

Army Days.

Domestic – Went to Fort Devans December 3, 1943. Boarded Europe bound ship in Boston night of May 12, 1944

Overseas – Sailed from Boston May 13, 1944 to December 5, 1945 when I was discharged..

#Undated, but postmarked 6, 1943. Probably Dec. 4 since I left for the Army on Dec. 3.
Company E, Fort Devens, Mass.

Dear Mum,

After we left Braintree we took an Ayre train and were there almost before we knew it. A train from here to Boston takes only about 50 minutes. We then got our uniforms and what a mess of clothing. There is almost everything. After that the whole bunch had to lug those heavy duffle bags about ½ mile and were our shoulders tired.

In the afternoon, they gave us 3 tests. One was a mechanical ability test, another was used to test a person's ability to recognize differences in sounds. They used Morse code. A series of dots and dashes was played on a record and then another series immediately followed. Then we had to tell whether the first was exactly the same as the second. What a job. I'm not a telegrapher. After this, came the main part of the test which was the I.Q. test. In this, wrong answers counted against you but problems not answered did not count. So out of the test, I left out about 10 and got about ¾ finished but we were told not to expect to finish. Boy! Was I tired.

Bertram Anderson and I went to a store down the way and they had everything. Imagine having jewelry which is worth \$23 for only \$16 or \$17. Then we went to a movie which lasted about 1 ½ hours. The price was only 15 cents.

What a racket in the place my first night. Two men in the barracks snored and about 1 o'clock a soldier came in drunk and woke everyone up with his noise so they kicked him out.

The next morning we had a little marching drill and some didn't know their left from the right. Then we all went to the classification center where, I suppose, they now know what I am to be and do in the future. If only I knew but I suppose I will soon know. They interviewed me and was I nervous. I don't know why. When I had to sign my name, I could hardly do it. As I mentioned on the telephone, they sort of discouraged me in photography and classified me as a student.

Last night I worked from 6 to 12 o'clock typing. I would rather do that than wash millions of dishes or dig a ditch. All I did was type a list of the men in Company E which is my company. After that I filed some cards.

I slept until about 8:30 o'clock but all the rest had to get up at 6, and then took my time until time for church. After church we went right to dinner where they had ham and all the fixings. Anderson is smaller than me but ate about twice as much as I did.

Right after, Anderson and I went to the telephone office where they take your name and the number you are calling. Then we waited and after an operator in the room announced my name and told me to go in a certain booth as there was 18 in all. After the call was completed, I paid them at the desk.

I have been enjoying myself so far although it has been such a short time in which to draw an opinion. I cannot be sure but I imagine I will like the Army I am so glad that you acted sensibly about everything instead of fretting as some mothers would have done. Although I knew how you felt. Some good will come out of being here.

I will write again very soon.

With much love,

Harold

P.S. Has Brooks-Skinner started to build the new building?

I believe I have done well in writing such a long letter.

#December 9, 1945, 27 I.T.B. Co. D, Camp Croft, So Carolina, U.S. Army

Dear Mum,

As you can see from the return address, I have been sent to South Carolina. The thing that strikes me is the awful red soil that is everywhere. You cannot believe what I have been put in but it turns out to be a bugler. I am almost sure for this company is for cooks, bakers, and buglers and I eliminated the cooks and bakers. It is so hot down here compared to up north that I can hardly believe the difference.

When I woke up Tuesday in Fort Devens, some of us were informed that we were to be shipped. At two in the afternoon, the train pulled out and we reached Camp Croft about 1:30 the next night. What a night trying to sleep on the train and in 2 days I have had about 5 hours sleep. When we reached here at 1:30 a.m. we had to walk about 5 miles to the barracks and they detained us so long that we did not get to sleep until 3 o'clock. But still I haven't minded it so terribly much. This morning we had marching drill. I've heard of tough sergeants but is this corporal tough. But I imagine that he is all right once you know him.

We are to be here for 17 weeks for certain and then, they claim, we are to be re-classified which I hope to be true. Some boys, who has been here for awhile, said that Camp Croft is less than 30 miles from the N. Car. border. The train went in an indirect way at first for it went north, then turned west up near the border of N.H. and then to Albany. From there, we went down the further side of the Hudson and down to Philadelphia. From their [*sic*] we passed through Washington where I saw the capitol, the Washington Monument and other things. Then we went down through Va. which I think is a discredit to our country. The shacks are only fit to house animals rather than people.

Not one person that I knew at Fort Devens or on the train is with me now but the new ones seem to be fine. Most of them are from New England and New York. I haven't seen a newspaper since I came in so I wouldn't know what is going on. How is everybody and how are the Army boats getting along? I wrote most of the news in the first letter for not much has happened yet. Please forgive the pencil for my pen ran dry and it is easier to write in pencil and please forgive the way I am rambling on but I am not going to bother to organize it. I'll be sure to write very soon again and tell Betty I'll write and tell her my address.

With love,

Harold

P.S. How did my color film turn out?

I have an awful long address. In case you cannot make it out on this envelope it is:

Pvt. Harold G. Simms

Army Serial No. 31425998

27th I.T.B., Co. D.

Camp Croft, So. Carolina, U.S. Army

(The I.T.B.stands for Infantry training battalion.)

I'm sending my automatic pencil home so you can have it repaired. Two sections of it came apart. I noticed that even boys with glasses have to go through this training and they are on limited service so there may be a chance for me after all.

I am still writing although I stopped and signed my name long ago Phew, is it hot here – Christmas in the tropics. I have been talking to some boys who have been here for a few weeks and find that this is the only specialized company in this whole camp. They claim to get here requires a good I.Q. Let's hope so. The food here is twice as good as at Fort Devens or at the College. It is not served in cafeteria style as in the two latter places but dishes are set on tables and everything. The sergeant who brought us down on the train

said it is one of the best camps in the country. Some of the other sergeants have said the same.

If you look on my atlas, you will find the camp located near Spartanburg, S.C. It is nice in some ways to be in a warm climate but still with all the equipment that has been issued, I would much rather be in the cold. We weren't told where we were going but the word "down" gave the general direction anyway.

Please send me some coat hangers. All we can get here is wooden ones which are no good.

I'm still rambling on not organizing it but to I try to tell you everything. Don't forget those hangers and to tell me about the color portraits and about the launching. Has it happened yet?

I have told you most of the things that I can think of at the present.

With much love again,

Harold

P.P.S. I'll write again very soon. Don't I do good at writing a long letter. I have done better at length than ever before.

#December 16, 1943. Camp Croft, Spartanburg, S.C.

Dear Mum, [note: I wrote only to my mother at the time, not to Dad]

I have been trying to write this letter for 2 days but every time I start we are called out. Since calling you up Sunday, Robert delVecchio, who is a boy from Back Bay, and I went to evening church service. There were only four in the church at the service. I should not use this term "service" but rather more like a young people's meeting. The chaplain explained that most of the regular boys were on maneuvers and could not attend. He also explained that the Sunday night movie competes for the men. The Protestant chaplain who is chaplain of my battalion, comes from Kansas and was a Baptist minister.

The hours for sleep are quite reasonable around here for we go to sleep at 10 o'clock and get up at 6:30. Someone in our barracks grinds his teeth every night but I haven't heard him yet. Most of the boys and men here are from the north and the majority are married and have children. There are two Jews sleeping on either side of me and they seem like nice men. There is another man who is only 5 feet tall and the tallest is about 6 feet 4 inches. Some contrast!! The little one comes not quite to my shoulder and has to take 2 steps to my one.

The barracks in this camp are kept very clean and do some have trouble making their beds. They take almost twice as long as I. One thing that surprised me most is that very few swear around here. At Fort Devens, a man could not say 2 words without using one swear word. I forgot to mention that there is a boy my age from Kentucky. One day he was talking to me about the large "heels" in Washington State and I never knew what he meant for two minutes after when it came to me all of a sudden. He meant "hills." People from different sections of the country certainly talk differently.

The commissioned officers of our battalion are nice men and are not too tough so as to be nasty and hateful. The lieutenant who commands our company is certainly fit and in condition. On Monday, we had physical training and the lieutenant who must be 45 or 50 kept right up with us. We then ran around the block and almost everyone had to drop out although I ran the whole distance. The first man to drop out was Shorty who took 2 steps to my one. All day we either drilled or saw movies on close order drill and chemical warfare.

Yesterday we were given instruction as to how to take a rifle apart and assemble it. They certainly do rush us for we only have 7 weeks basic in contrast to 17 week for those who are not specialists. We were then taken to a building where we were interviewed again. Imagine, they had

me down as a high school student so the interviewer had to make out a whole new sheet. He took twice the time with me as ordinarily. I told him that I passed the V-12 as I had forgotten in my first interview so he put me down as an A.S.T.P. [Army Specialized Training Program] possibility. Later he asked me questions on photography and were they simple. I'm sure I got a perfect score. He then put me down as a darkroom man and after my basic, it is possible I might go into either photography or A.S.T.P.

You asked me what I received in my I.Q. When interviewed, I looked at my mark which was 118. My mechanical ability was 128 and my dot-dot-dash test was only 98. I'm not so good at that. But the last score doesn't mean as much as the first two. If 118 is not good it was because I was very tight. I forgot to mention that I received your letter and package today but never received the one from Fort Devens.

When I wrote last I mentioned that it was so hot but now it is terribly cold. I never believed that the weather in the South could be so cold. We've been shivering around here every morning. Imagine having snow here. There wasn't much but enough to cover the ground and make it slippery.

Monday night, two boys and I went to the movies and saw "Happy Land." It certainly was very sad. The theater is called no. 1 theatre and what a nice place. Later we went to the P.X. which is the post-exchange. It is a store where we can get everything. I got a pint of milk, sometimes for breakfast it is the only time milk is on the table.

Last night I finally had time to write a letter to Mr. Marsell. The time is so limited but we can get a good night sleep. I have been trying to write you but every time I sit down, they call us out.

Today, I certainly got a great laugh. We had to turn out with full field pack. That is a pack full of necessities. What messes. As we marched someone had to get behind us so as to pick up the things that fell. We then proceeded to the large field here and learned how to pitch a tent. After this, we were told to repack the pack as quickly as possible and in any manner. We held them to their word and on the way home, things fell right and left and when we arrived at the barracks, we were worn out.

Tonight, we cleaned our rifles and some of us couldn't get it back together. After some hard work, I finally got it together. Then a boy inspected them. We call him the "little general" for he thinks he knows everything. He is only a buck private but went to a military academy

You asked how the barracks are. As I mentioned, everything is kept in good order. It is about 30 x 75 (approximately) and has two stories. Altogether there are about 50 men. They all seem of good character. We each have a place to hang all our clothes and things such as toilet articles are kept in a locker placed near the bed. For the last few nights, I have been sleeping with 3 heavy woolen blankets on and have just been comfortable. Before we leave in the morning, everything must be in good order and does everything sparkle.

We had a lesson on how to put on a gas mask and what horrors we were. They certainly are delicate instruments. We must have looked like men from Mars.

Everyone this evening seems to be writing letters for we have some extra time this evening. The camp is certainly a nice place and is 100% better than Fort Devens. The landscape is sort of hilly so we might be in the hills of So. Carolina (the Appalachian chain) (I forget how to spell this word but you can probably guess what I mean)

The mail today was certainly extra heavy and was I glad to get a letter from you for I have been expecting one since Tuesday. The coat hangers arrived at the same time and are certainly wonderful. I forgot to mention that I wrote to Grandma (you see I call her this now) and told her a few things. Lately we have been given some sulfa drug pills which are supposed to clean out our blood. They certainly keep tabs on our physical health. Yesterday,

they checked our teeth but I don't know whether I need fillings or not. Around here, we get the latest news almost faster than the newspapers.

I didn't know it was so cold up North. Have you had any snow yet? Some of the boys' parents in other parts say there has been quite a little snow. I'm so glad that you are going to Montreal for you will certainly enjoy yourselves. Down here it doesn't seem like Christmas. Lately I have had large breakfasts compared to at home for I eat bacon, eggs and other things. I'm positive Arthur Foster came down here but is not in the 27th battalion.

You mentioned about underwear and I have both winter and summer underwear. They call the winter ones superman drawers. Quite an appropriate name for they look like Dad's. We have both summer and winter clothing so I'm all set.

Thank Emily for the hangers for they give me much more room. I must be sure and write myself. I'm so glad that the boat was launched so well and it must have been comical to see Mrs. Wambaugh practicing on a tree. A few days ago, I got a haircut and did they cut out an awful lot although I did not get a whiffle. The barber said that my hair is very thick. I noticed in some lights that my hair has a slight reddish cast. Imagine that!

We have three corporals in charge of us and all three are tough but not mean so they are well liked. The first corporal we had was not well liked but he is now on maneuvers.

I had better get this letter off now for I might not have time for a little while. I'll be sure to write again soon.

With loads of love,

Harold

P.S. Even though it was the V-12, I understand that if my score is high enough, they might accept me. I'm getting good at writing long letters.

I forgot to mention that I should get about \$35 a month, \$6.40 for insurance, \$6.25 for bonds, and \$1.50 or so for laundry. I've spent about \$6 so have enough.

#December 21, 1943. Camp Croft, Spartanburg, So. Caroline

Dear Dad,

I certainly was surprised to have a letter from you of all people. I don't ever remember you writing more than one letter in about five years.

This might be an odd thing to say but I didn't believe you took such an interest in me. I know that isn't nice to say. You seemed to have such an air of indifference some times. But now I know the truth and know you take great interest and love me very much. I suppose that idea was brought about because you used to come home very tired and did not bother with anything.

I have addressed my letters to Mum so I must address one to you. From now on, I'll be sure to address it to both.

There is a boy in our barracks whose name is Robert Richardson. They have nicknamed him "Kentucky" because he came from there. He is just 18 and might get a medical discharge because he has had 4 hernia operations within four months. There is another boy here from Tennessee who appears to be a real hillbilly. His speech is so hard to understand. About 8 or 10 boys, after reclassification were sent to the 31st and 38th where Arthur Foster is. And some of the boys from there have come into our barracks. Somebody said that I spoke more like an Englishman than any of them.

