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A Memoir of War

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PREFACE

In mid-1942, I tried to enlist in the Marine Corps and then the Navy, but was rejected on physical grounds by both services because of poor eyesight (myopia). Rather than wait to be called up in the draft, I had hoped to have some choice in my eventual assignment and become a combat photographer. I was then two years out of high school and working (in New York City) at TIME Magazine as an editorial staff art-and-production associate. I had been told by both the Marine Corps and Navy examiners that "not even the Army will take you," but then I received my "Greetings" from Uncle Sam, passed the physical, and left my home town of Orange, N.J., for Fort Dix (N.J.), two days before Christmas in 1942.

Most of what is contained in Part One of this memoir represents letters written to my family while in uniform stateside; I wasn't aware that my mother had saved any of these letters until she surprised me with a sizable stack of them one day many years after the War.

Much of Part Two, which begins when my Division, the 14th Armored, embarked for France, was put on paper soon after the actual events, to register the where, what, and when--without undue emphasis on the bloodier aspects of battle--of my days in combat as a reconnaissance-tank crewman.

More recently, I revived that old manuscript and incorporated my letters written while serving overseas--and, since a soldier in combat has very little knowledge of what's transpiring beyond the range of his squad or platoon (and in a tank, with hatches closed and peering through a periscope, sometimes even less than that), I have also included expositions showing just where my crewmates and I fit into the bigger picture.

Part One

Camp Campbell, Kentucky

Dec. 30, 1942 (Wednesday)... I would guess that you're more than a little surprised to see this Kentucky address. So am I! I am now a member of the 92nd Armored Reconnaissance Battalion of the 12th Armored Division. Upon completion of eight to 13 weeks of basic training, I should go right to Officer Candidate School (OCS). Chances are I will become an aerial reconnaissance officer.

I was glad in most ways to leave Fort Dix. There we slept in drafty tents (six to a tent), the food was lousy, and the mud was knee deep. I knew some of the boys already there, and most of those who came down with me from Orange, so I got along well enough.

We (those of us assigned to this Division) packed and left Fort Dix by train 7 p.m., Monday, Dec. 28. When we reached Philadelphia, my traveling companions and I conjectured that we were headed for Florida and the Air Corps. When we awoke next morning, we were in Pittsburgh. We then went straight through Ohio and on to Indianapolis. By then we had decided we were being sent to California or Texas. But then the train cut back and headed southeast. Entering Kentucky, the betting was on Fort Knox. We bypassed Fort Knox, though, and went on into Tennessee. During the night, we cut back again, and arrived here this morning.

Camp Campbell is brand new and one of the largest military installations in the country. I undoubtedly was pop-eyed when I got off the train and saw all the tanks and armored field pieces. There was a band at the station and we were met by several generals and their staff officers.

We had additional tests and interviews this morning that will determine our immediate futures. The group (about 190 men) that came down from Fort Dix will be quarantined together for two or three days before we are sent to our respective outfits. I am the only one going into reconnaissance [my military occupational specialty (MOS) had me tabbed to become a scout-car commander--"the eyes of the Army!"].

Jan. 6, 1943 (Wednesday)... They keep us so busy I am finding it difficult to find the time to write. Our group is supposed to fit into units that have already had seven weeks of basic training. That makes it tough on us!

As part of my basic training, I will learn to drive a motorcycle, peep (the jeep, the Army's ubiquitous 4x4 quarter-ton truck, is called a peep in accord with Armored Force tradition), scout car, truck, half-track, and light, medium and heavy tanks. That part of my training should interest [my younger brother] Ken! I will learn to fire a variety of side arms, rifles, machine guns, and mobile gun units. I will also learn radio procedure, telegraphy, map reading, scouting, etc. etc. etc.

Camp Campbell is partly in Kentucky but mostly in Tennessee. As our post office is in Kentucky, the mail goes there. The

nearest towns are Hopkinsville (Ky.) and Clarksville (Tenn.). Nashville, about 50 miles from here, is the nearest big city. We can't leave camp until after we have been here a month or more; so I haven't been off the base yet. We have plenty of movies, post exchanges (PXs), and service clubs right here in camp, though, so the restriction doesn't make all that much difference.

The food is pretty good, and you can have all you want (except for milk, which is just as well, since the cows in this part of the country must graze on onions!). We eat in mess halls and from plates, which is more civilized than eating out of mess kits, as we did at Fort Dix.

Being in a large outfit like this, there is little chance that we would see combat with less than a year's training. Of course, everyone is saying that the War will be over in less than a year.

I won't be using my cameras down here. There are so many restrictions I don't think it would be worthwhile.

I am enclosing copies of some insurance papers I was told to send home.

[From Jan. 7 letter to JDTasker, at TIME: You get no satisfaction by being in the Army. So far, there has been none of that "this is worth fighting for" feeling. Everyone gripes, everyone talks about home, a short war, corrupt government, crooked draft boards. There is also a feeling here that men being trained now aren't being trained for the present conflict (which our officers encourage us to believe will be over in less than a year) but more for a show of might when the showdown and settlement come.]

Jan. 14, 1943 (Thursday)... In one of your letters, you mentioned something about inoculations. What ever gave you the idea that mine were over? Today I received a tetanus shot in the left arm and a typhoid shot in the right arm, plus a blood typing. Our "shots" [Watch the hook!] never end. So far, I have had one vaccination, two tetanus shots, three typhoid (one double) shots, and two blood typings. I don't mind them too much, but my arms do get sore, even making it difficult to write at times.

Boy, are they keeping us busy! We work and study 14 hours a day! We are a group of replacements being prepared to fit into units that have already had nine weeks of basic training. They are giving us the best of instructors and expect to have us complete our basic training in about six more weeks--at the same time that the rest of the Division completes its 16 weeks of training. At that time, we will join our respective companies.

Then, I'm not sure what happens. Maneuvers, a furlough, advanced training, OCS? I will keep you informed. At any rate, this outfit will not go anywhere until next winter, if then.

Lately we've been getting acquainted with the M-1 rifle and the .30cal machine gun. We've also been taking up vehicular maintenance and I expect to be driving a peep in a few days. They are teaching us as much about everything as we can possibly

absorb. Much of it is done through training films; this week I've been seeing three or four a day!

There are some 20 soldiers in this camp from Orange, so there are a few familiar faces. My fellow trainees are a pretty good bunch. They come from New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Ohio, West Virginia and Kentucky mostly. I have a "private" room in the barracks with three other "recruits," as we are referred to by the cadre, who are mostly members of the regular Army. I was lucky to get into this room as there are only two in the barracks and our sergeants occupy the other one. It's a good deal more comfortable than bunking side-by-side-by-side in the "open" barracks.

Keep me posted on the news and send me the addresses of Tommy Williams and Willard Kimm if you can.

I am enclosing one of our shoulder patches [for the 12th Armored Division].

Jan. 20, 1943 (Wednesday)... I began driving today. I did my first driving in a scout car, a heavily armored vehicle weighing about ten tons and capable of carrying eight passengers. Our instructors took us out to an open field deeply rutted with frozen mud. And then a lieutenant said to me, "All right, Coffee, take the wheel." I did fairly well (with a little assistance on the shifting) in spite of the exceptionally rough terrain.

It's been quite cold lately: near zero mornings and nights! When the sky is clear and the sun high, however, it really warms up. Some days it's 10° at 6 a.m., 60° at 2 p.m., and 20° at 8 p.m. Amazing! It's not a "dry" cold, either. We feel it just as much as you would at home.

We've been having a lot of everything lately, but for the next few weeks it'll be guns and vehicles. We have only about five-and-a-half more weeks of basic.

Tell Dad that I received a letter from "Hank" [Henry Luce]. I quote (in part)... "As an American I am delighted that you have answered the country's call, but as editor of TIME I am sorry to lose you from the staff. I hope that you will write to me from time to time, so that all of us on the job here may have news of you..."

For relaxation, we go to the PX and the movies, if we have time after classes. When you get up at 6 a.m. and work and study until 9 p.m., day after day, you really don't find much time to relax. We've been having quite a body-building program as well--with calisthenics and challenging obstacle courses--so I'm probably putting on weight and toughening up some.

I've finally written at least once to nearly everyone on my list, so the mail is rolling in. I get little time to write except on Wednesdays, when we stop at 15:00 (3 p.m. to you civilians), and Sundays, when we have the day off (except for church, which I've been attending regularly!). When the mail comes, it sure is appreciated.

Jan. 24, 1943 (Sunday)... We're still awfully busy, with classes in everything from first aid and chemical warfare to camouflage

and scouting. It's like being back in school, only a lot tougher! Classes usually run for 50 minutes, and then we get a 10-minute break, and then it's another class.

