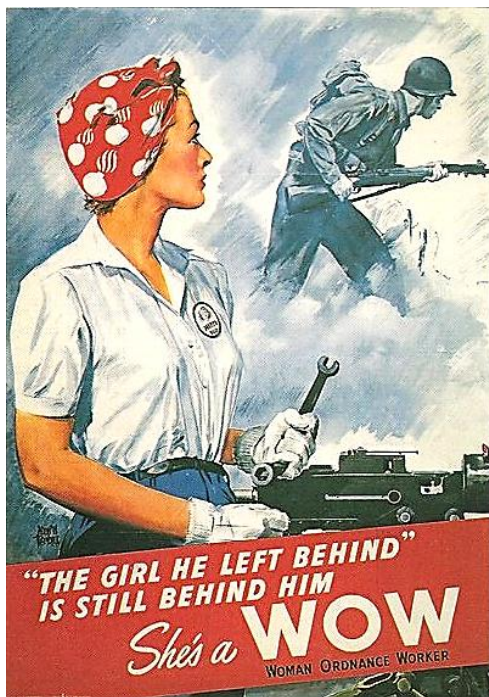


6

As the War raged on in Europe and the Pacific, American troops were constantly being deployed overseas. People on the home front were united in doing their part to support the war effort. The rationing of tires and gasoline was begun in 1942. By 1943 an individual needed government-issued ration coupons to purchase gasoline, fuel oil, several types of food and clothing, and many other items. Each person in a household received a book of ration stamps that was good for a set period. Furthermore, other items, such as automobiles and home appliances, were not being produced. Instead the factories were producing high volumes of war equipment.

Mobilization for war brought an end to the unemployment problem of the Great Depression. Production of war equipment created millions of new jobs. With many men entering the armed forces women joined the workforce to fill the new jobs. Many women also volunteered for the Red Cross and USO.



Families collected scrap material, such as copper, brass, aluminum and rubber that could be used for production of items needed for the war. Men who could not enter military service joined civil defense organizations to protect the home front from possible encroachment by the enemy.

“The efforts of civilians at home to support the war through personal sacrifice was as critical to winning the war as the efforts of the soldiers themselves”.....FDR

Final orders were received for overseas movement in late September, and on October 3, 1943 Arthur and Oscar travelled by train with the 2nd ID headed for the Camp Shanks staging area in New York. Camp Shanks, known as “Last stop USA”, was the U.S. Army point of embarkation. The brothers were setting out on an adventure that Arthur would never forget.



Dearest Pito

Oct 4, 1943

Hope each and everyone at home is okay. Received your letter, and enjoyed reading it very much. Glad to hear that Jimmy is doing fine in school. Honey please take it easy and don't work too hard. Write me and tell me if Joe is home by now if you know anything about it. Glad to hear that Leo and his wife are okay. Received a letter from Mother; she says that everybody is okay. Well honey, please don't worry about me, I am okay. Will write you again very soon. Give my regards and love to all. Will be waiting for a letter from you. Please write.

Lots of Love, Arthur

On October 8, the 9th Regiment boarded the troop ship, *USS Susan B. Anthony*, and sailed with a large convoy across the Atlantic. They arrived at Belfast, Ireland on October 18.



USS Susan B. Anthony (AP-72)

Once arriving in Belfast the troops were transported by rail to training areas. The 9th Regiment was sent to Camp Keady located in County Armagh, North Ireland. There they would prepare for the Invasion of German occupied Western Europe.

At Camp Keady most of the soldiers were housed in Nissen huts constructed of brick and corrugated tin. Oscar and the other men of the Cannon Company were housed next to a stone building which was being used as the Officers' Quarters.



While in Ireland, life for the troops would not be totally engulfed in training. There was time to get to know the Irish people and their customs. Soldiers could visit the cheerful pubs and fish-and-chips eateries. There were many Irish families who were eager to invite the Americans to their homes.

Arthur loved the Irish countryside. It was always lush and green due to the generally wet weather. The farmlands reminded him of his youth at Hopedale. He and Oscar made friends with local farmers and would help them with their farm work on occasion. A

horseback ride through the Irish countryside was always welcomed. The English type saddle was something new to Arthur and he found it quite comfortable, although he would sometimes ride bareback with a rope for a bridle. Their Irish friends grew to love these 'farm boys from Texas'.



Arthur would write home often; again not being able to say too much of what he was doing. His letters could take up to ten days to reach home. Pito would receive his first letter from overseas on October 28, 1943.

