of - Gus is in Detroit, John England is getting married, and you have a new minister. Every letter I've received mentions all three.

Must be a lot of election talk over in the States - we don't hear much here - no one gives a particular S--- about it anyhow. Perhaps as soon as it's out of the way though, they'll stop playing politics and end the war. At the frontline we have no use for strikers, politicians, and anyone who gripes about what he has to do as a soldier or a civilian. There is amazingly little griping done by the Infantry up at the front where we are, and we really hit the roof when some guy complains about anything. You hear a lot about the Infantry and the job they are doing. Well, it's not malarky!!! Perhaps Jay can elucidate better to you until I get there. I didn't mean to get off on a tangent and give any dissertation, however, it makes you feel a lot better when you write sometimes. Not that I'm down in the dumps - far from it - I could make my statements much stronger. Just sail into the next guy you hear complaining about rationing - he can come here in my place, and I'll go back and live in a garage and eat K-rations for as long as you want.

So, they say I look like you, Anne? I'm flattered. I'd almost given up hope for myself. You encourage me no end. Too bad about 'the hair' - she'll sure take a beating at that snooty joint.

I shall close now - they tell me the war will end soon over here - good news, huh? I'm fine and fit,

Love to all,
Hank

November 14, 1944
Somewhere in France

Dear Folks,

Sorry I haven't been able to write in the last week - I've been rather busy. I haven't much to say. You know more about the war than I do probably. I haven't read a newspaper in the last week. I'm in good health and still smiling. The war is going to be over soon they tell me - can't be too soon for me. This will have to be a short letter as I don't know another thing that I can tell you. I can see why the Infantry is called "Queen of Battle" now. You can tell the difference between us and the artillery or tankers just by the mud, beards, and wet feet.

Love to All
Hank

Nov. 18, 1944
Somewhere in France

Dear Folks

So Gus was disappointed in not going overseas!!! Well, you tell him for me to stay in the States as long as he can. If they want to send him, ok, but until they do tell him to have a good time and not try to be a hero. Enough from the philosophical corner.

I'm now an acting sergeant. I guess you're glad to hear that. However, I'd just as soon stay a pfc and not have any men under me - in the states ok, but here there's lots of extra work and worry to it. I'm in the Third Army.

Thanks for all the swell letters. I'm scarcely ever disappointed at a mail -call.

I'm well and still smiling -

Haven't run into anyone I know from home yet.

Love
Hank

Nov. 22, 1944
Somewhere in France

Dear Folks,

Tomorrow is Thanksgiving - I imagine it will be different from any I have ever spent - I know it will. They say we'll get turkey - I'll believe it when I see and eat it. I'll miss not sitting round the table with all the Rosenthals and getting all the fixings and especially that especially large hunk of apple pie. However, next year we'll have an even bigger celebration when Gus and Little Hank are home in our 'little trundle beds.'

I'm now an acting sergeant in charge of a mortar squad I don't think that I have yet been turned in for full rating yet, but I guess they'll do that soon if I turn out any good at all. It'll certainly make me a millionaire in no time flat.

I have written very few letters recently -only to home - if you check the newspapers you'll see why. I did write Gus though - a very pertinent letter on the 'disappointment of not coming overseas." I told him that there are about a million guys here who would simply like to live in a foxhole in Florida for the winter. Tell him gently to quit his griping and realize when he's well off. You'd be surprised at the small amount of griping over here among the Infantry - it's the near echelon boys that care of that - we have no time for foolishness like that - we know what we've got to do and are doing it as quickly as possible.

I haven't as yet compiled a treatise on England and France. I was in England 17 hours. That time by the way was passed on yours truly's birthday. France - what I've seen of it - is pretty much of a wreck. Paris - where I stopped for two hours - is typical of the travelogues. At present in all this rain and mud, bridges are out and rivers flooded. Transportation is difficult - listen to the snail talk. I'm glad this war isn't in the States. My only real comment is that if these people could once see the "old U.S." they wouldn't stay here long. Alabama even ranks this place.

