WINGTIP TO WINGTIP

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Wingtip to Wingtip

A LIFETIME IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

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For Dona

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INTRODUCTION

The business of living must be attended to.
—Daniel Mendelsohn

I first learned of Jack and Junior Batty in 1984. My mother was suffering the effects of a malignant brain tumor, so my father had suggested I travel to Texas as an escape. He knew a woman who lived in the country near Austin who was recently widowed and would graciously accept a moody teenage roommate. I flew to Houston, where she picked me up in her Ford van. That was my first experience of her loyalty to the Ford brand that took years to fully comprehend. As I became acquainted with this professor of German, I asked about her husband. She explained that he had owned his own construction firm and had been a SeaBee veteran of World War Two. I was in awe as she showed me the two Japanese rifles he had brought back from Guadalcanal. I perused his unit history and asked far too many personal questions. She answered them all patiently and graciously.

As the days merged into weeks, I asked about the family pictures on her mantel. One stood out more prominent than the others. Two airmen posed in front of a P-51 Mustang. Dona Reeves responded, "those are my brothers. Both are dead. Junior was shot down in Korea and Jack died of alcoholism in 1967." This blunt yet honest description of life helped me with my own weak grasp of mortality and how I might cope with my mother's cancer.

She dragged me along one day to her work. I observed a few classes and learned about university-level studies. We toured the library, various academic departments, and the beautiful Hill Country campus

at Southwest Texas State University. At that moment I knew I wanted to study history.

My mother died in late 1984 and Dona phoned immediately with calm, consoling words. I can no longer recall her exact words, only that she was adamant that I remember the positives of my mother. Over the years, I learned that she always spoke of others positively, yet truthfully. With Jack and Junior, she was no different.

My father married Dona the following year. I took in a few more stories of her brothers over the years, but as a teenager, I was absorbed with my own adventures. While driving together to San Marcos one day, she became animated as we watched a B-17 Flying Fortress circle overhead at Gary Airfield during an airshow. We argued over the type of airplane it was. Of course, she was right. After I had earned a bachelor's degree in history, she entrusted me with her World War Two aircraft identity book from her childhood.

Years later, I had moved to San Antonio to take my first teaching position, coincidentally less than one mile from Randolph Air Force Base. In the evenings I enjoyed watching the planes land, having no clue that Jack and Junior had been based there fifty years previous. While helping my parents move to Austin some years later, I stumbled upon a footlocker in the garage. I pulled off a few old boxes and found stenciled across the top in thick paint, "Jack Batty." My curiosity got the better of me. I opened the footlocker and found inside row upon row of letters.

They were old and musty. Haphazardly piled into stacks and rubber-banded together, the letters showed the effects of sixty-plus years in storage. A mouse had worked its way into the footlocker at some time and nibbled away at the edges of a few of the letters. Fortunately, they were mostly intact and legible. Organized by date, the story of an American Army pilot emerged. The first letter was scribbled on the back of a postcard. Dated 25 January 1943, with Canadian postage, its simple yellowed message read, "Dear Mom, Came into Canada thru the tunnel – under the river – Really nice. Going back over the bridge. Really had a swell meal here in Windsor. Wild Duck. Write

later. Yours, Jack." Scrawled on a paltry little postcard, sent by a son to relieve his mother of worry, the message lacked any real historical importance or meaning. Lacking that is, until the entirety of those letters revealed an exceptional story of sacrifice, loyalty, love, and loss.

An occasional phone call, telegram, furlough, or the many face-to-face meetings punctuated the timeline, but a generalized story began to emerge. A story that illustrated how a young Missouri farm boy, together with his older brother were transformed into pilots during the end of World War Two. The letters illuminated the heartache and tragedy that families often live through as their young men leave for war. They illustrated the deep bonds that families have, and how sacrifice affects us all today. Perhaps most importantly, reading these letters made Jack and Junior come alive.