The last few days have been nice and warm. Our only objection to the warmer weather is mud! It's not exactly mud down here, it's more like a sticky clay. Boy, does it stick!

Our restrictions are lifted next Saturday and we can go into town, if we choose. I'll probably go just to see what life is like here in "the sticks." I'll wait a few more weeks and then take a trip to Nashville with a few of my new buddies.

I took a walk this afternoon with one of my roommates and then went to see a movie: Andy Hardy's Double Life. It's very funny and I'm sure Barbara [my sister] will want to see it. Later, we went to one of the service clubs. A nice, quiet day.

I can't seem to find much to write about today. We've reached that stage of our training where everything is routine to us now.

Jan. 28, 1943 (Thursday)... Sunday, the weather was perfect: 74° and clear. Monday night we had four inches of snow! That's the weather we get. The quality of our food runs about the same--one week great, the next week _____!

As a result of this crazy weather, I'm in bed for the day with a bad cough and a slight fever (100.2°). It's nothing to worry about and I should be back on my feet by tomorrow.

Our restrictions are lifted this weekend and I will probably go into town. If I can, I will pick up an inexpensive camera and send you some pictures. A buddy of mine is having his wife bring his car down (from Dayton, Ohio), so a few of us should get around pretty well for a while. The bus lines from camp to town are so long you sometimes have to stand in line for hours to go either way.

ASN 32599978 is my Army Serial Number. That's the first thing the Army requires you to commit to memory and the one thing I will always have with me while in the service. It also goes on your dog tags, which carry your blood type and religious denomination and are worn on a thin chain about the neck. The first three or four digits are some kind of code indicating the draft I was in, the section of the country that I am from, where inducted, etc.

I had a letter from Dan [Brennan] the other day and (contrary to what Mrs. Alfred may have told you) he tells me he won't enter the service until May. Then he receives special training equal to his senior year of R.O.T.C. and then goes to OCS.

Hold on to my tax forms. I think I'll wait until the first of March and see what the government wants from me. Has my statement of earnings from TIME come yet?

I've been buying TIME and LIFE at the PX every week, waiting for TIME to start sending me my free copies as a military absentee. Getting on the mailing list takes a few weeks after they get the change of address, though.

My money is holding out fine. In fact, I'll probably send some home next week, as we get paid this Saturday.

Feb. 4, 1943 (Thursday)... My cold cleared up and I'm in pretty good shape now. There was a case of measles in our company, though, so we have been quarantined (restricted to the company area) for a period of from nine to 14 days. Now, I can find a little time for letter-writing and reading.

I've been doing some driving, mostly with a peep, and I'm doing all right. Peep-driving is something Ken would certainly enjoy. You can drive them just about anywhere--through water (though not too deep), mud, sand, snow, deep grass and the like. No roads needed. Some fun!

The War situation looks brighter each day. Few people here think we will ever see action! It's a nice thought, but I think there is too much optimism. It sure will be nice when it's all over.

Tomorrow, Lt. Gen. McNair, head of all Army ground forces, is to inspect the Division. I wonder if and where I might run into him.

I'm enclosing a money order for \$50. Deposit it in my account.

It's late and I'm tired, so good night to all.

Feb. 9, 1943 (Tuesday)... We had gas-mask drill this morning and went into a chamber filled with a concentration of tear gas. First, we put our masks on and entered the chamber, then stayed there for several minutes before being given the order to leave. You don't notice the gas at all. Next, we put on our masks, entered the chamber, and then took our masks off. We had to open our eyes and take a deep breath. They then let us out.

The gas is not poisonous, but it sure is an irritant. It stings the eyes and makes them water. It also affects the nasal membranes. The best remedy is to stand facing the wind for several minutes with your eyes open. This helps a lot.

Then, with our masks in our holders, we again entered the chamber. Given the order, we sure put those masks on in a hurry! We had learned the value of our gas masks!

We are still under quarantine but should be out of it by Friday. If so, I may go to Nashville this weekend. I have several acquaintances in training there with the Air Corps and I hope to look them up.

The weather has been nice lately. It's almost like summer and I'm acquiring quite a bit of color. However, I hope I'm not here when summer does come. The mud turns into dust and shifts around like desert sand. When the wind blows hard, you can't see a thing. Then, we wear goggles and dust respirators. That's not for me!

Feb. 14, 1943 (Sunday)... We got a bad break, another case of measles, so the quarantine continues for two more weeks. That means quarantined for the month of February! It is slowing down our training, but things should work out all right.

Tomorrow, Tuesday and Wednesday we go out to the range and fire the .30cal machine gun. We fire from both ground mounts and light tanks. Within the next few weeks, we will also fire

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the carbine, the 37mm anti-tank gun, the submachine gun, the mortar, and probably the "45" pistol. Here's hoping I qualify for a few expert or sharpshooter medals.

I'm making application for OCS. In order of preference, I'm applying for Air Corps Administration, Signal Corps (Photographic), and Armored Force. At the earliest, I can enter in six to eight weeks. There's a possibility that I will have to wait until after maneuvers, which can mean several months. That's all right, though, because the more extensive the training the more opportunity.

Sorry to learn that Bob [my older brother] isn't writing. I wrote to him last week. If I hear from him I'll let you know.

Regarding my [21st] birthday. I don't know. There isn't much that I can use down here.

Feb. 22, 1943 (Monday)... Last week I received a medal and a driver's license.

We finished firing the machine gun from ground mounts and tanks and I had one of the highest scores that day. My score rates me as an expert and I will get a corresponding medal.

Sunday, I qualified in the peep and now have a driver's license. In the near future, I will have to qualify for practically every type of vehicle we have.

If all goes well, our quarantine will be lifted this Saturday at 6:30 a.m. It's sure made things tough on us [We weren't even allowed to go to the PX]. One whole month of quarantine!

I will try to telephone you this Sunday or Monday. I will either call sometime after 5 p.m. Sunday, your time, or Monday after 7 p.m. I can get to a phone all right, but it often takes four hours or more to get a call through. There is a possibility that I am due for KP this Sunday. If so, no call until Monday.

According to all reports, and come what may, everyone has to file a tax return. So send my tax form to me. I will drop TIME a card and have them send me a statement of my earnings.

Furloughs are being granted to most of the Division starting March 1. Those who have been here the longest will go first, of course. There's a good chance that I will get one in six to eight weeks. This is the furlough customarily granted upon completion of basic training. So maybe I'll be home soon!

We are "dry-running" on the carbine now and should be on the firing range by Thursday. Here's hoping I qualify for another medal.

March 4, 1943 (Thursday)... It was good to talk with you and the others last Sunday. I hope it [I had to reverse the charges] didn't cost you too much. I received the candy-and-nut package Friday and the package from Kresge's on Monday. Thank the Lawsons for the birthday cards and Barbara and Dad for theirs. Let's hope I'll be home for my next birthday.

We've been having quite a physical-conditioning program lately, with lots of marching, double-timing and running the Division obstacle course. I'm getting into good shape, but after running five miles and marching ten, you do feel a bit tired in the evenings.

Our group didn't go on the range this week as had been scheduled. Tomorrow we start learning the "45" pistol. By Monday, we should start firing the carbine and then the 37mm anti-tank gun.

I'm enclosing a money order for thirty dollars and my tax statement. Draw whatever is needed from my bank account and send the first-quarter payment (\$42.75) to the Internal Revenue Service in Newark.

Best to all and thank Kenneth for his letter.

March 14, 1943 (Monday)... Last week I qualified for another expert-marksman medal--on the 37mm anti-tank gun! We will probably fire the carbine this week and I should qualify for still another medal.

I really missed something this week by being so far from home. Last Thursday evening, TIME celebrated its 20th Anniversary, with a dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria. I received an invitation and program, but of course I couldn't attend.

This camp is now "coed"! We have several hundred WAACs [Women's Auxiliary Army Corps] here and more are coming. There are quite a few from New Jersey, so I'm looking for familiar faces.

The first phase of our training ends in a week or two. They will probably hand out some ratings. If so, I should get one. It all helps toward OCS.

We've had quite a lot of rain lately (all the time we were on the range!), but it finally cleared yesterday and now it's quite summery.

Thanks just the same, but I have no use for any except GI socks.

Give my bike to the Miles. And send me Sherman's present address.

[It's likely that I became a member of B Company, 92nd Recon, sometime in here, but there is no reference to the change or the actual completion of basic training in these letters.]