A couple of days ago we learned how to pitch tents. We each had to carry a full field pack – that includes almost everything essential. There was one boy who made such a messy pack that the lieutenant told me, because I was behind that man, to pick up all the

things that fell. What a mess! We all had a great laugh over it. Then we went to the parade grounds and there a group of two would pitch a tent. Was the ground hard for it was frozen.

Later, we were shown how to administer first aid and the man who was used as a guinea pig. He certainly looked like Charlie Chaplin. They made him lie down and the officers certainly bandaged him up.

Yesterday we marched and later went on a 6 or 7 mile hike and were we tired. The pack and rifle weighed so much that it seemed like 60 or 70 pounds but we are lucky the weather is cold rather than hot. The countryside is certainly nice looking and the pines or spruces give a look of the north. There is more evergreens than hardwood. You mentioned about colored girls and I haven't seen one. Only a few colored boys. I noticed that you are certainly English in your way of spelling for you spell it "coloured" instead of "colored."

Today we just slept and could get up at anytime we felt like. At dinner, this noon, the head chef, who has a voice like a fog horn, asked us if we had enough to eat and wanted to know if we wanted soup. Nobody wanted it so he said that we [could] get it. They certainly give us plenty of food. Our company gives the best food in the camp so everyone says. Most don't give a second helping but here we can get even a fourth helping.

On Sunday, we all hung around and wrote letters. I wrote one to the Hendries, to Aunt Gert and to Almon. A couple of days ago, the mail coming into the camp was exceptionally large and believe it or not the very least two were for me. I have received Christmas cards from Miss Martin, Mr & Mrs. Hendrie, Mrs. Foster and Mr. and Mrs. Ackerson. It was nice of them to think of me. I have received a letter from Betty today and does good at writing an interesting letter. I do want to thank you for your Christmas card, and it certainly is appropriate. Well, so far I haven't been homesick at all. That is probably due to the fact that I was away this summer. Of course, I miss you both but I don't let it get me down. Boy, did the cooks feed us well today. I never saw so much food at one time. There was meat loaf, ham, milk, cocoa, bread and butter, potatoes, onions, jello, and apple sauce. You could have as much as you wanted.

This letter might take about 4 days to write because we certainly are being rushed. Last night, which we usually have free, was taken because we went on a hike. From 9:30 to 11:00 and was I tired. Almost the second my head touched the pillow I went sound asleep. When we returned, the cooks gave us cocoa, toast and an apple. Later the lieutenant inspected our feet for blisters but I didn't have any!

This morning (Dec.21), after breakfast, I was called down to the orderly room. That is where the company commander and the first sergeant are located. I was wondering if I had done anything wrong. When I got there, it had to do with the A-12. I mentioned that when I was re-classified I told them about passing the V-12 and they noted that down. The first sergeant had to fill out a form which stated my name, home address, and place where I took the test. There were three of us there and because of a meeting of the non-commissioned officers, we had to go into the next room for a short time. We could hear the commanding officer getting awfully mad at them. He is new and did not like the way things were being run. I don't know if anything will come of it.

Our company is quite lucky that it doesn't have to drill at night. The sergeant in charge of us doesn't believe in night drilling. The other three companies in our battalion have night drilling and aren't as good as us. We certainly see plenty of training films on almost every subject. We certainly get terribly sick of them. The heat is turned on full blast and almost put us to sleep. Tonight we had to really scrub our barracks and it seemed as if the place had never been cleaned for a long time. Boy! We certainly rush around and at times don't know if we are coming or going.

There is a Christmas tree in the mess hall all decorated but the tree isn't like our kind. That is about the only sign of Christmas so far. The weather for the past two days has been nice and cool. Just right. Today the whole barracks sent their coats to the cleaners because they were so dirty. Whatever one does, all have to do so the clothes worn are worn. Either all have to wear gloves or all don't. That shows how the clothes must be uniform.

Today, I received a Christmas card from Eric and Lillian. I have received letters or cards from a lot of people as I have mentioned. I get at least one letter at each mail-call. The postman who is private first class, brings up the mail and the whole group assembles around him. Then he calls the names. It is quite a fast system for he scales them almost the whole length of the barracks if the man is down there.

I suppose I had better write to others and therefore must close soon. You asked me if my watch is running well. It certainly is taking a beating from shock but it is standing up well. The money is holding out well. If I want anything I'll be sure to write. Monday everyone sent their clothes to the laundry and I sent quite a few handkerchiefs. I am using up an awful lot because of my cold. It is now getting better and have decided to use Kleenex.

Well, I'll be sure to write soon and am planning to write a letter to Betty and others. With loads of love,

Harold

P.S. I started this letter Sunday night and here it is Tuesday night and just finishing.

I forgot to mention that I'm not getting paid for 2 months and we don't get paid from the day of induction but from the day of arriving at the reception center.

#December 26 1943. Camp Croft, Spartanburg, So. Carolina

Dear Mum and Dad,

I suppose when I write this letter you will be up in Canada but probably when this letter arrives you will be home. The weather here was awful Christmas day for it rained. The temperature was cool enough that when the rain hit the ground, it froze. It was terribly slippery. I was going down the walk and slipped. I did a somersault and landed on my side. Everybody was sliding around. I had to wait on tables all day Christmas but I did not mind it. I would rather be busy than to hang around. We (there were 5 of us) were kept quite busy setting the table for dinner and keeping up with all they ate. I never saw so much food in my life and was a lot of things wasted. It is a shame for the civilian population must do without while the army wastes. How are you off for coupons and are you able to get along or does Mr. Richardson get you some things sometimes. I have been eating excellent lately for the fresh air makes me as hungry as a bear. The breakfasts we get are certainly large.

I don't know whether I told you but I was called down to the orderly room. I was wondering if I had done anything wrong. But it turned out that I had to fill out a form pertaining to the A-12. The 1st sergeant who had me fill out the form had an argument with the sergeant in charge of our platoon. The sergeant said that I should be with the rest of the group because they were going to practice something. But the first sergeant said he didn't care for the forms had been sent from headquarters and must be filled out. So he won and I stayed a few minutes. The 1st sergeant asked where I took the test, my home address, serial number, etc. I would like to get in that program if possible.

The other night we went on another night hike and tramped and tramped. The next day we went through the gas chamber – a single room house in which there is tear gas. We each went in three times. The first time we had our gas masks on so the gas did not bother anyone. The second time we went into the chamber and once in took off the masks and then walked out. We certainly cried. The third time we went in without our gas masks and once

in put them on. After this, we went to dinner. About halfway through the meal everyone in the mess hall began to cry – even the cooks. It seems that the gas had lodged in our clothes and after being in a warm room, the heat liberated the gas. We certainly had a crying good time.

A couple of nights ago, the officers took us on a night hike and then we pitched tents in the dark woods. The job of pitching takes two men. The man with me and I started to pitch but couldn't find anything to drive in the stakes so I took the little shovel from my pack and began. What a noise. One of the officers yelled at me because of the noise so I went and finally located a stone. And what a size! I could hardly lift it for it was so heavy and because it was so large I could hardly get my hand around it. Finally we got the tent pitched (one of the last) and found that the tent had been buttoned up wrong thus making it terribly wrinkly. But the order to strike tents came (that is to take it apart) and we were one of the first to have our pack all packed.

Friday, we went into a large field where we learned about booby traps and landmines. They asked for a volunteer who picked up a land mine. It was of course a dummy, but it was hitched up to a booby trap located quite a distance away. It certainly was some explosion.

I forgot to tell you about us throwing hand grenades. The instructor told us he had a real grenade in his hand. All of a sudden he yelled, "My God, I've dropped it. Run for your life." I never ran so fast in my life. The real grenades are painted a greenish color and this was of the same color so we thought it was real but it turned out to be a practice grenade which just pops. What a scare we all got.

One day some of us were talking and many of the men thought I was older than I was. Some said I looked about 25. It appears that I'm going to follow Dad in that he was old looking for his age.

I have about everything I need but if something turns up I'll be sure and let you know. The other day, the watch got christened. I forgot to take it off when I took a shower but the watch is all right. I forgot to mention that the cooks made two cakes for Christmas and were they huge. They must have been 2 feet by 1 foot and were all made by hand and what icing with petals that look like real roses.

I must tell you the people who have written to me or at least sent me a Christmas card – Miss Ring, Mr & Mrs. Ackerson, Eric and Lillian, Mrs. Foster, Mr. and Mrs. Hendrie, Almon and Emily and Miss Martin. Mrs. Bolton sent me a card and a letter in the same envelope. She tells me that Aggie is now going to work in the civil service. She (Mrs. Bolton) seems quite pleased.

She said that Nick failed the V-12 so he quit school and went into the Army Air Force. She also says that Dick is getting out of hand for he is pounding on the wall some nights. She explains that Mrs. McDonald is deaf so her husband has to yell. This annoys Dick so he pounds on the wall so they will stop. He certainly is bold and never thinks of the other person. It is too bad that she doesn't get rid of him. Grandma sent me a nice letter and also enclosed a money order for \$2.00 as you probably know. That certainly was nice of her. Uncle Don sent me a cribbage set but I don't know how to play. I should have Mr. Richardson here to teach me. But one of the boys knows how to play so sometime I'll learn. Mrs. Newell wrote and told me Mary Lou was sick with chicken pox. She wrote:

Oh gee! Oh gash! What do you know
Mary Lou has chicken pox. Oh! Oh! Oh!
Of all the children on the street
Why was she so indiscreet.

Quite cute don't you think! She is really good at writing little jingles.

Miss Martin wrote and told me you and Dad had your pictures taken with the sponsor. But you didn't come out. She says you never are as good looking in pictures as you really are. Betty wrote and I thought she did a splendid job for a person her age. Emily wrote that she was sending me a package but as yet have not received any packages except from Uncle Don. I am writing back to people as quickly as possible but Sunday is really the only day I have much time. I want to know what day is best to call you up if I want to. I don't want to wait 3 hours and then not have you there.

The laundry job done here is quite good. It gets back quite fast for it leaves Monday morning and gets back Wednesday morning. The other day everyone sent their field jacket[] to the cleaners and when they came back, everyone had a different one. But as it happened I got back a size 36 which was just my size. We had both summer and winter clothes issued to us and we have to use both because of the varying temperature.

The money is holding out quite well for I've still got 17 dollars left. I've used most of it for essential things such as shoe polish, face clothes, and other things We've got to go without pay for two month so if I get stuck, I'll let you know.

I'll write again as soon as I possibly can but sometimes our evenings are taken up and I can't write.

With loads of love,

Harold

P.S. I started to say "with the best of luck" but that isn't what I mean.

#January 1, 1944. Camp Croft, Spartkanburg, S.C.

Dear Mum and Dad,

I received your letter yesterday and it seems that you had quite a time in Montreal. How did Dad like Aunt Frances? I suppose he teased Uncle Don about the neckties for he always does. I received your package two day ago and it is really nice. I would like you to send a package like that once in awhile. But be sure to pack it better for when I received it, the box was quite torn but nothing was harmed inside.

You told me to write to Mrs. Newell and I have done that. When you see her again, tell her that I'll write a longer letter next time but am trying to catch up on my correspondence. Miss Martin sent me another letter and I enjoyed reading it very much. It certainly was funny. I also received a letter from Warren Scott today and he said there isn't much doing around now. He is working at the Armstrong Cork company now but he moves around so quickly I doubt if he'll stay there long. I want Dad to write me another letter even if Mum does all the time.

I mentioned a boy, named Richardson, from Kentucky. He went to town Christmas eve and went A.W.O.L. He never appeared for 5 days. Upon returning, he was court-martialed but got off easy. He was only restricted to the Camp for a week and \$18 forfeit. Some boys get 6 months in the guard house.

The other night we went up to a hill quite a distance from the camp and had a demonstration as to how sound and light can travel at night. I never realized a lighted cigarette could be seen from such a long distance. The next night we went into the woods and found out how to use a compass at night. Some don't get the idea of using a compass, the kind used in the army, but I think it is boring. Some seem as though they don't have any brains at all. One boy has a name of "Blank" and that fits him to a tee for he certainly has a blank mind. There is a boy here who, when touched from behind, acts just like Mr. Comeau, the painter except this boy doesn't swing, He only swears and jumps. One day he jumped right into the lieutenant and was his face red.

Today we had a demonstration on booby traps. The traps were harmless but they just wanted to show us how innocent looking things can be a trap. One boy picked up a box to sit on and he set off a trap which was placed quite a few feet from the man. Another picked up an innocent looking dollar bill and set one off. The non-coms (non-commissioned officers) played a trick on the lieutenant. As he touched a demonstration board the non-coms set off a charge of dynamite. I don't think I ever saw a man jump so. But he took it all in good part

There is a corporal here who, I believe, never smiled in his life. I don't know whether he is trying to scare everyone for he is only about 25. Tonight I saw a sergeant come into the company area as drunk as can be. He could hardly walk and was stumbling down the road under the guidance of a private. I forgot to mention that I received a box of chocolates from Al and Emily and one from Eric and Lillian.

Today I got a shot for tetanus and did it sting for a minute but it soon went away. The typhoid shots are all over. The only effect they had on me was that after about a day my arm grew a little stiff and sore but this soon left. So far, I've had 2 shots and don't know how many are left but I suppose enough.

Some new boys arrived in the next barracks and are all the way from Wisconsin. Quite a distance! I'm writing this letter in the recreation hall where I'm putting in a call though. The operator got it through but you weren't home so I told her to try later. I'm now writing this while I wait. Somebody just told me that it is possible for you to call me. Just give everything on my address except my serial number and give platoon #2 for that is the barracks I'm in.

I've been talking about companies and squads but must tell you what they are. The squad is composed of about 15 men and in turn 4 squads make up a company. The company plus 3 more make a battalion and above that I don't know.

