Letters to Home in World War Two:

Lieutenant Eugene David Mayers

by

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It is . . . difficult to describe someone, since memories are by their nature fragmented, isolated, and arbitrary as glimpses one has at night through lighted windows.[1]

What are all these fragments for, if not to be knit up finally?[2]

Housekeeping
Marilynne Robinson

Contents

Part I-Introduction, 5

Career and Intellectual Orientation, 5

Family Life, 16

Part II-Letters, 20

Before World War Two, 21

Army Induction and Training, 23

Europe and After, 1944-1945, 44

Part III-Coda, 60

Notes, 63
Pictures, 70

Part I-Introduction

Career and Intellectual Orientation:

The First World War had been under way for less than a year when Eugene David Mayers (EDM) was born, 30 July 1915. The United States at the time was not directly involved in hostilities. That intervention did not occur until 6 April 1917, when Congress, at the behest of President Woodrow Wilson, declared war on the Germany of Kaiser Wilhelm II. Still, at the moment of EDM's birth, relations between the United States and Germany (whence came EDM's forebears before the Civil War) were strained, occasioned by the U-boat sinking (7 May 1915) of the British Cunard liner *Lusitania*. The fatalities included 128 Americans, whose deaths sparked strenuous protests and warning (*Lusitania* notes) by Washington to Berlin. Five days before EDM's birth, a U-boat sank an American cargo ship, *Leelanaw*, plying northwest of Scotland's Orkney Islands. Many years later, EDM claimed that his earliest memory was of loud celebrations that marked the end—11 November 1918—of World War One.

Soon after EDM was born (New York City), the Mayerses moved to New Rochelle. His father, Sylvester, was a businessman/importer of pearls and precious stones who provided well for wife and children, until ruined during the last stage of the Great Depression. The family resided on an estate in New Rochelle and owned a summer cottage ("camp") in Belgrade

Lakes, Maine. Into deep age (d. 24 February 2007), EDM fondly remembered the Belgrade Lakes as the place where he learned to swim, play tennis, fish, and canoe. EDM's mother, Estelle, held memberships on charity and hospital boards, helped fund Braille (her husband blinded in one eye), and was active in the League of Women Voters. EDM had three older siblings. In order of birth, they were Martin (Yale-educated research engineer), Emily (pianist on the faculty of the Mannes School of Music), Albert (medical doctor/ psychoanalyst).

EDM packed much into his long life. He was twenty when in 1936 he was graduated—economics major—cum laude from Yale University (Pierson College), where he had been a member of the tennis squad. After college, he worked for a year in his father's business in New York City. He then entered Yale Law School, from which he was graduated in 1940, subsequently gaining admission to the New York State Bar. Social democratic by conviction and supportive of FDR's reforms and the New Deal promise, he first worked for the National Bureau of Economic Research and then for a Washington "alphabet" agency on problems related to price controls and wages. This career did not last long, however. It was cut short when he received his draft notice in mid-November 1941.

From then to late 1945, EDM lived in the United States Army. Although commissioned an officer (lieutenant) in 1942, he did not have to serve in a combat branch. Yet he wanted to see action and volunteered for combat service. He got his wish. He was ordered first to an artillery unit

and later assigned to the 824th Tank Destroyers Battalion (TDB), an outfit activated on 10 August 1942 and composed of roughly 800 men. EDM struggled through arduous training, which alternated with tedium, in army camps in North Carolina, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Texas. Afterwards, he was involved during 1944-45 in campaigns in France, Germany, and Austria—for which he won ribbons and commendations. He was Stateside, awaiting orders for redeployment to the Pacific theater, when the war against Japan ended in August 1945.

Upon separation from the Army, EDM returned to Washington as a lawyer for the Navy Department to draw up government contracts connected to the buying and building of ships. This work struck him as mildly worthwhile, at best, and fundamentally beside the point after his wartime experiences. Consequently, he left Washington to pursue graduate studies, courtesy of the GI bill, in philosophy and theology in a jointly administered program run by Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University. By December 1950, when he married, he was near to completing his Ph.D. and held an instructorship at Carleton, a liberal arts college in Northfield, Minnesota.

As indicated, EDM had separated from the Army in 1945, but had not severed all ties with it. He elected to stay in the Army Reserve. He liked to think of himself as a citizen-soldier and eventually attained (in the 1960s) the rank of lieutenant colonel. In any case, many reservists were called upon to serve in the Korean War ("police action"). He found himself, at

thirty-six, again on active duty, this time as a captain in the artillery, engaged in 1952 Korean combat against Chinese "volunteer" forces.

The years that followed Korea were centered on EDM's immersion in his true calling: college teaching. He won tenure at Carleton, where in the 1950s he was respected for classroom mastery and work on curricular questions (while coaching to championship the college tennis team). After a two-year visiting professorship (1961-1963) to Mills College in Oakland, he won appointment as founding chair of the Philosophy Department at California State University-Hayward (since rechristened, California State University-East Bay).[3] He built that department into a worthy scholarly unit. Despite the demands of administrative chores and the frustrations of university politics, EDM managed to publish essays and present papers at learned conferences. These works satisfied high standards of scholarship, presaged by his 1956 Ph.D. dissertation, *Some Modern Theories of Natural Law*. He concluded it with this even-handed assessment, laced with jurisprudential erudition and underlying optimism:

The tradition of the natural law is characteristic of both man's capacity and his frailty. At the same time that it clearly reflects man's desires for social and political justice, it yet also has constructed its scheme on a basically defective basis. Its aspiration has been of the highest, its tools of the weakest. The result has been that, failing to understand that truth for men cannot duplicate that of God, it has sought nevertheless to affirm such absolutes with the result that it has often affirmed truths either long obsolete or else which block the adjustment to changed conditions of life. Yet . . . the reaction against the tradition is also basically defective. That reaction, refusing to acknowledge men's continuing desire to improve the positive law, and refusing to acknowledge man's capacity to pierce the veil of mystery, however limited that capacity,

has gone so far as to remove from its approach to the law all reference to value. Yet that separation of law from value is not possible and this reaction to the tradition of natural law is no better than the tradition. Surely law must remain a value-oriented enterprise. The discussion submitted **[in the dissertation]** ***is a suggestion for avoiding the illusion of the natural law tradition while yet reformulating its insights.***[4]

As the above quotation hints, EDM was an intense and probing soul, though leavened by winning humor. Intellectually restless, he pursued reliable interpretation and sturdy truth. He found these ultimately in Christianity as refined by such Protestant theologians as Paul Tillich and (particularly) Reinhold Niebuhr. The following words were written by EDM in an autobiographical statement that he composed in 1977. It attests to unblinking self-examination and the yearning of a man, who, son of secular (assimilated) Jewish parents, found meaning in unexpected places. The passage begins with his recounting of 1938 participation in a Yale organization—led by two of his friends—that studied philosophical and religious ideas:

One day they invited Reinhold Niebuhr to address the group. I had dinner with Niebuhr and he couldn't help but make an impression on one. And I started reading Niebuhr—though I did that only after **[something startling had happened]** ***to me . . . I was afflicted with a moderately serious depression at the end of my second year in law school . . . I was under great pressure*** **[connected to family financial distress]** ***and for a couple of weeks I had a bad time. And I remember, working through it . . . that I came to decide that the real cause was a division within me: I talked a lot about social justice but it was a sham—I really meant my own success and triumph. I realized I was a divided personality and*** **[there]** ***lay the real source of my difficulties. Later that year, shortly after war broke out, I started reading Niebhur's*** **Reflections on the End of an Era** ***and his*** **Moral Man and Immoral Society**—***and it seemed to me his conception of sin laid bare my problem. I was egocentric. I cared more about myself than***

anything else and there was a failure of sincerity in all my talk about social justice and equality. I don't think I've ever gotten over that. It was my real beginning I think—and from then on I had to find some relief from that condition. I was convinced of my own self-centeredness, wasn't there anything in the world that could relieve it?

. . . Of all my experiences, my stint in the Army turned out to be the most critical and led eventually to the event that **[caused]** *me to make a change in my life . . . It's hard for me to collect into anything intelligible my army experience. I did everything an army officer is supposed to do: I worked hard and played hard but also bore as great a share of responsibility as I think I've ever had. And though I was often so busy that I didn't have time to think, I was periodically assailed . . . with terrible bouts of boredom and the blues—I was so far away from everything that I liked* **[New York, Washington]***. I fought the battle of Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana out in the countryside—a dismal life . . . It was such an* **[anxious],** *trying* **[time],** *dangerous even before combat. It was also an experience of great tension: people yelling at each other and sweating and straining in their efforts. And I realized my own temperament was too often rude to others and combative or else bored with the entire* **[project]***. Those were my problems I thought: to relate myself affirmatively to others, to be able, also, to exert myself wholeheartedly. But I couldn't get outside of myself. I seemed enclosed in my own egocentricity.*

Yet I also used to think, in taking solitary walks on the weekends, that if I could just find a purpose to life that I would at the same time find the resources to overcome my deficiencies; my need to relate affirmatively to others; my need to have resources for exerting myself, to draw on myself. But I could never see what the purpose was, I couldn't discern any. I read **War and Peace** *while I was in the Army and identified with Pierre who used to walk throughout the countryside and over battlefields* **[searching for reasons to live. Was there any point?].** *Well, in that frame of mind—but well trained as an officer and by now a staff officer, the Adjutant in fact, of the battalion--I sailed for Europe in the fall of 1944, bound for Marseilles.*

And it was there at Marseilles, in the harbor, that this event **[took place]***. We had sailed in convoy across the Atlantic and then divided at Gibraltar, my half of the convoy going on to Marseilles. But we had arrived too early and waited for three days on shipboard until disembarking—and . . . it was on the first day of our wait that I was reading in my bunk when a remarkable thing happened. I discovered what I had been* **[longing for—something solid and uplifting]***. The book in question was . . .* **The City of Man [an extended essay],** *written by a number of most distinguished people. Niebuhr was one . . . I had been reading it when I came upon paragraphs which affected me. Then, more animatedly, I realized that this was what I had been looking for* **[that purpose which had so eluded]***. I've*

realized subsequently that the sentences are laced with Bergsonian and Whiteheadian ideas and I'm a process man, though one tinged with Niebuhrian theistic existentialism—but regardless of that I was electrified with the discovery, or the revelation. I was so excited I scarcely slept that night at all—I remember being on watch in the men's quarters, the hold of the ship, and thinking almost dumbfoundedly. I stayed in that condition in fact for the rest of the time on shipboard—until we finally disembarked and had to walk ten miles up the Marseilles hills with 100 pounds of gear on our backs.[5]

These were the lines that concentrated the mind of twenty-nine year old EDM and helped fortify him in decades after:

A divine intention governs the universe—be it called God or Deity or the Holy Ghost or the Absolute or Logos or even Evolution. The direction of this intention is from matter to life and from life to spirit, from chaos to order, from blind strife and random impulse to conscience and moral law, from darkness to light . . .