March 21, 1943 (Sunday)... Tomorrow we are going on bivouac and will probably stay out until Friday. It's good experience but can be pretty nasty if it rains. During the bivouac we will have night problems and learn advanced reconnaissance techniques.

Friday, in the rain, we were on the combat-field firing range. I fired the 37mm anti-tank gun (with sub-caliber [.30cal] inserts), the tommy gun and the carbine. I did quite well, but no medals, as we weren't firing for record. We were using tracer bullets and could easily follow our shots, which made the firing fun in spite of the weather.

They just passed a new ruling: no cameras allowed in camp. You can easily realize why, what with all the "new" military equipment in plain view. That means no snapshots. I'll try to have my picture taken at one of the studios here in camp or in town and send you at least one picture of this soldier boy.

I likely won't know more than 12 hours in advance when I'm getting my furlough, so don't count on any definite date. I'll wire you and let you know when I'm coming--and, if I can arrange for a flight, possibly for some money. I doubt now that I'll get my furlough before the middle of April or early May.

In answer to your question, they're using the WAACs mostly for clerical work and in the PXs, service clubs and movie theaters. There are quite a few of them here and it seems to be helping the morale.

After a considerable number of weighings on several broken-down scales, I've determined that I now weigh about 140 pounds. With my pack and full field equipment, I weigh closer to 240. Luckily, being in an Armored unit, we usually toss our packs into our vehicles. It's not always that way though! We've had plenty of five- to seven-hour road marches with full packs.

[Sometime in here, the Battalion was put on alert, as enlisted men were needed to go overseas as battle replacements after the 1st Armored Division suffered heavy losses (more than 100 tanks lost and 6,000 killed, wounded or missing in two days) during the German breakthrough at Kasserine Pass in western Tunisia. It was rumored that selections would be made by lot. But I don't believe anyone from our company was selected. I learned later, as a member of the 14th Armored, that 148 men from that Division were among those sent to Fort Meade, Maryland, and then on to Africa.]

March 29, 1943 (Monday)... We had quite a time last week. We were on bivouac all week with the Rangers! They're our Army's equivalent of the British Commandos.

Ranger officers and non-coms acted as our instructors. They taught us a hundred and one little things that might not have seemed all that important at the time--but there's always a chance that they might be needed one day! We scaled cliffs by rope, improvised booby traps, crawled under live machine-gun fire, floated vehicles with tarpaulins, learned hand-to-hand combat skills, and assaulted and crawled under barbed wire.

We had fine weather during the bivouac but the nights sure were cold! We bathed and shaved in an icy stream. My face chapped quite a bit and it's still peeling.

Late this afternoon we had a Division Physical Test. Boy, what a test! We went through a series of timed exercises and then a road march. It was really tough and I was amazed at the stamina of not only myself but the rest of the company.

Here is what we went through--one right after the other--and they all had time limits:

- * 300-yard dash (50 seconds)
- * 15 push-ups (20 seconds)
- * carry a man your own weight 75 yards (20 seconds)
- * 10 burpees (25 seconds)
- * crawl through graduated tunnels of wire a distance of 100 yards (25 seconds)
- * broken-field running
- * walk 4 miles in 50 minutes

We wore our steel helmets and were further burdened with full packs.

April 3, 1943 (Saturday)... It looks like another busy week for me. Monday and Tuesday I'll be on the carbine range, and then Wednesday through Sunday I'll be out on bivouac. They certainly keep us busy!

I was talking with my Company Commander last night about my application for OCS. He told me that the Board will probably meet the middle of the month and that I should hear something then.

The soldier from the 12th Armored you saw on Main Street was probably Al Nicosia. He's Italian, rather heavy-set, and dark. He went home last week on an emergency furlough because of illness in the family. I know him quite well.

Now that the weather is warm, the mud is drying up, creating lots of dust. The dust is so bad that we have to wear goggles and dust respirators when we take to the road in our vehicles. At times, we even have to stop; the dust is that thick! I think I'd rather have the mud again.

April 11, 1943 (Sunday)... Received another medal last week: expert on the carbine. I'm getting quite a collection! My blouse is beginning to sag on the left side from the weight.

Your [toll-house] cookies came. Surprisingly, they were in perfect condition. I received a box of chocolates from Aunt Dot that got overheated in transit. Unfortunately, all the chocolates were now one--paper cups and all.

It looks like the Army may send me to college! I took a test last week for Advanced Specialists Training and received one of the highest marks in the Battalion. I will be given an interview and can make several choices of study [majoring in areas where the Army anticipated specialists would be needed later in the War]. Let's hope I end up at an Eastern college. I will let you know more about this later.

Just now, I am on 24-hour Battalion guard duty [I believe, at the motor pool]: 2 hours on, 4 hours off. It's raining, so it's not a very pleasant assignment.

I missed out on the bivouac last week because of the test and carbine firing. The company had a good time, so that's one bivouac I regret not going on.

The Board for OCS meets soon, so between OCS and college, I should be getting a furlough or moving out of here shortly.

[There are no letters between April 11 and the following, of May 2.]

May 2, 1943 (Sunday)... I finally got to spend a weekend in Nashville. Friday night, another GI and I attended a dance (a swell one!) there as representatives of our Company. After the dance we were on our own and spent Saturday and Sunday seeing the town.

Here is quite a coincidence. We stayed at the YMCA in a four-bed room. When I returned from washing-up Saturday morning,

I found my buddy talking excitedly with one of the other soldiers who shared the room. We had turned in after they had gone to bed the night before and it was really the first we had seen of them. It turns out that my buddy had gone to school with this other lad; their homes were only a few blocks apart! This other soldier wasn't from our Camp either. He was participating in maneuvers in southern Tennessee!

We went out on a four-day problem (just like maneuvers) last week and I got a total of eight hours sleep for the three nights. We encountered mosquitos worse than those for which New Jersey is famous! My hands, arms, and legs are still sore from the many bites. It's hot down here now and, thankfully, we have switched from wool ODS to our summer uniforms (sun-tans).

I'm still waiting to be interviewed for college. Let's hope the Board meets this week! Tomorrow, I start Division Radio School and will attend until I leave for other studies. It should prove to be worthwhile.

Dan Brennan is in the Army but will continue school until the middle of the month and then be sent to an Army camp. He doesn't know just what they are planning to do with him. Donald [MacSporrán] is stationed down in Miami. Jimmy Coccia is an Air Cadet at Maxwell Field, Alabama.

Best to all and hope to see you all soon.

May 14, 1943 (Friday)... It looks more and more like I'm headed for college! I passed the Board and should leave for Ohio State University in the very near future. There, I will take additional tests and my course of study will be decided upon. I have expressed interest in Psychology and Rehabilitation, also Photography. Maybe I'll end up in a college near home. [I believe the Photography program was being taught at Yale!]

I am getting along well in radio and find it quite interesting. We have four hours of study a day--two on sending and receiving and two on procedure. This is in the mornings. I "fall out" with the Company in the afternoon. [In the evenings, having been asked to do so by the CO, I was spending some time in the quiet mess hall attempting to teach a soldier from the hills of Arkansas how to read and write.]

Being a radio student, I miss most of the excitement of problems, field-firing, and tactics. That's all right, though, for it's very hot and dusty now and a half-day indoors can really be appreciated.

Ohio State University

June 3, 1943 (Thursday)... I never thought I'd study engineering --especially while in the Army! You will have two engineers in the family if and when I complete my courses.

When I was accepted by the Board at Camp Campbell, I thought I'd be taking Psychology or Foreign Area and Language Study. It seems now that most of those quotas filled early or require some previous college. It was determined that I had an aptitude for engineering [not surprising, since I had taken the Scientific Program in high school], so I took what was offered.

It's great here, just about perfect. I live in the Buckeye Club, one of several dormitories built into the Stadium for the athletes. There are about 20 to a dorm. In addition, each dorm has an attached lounge, with comfortable chairs, a Ping-Pong table, a radio, and a Coca-Cola machine.

The food is excellent. I've never eaten as much as I do now. We get all the milk we can drink. There are no shortages, with good meat or poultry, good salads, and plenty of vegetables. Dessert is usually ice cream or strawberry shortcake. Almost all of the food, including dairy products, is raised by the University's College of Agriculture on its many nearby farms.

At present, we are taking refresher courses, learning how to study again, in preparation for our advanced studies. We will have up to 40 hours of class a week--twice as many as the civilian students. No one seems to know just where we'll go, but we should know within two weeks.

I think we are called Cadets, but there's been nothing official yet.

I had a letter from Willard [Kimm]. He expects to get married as soon as he gets his commission [in the Maritime Service]. Say hello to Tommy for me if you see him.

