

ROCHESTER HISTORY

Edited by DEXTER PERKINS, *City Historian*
and BLAKE MCKELVEY, *Assistant City Historian*

VOL. VIII

JANUARY, 1946

No. 1

Life in the Armed Services

by Rochester GIs

EDITOR'S NOTE: Never before have so many men of Rochester traveled so far and under such unusual circumstances as have the community's 30,000 service men of the present war. The camp and battle experience of these young men, despite the fact that they were scattered throughout all service units, has become a part of the history of our city. Thousands of letters have returned weekly to the homefolks in Rochester, many of them rich in descriptive detail. We have been permitted to copy several hundred of such letters, brought in by former teachers, ministers, business associates, and relatives who have responded to our invitation to help collect these records. Miss Jean Dinse on our staff has read all of these letters, selecting passages of special descriptive value from which the following edition is made.

The flavor of the city's young manhood is clearly apparent in this selection, although of course the more personal expressions have been omitted. None of the letters was written with publication in mind, and we have been content (with the exception of a few changes in punctuation) to reproduce them as they were written, in crowded barracks or lonely fox holes. We have omitted the names of the writers and recipients, for the object has been to capture, while it is yet available, a first hand view of life in service as experienced and reported by Rochesterians. In the first ten pages the letters are arranged by author, although the series overlap in time; the wider selection in the latter period has prompted a chronological arrangement.

Early Camp Life

(April 10, 1941, Fort Niagara)

Having a wonderful time and all that stuff. Excellent food and very little sleep so far, however when we get used to the noises of this place I figure we'll snore with the best of them. Boy o boy, when I get home I'll be able to eat anything, we had sauerkraut and wieners for supper and I liked it! !

I got my uniform today and it fits to a T. I gotta have the sleeves lengthened on my coat but that's all.

ROCHESTER HISTORY, published quarterly by the Rochester Public Library, distributed free at the Library, by mail 25 cents per year. Address correspondence to the City Historian, Rochester Public Library, 115 South Avenue, Rochester 4, N.Y.

I got my shots today and I don't feel any ill effects and don't figure I'll have any. I gotta do K. P. tomorrow but that's better than drill 'cause you can eat practically all day and my hands are dirty anyhow.

Don't worry about me too much cause I'm learning to take care of myself more each day, there's a nice bunch of fellas here and we get along swell. I can even make my own bed. Imagine that can you?

(April 24, 1941, Ft. Eustis, Va.)

I'm gonna be a big help when I get back cause I can make a bed in 3 minutes without wrinkles and put my shoes on at the same time! ! Of course, my dish washing will be vastly improved on account of we have to wash dishes for 240 men and you are charged for every dish you break. We only get K. P. once a month so don't count on my being too good.

We also have to clean our shoes and brush our uniforms in the morning. We have to sweep and mop under our bunks, wash the windows and do our own laundry. Boy, I'm gonna be so darn neat when I get back, there won't be no livin' with me, nohow.

(April 26, 1941, Ft. Eustis, Va.)

In answer to your questions, Newport News is the closest town of any size. A little further away is Richmond. We can get weekend passes and go almost anywhere as long as we are back at 6:00 A. M. Monday.

However, there is no need to go out of the camp cause we have a Movie, a canteen where we can buy most anything, we can swim in the James River or in the Bay and we play ball, volley ball, ping pong, box, wrestle and most anything.

(May 13, 1941, Ft. Eustis, Va.)

I'll tell you about my trip to the "Nation's Capitol." We left Sat. about 9:00 and I drove the "old man's" car, he pointing the way and telling me to "step on it." Well it was the first time at the wheel of a car for me in a month, and I made the most of it! I don't think the old boy ever went anywhere so fast in his life. We rolled into the outskirts of D. C. and he didn't believe it. He said I ought to drive a blitz-wagon. The trip cost me about 20 bucks, but it was worth it. Ya see, he had some business to take care of so I was on my own most of the time. I met a fella from Fort Monroe whom I know slightly and we took in every museum, arts building, soldiers' memorial and govt. building in Wash., and that covers a lot of territory. The

CO wanted me to stay at his hotel but that would have cost a lot of bucks so me and my buddy stayed at the local Y. M. for a dollar. Oh yeah, most of the twenty went for eats — steaks with onions, chicken and dumplings, but I couldn't find any Yorkshire puddin', darn it. I had to come back to camp by train cause the old man couldn't leave until Monday which would have made me A. W. O. L. which is definitely bad!

(May 20, 1941, Ft. Eustis, Va.)

I haven't much time cause I've just got orders to scout a convoy, that means a motorcycle ride, hot diggety! I'll be out til about 1:00 A. M., but I'll have all day tomorrow off duty, so don't worry about my rest. I guess we've got to go to Fort Monroe and pick up some stuff. There are two other scouts and all we have to do is ride ahead of the trucks and control traffic in the three towns we pass thru, namely Newport News, Hampton and Phoebus. We'll have plenty of time to stop off for hamburgers and banana splits both ways so I'm gonna skip breakfast tomorrow and eat double for dinner, O Boy! ! There's not much traffic nights so I anticipate a soft job and a bunk all day tomorrow. Speaking of "Soft Jobs" I drew "Kitchen Police" the day we had *TURKEY* for supper. Honest I never ate so much in my life.

(June 8, 1941, Ft. Eustis, Va.)

I went to Norfolk Sat. and saw that British aircraft carrier that's docked there for repairs. Talked with one of the crew I met in a restaurant and he seemed quite sure of England's winning. He wouldn't say much on the subject, but he did say that if Germany would attack or attempt an invasion that Britain was ready and willing to drive them back the same way they came in! Plucky kid, only eighteen years old he said, and already a veteran of seven sea battles and the evacuation of Dunkirk. He came from around Newcastle. Seemed to like the American Way of living, its "much zippier than we English, you know."

(July 7, 1941, Ft. Eustis, Va.)

