

(Image: Library of Congress, LC-USF34-014509-D.)

DEAR MOTHER

SYNTHESIZING HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

INTRODUCTION

Many of the soldiers who served in the United States Army during World War II wrote their first letters home from basic training. Although a major objective of the training was to shape the individual trainees into a team, every person came to that experience already having their own existing set of beliefs, hopes, fears, values, and personal history. As a result, the letters they wrote home tell a wide variety of experiences, and no single person's story can fully capture the essence of what it was like to train for the Army. In this activity, students summarize historical information from multiple letters written by soldiers undergoing basic training, focusing on how drawing information from multiple sources helps them create a more accurate and detailed interpretation of the past.

GRADE LEVEL

7-12

TIME REQUIREMENT

1-2 class periods

MATERIALS

- + Copies of the **Letters Home** (pages 78-87) for each group of students completing the activity
- + Copies of the **Student Worksheet** for each student
- + Copies of the overview essay, **"Training the American GI"**

OBJECTIVES

Students will analyze both primary and secondary sources relating to the experiences of American soldiers during basic training. They will revise their historical interpretation after reading each source, recognizing that by synthesizing information from multiple perspectives, they can develop a richer, more accurate summary of the past.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.9

Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2




Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.9

Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

ONLINE RESOURCES

ww2classroom.org

-  Citizens To Soldiers Video
-  Edgar Cole Oral History
-  Lorraine Taix-McCaslin Oral History

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR HISTORY**HISTORICAL CONTENT ERA 8, STANDARD 3B**

The student understands World War II and how the Allies prevailed.

HISTORICAL CONTENT ERA 8, STANDARD 3C

The student understands the effects of World War II at home.

HISTORICAL THINKING STANDARD 2

The student is able to appreciate historical perspectives by demonstrating the ability to

- (a) describe the past on its own terms, through the eyes and experiences of those who were there, as revealed through their literature, diaries, letters, debates, arts, artifacts, and the like;
- (b) consider the historical context in which the event unfolded—the values, outlook, options, and contingencies of that time and place; and
- (c) avoid “present-mindedness,” and not judging the past solely in terms of present-day norms and values.

HISTORICAL THINKING STANDARD 4

The student is able to support interpretations with historical evidence in order to construct closely reasoned arguments rather than facile opinions.

PROCEDURES

1. Begin by either having students read the overview essay, “**Training the American GI,**” or reading it together as a class. Once students have finished reading the essay, have them take a moment to write a short paragraph (no more than three sentences) summarizing the training experience for American GIs based on what they read. Ask a few students to share their ideas, noting cases where students interpreted the essay differently or chose different aspects of the text to emphasize.
2. Review the difference between primary and secondary sources.

Primary sources are textual or visual materials created during the historical moment you are studying, such as letters, diary entries, photographs, posters, and newspaper articles.

Secondary sources are materials created well after the events they discuss by someone who did not experience them firsthand. Books, journal articles, encyclopedia entries, and documentaries are good examples.

3. Ask students whether the essay they just read is a primary or secondary source and how they can tell. Ask them what kinds of primary sources might be useful for learning more about what it was like to be an American soldier training for World War II (e.g. letters, diary entries, oral histories, maps or photographs of a training camp, a training manual, etc.).
4. Explain that students will now have the opportunity to build on their historical summaries of military training by reading actual letters that soldiers sent home from basic training during World War II. You may choose for students to complete the activity individually or in groups of three or four. Distribute copies of the primary source letters and the **Student Worksheet** to each student or group.

5. Instruct students to start by analyzing just one of the letters—any one they like, or you may specify one. Have them complete Part I of the **Student Worksheet** once they finish reading.
6. Have students read as many of the additional letters as they have time for, revising their historical summary each time and answering the questions on the **Student Worksheet**.
7. Return to the whole class to debrief. The object is for students to realize that while each primary source is a useful tool, the best historical interpretations will synthesize information from multiple perspectives. Here are some possible discussion questions:
 - a) How did your historical summary change after you read the first letter?
 - b) Did any of your letters contradict one another? How did you handle that in writing your summary?
 - c) Was there any one letter that helped you the most in developing your summary?
If so, why was it so helpful?
 - d) What details do you wish you knew more about before writing this summary?
 - e) What kinds of sources might help you find that information?

ASSESSMENT

You will be able to assess students' ability to analyze individual primary sources based on the historical summaries they write, as well as the answers they provide on the **Student Worksheet**. You will be able to assess their ability to synthesize information from multiple sources and recognize the value of that process based on their historical summaries and the answers they give in discussion.

