

Letter from my brother  
Léon Morin

Kirchberg, Germany  
9 July 1945.

Hello Everybody:

Back at last from a two week trip on the Riviera and sort of tired but still awed struck about the whole trip and plenty to talk about.

As I have mentioned before I'm now in the 7<sup>th</sup> Army and still expect to go back home sometime this summer although the 7<sup>th</sup> Army is stated as part of the Army of Occupation. I had two letters from you, Mother, waiting for me when I got back and was sorry to hear about <sup>Uncle</sup> Joe's death. I am expecting a letter from Anne-Marie soon.

Let us talk about the trip to Nice. This city which is at present the fourth largest of France has been designated by the Army as a rest center for troops all over Europe. It hasn't been too badly shot up by the war like most of the European cities. The Army has approximately 15,000 troops in the city, living in the best hotels, and getting army food prepared by French chefs. We pay 50 cents a day for rooms that used to be \$600 per week. The food is free and

plenty of it.

There are all kinds of signs all over the city telling the soldiers that they don't have to salute Officers and giving instructions on how to wear the uniform. I wore a polo shirt all the time I was there, with straw sandals and pants rolled up. The Military police serve you with a smile and even bring the boy back to their hotel if some happen to drink too much of the champagne or Cognac which is plentiful! There are about 12 night-clubs which are supported by the army and at army prices, so the G. I.'s don't lack any entertainment.

We left the place in a  $3/4$  ton truck six of us in the truck so you see we weren't too crowded. We rolled down the top and talk about a sun burn we got. We slept in Belfort the first night in an Army hospital and had a very good breakfast before hitting the road again at 8 o'clock. The second night was spent in Lyons which is the second largest city at present and a beautiful town. Edward Werener and

stayed in the city all night and didn't get much sleep.

The third day was the beginning of a beautiful vacation, and I maintain what a trip like this one would have cost about 3 to 4 thousand dollars in civilian life. We drove all day through the French Alps after leaving Grenoble. Up and down, up and down mountain after mountain. Then we hit the Mediterranean at four in the afternoon. We went to Cannes first and then to Nice.

Palm trees, beautiful sunshine, all white houses <sup>in the</sup> which orange roofs against a background of green mountainside. In France most of the cafes are on the sidewalk, well, there are hundreds of them in Nice. People taking it easy, basking in the sunshine. Beautiful women on bicycles, that you don't have to pay a fine to talk to (there is a fine in Germany if one is caught talking to a gawny man or woman). There are plenty of Calceos and bicycles with a trailer which are used as taxis. I wish I had a camera to take a few shots during the trip.

Of course film is hard to get. I lived at

the Luxembourg Hotel and the Negresco, which are two of the largest in the city. I got up at any time I wanted read the newspaper which was tucked under the door every morning and did a lot of swimming, although swimming is forbidden for soldiers because the Germans have altered some of the sewers in the city and there are now flowing directly in the sea. With a few Typhus cases in town the army has deemed it prudent to put a ban on swimming, although there are plenty of boats to ride in if the soldier wants the water and beside Nice itself.

After our seven days were over we left Nice going through the Italian Riviera all along the sea to Genoa. From there we went to Milan, and saw where Mussolini was ~~hung~~<sup>gagged</sup> by feet then the head and beaten up then left to rest on the breast of his mistress for everybody to see. Then we hit the Brenner Pass where Dussio, and Hitler used to meet over a glass of wine, and plan to rule the whole damn world. We had a glass of wine also the same place.

Half an hour we were almost with the heat and up there we had to wear our jackets. All along there were snow capped mountains. Then we descended through Austria and headed for Berchtesgaden. Hitler's mountain hideout. We had lunch there in Hitler's own chinaware with his initials on them. I tried to sneak one out for Anne Marie's collection but they made no sign for the darn things and we were obliged to return every bit of china and silverware we used. They have repaired the place quite a bit since I was down there last May. We didn't feel like eating in Hitler's kitchen then with all the dead S.S. laying around.

The worst sight and the last place that we visited where the cremation chambers at Dachau a few miles on this side of Munich. Dachau was built in 1933 when Hitler came to power. Its first barracks were for S.S. troops for training and garrison. It is a concentration camp for Political Prisoners. All the big shots in this country and from Poland, Norway, Czechoslovakia etc. who didn't abide by the

Huber's orders were thrown in there. I think it is worst than Buchenwald, although Buchenwald has been more publicised because there were more Photographs taken around the place.

