

## Training and Onward: 1943

January 11, 1943 (Letter)

Dear Folks,

I got letters from both of you to-day, finally. It seemed like quite a while since I had heard from you and I had begun to wonder the same as you did about me. I haven't written quite every day as I had planned to but I'm sure that by the time you get this you will have received more than two from me in the preceding week.

We went up to the rifle range again to-day. It was our last day of Basic Training and they gave us the Thompson submachine gun to shoot. Boy, they are even sweeter guns than the .30, .06's, however, I did worse with them than I did with rifles. Out of fifteen shots 2 hit my silhouette (that's wrong {{in reference to spelling of silhouette}}). I know I six times. You can't hold the darn things down if you kept your finger on the trigger the gun would be vertical instead of horizontal after firing five shots. We were told to fire three rounds at a burst and then line the gun up again. I got five hits out of ten shots on automatic and one out of five on single shot.

Roy Duffas wrote and told me about finding my pin. He didn't say anything about the root though. That makes me feel pretty good. I'm glad to hear that I now have a swell suit of civilian clothes. I hope they fit me when I get home. I've gained about ten pounds and I'm getting a brownish tint in my face. It can't be dirt because I wash every day and the brownish tint is still there.

Johnny Morris is leaving is he. I got a letter from him too but he didn't tell me he was leaving so soon.

I'm glad you asked me a few questions, Dad, It's getting kind of hard to tell just what I've written and what I haven't written. We've had the whole works so far, I believe. Facing, flank movements, Ohlikes (SP), column movements and also the manuel of arms but just a little of the latter. I don't think I'd remember very much of it at the end of a month. I forgot,--we've also had extended order drill and then we've had lectures on chemical war fare, first aid, personal hygiene, and military courtesy and discipline.

The first drill instructors we had were awful easy on us and on our fourteenth day we still acted like a bunch of jeeps (rookies) so the other day we got a couple of new instructors. One is a tall, red-headed Texan who is tougher than nails while on duty but a peach of a guy when he's off. His favorite punishment is double timing guys around the field. We had him up here in the hall the other night drilling. We took his place as instructor and marched him all over the hotel.

I'm not sure but I think I'm on shipment. Most of the guys that are left in my flight when on K.P. this morning. They say that the reason that the rest of us weren't on the list because we've still got days to make up for going on sick call. It's true all of us that were left have been on sick call but there also a lot of them that went on K.P. that were on also and we all expect a big shipping order. I'm hoping I am definitely going to armory school, dad.

Love to All, John.

January 14, 1943 (Postcard)

Dear Folks,

All they have done with our flight so far is to divide us up. But of the guys who did not go on K.P. yesterday went to one hotel (I was among them) and the rest of the flight went to another. I am now in flight "H" and the rest of them are in flight "D". I can't help but feel there is something up but I don't know what. Write to-night if I have time.

Love to All, John.

January 15, 1943 (Letter)

Dear Folks,

I think I'm writing pretty often almost too often but I'll catch up with the rest of my letters Sunday---I hope! I won't say anything about the rumored shipment of 400 guys from my squadron. They are supposed to be called to-morrow.

I had some more pictures taken before I left the Whithart the other day and am sending some of them along. The one of me saluting was taken candid and Dad,---I know my palm isn't supposed to be showing. The snap of the group includes my former room mate, Bob Patterson from Sharon PA, and Bob Naylor, from Youngstown, and Bob Love from somewhere down around the South central part of Ohio. They are all pretty good guys and only one drinks and he doesn't to access. Fred has been asking for a picture of me so if you will---send one on.

Doggonit, an order came through a day or two ago that we couldn't have any lights on at all now. So now if we want to write letters we've got to do it when we get a few short breaks, such as at noon or at night before it gets dark. Some people ought to be shot. I don't know what the idea is unless it is to protect troop movements out of Miami.

I forgot to tell you before that this fella that I've been running around with, Bob Naylor, knows Bill Kroesk. I guess they went to school to-gether in Youngstown. I've also met a guy from Bedford here in our flight with whom I worked with at GeaugaLake.

