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ARMY TALKS



The Soldier and His Mail



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ARMY TALKS



EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS

THE SOLDIER AND HIS MAIL

THREE fellows—their names were Joe, Bill and Pete—lived in a town in the United States which wasn't more than 1,500 miles from either the Atlantic or Pacific Oceans.

All three of them grew up together, playing baseball in the vacant lot back of the box factory, swimming in the old quarry on Lyandecker's farm, drinking "cokes" at Doc Theeber's drugstore.

Joe's father owned the box factory, and Joe and his sister lived in a big white house out in the Oakley section. Joe went to the State University—now he's a First Lieutenant in an SOS outfit stationed in Great Britain.

Bill, a Tank Sergeant

Bill finished high school, got a job in Wilson's Garage, and, at 22, was one of the best mechanics in the State. He's a sergeant in a tank company now, nursing his armored monster with the same loving care he used to lavish on the stripped-down Model T which he raced at the Fairgrounds every September 1 through 15.

Pete specialized in commercial courses at Dexter High and, when his father died, he went to work in the office of Miller and Lane's Department Store. He was working

there when he was drafted. Good office men are always needed in the Quartermasters—and that's where Pete wound up.

Back in Middle City, Joe's father and sister want to know every single thing he does, everything that happens to him here in the ETO. So do Bill's people, so do Pete's.

They All Want News

The three boys themselves have an endless curiosity about what's going on in Middle City. Nothing is too trivial for them to enjoy—when it is part of a letter from home.

Lieutenant Joe, Sergeant Bill and T/5 Pete know just what kind of news they want. They want, first, to know how the folks are getting along financially. They want to know that their families are doing everything they possibly can to help the war effort. They like to be told that the people they left at home miss them, and are anxious for their return. In general terms, they want to be assured, over and over again, that their families are happy and busy.

Sports, particularly the doings of the home-town team, rate high in the list of things Joe, Bill and Pete want to hear about. They are inter-

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ested in changes taking place in Middle City as a result of the war.

Joe knows, from his father's letters, that the old factory is working overtime, with an enlarged staff, on a Government contract to build ammunition boxes. Bill is interested in that, too, but from a different angle.

Bill Has Another Slant

Rationing of gasoline and tires has whittled the business at the garage down to little more than cross-roads filling station volume. But he gets a big kick out of learning that 15-year-old Andy, who used to work for old man Wilson, is now getting \$40 a week as a nailer at the factory.

"Can you imagine that?" he comments wonderingly. "That little kid making forty bucks. . . ."

That summary isn't just guess-work. It is the result of a survey, made of men in the ETO, on the general question of "What kind of thing do you men want in letters from home?"

It reveals exactly what Joe and Bill

and Pete are hoping for when they sit down, here in the ETO, to write a V-mail letter home. It may surprise most men in this theater—but not the Army Postal Service—to know that writing home is still the most popular way for soldiers to spend their off-duty time.

Most men write letters during their off-duty time. They know just the kind of replies they want from the folks at home, letters with lots of bright chatty news about the family, their friends and the town they left to come into the Army. That kind of mail makes a man a better soldier, adds to his pride in serving in his country's Armed Forces and helps him to have confidence in his leaders and a better understanding of the issues involved in this war.

Letters from Home Contribute To Final Victory, Generals Say

Nobody can tell a soldier on foreign duty anything about the "morale value" of a good, fast mail service from home—when he's getting plenty of letters.

Nobody needs to tell the higher command of the United States Army anything about it either. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower called the turn when he said:—

"Writing regularly to soldiers in the service is definitely contributing toward the winning of this war."

Here in the ETO, Army Postal Clerks administer a complicated system of Army Post Offices which exist for one reason and one reason only—to get soldier mail to the hands of the men as fast as is humanly possible, and to get their letters started on the way back to Middle City, or anywhere else in the United States.

There isn't much that Joe, Bill or Pete can do about letters from Middle

City—either their families and friends write to them or they don't—beyond writing frequently themselves.

The Same Old Story

Theirs is the same complaint as that of hundreds, perhaps thousands—of other soldiers:—

1. *There isn't anything to write about.*
2. *They won't let you say it anyway.*
3. *There's no time, no place and no facilities for writing letters in the Army, even if there was something to say—and no censorship to kill it.*



But our three sample soldiers—they stand for all the officers and men in this Theater of Operations—are making a very hasty judgment. There are things to write about. There is a way of saying interesting and amusing things in censor-proof letters which the folks at home will enjoy getting and which they will answer as fast as they can.

