

Russell's Memories of World War II: Russell served in the Army Air Corps from December 23, 1941 to September 3, 1945.



Russell Earl Smith (c. 1941)

Russell's family history continues: *After Pearl Harbor, ... I went into the Army (Army Air Corps). I went to Spokane first, then to Fort Lewis and Camp Murray where we were given a uniform and a shipping tag which we put in the buttonhole on the collar of our shirt. It didn't take long, and we were put on kitchen patrol or KP that night (KP is work assigned to junior staff under the supervision of experienced kitchen staff). The evening meal was spaghetti and meatballs. There was a lot of it left over after dinner. So that night, the meatballs were cut and smashed to use as SOS the next day. The next day, some guy, a regular soldier, said it wasn't fit to eat. A Lieutenant called us together and chewed us out. We worked all night on KP using some thickening to improve the leftovers. The next day, the same soldier that complained was served the SOS. He took his plate, walked over to the garbage can and walked out. It didn't take me long to learn that it was better to go hungry than eat some of the food.*

The next night, I was on fire line guard. I had four barracks to walk around and watch for fires. There were electric power transformers on the south end of the area I walked around. There was a soldier with a

rifle walking around the power station. Every time I walked around, he would start yelling: "Halt! Halt!" I would stop and he would recognize me and say carry-on. I never could get around without being stopped. I was on the fire line guard for four hours, then someone else replaced me.

In a few days, we were loaded onto a train and went to Sheppard Field in Wichita Falls, Texas. The first night we sat up the latrine. Then, we were assigned a barracks. We had the barracks from six o'clock at night until six o'clock in the morning. Then, other soldiers would have the barracks and sleep all day, leaving at 6:00 pm.



Sheppard Field, Wichita, Texas
(Image Source: defensestudies.net)

The mess hall always had a line of soldiers waiting to eat. There were several attempts to make it faster to get in and get out. The mess hall would fill with soldiers, then a whistle would blow, and everyone would sit down to eat for about 15 minutes. Then, the whistle would blow, and everyone would get up and go. This didn't work very well, and they stopped it.

We were told that we had to eat all the food served in our mess kits, except bones. There was an officer watching us eat our food. Some guys were taking the fat and skin from the food and sticking it in their pockets to get rid of it. We were being watched so closely that you couldn't throw the fat and skin under the table.

We did a lot of drills. There was a ditch in the area where we drilled, and we would take turns getting in the ditch and throwing rocks at each other.

CHANTING DURING DRILLS

"In the days we were taking basic training, we marched a lot and there was a lot of chanting: 'Gee I wish I had a dollar bill and I would go over the hill. The Sargent is crazy, and the Captain is lazy.' There were more verses to the chanting that I don't remember."

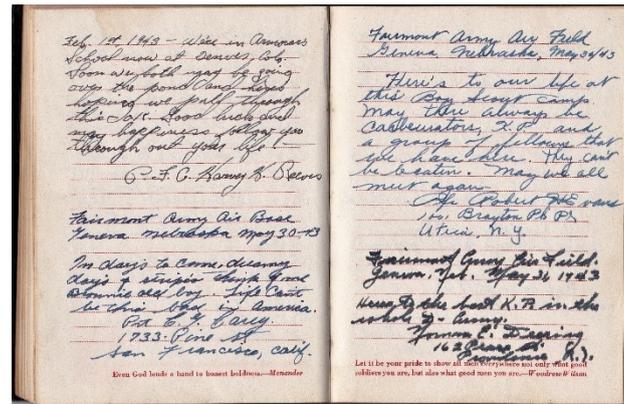
We had a captain that was potbellied and didn't have all his uniform yet. He was likely appointed by a politician. Most of the officers that were appointed by politicians were captains. Ronald Reagan was appointed, and he was a captain.

The second and first lieutenants (Lewies) worked more with the soldiers than the captains.

Shortly after Russell joined the army, he purchased a small book with blank pages entitled "My Life in the Service." Throughout his early years of military service, he passed the book to other servicemen who wrote their name and address in the book along with a brief wish or memory of their time together. There are over 85 entries in the book along with occasional entries by Russell. Selected entries are shown in highlight boxes included in this section of Russell's life history.



Russell's "My Life in the Service" with names, addresses and hand-written entries by the men he served with during World War II.



Handwritten entries in Russell's "My Life in the Service"

A bunch of us were sent to Brookley Field in Mobile, Alabama. We set up tents and did a lot of cleanup work as the airfield was under construction and not in use.



Brookley Field, Mobile, Alabama
(Image Source: Wikipedia)

Brookley Field is located along the coast. One day, we were told that there was a German U-boat in the harbor, and the Germans might send soldiers ashore and sabotage the airfield. So, we were put on guard duty and positioned around the air base. It was raining and we had to watch out for alligators as they would eat us if given the chance. There was a shot every once in a while. I called out and a guy answered. We got together, sat down and let it rain. When we got cold, we walked to get warm. We were happy to get the night over.



U.S. Air Corps – Brookley Field

Source: Pillowcase from Russell's Mementos of Military Service

I don't remember, but I believe in the Spring of 1942 we got paid \$17.50 per month for four months, then we got paid \$21 a day once a month. In June or July of 1942, we started getting paid \$50 a day once a month. We didn't do much of anything at the airfield, guard duty and cleanup.

I was eventually sent to machinist school at the National School of Aeronautics in Kansas City, Missouri. We stood around a lot while listening to instructors lecture from a book. We were allowed to work the levers on the machines, but weren't allowed to turn them on. We figured that over the six months that we went to school, we spent three minutes working on a machine. Everyone was glad to get out of there.

It was during Russell's time in Kansas City that he met Ruth Elizabeth McKendry, daughter of Harry and Zelma McKendry. The McKendry's along with Ruth's older sister, Zelma Lee ("Sis"), lived at 3913 Chestnut Street, Kansas City, Missouri. It's uncertain how Russell and Ruth met. Several entries in Russell's "My Life in the Service" indicate that a small group of Russell and Ruth's friends became acquainted and socialized. Ruth was a graduate of Central High School and worked at an engine plant in Kansas City operated by North American Aviation.

July 3, 1942. Kansas City, MO. *"To the best soldier in the U.S. Army. Remember me along with all the other things you don't like about Missouri. We've had lots of fun together and you are one soldier I'll never forget, and don't you forget the date we have."* Signed: Ruth McKendry. P.S. *"I hope they send you to Alaska. The girls aren't very cute up there, I hear."*



Ruth McKendry (right) with friends (c. 1942)

July 17, 1942. Kansas City, MO. *"By hook or by crook, I'll get my name in your book."* Signed: Your pal, Francis E. Gebhart, Dayton, Ohio.

Next, we were sent to Mobile, Alabama and from there we were sent to Savannah, Georgia. We were assigned to work in the machine shop at night. We weren't allowed to touch any machines. The weary war workers and civilians were always giving us a bad time. They were afraid that they would be drafted into the Army. All we wanted was more experience. We kept our mouths shut.

"Well Russ, I can't think of much to say but we have become pretty good friends in the short time we have known each other. As things look now, we will see plenty of action together. I hope things go O.K. with both of us If you ever get in Penna after the war and get in Lancaster County look me up." Signed: Your friend, Sgt. E. R. Houser, Christiana, PA.

After Savannah, we were sent to South Carolina. Shortly after we arrived, a woman came and told us that because of us she was being transferred. So, here we go again. None of the civilian workers would let us touch a machine. It wasn't long until a First Lieutenant called us together and told us we were going to be shipped out as we were needed at another base. I asked him if I could talk and he said 'yes.' I told him about the civilian workers and how we weren't allowed to work on the machines. He said he couldn't stop the transfer, but he would watch the civilian workers more closely in the future.

"Well Smitty, I really don't know just what to write only to wish u lots of luck here in the service, and when this treachery is over ... you and I can still sing 'America the Free.' I wish you lots of luck on the Outside or in the service. A pal." Signed: Pvt. Victor A. Maguar. "God's Country," Oregon.