June 13 1943 (Sunday)... I start school tomorrow--here! The Army signed a contract with the University last week for 1500 Basic Engineers. If I "keep on the beam" and continue my courses, I should be here for the next 22 months. I'll receive a one-week furlough every 12 weeks, so you know when you can expect me home.

We moved into a fraternity house last Tuesday and today into our "permanent" quarters--brand-new dorms (built for the girls!). We sleep two to a room, which is a bedroom and study combined. The food is still great. Everything is fine except for the weather, which is hot!

Friday evening I went over to the Stadium to check for mail. As I was passing through one of the dorms, someone called out my name. I turned around and there was Fred Wildauer! You remember him [He had been a classmate from kindergarten through high school]. We were inducted together and shared the same tent at Fort Dix. I had lost contact with him after I left Dix. It was quite a surprise [and coincidence!]. Saturday, I found another GI here from Orange.

The curriculum is quite challenging. In my first term, I have courses in Chemistry, Physics, Math, English, History and Geography. That's in addition to Military Studies and Physical Education. In our first nine months, we are supposed to cover two years of college.

This won't be as interesting or as exciting as being in Armored Reconnaissance, but I'll keep you informed as to my progress. The Army has submitted a bill to Congress to make us Cadets, with Cadet pay and privileges. Here's hoping!

June 24, 1943 (Thursday)... I've just returned from the Natatorium (3 pools!), so feel quite refreshed. Studying is a bit difficult in this weather, but we get by.

The Army has announced that some of us will be released from the service as civilian engineers upon completion of our training. Wouldn't that be something! Because of this, I see no reason why [my older brother] Bob's deferment won't be continued.

I'm glad to hear that Ken [my younger brother, who had enlisted in the Marines at age 17] has gotten what he wants. He's going to miss his days off though!

I received a form from TIME to be filled out for pay-as-you-go tax. So my monthly check could be for less than at present. I don't know just how this tax business will work out in respect to those in military service. From what I can determine, I pay tax on my 1942 earnings (the larger of the years) and none on 1943 income.

I had a letter from Donald. He's at Keesler Field, Miss., but expects to leave soon for college, where he will take Army pre-flight training. [As I understand it, Donald couldn't qualify for carrier landings and his training to become a Navy flier under the V-12 program was terminated. I don't know whether he was then drafted or volunteered, but he ended up in the Army Air Corps as a bombardier and was killed in a stateside training accident in 1944.]

Free time is a real luxury! We are free only from 9 p.m. to 10:45 p.m. weekdays and from 4 p.m. Saturday until 6:30 p.m. Sunday. All the rest of the time is for classes, compulsory study, eating and sleeping. We have at least twice as many class hours as the typical civilian student.

I'll be looking forward to reading Lowell Bennett's book [Assignment to Nowhere: The Battle for Tunisia] after you're done with it. [Lowell, a former neighbor, covered the first clash in this war between American and German ground forces, as a 22-year-old I.N.S. correspondent.]

I am enclosing a map of the campus, with a few notations.

July 2, 1943 (Friday)... After nearly two weeks of 95-100° heat, the weather took a decided turn and we were nearly frozen when the temperature plunged to 45° a few days ago.

There isn't much to tell about my life here, because everything is routine: classes and studying. We move along pretty fast and have tests at least once a week.

I have met several other GIs from around home, some of whom I knew before I got drafted. They are from Maplewood, Milburn, Newark and Orange. It seems strange to be running into people you haven't seen for some time--here!

Tell Dad I'm sorry I can't help him work on [repainting] the house this Summer. Someday it will be finished, though.

Deposit the enclosed \$50 money order to my account.

July 11, 1943 (Sunday)... Thanks for the book and the toll-house cookies. My roommates certainly enjoyed the cookies! They lasted about two hours. I'm halfway through Lowell's book and find it most interesting. Some of the others want to read it, so, if it's all right with you, I'll wait and bring it with me when I come home on furlough.

I'm in one of the larger rooms now, so have three roommates. We have two double-decker bunks, two large closets, two dressers, a desk and desk lamp, two easy chairs, straight chairs, etc. and have an adjoining study for the convenience of the 16 men in our floor section.

My roommates:

Ed Hiepe, a corporal in the Air Corps, from St. Petersburg, Florida

Bill Fennessy, a corporal in the Air Corps, from Queens, New York

Bernie Bodoff, a private who was in my Company at Camp Campbell, from Paoli, Pennsylvania

Ed is a newlywed, Bernie's been married about a year, and Bill a little longer. We are all about the same age and get along well.

I'm still getting the usual \$50-per-month private's pay. The Army has asked Congress for more money for us, but I doubt that we'll get it. This set-up is quite costly already, what with our deluxe dorms, civilian-operated kitchens, and civilian teachers [At OSU, all courses, including refresher courses, were taught by members of the Ohio State faculty].

Many of us will get commissions as second lieutenants. Some of those who remain near the top of the class, as I am now, will possibly be commissioned as first lieutenants.

The University is still operating as formerly, with one exception: there are few civilian male students. The co-eds whose dorms we now occupy (the Navy has taken over some of the men's dorms) are living in fraternity and sorority houses.

Before I forget it, see if you can find my summer pajamas and red robe and send them to me. Pajamas seem to be the fad here as they are quite comfortable during evening study hours.

If there is a chance of Ken's getting home some weekend, let me know and I will try to get a pass.

It's funny about Tommy [Williams]. Apparently, he doesn't write to anyone. Donald hasn't heard from him since last November. I guess Army life just doesn't agree with him.

I haven't heard from Dan since he left Rutgers. If you see Mrs. Brennan or the Judge, find out what's what.

July 27, 1943 (Tuesday)... Sorry I couldn't get home to see Ken and the rest of you, but that's the Army. I'm happy to hear that Barbara [my sister] had such a good time on her vacation. Boy, could I use a vacation!

There isn't much new here. We've been having a lot of big tests as this is one of our many mid-terms. Each term is divided into "terms" and "mid-terms", so we have mid-terms every other week.

This heat makes studying difficult but we get by. It'll be a lot better in the Fall. The nights are cool, though, so we sleep comfortably.

I just hope time continues to pass as quickly as it has since I arrived here. Weeks have been flying by like days.

August 6, 1943 (Friday)... Four weeks from tomorrow I should

be on my way. I don't know yet exactly when--or for how long --I'll be home, but I'll be there!

Ed and I went swimming last Sunday in a private pool. The pool is for the residents of Olentangy Village, a community similar to a garden apartment development. The sun didn't bother me much as we get plenty of it during Phys Ed. I did burn my insteps, though. It was the first I'd been barefoot outdoors in a long while.

August 15, 1943 (Sunday)... After a week of almost unbearable weather it has finally cooled off a bit. One of the worst of the hot-weather problems here are the flies. The heat brings them out in large numbers--and are they a nuisance!

Today is Bernie's birthday. His wife [Ruth] is here and last night she had a small dinner party for him at the Maromar Restaurant, which is very swank and one of the best in this part of the country. The meal ran to about \$3 per cover. Considering the company and the surroundings, it was easily the best meal I've enjoyed in a long while.

I wrote about 15 letters last weekend and thought I had surely caught up on my correspondence. So what happens? During the week I received three letters from overseas. Also, one of my letters to a friend at TIME ran in FYI [the TIME, Inc. house organ] and I heard from several people there I hadn't really expected to hear from.

Some of the guys made up a song that might amuse you. It's sung around the campus:

Mother take down your service flag,
Your boy's at O.S.U.
He's not out fighting battles
Like the other soldiers do.
He's either playing Ping-Pong
Or swimming in the pool.
Oh Mother take down your service flag,
Your boy's away at school.

August 22, 1943 (Sunday)... Nothing definite yet, but I think I'll be on my way after my last exam Friday morning. So, depending on which train I get, I should be home sometime the morning of the 4th. You'd better leave a key out for me as it might be quite early.

Tomorrow, Tuesday and Wednesday, we take A.S.T. Achievement Tests. Three full days of them! And then, next week, we take our college finals. I think I'll be busy for a while.

After basic training, Dan expects to go back to school, for further college and R.O.T.C. training. Last April, they called up the R.O.T.C. here at OSU, and now most of those men are back, continuing their studies under ASTP. Maybe the same will happen with Dan.

Last night, we went to the Maromar again, had a wonderful meal, and then went to see "Heaven Can Wait." I think you'd enjoy it. Dad, too, even though Don Ameche is in it!

August 29, 1943 (Sunday)... I should arrive home sometime Saturday morning. I don't know at just what time; you can't count on these trains.

