

9 May 1945
Wednesday

Dear Brother,

How are you? Fine I'm sure. As for myself I'm feeling pretty good. The weather has been pretty nice and warm the last couple of days. It sure feels funny to be writing to you with an APO at San Francisco, Calif. You know that is just about half ways around the world from my location to yours. Well now that VE day has come maybe I'll have a chance I hope to go someday back to the States. Who knows maybe I'll see you yet over there where you are. I hope that we can see each other back in the States instead. Now that VE day has come in Europe, I hope the Victory day in the Pacific comes real soon.

We had a little celebration here on the field. To most of us VE day was just another day in the ETO in the Army. Most of the fellows went back to work just like they did before. On the 7th of May about eleven in the evening we had firework display for about an hour and a half. They shot off flares of different colors and everything looked very beautiful. They even shot off a lot of parachute flares.

On VE day, 8 May 45 I celebrated also, and a lot of other fellows too. We got an opportunity to fly in a B-17 on an sight seeing mission over Europe. We flew over places which the 8th AF bombed at one time. The weather was perfect. We got up about six in the morning and ate breakfast. We took over about ten minutes to ten in the morning. I don't remember what time we crossed the channel. If you ask me there sure is a lot of water in the channel. We didn't see the White Cliffs of Dover. We saw convoys streaming up the channel. We saw the obstacles which the Germans put on the coast of France to prevent and allied landing. We flew over Aachen the City where the Germans made a great push back in Dec/44. Before we flew over Aachen we by passed on the right side of Brussels, Belgium. You could see the steeples and smokestacks of Brussels in the distance. Then we went on to Dusseldorf. From there we went to Cologne Germany. You probably remember seeing pictures of Cologne in the papers. That was the city where the allies crossed the Rhine River and later the bridge which they crossed over collapsed. Among the ruins I could see the Cathedral still standing. Everything was a complete mess. Not one building had a roof on it. After sweating out the war in the ETO for eighteen months I was anxious to see just what damage bombing actually did. I wouldn't miss a chance like that for anything in the world. All you could see in Cologne was four walls standing where at one time beautiful buildings stood. Every bridge across the Rhine and Ruhr river was destroyed. Most of the Factories in the Ruhr Valley were completely obliterated. From Cologne we flew down the river and saw the Remagen Bridgehead and also the city of Bohn which is just across the river. We also saw the mountains which the yanks had to scale after they made the Remagen Bridgehead. We flew from there down the river till we came to Frankfurt. That was also as messy as Cologne. From Frankfurt we flew down over Mannheim and Ludwigshaven. While we flew over Belgium most of the buildings had flags waving from them. When we flew over France you could distinguish the color of the flags which were waving. Theirs was Red White and Blue. We flew so low over France that you could see the people looking up at you and waving. The scenery was really beautiful over France and Germany. The fields were nice and green. Streams cut the land into different shapes. We saw some of the German highways, Autobahns, as they call them. Near Cologne we saw one which was in a clover leaf shape. Some of the highways were double highways. While flying over Germany we could see foxholes, and trenches which were dug for miles at a time. The trenches zigzagged along in the open fields. Most of the fields were flat. There were a lot of bomb craters and shell holes. Every so often you could see tank tracks in the fields where in certain parts you could tell that there was a tank battle going on. Wherever the Germans put up resistance you could see the whole large area crated from bombs and shells. There wasn't much of Germany left that wasn't scarred by the war. When we flew over France there were a lot of people moving around in the cities but when we flew over Germany you could not see a single soul moving around in the cities. Every little town and city and hamlet each had a flak tower from which they shot flak at the bombers during a mission. This was all in the Ruhr valley. No wonder the bombers had a heck of a time whenever they came over the Ruhr valley. There were factories all along the rivers. which were flattened out by the weight of the bombs which had fallen on them. Many factories are not in operation already. Big gas tanks which stood erect at one time were squashed and

you could see where the bombs had hit the tanks. Even farm buildings in isolated regions were destroyed. Germany looked like swiss cheese from their air with all the bomb craters. Germany really caught hell from all the bombers. We saw some air fields from which the Germans dispatches fighters. One air field we saw was really patched up. You could tell from the patching where each bomb fell.

On our return trip we flew over Abbeyville in France. We flew back over the Channel and right over the outskirts of London. London from the air looked very large. When we landed it was about five minutes to six in the evening. Boy was I tired. The trip was very interesting and if I ever get another chance to fly again like that I'll take the opportunity.

Later in the evening after washing up a bit we had to fall out for a formation and from there we met some of the other outfits on the field and our Commanding Officer of the base gave us a speech and after that we had mass on the open field by our Catholic chaplain. After that they served beer. We had some beer and it sure tasted good, and it quenched my thirst which I built up while flying about eight and a half hours in the air. Boy when I went to bed I really slept soundly. While I went to bed they had some fire works display on the field.

Today I was back at work again, as usual. Tomorrow is a Holy Day of Obligation so I guess I'll close for a while as I'd like to go to bed early this evening as I am pretty tired as yet. I'll try to write again pretty soon.

Tomorrow I think that we will have a lot of work to do and will probably work late in the evening for the next couple of days.

How that this mess is over, over here, I hope that I can get a chance to go home for a while. God bless you ~~xxx~~ brother and keep you safe.

Your brother,

Stanley