We had more extended order drill to-day and also more manuel of arms, in fact the whole afternoon was devoted to crawling around in the sand and dust and to slapping rifles. I guess I can't kick about going over this stuff again with this other flight. It'll do me a lot of good because we just skipped over it lightly before. Remember? I missed two days of my Basic Training so they put me into this other flight to finish up with them. I'll be an advanced trainee along with the rest of them either Tues. or Weds. because they are on their 15<sup>th</sup> day now.

I pulled guard duty again! I go on at 4:00 to-morrow morning. I'm getting pretty tired of it but I've been pretty lucky so far to get good hours. I pulled 10 to 12 shift one night but that isn't half as bad as from 12:00 to 2:00 or 2:00 to 4:00. These two shifts break up your sleeping completely.

The day I was moved over here, Weds, I stayed in the hotel and wrote letters until noon when they told us we had to be in a big parade for Colonel Proctor, our Wing Commander. It was an awful hot day and we had to stand at attention in the boiling sun for quite awhile during which time they took pictures and in general got organized. Several of the men keeled over under the heat and I was one of those that had to drop out of ranks. I was feeling rather sick to my stomach before I left but thought I'd be o.k. It was really a beautiful sight, though. About 30 acres covered with marching men. Colonel Proctor is leaving and wanted a fare well party I guess.

I hope all those who were on the sick list are feeling better now.

Love to All, John.

January 24, 1943 (Letter)

Dear Folks,

I'm afraid I skipped a day of writing to you, but I did write to Grandma and Grandpa Friday, or Thursday I guess it was. Any how you should have gotten it by now. I hope that takes the place of mine to you, that is for that one time.

You folks certainly must be having a real winter up north. It sounds as though it were the worst we've had in quite a few years. I can't notice any change in temperature down here. We still sweat plenty during our one period of drill and two of calisthenics. You know, I think I'm really in pretty good condition. We've been playing foot-ball for about an hour each day for the part week and I haven't been the least bit lame from it. We play fairly rough most of the time too and one day we were playing on coarse slag. That gave me a few bruises but nothing to speak of.

Mother did tell me about Gene's brawl with the Ball & Chainers. I would like to have seen him at the height of his disfigurement. I guess that will teach the Phi Gama's to play around with the best club on the hill.

Another thing I would like to see among many others, is Hiram play basketball. It's the best team they've had in quite a while, isn't it?

It must be funny to see Donny walk in his sleep. At Fort Hayes there was a fellow who would get up about four times each night and walk around the barracks mumbling to himself and then get back in bed. You meet some might queer people in the army. My roommate, for instance, he was in an automobile accident and has scars all over his face. He also was shot in the bottom part of spine with a twenty-two slug. I think he's just a little bit off myself, perhaps it's because of his many accidents, but anyway he's always talking, usually in the gutter, and about every time we fall out in the morning for the drill field he'll pipe up and say "Are we all in the groove? Is everyone hep to the jive?" He's lazy as heck and just dumps his clothes, magazines and everything else right on the floor where ever he happens to be through with them. He gets on my nerves plenty, but all four of us to-gether get along fairly well. My other two roommates are pretty good guys. One of them is from Baltimore, Maryland and the other is from Pittsburg. The latter is a pretty good baseball player, I guess, he speaks of playing in several of the big parks there in Pittsburg anyway. He said he had played once or twice at Ford Park. We past by it three years ago when we went to Vermont.

Last Sunday another fella and I went into Miami. We have to go through Biscayne Bay to get there and on the way we noticed a big fish roll to the surface and then dive again. The people we rode over with said it was a porpoise and they stopped to watch it for , though they had lived here eight years, it was the first time they had seen one in the bay. We drove along real slow just keeping up with it. It was just our luck that it was swimming along parallel to the road and in the direction we were going. It came up for air about every 30 seconds or so and as we watched another one came up at the same time. They say they travel in large schools but I was satisfied with just seeing two the first time. It was really thrilling to watch them, only about thirty or forty yards off shore. I guessed that they were about six or seven feet long and the people we were with said that I was probably about right but that they grow quite a little bigger. It seemed as though they were putting on a show for us because the nearest one scared up a small fish, 6 or 8 inches long, and chased right at us. The smaller fish jumping clear out of the water trying to get away and the porpoise swimming just below the surface like a streak of lightening. You could just see the water boil in back of him though I don't think he broke the surface once until he caught smaller fish about twenty yards from us. We all agreed that it was something to remember and also something to write home about---so I am.

