

WORLD WAR II LETTERS OF BENJAMIN FELSON **(1913-1988)**

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dad wrote these letters over 70 years ago. Since he states several times that he is writing every other day, it looks like we have most of them. This is a little surprising, since before I started thinking about this project in 2015 there were at least three boxes of loose letters – sometimes just loose fragments of letters – in the possession of various family members and therefore moved from one house to another many times. We were lucky.

My editing philosophy was to leave the letters as dad wrote them with the following exceptions. While he was a careful speller and grammarian, there were many discrepancies and I decided as editor to conform some of them. For example, he often mentioned reading a magazine called *P.M.*, which I decided to write the same way every time even though he did not. On the other hand, I left the time indications “a.m.” and “p.m.” as he wrote them.

There are also discrepancies arising from the fact that perhaps 10-20% of what you read here are from Aunt Sophie's typed versions, the handwritten letter having been lost. It's hard to tell how much editing she did, but she definitely did some (“personal material left out”). She also eliminated the greeting at the beginning of each letter and the closing endearments. I did not re-supply any “darlings” or “sweeties” or “loves.”

Then, as you will see, there are lots of references to people or events which are hard to identify because we do not have mom's letters. When he answered her questions or commented on her statements, I was left to guess in many cases what they were talking about. In italics and brackets I attempted either to explain a reference, guess at it, or note that it was unclear. For example, dad referred to “your little disturbances” in a letter dated 2/12/45. Without seeing her letter I had no way to interpret this phrase, and said so in italics and brackets.

Next category of editing: Since I hope this collection will have at least a few younger readers, I wanted to deal with references dad made that people of his generation would know, those of my generation might remember, but that younger folks would have little chance of recognizing. I decided to identify these through editorial comments, again in italics and

brackets. In some cases I just added a first name and dates of birth and death to a lesser-known composer or writer. However, on occasion, and especially in a historical context, I did more. For example, dad met a man who fought against Franco in Spain “along with Bottcher (of New Guinea fame).” I did not know this name so I looked him up and added a short bio. I hope the value of the information conveyed in such comments outweighs the breaking up of the text.

As to Army abbreviations, I usually identified them only the first time they appeared, again to avoid interfering with the text too much. Just remember that “E.M.” means “enlisted man,” “M.C.” is “Medical Corps,” and “E.T.O.” refers to “European Theater of Operations”—abbreviations dad took for granted that mom would understand – and you will do fine without continuing reminders.

Finally, I hope you will pay attention to some of the themes in these letters which were quite surprising to me, especially in light of the fact that dad told me what I thought was a great deal about his wartime experiences. For example, nurses, parties, and booze comprise a good part of these letters, along with the implication that “anything goes” on both sides of the Atlantic.

Another surprise was dad’s strong affinity to the Soviet Union, Comrade Stalin, and the fighting prowess of the Red Army. In fact, radical politics make up a *much* higher portion of the letters than I would ever have guessed, and mom was obviously on board with his views all the way.

You will also note how great a time dad was having overseas and away from his kids for the better part of two years. From knowing him I understand that he would make the best of any situation, conduct medical meetings, go out and meet people, and be positive in all respects, at least as much as possible with buzz bombs falling and a hospital full of wounded soldiers. For example, this is a passage from England, dated July 25, 1944:

This morning I went on a hike with the enlisted men for 7 miles. The pace was terrific and 47 men fell out, but not your old man. I hung on despite blisters on both heels and was even able to report for the athletic program this afternoon. Many men came really dragging this afternoon and I had trouble getting the games started. I am now going for a swim in town, so goodbye dear.

However, he might have dampened his enthusiasm a bit in his letters – after all, mom was not having a great time on the home front, as you can see from reading between the lines regarding friction with her family plus

caring for two very young children. On the other hand, the letters are more interesting because of the positive attitude and how much he got out and about. Looking back, maybe I would have been more surprised if his letters had been more negative. Another factor, mentioned in one of his letters, is that the Army generally encouraged soldiers to write cheerful letters home for morale purposes, and dad was nothing if not a team player.

As to his later thoughts on his service overseas, I *never* heard him start a conversation with “In the war...” On the other hand, if you asked he was happy to talk about his experiences. For example, I remember very clearly his description of being in Liège in December 1944 and suddenly seeing the American forces going the wrong way as the Battle of the Bulge began. He and his unit were plenty worried until the 101st Airborne Division “saved everybody’s bacon,” an expression he used often. (In the 1970s I met a veteran of that unit in the small Israeli town of Karkur, adjacent to Pardes Hana, where I was living.)

My point is, for Ben Felson the past was past, the future was bright if you worked hard enough, and he was always ready to get on with it.

In any event, there were lots of revelations for this humble editor, and I hope those readers who knew him will also enjoy learning about these different facets of dad’s supremely interesting personality.

*Steve Felson, Editor, Cincinnati,
Ohio, September 2016*

DEDICATION AND THANKS

I naturally dedicate this work to the memory of my mother, Virginia Felson, 1914-2016. In the last year or two of her life she asked to go over the letters again, and we printed many of them out in big type for her to read. She asked me lots of questions about them, as her memory was failing at the end and she needed to be reminded of matters she surely would have remembered earlier.. However, she got great joy out of them the second and third time around. She is also the one who saved them, before they were in great demand. Thanks, mom.

I would also thank profusely my cousin Judy Duchan, whose collection of her father [Walter’s war letters](#) preceded mine and got me going in the same direction. Judy and my sister Nancy looked through many boxes at various institutions and found Benjamin Felson letters which had been donated earlier which I would never found by myself.

My siblings, Nancy, Mark, Rich, and Ed, tried their best to answer at least 50 questions of family history over the last couple of months. Their responses figure into quite a number of my notes.

Finally, the miracle of the electronic age permits the updating of this piece at any time. If you see a mistake or want to add or subtract something, please let me know.

ITINERARY

Because of wartime censorship, dad could not state in his letters precisely where he was located. Even the concert brochures he sent home had holes in them where he (or someone) had cut out the name of the city where the concert was held. Later he was allowed to say more, but he never put together a comprehensive itinerary.

In addition to the letters, I have a printout from the World War II US Medical Research Center entitled “28th General Hospital, Unit History,” which contains bare place names and dates. Finally, there is a group letter from the Protestant Chaplain of the unit, Capt. Oscar R. Powell, dated May 25, 1945, which recaps his travels with the 28th General up to that point and adds some detail to the story. Combining these materials we have a pretty good look at his travels.

By the way, dad was apparently quite close to Chaplain Powell, whom he called “Chappie.” Dad often talked about him in my presence, corresponded with him after the war, and, deep in my memory, possibly visited him or was visited by him.

Here is my best shot at dad’s wartime whereabouts:

- October 11, 1942: Reports for duty at the headquarters of the 28th General Hospital, Indianapolis, Indiana. Official enlistment date is the next day. Mom must have joined him soon afterwards, pregnant with Nancy (born January 21, 1943), since the next letter to her is not until the fall of 1943. Most of the next nine months is spent in and around Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indianapolis.
- Fall 1943: Spends 4 ½ months at a base in Swannanoa, North Carolina, near Asheville, training and waiting to ship out overseas. Grandpa Jake brings mom and the kids down for much of this period, so there are only a couple of letters.

- December 22, 1943: Unit leaves Swannanoa for its port of embarkation to England – Camp Kilmer, New Jersey.
- December 24, 1943: Unit boards *HMS Queen Mary [His Majesty's Ship; George VI was King]*– 11,990 troops aboard.
- December 29, 1943: *Queen Mary* docks at Greenock, Scotland, near Glasgow.
- December 31, 1943: Unit arrives by train in Tilshead, Wiltshire, in the South of England, near Salisbury and north of Bournemouth, a city on the English Channel.
- January 8, 1944: Unit moves into Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley, Hampshire; Hospital where Florence Nightingale worked.
- February 15, 1944: Unit now in Trowbridge, Dorchester, and is billeted in a private home. During this period dad was on Detached Service to Weymouth, on the South Coast, for about one week.
- April 6, 1944: Unit moves to Kingston-Lacy, Dorchester, an estate 2 miles from Wimborne and a little north of Bournemouth and the Channel.
- July 22, 1944: Unit moves to the village of Honiton , near Exeter, west of where they had been. During his 3-4 weeks there he went on Detached Service for 10 days to a hospital outside of Warminster and Frome, near Trowbridge.
- August 14, 1944: Unit leaves Exeter for the port of Southampton on the English Channel, spends 48 hours at a staging area, and then boards a British ship to cross the Channel.
- August 16, 1944: Unit lands at Utah Beach, France; it's D-Day + 71. They arrive late in the evening, march 5 miles inland, and board army trucks.
- August 17, 1944: Unit is near Carentan, in Northern France, living in tents for five weeks. During this time dad visits the grave of his close boyhood friend, Mutty Kruke, at the 29th Infantry Cemetery outside of Longuville.
- Mid-September 1944: Unit now in Clichy, just north of Paris.
- September 26, 1944: Unit arrives in Liège, Belgium; hospital is located in and around the old *Fort de la Chartreuse*; first patient arrives October 5.

- July 5-6, 1945: Unit leaves Liège for a hospital in Sissone, North-Central France, 40 miles northwest of the cathedral city Reims.
- September 6, 1945: Moves to Mourmelon, France, near the Belgian Border, a temporary stop at a French army base on the way home.
- September 11, 1945: In a staging area outside of Marseilles, on the Mediterranean in the South of France.
- September 24, 1945: In Paris waiting for a plane home.
- January 5, 1946: Officially discharged, two years and one week after landing in the UK.



The lack of any further letters is puzzling. I always heard that dad was overseas for more than two years, even as long as two and one-half years.

However, if he got on a plane in late September or early October of 1945 he would've been back only 22 months after sailing. It is also possible that we have lost a box of letters. Perhaps he was simply en route from late September, arrived home a week or so later, and simply served the last three months of his tour of duty in Cincinnati.

I have no way to resolve this. All I know for sure is that he showed up in dress uniform outside Glueck's Drugstore, at the corner of Clinton Springs Avenue and Reading Road, Cincinnati 29, Ohio, to be picked up by mom in our 1941 Plymouth as Nancy and I cried in the back seat.

I was a little over four years old but I swear I remember one bit of conversation as we entered the front door at Dickson Avenue. Mom said to dad, "You have to sleep downstairs tonight," and they laughed. Later, when he started to go upstairs, we grabbed him and said, "No, mom said you had to sleep down here." They laughed again.

I have no memory of what he was carrying when he came home; a duffle bag over one shoulder? I do, however, recall many of the items he brought home with him. There was a large trunk with metal fasteners all around the top and bottom; I think it ended up in the attic. For years he kept in his office several dark-olive-colored ammunition boxes the size of large lunchboxes in which he kept important documents, probably including his discharge papers (which I wish I had now). For a long time I kept in my room an M-1 rifle which made a disappointing click when you cocked it and pulled the trigger; on the top of the stock I scratched the words "Chinese Death" during the Korean War, plus notches for every enemy I killed in the back yard. I also recall a helmet which I wore occasionally; I think it was German and that dad would wink mysteriously when I asked how he got it. The same is true for the indentation he had on one side of his body, which he passed off as a bullet wound until I got wise. There was also an artillery shell casing and a bayonet with a circular mounting on the back end where you could attach it to your rifle. I remember that the blade was dull, but he must have put it away somewhere; I was never able to use it against those charging North Korean and Chinese ground forces.

LETTERS

10-15-42 [*Indianapolis*]

Dearest Ginny:

Well, I'm a veteran of 4 days in the Army, and well pleased with my lot. There is much good news to be broadcast, but I'll mention things in chronological order, beginning when I left off in my first letter [*which we don't have*].



Figure 1: Undated photo.

The morning after my arrival, I reported to Major Booher, head of the station hospital. By now I have learned to salute so I gave him one helluva snappy one. He is an Indianapolis man, gruff and business-like and very

efficient. After welcoming me (he apparently knew I was a radiologist) he said that I would remain here until the Unit is called, which he believes will be some months. He then placed me in charge of X-ray. The 2 men there were in the “Pool” and therefore only temporary. The Major, Wulff by name, a helluva swell fellow, was to break me in. Major Booher then dismissed me and I went to X-ray and was shown around.

The X-ray Dept. handles about 100-150 pts. a day with good equipment but only 2 X-ray units, one of which is only used for minor work. This puts a tremendous burden on the other outfit and causes a lot of delay. We average 5-7 fluoroscopic patients per day and a couple of other time-consuming procedures, so that the X-ray technic room is by far the busiest in the hospital. [*Dad uniformly uses this spelling for the word “technique.”*] There are 2 civilian technicians, both of whom are quite capable, but full of excuses and evasions as well as complaints. There is also an Army technician (sergeant), and 5 recent graduates of the technical school here (a 3 months course) who are little more than beginners. The work, considering the quantity of it, is exceptional in quality, but the department is somewhat of a madhouse. When we move downstairs to a more secluded spot, it should be easy to get a more smoothly-running organization. So much for the set-up.

My job is to do the fluoroscopic work and read the films. Because there are so many normal cases, it is not too much for one man. At present there are 2 of us doing the work, so I have had time to get outfitted.

I have, so far, spent some \$65 on clothes here, but haven't bought an overcoat and a few other things. I plan to buy a \$29 short overcoat and figure \$35 will cover my remaining needs. Since my uniform expenses in Cincy were about \$75, and my uniform allowance was \$150 (which I will get in a few days, I think), I only will be about \$25 behind on the deal—but I don't have any summer uniforms (about \$30 more).

As to Army life—it has proven very pleasant so far. I have met many swell guys, medical and otherwise, and there is a fine *esprit de camaraderie* throughout the camp. The meals are amazingly good and I'm afraid I will increase in girth unless I get exercise (which I will shortly tell you about). Post Exchange prices are exceedingly cheap and their merchandise has so far covered practically all my wants.

Our quarters are comfortable, though plain. I have a room on the second floor of an unpainted wooden quarters. The room is much like the interior of a hunting lodge with dozens of beams at all angles, forming con-

venient shelves and hangers. The floor is bare wood but fortunately splinterless. The room is about as large as my room in Contage at the C.G.H. and I have furnished it so that I am quite comfortable. [Reference must be the contagious ward at Cincinnati General Hospital; don't know why he had a room there.]

The walls are made of very thin cardboard and planks. Fortunately when my neighbor breaks wind, I hear the deafening sounds in time to put on my gas mask. There is a phone in the corridor for which we pay 25¢ a month. There is only one large men's room in the building and it is downstairs. I have the choice of limiting my fluid intake after dinner, dreaming of distended balloons, which might terminate in a swim in the English Channel, or softly stealing down the bare chilly corridors in the dark night. I have so far chosen the latter.

The apartment situation looks good. I have several people looking including Bernie Segal (remember him?) who works as a civilian in the post-exchange, and Mannie Blatt. [*Dad seems to be kidding about Bernie, since I believe they were already close friends; Bernie must have already been married to Sadie Singer Segal, who was a friend of mom's as early as college; their oldest son, Paul, had to have been born around 1942 or 1943.*]

I will call Mrs. Q. tonight and perhaps Olga Hyman. I'm sure I will find something in the next week or two. Dave Graller [*Cincinnati doctor; other names unknown*] hasn't had any luck yet, though.

Last night I went to Kirschbaum Center [*Jewish Center in Indianapolis*] and guess what—you're right—played basketball. I'm in fine physical shape and plan to do it often. I went over to see Ebner Blatt afterwards and he took me home with him. I met an Eye Man (civilian) and his wife over there and we all had an interesting discussion on the post-war status of medicine, Ebner's sister and I arguing for government regulation, and Mannie and the others taking the opposite view. I waxed hot and heavy and we all left invigorated.

Tonight there is a medical meeting at the Hospital and I am to present the X-ray findings of the cases presented. We have a very capable staff and I have seen some interesting cases so far. The scientific interest here is, for the most part, good.

Well, this is about all. So far my own circumstances are unusual, as only a small percent of the medical men are happily situated. I only add, dear, that the cup will be full when you and Steve get here. How is the little S.O.B. anyway?

I expect you to write me all about him and yourself as well as about my family and yours. So far I haven't had time to be homesick.

I got a card from Walt. You've probably heard he's on the way to Camp Shelby. I hope he likes it there better than Iz Sharon does. [*sadore Sharon was a Cincinnati doctor.*]

Write me soon, dear.

The Old Man

P.S. This is chain letter no. 2. Read to the family and then forward as follows:

1. Leo
2. Chippy
3. David and Louise
4. Walt

Each to add a page and forward to next guy. Walt: forward to me or send to Ros first and let her forward it.

P.P.S. Forward any first class mail. Save my journals at home.

Leo: Are you tough enough to take me on yet, shorty?

Irv: I've given up tennis for the season—courts but no one to play. There's a free 9-hole golf course here but I don't care for golf.

Chip: Thanks for the Caduceus etc. and note the spelling. [*Ancient Greek or Roman herald's wand typically with two serpents twined around it, carried by Hermes or Mercury and symbolizing healing or medicine.*] Hope you and Helen get settled quick.

Walt: don't worry brother—15 medical guys left camp today for port of embarkation—Seattle. Time in service averaged about 1 month. No leave before going—wow! Goodbye brother, take keer of y'self. (two bits I beat you across.)

Ros: don't pine.

Louise and David: wherinhell are you now?

Soph and Edie and Roselyn: Fine eating here—best cooking I ever ate (or almost).

Bennie the Diamond [*Pet name his mother called him.*]

May 10, '43
[Location unclear
but from the
marching he may
be in training of
some sort.]

Dear Folks [*not mom; see last sentence below*]:

I'm trying something new. I'm such a stinker with the typewriter, that I don't enjoy writing letters. If page 5 is legible, I'll write instead of type. I just looked at page 5—hot dawg! It works!

Well, first for the big news: I have good reason to believe I'm going to be transferred! Here is the evidence: On April 24 I received orders transferring me to Billings General Hosp. [*at Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indianapolis*] Med. Officers Reserve pool (directly under Washington) with temp assignment at Station Hosp. (my regular job—which is under the Vth Service command). My C.O. [*commanding officer*] called Col. Redland about it, in my presence. He, Col. R., knew about it, and explained that the 4 best X-ray men in the Vth S. Com. had been selected for jobs with bigger units and I got the impression that it was for foreign service, but this wasn't definite. From overhearing one end of the conversation, I got the impression that Redland paid me some compliments. He has a terrific memory for people and seemed to know all details about me (including my resignation from the unit). [*Reference to resignation unclear.*]

Being in the Pool has not affected my status here, except that I've taken an awful razzing, since both Billings and Pool officers are not highly regarded here. [*Exact nature of these distinctions unclear.*] I may remain in the pool for a long time, however. In the meantime, our landlady wants to move back into her apt. July 1st. This really leaves me on the fence. Naturally, I'm thrilled, but I wish to hell they don't forget me now.

The news that Chippy's C.O. is the new Surgeon Gen. had already reached here. I have a hunch that Chip's ability has not gone unnoticed. I expect Chippy will be called to Wash. in the S.G.O. [*Surgeon General's Office*] as Chief of Medical Service—tsk, tsk.

Fortunately I've seen no anti-Semitism in the Army, but I'm not surprised at what Walt wrote in his last letter. I haven't heard from Leo since he got to Texas, nor from Louise. What's wrong? [*Walter wrote from a train-*

ing camp in Louisiana about a clique of inebriated Gentile doctors who saw to it that “all the duties were delegated to the Jewish officers.” An outside inspector finally came in and cleared up the problem.]

We went on a bivouac last week, marching 6 miles each way under full pack and staying overnight in our pup tents. We were most un-military throughout, and had a helluva swell time. After pitching our tents, Felson and several other officers were detailed to dig the latrine for the officers. We then had chow (including beans) and then played the enlisted men softball. It was a pitcher’s duel which we finally won 20 to 17. We then all got around the fire and sang after a few beers. I led them all in singing—me, imagine! Well, after I got them all hoarse, and myself slightly more tipsy, we turned in. I was a little obstreperous and noisy about this time, and suddenly a light flashed in my tent. I yelled out, “Who’s that sonofabitch with the flashlight.” Reply from the C.O. [*Commanding Officer*] “Go to sleep, Felson.” No demotion so far. Later on, I got lost looking for the latrine. A guard challenged me and I made him lead me to the latrine. I felt like a little kid being taken to pee by his poppa.

We’ve been out on the range twice this past week with 22s. I shot about 198 out of a possible 275, and the next day 215. At that rate I ought to get up to 290 out of 275 soon.

We met an enlisted man last week who fought in Spain against Franco. He is an avowed Communist and has run into a lot of difficulty in the Army though he has never expressed his views since he enlisted after Pearl Harbor. His mail is censored, he was placed in non-combat though he is itching and able to fight (he was a Capt. in Spain and there for 2 yrs.), and was considered subversive. He is a charming, interesting fellow, gentle, quiet-spoken and modest. He was bounced out of O.C.S. [*Officer Candidate School*] in the last week when his record caught up with him, as he knew it inevitably would. Just recently, Drew Pearson wrote about him by name in his column; since then he has been transferred to a combat unit and is now about to leave for foreign service, to his great delight. He fought along with Bottcher (of New Guinea fame) in Spain, and is apparently similar in makeup. How he hates Fascism! [*John Bottcher (1909 –1944) was an American soldier, born in Germany, who was awarded the rank of Captain in two different armies, the International Brigade during the Spanish Civil War and the United States Army during World War II.*]

The weather here is atrocious for tennis—I’m lucky if I can get out once a week. And I haven’t found any competition at all. Disgusting, isn’t it.

I may be able to get a week's leave if I can find another X-ray man in the pool. Here's hoping.

The family is fine—Steve and Nancy are rapidly growing up—I won't care much to leave them and Ginny, but I still want to go.

Love to all
Bennie

May 24, 1943
[Indianapolis]

Dear Folks [*to the family, not mom*]:

Well, we're all writing oftener, which is as it should be. Except I haven't heard from Texas, yet, what's the matter Leo?

Well, Chippy, so you know the new Surgeon General personally. Tsk, tsk. Rumor has it that he probably won't be the new one at that. At least there's some delay.

And Walt's hoping to go to Sunny Calif. Fun stuff—the steady traveling Felsons are still in Indianapolis and nothing, so far, has happened to them (but will soon, I hope). As a matter of fact, Ginny and the kids are moving back to Cincy on the first. Our landlady is moving back into the apt. and it is virtually impossible to find another place. Children are worse than the plague. And since my transfer is imminent, we'd probably get stuck for 3 weeks rent. So I'm taking a week's leave beginning on the 1st and moving the family down. Get the racket out Irv [*Dad's oldest brother*]! Can any of the others get leave?

We've been having floods here and the MPs [*Military Police*] have gone out on duty. Several of our men are out also. All this rain sure plays hell with my tennis!

I have an assistant now, a man from the pool, who will take my place while I'm on leave. He's plenty good and I hope he doesn't show me up. It's a real pleasure not to work so hard. They had him teaching students surgery technic—and he a well-qualified radiologist.

We have been firing on the range until the rain came, and I sure smell to high heaven. I can shoot lying down flat, but when I stand or kneel, I

shake like a leaf in the wind. Leo, how did you ever get to be such a good shot?

So David is having typist troubles again. Congratulations on your book, David. Pay no attention to Soph, Louise—a woman's place is behind the typewriter. You can have more children, but probably only 1 book. And the latter take longer than the former.

It pays to cooperate in the Army! An Air Corps installation 10 miles away has a small hospital but not portable X-ray machine and no Radiologist. I have been giving them good service and we have gotten along well. Recently they needed a portable X-ray of a patient injured in a crash. They called Billings, who turned them down. They then called me, and I sent the machine and technicians by ambulance stat. I next learned they sent a letter to Vth service Hq. [*headquarters*] commending me. Yesterday they called me and invited me to come over etc. I asked if all the men here (15) couldn't spend an afternoon there so they have arranged the following for next week: an hrs inspection of their field; an hrs ride in a bomber; a buffet supper; and a stag in the evening. Not bad, eh.

The following incident actually happened here last week. During a fire drill I was the first one finished with my allotted duty, and reported to the C.O. He asked me to check the Officers' ward to see if it was cleared of patients. I go back and find only 1 patient remaining, a retired colonel, sitting on the toilet. I said, "Col. there is a fire drill and all the pts. must leave the building." A worried frown crossed his face and he says pleadingly, "But they gave me an enema." So I tell him, while he grunts and strains, that he can stay there (to his obvious relief). I then went back to the C.O. and said, "Sir, Capt. Felson reporting. Officers' Ward is evacuated, all except the Colonel, who hasn't evacuated yet!" So help me, it's true.

The kids are both fine. Nancy gives signs of out-Steving Steve. Steve has changed from a baby to a boy, almost overnight. As a matter of fact he doesn't wet himself at night and frequently asks to peepee like Daddy. I had him out on the post one day and Colonel Churchill, the C.O., passed by. He patted Stevie's head and said "How are you little boy." Steve looked up and said, "Make peepee" and proceeded to do so! Was the Col's. face red!

Regards to all of you
from
Ginny, Ben, Steve, and Nancy.

Wed. night
Fall 1943
Swannanoa N.C.
[East of Asheville, about an hour from the Pisgah Creek cabin]

Darling:

Still here sweetie. Got your letter promptly and enjoyed it. Sorry about the trip. Did you run across my dogtags. If so, airmail special it to Swannanoa.

Miss you a lot but have been kept busy with my paper, which I finally finished. Oh, Boy! Also a little Poker and Black Jack—at present I'm 20 bucks ahead. Tsk, tsk. The men are really swell and one bull session follows another.

Yes, I taught Steve, "My Daddy's going over the Ocean." I got a big bang out of his actions as you describe them.

The pictures are the same size as the proofs which you have. I'll mail anything interesting to you. Under separate cover, I'm sending the notes on my paper and some other things. Put the notes away for me, honey, in case I have to have them later.

Soph just sent me some cookies.

I'm rushing off to a medical meeting at Moore General now, honey. Goodbye love—more later. Kiss the kids for me.

Ben

P.S. You are to pay the insurance premium of J. Hancock and Metropolitan.

Thurs. AM [*Undated but must be late fall 1943 in Swannanoa because of Moore Hospital*]

Darling:

My last night's scrawl was written more hurriedly than I like. Today I have had more time for a leisurely letter, so here goes.

Considering the restrictions and the fact that we're all still blue from the goodbye to our families, we're all having a pretty good time. I spend my days working (about 8 hours) on my paper, bulling with the fellows, throwing a football around, and playing a little poker, at which I'm doing some tall winning up to the present.

The men are really a fine lot. The bull sessions generally occur in Bloom's room (where I sit writing my paper) as he generally has refreshments. I haven't seen much of Hulse (the German) but I see a lot of Bloom and the Chaplain. [*Wilfred C. Hulse was a German-born physician, mentioned often in these letters but not known to the family after the war. It turns out that he became a very well-known child psychiatrist at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City who died in 1962. The Wilfred C. Hulse Award is still presented for outstanding contributions to the field of child and adolescent psychiatry.*]

Others drift in, and we talk about everything imaginable. I moved in with the Chaplain, sleeping on a mattress on the floor at his feet, because the other barracks was so cold. I have been accounting for my poker luck by stating that I lie at the feet of the Lord. The Chaplain is really a wonderful man. Last night we talked religion until 3 AM lying in our respective beds. He is a regular fellow, very honest, and really stimulating.

We had a curious incident the other day. One of the Jewish boys, a fellow named Laffer, developed gang-plank fever and became so depressed he had to be transferred out of the outfit. It was pretty disgusting to some of us. No, it didn't give me any ideas. [*This reminded me of Philip Roth's 1959 short story, Defender of the Faith, in which a Jewish sergeant has the same sort of disgust about a Jewish recruit who seeks special favors.*]

Col. Sackett has been proofreading my paper and seems to think it's a good one. He's a perfect gentleman about everything, though, and probably is just being kind. Tsk.

Your trip home must have been a mess. That boy of ours, though, is worth going through anything for. I guess you needed my soothing influence on the way back.

Did you know, I got a carbon letter from Irv telling the family that I ought to be leaving any day and would probably join Walter at ... (mentioning the Port of Embarkation). As you can guess, such a letter might prove very dangerous and serious to me. You just can't watch these things too closely, honey. I didn't say anything like it on the phone. What I did say was, "I'm sending Ginny home and may leave soon and would like to join Walter." Please be careful about these things, dear. I threw the letter away.

We went to a medical meeting at Moore last night, and I got up and said 3¢ worth, duly impressing the audience with my superior etc. etc. Afterwards, I indulged in a small amount of that favorite indoor pastime better known as the pasteboard pastime, winning an additional \$14 to bring my 2 day total to \$32. (Now don't run out and spend it.) I'll probably lose it next time. [*Connection between poker and pasteboard (cardboard) unclear. Chips? The cards themselves?*]

My luggage was overweight about 15# but I don't think they'll do anything about it. [*With 16,683 troops on board (the record) you can see why they had luggage restrictions.*]

The Chaplain's very capable in religious arguments. He, like your father, believes that any good, honest person is really a religious person, and since he believes in a personal God, concludes that such a person has a bit of God in him. He points out that "God" is a term, somewhat old-fashioned, but so far irreplaceable. He points out also that when I can give him a chemical formula for "goodness" or explain the advantage of being against injustice in my world of science (which would assume the right of the fittest to survive), he would come around to my way of thinking. Cute, eh wot!

Well, that's all for now, honey. Nothing new as far as the outfit is concerned. Will see you soon.

Love and kisses to both Steve and Nancy and yourself—

Ben

Friday [*Undated but must be late fall 1943 in Swannanoa because of Moore Hospital*]

Dear Ginny:

Hope everything's going along all right. I certainly miss you all. How are Steve and Nancy by now?

Had an interesting time yesterday. In the afternoon, I went down to Moore General X-ray and had Col. Sackett and his secretary read my paper. They corrected a few minor errors and were a great help in their criticism. They thought the paper was very fine, praising it highly.

After dinner Hulse and I went down to hear Chaplain Powell's services. He gave a slightly disjointed but good sermon about going away. The services were simple including some hymn singing, in which we joined. It was really very nice. I know the Chaplain was thrilled to see us there. I doubt if you would like his presentation. He's quite a poor orator, his voice is OK but he has the mid-western twang which I do not like. It's not how he says it, but what he says, which is important, I guess.

Afterwards, Hulse and I went to the movies to see Bette Davis in *Old Acquaintance* [1943; *serious authoress vs. hack authoress*]. Fair, not good.

There was an impromptu party for the 28th at the Officers Club with orchestra supplied by Moore Officers Club. We went down there and I started drinking beer (3.2). When I reached the 15th bottle, I became very full but only slightly drunk. I was really having a swell time. Then I saw Col. Sackett and he dragged me over to his table and started pouring whiskey into me. Finally, I found myself behind the bar, working as bartender. Inevitably I became sick. Col. Sackett took care of me, and when the party was over, took me home. He was also quite looped and exceedingly friendly. We sat aside for a while, throwing compliments at each other, and I meant everything I said. He wants to meet me again, and I shall correspond with him. There sure are some swell fellows in this Army!

This A.M., the men dragged me out at 6:30 A.M. and I sure had butterflies. I'm feeling better now, after breakfast.

By now, you've probably received my APO [*Army Post Office*] number. Please write your next letter using that number.

Goodbye darling.

Your drunken husband

12/29/43

At Sea

Hi honey:

Nothing new, but had some time, so I decided to write a letter, standing up in the Officers' lounge aboard troopship X. [*Reference is to the Queen Mary*]. I am very weary of sea travel and wish I could get the good earth under my feet once more. I think the crowded quarters are the chief reason for my ennui. The food is palatable, the camaraderie good, the beds comfortable, but the privacy, alas, is not. I am forced to play poker (at which I am still winning) by the fact that our room is headquarters for the 1-2-3 Club, a select group of Hoyle's favorites, all members of which (except of course myself) prefer poker to sleep.

I haven't done any reading but offer as excuses the facts that this is my first voyage and I have recently finished my paper after months of hard work. Tsk, tsk.

By the way, Hulse states that Steve's accomplishments in memory are unusual in degree, but not in type. Hulse's field is child guidance, and I intend to seek his advice wherever possible. Red Elsey [*a Cincinnati doctor*] tells me the University won't accept Steve until he's 3. By the way he's with me now.

Everything here is fine: we have a hunch that our set-up will be good, but don't know the details. When you get this letter, I will have safely debarked. Don't worry about a thing.

Love

Ben.

Received 14 Jan
1944 [*Dad landed in England on 12/29/43*]

Dearest Ginny:

Trip uneventful except for seasickness for a couple of days. Oh, misery! If I didn't have a fine family at home, I'd take up citizenship wherever I'd land because of fear of nausea on the trip back. I'm feeling fine and having fun in moderation. It's so darned hard to know what I'm permitted to write, because censorship varies with the individual and booklets and rules

don't fit individual cases. When you write me, keep a duplicate, so that if events suggest I haven't received the first copy, you can send the second. Write or type on 1 side of the page, so that if they cut out anything, I can still have something left.

Buy the kids Xmas [*presents?*] for their daddy and tell Steve I miss him. Don't get drunk on New Year—hm—the first New Year we've been apart. No, I'm not homesick—the future is still too exciting for that. I think I'll be able to write more at my next letter. I'm travelling with [*Dave*] Graller, [*Red*] Elsey [*another Cincinnati doctor*], and gang and getting along nicely. Poker winnings continue to keep me. All my love to you, Nancy, and Steve.

The gray-haired "old man"

1-1-1944 [*England*]

Dearest:

Our first New Year's Day apart in many moons and I certainly miss you. Happy New Year, darling.

We have finally arrived at a temporary destination [*Tilshead, Wiltshire, England, on the Salisbury Plain*] and are now comfortably settled (a relative term). We live in barracks, our outfit occupying most of the area. To a certain extent, it's a back to nature existence, but there are no real hardships.

The boat ride and subsequent train ride were very comfortable and our hosts charming. The American Red Cross served us well (from a refreshment standpoint) on the train. Our location now is very beautiful and the early village is very picturesque.



Figure 2 An inn in Tilshead, England

New Year's Eve a spontaneous party occurred and developed into a swell affair when we were successful in getting an orchestra from a nearby camp. Firewater is very scarce but present and a rip-snorting time was had by all.

At present I am engaged in laundering my hankies (yes, me! Wait til I get my hands on Hitler!) I'm using Ivory soap but I can't get away from tattle-tale gray. Those lying advertisements! Just got over a bad cold, cured mostly by the party last night. I had a temp. of 100°, but if you think I would stay in bed while a New Year's Eve party was going on, you're crazy.

If we stay put or get a permanent address I think I'll rent or buy a bike. I'll never walk unless I have to.

Don't let the kids forget their father who misses them intensely.

With very much love,

Ben

P.S. Save all my letters.

Jan. 2, 1943 [*really 1944; England*]

Dear Steve:

How are you, my fine boy. Daddy misses you very much. He is very far away from you and won't be home for a long time.

Have you been taking care of Mommy and Nancy? You know you mustn't hit Nancy anymore because she's just a sweet little baby and she won't like you if you hit her. And daddy hopes you don't wet your pants anymore.

I went on a ride in a big boat on the ocean and on a choo choo train. I'm with a whole lot of other soldiers. Last night I heard a soldier singing K-K-K-Katy and thought of my Stevie. Can you still sing K-K-K-Katy and all the other songs you used to sing in our singing bees.

Do you remember how we used to ride on the swings in North Carolina and how you rode down the slide? That was fun, wasn't it? I hope you get to ride on Shelley's swing, too. [*Shelley Greenfield lived next door on Dickson Ave.; 3 years older than I.*]

Has mommy taught you the ABCs and how to count? Have you been outside in the snow? Did Santa Claus bring you any presents? As soon as I can, I'll send you a book or something.

Give Mommy and Nancy a kiss and hug for me and tell Mommy to write a letter for you. Tell her what you want her to say.

I love you very much.

Your father.

Jan. 2, '43 [*really 1944*]
Rec. 1-21-44

Dear Gin:

Just a note today because there is very little to add. We're still restricted to the immediate area of the camp but these restrictions should be lifted shortly. Tomorrow begins an orientation course of about 8 hours per

day, the first formal program since before we left Swannanoa, but I'm not very eager.

So far no mail – you can imagine what an important item this is. If you ever let me down in this respect, I'll never forgive you. Make your letters detailed and long, sweetie, and often.

We've had a swell break in being located on the same military post as the special service outfit which I mentioned yesterday. They service post exchanges, sponsor athletics, have music teachers etc. Many of the enlisted men in the outfit are professional entertainers so they have supplied us with orchestras, singers etc.

Last night they invited all the officers over to their quarters, which is a large hunting lodge 750 years old. They had an orchestra that was really good and some of its entertainers were as funny as could be. In addition, they had an accordionist who was tireless & an excellent musician. We sang for hours, drank beer and a little gin, and a wonderful time was had by all.

This is some war, eh? They've also got some serious music musicians over there, and I'm going to try to arrange a concert of some sort. They are extremely obliging. They even supplied a pianist and violinist for church services. Incidentally, Bloom, Hulse, & I went to Chaplain Powell's services yesterday & really enjoyed his sermon. He spoke much better than the last time and his subject matter was very pleasant to our ears: Forgetting things of the past. He pointed out that past issues were dead, and we should forget the hard things said of the Russians (whose virtues he extolled), the Jews, labor, and the minority groups. He defined a reactionary as a person who played up this hatred between various groups for his own gain (my idea of a fascist and his too – he thinks they are synonymous). All in all it was a very coherent and well-prepared talk.

Well that's all for now, my love. Keep writing, dear. I'll eventually get them.

I'd suggest you send copies of my letters around to the others.

Note carefully: send me Walt's APO number. I've had no opportunity to look him up yet, but soon as I can get to a Red Cross outfit, I'll go to work on this. [*Brother Walter bypassed England in his journeys through North Africa and Italy, so this and all further attempts to meet up with him during the war came to nothing.*]

As always,

Ben

Monday
1-3-44

Darling:

Now I learn that I can tell you more details that I've left out in previous letters. We are soon to be better informed on the subject of censorship, but until then we are receiving conflicting reports, because the interpretation of censorship rules in the European Theater of Operations has not yet been clarified to our unit censors. So I am using my own judgment and trust to luck that it coincides with the censors. In your letters to me (none of which have I yet received) you can tell me anything except about military installations etc. that you might learn from one of my brothers.

A curious cablegram has been received by you from me. It's a routine safe arrival cablegram and I had no control of the wording. I learned it said, "Received your letter, darling. Safe and well." Sorry dear, no letter received.

We came over on [*literally cut out by censor*] and are now somewhere in England, ill-informed but comfortable. I say ill-informed because of the absence of radios (our radios will have to be altered to suit the English electric sockets and current), and our temporary restrictions to this military post. We occasionally get an English newspaper but seldom see an Englishman except through the fence and at a distance. I know now that I would never care to spend a long time in a prison camp. I would really feel it!

We met some [*censored*] on board ship and found them friendly if they were spoken to first, though a little stuffy. There were a few younger ones, even some with high rank, who were quite intelligent and very liberal. One called my friend Glenn a "Red" but seemed to consider the term complimentary rather than derogatory. Mostly, however, there was little discourse between the male officers of the two countries. The female discourse was quite another situation. The [*censored*] really went for the [*censored*] and vice versa, at the expense of the American officers who were quite piqued about it, though they wouldn't admit it. [*censored*] relations better watch out when women are concerned. The [*censored*] is quite an immaculate and clean cut looking fellow and so far there seems to be a wider gulf between the enlisted men and officers than in our Army. I'm not

sure of this, however, as my experience was limited to the ship. More of this later.

The crew was [censored] and was much more frank and friendly. Scotchmen, Irishmen, and Englishmen were all present. I had difficulty in understanding the various dialects. They showed no reserve whatsoever and gave us a lot of valuable information, kind and friendly. Also I discovered that [censored] was really running an efficient organization, at least in that area. I tasted my first warm English beer at this camp and certainly do not like it. I'll have to learn to, however, as liquor is practically not to be had.

We got on an English train with a small feeble-looking engine and entered compartments with 6 chairs in each. The trains are much more comfortable and roomy than our American trains and the ride is fast and efficient. We can all speak highly of English trains. I wonder who made them run on time in England. Maybe Moseby? [*Reference is to Sir Oswald Mosley (1896 – 1980), a British politician known principally as the founder of the British Union of Fascists; dad's point would be that a selling point for Hitler and Mussolini was that they would make their countries' trains run on time.*]

Before we started, the Red Cross served us fair doughnuts and good coffee and cigarettes. At subsequent stops we were served by British soldiers very efficiently: a bag containing cookies, a bar of chocolate, tarts and a pie containing substitute meat (oh, *misere!*—my cold, thank god, ruined my appetite) and coffee. It was heart-warming to receive such a nice reception. The people were curious and friendly which amazes me because so many Americans must have preceded us that we should have worn out our welcome.

The English countryside is beautiful. The grass is green though the leaves have all fallen. The land has a well-groomed appearance and is very picturesque and clean. The cities are busy as you might well imagine and the railroads are just as busy as in the US.

After detraining, we rode on trucks to our camp, passing through a picturebook English village. It was exactly as depicted in the movies except for a few chain stores.

Nothing new since my letter yesterday. I've been playing a little football with the enlisted man and joining bull sessions, writing letters, and doing a little reading.

Ben

P.S. As soon as restrictions are lifted, hope to be able to contact Walt.

P.P.S. Our trunk lockers and bedding rolls haven't arrived yet, so I haven't any pictures of the kids. Believe it or not, I'm having difficulty remembering what Nancy looks like. Oh unhappy day! Show the kids my pictures daily, Maw, or I will retribute you severely.

Wed. Jan. 5, '44

Hi honey:

Nothing much new of late. Some of the men have received airmail letters from home, but nothing for me. Please write all letters airmail henceforth.

I'm trying to contact Walt, if he is here, but I don't know how successful this will be.

We've heard what our permanent assignment will be and are extremely well pleased. Sorry, but I can't tell you more about it.

We've had various jobs assigned to us—mine is assistant censor. I'm pleased about it because now I ought to learn what I may and may not say. We finally had a formal lecture on censorship and I now learn that I made a few (thank god minor) mistakes. I can now tell you only that we are in Great Britain.

Time doesn't hang very heavy because I find much to do. Plenty of sleep, an occasional lecture, walks, touch football, reading, bridge, poker (\$5 more winners - total to date about \$65 since Swannanoa), meals and bull sessions pretty well fill the time. The food is getting pretty good as things become better organized and I rather like the life we lead.

We have just been informed we must exchange all our American money for English and the men are griping in an amusing manner. They certainly would prefer to keep their home ties, being reluctant to part with any connection with the homeland. Actually, of course, they'll more quickly learn English finances this way and save themselves money in the exchange. But emotions usually sweep away rational thought in circumstances of this kind.

Yesterday we had a speaker on Anglo-British relations. Among other things, he told us that there will be no color line in Great Britain. I heartily approve (as you know) of this and it was a pleasant surprise to some of us. The Chaplain is going to speak of this next Sunday and I plan to be there.

Nothing else except rumors, honey, so I depart for another meeting with love for you and the kids

Ben.

Note new APO no. 582

Fri. nite
1-7-1944

Hello darling:

Oh joy! Restrictions were just lifted. This has more significance from a psychological than a material standpoint, since transportation is essentially non-existent and there is only one town within walking distance. Furthermore, our orientation classes preclude our entering this town during the day, and blackout prevents us from seeing it at night. But I may be able to get away Sunday.

Our orientation course has been rather amusing in some respects, though it is given in dead seriousness. Both our men and Officers from main headquarters present it to all personnel. The first lecture was on how to get along with the English. It decried criticism of their ways, superciliousness, and super-pride in the U.S.A. I plan to act in my natural manner and am sure I'll get along O.K.

Another lecture was on the subject of regulations and laws by an M.P. [*Military Police*] Officer. There are some Army regulations and English regulations which we have to watch out for and Officers especially must be above reproach in their public conduct and appearance. I'll have to watch that my buttons are buttoned, my uniform is correct, etc. as these are court martial offenses. Everything is much more GI here than anywhere else I've ever been. [*"GI" literally stands for "government issue," but the reference here means "by the book."*] They're trying hard to make a soldier out of me, honey. Do you think they'll succeed?

We also had a lecture on inspections, an important item here. The Commanding General of the Service of Supplies has put out regulations as to how they will be made, and everything must be letter-perfect. The wording of each statement, the dress, the split-second timing, etc. of these inspections are all definitely set forth in regulations. For example, I will be informed that the Inspector will be in X-ray at 11 A.M. At 10:58 I will be standing outside the door to X-ray and at 11 A.M. salute the inspector, bring down my salute and say, "Sir, Capt. Felson, Chief of X-ray Service." I will

then about face and lead him into the Dept. As we come thru the door, my Sergeant will shout "Attention!" and all personnel and patients will stand at attention. Etc., etc. This is supposed to be the most military outfit in the world. Whatinhell is your unmilitary husband doing here!

Other lectures have included how to protect us from air attacks, fires, incendiaries and the British women. The latter have an amazing high incidence of venereal disease (due undoubtedly to lax wartime morals and shortage of men altho our speaker tried to blame it on negro soldiers, the whelp). Your husband will remain faithful! We even had a talk on disease prevention. As doctors, we chuckled over this, but there was something there even for us to learn.

So you see I am learning more and more, but experiencing little. Your man will become quite erudite at this rate.

Last night the Special Services outfit here presented us with a show including a jazz band, magician, singers, skits, and an excellent violinist. The latter was very outstanding and played such numbers as *Souvenir* [presumably Tchaikovsky's "Souvenir-de-Florence"], *Indian Lament* [Dvo-rak], etc. This was the first serious music since I left home and I enjoyed it immensely. The show was fairly good and the enlisted men really enjoyed it. Afterwards we danced for about ½ hour, the orchestra staying for this period. I danced with several cute nurses (oh, maybe I shouldn't have said it—but don't worry, dear—I'll come home chaste—by every gal that I can get to chase me). [*"Special Services" was the entertainment branch of the American military, with soldiers and local talent as the principal entertainers. United Service Organizations – USO – was a military-sponsored private group that brought in outside entertainers such as Bob Hope.*]

My censorship job has continued and has lost much of its original interest. It is now quite a chore. I'm so tired of reading love letters, letters to Mom etc. I could scream. There are amusing letters however, such as when a fellow writes love letters to 3 or 4 different gals, another who tells a married woman that she isn't the only one who has fallen in love with him, another who reminds his girl of their last night together in such a vivid manner that even the censor drooled a little, and the various attempts at poetry, some of which is very good. Most of our enlisted men are not too literary but a few are exceptionally fine in this respect. One fellow wrote a beautiful letter to his mother. It was good enough to be published. I can't get over the feeling of prying into the business of others in this job and am poorly suited for it as I tire of it too easily. There has been practically no attempt by the men to transmit information of military significance. What little is found is

entirely accidental. Some of the men gripe a lot in their letters and this is considered unfit for home consumption, so these men are called in and instructed to write more cheerful letters.

Well, darling, I've wandered thru 4 pages, but you're easy to talk to, especially when you can't talk back. I have received no mail yet but keep writing often and long letters. If you let me down in this respect, I will haunt your conscience and give you insomnia.

Did you get my portraits from Asheville? I have not yet developed the pictures we took in the Vanderbilt Estate. I hope my wonderful children are causing their beautiful mother no unusual difficulty.

Take care, my sweet, and remember, I love you.

Your ever-faithful (I hope) husband.

Jan. 9th, 1944

Still no mail. I am the only one in the barracks who hasn't received any mail from home. I should be blue because my wife (I assume) didn't have foresight to write airmail or V-mail. But I'm not. As I said to Hulse today, I really expected to be the last one to get mail. Of course I'm dying (not really) to hear about you and the kids and worrying about my scientific paper and it's a helpless feeling, but patience, brother, patience!

As a matter of fact, I'm enjoying things so much that I really haven't had too much time to be bothered with the "blues." I will now proceed in chronological order since my last letter. All the men complain they can't think of things to write and all the mail I censor is short (except for love letters). Not me! There's so much to say I have no... [*His sister Sophie censored the next few sentences and the original is not available.*]

Yesterday we received a lecture by the Catholic chaplain on sex morals. Something about taking Christ's word for it. It was about what one would expect from this type of speaker, presented with much oratory and little logic.

Subsequently we were informed by our C.O. in a private meeting that altho restrictions were lifted, the nurses couldn't leave the post after blackout. He wasn't sure he was correct in doing this and called on several officers for their opinion (his order was obviously prompted by the Chief Nurse). They, of course, agreed with him. I'm lucky he didn't call on me, champion of the down-trodden. If they expect to come home with 105 vir-

gins, they are crazy! The Chief Nurse probably will have a hemorrhage when she learns that babies aren't the result of kissing. (Maybe they are, indirectly).

Later I took a walk with Hulse. He is really a brilliant person and I enjoy talking to him very much. He seems to see things much more clearly than I and to express himself better. We are quite friendly.

Last night we were again invited to the castle or hunting lodge nearby, by the special service group. They had a new band this time and more professional entertainers, beer and sandwiches. A violinist who had played with the Phila. Symphony (*Eugene* Ormandy, successor to Stokowski [*as conductor*]), played a Chardash [*often spelled Czárdás; a Hungarian folk dance*], *Meditation* [*a symphonic intermezzo from the opera Thaïs by Jules Massenet*], and another number very beautifully and the other entertainment was likewise good. I'm getting a lot of practice in dancing at these parties but nothing else, dammit. And despite all lectures, I do not, definitely not, and will never, like English beer. I drank 4 glasses with absolutely no effect. Some of the men bought English wine of fair quality at the outrageous price of 2£ per bottle (\$8). There were some very young English 2nd Lts. (artillery) present and they had all their characteristics of country bumpkins. Nothing like the worldly debonair Air Force officers we had previously met.

This a.m. I again went to church services. It may surprise you, my going to church. No dear, I haven't gotten religion. Several things prompted me to go. First, respect, friendship and admiration for the chaplain; secondly, agreement with his liberal viewpoint and interest in how he puts it across; third, nothing else to do on Sunday a.m.; and fourth, to hear the excellent violinist who plays. Today the chaplain very beautifully attacked anti-negro sentiments. When you realize that a high percent of our officers and nurses are from the South and that they are all (the Northerners too) incensed by the English friendliness for the negro, you can understand the task he attempted. I expected trouble because he told me the subject in advance. To my pleasant surprise, he did it so well and subtly, that he got the point across without antagonising anyone. He worked it in as part of the broader subject of the social teachings of Christ, using parables and examples frequently. He pointed out that attitudes (emotional reactions) were as important as scientific facts and among the topics of various attitudes on which Christ expressed himself were those towards the proper education of children (no prejudices), a proper attitude toward the morally weak, and a proper attitude towards those considered inferior (the negro). He quoted

Booker T. Washington and G.W. Carver [*two African-American intellectuals*] and discussed shortly the fallacy of our anti-negro sentiments. In other words, he gave them a small concentrated sugar-coated pill which was swallowed without complaint or regurgitation. Incidentally, the violinist played superbly.

This afternoon Hulse, the chaplain and I took our first trip to the nearby village. It was quite enchanting, just like the storybooks. The community looks quite prosperous. The houses are old but immaculate. The roofs are thatched, i.e. composed of cut wheat or rice straw, clipped smoothly. The kids are well-nourished, cute as buttons and very polite. The farms are well-kept and no land is wasted. We ran across two churches, both fairly old and appearing just as I anticipated. A graveyard in the Anglican Church contained gravestones at least as far back as 1777. Others were too moldy to read. The few British we met nodded and smiled. We didn't go into a pub, we'll save that for later, but that's the place to meet the people. On Sunday afternoon, the adults stay home. The streets were almost deserted except for a handful of soldiers and a few children. We saw a sign stating that the building in the town – Oh, I can't say it because of security reasons. It might tell where we were. Sorry dear.

[*Sophie censored the rest.*]

[*Undated*] re-
ceived Jan 22,
1944

My dearest wife:

I am still in excellent spirits—as Red Elsey used to say, “I'm happy about the whole thing!” The weather's good, the food's ample, my supplies are holding up (except absolutely no liquor) and my time's filled with censoring the mail, classes on how to get along in England and why (in easy lessons), touch football, writing letters, and reading. The days are not long enough for this Pollyanna.

We have been informed of our permanent stations, and even you would be pleased. Though still insisting we look forward to the day when the bars are lifted. I'm going to buy a bike at the first opportunity and scout around the countryside and villages. I hope I can know soon.

I think and talk of you and the kids often, perhaps too often for my friends, but they're polite and soon change the subject to their families, so none of us is bored.

You may send a pkg. of 5 lb. or less per month and anyone else may send a similar pkg. per month. Actually I don't need anything, but you might send me a good book now and then, Let Jake wrap it. Send all mail by air.

Our mail, lockers and bedding rolls have not yet arrived, nor have we been paid (I have plenty of traveler's checks). Gosh, it seems a long time since. I miss you. Much much love.

Ben

Jan. 10, 1944

Did very little since my letter yesterday except read the X-ray year-books that I brought along. By the way, did my 1943 yearbook of Radiology come? If so, send it on. Also played poker with British money—6 pence limit—and lost a shilling (12 pence of about 20 cents). Heard a big shot Army man speak today and he told us some interesting things which will have to wait til I come home. By the way, I'm keeping a journal of my experience for you. [*I have a pocket-sized notebook in dad's handwriting covering the period 12/17/43 - 1/22/44, 17 small pages in the form of a shorthand diary: "thatched rooves – pubs – churches – tombstone 1777 – two English girls – Sunday afternoon in England – medical care for poor – flood of 1841."*]

I haven't yet told you of the English weather. It's almost constantly misty and not too cold according to the thermometer but the cold is very penetrating. A fire is very comfortable here. We heat with little coal stoves which tend to go out unless carefully watched. The ground retains moisture because of the high humidity and when the temperature rises, the muck increases. My rubber boots have been very welcome for this reason.

There's a show over at Special Service tonight: *Stars without Garters*. Hm! I think I'll go. English girls, too. Am still faithful, though, Dammit!

Am pulling some strings to get transportation to nearby towns and cities ... may be successful. I fervently hope so, as I would like to see as much as possible.

1-11-44 [*Eng-land*]

My Sweet:

So much has happened today and I can tell you so little. Oh, mores!
Oh, censors!

I'll tell you as much as is safe. The rest will be gleaned from my journal at some future date—may it be soon. [*Journal entry for 1/10/44 has material about bombings and paratroopers, so I guess that is what he was referring to but not putting in his letter.*]

At 7:30 P.M. yesterday, I was notified that I would go with the second advance party to our new station. At 8 P.M. I attended another GI soldier's revue which was excellent: skits, hot music, talents of various kinds. I was in a good mood for this type of entertainment and enjoyed it immensely. At 10 P.M. I rushed back to the barracks and packed, throwing my belongings helter-skelter into my bedding roll and trunk locker. Up at 7 to finish packing and then via ambulance to the station after a mediocre breakfast. We waited 2 hrs. for the train (we were ½ hour early) and passed the time at the station observing the English people—especially kids—and American troops. It was quite a busy little station. We finally boarded the train, 5 of us being in 1 compartment. This time it was a 3rd class compartment and a very slow train, stopping at every cattle crossing. The compartments were cold and not so comfortable. To make matters worse, somebody Snafued our lunch so we didn't eat. [*Snafu in army slang = "Situation Normal, All Fouled Up," at least in polite circles.*]

Furthermore, though the distance was short (to our new station) we went roundabout and took much too long a time. This time there was no Red Cross or British soldiers to feed us. We finally arrived at our destination, threw our hand luggage in a truck and marched at attention thru the town. The populace gaped at us. Apparently they were unaccustomed to seeing Yanks (this pleases me to no end, as I feel the British tire of too many Americans, as I would if they became commonplace)!

Our first view of this hospital was exciting from outside. I only wish I could describe it to you, but it might too readily be identified. We signed in and then were quartered in very nice rooms. Believe it or not: nearby bath and toilet in same building (right outside the door)! Two in a large room! Sheets on the bed, and clean! A British valet-waiter! Oh joy!

Tea was served later and we met some of the British medical officers, and saw our 1st advance party, who were quite friendly. Tea included a meat paste, bread, butter, cookies, and tea. I was really famished and ate large quantities. We cleaned up, unpacked, then had dinner consisting of

bouillon, good fish, mutton, potatoes, beets, Welsh rarebit (dessert), all in relatively small portions. The service was fine (British waiters) and we had so many implements it was hard to make it come out right so that the last fork was used with the rarebit. Then demitasse and saccharin with newspapers (my first newspaper in a month) in the Officers' lounge—and radio music! I hadn't heard one in so long that I got a real thrill out of it. The news is so wonderful, too. [*The good news at this time might have included the Russian army moving west, a British victory in Burma, or the launching of the first "Victory Ship," a larger version of the "Liberty Ship;" US shipyards produced over 3000 of these two cargo vessels from 1941 to 1945, a major factor in winning the war.*] Then to a free movie: Greer Garson and yes! Ronald Colman (maybe I oughtn't mention him in my letters if I'm to retain your love) in *Random Harvest* [*a 1942 amnesia-based love story*]. The audience was composed of mostly British enlisted men, British WANCs (AVT) [*meaning unknown*], nurses, nurses aids, British medical officers including a few females, American officers, [*enlisted*] men, and nurses. The movie was beautiful. I mistakenly thought I had seen it before, but curiously it was because I had read the book, and Garson and Colman's pictures were on the cover. I would have liked to hold your hand during this romantic movie, sweetheart. I'll bet you would have cried your heart out. [*I cannot for a moment visualize dad reading this type of romantic novel, written by James Hilton, author of two other very popular and sentimental novels made into movies, Lost Horizon and Goodbye, Mr. Chips. I once made a great effort to get dad to read a work of fiction, You Know Me Al, a great baseball story by Ring Lardner which was perfect for him. He never quite got around to it.*]

Oh, my love, I wish you were going thru this with me. With your adventurous and romantic spirit added to mine, I know how much we'd enjoy it together.

Still no mail from you, but I know you're thinking of me. Goodnight dearest.

My children are smiling at me from their photographs on my mantel. What an emotional father, they seem to say.

Love

Ben

Jan. 12th, 1944

Am highly elated at least momentarily. I started doing X-ray work today and tomorrow will have my own department at this hospital. We are replacing British officers but retaining their enlisted men until ours arrive. The officer I replaced was an exceptionally competent X-ray man who is leaving this A.M. and here am I again my own boss. While this hospital will not be our permanent station, I'll enjoy my stay here, I'm confident.

The X-ray equipment is modern and satisfactory but not quite as good as Levine's setup. [*Reference unknown.*] The technicians are very, very fine and the work is interesting, tho relatively light. I anticipate an increase in business when we take over completely.

Plan to go to a nearby city soon, but as no pay has been received, I will probably have to cash a traveller's check. Heard my first radio program tonight: British Broadcasting Co. Symphony; a beautiful Brahms. I drank it all in. Later I spent several hours in chit-chat with British officers; who says they are unfriendly or shy? Nothing of the sort. By the way, at least at first, we will have British patients.

Jan. 13th, 1944

Well, I was on my own today. Read X-rays and saw many interesting cases. The material here is splendid and I am certainly fortunate in getting to work here so soon even though it is temporary. Saw 3 ulcers in each of three G.I. series—much higher than our average in the States.

The news we get here of the Russian front is amazing. The discussions I have had here with the British indicate they share our respect for the Russians but not our fears. Read an English editorial attacking socialization (i.e. Govt. control) of business after the war. Evidently they expect it or at least fear it. "Methinks you protest too much." The arguments were rather miniature: it will permit the govt. to enter the home and invade our wonderful privacy. Also the physicians are complaining of the English panel system and fear further socialization. A good sign! You see, I still have some serious thoughts.

Darling, it might not be a bad idea to send me a salami and cheese, etc. Can't seem to get enough to fill this large stomach of mine. Don't forget each one of you may send a package, if it weighs less than 5#. No mail yet—soon I hope. Get the family to write also, V-mail or air mail, only. [*V-mail, short for Victory Mail, was a process in which an original letter would be*

censored, copied to film, and printed back to paper upon arrival at its overseas destination.]

Jan. 15, '44
[*England*]

Hello my sweet:

There's still so much to write and little time to write it now that I'm working, but I'll keep up my correspondence. Please note that I am writing daily, darling; I certainly hope you are doing the same. I still have not heard from home, but I have become resigned to it and no longer get palpitations each time the mail comes in. But, oh! that first letter will certainly be welcome.

I have learned much more about the British since my last letter by talking with the enlisted men and with a few civilians. I don't know how much I dare say in a letter but I see no relation between this subject and security or morale, so here goes. By the way, please let me know if any or all my letters are censored and whether anything has been cut out or blacked out, because if I have unwittingly broken any rules, I must know of it in order to correct it.

In the first place the British worker and enlisted man are very, very class conscious. There is small pay and much poverty in both the Army and civilian life despite a mild inflation and a tremendous shortage of food and certain commodities. These facts have been intensified a growing dissatisfaction among the underprivileged and a fairly widespread swing to the left. Many people are in fear of state ownership of varying degree and look to such leaders as [*Lord William Henry*] Beveridge and [*Sir Stafford*] Cripps [*British Labor Party politicians*] who have a large following in this group. The upper class, as might be expected, are strongly against it and are still in the driver's seat. However, there is little doubt that, after the war, these present leaders [*such as Winston Churchill*] will be unseated for more liberal ones. [*A correct prediction.*]

(Time out for my morning coffee)

However, it is believed that the English commoner, in general, is too apathetic (as we are, only more so) to do very much about it. The labor unions, which are quite strong, are fighting fiercely.

In general, there is an undercurrent of bitterness which is slowly but inevitably coming into the open. In view of the greater control which the public has over the members of the Parliament than we do over our congressmen, something may come of it.

I went to a nearby village yesterday and arrived there as the factory closed for the day. Myriads of bicycles and a few cars burst forth from the place. Americans are enough of a rarity around here that I was stared at by everyone, and the kids followed along silently behind me, whispering to each other. Needless to say, I was ill at ease and self-conscious until I became absorbed in the town itself, which was quite friendly-looking and attractive. I stepped into a hardware store and was surprised at the amount of unrationed merchandise. Candy, of course, is severely rationed so I generally give my weekly supply away to the British, who seem to crave it more than I, especially the kids. I had a spot of tea and returned to camp.

On my arrival, some of the men were going into a nearby city for dinner. They asked me to join them so I went along. By the time we got started, blackout was already in effect and when we got to the city it was plenty dark. However bus lights, flashlights, and light leaks were surprisingly present and we got around well. The first hotel we came to served the same food we had at the hospital, so Danish [*Abe Danish, later Al Danish, lived in Denver after the war and remained close to the family*], who was with us, went into action. First he called another hotel, made reservations, and got us a cab (quite different here). When we arrived at the hotel (a very nice place) we discovered a dinner dance was in progress. We ate a very nice dinner—roast pigeon (delicious)—and had a scotch and soda. Then Danish went out and got 4 English girls from nowhere—quite cute and friendly. We developed quite an enjoyable party, and danced until about 11 p.m. All the girls were swell dancers. No dear, we didn't pair off. We discovered that regular transportation back to the hospital was impossible, and that the scarce taxis were not running because of the fog. Danish again went into action and got us a private hired car back to camp. All in all, it was a quite enjoyable evening, chiefly because it was our first encounter with English girls. They are little different from ours, I'm sure.

This A.M. we had official ceremonies and took over the hospital. The British and American troops lined up on opposite sides of the entrance. Generals of both Medical Corps walked up, the band played, troops were present, speeches made, and then the hospital was inspected. All in all it apparently was a historic occasion, but I was duly unimpressed, as I am by all ceremonies. Amusingly, some of our troops did a wrong facing, and all

the Americans are walking around with bowed heads. The English were quite snappy.

The pictures of the kids are being developed [this] week. I think we'll get some fine ones. Will send you the negatives when and if they turn out. [*Apparently mom sent him negatives for development in England; I'm not sure why.*]

That's all for now Sweetheart. All my love to you.

Your ever-loving husband.

1-17-44

Hello again Darling:

Interesting things continue to happen to me. I wonder why? I think in the first place, I am sincerely and genuinely interested in the less important things here, and since they are new to me, I get much more of a "kick" out of them than I would at home. Further, my interest stimulates my English friends to impart their knowledge and ideas to me. In addition to all this, I guess I've been pretty lucky.

To begin with, I learned there was a concert in the nearby city on Sunday at 3 p.m., so I decided to go. Transportation facilities were poor but one of the English officers and I finally arrived at 3:30. The only seats left were right up front and cost 7s and 6d (\$1.50). Ordinarily, the seats rise to a minimum of about .40¢. The auditorium belongs to the city and is even larger than the one in Asheville. The main attraction was a two piano team (both males) Ravitz and Landauer. The latter was a distinguished looking semite, the former was obviously a little better pianist. They played *Prince Igor Dances* (Borodin), *Hungarian Rhapsody* (List), a Strauss number, *Invitation to the Dance* (Weber) and several others. And were they good! Much better than the one we heard in Asheville. And I was starved for serious music anyway.

Also on the program was a gorgeous young soprano. Her voice was sweet but not very strong, but she was so easy on the eyes that the audience fell for her in a big way (including myself!). She sang things like *Ave Maria* etc. Then there was also a pretty good violinist. A curious incident occurred when he was all set to play an encore. He suddenly faced the audience and quietly stated, with no embarrassment whatsoever that the bridge on his violin had slipped a little, and rather than play with inferior

quality, he would prefer not to play at all. I was highly amused but the audience didn't seem the least bit perturbed [and] took it quite naturally.

Incidentally British audiences seem quite enthusiastic and are not at all cold. Smoking is permitted in the seats and no one gets up at intermission. There is no formal dress (I don't know what it's like in London, however, or in evening performances).

We filed out at about 5:15 and took tea in a hotel. My English cousin [*apparently just an expression for the officer dad was with*] turned out to be quite a liberal and very intelligent. We got along swell. By the way, Sunday in England is really a day of rest. The movies have been open only since the war and restaurants are almost all closed. So are the pubs.

I left my English friend in town and started back for the hospital in a complete blackout plus terrific fog, either of which was sufficient to confuse a traffic cop. I got lost 3 or 4 times but always managed to ask someone and finally got on the correct bus. Then damned if the bus didn't get lost! Finally the conductor got out and walked ahead of the bus until we got back on the right road. Two hours to get home—ordinarily a ½ hr. trip!

I neglected to mention that one of my English sergeants had invited me to attend the sergeants' farewell social, apparently a singular honor, as only a few British officers, 2 U.S. Naval officers, 2 U.S. Army officers from another outfit, and myself were present. I expected a rather stuffy affair, but decided to go because the sergeant seemed so anxious to have me. And what do you know! It was a wonderful party. My sergeant (a famous English athlete) took care of me by getting me pint after pint of beer (cold and good, but weak and diuretic) and would bring girls over to me, introduce them, then tell them to ask me to dance. I even danced with a "Her Ladyship," quite a friendly and charming volunteer hospital worker. All were in uniforms of one sort or another, and many were good-looking and good dancers. Americans being quite scarce at these affairs, I was very flattered by the attention I received. Apparently the officers enter right into the spirit of things (not like our non-com. officers' parties) for we all stayed to the end (1 A.M.) and to bed I went, dead tired and practically cold sober despite about a gallon of beer.

That's all for now, honey. May I add that you're still the most attractive of all the women I've seen, even here, and I miss you oh, so much. You must understand that I have many hours of idleness, too, but since nothing of interest happens during those times that I feel our separation so keenly. I fight it off and try to read, but drift off into thoughts about you, our home,

our children, our future. I would really get homesick were it not for the short interludes that I write about. Thank God, I'm working again or I don't know what I'd do. As it is I get "moonstruck" too often. I look at your picture and those of the kids too much. And I take walks by myself along the shore and think and hope. Do you think I'm slipping? God, what I'd do for a letter from home!

Goodbye my love.

Ben.

P.S. The ceremonies of which I wrote earlier may be reproduced in Life. Watch carefully for "Americans Take Over British Hospital."

Somewhere in
England
Jan. 18, '44 [*actually Netley; see
"itinerary"*]

Hello family:

Soph, I'm writing this family letter to you and hope that you see to it that all the others get copies of it. Thanks, my dear sister. [*He's been in England for three weeks but is repeating much of this for the whole family.*]

Well, here I am in merry England, doing X-ray work in a British hospital just turned over to the Yanks. You may see a picture of the memorials in Life or on the newsreels, so watch for it. So far, I've been very happy and enjoying myself immensely except for lack of mail from home. I finally got my first V-mail letter yesterday and was immeasurably relieved to learn that all was well and that Ginny knew I was safe. You can't imagine how important mail is here. Please write often!

To begin at the beginning, we left Swannanoa [*North Carolina*] by rail, went to the staging area where I learned that Walt had left about a week before. I assume he, too, is in England and have written him, but no reply as yet. I would certainly love to see him. Well, I saw Dave Graller, Joe Filger, Red Eley, and many others of the Cincinnati Unit. [*The 25th General Hospital; Cincinnati physicians.*] In fact, we came over on the same boat. The boat ride was quite an experience for us all. It was a rather comfortable ride, but 80% of us, including the crew, were seasick on Xmas day. What a miserable feeling. We lay in our bunks all day and consoled each other between vomits. As a matter of fact, we tried to get some of the nurses in to

look at our retchings. Oh, Christ, that's awful. There was no excitement whatsoever, the officers' food was good (not the enlisted mens'), the quarters were OK (not the enlisted mens'), and the recreation was fine (not the enlisted mens'). I paid my fare across with Poker winnings. My first sea voyage was really very pleasant. The winter Atlantic is quite an eerie lake (no pun intended!) [*Lake Erie!*] and was magnificent.

On our arrival in Britain we were greeted very warmly by the Red Cross, British and American Transportation Service and others and soon entrained for our temporary staging area. The trip was very comfortable. British trains are rapid and comfortable despite their deceptive appearance. Much more so than our American trains.

We were put in a muddy camp in barracks cots, outside latrines, etc. and for a time acted like soldiers, but frankly, medics were never meant to be soldiers. Some of the older men didn't take to the rugged life so well. We were restricted for about 1 week, then permitted to scout around the countryside. A nearby town was quite picturesque and very typically English and I visited there several times.

We were very fortunate in having a Special Service outfit nearby and they put on several shows and parties for us, making life a little interesting. Their outfit was full of professional talent and we enjoyed much of it.

The food was poor for a day or two, but quickly rose to our Swannanoa standards and we are now eating wonderfully. Of course, I pay little attention to food ordinarily...

Part of us were sent ahead to our present location to take over this hospital from the British. I was one of this advance party. Unfortunately I believe our stay here will be short. At present I am working with British patients, British enlisted personnel, and American and British officers. The work is not too heavy but extremely interesting and the X-ray equipment is excellent considering what I expected. I am in charge of the Dept. and have a rather free hand since everything all over the place is in a state of flux. The grounds are large and beautiful, the building is old but not unserviceable, we are near a fair sized city with some amusements, and our quarters are not uncomfortable.



Figure 3: Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley

The British, especially enlisted men and civilians, are very friendly and helpful, as are some but not all of the officers. I have made some good friends here, and they have been very kind to me. I attended by invitation the Brit. Sgts. Farewell Social, which was quite an honor, as none of our officers and only a few of the British were invited. I had a helluva good time, too.

I also attended a concert in the city Sunday and the music and playing was beautiful. I've eaten pigeon and rabbit for the first time in my life and found them delicious to say the least. British food, on the whole, is very poor because of the rationing, which is intensely severe.

Well, that's all for now, folks. Please write me often and look after my family.

Love
Ben

Jan. 18, '44

Hello again darling:

Note the new APO number. No we haven't moved yet, just a new number. Was very thrilled to receive your V-mail letter written after receiving my cable. This is all I have received so far. So glad to hear about the kids. I hope Zinninger doesn't even find a hernia. [*Reference is presumably to a Cincinnati MD and it's my hernia, referred to again below*]. Don't worry about a truss; he won't have to wear one. I have been able to get a copy of *Gideon Planish* [*a novel by Sinclair Lewis*] and am reading it now and like it very much. I hope your next letter comes real soon, sweet.

Nothing much new here except for interesting work. Made my first "home run" on an X-ray and everyone, including myself, is duly impressed. By the way, did you mean Selma was moving out? Why? You didn't tell me how things were going along at your mother's or about my article.

We are now on American food, and oh, boy! I've had a full stomach ever since. My British sergeants are leaving soon and my own enlisted men have arrived and are learning the equipment. At present, I seem to have the dept. under my thumb. Still no word from Walter but if I can find a Red Cross office, I will try there. Just wrote a letter to Soph for redistribution to the family. Please recopy some of my letters and send them out. Also send me any mail you think I should have (via airmail). Don't send my X-ray journals, but if my 1943 yearbook comes, send it along. It's already paid for. You will get a bond from the govt. for that month we don't have (July, 1943?).

Please send me photos of the kids from time to time. Photograph them and yourself often. I'd like to see what I'm missing!

Don't forget, darling, to immediately take care of anything and everything I request in my letters and don't forget your ever-loving, travelling husband.

Rec. 2-3-44
[*other sources
indicate this was
written on
1-19-44*]

Darling:

I am enclosing the negatives of the small pictures we took at Biltmore Estate in Asheville. They really are wonderful—I've got a set of them which

we printed here (one of my boys is a photographer in civilian life). I've got pictures of you and Steve and Nancy all over my office and room.

Oh, glory! Guess what? I've now got a regular bed, spring-mattress and all, to sleep on. You may think this is a triviality, my sweet, but you'll understand when you read my explanation: Since leaving the states, I've slept in a very narrow bunk on the boat, a canvas cot at the staging area, and a wooden slab at this hospital. I've tossed, turned, lost the covers, and even fallen out of the bed. In the morning I've risen early just for the sheer comfort of getting out of the god-damned bed. My back ached worse than on my honeymoon. But now- now I sleep the sleep of the just, the young, the clear conscience! It took some string pulling to get the bed, but I'm developing some technic in this respect (which is the topic of my next paragraph).

Do you recall telling me many times that in my own subtle way I was quite proficient in getting what I wanted, and my denial, which was rather vociferous (perhaps too much so). Well, actually I've never believed that I was much of a schemer. I'll admit that I could shine my personality on someone if I'm so inclined, but I did it on rich and poor alike, boss and employee, friend and enemy with little or no thought of natural gain. Well, what I'm getting at is that I'm a mere novice at this sort of thing and very naive to boot. You should see some of the men around here. We have some of the shrewdest, most unscrupulous manipulators I've ever met, among our officers. They play up to the C.O., finagle among themselves, jockey for position, pull rank where necessary, etc. Don't get me wrong; only a few are guilty of this technic, but in those cases it is frequently very effective. Curiously enough, when it has been brought to my attention, I realize that it is going on, but do not discover it myself. However I find, to my chagrin, that I have learned some of the technic myself, viz. if I want something for myself or my department, I make it a point to see the guy who can get it for me, be he Sergeant or Major, and kid him into giving it to me. Example: I knew there were some beds around and a few of the higher-ranking officers had them. So I caught one of the supply officers and talked him into giving me one. Some major will probably sleep on my wooden bed now. Example: I need some X-ray films (British made) to work within the department, but neither our Executive Officer of Supply Officer knew how to get them. I got their O.K. to use my own ingenuity, talked to the British Supply Officer, a few British Sergeants, wrote a letter as they suggested and I'll have the films in a few days. Otherwise the dept. would have to close up. I suppose

playing these angles is the only way to be a good administrator, but it's so foreign to me that I feel a little guilty.

I've been working pretty hard, reading a good bit, and writing some letters. Tomorrow I plan to go to an all Tschaikovski symphony concert in the city. About a dozen of us are going and I'm going to try to get transportation via truck (which is legal).

I have been staying in nights pretty much. The fellow across the hall now has a radio which is fixed for the British current, and I plan a pleasant evening with *Gideon Planish* and BBC.

Things around the hospital here seem somewhat topsy turvy because of the novelty of running this type of hospital and the lack of our own technical equipment and supplies. We hope soon to be functioning more smoothly, once we learn the ropes. At present no one seems to know what the score is except the remaining British sergeants, who really do know the ropes.

That's all for now, dearest. I just learned that I can't send my negatives until censored. Will send them as soon as all. Goodbye my pet. Send me a pkg. of something (under 5#) and kiss the kids for me.

Love

Ben.

Jan. 22nd, 1944

I am still kicking along with my work and managing to gain the respect of the various officers and my enlisted men. Am losing my key British sergeant tomorrow. We work from about 8 am to 4:30 pm with an hour off for lunch. I have a feeling we may be here longer than expected. I certainly hope so but I do wish I could get another letter from you. I've only had one you know.

Last night I went to a nearby pub with a British medical officer (who was a prisoner in Italy for 10 months last year but was repatriated), a Czech medical officer who escaped into France then England, my roommate Joe Shafer (a Polish refugee who escaped via Russia and Japan to the US and who has travelled extensively in Europe), and myself, who is just a stay-at-home. Needless to say I enjoyed my evening immensely. I'll write you more of this later.

Yesterday I put on my athletic equipment, borrowed a red-striped turtle neck sweater and ran about 2 miles with my athletic British sergeant. I had to stop only twice. I looked like Joseph in his multi-colored coat, and felt like the fox, just before the hounds got him. The sergeant ended with a burst of speed and I ended with a burst.

23 Jan '44

Hello Honey:

In my last V-mail letter I promised you more about my visit to the Pub with the English and Czech officer and Joe Shafer. I can't write you about the Englishman's experience in the Italian prison camp except to tell you that it was pretty bad and the chief difficulty was getting enough to eat. Eventually the Red Cross came to their rescue. It took about 6 mo. to get a letter thru (or pkg). The Czech has been here for some time and doesn't like England. He was originally a White Russian and escaped the revolution by going to Czechoslovakia. He now has become a Russophile and a liberal. He hesitantly disagreed with the American attitude towards Finland, Ireland, Franco's Spain, French in No. Africa etc., taking our point of view exactly. When I pointed out that I, too, disagreed he became more at ease and talked more freely, since he had at first been afraid of offending me.

We had quite a pleasant evening drinking beer, eating a second dinner (fried fresh fish) which was very good, and took a shortcut back home, getting very muddy on the way.

We have discovered that many of the Drs. here are Jewish, some being refugees. There is an exceptionally brilliant E.N.T. man, a major, also a Jew, who stated at the table that England directed India's foreign politics but could not control their internal affairs, and that their hands were tied in the famine of Bengal because the local authorities were in charge. I immediately jumped him and said, "Look here. Do you mean to say, Major, that Parliament couldn't prevent etc." He suddenly smiled and one of the fellows explained to me that he had only been pulling my leg. It develops that he is quite a brilliant and outspoken liberal. I plan to have some talks with him.

Friday night we went to the city and heard an all-Tschaikovski Symphony: *Sleeping Beauty* Ballet, the piano concerto (a fellow named Curzon) which was very well played and the *Pathétique*. The whole thing was wonderful. Floer [*presumably a fellow MD*] in his most discriminating and supercilious manner said, "Oh, it was fair." Such tripe! He doesn't know any

more about music than I do. In fact, back at the staging area I insisted a certain no. on the radio was ballet music from Aida while he wanted to bet it was from Faust. I turned out to be right. Not complaining darling, but he makes me slightly nauseated with his mooning over his wife. Hell, we're all in the same boat, and he's had 15 letters from home while I've had only 3, and he has no kids —what the hell's he crying about!

By the way, I owe you an apology about accusing you of not writing V-mail to me. I'll bet that letter hurt. Can you please forgive me, sweetheart?

My British Sgt. has left and though I miss him, I am very well-pleased with my own enlisted men. They're working hard and won't stay out of the dept. They're here day and night and seem very happy. It promises to be pleasant working with them.

Am checking over your 3 letters to answer any questions. Please check mine in the same manner, sweet.

Please don't spank Steve unless you absolutely have to, dear. He's old enough for you to reason with him. Try to hurt his feelings if necessary, but never, never let him think you don't like him. What about his hernia? Don't get hospital insurance. Congratulate Leo and thank Soph for me. Finished *Gideon Planish* and enjoyed it as much as you. We've known a few of this prototype. Do you remember the man who spoke in the cemetery and had the symphony concert in Cincinnati, and the subsequent scandal. Don't worry about Steve's penchant for sleeping with you. He's like me, you know—and I've always loved to sleep with you! I probably will not look up Jo Sharon or Jule Grad because I can't get around to see them anyway, nor did I ever care much for them. [*Jule Grad, Chippy's brother-in-law, became a friend after the War and was mom's companion after dad died.*] I don't have any check stubs with me. They're somewhere with our Asheville belongings. I'm pleased to hear Bernie Segal's doing so well. What rank does he hold now? Is Chippy still a captain? New APO #409. The stuff I sent you was not my final paper, but the notes I took. Put them away for me. Don't worry about Steve or Nancy's clothes. Buy them whatever is necessary to make them as well dressed as Ira. [*Ira Lott was the nephew of Aunt Rosalyn; my age.*] But remember, even in their old clothes, you can't hide their wonderful personalities. I don't recall receiving a check from Leo. Pay Soph our share of the memorial she was talking about. Sorry about you and Selma, but so it goes. Teach the kids about religion if you like, but don't tell them a pack of lies as gospel truth. Remember they'll never forgive a mother who lies to them.

All out of paper, love. Goodbye now-
Ben

26 Jan '44

Darling:

May I comment on the swell way in which you handled the news about Steve. If you hadn't wired the way you did, I might have worried plenty. The way it was I received your wire before I had any word about what Zininger planned to do, and the wire itself is very reassuring, so I haven't worried at all to speak of. Naturally, I want to hear all the details and quick but at least I am not a maniac raving with any helplessness. Fortunately, I have tremendous confidence in Zininger. Otherwise—well you know what Steve means to me. I rather suspected, from my previous exam., that Steve would need surgery, but believed it could safely be put off for the duration. The operation is ordinarily a simple one and practically a sure cure, so don't you worry about it. [*Referring to my hernia operation.*]

Received 3 more letters dated 12/25, 12/29, and 12/30, for which I am duly grateful. This makes a total of 6 letters, but I know there are many more on the way. I will answer any questions which I haven't previously answered now.

By all means send the Gillespies bakery goods if they assure they will arrive here in good condition. Anytime you want to send anything, you don't need my permission, but pack it yourself. However, for general purposes I will write down a list here so that if you want to send me anything you can show the store that I requested it. I don't think this is necessary though:

Candy Books Chewing gum Cookies Shaving equipment
Salami Whiskey Cigarettes Automobile, bicycle.

Now are you satisfied?

Your possible 3rd bundle of love amused me greatly because of the sequence in which I received your letters. The first one came last! I would have been quite worried if it had been in correct order. Now, sweetie, I have you! If you should get pregnant now, wow! And I'm keeping this letter in a special fireproof box—

So Leo was in Cincy! I was completely surprised to learn this, since his letter of 1 week before didn't say a word about this. I'm pleased about the children's progress and still maintain that you shouldn't let Nancy be

aware of any comparisons with Steve. Oh, what I could do to that little but-terball if I could hold her now! You, too, my love.

Your judgment and sanity in writing me about key words is to be questioned closely. Are you trying to get me sent home via the court martial route? Forget all about it. I told you to before. [*I recall dad mentioning after the war that mom suggested lots of schemes whereby he could convey secret information through code words, but that he resisted. I think that is what he is referring to here.*]

Keep writing about the kids, darling. It means a lot, an awful lot. And continue to write cheerful letters—that helps, too. You may splurge a little for yourself and the kids. Buy another *P.M.* for yourself—my goodness, we can afford a few things, can't we? [*"P.M." was a liberal-leaning daily newspaper published in New York City from June 1940 to June 1948 and financed by the Chicago department store owner Marshall Field III.*] Did you get my pictures from Asheville? If not, write the lady. I think you can find her name among my belongings from Asheville. Am enclosing a letter from Sid K. [*Kahn, a boyhood friend*] and card from Carol [*possibly Carol Mann, a friend from Indianapolis*]. I guess you better skip the Univ. School from what you say, but please spend time with Steve as you used to, dear. Also with Nancy. By the way, I've forgotten Nancy's birthday, darling. Buy her something nice from her daddy. It's Jan. 21, isn't it?

Well, let's see, what have I been doing. Very little, I'm afraid. Some reading, lots of work, no going out. We don't know whether we're going to be here for a while or leave. Rumors are numerous. My dept. is in fine shape and I've received much favorable comment on my work and my dept. I've finally been officially appointed as Chief of X-ray, but I'm still a Capt. and likely to remain one for some time to come. No complaints, however. The X-ray work is very interesting and we're quite busy. My men are obviously cooperating in every respect. I've seen a little more of England and hope someday soon to get to London. If I find we will be here for a while, I plan to buy a bike for about \$30. I can sell it again later for nearly that amount as there is a big demand for them. Our Px has been closed again. [*Reference is to "Post Exchange," a store on an army base.*] Better send me some "Kools" as much as you can get in 5#. [*Symbol for pounds; presumably the weight limit.*] Remember to sign your family or friends names to the pkg. if you send more than 1 a month. [*At first I found it hard to believe that dad switched from mild Kools to unfiltered Chesterfields as he got older, but it turns out that the former, the first menthol cigarette, were unfiltered until the 1960s.*]

We have no typewriters here, so I have to write my reports [*and?*] official correspondence in longhand. Am still in fine spirits, though I do have my “blues” occasionally. I suppose they will get worse as time goes on.

Telser [*a fellow doc from Cincinnati*] told Danish that he thinks I don't like him and have been cutting “him.” I feel rather sorry for him as he has been quite depressed and almost everyone dislikes him. I will see what I can do to bring him out of the “dumps” and promised Danish I would be- have better. Incidentally, Danish and I have become close friends. He's re- ally a fine fellow and we get along swell. I believe he loves his wife after all, but am not sure. He holds you very high in his regard—I wonder why?— and thinks that you lead me around (but very subtly) by the nose. Is it true, darling? Why don't you tell me these things!

Joe Shafer, my room-mate, has turned out to be a fine fellow and we jibe very well. We kid around a lot and enjoy life very much. I've seen Hulse, Bloom, and the Chaplain very little, because I'm too busy during the day and stay in my room most of the evenings.

I've had a tussle with Major Joiner, Chief of Lab. who proves to be quite a fraud, literally. He knows absolutely nothing about medicine or lab work, and administers his dept. by creating fear in his employees. He's thoroughly detested by all. He tried to bluff his way thru a study of a re- moved kidney, and I wouldn't let him. He tried to act like an authority but forgot he was dealing with doctors who were interested in fact and theory, not fiction. I, at first, tried to point out where he was wrong, but he seemed to think I could only know about X-ray films. When he discovered that I had had a year of Path, it was too late for him to retract so he started to bluff, and his ignorance was abysmal. I was rather heartless because he had been so sarcastic. Witnesses later told me that they were amazed by his lack of knowledge, and that they enjoyed it greatly. But I am a little ashamed because I was so intolerant. I think it was because Danish has told me how he browbeats the enlisted men and 2nd Lts. under him.

Well, that's all now, darling. I love you as much as ever—rather more in fact (from some of your previous expressed sentiments, you should be very pleased).

I miss you all much too much.

Goodnight my prides and joys.

Ben.

[According to Aunt Sophie, this is an undated V-Mail typed after the 1/26/44 letter]

Am getting your letters fairly regularly now, and darling, they're quite bolstering. I'm still in good spirits with occasional attacks of mild depression brought on by my talking with some of my more moody colleagues. We are getting paid today and I plan to buy a bike at the earliest opportunity and see the countryside. So far, no word from Walt, but I have the Red Cross working on it. Please send me his new APO number and if Ros will tell you, send me the distance between his camp and London. *[Another crude attempt to defeat censorship; as noted above, Walter never got to England.]* And honey, please be careful what you say in letters to me. You can say almost anything but when you discovered the correct name of the boat and the day I left it would have sufficed to merely have stated that you knew and not mention the actual names. Such information is vital to the enemy. *[According to Aunt Sophie's typewritten note, "Ginny says it was the La Normandie and Ben sailed on Xmas Eve." This is rather odd for two reasons. First, dad identified his troopship as the Queen Mary in Humor in Medicine and always told me it was the Queen Mary. Second, the French-owned Normandie, rival to and even faster than the Queen Mary, was seized by US auth's camps orities after Germany defeated France, was re-named the USS Lafayette, caught fire while being converted to a troopship, and sank into the Hudson River in 1942, before dad sailed.]*

I've had a very pleasant few days with an English-Irish officer who tells wonderful stories and jokes in dialect. I won't waste space telling you them and most of them can't be written, but a good time was had by all, including the raconteur.

A Capt. Cherner, radiologist in a nearby outfit is coming over to watch me read films. Many others watch me work so I'm getting accustomed to a crowd around me. And you know how I can impress people. Tsk, tsk.

Every time I see an English kid, I stop and look at him, talk to his parents, and make mental comparisons with my own.

[Undated but must be late Jan.]

1944 because of
the hernia opera-
tion]

Dear Steve:

How is Daddy's wonderful boy getting along? I got your letter telling me about your operation for hernia by Dr. Zininger. I hope it didn't hurt very much. I am in the hospital now, too, but I don't have a hernia. Wouldn't it have been nice to be in the hospital together? Do you still sing, *My Daddy's Gone Over the Ocean* and kiss my picture? I kiss Stevie's picture and sing *Neath the Crust of the Old Apple Pie*. Do you remember how we sang it together on our walks in North Carolina? [*The former is dad's rewrite of the Scottish folk song, My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean. See later letter for a comment on the second song.*] Daddy's got a 2-wheel bicycle and is going to ride it soon. Maybe when I come home, I'll bring it to Stevie.

I hope you're taking care of Mommy and Nancy, because you're a big boy now. Do you play with Nancy a lot? She's a sweet little girl and I love her, too. Someday soon maybe Daddy, Mommy, Stevie and Nancy will all be together again. My, won't we have fun! We'll take walks, have singing bees, read stories, play the Victrola, go on picnics. Here's a big hug for Stevie from his Daddy. Be a good boy, my fine little fellow—your Daddy thinks you're the best boy he ever knew. [*The term "Victrola" refers to horn phonographs made by the Victor Talking Machine Company, beginning in 1906.*]

Goodbye Stevie
Daddy

29 Jan 44 [*Eng-
land*]

Dearest Ginny:

How are you, my love. I received your letter describing what Zininger found when he examined Steve, but as yet I've heard nothing about what he found at Surgery or how Steve did post-operatively. I certainly hope everything is going well.

I have been having more contacts with the English including a bridge game with Telser and 2 English officers last night. We had quite an enjoyable game, after which Telser left while I talked to the officers. One ace

Irish-British [*phrase is apparently a typo – original not available*] turned out to be quite a raconteur, telling the funniest stories extremely well, dialect and all. You should hear him talk like a Nazi or a southerner, or an Irishman or Scotsman. And all the stories were excruciatingly funny. I certainly enjoyed it very much. I told the joke about “wobbling a bit” [*involving music-hall urination by the upper classes in the balcony on the lower classes below*] and they almost died. I also went to a British movie a few nights ago and saw Sonja Henie in an American picture and a British comedy. Several things differ from what we do in America. Smoking is permitted and ash-trays are provided. The best seats (most expensive) are in the balcony, which is much closer to the stage than our balcony. The charge is 38¢. There are better seats, I believe (the loggia), which are about 50¢. The English comedies which appeal to the masses are very slapstick and not at all humorous to me. But the higher and less crude type of British humor is exceedingly funny to me, though not too much like ours. Sorry I can't tell you these stories in a letter, most are too dirty and those that aren't I've forgotten already. [*World War II censors were known to refuse to deliver salacious letters, but officers were mostly self-censored.*]

I'm getting a little exercise with the enlisted men—playing touch football. We go out about 4:15 PM about every day. If anyone questions me about this, I always have the excuse that X-ray personnel must get more outdoor exercise than other personnel and that this is departmental organized outdoor recreation.

My love life is essentially nil except for an occasional conversation with a British maid on the bus etc. No more parties or dances. Ah, me! Ran across a nice civilian gent who wants me to go out to his house over here and I plan to do it this weekend.

I'm still being highly complimented by the officers about how well everything is running and about my ability in X-ray. They didn't tell me directly but it gets back to me. Even Telser told a friend of mine that I was an outstanding X-ray man, though somewhat dogmatic. I guess I'll have to like him more! A few of the men who for one reason or another have taken a dislike to me on our journey have now come around very nicely because, I'm quite sure, they respect my work. It's different from my previous posts where I had to make friends via the football or baseball field, isn't it? The morale here is much better than it was because there is some work for everybody and living quarters are not so bad. It would have been better if they informed me whether or not we were to stay here.

Oh, I must tell you about Belvoir's taxicab of Anglo-American relatives. Mr. Belvoir, quite a character (Cockney) makes late rounds of the hotels in the city and takes us home at about midnight in his old Studebaker. Since his is the only available transportation, we depend on him entirely and he has never let us down. He piles 10-12 passengers male and female in his car and takes the local citizens home first, then takes us home. It costs about \$3.00 which we share between 4 or 5 people. We've met many interesting people in his cab and he generally starts the conversation and sees that everyone meets everyone else. I've been surrounded and yes, even sat upon, by amateur and professional prostitutes, night club entertainers, clubwomen, uppercrust dames, and various and sundry males and it has been very entertaining. On the last lap (no pun), he tells us all about each of the departed passengers, e.g. Sonia the hatcheck girl who alternates nights with her boyfriend in a hotel room and a boyfriend at home, the American gal from Oklahoma who affects a British accent, Jo Wilson, the beautiful nightclub Master of Ceremonies and her girlfriend who will go to bed with anyone and everyone, the British naval Lt. who goes nightclubbing 7 nights a week etc. It's a form of life I've never seen before and extremely colorful, as many of the people are quite cultured. We sometimes sing songs, tell jokes, get their reactions to the Americans and vice versa, etc.

Well, that's all for now, dear. I must go and eat. All my love to my sweet wife and wonderful children.

Your husband and their father

Ben

[Feb. 1, 1944]

Another small spell of homesickness caught me yesterday but I shook it off by talking to an English psychiatrist, listening to the radio, reading *P.M.*, and looking at depression row (a group of our medical officers who are much more homesick than I).

The Irish-English psychiatrist, Maj. Pilkington, is a quiet, friendly, intelligent and honest man who looks strikingly like Leslie Howard. He spent several years in the States and we had a thoroughly enjoyable conversation on everything from the purchase of bicycles to the placidity of the lowly Englishman on the streets (which is disappearing, as I pointed out before).

Before I forget, here is a cute limerick:

There once was a dentist named Stone
Who got a young lady alone
In a fit of depravity, he filled the wrong cavity,
My God, how his practice has grown!

[Dad writes this same limerick to the entire family in an upcoming letter. I heard him recite it innumerable times.]

The British radio is quite different from ours. In the first place, there are only 2 simultaneous programs, one for the services and one for the home front, on different wave lengths. There are, of course, no advertisements. The news programs are read without flourishes or excitement and with many long pauses. Classical music is played at frequent intervals, mostly on records, altho the BBC Symphony and other good orchestras do play. We hear some Nazi broadcasts in English, German and French on our radio and they are filled with distortions, lies and intermingled (rare) truths. They are quite immature and obvious and have no apparent appeal to any of the English and no possible effect whatsoever here.

P.M. and Life are arriving, though somewhat late, rather regularly. World events seem to be going in the right direction for us and the news is good. So the President is proud of his New Deal achievements and is not disowning his previous domestic policy. That is good. Maybe I'll vote for him again. I should be very much surprised if he doesn't run again. [Dad's first presidential election would've been in 1936. I read this paragraph to mean that he voted for Norman Thomas, the Socialist Party candidate, in 1936, but switched to FDR in 1940. He mentioned to me a number of times that he and mom had voted for Norman Thomas.]

I like the attack and exposé on the medical committee which is fighting the new Wagner medical bill. I can't see how the bill will pass, but I certainly hope it does. I'm almost alone among the medical men here (or anywhere, I guess) in my opinion,... *[Sen. Wagner, Democrat from New York, proposed to use Social Security to cover medical and hospital services. Labor supported the idea, the doctors opposed it, and the doctors won.]*

[SOMETHING IS MISSING HERE; NOT CLEAR WHETHER THE FOLLOWING IS PART OF THE SAME LETTER.]

We had a bull session yesterday which was quite interesting. The subject inevitably flitted into the field of sex. It seems like the weather, that everyone talks about it but no one does anything about it, – at least not I. I showed them a picture of my ideal intellectual type of girl in *P.M.* My God,

was she sexy! So this is how the male away from home acts. – No dammit, I'm not ashamed!

By the way darling do you remember *Address Unknown*? Is that what you are trying to do to me with your writing concerning dates, my ship, etc.? Please, dear, please! [*This was the title of a 1938 novel by Katherine Kressmann Taylor, as well as a 1944 film in which letters to a man in Nazi Germany are used as weapons because they are written as though they have a hidden encoded meaning: "My God, Max, do you know what you do? ... These letters you have sent ... are not delivered, but they bring me in and ... demand I give them the code ... I beg you, Max, no more, no more! Stop while I can be saved." I'm guessing that dad may have exaggerated somewhat the danger mom was creating for him.*]

I went to a nearby forest this past Sunday, quite a large place, and enjoyed the beautiful and picturesque woods and countryside. I had dinner and cocktails in a very delightful country hotel and talked to some members of the upper crust living there. I was all by my lonesome, but not at all bored. Amazing, isn't it!

I may go up to London with Joe Shafer this weekend. He has relatives there; in fact, his wife lived there for a time. However, I may not get permission. If not, I will go up with Danish at a later date. He is at present a patient in the hospital with a sore throat. I seem to run around more with these two than with any others. I see something of Bloom, Hulse and the Chaplain but not as much as I used to. I still like them very much. The Chaplain invited me to go with them to a lecture in the nearby village on the subject of a ruined Abbey near here. This doesn't sound so interesting, so I may not go.

Just got a V-mail you wrote Jan. 15th. The three letters, V, air and free mail arriving together only meant that they all went back on the same boat. Much more important is the fact that you received my airmail in slightly over 1 week's time which is about one half the time it takes for V-mail. That is our experience here. The airmails get here first, next the V-mail, and free mail runs a poor 3rd. So, please write airmail. As to my cable, it was a "canned" cable which was first authorized about Jan. 3rd and which I sent immediately after we got permission to cable. Nothing in it was of significance or true, but it simply was the way the Army must cable in order not to disclose any military information. [*Reference to "free mail" unclear unless it simply refers to regular mail, as it seems to in a later letter.*]

Your remark about my having been cloistered from racial prejudice is inexact and shows that you misunderstood my meaning. Just as you are perturbed when you read of anti-Negro riots in Detroit, so am I perturbed when I see an incident of anti-Negro sentiment. Both of us realize how widespread it is, but nonetheless are affected by any new evidence of it.

You and Jake don't make sense when you speak of how Hitler helps the Jews by driving them out so that there they are spared the bombing. Even in this little semi-joke of yours there is a large amount of fallacy; in the first place neither you, Jake nor I consider the Jew first. I think in our minds it is the average man first, the average American second, and the average Jew a poor third. We have never agreed with that "is it good for the Jews" policy.

And when you talk of Hess influencing England to join Russia, you do not reckon with the average Englishman (about whom I am by now a self-appointed authority). He would have never hold still for any "truck" with Germany at any price! *[Rudolf Hess (1894 – 1987) was Deputy Führer to Adolf Hitler from 1933 until 1941, when he flew solo to Scotland in an apparent attempt to negotiate peace with the United Kingdom. He was taken prisoner and was later convicted of war crimes and sentenced to life imprisonment.]*

Well, that's all for now. Keep reminding the children of their daddy and keep my pictures about. And send me, please some pictures of the kids.

Much love, Ben

Chaplain's Office Good Conduct Citation

Be it known by these presents that one BEN FELSON, a good soldier tried and true, is awarded this pseudo-medal for good conduct as purely thru oversight on the part of certain responsible individuals the aforementioned BEN FELSON has not been presented his justly deserved good conduct ribbon. Presentation of this certificate gives bearer priority in having his T.S. card punched. *[reference is to "Tough Shit" – there were lots of versions, but one I've seen "entitles the bearer to one good cry on the Chaplain's shoulder for each of the named complaints," including "my feet hurt," "the food is lousy," "I wanta go home," etc.]*

Dated and awarded this 7th day of Feb. year 1944.

Feb. 9, 1944

How are you, and how are my son and daughter doing? I'd like to hear the answers first hand, but since that seems impossible, I'll just have to accept the substitute of letters. I have been receiving them in profuse numbers. Since the new APO number has been received by you, the air-mail letters got here in about 10 days, V-mail in 2 weeks and regular mail about 3 weeks.

Well, dear, we are on the move again. So far we don't know where or when our next professional work will occur but we are given to understand that a hospital is a-building for us. We are to be temporarily stationed in another nicely located town and will be billeted in private homes there until, I guess, our hospital is ready. The advance party, which is already located at our temporary quarters, tells us that it is swell. So I am much happier than I was 2 days ago.

We have done very little since my last letter yet the time seems to pass rapidly. I've been reading *P.M.* and other odds and ends, playing a little bridge, billiards and chewing the fat. I go into town on occasion but have not been doing any female chasing.

My work has continued to bring in the interest and the material has been fascinating. My usual enthusiasm is going strong. A number of good cases, including several "home runs" have occurred lately and I am still sitting pretty with the officers. I discover that you are right about needing a letter to show to the postal authorities if I want you to send me anything.

However, I do quite well with what I have—I really don't need anything, but desire to be a good host to my friends (so I can eat their food, when it comes, with a clear conscience). That is why I requested the packages. Would you please try to get me a good cigarette lighter? Don't pay too much for it, however, as the need is not too acute.

My medical library has come in very handy. I refer to my books frequently and they have already settled several scientific arguments with my confreres.

I had another letter from Sid Kahn and he states he is exceedingly happy and raves about his new wife with an unprecedented degree of enthusiasm.

Despite my recent letter on prejudice [*apparently lost*], I remain happy and at peace. Thank God I am an extrovert. Otherwise I'd be sunk.

I am able to keep up with current events by reading the British papers. They certainly are better than our newspapers in both the coverage of the news, columnists, and viewpoints. Like ours they, too, are conservative but to a much lesser degree. And they don't pull any of this Chicago Tribune stuff. Sensationalism is avoided but the human side of the news is played up.

Well, that's all for now, sweetheart. Take care of yourself and the kids. All my love (unqualified), Your male animal.

10 Feb. 1944

Good morning, darling:

What's new? The Russians seem to be going to town as per usual, but I (and the English) still don't expect the War to be over any Tuesday. I can't reason it out on paper but my logic and judgment seems to say another year. I wonder when the second front will start. You probably hear more comment on this than I. But I'll bet the Germans really have a lot in reserve waiting for it. [*This refers to the Allied invasion, still four months away; the Russians had been engaging the German army on the Eastern front since 1941.*]

It seems to be that in Italy we have not been very successful in advancing with any degree of success. Despite all that's said about the terrain, mud, etc., I'm sure that the Russians have advanced much faster against stronger positions under much worse conditions. Probably the reason for this is the longer front permitting the element of surprise, the greater war experience of the Russians, and the willingness of the Russian to die for his country. I think this last factor should not be overrated.

The Nazis have had a long time to prepare for a continental invasion, and we have no reason to believe that they are not resourceful. It would be very dangerous to under-estimate the enemy, yet I think the average individual is doing just that.

As to a crack-up of the home front, I am of the opinion that Goebbels has imbued the Germans with a fear of the massacres to take place if they are defeated. This was not helped much when the Russians punished the guilty parties by death recently (for the mass murders in Sevastopol [*Crimea, Black Sea, occupied by the Germans in September 1941*], I believe). I think it's a tactical mistake to do this because it feeds Goebbels material evidence what the future holds in store for the German people if

they lose. To me, this will make the home front a helluva lot stronger in their effort.

Well, enough of this. Last night a newspaper correspondent stayed in my room, where there was an empty bed since Shafer moved on to the new place. This correspondent, a fellow named Holt, from a Boston newspaper, is strictly small potatoes. He is a run of the mine reporter, an older man, who is here because there are a lot of New Englanders among our enlisted men. People like to hear about their kids and it's good for circulation, so they send this older man over to do this chore. I started out by disliking him when he said *P.M.* (which he saw on my table) was a "crappy newspaper" and wound up ready to throw him out when he expressed his opinion on the negro problem. However, I didn't pull too many punches and am sure he didn't enjoy it too much. I know it's wrong to treat a guest so, but whatinhell kind of guest is it that criticizes his newspaper the minute he enters the room! He has had some experience talking to the English and Americans in England and I listened at great length and with much interest to this, but got little that was new. He doesn't have any inside information, either. They don't tell the small fry what's going on and he's no great shakes! I did get a little inside info about the American aircorps and ground force soldiers. It seems that everyone wants to go home! So do I, I guess, even though I don't say so to reporters.

Hand an interesting poker game last night, playing with a lot of rank: a Naval Capt. (= Col.), a Lt. Col., a Naval Lt. Commander (= major) and 3 Cpts. Won about £1 and 10s (\$6), though at 1 time I was ahead £5 (\$20). We play with English money and I can't get away from the idea that changing a £ is not like changing a dollar bill, but \$4. It's amazing how quickly we come to think entirely in terms of English money, though. By the way, this is the first poker game we have had since the staging area.

Well that's all for now, sweetie. I hope the kids are well.

Much love

Ben.

10 Feb '44

Hello family: The mail's coming in fine—letters from Leo 12/18 and 1/1, Chippy and Helen 12/20, 1/5 and 1/24, Soph 12/22, 1/5, Walt 12/20, Louise 1/8, and Edie undated and 1/27. Keep up the good work; it means a lot. I hope you are all getting to see my letters to Ginny. If you

don't let me know, and I will cancel my allotment to her. I really have her where I want her! I would prefer air mail to V-mail because it gets here quicker and you can say more in it. I am still intrigued with the fun of seeing a different type of people and different customs, and am so far not too homesick. However, sometimes I have to boost my morale to keep from getting down in the dumps. This has happened very recently when I learned that we must leave our present location soon for another hospital somewhere in England. The situation here was ideal from my standpoint and I hate to change it for something unknown. Too bad Walt and I didn't get together. I felt sure he was "somewhere in England" and was bitterly disappointed to learn this was not so.

Leo—good luck in O.C.S.—I'd sure like to address you soon as Lt. L. Felson.

Edie—was very pleased to learn about your nursing career. Good luck to you, too, kid.

Helen—will write Jule today and try to get together with him. I hope it can be soon. Ros—please forward some news about Walt. Soph—thank you for the things you knitted for the kids; damn sweet of you! Please type this letter into the usual copies and also let Ginny see it (she's so darned curious). Leo and Rosalyn—please write. Tell me all about your baby-please. (I asked for it). Helen and Chip—How about the majority? [*Becoming a Major*] May it come soon. I'll prob. get one eventually but no promotions in our outfit since I got here. Louise and David—Telser is over here with me. He misses Henrietta very much and moons around a lot. I'm a little disappointed in his professional ability, but like him well enough personally. What was your opinion of him?

Well, loads of luck to you all—and don't worry about brother Ben. He's always come up with a pot of gold. Here's a limerick for you: There once was a dentist named Stone who cornered a blonde all alone. In a fit of depravity, he filled the wrong cavity. My god how his practice has grown.

Love to all,

Ben

11 Feb. 44

Dearest,

Haven't been doing much lately except work during the day and read or play bridge or go to a movie at night. I took a few walks, talk to English and Americans freely, listen to a few radio programs etc. Doesn't sound like much but time seems to pass rapidly.

Had a few X-ray meetings with the Medical Service for which I have been complimented highly by the men. I conducted them much as I had at Harrison, doing most of the talking and teaching but calling on various men in the audience. If they couldn't answer promptly I interrupted prompting them to prevent their embarrassment. Telser annoyed me a bit by talking in the audience and not stopping when requested by one of the officers. Finally I had to ask him to shut up. It was quite annoying.

Our hospital and its taking over was just written up in the London Daily Telegraph but didn't mention its location or our name altho some of the men were mentioned. I will try to get a copy to send you.

Well, love, I miss you more than ever. I get quite lonesome at times, even if I'm in a crowd. Gosh, I do have my ups and downs, don't I.

With much love and kisses for the kids.