When they learn the trick, they have an added pride in service and an added sense of personal participation in this War.

But it is very easy to understand why Joe, Bill and Pete feel the way they do about writing home. In the first place, they're not professional writers—they've never been trained to think of every little experience they have,

every little odd or amusing thing they did, or saw, or heard as the subject for some written words.

So after they've carefully filled in their return address in the upper right-hand corner of a V-mail form, after they've addressed it in large block letters to the folks at home; and after they've said they were well, that they missed the family and that they wish the war was over so they could go home—well after that there just doesn't seem to be a thing left to say.

What do they do?

They chew the end of their pen, they look around, they light a cigaret. Then, more often than not, they fill a couple of lines by saying that there isn't anything else to say and drop it in the mail box, hoping the censor won't cut anything out of it.

It Has Opposite Effect

What happens when that letter reaches Middle City?

What probably happens is that it has an effect directly opposite to what was intended by Joe, Bill or Pete.

There's a curious thing about the written word which every professional writer knows—somehow, the frame of mind of the man who does the writing creeps through the words he sets down on paper and creates, in the mind of the reader, something of the same attitude.

If a man is unhappy the letters he writes will show it—even if there isn't



a single word of complaint in any of them. The folks at home will know. It will make them feel that way too.

Nobody wants to make his mother, or his wife, or the people he knew well, unhappy. Sometimes he realizes that his letters may be doing just that. The first reaction, often, is to stop writing. As a rule that only makes a bad situation worse.

Now, there is a way of overcoming this kind of thing—but it's not easy to do.

Let's get down to specific cases.

How One Soldier Handled a Christmas Letter Problem

There's a sergeant on duty in the ETO right now—and he's a real sergeant, not a synthetic Joe, Bill or Pete—who was billeted, with his company, in a big brick farmhouse out in the country last Christmas.

Last Christmas Eve he sat in an upstairs room of that farmhouse, writing a letter to his wife.

He was pretty blue—it was his first Christmas in England—and he started out to write just about the same kind of letter that most fellows in the same fix would have written. He had a V-mail form about half filled when he realized that what he was writing was the sort of a cry-baby letter that a homesick kid would write.

He pulled the V-form out of the machine, threw it in the fire, and started another.

Making a deliberate effort not to let his own feelings creep into the words as he typed them, he made a mental examination of that room—as if he was hunting for booby traps. Inch by inch he examined the walls, the floor, the ceiling. One by one he went over the articles of furniture. Without leaving his seat, he described that room

so minutely that even the Planters Peanut can which served as an ash tray, the ink spots on the table, came to life.

Just Plain Description

It was just a detailed description of a rather battered room in an old English farm-house, full of GI tables and filing cabinets, with a cracked window, a smoky fire and an uncertain electric light hanging from the middle of the ceiling.

Last week the sergeant who wrote that letter got one from his wife—one of many. In it she mentioned his Christmas Eve letter of last year.

For a whole year, the picture created by the sergeant's description of one room had remained in his wife's mind. It will probably remain there for a long time to come.

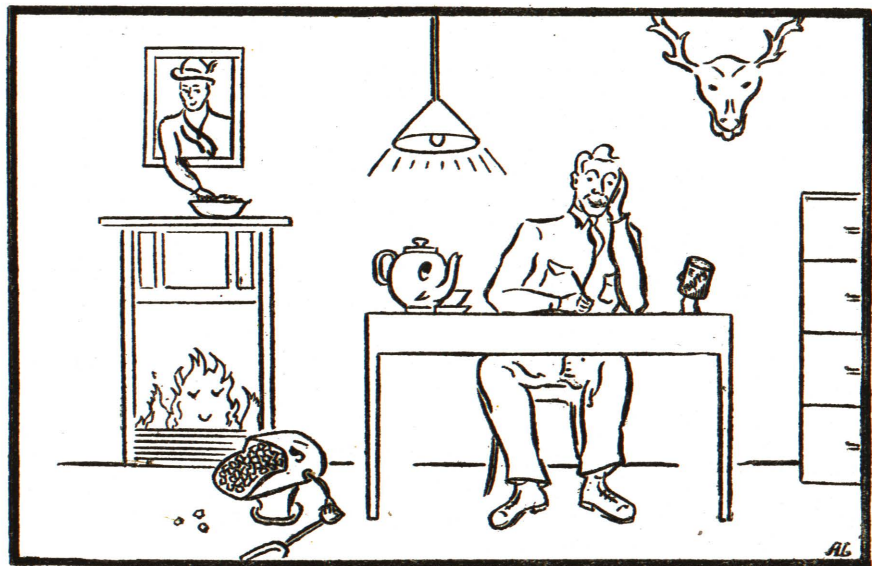
The little story is cited to illustrate the point that even when there's nothing to write about, letters can be written. Here's something to remember. Letters written home are cherished and saved. They'll probably be there to greet you when you finally go home yourself. Those letters you have written go to form the first chapter of your own personal book about this war.

