

Macquenoise

June 45

Dear Howard:

It was with the keenest pleasure that we received news of you. We were told that you had succeeded in escaping from the boches and that you got to England all right.

As for us, from the 12th of August to the 11th of September we lived through a frightful experience. Because of the stupid and thoughtless talk of Henri Fraikin, my husband Paul and he were arrested by the German counter-intelligence service at five in the morning on the 12th of August.

The Germans were very angry because of the assistance we had given to allied aviators. So they searched our house with typical German brutality, ripping things apart and destroying them in their search for clothing that you might have left behind.

Our protestations and denials only served to intensify their anger, which became worse when they found the Browning that my husband had hidden, since a German ordinance prohibited the possession of firearms.

After the end of the search my husband and Fraikin were taken to the Charleroi prison where they were told that their fate was sealed for having helped in the escape of an allied aviator. Luckily, providence intervened, for at this time the Germans were starting to retreat, and there wasn't time to go through with the executions. In their retreat they removed a cargo of prisoners, including Paul and M. Fraikin from Charleroi ~~mmmmmm~~ by trucks. Happily, the truck in which they were riding broke down on the way and the boches were forced to leave them at the Liege prison, 40 kilometers from the German border. Then, since their retreat was becoming more and more speeded up they had to abandon the prisoners at Liege, where Belgian patriots delivered them on 9 September.

We had prayed hard and God had heard our prayers. He didn't allow my husband to be executed as a result of his doing a good deed in saving a soldier momentarily overcome by the enemy.

In the meantime I had to abandon my home to go to my parents, and in my absence the house was pillaged by the German soldiers in retreat. They took off a good deal of our clothing, towels, shirts, etc.

Today, however, we are proud. We have reached the hour of victory over a fierce and brutal enemy and we have recovered our liberty.

Our admiration for the valiant allied soldiers is without limits, and our thanks go out especially to the American nation which helped us in time of peril and preserved us from slavery.

We are sending you in return our modest family photograph. Also, two small crosses made out of the mica coming from the debris of the fortress which you were piloting above us at the time of the tragedy, and a little handkerchief cut out of a piece of the parachute which saved your life.

Your mother sent us two photos of you and your family, and we have given them a place of honor, proudly exposed among those who are dearest to us.

I close with the hope that your misfortunes are now over and that have preserved from the ravages of war the happiness that is rightfully yours.

Be assured of the constancy of our good wishes, and our most cordial remembrance.

BASTIEN, Nelly
wife of TILQUIN, Paul

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