I've been up to the Post exchange drinkin' papaya juice and eatin' pineapple ice-cream, we're getting used to chowing in Hawaii! We just had our hypos for tetanus, malaria and such stuff like you're apt to run into. You should be here to see the different emotions the guys are expressing in one way or another. Most of them, like me, are writing letters all over the place. Some, like "Lefty," who just got married, are

walking around the post with their squaws. There's a kid bunking next to me having a heck of a time packing, he pushed the bottom out of his suit case. Charley doesn't want to leave, he's walking around in a fog. Bob swiped us some chow out of the Kitchen, we ate and now he's snorin' away. Nothing bothers him. We scrubbed the barracks and we really did a job. The shelves have shed their pictures and radios like a fire sale in a department store. The place looks like the way it did when we came in, except it's a little more familiar. I'll never forget the day we came in, we were wearing packs, overcoats, gloves, and the temp. was hot! I'll probably not forget the day we leave either, we've turned in our cold weather uniforms and we're traveling light. Did I say light? The bunch that left this morning were carrying clocks, pictures in frames, and one fella had a scrub board tied on his pack!

(August, 1941, Fort Shafter, Hawaii)

Left McDowell aboard the "Pres. Pierce" from the U. S. A. T. pier in Frisco at 12:30. Assigned to stateroom with 4 others of my gang (traveled first class) and chowed on kraut and weenies at 1:00 P. M. Did nothing for the entire trip but loll in the sun (got a gorgeous tan, I did) and eat (pretty good chow too). Drew one guard on a moonlight night I wouldn't have missed anyway. Ocean was as smooth as glass and as blue as Waterman's ink. Arrived Friday morning 8:30 A. M. in the darndest rainstorm. There were we, soaking wet on the deck and the band playing "Aloha" on the dock. Rode out to Shafter on trucks to the barracks, all new. A lot of mud but they tell us that the rain was most unusual. Ate dinner out of mess kits, darn good chow.

(August 19, 1941, Fort Kamehameha, Hawaii)

I've been moved again, this time to Fort Kamehameha. The joint is just like a paradise, if an army camp could be like paradise! We moved from Shafter Monday about 1:30 P. M. We didn't care what they did with us as long as they put us someplace long enough to hang up our hats! We've been on four posts since Eustis, it's no wonder we hesitated to unpack when we arrived here. There isn't any of the gang from my old battalion left, they've all been sent to other posts. It's sorta tough too, cause we're but four *draftees* in a battery of *regulars*. They aren't bad fellas tho', real helpful and stuff, but still there's no love lost between *draftees* and *regulars* anyplace.

I'm like a fish out of water, we sit here on our bunks not knowing

what to do or when to do it. The guys look at us like as if to say "Look at them lazy goldbricks," well, gee we'd work harder than any of them if we only knew what to do, but nobody tells us and we don't know. Maybe tomorrow they'll tell us what is expected of us. I hope so!

Well gang I guess this ain't the most cheerful letter I've written, but I'm tired of being moved around like a member of a herd of cattle instead of like a member of a fighting unit. I'm getting mad now, I'm gonna stir up a little action, I think I'll start by walking in the mess hall and having some chow!

(Sept. 15, 1941, Hawaii)

Boy I'm one tired soldier, soon's I write this I'm gonna take me a shower and put myself to bed! We're working on a lumber detail eight hours a day, but they feed us turkey and steak and "p'ok" chops so we don't mind working hard, it's a good chance to get a tan too. Boats bring in the lumber for army use and us "sojers" are stuck with the job of unloading and stacking it. It's a welcome change from drill tho'.

(Oct. 22, 1941, Ft. Kamehameha, Hawaii)

Ask Ivan if he ever heard of submarine mining. The Coast Artillery does it too. We lay mines controlled from shore, besides those that are exploded when hit. Boy I'm glad I'm a good swimmer. Those darn boats are awfully small compared to the size of the waves!

(Dec. 17, 1941, Ft. Kamehameha, Hawaii)

Another day, another dollar and more chow! Devilishly dull war, I've seen more action in an Iroquois war dance! Raises merry hell with one's social pursuits, but that's all. We did see a bit of action the 7th, brought down a Jap practically in the front yard, I don't know the cause of his demise but I like to think it was my Browning that did the trick, anyhow I threw about forty rounds at him. About the maddest soldier I saw was —, he emptied his rifle at the rising sun, couldn't find another clip so he bent down and threw a rock at them! Craziest sight was two buck sgts. with two machine guns, flipping a coin to determine who would shoot first at an oncoming plane! Coolest soldier was a conscript holding down an automatic rifle with one hand —and holding the Sunday morning funnies in the other! I sorta kinda think that soldiers like these are gonna be rugged guys to beat,

in fact I don't think they can be beaten, and that's something certain countries are getting wise to. Oh yeah, I'm O. K.

* * *

(August 11, 1941, Fort Niagara)

So far we haven't been getting very much military training here at Ft. Niagara. As a rule our stay here is from 3 days to two weeks — at least that is what the non-commissioned officers tell us. The average period is one week.

Two bus loads left for the State of Washington this evening. They will have quite a ride! Our work here has been mostly "fatigue duty" —that is, cleaning up barracks, waxing floors, gardening, shoveling coal, etc. Saturday I was one of 6 who spent the day in the baking kitchen, making pies. Before we were through we made the complete pie. All the dough was mixed in an electric mixer and we took turns at rolling it out into the crusts. All together we made 120 pineapple pies in the afternoon—and they were fairly good—we had them for Sunday "chow."

Sunday the hour of rising was 7:00 A. M. instead of 5:45, as during the week. Breakfast is served at 6:30 A. M., dinner at 12 M., and supper at about 6:45 P. M. These meal hours are very changeable — depending on whether there is something special going on or not.

One day last week several of us went up to the old fort in the evening. The soldiers in uniform are admitted free, so most of them go up there during their stay. The guide told some of the same stories that were told us a couple of years ago when we were there. I enjoyed seeing it again, though.

(Sept. 9, 1941, Camp Croft, S.C.)