EXTENSION/ENRICHMENT

1. Have students visit ww2online.org and select an oral history to use as an additional source. Most of the veterans describe their training to some extent; searching the database for the word "training" will help pinpoint the most relevant segments of their interviews. Ask students to revise their historical summary after taking the information in the oral history into account, and have them explain how the new source helped enhance their understanding of what it was like for American soldiers to train for World War II.
2. Have students choose their favorite letter out of the ones they read and do a "deep analysis," extracting as much information as possible about the writer—where he was from, what he liked or disliked, his strengths and weaknesses, etc.—and build a profile of that person. The objective here is for students to practice extracting data from text, both the expressly written data and the information they can infer by interpreting the details.

NAME:

DATE:

PART I: PRIMARY VS. SECONDARY SOURCES

Directions: Read the overview essay, “**Training the American GI,**” and then write a short paragraph (no more than two or three sentences) summarizing what it was like to train for the United States military during World War II. Then, read one letter written by a soldier during basic training. With this new information in mind, write a new historical summary of military training and answer the following questions:

1. What kinds of information did the letter give you that the essay did not?
2. What kind of information did the essay give you that the letter did not?
3. How did your historical summary change after reading the letter?

PART II: SYNTHESIZING INFORMATION

Directions: Read at least two more letters, revising your historical summary each time. By the end of the activity, you should have at least four versions of your historical summary of military training. Read back over them to see how your understanding of the topic has changed, and answer the following questions:

1. Describe the differences between the first version of your historical summary (the one you wrote after only having read the essay “**Training the American GI**”) and the last version.
2. Did any of the letters you read contradict one another? If so, how did you handle that when writing your historical summary?
3. What other details would you need to write an even better historical summary of military training during World War II? What kinds of sources do you think would be helpful for finding those details?

Letter below from Gordon Chandler, 1256th Engineer Combat Battalion:

7 Sep 44

Dear Mother

So far Camp, both seems very pleasant. Our barracks are two stories of the non-permanent type which we had at Camp Lea and Elginwood Airmail. The latrines are part of the building and not separate, requiring running out in the rain. We have single-deck bunks and water and electric light. Heat is by natural gas, but there are no fire to be had. The mess hall is directly opposite our barracks. The chapel is just across the street, next to that is the Recreation West, beyond that the big garden and then the PX. All of them are more convenient than we ever before. A short distance beyond are the theater and service club. No more walking miles to find things, they have left time around the various buildings which offer unaccounted and Germany. The windows in front of my deck at headquarters look out into a pine woods.

Most of the way from the Mission office room it is forest - and that is clear across the state! There are a couple of postscript Tom's Brown here and there and the road is logging camp, sawmills and hubs. Mills are not fenced, fences are used only occasionally and those only to keep cattle away from houses. Even in Tom's we saw cows at the gate to the yard, having come from the ramp. Cows stand here long did away with fences. The two factors I have mentioned the lack of fences and all forest, probably are big reasons why the state was formerly used for manure. How you ever wondered where all the railroad ties came from? I know now - from Louisiana. They can be used up ready for shipment all along the way. There are also loads of good wood for paper.

Leavelle (7 miles away) is the manual town and every body calls it the "Carminal" because it has that atmosphere. Many businesses are located in auto trailers and other impermanent structures. But even here and Leavelle there seems to be nothing but woods. At least that is the impression I get from the side on. There is nothing if you overlook the cars standing on the road that you have to dodge around. We came to a guide stop to avoid hitting a pig on the way out.

I overlooked the swimming pool which is practically in rear back yard. Among my things in Columbus are two pairs of "Swimming Trunks" will you send me one of them? At the same time you might as well include a bath towel. I should have brought

one with me even though there seemed to be no way of getting it into the furthest bag. I needed it at Camp Mc Caine and again here last night before I got my barracks bags.

Much to our amazement we no longer had camp load right than we ever paid. So I am going to send some money for the insurance (to this trip). I'll send you the cost of the month when we are paid again.

While we were from the Battalion suffered some casualties when the letter companies went through some of the training we had had just before we left. One man was killed, one had a hand and it was landed in the hospital after a series of accidents. He said that was him or he was, nothing to be proud to what some of the others took.