Don't forget to send Otis Pease's and John Hennelly's addresses. I'd like to see them. Al Genn is in the vicinity, but I have no chance of seeing him right now.

I enjoy all your letters - my latest is November 5 from Ann received two days ago - air mail - Vmail is faster I think, but far less appealing.

You probably won't get this for a couple - three weeks.

Love to Everyone
Hank

<note - this letter was written the same day that the Company had escaped from being surrounded by German troops in Laudrefang, but of course he couldn't mention this>

Nov. 23, 1944
Somewhere in France

Dear All

Just finished Thanksgiving dinner - not like home but good - turkey, gravy, sweet potato, bread, coffee, and apple. We had fresh eggs this morning and we get chicken tonight they tell us. Boy this sure 'ain't typical. I will say that we deserve every bit of this slight luxury. You know about where I am so keep your eye on the Third Army and you'll know what I'm doing. We got combat boots this morning - no more leggings.

There is much to be thankful for today - the same goes for every day.

Love
Hank

Nov 30, 1944
Somewhere in France

Dear All,

Sorry I can't write more often. I do every chance I get. They keep us pretty busy. All I can say is just keep reading the newspapers. I'm well and still smiling. I don't know what happened to my mail. I haven't received any for two weeks. I know you are still writing so it must be the post office is messing up the works. Weather is still lousy - lots of mud and rain - never saw anything like it and hope I never do again.

Hoping the war will soon end.

All my love

Hank

December 2, 1944
Somewhere in France

Dear Anne,

I wrote once before today, but this will get there before that one I'm sure. I just found the V-mail

Today it is raining cats and dogs - glad we got out of our holes this morning - they were beginning to get overly damp. We shoved some Frenchmen out of his guest room. We get some good places to stay once in a while. We lived in a chateau for a while. Before it was filled full of holes it was a beautiful place. The Germans didn't do it any good while they were in it. What they left of the library's collection of books was rather minute. but you could see that it once was a beautiful work.

Any place that keeps me out of the rain is heaven though - four walls and a roof is a plenty. Sometime we have straw, and that's terrific.

Love
Hank

December 3, 1944
Somewhere in France

Even'en Folks How ya'll,

After a damp night in a foxhole, I'm finally rehabilitating myself beside a warm fire in some Frenchman's attic. Even got some mail this morning - first time I've heard from home in a couple of weeks. It was the letter containing the excerpt from Gerson's trials on putting up an airport.

Anne typewrites very well. I wonder if Gus would like to trade places with me for. while - so he's got a private jeep now - well, I soon expect him to be wearing a major's leaf.

Didn't tell you that my platoon Lt is one of the battle-field-commission boys. He came over a tech sergeant. He deserves one - anyone in the platoon would do anything in the world for him.

Then we have some officers who Jack Talbot would even rank. When I get home, I'll tell you about one especially.

I want to mention how nice the other outfits are to us- namely the field artillery, tank destroyers, tankers, engineers, etc. They appreciate our work, and help us out in many comforting ways.

By the way, that "school" I mentioned was a patrol school. Consisted of a course in compass, map-reading, demolition, and patrolling. It was an excellent course, but luckily it fell three and patrols are a closed matter as far as I'm concerned.

You don't know a Col. McBride do you. We have a guy with the same name as Div. C.O. He's a Maj. Gen.

I'm looking forward to receiving all those packages which are on the way. Got a letter from Willie Walker yesterday - likewise one from Bill Gardiner.

They're taking mail now so I'll close for now.

Love to All
Hank

Dec. 6, 1944
Somewhere in France

Dear all,

Well, the saying 'another day, another dollar' doesn't hold true today. At long last we made our way thru the pay line. In francs I really made a fortune - 4,110 francs - in dollars and cents it is \$82.20 which isn't too bad even there. I sent home fifty of it - at least I'm awaiting a money order. The reason I kept what I did was that I may get a chance to go to Paris. My turn may come up some day and I can always send it home - hard to get sometimes though. I had 40 francs when I got paid \$1.40. there's no chance to spend money at all here. We are given cigarettes and a very infrequent chocolate bar. We have not been troubled too much with the cigarette shortage. Often we don't get the best brand but who cares as far as I'm concerned, a butt's a butt.

