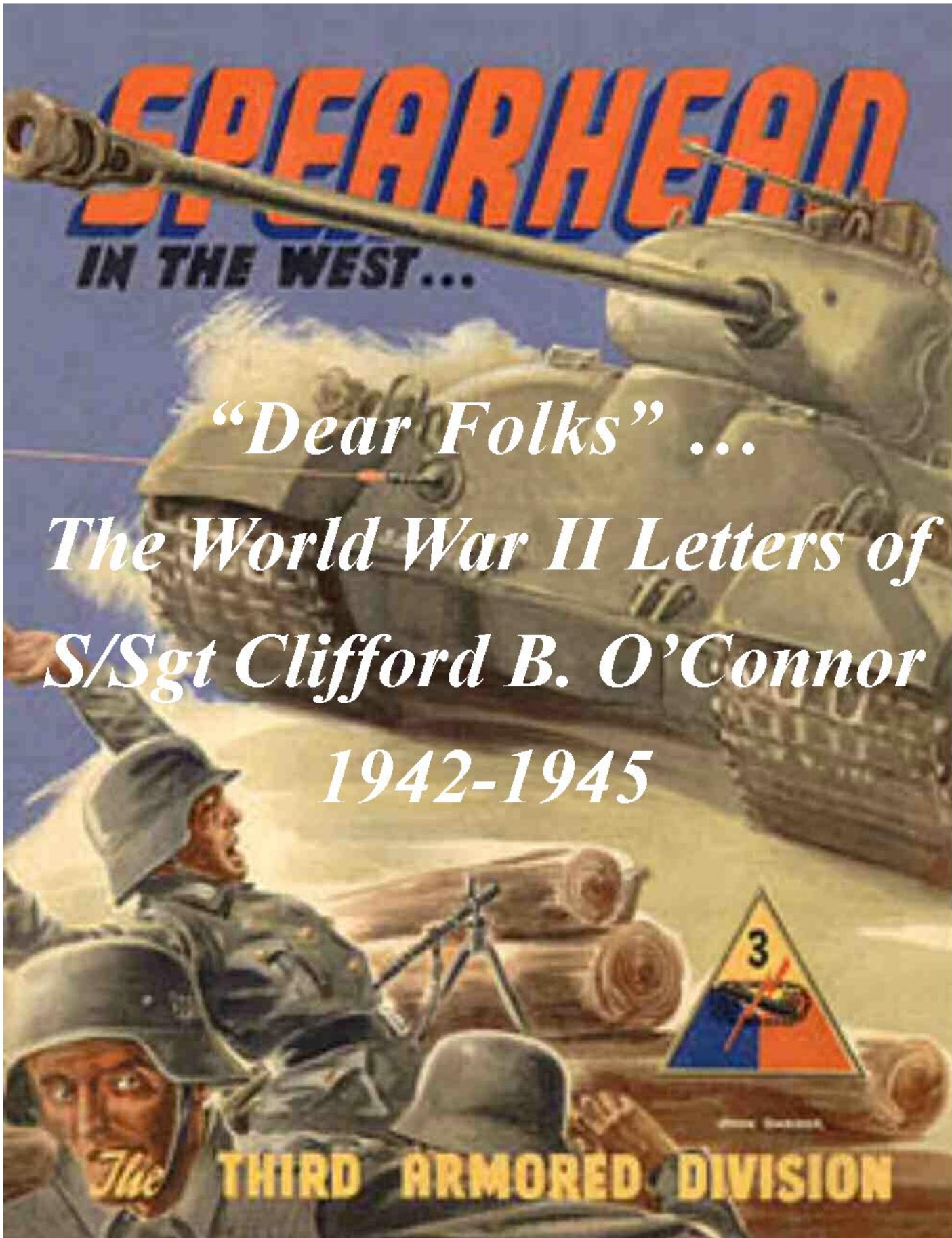


A vintage war poster for the Third Armored Division. The background features a large, olive-drab tank with its main gun barrel angled upwards. In the foreground, two soldiers in M1 helmets and olive-drab uniforms are depicted. One soldier is in the lower left, looking directly at the viewer with a determined expression. Another soldier is behind him, looking towards the right. To the right of the soldiers, there are several large, rolled-up logs or bundles of material. A triangular insignia is visible on the right side, featuring a yellow top half with the number '3' and a blue and red bottom half with a crossed sword and baton. The title 'SPEARHEAD' is written in large, bold, orange letters with a blue outline at the top, and 'IN THE WEST...' is in smaller, bold, black letters below it. At the bottom, the text 'The THIRD ARMORED DIVISION' is written in a stylized font, with 'The' in script and 'THIRD ARMORED DIVISION' in bold block letters.

# **SPEARHEAD**

**IN THE WEST...**

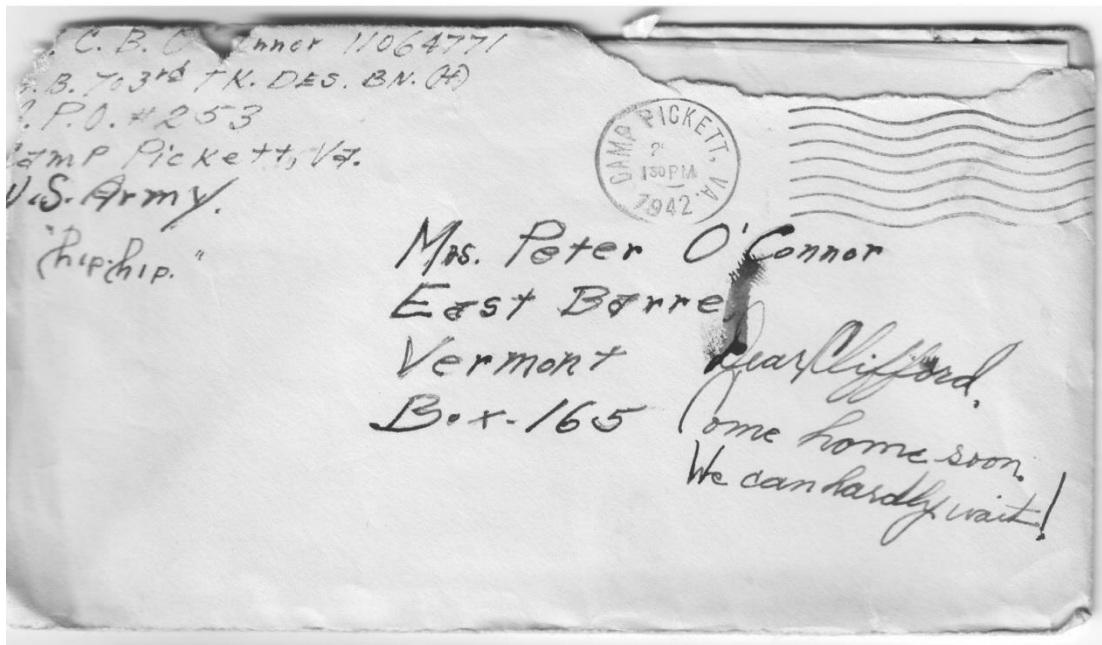
*“Dear Folks” ...  
The World War II Letters of  
S/Sgt Clifford B. O’Connor  
1942-1945*





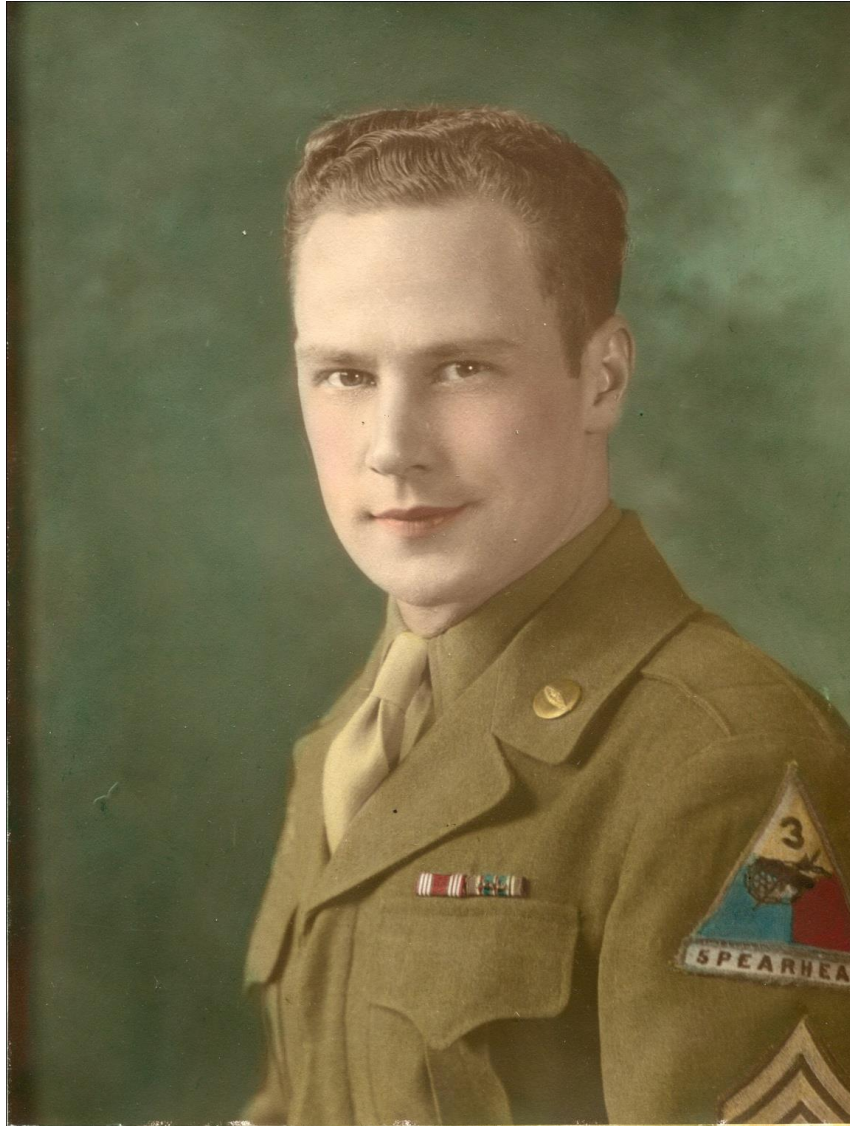
# *“Dear Folks” ...*

*The World War II Letters Home  
to  
East Barre, Vermont  
from  
S/Sgt. Clifford B. O'Connor  
Company B, 703<sup>rd</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion  
3rd Armored, “Spearhead,” Division  
United States Army  
1942-1945*



August 10, 2015

The more than 260 letters Clifford mailed home to East Barre, Vermont, during the war remained with his mother, Lula Nye O'Connor, until her death in 1987, when they were passed on to his wife, Dottie, and their children ... Karen, Peter, Kenny, and Kathy. They were transcribed and compiled by Karen O'Connor Bray, and are presented herein to commemorate the 25th anniversary of his passing.



*Clifford Boyce O'Connor*  
(September 19, 1919 – August 10, 1990)

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## DEDICATION

This volume of his letters is dedicated to the memory of my father, Clifford “Cliff” O’Connor, whose deep faith and big heart show up on every page. They are preserved here on behalf of my mother Dorothy (Dottie) Smith O’Connor (September 27, 1923 – January 18, 2003), the “sweetheart” of his letters; and on behalf of my brother Peter O’Connor; my brother Kenny O’Connor and wife Tricia, their son, Christopher O’Connor, Capt., U.S. Army, and daughter, Kathryn O’Connor; and my sister Kathy O’Connor Tersavich.

I have enjoyed communications with many of our cousins who expressed appreciation for my earlier diary transcriptions of our grandmother, Lula Nye O’Connor, for the years 1942 through 1946. It was my goal to integrate with my father’s letters the village story told in Ma’s diaries of life in East Barre, Vermont, during the war.

Many O’Connor and Cleary cousins (to whom Ma was Aunt Lula) have contributed pictures and other surprisingly wonderful tidbits from near and far. Sharing these books has rekindled many childhood friendships and established new ones. Family talk and interest expressed in the publication of these letters by Eugene Cleary during a recent family reunion, for example, reinforced my commitment to their completion on this date. Thanks to all.

My husband, Gaither C. Bray, Col., U.S. Army (Ret.), provided abundant encouragement and support from the day I began opening, reading, and transcribing each letter and later establishing the tribute of artifacts and memorabilia on display in the local American Legion museum.

Like similar collections of veterans everywhere, for long years these items were boxed in our cellar, occasionally seeing the light of day during Cliff’s Army tank crew reunions and on the many occasions he talked about them with my brothers at his work bench or at the kitchen table. Accessible now and under glass, the collection serves as a point of interest at the small museum in Cliff’s hometown of Windsor Locks, Ct. It was a pleasure to be there with our nephew Chris to see his grandfather O’Connor’s exhibit just before he left for basic training, Army Officer Candidate School, and aviation school. A Blackhawk pilot and Afghanistan veteran, he is now serving in Germany.

Other projects have been undertaken and shared by family members in the past few years to preserve histories, photographs, and relics. Joan Donahue Adorno manages such a collection at *ancestry.com* and remains hopeful, as do I, that there are still hidden treasures to be found in unlikely places and long-unopened shoeboxes.

We all need to make sure the sacrifices of the likes of Cliff O’Connor and the millions who served before, during, and after World War II are honored forever by remembering them, and talking about them, with love and gratitude.

*Karen O’Connor Bray  
karenobray@fastmail.fm*



## INTRODUCTION

On the nights of December 7, 8, and 10, 1941, Lula Nye O'Connor sat as always at her kitchen table in East Barre, Vermont, to write a few words in her diary. On these nights, her entries included, respectively, "*Battle in the Pacific with Japan*"; "*War was declared with Japan today*;" and "*Italy and Germany have declared war on this country*."

Lula's long war years had begun. Within weeks of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, her middle son, Clifford, had enlisted in the Army from Hartford, Connecticut, come home to say goodbye, and was in-processed at Fort Devens in Massachusetts. Before it was all over nearly four years later, all three of her sons would have gone off to the war, only two of them to come home.

Clifford's letters to the "Dear Folks" back home through these years track his soldier's story, from training stateside in Louisiana, Texas, Pennsylvania, California, and Virginia, to sailing to England on a troop ship, and on to the fight, landing two weeks after D-Day and serving as a tank commander through France, Belgium, and Germany.

He wrote his last letter from overseas, dated September 17, 1945, while waiting to ship out for home. His mother saved his 266 letters, in their original envelopes, having carefully tucked any photo or enclosure inside each.

Reflecting now from a connected digital world 70 years later, it's difficult for the grandchildren of WWII veterans to appreciate the sense of responsibility associated with the writing of a news-filled letter from home; and, from the war theatres, the shared responsibility of the service member to respond.

Mail to and from home was vital in conveying news, good and bad. Though mostly personal in nature, his letters also convey the sense of his combat experiences as a tank commander, including the ambush and killing of a German general officer. As this and other events unfold, we come to know a lot about Clifford ... the depth of his faith and love for family and friends, notably through the battlefield deaths of his younger brother and of Al Morrie, a hometown friend.

As for millions of other families notified by mail often months after a combat death, such a drama unfolds here. The family chose to withhold for several months news of brother Wendell's death in Italy in July 1944. He learned the truth from his own returned letter to Wendell, then struggled with the family's decision until his mother wrote a difficult letter telling him why. Though lost to history, the impact of her words lives on in Clifford's response.

Homefront activities in the village of East Barre and neighboring villages make interesting reading as Clifford's family members come to life through the letters, as does his sweetheart, later wife, Dottie.

That Clifford practiced a life-long habit not only of saving memorabilia but also of labeling and documenting things – his personal items often containing precise information about contents,

with his name, the date, and other relevant facts clearly marked, made the challenge of producing his letters less daunting than for those who must search, often in vain, for items with which to enrich the basic text. Those who knew Cliff and his mother, Lula, know that they shared this habit. “Ma” maintained a diary in which her spare daily entries revealed much about her and the family. Likewise Clifford’s letters provide insight with comments on the routine of Army life and his thoughts of home.

Together, Ma’s diaries and Clifford’s letters create a snapshot of World War II from the village of East Barre. Ma’s complete diaries of these, *The War Years*, were transcribed in the volume of January 2007, entitled “The World War II Years At Home,” which contains many excerpts from Clifford’s letters. The picture below shows Lula and Peter O’Connor (Ma and Pa) by the piazza at home in East Barre. Some of Ma’s diary pages are interspersed herein, as that on the following page, her entries for Pearl Harbor Day and the Declarations of War:

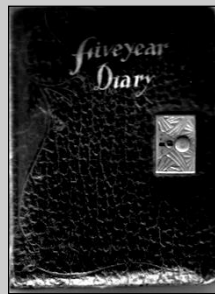


*Lula and Peter O'Connor (Ma and Pa) by the piazza at home in East Barre  
1944*

## From Ma's Diary:

### *Pearl Harbor Day and Declarations of War*

Note: In this and subsequent "From Ma's Diary" excerpts herein, the reader will become familiar with her abbreviations, i.e., P-Peter, L-Lawrence & J-Josephine, M-Mildred & J-Johnny, C-Clifford, W-Wendell, E-Edna, H-Helen, etc. The O'Connor family and Cleary cousins at home during the war are pictured on Introduction pages 8 and 9.



#### December 7, 1941 – Sunday

Snowy. We went to 10 o'clock in Barre. L went with us. Took M & Marilyn home after Mass. Very slippery. L & J & children & M & J & Marilyn were here at night. **Battle in the Pacific with Japan.**

#### December 8, 1941 – Monday

P & L worked. L & I went to 8 o'clock Mass in Graniteville. **War was declared with Japan to-day.** Mrs. Morrie came in a while.

#### December 9, 1941 – Tuesday

Cold & bright. P & L worked. I washed & mopped. Went over to Lawrence's at noon to stay with Josephine till Olga got there in p.m. Josephine had the doctor last night.

#### December 10, 1941 – Wednesday

Nice warm day. P & L worked. Edna went to Barre to go shopping with M. I went up to Lottie's in p.m. I made a slip for Lorraine & kerchief for Josephine for Christmas.

#### December 11, 1941 – Thursday

Very cold. P & L worked. L took me up to get Wendell's birth certificate. L got his & I got Mildred's too. I wrote to W & sent his certificate. **Italy & Germany have declared war on this country.**

## THE O'CONNOR FAMILY AT HOME DURING THE WAR

All three O'Connor sons served in World War II. Two of the three lived through it – Clifford and Lawrence came back home – Clifford from the European Theatre of Operations, and Lawrence, married and called up during the latter years, from the Army of Occupation in Japan. Their brother Wendell, the youngest of the three boys, was killed in action in Italy on July 8, 1944.

Of the three daughters, Edna and Helen were at home and in school; Mildred was married and lived nearby with her husband Johnny and their daughter Marilyn, and, before war's end, son Eugene.

The O'Connor family members at home during the war are introduced below in a photograph taken on July 12, 1943.



*Left to right: Clifford's sister Mildred & brother-in-law Johnny Cozzi with their daughter, Marilyn; mother and father, Lula and Peter O'Connor; sisters Edna and Helen O'Connor; brother Lawrence and sister-in-law Josephine, with children Lorraine and Bobby.*



## THEIR CLEARY COUSINS AT HOME DURING THE WAR



*The Cleary Family During the War*

*Annie O'Connor Cleary (far left) was Clifford's paternal aunt. To her right is her husband Joseph (Uncle Joe); their children Billy, Gertrude, and Mary (center); seated are left, Eugene, and right, Patrick.*

*Clifford and Wendell remained in close touch throughout the war years with their cousin Billy, also serving in the Army, and whose letters appear throughout these pages.*

## HOME SWEET HOME



### *The O'Connor Home*

*In East Barre, Vermont (formerly known as "Carnes Mill").  
Ancestral home of Clifford's mother, Lula Nye O'Connor,  
purchased in 1862 by Clifford's maternal great-grandfather, James M. Carnes.*

*[For more photos and information on the history of this house,  
refer to pages 73 and 74 in  
"The Diaries of Lula Nye O'Connor, '1946 and 1947: New Beginnings.'"]*

## *A Soldier's Chronology*

Also included herein are some relevant items found among Clifford's World War II artifacts and papers. Principal among these is this chronology, from all the years he'd made entries about his whereabouts and carried it through the war, from the day he in-processed at Camp Devens until his emphatically underlined "*Discharged*" entry, it stays with us now as a thread-bare double-sided sheet that went through it all with him from February 9, 1942, through October 2, 1945.

The following two pages present this timeline of Cliff's training and combat journey ... dates and places ... folds and creases. A tattered page that represents not only one soldier's long hard years, but the sacrifices of millions like him, writing letters to the "Dear Folks" at home.

Clifford O'Connor

Feb.

~~Feb.~~ 9, 1942 Arrived at Devens, Mass.

14 -

Left Devens, Mass.

17 -

Arrived at Falk, La.

June 7, 1942 Left Falk, La.

9, 1942

Arrived at Hood, Tex.

July 25, 1942 Left Hood, Tex.

(RAIL HEAD  
FREDA)

July 28, 1942 Arrived at Desert, Calif.

Oct 29, 1942 Left Desert

Nov. 4, 1942 Arrived at Pickett, Va.

Jan. 16, 1943 Left Camp Pickett, Va.

Jan. 17, 1943 Arrived at Johnston City, Pa.

Aug 26, 1943 Left the Gap, Pa.

P.O.E. Aug 26, 1943 Arrived at Wilmer, N. I. R.R.

Sept. 4, 1943 Left Wilmer for Staten Island

Terminal, P.E. and boarded

ship at 11 A.M. U.S.S. SHAWNEE

Sailed 11:15 P.M. (MARRY CLEARY'S WEDDING DAY)

Arrived at Weymouth, England 11 P.M.

Got off ship and went to Mere, Wilts, England

Moved to Weymouth

Boarded L.C.T. Weymouth

Sailed for France

Landed in France (OHMAHA BEACH)

Entered Belgium (ISIGNY)

Entered Germany (KOTGEN)

Left Brünig, Germany for

Robertsville, Belgium

BULGE

FROM

MILMOX



JAN 25 PARIS "3" Day Pass

JAN. 28 - TROUBLE - WHITEY KILLED (COQUIER, BELGIUM) 1945

<sup>1945</sup>  
Jan. 24 Pilled out of battle for rest at Coquier, Bel.

Feb 18, 1945 Left Coquier, Bel. for Stolberg, Ger. again

Feb. 23 - Court. marrialed, during bombings <sup>STOLBERG, GERMANY</sup> strutting.

Feb 24 - Crossed ~~Rhein~~ Roer River 3:30 A.M.

March 28 Crossed ~~RHINE~~ at BOHN. 1:05 P.M.

A. Pri / 21, reach Dessau + Elbe River

April 23 Pilled out of battle for good

May 7 War ends Saurbach, Ger.

Aug 14 Japan Capitulates.

Aug 24 - Got news of going home - Reg. & Co.

