

St. Eugene L. Williams Jr. O-1118314
Ex. Off. A-3 APO 11521
C/o P.M. N.Y., N.Y.

may 7th
H 4
Belgium



Mr. & Mrs. E. L. Williams
2463 Second Ave. N.

St. Petersburg, 6

Eugene L. Williams Jr. Florida

#4

Monday P.M.
7 May 1945
Belgium, near German
Border

Dear Mom & Dad,

As I sit here on my cot writing, awaiting call to supper, I have the honorable company of two little Belgian girls about 3 or 4 years old, who are sitting on the end of my cot playing with some beads. We're now living in the lobby of an Ex-hotel in a little Belgian town - swell facilities and so we're plenty satisfied.

Lots of interesting things have happened to us in the last couple days - I just wish I could remember all the details well enough to describe them vividly to you. I wouldn't give anything for the things I've seen and done.

We left France Saturday noon with 27 of us in a car - box car to be exact.

The French railway system is pretty well shot because of the war and so all troop movements are made in the old 40 or 8 cars - made to hold 40 men or 8 horses. They're about half the size of our box cars, and we felt quite crowded at the

first of our trip. But we really never thought of any discomfort since we were too busy looking at the French countryside, which is really the most beautiful I've ever seen — both French and Belgian country is beautiful. Some cities were almost ~~completely~~ leveled during bombing and fighting, but rural districts were practically untouched. I never saw terrain that was so perfect in pattern and color. Not a brown or weeded section to be seen. All land that wasn't actually under cultivation appeared to be a huge green lawn — in reality, grazing land. Northern France was hilly and here in Belgium where I am now it's what you could almost call mountains.

The spirit of the Belgian people along the route here particularly attracted my attention. Everyone watched and waved as our train moved thru cities, near residences, etc. Little children who could hardly walk would try to wave their arms off — two fingers to designate a "V" went with every wave of the hand. Flags of the allies were displayed in R.R. stations, along city streets, and out of

windows to houses and other buildings. U.S., French, British, Belgian and occasionally Russian flags are everywhere. It's a good feeling to see smiling faces and flags greeting you from homes shattered by the swaying tide of war. Out of some windows hang an effigy of Hitler, though his death had already been announced.

We met a couple of trains carrying prisoners back from Germany, mostly French and Belgian men whose spirits were at a peak as they headed for their own homes. When I saw how crowded they were in those box cars, not even room to sit down, I felt a little ashamed that I had ever thought ~~there~~ were the least bit hard up for space. Saturday night I spent my first night in a box car, and slept like a log, believe it or not. We arrived here last night, after passing thru Aime, Namur, Liege. I could walk to Aachen, Germany in 2 hours at normal speed.

This little hotel is on the very edge of a canal and from our back porch we look straight down about 30 feet to the swiftly flowing little river.

This afternoon we got to see 3 different small cities or towns in this vicinity, as we went to various army installations signing our pay vouchers, etc. Very much like any American towns except that most of the buildings are naturally older than ~~house~~ ours, emphasizing architecture of the past rather than the present or future.

This is still just another stepping stone to my eventual assignment to a unit. I can't say how long I will be here - no one knows, of course.

We've heard that the peace came this afternoon - if that's true, then this is V-E day or maybe tomorrow. Anyway, I'm staying in tonight to catch up on mail and avoid the company of the many who celebrate victory with a bottle.

Since I'm moving so much, I really don't expect ^{your} ~~my~~ mail ^{to} come thru very well until I get settled down.

Hope you're all well - at least as well as can be expected. Thinking of you all.

Your devoted son,
Gene

P.S.

5 Francs = approx. 124