Next, we were sent to Greenville, South Carolina where glider pilots were being trained. The airfield had a bunch of small cottages and a mess hall. We watched a lot of gliders take off.

I got assigned to a machine shop that was run by all soldiers. I wrapped copper on a ninety-degree elbow, then soldered wire on. Then, I would turn them down on a lathe. I did this for two or three weeks while learning to do other things. I liked it.

I heard rumors that there was a bunch of us that were going to be shipped out. I asked the Sergeant if I was going to be shipped out and he said I wasn't. Soon, a list of men being shipped out was put on the bulletin board. My name was not on the list.

June 13, 1943. Greenville, S.C. "Sadie, Oh Sadie with her body so free, which reminds me of a Washington tree." Signed: Andrew Imbrescia, Monessen, Penna.

The next day, I was put on guard duty from 6 pm to 6 am. I was to guard a tent that had a table in it. I stayed there that night and all day until 6 pm. When they came to post guards, I halted them. The rule was to look the sergeant over who posted you on guard duty for he was the only one that could remove you from guard duty. After halting the troops, I did not recognize them and would not let them relieve me. They went and found the sergeant who I recognized, and he relieved me of my guard post. He said I was right in what I had done, but someone had me down as AWOL. It was a hell of a mess. The captain came and chewed my butt. He had been drinking.

"Well Smithy, after several separations, we have finally got together again. I hope for good this time. has left us far behind and where they are no one will know. But one thing we do know, we can't forget the good times we had in K.C. and now in Ga. If you and I ever get separated again, just look at this page and remember me as a real pal Good luck Pal." Signed: John E. Williams, Clarksburg, W.Va.

Next, I was put on a shipping list, but it was going to be some time before a group of us would be shipped out. While waiting, we were asked if anybody wanted to go to Denver, Colorado. A bunch of us talked it over and decided maybe we could go to Denver and get out of our current outfit. We were all disgusted. Denver would be closer to home for me.

We went to Denver and were assigned to armor school. It was another school of limited training. When we were about to finish our training, we all got another physical. I found out that I had trouble identifying green and blue colors. I was told that I would not go overseas because of this. I didn't really give a dam if I ever went overseas. I was instructed to tell the next outfit I was assigned to that I was color blind.

When armor school was over, everyone was sent to Salt Lake City where there was a base that reassigned personnel to other locations. Salt Lake City was a poor

outfit. The sergeants and officers would watch you constantly. There was a buck sergeant that spit while he was in line for inspection. They called him up front and cut off his sergeant stripes. They would find all kinds of reasons to cut the stripes off. I had little respect for the officers at this base.

June 13, 1943. Greenville, S. Carolina.
"May many happy days soon be ours after this war is over which is God's wish for peace among all machinists of N.S.A. where the chow was terrible."
Signed: Pvt. Rondo Ash, Marshalltown, Iowa.

We stood for inspection morning and night. We were never allowed to go to town. We had to eat everything that was put on our plates, except the bones. The cooks at the mess hall would take a cleaver and chop a chicken up and make chicken ala king. There would be splinters of bone and lots of fat. I got out of the mess hall as fast as I could.

April 21, 1943. Salt Lake City Air Base. "We sweated out the armament school at Lowry together and had a lot of fun. I hope wherever we go, we keep on having fun. Good luck Smitty."
Signed: Pvc. Jim Raftery, Cincinnati, OH.

After Salt Lake City, a bunch of us were shipped out to an air base in Fairmont, Nebraska. We didn't do much at the base as it was still under construction.

I helped Charlie Agold string the wires to light the airfield. The water tower on the base already had lights on it. The tower was about 60 to 70 feet tall; some thought it was 100 feet tall. The tower lights and wiring were such that if one bulb burnt out, the other bulb would remain lit. Charlie was married and lived off the base. If the lights would go out at night, we knew that both bulbs had burned out and we would climb the tower and replace the bulbs.

While at Fairmont, we did a lot of guard duty and KP. Some of the guys on KP would steal food (cold cuts) and help themselves to the ice cream.



Geographical Map of Nebraska showing the location of Fairmont (Image Source: ezilon.com)

There was a rule that when you were working on the job you would salute the officer when you reported and when you left at the end of the day. One time I was on KP and the mess sergeant says to me "if you will clean out the water heater and get the hot water flowing to the kitchen, you can have the day off with no KP." The water heater was a coal fired boiler. It had a lot of soot in the pipes that carried the smoke from the fire box to the smoke pipe and out. I just got started working on cleaning the pipes when the mess officer came by. I saluted him and he looked things over and said the pipes were awful dirty. I worked on getting the water out of the pipes and removing the soot and ashes. I got the hot water flowing to the kitchen, so the mess sergeant was happy.

It wasn't long and the mess officer and a second lieutenant came by. I didn't salute him. He chewed me out and told me to be in Lt. Wiley's office at nine o'clock Monday morning. Lt. Wiley was a good guy and was fair about everything.

The mess sergeant said to me "I saw you salute the mess officer, but I have to get along with him and I can't help you." First Sergeant Barnum was with the mess sergeant and told me that he would talk to Lt. Wiley.

Monday rolled around and I went to the orderly room and into Lt. Wiley's office. I saw that the mess officer was already in Wiley's office. I finally got my turn to enter and talk to Lt. Wiley. Sergeant Barnum came

into the office and told me to take company punishment. I explained that I had saluted that morning and had soot on my hands when the mess officer and second lieutenant came by. I didn't want to get any dirtier than I already was. Lt. Wiley asked some additional questions, then I was excused to wait outside his office. After a while, I was called back into the office and asked by Lt. Wiley if I would take company punishment. I said "yes." I was confined to the base for the next two weeks. I wasn't going any place, so that was OK.

From time to time, the soldiers would play pranks on each other. One time, a cow pie was put in another soldier's bed. When he got into bed, he got the cow pie all over his legs. There was a lot of hell raised about that.



451st Bomb Group Insignia

When the runway was completed, the 451st Bomb Group (Heavy) came to Fairmont to fly and practice bombing in North Dakota and South Dakota.

I received a ten-day furlough. I used some of the time to work with the guys in the Bomb Group. When the guys with the Bomb Group got leave, some of them went AWOL. So I and several others were put into the 451st Bomb Group (H). We knew we would be going overseas. My clothes were inspected and a lot of them were replaced. I was in the 725th Squadron. Jack Davies (Smiling Jack) was the squadron commander.



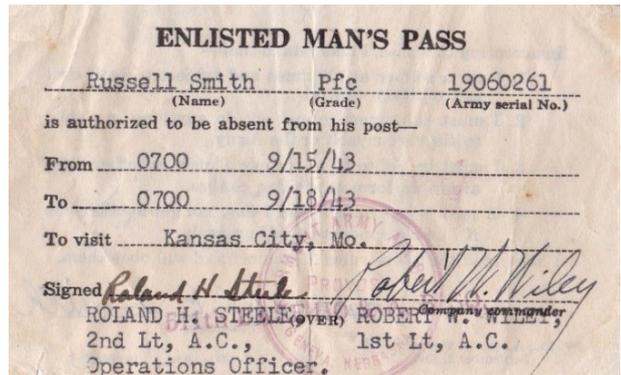
Fairmont Army Air Field (c. 1943)

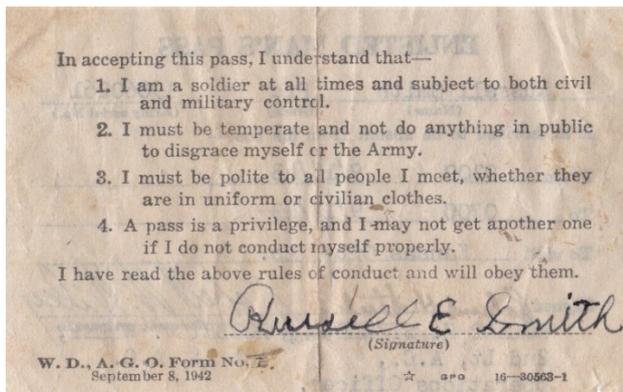
Image Source: Nebraska State Historical Society

Marriage: Russell's assignment to Fairmont Army Air Field may have been by chance, but it allowed Russell and Ruth to continue their relationship which resulted in their marriage on September 15, 1943. Russell was 27 years old. Ruth was 21 years old.