Tonight in ~~some~~ restricted because our barracks were dirty this morning. Ben new (acquired during my absence) first sergeant is trying to make with a former hand and so tonight in first. Also while I was gone we had our status as sergeant organizing when we are not to supply cadets after all. It is fortunate that I long ago learned that I would not be considered for cadet, so there was no disappointment so far as I am concerned. Also while I was gone all promotions were frozen which does not affect me in as much as I am as high as I can go with my present duties. Of course not reading and cadet does affect me in that there will not be no vacancies above me to be filled later.

With love
Gordon

Gradually I am getting updated and settled. We had a night problem last night and I had to Bandwick unpacking in to some training and work.

DEAR MOTHER,

7 Sep 44

So far Camp Polk seems very pleasant. Our barracks are two stories of the non permanent type which we had at Camp Lee and Edgewood Arsenal. The latrines are part of the building and not separate requiring running out in the rain. We have single deck bunks and better artificial lights. Heat is by natural gas so there are no fire poles built nor ashes to be carried. The mess hall is directly opposite our barracks. The Chapel is just across the street, next to that is the Recreation Hall, beyond that the beer garden and then the PX. All of these are more conveniently located than ever before. A short distance beyond are the theatre and service club. No more walking miles to find things. They have left trees around the various buildings which offer unaccustomed greenery. The window in front of my deck at headquarters looks out into a pine woods.

Most of the way from the Mississippi River it is forest—and that is clear across the state! There are a couple of good sized towns between here and there, and the rest is logging camps, hamlets and huts. Fields are not fenced, fences are used only occasionally and then only to keep cattle away from horses. Even in towns, we saw cows at the gate to the yard, having come home from the range. Cows range even in camp—around our barracks and the chapel. I understand Huey Long did away with fences. The two factors I have mentioned the lack of fences and all forest probably are big reasons why this state was formerly used for maneuvers. Have you ever wondered where all the railroad ties came from? I know now—from Louisiana. They were stacked up ready for shipment all along the way. There were also loads of cord wood for paper.

Leesville (7 miles away) is the nearest town and everybody calls it the “carnival” because it has that atmosphere. Many businesses are located in auto trailers and other impermanent structures. Between here and Leesville there seems to be nothing but woods. At least that is the impression I got from the ride out. There is nothing if you overlook the cows standing on the road that you have to dodge around. We came to a quick stop to avoid hitting a pig on the way out.

I overlooked the swimming pool which is practically in our backyard. Among my things in Columbus are two pairs of swimming trunks. Will you send me one of those? At the same time you might as well include a bath towel. I should have brought them with me even though there seemed to be no way of getting it into the furlough bag. I needed it at Camp McCain and again here last night before I got my barracks bags.

Much to my amazement we no sooner hit camp last night then we were paid so I am going to send some money for the insurance (\$40 this trip). I'll send more the end of the month when we are paid again.

While we were gone the battalion suffered some casualties when the better companies went through some of the training we had had just before we left. One man was killed, one lost a hand and 17 others landed in the hospital after a series of accidents. The wind that was blown on me was nothing compared to what some of the others took.

Tonight we are restricted because our barracks were dirty this morning. Our new (acquired during my absence) first sergeant is trying to rule with a firmer hand and so tonight is “G.I.” Also while I was gone we lost our status as parent organization so we are not to supply cadre after all. It is fortunate that I long ago learned that I would not be considered for cadre so there was no disappointment so far as I am concerned. Also while I was gone all promotions were frozen which does not affect me in as much as I am as high as I can go with my present duties. Of course not sending out cadre does affect me in that there will now be no vacancies above me to be filled later.

With love,

Gordon

Gradually I have been getting unpacked and settled. We had a night problem last night and I had to sandwich unpacking in between training and work.

Letter below from Technical Sergeant John T. "Jack" McDonough, who served as a radio operator with the 286th Engineer Combat Battalion, Headquarter and Service Company in the European Theater of Operations. His campaigns included Central Europe and the Rhineland:



March 9, 1944

Dear Mother,

Sorry I haven't been writing regularly but I'm kept on the go from the moment I get out of bed until lights are turned off at 9:00 at night.

The only way I'm getting this letter written is by staying out of bed and writing it down in the Day Room where the lights are still on.

There isn't a great deal of news - we eat, sleep, drill, march, and attend classes. It's pretty much of a grind especially on these older men but it hasn't done me any harm. The exercise and mountain air seems to act as a tonic for I've never felt better or eaten more in all my life. Of course I'm pretty tired now, but

that's to be expected.

