



**ROLAND
CHAMPAGNE**

**MY COMBAT
YEARS**

PART 1

**STATESIDE
TRAINING**

Hi Rolando,
My NAME IS AL ALTIG. I MET your
SON AT SAN DIEGO. I WAS IN THE 381st
2ND BATTALION HEAD QUARTERS. I AM SORRY
YOU CAN'T BE HERE. I WANT TO WISH
YOU ALL THE BEST. AL



Al Altig
96th Infantry
381st

Roland Champagne
96th Infantry, 382nd, K Company
San Diego Reunion
July 2013

Dear Roland,

I thoroughly enjoyed our time together at San Diego last year (2013). My very best to you and wish you could be with us but even so your son represents you well in your absence.

In Comradship,

Bob Siefert
& Company, 381st Inf

behalf on A
of



Roland Champagne, Karel Knutson, Bob Siefert
San Diego Reunion July 2013

DEAR ROLAND,
HAVING SERVED IN CO.K
WITH YOU ON LEXTE AND
OKINAWA I CAN APPRECIATE
THE HARDSHIPS AND
SACRIFICES YOU ENDURED.

YOU HAVE EVERY RIGHT
TO BE VERY PROUD OF
WHAT YOU DID TO
ACCOMPLISH OUR
MISSION.

THANK YOU

Edwin Wright



Dear Roland,

I was with you on Akinasa
and went through some of the things
you talk about in your book.

I was in Co. D. 381st Inf.
A dogface, and remembered most
of the things you talked about!!
Had the pleasure of meeting your
son at my 1st 96th Reunion in
Chicago - 2014!!

Reading your story, mate, we feel
that I knew you - Sincerely,

Chuck Debus
Co. D. 381st Inf.
96th



Dear Roland,

I was wounded on May 20 about the same location ^{Boe Hill} you were outside Thuri. I received one of those million dollar wounds where I went to the hospital at the start of a typhoon. It was over by the time I got out but the mud was ass deep.

They took us to an ordnance depot where they had rusty parts of M-1's laying around and told to put us together a rifle.

May God Bless

Jim Foster, Co L 382nd



Jim Foster
96th Infantry 382nd L Company
San Diego Reunion
July 2013

Hi: Roland,

Your son told us
all about you.
My father Julius Gerson
Served with you in
K / 382 / 96
we all wish you well.

David Gerson

Robert M. Gerson
Ray Radzivil



I / 381 / 96

96th Deadeye Reunion
Chicago July 2014



Ray Radzivila
96th
381st Infantry
I Company



Dave Gerson
holding portrait
of his father.

Julius Gerson
96th
382nd Infantry
K Company

Roland,

Thanks for serving as a
Deadeye with my father,
Nels Olsen. We are in
awe of the bravery and
resourcefulness you all showed.

Thank you - Dennis Olsen



Nels Olsen with son Dennis
Chicago July 2014



Nels Olsen
96th 383rd

Richard

Thanks for your SERVICE!
you ARE ONE OF THE
Good ONES

DWAYNE WEBB



**Dwayne Webb
CNA
St Paul's Manor
San Diego
August 2014**

Roland,

Thank you so much for your
service to our country and
for fighting alongside my dad
Michael Moroz (382nd Regiment,
Company L) in The Philippines
and Okinawa!

Liz Moroz Harper

Admiral Ridgway
Go G 381st
Leyte Okinawa



Dear Roland,
Thank you so much for
Sharing the books with us
at the 2014 96th Reunion.
Your son told us how you and he
had fun putting them together.
I appreciate your serving -
my dad, Sam Wood, ^{Spartanburg, SC} K Co. 383
had so much pride in all of
the young men in the Dealeyes.
God Bless you - "G"
Mary Elean Wood
M. August, S.C.

Roland,
Dad was part of the Cadre in Oregon.
He was the "old man". A captain who entered
service in 1936 from ROTC from Wofford
College, Spartanburg, SC. He loved you young
men and loved the 96th.
Sam Wood Jr
son of Sam Wood Sr K-383rd HHB-36th 383rd

To Roland Champagne,

Dad,

I hope you enjoy these books I made for you. I am very proud of all you have done in life.

Remember that I love you and always think of you. I never forget you so you are never alone. I always remember you in my prayers.

Love, your son
Mark





My father was in WWI. He was an ambulance driver in France. He was a citizen of Canada at the time but volunteered in the US Army.

Form 1 *112* REGISTRATION CARD No. **1353**

1 Name in full *5167 Gedeon Champagne* Age in yrs. *24*

2 Home address *413 N. Main Bristol Conn*

3 Date of birth *May 16 1888*

4 Are you: (1) a natural-born citizen, (2) a naturalized citizen, (3) an alien, (4) or have you declared your intention (specify which)? *Declared intention*

5 Where were you born? *Sirralie Queb. Canada*

6 If not a citizen, of what country are you a citizen or subject? *Great Britain*

7 What is your present trade, occupation, or office? *Carpenter*

8 By whom employed? *Central Bld. Co. (Worcester Mass)*
Where employed? *Bristol Conn.*

9 Have you a father, mother, wife, child under 12, or a sister or brother under 12, solely dependent on you for support (specify which)? *Mother*

10 Married or single (which)? *Single* Race (specify which)? *Caucasian*

11 What military service have you had? Rank *No* branch _____ years _____ Nation or State _____

12 Do you claim exemption from draft (specify grounds)? *No*

I affirm that I have verified above answers and that they are true.

Gedeon Champagne.
(Signature of registrant)

If person is not eligible do not fill out this form

Here is my father's registration card for the US Army.

0-1-5. A.

REGISTRAR'S REPORT

1	Tall, medium, or short (specify which)? <i>Med</i>	Slender, medium, or stout (which)? <i>Med</i>	
2	Color of eyes? <i>Brown</i>	Color of hair? <i>Dr. Brown</i>	Bald? <i>No</i>
3	Has person lost arm, leg, hand, foot, or both eyes, or is he otherwise disabled (specify)? <i>No</i>		

I certify that my answers are true, that the person registered has read his own answers, that I have witnessed his signature, and that all of his answers of which I have knowledge are true, except as follows:

.....

Emma W. Fish
(Signature of registrar)
Asst Town Clerk
Precinct *3*
City or County *Bristol*
State *Conn.*
BRISTOL CONN
JUN 2 - 1917
(Date of registration)

My father was very proud to serve in the Army, and I was very proud of him.

Honorable Discharge from The United States Army



TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This is to Certify, That Gedeon Champagne (3032660)
Sergeant Medical Dept., U.S. Army.

THE UNITED STATES ARMY, as a TESTIMONIAL OF HONEST AND FAITHFUL

SERVICE, is hereby HONORABLY DISCHARGED from the military service of the
UNITED STATES by reason of Circular 106 U.D. 1918.

Said Gedeon Champagne (3032660) was born
in Disraeli, in the State of Quebec, Canada.
When enlisted he was 30³/₁₂ years of age and by occupation a Carpenter.
He had Brown eyes, Dk Brown hair, Ruddy complexion, and
was 5 feet 8¹/₂ inches in height.

Given under my hand at Camp Dix, New Jersey this
14th day of Sept., one thousand nine hundred and Nineteen.

True Extract certified by me John W. Foster
on Oct. 1 - 1920 for the purpose of obtaining Victory Medal by mail.
Edward J. Howley Major, U.S.A.
Commanding.

Charles A. Crymbs, Postmaster

Filed 1/25/19

Form No. 532, A. G. O.
1917, 9-15

*Insert name, Christian name and A. C., "John Doe."
†Insert Army serial number, grade, company and regiment or unit or corps or department; e. g., "1,234,567," "Corporal,
Company A, 1st Infantry," "Hospital, Quartermaster Corps," "Hospital, First Class, Medical Department."
‡If discharged prior to expiration of service, give month, date, and source of order or full description of authority therefor.

9-404

Here is my father's honorable discharge from the US Army. Later I would have my own honorable discharge from the US Army from World War 2.

No. 1212501

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Section, Volume _____ Number 15311

Description of holder: Age, 31 years; height, 5 feet, 9 inches; color, White; complexion, Dark; color of eyes, Brown; color of hair, Black; visible distinguishing marks, None

Name, age and place of residence of wife, None None

Names, ages and places of residence of minor children, None

ORIGINAL

U. S. District Court
State of New Jersey

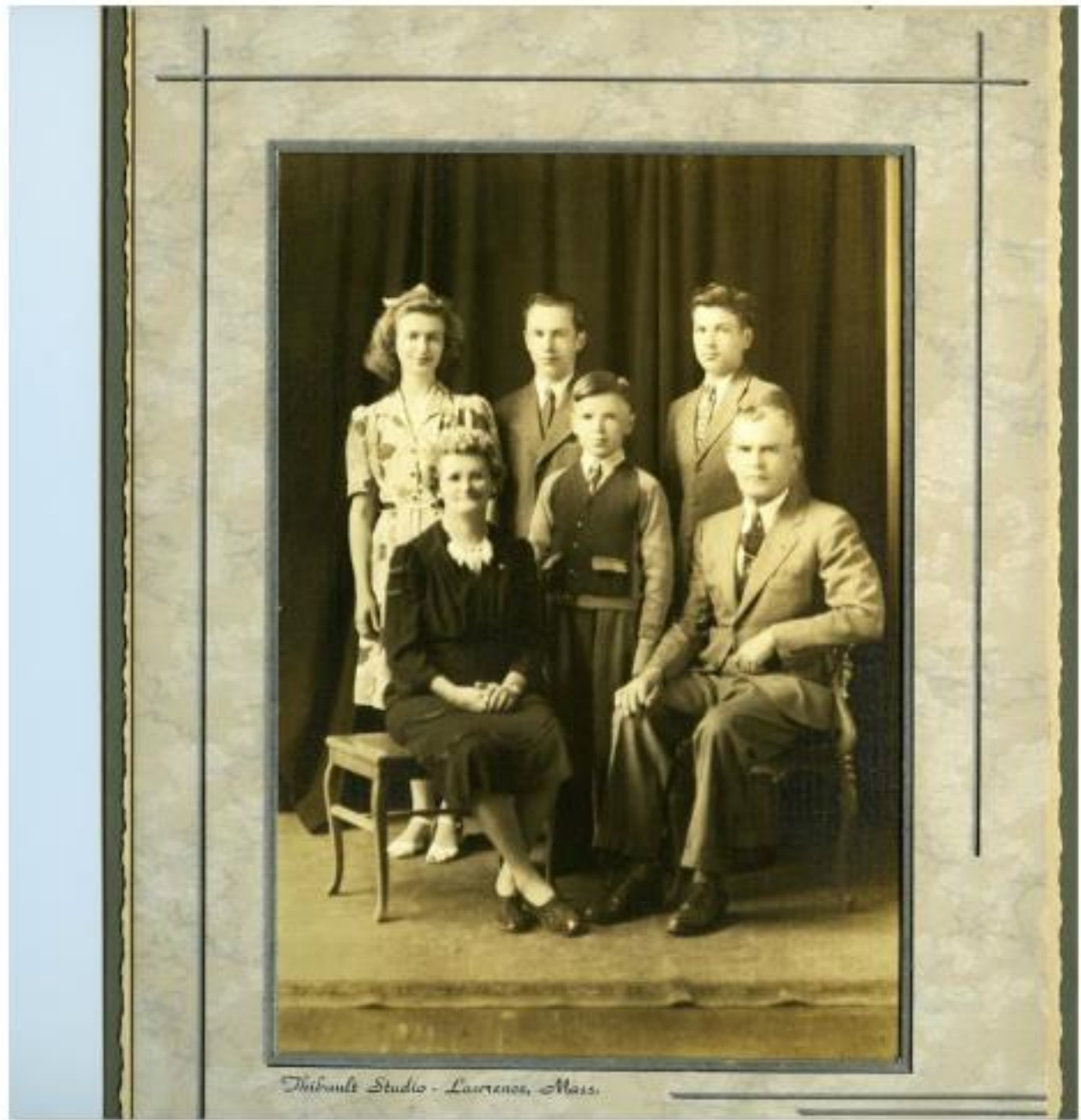
J.S. Gedeon Champagne (Signature of holder)

It is remembered, that Gedeon Champagne
then residing at number _____
City of Camp Dix, New Jersey,
born of _____ who previous
to his naturalization was a subject of Great Britain, having applied to be admitted a
citizen of the United States of America pursuant to law, and also _____
Court of the United States, held at Camp Dix, New Jersey, on the 3 day of Sept
in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and Nineteen, the court having found that the petitioner had resided con-
tinuously within the United States for at least five years, and in the territory for at least one year immediately preceding the
date of the filing of his petition, and that said petitioner intends to reside permanently in the United States, had in all
respects complied with the law in relation thereto, and that he was entitled to be so admitted, it was thereupon
ordered by the said court that he be admitted as a citizen of the United States of America.

In testimony whereof, the seal of said court is hereunto affixed on the 3 day of Sept
in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and _____ and of our Independence the
one hundred and Forty Fourth B. S. Havens
Deputy Clerk U. S. District Court
(Official character of officer)

I am very proud of all that my father did for us and our country, and happy because I know he is proud of me.

Later my father became a citizen of the United States of America. His service in the US Army was looked upon very favorably. He would move to Massachusetts, meet my mother and marry her.



Ditcomb Studio - Lawrence, Mass.

My parents were married Nov 29, 1923. They raised my two brothers Gene and Louis, my sister Lucille and I in Lawrence, MA. We lived at 6 Butler Street. Our father worked as a carpenter.



Here is my father's grave site. He was buried with full military honors. He died just 26 days after I returned home from World War II.

APPLICATION FOR APPOINTMENT AS AVIATION CADET



Lawrence, Mass.

(Place)

May 14, 1945

(Date)

To: COMMANDING GENERAL,*

First Corps Area,

Boston, Mass.

1. I hereby apply for enlistment in the Army Air Corps and for immediate appointment as aviation cadet, Army of the United States, for the type of training checked:

AIR CREW (Flying duty)

GROUND CREW (Nonflying duty)

2. Three letters of recommendation and birth certificate or other certified documentary evidence of date of birth are inclosed. Affidavit on reverse side of this sheet has been executed. I understand that it will be necessary for me to take the prescribed qualifying examination.

3. My mail and telegraph address is 7 S. Julian St.

Inclosures.

(Signature)

NOTE—APPLICATION with AFFIDAVIT ON REVERSE SIDE to be submitted in TRIPPLICATE accompanied by THREE LETTERS of RECOMMENDATION, BIRTH CERTIFICATE or other DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE OF DATE OF BIRTH.

* Address application to the Commanding General of the corps area in which you live. Mail it to that office, or present it to the president of the nearest Aviation Cadet Examining Board.

Corps area designation	Address of headquarters	States covered
First	Boston, Mass.	Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut.
Second	Governors Island, N. Y.	New Jersey, Delaware, and New York.
Third	Baltimore, Md.	Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia.
Fourth	Atlanta, Ga.	North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana.
Fifth	Columbus, Ohio	Ohio, West Virginia, Indiana, and Kentucky.
Sixth	Chicago, Ill.	Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin.
Seventh	Omaha, Neb.	Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas, Iowa, Nebraska, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming.
Eighth	Fort Sam Houston, Tex.	Texas, Oklahoma, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona.
Ninth	San Diego, Calif.	Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Nevada, and California.

INSTRUCTIONS

The following instructions, WHICH SHOULD BE READ CAREFULLY, will govern the preparation of the affidavit on the REVERSE side of this application:

- In items 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, insert necessary data.
- In item 6, name, in chronological order of attendance, institutions of learning attended by you with dates of attendance and dates of graduation from each, stating which of these offered courses of military instruction, what such courses were, and which, if any, of such courses were pursued.
- In item 7, give essential data concerning all your military service, if any, in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, National Guard, Coast Guard, and Officers' Reserve Corps, or in the military service of a foreign country, including dates of enlistment, dates of discharge, character given on discharge, noncommissioned grades held, dates, grades, etc., of promotions, dates of resignation or discharge, with reasons for such resignation or discharge.
- In item 8, state, in chronological order of events, business or professional experience, with names of employers and places of employment.
- Statement in brackets in item 10 to be signed only in case of applicant under 21 years of age.
- Candidates will sign both application and affidavit.