Dearest Pito

Oct 19, 1943

Writing you these few lines to let you know that I am okay, and I hope that each and everyone at home are in the best of health. Pito, I am somewhere in Northern Ireland. I hope you get this letter soon. Please write me when you have time. I want to know how everybody is back home. Give my love to each and everyone. I will be waiting for a letter from home. Lots of love.

Your husband, Arthur

Dearest Pito

21 Nov, 1943

Honey, sure was glad to hear from you and to know that you are in good health. Thank God. I hope you get my letter soon. Please don't worry about me, I am okay. Got a letter from Tete where she says everyone at home is okay. I am glad to hear that Tete is going to be with you on Christmas Holidays. Yes honey, after the baby is born you can go to Eagle Pass and stay with Mother. I wish I was there with you. Please take it easy and take care of yourself. Someday I will come home. Give my love to Jimmy and everyone.

From daddy, Love Arthur



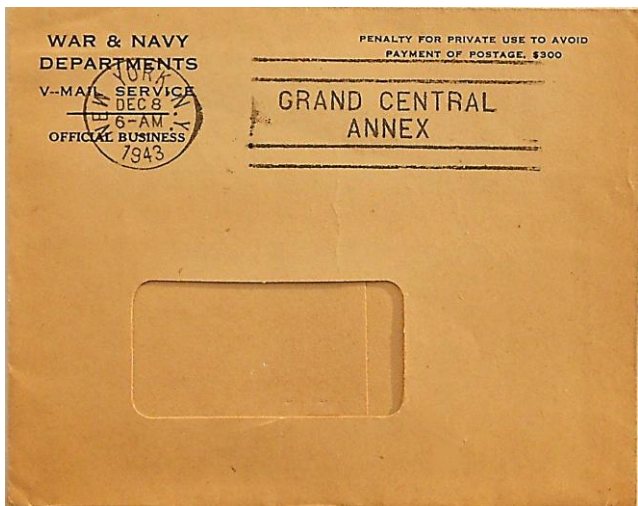
Although Air Mail was available, letters to and from soldiers stationed overseas was most often done by Victory-Mail, or V-Mail for short. The original letter would be censored and copied to film for transport across the seas. It would then be printed back to paper, which was about 2/3 the size of the original, to be delivered to the addressee. The system saved much weight and shipping space that was needed for war materials and made it easier to manage in combat areas.

WAR & NAVY
DEPARTMENTS

V-MAIL SERVICE
DEC 8
6-AM
OFFICIAL BUSINESS
7943

PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE TO AVOID
PAYMENT OF POSTAGE, \$300

GRAND CENTRAL
ANNEX



| | | | |
|--|---------------------------|--|--|
| No. | U.S. ARMY CENSOR STAMP | TO MRS. ARTHUR W. BACKUS 520 GOLIAD STREET SAN ANTONIO, 3, TEXAS | Mc ARTHUR BACKUS RECEIVED NAME 1943 C/O THE STEAK 'N' LAMB SENDERS ADDRESS 100% POSTMASTER NEW YORK, N.Y. DATE 21 NOV 1943 |
| | | U.S. ARMY 26 NOV 1943 | SOMEWHERE IN NORTHERN IRELAND |
| <p>Dear Pito:</p> <p>Honey, hope each and everyone at home is in the best of health. It has been a long time since I last heard from you, maybe you have been very busy and haven't got time to write. But I hope nothing is wrong. How is James doing in school? How is Sarah doing, is Luis still in San Antonio, I hope she will stay there for Christmas. I also hope that Pete will be there with you. Honey as for me please don't worry I am in good health, and so is Oscar. I hope your Bro. Leo, and his Wife are okay. Pito please send me your picture if you can. Write when you can. Please send me Edwards' address, I want to write to him. Well honey take care of yourself, and keep your chin up. Love to all.</p> <p>John of Long Beach Arthur</p> | | | |
| V-MAIL | | | |

Pito loved dolls and Arthur was always on a search for a special doll to send to her.