"Marriages were common during the war. Men married quickly before being shipped out. And when they returned, they expected to get their jobs back, buy homes, and raise their families." (Women and World War II by Dr. S. Hartman Strom and L. Ward [1995]).

Russell received an "Enlisted Man's Pass" beginning at 0700 on Wednesday, September 15, 1943 (see below).





Russell and Ruth had a small wedding at the McKendry family home (3913 Chestnut Street, Kansas City, Missouri). Ruth's grandmother Anna (Mell) DeWitt was an active member of the Unity School of Practical Christianity. A Unity minister, Louis E. Meyer, presided over the ceremony. Ruth's older sister, Zelma Lee (McKendry) Cook and her husband, Scott E. Cook, served as witnesses.



Russell and Ruth Smith (September 1943)



When Russell and Ruth married in 1943, Franklin D. Roosevelt was President and Henry A. Wallace was Vice-President. Popular movies in 1943 included *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, *I Walked with a Zombie*, and *Heaven Can Wait*.

Overseas Duty – North Africa and Italy: After a brief honeymoon, Russell returned to the Fairmont Army Air Field. It wouldn't be very long before the 451st Bomb Group would be on the move and Russell and Ruth would be separated for over a year.

Russell's family history continues: *There was a meeting held with the members of the 451st Bomb Group. I didn't get to the meeting until everyone was being dismissed. I asked some guys what the meeting was about. They said the officers asked who was afraid. Several responded that they were afraid. I don't know what happened after that.*

As part of our training, we were required to walk through a tear gas tent with our gas masks on. We also wore coveralls that were supposedly treated with chemicals that would protect your body.

As part of our clothing and equipment, each soldier was issued two bags marked "A" and "B" with a serial number. Both bags were crammed full of clothing, gas mask, belt canteen, carbine, 40 rounds of ammo, helmet and Musette bag (backpack).

When it came time to leave Fairmont (late November 1943), we were loaded into passenger cars and taken to the railroad depot. We were told not to tell anyone that we were going overseas. When we boarded the train,

we had our helmets, gas masks and carbines hanging by the windows in the train. These things were easily seen from outside the train.



Nebraska Historical Marker
Fairmont Army Air Field

Image Source: Nebraska State Historical Society

We traveled on the train for about four days although I'm not sure. We got stiff and sore necks from sleeping in the seats of the passenger cars.

We had C rations to eat and I believe we had a box lunch a few times. We heard stories that some guys took off. I don't know.

We arrived at New Port News, Virginia and Camp Patrick Henry. I don't remember how long we were at the camp. I think it was five or six days.

We had a lot of lectures while at camp. The food was mostly C rations. There were bed checks and roll calls several times a day. There were different officers in charge of us while at the camp. They also sat through a lot of lectures.

We were glad when it came time to load up on the ship.

We went by railroad car from the camp to the dock. When we were loading on the ship, named USS Pillsbury, the Red Cross gave us two cartons of cigarettes. We were loaded with our A and B bags, gun and other supplies. Now, we carried our mess kit in our bag over the shoulder. We had to wash the mess kit after each meal.



USS Pillsbury (c. 1943)
(Image Source: Wikipedia)

After the ship was loaded, it was pulled out into the river by tug boats. We sat there in the river all day. None of us were allowed on the deck. That night when it was dark, the USS Pillsbury began to move. The ship traveled by itself that night and the next day. Unknown to us at the time, we had joined a convoy of ships. Soon, we were allowed on deck. When I eventually went up on the deck, I'd never seem so many ships in all my life. We were traveling in a large convoy of ships. There were aircraft carriers, destroyers and many, many other ships.

We spent time on the deck at night. We were required to wear a life jacket. We all had to take turns taking care of the curtains on the deck, so there could be no lights seen from the outside.

There were about 500 (estimated) of us placed in the front compartment or hold of the ship. The bunks were five feet high with hardly enough room to roll over.



Allied Convoy Headed Toward North Africa During World War II (c. 1942)

(Image Source: *The North African Campaign* by Alan Taylor, September 4, 2011)

Joe Martin found the deodorant for the urinals and tried to sell it for saltwater soap. One dollar per cake. It didn't sell, so he tried to sell it for ten cents each. Still no takers. We were supposed to have turned in all our money, but no one did. Most of us kept some.

There was a PX on one side of the ship. There was always a line of soldiers waiting their turn to enter the PX. It wasn't long until the PX ran out of stuff to sell including candy.

There was an uneasy feeling and tension with lots of the troops while traveling on the ship. The only food we had was C rations. The C rations typically included a can of stew or a can of hash. There was also a can with a biscuit. The rations included coffee or lemonade and two pieces of candy. There were steam cookers to warm the food and tables to sit at. The food tasted better when it was hot.

There was a garbage can full of hot water to wash our mess kits. After washing a lot of mess kits in the water, it didn't take long for the water to look like slop. Some soldier said it would be cleaner to urinate on the mess kit to clean it.

The Merchant Marines would sell us a sandwich for one dollar each. The sandwiches were mostly ham. One dollar was high when you would typically pay ten to 25 cents for a hamburger.

The USS Pillsbury was one of many Liberty ships, a class of ships that were quickly built for the war effort.

The troops passed time by playing cards, shooting craps and writing letters. Eventually, the card games and crap shooting boiled down to where just a few men had any money.

While on the ship, we talked about where we were going. We decided it was Africa or Italy for if we were going to the Pacific we would have loaded on the west coast. None of the officers would tell us where we were going.

I think we had Thanksgiving while on the ship.

It took us about 28 days to get to our destination which we learned was Oran, Africa. Oran is a coastal city in northwest Algeria. (Travel distance from Medicine Lake, MT to Oran, Algeria is 4,976 miles.) We were loaded onto trucks and drove to a camp about 20 to 40 miles from where we docked. Some soldiers claimed they had seen a goat near the camp. From then on, the camp was referred to a Goat Hill Camp.

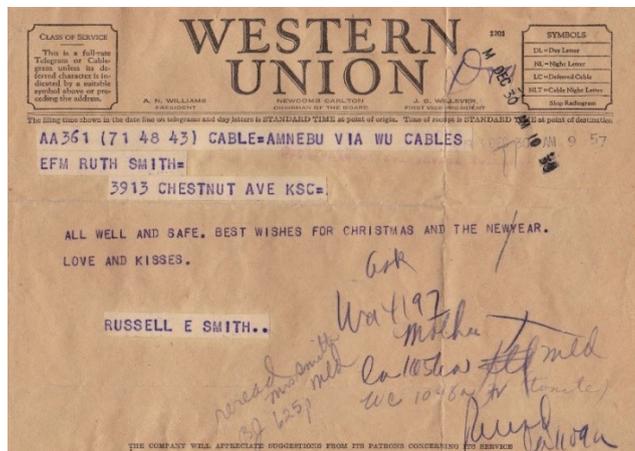


French North Africa – Oran, Algeria (c. 1942)

(Image Source: <https://www.combinedops.com/Torch.html>)

The weather was chilly during the nighttime. I remember that we were given two or three more blankets after spending several nights in camp. I think we each had four blankets. I got some of the paper the blankets were wrapped in, took it to my cot, and used the paper to sleep warmer. Some guys burned the paper to warm up. I learned when I rode freight trains that paper would make a bed a lot warmer.

We had Christmas 1943 at Goat Hill Camp. We had turkey. It was a nice break from C Rations.



Western Union Telegram – December 30, 1943
From Russell to Ruth: “ALL WELL AND SAFE,
BEST WISHES FOR CHRISTMAS AND THE
NEW YEAR. LOVE AND KISSES.”

