

*Following are two letters written by soldiers who fought in World War II. The first is by Private Morton D. Elevitch. He enlisted in 1943, and after basic training was sent to Europe, where he served under legendary commander George S. Patton. He participated in most of the major European battles of 1944 and 1945.*

*The second letter is by Sergeant Horace Evers, who enlisted early in World War II and spent much of his time in Italy (Anzio, which he refers to in his letter, is in Italy). He participated in the D-Day assault on France in June of 1944, and helped push the German army to the brink of defeat by May of 1945. He was, as his letter reveals, part of the contingent who took control of German leader Adolf Hitler's private apartment--this letter, in fact, was written on Hitler's stationery. He also had the unpleasant experience, common to many soldiers, of seeing that the rumors of German death camps--exterminating Jews, gypsies, gays, and other "undesirable" groups--were true.*

### ***Training to Be a Soldier***

November 23, 1943

Fort Benning, Georgia

Dear Louisa:

For the Nth time, thanks for your package. Please don't send me any more underwear, socks, or candy. The Milk of Magnesia was absolutely unnecessary. I'M HAVING NO MORE BOWEL TROUBLE AND DON'T ANTICIPATE ANY.

This week they're teaching us to kill. Now you probably looked away and shuddered. I don't like the idea, either, but we all know it's for our own good. The most strenuous work we do is bayonet drill. We lunge about and are required to growl, grimace, and look at each other with hate. They teach us how to withdraw our bayonets in a certain manner, because steel sticks to warm human flesh.

They even teach us how to scientifically stomp on a man. This will

be invaluable in case anyone ever tries to pick on me. By the way everything is done in double time -- puff puff.

Confidentially, I'm tired.

S'long,

Mort

### ***Visit to a Concentration Camp***

2 May 1945

Dearest Mom and Lou,

A year ago today I was sweating out shells on Anzio Beachhead ; today I am sitting in Hitler's luxuriously furnished apartment in Munich writing a few lines home. ; What a contrast. ; A still greater contrast is that between his quarters here and the living hell of DACHAU Concentration Camp only 10 miles from here. ; I had the misfortune of seeing the camp yesterday and I still find it hard to believe what my eyes told me.-

A railroad runs alongside the camp and as we walked toward the box cars on the track I thought of some of the stories I previously had read about DACHAU and was glad of the chance to see for myself just to prove once and for all that what I had heard was propaganda. ; But no it wasn't propaganda at all ; if anything ; some of the truth had been held back. In two years of combat you can imagine I have seen a lot of death, furious deaths mostly. But nothing has ever stirred me as much as this.

The first box car I came to had about 30 what were once humans in it. ; All were just bone with a layer of skin over them. Most of the eyes were open and had an undescrivable look about them. They had that beaten "what did I do to deserve this" look. Twenty to thirty other box cars were the same. Bodies on top of each other ; no telling how many. No identification as far as I could see. ; And then into the camp itself. ; Filthy barracks suitable for about 200 persons held 1500. 160,000 persons were originally in the camp and 32,000

were alive (or almost alive) when we arrived.-

There is a gas chamber and furnace room in one barracks.;  
Two rooms were full of bodies waiting to be cremated. ; In one room  
they were all nude -in the other they had prison clothes on ; As filthy  
as dirt itself.

How can people do things like that? I never believed they  
could until now.

Well enough for now-Miss you all very much.

Your son,

Horace