

ONE LUCKY COMBAT INFANTRYMAN

PAUL H. SLEGER

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ONE LUCKY COMBAT INFANTRYMAN

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DEDICATION

To the memory of Captain Dale Howard of A Company,
All my accompanying 3rd Platoon members,
All of the replacements in my squad who fought bravely
to keep the country free,
And my family.

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Editor's Preface

ONE *LUCKY COMBAT INFANTRYMAN* WAS written through interviews with the author, Paul H Sleger, his notes, and letters to his parents and brothers. He diligently sent letters to his family during his school, training, and combat experiences during the war. In World War II, many lost loved ones, and some survived—this lucky one survived to tell his story. He grew up in a small city in Wisconsin. He loved hunting and fishing. It was a patriotic time, when Americans showed their pride and enthusiasm for their soldiers and veterans. His family, wife and children often observed how the war affected him. He would wake up having nightmares of his previous battles, and it seemed like he was still fighting. Sometimes, he would be unable to fall back asleep. Later in life, the way he anxiously described his war experiences seemed like it happened yesterday.

Paul H. Sleger served as a sergeant and squad leader with the 11th Armored Division, Thunderbolt. He participated in the battles of Ardennes, Rhineland and Central Europe. His awards include: Bronze Star Medal, Good Conduct Medal, American Campaign Medal, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with three Bronze Service Stars, WWII Victory Medal, Combat Infantryman Badge 1st Award, and Honorable Service Lapel Button WWII. He received a commendation on January 13, 1945: “You distinguished yourself by performing your duties in a highly efficient and outstanding manner.”

—Diane A. Sleger

Author's Preface

FROM PRIVATE TO SERGEANT, THIS BOOK IS MY personal account of WWII. It takes you through my rough journey from enlistment to the end of the war. It speaks of the horrors of war, our encounter with the enemy, the loss of soldiers fighting side by side and the injury of others. It includes the capture and release soon after, due to two soldiers in our platoon who spoke fluent German convincing the enemy to surrender to us. I believe it was my strong faith and the camaraderie of those with me who pulled me through. The annual 11th Armored reunions kept many of us close over the years. I think we all looked forward to seeing each other every year, and this is my story.

—Paul H. Sleger



ONE

Inductions and Basic Training

IT WAS SUNDAY AFTERNOON DECEMBER 7, 1941. I had been rabbit hunting not far from my home in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. I was on my way home with a couple of cottontails, when one of my friends greeted me with, “the Japs attacked Pearl Harbor.” The lives of every American changed from that day forward.

I was a senior in high school at that time. Patriotism was running very high and the armed services had no difficulty getting enlistments. Some young men enlisted at the age of seventeen. But, most of us waited until graduation to either enlist or be drafted shortly after reaching age eighteen. This gave us the opportunity to investigate and determine which branch of service we would prefer. If you waited for the draft, you would most likely end up in the Army. I preferred the Air Force or the Marines, and I tried both. However, the fact that I wore glasses made my choices at that time either the Navy or Army. I chose the Army. Rather than be drafted, I enlisted and was notified to report on February 18, 1943.

That must have been a large recruitment date for many of the young men from the Manitowoc area. We were waiting for the train to take us to Ft. Sheridan, IL, where we were inducted. I would estimate that there were about a hundred men, including many of those that I graduated with earlier.

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Among them were my good friends Warren Fitzgerald, Tom Raven, Paul Statler and Elden Monday.

It was now time I left home and said, "Goodbye." While parents and friends waved their goodbyes, the coal fired locomotive pulled out of the Manitowoc depot. We all wondered what was in store for us. A few hours later we arrived at Ft. Sheridan, Illinois for processing and induction. I remember going through a line for inoculation. There were medical assistants with large hypodermic needles on both the right and left sides of the line. As I passed down the line, one of them got me in the right arm and before I took another step I noticed I had a shot in the left arm.