I should like to have each one of you, Mom, Dad, and Anne, take five bucks from the dough I'm sending - send Gus five also. I don't want to hear any of your lip either - this is sort of a payment for all the swell letters you've all been so liberal with. It's also a little Christmas present for the "old folks at home."

I received a letter written by you on Thanksgiving only eight days later - how do you like that. They seem much more interesting when they aren't a month old.

Had some delicious hash this morning. It's "goulash a' la Lt Penny" - consists of potatoes (boiled) with K ration cheese and mixed with salt- then a can of K ration beef and pork loaf is slung in to boot -- very tasty - someday I'm going to make some girl a wonderful wife.

Well, that's about the works.

A very Merry Christmas to you all

Love
Hank

December 7th, 1944
Somewhere in France

Dear All,

Tomorrow they say - I am to receive a shower- this will be the first time in a month and a half. Also I expect some new clothes. My clothes are 'how you say in English" 'Schtink.'

We run into some very comical language situations around here. We have a couple of Poles and they get along ok - then there are guys who speak German, and then there is my French. Tonight I was interpreter between a sergeant and a French girl. He spoke English. I translated in French, and whereupon she told her mother what we said in German. It's very difficult at times keeping your ears open for four languages.

Looks like I'll be able to keep my hands clean for a few days now - it will indeed be an innovation --

Am sleeping in a bed tonight - hope the sudden change isn't too much for me.

Love to All
Hank

December 8th, 1944
Somewhere in France

Dear Folks,

I'll try to write as much as possible this week. I should be able to get a letter off fairly often. We're living with a very nice family. They get me hot water, tea, and cleaning clothes. "Lamama" even makes my bed and pats out my pillow for me - believe me this is heaven. Perhaps I'll even get a pass somewhere. I took a shower this P.M. and finally got a change of underwear - after six weeks in the same pair.

My French is again getting a workout. I have lots of trouble thinking of words. My mind feels awfully rusty. We've had so many things to think about, that my minute amount of French sort of gets crowded into obscurity.

I just cleaned up my pistol. I've carried everything since I've been in this outfit. Mortar gunner's weapon, however, is a pistol (45 caliber).

I should like to tell you more things about the people over here, but I do not wish to divulge anything of a military nature. The war has hit them very hard - to say the least. Each time I see them I'm very thankful that the war is here and not in the States. They don't seem as advanced here as we are in the States. They have electricity and running water, but every place I've been to has had it blown apart. Latrines are still usual in most parts of what I've seen. Houses, as is natural for a country as old as this, are not modern to any extent. They seem dark and somber. Perhaps if i get a little rest - as is scheduled - my outlook will change and they'll appear a little more cheery.

Nearly time for chow - not K rations - yippee --- may take in a show tonight.

I'm still laughing and well ----

Love to All
Hank

P.S. A very Merry Christmas to you all

December 12, 1944
Somewhere in France

Hi Folks,

Enclosed is a commendation which we have all been given. However, I don't think we deserved it for this performance so much as we do for other more difficult assignments. Far be it from me to question the way they run this 'doggone" outfit though!!

I'm still looking for Otis and John. If John's in the Ninth Army there's little chance of my running into him.

Chalk this up as a coincidence. Our mess is close to M Co. I saw somebody standing in line there looked familiar the day before yesterday. Saw him again the next day, and went over to get a closer look. It turned out to be Lloyd Jones (Hobart '45. He's a Thete and came in the Army a month before me. I hadn't seen him since May 1943.

He'd never met anyone in the Army that he knew in civilian life (just like me). You can look him up in the year book. We played football and lacrosse on the same team. We had a pleasant hour and a half reminiscing about the good old days. Seemed very odd walking with him to the PX with both of us 'toting' weapons- very different from South Main in Geneva <NY>.