This evening I am over at the recreation hall writing amid the noises of the radio, piano, and ping pong game. It is after 9 P. M., and all the lights have to be out in the barracks, but over there they don't go out until 11 P. M. I had planned to write this earlier, but my gun hasn't been working very well lately, so I took it apart and oiled and cleaned it right after supper. I also spent some time sewing pads on my shooting jacket. Next Tuesday we start practice on the range. This lasts for 8 days — or at least until everyone in the battalion has fired 180 rounds. More about that later.

All today we have been out on the drill field going through the different exercises with the rifle and bayonet as well as hand grenade throwing. We all hope that it cools off some soon because it is very

hot in the sun, especially in the mid-afternoon. Yesterday they had to cut the drill period short because of the heat. Rumors were flying that it was 119° in the shade — you can take that for what it is worth. I can assure you that it was over 100° though, because it was about 98°F in the barracks when we came in—not a breath of air stirring.

(Oct. 11, 1941, Camp Croft, S. C.)

Shortly after I became squad leader, the supply sergeant picked me for his assistant and I have been spending a lot of my time working in the supply room with him. Now I am his official assistant — we get along swell and often work until 9 or 10 at night on the records. With this job I escape Saturday morning inspections. Come to think of it I have only stood one formal inspection, and that was after our parade and all the guns were dusty anyway. Even though I get out of the individual inspection don't think I don't have anything to do on Saturdays. Getting the supply room ready for inspection is no mean task.

(Nov. 23, 1941, Camp Croft, S. C.)

Saturday morning we had our small time maneuvers war games. We divided into two groups—enemy and friendly troops and started towards each other in the field. I carried two smoke bombs around all morning and then we never had a chance to use them effectively.

Everything went along smoothly until we were supposed to meet the enemy in close combat—the final stage of the game. We came to the field, laid a smoke screen and progressed. Upon arriving we found the enemy had gotten hungry and left for camp. So ended our battle.

War Camps

(March 26, 1942, Hawaii)

As you know, we had quite a time here on December 7th, and a great majority of us realized, for the first time, just what "in the Army" means. I saw men who were so scared that they scarcely knew what they were doing, yet because of our Army training they retaliated to the best of their ability. One boy, in particular, whom we had regarded as a "softy," ran out to an airplane with an aerial machine-gun and ammunition belt in his arms. Under a hail of enemy bullets, he set the gun up, and fired at the Jap planes with grim determination. He was sick with fear, an hour after the "blitz," but during the few minutes of action we saw, he was right there, doing what he had

been taught, plus some excellent shooting. Although we did not have one anti-aircraft gun set up, and although none of our ships were able to get off the ground, Bellows Field is officially credited with five Jap planes. If we could accomplish that much damage under such circumstances as existed then, what amount of damage will we be able to do with the fighting force that we have now? You can bet, it will be plenty!

* * *

(May 31, 1942, Camp Croft, S. C.)

Yesterday we received more equipment. A large Foot Locker with top compartment for small things, our shelter half, that is $\frac{1}{2}$ a tent, knapsack, etc. Pistol Belt with 1st aid kit. Then we got our Springfield Rifle. With the Bayonet on, it will be about 10 lbs. If we drill all day with rifles, I will bet it will feel like 100 lbs. by nite.

There sure is a lot to learn as we have a soldiers Hand Book and will have to know it all to be good soldiers. There are 11 General Orders that *have* to be learned as soon as possible as they are for Guard Duty, and if there is some tough work to do the officers will come up to you and say "What is G. O. No. 4?" If you can't answer it, you get on that detail.

(June 1942, Camp Croft)

We sure are working hard all day long on different things. We have an amphitheater in the woods and they give us lessons on many things there on a Blackboard. Then we had 2 different Rifles we had to learn to take apart and put together again.

Then we have movies of different angles of Army life; that is also in the training. To-day we went to the woods and had what is called Extended Order Drill. That is skirmishes, where the Platoon has to run for cover and drop on the ground. Also have to run and take cover in case of an Airplane attack. All the drills are for real battle maneuvers. We had an Alert yesterday, that is in case of an Air Raid; I had to stay near the Barracks with a fire extinguisher. That will be my post whenever there is another Alert.

We had a Free Show at our Rec. Hall last nite. Most of the talent was all from the soldier ranks. They were sure good. Some sang, some danced and tap danced. Also some comedians.

I hope that they don't keep us like this for 13 weeks or we will all be dead from work. They sure are pumping it to us so far. I hope they will let up after our 1st 2 weeks.

(June 16, 1942, Camp Croft, S. C.)

Yesterday we started out by going into the woods and digging what are called "fox holes" and Machine Gun Emplacements, also slit Trenches and Comm. Trenches. They are holes dug in the ground just large and deep enough for the individual soldier. Then he covers the new dirt with grass etc., so as to make it look like the surrounding area. The Mach. Gun Emp. is large enough and deep enough for the gun and 3 men.

In the P. M. we had more Bayonet Practice on dummies filled with hay. Also learned other strokes with the Bayonet. Kind of gruesome work but all in the training. Then we stacked our guns and practiced throwing hand grenades. Pretty hard day yesterday. We were all pretty tired last nite. . . .

(July 4, 1942, Camp Croft, S. C.)

Just finished up 24 hours on Guard Duty. Boy, were my feet tired, but I just took a nice shower and feel much better. We started on the first relief at 5 P. M. yesterday. I had the 30th Tg Bt to walk my Post on. That is right next to my own Bt., the 29th. We had to carry a 45 Colt Automatic Pistol in a holster and had General Orders to know, also Special Orders for Sentinels. We have to know where to ring in a fire alarm, what to do in case of a Black out; we look after all Government property on our Post, in general keep up peace & order on our Post.

(July 11, 1942, Camp Croft, S. C.)