After five or six days in camp, we were told that we would be moving. The trucks came to camp and we loaded up and went to Oran. We went to the dock and unloaded. (Note: About this time, the 451st Bomb Group [H] became part of the 15th Air Force which had been activated in November 1943.)

We waited at the dock for a long time before being told we needed to move to another location. After slinging our gear over our shoulders, we started walking. There were men strung out along the dock from one ship to another. We walked about a half mile, maybe more.

There was a rumor that we were going to have something good to eat when we got to the ship. The rumor was probably intended get us to move a little faster. I was with the first group to board the ship. We were afraid we would have to help carry the bags for the other soldiers. Once we checked in, we stayed to ourselves.

We loaded onto the HMS Jonathan DeWitt. It was a British ship with a mixed crew from England, India, Dutch and maybe other countries.

Our bunks were located two or three flights of stairs below the deck. We were told we could get something to eat on top of the deck. We grabbed our mess kit and canteen cup and went up on the deck and got in line. The cook was slicing loaves of bread down the middle, then putting grease on the bread and cutting it into chunks. We each received a chunk of bread and a canteen cup of hot tea with sugar. It was the first bread we had ate since we left the states. The soldiers were hungry and many of them went back in line for seconds.

At nighttime, we used our own blankets. If I remember right, our A bag stayed with us and our B bag was put in the hole elsewhere.

WORLD WAR II C RATIONS

(Reference: <https://heatermeals.com/world-war-ii-c-rations/>)

- Package of Biscuits
- Package of Graham Crackers
- Package of Sugar Tablets
- Meat Can of Ham (Breakfast), Chicken (Dinner), Turkey (Supper)
- Fruit Bar (Breakfast), Caramels (Dinner), Chocolate Bar (Supper)
- Powdered Coffee (Breakfast), Bouillon (Dinner), Lemon (Supper)
- Piece Chewing Gum
- 4-Pack Cigarettes
- Package of Toilet Tissue
- Wooden Spoon
- Matches
- A P-38 can opener

We figured our bunks were about even with the water level on the outside of the ship. We could walk from one compartment to another on the same floor. When the whistle blew, we had to settle into the compartment where our bunk was located. Then, the door closed, and we could only go up or down the stairs.

Later in the day, we were served hot, burnt chocolate and three or four pieces of hard tack. We had to clean off the cobwebs on the hard tack before eating it. One

guy claimed he saw "1914" printed on the hard tack. Another guy claimed he saw "1491 Santa Maria" printed on the hard tack box.

We left the Oran harbor. None of us knew where we were going, but speculated we were going to Italy. It's January 1944.

451st BOMBARDMENT GROUP (HEAVY)

The 451st Bombardment Group (Heavy) was constituted on April 6, 1943 and activated on May 1, 1943. The group prepared for combat with B-24s and moved to the Mediterranean theatre from November 1943 to January 1944, with the air echelon training in Algeria for several weeks before joining the remainder of the group in Italy. The 451st operated with the Fifteenth Air Force from January to May 1945, functioning primarily as a strategic bombardment organization. The 451st was comprised of three squadrons: the 725th, the 726th and the 727th. Russell was a member of the 725th squadron.

I believe we were on the ship for three days. We ate hash or beans once a day. We had hard tack and burnt chocolate to drink once a day. The food was brought to our compartment and served to us.

We were all in different compartments. F. M. Farrier said he found a loaf of bread and that is all he ate while on the ship. Jack Lampkin said his compartment was served smoked rotten fish to eat.

There was a speaker in each hole where music was sometimes played. I remember hearing the songs "Roll Out the Barrel" and "Rollover and We'll Do It Again." The music went on like that about every day.

The soldiers on the ship were parts of the 451st Bomb Group, 725th Squadron and another squadron.

The weather was cold and rainy most of the time.

The ship arrived at the harbor of Naples, Italy. A tugboat pulled us to the dock. We unloaded off the ship and boarded a train. The train was Italian with doors that opened on the side. The train took us to Count

Ciano College which was used for a billeting area for Allied troops.



Insignia of the Fifteenth Air Force
(Source: From Russell's WW II Memorabilia)

Count Ciano was the son-in-law of Mussolini, the dictator of Italy. There were three or four large buildings at the college. None of them had windows.

We entered one of the buildings and went up to the second floor carrying our A and B bags with us. We had some C Rations to eat that evening. We were told to sleep on the concrete floor. The floor was hard and cold.

Joe Martin and I went back to the corner of the building. This avoided having anyone needing to walk over us.

Then came the French troops with World War I helmets and old Springfield rifles. That is what some of our troops said they were. Then came along Indian soldiers wearing turbans on their heads.

It was awfully cold that night laying on the concrete floor. I was glad when morning came. We had some more C Rations for breakfast. We did a lot of running around the college grounds.

That night when it got dark, we loaded up onto trucks. Some guys claimed they could hear the guns at the front line. We arrived at Gioia dell Colle air base the next morning.

Every eight men were given a tent to setup. It was flat land with standing water all over. We setup our tent and dug a ditch to collect and bale the water out. Someone got a barrel from the fuel dump, then cut a hole in the side and top of the barrel. A gallon can with a rock and gasoline was placed in the barrel. The fuel was lit with a match and the top of the tent was taken off to let the smoke escape. We would crawl into the tent because the smoke was too thick to stand up.

The troops got 5-gallon fuel cans from the dump. The cans were laid flat and used to sleep on. In a day or two, we got boards to sleep on. Eventually, we got straw for mattress covers, then we got cots to sleep on. It's February 1944.

For a latrine, we had a straddle trench about 100 feet long. The officers had the Italians dig holes and make 4-holers.

Several men got sore knees and hips from sleeping on the ground. It was always raining. Another soldier was sent to the hospital because of arthritis.



Gioia del Colle Airfield, Italy
(Image Source: World Aero Data)

The ground crews would work on the planes during the day and everyone, but the officers and Master Sergeants would guard the planes at night. Someone was always around each plane when it was on the ground.



Russell Smith (c. 1944)

There was one soldier that laid his gun on the ground while guarding the planes. He left the gun on the ground when he went back to the tent and fell asleep. I never saw him after that incident.

There was rain just about every day. Because of the rain and the heavy traffic on the runway, there were a lot of potholes.

When we were assigned to a plane, we stayed there until it would take off and then return.

The crew on a B-24 Liberator included 10 men. The pilot, co-pilot, navigator, and bombardier were officers. The rest of the crew were enlisted men ranging in rank from corporal to tech sergeant: nose turret gunner, radio operator, top turret gunner, belly or ball turret gunner, tail turret gunner. There was a window and gun mounted on each side of the plane. There were two waist gunners that would open the window and shoot from each side of the plane.

The crew wore coveralls that were wired electrically such that when plugged-in, the coveralls would keep them warm during the flight. Their boots were also wired to keep their feet warm. Some crew members would get “frozen feet.” Each crew member had an oxygen mask along with a parachute and harness. Their life jacket was called a “Mae West vest” which would float in water. Each 50-caliber machine gun had an electric heater.

Each crew member had a first aid kit containing medication and bandages. There was also a kit with \$50 - \$100 American green back dollars to be used in case of emergency. The crew never knew what foreign county they might find themselves if the plane were shot down or they had to parachute. Some of the soldiers that jumped or crashed in Yugoslavia came back to Italy by way of the underground.



Damaged Plane Near Runway (c. 1944)

I was assigned to the armament crew. Our job was to load and unload the bombs on the aircraft. We had wenchers for the heavy lifting. Most of the bombs were 500 pounds. There were some that were 1,000 pounds and 2,000 pounds. We also cleaned and repaired (if needed) the 50 caliber machine guns after each mission.



Soldiers in the Armament Crew (c. 1944)

The bombs were hauled to the planes by the ordnance crew. The armament crew would load the bombs. When the crew knew there was no chance of rain and the flight being cancelled, the ordnance crew would put the fuses in the nose of each bomb. The fuses were timed so they wouldn't all explode at once. Some of them might explode in a day or two or a week.