Alma treasured the letters and many photographs of her son's travels and their time in military service. Scattered throughout the letters were newspaper clippings Jack or Junior often included. They informed Alma how the Army was treating her sons. When Alma died, Dona found the letters in the attic of the farmhouse in Missouri. She had no clue her mother had saved them. Dona brought them back to Texas, where I happened to discover them. Still impetuous, I asked if I might read them. I discovered a few of those letters were addressed to Dona herself. One still held a crisp dollar bill inside as a birthday present. They helped rekindle memories of her youth and the memories of her brothers flooded back. We cannot understand why she never received that dollar bill.

Jack wrote while studying gunnery and communications, on guard duty, during lulls while waiting for a commanding officer or a class, before he went to bed, and as soon as he awoke. He wrote on his bed, on the floor, at his desk, and inside airplanes while flying. Often, he wrote three letters a day to his mother, in addition to the letters he wrote to girlfriends, acquaintances, family, and friends back home, as well as any official correspondence. Although most of his letters were short and to the point, he often went overboard giving his mother advice. Never one to mince words, he gave his opinion fre-

quently and without hesitation. If Jack wanted his mother to know what he was thinking, he wrote it down, often to his own detriment. He wrote almost anywhere and on any type of stationary. When money ran dry, a napkin or the back of an official document sufficed. Mostly he purchased stationery with unit names, which was cheap and plentiful. Where possible, I copied the stationery heading for each chapter.

Junior Batty too, wrote often. As a married man, however, most of Junior's correspondence was addressed to his wife or daughter. Those he did send to his mother survived and add a different perspective to the story. I have tried to keep both Jack and Junior's words as authentic as possible, keeping syntax and spelling errors as they appeared. Any minor corrections made were to keep the intent of the message but allow for an easier flow of reading possible. All mistakes are mine alone.

PART ONE

Training

Claude A. Batty Jr.
Cleared for Takeoff!
August 1945

Darkened skies succumbed to the first stabs of morning sunlight. In the illuminated cockpit of a B-25 Mitchell, Claude Batty and his co-pilot completed their pre-flight checklists. As they adjusted their headsets and throat microphones, the ground crew turned each propeller over by hand drawing oil out of the cylinders. Armed with fire extinguishers, they waited for the pilot to start the R-2600 engines. Both 14-cylinder radial engines were run up for two minutes to reach proper operating temperatures. Known to his family and friends as Junior, Claude taxied skillfully on to the ramp and positioned the aircraft at the end of the runway. Oil temperature, manifold pressure, and countless other readings were within normal operating range. Trim tabs were adjusted for the prevailing winds and flaps were set at one quarter. Brakes were fixed and locked.

Contacting the tower, Junior received permission for takeoff. Dual throttles were eased forward increasing the engines to two thousand revolutions per minute creating a deafening roar. The twin-tailed bird's unique exhaust stack forced the sound of both engines directly

into the cockpit, or so it seemed to every pilot. Releasing the brakes, Junior's hands gripped the wheel tightly as the steel bird rumbled down the runway. Picking up speed, the plane bounced along the concrete path. As it reached 110 miles per hour, he pulled back firmly on the wheel and the medium bomber lifted slowly into the air. Almost standing on the rudder pedals to keep the ship from slipping side to side, Junior ordered the co-pilot to raise the gear back up into their respective wells. The B-25 rose quickly in the dense cold morning air and escaped the light ground fog that had formed in the early dawn. Reducing power and banking slightly eastward, two hours of flight time remained before the bomber reached its target.

Quickly reaching two thousand feet, the Mitchell cruised at this altitude for only a few minutes. Nudging the wheel forward, Junior dropped the light bomber slightly toward earth and gained speed. Leveling out over the onrushing flat terrain, he maneuvered his plane skillfully a mere twenty-five feet off the ground. He raised his wingtips over fast approaching obstacles. Avoiding populated areas and known radar installations, the minimal crew had no time to enjoy their surroundings as they busied themselves with the task at hand. Concentrating on his vital mission, Junior flew in direct, straight lines. Burning through precious high-octane gasoline, he trimmed the engine lean to conserve fuel. He headed on a northeast bearing, navigating by both radio beacon and terrain features, but flying under any radar that might identify their massive aircraft's signature.