Aug 27 - Transferred to 106 INF. (Odenheim, Germany)

Sept. 9 - Left Odenheim for Assembly Area <sup>40+85.</sup>

Sept. 11 Arrived at Camp LUCKY STRIKE NEAR LEHARTS

Sept. 20 Sailed / loaded on U.S. Victory at 3:30 P.M.

Sailed 6:03 P.M.

Sept. 28 Land Docked at Boston Fish Pier at

11:30 A.M. Went to Camp Miles Standish

Left Standish for Camp Edwards Sept 30,

Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup> Discharged.

## THE LETTERS

With the exception of a single, and especially poignant, letter that opened with “Hello Pa,” (see August 8, 1944), Clifford’s salutation was always the familiar, *Dear father*.

And also with only a single exception (a Christmas card addressed to *Mr. & Mrs. Peter O’Connor & Family* on Dec. 22, 1944), he addressed his envelopes to *Mrs. Peter O’Connor* as shown in the one depicted on the front cover of this volume, which bears his sister’s wistful annotation, “*Come home soon, we can hardly wait!*”

Each letter includes a brief description of stationery, postal marks, censor routing, etc., and identifies any enclosures sent with it, which were usually annotated on the envelope by his mother.

The letters are presented in separate sections by year, page-numbered in the top right as shown below:

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Pages</u>         |
|-------------|----------------------|
| 1942        | 1942   Pages 1 - 192 |
| 1943        | 1943   Pages 1 - 115 |
| 1944        | 1944   Pages 1 - 119 |
| 1945        | 1945   Pages 1 - 109 |

## THE LETTERS OF 1942

Although Clifford's first letter, dated January 15, 1942, mailed from Hartford, Ct., predates his actual enlistment in the Army, Ma had bundled it with his war years' letters. Written just a month into the war, it contains hints of both stepped up activities at Clifford's defense contractor employer and of his own thoughts about the future. One notes, for example, reference to *deferment* (Clifford was living in Hartford and working in East Hartford at the Pratt & Whitney Aircraft Division of United Aircraft Corporation, *sabotage*, and *increased production*).

The picture that follows this first letter is evidence that Cliff was enjoying his friends and activities in Hartford prior to the war. From the date on the reverse of the "privy" picture, this was taken during the lake weekend he'd just enjoyed as described in his letter home. The lake was Lake Popolopen, which is near West Point, N.Y., a few hours outside of Hartford. The name of his companion on that trip, Roland Riopel, (perhaps a co-worker), was found in Cliff's well-worn address book, which, along with his St. Joseph Missal, and the "Chronology" presented in the Introduction, accompanied him throughout the war.

Less than a month after this first letter, and just over 2 months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Clifford was on his way to Fort Devens. ...

January 15, 1942

[Envelope: 3-cent stamp; Postmarked Jan. 16, 1942; Transfer Office, Hartford, CT.  
Stationery: Two plain sheets; four sides; green ink.]

*Dear folks,*

Well it is nearly time I wrote. I hope you people don't think I have been sick or anything, because I haven't. I just haven't got around to write before. I don't seem to have any time to myself now.

I suppose you people have heard about the explosion we had at the aircraft plant. There was no sabotage connected with it though. It happened in the aluminum spray dept. where they spray the cylinders with aluminum for the Navy planes. So the salt water won't have any affect on the metal. It is very hot when they spray it on and somehow or other it blew up injuring 9 men 3 of them died last night in the hospital. I don't know about the condition of the rest. I was out to lunch the time it happened and the guards locked the gates and wouldn't let anyone in or out for a quite a while. We were a little late but we weren't docked for it. That dept. is a quite a long way from our dept. I would say about from Crowley's store down to the blacksmith shop in East Barre.

I was up to the lake in New York State last week end again we had a good time the lake was frozen over and we skated and played hockey. It was 16 degrees below but the air is so dry we didn't mind it very much. Just like up home.

I haven't seen Wendell for a quite a while. I will have to go up and see him Saturday nite I guess. He doesn't come down very often. I guess he is as tired when he gets out of work as I am.

I am still waiting to hear about my deferment.

There is a little snow here now. I am glad we finally got some. It has been quite cold here all last week. It thawed today for a while but it is cooler now. I hope it doesn't thaw too much. I want to go skating at some park Saturday nite or Saturday afternoon. You see I usually quit work at 12 on Saturday. They still let the office help do it if they want to. They are thinking of putting us on 7 days a week but I hope not. I do not want to work on Sunday. They say they might have us work 5 days and then have one day off. Which would give us a different day off every week. I don't like that system at all. But they seem to think they can get more production out that way.

Well I think I will go to bed.

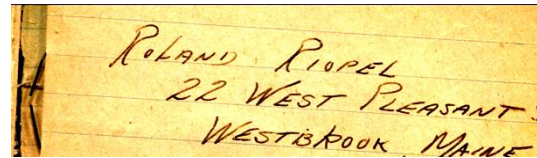
Love to all,

*Clifford*





*Playful note and imprint from reverse of photo below.*



*Above entry from Cliff's address book.  
The spelling remains in question after all these years.*



*This was taken at Lake Popolopen, N.Y., a training area near West Point.  
Imprint on reverse, "Nov 27, 1941 (see above.)"*

*Note: This picture was not included in his letter home of January 15, 1942.  
It was found among Clifford's papers and memorabilia. It reflects the more carefree days of the young men before the attack on Pearl Harbor.  
[Nothing is mentioned after this photo of Roland Riopel.]*

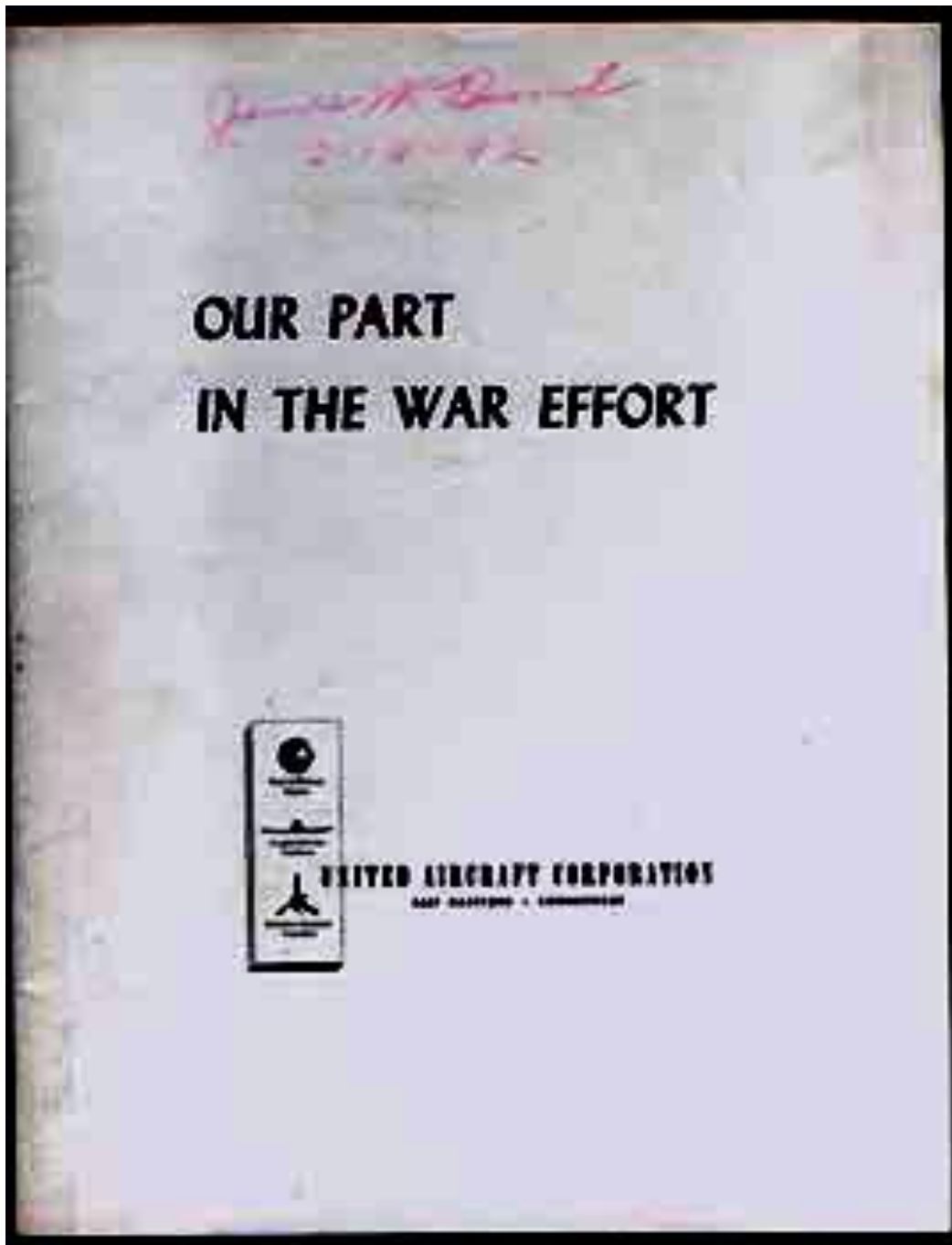
Shown below is the front cover of a booklet published by Clifford's employer at the time of his enlistment, United Aircraft Corporation, Pratt & Whitney Division, East Hartford, Connecticut.

Clifford returned to work at "the 'Aircraft'" at war's end, retiring in 1977.

Date written on this document is March 14, 1942, a month after Clifford enlisted.

(Image found online at a public website; contents were unavailable.)

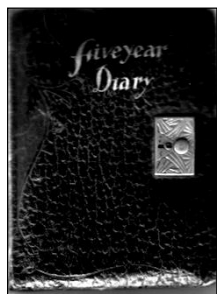
Consider Cliff's letter home of January 15, 1942, indicating that the intensity of war-time was affecting procedures at the Aircraft, readying for increased production demands.



The following are entries from Ma's diary for the days immediately surrounding Clifford's enlistment. Her, "war time" started on February 9, 1942, the day Clifford, the first of the three O'Connor sons to do so, enlisted.

### From Ma's Diary:

***"Begin Wartime by the Clock Today."***



#### February 5, 1942 – Thursday

Cold. C came home in morning. He will enlist Monday morning. P & L worked. We went down to M's at night. Mrs. Cozzi & Elda were there.

#### February 6, 1942 – Friday

Some snow & warmer. P & L worked. C & I went to confession & communion & stopped at Annie's to see Billy. P & C & I went up to Cleary's at night.

#### February 7, 1942 – Saturday

Cloudy & warm. Clifford went at noon to Hartford. He plans to enlist Mon. Billy Cleary went on the same train about 1 o'clock in p.m. P took 2 big pieces of ham up to Hutchins in p.m.

#### February 8, 1942 – Sunday

Lots of snow. L & H & I went to 10 o'clock Mass. The girls & I went down to Mildred's for dinner. Peter was up to Hutchins' again.

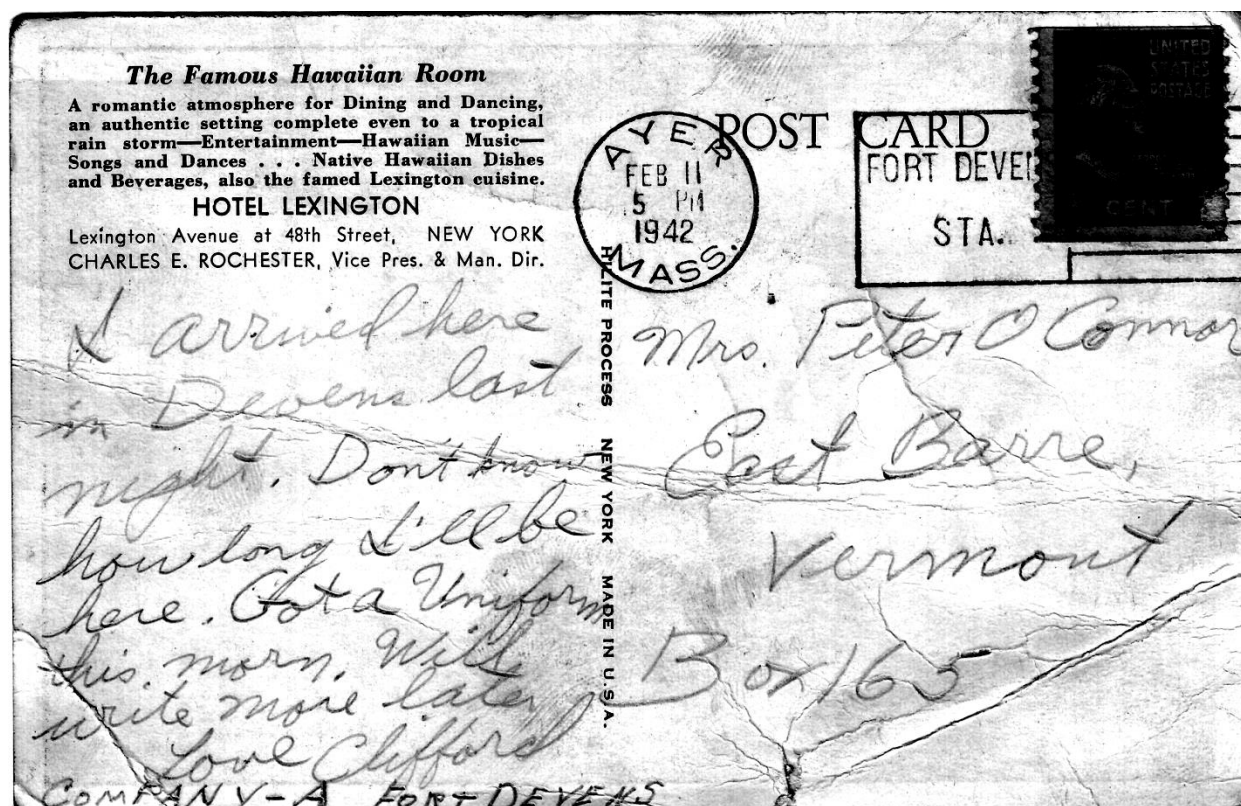
#### February 9, 1942 – Monday

Cold & clear. P & L worked. Begin war time by the clock today. I washed & mopped & cooked. Doris Roark practiced at night with Edna for a dance. My bedspreads came.

*..."Begin war time by the clock today." ...*

February 10, 1942

(Postcard, determined to have been written on Feb. 10, from text of the following letter; postmarked February 11, 1942, from Ayer, Mass., Fort Devens Sta.)



*This postcard, mailed from Fort Devens, was Clifford's first piece of war-time mail sent home.*

The front of the postcard (next page) is a scene from "Ray Kinney's Orchestra & Aloha Maids – the Hawaiian Room, Hotel Lexington, N.Y.C." It bears a 1¢ stamp. There's no way to know where he got this postcard – did he buy it at camp, "borrow" it, or had he saved it from a trip to NYC?







February 11, 1942

[Envelope: no return address; 3 cent stamp; postage stamp circle, "Alburg & BES (this part not legible), RPO, dated Feb (day illegible) 1942.] Note: This, the first, letter received at home, was written on personal stationery with monogram "C" on left side. Ma had enclosed the postcard referred to above, which was the first item mailed, in this letter's envelope – which was dated the same day as the letter; the postcard, however, was marked as having been sent from Fort Devens Station.

*Dear father,*

Well here I am a real soldier of the U.S.A. We have been pushed around a quite a bit in the last 3 days. I left Hartford at 5:30 Monday on the train with 49 others – we went to Worcester and from there we took a bus in to the fort. This is an awful big place – about 25 sq. miles 5 miles on a side. And what a bunch of soldiers, boy oh boy I never saw so many.

We got our uniforms Tuesday morning. I got a pretty good fit but not too good. We get pretty good meals here. Today we went on a hike for about 7 or 8 miles, and before that we had about 1-1/2 hours of drilling – 1-2-3-4 – 1-2-3-4 – I think I will be saying it in my sleep. Right face, left face, forward march, left, right, left, right. I don't mind it too much though but at the same time I don't love it either.

I saw a Captain about getting into the Air Corps yesterday and he told me I may be able to and he would see what he could do. I am hoping he will do something about it.

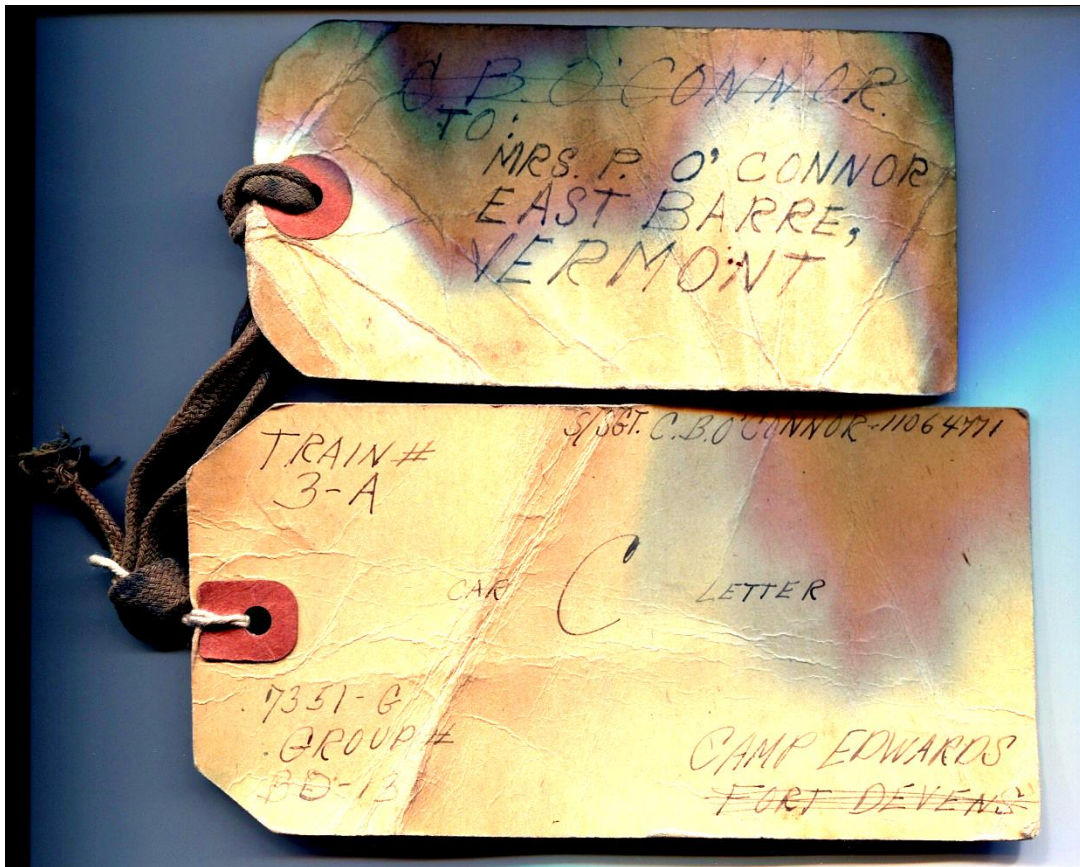
I may be shipped out of here any time. This morning they took a bunch, nobody knew where they were going. That is the worst part of it – we don't know what it is all about.

I saw Bill Cleary last night – boy I was glad he came around – he is coming over tonite too.

I am in Co. A. I wrote a card yesterday to you but you maybe won't get it any sooner than this letter. If you write to me here and I am sent away I suppose they will forward it to me wherever I am.

Bill just came in – I think we will take a walk around and see the place.

I sent my bag home last night with my clothes.



***Brown shoelaces secure these tags. The top tag accompanied his civilian clothes home from Fort Devens and were found among Clifford's war-years collection of memorabilia, along with others saved by his mother through the years.***

Bill sends his regards.

Love to everyone

*Clifford*



*Photographed in 1940's Hartford, Cliff's first cousin Bill Cleary is on the right, with his father, Cliff's Uncle Joe, and Bill's sister, Cliff's cousin Mary Cleary.*

**Note:** "Bill Cleary," mentioned in the letter of February 11, was Cliff's first cousin, who had joined the Army some months before Clifford had. They corresponded throughout the war and remained good friends throughout their lives. The reader is referred to the earlier cited, *"The Diaries of Lula Nye O'Connor, The World War II Years at Home,"* for information about the Cleary family, from the village of Websterville, Vermont, in which Clifford had been born, and in which the Cleary's resided.



*Early Hartford, Connecticut.*

The streetcar conductor is pointing to the “Old State House” sign on the streetcar – the Old Statehouse being in the left foreground; the Bond Hotel, prominent in the central background, is where Clifford first worked upon his arrival in Hartford. His Bellboy badge is shown below. The Bond Hotel remains a vital part of the capital area of downtown Hartford to this day, though its surroundings have changed over the decades.



*Clifford's Bond Hotel Bell Boy name tag, dated 1939.*

Over the years he related many stories from his days there, when celebrities appearing in Hartford at such venues as the State Theatre (e.g., Martha Ray), would take up residence at the Bond. There, he also met Dottie, later his wife, through Dottie's sister, Betty, who ran the elevator. In a letter that appears later recounting this time, Cliff wrote, “I learned a lot by meeting and talking to different people when I was a bell boy.



February 13, 1942

[Envelope: 3-cent stamp; postmark Feb 13, 1942; bottom portion of postmark, "R.P.O." – top not legible. No return address: (contents indicate written from Fort Devens). Stationery: Personal monogrammed stationery with "C" and vertical lines down left side; folded into four pages; four pages written, black ink.]

*Dear folks,*

[Underlined at top left, Clifford wrote, "*I got your letter this noon, boy I was glad.*" This seems to have been his first letter received from home after his arrival at Fort Devens.]

Well I am still at Devens. We just got back from a march or you could call it a hike we didn't go far today. It is very cold and windy here today, in fact it is quite cold here every day. I really enjoyed the walk today. We walked at a quite a pace for a little over an hour without stopping, and today my feet didn't hurt me at all. But yesterday and Wednesday boy oh boy my feet were sore. The darn shoes are all too big for us. I put on two pairs of socks today and it felt pretty good.

It was only a little after 2 o'clock when we got back, and it looks like we are off the rest of the day. We will have to "fall out" for retreat about 5 o'clock P.M. and then go to mess. I am going to see Bill again tonite. I think we are going to call Annie & Joe. Every morning a few fellows names are called and they are sent out somewhere. I always stand there just praying I won't hear my name. I haven't heard a thing about the Air Corp yet.

The meals are still pretty good very plain, but nourishing. I never ate many beans but I do now, and a few other things too. We have milk with every meal and coffee too. We always get some kind of desert at supper time, and dinner too.

Bill really has a good or rather is in a good company. They are set off by themselves. They have a mess hall (dining room) of their own and are waited on. The fellows take turns waiting table. We eat cafeteria style, you have to walk along a long line and they throw the food on your tray. The tray is your dish - it consists of 6 little separate holes or whatever you call them, just like cup cake tins, only they are much bigger. The coffee cups are very big with no handles.