Dad, is your back any better? I hope so, and how about Donnie? Is he still insisting that he ought stay out of school? I want to write to Gene to-night yet so I'll stop.

Love to All, John.

January 28, 1943 (Letter)

Dear Folks,

Well, at last it's come. I was called for shipment this morning. It certainly took me by surprise but, by golly, it happened the same way it did up at Fort Hayes. Remember? All my buddies up there were called first a day or so before me. Well yesterday morning Patterson and Naylor were called and also a swell guy from Akron that I've been running around with. We had a fire drill last night that partially accounts for my sleepiness this morning, any how, when they started calling names off for shipment this morning I wasn't even conscious of it. I did wake up, though, when they called my name and thought for a minute that "Johnnie's ears were doing wrong". We turned in our fatigue clothes and got coveralls, and they issued us gas masks and the shell of our helmet. Don't let this alarm you. It is just part of our equipment and everyone gets these things when they ship.

I don't know when or where we are going. It may be a week and it may be to California. It will very likely be three or four days before we leave and I'll write a little bit every day that I'm here. In the mean time you had better stop writing until you hear from me from my new camp,---if I really am shipped. I am talking in circles I know, But I just happen to think that I might be a super numeracy or in other words just an extra in case someone gets sick. I really won't be sure that I'm leaving until I get on the train.

I got your letter this morning. It sounds as though Gram and Gramp's celebration was pretty nice. I, also, hope that they have no ill effects from it.

When we march back and forth from the drill field we pass many civilian homes and there is always several little boys and girls standing around the streets. They are about Donnie's age and I can just picture him saluting us as we go by just as they do. When we aren't singing we can hear them sounding off with parts or phrases of our marching songs. Some of them are cute. I just heard one of them out side my window shouting at the top of his lungs: "When the war is over we will all enlist again". I can't think of the name of the song to which the tune belongs. It's one you have all heard many times but I guess it's unimportant anyway.

I can't think of much more to say right now except that we went up to the rifle range again yesterday and shot the old Enfields. I'm getting so I like that gun more and more every time I shoot it.

Something that I almost forgot. I'll need some money soon after I reach my new home. We haven't been paid yet and with laundry and a few other things I'm getting pretty low.

I didn't even hear about that plane crashing that Don Maihain was on. Was he killed?

I hope Donnie gets over his nervous trouble pretty quick. It must be pretty hard on all of you.

Love to All, John.

January 29, 1943 (Letter)

Dear Folks,

Well, this is the second day on shipment. If I'm going to leave it'll be either to-morrow or the next day. Love, one of the guys I hung around with was called yesterday morning, the same time I was called and left within four hours. His was a rush shipment though. The fellas that I named in my last letter left to-day. They were called the day before me, if you remember. I'm still keeping my fingers crossed and hoping that I'm not a super numerary. I'm afraid that it won't be north, more likely it will west because they told us to pack our overcoats and other heavy clothes in the bag they are shipping ahead. It doesn't logical that they would do that if

they didn't planned to ship us where it wasn't too cold. They say (the fellas who have been shipped to the schools I'm going to) that there are schools in Colorado and California. It would be nice if Fred was going to stay on in California and was to be stationed out there near him. In Fred's last letter he said that he thought he shipped out in about a week. That was two weeks ago. I suppose he has been shipped by now.

I'm awful glad to hear that Gram and Gramp's party turned out so well. I got a letter from them to-night and they seemed to have had a swell time.

I've got four new roommates now. We were all moved across the street into another hotel where the remainder of the original flight G is now staying. Our flight is all separated because we took our rooms in alphabetical order and filled up all the rooms that did not have there quota of men. I was very fortunate, I think, in not having to keep on living with this one guy I told you about before.

