

NAME: Charles

RANK: Ex-Lieutenant

ORGANIZATION: Ex-French Army

OVERSEAS WARTIME SERVICE: France and Germany

- The following excerpt is directly from an original wartime period letter written by Charles. This is the only letter from Charles in the site curator's possession.
- The following excerpt is presented under fair use provisions for educational purposes.
- No controversial material has been omitted from the following excerpt. No grammatical or spelling errors have been corrected.

Charles, a former French Army officer, writes his friends in the United States:

“Chartres
July 31. 1946

...you perhaps know that all the stained glass in Chartres is unharmed, and so is practically all the glass over France, even where the churches are damaged or destroyed, for it had been removed and put into safe places in due time.

You may have known...that I am still alive, and this makes me more ashamed, for you may wonder why I didn't write earlier to you. There is no real excuse to my being so rude, except that I am, as all every architect over here is, terribly busy: re-building France is no small job, considering that red tape and lumber papers are far more used materials than cement, steel or bricks.

This is, roughly, what happened to us during these past years: I joined the army a few days before the war began (Sept. 1939) as 1st.Lt. in the Maginot line, Strasbourg. I spent there nine quiet months and a very tough one (June 1940) I was captured then, my pill-box surrounded by the Germans, and taken to Nurnberg where I spent ten more quiet months, too quiet, learning German, practicing English, starving, teaching architecture to my fellow prisoners and deprived of news from my people for the first four months. I was sent back to France in June, 1941 when the Germans released the fathers of four children or more.

During this time my wife and the kids had to fly down to the south of France, escaped two air raids and were just allowed to return home a short time before. The Germans were staying in our house and stayed there until Aug. 1944. We were then living in a small apartment near the railroad station, but we left it for a country house when Chartres was beginning to be too heavily bombed. And then, thanks to America, we were at last liberated and we settled for what we hope will become some day a normal life. Nobody was killed, or even injured, the house was damaged but not destroyed, so everything's O.K...

...Give us news from yourselves, and forgive, please, my unforgivable silence.

Yours very sincerely
Charles”

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- Charles made it through the Second World War but when he passed away is unknown.
 - **For visual context, this link connects to an original wartime newsreel in the public domain that covers the city of Chartres which Charles speaks of (viewer discretion advised):**
<https://archive.org/details/gov.archives.arc.39201>
 - **For additional detail, this link connects to the Wikipedia article that covers the city of Chartres (reader discretion advised):** <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chartres>