Tomorrow I am on K.P. and I believe that they got my name mixed up for I was there on Christmas day but it is no use complaining. The boys here don't take much food sent to the individual person for each has some. I suppose I should say nearly everyone.

The other day the whole bunch went out and dug fox holes. Some job! It is an advantage to be small at that time. Think of the man who is only 5 feet high in contrast to one of the boys in our barracks who is 6 feet 5 inches. This a new person. He has been in the army 9 months and never received his basic training. They certainly get things mixed up at times all right. Every day the news is posted on a bulletin board in the barracks and it is about a day earlier than the newspapers. At least a half a day. The other night, the barracks had to be scrubbed. So many people told me what to do that I was mixed up. One would tell me to get cold water, another to get hot, another to get no water. I finally gave up in disgust and went out. They didn't even miss me.

Mum, you certainly received a compliment from one of the men. He was showing me some pictures of his family so I showed him a picture of you and Dad He wanted to know if you were my older sister. I almost burst with pride. I've got a swell looking mother. He seemed to think Dad looked quite young too. There is a man here who has a daughter 19 and has been married 20 years. He is only 37. He certainly was married young.

I don't believe I've laughed so much as I have in the Army. So many things happen that are really funny. One boy stepped into some mud and went up to his knees. What a mess he was. That same day I fell into a foxhole full of water but as luck would have it only one foot went in. I pulled it out so quickly that it didn't even get wet! Fast, Eh? This foxhole was camouflaged but was quite obvious. I wasn't looking where I was going. The lieutenant said that the camouflage must have been done good but he was of course joking.

I must tell you about the parade the whole battalion was in. It certainly was quite a sight. All the officers marched first in full dress uniforms and did they look nice. Next the recruits marched (that's us) and after the parade, the colonel told our lieutenant who told us we were the best barracks in the whole parade. We certainly felt good. Well, I suppose I must write some more letters. Besides that I haven't anything left to say, at least that I can think of now.

With loads of love,

Harold

P.S. I never got the call through again so you couldn't have been home. Be sure and write and tell me what day is best to call and I'll call once in awhile.

Imagine Betty put SWAK on one of her letters. This means "sealed with a kiss."

#January 6, 1944. Camp Croft, Spartanburg, S.C.

Dear Mum and Dad,

I want to point out that I've changed my address but only slightly. Instead of being company D, it is now company B. We haven't moved yet but are to go on Sunday.. I bet it will be some job moving about 60 people. The lieutenant says the idea is to keep the bunch who started together divided into 4 companies. There are about 60 men in each company – I mean those who are as far advanced as we. There are new men coming in all the time. The idea is to keep each new round of men together in one company instead of having 4 differently advanced bunches of men. We are called the 46th group. All the 46th group will be put into one company. I don't know if you will understand me but it doesn't matter.

Last night we cleaned the barracks and I never saw such fast work. Everybody wanted to get out early so they almost flew. Today the floor looks almost white. This morning the whole company had to get up at 5:30 because the 1st platoon was going out on maneuvers. You might ask why all should get up for only one platoon but the answer is that the cooks only will serve one meal. I didn't mind though for I wrote two letters – one to Miss Ring and another to Mrs. Dutton.

Alice, as you know, wrote me and seems to be jolly as ever. She tells me that Gertrude Spinney now has false uppers, for her teeth were terrible, and she now wears glasses. I had to laugh at the way she said that Gert was better looking. Speak of the devil! She wrote me a little note. I can't even get away from her.

This week about all we've been doing is learning how to fire a rifle. If I were in a rifle squad instead of specialist, I would be learning how to fire for at least a month.

Later, after this 7 weeks basic training, I would like to know if you could come down and visit me. But I suppose the expense would be too great. So many of the men's folks are coming down after basic.

This afternoon we fired 22 rifles with real ammunition. I didn't do too good and yet a lot better than some. Many of the boys got "Maggie's drawers" that is to miss the target entirely. The lieutenant in charge of us tried it and I did as good as he. He follow[s] (I guess) the old familiar saying "don't do as I do, do as I say." Dad, have you ever heard that?

Last night we scrubbed the barracks and did we work fast (Opps, I forgot I told you about it) and asked the lieutenant what the S.T.R. on Tom's address meant and he thought "signal training reserve." I believe that is right for didn't you say he was in radio? Or am I mistaken?

I went to the movies twice this week and saw two good pictures. The theater near us is the largest on the camp and is very nice inside although a little plainer than the one in Braintree. Part of our training calls for orientation films which shows how the Axis got

their power and how they built themselves up. Those films would be excellent for teaching history for these films really go into detail.

Tonight when we stood retreat I never laughed much harder in my life. The boy who played the bugle was horrible. I never heard so many mistakes in my life. Everyone in the company was just about in stitches.

Did I tell you about the boy from Kentucky being A.W.O.L. He went "over the hill" on Christmas eve and never appeared for 4 days later. He was court martialled upon returning and got off quite easily with only a week's restrictions. Some get 6 months in the guard house and 2/3 of their pay for that time taken as a fine.

Last Sunday, as I told you in my letter, I was on K.P. but found it quite easy for all I had to do was to carry dishes. I didn't mind it as much as being table waiter on Christmas. That night I was talking to one of the cooks and found that he came from Dorchester. So I asked him if he knew where Freeport Street was and he answered yes. So then I asked if he knew where Simms Bros. was. He looked at me queerly and said, "you're not Simms' son, are you?" He then replied that he used to "borrow" boats from the yard and Dad used to yell at him and his pals all the time.

A couple of days ago, I asked the lieutenant when I will be transferred if I am. He said not until the end of my basic training meaning the full 17 weeks.

I wanted to ask you if you will please send me down some of those candy kisses. The corporal tried some and wanted to know if he could buy a couple of packages. If you don't want to go to the trouble, don't bother.

We have a man in our barracks who we believe is about due to get a physical discharge for he has a perforated eardrum. It certainly has been bothering him tremendously. I guess that will fix his ear for life.

Yesterday the corporal was in great humor so the boys got another corporal to fight him informally. In the fight our corporal fell and hurt his finger enough to cause it to bleed. All the boys rushed upon him like first aid women and started to bind the wound. They then held him and took his pants off completely and he was enjoying the fun as much as we.

Some days we go "dive bombing" that is picking up all types of strewn paper. Some are as blind as bats and can't see the paper – probably on purpose. I'm so glad that I was able to get you on the telephone and as I said, I only waited about 30 minutes. Pretty fast. The telephones here are certainly busy but that time I got ahead of the rush.

There really isn't much to tell this week for not as much happened although tomorrow night we go out on a night problem. I'll write soon but the time slips by so quickly it seems as though I write to you sooner than I really do.

With loads of love,
Harold

#January 8, 1944, Camp Croft, South Carolina

Dear Mum and Dad,

I must tell you before I forget that you might just as well send your letter by regular mail. Mrs. Hendrie sent her letter at 6 p.m. that same day and it arrived as soon as yours even though hers was only by regular mail. Dad, just think how much money you'll save.

You talked about have some nice steak and since I've been here I've had steak once. Was it good and tender! Everyone just dove into it including me. I imagine I had three helpings! Tonight was our last night for eating in the company D mess hall for we all moved today to B company. The barracks are really nicer than before and the area around the barracks is nicer also. Some of the boys volunteered to sleep in the tents erected in a large parade ground just in front of the barracks. But I would not volunteer for who wants to

sleep in a tent unless they have to. These tents hold 6 for they are quite large and there is a stove and electricity in them. There were about 8 too many men in our barracks in company B for the commanding officer would let only so many in a barracks. In company D we squeezed them all in.

Tonight it has been raining quite a lot and Bob Del Vecchio and I went to the "PX" (post exchange) where we got some milk. While there, we saw a few boys come in who had been on maneuvers today and were they covered with mud. They were covered from head to toe. This Bob Del Vecchio has an Italian name yet is a Protestant. He explains that he is mostly English and has that little bit of Italian in him. I have to laugh at the way he writes some of his letters for he said he has to be very careful how he writes to some of his friend. Socialites, I suppose! He asked me how to spell "idiosyncrasy" and I never heard of the word. He certainly uses such verbose words sometimes. I don't even know if I've spelled it right yet.

Last night we went out on a night problem which was on scouting and patrolling. We lost our way (I should say seven of us) and walked for miles before we arrived at the right spot. We were "shot" so many times we must have to look like Swiss cheese. We happened to get mixed up in another company's area and they fired at us with blank cartridges. One man in company A jumped out at us and yelled for us to "stick-em-up." Did I jump for he sprang at us so suddenly.

Yesterday afternoon we went on a dress parade again and wasn't it nice. I probably have talked to you about it. All the officers marched up to the lieutenant colonel and reported. It is really a wonderful sight in fact the whole parade is nice. Today I wrote to Eric and Lillian and thanked them but from now on I will only write to Eric. I know she has hurt both of you over the smallest things. I have been thinking about getting my picture taken but haven't had much time. A few have had them taken in Spartanburg and they were terrible. Someone told me, we could have our picture taken in the main P.X. so sometime I'll have it taken.

I can't get over the change in Dad lately. He certainly must be sick. I don't understand what you mean by flooring over the big shed. Do you mean to say they floored over the whole shed on the ground?

There is a man here by the name of George Davis who thinks he knows everything. He is from Maine and one day I mentioned that you came from Nfld. He tried to tell me that only fisher folks live there – at least to that effect and he says the season isn't long enough to grow any kind of crops. He also says the place is just about barren and not much good for anything. It was no use trying to tell him anything for he thinks he knows it all. He and another fellow tease me a lot because I haven't been out with many girls so yesterday I told them that "a barking dog never bites." That fixed them! Those people who shoot off their mouth are usually the ones who have seldom done what they brag about.

There is another man here who everyone calls a "chow hound." He certainly is some eater and thinks of no one except himself at the table. He takes two spoons, it seems, and shovels the food in almost as if he was a large furnace. He gets an awful lot of people mad. He expects everyone to wait on him but not when anyone asks him to pass something, he ignores that person. He certainly is discourteous. You find all kinds of people in the army.

There is a man 36 sleeping by me and he is rather a nice man. The only thing is that he finds this training harder than some for he has something wrong with his foot. He tells me to stay the way I am and not pay any attention to those "bags of wind." He says "you'll appreciate being that way when you get older." He certainly advises against smoking.

I must be sure and tell you not to expect to hear from me next week for all of us are going out to the rifle range every day next week. We leave at 8 and come back about 8 at

night and the trip is about 5 miles each way. When we come back, we have to clean our rifles and get ready for bed so I don't suppose I'll have a spare minute. But if I do I'll certainly be sure to write.

The same day that your letter came, one came from Mrs. Hendrie and one from Al and Emily. Em certainly must be disgusted for I thought he swore he'd never get another pig for they were too much nuisance. Boy! He must really work her hard as well as work himself. I want you to write and tell me about Daiute's hens (capon). I suppose if one lets as much as a peep, off goes it neck. Poor thing!

I nearly forgot to tell you about shoot[ing] a 22 rifle with live ammunition 2 days ago. This was just in preparation for the rifle range where we use a 30 caliber rifle I was surprised to find that I had a score of 193 out of a possible 250. The highest was only 216 and that man has been in the army before. I ranked about 5th to 9th highest and I don't think that is bad for not having shot a rifle before. I did much better than most who have shot before. The lowest man got 33 out of 250 and it was really bad. If I couldn't do any better than that, I'd quit.

Well, it's bed time so I must close but I will be sure and write as soon as possible once we come off the range next week.

Note that my new address is as follows:

Pvt. Harold G. Simms

A.S.N. #31425998

27th I. T. B., Co. B

4th Platoon

Camp Croft, So Carolina

It makes it easier for the mailmen to find me if I tell in which platoon I'm in. You asked how the mail is given out. All the mailman does is to have us all assemble on the first story and then he calls the name. As we answer he gives them to us. Now I really must go.

With lots of love and a barrel of kisses;

Harold

P.S. be sure that Dad writes to me. Notice I changed my salutation a little.

#Postmark shows January 16, 1944. No date in letter. Camp Croft. Spartanburg, S.C.

Dear Mum and Dad,

Well, here we are back from the rifle range and are we tired! I'll tell you about my experience but I must tell you that I'll try not to make any mistakes in this letter. My mind does work faster than my pen and so I make mistakes. Then there is always somebody talking and that makes me make mistakes. Oops! (a mistake). There is so much noise going on here now that it is a wonder that I don't make more.

Thanks a lot for the cookies and cake. The cookies are all gone but the cake hasn't been touched for I haven't had time. This week, I didn't know whether I'm coming or going.

Wednesday morning, I was to report to one of executive buildings near the main gate. I didn't know just what was going on but I had an idea that it had to do with the A.S.T.P. and sure enough it was. Had to report in my dress uniform and I walked about 30 minutes before I got there. Some walk! When I got there, a sergeant gave me a form which I had to sign and fill out. I had to tell what college I went to, what subjects I've taken, and what I'd like to be in the future. It wasn't only one form but four which went to different people. It took me almost two hours before I arrived back at the barracks and then I was taken out to the rifle range by truck instead of walking. When I was up at the main gate, I went into the post office and am sending you a money order for \$20. When I got paid last Monday, I received \$34 and after sending you the money, I have about \$21 left. Some here

don't see how I get along on so little but this month I've been buying necessities such as face clothes and shoe polish and other things. This month I expect to get along on less. Twenty dollars is plenty for I sure enjoy saving. Like father, like son!