After nearly two hours, Junior required neither a radio nor a map to assist him. In fact, he no longer needed any navigational aids, for even at treetop level the terrain was well-known to him. He recognized the roads, streams, woods, and hills from many previous flights. The airplane shuddered close to a stall as he manipulated the throttle and pulled back on the wheel to lessen his speed while the aircraft rose to a safer altitude of 100 feet. In the past, he had flown this route more often with a smaller, but slower single-engine airplane. Today, however, his aircraft was twenty times heavier and capable of much faster speeds. He banked slightly from side to side to avoid the

silos and trees which quickly appeared in his windshield. Chickens scattered and horses panicked when the B-25 roared over the occasional dwelling dotting the landscape. The ever-important target was coming up fast.

As the bomber continued unabated to its destination, a young girl completing her weekend chores heard a terrific noise emanating from outside the farmhouse. The dull monotone sound of high-flying planes passing overhead was always exciting. She enjoyed trying to recognize each aircraft as they flew past. During World War Two, many nations employed masses of civilians to help identify foreign aircraft. On most occasions when an airplane flew over the farm, the young girl used her aircraft recognition guide and jotted notes into her journal, noting direction, type, and make of each airplane. Today, however, she sensed somehow that this plane brought something completely different, something out of the ordinary. As the plane "made a terrible racket" and drowned out all other sounds, the girl, together now with her terrified mother, ran out of the rattling house. Looking slightly above the horizon and spotting the low-flying plane, young Dona Batty immediately recognized her brother Junior's broad grin beaming from the cockpit. He cleared the trees that surrounded the pasture by inches, the same field on which he had landed his personal Cub countless times before. Banking left, he slid open the side window and waved to his family. Dona and her relieved mother, Alma, jumped up and down enthusiastically, waving frantically as the roaring aircraft circled just twice around the farm, and then as fast as it had appeared, the Mitchell wiggled its wings and disappeared southwestward, back toward Texas.[1]

Knowing he had barely enough time for the return trip to Pampa Army Air Base before being caught by his instructors, Junior had calculated the amount of fuel he needed for the remaining 420 miles. Not authorized to fly this route from Pampa, Texas to Peculiar, Missouri, Junior knew he had to make the correct calculations on fuel usage for a usual training mission. Normal missions required a direct route to Denver while flying at a low level and a return on instruments

only at a higher altitude. To make this flight home permissible, he fudged the records and accurately solved the fuel consumption within the allotted flight time. As he read his gauges and mentally checked his calculations, a sly grin crept across his face.

Back at the farm the reverberations from the fly-by echoed throughout the house the entire day. Alma and Dona smiled from ear-to-ear. It was the first time they had seen Junior in months. By the time Claude Senior returned home from his work in Kansas City and heard about the exciting events of the day, Junior had already landed at Pampa and completed his debriefing and required paperwork. Conspiring with his co-pilot, they jotted down a few hours each of low-level piloting, navigating, and instrumentation. They remained quiet about their actual flight plan. In fact, no one else in the detachment ever found out about their unauthorized journey, and the day belonged solely to the Batty family. The pride that swelled in each of them and the joy they all received that day reflected their familial bond. A bond that was tested and strained with the trials and tribulations that came quickly with not just one, but two sibling pilots who enlisted in the Army Air Forces during the height of World War Two.

Brothers Junior and Jack Batty
Kansas City, Missouri

Born on 17 May 1919 in Kansas City, Missouri, Claude Albert Batty, Junior was the second child and first son of Claude and Alma Batty. Claude Senior was a Kansas native who had grown up in Topeka, Kansas. Born and raised in Russell, Kansas, Junior's mother Alma Deines was from German-Russian immigrant stock that had helped cultivate the Great Plains during the late 1800s into "amber waves of grain." Homesteading acres of crops, however, was back-breaking work. The Battys sought a better life for themselves and their future children by moving to the booming city where jobs were more plentiful and lucrative. Claude obtained an excellent position at the Ford Motor Company factory in Kansas City as an inspector on assembly lines. Employment at the factory provided a better sense of security for his family. As a younger man, he had first eked out a living by working as a traveling salesman selling Ford automobiles directly from the factory. In rural areas of Kansas, the automobile was such a novelty at the time that a large component of Claude's sales pitch was a demonstration on how to drive. In Kansas City, Claude's newest employment allowed the young couple to purchase a small house where they began to raise their family. They had a total of five children, all born in Kansas City. Their first child, Constance, born in 1916, was followed by Junior in 1918, Marcella in 1922, Jack in 1925, and Dona in 1932.

