

# Operation Cobra Source Packet: Source D

## Letter, William Howard Shelfer to Charles Boatman, Sr., June 27, 1943

Courtesy of Ruth Shelfer

**July 11, 1944**

Dear Dad,

*Once again I have my back against the sea. The last time I did not do so good, but maybe my luck will be better this time. It has been cold for the past three days and of course I am traveling light—one blanket and a raincoat. You would think that this time of year it would be hot, but it is a far cry from it. The days are very long, about 21 hours from light to dark.*

*I have had a ringside seat in what is called the greatest show on earth. I would gladly exchange it for a lesser one. I am very tired of big shows. Yesterday and the day before it rained ice water and I cursed whatever God there may be for sending me out in it. I sure do hate cold weather. The weather gives us fellas in the infantry a Hell of a beating. The enemy isn't enough, we have to fight the weather, too. When this war is over, I swear that I shall never be cold again. I do not know why I am writing at all for it is hard to find anything pleasant to say in my present surroundings. My blood really must be thin because I stay cold all the time and other people don't seem to mind it so much. I think that is one reason I hate Yankees so much. It is not good to hate people, but Dad, my heart is full of it. You may not be able to understand that, but you have never slept in ice water. I shall write as often as possible, but don't expect much. Tell Mamie that the slide rule is a great source of amusement, and that I carry it in my pocket. I look to the east and wonder what is in store for me. I will see Berlin yet and may not be long doing it. Tell the kids hello and give my love to all.*

Howard

**July 24, 1944**

Dear Dad,

*It is now ebb tide in my life. Never before have I felt so low. I am sure that I can not last much longer. I have had my share of this thing and am not through yet. We have paid a heavy price. I do not know what the papers say, but as in Africa and Sicily, the 9<sup>th</sup> Division has done much of the hard work over here. I know that I should not write like this, but there is nothing else to say. It is too late for me to come home now. I know that I am a wretch and I am not sure I ever want to come home. Please give my love to all and do not feel bad because I do not write more often. I am so sick of war that sometimes I feel that I am losing my mind. It has been very hard, but the damn thing cannot last forever - not for me, it can't. All of my friends are gone now. I am a stranger in my own battalion. I shall try to do better in my next letter. Tell the girls that I will bring them all a present soon and to save me some pears.*

Notwithstanding,

Howard