Now I must tell you about the rifle range, Sunday, the whole company got ready by making up full field packs and cleaning the rifles. Then Monday morning we started off full of pep but by the time we arrived home, most staggered in. I certainly was terribly tired. The first three days we fired was only for practice and then the next two were devoted for record. The first day I went on "pit detail" which is a group of men who went to operate the targets. Those places where the men work to operate the targets are well protected – by about 1½ feet of cement and about 6 feet of earth. The targets moved up and down on cradles – when up they shoot at them and once down we find out that man's score. I don't know whether you understand but the only way to really understand is to see for yourself but of course that is impossible. We had dinner each day on the range for it is 5½ miles distance. We went to bed about ten and got up at 5:30 and still I was really tired. But each day we marched it got easier until yesterday, it seemed quite short. I received a score of 175 on my practice shooting and missed being an expert by 5 points. That score made me a sharpshooter. On record, I received exactly 180 which gave me a rating of expert and many who had shot rifles before didn't do as well as I. This score I mentioned is out of a possible 210 and only about 6 or 8 in the barracks made expert. One man here got a score of only 99 and he is a squad leader. A leader should get the best in everything but I wouldn't say that was very good.

Tonight while I was writing this letter, I received a letter from Miss Martin and is she comical Next to your letters I enjoy hers the most. She was telling me the latest yard gossip. Tonight I also received a package from Marjorie which was full of cookies, candy, and jams and jellies. I thought that was wonderful of her to think of me. I certainly am going to get a letter off soon so I can thank her. I certainly am glad to hear that Ruby is getting better for I've heard from other boys here that in Pittsburg, many are dying from flu, although I don't know whether Ruby had the flu or not.

Tonight is certainly miserable for it is raining quite hard. We have been quite lucky in that the weather was fine all week. Today we didn't go out on the range so it rained. Men before us have told us that they laid in mud while firing. We certainly were lucky for the ground was really dry. Since I wrote my last letter, about the only thing I've done is march, fire, and sleep so I really haven't had much time to do anything. Nothing has happened so I might as well finish up.

I nearly forgot to tell you that I received your letter in one day, quite quick, and received your package the next. I certainly am pleased the way Dad is writing. He never used to write before. Dad, be sure and keep it up.

With loads of love.

Harold

P.S. I don't think there are quite as many mistakes but at the speed I write, it is wonder that I don't make more.

I might as well send home the money order from Grandma for it is an awful lot of bother to cash it here for I would have to have an officer go up and counter sign it.

#January 22, 1944. Camp Croft, South Carolina

Dear Mum and Dad,

Since I received your letter, I've been meaning to write but time doesn't permit. Here it is Saturday night and finally I've had a little time to myself.

You didn't mention in your last letter whether you received my money order but maybe you sent the letter before getting mine.

I want you to come down after next week and not after the 17 weeks for after that my destination is unknown. First I must know how long you are planning to stay here for the guest house on the camp will only have guest for 3 days. If you stay longer I'll have to go to town and find something. The corporal told me that the U.S.O. could find me a nice room and he said that you should let me know when you're coming about a week or week and one half before time. He said that the buglers go out on night problems on Wednesday and Friday so if you're coming for 3 days, come on Saturday for that evening and Sunday I could be with you. I could see you every night until eleven if there isn't a night problem (Wed. and Fri.). Would you please find out where the nearest airport is and the price and etc. for I can't seem to find out much? I'm just curious and when given a furlough would like to go by plane. I was so glad that you were home that evening for that call went through almost immediately. Be sure and let me know all the details if you want to come.

Thanks very much for the Ice Capades program and the picture of the boat. The Capades must have been beautiful and I wish I could have been there. Dad certainly is improving with age but don't image he'll ever improve his deviltry. That is a nice picture of the boats and they certainly remind me of the P.T. boats.

Tonight I opened my fruit cake and gave the boys some. I've had their mouths watering since I got the cake. I haven't felt like eating it so didn't bother to open it. Some teaser! Eh! They all told me that the cake would dry up but only laughed for I know it takes a long time.

The weather here for the past two days has felt like spring instead of winter. It is nice and warm but not too hot. I bet it isn't like that in Boston. I never know what the weather and temperature will be like the next day for it varies so from day to day.

The other day I had a pleasant surprise for I received a letter from Judy in North Africa. She sent the letter on the 11th of this month and I received it 9 days later – fast work! Aunt Gert wrote and told me she was in Morocco but of course Judy didn't tell me. I noticed she censored her own letter. How come? Miss Martin after sending me a letter sent me a box of candy. I certainly thought that was so nice of her.

This week we've been firing different kinds of guns and rifles. One day we fired the bazooka and it certainly is some weapon. I was one of the few who got a hit and can't see why more didn't get a direct hit. Then we fire[d] a rifle grenade and got a perfect score. One of the grenades went in sideways and left a hole in the shape of it. With those grenades on the rifle, it gives a real good kick. Without, they don't kick at all. It isn't like those shotguns Dad used to fire where he had to back himself again a tree so the backfire wouldn't knock him down.

Last night, we went on a trucking and de-trucking problem. The way it works is that we would walk for a few miles and then road [crossed out and replaced with rode] for a few miles (oops! My mind is head of me and I made a mistake) that made the march a little easier.

One day last week we had a problem in judging distance. That certainly was monotonous two days for we kept judging all the time.

Tomorrow a wedding is to take place for one of the boys in our barracks is getting married. Tomorrow after the wedding they plan to give him a large party in the mess hall and there was enough money collected to give him about \$30. That reminds me that I've spent about \$3 this month so far. Some don't know how I get long on so little.

This morning I went on sick call for I had a little sore under my tongue. The doctor put some diluted silver nitrate on it and did it taste terrible. Yesterday, I could hardly eat

supper because the sore pained me when I swallowed. But now I'm alright. Tomorrow I'm on K.P. in the officers' mess hall so I'd better be sure and finish this letter tonight. It is eleven o'clock so I suppose I had better get to bed.

With love,
Harold

P.S. There really isn't much to tell so don't be disappointed if the letter is too short. I certainly would like to be home coasting for I miss that. I miss my home. Anyway as you know, I haven't had my picture taken yet for I haven't had much time. But sometime I'll get around to it.

#January 31, 1944, Camp Croft, South Carolina

Guess where I'm writing this letter. I'm wiring this in the latrine!

Before I tell you much I'll have to make a coy fo Mrs. Newell's poem. Spring is
Coming

The farmers are squirming,
A sure sign of spring.
In just a few weeks,
The birdies will sing.
Farmer Simms and farmer Soule,
Have got their seed books out,
Pretty soon they'll both begin to toss the sods about.
"Fifteen feet for beans," say Mr. Simms,
And puffs a brawn breast,
While Mr. Soule with tomato poles says "watch me beat the rest"!

Don't you think that is pretty cute. I certain think she is so clever at little poems.

Today we got paid and I received thirty-six dollars and thirty-five cents. That is exactly what I figure so I was contented. One of the boys has been looking forward all week to getting his pay and when today came he was blue-lined – that is he couldn't get any money this month probably because he had done something wrong. I never saw a more disappointed person in my life. I'll probably be sending home \$20 or \$25 for I now have \$40. That is too much for me to spend. The next time I have a little spare time, I'll go down and get a money order and at the same time I'll have my picture taken. At the main P.X. (post-exchange) they do a good job so I understand. Last week one of the boys here sent some horrible pictures home. They were tinted with only water colors and were really terrible but those were taken in Spartanburg. I wouldn't be bothered wasting the money on such pictures.

Sunday, I decided to go to church in the morning so got up at 8 o'clock and had breakfast. I was going alone but talked some into going with me and finally got six to go. The chapel was just about full (about 175 to 200 men). The chaplain gave a nice sermon and of all the songs they sang, I knew one. One of the boys who went with me fell asleep halfway through and slept through the whole sermon. I haven't had time to notify Mr. Marsell about the change in my address so will you tell him? I'm planning on writing soon. The Sunday School Times is being sent to my old address and if they changed it, it would be much simpler.

About a week ago I saw the movie picture "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" and was very much surprised to find that Maria Montez had exactly the same color hair as you. I thought it was very beautiful! So few people in Hollywood have red hair like you, I was

quite surprised. Talking about movies, pictures come here faster than they do in Boston. We get the latest pictures. Has Madame Curie come to Boston yet? It is coming here the last of the week.

The other day when I was up in the P.X I saw some valentines so decided to send you one. There was only one to both mother and father and since it had the right sentiment, I sent it. As I wrote, it is to show my love in another way.

Today we started school and had a really easy day of it. This morning we played the bugle and what a noise! Each had to play separately at times and one boy couldn't get out any more than wind. He and everyone just howled for the longer he tried the more wind he got out of it. That's about all we did this morning. This afternoon we went out and were given different degrees to follow by the compass for so many yards. We divided off in pairs and started off. We took our time and ended up just where we started (off about 50 yards.) Not too bad! A couple of pairs ended up about a mile from the right place. Not very far is it? One pair never came back so had to go out and find them. Finally we all got together and started off for school again. The corporal in charge of us told us that some night we'll have to do that. It would be our tough luck if we never got back for he said he'd leave us in the woods all night. He said that it happened once before and the men slept in the woods all night. After getting back to the school, he told us about the communications system used in the infantry. I believe the work will be quite interesting.

Tonight I did the crossword puzzle in the local paper and did the whole thing without a dictionary. It was hard in places but finally I worked the whole thing out. I suppose you still do them quite often.

Yesterday after church, I cleaned up my locker and wrote some letters to Judy, Eric and Betty. I was too lazy to write any more.

There really isn't much to tell so might as well go to bed.

With loads of love,
Harold

#February 6, 1944. Camp Croft, South Carolina

Dear Mum and Dad,

I should have written sooner but have been quite busy this week. I started to write but I had to do something else more than one night. I do hope you received the valentine.

This morning I got up about 8:30 and scrubbed my field jacket which had to be cleaned by Monday. Then I decided to scrub the polish off my shoes so I could start from the bare leather. You can get a much better shine that way. When I woke up, it was raining quite hard and just after I cleaned the shoes, the sun came out and now it is a beautiful spring day. Imagine! The leaves and flowers and (sic) now starting to bud and grow and the grass is starting to turn green. I bet it isn't that way up there. I also washed my webbed belt and a rifle belt and also a large bath towel. I think I accomplished quite a little today. Just a few minutes ago I put on some polish and didn't everyone laugh for the shoes looked like Betty's red shoes. I'm using oxblood which is a very deep red, almost brown, and gives a nice tone but the more polish I put on the darker it will get.

Friday night the buglers went on a night problem and followed a night reading. I was with an 18 year old boy from Ohio. We had 7 readings to follow so I took 4 and he three and when I was sighting he couldn't figure out how I could move so quickly and yet know where I was going. But we landed within 100 yards of our destination so that wasn't too bad. The old type compass took quite a long time to slow down but that night we went out, the camp received a shipment of compasses which float in oil and they were much faster and accurate than the older type. When the arrow swung to north it stayed there instead of

moving all the time. These remind me of ships' compasses which float in oil. All got back except one group of three and we spent ½ hour hunting for them and all the time they were at the school. They were such way out that they couldn't find anyone and so went back to the bugle school.

Well, Dad, find out about that plane transportation from here to Boston/. I'd like to know very much.

Mum, from what you tell me, the house is going to look wonderful now. I'm so glad you are finally going to have it the way you really want it. Talking about the house reminds me of the cat. How is he? I suppose he gets black if you put him in cellar during the cold weather.

Every Wednesday night we go out on a hike and last week we went on one. It didn't seem so far and yet many were really worn out. I can take it a little better than before It seems sort of odd that so far I haven't gotten homesick although I do miss both of you. Some here have been sick from being homesick. I would have expected to be for I haven't been away from home much.

Thursday night, I went to the movies to see "Mme. Curie." I don't believe it has come to Boston yet, has it? This camp gets the pictures almost as soon as they are released. Next Thursday I plan to see "Jane Eyre" which Grandma wants to see. Tell her I'll write but haven't had much time lately. The picture "Mme. Curie" was quite interesting to me but many got up and went because they didn't think the action moved fast enough. It sure would be dry for Dad.

Friday night the whole company had what is called a "G.I. Party." It is only a party which scrubs the floor. Some party, eh? There are a few in our barracks who are always yelling that some don't work but those that do the yelling don't do any work. Some think they are generals.

Last week I brought my dress clothes up to the tailor to be cleaned. They certainly did a good job. It is really hard to keep clothes clean around here. One night this week I was sent up to the mess hall to scrub the floors. I was really mad for I wanted to do some things but soon got over it. I had to laugh. One boy missed supper so he could go to town and was just ready to go when he was told to go up with me. Well, didn't he rip off his shirt. He was so mad he didn't even bother to un-button his buttons and thus all the buttons flew off. Now he has to sew them all on again.

All the noncommissioned officers last week had to take a physical test for I've heard most are going to be shipped across. I've heard they're really going to clean them out about March 1st.

Last Monday, about 16 of us started in the bugle school and the first period was devoted to blowing the bugle. One man has no front teeth and can hardly blow, another used to play a clarinet and I don't know how they expect him to be able to blow, another blew and only could get air to come out. Quite a varied bunch! We have classes on other things such as map reading, sketching, etc. and received a mark of superior in two and satisfactory in one (sketching) for I'm not very good at sketching a map. Superior is the highest possible mark and marks me feel good when I get such good marks.

Miss Martin wrote me two day ago and wrote a nice long letter by hand. She says it is too noisy in the office to type correctly and still concentrate on it. She said that it is possible you might come down alone but I'm afraid you wouldn't enjoy it very much if you came alone. She says she is trying to get Dad to come down for over a week-end but doesn't know if she'll succeed. I would like to have both of you come down but won't be disappointed if you can't.

You mentioned about me changing my address but we will be staying just where we are now. The sugar cookies were still intact when I received them and I thought they were good but liked the other cookies a little better. I gave some of the boys and men here some of my things but there wasn't enough to feed 60 men. I and everyone enjoyed the cake and cookies. I really like the cake and think you are a wonderful cook.

For about one week, the only letters I received was yours and Dad's. I really can't get over the fact that Dad writes more lately. Now I'm starting to get more. I'm really glad that we got those storm windows on for I would think they would help very much to save fuel.

The other day I was walking through the woods and was scared by a rabbit who jumped in front of me and then did he run. They are certainly quick little things. I told Mrs. Hendrie about some of the things of nature around here and she seems to enjoy that more than other things.