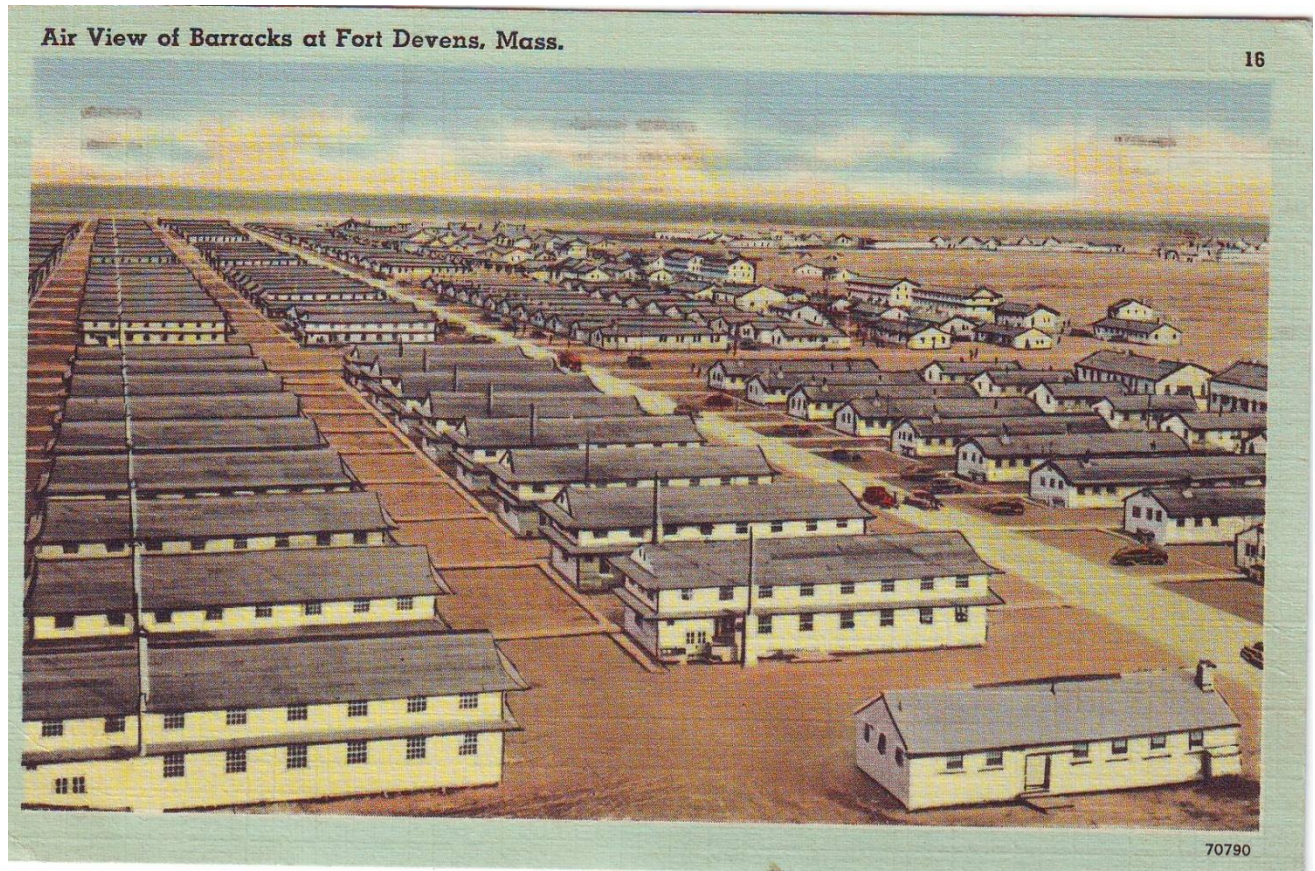
We are always being "called out" - that means to line up in front of our barracks and boy we really have to step on it. No matter what you are doing, if you are in the toilet it makes no difference at all. (We have been called about 5 times today already).

We get up awfully early - there is no reason for it either. The other regular soldiers don't get up until 1 hour after we do. But when we are here for a while they may change it. I don't think I told you the time we get up, well anyway it is about 4:45 (*four underlines*) and not 5:45 (*two underlines*) - boy that is the middle of the nite - boy it sure is cold standing at attention out there, but we are dressed warm.

I hope you are at Annie's house tonite when we call. I feel fine (*three underlines*). Hope you all feel as good as I do. I must close.

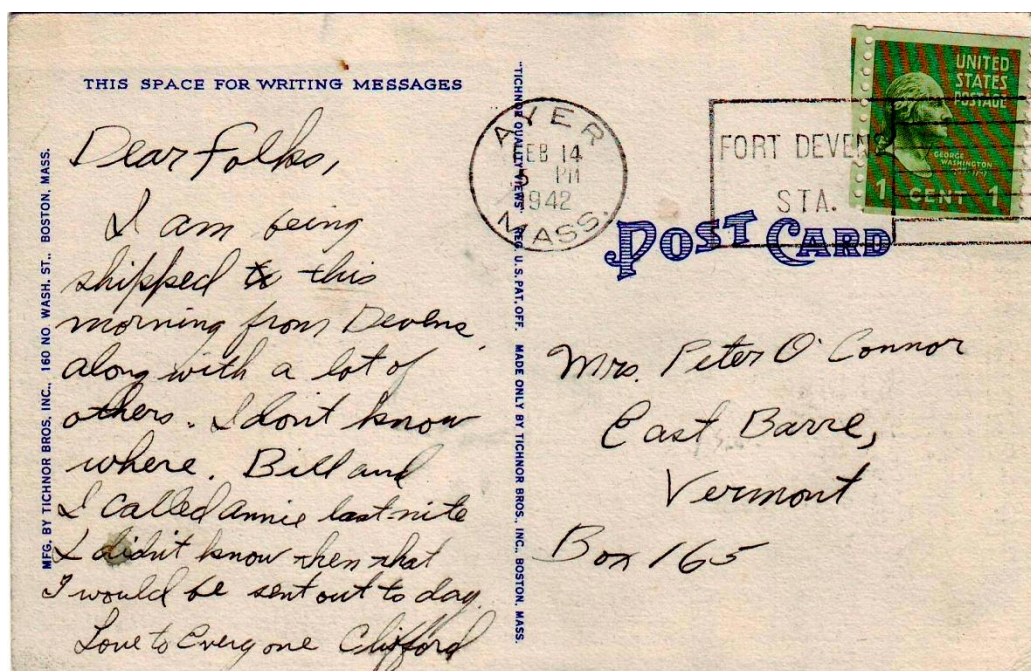
Love to Everyone,

*Clifford*





February 14, 1942



Ma received this postcard written while Clifford was preparing to leave Fort Devens, MA, bound for Camp Polk, Louisiana.

Although their paths diverged during the war, cousin Bill Cleary was in the same group at that time. Cliff's younger brother Wendell and, later, older brother Lawrence also processed through Fort Devens – Wendell early in 1943, Lawrence in 1945. As his Chronology presented in the Introduction showed, Clifford traveled from Fort Devens, Massachusetts, to Camp Polk, Louisiana, leaving on February 14 as noted on this postcard, arriving at Camp Polk on the 17<sup>th</sup>. He wrote home the very next day.

**February 18, 1942**

[Postmarked Camp Polk, LA., February 19, 1942. Envelope with two 3¢ stamps, VIA-AIR-MAIL; no return address. Written in pencil on a single sheet of monogrammed stationery with "C" on the left side.]

*Dear Folks,*

Here I am way down South in Louisiana. It is not as warm here as everyone thinks it is. In fact today is very cold. There is no snow at all. I got here yesterday (Tuesday) morning at 8:30. We left (Fort) Devens Saturday afternoon at 3:30. Boy what a ride. It was terrible - the meals weren't fit for a dog but I ate them I was so hungry. We slept good - we had Pullman berths. About 400 of us left Devens and we picked up about the same number more at Shreveport, Louisiana. They weren't expecting as many to come at once and they weren't ready for us. We were all split up into different Divisions and Battalions, and some of us had to sleep in somebody else's bed last nite. Some boys were out on maneuvers so we had their beds last nite. This morning we got a tent and no beds or mattress as yet, but we are expecting all the stuff this afternoon sometime. I don't like it here very much but I suppose it could be a lot worse.

Please don't be alarmed about the name of my company. It may not be permanent. I may be a mechanic yet. I think this is just for basic training. It is Co. B - 703<sup>rd</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion, Camp Polk, Louisiana. We came down by the way of Ohio, Indiana, Ill., Kent., Tenn., Miss., and then to our camp - we are near the Texas border somewhere I don't have the least idea.

I have to stop.

Love to Everyone

*Clifford*



*Camp Polk, Louisiana, Spring of 1942  
Gun crew shown with old type destroyer; halftrack with 75 mm. gun.  
Rear/Standing: Left-Sgt. Etman; right-Jim Allen  
Front l-r: Tom Laughing Indian, Winkler, Mike Selle, Clifford O'Connor, Al Morrie*



February 22, 1942

Sunday afternoon

[Postmarked Camp Polk, La., Feb. 23, 1942. Envelope - AIR MAIL; two 3¢ stamps; no return address; top-left corner torn but nothing appears missing. Personal monogrammed "C" stationery, folded into four pages, written in blue ink. This letter has been damaged a bit with some water stains.]

Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN.  
Camp Polk, La

*Dear Father,*

I just came from dinner - we had some chicken, but we didn't get enough to suit me. The meals here aren't as good as they were at Devens of course this camp couldn't nearly compare with Devens anyway it is so new. Especially the Co. I am in. We are all confined to quarters here and can not leave.

They took us to church this morning in trucks. We have 3 or 4 little chapels - they are pretty nice too. They wouldn't even let us walk to church for fear we would run off to town I guess. The nearest town is about 8 or 9 miles and it is a little one.

Whenever I get a weekend off - that is from Sat. noon until Mon. morning - I am going to try and get into Texas. They say it isn't very far. I have been trying to get a map of this state but I can't find one around here. I hope we are not restricted much longer.

All we are doing now is training to march, and we have to fix our tents up. They are big tents with a board floor and they hold 5 men. We have no foot lockers (trunks) for our clothes, and we have a quite a job keeping our stuff straightened out.

The days are much warmer here now than they were, in fact I have a little sun burn, but the nights are very cold and it is real cold when we get out of bed in the morning. We don't get up until 6:45 here that's a real break for us. The wind blows a lot down here and it is very sandy where we are, and it makes the dust fly all over.

Boy you should see me now I almost forgot to tell you. They made all of us get "butch" hair cuts. I only have about ½ inch of hair on my head now, and do I look funny. I don't think they are going to make us keep getting them I hope not anyway.

The people in the South live very cheaply. On the way down all we could see were little shacks all ready to fall apart and yet there would be a nice new car parked outside of it. I never saw so much desolation in my life. The land was very flat and stretched out as far as you could see were cotton fields. The towns we came through were dreary looking, and it rained nearly all the time we were on the train - that made it worse.

I suppose there is a lot of snow up home now and I bet it is cold. I wish I was in a camp further north.

There is a little kid in our Co. he claims he is 20 years old but I doubt it, he looks more like 14 or 15. I suppose he volunteered like I did thinking he would get a break. He should be home with his mother. It makes me mad every time I look at him. He still talks like a baby. It is a shame to see a kid like that in the Army. It is bad enough for the rest of us. I told Wendell not to enlist under any circumstances, but to wait and be drafted. We have draftees in our Co. and we are all used the same. No one gets a break in the Army now.

So far I have received but one letter from you folks and that was at Devens. I know you must have written more than that. Maybe I will get some mail tomorrow.

It takes a long time for mail to get here.

Hello, Edna & Helen, I hope you are getting along fine in school and with your music. You would laugh to see me with my “butch” hair cut. Whow!!! Is it short?

[The last paragraph was written on the side of the last page; ***letter contained no closing line.***]

February 25, 1942

Wed. Nite.

7 o'clock

[Postmarked Camp Polk, LA, Feb 26, 1942. Envelope: VIA AIR MAIL; two 3¢ stamps. No return address. Gold-embossed "Camp Polk Louisiana" stationery, two sheets, both sides, blue ink.]

*Dear folks,*

I received your letter yesterday afternoon, and was I glad to get it? It was the one you wrote Saturday noon Feb. 21. I want to thank you very much for the Sacred Heart Badge and the dollar. You shouldn't have sent the money as I don't really need any money around here now. I have enough for a while, and I have some more coming from Pratt & Whitney. So you don't have to send any more you folks need it more than I do. Anyway I can't leave this camp. The only thing I buy is cigarettes and candy and soda and things like that.

I haven't as yet received the letters you sent to Devens after I left there. I can't imagine where they are maybe they are held up somewhere between here and there. The only mail I have received since I have been in this darned Army are two letters from you folks, one I got in Devens and one I got yesterday. I haven't heard from anyone else and believe me I have written a lot of letters and cards.

I think I told you folks how I came down on the train - maybe I was writing to someone else. You were asking in your letter if we came in trucks or by train, anyway we came by train and it was the longest train ride I ever had and I never want to have another one like it. It was a lousy trip. I wouldn't have minded it so much if the food was any good.

When we landed here they had a band playing for us, but that didn't cheer us up any we were so disgusted after that train ride and then being sent to such a distant place.

The facilities here are lousy. We only get washed once a day and we are lucky to get time to wash ourselves that often. Today I washed myself twice - this morning after breakfast and tonight after supper. This morning was the first time I had my hands in warm water since I have been here, and I've been here 8 days. I took one shower and the water was ice cold. We don't have time to do very much around here they keep us pretty busy. Last night I started to write to you folks and I had to stop. We were all called out to go to a movie. It was a movie on how spark plugs are made for automobile and airplane engines. What do we care how they are made?

Boy were we mad about going to see that movie? They showed one film on the ignition system and I didn't mind that one so much but it was all stuff that I already know about. They also showed a film on parachute troops in Germany and how they are trained. That was O.K. too. The night before last we had to go down to the field house and listen to a long bearded French man give a lecture on what happened to France. He was a very good speaker but I didn't especially care for his topic. He said how France didn't quit fighting but they had to give up. I still think the whole thing was due to corrupt politics.

All in all they keep us busy running here and there. We are being shown everything very fast. We are going out to shoot machine guns sometime this week pretty soon it will be 75 MM. cannon. (about 3 inches) and also Howitzers guns. Those are little short fellows that shoot over mountains, etc. We have only had two machine gun classes, and they expect us to know all the parts already - I think I could take one apart and put it together and name all the parts, because I watched very closely and listened closely too.

We had a gas mask class today. I think after we get our basic training we will be sent up north again. We had another interview yesterday that makes 3 I've had since I've been here. I still insisted on an airplane engine mechanic. These fellows don't know anything about an airplane engine so they couldn't ask me any questions.

We are being pushed around by young fellows who have been in the Army only a short while and they don't seem to know an awfully lot of what they are talking about. They are nice fellows, that is the most of them are.

We had a hygiene class today and are going to have another one tomorrow. We also had a first aid class today. My chemistry and hygiene and biology that I had in school help me out a lot now. One good thing about this place is that the doctors seem very smart and really know their stuff. We have had a quite a few needles boy I dread them. We had two yesterday, one in each arm - my right arm is O.K. but my left whow!! Is it stiff? We have to get out and do our exercise just the same. I suppose they do that to take out the lameness. We are getting so we march pretty good now.

The nights are still cold as everything and the mornings too. We have a good fire going now and it is quite comfortable in the tent, but the fire always goes out during the night.

I was wondering if you got my bag I sent home from Devens, and if my room mate and Wendell sent my stuff home. I have some fishing equipment boots and basket and everything. I forgot to tell Charlie about sending them. I will write and tell him to send them home too.

I have to shine my shoes and get my laundry ready now and go to bed.

Love to Everyone.





February 28, 1942

Sat. Night  
7:30

[Postmarked Camp Polk, LA., Mar 2, 1942. Envelope: Two 3¢ stamps, AIR MAIL; no return address. Written in blue ink on both sides of two long sheets of gold-embossed Camp Polk, Louisiana, stationery.]

**Note:** Many of his letters from Camp Polk were written on the official stationery as shown on the next page, the first page of his February 28 letter.

Sat. Night.  
7:30



Feb. 28, 1942

Dear Folks,

Well to day I received a quite a lot of mail and yesterday too. Yesterday I got some letters from Pratt & Whitney with some statements and some back pay, and to day I got a letter from Jo & Lawrence and one from Wendell and two from you folks one of them came from Camp Denham and I got the one that you sent the map in. Thanks a lot for writing Kellys and thank a lot for the map. You folks don't know what it is to be some ~~place~~ place and not have any idea where the dickens you are.

It is Saturday night and we have nothing to do. We can't go any where, as we are still restricted. Boy I am getting sick of sitting around this damned camp, but there is nothing we can do about it.

The sun went down a little while ago and already we can feel the dampness setting in. While the sun is shining it is O.K. but as soon as it goes down it starts to get damp and cold.

(it goes down it starts to get damp and cold.). ... *the transcribed letter continues* ...

... I had a cold for a while but it is gone now. I caught it the first night I stayed here. Nearly every one here had a cold and a good lot of them had to go to the hospital. My inoculations haven't made me sick yet but of course my arm is sore for a while after I get them. We all got a shot for yellow fever yesterday and so far I haven't had the least reaction. None of us have except one fellow who was taken to the hospital yesterday afternoon just a little while after he got the shot. They say sometimes it takes about 3 or 4 days or even a week before you feel any reaction from it. Our arms aren't even sore. I am feeling fine, but I'm not gaining any weight here I'll tell you that, but I'm not losing any either. They keep us so busy. I suppose they have to.

Somebody in a tent across from us has a battery set radio and it certainly sounds good to hear music. They won't let us use electric radios because they want to conserve all the electricity they can. Our lights have to be put out at 9:30 maybe tonight being Saturday they might not make us put the lights out until 10 o'clock.

We didn't have our machine gun practice yesterday as I told you we would. I'm not fussy about learning too much about them anyway, but then again it is better to know those things if you ever have to use one. I don't think we will for a long long time and the war may be over by that time anyway. This darned war ain't going to last forever.

I am very sorry to hear that Mrs. Aja has been taken to the hospital and I hope she will be out very soon. I think she has been worrying too much about Peter and got herself all run down. I also hope Mildred will feel better soon. I will write she and Johnny a letter soon. It seems all I do is write. I am writing a letter or a card nearly every spare minute I have.

Tell Helen that we didn't see any cotton growing we only saw the fields where they do grow it. It is much too cold to grow cotton now. They maybe will plant it soon.

We never see any trees around here with leaves or trees that have leaves all the trees are evergreen, pine mostly, and it burns with a very funny smell. The smoke smells very strong and burns your nose and gives you a head ache if you smell it long enough. We are burning old boards and planks to night. They brought in a couple of truck loads today. It burns up like paper.

Wendell told me how Charlie sent my things home last Saturday. I hope you got them O.K.

Tomorrow morning we can sleep a little longer but not much unless we don't want to go for breakfast. We are going to 9 o'clock Mass, they will shove us all in trucks like a bunch of cattle and take us down and watch us like hawks so we don't skip out after church and run away and go some place we shouldn't.

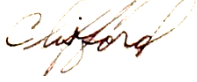
I had my beads blessed in Hartford before I left. Thanks a lot for the beads. I wouldn't have a chance to get any now if I didn't have these. They maybe have some at the chapel though.

The old wind is starting to blow it gets a good start across those Texas plains and it is really traveling when it hits here. It is going to be a darn cold night.

The moon shines very bright down here and the stars too, and the sky is very clear. I look at the North Star very often and wish I was heading in that direction, but I will get over that I guess. I hope that Wendell will never get into this Army. I never want to see him in a uniform.

Well it is getting cold and I can't think of any more to write about so I think I will go to bed.

Love to Everyone





March 7, 1942

Sat. 3 PM

Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN.  
Camp Polk, Louisiana

[Postmarked Camp Polk, LA., Mar 9, 1942. 3¢ stamp. Ma wrote in lower right, "remember stamps & tell about receipt & about things in room." No return address on envelope. Written in ink on both sides of two long plain sheets.]

*Dear folks,*

I received your letter and the map yesterday. Thanks a lot. Everyone gathered around me to look at the map and to see where we are located. I haven't had a chance to get a map yet. I won't need one now that I have the one you sent me.

Albert Morrie, that is Alfred's brother, came to see me this afternoon. He lives in a tent just across from mine; He is a nice fellow, but I don't seem to remember him very well. He knows Lawrence pretty well he says. I thought he talked an awfully lot like someone I knew, but I couldn't think who he was. He talks just like Alfred Morrie.

This morning we had a little parade around the grounds. It was competitive drilling they were trying to see which company was the best of the three A. B. & C. and we won!! Our Commanding Officer was quite pleased. It was the first time I ever saw him that way. I had to go and see him the other day about sending a letter to Pratt & Whitney stating that I'm in the Army and they will send me 80 hours pay. He talked to me for about 20 minutes. I was standing at attention for about half of that time before he gave me "at ease." Boy I was as straight as a string and I was afraid I would do something wrong, but I made out O.K.

I told him I know a quite a lot about airplane engines and how I would like to get into the Air Corps, but all he said was that we have airplane engines in some of our tanks. In other words I guess I don't get transferred. I don't care so much as long as I work on airplane engines.

You maybe have read how the Army is going to make another Armored Division. It will be the 7<sup>th</sup> Armored Div. We are now a part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Arm. Div. Anyway they say we fellows who just came in this camp are going to be a part of it. We are going to get all of our training here first. I think they are going to form this new Division someplace in Kentucky. There will be a lot of openings in a new division like that. I should be able to be a mechanic then. Unless they think I am better fit for something else.

It started to rain a little while ago, getting ready for a good rain tomorrow I guess. It rained like the dickens last Sunday. I guess I told you about it.

They raised a big stink about nobody saluting officers around here and we got hang for it. A lot of fellows got K.P. (kitchen police) potatoe peeling etc. and some got special detail work. Any way the saluting has improved 100% and they gave us yesterday afternoon off and last night. They let us go to the Post but we still can not go to town or leave the reservation. This is the first

camp I ever heard of that don't let the men go to the post. The post is more or less in the center of camp I guess. They have movies there and churches and more canteens (stores) and a barber shop etc. We only have a small canteen here or P.X. (post exchange) whatever you want to call it. They don't have very much stuff in it. We call ourselves the lost Battalion. I went to the movies last night with a fellow from our tent. Joan Blondell and John Wayne acted in it. It was "A Lady for a Night." Not bad but I've seen many better ones. We thought it was swell to get to a movie of any kind. They really make us appreciate anything we get around here. I think I will go to a movie tonite again. It makes you forget everything for a while anyway.



I am sorry to hear that Uncle Pat died, too bad none of us could be at his funeral.

So you and Mrs. Guy were crying over hearing that record, well I wish you wouldn't. That don't do any good. Of course you know that already.

I hope by now Mildred is feeling fine again and I also hope Mrs. Aja is better. I suppose Pete will get a leave from his camp and go home. I hope so any way.