This is the Second Chapter

You are writing the second chapter now, the chapter on training and preparation, the chapter which will tell, in the words of every man, how his country's greatest Army gathered itself for the supreme effort.

The tempo is rising. The job we all started a year or two years or even longer ago than that, is coming into its final phase. Now is the time to set down, for your family and friends—and later, when you re-read them, for yourselves—the words which will tell of the greatest adventure many of us will ever have.

Don't worry about the big things,



“ . . . he described the room so minutely that the things in it came to life.”

the conduct of this war will be printed in the history books and in the careful and authoritative accounts of the trained observers and writers who are accredited by the Army as war correspondents.

When the war is over it will be easy enough to look up the newspaper files on the big battles and long campaigns.

But the men who are fighting this war have other things to remember. Only a handful of men determine what major steps shall be taken, and where and when.

Thousands of men eat Brussels sprouts.

Think ahead five or ten years. Try to imagine what you will remember easily—try to figure out what little details, vitally important to you now, will have become blurred by time and warped by later experiences. Those are the things to write. Those are the things your families and

friends want to know, now. Those are the things you'll want to be able to recall, later on.

Men here in the ETO today, who were doing their basic in some camp at home a year and a half or two years ago, will find that they have already forgotten the details of their first few months in the Army.

The writer of this piece did his basic at a camp near Alexandria, La. Twice, during that period, he went into “Alex” on an overnight pass. The first time he took the last bus back to camp because he couldn't find a place in the crowded little town to spend the night. The next time he went straight to the biggest hotel in the town, as soon as he got off the bus, and reserved a room for the night. It was a big, double, air-cooled, corner room, and the price was \$14 for the night.

That much he remembers. The name of the hotel he has forgotten. But that little paragraph in one man's

history of the war is safe. It is safe because the whole story of that overnight stay was set down in a letter home the next day. In it is the name of the hotel—and the name of the beer-joint with the big clover-leaf bar and the girl singers which was always jammed with tanned, lean soldiers on those Louisiana nights.

That is the kind of thing which makes for good, interesting and colorful letter writing.

Those are the kind of details which make this war something real and vital to people thousands of miles away from it.

Try thinking of your letters as a medium which supplies the third dimension—the depth and relief—to the flat, one-plane picture of the war which the official newspaper accounts,

the news-reels and the magazine stories give.

Done properly, such sidelights on the war will have two results. They'll provide an invaluable record of your own experiences, and they'll produce, in the form of replies, just the kind of letters from home that you, like Joe, Bill and Pete, want to get.

The first big stumbling block in the way of writing your own running account of the war is the censorship barrier.

The material for the following passage was supplied by the office of the Theater Censor. In explaining the "why" of some of the censorship regulations, which might seem unreasonable, it will help to enhance confidence in the command on the part of the men.

PART II. "YOU CAN'T SAY THAT"

Anybody should be able to understand the necessity for safeguarding military information. What some soldiers do not find it so easy to understand are the definitions of what constitute "military information."

It doesn't take a hammer to get it into a man's skull that a "leak" concerning the route and date of departure of a convoy, for instance, means that enemy submarines could lie in ambush. Anybody can see that if the enemy knows that bombing planes are going to take off from a certain field and fly to a certain objective they could assemble plenty of fighters to make it very unhappy flying for the Fortress crews.

Those are big and easily understood examples.

But this is a very complicated kind of a war. There are lots of things about it which mean little to the individual soldier, but which do mean

a great deal to the enemy—if they can be fitted into the picture he is constantly assembling.

So the problem of safeguarding military information against the word spoken or written through carelessness or through ignorance of its importance, has to be done by an extensive series of "don'ts."