Dec. 8, 1943

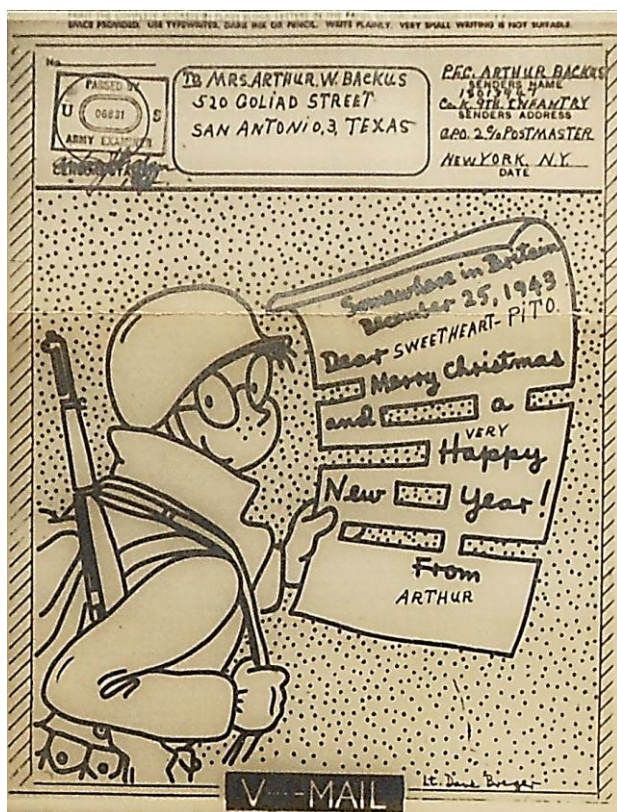
Somewhere in Northern Ireland

Dearest Pito,

Honey, glad to hear from you again and very happy to hear that you are alright, thank God. I received your air mail letter with some air mail stamps. That's very sweet of you. I also received a pair of gloves that you sent me, so don't worry. Please send me your picture if you can in an air mail. How is Jimmy? I hope he is doing alright in school. Please don't worry about me, I am okay. I saw Oscar the other day and he is alright. Please take care of yourself. Will write again very soon. I am still looking for your doll. Give my love to all.

Lots of Love, Arthur

Their first Christmas as husband and wife would be spent thousands of miles apart from each other. Arthur would send a V-Mail greeting and Pito would reminisce about the Christmases spent on the Hopedale farm. She would tell Jimmy stories about those days as they decorated the tree with glass ornaments at mama Lupita's house.



Pito would write Arthur often to let him know how things were at home. She would always mention that she was praying for him and how much she missed him. Of course she worried about his whereabouts and safety. Sometimes Jimmy would write a few lines to let his daddy know that he was being a good boy and taking care of his mother.

Somewhere in Northern Ireland

Dearest Pito, 13 January 1944

Hello honey, received your letter yesterday and am very glad to hear that everyone at home is in good health, thank God. I am still waiting for your picture. I haven't received that letter yet. I hope I will receive it soon. Glad to hear you had a good Christmas. Give my love to Jimmy. I enjoyed reading the few lines he wrote in your letter.

I got a letter from Edward, he says he's okay. May God take good care of him, he is only a baby you know. Well honey please don't worry about me, I am okay, only miss you very much. Give my love to each and everyone at home. Will write you again very soon. Honey please take care of yourself.

With Love, Dad. Arthur

At the home front they would stay up with news of the war through newspapers, radio broadcasts and newsreels shown at the local theaters. The news was censored but they knew that an Invasion of Nazi occupied Europe was inevitable. However, they had no idea of where or when it would take place or what units would be involved. The troops did not know the details themselves until the time came. But they would be ready.

Pito found comfort in prayer and in reading the letters from Arthur. But letters took several days to reach her; anything could have happened since the last letter she received was written. Then there was always the fear of telegrams. How would she go on if the worst would happen?



Now here she was at the Fort Sam Army Hospital and her thoughts turned to her new baby who was about to come into the world. Yes, she felt joy but there was also the thought that her baby may never know daddy.

The baby was born at 2:01 PM, January 25, 1944. Jimmy now had a baby sister. She was named Rose Lee by her Aunt Cookie and baptized at San Fernando Cathedral. Once settled in at home at mama Lupita's, Pito would write Arthur to tell him the news. He was very happy and couldn't wait for a picture of his daughter.

February 18, 1944

Somewhere in Northern Ireland

Dearest Pito:

Honey, today I received two letters from you and am very happy to hear that you, Jimmy, and the baby are doing fine and in good health, thank God. I am just as happy and proud of our little baby Rose Lee; I like the name too. Glad to hear that my sister and family was there. Yes honey, you may go to Eagle Pass and stay with Mother this summer. Please don't worry about me; I am okay thank God. Tell Cookie that I received her latter too; very nice of her to let me know about you. Will write you again soon. Please take care of yourself and the baby. Miss you very much and am always thinking of you. Receive my very best congratulations, and all my love.

Dad Arthur

February 22, 1944

Somewhere in Ireland

My dearest wife:

Hello honey, I received your letter today in which you say that you, Jimmy, and Rose Lee are in good health, thank God. Happy to hear that everybody likes the baby. Very nice of Joe to stop on his way home to see you. I bet he really had a lot to talk about. I wish I could have been there to see him. Tell your mother that I sure appreciate everything she has done for you, and someday I will repay her.

