

Dear Mother;

January 27, 1941

It certainly seems nice to sit down to a typewriter again. At last the Canteen has been equipped with a machine. Its all very nice but I won't be able to use it for very long. You see I plan to leave this job by the end of the month. Its a long story and I don't want to go too much into detail. There are several reasons why I will be glad to leave. In the first place I don't like the new Exchange Officer at all. He is too petty and sort of an old maid. Another reason is that I want and need some exercise. I am getting fat just hanging around the Canteen all the time. Spring is about to set in down here and from now on the weather promises to be good. Furthermore I realize now that my chances for advancement aren't at all good while I am working here. No doubt I have learned a lot about business and booking, but I have learned nothing about the military side of life and if I ever expect to become an officer that is what I must know. The other day I had a talk with my battery commander and from it I judged that as long as I stayed in the Canteen I wouldn't get much cooperation from him. It seems they are getting some new equipment in our battery and it will take a lot of new men to get it in good working order. It a radio plane detection idea perfected in England. At any rate I will soon be out of the Canteen; for better or for worse.

You asked in your letter for a bit of an idea as to what I do during the day. Actually since I have been in the Canteen, I haven't done much playing. However my successor has been appointed and gradually I am being relieved of my former work. Yesterday was beautiful and warm. It was just like spring. The fellows were taking sunbaths and playing ball in their shorts. Some of them(at the risk of jelly fish and sting rays) went for a dip in the gulf. Another fellow and myself went for a walk aroun camp. We looked over the new regiments that have arrived since we first came. Then we walked down by the waterfront. It is rather pretty here in a bleak sort of way. The whole area is dead flat, not a tree in sight and very little grass. The roads are made of shell and when they are dry shine very white in the sun. At present there is a lot of construction going on and most everywhere you can see huge piles of dirt and cement mixers. I imagine that when the place is completely finished, with all the buildings painted and grass laid out, it won't be too bad. However as I was saying, we went down by the water and walked along the beach. The Gulf of Mexico is very blue and calm. For some reason or other I don't get the same feeling as when I am near the ocean. It seems more placid and not so full of strangeness and mystery.

I took a few pictures even though there is very little of artistic beauty. When they are developed I will send them to you. When we came back supper was ready. After supper I went to the movies. We have here a huge tent for a theatre. It seats some twelve hundred boys and the seats are not too uncomfortable. The price is only fourteen ~~xxx~~ cents for a complete modern show. After the show I went to the Canteen, had a beer and went to bed at nine-thirty. Usually I haven't been in bed much before eleven. I have had to remain at the Canteen until everything was closed, the cash counted and the lights put out.

Since I have been working at the Canteen I have gradually obtained a lot of special privileges for myself. I was put on what they call special duty and I made the most of it. I was allowed to stay in bed in the morning. It is strictly against regulations as everybody in the entire camp is supposed to be present at roll call. I never will know how I get away with it. Reveille is at 6:15 AM. , breakfast at seven and the day begins at eight. However I didn't have to be at the Canteen until eight-thirty and I could miss breakfast so sometimes I stayed in bed until eight or so. I couldn't always sleep though because of the noise. First an alarm clock, then a bugle, then the sergeants' whistles and finally the talking and yelling. Now though I seem to be able to sleep right through it all and at times have been late to work.

When I miss breakfast at the battery I usually eat a snack at the Canteen so I don't exactly starve to death. Lunch is at twelve, but up until the last few days I never ate before one. Sometimes that worked to my advantage, sometimes not. Occasionally all the food would be gone and the cook would gather up a steak and I could more or less help myself. Other times the food would be gone. (period).

I usually had about an hour at noon and then went back to work. The Canteen wasn't open in the afternoon but I had to meet salesmen and do some book work. Supper was at five and then I worked until closing. So you see all in all it was a pretty long day. This kept up seven days a week for about eight weeks and it started to get on my nerves.

When I go back to the battery all that will be changed. My special privileges will be gone and I will once more lead the life of a soldier. I honestly don't think it will do me any harm as I am losing some of the benefits that come from strict discipline and an obedience to orders even though they may be arbitrary and extremely annoying. I hate to think that I would have spent a year in the Army and not even gone on guard duty. I will describe that when I have done it.