Some of them seem pretty pointless, but even the silliest-appearing censorship rule has a meaning—a very real meaning in terms of your life or somebody else's.

Here's an example:

Most men have probably seen the prepared "E.F.M." cable messages, similar to the telegraph companies'



greeting messages, which may be sent to the folks at home.

The blank has spaces on the front side for the address of the person for



whom it is intended and for the identification and return address of the sender. On the back are printed a lengthy list of prepared phrases, each with a number to identify it.

The Numbers Stand for Text

A soldier who wishes to inform his mother that her package has arrived, that he is well and that he is writing, to quote a typical selection, would write the three numbers, representing the three phrases he had chosen, in the message space on the front of the blank.

Then, with his two shillings and sixpence in hand, he would discover that the cable couldn't be sent without having the censor's stamp on it.

His comments would probably be unprintable. After he cooled down a little he would complain bitterly to somebody that it "doesn't make any sense."

"Here they go and write the whole message for me, they print up forms—they know all there is to know about it anyway—and then it's got to be censored.

"Boy, they sure do make things easy for a guy in this Army, don't they!"

On the surface it surely looks as if he had a legitimate complaint. Actually, censorship of those prepared messages is very necessary. It isn't, of course, censorship of the message itself. But that censorship is intended to make sure that nobody except bona fide

members of the American Armed Services are using the forms.

It Could Be a Code

What difference would that make, anyway?

Just this. If the message were sent by an enemy agent it would be as a part of a pre-arranged code.

The addressee in the United States would understand that it was the numbers, not the actual text, which was being transmitted. He or she could easily identify the three numbers by looking at the back of one of the same forms in any telegraph office at home.

Remember, this is a pre-arranged code which the enemy would be using.

If the understood reference book was, for example, the Encyclopædia Britannica, and the numbers were understood to mean volume, page and paragraph, it would be a very simple matter for an enemy agent to inform a superior, through an intermediary in the United States, that a particular section of the French Channel Coast was exceedingly interesting to the American Army.

Don't Be Nervous About It

How would you like that, if you were on a landing barge creeping across the Channel some dark night?

Just in case this illustration should serve to alarm any nervous soldier, it might be pointed out that this technique—number messages referring to the text of a book in the possession of both the sender and addressee of a code telegram—is one of the oldest devices of the Hollywood scenario writer and his counterpart, the "wood-pulp" fiction author.

It has been the basis for many good spy yarns, and is so well known that editors shake their heads unhappily when they encounter it in a story today.

Despite the fact that the illustration wouldn't do any enemy agent any good, it does serve to point out what many soldiers do not realize, that there really are good reasons for the censorship regulations.

The more important of them are already known to most officers and men, yet it may be convenient to repeat them here, as they were published in Circular 65 from Headquarters, ETOUSA, 26 August, 1943.

They Cover Officers and Men

They apply to all persons subject to military law, and include all civilians accompanying or serving with American military organizations in the European Theater of Operations.

Details of the various types of mail permitted are well known; such regulations as that providing that only officers censor mail, that no piece of mail matter may be held more than 24 hours for censoring in the units are equally familiar.

The most important thing to most officers and men probably is the answer to the question "What can you say?"

It is best answered by a list of the things which you can't say. The passage in the circular quoted here, which deals with prohibited matter, says:

Information useful to the enemy or affecting the security of, or our good relations with, Great Britain or other allies will not be included in private correspondence. The items listed below are the most important, and will not be mentioned in personal letters:

a. Any information or detail of the trip across the Atlantic, especially the names of the transports, ports and dates of embarkation and debarkation, number of ships in convoy, naval vessels or aircraft carriers accompanying the convoy, any action with the enemy, length of

voyage, route followed or other details of the trip.

b. Similar information or details of trans-Atlantic or other air journeys.

c. Strength, efficiency, training, morale or organization of military forces.

d. Location, movement, engagements or operations of naval, military or air force organizations, to include position or description of billets, stations or camps.

e. Direct or inferential information linking an APO or station number with an exact geographical location. (This prohibition does not apply to general and station hospitals.)

f. Armament or equipment of any kind whatsoever.

g. Distinguishing signs used to identify organizations or their transportation or baggage.

h. Information or details of operations against or by the enemy on land, sea, or in the air.

i. Plans and forecasts, or orders for future operations, whether known or surmised.

j. The use, condition, or probable extension of roads, railways, or transportation and signal communication facilities.

k. State of the maintenance of the services, including any reference to reserves.

l. Casualties, to include injuries or deaths by accident or natural causes, before official publication or release.

m. Information or details of any enemy action or reference to any results of enemy action.

n. Detailed reports of the weather in such form as to be helpful to the enemy.

o. Criticisms and statements that might tend to bring our armed forces or those of our allies into disrepute.