The bombs were hoisted, and shackles placed on the rack. When the fuse was placed in the nose, a wire was run from the fuse to the bomb shackle. When the bombs were dropped, the wire was jerked out of the bomb fuse and the wind from the bomb would turn the propeller on the fuse. It would come off and the bomb was armed.



Fellow Soldiers Palermo and Fessler (c. 1944)

Each plane also had a smoke bomb. When the bomb was dropped, the smoke bomb left a trail of smoke. The other planes would see the smoke and drop their bombs. The planes also carried anti-personnel bombs that were 15 to 18 inches long.



Aerial Photo During Bombing Mission (c. 1944)

Sam Palermo and I were loading the bombs one day. We had just placed one 500-pound bomb on the top rack. We were attaching the sling on another bomb when the bomb on the top rack fell and hit Sam on the side of his head. He was taken to the hospital. When he came back, he was paralyzed on his left side including his arm and leg. I hated that. I have thought about it a lot. I hope he got over it.

There was a story that made the rounds that the Italians were unloading bombs from a railroad car when there was an explosion. We were told about it by Captain L.... So, we handled the bombs very carefully. We never banged the bombs against one another. If a plane started a mission and had a malfunction and didn't want to land with the bombs they were carrying, they would fly over the ocean and drop the bombs.

One day, I was out at the plane waiting for the crew to



Aerial Photo During Bombing Mission (c. 1944)

come and take off. It was a C46 or C47 (I never knew what the difference was). The plane took off and got into the air about 200 to 300 feet above the ground. Then, the plane lost power, nosedived and hit the ground. The two engines rolled like they were a couple of dice.

One man came running out of the plane. I ran over to him and asked if anyone else was in the plane. He said "yes" and began calling for "Pearson." We found Pearson and grabbed him by the arms, and I helped with his legs. One of his legs was broken and I was reluctant to move him not wanting to hurt him.

There was a spot by a parachute that was smoking. I stamped it into the dirt and put the fire out. It was fortunate that the gas tanks on the plane didn't rupture.

The 725th Squadron ambulance came and picked up both men to take them to the hospital.

Someone called me and I had to get back to the B-24 plane. I talked to Lt. Prindal about the wreck. He said I had done the right thing.



B-24 Liberator
(Image Source: USAF Photo)

There were planes and men lost on the bombing missions. We would ask about the planes that didn't return. Some crew members said they had seen parachutes and many men got out. Some planes exploded and no one got out. Some planes crashed in the ocean. We did a lot of praying and hoping that the lost crews didn't get killed. I still wonder what happened to these men. There were lots of prisoners of war.



Aerial Scene from World War II
Art Print from Russell and Ruth's Living Room
(Artist: Gordon Snyder)

During March 1944, the weather was getting warmer. We continued eating lots of C Rations. The food included an orange marmalade and tropical butter that

would not melt. A lot of guys said the tropical butter was really yellow paint and paraffin wax. So, we ate a lot of biscuits along with the tropical butter and orange marmalade. We washed it down with coffee. Occasionally, we would have spam, Vienna sausage, dehydrated potatoes and onions, and bread to eat.

There were lots of grapes and wine. The Italians would have large barrels on carts pulled by a couple of white cows or oxen. Some of the soldiers drank a lot of the wine, so much that their teeth were blue.



Russell Smith (c. 1944)

Over time, the rainwater that ponded on the runway kept getting deeper. The B-24 Liberators were having a tough time getting enough speed up to take off.

The water on the runway got so deep, that we moved to Mandura, Italy. There was another bomb group that flew out of Mandura beside the 451st Bomb Group.

Lt. Prendel was killed in a Jeep accident. I don't know the details of what happened. I heard that his Jeep was going around a curve in the road when it ran into a wine cart. It was at night when Lt. Prendel was thrown out of the Jeep and killed.

Lt. Lures (Tanglefoot) took over for Lt. Prendel as the armor section officer. He was about 6 feet 2 inches tall. He was a nice guy. Lt. Collins (Silver Tip) was his

assistant. He lectured us on handling the ammo. Ever so many rounds had a silver tip round which was supposed to be armor penetrating when it hit the target.

Each airplane had about 10,000 to 12,000 rounds of ammo. I don't remember for sure, but there were lots of it.

The 725th Squadron was at Mandura, Italy in March 1944.

451st GROUP BOMBING MISSIONS

The 451st Bomb Group attacked such targets as oil refineries, marshalling yards, aircraft factories, bridges, and airfields in Italy, France, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania, and Greece. A sampling of bombing missions for the period from June 2 through June 10, 1944 is provided below. (Note: This information was taken from Russell's memorabilia which included a 10+ page list of bombing missions.)

No 57 - 2 June 1944 – Szolnok M/Y, Hungary

No 58 - 4 June 1944 – Gad River Bridge, Italy

No 59 - 5 June 1944 – Rimini Railroad Bridge, Italy

No 60 - 6 June 1944 – Ploesti/Xenia Oil Ref, RO

No 61 - 7 June 1944 – Antheor Viaduct, France

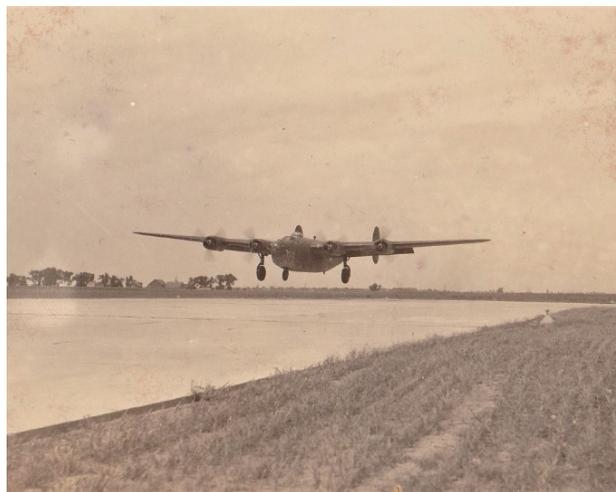
No 62 - 9 June 1944 – Munich, Germany

No 63 - 10 June 1944 – Porto/Marghera Oil Storage, Italy

One morning when one of the B-24 Liberators was taking off on a mission, its nose wheel collapsed. The plane started to burn right away. Many soldiers started towards the plane when they saw it crash, hoping to rescue the crew. One man got out or was blown out when the plane crashed. Two guys in a Jeep were able to pick-up the man before the plane exploded, throwing shrapnel all around us. The plane was loaded with 500-pound bombs. There were 10 men in the crew. It was a grim thing to see. Lots of soldiers prayed for the men in the plane.

If there were dead or wounded on a plane returning from a mission, the pilot would radio ahead and the ambulance at the airfield would meet the plane as soon as it landed. If the radio was shot out, the plane would use a flare gun to signal the ground to indicate there were dead or wounded on the plane.

When the plane landed, the dead were placed in what looked like a mattress cover or straw tick. The bodies were turned over to the soldier that took care of the details of burying the dead. There were a lot of men that flew on missions that never came back. We knew lots of them having trained together at Fairmont Air Field in Nebraska.



B-24 Landing at Airfield

I've always wondered what happened to the guys that didn't return. Were they killed or captured and became POWs? There were partisans in Europe including Yugoslavia that were friendly to Americans and would help them get back to Italy.

I went to the 451st Bomb Group Reunion in Chicago in 1980 to see if any of the guys I knew would be there. It had been a long time since the war. I didn't see any of them.



Aerial Scene of B-24 during World War II
 Art Print from Russell and Ruth's Living Room
 (Artist: Paul R. Jones)

It was April 1944 when the 451st Bomb Group moved to Castelluccio Airfield located about nine miles south of Foggia, Italy. The airfield was constructed in an oat field. When the oats got ripe, some Italian women picked the oats and put them in sacks tied to a donkey or mule.

An old mess hall was setup at the base. It may have been an Italian army barracks according to other soldiers. Once again, there was orange marmalade (yellow paint and wax) and tropical butter set out along with C Ration biscuits. We started getting more fresh meat along with bread, spam and Vienna sausages. We washed it down with coffee.



