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BURRDUCHS

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

April 7, 1945.

MEMORANDUM FOR  
MRS. ROOSEVELT

I suggest you send a copy  
of this letter to Beedle Smith.

F. D. R.

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## Manufacturers of Canvas Fabric Products

Phone Wabash 6343

KANSAS CITY 3, MISSOURI

30 March 1945

Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt,  
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

A great many times in my life I've felt the urge to say something or do something that I haven't done. Recently I've learned that to try is better than omission. For instance, I've long wanted to do something worth while, to help others, but I've been too much occupied with my own business. So when my only child was captured by the Germans (I am enclosing a clipping explaining that) I decided it was time I did something other than reporting at my work as office manager of this small war plant. So I went to work on courses fitting me for work in the Red Cross Motor Corps, and it is the happiest thing I have ever done.

And you know, it is an odd thing, Mrs. Roosevelt - the highest words of personal praise for you that I have ever heard came from my son. I say "the highest", because I know he meant them from his heart. A number of years ago, when jobs were extremely hard to find, he worked as a bellman at the Muehlebach Hotel here in Kansas City, because he could make more money than any other work he could get at the time. He had the pleasure of waiting on you during your visit here, and he said "Mother, she is the most gracious lady I have ever seen in the hotel". He often told me of famous people, and among others that "rated" with him were Miss Ethel Barrymore (he had a long conversation with her about books), Buddy Rogers and Mary Pickford, and Eleanor Powell. When conditions improved, he went into work more compatible with his education, - but I digress.

I am enclosing a little thing I wrote, and which Mr. Joseph Simrall thought good enough to broadcast over his "Moonbeams" program, WDAF. In my Red Cross work I meet so many lonely-and-away-from-home boys, and some of them I shall never forget. I won't forget the young Chief Petty Officer who brought a lump to my throat when I passed him coffee and a sandwich. He looked so much like Jack, and had the same friendly smile. He showed me some gunnery award wings, beautiful, silver and gold, and I said "But you aren't wearing them?" He answered, softly, and his voice was like a prayer "I'm saving them for my mother to pin on". No, I won't forget.

Yesterday I read about the most tragic and glorious display of bravery I've ever heard, and my heart has been heavy with it since. I know that you know the story of the thousand American and British prisoners who stood all afternoon in formation of P O W to save their lives and the lives of their comrades from strafing of P-47's, stood with their bare backs gleaming in the sun until some fainted. Some were killed before the

## **Midland Fabrics Co.**

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pilots understood. But it worked, and it saved most of the lives. To me, that took more courage than anything - any other kind of action. They stood, helpless, for hours, with the hope that their message to the pilots would be understood, and prayed.

My son's wife, Dorothy, said "I think every one of those boys should have the highest medal - they went 'over and beyond the call of duty' if anyone ever did". And I think she is right, and so probably do thousands of other Americans. The purpose of this letter, Mrs. Roosevelt, is to ask you to do whatever you can to further that thought. Perhaps it is already being done. I hope that it is. Surely those boys who deliberately exposed themselves to strafing deserve the highest award. I don't know from what prison camp they came, but they were loaded into box cars at Limburg, Germany and started East. But they were rescued, and of course there are records. I tried to think of the proper way to make an appeal, and I finally decided that you would be more understanding than anyone else, and of course you will know how to proceed.

I've never thought medals mattered much - we'd so much rather have our sons back than anything else - but a short time ago Dorothy was presented a medal, for Jack - the air medal, and we are very proud of that, of course. We'd still rather have him back home than anything, and I don't think it will be too long now.

Thank you for reading this - and I do hope you can start the movement to have those boys decorated for their exceptional bravery.

Very sincerely yours,

*Naomi M. Burroughs*



### I Saw My Son Today

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Barbed wire keeps my son from me, with courage he awaits  
The dawn of peace, when he walks free thru open prison gates.

He's in an alien country now - a country far away,  
And yet - believe me when I say "I saw my son today".

I met a soldier on the street, his eyes were fine and clear,  
I saw in them the courage of the boy I hold most dear.

An ensign asked me to direct him to a place to dine;  
His shoulders straight reminded me of that dear boy of mine.

A sturdy sailor passed me by, with laughter light and gay -  
A staunch marine returned my smile before he glanced away.

Silver wings, a raunchy cap, a step that's light and free -  
Tears blind my eyes; these other sons are like my own to me.

My son, a prisoner of war, is waiting, far away,  
And yet - in other mothers' sons - I saw my son today.

- Naomi M. Burroughs