

NAME: Melvin

RANK: Private First Class

ORGANIZATION: 9th Infantry Division

OVERSEAS WARTIME SERVICE: European Theater of Operations

- The following excerpt is directly from an original wartime letter written by Melvin. This is one of several letters from Melvin in the site curator's possession and more will be transcribed in the future.
- The following excerpt is presented under fair use provisions for educational purposes.
- No controversial material has been omitted from the following excerpt aside from an edited derogatory term for Germans and edited profanity for the protection of younger readers. No grammatical or spelling errors have been corrected.

Melvin writes a friend in the United States:

“May 30, 1945
Near Munich

Hello Again,

I just recieved your letter mailed May 23. Mail comes here fairly good but I doubt if you'll recieve this before June 20th or so. Mother does'nt get my mail at all and every time she writes she asks me to write. I guess they think I don't write but I've written as many as I could possibly find time to write. When I was in combat I used to write at least every other day because I did'nt know when I might not be able to write at all.

You asked what army I was in. Well I was in the first army till the war ended. First Army 39th Reg. of the 9th Div...

...Yesterday morning I had a great surprise when I got up. The nite before some guys that had been wounded returned to the outfit about 12 P.M. When I got up one guy says, 'Hello...what the h _ _ l are you doing here?' ...He left two wks. before I did and the last time I saw him was in Maryland. I was headed for the bus station and met him on the st. He was drunk and did'nt know where he was going so I took him back to camp. All he remmbers is, that someone got him to camp. He left the states one wk. before I did. He was quite a drinker... You don't know him.

I believe I wrote you when I was in Dessua on the Elbe R. Well from Dessua we moved down here to the hills. I'm in a small country town...in a great farming district. We're only about 40 miles from Munich. North west.

Every nite you should see my buddie and I sneaking from house to house buying eggs. He does'nt talk any German and I talk just a little. I can understand it pretty good and if I do enough motioning and talking I can make them understand me.

We are'nt suppose to talk to them but a guy likes a mid-night snack. We buy eggs, potatoes,

bread and sometimes butter. It is'nt like it was when we were fighting. Then we could take what we wanted now we have to buy it...

...Its peaceful as can be but the people work like ants. They have plenty to eat and no cares in the world. The only thing wrong with the picture is the people. Thoes people that wear long black dresses that hang down to the ground. They Are Germans And I Can't Help But Hate Them.

I don't believe these people can be blamed to much for what Hitler done because they are just peasants but they sure helped get the babies. Almost every house has at least 5 real young kids running around.

To you, the girl that wants to live in the big city this probably don't sound very romantic. I don't use the word romantic as, loveing, but as something peaceful and beautiful. No, I would'nt want to live here myself or live like this, but it wood be nice to spend a vaction in a place like this. It reminds me of what I picture the early days of the U.S. as being.

About what I have to say about the war being over. Its not much different than before except we are'nt chaseing J __ ries around the hills. Its not much of a thrill now because most of us are sweating out the Pacific. I'll probably be there before to long.

If we had been in the U.S.A. it would have been a real big day because we would'nt know what it was like to face death or to have a good friend killed. Back there it goes like this. The papers say, 'German Surrenders.' To the people back home the war is over. Here a guy thinks back when, they were taking a hill. German 88 shells were comeing in thick and fast. Now and then a soldier hollars he has been hit, others fall screaming and moaning, while others fall never to get up again. Maybe one of those boys was right beside you. Maybe you had just said something to him before the shell hit or the machine gun opened up. You remmber the days climbing hills and hikeing all over, ready for action. Remmber the days you did'nt eat at all or if you did eat it was out of a can. Days without being able to wash, wearing the same dirty clothes day in and day out.

(...to you and to millions of others it sounds thrilling, glorifying, you think you picture just how it is but its impossible. To think up a picture takes maybe two seconds, to really see it, it takes days of sweating cussing and facing death. No, none of us hold it against you folks in the states, in fact we are glad you can't picture it because if you could really picture it you'd never forget it and its not a pleasant picture.)

After thinking about fallen buddies and etc. a guy thinks about the Pacific and the idea of going throu it again. Its not pleasant.

For myself I can't kick because I have'nt seen anything compared to what some guys have seen...

...If this letter sounds screwy its because I can't put into words what I'm trying to say.

Good luck and I might see you before to long.

Just a Dog Face

Melvin"

- Melvin made it through the Second World War and passed away in his 90s.
- **For visual context, this link connects to an original wartime newsreel in the public domain that covers the above time period (viewer discretion advised):**
<https://archive.org/details/ARC-39067>
- **For additional detail, this link connects to the Wikipedia article that covers Melvin's wartime organization, the 9th Infantry Division (reader discretion advised):**
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/9th_Infantry_Division_\(United_States\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/9th_Infantry_Division_(United_States))