



## Letters Home from PFC George Higgins HQ 358th KIA 16 Mar 45 near Halsenbach, Germany

### Courtesy of his son George (Pete) Higgins

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*1945 February 1, - Luxembourg*

From Pfc. George F. Higgins, HQ & HQ Co., 358 Inf. Regt., 90th Div., serving with Intelligence and Reconnaissance,

"Had a pretty good sleep last night - the floor was kinda hard but I'm almost used to that now. There's three of us from various outfits staying in the attic of a large house while our vehicles are being repaired and it looks like I'll still be here tonight which doesn't make me mad! Tell Petey his daddy sends his love and would give anything to be with you both now." [Mom called me "snooks" and dad called me "Petey". In reality I was named after dad and am therefore, "George, Jr." but dad was nicknamed "Pete" and so was I; so "Pete" or "re-Pete" in family circles, became my social name.]

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*1945 February 2, - Belgium*

From Pfc. George F. Higgins, HQ & HQ Co., 358 Inf. Regt., 90th Div., serving with Intelligence and Reconnaissance,

"I received my ribbon today for being in the ETO for 6 months. I'm supposed to have a star on it for combat but I'll get that later, no doubt - I'm in no hurry, there's no one here to impress!"

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*1945 February 4, - Belgium*

From Pfc. George F. Higgins, HQ & HQ Co., 358 Inf. Regt., 90th Div., serving with Intelligence and Reconnaissance,

"I was made regular driver of the jeep I took back for repairs. It started off good by getting a flat tire which I repaired this morning - and I gave it a grease job this afternoon." He also told mom, "The eagle flew today so you should receive \$33.60 from the government sometime in the future for my last month's pay. Also signed an allotment to you for my February pay as I have no use for it."

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*1945 February 6, - Germany*

From Pfc. George F. Higgins, HQ & HQ Co., 358 Inf. Regt., 90th Div., serving with Intelligence and Reconnaissance,

"We've been having lots of rain lately - the snow is practically all gone and everything is muddy again, just like when I first came to France. Received my combat infantryman's badge today - that's the one that's worth \$10.00 extra per month. I'll really have a chest full of stuff when I get home (it'll be a big load off my chest when I get home, too!)"



## 90<sup>th</sup> Division Association Personal Submissions

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*1945 February 8 - Germany*

From Pfc. George F. Higgins, HQ & HQ Co., 358 Inf. Regt., 90th Div., serving with Intelligence and Reconnaissance,

"Golly, hon, it was really a shock to learn that Bill had been killed. I guess he'd been right up on the front lines since sometime in July. It makes a person realize how awful war is when a relative gets it, and I certainly hope it can end soon." [My Cousin Bill Steen retired to Luxembourg; his grave only a short stroll from that of my father's.]

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*1945 February 10, - Germany*

From Pfc. George F. Higgins, HQ & HQ Co., 358 Inf. Regt., 90th Div., serving with Intelligence and Reconnaissance,

"I was out yesterday and spent last night in a concrete pillbox. The ceiling sweated so much it felt like it was raining inside - it really was outside though and it continued all this morning - mud everywhere. The village near the pillboxes was so battered up that there wasn't a room left fit to live in. The horses left lying along the roadsides are commencing to feel spring coming and have a tendency to color the surrounding air with odor and it's best to hurry past them. I'm getting kinda tired now and about ready for bed - if I only had one."

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*1945 February 12, - Germany*

From Pfc. George F. Higgins, HQ & HQ Co., 358 Inf. Regt., 90th Div., serving with Intelligence and Reconnaissance,

"We've been having miserable weather lately - a constant drizzle - and we had to be out in it quite a bit today with the jeep. I spent over an hour trying to rearrange equipment so that there'd be room for four to ride. When we pile everybody's bed rolls and belongings on, there's not much room left. I'm going to see if I can put a rack on the back of it."

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*1945 February 14, - Germany*

From Pfc. George F. Higgins, HQ & HQ Co., 358 Inf. Regt., 90th Div., serving with Intelligence and Reconnaissance,

"It's been a beautiful day for a change - the sun even shined and no rain. The roads are worse than ever though, and I really got stuck this morning. Two command cars got behind me and couldn't budge the jeep, so a 2-1/2 ton truck came up behind them and pushed all three of us out at once! I spent most of the afternoon fixing the tire chains, tail light, greasing it up, etc. Think I'll go into the garage business - oh yeah! I did some driving last night and it was really black out. It took over an hour to go 15 minutes distance. I have to go out again tonight at midnight. Today's Valentine's Day so give yourself an extra special big kiss from me!"



