

## D-Day correspondence between a soldier and his wife, 1944

### Introduction

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On June 6, 1944, as Allied forces numbering approximately 160,000 troops landed along fifty miles of coastline in Normandy, France, Moe Weiner, a native of Brooklyn, was serving in the US Army Quartermaster Corps in England. He did not participate in the D-Day invasion himself, but he could not help but be caught up in the excitement of the day. That evening he wrote to his wife, Sylvia, a social worker in New York City. Since letters were censored to conceal military activities, he could not say very much.

It's a little hard to sit down and calmly write a letter, just as though nothing were happening. Of course nothing has happened except the most world shaking event.

Although I'm bursting to talk about it, I can't. Not that I know anything; even opinions are taboo at this particular stage.

However I can say I am glad that the long wearisome wait is over.

How, when and wear [*sic*] did you first hear about it? Did you upon getting up in the morning turn on the radio, as we used to do? Or did you know earlier.

On the same day, Sylvia wrote to Moe expressing the excitement and fear she felt upon hearing the news of the D-Day invasion. She described her desperate search for newspaper accounts of the military assault, noted the silence on the train among fellow commuters as they absorbed the news, and reflected on the fearful responses of friends and co-workers. Sylvia reassured Moe that she shed no tears and that she believed "the sooner this gets started the sooner it will be over."

Well – D-Day! It has come – God! So long awaited – so feared – so rejoiced – such release – such new tenseness – such excitement – such quiet – Well – darling – all of these feelings & emotions were expressed & felt by American people today – as you can well understand. People – & that includes me were torn between feelings of gladness that "the beginning of the end" has come – and with the fear of great sacrifices –

### Questions for Discussion

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Read the introduction, view the images of the letters, and study the transcripts. Then apply your knowledge of American history to answer the following questions:

1. What is the tone of the excerpt from Moe's letter? What is the tone of the excerpt from Sylvia's letter?
2. Why did Moe and Sylvia each write on June 6, 1944? What did they think was so important about that particular date? Cite evidence from the text to support your answer.

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3. Why would people in New York be “torn between feelings of gladness and fear of great sacrifices” upon hearing about D-Day?
4. Look at the full text of Sylvia’s letter. What do you find interesting regarding her description of the commute on the train?
5. Look at the full text of Moe’s letter. How would you characterize the difference in tone from Sylvia’s letter?

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### Transcript

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*Morris "Moe" Weiner to Sylvia Weiner, June 6, 1944*

Tuesday June 6, 1944

Dearest Syl:

It's a little hard to sit down and calmly write a letter, just as though nothing were happening. Of course nothing has happened except the most world shaking event.

Although I'm bursting to talk about it, I can't. Not that I know anything; even opinions are taboo at this particular stage.

However I can say I am glad that the long wearisome wait is over.

How, when and wear [*sic*] did you first hear about it? Did you upon getting up in the morning turn on the radio, as we used to do? Or did you know earlier.

I see by the papers that Rome has been taken. Well, that too is ok. In fact everything taken into consideration things march well.

We've finally managed to hook up Jack's radio and as I write, I'm listening to the programs with half an ear. It's pleasant as a background. Right now a chorus is singing "Night & Day." Remember it? It always has been a favorite of mine.

Just in passing, I received no mail today. But since the last week has been good in that respect, one day without any is no great calamity. So I'll begin to answer your 5/21 letter, the second one you wrote that day.

It's nice for you now, looking forward to weekends, and the chance to spend two quiet relaxing days at home. I used to envy you then when I had to get up at the usual time and crawl into a hot subway, spend a few hours at the office and dive into the by now hotter subway for the ride back. But what a relief to get that first whiff of cool air as I would get out at Sheepshead Bay.

I'd have given something to have been at Sarah Schiff's that evening with that tipsy lady needling Esther (Ellen) and her boy friend. How they must have squirmed. I wonder what her boy friend thinks of Esther's friends' friends?

