

C0262B001F003L021

Image 1:

Dec. 5, 1944

(3)¹

Dear Mother, Dad, and Grandpa,

Well I guess you were just as much surprised as I to learn of my being transferred. It came so suddenly and so unexpectedly. I was out in the field on a problem last night when I first heard of it. 3 of us were all alone in the wilderness it seemed, on a freezing night with a pup tent and a direction finder outside. Our food was brought out to us by a Sgt. who took over while we ate. Just as I started to eat some very cold potatoes, a message came over the phone saying I should pack up and I would be brought back to camp. Needless to say, I couldn't eat, for I sensed that something was up. When they came after me I was told by Sgt. Maclaughlin (whom I despise, and who is now 1st Sgt.) that I and 4 others from Hq. Co. were being transferred to Camp Swift, Texas, at 9 in the morning. Later, we talked the the [sic] company commander, and here is his version of the story:

4th Army asked for a certain number of pvts. and pfc's. who were P.O.R. qualified (physically and who have done all required things (rifle firing, grenades, etc.) and who have had a furlough in the past 6 months.)

Image 2:

He claims that all this was done by the battalion headquarters and that Hq. Co. orderly room had nothing to do with it. Somehow I can't believe that. He also claims that the Colonel tried to stop the order but couldn't. Said that Hq. Co. was supposed to furnish 7 men but could only give them 5. And he also told us that spec. numbers² were not asked for. (I know I am a 776 (low speed radio operator) but since I passed 18 W.P.M. I should be and might be a 740 (intermediate speed.) Since he said that were [undecipherable] are all upset, because they could make us riflemen in the Inf. Or anything else they wanted to.

When we got into camp we inquired at Bn. Hq. and were told that it would be the 10th Mountain (Inf.) division at Camp Swift. The sgt. who told us said he knew nothing else. I don't believe that either. He said they have been using mountain divisions in Italy. I don't think they have many vehicles. They walk mostly and I just can't bear the thought of going back into the Infantry. I hated it so and was so happy to get out of it. Actually, I hate everything about the Army. It's so confusing and mixed up. They play around with people's lives as if they were sheep.

I had so many hopes of getting good breaks in the 68th, and they were always dashed to pieces.

I heard today that this outfit at Swift is very old and very hot. I don't know. I heard that it was at Camp Carson, Colorado for 6 months.

Image 3:

Dec. 5, 1944

The c.o. said that just because they wanted men P.O.R. qualified and who have had a furlough in the last 6 months is no longer a sign that an outfit is hot, cold, or indifferent. It used to mean that it

¹ Epstein seems to have numbered his pages after completing this letter, and accidently numbered them in the wrong order. They are presented here in the order that provides the most coherent flow. The numbers are preserved in their original, incorrect positions.

² The term number here probably refers to the code number for different military specialties.

would be hot, he said. Claims he knows nothing more about it, which I don't believe. They are so secretive and tight lipped in the Army. Half the time they tell you lies.

The c.q. (charge of quarters) in the orderly room ~~this~~ last night said they called for so many radio operators, wiremen, etc. So maybe we will get into a Signal company. Still, I hate the very idea of being in any part of the Inf. It is certainly a rotten deal, I think. The above is exactly opposite of what the c.o. said.

I called you last night several times from 9 o'clock on, and was relieved when I finally reached you. ~~[undecipherable]~~ The lecture must have been very worth while.

It was a terrific rush packing, and I had to throw out all the newspapers and magazines I was saving, and the cheese and crackers and olives which you sent me and ~~which~~ which I ~~ha~~ didn't have a chance to eat yet. I still had the wonderful cookies, Mother, and I ate most of them. Other things I had to discard were hangers (most of them wooden ones you sent to me), and ink, writing paper, brillo, etc. I just don't

Image 4:

have room. The 2 radios and bed roll take up a lot of space and are heavy. But I have no way of sending them home. I wouldn't want to entrust their care to someone else, that is rely on someone else to send them home for me. As it is I have 2 regular barracks bags (very heavy, I might add, 2 full laundry bags, and a duffle bag packed tight. How I will manage, I don't know. I have that cardboard suitcase I brought back from furlough in the ~~sp~~-supply room, stored high above on the rafters. I don't remember just what is in it, but I don't think there is anything important, so I will have to leave it here. Maybe I can send for it later. After all, I have been here almost 8 months and have accumulated quite a lot.

I bought a map of the world for the dayroom for \$3.50 in New Orleans—a large, beautiful map, and I am taking that. After all, the Army furnished very little for orientation, so why should I give them anything? I even had to buy the newspapers to cut up as well as most of the maps. I was a fool. There was no appreciation shown whatever.

My platoon Lt. is a spineless, yellow weakling. He came into the dayroom today while I was there and didn't even say a word to me. Everyone says he never says a word for his men or sticks up for them in any way. They call him "Sister" Mercy, his last name being mercy.

The heads or leaders of the 68th are disgusting.

Image 5:

(5) Dec. 5, 1944

I do wish I had been trained enough, though, so I could have gotten somewhere in the 68th. I have always been on details instead of getting training in radio. I told the platoon sgt., Wertzberger, this today. He said that ~~[undecipherable]~~ they don't want anyone unless he can take 25 W.P.M. So I asked him how anyone could increase his code speed by being on details all the time. He had no plausible answer.

You see I suffered because ^{almost} everyone had been to Signal Corps schools. And besides they are always ~~bring~~-bringing in in new men from these schools who had never been in the 68th. So I never had a chance. Bust still, I think it was better than what I am getting into.

You know they let me work on orientation ~~[undecipherable]~~ all morning every day, and weren't greatly disturbed if I missed radio training.

Oh, I wish this nasty business were all over. [undecipherable] Still, the war drags on and on. All these optimistic predictions have dialed to materialize. One gets so discouraged.

Wish I could capitalize on my eyes. One fellow who has been in ^{the} South Pacific and Aleutians said to do that. Said he was overseas and knows what it is. Said a friend of his was sent over

Image 6:

and when he came back was told he never should have gone on account of his eyes. He didn't complain, or else he might have stayed here.

2 more went on furlough today and I would have been 6th on the list, and would have gone next week. My name is already crossed off. So near and yet so far. I really was looking forward to it, and had planned for it.

I don't like to write letters like this—this is the 1st in a long while along these lines – but I just have to.

Now we are supposed to leave a 6 P.M. tomorrow and travel night. I believe there is a 6 or 7 hr. layover in Beaumont starting around midnight.

I will call you as soon as I can. Let me hear from you. Love to you all.

Lovingly,

Jerome, Jr.

P.S. Do you think we should have “worked” something? Well, we'll see what develops. If it's too late, I'll really kick myself for not telling you to try. It's impossible for me to even attempt to think anything out anymore.

I don't have stamps with me, so I will have to send this free. It will take longer though.