Boy! Dad must have had some time when there weren't any shades in the house. I bet he was having a fit. He's too particular. I'm so glad that you're (sic) spring cleaning is all done for now it is done and you don't have to dread having to do it Next time you write, tell me how the furniture is. Next time I'll write sooner than I did this week.

With loads of love,
Harold

#February 10, 1944. Camp Croft, South Carolina
Dear Mum and Dad,

I have a few minutes at dinner time to do anything so I must start a letter. I say start for I probably won't finish it until this evening.

The other day we were informed we were going back to our old companies so now we have got to go to all the trouble of going back. Just keep writing to Co. B until I let you know just when and where we're going. Army efficiency, bah! I hope when we are finally settled that we will be there for awhile.

You mentioned about coming down and if you do, please let me know a few days in advance when you're coming and for how long. Don't wait much longer if you plan to come for our training will be over April 9.

Yesterday we went to school and when the attendance was taken, the non-commissioned officer found out that one of the boys went A.W.O.L. When the lieutenant came in to take the attendance, we told him he was on sick call and kept that up for one whole day. Today, he never appeared so we finally had to tell him. He went A.W.O.L once before and I imagine he'll be put in the guard house. There was a man in one of the other platoons who went "over the hill" and when they opened his locker, the corporals found rifle ammunition and parts of his rifle in the bottom. That is a crime and now he can be put in the guard house for two offenses.

Two days ago was the second time I've been put on detail. Quite lucky for some have been on detail 4 or 5 times. I had the job of table waiter which is quite easy. I just rushed in and out at each meal and after supper had to wash the mess hall but that wasn't too hard.

Last night, we went on a hike and walked about 10 or 11 miles. What made it so hard was the fact that we had to wear heavy overshoes. I swear they weighed about 1 ton. Were they heavy!! But it was a good thing we wore them for we walked through an awful lot of mud. For 1½ days solid it just pelted and made the ground terribly muddy. When we were about 1 mile from home, we were back on concrete, we took off the overshoes and carried them. We all felt as if we were walking in air for we felt so light. Some difference!

So far I haven't been put on bugler of the guard but expect to any day. This time the bugler plays for the entire battalion. Some of the men who have been put on bugle of the

guard certainly can't play very well. In the bugle school, some of the boys can't play much better than before. The corporal asked one of them why he wasn't doing too well and when he opened his mouth, the whole class nearly laughed themselves sick for he didn't have any front teeth.

Yesterday my teeth were checked and they found one cavity near my eye tooth so I expect to be called down to the dental clinic anytime.

Every night (oops! Somebody was just asking me what time it was and I made a mistake. The watch is still going) we have to play retreat which is when the flag is brought down at 6 o'clock in the evening.

There really isn't much to tell this time but when I write again will write a larger letter. Of course, the paper is much bigger. Tonight I think I'll go to the movies to see "Jane Eyre" so will close. I'll be calling up in a few days if not sooner.

With much love,
Harold

February 16, 1944. Camp Croft, South Carolina

Dear Mum and Dad,

I've been telling you about it being nice and warm down here but last Saturday it got real cold – about 10 above zero. That night I thought I'd freeze and didn't have enough sense to get up and put on another blanket or shut the window. Instead all I did was shiver and shake. When I got up Sunday morning, it was really cold in the barracks for the fireman had let the fire go out. Sunday evening, it grew a little warmer and then snowed all night and left nearly two inches of snow on the ground. It still grew a little warmer and started to rain quite hard all day. That evening and the next morning I certainly would like to have had a camera for the rain had left a solid sheet of ice on all the trees. I don't believe I've ever seen anything quite equal to its beauty. Now it has grown warm and almost all the snow is gone tonight.

Last Saturday night, most of the boys in the barracks went to town and had a good time drinking. One of the eighteen year old boys went and had two beers – he was trying to be a man. But as a result, as he wasn't used to drinking, he got quite sick and slept all Saturday night, and all day and night Sunday. Even Monday he was quite sick so it didn't pay. Sunday afternoon the ambulance arrived at our barracks and when the driver came in, he said he was told that someone in our barracks was terribly sick. All we had who fitted this description was this boy but he was asleep so the ambulance went. I don't let the army change me anymore than I can help. It has really changed some people for one person never used to swear and now that is all he can do.

I've been well off for cookies and other things with everyone sending me things. You sent me a nice large parcel and the very same day I got letters from Betty, Warren Scott, Miss Ring, and Mrs. Hendrie so I was pretty well off for that day. But the law of averages worked in that case for there was about 4 days last week I didn't get one letter. Tonight I've caught up with my mail so tomorrow I'll write to Grandma and to Mrs. Bolton to find out if I owe her (Mrs. Bolton) a letter. I haven't heard so I presume Grandma is all right. Getting back to the packages, the very next day after getting yours, I got Mrs. Newell's package. I haven't as yet eaten much of yours but instead have eaten Mrs. Newell's. A few days ago, I received a package from Emily filled with brownies and other kinds of cookies. Those brownies were just the way you always try to get them and were they good! It certain is too bad that those jars of jam broke for that was one of my favorite kinds and I certainly could have used it. I've been offering the hard candy and there was so much that it has lasted for three days.

Tonight I'm going to become bugler of the guard for the battalion. It was luck that I happened to be picked for tonight, we had to parade and after that go on a 15 mile hike. Now, because of being bugler, I won't have to do any of it.

Last Friday, the buglers had a night problem as we do every week and what a mix-up. The lieutenant had us move so many times that we didn't have time to situate ourselves. What the 16 of us were supposed to do was set up what they call command posts with message centers in 3 different places. I went with one bunch and when we got to where we were supposed to, I came back with a coded message. But upon arriving, only the corporal was in the bugle school where the main command post was located. The corporal himself didn't know what was going on so he told me to stay there. Then we each took a crack at doing the crossword puzzle and nearly finished it. I was there about two and one half hours before the rest came back. They were nearly frozen and covered with mud while I was in the warm building all evening. Pretty nice!

Mrs. Bolton hasn't written for a few weeks so I wrote her another letter. I do hope she answers the next one. Everyone seems to answer my letters quite promptly and hope it keeps up.

I noticed in the papers just a few days ago that the army is giving another test for college. So it is still possible to be put in a A.S.T.P. program. Of course, I have no idea where I'll be put but they'll put me where they do and that'll be about all there is to it.

Warren Scott wrote and told me he expects to be in the Army soon for his birthday is the 24th of this month and if the draft hoard is really pressed, they draft him quickly.

Lately there has been a few men in the barracks who go A.W.O.L for a couple of days every once in awhile I'm afraid if it keeps up that they might make us stay in for a few days. One boy (about 20) goes quite often now, so his wife has decided to go home for she believes she is the cause of it and from what I gather she is. Others go out and get drunk over the weekend and never come in till Tuesday.

You told me over the telephone that you and Dad wrote me and asked me plenty of questions. So I had better stop or I'll tell you all the news although there isn't much happening just recently. I was glad you were in last night for I waited just about 2 hours to make the call. I'll answer your next letter as quickly as possible.

With best of love,
Harold

#February 20, 1944. Camp Croft, South Carolina

Dear Mum and Dad,

As I am writing, 2 or 3 of the boys are having a great time swinging music with a saxophone and trumpet. I don't think I'll ever get to like swing as much as I like semi-classical music.

This noon all the buglers are all worn out for we had to go out this morning and set up some panels. Panels are pieces of cloth placed in different positions to mean different things and are read from an airplane. To make it more interesting, the corporal divided us into two groups and we had to see who could set up the message the faster. The loser went through the "hot oven" My team went through it first and it was enough to get them pepped up. From that time on we won everyone and the other team went through the "hot oven" three times. They certainly were plenty sore when the period was over.

The other day when I was in school and everyone was writing, I don't know what made me take notice, but there are 8 left-handed people in the bugle school out of 16, That certainly is unusual for it's usually about 2 to every 50 people.

I had a great laugh yesterday for some of the boys were telling me that one of the boys' wives was in the recreation hall and a major came in. She came up to him and asked him if he was a private and could he play the bugle. Then she complained to him that her husband didn't have much time to spend at home and wanted to know if he'd fix it up. She is only about 18 and a complete fool and reminds me of Lillian. Speaking of her, I must tell you that they sent me a large valentine box of chocolates – 2 lbs. It certainly was large and I do think it was very nice of them to go to the trouble and expense. She seems to be all right toward me but not that way toward you.

Last night, the platoon leader, Lt. Sellers called us all together and began to tell us something. The way he started, we didn't know what he was going to say. The next thing we knew, he started to talk but choked up immediately. Finally he got up enough strength to tell us he was leaving. I was surprised to see him almost cry but he said he never had such a nice bunch of men under him. He is now going to be made a captain and company commander of Co. A. That is just across the way from us. We fell quite badly about it for his theory is give the boys what they want and you can discipline them more than visa-versa. He did get cooperation and discipline! He was more like a father and always could see our side of the story. The boys in the barracks took a collection and got about \$25 so they got him a nice desk set made of marble. It really was a beautiful ornament and can always be used by him.

I started this letter Saturday afternoon and am now continuing it on Sunday. I went to church this morning and the services are very similar to those held in our church. The chaplain is a very nice speaker and can give an interesting sermon.

Next week, I'm planning to go to Spartanburg and have my picture taken. I never got around to it before but do want to get one for you.

I was sure I had written to Mrs. Newell. In fact, I'm sure, but instead of mailing it myself, I let someone else mail it. It is quite possible it was lost somewhere on the way. But I'll write another to her as soon as I finish yours.

Tonight, I'm being put on bugle of the guard again but I'd rather have that detail rather than K.P. or regular guard duty where you have to walk post half the night.

The weather down here is really terrible for it is always raining. It is a good thing it isn't cold or we would have plenty of snow. It's been so muddy we have had to stay inside rather than go outside and practice. Though one day, it was fine in the afternoon so all the buglers got outside with a couple of drummers and had fun as a bugle corps. It really was a lot of fun and sounded nice. A new group has just started school so in a couple of weeks we'll be able to add them to the corps.

We will be going to school for about 4 more weeks so let me know as soon as possible if and when you are coming.

Every Sunday I have an awful mess on my bed for I always sort out things on this day. I certainly have an awful mess sometimes but it is always righted by the time evening arrives, though the mess isn't quite as bad as what I made at home.

Most every day passes without much happening and usually about the same every day so I haven't got much to say now. I guess I'm not in the writing mood either. Believe it or not, I'm caught up on all my mail except for Mrs. Newell. Some days I'm really in the mood to write and sometimes I hate to bother. I'll write soon.

With loads of love,

Harold

P.S. I do hope you can understand my answers. If things aren't clear, let me know and I'll let you know.

*Questions to be answered (written by W. E. Simms)

- 1 How much time do you get off to yourself.?
- 2 If we should go to Spartanburg, how much time could you spend with us?
3. Have you any idea of what you will be doing or going to do after your 17 weeks are up?
4. How far by taxi from Spartanburg is Camp Croft?
5. Do buses run often to Camp Croft?
6. Have you ever been in Spartanburg?
7. Is training to be a bugler hard work?
8. What kind of a job is a bugler supposed to be in the army?
9. Do you ever hear anything about V-12 or A-12?
10. Do you think you will get time off to get home after your 17 weeks are up?
11. Do you think you could get time off to help dig the garden if I pay your way home?
12. If your mother was a man what relation would she be to you.

Answer.

- 1 a. Monday – after 6 o'clock – can be in town by 7. Can miss bed check and have to be back by 6:30 (get up about 5:15)
- 1 b. Tuesday – same as Monday
- 1 c. Wednesday – hike night – only can get off if table waiter or K.P. and then probably about 9 before I could get in town.
- 1 d, Thursday – scrub night – can get in about 8:00
- 1 e. Friday – night problem – can only get in if put on as table waiter or K.P. and then probably about 9 before I could get in town.
- 1 f. Saturday – after 5:30 o'clock and don't have to be in until 6:30 Mon. morning.
2. I answered no. 2 question in 1. I have about an hour and ½ at noon to myself.
3. no idea (so many things can happen)
4. about 5 miles
5. about 3 an hour
6. No. I have nothing to go in for.
7. Not as much physical as mental work.
8. He is a messenger but know all kinds of communications such as using radio, visual signaling, etc. He seems to be a man of all trades.
9. I haven't heard anything since I went up to headquarters but there is still a possibility.
10. That all depends. If I'm sent across, I'll be given a furlough definitely and sometimes boys are given a furlough before going to another camp in U.S. Other times a furlough isn't given until arriving at the new camp. If I stay here, it might be four or five months. (if I am sent) across, that doesn't mean combat).
11. I'll try anyway.
12. No relation. She isn't, anyway.

I could stay and sleep with you the nights I have off but will have to get up at 5 o'clock in order to get in on time.

I can get off all those days except when specified unless I have K.P. or table waiter. I can't get in on Mon., Tues, Thurs, Sat., and Sun. if I have K.P, or table waiter.

*February 26, 1944. Camp Croft, South Carolina

Dear Mum and Dad,

The other night I went to Spartanburg and got a room. It is in Hotel Franklin and on the fifth floor but I can't remember the room number though they have your name

reserving that room. I was able to get two adjoining rooms which cost \$6.50. The rooms are each about the size of the back bedroom so don't be too disappointed if it isn't the best for there are hardly any rooms left in the whole city. I first went to the best hotel in town but they were booked up to the 11th so I had to forget it. This hotel is in the center of the city – a little smaller than Quincy – and is located real close to the bus terminal where you will come in. I suggest you both bring down your raincoats and rubbers for it has really been raining here lately and is liable to keep up.

I would like you to bring down the “whitewash” for the dogwood poison for I think I have a slight touch of it now. All the doctor would give me was salve but if it is what I think, that won't do any good. I wondered if you'll be allowed to bring down the camera by plane. Please bring down those pictures that I took before I left for I would like to see them

Everyone in my barracks for the past two days, have had sore throats and hoarse but only one is really sick. It seems as though it has been going through the camp lately but my sore throat seems to be getting much better. But don't let that scare you for this sore throat came quickly and seems to be going quickly.