Last night when I finished writing to you I said I was going to play some ping pong. Well I never did get to it. Just then some fellow from another outfit near us walked into our day room and told us that there was a movie in their mess hall, so we decided to take a look. It turned out

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to be Wallace Beery in “Rationing” It was mildly amusing, that’s all.

Saw you had a little bit of the blues that Sunday evening. And attempting to drown your sorrows at Elmans with a fudge sundae, didn’t help either, or singing songs. When you’re blue, you’re blue, so whatta ya gonna do?

I can’t seem to organize for writing tonight dear, but,

I love you

Moe

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## Images

Tuesday June 6, 1944  
1108

Dearest Sgl:

It's a little hard to sit down and calmly write a letter, just as though nothing were happening. Of course nothing has happened except the most awful, shocking event.

Although I'm hurrying to talk about it, I can't. Not that I know anything; even opinions are taboos at this particular stage.

However I can say I am glad that the long weary-some wait is over.

Now, when and where did you first hear about it? Did you upon getting up in the morning turn on the radio, as we used to do? Or did you know earlier.

I see by the papers that Rome has been taken. Well, that too is out. In fact everything taken into consideration. Things march well.

Morris "Moe" Weiner to Sylvia Greenfield Weiner, June 6, 1944, p. 1. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC09414.1108)



## D-Day correspondence between a soldier and his wife, 1944

<sup>2</sup>  
 I've finally managed to look  
 up Jack's radio and as I  
 write I'm listening to the  
 program with half an ear.  
 It's pleasant as a background.  
 Right now a chorus is singing  
 "Night & Day." Remember it? It  
 always has been a favorite of  
 mine.  
 Just in passing. I received no  
 mail today. But since the  
 last week has been good in  
 that respect, one day without  
 any is no great calamity. So  
 I'll begin to answer your 1st  
 letter, the second one you wrote  
 that day.  
 It's nice for you now, looking  
 forward to weekends, and the  
 chance to spend two quiet  
 relaxing days at home. I used  
 to envy you then when I had  
 to get up at the usual time and  
 crawl into a hot subway, spend  
 a few hours at the office and  
 dive into the hot, hot subway  
 for the ride back. But  
 what a relief to get that first  
 whiff of cool air as I would  
 get out at Sheepshead Bay.

Morris "Moe" Weiner to Sylvia Greenfield Weiner, June 6, 1944, p. 2. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC09414.1108)

## D-Day correspondence between a soldier and his wife, 1944

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I'd have given something to have been at Sarah Schep's that evening with that tipsy lady, needing Esther (Ellen) and her boy friend. How they must have squirmed. I wonder what her boy friend thinks of Esther's friends' friends?

Last night when I finished writing to you I said I was going to lay some pong pong. Well I never did get to it. Just then some fellow from another outfit near us sneaked into our day room and told us that there was a movie in their mess hall, so we decided to take a look. It turned out to be Wallace Beery in "Rationing". It was mildly amusing, that's all.

So you had a little bit of the blues that Sunday evening, and attempting to drain your sorrows at Elman's with a fudge sundae, ~~didn't~~ keep either, or singing songs. When you're blue, you're blue, so whatta ya gonna do? Can't seem to organize for writing tonight dear, but, I love you  
Mae

Morris "Moe" Weiner to Sylvia Greenfield Weiner, June 6, 1944, p. 3. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC09414.1108)

## D-Day correspondence between a soldier and his wife, 1944

### Transcript

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*Sylvia Weiner to Morris "Moe" Weiner, June 6, 1944*

Tues - June 6, 1944

Hello – My dearest, —

Well – D-Day! It has come – God! So long awaited – so feared – so rejoiced – such release – such new tenseness – such excitement – such quiet – Well – darling – all of these feelings & emotions were expressed & felt by American people today – as you can well understand. People – & that includes me were torn between feelings of gladness that “the beginning of the end” has come – and with the fear of great sacrifices –