Old Mess Hall - Castelluccio Airfield, Italy (c. 1944)



Housing at Castelluccio Airfield, Italy (c. 1944)



Housing Unit Where Russell and Other Soldiers Lived at Castelluccio Airfield, Italy (c. 1944)



Russell Standing Outside His Housing Unit
 Castelluccio Airfield, Italy (c. 1944)

The runway was constructed of steel mats fastened together. The area adjacent to the runway included a fuel tank where gasoline was stored. Each squadron had a gasoline truck and oil truck to service the planes.



Russell (right) and Fellow Soldier (c. 1944)
Runway at Castelluccio Airfield, Italy

The air base water supply was a drilled well located near the airfield. The airfield was about two or three miles from the base.

We got away from washing our mess kits in water in garbage cans. There were 55 barrels or drums cut down the middle that were filled with water and heated. We placed the scraps from our mess kit in garbage cans before washing the kit in the heated water. An Italian with a two-wheel cart and oxen would haul off the garbage cans to feed his pigs.



Cleaning Mess Kits (c. 1944)

At this airfield, the officers and enlisted men ate at the same mess hall. Captain Davis, commander of the

725th squadron, gave orders that the officers couldn't go to the head of the chow line. There was to be an officer, then an enlisted man, and so on.

Everyone was given atabrine to prevent getting malaria. When we were in the chow line, a medic would throw one of the yellow atabrine pills in our mouth.

We were about 15 miles from Foggia, Italy where there was a Red Cross service club. The entrance to the club had two soldiers made of wood on each side of the door. We called them yanks from planks. Inside, there was an area to play cards and games. I think it was 10 o'clock am when the club would sell cookies for 5 lira, one nickel each. We bought two cookies at a time. The coffee was free and supplied by the U.S. Army. It was served by the Red Cross. Lots of soldiers didn't like paying for the cookies. When you are hungry, you'll eat anything.



American Red Cross Service Club
"Yanks from the Ranks"

There was an army camp close-by to the service club. We would go to the camp and mooch for something to eat.

If we were in an Italian town, we would ask the Italians where we could get something to eat. We often ate

potatoes and fried eggs cooked in olive oil along with a glass of wine and a chunk of soggy, sour bread. We would pay 300 to 400 lire for a meal.

Sometimes we would eat meatballs and pasta with a little tomato sauce. The meatballs were out of this world. No one knew what they were made of.



Russell (left) and Friend on Leave in Italy (c. 1944)

Many of the Italian towns had an oven in the center of town. The locals would beat the grain to grind it, then mix it to make a loaf. The loaf would be placed on a board balanced on their head and they would walk to town to bake the loaf in the oven. When the loaf was baked, they would put the loaf and board back on their head and go home.



Scene Along Italian Street (c. 1944)

Each town had a place where the locals could go and get water. They would carry the water in jugs or buckets. We carried a canteen of water from the air base. We were warned not to drink the water or eat anything in these towns for risk of diarrhea and other illnesses.



Scene Along Italian Street (c. 1944)

The towns that were small didn't have a sewer system. People would use a honey bucket, thunder mug or whatever you want to call it. The honey wagon would come down the city streets while the driver shouted out. Everyone would come and dump their bucket into the wagon.

A wagon was used to haul wastes from base to a spot (honey dump) alongside the road leading to the town. The smell and flies at the dump were bad. No one wanted to go by the dump on their way to town. There was a second route to town that avoided the dump.



Members of 451st Bomb Group (L-R):
J. Rhotan (?), W. North, R. Smith, J. Fessler, Martin

When we set up our tents, they were purposely not placed in a straight line. We dug shallow trenches around our tents so if we were strafed by German aircraft, we could lie in the trenches below the ground surface for protection.

The British Army set-up anti-aircraft guns in a farmhouse located near the edge of the airfield. A nearby barn with several rooms was used as a bar with card tables. The booze was usually orange juice and vodka. One of the rooms in the bar had a cold-water shower. Later when the British Army moved, they took their guns and the house they were living in was made into a mess hall for officers.

Several dogs came to the airbase. I don't know if they were strays or dumped by the locals. The locals had a tough time getting anything to eat for themselves.



Sack and His Son

(Russell's notes indicate that "Sack" came over from the states with the Bomb Group)

Over time while in Italy, the food got better. We had more fresh meat and bread although we never stopped eating C-Rations on a regular basis. The military must have had a ship load of spam as we ate a lot of it.

There was a B-24 parked in a revetment when it caught on fire. No one was sure what caused the fire. The plane was loaded with 500-pound bombs and several

rounds of 50 caliber ammo. There was a lot of cracking and popping sounds when the 50-caliber ammo exploded. It wasn't long before the bombs on the plane exploded and destroyed the plane. The explosions created a crater in the ground where the plane had set. One of the main struts with a wheel on it was thrown 300 to 400 feet from the plane. The soldiers guarding the plane took cover in their trenches and fox holes.

It was approximately June 1944 when, for some unknown reason, a new mess sergeant was assigned to our unit. The new sergeant started selling eggs for 15 lira. One lira was about the same as one penny.

The new sergeant got caught selling a chunk of meat to the Italians. The soldiers wanted to hang him. Similar offenders were court martialed and spent time in the stockade.

Everyone had to have a PX rationing card. John Fessler and I went to Bare, Italy and went into the PX. We bought candy bars and cigarettes. The PX staff said we could buy all the cigars we wanted. So, we bought cigars and went outside the building to smoke them. It wasn't long and we met three Canadian soldiers who wanted some cigars. We gave them one cigar each. They wanted to buy some more cigars and offered to pay us with several teeth with gold fillings or inlays. We told them we didn't want any teeth, so they came up with some Liras and we sold them several cigars before going our own way.

We went down to the beach near the town of Bare. There was a sidewalk café with mostly foreigners – French, Russians and Yugoslavians. The Russian officers were neatly attired in black boots. The Yugoslavian soldiers, men and women, wore a short cap with a red 5-pointed star on it. The soldiers that spoke English looked after each other.

Most of the soldiers from other nations carried side arms. The American soldiers did not carry side arms while in towns when we went on a pass. We were told

that we were goodwill ambassadors. We usually traveled in groups of four or more.

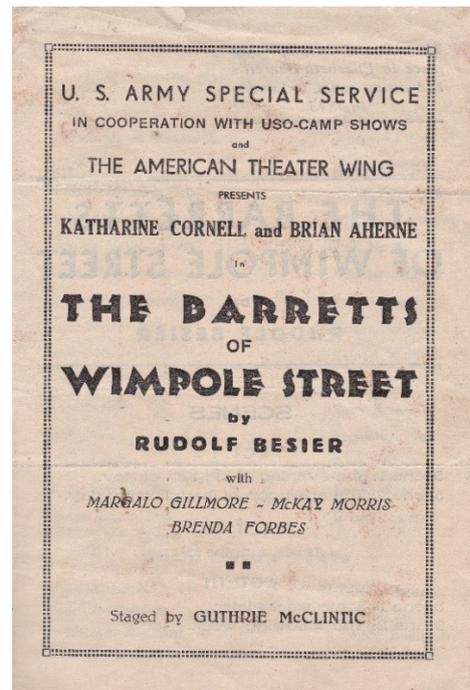


Russian(?) Military Officer (c. 1944)

John Fessler and I went to a show, then we went to a hotel that was managed by the Red Cross. The soldiers called it the Sad Sack Hotel. We each paid 50 to 100 Lira for a cot with one or two blankets to sleep on. The next morning, we went back to the air base to get something to eat.