The rest of the day was routine processing and after a dinner meal we could relax on the cots in the barracks to which we were assigned. By this time, my arms were sore from the shots. Shortly, someone with a couple of stripes (I didn't know the difference from a corporal to a captain) came in the barracks and said, "I need a few 'volunteers' for kitchen duty: you, you, and you." I was selected as a volunteer. I told him I didn't think I could do a good job because my arms were still sore from the shots. I was told that polishing stoves will make my arms feel better. The remainder of my first day in the Army as a "volunteer" was spent until midnight polishing stoves.

03JAN1943

I'm disgusted with this place. I feel like leaving when this next three months is over. I haven't had any good marks this term. This calculator is terrible. I don't know exactly what's going on in Physics. The only thing I like here is ice-skating. Don't be surprised if I tell you someday I'm leaving. I'm going over to see the permanent officer some day. OCS is filled up for about nine months, so I don't know where I'll go.

21FEB1943

We were processed rather rapidly and were given assignments to various Army bases for basic training. Most of the men I knew were assigned to the 44th division at Ft. Lewis, Washington. Some went to Ft. Leonard

Wood, Missouri and others to various bases around the country. During basic training, I had a chance to be a company clerk, but I refused. I boarded the train to Fort Lewis, WA.

27FEB1943

We're all through processing and are all up for shipment within the next few days. I got the shots in the arm yesterday and today I can't even reach for a hanker-chief. Last night, I went down to the P.X., which is the Post Exchange. There's a sweatshirt with Ft. Sheridan on it, at the P.X.

It's \$1.25, not bad! You ought to see the clothes we get: two fatigue suits, two dress shirts for winter and two summer suits made of gabardine. The shoes are size 10. I got two pairs of shoes; the soles are about two inches thick. When I got back, the orderly wanted us to scrub the barracks. He said it would help my arm, but it got worse.

I got real high grades in the intelligence tests. I had an I.Q. of 131. In order to be able to get into officers training school, you must have at least an IQ of 110. Yesterday, I even had a typing test. I made a 40.5 wpm within ten minutes. I could have gotten a pass for Saturday night and Sunday, but it was only good for 100 miles away. Otherwise, I'd be able to go to Kankakee. The first night I slept like a log. Last night, every time that I bumped my arm, I woke up. The bed isn't bad, plenty of covering, but has a pillow that felt like a cement bag.

03MAR1943 - 04MAR1943

I can't figure out how the railroads pass through the mountains. There's a hill rising-up a thousand feet on each side of the tracks. Before there was a colored boulder sticking up among the trees, it was the size of a whole city block. Another pretty big one was in North Dakota today. It was the most interesting thing we saw all day. It was Valley City seen from a bridge about 300 feet high. It was the only valley we crossed in

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the whole state during the daytime. We must have passed through part of the Black Hills during the night. Right now, we're crossing a Plain. It must be about 30 miles across. Mountains line the horizon wherever you look. I'm writing as we travel, hopefully you can read it. I'd like to see one of the rabbits that make the tracks around here. They must be as big as a dog by the size of their tracks.

We just passed a mountain of solid rock with not a tree on it. It isn't melting out, but still the streams and rivers are all running with ice cakes floating down. They always talk about the sparkling mountain streams. The ones we passed today are a dirty green color. Boy, this train is shaking like crazy! I'd like to see these rivers when the snow comes off the mountains. Talking about snow, there isn't any ground at all. We've been following a river for about a half hour and we crossed it a couple of times. It might be the Columbia River. Where we are now, the ice didn't crack up yet. There's a jam for about a mile behind it. Another thing is the color of the mountains, here they are red, and it is either clay or else Copper country. On one side of the hill, you see snow and on the other green grass. I just saw about 10 little fawn deer about 50 feet from the train. Do they ever look nice. Those are the first ones I've ever seen.

