

company and start out by going through the infiltration course. I don't know what it is about so I will write the details in my next letter... Payday in 4 days."

The 100<sup>th</sup> division was at near full strength after we ASTP men arrived on the scene, but very quickly large numbers of fully trained soldiers and officers were transferred away as combat infantry replacements. The Division commenced then to complete the basic training of former students who hadn't finished it. Other ASTP men, myself included, had already had 13 weeks or more of basic training, and had "tested out," so we had been assigned to the regular platoons from our arrival. In comparison to the other newcomers, we almost got to loaf through their training days. During the course of that Spring and early Summer, however, the training for all intensified. We received many transfers in from the by then over-staffed MPs, Army Air Corps, Coast Artillery, Signal Corps, and many recent draftees as well, until we again reached full strength. Quickly enough it became obvious to all that the 100<sup>th</sup> Division's training mission had been fulfilled and that it was soon to become a combat division in its own right.

## VI. MORE TRAINING – MAY & JUNE

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

April 30, 1944. "... We are now done with (rifle) firing so once we get the carbon out it will remain fairly clean. Also I have fired the carbine... The carbine looks and feels like a toy, but it still is a deadly weapon. On Thursday we went through the infiltration course. We crawl 75 yards with live machine gun bullets firing just over our heads. To make it interesting they had barbed wire and smoke pots all over. It was a hectic 10 minutes and when we were finished up we had a coat of red clay on us. Almost 4 hours were required to clean up... Tomorrow is payday and also we change into our summer uniforms... Our food is plentiful and tasty. We even get berry pies that remind me of mother's... We are now ready to be assigned to the regular company... I am getting quite proficient in the art of sewing and laundering..."

April 30, 1944. "... I have been doing nothing all week but cleaning my rifle ... a pitted rifle ... makes for perpetual gigs... I have had no free time to write letters because my rifle comes first... I am gaining weight and weigh 164 pounds with civilian shoes and two suppers in me. Our chow is excellent but we live on eggs three meals a day. The QMC purchased the surplus eggs of the country and we get them for breakfast, in salads, vegetables, and they even put hard boiled eggs in today's meat loaf... This morning I sewed on buttons, a shoulder

patch, and a tear in my fatigue shirt ... in my next package ... send me one worn out toothbrush to clean my rifle."

May 3, 1944. "... Last night we had a night problem from 5 to 5 so consequently we had today to ourselves. I went to Fayetteville this afternoon after sleeping until noon. My copilot is Richard La Fleur from Plymouth, Massachusetts. Yesterday everyone (the ASTP training platoon) was moved into different barracks. Our night work was a raiding party and setting up camp under combat conditions. We didn't have over two hours sleep... Tomorrow night we have a 4 hour 10 mile hike. Next Saturday my new squad goes out to the combat firing range so that means more rifle cleaning. Our company has a large group of older men in service who are scheduled for Port of Embarkation. Incidentally there are several thousand more air corps men who are being transferred to the infantry... We are 11 miles from Fayetteville... There aren't huge crowds on weekdays like there is on weekends."

May 4, 1944. "... At 8 this evening we hike for 4 hours and the route is 10 miles. Of course we carry our house, weapons, and household utensils... Tomorrow we arise at 5:30 and go out and capture a Nazi village. We fire live bullets and Saturday we go on squad combat firing tests which means we go walking along and targets appear. We then deploy into battle formations and shoot at the targets... Most of our work comes at night and soon each squad goes on a 3 day problem... On Wednesday we had raiding parties and so we captured all the company commanders and the battalion commander as well... My chief complaint against night problems is that I miss the movies."