So much for the general feeling – dearest – except – that I want to tell you that the whole thing is being handled in the usual exciting American manner – until blow by blow description – comments – by radio – long discussions on meagre information in the newspapers – a day of prayer by mayor, workers – & President –

Now for the exciting event as it was reflected in my own day – [2] Awoke at the usual[*struck: ly*] time – & my usual quiet fashion because David is still sleeping (can’t turn on the radio) – dressed & left the house – In the bus – I notice a[*struck: n*] movement – a restlessness – a murmuring amongst the people – but scarcely paid any attention to it – as I was occupied with my own thoughts. Arrived at Sheepshead Bay & couldn’t get a paper at the usual place because of the crowd around the paper vendors – So I dashed over to another stand – & grabbed the first Herald Tribune available – the headlines of which were not sensational (it was not the “Extra” – But as I was about to dash away – noted PM – It was sensational – The front page just had the following words splashed across the page – “ Invasion Extra” – I brought a copy – As I got into the train – & thank Heaven! got a seat – looked at the rear page [*strikeout*] covering latest Bulletins – & there was Gen. Eisenhower’s speech – [commanding] the real invasion – I became Excited & read the paper through – It was so exciting – People were [3] deep in their papers – like never before – Few spoke – even people traveling together did not speak – I read every word. When I arrived at the office – several girls were crying – others glad it had finally come – Tenseness which had been accumulating during the last few weeks was



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released – Needless to say – no one could work – As for myself – I didn't cry – darling – I felt as I have been feeling all along that it is good it has started – What will happen will do so – & the sooner this gets started the sooner it will be over – I am fully aware of all the dangers & sacrifices – I am ready for them – I have been thinking of them for so long – So I spent my time trying to reassure others – I called Olga early – & learned she was feeling quite low – but she cheered up – Decided to have lunch with her –

We finally forced ourselves to work – & became immersed in it, so that it was 11<sup>45</sup> before I knew it – we were permitted 15 minutes for personal prayer – But – as you know how I feel about that – I departed for Palmer & Marcers –

[4] Found Olga in fairly good spirits – Had lunch with her & learned she planned to go to Chicago on Saturday – Gave her the pictures & she liked them so much – spoke of you & Marty & exchanged thoughts & memories – Finally left her & walked back – trying to get a few words from radios blaring out all over the streets – Finally – bought the latest paper – Came back to the office – & read the papers then – as there was no [radios] handy – There was much talk about the immensity of the undertaking (Remember when we spoke about an umbrella of airplanes in that long ago – seated in a blue chair –) about whether this is a feint – or a real thing – about the whereabouts of the Luftwaffe – about what Russia would do – about when [*illegible*] would strike & about Rome – about this beginning of the end of the war – how long it would take – Perhaps – 1945 – the beginning – Perhaps – I didn't have time then to picture you – your [position] – your place in this – & I am glad – Late in the afternoon we were informed that the “Little Flower” requested [5] presence at a “Prayer meeting–” in Madison PK – where a light burns ever for the soldiers who died in the last war – So at 5 P. M – went there – around the corner from the office – There were crowds & crowds – The mayor came with Mr. Whaler – & loads of camera men – etc. – A catholic priest, & Rabbi (Wise) & Protestant pastor – said prayers – then – an English opera singer sang “God Save The King” – a French (Free) who received a lot of applause sang the “Marseilles” which is very stirring – Papers drifted down from the tall buildings – Then the Italian anthem was played – as Italy was welcomed as a member of the Allied Nations – Then Igor Gorin (a White Russian) sang of all things – the “Internationale” – what a faux Pas – Evidently, there had been no time for Igor to learn the new Russian anthem – & it was funny to hear a white Russian signing “And ye Prisoners of starvation” to the crowd –