The human species is the spearhead of the divine intention, man the necessary ally of that power . . . Man's growth or progress or evolution is not backward toward the savagery of the superman or the gleam of the beast of prey, but forward toward the radiance of the angel. If the divine intention is to be fulfilled, the pursuit of the good, under the inspiration of faith, hope, and charity, must imply resistance to evil, with battle when necessary. It teaches that life is service . . . Individual life is humble in the knowledge of its limits, under the all-human dogma of fallibility. It has meaning only by participation in the unlimited past, into the illimitable future . . . Tenets from the Lord's Prayer still* [apply]*: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."[6]

In the period when EDM grappled with the above statement, he became friendly with an Army chaplain, Paul Gebauer, who, as a German soldier in World War One, had been taken prisoner by the Americans. After hostilities, he became a U.S. citizen and spent years on missionary work in the British Cameroons. In 1945 (month not indicated), he inscribed the following in a book—Niebuhr's 1944 *The Children of Light and the Children*

of Darkness—gifted to EDM: "To Lt. E.D. Mayers—fellow sailor and pilgrim." Of Gebauer and his influence, EDM later said this about the time before going forward from Marseilles:

Well, at the staging area where we remained for another two weeks before moving to the front, I looked up a remarkable man I had met on the way over [to France], *the Lutheran Chaplain of another unit, a German who had been a missionary on his way back to his homeland, and talked to him at great length. I also went to his services as I went to services at the front later on . . .* [Gebauer] *gave me a book of devotions and told me to begin to pray—and I did begin to pray with the most astonishing results: it seemed to me, though I had to experiment a great deal, that my life was changing, my personality finally finding some of those resources I felt I needed for greater warmth and greater zeal in my work. I've prayed ever since but that was when I began. He gave me* [other] *books of devotions too and on the way to the front I remember reading them in my pup tent by the light of my flashlight, shaded so it wouldn't violate blackout requirements. And then at the front I continued my reflections and in some cases my reading, and you may not believe it, but those six months of combat were among the most exciting and fullest experiences I have ever had.*

I*t may strike you as odd but I used to read* The Nature and Destiny of Man [2 volumes, 1943] *in my billet with our Catholic Chaplain and when I came back to Columbia I remember telling Dave Roberts* [vocation unknown] *about that. Subsequently when I met* [James] *Muilenburg* [professor of Old Testament at Union Theological Seminary]*, he said "Oh you were the man who read Niebuhr at the front."*

It [reading/meditation] *was fulfilling because I had found what I had looked for—and in prayer I seemed to come upon a dimension of experience that opened up a whole new life to me. I didn't know what prayer meant, I still don't—though I think religious experience and religious epistemology is something that needs the most serious kind of analysis. I can't believe that God talks to you; it's more an esthetic experience I think, a vision of all of life; but whatever it is there is something composing and cathartic about it that makes the difference for the person who practices it. And with that experience I decided I must do something about communicating the reality of the dimension of life I had had exposed to me. What that was I couldn't be sure—though I spent a great deal of time thinking about it. It meant making up my mind about my religion—I first thought it was undoubtedly to be Christian although I also realized for the first time what the Jews had contributed [to] the world, the belief in the one*

God; and it also meant determining what profession I should follow in doing that.[7]

Thus, young EDM, in Army service in wartime Europe, began to align himself with a pattern of divine/intellectual order that, as he understood these things, transcended him and dignified his life.

Family Life:

After Europe, and still a graduate student at Columbia, EDM took a decision that remade him as fundamentally as had wartime events. He married—30 December 1950—Odette Julia Marguerite née Gilchriest (OGM).

She had been born (10 August 1921) and reared in Springfield, Massachusetts. Her Irish-American father, Bernard, was a doctor (general medicine). Her mother, Odette, was Parisian. Her parents had met when Bernard served as a captain in the Army medical corps in France during World War One. OGM had one brother, also named Bernard, who became a surgeon. OGM earned (1943) her BA at Smith College, where she majored in French language and literature. She had also spent an undergraduate year at the University of Chicago, where she lived in International House and, according to family lore, enjoyed bohemian adventures. Like her mother, who was an accomplished musician, OGM played the violin and piano. After Smith College, OGM moved to New York City. There she

worked for a number of agencies related to European refugees, the British war effort, and then the United Nations.

The EDM-OGM partnership lasted for fifty-five years, until OGM died (12 August 2005). It encompassed passion and confidence along with those vagaries that touch all human lives. EDM reminisced in 1977:

I married a girl who had by then become a renegade Catholic, a girl of Irish-American and French ancestry. She had been reared as a Catholic, and confirmed in the faith, but she was alienated by what she took to be the authoritarianism and the dogmatism of the Church, and she left the Church when she was 16, even before she went to college. Then she went to Smith College and became a modern liberal and rejected all of religion, not very different from the state I had been in. But she never took Protestantism very seriously because she thought all the Protestants she'd ever heard* [were] *wishy-washy and saccharine and with her love of music and the great tradition of Church music, she couldn't abide—and for the most part, still can't—the Protestant hymns and so she never thought seriously about Protestantism. She'd never met anybody who was interested in religion either for that matter until she met me—and then when I took her to hear Niebuhr over at Sunday services in the Union Chapel she changed her mind about Protestants, and saw that some of them at least took evil seriously. We were eventually married in the Columbia Chapel by Jim Pike [later Episcopal bishop of California]***—and we've been somewhat desultory Christians ever since. We have a great time in the family: we have two boys and two girls and regard our marriage as an experiment in comparative religions: a Jewish father, a Catholic mother, and Protestant children—though some closer to agnosticism than to orthodoxy.***[8]

The children born to EDM and OGM were David Allan (30 November 1951-), Marilyn Anne (3 April 1954-), Judith Odette (17 October 1957-), and Peter Michael (15 March 1960-).

EDM and OGM gave their children a coherent, stimulating, and safe world, lavishing time, tales, and games upon them. Pastimes included

digging for ancient fossils in the fields near Northfield. They involved story telling about a motley collection of heroes who quarreled and fumbled their way through northern Minnesota along the Gun Flint Trail; this gang featured a skinny Mozart, a fat Bach, a fierce Wuggabear (inspired by EDM's mother), an alert Smokey the Bear, and a noble Hiawatha. EDM wrestled with his children on what they called "fights on the cliff." There were adventures—in the backyard or basement--of "sheriff," "tugboat," and "tiger." EDM built, from various model kits, herds of dinosaurs, fleets of plastic ships, armies of medieval knights, and packs of dogs. He carved canoes and wigwams from birch-bark. He fashioned animal heads and human figures from bars of soap. He drew pictures for the children of prehistoric animals and scenes from Civil War battles. He took the children fishing, taught them to swim, instructed them in baseball, boxing, football, skiing, and tennis. EDM and OGM provided the children according to their interests: chemistry sets, microscopes, telescopes, books, records, sets of toy soldiers and castles, foreign dolls, story book houses, piano lessons, violin lessons, dance lessons, sailing lessons, horse-riding lessons, college tuition, foreign travel, and two dogs (Shep, a collie, and Cochise, a German shepherd).

The genius of EDM and OGM to love extended beyond the immediate family and included not only their friends, but also those of their children. Later, EDM and OGM embraced as their own Elizabeth Kirkland Jones,

Vladimir Vulovic, and Ignacio Martin, and then five grandchildren: Ivan, Peter, Eva, Sasha, Danny.

Part II-Letters

The EDM collection of WW II letters contains only those that he wrote to his mother and father. What he chose to reveal to them is conveyed forthrightly, sometimes vividly. But hardships and dangers encountered, albeit mentioned, are not elaborated upon, presumably for the sake of his parents' serenity of mind. And rarely does the reader glimpse any of that introspection apparent in the 1977 recollections cited previously.

Of wartime letters to siblings, friends, and other people, none has been located, although to his parents he often referred to such correspondents. Nor have letters that he received from people—parents too—during the war years been found.

The following, in effect, is only the embers, preserved by chance, of a life that burned brightly decades ago. Or, if you prefer Marilynne Robinson's metaphor, the passages quoted from EDM's letters are fragments, here stitched together.

Before WW II:

Just two letters from EDM's pre-World War II life are extant.[9] The temptation is to read more into them than is warranted. Even so, these letters are tantalizing. Dated 22 October 1936, one is from a Scot, George (surname unknown), who earned an MA at Yale, where he knew EDM and his circle of classmates/acquaintances. From Glasgow, George recounted inter alia his obtaining a newspaper job, giving a Labour Party speech in Lockerbie on "the beauty of Socialism," mentioned EDM's (lifelong) friend Gorley Putt, inquired about EDM's doings, expressed interest in the 1936 presidential election (FDR versus the GOP's Alf Landon), and asserted that King Edward VIII was "making rather an ass of himself" over Wallis Simpson.[10] Of that fateful year 1936—German remilitarization of the Rhineland, start of Spanish civil war and German/Italian intervention, flight of Emperor Haile Selassie from Italian-overrun Abyssinia, Berlin Olympics, signing of the Japanese-German Anti-Comintern Pact—George cheerfully commented that his "summer in spite of fears and rumours of war, and Fascist revolt, passed quietly."[11]

The second pre-WW II letter, written in this case by EDM to a friend or perhaps girlfriend, Sue Paris (a year or two younger than he), was also penned in 1936, between Christmas and New Year's.[12] The mood is carefree, playful, sprinkled with quotations from Shakespeare (*Comedy of Errors*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Hamlet*), and intended to persuade her to take brief leave from her parental home in Princeton to join EDM and other Yale/Harvard revelers in New Rochelle to welcome fast- approaching 1937.