Ben.

13-Feb. '44

Dearest Ginny:

Our time here, to my regret, is growing short. Our replacements, at least in part, are arriving every day—and some of us are already billeted in private homes in another town. I will probably be one of the last to leave since I am the only X-ray man. It's too bad we missed this place in the springtime and summer. Even now it is very lovely and beautiful. Well, here's a toast to our new post—may it a place of beauty boast, and may we not in summer roast nor yet be host to an English ghost.

Well, it rhymes, anyway.

All is not a bed of roses here. As always there is a fly in the ointment, negro in the woodpile, and salt on the dessert. Yes, your husband has a couple of enemies, who wouldst fix him goodst if they couldst.

Enemy no. 1 is the Chief of laboratory, of whom I may have written before. I believe I have. Anyway he is a medical fraud and generally disliked by all. He carries so many grudges he is round-shouldered from the

burden. He is Danish's boss and makes life miserable for the latter. His corpsmen have complained officially about him, than which there is no sin more cardinal. He professes to be a pathologist but I have factual knowledge that he has had no training in this line which would qualify. In one of our scientific spats he said the kidney was tuberculous and I disagreed. He then asked me how I, an X-ray man, could know more about it than he, a pathologist. When I reminded him that I had had a year in Pathology, he jeered at me. So I quietly said (and with malice), "well, that's a year more than you had." The above occurred in his office. At mess on the following day, as I sat down opposite him, he remarked to the others, "Here comes the Pathologist." I rejoined, "Oh no, Joiner, you've got me wrong. I didn't say I was a Pathologist. I just said you weren't." Everyone choked on his food (including Joiner) and he has left me strictly alone since, especially when I turned out to be correct about the kidney.

Did you know your husband could speak out in such a vitriolic fashion? Neither did I. I'm not ashamed of it either. In fact I'm proud to be high up on his list (maybe even at the top—who knows!).

My other enemy is less quick-witted and subtle than Joiner but much more harmful because of his position. He is Medical Supply Officer, a Capt. Moore. Because of his position, he holds a club over my head, and I'm beginning to get large hiccups and I'm sure I shall be slap-happy from my frequent encounters, before the war is over. My worthy opponent in this battle for supplies is also generally disliked and his enlisted men also have registered an official complaint about him. Furthermore, my two enemies are likewise enemies of each other! So they will probably not join forces against me.

I am not entirely blameless in this second feud. I could get along with this fellow if I soft-soaped him and acted as if he were great and I was small, but I can't force myself to do it. Furthermore I made an early tactical mistake. I tried to get supplies via British sources (without informing him) when he told me he would be unable to get me any. Of course, I had the permission of our executive officer beforehand. I didn't say anything to Moore because I was certain he wouldn't permit it and I thought that the result would justify the means. However, he found out and queered the deal, so that I'm now not only out of some films, but have him against me to boot. Since his men don't like him and do like me, they spontaneously come to me and warn me about things that he is cooking against me. He asked one of them to spy on me and this man immediately came to me and told me and offered to keep his eye on his boss, an offer which I turned down. Tsk,

tsk—espionage and counter-espionage! He has cut down on my supplies even though he has some of the stock on the shelf. This really doesn't affect me directly, but prevents the patients from getting proper X-ray service and they suffer for it. Because the Pts. suffer for it, I can't afford to hold still, as I can't have a non-medical man judge these matters. We are, for example, using much less film than our predecessors, yet we can't get even the amount we need. This last problem is only of recent origin and I am seeing the medical inspector to-day. I am willing to cry "enough" and bury the hatchet, but I'm afraid it's too late and any hatchet-burying he does will be in my head.

In reply to some of your letters:

Please no more crosses at end of letters—might be misinterpreted as a signal by the censors. Skip me on the applications to the Medical Who's Who. Sounds like a racket to me, though I can't smell out the angle. I'm no material for "Who's Who" and neither is Sander Cohen. The little baby you talked about prob. has epilepsy from a birth injury.

As to the English ladies, sweetie, I have met several socially and found them nice, kind, and friendly. But never you fear, dear, I have so far remained true and sown no wild oats for fear of reaping tame acorns. Thanks for your carte blanche, you sweet thing, though.

I heartily OK the nursery school idea for Stevie at the Center.

Sorry about the hospital insurance idea, but remember dear, \$21 a year for 8 yrs is \$168 and also that pregnancy is not payable under most insurances. Thus we would be about \$50 or \$75 in the hole plus additional expenses since you would have had the best rooms etc. which would not be completely covered by the hospital insurance.

As per your request, send me cookies (only non-breakable ones), salami, cheese, and candy.

The \$3.29 check was probably for laundry, clothes, or something like that.

To hell with Segar—tell him what he can do with the \$2. [*Reference unclear.*] Have not received Walt's V-letters, but expect these soon. Will look up Jule Grad when I get the chance.

Don't worry about economy too much, dear. Get what you need and we'll manage.

That's all for now, my love.

As always

Your husband, faithful as the day is long (England lying far North, the days are rather short).

16 Feb. '44

Dearest one and only:

How are you getting along, my pet? And what about my heir and heiress? Do you realize we've only been apart 2 months? It seems like a decade, doesn't it? Your letters are arriving in good time and often and I look forward to the mail each day. I have only 1 or 2 minor complaints about your letters. In the first place they are too short. V-mail will be out henceforward. There's not enough on them and you write them as though they were a telegram, i.e. curt, choppy, and incomplete. They're so cold! In the second place I can't get enough information about the kids. Remember, darling, I am missing these tots tremendously and will never be able to recapture these lost moments. I am very hungry for detailed news of their doings and sometimes, after reading a letter in which only one or two remarks about them are included, I am left high, dry, and frustrated.

Another thing I miss is what's going on in that beautiful head of yours. Please dish it out, honey; I'd like it.

In other words, my sweet, please take a little more time on this most important of all duties. What you write is fine but not enough. Show the literary skill which I know you possess—I was pleasantly surprised once before, you may recall, when I read one of your college themes. And that article you wrote for the college paper was beautifully done.

I hope you don't take any offense at the above, Ginny dear but it's mostly constructive criticism and only slightly complaint.

Please tell me what you'd like me to write about in my letters and I'll try to oblige. I promise not to get angry at anything you say about them.

My successor has arrived here and seems to be a well-trained man. He knows Hy Senturia [*later practiced medicine in St. Louis*] slightly and a few of my other friends. I can't say I like him too much, because he's too much of a big shot, at least that's what his attitude indicates. However, he's in great shakes as an X-ray man, I find.

I saw *North Star* recently and it was one of the best movies I've seen in years. It was really wonderful, sad, with some humor, and a very sympa-

thetic understanding performance. If you haven't seen it, don't miss it! [1943, with Dana Andrews and Anne Baxter; original story and screenplay by Lillian Hellman; *A Ukrainian village must suddenly contend with the Nazi invasion of June 1941*].

I have been playing a little bridge and poker lately and am still lucky—not much winnings but at least I'm not losing, and I have fun.

I haven't been doing as much medical reading as I should but I just don't seem to have the time or the drive. By the time I read *Free World* and *P.M.* and a novel or two, I just don't seem to be able to get around to the medicine. I guess I need your steadying and inspiring influence, honey. What do you think. [*Free World* was a magazine published from 1941-46; associated with the "Anti-Stalinist Left."]]

I have done very little sightseeing because I have never had the inclination. Historical places are numerous, but I am neither well-versed in English history nor desirous of becoming so. Strange that my curiosity has not been aroused in this respect. I made one jaunt to a very nearby historical spot (I wrote you about this and at first was going to send you a brochure on the place, but I was afraid of violating censorship. You remember, the letter about the clever old man who guided us thru) but I wouldn't go any distance to see churches, tombs, etc. on a bet.

Well, it's time for lunch, and you know how much I love my food. The food, incidentally, has been of very excellent quality and I look forward to each meal with gustatory ecstasy.

Don't let the children forget their daddy. Teach Steve the alphabet and help him write me a letter. What has Nancy learned? Does she walk yet? Does she like Steve? Does he still treat her too roughly? Have you taken any photos? Is Steve still a lone wolf? Does he play with Shelley? How are they adjusted to life with Grandma? Give me a summary of one of their days. Do you ever take them to restaurants? What do others think of them?

Love

Ben

P.S. I'm very pleased the way you have handled the finances. Keep it up. You have just been appointed my financial secretary.

Ben

Fri 18 Feb '44

My dear Mrs. Felson:

I am writing this letter from a recumbent position in a hospital bed. Yes, the old man is sick, oh so sick, almost delirious—from happiness at the beauty of the nurses who flock to my bedside.

I had a sore throat 2 weeks ago but it disappeared in a few days. Yesterday it recurred and Bloom told me this A.M. that I had follicular tonsillitis and put me into the hospital. I feel rather guilty as I have little or no fever, and no symptoms aside from some pain on swallowing. But since it is silly for me to lay around in my room, and since the enlisted men can bring up the films for me to read, and since I like to be waited on anyway, I let myself be talked into it.

In reply to your previous 3 letters:

On what basis did Morry Mattlin get out of the Army? [*Mom's first cousin on the Berman side*] I'm very pleased you and Selma feel close together again. That is as it should be. I have always been very fond of Sel and believe she is one of the nicest people it's been my pleasure to know. As I've told you before, it's too bad she and Chippy never got together. She is the only gal I've ever known who might have been the ideal wife for him. And they would have got on so well together. Strange, they each told me how well they had liked each other (long after Chippy was married) but Sel placed too much importance on Chippy's small stature. Oh, well, life is full of disappointments.

As to Telser and his not dating—I doubt very much if anyone teased him about it, but more likely he has been envious of the rest of us who have gone out with gals and that was his way of gaining recognition from his wife for his loyalty. I do not like Stanley any better than before—he's too loud, too depressed, and not a good enough Dr. to command my respect. I steer clear of him, enough so that he has complained to Danish about it. As to my viewpoint on dating (and I have no apologies further): One gets pretty fed up with male companionship and likes to talk to and go out with a pretty girl from time to time. I do this without the least pang of conscience. Before I ask one to go out, I inform her that I am a loyal husband and father. I find little hesitation on the part of the various nurses and can't blame them since it is hell sitting around waiting for one of the few single officers (about 6 in all, 3 of whom are tied up). There are about 105 nurses in all, you know. The few times I have met English girls, it has been in one of the nightclubs and simply as dancing partners so the above is how I feel. I have no objec-

tion to your doing the same, my love; just don't fall for anyone else in doing so. Well, what do you think of my viewpoint?

I think Henrietta is proving herself pretty much of a heel when she brags about her husband's loyalty to you and Davida [*Danish*] as though to say "your husbands aren't as nice as mine," and subtly to inform you we are "cheating." Sounds like backyard gossip. Thank gawd my wife is above it.

What's this business about Beauty Experts? Oh, no, darling! Social work or nothing, and I mean it!

By the way, always put both 28th Gen. Hosp. and the APO no., as some of your letters have been delayed on this account.

I'm so sorry I missed Nancy's birthday. That photo you sent made her appear so fat. Oh, how I'd like to hug that little cherub right now!

I wish I could have heard Marian Anderson with you. [*famous African-American contralto, 1897 – 1993*] She really has a wonderful voice, and when she hits the low notes I get chills in my back from the beauty of it.

So you didn't pass your drivers exam. Aren't you ashamed? [*I doubt whether this stopped her from driving.*]

I'm glad you like my letters; I write most of them between fluoroscopic cases and while accommodating my eyes for fluoroscopy. The room is dark except for a ruby light over my head and I'm often interrupted. Later on, when I'm busier, I'll probably not be able to write so often, but I'll try hard, my sweetheart.

By the way, how did Henrietta know what Abe's address is? He must be corresponding with her again. If so, keep it quiet, dear.

Well, that's all for now, my love-

Your desperately ill husband's chief complaint is nostalgia.

All my love and devotion

Ben

20 Feb. 44

My darling wife:

Did you know I was the proud father of a 11 lb. male-bicycle. \$44 seems a lot for a bike but I should be able to realize 7 or 8 £ (by the way a

£ = \$4) for it when and if I ever sell it, and I save a lot of cab and train fare by owning a bike, since transportation by buses ends at 8 to 9 pm in those parts of England in which I've been. As a matter of fact, everything but the nightclubs are closed by about 9 pm. The last complete movie starts about 6 pm, concerts start around 6:15 pm, pubs close at 10 pm. While there is no curfew law there might as well be.

I'm still a patient in the hospital. My throat is still sore but I'm doing OK. I should be out in a few days. It's much better than being in "quarters" with no one to wait on me. I've got the cutest nurses – hm – maybe I shouldn't tell you these things! The only trouble is I had to pass up a chicken dinner because I couldn't swallow. Now that is serious! And I will probably have to remain behind our outfit when they leave and catch up with them after a few days.

I apparently haven't received the first and most explanatory letter about your beauty expert job yet, and what I read now is very confusing. If you decide to accept it and have the time (I don't see how), leave yourself a loophole to get out. Are you sure you're not being taken for a ride? Take Selma's advice or better yet, talk to Irv about it. He is more practical than she (remember, she has been a sucker more than once). Always be suspicious of easy money, sweetie. If you really believe in the product, sweetheart, I'm sure you can sell it, because you have a natural technic for selling yourself. But I am confused by the whole subject, since I know so few of the details. Once you feel that you are doing the right thing, forget about what the family etc. think and put in system is all you have in the job. Best of luck my business woman.

Received a letter from Capt. (now Major) McCormick who is Executive Officer in an overseas General Hospital preparing in the states. All the old gang, except Mel Bernhard, are gone from Station Hospital. Mel, too, is still a captain and I wonder whether either of us will ever get a promotion. I also wonder what happened to our paper. I haven't heard a word yet from Mel. I must write him again today.

Did I mention this before: Henrietta's guess as to where Stanley is located is very likely correct, from what I gather from his letters. But you shouldn't mention even assumptions or guesses in letters to me or conversations at home as these things might possibly have military value to the enemy.

Darling, your typing has become atrocious. I have difficulty in deciphering words, the spelling is rotten, the ideas are rambling. Give out with

an intelligible letter once in a while! If nothing else, read them over before you mail them (and you'll see what I mean).

I was talking to the Chaplain yesterday about my viewpoints concerning going out with females and he shares my opinions. So I've got the Lord on my side, anyway. I hope you concur.

He tells me of a Commonwealth plan going on in Kansas, of which he is a member. Each individual contributes a certain amount of money on which he receives a fixed rate of interest (say 3 or 4%) and the group opens a store and hires a manager. They buy from their own store and the profits are divided at the end of a given period according to how much they have purchased. For example, he contributes \$10 to the fund, getting 3% interest each year on this investment. Now say he spends \$100/month in the store or \$1200 a year. Other members may spend less or more. The amount spent by members is totaled up and the profits divided accordingly. For example if all members bought \$9600 a year, his percentage would be 1/6. Now if \$1000 profit is made, his rebate would be \$16.33. This movement has spread all through the state of Kansas. The retail communes buy from wholesale...

[*REST MISSING*].

Feb. 23, '44

Good afternoon, sweetheart:

Well, I'm leaving the hospital tomorrow and will be around here for 3 or 4 days before leaving to join my unit. I've had a pleasant stay here both as a doctor and patient, and shall, in one sense hate to leave. But again, I am now an outsider and want very much to get back to my own big unhappy family. The chief reason for unhappiness is lack of professional work and lack of understanding between the professional and administrative groups. They don't see our point of view and we don't see theirs. I think I will dedicate my next few weeks to cementing this breach and building up some morale and cooperation. Apparently I stand in well with both groups and am liked enough by the Aryans to get away with it. I think I'll arrange some tours, bike trips, football games etc. Nobody else has been doing it and I have the drive. I may get myself hated but it won't be boring. We shall see. I may not do a thing about it. [*"Aryans" appears to be a metaphor for the administrative personnel, with the medical folks presumably being the non-Aryans.*]

My weight now is lower than at any time in the past 10 yrs—178 ½ with clothes on. My clothes hang loosely about my middle and I now have only one chin. Part of my loss is attributable to practically no food intake for 4 days when my throat was sorest. I figure that I'll stick around my present weight and see how I do. This should be simple. All I have to do is stop eating second helpings. Now to answer your questions and discuss your more recent letters.

Got about 5 letters from you dated from Jan 30 to Feb 14, including 2 sweet Valentines. You have been putting only 3 cent stamps on some of your letters and these are usually received about 1 week later than the others. The V-mail have been much more prompt, as are the airmail. I don't object to the V-mail, especially if you type them in capital letters and don't try to conserve space, using 2 or 3 pages instead. [*V-mail used smaller pages.*]

Don't worry about being a poor housewife, dear. In the first place you aren't bad and remember, you've other attributes. As for being a poor mother, that's so much tripe as I pointed in my letter of yesterday. This letter will probably reach you on a day when you are not feeling in a self-reproaching mood and the above will sound rather unnecessary. You will wonder what you had written in your letter that made me want to perk you up and chuckle and say, isn't he silly. At least that's my experience. I'll write a letter when down in the dumps and receive a reply when I'm in good humor, and say "whatinhell's wrong with her?" Amusing, isn't it.

I hope to hear soon about your long distance call to Bernhard. No pkg. received to date. Thanks for the Travelogue on England. As I've said before, I'm not a sightseer, but will try to look up some of the places for the kids and you. I've stopped keeping my diary because nothing of interest occurs that I don't write about or won't remember later. Yes, women go into pubs—it's perfectly respectable for them, too. Don't pay the AMA bill, just tear it up. I cancelled the journal because I never found time to read them.

Send me a couple of my (yellow) Journals of Roentgenology and Rad. Therapy.

I don't know Dr. Portnoy [*father of a classmate of mine*] very well. Dr. Joe Hyman is not a particular friend of mine. I interned under him for a month (he was staff man on Gyn) and he was nice to me but he's a pretty good back stabber. As to his being a ladies' man, who cares? Certainly not I. We're all wolves anyway.

The nurses falling for Steve pleased me. You know, he inherits that from his father. Just a chip off the old block.

Have Irv check your hospital bill if you have any doubts about it. After all, he is an accountant. You might have Sel or Irv find out about income tax. I'm almost positive we are exempt and may even have some money coming back. Why doesn't Irv do some taxwork this year. It's so complicated that it will take men like him to do it.

With Esther Marting leaving the general, I might find some job around the hospital.

[The following is page 5 of a letter which dad must've sent around this time, since it mentions me at age 28 months.]

... and set up a private office there. I'm seriously considering it. I shall talk to Red, who is not far from here, about it. So make friends of a more permanent type, my sweet. Don't worry about the future. I can always do well in private practice. As long as we can collect a nest egg to tide us over, and if we can borrow some money, we can always get along. *[Refers to the possibility of staying in Cincinnati.]*

My first bond purchase was Nov. 1, 1942, but the bonds will be received after the war. I think the first bond you received was for around June, '43, but I checked all the bonds and know that only the 1 is missing.

Steve's answering the phone at 28 months is an amazing thing. What a guy!

Am getting Walt's and Soph's letters regularly and 1 from Irv recently.

Honey I am writing at least every other day and often every day. So quit fretting. It's all in transit. Haven't written Hy Senturia. I've written him twice without an answer and don't expect to write again. Buy him a wedding gift please. If you don't have his address, send it to him care of Jewish Hospital ...

[REST MISSING.]

Sat. Feb. 26
[1944]

Dearest Ginny,

Well, I finally got out of the hospital, hale and hearty as ever and eager to get out and see or do something—anything. There is no work for me to do since the U.S. Navy took over and only a few of us are left so we're on our own.

I went into town on Friday and looked around, walking my legs off and just watching people and looking into shop windows. The shops here are very numerous and small. There are greengrocers (our groceries), butcher shops, ironmongers (hardware stores), newspaper shops, tobacconists, chemists (drug stores), camera shops, hairdressers (barber shop), bookstalls, etc. by the dozen. Each shop sticks rather closely to its specialty and altho many items require coupons, the shelves are not bare, at all.

I began to get bored so went into the American Red Cross where I saw 100 enlisted men more bored than I, so I quickly left. I wandered around until tea-time and went into a hotel for tea. An elderly lady sat down beside me and struck up a conversation with me. She turned out to be a New Zealander, mother of 2 children who had lost her husband, a flyer. She was about 42 or more. We chatted for about an hour and I learned that New Zealand is an island larger than Great Britain with only a little more than 1-million population. It is an "outdoor country," like Australia, with great open spaces. The Mauri's (I'm not sure of the spelling) are a very high class type of Negroid native with whom intermarriage is not at all uncommon and not particularly frowned upon. And into the hotel walks a Mauri Sgt. in the RAF! A fine-looking, light complexioned, nice young man, he joined us for a few moments then left. We discussed politics and the future, and she was a good listener and speaker. She was quite a cultured and refined person, but stated New Zealanders didn't go in for cultural things much. We even talked Socialized Medicine; her father having been a surgeon, she was interested in it. I found her very conservative but not too hard-boiled about it.

I went to a swell all-Beethoven concert, the program of which I am enclosing. The music was really beautiful, and the Soloist was a charming and attractive young lady, very talented. I then went home, arriving at about 9:45 and got into a poker game, winning £2 by 12:15 A.M. when we locked up. Quite a busy day.

This A.M. I arose at 9:15 and leisurely dressed and went over to the office, got a haircut, and then ate lunch. Then Col. Overton, Chief of Surgery, of whom I will tell you, asked me if I wanted to go with him (sight-seeing). I acceded and we went by train to Christchurch which is quite a place historically. [*Censor! This is the first time dad has mentioned a city by*

name; it's near Bournemouth, and also near Trowbridge, where he was stationed at this time.] There we were taken thru by the Warden. We took him and his wife to tea and they were very friendly and a sweet elderly couple. From there we went to a seaside resort town and to an excellent Officers' Red Cross Hotel. The town is gorgeous and the views are beautiful. I am now writing from the hotel! It is about 11:30 P.M. and a dance has just finished. Lovely English maidens, etc. but I wasn't much in the mood for it, so danced a few times and whiled away the evening. [*Photo of town of Christchurch.*]



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The Lt. Col. is a fine, regular fellow, a Memphis Dr. who has been in the Army 3 years. He likes people, is very outspoken, very fair, and goes to bat for his boys and is always in hot water with our more conservative C.O. because he lets the boys come and go without restrictions, even though the front office has laid down certain rules. He is very well-read and knows a lot of facts, mispronounces long words, which he uses often, in an amusing manner eg. moloments (emoluments), irrelavant, etc. He is entirely without ostentation, pays no attention to rank, and is forward and aggressive as far as meeting people is concerned. He is about 45.

I used to dislike him very much because he jumped on some of the boys and because he was loud-mouthed and dogmatic and I thought he was dumb because of his pronunciation, but he turned into a swell and quite discerning person.

We are staying at the Hotel tonight and will look around the town some tomorrow and then return.

All my usual love and an unusual kiss and caress to you, my sweetheart. Oh, how I wish you were here with me in this beautiful town!

Ben

Mon. 28 Feb. '44

Dearest Ginny:

Received your letter of Feb. 19 containing Steve's picture. It certainly was a good photo of him and my heart jumped when I saw it. I should like a pocket-sized leather folder containing pictures of yourself and the kids, like Ros sent to Walt. Will you please send one, dear? It's nice to be able to show my family to people. If you don't have any photos, send the folder as I have some pictures of the kids to put in but none of you. But no doubt you have plenty of recent photographs around.

Walt's letters are enclosed. Will you see that they are forwarded to the rest of the family as per Soph's request.

My gear is all packed and I am shortly having to join my outfit. I am entirely well but feel rather alone here. Abe Danish wrote me that our new town is darned nice, that most of the houses where we billeted are quite nice but cold, and that we have an Officers' club of our own and will be able to get some liquor. Not that I crave the stuff, but I find, on occasion, that I am able to feel more like having fun. I missed the Ballet Joos (remember it) for which he had gotten me a ticket, but he says many plays will be coming to the city near our town, so I am looking forward to it very much. Also, my bike is there and I'm anxious to make use of it. [*Presumably a reference to Kurt Jooss (1901 – 1979), a ballet dancer and choreographer who fled Germany in 1933 when the Nazis asked him to dismiss the Jews from his company, and then settled in England, opening a ballet school in Devon*].

At the moment, I'm a little bored with things in general. No work, time on my hands, etc. Since I am leaving so soon, I've made no effort to be-

come friendly with the Navy altho they have many competent and fine men here.

The food here isn't nearly as good as our mess and I again get up from the table with that empty feeling.

I'm again surprised at Steve's development. Commas, periods, etc. Maybe he'll be a great writer someday, n'es pas.

Don't worry about Nancy's relative sluggishness. It only proves what we already know, that Steve is very precocious. She'll come around in an entirely normal manner and will be a beautiful young lady, like her mother.

I ran across Sid Kauffman (Nelson's brother) in the Officers' Hotel in the resort town that I visited over the weekend. [*Doctor friends from Indianapolis.*] He has been in England 20 months and seems pretty well acclimated. Is Ebner Blatt over here or is he in North Africa? [*Friend from Indianapolis.*] I had planned to go up to see Dave Graller today but didn't have the necessary pep. I'll do it at some date in the near future, I hope.

Well, that's all for now, my love. Take care of yourself and of our children. Write long and often.

Your husband, ever-loving.

Wed-Mar. 1
[1944]

Dear Gin:

Well, here am I in a new town, with my unit again. After an uneventful train trip during which I won £2 at poker (this is so habitual, it's becoming uneventful), we detrained in a small manufacturing town where we were met by some of our officers. We were brought to an old, vast remodeled garage which is our mess, and had a fine lunch. We were then taken to our billets by ambulance.

I shall now proceed to tell you about my billet. It is about 10 minutes walk from the heart of town and is a large, beautiful, though slightly old-fashioned home. While there is nothing ornate, the grounds and house compare favorably with our nicer Rose Hill homes. There are many bedrooms (about 6), large living, sitting, and dining rooms, a large beautifully groomed garden, front and back, 2 large greenhouses, a good-sized garden. The rooms are all immaculate and beautifully appointed. Lt. Michelson, eyeman from New York City also is billeted there with me. He is a qui-

et, bright, semitic looking, friendly boy and we shall get along well. We share a comfortable bathroom together and are in adjoining bedrooms.

The house has central heating except for the bedrooms and is relatively comfortable from this standpoint. We are very fortunate in this respect as most of the billets are cold.

Our hostess is a charming woman of 73 who smokes and plays bridge and is quite alert and modern. She is very friendly and kind and can't do enough for me. The only occupant, except for a war worker, his wife, and child in the servants quarters, is the lady's niece, whose husband has been away in the army. She, too, is cultured and friendly. So you see, darling, how comfortable and welcome I have been made. I had tea with them yesterday and they were extremely hospitable.

In the town (which is not as attractive as some of the others we have visited but much more hospitable), we have an officers' club on the second floor of a small hotel. It consists of a large dining room which has been remodelled, a radio, chairs and tables, and a bar. It is for our outfit only and is near the town hall (which is our lecture hall), the mess, and headquarters and everyone hangs out here during the day and in the evenings. Liquor is rationed to us from a relatively small supply which is obtained thru the fact that we are an organized club, and beer is plentiful. It's really a very nice set-up.

There are about 5-6 hours of lectures daily, but most of the officers including myself report for roll call and then leave. There isn't much to do close by during the day, but I get out and practice riding my bike. I'm having a great deal of trouble since I never had a bike but after many more falls, I'll eventually learn. I do not have a good sense of balance, unfortunately. I expect to spend some time at home and do some reading during the day. I also plan a few trips around, e.g. visit other X-ray departments, see the Chaplain who is in a hospital 15 miles away with a chest cold, go to a nearby city for plays and symphonies (London Symphony next week). So you see my time will be pretty well filled.

Today I purchased a few items from a travelling Px including a nice warm bathrobe. My silk once had fallen to pieces. I wanted to buy another blouse, since we wear them constantly over here, but I didn't want to lay out the money. Despite what I thought was an adequate allotment and despite my poker winnings, I expect to have difficulty in making ends meet. After mess, clothing, bike, and club dues etc. are deducted from my exchequer, it leaves me about £10 (\$40) for the month, and with so much time

the money is bound to go rapidly. Prices are exceedingly high, and you can't go out an evening without spending about a pound. If I ever start losing at poker, I shall have to stay at home constantly. I had cashed 3 of my 10 traveller's checks in the States when we didn't get paid so I have \$70 left, which I intend to hang onto until the need is urgent. I shall probably come home with them.

Well, that is all my love. I also like my landlady because she fell for the pictures of the kids and you.

All my love

Ben

March 3, 1944

Note new APO #582

Dearest Ginny:

I am sitting at "home" in a beautiful bright parlor writing this letter in a soft upholstered easy chair, smoking my pipe. All I need are you by my side and the children at my feet and my cup would be full. The marble fireplace is burning warmly. Above the fireplace is a window which opens into the green house and behind me is a large floor to ceiling wall-to-wall window thru which a beautiful view of a very spacious trim garden is seen and beautiful hills stand out in the distance. Pictures and mirrors are on the walls but not in profusion and there is very little bric-a-brac. A small es-critoire is present in one corner, several odd chairs and tables of beautiful wood are scattered about the room, and a comfortable sofa faces the fireplace. A black Persian lamb rug is on the floor in front of the fireplace and a large simple light rug is on the floor. The door is solid mahogany. The walls and ceiling are very light yellow and the floor around the rug is pinkish tan linoleum. This is one of the most attractive rooms (to my tastes) that I have ever been in. I forgot, there is a crystal chandelier and wall lights.

Aren't you surprised at the interest I show in my surroundings? I am really describing it for your sake. The house is over 100 years old but looks almost brand new. When they build here, it is permanent!

I have been skipping classes and yet have kept quite busy. My cycling is still bad but improving. I spend my afternoons at home, reading or studying and usually go out in the evenings. I have seen 2 movies in 3 nights, *Yellow Canary* [1943, with Anna Neagle and Richard Greene; al-

leged Nazi sympathizer moves to Canada] and *Demi-Paradise* with Laurence Olivier [1943, known as *Adventure for Two in the US*; features a new propeller for ice-breaking ships], both of which were exceptionally good British pictures, especially the latter, which is a propaganda piece about a Russian in England, but the right kind. I hope they come to the U.S. They might have a different name, so watch for them.

On Wed. night, Danish took me to visit a British Contagious Hospital. Actually we visited the Matron, whom Danish had met thru his landlady. We had a delightful evening with the Matron and the sisters (nurses) and student nurses, sweet kids of 16 or 17. We played ping pong, parlor games, drank coffee and lemonade, and ate salmon sandwiches. We brought them some fruit juice and several pairs of stockings which Danish (not I) got from some of the nurses. They were breathless from the excitement of these precious gifts and we really had a hilarious time. Your husband was quite the life of the party, what with card tricks (the same old ones), stories, juggling, and catching cigarettes in his mouth.

The parlour games were really exciting and fun. Here is one you might try: Any no. of people may play. Each person is a different shop of some sort: green grocer, butcher, draper, florist, etc. A deck of cards is dealt out to all the players, face down. In sequence, each player turns over his top card. When this card matches someone else's top card, eg. a Jack, or 2 or 5 etc., the excitement begins. Everyone at the table points to one of the two people who have the identical cards and shout an item sold in that person's shop. The possessors of the identical cards point to each other and shout in a similar manner. The first one to name the correct item gets both identical cards and puts them on the bottom of his pile, face down. Eventually the slow-pokes are eliminated and a few are left. The game generally breaks up from sheer weariness of excitement. Everybody points immediately, but they can't think of an item or the shop of the owner of the card and therefore shout "uh, uh, uh," and gesticulate wildly. It really is a scream, and you know what I usually think of parlor games!

I've learned to know the British "Bobby" or policeman a little. He is quite an important and respected person in the community and is generally very intelligent, priding himself on his ability to answer any question. He is unarmed, yet rarely if ever attacked, and is utterly fearless. He is very friendly and usually has a lot of personality. He is typical of England—quiet but effective.

That is all for today my love. I hope we can visit England together after this war is over. It is certainly worth seeing, especially the smaller com-

munities. I haven't seen London yet, nor am I eager to, since the U.S.A. has taken over. If I go, it will be with Hulse, Danish, or Schafer, all of whom know some Englishmen there. I might look up Mr. Shara's friend. [*Reference unknown.*] Kiss my boy and girl for me,

All my love, forever
Ben.

4 March 44

Dearest one:

I plan to answer your previous letters today, then maybe catch up with a few of my other correspondents.

Better not send any more of Walt's letters if everyone else hasn't read them, as I probably have received copies. When everyone is finished with them, you can forward them to me and I'll read those I haven't seen. His letters on Italy are truly exciting and believe it or not, I envy him. No, honey, I'm not getting ideas.

No need to send my landlady anything—I've given her plenty and she's quite able to get most anything she wants. As to the boy in the bicycle shop, he wouldn't accept anything. I've tried to give him things before, but he always sneaked them back in my pocket before I left. Very independent cuss, but a swell kid.

I'm all agog about that Victrola record of Steve's. I hope it gets here O.K.

My God, darling, don't buy a house now. Howinhell do you know for sure I'll set up in Cincy. You're crazier than ever! I'll never forgive a stupid purchase of that kind. Rent an apt., house, farm, stable, or trailer or stay with your mother—but please keep me out of real estate now. I've never objected, by the way, to your staying with your folks and if it didn't work you could always move out. I recently wrote telling you to use your own judgment, but don't buy.

Don't worry about my post-war contacts in Cincy. Now's not the time to do anything. Sam Brown's interest in me, I'm sure, is merely that of a friend, and I don't expect anything from him. Reineke, Blankenhorn, and Benjamin are not the people to connect up with. And you can't do these things by mail, anyway.

You are about 30 miles off on Dave's location. He is in a hospital group including the 32nd general. I got the clipping about Doughty's death. He was a swell guy and a pretty good radiologist (altho he never stuck out his neon).

Do I get this correct? Is a 4# box of candy from Irv on its way or is it the box I received about 4 weeks ago?

Stan Simon is a wonderful Doc. (as good as Chip) and a swell fellow. I didn't know his wife, and you probably don't know him.

I've not heard a word from Bernhard altho I've written him several times. Can't understand it except it's probably due to his lethargy in writing letters.

The "2 and 2 isn't 4" incident of Jake's was highly amusing. He certainly has a charm that's rare in people by his age. You've got a grand dad.

I did write Irv about the baby's picture.

I'm all for a progressive school for Steve if he continues to remain a "wonder" boy, as I think he will. This will be an easy matter when the time comes, but the cost might be prohibitive unless I am making a living at that time. We shall see.

Last night we played the M.A.C. [*Medical Administrative Corps*] officers and beat them by one run. I played short for the M.C. [*Medical Corps*] officers and couldn't hit for hell. I also made an error on any easy ball. In the last inning they had men on base and their best batter bunted foul on the third strike, automatically being out. We now call him "Boner" Miller. There was a terrific amount of excitement about the ballgame and I won the munificent sum of about 4 shillings.

A friend of mine from 7X. Harrison Pool—Capt. Irv Brenner, visited here yesterday. He is in charge of V.D. [*venereal disease*] control in the Southern Base Section of E.T.O. [*European Theater of Operations*] and travels to all the hospitals. He saw Dave last week. He tells me Jack Wright is no longer in the 25th GH [*General Hospital*]. We had a pleasant visit, except that I lost 3£ in a poker game and am getting precariously near to broke—so early in the month, too. [*References unknown.*]

Well, all my love, darling. I still miss you all so much. When is the second front starting? I know less about it than you do.

Ben.

Mar. 5, '44

Dearest:

This beautiful Sunday A.M. I am sitting before the fireplace listening to the New World Symphony [*Dvorak – one of dad's favorites*] on the wireless, relaxed and at peace with the world. Just finished breakfast including 2 fresh eggs, my first since leaving the States, tea and toast. And now, in pajamas, robe, and slippers, I sit writing this letter to you. Gosh, I wish you were here to enjoy these things with me. I ask so little of life—why must it be denied me? When I get home, sweetheart, I want all my Sunday mornings to be like this. I'll play with the kids, hold your hand, and listen to records or radio. Our motto will be "Damn the dishes—this is Sunday morning."

We had some wonderful news yesterday. The colonel called a meeting and told us we have a brand new hospital which will be ready for us soon. He described it as a very attractive place with many conveniences and told us the exact time and place. It is to be our permanent station and because it is in the open country, my bike should come in very handy. It is not too far from a nearby city—a very attractive one which I have already visited. Isn't that wonderful news!

This afternoon I plan to go to a concert in a nearby village—the BBC Orchestra is playing and several British radio stars will be performing.

I have been loafing a good bit lately, reading *P.M.* and *Life* and some medicine stuff and the time seems to pass rapidly. I guess I don't know how to be bored. I do not travel around the countryside much, but practice riding my bike a little—I'm still pretty punk!!

I haven't had a letter from you for over a week—apparently there is a delay due to our recently changed APO. Naturally I am eager for news. Your pkg has not yet arrived.

I went to a Red Cross dance Sat. night and had a rather enjoyable time, especially since I had enough beer and liquor to get slightly tipsy. I danced with several of the English girls including some of the sisters (nurses) from the British hospitals we visited, our landlady's niece (she is a very charming and friendly girl whose husband is in Italy. She lost an eye in childhood and has an amazingly matched glass eye which I never suspected until she told me), and several of our nurses. I was in a pretty good humor and mixed very well, so I wasn't bored at all.

Well Darling, I shall cut this letter short, bathe, get my laundry ready, and go into our mess in town for a chicken dinner. Not a bad life, eh?

Tell Steven to write me a letter. Send me pictures of yourself and the kids often. I dreamed of you all last night. Take care of yourself, my sweet.

Your ever-loving husband

Ben.

P.S. I wrote Walter requesting the photos you mentioned.

March 8 - 44

Darling:

Nothing new to tell you but life goes on its interesting and merry way and time doesn't hang heavily on my hands. Received your letter of Feb. 24, the first one in about a week. This delay is due to our changed APO number which you should note: #582. I imagine it will be some time before this mail comes quickly again, because of this changed no.

Thanks for the advice about how to get along with my enemies. As far as [*Medical Supply Officer, Capt.*] Moore is concerned, I have straightened the matter out somewhat. I know what allotment of equipment I am entitled to by regulations and so does he. This amount is adequate and he can't cut me out, without answering to the C.O., so the patients can no longer suffer. As to your technic for getting along with him—well you just don't know Capt. Moore. He would deny ever having had any trouble with me and would start giving me incoherent advice

As far as [*Major*] Joiner [*chief of the laboratory*] is concerned, there is some benefit to be gained in disagreeing with him. If no one watches him, he can do some serious harm to patients by incorrect diagnosis, which almost happened recently on a cancer case. He missed the whole business and I caught him up and our disagreement resulted in the Pt. [*patient*] going to a cancer hospital much sooner than otherwise. The surgeon, who also missed the diagnosis clinically (it was rather obvious, I'm afraid) was very appreciative of my meddling in, since he had had little experience with cancer.

The circular of the conducted tour I spoke about was not sent to you, because I suddenly realized naming the place was contrary to censor regulations.

I've gotten no pkg. yet. If the \$18 per yr. hospital insurance includes you and both kids, take it.

I have not been to London, yet, but may go in a couple of weeks.

I have lighter fluid, so send me the lighter. Not the kind you strike like a match.

Everything here is so expensive, woolens are rationed, and dishes are breakable so I'm afraid I can't send anything like that. In fact, it seems silly to send anything from here to you, since you can get everything there and cheaper.

Change the J. Hancock policy but write Sid's dad—Mayer Kahn % J. Hancock Gary, Indiana for advice as to the type of policy to get. I'm not averse to paying the \$180 and we pay \$36 a year anyway so \$24 more shouldn't be a hardship. Don't forget to write Mr. Kahn, as we may get hooked otherwise.

By the way, how much dough do we have in the bank? How much in war bonds? Are you saving on my allotment? The overseas pay is included in the allotment. Remember, you didn't get any allotment until I was gone.

So Stevie goes to school! Tell me all the details, sweetheart. I can't wait to hear about this interesting part of his and our lives.

All my love to all three of you and a special hug to Nancy

Daddy Ben

Fri. Mar. 10 - '44

Dearest Virginia:

Another day, another dollar—well, maybe I get more than a dollar, but right now I don't earn it.

I am, at present, on detached service from my unit. The details will have to wait for some future date. Suffice it to say I have time on my hands and am catching up on my reading. *P.M.s* are coming in groups of 5-10 and I enjoy reading them immensely. They certainly keep me posted on what's happening in the USA, and though not encouraging, the future doesn't look so terribly black. You know, I lean on *P.M.* a lot. I've yet to see a subject

tackled by this paper in a completely unjust manner. Not that I agree with everything written—but there is no question of honesty and sincerity in the articles. *In Fact* was often unfair and vituperous and sometimes attacked trivialities [*This was a muckraking newsletter published from 1940 to 1950; so far to the left that President Roosevelt ordered the FBI to investigate it.*] Not so *P.M.*: the articles are rarely unfair, the tone is usually sarcastic (or rather ironical) with a subtle dash of humor, the prose (especially Lerner's) is exceptional, and the subject matter is generally important and vital. [*Max Lerner was an influential, pretty left-wing journalist, best-known for his New York Post column.*]

I generally read the back page (mostly news photographs) first, including Tom O'Reilly, whom I find very amusing. Then I read the comics. Barnaby is about as humorous as any other comic strip I have ever read. Max Lerner comes next and I enjoy him most of all. I read Sullivan or Stone (1st page) but don't think they are so good. I usually read the feature news article on the Nation and then go thru the paper page by page selecting my reading matter from the headlines. I especially read about race items, May-or Hague, and the Medical Column. Michie, Knickerbocker, and Deutsch are among my favorites. Deutsch tackles the medical problem with a great deal of sound medical knowledge and in a very clear and unemotional manner. One of my favorite columns is *It Happened in the USA*. These tidbits are always a delight. I generally finish with the serial article, altho reading the episodes out of order is sometimes quite confusing.

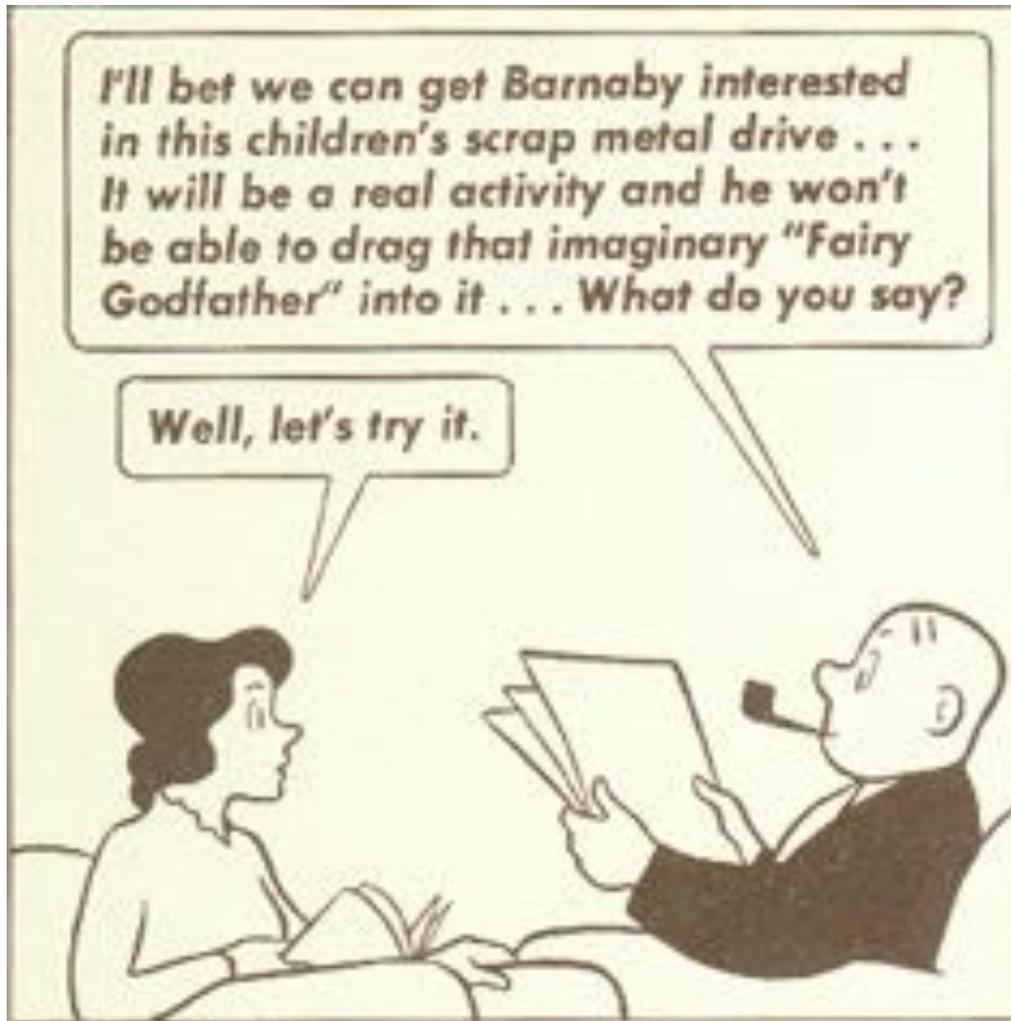


Figure 4: Barnaby was a sophisticated cartoon in the style of Calvin and Hobbes.

My total reading time of one *P.M.* is close to an hour, so, you see, I often get behind.

I finally got the cheese and salami, all in good condition, and am very pleased. I plan a little party for my closer friends when we get settled in our new place. The advance party leaves for there today, I am told. Do you think I can keep my hands off these rare delights until der Tag [*apparently "the Day" in German*] comes? I doubt it, altho I feel that sharing these edibles with others will make them taste better to me, similar to seeing a play or movie with someone, adds to its enjoyment.

I'm adding a letter to Sel, enclosing it. Can you subdue your curiosity and not read it, so I can save an air mail envelope (which are temporarily scarce). I hope you don't have your mother's insatiable curiosity—but I

have some doubts. Well, this will be a true test. Knowing you as I do, if you do read Sel's letter, sooner or later you will let it slip in one of your letters, and then I will sue you for breach of promise, or better still, I will start writing about the oh so numerous affairs I've been having since I left you, describing all the lurid details. Is that my mouth drooling?

I can see by your letters that you haven't yet received my complaint about your escorial qualities. Your letters are getting shorter and less numerous. The very idea, starting a letter Friday and finishing it Sunday, and only 1 typed page at that. I expect a change for the better, but soon.

I am still very happy in my English interlude. The better I know the English, the more similar to us I find them. They look and act just like we do, dress the same and like the same things.

If England invaded us as we have England (and there is no doubt but that this is an invasion), I am certain that we would show a similar resentment at first, and then ultimately warm up to them as they have to us. There is no question but that the better they know us as individuals, the better they like us. Most of them have gone thru phases in their attitude toward us: (1) Awe and uncertain fear (2) Resentment (3) Friendliness (4) Camaraderie or brotherhood. I believe that any two peoples or races, under similar circumstances, would go thru these stages.

I received a note from Jule Grad and will try to contact him when I get back to my unit.

Also I am still receiving fascinating letters from Walter in North Africa. I should certainly like to see him. He seems to have changed a lot. Imagine Walt joining our liberal ranks!

That's all for now, sweetheart. I love you as always and miss you more than ever.

Tell my children their daddy loves them, too, and would like to see them now.

As ever

Ben

Tues. 14 Mar.
1944

Dearest Gin:

I'm sitting in the Officers' lounge this A.M. while my bike is being repaired. I finished my day's work by 9:30 A.M., ate breakfast, answered roll-call, took some clothes to the cleaner, bought a newspaper, took my bike for repair, and got my rations. Not bad, eh! Of course, too much of this would be boring but I manage to keep my interests up by means of side-lights and making my own amusements. For example, yesterday was an outstanding day. Danish, who is Officers laundryman, rides a truck to a city some distance from here every Mon. and Fri. So I got permission to join him. We were supposed to be back by noon but we barely made it by supertime.

First, since the front seat couldn't accommodate us both, we sat on chairs in the back of the open truck. The wind was too strong so we lay down on the laundry and chatted and looked at the scenery. People laughed at two officers in such a ludicrous position and we chuckled and waved at them. The scenery was glorious even though at first the day was cloudy. And we were really in high spirits! We delivered the laundry, took the truck into the heart of this busy city, sent the truck home and were on our way.

First we visited the YMCA to wash up. Danish had made friends with the director when the latter had visited our town, so we looked him up and got a personally conducted tour thru the place, which compares very favorably with ours and is a very busy hotel. We got into a conversation with the Director, his female assistant, one of the board members and others over morning coffee, to which they invited us. We were quickly the central attraction and discussed everything from Army Service Organizations to the future state of the world, from Arabia to Zanzibar—always including Russia. To depart from the subject for a moment: It is rather strange how Danish and I supplement each other in conversation with others. In the first place, he makes the original contact and starts the conversational ball rolling. I then pick it up and generally lead it into political channels: England, Russia, racial subjects, labor etc. When I don't make myself clear, Danish clarifies it. When I begin to run down, he takes over and puts on the finishing touches. We manage to keep their interest and don't monopolize the conversation too much. This is all unconscious on our parts. I wonder if Danish realizes this synergistic tendency. He just told me he had noticed it too.

To get back to yesterday—The elderly female was a professional social worker, a *rara avis* over here. I told her about you and she told me many things about this place of work in England. In the first place they rely on thousands of voluntary workers who are very dependable and there are

few paid workers. The funds for charitable circumstances come from the war fund, voluntary drives, and collection boxes in pubs, shops, etc. This is nothing like our community chest. Even the hospitals have to get their own money from donors. The system is not very satisfactory, someone always starting a drive for one cause or another.

We then went to a very nice hotel, had a drink and lunch, then went on to another city, lovely Bath. Did you know that the Romans were in England from 55 AD to 400 AD. They built these baths at the site of a hot spring and they were unearthed in 1800 underneath the site of the modern baths. This famous spa is really a lovely spot and historically of great interest. I suggest you read about it in your book or in the Encyclopedia. Part of the suburbs of Bath are built on the side of a hill and are indescribably beautiful. We were taken thru the baths by an ebullient elderly volunteer who only takes allied soldiers thru (except British). We teased her a little and had lots of fun. She knew the history “cold.”

We looked the town over and then came home by bus. We got a little “squirrelly” about this time—eg. I took a baby from an overburdened mother’s arms and carried him a couple of blocks—playing with him. My paternal instincts. Danish borrowed a book from a young lady on the bus and let her read his map of England in return. We talked to everyone and cut up a little, having most of the bus laughing. Eg. when the bus was plodding slowly up a hill, suggested everyone lean forward to help it along! Needless to say, we had a lot of fun.

Last night we had a USO all-soldiers’ show which was really wonderful! It was sent over from the States and played to a packed house. It included a male chorus, a popular orchestra, good tap dancing, a male impersonation of Carmen Miranda including a strip tease, male chorus girls, marionettes (exceptional), a magician (outstanding), excellent singing, movie star impersonator, banjo artists, etc. It was a 2 hr. show and I laughed so hard I was worn out when it finished. The marionette act was so clever. I’ve never seen anything quite like it.

This weekend I am going to a British X-ray meeting in London and then see the town. From all the reports, I will probably come home broke, as London is very expensive. But since I probably won’t go back from a long time, I guess it’s O.K.

Well, my love, that’s all for now—Haven’t eaten the food yet, but plan to invite some friends up for a party.

All my love and remember to tell Steve and Nancy about their father.

Adios
Ben

Tues. 15 Mar
[1944]

Dearest Ginny:

I received letters and V-mail dated Feb. 29 today and also a letter from J. Hancock. I hope you contacted Mr. Kahn for advice. Again I say, by no means let the policy lapse. I replied to J. Hancock that I didn't have enough info to decide and that since you had my power of atty. you would handle the transaction. Don't depend on this fellow Sirkin alone. I had one dealing on insurance with his cousin or brother and got badly hooked.

It seems your letter is full of the questions of dating, including many direct queries. Tsk, tsk, who's on the defense now? So you changed your tack and want all the sordid details. Remember your statement that I was thinking and talking too much about women? Now you want me to talk more about it!

Well, darling—don't worry about us or about my being the wild wolf or about my falling for any nurse, English gal or anyone else. You ought to know by this time that I talk more than I act. I date from sheer ennui, am still a good boy and expect I'll remain so, dammit. I love you too much and there's too much to lose for me to get involved. So relax and hope for our happy reunion. Oh, joy—I thrill to think of that day!

Your letter was oh, so much of an improvement. I read it 3 times. As you know by this time, I do not object to your beauty clinic. I wish you all the success in your new venture.

As yet I didn't get the letter telling of Louise's opinion of Henrietta. I write about 4 letters a week, oftener when I am not travelling. Sorry you forgot where Henrietta said Abe was, but I can't tell you.

I don't know what the significance of the 16 Soviet republics is but I suspect that it's a play for the Baltic countries and other Western European satellites to join post-war Russia without open anti-democratic coercion. In other words, to me it looks like practical power politics. *[During this period the Soviets were getting impatient about the failure of the US and England*

to open a second front in the West. However, dad's exact reference is unclear.]

Did you know, the English book stalls are all filled with books on Russia?

I'm very worried about the political set-up in the States; the soldiers' vote, the overriding of the President's veto on the tax bill. By the way you said millions when you meant billions. These large sums are confusing, aren't they? *[For complicated political reasons, including race, only about 85,000 soldiers out of 11 million serving abroad were able to get ballots for the 1944 election. The tax bill was considered too small by President Roosevelt but on February 25, 1944, the Senate overrode his veto.]*

I'm still winning at cards—small amounts, but every little bit helps.

I bought a second-hand lightweight blouse from a friend for 2½ £ so now I am a two-blouse man, one of the elite. My bike riding has improved to the extent that I took a 12 mile trip with Danish last Sunday. I had quite a sore seat the following day, but am now able to sit comfortably again.

My landlady and I have become very friendly. I give her my rations and she invites me for food (I accept occasionally).

I might recapitulate on my travels in England so that you aren't confused: Debarkation Port, 2 days, Staging area about 2 weeks, British hospital about 6 weeks, billet in village 1 week, detached service 5 days, back to billet.

The competition of music, talk, etc. in the Officers' club this A.M. is too tough, so we'll close now.

I love you and miss you very much. Take care of yourself my sweet and please don't worry about me. Tell the kids how much I miss and love them, also.

Ben

March 19, 1944

I neglected to mention in yesterday's letter that it was our anniversary (in case you forgot), but I sent you a cable which I hope you received by now. So you see, I still think of you and miss you. This is our first anniversary apart and I'm rather blue about it. It's such a damned helpless feeling

– and no prospects of seeing you soon. Oh, well. No use fretting – it only prolongs the time.

I guess I'd better get back to London before I become maudlin. [So we are definitely missing a previous letter about what I think was a short trip to the big city.] Let's see, I left you about 6 p.m. At 6.30 p.m. Danish got in touch with me and I taxied to his hotel. It seems that, though I left messages at two hotels including the Red Cross these messages weren't given him when he called both places. They didn't even know at the Red Cross that I was registered there. If I hadn't happened to be at the phone, we would have missed each other. We had dinner at the Russell hotel [on Russell Square, Bloomsbury] – excellent food including vegetable hors d'oeuvres and a wonderful piece of fish. From there we went to a private club, an invitation to which Danish had received beforehand. These private clubs are apparently peculiar to London, probably in war-time only. They are really bars, owned by individuals which are closed to the public. To become a member, one must be introduced by a member and pay about \$2. Guests must be accompanied by members and members must pay. There is generally a piano player (and in this club a drummer, also). There are clubs and clubs; some are gyp joints but this one was not. The drinks were relatively reasonable and gals were numerous and loose (all members). We were introduced by a lieutenant (who was a member) to several gals and we danced around and talked and drank. We couldn't quite enter into the spirit of things – you know, I never was a night clubber. It was interesting to see the forced gaiety of the others. We could very easily have taken the gals home, but weren't interested. Mine was a VERY beautiful Czech refugee, as vivacious as Eula (of whom she reminded me a lot). She was rather gushy, altho about 30 years old and [or?] slightly more. She is, she says, quite well-to-do, and dresses in the height of fashion. Her husband and family are dead and she flits about London, very gaily (and I'm sure unhappily). I rather felt sorry for her, but she's a dope in a sense to get in a rut like that. Mind you, these were professionals or even roundheeled, hard-of-hearing pushovers; just girls out for what they thought was a good time. [*“Roundheeled” was a common synonym for “fast” or “loose” in this era, but “hard-of-hearing” is a new one on me. Eula was a friend of mom.*]

We went home by subway at about midnight, very slightly inebriated. The subway ride was a real eye-opener. The subways are similar to those in New York City but are deeper and most have escalators. The trains move rapidly and there are maps in each car and all the station so that it is really simple to find your way about.

A very sad sight was the subway, because of all the families sleeping there. Though there was no alert that night (there was on a Friday night but no raid) numerous families were sleeping on blankets, bunks attached to the wall composed of metal springs with no mattresses. It was very sordid that life had to be lived in all this noise and foul air, but the people evidently were accustomed to it. We learned that one family with 9 children slept there every night. They had been bombed out and stayed with relatives in the daytime but had no place to sleep at night. It costs 5 shillings (\$1) per week per child to board them out in the country and the father only made 4 £ (\$16) per week. Tragic isn't it.

Well, we arrived home safely and I stayed in Danish's room, rather than go to my room in the Red Cross. I think I'll the rest of the trip for another letter, darling. Am enclosing picture postcards of Bath.

March 22nd,
1944

I received a letter stating that you lost \$127 but haven't received any other statement or letter of explanation. Hey, that's a lot of dough! You've got me worried. I've had only 1 letter in the past week but received the cookies. Who baked them?

To take up where I left off in my trip to London:

Sunday a.m. we had a late breakfast and dashed off on a sightseeing tour sponsored by the English speaking union. Alternately walking and riding in trams and buses, we saw St. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, the House of Parliament, #10 Downing Street, Fleet Street (newspaper row), Temple Bar, Old Bailey, etc., etc. We didn't see all the interesting sights but spent about 2 hours looking London over superficially. Later I may see it more closely. I was most impressed by the dome of St. Paul's (Christopher Wren) from inside. [*Finished 1697; Wren was the architect*] It was very impressive and truly beautiful. In Westminster Abbey I saw graves and monuments of every great Englishman I ever heard of and a number that were unknown to me. They are buried under cement slabs in the floor and people are always walking on their graves. I'd rather have a little peace and quiet myself! England has certainly produced a number of great men, or is it that they advertise their great men better?

From there we took the Underground for a long ride to visit an older Russian couple. She is a doctor, he a businessman. We had lunch in their

very nice home and enjoyed a home-cooked meal of good food including small spicy fish, vegetable soup containing vegetables! Yiddish roast, etc. They were a delightful couple whom we met through Telser, their daughter who attends the U. of Chicago having stayed with Telser's parents. [No handwritten original available so I can't tell you what Aunt Sophie saw on the page when she was typing "Yiddish roast."]

After leaving there, we dashed madly back, taxied to the station and entrained for home. On the trip back we rode with a couple, about 40 years old, who were very nice. Her favorite author was Upton Sinclair and she was quite a liberal. She has a young daughter who is entering college next year to study chemistry, apparently quite a brilliant kid. Needless to say, I have a standing invitation to visit them in a nearby town and who knows how soon we shall do so?

On our arrival here at 9 p.m. Danish called up the Isolation Hospital and asked the matron to fix us a spread since we hadn't eaten since 1 p.m. She was very happy to do so, since she has become a good friend of Danish and mine as we sometimes go there to play ping-pong, etc. I think I told you about them before and after a delightful spread, we went home and so to bed, dead tired.

The early part of this week was spent in recuperating. I have stayed in bed until about 10 and have played a little cards (won another £2) and done some reading including *P.M.*, medical yearbooks, *Reader's Digest*, *Free World*, etc.

Last night we had a dance and social for the townfolk with whom we were billeted to show our gratitude. (5S \$1 per person) A program was put on by our Red Cross and was lousy! but the dance was good and brought out about 500 people, aged 10 to 80, and I mean 80. There are 3 social groups in this town, I learned, and they never see each other, but they all came and everybody obviously had a wonderful time, except for guys like me who flitted about dancing with any one of our guests who happen to look bored. I was dog tired but I can happily say that I did more than my share as a host. My landlady was my date and she certainly appeared to enjoy herself immensely. The refreshments were very good and included foods they hadn't seen for 4 years and plenty of it. My hostess said that there has never been a party like this in this town in 40 years and that this will go down in its history. There was quite a good healthy mixing of Americans and English. Incidentally I find the small town English men and women are quite cosmopolitan (because of their frequent trips to London).

1944 Mar 23 AM
10:20

Happy anniversary Darling. You are more than ever in my thoughts at this time.

Ben Felson.

Tues. Mar. 28
[1944]

Dearest mother of my two:

Received 2 airmail letters today but still no reference to that large sum, the loss of which you so casually mentioned. This suspense is awful!

Have a tennis date for Thurs. with 3 local enthusiasts of the upper crust. I will have to purchase a racket but don't plan to pay too much. I saw a tennis club near our new post and plan to join if time permits—and I think it will.

To answer some of your letters: Stan Telser and I are still at opposite ends of the unit, for which I have no regrets. Please send tennis balls, as many as Irv can conveniently get. Cigarettes are no longer needed.

Steve's letter was darling. Please tell me, in more detail, how it was written. I'm very pleased at the manner in which the kids are progressing and I miss them so very much. Gosh, darling, please send pictures, especially of my beautiful daughter, Nancy.

The request for British items which you make is really out of the question. Things here are much more expensive than at home, require ration points, and their quality is dubious. So buy what you want at home and make believe it comes from me. Did you get my anniversary wire? I do appreciate your attempt to augment our income with your clinics and wish you every success.

I hope to see Elsey one day soon, but it is difficult to get to their location and I can't very well call there.

I note your reference to the "silver spoon" in my life. Did you forget, in your 16 points, my working 7 nights a week during high school, my nights of study during college days, my work every weekend and some nights during college and med. school, my 18 hour/day shift in the summertime, my

walking to college winter and summer, no lunches for 7 years to save expenses, my grovelling before Mrs. Westheimer to continue my scholarship, my lack of a bicycle and other toys during childhood, my selling newspapers from the age of 6 to 12, etc. ad infinitum. As to Mother Rosenbaum's statement about Walter, chiseller Milt has little room to criticize anyone, let alone Walt, from whom he chiselled disgracefully all during Med. School. As to Leo's opinion of me, I'm afraid you might be right and I promise to change toward him in the future. I went thru the same stage with Irv and Chip when I was younger and felt left out of things when I was younger, so I can understand it. As to Sophie's opinion of me, I have no explanation. Do you?

Attended a dance at the Contagions Hospital here. Danish and I have been going over there and playing ping-pong and they have been very nice to us. The party was quite nice and the food and orchestra elegant. I danced with all the pretty and not-so-pretty girls including Lucy, age 15, a student nurse at her first party, and the matron, age circa 45+, on whose toes I stepped mercilessly. Also all ages in between. Danish and I are like patron uncles over there. We're enough to give the older ladies a thrill and young enough to understand the student nurses, age 15-18 who tell us about their boyfriends and beg us to introduce them to Americans. Danish supervised some of the games last night and I acted as an unofficial host, seeing that everyone was dancing with the young ladies, if I had to do so myself. The kids were so thrilled about this party (all the important people—patrons and donors—in town were there) but I think the matron was more excited than any of them. It was a typically English affair with English games and special dances. *Statue Dance* (each time the music stops, everyone must freeze. If you move even an eyelid, you are out), *Spot Waltz* (if the spotlight is on you when the music stops you win a prize), the *Lambeth Walk*, the *Polly Glide*, *Old Fashioned Waltz* and others which I have forgotten.

It was all very charming and everyone seemed to have a grand time.

All my love to you, my good woman and to you both, my sometimes good children.

Your husband

Signed—Ben Felson

*[Undated, but
has to be in
March 1944 be-
cause of the
\$127 loss.]*

Dearest:

I still don't know what this \$127 loss is, but assume it is insurance. If so, it is not a loss, but an expense which I had anticipated. If so, don't be upset by it. I haven't had but one air mail and 1 V-mail from you in the past 2 weeks or more and am eagerly awaiting more. Please don't drop Steve out of school, darling, but get up very early and get him there. It isn't fair to him, my sweet, and eventually you'll have to get him to regular school at that hour, so you might as well get practice. Do the school authorities insist on kids not going to school when they have a cold? If not, I don't think a kid should stay home for a week just for a cold. It seems that every time you write, our kids have colds. You know a running nose is almost normal in children of that age, and it not a cold. An adult blows it, a child lets it run. If every time you blew your nose you thought you had a cold, wouldn't you be miserable. So please darling Mommy, don't let a runny nose make our children stay inside. Let them (I mean the children, not the noses) run outside.

I've had a day or two! Toothache, that gremlin of the oral cavity, has had his clutches on me. It began in the lower molar area 1½ days ago and I saw our dentist who advised an X-ray. And there I was, a roentgenologist, caught with my X-ray down. Since it was a bad ache, I decided to wait until Mon. before going to a hospital to get one. Sat. night it really went to town. I punched the pillow, grabbed at the bed posts, took a flock of aspirins, but to no avail. I managed to get a few hrs. sleep when the pain became so severe as to cause me to faint, but when it eased up a little it awakened me or so it seemed. This AM it was better, but I managed to get hold of the Dentist about noon. First we had a chicken dinner (no toothache could keep me from that—and besides I had to build up my strength). And then he went to work! After drilling for hours (at the end of which time I became religious—praying to God to strike this dental bastard dead), he finally stated casually, "I guess I can't save this tooth." He told me he would have to pull it and that it would have to be done piecemeal. Well, I thought he meant the tooth, but he really meant me. I went to pieces and lost part of my meal. He pulled, gouged, and cracked fragments off and finally resorting to trying to extract me from around my tooth by holding my feet. Finally he said, "There's some roots left. Let's go over to the hospital and have it X-rayed." Grabbing

at any possible surcease of pain, I willingly assented. On the way to the hospital, I casually remarked how frequently I had seen root fragments melt away on X-ray, but he didn't seem to get the point. At the hospital there was a good oral surgeon, who, without an X-ray, got me to open my mouth on the pretext of putting in some more local anesthetic. Then this tricky SOB grabbed the fragments and oh, I can't go on! I am now minus a tooth, my faith in the human word, and religion (God didn't strike either of these torturers dead). Tonight I shall dream of dentists, extractions, and pain. I hope someday to fluoroscope a dentist. I shall put Arsenic in the barium and laugh (as they did) when he collapses in agony at my feet.

During the past week, the weather having been beautiful, I have visited castles, country inns, pubs, farms, and talked with people everywhere.

[*REST MISSING*]

Thurs. Mar 30
[1944]

Dearest keeper of the fund:

I finally discovered what you meant by your loss of money when I received about 5 letters from you in 1 day. I'll bet you were plenty upset! Well, don't worry about it, darling, I know you didn't do it on purpose. It was much worse not knowing what you meant when the letters didn't arrive in sequence than when I found out the true story. And don't listen to anyone, not even my swell brother, when they advise you not to tell me something important. Remember, dear, if I learn that you are holding up important details, I shall lose confidence and then start to imagine all sorts of things. So don't spare me any of the unpleasant occurrences at home, no matter what they are. Another suggestion: don't make allusions to what you've said in other letters (as on this matter) because the sequence of letters is not always correct, and my curiosity is aroused. Your letters have been much better lately and I appreciate it. Unfortunately, I am unable to continue to save them. I have so many of them saved now that I'll have to throw away some of my few clothes.

We are still not all at our new permanent location, but I hope it won't be long. Not that I'm not enjoying myself in my present location. But I'd rather get back to work, as you might guess.

Tomorrow I hope to go down to see the Cincy unit, which isn't very far from here. So far I haven't gotten permission, but I think I can get it now.

Danish plans to go with me. [*Reference is to the 25th General Hospital Unit.*]

You know, I'm still the same schlemiel I always was. I keep losing things and (usually) finding them again. Let me enumerate: bicycle (found), pocketbook (found), knife (found), 2 pipes (1 found), gloves—2 pair (not found), scarf (not found), leggings (not found), cigt. lighter (not found), fountain pen (found), writing paper (not found). So how can I censure you.

At the present moment, Danish and I are sitting in a beautiful country inn (of which I wrote you once before), a short bike ride from town, listening to the radio. I have a medical book with me and will read it when I finish this letter. It is 2 p.m.—at 4 p.m. we shall drink tea and eat sandwiches. Not a bad life, eh? Yesterday we biked 18 miles and saw a 13th century country village. The streets were bare and well-nigh deserted, but for the most part the village is still occupied. It was very ugly, all the buildings being built of stone which was deteriorating and there was a certain sameness and monotony in their external appearance. I was very tired when I returned as this was the longest bike ride I have so far made.

Well, darling, that's all for now. Am enclosing a letter which Chippy sent me. Haven't written Jule Grad yet, but will when I get around to it.

All my love.

Ben

P.S. Tell Soph to send me more cookies! Got Irv's candy. Please send more salami and cheese—It was wonderful!!!

I like it too—Please keep it up. Abe [*Danish*].

Fri Mar 31

Dear Beautician:

How's my ravishing (or is it ravenous) beauty today, with her apple blossom skin, peach complexion, pomegranate lips, avocado colored eyes, and big tomato? Do you see how hungry I am for you? Or is it just plain hungry? [*The slang meaning of "tomato" at the time was an attractive girl, who was presumably juicy and plump; but is that the meaning here?*]

I received Irv's candy today, for which I would like you to thank him. It was darned nice of him and the candy is excellent, plentiful, and just the right kind.

Played bridge with one of our men against my landlady and another young lady of 75. They have been playing together for 40 odd years but we beat them (barely). They are better players than we, however, [and] she has been very hospitable as I remarked before and we have the run of the hospital.

Today I planned a trip to the 25th General but had to wait for the pay or not get paid until next month, which I couldn't do so I guess I shall go Monday. It is a trip which requires 2 train changes, and 3 hours, and the last train back is 5 p.m., so I shan't look forward too much to making it. Danish, Col. Overton, and a major may go with me.

You inquired of my two "enemies." One, the Major, has been ostracized by every fellow in the outfit because of his attitude, and now appears quite depressed. At a "gripe meeting" which they had while I was in the hospital, they jumped him mercilessly. I feel rather sorry for him and have gone out of my way to be friendly with him. The other fellow, the supply officer, is with the advance party so I haven't seen him for over 3 weeks.

Did I tell you about the educational system in England. At 14 a child must drop out of public school unless he can get a government scholarship (which are relatively plentiful as compared to ours, but require outstanding academic abilities). If he can afford a private school and college of course he can go on, altho he must have some talent in order to get by. This law is soon to be changed to 16 years.

Therefore at the age of 14, the youngsters go out to work in factories and hotels and shops. They appear more mature mentally than our kids of similar age but are still children nonetheless. There is practically no opportunity of working one's way thru college or university.

I ran across a tragic incident of this nature at the bicycle shop. A very cute youngster, age ___ [*apparently unreadable; original unavailable*] but looks about 11, works there. He is a very quick-witted boy with an excellent sense of humor who is now specializing in American slang and loves to startle the American soldiers with "aw, nuts "gee whiz" etc. He told me that he did quite well in school and didn't want to leave, but was forced to because he couldn't afford to go on, altho his small income didn't help much at home. He was definitely bitter about it. This is another thing in my book of reforms when I become president.

I'm glad my kids will have a better opportunity (I hope). But what of the millions of others.

Am enclosing one of Chip's V-mails. Is he getting pathologically modest? I can't stand it when he writes in this vein and plan to tell him so. [*Reference unclear.*]

All my love, sweetheart. I still miss you and our babies (should I have said children?) May our reunion be soon, though I'm not too optimistic. When will this damned second front start. We'll never win by air—not from what I've seen of big cities which have been blitzed. The Germans are too smart to have centralized their industries and they've had plenty of time to prepare for this.

Love and kisses

Ben

Sat. April Fool's
Day [1944]

Dear Gin:

Received 3 pictures from you in a letter. None of them are particularly good ones, and the one of you is miserable—that is unless you're slipping since I left. You'd never have qualified as a beauty expert on the basis of that photograph.

I have received a number of letters from my boys and girls of Ft. Harrison X-ray dept. which is rather heartwarming. You asked about the certificate my men gave me. Yes, the sergt. in charge handed it to me.

As to your complaint that you can't write long letters—I would suggest the following: set aside a half hour period daily, for example just before you go to bed at night, and write a short 1 or 2 page letter. I won't object at all if they are short but frequent rather than long but far between. Why don't you try tho?

I had an interesting day in a nearby large city. Danish, Telser, and I (yes Telser) went to a play [Time and the Conways, *which opened on Broadway in 1938*] by J.B. Priestley. It was very good—about a family, the father of which had drowned years before. The first act was in 1918 just after demobilization when they all are together. Their ages range from 17 to 25 except for the young looking mother. They are well-to-do and happy. One of the daughters begins to think of the future, which is the basis for act II. In this act, laid in 1939, the family is in financial difficulties, all broken up, the children are now all mean and unhappy. The last act takes us back to

1919 and is a continuation of the first act, and you look at each character in a new light. It was very unusual and exceedingly well-acted. We sat in the first row (4 shillings - 80¢) and I was greatly surprised to discover that every moment the actors were on the stage they really were playing the part. I even overheard them in their sotto voce conversations while someone else was speaking out loud, and they even whispered in character, even though the audience couldn't have heard their words (which I did because of my position by watching their lips and hearing some of the words).

We also had a field-day on food. We got off the train at 5:15 pm and had a cup of tea and cookies and then hurried to the theatre. Since all shows and movies here begin early (6-6:15 pm) we had planned to eat afterwards. Arriving at the theatre at 5:45 pm, we ate a couple of sardine sandwiches and another cup of tea. After the performance we went to a French restaurant which Danish discovered and had the following: excellent pate de foie gras—chopped goose liver, marvellous veal steaks, wonderful French fries (chips to you), delicious crepes suzettes (pancakes) and rotten coffee.

Since the coffee wasn't so good we decided to stop at another place that Danish knew about. They wouldn't serve coffee alone, so we bought fish cakes and chips (French fries) and when we finished, we were so stuffed we couldn't move.

We rode home in a compartment by ourselves and whistled and sang all the way back.

I was so tired on arrival that I barely got in bed before I fell asleep.

Today I am O.D. [*Officer of the Day*] and am planning to do some reading.

I hope you and the children are all well and as happy as the circumstances permit.

I have neglected to ask about Sel, Jane and the Madame, not because I haven't thought of them, but because it's trite to say over and over "give my regards," etc.

All my love all the time,
Your overstuffed husband.

[The play described in this letter was said to have been seen in a "nearby large city," where dad and his friends went by train in the afternoon. However, in the next letter, which has exactly the same date, dad and Abe Dan-

ish appear to have arrived in London in the morning. Perhaps he is discussing some other trip. It is also possible that, since all I have is Sophie's typewritten version and not the original, the date one of the dates is wrong.]

Saturday, April 1,
1944

Life in London continues to be interesting. Here is the second installment. Arose at 9 a.m., breakfast at the Red Cross at 9:30, to Px to buy gloves (a nice warm pair), thence to another X-ray meeting. This time the subject was X-ray therapy, i.e., one small phase of it. There were three lectures, all very profound and scientific but the point proved was a fact that we in America have accepted for several years and it wasn't important to begin with. I left in the middle of the third lecture impressed with the English, pure science, beautiful rhetoric and waste of time.

Returning to the Red Cross, I had lunch and then debated whether to wait for Danish who was new here at 330 or go to the London Philharmonic concert which began at 2:30. I flipped a coin, and since it didn't stand on and, I went to the Concert with an air corps Lt. Royal Albert Hall is a tremendous auditorium opposite Kensington Gardens. A tremendous statute of Prince Albert is present in the Gardens facing the Hall. The Auditorium itself is massive and arranged somewhat like the Metropolitan Opera House. The ceiling is very high, the seats and drapes, etc., are maroon plush, the seats rotate in a semicircle so you can twist around to face the orchestra or look up in the boxes above. This was probably done in deference to the upper crust. The place, while drafty and old is really beautiful. A large crowd had gathered to hear this concert, the program of which I am enclosing. It was the most beautiful concert I had ever heard, bar none. The Beethoven and Schubert, both of which I knew well, are most melodious and I enjoyed them immensely.

I returned by cab to the Red Cross and still no Danish. So I just had tea consisting of the following: marinated herring, smoked fish on toast, smoked fish off toast, smoked fish and potato salad, tomatoes pickled in wine sauce. Oh, I forgot, no tea, but Coca-Cola (almost the real McCoy). I'm now slightly thirsty and will probably drink through my gills as I flap my dorsal fin.

Which takes me up to the present. There was an air alert last night but nothing happened. It's amazing how little air raid damage I have seen so far, despite riding around in cabs and walking a good bit. Can't under-

stand it. [Neither can I – from Sept. 7, 1940, the Luftwaffe bombed London for 57 consecutive nights, destroying more than one million London houses. Rebuilding had to await the end of the war.]



Figure 5: 1940: Firemen at work on fires, the result of bombs dropped by the Germans, near St Paul's Cathedral, London

Fri. nite (April 5),
[1944]

Dearest:

I'm writing you from London after quite an eventful day. I'm dog-tired and my dogs are tired and a little dazed by it all, but still manage to get around without getting lost, even in the blackout.

I arrived by train about 10:45 am. After an interesting trip, conversing with an ex-RAF officer who was discharged from the Army following a plane crash. He was shot by the flak and his face torn to pieces. He received 6 severe fractures of both extremities. His face shows no trace of injury after

3 years in an American plastic surgery hospital and innumerable operations. His left hand is amputated but still useful and he has a slight limp. He was permitted no visitors for 2½ years and when his mother and wife finally did see him, he had a new face and they couldn't recognize him. He saw his own face after 6 mo. and tried to commit suicide and believe it or not, he doesn't show a scar at a distance of 2 feet! He drives a long distance truck for the Air Corps now. He tells us many men were worse off than he at the hospital. He has 3 or 4 metal plates where bones used to be!

On arrival, I checked in at the Red Cross Reindeer Club where I was billeted in a room with 3 other officers. I then went to eat at the Officers' mess at the Governor's House—(pronounced Grosvenor). In one large room there are 240 tables, each seating 4 officers. Thousands of meals are served cafeteria style and the efficiency is so great, that altho I arrived during the rush hour, I was finished and out in 25 minutes. The meal was simple but good—American food. [*I'm pretty sure he is referring to Grosvenor House, now a fancy hotel in Mayfair, used as a U.S. Army officers' mess from 1943 on; Generals Eisenhower and Patton ate there regularly.*]

I then went to the Officers' Px where I bought a pipe. From there I went to Selfridge's, the biggest dept. store here. I looked at their art gallery and tennis equipment. The pictures and rackets were too damned expensive so I just looked. Balls are not to be had.

Next I went to an X-ray meeting at the Royal Radiological Societies bldg. where I was the only American present. The building and most of the Radiologists were quite old, but both still seemed to be functioning nicely. Some swell films were presented and discussed. Since my advance notice had suggested that slides be brought, your husband brought two cases from his collection (for the medics Caisson disease [*the "bends"*] in a parachute jumper and pulmonary edema from nephritis—the nephritis was diagnosed from a chest film before it was clinically!). As luck would have it my slides didn't fit in their projector but they finally made it work. While they were doing this, I had to prolong the history I was giving them. I interjected a few semi-humorous remarks which to my surprise caused them to laugh loudly. Before I realized it, they were laughing even at things I didn't mean to be funny. For a horrible moment, I thought my fly was unbuttoned, but no. This English sense of humor has me stumped!

Anyway, the two cases were excellent ones; in fact they aroused more comment than any of the others and they even applauded when I sat down, which they hadn't done before. When you realize that this was the cream of British Radiology, you will understand how flattered I was.

I then had tea with them and the editor of the British Journal of Radiology came up and chatted with me, then invited me to visit his hospital, which I will do if time permits.

You see what a little (or a helluva lot) of nerve will do.

I then was escorted to the British Medical Society where I listened to 3 lousy papers on X-ray. However, the British are smooth, interesting and humorous speakers and their prose is breath-taking, so it wasn't so bad.

I returned by foot to my hotel, my feet aching from the long walks. I had a very nice dinner, then met Lt. Col. Overton (from my outfit). We went to the famous Savoy where we had cocktails and talked. What a swanky place! More later.

They've got good food—a dinner for about \$2 and you wouldn't believe a war was on except for the perennial mashed potatoes, beans, and Brussel sprouts. *[Many times I heard dad say that he had eaten so many Brussel sprouts during the war he never wanted to see another one, and I do not think they appeared were spared very often, if ever, at our dinner table. However, when he and mom visited me in Israel in the 1970s I made a very rich creamed Brussel sprouts casserole which he tried tentatively and then gobbled up. I credit Julia Child for bringing him back.]*

We ran into a number of air corps men who have seen lots of action and discussed their reactions to danger etc. Several of them had DFCs [*Distinguished Flying Cross*], purple hearts, etc. and they've been in all the excitement you read about. They're still a bunch of scared kids. They told us that when the flak pops around them, they're almost terrorized, but react according to their training, though afterwards they are weak in the knees. Those that have crashed or were badly shot up and were afraid they wouldn't get home also were scared out of their wits. On landing, some of them collapse and others cry. Many have to empty their bladders immediately after the danger is over. These kids are serious as hell, quiet, and a few are definitely nervous. They like to talk, not about their heroism, but about their ships, of which they are very proud, of their blunders and dangers, and of their mental reactions and fears. They don't laugh much about it either!

Sometimes they are fatalistic, at other times they dread their next trip and never want to see another plane. They worry more about fear than about fighters. And, oh, how they all want to go home.

On the way home, we walked thru Piccadilly Circus and the female commandos were hard to beat off. They've cleaned this place up, but the oldest profession seemed to be doing OK. They flash a light a few times, say "hello, buddy" and even grab your arm. Honest, honey, I fought hard for my virginity and came thru with only my chin elevated.

We returned to the Red Cross where a dance was in progress, but were too tired to join in. Sometime I'll tell you about these Red Cross dances.

Then a snack (including pickled tomatoes and marinated herring), then a little conversation, then to bed at midnight.

Goodnight, dear.

All my love—

Ben

Sat. April 8
[1944]

Dearest:

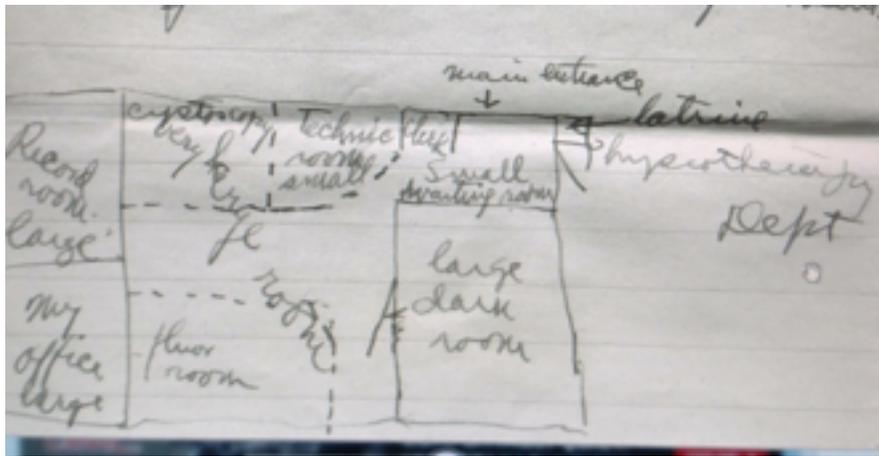
Forgive me for not writing the past few days, honey, we have been on the march again and are now established in our new but incomplete hospital. We are informed that this is our permanent station and are very grateful.

Let me give you an idea of our set-up. Let's see—where to begin—well, we are located 1½ miles from a village and about 12 miles from a city. The countryside here is spread over a wide area of low rolling hills and valleys. It is mostly landscaped by nature but the bare spots are being planted by man.

Our quarters are barracks heated by stoves which go out at night but the weather is not too cold. The latrines, showers and washing troughs are about 100 yds. from my particular barrack. We are sleeping on canvas cots using blankets but no sheets or pillows.

My roommates (at present there are only 4 of us but subsequently there will be 8) are not as congenial as I should like. They include Telser and Jacobs and some others whom I don't like too well, but I plan to hang out in my X-ray office in the evenings and, with the Officers' club, I plan to

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Our mess has been exceptional: we have had steak and French fries, excellent bacon and eggs (powdered but made into omelettes), good desserts, and excellent service. The Officers eat alone in one room so it makes it very pleasant.

We will have an Officers' club with radio, Victrola, bar, card tables, etc. shortly.

My X-ray dept. will eventually be excellent if we get the mechanical defects corrected. We have $\frac{1}{2}$ of a large Nissen hut. [*Prefabricated steel hemisphere.*] The unbroken lines in the following drawing are what we have now, the broken lines are partitions which we have to put in to make a decent department.

The mechanical defects so far noted are: a newspaper can be read by the light which leaks into the darkroom, no hot water faucet in the darkroom altho a hot water pipe is present, many light leaks in the fluoroscopic room, phone is in the record room instead of in my office, certain walls do not protect the personnel and should be coated with barium plaster etc.

I have been working on plans for the department, and as soon as I can get the executive officer to go thru my dept., I will be able to submit them for OK, and maybe get them done. All in all, I hope and expect to have a good setup and once I can be sure these things are done, I will develop my usual enthusiasm about these matters.

That's all about the place for the present, but I will give you further description as things come up.

I went to the city last night with all the other Jewish officers and enlisted men and a few gentile friends, including the Chaplain for Seder. (Yes, I went along but only because I would be the only Jew left in camp—I didn't want to be lonesome). We went to services in an Orthodox synagogue. There were 1000 Jewish soldiers and I didn't see even one from home! We then were split up for the Seder, some eating at the Schule, some at a hotel, and a few in private homes. Danish and I and a Canadian RAF Officer went to the home of a very nice couple—a wealthy man in the optical business. He turned out to be quite an intelligent and liberal person and we made a very nice friend here. We also had a wonderful meal including wine, hard boiled eggs in salt water, Knadle soup, fish, chicken, farfel, potatoes, fresh fruit salad, and fresh oranges. I was really stuffed—especially since I had eaten steak and French fries at 5 pm and it was only 9 o'clock when we ate again. The Canadian was also very nice and we plan to look him up again. He lives in the city and wants us to visit him and we will go out together.

Well, that's all for now, darling. I still miss you very much and love you more than ever.

Ben

Mon. April 10
[1944]

Dearest Ginny:

Well, things here are shaping up nicely from every respect, to wit:

1. Our plans for partitions, etc., in the X-ray dept. have been approved by the front office.
2. My tennis racket is to be repaired and I've found a place to play nearby.
3. I am captain of the X-ray laboratory baseball team in the hospital league and should make the hospital team in the E.T.O. league.
[*"Baseball" refers to softball throughout.*]
4. The countryside around here is gorgeous and bike rides are really a pleasure.

5. The food continues to be excellent, chicken for Sunday lunch, pancakes for Sunday breakfast, etc.

Yesterday Danish and I went on a bike ride to a town on the ocean shore. The weather was lovely and it wasn't very cold tho somewhat windy. The roads and countryside were beautiful. Flowers, trees and birds abound and I am told the foliage is reminiscent of Florida (but not so abundant).

We stopped in a little candy shop on the quay and the proprietor was very friendly. We entered into a political discussion with him and found him very vociferously anti-British, i.e., against Britain's domination of world politics. He had many liberal ideas including the one that all men are equal but was bitterly anti-Russian, believing any propaganda stories about the Russians that the newspapers have written. He thought that, with so many American soldiers in England, we probably will, and certainly should, take over the British Isles, then Roosevelt should get together with Stalin, Hitler, Chiang-Kai-Shek, Gandhi, etc., and make the world over into one international state with no police force! We discovered many similar squirrely thoughts in his head but the pay-off was that he was a Yogi disciple and tried to convert us. The book he showed us was written by an American "Prof. of University City, U.S.A." with a string of degrees from various colleges such as "American Univ. of Metaphysics," "Psychic Institute," etc.— Obviously a promotion of the type described in Sinclair Lewis' *Gideon Planish*.

We then went to the rocky beach and finished the salami and cheese (which I have been saving for such an occasion) and some canned corned beef. We then cycled to a nearby bridge from which about 8 men were fishing with ordinary poles and worms. We watched them for 30 minutes and saw them pull out about 20 fish from 6" to 12" long. Oh, was I itching to get onto one end of a rod and reel! We then cycled about 10 miles back home—tired but happy.

As I write this letter, my men are cleaning up the department. You should hear them whistling and singing. They're really happy and, of course, I'm well pleased. They are all anxious to get to work and take great pride in their department.

Just received 2 letters from you dated March 16th and 29th, and one each from Soph and Walt. These are the first letters from you in about 2 weeks. I'm not surprised about the mail being held up as ours is too. Now that you have our new APO No. (597) and we are established, mail should

come more quickly. I certainly hope so. Send more salami and cheese, more tennis balls, cookies, candy, etc.

Am enclosing a couple of English coins for Alan. If you lend Soph my letters, I won't have to write family letters and I can save repetition. I've written Mutty [*Marcus Kruke, a childhood friend later killed in combat*] and will write Jule shortly when I locate his mislaid address.

I'm pleased about your beauty clinic doing so nicely. How much money do you average per week? Will try to send Soph some English yarn if I can get hold of ration coupons which will be quite a feat. Everything worthwhile here is rationed so I can't buy anything.

I hope you get the Mother's Day flowers in time. Also my wedding anniversary wire. What you tell me of the children's progress pleases me to no end. Gosh, how I long to see them. I have been missing them for ages. And you as well, my own.

Well, I'll drown sorrows in work and play and hope our separation won't be too much longer. My darling, I love you so, so much!

Ben

Wed. 12 April
[1944]

Dearest:

What's cooking at home these days? The mail is still slow, I believe because it is coming by boat instead of air. My guess is that planes are being used for other purposes.

Well, my departmental plans are approved and I am impatiently awaiting installation of equipment. I am still having trouble in supply with the officer about whom I wrote you, and I am at the bottom of his list on equipment. We have had no flare-up in the open, but there's still a simmering under the surface. For example, he tells me my X-ray equipment can't be put in because it hasn't arrived yet, when actually only 1 machine is on the way while the others are here (and I can prove it). Well, I guess things shouldn't be too easy for me or I wouldn't appreciate them.

Glory of glories! I am playing tennis at 2:30 P.M. today with the enlisted man and it is a glorious day. The courts are about 1½ miles from here but we can bike down in about 15 minutes. I borrowed a tennis racket until mine is restrung. The enlisted man was in charge of the 28th G.H. tennis

team in Asheville and there are some intriguing possibilities of starting a team here.

Our ball team, the Pee-Rays, is composed of lab. and X-ray enlisted men and 1 lab officer and myself. We've practiced twice and have an amazingly strong team and great spirit—just what I like. Our league starts tonight, I believe. Did you know, with double daylight savings, it doesn't get dark here until 10 P.M. (11 P.M. in summer). Isn't that grand for me.

I have written to Morty Mann, Sid Kahn, Mutty and Jule Grad (both are apparently in London). There is little possibility of my seeing the latter 2 for a while.

We are now sleeping on steel cots with mattresses and I have rigged up my lamp to fit the British electrical currents and sockets, which are different from ours. I'm gradually getting some comforts and will soon be well-set. But I'll never get used to the distant wash-room, latrine, and shower. However, I have a plan. In my office I have a mirror and hot and cold running water and believe I will shave and wash in X-ray after I eat breakfast, since the dining room and my office are in opposite directions and there is a good sized hill between them. I always use my bike to get around the post, as distances are rather long.

Yesterday one of the Red Cross girls, who noted my interest in serious radio music, called me over and asked me to look at some of the records they got in. When she learned that one of the officers had a pretty good record player, she gave me 3 albums to play on it. So last night we had a concert in the club: Sibelius' 7th was cracked, so we couldn't play it, but Beethoven's violin concerto (Toscanini and Heifetz) was really beautiful. Walton's (a contemporary) violin concerto (Heifetz) was too modern to suit our tastes but still interesting and enjoyable.

Well, dear, I hope to hear from you again shortly. Don't send me a cigt. lighter—I bought a Zippo (the best) for 5 shillings (\$1) at the Px.

I'm looking at the pictures of the kids—Gosh they're handsome. Give them a hug and kiss from their daddy. Where is the folder of pictures you promised me? All my love to you.

Ben

13 April '44

Dearest Gin:

Got your letter dated 30 Mar and containing myriads of questions which I will now attempt to answer.

I thought my letters were very detailed, darling, and am surprised that you say you wish I had "Walt's disposition toward writing in detail."

I cannot tell you anything more about my period on detached service, except to say I worked in a first aid station for about 7-10 days. But there is much to add, and when we read these letters together after the war, I will tell you the fascinating story about it. Only 4 of us went on this particular sojourn.

As for my letter to Sel, the secrecy was not because of anything I put in it, but because Selma might not want you to know how she had been hurt by my previous letter. I'm glad she enjoyed it.

I will send you Walt's letters henceforth. I had thought you were getting to read Soph's copy.

The cookies were wonderful! I'm sorry I didn't mention that I liked them. I must confess that I thought Soph had made them and not you! This is really a compliment, my sweet, as you know what I think of Soph's cooking.

Since I haven't written Irv, I haven't thanked him for the swell picture of the baby. Will you do this for me, dear, and tell them I keep it on my desk with our children's pictures.

The Russian couple in London were Jewish. Telser and I get on fairly well, but I still feel the same way towards him. The Chaplain and Bloom are still close friends of mine and now that we're settled, I look forward to spending more time with them. The Chaplain is exceedingly well-liked here and is a wonderful person.

Joe Shaefer is married to a Polish girl who lived in London for a while. They have the Suchard (Swiss) chocolate mfg. concession for the N.Y. (formerly for Poland and London) and are quite well-to-do. Joe married her for the dough (a match-made marriage) in Poland, but has learned to love her. He is quite a vain and selfish person and rather shallow, but I like him just the same.

No promotions for anyone yet, except the Col. who now has "eagles."
[A colonel's insignia is a single eagle; unclear how this Colonel got an extra

one, but, as my brother Mark would say, “You can never have too many eagles.”]

I know very little about Telser’s family but suspect it to be much like my own, except smaller.

The Isolation Hospital was in my previous billet town, not in my present permanent location.

The dance for the townspeople took place in the Town Hall as usual. I have forgotten what we had for refreshments, but I recall that they were greatly enjoyed.

I’m sorry the cable came late; I didn’t realize it took so long to get there.

The Private Club in London was interesting. The women were there and we needed no real introduction. We didn’t take the ladies home, not only because Danish “is—another Felson,” but also because both of us are a couple of sissies and I, especially, don’t care to take chances.

I don’t know how the father of the Subuay family earned his \$16 income.

Well, darling, I hope your questions are answered to your satisfaction. I’d suggest you write me a letter of questions at intervals so I can clarify some of the doubtful points in your mind.

Words to “Old Apple Pie”

‘Neath the crust of the Old Apple Pie,
There is something for you and I.
It may be a pin that the cook just dropped in,
or it may be a dear little fly.
Or it may be an old rusty nail.
Or the tip of a pussy cat’s t and ail.
But whatever it be, it’s for you and for me;
‘Neath the crust of the Old Apple Pie.

[Sung to the tune of In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree, written in 1905 by Harry Williams (lyrics) and Egbert Van Alstyne (music), a sentimental love song devoid of any mention of pins, nails and flies.]

Please dear, send some letters to Soph for copying. She is yelling for me to write a family letter and since I don’t have a typewriter yet and it would only be repetition, I’d rather you let her take it from letters.

All my love to all of you.

Ben.

I miss you all terrifically.

14 April 44

Dear family:

I suppose I should have written more family letters, but I had hoped copies of my letters to Ginny would suffice.

We are about ready to open for business, and my equipment is materializing from thin air. My department is none too large but if my plans for alteration go there, it should be quite a nice place. The British workmen and engineers are very obliging and friendly and it's fine to be around them.

We've organized an enlisted men's X-ray and laboratory ball team called the Pee-Rays, of which I am captain and shortstop. We won 6-5 yesterday after yours truly hit a homer with 2 men on. Today all the enlisted men are calling me "the slugger."

Have played tennis once and if a tennis team is organized, my athletic situation will be ideal.

Went to Seder in the nearby city of [censored] and there were about 1000 "French-Canadians" in uniform there, of whom I knew not one. Had dinner in a private home—delightful meal and excellent food, from "Knadle" soup to nuts. I plan to reciprocate and take our hosts to dinner one day soon.

It was rather amusing to see the top hatted officials in the synagogue, and I'm told the Hebrew had an Oxford accent. It was all Greek to me but apparently everyone thought the services were fine. An American soldier was cantor for one of the services (there were 2) and was excellent, but I only got to hear the English cantor who was lousy.

Have been hearing rather regularly from Walt and have answered several of his letters, but he has apparently not received any yet. Also appreciate the letters from Chip and Soph, which have been regular.

I have written both Jule Grad and Mutty Kruke recently and received a note from Jule. If and when restrictions are lifted, we ought to be able to get together, though they are both a good distance away (about 108 miles).

My bicycle has been a godsend. I bike all thru this beautiful countryside, down to the ocean, not so far away, and get around 25 miles to a gal-

lon of energy. My longest round trip so far has been 30 miles, but each time I make a little more distance. I'm tired of visiting interesting old churches, interesting old castles, interesting old ruins and the like, but I still like to visit interesting old pubs, interesting old movies, interesting old plays and music, and play interesting old poker. I still get a kick out of meeting and knowing Englishmen and have a number of friends among them.

Whatinhell happened to the soldier vote? How can they get away with it! Congressional emasculation of the tax bill is also very discouraging to me. I don't hold very much hope for a future peaceful world, and believe America will be more reactionary than ever after this war is over. Well, I hope at least that they draft Willkie and Roosevelt runs again; I have faith in both of them, altho I should cast my vote for Roosevelt. [*Wendell Willkie, the only corporate executive before Donald Trump to receive a major-party nomination for president, lost to Roosevelt in 1940, ran again in 1944, but died of a heart attack just before the election.*]

Soph, will you see that Ginny gets to read this and to see copies of Walt's and other letters you receive. My letters home are too bulky as is. And thanks a lot for being such a Rock of Gibraltar as far as news/letters are concerned. Hey, do I get any of the cookies you are sending out or does Walt get them all? I'm jealous—well anyway hungry for your cookies. I get the *Israelite* pretty regularly and like it.

Irv: Thanks for the tennis balls. If they weren't too hard to get I'd like some more—but not yet. I'll let you know. The baby's picture was swell. Send me more. Good-looking baby, too!

Walt: Did you finally get my letters? Keep writing.

Chip and Helen: Will write you a separate letter soon.

Louise and David: How about some pictures of the kids. And more letters!

Leo and Ev: Congrats! I surmise you now are in O.C.S. Am I wrong? Keep writing.

Edie: Nu?

Rosie: How about a word from you. I only hear from you indirectly, via Soph's letters.

Love to all of you

Ben.

14 April '44

Dearest:

Today we are getting our department ready for opening so won't be able to write more than a note. The carpenters are arriving now—pause while I open the door—and things are shaping up pretty well. The British workers are as skilled as ours, but are not as thorough—too much work is unfinished. A misprint on the blueprint (or instead of and) cheated us out of barium plaster (a protection of personnel against X-rays) in one of our walls; I can read a newspaper in the darkroom etc.

I played tennis and beat the no. 1 man on the enlisted men's tennis team 6-0 and 6-2. Had a wonderful time on the brick dust court and it reminded me of New Orleans.

Last night I played ball, arriving late on account of a meeting—3rd inning—with our team losing 1-0. Our regular pitcher, an officer, couldn't come. The mighty Felson strode to bat with 2 men on and 2 outs, and on the count of 2 and 3 smote a lusty home run. I later knocked in another run and we won 6-5. Everywhere I go today, the enlisted men have been calling me "the slugger." Well, that's one way to become famous.

I was O.D. last night and slept on a treatment couch which is hinged across the middle. Oh, my back!

That's all, my love. Tell me more about the kids in your next.

Your devoted husband,

BF

Sun. 16 April 44

Dear Ginny:

Well, darling, at last we're getting our equipment in. We're a helluva long way from being completely supplied, but more is coming, and eventually we'll have a good X-ray dept.

Have had quite a bit of difficulty with the Supply Officer, my old enemy. He's been pretty nasty to me especially, altho he's #1 man on everyone's list. A typical example, which I got straight from the typewriter repairman: The worst typewriter in the place, almost beyond repair, was set aside at Capt. Moore's request "for something special." You guessed right—I got it. When the repairman balked at sending it to me, Moore told him it was his

(Moore's) business only. We won't suffer by it, however, as it has an extra large carriage and a lb. sign, so the registrar's office has already taken it off our hands and we will get their new standard-type Royal. It will kill Moore when he finds this out.

We were the last dept. to receive our equipment and consequently were 24 hrs. behind the opening schedule. However, on opening inspection, it was obvious why we weren't ready, since there was no equipment whatsoever, so the blame bounced back where it belonged.

I had another disappointment. My wall plans didn't go thru U.S. Engineers Hq. However, my men have scavenged around for bricks and we almost have enough to build our own walls. There are many loose bricks around, so I scout around and find them and my boys follow me with wheelbarrows.

The equipment so far received is excellent, some British and some American and my men are very thrilled about it. An interesting conversation with Hulse about my family. He seemed particularly interested in Walter and made me tell him more and more about him and asked me many questions. He finally said that Walt has always been jealous of me and gave a very lucid and intelligent explanation of the evidence. The reason he drew this conclusion with such certainty was that his younger brother showed a similar reaction to him and many tales he told me were similar to those I told him about Walt. Of course, this had never really occurred to me, altho in retrospect I can see that this is probably true. You know, of course, that he reacted very strongly against me when I was born because he had been the baby for 5 years except for the brief span that my brother Nathan was alive. And Walt always kept me from getting by with anything at home or at work. He was my boss for 3 or 4 years in the drugstore and he was much tougher on me than the owner was. I recall thinking that Walt was foolish in buying an X-ray machine and was a little surprised and hurt that he didn't send me the films to interpret. Hulse points out that his brother became a psychiatrist and pediatrician (just as Hulse did) but gave peculiar reasons for doing so.

When Ros lived with us, she used to always side against me. I can hear her yet, "Oh, Bennie, you've always had it too easy!" And I know that they were hurt when I got a Captaincy and he only received a 1st Lt.cy.

Oh, so many things are explained by this; incidents by the score come to my mind.

What's your opinion darling? Of course, it makes no difference, even if it is true, but it makes an interesting topic.

Well, I've rambled on for 5 pages. Gosh, I hope my children don't envy each other.

All my love, forever.

Ben

18 April '44

Dearest wench:

Your former doctor-husband is now a contractor, procurer (only of materials), and general factotum-supervisor in a department of busy-bees!

The motto of a new army installation seems to be "get it yourself"—and so I've thrown all my scruples to the wind and am proving one of the best "scroungers" in the business. And my men—well, they're all magicians!

Examples might be multiplied by the dozen—but here are a few:

As I believe I wrote you, our plans for brick walls were turned down by U.S. Army Engineers. So on my bike I jump, scout around the port for used brick laying around waiting to be thrown away, map them in my mind, bike back to the dept. and send a couple of men out for it. We almost have enough for our purposes already, and I know where I can get the sand and cement and masons.

The barter system is in full sway here. One pack of cigarettes borrows us a saw from a British laborer for an hour. Two packs and we can keep the saw here all the time and when he needs it, he will come down for it and return it when finished. A cigar gets us paint etc.

Actually none of this is illegal as we can get the same items by requisitioning thru our carpenters, as the materials belong to the hospital anyway. But that way, the carpenters etc. would be so busy that it would take months to do the job while my men would be standing around with nothing to do.

My men have made us a beautiful clerk's desk, a table for viewing films, are making a table into a beautiful desk for me (by putting composition around the sides and front, file-boxes, waste baskets, in- and out-boxes, etc.) They love the work and have fallen to with tremendous enthusi-

asm. They use scrap lumber, old nails, our own and borrowed tools, bartered paint, and bought sandpaper. And we shall have a fine X-ray dept. when all our equipment [*unreadable*]. Improvisation is the order of the day.

Sun. evening I had an interesting experience which I can't tell you about until after the war. In order to remind me at that time (I know you're saving my letters) I'll write the word glider down. Say, you are saving my letters, aren't you? Remember there are many topics that I can elaborate on and some that I might forget to tell you about if I can't use my letters as reference.

I received the enclosed letter from Walt. The last line left me with a large lump in my throat.

Well, darling, I must get back to my duties. I love you so much and want to see you so eagerly that I get very blue at times. And the children—gosh, I dig my nails into my palms and bite my tongue when I think of them.

Oh, I forgot, we chipped in and bought a swell radio which is playing beautiful Beethoven at the moment (cost £13). The men are enjoying this more and sing as they carpenter and paint. They are very proud of our dept. and go about looking for more gadgets to make. Only one has had any experience in this type of work—he was a sign painter for about a year, and now we have fancy signs all over the place.

I ran across the dental officer with whom Ros and Walt lived in New Jersey and whom I met at Kilmer (he's the fellow who told me Walt left Kilmer) last night. He dropped into our Officers' Club. I don't recall his name but he was in the 90th G.H.—Now he is in the 29th Division—a fighting dentist. Seemed to be a pretty nice guy. Will you tell Ros, please?

Well, my pet, that's all for now.

All my love to you, my sweet wife and keep showing the kids my picture. I would like another letter from Steve.

Ben

Thurs. 20 April

Dearest Gin:

I'm writing this letter with a gas mask on—we must wear them for 30 minutes at a certain time each week—and it isn't particularly uncomfortable. The men are still able to hammer and saw etc. and the hubbub here

is still quite as great as ever. We are making all kinds of equipment, shelves, etc. for the department. I say we, but all I do is tell the men what I want and they go to work with a will.

I've arranged for materials for the walls and have received quite a bit of equipment. It shouldn't be too long before we are able to operate but there is a shortage of film hangers and film. However, we just finished X-rays on our first 2 patients and they weren't bad.

I'm getting a little disturbed on the promotion situation. Some of the men have been told that they are getting their promotions (including Abe [*Danish*] to 1st Lt) but I haven't heard a word yet. I wonder I'll try not to be impatient—but you know how well we could use the money.

Baseball and work seem to be our only activities, the latter being quite the thing at present. Night before last our team got beat 7-0 due to the superior pitching and play of our opponents, but we hope to do better in the future. Last night the Professional Officers played the Administrative Officers in a challenge match in which a lot of pre-game rivalry and kidding was enjoyed by all. I was stuck in short-field and managed to make 2 fair catches and a home run while our team won 21-11. Since a big crowd of enlisted men and nurses were watching, I basked in the glory (you know how I love it!) and adulation of the crowd. So far today I've been congratulated on my play at least a dozen times!

By the way, darling, I guess my letters sound awfully conceited, but I hope you know me well enough to realize that, while my ego needs boosting more than most, I do not delude myself as to my own shortcomings. I'm just proud of myself when I do a good job. I don't mind bragging to my own wife or to some of my closest friends, who realize that I don't have such an exalted opinion of myself as some of my statements might indicate. Furthermore, I know it pleases you to be informed when I do a good job. What's your opinion on this subject?

Lately I have been missing you and the kids more than usual—I don't know why. I look at your photographs and get that lumpy sensation in my throat which is a combination of longing for you and pride in you. I don't get emotional very often either on paper or in the flesh, but I have been that way lately. The realization that I have a beautiful, intelligent, and thoughtful wife and 2 marvellous kids swells me up like a frog, then the thought occurs that I can't be with them and I rapidly deflate, a sinking sensation remaining in my epigastrium. Have you ever looked forward towards some important joyous event and noted how the time drags. Well, that's how I feel about

our reunion. I could bang my head on a wall in futility, as I see no prospects of a quick finish to all this. It certainly gives me a feeling of frustration.

Well, after baring my bosom to you, my own, I shall close with hands across the sea and all that. [*Possibly referring to a military march by that name composed by John Philip Sousa in 1899.*]

Remember how much I really do love you and keep telling the children about their daddy.