You don't have to bother sending the Times to me, we hardly get time to write letters here, to say nothing about reading a paper. I just bought the funnies from a paper boy that comes around here - He is selling Sunday's paper today. It is a Chicago paper, "Herald American." It has the same

funnies in it as we had up home. I don't suppose I will get around to read it until tomorrow nite. I usually spend all day Sunday writing letters.

I guess I have received all the letters I have coming from you folks about 8 I guess. I got your letter Edna, thanks a lot. You folks don't have to bother sending my letters by air mail. I don't think it will take more than 3 days by regular mail. I will send this letter by regular mail and you let me know how long it takes. Tomorrow being Sunday will slow it up of course.

Well it is chow time and I am hungry I am always hungry anyway. We are having chow early tonite 4:30. It is usually about 5:30 or 6. Well I guess I'll have to get wet again going over to the mess hall as it is still raining.

Give my best regards to Annie & Joe & Gertrude and the kids - I will drop them a line as soon as I get time. I'm always on a rush down here it seems. Everyone is. Well I must close.

Love to Everyone



P.S. I will write to Lawrence & Jo and Mildred and Johnnie tomorrow.

P.S.S. I washed myself 2 times today boy do I feel clean. I washed myself yesterday noon for the first time in 3 days. Ha! Ha! The lost Battalion. I could wash every nite after supper I guess if I really wanted to. But some nites we don't even get time for that. I don't know if my face is getting sun burned or if it is dirt. Ha! Ha!!



*Al Morrie, right, with Clifford, at Camp Polk, Louisiana.  
From 1942 group photo taken of the 703<sup>rd</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion, Co. B, in training.*

[**Note:** This letter contained the first reference to Al Morrie, who was later killed in December 1944 during the Battle of the Bulge. Al and Clifford became very close friends from this day on.

They trained together, attended Mass and received Holy Communion together frequently, traveled home to Vermont together on furloughs, and, as several of the letters reveal, spent a lot of time together speculating about the future. The memory of his friendship endured, and his loss was a life-long sorrow to Clifford.]



March 13, 1942

Friday Afternoon

Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN.

[Postmarked Camp Polk, LA, Mar 14, 1942. VIA-AIR-MAIL; two 3¢ stamps; no return address on envelope. Written on three sides of two gold-embossed sheets of "Camp Polk Louisiana" stationery, in blue ink.]

[Note at top, "Please excuse all errors I'm in a hurry as always."]

*Dear father,*

I received your letter yesterday or rather last nite. I also got one from Wendell. You must have received my letter Tuesday I sent one out Saturday. Maybe it pays to send the letters by air mail. I also got Edna's letter. Thanks for writing such a nice long letter, Edna.

Wendell mentioned in his letter about going home I bet he was glad to see you all. He said how it was nice and warm up there, and it is really hot here today. It must be about 90 degrees in the sun. The nights aren't as cold now as they were either.

We didn't do much of anything today. We are learning to drive those big ten wheel trucks. We didn't drive today but yesterday we went on a convoy to Shreveport. We got back about 8 o'clock and we started about 8:30 a.m. We took turns driving - I drove twice. I don't care much about driving them. I had trouble at first shifting the darned things, but I do all right now.

This afternoon we had some more stuff issued to us; pretty soon we will have all our equipment. We got our trunks today. We have been here over 3 weeks and had to keep all our stuff in a barracks bag, boy what a job trying to find anything when we wanted it. Now it will be much easier.

I took off my long underwear the other day and I got them packed away in the bottom of the trunk. I hope I won't ever have to use those darned things again.

They started a softball team and a volleyball team or I should say teams they have about six teams for each game I guess. I didn't go out for either one. I don't have enough time to write letters to say nothing about practicing playing ball. Maybe later on I will go out for baseball.

I hope the high water didn't do any damage to the saw plant so Pa & Lawrence will be able to keep working. I was surprised to hear you had high water up there already.

I hope you have gotten all over your cold, Ma. I had a cold for a long while. I got it the first nite I was here. I had a hard job to get rid of it, but I finally did and I didn't take anything for it either. Boy that letter you sent to me in Devens really traveled around didn't it? I was wondering what had happened to it. You told me how you sent two letters to Devens after I left, and I got one of them so I am glad to know where the other went.

I am glad to hear Mildred is well again. I hope Mrs. Aja pulls through her operation O.K.

If you are going to send something you can send cookies or candy or something like that.

Did you folks ever get a defense bond. I paid for one and I never got it. I thought maybe Pratt & Whitney sent it up to Vermont. I'm going to write to them and find out about it. If you folks haven't received it let me know.

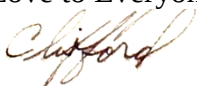
It is nearly time to eat supper it seems we do everything in a hurry around here. I hate Friday I just can't eat. This noon I threw away my whole dinner it was lousy fish!! I never liked fish anyway. Sometimes the meals are good but usually they aren't so hot. They put too much of a mixture on one plate making an awful slush, but I guess the food agrees with me, because I feel fine. I get plenty of sleep too.

Tonite I guess we will have to ourselves, because we have to get ready for inspection tomorrow morning. We have inspection once a week on Saturday morning.

Did you get my gun & tennis racket and everything that my room mate sent to you?

Well I must hurry over and get some supper I hope they have something good.

Love to Everyone

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Clifford", written in brown ink.



*Camp Polk, LA. Clifford on the right, with Al Brousseau.*

March 17, 1942

Tuesday Night

[Postmarked Camp Polk, LA., Mar 18, 1942. AIR-MAIL; two 3¢ stamps. Written in blue ink on both sides of two long plain sheets. Return address on reverse/flap: Pvt. Cliff O'Connor, Co B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN., Camp Polk, La.]

*Dear folks,*

I received your letter today. I mailed your last letter on a Saturday - gee, it took a long time for it to get to Vermont. Apparently they held it here until Monday before they sent it out. You should get this letter by Friday at least. It should go out tomorrow morning.

By the looks of those pictures you sent me I guess they did have a flood up there.

It didn't take them long to get that piece in the paper about us fellows being sent here. We filled out a form a while ago they wanted to know the name of our local or rather home news paper and our parents name. I don't remember this fellow Joseph Converse of Barre, but the name is vaguely familiar. I don't think I have seen him around here. Albert Morrie and I chum around together a quite a lot he comes in our tent quite often. He got a letter from Vermont today too.

One of the fellows plays a guitar in our tent so we borrowed one tonite and we are singing and he is playing. I'm trying to write this letter at the same time.

Well today was St. Patrick's Day I remember last St. Patrick's Day. My room mate and I went to confession that nite. Little did I think then I would be in Camp Polk, La. today. One of the fellows had a birthday today in our tent. We are going to get some ice cream & cookies later and have a party.

We are trying to sing "That Silver Haired Daddy of Mine" now I like that song very much.

There is a big fire burning somewhere in this camp tonite. We can see the reflection in the sky. Nobody seems to know what it is. Maybe just a brush fire.

We had to turn in a pair of shoes and one pair of fatigues (overhauls) I guess the Army is getting short of equipment. We were issued 3 pairs of shoes at first so we still have two pairs. We also were issued 3 pairs of overhauls (green ones). We wear them all day and at nite we usually change to our good clothes for supper.

That is just too bad about poor little Harold Whitcomb having to go back to the Army he is no better than I am or anyone else in this darned Army. There is a fellow right here in my tent who is bothered by sinus and not only that he was the sole supporter of his father (a cripple) and his mother but they dragged him in the Army just the same. I think Harold Whitcomb is an officer isn't he? That's a soft job in most cases. About my clothes in Hartford. Well I got a letter from Charlie. He told me the whole story. He told Wendell he sent them, because Wendell kept asking him every five minutes if he had. He never thought there would be a fuss about it. Well anyway

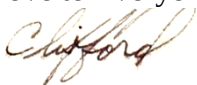
everything will be O.K. He said he tried to get a wooden box but he couldn't so as you say Mrs. Stratton is going to get some heavy card board boxes I guess.

Tomorrow we are supposed to go out on the range and shoot .45 revolvers. We haven't shot a single shell of any kind as yet. We were all set to fire machine guns but we didn't and we marched all the way out to the range with rifles to shoot them and it rained and we had to march all the way back about 5 miles in the rain. So maybe something will happen tomorrow that will postpone our shooting.

I'm glad Milford Guy has been sent to Akron, Ohio to school. He is lucky. Do you know what kind of school it is?

Well there goes the "Lights Out Whistle." I'll have to close now. Thanks a lot for the stamps.

Love to Everyone

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford".





*Clifford O'Connor, Camp Polk, La., 1942.*



*Al Morrie, Camp Polk, La., 1942.*



*Clifford at Camp Polk, La., April 15, 1942  
He says on back, "I wish I could play one of those things, ha!!"*





*Clifford, Camp Polk, Louisiana.*

*Note on back: "After day is o'er ... Those overalls are what we call fatigue clothes, but we work in them."*

March 23, 1942

Pvt. Cliff. O'Connor  
Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN.  
Camp Polk, La.

[Postmarked Camp Polk, Louisiana, March 24, 1942. Two 3¢ stamps, VIA-AIR-MAIL;  
Written in blue ink on two long plain sheets.]

*Dear father,*

I received the candy and cookies today. I got the two letters Saturday. The cookies or the candy weren't broke up at all and boy they tasted pretty good. I still have a few cookies left but they won't last long. The fellows thought the candy was very good. I don't think they ever tasted any candy of that kind before. They like the cookies too. Boy you ought to see them dive into the box when I offered them some whow!! When ever any fellow gets a package in our tent we always divvy it up. We all get along swell.

I got the letter with the Shamrock in it that Mildred sent, but I got it the day after St. Patrick's day, and if I remember right I got your letter on St. Patrick's day, and you sent it by regular mail. I may be wrong I have so many things on my mind now I don't know what day it is half of the time. I don't understand their system on mail here anyway. I think the mail comes in on time, but they must get it all mixed up here in camp.

About that letter from Pratt & Whitney. Thanks for sending it to me. I already had my commanding officer write a letter to the Aircraft. So I should get my check soon.

I heard about that hurricane in Mississippi and around there, but we didn't have any here at all.

Well we are finally off restriction and we can go to town when we want to after we get off duty. We have to be back at midnite. I didn't go to town Saturday nite, but I went down yesterday after church. It is a rather dead town. We went to Leesville.

Well it is chow time I will finish this letter after supper.

I just came back from mess. We had liver and I guess you know how I hate liver. I just can't seem to eat that stuff. It makes me gag. I wish I could eat it I know it is good for a person. I gave my share to a friend of mine. I always do when we get liver. I wasn't very hungry to nite anyway. We had a good dinner, boiled ham, I had two helpings and I ate a lot of the cookies and candy you sent so in that way I wasn't hungry to nite. I'm glad I wasn't too.

I just got my defense bond tonite. It was sent to Hartford and Charlie forwarded it to me. I will send it to you folks by registered mail as soon as I get a chance.

I am glad to know that you finally got a good family to take the house up in Websterville. I remember the time Pa bought the bike for Lawrence. Boy those were the days.



It didn't rain here yesterday or today for a change. We didn't do much today. We only had class on submachine guns. We are going to go on guard pretty soon I guess. All guards all carry those submachine guns or Tommie guns here.

There are all kinds of rumors going around here I get a kick out of listening to the guys. You hear stories how we are going to be sent here and sent there, but I don't believe any of them.

Well I'm going over and take a shower and shave. I feel dirty as anything. My ears are full of sand. When the wind blows it looks like a regular sand storm.

Well I can't think of any more to write about.

Love to Everyone

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford".

March 26, 1942

Thursday Evening

Pvt. Cliff O'Connor  
Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN.  
Camp Polk, La.

[Postmarked Camp Polk, LA., March 27, 1942. One 3¢ stamp and three 1¢ stamps; VIA-AIR-MAIL; written in blue ink on three sides of two long sheets, gold-embossed, Camp Polk Louisiana.] Ma penciled in bottom right, "Tell C about his things."

*Dear Father,*

I received your letter with the pictures last night. Gee the pictures came out swell thanks a lot for sending them. I'm glad you sent me the one of the pine trees. I was surprised to see it. It was very thoughtful of you.

I hope Billy has been made a sergeant - a person doesn't necessarily have to become a corporal at all. During war time you can even become a staff sergeant without being a 1<sup>st</sup> class private, corporal or sergeant. It has been done. A sergeant gets \$60. a month. A Corporal gets \$54. a month.

Well here is a little news for you. It is kind of comical in a way. We finally got off restriction last Saturday and the day before yesterday (Tuesday) a quite a few fellows came down with the measles so we are now quarantined for at least 14 days they say. We are examined every day by the doctors. I have had no signs of them as yet. One fellow from our tent was taken to the hospital Tuesday nite. Every time we are examined a few more cases are found. There goes a whistle!!

That whistle was for chow. I just came back. We had some kind of stew. They had some nice rolls too. They were still warm I guess they just took them out of the oven. I ate 5 rolls boy they were good.

Yesterday we went out on the firing range again. This time it was to shoot submachine guns. I did very well. It is fun to shoot those guns as long as you are just shooting at wooden targets. We were supposed to go out "black out" driving last nite with those big trucks, but we didn't go because it was raining too hard. Tonite we have to go to a training movie.

I hope they will arrange some way for us to go to church Sunday. We won't be able to go to the regular church as we are quarantined. They will probably have the priest come up here and say Mass some place.

Gee that is too bad about Nadeau not taking the house in Websterville. I hope you will find another family soon. That makes it kind of mean after you worked so hard getting it ready in a hurry. I had a letter today from Mrs. Stratton. She told me she had finally found an old trunk down cellar and would send my things home in that.

Herby Philips is certainly lucky to have so much time off. I hope he will not be sent across when he gets back.

It has been very hot down here the last few days.

I can't think of any more to say so I guess I will close and get ready for the movie.

Love to Everyone

*Clifford*

Glad to hear Mrs. Aja is feeling better. I hope you get this letter Saturday, but I bet you won't get it until Monday. I will mail it tonite but I suppose it won't go out until tomorrow.



**Ma's handwriting on the back of this picture, referred to in Clifford's letter above:**

***"This is a picture of that tree that you think looks like the State of Vermont Seal.***

***Helen & Helen Morrie went up on the hill to take it. It looks better from here I think."***



April 5, 1942

Easter Sunday  
P.M.

[Postmarked Camp Polk, LA., Apr 6, 1942; AIR MAIL; two 3¢ stamps; Pvt. Cliff O'Connor, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., Camp Polk, La. Written in blue ink on three long sheets of gold-embossed "Camp Polk Louisiana" stationery.]

*Dear Father,*

I guess it is nearly time I wrote. I hope you haven't been thinking I was sent away. I know I haven't written in some time, but I haven't had time.

We went out on a problem for 3 days. We left Wednesday morning about 8 o'clock. We walked about 18 miles, boy and I mean we really walked fast. In fact us short guys in the last platoon had to run to keep up to the other fellows. We had 3 ten minute rest periods. We walked until noon and we ate our lunch and then we got on trucks and rode about 50 miles away out in the woods someplace. We pitched our little pup tents and camouflaged them and camouflaged all the trucks with pine boughs. The food was lousy out there. The place was full of snakes. I didn't see any live ones but I saw some the fellows killed. I would rather take on ten darned Japs bare fisted than I would go to sleep on the ground with snakes crawling around me. We had fun chasing wild pigs around. We caught a little one and boy you should see the old mother pig chase after us. We let go of the little bugger pretty fast. Those darned pigs would take a man's leg off with one bite. You should see the long snout and big teeth they have.

We broke camp early Friday morning. We struck our tents and rolled them up and packed our stuff at 1:30 A.M. boy it was dark too. The moon was full and shining pretty good and it helped us out a quite a lot. We ate breakfast about 2:45 A.M. and we pulled out at 4 A.M. The trucks drove us up to about 8 miles or so from our tents maybe it wasn't that far but it seemed that far. Then we had to walk in. That was Friday morning. Wednesday morning when we were walking out a lot of fellows fell out of ranks they were so tired and their feet were sore. Boy my feet were sore too and I was getting pretty darned tired but I didn't fall out of ranks. I thought I was going to pass out once. It was so hot. I had an orange in my pocket so I started chewing on that orange peelings and all. It made me feel better. I couldn't have gone on much further, I was just about done when we finally stopped for our dinner.

Friday nite after we got back to Camp Polk I had to go on guard. I was pretty darned tired, boy. I was very nervous during guard mount everyone was. The officer of the day said we were the best looking guards he had ever inspected. He wasn't fooling either because he told our Company Commander about it. Our Commander was pretty well pleased. Boy I had a funny feeling when I went on guard. I had the same post as Albert Morrie had last week. It was Headquarters and A. Co. I didn't fully realize the responsibility of it all until I had that tommy gun (loaded) on my shoulder. Only then did I realize my duty and how serious it really was. I challenged 3 people during the night. I'll never forget my first challenge. I think I was more afraid than the person I was halting. We holler halt twice and then if they don't stop we are suppose to shoot them. But you have to use your own common sense when you are on guard. I was so tired I nearly fell asleep walking my post. We walk two hours and rest four. It doesn't sound too bad, but two

hours of walking around with a tommy gun on your shoulder isn't as easy as it sounds especially if you are tired when you start out.

Our basic training is over now. Maybe I will be able to get a furlough some time in the next few months. I hope so anyway.

About my check, you folks had better get it cashed. But I think I will have to sign it. Anyway I want you to keep it for me. Maybe you should send it to me and I will cash it and then I will send a money order to you and you can cash it and save it for me until I want it if I ever do. I think that is the best way. You see that check is suppose to be void after 30 days. Although I have held checks over that period of time and cashed them and nothing was said. I do not need any money now. We got paid last Tuesday. Boy it is a long time between pay days. Last Tuesday was my first pay day. I got \$30.35. You see I got some money for the month of February and all of March. Pretty soon we will get \$42. a month, and we will be able to send our mail for free too.

We are suppose to be off quarantine this Friday I hope nothing happens.

This morning we heard Mass. The priest came up here and said Mass in a motor park under a big tent. He couldn't give any sermon because he was in a great hurry. I was glad to get to Mass today being Easter Sunday. Remember last Easter I was home with you folks.

Oh I nearly forgot I got your package of cookies and candy it wasn't broken up at all and they were real fresh. I got your last letter while I was out in the woods on that 3 day problem. I also got a letter from Catherine O'Brien out there in the woods.

I got a quite a laugh when I read your letter about the skunk being in the back room.

I hope Marilyn is better I will send her a card as soon as I can get one.

I would like to have been home this morning for some of that ham Pa cured. And some nice eggs too. We had pan cakes for breakfast. We call pan cakes "gaskets" down here. Boy sometimes they are just like "gaskets."

I was just thinking you folks must have to sacrifice a lot of sugar just to send me that candy. I really appreciate it a lot but if it is too much I wish you wouldn't do it. You folks need the sugar more than I need the candy.

I can't think of any more. I am very very tired tonite.

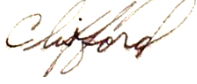
P.S. Bill Cleary has a first and second rating. That is very good. Same as a technical Sergeant's pay I think. I would rather have that than be a Sergeant. Give my best regards to Clearys & Guys and Hutchins and Ajas and Mildred & Johnny and Lawrence & Jo.

I got Mildred's last card will answer it soon. I hope you all had a very happy Easter. I could not get any cards to send.



I got a card from Mary Cleary too.

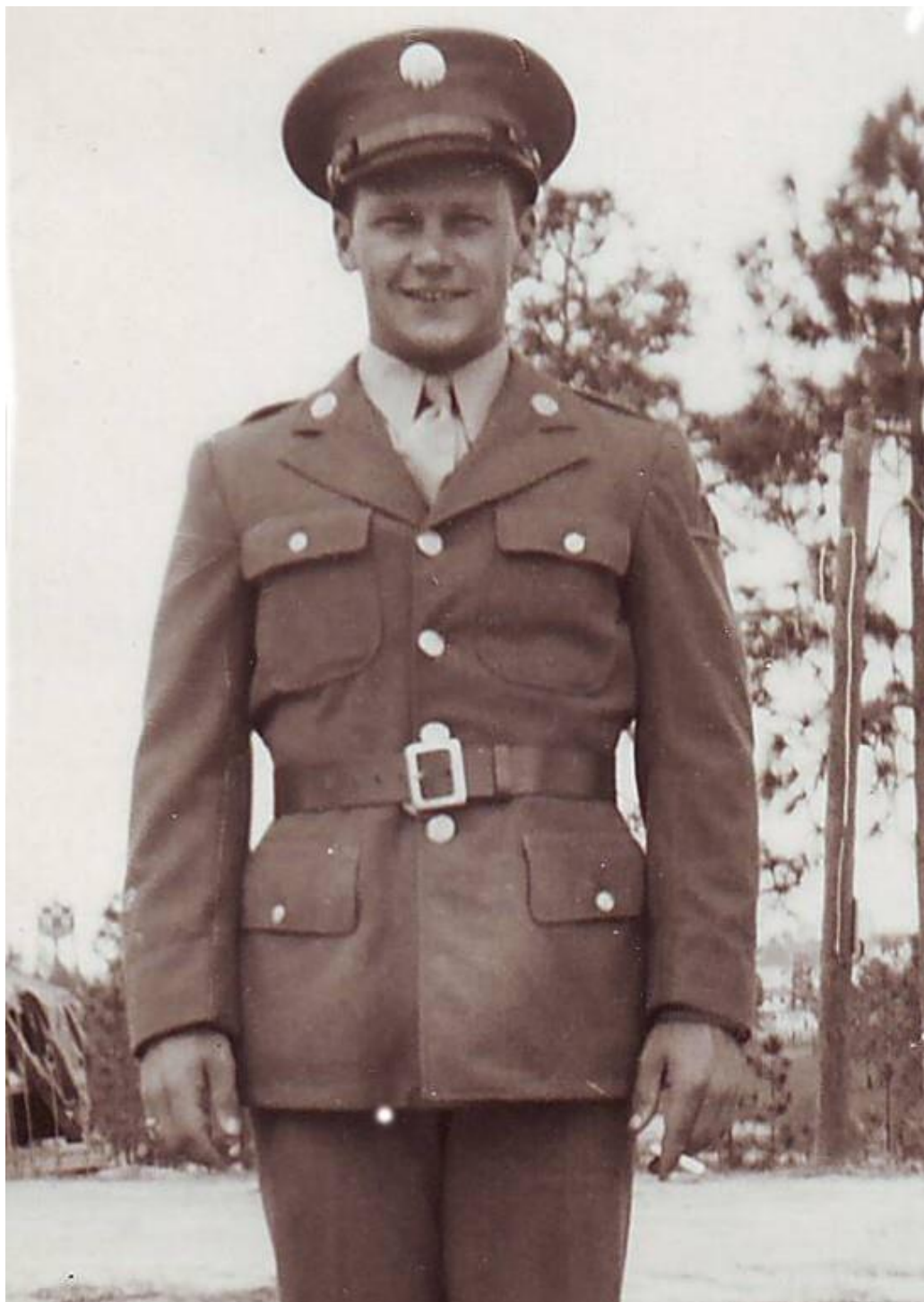
Love to Everyone

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Clifford", written in brown ink.