This morning we went over the Obstacle Course, that is a 3 ft. fence to run and jump over, then a nine foot board fence to run and jump and try and scale over, then a wall of logs to climb over, then another ditch to jump, then a log to run over, over a ditch, then jump up to a horizontal ladder and go over that hand over hand, then run and jump over a creek, then grab a rope with knots on it and swing back over the ditch (with water in, some fall in the water Ha Ha) then run up a hill and climb over sand bags. That's all. Think you could do it? Ha, Ha. Well I may be small, but we have been over it 3 times now and I have gone all the way 3 times, some never get over the 9 ft. wall, have to go around, but there are lots of big men and they have a lot of weight to pull up and over. But believe me when I get thru I am all in and puffing like a horse with the Heaves. Then on the way back to camp we have to "Double Time" (Run) part of the way. I can see why you have to be pretty healthy to get in the Army to do

all these things. Some who don't make the grade are put in another Company, to do less strenuous work. . . .

Yes, we are getting our Machine Gun Practice from now on. That is the Basic Weapon we will use. We will be a Heavy Weapons Company, but will use Machine Guns more than Rifles or other Guns. Don't let this scare you, as it is only what I heard, but a machine gunner's life is worth about 8 seconds while in action. But that don't scare me. I can't wait to get in action and have a bunch of Japs or Nazis coming at me while I got a Machine Gun to use on them. Boy they will drop or else. I suppose you think I am getting hard boiled, but it's either them or me.

(Aug. 7, 1942, Camp Croft, S. C.)

We started at 8:30 P. M. and hiked for about 3 miles till we got to a dense woods. Then we split up into squads of 12 men each and were given an azimuth (compass) and had to try and find our way back to camp by compass. The Corporal led the way, but what a mess to go thru in the pitch dark. We tried to keep closed up by hanging on to the man in front of us, but some times some one fell and we had to get closed up again. We got caught in vines with pricklers on, fell down creek banks, stumbled over logs, etc. I guess we were in the woods about 1½ hours finding our way out. If I had not done it I would say it was impossible, but we got out after all without any one being hurt. Maybe a few scratches or a few bruises. We ran into barbed wire fences in the dark and had to climb over them. Boy we were all glad when we got back to camp. I lost my raincoat as did about 6 others in our Platoon. I will have to buy another one. But it was a great experience at that. We had to keep as quiet as we could and if we got separated, as we did at times, we had to call as low as possible. Well I guess that all the Co. got thru O. K., but one Corporal just came in, and he must have gone head first down a bank, as his face is skinned from his fore head down his nose and chin. All I got was two small scratches on my cheek. . . .

One day we took our full field Packs down to the creek where the Engineers had built a dam, and we had to pair up, two men, and float our equipment across the creek. We took off all our clothes and some places where it was deep had to swim with the float. It is surprising how much weight you can put on the two halves of a tent and make a float of it and not have it sink. In fact, using a large tarp, you can run a truck on to it and wrap up the sides and float an army truck

across a river. Sounds odd but true, as I have seen it done in a Picture in the Movies.

(Aug. 15, 1942, Camp Croft, S. C.)

Then as we were marching along a dark road the Major came tearing along the road towards us in a Jeep and pulled over to let us pass and then he exploded a gas bomb and we had to put on our masks and continue on. It was pretty hard to see our way as the sweat gets on the visor of the mask. But we did not have them on more than a few minutes.

(Sept. 1942, Camp Kilmer, New Brunswick, N. J.)

Boy have we been busy, getting our Pictures taken, fingerprints, new equipment etc. But we also have lots of time to sleep during the day as we don't have to do anything as yet. This is an Embarkation Camp, probably our last camp. We will probably leave here to go across when we go. I do not know what we are to do or whether we will get any time to get home, but this is war so cannot help having to make sacrifices. We have all new equipment and our clothes sure stink with some acid that they are treated with so Gas won't get thru them.

(Sept. 12, 1942, Somewhere in Ireland)

Well here I am someplace in Ireland and expect to be here for a few days then go to some permanent camp. We had a very good crossing on a very fast ocean Liner. I can not give the name though. We were only a week getting here from N. Y. There were soldiers & sailors (censored). We had very good eats, and I sure enjoyed my experience riding on a big boat. We docked from the liner some place near Scotland, then we were split up in different groups and sent to different places. After we got off the boat in Ireland we marched to the R. R. Station where we were given hot coffee and a bag full of sandwiches and candy & cake. It sure tasted good after the all nite boat ride. I sure have seen pretty sights, but looking on the shores of Scotland or Ireland they sure are a picture.

* * *

(Oct. 28, 1942, Camp Van Dorn, Miss.)

Another missive from another garden spot. What a place! right in the exact center of nowhere—nothing to do, no place to go, and not even any work as yet . . . This is strictly a war-time camp, built to take care of emergency training, thus built on a limited budget, and definitely temporary. The barracks are one story sheds with tar paper

walls only, and little stoves in each to heat them. They are all on cement stilts, and the one convenience is a covered walk which connects them. There are two rows of these for the Med. Det., and in the middle, just a few hops, skips and jumps thru mud and puddles are the more important bldgs.—one for the office and supply room, one for Mess, a third houses the PX (or will house it eventually we hope), and the 4th is the latrine, very convenient of course! Heat and hot water just aren't, and Miss. so far has offered me only a very cold shoulder. The heating system is being rushed, southern style, and may be in operating order in another week or month—perhaps. The Med. Dept. operates the hospital here and has no Personnel work. I have been placed in the Registrar's office and am Custodian of the Patients' Funds. No patients as yet (only a handful) so no work. I just sit in the office and freeze and watch the others do their jobs. Typewriters are rare, and rare is the word — they are both scarce and of most ancient, if noble vintage. Desks and chairs are lacking and all supplies are meager, to put it mildly.

Mon. nite we made a reconnaissance of dear old Centreville. There are a few quaint old houses on the 3 side streets, but Main Street is a mess—just exactly like those of the boom-towns in those western meller drammers. I still expect to see Tom Mix jumping off from the corrugated roof that covers the arcaded walk, or shooting out from the swinging doors of one of the "cafes." The sidewalk is elevated about waist high (the "rain," you know) and wagons and cars are parked side by side. We soldiers are the only ones that are startled by horses suddenly dashing around the corner. The daily train (due at 5:40 p. m.) arrives anytime after 6:30, and everyone is there to meet it. I can now understand their so doing. It is (to me at least) the only connection with outside civilization, which appears about as near and as accessible as Shangri-La, and just as ideal. There is no bus service, but after this Sunday I will know if it is possible for a soldier to "bum" his way to and from Natchez—50 miles north—within one day. If it proves successful, I may next try Baton Rouge, 75 mi. south, and exactly half way to N'Orleans, which seems a little too far.