To his chagrin, though, EDM then had to rescind the invitation and cancel the party when he fell into the clutches of fever and "la grippe" (amusingly explained in an extended post-script, added a day after the main letter was written). "Anyway," he advised, "have a swell time, and all sorts of good luck for the New Year. I'll see you when you get back to the big city."[13] Not a glimmer of caution or concern from twenty-one year old EDM about the wider world—he and it innocent of things to happen in 1937: opening of Germany's Buchenwald concentration camp, Stalin's purge of the Red Army's senior officer corps, Italy's adherence to the Anti-Comintern Pact and departure from the League of Nations, Japan's invasion of China, the rape of Nanjing.

Army Induction and Training:

Drafted in November 1941, EDM's first experiences of Army life occurred at Camp Upton in Yaphank on Long Island; the town had for a few years hosted Camp Siegfried, a summer destination for Aryan youths run by the pro-Nazi German-American Bund. At Upton, EDM and other men mustered by his New York draft board—like millions of other people elsewhere—were obliged to fit into a military world previously unknown to them. Here are some of his initial impressions of places (induction center to Upton), new comrades, and ways of living far removed from Yale and lawyering. From a crowded and raucous barracks room, he wrote to his

parents in mid-November: "As I've thought and remarked many times recently, this certainly is different."[14]

We gave him* [clerk of the draft board in NYC] *our induction orders, and then he gave us our instructions, made me the leader of the group to the induction station and gave me a fat envelope of papers to hand the Captain at the Army Control Station in Penn Station. We—seven of us, from various walks of life . . .—took the 7th Ave. subway down to the Pennsy, getting there about 9 o'clock. I gave the package to the Control Station—all I saw was a flock of angry-looking Sergeants; if the Captain was about I certainly didn't make his acquaintance—and then we had to wait for about an hour until we boarded a special train which took all of us (two or three hundred strong . . .) out to Yaphank.

On the way I rode and talked with the fellows from my Board—especially with a tough little Irish-American boy named Joe Keating who since has been my buddy . . . He's worked at the Guaranty Trust Company in New York, doing I don't know what—I don't like questioning any of these fellows too closely, curious as I may be—though I'd judge it was most likely in some capacity as file clerk. All told, Joe and I became bosom pals on the train and we've stuck together ever since, through intelligence test, uniform fitting, injections and all. We have cots alongside each other here in the barracks.

Joe and I are two—that leaves five others from my Board, all of whom are in the same barracks with us . . . One of the boys is a big German boy named Karl. Karl's been in this country since 1936. He used to live in Hamburg but began trying to get out of Germany as soon as Hitler came into power.

At this point in his narrative, EDM had to pause and later inserted this passage by way of explanation:

You've no idea how hard it is to write this—I've just taken out about half an hour listening to some yarns from a couple of great lovers from Greenpoint, Brooklyn. One of these is a barber, a little feller who sleeps across the barracks from us. He's brought along his barbering equipment and says he'll give us a shave or a haircut whenever we want it. The other spinner of tales is a big guy who used to have a pool parlor of his own in Greenpoint. Likewise, an attractive specimen.

To get back to Karl—his folks are over in Germany still, but he hated it so much he had to leave and he's been grateful to get to this country, and is delighted with getting into the army. I think he used to have quite a bit of money in Germany but here in this country he's been working in a grocery on 225th St.

In addition to Karl, there's a young boy named Quinn from 231st St., a very nice, young, well-spoken boy, who's making a brave attempt to be cheerful; a tall gawky boy named Tom, who's also very young, and who just got himself engaged to a little girl back home; and two other boys, one named Pettigrew and another named Kennedy, the latter a ball-player.

Elsewhere in this letter, EDM mentioned other chaps, two of whom were burlesque comedians. After appraising his fellow draftees, EDM launched into this recital:

Well, when we finally got here Friday—about 11:30—we had a very brief and speedy physical exam, and then mess. After mess we went and were given some papers and had our measurements taken for uniforms. After that a small talk on why we should take out Army insurance, and then we were all herded into a large lecture hall where we got a variety of lectures, were officially sworn into the United States Army, and then took an intelligence test. With regard to the latter . . . they told me—when I was interviewed on Saturday—that my mark was in the upper 1% of the group. Unfortunately, though I suppose that makes me one of the first four or five in the group, I don't regard it as a very great distinction. There's not exactly a great amount of competition provided by the group.

After the intelligence test we had evening chow, and after that we were finally given quarters. Our draft board ended up in K-3, four of the boys being upstairs, three of us downstairs, Joe and I being together right next to the door. Our Sergeant and Corporal delivered a few well-chosen words to us shortly, which time chiefly prevents my reporting. I wish I'd taken the effusions down verbatim. As works of art—in originality of phrase and vigor of expression—I'm sure they were outstanding . . .

Saturday we rose early, to say the least, made our bunks, had mess, and then came back for various details around Company quarters. My detail was latrine duty. First I scrubbed the tin walls in the shower room, and scrubbed the cement floor. After that I got busy on the toilets. There are five of them in a latrine. First I soaped the seats and then dried them and then I soaped the bowls and then dried them off. The other fellow on the detail with me had meanwhile scrubbed the sinks and polished off the

urinal. After that we had to rush off and be processed—i.e. go and really become soldiers . . .

The processing process took up most of Saturday. We entered one side of a large warehouse-like structure, spent three or four hours therein, and eventually exited on the other side replete in uniforms. The three or four hours inside were taken up by a lengthy personal interview as to past record and experience, a hilarious fitting of uniforms and shoes and distribution of equipment, and injection of three varieties of serums for immunizing us against typhoid, small-pox and tetanus . . .

After the processing we got mess again and then had Saturday afternoon off. As we had some alterations to be made in our clothes we donned outfits like the very beautiful one you see me wearing **[reference to a photograph enclosed in EDM's letter but since missing]***. People outside the army don't know much about them—I'm sure you must be secretly humiliated to think you sent your son off to wear garb like that—and the first time I saw them I thought they must be convict clothes. Actually they're "fatigue" clothes—and we're in them practically all the time. Only on visitors' day, and late in the afternoons, do we wear our regular khaki uniforms.*

Saturday afternoon and evening I spent with Joe and some of the other Catholic boys I've become thick with. Had some beer early in the evening, and went for a little walk, and hit the hay early.

Sunday up fairly early but otherwise nothing very much, though I enjoyed myself greatly. Joe had some of his family out—fifteen of them—but I missed 'em. Instead spent the time walking around in the nice autumn sunshine with some of the other boys, reading the **Times** *and beginning this letter.*

Incidentally the episode with the **Times** *was typical and priceless. I'd gotten it earlier in the day and had it lying around the bunk. Some of my buddies came in later in the day and were horsing around with Harold Frees, the boy who sleeps on my other side—incidentally before he was inducted Harold was an undertaker—and they mistakenly thought that the* **Times** *belonged to him. "Say Harold," one of the fellows say, "What 're you tryin' to do with the* **Times***? Show off?" For the most part, they all buy the* **Mirror** *but just read the funny sheets . . .*

We got up early again, had mess, then listened to one of the Majors encourage us to enlist in the regular army. After that sat through three different movies, each well done, on various phases of Army life necessary that we know. The first—"Army Courtesy"—the second, "Personal

Hygiene"—the third "Sex and Venereal Disease"—arranged obviously in order of ascending emotional intensity.

EDM ended his account of first days at Upton in this unsettledness, which stirred humor, sarcasm, and flecks of premonition:

So far honestly having a tremendous time . . . I'm doing all the things and meeting all the wonderful people we'd all like to do and meet but never are able to because of the need for sticking our noses to a particular profession and getting ahead in the world. The rest of my life I'll meet nothing but stodgy middle-class folks, and stuffy intellectuals, and do nothing but the conventional routines of civilian life. But now, for a little while, I'm being forced into a position where I'm faced with exceptional people and exceptional situations. For the moment it's been very entertaining.[15]

Perforce, EDM and his mates quickly adjusted to their Upton surroundings while swept into military training and the acquiring of new habits. The physical demands were unceasing as twenty-six-year-old EDM readily admitted. Luckily, he was fit. He also retained his ebullient spirits and was not adverse to playing prankster, evidenced when his brother Albert, at the time a recently commissioned lieutenant (later a major) in the medical corps, entered the picture. EDM, a lowly private, delivered this account to his parents in late November:

I can declare quite definitely and unequivocally that I am tired. In the last two days I've done more physical work of one sort or another than I've done in a considerable time, so I suppose I've a right to be tired . . .

We **[Company K]** *resumed our station at the rifle range, with a little more excitement, than Friday, as the soldiers permanently stationed at Upton arrived for shooting practice and stayed the whole day as did we. The feature of the day for us was the arrival on the scene of the ambulance and Lieutenant Mayers. As the latter was one of four or five officers there, for fifty or sixty privates and non-coms, his rank was greatly revered and presence distinguished. He didn't see me at first when our detail was*

struggling with such chores as distributing 100-pound sand bags and carrying our communication platforms and gun-stands, but he spotted me later after he'd asked some of the draftees with whom he was standing around an open fire if they knew his brother (this informality only after he ordered them "at ease"). They of course shrieked—they being the Catholic Bronxites I've been palling with—and directed him to me; I was meanwhile at the other fire our detail was tending for the benefit of the riflemen.

Incidentally we had some sport with the ambulance driver after the Lieutenant had left us and resumed his place among the other officers on the range. The driver was one of the Greenpoint **[Brooklyn neighborhood]** ***gentry with the beautiful command of English and personal charm that all his colleagues possess. We called him Joe, though he later confided that his name was Charlie.***

Well, after Al walked away, Joe (nee Charlie) immediately wanted to know how I knew the Lieutenant. "Oh, him," I says with the disdain clearly rising in the cut of my inflection, "him I used to work with on the roads. He's a terrible heel, he's owed me five bucks for the last three years and I was just trying to collect it."