Prohibited Inclosures and Mail Matter: None of the following will be included in private letters:

a. Classified documents of the United States or allied nations.

b. Documents captured from

the enemy or containing enemy information.

c. Codes, ciphers, shorthand, maps, or blank paper.

d. Drawings, sketches, music manuscripts, and paintings will be submitted to the Theater Censor, ETOUSA, for censorship and forwarding to addressees.

e. Photographs or pictorial matters which, either alone or taken together with the letter, are censorable.

f. Letters for publication in the press, except through authorized channels.

g. Advertisements or letters for publication inviting correspondence with strangers.

h. Replies to letters or gifts from unknown persons; to advertisements or other requests inviting correspondence with unknown persons.

i. "Chain letters," "club letters," "round robin" or "news letters." Unit and base censors will return all such letters to their senders.

j. Newspaper or magazine clippings with connected or associated personal comments which disclose prohibited information.

Picture Post Cards which may connect a geographical location with an APO number, location of organization, or route of travel may not be sent through the mails.

Phonograph Records will not be mailed by personnel of this command.

Those are the formal rules, set down by the Theater Censor for the control of mail written by soldiers on duty in the ETO. They sound formidable and a man may well be pardoned for turning away from a bulletin board where they are posted with the conviction that "heck, you can't say anything."

It is, of course, in knowing how to write within the prohibitions of the regulations, that interesting letters can be written.

For instance, sub-paragraph "h" prohibits "information . . . of operations . . . by the enemy . . ."

Let's consider our three old friends from Middle City, Lieut. Joe, Sgt. Bill and T/5 Pete.

Let's assume that all three of them were in London, on three-day passes, on a night when German bombers broke through the defenses and made a quick hit-and-run raid on London. In this case it was Bill who saw the fireworks.

The sergeant had met a man from his own outfit, at a Red Cross Club, and they had gone together to a pub the friend knew about. The alert sounded while they were drinking mild and bitter and telling each other what the first thing they'd do when they got home would be.

Suddenly they noticed that the other occupants of the pub, who had displayed a blase indifference to the drone of enemy motors overhead, had stopped short in their conversation and were listening.

Then They Heard It

Then the boys heard it oo—the increasing whistle of a falling bomb. The crash came from down the street and it jarred the glasses on the bar in front of them. They joined with the other beer drinkers in running to the milk-bar, with a dance-hall upstairs, which had been hit.

The whole story was printed in the English papers, a month or two ago. Bill saw it all—the fire, the rescue workers, the dead and wounded being carried out. It was his first real taste of the war and it was the most exciting thing that had happened to him so far.

When he got back to his outfit, he wrote a colorful V-mail letter, describing the scene, telling the folks back in Middle City exactly what he had seen, how the bomb sounded as it came down,

how the glasses rattled and how the rescue operations had been carried out.

Not a single line of his letter passed—and he got bawled out for attempting to write prohibited details regarding action by the enemy in a personal letter home.

Lieutenant Joe took a different way. He hadn't been as close to the scene as had Sgt. Bill, but he too wanted to tell the folks at home about his first real taste of the war. The same rules applied to him, but he used his head.

Hint: Newspapers are Useful

He waited until he saw complete stories, lacking only the number of dead and the street address, of the milk-bar and dance hall, in the London papers. He reasoned that if the London papers had printed the story, it had passed the British censors. He knew that anything which had passed the British censors, except some very

special types of purely American stories, were automatically passed by the American censors for publication in *The Stars and Stripes*. He knew *The Stars and Stripes* would be accepted for mailing home. He reasoned that if the British papers printed the story, then American correspondents had been allowed to cable home similar accounts for the American papers.

His letter, then, simply told his father that he had been in London over the weekend, that he had had a good time, some of it "pretty exciting—if you look up the papers of last Sunday," giving the date, "you'll see what I mean."

He simply used his head to inform his family of an event which made mighty interesting re-telling in Middle City, without breaking a single censorship rule.