There is one theatre in Centreville (pop. of the town is almost 1200!) and it changes features nightly. Sunday they had "Kid Glove Killer," Mon. "Submarine Raider," Gene Autry last nite, and so it goes. Stores have mushroomed over nite, and are housed in little tents. The civilian laborers have taken over every possible room and shed

and trailer space. I don't know where accommodations can be found for the Army wives that arrive on each train. There are 30 restaurants (so called) where a month ago there were 12 of these hole-in-the-walls. There is no sewage system, and ergo—come Saturday, the town is to be "off Limits" for the soldiers until the town meets the sanitary specifications of the Army.

(May 7, 1943, Camp Wallace, Texas)

Just a few lines to let you know that this Army life is O. K. Of course it gets tough at times but I manage to struggle through.

I went swimming in the Gulf of Mexico Wednesday. While we were down there we fired the big 90 millimeter guns. You see, I am in the Anti Aircraft division. It's a swell outfit.

I have already completed my 8 weeks of basic training and I am now going to "Electricians School." This is because I am classified as a "Searchlight Electrician."

I never thought it was possible, but in these 8 weeks of training I have learned an awful lot.

After a few weeks at this Electrical School, in which I get fundamental work, I will get shipped to another school, Chicago or Los Angeles, to complete more of this Electrical work.

By getting this extra course, I hope it will enable me to get my diploma (as agreed to).

I usually spend my weekends in Galveston or Houston.

This Army life is good experience and at times a lot of fun, but I wish this damn war would end because I miss home very much.

This is War

(Sept. or Oct. 1942, Somewhere in the Pacific aboard the M/S Day Star)

Our ship is a merchant vessel, ordinarily carrying only a small group of passengers, but since being converted into a troop ship, it carries a huge number of officers and men. We are quartered in one of the hatches which ordinarily are used to store freight. We sleep in canvas bunks which are set up in double rows and four high on both sides of the ship. There are two such decks of these and we are fortunate in being in the first deck below the main deck. It is, of course, very crowded, but we have found that it is not too uncomfortable, after you get used to it. The toilet and washing facilities are on the

main deck. It is good to have a shower available, even though it is cold and of salt water. We spend most of our time on deck and have had excellent weather all the way.

We have seen many strange sights while sailing over these lovely waters, such as flying fish which actually leap out of the water and fly for some distance over its surface. Their pearl-gray bodies and pink wings glistening in the sunlight are most picturesque. We have seen many schools of porpoises frolicking in the late afternoon, and now and then a shark has been seen rearing its ugly head alongside the boat. We are all looking for a whale, but have not as yet seen one, but we are still looking. It is always interesting to watch the other ships of our convoy plow thru these lovely waters, and the sight of the waves dashing against our own ship and throwing their spray far out is always an interesting sight.

Early morning of the 12th of this month, we passed the Equator and each of us was given a certificate to attest the fact.

(June 8, 1943, North Africa)

The moon is starting to come out again at night so I guess that pretty soon we'll start being entertained by our "Jerry" friends again. Every time they come around it reminds of the night of the 4th of July. It's all very colorful, but very costly to the Germans. The last time they came over they lost four planes. That's about half of what came over. Their bombs were a waste of time, energy, and life — to them. They drop quite a few delayed action bombs — therefore we lose quite a few Arabs. The Arabs know what they are, but their curiosity is greater than their common sense, so therefore they receive free lessons in flying and the playing of a harp. They seem to insist on hitting the things with hatchets — sounds a bit foolish doesn't it?

Lots of the bombs dropped here are duds. Upon investigation there lies inside a scrape of paper with these words inscribed — "No Good Made in Czechoslovakia." It's a nice bit of sabotage; I'll bet the Heinies would blow their tops if they knew about it.

(Sept. 12, 1943, North Africa)

It's over a year that I'm in the Armed Service and I really like this Army life. Although being a soldier in the U. S. A. is much different than a soldier on foreign soil. My five months of foreign service have increased my geographical knowledge. I have seen all I want to see in

North Africa and wish that it won't be long before I return to Rochester.

The weather out here is very hot and dusty. The temperature stays around 120 degrees. Sometimes it's so windy and dusty that living under such unpleasant conditions make it downright disgusting. Fortunately, the food and water are about what anyone can expect here. You'd be surprised what I'd give for a cold glass of water and a good dish of spaghetti. In spite of all this, I am gradually becoming accustomed to the rugged ways of living.

The natives, (Arabs-French- and Italians) are glad to have us here but they sure take advantage of our good nature. We pay absurd prices for their merchandise. Take for example a pound of grapes (which by the way are plentiful) we pay twenty cents a pound. It seems that wherever the American soldiers are, that section becomes prosperous.

(Guantanamo Bay, Cuba)

You ask what I am doing. Well, I told you about my job. I'm still holding out in the office and trying hard not to look too incompetent. I have a watch every three or four days, usually coming in the middle of the night. I am in the office from 8:00 A. M. until 11:30. Then chow, or mess. The troughing and sluicing here, incidentally, is nothing tremendous, but filling. Then at 1:00 I am back at work until 4:00 or 4:30. Then a shower, more tissue-restoring, and rest until time for the movies at 8:00. Bed at 10:00. Quite frequently we wedge in a game of casino, or, in the days following payday, poker, joker with aces, flush or straight. The day begins with a shrill whistle at 5:45, at which we leap from our beds, smoke a cigarette and fall out for exercises at 6:15. These latter are directed by Gene Tunney's men, throwbacks to the medieval torturer. Breakfast is at 6:30. The time not covered in this brief summary is given over to rest and chit-chat. And that's really about all. I haven't gone on liberty since that first time. The movies are about the biggest event of the day. I see at least six a week, barring rain.

