

## **From book, *Mollie's War, Letters from a World War II WAC in Europe***

Here is my mother's letter home on the first Veteran's Day in newly liberated Paris....

PARIS, FRANCE 12 Nov. 1944

Dear Beck:

Another letter the hard way—but I don't have too much time in the office—so here I go again pen in hand, scratching off a few lines. Wrote Sarah today, too, but was fortunate in being able to knock it off on the typewriter.

Still haven't rec'd any of those packages—just the one I wrote you about containing Nescafe, gum, etc. Didn't receive Mr. Burns' letter either.

Must tell you about the Armistice Day Parade here in Paris. I still recall the ones we used to go to—you, Jackie & myself—but this was really the "cat's meow." It started about 6 AM— maybe not actually but there were gendarmes (or draculas as we call them with their all-enveloping capes) & G.I.'s, too, directing crowds that early, lining up the streets near the Arc de Triomphe, along with the great numbers of people who probably ran back to get sandwiches & hustled back to regain choice spots from where they would have an advantageous view of the celebration. And, Beck, I think the parading or celebrating was still going on this morning.

Florence (another WAC) & myself left the office at 10:30 AM & we made a "bee line" for Champs Elysees (one of the main streets in Paris that runs into the Arc de Triomphe). Honestly the people were packed like sardines (trite but true). Florence & I were standing on tip toes but couldn't see very much. All of a sudden I felt my feet leave the ground & I had a most wonderful view of marching soldiers. I turned around as I felt myself being put gently back to earth—it was the

captain! I thanked him & both Florence & I laughed. We walked farther on & we decided to stand back near the buildings away from the crowds along the streets. We did have a better view. We saw Churchill go by in a car but weren't quite sure. However, when we heard the people shouting "Vive Churchill," that confirmed it. Besides I had said to Florence "I know we have a long range view of the parade, but no one but Churchill's cheeks are puffed out like that!"

The one minute's silence at 11 AM brought to mind the folks back home—wonder when we'll be coming home. I know, Beck, it won't be too soon.

The streets were so crowded, we couldn't get over to see the Arc de Triomphe where the Tomb of the Unknown soldier is located but from the distance (only about three blocks) we could see displayed on the Arc de Triomphe the immense, magnificent Tricolour (flag) which had been used in previous ceremonies—but had been hidden these 4 yrs of occupation.

Today, at noon, we braved the crowds & went to see the flower-covered tomb. We didn't have time to stand in the queue to pass around to see all the flowers. Smitty, Loddo & I walked along the sidelines & saluted the tomb where the Unknown Soldier rests & the eternal flame flickers. We did get a good view. The flowers were beautifully arranged in oblong fashion about 3 yds wide & half block long. It was a most touching sight. \*\* I hope we don't have to fight this war over again in 20 years!

It's getting late now so I shall have to close—I know it's abrupt & --but anyhow—"hello" to Mom, Pop & Jackette. Hope to hear from you soon. If you need another request here goes—candy (if you can get anything that resembles pecan roll—ummmmm), gum (again), gum drops, tea, Nestles chocolate (so we can make hot chocolate). Anything else you can think of??

Love, Mollie