I think Joe (Charlie to his mother) was impressed. Moreover, he saw possibilities in the situation for me. If I'd only capitalize on my favorable position—I don't recall if he put it in such Oxonian phraseology—I could put my finger on the Lieutenant, so to speak, and get special privileges for myself—maybe, who can tell, for the other lucky fellows of Company K. I haven't acted as yet on Joe's suggestion. But he's treated me with much deference ever since and it's clear he knows that I'm a man to know and to watch.

We were out on the range Saturday afternoon again. Joe was there with the ambulance again but no Lieutenant Mayers. We'd evidently convinced Joe of the baseness of the Lieutenant's character for he was outraged about some inconsistency in the Lieutenant's conduct. (Considering what the worthy officer was burdened with at that stage of his mental and emotional development, I wasn't shocked to hear that he might possibly have slipped up.) I don't **[know]** ***what it was all about. Joe had been ordered to stop for him at the hospital after lunch but the Lieutenant never showed at the appointed hour and Joe was no little miffed at that "jerk Lieutenant," as he called him familiarly (an epithet the use of which we didn't discourage).***

I dunno—maybe if was bad for morale.[16]

When, whether, and under what conditions EDM confessed the above mischief to Lieutenant Mayers remains unknown. Plainly, though, relations between them did not suffer. The Lieutenant allowed the Private to socialize (off Upton) with himself, wife Elizabeth, and father-in-law—a welcome respite:

Sunday morning, the* Times*. And rain—lots of it.

Sunday afternoon, Al and his spouse, and the spouse's father . . . drove over, picked me up and I rode around with them for awhile, talking mostly with the father-in-law, who seemed decent and intelligent. Later we went over to Al's quarters, Elizabeth and Pa drove back to Patchogue* [a Long Island village]*, and Al and I sat in the common room, listening to the Philharmonic and reading the funny sheets . . . Later Elizabeth returned and Al drove me back to my camp for evening chow at five o'clock . . .

Monday morning—pick and shovel detail digging cinders located (by some queer twist) out in the fields, loading on a truck for transporting to the parking space, there to be spread over the patches of dirt. Monday afternoon—drill. Monday nite—movies. Also Monday nite—tired.

Tuesday, all day—K.P. in a Blackhole of Calcutta at Camp 1 that resembled a mining-camp mess-hall more than a United States Army preserve. And when I say K.P. all day, I mean it. They woke us specially for it at 5 o'clock, had us in the Blackhole by six, and kept us there busy every single minute until eight-thirty. I was engaged most of the day with sloughing off the slop from the trays, a task in which I was joined by my friend Joe the wrestler. At one point in the more hectic moments of the noon meal Joe observed mournfully "All that time in collitch and here you are washing dishes. Tsk!"

***Today—morning—more pick and shovel. This afternoon—drill, and lots of it. Tonite—tired, definitely.*[17]**

By mid-December 1941, EDM had escaped latrine and K.P. duties at Upton and was assigned to Fort Bragg (North Carolina), there to undergo thirteen-week basic training as an artilleryman. In the meantime, the

surprise attack at Pearl Harbor had occurred (7 December) and the United States, allied to the British empire and USSR, was at war with Japan, Germany, and Italy. Meanwhile, as EDM reported to his parents, the Bragg training was in earnest but the prevailing mood unruffled:

The news of the war has been taken very calmly down here. We all listened to the President's speech a week ago yesterday in which he asked for the declaration of war against Japan, and I'd say that was the only time that there's been any tension here at all. Each Battery listened to the radio in its own mess-hall. After the speech our Battery Commander said a few words—he's a very bad talker—and that was that. Not a thing occurred Thursday when we got into it with Italy and Germany and the Battery Commander's talk after the President's has been the only official mention we've had of the war—aside, that is, from a few instructions to the effect that our mail may be censored and also that we'd best not specify any facts and figures in our letters.

If anything it's been too apathetic—but that's not especially the fault of the boys in camp. It's simply the circumstances. We have very few radios, those we have got we never have a chance to listen to, and the only available newspapers are terrible country rags which cover the situation very inadequately. . . It sounds ludicrous, I know—you'd think we'd be completely on edge over the news but it hasn't worked out that way at all. Rather remotely we realize that the war may have serious consequences for us—and we make a lot of sentimental jokes about it—but for the most part we're concerned only with all the new things we're learning in our training program—which continues—famously.

The real event . . . was the overnite hike our battalion went on last Tuesday. The whole crowd marched off in columns, row upon row, each of us dressed in overcoat, rifle belt (with canteen and first-aid kit), rifle, gas-mask and pack, a great long row marching mass of soldiers, looking just like in the pictures. That nite we slept on the ground in pup-tents—I was one of the few who really slept; it was cold, this Carolina climate proving to be a snare and a delusion—and came staggering back to the barracks the next morning . . .

We've also been learning about and driving the big trucks that pull our 75's [howitzers] and that also carry us . . . And as usual we've been running and doing calisthenics with the rifles, which is no picnic. And to vary the program we've lately been having many practice blackouts and air-raid drills.

Two months in uniform, EDM still felt the tug of his civilian days and interrupted legal career.[18] Specifically, he wondered about a missing letter (contents unknown) from Yale Law School. He also mentioned to his parents a concern about a law book that involved previous labors and his pride as editor for the text's appendix:

If you look in the pocket appendix of that casebook that the West Publishing Co. sent me I think you'll find a footnote or something some place to the effect that "this appendix was edited by Eugene D. Mayers." I wish you'd let me know if you find it. I've never seen it yet, myself, except when the book was still in the galley proof stage.[19]

Just before Christmas 1941, EDM told his parents that life at Fort Bragg was tolerable. Even his abbreviated legal career seemed to merge neatly into his artilleryman's routine:

Our Gun Squad is pretty good . . . Our chief of Section is the young Sergeant of our Platoon. The Sergeant keeps saying we have the best Gun Squad in the Platoon if not in the Battery and usually supports it by calling attention to the fact that we've a judge for a gunner. "Judge"—that's rapidly becoming my only name.[20]

EDM got a promotion of sorts and was hopeful of further preferment. He wrote in a Christmas greetings:

The greatest excitement in my life at present is that I've just been made an Acting Corporal and now wear an arm band with a couple of stripes on my arm. I also order the Buck Privates around and don't have to do any more work details—such as K.P. . .

. . . all told I guess it's just a matter of weeks before I'm made General.[21]

Pursuant to obtaining general's epaulets, EDM had first to vault from the enlisted ranks and win appointment to Officer Candidate School (OCS), which he obtained in 1942. From early May to late July, he was assigned to Fort Sill (Oklahoma) and placed in Officer Candidate Class #23, which enrolled five hundred aspirants. In time for his twenty-seventh birthday, he subsequently was awarded a commission: second lieutenant (artillery).

Of Oklahoma, EDM had no prior ideas, never having ventured west of the Mississippi. Would he, he wondered while en route to Fort Sill, be able to slake his thirst as the need arose. Overall, though, he was ready for "this new territory. I understand it's chuck full of Indians and buffalo but surprisingly low on fire-water."[22] Later, after several days at Fort Sill, he delivered a meteorological review: "Oklahoma's incredible . . . One day it's 100; the next 50; and the third day we have a combination [of] thunder, hail, and sand storm to pep things up."[23]

OCS was a demanding school, compared to which, in EDM's estimation, Yale, law school, legal practice, and Camp Upton and Fort Bragg were relatively mild. He told his parents in mid-May: "Really, it's absolutely incredible—I didn't know it was possible to be so busy day in and day out all week but evidently it's the normal routine here . . . I figure if I can live through this, I can live through anything." Still, EDM found compensatory satisfactions: "For one thing I'm working with a fine bunch of boys. Of my tent-mates (six to a tent), two others are lawyers (isn't that

funny?) and one other is a journalist. We're also learning a great deal, and doing some pretty strict soldiering . . ."[24] As his later correspondence indicated, EDM and his lawyer/journalist tent-mates became companionable.[25]

Most every hour at OCS was heavily subscribed. He explained the rhythm of his daily life with a blend of matter-of-factness, bravado, and astonishment:

I usually get up at 5:45. I immediately begin to dash and I literally don't stop dashing—double-timing is the Army phrase—until I go to bed, which is usually between 10:30 and 11:00 at night.

Up at 5:45 and dash for the latrine where I wash and shave. Back to the tent, make my bunk, sweep up the tent (spotlessly), shine shoes and brass, dress—leggings usually included—and fall out at 6:45 for inspection and a 15-minute session of . . . mass commands and being looked over by the officers.

They have out here what they call the demerit system—which, simply, means that the officers walk around with little pads and pencil and whenever a poor unfortunate critter commits a boner, no matter how minor, his name is taken, and he's subsequently awarded an appropriate demerit or demerits. Offenses can be for anything: dirty shoes, dirty brass, bunk improperly made, clothes hung improperly, bad table manners, talking in ranks, not marching at attention. Incidentally, they require here an exaggerated position of attention, called bracing. Shoulders drawn as far back as possible; chest high as possible; chin drawn in; it's quite a strain assuming and holding it for our extended formations, marching, and foot-drill period . . . So far I haven't gotten a demerit but my time is coming. You can't help messing up sooner or later.

After the reveille drill, breakfast at 7:05. Back to the tent by 7:20 for fixing the tent up perfect for the inspection it has to stand during the morning. First formation at 7:45 and march (a little less than a mile) off to classes, which last from 8:00 to 12:00. Then march back to the tent and at 12:15 march to lunch. Formation again at 12:45 and march off again to classes from 1:00 to 5:00. March back to the tent area, and top off the afternoon with a little foot-drill and criticism of us as Battery Commanders from 5:15 to 5:50. Back to the tent and march to supper at 6:10. Formation

again at 6:45 and <u>march</u> to <u>compulsory</u> study period from 7:00 to 9:00. That'd be all right if we were through then, <u>but</u> the assignments are always so long that I never yet have gotten to bed before 10:30. I usually shower before going to bed. On nights before tests—and we have them every other day—I'll be up till about 11:00 or a little later.[26]

The courses centered on Motors (trucks) and Materiel (personal weapons, artillery pieces, machine guns), Gunnery, Communications, Tactics, and entailed maneuvers, both daytime and night. The officer candidates meanwhile were toughened, as EDM explained to his parents at the end of May:

This week the temperature has shot up over 90 during the days, it cools off a little at night . . . I suppose you've heard about Oklahoma and the Dust Bowl—well, it's blowing a continual 50-mile gale here so that at the same time you're sweating your head off you also are having a ton of sand blown into your face which cakes into mud. I use up a hankerchief a day just wiping off my face.