W. D., A. G. O. Form No. 40
January 1, 1942

(over)

16-5200-4

This is my Aviation Cadet application.

Affidavit to Accompany Application for Appointment as Aviation Cadet

STATE OF Massachusetts
COUNTY OF Essex

Personally appeared before me, the undersigned authority for administering oaths, one Roland J.H.
(Type or print)

Champagne, who deposes and says as follows:

(full name)

1. I have been a citizen of the United States for 10 years, and am a member of the White race.

2. My legal residence is 40 Butler St., Lawrence, Mass.

3. I was born at Lawrence, Mass., on the 3rd day of September, 1924.

4. I am in good health, am 5 feet 7 inches in height, and weigh 100 pounds.

5. (a) I ~~am~~ not married. (Strike out word or words not applicable.)

(b) My dependents have sufficient means of support. (Strike out if not applicable.)

6. My education has been as follows: I attended St. Anne's Grammar School and graduated in June 1939. I also attended Central Catholic High School where I will graduate in June 1943.

7. My service (see instruction 3 on reverse side) has been as follows: None.

8. My business (or professional) experience has been as follows: I am working in the Ayer Mill of the American Woolen Co. of Lawrence, as a yarn boy.

9. If I successfully complete the course of instruction as an aviation cadet I will accept such commission as may be tendered me, and I agree to serve on active duty under it, until relieved by competent authority. I understand that, should my appointment as aviation cadet be terminated, I will be obliged to continue my service in an enlisted status.

10. I do parents or ~~guardian~~ of Roland J. H. Champagne, consent to this application.
(If "do" or "do not") (Name of applicant)

Father Rudolph Champagne
(Signature)

Mother Eva Champagne
(Signature)

11. I ~~have~~ not been previously eliminated from Army, Navy, or Marine Corps flight training because of deficiency in flying. (Strike out word or words not applicable.)

Roland J. H. Champagne
(Signature of applicant)

Subscribed and sworn to in my presence this 17 day of May, 1943

Louis E. Rose
(Signature of official administering oath)

Notary Public
(Official capacity in which oath administered as "Notary Public," "Secretary of State," etc.)

NOTE.—(Subject to be submitted in triplicate. APPLICATION FOR APPOINTMENT AND INSTRUCTIONS for preparation of affidavit on reverse side.)

I worked as a store clerk and here you can see I worked at the famous Mills in Lawrence.



The textile mills here in Lawrence were famous the world over.

As a boy I worked in the Ayer Hill Mill of the American Woolen Company. It had the famous clock tower.



We would collect the empty spools and run them back up to the front. You had to be fast. The machinery was very loud. It was crazy inside.



I attended St Anne's Catholic School in Lawrence, MA and graduated from Central Catholic High School also in Lawrence. The boy in the middle is Richard Letendre. He went by the name of Dick. We were both inducted into the Army at the same time and called to active duty.

HEADQUARTERS BOSTON ARMY AND AIR FORCE INDUCTION DISTRICT
 1065 Commonwealth Ave.
 Boston, Mass.

June 17, 1943

Orders)
 No. 129)

E N L I S T M E N T

Par. 1. Each of the following enlisted men, inducted into the Army of the United States this date, is released from Active Duty this date, is transferred to the Enlisted Reserve Corps and will proceed to Local Board #80, 202 Broadway, Lawrence, Mass.

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|------------|----------------------------|----------|
| 1. John C. O'Connor | 31362113 | 23. Louis S. Bastok | 31362389 |
| 2. Edward T. Mansif | 31362108 | 24. Leonard J. Houle | 31362336 |
| 3. Roland E. Dube | 31362107 | 25. Roland J. H. Champagne | 31362422 |
| 4. John F. Bagley, Jr. | 31362106 | 26. Norman Goldenberg | 31362420 |
| 5. Mitchell A. Herb | 31362109 | 27. Emory J. Madore | 31362424 |
| 6. Roland E. Myers | 31362101 | 28. Joseph J. Harrigan | 31362398 |
| 7. Clinton P. Vose, Jr. | * 31362104 | 29. Henry J. Couture | 31362431 |
| 8. Emile G. Marcoux | 31362107 | 30. Edward Mosenko | 31362430 |
| 9. Paul J. Miville | 31362108 | 31. Edward R. Morin | 31362433 |
| 10. William B. Macsions | 31362100 | 32. Warden H. Gallup | 31362401 |
| 11. Thaddeus C. Jaross | 31362107 | 33. Russell L. Belanger | 31362432 |
| 12. Roland Becotte | 31362101 | | |
| 13. John Fiore | 31362102 | | |
| 14. Eugene R. Letendre | 31362103 | | |
| 15. Eugene W. Belliveau | 31362104 | | |
| 16. Charles A. Zerkat | 31362109 | | |
| 17. Myron S. Lynch | 31362308 | | |
| 18. Cyril P. Noel | 31362303 | | |
| 19. Albert J. Dabois | 31362386 | | |
| 20. George W. Bouchard | 31362385 | | |
| 21. Arnon Araigan | 31362339 | | |

Effective July 1, 1943, each of the above named men of the Enlisted Reserve Corps is called to Active Duty and will assemble at Local Board #80, 202 Broadway, Lawrence, Mass., at 8:30 A.M., and will proceed from Local Board #80 to the Reception Center at Fort Devens, Mass., reporting to the Commanding Officer, thereat for duty.

The TC will furnish the necessary transportation and meal tickets. TTN 1-5010 P-11-02 AG-21-3.

- RESTRICTIONS:
- 1 P.S.C., 1943
 - 1 C.O., Reception Center
 - 1 Trans. Br., Wash., D.C.
 - 1 Enlisted Corporal

- 2 File
- 1 Each Man
- 6 Local Board

FRANCIS J. SHEARER,
 Colonel, C.A.C.,
 Commanding.

F. A. Smith
 F. A. SMITH,
 Capt., Inf.,
 Ind. Officer.

Here is my induction and call to active duty orders. I am # 25 and Dick Letendre is # 14.

My high school class was the first one to graduate from Central Catholic.

The war had already been on for 18 months. We all knew we were to be drafted. We received our notices two weeks before graduation, and given deferments so that we could graduate.

I was inducted into the US Army on June 17, 1943 in Boston. Dick Letendre and I did it together.

I began active duty on July 1, 1943 at Fort Devens, MA. Here are my first photos in uniform.

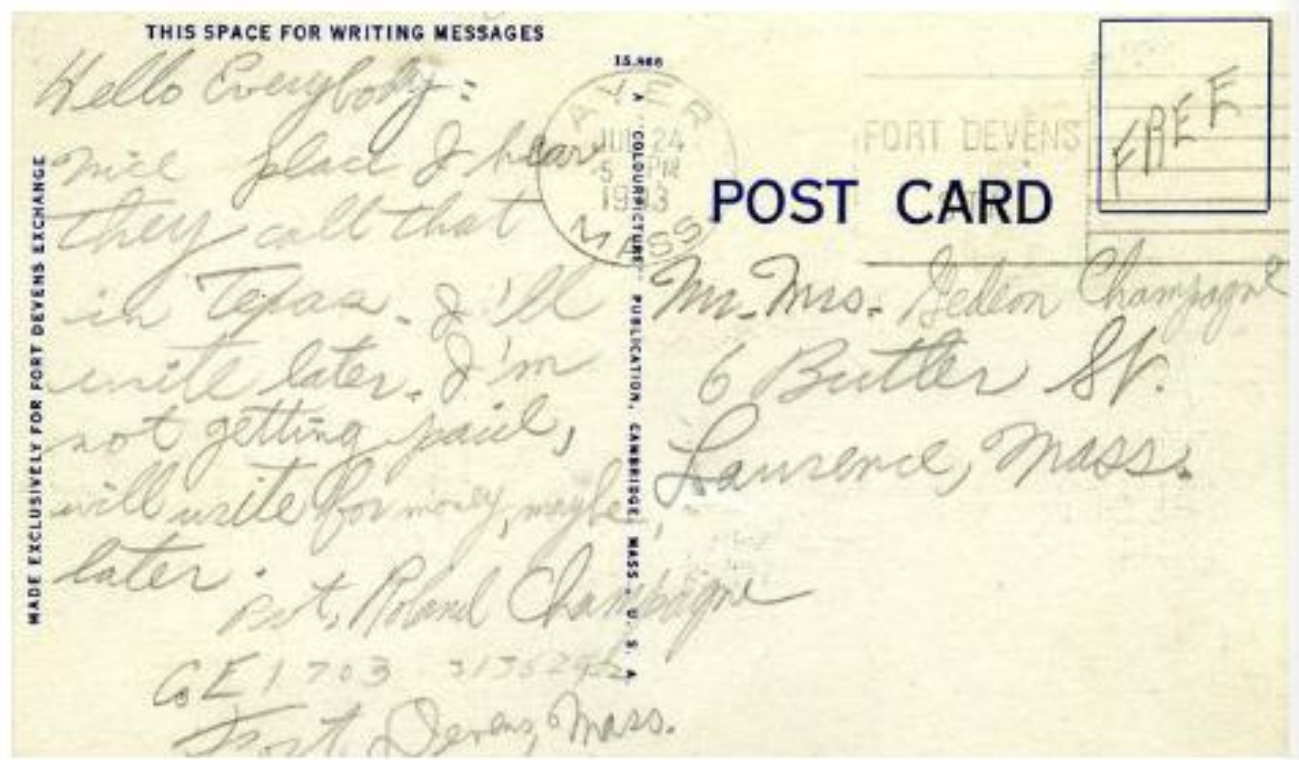
On July 3rd I came home on a "special" pass and returned to Fort Devens the next day on July 4th.



Main Gate, Fort Devens, Massachusetts



Following are some postcards I sent home.