The train trip to Ft. Lewis took about five days. This was a coach trip, no bunks, no showers, etc. When we got to the base we went through another processing period and were all split up and assigned to various units. As I was going through this process, someone noticed that I had a semester of typing in high school and I was told they needed company clerks. I said that I didn't come in the Army to pound a typewriter. I was assigned to "M" Company (Heavy Weapons) in the 324th Infantry battalion of the 44th Infantry Division. None of the men I left home with were assigned to "M" Company. Basic training started immediately and it was rough. Reveille was at 6 a.m. and our days were long and strenuous. My platoon leader was a big husky

Lieutenant from Duluth, MN. One of my first mornings at reveille he said to me "soldier, what's your name?" I responded "Sleger, sir." He then asked me when I shaved last. I didn't have to shave very often because I just had "peach fuzz", so I told him I shaved a few days ago. He replied "God damn it, you're in the army now and you shave every day." The next day at reveille, he asked me if I shaved. I replied, "Yes sir." I was now shaving every day.

We're on a train passing through the mountains of Montana. The way it looks we're going to be camped in Washington. The country is beautiful, but it is sure desolate. I have the upper berth, and they got the lower berth.

The first night, we almost froze to death. It was about 20 degrees below zero, and they shut off the heat. Last night, I got two overcoats to cover with, and then they left the heat on. We didn't even need blankets. I saw about a thousand pheasants, and a couple of rabbits. I wish they'd let me out there with a gun.

I wish I could get some sort of diary, "My life in the service." We've just been subjected to a personal search. Some guy lost a wallet with about forty bucks in it. Two captains searched us. When you think of a captain, or even a lieutenant, it just seems like another word to you. But to us, he's just like the president is to you. We can't talk to him, unless he talks to us first. We can be put in the guardhouse for not saluting him and must address him as "sir." The officers are still searching for the money. We had to move out of the car and they took out the berths and searched them. If they catch the guy, I'll bet he'll be court-martialed.

In Idaho, we saw more wildlife than anywhere. It must be a winterizing ground for mallard ducks. The pheasants are thicker here than anywhere we passed yet.

I arrived in Fort Lewis, Washington, at about noon on Thursday. This seems to be a pretty nice camp, between Tacoma and Seattle. I know what

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they mean when they tell us: “Join the army and see the world.”

There were thirteen weeks of Basic and it must have rained for ten of those weeks. Occasionally we could see Mt. Rainier. At one point in the training just about everyone had common colds. While listening to an officer give a training lecture, he could barely be heard because of the coughing. He became somewhat irritated and commanded us to be quiet. Then he asked us, if we were hiding from the enemy and they were only a few yards away, would we cough? He continued his lecture to a silent group of men! I never realized that a cough could be suppressed that easily. While on this topic, many of the men including myself were having sinus problems. One of the self-help recommendations: try not to blow your nose and never blow both nostrils at the same time. I have practiced this advice and cannot recall having a serious sinus problem since.

We had to master all the normal routines like learning the field manuals, learn to march, inspections, take the various weapons apart, mix up the parts and reassemble them, go through obstacle courses, crawl under live firing, and of course, the full pack hikes. There were forced marches for almost any reason. We started out with three or five mile marches and before basic ended we were doing the 25-mile hike. The day we did our final 25-mile hike with full equipment it rained. We were told to put on our raincoats. Walking at a fast pace in the rain with full pack and wearing a raincoat is rough duty. Quite a few of the men couldn't make it. Some even passed out. I was fortunate to make it all the way, but it was a struggle.

We spent much time on the rifle range. I knew my M-1 very well and still remember the serial number, 64840, which was one of the early issues. I was familiar with rifles and shotguns, since my father taught me to hunt when I was about twelve years old. I became proficient with my M-1, which proved to be very valuable later. In addition to the M-1 we learned to fire the 30 cal. Carbine, 30 cal. light machine gun, 30 cal. heavy, water cooled machine gun, 45 cal. pistol, 45 cal. “grease gun” and the bazooka which was a relatively new weapon at the time. I earned my “Expert” medals on the M-1 and the carbine and some sort of recognition on the 30-caliber heavy machine gun. The platoon did not receive training on mortars during basic training.

During basic we trained Monday to Friday. Saturday morning was devoted to inspections, and marching parades. If you were lucky, there would be a pass for the remainder of the weekend. Passes were denied for minor infractions of the rules and regulations. When on pass, we usually visited Olympia and or Seattle, Washington. Visits beyond those cities generally required at least a three-day pass.