I almost forgot, I've got to unpack and straighten out the things that I had to throw in my barracks bag. We had very short notice on our having to move.

I'll have write again to-morrow when I have more time.

Love to All, John.

February 5, 1943 (Letter no envelope)

Dear Folks,

I guess I told you about getting K. P. for about five hours Wednesday. Yesterday (Thursday) we got up at 5 o'clock expecting to be called out at any time until about 11:30. They told us then that we had K. P. for last night. I didn't go back to bed at all, instead I wrote letters all afternoon until six last night when we started for the mess halls. I did or we all did, I should say, about everything there was to do in a kitchen except cook, of course, until 6:30 this morning. We all hopped into bed and had just fallen to sleep five minutes later when a corporal came saying we had to be out of bed, dressed, and outside in fifteen minutes for another physical (this is the army Mr. Henry). I was lucky, though, they forgot me for some reason or other and so I went back to bed and slept until three this afternoon. I'm still lucky but I'm knocking on wood; about half of the guys in my barracks have K.P. to-morrow and they left my name off that list. I hope my luck holds.

I'm going to be able to get my mail before anyone else from now on---when it comes. I'm the mail man for our barracks. It means running back and forth to and from the mail room about four times a day but I get out of cleaning up the barracks for my troubles. Some guys are lucky! One of the guys from Elyria got a letter from home to-day in answer to a free mail letter he wrote the same day. I wrote to you. You've got to be lucky enough to make the right connections I guess.

We did have fun on K. P. last night. The air up here is so dry and cold that everyone's face is chapped. One of the guys is so chapped that he can barely open his mouth. He's a husky and handsome burt ((?)) and we kept trying to make him smile all evening. He'd put his hand up to his mouth for some reason or other and try his best not to smile because it hurt him to. You could see the twinkle in his eye and I thought that was funny but it got better later. Every once in a while it got so he just couldn't hold himself back and he'd give out the queerest laugh you ever heard. It sounded more like someone crying. He'd get tears in his eyes and practically roll on the floor with laughter that seemed more like a crying joy. I can't explain it very well but I know he had us practically splitting our sides.

I think the food here is considerably better than it was in Miami. The cooks are much more particular and the kitchens are kept much cleaner. The floors in Miami were mopped after each meal but here they are scrubbed on hands and knees. All garbage is taken care of depending on what kind of garbage. All bones are kept separate and sent where they will do the most good. The waste food is sent out to neighboring farms for their pigs, and fats are separated and saved. There are signs all over the mess halls saying that anyone mixing trash with garbage will get extra duty. They didn't have anything like this in Miami. Another thing I noticed was that they asked to see our hands as soon as we got in. If we had the least bit of dirt under our fingernails it had to be gotten out. It makes our feel a lot better eating in a place like that.

For some reason or other, I don't feel much like writing to-night. I'm still pretty tired and I can't think of much to say so I'll stop and go to bed. I hope I hear from you to-morrow.

Love to all,  
John

February 9, 1943 (Letter)

Dear Folks,

I got your letter last night. It was good to hear from you. That was about the longest length of time I've gone without getting any letters at all. Over a week. Thanks a lot for the 5 dollars but I wish you would send me one of my bank slips though, so I could pay you back. I did get ten dollars while I was down in Miami, and since that was all I got my next pay, which won't come until the end of this month, should be pretty good size even though there will be a deduction of about 10.20 for bonds and insurance.

Well, I went another 25 hours without sleep. We started school last night and I think it is really going to be interesting. We took the .50 caliber machine gun apart and started learning the better than 160 different parts. It sounds pretty tough but it really isn't. All these different parts are divided into groups under the headings of five main parts. All you have to do is know where the part goes and the use of it. It was easy for the first 6 hours last night but after that I started getting pretty sleepy and couldn't keep my mind on what was going on. We will spend three days on the nomenclature or parts so we will all get them, I think.

I agree with Fred that a lot of food is too well seasoned but it is good and they don't seem to season it as much as they did in Miami.