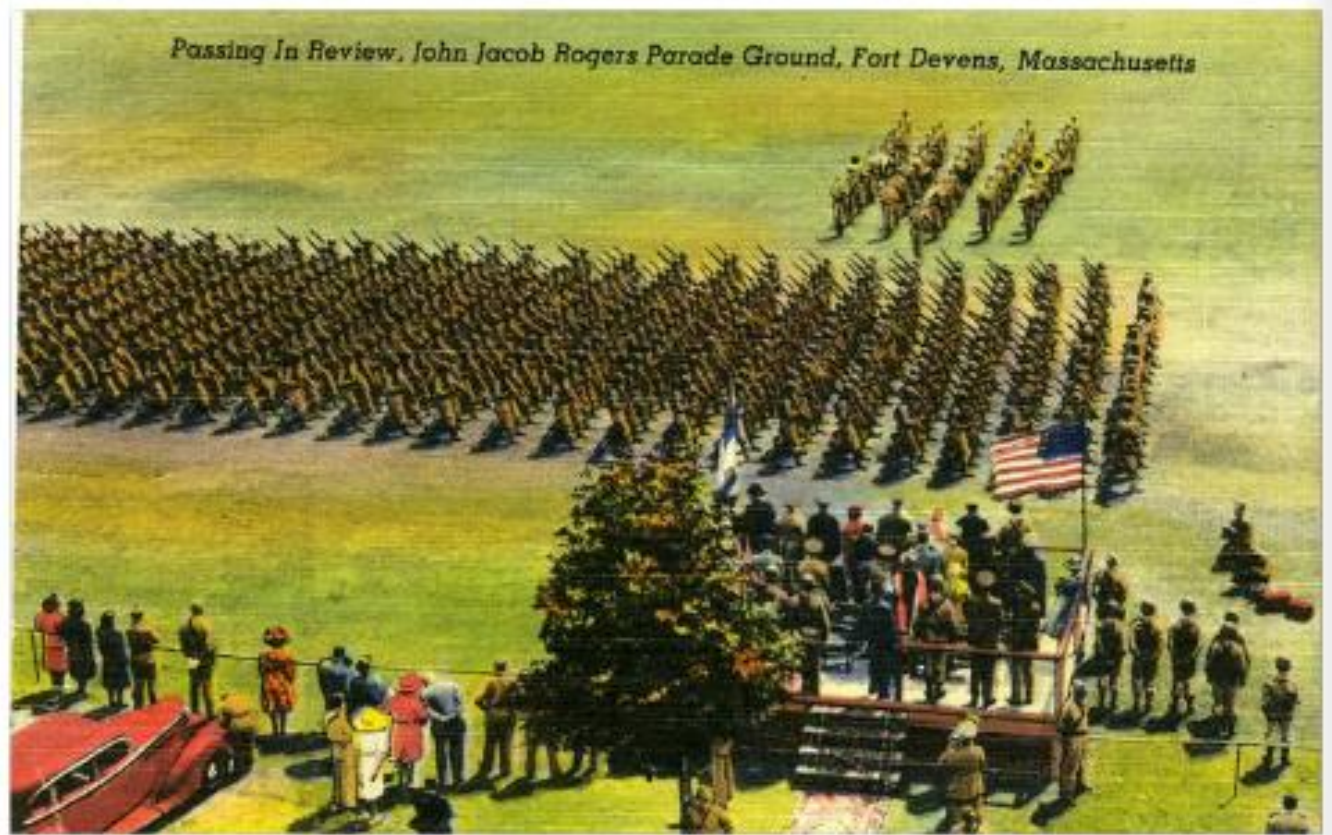


4

ROSTER CO. E BARRACK NO 1703 SCU 1112

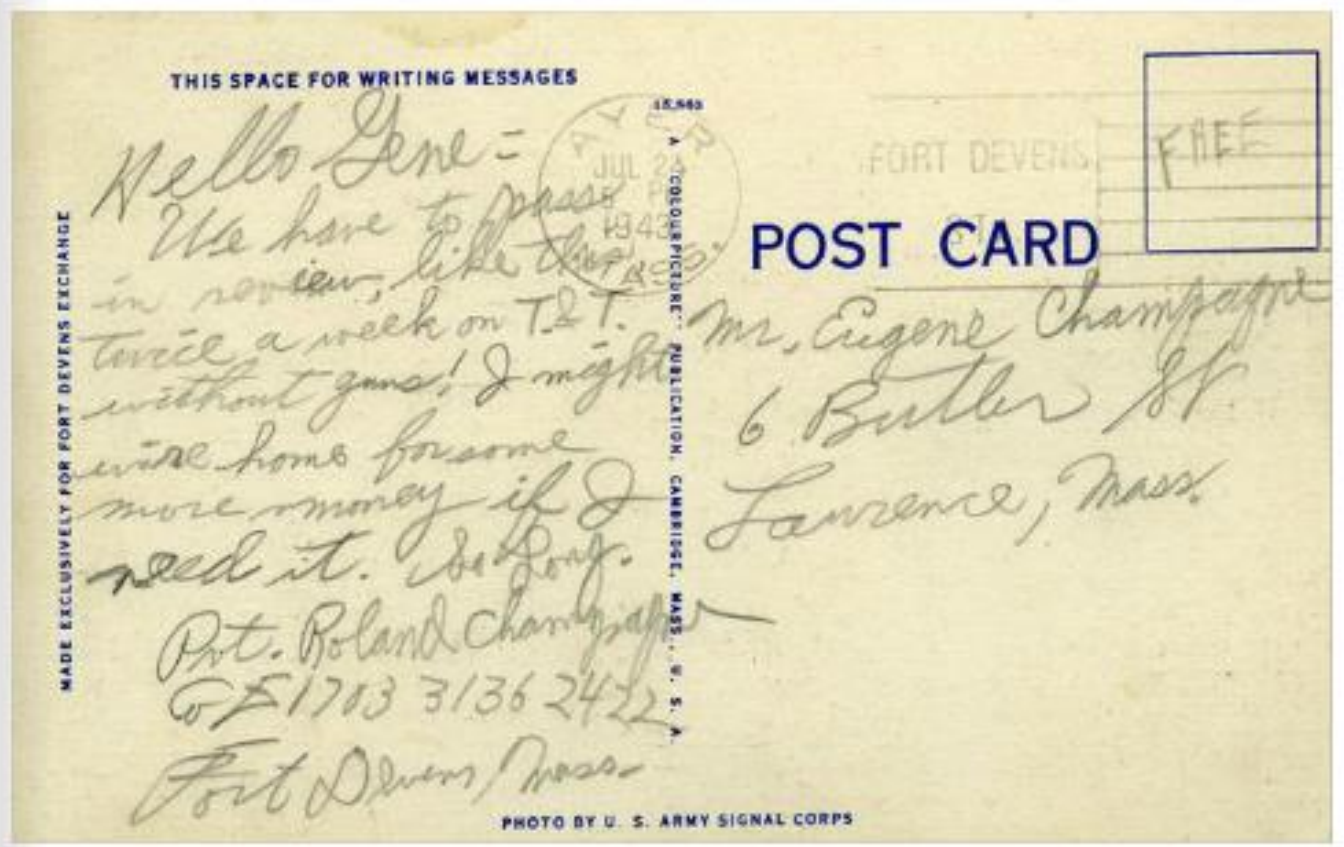
NO.	NAME	NO.	NAME	NO.	NAME
1	ARCIDIACMO, L.J. ✓	46		91	
2	ARSENOLT, A.P.	47		92	
3	ARZIGIAN, A.	48		93	
4	BASHARA, A.	49		94	
5	BAYER, H.	50	(LATRINE)	95	BG
6	BEBO, J.	51		96	
7	BENNER, H.	52		97	
8	BOUCHARD, G. ✓	53	PW	98	
9	BRADISH, D.W.	54		99	
10	BUSKEY, E.	55		100	
11	BEALOWS, W.	56	(SPECIAL AT MISS)	101	
12	BRADY, J.F.	57	PW	102	
13	CHADWICK, R.	58		103	BG
14	CHAMPAGNE, R. ✓	59		104	LATRINE
15	COBY, F.	60	(SUPPLY ROOM)	105	
16	DOLAN, J.	61		106	
17	DUBOIS, A.J.	62		107	
18	DURQUETTE, E.J.	63		108	
19	GEORGE, H.	64		109	
20	GIAYICE, J.J.	65		110	
21	GINERAS, L.	66		111	
22	GISLEO, L.	67		112	
23	HARRIGAN, J.	68		113	
24	HILL, W.	69	(RUNNER)	114	
25	HOULE, L.	70		115	
26	LARUS, J.	71		116	
27	MALAIONE, W.B.	72		117	
28	MARCOUX, E.	73		118	
29	MIRNANWICZ, W.	74		119	
30	MOLAN, E.	75	(LATRINE)	120	
31	NASSIK, E.	76		121	
32	NOEL, C. ✓	77		122	
33	O'MEARA, W.	78	(SUPPLY ROOM)	123	
34	ROSE, F.	79		124	
35	SCARANO, A.	80	(RUNNER)	125	
36	SOVGI, L.J. ✓	81		126	
37	SWATS, O.	82	PW	127	LATRINE
38	THORNTON, M.	83	(RUNNER)	128	
39	ZRAKET, C.	84		129	LATRINE
40		85		130	

Here is a roster from Fort Devens, my first assignment. You see I had latrine duty. Complaints were not welcome!



I began to receive my privates pay of \$75 a month at Fort Devens. I stayed here for one month learning how to drill, walk in step, shine our shoes, and keep our uniforms clean.

Basically how to look and act like soldiers. It is harder than it sounds with all the rules and regulations that must be followed!



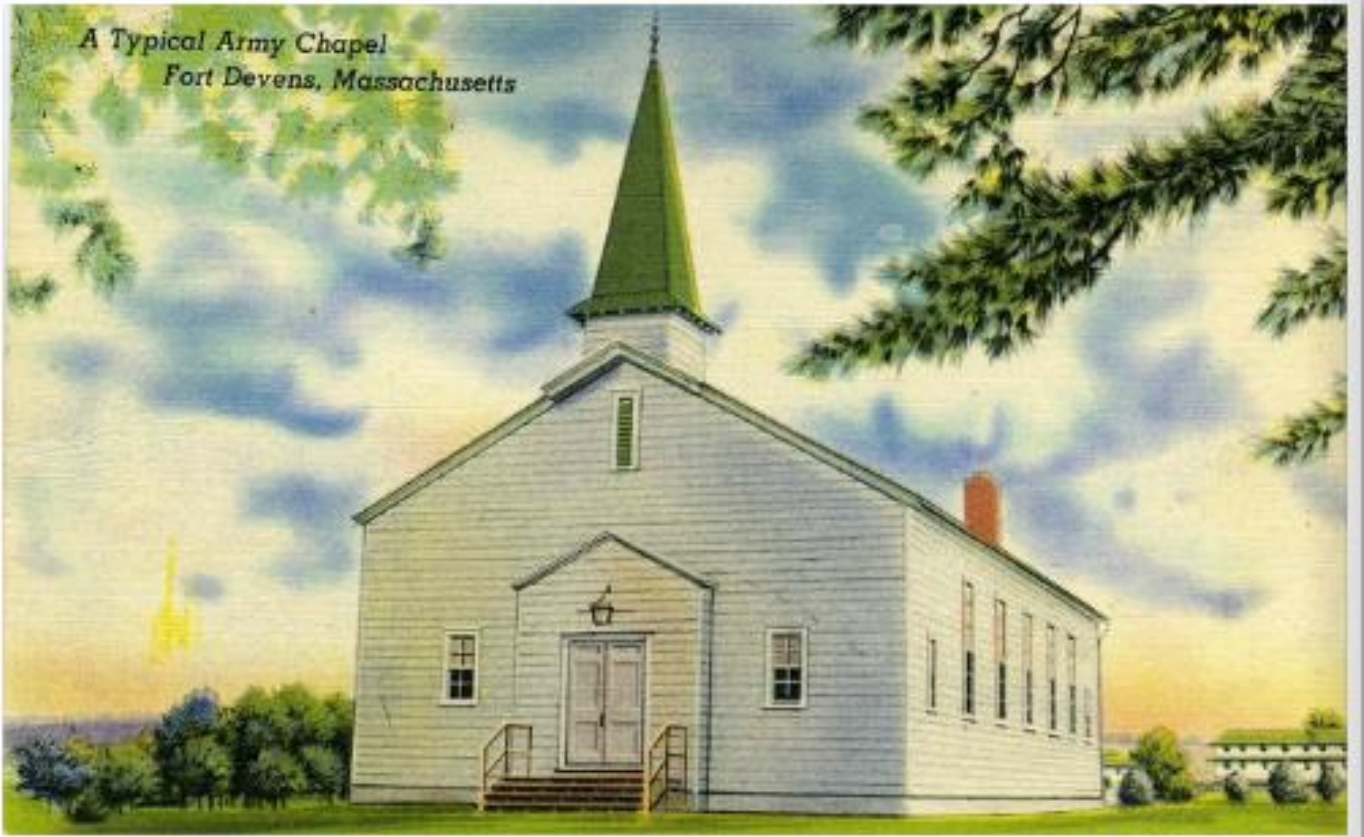
I was glad that I lived so close to home. I had another one day furlough on July 10th and returned to camp on July 11th.

We were still doing our drills without rifles at this point. I sent postcards to my brothers and parents.

We also had to receive our shots here. Both of our arms were very sore from the shots!

I was also allowed home on July 17th and returned on July 18th. Many guys never got a furlough home.

A Typical Army Chapel
Fort Devens, Massachusetts



THIS SPACE FOR WRITING MESSAGES

MADE EXCLUSIVELY FOR FORT DEVENS EXCHANGE

Hello Louis -
I don't know
the Chapel looks like
mine because I
haven't gone to mass
here yet. Tell mama
I only got \$7 left.
Also, I need a pair of
shoes; the others got caught
in the rainstorm.
Put Roland Champagne
at 1713 31362
Fort Devens, Mass.

P111

FORT DEVENS

FREE

CARD

Mr. Louis Champagne
6 Butler St.
Lawrence, Mass.



Sweetheart Monument Fort Devens, Massachusetts

SWEETHEART MONUMENT AT FORT DEVENS

Sweetheart Monument is an old landmark of Fort Devens. Its legend is that during World War I, when a soldier's sweetheart came to visit him at what was then Camp Devens, she brought with her a rock. These are the rocks of which the monument was built.

18,897

A. COLQUHOUN & CO., PUBLICATION, CAMBRIDGE, MASS., U. S. A.

FORT DEVENS

FRACK

POST CARD

MADE EXCLUSIVELY FOR FORT DEVENS EXCHANGE

*Hells Lucille =
 nice spot for a nice
 couple..... Armand!
 those are the Air
 Cadet Barracks
 in the picture.
 Pvt. Roland Champagne
 6 E 1703 31362422
 Fort Devens, Mass.*

*Miss Lucille Champagne
 6 Butler St.
 Lawrence, Mass.*

P.S. Write a letter next time!

14—Aerial View of Cincinnati, Ohio and the Ohio River



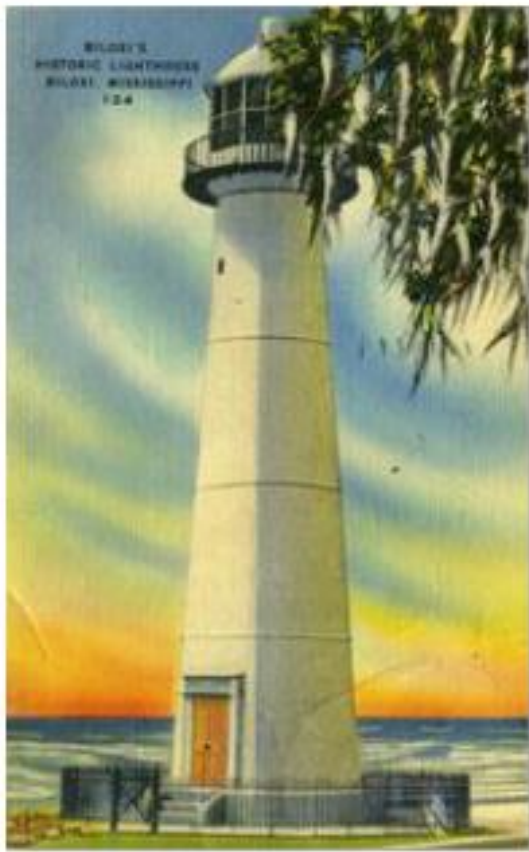
On July 24th I was called up to go to Keesler Field, Mississippi and left on the 25th. I completed my basic training there. We had the worst ride in B and M railroad cars. We rode 1,700 miles through Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee and Alabama.





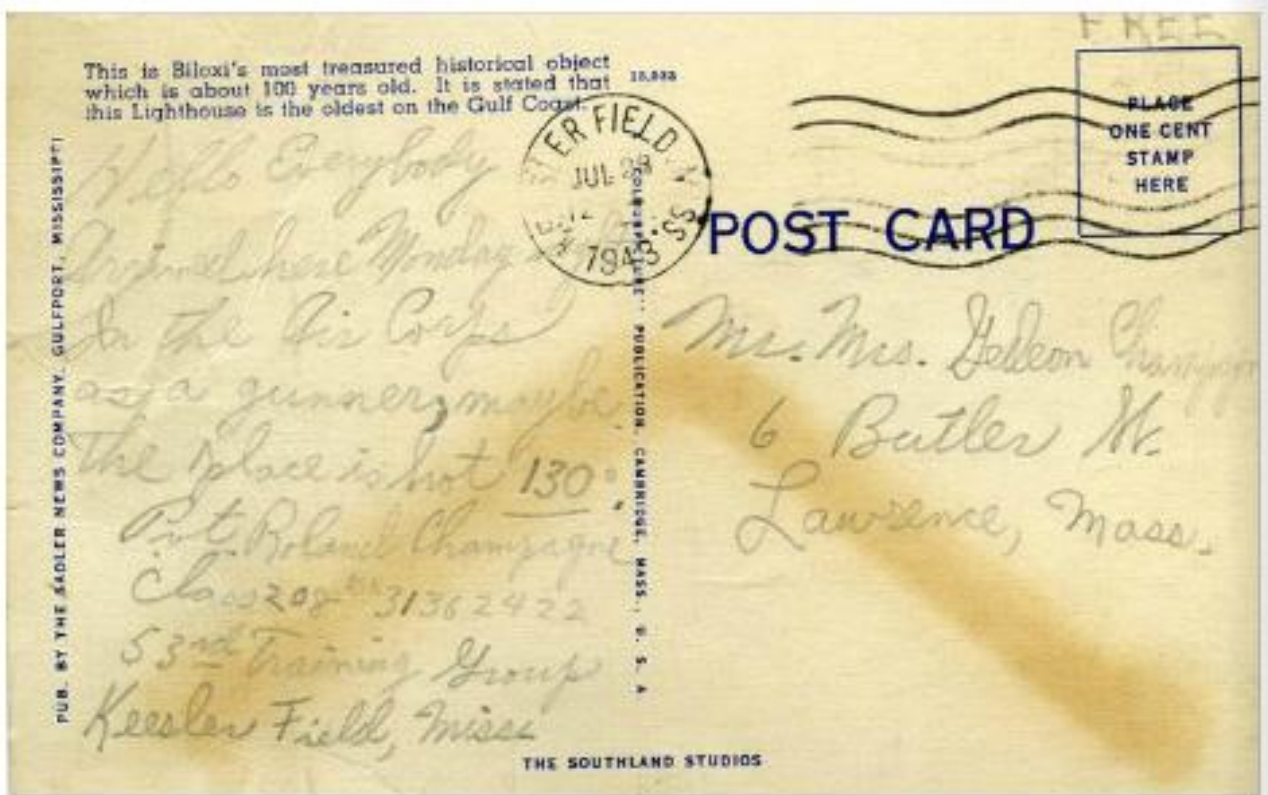
It was a 51 hour nightmare! Here are some postcards I sent my family. Letters from home were very important to me during this time. We were all still very young. We were kids really.





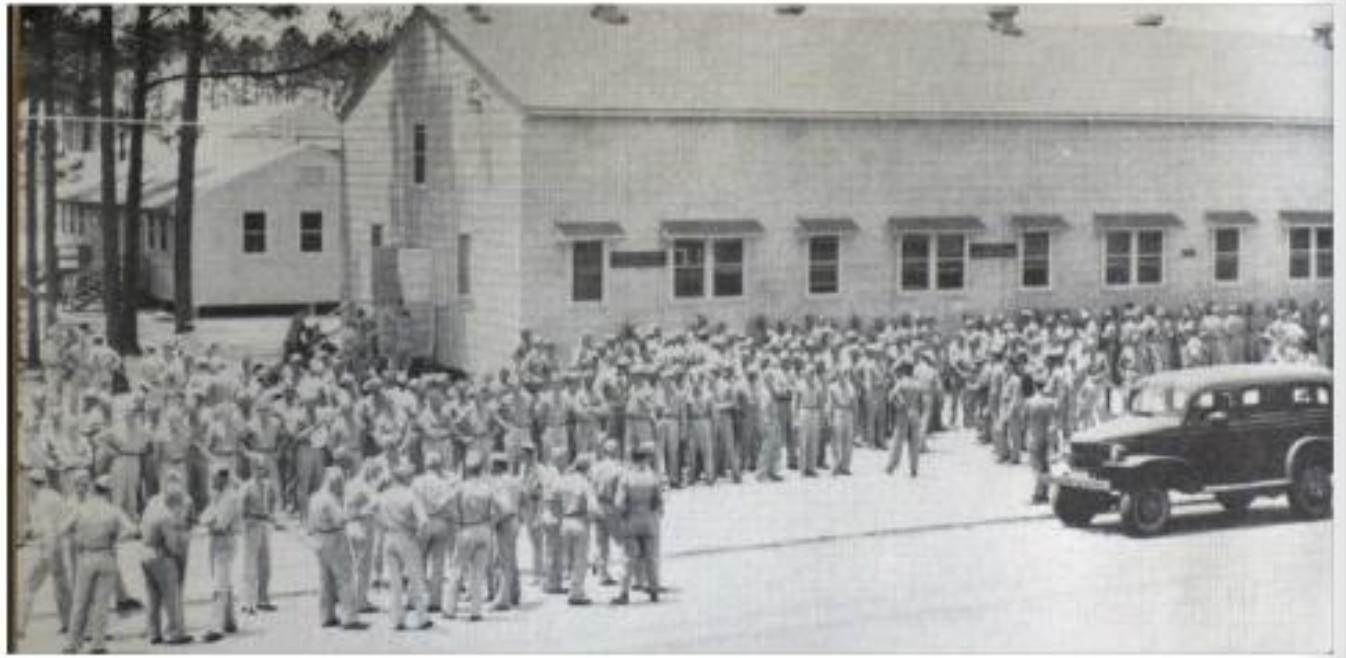
I arrived in Biloxi, Mississippi to begin my aerial gunner training and sent this postcard to my sister Lucille. It was hot and humid!

