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Letter from France, July 16, 1944

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16 July 1944
France

My dear folks;

Another week has again slipped by and its time to write you folks a letter. It is Sunday over here at the front and so far has been very quiet. Occasionally this quiet is broken by the deep thunder of a big gun followed by the whine of a shell as it slips through the sky on its mission of destruction. Artillery fire has been very heavy on this front — many days it is just one continuous thunder barrage and the very ground trembles from the concussion. I am prone to believe that this heavy firing has caused so much rainy weather here. It is a little cloudy again today but just nice to sit around in shirt sleeves. As yet we haven't really had any hot

weather here. As you have undoubtedly known, I am in that part of France known as Normandy. Normandy is world wide known for its orchards. Everywhere you go there are apple orchards, at present the apples are about the size of golf-balls. Really must have been beautiful here in Apple Blossom time.

I suppose you have seen many pictures of different towns here in France towns which became major battle fields. These towns are really one mass of destruction and the battlefield stench is most nauseating. War undoubtedly has a hell that is all its own.

The fields here are very productive. I have seen wheat five feet tall with nice big ears and a really heavy stand. And of course to add color to these fields are the inevitable Poppies which grow wild in this sector.

There is a great deal of swamp land here, both natural and artificial. The

Germans used these water barriers as a part of their defense system and its a rough nut to crack.

From time to time I have had an opportunity to talk to a few German Prisoners in their native tongue. They are all happy to be captured alive and always have something to say about the American Artillery. Many are not true Germans but men of conquered countries forced to fight so that their families will be permitted to live - these are poorly looking and seemingly poorly fed. Also have seen some of Hitlers elite troops - his paratroopers. Undoubtedly they are the cream of German manhood. They too, even though they are well clothed and well fed are more than ready to quit.

I don't remember if I thanked you for the birthday box that you sent me and arrived last week. Thanks a lot for the socks, rice Krispie bars and cigarettes. Wearing sock 24 hours a

day really wears out a bunch of folks
and of course we never tire of eating. the
box got a little beat up trying to follow
me around the front but it got here.

I am getting along just fine over
here but of course it's not like home.
This damp weather has seemingly settled
in my rapidly aging bones - my knees
and back are giving me a little trouble.

I imagine harvest season is going
in full swing over there - wish I
could be there to enjoy it.

Hoping these few lines may find
you folks all enjoying health & remain

Your loving

Sam
Ralph