Thus ends "My Day"

Love
Hank

-

also from Dec 12 -another letter with same date

Dear All,

Enclosed you will find the aforementioned fifty dollars (\$50). You know what to do with it- 'nuf said.'

There's very little to say at the moment. Had roast beef this noon- not bad for us hard-working G.I.'s - perhaps we'll have caviar and champagne soon. Tonight I hear we receive a beer ration - how much or how little I don't know. Once in a great while they dole out a shot of cognac to us. There is stuff that's red hot - burns your gizzard - one shot's enough for me too. Some guy mentioned in the "Stars & Stripes" (E.T.O. newspaper) that he put Calvados (another liqueur) in his jeep's radiator - it tested to 35 degrees below zero. These Europeans really have cast iron constitutions.

Today we had close order drill - sure seemed strange after not doing it for so long. There is also a rumor of a dance soon - imagine - I may even grace it with my presence--

About it for now

Love
Hank

Dec. 12, 1944
Somewhere in France

Dear All,

Well, you lucky people get another letter from your "no. 2" son. I hope I explained everything to your satisfaction in my last letter. I'm what is known as a 'walking case.' I wasn't hit bad enough to put me on my back; simply enough to get taken back to numerous hospitals - we go back farther and farther every so often - and get me some rest, pills, needles ("shots") and maybe a look at some of the sights. I now have the Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster - which I'll send home soon. This is supposed to go on my Purple Heart ribbon. I'm out of the fight for a while - hot dog!!!

Bet that makes you mad, huh? Keep well and I'll write as often as possible - Happy New Year

Love
Hank

December 13, 1944
Somewhere in France

Dear Anne,

You're not the only one who goes to dances. I went to one recently. It was rather different from other dances I've attended. In the first place few of the girls could understand us and we were the same as far as understanding them was concerned. They dance mostly tangoes, waltzes, and polkas here and 'jitterbugging' is unheard of. At least until the band started swinging out. Quite a panic to see the girls learning with soldiers who hadn't danced in months - they, the G.I.'s were really energetic. It's fun to tell a dame what you think of her and she smiles and says "oui, oui." Of course they can give us the same medicine, but who gives a darn anyhow? Most of the people pick up phrases like "ok" etc. One G.I. asked a girl if she wanted a piece of gum. She answered promptly with "Beats the heck out of me."

Well, I probably won't run into Tespscicary(sp) again for a while - I'm ok as usual, and be sure you all keep the same.

Love
Hank

December 16, 1944
Somewhere in France

Hi Folks,

What's cookin'? Guess what? Yesterday I went on pass. "How you like dat?" Went to Nancy. I imagine you all have the Atlas and gazetteers working overtime now. It's quite a nice city - supposed to be "Little Paris." Got a chance to do a little shopping and see a few things. Ran into an old platoon leader from Attenburg. The Red Cross has a swell place in town - continuous coffee and 'donuts' - as much as you can eat, and brother! we ate plenty. I got a haircut too- first time I ever had a lady barber - not bad looking either!!! Haircuts were only two bits - better get our Pittsfield Union on the ball and cut down a bit - she did such a good job that I went out and had my picture taken - they should be good if they ever send them to me - six pictures for six bucks (300 francs) I really splurged, but what the heck - I haven't spent any dough in three months. Then Al Cassan (Detroit) and I went to the cinema. The picture was "Kentucky" - Richard Greene and Loretta Young. We were all set to enjoy ourselves for a while when we discovered that our favorite movie stars had both learned to speak French. I could understand it quite well and interpreted for Al and some 2nd Louie sitting on the other side of me. Hence my afternoon developed into a class in language more than anything else. Had a dinner at a restaurant for 52 francs. Very good with wine, soup (delicious vegetable), potatoes, steak, bread, apple, and a glass of beer. I'm enclosing half a set of pictures in this letter and half in my next one - bought them in Nancy. Received #37 last night. About all - I'm well and as happy as possible - we always get a laugh somewhere along the line - you keep the same --

Love,
Hank

December 18th, 1944
Somewhere in France

Dear Folks,

Rain against today - tough, but I can't do a heck of a lot about it. Got a letter from Burry and one from the Stentifords yesterday. Mrs. S said that she sent a package to me. I still haven't gotten a one of my bundles.