But I'll tell you one consequence of it which is doubtless desirable. And that is that I'm beginning to feel very sorry for the Japanese and the Nazi Army—because when they run into us they're going to have their hands full. Of course they'll have had a lot of experience which we won't as yet have had, but by God I'll bet they won't have had our training. I can't see how they could have; frequently I can't see how we can have had it ourselves. It'll be a pleasure getting away to a front and resting up for a while.

In a hardly obvious assessment in the days after General Douglas MacArthur fled the Philippines and thousands of American soldiers on Luzon had surrendered (9 April 1942) to Japanese forces, EDM wrote reassuringly from Fort Sill: "Put your dough on the American Army. I can't see how it can lose."[27]

The few moments of pause on Fort Sill weekends, however valued, rarely aligned with civilian amusements. Images of Yale, and his father's

rowing prowess, may have floated like a mirage before EDM when he wrote on 30 June:

The last 2 weekends we've been witnessing demonstrations—anti-tank . . . and infantry attack coupled with artillery support—which have very inconsiderately occupied our Saturday afternoons . . . watching them when it's 100 in the shade isn't exactly like watching a couple of crews row past on a New England river.[28]

That OCS was worth applications of his physical and mental exertion, EDM did not doubt. The cost to U.S. taxpayers, in waging the "the greatest cause in history" (EDM's phrase), also did not bother him. Nevertheless, he mused as OCS graduation neared:

Do you know it costs the government $8,000 to send a soldier through OCS? It's mostly in ammunition. One day we fired problems with the 155 Howitzers. I fired that day, and I guess my problem took about 10 rounds. Each one of those shells cost $45—so there in about ten minutes or less I blew up almost $500. Another time I fired a problem, using two guns, that took all told about 24 rounds. That was with the 75's, at about $25 a round, so there went another $600 just like that. It's a shame I can't cash my training at a bank.[29]

A freshly minted lieutenant, EDM was next ordered to Fort Hood in Texas and attached to a training center for the newly created Tank Destroyers (TDs)—lightly armored, power-punching, fast vehicles. These ultimately employed 100,000 soldiers, formed into seventy-one battalions. Their intended mission was to combine reconnaissance, support of infantry, and destruction of German tanks. In the first two tasks, the TDs later proved effective. But in the third their achievements were few and the TDs sustained high casualties: 5,000 killed, many more wounded.[30] **A**

consequence of this—with belated revision of tactics—was that the TD men altered the official motto. "Seek, Strike, Destroy" was changed to "Sneak, Peek, and Retreat." Still, the TD crews were a sturdy lot and their education was exacting, as conveyed in this June 1943 account by EDM of a week in the Texas life of the 824th TDB:

The course here, though it's famous chiefly for its Obstacle Course and Infiltration Course, is actually composed of a number of regularly scheduled classes which the troops attend with the Obstacle Course thrown in for good measure. The classes all pertain to types of fighting we might be forced to engage in when deprived of our primary weapon, the 3"-gun. So we go to classes on Street Fighting (the "Nazi Village"—by far the cleverest and best class), Close Combat, Night Fighting, Woods Fighting, Demolitions, and a couple of other unimportant classes. These were interesting but were overshadowed by the Obstacle and Infiltration Courses.

The Obstacle course was something. We'd run it first thing in the morning. The whole battalion—officers and men—was dressed in class x fatigues, old beat-up fatigues that you didn't have to worry about getting filthy or torn. First thing we came through—wading if that's what you could call it—a stream about ten or fifteen yards wide up to your chest. Then up a steep bank in your sopping clothes and on about 100 yards to a wall you scaled. Then on to a horizontal rope about ten feet off the ground and 40 feet long that you went along arm over arm. Then another 150-200 yard run up and down a small hill to a log wall 15-feet high you climbed up and then jumped off on the other side. Then on your back under low-lying barbed-wire aprons for about 25-30 yards. Then up a 20 feet rope to a platform and down a rope on the other side. Then through a mud creek and up a damned high hill that's practically perpendicular and known lovingly as puke-hill.

That began our mornings. Just before lunch we'd run half of it—down the hill (which meant you had to climb up to the top), over the perpendicular ropes, under the barbed wire, and over the log-wall jump. At the end of the day we'd run the whole course again. I usually went to bed fairly early. Can you beat it, though—I had [to participate in] a court-martial out there in the field the very first night.

The Infiltration Course is the famous one in which you crawl along under machine-gun fire and past craters exploding dynamite. Actually, aside from the work-out in crawling which is plenty, there's not much to it and not especially dangerous. Of course it's very noisy but I'm so used to explosions and gun fire of all sort now that I can't find that especially alarming. What you do is to crawl on back or belly a distance of about 50-60 yards with machine gun bullets over your head, about 1'-1.5', and with half-pound sticks of dynamite being detonated around you. Of course it's highly desirable that you avoid the craters but you can do that easily and so that about all there is to it is the business of crawling—which after the obstacle course isn't something for which you're very keen.

I meant to say that we lived out at the Course in pup-tents the whole week we were there. My friends the chiggers ate us alive and do you know what I discovered when we struck camp Saturday—merely that I'd had my sleeping bag over a nest of little snakes the whole week. Incidentally, one of the prize questions of the men is to ask what they're supposed to do if they're crawling along in the Infiltration Course under machine gun fire and they come face to face with a rattlesnake. I originally told them the question was academic but now I'm not so sure.

And guess how we finished off the week? Well, I'll tell ya—by taking a 5-mile walk in the pouring rain, along mud-soaked ruds, which we were supposed to do in an hour. Uniform: steel helmets and packs. Our company did the 5-miles in 62 minutes—the whole company too, even though 2 men we promptly had to dispatch to the hospital. Incidentally, I meant to tell you that we wore our steel helmets the whole week—including during the little jaunts over the obstacle course.

Really, I wasn't at all unhappy to get back to camp. And take a shower. But you know, it's funny just what you can make yourself do and that's the idea of it—to make you think there's nothing can stop you.[31]

Concerning rattlesnakes and machine guns, EDM later commented to his parents—registering one of his rare written remarks regarding African American soldiers, in contrast with his civil rights activism and commitments in 1960s Oakland:

I'm dubious about the story about the snake. My room-mate—a newly acquired 2nd Lieutenant for the Battalion—was an instructor out at the Infiltration Course for about a year and in fact used to be one firing the machine gun. We all tell the story about the soldier and the rattlesnake—

he's usually a colored soldier—and Andy says it did happen on one occasion. But I doubt that it's happened so frequently as to involve the surprising number of individuals which the abundance of stories would indicate were in that predicament. But if anybody did stand up he'd be an awfully dead goose.[32]

Of vastly greater interest to EDM than tales of snakes and cornered solders was his love life, centered in 1943-44 on an Arkansan: Dusty (surname unrecorded). He wrote about her to his parents and sent them her photograph.[33] Probably, Dusty and EDM met while he and elements of the 824th were briefly detailed to Camp Robinson, near Little Rock. In any event, she eventually made her way to California, moving to Beverly Hills. There she became secretary to the story editor at Myron Selznick and Company, the preeminent movie agency.

In February 1944, after a two-month stint of grueling maneuvers that involved 500,000 GIs in the Louisiana swamps, EDM visited Dusty.[34] He thought southern California scenery attractive and the social scene glamorous: "mighty impressive though I suppose I'm susceptible to that sort of thing after 2.5 years in Texas, Oklahoma, and points south." Of Dusty, he reported that her work was "intriguing . . . [keeping her] in a constant dither what with New York publishers, authors, et al." Still, not all was bliss, he reported:

I've been staying at Dusty's apartment in Beverly Hills which has considerably defrayed expenses and which isn't so modern as it sounds as there's a hefty sullen-looking roommate who sulks around to defend Dusty's honor—the consequence of this being that we all three are worn out staying up till all hours trying to steal a march on the other.

During this Beverly Hills visit, EDM came to a decision: "We're <u>not</u> going to get married <u>now</u>."[35] Perhaps later—which time never came.

Six months after his California furlough, EDM and Dusty chose to go separate ways. Set against his looming embarkation to Europe, a somber EDM informed his parents:

Dusty and I have officially disentangled each from the other. It was unquestionably inevitable. We didn't suit each other, we couldn't have lived happily together, and the whole thing was wrong from the beginning. And I think each of us realized it all along. But these things are so subtle, so intangible, and so inexplicable, that we were caught up in something not of our own making. We arrived on it because we, quite genuinely, liked each other so much, and still do, but it wasn't love. I discovered that quite clearly when I came east* [on a furlough] *and all my feelings quite seemed to evaporate for the affair. She was reacting similarly at the same time. Now finally what with letters probing here and there and finally coming clean and confessing all, we've finally clarified the situation to the relief of both of us and to the harm of neither.

Of course it's much better this way. It's just the broken dream that hurts. Dusty's not the one but I realize more than ever how much I want a wife and family of my own, and how very remote are the prospects of my realizing any of same.[36]

Europe and After, 1944-1945:

On 14 October 1944, the 824th TDB, Major Clint Smith commanding officer, set sail from New York upon the *Le Jeune* amidst a convoy/naval escort that ferried 15,000 men to France.[37] Between landing two weeks later in Marseilles and the end of hostilities in May 1945, the 824th passed through or near to Avignon, Lyon, Dijon, Epinal, Baccarat, Saverne, Bitche, Mannheim, Heidelberg, Stuttgart, Heilbronn, Ulm, and Garmisch-

Partenkirchen and ended at Austria's Innsbruck. "Maybe some time twenty or thirty years hence the missus and I can return and re-trace our present dogged route," EDM suggested in mid-December.[38]

The rapidity of advance against retreating Germans through France and the crumbling Third Reich allowed EDM little time to write, his correspondence anyway subject to Army censorship. But he wrote to home when possible, within officially permissible parameters. One of his aims was to reassure his parents. On Boxing Day 1944, he sent word to them from a snow-covered post in Lorraine:

We* [824th TDB] *are and have been operating now for the past month with the Seventh Army. We're attached to one of the Divisions of the Seventh, and have become practically like one of the Division's organic units . . . We began in Lorraine, then went into Alsace and are back in Lorraine—something I hoped you were able to infer from what I wrote previously about speaking with the natives, because, as no doubt you know, German is mostly spoken in both these provinces. In their hearts they're truly French, but out of their mouths it comes all German. . .

