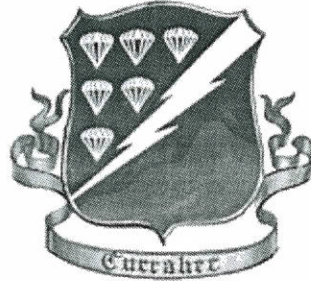


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Letters and Art Work

by 1LT Thomas Meehan, III
(E Co, 2nd BN, 506th PIR, KIA June 6, 1944)

Anne Meehan had a best friend, **Elaine Kroll**, with whom she shared everything, including letters from Anne's husband, **Thomas Meehan, III**. Elaine was so taken with the letters that she painstakingly copied them in longhand. This was fortunate because all of Tom's original letters were lost in a hurricane-related flood in the mid 1950's.

England
26 May, 1944

Dearest:

Well, I see in the papers that the Anzio Beachhead is no longer that, and that Cassino has fallen. Looks like "we ain't losin'". Looking back at the grim days of '40-'41 and '42, it seems hardly possible that we should have come so far. Those were grim years, and we in the states hardly realized it. Now the shoe is on the other foot, and the war has probably been decided in Europe. Yet, somehow I wonder about the "peace" as all the writers are describing it. I'm afraid I am a pessimist with little faith in the goodwill of mankind. Looking it over, thinking about it brings the realization that any peace will be compromise, not everlasting. I suppose the people, being as they are, have thought and tried world peace for thousands of centuries, but war, like the unwanted cat, comes back.

All we want is our way of life and all the handshaking and backslapping in the world won't change our ideas to conform with the other fellows'. The question is not, "how can we insure a permanent peace", but "how can we have peace for the maximum length of time and still be ourselves,

unyieldingly?" The natural, the human, and the inevitable. And so generation after generation has its day of crawling in filth and extracting the life of some other joker that only wanted peace, but a different brand of it.

We're fortunate in being Americans. At least we don't step on the underdog. I wonder if that's because there are no "Americans" -- only a stew of immigrants; or if it's because the earth from which we exist has been so kind to us and our forefathers; or if it's because the "American" is the offspring of the logical European who hated oppression and loved freedom beyond life? Those great mountains and the tall timber; the cool deep lakes and broad rivers; the green valleys and white farmhouses; the air, the sea and wind; the plains and great cities; the smell of living -- all must be the cause of it. And yet, with all that, we can't get away from the rest. For everyone of our millions who has that treasure in his hand there's another million crying for that victory of life. And for each of us who wants to live in happiness and give happiness, there's another different sort of person wanting to take it away.

Those people always manage to have their say, and Mars is always close at hand. We know how to win wars. We must learn now to win peace. Stick our noses in the affairs of the world. Learn politics as well as killing. Make the world accept peace whether they damn well like it or not. Here is the dove, and here is the bayonet. May we never see the day again that "World Peaceways" and like organizations dull our senses and make us anything but realists. If I ever have a son, I don't want him to go through this again, but I want him powerful enough that no one will be fool enough to touch him. He and America should be strong as hell and kind as Christ. That's the only insurance until human nature becomes a tangible thing that can be adjusted and made workable.

Thomas Meehan, III

The following note was written while sitting in the airplane waiting to take off for Normandy. Tom handed it out the door to a friend who promised to get the note to Tom's wife Anne.

June 5th, 1944

Dearest Anne:

In a few hours I'm going to take the best company of men in the world into France. We'll give the bastards hell. Strangely I'm not particularly scared, but in my heart is a terrific longing to hold you in my arms.

I love you Sweetheart - forever

Your
Tom