More than ever

Ben

Sun A.M. 23 April
'44

Dearest:

Got 3 more letters yesterday making a total of 8 in 2 days and enjoyed them all. I shall first answer your various questions, then on with any news I might have.

Leo's cracks at me and omission of your name in his letters has no particular significance, I am sure. In fact, he really was trying to be funny in his letter which you enclosed, so don't give it any more thought. I have written congrats to him in the family letter.

As to meeting me in N.Y. or my studying in England (I finally received that letter)—statements like these are so characteristic of your "you can't take it with you" personality that I emitted a loud chuckle when I read them. But it's one of the screwy traits that I like so much in you. I think it irritates you a little when I laugh about it, though. Anyway, darling, let's wait until the war looks like a smooth it's over before we make any plans of this sort. Yes, I know, "a gal can dream, can't she." [*Dad uses this expression in several forms, and there is a modern song by this name, but I couldn't find any source going back this far.*]

I don't speak of Joe Schaefer any more because I see very little of him and, altho I like him, he doesn't have much on the ball. Henrietta, by the way, has the pictures taken at the mountains so write her for them. Speaking of pictures, how about sending me some rolls of #620 film. Following this stream of consciousness, I don't get many packages because I don't request them (I have received about 3 in all). But I get so envious of the others who receive things that I wish you would keep them coming. So

send something about once a week or so, dear, if it's not too much trouble, until I tell you to stop.

When I say Steve amazes me, I mean his progress, his appeal to others, his memory, etc. He sounds so intelligent and grown-up for a youngster of 2½ years! I have so many things I would like to teach him and I feel so helpless because of the distance between us that I gnash my teeth from frustration. What about his athletic career? I could teach him tennis, swimming, baseball, basketball, and football. Well there'll be time for these things, I hope. But I'm so impatient. Maybe it's better for him as I might try to hurry him along too fast.

I don't recall not calling Soph when her kids were sick, but gosh, she doesn't have to bear me a grudge for this.

My blouse fits fairly well. The belt doesn't match very well, but it suffices for my purposes here, especially when my other blouse needs cleaning. Apparently I do look presentable—at least no one has made comments to me. But I do need you to keep me from slipping. We have our own barber and tailor, send clothes out for laundry and dry cleaning, and occasionally shoe repairing.

Up to the present we have had 15 X-ray patients and altho our equipment is far from set-up and incomplete, we have managed to do pretty good work.

Risqué (not riské) check this in the dictionary as I'm not sure.

I look forward to many bike trips with you and the kids darling—even if we have to have 4 bikes / Why stop at 4—bikes, I mean!

I've only made one trip to London so far. I'm glad you enjoyed my description of it. I'd like to go back but present restrictions and finances keep me from it. My finances are low. American standards don't go here because they soak us for everything. I've given up drinking because it's too darned expensive. Laundry runs me about 75¢ to \$1 a week, dry cleaning the same or a little less, a big beer 30¢, a bike lamp about \$2 etc. etc.

Right now I am sitting in my large office behind my beautiful desk which is the envy of the hospital. This desk was a large GI table with metal legs and wooden top. My men sanded and waxed the top, put beautiful corrugated roofing material on the sides, painted them mahogany and I've a prettier desk than most executives. I have fancy home-made book ends, in and out boxes (handmade), a desk blotter made by hand, etc. It really looks swanky and I'm the envy of all the officers because my men treat me so

well. They are making everything for the department including our brick walls. It's amazing, truly!

[*REST MISSING*]

4-24 [1944]

Dear Steve and Nancy:

How are my two fine children? I think of you all the time and wish I could see you both right now.

Here is a little book about Aladdin and his wonderful lamp. Stevie, when you finish the book, get a magic lamp and rub it and tell the spirit to bring your daddy home quick.

I would like you, Stevie, to go back to Nursery school soon. And Stevie, will you be good to Nancy? Remember, she is only a sweet little baby and she likes you ever so much!

Here's a kiss for both of you.

Your daddy, Ben.

April 29th, 1944

Dearest Ginny and Just Dear Walt:

I decided to make this letter perform double duty because of my time limitations. I'm so damned busy organizing things in my desk that I have hardly time to think. It is now 2210 hours (10:10 P.M.) and my men are still here, some working, some chewing the fat. They don't have to work at night but one just asked me if he could, as he felt like it, and now he's punching a hole in the wall.



Figure 6: Dad writes on the back of this photo that it was taken at Wimborne in his office and that we should "note the sloppy table – typical, isn't it." I'm guessing that the clouds around him are made up of cigarette smoke rather than the fog of war.



Figure 7: The hospital at Wimbourn was located here at the Estate at Kingston-Lacy; house was built in the 17th Century.

Everyone is in high spirits as our Pee-Ray (X-ray and lab) baseball team just won a see-saw game by 1 run in the last inning. Yours truly did alright for himself scoring 3 runs including the tying one, scoring a single from first base. It really was an exciting game witnessed by a large crowd of enlisted men and our C.O. As usual, I was the noisiest guy on the field and I forgot to wear my bars on my fatigues. I expect a call from the Col. (who is very G.I) in the A.M.!

Last night the M.C. [*Medical Corps*] Officers played the M.A.C., Sn.C. [*Sanitation Corps*], D.C. [*probably Dental Corps*] team and they were leading by two runs going into the last inning when we made 5 runs. In their half of the inning they made 4 more runs to beat us 14 to 13! In view of all the rivalry in all our games, we went around with our tails between our legs and so far today, I've been saluting all the Lt. M.A.C.s on a bet I made.

I am now a judge on the special court martial. I know nothing of the procedure but couldn't get out of it. Our first trial was yesterday when we acquitted a colored sergeant on a charge of beating up a white private outside a pub. The pvt. and 2 of 3 civilians picked this boy from among 40 colored men in a lineup (independently) so it looked pretty bad for him until 3

colored soldiers swore he was in a crap game at the specified time. However these colored boys might well have been with the accused at the time of the crime and were covering him up. The deciding point in my mind was that one of these witnesses had previously signed a statement that this boy was not in the crap game and therefore, knowingly, was opening himself to a perjury charge. I couldn't picture anyone being such a martyr. The others decided not guilty because the charges and specifications were so screwed up he couldn't be guilty as charged altho they thought he was probably guilty. Personally I do not think the charges would have been preferred on a white boy.

My brick wall is coming along according to schedule. Everyone who comes along stands around and watches my boys do their amateur brick-laying. There must be something intriguing about bricklaying, but I can't figure out what it is. In fact, anyone who has ever laid brick before watches for a while, then takes off his coat, grabs a trowel and goes to work. So far the English plumber, one American carpenter, Chaplain Powell, the boss of the English maintenance men, and a captain outpatient who worked his way thru college as a mason have pitched in and worked for about an hour each. In fact, the latter is coming in for physiotherapy for a bum shoulder and asked me if I minded his putting in an hour a day on my wall!

Walt, your letter to me has been read by dozens of people here and everyone agrees with me that it's the most exciting letter I've ever seen. The one dated April 12th is what I have reference to. It must really be exciting and very scary. I've had the experience of a number of air raids since being in the Army—in fact, at one point they got fairly close—but the enemy could never aim for us if he desired to. Once heavy bombs and incendiaries hit one fourth mile to our right, one mile to our left and two miles behind us, but I never got scared because the chance of my getting hit seemed infinitesimal. In fact, the area seemed so big and I so small that I stayed outside to watch the flashes. I was rewarded by seeing an enemy plane fall in flames—pilot inside, I discovered later. The difference between my situation and yours is that all that protects you from being pointblank target practice for the Germans is the Red Cross on your house. I can't figure out for sure what part of Italy you're in, but I have an idea that it's not a healthy part.

Ginny, don't worry about my above statement and my previous letter mentioning an air raid. Remember I'm perfectly cognizant of my duties as a husband and father and I wouldn't take any unhealthy chances. Since I can't tell you any of the details of either episode you'll have to take my word for it that I was quite safe.

Walt, all my best wishes to you. I'm very proud of your outfit—as much as if it were my own and think that their fine reactions under their “baptism of fire” are directly attributable to their C.O. Keep up the good work and stay well.

Ben.

*[Undated; should
be early May
1944 because
Manny Levin is a
new arrival.]*

Dearest wife:

I have been receiving at least one letter from you daily and I'm so happy things are going along so swell. I received 3 more pictures of you and the kids and it's oh, so good to see you all again. I'm breathlessly awaiting Steve's record (and the salami). Do you know I haven't had a pkg. for about 2 mo. and everyone else offers me their food, while all I can give them in return are my weekly rations. I feel neglected! You don't have to send pkgs so often but don't wait too long now.

I'll ask, at your request, in the last sentence of each letter for an item desired. Send what you want or can.

You impress me as a very busy lady these days, my sweet. Red Cross worker, beauty clinics, two kids, and no steady maid! I wonder how long you can keep it up. As to your lack of deep feeling for me—tsk, tsk. You wouldn't kick a guy when he's down, would you dear? Suffice it to say, I do miss you terrifically and I love you as much as ever.

I've been working myself and my men hard as of late. Dozens of snags have come up and yesterday was particularly a bad day. Only one machine was functioning, out of the 5 we had. The hip machine was being set-up by the repairman from the depot. One of the British machines was broken; one of the small American machines started to burn when it was first plugged in; and the other American machine had not yet been calibrated.

So, with a lot of X-ray work going on, two repairmen hammering away, carpentry work by 1 of my men, making of curtain partitions by a second, setting up of equipment by 2 more, and teaching Levin (my new student in X-ray), I practically went nuts.

So last night we all went out and played ball, winning 7-2. The old man couldn't hit very well but fielded in his usual stellar fashion. After the ballgame, we came back to X-ray, did a little work. Then we got our own pkgs out and had a party. Food was abundant and included my salami and herring, cheese of various kinds, coffee, cake, candy, etc. We stuffed ourselves royally, kidded around a lot and then went to bed around midnight, tired and happy. I'd suggest you wrap the salami better and send a whole one next time, as it gets moldy en route and even a little rancid. The herring was like a breath from home.

Night before last I was asked to umpire a hardball game between our enlisted men and an artillery outfit. The pitchers of both teams were of minor league caliber. I was given a mouth and chest protector and got behind the plate. A large crowd was on hand, including many officers and nurses. I got teased a lot, hit by 2 foul tips, thank god for the mask, ducked right and left on almost every pitch, guessed whether $\frac{1}{2}$ the balls crossed the corner of the plate, but surprisingly managed to satisfy both teams so well that I have been requested to officiate at the return game in the nearby city Mon. —unfortunately I will probably be unable to attend.

The game was very exciting including a pitching duel, a triple play by our team, a 10th inning home run by one of our men which won the game 3-2.

Well, I've got my glasses on for fluoroscopy, and the first case is ready so, so long dear.

All my love to you and our family. Don't work so hard.

Ben

3 May '44

Dear Gin:

Haven't hear from you yet; I hope I shall soon. How are you and the kids getting along these days? Gee, I'd love to be with you all! Are you sending me any more records? Please do, darling.

Night before last I went out and played tennis in the village. They have some excellent grass courts, so I decided to try them. Having never played on grass before, I thought it would be quite difficult and it was. However, grass proves to be much more suited to my game because it is very fast, so that altho the balls slide on the smooth grass, I was really able to

hit hard and blasted my opponents off the courts. They included one of our officers and the best enlisted tennis player in the outfit. A large contingent of the local populace were in the park, and when they saw the “Yanks” battling them around, they crowded about and watched. So naturally I was in my element! And I sure gave them their money’s worth.

Last night we had our X-ray party. The work is almost finished, so I got a bottle of scotch, the men got some food, I supplied the salami, cheese, and herring, Maj. Manny Levin supplied anchovies and canned weenies and tuna and we did it up right. Manny plays a fife-like instrument called a recorder and Lindstrom, with no accordion available, tooted on a similar gadget. Perella, a drummer by temperament and avocation, made some drumsticks and banged away on everything in sight. The rest of us sang, loudly and not too well. The liquor loosened our tongues and removed what little inhibitions we have left, but no one got drunk (too little firewater—I could have had more but thought it inadvisable). [*Manny later joined dad’s department in Cincinnati; he and wife Sylvia bought our house on Dickson Ave.*]

We had a hilarious time and went to bed stuffed and happy at about midnight.

Today we had an inspection by a general (2 stars), several consultants in various specialties. I think we passed them pretty well. These inspections are an awful nuisance. I don’t let my men stop working on patients except when the inspector actually comes in, but it means a lot of cleaning up as long as the inspector remains on the post, just in case he comes into my dept.

The consultants in X-ray have proved to be very nice guys and quite helpful. Some of the consultants for other services have been very critical and dogmatic about changes to be made, while mine seem to give me a free hand.

I’ll try to send you a photo of our dept. at some time soon.

Well, darling, I’ve got to go to bed. I played 6 sets of tennis tonight, 4 singles and 2 doubles and I’m plenty tired.

Pleasant dreams, darling.

Ben.

6 May '44 [*England*]

Dearest:

Received a letter from you today and 2 yesterday. A cigt. lighter arrived yesterday from Irv. Will you pay him for it, please. I'm sorry I had you send it, but at the time I requested it, we were told we couldn't get them, by the Px officer. Later he got hold of a few and I managed to get one very cheaply. I'll save this one and if I lose my other (as I inevitably will) I'll have the new one.

I had an awful day yesterday and needed some bucking up. Just to give you an idea, I'll list some of the things that happened.

1. G.I. series on 1 of our older officers who is cracking up. He stayed around and insisted on talking to me for an hour, so I couldn't get any work done.
2. 2nd G.I. case was a very tough one and I couldn't figure it out. Will repeat him.
3. The British bricklayer started the wall I've been waiting for, then went to tea and didn't come back.
4. I learned that certain lead doors couldn't be moved to a location that I had my heart set on.
5. I think I found another case of appendix stone, but I can't be positive as certain findings are lacking. I can't convince the surgeons who think it's a urinary stone.
6. I couldn't find a needle to fit a syringe for intravenous kidney study, so had to stick a guy 5x to give him the stuff with a smaller syringe.
7. An X-ray consultant showed up and disapproved of one of my plans. After learning that the cystoscopic table was on one of the wards, he said he'd rather have it in X-ray (my original idea). Now the surgeon won't let me have it back. He also disagreed with my diagnosis of appendix stone.
8. I got caught in the rain and was soaked.
9. Arrived late to chiefs of service meeting and the Col. gave me a dirty look.
10. My Sgt. in charge Lundstrom had a quarrel with some of the men.

Today everything is wonderful again. Three Britishers: plumber, brick-layer, and electrician arrived at once and went right to work on items I've been waiting for for 3 weeks. They're about finished now and on Tues. I'll get my new equipment functioning.

Nothing new around here. My men are doing excellent technical work with the facilities at hand. There is a movement afoot to get rid of the supply officer (one of my photographers and is chief of that phase of our work). He has a high IQ and pretty good judgment in his work. So far he has made most of the X-rays we have taken. The other men like him pretty well, but he is not one of the clique.

Last night I saw the play *Claudia* in town and enjoyed it immensely. I went with two nurses (one's not enough—or is there safety in numbers?) and they insisted (thank God) and on paying their own way. You mustn't miss the play—nothing profound but thoroughly enjoyable. [*Reference is to a comedy by Rose Franken; opened on Broadway in 1941 and ran for several years.*]

Received the kids pictures yesterday and they are wonderful. Also your picture looked lovely. Walt's picture—oh, my God! The leather photo case also arrived the same day. I've shown everyone here the photos. Nancy has changed so much I didn't recognize her. Steve needed a haircut but what handsome children we have! And what a beautiful mother!

That's all for now, sweetheart. All my love to the bestest family ever.

I don't have time to write David about his book. Will do so at a later date. I haven't heard a word from Mel B. Drop him a postcard, will you, dear? Don't pay any attention to Steve's wanting to be a baby again. Don't notice it. As to your working afternoons at the Red Cross, I have no objections to your trying it—but I can't understand how you'll manage it. I hardly know how to advise you. I suppose it can be done if you want to work hard. If you want to, give it a try and decide after a couple of weeks. You might accept the job on that basis. I like it better than "beauty hints."

Goodnight my own

Ben.

Tues May 9
[1944]

Darling:

Here it is late at night 10:30 P.M., after a very interesting day. I was called to Hq. for an X-ray meeting and arrived there at 10 A.M. I saw Red Elsey, Charley Ingersoll (Grand Rapids), Joe Filger, Nelson Cragg, and Bill Irwin (Cincy General—but not in the 25th), and several other medical friends there. The 25th got a rumor from Cincy that I was in India! Perhaps Walt's going to Italy was the start of a said rumor. I heard from Jim Mantz, Chapin Hawley, and Stan Garner (Station Hospital Ft. Harrison), who told their X-ray man to be sure and look me up. They are not very far from here and want me to come down. They told him some very nice things about me.

The meeting was on how to run an X-ray dept. and other things too confidential to mention. Red Elsey and Ingersoll are on the move again, I learned. When will they ever settle down?

I got back to the dept. and found that my men had gotten very much construction work finished just to show me that they could work better if I left them on their own. Now they have extracted a promise from me to keep out of their way.

Tonight we had a meeting on the conference (my men and I) and re-hashed some of the things I learned. Then some of the men (on their own) went back to work and I had to chase some of them out.

The next man I might tell you about is Auger, a French Canadian from outside Boston. He is the oldest man in the dept (34) and is quiet, meticulous, and a very hard worker. He goofs off some but hasn't had the experience of some of the others. He is very reliable and puts in much extra time. He never notices the time and often, without realizing it, misses his lunch. He stays in most of the time and thinks and talks chiefly X-ray technic. He worked as an orderly in a civilian hospital before the war, and doesn't seem to expect too much in financial return. He loves to fool with "enemies" and surprisingly, I didn't know a thing about it until it was well under way. We shall see...

In keeping with my previous threat, I'll tell you about another of my enlisted men, Sgt. (T4) Willard Sager—a Penn. Dutch boy from New Jersey. He is a waiter in Civil life and worked in a small joint in N.J. He has been in the Army about 2 ½ years, has a very friendly personality, and a good sense of humor. He is the leader and spokesman of the other enlisted men (the anti-Lindstrom faction) and is rather fearless of rank. He is the one who tackles Lindstrom when he gets a little too rank-conscious. He is not too bright a boy and none too good as a technician, but is a very nice

boy and a good, though slow, worker. He used to do some sign painting, so is our official painter. He is in charge of the darkroom, appearance of the dept. and of the personnel, passes for enlisted men, and in charge of the dept. in Lindy's absence. He apparently likes me very much, and talks right back at me any time (unlike Lindstrom). Yesterday all the men disagreed with me on whether to put a brick wall in the darkroom. They had all talked it over and decided against it. Instead they wanted the bricklayer to lay another wall in the X-ray room. We argued pros and cons, tested the light in the darkroom with a film and finally they proved their point and I acknowledged defeat. It was all done in high good humor and the men were highly pleased when I changed over. In fact, I overheard one remark to one of the dental technicians: "See, we can get our boss to see things our way, while you can't even disagree with yours." Sager was the spokesman during all this altho all the men had their say.

Incidentally, I find that I know even less than I dreamed about mechanical things, and whenever something comes up, I call a huddle of my key Sgts. and they thrash it out. They're quick to catch on to what I want, and wonderful at improvising it. Yesterday they put a figure of a man with 8 arms on the bulletin board. It was labelled X-ray technician! And they're offering to buy me a whip. But then they're always suggesting things they should make, so I guess they like it.

Last night Danish came down to the dept. with some Nescafe, date and nut bread, and kippered herring. I got some bread, cream, and sugar and we ate it all (with the help of 3 or 4 E.M. [*Enlisted men*]). A good time was had by all, as you might well imagine.

Today (Sat.) I've been in my office and all afternoon and evening, working, writing letters and reading. It's a good thing I was in as there have been a few Jeep accidents and the men have been swamped. So I've chipped in and helped them with some of the work.

I've adapted a technic from the literature and it has proven to be the simplest and closest to foolproof of any I've ever seen. This has been wonderful experience for me—to start a dept. on a shoestring.

Well that's all for now, dear.

All my love to you and the younguns.

Ben.

*[Undated but
must be around
May 1944 be-
cause of the
Bulldog refer-
ence]*

Dearest Gin:

Have missed a few days in writing as I have been visiting the 25th General and packing up to leave here.

I saw Red Elsey, Dave, Connie Baker, Stan Simon, Harold Schiro, Sander Goodman, Jimmy Mack, and many others and they gave me a grand welcome. They are located at their permanent site, a general hospital which will be a part of a large hospital center located in the outskirts of a small town, some miles from a big city. Our location will be much better.

(Before I forget—I don't get that reference to Bulldog Drummond.)
[This was a radio and movie detective popular in the 1940s.]

They are all very angry at their CO because he is too bossy and won't take anyone's advice, even about specialized professional matters which he doesn't know anything about.

I talked with Red about going to Cincy after the war and asked his advice. He wants to think about it before advising me. Nothing was said about a partnership. He believes that his job at the General is not too secure and the first thing he would like to do is make it more secure. You see, Sidney Lang's nephew is now in charge of the X-ray dept. at the General; Charlie Barrett is in charge of Tumor Clinic and Therapy, Milt Stucheli and Bob Garber have left the CGH. Once Red had made his job secure, he would like to make the General part time and set up practice at Holmes or in town. He thinks the amount of work Charlie Barrett is doing is more than he can handle, and there ought to be room for me part time in therapy. So my plans must remain nebulous. I still think I can make a go of it in Cincy and plan to try—so there!

Got the tennis balls from Irv today—oh, joy! And yesterday I was given a frame and press so all I need now is a restringing job at 30 shillings (\$5) and I'm all set. Will you please pay Irv for these tennis balls, darling.

I'll let you know my new APO as soon as I find out. Am anxious to get there and hope we get patients soon.

That's all for now, my love. Kiss the kids for their daddy.

All my love
Ben

16 May 44

Dearest Ginny:

Well, darling, my promotion seems to be on its way at last. Aside from a bit of red tape and a period of time, I should be a Major in about a month. Yesterday I went down for an interview at Hq. Many others were present and I was away from camp for 7 hours, altho Hq. is only about 1 hr. from here. My interview was by a Col. in the Infantry and consisted of 2 questions: "How long have you been a Capt.?" and "How long have you been in the Army?" Next I will have to see a General who will probably ask me a few more questions. I don't know when this will be. Then there will be a waiting period (Danish just got his 1st Lt. a month after his interview). Don't tell anybody until I get the promotion, dear as I wouldn't want to have you embarrassed if it fell thru (very unlikely). The interview should be a mere formality.

Last night Danish, Bloom, and I visited the Jewish family where we spent the Seder. Bloom went early and had dinner there while Danish and I joined him there later. Danish has been seeing them pretty regularly and is almost one of the family. We had a pleasant time there, particularly noteworthy in that we had our first ice cream since being in the E.T.O..

I have been working very hard lately, mostly administrative work. Things are coming a little slow. My possible appendix stone has not been corroborated on further X-ray study so I've lost 2 shillings in bets. Quite disappointing.

Steve's interest in his body is a natural and normal reaction, occurring, I believe in older children. As far as athletics are concerned, keep playing ball with him. I'll take this up when I get home. As to Nancy being a Babe Didrickson [*Zaharias, 1911-1956, world-famous woman athlete*], that ain't so good. We don't want a "muscles" in the family! "Peaked" not "picked." No small caduceus esesis are available here. What do you think this is, the USA? [*He is apparently joking about finding a plural for this word.*]

I would have liked to send Irv back the lighter as I had two, but after about 2 days, as so often occurs with me when I have two of anything, I lost the one that I bought from the Px. Now if you don't send me another

one, I'll be able to hang out to this one for the duration, I hope. I have a single-track mind apparently.

I find myself not working as well under pressure as I used to. I think that, after a bit, when things get back to a normal condition, I'll be able to get into the swing. At present, I find that I am organizing my work poorly or at least worse than I used to.

I'm a little surprised at your opinion of Roselyn. She is a very generous person darling. I hope you can overlook a few minor faults. As far as Soph is concerned, she will never change her spots and is so self-sufficient that she doesn't have to. And her opinions vacillate with the wind. She will change sides in her viewpoint with a little logic, but the next time you have to start again in the same place. She's like a curtain in the wind—when the wind stops blowing, the curtain resumes its normal position.

The reference to Bulldog Drummond—in one of your letters you asked me if it were alright if you _____ Bulldog Drummond. The last two words were very distinct. It apparently wasn't important or you would have remembered it. I meant by: "you can't take it with you" that you shouldn't try to do without things just because you want to save money. We'll manage eventually.

There is very little drinking here only because the stuff is hard to get.

A urology table is a special table for examining the bladder and kidneys and making X-rays of them.

Sel must have some anemia. Aaron Kantor would be a very good man to go to. Please let me hear further about this.

That is all, my love.

Goodbye for now.

Ben

[This is an undated fragment, page 3 of a longer letter.]

England is really beautiful and very friendly, from the ancient farmer who showed me how a threshing machine worked (and incidentally I was picking straw out of my teeth – passing it in my stool for 2 days after) to the formerly famous but now old actor (who had toured the entire world and still talks conversationally as if he were playing Hamlet). They have been friendly and hospitable. I visited the oldest inn in England (built 1200 A.D.)

which has never closed its doors since its establishment – I drank beer and had tea there. The only place I encountered any reserve and (I think) animosity was in a lovely country hotel where I stopped for tea, then returned for dinner. The place is now a residential hotel for ancient wealthy dowagers, to whom an American seemed an outsider and an upstart. These hoary examples of how to grow old ungraciously put on a haughty and disdainful mien when I smiled sweetly and benevolently in their direction and I soon tired of looking at their Adam's apples (their noses were high up in the air). I wonder whether people like that have to answer the call of nature. I'll bet their body wastes are eliminated as perfume!

Danish and I have become very friendly with the Constable and his wife and we are welcome there any time. It's more or less like a second house to us. They are being transferred to a country place about 25 miles from our new hospital and we look forward to visiting them. Perhaps we shall go fishing with him.

That's all for now, my sweet. All my love to all that counts.

Ben

Thurs. 18 May
[1944]

Dearest:

How is everything at home? I received a nice letter from Chippy; not much news in it, but interesting. I think he would like to go overseas (he doesn't say so in the letter, however). He keeps remarking how unexciting his life is and how exciting Walt's and mine must be.

I finally got a letter from Mel Bernhard, who is in England. I will try to get together with him in the near future, but don't know yet exactly where he is. Our paper is to be published in the JAMA [*Journal of the American Medical Association*] if they will accept it, or in the American J. of Surg. if the JAMA doesn't. Col. Coolissi spoke to Fishbein who said he would accept it so we shall see.

Soph writes of the Zionist-Anti-Zionist war in Cincy and I am rather amused and amazed that they piddle around and can't be brought together at this time. [*The controversy was over the creation of the Jewish State itself. A minority of American Jews believed it would increase anti-Semitism. David Ben-Gurion's declaration of statehood took place four years later, on May 14, 1948.*]

Time out for dinner.

I just got back from chow where I had a little discussion with 3 of our officers who don't believe in labor unions. Needless to say, I gave them hell of a refined type, though the 3 ganged up on me so I could hardly hold my own. I didn't anger as I've become more tolerant of bigots (bigots, not because of their opinion on labor but because of their other fascist viewpoints not discussed here).

I tossed a little baseball with one of my men, Perella, and then came back to my desk. Perella, a Cpl., is quite a boy. He's Italian Catholic, age 22, 6 ft. of solid muscle, and very handsome, a window trimmer at \$46 per [week] before the war. He played regular end on the famous Boston College football team of a few yrs. back but dropped out of school at the end of his 2nd yr. His actions and humor remind me greatly of Jack Jacobs. He's very quick-witted, a great kidder, very funny, quite talkative—one of the most popular fellows in the outfit. I like him best of all. There's nothing he can't do and do well. He's a good, though inexperienced, technician, an excellent carpenter, a passable painter, a "scrounger" of the first water, metal worker—in short, a Jack of all trades. He works hard, fast, and long and accomplishes twice as much as anyone else in half the time. He seldom goes out, always coming back to the dept. to help out someone else or finish off some work. Many days he has worked from 8 AM to 12 midnight, whistling and joking as he went. I've never seen him "riled" about anything and he's not a griper. I'd hate to have him angry at me, as he's very powerful. He has absolutely and positively no fear of authority and kids nurses and officers with a reckless abandon. Several of the nurses have shown a "strange" interest in him, but he seems to be willing to let it stop there. His best friend, Sgt. Willard, one of my men—he jokes and kids constantly, makes fun of me in public or private and generally gets away with murder. He always stops short of embarrassing me, but barely, and I eat it up and enjoy myself immensely. The kid's really got something and should be developed further. I'm going to try to give him some encouragement.

By the way, do you want me to continue to give you thumbnail sketches of my men or am I boring you?

Yesterday evening we were inspected by *** [Lt.] General [J.C.H.]Lee, Chief of American forces in E.T.O. The place was really shining and since it's a beautiful spot to begin with, General Lee was really deeply impressed and said so. In fact, ... [LETTER PARTIALLY DESTROYED] ... I got to see him—short, very military, swanky guy supposed to be very "GI" but looked more human. We were snappier and [more] "GI" than even they

expected and everything was split second timing. He arrives on the dot, set exactly the time he would leave and left exactly on time. The procession went according to rank, and every one of our officers reported in exactly the prescribed manner (we should be good—we've practiced it enough!). [*One military historian called General Lee "the biggest jerk" in the entire theater of operations, and he was regularly disparaged as "Jesus Christ Himself" following his initials.*]

Our dept. is functioning beautifully now, with 4 machines connected and in use. We aren't very busy yet and there is a shortage of film and film hangers, but we'll be able to get along, I hope.

The kids seem to be thriving, from their pictures. I look at them often and long for you all. You're as beautiful as ever, my sweet and I love you in spite of all your faults (sic).

Here's a kiss and my heart.

As ever, only more so

Ben

P.S.

Here's a story, new to me:

Mr. Cohen is on his death bed, and his wife and 7 children are surrounding him. "Mama, are you there," gasps Mr. Cohen. "Yes, Papa," she says. "Are my daughters here," whispers the old man. "Yes, Papa," chorus Sadie, Sophie, Ida, and Becky. "Are my sons here," asks he, very faintly. "Yes, Papa," reply Izzy, Sam, and Morris. "Then," shouts the old man, "who's ... [*REST OF LETTER UNREADABLE, but the punchline has to be: "Who's minding the store?"*] ...

22 May '44

Dearest one:

Have received your letters a little more slowly of late but I expect you're writing regularly—at least I hope so.

Why are you so blue? Remember I'm the one who's away from you and the kids and from home. It seems that Alice Schrofe's affair has you upset disproportionately to the friendship between the two of you. [*Reference unknown.*] Say, are you worrying about me doing the same thing? Mi-gawd, perish the thought! I thought by this time we had all this settled.

Don't worry my darling—you're for me and vice versa and that's all that matters. The only question is how soon we'll be united again. So don't let your imagination run wild from the tales you hear about married soldiers away from home. I'll have no quadruplets, I assure you. [*Reference unknown.*]

Now that things have slackened up a bit I've become slightly bored so I went out this weekend. I took a 24 hr. pass and went with Danish to visit our constable friends about 40 miles away. We brought some rations and they, expecting us, loaded up the table with good things to eat. I stayed overnight, passing the time by talking, relaxing, eating, drinking beer, playing with their 1 yr. old boy, and best of all—sleeping. It seems I was pretty worn out when I went down there and the rest, relaxation and quiet of the country picked me up a bit. We then came back Sun. night and went to the City to hear a Pop concert. It was just fair—I'm sending you the program. We almost missed the last train to camp and when I got to the station (3½ miles from camp) I found my back tire flatter than a pancake. I walked to the police station and had it pumped up. I finally got home about midnight.

I think I can now tell you about Stanley [*Telser, a Cincinnati doctor in the unit*] and his sore back, a long but interesting narrative.

It seems that Stanley had an X-ray in the States because of a painful back when he was 1st assigned to an overseas outfit. A congenital abnormality was discovered which did not disqualify him for overseas service (to his disappointment). This particular abnormality sometimes permits slipping of 1 vertebra on another but in his case said slipping had apparently not occurred.

Stan's back bothered him occasionally in the E.T.O. but apparently not very much, so he told me later. He did ask me for an X-ray once but at that time we were between hospitals.

One day about 3-4 weeks ago Stan came to me and said he would like another X-ray of his back. When I asked him if it was giving him trouble, he said not at present. When I asked him why the X-ray he became very mysterious and after some self-imposed reluctance finally informed me that he had learned that he might be transferred to a Field outfit (he has been very incompetent and unpopular here), and he didn't want to go. He was hoping to re-investigate his congenital abnormality and maybe get home on it.

To my surprise and his chagrin, I discovered on the X-ray that his spine had slipped and it was definitely more serious than he or I had antici-

pated. He promptly developed some symptoms and saw the orthopedist who sent him into the hospital. A board met on him shortly after and recommended Zone of Interior (USA) and Stan left last week for another hospital and should be home in a month of two.

If Stan had wanted to stay, he could have and if our Chief of Services had wanted him to, they could have kept him. So everyone enjoyed the happy solution which evolved. Stan outwardly tried to appear unhappy and worried about his back, but he was really thrilled to pieces. He took the last-minute opportunity to tell Danish what he thought of him and make a few nasty cracks to one of the fellows about Meyer Bloom.

As I see it, good riddance. I told him to write you and tell you all the dope. I promised him I wouldn't tell you the above tale, but it's too good to keep to myself. Don't write Henrietta yet—he asked me not to write home because he didn't want her to worry about his back. So sit tight until you hear from him, please.

Did I tell you we now have a pigeon named Algernon who craps all over the place, eats anything, and perches on our shoulders while we work.

At present a bull session is raging with the enlisted men in my office. It's raging hot and heavy so I guess I'll close.

All my love

Ben

P.S.

Will you drop Ros a line and have her write the wife of Bernard, the Dentist, from Lakewood, N.J. and tell her she might not hear from him for a while.

24 May '44

Dearest Ginny:

Steve's record still hasn't arrived. Oh, me, I wish it would get here!

We're working hard but need to finish a few major items before we're ready to do an expected land-office business.

I have held some interesting X-ray meetings including some interesting cases. I even had the pleasure of Col. Figueras' attendance at my last one. This doesn't please me too much as it stifles discussion. I talked right past him to the others—I hope he didn't feel slighted—but my feeling is that

this meeting is meant for the medical officers and though technically he is an M.C., he's purely an administrator and this was a professional meeting. Don't get me wrong, though. I was flattered to have him attend what I imagine is his 1st professional meeting in a decade. I tried to conduct the meeting in the usual manner, but the men wouldn't talk, strange as it may seem. I damn near called on Colonel Kinsey! [*Reference unknown.*]

The weather here is delightful now, myriads of flowers having blossomed out. They have beautiful gardens in the nearby city, so beautiful in fact, that even I—non-aesthete that I am—enjoyed looking at them.

Most things here are awaiting the second front—you know better than I, no doubt, when it will occur. At least my X-ray dept. is ready for it. You know, they talk about invasion jitters on the continent, and the morale effect of the uncertain date of the impending invasion—but I'll bet everyone in England has the jitters, too—only no one says anything about ours.

I've been staying in of late, doing some medical reading, and working in the evenings. Our radio is out of whack and I miss it. I'm not following the news too closely—seem to have lost interest in what's going on at the war fronts—and confine my non-medical reading to *Life* and *P.M.*

A lot of discontent is present in our outfit now, especially among the enlisted men who are being restricted, busted, or court martialed for any trivial offence. For example, one man is being court martialed for voiding on the side of the barracks instead of going to the latrine. It's true he had had several warnings, but to waste the time of about 8 officers over such trivia instead of giving him company punishment (restriction etc.) is ridiculous. The creating of a serious change out of this tripe is grossly unfair, as everyone in the Army is guilty of this at one time or another. And the effect on general morale is bad. Today, when I pleaded with the detachment commander about being so tough, he told me would come down to X-ray and read my X-ray films for me! But it is my business, because if my men are unhappy, their work suffers and that's bad for the patients.

Well, my love, that's all for now.

Your husband

26 May '44

Hi darling:

I just got back from my final promotion interview and it was approved, so it shouldn't be very long now. Yesterday I received by mail a notice to come for an interview (at the earliest practicable day) with the commanding General of this section (one star). So this A.M.—after an evening spent in polishing brass, shining shoes, getting a haircut, etc.—the men looked me over, passed judgment that I was OK, and sent me off with a cheer. I climbed aboard a staff car and was off to the general. I arrived about 10 AM, waited for a short while, then was informed that the general was out and wouldn't be in until tomorrow. My jaw must have dropped, because they said maybe his executive officer (a Lt. Col.) would be able to interview me. They went and asked him, he said OK, and shortly I was told to enter. I marched in, saluted in my Sunday best military manner (about Tuesday-best to a good soldier). I reported, "Sir, Capt. Felson, 28th General Hospital," (the proscribed words) and proceeded to listen (while standing for 15 minutes at attention) to a quietly-worded lecture on the conduct of a Major, the importance of said rank, etc. It was stressed that promotions were made not only upon professional qualities but also upon military bearing and manner. I managed to insert a few "yessirs," look him straight in the eye until he seemed to feel a little self-conscious about this talk, and finally he finished very weakly. He asked me one or two insignificant questions, remarked in a friendly manner that my promotion was approved and the "interview" was over. I bet I know more about him than he does about me.

I received that record yesterday and rushed over to the Red Cross immediately to hear it played. It was, oh so good to hear your voices again, even though I was embarrassed because almost every patient in the hospital seemed to be in the Red Cross and listening to my private record. I think you prompted him a little too much and you sounded more excited than he did. Please make some more records, darling. I'd suggest you pack things a little more carefully. Most of the juice leaked out of the herring, the salami was covered with mold and wet with herring juice, and the record miraculously survived damage. Most packages get pretty well-battered. When you make a record next time, try a "dry run" with Steve: i.e. let him think it is being recorded for about 10 minutes, then after the initial excitement and fear is over, turn on the machine without his knowledge and start a conversation with him—make a game of it. (I'd rather hear him talk than sing). And don't try to rush him—make 2 or more records instead. I'm dying to hear him say some of the things you write me about. His songs indicated a better (more adult) enunciation of words—but he never did talk baby talk, you know.

By the way, how did he react to my personal letter to him? I would like him to reply with little or no prompting from you if possible. I got such a thrill out of one letter written like this. What curiosity does he show now about me? Does he spontaneously ask about me? Do you think he thinks about me? It seems that all his bright sayings concern bosoms. What goes on in that little head of his?

Well, that's all I have for now, my pet.

I'll blow you some kisses.

Your ever-loving husband

P.S. What do people say about our kids? Soph doesn't seem to rave much about them in her letters, but talks about Elaine. I'm jealous!

Sun - May 28

Dearest Gin:

Haven't heard much from home lately, but I expect they are on the way. After playing the record a few more times on a good phonograph, and understanding all the words, I really got a big thrill from it. Please send more darling.

The past 2 days here were beautiful and I enjoyed the change immensely. Today was a scorcher but if one got out of the sun, it wasn't too hot. However, I didn't get out of the sun: instead I umpired a hardball game—and I'm red as a beet. But more about that later.

Yesterday I went to the city and saw a Little Theaters play: *The Constant Wife* by Somerset Maugham. [*First produced on Broadway in 1926.*] It was very good and extremely entertaining—about a wife whose husband cheated and she knew it and all her friends knew it, but no one knew that she knew it. It has very good lines and you ought to read it. Today the cast came to the hospital and gave the play in the Red Cross Bldg. I got to talk to them for a short time. It seems they are very much like our Little Theaters—ordinary working people who like to act. They did it very well, too!

Before the play I sat on the beach with some of the fellows and it was really a glorious view. This beach is simply beautiful.

This afternoon (Sunday) I tried to get someone to bike to town with me and go for a swim or play tennis but couldn't find a soul. Danish would

have gone, but he was working. So instead, I umpired between the 28th and 48th Generals. Woe is me!

The game was close, hard-fought all the way, and exciting. A lot of money was bet and our team lost 5 to 4. And did everyone give the umpire hell! Wow, I caught it from all sides. Some nurses from the 48th were particularly vicious, even going so far as to yell and applaud when I got hit by a foul tip on the arm! I thought the Brooklyn Dodgers were playing the N.Y. Giants. I made a few blunders that I know about and probably a lot that I didn't know about. But I wasn't partial to either team. I was called everything from a robber to S.O.B. and I don't mean sand on the beach. I rather enjoyed it, though, not losing my temper in spite of all the provocation. And when they yelled the loudest, I looked over and grinned at them and you should have heard them scream and boo! Baseball is a wonderful game, no doubt. I'm glad they don't sell soft drinks in the E.T.O. [*Probable reference to glass bottles being thrown.*]

Which brings me to the present. I'm sitting in my office, sunburned and hot, trying to figure out what to do next as far as the dept. is concerned. We expect to be one of the busiest depts. in the hospital when D-Day arrives and our darkroom can only dry a certain inadequate number of films per day. So I have to figure out a place to hang films outside. If it rains, woe is me. It's like hanging out the laundry. And I don't know how much dust will cling to the films.

Well, I think I'll knock off and read some *P.M.* They're sure giving it to Ham Fish aren't they. And he really deserves it. [*Hamilton Fish was a Republican Congressman from New York who was accused of anti-Semitism for a remark he made about Jews being in favor of Pres. Roosevelt's New Deal.*]

All my love, to the sweetie. Keep writing.

Ben

Note the new APO no. 143

1 June 44

Dear Madame, [*Referring to his mother-in-law, Ida Raphaelson; can't explain the formality.*]

Thanks for your letter. I enjoyed it very much. Ginny tells me you and she are getting along much better now, and it's a good thing, too. I think you and your daughter are much alike—both stubborn women!

What do you think of your 2 grandchildren by now? I'll bet you think they don't even need their father anymore. Well, don't spoil them too much as I plan to whip it all out of them when I get back.

I get very homesick when I think of my family, but at least I know that they're safe and in good hands. Don't let Virginia do anything rash, like buying a house, renting an apartment, buying a country home, etc.

All is well here, at least as well as can be expected under the present circumstances.

Well, young lady, keep the kids well fed and happy until I get home. And don't let Jake go to the 10¢ store.

Goodbye for now.

Your son in law

Ben.

4 June '44

Dearest Ginny:

I've been quite busy and am now so I won't have time to write much.

Received a letter from Chippy today but haven't heard from you for 4 days, when I got 5 letters at once!

Here are answers to some of your questions.

1. I received the pickled herring-salami pkg, while I was writing the letter complaining about no packages.
2. Does stop backwards spell pots or tops?
3. Our photographic work is a sideline with us; we develop and print pictures for the officers and enlisted men on the post.
4. What's this undue interest in Harry Schwartz? Tsk, tsk.
5. I haven't received any coconut cookies yet.
6. Enjoyed your mother's letter very much. Will write another family letter soon and mention David specifically.

7. Prof. Ellwood's article on military training is good for reactionaries but bad for the people. He starts off on the (incorrect—my opinion) premise that it's bad to emulate Russia. I'm not afraid of this—and not too optimistic, as you know, that letting things take their natural course is the best policy. You're right about his idea of military training. [*Ellwood was a sociology professor who opposed compulsory military training on the ground that it led to class warfare, as in the Soviet Union.*]

8. The stone in the appendix was not operated, but on re-examination I decided myself that it wasn't in the appendix, and consequently lost a 2 shilling bet.

9. British coins — American equivalent

1 penny (1d)	2¢
threepence (3d) called threepenny bit	6¢
sixpence (6d)	12¢
1 shilling (1s) or 1 bob =12 pence	20¢
2 shillings	40¢
half-crown 2 ½ shillings	50¢
10 shilling note	\$2.00
pound note £ 20 shillings	\$4.00

10. We operate on double-summer time. It is daylight until after 11 PM!

11. Army time starts at 0000 - midnight and runs straight thru to 2359 (1 min. to midnight). 6 PM = 1800 hrs.

12. I don't see any point in your continuing your beauty work and suggest you give it up. It certainly doesn't pay you to wear yourself out and I never liked it too well, anyway.

13. Sorry you doubted my flowers; I can't understand the mixup.

That's all for now, my adorable one. Oh, I forgot another point or two.

14. We use simple weight printing paper, but it doesn't make much difference. I'm enclosing some letters of Walt's as requested. Please give to Soph.

6 June '44

Dearest Ginny:

Well, it finally arrived—the invasion started apparently with a bang early this A.M. We have apparently had our first patient, but now there's a big pause before we get more—the calm before the storm.

Thank God, at least my little dept. is ready for it. We put on some finishing touches in today's hell; the hospital has done a lot of evacuation. Now bring on your casualties! And I hope that there aren't too many.

The news was received here with mixed emotions. Some were excited, others calm. I was a little bit of both. I kidded around disbelievingly when informed at breakfast that a new patient said it had started. The next report was quoting Berlin, and finally the report from Eisenhower confirmed it! But we all had reason during the night to feel that it had started.

I insisted we keep the radio off during working hours, but towards the end of the A.M. I got excited and turned the radio on to listen to the news. Since then we have all been on pins and needles.

The British radio tells us little news, about 5 or 10 minutes every hour. I can just imagine all the radios at home blaring full blast 24 hour news reports, special commentators! None of that is going on here. Mostly music, no interruptions, news flashes, etc. Most annoying. In addition many of the stations are broadcasting in French and German. We hear the continental broadcasts, too, but unfortunately I can't understand them, either.

Gosh, I hope this front doesn't prove too costly in lives. I'm afraid the invaders will die like flies as they charge up the beaches. No doubt the enemy is prepared for the worst, and I'm sure they'll get it, but in the process, many youngsters are going to die. It's a helluva note.

Again I feel that I should like to be playing a more active part in the fight. My sense of the romantic and adventure makes me envious of Walt's experience in Africa and I should like very much to be in on this trip to the continent. Don't worry, darling, I couldn't go if I tried, but I do have the same feeling I had when I told you I wanted to go overseas.

My sweet, I don't believe I told you the whole story about my getting into an overseas outfit. At this safe distance, I think I can tell you, especially when you must realize how fortunate I am in not being in Walt's shoes, and that I would eventually have gone anyhow.

Well, it seems that I sent a letter to the Surgeon General's office and the Chief Consultant in Radiology in the US Army requesting removal from the Billings' Pool and transfer to an overseas outfit. [*Billings and Pool doctors are mentioned earlier without explanation; they were apparently not part of a specific unit.*] Within 2 weeks my orders came thru. I think this is more than coincidence. Anyhow, darling, I couldn't help it, so forgive me.

I hope you and the kids are doing as well as in the past. All my love, dear, and for gosh sakes, don't worry about me—I am definitely not in any danger zone.

Goodnight my love

Ben

P.S. My new APO no. (no, I haven't moved again) is 143

9-June '44

Dearest Ginny:

At last things are pretty quiet. We only had 25 patients today (Sunday), and only about 50 yesterday.

A big inspection is due tomorrow and we're getting ready for it this evening. This type of inspection is not the dirt-seeking, reporting type which I abhor so much, but a thorough record-searching, financial-accounting, morale-investigating, inventory-checking inspection of which I heartily approve. I hope this one hits the X-ray dept. Most of the previous ones, the other type, to my great relief, have skipped over us.

This afternoon I indulged in the rare luxury of reading in bed and an afternoon nap. I read *P.M., Life*, and a couple of scientific journals and slept for an hour and a half. The other men in my quarters frequently get to nap during the day or early evening but I guess I put in twice the hours they do at work.

One of my men has to have a wisdom tooth pulled and we've been scaring him, but good. They just told him that the dentists pulled part of the jaw out on a patient last week. I just told him about my experience. Now they're describing the various implements to him. Gee, he's scared to death; I better put a stop to this. Now they're talking about fainting in the chair. I just told him that if he didn't hold still they would use the scrotal clamp on him. "What's that." "Oh, that's a clamp they put around your testicles, tighten a little, then you don't dare move." Now they're telling him that the dentists here aren't very experienced, and one of the men just remind-

ed him of an X-ray patient at Moore General who was sensitive to Novocain! He's listening to all this and is pretty gullible to boot. I'll take him aside later and tell him we're only kidding.

Speaking of sensitivity, to add to my bad luck of this week, I had a severe reaction to kidney dye given in the vein [*of a patient, not our radiologist*]. Certain rare cases of sensitivity, as you know, do occur. It so happened that either [*Manny*] Levin or our G.U. [*genito-urinary doc*] man have been doing these inspections and they never take any precautions. However, neither of them were present yesterday afternoon so I went ahead. As is my custom, I dropped a little in the eye to test for sensitivity, and he showed a slight degree. Early in my X-ray work I would have cancelled the examination, but at our previous hospital we had 2 patients who were slightly sensitive to the eye test and I turned them back. The next day the G.U. man did it himself and neither Pt. had a reaction. So I decided to proceed cautiously. I got a syringe with adrenaline all set (this is the antidote), then gave about 2 drops in the vein and waited a full minute. Nothing happened. I gave a few more drops (total ½ cc) and waited 30 more seconds. then the Pt. said he felt funny all over, turned very blue and began to gasp for air. By the time he said "funny" I had given the adrenaline and within a minute his color had returned to normal. During this minute, however, his breathing stopped for about 15 seconds. Needless to say, I was weak in the knees for hours afterwards, but so was he. Small consolation, but if either the G.U. man or Levin had given the stuff, we would very likely have had a dead patient, since they give it too rapidly. They'll be slower and more careful from now on, I assure you!

Yesterday I saw the play *Squaring the Circle*, program enclosed. [*Play by Valentine Katayev, written in Russian, produced on Broadway in 1935.*] The play was excellent, but the acting was so "hammy" that it was ruined. Danish and I went in together and had lobster (fresh) before the show and good fried chicken afterwards. When we got back we went to the Sat. night party at our Officers' club and had eats and cokes with ice in them. We didn't indulge in alcohol altho plenty was flowing. We just weren't in the mood. We went to bed tired and gastronomically happy.

Danish is a very swell guy but not too well liked because he knows the weaknesses and secrets of many of the officers and kids them ironically. Since I understand him, this sort of kidding doesn't bother me. You know the type of joshing I am referring to: kidding, but with an element of truth in it. He has discovered the schemes and undercover machinations of many of the men—and are they a bunch of "Little Foxes." Many are bucking for

higher rank, more power, etc. It's disgusting, ordinarily I wouldn't believe these things, but Danish's evidence is incontrovertible.

What is Nancy saying these days? I am very pleased that she and Steve are getting on so well together. Please, please send me some more pictures. How about ordinary snapshots of the kids at play. Also some of yourself.

Goodnight my darling

Ben

Thurs. 13 June

Dear Gin:

Here I sit on a quiet cool evening in my office, the doors open, and Lindy playing soft music on a borrowed accordion. Not a bad life, eh dear?

Things are still quiet—this time I don't think it's the one before the storm, as we're pretty well filled up and don't have room for many more.

I just had dinner in town with 2 of the guys. We thought we'd try some outside cooking for a change. It sure made us appreciate our mess: Boiled potatoes, boiled cauliflower, and boiled fish, no salt, no sauce—The worst I've ever eaten in England.

I've taken some more photos, some of which are pretty good—I'll forward them to you as soon as they are censored.

I'll answer some of your questions in this letter:

What about all these doctors—are you getting neurotic again. First the dentist, then the chiroprapist, then the otologist (ear doctor), now the orthopedist for your back. I guess you'll get a quick cure when I arrive home, won't you honey? I know that I'll be cured of all my ailments when I hit home sail.

Don't worry about robot planes. I haven't seen or heard one yet. We had an alert some days ago, but nothing happened. This is the only alert we've had in the past 3 or 4 weeks.

I don't like Steve's fear of trains and plan to talk to Hulse about it. It has some significance—maybe related to my leaving on a train or something similar.

So Nancy recognized her daddy's picture! It makes me swell with pride (I said swell). [*Dad underlined the "w" so it wouldn't be taken for an "m."*]

I've been writing you regularly, but mail between May 22 and June 6 was very likely held up. The longest I ever went without writing was 4 days.

You sent me Prof. Ellwood's article on military training.

I received Hy Senturia's letter from you and enjoyed it. He's a good guy and I appreciate him more and more as I look back at our association.

Spelling: Tschaikovsky
Concerto (from Concherto)
Chester, not Chestor

The *P.M.s* containing Wilke's and Churchill's son's articles haven't reached me yet. My *P.M.s* and *Lifes* are about 1 mo. old when I receive them.

Don't be perturbed when people like Rosalyn or Ossie Elsey don't follow the conventions of daily life. Just continue to make the advances, because—I assure you—you will never be calling where you're not wanted. People like to have you around, my dear.

Your ear culture was negative. By all means get Okrent a nice gift. He deserves it for taking care of our kids and for the peace of mind it gives me to know they are in cautious and competent hands. It gives me a lot of consolation. [*Dr. Okrent was our family pediatrician and delivered Mark and Rich, who remembers he had rough hands.*]

Well, that's all for now my dear. A kiss and a dozen more for yourself. I miss you!!!

Ben

Wednesday,
June 14th
D-day + 8

Note new APO 350

Dearest Gin:

Received a couple of letters today after a period of about 10 days. It was so good to hear from home. Steve's letter thrilled and amused me immensely. What a guy!

(30 hours later) Now, have I been busy! Had 2 hours sleep in this interval but feel quite fresh after a good shower (my first in 5 days).

Let's see, where was I. Oh, yes, about Steve. He sounds like a peach of a kid. And Nancy, how I'd love to play with her. It leaves me very sad when I realize she doesn't even know me. And how time flies—Steve's 2 years and 8½ months and Nancy's 1 year, 4 months (have I got them both correct?) And I've been gone about 7 months, and just thinking of them and you really saddens my heart. The men kid me when I read them excerpts from your letters, especially the parts about the kids. They pull out their hankies asking me if I don't want to blow. They know how blue I get.

The radio has been very gratifying. Since I work 20 hours, sleep 4, and only leave the dept. for meals (I sleep in the dept., too), it is my only recreation for the present. The music is excellent and we even get programs from the states on records, e.g., *Fred Allen*, *Jack Benny*, *Basin St. Blues*, etc., on the American Forces program. [*NBC's Blue Network had a radio show called Chamber Music Society of Lower Basin Street, playing on Wednesdays at 9 p.m.; this could be the reference.*] We also listen to the Germans broadcast in English, including Lord Haw Haw and others. Tonight they say Rome and Vatican City have turned "Red." They have opened 1 church and that was a Jewish one. They say the French have welcomed the American Forces in a very cool fashion, etc. I can't see why they waste their time broadcasting such tripe, but I expect quite a few people with and without fascist tendencies do believe them. [*"Lord Haw Haw" was William Joyce (1906–1946), an American-born Irish-British Fascist politician and Nazi propaganda broadcaster to the United Kingdom. He was convicted of treason in 1945 and hanged the next year.*]

Our business has been booming in the past week, and I mean booming. We have gone over 36 hours, never being without at least 2 patients in the dept. and that includes night. We have it organized pretty well, the men being divided into 2 shifts, Manny Levin helping me during the day and at night I work alone. You see, I am the only one I didn't take care of. Manny can read the simple fractures and wounds, but when it comes to skulls and chests, etc., he is not much help, so I have to be nearby. But I am surprised how well I feel with consecutive nights of broken or lost sleep. I have averaged about 4 hours a night.

There have been many compliments from officers and nurses at the speed with which we put out the reports and films. The reports hit the wards about 40 minutes after the film is made and the films themselves arrive about 20 minutes later. Of course a few films and reports have been temporarily lost, especially when patients are transferred from one ward to another. Under the present snafu ward conditions, the registrar and wards don't know who they have on which ward and so the poor X-ray chief has to run them down by various stratagems, sometimes going so far as calling each ward in the whole goddamn hospital.

My X-ray consultant came down a couple of days ago, looked over my "system" and paid me the high compliment of copying some of my ideas for some of the other hospitals. He couldn't believe we had X-rayed the no. of cases I declared we had until I showed him. He copied down the figures meticulously to show to other places.

The casualties here have been less numerous but more severe lately. This indicates that we are now getting the cases which were heretofore too sick to move back from the forward echelons. And some of them are desperately ill, poor fellows. So far we have had almost no deaths, but no doubt there have been plenty of these up at the front.

I have learned that the Army medical setup is an excellent one from the standpoint of organization. These casualties, despite what must have been tremendous numbers, have been treated quickly and efficaciously, evacuated early, and from front to rear, receive modern medical care beyond what I could have previously [*thought?*] was possible.

I have learned many things about organizing a department since being in this army, but I was never prepared for the tremendous task which fell on my shoulders. I gradually stripped the dept. to the waist, made some radical changes which really hurt me to do (e.g. send loose X-rays to the ward, etc.) but they worked. My men have amazed me with the speed with which they put excellent X-rays out and our morale is high. It is especially gratifying to know that our work is so important that practically no patient leaves this hospital without an X-ray. The patients, going thru all this ordeal of surgery, evacuation and X-rays have shown remarkable fortitude, and at this stage seem to think only of material things: food, sleep, ease of pain, etc.

They have had some hair-raising experiences; ships striking mines, bombs and grenades blowing up all around them, etc. One kid and a captain were taken prisoner, both injured and moved toward the rear slowly.

They ate sporadically and slept little. On the 3rd day, after no food for 24 hours, their captain [*captor? Original unavailable.*] went to look for food, leaving them unguarded. They were picked up by the French underground who hid them in caves, fed them well, and finally, 2 days later, the Americans arrived and sent them to the rear. They told us that the Nazis appeared scared to death and were almost frantic in their speed to get away from the fighting.

We had a French member of the underground who was shot by a sniper while helping paratroopers and have had several German prisoners, including a Russian and a Pole who were forced to fight by the Nazis. They were very happy to be captured. A colonel, first to receive the D.S.C. [*Distinguished Service Cross*] in the invasion, just came in for an X-ray. His leg will probably be lost. I don't know why he is getting the medal yet. That's all for now, my love. More later.

Ben

Monday, June
19th. [1944]

Dearest Ginny:

Just a short note to let you know that it finally came. As of this morning, I am a major. Everyone has congratulated me and kidded me all day long. The enlisted men in my department cheered me when I came in with the leaves. [*Two gold oak leaves, the insignia for a Major; oddly, the next step up, Lt. Col., is signified by silver leaves. The precedence of silver over gold was from an 1851 decision based on economy.*]

The Colonel called me over but I was delayed and he wasn't there when I arrived so the adjutant gave me the information. The thrill just wasn't there because it was so long anticipated. But it came later, especially when practically all the enlisted men and officers and nurses on the post came over and congratulated me. Many of them said it was the most deserving promotion above the rank of captain in the outfit except for the C.O. himself. I was outranked by a number of captains but I feel that none begrudged me.

Several of my major and captain friends were astonished when I told them I had been waiting for this rank just to tell them off and proceeded to blast them—of course in fun. Everyone got a big laugh out of it, including myself.

Things are still quiet here, so life proceeds very pleasantly. It's surprising but when there's little work to do, the men all loaf and won't do it, but when there's lots to do, they really put their shoulders to the wheel. This results in the reports and films getting to the wards quickly when we are busy, and much more slowly when things are quiet—a paradox, yet very true of human nature.

We are making 35 mm. photographs of the interesting traumatic cases which war has brought on and from a scientific standpoint they are quite unusual, especially from the standpoint of severity. It's hard to understand how some of these kids are still alive.

I am enclosing a piece of parachute and parachute cord given us by a patient injured in landing on D-Day in France. He broke his leg in the fall, landing behind enemy lines, but managed to remain hidden during all the shooting for 2 days, when he was rescued by Americans.

Did you note the official casualties of the invasion? We handled quite a good percentage of them if the figures are correct, and I assume they are because such a low figure would immediately be questioned by anyone, so they wouldn't be apt to give it out were it not true.

Well, that's all for now, my love.

Regards to your family and our wonderful children.

Your loving husband

Ben

Thursday, June
22nd, 1944.

Oh, the life of Riley! Here I sit at my desk, radio playing *Spanish Serenade* [Edward Elgar] in my right ear, the bright afternoon sun beating thru my window, a cool breeze blowing on my back thru the open door, no patients to disturb my peace, only an occasional plane floating lazily overhead (to remind me that a war is on), 10 hours sleep behind me, and a good dinner under my belt.

It isn't always so good, however. In fact, 24 hours ago it was really a tough life. I was up 36 hours in succession, reading films as fast as I could go, Manny Levin taking dictation in long hand, the men taking X-rays a mile a minute, hundreds of pictures being made.

We have a pretty good system of getting the work out in a rapid manner. It works somewhat as follows:

1. The patient is wheeled into the X-ray room from the ward, with his request in his hand. The clerk records him in the daybook, gives him an X-ray number (red number if he has X-rays with him, black if not) and types and identification tag. Many have been X-rayed in France and some of these accompanied the pt. to the hospital. His previous X-rays are brought to my office,
2. The patient is taken into one of the 3 X-ray rooms and pictures made.
3. The films are taken to the darkroom where they are identified by photographing the identification into the film. This is done by placing the X-ray film (light-sensitive) in a box with the typewritten identification marker over one corner, then flashing a light on it. This transfers the typewriting onto the film.
4. The next step is developing (5 minutes), hypo, 10 minutes, wash, 15 minutes—total 30 minutes. They are not allowed to lay in solutions any longer than the above period.
5. They are then brought to me wet for reading, being placed in a stand on my left. I read them, put them on a rod on my right and technician takes the wet film off the rod and strings them on a wash line in the next room for drying. The request was originally put in a box near my desk and I dictate a report to Manny who writes it on the request (with carbon copy). The original goes in a box for immediate delivery, the carbon copy goes in another box and when the dry films are taken off the line, the no. and size of films are noted on the back of the carbon (written there by the technician) and when all the films are dry, they are put in an envelope and sent to the ward, usually reaching the ward 1 to 1½ hours after being taken depending how long it takes them to dry. The report reaches the ward in about ½ that time. The carbon copy goes into our numerical file for future reference.

We have failed to identify only 1 film in about 5000 films and only lost 2 cases in about 1200, one I just found 10 minutes ago (after being lost 4 days) and the other was sent out by mistake to another hospital.

In 99% of the cases the films have accompanied the patients to their next hospital, while in less than 10% of our cases have films arrived here

with the patient. So my system is apparently better than those being used so far in France.

We've had a few more interesting cases. One youngster was struck by shrapnel in a Bible over his heart and in his dog tag receiving 2 flesh wounds. However, one piece of shrapnel penetrated his lung, but he'll recover from this. Both Bible and tag were "chewed up" plenty.

Another kid, a paratrooper, landed 6 hours before the beach was stormed, well behind the enemy lines. He was challenged by another American paratrooper, answered the challenge, but was shot by his own man who was "trigger happy" right thru the abdomen. He lay in the bushes 2 days, was taken prisoner by the Nazis and was in 2 German hospitals—which were so overcrowded and poorly equipped that little or nothing was done for the patients, altho Americans and Germans were equally treated. The Americans captured the hospital and he was sent to the rear. Despite the lack of treatment of his severe abdominal wound (thru part of abdomen and out of the back; he was not sick a moment except for some cramps on the first day and blood in his urine that day). The man feels quite well and his wound is of the type that is frequently fatal and certainly always seriously incapacitating!

I haven't heard from you for 4 or 5 days, but have received letters from Walt recently. Please send me some herring, cheese, salami—pack them better, dear. Let Jake do it! Also, another recording of Steve and even Nancy.

[Page 4 of an unknown letter; since dad is a Major it has to be after 6/19/44.]

When I answered the phone with "Major Felson speaking," the voice replied "Bennie Felson?" It proved to be Walter Griffing, who trained under Red [Elsy] at the General, just after I left. He left the 25th in England and is now in the 82nd General. He brought the films over and we had a pleasant two hour visit and he ate supper with me. From what I recall, Red inferred that he isn't very bright and is somewhat mal-adjusted, but to me he seemed like quite a nice guy.

I received a package containing nuts, gefülte fish, and mock-turtle soup. Thanks, dearest. How about some non-fattening foods, now that I'm on a diet. Salami coated with paraffin would be very appropriate. [*Oy, how times have changed.*] Hell, anything you want to send will be okay. Are they

still making you show requests? [*Apparently there was a rule, alluded to several times in these letters, that if you wanted to send a package to a soldier you needed a prior request from the soldier. The reason seems obvious in hindsight but it took me a while to figure it out: too many packages!*]

How about sending me a package containing you, Steve and Nancy?

All my devotion

Always yours

Ben

P.S. I have no stamps and our post office isn't set up yet, so I'm sending this "free." [*I still don't know what this means.*]

Sunday, after-
noon. [6/25/44]

I just finished indulging in the extreme luxury of 10 hours of sleep and a beautiful shower. And oh, boy, am I rarin' to go to work!

That's the way it goes here; patients flock in for a period, we start X-raying them about 6 hours later (meanwhile they are being treated) and work for 24 to 48 hours without stopping, they then are evacuated after treatment (those that are able to be moved) and we begin to get a batch of new ones. This leaves about 24 hours of break for us and we use it to clean up, get things in shape for the next rush, catch up on sleep, write letters and relax in general.

The casualties do not seem so numerous, at least in our place, and the war seems to be going along very well, albeit too slow for my impatience. The patients tell us many things, most of which can't be passed on. Many were victims of ships striking mines—one man was blown about 25-50 feet in the air, struck the deck of the boat, crawled 25 yards, jumped into the water and got on a life raft, and was rescued, all with a broken back. Another fellow crawled 2 miles back to his line, with his leg shot to hell. Many paratroopers landed in Nazi-flooded lands, but many were rescued by French natives. (I'm sending you some invasion money, enclosed. The men buy it for British money and use it in France. This 5 franc note costs about 12¢). An officer told me that a German got out of a pillbox and threw a grenade. So a little later, the officer himself (a lt. col.) saw a German wave a white flag from a shell hole, but didn't care to take a chance,

and flipped a grenade in. He said it probably was pretty cold-blooded but I don't blame him. It's apparently you or him, over there, and the softie gets it in the neck.

One young paratrooper captured some Germans, and didn't know what to do with them. If he let them go, they would hunt him down. Since he was behind the enemy lines he couldn't turn them over to an M.P. so he thought it over and finally "liquefied" them. He was subsequently wounded and brought here. He told the chaplain and myself about it and brother, was he upset about it! We eased his conscience but he won't forget it for a long time, I'm afraid.

A paratroop officer was convoying some prisoners to the rear when he saw one of his men strung up in a tree with his shoes hanging in his mouth and a rope around his neck. He turned, look at his prisoners, lined them up under the tree, finished them off, and went back to capture some more.

One thing all this has led me to discover. We have always said you can't be a good soldier unless you hate the enemy, and therefore you must know why you're fighting. Well, you must hate the enemy alright but you can hate him if he kills your buddy, if he makes you so afraid you get desperate, or if he does something very unfair (as in the above instance).

Enough of this war. I'll write some personal things on another page.

Nancy's vocabulary takes my breath away. Oh, gosh—I choke up when I realize what I'm missing. You must have quite a playground in the backyard: swimming pool, swing, sandbox—even a vegetable garden. What a life!

Steve sounds so grown up for his age. Do they ever talk about their father? Does Steve ever tell Nancy about me? Concentrate on the kids more in your letters, darling. I hang on every word about them. How about another record.

I don't recall Kay Pearlman's attorney friend at all. [*Reference unknown.*]

I will write more about my men later on.

I haven't seen the movie, *Watch on [the]Rhine* [1943 *Bette Davis tearjerker*] but can just imagine your reaction and tears. I wish my shoulder had been there for you to cry on. I, too, am glad we met so young. It's been ever so wonderful to "grow-up" together. However, I feel it was luck more than judgment which made us choose each other. I look forward to many

beautiful years together with our family (and more children). All that we need is financial security, which I plan to make possible.

The bill and card that came with the gardenias were not in the letter when I received it. So you forgot.

Am enclosing some photos that you wanted. These were all taken in Swannanoa, N. Car.

I've received all the pkgs. you speak of except the printing paper and films, but there's no longer a rush on them as we have enough for the present.

I didn't look up Benson's brother or any other names you sent, altho I've written and received replies from Jule Grad, Mutty, and Mel Bernhard, all of whom are over here. [*"Bubs" Benson was a close family friend.*]

I'm glad you're giving up your clinics. No, I couldn't be happy in some "unessential" job.

It's hard to believe Margie has graduated from HS. [*Probably Margie Berman, mom's first cousin.*] It seems as tho she was just a little girl yesterday. Tell her I'm proud of the cum laude stuff.

Spinal taps are done on all psychiatric cases to rule out syphilis and other conditions. They are simple to do and almost painless with practically no chance of serious sequelae. As to psychiatrists diagnosing in one interview, it is frequently possible with a good man and clear-cut case in a cooperative patient. But like other specialties, many cases take more time and treatment always takes longer.

Goodbye for now, my love.

[*SAME LETTER; APPARENTLY ADDED LATER.*]

Original Announcement.

Tonight we had a very good USO show. Two of my men went on stage for the magician and we kidded them very much. After the show I came down to the dept. (where I spend all the time that I am on the post except sleeping – I even wash and shave here every morning). I find practically all my men down here. Some are working, many are writing letters, a few are jitterbugging to the radio, a number of their friends (other GIs) are here with them. This is a very comfortable layout for us all. Whenever anyone receives a pkg. it's share and share alike. We have many magazines and papers and we read each other's.

I think I'll try to tell you about each of my men, one in a letter.

Lindstrom (Lindy) is of Swedish extraction, a quiet, bright, alert boy of about 25 who is Staff Sergeant Chief enlisted man in the dept. He is very intelligent – has the highest I.Q. in the entire 28th (140). He has a girl back home of whom he is deeply enamored and writes her rather mushy but very clever letters. He stays in the department practically day and night, and I have to chase him to town occasionally. He is not so well liked by the others but has very good judgment and is a hard worker and a good taskmaster. He once wrote a letter complaining of his lot after he was pulled out of X-ray because he had too much rank for the job and was put on the coals because of it by the detachment commander, but it has blown over, and I feel that he is very happy now. We get along very well – he seems to be liberal in thought. He is much more GI towards me than the other man but will disagree (respectfully) with me when he thinks I am wrong. I always admit it when he catches me up and can usually tell by the way he stands when he has something to say. He never will offer information without my saying, “What is it Lindy?” He plays an accordion (self-taught).

23 June '44

Dear Gin:

Here it is a very beautiful lazy Saturday at home and I hardly have enough pep to go out to play tennis. Maybe it's partly due to a slight hang-over from the large rations doled at the club last night.

Things are still very quiet since our last load and promise to remain so, since we have reverted back to general hospital status. Casualties are apparently very light—at least we're nearly empty at present.

The advance on the continent is very slow. Gee, I'd like to be over there to speed things up.

At present I'm quite bored with it all. I guess I'll have to get back and do more reading than I have of late. It's sure to make my ennui fade into thin air.

Time out for a few minutes—a patient.

The dental Lt. you tried to recall to us is Blaine, now a Capt. I see him now, but not very much; a helluva nice guy but no mental giant.

Well, darling, I'm studying French, just in case. *La fermiere donne des cerises a la bouchere*. ["The woman farmer gives some cherries to the woman butcher."] Not bad, eh? I managed to get hold of a grammar book and had Auger (French Canadian) show me pronunciation. I am doing famously. That's all for now.

Your husband,
Ben.

Monday, June
26th [1944]

Dearest Ginny:

A very rainy morning today, but business has increased instead of falling off with the weather. C.A. Mills, M.D., Assoc. Prof. of Medicine at U.C. wrote a book on the subject of the effects of weather and climatic conditions on diseases. Like himself, the book is screwy. But I wonder if I ought to write a brochure on the same subject with reference to X-ray. I think on rainy days the doctors stay in, work a little harder, and consequently write more X-ray requests. In addition, on rainy days X-ray films dry slowly adding gray hairs to this war-weary head of mine.

Something new is brewing but I won't be able to tell you about it for some time.

An amusing incident occurred with reference to Stanley Telser. While in NYC he called Mrs. Bell, wife of Lt. Bell of our outfit. He told her that her husband was well and happy and seemed to be enjoying himself—in other words tried to build up her morale. The facts are that her husband has been pretty depressed and probably has stayed in and moped more than anyone except Stanley. Also he probably wrote home to that effect. The wife, knowing what her husband had been writing, put 2 and 2 together, and got five, and wrote her hubby a blistering letter accusing him of everything in the book and some things not. She is apparently quite an excitable *Yiddishe madel* [Jewish girl]. Bill would have killed Telser if he could have gotten hold of him. He told some of us about it and though he is miserable we teased hell out of him. And Danish, knowing what Stanley thinks of him, is on pins and needles about what Stan tells his wife who lives nearby. Mi-gawd, what am I laughing about? He might call you or write you! Wow! Now I'm depressed. Woe, oh, miserere. And to think I helped him get home! Like so many good turns, they boomerang as a sock in the donor's jaw.

Speaking of boomerangs, I give promise now of becoming quite unpopular on the post and losing some money, because of a good turn. The story runs somewhat as follows: At the insistence of some of my men and many of the personnel, we consented to develop and print photographs of the post personnel. We accepted work before we had facilities and soon had several hundred rolls of films to do. When we got here, we started developing and discovered suddenly that printing paper was very difficult to get and much more expensive than in the States (hence my request to you). As it turns out, we not only stand to lose a little dough, but our customers have waiting as long as 3 months for their work. If you know any photographic hounds, you'll realize that after 10 days they start to bite, and after a month there's murder in their hearts. Now we're almost afraid to show our faces in public, even though it's not our fault and it would take them 3 or 4 months if they sent the photos to London. However I made a serious mistake: Joe Shafer and a few other officers hounded me so much (Joe is the vainest creature I've ever known) that I let them develop their films first. Wouldn't you know these ungrateful wretches went around showing everyone their films and the rest were up in arms. As soon as we finish the present work, we shall go out of business. Please send me more photographic printing paper, same as before, 2 or 3 gross if possible. I get the money back at this end, so be sure you enclose the cost.

I won't get my Major's pay the 1st of July because the pay vouchers went in the 15th of June and my orders didn't come thru until the 17th. My rank dates from the 15th of June. I'm beginning to get used to being called Major now. At first, I looked behind me when people said "Major" and still occasionally sign Capt. M.C.

Well, that's all for now, dear. Please send me some cheese, salami, canned onion soup, or similar delicacies.

I received, ate, and distributed the Hershey bars, enjoying them very much.

That's all now darling.
Love and kisses to Steve and Nancy.
Goodbye dear.
Ben.

Tuesday, June
27th. [1944]

Dearest Ginny:

I'm enclosing some photographs taken with the films you sent me. Please send me more 650 film, and be sure to read the notations on the back of the photos.

There is little happening here that I can tell you about. We are again acting as a general hospital with no mass admissions or evacuations. We're down to 25-40 X-ray patients a day, which is still more than we did before D-Day, but it seems like such a drop in the bucket, that we hardly look around when a half dozen patients walk or are brought in. My men routinely do good work and are vastly improved technicians than they were before D-Day. They simply HAD to do good work as we had no time to repeat examinations.

I haven't been to the city since before the invasion (everything dates from D-Day here) but expect to go in again this week for a play or concert. I've played a little tennis, getting beat for the first time by one of the officers in our outfit, who surprised me by playing one helluva good game of tennis. I knew he played, but he seldom went out and I never saw him play. So with my usual cockiness I romped out on the court expecting an easy time of it—and got my tail beat 6-2, 4-6, 6-4. I think I can beat him now that I am the underdog but we are pretty evenly matched. We also have managed to find 2 other tennis players to make a good doubles game. The 4 of us, all Majors, kid around a lot & get along very well together, despite the fact that 2 of them, including my singles opponent, are thought by some of the other Jewish men to be very anti-Semitic. They have been darned nice to me and I've never heard a break [*thus in original*] from any of them.

At the moment, Manny Levin (my major asst.) is brewing some onion soup on the desk (shown in the picture) and it smells so-oo- good. He is a surprising fellow, this guy Levin. Since he got in the 28th G.H. he has been one of the most detested men in the outfit. He was in Curacao, Trinidad and Venezuela (in the Caribbean) where he got his majority after entering the army as a Lt. 3 years ago and was fed up with the army when he got into our outfit. He was loud, vulgar, very inconsiderate and very outspoken, arousing the enmity of almost everyone including the Jewish men. As I told you before, he was palmed off on me by the medical service, who didn't want him. Well to make a long story short, he has proved to be a brilliant though semi-trained doctor, and has done a complete about-face! Many of the men in the outfit have remarked to me about his obvious change, and he is no longer moody and depressing. The men are crazy about him. Hulse tells me that I have set him such a fine example that he couldn't be

otherwise but honestly, I've never made one effort to change him. Occasionally we discuss people and things in general and I give him my viewpoint, which frequently differs widely from his own. He listens to me, respects my opinion very highly, and to my surprise has adopted some of my policies. Imagine, me with a disciple! Nonetheless, it has an advantage for me, too. I have someone to help and advise me in administrative matters and he frequently catches me up on X-rays which keeps me on my toes.

I hope Steve is better by now. I'm not too anxious, in view of the fact that your letters, telling me he was sick and that he was better, arrived at the same day. And 103° rectally in a child his age is not very high. Keep Nancy away from him—— Oh, I forgot that he will no doubt be well when you receive this advice.

Good night my love
Ben

Wednesday,
June 28th.

It's been a very long time since I wrote a family letter, so here goes. In the first place, thanks for all your letters, the tennis balls and lighter from Irv, and anything else I might have forgotten. Walt's letters have been greatly appreciated and he has his own 28th General Hospital fan club. All of them think his letters ought to be saved and made into a book. I'm sure Ros is saving them. Many people drop around my office just to see if I have a letter from Walt!

Well, we had quite an experience after D-Day and nothing will ever appear too difficult for me from now on. We had so many patients thru the dept. and took so many pictures that it makes my head swim just to look at the figures. In one day we made 890 exposures. This ought to be some sort of record. We figure that 10% of the casualties went thru this hospital, so you can imagine how terrific things were. Certain advice given me by my consultant who had experience in Africa and Sicily, was not taken because yours truly had delusions of grandeur about the amount of work he could put out. But, brothers and sisters, I learned quick. Unfortunately, my surgical colleagues took a lot longer to learn, and from their standpoint, the first and busiest week was snafu. [*The Chaplain later described the casualties as coming in "500 at a time."*]

To begin with, the surgeons decided that all patients would be X-rayed before they got to the wards. We kept 4 machines going so fast that you couldn't touch the tubes. And still they came! We kept up fairly well on the first batch because they were walking wounded and usually only an extremity or two was needed. But then the sick cases came in and by the dozen they were unloaded on us. Almost every case was loaded with "shrapnel" and needed 6 to 8 X-rays. Soon we had 100 patients waiting and finally they started admitting them without X-rays. Finally they admitted all patients to the wards and returned them to X-ray afterwards. Then they only X-rayed those patients who were going to be here for more than 24 hours. Later they decided to keep the patients longer so that everyone would have some form of definitive treatment. Finally we reverted to the function of a general hospital (we were temporarily classed as an evacuation hospital) and things reverted back to pre D-Day status. So you see how many changes we went thru.

Several things I did saved our backs and enabled us to keep well ahead of the surgeons. In the first place, I read all the films while wet, not wasting time for them to dry. The reports were therefore sent to the wards about 30-45 minutes after the film was made. Then we rigged up a clothes line and took the films out of the developmental hangers and hung them on the line to dry. This enabled us to dry them faster and not block the dark-room, which was very short of development hangers. Also if the case was urgent or looked very sick to me, I sent the films to the ward or operating rooms wet, as soon as I read it, along with the report. I threw out all records except the ones which would help us find a film immediately. All films were delivered to the wards and kept at the patients' bedside so I didn't have to describe the findings in a detailed manner, and when the patient was evacuated, his film could accompany him. Many patients had previous X-rays but they were left behind in France so we had to repeat them.

The accounts we heard from the invasion were vivid and first hand. When given the paratrooper's, the glider pilot's, the sailor's, the infantryman's, the doctor's, the prisoner's of war, and the flier's stories, we were able to piece together a fairly coherent and over-all picture of what went on. Since most of it was in the papers, I think I can give you my idea of what happened.

The false report that got out 24 hours in advance (and which amused us no end) was probably either SNAFU or planned to disconcert the enemy. The night before D-Day and early hours of that morning we knew it was happening because of the unprecedented air activity overhead. We had

had a pretty good idea that it was about to happen because we were getting patients from “marshalling” areas who were marked “Briefed” and with whom we were not permitted to talk without a third party being present. The conversation had to be entirely doctor-patient in character. They were kept on a ward incommunicado and were guarded like prisoners. *[Dad had no way of knowing about Operation Bodyguard, Fortitude North and Fortitude South, fake armies in Scotland, planted bodies in the English Channel, and all the other planned deception which kept the Germans from focusing on the Normandy beaches where the landing actually took place.]*

At 4 A.M., we got in an air-pilot seriously wounded by flak, who told us that the invasion was on. He towed a load of glider troops over at about 11 P.M. and his was one of the first loads. On his way back he saw the channel “packed with ships.”

The paratroopers and gliders were dropped about 10-15 miles from the coast well ahead of the landing parties and apparently in tremendous numbers. The Germans seems to be waiting for the paratroopers and picked many off before they hit the ground. The fields were covered with camouflaged obstacles and tremendous numbers of gliders crashed into these. But a glider is so constructed that even a crash landing is seldom fatal to the personnel and many of the glider troops were merely shaken up. The pilots and co-pilots, however, took a helluva beating.

By this time the minesweepers had cleared a good passage thru the Channel, but the seas were pretty rough and everyone was seasick. A number of landing craft struck mines in the dawn hours or were hit by bombs from planes, altho the Allied planes were greatly superior in numbers and held an impregnable umbrella overhead.

The men knew the geography of the landing beaches to a T and expected not quite as much resistance as they got. At first, in many instances, the Germans held their fire until the boats came in. Artillery fire was devastating, machine guns and rifle fire being much less effective.

The German SS was particularly effective, but there was believed to be a tendency to call all artillery fire SS. Several medical outfits got banged up pretty badly and the Red Cross did not seem to be so well-honored as in Italy. Some of our casualties were medics, but not so many.

The Allies took the beaches by sheer weight of numbers and with apparent disregard of casualties. Once the beaches were taken, the wounded were evacuated in as rapid a manner as possible.

With the paratroopers and glider troops disorganizing their rear, and the overwhelming attack from the front, the Germans were beaten pretty badly but not disorganized. They were scared still, as those Americans who were temporarily captured, informed us. [*Probably “scared stiff” but original not available.*] Many didn't put up a very good fight, but some were quite fanatical. The men had a pretty good respect for the German soldier.

All in all, it was a pretty bloody mess, but not nearly as bad as expected. And now I believe casualties are very light and that the worst is over. However, it's slow business and I don't expect to get home in 1944. The new Russian offensive is music to my ears – but when you look at the map, everything seems rather depressing.

I hope all of you are happy and well. Gee, I'd sure like to get in on another family reunion. But it isn't in the cards for the present, is it?

Kiss the third generation Felson's for me (also the Travis and Abramsons). And keep an eye on my family for me.

Best of luck to you all, and wish me a little luck too.

With all my love,

Ben.

Sun. 2 July '44

Dearest:

I haven't written for 2 or 3 days because we've been busy – very busy – again. We admitted about 400 patients in 1 afternoon and X-rayed practically all of them. I worked practically all night Friday, got 6 hours sleep last night. Am not so tired at present. A few patients are dribbling in for X-rays this afternoon, but on the whole things are pretty quiet for now.

Everything during this last rush functioned quite smoothly until this AM when all kinds of things happened: first my British machine started shooting blank X-rays. Since I have a spare British portable machine, I got it down from the wall, but had to repeat 2 cases. Just as we got this one going, the Westinghouse played out, without warning. Several patients had to be brought back for repeat here also. Then I learned that I had reported a fracture in the lt. [*left*] jaw, when it was the right. This was annoying, but not important. On reviewing the films, I discovered that the technician had put a lt. marker on by mistake.

Then our dark-room developed a light leak, partially fogging several films. I read them anyway because they weren't bad, then discovered the darkroom leak and had it fixed. I then learned my X-ray repairman (belongs to medical supply dept.) was off the post and I couldn't use the Westinghouse until he gets back at midnight and fixes it. Then, with only 1 good machine functioning, we got very busy. But Auger, my hardworking French-Canadian, batted them out a mile a minute on his machine and we just caught up.

It's been raining hard for almost a week. This rain must have a hampering effect on invasion progress. It seems that in every rush period, it rains constantly, slowing the drying of our films.

By the way, we were paid a very high compliment by the chief of surgical services, who practically never puts in a good word for anyone but himself. He and I get along real well but he is one of the most scheming docs it's ever been my misfortune to meet, but he's quite capable (though thoroughly disliked by everyone except the C.O. who lets him run the place). Anyway his typist let one of my men read his 3-monthly report wherein he slammed everyone else but spent a lot of time and space saying that the work could not have been handled if it weren't for the speed with which the X-ray dept. functioned, so that they saw wet X-ray films immediately and dry ones were on the ward with reports in less than 2 hr., which he had never known before was possible, etc. He has never said anything of this sort to me, but teases me about any misdeed or lost film. I have heard from many of the officers directly or via the grapevine that the X-ray dept. was the best functioning dept. in the place! Apparently my administrative ability is improving.

An amusing experience of yesterday: We were quite busy and I told Lindy to make up my tri-monthly report. He laughed and said "What do you want, blood?"— an Army expression. At that moment the phone rang and the lab asked that I send Lindy over to them so that they could bleed him for the blood bank!

British opinion of an American: over-paid, over-sexed, over-rated, and over here. [*Another version: "There are only three things wrong with Americans – they're overpaid, they're oversexed, and they're over here."*]

Enough of my troubles. The patients have now stopped coming and I'm going to the regular Sunday night movie. These Sunday and Wed. night movies are usually first run, Mickey Rooney, Andrews Sisters, etc. with rotten hackneyed plots and I'm pretty discouraged with this form of entertain-

ment here. Generally when I go to the city, I see a play and so I'm way behind on my movies. A few days ago I went to the city and saw a very good play, a French comedy fresh from the London stage, quite risqué, but very funny and clever. I enjoyed it very much.

Other than the plays, my chief form of entertainment is the radio. The programs are filled with excellent classical music. At the moment I'm listening to [Gladys] Swarthout [*American mezzo-soprano*] singing *Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child* very beautifully. The U.S. programs are usually very good comedy by J[ack]. Benny, F[red]. Allen and other top-notchers who make specially broadcast records for overseas. These are sent to BBC where they are broadcast to the American camps about 12-15 hours per day. This procedure has only been followed since D-Day. When they play swing, I switch across the dial for some classical music, frequently to the German program which usually has a good classical record playing, and I'm not averse to enjoying myself at the expense of the enemy. We even listen and laugh at the Nazi propaganda. Of course I have to hold still for the swing when my men are around, but many of them like good music, too. They kid me about my "long-haired" tastes. Many enlisted men from other depts. hang around to listen to the radio, and officers come in at all hours to hear the news.

I don't believe I have ever told you about all the discussion in our outfit that has been brewing in the past 3 months, though I may have intimated that things were going wrong. Our administration has snafued so much and showed such partiality that everyone is griping constantly. When we go to town, we are the only ones carrying gas masks; all other outfits get 24 hr. passes but we don't; London is out-of-bounds only for our outfit; our nurses can't travel on weekends, etc. etc. There is no question but that all these are justifiable complaints, but they don't strike close to home. What gets me most is that the enlisted men (including my own) are under a detachment commander—a former Army Sergt., now a Capt. M.A.C., who is totally incapable of sympathy or understanding. To top it all, he thinks the men like him, when they really would have no compunctions about shooting him if they were in the field! The chief of surgery and chief of laboratory have bucked their ways into the good graces of the Col. and both should shortly make L.C. [*Lt. Col.*] They have unscrupulously trampled on everyone else to advance their own cause. The lab. chief is a good organizer but poor lab man, the Surgeon is the reverse. Both are first-rate slickers. The chief nurse is in the same class, but not so bright. She has a vicious streak in her which enables her to be nice to supervisors and nasty to underlings (except

those who play up to her). The supply officer you already know about. Our executive officer is not one of the clan, so is pretty well hand-cuffed. He's a nice guy, but not so bright and tries to be GI, so few like him. Our inspector is the Jewish fellow around whom much of the anti-Semitism has centered. This leaves the quartermaster, myself and the chief of X-ray as the only departmental heads who have any friends.

The blame for all the discussion goes to the top. The Colonel is a devout Catholic, born and raised in Puerto Rico, speaking English with a fairly good accent. He is a prim, immaculate, very reserved, pipe-smoking, dignified, introverted weakling who has been in the regular Army a long time. He is blind to what goes on and lets nature take its course. He follows all paths of least resistance and cannot make an important decision. The outfit is run by his advisers, most important of whom is the Adjutant, a 1st Lt. M.A.C. while, the biggest liar in the world, who always says no to any request, be it legitimate or otherwise. The other advisers are the chiefs of surgery and the lab, who form most of the professional policy. Oh, I forgot a particularly vicious and friendless guy, the Plans and Training Officer; even the administration doesn't like him!

They have railroaded several nice Lt. Colonels out of here so fast it makes your head swim. This was done so as not to block the promotion of the Chief of Surgery.

For my own part, I have remained out of it, often defending the Administration when it seemed they were right. Now, I no longer even do this, because I'm fed up with them. Surprisingly enough, they seem to like me despite my opinion of them, so I guess they don't know how I feel. Fortunately, they seldom come into my dept. and leave me strictly alone. The Colonel himself has no conception of X-ray and holds it in awe, which is OK by me.

That's all for now, my love. Keep writing. I received some Mullane [*candy*] from Irv. Call him and tell him thanks.

Goodnight darling.

Ben.

July ____ '44

Dearest Gin:

How are you this evening? I'm sitting at my desk after a spaghetti and meatball dinner thinking of my family and how long it will be before I see you all again. Gulp!

There's been good news on the radio since the Russian drive started; today they're fighting in the streets of Vilna, tomorrow they'll be in East Prussia and the next day in Berlin. Well a guy can dream, can't he?

Yesterday we had the inspection about which I wrote you and except for a few minor things (floors needed wax but we're fresh out of wax, etc.) we did ok. There was an amusing sidelight to the inspection that might interest you. It seems the inspector was quite GI [*by the book*] and very _____ [*original unavailable*] descendent of Moses from the Southside of Chicago and cold as a fish. He swept thru one department after another in the morning, and struck Bloom's dept. about 11 A.M. Lo and behold, one of my *P.M.s* was on Bloom's desk. The inspector came to a very quick halt. "Whose is this?" Bloom feebly replied, "Mine, sir." "Are you a subscriber?" Bloom (with voice trembling) "No, sir. I borrow it from one of the Majors." Inspector: "Well, you ought to subscribe. I do!" [*Apparently all P.M. readers were afraid of being taken as Communists.*]

Danish, who witnessed the above, told me about it at lunch, and we laughed a good bit over it. At 1 P.M. I was reading *P.M.* and displayed the paper prominently in my cupboard. The Inspector strode in, took no note of what I was reading, didn't open my cupboard, went thru the department, and left without being aware that I, too, was a great liberal, reader of that peerless journal of the underdog, that cudgel of the minorities, that crusader of truth. Well, such is life!

Do you remember my discovering an *In Fact* in the millionaire's home in Tulsa? And how we looked at each other in surprise and gratification and our host took [*on?*] a new and improved appearance to our eyes? Silly, isn't it? It's like the drunk and the Park Ave. bitch giving each other the Moose handshake. [*The Loyal Order of Moose is a fraternal and service organization founded in 1888.*]

At the present, I am suffering from a backache derived from, of all things, my attempts to learn to pitch softball. Each day one of the men and I go out in the backyard and I practice my pitching. I have now reached the point where Cannon-Ball Bailey had better look to his laurels. But I'll bet he didn't get the backache! [*Reference to the unhittable pitcher on a four-man barnstorming softball team.*]

Speaking of baseball, Sid Kahn writes me that he broke his arm when someone slid into him at second base and he has to be in the hospital for 30 days. Poor Sid, baseball and he never did agree. One of our secrets when we were kids, never spoken of (but often hinted at) in politer company, was the blow he received in the groin from a misjudged ground ball which injured 50% of his reproductive capacity (thank God for the wasteful? surplus which has been allotted to man. After all it only takes one.....). I can still remember the livid color of his face, the engorged veins in his neck, and the excruciating torture he went thru. And women complain of childbirth pain! [*I know for a fact that Sid never had children though married to Ruth for many years.*]

Business is lighter in the department and it's such a pleasure to be able to indulge in the luxury of wasting time and being inefficient. Well, so it goes. All my love, and a kiss to Nancy and Steve.

16 July '44
(Rec. July 24)

Dearest:

Ah, me—I feel awful. My head is large and pounding, I've got a stomach full of butterflies, my gut feels like a raw tube from esophagus to anus, with increasing severity from former to latter. Perella, stop that screaming! What, you were only whispering. Well, quit stamping your foot. Oh, that was only the click from your camera shutter. I suppose you'll be telling me next that that infernal racket is due to a leaky faucet. Oh. It is. Hmmm.

Yes, dear, you've guessed it. I've got a hangover. It seems we had quite a party at the club last night, orchestra, plenty of liquor rations, etc. Your husband was just in the right (or wrong) mood and imbibed somewhat freely. I had a swell time up to and including the open faced sandwiches (which included chopped liver—I had 7 or 8). Then, slightly to moderately nauseous, I took off for my quarters, flung my clothes off, waited until the bed came past me, dove for it but missed it, and went to sleep on the floor. The latecomers woke me up and put me to bed and I slept for 10 hours, waking in time to go to church. I had promised the Chaplain I would attend services. So with raw body and bleary soul, I wended my way to the crowded chapel to hear the Chaplain talk about the "Good and Bad Points of Protestantism." It was quite a good talk.

Then to work to read some films, then chow, and now in my office writing this letter.

At the moment I am highly amused at something you might not think is funny. Perella is at the back door stopping people (officers, nurses, and enlisted men) and asking them to pose for a photo with his new camera. Now, ordinarily this wouldn't be funny, would it dear? But it so happens there is no film in the camera. In fact there isn't even a back on the camera. You should see the positions Perella is angling from and the poses he is making them take. He even took our officer in the dark hall with "ultra-violet" film (there ain't no such animal). He got Col. Selby a few minutes ago to stand on a concrete block and pose. No one has caught on yet, but it sure is hard for the rest of us to keep straight faces.

The chief of orthopedics had paid me some very high compliments, I hear by the grapevine. A nice feeling, you know! Of course I deserve the credit etc. but—aw, hell it does help to be told.

On the way out of church, one of the fellows, a plastic surgeon, asked me if I was changing religious horses in the middle of the stream. I answered yes, and that I would be needing 2 plastic operations in the near future, one on my nose.

We had another big inspection yesterday which we passed with flying colors. The floor, which caught us on the previous inspection, was immaculate and shiny. Since the day, almost 5 days ago, that our floor failed to pass inspection, it had been inspected twice daily by the Colonel or the post-inspector. You see, now, what the chief function of the administration is.

Your husband is learning how to deal with administrative bigwigs dear. Let me tell you what I pulled the other day. Don't think too ill of my, but I'm having to fight fire with fire.

I've been having trouble getting permission from the administration to do a certain thing which I can't tell you about. Everyone else was doing it and finally an order came out forbidding it. To me it seemed more important that I be permitted to go ahead with it anyway but the executive officer said no and with an air of finality.

So, when the Colonel gave me hell about my floor, I took it (naturally). Then I went up to the exec's office. I complained to him bitterly about how the administration was quick to have a guy out, but never pat him on the back when he did his job well. I went on in this vein with numerous exam-

ples (the statement is true) and putting on an air of injured pride. Pretty soon, as I had hoped, he began feeling sorry for me and tried to explain to and console me. This went on for a little bit and then I used as an example, the fact that they had forbidden me to do the aforementioned thing, even though I could not possibly derive any personal benefit from it. To make a long story short, he swallowed hook, line, and sinker and now I've got their OK to go ahead.

Unfortunately it is necessary here to use these subterfuges to get something done for the dept. All they are interested in is how our administration impresses headquarters. Even if something is good for the patient, it must also be good for the outfit and impress Hq. before you can do it. If you don't push the idea, it just never gets done.

And so it goes. Am enclosing some photos. Hope you like them.

Tues, July 18,
'44

My dear good woman:

What's the latest word from the home front? All sounds well from your letter my dear. I fervently hope it continues to run as smoothly.

So my son is starting tennis at a ripe and early age. I wonder if my vanity will be hurt when he beats me for the first time. I recall a cartoon in which the young son comes home with a paycheck larger than his father and the hurt look on papa's face.

Things are pretty quiet now that we're back on general hospital status. They're so quiet that I wish we'd either go back on evacuation hospital status or go over to France, preferably the latter.

We have managed to borrow an accordion and during the past week we have had 3 concerts by Lindstrom. He plays for 2 hours without repeating, entirely by ear. Practically any request number is in his repertory. We sit around the dept. in the late evening hours with the back door open and dozens of officers, enlisted men, and nurses drop in from time to time. Perella is a rhythm expert with the drums and he beats away on my desk using cans, bottles, floor, etc., for tympanic purposes. He's a natural comedian too, and Lindy also has a lot of stage presence. When Perella (who acts as Lindy's manager) started to pass the hat last night, we almost died. And Lindy will suddenly put on a Mortimer Snerd bashful act that would split your sides. [*Slow-witted puppet-character in Edgar Bergen's ventrilo-*

quist act.] We also have a jitterbug, Willard, and last night he grabbed one of the nurses and they put on a jitterbug exhibition that came right out of Harlem. For straight music we have our ex-singing waiter, Sager, who—though bashful—will solo a couple of numbers when coaxed and he has a very pleasant tenor. We have a Slovak (Novak) who goes wild when Lindy plays polkas and dances (soft shoe) all over the place.

One of the high spots of our entertainment the other night occurred when DiSalvo, an Italian boy, came in to listen. As soon as Lindy saw him he played Santa Lucia and other Italian folk songs. You could see immediately that the kid was smelling spaghetti and as Lindy continued, the boy became very quiet, pale and had that far away look in his eye. He suddenly got up and bolted out of the room. The lump in his throat must have been the size of an apple.

Another kid suddenly dashed in the other room while Lindy was playing “Margie” and wrote a long, long letter. You guess it—it was to his girl in the States named Margie.

It’s done the men a world of good to have this fun—and me, too. I don’t mind telling you I choke up, too. I call Lindy the Pied Piper of the pipe organ.

Well, that’s all for now, my dear. All my love to you, Steve and Nancy.

Ben.

P.S. Send me #620 film and 5x7 medicine grade contact printing paper—1 gross. Velox if poss.

Sat. July 22
[1944]

Dearest Ginny:

Well, I wanted to tell you sooner, but couldn’t until we arrived at our destination. Yes, we have moved out of our beautiful hospital, turning it over to a new outfit, the 106th General. We entrained and 4 hrs. later arrived at a camp in the countryside, much like the one we entered when we first came to England.

First, a brief description of our present camp. It is 6 miles from the nearest town, a good sized town, however—nice from the enlisted men’s standpoint but nothing much there for officers. [*Probably Exeter.*] About 25 miles away is a beautiful city, but unfortunately we won’t be able to go

there. The camp itself is in a beautiful countryside, all green and not muddy, despite recent rains. For the first time (since I have been in the Army) we are in tents, the few Nissen huts being used for mess, administration, chapel, etc. We sleep on cots, 4 to a tent, which are rather roomy. We wash at nearby troughs which have hot and cold running water and showers are available so it isn't really so rugged. We eat from mess kits (not new for us), and use outside latrines composed of about 12 boards with the usual circular cut, under each of which is a small bucket containing a little straw. At certain intervals the buckets are removed by an Englishman who has contracted to do this chore. He is called the "Honey-man" and the buckets are known as the "honey-buckets." Poor fellow—to add to his disagreeable task, everyone makes poor jokes about him.



Figure 8: Some of dad's fellow officers. Joe Filger is second from left, and Dave Graller's daughter Susan believes that may be her father on the far right.

Nearby is the usual "interesting old castle" consisting of an ancient bishopric surrounded by a moat dating back to 1350. An old couple and granddaughter live there and it is strictly off-limits for the Yanks, ever since our predecessors at this camp shot a few pheasants there, impregnated the maid, milked the cows and robbed the chickens of their day's labor.

There is a lovely swimming pool in town and horseback riding, both of which I hope to indulge in if the opportunity arises. The usual difficulty of

transportation, especially back to camp, is present, the last bus arriving at 9:10 P.M. Since I sold my bike for £7 (I paid 10 and ½ £) to an officer of the 106th General, I won't be able to get around much, but I plan to go in and see the sights tomorrow.

It looks like I will get a good break here. Since there's no professional work, we will undoubtedly be given a rigid training program, which is very obnoxious to me. However, the Detachment Commander asked me to help him with the enlisted men's physical training program and wants me to supervise organized athletics: baseball, swimming (in town), volleyball, football etc. Of course, this will please me no end as I will get my much-needed recreation in this manner. Also I will be excused from the training program, I hope: not bad eh.

I think I will like this outdoor life very much.

Then came the dawn—the following A.M.—I slept in the tent and it was pretty cold, but I managed to sleep pretty well with 5 blankets. My pillow was too hard so I awoke with a sore neck, a stiff back, and a full bladder all of which have duly disappeared.



Figure 9: Appears to be dad "taken at Bishop's Court outside of Exeter, England – our staging area," July 1944.

I must tear off now to borrow some athletic equipment from a nearby outfit.

Goodbye my dear.

All my love to you and the children.

Ben.

Tues. July 25
[1944]

Dearest Ginny:

After 3 days in tents, we seem to be still alive and kicking. So it really isn't very bad. As a matter of fact the change in routine, I find, is refreshing, and I see where—if this lasts long enough—I can get back into pretty good shape.

The nights are rather cool, five blankets being just enough to make sleeping comfortable. Yesterday it was warm and sunny in the afternoon, today it is somewhat cool and cloudy and may rain before long.

We have been drilling and hiking for physical activity and everyone seems to be the better for it. Yesterday, which appears to be a fairly typical day, was quite a busy one for me...

In the morning, after rising at 7 A.M. and eating breakfast, I started out with 2 enlisted men and we laid out 3 baseball diamonds and a football field. This took a couple of hours. The officers and enlisted men were drilling and having calisthenics during this period, but I didn't join them. At 11 A.M. we all went on a 3 mile hike (each day it will be longer). Then lunch: all the officers were given the afternoon off, but I had to work at my new job.

At 1:30 P.M. all the enlisted men, about 300 in number, lined up and I was given charge. About 30 were pulled out for details. Then I asked for those who wanted to go swimming and 100 men responded. These we packed off in trucks to the City Bath which has a beautiful swimming pool. I had previously arranged for swimming there and the Red Cross had supplied the bathing trunks. Next, the remaining men were lined up by platoons and paired off for "rough and tumble." Two men from each platoon were selected and one rode piggyback on the other. Each team moved to the center and when I blew the whistle they started to tumble each other over. The last team remaining piggyback was the winner. The winners in each group were matched against the other winners and the final winning team was given a one-way ticket to the States—if they would ask the C.O. for it. The men got a big bang from this.

Then I started a volleyball game, 2 baseball games, a football game, and some boxing. Almost everyone participated and a good time was had by all, including myself, who went around joining each game for a while. I

wound up pitching a 5 inning game for one enlisted man's team. I did very well for 4 innings striking out about 6 men and only walking 2. In the 5th inning, however, I walked 6 men and gave up 3 hits and they made 6 runs to beat us by 1. What a razzing I took!

Last night I dropped over at a nearby British ack-ack station [*nickname for anti-aircraft guns*] and a Lt. showed me all the intricacies of the guns. I'd like to tell you about it, but I'm sorry I can't. In any case the efficiency was truly stupefying. Afterwards they invited me to supper and we sat around for a couple of hours chewing fat. They were extremely cordial, much more so than any other group of British officers I have ever met. They had some Army Territorial Service Officers (females!!!) and I was in fine fettle, so they are inviting me back in a couple of days. [*Reference is presumably to the Auxiliary Territorial Service, the women's branch of the British Army at the time.*]

This morning I went on a hike with the enlisted men for 7 miles. The pace was terrific and 47 men fell out, but not your old man. I hung on despite blisters on both heels and was even able to report for the athletic program this afternoon. Many men came really dragging this afternoon and I had trouble getting the games started.

I am now going for a swim in town, so goodbye dear.

All my love

Ben

Thurs. 26 July 44

Dearest Ginny:

At the moment there is a downpour of rain outside and I am sitting in my tent along listening to a record concert of my own choosing. I just finished Bruch's violin concerto, with Yehudi Menuhin, which is very beautiful, and am now listening to Schubert's unfinished—we have only 1 record of this, however. Fixer Danish went to the Red Cross Field Director, no less, to get some athletic equipment. At the same time he finagled the Victrola and records for himself, i.e. for us. We have a fairly nice assortment of records and when we get tired of these, I think he can get some more. Not a bad war, is it, dear. [*A symphony of this length required more than one 78 rpm disc; 33 1/3 long-playing records did not go on the market until 1948 .*]

We've had much too much rain and it has interfered with my athletic program, altho the latter seems to be doing well. So well, in fact, that the powers that be assigned me to be the officers' and nurses' athletic director. When I discovered that the time allotted for this coincided with that for the enlisted men, I tried to get them to change it as there isn't enough equipment and the athletic fields are too few. They wouldn't, so I asked to be relieved of the new duty which they reluctantly did. Since the enlisted men get preference on equipment and fields (there are now 400 men) it seems that the officers will have to either change their athletic program to the morning or have to piddle around without ball gloves, volleyballs, etc.

After my last letter to you, I went for a swell swim with about 15 officers and a dozen or so nurses and we had a lot of fun in the beautiful, enclosed, large civic swimming pool which we had much to ourselves.

I might take time out to call your attention to the various city-owned amusement places we have run into in England. In Southampton they have a large, beautifully appointed hall which is used for dancing and for concerts about once every week or two. In Bath they have the historically famous spa and swimming pool. In Bristol they have a theatre for plays and musical programs.

In London there is Albert Hall and other similar institutions and 3 or 4 symphony orchestras (L[ondon]. Philharmonic, L[ondon]. Symphony, National Symphony, BBC, etc.). In Bournemouth, the "Pavilion" surrounded by gorgeous gardens in a spacious building overlooking the Channel which houses a large auditorium—weekly concerts of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, week runs of plays, ballet, and vaudeville, a very large dancehall, and a city-owned "French Restaurant."

In our present location, all the cities have locally owned "baths" and swimming pools.

The obvious advantages to the above is the low prices of admission (about 10¢ for soldiers), the better programs, and the better equipment and appointments.

Night before last, I played touch football with the men and we had a rip-snorting game witnessed by ½ of the detachment. The men seemed to get a big bang out of yelling, "get the Major," and several times I was "got" especially by a really good player, a Jewish boy from Boston.

Yesterday the officers and nurses went on a 5 miles hike in the AM and it was quite enjoyable. In the PM, rain cancelled all training programs

and I slept for 5 hours. After dinner I organized an officers softball game and we had a helluva good time. Afterwards I played some bridge and then to bed.

Which brings me up to the present. Our mail is coming in again now—yesterday I received 4 letters from Walt, 2 from you, 1 from Edith, 1 from Chip, and 2 from previous X-ray technicians at Ft. Harrison.

I hope you and the kids are all well. I haven't yet received any Major's pay, but when I do, I'll pay off some debts and send you a money order.

Take care, my love.

Ben.

