

C0262B001F002L007

Image 1:

Feb. 27, 1944

Dear Mother, Dad, and Grandpa,

Well, another week of basic training has come to an end. Tomorrow my fourth week starts. I can hardly believe it. It goes fast – too fast. The basic is tough – darn tough – but I don't think I would even care if there were something to look forward to at the end. I don't talk to the boys around here about it, but the closing of A.S.T.P. was one of the biggest disappointments I have ever had. There's not a chance of it being reopened.¹ They are even checking draft deferments of agricultural and industrial workers under 26 in order to make up the deficit. I don't they understand why they would have been 200,000 men short in 1943. I don't think they would have been short had they not been so reluctant to draft fathers. It's pretty hard to adjust yourself to the fact that

Image 2:

pretty soon you will be in combat instead of going to college. By April 1st † we will all be reclassified. We haven't been told anything. I get all my information from the newspapers. I imagine we will all be reclassified into the infantry. I wish I could work something else. In all probability our basic will be lengthened to 17 weeks. That is mere conjecture, for I haven't learned anything official. But A.S.T.P., I believe, is the only branch that gives 13 week basic. Of course everyone gets advanced training before being sent into actual combat, but that training can just as well be given overseas as here. And then, whatever it is, it can't be very long. All this talk from Congressman May and other of training 18 year olds for a year before being sent over is mere talk and nothing more.² I have found that the 18- yr. olds are treated no differently that the others. I know what we are being prepared for. We can all tell from the training we are being given. However, for obvious reasons, I am unable to tell you.

All lectures and orientation talks given us discourage the thought of anything but a long costly war. Whether that is to

Image 3:

Feb. 27, 1944

(3)

prevent over-optimism or whether that is how the military men actually feel, I do not know. However, I am inclined towards the latter explanation. Yes, the war is going well, but how long will it take for the really big things to happen?

¹ The Army Specialized Troops Program was canceled in February 1944 and roughly 110,000 students were transferred from the program to combat units. For Epstein, who had not yet finished Basic Training and reported to a school for ASTP training, this meant that now at the end of basic instead of going to a college campus he would be assigned to a normal army unit.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Army_Specialized_Training_Program#Reduction

² Congressman Andrew J. May was the chairman of the House Military Affairs Committee during World War II. He is most famous for "The May Incident" in which he revealed classified information on deficiencies of Japanese depth charges during a press conference. In response to this revelation, the Japanese improved their depth charges. Navy leaders estimated that this leak resulted in the sinking of ten American submarines and the deaths of approximately 800 American sailors.

I called home yesterday (Sat.) at 1:05 P.M. That was the first chance I could get to the telephone. The circuits not being open, the operator could not get the call through to Dayton until 15 minutes later. No one answered the phone so you must have been at the station by then. I thought that Grandpa would be there. De he go along? I was sorry that I did not get to talk to you. However, I intend to call tomorrow noon. I hope that you were able to see Leonard. However, there is not much that anyone can do. Did you have a nice weekend in Cleveland? Why don't you go to Florida

Image 4:

when you come down here? It would do you good. The weather has been beautiful here the past few days. It has been very hot and I am getting a sunburn. It's very exhausting to train in the heat. It must be terrible here in the summer. Funny, a couple of weeks ago I was complaining because it was so cold. Those 2 or 3 weeks must have been the extent of the winter season. Yesterday and today were just like summer days at home. It is still cool at night. Since the weather has changed I have stopped wearing my long underwear. This past week has really been tough and the week coming up will be worse. We had a lot of hand to hand combat in which you learn how to overthrow and kill your opponent. It seems such a shame that Americans are being taught the ways of barbarians, but as we were told yesterday it is either kill or be killed. Some days I hope this world will again be civilized. Also we had a great deal of bayonet drill. That was really something. I felt as if I were ready to collapse after I was through with that each time. We had it for 2 hours at a time, with only a 10-minute break in the middle. Every muscle is strained and the perspiration is dripping all over and still you must keep on practicing

Image 5:

(5)

different positions and thrusts. The bayonet is attached to the rifle and is that something to lift. We had six hours of it so far, and there are 7 more to go. ~~undecipherable~~ Tomorrow we have it from 8:30 to 10:30. Also we must run the bayonet obstacle course this week. It is a long course, and plenty tough. I don't know what kind of obstacles there are but I do know that we must attack dummies. This week we will also have a lot of hand to hand combat and work in hand grenades.