I'm frank to admit that I prefer Lorraine any day to Texas. . . . And one thing I want you to realize is that I'm in much less danger than you probably imagine. Remember this: that as a member of the staff I'm in a headquarters and behind our guns, and that for the most part our guns are behind the infantry, and that when all put together, Battalion headquarters is safely behind the front lines. I have the most profound admiration for, and a sense of humility and guilt when I think of the infantry rifle squads—but remember I'm not up there with them. There's been very little danger in any of our positions, aside from ones where a few shells were lobbed over into towns we were occupying a couple of weeks ago. It's hard for me to explain because of the current distorted notions of war—due chiefly to false advertising and asinine reporting. Actually it's nothing at all like what I had been taught to expect . . .

There's terrific misery and horror connected with the war but it's narrowed down to that thin gray line ahead and people even a little as half a

mile away from that thin gray line can be, and are, surprisingly comfortable.[39]

A few days later, on 1 January 1945, which date coincided with his parents' fortieth wedding anniversary, EDM added more reassurance, even as the Germans launched a counter-offensive, *Nordwind*, against Allied forces in Alsace and Lorraine. This began with a massive shelling barrage. Casualties eventually totaled 29,000 American, 2,000 French, and 23,000 German.

It's odd I know you have some ideas as to the difficulties of my present position; in fact they're negligible, and regardless of the fact that one's in combat one's mind and ideas are much the same that they were—and so are one's memories. Last night I played the New Year's Eve game with myself which consisted of recalling where I was and what doing three, four, five, six, seven, eight years ago. **[The arithmetic implied revisiting those December 1936 plans that EDM devised for a New Year's Eve party.]**

Meanwhile time elapses and we all become veterans. So far as my job goes it continues as always to be something of a cross between chief-arbiter of the disputes which occupy so much of our time, unfortunately—the greater battle is that of personalities not with the enemy—and father-confessor for half of the battalion's officers. My assigned mission is the same as before—the triple responsibility of supervising all administrative matters, aside from supply, all matters pertaining to personnel, and lastly, while we're operating in our field dispositions, the housekeeping of this elaborate forward command post. . .

I've attended the local Catholic Kirche a couple of times and have again visited my friend the mayor. As yet I haven't vowed anything for the New Year—though I've given up smoking again for about the ninety-fifth time.

I can definitely state that the war will be over this century. I refuse to select the year.[40]

Not long after the Germans' *Nordwind* ground to a halt, EDM's luck soared. In late February, he was ordered to Paris in connection with a

week-long assignment related to the Army's Information and Education school. Its goal was to disseminate material to soldiers on "why we fight" and prepare GIs for duties in inactive theaters. While in Paris, he managed to rendezvous with a few Army friends and civilian acquaintances, the latter of whom included war correspondents. Clearly, the journalists sometimes annoyed him: "I wouldn't mind if they clearly understood their function and were as concerned with their jobs as we are with ours but I object seriously to their egocentric preoccupation with their careers and with their alcoholic whimsy which they use to cloak their guilt. It doesn't sit well after some of the things I've seen." While driving their jeep through the city, EDM and driver "picked up Ernest Hemingway and his latest [woman] . . . Hemingway is living in Paris now writing inferior stories, I'm told, for *Colliers*."[41]

In contrast with such irritations, the city's stateliness and inhabitants delighted EDM. He became friendly with the proprietress and staff of his residence (L'Hotel Mont-Fleuri), dated a Parisian, Michele (surname not recorded), and walked in the Tuileries, the Louvre, and through old city neighborhoods. "So long as there is Paris," he wrote his parents, "the nation that created it cannot be discounted. Any nation that could conceive such a city must still have something in it. I hope I'll see it again." In this same missive, he added, by then having returned to the front: "I wasn't unhappy to come back—not because the war or the army has changed so much as I have changed—not boasting, merely acknowledging something I

know to be true."[42] Perhaps he meant to intimate that "conversion" event in Marseilles harbor, to say nothing of passing trials of combat.

After this Parisian interlude, the pace of EDM's life quickened again as he and the 824th crossed into a Germany on the brink of unconditional surrender. To EDM this German drama involved certain satisfactions:

The first place we stopped in was most elegant and we lived like princes. As you probably know, the policy of non-fraternization is strictly enforced which allows us to accomplish our billeting most readily. All we do is run the people out of whatever homes we require—and we always require an ample number—and let them double up with whatever neighbors they find they have left . . . That first **[instance and at a palatial place]** ***was especially pleasant as the*** **[owner]** ***was obviously a well-heeled fat heel who'd likewise obviously played ball with the Nazis. I made the mistake in that case—one I've since corrected—of giving him and his attractive daughter and servants a halb stunde*** **[30 minutes]** ***to vacate but they cleared out quick enough.***

His home was terrific—made doubly so by the fact that he was a wine merchant and had a most spacious, well-stocked cellar, built on two levels. As a result we've had an ample supply of Champagne and Sparkling Burgundy on hand ever since—with all due respect to that other familiar policy which forbids looting. The other feature of the place worth mentioning was the green-tile bathroom with hot and cold running water—our first exposure to same since coming overseas—and the bathtub was kept busy every minute of the three or fours days we were there.

After that place we moved into a little farming village and after that—our first stop east of the Rhine—at the funniest place of all, an old Polish Labor Camp, which the Nazis of course had abandoned. It was very much like CCC camps **[Civilian Conservation Corps of New Deal origin]** ***in America, aside from the barbed wire enclosing the area, harking back to less happy days, and also aside from four Polish and one Russian girl which the Nazis hadn't had time to take along.***

Since then we've hit a few more places, none of which **[was]** ***especially noteworthy. One time we had already taken over a couple of Gasthauser in one little town—and I was looking forward to holding sway in them—but had to give them up immediately when the orders came that our***

halting was premature and that we had instead to chase on another ten or fifteen miles.

So far the people have been docile, at times even being downright cooperative, but so far the Non-fraternization Policy has been more than lived up to in letter and spirit. After we move into town the first fellow I see, after chasing the families out of what are to be our quarters, is the Burgomeister. I order him to produce all the rifles, pistols and ammunition anywhere in the town and by a certain hour. He produces and most of our personnel is presently exceptionally well-equipped with firearms, to the point that our CP **[Command Post]** *is every day more and more resembling a self-propelled arsenal. After we've taken our choice, the balance of the weapons are turned over to the MPs.*

Actually, however, I'm not very much of a souvenir hunter—I seem to have very little of the collector instinct in me. In fact aside from the Gestapo cap I picked up for Ton **[Jonathan Harris, son of EDM's sister Emily],** *I haven't taken anything. That was a hot one, as a matter of fact. At this first place I mentioned some of our troops located a Gestapo Headquarters which had evidently just received a brand new shipment of assorted Gestapo headgear. So of course we were all more than well-hatted. Each man in the CP had one—and wore it constantly till an order was finally issued that the only headgear to be worn was that authorized by the United State War Department. It was quite a picture though—all of us tromping around in that tremendous mansion wearing Nazi caps, siegheiling and throwing the Nazi salute at the slightest opportunity. All that plus the Sparkling Burgundy—which I've decided I prefer to Champagne. Imagine having the choice!—and you had quite a comic opera.*

Of course we're not thrown off our guard by any apparent docility we may so far have encountered and we're constantly alert for the worst.

At the moment we're standing still—but it shouldn't be long before we start off again.[43]

As commemorated by Americans and their Western partners, Victory in Europe Day (V-E Day) was 8 May 1945.[44] **On 13 May, a Sunday, EDM wrote a letter to his parents from a site near Innsbruck, where his 824th TDB ended the war, having traversed vast stretches of France, Germany, and Austria. Here in an account to his parents are traces of large subjects, long since examined in detail by historians: the collapse of German resistance**

on the western front in spring 1945, the plight of displaced people, the Shoah (Holocaust), the coarsening effect of war on ordinary people, GI comportment, and German civilian attitudes:

I know I have considerable ground and time to cover to bring you up to date on the last two weeks of the war and the blissful pastoral period since VE Day.

Those last two weeks were mad all right, and also very wearing. It wasn't so much a fight as a road march. On April 23d the S-2 **[Intelligence officer]** ***and myself and four of our enlisted men were on detached service with our old Division—the 100th—as a provisional Military Government detachment, in which we had had a riotous time rounding up displaced persons (the term given by the Military to the Poles, Russians, Czechs, Croats, Slavs, French and thousand and one others held by the Nazis for labor) in one of the large towns the 100th was then occupying. On the night of the 24th we were recalled to the Battalion and the next morning the Battalion moved out on a 50-mile road march to join its new parent unit, the 103d—and, in effect, never thereafter stopped moving till we reached Innsbruck.***

It was a cuckoo chase. There was no organized resistance, and the Germans gave themselves up in droves. The doughboys rode on tanks and our tank-destroyers and just drove and drove, night and day. Whatever scattered pockets of resistance were encountered were by-passed and frequently we entered towns which the doughs had just zipped through and the Wehrmacht there hadn't discovered till a few hours after that the only sensible thing to be done was to surrender. The number of prisoners taken was so enormous that at one town personnel from our Battalion headquarters had to operate a cage, and I had a hugely entertaining four hours one morning as warden. We fed them a meal—500 of them—through the courtesy (?—we ordered him) of the local Burgomeister; it was the biggest chow line I've ever seen. And among these Uber-mensch were a flock of high ranking Obersts and Oberst-Lieutenants who'd been on the faculty of their Cavalry School, an arrogant bunch of Prussians, if ever I saw them, who unfortunately no longer knew the answers.