I had never done so much traveling in all my life. I was covered in coal dust from the train ride.





Keesler Field was named for a World War I hero, Lt. Samuel R. Keesler. It was built on swampland.



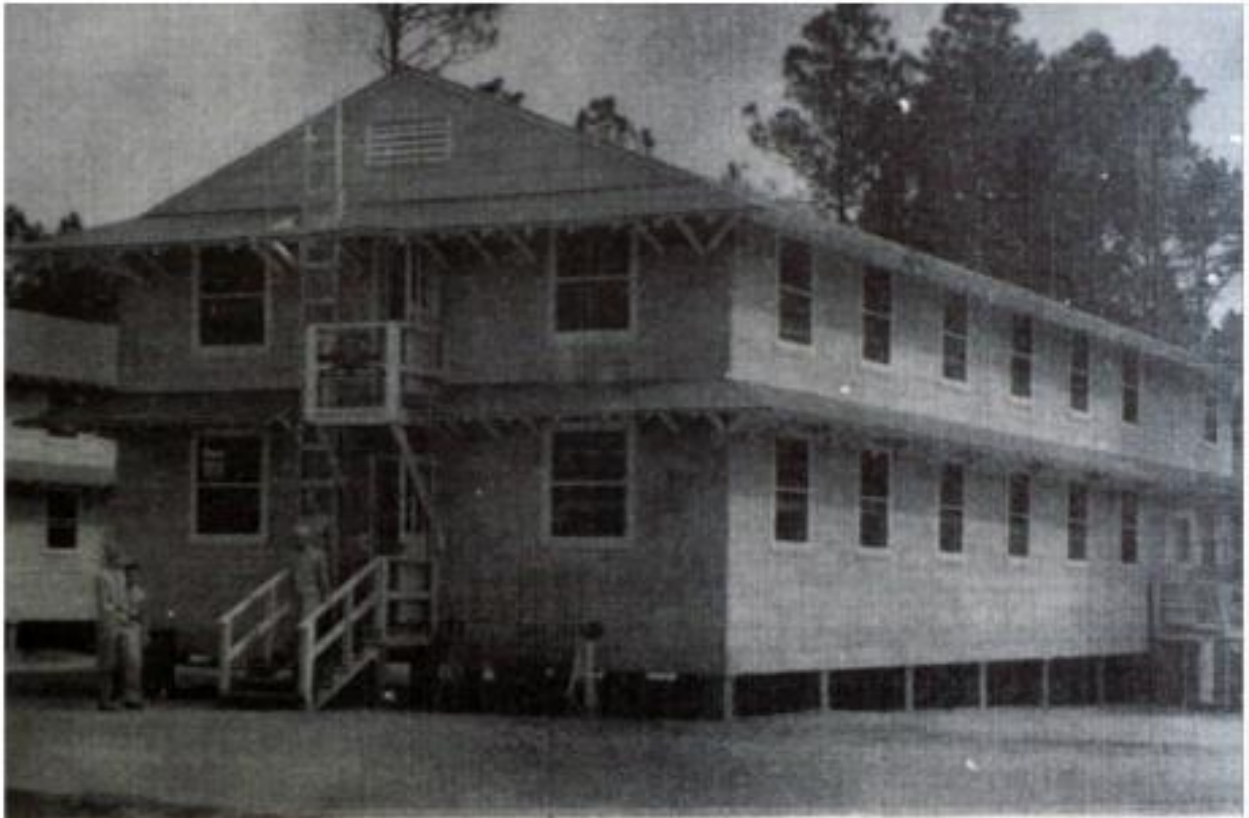
I sent this picture book home to my folks. I sure am glad they saved these things for me while I was gone. I really appreciate that I still have them years later.

Here is a new wave of recruits arriving at Keesler Field. We always had to wait for our assignments, orders, and all kinds of instructions. The routine was the same. Lots of rushing here and there to wait in line.



Here we are receiving our barracks assignments. It was interesting to get to know other people. We were from all over the country, with different ways of talking, accents etc..

Most of us were young but some were already out of college.



BARRACK FOR ENLISTED MEN

Although there were barracks for enlisted men we were put in tents. I guess we were not considered enlisted until we passed our basic training.





We slept six men in a tent. There was one guy from Lawrence in my tent.

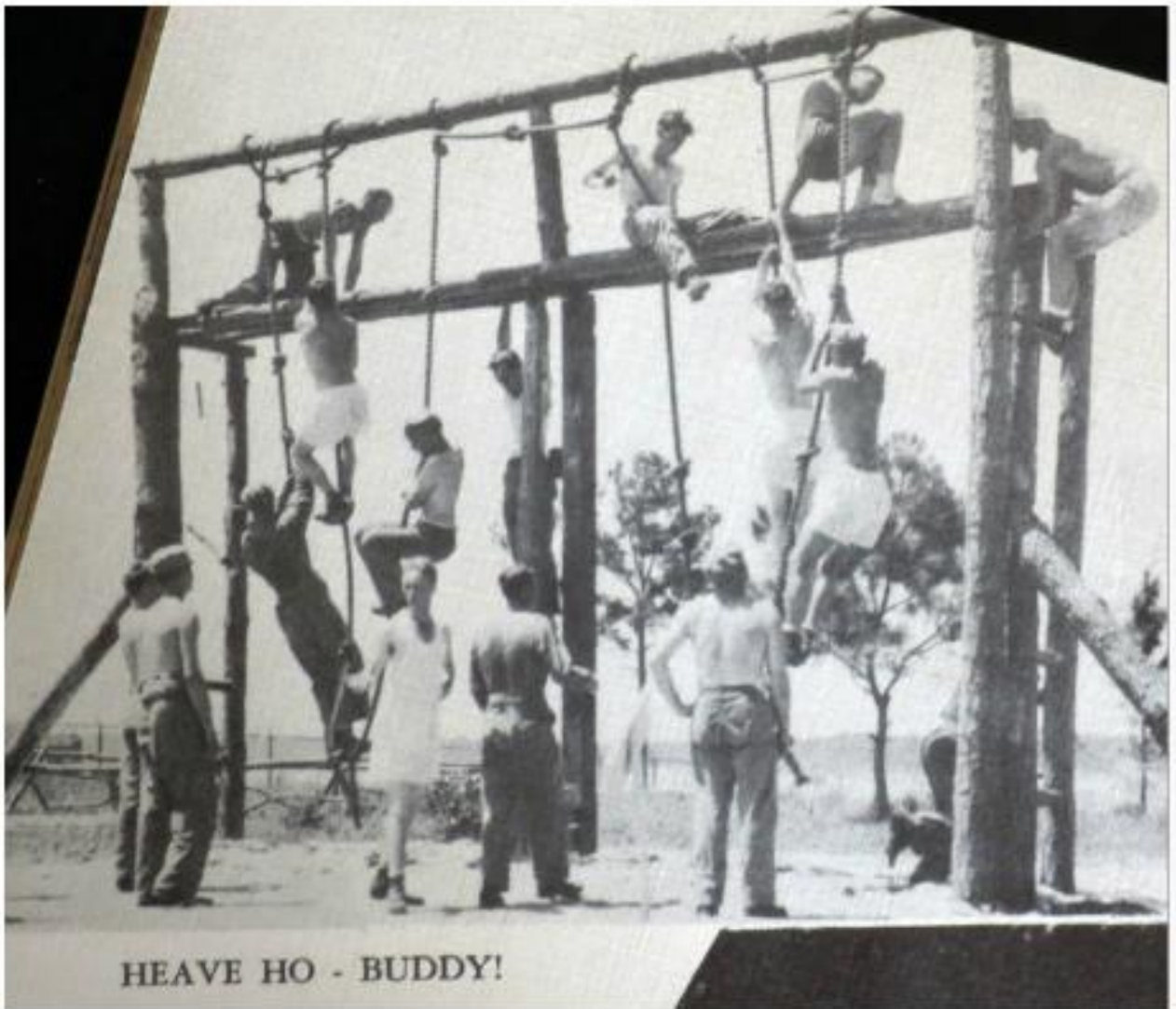
No matter where we went we always ended up getting more shots. It was crazy. And we still had to do our drills and exercises with our sore arms.



Here we are doing our exercises in the morning. It was hot and humid down there. You had to make sure and drink lots of water.



We built up our endurance with marches and runs. The runs always had obstacles to build up our muscles as well. It was tough work. We were all getting in very good shape.



Every obstacle course had climbing exercises. We would have to climb up and down the ship cargo nets eventually and this was good preparation. I think this was also just a good upper body exercise. It sure did toughened up the hands as well.

Climbing up a rope is tough work with only your arms and shoulders to pull up your entire body weight.



Going to class was not like in high school where everyone is talking, joking around, and being with your buddies.

Here we went to our classes in groups relaxed but still in formation.



Here is our all important post office. Receiving letters from home sure was nice and really gave me a lift.

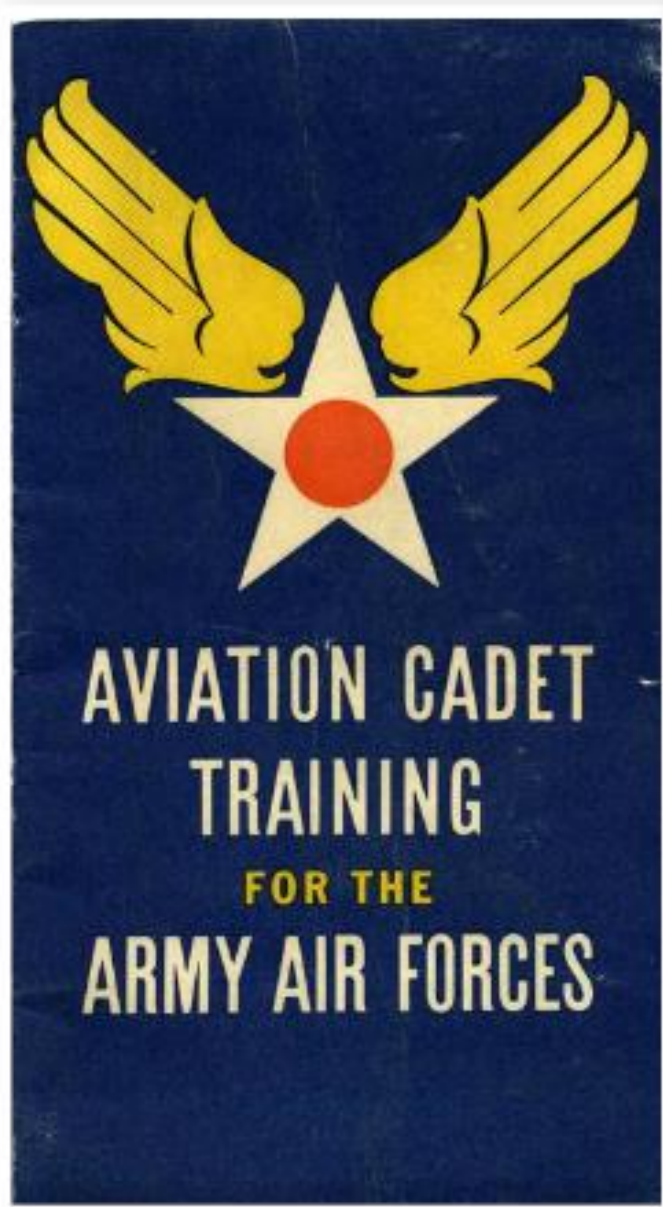


Here is a B-24 that we all got a chance to get a good look at.

Training was tough, no kidding.

We were right on the Gulf of Mexico, just one half mile away.

We got up at 5:30 am to do physical conditioning, close order drills, study military procedures, articles of war, and rifle training.



Here is a description of the Mississippi Gulf Coast.
The last paragraph is about the Air Force Technical
Training School.

THE MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST

This area described in this folder is one of great historic interest. First, this section has been under the flags of France, England, Spain, The Confederate States, and The United States. It was first established in 1699 when D'Iberville and his French Colonists landed on this coast. Here they found the Biloxi Indians, with whom they at once made friends.

Many are the historical points of interest, few of which are, The Old Spanish Fort, The Biloxi Lighthouse, Fort Massachusetts, The Church Of The Redeemer, and Jefferson Davis' Old Home.

Cities represented in this folder such as, Biloxi, Gulfport, Pascagoula, Moss Point, Ocean Springs, Long Beach, Bay St. Louis, and Pass Christian, attract many Tourists with their excellent accommodations, good fishing, both salt water and fresh water, and unexcelled Golf Courses.

The main industry at the present time is ship building, but, commercial fishing and the canning of sea foods are equal in importance. Biloxi is noted as the sea food capital of the nation. Moss Point has the largest Kraft Paper Mill in the country. Gulfport, with its fine harbor facilities has ships from all parts of the world discharging freight for all points in the United States.

Also noted in this section are the large live oak trees, such as the Ruskin Oak, and The Friendship Oak. Some of these famous oak trees are as old as 450 years, and at least 600 people can stand in the shade of one oak at high noon.

Many Legends are told about this interesting section. In the old days, Pirates attracted by the ships carrying gold and other supplies, made this their happy hunting ground. The plantation of the famous lawyer, Edward Livingston, who acted as the go-between between the Pirates and the shipping Merchants, was located at Henderson Point. Cat Island was where these Pirates made their headquarters.

Located now along this coast is the largest Air Force Technical Training School. Here the Soldier Student receives full instructions as to repairing, and maintaining airplanes of all descriptions. After graduation, he is sent to the four corners of the world to Keep 'Em Flying. Through the courtesy of The Army Air Force Technical Training Command, the photographs in this folder of Keesler Field were obtained.

A "COLOURPICTURE" Publication, Cambridge, Mass., U. S. A.

where I'm stationed.



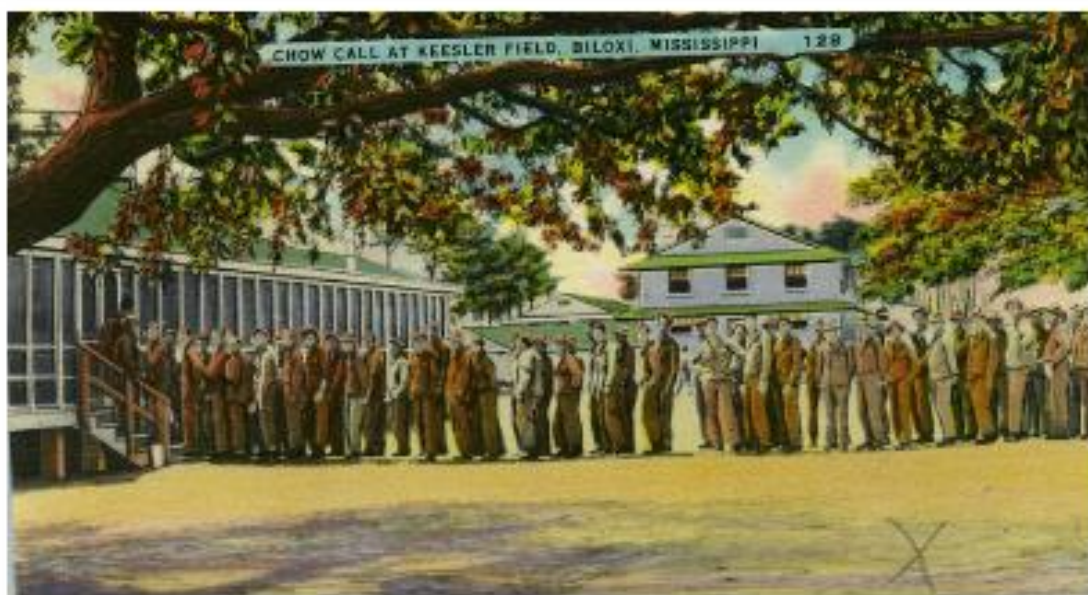
I sent my parents this postcard set so they could see where I was training. I was close to Florida and I hoped to make it there on some weekend.