May 9, 1944. "... Last night we spent out in the field. There was the usual raiding parties and after 1 o'clock we had a tactical bivouac... Tomorrow our company is to be spot checked by the officers from division and it includes everything from sox to the barracks... When all this red dust gets to circulating you almost choke. It gets into everything... the damn mosquitoes around here are as big as Illinois flies but they can't get our heads as we have been issued head nets and we all look like brides or bee keepers. My wrists are full of bites... a mosquito sounds like an airplane when it gets under your helmet. Our whole division is being filled up with ex-M.P.'s and anti-aircraft and coast artillery men... They are going to get infantry basic even though most of them are T/5's or corporals. It proves that the United States is through with defense and urgently needs infantrymen to hold the ground and mop up..."

May 10, 1944. "... Some fellows make work out of letter writing, but it comes quite easy for me ... we get hot and tired after traversing the obstacle course and then do 25 push ups. This morning we had instruction on the 30 cal. machine gun... Most weapons are simple and sturdy, but they still cost the taxpayers a neat penny. Each morning we have a half hour of close order drill and then a half hour of bayonet drill... Each week we are supposed to have 16 hours of night work ... they are serving pork and eggs every meal. They never have beef like the advertisements depict. We have beef tonight but of course they will put it in stew..."

May 12, 1944. "... The hours of bayonet drill seem to be long but the days themselves just fly by ... nothing but hot sun. This morning we had our 50

minutes run after we finished a half hour of close order drill, physical training, and bayonet drill. I can guarantee that there was several pooped out GI's afterwards. Last night I saw Betty Grable in Pin Up Girl. I wasn't too well pleased with the show but the finale was 100 chorus girls doing close order drill. They inspired us, but the hot, dusty drill field will cure that... Every night we stand retreat at 5:30 and after chow we are free. I worked harder at home, but everyone still likes home the best, including me. Tonight we had our first beefsteak in 3 weeks. Don't let anyone say that the army gets all the prime beef. All the beef I have seen is not prime, but only choice. I suppose it is shipped overseas [I was not as preoccupied with the quality of the food as Bud was—though I can remember first hearing the old joke there that the food here is lousy, and we don't get enough of it—but I do have one clear memory of being served one day some "beef" that was very lean, dark, and stringy. Some among us swore it was horse meat; others said that in all probability it was goat. We ate it, whatever it was.] ... All the old men of the company have been taking shots and physicals and are scheduled for port of embarkation shipment this coming week. All the non-coms are remaining... Also we now have our full quota of officers... Last Tuesday we crawled the infiltration course at night and it sure resembles a battle."

May 14, 1944. "... They opened our swim hole yesterday. Yesterday afternoon we had a regimental review and my feet were really hot dogs ... our Lt. barked commands. He is a short, stocky, good natured Irishman name of Sullivan. His nickname is baseplate and he looks it... The novelty of going into Fayetteville has fallen off with me so here I am. I looked at my draft registration card and it says I weighed 140 pounds. My weight now is 162 pounds with GI shoes on. A dreadful calamity happened as every dayroom ran out of cokes..."

May 18, 1944. "... We just came in from a divisional parade and review. We paraded for a Marine General and members of the Chinese military legation... It is in the 90's today and the dust almost chokes us when the whole battalion moves as one. Last night we had our regular weekly 12 hr. problem. We three rifle companies attacked the weapons company of this 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion but since we were held in reserve we didn't get to shoot our blanks. On the way out we were the advance guard and the heavy weapons company ambushed us and threw out a smoke screen. We put on our masks and proceeded to drive them back. This was one problem in which we were permitted to sleep. Also yesterday afternoon was supposed to be free time, but our platoon rode out 12 miles on the combat firing test with live ammunition. The whole squad moves out and when the targets come up we build up a firing line and then proceed to pepper the cardboard targets. Yesterday we arose at 3:30... Our company was inspected by the Inspector General's Dept. so we were scrubbing everything until 10:30 at night and then getting up at 3:30... We moved out of the way at 6:00 AM and walked four miles to witness a demonstration on how the Medical Corps cares for and evacuates casualties. I was very impressed as there was \$250,000 of equipment and scores of men ... we were given a clean bill by the Inspector General. They examine everything from a private's socks to the payroll records. Last Monday night we did 15 miles in 4 hours. On Monday afternoon a few of us went through the bayonet assault course. Before we stabbed at the air, but here