It's nice that Auntie Vashti is going south but I should think it would be pretty hard on her going by bus. It's tough enough going by train.

We do have school from ten to six but they have every one on the same shift in one barracks so it won't be too bad. We have one day off a week and that one is apt to be any day in the week. We've got Wednesday off. Half of the boys in the barracks had last night off but they were in Denver practically all night so they were as ready to sleep as the rest of us. We won't get much chance to take advantage of the dances at the service club except on our day off but we can go over to the day room or to the library in the service club and read magazines or books. I took one of Zane Grey's books out Saturday afternoon and finished it Sunday night. That wasn't too bad for me and I really didn't spend too much time on it either. I would enjoy my "Out Door Life", I believe that's the one I've got coming.

So Hiram's got the Fenn-Hiram wooden brick now. We haven't had it in quite a while. I'll bet there were some good times had after that game.

I don't know as yet where any of my friends when after leaving Miami. We did exchange home addresses but I haven't written yet, I'll have to get on that ball again. I haven't found any

fella's here that I care to run around with. They don't seem to be of as high class as some of those I've met. There is a rather nice little hillbilly that was in our flight at Miami. You'd laugh yourself silly at him. He chews snuff and so we called him "Snuffy". He's a typical hillbilly and has plenty of life, spunk, and is more independent than anyone I've ever seen.

So Fred has his eyes on 14 year old girls now does he? I'll have to write him about that.

Thanks for the money, I got your other letter to-night. I won't say that I can't use much as you've promised me. I've got to have a few alterations made on my uniform (my O.D. blouse was way too big).

Love to all,  
John.

February 11, 1943 (Letter to younger brother)

Hi Donnie,

How are you getting along in school? You are being a good boy aren't you? Mother & Dad and Grandma & Grandpa have been telling me how hard you have been working there at home; making big snow balls, helping Bob, and things like that. At the last place that I was at there were little boys and girls about your age that would run along beside us as we marched along the streets and they would sing with us and many times they would stand beside the road with their dogs or cats and salute us. They reminded me of you and I wondered if you were being a good boy and not making any trouble for mother. We have a little brown and white dog here with nice, long, curly hair and tied to this long hair on his back he has a sign that says—"Feed me, please". Some lady has fed him too because he's nice and fat. Then there is another dog here. He's another small dog and he's also small like the other one. He is a bull dog and on his harness he has the stripes and arcs of a master sergeant. Mother or Dad will tell you what that is. And we have another dog here too, a real big one this time. He's called a St. Bernard and is two or three times as big as you. What do you think of that?

Well, I have to take a shower before I go to school to-night and so until you hear again from me—be a good boy, won't you.

Love to all,  
Your brother  
Johnny.

Mother and Dad, tell me how Donnie feels about getting his own mail, will you? I've written Grandma and Grandpa to-night and you'll probably get both of these at the same time. There isn't much of any news since I last wrote you but what there is I've written in their letter. I thought it would be fun to write to Donnie just to make him feel important. Perhaps it won't, though...

Love,  
John.

February 14, 1943 (Letter)

Dear Folks,

I got your letter last night Dad, along with one from Gene and Helen Farrow. I certainly ought to be able to get along on the money you've sent me. We spent about an hour and a half

standing in line waiting to sign the pay roll yesterday but won't get paid until the first of next month. I can get along easily until then. Thanks loads!

I'm sorry, I guess I haven't made it very clear just what my schooling consists of. The first five days we spent in taking the .50 caliber machine gun apart and learning the names of parts and the operation of it. I think I told you about this-if I have-skip over it. Last night we did the same thing to the thirty. They both are practically the same except for the one being quite a bit smaller. To-night we go through malfunctions of the two at the field laboratory. We've got to be able to tell what is wrong with the gun just by what we hear and see without taking the gun apart after the trigger is pressed. I don't think it will be too hard, I understand the operation of both pretty well. I'm really finding everything very interesting so far. It is all maintenance. The last week we take a physical and if we pass we are, I think, drafted as an aerial gunner. I've heard some guys say that you have your choice if you pass this physical as whether you want to be a gunner or not. At any rate a gunner gets a Staff Sergeants' rating. That's one consolation. After this malfunction examination which last two days we study the 20 and 92 mm. cannons. I don't really know what comes after that, I think it's small arms—sub-machine guns, rifles, and side arms. I told you this course takes 9 weeks---aerial gunner school takes 13 weeks more. After that I guess we get sent to a base.