We had our A.S.T. Achievement Tests and they were really tough. For some inexplicable reason, most of the tests covered material for all three terms!

College exams start Tuesday at 8 a.m. and end Friday at noon. They cover plenty of material so I have a lot of studying to do.

We had a Civil Defense show at the Stadium Friday night. It was on incendiaries and quite exciting. A special Army unit demonstrated the effect of various incendiaries and small explosives. They blew up and burned dummy houses and stores, showing just what incendiaries could do. Then they showed what civilians and the fire department could do against them.

Donald cut his foot a week ago and can't do any flying for a while. James [MacSporran, Donald's older brother] is stationed in England as a bomber pilot [James had joined up early, with the Royal Canadian Air Force, and was later lost on a bombing run over Berlin].

I've got a lot to do, so, best to all...

[First furlough... I got to the theatre September 6 (Ziegfeld Follies, starring Milton Berle, with Eric Blore and Senor Wences), September 7 (The Doughgirls, with Virginia Field, Arleen Whelan and Arlene Francis), September 8 (Something for the Boys, with Ethel Merman and Betty Garrett), and September 11 (Oklahoma). I believe Bob went with me to see Oklahoma and it was the Saturday matinee. We paid our way to see Oklahoma, but I'm pretty certain I got my tickets for the other shows through the USO. I didn't think Oklahoma was all that great. Perhaps I hadn't recognized how far it had advanced musical theater.]

September 26, 1943 (Sunday)... Just a note to let you know that everything's OK. School is tougher and keeps me even busier than last term. But I'll get through.

We see all the Ohio State home football games, so Saturdays are really looked forward to now. We saw our first game yesterday. It was a good one, even though Ohio State lost [by a score of 28 to 13 to the Seahawks, one of the most potent teams in the nation].

It's certainly weird the way I keep running into old acquaintances. Bobby Fee is here now, in the Basic program. I met him on the street last week. Yesterday, I got a phone call from one of the female seniors [Doris Slutsky, from Ellenville, Ky. and I believe related to the owners of one of the major Catskill resort hotels]. She had spent the Summer at TIME, on the college training squad, and several people told her that I was here and suggested that she look me up.

Sometime soon you can send me my Winter pajamas. It's getting colder here.

October 3, 1943 (Sunday)... That train ride you asked about

had nearly been forgotten. It certainly seems a long time ago. By going to New York [rather than Newark], I met up with several friends from school and we were able to get good seats together. The cars weren't exactly new and things got pretty sooty after a while, but we made good time and arrived in Columbus a few minutes early, which is a rarity for train travel these days!

We had a fine football game here yesterday. As you may already know, Ohio State won [beating Missouri by a score of 27 to 6]. It was a perfect day for football but it does seem strange to be enjoying things like this while in the Army!

I took my senior friend from TIME to the Icebreaker last night. That's the annual early get-together dance. They had quite a turnout--about 2400 students. The girl [Doris] is awfully nice and lots of fun. She's returning to TIME when she graduates in June.

I feel a little low because my studies keep me so busy. I've been asked to do some work on the College newspaper [The Ohio State Daily Lantern] as well as the "Meet the Cadets" program on the University's radio network. I'm awfully busy though and doubt that I'll be able to do much in the way of extra-curricular activity.

I have two mid-terms tomorrow, so I had better start looking at my books.

Best to all and congratulations to Ken [sergeant stripes or engagement?].

[From a letter to Dennis Feldman: At about four o'clock the other ayem, several of our chronic drunks (yours truly not included) broke into the bell tower and proceeded to ring out "Pistol Packin' Mamma" and assorted boogie-woogie on the carillon. This orgy continued for upwards of 23 minutes, until halted by the arrival of the local gendarmerie.]

October 17, 1943 (Sunday)... There's been quite a change in the weather. It's gotten awfully cold and we even had a snow flurry yesterday. My flannel pajamas arrived just in time!

Dan expects to return to Rutgers either this month or early in November. When I get home in December, he and I should be able to get together, if only for a weekend.

Donald is out in Santa Ana, California now, in Bombardier's Pre-Flight School. He's not far from Los Angeles and has had some great times on his weekends. [His brothers] Johnny and Jimmy had quite a reunion in England recently. They are both 1st lieutenants. Johnny [who had been a roommate of Henry Ford II's at Hotchkiss and Yale] expects to become a father next March.

Jimmy Coccia is in Arkansas, at an advanced twin-engine school. He expects to get his pilot's wings in another two months.

A number of my widely-scattered friends anticipate they'll be getting furloughs in early December, so maybe there'll be a few of them around this time.

A friend of mine at TIME, John Phillip Sousa III, grandson of the Sousa, has just written a book, "My Family, Right or

Wrong." It's along the lines of "Life with Father" and quite amusing. Read it if you get the chance.

Ohio State lost again this week [to Purdue, by a score of 30 to 7]. But that was to be expected. The OSU team is made up mostly of 17-year-old freshmen and a few 4-Fs. Practically all the teams OSU plays are made up largely of men serving in the Navy or Marine Corps, including not a few All-Americans as well as former professional players. There are no servicemen on the team here, so [even under the coaching of the great Paul Brown] it's pretty rough for the kids.

October 31, 1943 (Sunday)... Happy Birthday again [I had sent a birthday card, with a cash gift, earlier].

I'm certainly glad to hear that Bubby [Higgins] is all right after his misfortune. He's one kid who surely deserves to get through this OK.

We had a wonderfully exciting game yesterday--lost, unfortunately, in the final 30 seconds [to Indiana, by a score of 20 to 14.] But that's football! We see only one more game here--the Illinois game, a week from Saturday. That's the Homecoming game and it should prove to be a good one and quite a weekend.

The weather has been pretty mean lately. It drizzled most of the week. But yesterday morning it cleared and we enjoyed perfect football weather in the afternoon. Now it's drizzling again. Cold, too.

I'm enclosing a letter from TIME Personnel requesting a copy of my birth certificate. Please take care of this for me.

November 15, 1943 (Monday)... Three more weeks! I don't believe I can get away until Saturday afternoon this time. So I probably won't get home before noon Sunday (December 5). I'll let you know more later.

As you may already know, the game Saturday was a thriller! Ohio State beat Illinois by a score of 29 to 26. It was the annual Homecoming game and the last home stand of the season, so the boys played their hearts out. Everyone thought the game had ended in a 26-26 tie. Five minutes after the game was thought to be over, the players were called back onto the field. And then it took another five minutes to clear the field of spectators. There was still two seconds of playing time! It was OSU's ball, deep in Illinois territory. OSU won with a spectacular field goal.

[Ohio State's final game of the season, on November 20, was an away game with Michigan. Michigan won, 45 to 6.]

The day your packages arrived, everyone else in the room received packages. Our quarters looked like a delicatessen for several days and we spoiled our appetites for a week.

Ed is leaving us next Saturday. I'll certainly be sorry to see him go as he has become a good friend. There are about 30 leaving the Company due to "unsatisfactory" reports in their studies. There is no shame or disgrace in failing an accelerated program like this, for it is really tough!

November 27, 1943 (Saturday)... I don't think now we can get away before Saturday afternoon, so you should expect me Sunday morning. If I can get away Friday, I'll let you know.

We had classes all day Thanksgiving but enjoyed a feast in the evening. We are right in the midst of exams now, both Army and College. I had a three-hour Army exam this morning on Plane and Solid Analytical Geometry. It was lovely!

I don't think that Bob, Ken and I should exchange gifts this Christmas. It's difficult to make out any kind of a list for myself as there are so few things I need or can use. But here are a few suggestions: a pipe (a rough, black-briar Kaywoodie or some other good make), a large jar of Walnut pipe tobacco, a Gillette double-edge safety razor, maybe a robe. We can talk more about it when I get home.

[Furlough, December 4-12. I got to the theater on the 6th (One Touch of Venus, starring Mary Martin, John Boles and Kenny Baker) and the 8th (Early to Bed, a musical comedy with few recognizable names other than Eddie Mayehoff, as Coach). The 8th was a Wednesday, so I likely attended the matinee. I believe Jimmy Coccia was home part of the time, and I recall going with him to visit a female cousin and dancing with her (and being kissed by her) in her family's closed-for-the-duration tavern. I think it was while on this furlough, too, that Joe Cullen, a fellow ASTPer from Maplewood, and I were taken night-clubbing (the Latin Quarter?) in New York by Joe's father.]

[On December 7, I wrote the following to Dennis Feldman (also a TIME military absentee), on TIME stationary and posted in New York:

Cher Feldman,

I didn't expect the "HRL" [Henry Luce] to completely fool you, but a three-cent stamp, with my franking privilege! Coffee? No way!