Training was so tough and tiring that a few guys even died from sunstroke. I never made it to Florida.





We began bayonet training here. We all hoped we would never be so close to the enemy to need them. Below is a chow line. On KP we got up at 4 am to prepare for breakfast. Peeling potatoes, cleaning and scrubbing pots and pans for up to 18 hours was no fun I can tell you.





B-24 MECHANICS CLASS IN SESSION, KEESLER FIELD, MISS.

PHOTO BY ARMY AIR FORCES TECHNICAL TRAINING COMMAND

KEEP 'EM FLYING

We learned airplane identification and other helpful things for the Air Corps. We did calisthenics in the hot sun and had to march nine miles to the rifle range.

We had other hikes of ten miles carrying our packs weighing forty pounds, and then camping out overnight.

TWENTY-FOUR HOURS A DAY, seven days a week, roaring engines and clanking wrenches tell, in part, the story of the tremendous training program at Keesler Field, Miss., a unit of the Army Air Forces Technical Training Command

PT R Champagne 3/362422 Class 2 of
BX 140 5377 Keesler Field, MISS

KEESLER FIELD
MISS
AUG 12
4 30 PM
1943

POST CARD

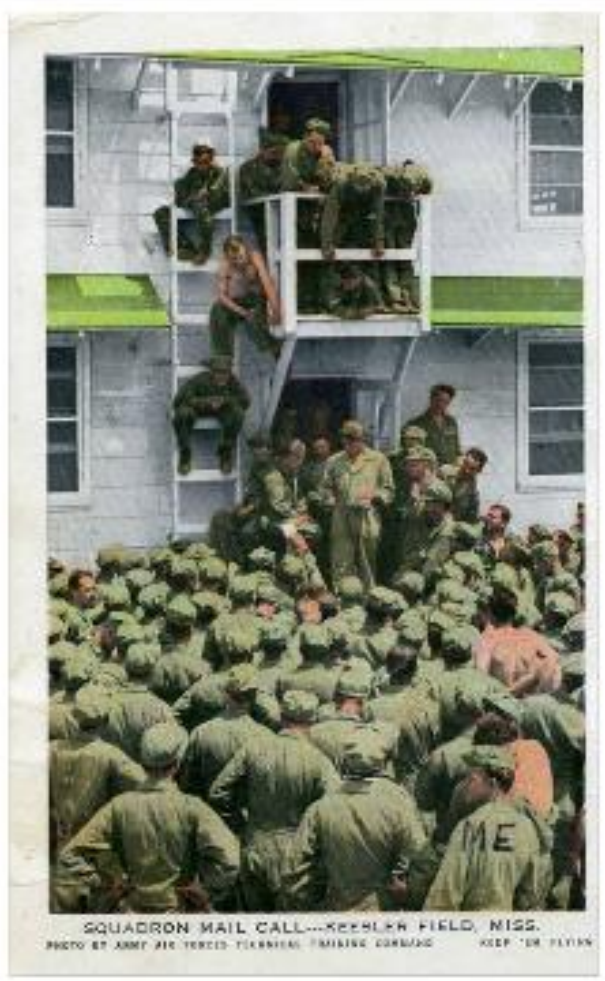
THIS SPACE FOR ADDRESS ONLY

PLACE
STAMP
HERE

Hello Brothers:
How would you
like to fly in one of
these like I will,
maybe? They really
are beautiful to look
at and they fly nice.
Your future aviator brother,
Poland

Mrs. Louis & Gene Champagne,
6 Butler St.
Lawrence, Mass

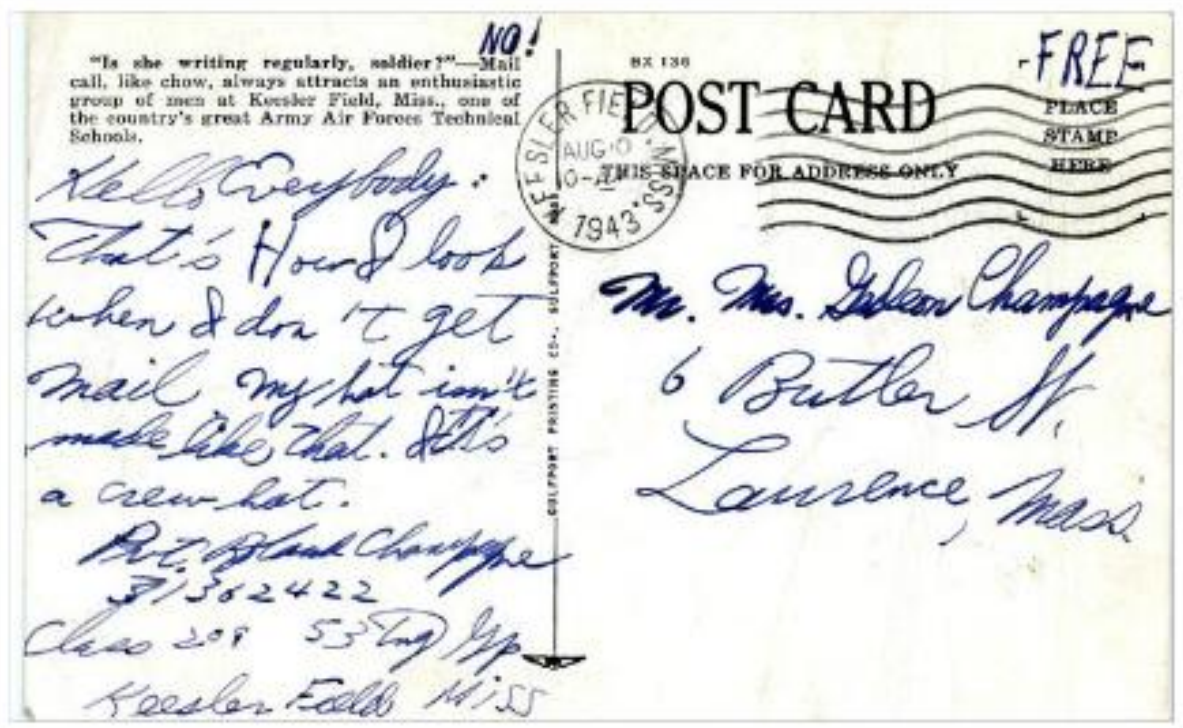
Keesler Field had a radio show weekly on Thursday nights, 870 on your dial, WLW New Orleans. It was only on for fifteen minutes nationally but played on much longer for us locally.



SQUADRON MAIL CALL--KEESLER FIELD, MISS.
 PHOTO BY ARMY AIR FORCE'S TECHNICAL TRAINING COMMAND KEEP 'EM FLYING

Mail call was always an important event throughout my time in the US Army.

Mail service was good and we received letters even during combat, but when a ship sank in the Pacific, down with it went sacks of letters and packages.



"Is she writing regularly, soldier?" **NO!**
 Mail call, like chow, always attracts an enthusiastic group of men at Keesler Field, Miss., one of the country's great Army Air Forces Technical Schools.

*Kello Everybody:
 That's how I look when I don't get mail my hat isn't made like that. It's a crew hat.
 Pvt. Gilbert Champagne
 31582422
 Class 209 53rd Inf Pp
 Keesler Field Miss*

KEESLER FIELD MISSISSIPPI
 AUG 10 1943

POST CARD

THIS SPACE FOR ADDRESS ONLY

FREE

PLACE STAMP HERE

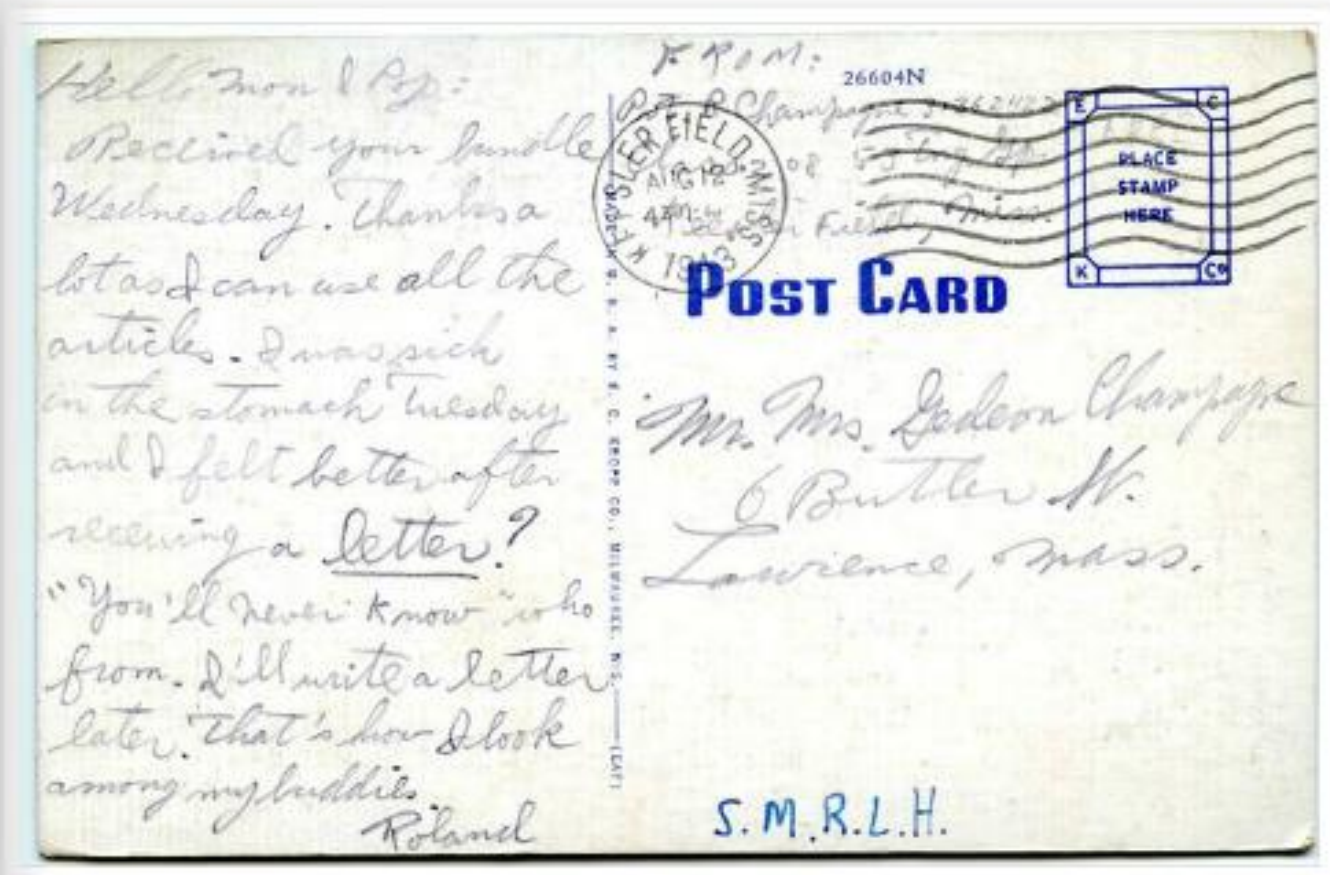
*Mr. Mrs. Gilbert Champagne
 6 Butler St.
 Lawrence, Mass*



These are two targets I sent home in a letter dated Sept 11, 1943. On that day I shot a machine gun, a rifle, and the new carbine. We had marched 8 miles to the range on Thursday. I was too lazy to get up for breakfast so only ate one orange and six cookies before the march! We camped out by the range for several days and practiced all the different guns at different distances, sometimes standing, lying down, and kneeling.



On August 2nd I was notified that I qualified for the Army Specialized Training Program, known as the ASTP. The qualifying test was given back at Fort Devens. Only 37 out of 256 in our squadron qualified. A score of 110 was needed for Officer Candidate School but this program required a score of 115. I was very happy as my



score was 128. I was the 4th highest in our squadron! Some of the guys who qualified already had college degrees. The program would be 36 weeks of study, with one week off between the twelve week semesters. I hoped to go to a college in New England so I could see my family more often.

Even though I had qualified for the ASTP way back at Fort Devens, it was not until Oct 5, 1943 that I was I notified that I had been accepted. One third of the qualifiers in my group were not accepted. One of the officers asked if I wanted to take the French test but I stayed with engineering.

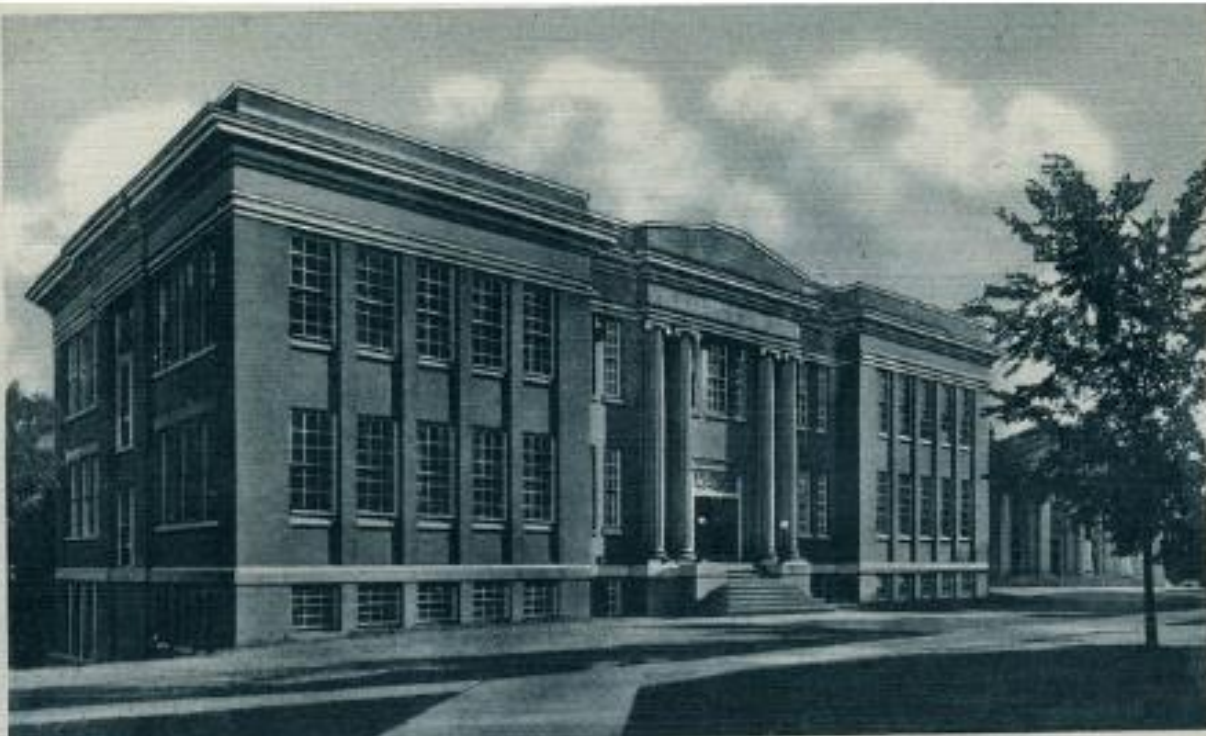
I spent most of October at the University of Mississippi. It was nice with a beautiful campus, good food, and nice dorm rooms.



Ole Miss is a beautiful school that was founded in 1844. It had magnificent old oak trees and very stately buildings. It is located in Oxford, Mississippi. What a majestic atmosphere.