I know I should have written sooner to let you know about these things but everything seems to have worked out wrong this week – in fact I didn't think I'd get to town and see about a room until tonight.

Talking about army efficiency, I'll have to tell you something odd that happened. There are now five boys who have been shipped here from a camp in Va. so they could learn to play bugle and the odd thing is that they've been actually assigned to a unit as buglers and here they don't even know how to play. I suppose when we get out, and since we know how to play a bugle, they'll be different and place us somewhere else.

I don't think that I ever told you about there being plenty of cockroaches down here. I never saw them before and probably you know what they are.

Last night we came over to the school for the buglers were going out on a night problem. But an hour before we left, the clouds just seem to open and did it rain! We hung around the school for nearly one hour while the officers decided whether we would go out or not. Finally one of the officers came in and told us he had sad news for us but it turned out we were going home. The boys never moved so fast in their lives as they did then.

The other day, when I was a table waiter, the new mess sergeant asked us if we had put all the “con” on the table, that's “corn,” and then I knew he was from Boston. Sure enough, he is from Fields Corner and knows where Dad's yard is. It certainly sounds good to hear a Bostonian rather than a lot of southerners.

A new shipment of men came in the other day and they really are a long way from home for they came from California, Texas, and other far western states. Among them are two Indians who came from California.

I don't know if you ever looked at a map but drawing a straight line from Spartanburg to Boston passes through Washington and New York so by plane the route is nearly straight.

I'm going to the movies tonight so I'll write tomorrow.

With love,
Harold

*February 27, 1944. Camp Croft, South Carolina

Dear Mum and Dad,

Last night I went to the movies and saw “Hey, Rookie” and it certainly was quite funny. In the story, this bunch of men came into the reception center to be interviewed and the sergeant said that the army motto is “the right man in the right place.” I thought the

audience would make the theater crumble because they laughed so hard. (That about the reception center happened in the movies). Their motto isn't and never will be that. Boy, from what I read in the paper, they're really going to draft plenty of men. I hope Dad doesn't just have someone broken in when he is drafted.

The other day, we got out of school early, about 10, and walked about 2 miles to an anti-aircraft range. After getting there, we waited around and after awhile got up and came back without doing anything. I guess some part of the equipment broke and we couldn't do anything. I think the army motto is "hurry and wait."

One day last week, all the buglers went out and set up what are called command post where all the high officers are. I was appointed code clerk and what an easy job but the thing that made it hard was that not all three of the machines which code were set up the same so I couldn't decode any. So all I did was sit around and take it easy.

That afternoon the buglers went out to a field and used sound powered telephones. They certainly are wonderful things for they aren't run by any batteries or power. But by speaking into them it produces the speech and can be effective to about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile.

I just received a letter from Ruby and it was one of these puzzle types where, in order to read it, you have to put in together like a puzzle. It is cute but some of the boys have received them before and all they can do is swear. I also wrote a letter to Grandma for I felt I should. Mrs. Bolton hasn't written so I'll write one more time to make sure it isn't my fault but I usually keep an accurate account of the letters I receive and send out.

One of the boys, about 20, told me the other day that I sure am taking an awful kidding from the rest and he doesn't see how I can stand it and not get mad. But I believe I have a stronger will power than some who have changed for the worse after getting into the army. From what I read in the paper, the Allies are really giving the Axis a fight now and I hope it continues for the sooner I get home the better it'll be.

A couple of the boys just took an aviation test and passed so now I suppose they'll be going into the air corps after finishing their basic training.

There really isn't an awful lot to say for between the two letters I've told you almost everything.

I suppose I had better not write any more this week for you'll be down soon.

With much love,

Harold

P.S. Don't forget, it is Hotel Franklin and real near the bus terminal so don't think you'll have much trouble finding it.

One thing I noticed (maybe I told you) is that the negro down south is really meek for in the hotel they don't say two words to you. I never saw that racial prejudice until I went to town last Thurs. and even at the bus terminal, there is a waiting room for whites and one for the blacks.

*March 9, 1944. Camp Croft. South Carolina

Dear Mum and Dad,

After leaving you, I had to be right back and go on K.P. But now I'm getting so used to it I don't mind. In the evening when we were washing, the water grew cold and what a mess! The boys had just eaten ham and you can image how greasy the dishes were but there was nothing we could do. I don't know just what it is, but after washing each meal's dishes, my hands really grow sore. Maybe it is the strong soap which is used to wash them.

We got out pretty early that evening and then expected to come up and scrub the barracks, but for some reason, the corporal changed his mind. So I washed and then got right into bed for I was quite tired.

I nearly forgot to tell you that I did lose my pen but went up and got a \$1.85 pen at the P.X. It doesn't write as well as the other but I think it will be all right to keep around here. It is not worth keeping a good pen here for many have lost their pens by losing them. So don't bother to send me one though you could buy me one so I could have it at home. I know I should have written sooner but almost all my time seems to have been taken up though I did get a short letter off to Eric.

Tuesday night, two of us went to the show and saw a second rate picture and some funny pictures. All of the men here in camp seem to get such a kick out of those funny pictures.

So far, I've only made one mistake in this letter so I think I'm doing it better. I check up on the way to make a capital T and Miss Martin makes it like you or Mum. But then I checked up with three or four of the boys and they all say it is made like I do for I write according to the Palmer method.

It sure did rain Monday, the day you left and I always say, the weather down here is unpredictable. Tuesday it rained nearly all day but finally cleared away in the evening. Yesterday, there was an awful raw wind which penetrated the clothing and chilled everyone. Most rushed for the winter underwear. I didn't for my changing underwear so often makes me more liable to catch cold. But for some reason, the wind didn't chill me the way it did some. I believe it must be because I'm used to the wind at the boatyard. Yesterday we had to go out and practice semaphore and in order to send signals, we stood on a hill. A couple of the older men are crippled up today because of all the wind and those without gloves really had cold hands.

Later yesterday, we went out with radios and sent messages between groups. In all, we had a lot of fun sending messages but once in awhile a hog would start sending one message right after the other and wouldn't give anyone else a chance to say anything. Other than what I just told you, all we did was play a bugle.

Monday, I couldn't get a haircut and did I need it! The hair seemed to grow almost overnight. But the next day, I missed retreat at 6:00 p.m. and went up and had a haircut and a shampoo for I like to get one every other time. I go for the haircut. Around here, there is plenty of soot and dust and gets my hair terribly dirty.

I'll have to tell you what happened last night for I never laughed so hard since I've been in the army. One of the boys near me thought of "short-sheeting" some of the other boys' beds – short sheeting is folding the top sheet in half and when the person crawls in bed, he can only get halfway down. So a couple of the boys went around and short-sheeted quite a few of the beds. All who tried to get into these beds stated to swear and I don't mean maybe. After awhile, some of them got the bright idea of bending the collapsible legs in such a way that when the owner sat in bed, the bed would collapse. Well, one of the boys came into the latrine and talked with me just after "lights out." We went up together and he got into bed just a little bit before me. He got in and the next thing I knew, the legs at the foot collapsed and here he was at an angle so he jumped into one of the beds next to him and started to swear at him. I suspected something might be going on and found my bed was "short-sheeted." After fixing it, the foot collapsed and I couldn't get the bed put up again. The next thing I knew, the corporal came up and made us get up and scrub at 11:00. The cooks on the floor under us had an awful time sleeping for we made too much noise and with the beds collapsing made more. They weren't very quite while scrubbing but the corporal never put them on extra detail. Finally, we did get to bed and the next thing I knew, one of the boys was swearing a blue streak and then all of a sudden the whole bed fell and here he was on the floor. That was the climax and after that the noise diminished

and finally everyone fell asleep. I suppose this description is long and drawn out but if you can understand, I believe you'll find it funny.

Today all we did was play the bugle and send messages by semaphore flags. I'm one of the four best at this so usually I send messages to the rest of the buglers.

Well, I think that is about all for now for I have to go to bed in a few minutes. I know I should have written sooner but everything seemed to have gone wrong with being on K.P. and scrubbing and etc. I was glad you got in Washington and I believe you were lucky to be able to get the Pullman for if you had to stand, you would have been worn out. It was too bad that you lost the reservation at the other hotel but at least you were lucky enough to get a room at another hotel. I guess I'll go to sleep now so that will be all for now.

With lots of love,

Harold

P.S. Note that I made hardly any mistakes in the letter. I guess I'm getting a little better and it certainly is true that practice makes perfect. Goodnight and I'll write soon again.

*March 16, 1944. Camp Croft, South Carolina

Dear Mum and Dad,

Time slips by so quickly that sometimes I don't get around to writing letters as regular as I should.

Today I'm on K.P. but took a little time out to write this letter. We're supposed to have a night problem tonight but now I doubt if there will be any for there will only be three left in school.

Saturday we leave for the bivouac area and then we start our two week maneuvers. I bet it will be terribly tiring but soon after that I expect to be home for 10 days. And after that I don't know what will happen as yet. After that terrible rainy day, the weather grew nice and warm and came almost like spring. It certainly was too bad that it couldn't have been a nice day when you left but it couldn't be.

Last Saturday, the whole platoon had to walk 5 miles to go through the camp infiltration course. You've probably heard of similar courses where the soldier has to crawl under barbed wire and over mounds with real bullets whistling about 30 inches overhead. After going through it twice, once in the morning and once at night, I was really tired and slept till 10 o'clock Sunday morning.

Sunday, I had a chance to write some letters but didn't feel much like it so all I wrote was two. Then that evening I had to go on as bugler of the guard so I was really tired the next day. But now, I'm catching up on my sleep a little bit.

The weather has been so warm that all the peach and apple trees are now just about out in full bloom. What a sight to see those beautiful pink blossoms of the peach trees. Spring seems to be here now!

Quite a lot of the cadre (non-coms) are being shipped to other camps, in fact 16 or 20 came out of only this one battalion. I have heard that only those men on limited service or those returning from the fronts would take their places but I have heard from many who say the camp would be hard up for cadre for these men would be enough.

One of the men from Springfield, Mass. who has been in my barracks was shipping out the other day to the 41st battalion in this camp where he has been made a mailman. He has a punctured eardrum and so can't be sent to any of the fronts. So he starts the breaking up of the platoon and I suppose not one of us will see each other again after we leave this camp. There really isn't an awful lot to say for it is always about the same each time I write.

The other night, I went to the movies and saw a nice picture but I can't tell you what the name of it was. It is little change going to the movies and it gives my mind a rest.

My mind doesn't seem to be able to think of anything so will write a longer letter next time
With loads of love.
Harold

*March 19, 1944. Camp Croft, South Carolina

Dear Mum and Dad,

Well, now I am writing with my old pen for I have found it and am I glad for it writes so much better. When we got ready to go out on maneuvers, I emptied my barracks completely and out fell the pen. Apparently, I didn't look on the bottom although I thought I did. Up to the same tricks, don't you think?

I am out in the bivouac area in a tent and is it raining hard today. The tent leaks if the sides are touched and everything is getting wet. If I can keep this letter from getting wet, it will be a wonder.

The boys acted up the night before coming out here and what a noise. The cooks downstairs made the most by throwing over beds, ripping them apart, in fact, anything to have fun (what they call fun anyway). The corporeal was out for a while and came back just at the noisiest time and was he furious! He was so tired that he did not want to stay up while they scrubbed so he said the first one to speak would scrub the latrine. While someone did say something so the corporeal made him get up and scrub. That private swore at the corporeal something awful and threatened to beat him up. But the private is only 5 ft. while the corporeal is 6 ft. so we all got a great kick out of that statement. So all in all, that was quite an evening.

There was a real fight going on the other day so I was told by some of the cooks. It seems as though two of the cooks got into an argument - one was a Jew - and the next thing the Jew spit in the other fellows face. That was the starting signal and they had quite a time of it. Somebody said that it is a trait of Jews to spit but whether or not, it is an awful thing to do.

About five of the men in my barracks didn't go out on maneuvers with us because they are being stationed here. Four as cooks and one as a mailman. There is one cook - a Jew - who almost bribed all of the officers and I suppose that is why. You remember me telling you that he was first a pioneer and got changed through some mysterious means. I know nothing as yet where I'm going and probably won't know till the last minute.

Our company commander reminds me so much of Mortimer Snerd for they both have buck teeth and are hickish looking. The officer is really a disgrace to the army for his pants look awful baggy - remember mine sometime? And his general appearance is slack. A few days ago, he came to the company and told us he had a surprise,. So naturally we were all ears and he said "You're all restricted." Well the boys have had more fun imitating him and his ways.

When you get those pictures of us back, please tell me how they came out. I have meant to ask you but have forgotten to find out if you ever got that watch back from Jordans? I am getting a little better at writing than when I first came and might just as well compliment myself. It is quite damp in this tent because of all the rain and I do hope it clears up tomorrow. I write you in a few days (I should say "couple") and give you the latest gossip.

With loads of love,
Harold

PS. Be sure and ask Miss Martin if I owe her a letter. I believe I wrote here one but am not positive. Have Dad write me and tell me all that is happening at the shipyard. I guess I succeeded in keeping the letter from getting wet but is quite damp.

*March 22, 1944. Camp Croft, South Carolina
(Second day of spring, just imagine!)

Dear Mum and Dad,

Tonight I'm really on the ball for I've written two letters, one to Grandma and one to Alice. We are having a problem tomorrow so I decided to write tonight.

Just at present it is raining quite hard. Doesn't it always when you don't want it to? I mentioned about it raining Sunday and Monday in my last letter and what a mess it made of everything. Everything that wasn't drenched was real damp and most of the tents leaked like sieves. But fortunately our tent didn't leak the way some did and we stayed fairly dry. There are four to a tent but still it isn't too crowded. One of the corporals was in our tent for a couple of days but he moved to a large tent so now we have plenty of room. I just received your package tonight and was very glad to get it but still would rather get a letter. You haven't written for awhile but I hope it comes tomorrow.