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Wow! It was terrific – & funny – because most of us knew about the new Russian Anthem – By the way, attitude toward [6] Russia has changed considerably here – It is realized that she has taken her place as a nation alongside with us – & that she no longer is a bugaboo – Most people think Russia is going capitalistic – while other nations will tend toward socialism – Who knows? So it ended – & home I came – There were no appointments scheduled at the Draft Board – thank Heaven! So I sat myself down at the Radio – & have not left it since – Every once in a while programs break-in constantly with news bulletins – It is exciting – & in between tunes – I think of you – & your place – The President read a so-called prayer – what was a great document & sounded like a new “Gettysburg” address – How long this interest & excitement [*inserted:* will] keep the American People united remains to be seen –

Now to you – I hope you are alright – & I have shed only a few tears in my fears – But no matter what – dearest – I love you, love you – love you – & Falmouth St will be ready for your homecoming –

Soon – I hope –

To Victory soon –

Dearest –

syl

Good Luck!

Good Good Luck!

to all of you boys!

[7] P.S Called Mom – & as usual she was wonderful – Quiet – but interested in all the going’s on –had just listened in to the Presidents’ prayer – & she prayed – too –

My Dad called to ask how I was feeling – explained –

So dearest – this time I really – forgot to say “Good night” –

So darling; Beloved –

“Good night” I hope a good night for people all over the world –

Love Syl

## D-Day correspondence between a soldier and his wife, 1944

## Images

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June - June 6, 1944

Hells - my dearest -  
 Well - D-Day! It has come -  
 God! So long awaited - so feared -  
 so rejoiced - such release - such  
 new tension - such statement - such  
 quiet - Well - darling - all of these  
 feelings + emotions were expressed +  
 felt by American people today - as  
 you can well understand. People +  
 that includes me were torn between  
 feelings of gladness that "the beginning of  
 the end" has come - and with the  
 fear of great sacrifices -  
 So much for the general feeling - dearest -  
 except - that I want to tell you that  
 the whole thing is being handled in  
 the usual exciting American manner -  
 with blow by blow description - comments -  
 by radio - long discussions on meagre  
 information in the newspapers - a day  
 of prayer by Mayor, workers - +  
 President -  
 Now for the exciting event as it  
 was reflected in my own day -

Sylvia Greenfield Weiner to Morris "Moe" Weiner, June 6, 1944, p. 1. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC09414.0286)

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3.  
 Awake at the usually time - & my  
 usual quiet fashion because Doris  
 is still sleeping (can't turn on the  
 radio) - ~~Doris~~ + left the house -  
 In the bus - I noticed ~~an~~ movement -  
 a restlessness - a rumormongering amongst  
 the people - but scarcely paid any  
 attention to it - as I was occupied  
 with my own thoughts. Arrived at  
 Sheepshead Bay & couldn't get a paper  
 at the usual place because of the  
 crowd around the paper vendors -  
 So I looked over to another stand -  
 & grabbed the first Herald Tribune  
 available - the headlines of which  
 were not sensational (it was not the  
 "Extra" - But as I was about to  
 look away - noted PM - It was  
 sensational - The first page just had  
 the following words splashed across  
 the page - "Jamaica Extra" -  
 I bought a copy - As I got into the  
 train - & thank Heaven! got a seat -  
 looked at the new page ~~covering~~ covering  
 latest Bulletin - & then read  
 Gen. Eisenhower's speech - corroborating  
 the real situation - I became excited  
 & read the paper through - It  
 was so exciting - People were

Sylvia Greenfield Weiner to Morris "Moe" Weiner, June 6, 1944, p. 2. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC09414.0286)