Just look at the building where one of my classes was located.

Nowadays one of the teams my son roots for when he watches college football games is Ole Miss!



THE GEORGE PEABODY BUILDING - UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI, OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI

one of my class rooms.

one of my class rooms.



THE GRADUATE BUILDING — UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI, OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI

James O. Smith

This is the Army building on campus. All of these buildings were so big but also hot and humid inside with no air conditioning whatsoever. Since it was fall it was not so bad.



THE GYMNASIUM — UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI, OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI



WARD AND RICKS — WOMEN'S DORMITORIES — UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI, OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI

...hope we can get any date we want by asking hostess!



THE HOSPITAL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI, OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI

The towns people always supported us soldiers. We could ask hostesses here for info on what to do in town, and even have a tour guide.

This large grassy area in front of the building was our drill field. One thing we always did was drill. We marched in formation over and over. Many times we sang songs as we marched to help us keep time. It was not so bad except for the heat but I did alright. Others had a hard time. You had to drink lots of water.



08-11-2020

Our basic training completed we took trains and headed north at 5 pm on October 28 and arrived at 9 am the next morning. We stayed at Fort Sheridan, Ill outside of Chicago because our dorms were not ready yet. Our ASTP schedule was full.

Reveille 6:30
Breakfast 7:00
Classes 8 to noon
Lunch 12:15
Classes 1:20 to 5:20
Supper 6:30
Study 7:40 to 10
Taps 10:30



I did my ASTP courses at Lake Forest College, outside of Chicago. This portrait is from Nov 15, 1943.

**WILL GET TRAINING
IN ENGINEERING**



PRIVATE ROLAND CHAMPAGNE

Private Roland Champagne, son of Mr. and Mrs. Gideon Champagne, 6 Butler street, has been assigned to an Army specialized training unit at Lake Forest, Ill., where he will study engineering. He received his basic training at Keesler Field, Miss., and at the University of Mississippi. Private Champagne, who was graduated from Central Catholic high school in June, 1943, recently spent a short furlough at his home.

Our local newspaper in Lawrence, Mass did this little story on me.

Newspapers really supported the local servicemen. It was a nice thing to do and really felt good.

We were young and far away from home. We all wrote letters in our spare time, and getting mail from home was the best thing ever for our morale.

73 New A.S.T.P. Men Report Here From Mississippi

Last Saturday 73 new khaki uniforms appeared on campus. Inside were the 73 A.S.T.P.'ers recently acquired from the University of Mississippi.

The boys are going to be the "freshmen" of the Army unit stationed here, for they begin Basic I as soon as they return from their furloughs. The veterans who have been here since July are now resting up for Basic II.

Very unusual is the fact that in the new group there was a master-sergeant who now of course is a private again, and a decided prominence of Smiths. (There are seven in all).

We'll be waiting to welcome you, fellas, when you're back again "hut-hup-hut"ing around L.F.C.

The local newspaper even had a story about our arrival. The program was tough with lots of studying and drilling on top of it. At least now we lived in dorms and there were no more long marches.

The dorm rooms were small as in most colleges. We were two to a room with a bunk bed and two small desks.



Present for Admission Ticket	GARRICK CLUB SEASON	Lake Forest College		
		<i>Student Activity Ticket</i>		
		2ND	1943-44	
		This ticket entitles holder to take part in and attend Student Activities as a student of Lake Forest College.		
3	2	NAME	ROLAND H. CHAMPAGNE	\$2.
1		NOT TRANSFERABLE		

We were so busy with classes, drilling, exercise, and studying that we really did not spend much time in them. So the size of the room was okay.



It was starting to get cold already. It would be much colder than in Lawrence. Look at these guys with all their books!



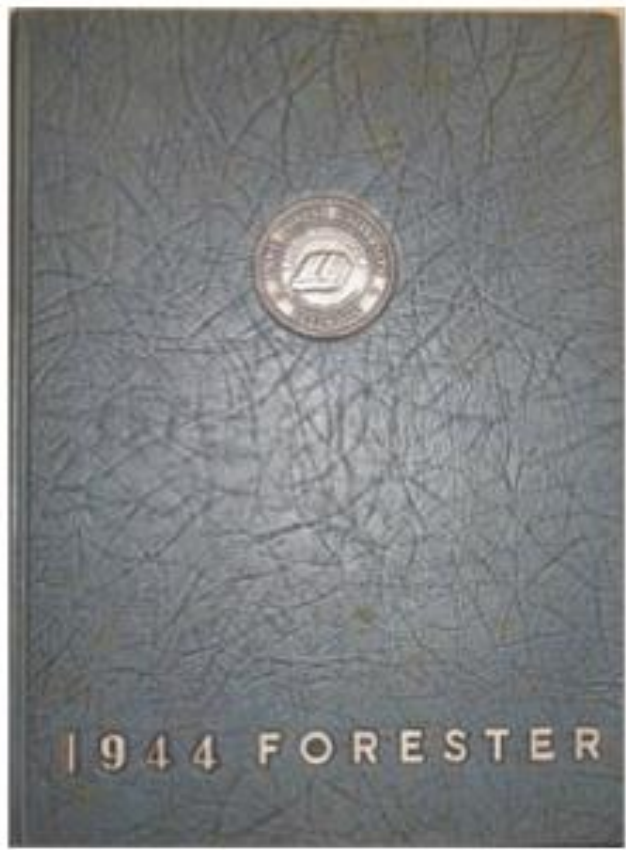
Soon our drills and exercises were being done in the snow! At least I was from New England though I still did not like all the work in the cold.





This training was nothing compared to our basic training. We could feel ourselves losing our physical fitness by the day.





My family kept my Lake Forest yearbook while I was gone. That is where all these photos can be found. I am so glad they did as I now have these photos.





This is a decorative pillowcase that I got in Chicago. I do not remember where but it probably was at the Service Mens' Center. I also got decorative pillowcases at Camp White in Oregon and at Camp San Luis Obispo in California.

Mother and Dad

No one knows but Mother and Dad
About the smiles and tears when sad.

No other is willing and glad to share
Whatever we have of joy or care.

No others of years gone by
Or understand each smile and sigh,

For the dearest hearts on this old earth
Are the hearts at home of golden worth



First Row: Champagne, Feren, Kitchen, Feigal, French, Bernart, Golden, Douglas.
Second Row: Pilsbury, Gobbo, Farrington, Fischer, Callan, Coobs, Bickel.
Third Row: Anderson, Alexander, Anslinger, Hall, Grady, Fancher.
Fourth Row: Ulrich, Sukenik, Bottis, Dunlap, Behr, Adams.

Our section was number three. There I am with my section in the first spot in the first row. It was a good group of guys from all over the country.

On the next page is how Lake Forest College looks today. Still beautiful and small. It remains a very good school to attend.



Today there is a very nice monument dedicated to all the servicemen who have attended Lake Forest College.

In the background is the chapel.





Dedicated to all the heroic alumni who have served our country in the Armed Forces.

I pray that our heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

Abraham Lincoln



This the Chicago Service Men's Center. I sent this postcard home so my family could see it. Inside it was very nice. This is the building in 1944.



Whenever I could I went to Chicago to the Service Men's Center. They had shows, food, stationary to write home. Their support really helped all us boys who were so far from home. You could even make a recording to send home!

This is how the same building looks today. This photo was taken in July of 2014 by my son Mark. He and my grandson Matthew went to see it together.



By December there were rumors that the ASTP program would be ending. They needed people in the infantry as there were so many wounded and killed in action. All we could do was wait to see what the government had in store for us.



Too bad. I could have stayed in the Air Corps.



On Feb 18, 1944 it was announced that the engineering program would be terminated by April 1st. We all went into the infantry. We were all sorry to go.



We left Chicago Monday, March 20th at 9 pm and arrived at Camp White on Friday at 7:30 am. It was quite a trip going through the mountains and coming within 20 miles of the Canadian border. North Dakota and Montana were flat and boring, but Washington and finally Oregon were nice and green.

There is a wonderful short documentary called Southern Oregon Goes to War: Camp White. It was built in 1942 as the country needed Army boot camps to train troops. It was soon called the Alcatraz of Boot Camps as the training was known for its tough standards and long marches. Some of the following photos are taken from the documentary, others from a 96th Division publication.

We marched through Merced, Oregon to the Camp with many people greeting us.





We were now in the 96th Division, the Deadeyes. I would be in the 382nd infantry regiment, company K, 3rd platoon 1st squadron.

Now we began our "battle conditioning". It was tough as we had lost the physical conditioning that we had developed during basic training at Keesler Field. All our classroom work in the ASTP did nothing to help us now. Many of us felt cheated by the Army.

T.S. - 4 loops had KP the day we arrived. T.S.

Hello Everybody,

March 24, 1944

Well here I am - in the Infantry.
That's what I get for being so smart and
being in A.S.T.P.. This division expects
to go to California within 8 weeks for
amphibious training. That means the South Pacific.
The sergeant said I would get 5 weeks of
training - mostly lectures. We have
to be reclassified so I may land in
the Field Artillery, Division Headquarters
or the 96th Division of the INFANTRY.
I don't care where I go from here on
because I feel I'll go overseas very
shortly. The boys who were in the Infantry
will leave with the Division. ~~ummm~~
We left Monday at 9 PM and arrived
at Camp on Friday 7:30 AM.
Quite a trip with plenty of thrills

Here is the first letter I wrote home after arriving at Camp White, Oregon. All our duties and drills felt much more serious now.

T.S. - 4 boys had KP the day we arrived

Hello Everybody,

Well here I am - in the Infantry.
That what I get for being so smart and being
in A.S.T.P..

This division expects to go to California
within 8 weeks for amphibious training. That
means the South Pacific. The sergeant said I
would get 5 weeks of training - mostly
lectures. We have to be reclassified so I may
land in the Field Artillery, Division
Headquarters or the 96th Division INFANTRY.

I don't care where I go from here on because
I feel I'll go overseas very shortly. The boys
who were in the Infantry will leave with the
Division.

We left Monday at 9 PM and arrived at Camp
on Friday 7:30 AM.

Quite a trip with plenty of thrills

and experiences. We went through the mountains and came within 20 miles of the Canadian border. We went to Seattle and then south to Medford. North Dakota and Montana were dry to the eye because the land was flat for miles around. Washington and Oregon are really nice. The grass is green and already flowers are blossoming. There are plenty of apple orchards around. The next time I see home will be just before I shove off for overseas duty. I'm, at least, 3,200 miles from home. I may go to Los Angeles when and if I get a few passes. Our C.O. told us we would get a good seat and I believe he's right.

Don't use this address because I'm going to another Company. I'll send it to you when I get settled. Don't forget DON'T use the address!

Y Y Y Roland

We all knew that we would be in real combat soon. Our trainers began to tell us more about combat and what to expect.

and experiences. We went through the mountains and came within 20 miles of the Canadian border. We went to Seattle and then south to Medford.

North Dakota and Montana were dry to the eye because the land was flat for miles around. Washington and Oregon are really nice. The grass is green and already flowers are blossoming. There are plenty of apple orchards around.

The next time I see home will be just before I shove for overseas duty. I'm at least 3200 miles from home. I may go to Los Angeles when and if I get a few passes. Our CO told us we would get a good deal and I believe he's right.

Don't use this address because I'm going to another Company. I'll send it to you when I get settled.

Don't forget DON'T use the address!

Yours, Roland

It rains quite a bit in Oregon so much of the time the grounds were all mud. That made marching in step more difficult and it meant just keeping your uniform clean took a lot more work.





Camp White was famous for its long marches. That seemed to be the basis of its conditioning program. I guess soldiers the world over go through it.



UNITED STATES ARMY

Hello Everybody,

March 27, 1944

Well today was my "first" day in a man's outfit. We started carrying packs and rifles. We even carry them from one lecture hall to the other. That way we become accustomed to wearing a pack. We had a talk on first aid that will become very useful on the battlefield. We were shown how to treat wounds from bullets, shrapnel and other weapons of war. We were told about malaria because we are going down to that sector. Even snake bites! We also had a talk on personal affairs such as wills, insurance and allotments. And me the name of the bank in which I have money deposited. The government will send my savings direct to the bank so I won't have to bother with money orders.

There is no mistake we are in the Army now as we have to carry our rifles and packs to each of our classes. That was to get us used to carrying a pack.

Hello Everybody,

Well today was my first day in a men's outfit. We started carrying panchoes and rifles. We even carry them from one lecture hall to the other. That way we become accustomed to wearing a pack.

We had a talk on first aid that will become very useful in the battlefield. We were shown how to treat wounds from bullets, shrapnel and other weapons of war.

We were told about malaria because we are going down to that section. Even snake bites!

We also had a talk on personal affairs such as wills, insurance and allotments.

Send me the name of the bank in which I have money deposited. The government will send my savings direct to the bank so I wont have to bother with money orders.

Camp White, Oregon

March 27, 1944

Here's a postcard with a snow covered peak that I can see from the barracks. The peak stands out over the green trees down below. It's so white that we thought it was a cloud at first sight. The lieutenants have been emphasizing the fact that it is imminent that we will go overseas. Our training is condensed to the most important points of a rifleman - meaning me. We can't be anything else because there is not enough time to train us as machine gunners or artillery men. Sends me the sports section of the Sunday Post when you can. I haven't and won't have time to read any magazines SO.....! One of the sergeants told us that, in battle, you are in a daze and you don't exactly know what you are doing when you're running from place to place KILLING Japs. I've got my mind set on this training and I don't even stop to think about home and even that little woman - Theresa. I'm so busy that I forget my morning prayers BUT I recite them around noon when we stop to think. P.S. The lieutenant told us we would PASS with flying colors, our first maneuvers when we got through our first battle. 2nd P.S. - I hope I pass!!! J Roland

The officers built up our confidence by telling us that we would pass our first maneuvers with flying colors. I would be happy just to pass. We were so tired at the end of each day.

Here's a postcard with a snow covered peak that I can see from the barracks. The peak stands out over the green trees down below. Its so white that we thought it was a cloud at first sight.

The lieutenants have been emphasizing the fact that it is imminent that we will go overseas. Our training is condensed to the most important points of a rifleman - meaning me. We can't be anything else because there is not enough time to train us as machine gunners or artillery men.

Send me the sports section of the Sunday Post when you can. I haven't and wont have time to rad any magzines SO!