Friday 28 July
'44

Dearest Ginny:

I am on my way again—this time on detached service to the 216th General Hospital, near the town where I was billeted. (Please use my regular address)

Yesterday afternoon Manny Levin and I were notified that we would take 35 of our enlisted men to this new outfit, subject to call from our own hospital, if alerted. We left camp at 9 A.M. by truck for the station, entrained at 10 A.M., and arrived at a small town at 12:40 P.M. after 1 change of trains. We were met by trucks and brought here. The trip was a mad rush of loading and unloading baggage, counting and recounting the men, finding the R.T.O. (rail transportation officer) in each station, kidding and cajoling the enlisted men who weren't too anxious to go, etc. We arrived safely however, altho we almost left 2 men in a latrine, and almost had to take along 3 gals who attached themselves to the men. Manny was in charge of the detail since he outranks me, but we get along very well and the trip ran smoothly because we both cooperated on the job. It's surprising how much headache such a trip can be. The stations were all jammed with service men and civilians and public school kids (i.e. private school) going on 7 week vacation. Two of the latter attached themselves to us and proved to be (especially the elder) quite snobbish and superior, especially in their talk of free-school kids. They smoked cigarettes with a flourish (ages 13 and 9!) and this sickened all of us. Then they bragged about their wild pranks and hazing. All in all it was rather nauseating to the men and myself. Since there is a movement afoot to improve education here and much discussion

in the papers of what to do with the so-called public schools, it confirmed my (and others') opinion to get rid of the old school tie which has been a blot on English history in the past. Did you know that 70% of the important jobs in England are held by a snobbish few who are recipients of vari-colored ties.

We reported to the C.O. (who is supposed to be a S.O.B. according to everyone here) and were both assigned to the X-ray dept., manned by a Maj. who has had 6 wks to 3 mo. army X-ray training and a Lt. who had just 6 wks. We attended to our men's dinner and quartering, were then fed and quartered ourselves and then took a look around. The place is simply magnificent! Surrounded by hills covered with beautiful green trees, we are apparently located in the middle of a large park. No house is visible on any side outside the hospital. The hospital is older and therefore better equipped than ours, and is very well maintained and clean as a pin due to the hard taskmaster who is the C.O.



Figure 10: Countryside around Honiton where this hospital was located.

After a look around, we got the enlisted men together and went over the ball field and had a game—we had taken our baseball equipment along. We now plan to challenge the teams in the baseball league here.

Tonight we shot the bull with several men we know in this outfit, including Lt. Col. Overton who transferred from our outfit to this one, a Capt. I played tennis with at Billings when you were in Cincy (a refugee—I don't recall his name now), a Lt. Goldman whom I knew when I was in the Billings Pool, and several friends of Manny's from the states.

We had a beer and ping pong game at their excellent Officers' club and so to bed and work at 8 A.M.

All my love, darling. I miss you and the kids so much—especially tonight, since I am away from my Army “home.”

I hope all is going well, my sweet. I won't get any mail here for several days. I certainly would like a letter now.

I think the attempt on Hitler's life is a wonderful sign and if it had been successful, a great coup would have been made. I think a wide rift would have been fated to the German war effort. As it turned out, the opposition will be massacred, but many competent generals will die and the confidence of the Army is undoubtedly already shaken.

With the Russian knife at their throat, it can't be too long, I hope, I hope.

Goodnight my dear.

Ben.

Sun. July 30
[1944] 11 P.M.

Dearest Gin:

I just returned from the town where we were billeted, after a most delightful day. Manny and I took about 30 of our enlisted men by truck, arriving there at about 2 P.M. As soon as the truck stopped and unloaded, the men were out of sight, either going in the direction of their former landladies, or to their girlfriends' house. It so happened that no other soldiers were in town so as I later learned, the girls welcomed them with open arms.

I called Mrs. Crees and she was in and overjoyed to hear from me. I went out to the house and spent 3 delightful hours talking with her, learning all the latest gossip, drinking and eating tea, helping myself to apples off the tree (not quite ripe). The pears and plums weren't quite ripe yet—another 2-4 weeks. I had a hot-house tomato and some fresh vegetables. We talked of old times and she even told me how she had her will made out. She's worth about a quarter million dollars.

Her large garden was in full bloom and the flowers were simply gorgeous. It was so relaxing.

I then went over to the isolation hospital where the matron and nurses were eagerly awaiting me—I had called previously. They rushed out to greet me and made me feel so welcome. I was almost overcome. They

rushed me over to the tennis court and threw gym shoes and a tennis racket at me, dragged me out on the courts, where I promptly beat them all in singles and doubles (that's gratitude for you!) The matron was so effervescent and the young probationer nurses (15 to 18, dear—so don't worry) were so full of mischief and gay that I was shortly in very high spirits, kidding the life out of all of them. During the game, every time I passed an apple tree (they surrounded the court), I plucked one off and ate it. I must have consumed 35 apples today, some ripe, some green. Then we had supper: fresh eggs, home grown tomatoes, potatoes, and peas and individual mince pies and coffee. We talked over the coffee and I gave them all the news about our outfit. They told me the town was dead since we left, except for a raucous infantry outfit whom they didn't like. (I forgot to say I brought a carton of cigts. to both places.) About 20 girls had walked the soldiers back to the truck and a lot of kidding took place, especially at one of my men, Bruce, who had a very, very beautiful redhead in tow—incidentally a very sweet girl, whom he is serious about.

After waiting 10 minutes for some latecomers, we got off at 10:30 P.M. and arrived at camp at 11, tired but happy—singing and kidding all the way home.

I also neglected to tell you about the nurses playing an unrecognizable game they called baseball which they learned from the GI Joes. It was hilarious to watch them. The only resemblance to the real game was the name. Even the dog played it.

I have been helping with the film reading here as they have been pretty busy. They don't do things exactly my way, but I have been able to adjust my ways to thee routine. I don't mind ___ [*unreadable*] but I'd rather be with my own outfit, as I am definitely an outsider here. Maybe it will be better after I'm here for a while. The Major in X-ray has been very nice to me. It's now midnight, my love, so goodnight and sweet dreams.

I wish I could see the kids. Send me some more photos, please.

Lovingly

Ben

Tues, Aug 1, '44

Dearest One:

Today was quite an eventful day and I am now duly tired—but the day wouldn't be complete without at least a short bedtime letter to you.

In the first place we got off to a bad start this AM. When the men were assigned to ward duty and didn't like it, because they wanted either to do outside work or work in their respective specialties, viz., X-ray, lab., etc. So instead of reporting for duty they came to see Manny and I. The detachment commander heard of it and immediately went to the C.O. crying in-subordination. He could very easily have called us instead. The men were in the wrong and the Colonel was furious, but cooled off some while waiting for them to bring in all the "culprits" (a nicer bunch of boys you never saw). He made a mountain out of the molehill at first, but when the men finally arrived, scared stiff, he was very nice and fair. However, we now have a black eye with the administration.

This afternoon, 2 officers came down to pay us, and brought mail. I received 4 or 5 letters from Walt, 1 from Soph, 1 from Helen, 1 from Louise, and 1 from you (containing a very short note and a flock of letters from Walt and 1 from Leo). I was very disappointed in not getting more from you, but I know you are writing regularly, so I have to bear up with the disappointments. I will send you a money order tomorrow as I have too much dough on hand now. I will try to increase the allotment, if possible.

Tonight we played one of the teams here in softball and won 8 to 1. We've got a swell team and your old man only knocked 3 runs in and scored 2 himself. After the game, the 14 yr old kid I wrote about once came up from the town we were billeted in, 15 miles away, by bike, just to see me. I chatted with him for a while and offered him money so he could take the train back, but he wouldn't accept. He invited me to tea and supper when we next visit the town.

After this I was asked to fluoroscope a patient when they were trying to pass a Miller Abbott tube into the small bowel. They weren't successful, so I took over, and with a trick that had worked once before for me, I plopped it into the desired region under the fluoroscope. This is quite unusual as it generally takes hours to get it there and it was pure accident that I was successful. But I admit it was very impressive, especially when I said, just before I took over, that very rarely it was possible to do this successfully. I was the most surprised of the whole lot!

And so to bed to prepare for another lazy day tomorrow. They haven't too much material here, but enough to make it interesting. And I have apparently impressed the Major in charge enough that he lets me do much of

the film-reading and asks my opinion on all the tough cases. I always give it before I know what he thinks so that he doesn't commit himself, for he hates to admit that he was wrong. He's really been very nice to us, so I can't complain.

I'd sure like to hear from you, dearest, and am thirsting for news of the children. We will probably not receive mail for a couple of weeks as our outfit can't send it to us by courier. All my love and kisses. Ben.

3 August '44

Dearest:

Another day, but rather dull and boring. I'm so tired of all this—I want to go home—baw!

I'd better get the hell off this post or I shall go awry, askew, and a nuts. My typical day (when there's no ball game) is help with the X-ray work all morning, 1½ hrs. for lunch, quit work at 3, nap til dinner, read in the evening, maybe a beer at the Officers' club, a couple of games of ping-pong with Manny. Occasionally a movie, and fairly often a ball game, one trip to our billets, sort of fills in in the time.

I just can't get in the swing of a letter tonight dear. I think I'll go out for a walk and maybe finish later.

Later: Just chatted with Maj. Brown, chief of X-ray here about nothing in general. I like him even better as time goes on. But he's a little too quiet and formal for me.

Am enclosing 2 money orders, total \$116.00—Be sure to let me know when you receive them. I haven't been asking for packages lately, so before you chide me for lack of requests I'll mention some things I'd like: more Hershey bars (another box if possible), crackers (make sure they're packed well—if possible air tight), kippered herring, sardines, pickled herring, anchovies, rye crisp or the like to use as bread, cheese. How about canned whole corn on cob—you know, 4 in a can.

I'll enclose a little note to Steve and Nancy:

Dear Steve and Nan:

How are my two fine children. Your daddy would like to see you so much right now.

Steve, Mommy tells me you like to play tennis. When I get home, we'll play together. Won't that be fine! And Daddy and you will go swimming together like we used to—Do you remember?

And at bed-time, Steve will sit on Daddy's right knee and Nancy on Daddy's left knee and we'll read a book or have a singing bee.

Steve, I hope you will teach Nancy how to ride a bicycle, too, so that when the war is over, Daddy, Mommy, Steve and Nancy can all go for a ride together, each one on his own bicycle.

Mommy tells me how much Nancy can talk now. Pretty soon Stevie and Nancy will both make another record to send to their daddy. I liked your record, Stevie.

Stevie, kiss Nancy and Mommy for me and take care of them until I get back. Mama tells me what good children both you and Nancy are and I'm very proud of you. I think you're the nicest children in the whole world.

All my love and many kisses

Your soldier Daddy Ben

Goodnight my love -

Ben

8-4-44

Dear Capt [*Felson*]:

Hello there!! I hope you have arrived at your destination safe. I shall be sending you on a photograph of myself (Buddy). I shall be very pleased to hear from you. Remember me to your department and the nurses, especially Lieut. Cochrine. Do you want any air in your tyres if so let me know and I will come there and give you it free. We have missed you since you have gone. I hope you will excuse my writing Sir!!! I am hoping to hear from you in the near future. So cheers for now.

Yours Sincerely,

Roy.

Letter from my 14 yr. old English boy from the bicycle shop.

13 Aug. '44

Dearest:

We have returned from the D.S. trip [*Detached Service apparently just means leaving the main unit; now he is back.*] to our own outfit again and I must say, I am happy to be back. Did I tell you I had a cold and was in the hospital on my last day out? I made a helluva quick recovery after I learned we were to go back. Frankly, I still had fever when we left, but no one else knew it. I am entirely well now, however, having improved quickly after a baseball game the evening we arrived. We were in hot water all the while we were on detached service and the authorities there were not too sorry to see us go. In fact, all their medical officers—who disliked their CO even more than we did—teased us all the time about our latest snafu. The day before we left, Manny was away and I was in the hospital when they told one of our men he was going to be court martialed because he went to Trowbridge while he was on restriction. It seems the detachment commander found a pass with his name on it at the pass out gate. I heard about it unofficially and recalled that the man did not go to Trowbridge with us on the day in question. The man told me that he had a witness that he was on the post but the witness was away on 24 hr. pass. And yet they were trying to rush the case thru, and apparently without an investigation beforehand. When the Detachment Commander heard that I knew about it and that I threatened to be a witness on the man's behalf, he dropped the charges. I could have complained to the C.O. but by that time we knew we were leaving the next day, so I decided to pass it by.

To top everything off I lost my Gladstone bag [*wide leather briefcase*] on the way back, or rather the enlisted men in charge of baggage lost it. It contained my blouse, pinks and greens, slides I made after D-Day (I'm heartbroken about this), my address book, stationery, and stamps, some underclothes and socks, and a few other things of lesser value. It may catch up with me—my name, serial no. and organization are on the outside, and the rail transport office (RTO) is looking hard for it.

On our return I got in a ballgame—officers vs. enlisted men. We were losing 7 to 1 when they asked me to pitch. Someone had seen me practicing pitching. I went in the box and struck out the next 3 men. I pitched good, scoreless ball for 3 innings and we tied it at 7 to 7, then I got tired and lost confidence at the same time. From then on it was murder and I

again decided to give up pitching! [*Dad was still deciding to give up pitching when I was 10 and watching him play at the Jewish Center.*]

We had a nice party a few nights ago which began with a lottery of the remaining liquor in the club. I didn't win any, but those that did were very liberal and by 9 PM I found myself in an enlisted man's volleyball game, shouting and yelling to pep it up. They didn't realize I was drunk because (I later learned) I make the same amount of noise in a game when I'm sober! I retired early, definitely the worse for wear and tear and had a real hangover the next AM. Wine will do it every time.

P. 3 will be a more personal letter dear.

Ben

13 August '44

Dearest:

Don't pay any attention to what your mother says about writing. Your letters are very nice, altho when you write a V-mail longhand, it doesn't say enough. Keep writing as you are, especially about the children.

As for Steve not progressing—he is like the Russian Army in that every now and then he must take time out to straighten his lines and consolidate his game.

Don't bother the Dr. with your low blood pressure and lethargy. Firstly, he can do nothing for them (only I can) and secondly it's not a disease with you—it's your natural state!

I can get a 16 mm projector, so get Irv to have some taken if possible. That could be wonderful. What about the records of the kids' voices.

All my love, darling

Ben.

Thurs. Aug 17
'44 Somewhere
in France

Dearest:

Note the heading and you'll realize why I haven't been able to write lately. When I haven't been walking, riding on a boat, truck, or train, I've been resting so that I can be ready to walk or ride some more.

Our recent life has been fairly rugged for some, but your old man has been doing pretty well for himself. At the moment I am sitting on the back step of an ambulance in a French field wondering where we go next.

I begin at the beginning—we left our staging about 6 days ago by truck, then entrained for the marshalling area where we remained for a couple of days. There we were restricted to the camp, slept in large tents 7 to a tent, ate fairly well out of our mess gear and spent the rest of the time sleeping, playing bridge, reading, or throwing a medicine ball around. We left there by foot and marched about 6 miles to the dock under full pack and in blistering heat thru city streets. It was kind of tough because my new shoes gave me blisters, but I managed to arrive safely. After a 4 hour wait, we loaded onto a British passenger ship which used to ply the route between India and England. The crew was about $\frac{2}{3}$ Mohammedan Indians and $\frac{1}{3}$ British. There were about 40% more passengers than accommodations but they packed us in anyway. Being a Major I got a cabin with 5 other Majors and ate in the Officers' mess. Relatively speaking, I lived the life of Riley. The other officers, the men, and even the nurses lived crowdedly in the hold, sleeping in hammocks and eating slop as only the British can prepare it. Since it was only a short voyage—we went by convoy—no one beefed much but after arriving we didn't get off any too quickly and from there on there was much griping. I tried to get the officers in my cabin to give up their quarters to the nurses but they wouldn't, the bastards. I guess chivalry is dead.

Our trip to shore was very fascinating but I can't tell you about it, except to say we landed at one of the original beach-heads. While on board ship, I neglected to mention, a dead flier floated by us. He appeared to have been in the water for some time.

On landing, we saw plenty of evidence that a battle had been fought here. The few civilians we saw were very friendly but not excited and did not beg for food. They smiled wanly at us as we went past but even the kids didn't yell out as they did at the port of embarkation in England—everyone gave us a send off there.

Last night we slept in the open and it was pretty cold for most but I slept in the front seat of an ambulance and did very well.

That's all for now, dearest. All my love—

Ben

[Mid-August] '44

Dearest Ginny:

At the moment I am lying on a blanket in the field waiting my turn for a haircut. Yes, life is so different—we are sleeping in pup tents, eating K rations, and are restricted to a field of a couple of acres with nothing to do. Surprisingly however time doesn't hang very heavy so I can't complain. By the time I get up, eat breakfast, wash and shave, it's 10 o'clock. Censoring mail takes 15-30 minutes, kibitzing around, writing letters, doing laundry, straightening out my belongings takes the time up until lunch. In the PM a ball game, or going to one of the shower units in the neighborhood or doing some reading usually takes the time until late dinner. In the evening, shooting the bull, some more reading, some more baseball etc. until dark and then to bed for another 9 hours.

It really isn't a very tough life, altho some of the officers think it's rugged. I imagine we will get tired of K rations before much longer, but then I hear we are setting up a mess soon and will have hot food. I look forward to that time with relish (or without). Some of the men are going out as surgical and shock teams but I'm afraid that there'll be no X-ray teams. I plan to visit some nearby general hospitals as soon as I can get permission however.

We've had practically no contact with the French civilians except as we've passed thru battle scarred towns and cities. Our town, famous for a battle fought there, was really beaten up. One large edge of it had the hell busted out of it. The civilians had moved back and were lined up on the streets watching and waving and shouting to us as we passed by. Some of the enlisted men have talked to the French nearby by means of the GI conversational French book and sign language and the people seem gloriously happy to see us. In this part of the country at least, they do not seem to be beggars or terribly poverty-stricken. They usually refuse pay for cider or French bread but accept parts of our K rations happily. Cigarettes are not in such demand. So far they have not shouted for candy, cigarettes etc. as they apparently do in Italy.

I have had several canteens of cider which makes a delightful slightly alcoholic drink—my men generally see that I get some. Wine and cognac is

much more difficult to get, but cider is apparently very plentiful since this is Apple Country.

The countryside is very beautiful and shows very little scarring. Fields of 1 or 2 acres are surrounded by the hedgerows of which you have heard so much. They are usually about 10 feet high and composed of thick growths of bushes, the bottom part can also contain a good bit of earth. You can't see thru them and it is pretty obvious why they gave the Allies so much trouble.



Figure 11: Typical Normandy hedgerows. "The Battle of the Hedgerows" took place at St. Lô, perhaps the town mentioned earlier in this letter. U.S. 30-ton Sherman tanks could not penetrate the hedgerows until the Army improvised cutting devices and attached them to the front of the tanks.

Mosquitos are large and numerous. It is said that they turn over your dog tag and look at the blood type before they stick you, but I can't vouch for that, personally. Wild ducks are plentiful and many of the men drool at the mouth when they see them.

On the boat I ran into Maury Oscherwitz and a Capt. Irv. Gold who used to live in Cincy. In the 1st place we stopped in France, who should I run into but Jim Nantz (now a Capt.), Chape Hawley and my Indpls tennis

opponent, and Stan Garner, all former Ft. Harrison Station Hospital personnel. Within 15 minutes Jim and I had started a touch football game! I was very glad to see all of them... In the field next to our present location I ran across Capt. Bill Irwin, an old friend of mine from the CGH. So the world is not so small after all.

Walt is no doubt now in Southern France and I fervently hope it's going well with them there. I guessed what was going to happen from one of his letters in which he said he was moving but couldn't say any more than that. He would have told us that he was going to the Italian front, so I correctly guessed Southern France. [*In her typewritten transcription of this letter, his sister Sophie noted that dad guessed wrong.*]

I haven't had any mail for about 2 weeks. Please Mr. Postman, get on the ball so I can know that my wife and kiddies are well and happy.

I miss you, Steve, and Nan so much, I could screech.

All my love to all of you all.

Ben

Mon. - Aug. 19 or
20 (I forget)
[1945] Some-
where in France

Hello darling:

I am writing this letter in the recumbent position in a pup tent under a driving rain, my biggest hardship so far. Except for a few drops of rain blowing in around the edges, I am quite dry and comfortable. It has rained twice since we have been here. The first time the wind was from the west and blew right into my pup tent around the raincoat which I had put up for protection, soaking most of my belongings. This time the wind is from the east and those guys who told me my tent was facing wrong are now suffering themselves. Surprisingly, even in a terrific downpour one can remain completely dry in these things if he plans in advance.

Danish brought me some breakfast so I had breakfast in bed, super-de-luxe. I plan to put on my bathing trunks and go out for a shower after finishing this letter. I mean a shower in the rain. I need a bath anyway.

We are still restricted to the field but many enlisted men are apparently slipping out the back way and going to neighboring towns and farms

where they buy hard cider, wine, cognac, and even champagne at exorbitant prices. Last night, as I sat near the motor pool, men passed by in various stages of inebriation, carrying canteens of wine etc. As they saw me, each would come over and give me a swig and pretty soon I was feeling dizzy. I went up to my tent and lay down after dark and 2 men came up looking for me, one to give me 2 canteens of cider (which I still have) and the other to give me a swig of cognac.

I not only was drunk when I fell asleep, but had to twice go to the latrine, the second time in the rain. The cider makes a very good drink, tasting somewhat like Calawbra wine. The other wines I drank were dry wines i.e. they left the tongue dry after drinking. The cognac tasted like cognac, but better since it was free. [*There is a Calabria wine from Southern Italy but I don't know if that is the reference.*]

My time lately has been almost completely filled by baseball. Day before yesterday I was asked to umpire the game between our nurses and those of the 62nd general in the next field. The game was a riot, our girls winning 12 to 11. The climax of the game occurred when one of our nurses lost her sense of direction at 3rd base and started to run into left field instead of home. And every decision I made as umpire was loudly "booed" even when I called one gal safe because the fielder touched 2nd base with the ball when she should have touched the runner/it was not a "force play."

From there I went over to the enlisted men's game with the 62nd. Our team had lost the first game 5 to 4. They asked me to play shortfield [*fourth outfielder*] in the second game and I handled about 10 chances without an error. I didn't get any hits but we won 5 to 4 and from then on I have been regular shortfielder on the enlisted men's team. I have learned how to play this position pretty well, having discovered that in 9 out of 10 cases with fast pitching, I can predict which direction the ball will go by the stance of the batter. The more of his back I can see standing in left-center, the more towards center or right field he will hit it. If I can see his chest, I play near the 3rd base line. Seldom do they fail to come thru and I usually get 8 to 12 putouts a game.

Yesterday afternoon our officers played the officers of the 62nd. I started in pitching and did well until the third inning when I got awfully tired (I had hit a home run and triple before this and I was puffing away like the old man that I am). I started to give out walks and quickly took myself out, after giving them 1 run. The next pitcher did very well for 3 more innings but he too got tired running bases and we had to put in a third pitcher. I was catcher for the rest of the game. We finally won 7 to 2.

Last night our enlisted men's team played them again and we won 9 to 2. Our pitcher, unknown to me, was drinking large quantities of wine between innings and by the 4th inning was staggering drunk. He could hardly catch the ball when the catcher threw it to him. Yet they didn't get a hit until the last inning and only got 2 hits in the whole ballgame. The game was really a riot as another youngster, a spectator, was higher than a kite and wandering all over the field during the game. The umpire was arguing with the crowd half the time, which gave the game an additionally wild effect. Incidentally his name was Cohen from Brooklyn so you can see what I mean.

These games are attended by 4 or 5 hundred people, so you can see that I am really in my element. I have become unofficial liaison officer of baseball for our outfit.

I hope everything goes well with you and the kids. Anything, even baseball, that takes my mind off of home is really a blessing, because I do miss you so very much. God, I hope it's over soon.

My greatest and deepest love to you, sweetheart. Au revoir.

Ben

Tues- 22 Aug.
'44 [*France*]

Good morning my love:

I hit the jackpot on mail yesterday—about a dozen from you, 1 from Soph, 1 from the election board with my ballot in it, and 1 from one of my men at Ft. Harrison. It picked up my spirit immensely. They were especially low because of a pernicious 24 hour rain which kept us all in our pup tents except for mealtime. Even at that, I didn't get out of my tent until 5 p.m. Danish brought me breakfast in bed at 10 AM, I skipped lunch, and Danish brought me mail twice. You see, he takes good care of me.

Last night I went out of our restricted area to the outskirts of the nearby town. I visited a bombed church and it certainly was a mess. Then Abe, Manny, and I talked to some French people in a mixture of sign language, French out of the Army phrasebook, pidgin Spanish, and broken English. The people were obviously poverty-stricken and had returned to the area about 5 weeks after the Germans were pushed out. They eat well because the American soldiers are always bringing them rations. They are pitifully crowded, about 10 people in 1 room. The front door is always open and GIs wander in and out aimlessly. Wine can be had, but usually with some diffi-

culty. I managed to get a drink of cognac and several of wine, along with plenty of cider, so my spirits were elevated despite the consistent drizzle. All in all, their life seemed pretty sordid, but no more so than in the slums of Cincy. Our rations seem to go a long way with them but they soak up plenty for wine and De Gaulle must be OK since the Americans brought him along. Mind you, these are the isolated viewpoints of a few unenlisted peasants and not the voice of the People. I can't help but feel that they are intensely practical and whoever treats them nicest gains their support—at least this applies to these few Frenchmen I've seen. [*Gen. Charles de Gaulle was the symbol of the Free French while in exile in England and became President of the provisional government in 1945.*]

There are many things to answer or comment upon in your letters. In the first place there's the sad news of Mutty's death. I wrote Rae and promised her I will try to find and visit his grave. I think that I might be successful in this attempt as there is a very large American cemetery nearby. I thought a lot about Mutty last night and concluded among other things that his life held little purpose in that no significant good had been set. I might have said the same for myself were it not for my family. There is no question but that a family adds purpose and aim and meaning to one's existence. My parents' lives would have held no significance were it not for their progeny and their drive to make something of their children was terrific. They projected themselves into their offsprings (as we, no doubt, will into ours) and their frustrations were lessened.

Enough of this philosophical drivel. You are showing your typical mental ____ [*unreadable*] which amuses me so much in forgetting enclosures. (1) "Steve says please dictate a letter to father"—but no letter. (2) "Am enclosing an article"—but no article (B) On parking the car on a hill without setting the brakes. (C) In rushing about from one thing to another, biting off more than you a can chew. Get organized, my dear—give up your clinics, don't be afraid to miss a symphony or a good movie and take things easier.

I'm glad you enjoyed the photographs. If I have a chance, I'll send you more. I wish you would send me more photos of yourself and the kids and also more records. Don't you realize what this means to me!

The place I had reference to in England was Bournemouth not Brussels. If you had looked over the symphony programs carefully you would have realized that. Since when is Brussels in England?

Danish's domestic life seems to be a very happy one—an impression of his mental situation were obviously incorrect.

Don't worry about Walt's missing his wife more than his kids. I wonder how much truth there is in that. But Walt had always been more romantic than most. I've canvassed the men around here and they all feel the same way as I do. Our kids will have changed and their growth period will be irrevocably lost to us, while our wives will be their same sweet selves.

Don't aggravate yourself about Steve's weight, etc. and above all don't say anything about it in his presence. He'll do alright. As for his being a scholar rather than an athlete—just wait until I get back. He will be both! We all got a big kick out of his statement, "I know everything, don't I, Mother." I'll take that conceit out of him, too!

Nancy's tomboyishness and fearlessness are very pleasing to me. Gosh, just to think of them brings ye old lumps to my throat.

Send me Leo's address (I lost my address book) so I can congratulate him. That proves he really has something on the ball and is a real accomplishment. [*Possible reference to Brother Leo becoming a Marine Corps officer.*]

I think it would be OK to send both the kids to nursery school, but prefer U.C. to the Center School. But don't start them and then let it lapse. Such indecision has an adverse effect on kids. And don't cross bridges until you reach them. If it takes so long to dress them that you can't get to work on time, get up a little earlier and go to bed earlier at night. You go to bed too late, anyway.

I sent hankies to all the girls on the Felson side—I don't recall whether I sent any to Sel or to your mother. I hope I did. If not, I know they will understand. The Felsons are more touchy about these things than the Raphaelsons.

I have written about 10 to 15 letters every month, the minimum number just after D-Day (June) so if you don't receive more for June and July, blame it on the mailman, not your ever-loving husband.

It's alright with me if you lend Jake money. It's the least we can do in return for his many favors.

I know John Freeden and his wife fairly well, having gone to school with Ann. Your poker game was quite stiff and it's a good thing you won. I'll break your neck if you get in another though. I'm glad to hear the news

about Sid. I owe him a letter, but his address is lost also. Please send me a list of addresses of some of our friends and relatives, dear.

I'm very proud of your presentation to the Red Cross group, but am not at all surprised at the good impression you made. Some of your letters may be semi-literate, and your knowledge of geography and arithmetic is no doubt sub-moronic, but in your field, dear, you have no superiors. Jesus, what a backhanded compliment! But you know what I mean. That's why I fell for you, anyway.

Well, my sweet, that's all for now.

Your ever-loving husband.

Thurs. 24 Aug.
[1944; France]

Darling:

How are you this lovely cloudy morning? If this rain doesn't stop soon, we will all go stark mad. In between rains I have managed to get a swell tan. I am really in excellent health and spirits and in no danger whatsoever. I'm no slacker—I just want to go home!

The war is still moving along very nicely, altho really straight news (not of the rumor type) is scarce. *The Stars and Stripes* [the independent but official newspaper of the US Armed Forces] is generally 24 to 48 hours behind time and there is only 1 portable radio I know of on the post, owned by 1 of the nurses. By the time the fresh news reaches us—transmitted by word of mouth—it is pretty well garbled. Paris has fallen by an uprising of the underground, we are told. Romania has capitulated and is now fighting on our side—that is the latest rumor. The slaughter in the trap closed at Falaise must have been terrific. [This battle was in Northern France, August 8-17.] We are located in an area originally occupied by the paratroopers. The land was flooded by the Nazis and apparently there were plenty of our boys drowned. Some of the GIs discovered both American and German bodies in a ditch not so far away. There are broken tanks and vehicles, mostly German, in the vicinity. The Germans didn't practice scorched earth technic in this region because they left too hurriedly. As to other regions, I can't tell. The story told here was that in this particular area only 2 companies of Germans were located and that the Americans were landed in this area by mistake. They were supposed to be landed further up along the coast (where subsequent events showed much stronger Nazi positions).

Due to this error of the Navy, we landed in this weaker location and were able to make the furthest early advances here. The story is good, though very likely untrue, as most stories of this kind.

Last night I visited a nearby French farmhouse with some of the fellows and a few French speaking enlisted men. We drank good cider and then she brought out some 25 yr. old wine with which we toasted the liberation of Paris. I am picking up a few French words.

On our way home, we were feeling pretty good. About ½ way up the road we ran across 5 of our men surrounding 3 negroes. I smelled something wrong and lagged behind, while the others went on. About this time a truckload of about 15 negroes pulled up and the men piled out. I decided to investigate and discovered that the white boys, all Southerners, were members of a group called the “Rebels” who have bragged around the post of how they deal with “niggers.” The negroes had that quiet serious look that meant trouble—and serious trouble! I had heard that there were several incidents in the nearby town and several stabbings were supposed to have occurred, and also know that sort generally started by the whites who resented the fact that many white English girls dated the negroes. So I expected the worst. The whites were drunk and the negroes sober. Apparently “Rebels” recognized me as the ball-playing Major and seemed to turn their attention to me. I kidded and cajoled them into starting back to camp and then turned to the colored men. I told them that I would handle the white boys and that I understood who had started it, but that it would only create more trouble if they beat them up—even if they deserved it. They seemed willing to listen to reason—probably because of their respect for my Major leaf (They are usually very GI in this manner, I’m told). They muttered something to the effect that the white boys had better leave them alone—and I really believe they mean it. Then they climbed into the truck and went on.

I’m afraid of a lot of race trouble when this is all over, dear. The whites are very bitter about the social equality the negro soldier is getting (which isn’t strictly true) and they are getting tired of getting kicked around. If it comes to a showdown, as usual the negro will get the worst.

It promises to be a major issue in the near future. One of our officers, a Southerner, carries a stick which he calls a “nigger-killer!” Shades of Himmler and his kike-killer! It’s awful, isn’t it. [*I couldn’t find a precise reference for the Himmler phrase.*]

Nothing new here except our ball team (officers') lost to the 62nd 8 to 3 yesterday. We will play the 3rd frame in the series tomorrow and hope to win.

Our administration is still afraid of its own shadow ... one trivial rule after another on to our restriction making things awkward for all of us. We gripe but it does little good. Yesterday they pitched 2 tents on our only field and I had to beef plenty but finally they removed them to another area where there was adequate room. The Chaplain has been giving very liberal talks at his Sunday services and I attend them fairly regularly. Tues. night at the request of several enlisted men to the Chaplain, we had a discussion group on Russia and the post-war world. It was very illuminating to discover that we have a number of well-educated parlor pinks (at least) among the enlisted men and the discussion went over with a bang. There was an educated vociferous reactionary around them and no holds were barred. A good time was had by all, as you can well imagine. We are going to continue these groups every Tues. as much as possible, the Chaplain being the moderator (and a good one, too). The next subject is Civil govt. on the conquered French territory—what is being done and what should be done. I suggested the topic.

Please see that Soph types some of my letters for transmittal to the family, dear. They're all writing me that they don't hear from me. This is a small matter for you but important to me. Love to Steve and Nan.

With oceans of love and kisses to you,

Ben.

Sun. 27 Aug.
[1944; France]

Dearest:

Another chapter or two in the Adventures of Ben Felson. It is a constant source of amazement to me when I look back and think of all the things that happen to me.

To begin with, of late I have noticed that whenever I sit down somewhere on the post, enlisted men come and sit by me and a bull session, ever-growing in number and scope, develops. It is mostly griping at the administration (which I do well) but frequently winds up in baseball, music, books, etc. The other day I started to hum a tune and before I could turn around, we had a singing-session. While this is all flattering to my ego, it

sometimes becomes somewhat of a nuisance, especially when I try to do some reading.

I have unofficially become special service officer (for athletics) without anyone appointing me. It seems that the same boys were always playing ball and some of the others didn't get to play, so they came to me about it. I decided to start a league, and before I realized it, there were 10 teams and it had become the rage of the camp. Everyone in the place turns out for the games and blood is hot. So far I haven't heard from the C.O. about it, but I shouldn't be surprised since I didn't ask anyone's permission. We didn't have any baseballs and knowing our Special Services Officer, I didn't expect to be getting any thru him. So I went next door to the 62nd General, saw a Corporal who knew where the balls were kept, and he brought me 3 of them behind a bush. The S.S. [*Special Services*] Officer still wants to know where I got them! Today a 62nd GH officer came over and asked me to get up a soccer team. I don't know anything about soccer, but I asked one of the Italian boys if he could get up a team and he said yes. Ergo: soccer game 7 p.m. today.

Yesterday I was reading (Geo. Wash. Carver's biography) when about 14 guys came running up all hot and bothered. It seems that a batted ball hit the umpire and then struck a runner. Was he automatically out? I said, yes—(ball in play if it hits an umpire) and everyone accepted the decision and went back to the ballgame!

Day before yesterday, Manny and I were kidding and threatening each other. We offered to box—but both of us were bluffing altho neither realized the other guy was bluffing. The Chaplain ran and got the gloves and we bet 100 Francs. They laid out a ring, got a referee and seconds. Manny said he wanted 3, 3 minute rounds and I didn't know he was bluffing and that he hoped I'd call the whole thing off. I held out for 1 minute rounds and finally, we actually got under way after ½ hr. of haggling. Manny expected me to go easy, but I didn't know it and started to hit hard. Before you know it we were standing toe to toe and slugging away. Once he hit me so hard in the nose that my grandchildren will feel it. By the end of the first round we were both dead and I was losing badly.

In the meantime the enlisted men got wind of it while they were drilling and called a halt to the drill to come and watch. All the officers were there and many nurses.

The second round we both stalled. In the third round Manny couldn't lift his arms above his waist, but I could get mine 2 inches higher, so I pro-

ceeded to get even with him for that punch in the nose and first round beating.

The fight was called a draw and someone poured a bucket of water over my head after it was all over.

Manny was so tired afterwards he laid down and slept for 4 hours. I was pretty tired, too, you may be sure.

That afternoon our officers play the 62nd Gen. Officers in the 3rd game of our series. I made 4 errors and everyone razzed hell out of me. I practically blew the ballgame by myself and we lost 8 to 4, so they won the series 2 to 1.

Did I tell you about Milt Blaine and I running a race? We had been calling each other "fatty" and finally I said I could beat him in a hundred yard dash. We bet 100 Francs and the Chaplain held the stakes. They laid out the 100 yds., spectators lined up, and off we went. After about 10 yards I started pulling away, and beat him by about 40 yards.

Yesterday I went to Cherbourg with Danish, Hulse, the Chaplain, and Joe Shafer. I'll tell you about my trip in the next letter.

All my love to you.

Kiss and hug Nancy and Steve for me, dear.

Ben.

Sun. 3 Sept. '44
[France]

Dearest:

We've had little excitement here in the past 2 days due to rain and cold weather. Yesterday the wind blew up a small gale and almost blew our tents down. We had plenty of rain, but I don't mind it so much now because we are under large tents and can keep dry. But it becomes rather boring.

They have taken about 200 of the men to a movie in town, but that's about all the recreation anyone here has gotten.

I visited the 50th General yesterday and was treated very cordially by the X-ray man there. They are the Seattle College Unit and seem to have a well-knit organization, but have never been truly busy. I had lunch there and then came back to camp to finish my book, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*

[*Betty Smith's 1943 novel*]. It was wonderful wasn't it, my socially conscious wife? I can just see the tears in your sympathetic eyes.

We may set up our hospital in the next 2 to 4 weeks—I certainly hope so. It shouldn't be so bad working under tents. They can be pretty comfortable.

I'm taking an officers' and enlisted men's team out to play ball this afternoon at the nearby air corps outfit. I may take my racket along, but it's rather windy today.

By the way, did you get my money order for last month? Please acknowledge. I'm sending another one or a bond for the month of Sept. Also acknowledge receipt of it! I also bought you, Nancy, and Steve each a X-mas present (no, I don't expect to be home by X-mas) and when they come, let me know.

There's nothing to buy here that they don't soak like hell for and that isn't cheesy. I'm not much for souvenirs of action and furthermore I don't see many, so please forgive me if I don't burden the mails with junk of this sort. However, if I pick up a captured Nazi tank or truck, I'll send it home.

I ran across another small pocket of anti-Semitism in a "friend" of mine the other day. I jumped him for it and now he stays away from me and vice versa. He's a new dentist in the outfit and we had played some bridge and ping pong together.

I haven't heard from Walt in some time, so I'm a bit worried. I hear 4 sacks of mail came in today, so maybe there's something from him. And I hope a no. from you. Keep sending pkgs: anchovies, salami—paint it with paraffin, sardines, marinated herring (well-packed). How about pickled tongue in a jar? Look in the delicatessen for some "exotic" and saliva producing food and send it on to your ever-hungry husband. Also photographing printing paper.

I'm still pleased dear, the way you and the kids have adjusted to your family and with the way you are handling the children. I have supreme confidence in your judgment concerning them and it has taken a tremendous load off my mind. As a mother, you have proved to be a natural and I take my hat off to you, because early in our married life I wondered – as you know – what kind of mama you'd make. The sympathy and love that you show them is probably the strongest force that they will ever experience in building up their future lives. I keep hoping that they don't change too much

until I have returned to witness the changes. Knowing this is only a futile hope makes me sad.

Am enclosing the bill to Chas. Thomas. [*Reference unknown.*] Pay it by check—I can't write a check here. Don't re-subscribe to the JAMA but subscribe to "Radiology." I haven't read a *P.M.* for more than a month. *Life* has been so sporadic that I don't want you to renew my subscription to it.

As far as missing you, I do tremendously. I have been reluctant to admit it to myself because there is nothing I can do about it. I frequently get ye olde lump in my throat and I try to keep these feelings out of my letters as that might make me sound sorry for myself. Then you would sympathize with me and perhaps be more miserable for it, too. I have seen some of the others go thru these periods of depression and it's not for me. So I put on a good act—"I like it here" and all that hooey. As I write even this little bit, I feel sadness growing on me—so forgive me darling for over-compensating by acting so happy. I-want-to-go-home-to-you!

All my love to you darling. I'd love to hold you close right now. I'm afraid I'd never let go.

Goodnight my dearest.

B

8 Sep 44
[*France*]

Hello Honey Chile:

Oh, this awful weather: chilly and rain, rain, rain - confining us to our tents, ruining our dispositions, delaying our baseball league, interfering with our travel over the countryside.

Speaking of our baseball league (you knew I would!) we lost 2 games and are now eliminated. I pitched the 2nd of the two games and did OK for 5 innings but got the hell knocked out of me in the 6th and we got beat 12 to 6. This leaves the "Duty Dagoes" and "Chicago Gangsters" to play for the championship as soon as weather permits, and I hear there are \$1000 being bet on this game—and I am chief umpire! Woe is me!

After the game I have a boxing show arranged—three round bouts which ought to make it a good show.

The men are divided as to whether we should start touch football or play more baseball. I'll decide later, maybe do both.

Last night I read until 4 AM and finished *Strange Fruit* [1944 novel by Lillian Smith]. It really is an excellent book on the negro subject and you should by all means read it. I have gotten 3 *Lifes*, 8 *P.M.s* and 2 *Amer. Israelites* in the past week, but no first class mail. The box of Hershey's which Soph sent arrived yesterday and are wonderful. They came in very handy, too—as I have been eating out of other peoples' boxes recently and could repay them in kind, as well as eat Hershey's to my heart's content. Be sure to thank Soph for me. Someday soon I'll write another family letter. By the way dear, please turn most of my letters over to Soph for copying. She keeps remarking that she hasn't gotten them from you and I can't understand it—except that it must be absent-mindedness on your part. Please do it now, dearest.

Guess what! 2 days ago Manny ran across Stan Simon and Dave Graller in a nearby town and learned their location. Yesterday he and I went over there—hitch-hiking took us only a little more than an hour. I had a wonderful visit, especially with Dave and Red. I saw Joe Filger, Connie Baker, Sander Goodman, Carl Harting, and all the others. Jack Wright is with another outfit and Jimmy Mack is in England with a broken pelvis received the night they arrived in France, in a truck convoy accident. 3 nurses and Jimmy received broken pelvises and Dave was in the hospital for a while also. They will all recover OK.

The 25th has been here since the latter part of July and has been functioning as a hospital for 3 weeks in a muddy field outside a small town and surrounded by 2 larger towns which are off-limits to military personnel. They are none-too-happy about their set-up and are disappointed in having missed the D-Day rush. They all look well—Dave, in fact, looks better than I've ever seen him and Red has changed not at all.

The hospital grounds are very muddy, having formerly been a marsh, but they have a nice set-up as tent hospitals go. Red seems to have a very nice X-ray dept. and appears to be doing excellent work.

I told them I was going to set up in Cincy and they both, especially Dave, thought it was a swell idea. Sander, too.

We had lunch together (2 steaks each, and good!), had some drinks together, and chatted about the past and present. Red plans to go back to his job in the General and hopes to get to practice in Holmes so he can pick up more money. He expects to be approached by Bader and Reineke

to go in with them as they are so busy. He says he might accept if they don't try to make him a scut or treat him as a kid (Reineke has this fault). [*"Scut" is a term used in teaching hospitals by junior residents and medical students to describe mindless and thankless errands.*]

An amusing incident, very reminiscent of old times, occurred in the X-ray dept. when the question of a fractured skull came up on a film. I said no, Red said yes and we both immediately said "bet a coke." I subsequently proved to be right and Red will pay off back in Cincy.

Also Stan, Red, Dave, and I were talking together when it suddenly dawned on me that you had written that you had gone with Mrs. Simon, Elsey, and Graller to the Commissary at Ft. Thomas. A coincidence, no!

Dave has no idea of what Leon Schiff [*an older Cincinnati physician*] wants to talk to us about and laughingly said he wished that Leon wanted to talk to him.

We had a few drinks, then Red finagled a vehicle and took us back to camp, where Manny supplied a bottle of wine and we killed it. Then Red left. If we're here for very long, I will go back over there again or maybe go with Red and Dave to a city near here and we will get drunk together.

I hope your ear is better, dear. Take care of yourself for me—please...

My love and kisses to Nan and Steve.

Ben.

Sun. 10 Sep. 44
[*France*]

Dearest:

Brrrr..., it's getting cold. Last night was our first frost and I was cold despite 4 blankets, my bathrobe, and bedding roll used as a sleeping bag. We sleep on cots so pity the poor enlisted men who sleep on the ground with only 2 blankets. They had a miserable night of it. It seems that there is a shortage of blankets over here. I've given out one blanket and 2 shelter halves to enlisted men. I imagine that blankets will be forthcoming soon. I certainly hope so for their sake!

Little of any importance has occurred since my last letter. Yesterday the ball league finished up when the Chicago Gangsters beat the Dirty Da-

goes 7 to 2, your husband being the umpire. I arranged the program for the afternoon, starting off with a baseball game between our nurses and a neighboring hospital nurse team which we won handily. This preceded the big game. Following the big game (\$500 to \$1000 changed hands on it) we had a boxing match which I refereed. Each time I went in to break a clinch one of the boxers would take a pop at me. One time they even knocked me down. So later in the fight, when they clinched, I got on the opposite side of the ring and yelled "break," and the audience got a helluva big kick out of it. There were about 300-400 people present.

Today an all-star team is going to play the Chicago team and tomorrow we are starting another league, weather permitting. We have now had almost 24 hrs. without rain—praise the Lord (especially since it's Sunday). All days of the week are alike here except that on Sunday morning we have church services and on Tues. night the Chaplain has a discussion group which is rapidly expanding. So far the topics have been 1. Russia and the Post-War World 2. The Governing of Occupied Cities in France 3. What to do about Govt. of Post-War Germany (Hulse conducted this as a question and answer program and did very well—more later). Next week: China, its present and future govt.

Hulse believes that there is no effective underground or liberal group in Germany to take over the govt. He feels it unwise to turn the govt. over to the liberals who emigrated to the US or England—many of whom he knows quite well personally. These men, he says, have had their chance and failed, and are 10 years older and out of practice. He also points out that the Germans, after so much of Hitler, would never tolerate them. He believes the Russian sponsored German group: High German Army Prisoners, German communists who emigrated to Russia, and some unknowns might be put in charge of the govt. at first, until something better can be worked out—just as the Badoglio govt. in Italy. The captured Prussian Generals would have to be watched carefully. Suffice to say it will be one hell of a problem. [*The Italian Chief of Staff, Marshall Pietro Badoglio, became Prime Minister in 1943 after Mussolini was deposed. When Berlin fell and Hitler committed suicide (May 1945), the Allies – the US, the Soviet Union, France, and England – took over the government of Germany. They did not permit a German election until 1949, when Conrad Adenauer became Chancellor. Allied government of Germany ended in 1952.*]

Yesterday the Chief Nurse, a barren frustrated spinster, approached me. It seems that my ball games have been used as an excuse by certain of the nurses to get familiar with the enlisted men and she is worried about

the after-dark consequences. What could I suggest. She wanted to stop all nurses from attending the games! I wanted to suggest iron girdles with cross bar, but was afraid she might be shocked. So I told her, while I hadn't noted anything amiss (I really had) I would try to see that all the girls sat together and would try to sit among them. Imagine me a guardian of chastity! Of course, I plan to mind my own business and let her worry about it herself. The darned fool doesn't have sense enough to know that any nurse who is making love with the enlisted men in the dark will be discreet around him in the daylight. And any fellow who is spending time with the nurses won't be addressing her by her first name in public, as some of the men do!

Well, that's all for now, my love. I hope your ear is well by the time you receive this. Remember me to Sel and your folks. I'm awfully sorry to learn about your mother's hypertension. I, too, am a little alarmed about it. You must make her take it easy. It probably would be advisable for you to quit your work and supervise the housework, much as I know you hate it. It might prove very helpful if you did it.

All my love again to you and our kids, God love-'em.

Ben

Tues. Sep 13
[1944; France]

Dearest:

Before I forget, will you buy Steve a birthday present from his daddy and one for yourself from your loving husband. There is simply nothing here that I can get you without paying very exorbitant prices for sleazy stuff. Should I find anything for either of you, I will send it home, but don't be very optimistic. I'm sorry, my love.

By the way, did you get my money order for \$100? Please acknowledge. I have also sent \$75 via War Dept. Finance Office on Sep. 3 and added \$65 to my allotment beginning Nov. 1st. Please acknowledge all these, dear. Should I accumulate any cash, I'll send it via W.D. Finance Office or Postal money order.

Your last letter tells me that you are in the hospital getting penicillin. I'm still a bit worried about your ear, but know you're in good hands. Remember what I said in an earlier letter.

Our life here remains pretty much the same. Baseball is still in the limelight, especially since the weather is better, altho an officers' volley ball league has been started. The first baseball series closed when the All-Stars played the champion Chicago Gangsters and beat them 3 to 1 in the last inning in one of the finest ball games I have ever seen. Three officers including myself played on the All-Stars and we all won the game for our team, one of the officers making a phenomenal catch with the bases full and 2 outs in the last inning, the second officer handling many chances at 3rd base, and I making 4 hits in 4 times at bat and scoring all 3 runs. Much money changed hands on this game.

Immediately after the series, the men requested that I start another league and now a new 8-team league is in full swing. I tried to pitch our 1st game and in the 2nd inning my arm went dead and I had to go out. Since then I have been unable to lift it. We got beat, too.

A few of us have been visiting an elderly French couple on a nearby farm. Madame has various ulcers in her leg—but bad, and I finally sent her to the 5th General Hospital where they are taking care of her. We drink Calvados there: a very potent distilled drink made from fermented apple cider; 2 drinks and your ears are numb, three and they drop off.

Yesterday Abe [*Danish*] and I took a vehicle and went out hunting athletic equipment. We learned that if our Special Service Officer went thru proper channels he could get all we needed and then some, but he won't take the trouble. We were refused the equipment by Special Service because we had no requisition, so we went to the 2nd and 25th General Hospitals and they gave us sufficient equipment to get by on. The 2nd General (Presbyterian Hosp., NYC) is one of the best units I have ever seen. I saw Dave again at the 25th but Red Elsey was out. I didn't stay very long, coming back to camp.

Today I am taking 7 nurses to Cherbourg—as chaperone. I am to leave very shortly, so I must close now with all my love to you, and wishes for a very speedy recovery.

Say hello and give my love to Nancy and Steve.

Devotedly,

Ben

Sept. 16th, 1944
[*France*]

Dear kinfolks:

I have been remiss in writing family letters, but will not apologize because I can't type and have no carbons to make duplicates of letters to Ginny. So it remains for that ... wife of mine to transmit my letters to Soph for copying—which she has neglected to do, making it all her (Ginny's) fault. (What a scoundrel I am, hiding behind a woman's skirt.)

The past few days I have been exceedingly busy with baseball, volleyball, and travel. My baseball is fair, my volleyball mediocre, my French stinks, but my travels beat Gulliver himself in scope and interest.

Since my letters to Ginny have been full of baseball and eventually you will (I hope) get copies, I will dismiss the topic by admitting that I am very tired of it myself by now. The league is growing great guns however, despite the "officers" loss of 4 straight games.

My interest in volleyball is only a passing one—no pun intended since I'm a better spiker than passer.

This leaves my travel experiences to discuss. My travelogue begins with 2 trips to Cherbourg, the second as chaperone for 7 beautiful nurses on a shopping tour. Hitchhiking is the mode of travel utilized here—any vehicle going your way will stop and pick you up—often going out of its way to take you where you are going. Once we took the train (Amer. Transp. Corp) —no tickets, no conductor, plenty of seats – a fairly rapid mode of travel but not as fast as my thumb. Further, train schedules are fixed and there are few passenger trains a day. Traffic by road is stupendous, unbelievable in quantity and types of vehicles. These vehicles transport everything from anus to zombie, including French civilians.

Speaking of French civilians, they are not the American-lovers [*here*] in Normandie that they are south of the peninsula. Cherbourg is interesting chiefly as a port—but I can't say much about this. There are quite a few Americans there, several Red Cross establishments and a few shops open – they soak the Americans and the quality of merchandise is inferior. It's quite a dull town with no eating places and only a few drinking spots. Liquor can be had by the bottle if you know where but the methods of obtaining it are more devious than during prohibition in the States.

Two days ago after visiting Mutty's grave (more about this later) I went into the English-controlled section to an intact town under British control. Many shops were open and we looked around (Chaplain Powell and I). The town was colorful, the British soldiers were much better behaved than

our American men and the French were quite friendly. We visited a beautiful famous old church there and saw a replica of a famous tapestry – ah, ah, ah, Mr. Censor – put that scissors away—I didn't mention the name of the town!

The original of the tapestry has been hidden by the French for the duration.

We had a few drinks of light wine (light only in color, I assure you) then hitchhiked home. Yesterday, Manny Levin (my asst. in X-ray), myself and 11 X-ray technicians took off by thumb at 9 A.M. for an intact town in the American sector, south of here. The town is outside of the beaten path, but we managed to get there by lunch time. On the way we passed thru a good-sized city which was a famous battlefield recently in the news. There was practically nothing left standing except a few walls and they are still pulling out an occasional body. The place is off-limits to soldiers, so we couldn't look around but the devastation was heart-rending and the civilians remaining looked so lost we were greatly depressed. Most of the damage was done by American planes and the story goes that they came in the day before the devastating raid and dropped leaflets warning the civilians to get out, but the leaflets fell outside the city and the Nazis threw a cordon around the city so no one could enter or leave. At least 2000 civilians were believed to have been killed there.

We reached our destination in time to get a good drink of Bordeaux wine (also called Burgundy red wine and Le Vin Rouge) and sit down to dinner in a French hotel. The meal was tres magnifico (oh, my French) and consisted of the following courses: tomato and potato salad containing cheese, onions, etc. (2 helpings), 1 glass of vin rouge, 2 fresh eggs fried or as an omelette (I had the latter), 1 glass vin rouge, mashed potatoes of a very fluffy consistency, string beans cooked with cheese, roast veal rare to medium, 1 glass vin rouge, camembert cheese, 1 glass vin rouge, glazed pear colored red and containing wine sauce, 1 glass vin rouge, 1 glass calvados (applejack brandy but more potent). Each food item was prepared and flavored better than anything of its type that I had ever eaten and I was bloated by the time we finished despite the fact that we took 2 hours or more to eat. We were quite a little tipsy before we finished from so much wine, and we talked to many Frenchmen in our abominable French. The waitresses were very lovely looking mademoiselles and the men made lots of passes at them. The girls knew all the ropes and acted coy but untouchable. We had a howling good time from beginning to end and a French civilian even set us up to a drink (and we set him up to dinner).

We then went shopping in town. It was raining but we didn't let this slow us up. We were the only Yanks in town and the people were very friendly. Girls waved to us from windows and we had to keep goodnatured eye on some of our wolves.

We bought plenty of liquor by the bottle (I got a bottle of Cherry brandy) very reasonably and some perfume. I got Chanel #5, 1 bottle only for 100 francs (\$2) per ½ oz. I'll try to find more and send all you females some. We bought a few postcards, had another drink, then started for home, arriving just in time for a steak dinner!

Of Mutty's grave there is little to say—it's like any other soldier's grave except that Mutty wasn't just any other soldier. It's a sad feeling to stand over the grave of one of your close friends, so far from home. It made me feel very lonely and homesick, and I wanted to relive the good old days when we were in our late teens together. I reminisced for a time, then tried to shove it all from my mind because it was too disturbing. Poor Rae, there isn't anything one might say to console her. I've written her about the visit to Mutt's grave. On this sad note I'll close.

Good luck to all of you.

Congratulations, Irv, I hope your bowling alley is a success. I'm sure it will be.

Soph, thanks for the Hershey's. Please send copies of this letter around and include Ginny.

Chip and Helen, I'm glad you're getting to stay in Battle Creek and sorry Louise and Dave won't remain with you.

Edie, thanks for the letter. This letter can serve as a request for more Hershey's.

Roselyn, the picture of your daughter is adorable (if a robust male can use such a term).

Leo and Ev—I'm proud of your second lieutenancy and expect you to go right on up. Good luck to you both.

Walt—will try to write you a separate letter again soon.

All my love,

Ben.

18 Sept. 44
[France]

Dearest:

I haven't written you directly for about 4 or 5 days because of traveling but I wrote a family letter and told Soph to make you a copy, so I won't bother to re-describe my trips to you.

I'd like to spend most of this letter answering questions and comments which you have made recently. I'll begin at random by looking in your letters for sentences which I have circled. Here's one: "Steve is mean to sister. He says his peepee tickles and masturbates." As for the first, it's naturally disconcerting but not of any real significance. He is still jealous of little sister replacing him as the baby and the only thing you can do is lean over backward to show your greater affection for him. Nancy will not be jealous as she will probably sense that this is the prerogative of the older and (later) male species. Punishing him will do no good or more likely make matters worse. In any case, he will get over it, but such things do affect a child's future character and reactions. As to the masturbation, I know you are not worried about it. As you know, it's just sex rearing its beautiful head and so you should just look the other way. Don't let grandma make him think there is anything wrong in it!!

Nancy's affection for her grandpa when he came back was very touching to me, especially as I know I will be a stranger to them both when I return. I was a little surprised that Steve had a visual memory of me, and needless to say, very pleased.

Your idea of starting a "nursery" at home is a marvellous one and I'm very thrilled at the idea. You're just the person who can carry it off. Now, don't give up the idea or I'll be very disappointed. As far as a place to play indoors, you can fix up one of the upstairs rooms or use the downstairs solarium. I wouldn't get more than 4 or 5 kids including our own and select the other kids by observing their parents. In fact, if you can, I'm sure 1 or 2 of their mothers would be glad to help you. If you don't do it this way, you will become very tired of it and probably bored. It is also very important that you strike a sharp balance between favoring your own children and discriminating against them, but I don't think this would be a problem to you.

You're absolutely right about parenthood—it should be a privilege rather than a habit. But there should be schools for parents just as for children. Does Russia do this? I believe not.

There is still no question in my obviously impartial mind that we have 2 of the finest children extant. Their antics, as you describe them, bring this out very well and of course delight me no end. Nancy's independence and stubbornness, if properly handled, can develop into self-sufficiency and tenacity, which coupled with her obvious intelligence, can make her an outstanding woman (like her mother).

Steve's serious interests, his sense of humor, and his brilliance can be developed into a character of highest calibre and I picture an important future for him. It all depends on us however, and I hope the responsibility hangs as heavy on your shoulders as it does on mine, dearest.

As for your turning over a new leaf—this only proves to me that you haven't changed. You're always turning over a new leaf, so I'm not alarmed. I use the word alarmed advisedly, because I don't want you to turn over new leaves or change in any way. I love you the way you are—that's final!

I howled with delight about the fire dept. incident. It could only happen to you! [*Wish I knew what this means.*]

I think you misunderstood my statement about Mutt's purpose in life. When I wrote it I wondered if I had made myself clear. What I meant was that Mutt's life would have held a purpose if he had lived, i.e. in my opinion, but by dying at this early age, his life was robbed of its goal and he was placed in the same category as 80% (at least) of the population. I always had faith in Mutt and felt that he would eventually find his niche—just as I feel that you are not destined to be a hausfrau all your life, nor an ordinary social worker, but believe that you will someday hold an important job in welfare work. Are you surprised? I think Mutt had a similar future—also that Jack Jacobs and Sid Kahn are similarly destined to do big things.

As to your mother's high blood pressure, I confide in you that I'm worried about it, because she didn't have it when Chippy examined her 3 or 4 years ago and I think Hahn has probably taken her B.P. and would have told the family if it were elevated. Keep this to yourself or tell Selma if you want, but don't tell Jake or he might tell Ida and she'd get worried about it, which would only aggravate her condition.

I haven't found my suitcase yet, but have written the RR station and US Army Quartermaster in Liverpool and London. It may turn up.

Danish only brought me 2 meals in bed on rainy days when I was in a pup tent and didn't want to get dressed. Don't worry, dear, you won't have to do this after the first week at home.

There is nothing I want for X-mas, but I would like you to keep sending me pkgs. They take so long to get here, however. I received the limburger and ham salad.

I've sent you a bottle of Chanel No. 5 and will try to pick up more if and when I get to Paris.

That's all for now, my love. I still miss you, and love you more than ever.

Au revoir,

Ben

Sept. 20, '44
[France]

Dearest Ginny:

Received your letter dated Sept. 8th today. Your compliments on my leadership were received and well-taken. My popularity has wavered a little since I've started to umpire, but that doesn't bother me since I enjoy the latter so much. Also I find a few of the officers are sniping at me in a pseudo-kidding fashion which I don't like. I try to believe they're jealous, but maybe they don't like me. And of course, the HQ group of MACs don't care for me because I'm always on their tail. And do you blame me?

Here's one of their latest deals. They forbade the enlisted men to hitchhike and when I asked the detachment CO, Cpt. Poe, if I couldn't take them to Cherbourg in a vehicle, he said no and gave me hell because I didn't realize there was a war on and also a terrific gas shortage! Two days later this same officer was seen at Mont St. Michel—a purely tourist haven—80 miles in another direction! I made it a point to check up on this and no one except Danish and I know about it, not even the officers concerned! Boy, if I wanted to, could I ever get him in “dutch.” I'll let him know I'm aware of his trick, just to see him squirm, the bastard. If I ever have trouble with him again, I'll be surprised. I must check into these things for self-protection, because I know these men would snipe at me if they ever got the chance.

Another example: a flock of enlisted men's gym shoes arrived, and all the MACs were wearing them the next day. I asked for a pair and was told they were for E.M. only! I wonder if they think they're fooling anyone?

Our baseball league is nearing its conclusion and the excitement and interest is terrifically high. Three teams were tied for 1st place and after 1 playoff lasting 13 innings for a score of 0-0 one team won the game. The finals are being played tonight. Tomorrow the winner of the 2nd half plays the winner of the 1st half of the championship. Everyone talks baseball constantly.

We ate at the hotel—famous for its Poullard omelettes (they were marvellous) and the meal—steak and potatoes, omelette, special cream cheese, was it wonderful, and salad and dessert was very good, though not as good as that I had eaten previously. The wine, Burgundy, and the cognac and Calvados (applejack) however were exceedingly good. The price was rather stiff (597 francs [\$12] for two plus tip) but you'd expect that in a place where Rommell [*Germany's most famous general*] ate only a couple of months before. We had a good time sightseeing and returned in time for dinner. The place is apparently the most famous spot in Normandy (at its junction with Brittany). [*Today these omelettes – more like soufflés – are \$50 per serving.*]

I haven't received a recent picture of Steve, nor a letter from Sel in months. I'll be glad to write Sel a letter, but can't understand what she's getting so temperamental about. So what if she wants 5 letters before I write one. I'm certainly not trying to slight her. She knows me too well for that!

I hope your mother is better. Sorry to hear of her fall. I'll try to write to both her and Sel as soon as I get a chance.

I can't advise you very much about your 2 doctors disagreeing with each other, but it doesn't sound so important, so don't get disturbed by it. I'm very pleased that you're finally out of the hospital.

Remember me to my children and to your family.

All my love,

Ben

Mon. 25 Sept.
'44 [*in transit*]

Dearest:

I haven't been able to write you for 4 or 5 days now because we're again on the move. Since I can't mail this until we reach our destination, anyhow, my mail to you should be somewhat delayed.

We entrained on Saturday A.M. and are still on the train and expect to be on it for a while yet. Guess what—destination Belgium! But don't worry, it's not the front, since—according to our last news on Saturday—the Americans are well into Germany. Our train is a hospital train and our outfit is all on one train, which is over twice as crowded at its capacity.

We are jammed into cars somewhat like sardines. There are no chairs, no seats, no nothing except stretchers which can be hooked into the wall 3 tiers high. Two of us share one stretcher but one at a time. Manny and I are bunkmates but I usually sleep on the floor and quite soundly. We have gotten some K ration [*individual daily combat food ration*] boxes and use them for seats. There are 2 windows in the entire car, which hold all our officers and about 12 nurses (separated from us by a blanket screen). The rest of the nurses are in a chair car, the only one on the train, and are pretty crowded and have to sleep upright. The enlisted men are about as crowded as we are.

Our chow consists of K rations and cold water (once we had hot water and used our nescafe) supplemented by (1) what one can trade from the windows with the French civilians; bread (very good), apples, pears, tomatoes, too few to go around; (2) what we can buy in our daily ½ hour stopover, usually more of the above and maybe some wine or cognac (just a glassful); (3) canned goods which some of us brought along with us—I share Al Blanket's and Manny Levin's and am quite a bit ashamed that I seldom get any packages to return their kindnesses. I know it is partly my fault and that probably some are on the way, but I'm a little disappointed that so few things come. From now on until Oct. 15th there is no ban on packages and requests are not needed. Canned goods of all sorts are very much in demand here: tuna, salmon-in-oil, chopped liver, chicken, turkey, anchovies, sardines, fruits, etc. Please dear, don't let me down—I'm awfully embarrassed on this trip, especially since I haven't contributed a thing. Of course I got Manny a combat jacket (also one myself) but it didn't cost me anything since I had a stroke of good luck which I can't tell you about now.

Cooped up like this you'd think the time would pass very slowly, but sight-seeing thru the window, reading and eating and kidding around.

Speaking of reading, I just read in *Reader's Digest* an article partly about our hospital—Sept. issue, page 59—we are the transit hospital, link #6. I met the correspondent when he was at our hospital in Wimborne and he is an associate editor of *Reader's Digest*. The article was written for *Reader's Digest* altho it was printed in (I think) *Sat. Rev. of Lit.* Curiously enough, I asked Mr. Littel if *Reader's Digest* farmed out items and then extracted them as if they were originally written for the other magazine (as accused by *P.M.*) and he said they did, but just as a good businessman throws the manufacturer a bonus (but *P.M.* believes that this is to lead the public to believe that certain political opinions, in reality those of *Reader's Digest's* publishers, are more widely believed and a cross-section of the country's magazine writer's opinions). I told him this and he seemed to get a little angry. Needless to say, I didn't like him.

Our unlucky outfit entered Paris during the night and altho we stayed overnight, were not permitted to leave the train. About all we saw were the Eiffel Tower, Church of Sacre Coeur, and one of the big buildings at Versailles. In the A.M., we saw, as we pulled out, some of the effects of American bombardment and since then a good bit of the effects of war, since fighting in our present (moving) location was taking place as recently as 3 weeks ago. The French civilians are still a little excited by our presence and almost all wave at us as we go by. They crave cigarettes but do not ask for them. However, they scramble for them when they are thrown. In these parts the kids and adults don't look so well nourished as they did in Normandy.

Last night, while I was sleeping on the floor, one of the fellows got sick in an upper bunk, and his regurgitation just missed me. Then one of the men poured liquor on my lips (very strong stuff), then put the bottle in my hand. They all laughed loudly, but I slept blissfully thru it all!

That's all for now, dearest. I feel I'm travelling in the wrong direction from where my heart dictates, but what can I do.

Kiss Steve and Nancy for me and tell them I miss them and you soooo much.

Ben

27 Sept. '44
Somewhere in
Belgium

Dearest:

This has been one of the most exciting days of my life and I could hardly wait to write you about it.

To begin with, I might re-emphasize that I have discovered that with me, places, historical events, beautiful buildings mean very little, while people mean much. This has again been proven to me by recent events.

Now, I will take up my story where I left off in the last letter. At that time our train was approaching the Belgian border in France. As we entered Belgium and especially as we passed farther into the country, we noticed that we engendered increasing excitement among the populace. In France, many people waved and smiled at us, but in Belgium, everyone did so and people dashed out of their homes to see us and wave and smile and shout something. Whenever we stopped in a town for a short time, the entire village seemed to come to the train. We distributed our rations freely and they gave us vegetables (wonderful tomatoes), bread, fruit, beer and wine (exceptionally good pears and magnificent grapes as well as small plums) even more freely. The kids and an occasional adult begged candy or cigarettes and a few were mercenary about their trades, but practically all of them presented these things without asking for recompense, altho we gave cigarettes, etc., for everything we received.

The last lap of our journey was exceedingly beautiful, following between high hills and a good sized river. This combined with the attitude of the people increased our enjoyment of the trip manifoldly.

Thus, after 3 ½ days in really cramped quarters, we reached our destination, a good-sized city. It was dark already and as we got off our hospital train, it was quickly refilled with wounded from ambulances.

After an hour's wait in the station where 500 of us were spontaneously singing songs in unison, the male officers were taken to a hotel, the nurses to another hotel, and the enlisted men to a barracks.

Our hotel was a relatively small but quite modern one—imagine inner-spring mattresses, running hot and cold water, and elevator, electric lights, steam heat!!! We had never seen anything like this in the Army.

We were dog-tired, but ate out rations, cleaned up, and went to bed. Manny and I share one room and Al Blanket and Bloom share the next one.

Today we got up at 7 A.M. and looked out the window. What a sight met our eyes. The city is simply beautiful—clean and unravaged by the war!

We dressed (Manny, Al, and I) quickly and went downstairs and found shops of all kinds, open and doing business. The people practically fell on our necks. One man stopped us and gave us a postcard souvenir. A lady gave us each a pear. We heard 2 men conversing in Yiddish and since it was Yom Kippur, we decided to ask them where a Schul was. Instead of showing us, he took us into his house nearby, where—but that's another story which I will tell you later. On leaving his house (we returned this evening) we went to the bank and exchanged our French francs for Belgian—100 French equal 88 Belgian. I then got a haircut then we had coffee in a restaurant. No food is sold in any restaurant, but coffee (really ersatz—it contains malt) and beer, exceptionally good 4% and ice cold, and wine are all that they carry. There is a shortage here of all types of food and prices are high, but the population seems fairly well-nourished. One loaf of bread is rationed out every 4 days, there is no meat at present, practically no butter and essentially no cheese.

Now, despite the fact that we are about 3 weeks behind the vanguard of the Army there have been relatively few Americans here, accounting in part for our warm welcome. There are flags—Belgian, American, British, and U.S.S.R. (the latter very prominent), signs “Vive L’Amerique,” “Hail to our Liberators,” etc., patriotic armbands, etc., galore all over the place. And the people fall all over us. Children rush up to shake our hands and follow us around, adults smile and say “good morning,” girls flirt with us, everyone tries his English out on us—many more people seem to speak English here than in Normandy. It was genuine friendliness, heart-warming and thrilling. The people really look upon us as their liberators.

Prices are high, but we are not charged more than civilians, except one place hooked us \$3.00 for 3 large helpings of special ice cream. An ordinary ice cream sundae is about 40¢ altho ice cream is very plentiful. But this is the first time we could get an adequate quantity of this cream of the Gods, so we didn't object. Other Belgians, when we told them about it, wanted to report them to the police, but we didn't let them.

Women and girls here are really beautiful, plentiful, flirtatious, and hopeful. I think friendly would be more proper than flirtatious. You had better start worrying about me now, my love!

By afternoon we were carrying gum, candy, and other tidbits out of our K-rations and giving them and cigarettes out freely. On one busy street we stopped traffic when we gave out individual pieces of a package of caramels to the kids surrounding us.

One of the kids kissed me spontaneously. Manny saw a beautiful woman standing by and laughing, so he went up to her and gave her a piece of gum. When she said “Merci” he said “Non, non. Bessa moi,” and she kissed him on the cheek! The crowd howled.

At another spot some cute young girls shouted down to us from the 3rd floor of a building and when we looked up, they dropped pears and plums at us. All the traffic stopped to watch and everyone laughed.

We passed a vegetable shop and I remarked to Al what pretty tomatoes these were. Quick as a flash, the lady proprietor stopped us and gave each of us one. We insisted she accept a cigarette altho at first she wouldn't.

We managed to buy a few souvenirs including some perfume for you, some wooden shoes and a book for Steve, and something for Nancy. I will send them when I can. I'll also try to pick up some Belgian lace. [*Your editor remembers wooden shoes from his early childhood.*]

I'll have to write you about the Yiddish family in my next letter, dearest, as it's quite late now and we're going out early tomorrow.

All my love to you all,

Ben.

Thurs. Sept. 28,
'44 Somewhere
in Belgium

I will continue yesterday's long letter and tell you as much as I can, altho today too, was very eventful and I may have to continue again in tomorrow's letter.

First I will tell you about our visit to the Jewish family last night. We brought some K-rations, gum for the kids, cigarettes for the menfolk, then sat down and ate some Yiddishe cooking including good meat, butter, bread and cookies, and Belgian beer. They spoke Yiddish and French but we conversed mostly in Yiddish. This will amaze you—your husband did practically all the talking! Shades of mama and papa! If my family had heard they would have gone mad. It seems both Manny and Al can understand (but can't speak) a little Yiddish but I can understand practically anything that is said. I have never spoken any Yiddish in my life but to my surprise I discovered that I could speak well enough to be understood with

only occasional difficulty, as long as I didn't try to think in English and then translate. Imagine me thinking in Yiddish!

The group consists of Mr. and Mrs. Beryl Lerner and son Charles, age 11, picture enclosed, Mrs. Lerner's sister and her husband, the latter's sister and her husband, 2 children, girls—ages 3 and 9—of another sister who has been carried off by the Germans, and an adopted refugee girl from Vienna, age 15.



Figure 12: Children of Polish-Belgian Jews. Parents of the two smaller children were deported; older girl was legally adopted by the mother of the older boy after parents were killed.



Figure 13: Charles from Liege with yellow Star of David

This is their story. All the adults came to Belgium from Eastern Poland about 20 years ago, one of the men having been an escaped prisoner in the 1st World War. They settled in this city and apparently did very well. Mr. Lerner had a hosiery shop with a million franc's worth (then \$200,000) of merchandise when the Nazis came to Belgium. They had many friends among the Belgians—the latter have never shown significant anti-Semitism

except for the collaborationists during the present war (about 1% of the population were collaborationists during the occupation).

When the Nazis first arrived, they made the Jews wear the yellow badge—see enclosed photo. [*Separate photo not found, but see photo of Charles above.*] (I could have gotten the original badge but they had only 2 and I let Manny and Al have them) and they were beaten and persecuted for about 1 year. The Belgians, however, continued to patronize their shops. Finally the Nazis began to raid the houses of the Jews, carry off their families (generally to kill them—the women and children especially—while the men were taken to Germany for hard labor).

Our friends escaped at night, one couple going out a back window as the Nazis came in the front door. Belgian friends hid them for a few days and then arranged for them to go to a village some 40 miles away where they slept a few days in the woods, then were taken into a Catholic cloister for several months and finally lived in 2 small houses in the village.

Mr. Lerner's 2 sisters and their husbands were not so fortunate. They were carried off by the Nazis and have not been heard from since (2 yrs.) The infant daughter of one of these sisters was temporarily adopted by a Belgian couple and still lives with them. The elder daughter was taken by Mrs. Lerner.

In the village of 16 houses, there were no Nazi soldiers and very few collaborationists, so the family, remaining hidden most of the time, were relatively safe. Mr. Lerner became a Maqui [*French Resistance*] and had several interesting experiences. One night he heard someone swimming in the river. On investigation he recognized English voices. He discovered 3 Americans who had parachuted from a burning fortress [*B-17, early US bomber, the "Flying Fortress"*] and took them home with him. They were kept in the village for 6 months until the Americans came.

Shortly before D-Day he and other Maquis stood guard in the woods—password Bengazi—while 26 British and Canadians paratrooped to the ground with weapons and ammunition for the Maquis when the Americans came.

Mrs. Lerner spoke to an American soldier of Polish extraction recently and told him of the treatment of Jews and Poles by the Nazis. A few minutes later he captured 2 SS troops and, altho they begged on their knees for him to spare them, he killed them both to avenge his people, in her presence.

About 4 days ago the family returned to their home in the city. They found it intact (many other Jewish homes had been gutted) but its interior completely changed: wall paper, wall partitions, and furniture. It seems that the furniture was sent to Germany as a “gift from the Belgian people” and the house remained completely empty for about a year. Then a collaborationist family, the father of which had been killed on the Russian front, moved in. Their previous home had been bombed by the Belgians. The house was redecorated for them by the Nazis at the Belgian Govt. expense and ultimately became some sort of headquarters for the Belgian collaborationists.

Apparently they left in a helluva hurry when the Americans were coming as food remained on the table, clothes were strewn over the house, but everything remained intact.

There are evidences of Nazi friendship all over the place and many Catholic icons. This brings the story up to the present time.

The ladies and children are going back to the village for a while as food conditions are much better there while the men are staying behind to fix up the house and perhaps obtain work. They have lived off their savings for 2 years and intimate that they haven't too much left. They have a car but no gas and must beg the administration for gas to get the kids back to the country. They brought plenty of meat and butter, etc., from the country so are pretty well fixed in this respect.

This afternoon, after taking our clothes out to be laundered and dry-cleaned, Mr. Lerner and a friend took us to the Citadel, an old fortress built in the latter part of the 19th century, used by the Belgians in this war as a prison, then by the Nazis and now by the Belgians as a political prison. We were conducted thru the place by the Commandant, recently a guerilla, who is a young man in civilian clothes, bears the rank of captain, and speaks English after a fashion.

Among other things we saw many certain and probable collaborationists, male and female—I suppose the place holds several thousand of them. The proven ones were herded together about 10 to 15 in wooden cells about the size of our bathroom in Cincy—I can't imagine how they slept there. Many had been badly beaten by the people when they were captured, a few of the women had their hair clipped short. Of the worst type of collaborationists there were many, including Belgian SS troops, gangsters, murderers—a young boy of 17 had killed a Belgian patriot for money supplied by the Nazis. Most of the women were accused of consorting with

the Nazis or being informers. Many of the women were young and attractive, others were old and infirm. It was one of the most sordid sights I have ever seen. Conditions seemed quite primitive. The worst offenders will no doubt be executed and the others put at hard labor. All will be tried in the courts and probably most will be found guilty. The hatred of the patriots for these traitors is unbelievable, and we soon saw the reason with our own eyes. We were conducted to the Nazi killing grounds and shown over 200 graves of unidentified Belgian patriots. On the day before the Americans arrived they killed 23 and threw their bodies in a hole in the ground. These were disinterred by the Belgians and 22 of the 23 were identified. We were taken to the Nazi torture chamber and shown the table and some of the implements of torture including a tear gas chamber, used to obtain information from the prisoners. Altho this chamber has been open for 15 days, we still received slight effects from the tear gas and could still smell it. We saw the disinterred bodies of the Belgian patriots in various states of decomposition, in simple wooden coffins, bedecked with Belgian flags and flowers recently added. We saw underground dungeons of the 19th century recently used by the Nazis probably for the Jews. They were in the midst of improving the fortifications of the place when the Americans arrived.

All in all, it was one of the most horrible yet interesting experiences I have ever experienced. I can truly understand why the Belgians hate the Nazis and their traitors so much.

They picked up a sniper in town today, still in Nazi uniform. Also several buzz bombs dropped in the outskirts. [*The V-1 flying bomb was a nine-yard-long, 4,740 pound missile first directed against the Allies in June 1944.*] But the people (and ourselves) feel quite safe and are trying to resume a normal existence.



Handwritten: 688 845 111-08
From: Lyndon, 11/18/1947 ca

Figure 14: V-1 flying bomb.



Figure 15: V-2 rocket, mentioned later.

Thurs. Sept. 29th
'44 Somewhere
in Belgium

Life continues here at an exciting pace and though restrictions are being enforced (the town is really off-limits), we have managed to evade anyone in authority and continued on our very merry way.

Yesterday at 5:30 P.M. we entered an ice cream parlor for a bit of creme glace. We had been given a bouquet of carnations a few moments before by the proprietor of a vegetable store. We gave the flowers to an elderly lady in a group of people sitting in the parlor. We then ate our ice cream and on our way out we were invited to have a drink of Rossi (vermouth) with the party with the elderly lady. We partook of 2 drinks before we left and an elderly gentleman in the crowd, who paid for the drinks, invited us to spend the evening hitting the hotspots with him. We said o.k. While we were sitting there, 2 young ladies at an adjacent (we later learned that they were sisters, 16 and 18 years old) helped me out in interpreting what was being said in French by those at the table. They spoke English fairly well—learned in high school. They were 2 lovely, beautiful, and refined kids, and I was immediately interested in them. I soon discovered that their grandpa was a doctor, also 3 uncles and their father (divorced—they lived with their mother and grandpa). They were slightly shy and embarrassedly asked us if we would visit their grandpa, who spoke English well. I said yes and made an appointment for 2 p.m. today. I was very much impressed by the demeanor and appearance of these girls. More of this later.

We then accompanied the older man to a cafe, had a cognac, then to another cafe, and had a Pernod (anise liqueur). In the second cafe we met the proprietress “Mama,” her daughters, about 40, and her brother. By this time, we all felt a little high and the old man was becoming definitely inebriated. Since the old man was getting a little silly, we decided to scam and made an appointment to meet him tonight and leave him a package of cigarettes. We only managed to pay for one drink all night, but made him take some American cigarettes. He insisted on giving us Belgian cigarettes in return, however.

We went back to the hotel, ate, wrote letters and slept. This A.M. we got up late, went shopping for food and souvenirs. After lunch we kept our appointment with the doctor and what a pleasant surprise. They have a

lovely home, including his office, and are apparently quite affluent. They all speak and understand English. The girls are as charming as any I've met, their mother is an accomplished pianist and is to play a concert for us tomorrow night. The doctor, an ENT specialist, is 73, and until 2 years ago was professor of ENT at this famous University.

He is brilliant from a medical standpoint and very alert and ever so cute and friendly. You would love him.

Also present were a cute girl friend of the granddaughters and a man of 40 in charge of Texaco Oil in Belgium. We talked of many things, medicine, music, the Nazi occupation, bombings, how long the war will last, rationing, etc. We joked much and laughed a lot. I had a delicious drink of Curacao—an excellent liqueur. And we all had a wonderful though quiet and refined afternoon. I am enclosing a card which we found at the hotel when we returned; they had tried to forestall our trip because grandpa had office hours that afternoon but only a few patients came.

This evening we went out for a drink at the cafe I told you about above. We were 1 hour late for our appointment. Our old man had left already. We were happy about this as we didn't feel like getting drunk with him. We had a "Picon"—[*an orange-flavored*] liqueur mixed with grenadine and water; tres bon, and started to talk with Mama and her 2 daughters. More of her relatives and children came in and soon there were 10 of us. We had the place to ourselves and were practicing our French on them. We had a lot of fun and then told them we were going to our hotel to eat. They asked us how we were eating and we described our K rations. "No bon" said they and brought out a small Belgium cheese—very similar to limburg-er. "For vous" they said. We thanked them and gave them some cigarettes. They then said "Wait" and brought us in quick succession butter, ½ lb., a loaf of bread similar to pumpernickel and a bottle of old Burgundy (with cobwebs). We were really overwhelmed at their kindness because both butter and cheese are simply not available at all and bread is strictly rationed and not of this quality. Apparently these items were obtained on the black market. We gave them all the cigarettes we had and told them we would bring them some of our cheese and rations tomorrow which we will despite their protests.

From these tales you can see how kind and friendly the people are and how much they must have suffered during the occupation to take us to their bosoms. These are only a few demonstrations of their kindness. We are forever being treated with beers and drinks. People stop us and give us candy, flowers, or fruit. Elderly ladies walking slowly along stop us and wish

us good day. You can't imagine the warmth and satisfaction it gives us. Every head turns as we walk down the street and one and all smile at our antics. In return we pass out cigarettes, candy, chewing gum, and ration tidbits wherever possible somewhat lavishly considering our meager supply, but I only wish we had more to give them! We must never let these people down again.

Sunday, Oct. 1st
1944 [*Belgium*]

Dearest Ginny:

I didn't get to write you yesterday because when we got back to the hotel at 11 p.m. we found that the 8 of our men who were on detached service for the past month had joined us again and brought cases of champagne (Piper Heidsieck) and cognac. A party was going on full blast and so I had a few drinks, joined a bull session, and went to bed at 12:30 A.M.

Yesterday was a similar day for us as the preceding ones. The Belgians are still not tired of us—I guess because there are still so few of us. The town is still off limits and we are still technically restricted but wander around almost to our heart's content.

In the A.M. we did some shopping. I bought you some perfume and a couple of expensive Belgian (Brusselles) lace hand-made hankies which I hope you like; I bought some picture cards and wooden shoes and a book for Steve; I can't find anything cute for Nancy that would be suitable. The toys are cheesy and expensive. I have also acquired a German helmet, some pre-war Belgian coins, some postcards, an underground newspaper, and false identification cards, etc., which I will send to Alan.

We went to a fruit stand to get some mushrooms. The last few mushrooms were being sold to a lady who immediately offered to give them to us. We, of course, refused despite her insistence, and went elsewhere in the store. An employee there came up to us and said she could get mushrooms any day, would we please take hers. After much argument we purchased them from her. In the meantime the first lady had been looking for us and on finding us, thrust her bag of mushrooms in our hands and started to run off, laughing. We caught up with her, showed her that we had mushrooms, and finally she took them back. This is typical of the Belgian's attitude toward us.

Last night we again went to our doctor friend and had another lovely evening. One of the daughters plays piano fairly well, but the mother plays beautifully. She played a Schumann concerto and some Chopin and I enjoyed it immensely. We talked at length and I spoke some halting French—I am definitely improving! They are so charming and cultured it is a pleasure to be in their company.

The girls are so thrilled at our presence and I believe the 16 year old one has a crush on me because her chin dropped a mile when she learned I was married and a father of 2. And she blushed prettily when her aunt teased her for asking if she could visit our hospital.

We walked the 2 blocks home after curfew in constant fear of getting picked up by the MPs. We were walking quietly in single file close to the building when we saw 3 men up ahead. Our breaths quickened and we quivered as we walked on. Suddenly out of the darkness came a voice. “Allo!” “Hello,” we replied, much relieved, since we knew it was a Belgian. It proved to be 2 secret policemen checking the papers of a civilian! We arrived home safely a few minutes later.

This morning, Sunday, we dropped in at the home of the commandant of the Citadel (where they kept the collaborationists) and his mother, wife, stepfather, and 18 month old son were home, but he was at the Citadel. The mother spoke English fairly well and they all were extremely hospitable. They plied us with cognac, real coffee, homemade cake, etc., and she told us many hair-raising tales of the Occupation. Her first husband died in the last war, her youngest son was murdered with 15 other young Belgians when a Nazi tank fired upon them as they stood in the street watching. Another son is a prisoner of the Nazis, convicted for refusing to work for the Nazis. He was treated brutally in an effort to make him confess some underground crime but never broke down. They were permitted to give him much food, etc., when he was taken from the Citadel to Germany, but when he reached the border, the Germans took it all away from him—about \$500 worth.

His brother, our friend, worked for the Belgium underground propaganda division and distributed propaganda and newspapers over the town. Three times he was reported but they could never find anything at his home, so he was released.

The mother is very bitter at the Germans and insisted that her sons not work for them, despite the laws. She told us that when the Germans requested that the Belgians turn in their pre-war coins (for extracting the

nickel), the coins suddenly disappeared from the market, each Belgian hoarding all the coins he could lay his hands on. Later, they embedded the coins in the soles of their shoes and the girls made them into belts. When a German would come into a cafe, the Belgians would cross their legs so that he could see the coins on the sole, thus taunting him. The girls would jangle their belts as they passed a German on the street, for similar reasons. She gave me some of these coins for souvenirs and I am sending them to Alan.

Tonight we found a note at our hotel from the son in law of Dr. Breyere, who asked us to drop over there. We went at about 8 p.m. and just returned at 11. They, too, have 2 charming daughters, a girl age 10 (Suzanne) and one 12 (Jeanne). Also his parents were there, a charming elderly couple. Again we had a very enjoyable evening. I played a game that I invented with the kids: I pointed at an object and Jeanne had to supply the English name while I supplied the French. Suzanne kept score. We had a hilarious time, I assure you.

We then retired to the music room. By the way, the house here also was very beautiful and had an unusual feature in that the wall "paper" was really a silken material, beautiful in color, and attached to the long wall by cardboard strips at each end. No nails. The silk is fitted as on a frame and is called "English paper!" The conservatory was Italian style and beautiful, yet comfortable. The doctor's wife (Dr. Breyere's daughter) played the piano beautifully. She played at our request: Mendelsohn's *Rondo Capriccioso*, Schubert's *March Military*, a Chopin waltz. What a pianist she is! She plays even better than her sister. We had ice cream and 2 glasses of curacao during the evening.

Tomorrow I am going to the hospital to check up on our physical set up. It's late now, so goodnight mon cherie.

Kiss Nancy and Steve pour moi.

All my love,

Ben.

PS. Please call Alan and explain what the coins and identification cards are.

Wed - Oct. 4? .
44 [Belgium; Oct.
4 was a
Wednesday]

Dearest and Darling Ginny:

Well, the honeymoon is about over and shortly I expect to go back to work. In a few days—perhaps tomorrow—we will move into our hospital which is a slightly bombed former German O.C.S. School and before that was a fortress. It was very dirty and had to be cleaned up. Altho I haven't seen it myself, I understand it will be quite nice, especially the hospital part which has central heating, water facilities, plenty of room, etc. Our living quarters are not so hot. There will be 5 offices in a room on the 4th floor, stoves for heat, and no latrine or wash facilities except in the basement. Of course, I will wash and shave in the X-ray dept. after breakfast, and my nocturia should be taken care of by a convenient tin can or window so I can't complain. [*Nocturia is the need to pass urine at night. The site was called Fort de la Chartreuse.*]





The X-ray dept. from the plan seems pretty adequate though I expect to be very busy since I believe we will be a transit hospital, just as we were after D-Day. We recently learned that our supply train was derailed, 4 enlisted men killed, several more badly injured, and some of our equipment destroyed. The supply officer, whom I once classified as my enemy and subsequently reclassified as everyone's enemy, was not on the train but apparently enjoying himself in Paris with a Jeep, so is in a helluva of a jam for not being at his post. I hope this cooks his goose. I certainly hope my X-ray equipment was not damaged.

Yesterday, I visited the 15th General, also in this city (our hospital is at the outskirts of the town). The X-ray man was very friendly. I also ran across a guy who knew Herb Schwartz and told me he is in France, I believe. [*Reference unknown.*] I also learned that L. Col Allen, Chief of X-ray in E.T.O. was going to be here at night. So last night I saw him at the Major's hotel room nearby and we talked until 11 P.M. Among other things I learned that we may get a captured German 200 milliamp. X-ray machine, new, instead of one of our 30 milliamp field units; that we and the 15th were farther forward than any other general hospital on the continent; that my record at Wimborne of over 400 pts. in 1 day is the highest of any X-ray dept. in this whole theatre so far; that our Colonel tried very hard to get rid of Levin, but Col. Allen, after a hint from me, blocked him.

He invited me to go to a forward evacuation hospital with him this A.M., so I got permission and we left by Jeep for the forward area. I was all excited about this, and was very disappointed when we stopped 10 miles from the enemy and found even less going on than in our own city. At least we have had a few air raids, have seen an enemy plane, and have had some buzz bombs. I didn't even hear a gun—and life was proceeding very normally.

Note—air raid alert going on now—but I don't hear a sound.

The hospital was very busy, but less busy than we were after D-Day. On the whole, the trip was a big let-down.

Oh, oh—some ack-ack. I'll turn out the lights and look outside.

Later—nothing to see. Heard some explosions in the distance.

The people here are just as friendly as ever to us; just as vindictive as ever to the enemy. Yesterday on the street, I saw a kid of 18, with a Forces of Independence arm band on [*and thus connected with Belgian underground*], stop a well-dressed youth of about the same age, shout something, then take a poke at him and start to pull him down the street. It seems that the good-looking well-dressed boy had turned the FI boy in to the Nazis and the latter had recognized him on the street. A cop came up and told both boys to follow him to the police station. In the meantime, while the cop's back was turned, a 30 yr old civilian gave the well-dressed kid a right to the nose, apparently breaking it. The kid looked plenty worried, and despite his bloody nose, tried to keep his poise. He didn't deny the charges. The cop hauled all 3 to the station. How they hate these collaborators.

That's all now my love. I learn I am to move out to the hospital tomorrow. I haven't heard from you for 2 weeks because of our change of station. Hope you and the kids are well and happy.

I love you

Ben.

Oct. 8th, 1944
[Liège, Belgium]

As I wrote you in my last letter, the honeymoon is over. I haven't written for a few days simply because I've worked 18 hours out of the 24 since our arrival at our new hospital site.

Within 24 hours after Manny and I got here, we were able to take films on an emergency basis, and 24 hours later we were able to take as many pictures as ever. However, up to the moment of writing, we have only had 5 X-ray patients altho they have admitted and evacuated hundreds. The reason for this discrepancy is that we are acting as a transit hospital, patients being brought here and evacuated to the rear within 24 hours. Practically all patients have had some treatment of a surgical nature, at the evacuation and field hospitals and emergency medical care (first aid, splints, plasma, etc.) forward of these [*i.e., closer to the front lines*]. Only those that can stand the 20 or so mile ambulance trip from these forward areas are brought to our hospital, where they are held until a hospital train comes in. We in turn evacuate only the ones who can stand the train trip and keep the rest until a time they, too, can stand the trip. Since the trip is not too difficult for the patient, we keep very few patients.

The X-rays are taken on many of the patients at the evacuation and field hospitals and accompany the patients to the rear. So far, we have only X-rayed those patients who haven't been X-rayed and who might be able to go back to duty, those that are too ill to evacuate and those where the X-ray decides the factor of evacuability. So far there have been very few of these, especially since the rest of our hospital is not yet set up for treatment—surgery is not open. In fact, we are the only dept. functioning except the mess and the wards where the patients sleep. In other words, we are a hotel for the patient. They are bathed, bedded and fed here. As our hospital gets ready, there will be more and more work for X-ray.

In the meantime, the 50th field hospital is set up in tents here to do any necessary emergency work, surgical especially. In this outfit are about 9 or 10 Ft. Harrison nurses, including Mary Ochs (now Lynn) who married a dentist (I told you he was a wild guy and we sat with them once at an Officers' Club dance). Zanly's is with this outfit but went on DS with a detached group that joined the paratroopers in their landing in Holland. I hope he is OK but they took tremendous losses in that invasion, I imagine.

Our X-ray set up is even better than in England. Sgt. Lindstrom (Lindy) used to be an electrician and is now working temporarily with Utilities in this capacity. Naturally he has given us 1st call on our electrical set-up. My old enemy, the supply officer, has been supplanted in actuality but not in name, by another fellow, who has left many things up to his sergeants and has permitted us to go into the warehouse for our equipment. The fact that the sergeants are friends of mine didn't hurt any. The men, in their usual manner, have scrounged tables, chairs and materials of

the best available quality and have worked hard. They deserve all the credit—and I'm not one to be modest. Manny, too, has been a big help, altho he and I do a little too much bickering. As usual, we're all pulling together and having fun in doing it.

This place was formerly a Belgian fortress (I think) and during the German occupation it was a German Army School. It was filthy, tremendously large, and to boot, parts have been badly damaged by artillery. The 2 hospital buildings are relatively new and unblitzed but our quarters are abominable—large, dirty rooms with windows blown out and adjoining vacant rooms which have large shell holes in their walls. They are cold and barren altho there is a stove in each. There are 4 of us in our room, Danish, Levin, Al Blanket and myself. Blanket and Levin do not like Danish and vice versa but they tolerate each other because of me. I'm afraid sometimes that they'll explode because there is often a coldness in the air that doesn't come in via the shellholes, but so far they still speak to each other. If Danish weren't so scheming and if Manny didn't carry such a grudge, I could make some peace. As it is, the situation is pretty hopeless.

Eventually the hospital should be quite a nice place, but at present there are no phones, no hot water, inadequate electric facilities, dirt galore—but less each day. We are at the outskirts of the city but only about 25-30 minutes from the heart of town. A few buzz bombs have hit not too far away but we hardly look up when this occurs.

The town is still off-limits and I haven't had a chance to go visiting since we moved out here. Our radio is now working and I just heard of the death of Wendell Willkie. I'm damned sorry to learn of it, because, as you know, I had predicted a great future for him—probably our next president. Wouldn't you know that something like that would happen! The only liberal Republican with any good political prospects, too.

I haven't had any mail for more than 3 weeks and I'm getting very anxious. I hope everything is ok with you, Nancy and Steve. Gosh, I miss you all so much.

Mon. Oct. 10 '44
[*Liège, Belgium;*
Oct. 10 was a
Tuesday]

My Dearest:

Your birthday will occur in 2 days and I'm so sorry I'm not there to celebrate it. But happy birthday anyhow. I hope my gift reaches you in time. Also Steve's. He's 3 years old now —my, how time passes. It seems like yesterday when we celebrated his 1st birthday.

For the second time, I have forgotten Nancy's birthday. As I recall, it is on Jan. 19. Am I correct? [*Close – Jan. 21.*]

I'm sending you a few pictures taken in our present location. Hope I haven't changed too much.

I might review the places I've been in the past few months, now that it is permitted to mention the locations over 25 miles away: get your map out.

We arrived in the British Isles on Dec 31, landing in Greenock, Scotland, near Glasgow. That night we rode by train to a place called Tilshead, near Salisbury, England. This was our first camp—English barracks—and you will recall how cold and muddy it was there. After 2 or 3 weeks, we went in groups to the Royal Victoria Hospital, famous old British Army Hospital where Florence Nightingale worked. It is in Netley, just outside of Southampton, the first city I wrote you about. We remained there about 2 months and then went again in groups to Trowbridge in central England, where we were billeted in private homes for about 6 weeks. During this period I went on Detached Service to Weymouth, on the South Coast for about 1 week.

From Trowbridge we moved to Kingston-Lacy, an estate 2 miles from Wimborne, which in turn is 10 miles from Bournemouth. Bournemouth is the beautiful and very entertaining city where I went to concerts and plays.

We remained at Wimbourne about 3 or more months, then moved out in groups to a small village, Honyngton Clyst, just outside of Exeter where we stayed for about 3-4 weeks. At that time I went on Det. Service for 10 days to a hospital outside of Warminster and Frome and near Trowbridge.



Figure 16: The River Clyst (Celtic for “clear stream”). Towns on or near this river often contain that word in their name. However, the area includes a Honiton, a Honington Hall, and a Clyst Honiton, which dad spells Honyngton Clyst. In any event he was stationed around here somewhere.

From Exeter we went again to the port of embarkation in Southampton, remaining restricted to the camp for 3 days.

We landed on the continent at one of the beaches of the Normandy peninsula along the east coast, south of Cherbourg. We spent one night near the beach and then went to a field on the edge of Carentan where we remained about a month. During this stay, I hitch-hiked to Cherbourg, where the Red Cross was located, Isigny, Saint Lô—the terribly battered town I wrote about, Mont St. Michel, Villedieu, Bayeaux (where the tapes the try is located), Mutt’s grave at the 29th Infantry Cemetery, outside of Longueville which is near Isigny.



Figure 17: Dad calls this "chow time in the cow pasture at Carentan, France Aug. '44"



Figure 18: Enlisted mens' "quarters" at Carentan

We left there about 3 weeks ago and went via Paris to Belgium, where we are now located.

It might be interesting to review some of my old letters now, in light of correct geographical location.

The Dept. is still the only one functioning completely and everyone but me are busy making improvements. We have little business but expect to be very busy as time rolls on.

We'll get some snaps of our set up and I'll send you some. Did I tell you that Col. Alber was very pleased at Auger's photographic (the X-ray consultant for E.T.O.) technic for reproducing X-rays and requested that we write it up for the Army Medical Journal. I told him that it was Auger's baby, but he insisted that I collaborate, as Auger is only an enlisted man, and it wouldn't carry any weight. So this is one of our first tasks here, from a scientific standpoint.

Tomorrow night we are going to have our grand opening, with a party for the men, Manny, and myself. Since we are no longer housed in a separate building, and since patients are nearby, it will have to be much more tame than our previous one, but we'll have a little to drink and a lot to eat, so we should do alright.

Well, I've got to get back to work at—guess what?—cutting up photos of you and the kids for my photo-holder. So au revoir, my beloved. Oh, what I would give for a glimpse of your lovely, beautiful face! Even your baritone voice would thrill me. Uh, uh— don't say it.

Maybe I'll get a letter soon—over 3 weeks now. Gee, I'm so anxious to hear what the kids are doing. Please send me records of their voices and movies and any photos you have. Keep taking photos. And keep sending food.

Goodbye again.

Ben

12 Oct 44 [Liège]

Hello Sweetheart and happy birthday:

Gosh, it makes me realize I've been away from you almost a whole year. Do you remember our last night together in Asheville? Hm—I better quit reminiscing or I'll get that old lump back again.

Nothing new here. We're getting patients and still discharging them as fast as they come in. The 3 Bs still holds true: bath, bed, and breakfast.

Construction and cleaning are still proceeding apace and we're still the only dept. that is open completely for business. However, as yet we've not had much work to do. In fact, time hangs a little heavy on my shoulders, since I'm not doing any supervision of the departmental construction. Manny Levin does all that and participates as well; he loves it.

Last night we had our grand opening in a party which proved to be very nice. Manny took great pains in the "cooking" and preparation. Our feast came mostly from Manny's saved up personal supply of canned foods sent him from home. It was buffet type and spread out on several patients' trays which have compartments for different foods.

We had fresh sliced tomatoes, sliced fresh onions, Kraft's cheese, anchovies, tuna, sardines, biscuits, bread, peanut butter, coffee, and delicious grapes.

We also had a mixture of cognac and gin, ½ bottle of cognac, and Picon with grenadine syrup and carbonated water—all in sufficient quantity to give everyone a nice glow but not enough to make them boisterous. Picon and grenadine is a very sweet drink which has a slight but fleeting "kick" and is truly delicious.

It was a quiet party with no singing or music except for the radio, since we are too close to the rest of the hospital. So far, we have still been unsuccessful in obtaining an accordion for Lindy but we have located one and perhaps can talk the Red Cross into buying it.

Today I went into town for a few hours on "official business" with Danish, who had a vehicle. I visited some of our friends, including the Dr.'s family. There is a concert Sunday at the Conservatory honoring the liberation of the city. They wanted me to go, and since no tickets are available, they insisted I accept the young son's ticket while he sat in the gallery with his friends. I argued as long and as hard as I could, but to no avail. So Sunday I am going to take French leave in Belgium and go with them. [*The term means absence without leave.*] It apparently will be a gala affair as posters are plastered all over town.

My friends greeted me effusively, and the lady in the shop (Mrs. Mushroom I call her because of the mushroom incident) invited us to dinner again—we were unable to go the last time because of restrictions and work around the hospital. And the people on the streets are just as friendly as ever.

Well, it's late dear and I'm getting tired, so goodnight, my love, and pleasant dreams.

Au revoir

Ben

P.S. I was just looking at pictures of you, Nancy, and Steve. Oh, nostalgia, stay 'way from my door!

B.

15 Oct. 44
[Liège]

Dearest Ginny:

I would have written you yesterday, but believe it or not, business picked up to where we had 85 cases, which kept us hopping until 10:30 PM. Today it was somewhat lighter, so I was able to keep my appointment with the Dr.'s family in town, attending the symphony from which I have just returned.

The town is still restricted, only more so, as the MPs are clamping down more than ever. I took a chance but not a very big one. This is what I did: Danish has been getting prescriptions filled in another hospital across town since his pharmacy is not yet set up. I needed some Barium Sulphate so I accompanied him as far as town, thus having an excuse to get off the post. He dropped me off at the Doctor's house, went on to the hospital, and picked me up at the Dr.'s after the concert. Thereby I was not on the streets, (which is verboten) except to go to the concert hall 2 blocks away and return. Since other Americans, including higher ranking officers attended the concert, I assume it was OK for me to be there.

Mrs. Harel (the Dr.'s daughter) and Francoise, her daughter, attended the concert with me. We entered the Conservatory of Music, and I found it very beautiful. It was similar to Albert Hall in England and to the Metropolitan Opera House in NYC but much smaller. All seats were sold out. There are 5 or 6 balconies, each once above the other. We sat in the or-

chestra, 5th row and there were about a dozen other Americans I could see. The crowd looked prosperous and well-dressed. These women all wear exotic perfume and their hair is always fresh from the beauty shoppe.

The orchestra numbered about 75 pieces and its conductor was dressed informally. He looked a little like Adolph Hitler, except his moustache was differently shaped.

The first number (enclosed program) was remarkable in that after each number an ovation was given. The roar of applause following *The Star Spangled Banner* was terrific and the crowd beamed on the Americans and shook their hands, including my own. The ovation lasted 10 minutes. The ovations for the French, British, and Russian were almost as loud, especially the latter.

The trumpet number was short and included an organ accompaniment. I didn't care for it. [*The program says Trumpet Voluntary by Henry Purcell, 1658-95, but I have to assume it was really the very popular – and constantly played today – Prince of Denmark's March, once attributed to Purcell but now known to have been composed by Jeremiah Clarke in around 1700.*] But you know how I love the *Italian Symphony* [by Felix Mendelsohn] – it was really wonderful!

During the entr'acte [*intermission*] we promenaded in the foyer, and I snuck out for a cigarette—no smoking inside. Everyone goes either into the foyer or the promenades thru the halls to see what the others look like, and to be seen—just as at home.

The cello soloist, a young Jewish lad of about 24, very handsome and with good stage presence, had been in hiding for 4 years from the Germans. He apparently was made the first soloist because it suited the occasion. And what a cellist! His technic was amazing and tone faultless. The music was brilliant and melodious, consisting entirely of variations on a theme of about 10 simple notes, not so beautiful, and changing it into a thing of wonder. [*This would be Tchaikovsky's Variations on a Rococo Theme.*]

He played an encore which was not so beautiful. *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* [by Paul Dukas] was as enjoyable as ever. On our return to their home, I stayed only a few minutes, when my vehicle arrived. I returned to the hospital just in time for dinner.

Well, that's all for now, my love. Still no mail—what torture it is to be out of touch with one's family for so long!

All my devotion and affection and love.

Ben

[Internal page of an unknown letter; Sophie typed it just before the October 19, 1944, letter, so that is where I put it.]

... used 2 pieces. A week later our Exec. gave me hell for it (although on numerous occasions he has advised me to do identical things – viz. pick up things I couldn't get through channels). Tonight I received a bill for 13 sheets of zinc-5000 francs or \$120! The Exec. had sent it up, he was afraid to give it to me himself. I tossed the bill in the wastebasket. Later on the Exec. asked me if I got the bill and then, what was I going to do about it. I laughed and told him I wasn't going to pay it. He said "That means an investigation" to which I replied that I would enjoy such an investigation. He was a little angry about it, too. Later I learned that Danish (who I knew had 8 pieces) had given 2 to our CO for his house which he is furnishing (just outside the gate) and that he (Danish) had talked an engineer into bringing out 15 sheets of the same stuff, so I didn't have to fight the battle after all.

And did I rub it in! I asked the Exec. if the Col. was going to pay for his piece and was the Exec. embarrassed.

Such crap has been going on in the outfit for a long time. Here's another example: An enlisted man on D.S. [*detached service with another unit*] picked up a large vase and brought it back with him. He decided to send it home but the P.O. said it was too bulky (I suspect the Detachment Commander had something to do with this). In the meantime the fellow had shown the vase around and the adjutant had stopped in his room to see it. A few days ago the Detachment Commander ordered him to give it to the Col. The fellow stopped in to see Manny and me about the matter – he knew and liked us. After some deliberation I suggested he take the vase to the CO and say, "Sir, I heard you wanted to SEE MY vase." If the Col. said he wanted the vase, he was to say that he had already promised it to me. He did just that – and the Col. hit the ceiling shouting he wouldn't accept the vase if it were now offered to him (which it won't be!) and telling the man to get it out of the quarters immediately. So I now have the vase, which I plan to send to the boy's wife.

Another similar incident occurred with a daybed one of the men bought from a Belgian soldier – it now rests in the Col.'s house, after the Detachment Commander had confiscated it. The boy managed to sabotage

a rug before they got that too. They told the boy the couch was to be used for the Officers Club!

A captured German overcoat, admired by the Col., is now resting in MY office cupboard, an enlisted man preferring to give it to me for safe-keeping!

It's hard to believe the above but I vouch for every bit of it. You know me well enough to realize I wouldn't accept such things without proof and I'm willing to step on the witness stand, if necessary. Such infringement on an individual's rights should not go unpunished but there is little we can do because the enlisted man would get it in the neck at the first opportunity. However, sooner or later it will catch up with the old man and if I can in some manner complain to the Inspector General's office, I shall.

Oct 19 '44
[Liège]

Dearest Ginny:

Still no word from you. Woe is me—have you forgotten your poor husband.