Lots of Love From Dad

February 24, 1944

Somewhere in Ireland

My dearest wife:

Hello honey, I am writing you these few lines to let you know that I am alright. Please send me a picture of little Rose Lee if you can. I will be very glad to have one. I am sending her a doll from Ireland in a few days. So Jimmy is crazy about his little sister. I wish I could have been there with you. Tell Jimmy that I am very proud of him for being such a nice boy. I love you very much. Honey, please take care of yourself. Please write me when you can.

Give my love to all.

From Dad

As spring came to Ireland there were more clear weather days, and outside training for the soldiers intensified with an emphasis placed on night fighting. In early April, General George S. Patton inspected the troops of the 2nd ID at Armagh. He then addressed them and told them about the things they would soon have to face.



Arthur admired General Patton for his front line leadership, and later referred to him as “Old Blood and Guts” as many soldiers did due to his determination to win in combat. It was inspiring to hear the Generals’ words that day at Armagh.

In mid-April, Arthur and Oscar said goodbye to their Irish friends as they departed with the 2nd ID by rail to Belfast. From there the troops boarded ships for the short sea trip to South Wales. Quartering for the men in South Wales was similar to that in Ireland.

Pito had sent pictures of her and Rose Lee to Arthur and hoped he would receive them soon. Arthur would always write in his letters not to worry about him. But, of course, everyone at home constantly had worry for their loved ones on the back of their minds.

10 April, 1944

Somewhere in Northern Ireland

Dearest Pito:

Writing you these few lines to say hello and hope that you, Jimmy, and Rose Lee are alright. I got Rose Lee's picture; she looks so cute and sweet, and she is the prettiest baby I ever saw. Honey, please don't worry about me. I am okay. Yesterday was Easter Sunday. I hope you went to church and all had a good time. Please take care of yourself and don't work too hard. Give my love to Jimmy, Rose Lee, and everyone at home. Write when you can.

Lots of Love, Arthur

1 May, 1944
Somewhere in England

Dearest Pito:

Hello honey, I received Rose Lee's picture; the one where you have her in your arms. She looks very pretty and you do too. She favors you very much. Honey, I am somewhere in England, but please don't worry I am okay. You don't know how sorry I feel now that your birthday is coming, but don't forget that enclosed in my letters is all my love, and may God take care of you and the children. I sent Rose Lee a doll, please let me know when you get it. Say hello to Cookie, Mora, and Vera. Hope you have a good time on your birthday. I will go to church here. Will write again soon.

Love, Arthur



The doll that Arthur sent from Ireland for Rose Lee arrived and it was a lovely treasure. Spending her birthday with family kept Pito's spirits up. She was thankful that Leo was still in the States for now. Jimmy was doing well in school. He and his cousins would participate in scrap drives collecting materials for the war effort. They would save foil gum wrappers and rubber bands made into balls. Cookie was working and became very good at managing finances. She volunteered to help at the local USO facility whenever she could.

Pito stayed in touch with Arthur's family in Eagle Pass. She planned to spend the summer of 1944 there. Joe, Tete, and Mary would also travel to San Antonio to visit Pito on occasion. Nana was not accustomed to travel but she was very happy to have Pito and the children visit with her in the summer.

It was important for the morale of troops overseas to receive thoughtful letters and packages from home. It was a very happy day for Oscar when he received a letter from Cookie.....

Somewhere in England.
May 30, 1944

Dear Cookie,

Ah! As I was listening to the mail call, I looked as though I had been struck. I recovered quickly. I smiled happily when I heard my name call. Boy, it was a surprise receiving a letter from you. I thought well, maybe she thought of me after all. I was so anxious to open it. I opened it with a sinking heart but after I read it I felt like being lifted up in your arms. I am so glad you are fine and that your Mother, sisters, Pits and

Jim and Daughter are well.
Give my regards to all. Kiss
the child a hundred times for
me.

When I finished reading your
letter, I got up from my bed
and walked to the tent door
to see the rain. First thought
that came to my mind was,
why not answer before, it is
to late.

So here I am writing to you
hoping you are alright and
wishing you a cool summer.

It is getting dark. I shall close.
Best luck

With Love
Oscar

May 31, 1944

Dear Peto,

I am writing you this letter to let you know that Arthur is all right.

Last Sunday I received a letter from Cookie. She said everyone is well.

Glad to hear that. Give a long kiss to your child. Some day I'll see her but I wish I will be able to hear her sing and play a piano by then.

Best wishes to all.

When you go home, tell Mary I haven't received the package and tell her I would like to have walnuts
With Love Oscar