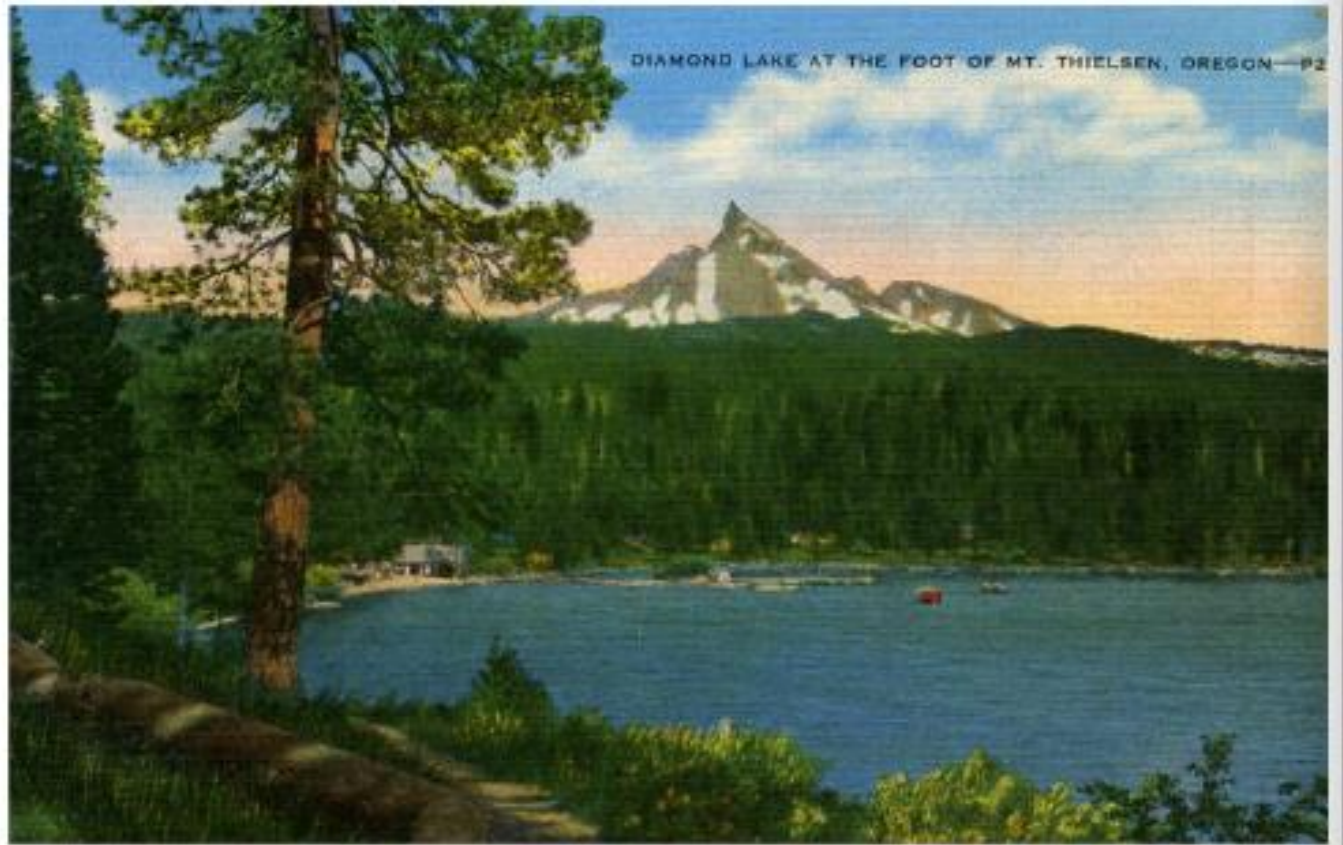
One of the sergeants told us that in battle you are in a daze and you don't exactly know what you are doing when you're running from place to place KILLING Japs. I've got my mind set on this training and I don't even stop to think about home and even that little woman Theresa.

I'm so busy that I forgot my morning prayers BUT I recite them around noon when we stop - think.

PS The lieutenant told us we would pass with flying colors our first maneuvers when we got through our first battle.

2nd PS - I hope I pass!!!

Yours, Roland



Oregon was really beautiful country. It is too bad the circumstances did not allow me to go out and see more of it. I did make it to the town of Medford but was so busy and tired that it was very rare.

This great clifflike formation, rising to an elevation of 9,178 feet, is a picturesque sight when seen from the heights surrounding the beautiful Diamond Lake. It is often referred to as the Matterhorn of the Cascade Range. The sharp summit of the peak has been shattered repeatedly by lightning producing fused glossy surfaces and tortuous opening of the nature of foliurite formations.

NATURAL COLOR PHOTOGRAPH MADE IN U.S.A. BY E. C. KROPP, LITHUANIAN, MICHIGAN

28318

Pt. Roland Champagne
31362422 Co. X
381 INF APO 96
Camp Whites, Oregon
POST CARD



Here's that peak
which is a very beautiful
sight when it is
covered with snow.

Mr. Mrs. Gideon Champagne
6 Butler St.
Lawrence, Mass.

Roland

So as it turned out the most I saw of Oregon was from the train car windows when traveling to and from it.

On March 28 we began our rifle training. I learned why we are nicknamed the Deadeyes. Our Major General Bradley was Captain of the Army rifle team for 30 years and has been personally teaching men to shoot. He is demanding 80 % expert qualifications from the Division, and he will get it.

Below—You gotta know how to shoot in the 96th whether a generat . . .





On April 10, 1944 I qualified as an expert on the carbine rifle. I also qualified in the rifle. Boy was I happy as it took me awhile to feel comfortable with them.

These are photos of the medals I received for those qualifications. Very soon we would begin going through the "field infiltration" course.

The long marches in combat boots, full gear, and heavy helmets were tough on everyone. I don't care how athletic you thought you were.

By then everyone was well aware of the dangers of heat stroke and dehydration. Instructors always made sure that we breaks to drink our water rations.





For some of the marches we camped out overnight in tents with two men in each one. For some of the firing ranges we would also camp out there.

Though the ground was hard falling asleep was not a problem. You can bet we woke up with sore backs.



We never escaped from climbing exercises and Camp White was no different.



We also had to do short "assault sprints" with our rifles and bayonets attached. You did not want to trip and be trampled on by those coming up behind you!

We also learned to throw grenades using the midpoint of your chest as the swivel point. It is the same principle as that of a javelin thrower.





Field infiltration courses are designed to get you used to combat situations; the sights and sounds of combat. It is a mile long with snipers shooting around you, machine guns rattling bullets a mere 30 inches above your head while crawling under barbed wire, and dynamite exploding all around you.



My first day in the field infiltration course was April 18, 1944. What a day! I went through it three times and then twice more at night. At night you can see the tracer bullets whizzing by overhead. One boy got a bullet in his arm as he was too far off the ground. Thirty inches is not much space to be crawling through, especially with all the noise and confusion.



Those explosions were not only loud, they were also dangerous. If an officer threw the dynamite too close the shock wave would throw you. Rocks and dirt rained down upon us at every turn.



The dynamite did two things for sure. It made us run like hell and it made us keep our helmets on.

The next day we went through a German village and then on a night patrol. Now we are real infantrymen. We had more night marches and two 25 mile day marches.





By now we knew that we were a "hot division" and would receive amphibious training somewhere on the west coast and then it would be off to the Pacific to fight the Japanese.



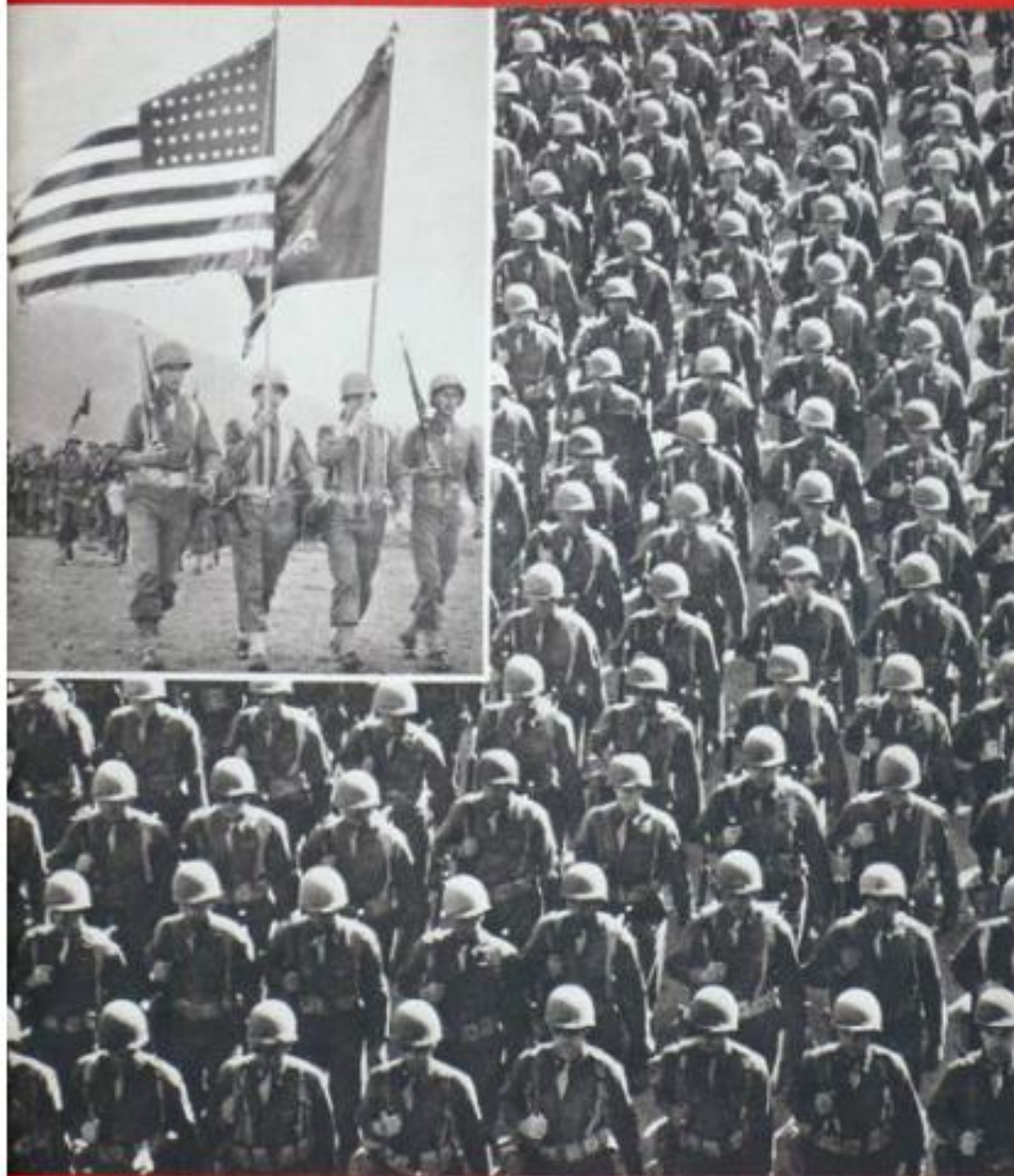
This is the pillowcase I got at Camp White before we left. I wanted to remember this time I spent in training. There were not many items one could call souvenirs, but this is one of them.

MOTHER

With spirit calm as the summer sea
Moving in sweet serenity,
I am sure there is no other
In all the world like you, My Mother

We left by train on April 26th and arrived at Camp San Luis Obispo on the 27th. The train cars were packed but it was not a terribly long ride.

A PICTURE BOOK OF
CAMP SAN LUIS OBISPO
CALIFORNIA



A PICTURE BOOK OF THE CAMP AND ITS ACTIVITIES



I bought this book and sent it home to show my family what we were doing.

We stayed in tarpapered shacks, one squad to a shack. The training was run by the Navy. Our training continued day after day.





The obstacle courses always included lots of climbing. Now I know it was for the climbing down from ships that we needed to do it.





We also climbed up and down thirty foot towers strung with the same cargo netting that we would use to climb up and down the ships at sea.

I never got used to those nets and hated them more than anything else.



These guys must be actors or jokers, because KP was no fun. You began peeling potatoes and 4 AM and then cleaned up from dinner until 9 PM.

This is more like it. We did not have a lot of time to eat so I guess that is why it is called chow. We ate fast and were back at work; studying, writing letters home, practicing drills.





Our days were getting closer and closer to shipping out overseas. Memories of family were becoming more and more important to us. Of course I sent these pillowcases home for safekeeping. I still have them after all these years.

MOTHER

To one who bears the sweetest name
And adds a luster to the same
The greatest friend who cheers when sad
The greatest friend I ever had
Long life to her for there's no other
Could take the place of my dear Mother.

On May 31st we boarded a train headed for Camp Callan in San Diego. Today UCSD is located there. This was the final stage in our amphibious training.

June 1, 1944

Hello Everybody,

Today marks my eleventh month of ACTIVE service. Yesterday I was within 2 miles of Guntz's house and I couldn't see her. I was on the train passing through Los Angeles. We stopped there for 5 hours doing nothing.

I'm in a camp near San Diego.

San Diego is a rough town.

There are too many sailors and also lots of women! nip

I may see Guntz this week if I can get to L. A. It's only 110 miles. The surest way of getting that would be by Guntz coming to see me.

You'll be getting a few pillow

Hello Everybody,

Today marks my eleventh month of ACTIVE service.

Yesterday I was within 2 miles of Aunty's house and I couldn't see her. I was on the train passing through Los Angeles. We stopped there for 5 hours doing nothing.

I'm in a camp near San Diego. San Diego is a rough town. There are too many sailors and also lots of women!

I may see Aunty this week IF i can get to L.A. Its only 110 miles.

The surest way of getting there would be by Aunty coming to see me.

You'll be getting a few pillow

cases. I won't be getting paid till
the 10th. I hope. I didn't sign
the monthly payroll - remember the hospital
V's & I'm sorry I forgot your
birthday. I was in the hospital
too sick to even think. No kidding.
Lucille don't send that book
to Lake Forest. Their sub-
scription doesn't interest me.

Let me know when you hear
from them. Plus about the
yearbook and paper I'm sup-
posed to receive!

I was on K P again 1st day
again.

Light are out soon

so
so long

Roland

cases. I wont be getting paid till the 10th. I hope. I didn't sign the monthly payroll remember the hospital.

Pop I'm sorry I forgot your birthday. I was in the hospital too sick to even think. No kidding.

Lucille don't send that buck to Lake Forest. Their subscription doesn't interest me. Let me know when you hear from them. Also about the yearbook and paper I'm supposed to receive!

I was on KP again 1st day again.

Lights are out soon

so

so long

Roland



Training began right away. Everything seemed rushed now. They needed us in the Pacific war.



We tested our life belts in a swimming pool and even had to jump off the Del Mar pier to simulate abandoning ship.

That was hard for me as I was not comfortable in the water. Later I would have to be.



I was nervous. Looking back there were so many things we had to do throughout all our training. There was always something giving us stress. Later we would realized that this was nothing compared to what we would be doing in combat.

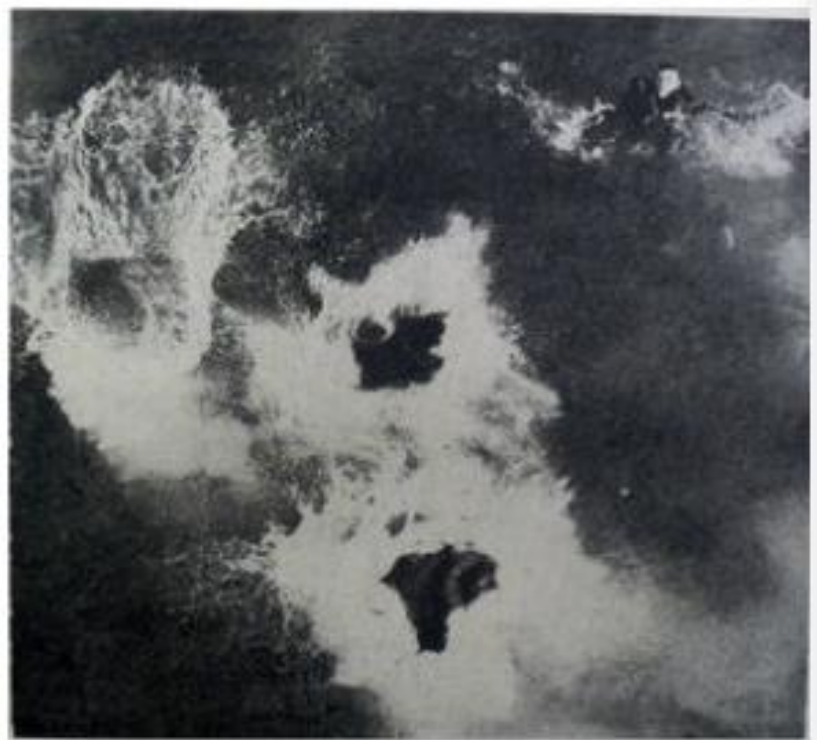


Here we go!

I sure was glad to be wearing a life preserver.

It turned out that this was nothing. Later we had to jump off of a cargo ship a mile out at sea and swim to shore.

That was about a thirty foot drop to the water!







Within a few days we boarded the converted troop ship USS Hunter Liggett, which is pictured above, for our first practice assault landing made on San Clemente Island, 70 miles out on the Pacific Ocean.

The entire 3rd Battalion was on board. The 2nd Battalion was on another ship. We landed the next morning two battalions abreast on San Clemente beaches.

The landing craft were lowered down and we had to climb down the dreaded cargo nets to them.

They landing boats were bobbing up and down on the waves two to three feet. If you did not time it right you were either slammed to the deck or had a three foot drop.

You also had to be careful not to miss the boat altogether as the nets swung away from and against the side of the ship. You could get crushed between the two sides. We had to do this with all our gear on our backs.