PART III. CENSORS ARE FRIENDS

Just in case any officer or man should misinterpret this pamphlet—it is very definitely not a lesson in how to put something over on the officers charged with security of personal mail.

It is an attempt to explain, in part, some of the reasons for the censorship rules and to suggest methods by which letters can be written without breaking these very necessary regulations.

These rules may be compared, roughly, to the inoculations—the "hook"—which every soldier remembers from his basic training days. That old needle stings when the medical officer jabs it into your arm, and the arm itself sometimes becomes lame for a few hours.

But nobody in his right mind would seriously contend that he'd rather have typhoid or yellow fever than get

an inoculation. It is the same way with censored mail. The old ego may sting, a man's personal feelings may be hurt, by the "inoculation" of mail censorship. But he'd rather have a phrase cut out of his letter than have an arm or a leg cut off in a hospital as the result of a needless wound.

Words May Cause Wounds

Wounds caused because the enemy learned about some operation from somebody's careless words are needless wounds and the man who wrote the words is just as much responsible as if he himself had pulled the trigger.

The censor's job is to see that nobody pulls that trigger.

He is aided in this by a very comprehensive list of instructions. They cover practically every contingency. As in any such procedure, there will always be cases which the regulations

do not specifically cover because the situation never existed before. In such cases the conscientious censor applies, to the best of his ability, rules drawn to cover other circumstances.

Sometimes this procedure is not used. That, again, depends upon the special circumstances. For instance :

If a battalion of infantry has advanced through some woods, under fire from the enemy, if the battalion has reached its first objective—an open ridge on the other side of the woods—if the men have dug in and are getting ready to meet an expected counter-attack, perhaps supported by tanks ; then the location of the battalion headquarters is a military secret of the very highest importance.

A Headquarters is Secret

Telephone lines run to and from the commander's foxhole. Messengers and runners from the line companies come and go. That few yards of ground would be a primary target for a burst of enemy machine-gun fire, a stick of bombs or a salvo of shells.

A primary security rule, then, is that the exact location of a headquarters must remain secret. Censorship of mail is a part of the security protection, an agency helping to keep security. Just as the battalion protects its headquarters by camouflage of various types, so does the censorship agency protect the location of a headquarters by barring mention of its address in soldier mail.

There's a perfectly good reason for this, and because the reason is good, it is applied to headquarters far removed from the danger of enemy machine gun fire, enemy barrages or even enemy bombing planes.

How does that affect the individual soldier :

This is how the inter-locking rules apply. A return address is required on soldier mail, for two reasons. One

of them is that people at home are often careless in addressing mail to soldiers. If they have the correct address given every time they get a letter from one of us here, it will be almost impossible for them to continue to address their replies incorrectly. That does away with the possibility of many sacks of improperly addressed mail piling up somewhere while the men for whom it is intended do not hear from home.

The other reason is that a man who through ignorance or carelessness is violating censorship security can be quickly located and effectively prevented from doing further harm.

Obviously, if his return address includes the designation of his organization and it is a Headquarters Company, and he then says in a letter that he is working at such and such a number on this or that street, in some particular British city, he has done, in effect, exactly what a man who built a smoky fire right behind the commander's dugout in our synthetic infantry position would have done. His reprimand would take a less spectacular but none the less effective form. To sum up :

An active flow of soldier-civilian mail is a very necessary adjunct to the job in which we are all engaged. Every soldier knows it, the generals of the



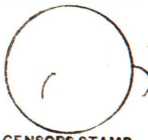
high command know it—and say so. The people at home know it.

Writing letters is difficult, under the conditions which exist in a Theater of Operations. But these difficulties are not insurmountable. The resourceful soldier can find a place to write and

time in which to do it. With imagination he can find things to write about. With intelligence and an understanding of what the censors are ordered to do, he can avoid having his letters held up or cut to ribbons.

So :

PRINT THE COMPLETE ADDRESS IN PLAIN BLOCK LETTERS IN THE PANEL BELOW, AND YOUR RETURN ADDRESS IN THE SPACE PROVIDED. USE TYPEWRITER, DARK INK OR PENCIL. WRITE PLAINLY. VERY SMALL WRITING IS NOT SUITABLE.