I have just received the dubious honor of being elected to the Board of Directors of the Officers' Club at a general meeting today. Only a Maj. or above can hold the job and since there are only 14 of these animals in the outfit, it certainly was not a popularity poll. In fact, since the Colonel has been dominating the club with his insular personality and not infrequent attacks of temper, there weren't many takers for the job. To me, the job adds a little spice in my one man battle for freedom from oppression and I'm in the mood for a little active passive resistance. (This differs from Gandhi's passive resistance in that the Indians just stand or sit still while I lean forward towards the oppressor.)

I entered politics with a vengeance, too. When we heard that the Colonel had finally OK'd an election of officers, we got together in advance, decided who we wanted, and then lobbied for these men. I was the ring-leader for the entire thing since I suspected the Colonel would try to select the officers—which he didn't. He is doing the next best thing, though. He is having us in for a meeting and telling us what we can and what we cannot do. Incidentally, our ticket went thru virtually unchanged.

The amusing thing is that I use the club probably as little as anyone. I seldom do any drinking, and when I am on the post I hang out in my own

dept. where I have my own "club." Practically every evening we have half a doz. to a doz. officers, nurses, and enlisted men sitting around the dept. This is a continuation of our English "X-ray club" where a similar turnout took place. We generally scrape up some refreshments of a sort and usually have some hot coffee at about 10 P.M. So far the powers that be have let us strictly alone, and I wonder whether they even know about it.

We play the radio, sit around and chat with our "guests" or among ourselves, read, look at X-rays, etc. and the evenings pass away.

Next week, rumor has it that the restrictions will be lifted from the nearby town. Glory be, I'll certainly be happy about that!

Did I tell you about our Jewish friends in town? I don't think so. It seems that one of them has been arrested on the complaint of another Jew of having had business relations with the Nazis during the early part of the occupation. Since there are many false charges of this nature going on at the present time and since his religion would have precluded any mixing with the Nazis as late as 1940 and 1941, I doubt if he is guilty. His family is terribly upset, particularly since he has been in jail for almost a month and there are many cases still ahead of him on the dossier. They feel sure he will be exonerated when his case comes up, but have pleaded with us to intercede with the authorities to bring him to an earlier trial, claiming he is ill. I don't know what we can do about it and hesitate to butt into purely Belgian affairs, but they have had so much trouble, I feel very sorry for them. I talked to Manny, Blanket, Hulse, and Bloom about it. Hulse is the only one that agrees with me that something should and might be done for them. His opinion is much more mature than that of the others, so he and I are going to check into the matter carefully and if the case merits some effort on our part, we might try to do something about it, altho I can't see what we can do.

Our department is finished and is very beautiful to behold, with plenty of room, lots of paint and polish. I will photograph it when I can and send you the pictures so you can see what I mean.

Latest rumor dept: (1) We are going to leave here soon, go home for a month, and then to the South Pacific (2) Any hospital that sets up 7 times gets to go home for good. (3) There will be a tremendous victory Nov. 6 (election eve) and Roosevelt will win in a landslide (4) The Colonel has requested that we remain in the Army of Occupation (5) The Colonel has requested we be transferred to the Pacific when this phase of the war is over—etc. etc.

May I say that I don't think the Colonel or anyone else around here know what our future course will be.

We've had a bit of enemy air activity here, and some of the fellows get scared while it's going on, but it's rather exciting and not really very dangerous.

I hope you are all doing well and that now you're a lady of leisure, you will relax a little and enjoy life (not too much, though, my love).

Kiss my two darlings for their homesick daddy.

Ben.

22 Oct '44
[Liège]

Dearest Ginny:

Well, life has its ups and downs and yesterday was one of the uppest of up while today is one of the downest of the downs. So I'll begin by telling you about the good things and wind up with the bad.

Yesterday, being my birthday should have been and was a beautiful day. All the work went smoothly, our Officers' club got off to a good start (in committee only), and I received 4 letters from you, the first in over a month. Oh, how wonderful it was to read them and discover how well everything seemed to be going at home. And the lock of Nancy's hair—what a wonderful idea that was. How blonde and silky and beautiful. I've shown it to everyone in the hospital.

Next, Manny returned from a trip to a captured German medical depot I sent him out on with an American portable machine which had been captured by the Nazis and recaptured, and parts of a large machine—both badly needed in the dept. He was to return today to get the rest of the equipment. More of this anon.

In the evening, I asked Manny to go over the Officers' Club with me and he said OK, so we went. After about an [word left out] I asked him to return with me to the dept., which we did. We listened to the radio at my request, and most of the men and a few nurses seemed to be buzzing about. Finally I got up and walked into my office. Lo and behold, there was a lot of good food on trays. As I looked at the food, everyone (they had followed me in) started singing "Happy Birthday to You!" What a surprise! It really floored me.

What a party it was. All the men were there, Manny, Abe Danish, Al Blanket, and three nurses—friends of ours whom Manny had asked to help out with the party. The refreshments included canned tuna, canned turkey, GI cheese and Belgian cream cheese, fresh fruit of all kinds, dark bread—very fresh. Then we had cognac, champagne, and light wine. We really felt good after a bit and altho quite a little noise emanated from the dept., it apparently didn't disturb anyone as we weren't reported. Then the presents were brought out. They included a fountain pen (Waterman's)—I had lost mine—, a beautiful woolen scarf—O.D. [*color of scarf was olive drab*] —, and a very large box which, when unwrapped, proved to be a tube of eye ointment. Danish gave me the latter and I'm enclosing the notes I found as I unwrapped this tremendous pkg. [*Notes not found.*]

Naturally, I was quite touched by the whole business and became quite tight in a beatific sort of way. I arrived home, safely but not soundly, at 11 P.M.

And today everything went haywire! I received your letters of Oct. 3 and 4 telling me about the spats at home, Steve's babyishness, etc. Then Manny returned from the depot without the rest of the equipment and with the information that all the equipment we got the day before must be returned as there was a mistake made. (We have decided to go back down there tomorrow with a little more authority and persuasion).

Then we had trouble with one of the men because he didn't get to go down with Manny and the 4 other men from our dept. Also all the X-ray pictures were of inferior quality, for which we found no explanation. Then the electric current and water faucets failed several times, just when we needed them most.

Then one of my technicians, who had the blues because he hadn't heard from his paratrooper brother since he landed in Holland, got cranky and irritable and I had to baby him.

What a day! Oh, I forgot—there were 3 meetings with council and committees etc. on the Officers' Club and interviews of various members.

But I hope tomorrow is a better day.

The Officers' Club idea as a place to meet, read, write letters, hear good music, listen to interesting lectures, drink and dance—has really gone over big with all the people and we have received a number of compliments on the way we've been handling the club deal.

Pause

Danish has been having trouble with my enemy, the chief of the lab, who is his boss. However, Danish has also been in charge of pharmacy which has been running very smoothly. The pharmacy has been fixed up beautifully by Danish. Now Danish's lab boss has finagled into the Chief of Pharmacy, despite no qualification except that he is Abe's boss in the lab and the Colonel's right hand man. So I've just been cheering Abe up. He just left with a smile on his face, so now all's well.

Well, dear, I'll sign off now—I hope the situation at home is better. Let your sister blow off steam and don't let it get you down. Sel is reasonable, but like all of us, she occasionally “blows her top” without meaning to hurt you. As for Steve's babyishness, pay no attention to it—at least don't let him be aware that it affects you. I wish I were there to straighten out your troubles. My broad shoulders are all you need. It hurts me deeply not to be around you when you need to be caressed and petted. The Army makes me neglect my husbandly duties, I guess.

With much, much love

Ben

P.S. I love my son and my daughter and my wife.

25 Oct 44 [Liège]

Dear Gin:

Another day and another dollar or more. Ain't it nice! Still not much business but I manage to keep busy with club affairs, meetings, etc. Oh, yes, I've become quite an executive and clubman. Ho, hum.

I've got my troubles, too—but none are very big ones. My good days alternate with my bad ones but I've had to broaden my shoulders for some of the others to cry on. Manny has been a headache to me for the past few days. He has made 3 trips to the captured medical depot with the following results:

1. Received: 1 portable X-ray machine which won't work.
2. Received: 1 large German X-ray table, of no value without the rest of the machinery and vice versa. They refused to let him take the rest so neither they nor we can use it now.
3. Received: small assortment of first aid packets and antiquated surgical instruments etc. which look nice but of no value.

4. 3 mirrors to give to his friends: confiscated by medical supply officers (for his friends, prob.) after a big fight.
5. 2 chairs donated (under pressure) to the Officers' club.
6. Two enlisted men—Sgts. in other depts.—busted to PVT. because they went along with only Manny's permission (which he had no right to give).
7. One officer in hot water because he went along without asking his chief of service.
8. A ruling by the Colonel that no more trips to German depots be made.
9. Wrath of the new Medical Supply Officer incurred.
10. Hours of time wasted discussing the pros and cons of the distribution of the "booty."

Not a bad deal n'est pas? Oh, I forgot (11)—acute melancholic depression of one - Manny Levin.

It is all very humorous, really, because all the items are really trifling and Manny has attached so much significance.

I am enclosing a note I received from Grave's Registration concerning the marker on Mutty's grave. When I was there, they had no Stars of David so they had put a cross on his grave. Chaplain Powell, who went with me, thought this was terrible, and I deemed it inadvisable to mention it to Rae in my letter. We arranged to get the cross down and I insisted on being notified when they got the proper marker up as soon as possible. This note was the result.

I have gotten a good look at a flying bomb in the air (thank God!) and they sure give you an eerie sensation. I can't understand why the Germans still use them—they only make retribution more likely and are too inaccurate for military targets. What monsters the Germans are!

I sent you some perfume (1 pkg) and a book for Steve, a "Heil Hitler" sign I found in our Jewish friend's house (for Alan), and a few other things in a second pkg.

To answer some of your questions:

I received the bills for the medical journals and sent them on to you with instructions. I do not want the *J.A.M.A.* I just received my subscription to *P.M.* I received the letter about Dr. Schiff and have written comments to you. I have informed you as to what pkgs. I have received and that's a hel-

luva poor excuse for not sending more—i.e. the fact that you don't know whether I am receiving them. If you'd only remember that 1 week after you ask me a question you can't expect a reply, then you'd quit giving me hell. Look at the dates on my letters and you'll understand.

I hope Steve gets some kind of nursery schooling, whether Dr. Arlet's or your own is immaterial. [*Reference unknown.*]

I have no idea how or when the Army will be demobilized but rest assured, my love, I'll get the hell home as quick as I can! And, while it's nice to dream, I think it's futile to expect me home before 6+ more months.

I see you have started keeping the kids in the house on account of colds. Again I caution you that you stand more chance of making them neurotics than you do from serious complications. Naturally, use judgment: when they're sicker than usual with a cold—or in the case where Steve had a conjunctivitis—keep them in. But it seems every letter last winter mentioned a cold and the same thing is beginning again. Let their noses run along with their little feet! It's not beautiful but it's effective.

Irv's hard work is probably not advisable, but he's got sense enough to know his own strength, so tell Maxine not to worry—he won't break down.

Well, love, it's time for chow. I'm sorry I took the tone above, but I'm in a bad humor, I guess—and don't feel like coddling. After all, you don't want to start all our fights, do you. As I've said before, I love you in spite of everything.

Love and kisses to you, Nancy, and Steve
Ben.

14 October 1944

SUBJECT: For Your Information

TO: Major B. Felson, 28th Gen. Hosp., APO 350, U.S. Army.

1. Temporary Star of David has been erected on the grave of 2nd Lt. Marcus Kruke, 0-1325403.

Lynford G. Chase
1st Lt., QMC

27 Oct 44 [Liège]

Hello my own:

Oh, disappointment—O tragedy! Stevie's picture arrived but the pkg had gotten wet and the corrugated paper had faded out the picture in streaks. His left eyebrow is amputated and he looks like a zebra with yellow stripes. Auger thinks he can photograph it with a yellow filter and the lines will disappear, then retouch it. In the meantime, send me another, in better packing, 1st class mail. No kidding, though, I was awfully disappointed. I'd like pictures and more pictures!

I received a few more *Lifes* and *P.M.s*, about 4 letters from you, 1 from Soph and 5 from Walt. I will endeavor to answer your questions etc. later on in this letter.

Yesterday was a very interesting day to me, chiefly because of a meeting the Officers of the Club had with the C.O.—what a meeting!

I guess I started it all when I went to the adjutant with a request for a vehicle to hire a civilian orchestra. A new directive had just come out stating that there would be absolutely no hobnobbing with civilians except in line of duty and with his usual self-preservation instincts he tried to point out that this would be hobnobbing. When I remonstrated that civilian workers were present on the post in large numbers and that an orchestra could be considered in this same category; also the colonel had permitted a civilian speaker to address the enlisted men, he said he would ask the C.O. I waited around and finally he came back and told me that the Colonel didn't want a dance this week but wanted a housewarming party with beer only and no civilians could be brought on the post under any circumstances by the club. I decided not to try to see the Col. but call the Committee Mgr. for a meeting with him. We got together and decided that if he didn't want a civilian band, that OK, but when he tried to tell us the kind of party we were to have, that was a horse of a different etc. and we figured there was no time like the present, typed up our resignations and decided we would all stick together and have a showdown as to who would run the club. He had done a similar thing with the last group and ruined the club for everyone.

So off we went, cooled our heels for an hour while he was resting in his quarters and finally had our conference.

Maj. Durns, an older man, fearless and outspoken, was our spokesman, and began bluntly with a summary of the problem and a query as to who was going to run the club, he or the committee. He didn't like Durns's tone and quickly got mad. Pretty soon the 2 of them were shouting at each other and Durns was reaching for the resignations. The Col. refused to talk further to Durns, saying he would talk only to the President. Hagen, the Pres., chimed in and said Durns was delegated the authority to speak by the Pres. and pointed out he agreed with everything that Durns said. The C.O. turned again to Durns and with righteous indignation said we had all agreed to the housewarming party without beer. Durns said that this was not true and the Col., fiercely glaring at each of us, asked if we were not right. We chorused back with a loud "no!!" and he turned purple and shouted for the executive officer, who arrived 20 minutes later. Spineless Col. Selby read the minutes and said nothing had been said on that subject (which was true). The Col. then said he would have a secretary take everything down in shorthand all future meetings.

I then interjected a request for a GI band for the coming affair and he shouted that he would decide that some other time. Then I asked him sarcastically (but quietly) if he objected to dancing. He almost exploded! He accused me of having started the whole trouble by bothering him on a busy day, but I pointed out that I had come by request of the committee to the adjutant and that the latter had brought the matter up to him, that I didn't even see him. He then turned to the President and said henceforth he would only deal with him and the mgr. and the rest of us (Maj. Durns and myself) could meet with these two beforehand (he wanted to get us 1 or 2 at a time). The Pres. (Hagen) said we had decided to work closely together and all of us or none of us would attend the meetings. The Col. said OK, but said we would meet only once a month and no one would bother him between times. Meantime, Al Blanket would correct him every time he would make a false statement. He never did cool down completely, altho we did. For my part, it was a scream, and many times I had a hard time to keep from laughing. We really ganged up on him! He tried everything to scare us, from pulling rank to veiled and open threats. Oh, I forgot, Hagen told him several times that if he didn't like the way we were doing, we were prepared to resign. The C.O. became very irritated by that, saying that he hadn't said he was dissatisfied. Obviously, he didn't want us to resign, because he knew that we were elected by a landslide and just because we never kowtowed to him and that no one would attend the club except the few minions, if we quit. So he would have to explain to his doctors why he didn't have a club.

Well, the battle royal lasted an hour and the following is the box score:

1. No GI orchestra this week but next week.
2. No hard liquor at the party but a few days later he would let us have the key—it had to be inventoried.
3. Dancing to radio music at the party.
4. A promise that we would run the club without his interference except when there was a question of Army regulations.
5. More cooperation with regard to getting vehicles for club businesses.
6. A trip to Brussels for monthly liquor rations sanctioned before Nov. 1st (we already missed 1 mo. rations and if we don't make this trip, will lose a 2nd months').

What a guy—

Well, this tale is so long, I won't have time for anymore tonight.

All and every bit of my love to you, dear. How'm I doin'.

Ben

Kiss the 2 darlings for their fighter father.

30 Oct 44 [Liège]

Dearest:

I received your letter giving me hell for saying it was all your fault that my letters weren't reaching Soph. Didn't you get the undertone of amusement with which I neatly shifted the blame onto you? Don't you know I'm more gallant than to really hide behind your skirts? (Or am I?) Anyway I got a kick out of putting you on the spot and expected you to react as you did, only more vehemently. I'm a villain, aren't I? But it does add a little more color to life, so forgive me, please.

As for my complaint about not receiving packages and your reply that I do not acknowledge when received—well, I guess we're both wrong. In the first place I didn't realize 10 pkgs. were on the way. On the other hand I haven't received any pkgs that I haven't acknowledged. In fact, aside from 1 box of Hershey's and Steve's picture, I haven't received a pkg in more than 3 months. Another sidelight on this is that, because of the irregularities in the mail, our continuity of letters is ruined and many questions are an-

swered by me before they are received. No doubt some letters are lost. As a matter of fact, when I receive a letter from you, I read it once, then reread it and circle in red any sentence or subject which bears reply. After I accumulate a few letters, I incorporate replies to these all at once. So you see, it is almost impossible for one to miss a point on replying.

So dearest, please bear with the poor mailman and be patient with your devoted husband.

Again, I hope you are saving all my letters, as it will be fun to gather our little family circle together and relive my “adventures” together, elaborating the stories and telling you added things that I am not permitted to tell now for security reasons. And you know how I love to embellish a story!

I’m sorry about Steve’s not wanting to write his daddy. I think his babyish actions, his bed wetting, and his lack of interest in his daddy are all part of a little internal conflict which he is having and frankly I don’t like it. I know he’s only a 3 yr. old, but his mental outlook is older and remember, I’m quite sure that a person’s character is developed in the first few years of life. I know how discerning you are in such matters or else I wouldn’t give it another thought. It probably ties up with his being around your mother, thought I don’t know the answer or solution. I’ll talk to Hulse and write you more on this.

Al is Al Blanket, the dentist who lives with Manny, myself, and Abe Danish. He and Manny didn’t like Abe at first but now Al and Abe are quite friendly, ever since I showed Al the letter I was writing you concerning their quarreling. Manny still doesn’t like Abe but he, like the proverbial elephant, never forgives or forgets. Manny hates with a vengeance and forever—never forgives anyone, and hates many people. He often broods about people he doesn’t like, and is very cynical. He is very generous to his friends and very impolite to those he dislikes. A peculiar guy!

Still no news of my suitcase. My long coat in the photo is the blouse I bought from Manny. You can get rid of any old clothes you see fit, but if I have a suit that is in good condition you better save it, because I want to take my uniform off permanently when I arrive home.

Don’t worry about danger to me, dear. The only possible chance of anything happening is by air and the likelihood of this is less than when I used to drive my car.

Chanel and Shalimar are not available here, but other perfumes are plentiful, though expensive. I will send some from time to time.

Our allotments are figured in Belgian money, so that accounts for the uneven amount. Let's let it stand as is. Incidentally, I rarely get in a poker game, so I am well ahead of the game. Strange that I have lost interest. But, now that I'm reading medicine again, I find little time for too many other things. Oh, I forgot to tell you about sending to the Army Medical Library for journals on 35 mm film. I use a microfilm "reader"—a special magnifying glass, and have been doing a lot of reading lately. I am on their mailing list and every week or so I get about 10 journals on a roll of film.

I like the idea of taking over your Dad's house (at the full price, however) but it will have to wait until I get home. I will dismember you and feed you to the fishes in the Ohio River if you start paying for the house now, so help me. I agree that a fancy home wouldn't suit us—but at the present writing, any home would appeal to me.

As to sending out feelers for a post war job at the General or via Schiff—that must wait until a definite date for the end of the war is in sight. There is still plenty of time for that, and any letters from me now would be definitely premature.

Sel's spat with you and subsequent admission that she was jealous of you because of Steve and Nan proved to me that you were not the gad-about they tried to make you. But I knew there was little truth in that anyway. In fact I suspected that something of the sort was behind the things. After such an admission from her (which was a very admirable thing on her part) I hope you will try to be more understanding of her feelings in the future and not let it upset you so much. That, too, may enter into Steve's present behavior. You realize, it's a complicated situation with which to confront a child. I certainly don't want Steve and Nan to transfer their affections. Remember, that's what happened to my sister, Edith.

My reaction to the wealth being accumulated by the "Docs we left behind"—well, it's probably different from that of most of my Army colleagues. I am not at all envious, since I wouldn't trade my experiences for their \$40,000 house and security or anything else they have. Money doesn't mean that much to me (altho security means a lot). Think of how self-conscious those poor clucks will feel when we get back and for years after. And, knowing my Army colleagues pretty well, I realize what a cold shoulder they will give these guys when they get home.

By the way, don't pay Steve for a dry bed—I think it's the wrong paediology to show any concern at all over it. His subconscious mind is work-

ing in such a manner, that if he doesn't get any attention, he will quit doing it.

The reason I sent Martha a New Year's card is that I got one from her. I sent the card after I got hers.

Well, that's all for now, my love. Tell Steve and Nan how much I miss them and their mama.

Ben.

31 Oct '44
[Liège]

Dearest Ginny:

I wrote you yesterday about the fact that Steve's behavior, i.e. baby talk, pants-wetting, etc. were symptoms of unrest which it would be very wise to nip in the bud at once. Since I attached a lot of significance to it (perhaps more than you or your family might), I spoke to Hulse, who is a child psychiatrist in civilian life last night, and he agrees with me and suggested some things for the straightening out of this condition.

So this A.M. I write you what I think ought to be done. I will preface my remarks by pointing out that I have never been much of an alarmist, as you know, but to me (and to Hulse) this thing seems very important for the future mental well-being and future character of our boy. You know how much this means to me, and that there is absolutely nothing that would hurt me more than to feel in future years that we had made some mistake. I know that if I were home we would straighten him out, and believe that in my absence you can do the same thing, though it will be harder for you without my presence. Remember, too, that I feel helpless at this distance, so don't let me down, dearest.

Well, here's the dope. In the first place, these symptoms, including his refusal to write his daddy or to willingly submit to a moving picture to send to his daddy, seems to indicate that he is (unconsciously) deeply disturbed by conflicts arising at home—raising of voices, quarrels and bickering between you and your mother, you and your sister, etc. since he loves all of you. It's the same thing that takes place when a mother and father quarrel in front of their child, or divorce in a family, etc. Your social work training, I'm sure, will show you the parallel. He does not have the judgment to realize that these bickerings are not a sign of hatred or dislike between you. I doubt if jealousy of Nancy enters into it now, except to remind

us that whenever Steve had conflicts he reacts by bed wetting and babyish talk and action; in other words it is his pattern of reaction to any conflict at his age.

I am now resented by him, because I went away and have not returned to help him in this conflict—in other words, I have let him down.

Another point—I know that in the case of practically every mentally aberrant individual, a review of the previous home surroundings will show the cause. If you will recall your sister Netty's depression, and think about it (and remember Steve is in that same environment) or my sister Edith, you will understand better what I mean.

Now, for the treatment. In the first place, Steve at all costs, must be put in a pre-school nursery. He will spend some time away from home, gather new interests, and thus be less self-centered. Do not keep him away from school on any slight provocation as you did last year. If necessary, use a taxi, but get him there.

Secondly, under no circumstances permit any arguments or heated discussions within his hearing. Demonstrate your love for your mother, Sel, and dad as much as you can. Control your temper and swallow your pride.

Next, don't punish him for being "bad," altho you might reward him for being good. I don't think it makes much difference, but would suggest you don't pay him for not wetting etc. In general, encourage him to be a "big boy," build up his big brother attitude. Don't mention the bed wetting in front of others in his presence.

Now, of course, you alone following my suggestions can't do the whole thing yourself. But remember, it takes two to make a quarrel. Furthermore, I'd suggest you have Selma and your daddy read this letter. Perhaps they might think this is much ado about nothing, but I am convinced I am right, so I beg them to cooperate.

Hulse says we should give the school about 2 months, and if there is no appreciable improvement, then he would advise you and the kids to move off by yourself. I heartily agree with this, but if you keep me posted on Steve's progress, we don't have to cross this bridge until we come to it. By the way, even if there is no improvement, leave him the school. I'm inclined to believe that the school will improve him. If you desire you can explain Steve's "dilemma" to the teacher, but perhaps there is no point in this.

And as a point of lesser significance, I would be pleased if you'd take my boy aside and explain to him how much I love him and want to come

home to him, but that the Army won't let me, that they would shoot me first. You might do that for me from time to time, darling. [*No wonder I wet my pants.*]

That's all for now, dearest. Keep me posted, in every letter, of his progress and don't pull any punches. Remember, I'm depending on you.

Your ever-loving husband,
Ben.

31 Oct '44
[Liège]

Dear Stevie:

I hope you are very well, now. It seems like such a long time since I saw you last. You must be a big boy now. I'm sorry I didn't get to come to your birthday party, but I'm so far away, and the Army won't let me come home until the war is over. I think it might be soon.

Well you're 3 years old now. Do you remember when I left? You were only 2 years old then, but even then you were a big boy. I got a new picture of you and you look like a fine fellow. I wish I were home so you could sit on my lap and I'd read you books and stories and we could sing together. I can't wait until the moving picture of you gets here.

Did you get the book I sent you for your birthday? Also I am sending you a Christmas present. And when I get home I will tell you all about my life in the Army and about all the countries I visited. I rode on very big boats, in an airplane, and in jeeps. Some day you and I and Nancy and Mommy will all go up for a ride in an airplane. Do you want to? It's like a bird flying in the sky.

Will you kiss Mommy, Nancy, Selma, Grandma, and Grandpa and tell them all that I love them.

I love you, too, very, very, very, very, very much.

Your Daddy Ben

Nov. 2, '44
[Liège]

Dearest one:

It's letter writing time this early beautiful morning since the power is off (it fails us frequently) and our dark room can't function because the carpenters are working on it. Also the water is off (whenever the power fails). There's still very little work, some of which is rather interesting, and I have much leisure time. Unfortunately, the town is still off limits and enforced, or my cup would be complete. I have been asked to chaperone some nurses to a party or dance in town and it should be good to get off.

My time is spent reading 35 mm medical journals, *P.M.*, *Life*, and a few novels (just finished the new *Barnaby*—tres bon), attending Officers' Club council meetings and working on the club program, and drinking a little at the club—our hard liquor rations are being dispensed at the rate of 18 1 oz glasses every 2 weeks at 4 fr (10¢) per glass.

We are very hopeful around here these days because our administration is apparently in the frying pan. The Lt. Col. nurse, chief nurse in the E.T.O., had been tipped off about the chief nurse of the 28th by some of the girls who were on D.S. and had transferred 2 important 1st Lts. at their request. She came up here to see what it's all about, called a meeting of all 2nd Lt. nurses and asked them what the trouble was. Well, they really did a good job of telling her and she seemed very sympathetic, agreeing with them that they were right. She asked them what they would like to have done to correct the situation and they chorused back: Transfer the C.O. and chief nurse or transfer the nurses. She was also told that the officers were in the same boat. She promised some sort of action in 2 weeks—and we expect to lose the chief nurse (applause!) and have some sort of inspector sent here to check up on the officers, since she works in the same Hq. as General Hawley, chief surgeon, E.T.O. Of course, as so often happens in the Army, nothing at all may come of it, but there was no question where her sympathies lay, and she is a very powerful individual. So everyone is hoping against hope!

Manny and I have become rather friendly with the nice 2nd Lt. (colored) in charge of the engineer construction men, working our dept. at this time. He is a friendly, shy Michigander, quite intelligent and obviously lonesome. He often works right with his men and you ought to see the things hum when he goes to work. He speaks well and has told us many things about his experience as a colored enlisted man in the Army.

I received 2 pkgs. yesterday: containing Limburger and another cheese, dried kippers, caviar, anchovy sauce, and anchovies, 1 roll of film, and Ry Krisp. I've been eating ever since. Gosh, honey, do those things taste good. The kippers were in excellent shape altho Manny thought they

smelled spoiled and wouldn't eat them. Send me more—they were wonderful and I'm still alive. I'd suggest you pack them a little better, though, as they do have an odor.

The chief of the Belgian Red Cross in the city spoke to our discussion group last Sunday. She was a charming woman, 6 ft 2 or so and twice as thin, spoke English with practically no accent, having lived in England thru the last war—as have many other Belgians. She told us that the Belgian Red Cross did mostly nursing and hospital work during this occupation, running their own hospital and treating only Belgians and few allied airmen. They also sent a contingent of children to Switzerland every few months for feeding and health purposed. She made several trips to POW [*prisoner of war*] camps in Eastern Germany and Austria and on one occasion was supposed to bring back 68 sick Belgians. Two had died in the meantime, so the German commandant was at his wit's end, because he was told to deliver 68 and he had to deliver that number. Two well Belgians happened to walk by. Suddenly the commandant pounced on them, shoved them into the train, and off they all went for home, with their 68 prisoners. The two men were so dazed by their good fortune that they were speechless.

Another time, a captured British Major was brought to the hospital, his leg in a cast. He was X-rayed, and no abnormality found. That night he disappeared (having walked out without his cast). The Germans were furious and wanted to close the hospital, but finally “forgot” about the incident. They later learned the Major had gotten back to England safely.

Now to answer a few of your questions and comment on your letters:

Soph apologised in a recent letter for writing that you had failed to bring her my letters for copying, so let's forget the whole thing.

As far as Red [*E/sey?*] not being enthusiastic about my return to Cincy, I don't think it's because of any competition I might give him, but rather that he realises it will be a struggle for me at first, and sees little hope of a hospital connection. As for telling Dave about the Schiff deal, remember that you didn't sound like it was a secret when you wrote me. I guess I shouldn't have said anything, but it's too late now. I figure that, in view of what Soph tells me about insurance medicine in Southern Ohio, Schiff wants to get in on the ground floor and an X-ray dept. is very important in this type of work. It may prove a big boon to returning MDs, too. [*Note that dad uses the English spelling of “apologize” and “realize” after less than a year in the mother country.*]

As to Safer, I think you have him sized up correctly, and I wouldn't have recommended him as your ENT if I had had a chance, even though I don't know any others at home now. Leon Goldman is a good dermatologist but has his eccentricities, including an absent-mindedness that is in a class by itself and a sense of humor that is violent. He is not very conservative in his medicine, which in dermatology is not the best policy (in cancer work, obviously one must be more radical).

You say to write "Jack Jacobs and other correspondents for souvenirs." Where is Jack? I had no idea that he had left the States. And by the way, souvenirs are nice, I suppose, but they aren't really important. Why don't you just forget about them for awhile and I'll pick up something in town when the restrictions are lifted.

I liked the pictures of Nancy very much. As I was looking at them, and realizing she was such a stranger to me—I had no real idea of what she looked like now—Perella walked in, saw my face, then started to hum sad music, patting me on the shoulder and telling me to buck up. I got quite a kick out of that, but what a beauty she is!

Also everyone got a bang out of Steve's statement that Barty would just hit him back. What a proud papa I am! [*There was an older kid named Barty Shallot in the neighborhood but I don't remember the incident.*]

You handled the negro incident ("dirty and colored") very well, my pet. That's exactly what I think you should have done.

Well, that's all for now, love.

Your devoted husband

P.S. I ran across a Phil Schiff from Cincy, an attorney from Newport, who knows Selma and her brother, Lev! He married a Nedelman girl I know and they now live in Price Hill. He's a Lt. in the QM [*Quartermaster*] supply and is often at or near the fighting. He's a nice guy. [*"Selma" is not mom's sister; all references unknown.*]

Saturday, Nov.
4th, 1944 [*Liège*]

Dear Family:

Hurray for us! The town has gone on limits as of today and I'm raring to get in again. I'd go tonight only I have to chaperone 18 nurses to an Air Corps dance (harmless Bennie, that's me). But tomorrow I plan to go to

another concert in town if I can get a ticket. I'm so damned tired of being confined to this post (3 weeks now) that I could go mad.

The town, or rather city, is beautiful, friendly and alive. I have a number of Belgian friends there and have had to turn down many invitations since the MPs have been turning in officers. But no more! I plan a trip to the University Medical College where my friend (and interpreter) Capt. Hulse, has made several contacts: I hope to listen to an excellent piano concert and musical evening at my Belgian friend's (Dr. Breyere); a cello concert by one of our enlisted men is in the offing—a friend of ours is supplying the cello, the home, and the refreshments. So you see the reason for my enthusiasm.

We are still acting as a transit hospital (more or less of a hotel for patients moving back from the front) and altho many patients pass thru our portals, we are not very busy. In fact 30 patients in X-ray in 1 day is a busy day. When you compare this with the 400 plus we had in Wimborne, England (I learn that this is a record for the E.T.O.—bring on the D.S.C.), you see how little we have to do. But many complications have arisen during our setting up so that yesterday we had no electric power, no water, construction in our narrow hallway, and plumber working in our darkroom. We still managed to do X-ray work with a small generator but I nearly went nuts from the recent complications.

We see artillery flashes on a clear night and we have our buzz bombs—otherwise the war itself seems far away. Oh, I forgot, we also have plenty of German prisoner patients, mostly a quiet and sullen crew.

The buzzers are exactly as depicted in the papers, flying fairly high and on a pretty regular schedule. My 7:15 buzz bomb has been acting as an alarm clock, but this A.M. they forgot to send it over, so I overslept. They haven't been hitting around here lately but one day one hit about 4 blocks from a vehicle in which I was riding. Fortunately I had another pair of pants with me so everything was o.k.

For a while snipers were taking pot shots at our guards, but lately this has ceased—apparently the caves all around us on our hill have been sealed up.

We have movies on the post 3 times a week and an occasional USO show. Last night we had a good Belgian civilian jive band and some performers from town. It was a helluva good show, especially the 10 yr. old drummer who was really in the groove. My spare time is spent working and fighting for the Officers' Club, of which I am a member of the council of 3.

We have really been fighting with the Colonel over the subject of liquor and he hardly speaks to us anymore.

I appreciate Soph's and Walt's frequent letters and occasional notes from the rest of you, so keep writing.

Irv, I'm very pleased to learn how well your bowling business is doing. I can see where you might become the only capitalist in the family. Thanks for the picture of Nancy Paula. It's lovely and she's a beautiful child.

Soph, tell Alan I have a helmet (German) and some other odds and ends I will send him soon. And I'm pleased to hear he's a regular on the football team. Carl Wyler is a good friend of mine, too. We used to play tennis at Losantiville—I was his guest.

Leo and Ev—how about a picture of you two with Leo in his new uniform.

Chip and Helen—your daughters' pictures arrived safely and I carry them around in my folder—tres belles fillettes! I'm kind of sore at your C.O. for not making you a major. Did I ever tell you how glad I was that I took your advice to go into X-ray. Remember that day, Chip?

Louise and Dave—How about some photos of the kids? I hear they're cute as can be.

Edith—drop me a line again someday, dear. You know I enjoy your few letters (tsk-tsk). The dolls here are expensive and not authentic but will keep looking.

Walt—keep writing—it's wonderfully exciting to read your letters.

Love,

Ben.

7 Nov 44 [Liège]

Hello my love:

Well, what's new on the home front? Especially the B. Felson home front? I'm eagerly awaiting the movies and more pkgs. So far I have received only the 2 I wrote you about. However, I'm not undergoing any real hardship, even though the contents of the pkgs are long since gone. Each evening we have toast or biscuits, butter, coffee ("picked up on the post") [*phrase must have some meaning to them but not to me*] and cheese,

bought in town. When eaten in the atmosphere of our radio music or over a book or medical article, it ain't half bad.

I went to the concert in town, Sunday, with my Belgique friends, but was rather disappointed in the program. The first no. was *Redemption* by Cesar Franck, which was rather dull. The second no. was Bruch's 1st Violin Concerto played by a Belgian named Josef Beck, which was really beautiful. I was familiar with the number and therefore it was doubly enjoyable. After the intermission they played a symphony by Rimsky-Korsakoff (*Adonu?*) [couldn't find such a piece] which is on the order of Scheherazade but not as beautiful and very repetitious—I almost fell asleep. Then came the finale, an overture of one of Lalo's operas, which was nice, but no kick to it. After the concert I walked them home, then returned to the post (a trip of slightly under ½ hr. from town).

I find very little change in the town since we were last there 3 weeks ago. There aren't as yet so many GIs, and the stores are still full of merchandise. I may do some shopping this week.

Last night, as part of the club's activities, Chap. Powell held a discussion of some articles he had read on the negro situation. Only 8 officers showed up including 5 of God's Chosen and most of these happened to be in the club at the time with nothing to do. I'm afraid the officers here aren't interested in politics, current events, economics or the like. There isn't even a ripple altho today is election day. The viewpoint on such vital points seems to be, "So what!" So, what! And if it weren't for the topics under discussion, we wouldn't be so far away from our loved ones for so long. And if it weren't for these things we wouldn't be getting killed or maimed by the millions. Such a lazy attitude, as you can see, makes me irritable and I often wonder "What the hell's the use."

Our dept. is quite the thing now and when we have visitors I am proud to show it off. However, our electric diesel engines for the hospital are acting very temperamental, so most of the past week we have been running on small generators with only 1 machine working, which is a nuisance.

Yesterday, I had to jump 2 of my favorite enlisted men because they have been leaving their personal belongings lay around, despite many warnings, and have been going off without saying anything to anyone. I really acted sore (and was a bit sore). Last night they were on duty and stayed up half the night, cleaning up the whole dept. to get back in my good graces!

Henri, our Belgian char man [*janitor*], is quite a fine man. The EM had been teaching him to cuss in English and he has been reciprocating in French. He was a Belgian soldier at first, then became a Major, and lost part of his foot and received many wounds when a bomb fell on his group's hideout. He is quiet and industrious until he sees a German prisoner, and then almost goes berserk. He is very honest, will accept nothing except what he considers his due, and is always bringing me coins which he finds on the floor. When I try to get him to keep them, he refuses.

Well, that's all for now, love.

I hope Steve is acting more mature, and that my letter didn't make much out of nothing.

Please send pictures and more pictures and keep sending pkgs—things like gefilte fish, shrimp, chicken etc. in cans.

Your ever-loving husband, who at the moment is fighting an attack of nostalgia.

Ben.

Nov. 10 [1944;
Liège]

Dearest:

Last night I chaperoned about 15 nurses to an air corps dance in a beautiful night club in the city, so I've got a little headache this morning. I had a pretty fair time, but unfortunately only about ½ the nurses made contact as there were too few stags. Most of the males had made Belgian contacts and had brought them, so from our angle it was pretty snafu. So there were 2 males and about 8 girls. It was very touching, since several of them were fairly attractive and not accustomed to being left out. I managed to dance with all 8 of them—and you know how I like to dance! But I also managed to get a few drinks in me, so I had some fun at that.

We had an inspection this A.M. and the place looked beautiful; the Col. appeared well-pleased.

By the way, did you read the article in *Reader's Dig.* about Army hospitals. We were no. 6 in the chain of evacuation. Also some of the photographers were taking pictures of nurses voting, so they asked permission to use my desk, which I gave. Steve and Nancy's pictures were on it, so it might be that someone may see it. Did anyone ever see the movies of our

taking over the Royal Victoria Hospital in Netley, Eng. about 10 months ago.

Latest rumor dept.: “The Colonel has reached retirement age and is to go back to the States. He requested that the unit go back with him. General Hawley OK’d the request so we will land home next month, train for 3 months in the States, and then go to the South Pacific.” Such drive! I wish people wouldn’t start such things. It raises too many thoughts in a poor guy’s mind.

I think I’ll comment on some of your recent letters, now. I have received a nice letter from Danny Engel (I didn’t know he had a son or even had been married). Also one from Mutty’s girlfriend, one from the Chaplain in Mutty’s outfit, telling me he couldn’t give me any info, but to write so and so, which I did.

So far I haven’t run across a copy of *So Little Time* [1943 novel by John Marquand], but the title is sure a truism.

I already told you about Steve’s picture being damaged. As yet, Auger hasn’t had a chance to retouch it. I received the pictures of Nancy and she is certainly lovely—But an utter stranger to me. No movies as yet.

I didn’t get any more pkgs.—just the two I mentioned.

Carl Vilter was a year or two behind me in school—I never cared much for him, but he was plenty smart. Koehlstadt’s replacement of Page is certainly a surprise. [Must be a reference to Cincinnati physicians.] He’s a politician and a snake, but he too is fairly smart, but not good enough for that position. He certainly doesn’t get Page’s salary, I’m sure. As for Walt Rosenbaum being a liberal, I guess Bernie or someone once told me about him. However, don’t you wonder whether the letter to the newspaper wasn’t meant as a slight plug? I’m getting cynical, aren’t I.

So Gladys is in the big city. I wish her lots of luck. Don’t expect one of your friends to like another very often—i.e. Gita and Gladys to become friends. It doesn’t often work. [Mom had a first cousin named Gladys Levinson who did live in New York City.]

As to the men thinking that I don’t miss my wife—several of them have so commented, because of my general optimistic and adaptable manner. How wrong they are!

I am still blue from Steve’s, “I don’t even know my daddy” and “No, I’d rather have flowers for my birthday (rather than daddy)”—c’est la guerre, I guess. But I also believe it’s part of the same feeling I described before—

he believes his daddy has let him down. Tragic isn't it. Can you imagine how it makes me feel, dearest? Yet it was cute.

As to your not having the courage to go on without me, if anything should happen to me—well, in the first place I am safe and expect to remain so. If something (very unlikely) should happen to me, however, I'm sure you could carry on. Don't belittle your character to me, dear, I know you better.

I'll drop Ed Lerman a note when the films arrive, but please send me his address.

Perfume is available, but prices are exorbitant, and the better brands have disappeared.

Don't be jealous of the other kids in my family. Ours are the smartest, dear; don't let anything make you believe otherwise. I know!!!

Your mother's blood pressure might fluctuate and be normal one time and elevated at another. It is a very good sign if Hahn told her the truth. Check with him on the sly.

Well, that's about all for now.

Goodbye 'til the next letter.

Your ever-loving gray-haired husband

Wed. 15 Nov. '44
[Liège]

Dearest Gin:

Well, life proceeds apace, with ups and downs, ins and outs etc. and I only hope (but fervently) that we get the hell back home soon. I expect it will be sometime around June, though before we get on the boat from the rate we're moving.

Yesterday I went to town alone, had an ice cream or two, did a little shopping, visited some friends, was invited for dinner this Sunday, and then had a delicious meal, consisting of wonderful soup, a large steak, 2 helpings of French fries, and a bottle of wine. What a meal and, oh, how tasty after our somewhat monotonous diet. The lady proprietor of the restaurant was very friendly and I practiced my bum French on her. I manage to make myself understood, but sometimes have to resort to sign language.

Incidentally, I am trying to buy some dolls for Edie—I expect them to be genuine but expensive. Everything here is terribly expensive—my meal was dirt cheap for 230 francs (about \$5.00) including the wine. Good perfume is scarce and runs about \$12+ for an ounce. Ice cream is 20¢+ a dish etc. I started this month with plenty of money, but after lending about \$70 to the photography fund for an enlarger and photographic printer, and going to town 2 or 3 times, I am nearly broke.

Speaking of photography, Sgt. Auger bought a camera which suits our clinical material to a T, and is making beautiful reproductions of interesting films. I have improvised a projector and plan to start X-ray meetings this Friday. There is fairly much good clinical material in our present set-up, so I should come home with a good collection.

Today, a Capt. Cajacob (Melvyn) from Cincy dropped in on me. Though he is a medical officer, he spent 2 years in the artillery because he was in the ROTC in artillery before the war and would have had to lose his Captaincy if he became a medical officer. Later they caught up with him and made him an M.C. [*Medical Corps*]. I knew him in Cincy and at Ft. Harrison. A nice guy, too. He is a battalion surgeon in artillery in Holland and told me many interesting things. He says that the British soldier and artillery are superb and that the only thing that is holding them up in Holland is the strength of the Germans. This is the contrary to what we all suspected, as we imagined that the “Limeys” weren’t doing their share. But here is an eye witness. He chuckles over their stopping for tea etc., but maintains when they are in the combat line, they stop for nothing, including the enemy. He says the Scotch are even better fighters, and both are better than the Americans.

He also mentioned that the Germans evidently don’t like the American air observer plane (I guess they’re Piper Cubs) because they “turn off” all their artillery whenever these planes are up so the guns won’t be spotted, and go to great lengths to shoot them down.

He and one of his corpsmen went out to catch some chickens last week, and an artillery burst in the vicinity killed his corpsman, but he escaped intact.

Tonight there is a surgical meeting which I plan to attend. Last night we had a record concert at the club (part of my job as program director)—Hulse had borrowed the records in town. They were excellent, especially a Mendelsohn violin concerto and Smetana’s *Moldau* (a river in Czechoslovakia) Symphonic poem. We have these record programs every two

weeks, played on a homemade record player, with a large loudspeaker and radio, rigged up by one of our officers, who is an electrical wizard, but otherwise a very straitlaced guy with little or no judgment, afraid of everything and possessing no sense of humor. He is the butt of most jokes around here.

We also have a photographic exhibit at the club this week. I got 3 of the officers, who are picture-taking fiends (including Bloom) to rig up boards and show their pictures. They are excellent and show every place we've been. There is a plan afoot to make a book record of our meanderings, most of the book to consist of these photos. It ought to be exceptionally good.

A ping pong tournament and Thanksgiving dance are in the offing. We had a dance last Sat. night—Sadie Hawkin's Day—and the decorations were of the Lil Abner motif. We also had a mock wedding, including shotgun, which was a scream. It is my job to see that these events are scheduled, arranged, and go off without a hitch, altho actually all I do is see that the sub-committees etc. get the things done. I do very little of the work itself, but call meetings, contact the individuals concerned, and coordinate all the work. It's fun and flatters my ego. This last dance was said to be the best in our history. I got looped and had a helluva good time. [*Sadie Hawkins Day was an American pseudo-holiday originated by Al Capp's hill-billy comic strip Li'l Abner (1934–1978). The premise is that females ask males for a date or a dance.*]

While in town on a street car yesterday, a buzz bomb hit about 4 blocks away. The blast and sound passed over our head but a big plume of smoke rose quickly to the sky. I later learned that the casualties were brought to our hospital. I heard the motor cut out and was tempted to hit the floor of the car, but the explosion occurred within a second or two of the time the motor stopped. People around me seemed quite afraid, but it happened too fast for me to be afraid beforehand, and afterwards there was nothing to fear.

Well, my own, this is the 5th page of hodge-podge. Our medical work has remained quite light, so I take time out for letters, and now plan to take a much needed shower and haircut.

I have been asked to coach the basketball team—there's a league in town. I may turn it down, but probably not.

Love to you, Steve, and Nancy,

Always

Ben

PS Am sending a German helmet for Alan, a doll and wooden shoes for the kids.

[Page 3 of unknown letter; I place it in November of 1944 because of the comment on the Republican presidential candidate, Thomas Dewey.]

I sure must have impressed the Schweitzer's or else they are just being nice – paying me such high compliments. I still wear the PJs that Manny gave me. I'm impressed that Mark Saudground turned out so nice. I note your sarcasm in discussing the votes cast for Dewey by our Indianapolis friends with amusement, and no surprise. Do you remember Mark Cohn and his wife at our house on election day in 1936? *[The only name I know here is that of dad's medical colleague, Manny Levin.]*

Mamie Blatt's untimely death from cancer was not too much of a surprise because when I was last in Indianapolis she had uterine bleeding for which they might give her X-ray and I suspected cancer of the uterus then. It apparently spread to the bone. Ebner I learned made 2 parachute jumps, one on D-Day and a second in Holland. Both of these were costly to the paratroopers and Ebner must have had quite a time. I hear he is back in Indianapolis on leave. I'll try to write Henry Blatt, but I haven't his address. *[Again, names unknown.]*

Morty's connections at the University are swell, and I think his fortune is made, because once people know him, they like him; furthermore he's a pretty clever tactician and an excellent doctor. *[Morty and Carol Mann were close Indianapolis friends and remained so after the war.]*

I knew you'd order a meal on the train, because you're always talking about eating on trains. For the life of me, I've never been able to understand what you get such a kick out of in these train meals. I'd much sooner eat at Lerman's! But everyone to his own tastes. *[Lerman's, a modest downtown Cincinnati restaurant, opened in 1932 and took out an advertisement in the 1958 Walnut Hills High School yearbook but I don't think it lasted much longer than that.]*

I'm not surprised that the Dale's split up. He's a fraud and a philanderer and she's sweet, homely, and not bright. It looks like our marriage should remain permanent on this basis, since at least I'm not a fraud, and no one could call you homely. Milt and Pauline never did impress me as be-

ing too happy, but I think that they've gone on too long together for it to be very serious. [*I don't know them either.*]

I don't recall a psychiatrist from Billings named Herbert Dash, but you must recall my penchant for forgetting names. Ingersoll goes to great lengths to remember names, just as you used to do in Indianapolis and Tulsa. I find some people and names are better forgotten.

Your letter states that you start out discussing life and wind up writing about your children's BMs, but ...

[REST MISSING]

19 Nov 44
[Liège]

Dearest Gin:

Well, all hell has popped loose for the past few days but I've managed to sneak time enough to write you this note. I've gotten 5 and 6 hours sleep in the past few days, but we have kept going almost all the clock round. It's not as busy as at Wimborne but we aren't able to work as fast here due to a shortage of litter bearers. But we're getting some pressures of war shortly, so things should really begin to hum.

We've had several very interesting cases but the casualties so far are not as severe as after D-Day. We are getting them as early as 3 hours after their wounds and before they've been to other hospitals. They stay here until they have had operative treatment, and then are evacuated by train and by air to the rear. We manage to keep well ahead of surgery, but unfortunately the surgical dept. (i.e. the Operating Room) is still lacking in organization and there is much confusion there. I hope they iron this out, because it's a helluva nuisance to have to root around the darkroom for films that surgery decides suddenly to operate. If they'd work on a schedule and keep me notified, it would save everyone a helluva lot of grief.

24 hours later

We got very busy and I haven't had a chance to get back to you dear, but here I am finally.

Surgery is working better, so while we're busy, we don't have to stop so often to look for films for surgery. Furthermore we've now got a system of locating films in the dark room and drier.

Also, beginning tomorrow we'll have 8 prisoners of war carrying litters. This litter bearing has been a real bottleneck since we don't have elevators and our place is quite large. Today we expanded our number of beds by 50% which makes us quite a sizeable institution (twice as big as the CGH).

The day of our first scheduled X-ray meeting was the day we first got busy, so to my regret we had to call the meeting off and for the time being it seems unwise to have them. The officers' club is going along very nicely and we've been paid many compliments. Al Blanket makes a wonderful manager, too, and deserves most of the credit. I've been lax in my part of the duties since my time is pretty well filled.

I might put in a few words about the buzz bombs. It's a funny feeling to hear the motor in the distance, slowly increasing as it approaches and very loud as it passes over. Flames shoot out the rear end for a good distance and they fly at a helluva fast clip and fairly low. At night the flame of the exhaust can be seen at quite some distance. The sound increases for a time after it has passed over, and then slowly fades off. They can be heard for a long time after they are out of sight.

When they are about to stop, the motor starts to miss, then stops. A large flash accompanied by a sound is seen a few seconds later, then anywhere from 1 to 10 seconds later (this time seems to vary with the degree of my excitement) kerpoom! In the daytime a smoke plume rises at the site about 10-15 seconds afterwards. At night flames can sometimes be seen.

They run in the same general direction, surprising as far as military targets are concerned, but usually land within a mile of each other. It seems so utterly wanton and malicious to shoot these over, as the civilians are really the ones that suffer. Casualties seem very light, but property destruction must be pretty heavy. It's just like those bastards to utilize warfare of this type. It's really hard to believe, but I've found most of the so-called propaganda stories to be unequivocally true.

The buzz bombs have given me a slightly squeamish feeling, which I suppose to be akin to fear. When I hear that motor, I either go to the window (daytime) or outside to the door (at night) to look. And I really give it my undivided attention, listening to that motor. When the motor is loud and sputters, I get indoors and when it kicks off at a time like that, I duck—and mean duck. It gives you enough warning to get to safety.

Tomorrow night I'm going to try to get away to see and hear *Traviata*, put on by a Brussels company. I hope nothing prevents me. I've got nice

seats and I'm taking 3 nurses (but they insisted on paying their own way, thank goodness). Seats are 65 francs (\$1.50).

Well, my love—that's all for now. I'll read my nightly *P.M.* and then to bed at 12 (in the dept.).

No mail for 5 days and no pkgs. for two weeks. I've still only received 2 of the 10+ that you sent.

All my love to you and the kids.

Your gray-haired hubby.

24 Nov 44
[Liège]

Dearest:

Well, here I am again after 3 days (I think) still very busy. I've been working alone for 2 days, since I sent Manny out for some X-ray equipment—captured German stuff—some distance away. He called yesterday and said he was delayed by a truck breakdown and by the fact he couldn't find the tube for the X-ray machine.

The buzz bombs (V1 and maybe V2) are about some, lately, and I've had opportunity to see them in the air, going down, and the effects from them. [*The V-2 was the world's first long-range guided ballistic missile, 45 feet long, weighing 27,600 lbs., with a warhead of 2,200 lbs., first used against the allies in September 1944.*] It is quite nerve-racking when you hear that [V-1] motor cut out, I assure you, and the people in town are very upset and afraid. It is one of the dirtiest pieces of warfare you can imagine, since it is totally indiscriminate. There is practically no opportunity to hit any important military objective; it is a wantonly and unforgivably cruel weapon to use. I'm beginning to really hate the bastards who would resort to its use, and now understand the desire of the Londoners to get revenge on the Germans. They are quite devastating in effect and a lucky hit probably kills a lot of civilians and maims a lot more. There have been few or no military casualties so far.

The other night I went into town to see and hear *Traviata*. It was very delightful, and the baritone was top-notch while the tenor and soprano were real good, but not any better than some I've hear at the zoo. [*The Cincinnati Opera performed outdoors at the Zoo Pavilion from 1920 to 1971.*] It's apparently one of the best opera groups in Belgium, and *Traviata* is one of

the most beautiful of Verdi's operas, so I had a swell time. The two nurses I took along with me were new to opera, and were delighted no end.

We had a delicious Thanksgiving dinner yesterday—turkey and all the trimmings. Everything was delicious and I made the usual glutton of myself, both at dinner and at supper.

This week Murray Rich from Cincy popped in on us here. He's with the 25th General and says they are moving down this way soon, in fact their equipment for their new hospital is stored right on our post, and Murray lives in our quarters. He says an advance party is supposed to come to our post sometime during the next week. I hope Dave and Red are with them.

I'll have to quit now, dearest.

All my love to you and the kids.

Ben

26 Nov 44
[Liège]

Hello, my sweet:

Well, mail is still slow, and so far, no packages. I'm drooling for some tasty foods, but it seems as if they just won't get here. Furthermore, I sure would like to get those movies of the kids.

I am again a pipe smoker with an occasional cigar in my more virile moments, due to the shortage of cigarettes here. The cigs are going to the front lines, which is as it should be, except that the wounded soldiers should be entitled to them as well. The Red Cross supplies them, but not very abundantly and while I could pick up cigarettes in this fashion, I wouldn't resort to such a cheap practice as stealing from the wounded. We received no cigarettes last week and expect about 2 pkgs. per week for the future. So how about sending me some cartons of cigarettes? I understand there's a run on them in the states so if it's too tough to get them, I can continue to smoke a pipe. Don't get them on the black market and don't let anyone give you any of his personal supply (eg. Irv) because I can do very well as is.

We have seen some buzz bombs close up and you really can't imagine how impressive and eerie they can be. When one of those babies starts diving, it really moves and the watcher is sure glad to be somewhere else. They aren't the block-busters I imagined them to be, but can do enough

damage. The biggest danger seems to be flying glass, except of course for those in the line of the direct hit, for whom there is little chance of survival. One GI is supposed to have been lying flat, 10 feet from where it hit, and the blast went over him, so he was unscathed, but I am inclined to doubt this tale. At another place they blasted a wall down 24 hrs. after a buzz bomb hit a place, because it was threatening to fall. Out walked a trapped GI, unhurt! Even if it may not have happened, it's a good story.

Not so long ago they struck a general hospital, breaking almost every window in the place, killing 10 or 15 civilian personnel and 1 officer, and injuring quite a number of patients and corpsmen. We took care of the casualties, and since then have had quite a little more respect for the diabolic things. That was some morning, I assure you!

Since that time, I have been deliberately working the tails off our German prisoners. They put in a 12 hour day and I see to it that they don't sit around. This is not sadism, or an exaggerated feeling of hatred for the enemy engendered by the recent events, altho the latter may enter into it. But there is lots of work to do, many patients to haul to X-ray, and I feel quite sure many of these young Germans must be real Nazis. So I have overcome my natural tendency to be a softie, and made them toe the mark.

They are very military, snapping to attention every time I pass, following orders of non-coms (their own and ours) as though they were given by a General, working very hard and vigorously. In their presence, I treat my own men as I always have, and I'm sure they are quite surprised. They have an obvious respect for the efficiency and smoothness with which the department functions, and I'd like to show them that there are other ways to get things done than the one to which they've accustomed themselves. Openly, I have ignored them completely, altho I have been watching them closely from the corner of my eye. I never give them an order, altho I am the only one in the dept. who can speak German. My orders always are given thru one of my men. (By the way, I find I can speak and understand German surprisingly well, enough to get by on. And my French is coming along pretty well, too—so I can buy anything in the stores and discuss things in general, a little bit slowly, I'll admit). To answer some of your recent letters:

I am a little abashed by your anemia. But apparently you came by it honestly. Both your mother and Sel have it. I don't think your diet at home is varied enough, and suggest you see that Steve and Nan keep eating a varied diet and get all their vitamins. You seem to be in the hands of a good Doc. Stick with her.

Your mother's high BP shouldn't prevent her from walking. It's more likely due to the sedative she's taking. I hope she's not going to Hahn. And I don't know of any shots which would help her high blood pressure. How about you taking her to your Dr? Give me more details—what doctor she is going to etc.

I ordered your Xmas gift by photograph, from a catalogue in the Px.

Did you get my 2nd money order? And please acknowledge any pkgs. you receive from me. What about Nancy's and Steve's Xmas gifts. I sent them the same time I sent the luggage. So far I've sent you 2 money orders on Aug. 3 - one for \$100 and 1 for \$16. On Sept. 3, I sent \$75 thru WD Finance Dept. In October, I didn't send anything. On or about Nov. 1st you should have received the increased allotment pay of \$60 more.

I'm glad you liked the luggage, dearest. May you travel a lot with it!

And I'm likewise pleased that you and Steve enjoyed your trip to Indpls. Didn't Nancy go with you? I certainly missed all the pre-election radio "goings-on," but felt very confident FDR would win. Too bad Wallace wasn't his running mate isn't it.

I have no objection to Al Segal printing any of my letters, but would like to have a copy of the article sent me by you, via 1st class mail.

I get along without my dress clothes very nicely, since we are only wearing class B uniform (OD shirt, trousers, field jacket, high topped shoes with leggings or combat shoes). I will get compensation for my lost belongings, after putting in a claim.

Tell Soph that I'd like some nuts, packed so they get here fresh. (She asked me to request something in a recent letter).

Tell Sel I received her letter of Nov. 8 and enjoyed it very much. It was really a morale builder, especially the part about the kids. She certainly makes me proud of them.

It just occurs to me who Dr. Schneider is. I think she was a student in Path[ology] when I was an instructor, and she's not so hot! But her diagnosis and treatment seems pretty intelligent, so follow her advice, dear.

Got a kick out of Lee Goldman's substitute for knitting needles and watches in your ear. [*Leon Goldman was a Cincinnati colleague (and a funny guy); he performed the world's first laser surgery in 1962 – removing a tattoo.*]

All my love to the 3 of you dearest.

I miss you ever so much.
Please send more photos.
Ben.

30 Nov 44
[Liège]

Hello darling:

Your mail is coming thru now, but still no pkgs. I drool whenever I think of the things on the way but I'd be willing lose all the pkgs, if those movies would get here.

Guess what—the 25th General is now here in town! In fact, 4 officers—Jimmy Mack, Connie Baker (remember the guy with a lot of kids and dogs in Indpls), Eddy White, and Henry Lee, both of whom I knew well in Cincy—have come to our outfit on detached service with 40 nurses. Dave Graller and Herm Nimitz were out to see me yesterday.

Gosh, it's good to see all these guys again. I plan on taking Dave out for a steak dinner, shortly—a few days I hope. He was supposed to come out here tonight, but can't get a vehicle. Actually he could come by street car, but he's over at the other end of town.

The 32nd General is also on its way. Only ½ of the 25th have arrived so far and Red Elsey's in the other half. He will get here in the next day or two.

They all seemed awfully glad to see me and think our setup is wonderful. However, they don't seem to like our buzz bombs—imagine that!

These buzzers are really something! They make strong men quake and weak men wet their pants. Since I have a surplus of pants, I'm doing alright.

It's strange but even patients wounded in action, just fresh from the front, tell me that they're more terrified of these robots than they are in no man's land. They say that when the shelling gets heavy there, they stay in their foxholes, but here they have to walk around or lie helplessly in bed.

Serious casualties from a bomb of this type are relatively light, but property damage can be pretty heavy. It doesn't create the devastation that I imagined, but it can flatten a number of small houses. A helluva lot of glass gets broken, too.

The people in town are pretty scared when one cuts off and “tear tail” for the shelters. The Americans have organized rescue squads etc. on the order of that used in London, and this is quite effective. The people here are not nearly the stoics that the British are and do not try to hide their fear.

Our outfit has shown little nervousness, on the whole, altho the C.O. is obviously terrified. Our Catholic Chaplain has a sign up saying that he will give absolution for each buzz bomb that comes over, so that a true and good Catholic can say a quick prayer when he hears a flying bomb, thus becoming immune. However, he must not sin, or the absolution won't do any good. I wonder how many of the buzz bombs are Catholics, and would a Protestant buzz bomb (there can be no Jewish ones) spare a Catholic who has been absolved?

I'm starting a ping pong tournament next week at the club, and interest seems to be running pretty high. I beat Manny Levin last night, making 3 times in a row and am at present the heavy favorite! Tsk, tsk.

Al Blanket has been ailing lately. Yesterday he was feeling better and came over to shave (my dept. with its sink, hot water, mirror, and shaving utensils is the shaving center of the hospital. In fact Jimmy Mack and Connie Baker are now shaving). While he was here I decided to take a chest plate on him. Lo and behold, he had extensive atypical pneumonia! So he's in the hospital and I'm now acting as club manager (small honor).

We're now doing photography printing, developing, and enlarging for the hospital. We invested over \$100, fixed up a darkroom in the basement, and business is really beginning to get good. We're charging more now than we did in England, so should get our investment back before long, unless we move again. So far, we have had no rumors of any sort about moving, and I fervently hope we stay here for the winter.

Weather here is a little brusque at times, but for the most part it's a little warmer than Cincy so far. We had one very light snow; at yet I'm wearing only my field jacket. Probably I'll be wearing my overcoat in one month.

Later: tonight Jimmy Mack stayed out here and we played ping pong, drank, talked, ate some buttered toast and coffee, and had a helluva good time. He's really a swell guy and very friendly. He graduated from Med School in '33 and was one of the few Jewish boys who started and finished a residency in Surgery at the General. He was related to Judge Mack, Dr. Alfred Friedlander, etc.

Tonight I am taking Dave out for a steak dinner if we can find a place to eat it. So at last, I'm in home company.

That's all for now, my love.

Kiss and hug yourself, Nan, and Steve,
pour papa,
Ben

Dec. 5th, 1944
[Liège]

I've been so busy lately that it's 3 days since I wrote you. We've had lots of work and lots of visitors, including men from the 25th. Charlie Ingersoll, X-ray man from the 32nd, is now in town but I think they will set up in the next city east of us. That place has been battered to hell and I don't envy them in the least.

Charley is the same old sarcastic, aggressive, smart fellow but it adds to his charms. He never pulls any punches. He made some good (and some poor) suggestions and differed with me on a case. The next day they tapped the chest on this case and found fluid proving me right. Wait until Charley hears of that! I expect Red Elsey to drop in any day now.

I've had some nice experiences in eating lately. I met Dave in town 3 days ago and after getting on the wrong street car and getting lost we finally found the eating place I had in mind and had an excellent steak with French fries, delicious salad and wine. We had a swell time and Dave seems in good health and spirits.

Sunday, Hulse, Bloom and I went walking. Hulse is really a brilliant guy and since he speaks French well (he has lived in France for several years and practiced in Tunis for a while before coming to America) has gained an accurate insight into the Belgian political situation. It seems that when the Belgians capitulated without warning the Allies, it was at King Leopold's insistence. Pierlot, the prime minister, had maintained before the war, that if the Belgians did not prepare, the Nazis would not overrun the country but this technic didn't appeal to the people after Chamberlain said that the Rhine was the British front (meaning they would stand by Belgium). Pierlot tried to get Leopold to leave for England with him, but when Leopold refused to leave his troops, Pierlot denounced him as a pro-Nazi publicly, over the radio, both in Belgium and after he fled, in Britain. Pierlot, a

Catholic of the right wing, was nominally in charge of the Belgian govt. in England but the resistance movement was really run by the communists and socialists. In the meantime, Leopold did NOT collaborate. His wife was killed in an “auto accident” but many believe it was another *Great American Tragedy* since Leopold was along with her at the time. [Reference must be to Theodore Dreiser’s 1925 novel, *An American Tragedy*; in the 1951 movie version (*A Place in the Sun*), it was a boat accident involving Montgomery Clift and a pregnant Shelley Winters.] King Albert, who was supposed to have fallen while mountain climbing, may also have been assassinated; no one knows. At any rate, Leopold now married his sweetheart, by whom he had already had 3 children. She is supposed to be a collaborationist, but he had already maintained that he was a captured commander of the Army and refused to take any part in the Nazification of Belgium. He is not too popular today but his attitude towards the Germans has improved his situation with the people.

The collaborators were composed of several groups:

1. The civil servants (under-secretaries of state, etc., are all civil servants who now maintain that Pierlot told them to keep the country alive by any means possible).
2. The poor guys who had to eat and saw this method of feeding themselves and families—they wore the uniforms.
3. The wealthy manufacturers who made parts for the German war machine.

Group 1 are being tried today. Group 2 are getting it in the neck, long prison sentences, death penalties, etc. Group 3 is now working for the Allies—they maintained the only way to keep the people alive was to keep the factories going. They were not even arrested! Isn’t it always the case—the little crook gets it in the neck, the big one goes scot free.

Since the Allies have taken over, Pierlot has returned as prime minister. One of his cabinet members (I forget his name), a left wing democrat who has been very active in the Underground movements, has resigned because of Pierlot’s active anti-left policies, and the socialists and communists have marched and demonstrated in Brussels. They have been fired upon and the Americans have taken all weapons away from the F.I. (mostly socialists and communist sponsored), so it looks like we’ll continue to have a reactionary Belgium! [*The Front de l’Indépendance was a Belgian resistance movement.*]

We (Hulse, Bloom and I) had a most wonderful, though expensive meal (\$5) at a Belgian restaurant: beautiful service and wonderful food and wine. We began with fair soup (as much as we wanted), hors d'oeuvres in 8 separate dishes including hard-boiled eggs with cream sauce, tomatoes with delicious mayonnaise sauce, tuna salad, French salami, shredded celery with cheese and sauce, etc.—as much as I could eat. Next came the main course: partridge with applesauce and French fries. Then an apple tart; then coffee with whipped cream (French coffee). Not bad.

Our programs at the club have been really clicking. This week we are starting a ping pong tournament. Last Saturday night I got 2 of the enlisted men, a swell swing pianist and a fair cornet, and they played to a big turnout, who listened and danced. Everyone, including myself, enjoyed it. Last night (Monday) I had Sgt. Mischa Slatkin, who played with the Indianapolis Symphony before entering the service and now works in our dental clinic, entertain us with a cello concert with one of the Red Cross workers accompanying him on the piano. We had a turnout of about 30 officers and nurses and everyone enjoyed it immensely. They didn't want him to stop! He cleverly played a number of more popular classics—e.g. Schumann's *Traumerei*, Schubert's *Serenade* and *Ave Maria*, a Boccherini number and a Bach concerto and Mendelsohn's *Spring Song*. The reception was really beyond all expectation and we received a lot of praise.

Incidentally, our friends in town, the musical Breyeres, to whom we introduced Mischa, were instrumental in getting him the use, gratis, of a cello as long as he is here. A musical instrument store owner said he wouldn't take money from an American musician.

We hope to get Mischa into the City Symphony here. He is an excellent musician. He played in the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra when we were stationed there.

Everyone tells me what a rotten dental assistant he is, but he is tops with the cello, which is after all his own choice.

Still no packages. Edith asked me to request anchovies, sardines and other canned goods which she has, so you may consider the above as such a request. No cigarettes or tobacco here and it's awful. Dave gave me some pipe tobacco and I still have half a pack but I don't know what I'll do when that runs out. Other outfits seem to be getting some rations, but as I told you before, our Px officer isn't on the ball.

Well, dearest, here's 4 pages, so I better stop for now. Your letters are coming in pretty good, so keep writing.

All my love to you and the kids.

Ben.

Dec. 9th, 1944
[Liège]

Dear Gin:

If this letter looks funny at the beginning, please forgive me as I am writing with my dark glasses in preparing my eyes for fluoroscopy.

Little has been happening here. The buzz bombs have been leaving us strictly alone lately and I haven't seen or heard one for the past week. I looked over the town a few days ago, and it seems surprisingly little damaged considering the number of those instruments of destruction that dropped in. But there's no question about the results if one of these hits nearby.

I have restricted my 2 cute but rambunctious technicians, Willard and Perella, for 2 weeks for goldbricking and a hangover lasting 3 days during which they were so sick they could hardly work. So they have christened me Simon Legree (or Maggie Miller—former chief nurse) and have told all my friends to tease me about it, which they do. They also go around acting like the Georgia chain gang and will come in the office, ask me for the key [to *the*] ball and chain so that they can go to the latrine, as both of them can't fit in the latrine at the same time.

The best part of it, though, is that, once they realized I meant business, they really have started to work hard. It has really been a lot of fun, too.

I have been working on my scientific photographs the past few nights and I certainly have a nice collection. I give copies to various other docs here, and they seem very appreciative.

Well, now that I've got my glasses off, I realize the above writing is better than my usual. Wait a minute—I'm going to put the glasses back on.

A couple of days ago, I got a call from Dave Engel, of the 32nd General, who also was at Ft. Harrison for a while. He invited Dave Graller and me to a dinner party at their quarters, a nice hotel in town. We had an excellent steak dinner and I re-met some of my old acquaintances of the 32nd. It seems they have lost a lot of their original personnel, Kwitney, Fouts, etc. all thru transfer. We had an excellent GI steak dinner, plenty to drink and a

hilarious time was had by all. They were all very friendly, too. Charley Ingersoll was there, and it was fun getting tight with him.

The 25th has lost 2 officers, killed by vehicles. The only one I knew was a fellow named Saler, a brilliant pathologist who was a violent anti-Semite (God or the devil rest his soul) according to Dave and Red Elsey. Schiro has been transferred (as has Jack Wright, as you know).

Red Elsey was out here 2 days ago and it sure was fun to see the fat slob (we each weigh exactly the same—192 with clothes). He thought my set-up was very fine and we had a swell chat about nothing in particular.

We finally got some tobacco rations. I was really begging cigarettes on pipe tobacco for a while and Dave Graller saved my life with a couple of cans of tobacco and pkgs of cigarettes. Also Henry Lee gave me a carton.

Still no packages, moving pictures, etc. I get some letters from you (not enough), about one a week from Soph, 1 or 2 a week from Walt and an occasional one from Edie and Chip. You have been forwarding Leo's letters, so I keep pretty well posted. My *P.M.s*, *Lifes*, and *Israelites* come in spurts.

I just finished *Freedom Road*, [a 1944 novel] by Howard Fast, a powerfully exciting though tragic historical novel of post civil war days, which you must read. I plan to start [Louis] Adamic's *My Native Land* (about Yugoslavia) tonight. [Adamic was a left-wing writer born in Slovenia.]

I see where Chippy is now a Fellow of the American College of Physicians—which is a very fine and important honor. He is so modest about things; he very casually mentioned it in his last letter.

Edie asked me to request some canned goods, which I do herewith: sardines, anchovies, etc. (I may have put this in a previous letter). Louise asked me to tell her what I would like but since 15 or more packages are on the way and since they're a long time in transit, I hesitate to put her to the trouble. Incidentally, I received a swell letter from her today. She's a swell guy, do you know? If she insists, write her that canned mushrooms or canned chicken, a variety of cheese, etc. would be excellent. Nuts are always welcome but unless packed airtight are usually stale. Come to think of it, you might have to forward part of this letter to her.

12 Dec 44
[Liège]

Hello darling:

Well, it's a great and memorable day today. Two lovely pkgs. received, the first in ages. One was from you and contained delicious home-made cookies—slightly crumbled, but still delicious—and a fruit cake. The other was from Sel and contained peanuts, salted with shells, and mixed walnuts and cashews—delish! Also a sweet card from my sweet sister in law. The nuts, packed in cans, were exceedingly fresh—it makes a tremendous difference in their quality and taste if they are packed thus. All in all, the whole dept. gorged on the nuts and cookies, so that tonight we have only fruit cake left. And I feel so much better to be on the contributing end especially when Manny is concerned. He has the bad taste, sometime, of not wanting or liking what I receive and therefore not eating it but I go strongly for what he gets, and consequently, when I finally have a chance to repay him and he turns up his nose, it is really maddening. However, you should have seen him go for the cookies and nuts—it was wonderful! And don't think I was very far behind him, either.

Don't get the impression we aren't eating well, here, darling. We had steak and chocolate cake last night and chicken tonight. And any time I get real hungry, I can go in town and have a banquet meal at the restaurant I wrote you about. And every evening we have buttered toast and one delicacy or another at about 10 P.M.! It's come to the point where I just drink coffee for breakfast to control my waistline. I get no physical exercise at all since the basketball idea has fallen thru here and find I weigh 192 with clothes (about 185 in the raw). Don't get alarmed though. I've always weighed this—at least for the past 10 years.

The buzz bombs are seen very seldom nowadays, and I ain't complaining. Some of the V2 variety are supposed to have hit around here, but of course you can't expect to see these as they travel very rapidly, faster than sound, and so they are past you before you can hear them.

The cigarette shortage is apparently improving and we are again getting 5 pkg per week.

With my pipe and 5 extra pkgs. from one of my non-smoking men (I give him my candy rations in return), I am managing nicely.

We have lost a few of our officers in trades with frontline installations on a rotation plan. This is very fair, and our new officers seem very nice. One of them was over here on D-Day and he is certainly entitled to get into a General Hospital. Apparently none of the specialists are being sent forward, however. There's no question but that the safest and most comfort-

able spot in the Army is the General Hospital and I should really never complain, because this war is really a lark for us here. Sure, we work hard at times, but we really have it easy compared to the men forward. All we miss here is our families.

We get pretty good first hand info about what goes on at the front thru our "X-ray Shower Service." This consists of inquiring of every officer (and many enlisted men) who come thru here as outpatients for X-rays—and there are many—if they wouldn't like to take a shower. We supply them with towel, soap, and escort them to the shower room and if they wish, lend them shaving equipment and let them shave at the sink and mirror in my office. We also see that they eat at our mess if it is around meal time.

Some of these poor guys haven't had baths for 3 to 4 weeks and haven't shaved for a week. And do they grab at the opportunity. One captain has become a regular customer coming in about every 10 days with 3 or 4 other officers directly from the fighting.

A tank officer with a very slight wound in the eyelid told us that he was a platoon commander in a group of 24 tanks that went into a town. They were told that it would take them about an hour to take the town. As they pulled into the town, everything was quiet. Then, suddenly all hell broke loose and in 30 sec, ½ the tanks were knocked out. The rest got out of there in a helluva hurry. Now he is company commander, since he is the only officer left!

Medical men: battalion and regimental surgeons, collecting and cleaning station officers etc., sometimes bring their patients here personally. These, too, get the benefit of our X-ray S.S. [*shower service*] and are invited to sit down and look at films with us. I usually also pull out my slides and show them some of the cases. Since most of the docs in General Hospitals treat them in a more or less supercilious manner, they are quite surprised and pleased no end. Several of them have commented on the difference and it is certainly heartwarming to see how grateful they are for the few professional tidbits we can give them. But Manny and I feel that it's the least we can do.

Whenever we have an Engineer Officer, Manny asks him to bring us some paint or other item as construction for improving the dept., and if they come back, they usually bring the requested item with them. An artillery officer had brought us some shell casings and a qm [*quartermaster*] officer has taken them and made us an X-ray cone. [*Reference is apparently to a*

part on an old X-ray machine, but unclear why they needed to make their own.] So you see we also sometimes get something besides the pleasure.

Yesterday I beginning spent the day with the 25th G.H. at their schoolhouse quarters in town. I played bridge (poorly) all afternoon with Ed White, Dave G., and Harvey McCandless and lost 85 francs. Then I spent the early evening talking and drinking with Red, then we went to their Officers' "Club" and Dave, Jimmy Mack, Sander Goodman and some of the other fellows had some drinks and chewed the fat about old times. They were very hospitable—Dave even more so than usual. At about 11 P.M. I was really feeling good and they decided that I should stay there all night. So I called Manny, who signed me in at the gate (we aren't supposed to stay out overnight). We drank a little more, then I decided to go to bed. I went up to the bedroom, only to discover some strange guy in my bed. So I went back and got Dave, who accompanied me, and lo and behold, I had been at the wrong bedroom! Then I hung all my clothes on a hook; when I put my trousers up, the hook fell down and all the sleepers woke up. Then I kicked over a bottle of gin (it didn't break, thank god), knocked over an ash-tray, and got into bed. Then I tried to find a match to light my cigarette, got up again in the dark to try to light it in the stove. By this time everyone was ready to throw shoes at me, but I finally got to bed and came out this A.M. in the truck that brings the 25th nurses to our hospital (they are still on detached service here).

Red is still undecided about what he will do when he gets back, but would like to hold the [*Cincinnati*] General [*Hospital*] job and take over Holmes's hospital X-ray work. He tells me that Sidney Lange's nephew is running the General job now and is quite unpopular there; that Reineke looks in occasionally; that Bob Garber left the Good Sam and Jack Singer is now there, Bob being in Mansfield (?). Milt Stuecheli is in a group clinic in Detroit which doesn't have such a good reputation; and of course that Esther Marting is in Chicago. Charley Barrett is running the tumor clinic and helping in the X-ray dept.

The way it looks to me, I ought to be able to break into the tumor clinic set-up without too much difficulty, but probably without pay. I think Charley would always welcome me, since he is very unsure of himself and has in the past leaned very strongly on me. But, of course, you never can tell. Red thinks there will be plenty of room for me in Cincy.

He still feels very unsure of himself at times and believes he is not too popular or too highly thought of from a professional standpoint in the 25th. The former is definitely not true but there may be some truth in the second

statement. I'm crazy about that redhead! He's so honest and modest. He tries to think things out for the future, and like "Nippy [*a cartoon character always getting into trouble*]," he's often wrong.

Well, that's all for the nonce, dearest. I love you and miss you so much even when you threaten to return your \$375 carat in exchange for a \$1000 one—or should I say especially.

But you better keep that \$375 carat!!!

I'm so glad the kids are doing so well, now. Tell your mother I order her to be more cheerful and happy that the kids are with her and tell Sel thanks a lot for the pkg.

All my love

Ben.

16 Dec 44
[*Liège; the German counter-offensive known as the Battle of the Bulge began on this day*]

Dearest:

The big event of the day is the receipt of your letter telling me about the publication of my letter by Al Segal. You made it sound so terrible that I was really upset, and a little sore that you sent me the disconcerting news, but not the article itself. That evening one of the enlisted men in Pharmacy who is from Cincy called me and told me he had an article about me and was bringing it over. Of course I knew what it was, and I held my breath.

When I read over the article, I was quite surprised, as it was certainly innocuous and I think, well-done. That's the way Al Segal writes, a style pretty much his own, and I can't understand what my two sisters, Sophie and Edie, objected to in it. As a matter of fact I got a big kick out of it as did my men and officer friends. It never occurred to any of us, including the doctors among us, that anyone could object to my name being included. As to making me a Captain again, certainly that is excusable. So whatinhell is all the fuss about? I think you should call Al up at once and apologize to

him for your lack of judgment at first. [*Unclear what was in the article and what mom did “at first.”*]

Dr. Aronoff’s statement that it was cheap shouldn’t go unanswered. I don’t know him well, but dimly recall him as a short and fat kid. For him to snipe at me or mine behind my back is a rather scummy trick. Some of my colleagues here, when I mentioned what he had said, remarked “He should talk!” My only explanation for his reaction (after I read the article) is that he was a bit envious. Well, I won’t waste any more time or space on him.

Last night I went to a USO show in town and enjoyed it immensely. I was supposed to meet Danish in the lobby, but the bum didn’t show up, so I went in alone. They had an Army band, a very good comedian (Willie Something—a Jewish comedian from a big night club in Chicago), some very pretty girls (mmmm) and an excellent ventriloquist. In addition they had a 17 piece GI orchestra—tres bon. I’m getting to where I enjoy good hot music (just a little bit).

We are not nearly as busy as we were, running about 60 patients a day. The battle casualties aren’t so numerous, but our outpatient work has increased by leaps and bounds since the other general hospital (I wrote you about it) went out of business on account of robotitis. [*V-1s were referred to as robot bombs as well as buzz bombs.*] I hope you didn’t think it was us when you read about it in the papers (It was in *Stars and Stripes* so I imagine the US papers picked it up.) There were about 15 killed and 50 injured (not many seriously). The personnel, only, were affected, the patients fortunately being spared. They have set up again and are functioning in a new place, but are still pretty shaky, even though a month has passed by.

The bombs are still bursting but are much fewer in number and none near us, thank gawd!

We’re planning Xmas and New Year dances at the Club, and I am now proud possessor of 2 bottles of scotch and gin, accumulated reserve rations, so I can celebrate these holidays in proper style.

Monday night we had a discussion group meeting, entitled “And What of Russia,” led by Chap. Powell. As you might expect, we had a turnout of 12 (which is pretty good) but they all appeared to be confused liberals (except Hulse, who is not confused). Isn’t that always the case—none of the opposition ever turns up.

Hulse believes that at Tehran the British were given the Western European, Mediterranean, and Africa as their sphere of influence, Russia, Eastern Europe, and the Balkans, and the US, South America and the Pacific. [*From Nov. 28 to Dec. 1, 1943, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin met in Tehran, Iran, to discuss, among other things, post-war geography.*] That is why, he states, Russia has paid no official attention to the British attacks on the Greek Communists and Belgian liberals while they have been very interested in Yugoslavia, the British pulling out their backing of [*Dragoljub "Draja" Mikhailovich, [a Yugoslav Serb general, royalist, and anti-communist.]*] He claims it is the same old power politics, and I'm inclined to agree, though I hate the thought. Adamic in his "My Native Land" also points this out. You should read that book, it is very informative and very well-written—concerning a phase of the war of which few people are aware.

Well, dearest, I'll have to stop now—there's work to do. I hope you and the kids remain well and want you to keep writing about their daily doings.

All my love,

By the way, you can publish any more of my letters you see fit, but don't use my name anymore (I know it wasn't your fault). Once is enough. Thereafter, I don't think it would look right.

Ben.

20 Dec 44
[Liège]

Hello dearest:

This is bright and early on a very foggy Wednesday morning, with as yet, no Xmas spirit pervading the air.

I hope you're not too worried about the counter-offensive that's going on. [*This is the first letter after the Dec. 16 beginning of the Battle of the Bulge, the last German counter-offensive.*] I doubt if they will ever push back to my location, and, if so we'll have plenty of warning to get out. As I understand it our troops are stopping them, but the news is pretty meagre and what news we have consists of radio ("It is believed" etc.) and *Stars and Stripes* which doesn't seem to be very excited about it.

The counter-offensive didn't catch us unprepared. One of the Officers that comes here (the Lt. in the Tank Corps whom I wrote about in a previ-

ous letter) told us 2 weeks ago that they were expecting something big from the Germans. But we get so many rumors that we didn't pay much attention to him, despite the fact that he is anything but a sensationalist.

I'm enclosing a clipping from S&S, the truth of which I can vouch for since I spoke to several patients who were in this thing. One of them "played dead" between 2 wounded comrades. A Nazi kicked the one on his right who groaned. He shot him in the head. Then he kicked this fellow—who didn't move. He went on the man on his left, who also moved. He shot him thru the head. It was all very cold-blooded and deliberate, beginning when the men were rounded up and led onto a field with their officers. A German Officer took a pot shot with a pistol at close range at the C.O., a Lt. Col., killing him. This seemed to be a signal for the killing of all the officers, who were in a group together. The Nazis used them for targets, booing anyone who missed and cheering when a hit was obtained. Then they raked the men with machine gun fire. Many of the men hit the ground when they started to shoot, and those that acted dead and weren't "caught" survived, escaping later. Horrible isn't it! War is no pleasant business, you can be sure.

Our POWs, in some manner, have heard of the offensive and are a little cocky about it, smiling among themselves. We cure the cockiness by thrusting mops in their hands and making them work hard for their keep. One in particular (I wonder if he is SS stuff), a young kid of about 20, blonde and husky, seems to dominate the others. He may be a non-commissioned officer (Cpl or sergeant), I don't know. But when he passes the mop on to one of the others, my men give it back to him. He is quite surly and looking for trouble, which he no doubt will get if he keeps it up.

The buzz bombs are still buzzing around scaring hell out of everyone, but doing surprising little all-around damage. People have learned to keep away from glass when one is coming down and there is usually sufficient warning of this. The V-2 goes so fast it doesn't give you any warning; it travels faster than sound, according to *Stars and Stripes*, so it isn't heard until after it hits. If these start dropping around here, I'm going to stay away from glass all the time. We are supposed to have had a few, but this is merely conjecture.

Add to all the above, the increased air activity on the part of the Luftwaffe, with ack ack firing and flares being dropped at night, and you can see what a state our nerves are likely to be in. Actually, though, everyone is holding up well, and we kid about it a good deal. Personally, except for a few bad moments, I have not been on edge as I think the chances of any-

thing happening to me are extremely unlikely. Walt is in much more danger than I.

Speaking of Walt—I ran across a Capt. Prescott, who is here on detached service from the Italian front, and knows Walt's location. He is married to one of our nurses and flew up here. He volunteered to look Walt up for me. I hope he finds him.

To answer your previous letters: You sure are getting ambitions for me. Na, I'm still a Major and will no doubt remain one for the duration, despite the fact that my job calls for a Lt. Col. Me and da coinel ain't such hot friends.

I plan on sending you and Soph and the others some perfume if and when I can find some that is only exorbitant in price. Most is super-colossal now.

I don't mind Al Segal using the Jewish family story but tell him to call me Zilch or something.

Soph asked me to make a request for Hershey's—which I do here-with and wholeheartedly. I received a box of Fanny Farmer candy from her—it was excellent. I also received a box from you containing: toffee, crackers, sardines (2 cans), caviar, and gefilte fish—all tres, tres bon. Packages are now coming thru better, and if we don't change APOs or move, I think the mail service will improve greatly. They do a tremendous job, the APO.

By the way, if anything is cut out of my letters, please let me know, as I have no way of knowing if I have unwittingly broken censorship regulations otherwise.

Sel has some blood in her urine? Or is it stool? You ask, could it be piles. That's like looking up one's rectum to see if he has a sore throat!! Piles is rectal disease, blood in the urine is bladder or kidney disease. Send me all the details, please dear, and maybe I can get an idea of what she has. Tell her to see Carl Wyler for an examination.

Your and Bert's guess as to Dave's location is correct. I hope to see him again soon. [*Bert Graller was Dave's wife.*]

I have a letter dated Tues Nov 27 or 28 saying that your burns are OK except your thigh. Apparently there's a missing letter before this. I guess you've burned yourself, but how badly I can't tell. Please dear, when you make a reference of this sort (something that might disturb me) put all the details in each letter, as they seldom arrive in sequence. [*Possible reference to a small explosion which occurred at the bottom of our basement*

steps on Dickson Avenue as mom tried to re-light our gas furnace. I was sitting right next to her.]

All my love

Ben

P.S. The kids seem to be doing well. Gosh, there goes that lump in my throat!

Ben.

Dec 24, 44
[Liège]

Dearest:

This is a hectic time to write a letter, but it's the first break I've had and I'm going to make the best of it.

We've had the busiest spell of work since D-Day plus 10 [*the standard way of counting from June 6, 1944*], functioning again as an evacuation plus general hospital. As at that time, the men have been magnificent and the work is outstanding, despite the quantity and speed necessitated. Manny has also been tremendous help both in administration, sorting of films, and reading.

Yesterday was really an exciting day. We had several hundred X-ray examinations, including many emergencies. A large number of patients came in directly from the front (this new German offensive).

My men each had a task to do—2 on each of 2 machines, one at the desk, 2 in the darkroom, and one doing portable work. Henri was superb, carrying films from darkroom to drier and from drier to table, and carrying cassettes from X-ray room to darkroom and vice versa. Manny sorted the dry films, put them in the office, and I read them. Three teams of 4 prisoners each brought the litter cases in (the ambulatory and outpatients walk in).

With everyone working constantly, each man or team kept up with the rate of flow, so that at no time was anybody resting nor was anyone swamped. This, despite such complications as 5 fuses blowing (about 5 minutes stoppage per fuse); no heat in my office or reading room; water stopped running all afternoon and processing tanks therefore had to be re-filled by POWs two or three times and the developing time had to be in-

creased because of cold solutions; lights went out for a while; Docs coming in for films almost before they were made. I was really proud of the dept. and men!

Rumors have been flying thick and fast as to where the Germans are—particularly how close to us they are. The radio and *Stars and Stripes* are somewhat behind the times, admittedly about 48 hours, so we can only keep posted from what we hear from the patients—which is a very small part of the story. We have finally given up and started our rumor factory, to wit (1) 400 Jeeps flew overhead and dropped camouflaged airplanes filled with Americans in German uniforms. (2) A battleship is parked outside the back gate with a Jap Admiral in charge waiting to attack the Germans on whom the Japs just declared war. (3) General Eisenhower is coming in for a G.I. series tomorrow.

At odd times during the day and night officers and enlisted men come in and ask us the news (knowing we have a radio). When we tell them one or another of our homemade rumors, it seems to ease their tension appreciably. To top it off we did have to do an X-ray on a visiting general but only 1 star. It was an amusing incident which I shall tell you here.

At 1 PM I get a call from the Adjutant that said General was going to come for an X-ray, but he didn't know when. I was planning a trip to town, so grumbled a bit, then told Manny I was going anyway, since it was my first trip into town in about 2 wks. I got the POWs to wash the floor in our X-ray room, told the desk clerk to yell "Attention" when he came in, instructed Auger to call "achtung" to the POWs at the proper time, then was about to take off when the Adjutant called again and said the C.O. was bringing him up and just left Hq. So I was stuck. Apparently he was not simply a patient (we had X-rayed a two star that morning and no one even got excited about it) but a big shot or an inspector.

When I told the technicians he was only a brigadier, they said "What the hell's all the excitement about. Nothing under 3 stars excites us, and 3, 4, or 5 stars is important only when it refers to cognac."

At about this time the floor was a dirty mess and we had an emergency on the table. So this was a fine kettle of fish! I made things hum for a few minutes and the floor was just finished when the General popped in. Brooks yelled "attention" which scared hell out of him, I came out of my office and was introduced to him by our Colonel. In the background I could see the surgical wolves and vultures who gladhand all the rank, waiting to pounce on him when I finished.

I took him in my office, had him undress, hung up his clothes, and sirring the hell out of him while the Colonel was around. When the latter walked out, Manny and I kidded the General a bit about refusing to X-ray him without a written request. In the meantime our Col. had Brooks call up the Hq. to find out the General's middle initial because "He is very particular about getting his name right."

About time he was in a gown, the emergency was finished and I took him into the X-ray room where Auger broke his eardrums with an "Achtung" for the POWs. Lucky he wasn't here for coronary thrombosis.

Then Perella took him over. I told him what I wanted, and walked out. Later I learned Perella bossed the hell out of him. When the General started to suggest how to position him, Perella interrupted with, "Yes, general, I know," and went on about his business.

Meanwhile, the POWs didn't budge from their position of attention when the General said "At ease" but waiting until Sgt. Auger gave them "At ease." I guess that put him in his place.

When he finished, they brought him back to the office, where I was showing our C.O. some of the interesting films we've seen. I helped the General on with his clothes (the men later wiped the imaginary brown color off my nose and tried to silver polish my Major leaves. The Col. and General left together, impressed deeply (I hope) with our efficiency. In 10 minutes, I called the wet reading in (he had a trivial fracture) and then took off for town (I'll tell you about the town trip in my next letter).

We're seeing a good bit of ack ack these days but little bombing. I'll take a bombing anytime in preference to the robot. The latter give a much bigger psychological trauma and I've almost had to change pants more than once. I don't know which is the more dangerous to us, though I imagine indiscriminate bombing would be. I saw my first dogfights today, saw 4 planes shot down (1 of ours I know—we got the waist gunner as a Pt.—he had been hit in the chest by a cannon bullet but it had hit his pistol, deflected thru his shoe, and he parachuted safely from the burning and falling plane and walked in. He doesn't know what happened to his mates). Wow, the excitement!

Well, dear, I suppose you think I'm in real danger. Actually I have never, so far, even had a close call and I don't expect any in the future. Remember, this is still a general hospital—(by the way another General H. was hit by a robot—still not us if you read it in the papers—Say, maybe I

shouldn't have told you that, but I don't want you to think it happened to us).

Also, I take many precautions, and I sleep in about the safest place in the hospital. So don't worry unduly. I'm quite convinced the Germans won't get anywhere on our front.

All my love.

Ben—

P.S. Don't worry about this. If you do, I won't write about any of the excitement.

B.

P.P.S. I received a flock of pkgs in past week

1. Movies of the kids—excellent—I'm thrilled—more later—will forward to Walt as soon as I can get some enlargements made of some of the "stills."
2. A Channukah gift from Soph—a box of candy
3. A pkg from Irv—canned goods etc.
4. A pkg from Edie
5. A pkg from Sel.
6. A pkg from Wise Temple—a very nice Soldier's pkg
7. Two or three pkgs. from you containing various canned goods etc.

So much stuff came—all on 2 successive days—that I am unable to tell what was in which pkg. I've got "beaucoup pour manger," enough to start a grocery store and everything is delectable and tickles my palate immensely (and those around me). Thank everyone for me, my love, and yourself too. Merry Channukah and Happy New Year to my own wife and children and all the rest.

Ben.

Dec. 27th, 1944
[Liège]

Well, I'm very pleased to be writing this letter today. We are now immune to all harm (lightning never strikes twice in the same place, etc.). Yes, we are now the proud possessors of a scar de guerre. Well, enough of this

suspense. At about 7:45 p.m. last night, a buzz bomb decided to descend in our territory and did so without further ado, landing about 5 to 10 yards outside the admitting building. We suffered, miraculously, only about 10 casualties that amounted to anything, one serious—a patient, and one dead, a prisoner of war. Your husband didn't even get a scratch, so he can't put in for a Purple Heart as some of our trivially injured officers are doing.

Every window in the hospital was shattered, but the blackouts stopped most of the glass and only a score or two of us got even minor cuts and abrasions. Several of the personnel in the dispensary had to be dug out, but when finally extricated, they were not severely hurt, although scared stiff (as was everyone else).

My room, in which I haven't slept in over a month, was on the top floor, about 25 yards, without any obstruction, from the crater. It was really a shambles, plaster, glass, paper, etc., strewn all over everything, cupboards torn up, etc. It apparently was the worst of any quarters and I'm thankful I wasn't in it. However, my liquor bottle came thru undamaged, except where one of my good neighbors took a swig. Those in adjoining rooms got cut up a bit but none seriously.



Figure 19: "View from bomb crater – my room marked X" (appears to be top floor, corner room)



Figure 20: X in front of building marks the crater, arrow points to dad's unoccupied room. Demolished building on left is where Bloom and others were buried and then dug out.

Our Catholic Chaplain believes that his prayers or Godliness saved him—his office and the Chapel were completely demolished. But as Hulse quickly put in, I wonder what saved us infidels.

We are amazingly lucky to get by without any more casualties than we had, especially if you could see what it did to the Admissions Building. How those guys got out of there alive is beyond me. The captain who was going to look up Walt for me when he got back to Italy—he was visiting his

wife here, was under a desk when the walls and roof came down on him. He directed his rescuers by means of a flashlight. Apparently almost all of them had time to duck under their desks having heard the bomb and realizing it was going to be a close one.

Rescue work and first aid was amazingly efficient. The enlisted men came to their wards and departments or went to the damaged building immediately. Nurses went to their wards or helped on busier ones. Officers reported to the operating room or their departments. Litter bearers quickly brought casualties in and they were given plasma, X-rayed, and taken up to the O.R. which was by then all set up to treat them. Of course, I don't know how we would have behaved if more casualties had occurred, but I have reason to believe we would have kept our heads. I only saw 2 cases of near panic. One was the nurse whose husband was under the debris, and that is excusable. The other was our chief of surgery who had trivial lacerations of the scalp and hand and he behaved childishly. He seemed totally helpless and had to be helped around. He has been in bed all day today (in a safe place) and is being waited on hand and foot. Disgusting, isn't it?

My own personal experience was somewhat as follows: I was in the hallway near the X-ray dept. on the side of the building away from where the bomb hit. I was talking to one of the officers about a patient when I heard a crash followed by glass falling all over me and a blackout shade coming down over my shoulders. I (and the others around me) didn't hear the bomb at all. Strangely enough, I finished a sentence and what's more Rogers listened to it. Then we both realized what had happened and I started down the hall toward X-ray asking everyone along the way if he was hurt.

On arriving at X-ray, which is on the side of the building toward the bomb—about 100 yards from the crater—Manny was just coming outside the door, clutching his elbow, shaking like a leaf, and the color of an unripe pear. He was obviously excited and I grabbed him, looked at his arm and found it to be only a bruise. He cooled off quickly and his color came back. He had been thrown to the floor as had Auger, but both were o.k. The POWs were also scared, their green fatigues showing brown in certain places. Three patients, in the department at the time, were scared but relatively cool and unhurt. Graham, who was in the darkroom, was unhurt and quite blasé. I soon learned where the bomb had hit and figuring that we would probably be busy soon, I got the patients sent to their wards (they were ambulatory) then set the POWs to cleaning up the mess. What a

shambles! All the blackouts were down and there was glass and debris all over the place.

Fortunately the current and all the X-ray machines and accessories were undamaged. By this time, 5 minutes or less after the explosion, my men started to show up. I put them to work fixing the blackouts with blankets, beginning with the darkroom so it would be ready to work.

Then the chief of Surgery, still off his beam, came down and dispatched Manny with 4 POWs to the site of the accident, where they found they weren't needed and quickly returned.

In the meantime I took up a station in the front hall (just outside X-ray) and figured all I could do for the nonce was to be a traffic cop. There was quite a crowd of enlisted men in the hall, milling around excitedly, and wanting to help. Also there were some ambulatory patients, who were waiting evacuation when the bomb fell.

It is surprising (and rather amusing now) how people will obey orders in a time of excitement and also, how much they want to help. So your old man started giving orders—quietly, tho I was still plenty excited.

I sent the EM either to their wards or depts or to the bombed building, the patients into 1 of my X-ray rooms, leaving one patient in the hall to await the evacuation and tell the others. This cleared the hall out pretty well.

Only about 10 minutes must have elapsed, tho, it seemed like an hour, when the casualties began to come in. The sick ones I sent to A Block (which is for sick patients), the others I sent to other wards, including the POWs to the POW block. I didn't know whether beds were available on the wards but since there had just been an evacuation I took the chance.

It was a "funny" feeling to see friends walk or be carried in with blood all over them (an insignificant wound can simulate a serious one with a little bleeding).

When the officers and nurses started coming in, I sent them where I thought they would be needed, altho most of them didn't bother to ask, but went to their stations. One nurse, obviously quite excited, I sent to get me a broom to have the POWs sweep the hall. And she brought it back, too! By the time the casualties had finished coming in, X-ray was ready to function. I guess it wasn't more than a half hour after the bomb fell.

Many rumors had started, including men missing, fire, etc., and I was quite surprised when I learned that everyone was out with none dead ex-

cept the POW. When he was brought in, I thought he was dead, but didn't take any chances and sent him to the ward also.

When the excitement cleared I discovered we had only X-rayed 7 patients, 2 of whom didn't really need it, but thought they had glass in them so I X-rayed them just to ease their minds.

An amusing incident occurred during the excitement. Major Jabe Jackson, our Arkansas comedian, walked in with blood on his face; he knew he only had a little cut but his over-zealous friends had dragged him over for first aid. He wise-cracked going up the steps to surgery. One of the officers then told the corpsmen to clean and bandage him which he did. The surgeon then went into another room and sent a nurse back to give another major a shot of morphine in the vein. She came into the wrong room, saw Jabe and started to give him the morphine. When he refused, she insisted and they argued for five minutes, but she finally won. Well, Jabe got very weak and pale and faint from the shot and 2 medical officers, who came by, thought he was in shock, so despite his protests, they carried him down to the ward and put him to bed. They wanted to give him plasma, but his B.P. was good and he finally got them to listen to him. So today he is still a patient.

Today we have evacuated all our patients except those too ill to be moved and our own men, because the place is too cold at present, but I'm sure we'll go back in the business before long.

We are using old X-ray film instead of glass for windows and it works very well.

Well, darling, that's all for now. I assure you that I am o.k. and that the buzz bombs have let up, so don't worry too much.

P.S. Don't think from the above that I was as cool as a cucumber. I was plenty excited but didn't really have much time to be "scared" until afterwards.

Ben.

[Dad repeats this story in Humor in Medicine, reproduced in the Addendum below.]

Jan. 1st, 1945

Happiest of New Year's to you—only happier if we were reunited! It's only slightly over a year that we have been separated but it seems like a

decade. You know, there's nothing more important than being with one's family. I try to keep cheerful and distract myself by hard work and hard play, but my thoughts always return to our family. On holidays of all kinds everything becomes more acute and I'm now in a mood that will take a lot of coaxing to get me out of. Well, I'll fight it off by trying to write a cheerful, newsy letter.

In the first place, Zanly Edelson (remember him at Ft. Harrison—the tall partly bald young Jewish fellow from Portland, Ore.) has just joined our outfit. I believe I told you he landed by glider in the invasion of Holland a couple of months ago. This was his first glider ride—and he was copilot and would have to land it if anything happened to the pilot. They flew from England, 4 hours in the air including the channel, 15 to 30 minutes thru flak which hit their glider, seeing gliders and planes of their air invasion fleet shot down all around them, a crash landing in enemy country—but no one was injured in his group. They set up a small hospital and were terribly busy since the casualties were exceedingly heavy because contact with the British in this area was not made. He went thru 24 hr. artillery shelling of their hospital (a school building) which received more than 20 direct hits, yet only 2 POWs were killed and a few patients again wounded by shrapnel. However, everyone was scared to death. Also many air raids took place, they were cut off for a while, went without food for short periods and worked harder than hell. All in all, it was a harrowing and very exciting experience. He expects to find it tame as hell here, but he's in for a surprise what with the buzz bombs and air raids.

I just heard Beethoven's violin concerto on the radio—gosh it's beautiful! The radio certainly comes in handy. We just got our money back for the radio thru the photography profits. We paid for our photo equipment, all expenses, etc., and then closed up the photography dept. because of the many headaches entailed and because of the pressure of the X-ray work.

The news is again good, we're grateful to learn, and we are ABSOLUTELY in no danger of capture where we are, so I hope you aren't worrying. The buzz bombs are much fewer in number and we haven't had any close ones lately except for 1 dud.

Our broken windows are being blocked up by engineers and we're getting warm again.

Last night we had a New Year's party and anniversary—1 year in the E.T.O. I got pretty high, but not too much so. I took Zanly with me and we

had a lot of fun. I had to put one guy to bed and another had to be helped home but a good time was had by all.

Our Belgian family in town has moved to Brussels temporarily, the concerts are “finis” and the only shows are the American movies and an occasional USO. There are now several Red Cross places in town including an officers’ of all and he night club which I haven’t yet patronized.

I ran off the movies of the kids again and they were really thrilling to see. I could have shot Steve for bawling so much and when he finally stopped the film was too dark to see him! Then I got one of my amateur photographers to photograph and enlarge certain “stills” and so far we have some excellent pictures of Nancy. I don’t know yet what they can get from Steve’s pictures.

Today I went into town and bought a lot of perfume and toilet water intended for Sel, Louise, Soph, Helen, Evelyn, Roslyn, and Rosalyn. For Edie I have a very unusual gift: a pouppee (doll) made especially for her. It is dressed in the costume worn years ago only in this city—by female coal miners. They picked up the coals in the mines, put them in the basket then bent over the cars, emptying the coal in the coal cars. Our lady friend manager of the dept. store in town, Madame Caspar, when she learned what I was looking for, told me to leave it to her. She found she couldn’t buy one, so she had an old lady who makes dolls in an attic make it to order.

For yourself, I bought a pair of earrings (not precious stones) which I had Mrs. Caspar pick out for me. I hope you like them. Will you please send the perfume, etc., around to the various gals in the family.

Am just eating a tongue sandwich (can arrived here 2 days ago) with other things, crackers, etc. Today I got a package containing photo films, anchovy paste and anchovies, 2 boxes of rye crisp. The food is really swell. This tongue is marvellous. Send another sil vous plait. Peanut butter is nice. How about some canned soups, exotic kinds. One package a week is more than enough. How about Gruyere and other fancy cheese? Salami coated with paraffin comes thru very well. Also pickled herring.

[Undated]

Dear Steve:

I hope you are feeling well and happy. I wish I could see you now, because I miss you ever so much.

Mommy tells me what a big and good boy you are and it makes me very happy to know that. I am happy to know, too, that you are such a bright boy (ask Mommy what “bright” means) and that you love your sister, Nancy, and your daddy, Ben (and your mother, too). But I am sad that I can’t be with you like I used to be, and sad because I can’t play and sing with you. But, wait until I get home! We’ll go swimming, riding, and even fishing together, we’ll read and play games and be happy all the time.

I’m sorry I’m not a Colonel yet and won’t be one for a very long time.

Take care of Mommy and Nancy for me until I get back. With much love,

Your Daddy.

6 Jan. ‘45 [Liège]

Hello my love,

Well it looks like our side is on the upsurge again, and—barring some untoward and unprecedented Nazi weapon—I think we’ll do fine now. [*The official date for the end of the Battle of the Bulge is Jan. 25, 1945.*] The pressure is off our area, to our relief; even the buzz bombs are less frequent. I’m sorry you got such a scare about the break-through, but so did we. We heard so many rumors as to where the enemy was that we were quite at a loss as to what to believe. Many of these rumors proved true, so that without realizing it, we had a pretty idea of what was going on.

Our work has increased lately, but it will still be a couple of days before all 3 of our buildings are occupied. Two of them are now full, but the 3rd still has not had all its windows replaced (by composition board).

Red Elsey was up yesterday. They are still in town and not working, waiting for a place to set up. They are dodging buzz bombs, too, and quite bored with loafing, but stick pretty close to home. It’s funny (peculiar) how, when there is danger in the air, everyone stays close to “home.” It’s probably just as safe on the streets, but the mental comfort afforded by familiar surroundings makes the difference.