The A.P.O's are having a hard time with all the mail that's coming in. Packages have priority over letters, but somehow I still get let <???. Well, a week till Christmas. This one'll be lot's different from all my others. Last year we had a swell time at Auburn - I don't know if we realized it at the time or not - I never expected to in a place like this anyhow -

Love to all
Hank

December 24, 1944
Somewhere in France

Dear All,

Two days ago I was saying to myself, "Hank - I call myself Hank because I'm getting to know myself pretty well -

I said "Hank, wouldn't it be lousy to spend the Christmas holidays in a foxhole?"

I admitted it would but there was very little I could do about it. Well, anyhow, I kept on with the company - we were going through an orchard - and then the Heinies zeroed in on us with some of their artillery. To make a long story short, I'm spending the holidays in the hospital with all the pretty nurses. I wasn't hurt badly. They got me in the right chest - it only knocked a little skin off. Don't worry about me - we all get splendid care and delicious food.

I'm in good spirits, happy and dry for a change - and getting lots of rest - Merry Christmas and love to all. - Hank.

New Year's Eve
Somewhere in France

Hi Everyone,

May I wish you a belated Happy New Year with many of the same to follow. I imagine tonight you and the Woods are doing your annual celebrating. I hope you take a rye and ginger for me. I've been wondering if "Lt. Gus" got home during the holidays. I hope he did - and it wouldn't surprise me in the least.

I've been having a most enjoyable time since I've been here. Lot's of rest, swell food, movies every other day, and a radio occasionally. Tonight no matter how much we cajoled the nurses - we were not able to obtain any cognac, wine, calvados, or beer. That's tough, real tough!!! However, I do have a warm room, soft bed, and a roof over my head. I'm overjoyed with these simple things - guess I'm becoming a fundamentalist-

My love to all,
Hank

January 3, 1945
Somewhere in France

Hi ya family,

Been having lots of fun lately. I'm catching up on my reading - read four books and many magazines. See a movie every couple of days and heard "Capriccio Espagnol" on the radio yesterday - what more can a guy ask for?

Everyday a nurse makes my bed - as if I couldn't make it myself. Went to the Red Cross this afternoon and got something I hadn't had since I left Boston - a coke - sure tasted good.

All day we sit around and argue politics, war, peace, home, women, everything. My wound is lots better and otherwise I'm perfect. Don't know where my mail is, but it'll come --

I'll write soon ---

Love
Hank

January 3, 1945
Somewhere in France

Dear Anne,

I hope the mails are fast enough for me to wish you a Happy birthday on time. However, even if my congratulations don't arrive 'a l'heure,' they are still in my thoughts. I wish I could be with you even though it were only long enough to grab a bite of birthday cake - chalk it up for another party to celebrate 'you-know-when.'

I'm afraid I shall leave my pleasant new home - namely this hospital - soon. Well, you can't have the cream all the time. I hate to break up this fine discussion group we've got here. We got off on

religion the other night - I usually steer clear of them, but I couldn't this time. No one believed that the word Jewish referred to a religion and not a nationality and race. I said it was a religion alone. Perhaps you can straighten me out - perhaps mine is the misconception - however, i think not.

That's about all - if the war ends tomorrow it'll be a day late -

Happy Birthday

Love
Hank

January 7, 1945
Somewhere in France

Dear Folks,

Played gin rummy this evening - most exciting. i didn't win. I haven't received any mail in over two weeks - takes a while for it to get to the company and then back to me. I'll wait - there's not any rush I guess. Sure is a relief being in the rear for a while though. Tomorrow's our day for the radio - might hear Fred Allen this time. Went to the Red Cross this afternoon - nothing terrific --