Junior was a young, energetic boy who grew up in a bustling town during the Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression. Always hard-working and entrepreneurial, he had his first job at ten years of age selling subscriptions to the *Saturday Evening Post*. He delivered them door to door from the back of a specialized child's wagon emblazoned with the *Post's* logo. Combined with his financial sense, Junior had a nose for adventure and loved to travel. He often ran away from home,

much to the chagrin of his parents. After he purchased his first car, he drove for hours exploring the countryside. He savored the open road and once drove away for a weeklong trip without informing his parents. Concerned over his whereabouts, Alma and Claude called the authorities who convened a large manhunt. So many law enforcement agencies became involved that John Cameron Swayze broadcast the particulars of the search on his popular Kansas City radio show, only a few years before he became a famous national television news anchor with NBC. Junior knew nothing of this and as he saw it, he had simply taken his car for a journey through the Southwest. As a self-absorbed teenager, he returned surprised to find that his parents had worried at all. He wanted only to travel and see what the world away from Missouri had to offer.

Wanting to see more of the world, Junior attempted to enlist in the United States Marine Corps together with his friend, Bill McKinley. Denied due to flat feet, Junior remained in Missouri while his friend was accepted.[2] For much of Junior's young adult life, he covered as much of the country as possible. Later in life, as an airman he enjoyed traveling throughout the United States and overseas. During the Depression years, however, travel was much more difficult due to financial constraints. Desiring the fiducial means to become independent, Junior decided to drop out of high school and join the work force. Claude Senior procured a job for his son at the Kansas City Ford factory as a trimmer.

By 1934 the Great Depression suppressed wages and economic growth, causing financial ruin in all corners of the United States. Yet the Batty family managed to survive with Claude's fulltime employment combined with Junior's latest job at the same Ford factory. Junior earned enough money to contribute to the family's well-being and allowing him to continue his adventures. Nineteen and fully employed, Junior purchased a new car, a 1938 Ford Convertible. Custom built for him in the factory where he worked, he had his initials welded onto the floorboards. As a wild teenager in a big city is apt to do, Junior cruised late into the night and dated often. One girl stole

his heart, and in January of 1940 while on a road trip to Oklahoma, at the young age of twenty-one Junior married his eighteen-year-old bride Marguerite Patton. The young couple celebrated the arrival of their only child, Sharon Lee on 04 November 1940.

Still adventurous at heart, Junior took flying lessons at nearby Ong airport. He started night classes at Kansas City University in aeronautics, earning his pilot's license. Receiving a loan from his mother-in-law, he purchased a used Piper Cub airplane for his personal enjoyment. Junior flew his little Cub around Kansas City and the Missouri countryside, giving rides to his family. Dona, the youngest Batty, was only eight years old but enjoyed tremendously the occasional foray into the air, and she too fell in love with the romanticism and thrill of flight.[3]

Growing up in the dawn of air flight during the 1920s, many young people all over the globe were entertained by barnstormers and aerial shows at local or improvised airstrips. Watching these daredevils, however, proved too much for many young spectators. Temptation spawned an entire generation of hopeful and willing pilots. Tens of thousands of these future airmen would lose their lives while fighting one another in the skies over Europe and the Pacific. Junior was captivated with airplanes and like many children loved constructing his own model airplanes.

On 18 January 1925, the Battys had welcomed their second son into the world. When Junior's younger brother Jack was old enough, both boys spent hours building model airplanes together and pretended to pilot the aircraft themselves. The smell of model glue hung in the air and superfluous model parts were strewn around the house causing more than one injured foot in the Batty household. Junior now had someone to share his passion of travel and flight. Sure enough, as Jack grew older, he too immersed himself into all things aerial. As Jack matured, the brothers became more than siblings with similar interests, they became the very best of friends.

