

1942: The Beginning

December 1, 1942 (Postcard)

Dear Folks,

We got into Columbus about 3:15. We were herded into an army truck (about 60 or 90 of us). Once, when we stopped rather suddenly, I felt pretty sorry for the guys in the front end of the truck because we all just fell forward. There was barely enough room for our feet and once we got them settled under us we couldn't move them. Right after we got here we were issued bedding and were given our bed and barracks numbers. After that---supper, and what a supper, boy it was wonderful. We had lunch in Cleveland today right after we had our physical and then left for Columbus.

The fellas all seem to be pretty good eggs, both those who came up from Cleveland and those in my barracks. Kilby and I stuck to-gether all the way up here and now we're in different barracks. I saw Bill Kroesk in Cleveland to-day while I was getting my physical. He's a Ball &Chaines too.

Love John.

December 3, 1942 (Letter)

Dear Folks,

I'm not so sure I'll have time to finish this, but I'll do my best. Later: We were just called out for processing but were disappointed, only about half of us left. Processing is the last stage before being shipped. We have our uniforms issued and get two shots and there is also three mental exams which are included in our processing.

Boy!--- I wonder if it's as cold at home as it is here. The darn wind blows all the time and I'm sure it's below zero. We have to march in columns of two and threes to chow three times a day and it takes about fifteen minutes altogether, during which time we stand and shiver while we slowly grow numb. We don't have to march back for which I'm very thankful.

We're waiting around now for barracks inspection. In fact we've been waiting around for it for the past hour and a half. The blankets they issued me are all wrinkled and I can't make them look right. I don't suppose I'll get called down for it since it can't be helped.

Lawrence and I met up with four other boys from Cleveland after we got here Tuesday. They all seem like really swell guys especially a boy from WestHigh School. He graduated in '41, stayed out a year and then went about a quarter at MichiganState. He's a real runner so he says and I believe him, he's not the kind of guy to brag or lie.

The six of us went over to the canteen to get something to eat last night. I got myself a money belt there so Mom, don't you be getting me one. The only trouble is I haven't enough money now to warrant using it. We heard that Bonnie Baker was going to b at Rec Hall so we went over there last night. She's alright!

This business of lights out at nine and up at four-thirty in the morning is tough on me. I suppose I'll get used to it.

About 9/10 of our time has been spent in waiting around for our different tent, interviews, etc... They take us from cold building to another make us sit around on the floor or stand up. It's getting tiresome. We were sworn in last night so we're in the army now.

Love John.

(Postcard)

Dear Mom & Dad,

Everything is going fine so far. We got our blood tests Wednesday and were sworn in the some night. Got our uniforms yesterday & boy did they ever fit us up in a hurry! Had to carry our barracks bags back from the drill hall and it seemed like they weighted better than 100 pounds. We're leaving to-day or to-morrow, I think.

Love to all John.

December 6, 1942 (Letter)

Dear Folks,

It certainly seems like I've been away a long time already, but I haven't been gone a week yet. Two or three months is going to seem like several years,---one year anyway. I'm not the only one though, that feels that way. The four other boys that I've been running around together with were voicing their desire to spend a couple of hours at home. Boy that would be swell! I agree with them. I noticed a fella yesterday here in the barracks just lying looking at a girl's picture with that far away look in his eyes. I felt a little sorry for him.

Boy, I'm getting awfully low on money. I'd have a couple of extra bucks if I hadn't lent them to a Sergeant here in the barracks. I've had a couple of talks with they guy and seemed like a pretty good egg so like a darned fool I let him take them. He said he was going home (he lives here) and that he'd have it when he came back, but he cooked up some excuses and I'm afraid I'll never see it again.

I've been hoping to be shipped out for the past three days, but no soap. Perhaps tomorrow... a couple of boys got shipped to Alaska the other day. Boy, I hope I don't get shipped up there! It's too far.

Three of our gang and I went down to Ohio State University last night to see if we could find a friend of Bill Weaver's (he's the track star I told you about). We got down there pretty early so Bill suggested that we stop in at a record store and listen to some good, high class symphony. No kidding, there boys are really swell! They are all good athletes and they go in for better things of life. That's something you don't find very often. Any how, we got down to the University and looked over the campus and buildings and I'll have to admit that they are pretty nice but I'll still take Hiram. We started back rather early after an unsuccessful hunt for Bill's friend and on the way I met Pete Clemens. He let me in on some of the places that are receptive to soldiers and this after noon we followed up some of his suggestions. We went down to the Y.M.C.A. and went swimming. By the way, we stopped in at the first Y.M.C.A and was all ready to go swimming when we found out that it was a Y.M. for colored boys. What a surprise! They were swell to us, though. just as everyone else is here. They invited us in and seemed only too glad to let us swim. One of the boys wanted to play some basketball, though, so we used that as an excuse to go elsewhere. The pool at the while Y.M. was really nice. All tile with nice, cool, clear water. It wasn't at all crowded and we really had a lot of fun. I'll have to go again if I'm here long enough. To be perfectly frank I hope I'm not. I want to get started again, this place is going stale. The food is still good and all that but when you know you're going to move you can't just sit back and be satisfied with life until you're started on your way, especially when it's some unknown place. It keeps you in suspense and you want to know 'where, when and how'. I've been keeping my fingers crossed every time the shipping list is read.

Boy, you should have seen me yesterday. Since we are all processed and ready to move they put us on 'fatigue duty'. That means helping around the post doing everything hot possible (sp?). Yesterday I had a white collared job. Two others of our gang and I checked G.I. supply lists for about 8 hours. Kilby was put to work cleaning one of the barracks and the other fella, Bill North, was an orderly all day. We didn't do so good today, though, we were all put on the snow crew. It would have to snow doggone it. We all seem happy, though, singing as we work. Our theme song is---"When you're a long long way from home."

Guess who I saw the other day down here, I almost forgot about it. Roy Johnson from Aurora, Marmaduke Raymond and Don Roy from Hiram. Boy, what a surprise.

Well, it's about time I was hitting the hay, I'm pretty doggoned tired so good night and wish me luck when tomorrow's shipping list is read.

Love to all John.

Thursday AM December 1942 (Postcard)

Dear Mom & Dad,

I'm leaving at last. I found out this morning that my three pals that went out yesterday ended up in the armory here in Columbus. I've got the laugh on them because I'm pretty sure I'm not stopping there. They say we might go to Florida or California. That should be alright.

Well I've got to move, we're getting ready to leave.

Love John.