I enjoyed reading about Lou Kreindler. That makes 3 decorations for the West-End-Poor-Boys-Who-Became-Doctors: Meyer Margolis, Billy Kuhn, and Lou. They really came from poor families, especially Lou and Billy. Bill’s folks were destitute and receiving UJS agency support [*a Jewish welfare society*], while Lou was put thru school by his brother Mike, a bril-

liant, homely, somewhat unbalanced fellow Walt's age, who was one of the most generous and good-natured boys I have ever known. Mike slaved thru Engineering school on a co-op job, then worked for U.G. & E. [Sophie's typing – could be Cincinnati Gas & Electric] as an engineer, making enough to support his family and put his brother thru school (with help from the Council of J[ewish] W[omen]). When Lou was in Med School, Mike went on a visit to N.Y.C. and was found dead in a hotel room under mysterious circumstances. I have never learned the details. [*Dr. Kreindler named his first son "Michael"; I went to school with him from kindergarten through 12th grade.*]

This female Dr. Ransohoff whom you quote seems to be pretty much on the ball from the viewpoint of child psychology. Do as she says and I think it will benefit the kids. I appreciated Sel's letter in reply to the one I sent about the children. Sel, I think you are right up to a point. However, I think it is not only impossible but definitely unwise to devote all one's time to children. They become too dependent on others instead of developing the self-reliance which is so necessary later in life. Furthermore, if everything is too rosy for a child, when he finally leaves the domicile for school, it is often a terrific shock for him when he learns that he is no longer the center of attraction. I think Ginny probably could stay in a little more, but I doubt if she gads about as much as it sounds. Women are so prone to remember the times they go out and forget the less spectacular periods when they stayed at home. And don't think Nancy is too young to comprehend. No child is!

I am sorry to learn of your losing your beautiful eyelashes, but I guess they are already growing back by now. My god, honey, be careful. You're all I have, you know. [*Apparently another reference to the exploding furnace.*]

And don't worry about Belgian wenches! Congratulate Sel on her birthday (which I hadn't been aware of) and tell her that the perfume I am sending her with the other perfumes and toilet waters should be considered her special birthday gift.

Congratulate Elaine Bauman on her husband's decoration for me, s'il vous plait.

Tell Steve that a Jeep is out of the question until after the war. Then I'll get him a tank (but a swimming tank).

I pay about \$25 per month for food, about \$6 for Px supplies, about \$7 for laundry, and about \$5 for clothes, etc. I have not yet bought the clothes that I lost because we are not wearing Class A uniforms, and I have

a hunch my stuff will turn up, twice I got word that they “think” they have my bag in England.

Did Steve dictate the letter verbatim or are those your words? I would like so much to get a letter using only his words, without prompting, no matter how disconnected it is. He is so intelligent, isn't he? Gosh, how I miss those two youngsters.

Tell your mother to stick with Harry Salzer and stay away from Hahn. As for you, Goldman, Safer, and the lady Dr. Schneider are enough, wouldn't you say? I'm not so sure of Schneider and would prefer Carl Wyler. For the children, of course, Onreut is excellent. [*All Cincy docs.*]

The reason for my not giving direct orders to the POWs is that I am afraid I would be too soft, since by nature I'm not a bitter person. But my judgment tells me it is inadvisable to be easy-going with them, so I tell my more hard-boiled men what I want done and they tell the prisoners. They see how well the men and I get along, yet I act entirely unaware of their presence so they must assume (which I want them to) that I do not like them. This, in turn, (I hope) makes them feel that they are not liked because they are Nazis (which I assume they are because of their ages). But, dammit, they are so clean cut, so willing at work, so desirous of friendship, and so young—I can't help it, I like them!

[*Walter*] Winchell's statement regarding Stalin and Churchill playing power politics is not unjust. Stalin is doing so in Russia's defense and rightly so, because I see very little hope of a liberal future of this world outside of Russia. [*Winchell was a widely read gossip columnist.*] I read Dorothy Thompson's pre-election radio speech and it was a classic. I think very highly of her. [*She was an influential American journalist and radio broadcaster.*] I hold great hopes for [*Sydney*] Hillman's Political Action Committee and might even go so far as to say it is America's only remaining hope for future liberalism. [*Hillman was an American labor leader.*] It's one bright spot in a very dark background.

I'm glad you finally decided you liked my idea of a gift for Steve. At first I was hurt that you thought comics wouldn't do.

I am pleased that we have \$650 each in hand and plenty of bonds. How much in bonds do we actually have, final value?

Isn't the *Moldova Symphonic Poem* by Smetana wonderful! It will be great fun to listen to music together again, won't it, darling?

Joe Shafer went home, I hear, with a bad back. And I'm disgustingly healthy!

As for gifts for home, I will pick up what I can, but it's silly to buy presents for children over here. In the first place, they're very "cheesy" and in the second, they're much more expensive than in the States. Belgian lace, handmade, is famous over the world, but \$2 only buys 1 linen hanky with lace margins. Do you want something in lace at these prices?

As for story books for the kids, did you know they speak, read, write, and print only in French here?

The bracelet you received was a charm bracelet, I think, bought for me by Henri, our Belgian. Incidentally, we took up a collection of money and food (from pkgs.) for Henri and his family for Xmas. It was quite a nice present, including many things that they haven't had in years and quite a nice sum of cash. On New Year's Day, Henri called us into the technicians' room and there on the table was a bottle of cognac and glasses (see enclosed photo). We drank a toast or two or three, quite ceremoniously, and Henri was obviously thrilled with the seriousness with which we accepted his gift.

Please forward the 1944 yearbook to me.

Well that's all for now, my pet.

All my love and devotion as ever,

Ben

Tues. 9 Jan. '45
[Liège]

Hello Dearest:

I hope this finds you all in good health and good spirits. For myself, I had a little case of doldrums yesterday, for the usual reasons, but today I am once more my usual self because (1) I am too busy to be otherwise and (2) every film has been a masterpiece of art rather than an over-exposed moving picture of the part that I sometimes get on busy days. All my men know their jobs so well by now that there is very little commotion and no disintegration of service, no matter how busy we get. The only time we snafu is when the lights go off, the water doesn't come in, the X-ray power fails, or some medical officer or nurse forgets to send the patient for an X-ray and he winds up on the operating table, the surgeon has his knife

poised, then looks up at the X-ray viewbox, only to find it bare of film. He blows his top (as only a surgeon can blow his top) and everyone looks at the next lower ranking guy to see why the X-rays aren't here. They start squawking at us and I usually reply with my stock statement: "I don't care who I X-ray first. I X-ray the patients as you send them!" This usually stops them and instead of trying to fix the blame, they finally realize they're wasting more time yelling, and we get a hurry-up call to X-ray the patient.

Our efficiency is in direct contrast to our surgical department which, because of the "vermisch" [*confused*] Chief of Surgery, is still floundering about trying to organize itself. Every few days there is a sweeping change in the entire method of seeing patients and preparing them for surgery. The Chief of Surgery came around yesterday complaining that surgeons could operate longer and quicker, not realizing that it is his own fault. But so it goes and the poor patient takes the beating. From what I understand, other outfits run much more smoothly than ours, for which we should be grateful.

We have been having quite a bit of snow and have been throwing snowballs and slopping around in the snow. It's not too cold though.

The buzz bombs are doing very much the better for us, viz. coming over less often than before. Note: I wrote the above while accommodating for a fluoroscopic exam ... a young kid with 3 pieces of steel in his heart. They came from a mortar shell on Xmas day and he is not only quite alive but in pretty fair health. They are going to tap his pericardium (the sac around his heart) tomorrow. You ought to see those pieces of steel dance around with each heartbeat. And you know, his biggest complaint is that he doesn't like the barium which I had to feed him for the fluoroscopic exam. Of such is the American Soldier made.

It is now nearly midnight and this is the first chance I've had to finish the letter. We had an excellent all-soldier Special Service show tonight including a swing orchestra composed of members of famous bands, an excellent singer from Chicago who sang *Ole Man River*, and a medley from *Porgy and Bess*—excellently; a magician who was fair, a concert pianist who played an arrangement of famous piano concertos, and an arrangement of Viennese waltzes, and *Rhapsody in Blue*—he was 6 ft. 3" of Jewish boy weighing 220+, had played for Radio City and his style and technic reminded me of a trick golfer—only pretty good at the golf game when played straight, but fascinating and superb when using his bag of tricks. This guy really played with his whole body, and his fingers fairly flew across the keyboard. He played with such force that I couldn't see how the GI piano could stand it. And to top it off, he was in a standing position when he

hit that last note, ready to take his bow. But, make no mistake, he was really an excellent performer and created the illusion of being among the best. Next, we had the stuttering guy from Bob Hope's radio program and Hollywood pictures. [*Possibly Fred S. Fox, who stuttered, wrote for Bob Hope, toured with Hope for US war bonds, and had his own show called Freddie the Fox.*] There was also this Comedian-Harmonica player formerly on the Camel Caravan radio show, Schreiner. [*This must be Herb Shriner, home-spun Hoosier humorist who frequently appeared on TV after the war, altho I never heard dad say, "I saw that guy overseas."*] And he is really top-notch in both these fields. I'm crazy about this type of humor and also about a harmonica player who plays the classics. One of his gags, in his own serious tone: "It was the most fun I ever had with my clothes on."

Incidentally, the shows we see are usually fairly frank as you'd expect, but seldom raw or embarrassing, and they love to make cracks about officers—eg. Schreiner: "I think the war's going to end soon. The officers are starting to treat us like humans again."

Tonight, after the show, I came back to the office, ate some gefilte fish with Manny and Zan Edelman, and just relaxed when we had a near miss by another buzz bomb. It struck in a ravine around the back but still on the hospital property so we can count it as no. 2.

A number of windows went out—(what, again!) but casualties were very few and trivial, the most serious being a scratched hand. We heard it cut out pretty close, but I was in my inner sanctum, a room without windows, so I didn't even duck.

Dave Graller was out to see me yesterday and berated me for not coming in to visit them again. When I pointed out I preferred to stay at home when there was action, he didn't disagree. His stay was short but pleasant and I gave him a half-bottle of gin as a present. He was also very glad to see Zanly again.

I'd suggest you don't say anything about the robots to Bert [*Graller*] or any of the others, as perhaps the men don't want them to know—i.e. if it's not too late. Personally, I don't think you would want me to keep these things from you, and besides, like Walt, I have to share these experiences with you. In any case, the chances are 1000:1 against any harm befalling me - no more than when I drive the car.

Well, dearest, I'm pretty tired now. Take care of our 2 beautiful geniuses.

I love you.
Ben.

15 Jan 45 and
damned cold
[Liège]

Dearest Gin:

Yes, it's damned cold and Lord help the poor cluck in the foxhole—what a beating he must be taking. And what a beating I've taken: the radiators aren't working in my office and it feels like subzero minus in there. But I can't complain because of the aforementioned foxhole boys. And at least I have prospects of being warm tomorrow, but not today.

We are still running light as far as the patients are concerned; our other building is still not open for business so we have plenty of time on our hands. I manage to keep busy with reading, scientific photographs, letter-writing, etc.

However, it's too cold to go to town and what's more, I don't like to run around when the buzzers are about, so I remain pretty close to my stable.

The 25th has pulled out, leaving a few nurses and EM at our hospital, Dave Graller at the 76th (about a mile from us, and a number of officers on D.S. at forward evacuation hospitals (some of these "forward" hospitals are to our rear and even some of those east of us are farther from the enemy than we are). The 25th is moving into a chateau some distance from this city, staying there until a hospital is found for them. The powers that be probably decided to get them away from the robot area.

The war news sounds good with the pocket being closed to 7 miles in the Ardennes section; and the 3 large Russian offensives sound awfully good. You know, I believe that the Russians will win this war for us yet. I guess they're tired of waiting for us.

The trouble with staying in so much is that it gives me very little ammunition for my letters. So for the 1st time, since I've been overseas, I have difficulty in filling a letter. Walt apparently got pretty worried (as did you) for my safety while the German offensive was going on, but so did I. Lots were drawn as to who would remain behind with the patients (just in case). Only the medical and surgical officers drew lots since the rest of us wouldn't help

Figure 21: Liege is just to the right of the "First Army" (center-left of map), only a few miles from the German advance.

By the way, none of the above is for publication. Incidentally, Joe Shafer had a backache with some clinical findings and a very poor mental attitude, so was sent to another General Hospital for evaluation of findings and since has been boarded. [*Probable reference to the military board which would decide if a soldier was to be sent home.*] Now he is on his way to the States! Murray Bell, a dentist who was transferred to another outfit after a slight mental crack-up, has again broken-down and will probably get home as a psychiatric casualty.

And I remain disgustingly healthy! I wouldn't ever go home on any questionable basis—and you know how much I would like to go home.

Another of our officers (Chief of Surgery) got cut slightly by glass on the hand when the first buzz bomb hit here. He was very upset at the time and the next day had himself admitted to the hospital, but stayed in the basement while the other hospital patients remained on the wards (above-ground). He was brought meals and bedpans etc., waited on hand and foot, when he was no sicker than I am. This went on for about 2 weeks to everyone's disgust!

[*Well, we finally caught dad in a very large fib of omission. Notice the phrase "when the first buzz bomb hit here," which was on 12/26/44. Then note the lack of any mention of a second hit. Then compare the official Medical Corps photo of the second hit, six days before this letter. I guess he wanted to reduce the stateside panic factor.*]



Figure 22: “Winter view of destructions caused to the 28th General Hospital, Liège, after being hit by a V-1 buzz-bomb 9 January 1945.” [from the official history of the Unit]

Our Colonel and executive officer moved into a bomb-proof shelter while the nurses, most of the other officers, and the enlisted men have been exposed. Such “bravery” is nauseous isn’t it. Especially since the Colonel is a very devout Catholic, and our Catholic Chaplain has published widely on all bulletin boards that he grants protection from each buzz bomb if the person who desires such protection will repent and pray, is truly sincere in such prayer, and will confess his sins regularly. Of course, if a Catholic gets hurt, he just wasn’t sincere in his repentance. They get you coming and going, don’t they? The Chaplain looks upon it as a miracle that he wasn’t in his chapel when the bomb demolished it. But who prayed for the non-Catholics who were dug out safely and who forgot to pray for the Chapel?

Such pseudo-religion puts a bad name on all true religion, and while I do not believe many Catholic priests are like our Chaplain, or that other re-

ligions don't commonly pull the same stuff, I believe the Catholic religion is the chief offender.

Well, that's all for now, my love.

I would like you to send me some books: historical novels, book of the month selections (or other best selling novels), books on the order of *Berlin Diary* [*first-hand 1941 account of the rise of Nazi Germany by American journalist William Shirer*], or cartoon books like "Barnaby" (which I have just read) etc. I suggest you get cheap paper bound editions and don't go into any real expense. Also send any X-ray yearbooks you have—1943 or 44. Also send Hershey's, marinated herring, salami (paraffin-coated), more Ritter beans [*a brand of baked beans*], cheeses, canned soups, Kodabro-mide enlarging paper 5x7, one gross. No more 620 films are needed.

Haven't received any pkgs. now for about 3 weeks, but 1st class mail is coming in slowly.

All my love to you, Steve, and Nan

Ben

Jan. 17th, 1945

I went down the hill to a restaurant this evening and had a delicious meal and excellent white wine at a very reasonable price for Belgium—180 francs. The place was closed when I got there and on knocking, I was informed that the proprietress had gone to Bruxelles to get away from the robots. I started to walk into town, someone came running toward me, stopped and told me to come back, which I did. It seems that the proprietress had returned yesterday and while the place was closed, would cook me up a meal. The front of the restaurant was cluttered with wet wash hanging from clothes lines but they took me into the very cozy warm kitchen, sat me down at the table, and prepared me soup, biftek au cheval (steak with an egg on it—wonderful) and white wine and coffee. Since I was apparently admitted to the family circle, we soon got into conversation in French, and though falteringly, I was able to get along quite well. In my vocabulary of 50 or more words, plus conversion English (English pronounced as French—for example, democracy pronounced democrasee). I was able to start and complete quite a political discussion. I cautioned them to speak slowly which they did and was able to understand much better than I expected and at the end of the evening, which lasted more than 2 hours, I was quite proud of myself. [*If dad's French were a little better he*

would have known that “cheval” means “horse,” but I’m sure he still would have praised the meal.]

To begin with, Papa—a man of 46, is quite a sportsman. He is a prizefighter manager and entrepreneur and in 1938 had a world champion boxer (I think lightweight) in his “stable.” He showed me his pictures posed with many boxing big shots on the continent, famous boxers and beautiful and famous actresses. He had recently organized a big boxing show for the benefit of Allied wounded. Apparently he is the Mike Jacobs of boxing in Belgium as his photographs testify. [*Jacobs arranged most of Joe Louis’s big fights.*] He also managed soccer and football teams before the war, and himself was quite an athlete a few years back. He also owns a cafe and this small restaurant.

Then we started to discuss the war and he decried the robot as an unfair war weapon, since military objectives were only hit occasionally. He then went into a bitter denunciation of Le Boche and complained that the Americans were too good to give them their just desserts. [*Reference is to the Germans; “boche” means “rascal” in French, but the origin of the slang phrase is unclear.*] He pointed out that we Americans in Belgium could see for ourselves and realize how they have emasculated the Belgian people but that the Americans at home would never realize the barbarity of the Nazis thru the newspaper and letters but must see for themselves.

He also said that American soldiers were lacking in discipline, liked their cognac and women too much, and were therefore suckers for spies, especially feminine, with which this whole area abounds. He is firm believer of an eye for an eye, and believed that Germany should be subdivided into small states and dominated by the various allied countries forever. He says “Once a Boche, always a Boche.” He has lived thru 7 years of occupation in this and the last war and he says the Germans are the most two-face brutal people in the world.

I told him what I believed about liberalism and labor, about the Political Action Committee, about Russia, etc., and he seemed to agree pretty well that capitalism in its present form held no future for the common man. He didn’t like Communism, but admitted that Russia’s role would be an important one, and that the Russian form of democracy was better for the people than the American or British form. He also saw some good in Communism, but I am inclined to believe that he was just being polite at this point. [*The Political Action Committee was a labor union group run by Sidney Hillman.*]

He informed me that the Belgian cabinet was no good (which I knew), that 8 fr. an hour was the average workingman's pay, about \$1.40 per day, and with inflation how difficult it was for a laborer to eke out a living. We didn't get to discuss the king, but I believe he is interested more in a socialistic form of govt. and holds no torch for the monarch.

I left, finally, after a very enjoyable evening, returned to our camp, up the long hill, with tail dragging from all the clothes I had on: winter underwear, OD shirt and trousers, heavy socks, heavy field shoes, arctic overshoes, combat jacket, overcoat, heavy scarf, steel helmet and helmet liner and heavy gloves. There's plenty of snow on the ground and today it was bitter cold. God help the poor GI at the front on a day like today. But I guess he is inured to his lot by now.

Our work is still light but interesting. The orthopedist caught me on a missed fracture yesterday and now I am rechristened "No Fracture Felson." I had previously beaten him at ping pong, so my defense was that I wasn't a good radiologist, but I sure could play ping pong.

The buzz bombs are still buzzing as much or more than ever, but since we have been lucky so far, my hope is that our luck will stay with us (as I'm sure it will).

I got a chunk of our last buzzer and will send it to Alan as soon as I can. There are 2 smaller bits of metal which I will try to remember to enclose in this letter.

Bonsoir ma cherie. Donne-vous ma coeur a mes enfants. (Thus goes my murderous French).

Ben

Jan. 18th, 1945
[Liège]

Well, all is still quiet here—i.e. as quiet as ever considering that the city is still getting buzz bombs. They seem to have let up recently—a little, anyhow.

The war news is exceptionally good today and it's barely possible that this phase will be over before the winter ends. Wouldn't that be wonderful?

The Russians have taken Warsaw and most of remaining Poland and are now only 15 miles from Silesia in Southeastern Germany. And the Russian tide surges forward at an amazing rate. We gain 1000 yards a day,

the British do the same, while the Russians surge 40 or more miles. It's typical of this war. We, in our conceit, think we're hot stuff in this war game, but let them what wants trouble with Russia beat their own heads against a stone wall. I'm sitting THAT one out!

I have had no fear of the world fighting Russia in 20 years or less, but now I am even less disturbed over such a possibility. The Russians could lick the balance of the world without a tough battle, and that is not sheer hero worship, because the record proves it. What's more, everyone knows it, including Russia, and I've yet to see anyone go looking for trouble with the champ. So I'm optimistic about future peace, being realistic. Of course, I don't see why Russia would want to start trouble herself. So there is one place where the next war won't begin.

We are not so busy now, but it seems like the last 2 days have been the most interesting, from a scientific standpoint, of any similar period since I have been overseas. The cases included: (Note from Sophie...Hope I spell the medical terms right)

1. An uncommon but rather classical benign giant cell tumor of the ulna in the elbow.
2. A malignancy (cancer) of the stomach, early.
3. A very small lesion in the cecum in one of my own men, Sager, who has been in the hospital for the past 10 days. I don't know whether it is a tumor, chronic infection or tuberculosis.
4. A classical case of what is known as obstructive emphysema: the air trunk running to one lobe of the lung being partly obstructed, permitting air to get in, but not out.
5. An unusual calcification in a tendon in the ankle (seldom seen outside the shoulder).
6. A pre-cancerous sore (leukoplakia) in the mouth from an ill-fitting dental plate plus chewing tobacco (he carried the cud right at the site of the sore) which reminded me that I was also trained in cancer work. I wrote a note on the chart as a tumor consultant. Was I proud!
7. Stones in a salivary gland duct, neatly demonstrated by special views.
8. A number of cases of pneumonia and complications in the chest from wounds. All these are interesting and very instructive.

9. One case with a heart that I maintained was large on X-ray and congestion in the lungs. Every one (especially Manny) felt the man had nephritis and I maintained he had also hypertensive heart disease. They all said his blood pressure was normal and since he was now recuperating and his blood pressure was still normal, it couldn't be. Then they discovered the blood pressure machine was off the beam and he did have high pressure! They (the chief of medicine, Manny and Edelson) had beaten me to a frazzle, but very gracefully retracted in the face of the accurate BP.

Of course, many of the above cases are not confirmed, but the films are excellent, the findings are definite, and the conclusions seem pretty sound. Furthermore, the clinical histories check pretty well. I have impressed each of the Pts. with my interest and they have all promised to write me or have their medical officer write me when the results are known. Further, the medical department of the Army has a follow up postcard which you can put in the Pts. chart and which will be filled out when a final disposition is made. I have a card with my address on it in each chart.

An amusing incident occurred during the fluoroscopy today. Assisting me was Cpl. Graham, a very phlegmatic, quiet S. Dakotan. A patient was on the table for a barium enema. Graham put some vaseline on the enema tip, handed it to the patient (an officer) and seriously said "Here, take this 'stick' and shove it up your—ah—rectum." The patient, Manny and I almost split our sides laughing, and it was 5 minutes before we could go on with the exam. The best part was that Graham didn't think it was very funny.

Lindstrom, my chief sgt., has been doing an amazing job in fixing and adapting X-ray machinery to our purposes. He has had no real experience, but knows a little electricity and figures out the rest slowly and laboriously. When I present a problem to him, he will mull it over for 3 or 4 days, gazing off into space, and everyone thinks he is loafing (including myself). If we're busy, the other technicians get irritated because he won't pitch in. He then spends about 2 days making diagrams—very painstaking works of art and geometric complexities—a sort of blueprint. He shows me the plan (which is Greek to me), and then disappears for 24 hours (he goes to the machine shop). He returns with odd-shaped pieces of metal bolted together and in about 2 hours the new apparatus, gadget, or adaptation is complete and never fails us thereafter.

Some of this work is quite complicated and master mechanics and X-ray repairmen from HQ tell us it's impossible to do. Then Lindy does them.

Well, until the next time, adieu. Well, until next time until the next time, darling, I do. I hope you and the kids are well and happy.

Ben.

P.S. 3 pkgs arrived in past week – mailed November 10 and 22nd and 1 undated. The salami was in the undated package. Don't forget to paraffin the next salami. This one had mold on the skin, but the meat was excellent. [*Note the two-month delay.*]

Ben

Jan. 26th, 1945
[Liège]

All's well with me these days (since the V-1s have declared a halt and the Russians have advanced more miles towards Berlin). Every mile they move is ten miles closer to home for me. [*This is the time of the "Vistula-Oder Offensive" in which the Red Army liberated Kraków, Warsaw and Poznań.*]

We are again filled up and working fairly hard, with more battle casualties and fewer interesting cases. At the moment, I am sorting and classifying my slides and photographs for use as reference, and I am pleasantly surprised at the materials which I have collected.

Time out while I see what all the racket's about in the next room.

Sager, who was sleeping on a litter, was just carried out in the hallway by Lindy and Perella, and is now peacefully sleeping by the front entrance to the hospital.

Well, my term in politics is finished. The club officers called a meeting of the members today for the purpose of electing new officers. Everyone wanted us to run again but we refused. However, we decided it would be advisable to continue our present methods by seeing to it that our successors were pro-liquor and anti-Colonel, so we quietly chose our successors, appointed a nominating committee that knew whom we wanted and they nominated our selections. Of course, others could be nominated from the floor, but no one was, so our ticket ran thru unopposed and unanimously. Of course, everyone knew what we were doing (i.e. all the rank and file members) but they all realized it was best for the club to keep the Colonel's minions out.

So my first and last venture into politics has been a success except that I don't think the Colonel now cares much for me. At least he gives me a wide berth—but then he never did like me, so...

Three of our officers received their L.C.s [*rank of Lt. Col.*] after much, much delay. One, Gervig, chief of surgery, has been bucking so long that it was a relief to all of us to see him get it. The second, chief of med. Ed Thorpe, is a pretty good friend of mine and also has been waiting a long time. He finally gave up about a week ago. The 3rd, a regular Army dentist who joined us in England, is a particular S.O.B., whom I suspect of anti-Semitism. He started out with 5 Jewish men, 3 officers and 2 E.M., among his staff.

First went Sgt. Mischa Slatkin, former cellist for the Indianapolis Symphony—but was sent back because his new outfit didn't think he fitted the bill. Ogle (the major) finally got him out again lately, and now he is hauling litters up at the front—totally useless for such a job.

Capt. Bell, a psychiatric case (now on the way home), was railroaded out while he was a patient in the hospital and returned without a job. He subsequently was transferred to another outfit where he broke down again. Neither of these 2 were worth much in a dental clinic.

Next came Sgt. Kaplan, a budding young artist, whom Ogle is now putting the skids to. He is admittedly an excellent technician, but Ogle says he is "sassy" and "belligerent." So far the kid is still with them but won't be long.

Next Capt. Blanket (our club mgr.) has requested a transfer because Ogle has become unbearable. This leaves Milt Blaine, who hates Ogle's guts, but will probably do anything he says.

Well, do you think there's anti-Semitism here? No other transfers have been made during this period. Thorpe, chief of med., who rooms with Ogle and runs around with him seems to think highly of me and I rather like him. Today, I casually mentioned to Thorpe that it seemed strange that 4 men were involved in dental clinic transfers and they all happened to be Jews; that perhaps some of the Jewish officers were beginning to wonder. Thorpe, I hope, will tell Ogle what I said and the latter, who I know would hate to have such a rumor get around, will at least know that he's not fooling everyone (if the accusation is true). This may have made him go a little easier.

Perhaps this may sound like meddling, but I spoke to the Chaplain and one or two other Gentile friends and they agree that it looks mighty funny. And I have heard Ogle make remarks concerning Hulse: that he always mistrusts people with a foreign accent, that will probably make money in America, then go back to Germany with it as soon as the time's ripe! This kind of talk doesn't come from broadminded individuals.

I don't propose to sit idly around and watch a guy take potshots at my kith and kin. It's caused too much damage in this world already, and the turn the cheek policy has brought nothing but grief.

Incidentally, this is one of the policies that I've thought out clearly since I've been away from you all. For some time now I've made up my mind to be a militant anti-anti-Semite—not with fists or guns, but with their own weapons—quiet slander, innuendos, etc., and if necessary, a face to face showdown.

29 Jan 45 [Liège]

Hello my love:

I kinda got the lump in my throat today when I heard Beethoven's violin concerto on the radio. I don't know why, but I started to think about Sundays at home (did we ever stay home on Sunday) and how I'd love to spend them with you. I was blue all afternoon, but this evening I feel better and was day dreaming about how I'd organize a tumor clinic and the X-ray dept. at the C.G.H. if I were chief. Well, a guy's allowed to dream, isn't he?

You know, nothing would please me more than to take over such a full time job at the General and spend the rest of my life at it. Damn the salary. We could make enough to enjoy life, couldn't we? Please don't cast any wet towels on my burning ambition.

Exciting news: I got a letter from Jack Jacobs, who, with Earl Coplan, is firing shells at the Nazis, or should I say exchanging shells with them. He must be about ___ miles from here and writes me he would like to meet me at a city about midway between here and the front. I've written telling him to call me long distance, so I expect to hear his voice in a week or so. He somehow learned my location thru a friend from Cincy who ran across Joe Filger in this city. I don't know who the friend was. Gosh, I hope we can get together. [*Jacobs was a boyhood friend from the West End of Cincinnati; I do not remember Earl Coplan.*]

The 25th General is running a rest camp some distance from here in Charleroi. [*A town in Belgium some 60 miles west of Liège; a few miles farther would be northern France.*] Some of our EM and nurses are going up there for a 7 day rest. The officers are expected to get these too. If I went, I'll bet I wouldn't get much rest! There is also some talk of leaves for Paris, the French Riviera, and overnight passes to Brussels, but they're still in the rumor stage.

The buzz bombs have not hit our city for 7-10 days, altho a few have passed over, on their way to cause death and destruction somewhere else.

I haven't heard from Walt for a while. I hope everything's o.k. with him. I forgot to tell you Jack [*Jacobs*] is with the 9th Army in Germany.

Now let's answer some of your recent letters:

1. By now you must know I'm safe and well, so I hardly think it feasible to drop a V-mail every day. Furthermore, since the mail is delivered in batches, it won't alleviate the condition. I've been writing every 2-4 days, depending on how busy I am. I don't know where the balance of my letters for Dec. are, but you will no doubt eventually receive them. Whenever you don't hear from me, it will never be because I'm not writing. I'm pleased that you write me daily. Remember, I prefer your letters to V-mails. And I do enjoy your letters immensely.
2. How does that guy Bubs [*Benson, a close Cincinnati friend*] rate a 30-day leave, the lucky stiff. Oh, for the life of a Navy officer. What's his rank now?
3. I'm proud of my wife. Imagine, a public speaker! How did it go, darling? You know, I've always thought public speaking or radio would be your forte.
 1. Sel's rectal trouble should be treated by a good rectal man. I don't know Chas. Howard, but I think he was a classmate of Chip's. Carmel has wide experience. [*Dr. Carmel was the father of a classmate of mine; in later years dad would often mention the proctologist's theme song, Love is Just Around the Corner.*] And I know nothing of the innuendos which you cast about him. After all, he must treat thousands of similar cases.
4. I get a big kick out of the antics of my 2 favorite children, especially Steve's homemade train to take him to his daddy. I'm so pleased he's gotten over his resentment toward me.

5. Your continual forgetting about the car and leaving it somewhere will one day cost us a pretty penny. But (I shouldn't say this) you're worth it, so I guess I can't kick.
6. I have many unread *P.M.s* now, but haven't run across a word about Madame [*Chiang*] Kai Shek's divorce in *The Stars and Stripes* or other newspapers. She is an opportunist and probably sees no place in the future scheme for her ex-husband, so throws him over. He probably is quite a boor for her exquisite tastes, also. [*In fact, they remained married until Chiang's death in 1975. He was the president of the Republic of China, the anti-communist faction based in Taiwan.*]
7. I still advise you to keep your mother away from Hahn. He's not a good doc, no matter how you look at him. How did your mother hurt her leg? And what's the diagnosis? I certainly wish I were there to supervise the medical care of all of you.
8. A general hospital has 1000 to 2000 beds. Ours is now nearer the latter figure.
9. I'm glad you don't blame me for writing you the truth about events over here and the degree of my danger. Remember again, my love, that the chances of my getting hurt where I am are infinitesimal.
10. I don't think it advisable that you hang around the nursery school too much, even if you're on the Committee. I think the teachers might resent it.
11. Say, that dollie that the kids squabbled over didn't have a basket on its back, did it? If so, it's the special doll for Edith. Oh, my god! Describe the doll to me and maybe I can get more for the kids. I've forgotten. Am sending you another bottle of perfume, for yourself. Please acknowledge the pkg. of perfumes for the dames in the family.
12. I'm a little astonished that Jack Singer is in practice in Cincy and in the Doctors Bldg., too! I wonder how Lange failed to keep him out of that bldg., like he did the others? [*Reference not clear, although I think Lange lived across the street on Rose Hill Avenue.*]
13. Send me some books (a few); I don't need any more cigarettes now that I'm smoking a pipe. Thank Irv for me, please. I haven't got the cigs yet. Don't send canned turkey or chicken. We get that in our mess. Send more kippers, salami in paraffin. The tongue was spoiled because the glass broke. Hershey's are fine.

14. I don't know the true story about Booher, but he'll talk his way out of the jam. [*Reference unknown.*]
15. I agree with you on the Greek situation, but don't expect much from Churchill or Grt. Britain. [*A Communist takeover of Greece had just been averted through British intervention; dad was not sympathetic to the anti-Communist position, as a later letter shows.*]

Am enclosing a few odds and ends.

Goodnight my love.

Ben.

2 Feb 45 [*Liège*]

Dearest:

Well, what's the good word, my love. Am in quite a good humor—why, I don't know. Perhaps because my work's running so smoothly; perhaps because the war news is so good; perhaps because the sun's out and it's a balmy springish day; perhaps because Manny is in the fluoroscopic room and I'm not; perhaps because I'm writing you.

Yesterday, I was informed we would be inspected by a Major from higher Hq. We were quite busy so I told one Belgique [*Belgian civilian worker*] to clean up the joint, which is always a little messy. Well, he and the POWs got things pretty clean in the morning, but as luck would have it he [*the Major*] didn't show up 'til late in the afternoon, when we were still very busy. He proved to be a friend of Zany Edelson's who had come down a week ago to see him and, Zany being out, I entertained him! I showed him around the place, fearfully opening doors thinking I would encounter a mess. But lo and behold, the place was still immaculate from the morning's clean-up, and the inspection went beautifully.

He asked to see some samples of our film marking, our record books, and a few other things. The films I pulled out (at random) proved to be gems of perfection and the page I opened to in the log book—honestly, by accident—was the neatest in the book. What an inspection! I suppose you've heard the old saw: The Americans had an inspection, the British had tea, and the Russians advanced another 50 miles. Never was this truer than at present—altho I must admit, we've had very little inspection on the Continent.

Our Hq. crew—C.O., exec., and inspector never come around my dept. and I'm left strictly alone, which ordinarily pleases me no end. However, it has some disadvantages. They never call me when there is some new directive—like they do the other chiefs of service, and I am going to make a complaint today. For example, they asked the other chiefs of service how many WACs they could use for replacement of GIs but not me. I'm afraid they mean to decide for my dept. themselves. Further, the surgical service has already drawn lots for turns to go to a rest-camp and nothing has been said to me about a rest camp. Thirdly, they have sent some EM to a rest camp already and my men should have the highest priority because of the dangers of X-ray exposure—and I haven't been officially told a thing about it. Of course, I have many other channels of information, including one very close to the C.O., so I really know many more things than I am supposed to know. So, while I act insulted, we are not suffering! In fact, neither Manny nor I want to go to the rest camp and we already arranged with the detachment C.O. to have my men go.

One of my men, our 7th day Adventist, Brooks, has been giving me headaches for many months because of his lack of interest in X-ray work (preoccupation with Religious work) and I have been quite dissatisfied with him for many moons. The other day I decided I'd get rid of him and called the detachment office. Then I decided, maybe I'd give him another chance. I called him in and blistered the hell out of him, told him what I thought of his work, and advised him that I was going to replace him but would give him another chance if he turned over a new leaf. He was very contrite and promised to do better, admitting that he hadn't been attending to his work. The next morning he came in and told me he had felt pretty bad about what I had said, realized I was right, and wouldn't I forget the past. "Of course, I would," I said. Since that time he has shown an amazing change. He works every minute of his duty time and is really quite a new man from my standpoint. He's the boy I had to fight for to get him off on Sabbath.

I still haven't heard from Jack, but expect to in a few days. What a reunion that will be!

I mailed a bottle of parfum for you—Please consider it a St. Valentine's present, and forgive my failing memory for not remembering Nancy's birthday. I can't help it dear—remember, I wasn't around for her first one and a lot have things have happened since she was born. This is a weak excuse for a father, I guess—and I feel pretty bad about it. But I don't love her any less.

Steve's "camel" arrived yesterday, and it created quite an amusing incident. Manny always belittles anything I say about Steve and tells me his nephew could do it better. It has gotten to be quite a joke here and of course, has made me quite a frustrated papa, as I can do very little bragging. So I showed him the camel, didn't say a word about it being an accident, and was he impressed! For 5 minutes, he couldn't think of anything to say, but finally said his 3 yr. old nephew had just had an exhibition in the Metropolitan Museum of Art—very weak for him. So now, I think he really thinks Steve is a genius, even though he won't admit it. I hope the good Lord forgives me for not disillusioning him about Steve's artistry. [*Wish I remembered the accidental camel, but I don't.*]

Well, back to work now. Remember my 5, 6, and 7 page letters 2 to 4 times a week are more than your daily 1 page V-mails, so that actually I am writing much more than you.

All my love and devotion, dearest.

Ben

5 Feb. 45

Hello again darling:

I am writing this while in the throes of a fresh cold, amid headache, drippy nose, and sneezes, so please forgive any departure from my usual dizziness.

We continue to be busy, but now there are fewer unoperated battle casualties and more medical cases—which makes the work even more interesting than usual.

I finished writing the paper on Sgt. Auger's work and have sent it in with both his name and mine as co-authors, since his name alone would cause the article to be rejected.

I wonder what happened to that article Mel Bernhard and I wrote. I'll bet it's still on a shelf in his home! I never hear from him and have lost his address. Does Jack Wright's wife have his wife's address. Call her, find out, and then drop Mrs. Bernhard a note, requesting her husband's address and then forward it to me *sil vous plait, tout suite*. I'm still waiting for you to send me Sid Kahn's address. Darling, these requests of mine must be taken care of immediately.

I would like you to begin sending me a few of my *Amer. Journals of Radiology and Roentgen Therapy*, the yellow ones from the time I left the States. I have the Sept. and Oct. '44 issues over here via our library service so don't send those. It's too difficult to read the microfilm editions without a projector, as one-eyed reading with the hand lens is very tiring.

I plan to get hold of a projector soon and start X-ray meetings once more. I have wonderful material right now. But slide projectors are hard to get. Maybe the University will part with one.

The buzz-bombs have practically completely stopped for more than 2 weeks, so that this is quite an inactive front—if you want to call it a front. From here it looks like the rear. The story here is that the Russians are going to beat us to Cologne. Another story states that the reason for the German counter-offensive was that the Russians were pushing them so hard, they had to find somewhere to go to get away. And our cooks are practicing up on Russian dishes; they don't know when they will have to feed a Red regiment!

Dave G. and Co. are in or going to be in Tongren. And I still haven't heard from Jack J. I shall be very disappointed if he doesn't contact me, but it's a little too soon for him to have received my letter, as yet.

Trips to the rest camp at the 25th are being given out to Officers, nurses, and men—5-7 day passes. But I don't think I want to go. In the first place I don't need a rest and would prefer professional work. Secondly, if I do take a leave, I want it to be either Paris or the Riviera. And don't think I won't get there—one way or another—before I leave the Continent.

As it is now, I get up about 7:45 A.M., work until about 8 P.M. with ½ hr. off for lunch and for dinner. After 8, I read *P.M.s*, study my journals, look up literature on cases, or go to the movies. Last night I saw Wallace Beery in something or other. The cornier he is, the better I like him.

As you know, I sleep in the fluoroscopy room, so I'm in the dept. practically 100% of the time. It's quite convenient and comfortable, and we have our radio, so I don't get tired of the place. The only thing I lack is variety of companionship, but that alone is not very disturbing. Manny is usually too difficult to talk to, so I'm getting to be an introvert. Imagine!

I seldom go into town, especially since Dr. Breyere and family have gone to Brussels. Also the food you send is so good and that in town so expensive, there is little desire to eat in town. Last night Zanly brought

down some home-made dill pickles and I got out my salami. What a feed we had!

2 boxes of Hershey's (in 1 pkg) arrived today. Also letters from you (Jan 15), Edie, Soph, and Walt. Walt sure wrote an article for the *Catholic Messenger* didn't he. Don't you think they should pay our own little Jewboy for his contribution?

Which reminds me, you can send out any letters you want to for publication (*American Israelite* etc.) but from now on without my name. Once it's OK. After that it's advertising—and will be looked on as such. Don't forget this.

That's all for now, darling.

Love to you and the 2 wonderful kids.

Your husband and their
Daddy Ben.

8 Feb 45 [Liège]

Dear Ginny:

Well, my cold is better despite a few hours of acute sinusitis. Codeine relieved the latter and it didn't return.

There's a dearth of things to write about, but as usual, I'll manage to fill up the pages. To begin with the Russians are now 30 miles from Berlin and are still moving up. I think this is up, and predict the end of the European war by the last of March, due 90% to the fighting Russians. After this war, if there is any discussion as to who won the war—as there was after the last—it will be self-evident that Russia played the greatest role. And I shouldn't be too surprised or displeased if she plays a big role in the peace. Certainly the British handling of Greece and our dealings in Italy were grossly bungled and we have no reason to believe that there will be any difference in the future. This, despite the fact that I trust Roosevelt (but not Churchill). He will, like Wilson, be hamstrung by an unfavorable congress. Picture the difficulty they are having getting [Henry] Wallace his Secretary of Commerce job—Wallace, one of the most intelligent and enlightened men in the country (even his enemies admit this). [Wallace was Vice-President in Franklin Roosevelt's last term and ran for president on the Progressive Party ticket in 1948. Mom and dad had to decide whether to

vote Progressive, and possibly help the Republicans by splitting the liberal vote, or vote for Democrat Harry Truman. I think they chose the latter.]

So, let Stalin make the peace! So far as I can see, he has never trod on the toes of other countries, and I'm sure he wants a permanent peace as much as we do.

Last night the meeting between Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt in the Black Sea area was announced, in a dramatic interruption of a Bob Hope program. [*This was the Yalta Conference, which took place in a Russian resort town in the Crimea.*] It pointed out that the meeting was for the successful completion of the war, for deciding the fate of the enemy, and for planning to prevent all future wars—including a discussion of an international organization such as the League of Nations. Will Congress stand back of Roosevelt's decisions?

To go from the ridiculous to the sublime, I had a delicious repast of salami and non-marinated herring last night. It was the salami you sent, the herring supplied by one of our new Jewish officers, a N.Y.C. Jewish boy. It was canned whole salt-schmaltz Bismarck herring with a very salty sauce. It was good for a change, but I drank water all night long and didn't sleep so well. Don't send me any herring of this kind. I much prefer the marinated. And please remember to coat the salami with paraffin when you send more.

Two boxes of Hershey's arrived and are greatly appreciated.

And this morning I got up early because of the rumor of fresh eggs for breakfast. The rumor proved correct and in addition they had Wheaties; so that for my first breakfast in 3 months, I did alright. I generally get up at 8 A.M., forgoing breakfast. Usually one of the men gets me some coffee from the ward, because they say I'm too cranky if I don't get coffee.

Business has been rather light of late, but I still manage to be reading films at 7 and 8 P.M. every night, chiefly because I want to start the next day with a clean slate.

As the days go by, I have my heart more and more set on getting a salaried (or other) job in a teaching hospital, preferably something like the General. We might not be wealthy on the salary, but we'd have more than our share of happiness and security. And I keep thinking of the interesting cases I would see and best of all, the fun of being in charge of a busy dept. You, by now, must realize how much I have enjoyed my work and position in the Army, and how much administrative experience I have had. I feel

very confident that I could run any X-ray dept., no matter how busy it is and put out good work—so long as I am king-pin. I doubt if I could work well under a boss and don't want to try.

Well, we shall see, we shall see. After the war I would like to get a few months refreshing myself on therapy. It will be 3 or more years that I have been away from this place of the work, and you can forget a lot in this interval.

I am studying more and more and trying to get caught up in my reading, since I got hopelessly behind when we were en route from England until we settled down here.

Apparently my Gladstone bag has been found and is on its way here. I'm very happy about this because (1) I won't have to buy a blouse (2) my earlier scientific photos are in the bag (3) so is my address book (you never did send me Kahn's address) and (4) the bag has financial and sentimental value.

I think I'll go to town today.

Good-day my love.

Ben

P.S. Hugs and kisses to you and the kids.

12 Feb 45
[Liège]

Hello Dear:

I guess I've cooled off enough to write you again. I hope you realize what a headache you've given me because of that article. And I really meant it when I said that nothing else of mine will be published. Jack Jacobson and Earl Coplan (more about their visit later), who received the article by mail, both think that I may get a letter from authorities warning me against that sort of thing. That would be the least I deserve! I've not shown anyone around here the article, so I hope the subject dies a natural death.?? THREE MONTHS OF ANGUISH? Prenovember 19 1944!!! -FEB

Now to Jack and Earl's visit. They popped in on me at about 11:30 A.M. and only could stay until two. Jack is a Captain, as funny as ever, but looks definitely older than when I last saw him. He is more bald, his baldness being augmented by a short (I mean short) haircut and an attack of a

scalp condition which has (temporarily) given him scattered bald spots elsewhere on his scalp. They are with a Field Artillery battalion, shooting 105 mm guns in the 9th Army. They are in action in Germany, belittle their danger, though they are firing on the enemy and vice versa. Jack stays in a cellar and aims the guns by calculation while Earl is Ammunition Officer and for a while was an air observer. Earl is a 1st Lt. and still acts as a Stooge for Jack. Jack is hilariously funny in recounting tales of his misadventures. For example he told some friends that he wouldn't stay in the Army after the War, unless they created a 5-star General. "And wouldn't you know it," he says, "Congress went ahead and made one just to keep me in!" [*Reference is to a new wartime rank created in December 1944, and awarded only to George Marshall, Douglas MacArthur, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Henry H. ("Hap") Arnold, and Omar Bradley.*] He still seems to win at poker, even from his C.O. He says that he killed his chances of promotion because of this, but gets more fun out of winning his extra salary than collecting it legitimately! They both seemed to be very happy, altho Jake says he's bucking to go home. They left, promising to come back in about 2 weeks if possible, and want me to go back with them and stay overnight at their next camp, which I may do.

I wasn't too surprised to see that Mutty died a hero—having mentioned to several friends here that he probably did, when I first learned of his death. After reading Al Segal's article, I felt very sad. Danny sent me the article in a letter and told me about several athletic funds that the Ajacs have started at the center in Mutty's name. [*Reference is to a kids sports club from dad's youth.*] Give an ample sum for this, dear, in my name. I haven't any idea of how much to give, but would not want to be a "piker." Find out what the other fellows are giving and add \$10 more. I suppose it could wait until after the war, if you like.

We are now giving a General (1 star) the "works:" gallbladder, G.I. series and barium enema. Manny, with his hatred for authority, demanded that I let him do the barium enema. I assented reluctantly, but made it a point to be present. As the solution poured into his colon, the general squirmed, and I heard Manny give a low insane chuckle. Finally the general was quite distended and informed us so; Manny, the sadist, laughed gleefully at the general's discomfiture, but the general, a good egg, laughed back—'though he was smart enough not to give a big belly laugh. After the general went out for a film and evacuation, Manny wanted him back for an air enema, but I wouldn't let him, since it wasn't indicated in the general's instance. And so it goes—we have our ups and downs here, but manage to have a little fun.

[In later life dad embellished this story by having Manny lift the tube up high in the dark to raise the pressure on the General's insides, so that dad had to pinch the tube to keep the pressure down and the general conscious.]

I have received pkgs. for Dec. 18 (pickalilly) [*pickle relish in the Felson vocabulary*], Vienna sausages, nuts, ham salad, etc.). Dec 17 (salami et al.), and Nov 28 (I think Hershey's). You may cut down on the number of pkgs. you send now. I don't need a thing—plenty of cigarettes and food. Didn't you know that Vienna sausages and ham salad are C rations, of which we have long since grown tired. So don't waste any more dough on them. But when you send salami, pickled herring, tongue, nuts, cookies, Hershey's, et al., these are foods that make us drool freely.

To answer some of your questions: Our Jewish acquaintances in town have apparently moved—and I don't know whether the brother got out or not. I rather believe that he did, or I should have heard from them.

Don't stop writing about your "little disturbances." That's the only way I can keep tab on your mistakes and know how to protect myself! [*Reference unclear.*]

I'm very pleased about our financial set-up. I totalled up our savings and get \$2325 cost value (\$3100 - 10 yr value) in bonds and \$600 in the bank after deducting bills.

Your Doc is the same Dr. Snyder despite her age. She was in charge of the Medical College Restaurant for many years and finally took up medicine. I don't know Dr. Elgart.

That's all for now, dear. I'm sorry I had to blow up in my last letter, but something has to be done to curb your failure to look before you leap. [*Must still be about the article.*]

I hope you and the kids are all well.

Honest dear, I still love you!

Ben.

14 Feb 45
[Liège]

Hello darling:

I haven't heard from you in about 5 days, altho I received letters from Soph and Walt yesterday. When mail is slow, we all suffer.

Work has been slow until today when it picked up quite a bit. I did 15 G.I. series, the most I ever did in 1 day—and many were abnormal.

Manny returned from Brussels at noon today, and seems to have had an excellent time during his 3 day stay there. He says it is not too much different from our city [Liège], but more of everything and fewer Americans. He paid 900 francs for 1 meal (\$20) and was pretty well cheated.

Jule Grad was up again yesterday and got his teeth fixed thru an arrangement which I made with our dentist (Milt Blaine). Jule is, like many other people, a “dental coward,” and his teeth had many cavities. Blaine took special pains to do a good job, painlessly, using Novocaine. Jule was very, very grateful, because if he reported to his own sick call, he would get dental care with foot treadle equipment, a rush job, and have to take whatever dentist was available. Since he needed good care, I gave him a note to his C.O., which seemed to get him off. He is supposed to come up for the finishing touches tomorrow, and if possible, I’m going to take off and take him to dinner in town. I only hope I’m not too busy. As luck would have it, there were a lot of admissions today and tonight, so it doesn’t look too good. But here’s hoping.

Monday night was an event here. Lily Pons [*a French-American soprano; performed 300 times at the Met in New York*] and Andre Kostelanetz [*her husband, a Russian-born pop orchestral conductor*] came to town, and admission was free for men in uniform, and they were out full force. No civilians were permitted. I arranged for a truck and many people from our unit attended. We arrived at 6:20 (curtain time 7:30) and the line was 2 ¼ blocks long, double. The theatre seats close to 5,000, and at 6:45 every seat and all the standing room was taken. I got in about 5 minutes before they closed the doors and got a good seat in the upper tier of boxes. About 2000, I am told, were turned away.

The show was excellent, and Lily was magnificent. What a beautiful voice and wonderful stage presence. She won the heart of the audience the moment she came on, and everyone has been raving about her ever since. She sang *Blue Danube*, *Caro Nome*, an English coloratura air, *Summertime* from *Porgy and Bess*, and one or two other similar numbers, all wisely chosen for general appeal to this type of audience. Kostelanetz led the orchestra (First Army Orchestra) in various semi-classical and popular numbers (*Night and Day*, [*songwriter*] Hoagy Carmichael etc.) and then there were an excellent pianist who played *Fire Dance* and other classical numbers exceptionally well; and a flautist (also a comedian) who accompa-

nied Miss Pons in some of her solos, and played some solos of his own. The show lasted 2 hrs. and packed a wallop for every minute!

And look what I have on my musical program for the balance of the week:

Thurs: *La Boheme* by a Brussels Co.

Fri: Return engagement of the Negro Engineers Choir (Spirituals and Boogie Woogie) of which I wrote you.

Sun: Symphony Concert, including an American Sgt. as guest pianist.

I had hoped Jule could stay for some of these, but he says it's impossible. He's had some tough luck, musically. He missed Yehudi Menuhin [*violinist*] and Lily Pons by a hair: had an inspection at the last minute, when Menuhin was playing 1 mile away; and found Lily's concert cancelled at the last minute. Of course, he's seen and heard some other things to make up for it.

During Jule's visits here, I have taken the initiative from him, talked down most objections he has had to things I suggested (he hates to impose on me). I hope he doesn't think I am pompous, officious, or rank-conscious, but I believe in taking advantage of certain prerogatives an officer has, in his behalf. For example, I took him to our officers mess (first E.M. I have ever seen eat there), insisted that the dentist would take care of him if I asked him to (I wouldn't take Jule's no for an answer). It's sometimes difficult to know whether he says "no" because he doesn't like me to do something or doesn't want to impose on me. So far, I think I have guessed right.

I'm going to put in for a pass to Paris one day soon. I doubt if I'll be the lucky one for a while yet, since one officer from the dept. (Manny) has already had a leave (Brussels). If that doesn't work, I'm going to ask for the Riviera. No leaves have been granted for the latter so far, but there's no harm in asking.

I saw a picture of 2 of our nurses registering to vote during the past election. This ordinarily wouldn't be of interest, but they used my desk to write on, and I saw to it that Steve's picture faced the camera. The final print showed Steve better than it did the nurses. The photographer doesn't know where, when, or even if the picture was published, but keep your eyes open for it just the same, and if you recall seeing it in the newspaper, try to check back.

All my love, dearest, to you and our 2 darlings.

I fervently hope this war ends soon

Ben

Feb. 16th, 1945
[Liège]

Hello dearest:

Still no repercussions on that article, altho I know for a fact that the other man from Cincy received the article via mail and showed it to the chief of Lab (Joiner) who is our C.O.'s right hand. So I'm waiting.

I saw Sander Goodman at a medical meeting yesterday. He is on Detached Service at a general hospital in town—looks well. The medical meeting was put on by the 298th General and was an excellent one, the first we have had in this vicinity to my knowledge, since our arrival here. Two visiting bigwigs, Hugh Morgan, former professor of medicine at Vanderbilt and now a brig. genl. head of all the internists in the Army, and Col. Middleton, former professor at Wisconsin and now head of medicine (not surgery) in the E.T.O. The meeting was well attended by docs from all the hospitals around here and the cases were excellent. I saw several of the radiologists and tried to arrange a meeting but met with little enthusiasm from the X-ray man at the 298th who is the ranking radiologist here, and is supposed to be consultant for this area as well. Without him pushing it, I doubt if a meeting could be arranged.

Perhaps I can invite Ostreich from the 15th General and Weiner from the 76th over for an evening. They are both radiological enthusiasts and we probably could have excellent meetings. Red Elsey and Charley Ingersoll are no longer in this vicinity, tho neither are very far away. Joe Filger, too, (I learned today) is on D.S. here at the 76th Gen. Hosp. He probably will leave here soon as the 25th is about ready to set up. They certainly have had a long lay-off!

Saw an excellent movie last night. *To Have or [and] Have Not* (Hemingway's) and this Lauren Bacall is really a torrid number and excellent actress. They also had a magician who told stories which were quite dirty, but clever. e.g. The old maid wanted to trade a grand piano for an upright organ; or a eunuch is a man who may be too old but not two-balled, etc. He cracked them so fast that many were missed by the audience, especially the nurses (I hope). [*Ernest Hemingway wrote the 1937 novel; the Howard Hawks movie, with Bogart and Bacall, was released in 1944.*]

Am very pleased about Rosalyn's pregnancy. You'd better get straightened out on the spelling of the names of your two sisters-in-law; for a moment I thought Roslyn was pregnant. Hm.....

The work here has lightened considerably which gives me a little time to read, write, etc. At present I am summarizing the statistical records I made at Ft. Harrison on chest cases, and am uncovering some interesting facts which should make me a better radiologist—especially in relation to chest work. I felt bad yesterday on learning that I missed a fracture again. I've got to be more careful. Of course, the fracture wasn't obvious, but I should be able to see them when the orthopedist can't instead of vice versa. I hate to make mistakes like that.

I had a nice long chat with Chaplain Powell, night before last—a rather philosophical one, which he seemed to enjoy as much as I did. He's really a fine person and universally popular among the officers and men. He's in striking contrast to our Catholic chaplain, who has proved to be a bigoted, rather domineering man, who preys on the fears of his co-religionists, including the C.O. He grants absolution for each buzz-bomb provided the men come to church regularly; waits in the chow line for his delinquent non-church-going co-religionists (enlisted men), admonishing and threatening them in an attempt to get them into church. Many of them do not go because of him, to which he is oblivious. His dissertations on sex are gems, I'm told; and he dissertates about once a week, which suggests that he likes to talk on the subject. Powell is just the anti-thesis of all this; he's understanding, forgives mortal sins without a fuss, and never goes out of his way to get an audience. He is fair to a fault; he sees both sides of a question but tries to be so fair to the other side that he loses his punch. My motto is: if the issue is big enough and the other side is wrong enough, hit it hard. This is where we differ. He is too inclined to be easy on his opponents, e.g. the reactionaries.

Well, here's five pages already and I haven't even asked how you and the kids are. All my love to the three of you. I miss you more than I care to admit, even to myself.

Ben.

Sun. Feb. 19, '45

Dearest:

I hope everything on the home front is OK, especially my own personal home front. We are still quite busy here and there continues to be an interesting run of cases. I have been a little depressed the past two days since everything seemed to go wrong.

To begin with, 2 cases were coming up for surgery and your smart husband, instead of couching his diagnosis in general terms, tried to tell 'em exactly what they would find—for example instead of saying intestinal obstruction in the lower colon (it turned out to be in the upper small bowel!). The other case, instead of calling it tumor, I said lipoma (fatty tumor)—it proved to be a cyst. Of course, I had evidence, but it wasn't as clean cut as I made it out to be. What a ride I took at chow yesterday! Oh, well, there's no fun in being conservative. At least I have the satisfaction of knowing that none of the others expressed himself before the operation—a cautious lot. Of course, I had an answer for my critics: "I must be right all the time for you guys to make so much fuss over such a little mistake." Or (on the obstruction case) "I only missed by a couple of feet!"

On top of that Manny and I did 2 lipiodols of the chest yesterday afternoon: on the first case the tube slipped out of the nose without Manny knowing it (in the darkened fluoroscopic room)—the Pt and I both had the slimy oil all over us and the exam didn't work very well. On the second case, he put the tube way down the larynx without my knowing it (it's only supposed to go in the nostril) and the Pt. gagged his head off before I discovered why. Manny then pulled the tube out and the rubber was faulty so the rest of the oil went on me and the floor. Finally, at the end of the 2nd bottle we got a little in his lungs but the exam will have to be repeated. What a snafu! I didn't say anything to Manny and later he let me take the blame when I told the ward officer about it.

Today, the current was acting up all day long, and we had to send about 20 patients back to the ward at various times, because the power went dead. In a few days we expect to have power exclusively for X-ray—the way it is everywhere I've been—and what a relief it'll be!

I guess I take my work too seriously, but that's the way I'm built. I suppose my life will never run smoothly over any extended period.

I spent a very enjoyable evening with Sander Goodman yesterday. As I wrote you, he is on D.S. with the 16th General here, and last night came to see me. We drank some scotch and gin, had a snack, played some ping-pong, and talked. He hasn't changed much, and, as always, gave me a little free advice, which, as always, I disregarded. He has always, ever since

our youth, assumed a big brother attitude towards me (so has Red Elsey). In anyone I didn't like a lot, I would resent this attitude, but in them I am amused by it. Much of their advice has seemed silly to me, because they are both so conventional about things. Me, I like to be different (even if I'm not)—and they always forget there's more than one way to skin a cat. I think I'll just muddle along my own way, altho I'll accept any advice that makes sense to me. Incidentally, Chippy has always been very helpful in his suggestions and when he advises me on a matter (which is seldom), it is inevitably sound.

I had a beer with Hulse and Danish this evening. They wonder how I manage to get along so well with Manny and being so constantly in his company—because of his moodiness, animosity towards people, and “screwy” reactions. I admitted that at times it gets pretty nerve-racking (esp. the past few days) and that I find I have probably changed more than he: I am much more critical of people, even my friends, because of his constant fault-finding, and find myself watching for the things Manny tells me are behind certain persons' motives. On the other hand, Manny has become much less out-spoken and more tactful in the presence of other people. Several friends (including Danish) will not come into the dept. because of their dislike for Manny, and, of course, this grieves me no end.

You can't imagine the effects of a constant hammering of cynicism on my ordinarily cheerful disposition. And one can't avoid the subject with him, because that is his meat and drink.

From the above, you probably realize that I am not too fond of him. But I really don't dislike the fellow—as a matter of fact, I rather like him. And he is a great help to me. But one can't have everything, and he's got plenty of brains. [*By 1951, when Manny and Sylvia had bought our Dickson Avenue house and started complaining about their bad deal, I think dad became less forgiving.*]

Well here we are on page 6. It's getting late so here's a kiss for Steve, for Nancy, and an especially emotional and longing one for you, my own.

Ben.

Fri Feb 23 [1945;
Liège]

Hello precious:

Just returned from a corny special service show—a jazz orchestra with some extreme lack of talent and voices—all soldiers. Quite a wasted evening, were it not for a minor adventure in eating earlier. About once a week I go out to eat, sometimes alone and sometimes with one or another of my colleagues. Tonight I was alone and went to my favorite neighborhood restaurant where I had an excellent meal: an oyster-like bivalve, steamed and served (about 24 of them) in the shell in salt water to which vinegar was added. It is called mousse (sp?). This was followed by French fries, a beautiful roundsteak, pickled small onions, and rye bread (the real McCoy—1st time since the States). Next week I am to bring a can of milk and some cheese and they're going to fix me mushroom in milk and spaghetti with cheese—which the chef ... [*My guess on the oyster-like shellfish is moules, mussels.*]

[PAGES MISSING]

... since a directive just came out stating the order of priority of sending men out and is a fortuitous dearth of X-ray technicians or else they don't want to waste all the special training they've had. These men of mine could stack up well with any the Cincy General have.

The 25th is setting up about 16 miles from here and I'll probably be able to get out to see them from time to time.

I got your anniversary gift off—I hope you like it. Before I forget, will you please forward X-ray journals—about ten of them, the yellow ones, then one at a time as they come to you in the mail. I find it too tough to read microfilm. Don't forget to do this, dearest, as I don't have much scientific material to read and I don't want to get too far behind.

To answer some of your recent questions etc.:

So Steve's expecting me to be a general! Well, one's son is always full of hero-worship up to a certain age at which his Pop disillusion him. I hope it's not too big a blow.

There are more than 3 General Hospitals in our center, and neither the 25th or 32nd are in it. They were just billeted in town and helped us out with personnel from time to time.

Never could find any Belgian glassware. I still haven't had a chance to pack the kids' dolls, but will send them soon.

I hope Sel and your mother and yourself stay well for a while, now. It seems like Jake, the only one with a lot of disease, seems to be doing quite well! Tell him I enjoyed his letter very much and hope he keeps writing. I

passed his invitation on to the Chaplain (to his mountain home) and the latter was quite pleased and amused.

Your French isn't bad – better than mine. In fact, since I am learning by speaking, I have no conception of how the words are spelt.

Say, you and this Prof. Barnett seem to be doing OK. Who is he? By the way orchid, not orchard!

I hope the mail is coming thru better, now. And remember, the buzz bombs have completely stopped over a month, so don't worry. The incident of the newspaper article has not developed any complications yet.

I'm surprised you're becoming more tolerant of the reactionaries. I'm not. In fact, I'll be quite a radical when I get home, and guess I'll pull you along with me. I'm proud of your prolific speaking ability and think you ought to do more of it.

And please quit talking about "in your youth." It makes me feel like an old man, even tho I'm only 31.

Did it occur to you that Geo. Sands was a homosexual?

My "lady friend" seems to have good taste. She is Mrs. Caspar, a woman of 35 to 40 who is manageress of a big dept. store.

Say, how did your other speech come out, the scheduled one. You made 2 didn't you.

Please don't make an alcoholic out of my boy, Steve—altho an occasional binge won't hurt him, I guess. Recd. 2 pkgs dates 6 Jan 45.

Haven't seen Joe Filger in a long time, but should I see him, I'll ask him to drop Sam Okrent a line.

All my love, sweetheart. I know I'm a bit early, but the mail might be delayed, so happy anniversary. I wish we were together to celebrate.

Ben

28 Feb 45
[Liège]

Hello Ginny:

Beaucoup de travail since the latest putsch started, and I expect the work to continue as long as they push. We're bringing 'em in and evacuating them by the numbers. Lots of night work in my dept. altho surgery is still

working only an 8 hr. day. But we have to work ahead of them, so the night before, we get the films read so that Pts can be operated the following morning. They're hammering at the gates of Cologne and Dusseldorf today—so it won't be long before they're on the Rhine—I hope. [*Both cities are on the Rhine. As the winter ended the Allied armies started moving eastward, probably the “putsch” or “push” dad refers to. On March 7, the 9th Armored Division of the U.S. First Army reached the Ludendorff Bridge over the Rhine at Remagen , which the Germans had failed to blow up completely.*]

I went to the concert Sunday—they started again—and heard Schubert's Unfinished, Beethoven's 5th, and a Lalo violin concerto played by a Belgique. Very excellent music and performers. They seem to go for Lalo here, and rightly so—he's an excellent composer, tho of course not in the class of the music masters. They played his Russian concerto which was about as Russian in style and tempo as Casey's famous cat. [*Reference unclear.*] But it was a delicate and sweet composition, which seems to please the French palate.

Red brought a patient up for a G.I. [*gastro-intestinal*] series—they aren't set up yet—and fell in love with my fluoroscopic machine: the part-German and part-American apparatus we put together. He sat with me as I read films and we argued over cases, just like old times. It was swell to see the fatty again: 215 lbs! I shouldn't talk; I'm 195 at least.

Today I received a directive (I think by mistake) requesting the C.O. to send in the name of an officer who would make a likely athletic officer (in addition to his other duties). He would be sent to Paris for a 1 wk. course.

In pencil in the upper rt. hand corner was a note stating "Consider Felson and (another name)." I think the clerk, seeing my name on the memo, thought it was to be forwarded to me. At any rate, I don't think the C.O. will approve my name because he doesn't care for me and prob. likes the other guy better. In any event, it's a possibility which I would love to have materialize.

I note the Colonel's been a little more considerate of us all lately. There is now a truck to bring officers and men back to the post from town at 10:30 every night (other outfits here have had transportation for their personnel for weeks). And he seems a little more personal to me. I wonder why the change in attitude.

Last night I was discussing with Edelson, Manny, and another guy that this outfit wasn't so bad; that even the worst things that happened here were only of trivial importance and were well compensated for by the many other comparative advantages. I pointed out that the thing of greatest importance to me was professional freedom from administrative encumbrances, and that, at least, was true here. Of course, I was giving myself a pep talk, too, but I was really aiming at Manny's constant griping at various personalities. And with each objection or argument of Manny's, I was able to come back with: "It's a mere triviality." And, what do you know—today the Col. made the announcement concerning transportation back from town at 10:30!

Tonight we had another social at the club including chopped chicken liver sandwiches, coffee, and champagne (the latter @ 20 fr per 2 oz. drink). Also Lindy and his accordion, a pianist and a cornetist furnished the music. I enjoyed a very pleasant evening. On my return (now), I just learned we're getting a lot of patients again. Oh, me—'Round and 'round we go...

So, to bed. Goodnight my love and pleasant dreams. Will this war never end!!! Love to Steve, Nancy, and all our families.

B Felson

Sat—3 Mar
[1945; Liège]

Hello dearest:

We're still doing a land-office business, averaging about 100 patients a day including 10-15 fluoroscopies. But we manage to get done about 7 or 8 pm every evening, which doesn't make it so tough. However, the work is more traumatic in type, and therefore not so interesting.

I received your letter enclosing that from Martha Bernhard today, and have just finished a letter to Mel. I hope the —— answers it more promptly than he did my other ones. I am naturally very disappointed about the rejection and can't understand the reason for it. I am going to try to send it to the *Amer. Journal of Roentgenology*, if Mel will hold still for that.

Night before last and last night we had excellent shows at our theater. The first night we had a USO show consisting of an excellent pianist-accordionist; a good and pretty dancer, a hilarious comedienne who sang songs in a husky baritone—she stopped the show; and 2 singer-comedian-mind reading artistes. The latter put on a baffling act, one being blindfolded on the stage, the other going thru the audience getting people to write things on a paper, and the man on the stage told what was written. He stopped at my side, asked me to write my alma mater on the paper—and added “If you have one.” The man on the stage quickly starting talking about beer etc. and winding up with “Vas you ever in Zinzinnati.” He then added that I was an erudite person, with a B.S. degree (I nodded), an M.S. degree (I shook my head side to side) and a PhD degree (I said no! no!). The man in the audience told him he must be wrong, but “Salami” said he wasn't. Then the stooge asked what the degrees meant. And Salami replied, “B.S. means what you think it means. M.S. means more of the same, and PhD means pile it high and deep!” What a laugh—and I'm still getting teased about it. What a sucker I am!

Last night we had a colored engineer choir singing spirituals and Boogie Woogie. Despite the fact that half of them couldn't come because of military duties, they were about the best choir it's ever been my good fortune to hear. They had a tenor-soprano, tenor, and baritone soloists, who were magnificent and the choir was amazing. They should become professionals after the war.

Two of my men are away on leaves, so that the rest of them have to keep hopping to get done. Lindy is in Paris and Auger is in England. Both had their names pulled out of a hat—only 2 names were drawn for each trip—and everyone is talking about the luck of the X-ray dept.

[POSSIBLE MISSING PAGE]

6 Mar 45 [Liège]

Hello dearest:

I just wanted to show off my typing. I have had to type my own reports since my E.M. are such abominable spellers of medical terms that it takes less time for me to do it myself. I don't have to hunt and peck anymore since I know where most of the keys are without looking by this time.

Today has been interesting from the standpoint of the various nationalities which we have X-rayed. We have had Russians, Yugoslavians, Italians, and a German. It seems that a number of them were released or escaped from German POW camps in the recent American drive towards Cologne. Most were originally soldiers captured by the Germans as long as 3 yrs. ago, and several were in horrible condition. They all had the "itch," had obviously lost much weight, and some had neglected, infected wounds. [*Itch reference unclear; lice?*] They all showed a hatred for our German POWs—which is easily understood, since they were shabbily treated by the Germans. One poor fellow said that so far he had been unable to eat the American food—it was too rich for him! Another poor guy showed far advanced pulmonary T.B. A third fellow told us that he was one of about 25 men who escaped from a stockade when they heard the Americans were coming, and tried to make the American lines. Most were killed by American shells! He was slightly wounded and with the remnants of his compatriots succeeded in getting thru. He seemed careful to take pains to indicate that the Americans didn't shell them deliberately. Our interpreter was a very nice nurse whom none of us suspected of being Polish, altho she has been with us since the States. She said that they spoke a mixture of Russian, Polish, and Slavic which resembled Polish sufficiently for her to speak and understand.

And believe it or not, we X-rayed an American civilian today! He works for the gov't attached to the Army and was wearing civilian clothes; Sager thought he was a Belge and tried his punk French on him. The guy laughed and said, "Hell, I'm from Chicago!" Sager's jaw dropped 3 inches,

but he recovered quickly, and then called everyone in the dept. in to see the American civilian. We all got a big laugh out of it.

I saw [Eugene] O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* [1944] last night and was a bit disappointed in the movie version. [*The play was first produced in New York in 1922.*] I guess the movie is a poor medium to demonstrate or even infer rape. I thought [William] Bendix was excellent, tho.

I am very sad about my article being rejected by the Surgeon General's office and am mystified as to the reason. Mel's failure to try to contact me is unforgivable, but it's my own fault for being sucker enough to bring him into the thing in the first place. Well, live and learn. Maybe it will appear in print someday—at least I hope so. [*I have no further clue about this elusive medical article, mentioned many times.*]

I'm very pleased that everything is going along so well at home, and of course, attribute it to your excellent management. Keep up the good work, and especially don't do any quarreling or bickering with your mother. And it's still a little early for any post-war plans for us, altho you can dream about it like I do. While I haven't changed my mind, it's possible that we won't stay in Cincy if some better opportunity presents itself, so don't make any financial commitments whatsoever. Time will tell. All my love, sweetheart. Say, you can [*unreadable on original*] you. Ben.

9 March 45

Hello dearest:

We're pretty busy so I'm going to write a short one today. The war news continues good, so maybe we'll be home some day in 1945. I guess I shouldn't kick—many people I know have been overseas for 2½ to 3 yrs, and my incarceration is only 1¼ years.

I had an interesting day yesterday: took a truck ride into town to buy an Eisenhower jacket: the short woolen blouse which Ike wears in his photos. While in town I bought a book for Steve—coloring—but couldn't find anything suitable for Nan. I then bought a ticket for the Opera *La Boheme* for Thursday, and found that no tickets were being issues for USO sponsored Lily Pons and Kostelanetz who are playing here next week—first come, first served. [*Dad reported having already seen them in his letter of Feb. 14 so there must be a mix-up in the pages of these letters.*] Also I learned that there is a symphony next week. So my musical appetite is being whetted in keen anticipation. I next went to see my friends, the

Radelets. The Dr., an OB-Gyn man was in and we chatted for a while. Then he begged me to go to a hospital and see him operate, following which we'd go back to his home for dinner. Reluctantly, I agreed and we took off in his General Motors, European made 4 cylinder car.

The Hospital was an old castle taken over by some Catholic nuns many years ago, and situated on a lovely hill overlooking beautiful valleys and the river, at the edge of town. I spoke to the nun-in-charge in passable (barely) French and met several other Drs. The Pt. was a gyn case and just before she went under—and without knowing an American was in the room, said “Okay, I’m ready,” in English!

Dr Radelet tells me that all surgeons, except those in the University, carry their own instruments. He had his own, which were sterilized immediately after he gave them to the sister. The Dr. anesthetist and the patient's Dr. who was acting as surgical asst. and was more in the way than helpful, two sisters hovering about the room, and myself and the Pt's husband were the only ones in the O.R. In other words, Radelet did essentially everything himself except give the anesthetic. This is customary here, no scrub nurses etc. being used.

The surgical technic and sterile technic are essentially the same as in the states, and their equipment and O.R. are quite modern. The doctor is a helluva slick surgeon and worked rapidly under evipal anesthesia (same as we use in the States for this work). Within 45 minutes he had demonstrated a tubal pregnancy and ruptured ovarian cyst, removed them, did an appendectomy and a uterine suspension, put his coat on and had a cup of coffee. We stopped in the X-ray dept. which was quite modern and very nicely equipped, considering the size of the hospital. The equipment was made in this very city.

We returned to his home where we had a supper consisting of 2 eggs, bacon, Herve cheese (a Belgian product) and preserves, an apple, and about 7 cups of coffee, followed by 2 “thimbles” of home-mixed Coin-treau. Then we talked, I in French, and Dr. and Mrs. Radelet in English for practice. The talk was chiefly small in variety, because I sensed that Radelet, a prosperous Dr. formerly president of the local med. society, is a good deal removed from the left—altho I am not sure since he, too, veers away from politics. In any event, he told me among other things, that the Belgians could not understand our failure to work the Nazi POWs in the Belgian coal mines, despite the coal shortage here. He pointed out that the Germans put the Russian POWs to work in the mines immediately. He feared that if the Americans and British occupied Germany or even part of

it, we would be too easy on the Nazis and German people. He said, "I would like to see the Belgians, French, and Russians occupy Germany. Then you would see an occupation!"

After a very pleasant evening, I went to our hospital's truck station, got on the truck and came back to camp just in time to eat some chicken sandwiches and cinnamon rolls and coffee at the club—they were having a social.

Incidentally, I'm getting fat, I'm afraid. My clothes fit tight and I think I weigh about 190-195 #. Well, I haven't had any exercise for 6 months—no wonder!

Love and kisses to my mister and 2 misses.

Ben.

11 Mar 45 [Liège]

Hello dearest:

I've something interesting to tell you today. Yesterday, some of the men came into the office and told me an enlisted man wanted to see me. And who should look over his shoulder but Jule Grad, in the flesh! We fell over each other like brothers, which in reality we later proved to be but in another sense. [*I again suspect a mix-up in pages or in dates, since he spent time with Jule a month earlier. As to being "brothers," dad's brother Chippy was married to Jule's sister, Helen Grad, but "we later proved to be" is unclear.*]

It seems that Jule, who has been overseas almost 3 years, finally learned where I was thru Chippy and Helen, and found himself nearby with a pass and a little time off! And a thumb which apparently is very effective on the open road. In England we had tried to get together but were too far apart to make it. Jule is a corporal in the signal corps, holds a very responsible position, and has adjusted very well to army life. He is in fine health, has put on a good bit of weight and bears a very striking resemblance to his brother Aaron, especially his profile. For a guy who has been overseas so long he is in remarkably good spirits—I'm afraid I would be E.T.O. happy by that time. [*An army slang collection refers to this expression as meaning "bored," but in context it sounds more like "cuckoo." "E.T.O." refers to the European Theater of Operations.*]

Fortunately I was about thru with the morning work, so Manny took over the dept. and for about 6 hours, despite constant short interruptions, we talked of things mundane and philosophical, covering a multitude of subjects, including each individual in our families, the political condition of the world, freedom of the press, and our impressions of the few countries which we had visited. One of the most striking things of our meeting was the striking change in my opinion of him which resulted. It seems that I have not known Jule well enough, in the past. Actually I hardly knew him before Chip and Helen got married altho he used to be very friendly to Sid Kahn. And after the union of the Felsons and Grads, we only met in groups and seldom saw each other alone.

To begin with, Jule and I seem to feel pretty much the same about politics, and as you know that's a pretty good start as far as I'm concerned. Next, he is very sincere and despises insincerity as much as I do. Furthermore, he is exceedingly bright and a very excellent talker which makes him even more interesting. To top it all, he is extremely loyal to his friends and will go out of his way for them. I could go on, but I simply am trying to convey the idea that I found that I liked him very much. It seems strange to come so far to find out things about one's acquaintances and family.

Jule had lunch with me and left at about 3 P.M. to hitch-hike back to his unit. We are going to try to get together again soon. Incidentally, he asked me to urge Edith to write him. She sends him pkgs. but never a line. Will you please tell her to get on the ball and start writing both to him and to me. I found her letters very entertaining, tho brief, and she is another person I have learned to appreciate as time passes.

Manny is now on a 3 day pass to Brussels and I am on my own, but not very busy. Manny left this morning. I could have been the one to go, but thought I'd give him the first opportunity, and take the next one, if there is another. Say, I discovered I have a disease, in fact two. 1. Pilonidal cyst 2. Varicose veins. Both are mild unfortunately, so I guess I'll have to stay here.

With love,

Ben

18 Mar 45
[Liège]

Hello darling:

I hope everything's going well at home—at least as well as usual. I am pleased with the way the war is going, but at best it's slow work (like my typing), so don't get too optimistic.

I have seen Jule Grad twice since his first visit. He came up for dental care and got completely fixed up in this respect. On his last trip, I knocked off at noon and took him into town for dinner. We had an excellent meal—duck, hors d'oeuvres, soup, and crepe suzettes (not in that order) and he seemed in 7th heaven. I insisted on paying despite his strong protestations (he is an independent cuss). I doubt if he can get permission to come up again now that he doesn't have the dental excuse. I think his visit here gave him quite a lift, because it gave him a breath of home, and like everyone over here, he's so tired of being away. His eyes looked a little moist when we parted, but so were mine.

By the way, I wish you'd show my last letters and this one to his family. They worry so much about him. I can assure them he is never near any fighting, that his type of work is always rear echelon stuff, and he is as safe (but not as happy) as if he were on Gholson Ave. [*Reference is to the street in North Avondale where Julius – the name we knew him by – grew up.*]

My past week has been full of enjoyment from the entertainment standpoint. To begin with, I went to hear and see Lily Pons, which I wrote about in my last letter. On Thurs. I heard *La Boheme*, but, altho the voices and orchestra were good, I didn't like it, because the music didn't please my ear. I never did like Puccini; his music doesn't have enough melody for me. I've never been so bored since I heard *Madame Butterfly*. In both these operas together there are about 3 beautiful arias. [*Oy!*] I plan to skip *Madame Butterfly* and *Tosca* which are the next two operas to be sung.

Friday night we had the colored engineers for a request repeat performance. They sang the same program as before but it was just as enjoyable as the first time, which I wrote you about before. What voices! And what rhythm! They also had a Belgian violinist who was fair and an accordionist who was rotten before the colored group arrived.

Last night, Manny, Zan, 2 other officers and myself went to town to see the play *Three Men on a Horse*, with several of the original Broadway cast, including Sam Levene. Radio's Henry Aldrich [*probably Ezra Stone*] was also in it as well as 2 Broadway lovelies. I had seen the movie version, but it was definitely a censored version I assure you. As a matter of fact the play is refreshingly risqué and is really hilarious. I can't remember laughing so hard in ages. And it was a real Broadway performance, too. God love

the USO for this one! [*The play, written by George Abbott and John Cecil Holm, opened on Broadway in 1935. The movie version (1936) starred Frank McHugh and Joan Blondell.*]

Afterwards we went to the club dance and had open-faced sandwiches, cake and coffee. I didn't feel like dancing, so watched for a while and then went to bed, about midnight.

Today I am going to the symphony. I don't recall the program, but as I remember, it sounded good to me, and an American, Sgt. Emerson Meyer, is the piano soloist.

I ran across my Jewish Belgian friends while walking thru town yesterday. They had moved to another part of the city and seem quite well and happy. The brother got out of the jug the day after I had last seen them, and I doubt if it was due to anything I did. They invited me to a Seder at their home and I said I would try to come. But when in the hell is Pesach? What a Jew I am!

Our work has slackened somewhat, enough so that I can do some reading in the daytime. However, there have been few interesting cases lately, which always disappoints me.

Cpl. Blough, one of my men who hails from Michigan, showed me an article in his home town paper listing the death of the busiest X-ray man in Grand Rapids. It might not be a bad idea to contact Col. Collisi after the war—remember, he asked me to write him because he thought there would be an opening in Butterworth Hospital in G.R. Also maybe I ought to get Ingersoll's reaction next time I see him. He also has hinted that he and I would work well together. However, it's still premature, so I guess I'll wait awhile.

Well, dearest, this typing wears me out, so I guess I will sign off. With all my love and devotion,

Ben

20 Mar 45
[Liège]

Hello Ginny darling:

I think I'll answer some of your recent letters today, for a change, after I spend a few paragraphs on my recent doings.

Sunday, I went to the symphony with Hulse and enjoyed it very much. Hulse knows music as well as he does politics, which is considerable knowledge. I find him very entertaining and excellent company.

Last night I spent a quiet evening, after a shower, in pajamas on my litter, reading the 1944 yearbook. I read over 100 pages and was very proud of myself. At 11 P.M. the men brought me some fried chicken, bread, butter, and coffee from late chow. The chicken was a dream: fried in deep fat and had a soft brown crust on it which tasted like it had corn on it. We also had this chicken for lunch, and it's the best I've eaten—ever.

Well, here are replies to your recent questions, and discussions of points in your letters.

1. The Sophie vs Louise duel over the 400 smackers: well, it would take 3 courts-of-law to straighten that one out, and far be it from me to mix into it. It prob. could have been better if Soph had let sleeping dogs lie, because such a petty thing could cause serious strife in the family, and it was entirely forgotten by everyone. Of course, Louise did owe the money and should have paid it back, but to force one's own sister to pay, especially when she needs it, isn't being done in the best of circles. But I, too, am staying clear. Don't quote me.
2. When I come home, I don't want to go night-clubbing, meet you in New York etc. I want to come home and stay home. You silly thing—don't you realize that one of the things I miss most here is a place to call home?
3. I no longer have a favorite child. What you have told me of Nancy and her pictures make me long for her as much as for Steve. That's a change, isn't it?
4. Say, what's going on between you and this guy Romano? And hell, if "noxious" and "assuage" are the best sweet nothings he can whisper, aren't you bored? [*Reference unknown.*]
5. Steve's objections to having his picture taken seem too consistent to be without significance. It sounds like picture-taking has a special meaning for him, an unpleasant one. Perhaps I am associated in some manner. Don't make an issue of it. Of course, I'd like some photos of him, but perhaps you can make it seem like a game. Or else take candid shots. Please, how about more photos.

6. I received the 1944 yearbook. Could you send me the 1943 one. And don't send me too many old journals. You might start sending me only the current ones.
7. Bert has always seemed to me to be a rather unusual kid and a profound one. I've always been amazed by Uncle Abe's children. Is Sandra as beautiful as ever? Incidentally, I've always been an admirer of Mary's. You've got a few swell relatives. [*Abe Berman was mom's mother's brother. Bert, Larry and Sandra were the children of Abe and Martha (nee Silverblatt) , and were thus mom's first cousins. There were several Marys on mom's side but none seems to fit this reference.*]
8. I didn't realize I contradicted myself about re-ordering *Life Magazine*. But it has been coming so seldom that I hardly even see it. *P.M.s* are more regular, and I've got about 20 numbers of the latter to read right now.
9. Am going to send you some Val St. Lambert glassware: a fruit bowl and ashtray. They make beautiful glass, but it's quite expensive and most of it looks like it wouldn't arrive safely in the states. Furthermore, I don't know what you want in this line. Let me know and I'll buy some more if I can and be practical about it, my dear.



Figure 24: I don't remember any such bowl but this is an example of that glass-maker's work.

10. Black lace nightgowns will not be bought by B. Felson, under any circumstances!
11. I hope my anniversary present arrived in time. It's too bad we must be apart for 2 of them in a row. Maybe, by the time our next one rolls around we will be together again.

12. Here's some requests: Salami in paraffin, cheese, nuts, marinated and chopped herring, Ritter Beans, canned mushrooms.
13. Roselyn's baby from the meagre description might have a birthmark (hemangioma). If so, it should be given radium treatments, but can wait until I return, unless it seems to be growing pretty fast. In your next letter, describe it to me: exact size, color, whether pressure causes the color to disappear, and any change in size. Have them measure it from time to time to keep me posted.
14. I don't know Gordon Block. Give the money in Mutt's name to anyone Danny Engel tells you. I don't think \$3 is enough.
15. Thanks for the very cute Valentine. They didn't have them here as far as I know.

Well, that's all for now, dear.

All my love,
Ben.

23 Mar 45
[Liège]

Hello again, my love:

What lovely weather we are having here! Each day is more beautiful than the one before. I haven't seen a cloud for a week and the temperature is just right. In fact it has been ideal baseball weather and we have been hitting the ball around after lunch and after dinner, daily. Everyone says I'm getting fat so instead of cutting down on my food, I'm trying to sweat it off. To top it all off, we are doing less work than ever before. I don't know why business is so light. So I have much time on my hands. I do some reading, medical and otherwise, see the movies on the post, go to any entertainment that I can find, and manage to pass the time in one manner or another. There was an opera in town last night, but it was *Butterfly*, and after last week's experience with Puccini I decided to attend the post movie instead. Next week is *Tosca*, and later *Aida* and *Rigoletto*. I look forward to the latter two especially.

Night before last I went to the home of the Breyere's for one of their musical evenings. Manny and Zanly were with me. We had some very excellent amateur musicians including the 2 daughters of the Dr. and a number of guests: assorted pianists, cellists, and vocalists. Most of the numbers

were a little too formal for my complete enjoyment, but several, including some of my favorite Chopins and [the] Jewel song from [Charles Gounod's] Faust, balanced things up. We talked a lot and left at 10:30 for home, after a very enjoyable evening. I am invited for Sunday dinner (12 noon) and look forward to it to vary the relatively monotonous existence here. They are very nice people and someday I hope that you will have the opportunity of meeting them.

Had an interesting experience yesterday. About a week ago one of my men was reported for not saluting an officer in town. 2 days later I got him and another man a promotion to Cpl—the first promotions my men have received since coming overseas. Well, yesterday the Detachment Commander called the man down and told him he was being busted to buck private for his failure to salute. The injustice is apparent when you consider that the man has been in the Army for 2½ years, is blind in one eye and the officer approached him on that side, and that about 1 out of every 10 men salute officers in town. So I went down to talk to the Detachment Commander. He was very adamant about it and wouldn't consider any of the circumstances. I was a little put out and told him he had gotten up on the wrong side this A.M. and asked him if he minded if I went to the C.O. about it. He had to say he didn't mind, tho he obviously did mind. So I went to the C.O. with my problem. The latter was very nice about it and listened to my arguments. He agreed with me, and added that he was seldom saluted in town and saw no reason why the punishment should be so severe. He told me the man would not be busted. I understand that the D.C. is really gunning for me now! But I'm not worried about him as I have enough on him to hang him.

I am very proud of your speaking engagements and would like you to continue them, gaining experience as you go. Do you get paid; not that it makes any difference or not. I suggest you give your audience little shocks from time to time but don't give them ... [*Rest not visible on original.*]

Love

Ben

26 Mar 45

Hello again Honey:

I've received a couple of very enjoyable letters from you, one dated Mar 15! You certainly are getting around, what with your work, public speaking etc. I suppose when I get back, you'll be a permanent figure in

our city and want to run for Congress. I think you're finding yourself. Keep at it. By the way, do I understand correctly—are you making \$175 a month! Or is that the salary you make if you work full time. Remember, though, dearest, what a turmoil the kids got in the last time you worked. Think it over carefully before you accept either full or part-time work. I'd rather see you do public speaking, gratis, than work for any salary and impair the peace and happiness of your children.

You may bite off more than you can chew by taking 2 kids away for a long vacation. You'd better take a maid along and stay half the time you would otherwise.

Keep up the good work with the kids. I'll always be indebted to you for the excellent manner in which you handle their upbringing.

We're still very light here, and I have been gallivanting around so much I haven't been able to write. I'm sorry. This was my schedule for the past 4 days:

Fri noon: went to the 25th general about 12 miles away for a visit. They have a lovely place in the outskirts of an unfriendly Flemish village; relatively new buildings, nice quarters etc. etc. They have some patients, but aren't going full blast yet—just fixing up the place. Dave, Jimmy Mack, Red Elsey, and Sander Goodman were very friendly and hospitable. I found Red rather overcritical of some of the men in the unit, inclined to be picayunish. He has a very nice dept, but I prefer mine, because of some of Red's fool (I think) notions about the administration of his dept. I don't think he's geared for a heavy load—he's never had a heavy load and the 25th has never functioned as an evacuation hospital, like we have here. They prob. will have to work as an evac. hospital in this locale before long. The 25th has handled about 1/5 (or less) the no. of patients we have had since being in the E.T.O. I stayed for steak dinner, drinking Joe Tilger's scotch and Sander's wine (and his shrimp) before dinner. Zan Edelson was with me.

Friday night they had a dance, which we attended. I drank gin, scotch, wine, champagne, and GI alcohol in grape juice, had a hilarious time, and awoke the next A.M. with a hangover. [*Dad spoke often of the "purple passion," a last-resort cocktail made out of lab-available pure grain alcohol and grape juice.*] We were fortunate in hitch-hiking home and I arrived home on Sat. A.M. ready to work, but we still weren't busy.

Sat. night I stayed in and read. Sun. noon I went to dinner at the Belgian Drs house and it was delicious. Cream of spinach soup (mm), excellent roast beef (or lamb?), wonderful sauce, potatoes, carrots and peas,

salad of tuna and lettuce (served as a separate course), chocolate pudding, real coffee. We drank wine and beer with the meal, and curacao afterwards. By now, they all speak English well and I enjoyed it immensely. After dinner we went to the Symphony. I enjoyed a very beautiful program—which I am enclosing with my own comments. [*We don't have it.*]

I remarked to my friends that the selection of numbers in their concerts tickled my ear and Mrs. Howet (the Drs. daughter) told me that much of the present music was banned during the occupation, so that practically all they play now are those numbers which they hadn't had in so long, to make up for lost time. Fortunately for me, they all grew tired of Wagner and some of the more ponderous music of German writers. I was amused when I inquired of the 2 young daughters if they went out with American soldiers, to learn from Mama that nice girls their age did not go out without Mama coming along, that at no age did they go to night clubs etc. without Mama. In short, they were seldom seen out at night without Mama being along. I promised them that I would bring 2 soldiers along—men of “unimpeachable character,” etc.—who might teach them to jitterbug—they are dying to learn. Francois listens to American radio programs constantly and longs to play jazz on the piano but doesn't know how.

Sun. night I saw *Dragon Seed*—it was really an outstanding picture, albeit the ending was stretched out too much. [*A 1944 film from a Pearl Buck novel, starring Katharine Hepburn and Walter Huston.*]

This A.M.: both Manny and I went over to the 298th General to meet with Col. Allen, our chief E.T.O. X-ray consultant. We returned at 6 pm after a day well spent in discussing our problems including presentation of interesting cases. I saw Charley Ingersoll, Red Eley, and all the other X-ray men and it was a lot of fun. Col. Allen is a swell egg, very modest despite his capabilities, candid, and very popular with it all. Everything was quite informal.

I came away with one thing. Apparently I have, from an all-around standpoint, a better set-up than anyone else: (1) I have the only satisfactory fluoroscopic machine in the hospital center (8 hospitals) (2) I am the only one that has 2 Bucky Machines [*X-ray unit with a drawer -like device under the table*] (3) My dept. is one of the few which has not lost any enlisted men by transfer to the infantry (4) I am one of the radiologists who still has an assistant (5) We have fewer films left behind when the patient is evacuated (6) We have the only dept. which doesn't need a full-time clerk (our record system is so simplified that it usually doesn't require a full-time man—and yet it works without a hitch) (7) Because of (4) we get the films to the wards

and operating room much quicker than anyone else and don't permit films to wait until the next morning for reading. (8) My men get much more time off than any of the others (9) My films are as good or better than any of the others.

I don't claim any credit for the above, because it has simply been due to good luck. But I do feel proud of the dept.

Well, that's all for now, dearest.

My deepest love to you and the kids. I miss you so much, and Oh, how I want to come home!

Ben

31 Mar 45
[Liège]

Hello again, darling:

Well, business has picked up, and I don't have as much time to fool around as I did last week.

Manny and I pulled a fool stunt about 2 mo. ago and found out about it yesterday. Fortunately, it had no sequelae, but it might have.

About 2 mo. ago, our best internist sent a patient down with tumors in his chest and tonsils for us to X-ray and examine. It looked like a malignant tumor of his chest and tonsil and we examined him carefully, including palpation of the tonsil with our finger. We washed our hands afterwards and thought no more about it. He was evacuated and I enclosed a follow-up card in his chart, because I was interested in the case. Yesterday I got the card back: diagnosis of primary and secondary syphilis with active chance of the tonsil teeming with spirochetes! Our blood tests are negative, so we are pretty lucky—or rather we might have been unlucky enough to get infected. That would be a helluva way to get it, wouldn't it! [*The first disposable rubber gloves did not appear until 1964.*]

I think you should be proud of me—I attended Seders on the 1st and 2nd nights of Passover!

The first night there was a big Seder—1200 soldiers—put on by the Army, with Meyer Bloom as chairman. Bloom was really in his element, and did a fine job. Of course the chicken livers and matzo balls would spoil (someone forgot to put them in the icebox). But the services were brief, the

Belgian rabbi had a marvellous voice, and the chicken soup was rather good. Various Commanding Officers (gentiles) and bigwigs were invited, and a number came. There were services at 6:30 in the Synagogue (I didn't go) and at 8 P.M. the Seder began. It was run off with split second timing, the services proceeding by flashlight when the power failed for 10 minutes. It was very nice, even if I was bored to tears except when the rabbi sang. I may be able to get a photo of the thing to send you.

I ran across 2 Cincy boys there whom I knew by sight: Napperstick (the older of the 2 brothers) and another fellow whose name I don't recall.

I was amused at Zan Edelson who was griped at Manny for not going and seemed horrified when I said I was going only because I liked the food (you may recall, Zan is married to a gentile). So I explained to Zan that, being a Jew had many disadvantages and a few advantages. Since I was forced to suffer the former, I wasn't going to forego the latter. He didn't think it was funny!

Last night I went to a Seder at Beryl Lerner's house. He came out a few days ago to invite me, and wouldn't take no for an answer. You will recall him as the Jew we met when we first arrived here, whose bro-in-law was arrested but later released.

There were 4 GIs, 2 young girls 17 and 19 whose parents had been taken from Poland into Germany by the Nazis and have never been heard from since, a Jewish couple—he lived in NYC for 2 years and now is a U.S. Army interpreter, Mr. and Mrs. Lerner and son and sister.

Mr. Lerner also has a pleasant voice and the services were not too long, and the food and wine were excellent, so I enjoyed myself very much. Mrs. Lerner mothered me to death. They seemed to think it a terrific honor to have a Jewish Major and Dr. as a guest, and I was touched but embarrassed.

The menu? 1. The usual impedimenta of a Seder service 2. Two hard boiled eggs and salt water 3. chicken soup with matzo disks—delicious—I think it's called Krebits or something [*I am opting for creplach.*] 4. gefilte fish without the gefilte (carp) 5. chicken, sliced beef, a small piece of "helzel" [*stuffed chicken skin*] filled with egg 6. applesauce 7. Beaucoup de Vin and good. I was slightly "schicker" [*drunk*] before the evening was out.

And you should hear my Yiddish! I was better than any of the GIs and they all got a big kick out of it.

I'm very proud of your speech-making dearest. Keep it up and do some practicing and study in this direction. I have an idea that apres la guerre you should go into this type of thing in a big way—if you like it.

I hope you and the kids are all well and happy—it sure looks like Papa ought to be coming home soon.

My love to you, sweetheart.

Ben

3 Apr 45 [Liège]

Hello Gin:

What's the latest word from the home front? Not much is happening around here: few patients and little in the way of amusements. A movie here and there, some good, some bad. *Dragon Seed* [described above] was really fine and packed a good punch.

It seems when the Armies move fast, our work slackens appreciably—or the front has moved so far away the patients are bypassing us. I don't know which.

I'm planning to hear [Rossini's] *Barber of Seville* this week and [Verdi's] *Aida* next, with maybe a concert on Sunday. This Thurs. we are taking 6 of our men to the Drs. house for a dance. They are inviting some Belgique lasses in and believe it or not, Mama and I are to be the chaperones while Manny plays chess with the old man. I must be getting old!

I'm losing one of my men to the infantry this week—a one-eyed boy named Crane. He will prob. be a medic. I hate to see him go, especially since he's the only married man and is quite afraid of shooting. But he is the least trained of the technicians and the least congenial of the bunch, so there's nothing else to do. I don't relish the idea of deciding things of this sort, but I guess I'm duty-bound to do it to the best advantages of the Army. I wouldn't be surprised to see more of my men go.

I've received 2 pkgs. recently including dried smoked herrings, marinated herring, shrimp, beans, liver paste, tongue, and sardines. I'm afraid I'll get fatter instead of thinner, but at least I'm getting some exercise now; again I had to push the Special Service officer along to get a ballfield fixed up. I suspect that I'll have to arrange ballgames, too, despite his appointment as athletic officer.

Today I went to the glass factory to get the crystal-ware we all bought from their display here 3 weeks ago—about \$1000 worth was sold on this post. The Executive Officer asked me to go along with the truck. It is about 15 miles away. I had bought a fruit dish and nice big ashtray (I'm shipping them tomorrow). The place is in a sad state of neglect, the glass making part is still closed, but they are still blowing and cutting glass. It's quite a business, and I'm sure very profitable. On the trip I saw many factories and the effects of bombs (American and German) on them. They say Germany is really a mess, and I don't wonder.

About a week ago I received a letter from Marian Watts (my Sec. at Ft. Benj. [*Harrison in Indiana*]) with an enclosure from Jerry Sloven, the Brooklyn Jewish boy who worked for me for a while at Ft. Ben. The latter stated that he was a POW in Germany—I'll enclose it. I wrote him a letter, but didn't know how to mail it so I called Red Cross yesterday who told me that letters to American POWs must be sent only by civilians. So I had to tear up the letter.

Today I received a call from Red Cross saying that the Red Cross at the 76th General (1 mi away) had called and a Pt. wanted to see me. His name was Cpl. Jerry Sloven!

I went right over and there was Jerry in the flesh (but not much of it). He was tremendously happy to see me (as I was to see him) and told me he had been liberated 1 wk. ago after being a POW for 6 months. His story is very interesting:

He was in a replacement pool on the continent for 7 mo. awaiting assignment as an X-ray technician. Finally he was sent out as a frontline medic to [*Gen. George*] Patton's [*Third*] Army at Metz in September. On his first day he was almost captured but managed to dodge a few bullets deliberately fired at him while he was giving first aid. On the 5th day, he and his company were caught in a town and after getting shot up, were captured. The Nazis set fire to the houses and wouldn't let them take the badly wounded cases out. They were herded into boxcars—60 to a small boxcar, the door locked and they travelled thus for 4 days with a little water and no food. The door was opened every night to empty the latrine pot (one per car). They had to urinate thru the cracks in the car. They heard American planes bombing and strafing much of the way. They finally reached a POW camp in Limburgh [*75 miles into Germany*] where they were searched and most of their belongings which hadn't been confiscated before were now taken from them. He remained there for about a month, eating bread and soup with occasional cabbage and potatoes and horsemeat sausage raw,

as a Sunday treat. They all had lice and diarrhea and Jerry lost 75 lbs. The death rate among the prisoners was 2 a day—out of 2000 population. There was no open brutality but the Jews were made to do the dirty work, like emptying the latrines. Jerry had “lost” his dog tags and registered as a Protestant at the advice of a “veteran.” The prisoners were a mixture of Americans, English, and Russians, etc., with a Polish doctor (who blew with the wind) in charge of the infirmary. Jerry was assigned to the latter at his own request and found him a very disinterested doctor who just didn’t give a damn. They brought in a wounded German Jewish civilian once, and though they couldn’t save him, did nothing to relieve his suffering.

After being there for a month, a call came in for an English speaking medic and Jerry was sent to a nearby hospital—60 beds—as a ward man. The hospital was staffed by German nurses or nuns (I don’t know which) and a German medical officer, the latter a major, who came in once a week, but was always available for emergencies and treated the patients and Jerry very nicely. He seemed to be a very good doctor.

Here Jerry assumed a new role. The patients were Americans and Englishmen and he was the only medic who spoke English. He was liaison between the patients and the staff, helped with the care of the patients, etc. He stole and begged food and cigarettes for himself and them. He collected their Red Cross boxes for them. Incidentally these boxes saved many lives, the added nutrition was a great help and the cigarettes were in great demand—so much so that they were the barter medium in both the Stalag [*prisoner-of-war camp*] and the hospital. Of course there was some pilfering by the Germans and even by the Americans in charge of the packages but on the whole they came thru intact. Jerry says he saw a good watch bartered for 3 cigarettes!

The nurses used to give him small quantities of food, sugar, etc., surreptitiously and he would divide it among the patients. The hospital patients got fed better than the Stalag patients and Jerry gained back a good portion of the lost weight.

One of the worst features of the hospital was its location between a railroad yard and crossroads, and it was constantly under bombardment from the air. German planes never went up until after the Americans left and during his last month there, Jerry never saw a German plane. Their hospital received several hits but casualties were light because they had an air raid shelter. They received no news whatsoever, but were aware of something going on at the time of the breakthrough by the elation of the

Germans. [*Reference must be to the Bulge breakthrough by the Wehrmacht.*]

I will have to sign off now, dearest. Will finish in my next letter.

All my love,

Ben.

6 Apr 45 [Liège]

Hello my love:

To continue where I left off in my last letter: I was talking about Jerry Sloven, who was a POW of the Germans for 6 months.

He told me the American bombing was terrific, his hospital was near some military installations and American planes were over every day. He also said American prisoners en route, in box cars, were often bombed and killed by our planes, when the latter attacked the railroad stations and that the Germans never travelled by rail for this reason. But all Americans were shipped by rail!

They had no idea that the American Army was nearby until one day Jerry heard an American machine gun and recognized it. He told an officer-patient about it but the latter thought it might be Germans practicing on a captured weapon. A while later he heard small arms fire and they began to receive freshly wounded German soldiers—and for the first time they knew what was happening. Jerry was tempted to escape, but decided to stay with his patients. The firing then stopped and all night and much of the following morning not a sound was heard. Jerry and the others began to fear that the Americans had been driven back, and Jerry was very disturbed because he thought he had missed a golden opportunity to escape. But suddenly a recon. car and 4 armed Americans pulled up to their area. Everyone cheered hysterically. After some questioning by an Amer. Colonel, all the allied patients were evacuated, Jerry with them, while the German nurses and civilians were allowed to remain at their posts. An amusing sidelight was the fear of the nurses and guards that they would be killed and the way they reminded Jerry “how nicely they had treated him.”

Jerry will prob. be decorated for his good work—the officer-patients sent in a recommendation.

Since starting this story, we have received a number of liberated Americans. Some were actually living skeletons and all had lost from 25 to

65 lbs. Several have active pulmonary T.B. and all were weak and infested with lice. What a murderous crew these Nazis are! I've lost any soft-heartedness concerning them. These are things I'm seeing firsthand and not reading the papers!



Figure 25: to the official history, this photo shows patients being brought to the 28th WC-54 3/4-ambulance, probably in the Spring of 1945.

According to the official unit history, this photo shows patients being brought to the 28th WC-54 3/4-ambulance, probably in the Spring of 1945.

To come to a more pleasant topic. Last night Manny, Zanly, and I took 5 of our men to Dr. Breyere's house for a dance. Lindy brought his accordion and between this instrument, the radio, and the Victrola we had plenty of music. In addition, the refreshments were excellent: sandwiches, cake, ice cream, wine and cider. And the girls were lovely—8 of them between 16 and 19 years old. They were cute as could be and I felt like an old man among them. The men quickly warmed up to the situation and everyone seemed to have an excellent time. Manny and the old man played chess while Zan and I danced with Mama and Auntie and all the girls. You should have seen your old man dancing! And did the "dogs" hurt! So a big time was had by all.

I've never received my suitcase nor have any of us got our trunk lockers—so wouldn't you know we would have to wear class A uniforms to

town and neckties and low cut shoes on duty. Fortunately, I bought an Eisenhower jacket which will serve as a blouse, and Manny gave me a pair of dark green trousers, so I can get by.



Figure 26: Eisenhower Jacket, vintage version, available in 2016 for \$200.

Our dept. is being painted today and for the past 3 days and everything is topsy turvy. I hate to work in a mess and this sure is one. But it will look very nice when finished.

Abe Danish just made his captaincy—the first man in the hospital to get 2 promotions in the outfit (except for the Adjutant—who doesn't count anyway). Abe has worked hard for the promotion and I'm very pleased about it. Manny didn't even congratulate him!

Well, dearest it's getting to be suppertime. I received a pkg. from Soph containing a large box of nuts. Thank her for me will you.

I haven't had a letter from home for a week. The mail is like that I guess, but I get impatient.

All my love to you and the kids.

Ben

*[Undated but
must be Spring
1945 since Riv-
iera leave is
mentioned;
Liège]*

Hello Dearest:

I just got news that I have a pass to Brussels for the next 3 days, beginning tomorrow, so I have a nice trip in store for me. Those who have been there say that it is a lovely town, almost as nice as Paris, so I guess I will enjoy myself. I hope this doesn't queer my chances of Paris or the Riviera. I'll keep my fingers crossed, anyhow.

Last night, Manny and I took the Belgian girl and her mama / Mrs. Breyere to the Officers nightclub in town. The younger sister could not go because of the 18 yr age minimum. Some of the other officers from our post were among those present, and all of us seemed to have a nice time, despite the large crowd present. It was packed! The Belgian Orchestra was very nice and the many Belgian lasses there were not hard to look at altho some appeared to be pretty tough characters. We got Mama slightly tight on a few scotches and I was highly amused to see her relax from her usually somewhat stilted and "genteel" demeanor. She married at 18—and was divorced about 10 years later, by her alcoholic medical husband. She is about 40 now and a little careworn, but still has her looks and security (her papa is very well-fixed) and 3 fine children—so she's lonesome but otherwise pretty well off.

No, she didn't proposition me! But she did giggle like a schoolgirl, which was very unlike her usual manner. As a matter of fact, Al Blanket, who was there, asked her daughter if Mama always looked so serious and the girl told Mama, she kept a grin on her face for the rest of the evening and "needled" Blanket every time she saw him. So it must have struck home.

Two days ago, Jule Grad's friends, a Belgian couple, came over to see me. The husband has been ailing and I did a G.I. series on him and had Hulse talk to them both. They were very grateful and I now have a standing invitation to visit them in Namur [*Belgian city 40 miles West of Liege*]. They are a charming couple, liberal in viewpoint and quite intelligent.

I received a box of nuts from Soph and a couple of letters from you yesterday. Please thank Soph for me.

Here's the answers to some of your letters.

That debt to Mrs. Westheimer seems higher than I remember. Look in my strongbox for a note from her giving the balance and check it. I have a hunch she's wrong.