One thing I observed, however, and it's funny in a way, and disappointing in another, and that was the contrast in the appearance of the German and the American soldiers. There is no contesting the fact that the Nazi officers are much swankier in dress and bearing than ours, and the same goes for the men. Of course many of theirs were badly

bedraggled but so were ours and the question often seemed to be who was worse off, the pursued or the pursuing. Sometimes I used to be almost ashamed of the ragtail bunch of Joes I used to take along with me on my quartering runs. In going through the houses we were taking over we often found German soldiers who'd either sought refuge in their houses or, sometimes, were peacefully waiting for the Americans to give themselves up, and I'd order them outside and post a couple of our guards on them till the Battalion came up and we were able to deliver them to the cage. Well, frequently the contrast between the well-groomed Nazi prisoner and his frazzled American keeper was comical. I used to feel ashamed of them for the impression they must have made on the civilians—who must literally have been astounded that this collection of ragamuffins should rip through their country at such staggering speed—and finally I'd give them little lectures on "wearing of the uniform" each time before we took off.

On these quartering runs I'd also have occasion to talk with some civilians—in explaining what they should do, etc., in evacuating the houses I had just finished telling them we would occupy. Nothing much more than that—non-fraternization and all that, you know. They are a weird lot, I will say, though the ones I met weren't very fierce. If there were any werewolves among them they certainly didn't display any of their proclaimed characteristics. Many of them alleged that they were glad to see us which I think they did more from the relief that we weren't Russians than that we were Americans. For the most part they impressed me as a naïve people who didn't care to think for themselves and who were willing to respond to anyone who gave them orders and were, and are, accordingly, waiting now for orders from us.

But those things I've spoken of, their soldierly qualities and their what you might almost call docility, doesn't exhaust the German scene—they're only incidents and more favorable ones at that—and please don't imply too much from them. I've also seen some other things that aren't so pretty. One of these are the displaced persons I spoke of earlier, and you see them by the millions here—20 million all told I think were in Germany. From all the countries of Europe they are, living and working here in camps and on farms under slave conditions. So long as they were here, the common people of Germany can't enlist my sympathy very much as they benefitted from them. Every small farming village had scores of them and there was plenty of evidence that these farmers treated them brutally. One place we came to a young Russian boy of 21 turned over to me the names of all the Nazis in the town and then begged me for my pistol so he could go shoot the Burgomeister. I was tempted but finally told him to wait till we moved out. In another place, when I was on detached service with the Military Government, I turned up a camp which held upwards of 600 of them, families and all, mostly Russians who were the wildest, most unkempt crew imaginable. They crowded around my jeep and jumped and

shouted and I half believed they were going to dismantle the jeep on the spot.

And I've also seen enough of the inmates of the concentration camps so that my cup of mercy doesn't exactly run over for the poor Germans. In one town we uncovered three Polish Jews who'd been evacuated from Buchenwald by the SS, but whom they had had to leave behind when the chase turned into a rout. And they were the most horrible look specimens! Emaciated, their heads cropped, faces festering with sores, and their ankles and legs so badly beaten with clubs that they could only hobble along like lame dogs. And as we drove through Bavaria we saw scores of others in similar condition, wearing the striped uniform and close fitting knit hood which was the concentration camp uniform. A friend of mine with the Military Government also told me of uncovering the camp at Landsberg **[a subsidiary of the Dachau concentration camp, located near Munich]** ***where they discovered a camp of 1570, of whom 70 were alive. The rest were dead but were still lying in the same quarters with the living, and the latter, many of them without clothes and emaciated as skeletons, were huddled together to keep warm among the piles of the dead. He told me they had the Nazi officers, the higher ranking the better, evacuate and bury the dead and clean up the filthy mess generally.***

No, I'm not about to embark on any "be kind to the nice Nazis" program. Everything they got they had coming to them. I was only sorry when I saw the occasional town, like Partenkirchen **[located in southern Bavaria along the Austrian frontier]**, ***that wasn't touched, that all of their country, every last hamlet, wasn't leveled.***

The chase did take us through some wonderful country, however. We went through Oberammergau **[site of the renowned Passion Play]** ***and also spent a few days in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, the Lake Placid of Germany and the scene of the 1936 Olympics, where we occupied a terrific mansion. After that we moved on down into Innsbruck, part of the Division (the 103d) hooking up with the Fifth Army in the Brenner Pass. And there, last Saturday, the 5th, the surrender was made for this part of the Front. The next day we moved about twenty miles out of Innsbruck to occupy a sector along the Inn River in the heart of the Tyrol, and in as beautiful country as anything I've ever seen. The river cuts a small valley through the Alps which tower up to snowy peaks on both sides and since we've been here the sun has been bright and the sky blue and it's been almost hot.***

Since Tuesday and VE day—which here was anti-climactic as the fighting had by then been over many days and also as we knew that a considerable part of the war still lay ahead of us **[assignment to the anti-Japanese war]**—***we've caught up on our food and our sleep, remembered***

again some of our sweet dreams of peace, and today even had a holiday, our first since we disembarked at Marseilles on October 29th.

We've also been encumbered with occupation administration which has been more amusing than anything else. Much of it in these past few days since peace has consisted of rounding up PWs and displaced persons, and rousting out any suspicious characters. One killing thing happened today. Last night I had bought four small kegs of beer for a party for the Officers this afternoon, and put them in the river to cool off. Well, of course, the river is very swift now and of course the kegs were washed downstream away from the bank where I had placed them. As soon as I heard about it this morning I grabbed my driver and reconnoitered the river for the kegs. Sure enough I spotted two of them—the other two are gone forever and are probably on their way now in the Danube out to the Black Sea—caught on some snags in the middle of the river, about half-a mile downstream. "There's no sense our catching p'monia," says my driver, "when we have those fine healthy Germans around," to which I agreed unhesitatingly. So we came back got two of our prisoners—political, not military—got them into their trunks and with a group of eager GIs as spectators took them back to the river. One of the Germans tied a rope around his middle and going into the stream, which he acknowledged to be Schnuwasser—and it was as the melting snows from the mountains feed it at this time of year—fought his way out to the first keg. Then he untied the rope from himself, tied it around the keg, and the other prisoner started hauling it in. But the first feller wasn't much of a boy-scout **[EDM had been an Eagle Scout, Order of the Arrow]** ***because the knot slipped off—and so the other kraut had to join his pal in the middle of the river and the two of them pulled and tugged first the one keg in and then finally the other second one. "Beer ist gut kalt" said one of them when the mission was complete. He was right—it was.***

Both of these characters had distinguished themselves earlier in the week by splitting open an old Polish woman's skull, and for that brave act, after some of our boys, of which my driver was the chief, had worked them over a bit, we locked them up under guard. After the interview with my driver one of the jokers looked like something out of a meat-machine—but subsequent to that we didn't touch them, just worked them, and fed 'em. Well tonight we told them that tomorrow they were to be discharged. But can you beat it they said they wanted to stay with us and keep working for us. It killed us, but the Colonel decided that he'd punish them and release them.

<u>They're nuts. I tell you, they're nuts.</u>

I meant to tell you and never did that your books came about two weeks ago. They're swell—thanks a million. It looks as if I may have plenty

of time for reading now. I also got three letters this week . . . also a box from **[brother]** ***Marty . . . Incidentally, has the stuff I sent the kids*** **[to nephew Jonathan and niece Pamela]** ***ever gotten there or not?***

Well this has been a long letter—but I'm 2/3 a civilian again these days and breathing easier.[45]

Sundry chores in American-occupied Innsbruck weighed on EDM—"I've a barrel of administrative work to attend to"—but he relished the spell of peace, albeit anxious about pending redeployment to the Pacific. He also felt this twinge, expressed a day before his mother's birthday, 26 May: "Once again I won't be there to celebrate it. But I'll be thinking of it and wishing her a happy birthday. I don't think you really know what your family and the ones you love mean until you've been far away from them, in time and in space."[46] **Still, EDM remained hopeful. He allowed himself in Austria to entertain "brilliant ideas" for his postwar future, "though I suppose they will all work out quite differently." In this vein, he confessed: "I've decided the first thing I want to do is get married."**[47]

As with countless returning veterans who felt themselves removed from everyday American life, EDM's transition to civilian habits was rougher than he anticipated. The fraternity of soldiers and their incommunicable hardships set him apart from family and other people. During Stateside furlough in July 1945, he was moody and preoccupied. By way of explanation, he made this cautious apology in August to his parents:

I've considerable regrets about my leave and I feel that I failed to reflect in my action what I've come to think and believe in. I don't suppose I was the most joyous person to have around and I do know that I was far too often resentful and critical. I can understand some of that a little better now after coming back to the Army again and I know it will take time for me to adjust again to civilian life. Partially, perhaps, it was because I felt that our experience was utterly unappreciated, and to that extent that we have become isolated from those older and younger who stayed at home; and also perhaps because the identity of purpose among men, which first became discernible to me when I was in the Army, isn't very apparent in civilian life. Of course it isn't the Army's fault that we all work together; we have to. But I can't help but regret that most civilians neither feel the fact of, nor the need for, brotherhood. I do expect to adjust to civilian life eventually again—and I'm only sorry for the discomfort and unpleasantness I may have occasioned you while I was home.[48]

EDM's outlook improved in the late summer, to which cause the deactivation of his unit at Fort Jackson in South Carolina contributed. He reported to his parents, as the prospect of relocation northward dawned and as he and fellow officers relaxed, pursuing varied recreations:

The object that's blighted my life for the past 37 months, the noble 824th Tank Destroyer Battalion, is no more. It died this morning at 0001 11 Sept. unwept and, aside from a few Austrian girls who still nourish ideas of their emigration to various choice sections of Brooklyn such as Greenpoint and Williamsburg, unsung . . . Yes, gone are the days of footdrill, rifle marksmanship, retreat parades, and maneuvers—and their demise moves us not at all.

At the moment we are doing nothing—absolutely and positively nothing . . . I suspect we will continue to find our amusement in tennis, swimming and golf.