Jack's childhood was as typical and normal as any American boy in the 1930s. Growing up during the Depression, he moved from

one house to another as his parents struggled financially. Jack excelled in grade school and earned a prestigious position in the safety patrol during his junior high school years. Wearing a smart uniform and bright sash, he stopped traffic and helped children safely cross on their way to and from school. Receiving special permission to accompany his little sister's Kindergarten class on a field trip, he taught the children about various animals that lived in the area. Matriculating into high school, Jack tried out for the football team, but did not earn a spot due to his short stature. However, the coach noticed his tenacity and work ethic, and asked him to become the team manager. He also turned to theater where he became a talented actor. On weekends, he borrowed Junior's car and he too, had many girlfriends.

As the Great Depression made life more difficult, Claude and Alma defaulted on their mortgage and lost their modest home. They moved to Eastwood Hills, a suburb of Kansas City where they rented a much smaller and cheaper house. Their new neighbors were recent immigrants from Switzerland. The Herr's owned many cows and other animals in their backyard, as was wont during the Depression. They raised pheasants, guinea hens, ducks, geese, and various breeds of chickens. The Battys learned about livestock from these friendly neighbors and acquired useful skills such as how to milk cows and raise poultry. As the Great Depression waned in July of 1940, the Battys moved again, this time to Peculiar, Missouri. Borrowing from family, they purchased some farm acreage. The knowledge gained from the Herrs was put to good use. They purchased a 1940 Ford tractor to plow the 120 acres, although the house did not yet have running water nor electricity. However, the family felt more self-sufficient and enjoyed the simplistic yet rustic lifestyle the farm offered. Alma especially enjoyed raising poultry. Her turkeys were sold off during Thanksgiving. The Battys grew corn, oats, and wheat to sell in addition to a few acres of hay for the cows they raised. Claude and Alma were quite content, but farm life did not please any of their children.

When Junior and Pat[4] visited, the boys read tales of American volunteers fighting over London or the brave pilots of the Flying Tigers

in China. Jack and Junior both dreamt of flying with the Air Corps. The boys were adventurous, and the Air Corps fed their dreams and egos. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on 07 December 1941, plunging the country into war, national pride combined with youthful exuberance propelled many young men to join the military to seek revenge against the Japanese. At sixteen, Jack was still too young to volunteer and Junior had a daughter and wife to consider. Enlisting at that time was out of the question for the brothers. Weighing more on their minds than patriotism or revenge, however, was the desire to fly. They began to formulate a plan, but they would have to be patient to see it come to fruition.

In the spring of 1942, while Jack was in the second semester of his sophomore year of high school, Junior was transferred to the Willow Run factory in Ypsilanti, Michigan. Mart[5] had also attained a position with the Ford factory, and Pat and Mart became quite close. The factory had been retooled to manufacture airplanes, and jobs were plentiful. Due to wartime expenditures and necessities, this new position offered much more pay and better benefits. Junior worked on time-studies and concentrated on finding the most efficient use for the assembly line. In Kansas City, the factory had cranked out rows and rows of Ford sedans, whereas in Ypsilanti, Junior worked on the newest heavy bomber in the United States Army's arsenal, the B-24 Liberator. Junior learned the many ins and outs of the massive four-engine "Flying Boxcar." Although he wanted to fly the B-24 in combat, Junior used a deferment to keep his essential government job, much to the relief of his family. His true motive, though, was to enlist simultaneously with his brother.

During his time in Michigan, Junior corresponded often with Jack. During the winter break of January 1943, Jack visited his older brother in Detroit. A pair of explorers, they enjoyed a few days of travel together in Canada and savored the sights. Away from their parents, they talked freely about their future. They knew that their father would not be happy working the farm alone, nor having his only two sons at war. Unbeknownst to their parents, however, the pair had conspired for months. Over long letters, the rare phone call or

telegram, and the occasional meeting, they discussed their enlistment into the Army Air Forces.[6] From the beginning, Claude Senior had been adamantly opposed to Jack's enlistment. Junior, however, was on his own in Michigan, and no longer under the watchful eye of his father nor the tough love of his mother. Alma, too, disagreed with either of her sons enlisting. A domineering and strict mother, she openly spoke her mind on all topics. Her greatest joy were her children, and her single-minded goal was to keep her family intact.