Sincerely sorry you couldn't make it this time. Maybe when I get my next furlough (March), the War Department will see fit to grant you one. What a life. I quote again the first intelligible utterings of Neanderthal man--"T.S."

I am having a fairly respectable time. But with the liquor situation so completely "snafu", New York is practically a dry town! Even so, I'm getting my share--mine and yours. Several of my cronies are around, with Uncle Sam's blessing, so I'm not alone in my wanderings.

I have already seen several Broadway shows, but even the best aren't up to par. However, Willie Howard is in the stage show at the Strand. I nearly died laughing at his impersonation of Frank Sinatra. What a riot!

Speaking of post-war projects, I have an item that's been cooking on my back burner for years. After the grand finale, I will probably return to TIME for a few months, to see what they have for me by way of a job (In all probability, I won't get my old one back. Not that I want it!) and to establish

a few contacts. And then, according to the season, I will hit the road, North or South, with pack on my back, a camera in one hand and a pencil in the other. Via thumb, foot, car, bicycle or what have you, I intend to make a grand tour of the U.S.A., with extensive side trips into Mexico and Canada. When I return (I can easily finance myself for a minimum of one year), I will see what I can do with 10,000 pictures and 500,000 words of notes.

When and if we ever get together, I would like to discuss the above project with you. Perhaps you would like to go along? It's something you can do only while young and unmarried.

After consulting the stars, TIME, and a ouija board, here are my prognostications on the War:

1) The War in Europe will end by October of 1944. Germany will sue for peace.

2) As the European War ends, Russia will grant up southeastern bases within easy bombing range of Japan proper. Even before this stage, Allied forces will have pushed through Burma and into China. Once in China, which is fairly open country, the fighting will be swift and complete. Outside the jungles, the Japs won't have a chance. Bombing of Japan will be unrelentless and of an unparalleled scope. The Japanese empire will be crushed beyond recognition by the end of 1945.

3) Coffee will be a civilian by March of 1946.

That's all for now, Dennis, I've got a date. Write me next at school.

Keep it flying,
F. Kilburn Coffee

Come on you Russians!]

December 19, 1943 (Sunday)... Your four packages arrived early this week. I opened them and now would like to thank all of you for the gifts. The robe and Barbara's "ski suits" are swell and fit perfectly. I had meant to tell you I needed pajamas, while home on furlough.

The train ride back was fairly comfortable and a great improvement over some I have taken. The train was two hours late but we still made the [Monday] morning formation.

The Army has decided to give us a "break" this weekend (Christmas). We will have Friday, Saturday and Sunday off. I might have gone home but the Army is allowing only 10% of the men at any station to travel by public conveyance. We drew lots to see who would get passes. I was with the 90%.

I don't know whether you've seen anything in the newspapers, but there have been rumours and denials that the ASTP is to be disbanded. We don't know anything about it. We just wait to see what the next day will bring.

I am enclosing a money order (TIME Christmas bonus) that you can deposit for me.

Merry Christmas to all.

[There's an unexplained gap here. No letters between December 19 and February 6.]

February 6, 1944 (Sunday)... That is certainly good news about Ken. I hope he can make it [He may have been expecting a furlough that would coincide with mine in early March].

Last night we celebrated the Bodoffs' second wedding anniversary. We didn't return to the Maromar, but dined at Marzettees, which is in the same class. Including the tip, the cost of the dinner came to \$3.20 per person. We had quite a meal and were at the table for nearly two and a half hours.

Ruth Bodoff arrived Friday and will be here for the week. She brought a load of goodies with her, including two large steaks (her father owns two supermarkets in Bryn Mawr, Pa.). Tomorrow night we are going over to the Fennessys [Bill and Mary had taken temporary living quarters in a private home, off-campus] where we will cook them.

Well, the third term is now two-thirds over. The next four weeks should pass quickly. Before you know it I'll be home again.

The letter from the Treasury Department contained my tax forms. I'll probably go down to the Internal Revenue Bureau this week and find out just where I stand. That is, whether I have a refund coming, and how to get it.

Does Barbara's switch mean another raise? How's your job [at Bamberger's] coming?

Sherman is in Little Creek, Virginia, skippering some kind of amphibious craft. Donald is in Las Vegas, Nevada, taking a six-week gunnery course, which is just a small part of his training.

[Another gap, with no letters between February 6 and March 13, when I was back in the real Army. I'doubt very much that I got an end-of-term furlough, since it would have been from Saturday, March 4, through Sunday, March 12, and I was back in Camp Campbell a few days before that last date. On February 28, however, while still at OSU, our little group enjoyed a night at the theater: Katherine Dunham in Tropical Review, a sizzling show that had earlier wowed Broadway.]

Camp Campbell, Kentucky

March 13, 1944 (Monday)... Unfortunately, Camp Campbell is still the same. Now that I have been here for a few days, I hardly feel that I ever left the place.

This new assignment has proven to be something of a "raw deal." More than 1400 ASTPers have been assigned to this Division to bring it up to strength, so I am not alone in my misfortune. [In all, 120,000 of "the Army's best and brightest" were cut from the program, with more than half of them being sent into rifle companies, where most of them would never have ended up, unless as officers, had they declined the offer to enter the program.]

My interview and reassignment within the 14th Armored didn't amount to much. Because of my previous training, I'll go into reconnaissance. If I get a break, I may get a good job, eventually.

mow--coffee--22

As you can see by my return address [Company C--62nd AIB], I'm now assigned to an Armored Infantry Battalion. This is just temporary. We will probably go into our regular organizations in two weeks. You can write to me at the present address, though.

The 14th has been in training for over 16 months now and completed two-and-a-half months of extensive maneuvers [involving not only the 14th Armored but the 35th, 87th and 100th Infantry Divisions, the 11th Tank Group, the 14th Tank Destroyer Group and the 3rd Cavalry. It was as close to actual combat as possible, but with no live ammo] prior to moving into Camp Campbell at the end of January. Parts of the Division are ready for combat while others are far from it.

I was certainly sorry to leave Columbus and many close friends, but it had to happen. The rest of our group left for Texas later in the week.

As usual, our train trip was made along a circuitous route. We went from Columbus to Ashland, Ky. (at the Ky., Ohio, W.Va. border), from there to Lexington, then on to Louisville, from Louisville to Nashville, and then to camp. By a direct route and on regular trains, the trip takes less than 10 hours. It took us 24!

There's a good possibility we'll get furloughs soon after we join our new outfits. Don't count on it though!

March 19, 1944 (Sunday)... Yesterday morning we were scheduled to have a Division review. That means that 10,000 men and officers in their dress uniforms, with leggings, and with shoes and brass highly polished, parade before a galaxy of generals, senators, governors and other dignitaries.

Our battalion marched to the parade grounds nearly two miles from our barracks. As the various battalions took their assigned places on the field, it began to rain. A Division takes considerable time to form up and pass in review, so there wasn't any way the review could have been hurried to avoid the rain. Then it started to pour--cold and drenching. The rain was obviously going to continue for some time, so the Commanding General gave the order calling off the review. As battalion units, we double-timed from the field to our barracks. There wasn't one among the 10,000 of us who wasn't soaked to the skin.

Most of the past week was spent in "reviewing" weapons. For some of us it was review; for others, it was all new.

It is rumored that they are bringing a large number of recruits into the Division. Now, we don't know whether we will go directly into our assigned units or wait and train with these new men. Only time will tell.

In my letter, I did mean the 14th, not the 16th [So there must have been a letter prior to the one written on March 13th, probably while still in Columbus, conveying the news of this new assignment].

My eyes are 20/400 and may ultimately limit me as combat material. I'll have to wait and see what "they" say, though.

March 26, 1944 (Sunday)... I have a new address [Troop F--94th

Cav. Rec. Sqd. Mech. In September 1943, the War Department ordered reorganization of the Armored Division, cutting the number of men to roughly 10,000 and, under a new table of organization, the Armored Reconnaissance Battalion became the Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron Mechanized]. We are not actually with our assigned Troops, but are in the Squadron and will go into our new units after about four weeks of special training.

One of the boys going into F Troop with me has been with me all the way--92nd Recon, ASTP at OSU, and now. But most of our original group has been broken up. Some of the boys are going to California for ten weeks of amphibious training and then overseas.

The 94th is a good outfit. We have a good group of men and officers, and the chow has been excellent. That helps a lot in keeping up morale.