## 90<sup>th</sup> Division Association Personal Submissions

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*1945 February 16, - Germany*

From Pfc. George F. Higgins, HQ & HQ Co., 358 Inf. Regt., 90th Div., serving with Intelligence and Reconnaissance,

"Today is Pete's 18th month birthday, so give the little rascal a great big kiss for his daddy. Golly, he's just about twice as old now and when I saw him last! I'm glad he's keeping his weight so he'll look about the same when I get home (only bigger of course!) ... We found a German trailer (horse drawn) the other day and remodeled it to fit onto the jeep I drive. It has rubber tires but no fenders so it throws a lot of mud over everything. This afternoon we found a knocked-out German truck so we took the fenders off it and will be able to use them. We pile all the bed rolls and other junk on the trailer now and keep the jeep clean for passengers."

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*1945 February 18, - Germany*

From Pfc. George F. Higgins, HQ & HQ Co., 358 Inf. Regt., 90th Div., serving with Intelligence and Reconnaissance,

"Spent most of the time putting finishing touches on our trailer and cleaning some of the mud out of the jeep. I was out again last night - driving was almost impossible, very dark plus a heavy fog. We're going out tonight too, and the weather is just as bad with the added attraction of a drizzling rain."

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*1945 February 20, - Germany*

From Pfc. George F. Higgins, HQ & HQ Co., 358 Inf. Regt., 90th Div., serving with Intelligence and Reconnaissance,

"I've been pretty busy in the last couple of days. Was on duty yesterday morning from midnight till 7:00, ate breakfast, and spent the rest of the morning running errands with the jeep and getting a welding job done on it. In the afternoon I washed all the mud off our newly acquired trailer and then painted it. By then it was supper time and I hit the hay at 7:00 PM, not having had any sleep for the past 36 hours."

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*1945 February 20, - Germany*

From Pfc. George F. Higgins, HQ & HQ Co., 358 Inf. Regt., 90th Div., serving with Intelligence and Reconnaissance,

Dad had sent home a German shoulder patch earlier - I have it in front of me as I write this - and he continued his letter with these comments evidently in response to a question mom had written:

"No, you won't have to wait till I get home to hear how I acquired the shoulder patch, but it really doesn't make a very exciting story. You see - it was a very dangerous mission - I walked into the house where we were going to stay and saw a jacket laying in the corner, so I pulled out my trusty knife and, with a few deft strokes, I neatly severed the threads! With a little imagination you could make a good story out of it tho', huh?"



## 90<sup>th</sup> Division Association Personal Submissions

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*1945 February 23, - Germany*

From Pfc. George F. Higgins, HQ & HQ Co., 358 Inf. Regt., 90th Div., serving with Intelligence and Reconnaissance,

"We've been plenty busy lately but I don't mind it 'cause the last couple of days have been beautiful and the moon is out at night. We've been moving pretty fast and I sure hope we can keep it up - the sooner the quicker! It's been getting warm enough so that we put the top and windshield down on the jeep and get lots of fresh air and sunshine now. ... One of the fellows found a swell camera in a house here today. Some guys have all the luck! I never can get very interested in prowling around for loot, though. ... "

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*1945 February 23, - Germany*

Continued from Pfc. George F. Higgins, HQ & HQ Co., 358 Inf. Regt., 90th Div., serving with Intelligence and Reconnaissance,

"... You're doing pretty good at locating where I am from the news. Just read the papers and I'll be there! ... We've got a fairly nice room for tonight - long and narrow, but big enough for the whole platoon to sleep in. It's an old school house and we had to move the desks out and set up a stove for heat. We've got light from a headlight bulb and storage battery that we carry around with us for such occasions ... Most of the boys are in bed now although it's only 9:00, so I guess I'll do likewise - wish I could kiss you goodnight first, but I'm saving them all - so be prepared! Goodnight darling, I adore you and miss you so much! Always your loving, George"

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*1945 February 26, - Germany*

From Pfc. George F. Higgins, HQ & HQ Co., 358 Inf. Regt., 90th Div., serving with Intelligence and Reconnaissance,

"Saturday I was out all morning going from one town to the next with a fellow who was interrogating civilians. The roads were terrible and about noon I got hung up on some ruts and couldn't budge the jeep. There was no other traffic so I jacked up each wheel, put chains on, and filled up the holes in the road - still no luck - so we had to walk back to town and get a "Weasel" to tow us out. ... We finally did move to another town last night and found a pretty good place to stay. The house has no roof on it though, and when it rains the plaster ceiling filters it! ... We're in more or less a rear area now for a little rest before moving to our next sector. ... It will be wonderful to get home to you and Pete again dear!!