Oh, yes, there is one thing I've done which may be of some interest. Those of us who have not as yet shot the regulation firearm are doing so this week. Monday and Tuesday we had lectures, and today we shot for the first time. Ten rounds apiece, five prone and five sitting. I was led, trembling and pale, to a position opposite target 26, at which I was supposed to aim. This, I pointed out to the Marine,

was ridiculous, as it was a full 200 yards away. However, I determined to try, the first shot nearly cracked my eardrums and just nicked a small land crab sunning itself on a rock about 100 yards to my left. On the second I completely disregarded the rules and was sloshed smartly along side the right eye, with the butt of the rifle or my thumb I am told. From then on I shot with the left eye only. My scores from the prone position were, I am afraid, well below par. However, I found myself when I assumed the sitting position. I discovered that, by gripping the rifle in a manner similar to that of a drowning man grasping at a straw, I was enabled to exercise some control over the course of the bullet *after* it left the gun. I astounded everyone by getting three bull's eyes in a row, and finishing up with two near misses. There was quite a bit of comment, I can tell you.

(March 13, 1944, Pacific)

As you probably know, I am now somewhere in the Southwest Pacific. This island has the most beautifully colored green that I have ever seen. Hundreds upon hundreds of cocoanut trees make it somewhat dangerous to walk around whenever there is a strong wind. The climate is very humid and there are too many mosquitoes to suit me. However, the nights are very cool and our mosquito nets help make sleeping pleasant. Everything possible is being done to protect us from mosquitoes. Especially the female malaria ones. These malaria mosquitoes play no favorites. If they were fussy whom they bit, there would be fewer malaria cases.

Some of the boys have even located a nice little swimming pool with nice cool water. That is the answer to a prayer in this heat and we sure have lots of fun. Chow is swell and we even have a neat little P. X. Can you imagine me drinking coca cola way out here, miles away from civilization? It really is pretty swell. Movies are shown every night and we sure go for that. What more can a fella ask, way out here? Having a swell bunch of officers and non-coms makes this life easier to endure.

You should have seen how we acted when we had our first mail call. We were just like a bunch of kids. That's how important mail is to us. We always look forward to our next mail call.

(Apr. 26, 1944, Somewhere in China)

Am off on another excursion, but only as a ferry pilot. Another fellow and I flew our supply and ferry ship up here and got things

ready for our boys who came in yesterday. They won't let me fly a mission with my bum leg so I've taken care of all the ground duty here for a couple of days. Some of the officers that came with me went to town and had to walk most of the 30 miles back, because they couldn't catch a ride. So I was busy as a bee all day yesterday doing five men's work.

Today everybody is here so I don't have a thing to do, but waste time. The weather is zero-zero at this moment. Planes are trying to get in on instruments and are having terrible trouble. It's extremely bad weather, and dangerous to try getting in, but they would rather get their ship in whole than to bail out, if they can possibly do it.

It's miserable damp and now rain. We didn't bring our mosquito nets, since we thought everything would be prepared in this hostel like ours. So far the mosquitoes haven't bothered me any, but the others seem to be complaining so they must be bothersome.

Right now I'm awful hungry but chow isn't till 12 (it's now 10:30) so I'll have to starve along. They've got half the people in this part of China working on the runway here, and there's more of them than you can count in a day's time. The Chinese soldiers live back of us a few feet and take calisthenics at about 4:30 a. m. waking us up at the most unearthly time with their shouts and counting in unison.

There are also lots of little babies and children around who run about screeching and yelling also. Not to mention some darned bird that sings a scale going up a quaternote at a time for about four or five times and then starting all over. It sure is a loud bird. There are literally billions of sparrows. I can't figure out how they got over here.

(May 22, 1944, Pacific)

Once out here we began work immediately and have been in every carrier operation since. Some of them have been damned rough. I've lost some very good friends during these raids, and that, more than anything else has been my main dislike for this type of work.

Right now we are on the home stretch. We expect to be relieved after this next big operation and return to the States for a much needed rest.

(June 8, 1944, Italy)

The 16th of this month, yours truly will have been over in this theater for one year . . .

I flew my own P-38 across the south Atlantic last summer and I assure you it was an exciting and memorable trip.

Don't know whether you know what I am doing or not but I'll tell you anyway. After graduating from flying school, I went into a Photo Reconnaissance training unit and am still in it. I came over as operations officer of the 23rd Photo Recon. Sq. and kept that job until just last Feb. Then I was made sq. commander and had that until April and was then made group operations officer in addition to being deputy group commander and I still have that job. Just between you and me, it was much more fun having a squadron. This sitting behind a desk is not for me; but it's a jump up the ladder.

Up to date I have flown 48 sorties against the enemy and I assure you they have been quite exciting and I have gained a few grey hairs. It used to be that when one got 50 missions they went back to the zone of interior for a 30 day leave and then were reassigned. But now 50 missions is just a number, you might as well have 100 or 25 it doesn't make any difference. But there is a new plan in effect, whereby on the recommendation of the flight surgeon one may get a 30 day leave home and then return to the same outfit—one may have 40 missions or 60, it all depends on the decision of the flight surgeon. Probably after the completion of this theater I'll go to China — a very distasteful thought I assure you.

Since I've been over, I've had the great opportunity to check out in the B-17 and the B-25. I enjoy flying them very much and have gotten about 110 hrs in the B-17 and about 60 in the B-25. But of course most of my time is in the P-38—close to 500 hrs now.

