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**Harold Berry's Greetings To Friends**

The following letter from Tech. Sgt. Harold T. Berry, written somewhere in Belgium, was received by the Sentinel this week:

Many months have passed since I visited home the last time, busy months packed full of training and the million and one things that go to make a soldier's life complete. During that time I have neglected to write to many of my friends. I take this means of conveying my best regards to all and at the same time tell you a little about the various parts of this war-shrouded world that I have visited.

Was lucky in making the trip across the Atlantic in a large luxury liner, in record time, arriving in England a short time before the invasion of France. During our stay in England we had many opportunities to visit many famous places in Scotland, Wales and the rest of the United Kingdom. Due to Hitler and his followers we more than welcomed the opportunity to get to France, life in England was pretty nerve wracking for the fellows in our unit and we were really glad to get our feet on French soil.

Since June, 1940, French men, women and children have learned what happens to a great democracy when it collapses under the Nazi heel. For generations France's motto on her public buildings has been Liberty, Equality, Fraternity—Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. As you doubtless recall she lost all three when the Nazis marched in. The case of France's fall and early collapse in this war were so complicated that even the French bitterly disagree as to who or what was to blame.

I have made several lasting friendships among the English-speaking natives and find that basically the French have a pretty good national character, made up of several outstanding characteristics. They are mentally quick and whether rich or poor, quite economical, many having been able to live through the four years of occupation on their modest savings.

The natives call themselves realistic, which upon inquiry resulted in an explanation which boiled down to looking the situation straight in the eye and then using good common sense; they are really smart and, if you are going to try any trickery with them, I would advise being quite careful for the Frenchman can't be easily fooled.

They have respect for religion and artistic ideas, with an extreme respect for property, whether public or private. To them property represents the results of work and to destroy property is to belittle work. Above all the French respect the family circle as the center of social and economic life. The economies of French life are based on the parents' rule of working and saving for their children's future.

I believe that all Frenchmen are individualist. Most of them believe in just being yourself and find no necessity of being like any one else. They aren't just two ways of looking at things in France—there are dozens of ways.

If you should sum up the above paragraphs you should be able to

understand why the F. F. I.—French Forces of the Interior—have been so effective in helping the allied nations' progress so rapidly with the war in France. There are many instances in the history of the organization, where man and wife have belonged to the organization for long periods of time without either knowing that the other belonged. When and if the history of the French underground movement comes into print you may be assured it will be a world's best seller.

We arrived in France as a ninth air force Liaison Squadron attached to S.H.A.F.F. (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force). Our work has been quite interesting, because we have been right in the middle of almost everything that has taken place on the continent. I am an enlisted Liaison pilot and have been thankful many times that I learned to fly out of that small field that the Coquille Flying club had up on Mr. Carl's ranch at Arago. The safety of my passengers' lives as well as my own has depended many times upon knowledge gained at that particular spot in the world. Flying over here would be extremely pleasant if the war was over. The way things are now you have to be quite careful or you will fly right out of one country into another in a few minutes, and I know of one country that I am not quite ready to visit yet. Have flown over all of France, Belgium, and some parts of Holland and Luxembourg. It might be of interest to any of the veterans of the last war who happen to read this that the efforts they put forth to win the last war are still plainly visible from the air. Miles and miles of trenches are still visible with only a slight growth of natural camouflage since the veterans' departure twenty-six years ago. Many of these fortifications were used in excellent advantage in this war.

I believe that the most impressive and picturesque places that I visited as I passed through France were the champagne cellars of the firm of Pommery and Greno at Reims, France. Perhaps one of the reasons I appreciated this particular spot is the fact that ever since I saw my first bottle of champagne I have wondered how it was possible to get such a large cork in such a little hole.