Please excuse all errors there are a bunch of guys in my tent raising hang. I can't concentrate at all.



*Clifford at Camp Polk, Louisiana  
His note on reverse: "1<sup>st</sup> Guard Duty, March 1942"*



*Camp Polk, La., April 15, 1942*

*"I borrowed the cap & belt. We aren't supposed to wear them.  
I shouldn't be smiling when standing at attention but I did anyway."*

April 12, 1942

Sunday afternoon

[Postmarked Camp Polk, LA, April 13, 1942. FREE; Pvt. Cliff O'Connor, Co. B 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), 3<sup>rd</sup> Arm'd Div., Camp Polk, Louisiana. Written in blue ink on both sides of a sheet of gold-embossed Camp Polk Louisiana letterhead.]

*Dear folks,*

I received your last letter yesterday. I will get the check cashed as soon as I can and send you a money order. I also will send you the Defense Bond.

This morning Albert Morrie & I went to receive, another fellow went with us too. We went to confession last night. This morning we got up and went to the chapel at 7 o'clock and there wasn't any Mass. So we had to come back to the tent and wait to go to the 9 o'clock Mass.

After Mass we went down to the Service Club and had breakfast, and what a breakfast!! "double order of ham & eggs." Tomato juice and all. I used to eat like that in civilian life and think nothing of it. But let me tell you I enjoyed that meal more than anything else since I have been here. It is funny how a person gets to really appreciate a little thing like that. But I guess the Army changes any one a lot. We had to buy that meal of course. We came back to camp just in time for dinner and we went over to the mess hall. They had chicken & ice cream. But I wish you could have seen that chicken. They cooked it so darned long that the meat was almost as hard and tough as the bones. It is a shame the way they spoiled all those nice chickens. I couldn't eat mine at all. I wasn't very hungry after having such a breakfast.

I got Jo's & Lawrence's package but the cookies were all broken to pieces. All the guys in the tent and myself ate the crumbs. The candy was very good too. I will write to her and thank her soon.

We are going on another problem this Tuesday so I won't be writing to you folks all this week. I don't know where we are going nobody does I guess. We have been training on the big guns (French .75 mm) it is quite interesting. I guess I told you how our basic training is over now. We are off quarantine now too.

We have a fellow in our tent playing a guitar and harmonica and we are singing songs. It is the only way we have to enjoy ourselves here.

I am glad you finally have received my stuff from Hartford. I will write and have them send the fish pole and boots later on. Maybe my friends are going to use them this spring for trout fishing. My boots are brand new and darned good ones too.

It is very nice here today, but a little too hot to suit me. It rained nearly all last week. The weather is very changeable here. I will write as soon as we get back from our problem.  
Love to Everyone

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford".

[Two notes were made at the top of this letter: Left side - P.S. Albert Morrie is in my tent now. We are very good friends; Right side – Helen, I know your birthday was the 2<sup>nd</sup> but I couldn't get out to buy a card, anyway I hope you had a happy birthday. Love Clifford]



April 17, 1942

[Envelope from Pvt. Cliff O'Connor, Co. B – 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN (H), 3<sup>rd</sup> Arm'd Div  
Camp Polk, La.; Picture in envelope written in ink on the front "Part of Company Street, Co. B  
703 TK. DES. BN. ]

Friday Evening

Pvt. Cliff O'Connor  
Co. B – 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN (H)  
3<sup>rd</sup> Arm'd Div  
Camp Polk, La.

*Dear folks,*

Today we got back from our problem, and boy are we tired. This time they didn't make us walk so far. It was about 9 or ten miles we walked on the way out and about the same on the way back. The trucks picked us up and carried us the rest of the way. So we walked about 10 miles Tuesday afternoon going out and about 10 miles this morning. We broke camp at 1 o'clock in the morning. We had to do it in a complete blackout. It is kind of hard prowling around in the dark. We started marching at 2 o'clock in the morning. We marched through a couple of little villages, and we had fun singing songs as we walked. We must have awakened everybody in every house we passed. On this problem we did some scouting and patrolling and we learned a quite a little about a compass. They would send us out in groups of fours with a compass to find a certain point. It was kind of fun.

Al Morrie and I pitched tents together. You see they give each soldier a "shelter half" - (half a tent) and two soldiers button the two halves together making a whole tent. Boy the ground gets kind of hard to sleep on after a few hours.

The meals were much better this time. They really fed us good out there. Our Commander caught hang on account of making us walk so fast the last time we went out. He is a big long legged fellow. And he always puts the long legged fellows up in front and they don't realize that they are taking a very long step. The Army regulation step is 30 inches. Anyway the doctors asked our Commander if he was trying to kill his men. Our Commander always wants to be first in everything. He wants us to win all of the events and Co. B usually does. But there was no reason for racing us fellows on the march. He caught hang anyway and I guess that is why he took it easier on us this time.

Today when we got back the first thing I did was eat a good breakfast and take a good shower. I had not washed myself at all since Tuesday morning, boy was I dirty. This morning after we got our stuff all put away some of us had to wash and polish the stoves we brought with us and also some great big pots and pans. The officer wasn't satisfied with our job and we had to clean the stoves again and still he wasn't satisfied and we had to clean those darned stoves again. Boy I was never so disgusted in my life - I felt like smashing those stoves in a million pieces. All of us had to do something or other. Some had to clean guns, I mean cannons. Anyway I was pretty darned disgusted with this whole darned Army this afternoon, but now I have cooled off.

Tomorrow is inspection day - just something else to give some of the officers a chance to give somebody the dickens.

I got the sugar cakes you sent me this noon. They are swell. I also got a box of sugar from Gertrude Cleary. If you see her thank her for me. I will send her a letter as soon as I can.

I got both Johnnie's and Mildred's and Lawrence and Joe's cards. I will try and write to them as soon as I can – boy, I can't seem to find time for anything. I also received your Easter card or did I tell you before.

Well I can't think of any more. I must get ready for inspection tomorrow as much as I hate to.

Love to Everyone

*Clifford*

P.S. Thanks for the sugar. I haven't had a chance to cash my check yet.



*Clifford with cousin Gertrude Cleary while he was home on leave ... their fondness for each other continued throughout their lives. This photo provided by Gertrude's daughter Kathleen Fitzpatrick Fox from among Gertrude's collection.*



*Company B Street  
Camp Polk, Louisiana  
February 1942*

April 22, 1942

[Pvt Cliff O'Connor, Co. B, 703<sup>rd</sup> Tk. DES. BN., 3<sup>rd</sup> Arm'd Div., Camp Polk, La]

Wed. Nite

*Dear folks,*

I received your letter today, I mean the one you sent Monday morning. I also got the one you sent before that.

I am glad to hear Philip has not got to go to the Army, or rather I should say, come into the Army. I think they will take Ora Violette because there are fellows here who can't read or write.

I would like you to have Edna send her picture to me rather than saving it for me.

I am glad you liked the pillow slip I sent you, Ma. I am trying to find a birthday card for Pa, but I can't seem to find one around here. I hope I find one before it is too late.

We had a review of the whole Battalion this afternoon. We spent nearly all day preparing for it and it really only lasted a few minutes. We all marched by the General - that was all there was to it. We had a band playing and I guess we looked pretty good. Our Company carried the "colors" (Stars & Stripes). We were chosen as the best Company, that's why we carried the flag. The whole thing was very military, but it didn't last very long. A lot of nonsense I think.

We went out firing a .37mm cannon yesterday. They made me a gunner on our section. Boy I must admit I was nervous. Al Morrie was a gunner in his section too. 99% of the efficiency of the gun is due to the gunner - he has to operate the sights and elevation and turn the gun and everything like that. There are 3 men in a crew, one loads and fires the cannon when the gunner gives the command. Another fellow gets the ammunition ready. We were firing at a moving target. The target was on a track and mounted on a motor of some kind. Anyway it was darned hard to hit. It was about 500 yds. away and going 20 miles an hour. We had to aim in front of it of course in order to make up for the moving of the darned thing. I missed it anyway. I was trying to shoot too fast I guess. I knew how to do it, but when you have a bunch of officers in back watching you it is hard. We had never had any instructions on that gun and the sights on it were different than the one we learned about. We were totally unfamiliar with that gun. So you can imagine how nervous I was. I was trying awfully hard to get a hit so our sergeant wouldn't get hang, but I missed anyway, and the sergeant didn't get hang, because I guess our Commanding Officer realized we hadn't had instructions on that gun. Boy, do those guns make a racket - whow!!! Especially when your head and ears are beside it. The shells explode when they hit too. It was real fun shooting them as long as we were shooting at running targets. Our Company got the most hits for the day so that made our officer pretty happy.

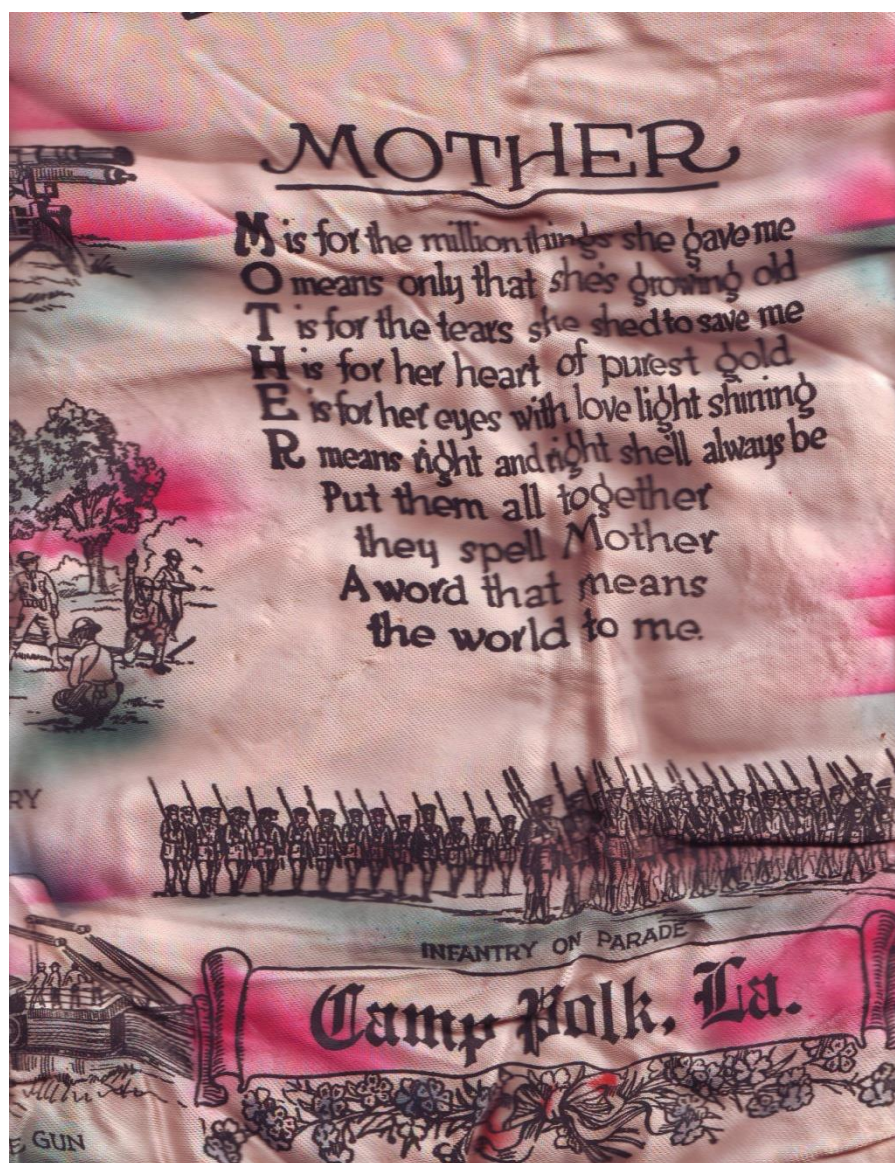
I guess I told you how we are under quarantine for measles again. Boy it makes me mad. Well I can't think of any more and it is "lights out" time (9:30 pm). The measles are much better here now than they were.



Love to everyone

*Clifford*

P.S. I hope Wendell has not got appendicitis. It must be hard for him to work such long hours as he does. I used to get sick of working so long too. That is one thing about the Army – we don't work awfully hard. I am glad Mrs. Aja is back and feeling better.



*Ma is to later receive a similar pillow cover, from Wendell, on January 13, 1943.*



April 28, 1942

[Postmarked Camp Polk, LA., April 29, 1942; FREE; Ma has penciled on the right side, "pictures in here." Pvt. Cliff O'Connor, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN., 3<sup>rd</sup> Arm'd Div., Camp Polk, La. Enclosures: Three snapshots of Clifford – in uniform, in fatigues, and with guitar, as seen on earlier pages (letter of Feb. 25). Written in blue ink on three sides of two long gold-embossed Camp Polk Louisiana sheets.]

Tuesday Nite

*Dear Father,*

I received your letter yesterday. I was working in the kitchen when I got it. Boy what a day yesterday was. I hate to work in the kitchen. I hope I never have to handle another dish or another pan again. We have turns going on K.P. Of course if you do something wrong they put you on K.P. for punishment, but so far I haven't got K.P. for that.

It has been very warm here today. The sun has gone down now and it is real nice now. The sky is kind of pink so I suppose tomorrow will be another scortcher.

I couldn't get a birthday card for you, Pa, but I was thinking of you all day. I wish I could have gotten something to send you, but there is nothing around camp here that I could get.

I had my check cashed today and I will send a money order home soon and my defense bond too.

I haven't heard from Wendell for a long time maybe he doesn't feel like writing after working all day. I bet he likes the idea of getting 2 days off after working 6. I know I would like it better that way. Of course the way it is now he has to work some Sundays. That isn't so good.

We were suppose to go on a 10 day problem starting yesterday but it was cancelled. Am I glad ?!!

Today we were fooling around with a few tanks seeing what they could do. We dug holes and had the tanks run over them. One tank got stuck and I mean stuck. We got another tank to pull it out. Boy what a job. They broke a 1 inch cable like it was a piece of twine. One fellow was guiding the tank into a position to pull the tank that was stuck and he was walking backwards and he fell over some dirt right in front of the oncoming tank. You could hear everyone that was watching, gasp. I yelled something I really don't know what I said I was so excited. Anyway the driver saw him fall and he stopped that tank awfully fast. The fellow hurt his leg a little but I think he hurt his leg from the fall. I don't think the tank track caught his leg. I don't think I ever saw anyone come so close to being killed before. The fellow just jumped up and carried on with his work like nothing happened.

I am glad Philip hasn't got to come in the Army, but most of all I hope they never get Wendell.

You were saying that the sand in our company street looked white, well it is and the darned stuff gets into everything. Just like stone dust.

We are still on quarantine. I think we will be off Saturday. I hope.

I am sending a few snap shots. I know you don't like to see me in the uniform but you might as well have a picture. I hate to wear this uniform just as much as you hate to see it on me.

Well I can't think of any more.

P.S. That trunk Mrs. Stratton sent you must be one that she or her husband bought in England. They both came from England. I am glad you haven't got to send it back. It saves a lot of bother.

Love to all

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Clifford", written in brown ink.

I am glad Mrs. Aja is better. Give her my best regards.

May 6, 1942

[Postmarked Camp Polk, LA., May 7, 1942. FREE; Pvt. Cliff O'Connor, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., Camp Polk, La. Written in blue ink on five sides of three sheets of gold-embossed Camp Polk Louisiana stationery. Enclosure, small Mother's Day card.]

Wed. Evening

*Dear folks,*

I received your letter today, the one you wrote Sunday nite. I also received your letter, Helen thanks a lot. I got your letter last nite or rather Monday nite, Helen. We went on another problem Monday walked 23 miles in the rain boy were we soaked? The reason why we had to walk so far was because one company got lost and we were following them so we of course got off the route too. We started marching at 2:15 Monday afternoon and we landed at our destination at about 8:45 Monday nite. It started to rain about 2:30 in the afternoon and did it rain. It rained right up until we got to our camping area. They had great fires built and we all gathered around to dry ourselves. Then they had mail call and when I got your letter I was pretty happy. I had been in a pretty bad mood after walking so far in mud and through streams and everything. We got back to our battalion this morning about 6 o'clock. We rode all the way back boy what a break for us!!! I feel fine except I am kind of tired tonite as we didn't get much sleep in the woods. I didn't catch cold boy I am thankful for that.

I am sending this little green card along with this letter. The priest gave it to us. I am going to receive on Mothers day. I should have sent it before but I didn't get around to. We have Mass right here at our battalion now at 9 o'clock Sunday morning. They put up a little altar right out in the pine woods. It seems funny to go to Mass outdoors but it is nice. Al Morrie & I always go to church together.

I got your picture Edna, thanks a lot it is a fine picture. I wish I could only be out of the Army I would get you a nice graduation present, but maybe some time I will be able to later. It makes me think of when I graduated; boy how time flies. I remember how Mildred told me the same thing. She said boy how time flies after you graduate and before you know it you will be 21. How true that was!!

I hope Lawrence has found work in Hartford. I think Hartford is a much better place to work than the shipyards. I don't blame him for not paying \$21. to join the union. I believe in a union but now days a union is nothing but graft. I'll bet the kiddies do miss Lawrence an awfully lot.

I didn't know you people had to register for sugar. That is one thing we do get enough of in the Army. They certainly asked you some silly questions but they must have some reason for it.

I haven't received the package you sent me yet. Maybe I will get it in a couple of days. I wish you would send me some of those little salamis or whatever you call those things you boil for 20 minutes and let them cool off before you eat them. I mean those things Pa used to get at Mario Sanguinetti's. Or you could send me some peperoni it is all most the same only you don't have to cook it. I don't like to ask for anything, but if you are going to send something I would like

something like that. I also like cookies and candy of course too. I know that meat cost a lot of money and I don't want you to put your selves out by sending it to me. Maybe you won't be able to get any of that meat now on account of the war.

Today we had another rather interesting experience. We all were quite tired when we got back after the problem and they had us go down and go into a gas chamber. The gas they used was tear gas. First we went in and stood around in there for a few minutes with our gas masks on. One fellow had to go out. His mask wasn't adjusted right to fit his head. Mine was perfect. I could feel the gas picking around my neck and the edge of the mask and my hands were picking like everything, but my eyes were perfect and I couldn't smell anything. The next time we went in they made us take off our gas mask and walk out, boy you would have laughed to see some of those guys They would start walking and all of a sudden they would stop just like they banged into a stone wall and they would start to stagger and grope around for the door. Blind as a bat, for a minute. I was the last one out in our bunch. I had a great time laughing at them, but when my turn came around it ceased to be a joke. I didn't stagger, but I couldn't see very good. When we were all out side we were all crying like a bunch of babies. We all piled into trucks to come back and our clothes were full of gas and we were crying all the way up to our tents, but as soon as we got out of the trucks we were all right.

It taught all of us a lesson to always take good care of our gas mask and it made us appreciate our masks and just what they could do for us.

I am going to send Lawrence and Jo some pictures of me. I would have sent them before but I didn't have enough. I am having some more printed.

Helen was saying something about my 13 weeks training being nearly over, but my basic training only consisted of 8 weeks. They have cut it from 13 to 8. We have finished our basic training, and I guess I won't get a transfer to the Air Corps as I had planned.

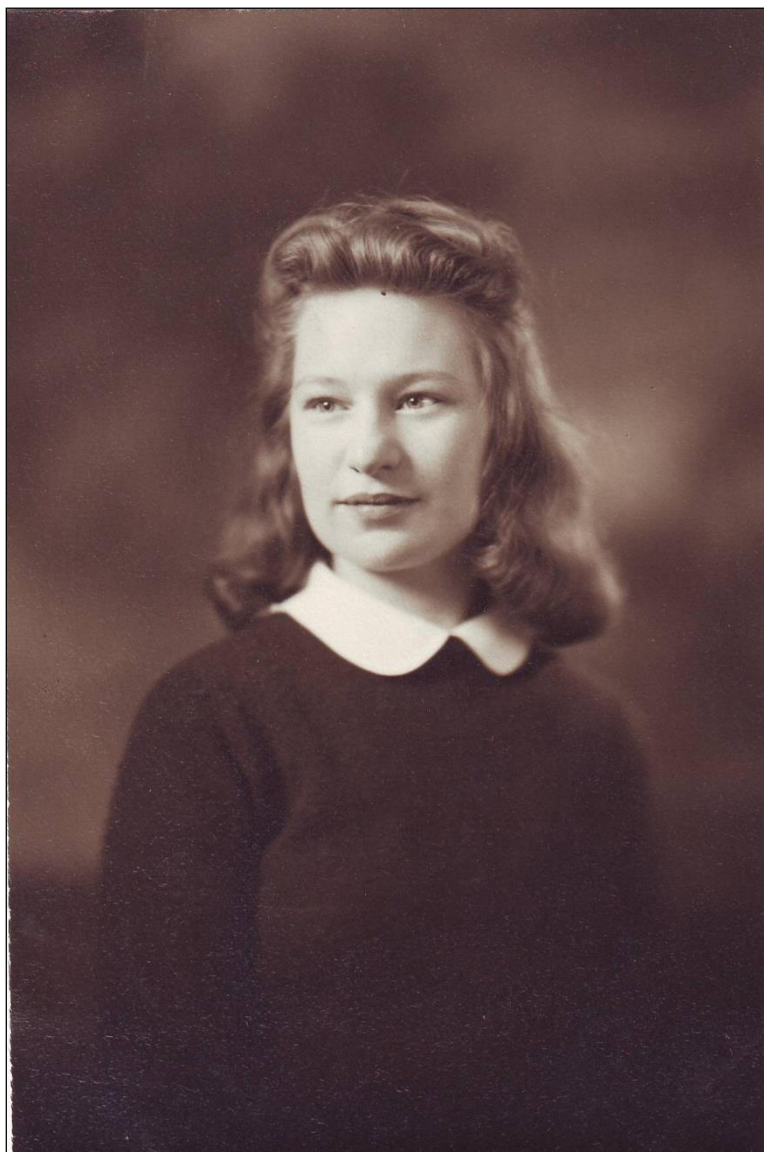
You probably have received my letter containing the money order and bond. I was going to send the cash in the envelope but I decided to send it as a money order. I didn't have time to write when I sent it you probably thought it funny of me not write anything in that letter. I was in Leesville when I sent it. What a lousy town Leesville is.

Well it is time for lights out and I am very tired. I won't have much trouble getting to sleep to nite.

Love to Everyone



P.S. Thanks for going to receive for me, Ma.



*C. (Cecelia) Edna O'Connor,  
Graduation from Spaulding High School, Barre, Vt., June 12, 1942*



May 10, 1942

[Postmarked Camp Polk, LA., May 11, 1942. FREE; Pvt. Cliff O'Connor, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN., 3<sup>rd</sup> Arm'd Div., Camp Polk, La. Written in blue ink on both sides of long plain sheet.]

