2442 Sqdn. R.A.F.R
Royal Air Force,
B. L. A.
29. 4. 45.

Dear Mum & Dad,

Many thanks for your letter & parcel which I received a couple of days ago.

I'm so glad you are all well I am in the best of health.

The news is very good the last day or two isn't it, it certainly looks as if Germany is done to be forcing unconditional surrender to the British. I can't see it lasting many days now, I shouldn't be at all surprised if it's finished by the time you receive this letter.

The weather isn't so hot these days is it, I'm cold now writing this, it's not a bit like summer here, in fact it's tried to snow today. What is it like at Muddiford for weather.

I must tell you about this. I had a day out the other day to see one of the German concentration camps or so-called horror-camps, a believe me I've never seen anything like it before. If anyone had told me of what it was like I would never have believed it, or if I'd seen pictures of it, but now I've seen it myself I know it's true. My only regret was that I hadn't any films to take some photographs to show you what it was like. We were allowed to go anywhere in the camp & see anything that we liked. The first thing that greeted us when we got inside the gates was a huge pile of bodies, completely naked, just thrown one on top of the other & a lorry filed up with them all ready to be taken away to one of the mass burial grounds. The next thing was the crematorium where they used to dispose of the bodies before they got

shock of coal, some still having the remains of bodies in them. The number of deaths by the way ranged from sixty to a hundred-and-sixty per day. I'm not kidding you've never seen anyone in such a state as those blokes were in, those who were living were just like living skeletons, very few had any flesh on them at all, the majority were just skin & bone, literally starved to death. I should never have thought that men could live to get into such a state.

On the kind of barrack square which they had, was a monument erected to the memory of 51,000 who had died there since the camp was opened about four years ago.

The worst sight of all was the hospital, I'm afraid to say it nearly turned me up & that's not very easily done. There were men, old & young there who hadn't even the strength to sit up in bed to

drink a bowl of soup, all they could do was roll over on their sides & drink it. All they could do was plead with you to give them chocolate, everyone you saw had the same word on his lips, "chocolate". I regret to say we weren't allowed to give them any or I'd have given them all I had, but we were warned before we went that we must not give them food of any description because their stomachs are in such a state that it would kill them straight away. We were allowed to give them cigarettes but nothing else!

There was one place there which I didn't fancy seeing at all & that was the tannery. ~~there~~ There any man who died & had a good tattoo mark on his body, his skin was used to make handbags or purses which I understood were sold publicly in the shops, whether the people who bought them knew what

they were or not I'm afraid I don't know.

When this camp was in full swing it held as many as 80,000 prisoners & then they had to sleep in the billets on alternate nights, the other nights they had to sleep outside in the open air.

Apparently when the camp was overcrowded they used various ways of getting rid of the prisoners. The favourite way was for a guard to take out a working party & get them marching in single file, then he would take off a blokes hat & throw it away. He would then be told go & fetch it, if he did he was shot for breaking the ranks & attempting to escape, if he didn't fetch it he was shot for disobeying an order so whatever he did he still got shot.

The majority of the prisoners were Russians Poles Czechs, Jews & German Political Prisoners. As far as I could gather there were no

British or Americans there at any time.

Outside of the camp was a huge quarry or what could have been a large bomb-crater. This was where they buried the dead by just tipping them over the side so that they slid to the bottom, then the other prisoners had to dig earth from the sides to cover them up. They were in such a hurry when they left that there were about fifty thrown in but not covered up & you could see by their bodies that some had been beaten to death their heads being just a mass of pulp.

It was certainly a sight which I shouldn't like to see again, but it would open quite a few people's eyes in England, there are still far too many who think it is just propaganda when they read it in the papers or see it at the cinemas on the news. But believe me what you read about it is true.

So much for that I hope you don't get dreaming about it or having nightmares. The next time you hear anybody say they don't believe it show them this letter it may convince them.

Let's forget that for the time being anyway, could you settle an argument for me Dad, it is about shot guns, is a 16. bore gun a longer range than a 12. bore or shorter & also is a 16. bore any good for rabbiting. Also would you do me a favour the next time you're in town would you take me out a gun-licence & send it on to me.

We had a draw the other day to obtain a roster for leave & I was drawn number 34 so I didn't do too badly, but even now I don't think we shall get it until June at the earliest.

I hope Reg has arrived home by now & also I know what sort of state Phyl will be in.

8.

Well I expect you are about fed up with reading this so I will close for now.

Cheerio for the present;
Yours ever loving son,
Jack.