One thing I don't like about school is that we have a ten minute break every hour. It breaks up the class too much and makes it seem like about all we do is take off and put on our coats. I'd like it better if it was a twenty minute break every two hours.

Hiram is doing alright in basketball, aren't they? I'm glad they downed Fenn twice. There is still another with them I believe, isn't there?

Mrs. Chambers has gone to Michigan has she? I suppose Dave is living at Hurds'. It is too bad about Aunt Emily, but as you say, it's just one of those things.

I got my first glimpse at a P-38 the other day. Boy oh boy, how they do travel. There has been P-40's and P-47's here flying around too. They swoop down over the fields like a big hawk and then glide back up banking at the same time. It seems as though are out of sight in almost no time.

I stood retreat Friday with about 150 others and passed in review in front of a General, I believe. There was one on the field and I'm pretty sure he was there for retreat. It was the first time I stood retreat here and when they shot the cannon it nearly knocked me off my feet, saying nothing of how it scared me.

Love to all,  
John.

February 15, 1943 (letter)

Dear Folks,

Mom, your letter came to-night. You and Dad should talk about keeping the letters rolling. One from Dad Saturday and you to-day. There were at least four from you last week. You keep up with me as far as news is concerned.

I'm finding a lot more time to write here and the writing conditions are much better which helps no end. Fred has arrived has he? Your description of the camps makes it sound pretty nice though I wouldn't want to be "in the middle of no-where". I would like his letters and will send them back.



I'm afraid this will have to short because it's kind of late now. I have to shower, shave, and study a little before school to-night. We have a test.

I got letters from Dick Burns, you, and Betty Hamm to-night. Betty Hamm is the girl from Chardon I had a few dates with. There was also a package of cookies, or what was cookies, from Mrs. Chambers. They went all the way to Miami first. You see I'm doing pretty well around as far as mail is concerned.

I won't have any more 25 hour stretches now that I'm in school. I'm glad of that. It was tough.

I'd like to see that exhibition match between Don and Billy Glore. That should be good.

I'd better stop and get busy with my other duties.

Love to all,

John.

February 21, 1943 (Letter)

Dear Folks,

Got Dad's letter to-night. For some reason or other my other mail seems to have stopped or slowed up plenty. It seems like a week or better since I've heard from anyone in Hiram. Your letters and Grandma's and Grandpa's are coming through alright. Mail certainly plays a big part in keeping the morale of the soldiers high. When I don't get any I feel plenty low and you might say homesick, in a way. The same with the other fellows. If I don't bring back very much mail from the mail room there will be a dozen or more guys that will as if I'm sure that was all there was. Some of them aren't even satisfied with my being sure about this and will go down to the mail room themselves. When they come back empty handed they swear they won't write another word unless their friends start answering. In the past week I've read the "Broadcaster" and "Advance" through twice. I'm glad that both are being sent to me.

Driving 150 to 200 miles a day must be pretty hard on you, Dad, especially in the weather you're having unless the roads stay clear. The winter we're having up here is the strangest I've ever seen. We could run around in bathing suits during the day time and be warm enough but at night while we're in school we can't keep warm even with our winter underwear, overcoats gloves and woolen caps on. The temperature changes awfully quick too. I usually come over here to the day room about 6:00, before the sun goes down, and when I go back around 9:30 I'm pretty well chilled before I reach my barracks about a block away.

Did I tell you how I came out in my exams? If not, I got all nine of my problems or malfunctions right. They were hard at all. All we had to do was to use our heads and if we kept awake in class there was nothing to it. One of fellas in the barracks flunked it and will be put on general duty (cleaning up around the camp) or on K. P. until they find something else for him. If they don't find anything else, he'll stay on until he knows enough about the kitchen to become a K. P. pusher with a corporals rating. That's pretty tough punishment for those guys who didn't stay on the beam.