there is realistic Japs and Germans. Of course there are a few obstacles like a river that is four feet deep and about 25 yards of knee deep mud that we are supposed to run thru. Following that is a long hill with barbed wire to crawl under, fences to jump, and the log wall. The wall is about 15 feet wide and 8' high and we have to roll over it and between the walls are piled logs and stumps that are mean. Everyone is bruised stiff and tired. Tomorrow our platoon is alerted for fire squad which means that we lay around the barracks waiting for a fire ... signed with mosquito bites."

May 19, 1944. "I have been sewing and shining shoes and I have the best intentions of shining my rifle only it is locked in the rack... The bayonet assault course ... is supposed to be the toughest ever devised ... it is the cause of several bruises and torn pants ... at the end everyone just fell down and panted for five minutes... On our night march the honeysuckle was very pleasing to smell but when we stop the mosquitoes dive bomb us."

May 21, 1944. "... Everything is wet with sweat whenever we do any physical exertion. It is especially true when our packs are on our backs. There is an artificial lake about a mile from here with complete swimming facilities. Have mother send my swimming trunks as it is next to the highway and no nudity is permitted... We are going on mountain maneuvers in West Virginia this coming August. Another reliable rumor is that we have the sailing date set for this division [We were ceaselessly assaulted with rumors, most of them baseless. *The West Virginia maneuvers were totally imaginary—the sailing date may not have been, but it didn't make much difference for apparently no actual date was included.*] ... One nice thing about the army is the opportunity to take a shower. I guess it is vastly different on maneuvers... The mosquitoes sound like P38's and sting like hornets."

May 23, 1944. "... This afternoon we go out for a 24 hour expedition or problem ... its main purpose is to test the individual soldier on sanitation and first aid when on a hike and in a bivouac area... There are going to be simulated casualties and we are supposed to apply first aid for any types of casualties ... we are supposed to have two hot meals in the field ... yesterday afternoon (with Dick La Fleur) went into the Highland Cafeteria (in Fayetteville) and it is swell. It is air conditioned and the decorations are Scotch with all the plaids, etc. I ordered and enjoyed baked fish and just for the record we drank 3 pints of milk. Of course we rounded out the meal with salad, pie, rolls, olives, and sweet potatoes. It only cost me \$1.08 [!] so I figure I had my pennies worth. Then we went to the Colony which is Fayetteville's finest cinema... It sure seems funny to go into air conditioned buildings and be cooled off..."

May 25, 1944. "... Today I went swimming for the first time. A heavy rain delayed us, but the whole battalion walked down later on. Of course the pond was muddy, but it had a nice sandy bottom and excellent bath house facilities. This morning we had obstacle course and the like, but for once we had a pleasant duty to perform. On Tuesday... we marched nine miles with full field pack and the mercury near 100. No breeze and all I had to drink was salt water. All I drank was 2 1/2 swallows... We pitched camp and after I got done with my usual latrine digging I had chow. The medics quizzed us on first aid ... and the

practice of sanitation... I slept under the mosquito net. In the middle of the night we get up and go on patrols for 2 hours against the other companies... In the morning we had lectures on malaria control... I dislike the warm, putrid drinking water. The cooks serve nice cool drinks with our meals..."

May 30, 1944. "... Today I worked in the pits on the transition firing range. Pits are located at ranges of 2, 3, and 5 hundred yards. We hold up pasteboard silhouette targets and keep our heads down when the lead flies. It is something to hear live lead singing overhead... The worst part of the detail is the showers of sand that rain on us when the bullet hits into the bank in front of us. It isn't all work as we both read magazines and shot the breeze over the field telephone. Not many men can hit the targets at 500 so we rest while they aim at 200 and 300 yard ranges. ... we always had to throw out small lizards and toads so we wouldn't crush them. Yesterday ... we ate 2 meals in the field and got to bed about 1:00. As usual we had night raids after dark and G Company always wins even when we're against the other three companies. All day long we dug foxholes and practiced camouflage and the like and loafed around ... Another natural curiosity here is the abundance of ants. You can't sit down without getting your pants full of the sociable creatures... Today they picked 2 men to drive jeeps and three others for radio work..."

