

Waffen-44
44-Standortkommandantur
Dachau

140
Dachau 3, den
Federal Dachau 289

~~7 April 1945~~
7 May 1945

Betreff:

Baug:

Anlagen: Dear Mother and Father,

You have, by this time, received a letter mentioning that I am quartered in the concentration camp at Dachau. It is still undecided whether we will be permitted to describe the conditions here, but I'm writing this now to tell you a little, and will mail it later when we are told we can.

It is difficult to know how to begin. By this time I have recovered from my first emotional shock and am able to write without seeming like a hysterical gibbering idiot. Yet, I know you will hesitate to believe me no matter how objective and factual I try to be. I even find myself trying to deny what I am looking at with my own eyes. Certainly, what I have seen in the past few days will affect my personality for the rest of my life.

We knew a day or two before we moved that we were going to operate in Dachau, and that it was the location of one of the most notorious concentration camps, but while we expected things to be grim, I'm sure none of us knew what was coming. It is easy to read about atrocities, but they must be seen before they can be believed. To think that I once scoffed at Voltaire's book "Out of the Night" as being preposterous! I've seen worse

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Dachau 3, den
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Netreff: sights than any he described.

ezug: The trip south fromettingen was
 Anlagen: pleasant enough. We passed through Donauworth
 and Aichach and as we entered Dachau, the
 country, with the cottages, rivers, country estates and
 Alps in the distance, was almost like a tourist resort.

But as we came to the center of the city, we
 met a train with a wrecked engine - about fifty
 cars long. Every car was loaded with bodies.
 There must have been thousands of them - all obviously
 starved to death. This was a shock of the first
 order, and the odor can best be imagined. But
 neither the sight nor the odor were anything when
 compared with what we were still to see. E

More Coyle reached the camp two days
 before I did and was a guard so as soon as I
 got there I looked him up and he took me to
 the crematory. Each SS trooper was scattered
 around the grounds, but when we reached the
 furnace house we came upon a huge stack of
 corpses piled up like kindling, all made so that
 their clothes wouldn't be wasted by the burning.
 There were furnaces for burning six bodies at once,
 and on each side of them was a room twenty
 feet square crammed to the ceiling with more
 bodies - one big stinking rotten mess. Their faces

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Vetoff:

Lexug:

Anlagen:

purple, their eyes popping, and with a lincous grin on each one. They were nothing but bones + skins. Coyle had assisted at ten autopsies the day before (wearing a gas mask) on ten bodies selected at random. Eight of them had advanced T.B., all had typhus and extreme malnutrition symptoms. There were both women and children in the stack in addition to the men.

While we were inspecting the place, freed prisoners show up with wagon loads of corpses removed from the compound proper. Watching the unloading was horrible. The bodies squashed and gurgled as they hit the pile and the odor could almost be seen.

Behind the furnaces was the execution chamber, a windowless cell twenty feet square with gas nozzles every few feet across the ceiling. Outside, in addition to a huge mound of charred bone fragments, were the carefully sorted and stacked clothes of the victims - which obviously numbered in the thousands. Although I stood there looking at it, I couldn't believe it. The realness of the whole mess is just gradually dawning on me, and I doubt if it ever will on you.

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Freitag Dachau 291

There is a rumor circulating which says that the war is over. It probably is - as much as it ever will be. We've all been expecting the end for several days, but were not too excited about it because we know that it does not mean too much as far as our immediate situation is concerned. There was no celebration - it's difficult to celebrate anything with the morbid state we're in.

The Pacific theater will not come immediately for this unit; we have around 36,000 potential and eventual patients here. The end of the work for everyone else is going to be just the beginning for us.

Today was a scorching hot day after several rainy cold ones. The result of the heat on the corpses is impossible to describe, and the situation will probably get worse because their disposal will certainly take time.

My arm is sore from a typhus shot so I'm ending here for the present. More will follow later. I have lots to write about now.

Love,

Harold

Waffen- 44
44-Standortkommandantur
Dachau

142
Dachau 3, den
Ferienhof Dachau 293

10 May 1945

Betreff:

Bzug:

Anlagen:

Dear Mother and Father,

I've told you before about the thousands of dead bodies here. They are not nearly so ghastly nor horrible as our patients, the "living corpses." *Skantha*, after a thirty day fast would still look like Hercules when compared with some of these men. They have no buttocks at all, and on some their vertebrae can be seen rubbing on their stomach. It's unbelievable that they could still be alive. And the odor of a ward is nearly as bad as the odor of the crematory. All have raw ugly bed sores, puss dripping infections, scabs, scales, ulcers, bites plus typhus, beri-beri, scurvy, T.B. erysipelas and 101 other symptoms.