On one occasion before our basic training was completed, the 44th Infantry was put on alert. There was some evidence that a Japanese submarine attempted to land saboteurs along the Pacific coast somewhere near the Portland, Oregon area. A part of the 44th Division including my battalion was deployed to the area for a short time.

We were sent up the line for classification. I think I'm going to get an office job. That's what the corporal said I was best fitted for. Personally, I'd rather not take an office position. Most of the guys are going to get into the field artillery or the infantry. He asked me what I'd like to do in the army. I told him I'd like the air corps or paratroopers. Since, I came here I saw quite a few planes including flying fortress and P-38 flying in formation.

10MAR1943-15MAR1943

The Infantry has the most intensive training of the regular Army. We're getting prepared for the whole 44th division to be shipped across the ocean. Yesterday, we had to hike out to the swamp about a mile away with full 54-pound pack, gas mask, and a trench shovel. Plus, two guys had to carry a machine gun or large pick and shovel.

We had an air raid drill. We had to carry all that stuff out in the swamp and each man had to dig a slit trench. That's a two-foot wide trench that's two feet deep and six inches longer than your body. There are two trenches that are deep as the man who carries the machine gun. After these trenches are dug, they must be camouflaged.

Our sergeant went on a recon to find good positions and left us alone on a little two-lane road. We heard something like a dive-bomber with a siren on it. About a hundred feet from us

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through the trees and brush, came two tanks about 45 mph right for us. I bet you never saw six men make such fast moves in your life. They passed within ten feet of us and never slowed down. I'll never forget that.

Now, I'll be getting those long hikes with a full pack. I'll be digging trenches and laying in them when bullets are shot over us and tanks run across us. Just north of our section of the camp, there are foxholes and slit trenches for use in an air raid. We saw deer tracks and either a big dog or wolf tracks.

16MAR1943-17MAR1943

I sent a letter to my brother Joe, I told him, "As far as yourself, don't be too anxious to get in the Army, you'll be there soon enough." I knew he wouldn't like it anyway because he never did like to do any of the stuff we're doing. He's too young, and if they did find out his age after he's in, even if he becomes a general, all ratings would be taken away and subject to six months of confinement of hard labor. I hope he doesn't try anything as foolish as that. There isn't a thing easy in the Army. There isn't enough time to wash up in the morning. At night, we wash our clothes, shine shoes, and set up our equipment for the next day.

Monday, the first thing was a ten-mile hike in two hours. Just try to make five miles an hour with thirty pounds on your back. It doesn't feel as good as when you started. After we came back, we drilled until noon. After chow, we had sighting and aiming with both new and old rifles for about three hours. We went down to the obstacle course about a mile away. There are hurdles and barricades from three to eight feet high, trenches from two to six feet deep and from three to ten feet wide. We had to get in, out of, and over them. We have zigzag barricades and tunnels and ropes to climb across ditches on. I went through the thing as fast as any old man in the outfit. That's because I'm light. I went over the eight-foot wall like a fly. Some of the older men had to try three or four times, and then almost broke their necks when they came down. No

matter what obstacle you go through, when you come out of it, you'll be facing the enemy. While you're going through the obstacles, you can't allow yourself to be a still target for a sniper.

Today, I had another hike, about 8 miles long, rifle drill and training movies. I found out today, that I did disclose some military information in some of my letters. They told us today, what is considered information of military nature? So, please don't ever repeat anything I write. If I should happen to make a mistake and write something that I shouldn't.

I don't realize just what I wrote when telling you at night what I did during the day.

18MAR1943

The General told us about the training we are going to get in the next twelve weeks. It's going to be some of the toughest and most realistic that any Army unit has received. I sent a letter to my "momma" asking her to send that stuff that I had for sinuses that time, more nose drops. I can't believe that I can feel my head starting to hurt just above the eyes again.