(October 6, 1944, Holland)

Everything here is going fine, hope it is as well with you. Since leaving the States I have visited Paris, Chartres, Carenton, St. Lo, and numerous other smaller cities in France. City of Liège in Belgium also. My fox hole and rifle are my best friends here in Holland. Artillery and Ack Ack are constantly raging, and planes are always above. Have done a lot of praying so far and never again will I refrain from it. It sure is comforting. Haven't had my clothes off in two weeks and am glad of every stitch. The old timers who griped about the muddy fields of Flanders weren't talking through their hats. Here in Holland, though, we have streamlined or rather straw-lined foxholes which are alright, but of course we can't tell how long we'll keep them. I expect to write from Germany next time. Haven't had any mail since leaving old U. S. and don't expect any for another month. More important things have priorities of the supply routes. Bunch of us were

lost in Belgium and put up for the night in a small Flemish Village. With my meager German I was still able to hold a fair conversation with the Flemish Innkeeper and talked twenty of us into the right to sleep on the floor after drinking plenty of beer and eating sandwiches. We surprised the townfolk by paying for everything. The Germans stole everything, even slept in their beds and made them sleep outside. Hit a card game. Had a 1/2 dollar and ran it to ten. Gotta stay lucky you know. Be seeing you. Hope you are both well and happy.

(October 11, 1944, France)

At the moment I'm sitting on someone's barracks bag in an old French barracks — by far the best billet we have had in many months. We have one very weak light for the room but that is a luxury to us. It is the first light we have had since we left England. This will be our third night here and it is very peaceful after three weeks of sleeping through thunderous barrages. We can relax here too. For there is not much chance of being shot while we sleep—except by plane. I'm not complaining! You see we are troops that have it a bit tougher than many, but not near as hard as the Infantry. They are the lads who really catch hell!

We have been shot at with a wide variety of items (too wide a variety) but I still think the worst part of war is the dreary separation from loved ones, complete lack of creature comforts, fatigue, wet, cold, and dirt! Pick out the dirtiest job you know and do it for a month without bathing, going two and three days at a time without washing even your face and hands, and you have a good idea of how war feels. If you can get good and wet and cold and stay that way, then you, as we say, "have had it." So spare a thought (not for me, at the moment in a very nice spot) for the lads who make the communiques.

This aging soldier sends you his best wishes from a rather soiled "La Belle France."

The Beginning of the End

(May 20, 1945, France)

I suppose I wrote about my trip to England in my last letter so I'll concentrate on VE Day.

I was lucky enough to be in Paris that day and night — hence, I was right in the middle of things.

Through a librarian with the OWI I have met a wonderful group of people. They work for the OWI, the American Embassy, the American Library in Paris etc. I spent the time with this group.

Of course, we did a great deal of drinking and lots of sight seeing. One of the boys who works at the Embassy has a car at his disposal all of the time, so a bunch of us piled in about midnight and we drove all over the city seeing the lighted buildings. They were perfectly beautiful. Sacre Coeur was brilliantly lighted, which made it chalk white against the inky darkness of the sky. Place de la Concorde was a myriad of lights surrounding the lighted fountains. Notre Dame had white lights shining on it and red lights were shining from within. The facade of Notre Dame was light as day. The Trocadero has many, many fountains behind it facing on a pool. The sight reminded me of the World's Fair with the lights playing. I suppose the most impressive sight was the Arc. It was a blaze of light and had huge flags of the United Nations hung down in the middle of it. There was just enough breeze so that they fluttered gently. The huge crowds singing the Marseillaise around it, added to the impressiveness.

I don't think I have ever seen so many people on the streets as there were all day and all night. Everyone was singing, laughing, kissing, drinking, etc. The few cars that ventured out were soon covered with humanity from the radiator, over the top and on the back bumper. It was practically impossible to drive a vehicle anywhere near the Opera, Arc, Concorde, Madeleine, etc.

When I finally started for a friend's house for a few winks of sleep at about four A. M., there was still a mob around the Opera.

(June 11, 1945, Oelsnitz, Germany)

Our ball game was called off tonight because of the rain, so instead we all went to a U.S.O. show which was playing in the theatre here. The nucleus of the show was the same as I saw while back in Holland before the Rhine Crossing. Evidently those artists have been touring the ETO ever since. There were only 5 entertainers in the group, two singers, a dancer, a violinist and the piano player. As we would say — "they knew their stuff," and put on a very good hour's entertainment. They were all first rate entertainers — I might say veterans in the field! As I've said before, probably, the evenings are very long here if one doesn't have something to do. Even on a cloudy day like today, it is now 9:45 P. M. and one can still see to read a book outside.

(July 1945, France)

Here is a list of the places where I have stayed while over here—
Left New York City 3 Nov. 44—Arrived Scotland 9 Nov. 44 Arrived
Le Havre 11 Nov.—Givet Fr. 14 Nov.—Compiègne, Fr. 28 Dec.
44,—Verviers, Fr., 26 Jan. 45—Petit Halleux, Belgium 29 Jan. 45
(Joined 30th Div.)—Harren, Gr. 2 Feb.—Fronhoven, Gr. 8 Feb.—
Inden, Gr. 24 Feb., Niederzier, Gr. 25 Feb.—Oberembt, Gr. 26 Feb.,
Bedburdyck, Gr. 2 Mar., Maasterbracht, Holland 6 Mar.—Brachter-
beck, Holland 8 Mar.,—Hoffman, Gr. 18 Mar.—Wallach 24 Mar.,
—Buschmannshof 25 Mar.—Waldebust 26 Mar.—Besten 28 Mar.
Drensteinfurt 1 Apr.—Neunkirchen 2 Apr.—Stukenbroch 3 Apr.—
Horstman 5 Apr.—Ohr 6 Apr.—Hamelin 7 Apr.—Bettmar 10 Apr.—
Denstort 11 Apr.—Caluorde 12 Apr.—Rogatz 13 Apr.—Guttenswegen
16 Apr.—Olvenstedt 17 Apr.—Magdeburg, 1 May—Oelsnitz 27 May
—Burstadt, Germany 1 July—Reims, Fr. (10 July).

(July 17, 1945, Pacific)

The old ship has traveled several thousand miles since I've come aboard. We've been on Patrol and gone chasing after Jap cruisers several times. We covered two landings on Mindanao with ease. Our latest work was done on Borneo. The "Dewey" was at both Brunei Bay and Balikpapan. That was quite an ordeal—prolonged bombardment, day and night. Jap bogies (enemy planes picked up by radar) annoyed us several times. We shot down a few—some of the emperor's best, I hope. And as usual activities up through the last four weeks can't be divulged.