Once in our landing boats we headed to shore at our top speed of twelve knots. Overhead sailed five inch shells from a Navy destroyer.

Our boats hit the shore and skidded a few feet on the bottom. The front doors opened and we ran out to the shore in a foot of water.



One thousand yards in we quickly dug foxholes for shelter. Our drill was now complete. We then ate our K ration lunches, went back to the boats, climbed back onto the Hunter Liggett and sailed back to San Diego. We rode the trucks back to Camp Callan in the dark.

It was June 6th, and we were anxious to hear how the D-Day landings had gone. We now had an idea of what they had done. Some days later we watched a close air support demonstration at a marine base. First came some Navy bombers then Marine Corps Corsairs shooting 50 caliber machine guns.

Training was dangerous. The air support was a little too close as bullets ripped into our trucks. A driver who had stayed with the trucks was hit and had to be taken away by ambulance.

Our final exercise was a full scale landing at the beach of Camp Pendleton. We boarded the USS Hunter Liggett in the afternoon and sailed overnight to Oceanside. In the pre-dawn darkness we disembarked the same as before.

Our landing was perfectly executed. There was a reviewing stand onshore and we were told that the President of Mexico had observed us.

MPs had stopped traffic on Pacific Coast Highway and we stormed across as the final task of the day. Our amphibious training was now complete. We were proud and exhausted.

We would all be getting furloughs long enough to go home before shipping out. We knew that upon our return we would be shipping out for some destination in the Pacific theater of operations.

I prayed every day as I had always done and wrote letters home every day except for a few times I was too exhausted or sick. You cannot understand how important it is for your morale to receive letters from home unless you have been in a similar situation; far from home, being pushed to your limits, and fearful of the future.

I was maturing in many ways during my combat training days. I was no longer afraid of the water and would go for swims when I had the chance. Haha, what a change some ammunition makes!



An Attack on Little Tokyo
Camp Callan.

Pvt. R. Champagne US Army
GK 382 31362422 APO 96
Camp San Luis Obispo, Calif

SAN DIEGO
JUN 1
11 24
2 1944
CALIF.

Free

Hello Louis,
I've gone through
German village at Camp White now
We may go through this one here.
I went swimming again. I'm really
learning now. I'm not afraid of
water and use to be. Have you gone
swimming yet? The beaches here
are really nice. Salisbury Beach is
dirty and dreary compared to here.
I'll send you a few souvenirs when I
have time to go to town.
Well, so love Y Roland

Mr. Louis Champagne
6 Butler St.
Lawrence, Mass.



We were all excited for our furloughs.

Dear Lucille:
 Just a card I found
 A fond remembrance of the
 place. I write on anything
 I find. You should
 try it. The girls write
 to me often but writing
 is not like "Action -
 speaks louder than words"
 & sure miss the thrills of
 seeing women that are nice!
 Roland

POST CARD

Miss Lucille Champagne
 6 Butler St.
 Lawrence, Mass.

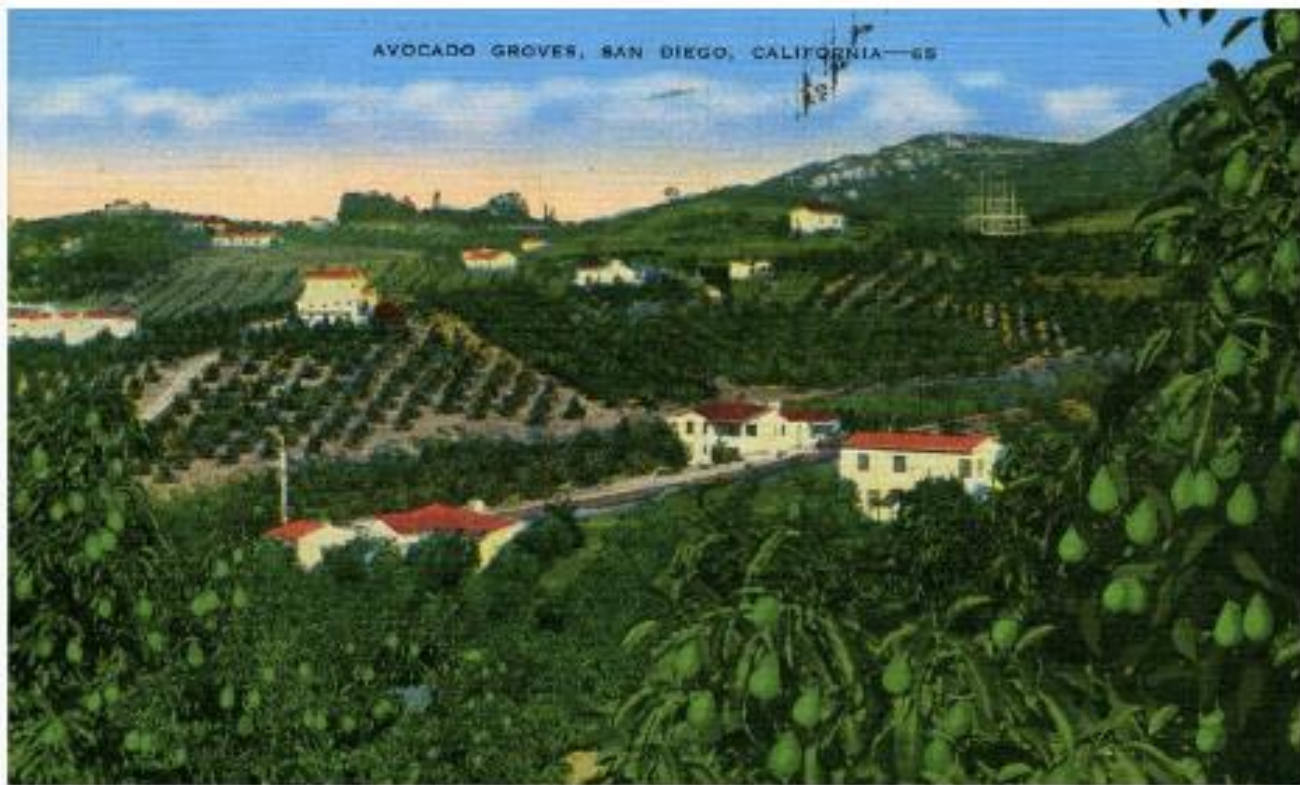
SUSTINEO ALAS

FREE
 SLACK
 ONE CENT
 STAMP
 HERE

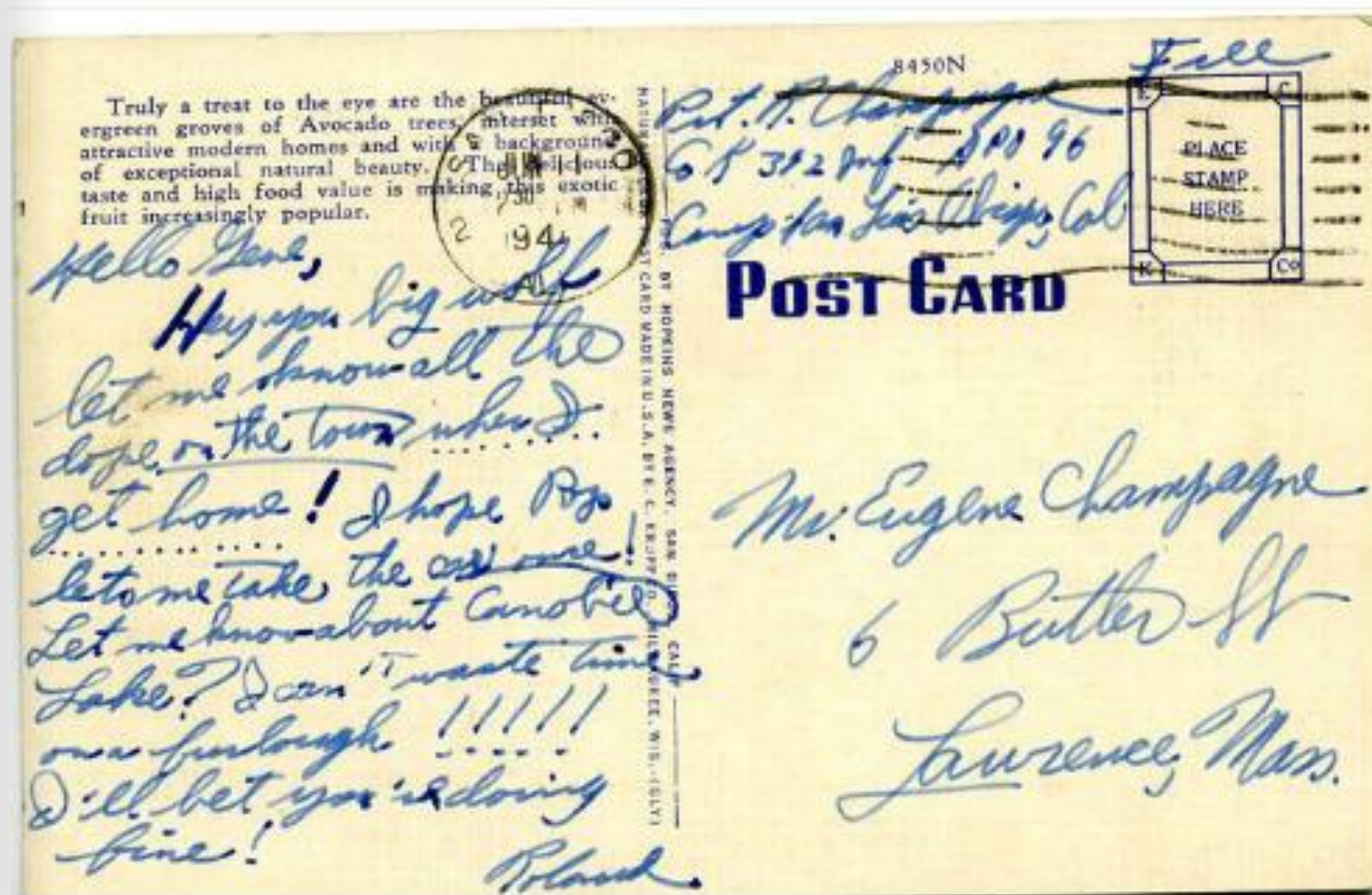
FIELD MASS 209 33 Aug 22
 AUG 13 4 48 PM '18
 W. L. 48 PM '18
 W. L. 48 PM '18

LOUIS ROTHEMANN - CINCINNATI, O.
 GENUINE CURTIS-CHICAGO "C.T. ART-COLORENE" POST-CARD

PT. A. Champagne
 31 36 24 22



Here are some postcards I sent home.



CLASS OF SERVICE This is a full-rate Telegram or Cablegram unless its deferred character is indicated by a suitable symbol above or preceding the address.	<h1>WESTERN UNION</h1> <p>A. N. WILLIAMS PRESIDENT</p>	1301	SYMBOLS DL = Day Letter NL = Night Letter LC = Deferred Cable NLT = Cable Night Letter Ship Radiogram
--	--	------	---

(19)

The time shown in the date line on telegrams and day letters is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination.

BW192 9 TOUR=CHICAGO ILL 23 518P

GIDEON CHAMPAGNE=

1944 JUN 23 PM 7 23

6 BUTLER ST RD=

ARRIVING SOUTH STATION 4:40 PM ON LAKE SHORE LIMITED=

ROLAND.

4:40 PM.

TELEPHONE No.

TELEPHONED TO *[Signature]*

TIME *7:30*

BY *[Signature]* TO *[Signature]*

ATTEMPTS TO DELIVER

THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM CUSTOMERS CONCERNING SERVICE SURFACE

Here is the telegram I sent my family announcing which train I would arrive on. My only request was plenty of hot water for a long awaited hot bath! There were so many servicemen on board the trains and at every stop. It seemed we were all on the move!

It was great to be back home in Lawrence, MA. visiting family and friends.

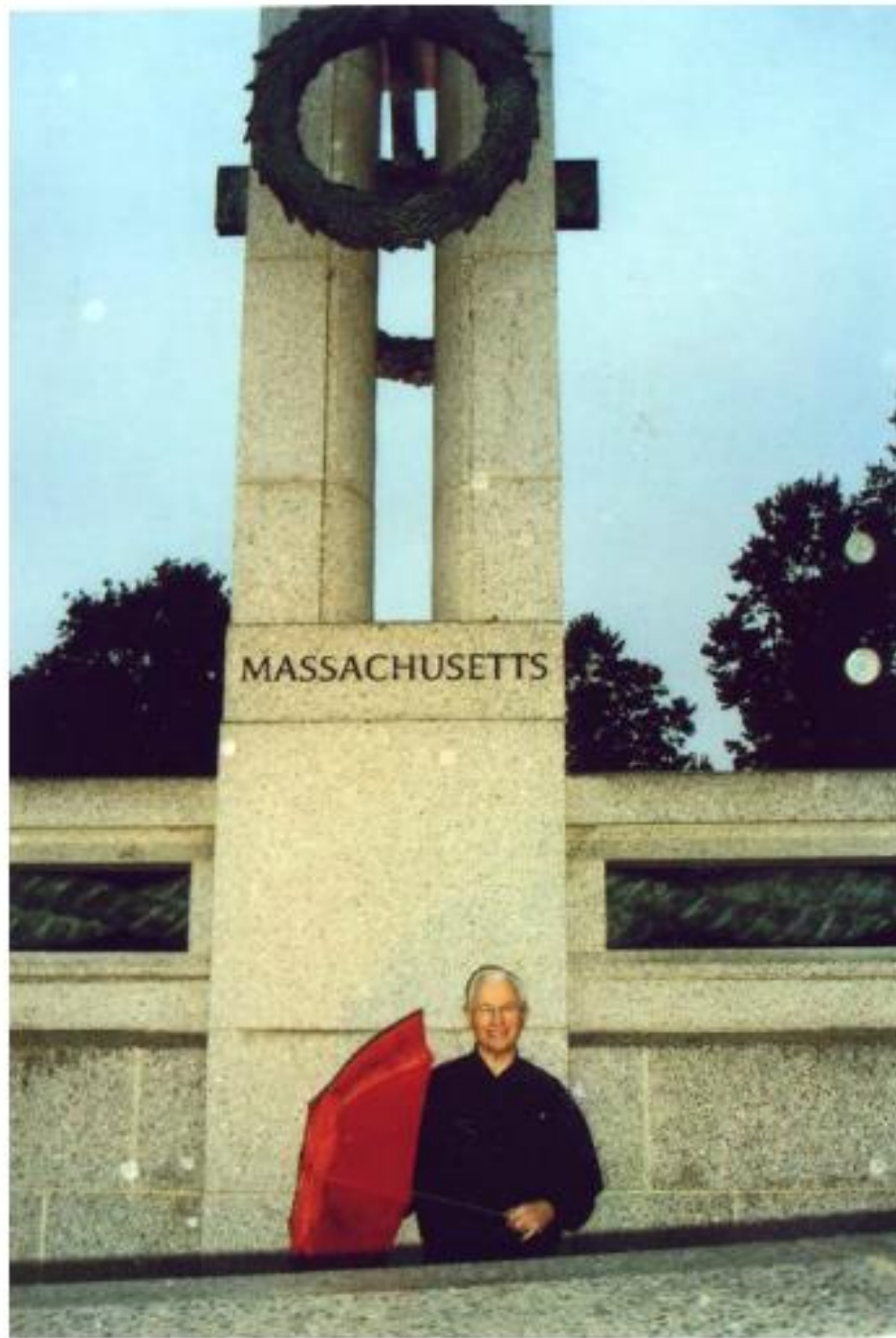


It was great to be back home in Lawrence, MA. Visiting family and friends, and I was able to attend my sister Lucille's high school graduation.

That is our Pop in the middle!

Our stateside training was over. Next stop somewhere in the Pacific!





Two Bronze Stars, Combat Infantryman Badge, Purple Heart Recipient Roland Joseph Champagne of Lawrence, Mass, 96th Division, 382nd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Battalion, K Co., 1st Squad. Liberation of the Philippines and The Battle of Okinawa