23MAR1943

I shouldn't try to get into the chemical warfare division. We were apprehensive and had gas agent practice today. They released 10% chemical solutions of highly toxic Phosgene, Mustard Gas, Chloropicrin and Lucite. We had to get a whiff of each one, so we know what it smells like. These are the most-deadly gases known. When we hear the alarm "gas," we must remove our helmets, check our masks and put them on. This process must be done all within 10 seconds or less. After we get into advanced training, we're going to have to go through 50% of solutions of these chemical gases. They told us that we're going to be surprised some of these days. They're going to release tear gas on us. If the guys don't get their masks on quick, they'll be crying all day.

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I sure got a cold, so bad that I can't even talk. I hope to get rid of it soon. I need something for a sore throat.

30MAR1943

Today, we had to go through a gas chamber filled with tear gas. I dropped my helmet liner, when I went through the first time. I had to go through again. When we get inside, we must take our masks off.

Boy, my eyes and nose sure do burn, and we're told not to rub them either. I cried like a baby after I came out the second time, because it took a little while before I found my cap.

05APR1943

I sent a letter to my brother Joe telling him that I know every part of the M-1 rifle. Also, every part of the function of the Browning machine gun caliber 30 model 1917A1 water-cooled, belt fed and recoil operated. Half of the day, we must listen to lectures on the machine gun.

Last Friday, we had a hike that was a dilly. It was about 7 miles in an hour and a half. There were guys so exhausted they were lying all along the road. My feet burned for two days.

22APR1943

Here's my opinion of the war situation. From now on this war is going to be bloody and dirty. The Japs and Germans used gas and we're going to use it in a hurry. We have more than the whole world put together. I hope I never go to Europe. The training we're getting is for the Japs. From what I hear, the fellows that come in here, we're getting training that is tougher than any they have had. If we'd go over tomorrow, we have enough training to take on double numbers in Japan. The older guys in the outfit say that the 44th will never go overseas; they have been in three years already. They won't see any combat for quite a while yet.

27APR1943

We drilled all day, after chow, only a little rest. It was raining all day and it rained all that night. At 8:45 p.m, we must go on a hike, about six to seven miles and then make camp. Sometimes, the water was knee deep. We didn't reach our area until 11:00 p.m. I wish they would call it all off because it's raining and it isn't much fun pitching tents and digging trenches in the rain and dark. We won't get much sleep tonight. All during the hike, we were told that we couldn't talk, use lights or make any kind of noise. It was so dark, that we had handkerchiefs on our backs. We had to hold the man in front of us when we went into the woods. We had to set up our tents in the dark and rain. I was soaked to the skin, blankets and all. No more than the time that I crawled in between the wet blankets, then the command: "strike tents." We packed up our equipment, and I lost one tent peg. Supposedly we weren't wet enough, that they had us stand for about an hour on the road waiting until the whole regiment was ready to move. We arrived back in camp at 3:30 a.m. It was twenty-two hours without sleep. I'm still so tired. Sometimes you get so disgusted you think you're going to die. That's what makes this tough.

01MAY1943

As my basic training was closing, I was very proud to receive PFC status. As privates, we received \$33.00 per month and I even had a deduction made each month toward purchase of a "war bond." I don't recall how much the increase was to advance to PFC. Just as the basic training ended, my name was among a group of men who had scored well on the IQ tests. We were selected to continue education at various colleges and universities.

08MAY1943 - 12MAY1943

Very few young men were attending college and the government recognized that this had to be corrected. They put together a program called ASTP, Army Specialized Training Program. I met the requirements of this program and had the chance to go to ASTP. I was sent to the University of

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Idaho for processing, along with a group of men, none of whom I knew except for Warren Fitzgerald from my hometown of Manitowoc, WI.

We were processed in Moscow, ID, and Warren and I, along with a small group, were assigned to attend Washington State College in Pullman, WA. As students in the ASTP program our status reverted to “private,” so that my PFC rating was short-lived.

During maneuvers, a P-38 crashed. We spent the rest of the day at the rifle range in Ft. Lewis.