Sunday Afternoon

*Dear folks,*

I received your package this afternoon. Boy that salami is good. I know I asked you for some salami or pepperoni in the last letter I wrote to you folks, but did I ask for it in the letter before? I really don't remember. Or did you folks just guess that I wanted some salami? I'm getting so I don't remember anything. I guess this heat is getting me. It is awfully hot down here now.

I was on guard over the weekend. I went on yesterday noon until this noon. I was chosen as orderly of the guard. I didn't have to walk a post but I had to run errands for the officers and deliver telegrams etc.

I had the sergeant of the guard send me a relief at 8:30 this morning so I could go to confession. He sent me a relief and Al Morrie and I went over to where the priest was hearing confessions. The priest was standing out in the woods. We had to walk up to him and stand beside him and make our confessions. It was the first time I ever went to confession right out doors. It was nice to hear Mass out in the woods. There was no music, but it was nice. The sun was shining through the pine trees and everything was as quiet as could be. I went to receive this morning for your intention, Ma.

We are going on another problem tomorrow.

Well I must close will write more later.

Love to Everyone

*Clifford*

May 13, 1942

[Pvt Cliff O'Connor, Co B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN., 3<sup>rd</sup> Arm'd Div., Camp Polk, La.]

Wed. Night

*Dear folks,*

I received your letter with Edna's picture today. Edna's picture is very nice. Gee, Edna you are getting to be a young lady. You look much older in that snapshot than you do in your graduation picture. All the fellows in the tent liked the picture, they said you are very attractive.

Just 3 months ago today I received the first letter you folks sent me in Devens. It was Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> - I remember how happy I was to get that letter.

I suppose you have received my letter I wrote last Sunday. Gee, that salami sure was good. I didn't thank you for it in the last letter so I will now. It must have cost a quite a lot.

I also received the letter you sent me last Friday, and Edna's letter too. Thanks a lot for the map. I always like to look at maps. I am glad you liked the Mother's Day card, Ma. You were asking if we ever had thunder showers. Whow! Do we? We have them about every other day. Today we had one and the night before last we had a bad one. It is very nice here right now. It usually is about this time of the evening (7:30). It has been awfully hot here today. I don't know just what I will do in July and August. They told us today we are going to be shipped to California July 1<sup>st</sup> for 2 months maneuvers, and then we will be sent to Texas for a while I think. I bought a sleeping bag today - \$13.75. It is one of those you can zip up all around you. It cost a lot but it is worth it I think. A lot of fellows bought one. They are going to take half of the amount out of our pay this month and half next month. Those bags will come in handy when on maneuvers.

We didn't leave for that maneuver last Monday, but we are going this Friday for 6 or 7 days. That means we will be in the field Sunday. I hate to miss Mass. Any problem that lasts over 3 days is called maneuvers. Tomorrow we go on a little hike to get our legs limbered up for Friday I guess.

I hope you can get the bureau upstairs. It sure was a bargain.

Edna must have been thrilled to play in an orchestra of 188. I would like to have been there!

I am sorry to hear Harold is in the hospital again. I hope he pulls through.

I hope Lawrence got a good job.

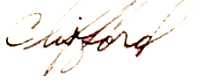
Hanson Whitney is a good place to work they say. I believe Wallace Gilander works there. I hope Lawrence finds a good place to live so Jo & the kids can go down too.

Al Morrie had a couple of teeth out today and is lying on his bunk now with a sore jaw. I had my teeth checked and they said I didn't need any attention.

I haven't heard from Wendell for a quite a while now.

Well I am going up to take a shower. My clothes are just about soaked from sweating so much today. I will be glad to get out of Louisiana.

Love to Everyone,



May 24, 1942

[Pvt. Cliff O'Connor, Co. B 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN, 3<sup>rd</sup> Arm'd Div, Camp Polk, La.]

(Sunday Evening)

*Dear Father,*

Well I'm back from maneuvers safely. We left Friday the 15<sup>th</sup> and came back Thursday the 21<sup>st</sup> then we went right out again Thursday afternoon and stayed out until Friday afternoon. Just our company went out on this last one. The officers wanted to see what a complete company would look like. So our company borrowed some vehicles from the others as we don't have hardly any of the things that we need. We would make believe a truck is a gun, etc. This last one we went on is called a C.P.X. (Command Post Exercise). We would go off into the woods and simulate taking gun positions and camouflaging the vehicle. We would only stay there for a short while and we would pull out again. Finally we stopped at a place away out in the woods and stayed until morning. In the morning an airplane came over taking pictures to see how well we camouflaged. We were riding mostly all day Friday. The 33<sup>rd</sup> Arm'd Regiment were on maneuvers too and our job was to protect their left flank. It was kind of interesting but boy we sure had a rough ride. The Army vehicles take an awful beating on maneuvers.

We saw an awful lot of snakes last week. They caught 2 alligators about 3 or 4 feet long - one was smaller than the others - boy they are ugly looking things - they look awfully slow acting but you should see the way they snap at you and the way they can lash their tail around. You would swear those things were dead to look at it at first. They can lie down for hours motionless, not even winking their eyes, but if you poke their tail boy you see some quick acting. Some fellows killed 3 coral snakes. They are a very deadly poisonous snake. They don't grow very big. They have beautiful colors - I never saw a snake with colors like that before. I never saw a picture of one even. They are circled by black, yellow and red rings. Their eyes are very black and about the size of a needle point. They have two little fangs in the roof of their mouth. The fangs are very short - I don't think they could bite through very much clothing. The fellows also caught some water moccasins alive - boy they are pretty big and poisonous too. They caught a great big "bull" snake about 5 or 6 feet long and about 3 inches in diameter. They aren't poisonous. Well that's about enough about the snakes I guess. No one was bitten, thank goodness.

You were asking about robins. There were some around here early this Spring but I haven't seen any since then. We see a lot of those darned big vultures or whatever you call them when we go out on problems. They look like hen hawks.

There are a lot of niggers down here. They have a colored Regiment here in this camp but they are a long ways from us. We don't see many of them at all. They keep them separated from us pretty good. We have no colored officers over us. I don't think there are any colored officers over any white men.

We have a new company commander now. He is much better than the other one we had. The other one has gone to school in Texas to study tank destroyer tactics. I hope we never will get him as commander again. His name was Truman Alford 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant. Our new commander is

2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Cole. We are supposed to have 5 officers in our company and we only have one. The Army needs a lot of officers.

I am glad to know Harold Nerney is getting better. Poor Nellie has an awful lot of trouble. I pity her. I don't know how she stands it. I haven't heard from Wendell in an awfully long time. I hope he isn't sick again.

I'm glad Lawrence likes his job. I'll bet he is a good man on a lathe. He will pick it up fast.

I hope the trouble is over in the sheds up there.

You were saying there are a lot of empty houses up there now. When the war is over people will be glad to come back to good old Vermont and live. I don't suppose there are hardly any young fellows up there at all now.

If Wesley Norris went in the Army as a machinist he is lucky but the Army usually puts you where they want you. I don't care how good you may be at a certain thing.

Herby Philip sure is lucky going to officers school.

Well it is time to go to bed.

I went to Mass in the pines again this morning. I missed Mass last Sunday as we were on maneuvers.

Love to Everyone,





May 31, 1942

Camp Polk, Louisiana

[Pvt. Cliff O'Connor, Co. B 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN., 3<sup>rd</sup> Arm'd Div., Camp Polk, Louisiana]

Sunday afternoon

*Dear folks,*

I have received two letters, and also the salamis which I got yesterday, since I've written to you, so it is nearly time I wrote, I think. The salamis were all spoiled, boy, I was mad. They looked good but they smelled something awful. I had to throw them away. I guess it is no use to send anything anymore. It is so darned hot in these darned Southern States.

It is awfully hot today. I can't imagine it getting any hotter but the southerners say this is nothing yet. We have the sides of our tents rolled up and a little breeze comes through now and then - boy it feels good.

There goes the chow whistle!! 4:30. We had some cold meat and French fried potatoes, jello, and cold cocoa for supper. We have chow early on Sunday. Usually have chow at 6 o'clock.

The sun isn't as hot now as it was about two hours ago. We have a pine floor in our tent and it is so hot that pitch is coming right out of the boards.

I went to Mass this morning out in the pines again. Right after Mass I took off my shirt and shoes and I have been running around here like that all day. The sweat is still running down my back now. The sand out on our company street is awfully hot - it burns your feet to walk on it. That is with no shoes of course. I suppose it is hot up there too.

I would like to have been up there yesterday. I was thinking of you folks all day. Getting flowers ready and everything to put on the graves. I was home last Decoration day - remember how we went down to Barre to see the parade.

I don't think we will be getting any furlough for some time. A few fellows got theirs, but they sucked around the Company Commander for them. There are a lot of what we call the "old men" - they were here before we came and they are all supposed to get furloughs before us. Some of them were pretty darned sore about these few suckers that got theirs. They were all new men. I would never suck around for a furlough if I never got one. I'm just not made that way I guess.

The latest rumor is that we are to go to Temple, Texas for a while and from there to California. There is no question that we are going to move some place soon. The officers even say so. We are scheduled to go out on a problem this Friday. I don't know where we are going or how long we will be gone. This Tuesday we are supposed to go on a long hike. I hope it isn't as hot as it has been today. Tomorrow is pay day. We are usually paid on the last day of the month, but as the 31st came on Sunday they are going to pay us tomorrow June 1<sup>st</sup>. We will start getting \$30 a month in June. Mine will start June 9<sup>th</sup> as I came in Feb 9<sup>th</sup>. There are going to be a lot of ratings

given out sometime this week. I may get one and I may not. I don't care for the stripes anyway, it is the money I am looking for. I hope they pass that bill in Washington so we soldiers will get more money. If they do I won't worry about getting any rating at all, as \$50 a month will be plenty of money for all of us.

I suppose Wendell is home today. I hope he is anyway. I will write him a letter and try to explain to him that he had better start saving some money and sending some home too. I know I never did and I made pretty good money too, but I see now how foolish I was. I had a good time but that isn't the only thing in life.

I'll bet Lawrence hated to go back, but that was the only thing to do I suppose. Maybe he will be able to find a nice place and have Jo and the kids go down to live with him.

I am glad that the strike is over. Did the men finally get what they wanted?

Do you get enough gasoline up there? There is no rationing on gasoline here at all. I don't know about sugar, but I don't think there is any rationing on it either.

There are a lot of young fellows around the south here working. I don't understand how they aren't in the Army but I don't think they take many from down this way. Those darned lazy southerners are no good for anything but to sleep anyway. They are mostly all skinny and undernourished looking. I don't think they know what a good meal is.

If Danny Murphy is going to Alaska I think he is very lucky although he may not think the same. I've always wanted to go away up north. Someday I am going. If everything goes the way I plan.

Our old Company Commander is supposed to come back to us tomorrow. He has been in Texas studying tank destroyer tactics. I hope he doesn't come back to this company. It is bad enough to be here without being under a slave driver. I'm afraid if we ever get into battle and he is our officer he will never come back alive.

I got a letter from Pat Donahue last week. He is a machine gunner in an infantry outfit at Camp Upton, NY on Long Island. I got a nice letter from Gertrude too. If you see her tell her I'll answer it soon. She writes a very nice letter.

Is Spaulding going to have the graduates wear those caps and gowns this year or have they discontinued that practice?

Ma, tell Mildred that when she writes her next letter to let me know if she knows anything to put on "Jigger" bites. These jiggers are little tiny red bugs that get in under your skin and irritate the skin something awful. I didn't get many bites on the last problem, but some fellows are plastered with big red blotches and they itch something fierce they say. Also there is a lot of poison oak down here I suppose it is the same as poison ivy at least it acts the same. I didn't get any of that either yet but a lot of fellows did.

Maybe you never heard of jiggers I never did until I came here. There are a lot of darned things in this state that I have never heard of or seen before.

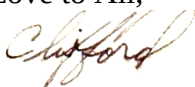
I heard over the radio that the Japs are using gas. Well they are going to get plenty of gas right back if they start doing that.

There are now 800 cases or over of yellow jaundice in this camp. The number of cases is increasing every day. So far I have had no symptoms of it. 41 fellows have it from our Battalion. They are all in this hospital now.

I am sorry the salamis were spoiled after you went through all the trouble of buying and cooking them. They must have cost a lot. I guess there is no use sending anything any more.

Well I can't think of any more to say.

Love to All,

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford", written in a cursive style.

P.S. Please let me know when Father's Day is or has it passed? No one here seems to know. If it has passed I'll never forgive myself for not sending a card or something to Pa.



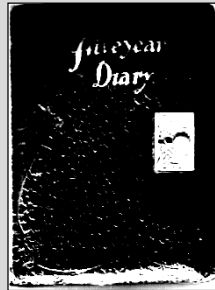
*Camp Polk, Louisiana  
Spring 1942*

*Top Photo: Left-right: Clifford, Selle, Brousseau, Hall, Cameron*

*Bottom Photo: Left-right: Brousseau, Hall, Clifford, Al Morrie*

**From Ma's Diary:**

***“Clifford's gone to Texas.”***



June 9, 1942 – Tuesday

Nice day. P & L worked. I ironed in evening. Started E's evening dress. Lottie & Mrs. Aja were here in p.m. & Josephine & the children in evening. *Got letter from C. He has gone to Texas.*

**Note: Clifford's "Chronology" (see Introduction) shows that his Company left Camp Polk, Louisiana, on June 7, 1942, and arrived at Fort Hood, Texas, on June 9, 1942.**



June 14, 1942

Sunday afternoon

[Pvt Cliff O'Connor, B Co 703<sup>rd</sup> TK DES BN (H), 2<sup>nd</sup> Training Group U.T.C., Tank Destroyer Command, Temple, Texas]

*Dear folks,*

I'll bet you will be glad to get this letter as I haven't written in such a long time.

I am in Texas now. Going to stay here until August 5<sup>th</sup> then we are going to California. Death Valley I guess.

I would have written sooner but I haven't had time. Boy we have been busy since we have been here. We are situated about 60 miles from Waco, about 20 miles from Gatesville. Right in the heart of Texas. We have been clearing brush and putting up tents and digging ditches and everything - I don't mind the work here but I never would have been able to work like that in Louisiana. The air here is very good. I like Texas very much. There are nice hills here. Something like Vermont only not quite so nice. There is a lot of flat land here too but where we are it is real nice. We are camped on a hill right in a bunch of cedar trees. The cedar down here is scrubby - it looks like the northern cedar but it smells just like the northern pine.

Our company has the best camp site I think. The other companies are down below us in a valley and the ground is quite soft down there. The only trouble is we are farther away from the creek than the other companies. We have to walk a quite a long ways to wash ourselves and our clothes. We drink the water from the creek but it is pumped out and put through a purifier. The water here tastes a lot better than it did in Louisiana. Everything here is better than it was in Louisiana. The only trouble is that we aren't going to stay here long enough. I signed up to go on a convoy to Waco yesterday and I was lucky enough to get a chance to go - they only let 20% of the Battalion go at a time. Only 34 fellows from our company went. We only had about ½ hour yesterday to eat dinner and shave and get dressed to go. Boy I did some hurrying. I had a good time last night. We had to leave the city at 1:30. It was a long ride in those trucks but we had fun. Waco is a nice city. The people used us soldiers like human beings. In Louisiana they didn't seem to like the soldiers much, but the people here treated us fine last night. Perhaps because they have seen so many soldiers. After a few months they will be sick of seeing us. I don't think I will be able to go to town again while we are here as they are going to try and have a different gang go each weekend. In that case when my turn comes around again we will be pulling out of here.

This afternoon I'll have to go down to the creek and wash out some of my clothes, boy I hate that job. They are going to send out some laundry tomorrow but I am going to send just my khaki uniforms. The rest I'll do myself - it is cheaper.

Before I forget it. I wish you would send me \$10. I am broke and I might get a chance to go to town. We are getting more money now - \$50 a month. I think we will get it for this month. I will send the money back payday.

Tell Josephine I got her letter and will write when I get time. I also got Edna's letter.

We left Camp Polk Sunday noon and got here Monday noon. I came on a train along with a bunch of others. I was lucky - the rest of Company B had to come by trucks. I enjoyed the trip very much. Some places we went through water up to the steps on the train cars. It was like that for miles.

Boy that was quite a wreck up there in Barre. It is a good thing the airplane didn't land on a house. The crew was lucky they weren't all killed.

I hope this war has reached its peak. I saw a paper last night - it said the Japs have landed on the Aleutian Islands. That sounds bad.

Well I can't think of any more to say except to give my congratulations to Edna for graduating and Helen for getting out of her exams, and Pat Guy and Arlene also.

Love to Everyone

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Clifford", written in brown ink.

Please excuse writing - I have nothing to write on. Don't mind sending salami. I think it would spoil.

P.S. Al Morrie is still in a hospital back at Camp Polk I guess. I hope they ship him out here. He will like it here.

June 23, 1942

The following is a copy of the handwritten three-page letter from Clifford, written on June 23, 1942, from Fort Hood in Temple, Texas. His description of the terrain is typical of his style and affinity for detail. Here, for example, to complement his description he renders a simple sketch of the shape of the nearby hills. As always, family references abound, including mention of Edna's graduation, as well as mention of Al Morrie. It ends with a request for prayers. The transcribed version follows the handwritten pages.

June 23, 1942

Dear Folks

I received your letter yesterday. It only took two days to get here. It usually took 3 days in Louisiana. You don't have to send the letters by air mail now it only costs more I don't think it is worth it. But suit your self.

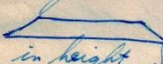
Well now that graduation is over I suppose that Edna and Helen are happy. And it was a lot of trouble for you too.

I suppose Johnny got back yesterday. I hope he got a lot of orders. I also hope he saw Wilford & Eng.

Thanks a lot for sending me the money order. We are going to some city near here to march on 4th of July. And there are rumors around camp that we won't be paid until the 10th of July. We usually get paid the last day of the month. So the money order will come in nice to have. We are going to stay in town a couple of days I guess

We are getting some extensive training now. We have plenty of room here in Texas to maneuver around.

This whole country looks as if it was all under water at one time. The ground is covered with old sea shells all through the woods and everywhere. All the mountains are about the same height. They really are long ridges rather than mountains. Covered with cedar shrub trees. All the ridges we can see are shaped like this



about 100 ft. at the most in height. Some places are very <sup>low</sup> ~~low~~ can see for miles and miles with out a hill or roll in the ground its just like looking out over the ocean.

Thanks a lot for that prescription for Chigger bites. I had a fellow get one some Sat. He was going to town. It works swell. The doctors here use the same stuff but they don't have hardly any Carbollic in it so it doesn't work good.

The yellow jaundice is still going strong in camp. The doctors don't do any thing for the guys that have it. Some of them are pretty bad as and they are in a lot by themselves. But what the fellows that haven't have to take is everything the rest of us do.

If they are sick it is just too bad.  
 They will have to work and go on marches  
 just the same. The doctors don't know  
 whether it is yellow jaundice or the  
 effects of the yellow fever coming out on us.  
 I felt kind of sick yesterday but I feel  
 O.K. today. I guess we all got a slight  
 touch of it.  
 I was sorry to hear about Vito. I  
 will write to him.  
 I guess Billy & his wife didn't go to  
 Vermont as Rome had planned. Because  
 I got a letter from him and he said he  
 was in Fort Ford over the week end.  
 I got a letter to night from a friend of mine  
 back in Camp Ford in the Hospital with  
 yellow jaundice. He said that Alton Moore  
 is fine and he left the Hospital. He didn't  
 know where he went though. Maybe he  
 is on his way out here or maybe he got a  
 furlough. But I doubt if he got a furlough.  
 I can't think of any more.  
 Love to Everyone Clifford  
 Pray alot for me. I know you do. I do for all of you.  
 I can't get to church here yet. Maybe next Sunday  
 they will have some way for us to get to Mass.

[Transcribed version of the above letter follows:]



June 23, 1942

Tues. Eve.

[Postmarked Temple, Texas, June 24, 1942; Sgt. Cliff O'Connor, B Co. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), 2<sup>nd</sup> Training Group U.T.C., Tank Destroyer Command, Temple, Texas. Letter written on two sheets of plain paper, three sides, in blue ink.]

*Dear folks,*

I received your letter yesterday. It only took two days to get here. It usually took 3 days in Louisiana. You don't have to send the letters by air mail, Ma it only costs more I don't think it is worth it. But suit yourself.

Well now that graduation is over I suppose that Edna and Helen are happy. And it was a lot of trouble for you too, Ma.

I suppose Johnny got back yesterday. I hope he got a lot of orders. I also hope he saw Milford Guy.

Thanks a lot for sending me the money order. We are going to some city near here to march on 4<sup>th</sup> of July and there are rumors around camp that we won't be paid until the 10<sup>th</sup> of July. We usually get paid the last day of the month. So the money order will come in nice to have. We are going to stay in town a couple of days I guess.

We are getting some extensive training now. We have plenty of room here in Texas to maneuver around.

This whole country looks as if it was all under water at one time. The ground is covered with old sea shells all through the woods and everywhere. All the mountains are about the same height. They really are long ridges rather than mountains covered with cedar shrub trees. All the ridges we can see are shaped like this (see diagram of flat-top peaks in original on preceding pages) about 100 ft. at the most in height. Some places are very clear you can see for miles and miles without a hill or roll in the ground it's just like looking out over the ocean.

Thanks a lot for that prescription for chigger bites. I had a fellow get me some Sat. He was going to town. It works swell. The doctors here use the same stuff but they don't have hardly any carbolic in it so it doesn't work good.

The yellow jaundice is still going strong in camp. The doctors don't do anything for the guys that have it. Some of them are quite bad off and they are in a tent by themselves. But a lot of the fellows that have it have to do everything the rest of us do. If they are sick it is just too bad. They still have to work and go on marches just the same. The doctors don't know whether it is Yellow Jaundice or the effects of the Yellow fever coming out on us. I felt kind of sick yesterday but I feel O.K. today. I guess we all got a slight touch of it.

I was sorry to hear about Wendell I will write to him.



I guess Billy & his wife didn't go to Vermont as Annie had planned. Because I got a letter from him and he said he was in Hartford over the weekend.

I got a letter tonight from a friend of mine back in Camp Polk in the hospital with yellow jaundice he said how Albert Morrie is fine and he left the hospital. He didn't know where he went though. Maybe he is on his way out here or maybe he got a furlough. But I doubt if he got a furlough.

I can't think of any more.

Love to Everyone,

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford".

Pray a lot for me, I know you do, I do for all of you. I can't get to church here yet. Maybe next Sunday they will have some way for us to get to Mass.

June 27, 1942

Sat. Afternoon

[Postmarked Temple, Texas June 29, 1942; FREE; Cliff O'Connor, B Co. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), 2<sup>nd</sup> Training Group U.T.C., Tank Destroyer Command, Temple, Texas; written on three sides of two sheets of plain paper in blue ink.]