This last week-end I went down to the shore for the sun and the surf—and enjoyed it mightily. Up till today it's been outrageously hot here but it's cooled off somewhat today and I have hopes that shortly the afternoons and evenings may become bearable. More than that, however, I hope soon I'll be at Fort Dix **[New Jersey]** *and in NY every Wednesday and every week-end.*[49]

On 17 November 1945, EDM was demobilized at the Separation Center in Camp Gordon, Georgia. In mid-March 1946, he obtained full relief from active duty, having recently been promoted to captain.[50]

Part III-Coda

Seven years after his Camp Gordon discharge, EDM was again in combat, again writing to his parents, although the volume and intensity of correspondence had, understandably, shifted from them to OGM. From Korea in August 1952, he offered them an informed opinion about the Sino-U.S. war and the drama of ideas and purpose that entangled him:

Maybe I'm wrong but I have the feeling that the Chinese are as sick of the nonsense as we are and I think it'd take a most prodigious effort on their part to get us out of here now.

Of course the fact that they're sick of it and yet don't end it is the disquieting thing. I'm afraid the only inference from that is that we're in for a long struggle. And I think, as you might probably guess I would, that that struggle is only partly economic. It's ultimately a struggle for values, for what one is living for, and if America is unable to define its purpose or its values, it will lose that struggle. Possibly that's one reason I get so burned up about the complacency and indifference of most of the people at home. Korea may be far away, the military conflict may still be far removed, but the real issue, the meaning of life in this the 20th Century, couldn't be closer at hand for them. And pleasure, self-absorption, or success, is no answer to that relentless issue. I thought that when I came back from the war in Europe; I think that more strongly now as I prepare to come back from the one in Asia . . . .

In a few weeks I will be on my way back—to my friends, family, and beloved work. I've been lucky enough to live through two wars, to have become acquainted with a larger view of the world's work than most, in fact to have seen more of our country and of the world than most. I will not let those blessings go to waste.[51]

Twenty-five years after his Korean assignment, EDM, witty and gently self-deprecating, remarked to a group of Berkeley-area scholars with whom he periodically met:

A prospective employer once made* [this comment] *when I applied for a job with his college, one of the more important appointments. When I told him of my career and of my decision to try philosophy instead of law, and then of my experimenting with philosophy of religion and perhaps the ministry only to give it up for straight philosophy, he turned to me with an air of the greatest pain and asked me "But why Mr. Mayers does it all have to be so complicated?"[52]

Complicated, indeed, eventful too as illustrated by passages from letters and other retrievable fragments of EDM's life.

One cannot know how many hundreds of times EDM heard Taps sounded on military bases in the United States or in encampments elsewhere. Following, in any case, is the text to Taps played at the end of every Army day—fitting words on which to end this glimpse into the experiences and thought of a World War II soldier:

Day is done,
Gone the sun,
From the hills,
From the lake,
From the skies.
All is well,
Safely rest,
God is nigh.

Notes

[1] **Marilynne Robinson, *Housekeeping* (New York: Picador, 1980), p. 53.**

[2] **Ibid., p. 92.**

[3] **Two of EDM's lectures survive: "Nietzsche and the Transvaluation of Values," 26 January 1967; "The Contemporary Movement: Atheistic Existentialism," 9 February 1967.**

[4] **EDM, *Some Modern Theories of Natural Law* (Columbia University, Ph.D. dissertation, 1956), pp. 194-195.**

[5] **EDM, *Autobiography Presented to the Pacific Coast Theological Society* (hereafter *Autobiography*), 11 November 1977, pp. 5-8.**

[6] **Herbert Agar et al, *The City of Man: A Declaration of World Democracy* (New York: Viking Press, 1941), p. 47-48.**

[7] **EDM, *Autobiography*, pp. 8-9.**

[8] **EDM, *Autobiography*, p. 12.**

[9] **Also surviving is an illustrated children's book, Seymour Eaton, *The Adventure of the Traveling Bears* (New York: Barse and Hopkins Publishers, 1915). It contains EDM's early childhood scribbling in pencil and attempts at writing words in the unsteady and exaggerated letters of a youngster: "This book belongs to Eugene David Mayers." EDM's Yale transcript, 1932-36, also exists, showing good grades in his courses: chemistry, classical civilization, economics, English, German, government, history, mathematics, and physics.**

[10] **Gorley Putt (b. June 1913), native of Devon and graduate of Cambridge University, attended Yale as a Commonwealth Fund Fellow. There he earned an MA in 1936. During the Second World War, Putt served as a Lieutenant Commander in intelligence in the Royal Navy. Much of his academic career was on the English Faculty at Cambridge, where he was a fellow of Christ's College. His primary research/writing focused on Henry James. To EDM, Putt inscribed this in his *Henry James: A Reader's Guide* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967): "On 9 September 1981, in Berkeley, California, Eugene Mayers bought this book with his own money, to the amazement and pleasure of his friend Gorley Putt." EDM and Putt last saw each other in summer 1993, when EDM and OGM visited him at Christ's College. Putt died in April 1995.**

[11] **George (surname unknown) to Dear Gene, 22 October 1936.**

[12] **Sue Paris's sister was Rosemary. She married Arthur Mizener (1907-1988), who had been an instructor in the English Department at Yale during EDM's undergraduate days. Mizener and EDM became friends. Mizener later taught at Carleton College, where he was instrumental in EDM's recruitment to the faculty. In 1951 Mizener joined the English Department at Cornell University and produced many scholarly publications. These included biographies of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ford Madox Ford.**

[13] **EDM to Dear Sue, Monday nite (December 1936).**

From: Marcie Porter <mmporter@fairpoint.net>
Subject: Re: slight edit of plans
Date: April 4, 2017 at 8:21:24 PM EDT
To: "Mayers, David A" <dmayers@bu.edu>

I finally found at least one of my mother's diaries that I was looking for. Unfortunately they are written in teeny writing that I don't have the time or patience for at the moment, but I did find these two readable entries:

October 6, 1936: Gene Mayers has called me up. Going out with him. Very enjoyable and stimulating person.

December 13, 1936: I have dinner with Gene every so often. He is working hard. Will probably go out for Law Journal.

Marcie Porter (daughter of Sue Paris)

[14] **EDM to Dear Mother and Dad, 16 November 1941.**

[15] **Ibid.**

[16] **EDM to Dear Mother and Dad, 27 November 1941.**

[17] **Ibid.**

[18] **An observation worth making lightly and without over-interpretation: EDM used the phase "a snare and a delusion" in his 1936 letter to Sue Paris as well as in his 1941 account of North Carolina's December chill. This was the first sentence in the letter to Sue Paris, brimming in youthful self-consciousness and purported worldliness: "At best life is but sham and tinsel, 'a passing shadow that struts and frets its hour upon the stage,' a snare and a delusion, a short but merry one." From there, EDM elaborated his plans for the prospective New Year's party and Sue Paris's joining the festivities.**

[19] **EDM to Dear Mother and Dad, 16 December 1941.**

[20] **EDM to Dear Folks, 24 December 1941.**

[21] **EDM's Christmas card, "Great Guns! It's Christmas," to his parents, 20 December 1941.**

[22] **EDM to Dear Folks, 3 May 1942.**

[23] **EDM to Dear Mother and Dad, 14 May 1942.**

[24] **Ibid.**

[25] **EDM to Dear Mother and Dad, 24 May 1942.**

[26] **Ibid.**

[27] **EDM to Dear Mother and Dad, 31 May 1942.**

[28] **EDM to Dear Mother and Dad, 30 June 1942.**

[29] **EDM to Dear Mother and Dad, 12 July 1942.**

[30] **John Gimlette, *Panther Soup: Travels Through Europe in War and Peace* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008], p. 15.**

[31] **EDM to Dear Folks, 7 June 1943.**

[32] **EDM to Dear Folks and M.A. Mayerses, 16 June 1943.**

[33] **EDM to Dear Payrents (deliberate spelling by EDM), 31 October 1943 and EDM to Dear Folks, 21 November 1943.**

[34] **Gimlette, *Panther Soup: Travels Through Europe in War and Peace*, p. 16.**

[35] **EDM to Dear Folks, 29 February 1944.**

[36] **EDM to Dear Folks, 27 August 1944.**

[37] **Gimlette, *Panther Soup: Travels Through Europe in War and Peace*, p. 17.**

[38] **EDM to Dear Folks, 14 December 1944.**

[39] **EDM to Dear Mother and Dad, 26 December 1944.**

[40] **EDM to Dear Mother and Dad, 1 January 1945.**

[41] **EDM to Dear Folks, 6 March 1945.**

[42] **EDM to Dear Folks, 6 March 1945.**

Not until August 1971 did EDM, with wife and children in tow, return to Paris. The occasion was to show Paris to his wife, a gift for her fiftieth birthday. During that visit, EDM and son David visited L'Hotel Mont-Fleuri, located near the Place de l'Etoile: 21 Avenue de la Grand Armée. Neither then nor ever did EDM mention Michele to David; the same appropriate reticence obtained during visits to Notre Dame, where EDM and Michele (and her mother) had in March 1945 attended mass. What, if anything, EDM confided to OGM remains a matter of conjecture.

[43] **EDM to Dear Mother and Dad, 12 April 1945.**

[44] **As traditionally observed in the USSR, the end of the European war centered on 9 May 1945.**

[45] **EDM to Dear Folks, 13 May 1945.**

[46] **EDM to Dear Mother and Dad, 25 May 1945.**

[47] **EDM to Dear Mother and Dad, 3 June 3 1945.**

[48] **EDM to Dear Mother and Dad, 24 August 1945.**

[49] **EDM to Dear Mother and Dad, 11 September 1945.**

[50] **According to his Military Record and Report of Separation, EDM in November 1945 stood at 5'8" and weighed only 142 pounds.** A similar report, at the end of his Korean service, indicates that **EDM weighed 170 pounds, no doubt owing to OGM's fine cooking and his salubrious Korean outing.**

[51] **EDM to Dear Wugga and Dad, 23 August 1952.**

[52] **EDM, *Autobiography*, p. 13.**