

We Remember

Dear Mum,

Happy birthday, Mum! I wish you a lifetime of happiness. I hope this letter finds you well and arrives in time for your birthday.

As I sit here in beautiful Ortona, surrounded by the blue-green water of the Adriatic Sea, I miss you terribly. I am so saddened and disgusted by the war that rages on. I often recall the stories that Nonno used to tell me about growing up in Abruzzo. I can only imagine the peace and tranquility he had here growing up. In another lifetime, this place would have been magical and calming. Just imagine the fresh smell of ocean air, the cafes and restaurants, the beaches, and the warm sun.

There is death and desperation all around me. I find myself missing home more and more with each passing day. Please send news from home to keep me connected to you. How is Dad? How is my sister? What is the family doing these days?

I must update you on the latest in the war. I arrived with my fellow soldiers from the 1st Canadian Division in July 1943 and joined Operation Husky, which was the invasion of the island of Sicily by sea. We managed to overpower the Italians and they surrendered.

We met German resistance a few days later in a town called Valguarnera, and had to go house-to-house, engaging in fighting and killing. But, with our American and British allies, we persevered! The Germans evacuated Sicily in August this year.

Next we met up with the British army to invade mainland Italy. We marched up through the "boot" of Italy, fighting Germans all along the way up. The fighting was heavy and harsh, with deaths on both sides.

Christmas was a sad and depressing affair. The war came to Ortona again. While there was a delicious dinner prepared for the soldiers, it was hastily eaten during a break in battle. Then it was back to fighting and trying to stay alive. We managed to force a German withdrawal closer to the end of 1943. We celebrated the New Year with a heavy toll - 2600 Canadians wounded, 500 died. We evacuated 3900 people for battle exhaustion and 1600 for sickness. We started this campaign with 20,000 soldiers.

As we start 1944, there are discussions of where in Italy to fight next. The soldiers are tired, but know they cannot let Hitler win this war. We will be headed off soon to wherever we will fight next. I am pretty sure that we will be sent to Rome next because that is where most of the enemy soldiers are now.

I miss you and Dad terribly so. I don't know when I will be able to write again. This war seems to have gone on forever, without an end in sight. I hope and pray that the war ends soon and I will be able to return home to my family.

I love you.

Keep well,

Your very loving son.