*Dear folks,*

I am writing to you from a hospital that is they call it a hospital. It is nothing but a big tent. I came in Wednesday I had a fever and I felt lousy. I found out I had the diarrhea. Boy and I had it. The whole battalion is coming down with it. I was lucky I got it early enough to get in the hospital it is full now. I am feeling fine now guess I'll get out tomorrow. I lost some weight and I'm a little weak but I'm much better than I was. The first thing they give us here is castor oil. You probably think it is funny of them to give you castor oil when you already have the runs but that's to clean out the poison that caused it I guess. After the castor oil works off they give us paregoric I took a quite a lot of that but I got the cramps every body else did too. Now they are giving us bismuth bicarbonate tablets. After one gets to feel better you get a quite a laugh at the other sick ones running to the toilet. The toilet is only a ditch dug in the ground nothing to sit on. It is about 100 yards from the hospital tent. I had a hard job getting there a number of times but I always managed to make it. There are fellows laying all around me moaning and groaning just like I was Wednesday nite. They haven't got the proper stuff here to take care of us or the proper food for us but they are doing the best they can. The yellow jaundice is still going around I thought I was going to get that but I ended up with this. I felt so good this morning I went down to the creek and had a little swim. They made a little dam there. I also shaved I had a quite a beard. I hadn't shaved in 4 days. Whoops, excuse me I got a call ..... I just came back. It isn't so runny as it was.

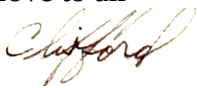
The doctor doesn't know whether it is the water or the food that is causing it. They think it is the water and they say we will eventually build up an immunity to it. I hope so.

Yesterday I got a letter you sent last Friday it went to Camp Polk. It took a week to get to me. You wrote another one that same day after you received the first one I sent from Texas. That letter you sent Saturday morning and I got it Monday.

It has been awfully hot here the last few days. Today there is a nice breeze blowing through the hospital. It feels pretty good.

Well don't worry about me I'll be fine in a day or so.

Love to all



July 10, 1942

Friday Morn.

[Postmarked Temple, Texas, July 11, 1942; FREE; Pvt. Cliff O'Connor, B Co. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), 2<sup>nd</sup> Training Group O.T.C., TK. DES. Command, Temple, Texas; written in blue ink on four sides of two long plain sheets.]

*Dear folks,*

I have a few minutes to myself this morning and I am going to try and drop you a few lines. (if I don't get caught writing). This morning I had to see about getting a new pair of shoes. Boy what a job. I had to go and see the medical officer to have him sign a statement that my shoes are much too big and all that, what a run around I have been getting. Oh! Oh!! Here comes some body I'll have to finish this later.

Afternoon:

Here I am again. It is 3 o'clock and I have off until 6. to get ready to go on guard tonight. I had to stop writing this morning and go out with the Company on a little problem. We came back at dinner time.

I just saw the Captain about my shoes I guess finally I'll get a new pair.

Well I suppose you folks have been wondering why I haven't written before this time. I hope you haven't been worried. I got 3 letters from you the ones you wrote June 28<sup>th</sup> July 3 and July 5<sup>th</sup>. I couldn't answer before because we have been awfully awfully busy here lately. We went to Belton, Texas, for the parade July 4<sup>th</sup>.



***Belton, Texas – Bell County Courthouse***  
***1940s postcard (from county website)***  
***Clifford's Company B likely rolled right by this building in the parade.***

We left here Sat. morning at 2:30 got there around 7 a.m. we went in our overalls and changed to our khakis when we got there. We had to change our clothes right on a street. There weren't many people around at that time of the morning. The first time I ever changed clothes on a street. The parade started at 10 o'clock it didn't last long we just rode through the city in our destroyers that's all. I left Belton and went to Waco about 4 o'clock. Before that I went to see a rodeo they had there. I enjoyed it very much, but the people there told me it was the worst rodeo that they ever saw. That's how much I know about western rodeos. I wish Pa could have been there to see the nice horses. That's what I liked about it. I saw a lot of cowboys too. As I said after that I went to Waco, Texas. I stayed there Sat. night. There was a big bunch of us we had a good time. I ate 3 steaks. Boy I can still taste them. I think I could eat steak every day and never get sick of it. Sunday I went back to Belton and we pulled out of there at 9 o'clock that night. We went from there to a "tank stalking range". We got to the range about 1 a.m. Didn't get hardly any sleep.



***Belton, Texas, Rodeo Grounds, undated.***  
*From county website.*

Monday we started our training. It was the toughest and best training I ever had. We were trained by a major that has fought with the British Commandos. Boy we really went through some tough training. Toughest in the Army I guess. We stayed there until Wednesday night. Got back here to camp late Wednesday night. I was planning to write to you last night but didn't get around to it. I had to go down to the creek and wash and shave. I hadn't shaved in 6 days, and was I dirty? Anyway when I got done washing it was dark and I couldn't write. We have been very very busy since we got back here boy this place is like a bee hive. We are suppose to leave here July 24<sup>th</sup> for the desert in Calif. That's the latest news from the officers. It is hard to believe anything around here.

I am feeling fine now, I think I feel better now than I ever have since I have been in this darned Army. I wish we could stay in Texas longer. Thanks a lot for your prayers, Ma. I know they help me.

I wrote to Wendell. I hope he is still behaving himself.

Oh! Yes I nearly forgot. I got the package you sent Thanks. That soap is swell. I'm not in the habit of using Alka Seltzers or anything like that. I never took anything like that, but maybe sometime I'll need it.

Tell Helen I did get her picture I thought I told you before but I must have forgotten. That was the one where she is sitting on the porch. A very nice picture. I look at those pictures very often.

I suppose Edna has left for the mountains. I had all hopes of her being a nurse. I feel kind of sorry she can't go in for it. Isn't there some way of her taking up the required subjects in school somewhere. Summer school or night school if they have it or something. She should take those subjects as soon as she can while the rest of her studying is fresh in her mind. Probably she doesn't want to be a nurse. I hope she does.

You said how the 4<sup>th</sup> was quiet up there. It was here too. Very quiet a few fire crackers that's all. But I heard plenty of noise on that tank stalking range let me tell you.

Gee, Ma I hope your ankle is better by now. I'm sorry Billy couldn't get home for the 4<sup>th</sup>. I bet Annie was disappointed.

I can understand why Milford looked so sad when you saw him. I can imagine myself going back.

Al Morrie is here now. Boy I was glad to see him. He and I are great pals. I missed him like everything when he was in the hospital.



*July 1942, "Just back from Commando Training, Texas"  
Al Morrie (l), with Clifford. (Whose is the photographer's shadow!?)  
Clifford's note on the back of this picture indicates that Al  
was just out of the hospital, from jaundice, which had hit their unit hard.*



I'll try and find out where Hereford, Texas is and try and see Father Milano if it isn't too far. I'd like to see him. I haven't seen any priest in almost 5 weeks now. I wish there was a church around here. I didn't get to Mass in Waco.

Well I must close now and get ready for guard.

Love to all



July 14, 1942

Tuesday Eve.

[Postmarked Jul 15, 1942, Temple, Texas; FREE; Pvt. C. B. O'Connor, B. Co. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), 2<sup>nd</sup> Training Group U.T.C., Tank Destroyer Command, Temple, Texas.]

*Dear folks,*

I received your letter Sunday night. I got some time to myself this evening so I guess I'll answer it now. I wish we had electric lights here. It is awfully hard to find time to write. I wrote a couple letters with a flash light and candles but it hurts my eyes too much to do it very often.

I was going to do my laundry this evening but I'll do it tomorrow. I hate that job.

It has been very nice here lately, but a little too warm to suit me. We need a good rain – the creeks are all drying up on us. We get enough drinking water, but taking a bath is getting to be a problem. The sun shines bright all day and everything is pretty darn dry. The nights so far have been pretty nice. That is, cool enough to get a good rest. The sky at night here is just as bright as can be with stars. This is the time of day I like best here. The sun is going down, and I like to look over the valleys and hills – it reminds me of home so much.

I hope Mildred is feeling better by this time, and I hope you are too, Ma and all the rest of course. I am fine.

I suppose you have heard from Edna by now. I hope she likes it there. I hope Helen is enjoying her vacation.

There aren't many cases of jaundice around here now. I guess it is pretty well over with now. I think I had a slight touch of it, but when I got the diaorrea (excuse spelling) it cleaned it right out of me.

I suppose you have started papering the back room. That is a big job - you should have someone help you, Ma.

You spoke of Lawrence getting his coal soon. Will there be a shortage of coal – do you think? I imagine they will sell a lot more coal this winter as the people won't be able to get fuel oil for oil burners. At least I don't think they will. They don't have any gasoline rationing down this way at all.

I haven't heard any more about us moving. I guess we leave the 24<sup>th</sup>. They told us now that they don't know if we will go to California or not. I hope not. Just the thought of the desert is enough for me.

Well this is a short letter but I must close. Will write more next time.

Love to Everyone,

*Clifford*

P.S. I was talking to some Texas people about that town of Hereford. They told me it was about 300 miles from here away out on the plains.

July 20, 1942

Mon. Eve.

[FREE; Postmarked Temple, Texas, July 21, 1942; Pvt. C. B. O'Connor, B Co. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), 2<sup>nd</sup> Training Group U.T.C., Tank Destroyer Command, Temple, Texas; written in blue ink on three sides of two long sheets, three sides, blue ink.]

*Dear folks,*

I received both of your letters. The one you sent Monday I got Wed. and the one you sent Friday I got last night I got Helen's letter tonight. I will write to her later.

It has been very hot here today as usual. The sun comes up in the morning and just bales down on us right up until sun down. There is usually a little breeze here and we are all thankful for that. We had a little cross country road march the other day it was kind of tough. We climbed a little mountain and had to go through an awful bunch of little schrubby oak trees boy they are tough and wiry and scratch a person all up.

We are just about ready to move now. We are suppose to go Wednesday morning. It seems funny to me, but we are going to Gatesville and camp there for at least 4 days they told us to wait for train connections or something. I don't see why we can't wait right here, but they do such crazy things in the Army we can expect anything. It is only about 17 or 18 miles from here to Gatesville.

I went to town last week end. I went to confession & communion. I don't think I ever in my life appreciated going to receive as much as I did then. It was the first time since Mother's Day and since then I haven't been to church very often. We don't have any chaplin with this outfit. I wish we did. Anyway it seemed so nice to go to church. I don't think any one appreciates a chance to go to church until you get to a place where there is no church at all, and a very slim chance to get to a place where there is one. I went to Waco. Morrie myself and a French fellow from Waterbury, Conn. hitch hiked down. We got there about 9 o'clock Saturday night. The people in Texas are very good to the soldiers. They give us rides and are very nice to us. It makes us feel like human beings again, even though we live like animals. Everyone in Texas is so much nicer to us than they were in Louisiana. I wish we could stay here longer. The only thing I don't like about this place is that there isn't enough water right around here. I mean places to swim and wash our clothes.

I am glad Wendell is going to be home for a while he is lucky. Hope he enjoys himself. It will seem good to him to be out of the shop for a while.

I suppose you folks went to the mountains to see Edna yesterday. That's too bad the way they feed their help, but most of those places are like that I guess. It would be a good experience for her to work here I know I learned a lot by meeting and talking to different people when I was a bell boy.

I got a letter from Bill Cleary. He is still in Camp Devens. Boy he is lucky.

If you see Gertrude tell her I will write to her sometime along. I got a letter from her an awfully long time ago and haven't answered it as yet, but tell her I haven't forgotten about any of them.

Love to all

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Clifford", written in brown ink.



July 24, 1942

Friday P. M.

[Pvt. C. B. O'Connor, B. Co. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), 2<sup>nd</sup> Training Group UTC, TK. DES. Command, Temple, Texas]



I received your letter Wednesday just after we got here in Gatesville.

Our Company has all of our vehicles loaded on flat cars and we are waiting for orders to pull out. The other Companies haven't loaded yet as there aren't enough flat cars here yet. I don't know when they will be here. They told us we will leave here tomorrow morning, but I don't think they know themselves when we will leave.

We are staying in our little pup tents. I hate to stay in the darn things. There isn't enough room to suit me. Al Morrie and I pitched together. I am laying down on a blanket in the tent trying to write. I bet it is 115 degrees in here. I'm sweating like the dickens. It is dropping right off from me onto this page as I write.

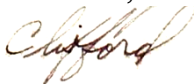
It is awfully hot out in the sun but it is cool out there compared to in here. The blanket I'm laying on is getting soaked with sweat. I would go out in the sun to write but if a person stays in direct sunlight down here too long you get sun stroke.

The train is just pulling in with a big long line of flat cars. Guess maybe we will leave tomorrow. I wish we could stay here for a while. We go into town every nite and have a little fun. We are camped just a little ways out of town. Gatesville is a very nice town. About as clean of a town as I've seen. No booze at all. There are a lot of houses here built from petrified wood. They are very pretty, all colors. They are made from rough blocks that are cemented together just like rocks.

I am sorry the place where Edna was had to be so bad. She is better off at home. I know what it is to eat lousy food, let me tell you.

Well I must close - I have no more time right now.

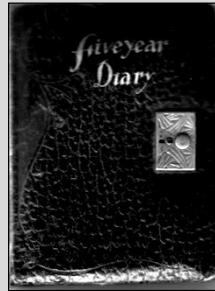
Love to all,



**The following pages present the entries  
from Ma's diary for the month of July 1942 ... so many of the  
activities from home are included in Clifford's letters.**

## From Ma's Diary:

### Entries for the Month of July 1942



July 1, 1942 – Wednesday -- Cloudy, showers. P & L worked. I put a linoleum down in the bathroom. H & E went on a hike to Cobble Hill. Got a letter from Wendell & Maggie.

July 2, 1942 – Thursday -- Dark & cloudy. P & L worked. I made a pair of pajamas for Edna. She & H went to movie in p.m. I made doughnuts.

July 3, 1942 – Friday -- Fairly nice day. P & L worked. H & E & I went to Mass & received. Got 2 letters from C. He has been sick. I sprained my ankle coming home but went to Barre just the same.

July 4, 1942 – Saturday -- Nice day. We went to Barre in a.m. to get some meat & up to Cleary's & Guy's in p.m. We kind of (had) a bad time in the night with P wanting to go away.

July 5, 1942 – Sunday -- Nice day. L & H & E & I went to Graniteville at 10 o'clock Mass and P went away with Leon somewhere. M is sick abed. L & J & babies & H & E & Erlene went over to Curtis at night.

July 6, 1942 – Monday -- Fairly nice day. Rained at night. P & L worked. H went down to work for M. E went to Barre with Erlene. I washed & mopped. Made doughnuts at night.

July 7, 1942 – Tuesday -- Nice day. P & L worked. I ironed. Did not feel very good. I went to Bohonons in p.m. E went to Hardwick at night with Hartson's. Jos. came over at night with the children.

July 8, 1942 – Wednesday -- Mostly cloudy & cool. P & L worked. Edna & Erlene & Mildred Bicknell went to the White Mts. To work. I cooked & sent some things to Mildred & cleaned a little in dish closet.

July 9, 1942 – Thursday -- Cool. P & L worked. I cleaned some in kitchen & made doughnuts & went to M's in p.m. Got black & white checked dress for \$1.00. Went with P at night to get gas card.

July 10, 1942 – Friday -- Cool in a.m. P & L worked. I finished cleaning kitchen. Got letter from Edna at night.

July 11, 1942 – Saturday -- Cloudy. I went to Barre in a.m. with L & with P at night & we went to M's to get H. M did not feel so well today.

July 12, 1942 – Sunday -- Nice day. We went to 10 o'clock Mass & Josephine went with us. We went to M's afterwards & to Curtis' at night & took our supper out & ate in Hubbard Park.

July 13, 1942 – Monday -- Nice day. Put up 1-1/2 qts. greens. P & L worked. I washed & mopped. Wrote to

*C. Got a card from E at noon time. Took a bath & washed my hair in p.m. Went over to Josephine's at night & to Hartson's.*

*July 14, 1942 – Tuesday -- Nice day. P & L worked. I ironed and made 2 apple pies and sent one to Mildred. I got a letter from C and wrote to W and Edna.*

*July 15, 1942 – Wednesday -- Cloudy & cold. P & L worked. I mended & made berry pies & doughnuts & went up to Wilbers & over to Morrie's. Josephine & children came over at night.*

*July 16, 1942 – Thursday -- Nice day. Very cold nights & mornings. Got letter from W. P & L worked. I painted the piazza screen. Mrs. Webber came down in the evening.*

*July 17, 1942 – Friday -- Nice day. P & L worked. I made two apple pies & cleaned paint brushes & did other odd jobs. Lined a pair of drapes tonight.*

*July 18, 1942 – Saturday -- Fairly nice day. We went to Barre about noon & paid Peter's insurance and to M's and went down to M's again at night to get Helen.*

*July 19, 1942 – Sunday -- Very hot day. We went to 8 o'clock Mass and then went to the White Mts. to get Edna and Erlene. Mrs. Webber & Marilyn went with us. Got home about 9.*

*July 20, 1942 – Monday -- Very hot. P & L worked. L did not get home till 10 o'clock from work. I washed & mopped & made 2 pies. Wrote to C & W. We are all very tired. Got peas from Genevieve.*

*July 21, 1942 – Tuesday -- Nice day. P & L worked. E & I ironed. May Vance was here & Doria Roark. Josephine & children came over at night & Johnny & Mildred & Marilyn came up. Johnny was on as air warden.*

*July 22, 1942 – Wednesday -- Nice day. P & L worked. I cooked in a.m. and went to Barre at noon with L to get Peter's form for gas ration and went to M's. She does not feel well. E went with me. Mrs. Barrett came up at night. P went up to Annie's.*

*July 23, 1942 – Thursday -- Cool. Marilyn is 6 years old today. P & L worked. H went down to M's to help her & came home at night. I mended & cut out my dusty rose dress. Went over to Josephine's at night. Black out tonight. E canned 6 qts. of greens.*

*July 24, 1942 – Friday -- Nice day. P & L worked. I sewed all day on my dress. Chinky Rubalcalba drove our car to the dance at Orange. E went. Helen Morrie stayed here with Helen all night.*

*July 25, 1942 – Saturday -- Hot day. Mrs. Robie is back from Hartford & brought Edith with her. They came over here in a.m. & we all went to Barre.*

*July 26, 1942 – Sunday -- Warm day. St. Anne's day. I went to receive at 8 o'clock Mass in Barre. Wendell came home this morning for a 10 day vacation. Josephine & Lawrence & children were over in p.m. Edith came in a.m.*

*July 27, 1942 – Monday -- Dark & rainy. P & L worked. I did not wash. I fixed another gore in my dusty-rose suit & made 2 pies. Got a letter from C. He was in Gatesville, Texas when he wrote.*

*July 28, 1942 – Tuesday -- Nice warm day. P & L worked. L & Fuller were air wardens last night in Bradford. I washed & mopped. E put up 7-1/2 qts. string beans. W took girls to the pictures at night. Josephine came over in evening with children.*

*July 29, 1942 – Wednesday -- Dark & cloudy. P & L worked. I mended in a.m. and went to Barre when L*

*did & got P's B card for gas & went to M's for the p.m. Chink Aja is going into the Army tomorrow or going for examination.*

*July 30, 1942 – Thursday -- Rainy but cleared off nice at night. P & L worked. I just did odd jobs. H got a permanent. W fixed the radio. Got letter from C.*

*July 31, 1942 – Friday -- Dark & cloudy & rained in p.m. P & L worked. W took H & I berrying up in Orange & up to Littlejohn's but we did not get many. Josephine had a permanent. We had a blackout. I finished E's suit.*

**Clifford's "Chronology" (see "Introduction) shows that his Company left Fort Hood, Texas, from Gatesville on July 25, 1942, and arrived in the desert of California on July 28, 1942. His annotation at these entries indicates, "*Rail Head Freda.*"**

July 27, 1942

Mon. Morn.

[Postmarked July 28, 1942; ALBUQ & R.P.O. (or P.P.O.?); FREE; Pvt. C. B. O'Connor, B Co. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), 2<sup>nd</sup> Training Group U.T.C., TK. DES. Command, Temple, Texas; written in pencil on five sides of three long sheets.]

*Dear folks,*

Well here I am in New Mexico. You will have to excuse writing as I am on a train.

We left Gatesville, Texas Saturday nite shortly after mid nite. Didn't travel very far Sat. nite because we were only in Brownwood, Texas Sunday morning. We got off the train and had a little exercising. We stopped again in Slaton, Texas for some more exercise just before supper last nite. Crossed the border between Texas & New Mexico around 9 o'clock last nite. We went to sleep last nite in Clovis, New Mexico and woke up this morning in Belen, New Mex. We got off the train again there for some more exercise. I thought I'd freeze last night, boy it was cold we were crossing the southern part of the Rockies. We saw some of the mountains this morning boy they sure looked good to me. I guess these mountains are called San Andreas Mts. The map you sent me of Louisiana has a map of U.S on the back of it and it comes in pretty handy now everyone wants to see it even the captain keeps coming in and asking me for it. I guess it is the only map on this section of the train.

Where we are right now we can see a few mountains but not many. All day yesterday we traveled through country that was as flat as a table you could see for miles & miles and not as much as a slight rise in the ground could be seen. Through this part there was farm after farm of cotton fields and cotton gins. The cotton plant looks a lot like the potatoe plant right now. It is not in bloom yet. I would like to see it when it is. We just passed through a lot of sage grass at least I think it is sage, it is very coarse and kind of a greenish blue color. Last night the moon was full and I woke up pretty often and looked out of my window boy what a pretty sight, the moon peeping over mountain tops shining on the sage. It is very dry out this way just as it was back in Texas nearly every small river & creek we pass is dried up and in the bottom there is a white deposit of something I was thinking it must be salt. Out where we are now we don't see much of any civilization except when we come to a small station which are pretty few and far between.

Yesterday we saw a quite a few stock yards full of white faced short horns and a few horses.

So far we have been lucky traveling in nice trains. From Devens to Polk we had Pullmans & Polk to Texas we had the same and now we are in Pullmans. I wouldn't have been surprised if they had have loaded us onto a bunch of cattle cars or boxes. The cars we are on now are called day coaches I guess. They are like regular coaches except they make up into beds at night. The food so far has been pretty good. Much better than it was from Devens to Polk.

We just passed a station named Lagunas. I can't find it on this map.



Last night as I was riding along and looking out the window I was thinking maybe Wendell was on a train heading home. Or maybe he waited until today to take the train.

There are a good many miles between us now and as every minute goes by I am about a mile further. I wish this train was going backwards.

Yesterday I was reading an article in the Reader Digest about the Lewis & Clark expedition. I remember some of it from school boy what a difference about 100 years can make. We crossed the Rockies in no time and it took them months to do it. I am enjoying this trip very much. I wish Al Morrie was with us. He was sent on ahead with Headquarters Co. They took a few of our company I don't know why maybe to balance the number of men.

The houses we do see around here are all built of adobé. Real Mexican style. 1 story and flat roofed. They look like they are made of adobé maybe it is cement.