I don't know whether I told you before but the 12th moved out of here some time ago and is now at Camp Barkley, Texas. [This may or may not have been correct. When the 14th moved out of Camp Chaffee (near Fort Smith, Arkansas) in November 1943, to go on maneuvers in Tennessee prior to moving into Camp Campbell, the 12th Armored moved into Camp Chaffee. The two Divisions also switched vehicles, the 14th having left theirs behind at Chaffee and picking up those of the 12th at Lebanon Junction, in the Tennessee maneuver area east of Nashville.] Camp Campbell is still quite crowded though, with two Armored Divisions [the 14th and the 20th], several Tank Groups, a Station Hospital, Service units, WACs, Ordnance, and a large number of German prisoners of war.

[March 26, 1944... To the Custodian of Matters Concerning the Whereabouts and Well-being of TIME, Inc. Military Absentees... With the folding of ASTP, Private Coffee has been transferred in grade to the unit of service whereby he can best serve his country and mankind. Amen.]

April 2, 1944 (Sunday)... Believe it or not, in our small troop --less than 90 men--there are two "Coffees"! The other Coffee is a Coffey, and his first name, Franzel, is enough like mine to cause plenty of mix-ups. His middle initial is a "K", too!

F Troop [later designated as a Company] is the Reconnaissance Squadron's light tank troop. All of our primary vehicles are light (16 tons!) tanks. The tank we are using is a new model with a lot of secrets, and I am spending most of my time in getting acquainted with it.

A Division order came down when we arrived stating "no passes for ASTP men until May 1." By deduction, maybe I will get my furlough then, or soon after.

April 9, 1944 (Sunday)... This has been a week of almost continuous rain. A Division review that had been scheduled for Saturday had to be called off. Between the cold rain and the mud, it's been plenty miserable. We spent several days on the "transition" firing courses, though, shooting at disappearing targets as we moved. It was good training.

Friday we had an interesting tactical problem dealing with booby traps and mine fields. We spent the day in classes, outdoors in the pouring rain, brushing up on the intricacies of our subjects. When night came, the problem started. We worked under simulated battlefield conditions that were quite realistic. We had to go through a two-and-a-half-mile booby-trapped course and clear paths through two mine fields. Umpires accompanied us to rate our efficiency and mark "casualties." We completed the mission in a little over five hours and, considering the decidedly inclement weather and the deep "ooze" for which Camp Campbell is famous, that was excellent time.

To top everything off, instead of being allowed to sleep a little later Saturday morning, we got up at 6 a.m. (after only three hours' sleep) to prepare for an inspection. Our C.O. tried to have it cancelled for us, but it was a Division order. We were plenty busy cleaning our personal and field equipment. When the inspecting officers found out what we had had to go through for the inspection, we were given a Division compliment for our excellent appearance.

[From letter of April 9 to Dennis Feldman... The "Mad Drummer" has been found! He is currently making his home on that lovely tropical isle of enchantment, New Guinea. He goldbricked his way during the lengthy voyage, behind an ancient and much-worn set of drums. He beat while the less talented performed the odious chores. In all probability there was more than meets the eye behind all this drumming. That great TIME-trained brain was at work again. Could he not, in time of shipwreck, create a crude, seaworthy craft from the largest drum, put the small snare over his head as protection against the elements, use the cymbals as propellents and as shiny aids to attract allied attention? Small wonder that Franklin W. Hooper is known as "Franklin the Great", or is that someone else?]

April 23, 1944 (Sunday)... Unless the Army crosses me up, my furlough will start Tuesday, May 2. I will probably leave here Monday evening. Since it's a 30-hour-or-more train ride, I should be home sometime Wednesday morning.

It would be great if Ken's furlough coincides with mine. If you get anything definite from Ken, you could ask Bob to come down and join us.

The clipping about Mary Jane [Maxon] surprised me. She had been engaged to a boy from Maplewood now serving overseas. She has been doing well as a Powers' model and was recently featured in a full-page Ponds' advertisement that appeared in many magazines [I had spotted it in LIFE] and newspapers.

We have had a lot of rain, making field training quite difficult. We don't dare take the tanks out under present conditions. The moment we left the road we would likely become bogged down in the mire.

The Division is stressing individual offense and defense, so we have done considerable firing on the close-combat courses. It's a little dangerous, but we did exceptionally well on the Infantry Assault Course and in Village Street Fighting.

That street fighting is quite a science. The Division has set up a German village in replica on one of the ranges. Working in teams, we go from house to house on given hand signals, exploring each one carefully. First we toss in (dummy) grenades and then enter through the most convenient entrance--window, door, or hole blown in the wall--and shoot at all targets (enemy soldiers), most of which pop into view. We use our personal weapons, mine being the new-type M3 submachine gun.

Keep things going till I get there. Best to all.

[Furlough May 2-12... I have no other record of what I did, or with whom, while home other than (having saved all my Playbills) attend the theater: on May 5, it was Follow the Girls, with Gertrude Niesen, Frank Parker and Jackie Gleason; May 8, Mexican Hayride, with Bobby Clark and June Havoc; May 10, the matinee performance of Early to Bed (again!), and, in the evening, The Voice of the Turtle, with Margaret Sullivan, Elliott Nugent and Audrey Christie.

It's quite possible that I paid a visit to TIME, for I do recall telling Dunc Taylor about the alarming number of suicides in the military, citing the three of which I was especially aware. I may also have encountered Mary Elizabeth Fritz during this visit. She worked in the News Bureau, as David Hulbard's secretary, and would later go to work on LIFE. She was one gorgeous babe. I recall being down in the Village one night and walking past the door to her apartment building, almost but not quite mustering up the nerve to pay her a visit. It's also likely that it was during this furlough that I first visited Leon & Eddie's, the famous night club, on 52nd Street.]

May 21, 1944 (Sunday)... I made excellent time getting back to camp--about 24 hours. The ride to Cincinnati was quite comfortable, but there we changed trains--from the Pennsylvania to the Louisville & Nashville RR. From then on, it was pretty rough and crowded.

After the pleasant Spring weather back home, the torrid weather we experienced this past week was hard to take. It got up to 110-115°! That and the dust are tough on morale. We took salt tablets on the hotter days and they helped.

We have reached a stage of training where we spend over 50% of the time in the field, with tactical bivouacs and problems. My bunk in the barracks is becoming a stranger to me. If this past week's weather is any criterion of things to come, life will be quite miserable here during the next several months. That will have a "good" effect on the men, though. They will begin to think of going overseas as the lesser of two evils, the other being remaining at Camp Campbell!

So Bob is feeling the "hot breath". I certainly wish him luck. If his deferment doesn't come through, he should be able to get his commission in the Navy.

June 2, 1944 (Thursday)... We just got in from the field and go out again in the morning, for a six-day problem. I thought I had better drop you a line now, just to let you know that

we are still here. In the field, we are tactical all the time now and seldom in actual bivouac. Chances to write a letter are few and far between. That's why I'm writing on Thursday and not the usual Sunday.

The heat and dust are probably worse now than before, but we are getting used to it. That's the hard way. The brass consider it excellent conditioning for battle.

During the course of the coming problem, we will cover several hundred miles, with the tank platoons [of five tanks each] acting independently. Our food will be C rations exclusively. That's the most primitive of Army rations, so we'll really be up against it so far as good food is concerned.

[On June 6, the day of the invasion, I wrote the following:

The day begins and yet a darkness falls
and enshrouds the men of might.
Mighty crescendo and staccato rhythm,
ripped with tracer and cry of pain.
Baptized in battle, others stillborn.]

June 11, 1944 (Sunday)... We finally got a break and will be in garrison for a few days of "rest". The change in diet will be greatly appreciated, too.

Your pictures reached me in the field, as did the news of the invasion, both the premature announcement and the actual landings. There wasn't much excitement here on hearing the news, since it was an event that had to come. On reflection, I think it would have been appropriate had our officers called us together to offer a prayer for those men storming the beaches.

Yes, the Edit staff at TIME must have had a busy time of it. The news came through just at closing, as the magazine was about to go on the presses. That meant a good deal of scrapping of text and photos and much late work.

You asked about Dr. Glass [our family doctor]. Well, he's a close friend of the Maxons. I guess Mary Jane considers him a friend, too. It does seem unusual that he should be an usher at her wedding, though.

A "C" ration consists of two small cans of food. One can, the B unit, holds 2.5 ounces of hard, unappetizing biscuits, envelopes of sugar and powdered ("instant") coffee, and a few sour balls (candy). The second can, the "meat" unit, comes in three varieties: meat and beans, meat and vegetable stew, meat and vegetable hash. The first few meals of C's are a novelty and not too hard to digest. But after a few days of three C's a day, your stomach turns at the very sight of a can.