Australian Soldier (c. 1944)



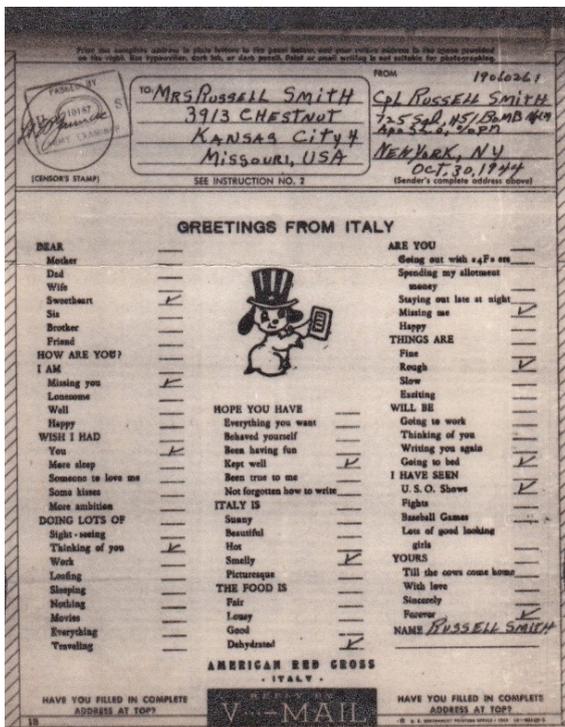
Playbill – The Barretts of Wimpole Street (c. 1944)

At some point during 1944, we decided we would build a structure to live in. We got a truck from the motor pool to load blocks from a limestone quarry which we used to build our housing unit.

There was a time late in the war when word came that two soldiers were going to be sent back to the USA, a Corporal and a Sergeant. Pieces of paper (tickets) were placed in a helmet. Each ticket had the word “stay” written on it, except for two tickets with the word “go.” Ralph M... and I entered the tent where the drawing was being held. Ralph believed that when his turn came, the ticket he pulled from the helmet would say “go.” He pulled out a “stay.” There were three tickets left in the helmet when my turn came. No one had pulled a “go” yet. I reached into the helmet and pulled out a “stay.” I never thought about looking at the two tickets remaining to see if they were marked “go.” After the drawing, two soldiers went back to the U.S. I talked with F.M. Fanier in April 1987 and he said the drawing was rigged. I didn’t care one way or the other as the war in the Pacific was still going on and we thought we might be sent over there.

The war was winding down. It was about June or July 1944 in Italy.

Russell communicated with Ruth through Victory Mail (V-Mail). To save the cost of shipping thousands of letters back home from overseas, V-Mail letters were copied to film which was transported to the United States. The film was used to reprint the letter upon delivery to its destination (Source: Wikipedia). Ruth saved at least two V-Mail letters from Russell which are shown below:

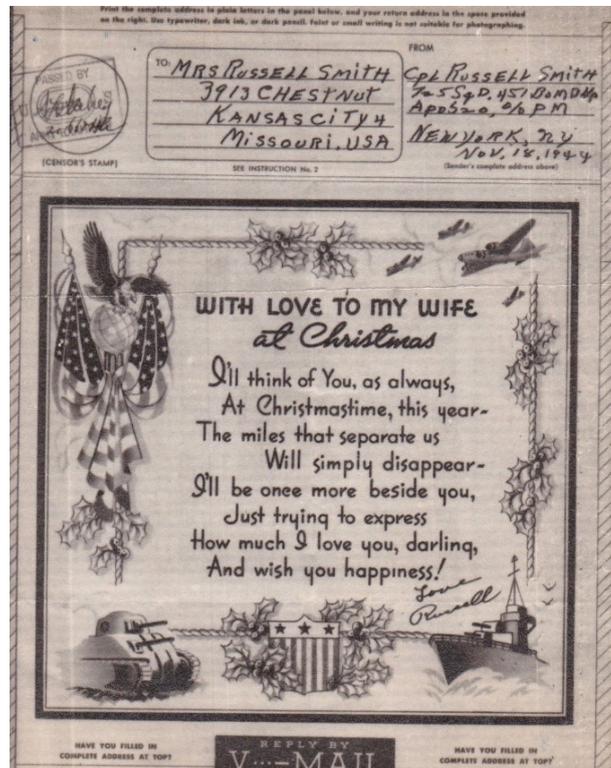


V-MAIL - Completed by Russell and sent to Ruth
October 30, 1944

GREETINGS FROM ITALY

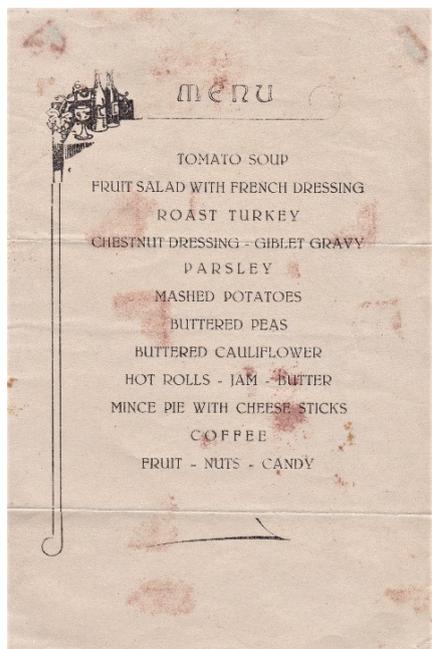
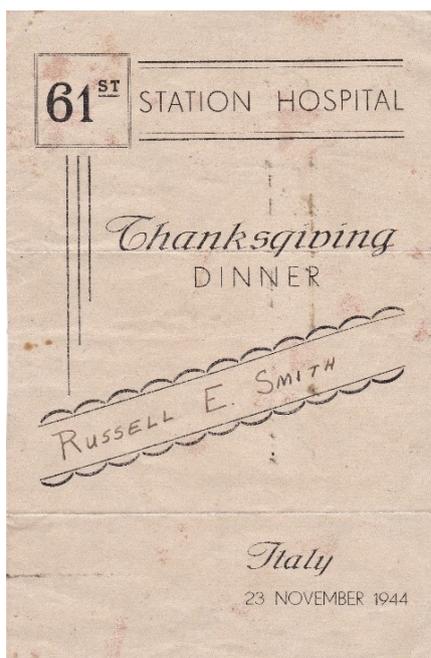
DEAR: Sweetheart
 I AM: Missing you
 DOING LOTS OF: Thinking of you
 HOPE YOU HAVE KEPT: Well
 ITALY IS: Smelly
 THE FOOD IS: Dehydrated
 ARE YOU: Missing me
 THINGS ARE: Rough
 WILL BE: Going to bed
 I HAVE SEEN: U.S.O. Shows
 YOURS: Forever

Russell sent a second V-Mail letter to Ruth for Christmas, December 1944. It consisted of a poem as shown below:



WITH LOVE TO MY WIFE
 At Christmas
 I'll think of You always,
 At Christmas, this year -
 The miles that separate us
 Will simply disappear -
 I'll be once more beside you,
 Just trying to express
 How much I love you, darling,
 And wish you happiness!
 Love Russell

Russell, members of the armament crew, and others enjoyed Thanksgiving dinner on November 23, 1944 at the 61st Station Hospital in Italy. The Thanksgiving meal was likely the best military provided meal Russell had during his time in Italy. His collection of memorabilia from the war included a printed invitation with his name and a description of the menu as shown below.



Thanksgiving Dinner Menu – 23 November 1944
61st Station Hospital, Italy

There was another one of our planes where the nose collapsed and burnt up. No one was hurt or killed.

There was one plane that took off and as it climbed higher, the life raft came out and caught on one of the plane's stabilizers. The plane couldn't go any higher, so

the crew jumped out. They were too close to the ground for their parachutes to fully open. Many of them were injured.

It's now April 1945. I am writing this in January 1988. As the war in Europe was about over, we started getting beer. We are wondering what is going to happen to us? Will we be sent to the Pacific Campaign to fight the Japanese?

DISTINGUISHED UNIT CITATIONS

The 451st Bombardment Group received a Distinguished Unit Citation for each of three missions: to an aircraft factory at Regensburg on February 25, 1944, to oil refineries and marshalling yards at Ploesti on April 5, 1944, and to an airdrome at Vienna on August 23, 1944. Although the group encountered large numbers of enemy fighters and severe anti-aircraft fire during each of these missions, it fought its way through the opposition, destroyed many interceptors, and inflicted serious damage on the assigned targets. At times the group also flew support and interdiction missions. It helped to prepare the way for and participated in the invasion of Southern France in August 1944. The group transported supplies to troops in Italy during September 1944 and supported the final advances of Allied armies in northern Italy in April 1945. The 451st Bombardment Group returned to the United States in June and was inactivated on September 26, 1945.