These cellars, which are the largest of the champagne district, have been laid out in chalk pits, out of which had been extracted the stones that were used to build pre-war Reims, then the Roman town of Durocororum, as it was then called; the city was the capital of Belgian Gaul and has more than 100,000 inhabitants. Reims, as it is now known, has been destroyed five or six times in the course of ages and it is only since the last war that the town has been rebuilt with hard stone and reinforced concrete. We were told by natives that at the completion of World War I only 50 buildings remained intact and undamaged.

The firm of Pommery started to make use of these quarries in the nineteenth century. They are the largest in the world, spread under a hill overlooking Reims and flanked on either side by two ancient and important roads leading to Rome. These cellars provide shelter and storage space for twelve million bottles of stock as well as extensive bottling machinery and a vast conveyor system for transporting the stock into the cellars. This conveyor system is over two miles long. The only access to the cellars is a huge flight of stairs of one hundred and sixteen steps which leads directly to eleven miles of long wide avenues, which connect together one hundred and ten feet underground, the one hundred and twenty huge chalk pits that are known as the Pommery cellars.

Champagne, which is very difficult to keep, will perfectly develop in these cellars where the temperature remains at 50 degrees Fahrenheit all through the years. It is rather strange to see that chalk, which is generally considered as a factor of impoverishment, plays a doubly beneficial part in this country. It provides for the vine plant, the elements giving their specific qualities to the champagne grapes and also provides the ideal home for the bottled wine allowing it to come to maturity in the best possible condition. I have wondered many times since visiting these cellars, how many people who have enjoyed drinking French champagne realize that each bottle represents at least four hundred man hours to produce and an average aging period of six years. The champagne that we bought in this area was manufactured in 1937 and cost us approximately \$2.06 per bottle. The firm of Pommery produces two million bottles annually.

I have not met anyone from home while in the E.T.O. so would appreciate hearing from any of my friends who do not know where I have been located. Until my two brothers and I return to Fairview, Au Revoir, Harold Berry.

P. S. mail just arrived and with it came August 31st issue of the Sentinel, it comes through right on schedule even though it is two months late.

T/Sgt. Harold T. Berry,  
112th Liaison Sq. A.P.O. 757  
Postmaster, New York, N. Y.

**Leo Aber Awarded Medal For Meritorious Achievement in Air**

From the 15th Air Force in Italy comes word that Technical Sergeant Leo L. Aber, son of Mr. and Mrs. H. L. Aber, of Arago route, Coquille, has been awarded the air medal for meritorious achievement in aerial combat. He is a B-24 engineer-gunner flying with a veteran group of the 15th A.A.F.

The group assisted in wearing down German air strength by striking at such key aircraft production centers as Regensburg, Steyr, Munich, Wiener Neustadt and Vienna. It took an active part in attacks on the enemy's vital oil resources, including the Ploesti, Rumanian, oil-fields and refineries, and synthetic oil plants in Germany. It also participated in the pre-invasion hammering of coastal defenses in southern France and has carried out innumerable assaults on the Nazis' communications and supply lines in northern Italy.

A graduate of Coquille high school, Sgt. Aber was a plywood worker for Smith Wood-Products Co. prior to entering the armed forces in June, 1942. He received his gunnery training at the Tyndall Field Gunnery School, Florida, winning his wings in November, 1943.

**Two Coquille Boys Meet in India**

In a letter to the Sentinel, written in China late in October, this office's former employee, Macy Anderson, says that he unexpectedly met a Coquille boy, M/Sgt. Rhule at a replacement pool in India early in October. He writes that he would not have known Albert, as the last time he saw him he was about half his present size, but that Albert recognized his name as one from the old home town when he heard it. "Albert holds down the job of sergeant-major at this particular replacement depot and it keeps him plenty busy," Macy wrote.

For himself he adds that he "has been assigned as adjutant at a supply sub-depot and am in an interesting but somewhat isolated spot. The elevation is over 6,000, the weather nice, (we can wear sun-tans), the food good as can be expected—and my morale good!"

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**Seeing Ahead**



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