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*1945 February 26, - Germany*

Continued from Pfc. George F. Higgins, HQ & HQ Co., 358 Inf. Regt., 90th Div., serving with Intelligence and Reconnaissance,

It looks as though the Germans are on the run again so it shouldn't be too long. ... Do you remember when I fell in the foxhole at night? That was back in Dillingeen on the east bank of the Saar River and one of the worst experiences I've had yet - shells falling all around and you couldn't see where the heck you were going. I think I can tell you where it was now. That was when we pulled back across the Saar and into France before moving north. I love you and want you so much! Give my love to Petey - I'm coming home to play with him pretty soon! Forever your adoring George"



## 90<sup>th</sup> Division Association Personal Submissions

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*1945 February 27, - Germany*

From Pfc. George F. Higgins, HQ & HQ Co., 358 Inf. Regt., 90th Div., serving with Intelligence and Reconnaissance,

"This afternoon our platoon went over a couple of towns from here to take showers. It sure felt good to have plenty of hot water to stand under and it was worth the long wait to get it - it took us most of the afternoon. After supper tonight we got our rations of candy and gum and then sat around and chewed the fat for a while. ... Here's a little poem that expresses my sentiments:

Sitting in my G.I. bed (?!)

My G. I. hat upon my head,

My G. I. pants, my G. I. shoes

Everything free, nothing to lose,

G. I. razor, G. I. comb

G. I wish that I were home!

Tell Petey his daddy sends his love and give the folks my regards. I love you my dearest!"

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*2000 March 4, - France*

from Lt. Jean-Paul Espinosa, retired, HQ & HQ Co., 358 Inf. Regt., 90th Div., who served with Intelligence and Reconnaissance, translated from French:

"Dear Mr. Higgins,

"I was a French Liaison Officer in the 358th US Infantry Regiment (20th corps) from September 1944 to March 1945.

"My general mission as Liaison Officer was to look for information concerning German troops who were in front of our Regiment, or in the sector in which we found ourselves. ... "

"...On March 16, 1945, Major Falvey gave me orders to go to a small German village, Halsenbach, to try and find out some information, because it was suspected that there were concentrations of German troops in the woods near the village. Major Falvey gave me two soldiers - a driver, whom I understand now was your father, and another soldier.

"The village was completely destroyed and deserted.

"As it so often happens, and that is the reason for my memories, we met an escaped French prisoner in the ruins who was hiding in the hopes of seeing the allied armies.

"I took him inside the ruins of a house, if I dare say, with the American soldier. The driver of the Jeep, that is your father, stayed outside next to the vehicle... "

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*2000 March 4, - France*

Continued from Lt. Jean-Paul Espinosa, retired, HQ & HQ Co., 358 Inf. Regt., 90th Div., who served with Intelligence and Reconnaissance, translated from French:

"...As we three were talking in the ruins, we heard the loud clattering of heavy shelling, and we found ourselves on the ground covered in a sea of blood.

"For my part, my right leg was completely dead. Thus, I crawled slowly along the ground, to put myself in front of the opening of the house. I awaited the arrival of the Germans, telling myself that I was to shoot my last bullets of my revolver into the first German I saw, the one who would put an end to my own existence.

"In fact, I do not know how long it was, given the state of shock I was in, that I heard in front of the house, the sound of a car motor. I had the luck of hearing Major Falvey call me desperately: 'Esp! Esp! (that's what they called me at the time) Where are you?'..."



## 90<sup>th</sup> Division Association Personal Submissions

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*2000 March 4, - France*

Continued from Lt. Jean-Paul Espinosa, retired, HQ & HQ Co., 358 Inf. Regt., 90th Div., who served with Intelligence and Reconnaissance, translated from French:

"...That is where I was saved and sent immediately to a country military hospital. In terms of your father, I did not see him, obviously, after I was hurt. It is certain that he was killed while waiting outside near the jeep.

"It is truly remarkable, like you said yourself, that you were able to trace my whereabouts, so long after these incidents. I have to tell you that I owe you this information in the memory of my American comrades killed for the freedom of my country, and my gratitude will never cease for those boys who sacrificed their life for freedom.

Lt. Jean-Paul Espinosa (ret.)"

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GEORGE "PETE" HIGGINS from LaPorte, Indiana, graduated from the University of Illinois becoming an architect in Gary, Indiana.

A Scout with HQ & HQCO, 358th Inf. Regt., 90th Div., dad saw France, Luxembourg, Belgium and Germany on mission with an intelligence officer and a gunner in advance of troop movements. On 16 March 1945, A plane strafed their position near Halsenbach, Germany severely wounding the intelligence officer and killing dad and the gunner.

If you know anything about my daddy or the nature of these reconnaissance missions, I would very much like to hear from you.

(c) 2001, George F. Higgins, Jr.