Tomorrow afternoon we have a 4-hr march with full field pack. I think it is 10 miles this time. But this will be the first time that we will have carried a full field pack for such a great distance. In a full field pack you carry a blanket, socks, underclothes, and toilet articles besides your tent, tent poles, and stakes, and a mess kit and of course the pack itself. Then we also carry a rifle, rifle belt, ~~and bayonet~~ and canteen and first-aid packet on the rifle belt. Also we always carry a raincoat and a bayonet. I don't mind

Image 6:

marching in itself, but with all that stuff on my back, I don't care for marching. And whenever we cross a ~~red~~ road (and there are plenty of them) we must run across. In army lingo it is called doubletime. When that happens a bunch of fellows always start losing things from their packs. So far, I haven't lost or dropped anything.

I am going to find out this week whether they will issue week-end passes. If not, I am pretty sure I can get a pass ~~for~~ from whatever time I am through Sat. afternoon until 1 o'clock Sunday morning. I would have to return to camp, but then I could get another pass from Sunday morning until ~~11 o'clock Sunday night~~ ^{1 o'clock Monday morning}. I am eagerly awaiting your arrival here. We will have plenty to talk

about. There is a place for visitors to stay here at camp but I don't know what kind of place it is. I know that you would much rather stay in Columbus.

I received the box of fruit and the box of delicious foods this week, I have been stuffing myself. It all tastes so wonderful. I have to eat it fast, however, for everything spoils very rapidly in hot weather.

I have been drinking more cokes and orange drinks here than I ever

Image 7:

(7)

Feb. 27, 1944

did in my whole life. You have to have a lot to drink though when you are exercising so much.

Saturday I went over the obstacle course, and that really tired me out. Saturday was a hard day anyways for we had to get up at 5:30 to prepare for inspection. At 8:30 we had almost an hour of calisthenics which was enough to wear anyone out. Then they sent us over the obstacle course, [undecipherable] and immediately after that we had inspection.

I went to the barber shop twice this week, but the line was so long that I could not get waited on. There is only one chair and the barber is a lady at that. So had one of the boys give me a trim. A lot of others did the same thing. As it turned out, the Lt. didn't even look at our hair during inspection.

I had 2 wonderful meals at the Service Club last night and this noon. This noon I had fried chicken, sweet potatoes,

Image 8:

peas, apple sauce, jello salad, chocolate cake, and most wonderful of all a big bottle of milk.

Last night I saw "[The Bridge of San Luis Rey](#)" with an all-star cast including Francis Lederer, Lynn Bari, Akim Timeroff, and Blanche Yurka. Weekends are wonderful – that is if you don't have K.P. or guard duty.

I would give anything to be free at home and going to school. Let us hope that the day when I can do that will not be too far in the future.

Grandpa, I was certainly glad to get your letter, and thanks loads for the money. I wish you could come down here, too. Let me hear from all of you. I could ramble on like this for hours, but I must close sometime!

Lovingly,

Jerome, Jr.

P.S. Enclosed is a clipping from the A.S.T.P. newspaper published here at camp.³

Also, I wonder if you could send me 2 batteries for my "[undecipherable]-lite" flashlight? All it says on the battery is that it is "D" size. I don't know whether you will be able to buy them from that meager description. The make, although it doesn't matter, is called micro-lite, made by the Micro-Lite Co.

³ Not present in file.