

sick and I still feel like I have been shocking grain all day. Before the great jaunt we had a 300 yd. Dash in 45 seconds, 11 burpees, 75 yd. pick-a-back, creep and crawl 75 yards, and wound up with 24 push-ups. It really kept the medics busy with the smelling salts. Some guys really had to step on their guts to make it. I can truthfully say it made me feel like hell. For breakfast all I ate was a cup of coffee, 2 salt pills, and one piece of toast. We did so well I guess it was worth the effort... All this training must be the last phase of our training that the colonel spoke about. One advantage of field work is that you can't dirty your khakis and so I save on cleaning bills. On Wednesday I fired the rocket launcher or bazooka and the rifle anti-tank grenade. It makes more noise than a cannon and kicks like a mule. While we fired the artillery was shooting their Long Toms about 300 yards away. They are 240 millimeters and they really pack a wallop... After July 7<sup>th</sup> they have to give me a furlough before I go overseas. This morning they called 10 men out of ranks and they move out tomorrow. Now this makes us ASTP boys the veterans of the whole company outside of the non-coms... I hope the hay gets harvested and the cherries aren't all bird food..."

## **VII. AND STILL WE TRAIN – JULY & AUGUST**

### **LETTERS SENT HOME FROM FORT BRAGG, NORTH CAROLINA**

July 4, 1944. "I spent the day recuperating from a three day problem. We hit bad weather and got rain 2 nights and all three nights were quite cool. In fact the mosquitoes must have been numbed by the cold. Everyone who went on the problem looks beat out... These problems have a top priority... We underwent the physical fitness tests on Friday morning and that evening we started the problem. I know we were all fatigued before we started and it rained before we could pitch tents... The next day we walked all through the woods and at night we stopped and camped. Since the moon shone so bright we put up our mosquito bars and no tents. We were some sorry looking specimens when it rained. Everyone was soaked and I wonder why we don't all have pneumonia. They had food cached at each end of the bivouac areas but we had to do all of our own cooking. I thrived on it, but I think it was the water that made me miserable. All those hikes through the jungle lowlands didn't please me either. The only compensation I found was the blackberry bushes throughout the area... During our cross country jaunts I saw my first growing fields of cotton and tobacco. All the problem was off the reservation and we were in some fair farming country... We had to ford some deep creeks and we really slogged thru the mud. For the grand finale we marched 14 miles back into camp in 4 hours..."

This coming weekend our platoon has to run the course so it rules me out of two weekends. Our 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon helped fill out the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> platoons when they ran the course...”

July 4, 1944. “I am spending a miserable 4<sup>th</sup> of July in my bunk. Yesterday noon we came in from a 3 day problem. My back, head, and knee all ache plus blisters on my feet... When I woke up on Saturday night or I mean Sunday morning there was small rivulets beneath me. Everyone woke up with a wet hide... During the day we trekked through some rough terrain and I dare say the lowlands are as thick as any jungle. We also passed through some mighty nice looking farms... Of course all the buildings aren't too fancy, but every family is large and invariably they all own a jalopy. I ate lots of blackberries... We have to run through another problem with our own platoon. It is scheduled for this coming weekend ... I feel a little fortunate as I didn't get any poison oak... Today the P.O.E. shipment left and 9 guys left. That makes us ASTP men the veterans here. I guess 1/3 of the company is under 19 and another 1/3 are under 24. There are few men over 30 in age so I guess we must be a young outfit. When we came back they also had our pay ready so it cheered us a little...”

July 8, 1944. “... The spring was dry and hot, but what little summer we have had has been quite cool with quite a bit of moisture ... tomorrow night we go out on another three day problem. We got stuck for two weekends in a row and the three before these two we were restricted... On Thursday night I embarked on the biggest undertaking of my life. We left at 9:15 on a 25 miles hike and we finished it in 7 hrs. and 40 minutes. *[Most of the things Bud reports in such detail are long gone from my memory so many years later, but not that 25 mile hike. I will never forget that. It was a big deal, and no one who completed it could help feeling a little proud of himself.]* All we had for breaks were 5 minutes of rest per hour. We are a good infantry outfit as most of us finished... Some people really went through a lot of torture to complete it. One of our sergeants couldn't get his shoes off. I got some nasty blisters, but who didn't? I shudder to think of walking for another three days, but we all suffer together... For 8 days I haven't seen a movie and I have been to the PX but two times. I did see one USO camp show and it sure pepped me up. They are asking for volunteers for the paratroopers, but I am perfectly satisfied with the infantry... Some of the fellows said they saw my name on the list in the orderly room for promotion to PFC... It really takes something to make a stripe or two in the infantry... I got a feeling that we will head for France... Our long sought after trip to the (Myrtle) beach has been postponed... This training we are getting now is really fast and furious with few breaks...”