"Note: A Company G, 399<sup>th</sup> roster from this period of time lists 193 enlisted men. Pvt. Alfred C. Stimes is the 172<sup>nd</sup> name on this roster." [*I have a roster dated 7 Jun 44 which has 250 names. Stimes is 227th on this list. I am 145<sup>th</sup>.*]

I got another furlough, around the end of May, when I went home, and a couple of weekend passes later which I spent in Washington DC. I have a very clear memory of getting off a train in Fayetteville on a still, hot early morning in June and hearing the news of D-Day. After that, we all knew that we couldn't expect much more time in North Carolina. As it turned out, however, we didn't hear our first "shot fired in anger" until early November. By late July we knew the Division was slated to go overseas, and by the end of September we were on our way.

#### Back to Bud Stimes:

June 9, 1944. "Today is a busy one for 68 men. They are all going P.O.E. and they are being interviewed and checking equipment. It will leave exactly 11 of us privates in the third platoon. [*Impossible to understand at this date. If so many truly did leave—and there were probably even more—I can still count from the June 7 roster at least 27 from the 3<sup>d</sup> Platoon as then constituted who went overseas with the Division in September. All of the 27 were not ASTP, though, and that is what Bud might have meant—though I still think his count would have been off.*] Only privates and PFC's are leaving. Since 5 of us 11 are on furlough it will really keep us busy for details and the like. I got up at 5:15 and reported for a pit detail at 6:30 and then found out that we weren't to report until 7:30. I guess we were a victim of army red tape. Yesterday I pulled targets in pit number 13 and this morning the same. We got done at 10 and came back into camp and witnessed a demonstration on the 81 MM mortar... Every week we study the weapon of the week and the infantry regiment is armed with several types of

weapons. In another hour I go on an unusual guard detail. Two of our blossoms have been AWOL so they restricted them to the barracks... My shifts are from 4-6, 12-2, and 8-10. The men are being kept under surveillance [sic] until they leave with the P.O.E bunch next Thursday..."

June 11, 1944. "... I first heard the invasion news early in the morning. In Fayetteville they blew the sirens and rang the church bells. I hope they can do the same when peace returns. Ike sure has done a good job so far as the invasion goes... We are losing all of the original privates and PFC's of the 100<sup>th</sup> to overseas shipment. All that is left is the non-coms and a few officers. In the past few weeks we have received transfers and volunteers to the infantry from the medics, MP's, coast artillery and the air corps... Last Sunday I was the mess sergeant's assistant or known to civilians as KP. Tomorrow I get the same and actually I welcome it. The hours are long but the work isn't too hard. All the rest of the company go out to the rifle range and pull targets. For every man that is firing the rifle it takes 3 men to mark scores and the like. This past week I have worked two days out on the transition range. It means shooting at cardboard targets shaped like a man. A lot of dirt is kicked up by the lead slugs and it is darned hot in the pits... Yesterday we had blackberry shortcake and was it good and the berries were fresh. A couple of times we have had fresh strawberry shortcake but the treats aren't often enough..."

June 13, 1944. "... I hope Illinois isn't like Ft. Bragg today. It is just like standing in front of a blast furnace. All this sand and dry air makes one feel like he is in a desert... One welcome relief is our shower rooms and the nights are cool enough for sleeping... I am glad I finished my basic before all this heat. The detachment finishes basic this week and next week they will be assigned to the company. This morning those of us who had gas masks and weren't on detail went through the gas chamber. Today they had chlorine inside instead of tear gas. The first time we go in with our masks on and the second time we go in the gas and then put on our masks. Fourteen men are eligible to be on furlough at one time. I think it will be July or August for me. I am gaining weight... At times I yearn to mow the lawn and do some carpentry..."