For Jack and Junior, the only logical solution was deception. Secretly, the boys would apply to the Aviation Cadets. Although the Army drafted civilians directly into the various branches of the armed forces, citizens were allowed the option of applying for the Army Air Forces. The Army allowed "men between the ages of 18 and 26…" to "apply through voluntary induction for air crew training…."[7] Once accepted, these men were known as Air Cadets.

When Jack turned eighteen, he began his last semester at Southeast High School. He and his father drove Junior's car to and from Kansas City for the daily one-hour commute. As Jack's graduation date approached, he wrote Junior often and the pair finalized their plan. Their shared passion of flying led them to their decision to enlist in the Army and apply for air crew training as a pair. They hoped to enlist, train, and fight together. As brothers, they knew nothing could separate them. As it often does, the Army saw it completely different.

The warm summer air of Michigan was always pleasant, but a light breeze came off Anchor Bay, cooling the soldiers working nearby. It was 13 July 1943 when Junior arrived at the main gate of Selfridge Field, north of Detroit. He checked in with the officer in charge and stared at his surroundings. The airfield buzzed with activity as construction crews, day laborers, and Army Air Force personnel worked with a purpose. Twin-tailed P-38s were landing after practicing aerial gunnery, B-24s roared high above from their assembly plant at nearby Willow Run, and a plethora of planes in various stages of repair were

worked on in the hangars. World War One vintage aircraft stood on static display, honoring those who had come before. The field was named after Lieutenant Thomas Selfridge, the first U.S. military officer to fly a military aircraft and the first to die in an aviation accident at the young age of twenty-six.

From its inception, the field was continuously modernized and expanded to its wartime size of 3,700 acres. The base housed the 1st Pursuit Group, the oldest combat group in the United States. Famous individual pilots who had learned their trade at this airfield included Eddie Rickenbacker and Army Reserve pilot Charles Lindbergh. Additional important contributors to the development of American airpower stationed at Selfridge Field included James Doolittle, Curtis LeMay, and Carl Spaatz. In 1918 Selfridge Army Air Base became the first aerial gunnery school and during World War Two was employed for a myriad of training exercises. Selfridge Field had also prepared the Tuskegee Airmen for combat deployment.

Junior walked to the infirmary and reported to the front desk. He received a few instructions and waited in line with the other recruits for his physical. Eight hundred miles away in Missouri, Jack slept in and was enjoying his summer vacation after graduating from high school. Although the farm demanded much of his attention, the heat of summer kept him in bed. His bull, which monopolized much of his time, could wait. Drifting off back to sleep, he dreamt of piloting his own plane, shooting down wave after wave of enemy fighters. After all, four months earlier in March he too had completed his own physical test at the Cass County Court House in Harrisonville and was classified 1-A, ready for duty.

His parents knew and feared that he might soon be drafted into the Army, but his father hoped to earn Jack a farm deferment. Claude Sr. still worked at the Ford factory in Kansas City, but his job had changed since the attack on Pearl Harbor. Like Junior's work at Willow Run, he now concentrated on the automation and efficiency on the assembly line of Pratt and Whitney aircraft engines. Nonetheless, he hoped Jack would stay on the farm, safe from harm.

For his part, Jack could have applied on his own for a deferment. Although hardly an absolute, as the only working male on a productive farm, Jack's work was often deemed essential by the government. However, Jack was not to be denied a future he himself would forge. He had applied to be an Aviation Cadet on the same date as his older brother. However, due to bureaucratic delays, he was not inducted into the Army until 07 January 1944. Part of the delay came from Claude Sr., who had discovered his children's deceit and actively discouraged Jack's enlistment by directly petitioning the local draft board. The request asked that Jack's status change to 2-C, an agricultural deferment. His request had been approved in April 1943. Claude demanded that Jack remain on the farm. Jack was not to be denied. Now eighteen, as a legal adult he had himself reclassified as 1-C and by the end of November reapplied. The Army received the necessary letters of recommendation and Jack was inducted into active service on 07 January 1944 at Ft. Leavenworth, seventeen days after Junior's swearing in. Jack and Junior explained to their parents that they were joining together, allaying some of their parent's fears.

