

Sunday -- enroute

My dearest:

Things have been happening so fast I hardly know where to start. There is also the question of security.. not knowing just what I can tell you and what I should not. Would hate to have the first few letters all cut to pieces.

We were given a final briefing on Tuesday and then came 24 hours of frantic last minute shopping and packing, complicated by the fact that the last 5 shots (all at once) made me pretty rocky. Felt fine the next day, however, and Jeanette came to town and helped with the last minute purchases. Things like a scout knife, which I located in a pawn shop.. there were none in the stores, a silver dog tag chain... and so on. I still lack salt water soap, but hope to get that at the Port of Embarcation.

This is the first time I ever got on a train with no ticket and no idea where I was going. What a sensation. We stay in the same Pullman car all the way, and have a porter who is just out of this world. Good natured and accomodating. Can't tell you how many in our party, but it includes both men and girls, end we have a splendid leader.

The young man in charge¹ is an expert on donut machines that has spent 20 months overseas and still kept his perspective and fine spirits. Each afternoon he gives us a briefing session, telling us about conditions overseas and something of what we can expect. The lady in charge of the gals is Mrs. John Oliver La Gorce, and if you will look in one of your National Geographics you will find that her husband is Associate Editor of the magazine. She is very charming, and incidentally a great friend of the Vandenburgs. When you write father you might tell him about her.. letting him know that we are in good hands.

When I get where I am going.. to the other end.. will be able to write you and tell you something about this trip, which I am not permitted to do at this time. This letter will be mailed from the POE, however, perhaps in the next few days and perhaps not until we have reached the station referred to as our "ultimate destination".

¹ I believe he was speaking of "Stan the Doughnut Man".

Money is already a problem... when I leave the port I will have less than \$5 of my own money, and I doubt if we will be paid for a month.. and mebbe longer. Guess I will just have to learn to go without things.

Jeanette said she would send you some cigarettes.. they had almost disappeared from Washington.. like Detroit.. by the time we left. By the way.. I tailed out to the airport in a taxi the last evening to pick up my boots... and they said the package had not arrived.. or they could not locate it.. or something... Anyway, I wish you would send Jeannette the waybill number, ask her to pick up the boots and mail them to me.. when she has a chance. Shoes are very hard to get overseas, and I have only one pair. Address is American Red Cross, 930 "H" St., Washington, D. C. (Mail Section)

The food on the train is excellent.. last night we had fried chicken for dinnsr and it was very good. Also very inexpensive compared to anything I have been accustomed to.

You might tell Barbara to tell her friend Shiela that her daddy has had a look at some of the things in America that Shelia expects to find when she visits here... they are still here alright.

For the time being you had better send most of my letters on to the folks.. then have them returned to you to be kept in a file... as when I get on duty there will just not be enough time to write to everyone all the time. Now and then I will write you a letter that is for you only... and you can hang on to those.

We have a lot of very interesting people in our gang. Yesterday one of the gals hurt her hand playing ball in a railroad station and a full Colonel, U. S. Army, who is aboard, awarded her the "Pink Heart"... complete with safety pin, at a ceremony held-- during, our afternoon meeting. Stan Anderson, our leader, said if I wanted to haul it around, he would requisition a piano accordion at the port, and I could learn to use it. One morning in route we had breakfast in a fine canteen and then had a grand time playing a big Baldwin grand piano for about 20 minutes.. You have no idea what things like that mean to us already. We have song sessions in the Pullman cars, and that helps.

I read the last article by Bumpy Stevenson last evening in the Post, and was sorry to find that it trailed off into not much. In fact it consisted of very little except the great "I am." I learn via latrine gossip that the ARC gang in Italy hated her guts, as she used her personal sex appeal to build up her own reputation and not that of the organization. I talk to one GI back from the front and he says ARC is wonderful.. the next one says the boys hate our guts for selling free supplies, etc. Guess there are all kinds of Red Cross guys working... creating all kinds of situations in the field.

If you write Blackie tell him I wish I had Jean's address right now and should you drop a note to Isobel tell her the same thing.

Already feel that this will be a great adventure, darling, and just wish that you were goin' along. Have already obtained some good grist for copy, and expect to get a lot more. May not hit the Post but can sure turn out the stuff for someone.

It makes me feel good to know that you are back in Pleasant Ridge and near the Jaques and your family. Also.. please let me know if your part time proposition with Mrs. Kern works out. I really feel that would be a grand set up for you and right down your alley. I know you would like Red Cross work.

When we get on the other end I will write you something about the trip. Hope a letter from you catches up with me at POE,

All my love to all four of you

your own,
Henry

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Henry", with a small flourish at the end.

Please let me know that you got the letter mailed from Washington containing the checks, signed check on Dayton bank and the little ARC. You will get a pay check about the 17th.