29MAY 1943 - 30MAY1943

Today is my happy day. I turned in my helmet, and field equipment. I got my orders to report to the University of Idaho on Tuesday, June 1st. Local boy makes good, huh? On the Infiltration course, we used live ammo. The next day, I got the info that on June 6th, I would be going to Washoe, ID for ASTP for processing for Washington State College.

TWO

Washington State College

13JUN1943

I arrived at Washington State College (WSC) in Pullman, Washington. What a change from basic training for combat as an Infantryman, to an Engineering student in a nationally known state college! We had a large contingent of men from numerous army units and we were billeted at various dormitories on campus. Many of the dormitories were not being used because of the lack of male students. The first semester I was assigned to Duncan Dunn Hall, the second semester was spent at the Delta Tau Omega fraternity house.

Although this was a welcome change from the basic training routine, the ASTP Program was a difficult and serious challenge to each of us. We had an extremely heavy schedule. Reveille was at 6:00 a.m. First classes were usually at 8:00 a.m. and except for a short lunch break were almost continuous until the dinner hour. Since we were all taking essentially the same courses we were assigned to small groups with one person designated the leader and we marched to all classes.

The leader was a rotating position so that everyone had a chance to be a "leader." We had a schedule of thirty-three hours compared to the

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normal schedule of about sixteen hours. “ Lights out” and bed check was 10:00 p.m. This was essentially our schedule for five days a week and until noon on Saturday. Saturday classes included a course in “Military” and of course some time on Saturday was devoted to inspections.

Even though, we were Army men going to college, we were still subject to military rules and regulations. Minor infractions resulted in such punishment as doing guard duty in front of your dormitory with a “wooden” rifle. We had to turn in any weapons issued to us prior to our assignment to ASTP. More serious discipline breaches could result in being dropped from the program. We had a couple of guys in the company with high blood pressure. One guy might even get a discharge because of it.

Going through this busy schedule was not all work and no play. The time between dinner and “lights out” we were free to use as we chose. However, if not enough time was devoted to studying, we might flunk some of the courses and no longer be in the ASTP program. We had free time Saturday afternoon and on Sunday.

WSC was in the Pacific Football Conference and we of course attended all the home games. It should also be remembered that female students outnumbered the male students by about ten to one and so we did find some time to fraternize.

04AUG1943 - 01SEP1943

I took the test for West Point. I felt proud of myself. I made expert status on the Grease Gun, 45 cal. I moved from my dormitory to Sigma Avenue. It's the end of the semester. I'm ready for furlough.

21OCT1943

I'm the big shot around here for a week. I'm the Cadet Company Commander until next Wednesday. If this isn't a headache, then nothing is. I must get the whole company down to the field house every morning and have the rifles handed out. I have a detail in charge of sighting and aiming devices, and besides that, see to it that everyone is on the “ball.” Also, then

get to class on time. I take the reports at reveille, give command at retreat, and see that everyone eats in the right order, and keep a record of the number of guys who eat.

The Company Commander grades me, and I grade each lieutenant on this basis:

- 1. Performance of duty*
- 2. As an instructor*
- 3. Physical Activity*
- 4. Military bearing and neatness*
- 5. Attention to duty*
- 6. Cooperation*
- 7. Intelligence*
- 8. Force*
- 9. Judgment and common sense*
- 10. Leadership*

This morning I had a guy who used to be a staff sergeant and another with an excellent voice giving and explaining positions for firing. I'll be glad when it's over.

27OCT1943 - 30NOV1943

I received a new slide rule from home for my birthday. Just my luck, I couldn't get to use it too well. My knuckles were swollen. I jammed and broke my finger in the gym, while playing basketball.

17DEC1943 - 30DEC1943

I finally had my cast taken off on Wednesday. My finger is real stiff, and probably will be before it limbers up again.

I spent Christmas at Lewiston, ID. I was glad to receive a gift of new ice skates from home.