The war in Europe came to an end. We all celebrated winning the war. We had to clean-up everything on the base. We picked up sticks and boards. Major Welsh had them burned. Then, someone decided the material should be taken to the dump. The Italians were waiting at the dump to see and pick-up what we dumped. They would yell and sometimes fight each other for the material.

While at the dump, a soldier threw a board up in the air and hit me in the head when the wind got a hold of it. He got a cussing.

There were a lot of rumors that we were going to fight the Japanese. One day we were told to remove the 50-caliber ammunition from the planes. The next day, we watched the planes take off for the USA. It was a glad and sad day. We had become attached to the planes. Many of the planes had names painted on them. There was also a bomb painted on each plane for each bombing mission it went on. If the crew shot down a German plane, a swastika was painted on the plane. When the planes took off, we often wondered where they went.

The ground crew loaded on to trucks and went on the road to Naples, Italy. The crew included soldiers that were demoted and spending time in the stockade (prison). We went back to Count Ciano College. It hadn't changed much. There was a mess hall now, but they still served C-Rations, hash and stew.



Aircraft Name: Devils Duchess
 451st Bomb Group, 725th Squadron
 Enemy Aircraft
 (Data Source: 451st Bomb Group Inventory,
www.451st.org/Aircraft/pdfs)

The first thing we did when we got to Camp Patrick Henry was to get in line at the shower house. We pulled all of our clothes off. We were naked as a Jay bird just hatched. We scrubbed our body from top to bottom. We had to stay in the shower for a period of time, then we were given different clothes to wear. Most everyone had their clothes worked on to make them fit better. Then, we were given uniforms to wear. We looked as seedy as we did on our first day in the service.

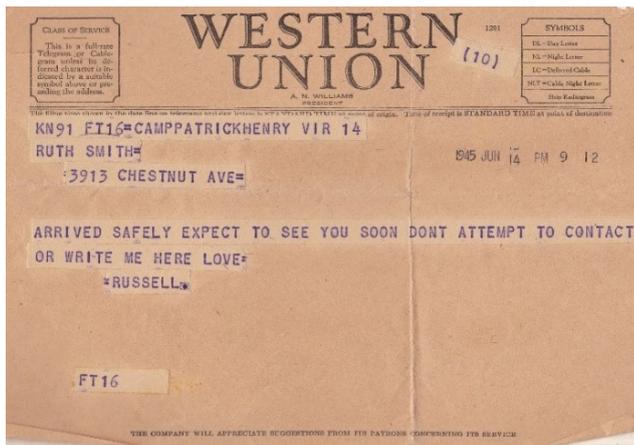
After the shower, we went to the mess hall. We had a steak dinner. There were a lot of soldiers in the mess hall having dinner. There were also German POWs working on KP.

There was one POW eating out of a garbage can. A couple of U.S. Soldiers picked up the German POW and stuck his head in the garbage can so he could eat all he wanted. There were other POWs that came to help the POW in the garbage can. Then other GIs came to help their GI friends. The MPs blew their whistles and stood between the German POWs and GIs. Tempers were high as more GIs assembled wanting a piece of the action. There was no love for the German POWs.



Aircraft Name: Ferp Finesco
 451st Bomb Group, 725th Squadron
 Missing-In-Action: July 28, 1944
 (Data Source: 451st Bomb Group Inventory,
www.451st.org/Aircraft/pdfs)

We were at Count Ciano College for three or four days before we loaded on to trucks and were taken to the dock. We loaded on to the USS General Meigs where we traveled by sea for seven days arriving at the dock of Newport News, Virginia. We loaded on to railroad cars and were taken to Camp Patrick Henry. The loudspeakers at camp were thanking the soldiers for the bang-up job they did overseas.



Western Union Telegram: June 14, 1945
 From Russell to Ruth: “ARRIVED SAFELY.
 EXPECT TO SEE YOU SOON. DONT
 ATTEMPT TO CONTACT OR WRITE HERE.
 LOVE – RUSSELL”

In a day or two we were all shipped out to different parts of the country. I went to Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis, Missouri. We were all given 30 days leave.

When the 30 days were up, we were sent to Dow Air Base in Bangor, Maine. It took about three days by train to get to Bangor. At Bangor, they started shipping men to different parts of the country. It was tiresome just waiting and waiting to see what was going to happen. Most of the guys I knew were gone. I didn't know very many of the guys in our barracks. Some of the guys were members of the ordnance crew, some were truck drivers. We all wondered what was going to happen.

There were rumors that we were going to be sent to Camp Roberts in California where we were going to be in the infantry. There was a lot of talk among the men. Some decided they would go over the hill. I talked to some guys from the west coast. It was best to go to Camp Roberts and see what happens next.

Then, the atomic bomb was dropped on Japan. We waited, and the second bomb was dropped. The Japanese surrendered, and we were discharged from the Army.



Newspaper Headline
 (Image Source: www.worldwar2facts.org)

SEPTEMBER 2, 1945

“Heavy casualties sustained in the campaigns at Iwo Jima (February 1945) and Okinawa (April-June 1945), and fears of the even costlier land invasion of Japan led (President) Truman to authorize the use of a new and devastating weapon – the atomic bomb – on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in early August. On August 15, the Japanese government issued a statement declaring they would accept the terms of the Potsdam Declaration, and on September 2, (1945) U.S. General Douglas MacArthur accepted Japan’s formal surrender.....”
 (https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii)

Russell’s Discharge from the Service: A copy of Russell’s Honorable Discharge is included with this document. There are several entries on his discharge worth noting.

Russell’s Army Serial No. was 19 060 261. He served in the Army of the United States - Army Air Force from December 23, 1941 to September 3, 1945, a total of three years, eight months and 11 days. This time period included one year, six months and 11 days of foreign service.

His discharge document shows that he was a member of the 725th Squadron attaining the rank of Corporal (Russell felt like he should have been

promoted to Sergeant). The battles and campaigns listed on his discharge document include: Southern France, Rhineland, Northern France, Po Valley, Northern Apennines, Air Offensive Europe Air Combat Balkans, Naples Foggia, Rome Arno, Normandy.

Russell was awarded the following decorations and citations for the above campaigns: 10 Bronze Stars, Good Conduct Medal, Distinguished Unit Badge with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters. He was issued a lapel button (ribbon) to wear – European - African – Middle Eastern Theatre Campaign; 3 Overseas Bars.

Among Russell’s collection of photos and documents from his time in the service, he kept his dog tags and military decorations/awards in a small cardboard box. Selected items are shown below:



Russell’s Military ID Tags (“Dog Tags”)

His Advanced Service Rating (ASR) Score was 101. The ASR was a scoring system used during demobilization of troops at the end of the war. The system “... was designed to return troops back to the U.S. based on the length of time served, family status and honors received in battle.” (Source: Wikipedia)

The “pay data” shown on Russell’s discharge document shows that his final payment at discharge was \$97.80 for travel and \$233.83 (total amount). The document was signed by Russell and Captain S.H. Kulp.



Russell’s World War II Medals and Ribbons
 Left: European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign
 Center: World War II Victory Medal
 Right: American Campaign Medal



Russell’s World War II Medals and Ribbons
 Distinguished Unit Citation (Ribbon)
 Center: Good Conduct Medal (left)
 Various Campaign Ribbons

Returning to Civilian Life: Following Russell’s discharge from military service at the Jefferson Barracks Military Post in St. Louis, Missouri, he likely traveled by train to Kansas City where he reunited with Ruth (possibly at Union Station). It had been over 18 months since Russell and his unit had departed from Fairfield, Nebraska. Russell and Ruth began their life together while living at the home of Ruth’s parents, Harry and Zelma (DeWitt) McKendry. The family home was