July 13, 1944. “Our squad goes out this afternoon on a squad combat firing test. It means a dirty rifle when we come back and tonight the whole company goes out on a night problem until 2 in the morning ... On Sunday afternoon at 5 we started our 22 mile trek on a 3 day problem. We arrived at our camping area in the middle of the night and my tent mate and I made our canvas home. Our efforts were rewarded by a nice little downpour of 4 hours duration... They gave us the missions to destroy enemy installations and we did cross country walking to get there... One night it rained so hard we got disgusted and

took our provisions to a farmhouse. The woman cooked our veal cutlets and made us some coffee. We rewarded her with all the excess groceries. They bring us out our food in a jeep, but we have to prepare and cook it. Our only facilities are bayonets, knives, helmets, mess kits, and a few stray tin cans. We fared fairly well on our cooking, but one night some dogs stole our bacon and part of our bread. This farmhouse was a typical farmhouse with 3 rooms and no cellar, but a shiny tin roof. Their outhouse didn't have a pit and a family of chickens lived behind the stove. However, we were hungry and the meat sure was delicious even if there was other odors. That evening we walked 1 1/2 miles into a small village on U.S. No. 1 highway and we feasted ourselves with pop and cakes. We had a few hours off one afternoon so we took a busman's holiday and walked 2 miles to a gas station for pop and cookies. The blisters on my feet have changed to callouses... On these problems we get dirty and smelly and we are all glad to go back to camp. We rode back to the barracks in GI trucks."

July 13, 1944. "... We are hardly even living in the barracks any more. If we aren't out on a 3 day problem it is some night problem... For 6 days I couldn't even go to the PX to say nothing of a movie. Most spare time is consumed in cleaning equipment and especially our rifles as we have fired them this past week... I guess we are soon going to change scenery and our C.O. said the hour wasn't far away... These three day problems take us off the reservation proper we meet a lot of the natives. They are good natured and treat us O.K.... The All-Star game was 4 days history before I even knew about it... The army must be a good life as I haven't been sick since I entered... They cancelled all three day passes here ... If we do ship out I think it will be to some camp in Maryland or New Jersey and then over east... All the physical misfits have been transferred and we are a hale and hearty crew. The radio inside the barracks is going full blast on some revival broadcast. It is all we hear on these radios except transcribed programs... Today is good flying weather and the planes have been distracting me all day..."

July 16, 1944. "... These three day excursions out in the pine woods really separate one from the affairs of the world... The papers say that a hurricane is headed north on the Atlantic coastline. This month has had plenty of moisture. There had been a drought and this spring was abnormally hot and dry... Tomorrow morning I have to be ready to move out to the rifle range... I work in the pits, but I rather enjoy the job..."

July 20, 1944. "... Today I threw live hand grenades and I have fulfilled all of my POM requirements (Progress for Overseas Movement). I crave a change of scenery, but overseas vets in here say this is heaven compared to battlefields... I had a change yesterday when I went on the range and fired the Browning Automatic Rifle. My score was 187 which qualified me as an expert. The automatic rifle weighs 22 pounds compared to 9 lbs. for the M-1 rifle... We are almost prisoners. We have new battalion and company commanding officers and they both are very strict... All three day passes have been curtailed and they took away our Class A passes... Last Saturday a bunch of us got disgusted with the whole affair and took off to town. They missed us and put us on pit detail on Monday. It isn't my idea of punishment and it was an experience. We pulled

targets on the machine gun transition range. It is really something to have machine gun bullets flying overhead. I got caught up on my reading so you hear no complaints from me on that deal... Guess I'll close now and dub my shoes."

July 23, 1944. "... We had a good meal in the service club cafeteria. Yesterday afternoon and evening I ate my customary steak and cream puffs as well as malted milks... We are moving soon and they are hurrying all remaining furloughs... I will be home in August... They have erased all quotas and are actually asking men if they have funds to carry them home... The way Germany is crumbling it looks like we might be too late. Things may be over before we expect, but I still think there is a rough trail ahead. Right now we are going through a lot of tactics and battle formations. It gets quite boring and I actually wish I'd get some KP soon..."