Right now my fondest hope is to return home sometime this fall. The tropical seas look good only in travel folders. Warm weather and frequent rains cause the lesser annoyances. Missing civilian liberties that I used to take for granted hurts the most—dates, a few beers whenever you're in the mood, a smoke at night, an uninterrupted sleep, a change of faces, etc. Things that would pass unnoticed, unless you were denied them for an extended period make me realize just how well off I was as a civilian. This mess can't end soon enough to please me.

My daily routine, however, is not quite as uninteresting as I may make it sound. There's always plenty to do—8 hours of watch daily, inspections, reports, repairs to gunnery equipment and general maintenance, and education. Education works two ways. First, I have a lot to learn about my duties and ship handling. Something new is always

arising. Secondly, I try to prepare the men in my division for promotions in their respective rates of seamen, boatswain mates, and gunners mates. Occasionally, I hold informal classes and go over various points. Also there is a prepared course and printed progress tests available from the Navy Dept. And lastly we have practical tests of giving a man a job and grading his successful completion of it. So you see, despite dislike for this life, there's plenty to keep me busy.

(August 12, 1945, Germany)

I'm still in the Classification and Assignment Division of the Adjutant General's section of the Headquarters, and while readjustment was progressing, I was in charge of transferring men eligible for discharge out of units scheduled for the Pacific and replacing them with men who had less than eighty five points. The biggest problem was getting the same type of specialist who was well qualified to fill the shoes of some of the high priced help who had been in the Army long enough to acquire their 85 points. Unlike most Army jobs it was one that one could see the point of and consequently the efforts that one put in had the tangible results of getting men into a position where they could get out of the Army. Since then I've been engaged in the less serious business of playing tennis and polishing up my bridge game. They are both coming along nicely. There is a park in town here with excellent red clay courts and the Army furnishes rackets and balls.

(Aug. 28, 1945, Biarritz)

The Army opened a school at Shrivenham, England, and I ignored that. The place didn't hold especially pleasing memories, and I'd had enough of that misty isle. But I couldn't believe it when they announced Biarritz as the site for the Continental U. And what's more, it was just as difficult to believe that I got in on the first quota

One end of the town juts out on some bluffs with magnificent views of the Pyrennees and Spain and off towards the land of the 48. Here the Army took but one chateau. That is my fox hole. I share a room and bath with 2 others. We have a corner room with balconies on both sides, and can swim in either the front or back yard, with a bit of an abrupt drop on one other side and land connecting the remaining side. Sounds rough, doesn't it? Ah yes, it's tuff in the Army!

Have been here one week, have 7 more to go. Am taking Political Science with an egotistic Princeton prof, cultural geog with a U. of Ill. professor, and French with a dilettante from Pratt Institute, I believe.

(Sept. 7, 1945, Berlin, Germany)

We spent six months in England and Christmas Eve flew across the Channel into the Bulge. And Hell isn't fire, it's the lack of it. Cold was the worst enemy in the winter campaign.

Then after a month's rest we jumped over the Rhine at Wesel. (I became a Paratrooper just after I returned from Furlough in May) and they were waiting for us. I'd rather sweat out twenty four hours under artillery fire than a five minutes tussle with a sniper. Fifteen minutes after we landed I had six bullet holes in my clothing but none in me. (I'm giving my luck a *long* rest to make up for *that*.)

As I look back on it I had a hell of a lot of excitement in combat. I used to be up with the Infantry as Forward observer a lot and always went on Patrol with them. I estimate that 25% of my combat time was spent behind enemy lines. My longest time was 74 hours. I was sent (I volunteered like a damn fool) looking for a hidden gun position. I found it but the gun was gone. I had to live off "D" [concentrated chocolate bars] rations and what I could scramble on my own. Now it seems like fun but it wasn't at the time.

— — — was killed Jan. 7th on the Bayonet charge up a hill at Flamierge, Belgium. I was with his outfit as Forward observer. He died quick and clean. A sniper put a bullet right between his eyes. I was right behind him buzzing my radio. I stopped for him but he was gone. The sniper nearly got me too.

(Summer, 1945, Frankfurt on the Main)

I can't begin to describe the emotions you feel in a ruined nation such as Germany. About 70 per cent of this city, a little smaller than Cleveland, is ruined. Twenty-eight thousand people were killed in the air raids and many more are missing. They are digging in some of the ruins and uncovering corpses every day. On a warm day the stench around some of the buildings is terrific. Most of the better class of Germans have long since left. What are here are the laboring class. Existing on \$5 a week if they are lucky. They are mostly living in cellars, as all the floors above have been destroyed.

There are blocks and blocks, miles and miles of just devastation. Nothing was spared; churches, opera houses, factories, apartments, etc. . . . How many people are buried under these homes, no one knows. . . . The streets are crowded with the Wehrmacht, straggling back to their homes, if they have any left. They are a bedraggled bunch, hunched over with huge packs on their backs, gaunt, sullen, defeated.

. . . The only ones who speak to you are the kids, and they are as cute as bugs' ears—smart, alert and neat as pins. Poor little guys. What a heritage they have!

(Oct. 12, 1945, Tokyo Bay)

After a full week of rain and fog the sun broke through this morning bright and clear. I happened to be up and strolling around on top deck when the sun arose and there, sure enough, was Fujiyama staring me in the face. It is really much nearer than I had expected and it seems almost impossible that the fog could have been so thick as to obstruct our seeing it before. From where we lie it is sixty miles to its base but it seems as if you could reach over the rail and touch it. At this time of year there is no snow on its peak and it stands bare and rocky. I can easily see why the Japs have worshipped this volcano—it is an imposing sight and one which I shall never forget. It struck me as I gazed toward the mountain that this alone, of all that was Japan, remains great. It is like a huge sentinel guarding its beloved land from both sea and air. Despite what the militarists of the world may say or think or do the great geographical land-marks remain unchanged — this is what makes travel worth-while to me. Up until today, being here was like being in Panama without the Canal, or steaming into San Francisco harbor and seeing no Golden Gate. The picture is now complete.