I had a card from Aunt Julia today. I'm going to send out the rest of my post cards before I turn in for the night.

I'd better close now and get some sleep. Just wanted to let you know that I'm O.K. and thinking of you falls back home.

I'll write a longer letter when I find time. Dad only knows when that'll be in this camp we literally don't get a minute to ourselves.

Love to all,

Jack

P.S. - I almost forgot. Please send me about a dozen hangers and a little still steel wool as soon as possible. I think there's a whole mess of hangers hanging to one side of my closet. I need them badly for inspection and it's impossible to get them out here.

Jack

DEAR MOTHER,

March 9, 1944

Sorry I haven't been writing regularly but I'm kept on the go from the moment I get out of bed until lights out at 9:00 at night. The only way I'm getting this letter written is by staying out of bed and writing it over in the Day Room where the lights are still on.

There isn't a great deal of news—we eat, sleep, drill, march, and attend classes. It's pretty much of a grind especially on these older men but it hasn't done me any harm. The exercise and mountain air seems to act as a tonic for I've never felt better or eaten more in all my life. Of course I'm pretty tired now, but that's to be expected.

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Love to all,

Jack

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Letter below from Robert Wolf, HQ Company, 1st Battalion, 383rd Infantry Regiment, 86th Infantry Division, two battle stars in Europe, and Museum volunteer:

12/5/43



SECOND COMPANY
FOURTH TRAINING REGIMENT A.S.T.P.
HARSONG COURSE AREA
FORT BENNING, GEORGIA

Dear Falke & Judy,

Today, being Sunday, our day of rest, I have a little time to write after doing the week's laundry. No kidding, they keep us busy so much here that I have been trying to get to the cleaner's for a sweets but haven't quite made it yet. The work so far hasn't been too hard physically, but we are scheduled for a ten mile hike with full field packs and rifles this week. That sounds like fun.

As usual, rumors run rampant but the general opinion is that the work gets easier as the course progresses. That is, until business comes. Of course, for us that will be in the middle of February but who are we to mind a little thing like that.

This first week has been mostly lectures on Chemical Warfare, Military Sanitation, the M-1 rifle, Military Courtesy, and Interior guard duty with practice on tent pitching and lots of drill and manual of arms.

Eugene has written me a couple of times and says he may get a furlough in January. But would I certainly

but at the present moment the prospect aren't too good. I don't know if I'll even be able to get to Atlanta for a while but Aunt Sarah and Uncle Buddy extended me a very generous invitation while I was there. I got my first pass to Columbus last night, though. It was good for a swell chicken dinner. I also had a picture taken which you will no doubt regret seeing soon. Someday I will get a good picture taken.

There doesn't seem to be much to buy in Columbus so I am enclosing some money. I would appreciate it if you could get something for Mom for me so she can have it for Christmas. I tried but it was just no go in Columbus beside which I don't what to get.

Love,
Bob

DEAR FOLKS AND JUDY,

12/5/43

Today being Sunday, our first day of rest, I have a little time to write after doing the week's laundry. No kidding they keep us busy so much here that I have been trying to get to the cleaners for a week but haven't quite made it yet. The work so far hasn't been too hard physically but we are scheduled for a ten mile hike with full field packs and rifle this week. That sounds like fun.

As usual, rumors run rampant but the general opinion is that the work gets easier as the course progresses. That is, until bivouac comes. Of course, for us that will be in the middle of February but who are we to mind a little thing like that.

This first week has been mostly lectures on chemical warfare, military sanitation, the M-1 rifle, military courtesies, and interior guard duty with practice on tent pitching and lots of drill and manual of arms.

Eugene has written me a couple of times and says he may get a furlough in January. That would certainly be swell. I would sure like to be there. But at the present moment, the prospects aren't too good. I don't know if I'll even be able to get to Atlanta for a while, but Aunt Sarah and Uncle Buddy extended me a very generous invitation while I was there. I got my first pass to Columbus last night though. It was good for a swell chicken dinner. I also had a picture taken which you will no doubt regret seeing soon. Someday I will get a good picture taken.

There doesn't seem to be too much to buy in Columbus so I am enclosing some money. I would appreciate it if you could get something for Mom for me so she can have it for Christmas. I tried, but it was just no-go in Columbus, besides which I don't know what to get.