## D-Day correspondence between a soldier and his wife, 1944

3.  
 deep in their papers - like never before -  
 Few spoke - even people traveling  
 together did not speak - I read  
 every word. When I arrived at the  
 office - several girls were crying -  
 others glad it had finally come -  
 Tenseless which had been accumulating  
 during the last few weeks was released -  
 Needless to say - no one could work -  
 as for myself - I didn't cry - screaming -  
 I felt as I have been feeling all  
 along that it was good it had started -  
 What will happen will do so - & the  
 sooner this gets started the sooner it  
 will be over - I am fully aware of all  
 the danger & sacrifice - I am ready  
 for them - I have been thinking of them  
 for so long - So - I spent my time trying  
 to reassure them - I called Olga  
 early - & learned she was feeling quite  
 low - but she cheered up - Decided  
 to have lunch with her -  
 We finally forced ourselves to work -  
 & became immersed in it, so that  
 it was 11:45 before I knew it -  
 We were permitted 15 minutes for  
 personal prayer - But - as you know  
 how I feel about that - I departed  
 for Palmer & Marcus -

Sylvia Greenfield Weiner to Morris "Moe" Weiner, June 6, 1944, p. 3. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC09414.0286)



## D-Day correspondence between a soldier and his wife, 1944

4.  
 Found Olga in fairly good spirits -  
 Had lunch with her & learned she  
 planned to go to Chicago on Saturday -  
 Gave her the pictures & she liked  
 them so much - spoke of you &  
 mostly & recharged thoughts &  
 memories - Finally left her & walked  
 back - trying to get a few words for  
 radio's blaring out all over the  
 streets - Finally - bought the latest  
 paper - Came back to the office -  
 & read the papers thru - as there  
 was no radio handy - There was much  
 talk about the immensity of the  
 undertaking (Remember when we spoke  
 about an umbrella of surveillance in  
 that long ago - seated in a lobby  
 chair -) about whether this is a feat -  
 a usual thing - about the whereabouts  
 of the Luftwaffe - about what  
 Russia would do - about when Tito  
 would strike & about Rome -  
 about this beginning of the end of the  
 war - how long it would take -  
 Perhaps - 1945 - the beginning -  
 Perhaps - I didn't have time then  
 to picture you - your position -  
 your place in this - & I am glad -  
 Late in the afternoon we were informed  
 that the "Little Doves" were

Sylvia Greenfield Weiner to Morris "Moe" Weiner, June 6, 1944, p. 4. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC09414.0286)

## D-Day correspondence between a soldier and his wife, 1944

5  
 presence at a "Prayer meeting" in  
 Madison PK - where a legit  
 business ever for the soldiers who died  
 in the lost war - So at 3 P.M. -  
 went there - around the corner from  
 the office - There were crowds & crowds -  
 The Mayor came with Mr. Wheeler - &  
 lots of camera men - etc -  
 A Catholic Priest, & Rabbi (Weiss)  
 & Protestant Pastor - said prayers -  
 then - an English organ sang  
 "God Save the King" - a French (Free)  
 who received a lot of applause sang  
 the "Marseillaise" which is very stirring -  
 Papers drifted down from the tall  
 building - Then the Italian Anthem  
 was played - as Italy was welcomed  
 as a member of the Allied Nations -  
 Then Igor Gouss (a White Russian) sang  
 of all things - the "Internationale" -  
 What a foul gas - Evidently, there had  
 been no time for Igor to learn the new  
 Russian anthem & it was funny to  
 hear a white Russian singing "Lies - ye  
 Prisoners of Starvation" to the crowd -  
 Now! I am terrified - & funny - because  
 most of us shiver about the new Russian  
 Anthem - By the way, attitude toward

Sylvia Greenfield Weiner to Morris "Moe" Weiner, June 6, 1944, p. 5. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC09414.0286)



## D-Day correspondence between a soldier and his wife, 1944

7.

P.S. Called Mom - & as usual - she  
 was wonderful - Just - but interested  
 in all the going on - had just listened  
 in to the President's prayer - & she  
 prayed - too -  
 My Dad called to ask how I was feeling -  
 & planned -  
 As - dearest - this time I really -  
 forgot to say "Good night" -  
 As - darling; Beloved -  
 'Good night' - I hope a  
 good night for people all over the  
 world -  
 Love, Moe

Sylvia Greenfield Weiner to Morris "Moe" Weiner, June 6, 1944, p. 7. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC09414.0286)