Siblings were discouraged from serving jointly during World War Two. Twenty-two pairs of brothers perished on the USS *Arizona* on that infamous day in December. After the sinking of the USS *Juneau* and the subsequent loss of all five Sullivan brothers during the Battle of Guadalcanal in 1942, it became more challenging for family members to serve together. However, Jack and Junior adamantly expressed their desire not to be separated, regardless the consequences. Nonetheless, receiving the same orders and remaining together for their training and overseas deployment would be at best, difficult. No official government policy existed concerning siblings. The Sole Survivor Policy did not become official government law until 1948, and each branch of service adopted its own policies concerning siblings much later. None of that mattered to Jack and Junior though, as they were determined to remain together.

From the moment of their enlistment, however, that determination was put to the test. Unlike Jack, Junior was ordered to active duty and

had no choice but to proceed to Fort Leavenworth and report to the reception center. Jack wrote the headquarters of the Seventh Service Command and requested that his name be added to those orders. Fortunately, the orders were changed, and Jack happily received the same shipping date as Junior. However, because Junior had been put on an earlier order, they were not guaranteed that they would remain together as they matriculated through basic training. But, at a minimum, they had cleared the first hurdle in a very long race.

Junior had already showed up for induction at Leavenworth, Kansas by the time Jack arrived. Jack had driven in from Peculiar with his parents and youngest sister, Dona. The brothers said their goodbyes to their family and headed inside. They were assigned barracks and told exactly where to bunk. For the next few days they trained for fire guard duty, marched up and down the parade fields, scrubbed the barracks from top to bottom, performed calisthenics, washed windows, learned to stand at attention, and completed endless hours of KP duty. Their time in Leavenworth was mercifully short. In a mere eight days from 21-28 January 1944 Jack and Junior Batty were officially mustered into the United States Army. Processing at Leavenworth included tetanus and typhoid immunizations, I.Q. tests, and lectures on military courtesy. In addition, they received their uniform, with Jack commenting that they were "more clothes than I've ever owned."[8]

As it is intended, the shock of military life assaulted the men's sense of individuality. Training was designed to make boys into soldiers, and like many other young enlistees, Jack missed the many comforts and normalcy of home. In the evening, when he had some rare downtime, he wrote many letters to help sooth his anxiety. He was diligent enough to send seven letters home in those eight days. Illustrating the seriousness of their undertaking, but employing his sense of dry wit, Jack wrote, "Keep the things I'm sending home. You'll need it in case I kick the bucket."[9]

Immediately, the difficulties that became commonplace during their time in the military began to appear. Jack and Junior received separate shipping orders for basic training. Only through personal intervention

by the Colonel of their group did they receive matching shipping orders. They had talked personally to the Colonel, who found some sympathy for the young men and had the orders amended. After sweating it out for a few days, they were moving forward together. This became a common occurrence. Whenever Jack and Junior held conflicting orders, the brothers worked tirelessly to have them changed. Alma too, used any pull she might have as their mother to keep them united; either giving advice to her sons, threatening to call their commanding officer personally, or writing the Army on behalf of her children. As a family, they conferred with Army chaplains, filed requests in triplicate to their commanding officers, and begged and pleaded with anyone who lent a sympathetic ear. Occasionally, they simply argued their case directly to the officer in charge. Never easy, the Army's unofficial policy of "chicken shit" worked seemingly overtime at separating them. Sometimes bureaucratic red tape, incompetence, or perceived grievances tried to force them apart. None of it mattered, however, for their commitment and brotherly love of one another was perhaps stronger than their patriotism or their desire to fly.

The bond they shared was a smaller part of a stronger familial bond. Although their parents were both against Jack's and Junior's enlistment, it was only out of a desire to keep their children safe from harm. Both parents were proud of their sons, but they were a very demanding and strong-minded people. Their opinionated manner in all things had stymied their sons from talking openly about their enlistment. Now that they had officially joined the Army, however, Claude and Alma supported their boys wholeheartedly. Family came first. Nothing was more important to the Battys than their children. This strong bond, however, would be strained to the breaking point by the realities of a lifetime in the military.