What's this about Nancy's foot turning in? Take her to Dr. Freiberg at once!

I have never said I disliked Milt Rosenbaum. He is a bit too selfish and self-centered for me to like him very much, but I don't dislike him. I'm rather neutral about him.

I'm awfully sorry about Edie's doll. Take it to a doll repair place in Cincy—I can do nothing here. The basket goes on the back like a papoose bag.

Lucien Lelong is supposed to be one of the better perfumers. I doubt if you beat their price in the States.

I mailed the box containing the ash-tray and first bowl today.

My cyst is much better and my varicose veins are very trivial, not visible except to a doctor, and not troublesome.

Don't reproach Steve for his injuring the little girl. And don't be too positive that he was responsible for her symptoms. It is very problematical that a blow could cause uterine bleeding. Forget the whole thing, because a child his age cannot be blamed for any unfortunate accident of this kind, except by some ignoramus. Let me know more about this incident and its outcome.

I wrote Mel Bernhard, but he has not answered my letter. I may write him another one, and this time the tone will be different!

As to Louise writing me a flattering letter—sometimes you're very silly. Louise in her letter did not say anything about me. You don't give me credit for much judgment, do you?

I've heard "One Meat Ball" and think it's very amusing. We hear most of the songs etc. a week or two after you do, on record transcriptions of the big radio programs over the Allied Forces network.

Please send me more photos. I enjoyed the last 2 you sent of Nancy, but they weren't very flattering to her.

Brown's bill of \$5 for the X-ray is dirt cheap. I do not know Dr. Sam Elgart.

Tell Soph that Jimmy Mack went to the cemetery in Hamm to see the grave of Leon Mack. It's a bit too far away for me.

Well, love—kiss the kids for me. I will prob. wait until I came back before I write again, so oceans of love til then.

Ben

13 Apr 45, 10
P.M [Brussels]

Hello from Brussels, darling. This is my last night of my 3 day trip here. It has been a delightful visit, nothing too exciting, but a relaxing trip, of great interest to this small town boy. I will not try to say too much in this V-mail but will write more later.

To begin with, the Army has outdone itself in making arrangements for both officers and men: the trip up was arranged by our hospital center and was by not-too-comfortable truck—but only a 2½ hr. jaunt. [*It's only 60 miles!*] On our arrival at the parking lot, we checked in at a tent and the officers and men were whisked off to their respective hotels. Our hotel (Hotel Central) is located in the heart of town, a delightful, quiet place with the following conveniences: two officers in a lovely room with twin beds and bath—ours has a balcony overlooking the Rouse [*reference unclear*—the heart of town (most houses here have these balconies); a beautiful dining hall with excellent GI food cooked by Belgians; excellent service from Belgian waiters and personnel, all of whom spoke English well; a gift shop with prices about ½ those in the city; an extra week's rations of cigarettes and candy etc.; a money exchange and Army postal service; a quiet reading and writing room with radio; a beautiful night club open 8 to 11 every night with 2 top-notch orchestras playing alternately—about 12 pcs. in each orchestra—lovely Belgian girls are brought in for dancing and there are free sandwiches and champagne at 200 fr.—as much as desired (400 fr. + everywhere else). So our home surroundings are really wonderful. There are tours and shows posted on the bulletin board with a guide to give you directions. See next V-mail.

And Brussels is filled with good entertainment: Movies, Symphonies, Opera, Variety shows, Ensa (British Entertainment), athletic events nightly.

They even have an American basketball tournament going on now (but I didn't attend).

My room-mate is Chief of Med. at 130th GH, a Maj. Evans—a very nice guy, not too exciting, though. Howard Fabring (Esther Marting Fabing's husband) is in their outfit, and Evans, too, holds him in high regard. Since we both had to be together a good portion of the time, we were a bit stuck with each other and it was a bit tough to shake each other loose—damned conventions, you know.

My plan was to do things I couldn't do in our own town or at home and included (1) Sleeping until noon every day (2) seeing the sights that only Brussels could offer—historical and otherwise (3) going to hear the Belgian Nat'l Symphony Orchestra or the Belgian opera (4) going to a Belgian variety show (5) Sitting in a sidewalk cafe (6) Talking to someone from Brussels about political events and the occupation and the Belgian point of view on these (7) getting tight on champagne. I did not plan a wild time because (I guess) I'm getting too old.

Well, I finished most of my plan. My schedule went like this: (1) Wed. afternoon—looking over the town. (2) Wed. evening—hearing the Belgian Nat'l Symphony. (3) Wed 10 to 11 p.m. getting tight on champagne. Thurs. A.M.—sleep. Thurs. p.m. Organized sight-seeing tour. Thurs. p.m. Dinner at the home of friends of Dr. Breyere. Thurs. 10-11 p.m. cockeyed and almost sick on and of champagne. Fri. A.M. ? in bed. Fri. p.m. Visit to Waterloo. Fri. night—Belgian Cabaret with a pretty good show. Fri. 10 p.m. letter to you. Depart in the morning.

All my love,
Ben

Sun. 22 April
Wd. H. [*perhaps
a reference to
the hospital he
was in; see be-
low*]

Hello again my love:

Well, this time I'm writing from a hospital bed—but don't be alarmed. I'm just about well. I wrote you about my foot. It was getting better, so I decided to go to the Opera Thurs. nite. So with 2 other officers we started out.

We hitched a ride and the tailgate of the small truck—weight 50 lbs—dropped right on my sore foot. Did I howl! I thought I'd broken my toe, but apparently I didn't, as the pain soon stopped. Well, I got to the opera OK, but noticed my throat was getting pretty sore.

The opera, *Rigoletto*, was really fine, the baritone who played Rigoletto had as good a voice as any I've heard, altho Gilda and the Duke weren't so hot. Incidentally, the 25th General was there in force and I saw Graller and some of the others.

On leaving the Opera House, I was suddenly seized with a severe chill which lasted about 15 minutes. The 28th vehicle wasn't due to leave for a half hour, so we went into beer joint so I could get warm. After a miserable ride home, I went to the dept., got under some blankets and called the O.D. My temp was 101° and they admitted me to the medical service and started me on penicillin and soaks for my foot.

The following day I was much better and by now, 2 days later, I am almost well.

I had scheduled my first X-ray meeting for Friday when I succeeded in borrowing a projector and was very disappointed that it was going to be called off. But Col. Thorpe, Chief of Med., thought it would be alright if I held it anyway, so the POWs carried me over (and back) in a wheelchair and we had an excellent meeting. My reproductions showed very well and there was a big turnout of 15 Docs. We had some good discussions and everyone wanted more meetings, so we are going to have them every week. I now have my slides etc. so indexed that it will be very little trouble for me, and I have arranged to borrow the projector once a week from the 15th General.

Since being in bed, I've read Quentin Reynolds' *The Curtain Rises*, some short stories, *P.M.s*, and Medical journals, and have been having quite an enjoyable time. Reynolds' book is very interesting but he likes everybody except the obvious enemies! He's a liberal, but quite benign about his liberalism. [*Reynolds' 1944 non-fiction book was in part about life in wartime in the Soviet Union.*]

I received a letter from Jule Grad today. He doesn't tell me where he is, but was very profuse in thanking me for what I had done (which was really very little). It was a very clever and nice letter.

I also received 2 pkgs from you: 1 containing food: tongues, gefilte fish, Vienna sausage, and 2 pkgs of delicious cheese; the other containing 7 paper bound books—novels, etc. Thanks, dear, they came in very handy.

Baseball season is peeking around the corner and I am eager to get into it. We have so little medical work now, that it will be an excellent preventive of boredom.

Did I ever tell you that the busiest radiologist in Grand Rapids had died and remember Col. Collisi of Ft. Harrison wanting me to come up there after the war? I was just thinking.....

This week we are having a dinner and meeting of the X-ray men in the Hospital Center at the 25th General. I look forward to it and expect to have an enjoyable time. Today I am missing the symphony—an all-Russian program: Shostakovich's Leningrad (?) Symphony, Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto (we had records (Sadie's, I believe) of this concerto), and dances from [*Borodin's*] Prince Igor. Tues. at the Opera they are having [*Puccini's*] *Manon* [*Lescauf*] and Thurs. *Aida*. I may get to go to the latter.

I'm so pleased with Nancy's and Steve's progress that I could "bust." I'm glad to hear that she's pretty and hope she stays that way. The world's a nicer place for a girl with looks, and they are important even if they shouldn't be. Steve is at the right age for some athletic training and I'm very disappointed that I can't be there to give it to him. Maybe soon, who knows?

Mel has never answered my letter yet, and I have to write him one which will bring forth an answer. It's really a dirty trick for his lack of consideration on a matter such as this.

All my love, darling. I miss you so very much. Here's to an early reunion.

Ben

26 Apr 45 [*Liège*]

My own true love:

I'm still in the hospital and getting disgustipated. I wouldn't mind so much if it weren't for the baseball weather outside. In fact I just had a "conference" with my asst. mgr. of the ball team and he's very disturbed that I am unable to play, says it's holding the team up. Well, so it goes with indispensable Benny; ho hum.

Last night with my Dr.'s permission I went to an X-ray meeting at the 25th G.H. Manny and I went by jeep. On our arrival we saw Dave, Jimmy Mack, Ed White, and Sander, had a cup of coffee with them. Finally the other Docs arrived and we sat down to dinner at 6 p.m.—all the X-ray men, the C.O. of the 25th, and Herm Nimmetz, the exec. of the 25th. Dinner included tomato juice, a large sirloin, vegetables, good vanilla ice cream, and coffee. After this delicious meal, served by the ex-maitre d'hotel of the Edgewater Beach Hotel [*in Naples, Florida*], we toured the hospital, then Red showed us his X-ray dept., which looked very nice. We then had a 2½ hr film study session, each of us having brought several films to present. A great time was had by all, discussing, guessing, and arguing. Ingersoll was there and we had a big time needling each other. I find I like him very much and he apparently respects me also. He told me he doesn't know whether he'll go back to Grand Rapids apres guerre, but I rather think he will. The death of the old radiologist there would have been a good break for him if he had been home, but another Doc. has moved in since, and he doesn't know whether it will or will not be advisable to open a downtown office in addition to his present place.

During the meeting, beer was constantly served. The meeting adjourned about 9:30 and everyone went home except Manny and I, who went to the Officers' Club. We drank wine, gin, and cognac, and ate lobster salad, tuna salad, cheese etc. Jimmy Mack, Sander, and Dave were our hosts and tried to get me drunk, but I managed to leave under my own power at 11:30 and we had a long cold ride home which sobered us up. My foot was none the worse for the trip but I now have a sore throat again.

Today's war news: Reich Army is Smashed! What a glorious day of reckoning is coming for Hitler and his cohorts. I guess I sound vengeful—but I really want them to get the works! And I think they will.

Is Fred Goldman in the Army or in the Veteran's Administration? By the way, it's beaucoup, not boucoup. You spell as badly in French as you do in English!

As for Jule Grad's letter, I rather suspected he would write such a letter. Can I help it if he found out my true worth!

I enjoy your anecdotes about the kids—keep writing them. As a fond papa, it is my meat and drink.

Well, since nothing is happening to this miserable patient, I will close with all my love and devotion.

Your (sometimes) affectionate husband

Ben

P.S. Please pay the enclosed bill for me.

Ben

1 May '44 [*really
1945, since visit-
ing Paris is men-
tioned*]

Dearest Ginny:

I have been working hard, so forgive my delay in writing. Come to think of it, tho I've been writing about every day, so it's not so bad at that. I received 2 letters from you dated the 21st and 22nd of April, which is plenty fast. I hope you received Walt's letters from Italy. They are very fascinating, and I am keeping my copies for everyone here to read.

My professional work is increasing daily and the administrative and construction departments are proceeding slowly. What the average Englishman worker will do for a can of tobacco! They cost them about 85¢ while they cost us an equivalent of 9¢, so you can understand their eagerness to give materials which do not belong to them, or labor for which they get paid anyway. People are materialistic, aren't they.

We have a small fund which we have collected for doing photographic developing and printing (our own supplies, the work being done in the evening so that we are permitted to charge a small sum for the work). We plan to use this fund to pay for the radio; various improvements, construction materials obtainable in no other manner, etc. So far our expenditures have been many times our income but when we get some more printing paper we will catch up I hope. If possible send me a gross of 5x7 printing paper, medium grade (tell me the cost if you can get it). Please give this your immediate attention.

The photo dept. has given me many headaches but if we can build up a fund it will be well worth it. In addition we help the officers, nurses, and men out because we can give them quicker service than the Censor Office and we have our own unit censor as official photography censor. But me—I'm not so lucky. I was not appointed Athletic Director. The special service officer got it and will spend a week in Paris taking a course. Unfortunately,

he is the fellow who messed up the athletic program before, but after all athletics do fall under “special service” so I guess I can’t kick, despite the fact that I would have relished the trip.

I now have a new wristwatch, non-magnetic (all my prev. watches would get magnetized from the X-ray machinery). It is a Longue, Swiss movement type—waterproof, shockproof, and (I hope) accurate. I’ve needed one like this for a long time—costs about \$30 American money.

I’m glad to hear that the kids are as cute as ever and that they play well together. Gosh, how I miss them—more actually now than ever before. 14+ months seems so long in their lives. By the time I get back, Steve will be a boy—not a child to cuddle and play with, and Nancy will be on her way, too. But what else can I do? It’s a damned helpless feeling. Do write down what they do and say, dearest. I treasure all their little statements and actions. How about more photos?

Spring has arrived here about a month ago, but today we had a relapse—snow and cold. Isn’t it a shame! Well I hope this is over before summer anyway. I expect another drive from the Russian side should finish it up.

Goodnight my dear one

Ben

[This is page 3 of an unknown letter; the top right corner is missing, shown by ... I date it from the Spring of 1945, since leave to the French Riviera was being granted around that time.]

So far I haven’t played any tennis,... Soon as a few of my officer opponents come back ... leave at the Riviera, I will try to get some in. The courts are pretty far away, but ... be we can get quite a get a vehicle – I rather doubt it,...

I received a nice letter from Irv and Edie and ... and Walt is starting to send me carbon copies... his letters again, so I’m planning to ... a family letter soon. Maybe my next letter to you will be in that form.

It seems like I’ve accumulated lots of your letters for answering, so here goes:

Your statement that you remember only the unpleasant parts of our married life is so true. You always generalize from 1 unpleasant occur-

rence, and sometimes I could bash you when you do. But I suppose women are like that – so what can I do about it. Only – oh, what's the use.

Sadie can force any O.B. man she wants, to take care of her. This has come up before and there is some legal work on the subject. This business Kanter is pulling isn't so commendable. Why doesn't he offer to take care of her for nothing, if it isn't the money.

I received the penicillin for both my throat and foot infection, though neither was really serious. Penicillin is cheap in the Army, you know. So they give it pretty promiscuously. And, ouch how it hurts to get it injected (in the arm).

I haven't received any A.J.R. [*American Journal of Roentgenology*] journals yet, but ...

[*REST MISSING.*]

2 May 45

Hello Ginny dear:

Well, I'm really discouraged by now. My foot still isn't well yet so I'm still a hospital patient, but since Manny was admitted with the same trouble, I'm working with my foot up in the air. Up to today it was OK, but now on top of everything else I've developed a slight case of diarrhea (every 15 minutes). I don't consider it a severe case until I have to stay on the Johnnie all day long. I had a slight accident with my diarrhea today. Thank god I was alone and had a spare pair of pajamas.

I'm not the only invalid in the dept., though. Manny and 2 of our enlisted men are in the hospital, one of my men is running an elevated white blood count and will prob. go in the hospital tomorrow, another has sinus trouble, and several have colds.

Hitler's death [*by suicide, April 30*] was announced yesterday by German radio. I certainly hope it's true, but he might be trying to save his neck by going into hiding. Yesterday Jack Jacobs popped in on me. He's on his way to the Riviera for a week's leave. Earl [*Coplan; see above*] wasn't with him this time. He spent a couple of hours with me and then took off for the town where he was supposed to catch his train. We reminisced about old times and I tweaked him a little about his affectations: acting the gay Lothario, clowning, thinking he was a big shot etc. I think he took it serious-

ly—and there probably is an element of truth in it. I don't think he considers himself a success, but is able to convince other people that he's a big shot.

Rumors are numerous as to where we go from here. The thing we all fear most (and this includes the combat troops) is the trip to China. Everyone talks about his chances to get home, and hopes—and hopes. And I'm no exception.

Time out while I make a short trip. Is this trip necessary? You're darn tootin' it is!

More good news. A million Nazis in Italy and Western Austria have surrendered. Berlin has capitulated. I'm particularly grateful for the former, which should mean that Walt is no longer in the fight. Also, the Redoubt area will be less effective for a last stand. [*The Germans convinced the Allies they had a fortified area in southern Germany and Austria where they would make a last stand. The Allies believed it and altered their military plans accordingly. In the end it turned out there were no such fortifications.*]

To answer some of your questions: I can't possibly get a new head for the broken doll. Do you think doll's heads come separately? Why can't Edith get one in Cincy?

Class A uniforms are blouse, pink or green trousers, low cut shoes, and overseas or dress hat.

My trunk foot locker has turned up, but not my suitcase. I am going to put in a claim for the latter.

Al Blanket is the dentist (Jewish) that Manny and I ran around with while we were in Carentan [*city in Northern France where the 28th General bivouacked upon landing on the Continent*] and on our arrival here. I don't see much of him anymore.

Your Aunt Sarah 's has the "leucorrhea" among other things. Incidentally, advise her to stick with Zininger, and to forget this guy in Columbus. Anyone who advises both breasts removed for lumpiness, isn't so good. That is only a last resort. Zininger is widely experienced in breast tumors and is sanely conservative.

Well, that's all for now, my love. I have to get my slides ready for tomorrow's meeting.

Don't worry about Steve's hitting Nancy, but he should be punished if he hurts her—by taking away something he likes.

Who knows, maybe I'll be home soon. Wouldn't that be wonderful!

Ben

6 May 45 [*Liège;*
still in hospital]

My own true love:

Woe is me! The war is practically finished over here and I am still a patient, so I couldn't go out to celebrate. I managed to do a little private celebrating last night with my gin rations, but this A.M. my head and stomach feel like..... woe is me!

I have been a patient for over 3 weeks and I'm very fed up with it since my foot is completely well. But my Doc says it might break down again if I put a shoe on, so he keeps me in by not discharging me from the hospital. So I while away my time sitting around the dept. and reading and working. There is very little of the latter, but I manage to keep fairly busy.

My last meeting on Friday went over very nicely. An amusing incident occurred—related to this meeting. Hawley was scheduled to inspect our hospital (he is Chief surgeon E.T.O.) on Friday. The Chief of Surgery being away, his assistant waited at the front door of the surgical bldg. all morning. At 11:30, still no Gen. Hawley, so Capt. Berry (asst. Chief Surgeon) came in to my office and asked me if I was prepared to show the General thru the X-ray dept. when he came. I said, "Of course, we're always ready for Generals," and informed him of our X-ray meeting scheduled at 1 P.M. He was horrified to learn that I hadn't called off the meeting – he had cancelled the surgery schedule because of the inspection. When he learned that I had no intention of calling the meeting off, he was flabbergasted and went out. Manny caught him covering up my announcement of the meeting on the Bulletin board, and made him stop. Later, he came to me and said he was going to have all the surgeons remain on the ward all afternoon (which would cut the attendance in half). So I contacted the Chief of Medicine who said to have the meeting anyway. I then called the front-office and asked them to inform me if and when the General came on the post (this would give the officers 20 minutes to get on their wards), told Berry of this arrangement and he couldn't do anything but say OK. So we had our meeting and the General never even showed up!

It's typical of the Chief of Surgery and his asst. that everything must stop for these inspections—and I'm sure the inspectors would be furious if they knew of it.

I think my suitcase is finally going to turn up after all. It shows another example of snafu. I received a letter from England telling me that they had forwarded it to a certain depot on the continent. I wrote to this depot and they wrote back that all they had under my name was my foot locker which they were sending me thru the mails (and which I received a few days ago). In the meantime our Quartermaster sent down to the same depot for everyone's foot locker, but among others they said they did not have mine (this was before they mailed my trunk locker, and after they sent me the letter according to the mailing dates!) They also inquired about my suitcase, but were told it was not there.

Yesterday I received a letter stating that they have had my suitcase at the same depot for some time, and wanted to know what to do with it! Of course they have thousands of pieces of luggage there, so it's understandable.

We're holding our breaths here, waiting for Czechoslovakia and Norway to surrender—which will mean V.E. day. But you'd be very much surprised to see how little excitement is being caused by the finish of the war here. The reasons are duofold: (1) It will be some time before they start sending any of us home. (2) We do not know whether we go home, remain as occupation troops, or go to the CBI [*China-Burma-India war zone*].

Since the one thing that every GI puts at the top of his list is the one-way trip home, the only thing that will get him excited is to start towards the boat. And I share these feelings.

Leaves for Paris and the Riviera are starting to come thru, so I plan to apply for one of them, probably the latter. I may even try to arrange a rendezvous with Walt, but it's extremely unlikely that we would be successful, even if I got my leave to the Riviera.

Well, I think I'll stop with the hope that I'll have a rendezvous with you before long.

As always

Ben

8 May 45 Mid-
night
[Liège]

Dearest:

This letter should be entitled Victory in Europe—effective 12:01 this A.M. [*Various German generals had signed partial surrender agreements beginning as early as April 29, 1945.*]

I just returned from town after a very exciting evening with Manny and some of our cronies. Zan, being on night duty, missed the fun—and it was quite a time.

When we heard the news on the radio yesterday, everyone maintained a decided calm. Aside from a desultory “Whoopee!” and a half-hearted dance-step, a surprising state of decorum persisted. Not that there was no talk. Oh, no! But the subjects were variations from our latest theme – “Oh, where do we go from here, boys.” The allegro was the first movement, the words beginning with “How long do we stay here?” The second movement was andante: “Do we go to the CBI.” This was followed quickly by an andante con expression— “If so, do we go eastward or westward.” And then a loud but plaintive finale: “When do we go home?”

Rumors were flying thick and fast—none with any real foundation, I hope, since the strongest and most persistent was that we were going to India.

The Belgians were holding a joyous celebration last night, but we had a quiet drinking party at the club, so I didn’t go to town.

Tonight, however, we went in—and were stunned by the exuberant and tumultuous reaction of the townsfolk. The entire population was on the streets, shouting, singing, and generally creating such a racket that we were swept off our feet.

It was strictly a civilian celebration, as few GIs entered into the spirit of the thing. We were there merely as observers and outsiders. This was their party, and it was a good one!

There were snake-dancers, fireworks, impromptu parades, brass bands, and everything else that helps to blow off steam. It was like a New Year’s celebration only ten times as good or bad—depending on your point of view. Many young kids were afoot, forming the backbone of the demonstration, the oldsters (and Americans) standing by and watching.

The café’s (esp. the sidewalk variety) and night clubs were jammed, each little 2 by 4 joint having its one to 5 piece orchestra. There was a street dance—also impromptu.

In the midst of the celebration, a convoy of liberated French and Belgian soldiers and civilians passed thru town. The crowd went wild, and

cheers such as you never heard before, rose to the skies. People cried and laughed simultaneously. And the ragged, undernourished liberated prisoners appeared overwhelmed. What a welcome it was for them!

There was not so much affection demonstrated, even for the Americans, but I suspect they got rid of most of that last night.

We went to 3 or 4 or 6 (I don't recall the number now) night clubs, pouring our scotch and gin into their beer. There was a lot of drinking and toasting of everything, but no one (i.e. none of the Belges) seemed to be overdoing it. America and the Americans came in for its share of toasts, but I rather had the impression that we were essentially uninvited guests. I think what they want most now is to get the Americans, Britishers, and other foreigners out of their country so they can rebuild, and pick up where they left off. And I don't blame them. It's been a tough five years for them, and I'm not excepting our occupation of the country. We steal their women, drink their liquor, attract the buzz bombs, stop their supplies, clamp down on their black market, and stop their coal. All we actually brought them was freedom—and we've seen how little good freedom can do on an empty stomach.

But all this is past now. So we drink, vive le Belge! An amazing people they are, shrewd, practical, but warm-hearted.

Enough of this silly prattle. I'm dead tired, slightly tipsy, and very sleepy. So goodnight my love and happy V-E day. May we erase the Japs in half the time that it took to finish the Nazis (after D-Day)! I think the D-Day against Japan won't be too far off and then (oh, boy!) the real V day. Don't be blue about the CBI possibilities. It won't be long. Kiss the children for me,

Ben

11 May 45
[Liège]

My dear wife:

Today's topic is the point system for discharge from the army. Everyone is adding, poring over *The Stars and Stripes* column on point values, and finally disgustedly give up with the 50 to 84 totals, unable to stretch to the 85 which get you out. Point values are as follows:

1 for each month in the army

1 for each month overseas

5 for each battle citation (we have 2—Battle of Normandy and Battle of Belgium; we may get one more soon [too late] for the buzz bombs) The Purple Heart, Bronze Star, Silver Star etc. count here.

12 for each child (max. 3 children)

Officers can be kept if they're needed (as I prob. will be). The count is frozen as of tomorrow.

What is my point count? Well————

30 months in Army

16 months overseas

10 2 battle citations

24 2 children

80 Too bad! I should have advised you to go out a little more while I was away. I wonder if I can count my illegitimate children in Europe. Zanly has 88 and Manny about 95 but I doubt if they'll let doctors out on this basis. None of my men are eligible.

There's another way Doctors can get out and two of our medical officers and 3 enlisted men have had their names sent in on this basis and prob. will get out of the Army shortly.

More than 4 years in the Army + one year overseas or more + one or more children + 3 battle citations or over 4 years in the Army + one year overseas + 5 battle citations + no children

Zanly and Manny miss out on this too because neither have kids. I told Zanly a month ago to start corresponding with his wife and try the canned method but he didn't take my advice.

When Manny complained that a family should not make any difference, I pointed out that a married man deserved more than the equivalent of 2 battle citations which the Army evaluated him, and that I could show him the scars.

So... (1) my chances of getting out of the Army are nil.

(2) my chances of being permanently assigned to the States is about 50-50

(3) my chances of going to the CBI takes up the other 50%, with a good chance of a stopover in the States en route. So keep your fingers crossed, baby, and maybe Papa will see you in from 2 to 12 months.

I have been playing ball a good bit lately and find that I'm not in very good shape. My feet especially don't seem to be able to take it, but I attribute it to my 3½ mo. lay-off because of the ringworm, rather than to my 31 years. My feet peeled and are very tender. Reminds me of you! [*This is the first I've heard of ringworm, a fungal infection of the skin including athlete's foot and jock itch. He must have mentioned it in one of the missing pages.*]

I still manage to hold my own with the enlisted men and also pitch for the Officers' team. The latter have played only 1 practice game so far, and I pitched for 3 innings, allowing only 1 run for the E.M. But after this game I was stiff in every muscle for 2 days, and my arm felt like it was dropping off.

The weather here in Liege (we can now mention the city by name) is rather warm and the days are sunny. We have double summer time so it doesn't get dark until about 10 o'clock. While I was in the hospital it was quite rainy, cold, and miserable—so I had a break in this respect.

I ran across Dr. (Maj.) Dave Frankel 2 days ago. He had just pulled into a hotel in town, is in Liege on detached service. He saw me driving the victory celebration in Liege and I told him to come out the hospital. He did, yesterday at noon, and stayed about 3 hours. We had a very nice visit—I think he's a very nice guy. He's a bit depressed, but who wouldn't be with 33 mo. overseas, with very little time spent doing medicine. He was a port battalion surgeon until his recent transfer to the 231st General in Aachen [*Germany*] (the 32nd is also there and the 25th Gen. is in Tongres. The 298th (Michigan), 16th, 76th, 28th, and 15th are in Liege). Dave went in on the African invasion, Salerno, Southern France, and all thru France.

Hulse is leaving tomorrow for another General Hospital as Chief of Psychiatry. I hate to see him go, altho it's a break for him and he requested a transfer. I believe I told you they made another officer, his junior in rank and ability, Chief of Psychiatry and gave him a promotion to Major while Hulse remained a Captain. But so it goes. After a few more men leave, we'll have just a few of our original officers left.

Well goodnight my love. Tell Nan and Steve how much I want to come home and see them.

Ben.

14 May 45
[Liège]

Good evening, my love,

Well, we're still in Liege, with prospects of remaining here at least for a while, in as much as we're almost filled with patients, mostly RAMPs (Returned Allied Military Personnel—ex-POWs). Many are quite ill, especially with non-tuberculosis chest infections, infected wounds of bone, soft tissues, and chest, varying degrees of malnutrition, and poorly united fractures. The Germans did a lot of malicious neglect—just as an example I will cite the case of an air corps officer who fractured his spine in a crash. They knew he had a fracture and put him in half a cast—correct treatment except that the cast was straight and not arched as any beginner in medicine knows it should be. As a consequence the man will later need a serious operation to fuse his spine. It wouldn't have been a bit of extra trouble to put the cast on properly.

Other cases of this sort have occurred, but for the most part, they tried, albeit weakly, to do something for the patients. Their charts are very well kept, and with my faltering German, I am able to translate them fairly well.

We are almost as busy now as during the breakthrough, because we're X-raying the chest on each RAMP, and in addition most were wounded or ill in German hospitals and we are re-X-raying their wounds, etc. To top it off, they are sending Manny (and Zanly) out on D.S. tomorrow, which is a dirty trick, since Manny is now classified as an X-ray man and will be doing routine physical examinations. Furthermore, they are taking 50% of my officer personnel (me + Manny = 100%) when 1 man on medicine would only increase the work by 10%. In addition I prob. won't get a leave until Manny gets back about July 1st. Manny will prob. still live in the hospital here and work in and around Liege.

Baseball season is starting now, and apparently I have made a regular position on the 28th team and am Captain of the Officers' team. Yesterday the EM in special service called me and asked me to play with the team against the 25th at Tongres. Of course I was delighted to play in front of my old pals.

On the way out, he told me that some officer had told him no officers were permitted on our team, altho this was not a league rule. This account-

ed for my not being asked to play. And I was only to play in this one game! On the way home, I learned that our special service officer had made the rule—the guy I had so much trouble with in Carentan because he wouldn't start a league or get equipment. When the other players on the team heard this, they were indignant and demanded that I play with them if I wanted to. So I played again tonight and nothing more was said. He passed the rule just to get back at me because I am the only officer who could possibly have made the team.

At the 25th game Graller, Stan Simon, Jimmy Mack, and many others I knew attended the game—and were they surprised to see Benny playing regular! I played short field and did rather well, including a perfect throw to home which stopped the tying run and a double steal which scored a run for us. We won 5 to 3.

Tonight I was promoted to 3rd base and had plenty of action. I made 2 errors, one of which almost cost us the game—a wild throw to first base with 2 outs and men on 2nd and 3rd, causing 2 runs. However in the next inning I knocked in 2 runs and scored myself a few minutes later. We won 5 to 3.

Tomorrow or the next night I pitch for the officers, so you see the season's really getting under way; so you better start brushing up on your baseball parlance.

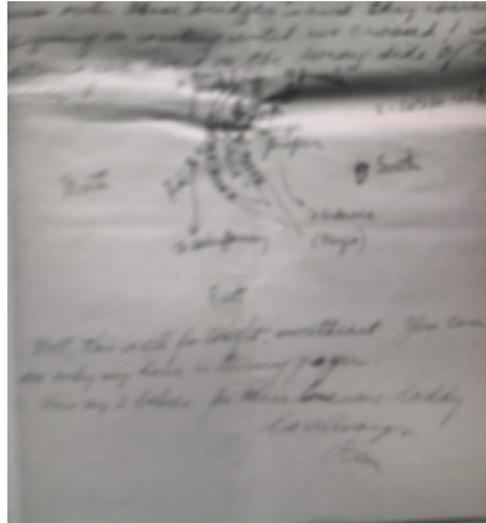
I haven't found time for or a place to play tennis, but I'm going to hunt one up soon. Maybe I'll lose some of this surplus weight.

I couldn't write you about it before, but the Germans were aiming at Liege during the break thru and almost got here. They were about 15 miles from us when they were stopped and we were plenty scared. Lots were drawn as to who would stay behind with the sick patients but they hadn't come to my name yet, so I was still on pins and needles. The Germans made it plenty tough on Jewish-Americans. The C.O. was plenty scared, too—he was praying full time. Joe Shafer was no. 2 officer to stay behind, and since he was a refugee he (wisely) tried to get out of it—developed a backache which later got him home. He went to the Colonel, but all he got from him was advice to pray and the Lord would take care of him. I wonder if he meant the Catholic, Jewish, or Nazi God.

Another point I couldn't tell you at the time, was that I had authentic information (from the man in charge of it) that all the bridges in Liege had been prepared for dynamiting. This was particularly disconcerting since our

only escape route was over these bridges—and they weren't figuring on waiting until we were on the wrong

crossed! It seems we side of the river!



Well, this is all for tonight, sweetheart. You can see why my hair is turning grayer.

Kiss my 2 babies for their lonesome daddy.

As always

Ben

18 May 45
[Liège]

Hello Honey:

Another day closer to home, another dollar in the bank. I have several letters from you lately, but no pkgs. for a very long time. How about a few— I'm starting to get hungry at night again. How about some salami dipped in paraffin, cheeses, biscuits (so-called hard-tack is very good), sardines, marinated herring, shrimps, sardines, etc. Edie asked that I request some things from her, too. Do you still need requests to send pkgs?

Manny has been away with Zan on detached service for about a week and will be gone until the 1st of June. They are doing "profile" work, examining soldiers to determine whether they're fit for combat, limited duty—but don't get excited. That doesn't mean I will be in combat. As a matter

of fact, I read in *Stars and Stripes* that I get 5 more points for the battle of Ardennes (the breakthrough) which will put me over 85. But I still doubt whether that point system applies to Doctors. I'm inclined to doubt it. And don't be over-optimistic about my coming home in a hurry. I'm not counting on it, as much as I want to go home. I've got a hunch, too, but the other direction. No, I don't know a thing, not even a good rumor.

Yesterday afternoon I knocked off for a 3 hr. steamer ride on the Meuse—a Red Cross sponsored trip. It was delightful and relaxing. We went from the pier in Liege, upstream to St. Lambert and downstream to the Albert Canal. King Albert's famous statue is at the entrance to the canal and is a tremendous structure. The Meuse is lined with factories and spanned by many bridges, all of which have suffered the ravages of war to varying degrees. Belgium is so closely populated in this region that very few open fields could be seen on the entire trip. I learned that inland Liege is, next to Antwerp, the largest port in Belgium because of the Albert Canal (to Antwerp) and the Meuse. There are now scads of river boats and barges parked in Liege and soon the river traffic will be very heavy from Antwerp (and the Atlantic) to Liege.

I had a swell X-ray meeting this AM—using regular films instead of my slides and projector. We are holding the patients longer now, so I can usually get enough material for the meetings from the patients in the hospital at the time, before they, and their films, are evacuated. Also many of the ex-POWs have unusual chest conditions which lend themselves to presentation and speculation. Many of the officers maintained how much they enjoyed the meeting.

In my spare time—evenings—I have been playing on the Officers' ball team and on the 28th General E.M. team. I now play regular 3rd baseman on the latter and have been playing pretty well....

[PAGE MISSING]

... if I do, I'll let you know.

Victor Keller's statement concerning my views on socialized medicine comes as a surprise. How did he know how I felt. But I guess it's his business to know who are the conservatives and who are the radicals. He probably picked it up via Ros or Ralph Marcus. I think the Marcuses and Walt know him pretty well. I know him very slightly. *[Aunt Roslyn was a Marcus; Mr. Keller is apparently long forgotten. However, family differences on this subject were longstanding. For example, Walter wrote a family letter dated 7/3/43, from Oklahoma, which stated that a letter by mom about private*

medicine “gets me riled up enough” that I might “write a book about socialized medicine after the war.” Ros responded in a letter dated 7/8/43 that she was “afraid he is going to start a family feud with his vehemence about the type of medicine he’s seeing out there – in answer to naïve Ginny’s so-called social ideas. She and Ben have gone quite radical and Ginny believes that anyone who doesn’t read P.M. is just not up on current events.]

You recall Zan Edelson’s wife correctly. He’s a very nice fellow, quite immature in his ideas, but pleasant and loyal. I like him a lot and treat him as a kid brother. It’s rather ludicrous tho, when he starts discussing political things—and it isn’t only because he doesn’t agree with me (or is it?)

Your dismissal of my viewpoint on Palestine with a simple statement doesn’t make sense. I say a coalition govt. is the only solution because neither side will give in and you tell me that the whole fight is for a separate, independent state. Aren’t you under-estimating my intelligence? And you and your Dad had a good laugh over it! A couple of Spinozas, eh? It so happens, my dear, that I’ve been reading a couple of lengthy treatises on the subject—one in *P.M.* I think and another in the *Churchman* (?), Chaplain Powell’s liberal Protestant news-weekly. [The *Churchman* was (and still is) a quarterly evangelical Anglican academic journal.] And I still say, whether the Jews or the Arabs like it or not, they should be forced to form a coalition govt. (if necessary. Naturally educating them would be better but I don’t see where it’s possible). The Walloons [*French-speaking Belgians*] and Flemish have been able to live together for many years without any serious friction, and there’s no reason for friction between Jews and Arabs. There are leaders in both groups who think it is a very plausible solution, and I for one can’t see any sense in mass movement of the Jews to one end of the country and the Arabs to another, then dividing it into 2. And the Arabs have their rights, too. How would you like to be governed by the Catholic Church without any say in the matter. Why should the Arabs, whose home it really is, give it up to the Jews?

I’m sorry the earrings haven’t arrived. They should have been there long ago. Perhaps they are lost. Anyway my intentions were good. As for glassware—I haven’t been able to get over the factory again, and the prices are much more expensive in town. But I’ll see what I can do.

Please send me a picture of you with your hair cut. I’m anxious to see whether I’ll like it. But I can’t do much else, can I.

The Shanghai perfume was not your anniversary present—but I enclosed a card—or did I—with the lace.

My cyst is apparently not a pilonidal, and is completely cured. My varicose veins don't bother me so I don't bother them.

Col. Allen is from Denver. Picayunish means small, trivial, petty, etc. In other words, Red is inclined to belittle his colleagues for trivial reasons, some of which are imaginary. He's always reading between the lines where there is supposed to be a blank.

Nancy Paula's skin lesion is apparently a mole and not a heman-gioma, so it is nothing to worry about. What part of her back is it on?

21 May 45
[Liège]

Dear family:

It's been some time since I last wrote a family letter and I hope you can see your way clear to forgive your errant brother. I can't even use the excuse that I am too busy, because I've had the time. It's just that I type so damned slow, and it takes me forever more to write one of these 6-page carbon things. And just as I finish a paragraph, I have to take the letter out to type an X-ray report.

Well, V.E. day has passed and I still haven't decided what the army is to do with me. It seems there is a slight disagreement anyway, since I want to go home, but the Army thinks my 82 points doesn't pay the transportation. So I talked them into give 5 points for the break-thru, which will put me over the top—except that I don't think the point system affects Doctors. So here am I, back where I started and no nearer home.

Time-out for a USO show——. Well here I am again 1½ hours later. The show was very unusual. It consisted of 5 beautiful American girls, 3 ballerinas and 2 pianists, and a male balle—well, whatever you call them. They were all from famous ballet groups, including the Ballet Russe, Paris Ballet, etc. One of the pianistesses (female pianists, you dopes) plays on Columbia Concert Tours, Inc. and was no slouch. The show was really marvellous, the selections and dance numbers being chosen for their popular appeal and lack of subtlety. It almost floundered at first until those less refined (ahem!) GIs who unsuspectingly came to see the usual Stinkeroo type of USO show, expressed their loud disapproval and got up and left. From then on it was a big hit. Incidentally, one of the ballerinas is a Cincinnati girl, named Ginny Richardson.

We still have quite a few patients, mostly RAMPs (Released Allied Military Personnel). If you heard some of the tales these boys have to tell about their experience in German Stalags, you'd feel the same as Walt and I do: there are no good Germans. A large group of them, poorly fed and clothed, were marched 650 miles thru Germany, being forced to run away from the liberating armies. Their diet consisted of a few potatoes and a small amount of bread per day for 60 days, and many were left where they fell. Surprisingly, a large no. survived the ordeal and we have gotten a number of patients, some in horrible shape. There were several thousand of them, and about 80% survive the trip. Practically all were Americans. I can assure you that essentially all the "atrocities" stories you read about are true.

Time out again, this time for a movie, *The Guest Room*, with Ann Baxter. [Actual name: *Guest in the House (1944)*, also starring Ralph Bel-lamy.] An excellent movie. I just returned from it. From this letter you might think that all we do is go to USO shows and movies. Tain't so. Just a coincidence. Most of our entertainment is on the corny side, unless you're a swing addict, which I'm not.

My present entertainment, at least for the past few weeks, has been baseball—about 3 evenings per week. I play 3rd base for the post team in the Liege league and pitch for the Officers' team in the hospital league. I haven't lost my winter roll of fat yet, but I'm beginning to get into shape. I have developed a specialty. When the opponents see this fat, grey-haired old man come to the plate, they relax and wait for a pop-up. Little do they know what a fleet foot I am. You guessed it—I bunt. In 4 games, I've bunted 6 times and have been safe 5. I also steal bases and I've gotten so many strawberries [*bruises*] from sliding that I'm going into the black market.

I have managed to see many old friends from time to time. The men in the 25th have visited me here and I have been out there 3 times. The last time was when our team played theirs. I derived particular pleasure out of beating them for the 3rd straight time, especially in front of such critics as Dave Graller, Stan Simon, and Jimmy Mack. I have seen Red Elsey and Charley Ingersoll (I worked for him in Grand Rapids) at 2 inter-hospital X-ray meetings; Jack Jacobson and Earl Coplan have visited me twice; and Mel Cajacob, Dave Frankel and several other Cincy Docs have come around. As you know, Jule Grad and I had several very nice visits—which apparently wound up in a bouquet-tossing episode. He called me up from Eupen [*Belgium, close to Germany*] about 4 days ago. He was on his way to Paris to join his old outfit which wasn't there but somewhere else, tho he

had to go thru Paris to get there. At least that is what it sounded like over a poor telephone connection. How else would you say it?

I have again been holding weekly X-ray conferences using my own slides, made by one of the technicians out of materials available in any X-ray dept. We have written the procedure up for the E.T.O. Medical Bulletin, but so far it hasn't been published. This seems to be the fate of all my Medical articles—the one I wrote in the States hasn't been accepted as far as I know, altho I haven't learned the reason from my colleague, who doesn't believe in answering my letters. The meetings are getting a good turn-out—about 75% of the officers. This is the only scientific meeting we have in the hospital altho there are inter-hospital meetings every 2nd or 3rd week. We have been having excellent medical cases of late, especially among the RAMPs, who have all the diseases related to mal-nutrition. I have been sending medical follow-up cards with many patients, but I get few replies. It seems that my colleagues in the States do not believe in giving us a break. It is the only thing that I ask of them and I get very angry about it. Chip, I'd suggest you pass my sentiments along to your conference in Battle Creek.

V.E. day was a real celebration for the Belgians. We stood on the sidelines since it was their day and not ours. Our day comes when we get orders to go home, not before. The Belges did everything they were supposed to do and then some. What a time they had! Dancing in the streets, snake-dances, brass bands, drinking toasts to and kissing Les Americains, etc., etc. I don't think they sobered up for almost a week.

I fervently hope the Frisco Conference does big things, but I do not like their start in recognizing Argentina as a member and rebuffing the Russian-sponsored Polish Govt. This is no time for power politics, but they're going at it like they did in Versailles. A bunch of shrewd operators will slick us into another war if we are not careful. Whyinhell can't people be altruistic, at least in something as vital as this? [*This conference took place in San Francisco between April 25 and June 26, 1945, and resulted in the creation of the United Nations Charter.*]

Truman may prove to be quite a liberal, despite the claims of business leaders that his advent spells the doom of the New Deal. So far, there have been no sweeping changes in the Brain Trust; in fact he added a few well-known liberals to the fold and has delegated a little extra power to Henry Wallace. I have a hunch that he will make a good President, nothing flashy, but steady and reliable and not averse to improving the lot of the little guys. His stand on the international bank subject, in the face of Big Business pressure, is another indication. Of course, all this is premature,

and I may be just whistling in the dark. But brothers and sisters, he's in an important spot right now. [*“Brain Trust” refers to several different groups of advisers to President Roosevelt. The “international bank subject” refers to the creation of the International Monetary Fund at the Bretton Woods Conference in July of 1944; Truman would have followed Roosevelt and been considered a progressive on this issue.*]

I'll add a personal note to each of you and sign off.

Your homesick brother,

Ben

29 May [1945]
Tues. [Liège]

Hello Dearest:

2 more days to pay-day, and I only owe 500 fr. I wonder where my money goes. Laundry, rations, beer and cokes and hard liquor, etc. takes up a good bit, but I think the most expensive item on my list is eating out about once a week, costing about 200 francs. Prices here for everything are outrageous, but I can't always stay at home. Also, when I went to Brussels, it put me in the hole.

I'm getting quite disgruntled with all the rainy weather—it's just playing hell with my baseball. Two weeks ago, 2 ball games were rained out in the 5th and 6th innings. Last week all ball games were rained out and last night another game was called off because of rain. It seems to rain only on game nights, enough water coming down to make the field muddy, then the sun comes out and we have a nice sunny evening. It stays light until 11 P.M.—double Summertime.

I saw the movie, *Wilson*, night before last. [1944 film starring Alexander Knox as President Wilson.] It was a good movie, but our sound track was off the beam, so we missed some of the dialogue. I didn't think it was so very outstanding, though. It is very timely, however, and I'm quite pleased that it is being shown during the Frisco Conference [*described above*].

Sat. Dave Graller called me and invited us to come out to their place for a dance. He came in with Al Sapadin, picked us up, took us to the dance and then got us a ride home. As you know, we can't get transporta-

tion, but the 25th does OK in this respect. Manny and Zan went with me – and we all got polluted! I had a cold and a hangover the next day.

Al Sap is apparently the same as ever. He's grown up a little, but he still has the same giggle he always had. He's been overseas about 20 mo., was in a non-combat engineer outfit until after V.E. day, when he was transferred to a collecting company. [*Reference is to a unit which removed casualties directly from the field.*] He expects or hopes to go home soon.

Sunday afternoon I went in to hear the concert but there wasn't any, so I spent the afternoon with the Breyere family, expounding my political beliefs. They prob. think I'm a Communist, but they're too cautious to express their own viewpoints. However, they agreed with me on most of my points. However, at one point, Mrs. Breyere said—seriously—that I was really a Communist, even if I didn't know it!

You'll be very interested to know that Morris Kauffman dropped in on me Sunday. I thought I had seen him somewhere before, but apparently I hadn't. We talked for a couple of hours and he drove me to town in his jeep. I remember you writing me about his wife being a very close friend of yours, but didn't recall anything about him being in Belgium. He is situated in Liege and I plan to see more of him. He is a very handsome and intelligent fellow with a lot of personality. I liked him at first meeting. Incidentally, he grew up with Arnold Ungerman and he was the one who gave us Arnold's name in Indpls, altho we met Arnold before we realized we had his name in our "social" book.

I am now taking a week off—even tho I am remaining on the post. Manny is doing all the work. I am reading, relaxing, working on my slides, etc. Next week, I'll work and let Manny relax. Also I received a letter of approval on my request for leave from our C.O. Now it remains for the hospital center to approve it and, if we're still here, I'll get to go.

Danish just returned from a leave to England and he had a swell time. He got some days in Paris and Brussels and managed to finagle a few plane rides including his trip back from England, which gave him a little extra time there.

I haven't any more info. about going home except that the rumor I wrote you about (General Hawley's statement) has been confirmed by Red Eley, who heard the General make the statement when he inspected their hospital. But maybe the General's wrong. Here's hoping he isn't. [*Reference appears to be to a rumor that hospital units would be sent back to the states for three months and then to the Pacific Theater.*]

Kiss the kids and remind them that their papa loves them (and you).

As always,

Ben

[This is page 6 of an unknown letter; the mention of the end of the war dates it to the summer of 1945.]

The end of the war over here has canceled out every possibility of increasing the franc's value in exchange for American money, so forget about any cancellation of the allotments which I mentioned previously. *[Financial reference unclear.]*

As to my lack of an affectionate nature – well, I doubt if I'll ever basically change. I predict: that for about 2 to 4 weeks after I return home I'll be very affectionate, then I'll slowly subside until I reach my former status quo and you'll start wondering if I love you anymore (which is silly, because I'll love you forever) and then you'll threaten to leave me, and I'll get more affectionate for two days, and then go into the same rut and we'll be going around in circles. And so they lived unhappily forever after! So now you can't say that I didn't answer your question.

I love and adore you, my sweet. And sometimes I want to hit you in the haid!

This letter has taken 3 days to write because I've been so busy, but it's long enough to make up for it, I hope.

Ben

*[Undated but
must be a little
before June 5,
1945]*

Dearest Gin:

Things are happening again around here—enough to make my head swim. I'm trying to figure it all out, but am really stumped. Here's the score.

1. We have been classified as a "4" hospital—which means the hospital is going home sometime between Nov. 45 and Feb 46. But the C.O. is supposed to be trying to change it to a "2B" (home to CBI). This is the outfit, not the present individuals in it. If we are a "4," we lose the

ones over 85 points (including me) who will be transferred to “4” outfits.

2. 9 enlisted men with low scores have been transferred out and replaced by men with high scores. 6 low score officers received orders to leave, but these orders have been postponed or rescinded. The change of enlisted men confirms our “4” category, but the delay in transfer of the officers casts some doubt. They may still change us to “2B.”
3. One officer with low points has left by plane for the States—a dermatologist. Today we learn 4 more officers—Lt. Col. and Maj., all with very high scores, are flying to the states soon. But one Major and one LC, also with very high scores, are not included in these orders, altho their name was on a list sent into Hq while another of the officers who is going home, was not on the list. The list included officers with at least 1 child, 4 years in the service, 1+ yr overseas, and 3 battle stars. We learn that by June 5, 1000 med. Officers are being flown home for work in the states. So this adds up in my opinion, as follows: the dermatologist is being sent home despite his low score, because they ...

[REST MISSING]

1 June 45 [Liège]

Hello, my dear:

Nothing very exciting is happening around here—we are all sitting around waiting to see what direction we are to take, east or west. Things look pretty good from a theoretical standpoint, but one never knows in this man’s army.

Business is very light and I’ve been reading, sleeping, and playing a little ball. The weather has been so bad however, that our baseball has been confined to one game in the past 2 weeks, which we lost to the 76th G.H., 3 to 1. Your old man did pretty well, handling 10 chances without an error, and getting a safe bunt and a hit. I’m trying to arrange a ballgame with the 25th G.H. Officers Sat., [and] after the game, they could stay for our dance.

I’m waiting for the weekly X-ray meeting to start, in about an hour. We are still getting a large turnout, about $\frac{2}{3}$ of our officers attend.

We have been restricted to the post this week for 24 hours because of the 24 hour protest-strike of Belgian labor, against the poor wages etc. There were demonstrations in town and parades, and everything was closed up including the street cars. We were cautioned by directives to avoid participation in political demonstrations of any kind and to remain aloof from any gatherings of this sort.

To answer some of your questions: I read White's article about Russia in *Reader's Digest*, but thanks for sending the newspaper series anyway, as it is more complete. There is nothing subtle about the article; it is an unmitigated attack on Russia of the type we used to read and is in keeping with White's position as an editor of the *Reader's Digest*. It's hardly unexpected from him or his magazine. [*No further info on this.*]

Hulse has been transferred at his own request to another General Hospital and we were all sorry to see him go, but he will prob. be chief of psychiatry, which job he did not have here, altho he should have been. I don't see much of the chaplain.

So Steve is now a movie -goer! And double features too. Well, what did you expect, with me as a father. Does he get restless? Does he talk in the movie? Tell me more. [*Growing up I do not remember dad ever going to a movie or talking about a movie.*]

Don't be taken in by Milt Rosenbaum; he's a slick article, with a lot of personality, but very selfish and inclined to take advantage of others. I like him in spite of that, however. I bought a pocketbook so you needn't send one. However, you might start sending edibles again, as I am getting indebted to Lindstrom, my sgt. in this respect. Anchovies, cheese, nuts, cookies, herring (marinated), salami coated with paraffin, etc. would be very acceptable. Send me *Earth and High Heaven* [a 1944 novel by Canadian Gwethalyn Graham] if you want me to read it. I have no way of getting newer novels. I have plenty of reading material, however, and have already received my first *AJR & RT* from the publisher. Pay the Yearbook Publisher's anything I owe them. By the way, I am missing the 1943 *Yearbook of Radiology*. Do you have it?

So you think Soph has changed towards me? Could be. I haven't noticed it, though. Incidentally, you are starting to inquire about the private lives of the people around here (in generalities of course). It's a poor topic for letters, as you might try to read between the lines and worry needlessly. Better wait until I get home. We've had a wonderful tone of rapport in our

correspondence and I don't want to change it. AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT!

I was a little shocked that the Republicans blocked the naming of the Parkway after Roosevelt. Phil's statement about the Judge was just another expression of his inclination to be derogatory about more intelligent people. I think I would have really jumped down his throat if I had been there. I admire your restraint. [*"Phil" is presumably Phil Travis, Aunt Sophie's husband and therefore dad's brother-in-law.*]

I think a half day at Nursery school is sufficient for the kids; I don't want them away from home too much. The function of the Nursery School as I see it is accomplished in half a day as well.

You say you will never complain again, if and when I come home. Who are you kidding? I'm not that gullible. In fact, I don't think I'd love you as much if you didn't. It added color to our relations. What I'd give right now to hear you complaining that I never take you anywhere, or that we never go dancing, or that the only time I kiss you is—— How I'd love to hear you complain that you are a tennis widow.

That's all for now, my love.

As always, and with kisses,

Ben

4 June 45 [Liège]

Good evening, my love:

I'm starting this letter with nothing to say, but from previous experience with my verbosity, you know I'll manage to fill the pages with one sort of tripe or another.

Aside from baseball (which must bore you to tears by now), a frequent movie—3 times a week or 4, a show on rare occasions, and my work—essentially nothing is happening.

Al Sap popped in on me tonight—his division is moving thru. He came in with a friend and could only stay a few minutes. He brought a beautiful camera which I am to deliver to Dave Graller for him—a \$100 camera (German) for a carton of cigarettes! Nothing like that ever happens to me, does it.

Saw Jose Iturbi in a movie *Music for Millions* [1944]—pretty good, but our sound isn't too good and some of the music sounded very flat, especially Larry Adler's harmonica solo.

I'm back at work this week, and Manny's off. Wouldn't you know we'd get a 150 patients in the day I went back to work. And during my week off, it rained Sun, Mon, and Tues., the town was off limits Wed. (one day strike of the Belge), Thurs. and Fr. it rained or threatened to, and Sat. and Sun. we were restricted to the post because of a round-up of AWOLs [*soldiers absent without leave*]!

Time out while I eat a tuna sandwich which Perella just made me. Speaking of Perella reminds me of my men. We are all getting along as well or better than ever. Perella and Lindstrom play in the 28th's dance orchestra which is really a pretty good outfit. They don't use music, yet have a wide repertory including all the latest hits. At our dances they usually get more drunk than the officers (and their music gets better). After our last dance I had to put both Perella and Lindy to bed, with the aid of our night crew.

I give the men a lot of time off, using as an excuse the dangers of exposure to the X-rays. All the other enlisted men in the hospital work 70+ hours, mine work 32 hours. I found that the men had improved so much in speed and ability that half the crew could accomplish as much or more than the full crew could do in England. (We have had about 40,000 patients in our hospital since coming overseas—about 20,000 in X-ray). A peculiar thing has been the reversal in relative abilities of my men. In England, the best technicians were Sgt. Sager, Sgt. Bruce, and Sgt. Auger. Now my technicians rate about as follows Cpl. Graham, Sgt. Willard, Cpl. Perella, Cpl. Blough, Sgt. Lindstrom, Sgt. Auger, Cpl. Brooks, Sgt. Bruce, Sgt. Sager, and Cpl. Crane. The first 3 named have long-since been passed by the others and Sager and Bruce have both lost interest. I would rank my 4 best technicians with anyone I've ever had working for me—and I mean anyone. Our films are now works of art and any short-comings are mine, not theirs – they always give me what I ask for!

One of our POWs—Wilhelm—(who speaks English fairly well) has been trained by us as a dark-room man and does beautiful work. The men kid a lot about it. When I put in a buzzer system, they acted indignant because I didn't give Wilhelm a number. When I see the technician who is assigned to the darkroom sitting around and reading, and raise my eyebrows, he says "Wilhelm just ran me out." Or when we see a punk film, someone says Wilhelm must have measured the Pt. wrong.

The POWs keep the dept. spic and span, Henri Broch the Belge takes the films to the drier and then sorts the dried films and brings them into the office—also he carries the cassettes to and from the darkroom and takes care of our laundry. So we don't lift a finger except for taking pictures and reading them. What luxury!

When I see a piece of paper or cigarette butt on the floor, I point to a technician and say "clean it up" and he calls Hans or Franz or Wilhelm, who then sweeps the floor! In the meantime the technician thumbs his nose at me! We really howl!

The men deserve this break, though. They've worked hard when they needed to and did a fine job when it was important.

Please send me a checkbook, so I can pay any bills I get without forwarding them to you. It's a nuisance to get a money order. Anyway, I like to write checks. Do you trust me? I will pay this bill you returned [to] me (yearbook prob.) but why do you think I enclosed it?

All my love, darling. Our kids are growing up aren't they. Please, PLEASE—more pictures of them and you. I hope I get home soon. Things look pretty good—but nothing definite, just rumors that we are going home—but when?

Goodnight dearest one.

I miss you so much.

Ben

Mon. 11 June
[1945; Liège]

Good morning honey:

This is my week off and it's started raining again. Disgusting isn't it! I had a tennis game planned for today, too. My side isn't well enough to play ball yet, so I guess I'll have to stay home and read. [*Don't know about the side ailment.*]

Yesterday I went into town with Abe Danish. We planned to go to the Symphony but it had been called off, apparently because of the River Regatta sponsored by the Hospital Center and Liege Nautical Society for the benefit of Liege orphans. So we dropped in on Morris Kauffman at his office. He is very comfortably ensconced in a large, rambling, very nicely fur-

nished private dwelling with Belgian maids, interpreters etc. [*Kauffman's job is made clear below.*] The usual story of these homes is that the Germans took them from the Belge or Jews (or that they were the homes of collaborators who left with the Germans). The British and Americans only took over places that were once occupied by the Germans except for school-houses which they "borrow" for bigger units. This is the reason that several of our hospitals are under tents.

The C.I.D. is a criminal investigating crew [*of the US Army*], and delves into any serious crimes, such as rape, murder, robbery etc. involving GIs. The MPs take care of the minor crimes and more serious cases which are cut and dried, but since they are not trained in criminal detection, they turn over any serious sleuthing to the C.I.D. which has offices scattered throughout the areas where we have troops. The C.I.D. consists of policemen, lawyers, etc. and is much like the F.B.I. in the States, except of course a mobile outfit like this (—and a very busy one—) doesn't have the crime detection lab. work that the F.B.I. does.

These men are all civilians attached to the Army except for 1 first Lt. who is technically in charge—and they don't have to put up with a lot of the chicken ___ the rest of us have to. It appears to be a nice deal for the men involved, altho they are always very busy. [*Dad left out the rest of the word in the original.*]

Morris seems to be one of the chiefs in the local organization, but I don't know whether he gets the pay of an enlisted man or officer. I imagine the latter. He seems to be quite a nice guy, rather serious and quiet or else it's because I don't know him well enough. We seem to be a little too serious in our conversation as strangers too often are. How well do you know his wife? I recall your writing about her, but since it didn't ring any bells, I forgot what you said. Incidentally, in Indianapolis we got Arnold Ungerman's address from Morris thru Kay Pearlman, who worked in his office in Wash. D.C.

We went to the Regatta and saw some outboard motorboat races and an exhibition of water-skiing (how many "i"s in skiing?) and surf-board riding. It was nice—nothing exciting, but of some interest. He then took us home in his jeep—a pleasant afternoon.

Night before last I saw the movie *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* [1945; *Dorothy McGuire and Joan Blondell.*] and I thought it excellent—even better than the [1943] book [*by Betty Smith*], altho the continuity would have

been a little difficult to follow if I hadn't read the book. Aside from this movie, I have done practically nothing since my last letter.

I was very interested to learn of Nancy's experiences in the Nursery school. I think you did a very wise thing to enroll her for only a short period. It will do her good, without encumbering the school with a child that is really too young for school as a steady diet. One important thing, which I know you understand, nursery school is definitely secondary in importance to a happy home life, and that's why I think ½ day is sufficient for a child this age. Your statement that it takes very little to make a child happy if you take the trouble, is a sage observation, and if you continue on that basis, you cannot miss. Little surprises, staged with a little histrionics, will be a constant source of joy to the kids and solve most of their problems of behavior and boredom. Your judgment has been so good up 'til now that I am rather amusingly surprised that you still attend lectures on child psychology etc. You must realize by now that your own methods and judgment are working well.

As to your nocturnal cough and resultant insomnia—"The minute I lay down I really cough"—doesn't that remind you of anything? Have you forgotten your sensitivity to feathers? Get rid of the pillows, dope. If that doesn't work, try sleeping on a cot rather than a mattress. It's probably another bout of allergy.

In the argument between Esther and Tammy Barnett, it seems to me that Esther was right in squelching her on her statement of the reason for the German officers retaining their weapons—certainly Mrs. Barnett could have had no evidence to prove her point, and even liberals should stick to facts, not meager hearsay stuff. As far as Esther's embarrassing you—it would have me also, but it's really silly to feel responsible for another's behavior and I think we are both inclined to be a bit prissy about what we consider to be making a spectacle in public. [*Mom had a cousin named Esther but I don't think she lived in Cincinnati. Tammy Barnett is also a mystery.*]

I don't blame any of the family for worrying about Joe's vascular trouble. [*Probably mom's uncle, Joe Berman.*] Send him to Zininger or Lewis Herrmann, the latter saw him once and is an exceptionally fine vascular man. Or you might drop David Abramson a line describing his advice. David knows a lot about this subject—prob. as much as anyone in the country.

I've written Mel Bernhard 2 letters, but still no reply.

If you have any pictures, please send them on. I'm dying for some.

And I've been eating a lot of foodstuffs supplied by Lindy, having contributed nothing for a long time. How about some pkgs. I haven't had one for 3 months—cheese, salami in paraffin, anchovies (not anchovy paste), coffee, marinated herring, sardines, kippers, etc. etc. Please send about 4 or 5 pkgs at least.

I'm enclosing a letter from the British sgt. who worked for me at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Southampton, England.

All my love dearest. I miss you.

Ben

Thurs. 14 June
45 [Liège]

Hiya dear:

Another episode from your fat feeble husband's experiences. My aching back has now subsided perceptibly, so I was able to play ball with the 28th team Tues. and hurt my rt. knee. We're playing tonight and my knee is now better, so I wonder what I'll hurt next. Now, don't get alarmed—none of my injuries are serious and I am able to continue in the game—I'm just making comparisons with the games I played as a kid, when it appeared to me I could take it a little better. This last time I really asked for it, too. A man was coming to third base at a helluva rate and the ball was being thrown from the outfield. The only way to get him was to block the base, as he was ahead of the ball. So there I was, like a clay pigeon, right in his path. He hit me so hard I saw stars, went over backwards and landed about 5 feet back. But, hero that I am, I held the ball and the runner was out. Hooray for our side. [*So when exactly did the ball arrive?*]

In a few weeks you may have a visitor—one of the nurses in our outfit—"Itzie" Lohendro Triggs. She is going home because her husband was recently assigned to the States permanently; according to a recent directive in such cases nurses can request transfer to the States. She is a very sweet and cute little girl who worked in the ward next to X-ray, spending much of her spare time in the dept. Half of A-Block (the nearby ward) spends its time in our dept.—there's never a dull moment. "Itzie" is going to meet her hubby in Georgia and then travel with him to her Ohio home, stopping in Cincy en route. If her plans materialize, she will call you up from the station. If possible, I'd like you to pick them up and bring them out to

see the kids. She's heard a lot about Nancy and Steve and said she would like to see them. I'd appreciate it if you'd invite them to eat or even stay all night if you have room. And you can get a preview of the "History of the 28th."

Last night Manny, Zan, John Humm, and I took "Itzie" and some other nurses to dinner in a downtown restaurant and for dancing afterwards. The meal was excellent but expensive, but I got kind of bored at the night club despite having a buzz on. I went home early—guess I'm not a night clubber!

There are still all kinds of rumors about going home. The critical score for medical officers hasn't been announced yet. There will be medical outfits A, B, C and D. A includes regular army officers, volunteer officers, and low-score officers—will go directly to the CBI plus essential officers. B will include the same, and officers in essential categories (prob. X-ray will be declared essential) but the officers' scores will be higher. These will go to the CBI via the States. Group C will go to the States and stay there. Officers with relatively high points and non-essential will be included here. Finally group D will go the States and be discharged from the Army. Highest point officers fit into this category.

What I figure is that I will get to the States, then may remain there or go to the CBI. But it's so indefinite that I can't depend on it. And we may remain here for months before transportation home is available. So don't make any plans for me next month!

I'm first on the list for a leave to the Riviera, but no one here has had a leave in weeks. If I do get the leave, I'll try to get to Italy to see Walt. I also put in for a pass to visit Walt, in case my leave to the Riviera doesn't come thru. I'll keep my fingers crossed.

We're playing ball at the 25th general tonight, so I prob. will see Dave and the others. I'm bringing him the camera that Al Sapadin got him in Germany.

Well, I'll stop now because I must prepare for my meeting tomorrow — and in a few minutes we are going to get a group photograph of all members of the dept. I'll send you one.

All my love to you, Nan, and Steve.

Your aged husband,

Ben

17 June 45
[Liège]

Hello again, my love:

There's an old song which characterizes my present frame of mind pretty well. It's called *I'm Bidin' My Time*. [George & Ira Gershwin, 1930.] Strange that I'm not getting nervous or on edge. I guess I'm just resigned to waiting—the so-called “sweating it out” process of the Army. Or is it because I keep pretty busy so that I don't have much time to bewail the delays in getting home to you.

Today was typical of the way I manage to keep busy, reminiscent of the old days when I was always rushing thru one thing to get to the next, just so I wouldn't miss a thing.

This morning I went back to work after a week “off” (I spent it in the dept. for the most part) and we were quite busy, since Manny had left a lot of work from yesterday. So I worked steady until noon and still wasn't finished. I scheduled a technicians meeting for 1 pm because I wanted to give the men hell for laying down since V-E day.

During lunch, one of the enlisted men in Hq. sent me word that they were going out to play tennis—did I want to come along. They were leaving immediately. I said I couldn't make it because I was too busy. Then after he'd gone, I looked at the weather—a perfect day for tennis—and all my will power melted. I dashed off after them, but too late. I finished my lunch, got in touch with another officer, contacted the motor pool and several other places to get permission for a vehicle, dashed madly to the dept. and held the meeting with the men, then read all the films in sight. The vehicle came and we went to the courts and had two wonderful sets (my first in a year), got back just in time to eat (5:45), rushed to the dept, saw a few films, went out to play ball with our enlisted man's team, rushed back to the hospital and showered, went to the movies and saw the last half of a Humphrey Bogart picture, had a coke at the club, then came to the dept. and read all the films for today. And now at 11:15 I'm writing this letter! A busy day you must admit.

Our ball team has lost 4 games in a row, the last 2 facing superb pitchers. These 2 pitchers were former professionals in the States and are as good as they come. The first, who pitches for the 25th General Hosp., gave us 2 hits (I made one) and the fellow tonight gave us no hits and

struck out 14 of 22 batters who faced him. Only one man got on base tonight, by a walk. I only struck out once, and then on a called 3rd strike of questionable verity. We lost 3 to 0. The pitcher has now pitched 4 no-hit games in a row! I talked to him a bit after the game. He pitched for the Ky. state champs and said that the best softball pitcher in the States was the fellow who pitches for the 25th Gen!

Manny is leaving soon for a month's course in X-ray in England. I could have gone, but decided I could get more out of my cases here—plus reading. And I thought the course would be given in Normandy, which I had already visited. Furthermore, my leave to the Riviera is expected momentarily, and I would hate to miss it. As matters appear now, with Manny gone, my leave may be cancelled. Gosh, I hope not. They say the Riviera is really wonderful—and I have hope of being able to see Walt (which might be impossible anyway, since he is a long way from the Riviera).

Manny picked up another General somewhere and went out with him last night. They both got pretty looped—ran into Cpl. Perella, who promptly joined the party—including 2 nurses—and a good time was had by all. The General slept on the ward next door to our dept. and I think he had a hangover this A.M. Even Generals have hangovers!

[*REST MISSING*]

[*This is page 3 of an unknown letter; the part about closing the hospital and moving to France indicates that it is from around June 1945.*]

Taking the chance of boring you with so much baseball talk, I think I ought to tell you about our game at the 25th. Almost all the officers were there except Dave [*Graller*] who had twisted his neck climbing over a fence at their previous ballgame. When they discovered that I was a player and not a coach, they were truly amazed and also amused. I guess they thought I was out of my element. It was just like “they laughed when I sat down at the piano” – I handled about 12 chances at third base without an error, making several running catches – and their marvelous pitcher didn't strike me out. And when I got a hit in the last inning they didn't think it possible (their faith in him is like the Arabs in Mohammed). [*The quote about the piano comes from a famous 1926 advertisement soliciting correspondence-course students for the U.S. School of Music.*]

When the game ended, I believe they were deeply impressed. In fact, Sander Goodman came up to me and said, “Benny, I think it's wonderful

that you stay in such good shape, play so well, and still take a boyish interest in sports!” You can imagine how much I enjoyed the spectacle, despite the beating we took. Incidentally, the above sounds too much like bragging, so don’t show it around to anyone who wouldn’t understand. [*Sander Goodman practiced medicine in Cincinnati into his 90s.*]

Well, if I can’t impress people with my X-ray ability – you’ve said it before, haven’t you.

Good night my love – and tell my wonderful children that I’ll be home as soon as the Army sees my point of view. They say the Ardennes battle star is coming through, so I’m due for 5 more points – 87 in all. But I doubt if that will help.

All my love and devotion

Your husband, Ben

Benjamin Felson

(Just like Jake’s endings)

Please pay the enclosed bill.

I just got word that we are closing this hospital and moving to France to another hospital. More later.

Mon. 25 June 45
[Liège]

Hello honey:

We’re in the process of packing and moving so I’m writing with whatever materials are at hand. It’s surprising (but not to you or me) what junk one can accumulate in 8-9 months. But we are throwing it away instead of carting it with us like you and I did in our many moves over the country. At that we have about a doz. large packing boxes to move to our new place—books, X-ray equipment, lead, radio, etc. etc. I’m taking my German fluoroscopic machine and Belgian Bucky X-ray table along, for I feel sure they have only the field equipment there, and with these refinements I can still run a pretty good show.

The new set-up will be a lot different from our present one. We will be servicing two big re-deployment centers with thousands of troops and will operate as a mammoth station hospital with a large and busy out-patient dept. The present occupiers of the hospital (an old French barracks) are

going to the CBI—they are a relatively new outfit and for the first time since being set-up, they have been busy (the past 10 days). From reports, they haven't organized things very well—so with our experience, we shouldn't have too much worry. Unfortunately, the place is in the middle of nowhere, the nearest city, Reims, being some 40 miles away. The roads are bad and I gather we will be pretty well isolated from the gayety and life of the big city, which we have enjoyed here.

Speaking of big cities, we visited Brussels for 1 day the past Saturday. Had a lot of fun, but my feet were killing me from all the walking we did. Danish knew of a nice Officers' mess (British) where we had lunch for 25 francs and a bottle of good wine for 40 francs—ridiculously low prices. The lunch was very meagre—as only British lunches can be—including the inevitable beef (or mutton). But excellent waiter service, a beautiful dining hall, and a soft playing orchestra made the meal very pleasant. My lack of funds and the high cost of merchandise prevented me from buying you a gift there, but I hope to go to town here and get something after pay day.

To answer some of your recent letters:

My prospective trip to the Riviera looks like it has been delegated to the limbo of lost hopes. What with Manny away, our new move etc.—I fear it has been discarded.

I think your cough is allergic—get rid of the pillows and/or mattress. Try sleeping on a cot. I'm afraid you forgot your previous experience.

Your poem for your party was quite good—Didn't know you had such talents (sic).

I appreciate your past and present offers to let all decisions for our future be governed by my happiness in my chosen work. Not many wives are willing to make such sacrifices. I agree that we have a lot in common, but I still believe some differences are important to a happy union—and I will jealously guard the few differences between us (my enjoyment of study, my medical work, my poker, your love of shopping and lectures)—so we can have our individual interests as well as our common ones. So don't try to drag me out on shopping tours or to lectures, and I won't try to interest you in medicine or poker! *[I wonder if dad played even one hand of poker after the war! Once he saw us kids playing hearts, pretended not to know the rules, sat down "just to try one hand," shot the moon (top score), and went back to his office, commenting that the game was too easy.]*

Your amateur psychiatry and explanations for Sel's speech difficulty are OK, but remember, a little knowledge is a dangerous thing.

It's OK that you get *Life* instead of me, but their reasons for not sending them to me are a lot of hooey! I get *P.M.* fairly regularly—it's just too much effort for *Life* to make, and they would prefer I buy the overseas edition.

Will close now. Am sending several odds and ends—photos, musical programs, propaganda leaflets etc. Tell the kids and yourself that I miss you all very much.

All my love,
Ben

June 28th, 1945
[Liège]

It's been a very long time since I wrote a family letter, so here goes. In the first place, thanks for all your letters, the tennis balls and lighter from Irv, and anything else I might have forgotten. Walt's letters have been greatly appreciated and he has his own 28th General Hospital fan club. All of them think his letters ought to be saved and made into a book. I'm sure Ros is saving them. Many people drop around my office just to see if I have a letter from Walt!

Well, we had quite an experience after D-Day and nothing will ever appear too difficult for me from now on. We had so many patients thru the dept. and took so many pictures that it makes my head swim just to look at the figures. In one day we made 890 exposures. This ought to be some sort of record. We figure that 10% of the casualties went thru this hospital, so you can imagine how terrific things were. Certain advice given me by my consultant, who had experience in Africa and Sicily, was not taken because yours truly had delusions of grandeur about the amount of work he could put out. But, brothers and sisters, I learned quick. Unfortunately, my surgical colleagues took a lot longer to learn, and from their standpoint, the first and busiest week was Snafu.

[REST MISSING]

[Undated but I'm
guessing mid-

1945 because of
the discussion of
going to the Pa-
cific]

Hello honey:

Your mail has been coming thru a lot better lately and on no day in the past week have I failed to receive a letter from you. Thanks for writing so much, honey. Your letters help a lot, especially since I'm in the doldrums waiting to learn what happens to us.

Rumors are rife and worth about a dime a dozen, but here's a plausible one. General Hawley, chief surgeon E.T.O., told the C.O.s of the various hospitals here recently that about 8% of the hospitals on the continent would remain with the Army of Occupation, 35 % would go to the CBI via the States, and the balance would go home. The hospitals would be selected from point of length of service overseas and we rank pretty high in this respect, certainly under 50%. The COs of the 16th and 76th Generals told their personnel, one of whom told Maj. Swelling of our outfit, who, in turn, told me. Our CO, who was prob. at the same meeting, said yesterday that he knew nothing about whether we would or would not go home, but would inform us as soon as he learned something. With his past record in this respect, however, he could well know about this and fail to pass the information on. So there you are: only 4 steps from the Chief Surgeon, who probably doesn't know himself.

We are still functioning as a hospital with about 450 patients, and I manage to keep busy, since I'm alone. Manny returned from his DS trip with Zanly. The next morning he had a sudden shaking chill, and despite his protests, I made him go into the hospital. Since then he has been entirely well, but they won't release him yet. So I've continued working alone—and I don't mind it a bit.

I had an inspiration yesterday, and believe I have managed to capitalize on the various illnesses which the personnel in X-ray have had lately: to wit 3 or 4 EM in the hospital at one time or another lately, Manny's 2 periods of hospitalization, and my prolonged convalescence from a trivial infection. So I hied me down to the Colonel, who happened to be in a good mood. I acted worried (which I'm not), explained that I wasn't sure our exposure to X-ray had anything to do with it, but that it looked very peculiar, reminded him of the dangers of X-ray, and of various Army directives concerning it, and pointed out what I had done for the EM (cut their hours down

to about 30 per week and gotten them leaves). By the time I finished, I could see that he was thinking what a tragedy it would be (to his reputation) if any harm befell his officers from this hazard and he, too, appeared worried. He then suggested that Manny and I each alternately work a week and lay off a week from now on and thought that maybe we ought to get our leaves put thru a little quicker (mine at the Riviera and Manny's to Paris). So here's hoping. As soon as Manny gets out of the hospital, I'm going to turn the dept. over to him completely for a week, and do as I please. There's lots of things I would like to do: read, sleep, travel a bit, clean up my scientific work here, etc. The following week I'll let him do the same. Not a bad prospect is it?

I looked on the map for Walt's location and find it 300 to 400 miles from the Riviera, so a rendezvous with him doesn't appear likely if I do get to go there—unless I can contact him by phone and get him to come part way.

Walt's letters are very fascinating, aren't they? I have been getting copies regularly again, and look forward to them eagerly.

Did I tell you I met Beebe Daniels and husband Lt. Col. Ben Lyons? [*She was an American actress and singer.*] They visited here to obtain material from the RAMPS for their radio broadcasts and made a number of records of these interviews for re-broadcast to the States. They stayed 2 days and one evening they dropped into the club and were introduced to all the officers present. She is still not unattractive, despite her age—which should be about 45—she looks to be in her mid-thirties. [*Born in 1901.*] She has a sweet smile and seemed very nice. Her hubby also is quite a nice guy. They have lived in England a no. of years but are still American citizens and he is in the US Army.

My scientific meeting today seemed to go over well again. I attribute the greater success of my last 2 meetings to the fact that I changed the hour from 1 PM to 11 AM; my audience is much more alert. Also I am using regular X-ray films more, and fewer slides. This seems to change the tone of the meeting from a lecture to a conference, with greater participation of the audience. Furthermore it's harder to sleep when the lights are on!

I volunteered to give illustrated lectures in X-ray on request of the Hospital Center for such volunteers. They plan to hold refresher courses soon for front-line docs, and I may be on the "faculty." I'm glad to see this being done; as you realize from Walt's letters, these doctors have forgotten

a lot of medicine. I look forward to this, as I like to teach. I hope it works out OK.

Went to town today for a while, looked around, then came home, stopping on the way home to have a biftek au cheval: 2 eggs on a steak. We'll have this when I get home, as it's now one of my favorite foods.

Well that's all now, sweetheart. Oh, how I hope to see you soon. Remember me to the younguns.

Ben

June 29 [1945;
Liège]

Hello honey:

We're biding our time, awaiting our move to the new area: the first group leaves _____ [*unreadable in original*] 6. The new set-up, we learn, will be in the center of a tremendous, but barren, army re-deployment camp. We are class IV, which means that the 28th G.H. as a unit will go home—prob. after servicing the redeployment center for some time (indefinite—our C.O. thinks 2 to 3 months, I think longer). But this does not mean we, as individuals, will go with the unit. More than likely, there will be a reshuffling of personnel so that indispensable officers, men, and nurses and those below the critical scores, will go to other units, in exchange for dispensable personnel and those with high scores, who will go home with the unit. I don't know where I come in, but prob. will be "indispensable" since there have already been calls for 2 X-ray officers for outfits going directly to CBI—both times the C.O. side-tracked the issue, but my C.O. would never do this. But, at least, this proves that they need X-ray men. One of our officers, a dermatologist, suddenly got orders, along with 4 officers from other units, to go to the States by plane. I imagine they will join CBI-bound units, but one never knows. So far the 25th G.H. is still here, with 1000 patients, and they know nothing about when and whether they will go home or not, what their wives say to the contrary notwithstanding. Their C.O. was asked to volunteer for the whole outfit to go CBI and tried to get his personnel to approve, but they wouldn't do it. So they're in about the same boat that we are. Time only will answer our questions.

I've been doing a bit of travelling lately. Monday, Chap. Powell and Jeff Klepfer (psychiatrist) and I went by st. car to St. Trond, a Flemish town about 25 miles from Liege. It was a beautiful day and beautiful ride. The

poppies were in full bloom in the Flemish fields and we were all in high spirits. On our arrival in St. Trond, we bought some cherries, ate our lunch (sandwiches and K-rations), drank some beer, and looked around. The town had little of interest to offer, except for one thing. This was the world's largest clock, an electrical structure built by a local watch-maker and housed in an old unoccupied church. It is not yet completed—and he had been working on it for 7 years. After the war he is going to take it to the States and exhibit it. He should really make a fortune.

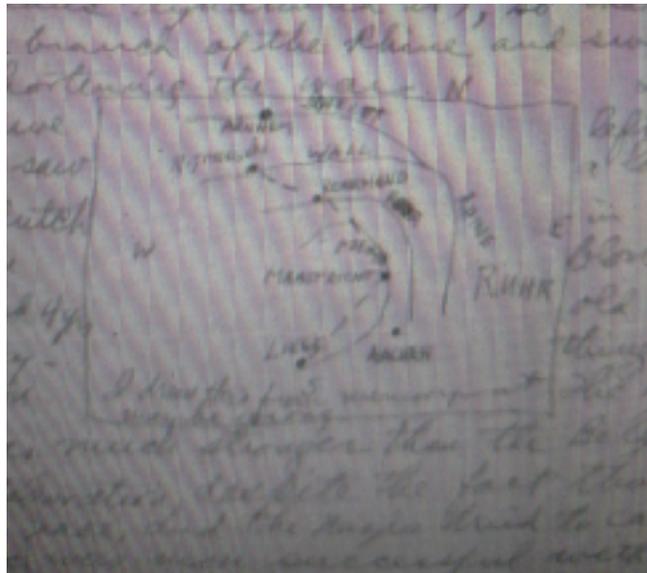
The clock is one of the screwiest and most amusing things I have ever seen. It is about 15 feet high and all the works can be seen. It tells the date and year, simultaneous time in almost all the countries in the world; has a synchronised watch, 1 millimeter in diameter, set in the pearl setting of an ordinary ring, and looked at thru a magnifying lens; and when completed will also show the momentary location of the more important stars and planets.

The show begins at 30 sec. before the hour (the exhibit opens at 5 minutes to the hour), when various lights turn on and the chimes ♪♪♪♪♪♪♪♪ etc. play. Each note is played by a mannikin pulling a string on a bell. There are 4 bells and the 4 mannikins are dressed to represent the 4 seasons. [*Dad actually wrote the above quarter-notes in the form of the tune being played.*]

Then 2 doors fly open and a skeleton with a scythe (Father Time) moves his scythe, thus striking the hour. Then music begins and a door in the side of the clock opens and a horse drawn doll train moves out on a track to a point in the front of the clock and stops. The dolls are all dressed to represent the various shops of St. Trond in the last century—baker, weaver, blacksmith etc. Suddenly, each doll starts plying its trade: the baker kneads his dough, the weaver moves his loom, the smith pumps his bellows (and a red light flares up and dies down in unison) etc. It was really clever and highly amusing. After about 5 minutes of this, the train moves in the opposite side of the clock and the show is over. I will send you post-cards of the clock.

Yesterday, the chaplain, Jeff, I, and 2 nurses went to Holland in the Chaplain's vehicle. He is entitled to a vehicle, but seldom uses one. When he learned that other officers, friendlier to the Hq. bunch, were going places unofficially in the vehicles, he got griped and ordered his vehicle for a full day pleasure jaunt.

We first went to Maastricht and looked over the town. The Holland stores have little or no merchandise (not at all like Belgium). We then took off for Nymoegeen and Arnhem, in British-occupied Dutch territories, the scene of the famous (but unsuccessful) paratroop landings over a year ago. The British had failed to move forward to the area of the Paratroopers in time and the bridge at Arnhem was not taken (the Germans dynamited it), so that the Allies failed to cross the Northern branch of the Rhine and sweep down toward the Ruhr, thus shortening the war.



The trip was about 300 miles all told and we left at 8 AM and returned at 9 PM. We saw a lot of war damage, windmills, Dutch in wooden shoes, and about 3 billion blonde blue eyed kids between 1 mo and 4 yrs old. I guess the Dutch didn't have anything else to do during the occupation. The Dutch resistance movement was much stronger than the Belgian, and there was little or no collaboration, despite the fact that the Dutch are a Germanic race, and the Nazis tried to call them Aryans etc. This technic was more successful with the Flemish. We stopped at a windmill for a picture, then I got to talking to the owner, who showed us how it worked. The mill, 100 years old, grinds grain, the blades of the mill turning wooden gears which rotate 2 large smooth stones which grind the grain. It is all hand-operated and simple—no electricity or power other than that supplied by the wind. I spoke Yiddish-German and he spoke German so we had no difficulty. In fact in both Flanders and Holland, I have been spokesman, because both the Dutch and Flemish languages are similar to German and English, so if they do not speak German, I still manage to make myself understood and

to understand them quite fluently. After 4 years of occupation, there are many who speak German well. And my recent practice of speaking Yiddish has also come in handy.

On this trip we also saw the longest single-span bridge in Europe (at Nymoegeen) and the famous Bailey bridge which the British threw across the Rhine (Scheldt [*Estuary, site of a big battle*]) at Arnhem. So we had a very nice time, despite rather bad weather with much rain.

Now I'll answer a few of your recent letters:

I paid about \$16 for my watch and it works very well. I haven't had a chance to get up to Val St. Lambert's lately, but will try to get there in the next week—if it's possible. I forget how much I paid for the ash tray and bowl, but I think it was about \$20 for the two. Or maybe less.

I wouldn't mind working for the Vet. Adm. when I get back, especially if they clean it up a bit. Have you read of a bill passed in Congress allotting \$100,000,000 for building hospital diagnostic centers by the States. The College of Radiology wrote as if it had been passed, but I had never heard of it.

Your easy-going manner with the kids is just the right track—I don't believe in making them toe the line. And the saving habit is OK, but shouldn't be overdone—I think Alan is over doing it. He's missing a lot of fun of other kids his age in his desire to make money, and may suffer for it later in life.

I received Steve's Father's Day card today and was very proud of it. I'm happy I have regained a place in his affections, too. Mr. Mann's complaint about Nancy's crying made me mad. That S.O.B. fussing about kids and their noise, must be getting too old to remember his own children. I'm sure they were a bunch of angels. More than once, I couldn't study because of the racket in their yard; but I guess he thinks the poorer class of people (his neighbors) don't bring their children up properly. Maybe he forgets he was a shoe salesman. I'll bet he was a nicer guy then.

The Belgian strike was in reality only a protest, and went according to schedule, lasting 24 hrs., without any violence. Average labor wage is very small, about \$80 per month or less—and prices are over twice what they are in the States. Housing is prob. pretty bad, esp. in Liege where many homes have been destroyed by the buzz bombs. We are supposed to have had more buzz bombs per area than in the Valley of the Meuse and the ad-

jacent hills. Geographically and topographically, it is much like Cincy, in that the town is built in the valley and on the hills.

ORCHID, NOT ORCHARD. You don't use the dictionary enough—your spelling is often very bad; sometimes I can't even get the meaning.

Your letter about the devilments of the kids surprised me—you've praised them so much, I really did begin to wonder if they had wings.

I received a nice letter from Manny Schweitzer, still a Capt. and still at Ft. Ben., but no longer in X-ray, for which reason he isn't very happy.

The 25th G.H. is now pretty busy, but still not like we were. They've never had the business we did, and have had only a small % of the amount of patients we had.

The idea of Radio Work sounds very good to me. But if you do any writing, you better get Esther or Gladys to proofread it first. Benzedrine is a dangerous drug—lay off it. That's an order. Diet and exercise if you must, but no drugs, at least till I get home.

All my love-

Ben

P.S. We have no orientation officer here. Keep sending *In Fact*.

___ June 1945
[Liège]

HELLO AGAIN, HONEY

I got another letter today from you, in which you bitterly complain because I haven't been writing you regularly. For God's sakes quit the beefing and realize that I am writing every other day, and that because the mail is slow, there's no reason to blame it on me. Furthermore you gave me the wrong address to Cruso [*North Carolina, location of Grandpa Jake's cabin*], and some of the letters may be lost. In addition, it takes extra time for mail to be forwarded from Cincinnati, and it may have been improperly routed because of your typical non-observance of details.

An example of what I mean: you wrote me to send mail to General Delivery % Cruso N. Car. RR #2 before investigating the forwarding of mail by the Cincy post office. So I tried to guess how long you would be in Cruso (the dates) and time my letters accordingly, which is really an impossibility. Instead you should have had me continue to send mail to Cincy and had

the Cincy post office forward it. That way only one or two letters might be delayed. Now if my letters are mis-timed you will have to wait an extra week or two for them. Furthermore I have a hunch that the address is either % Gen. Deliv or RR #2, but not both. You may be looking in the wrong place for them.

I occasionally get a letter from you that is 2 or 3 months old, having been mis-routed to 3 or 4 places, even though I hadn't been on the move. And some letters to which you later refer, I haven't even received, so they must be lost. I'm sure you have had the same experience. So for God's sake, let's cut out this childish bickering and enjoy our correspondence. You can't imagine what a let-down it is to me to wait a whole week for a letter, then finally receive one, tear it open eagerly, then find $\frac{3}{4}$ of it devoted to something like "why don't I write more often" or "what brats our children are!"

I won't be able to look up Pvt. Jimmy Warm, as Camp Phila. is 50 miles away, and it would be always impossible to find him when I got there. It took Manny a week to find Hulse and they were in the same camp!

The return to small town life which Judge Shook [*Aunt Selma's boss and boyfriend*] advocated might appeal to you on superficial thought, but what about: Operas and Symphonies; stage shows and plays; a wide circle of liberal friends and acquaintances; your husband's X-ray practice; a good public library; etc.? Would Walt and Ros' life appeal to you? Perhaps yes, but not to me! I'm a city dweller from way back, and intend to remain so. And do you think the small townner is not a money worshipper? Don't be naive!

Your reminiscences of Asheville brought the old lump to my throat; we did have fun there, didn't we. And when you talk about pickled herring, sour cream, cottage cheese, Rubel's rye, etc. you bring me to my knees. Yesterday we had cabbage soup like Mama used to make (or was it a couple of days ago) and to me it was the event of the month.

The way the kids seem to be taking to the mountain life is thrilling and surprising to me, as is the fact that you seem to be enjoying it so much yourself. What I was really worried about was the amount of work involved in taking care of the place, but apparently you have become accustomed to housekeeping; I didn't know your mother would be along. I cherish the hope that just the 4 of us (plus a maid) will be able to do the same thing next summer; I think it's a wonderful idea. Incidentally, I didn't know about the tenants and the fresh vegetables either.

Nancy sounds more and more like the kind of daughter I have dreamt about, and I can hardly wait to make her acquaintance. And it is particularly disturbing to me, now that the war is over, to have to wait, because the purpose and meaning of my being away from home is no longer clear. God, how I thirst for our reunion!

I think your sending Ros a gift was very nice, though perhaps superfluous. Certainly she could not resent it. As to your discussion with her about the faithfulness of husbands, and Walt's and her views on faithlessness, don't be too perturbed. I guess our less strait-laced viewpoints are one of the penalties of liberalism; and anyway, I haven't done anything I'm ashamed of; can you say the same? (Not to inject any doubts—but do you have a cooperative conscience?).

So far we haven't lost our Ardennes battle star, so I still have 87 points. With the new redeployment, maybe I will get home sooner than anticipated, but don't let me raise your hopes prematurely. I don't know a thing, so this is really only a guess.

The 25th GH is now in Rouen, France, near Le Havre. I haven't corresponded with them but plan to write a letter soon, to see if they are setting up another hospital. I rather think they are.

One of the lousiest tricks I've ever seen occurred here recently. The AAC [*presumably the Army Air Corps*], which controls redeployment, is quartered on our post. They had a tennis court which was terribly run down, so bad in fact, that I quit playing on it. I had been told by their CO that we could use the courts all we wanted, and if it was too busy, he would build another. I talked our executive officer into getting the CO of the AAC to give us permission to fix their court, and he said OK. Well we got the court in pretty good shape and only a few of us were playing. At no time did any of the AAC have to wait to play, and most of the day the court was unoccupied. Yesterday we received a directive that the court was only for the use of the AAC personnel! I have squawked plenty to all the officers of the AAC I meet, and hope it gets to their Colonel's ears. What a bastard he must be!

Well, this little letter has taken me 2 hours to write, so I'll sign off apologetically because I gave you so much hell at the beginning, and tell you truthfully how much I long for you and miss you. I promise to be more affectionate and considerate than I ever was, and this is not merely a campaign promise.

BEN

July 4, 1945
[Liège]

[PAGE ONE MISSING]

... need derm. men in the States and there are no qualified high point men in the E.T.O.; the others are going home as general surgeons and internists because of a need for these at home and were selected by their score; and the other two were left behind because of either their lesser qualifications or not quite as high a point score.

4. Men have been pulled out of other general hospitals here for trips home or to the CBI e.g. Ed. White, an orthopedist in the 25th went direct to the CBI. Another orthopedist with about the same points, flew home. They've tried to pull out 2 Radiologists for the CBI who have had more overseas service than I, but their C.O.s objected. Mine wouldn't, so I sure hope they've already found them!

5. Our parting date for the new place has been postponed twice. Perhaps we won't even be going!

Earl Coplan spent 24 hrs. with me this weekend and we had a pleasant time. The Hospital Center gave us and 2 other outfits a farewell party on a resort island in the Meuse [River] at Vise—about 10 miles away, and I took Earl along. We all took nurses to the dance, so I got Earl a date with a pretty but dumb creature. Just as we were leaving, an old boyfriend of hers drove up, and we invited him along, too. So there was this gal with 2 swains, and very confused. On top of all this, she is a married dame, so it was really very funny. We teased her a bit, but she said there was safety in numbers, so they all seemed to have a good time. We all got pretty tight, and it was a very nice party. My dancing is improving—but I still don't enjoy it!

Yesterday Chaplain Powell, Klepfer, and I went to Bruges by train and stayed overnight. It is a very beautiful ancient Belgian city of 50,000, and old art center for the 15th and 16th century Flemish painters. The Germans took a lot of their famous paintings and objets d'art, including a Madonna and Child by Michelangelo, but these have all been located in Germany and will soon be brought back. There are still thousands of beautiful paintings and tapestries, etc. remaining. A particularly famous 15th century painter, [Hans] Memling, [1430-1494] has many paintings in St. John's hospital, and they are really beautiful and interesting. Most of the famous

paintings belong to the various Catholic churches which are tremendous and beautiful edifices incorporating Roman, Gothic, and Flemish architecture. Their interiors are sumptuously decorated with priceless paintings, murals, Gobelin tapestries, etc. In one, the church of the Sacred Blood, dating back to the 10th and 11th centuries, where the crusaders were supposed to have brought back some of Christ's blood (after 1100 years!) In addition to the architecture, its numerous works of art, stained glass windows, etc., it had a tremendous solid gold, handcarved receptacle (for the blood), beset with all types of jewels contributed thru the years by wealthy Flemish nobles and commoners—a black diamond the size of your thumb, rubies, pearls etc. galore. Conservatively, I believe the thing is worth a million dollars. And it is really exquisitely carved. The city is traversed and surrounded by numerous picturesque canals, and we rowed thru some of these. The bridges were quite low, and when it came my turn to man the oars, I got us stuck under one of these bridges, to the great amusement of the townspeople who accumulated in droves. Americans here are a rarity, altho there are numerous British soldiers here. So the townsfolk stared and whispered “Americains” and followed us around. Several civilians who had lived in the States came up to talk to us, and several Americans in the British Army did likewise. The people are all Flemish and are strongly in favor of the return of Leopold III, which is the reverse of the opinion of the Liegoise (French-speaking Walloons).

Both wars have spared Bruges; in the first war, the Germans fought up to Bruges, the Allies withdrew, and the Germans marched thru and started fighting on the other side of the town. The process was reversed when the Germans were driven out. In this war, Leopold capitulated outside of Bruges, and the Germans did not stand and fight when the Canadians came. The just stole some of the art treasures and retreated one day ahead of the Canadians, blowing up a few bridges.

I'm sending you a booklet of Photos and history of the town, in a special pkg.

I hope you and the kids are still doing well—I haven't heard from you for 3 days and the P.O. is closed now.

Happy 4th of July.

As always

Ben.

6 July 45 [Liège]

Hello my love:

Just got back from a morning of tennis at the court of our brewery friends. My game has fallen off appreciably, but with some steady play I should be able to get back in shape and become more accurate. They are very hospitable but did not bring out the beer as they did the first time. I plan to enter the GI tennis tournament when we get to our new location at Sissonne [*France*].

We leave here Monday, 9 July and my men and I will go with the first group. The 2nd and 3rd groups will follow on successive days.

We have lost one man, Libertoff, a Jewish boy from Brooklyn, who joined us 3 months ago. I threw a party for all the men 3 days ago, using his transfer out as an excuse. We consumed 4 bottles of cognac and everyone had to be poured into bed except me. Blough, our Michigan farm boy who doesn't drink, was coaxed into imbibing, and he was a scream! He got on the table, made speeches, staggered around quite a bit, and then went to sleep sitting in a chair. They all had hangovers, some for 2 days! No more news about the redeployment business, but it should be clear about a month from now when all units are supposed to clear themselves of either all high-point or low-point officers and men (depending on what class the unit is in).

I'm glad you're having such a swell time in Cleveland, but was rather surprised your mother let you get away. I don't recall meeting any of these Cleveland people that you mention in your letter, except for Rose's sister. I hope you let your hair down and had some fun. [*Aunt Rose (if that's the reference) was married to one of mom's uncles, Joe Berman.*]

Your snaps of the kids arrived and were really charming. I was very pleased with my 2 progeny. I think Steve is uncommonly handsome, and Nancy certainly does have an abundance of blonde curly hair. I was a little disappointed in her features—I didn't think she was so pretty—but perhaps the pictures didn't do her justice. In any case, she has an interesting and expressive face. Steve appears to have changed very little, but Nance is a complete stranger to me. I can only impatiently wait for the day when that will cease to be.

All these changes to be made in the Veteran's Administration intrigue me and I am now toying with the thought of joining it après la guerre, if other things fail. My choices are now as follows: (1) Teaching hospital, full-time

(2) teaching-hospital part-time and private practice part-time (3) group practice (4) Vet. facility. But I may change my mind tomorrow!

I haven't done any more travelling since my last letter, being a little tired of it by now. I spend my A.M.s sleeping, my afternoons and evenings reading and bull-sessioning, but I'm getting tired of this, too, and I'm anxious to get back to work or (probably by far) to go home.

I've said adieu to my Belgian friends, so have no further reason for going to town. The men are in town every night and doing a lot of drinking. When they come in, at all hours of the night, they make a helluva racket and wake everyone in our building. Their latest stunt is to pick up a handful of stones before they go up to their rooms and then throw them out of the window on the tin roof of the next building. This makes a terrific racket and they prolong it by throwing one stone every minute. Night before last they kept it up for 4 hours! It was really maddening.

Well, that's all the news for now, my own. I miss you so much, words can hardly describe it. If I don't get to go home now.....well, I'll write my congressman or *P.M.*

With much love

Ben.

[Page 3 of an unknown letter; must be July 1945 because mom's trip to Cleveland is mentioned in the prior letter.]

... I recall he's pretty good.

Speaking of tennis, I played once here, and the court is badly in need of repair. They have plenty of POW help, in fact the court was freshly lined, but hadn't been rolled for a long time. I'm pretty far off my old game, but if I play enough, I'll get back in trim. My physical condition is pretty good, altho I still weigh 192# stripped.

Still no mail – I'm getting impatient. I hope everything at home is still going well.

To answer some of your recent queries:

Naturally I was quite a bit jealous of your going out so much in Cleveland, but since I haven't been entirely a stay-at-home, I can't bring myself to complain – it wouldn't be fair. So go ahead and have fun. But up to a

point! You'd better not tell me any more about hotel rooms! What you do is your own business, and until someone finds out about it – especially me!

Everett Matlin sounds like a little boor – but he may outgrow his smugness. [*Everett was a first cousin from Columbus.*]

The kids still sound wonderful to me – gosh, when will I get home to them?

All my love, sweetie, Ben

Tues July 10
[1945; France]

Hello my love:

I'm writing you from our new location near Sissonne, France, where the advance party arrived this am, after a very comfortable and beautiful ride by train. It took about 18 hours to travel the 140 miles from Liege, but most of this time was spent waiting for clear rails. We were not very crowded on the trip and were able to sleep lying down (across 3 seats) for the first time since we left by Pullman from Asheville. The route followed the Meuse for most of the trip, right along the banks, and this is one of the most picturesque regions I've ever seen. Southwestern Belgium is truly beautiful—more so than any other part of the country. There are high hills with sheer white rocky cliffs border the river with lovely resort towns nestling on the banks of the river. The bridges are all out, but only a few of the villages show the ravages of war. To top it off, we had a colorful sunset. When you add to that a good book ([*William*] Saroyan's short stories—they're marvelous) and no crap from the higher-ups—Maj. Hagen, our orthopedist was "C.O." and I in charge of officers and nurses—you can see that our trip was truly enjoyable.

On arriving here, we immediately realized that our amusements would have to center about the camp, since Sissonne is an ugly tiny village, hardly meriting a name, and the nearest city is Reims, 30 miles away (southwest of here). [*Assuming he is in Sissone and not the larger Soissons, also in the vicinity, Reims would really be to the southeast. All are in North-Central France, near the Belgian border.*]

The hospital is located near 2 redeployment camps: "Oklahoma City" and "Chicago." It is an old French barracks with buildings dating to about 1913, stucco with red trimmings, and not unattractive. The hospital is composed of 6 or 7 of these large buildings, 2 stories tall, and about 15 more of

such buildings used for quarters and messes, and a double building housing Hq. and all the clinics, including X-ray. The place is rather pretty, the streets used to be paved and are tree-lined. It boasts of excellent flowers, a fine ball-field, and a large theater shared with the 79th General Hospital which is just next door, separated from us by a road, and occupying identical buildings. Their area is even nicer than ours.

The X-ray set-up will be as good or better than any we've had, since there is more space and since I successfully managed to bring some of our acquired equipment along. We take over in the AM.

The 241st General, whom we are replacing, are headed direct for the CBI, having been overseas only since Dec. '44. They have never been really busy, and seem to be inexperienced in the ways of General Hospital warfare.

Most of our men have the blues tonight, including your husband –this place is just too far from anything interesting. However, I started a ball game this evening and then there was a fairly good USO show on the post – so the time has passed pretty pleasantly at that.

In the show, the most humorous act was put on by a Mrs. Dahl, whose former husband was released from a death sentence by Franco when she sent him (Franco) her photo and a letter pleading with him to spare the Loyalist flyer. You probably remember the incident. She's a typical "red-hot mama" with platinum hair and a low-voice, prob. close to 40, who plays the violin fairly well and makes suggestive remarks. Very funny, too.

Well, it's almost midnight dearest. Oh, how I miss you tonight.

All my love

Ben

Fri 13 July 45
[France]

Hello again, my love:

Well, we've taken over our new hospital, and so far there is very little work. We're installing some of our own equipment and making odds and ends of furnishings to suit our own tastes, so most of us are managing to keep busy during our work-day. The set-up should be very nice when we've fixed to suit ourselves.

I've been very fortunate in inheriting an Italian cooperator who is a cabinet-maker, and who goes with the department. He's fast, hard-working, and a skilled craftsman, and I am having difficulty in giving him enough work to do. No problem yet has seemed to faze him. He speaks enough English to get by, and since none of us speaks Italian, and he doesn't speak French or German, this is very fortunate.

We also have 2 German POWs who, like 99% of the Germans, are very diligent and willing. Neither speaks English, so my Yiddish-German is coming in very handy.

Other nationalities on the post are (1) French civilians, male and female, some of the latter being cute, young, and willing. I think I'll knock on any closed door before entering. Some are volunteer nurses aides and others are paid help. (2) There are also Polish guards for the POWs—all of whom talk German.

The men don't have too much interest since their status is indefinite. This is particularly true of our newest acquisition, a Sgt. Lancaster, whom we acquired from the 76th General in place of Libertoff. He has 98 points and hopes to go home soon. He hasn't lifted a finger since he got here, and from appearances, doesn't intend to. He's a rather cocky, know-it-all, and the men have taken an attitude 100% against him. I hope he gets home soon. It will be better for all concerned. Incidentally, he is a very bright fellow.

We play softball at 6 pm each evening on our very fine ball-field. I started this the night we got here and have kept it up ever since. I'm going to try to organize a post softball league here next week, when everyone gets here. The 3rd group is due tomorrow.

I find I'm not in too good physical condition (I must weigh about 195#) and keep pulling muscles and twisting ankles every day. I put myself on a diet and now maybe I'll get down to some reasonable dimension.

Last night we had a USO show consisting of 2 entertainers: Ella Logan, a movie star (I never heard of her) and an accordion accompaniment. She was very entertaining, and sang some popular tunes in quite an unusual manner. She appeared quite young and attractive and the GIs liked the show, altho it was a bit long and drawn out. [*She was 32 at the time and had had a few supporting movie roles in the 1930s.*]

Our weather here is beautiful—warm sunny days and lovely cool nights. The past 2 nights we have had gorgeous sunsets which vie with

those of Oklahoma. When I saw the sunsets, I sighed, and thought of us, sitting in the car along the river, thrilled by the sunset in Tulsa. ‘Member? And then my stream of consciousness carried me through our whole period in Tulsa. It was nice, wasn’t it. I enjoyed our life there very much, except for my work. I wonder where we’ll go next. [*Mom and dad had moved to Tulsa around 1940, where he was going to take over the practice of a retiring radiologist. He didn’t like private practice much, and was also dismayed by the bible-belt politics. I was born there in October 1941; then came Pearl Harbor in December, and that was the end of Tulsa.*]

This is rather a colorless part of France. Except for our particular post, the place looks like Kansas in the summer time. There are very few inhabitants, and the villages are hot and empty of interest. I suppose I’ll just live here and like it—waiting to go home.

It’s too bad that I didn’t get my leave to the Riviera. And now rumor has it that Walt will go home in August, so I shall have missed him. When Manny returns, they are going to put him on medicine [*instead of X-ray*], because of the shortage of officers. So any further trips are unlikely. I might get a day in Paris if I’m lucky. It’s only about 3 hrs away by train.

I got a phone call yesterday from the X-ray man from another hospital in this area. My predecessor having been X-ray consultant for this area, he wanted to have him see some special films.

Am enclosing a photo of a wall painting in our building, left by the Nazis.

It took about 20 hours by train from Scotland to Southampton, and I had 101° all the way from a cold. You are correct about the present whereabouts of Graller. [*Mom must have been asking about his time in England. However, part of this letter seems to repeat a passage from 12/9/44, so there was probably some confusion in the transcription.*]

Purchases of educational toys or other types are not foolish purchases, so don’t worry about it. Don’t overdo the toy situation, though, as I think it leaves little to a kid’s imagination. Your tales about the kids are extremely enjoyable and I want you to know what a swell job I think you’re doing with them. I’m very very pleased to hear that Steve is doing so much better.

Don’t worry about gifts for me, darling. I can get anything I want, but really don’t need a thing. You might send me a wallet which will hold British or Belgian money—broader than American. Leather goods are so expensive here! Perfume, too, has gone way up in cost and it would break me to

buy perfume for all the femmes of the family, as the cheapest price now is 400 francs (\$10) for any decent kind and these are small quantities.

Edie asked me to request some canned goods, which I do herewith: sardines, anchovies, etc. (I may have put this in a previous letter). Louise asked me to tell her what I would like—but since 15 or more pkgs. are on the way, and since they're a long time in transit, I hesitate to put her to the trouble. Incidentally, I received a swell letter from her today. She's a swell guy, do you know? If she insists, write her that canned mushrooms or canned chicken, a variety of cheese, etc. would be excellent. Nuts are always welcome, but unless packed airtight, are usually stale. Come to think of it, you might have to forward part of this letter to her.