Thursday is Infantry Day and the Commanding Generals of the 14th and the 20th Armored have scheduled a joint Divisional Review. It should be an impressive sight, but remember what happened when we held our last review?

Friday night, we are scheduled for a 25-mile hike. Let's hope it's not too hot!

I don't expect another furlough before August, the second half of the month most likely.

June 25, 1944 (Sunday)... We had our Infantry Day parade and it was quite a success. We had a huge civilian audience, with thousands of visitors from all over the Midwest. But it did rain! We were caught in a heavy shower as we marched from our barracks to the parade grounds.

Friday night we took our 25-mile hike, with helmets and full packs. We were certainly glad that we got to do it at night rather than in the hot, dusty daytime. At that, it was pretty hot and most of us lost up to five pounds in sweat! I'm just glad that we don't make many of these long marches. I pity the poor Infantry!

Sunday, the Squadron furnished a number of trucks and quite a few of us went to Dawson Springs for the day. Dawson Springs is a National Park, about 40 miles from camp. There, they have a natural lake for swimming and boating, plus other recreational facilities. It was a perfect day and I was in the water for nearly three hours--unfortunately! I picked up quite a sunburn, as did many of the others.

The burn didn't bother me much as I used boric acid burn jelly on it, and that reputedly provides the best relief. The blisters that formed did bother me though. Monday, we went into the field for several days. The hard, rough ground never was conducive to rest on any occasion. So I had several practically sleepless nights. Bouncing around in the tank didn't help much either. But you know me--at least one good burn a year!

July 9, 1944 (Sunday)... We are full of rumors. No one knows just what to believe. In all probability, we will be on the move very shortly--if not for overseas, to some coastal camp, East or West, for amphibious training.

Yesterday we had a Division Review, as our Division Commander [Major General V. E. Prichard] is leaving us. It's unusual to lose such a key man at this stage, when we are practically ready for combat. Of course, this move has started many rumors, too.

Early in the week, all furloughs were cancelled. Yesterday, a new order came through and furloughs will be continued soon. Rumor has it that starting Wednesday up to 50% of the men can be on furlough at the same time. If this is true, I might be home soon. Don't count on it though!

The "Makio" [Ohio State yearbook] was not a surprise package. It cost me \$5 and was ordered some time ago.

July 10, 1944 (Monday)... We finally have some definite news! On or about July 27 we leave for Indiantown Gap Military Reservation, in Pennsylvania. The Camp is near Harrisburg, about three-and-a-half train hours from home! Furloughs are to be resumed there. We may be there for several months--and it should be easy to get home on weekends.

I thought I had better let you in on the news so that you wouldn't be expecting me to pop in this week. After all, this is your vacation time and I wouldn't want you to spoil it by sitting around anticipating a visit from me.

July 23, 1944 (Sunday)... We are hearing rumors again. We probably won't leave Camp before August 10, and when we do, it might not be for Indiantown Gap. It might be for Texas or California or Wisconsin. Nearly half of the Division is from New York and Pennsylvania, so you can imagine how interested most of us are in our next move!

We aren't doing much now. Most of our day is devoted to physical conditioning and a review of our earlier training. Our tanks are "deadlined" and we spend a lot of time on maintenance.

For late July, we have been having unusual weather. It has been comparatively cool and two nights ago the temperature dropped to the low 50s. This week it will probably average 110° in the shade, and there isn't any of that.

July 28, 1944 (Friday)... [letter written on Chicago Service Men's Center stationary]... Surprised at the postmark and address? I thought you would be. Our plans have been changed, so I decided to take a 3-day pass due me and see Chicago.

We aren't going to Pennsylvania. In fact, we aren't going anywhere for two or three months (or so they say)! Furloughs are starting again and I hope to get mine in about six weeks.

My pass is for Friday, Saturday and Sunday. I left Camp on the 9:30 train last night and arrived here at 7:30 this morning. When I return, I will take a late Sunday train. There isn't much use trying to get home on a 3-day pass because almost all of my time would be consumed in train travel.

I am writing this from the Servicemen's Summer Center. It is known as the "G.I. Country Club" and is located on the shore of Lake Michigan. I'm not going swimming this afternoon though, as it is a little cool. They have everything here: free cafeteria, fishing, boating, golf, swimming, dancing, etc.

Chicago is quite a town so far as servicemen are concerned. Everything is free. You can drop into dozens of places for free meals or free lodging. The subways, buses and trolleys are free, too. And various agencies give out free tickets to shows, movies, and baseball games.

A friend of mine is coming down from Madison, Wisconsin and we plan to meet tomorrow morning.

August 13, 1944 (Sunday)... I am still fighting the battle of Camp Campbell. There are no new rumors, and although our future is quite unpredictable, we will probably be here for several months yet.

Yesterday I received a major disappointment. An order came down from Division: "No applications for transfer or OCS will be accepted. All personnel are frozen in their present jobs." Until yesterday, it looked like I would soon be on my way to Signal Corps OCS. I had a waiver on my eyes and had appeared before all but the final Board. There is no explanation for the order. I will have to wait and apply again, if I ever get the opportunity.

Unless the Army crosses me up again, I should be home on furlough in early September.

August 27, 1944 (Sunday)... I might be home next weekend. As soon as I know for sure, I will try to phone you.

This Division is again getting ready to go somewhere. We just don't know where or when. For once, our destination is a well-kept secret.

All men must be back in Camp by September 20. So, unless I get my furlough within the week, I likely won't get one until I arrive at our next U.S. destination, if then.

We had our last problem this week and are preparing to turn in our vehicles. During the week, and especially during the problem, we were inspected by six different generals. This is a hot outfit! I think I can still count on three more months in this country, though.

See you soon, I hope!

[Furlough early September, 2-12? It was during this visit home that I learned of the deaths of two close friends, both of whom lived within a block of me and had been classmates all through grade and grammar school. Donald MacSporran, who had gone on to Hill School and then to Yale, had always been one of my closest friends. He died, as an Army Air Force bombardier, in a training flight in the U.S. Mildred Schilling, who I was just getting to know again (she had gone off to private school), died from pneumonia, or so I was told. I believe that these two deaths, of young, beautiful people who had had so much potential, with so much to live for, contributed to making me a good deal less fearful of putting my own life on the line in combat.

I got to the theater on the 5th (Pick-Up Girl), 7th (School for Brides), 8th (Catherine Was Great, starring Mae West. I found Mae a bore and walked out after the first or second act), and 11th (Kiss and Tell, with Kirk Douglas in a small role).]

September 17, 1944 (Sunday)... Back to the Army routine.

The trains weren't too crowded, so I had seats all the way, and got here in time, too.

We are definitely on the move--and soon. Nobody knows much and we couldn't say anything if we did.

It is a little hard to get back into the Army routine, but the crisis has passed and the transition is nearly complete.

The salt water taffy was waiting for me, and if you find this paper a bit sticky, you'll know why.

September 29, 1944 (Friday)... The money arrived in time and I left for Chicago Monday night. Another fellow, from Boston, went with me and we had three good days in the Windy City.

I hope I didn't put you to any trouble.

My next letter undoubtedly will bear the censor's stamp. But don't be alarmed. We go under a strict censorship as soon as we board the train out of here, and will remain under it even if we stay in continental U.S. for three months more, or longer.

I am enclosing several items that I am forced to get rid of for security measures: Social Security card, Draft

Registration card, and a list of addresses. Keep the address list handy as I likely will ask you for some of the addresses later.

[I must have left Camp Campbell within the week, for the 14th Armored Division had "closed" in Camp Shanks by Sunday, October 8. Camp Shanks, in New York State, just across the border from northern New Jersey, was then the staging area for troops embarking from the Port of New York.

I have two memories of Camp Shanks: one was a road march that took our Company past Rockland State Hospital (for the insane), and the other was KP. My morning of KP duty involved cracking hundreds of eggs into a huge pot, to be later whipped up as scrambled eggs. It proved to be a stomach-turning assignment, for all too frequently I found an egg to be either rotten or holding a chick embryo. The 14th cleared Camp Shanks by Friday, October 13 (an omen?), and in wool OD's, with shoulder patches gone and shouldering full equipment (blanket roll, musette bag, gas mask, weapon, ammo, and duffle bag), the fronts of our helmets chalked with shipment numbers, we marched from our barracks to the trains and were loaded into the cars by roster. We were not allowed to remove our equipment.

It was an hour-plus ride to Weehawken, where the train ran onto the pier from where we boarded the ferries that would take us through the dark of New York Harbor to the Staten Island loading sheds and the troop carriers that would take us to a destination as yet unknown.]