The officers in camp are privileged characters but out here they don't rate a salute and not much courtesy for under actual combat conditions, it isn't best to let the enemy know who are the officers. The officers did, though, have a special tent where they ate their meals. Last night the major came out to inspect the area and this morning I saw that the tent was gone. So I suppose the major had it taken down for the officers are no more privileged than we.

I noticed in the paper tonight that the Russian seem to be pushing ahead. I sure hope they keep it up for we'd all like to see the war over. Tonight I received a letter from Evie and was glad to hear from her.

This morning and yesterday morning the worst bugler played reveille and what a noise and mess!! Some who heard him said they could do as well as he without even trying and they didn't even know how to play themselves. I'll have to admit though that it sure sounded horrible.

You talk about us being here for a purpose. All I think this is a boy scout camp where we're all out to have a good time. The officers are less efficient then at camp and here it was a pretty sorry place. The only trouble is I'm too conscientious and grow disgusted when I see things run in such a haphazard way.

I saved your jam for maneuvers and now I've eaten one jar and was it never good! I sure do hate jam, don't you think?

Last night, it was fine but really cold. Most men here were cold all night but with what I had on, I was warm. I had 4 heavy woolen blankets on and a heavy overcoat and a raincoat all over me. The others didn't work their blankets in quite in the same manner as I did and so were cold. The thing was, I made the bed as airtight as possible and that kept the cold from coming in.

Today we cleaned our rifles and what a mess! The rifles were so full of rust from the two days rain that it took me nearly three hours to get it clean. Then this afternoon we went out and sent messages by semaphore but they decided to sleep on the job so that spoiled that.

I had better get to bed now for we've got a problem all day tomorrow when we have to eat the army K rations. I'll write a letter shortly and give you all the low down.

With lots of love,
Harold

*March 25, 1944. Camp Croft, South Carolina

Dear Mum and Dad,

Well, here I am halfway through maneuvers and only two weeks left to the end of my basic training. And still I don't know where or what I am to do so the only thing to do is hope and pray I get a little break rather than all bad luck. Tonight, I seem morbid for some reason – maybe looking forward to the day I'll come home to see you and everyone.

Well, enough of that. I'm quite caught up on my mail but it seems that everyone keeps up their letter writing with speed. Aunt Gert sent me a letter and I had answered her only a few days before. Tonight I received a box of cookies from Al and Emily and was sorry I sent out my letter to them just a short time before without thanking them. I told you in my last letter that I received your package real fast for the mail comes out here quite fast. Those cookies were really wonderful and the others in the tent thought so too. There are only three of us in his tent instead of four for the corporal moved into the large supply tent where he could keep an eye on the equipment. Having only three of us – two 18 year olds and one about 35 – gave us plenty of room until the man's wife started sending him food. If she sends much more, we threaten to put him outside so as to make room for all the canned goods and food.

Today all the buglers did was sketch a drawing or map of the entire bivouac area and the best one was to be turned in to the company commander. Mine wasn't the best but at least not the worst. I can tell you it was a real task and required nearly 5 hours to fill only a paper 10 x 10. Everything had to be accounted for!

Last night I was appointed bugler of the guard and what a night. There were six of us sleeping in tent which should normally hold four. But at least I wasn't cold for I always make sure after each shift of the guard that I was in the middle of the gang. Then in the early morning, I stumbled around and found the sergeant's tent for he was to take me around to play my call in a jeep of all things!! Pretty special, don't you think? I was the only bugler so far who has had that honor bestowed on him. The area covers over half a mile and to try and find the tent areas is a job in the dark.

The weather these last two or three days has just been perfect but before that it rained and made everything terribly miserable. Wednesday, it rained and that was the day we had to go out on a 24 hours problem. But since the weather was so miserable part of the problem was called off. That day all we ate were these army K rations and I can tell you they weren't the best tasting food. But one thing is that they have a high food content and fill a person up quickly. That day the whole platoon did scouting and patrolling and I didn't mind the work at all. But it was nice when we finally did get to sleep for I was really tired.

I forgot to mention about going to a place about 8 miles away where we saw artillery demonstration. Believe it or not, we didn't have to walk but actually rode in trucks! It was quite a demonstration and showed the fire power of the artillery.

Well, tomorrow we all go to the barracks to have a hot shower and won't that feel good. Since it is getting late, I had better get to bed. So I must say good night and I'll write you very soon again.

With much love,

Harold

P.S. I seem to be writing letters more often since I've been out here..

#March 29, 1944. Camp Croft, South Carolina

Dear Mum and Dad,

Today it rained so hard that we cleaned our rifles in our tents and slept. It certainly can pour down here when it wants to as you all ready know. The tent I'm in has been fortunate for it has hardly leaked at all. Some tents do leak something awful though.

I received your package of those candies that we both like so much and I can tell you they were really good. But between the three of us, they went down our stomachs pretty fast. The same day as I got yours, Betty sent me a package of cookies and raspberry turnovers. Boy, those turnovers were good but not equal to yours just the same.

I'm going to see how many letters I can get off today for I'm nearly caught up. There are only five people left and I don't think that is many.

As I mentioned there are two 18 year olds and one 35 or 36. He's sort of a funny guy though, for he is always giving the two of us an awful lot of advice almost as though we didn't know much. His wife lives in Spartanburg and sends him almost a package a day and I can tell you the tent is a mess for there is so much food. But the strange thing is that he won't open much of it and when he does, those in the other tents get more than us.

The other day he said to me that we had too many apples which wasn't true for I could have eaten many of them. Anyway, he took all but two and gave them out to all the other tents. So when he went to find some apples to eat, he couldn't understand why there weren't more. The same way with a box of chocolates. He figured we had plenty to eat so he gave one of the other tents an unopened box to eat. You sure do meet some odd people sometimes.

Out here on maneuvers, D company is getting really independent. The captain in charge of us seems to have a grudge against our company and has he made it miserable at times. For example, we came in tired from a night problem about one morning at about 2. We left things which were wet hanging on the tree limbs and thought it was all right. But the next day the captain came down and saw our area and woke us up three hours ahead of schedule. Then he told us to dig 40 foxholes but in the end only 20 were dug. But do as they may, this platoon has the best spirit and morale of anyone in the camp. No matter what anyone does, it morale is always high. The funny thing is though that we always do our problems better than any of the other companies and yet they treat us like dogs.

One of the corporals said that all three companies (A, B & C) have always been against D because our company used to do the best in everything. If we have a piece of paper laying around near our tents we are restricted but of course, that is a different story for any of the other companies for they can do anything.

There was so much conflict a couple days ago that our lieutenant threatened to move us back to camp. We called the captain "Dangerous Dan McGraw" and that is quite appropriate.

Yesterday I planned to send you a letter but I was put on guard duty as a regular guard. There were about ten of us who were really mad for we had been on it before, only a week ago, and some had never been on it. This corporal in charge of our platoon is an Irishman who has a few favorites and they can do anything they please. But let us try it and it'll be too bad. Today I'm like everyone else, mad and disgusted at everything.

As yet I haven't heard from any official source where I'm going or anything about it. But Saturday we go into camp and am I glad. I can now appreciate a good bed more than ever. Last Sunday we all went into camp and had nice hot showers and was it good to see a building! We were all terribly dirty and I don't mean maybe. From what I've seen of the army so far, I almost detest it. That might be a rather blunt statement but I don't like what I've seen of it so far. They say the regular army is much better than this and I hope so.

I'm sure glad I found my good pen for I don't think you could buy me a more expensive one and yet write as nicely. Everyone – very few – who I've let use the pen has said it is the best one they ever used.

One of the buglers comes from the center of the only city in the world so called Brooklyn. I never saw such a frightened person as he is at night in the woods. He was leading a group of us so we decided to play a trick on him. We stopped and let him go on alone. When he found no one with him, I thought he'd faint. Then they've frightened him by telling of red-eyed snipes which lurk around the woods at night and does he get scared.

One thing that is very noticeable and just the opposite from New England is the streams. The ones around here are so terribly muddy and not even lay a hand in. The streams in New England are so nice and clear that it was always a pleasure to watch one.

Well, so far, I've been mighty lucky for I haven't had a cold while out there even with all the rain and dampness. So many are quite sick and I'm really surprised I haven't been for at home, I used to get a few colds in the winter.

I received a very nice letter from Mr. Marsell just recently so answered him as quickly as possible. I used the very best of English and worded my sentences just right so I hope it doesn't sound too artificial but some of the things I said needed to be worded just right. I'm sure I wrote things that wouldn't embarrass you and I can tell you he is the hardest person to write a letter to.

I don't remember if I ever told you about us eating K rations on one of our problems. Those rations were used to give us an idea of eating them for awhile. The food is very concentrated and sure does fill you up fast. But not many of us like the choice they have for the courses because they are lousy tasting. But I supposed they're the best for us. Friday, the day before we go back to camp, we move the whole bivouac area to some other site and eat C rations that day. Those C ratios are canned food and I've heard they're twice as good as the K. The man here had his wife send him a sterno oven and what a lot of heat. I never knew solidified alcohol could burn with such a heat and actually cook things. We use it mostly for heating purposes rather than cooking .But one of the other tents has a regular meal everyday – cooked beans, bread, butter, jam, in fact all kinds of canned food. I never saw such a pile of junk such as tin cans and paper from one tent. One boy in that tent is thin and to look at him, wouldn't think he could eat much but when it comes to his actual eating, he can beat me by three times. You aren't always able tell by the size of a person.

Well there isn't much left to tell and I am going to supper in a short time so had better end. Thanks again for those wonderful candies and I appreciated and enjoyed them very much.

With all the love in the world,

Harold

P.S. I don't know if I told you that the corporal in charge of us is an Irishman who is in his glory when he can yell. Many Irishmen sure like to yell and show their authority, don't they?

I always thought my vocabulary was limited but now I know better for I can stupefy most of them here with a few verbose sentences.

With more love.

Harold

#April 3, 1944, Camp Croft, South Carolina

Dear Mum and Dad,

A couple of days before I came back from maneuvers, I received your letter telling me about the fire in Braintree. It was a strange thing that just as I was reading about this

fire I happen to be standing under some camouflague which just then caught on fire. That scared everyone and took them quite awhile to figure out just how to get it out. Finally they did and at that it took quite a few dousing of water. That incident struck me that it should happen just as I was reading just about the fire.

When out on maneuvers, we had to go near the power line where we could get a distant view so we could use semaphore. While there, some German prisoners (about 30) were brought near the woods where they cut wood. They are part of the “invincible” Africa Corps which was routed in Africa and not many prisoners taken. But they did not look like supermen to us although they were healthy and strong. Most of those men, though, have been in at least five years.

One of the Germans in the American army and in our platoon talked to them and found the men up to 30 were headstrong and so pro-Nazi but found the older ones to be opposite. The younger ones were really surprised to find New York skyscrapers standing for Hitler told them the city was in ruins.

It makes me mad to some extent to see them get treated so well for I know the Americans aren't receiving the same treatment in their prison camps. These prisoners get 80 cents per day in canteen checks and get all they want to eat. The only thing they complain about is that they don't have drinks and women but I don't know what they think!

Friday we came into camp and were we glad. We came in one day early for everyone including all the captains and lieutenants were sick and tired of the cold and the rain. Usually our platoon was slowest in moving but that day we beat all the others. But it wasn't worth hurrying much for we waited three hours before the trucks were ready to move. It is the same old story, the army's motto “hurry up and wait.”

It sure was wonderful to sleep between nice clean sheets and have a dry place to come to instead of that damp tent. Now that we are in the weather had grown so nice and real warm. But isn't that always the way!

After coming back in camp, we had to clean everything ourselves and what a job for there was so much! Finally I did get it all done and turned in my clothing to be salvaged and repaired. When I got my shoes back, they turned out to be new ones so now I'll have to break them in. That day I got in I turned in my name so I could get a shoes stamp for I want some civilian shoes when I go home.

Our platoon wasn't supposed to get K.P. till Monday but the first sgt. changed his mind and we got it on a Sunday – the only day to rest and we needed it! We hated to do it but we just had to like it. But it wasn't too bad for the mess sgt. had a date and wanted to get out early. So we were through by 5”15 but I was so tired I went to bed.

The day I came back I went to the movies and really was surprised to find how it soothed and rested my mind.

Since I've come in I've noticed how the trees have progressed while out there. Before we left they were just blooming and now they are just about fully leaved. I'm quite sure it hasn't been like that yet and probably not for nearly a month.

As I told you over the telephone I'll let you know just when and where I'll be going after here. If they don't give me enough time to write a letter, I'll send a telegram or call up.

I'm quite tired tonight so will close and go to bed. There really isn't much to tell for all we're doing is going to school and fool around. Si I'll write soon again.

With loads of love,
Harold

#April 4, 1944. Camp Croft, South Carolina
Der Mum and Dad,

This is just a little note to ask you if you'd send 5 or 10 dollars so I can have it in reserve. I have about \$60 but sometimes I have to spend some on something unexpected.

I saw the first sgt. about plane tickets and he said if you put or request plane you'll get it. I sure hope he's right and believe if I do come that way I'll have a priority.

I have good reason to believe I'll be home or leave here Wednesday but of course, that might be change. One of the boys said he and five others (buglers) are being sent to Fort Meade. From there, I don't know what'll happen though. Of course, he might be kidding but I believe I can believe him.

25% of our platoon has been chosen to represent the platoon in doing exercises (I'm one of them). In this way, they can get a cross section of the training of us. That training isn't very easy and would have been good if we'd had that type from the beginning. All 15 of us are so crippled up we're all in bed tonight.

There isn't an awful lot to tell yet but really sent these few lines to get the money. Thanks very much. I am so tired I'm going to bed right now so I'll say good night.

With loads of love,
Harold

#April 7, 1944. Camp Croft, South Carolina

Dear Mum and Dad,

Just now I'm in school where all of us are having a bugle test on 25 calls. When we finished, we certainly are all worn out.