Love,

Bob

Correspondence below from the WAC service of Captain Mary Adele Chave:

Friday August 14th

Dear Family,

I've been in a terrific dither the last twenty-four hours trying to make up my mind whether to be a WAVE or a WAAC. My application blank from Chicago for the WAVES came last night and I woke up in the middle of the night -- from three o'clock until five -- and all day long today while I've been eating, attending meetings and writing, I've been hashing it over in my mind. At last I've decided, and I do hope you're pleased with the decision for I feel pretty satisfied about it now.

The WAVES, of course, are being selected right away to be officers. That I like. They don't go out of the country. That I don't like. Then there are three divisions of officers: administrative -- these women, between 21 and 50, are to act as teachers of future classes of WAVES. This didn't particularly intrigue me, for I would be more or less just teaching school -- and teaching school to a bunch of women at that. The next group of officers are technical. For these you must have both training and experience in engineering, communications, physics, chemistry, etc. I simply do not have this sort of technical training and experience, and though it sounds interesting there's just no soap without this background. There was one group here that I would have liked to try out for -- aeronautics -- but at best it must mean ground crew work -- I wouldn't stand a chance at flying because of my eyesight. Besides, I don't believe they plan for women to fly. (I called to try to find out here, but they won't give you any information. It's just a flat denial because they say they have not yet received official notice to release information -- but my application must be mailed not later than next Thursday if I am to get in with the first group selected.) The third group is for reserve midshipmen who would later be assigned as ensigns. Upon looking up ensigns, I discover that they are the lowest commissioned officer -- lower than a second lieutenant. They are assigned to active duty ashore. As far as I can tell from the information they sent, the group I would be most interested in would be a journalist, which I have always liked. However, in this group you can rise no higher than the lowest commissioned officer.

I guess by this time you gather that I would rather be a WAAC. And I would, even though I'm getting in rather late on it. Here's why: in the first place, they have an opportunity to be sent out of the country -- and I must confess I think that would be exciting, and fun. Next, even though I am entering late, nevertheless, after three months' training and service an auxiliary can apply for officers training at that time, because all future officers will be selected from the auxiliary ranks. That means that I can rise to be a lieutenant if I pass the officers' training -- and that's higher than the third group in the WAVES, in which I could only be an ensign. And then third, I really would rather be an ambulance driver than a school teacher, and though I would just as soon be a journalist as a driver -- even more, I think -- nevertheless, I couldn't leave the country, and I would always be an ensign.

So I'm turning in my application to be a WAAC. I really feel confident that I can be an officer -- that is, I feel they'll accept my application for officers' training and I think I'll get along all right in that too. School is generally pretty easy for me, so I don't think there should be any ~~trouble~~ trouble there.

They say to mail the application in and that they will notify us when to report for the physical and mental tests. ~~First~~ The first of these was held last Thursday, Friday and Saturday -- they take the mental tests Thursday, the physical tests Friday, and are sworn in on Saturday. After that, it's about two months wait, then two weeks notice -- then Des Moines. Yippeee!

See you soon my Tootsie- Snootsies -- and how will you like me in uniform?

Love, MJC

A very, very happy birthday to you both, Lambie-Pies.

DEAR FAMILY,

Friday August 14th

I've been in a terrific dither the last twenty-four hours trying to make up my mind whether to be a WAVE or a WAAC. My application back from Chicago for the WAVES came last night and I woke up in the middle of the night—from three o'clock until five—and all day long today while I've been eating, attending meetings and writing, I've been hashing it over in my mind. At last I've decided, and I do hope you're pleased with the decision for I feel pretty satisfied about it now.

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See you soon my Tootsie-Snootsies—and how will you like me in uniform?

Love, Lois

A very, very happy birthday to you both, Lambie-Pies.

Letter below written by Paul Rawson, from Webb City, Missouri, enlisted in the Army in February 1943. He arrived England in 1944 and served throughout the ETO.

29 March 1944

Dear Folks,

Just came back from the P.X. and the funniest thing happened. When we got back, everyone came up to us yelling and said that our tent had just burnt down but didn't know how bad it was. You can imagine how fast Jimmie and I dashed over there. Could be since the whole tent had disappeared and there was just a mass of glowing canvas. My gosh, we just about passed out. Come to find out the piece of canvas that covered the front of the tent has caught on fire but some of the guys had noticed it and went over and picked the whole tent up and then beat it up, luckily just the piece of canvas was burnt and since it was just a piece of canvas that we had picked up someplace it didn't make so much difference.