No. _____	<p>Mrs. MARY DOAKES 113 JONES STREET MIDDLE CITY, USA</p>	<p>Pvt. Joe Doakes ASN 12345678</p>
 <p>CENSORS STAMP</p>		<p>SENDER'S NAME X Company</p>
	<p>SENDER'S ADDRESS APO 000 NY US ARMY</p>	
		<p>JAN 1, 1944 DATE</p>

Dear Mom:- New Year's Day is a good day to write to you and Pa, to tell you that I am well, that I like the ^{new} post at which the outfit is stationed now and that I had a swell time, last week, on a three-day pass in London.

With one of the other fellows from my company, I hitched a ride to the nearest town where we got a train for London. It was after dark when we arrived and it sure seemed strange to step out of the railroad station into the blackout.

You could see little red glows from the cigarets other people were smoking as they walked along the street. Sometimes, when a taxi or an Army car passed, the street would light up for a minute from the shaded headlights, but after they passed it was darker than ever.

We went to one of the American Red Cross Clubs, had something to eat and then went to bed.

Boy, ^{it} ~~we~~ felt good to get out of a nice hot shower and into a bed with real sheets on it, for a change. Sleeping in blankets is all right -- we used to do it all the time in the ~~plane~~ cabin when we were hunting or fighting with Pa -- but after a year or so you get sick of it.

The next day we went shopping, I bought a flashlight and a few other little things that you can't get in camp. That night we went to a movie, a much bigger theater than the Bijou but with an American picture that ^{was named} sure seems like home. ^{Love} ~~another sheet.~~

No more room, I'll use Joe.

V...-MAIL



Preparation

What is There to Discuss About Letter Writing ?

EVERYTHING; the author of this issue of ARMY TALKS has given some examples of how you and I can write interesting and long letters to the folks back home.

It is suggested that you start the discussion on this topic by a brief talk outlining the purpose of the discussion, the importance of letters to the soldier, to you, and to the members of your family. Then turn to two or three men who are known to write good letters and to receive lots of letters and ask them to tell how they do it.

The discussion leader has plenty of material for his brief initial talk if he would take time to censor the letters of his company for a few days, making notes of interesting things which were written about without violating security, but the things which he found it necessary to censor.

What Other Suggestions Can You Make ?

The author has made a number of suggestions. Here is another which has proven effective. Ask the folks a series of questions about the things you want to know. This will help them in writing interesting letters to you, and give you an opportunity to comment on the news they have given you.

What is the Secret of Good Letter Writing ?

Study in detail the simple things and experiences of your everyday life in the Army and put down your thoughts in letters to your family and friends. Usually the most interesting letters are about the simple, everyday things of life. Another factor in good letter writing is to have one major purpose or theme to each letter and make this the main body of the letter. If you do this you will quickly be looking for a second sheet of V-Mail.

Which do You Prefer : V-Mail, Air Mail, Free Mail ? Why ?

The relative advantages and disadvantages of these methods of writing letters will help to stimulate thought and discussion on how different men use one or the other, when, and why.

Why Should the Soldier's Letters be Made the Topic for an Issue of ARMY TALKS ?

ARMY TALKS should help us with any and all our problems. Letter writing is a very important problem for most of us. If the discussion of this topic helps



most of us even a little to write and receive more and better letters it has helped us to be better soldiers and better men. This is the primary purpose of ARMY TALKS. Then, too, we all want more and better news from home. This is one of the best ways of getting it.

What Kinds of Information Cannot be Given in Our Letters ?

It is suggested that special attention be given to the kinds of information which cannot be given, and why? See page 10. The men should leave the discussion feeling that they have learned something and that they understand why certain information may be useful to the enemy. See the example of the E F M Cable, page 9.

Why is it Required that the ASN be Used as Part of the Soldier's Return Address ?

One example will answer this question, there may be as many as twenty John C. Smiths in ETO. Several of them may be sergeants. Two of them may even be in the same unit. If there is any question about the unit or the APO the ASN is a final check on the identity and location of the man to whom the letter belongs. When the ASN is a part of the address, the folks at home don't forget it easily and always have it for reference.

What Questions Would You Like to Ask the Theater Censor ?

It is suggested that the leader of the discussion group give the men a chance to air their grievances by taking it out on the Theater Censor. Most of the supposed grievances will prove to be based on misunderstandings which can be largely cleared up in the discussion. If not, write a letter to ARMY TALKS, Education Branch, Special Service Division, Hq, SOS. APO 887, who will pass them on to the Theater Censor. He is your friend and wants you to understand why censorship is necessary and what you can and cannot put in your letters.