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11JAN1944

The time sure is flying this term. Next Monday, the term is half over. This is a rumor around that we'll change section leaders then. Will I be glad to get rid of that job! Last Saturday, if I wanted to be mean, I could have, had two guys shipped out in a hurry. But I don't want to be the cause of anyone leaving here and going overseas if it isn't necessary. A couple of the fellows went down to the gym to play basketball during their free time and while they were there, the sergeant wanted them for a detail. He couldn't find them and made a check at the gym, but I was a bit faster and let them know first. They've been given one chance more because they were caught once before and if they'd been caught this time it would mean leaving here, they sure are thankful for that.

13JAN1944 - 24JAN1944

The temperature is now below twenty degrees. Since the skating started, I've met more girls than all the while I've been here. I had that "Irish" one out Sunday. I think I'll have a picture to send home. Her husband is a chief engineer on a Liberty ship and has been around the world a few times in the last couple of years. He was down in Egypt just after they cleaned up down there and brought her a lot of souvenirs. I guess he has a rating of lieutenant commander or something like that. He must be making money hand over fist.

We did not select our classes nor did we have a choice of courses. The Army did that for us. Our schedule included such courses as college algebra, trigonometry, calculus, chemistry, and physics. The second semester was devoted to more specific engineering subjects.

Everything was geared toward engineering. At the end of nine months we would have completed the equivalent of two years of college. At that time each of us would have a choice to make. We then must choose to continue in either civil, chemical, or electrical engineering and would receive our college degree in essentially two years.

World events were about to change this optimistic outlook for us. The invasion in Europe was imminent and many battles were taking place in the Pacific Theater now. The need for men in the active theaters of operation was apparent. We were completing our second semester of the Engineering course at WSC. The Army determined we were needed elsewhere and the ASTP program was all but disbanded.

We heard yesterday that the college got a 90-day notice to clear out the ASTP, but of course, no one knows how true it is. The fellows who ship out get assigned directly to a unit from here. There are rumors about abolishment of ASTP. A good friend, Chester Wasson, was sent out of ASTP. I was apprehensive about shipping out of ASTP.

02FEB1944 - 18FEB1944

Washington State College was ranked the best in the country in ASTP. I was thinking about switching to Paratroopers. Then, I met a gal named "Jacke."

Yesterday, ten guys from the outfit got notice that they are to report next week to California to a signal corps school. I don't know how they picked them but the way they're doing it, a guy doesn't know what's coming off.

One month from today, I'll be home if nothing else happens before then. I haven't had a letter from Jeanne Marie since around Christmas time. Of course, I haven't written her either so that makes it even. I don't know whom I'll be going out with. I know I'm not going to sit home nights because maybe I won't get another furlough in a long time.

Tonight, I was ever a big shot. I had a date with Campus Queen Pat Frayne. It was quite by accident though. I had a date with this other girl at Signs. She wasn't able to be there due to some formal supper or something and the guy that as supposed to take out Pat Frayne wasn't there either so I took her. Lucky, huh?

ONE LUCKY COMBAT INFANTRYMAN

There was one complication though. Just as I was going out this other girl that I had a date with came in. Boy, will I have some explaining to do. I guess that all sounds like foolishness, but that's college life.

I have a picture, I sure look like one of the old fogies, though. I hope I don't look like that all the time. I look like a zombie, huh?

The Chinook warm winds are blowing in. There's still confusion about the breakup of ASTP.

02MAR1944 - 04MAR1944

Following the end of the semester we had a graduation ceremony on March 4, 1944 at which time we received a Certificate in Basic Engineering. I will always remember this ceremony. It involved being called by name to the stage, saluting the presenting officer, of course using your right hand, extending your left hand to accept your diploma, and then receiving a congratulatory handshake with your right hand. It was a funny sight to see how many of these intelligent young men had difficulty with this three-step operation.

Shortly after the graduation took place we were given a two-week furlough before being reassigned. Back home it's gloomy, dreary, and cold there, out here it's sunny, dreary, and hot during the day and cold as the devil at night. I spent the next two weeks at home in Manitowoc, Wisconsin not knowing where I might be reassigned.

Washington State College



College of Engineering, Washington State College (WSC), Pullman, Washington.

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