They <sup>there</sup> are at least 20 of these camps in Germany and they are all the same. Just a well organized factory for burning bodies and letting people by the thousands starved to death. When we marched through there last May there were 32,000 prisoners. The infantry got in town at 9 o'clock and there were 2,000 bodies piled up in front of the furnace ready to be cremated. The reason for this is that at 6 o'clock the S.S. were told to kill and cremate everybody before the Americans got there. But we got in faster than they expected, therefore they were caught with their pants down. During the 3 hours interval, they succeeded in killing 9 thousands and cremated or rather half cremated more half then they ran out of coal for the furnaces, so they stopped the operation. I didn't visit all the grounds when I was there there was too much to do, but this time I got all the details and it will take 12 pages like this one to just give an idea about the best organized butchery in the world. I'll bet Armour's in Chicago could

-1-

copy their plan and increase their production  
50 90.

The rotten stink around the place is awful. But after a while we got used to the stuff we even joked when a couple of dogs got in a fight over an half burned human foot which was dug out of a bone pit. One of the dogs ran through fence and into the town with the foot in his mouth. I wonder what the civilians in town think of that place, I'm sure that they must have known what was going inside that camp. As a camouflage for the burning flesh when it stunk the whole country side the Germans had a real Soap Factory a few yards away from the camp so that the people believed the strong odor was coming from the soap factory. There are two crematories who can hold three bodies and four more it who can hold six a piece so you can see how many people died in 12 years. The place has been running full blast for three years, and it takes 15 minutes to cremate 50 persons.

The burning of the bodies wasn't the worst part of the deal. The gruesome part of this was how they killed those people. Either by torture by the firing squad, mutilation with starved bloodhounds

of which each camp had about fifty or sixty, and by mass gas poisoning which was done this way. The unsuspecting prisoners were marched in formation to this room which was supposed to be a shower room. Inside, the ceiling was all fixed with sprinklers nicely polished which had never been used for water but nice jets of chlorine gas were forced through controlled by an S. S. guard who had a little window through which he could look over the victims without them seeing him. Just like a Dr. Du Mas story. After five minutes there wasn't one of them alive, or if there were it was just tough luck because all the bodies were thrown in the next room next to the crematory and a few minutes they were all burned. That "Shower Room" could hold 250 persons at one crack. Well I could talk about this all day and all night but I must go to supper and sometime I'll draw you a picture of the place and you can get show it around to some of the people. It is all right to see those things in the papers and magazines but it is a helluva lot different when you can get the dope from a



bystander. For instance nobody ever mentioned that right among those chambers of horrors stand beautiful churches where those same soldiers of the Reich used to receive God every Sunday and where those same churches are always packed up with people every day of the week. I can't understand that and there's nobody in the American Army who does either. Maybe we're too narrow minded in America.

~~Well~~ I would like to tell you more about ~~it~~ but it takes till ~~another~~ time. I wanted to tell you though that I got mixed up in royalty in Nice. Quite by accident, I saw this beautiful girl on the beach and as it is almost a novelty for a soldier to speak good French I thought I'd impress her with my French vocabulary well! It turned out that I went to the house they have in Nice for the summer her and her father and stepmother. Her mother who is dead was the Countess of Calo Perlasche's got an aunt in Paris who is also a countess one in Baden Germany also and her grandmothers in Rome is a Baroness. What a mixup. Her father's name is Dr Jean-Pierre Bossé di

Borgo who is a descendent of Bonaparte's worst  
 enemy originally of Corsica. The Dr had  
 his leg amputated last ~~summer~~<sup>winter</sup> by an American  
 Surgeon in the Army who treated him with  
 penicillin and thereby saved his life. The  
 girl told me that I must have made quite  
 an impression on the old man because he even  
 took out an old cherished bottle of cognac  
 the last night I was in Nice and I had to help  
 him drink it. She said that I had been ~~holding~~  
~~that bottle~~ ~~in my hand~~ ~~for a special~~  
 occasion ~~and~~ never even opened it when the  
 war ended. Well that's one thing of putting  
 it over big. I'll have to ~~comp~~ ~~ford~~ with  
 the little Countess now and the ~~other~~. Those people  
 don't seem to laugh very much but I had the  
 old man almost ~~roll~~ on the floor when I told  
 him a few funny ones that happened  
 during this war. He used to ~~be~~ an Army  
 Surgeon during the last war and had quite  
 a few good ones himself.  
 Well bye now, and the best of luck and  
 health, will write again soon.

John