Love to All,
Hank

January 9, 1945
Somewhere in France

Hi Folks,

Today I went to the Red Cross and played Bingo - now isn't that peachy? The rest of the day I spent reading and throwing the bull. We have many arguments in the ward about everything. Needless to say I get in'em all. One guy says I argue like a minister at one time and a lawyer at another - therefore I guess that sort of puts me in the category of a politician. Some of the boys here aren't too bright and a three syllable word will sort of blind them whether one uses it in its correct sense or not. Anyway if I know I'm in the wrong, I'll keep on arguing and confuse'em by half changing the subject - most of the time they don't know what they're talking about anyhow so it's not very difficult. After having proved to you now my new found sagacity, I shall withdraw to my corner and blow my nose. I don't know where I get all the malarky from. It isn't from the Mater or the Pater or the Lt. - Guess it must be from my little sister Anne J. All the same thoughts expressed in this letter are purely coincidental and are in no way the ideas of the sponsors.

I'm feeling fine and getting lots of rest- I expect mail shortly - keep writing to my B-318 address - Give my best to everyone I know -

Love to All
Hank

later references to the 80th:

June 3, 1945
Paris, France

Dear Family,

A little while ago I thought I had something to say, but now I can't think of a thing.

This evening I rode out to Orly Field to pick up a A.G.D. Colonel. This was all most inspiring!!! Officers don't impress me a great deal. Our C.O. who is a major is a fine example. Two years ago, he was a T/4 and you'd think he'd have the enlisted men's point of view, but he doesn't. Well, the Infantry has good men anyhow. You don't run into men like Lt. Penny or Lt. Starr every day. I've written you before about Penny - he was my platoon leader up front. As far as I know he's still going. Lt. Starr - Jewish by the way - was killed back in November. He walked point blank, firing like mad, into German machine gun fire. He was right at the head of his platoon where he should be too. He got hit but kept on going till they finally got him for good. Rear echelon officers should take a fling at combat - they'd take a different slant on things then.

I don't know why the dissertation on leadership, but who knows why we do anything?

You may consider yourselves quite lucky in that you are about the only people I write anymore - why I've stopped writing is also beyond me.

Although our rations have been cut, I still get plenty of chow. "If you're hungry take some bread and butter" enquote the Mater.

I'm awfully glad to hear you have a new job, Dad. Where did Mr. Weiss go?

Have you received the box I sent yet? I'm sending some Yanks and Stars and Stripes this week.

That's about all; I'm well and happy ---

Love to all
Hank

A.G.D. means Adjutant General's Dept of which I am now a member. Enclosed is a money order for \$50.

October 11, 1945
Vitry - sur- Seine

Dear Family,

It's just ten in the morning and this is my day off. This afternoon I'm going into Paris to see a show. I've been doing very little of late except put in my time at the P.O. - still not much work there. In the evenings I usually go to the day room for a game of ping pong or to listen to the radio. I heard the Series in parts, but I never listened too intensely.

Last night I threw a football around for an hour. That just about pooped me out. A buck sergeant from the 80th came in yesterday to work at the P.O. He was from the 317th. When I told him I was in the 318th for three months, he said "With the 318th that's an awfully long time." So you can see what another 80th man thought of my regiment. If there was a tough assignment, you know who got it. That sounds like bragging - well it is.

The "going home" situation looks better every day. My fingers are still crossed however. Now they even plan to have the 56-59 pointers on their way by December.

If this goes through, I can't miss.

I finished "The Razor's Edge" about a week ago. It was really quite a good book. Mr. Maugham has a case on himself and doesn't mind telling you about it.

I'm almost through reading "Earth and High Heaven" by Gwethalyn Graham. You've probably read it. It's the story of a Canadian Jewish lawyer and a Socialist Gentile girl. I don't know as yet whether they will get married or how it will come out. Nevertheless, it's a problem pertinent to the times and it's excellent reading. I've thought of it many times myself. It brings out graphically how the Jews are thought of as a group and not as individuals. It's a pity so many are judged by so few. I still maintain that they bring it on themselves. But that's neither here nor there. so I'll withdraw to the lavabo and shave ----

Keep well and

All my Love

Hank

PS here' the \$30 this time