Your purchase of a fur coat didn't surprise me too much, as I know you pretty well and can see that our bank account is bothering you. You're a clever rascal, though. You had me scared to death in the first part of the letter so that when I finally reached the actual cost on the third page, I was so relieved that it wasn't \$1000 that I forgave you immediately. Wear it in the best of health and with my love, dearest.

The pictures of the kids are excellent and I have been showing them off to anyone who will look. What handsome and bright kiddies we have!

Say, do you still put them on the Johnnie at midnight? And why? It's supposed to be bad psychology.

I didn't think your letter about furniture and houses was so foolish. It's just typical of you, my dreamer. I'm sorry that you think Edie had a slightly patronizing air, I've never noticed it in her.

We are all OK on my money orders, allotments, etc. so forget about it.

Now that I have these new snapshots and Auger is working on Steve's other picture, you'd better keep the portrait of Steve and frame it.

I liked *Strange Fruit* very much also, but *Freedom Road* is better. [*These are novels identified earlier.*]

Well, that's all (and plenty too) dearest.

I miss you soooooooo much.

Ben.

16 July 45 [*France*]

Dearest:

By this time we are being acclimated to our new surroundings—and I don't think it will be so bad. Of course there is absolutely no place to go off the post, but aside from that it should be a good deal.

We are quite busy, especially with out-patients. The clinics are packed with patients and many are X-rayed, so we have been very busy since we took over—not like after D-Day but still a sizeable number of cases. A number are interesting too.

Manny is still away and will be until Aug. 1. When he returns, he will go on medicine because of the shortage caused when the chief and asst. chief of medicine went home. He will be very disappointed, but there's little I can do to prevent it.

We have a new chief of surgery (Hagen—our orthopedist) and medicine (Klepfer—our psychiatrist) both of whom are very popular, and incidentally close friends of mine. Their predecessors, both of whom went to the States, were not nearly so popular, nor were they as good administrators.

The new set-up is entirely different from any of our previous ones in that there is mostly station hospital type of work with no battle casualties. But our experience as an outfit has made us very adaptable and we took over with very little confusion.

The previous outfit had only 2 months actual work, altho they had been set-up since January. What a mess this place was in. The surgical and medical patients were all mixed up, patients were not worked up properly, the X-ray film files both in the dept. and on the ward were in a terrible mess and many films had been permanently lost. And patients who were well were not being discharged.

The grounds were poorly kept up, despite the presence of—believe it or not—790 non-Army personnel on the post in addition to 500 corpsmen [*enlisted members of a medical unit*], officers, and nurses. With less than 500 patients in the hospital, these POWs, Italians, Poles, and French civilians were cluttering up the place terrifically. The corpsmen lived in tents despite an adequate no. of bldgs.

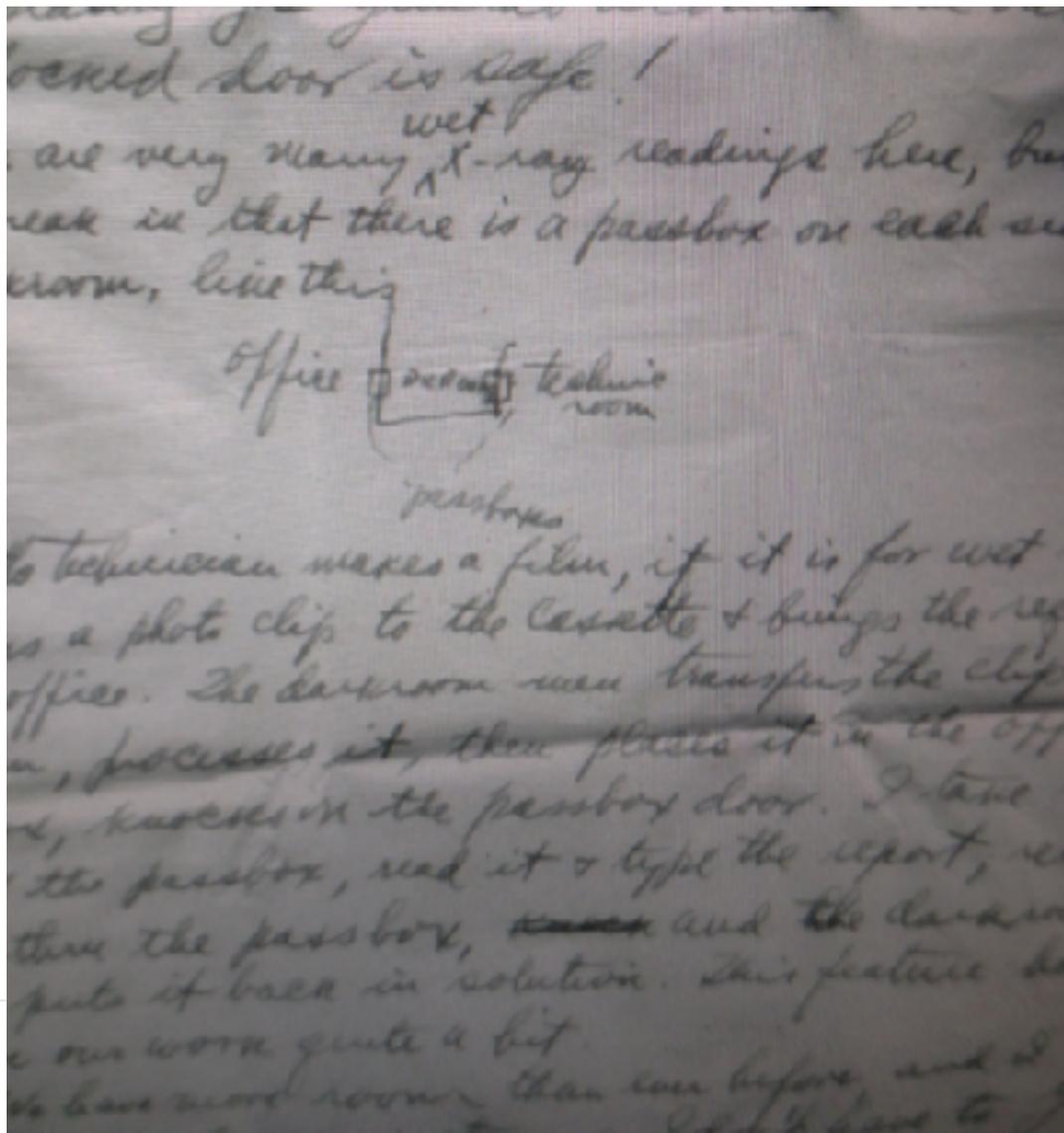
The X-ray set-up was better than the other services, but they had no Bucky. The genito-urinary department had a Bucky for their G.U. table, but would not lend it to X-ray when it was not being used! Consequently the films were definitely below par.

The extra personnel situation was quite amusing. There are 500 POWs who work from 8 to 11:30 and 1 to 4:30, in the hospital and from 6 to 8 in their Stalag. There were no POWs in the hospital at night or during the noon hours and they all had every Sunday off, so that even the boilers for hot water did not function on Sunday. There was much fraternizing, including the French girls.

The French girls, some quite attractive, work as hired help and nurses' aides. They did quite a good job servicing the patients behind closed doors. The worst part of the whole situation when we got here was the number of idle people sitting around at all hours of the day. It was ludicrous.

We will soon get this mess straightened out. A lot of Army and personnel stuff has been stolen and we are placing GI guards around the barracks. No unlocked door is safe!

There are very many wet X-ray readings here, but I got a big break in that there is a passbox on each side of the darkroom, like this:



When the technician makes a film, if it is for wet readings, he clips a photo clip to the cassette and brings the request into the officer. The darkroom man transfers the clip on to the film, processes it, then places it in the opposite passbox, knocks on the passbox door. I take the film out of the passbox, read it and type the report, return the film thru the passbox, and the darkroom man puts it back in solution. This feature has cut down our work quite a bit.

We have more room than ever before, and I am setting up a buzzer system so I don't have to yell or walk out of the office so much.

Our quarters are excellent. For the first time I have a room to myself, next to the ballfield too! And a tennis court is about a block away! There is a sink in the room and a johnny next door. I have a mattress, reading lamp, tables, chairs, plenty of cupboard space.

Incidentally, I picked up another case of appendix stone on one of our personnel in Liege and proved it by surgery. Yesterday on reviewing films on a pt. whom we inherited, I picked up another very large one, which they had diagnosed incorrectly, and I think they will operate him soon. I certainly hope so. That will make 10 cases. And still don't know what happened to our paper. [*The paper must have been on this subject.*]

Well, that's all for now, my pet.

All my love

From your old man, who misses you more than ever.

B.

July 19th, 1945
[*France*]

Dearest:

There's so little of interest happening to me, that I feel at a loss for ideas about which to write.

I have done little except work all day, play ball after supper, and read or go to a movie in the evening. Tonight, I am going to vary the routine a bit. We found a tennis court right on the post, and I'm playing Walt Hagen (Chief of Surgery). I really look forward to it.

We are starting an intramural softball league between the various services: (1) Clinics (2) Surgical wardsmen (3) medical wardsmen (4) cooks (5) administrative and duty men (6) Officers. I talked to the Sgt. in Special Service about dividing the teams up in such a manner and supplying one of the post's six pitchers to each team. Also I suggested the names of the managers and umpires. The next day, great was my amusement, when the special service officer dropped in on me and told me his plans for the league. They were mine verbatim! Apparently the Sgt. passed them onto him as his own idea, then passed them on to me as his (the Special Service Officers') idea. Needless to say, I praised the idea to the sky and complimented him on his excellent plan. He was highly pleased!

Last night, in front of a fairly large crowd, we played an enlisted men all-star team. The officers, including myself, failed terribly, and my pitching was none too good. But our hitting was good and we went into the last half of the last inning, behind 11 to 8. Then their pitcher went bad and walked 4 men in a row. Finally one of our officers got a 2 base hit and cleaned the bases, so that our officers' team won 12 to 11. Did we rub it in!

Just finished reading a book by Ogden Nash (you sent it to me). It was swell. Stuff like:

The turtle dwells twixt two half-decks
Which practically conceal its sex
I think it clever of the turtle
In spite of this, to be so fertile.

His crazy humor is right down my alley. And his puns are worse than mine!

The dept. is beginning to function more smoothly and since there's enough material on hand, I plan to start X-ray meeting next week. They will probably operate my case of appendix stone tomorrow or the next day and I look forward to it with bated breath. I'm really out on a limb but I'm 99% sure I'm right. [*Reference is to a patient's stone, not dad's.*]

The Allied bombing and shelling of Japan seems to me a rather daring and risky measure to force the Japs to accept unconditional surrender. I don't believe they will; as a race they do not seem to attach the same significance to death as we do. I wish they would spare us this unnecessary slaughter. The results are inevitable—they don't stand a Chinaman's (or Japanese's) chance. [*B-29 "Superfortress" bombers based in China and the Mariana Islands bombed Japan from Nov. 1944 until Japan capitulated on 15 Aug. 1945.*]

Well, with redeployment proceeding at such a clip, I think we can revise downward the estimated number of months it will take us to get home. I guess November. Get the turkey out, honey.

That's all for now. Has Leo left for the Pacific yet? And what about David and Chippy? And when is Walt coming home?

And how are you and our two devastating children? Write and write and write.

All my love, Ben.

22 July 45
[France]

Hello again, my sweetheart:

Little that's new, since my last letter. This is a quiet Sun. afternoon—the clinics are closed and I plan to go over to my quarters soon for a nap. There's a vehicle for Reims at 5:30 tonight (returns at 11 pm). It will make the run 4 times weekly. But tonight there's also a softball game between the 28th and the 79th Gen. (next door). I choose the latter. I can go to Reims some other time.

I walked to Sissonne night before last and it's a small, hot, dusty country village with absolutely no interests. It could be transplanted into the middle of Kansas and no one would be the wiser.

Manny is back after 1 month sojourn in England for a refresher course in X-ray at the 7th General. He had a swell time but learned little. As a matter of fact, they didn't expect to be teaching the course and had made no preparations. So it wound up with Manny doing the X-ray work for the G.H. for about a week, until their new radiologist came in, then sitting behind this radiologist (who was more or less a beginner) while he read films. But he was only 15 miles from London, so he had a good time and came back broke but happy.

I expect his transfer to the med. service momentarily, but so far have heard nothing, 'tho he has been back two days. I'm trying to keep him. My purely selfish motive is that I won't be tied down so much.

Leaves for the Riviera, Paris, Switzerland, and Reims are no longer "frozen" so I again put in for the Riviera. I was first on the priority list, but now I doubt if I'll get right back in that position, esp. if Manny gets transferred to medicine. We are only 4 hrs. from Paris, so I may get that, too.

I heard that the C.O. of this hospital center was a Capt. Grissell and wondered if he were an old friend of mine from Indpls City Hospital. Yesterday I received a phone call from him. He asked if I were the same Benny Felson who had a fellowship at City Hosp. Then he invited me for dinner at the hospital center and sent a vehicle for me.

He had been C.O. of the center for 2 months and last week an L.C. [Lt. Col.] was sent to supersede him. The job calls for a Brig. Gen'l so "Gristle" knew he wouldn't get to keep the job. He has been a Capt. for 48 months! He had a fellowship in medicine at City and was one of the 5 men in our journal club: Brock, Tether, Hasewinkle, Grissell and myself. You may remember his wife from the "wives" auxiliary of the club.

They have a nice set-up there: live in a modern chateau with plenty of civilian help, [he] has a personal jeep, they have an excellent tennis court and swimming pool nearby. He is going to call me next week and we'll play tennis together. We used to play at the City hosp. and ...

[REST MISSING]

July 27th, 1945
[France]

I am having a lot of trouble getting this letter written but finally we have had a little let-up in our work, so for the first time in 4 days I am able to sit down and write this letter. We run about 75 patients a day but since Manny is on the wards as a ward officer and since I'm getting a lot of wet readings, things are really hopping. I have had to do a lot of work at night so have had little chance to do any reading or writing.

I feel pretty good today: my case of appendix stone was operated on and the diagnosis is confirmed. Apparently my predecessors here missed the boat. They saw the stone but called it a gall stone in the colon and were going to evacuate him. In fact they gave him castor oil which should never be done in appendix cases; he had a severe attack of appendicitis following this but they still didn't suspect the appendix. This is case No. 10 for me, all diagnosed beforehand by X-ray.

Today I received orders to the effect that, in addition to my other duties, I am now consultant in Radiology to the Hospital Center (about 6 hospitals). This is a small honor since I will have to visit these hospitals once a month and submit a report. In addition, I will carry out orders from higher up

and act as consultant upon request of the other radiologists. And I have very little time without all this.

Your statement that Leo went overseas was the first I had heard and I was very sad to hear of it. But perhaps with the news that the Japs are contemplating unconditional surrender (tonight's radio) perhaps he won't have to go into action. [*The prevailing view today is that, in the absence of the atom bomb, the Japanese would not have surrendered unless beaten on the ground after an invasion.*]

Love Ben.

P.S. Churchill's defeat is good news, isn't it? Note new APO 513. [*Despite overwhelming personal popularity resulting from his wartime leadership, Churchill's Conservative Party was badly beaten by the Labour Party, led by Clement Attlee, in the July 1945 election.*]

31 July 45
[France]

Hello, honey:

Oh, my aching back! We're moving again! Setting up another hospital in the Nancy area. [*In Eastern France, near the German border.*] We leave here later this month. I have a hunch that we came here by mistake. In fact, I do not think it improbable that our new orders will be cancelled. We are supposed to leave here 25 Aug and go to Lunaville near Nancy, taking over from another hospital. I don't mind saying that I don't like it a bit—it will prob. slow us up in going home and I hate like hell to move again so soon. But I'm afraid they won't listen to me. They never do!

In addition, we lost 4 officers who have been with us all the way. These include Manny Levin and Meyer Bloom; I sure will miss them. They are both in their 90s (points) and are going to a field hospital which is leaving for home soon. I imagine they will be transferred out as soon as they hit the States. In addition, we are losing 2 low point men to other outfits—I assume they go to the CBI direct or via the States. We are terribly short-handed now, altho we have gotten a few officers in on D.S. recently. I suspect we will lose a lot of low point men from now on since we are still a class 4 outfit and they are starting to move Medical Officers again. And most of our Nurses and enlisted men should start leaving also. What a turmoil!

Last night, I threw a party for Manny in the E.M. quarters. All the technicians, Zanly, Chaplain Powell and I attended. I supplied most of the 6 bottles of gin consumed, and we got some refreshments, including hard-boiled eggs from my friend in the Mess. We had a howling good time reminiscing about old times, singing to the accompaniment of Lindy's accordion, teasing each other etc. Since we ate as we drank, no one got too drunk, altho most of us, including me, had a hangover today. Lindy played music in honor of each of us: *Turkey in the Straw* for Blough; *Bei Mir Bistu Schoen* for me; Italian music for Perella; Irish music for Willard; Swedish music for himself; etc. A memorable evening! [*Dad's requested song was written in Yiddish in 1932 by Sholom Secunda; lyricist Sammy Cahn got his employer, possibly Capitol Records, to buy the rights to it for \$30 and wrote the English-Yiddish version for the then-unknown Andrews Sisters; released in 1937, that version earned \$3 million in royalties.*]

In the meantime, nothing unusual is happening around here. I play softball or tennis every evening, attend a movie now and then, and still have to do some work at night. I think I'll go to Reims tonight and give the town the once over. By quitting time I may change my mind.

I received your letter today in which you bemoaned the fact that the kids didn't behave, that you lost your temper with them, that they didn't compare favorably with Ros' children, that you didn't want any more, etc. In the next breath you talk about going here, there, and the other place with and without them. In the first place, your kids (and they are yours when they misbehave) were away from home and Ros' were at home—quite a difference, you know. Furthermore, you take the kids away from home too often. Their natural environment is home, and they should stay there most of the time. And I think you go galivanting around too much. It would be different if you always had someone responsible to leave them with, but your mother is not the one for the job. Therefore, stay home with them, and only go out when Sel is around or when the kids have gone to bed. That's your part of the bargain, dear, and I expect you to keep it.

Well that's all for now; all my love.

Ben

3 Aug 45
[France]

HELLO DEAREST:

Well, things are still happening so fast here that it makes one's head swim. In the first place, it is not Lunaville we are going to, it's Tournaville; and that's not near Nancy, it's 4 miles outside of Cherbourg [*Northern France, facing England*]; and we are not closing up this place, we are turning it over to another hospital; and we're not a 4 outfit, we are 2bb—CBI reserve, via the States; etc. etc.

We have lost 3 more officers with low scores, who are going direct to the CBI, and received 2 displacements in place of Bloom and Levin, one of whom is an Army trained Radiologist with 60 points, a Capt. Ressler. He had been in an evacuation hospital up to now. He reported to work this a.m. and at noon was sent on D.S. to the 79th GH (right next door) because their low-point Radiologists are leaving for the CBI. So you can see what a state of uncertainty we are all in. Every hour something new comes up; the latest is that we will prob. lose our Ardennes battle star with the 5 points which it gives us. This will bring my point score down to 82 points, a dangerous score to have with a shortage of Radiologists.

The coming move will hold us over here longer; I think March to June is the earliest you can expect me, and if I should happen to get a bad break, I still might wind up in the CBI, God forbid. [*Again, that is the Pacific – "China-Burma-India" – but Hiroshima comes along three days later, changing everything.*] So you can see that my usually buoyant spirits are at low ebb now. To top it off, our Officers' ball team took a shellacking from the Cooks to the tune of 12 to 1. Our team fielded terribly, got no hits and I didn't pitch so good. So you realize that things are really getting desperate over here for me. My softball is my last hope unless I can find a tennis court!

Saw a punk movie: *Salome, Where She Danced*. [1945, with Yvonne De Carlo.] Everything was fine while she was dancing, but the rest of the plot was a Western with all the trimmings and a stinker of the worst sort. The night before that we had a USO show which wasn't bad. But as a rule, entertainment is not so good here. What I miss most is a Radio. Our dept. radio was stolen, and Special Service hasn't seen fit to lend us another, so I haven't heard any serious music in weeks. And I miss it very much.

The news of Irv's and Ros' good fortune in obtaining a male heir [*Alan Felson*] was very thrilling to me; now there is another male named Felson in the tribe, long may it wave! Please buy Alan Stuart something nice from us and pass my congratulations on to Irv.

I have had several requests to start my X-ray conferences again, so next week I am planning to have one. That is, if we are still here; one never knows what will happen next. The material I have here is excellent and plentiful.

I will greatly regret leaving this place (on or about 15 Aug.) because of the nice weather and quarters here and the excellent working conditions. My room has running cold water; there is hot water next door which I tote with a pitcher in the a.m. The latrine is 2 doors away, the showers are excellent and handy, I have sheets and pillows and a mattress on my bed, the ball field is right outside the back door and the mess hall and X-ray dept. are close by. This is the most comfortable setup we have had since coming overseas, and I hate to exchange a known for an unknown. Well enough of this drivel.

I miss you acutely, and the lump in my throat feels malignant, getting larger and larger with the passage of time. Keep on writing, my love.

Incidentally, I think it inadvisable to write you c/o your mountain, since the mail may get there long after you've gone back home. Have someone forward it up to a certain date, then hold it as the time for your return draws nigh. Mail is too uncertain for me to try this. I might send this letter there, though. [*Apparently mom and us kids spent quite a while at the cabin that summer.*]

With all my love and devotion,

Ben

PS The book I finished reading was a biography (auto) by Maurice Hindus, Green something. [*This must be Green Worlds: An Informal Chronicle (1938); Hindus, 1891 - 1969, was a Russian-American writer.*]

B

7 Aug 45
[France]

Dear Gin:

Didn't I tell you things were changing all the time. Latest word is that we are going to stay here until at least Sept., which doesn't make me at all angry. We lost 2 more low point medical officers and gained a new chief of Medical Service. Also received a new asst. in place of Manny, an older (47) army-trained radiologist who has been with an evacuation hospital for a long time, doing X-ray work. His name is Hy Ressler, one of the NY cho-

sen, who seems to be a helluva nice guy. He knows a fair amt of X-ray, but seems overly humble. So far I like him very much. However, 4 hours after he reported to me, he was sent on D.S. to the 79th GH (next door) so I haven't seen much of him. I expect him back next week.

We are getting busy again, and the work remains very interesting. I have been requested to start my X-ray meetings again, and plan my first one for tomorrow. Since I don't have a projector here, we will look at original films only [*instead of slides*], but this improves a meeting rather than detracting from it. The only trouble is that if a large number of officers attend, they all can't see too well. Also, some of the good cases are evacuated—but I managed to take a few extra films on these patients for the sake of the meetings. We still make the miniatures for my personal slide collection.

Have been trying my hand at hardball umpiring. We now have a team representing the 28th, and a pretty good one at that. The other day I started a near riot by calling a foul ball on one near the first base line. It was a very crucial one and I wasn't far from where it hit. Besides, 2 patients who were also close to the ball, also agreed later that I was right. Since the decision was in favor of my own team, it might have looked peculiar, but—the other umpire (who was with the opponents) called it fair ball from behind home plate, with his mask still on, and over-ruled my decision despite the fact that he was 90 feet further from the play than I was. Since the umpire behind the plate is automatically the chief umpire, he changed my decision and our team lost. Wow, all hell broke loose, and I thought for a while that we would need the MPs. I was pretty mad, too, but being technically impartial, couldn't say much.

My softball pitching of late hasn't been too good, but we managed to win 2 of 3 of our league games and are in 2nd place. Not bad for a bunch of old men. I still play 3rd base on the EM team, so practically every night I get some exercise. The tennis courts are now so bad that I have given it up as a bad job.

I received a letter from Sel, who seems very happy in her present situation in Chicago. I do not recall ever having encountered her in such good spirits. She enclosed letters from your Dad, which are, as usual highly amusing. I am enclosing them in this one.

Walt has also written me, but so far a rendezvous with him appears very unlikely. Because of the present shortage of MCs [*Medical Corps*] in this area, I think all leaves are frozen.

I have received a few recent letters from you, and you sound a bit depressed. Hang on, kid, we'll get together yet. And please don't ask me to look up people in "nearby" camps without giving me a lot of information of an accurate type. If you knew how many people there were in these camps, you'd realize what a task it is.

I'm surprised that Meyer Margolis is still a Capt. and doesn't have enough points to get out of the CBI. He has been in a long time, and ought to have a few battle stars. Also he has been overseas a long time, too. And has at least one decoration.

I hope it won't be too much work for you at your Dad's mountain retreat. I am a little concerned, since you will prob. have to cook, launder, etc. I wonder if it's worth it. Let me know soon how you are making out.

Good afternoon, my love. Am sending a few more photos also.

Ben

10 Aug 45
[France]

Hello, darling:

I hope everything is going well with all of you in the mountains. I haven't heard from you since you left Cincy, and knowing that it's going to be a tough trip with the two kids, and tougher to do all the house work, I feel for you.

The war news is wonderful; the Japs suing for peace is marvellous, and I shouldn't be surprised if the war ends this week. Of course, they should accept no conditions, such as the Japs insisting on keeping Hirohito; just drop another atomic bomb, and they will accept "unconditional surrender" without any conditions. The Mikado [*a term for the Emperor, now obsolete*] is as morally responsible as the rest of them, and it will mean only a return of the status quo if he is retained. [*Col. Paul Tibbets piloted the B-29, named "Enola Gay" after his mother, which dropped the first atomic bomb, "Little Boy," on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. It took a day or so for the Japanese to figure out what had happened, at which point they apparently decided to fight on unless certain conditions were met for surrender, including no abdication of the Emperor, no occupation by the US, and no imposed punishment of war criminals. However, they did not communicate one way or another with the US, and on August 9 another B-29, "Bockscar," piloted by Maj. Charles Sweeney, dropped "Fat Man" on Nagasaki. The*

American surrender terms published at this time did not appear to require the Emperor to abdicate. This proved acceptable and the Emperor's capitulation announcement was broadcast on August 15. When dad says below, "I hope it is over," he makes it clear that the "Japs suing for peace" was not yet a hard fact.]

I hope it is over before Leo can get anywhere near the fighting. I don't trust him to exercise due caution. He might pull a Kruke, and I don't care for dead heroes in my family! [*This reference would be to an act of heroism that gets you killed, which is what happened to his friend Mutty Kruke. Some Americans later expressed mild guilt for incinerating 200,000 Japanese civilians, but dad obviously did not feel that way at the time.*]

I have been writing every other day, so can't understand your complaint that you are receiving my letters sporadically. As to writing a V-mail daily, with just a short note on it: I'm sure you would prefer these longer letters on alternate days. Certainly nothing can happen to me here, so danger shouldn't be a factor. And if the mail is slow, it's not my fault. Furthermore, you don't write me daily. So you should be adult enough not to indulge yourself in envying your friends their more frequent letters; remember, the quality of my letters is so much better than theirs (ahem!) that they should be worth waiting an extra day. I've been overseas long enough (almost 2 years) to prove to you that I haven't been derelict in my duty of correspondence. I think our contact with each other via the mails has been exceedingly pleasant, at least from my standpoint. I enjoy and look forward to your letters as much as you probably do mine, so let's forget the subject.

The weather here for the last few days has been wet and wetter, and fairly cool. So it has played hell with our athletic activities, and has kept us in. This is the first bad spell we have had so I can't complain. I've been catching up on my reading, and enjoying it. It's funny, but if I read my Journals regularly, it gets boring, while if I wait until I'm in the mood, I accomplish almost as much, and enjoy it much more.

I saw a fair USO show yesterday, a Cole Porter Broadway musical comedy, prob. with some of the Broadway players—I forget the name, but it is a few years old. It was very pleasant, and the ladies were luscious, esp. to this sex-starved old man. [*Possibly Something for the Boys (1943); Ethel Merman was the Broadway lead.*]

My helper, Capt. Ressler, has been re-assigned here, so now I ought to have a little more time during the day for reading, administrative work, etc. He seems to be very nice, and much less difficult to be with than Man-



ny was. I miss the latter, though. He is in Camp Philadelphia awaiting shipment home. Also there are Bloom and Hulse. The latter is supposed to leave for the CBI momentarily.

Nancy's picture arrived yesterday, and I take back anything I have ever said about her. She is gorgeous, and as cute a smile I've never seen. Everyone has raved about the picture, to my great pleasure. And to top it off they say she has been unani-
the pin-up girl of dept., and graces as such, having Lake. I guess, like seldom takes a does her justice. popular actress of mous for her style.]



looks like me. She mously elected as the 28th GH X-ray our bulletin board replaced Veronica her mother, she picture which [Reference is to a the 1940s, fa- "peekaboo" hair-

Figure 27: This is probably six months or so before the pinup photo. I am holding "Kinky."

Figure 28: Constance Frances Marie Ockelman, later known as Veronica Lake (1922-1973); not sure exactly what she's embracing.

I would also like a recent picture of Steve, if possible. Is he as handsome as ever? If I ever hear you complain of our kids again, I will wring your neck!

I received a pkg yesterday containing chopped herring salad, soup, 2 kinds of cheese, vegetable relish, anchovies, and fillets. Last night I got 5 of the men, and we had a small feast. I have eaten so much of their food, that it did my heart good to dish it out. I only regret that I didn't get to feed Manny. My appetite was usually so good that I couldn't refuse to eat Manny's food when he offered it, even though I felt too indebted to him.

This is all for now. I will send this letter to the Mountains, but from now on I will send them home, as you will prob. be gone before they would arrive there.

All my love,
Ben.

15 Aug. [1945; France]

Hello darling:

Altho it isn't official V-J day yet, this A.M., Truman announced that everything has ended, except for the signing. What marvellous news! It can't be long now before we go home—which is what we're all waiting for.

Please forgive the writing—the lights just failed and it's pitch dark, almost. With my training in writing letters with my dark glasses on, when accommodating my eyes for fluoroscopy, I ought to get by.

Altho there are parties at both the officers and EM clubs tonight, there is no real excitement here, as there must be in the States. Our big excitement and thrill will take place when we walk up the front steps of our homes—that's what I'm waiting for, at least.

But make no mistake. This is really an important occasion, and I would not have believed it 1 short month ago. (The lights are on now).

The atomic bomb should be the greatest deterrent to future wars. I think that more can be accomplished between nations thru fear than thru any dependence on each other's word. And I believe everyone, including ourselves, will be afraid to start anything. But I don't trust even us (America) to hesitate to use it as a threat against the countries who do not have it. I wonder if the Russians know how to make them? [*They didn't but soon would.*]

Tonight I spent a pleasant evening reading *Reader's Digest* and *P.M.*—2 extremes, in a sense. It's not surprising to see the different way they write up the same stories.

I'm beginning to think seriously of what the future holds for us. It's about time, don't you think. I imagine it will be 6 mo. plus before I get out of the Army. I plan to contact the American College of Radiology Professional bureau, Doctors' exchanges, Dr. Schiff, Reineke, Sam Brown et al., but it's premature since I have no idea of my discharge date. I will start looking

around the day I arrive in the States (3 to 6 mo. hence) using my accrued leave to visit various possibilities in person.

Competition is going to be tough, since the Army has trained (or rather partially trained) a lot of men in Radiology who want to stay in the field. It's all so uncertain, though. Cincy looks like a good place for me, aside from the fact that I'd like to live there. I think I can depend on a number of men in the Cincy unit to send business my way. And perhaps I can find some connections at the General.

Enough of this meandering and hopeful waiting. We had a nice X-ray meeting today and about ½ or more of our medical officers attended (about 10 came). We lost another officer recently to a Q.M. [*Quartermaster – supplies*] outfit, and have gotten in 3 more including a new Chief of Medicine and of Surgery. The latter a Col. Green, of the 12th Gen. Hosp. (Northwestern unit) which staged at [*Fort*] Harrison, I knew at that time. You may remember we met them at a party or something in Meridian St (I think the Commodore) and you got sore at me for riding them back to the Fort at 1 A.M. He is an older man, part bald and with white hair and a white moustache, very distinguished looking. Do you remember?

There are also 4 or 5 men on D.S. from another hospital, mostly N.Y. heathens. [*My guess is "non-Christians."*] So we have more new men than old timers. About 12 or 13 of our original crew of officers remain (aside from the MACs who go on and on, unfortunately).

I suggested to the Chaplain he start holding current event meetings again and he seemed very enthusiastic about it. He seems to be down in the dumps lately. He asked me to help him with it, and I said I would.

Just finished eating a can of gefilte fish and pretzels all by myself, and now my belly's a'hurtin'. That stuff will kill a guy—but it's good.

Speaking of food, the mess has been exceptionally good lately. This past week we had steak twice, chicken once, and really good cabbage soup like Mom used to make, corn on the cob, raw onions (Bermuda), and bananas. We haven't had corn or bananas since leaving home 20 mo. ago.

You'd be very pleased to see how nicely I keep my room. Everything is on its special wall hook (and the closets are empty!) and I hang up my pants and shirt every night on a chair!

When I get home, I want a room for myself—don't get me wrong, I don't want a bed in the room—just a place to keep my own things and cupboards of my own. If we should take over your folks place—and I don't say

we will—Jake’s room will be fine. And that will be my sanctorium. Admission by invitation only!

Well, I’m getting tired now, so will sign off with all my love and hopes for a quick reunion.

Tell Nancy and Steve how much I miss them—and tell Ida that she better get that ice box [*fridge*] stocked.

Ben

19 Aug 45
[*France*]

Hello again, honey:

Not much to write about, as I haven’t done anything but work since my last letter. The weather has been pretty foul ever since I wrote you about the nice weather we had here, so I promise you I’ll never mention the weather again. It’s a jinx to do so.

My typing is improving, don’t you think? I can type (very slowly but correctly) with my eyes closed, and I’m very proud of this new talent. Of course, it takes me three times as long to type this letter than to write it, but don’t you think it’s more sophisticated?

My softball pitching ability is turning into a flop and I am acutely unhappy about it. I’ve developed good control, but moderate speed, and a change of pace, but somehow or other, I don’t seem to be fooling the batters! Even the cripples knock me around. The faster I throw ‘em, the harder they hit ‘em. In my own defense, I must say that my officer-fielders aren’t so hot, but I guess I’d still get beat by the EM if I had big leaguers behind me. I’ve won 3 and lost 3 and tied 1 in the EM league, which won’t net me a professional job, I’m afraid.

We are going to try to see the Radio City Rockettes this PM if the rain doesn’t stop this outdoor show. I hear that it is one of the best USO shows they have ever had. They are playing at Camp Detroit, 40 miles away. Zanny, Danish, John Humm and I are going.

My second meeting again went over pretty well, and the new chiefs of service (medicine and surgery) definitely want them continued. They are the only meetings we have. The cases are still interesting here and I am picking up new things all the time, so that my time here is definitely not wasted, from a scientific angle.

I picked up a Tbc [*tubercular?*] spine on a POW and presented it to the first meeting. Everyone agreed to the diagnosis except that one man asked if gas in the bowel could produce the shadows in question. I said I didn't think so, but because of his suggestion, would take another picture. The day before he was to have a cast applied, I got him back, and lo and behold, the shadow was gone! It was gas in the bowel. When I presented him to the next meeting, we all had a good laugh at my expense and no one seemed to hold it against me. I think people seem to respect one more if he owns up to his mistakes and doesn't offer any excuses. Of course I get teased a lot, but I detect no malicious note in this teasing, and everyone knows here that I like it, so they really dish it out. But I generally catch them up before long, and get even with a vengeance. It adds to the fun in working together, and I take great pains not to put salt into open sores.

I found out one thing though. I can't take a ride from someone I don't like; it really disturbs me because I imagine I detect gloating or censure, sometimes unfairly, and want to respond in kind. This is definitely a smallishness in my character, and I have tried to fight it, but not always successfully.

Sundays (today) I spent the mornings following up my cases and preparing for my Wed. meetings. I look forward to it, because I can often check the accuracy of my diagnoses. God, how I love to be right! Even when no one else knows it. I have gotten over the childish desire to brag about my "home runs" and when I make a few in succession, I know that a "strike out" is around the corner. There is nothing more humbling than to be wrong, and I make my share of mistakes, I assure you.

We still have no news of when we will go home, so don't bank on my November guess. That is all that buoys my spirits, though, so I'll hang on to my hopes.

I am so thrilled about what you tell me about the kids that I'm nervous with impatience to see for myself. Take care of yourself and of them for me, honey, and daddy will try to get home soon.

as always,
Your loving husband.

Tues. 21 Aug. [*France*]

Hello honey:

I'm still biding my time but impatiently. No news about going home yet. My hopes go up and down like a teeter-totter as one rumor supplants another. In the meantime I'm making the most of a situation, and carrying on as if I'm sentenced to remain here for life (god forbid).

Remember how much more pleasant life can be if you act as if your new situation is a permanent one—as we did in Indianapolis and Tulsa? So I'm continuing my meetings, keeping my interest up in my work, and reading up on my cases.

In addition, I'm started on the downward path of poker again. Played twice—winning about \$50 and am going to play again for life. I guess I'll go to hell fast at this rate.

The "Rockettes" were rained out, but are playing at another camp nearby, soon, and I may get to see the show yet.

Yesterday Zan, John Humm and I went to visit the 50th Field Hospital at Sissone. I was able to obtain a vehicle in my capacity of consultant in Radiology, and ostensibly checked their X-ray dept. We enjoyed ourselves very much—ate and drank well in the 4½ hours we stayed there. Zan used to be in the 50th Field and I knew 5 nurses and 2 med officers from Ft. Harrison and the C.O. is a heathen from Pittsburgh, a Lt. Col. Blumberg—nice guy and quite friendly and efficient. [*Now it's clear – "heathen" is a synonym for "Jewish."*]

I learned some of the low-down on Booher, from several men who were formerly in the 40th Gen. H. And what a juicy tale it is. I don't think this paper could stand the tale, so I'll wait until I get home. Besides, they hated him so much, that I couldn't tell whether the story was doctored up or not. They didn't know what the court martial gave him.

What have you heard from Walt? Is he going to get home soon? And what about Leo? Please keep me posted. Also, is Chippy going to have to go in the Army of occupation?

We're still having a steady run of bad weather, and all our ball games have been rained out, making me very unhappy. So beginning Friday, I'm going to start getting away from this joint.

Danish is going to Paris to take some lab specimens and I am going to drive with him. We will stay there about 6-8 hours (it is a 4 hr. drive each way) and I ought to get to see some of the city in my first visit there.

On Monday, Max Hagen and I are going to Campagne and prob. Chateau Thierry to consult, and see the country (incidentally). [*These are in*

North-Central France, between Paris and Reims, not far from the Belgian border.]

Oh, yes—the 25th GH has lost most of its officers—Jimmy Mack, Dan Early (sick), Murray Rich, Joe Filger, Sander Goodman, and others have left. Herman Nimmitz is C.O.—Red Elsey and Dave Graller are still there. They have just opened a hospital at—Oh, hell, I forget the name of the city.

I am amused at myself, vacillating so much with my post-war plans: first I want to set up in Cincy—pvt. practice—then I think about some other town; then I think of the Vet. Administration, then of a group practice, etc. To sum it up, I don't what the hell I'm going to finally decide to do. I guess I'll just have to wait until I get home and interview—a few people: Reineke, Zinninger, Sam Brown, Leon Schiff and some others. I will never work in pvt. practice with another Dr.

By the way, find out for me if Bader has retired, who works with Reineke downtown; what new X-ray men are in town; who is training at the CGH. In other words, write me the present X-ray setup in Cincy. Maybe I can think it out.

Well, the poker game is beginning in a few minutes, so auf wiedersehen.

25 Aug 45
[France]

Dearest:

I went to Paris yesterday with Abe Danish and had a delightful time visiting the beautiful city. The trip took about 3 hrs. each way, which gave me about 7 hours in Paris—enough to see the sights, but not enough for anything else.

We left here at 7:30 am, and drove along a fairly rough road thru the beautiful countryside of France. Approaching Paris, the first well known place we saw was Le Bourget Airport where Lindbergh landed. [1927, *first solo trans-Atlantic flight.*] It is about 8 or 10 kilometers from central Paris, a large airport filled with warplanes of the various Allied Nations, including France. There was nothing particularly unusual about it as airports go, so we went on.

Paris has no great suburbia; it suddenly materialized out of the countryside. You round a curve and you're in it. It doesn't have a beautiful ap-

proach, at least from the North; in fact, this part of town looks like any big city. We passed a marketplace, jammed with people buying vegetables etc. like in any other city—nothing colorful about it.

The traffic was fairly heavy including a no. of civilian cars and trucks so apparently gas is available, legal or otherwise. The Parisian motorists and pedestrians don't seem to pay much attention to what they're doing, so one must be careful in driving around the city. Traffic lights and cops are ignored and arterial stops are non-existent.

We cruised thru the town to the University of Paris, where the official business of the trip was transacted with the U.S. Army laboratory located there. This took almost an hour, so we had lunch with them at their civilian mess (GI food). To my intense pleasure, we had grilled liver and other food prepared in French style—an excellent meal.

From here we drove to the famous Crillon Hotel [*in Place de la Concorde*], now taken over by the Red Cross for officers, and I went on the bus tour of the city, leaving Danish and the driver, neither of whom cared to go. This was a good idea, as I found out what all the famous buildings were and enjoyed the trip immensely. We got out of the bus about 5 times: at Notre Dame Cathedral, the Arch of Triumph, the Eiffel Tower, Napoleon's tomb, and the Louvre. I am enclosing some post cards in true tourist fashion. We saw the tomb of the unknown soldier with its perpetual flame, various famous government buildings and streets, statues of famous people, etc. until I was getting filled up, at which time the tour appropriately ended, at about 3:15 (2½ hrs). I am also enclosing a snap of the people on the tour (not free, either) and a list of the things we saw.

My impression of the city is that it is really a lovely place, not crowded in the New York manner at all, but much more widely spaced. The buildings are not very tall, 8 stories being the maximum allowed by statute. The people do not seem to dash about in a hurry, things moving about as they do in the Southern U.S., perhaps a little faster. The people no longer pay much attention to the Americans but certainly are not unfriendly. There are so many large official and historical buildings and palaces and squares and circles and streets, that Paris is in a class by itself when it comes to this type of beauty. The Place de la Concorde is really magnificent and the Champs d'Elysee is also most beautiful.

The shops are likewise works of art and I visited some of them. But prices are terrific; perfumes cost twice as much here as they did in Liege, and Lord knows they were expensive enough there. Everything is very ex-

pensive, and the shops were not well stocked as they were in Belgium. I saw some fancy clothes in the shops and on the streets, but please don't ask me to describe them. All I can say is that they looked very nice, period.

One cannot visit this city without mentioning the women. They were really beautiful, and not in the artificial sense with which I have come to associate beauty on the continent. The ones which attracted me were those who looked more natural, and there were myriads of them. I suppose the more sophisticated would consider these damselles less stylish than the more "flashy" type who also were present by the thousands. The latter wore their hair high in front, and dyed practically every color of the rainbow, including two-toned (so help me!) But as I said before, these didn't appeal to me. Wedgy shoes are apparently the only type of shoe manufactured, and on some the heels are so high they look like stilts. Bicycle travel is quite common, and lovely creatures floating by on their bikes, with no attempt to maintain decorum, weakens even the strongest male, and I have never claimed that I was strong.

We had a drink at the famous Harry's New York Bar—one of the better known habitats of American soldiers during the last war—but it looked like a dive to me! We were approached by a Yiddish "promoter" who wanted to guarantee us a good time in Paris, supplying everything we wanted and I mean everything, unquote. When he learned we were leaving in 20 minutes, he stayed and talked to us. He handles anything from prostitutes to black market, and charges American money at 10 times the current rate. He had a real gift of gab, which intrigued Danish, who led him into thinking we would return next week and look him up. To top it off, we were approached by a street walker (flattering to this old man, isn't it?). Incidentally prices are outrageous for this pleasure—800 to 1000 francs for this ugly dame (\$16-20). I think any self-respecting prostitute in the states would blush for shame at these prices.

We had supper in the same mess that we ate dinner, and this time the dessert was ice cream and cake! So stuffed and happy, we started for home, arriving at about 9 pm, after a pleasant ride. There was a lot more in Paris to see and do, but this will have to wait until I get more time there. I hope it won't be too long before the occasion arises.

Well that's all for now, my love. See you soon, I hope.

Ben

27 Aug 45
[France]

Darling:

The Stars and Stripes says all 85 pointers (and some 75+) pointers will be home in October and out of the Army by Xmas. So, if S&S is right and if I don't lose that battle star, you better get my civilian clothes out (I wonder if they still fit) and warm up the bed, 'cause here I come. I'll tell you, though, I won't believe it until I see it.

The Japs are still stalling around, and don't act like they've been beaten. But I think [Gen. Douglas] MacArthur isn't the type to let them fool around, and—whatever else you think of him—should be the ideal man for the job. [MacArthur was in effect the ruler of occupied Japan from 1945-51.]

I'm pleased that Nelson Rockefeller resigned. His "kid-glove" attitude towards Argentina has proven to be wasted tact, and now I think we will handle them more firmly. [Rockefeller was Assistant Secretary of State under Roosevelt, fired by Truman in 1945 amid accusations that through his family company, Standard Oil, he shipped fuel to Nazi Germany. He was President Ford's Vice-President from 1974-77.]

It looks like the Chinese Reds and Kuo Min Tang might patch up their differences; my God, how can they keep fighting after 13 yrs. of war! But neither Chiang [Kai Shek] nor Mao Tse will give in very much, I'm afraid, so we'll prob. have more civil war in China. [Mao prevailed in 1947; Chiang and his anti-Communist forces ended up in Taiwan, supported by the US.]

The handwriting is on the wall for Franco, despite England's New Labor Party's wishy-washy attitude toward it. We'll either have another Revolution in Spain or a popular election at the insistence of the World Court. Perhaps the Monarchy will return, but I'm sure Franco can't hang on. [Generalissimo Francisco Franco remained dictator of Spain until his death 30 years later.]

The English Labor Party's platform is very much the same as Churchill's at present, but I don't want to be too hasty in my judgments—men like Bevin, Laski, Bevan, Beveridge et al. can't continue Britain's former foreign policy, because every word they've ever uttered and written is contrary to it. [These are British Labour Party figures.]

What do you think of Truman by now? My own opinion is that he's an excellent tactician, yet liberal—and I've yet to see him take the "wrong" side (to me) on a major issue.

His appointments have been apparently intended to placate both the rt. and the lt., with a little favoritism shown the latter. And even his appointed conservatives have been men acceptable to the liberal groups. I think that he is a practical liberal, and though he lacks Roosevelt's finesse, he will get just as much done in the long run. He is definitely not a weak President.

Tomorrow Maj. Hagen (Orthopedist), Kibler (G.U.) and myself are going to visit some of the other hospitals in our center in our capacities of consultants. We will spend a minimum of time in the hospitals and maximum of time sight-seeing, so it should be a nice trip. Paris leaves are beginning to come thru: 48 hr. passes. I would certainly like to get one of these to visit the opera, go the Louvre, and look around some more. I'm putting in for one immediately, but I'll prob. send Hy Ressler first, inasmuch as I've been away a couple of days myself.

Tonight we redeemed ourselves a bit by beating a pretty good EM team 11 to 2. The chaplain pitched (easy pitching) and I played shortstop where I managed to make several nice plays and also to get 3 hits. After showering, I read some films, then Hagen came in with 5 chopped liver sandwiches which we proceeded to wash down with Cokes. Ah, me—shades of home!

Well, see you soon, I hope.
All my love to the 2 little devils.

Ben

9 Aug [1945;
France]

Hello, lover:

Nothing new here, but I hope some news will come along soon.
Nope, don't even have a good substantial rumor.

Yesterday, Hagen, Kibler, and I went touring the countryside. It was a beautiful cloudless day and we were all in fine spirits. We set out at 8:30 in a command car with a cooperative, though loquacious, driver and went to Laon, a fair sized town built on a large hill. [*A few miles NW of Reims.*] We stopped in a tremendous cathedral built on the top of the hill, which can be seen for many miles. It is an old gothic structure, beautiful in its way and typical of these French churches. We looked in the shops, loafed around a

bit, then headed north. We stopped on the road and picked and ate some unripe apples; then went on to cross the Oise River and canal, thence to a small town (I forgot the name), where we turned west and went to St. Quentin. [*Guise is the town immediately east of Saint Quentin.*]

This is a rather good city town, the den of iniquity of this part of France. There are beaucoup girls, mostly good lookers—many of whom are prob. trollops.

(Def. Trollop: a girl who doesn't have to, but wants to.

Tart: a girl who has to and does or doesn't want to.

Slut: a girl who doesn't have to, doesn't want to, but will.)

The town is supposed to be quite unfriendly to Americans and was apparently a center of collaboration. They still, we are told, have a fascist underground, and the FFI is actively combating it. [*French Forces of the Interior," Gen. de Gaulle's name for the Resistance.*]

We visited the 61st Field Hosp. there for inspection purposes and the X-ray man there is a 2nd class dope—couldn't even make the 1st echelon. He was a nice guy, tho, and knew Dave Hankel and Harold Jacobson quite well—from the Army. Also, the Chief Nurse proved to be a Jewish hospital superior, knew Chip and Walt real well, but didn't know they had a doctor-brother.

Also saw a Capt. who had a fracture missed on X-ray by their X-ray man and subsequently brought it to me and I picked it up. He was very grateful to me, and sent their Chaplain up here for an X-ray workshop, insisting that he come to me!

So we were quite at home there. We had a nice lunch and were on our way by 1:30 pm. We went from there to Soissons, via a "long-cut" and on this trip went over some back roads where they apparently haven't seen many Americans. The kids all waved to us and it looked like liberation day again!

We stopped at the 50th Field in Soissons for a few minutes, arranged a game with their officers ball team, then started for home, arriving in time for supper.

I might tell you something about the countryside in this part of France. There are numerous fair-sized farms, some of which are Govt. owned. So far as I am informed, their farming methods are fairly modern. The country is not at all monotonous: Many wild and wooded areas and hills and valleys

are interspersed. A network of rivers (Aisne, Oise, etc.) and canals traverse the land, and numerous small, old villages dot the landscape. Many have long names, and most are unattractive, hot looking places. They are fairly clean villages, and a few are picturesque in the picture book sense. There are few yards, but every house has a shutter on every window, and most are kept closed during the heat of the day. The houses are very close together and usually 2-story affairs made of brick, stucco, and stone—no wood or frame houses are visible.

The people are poorly clothed, the kids wearing “duster” type coats over their clothes, and most of the adults wearing worn, black, ugly-looking dresses etc. The contrast between these villages and Paris is terrific. A fair no. of adults and almost all the kids go barefoot, altho I didn’t see barefooted adults in the towns themselves, but out in the adjacent countryside. [*Duster coats seem to be ¾ length affairs with big pockets, popular c. 1920. \$150 will get you one online as of 2016.*]

The people look rather healthy, and the kids are often quite attractive. Most of them stop what they are doing to give us the once-over—even in the fields. Many gangs are working on the roads and seem to rest quite a bit and all of them would stop to look at us. I’ll bet the road repair will be sped up when the Americans leave! Or will they then watch the French vehicles?

When I got home, I prepared for my meeting, which I had this a.m. It went off pretty well again, and once more I played to a capacity audience. Since we continue to have interesting cases, I don’t seem to have difficulty in obtaining material for the meetings, and I have managed so far to have a specialist to discuss the cases in his specialty, so I don’t do all the talking.

Tonight we just played the E.M. a game of softball and got our tails beat 13 to 2. They pulled one on me: I let the Chaplain pitch (he’s not very fast), and they changed to a fast ball pitcher, because they wanted to avenge their defeat of 2 nights ago. Tomorrow we’re going to play the 3rd game in the series, and Felson will be in the box. And we’re really playing for blood. Both officers and men are on edge over the game—and we’re really going to battle it out.

Well, that’s all for now, my love. Tell the kids it won’t be long. Au revoir.

Ben.

1 Sep 45
[France]

Dearest one:

I don't know whether I had better tell you the latest rumor or not. But if you remember it's just a rumor, I guess it's safe. It began yesterday, and I would have written then, but decided to wait one day to see if there was anything to it.

Well, the rumor is that I am going home! At least 50 people, officers and E.M. have congratulated me—and I didn't know where they got their information. I attempted to confirm the rumor, but the front office (including my spies) knows nothing of it.

But I was able to trace it down. Col. Green, Chief of surgery, came into my officer at 4 P.M. and told me that the Chief surgeon of Oise Base Section had just left him. Green had asked him how many men were leaving his department for home, so that he could make a better coverage of the surgical service. The consultant then told him that he (Green), Edelson, and Felson were next on the list.

Last night Edelson got his orders, so ————— ???

Apparently Green told others and the word spread around that our orders were in; as rumors will go, so went this one.

I don't know where the consultant got his information, nor how he remembered my name—so don't take too much stock in the above.

However, just in case you feel let down let me list those that have left or are leaving in the next few days.

Exec. Officer	100 points
Chief of Med	100 points
Bloom	94 points
Levin	97 points
Hagen	93 points
Valentine	92 points
Kibler	100 points
Chap. Powell	93 points
Edelson	93 points

McCreight 94 points

These are all med officers (except the Chaplain) and several MACs etc. are going also. All are 90 points plus.

The rumor is (and I think it's true) is this week 90+, next week 85+ points. My 87 should carry me home next week, then. Sounds wonderful, doesn't it?

Tonight we are having a big goodbye party for those leaving. In fact it has already begun for many and at supper we had a violinist with piano accompaniment play as we ate; and he was good, too.

Zanly is so worked up and exuberant that it is quite funny. He would be funnier if my orders had come thru also!

Of course we won't go straight to a boat when we leave here. We will join various hospital units which are waiting for boats, and go home attached to these units. The 5th, 2nd, 50th and other General Hospitals are among those waiting at ports, and they are expecting to go any minute. Some of our men have orders to fly to Marseilles to join the 5th General.

The men are also beginning to move, but unfortunately there aren't many of them over 90 [*points*] or over 38 yrs. old left.

About 10 of our highest point nurses have orders also (60 to 90 points).

I am sending home some boxes of films, books etc. Don't bother to open them, please. They will be big wooden boxes, heavy, and labeled "please keep in dry place" or something like that.

This place is really in a turmoil, yet we still have quite a few hospital cases, and we are still functioning. I have turned over the dept. to Ressler, and act as a consultant on request. In the meantime I am getting my file in shape and getting ready, just in case.

All my love, dearest. On second thought, I think I'll save some of my love and bring it home with me.

See you soon, I hope and hope.

Ben

3 Sep. [1945]
Sissonne,
France

Hello again darling:

Happy labor day! As you perhaps gather from the heading, I'm still here. No orders yet but maybe they'll come in next week (and maybe not).

About 15 nurse and 30 enlisted men have received orders and some are already gone. So they haven't forgotten us, at least. Included in the list of EM were Lancaster (whom we got from the 76th Gen. in exchange for 1 one of our own X-ray technicians) and Bruce. So we are down to 9 men in the X-ray dept. The work has fallen off so much, however, that we won't really miss them.

They are apparently taking officers and nurses exactly according to point score, and I am about no. 7 on the remaining list. I am about no. 3 of the M.C., so the next batch of orders or the 2nd batch should start me for home. Of course I may have to wait in a staging area for a while—Manny has been in England for 5 weeks and is finally scheduled to start for home Sep. 5.—so don't expect too much speed from the Army.

I have managed to catch up on all the loose ends of my scientific work and will start shipping books and films etc. home as soon as I get my orders. I am quite pleased with the material which I have collected, and the manner in which they are filed, cross-indexed, and documented. I can find any case in a matter of seconds, with a complete history of the Pt. and on the more common subjects I have a number of examples of each.

If I want to show someone or some group a number of cases of duodenal ulcer, I can pull out examples by the dozen—all different types—and give them the desired information in a few seconds.

I also have a large number of normal films of every part of the anatomy, for comparing with poss. abnormal ones. I have wanted to collect normals for a long time, and finally did it.

I had a questionable inspiration last night as I lay in bed thinking of our future. I was toying with the idea of private practice in Cincy, and wondering what I would do if I couldn't get a hospital connection. I began to think of the various men in the 25th G.H. who might send me business. Then I thought of Herman Nimitz, and then.....

It occurred to me that Herman, as chief of the Ham. Co. Tbc. division might need a consulting radiologist for the non-T.B. work which every large institution has. I know they do other types of X-ray diagnosis at the Branch, because Chippy used to bring me films of kidneys, GI stuff etc. Also Stan Simon is a big shot at the Chronic hospital, and they've never been satis-

fied with the quality of the X-ray work (supplied by 1st and 2nd yr. men from the CGH). The same goes for Longview and perhaps any other similar institutions in the city. So I think I will approach Stan and Herman on the subject at the earliest opportunity. Reineke might object to my trying to break into Longview and the Chronic Hosp. since the General X-ray dept. gets money for its residency partly from these institutions, but the X-ray work in these places has been of the worst variety and should be improved. Maybe I'm just the guy for the job!

Please, please don't say anything to anyone about the above.

Nothing else new here, except that I umpired a big hardball game behind the bat yesterday. Apparently I did OK as I didn't get a real "beef" in the whole game and was complimented by players of both teams when the game was over. Our team won, 2 to 1 and the game was hotly contested thru out. Prob. the next time I try it, I'll get the pop-bottle treatment.

An amusing incident occurred the other night, which is better than most I read in the *Coronet* [a *general interest magazine published until 1971*] and *Reader's Digest*. It was pitch black and I was walking home from the club, when I heard loud voices approaching from the distance, apparently emanating from 2 drunken GIs walking back from town. The conversation went something like this:

Voice no. 1 "I'm a real goddam American!"

Voice no. 2 "That's right."

Voice no. 1 "I'm a goddam good soldier and I love my country."

Voice no. 2 "That's right."

Voice no. 1 "I hate Europe and every goddam thing that's in it. I'm ready to start another goddam war."

Voice no. 2 "That's right."

Voice no. 1 "I'm a goddam combat engineer even if they put me in the goddam medics!"

Voice no. 2 "That's right."

By this time the voices are quite near to me. In the dark, a single staggering figure looms up and every few seconds yells out "That's right!"—He's voice no. 2. About 20 yards or more behind him is another shouting, staggering figure—voice no. 1. They apparently didn't even know each other!

Tell the kids papa hopes to see them real soon and can hardly wait.
With much love and anticipation.

Ben.

4 Sept. 45
[France]

DEAREST:

I was told this am that I am leaving for Mourmelon, France tomorrow at 9 am, to join the 19th General Hospital, which is on the way home. [*Mourmelon was a French army base in the same area – near the Belgian border.*] I don't know how soon they are leaving or how long it will take me to make it to Dickson Av. but it would be wonderful if I could attend Steve's birthday party. Here's hoping.

Maybe if everything goes well I can be home by Oct. 1st, but don't be too disappointed if I'm late, as one never knows what delays might occur.

I haven't much time to pack, and I'm too excited to type, so I'm going to close now.

Your thrilled husband,

Ben.

P.S. - No use writing anymore, as my address will change too often to keep up with.

Thurs. 6 Sept. 45
Mourmelon Sub
Area (19th G.H.)

Dearest Ginny:

I'm writing this from a hospital bed; but don't get excited—we're living in a hospital ward while we're awaiting events of the future.

Our trip down was uneventful except for some Barney Oldfield tactics by our GI driver and a few wrong turns. [*Reference is to an American auto racing driver.*]

We arrived at this tremendous old French military camp about noon and the 4 of us (Al Blanket, Maj. Novello, and Lt. Col. Joyner (the lab chief

who I dislike so much)). There are about 6 general hospitals functioning here but ours was just turned over to the advance unit of another hospital and the place is now empty. Except for new and old 19th General Hospital personnel.

We ran across 3 nurses and 1 officer here who used to be in the 28th so we didn't feel like absolute strangers. We checked in, had our papers straightened out, then took a nap. Last night we went to a rotten movie (Kay Kyser [*bandleader/actor*]), then played double casino (partners), then I read in bed until late.

This A.M. we strolled into Mourmelon, which is just another swell French town where I sent you a cable, we came back, played more casino, then went to chow. So you see what a lazy time we're leading.

Tomorrow our nurses are going to the Marseilles marshalling or staging area and we are going on Saturday. I have no idea how long we will stay there, but our ship is bound to come in soon—I hope.

When I reach the States, I will be assigned to Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania—all Ohio personnel is sent there and I guess get a 30 day leave. I doubt if I'll have to remain in the Army very long.

So Cincy, here I come!

There's no point in your writing me, honey, as mail will never catch up with me en route.

I hope you're preparing Nancy and Steve for my homecoming. I wonder if they'll "warm up" to me quickly.

All my love, your eager husband

Ben

1945 SEP 7 PM
8:36

HOPE TO SEE YOU SOON. BEST LOVE FROM DADDY=
=BEN FELSON.

[Western Union telegram phoned to mom; our telephone number, "4638," appears in pencil on the original with an "A" in front of it, presumably for "Avon." No indication where the sender was located unless it's in code.]

1945 SEP 7 PM
8:58

ENROUTE TO MARSEILLES STAGING AREA=
=BEN FELSON.

[Same "telephoned telegram."]

11 Sept 45
[*South of France*]

Dearest:

Well, we're in the staging area outside of Marseilles, after a hectic 2 days on a 2nd class train. With a break, we may get out of here in 7 to 10 days, but there's a possibility of typical Army snafu—and a month or so of this life would be an unwelcome possibility. So don't bank on anything.

This is a typical staging area, but without the heat, dust, and flies etc. which ordinarily be found in such a place. This is because of the unusual location. We are on a plain on top of a tremendous hill or mountain surrounded by beautiful mountains. The Mediterranean is nearby but so far I haven't been able to see it except from the train.

The weather is delightful, cool in the mornings and evenings and fairly warm during the day. The ground has been oiled and despite the high winds, the dust is at a minimum.

Right now I'm trying to write against the real obstacle. There are only 4 officers in the Army who are learning to play musical instruments, and they would be on the beds adjacent to mine (violin, cornet, sax, and accordion). They are organizing an orchestra at the moment, altho none of them is a qualified musician. Oh my God, a harmonica just walked in, in the mouth of an M.A.C! [Medical Administration Corps] In this bedlam, I will have to say goodbye. All my love. No use writing.

Ben

13 Sep. 45
[*South of France*]

My love:

Still being processed, but everything seems to be according to Hoyle so far, so see no reason yet to worry about making the trip. Tomorrow, rumor has it, is “readiness day” and we might possibly leave any time from 1 day to 1 month after. So far 2 or 3 days has been the rule, but things are so confused and nebulous in our minds that there is no way of predicting correctly when we will get on that boat.

We manage to keep pretty busy, what with processing, reading, playing cards, attending movies and USO shows etc. As soon as the processing is finished, I’m going for a swim in the blue Mediterranean.



Jandarrac v. 183 101 -12-14-35
Foto: 1941-1942, 1943, 1944, 1945

Figure 29: The waterfront at Marseilles a couple of years earlier, with French Police doing the Germans' dirty work by checking identity papers of refugees.

Chap. Powell has finally made it here, which makes me happy, as I was a bit worried about him. Many others from our outfit are also among those present, including Zanly. The 32nd is here but minus about ½ its original personnel. The only member of the 25th GH here is Murray Rich, and he is with the ill-fated 251st GH which has its sailing orders cancelled. I imagine they will transfer the low score men out, and he will be going home soon.

The 2 amphitheatres here are really works of art (but natural), which put the Hollywood Bowl etc. to shame.

I hope the kids are excited about my coming home. I most certainly can't be patient about it. By the way, are you training the kids to wait up for me? Remember, that's why we had 'em in the first place. Don't be derelict in your duties.

All my love,
Ben

24 Sep 45 [*Paris*]

Dearest-

Delays, delays, and delays! Guess what—I am now in Paris, after a 2 day nightmare trip by train from Marseilles.

Everyone and his uncle is here—every doctor I ever knew—all waiting to go home by plane. I should leave in about a week—and will go to Camp Atterbury, Indiana by train from (probably) NYC. I'll call you at the first opportunity. I'm sorry, but I'll miss Steve's birthday party. Please be sure to explain to him.

I'm getting a better look at Paris now, and it is truly a delightful place. Went to the Opera Comique last night and saw [*Georges*] Bizet's [*opera, The*] *Pearl Fishers*. It was tops. The Comique and Paris Opera are about at the same level, and prob. not quite so good as the Met.

The Louvre was truly wonderful and I saw many famous statues and paintings.

I can't think of a better city to be "stuck" in.

Yours hopefully.

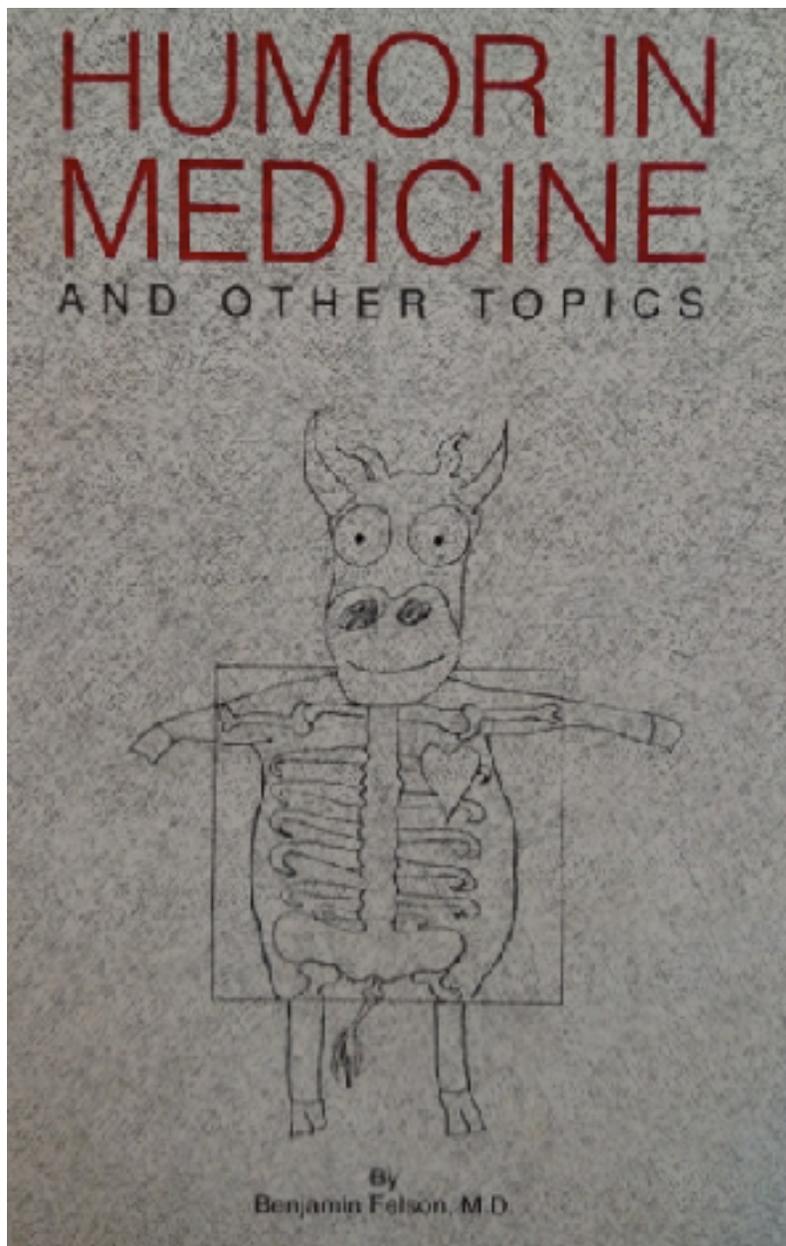
Ben

[*THIS IS THE LAST LETTER WE HAVE.*]

ADDENDUM

In 1989, a year after dad's death, the family published a book of his collected writings entitled *Humor in Medicine*. That book contained several

stories
War II
not in the
have re-
them be-



from World
which are
letters; I
produced
low.

Figure 30: Cover of the 1989 book.

TOUCHED

It was an odd way to start an Army career and bespoke weirder events to come. On receiving my military "Greetings" letter early in 1942, I was instructed to report to Fort Harrison, Indiana, for my physical examination. I had heard of M-R 19, the Army's medical regulation book, and knew that the large calcification in my thoracic nodes would be obvious on my x-rays and would disqualify me from the induction. In my zeal to help destroy Hitler and his Nazis, I made a special trip to the X-ray Department at Fort Harrison on my way to the induction office.

The radiologist, Captain Wilson, appeared skeptical as I spoke of my desire to enter the Army, and became clearly incredulous when I informed him of my calcification; he knew the regulation. But my sincerity prevailed and the captain finally said. "OK, when you come for your chest film, knock on my door first."

The physical examination must have been the fastest ever performed. This was not surprising, since it was 1942 and there were almost a thousand men to examine each morning. The medicos strolled up and down the rows, hardly stopping as each inspected his own territory: tonsils, tongue, torso, tokus, and testes.

When Capt. Wilson responded to my knock he told me he was not quite certain whether he should x ray my chest or my skull. He called his technician over and whispered, "Hit this chest 15 Kv light." How clever! The calcium would be difficult or even impossible to see on an underexposed film.

A few weeks later I received my orders: "Report for duty to the X-ray Department at Station Hospital, Fort Harrison." By a strange quirk, I was the replacement for Capt. Wilson who had been reassigned to a post in the Far Pacific Zone. When I appeared, Wilson was waiting for me.

"Hello, you Good Samaritan!" I exclaimed.

"Goodbye, you bastard," he grumbled.

My new assignment turned out to be interesting but hectic. My duties included administration and performing all the diagnostic interpretations of the hospital Radiology Department, plus reporting the chest radiographs of approximately 300 inductees daily.

Each weekday at 4 PM we doctors became soldiers. We had a choice: report to a corporal who drilled us, to a sergeant who exercised us, to a lieutenant who exorcised us, or to a colonel who oriented or often dis-oriented us. None of these appealed to me, so when I discovered an additional choice, the hospital football team, I developed a yen for the roar of the gridiron.

Here, again, there were obstacles. In the first place an officer is more or less “untouchable” to an enlisted man, and this might carry over onto the football field. And what if blows are struck in the heat of the contest? However, I discovered a regulation that stated one officer was permitted per team.

Secondly, I had never played organized football before. Could I make the squad? My hopes were quickly raised when I discovered that the team manager was my chief x-ray technician.

The third obstacle was more ominous. There was always a stream of fracture patients coming to the x-ray room from the football field. The rules stated that the “touch” had to be made with two hands. In effect, the rule changed the touch into a push, and the ball carrier was often knocked down to convince the referee that a tag had been made. Since no protective equipment was worn, the injury rate was high. This didn't seem to bother anyone, since the players were strong, reckless, and expendable. By the time I realized I possessed none of these traits and would be better off on the marching field, my battered frame could no longer take the torturous long hikes to which my fellow Officers had by this time progressed. I had passed the point of no return.

Scotty Muhlberg was our captain, coach, and quarterback. He qualified because he had once played high school football. He was a Chicago tough with a salty tongue and better-than-average passing arm. And he hated to lose.

I made the squad, vain enough to attribute my success to my talent rather than the fact that I was the nearest physician available to my teammates. It was a proud moment for me when the season opened and I was in the starting lineup.

I soon learned some of the finer points of touch football. The captain's insignia sewn onto my "fatigues" made me fair game for every enlisted man with an officer-grudge, and there seemed to be no others. I quickly deflowered myself of these tell-tale impedimenta. Subsequently one of our opponents did take a punch at me near the end of a game. I swung back and we were both ejected. I quickly headed for the showers and almost made it out the back door in my Officers' uniform without being seen. However, my antagonist suddenly appeared, recognized me, and ran back on the field roaring with glee, "Hey, I slugged an officer!" The word got around.

We had a good team and won game after game. I was a star in the Military Police game. The first time we huddled. I looked out at our opponents and saw an enormous linebacker. He was a muscular 260 pounder who appeared almost 7 feet tall. Scott, casually mentioning that the big guy had been an all-American at Notre Dame, called for a short pass to Joe on the right and added. "Ben and George, block."

We lined up and signals were called. As the center passed the ball, the giant came rushing in full-speed. I steeled myself for the block, then lost courage and fell away. He landed full blast on little Scotty. In the next huddle, Scotty said sternly, "Ben, don't miss him again. OK, same play." I gritted my teeth, set my feet, and awaited the charging bull. This time I performed a sidestepping Veronica that would have drawn "Oles" from any bullfight aficionado. He swept by me, and slammed Scotty to the ground with a thud. Scotty got up slowly, glaring at me.

In the huddle, Scotty said menacingly, "Doc, once more and out you go. Same play." Visions of returning to the drill field in disgrace, or even worse, of dismissal from the Service for cowardice, fortified my dwindling courage. My jaws set, my fists clenched, and my eyes narrowed — I was ready!

In came the behemoth, this time faster than before. Contemptuous, he was obviously going to deal with me first. I braced for the crash, but suddenly my knees weakened and wobbled beneath me, and, at the very last instant, they gave way and I fell to the ground at his feet. His size 15s trapped beneath me and he flew headlong over my fallen frame.

They carried him off the field. I read his films the next morning, and I understand that, altho the fractures subsequently healed, he never played football again.

We continued our winning ways and were tied for first place with Finance #2, our last opponent of the season. A surprisingly large crowd was

at hand, and even the Post band attended, lending color and excitement to the occasion. A two-star general, Commanding Officer of Finance for the whole U.S. Army, tossed out the first football, and the referee, a second lieutenant from the motor pool, took over.

What a game it was! The ball moved up and down the field, but neither team could score. In the middle of the last quarter we had the ball on their 20 yard line, fourth down and 8 to go. In the huddle, Scotty called the play: "Field goal. Ben, you hold, I'll kick." I had never held for a place-kick in my life.

A perfect pass came from center and I jammed the ball to the ground and closed my eyes. An excruciating pain in my hand told me the ball had been kicked. I opened my eyes to see the football wobbling high in the general direction of the goalpost, which appeared to be a mile away. The ball struck the upright, caromed along the crossbar, and dropped over. My teammates were jumping and yelling, and I guess I was too as I rubbed my numbed fingers. I exulted above the din. "You know, Scotty, I never held for a field goal before." Scotty yelled back, "So what, I never kicked one before."

However, the game wasn't over yet. On the next kickoff, their receiver broke loose and headed for our goal line. Scotty, playing safety, barely nipped him at the 10 yard line. Two passes and a run netted them only 5 yards, and it was last down with less than a minute to play. On the next play the quarterback threw a short pass to the end on my side, who grabbed it, cut out, and headed for the goal. I lunged and hit him on the backside with both hands when he was clearly a step short of the goal line. The referee called. "Touched!" And we shouted at the top of our lungs, "We're the champs!" But suddenly the General came running onto the field, his face beet-red and contorted. He panted up to the referee, pointing and gasping. "Only one hand!" Overruling the second lieutenant, he granted 6 points to his *own* team.

We were shocked, to say the least. I confronted the general. "You can't do that—," quickly adding "sir."

His eyes narrowed and he said. "What's your name?" Fearing I might become a prisoner-of-war (on my side!), I gave the information. When he heard the word "Captain," he raised his eyebrows and said, "Where are your insignia?" I didn't answer, and he turned and walked away.

The next morning I reported the incident to our hospital commander, Major Norman. A fleeting flash of anger crossed his face, but then he seemed to have second thoughts and said, "Aw, hell, it's only a game."

That afternoon Scotty received an envelope that bore a Finance Office insignia. In it was a handwritten document: "This is to certify that the Medics of Fort Benjamin Harrison won the Touch Football Championship for 1942." It was unsigned.

ARMS AND THE DOCTOR

I shipped out from New York to Greenock, Scotland, on the *Queen Mary* in December 1943 with the 28th General Hospital Unit. We arrived by train at Tilshead, England, near Salisbury, on New Year's Eve. My wife Virginia, my 2-year-old son Steve, and my 11-month-old daughter Nancy were sent to Cincinnati to live with Virginia's parents.

Wartime telephone communication with the States was nonexistent. Virginia and I wrote each other voluminously but it was still very depressing to be in cold, damp Salisbury in the middle of winter, unable to watch my kids growing up and without a familiar voice from home.

There was a solution, however, and I was elated one day to receive, through the auspices of the Red Cross, a floppy blue plastic disc containing a recording from Virginia and the children "To daddy overseas." Unfortunately, the poor quality of the recording caused the major portion of the five-minute disc to come out pure static. I strained to hear over the noise, but could decipher only two lines of repetitious dialogue: Virginia saying "Steve, Nancy, talk to your daddy," and my two infant children crying at the top of their lungs.

Then came a 16mm film of the kids — all tears and wailing. I never got another movie or recording, and perhaps it was for the best, since that day was one of the low points not only of the war years but of my whole life.

* * * * *

My initial response to being overseas was my usual optimism — I would make the best of it, get through the war in one piece, and throw myself into civilian life again once it was concluded. However, an incident soon occurred that had me wondering for a while whether I would finish my ser-

vice in charge of a field hospital x-ray department or breaking rocks in prison stripes.

It was early in 1944 and the 28th General Hospital unit was based in the beautiful green English countryside near Bournemouth while preparations for D-Day were being made. We had recently moved into a new British-built hospital of the pavilion type, constructed with ersatz material. To our dismay, we found many light leaks in the walls of the x-ray dark-room. It seemed simple and logical to borrow some powdered plaster of paris from the nearby neighborly orthopedics department. We were proud of our new-found prowess as plasterers, particularly so when our dark-room's blackness reached beautiful totality.

Fluoroscopy the next morning began in a routine fashion. The first patient, Private First Class Bates, swallowed the first mouthful of barium sulphate without comment. As it entered the stomach, it didn't appear to me to be sufficiently radiopaque. I inquired of the patient whether he had had breakfast, and he admitted to a small swallow of water one hour before. I then instructed the corpsman-technician to add more powder to the mixture, which he did. This time the swallowed contrast appeared more opaque, and the examination was completed with no abnormalities found.

The second patient, a highly nervous Air Force captain named Diggs, could hardly get the fluid down. I encouraged him by mentioning that I poured it on my cereal each morning (I eat eggs). Again the first swallow appeared a bit too radiolucent, so I instructed the corpsman to "sweeten it up." I even had the ampere and voltage meter settings checked to see if they were adequate. The Captain complained of faintness during the examination, so it was completed with him in recumbent position. No abnormalities were seen.

With the third patient, another officer, I encountered the same difficulties and arrived at the same results — a normal but not soul-satisfying study. When the fourth patient complained of the horrible taste I began to suspect that something was very wrong.

I tasted the liquid, retched, and promptly dismissed the patient. Investigation of the barium tin revealed a coarse and gritty powder that smacked faintly of iodine. It was clearly the leftover plaster of paris we had saved for further repairs. It had been put in a barium tin, and so had naturally found its way onto the barium shelf.

I informed the chief of medicine. His guffaws elicited from me a wan but hopeful smile. This feeling of relief was quickly dispelled by the chief of

surgery, who countered with the somber question, “What if the plaster sets?”

A scientific approach to the problem seemed in order, so some of the powdered plaster was poured into a beaker of water. After a few minutes it hardened and dropped to the bottom of the glass with a resounding clunk.

“Ah, but the stomach contains acid,” said one of the more astute of the many medical kibitzers who had gathered to observe the experiment. We got some dilute hydrochloric acid from the pharmacy and poured in some plaster of paris. This time the suspension remained beautifully fluid, and I breathed more easily.

This unwarranted optimism lasted only until the following morning. At that time the 24-hour film we made of each of the four patients revealed that the plaster had set harder than Lot’s wife, and was much more insoluble.

The next 48 hours snailed by with no change in the position of the gastric casts or the condition of the patients. Each of the four men seemed delighted with the friendliness and solicitude shown him, particularly by the Chief of Radiology. The commanding officer wanted me to supply him with the name of the corpsman responsible for the error, but I refused. I would at least retain some small measure of self-respect after my dishonorable discharge from the Army. Besides, I had no idea who the culprit was.

On the fourth day a crisis was reached. The chief of surgery decided that it would be wiser to operate on the men before they developed symptoms. “This way they’ll be in better shape to survive gastrostomy,” he assured me.

It was agreed by everyone, except me, that it was now my duty to tell the patients what had happened and what had to be done. My almost tearful plea for more time and my feeble arguments that there was no palpable mass, that the men were eating well, and that there were no signs of obstruction were met, not surprisingly, with set jaws and stony silence.

I decided to tell all four at one time in my office. As I looked into their friendly, trusting faces I couldn’t manage it. I needed some excuse for having called them together, so I ordered another set of abdominal x-rays instead. And lo!, a fragment of the plaster had broken loose from the gastrolith in Private Bates’ stomach and was meandering merrily through the small bowel.

From then on, the rocks crumbled rapidly in all the patients, the fragments snaking their way to the colon. I didn’t see the patients again, but I

learned from the night corpsman that some very interesting sounds had emanated from the latrine.

I don't know how much value these events will have for posterity, but my experience did help at least one person. After the war, and well after the statute of limitations had passed, I wrote up and published this experience. Shortly thereafter I received a call from Texas. "Are you the fellow who gave plaster of paris to some patients?" A man asked.

"Yes", I replied, with a chuckle.

"What happened?" He asked intently.

"Well, it broke up after a few days and passed."

"Thank God!" Then he hung up.

I also know of a case in which a plaster of paris technique was used to remove a light bulb, inserted in the rectum for masturbation purposes, and accidentally released. Rather than take the chance of breaking it, the physician encased it in plaster and removed the whole block after it set. I'm not sure my article had anything to do with this idea, but I fully expect someone, somewhere, to advance the body of knowledge even further by performing the first plaster of paris enema. I have several involunteers in mind on whom I'd like to try it.

It is concluded that plaster of paris, altho not an ideal gastrointestinal contrast medium, is apparently harmless to the patient — but is devastating to the radiologist. Medals have been won for experiences less harrowing than these.

* * * * *

We landed in France on D-Day plus 29—July 4, 1944. [*Actually it was August 16, D-Day +71*] Altho we came in at Omaha Beach just like the actual invasion force, there was little danger by the time we got there. Only the few corpses still surfacing in the waters offshore reminded us what had taken place here only a few weeks earlier.

There was one danger, though — from our allies. We crossed the Channel on an Indian ship, but had to transfer to a landing craft in order to get to shore. The Indian crewman, presumably loyal members of the British Navy, had little interest in remaining any longer than necessary in a mined sea near a land mass containing an enemy army, so instead of using nets and winches to off-load our personal equipment they found it more convenient to simply toss it down onto the barges by hand. If a footlocker or two

missed the barge and landed in the water, or disintegrated from the 25-foot free fall into the boat, well, that was too bad — file a complaint with Supreme Headquarters, carbon copy to Field Marshal Montgomery. This continued until a couple of burly sergeants climbed back up to the ship and persuaded our much smaller allies that they too could be tossed overboard by hand, into the landing craft or into the water, whichever they preferred. My locker came down safely in a net.

We slept in individual pup tents for about 6 weeks just outside St. Mère-Église, France, waiting for our first assignment in the war zone. The conditions were primitive: field rations three times a day, shower trucks once every 2 weeks, warmed water carried in a helmet if we wanted to wash. To bathe from a helmet is possible if you don't mind the accompanying goose pimples from the brisk French breeze.

Worse, there was absolutely nothing for our 500 corpsmen and 100 officers to do. No movies, and the nurses were sequestered in another field. For a while I passed the time reading the piles of paperbacks that were circulating around — I must have read 40 novels those first few weeks. Soon, however, it became apparent that something creative had to be done.

Now, my parents were born in Europe but my blood was as red as that of any other American, so the obvious answer was baseball. I hitchhiked to the 5th and 25th General Hospitals, already set up nearby, to search for equipment. I found an old friend from home, Dr. Dave Graller, at the 25th, a Cincinnati unit. He arranged to have their athletic officer give me gloves, bases, bats, and balls — they even gave me a car and driver to take everything back to our area, a matter of about 25 miles. We immediately set up a league of six teams and played baseball every day, almost all day long.

The competition was fierce and the boredom dissipated. We had a few semipro ballplayers around, and the level of play was not too bad. The money bet on the games was incredible. Before departing the U.S., I had arranged to have my paycheck delivered directly to my wife, but most of our GIs had nothing to do with their money but play poker and bet on softball games. The sums bet were so large that a rumor started about a fix. Black Sox of Normandy?

Baseball had to be put aside, however, when we finally got our first permanent assignment, the setting up of our 28th General Hospital in Liège, Belgium.

* * * * *

War-time Liège was ecstatic — the Americans had arrived! Overnight the city underwent a metamorphosis — from a drab, boring cocoon of captivity into a vibrant, irrepressible paradise of freedom. Sweet was the taste of liberty, and the people savored it joyously.

But the American infantry that liberated the city had continued headlong after the retreating Germans, leaving the delirious Liègeois with no *libérateurs* on whom to lavish their prodigious gratitude. When the 28th General Hospital arrived on the scene, we were greeted as conquering, if tardy heroes. The clamorous populace, unable to distinguish between an infantry insignia and a medical corps caduceus, and caring not at all, gave us a wild reception, sharing with us the thrill of their emancipation.

However, as the weeks passed, the Belgians became preoccupied with reconstructing their existence to a semblance of what it had been before the Black Years, and preoccupied as well with their efforts to ferret out and punish the *collaborateurs*. What little time this left them for us now had to be shared with other American units that had moved into the area. Furthermore, altho we were reasonably well-behaved, we were still soldiers and there was still a war. The mass love affair cooled as the individual attachments burned down and out. Their disenchantment with us was not complete, though, until the buzz-bombs came. Day and night these diabolic self-propelled rockets fell, hundreds of them, killing, crippling, destroying. The citizenry, who had logically assumed that the war was over, at least for them, were now convinced that the Americans had attracted this new scourge, and reacted accordingly. The buzz-bomb operated on a simple crude principle. When its engine ran out of fuel it fell, either straight down or in a gliding flight path. The random nature of its descent meant you could never tell from the sound where it was going to land, and the troops underneath were quickly divided between the optimists and the pessimists.

A typical example of this division occurred one day as I was walking through the rain, a wounded soldier-patient limping along beside me. We heard the buzz in crescendo as the infernal machine approached, and then the silence as the engine cut out. The two of us looked up and hit the ground simultaneously, right into a mudpuddle. Everyone else in the area kept walking as the bomb coasted on, landing miles away. In fact, I even heard some brave-sounding laughter as we rose, soaking wet and covered with mud, to continue on our way. "That's all right, Captain," my companion said with a confident grin, "the two of us will survive this goddam war. These bastards will all get killed."

Things got so depressing that most of us avoided going into town — who knew if strangers would dig you out? Finally, all the x-ray officers and men moved right into the x-ray department, where we knew we'd take care of each other if anything happened.

Altho we were crowded, no one wanted the innermost room, which might not be reachable if we were hit. As the brave chief, I volunteered to take it. My second-in-command, a major named Manny Levin, picked what he thought was the safest spot, in a hallway with no window. Shortly thereafter, a bomb hit the hospital and wiped out the corner bedroom where I would otherwise have been sleeping. I was talking to Manny in his room as the bomb landed, knocking me off my feet. I finished my sentence while lying on the floor. [*Dad left this part out of his wartime letter to mom about the same incident.*]

The admitting department, housed in an old concrete garage, was hardest hit, but the only fatalities were two German prisoner stretcher-bearers at the entry. Those inside the building heard the bomb coming and dove under desks. The roof caved in and completely buried them. When we dug the first survivor out he shouted, "Don't move me — I know where everyone is," and he pointed out just where his colleagues had been at the time of the explosion. We dug all of them out and none was badly hurt.

I was doing triage (directing traffic of the wounded) when they brought in one of our comic characters, an Arkansas doctor named Jabez Jackson, sitting on a stretcher. He only had a few scratches so I sent him to a room across the hall to wait, not considering the fact that it was adjacent to the operating room. When I looked in a little later he was comatose. It seemed impossible — he hadn't been that seriously wounded. Later I found out that one of our larger nurses had been told to "go out there and give that patient intravenous morphine." Jabez, not the patient intended, put up a struggle but lost — he slept for 24 hours.

Years later a truck chugging up a hill adjacent to our home could still wake me from sleep to listen for the rocket engine to sputter and conk out.

* * * * *

Theoretically, there are a number of ways to combat fear, homesickness, bad food, and static-filled Red Cross recordings. In the beginning we went into town often, but with the arrival of the buzz-bombs we too, like the Liègeois, developed a new pattern of reaction: group tension.

To be sure, each of us had his individual private fear response, my own consisting of severe anal tremors each time I heard a buzz-bomb motor cough and die. The group symptoms, however, took the form of herd instinct, i.e., a desire for togetherness. Since there were no bomb shelters except the small one appropriated by our commanding officer, who obviously had his own fear pattern, our psychologic support centered on the Officers Club. Night after night we gathered there like cows in a storm, backsides toward the danger, fearful lest we show our fears, to commingle and commiserate with our colleagues over bottles of subsidized liquor.

The ration was one bottle of gin, one of scotch and one of wine each week. The initial problem was that our commanding officer postponed issuing the liquor, even though he didn't have the authority, since it was supposed to come directly through the Officers Club system. Finally I was "elected" by the officers, along with two other majors, an orthopedist named Hagen and a dermatologist named Knerler, to discuss the matter with the Colonel. It was a struggle and we had to threaten to write to headquarters, but we finally got our liquor ration, at first in part and finally all of it. Having fought so hard, we then had to drink it.

Weeks of nocturnal drinking didn't make me feel much better about the depressing war news, and neither did the realization that some of my fellow officers were well on their way to becoming alcoholics. I admit they might have had a point if our end were in sight — eat, drink and make merrily, etc. — but we had survived the worst of the buzz-bomb attacks and it looked like we might even survive the war.

I was way behind on the available medical literature, having barely touched the few journals I'd brought with me, let alone those Virginia had sent in the mail, or even the 35 mm microfilmed copies that we could get at the library. So, one evening I simply made up my mind to lie in bed and read. My medical colleagues snickered at me on their way to the Club, all except for Meyer Bloom, who walked by, hesitated, then turned back and asked if I had any extras. I tossed him a journal and he flopped down on the adjoining bunk and started to read. Manny came home early and joined us. Over the next week, Hulse from New York, Cayce from Tennessee, and Muecke from Georgia were staying in too, and we started exchanging journals.

We soon started a teaching panel, each physician taking turns conducting a session in his specialty. The idea snowballed and before long I found myself giving talks and presenting cases at a weekly hospital center radiology conference, with several hundred doctors from five or six general

and field hospitals attending. We used x-ray film processing equipment to make slides; a projector and screen were available. There was a lot of enthusiastic response, with questions, discussion, and argument. Apart from the sheer fun of the sessions, I reasoned that if and when I ever got home, I wouldn't be so rusty medically and could at least say I'd made some effort to keep up on developments in medicine. By the time I got home, however, because of the length of time abroad and the march of science, there were literally whole new areas of medicine that I had never even heard of.

Anyhow, I always look for ways to stay current. This philosophy also accounted for an interesting experience when I was at Fort Benjamin Harrison Station Hospital in Indianapolis, before I was sent overseas.

In addition to my regular radiology duties, I had been assigned a new task: to read 300 or more chest films of newly inducted soldiers from our reception center every day. Since we had to be out of the department at 4 PM for physical training, and Marian, our civilian medical secretary, left at that time, things got a little hectic toward the end of the day. I ended up having one corpsman putting up the films, one taking them down and Marian typing the findings as I dictated them non-stop.

Soon I found myself mumbling "normal chest, normal chest," while falling asleep. Often I'd have to go back and look until I found a film that I remembered interpreting. To keep myself awake, I decided to tabulate some-thing— anything — that would hold my interest and require me to look more carefully at the films.

Taking 1000 films as my sample, I would note the relative heights of the left and right side of the diaphragm, for example. Then I'd look at another parameter and tabulate that for 1000 cases. Soon I had accumulated reams of useless information, but I did stay awake. I still remember that the left pulmonary artery is slightly higher than the right in 97% of normal chests, at the same level in 3%, and is never lower. Thus if it appears lower there is usually something abnormal to account for it, even if you can't see the abnormality on the film.

I kept the tabulations with me all through the war, but had little chance to add to them overseas. Finally I printed them in the appendix of one of my books. From the comments and citations, I know that the information has proved useful to many physicians. It has certainly helped me.

I still compile this type of thing when I can. For example, while tabulating thousands of coal workers' x-rays for pneumoconiosis (black lung), I found that the radiologic axiom stating that the normal right border of the

trachea is never more than four millimeters thick is not always true. My “useless information” file is full of such data, some of which might well come in handy to a radiologist interpreting chest films who might mistakenly conclude that a certain normal variation is a sign of abnormality.

An intriguing sidelight: while I was doing my compilations at Fort Harrison, an occasional soldier-to-be brought with him a note from a Capt. Kvidera, a physician who worked in the reception center. It would simply say, “Watch out for a right-sided heart.” His prediction was never wrong. Finally I called him to ask how he did this while working at such a break-neck pace. He said he’d line up fifty nude patients at a time and inspect them for external defects. When he saw one with a lower right testicle instead of the usual lower left one, he’d infer situs inversus, a mirror-image reversal in the position of all the organs. While important medical implications seldom flow from this information, it might come in handy as a quick indication of whether your friend or lover’s heart is in the right place.

* * * * *

The 28th General was located in the ancient and modern buildings of a Belgian officers training camp known as Chartreuse. We had converted them into a thousand-bed general hospital. Chartreuse, catacombed with tunnels and surrounded by a high medieval brick wall, stood atop one of Liège’s highest hills. There were two entries to the compound, front and back, each having an attractive gate topped by a beautiful hand-wrought metal grille arch. Each gate was located a considerable distance from the buildings, obscured from them by a curve in the roadway. At first we posted guards at the gates, but as we grew busier and needed the manpower for other duties, we dispensed with the guards faring daylight hours.

This was our state in the early fall of 1944 when, suffering a mild attack of the guiltful melancholies one morning, I found myself walking down the hill toward town. It had been drizzling slightly when I set out, but now the rain was coming harder, so I took shelter in the covered hallway of an abandoned, badly bomb-damaged house. Suddenly the roar of a motor split the silence, vibrating the house and, synchronously, my knees. Automatically I looked to the sky, but this was obviously no buzz-bomb. I moved to the back of the hallway toward the sound and looked out. There, in a hollow, clearing out the debris of an adjacent destroyed building, was the largest bulldozer I had ever seen. It was army green and in the driver’s seat was a giant of a U.S. sergeant. I stood there absolutely entranced by the sheer magnitude of the action, by the grace with which this massive fellow and his even more massive behemoth moved mountains of mortar and

bricks and furnishings toward a large steam shovel and truck on the far side.

The rain was beginning to sluice down now, and the man clambered off his perch and sought shelter in my hallway.

“Some machine you got there, Sergeant,” I said.

“Yup,” he replied. “If this damned rain’ll stop I’ll get done.”

“Do you have another job then?”

“Nope. Ain’t much work, so we’re helpin’ the *Belgiques*.”

Suddenly a bolt of lightning struck nearby. Coinstantaneously a light flashed in my cerebrum, somewhere near the occipital lobe, and on impulse I asked, “Sergeant, could you level a hill with that thing?”

“How big a hill?” He asked guardedly.

Impulse gave way to inspiration. “Sergeant, could you level a baseball field on the side of that hill up there?” I asked, pointing through the doorway. He went out into the rain, looked, and returned.

“Sure. Easy.”

“How long would it take?”

“Oh, maybe four, five hours.”

“Really? Where could I get an OK for you to do it?” I asked.

“No problem. All you have to do is sign a work requisition. I’m only a sergeant — every officer in the Army’s my boss.”

“Where do I get one?”

“I’ve got some in my dashboard.”

Then, thoughtfully, “But won’t the ground be pretty rough when you finish?”

“Sure, but I got a buddy with a steamroller.”

“A big one?”

“Bigger than my Cat.”

“Get me that work order, Sergeant.”

The rain had slowed. He went out to his vehicle and returned with the form. He filled out the top part and handed it to me for signing. Casually but with a flourish I signed “George H. Ruth, Major, Special Services.” [Refer-

ence is to George Herman “Babe” Ruth.] Then I gave him directions to our hospital and said, “I’ll meet you tomorrow morning at 8 at the front gate.”

The rain had stopped so I left, mumbling to myself, “Why? Why do you do such stupid things? Why do you always go out on a limb?” The logical answer, “To get the fruit,” came to me that night after my third drink. By that time, however, I had already decided to get up early, flag down the Sergeant before he reached our rendezvous, and cancel the whole crazy business. This decision made, I went to bed, and slept the sleep of a reformed sinner.

I awoke the next morning rested, and happy to have renounced temptation. Then I glanced at my watch. Five minutes to eight! I jumped into my clothes and raced for the front gate. Too late — no gate. The bulldozer had beaten me to it. Attempting to enter the hospital grounds, the sergeant had evidently miscalculated the radius of the arch, and the top of his machine was now neatly adorned by a garland of metal. At the moment, he appeared to be trying to soft-pedal his vehicle and, at the same time, edge it through the gateway, a tactic reminiscent of an elephant on tiptoe. To the clank of the bulldozer was added the jangle of the detached grille, a deafening clatter that must surely perforate every tympanum within 200 yards. Miraculously, no one was about, nor did anyone even come round to look. After all it was breakfast-time.

When he saw me, the Sergeant smiled weakly, shrugged his shoulders and spread his palms upward in a “Sorry, I goofed” gesture. I waved him into reverse and he backed the huge bulldozer to the main road, picking his way as gingerly as a barefoot boy walking through a cow pasture. He braked his machine, descended, pulled the metal arch to the ground, climbed back to his seat, dropped the blade, and pushed the debris into a ditch alongside the road.

“Well, it’s too late to stop now,” I said to myself, probably out loud. I pointed toward the dirt road outside the gate and then to the nearby hillside at the right. The Sergeant drove the dozer down the road and onto the hill, and dropped the blade. The machine began to masticate the earth in gargantuan bites, pushing it in colossal chunks over the brow of the hill, to the accompaniment of prodigious belches from its motor. Belatedly, I wondered who owned the property, decided it would be better not to know, and got the hell out of there.

I stopped by the mess hall but there was standing room only, so I went to the x-ray department, drank a cup of coffee, and tried to work. At nine sharp the phone rang. The Colonel wanted to see me. Yes, right away.

I walked slowly, very slowly, toward headquarters, trying to prepare my strategy for what I knew was going to be a serious confrontation. The Colonel still smarted from The Liquor Ration Incident and I suspected by now he'd heard about the Air Force Party. I had felt like a wolf with his fangs pulled when the nurses selected me for their chaperon. Cripes, twenty nurses and forty young, high-flying majors and colonels! They'd needed a referee, not a chaperon. Well, that wasn't my problem now.

I was pretty certain no one had seen me at the gate. Yet the CO obviously suspected something and he was bound to ask embarrassing questions. And an officer never lies — if he's caught it's a court-martial. No doubt I was in for it. Truth or lie, he had me where it hurt most: with his right hand for forging a name and with his left for appropriating private land without authority. I had one thing going for me: the man was a coward. Afraid of bombs. Afraid of trouble. Afraid of higher authority. Maybe, just maybe, afraid of me.

As I walked through the outer office everyone seemed unnaturally busy. No one glanced up, not even the friendly staff sergeant with the acne, for whom our dermatologist regularly prescribed — and we regularly shared — zinc stearate in pure ethyl alcohol, shake well before using. The fluffy, totally insoluble zinc stearate was floated off, providing us with a residue of fine grade pharmacy alcohol which, with grape juice, made a perfect Purple Passion.

The grim-faced adjutant led me into the higher presence and retreated, closing the door behind him. The Colonel, erect and trim, swagger stick in hand, returned my salute perfunctorily. With icy dignity, he hissed, "What did you do to my front gate?"

"Front gate, Colonel?" I asked.

"Yes, front gate."

"What did I do to it? What's wrong with it, sir?"

"It's broken."

"Broken? What makes you think I had anything to do with it, sir?"

“You're always up to something.” Oh ho! No witnesses. And our brave and peerless leader, deep in the bowels of his earthen shelter, could hardly have observed the incident himself.

“Is that fair, Colonel?”

“What do you know about the front gate?” He demanded angrily.

“How could any man bust that front gate?” I replied, disdainfully.

“A vehicle could.”

“A vehicle, sir? Where would I get a vehicle in the middle of the war?”

I had him. Not a single lie, I exulted inwardly. The interrogation proceeded and I continued the same tactic: countering each of his questions with a question of my own.

He began to waver and seemed about to give up. He walked over to the window and opened it. At that moment the bulldozer emitted a roar.

“What's that noise?”

“What noise? I replied automatically, then added weakly, “I mean ... uh ... uh ... I don't know.” Damn, I did know. My first lie!

He turned sharply and caught the trapped look on my face. He cocked an eye at me and said coldly. “You've been up to something. You're not fooling me. First it was the liquor ration, then you brought the corporal into the officers mess, then you gave those patients plaster of paris to drink instead of barium, and now —.” He was almost shouting. It was comforting to know that he hadn't heard about the Air Force Party.

With injured dignity, I complained. “Why, sir, do you accuse me of everything that goes wrong in this outfit? I'm going to request a transfer. And when I do, I'll tell them the reasons. They'll make an inspection and I'll bet they'll hold a hearing.” Recalling his many injustices brought tears to my eyes. He looked startled. No man can deal with male tears. He didn't exactly wilt, but he did seem more conciliatory. “Dismissed,” he said, almost inaudibly.

I was uneasy as I walked back from headquarters. I'd won the first skirmish, but not decisively. What next? The bulldozer in the distance gave another loud blast. I had to stop that infernal machine! I didn't dare go directly to the hill, so I went to the x-ray department, planning to sneak over from another direction. A number of films and fluoroscopic examinations awaited me, and it was an hour before I could dispose of my duties. I started for the hill, but then decided to reconnoiter first. I climbed the three

flights to the top floor of the hospital and looked out the window. I couldn't see the bulldozer but I did see about a hundred soldiers standing around watching it work. I certainly couldn't go there now.

I suffered through the rest of the morning, periodically ascending to my lookout post. Each time the crowd below was larger. Didn't anyone ever work around here? By now I was dripping a trail of perspiration, the combined result of the stair-climbing, the climbing tension, and the tense interview. "What if the Colonel goes out to investigate the racket?" I asked myself. The answer was obvious. I could even picture it: "Is this the officer?" "Yes." Then the arrest, the court-martial, the sentence. I vividly recalled the movie scene in which a general ripped the epaulets and insignia from Dreyfus's uniform. And he was innocent.

Time inched by, every inch giving me a tiny reprieve. By noon I could stand it no longer and went to the hill. I moved to an unobtrusive spot overlooking the scene.

What a job that fellow was doing! He was almost finished. Hmm. Now if we put home plate here, left field would be okay but right field would be pretty short. On the other hand, if we move the plate a little closer to the high part of the hill, right field would be a bit longer. But then there'd be no room to field foul balls on the third base side. Better to have a short right field. We'll probably lose a few right fielders, but I'm a third baseman. My musings were interrupted by vigorous waving from the driver of the bulldozer, who had just recognized me. I left quickly, ignoring his hurt expression as he watched me retreat.

An hour later the sound of the machinery changed. The roar of the bulldozer was replaced by a smoother, less raucous purr, interspersed with rhythmic clanks. Guy Lombardo had replaced John Philip Sousa. I sauntered over to the ex-hill to have a look. Sure enough, the Sergeant was gone and his incriminating evidence with him. Another victory, another reprieve!

A huge steamroller with a thin wisp of a corporal seated like a mahout on its top was moving ponderously up and down the field. Ahead the ground was soft, rough and lumpy; behind it was firm, flat and beautifully smooth. The little Corporal apparently loved his work, for he was singing fortissimo in a voice that penetrated the din. Obviously a perfectionist, he periodically clambered down from his perch, squatted, ran his eye back along the path just traversed, and then climbed back up to his seat. Sometimes he made a second pass over a particularly rough area.

I left and returned about an hour later. The roller had just finished its last run and was moving off toward the main road on the left. I spotted the Colonel coming down a footpath on the right and ducked behind some bushes. The Colonel looked at the leveled field, took off the braided Mac-Arthur cap he always wore, and scratched his head. Then he turned toward the steamroller and called to the operator. I held my breath. But the Corporal, still singing and faced in the opposite direction, couldn't hear him above the noise. He guided his vehicle onto the road and rolled away. The Colonel started to run after him, but seemed to think better of this, and came to an indecisive stop. He followed the steamroller with his eyes until it disappeared around a bend. He turned back to the path and slowly walked away, shaking his head in puzzlement. He'll never be able to trace them. I crowed. I'd won the game!

It didn't take long for the ballplayers to discover the new field. We played the next evening and the next and the next. We scheduled games with other teams, and before long a softball league was going full-blast in the hospital center that had sprung up in and around Liège.

It was a particular pleasure for me whenever we played the 25th General Hospital, a unit recruited from the University of Cincinnati, my own school. Most of the medical officers were my classmates or colleagues. They always turned out full force to watch the games and since I was the only doctor-player in the league, they heckled me relentlessly. We had beaten them twice and now were scheduled to play them a third game.

When we arrived at the field, their team was already warming up. One of my classmates came up to bet me 2000 francs (\$40) on his team, even money. I thought this strange, since our previous games hadn't even been close. Two other colleagues made similar wagers. When their chaplain offered me 2:1 odds and promised not to umpire, I knew something was amiss. I looked around and spotted a new pitcher warming up. I cancelled all bets.

I soon learned that he had been a top stateside softball pitcher. He had suffered a minor wound at the front and had been evacuated to the 25th General Hospital. When their Commanding Officer was apprised of the available talent, he arranged for a transfer to the hospital's permanent cadre in exchange for a left-handed grenade thrower.

By the sixth inning we were hitless and behind 5 to 0. The pitcher had struck out 13 of us, myself twice. As I came up for the third time amid loud jeers from my Cincinnati friends, the pitcher smiled—and then seemed to

wink. He's going to let me hit it! I stepped jauntily into the batter's box with renewed confidence. The first ball came in a little slower than usual, straight and through the middle, and I hit it over second base for a single.

Despite the fact that we were badly beaten, I was acclaimed the star, the spoiler. After the game, I walked over to the pitcher and whispered my thanks for his cooperation. He became infuriated. "I wouldn't throw a 'cripple' to my grandmother," he shouted indignantly. Confidence can be a substitute for talent.

Sometimes when an important game was in progress our CO came down to watch. Once our captain publicly thanked him for having had the baseball field built. The Colonel beamed. On another occasion, so I learned from the acne-scarred staff sergeant as we imbibed Purple Passion, the Colonel received a citation from the Commanding General of the Liège Hospital Center for boosting morale by building the field and creating the baseball league. The Colonel liked that too.

One evening, he made one of his rare appearances at the Officers club. He came across the room and deliberately sat down next to me. "Baseball certainly keeps people out of trouble, doesn't it?" He commented, pointedly.

"Yes, sir," I answered emphatically, "it certainly does!" The conversational buzz around us had subsided, and my response sounded louder than intended.

"Winter is coming soon," he said, with a note of warning in his voice.

"Maybe we can find a basketball court in town," I answered meekly, "or build one."

He looked startled, got up quickly, and left.

* * * * *

Twenty years later, pulling a no-longer-so-skeptical wife by the hand up a steep street, we came to the clearing at the end. There it was — Charreuse!

An unarmed sentry sat sleepily on a chair by the front gate, oblivious to our approach. The gate itself was unadorned — no grille, no arch. On the high wood fence alongside the entrance was a small plaque: "28th General Hospital, U.S. Army, 1944-1945." I read it out loud to my wife.

We took the road to the right. As we approached the hill, I walked faster, then still faster. I was almost running when I came out on the field.

"It's still here!" I shouted, rapturously. Goal posts had been erected at the two ends of me field and some young men were playing soccer. Several trucks were parked in deep left field. A kaleidoscopic flood of out-of-focus images from the past swept through my mind. My reverie was interrupted by my wife. "It's real," she exclaimed. "It's true!" Her eyes were shining.

I took a sharpened stick from my briefcase and poked it into the ground near home plate. I then brought out a small hand-printed cardboard placard and attached it to the stick. By this time the soccer players had stopped their game and were approaching, obviously puzzled by my curious behavior. As we walked off, I waved to them and pointed to the sign. It read, "Felson's Baseball Field – Liège, 1944."