We started on the 20 mm cannon the other night. Boy, when you first see the gun apart you think it's going to take days to learn all the names and operations but after you get acquainted with them it's not hard at all. We learn all the names and how to put the gun together in about two hours. The twenty mm is only about six years old and still in it's experimental stage. There are only two American plans that carry it as their regular equipment. The gun backs two inches being eight feet long. It seems to me as if it would be pretty hard to mount on a fighter plane.

Love to all,  
John

February 24, 1943 (Letter)

Dear Folks,

Mother's letters came yesterday and left me with quite an incentive for writing. First of all, how long has Marsh and Ralph been so serious? Last I knew she and Charlie Spencer were going to-gether pretty steadily. I don't remember for sure just who told me this but I think it was Gene. I certainly can't see what this war has to do with people's love life. It certainly hasn't had the slightest effect on me---so far. It seems like all my friends are either getting married, engaged or are going steady.

Yes, I did finally get Mrs. Chamber's cookies. They were very much battered but awfully good. A little hillbilly from West Virginia lit into them right after I got them and sincerely admitted that they were the best he had ever tasted. He wanted me to get the recipe so he could send it home to his mother. I was going to tell Mrs. Chambers this but I haven't yet had a chance to write again yet. I got a box of cookies from Mrs. Collins at Christmas time and I'm sure that I wrote to her thanking her for them. Were they the ones you referred to? I haven't yet received any Christmas present from either Polly or Auntie Sis. I hope they aren't lost if they have sent them.

Well, to-day is Wednesday and my day-off. I'm going into Denver this afternoon to see for myself what the place is like. A kid from Canton, Ohio is going in with me and we'll probably stay until tomorrow noon.

I decided the other day that I better have my teeth checked again. I just came back from the dental clinic after having three small cavities filled. He said I was all set for a while now. This appointment got me out of bed this morning about 10 o'clock.

I guess I didn't tell you about my schedule. I get all mixed up in what I've told different people. We get to bed around 6:30 or quarter to seven and get to sleep until 1:30 or 2. We eat a large meal at 3:15 and fall out for calisthenics, gasmask drill, and close order drill at 4:15. Between times we clean up the barracks. Calisthenics and the rest last two hours and we are free until 10 pm. Ten minutes break every fifty minutes during school. Another larger meal at 3:15 am and an hour off. Back to school until 6 AM. When we have to go to breakfast. Breakfast and then to bed. Seems funny doesn't it? Breakfast before bed. Incidentally, the food is fast becoming unfit for the dogs. I wish I knew why.

Love to all,  
John

P.S. Fred is having an exciting time isn't he?

P.P.S. Armor school last 9 weeks and gunnery school 5 weeks. Two gunnery schools in Texas and one at Miami Beach.

February 25, 1943 (Letter and Flyer about Denver)

Dear Folks,

We got back from Denver just a little while ago and I'll have to admit that it's really a very friendly place. We got there yesterday about 3 o'clock and after finding it early for the

dance and other things at the service club we went to a show. Afterwards the guys suggested we drop in at the Y.M.C.A. for a while. I didn't think we were allowed there but they seemed to think it was alright so I went along feeling rather out-of-place and not knowing what to expect. It turned out fine, though. There were other soldiers there and girls dancing. I danced a few dances and later we decided to go back up to the service club. They were dancing up there too. I danced a couple more but because of the large number of fellas there in comparison to the number of girls I finally contented myself with just watching. We slept at the Y.M. for .50 cents apiece and this morning just walked around town window shopping until noon and then started back to camp.

We talked with a fellow who had gone through aerial gunner school on the way back. He says that you definitely do graduate with a rating and in my care if I go to aerial gunner school, it will be a staff sergeant since I will have my armorer diploma. For the armorers they have cut the course down to three weeks and one week will consist of shooting a sleeve towed by a plane. It all sounds good to me.

Love to all,  
John.