June 17, 1944. "... The furloughs are 10 days plus 2 days travelling time plus 1 day of grace plus a 7 hr. head start... Everything is in an uproar because new men assigned to permanent squads are moving in. On Thursday we lost all the P.O.E. men. We have been short of detail men... I have had KP, prison guard, regimental supply office detail, and police and prison detail. Today I loaded empty cartridge cases and shell cases into a truck and hauled them to the salvage warehouse. I was prison chaser on Thursday and I had two prisoners working in a theater. They give us live ammunition for the job and we were especially watchful as the previous day a guard was severely injured by his prisoner..."

June 19, 1944. "... There are very few midwesterners in this outfit... Whenever a good movie arrives we invariably go out on a night problem... Yesterday it was 110 and this noon it was 102... Payday is on Friday... I have almost \$30 and payday brings another \$24.80... About all the money I spend is on pressing my uniforms, ice cream, and movies... Tomorrow night I go on

regimental guard and it isn't too bad because we ride in a jeep. There is a rumor that a P.O.E. shipment goes out in July and all us ASTP boys are the ones to fill it. I hope I can go with the division as I have a grand bunch of officers and pals..."

June 23, 1944. "My night's usual round of entertainment is done so I will get to this delayed letter. I have spent my customary \$.35 as follows: 15 cents for a movie, 15 cents for a pint of ice cream, and 5 cents for a coca cola... The barracks have no attic so the upstairs is like a furnace room... On early Wed. morn we rode 33 miles on a truck convoy and started our 2 day bivouac. It was field work in squad tactics and compass courses. We were located about 25 miles due west of here and still we were in Fort Bragg. They run us ragged in both day and night compass courses and the terrain is quite rugged. There are a few run down farms and a few trails through the area and I believe a person could get lost for several hours if he lost his compass. The highlands are second growth pine and scrub oak while the lowlands are thicker than our jungle at home. At night we made a tunnel for a hundred yards through the mass and we couldn't see the sky. I found black, rasp, and blue berry bushes but we didn't have time to touch them. I still won't trade 40 acres of Boone County for all of Fort Bragg... They brought out our chow and we ate good. I bathed in my helmet and I still find it impossible to get all my foot in... All I got was one chigger in me right where my belt goes and he really tickles me. I was lucky not to get a lot more or even ticks... The latest rumor has the whole division going up to Fort Dix on July 28 for P.O.E. It has been widely circulated and it might be true... The lights are out so it is my cue to hit the hay."

June 25, 1944. "... We go out in the field tomorrow and remain until midnight Tuesday. I rather enjoy these field expeditions, but 90% of the company has poison ivy from the last expedition. Since I have nothing but a few briar scratches it makes me a 'field soldier.' It is amazing how dumb some city guys are about nature and the open spaces. The company commander even is in the hospital with the ivy... [I remember that one man was threatened with loss of pay for the time he was hospitalized with poison ivy. Perhaps the captain being hospitalized too forestalled this threat.] I imagine the hay was moving in Illinois today and all I did was loaf... One of our sergeants from Penn. went home on furlough and pitched hay for 6 days. Keep some of those cherries in a can as I can easily use a piece of pie and some cool milk when I get home. One of the sergeants in our barracks blew his top today when someone booby-trapped his foot locker... Give dad another pat on the back for his part in 'Backing the Fighting Fifth' (war bond drive)..."

June 30, 1944. "... We leave tonight at seven for the three day problems. Everyone is rather irritated over the fact that there is no passes whatsoever this weekend... It was originally scheduled for midweek, but today's physical fitness test postponed it until this weekend. This morning the XVIII Corps tested G Company for physical fitness for combat duty. We represented the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion and as usual we came through with flying colors. 70 is a passing mark and we did 90.17 and for the grand finale we did a four mile forced march in 49 minutes and 6 seconds and we had full field plus rifles. Needless to say several men got