The other night I went out with my light section and had hoped that I would be able to see something. As luck would have it, the plane could not get off the ground because of fog and so we turned around and came home. I understand that now the real bad weather has passed we will begin a period of intensive training.

You asked about the food. I never was one to complain about food. It is plain and has too much starch but otherwise it isn't so bad. We do have I believe too much pork and ham.; also lots of beans and corn chowder. We don't have enough fruit to suit me. When we do have it it is generally green or rotten so perhaps it is just as well not to serve it often. All in all though I get enough and although I haven't weighed myself I am sure I have gained. Most everybody does.

It has just started to rain cats and prairie dogs. The ground is already slippery and in a few more minutes will be a bog of mud. All the fellows are hustling around putting down tentsides and trying to get into the rubber overshoes, that were issued to us, before shiny shoes get all muddy. Mine will get muddy just walking back to the tent. Well I'll close now with lots of love.

Fred

Dusty

Dear Cap;

Its been rather a long time since I have heard from you. Even longer since you have heard from me. Having at I will at least start a letter. First of all I want to say somewhat belated thanks for your Christmas gift. The gift certainly came in very handy particularly as I received it I set out on a three day trip to Mexico. Being confronted with temptations of foreign lands and having only a few dollars to yield to them is certainly a problem. Every bit helps so thanks again.

Things are going along here in their usual up and down motion. Army life is full of ups and downs. It is a rather hard transition to make and I suppose there should be difficulties. At times there seems to be a point to it all and at other times it all seems so foolish. I cannot seem to accept the current philosophy that each day is just another twentyfour hours to be in the Army and to gold brick (loaf). I can only say that the Army has about every variation and variety of thought, action, motives and human being. It makes it very interesting yet at the same time confusing. Everybody has their own reason for being here. Now that the draftees have arrived there is a new element added which is perhaps makes the whole picture more tragic. I cannot help but get a queer feeling when I see them marching, forced and terrified. It seems different when it is done against one's will. Up to the arrival of the draftees our entire regiment was one of volunteers and National Guardsmen. Now it is in part a conscripted army. I had occasion the other day to visit the draftee area. It was very interesting. Many of the boys consider the draftees as something to be photographed and considered as oddities. Soon they will be mixed in with the regular batteries and then I am sure the attitude of one or the other will change.

My own career has been one of hard work and little time for the usual pastimes of soldiers. As I mentioned in my last letter, I have been working in the Regimental Exchange. I was made steward and given charge with the aid of an Exchange Officer. Now I regret my acceptance of the position and have asked for a transfer. So this is my last week in the retail business. I hated to think that I might spend a year in the Army and know very little about military life. My chances for advancement, I was told by my better commander in the long run would be much better if I went back in the searchlight battery. So next week I go back to a soldier's life with guard duty, kp and all the rest of the drudgery. I really don't mind though as that is what I expected in the first place. My work here in the Canteen was really very good experience and I have learned a lot about business.

The day after Christmas a bunch of us fellows had a taxi and took a three day trip to Mexico. We were so ~~quarantined~~ so our travels were confined though have a good taste. Both of which are not i-

All went well though and no trouble showed up. On the way home we stopped in the famous King ranch, the largest single owned piece of property in the world. It takes five hours to cross it. Our driver was a true native son and he pointed out many interesting things that ordinarily would be missed. We saw oil wells in action and spotted all sorts of wild game.

Yesterday was truly like spring. Many of the boys took sunbaths and played ball in their shorts. A few even dared the jelly fish and sting rays and took a dip in the gulf. I thought of you all up North freezing in the snow and rain. At times though I miss the cold weather particularly the skiing. I haven't been skiing since I broke my leg and I am very anxious to try it again. I hope to be able to next winter, but if the great white father talks too much we may get ourselves in trouble. I hope not.

Well I am using the Exchange typewriter and they want to send out a letter or two so I will have to stop. I hope everything is well with you and that you are getting your share of the prosperity that I read about. I'd appreciate hearing from you and knowing what the current trend of thought is up North. You sort of lose contact with the outside world in this hole and I don't trust too much the papers.

As ever your wayward but devoted nephew,

Fred

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