Last night it really poured. It rained for about an hour. It was quite interesting inside of the pup tent trying to keep the water out. It was pouring so hard that the water just beat thru the canvas in a fine drizzle. Finally it stopped and then turned quite cold and we pulled the blankets over us. By the way, if we ever get mad at anyone we always threaten to pull the blankets off of them at around 2 o'clock. That would really be quite a sensation I imagine.

Are you going to send that money on down anyway. I hope that you have because I just found out today that I had been "red-lined" on the payroll since I was supposed to have been go to Camp Bowie on pay day. That means that I may not be paid at the regular pay day and probably not until the next pay day.

We are working on a Court Martial case now. I was in the tent when Major Britton interviewed him. It was quite an interesting case and was a AWOL case. This boy said that he got drunk in Leesville and when he regained consciousness he was down in Corpus Christi. Well, Corpus Christi must be at least 300 or 400 miles away, and he surely must have regained some sort of sobriety by

that time. After that he just keep on going and finally reached some town just 19 miles from the border of Mexico--must have been thinking of getting across the border. When the M.P.s arrested him he was in civilian clothing and resisted arrest. They fired one bullet at him and so he gave himself up. I don't imagine that I would try to get much further either if they were shooting at me. He is going to be tried by a General Court Martial which is the highest court that a Battalion can have.

Another case that is rather interesting is about a boy in Co. "C" who lied about his age to get a job in a defense plant. He was only 15 and told them that he was 18. So the draft board immediately yanked him into the army. He is really young looking and I really feel sorry for the kid. Now he is up for a Court Martial because he ran away ~~from~~ with a pep and took off for town. I sure can't see why he did it, but it happened. They seem to think that it is rather serious and so are really pushing for his discharge (on grounds of being underage) before his Court-Martial Case comes up.

We are working on a Malaria Control Problem now and so have to wear our mosquito netting over our heads and take pills before every meal. What a queer looking bunch we are with those nets draped over our heads. Every day I think that we look more like some wild animals off of Mars. We also are sleeping in big mosquito nets that are placed inside of our pup tents.

I am going to perfect our secret code soon and send you complete instructions soon. I think that I will use about the same way as last time we were talking about it. ~~XXXX~~ Have you noticed how many soldiers they are sending over recently. Must be getting ready for the big invasion of Europe. Our latest rumor is that this Division is going to Burma. Really I think that that would be swell. I always have had a yearning to go over there. As our fatigues are being worn out, they are being replaced by so called "jungle suits" which is really a glorified camouflage suit. There are the wierdiest looking things and we call them "monkey suits."

Of course, however, you will hear all sorts of rumors spreading around an army.

DEAR FOLKS,

29 March 1944

Just came back from the P.X. and the funniest thing happened. When we got back, everyone came up to us yelling and said that our tent had just burnt down, but didn't know how bad it was. You can imagine how fast Jimmie and I dashed over there. Could be since the whole tent had disappeared and there was just a mass of glowing canvas. My gosh, we just about passed out. Come to find out the piece of canvas that covered the front of the tent had caught on fire, but some of the guys had noticed it and went over and picked the whole tent up and then beat it up, luckily just the piece of canvas was burnt and since it was just a piece of canvas that we had picked up someplace it didn't make so much difference.

Last night it really poured. It rained for about an hour. It was quite interesting inside of the pup tent trying to keep the water out. It was pouring so hard that the water just beat thru the canvas in a fine drizzle. Finally it stopped and then turned quite cold and we pulled the blankets over us. By the way, if we ever get mad at anyone we always threaten to pull the blankets off of them at 2 o'clock. That would really be quite a sensation I imagine.

Are you going to send that money on down anyway? I hope that you have because I just found out today that I had been "red-lined" on the payroll since I was supposed to have been go to Camp Bowie on pay day. That means that I may not be paid at the regular pay day and probably not until the next pay day.

We are working on a Court Martial case now. I was in the tent when Major Britton interviewed them. It was quite an interesting case and was a AWOL case. This boy said he got drunk in Leesville and when he regained consciousness he was down in Corpus Christi. Well, Corpus Christi must be at least 300 or 400 miles away, and he surely must have regained some sort of somberness by that time. After that he just keep on going and finally reached some town just 19 miles from the border of Mexico—must have been thinking of getting across the border. When the M.P.s arrested him he was in civilian clothing and resisted arrest. They fired one bullet at him and so he gave himself up. I don't imagine that I would try to get much further either if they were shooting at me. He is going to be tried by a General Court Martial which is the highest court that a Battalion can have.

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