July 24, 1944. "... The way some guys get their furloughs is to be on KP one day and leave the next afternoon... We leave here in the afternoon and if we're lucky we get the 5:30 train to Washington. Sometimes some guys have to wait until the 11:30 at night. Our furloughs legally don't start until midnight... I guess I got some cellar cleaning practice yesterday as I volunteered to sort out the trash of the company. It got me out of inspection and drill and it didn't exactly break my back... The guys I run around with come from all over the union. Our platoon is the best in G Company and we stick together. I have friends from N. Dakota [*Fett*], Kansas [*Gillin*], Wisconsin [*Pointer*], Illinois [*several*], Penn. [*Nailor*], Vermont [*me*], New York [*several*], Mass. [*La Fleur*], and N. Carolina [*Raymer*]. We sure have a lot of arguments, but nobody takes them seriously. I guess we act silly as we put up an exhibition when we go hiking..."

July 26, 1944. "... This is being written on the 2<sup>nd</sup> story porch of the barracks... We do PT, bayonet drill early in the morning and then for the remainder of the day we do tactics... Today I was the table waiter which is a fancy name for a scrubman. Our mess hall is the honor mess hall of all the battalion for the third straight week. It is us little guys that scrub it clean and make it so. Right after dinner they had a dental survey of the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion. All they did was shine a light in your face and look in your mouth. Almost everyone including me got a classification of 1-C. It means the teeth require minor repairs... The battalion commanding officer told the non-com school that all of our training has to be completed by Sept. 3... I saw the 'Battle of China' film which is the last in the why we fight series. The company is quite empty now with so many guys on furlough. I think I have an even chance to leave this week. I didn't send laundry and my clothes are ready from the cleaners. I hope you haven't forgotten about how to cook..."

#### FURLOUGH AND RUMORS OF OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENT

"The furlough came through. I was with hundreds of GI's that boarded the filled, late evening Atlantic Coast Line passenger train at the Fayetteville depot. I rode in a vestibule until the Rocky Mount stop when I got aisle standing room inside the car. At Washington I boarded a coal fired Pennsylvania Railway train for Chicago with plenty of seating room and lots of soot. I caught a late afternoon diesel powered C & NW train to Capron and looked like a chimney sweep when I

greeted my parents and sister. I arrived after grain shocking time and just before threshing time in pleasant August weather. Wimpy, my German shepherd–collie dog, still remembered me. My purebred Chester Whites had been merged with the farm's larger swine herd. That was the summer my father learned how to grow sweet potatoes from a new Kentucky born neighbor. It was the first summer my father didn't operate the threshing machine for the south of Capron threshing ring. My mother cleaned and pressed my khakis while I wore my farm denim clothing. She filled me with lots of home cooking and fresh berry pies. My high school classmates were scattered with most serving in the Pacific area. I noticed the shortage of labor on northern Illinois dairy farms. I visited relatives and friends in Chicago on the way back to Fayetteville with a full day at Riverview Amusement Park and lots of roller coaster riding. My letters begin with my return to Fort Bragg."

August 22, 1944. "Today I am back on the old job after an uneventful trip down here... I find lots of new faces here and several familiar ones absent. All the old pills are shipped out and replacements are more kids... I guess we leave here in September... Today of all days we get scrambled eggs, lamb stew and lamb patties... Guess we maybe will go to Europe, but we'll be sure when we arrive. I'll send some stuff home as soon as I find a box. We are going to have all our unserviceable equipment replaced by new..."

August 28, 1944. "... The weekend has been quite cool and I slept under two blankets. Everyone wears his field jacket, so I guess maybe fall is on its way. I just cut off my divisional insignia and we're supposed to turn them in. Today we had a lecture on military censorship and related subjects. Everyone will be happy that we are moving. Tonight I go on guard duty for which I volunteered. Of all things we guard the trash and garbage cans in the company. Some men have been throwing away excess GI equipment so now they guard the cans. To my mind it will be a lot simpler to sort out the trash every day..."

August 30, 1944. "This has been a hard day for all of us, but I am still not finished. I go to school for flame throwers tonight at 7:30. We are to receive instruction in case someone has to use it someday. I received my first promotion [obviously, to PFC] along with 19 of my distinguished friends [not I!]. Today our platoon had training with tanks. We all rode on tanks and it is like hanging on to a bolt of greased lightning. They run over 10 inch pine trees and turned around on a Willie button. It was as hectic as my roller coaster... The regiment is full of new overseas equipment. They ought to be passing it out in a day or two... We don't have change of address cards yet and they ought to give us them pretty soon..."

August 31, 1944, in August 30 envelope. "I just came in from the field... We went through rifle anti-tank grenades all morning. I learned the use of the flame thrower so it looks like I am becoming the all around man in the squad. Learning something new takes the monotony out of life ... I was in the supply room this morning and it is just filled with new clothes and equipment. We know we are going (overseas) because the general said so, but everyone has a different idea as to when or where..."