Milty's Mag

Paris Edition

Milton A. Rothman July, 1945

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On this last day of my first transatlantic crossing, approaching the British Isles, it seems appropriate that I should commence writing the material for the next Milty's Mag; altho it is not long since I sent Fran Laney my material for the April issue.

It was not possible for me to say so then, but that last issue was hurriedly rushed off from the Port of Embarkation just a day or two before I got on the boat, and that is why it was such a poor excuse for a Milty's Mag. This issue will be better, I'm sure, as I should have so many things to say, within the limits of censorship. I'm hoping there will be society departments concerning visits with Doug Webster and Mike Rosenblum and maybe some of the other boys. Of course, tho, at this stage of the game, I can't even know whether I'll be within visiting distance of them for a long enough time. More of that later.

(Later -- so I was actually in Scotland and in England, but was unable to meet the boys there. Too bad.)

April, 1945

Could it be that some people are born to have things happen to them, and other people not have things happen to them? Of course, that is a silly idea, being predestination in its worst form, but let us examine how this applied to a certain Joe:

For a long time events had comtrived to keep serious things from happening to him. Now mind you, he was not complaining, because highly unpleasant things had been prevented, as well as other interesting, and adventuresome events. In other words, he appeared doomed to a life of ordinariness, of commonplaceness, of equilibrium.

In civilian life, he worked and went to school just as thousands of others had done before him. He got into the army, and you might think that things would start being different.

So was he put into the infantry and rushed overseas right away? No. They sent him to college and then to radio school and he hung around in the states for two and a half years before th pressure of events was finally too much for his destiny and he finally got sent overseas.

So was he topedoed and did he float on a raft for 20 days before being rescued? No, he got on the boat with a lot of other guys and it swished briskly along in lovely weather. Later on the weather got worse and the wind nearly blew him off the deck and that was a lot of fun, but the water was not as rough as he'd seen in the movies, and in general the trip was as uneventful as if he'd bought a tourist ticket on the Normandie.

So he drifted gently along thru life, and such stuff, wondering what next thing would be on the program for him, and quite sure that it would be nothing very important.

Paris in the Spring, Tra La.

When this Joe got to Europe, was he transferred to the infantry and sent right to the front with a rifle in one hand and a tommy gun in the other? No, of course. They sent him to Paris and made him stay in a big modern building occupied by the Signal Corps, and they told him he'd have to wait a few weeks before he had any work to do.

So after drying the tears which came when he thought that the war would be over before he started on the job, he set out to discover Paris.

It has been said that everbody has two homes -- his own and Paris. He could see why that was. Everything a person could say about Paris was true. It was comparable onlt to New York in that respect, and was even more colorful and less tawdry. It was modern, clean, beautiful, shabby, unpainted, crowded, cultured, vulgar, luxurious, impoverished, expensive, overflowing with art, concerts, operas, prostitutes, cognac, schools, soldiers, people, and seething with an animation that war could not destroy.

He saw places with famous names, and he did the famous things that were done in Paris. He walked in the Easter Parade along the Champs Elysees. He photographed the Eiffel Tower. He drank champagne between the acts of Boris Godounov at the Opera. He saw the Folies Bergere. He argued with the whores who crowded the streets by the Red Cross Club, waylaying and propositioning every soldier that came along. Yea and Verily, those girls did everything but knock down and drag to their rooms the poor innocent soldiers.

He had coffee at the Grand Hotel, and he played piano at the Hotel de Paris, and there was not less enjoyment because those places were now called the AEF Club and the Red Cross "Rainbow Corner".

He studied piano in a Montmartre Studio and he listened to music by the Societe des Concerts du Conservatoire and by the Hot Club of France.

And once more the world had ignored him, casting him into the backwash of events, while it went along with its wars and he sauntered by having a good time.

I NEVER HAD IT SO GOOD:

There are some aspects of Army Life in Paris which are not particularly publicized, and which make the Army a bit different from anything the Army in America ever was. The boys at the front would have their morale lowered a few notches if it were made known how good we had it in Paris.

The liquor ration is one of the bright spots in our life. In the states you go out and buy all the bottle liquor you can afford. In the barracks it is verboten. Here, however, we can't buy bottles on the outside except in a Black Market, but at the Battalion we hold drawings to see who will have the privilege of buying what out of a number of Scotch, Cognac, Champagne and Wine. So to the unaccustomed ear it sounds a bit strange to hear Joe say, "I have to take my empty Champagne bottle back to the supply room."

Some billets (when you live in a building in a foreign city it's a billet, and not a barracks) have their own bars, with rationed liquor. The bar at the WAC Billets, a former hotel, has lovely scotch. When you eat there as a guest it's like eating at a resturant. Or it was until the directive came out about no more waiting on E.M.'s messes. Towards the end of the evening the lounge in the WAC Hotel is deafened with billing and cooing of OD garbed lovebirds draped all over the joint with magnificent disregard of passers by.

Every night there is a GI in from the front on a three day pass who barges into the WAC Billets asking for a WAC for the evening. Sometimes he gets it. More often not. Someday I shall write a story about the guys from the front who look at men stationed in Paris going out on dates with their WAC friends and who feel resentful about it. But what can they do? The WACs haven't quite descended to the level of the 200 franc Mademoiselles.

It's Rough in the ETO.

The language situation is much fun. You get used to hearing French as she is spoke, and you have hilariousness when you try to talk to the natives with the help of the little Blue Books and about three weeks of lessons at the Red Cross.

The real fun begins when they start mixing up languages. Like when I spoke German with a French Barber who'd been a prisoner in Germany. Or when the Sergeant calls over the P.A. System "Joe Blow report to the Orderly Room toute de suite!" Or when somebody asks you at the Red Cross Club: "Is this the Java Queue, S'il vous plait?"

SCIENCE FICTION DEPARTMENT (Huzzah!)

Report on Science Fiction in France:
So far I have discovered the following:
A copy of Jules Verne's "A Trip to the Moon" on a book stand.
A comic book entitled "Les Hommes Immortels".(The Immortal Men)
A showing of "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" and "Nosferatu The Vampire," which is a 1921 German version of Dracula.

But I haven't really started looking yet. Too many other things to do.

And so we come more or less to the end of this eventful issue. We may claim the honor and distinction of being the first Science Fiction Fan magazine written in Paris. Unless Georges Gallet brought out something a long time ago that we haven't heard about. Ho Hum, another three thousand miles. Where will the next issue be written?

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Stenciled and mimeo'd by Walter Dunkelberger as received from F.T.Laney

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