We don't even think of them as human. Few did we'd never be able to do the work. They look like weird beings from Mars - with their shaven heads (part of the de-lousing technique) knobby joints, huge hands, feet, and popping eyes. Many are toothless. They lie curled up in the oddest positions, and when morning comes we go around and remove the corpses - still stiff in the freakish pose they held when they died. Most have dysentery of the "continuous bloody dribble" type - and of course are unable to drag themselves to the latrine. The alternative I'll leave you to imagine. I certainly

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Dachau

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Februar Dachau 293

Betreff:

Ursach:

Anlagen:

am thankful I'm not a ward boy.) Those that are not gibbering idiots are dumb statues. They die off like flies while I'm giving them penicillin. To enter a ward at night is like hearing the "Inner Sanctum" radio program. There are weird wails, sobs, groans, rattles, gnashing of teeth, and above it all the chant of men praying. I'll never forget it as long as I live. I have picked up complete bodies in a blanket with two fingers to carry them to the crematory.

This job could go on for ever; the number of patients for practical purposes is infinite. Normally we're a 400 bed hospital. We're prepared to take over 1200 here.

I wear a mask, gown, hat and rubber gloves all the time, but you can bet your life it will be just my luck to come down with something. The fellows are volunteering for infantry duty in the Pacific, but no such luck.

More later.

Love,

Arnold.



13 May 1945

Betroff: Dear Mother and Father,

Besug:

Anlagen:

If the numbers on my letters and the dates seem confused, remember that several of these are being written several weeks before they will be mailed. It won't be until the 16th that we'll be able to say we are in Dachau.

Today I talked to several Italian girls here, (through an interpreter) who were kept for the amusement of the SS troops. I gather that the life they led is beyond description. We've already had other evidence of the sexual orgies of these troops. The Yugoslav who was forced to operate the crematory for the Germans is operating it voluntarily for us. He tells of having to go to the SS barracks to get the bodies of the girls after a particularly wild evening. Girls who refused to cooperate were burned alive before their companions - who soon decided to cooperate.

Tonight some prisoners formed an orchestra and held a dance with a lot of the slave girls. Things are getting less morbid lately. 400 Belgians have already left for home. Several International Red Cross trucks with loads of candy, fruit and cigarettes have been here already, and the corpses are being gradually collected and burned.

The enclosed picture is of the officer whose stationary bin using. He apparently had an excellent camera because we found a lot of



Waffen-SS
Hauptsturmführer
Dachau

Name:
Geburtsdatum:
Geburtsort:

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Dachau 3, den

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Dachau

Betreff:

Bezug:

Anlagen:

shots all equally good. The surprising thing to me was the normalcy of his life. There were pictures of his wife, his little girls, his dogs, his harness, motor boats etc, yet without view of his office window was the mound of corpses beside the crematory.

Here the Jewellintons has a private office, complete with a brand new electric refrigerator. All the 12 wards have these now - since we found a warehouse full of them still in their crates.

Except for my 30 days in the hospital, I've worked at least 12 hours a day ever since we landed in Marseille. Now that the war is over I hope things will relax a little so that we can have one day a week off.

The patients are recovering and we're having regular food riots on the wards. They don't understand why we give them so little, but if we don't it all comes up within minutes after it went down because they haven't eaten for so long. You can imagine the bobb and confusion when one ward of 110 patients has about 8 or 10 different languages being spoken at once.

Love,

Arnold.

135 May 1946

Betreff: Dear Father and Mother,
Bezug:
Anlagen:

German civilians are being used to help clean up this mess - the mountains of rotting corpses. They can hardly believe their eyes - exhibit every sign of genuine surprise, shock, and guilt - even to the extent of vomiting and fainting. I've talked with a French prisoner who was permitted to travel from camp to camp with an SS guard. He told of how the civilians on the train recognized his striped uniform, exhibited genuine pity for him and even offered him cigarettes. He is sure that not one in a hundred of the German civilians has the faintest idea of what actually goes on in ~~as~~ concentration camps. Yet, I wonder.

An interesting part of this camp that I haven't mentioned yet is its large female complement - the wives, mistresses, Russian show girls, etc that were kept here for the SS troops. They're all still here, plus lots of their children. The 127th Evac. which is also here with us, actually has a maternity ward.

Today I had a chance to read an official army report to the French government on the conditions of the camp at Breitenwald.

This camp, like Dachau, specialized in

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Dachau 3, den
Februar Dachau 1953

Betreff:
Bezug:
Anlagen:

leadership personnel, but was an extermination
camp entirely - exterminating 6000 a month
on the average. The industrial efficiency of
the slaughter house and cemetery was
described as being typical of the grim and
ruthless determination that has characterized
all 44 troop undertakings. One little innovation
they had that we haven't discovered here was the
special attention paid to tattooed prisoners. They
were all skinned, the skin tanned, then made
into lamp shades, wallets, and other leather
novelties.

The patients each had an orange for breakfast
the other day. Everyone was excited, but some were too
weak to even get theirs. More and more of them are
beginning to look like people and less like animals.
We have patient, or prisoner, ward boys to assist us
now and things are going a little easier.

Perhaps you'll see much of this in
the news reels. If so you'll miss the most grisly
part. An article in Stars and Stripes says that
the Hays office has decided you couldn't take it.

Love,
Arnold