One of the boys has been feeling miserable the last two or three days. In fact, I noticed his face was all puffed up but didn't know just why. Today, he got so bad he went to the infirmary and now he's in the hospital with measles.. I sure hope nobody else gets the measles for we might possibly be quarantined. But just before you came down, one of the boys had measles and all they did was examine us but didn't restrict us.

The next day after we got back from maneuvers, Company A, second platoon, was restricted or quarantined for one of the boys had spinal meningitis (I really don't know how to spell it). So that spoiled everything for those men for the whole week.

The Sunday after we got back the first sgt. decided to put us on K.P. even though we were not suppose to have it till Monday. Everyone in our platoon including the corporals got a raw deal. The privates went on K.P. – I've been on so much I feel like a mess sgt. One of the corporals was put on charge of quarters – he looks after all the business of the company at night when no one is there. The other was put on as corporal of the guard – he's in charge of the guards. And the next night he went on as charge of quarters. And to top it all, the lieutenant in charge of our platoon was made officer in charge of the guards. So all in all, we had a good time and we all think we were gypped.

We had four corporals but in the last paragraph I mentioned only two. One cpl. was made a sgt. in charge of the cook school and the other went to the hospital.

This one corporal was out on maneuvers with us but near the end he began to feel sick with a cold. So finally he went on sick call though he should have gone sooner but he wanted to stick it out. As a result he went to the hospital with pneumonia, measles, and after getting there got appendicitis. So that fixed him good and proper.

A couple of nights ago the whole platoon had its picture taken with two lieutenants and all the enlisted men. One lt. is our platoon leader now and the other was the one we liked so much and who left us. We will get those pictures Tuesday night and have ordered two. They did turn out very good and everyone shows up so clearly. In this picture I don't have a frown but a grin or smile.

I now know definitely that I'm being shipped but don't know much more than that. I'm pretty sure I'll leave camp next Wednesday and am heading for Fort Meade which I may have told you about. From there I can go anywhere. Only five out of 17 buglers have received their orders as yet and all the cooks are staying permanently in this camp. Each mess hall needs one more cook so that'll use up all in our platoon.

Today we went on a commando course where all the brass hats were watching. I could do everything fine except push-ups and blame the broken arm which I had. As many push-ups as I've had, I still can't do them.

Tomorrow, the next group of men goes out on maneuvers and I hope for their sake it is better weather than we had. Our lieutenant just came back from maneuvers and now he has been notified he is going out again. I guess he is pretty well disgusted with everything.

I started to tell about the commando course but got side tracked. It sure was a hard course but everyone came through. To top it all, we had to hike 4 miles in 50 minutes and I can tell you, we were traveling. We did though come back in 45 mins., 40 seconds so that wasn't too bad.

I suppose I won't know until the last minute whether I'm flying or not. But as soon as I know something definite, I'll be sure and let you know.

Well after all that hiking and exercise, I'm terribly tired so I'll go to bed soon. So good night, and I'll be seeing you soon.

With much love,

Harold

P.S. I'll talk to you about the Leica camera and things Mr. Robinson talked about when I get home.

With orelove,

Harold

#Telegram dated April 10, 1944. Sent to W. E. Simms, 130 Walnut St., Braintree, Mass.

Leaving Wednesday by train. Expect to arrive in Boston Thursday. Train schedule uncertain. Will phone you on arrival. Received money order. Harold

#April 26, 1944. Return address now A.G.S., Repl. Depot #1, Fort Geo. G. Meade, Maryland. Letter written on stationery – Baltimore and Ohio Canteen for Service Men, Camden Station, Baltimore, Md.

Dear Mum and Dad,

Here I am in the wonderful city of Baltimore waiting for a bus.

Fred Villeneuve met me on the train without any trouble and so are together with the other boy from New Haven. He got on but missed us and sat in the second car.

I guess that train must have been the only one coming this way because there were an awful lot on that train I knew. All we're doing just now is hanging around in a canteen in the station for we don't want to get to camp too early.

We took a walk around a short time ago and is the city terribly dirty – much worse than Boston in its worst parts.

I guess you had better send me my shoes for all the rest have them. They all brought a lot of extra stuff although you aren't supposed to.

I slept fairly well on the train and never remember stopping at New Haven. So the trip wasn't too bad.

That's all the news for now so will close.

With much love,

Harold

#April 27, 1944. Fort Meade, Maryland

Dear Mum and Dad,

After getting here at camp, the old group at camp Croft met and stayed together till they placed us in different companies.

In company A where I am now, there are two buglers, two amour-artificers, and two cooks. Fred, the boy from Providence was put in another company which I believe it is right nest to mine. The army sure does mix the men up.

We got into camp about 11:30 and then immediately we got our pay or traveling money. It amounted to \$22.55 so I only got paid about a dollar for the trip home. Some of the boys who live in New Jersey gained about three dollars so they were pretty well off.

Today, I decided I'd raise my bond to \$18.75 so I'll get one once a month and then the government is to send \$10 to you for the bank. I believe it is best to have money in both bank and bonds. Even with all that being taken out, I'll have \$16.00 for myself so I'll have plenty. I'm doing this so I won't have to handle as much money as before.

Don't send me any mail for I don't think I'll be here very long. The captain said we were shipping out Monday for overseas. So don't be too surprised to get an A.P.O. number soon.

I know it is hard on you but think of all the other families who have men are leaving too. I'm not alone either for nearly 10,000 men came to this camp yesterday and more are coming today and the rest of Camp Croft comes tomorrow. If they keep up sending at that rate, they'll have most of the army over in the European theater where I expect to go.

Well, I guess there must be an evil spell on me for everything is going wrong and probably will never straighten itself out. But it has happened so there is no use feeling that way. Keep your chin up and let's hope the war will be over soon.

With much love,

Harold

P.S. I'm sending some receipts pertaining to bonds.

One of the lieutenants here paid you a compliment while having a clothing check for he asked me if my summer underwear were new for they were so white and clean. I bet he wouldn't have said that if he could have seen it before I had you clean them.

This afternoon we received all our new clothes and this time everything fits perfect. I'm pretty sure if and when we go it'll be to England, or possibly North Africa. I suppose I really shouldn't tell you anything but I feel once you know what to expect you can adjust yourselves to the idea.

With more love,

Harold

#April 29, 1944. Fort Meade, Maryland.

Dear Mum and Dad,

I called from a U.S.O. in Baltimore and the call was put through quite quickly. Of course, it isn't as far and so doesn't take as long as it did in Spartanburg.

At present I'm using one of the U.S.O.'s typewriters and hope I won't make too many mistakes. This typewriting reminds me of Mrs. Gibb but I hope I don't make as many mistakes as she used to. The ribbon isn't the best but I guess you can read this letter.

One of the boys here at Fort Meade got a letter from one of the boys back in Camp Croft He said Bob Del Vecchio has been made company clerk and here he started out as a bugler and ended up being a clerk. Then he said that two of the buglers who were not physically fit were made permanent buglers in the 31st Battalion and the strange thing is

that they can't play a note. Del Vecchio should have had that job for he was a good bugler but I supposed that is the way the army works

Two French soldiers came into the U.S.O. a few minutes ago and couldn't speak a word of English. But as luck would have it the head hostess could speak it quite fluently so they went to over and got something to eat.

Tonight it looks as though the whole of the camp has come to Baltimore also the fleet seems to have landed. All we've been doing is having clothing inspections and taking life easy in general. But some have been on K.P. and guard duty but they have quite a ways before they get to the S's. I was really surprised to find so many people's names with the letter S.

There isn't much to tell except to say I feel much better since I've talked to you. Some of the boys aren't going to tell their families but I'd rather tell you myself instead of you receiving an A.P.O. number. You're more used to the idea, I hope, than before so it won't as too much as a shock.

We've all got to face it so all we can do is be brave and hope and pray that the war will be over soon.

Please keep your chin up for it'll make me feel much better.

With lots of love,

Harold

P.S. I don't think I did too bad a job considering that I had to make up the letter as I went along. It would have been much easier and less mistakes if I could have had it written first and then typed from that. I'm pretty sure that I did a much better job than Warren used to do when he wrote me.

With more love,

Harold

#May 1, 1944. Fort Meade, Maryland.

Dear Mum and Dad,

Right now all we're doing is waiting around for some time this morning we are going to have our clothes inspected.

Saturday night I went to Baltimore and called you and wrote a letter, then I went out with a couple of the old friends. After being out with them, I was thoroughly disgusted the way some of the world behaves and am glad I was brought up differently.

They urged me to have a drink but the strongest I would have was orange soda. It seems as though being in a room where there are many smokers gives me an awful headache so I left and came back to camp.

We got paid yesterday afternoon and had to wait in line two hours. Then I got \$30 and some odd cents which wasn't bad but should have gotten more except that I lost that bayonet at Camp Croft.

Next month, I'll have \$10.00 taken out from then on and then I want you to put it in the bank. I really don't know just how it'll be sent to you but the army will take care of that.

Then starting with the June pay, I'll be having one bond taken out per month (\$18.75) so that'll give me quite a few bonds.

Just at present there is quite an argument going on pertaining to the southern negro question. There are northerners and southerners yelling and arguing. I believe it should never be brought up for it is a very delicate question, the same as the question of religion.

It was a beautiful day yesterday and is the same today. Late yesterday afternoon, the officers, non-coms, and privates were all playing softball together. I was really surprised at the informality in this camp for usually officers and enlisted men shouldn't mix.

Fort Meade sure is a large camp though not as beautiful as Camp Croft. The buildings on this post are in bad need of painting though the insides are all right. This camp has three sections – the WAC's detachment down the road away, the reception center like Fort Devens, and the replacement center where I am. I am in a battalion which is in a tank division but this is the first time they've had infantry in their battalion. I guess that is due to overcrowding.

I've written A.G.F.R.D#1 on my address and maybe you are wondering what it means. It means "Army Ground Force Replacement Depot #1. #2 depot is a fort in California and all the men from there goes to the South Pacific.

Only one boy from the old company went to Fort Ord, Cal. and I understand that he requested that for he is a German and many of his relations are in Germany.

I just filled a package with a few odds and ends such as coat hangers, books, etc. which would be too cumbersome. The package will be sent C.O.D. to you and I'll enclose a receipt for the package in this letter.

Since I missed church yesterday morning, I went last night and found very few there. Most of the boys were in town gambling and drinking. Many feel they might as well have a good time while they're here but I can't see their good time. It certainly would be better for many to go to church a little more often.

I'll write again as soon as I can so I'll have to be indefinite about when. I haven't started the correspondence yet for I want to get somewhere first instead of things being so indefinite.

This will be all for now so: With loads of love and kisses. !

Harold

P.S. You should see my new shoes. Are they fancy! They are leather turned rough side out and are almost pure white or a little tannish in some cases. I call them the "Palm Beach special" for they remind me of sport shoes.

#May 2, 1944. Fort Meade, Maryland

Dear Mum and Dad,

I'm still here with all the boys from the 27th Battalion down at Croft. This morning at 4 almost all the men except those in the specialist group such as me left for a port of embarkation.

As yet we have no idea where we are going but know we'll be here for one more night at least. Tomorrow morning we may ship out though. The place is dead around here today for there isn't much excitement going on today.

Last night I went up to the main telephone exchange and what a madhouse! Everyone seemed to want to call home last night. There were calls from Maine to California and the calls didn't take too long. Most of the delay was due to the large number wanting to call. I enjoyed talking to Dad but would liked³ to have talking to both.

This morning the sgt. caught four of us sleeping or I should say resting on our beds when we weren't supposed to so we had to sort the rubbish collected from the men who didn't bother sending anything home. I can tell you there was everything from a needle to a haystack. Even shoes and furlough bags were in the mess. This stationery I am writing on I found in the pile so I took it in the barracks to use. This is the best writing paper I think I ever used.

All I did was want to write a note to let you know I'm still here. So I'll close now.

With much love,

Harold

P.S. I'm sending home another box and it should get there soon.

With more love.

MY NOTES May, 2012

I moved into Camp Myles Standish on April 25, 1944. The first thing that happened was a confrontation between our southern boys and a contingent of Negroes (that's what they were called in those days) who moved in next door. They were using our latrines and washing facilities. There was so much ruckus that I was sure a war was ready to hit because the southerners were so upset, they were ready to grab their rifles and shoot every one of those "bastards." I became very frightened by the whole episode. Fortunately, the camp commander learned of the situation and moved us to the other end of the camp. The confrontation suddenly subsided and all went back to normal. It was an experience the likes of which I have experienced since.

I found the following on 7 May 2007 among some of Ruby's items.

Registered for the draft Sept. 27, 1943

Was inducted Nov. ??

Left for Fort Devens, Dec. 3

We left for Camp Croft, Mar. 2, 1944

He started furlough April 12

Got home April 13

Left for Fort Meade April 25

Called from Fort Meade May 1

Called from Taunton, May 5

Got home from Taunton, May 4

Got home from Taunton May 6, 7, & 8

Saw him last Tuesday morning May 9.

Got word that he was in England June 14

Got word that he was in France July 6

Got word he was in actual combat July 14.

Boarded troop transport on late May 12, 1944 don't know the name of the vessel but it was small.

Sailed for Europe early May 13, 1944. Joined a large convoy from New York bound for Europe.

DUTIES OF A MESSENGER/RUNNER – taught in basic training

1. Transmitting of a message.
2. Travelling across country at prescribed speed.
3. Know how to use a compass.
4. Know how to orient and read a map.
5. Know how to maintain direction in the field by use of the dipper and the north star and by use of if you have a watch.*
6. Looking for routes for both day and night reconnaissance.
7. Know how to write a message quickly and accurately.
8. Observing and interpreting enemy action.
9. To distinguish enemy and friendly equipment and dplanes.

10. Recognition of officers and equipment.
11. Know all arm and hand signals.
12. Know how to search terrain.

Using a watch as a compass.

1. Take hour hand and point toward sun.
2. Draw an imaginary line to 12 o'clock.
3. Bisect the angle between 12 and the hour hand and this points south.