We are almost 2 hours behind your time now. It is 10 o'clock AM. now. I suppose you are getting dinner ready now, Ma.

We can buy cigarettes & cigars and candy and tomato & grapefruit juice on the train. That's pretty good. Everything seems so good right now, but when we think of the desert we are heading for it spoils everything. Maybe because we have gradually built up a great fear in our minds of the desert by listening to talk and ballyhoo from others that have been there. Perhaps it won't be as bad as we have it pictured. We all hope it won't be.

We are not suppose to mail any letters from this train at all, but if they think they are going to stop us they are crazy. I guess I'll manage to get this into a mailbox somehow or other. You see we can't leave the train except for exercise. But we see a few civilians they usually mail our letters and cards. Some of them won't 'cause they say they were told not to do it.

I hope you will be able to read this letter and I hope I have made it interesting.

We will soon cross the border between New Mex. & Arizona.

We just came through Grants, New Mexico. Well I can't think of any more. I wonder when you will get this letter.

Love to Everyone

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Clifford", written in dark ink.

The weather has been swell so far much different than it was from Mass. to Louisiana.

I don't know what to put on the envelope for an address guess I'll put my old address.

**NOTE:**

**From this date until November 4, 1942, when the 703<sup>rd</sup> arrived at Camp Pickett after completing desert training, Clifford's letters give a good impression of the conditions from a soldier's perspective.**

*The first troops arrived at Desert Training Center in mid-April 1942 followed by the first full division, the "Bayou Blitz," 3rd Armored Division, on 26 July 1942. To save rubber, the Division and all its equipment was shipped on 30 trains from Camp Polk, Louisiana. During the four-day journey, the troops stopped for rest in small towns across west Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. At their destination in Rice, California, and the Freda siding, the soldiers stepped into a brilliantly sunlit desert of sand and rock with the July temperature near 130 degrees. Even before the maneuver training started, they were being acclimated to North African conditions.*

Above paragraph from: [http://www.olive-drab.com/gallery/description\\_0099.php](http://www.olive-drab.com/gallery/description_0099.php)

July 30, 1942

[Postmarked Barstow, Calif. July 30, 1942; stamp area is moth eaten but appears to have had FREE underlined; Pvt. C. B. O'Connor, B. Co. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253. c/o Post Master, Rice, Calif.]

[This letter and envelope appear to have been moth-eaten in storage; parts of words and several lines are illegible.]

Thursday P.M.

*Dear folks,*

Well I'm here on the desert at last. It is something like what I thought it would be. We are surrounded by rugged mountains – nothing absolutely nothing grows on the mountains. They are just plain rocks burned to a brownish color by the scorching sun.



It took us about 60 hours to get here. I really enjoyed the trip. I think the most beautiful part of the trip was about in the center of Arizona. A town named Flagstaff. It is a tourist center I guess. It is about 7,000 ft. above sea level. The air there was wonderful. You could smell fir trees for miles. We saw a deer just outside of the town. She stood right there while the train went by. We saw a few Army boys there, they were still wearing their winter clothes it is so nice and cool there. Boy I would like to be stationed up there for a while. I always thought Arizona was nothing but desert and waste land, but it isn't. Most of the state is very flat and dry but where the

mountains come down through it is real nice. There were some nice farms up on top of these mountains. I wouldn't believe it

....

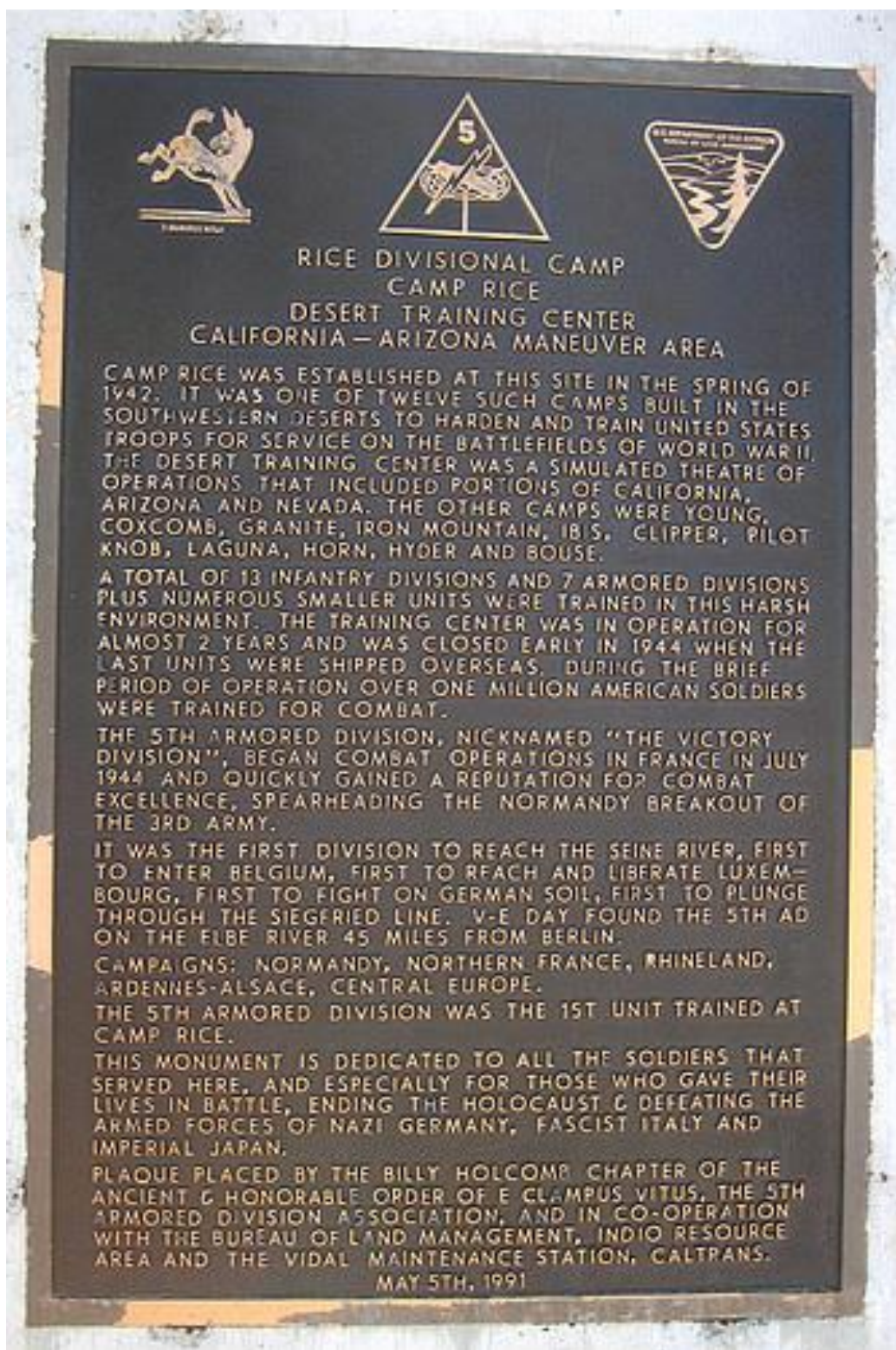
.... A few canyons on the way out .... one was Diablo Canyon. We crossed right over that one. It was about 200 ft. deep I guess. Not a drop of water in it. The others we saw weren't so deep but they looked just the same. No water in the bottom at all. It seemed funny to look around at the dry land and think that at one time there was a lot of water around there.

The desert we are in now is somewhere near Rice, Calif. We are in Calif. Just a little ways over the line from Arizona. We crossed into Calif. at Needles. The Colorado River there is quite small. We get our drinking water from the Colorado. They stopped the water main from the river into Los Angeles. They have some shower baths set up about 2 or 3 miles from here. They gave us a ride down last nite to wash up. Boy I think I appreciated that shower more than any other I've ever had.



*Memorial on the highway passing the site of Camp Rice. Text of the inscription is provided below. [Photograph from internet CAMA site.]*







***The Aquaduct, Colorado River source, to Los Angeles, over 300 miles away;  
from a Division History of the California-Arizona Maneuver Area,  
by Frank Gilchrist, at <http://www.90thdivisionassoc.org>)***

The water in our canteens gets so hot that it actually burns us when we drink it. Yesterday the captain got a few desert bags for us. I was lucky enough to be around and got one. They are made of cloth or canvas and hold about a gallon. You can put warm water in and in about an hour it is cool enough to drink. I don't understand how it works, but it does. As long as there is a little breeze the water will stay cool even if it is hung right out in the sun. There is usually a little breeze here.

... awfully hot in the afternoon ... so hot it burns your face and body. You see the sun warms the sand and as the wind blows over it picks up a lot of heat. The medals around my neck get so hot they burn my skin, and the metal buttons on our coveralls get the same way, our shoes get awfully hot and burn our feet. Our lips get swollen and sore and chapped.

Tuesday morning when we first came into the desert we stopped at a little rail road station named Cadiz, Calif. It was 128 degrees inside, and it was a lot hotter in the sun. They say it gets up to 140 degrees. I bet it is close to that right now.

We can see nothing here but sand, sand, sand. Some trees grow here in the sand. They call them greasewood and there is a little sage brush too. These trees grow to about 3 ft. high. They are awfully dry and tough. They told us if you run over them with trucks they would splinter and



puncture the best tire made. I can't get over the fact that the mountains around us have no vegetation at all. What a skyline!!! rugged jagged rocky peaks. I'll try and get some snapshots to send you.

Keeping food fresh is a quite a problem out here. We get ice but it doesn't last long and we don't get enough.

We work from 6:30 A.M. to 11:30 A.M. and we have off from 11:30 till 3 PM. We go back then till 5:30. We seem to get more work than others that are here. I don't know why. Some outfits don't do anything in the afternoon at all. I got kind of sick yesterday ... I guess I worked too fast. I ... have to take it easy out here. You ... can't stand that sun beating down on you. ... never see any clouds in the sky at night or day. There is no shade at all except our tents. Boy what a job putting up those tents. I drove stakes till I was dizzy. I finally had to quit. I feel better today. I didn't work much this morning. It is about 2:30 P.M. now and we get to fall out at 3. I don't think I'll do much this afternoon. Nobody can work in this tremendous heat.

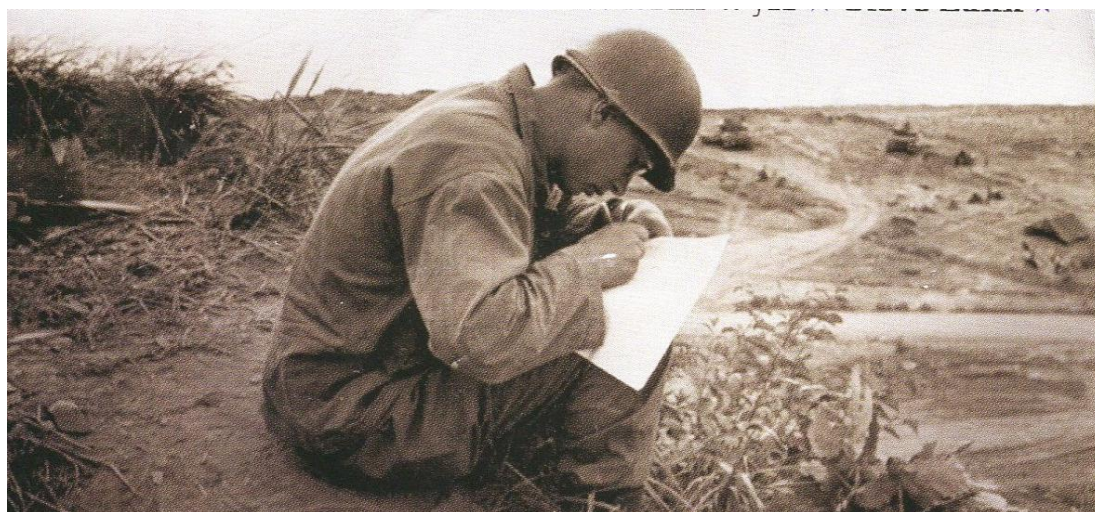
We take 2 salt tablets with every meal. If we didn't I don't think we would last long. I don't see how the soldiers can fight the way they are in Libya. When we unloaded the vehicles from the train Tuesday we got blisters on our hands. The steel was so hot. Just leave a pinch bar sit in the sun for 2 minutes and it will give you a blister if you pick it up.

I can't think of any more.

Love to Everyone

*Clifford*

I hope you can read this I'm writing on my knee.



*Picture from cover of audio cassette project entitled, "War Letters," edited by Andrew W. Carroll  
Unknown soldier, unknown location, unknown date. (ref. [www.warletters.com](http://www.warletters.com))*



*August 1942*  
*“Our Tent, Desert, California”*  
*Roland Anctil, Friend from Waterbury, Connecticut*

**Note:** The photo above, and many provided for use in this project were generously provided by the two sons of Roland Anctil, shown here, a close friend of Clifford’s throughout his life after the war. Particularly the troop train pictures crossing to California, the Camp Rice training period, the trip to Los Angeles, and later, from combat areas.

August 9, 1942

[Postmarked Los Angeles, Calif., August 11, 1942; FREE; Pvt. C. B. O'Connor, B. Co. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. #253 c/o Post Master, Rice, Calif.; written in blue ink on six sides of three blue-lined sheets of notepaper.]

Sunday Morn.

*Dear folks,*

Well it is nearly time for me to write again I guess. I have 4 letters here I received from you and not answered. I got one 7/4 & 7/6 & two 7/8. Those 2 I got were yesterday. One was stamped July 31 the other Aug. 5<sup>th</sup>. We don't get very good service on mail here, although it only took 3 days for that letter you wrote last Wednesday to get here. I also have a letter that I haven't answered from Helen the one she wrote when she was at Mildred's. If I ever get a chance to go to town from here I am going to get some little souvenir for Helen & Edna. Edna sent me a letter too along with the letter you wrote July 27, Ma. Edna's letter was dated July 30 and yours July 27. But I think Edna must have made a mistake, because she mentioned about Wendell coming home this morning. And he got home July 26. I couldn't figure it out for a while but I think she must have made a mistake. She must have wrote it Sunday and put it in with your letter Monday morning.

I suppose Wendell & Edna are in Hartford now. I hope Edna gets a good job and takes care of herself. If she stays at Nellie's there certainly will be a house full there with Gertrude coming down too with Mary.

I bet Helen misses Edna a lot.

I'm glad Pa got a B card. It must be awful not to be able to go anywhere after being used to it for so long. What makes me mad is the fact that there is actually no gas shortage at all. There is plenty of gas in U.S., but the trouble is there is no transportation. (They say) I wish you could see the way gas is wasted here. Coming out here was a foolish thing I think. It is too hot to run vehicles out here. The motor temperature gets up to 210 degrees to 212 degrees in no time and they have to stop before they burn up. Some of them do. Two tanks caught on fire the other day, and a lot of other vehicles did too. It is just plain torture in those vehicles of steel out here. So far I have not had to go out in them on a problem, but I feel sorry for those that did. They say this sand is awful stuff to drive in, the front wheels just want to keep going straight when you take a corner unless the front wheel drive is engaged and even then it is hard to turn. Oh! This whole mess is a waste of money. It makes me disgusted just to think of it. I often think how disgusted a priest must get when he thinks of the war going on & on. So much suffering & trouble for what?

I was glad to hear Billy got his 3 day pass I had a letter from him and he was telling me he had asked for one. He is lucky. We can't even get out of here on the weekend. This week end they let 10 men go on convoy to Los Angeles I was so mad I didn't even sign my name on the list, 10 men out of about 150 in our Co. Next week there is a rumor that about 50 will be able to go from each Co. I hope I make it. We got paid last Friday Aug 7<sup>th</sup> one week late. I don't know what the trouble with this outfit is.

Some fellows left here yesterday hitch hiking for some place they didn't care especially where as long as they got out of here. Hitch hiking here is dangerous business. You might get stranded miles from camp and miles from a drop of water. They say any town within 100 miles from here is off limits to soldiers. That means we have to go farther than 100 miles if we are going anywhere. And there aren't many cars traveling out here on the desert. So the chances of getting a ride are pretty slim.

I told Albert Morrie about his brother being in Washington St. He was surprised to hear it. He is in our tent. We have the same bunch we had back at Polk. I would like the ski troops I think. At least we would get out of this heat.

Some of the boys are out in the Co. street cutting one another's hair boy you should see the jobs they are doing. I'll have to find some one to cut mine and I'll cut theirs. I may wait and take a chance on making the convoy to Los Angeles and get a hair cut there, but at any rate I have to get one very soon I look like a sheep herder.

We had Mass this morning under a tent. I was a little late getting there but I heard a nice little sermon.

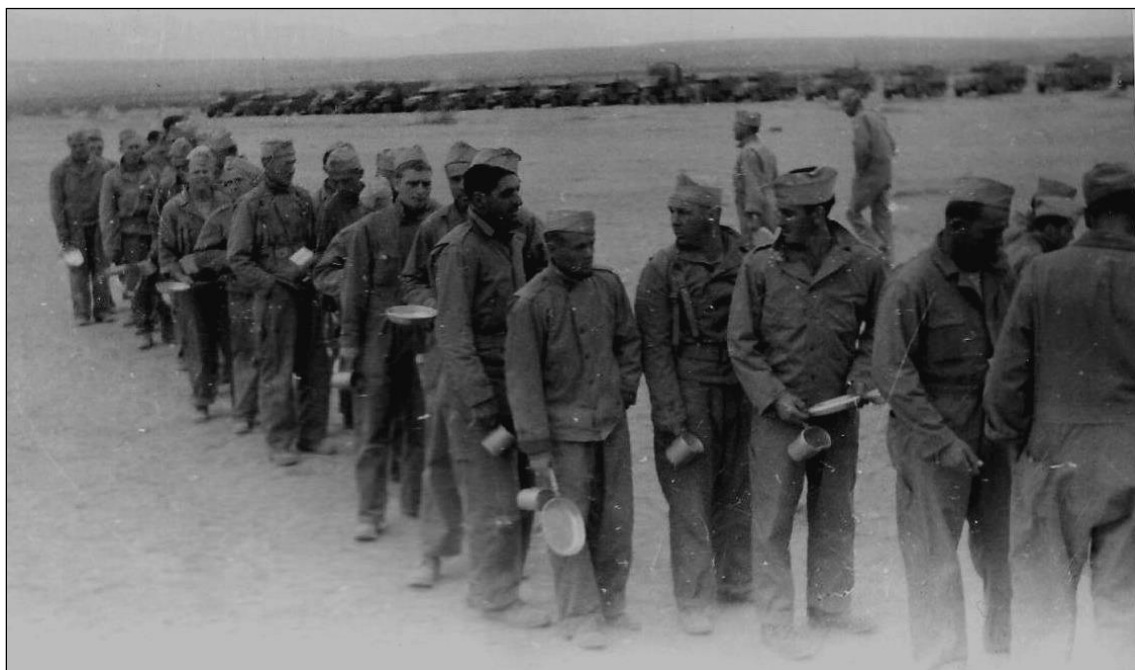
It is 11:15 a.m. now. I suppose you folks are all done with dinner and probably taking a nap now I very often look at the time and wonder what you folks are doing. I suppose you do the same.

We had a little rain here last week, believe it or not rain on a desert. It rained about 2 minutes one morning about 3 o'clock. I woke up and couldn't figure out what was going on. The sound of rain on the tent was like music to our ears. I wish it would pour here but that is wishing for a lot.

I don't think I told you in the last letter or maybe I did. We have a chance to take showers some nites. They have showers about 2 or 3 miles from us. We get transportation nearly every nite. It is too far to walk so if we don't get a truck we are out of luck if we go for a shower after supper we don't get back until dark and we don't have time to write or anything. I don't think I told you how we have from 11:30 a.m. until 3 pm off. We usually do our shaving etc., then. We like to lie down and rest then too because we are usually played out by 11:30. We have to use our steel helmets to wash ourselves in and shave with our drinking cups as shaving mugs. I've been using that ever since we left Polk.

It is chow time!!

We had a pretty good dinner. The food out here is much better than we ever had, so far. They feed us a lot of meat I don't think we should eat much meat in this climate. I don't eat much of it. The vegetables & fruit we get here are very good. I never saw such big peaches & potatoes & nice oranges.



*Chow Line at Camp Rice, on the California Desert  
Photo of Co. B during Desert Training.*

They are having mail call now. I have a friend of mine listening for me. I hope I get a letter. Ma, you folks needn't get me a radio 'cause it would only get broke coming away out here, and I would probably break it myself packing it when we move even if it did get here without being broke. It would be very nice to have one, but I'm afraid it would just get smashed up.

Mail call is over no mail. About gloves, Ma we have plenty of them, but when we first got here we didn't get a chance to unpack our stuff so we had to work without them.

It has been cloudy here all morning and the breeze is cool now. I hope the sun doesn't come out.

We are suppose to move from here sometime between now and the 22<sup>nd</sup>. I don't think we will move very far. We are suppose to maneuver out around here for 6 weeks.

I can't think of any more now.

Love to Everyone

I must write and thank Annie for having Mass said for Bill & I.

Kenneth Hutchins is lucky to get into the Navy.  
U.T.C. in my other address meant Unit Training Center.  
A.P.O. #253 means Army Post Office box #253





*Mail Call at Camp Rice, on the California Desert  
Photo of Co. B during Desert Training.*

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*PX, California Desert.*

August 17, 1942

[P.F.C. C.B. O'Connor, B Co. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK DES BN (H), A.P.O. #253, c/o Post Master  
Rice, Calif.]

Monday afternoon

[Top note: 6 months ago today we landed in Camp Polk. As bad as this country is here I don't know but it is better than Louisiana in my estimation.]

*Dear folks,*

Here I am again, hope you haven't been worried about me as I haven't written in quite a while. We were out on a problem for 3 days last week, Wednesday through Friday. It was pretty hot but I was lucky enough to ride in a C&R (Command) car – it has a roof on it so the sun didn't bother us much. Al Morrie was with me too. We didn't get much sleep on the problem. It was a real big affair – the whole 3<sup>rd</sup> Arm'd Div. or almost all of it took part in it. Some tanks caught on fire they got so hot. We had very little trouble with our vehicles – one flat tire on one destroyer and the same one ran out of oil and water – that was all.

I picked up some little stones out there on the desert. I'm sending them along with this letter – I hope they don't tear a hole in the envelope. These stones seem to have been melted at one time – maybe years ago there was a volcano around here. I had some other pretty ones but I lost them.

I got 2 letters here from you that I haven't answered – one dated Aug 10 the other the 13<sup>th</sup>. I got one Saturday morn. and the other came yesterday.

I'm glad you got a permanent Ma. Gee you had a long time of it from 8:00 till 3 o'clock – boy you must have been tired out. I'm sorry you have to have your teeth out but they are better out than in if they are no good. I hope it doesn't hurt you to have your ears cleaned out.

So Pa is an air raid warden now – well I hope no enemy planes ever go up around there. I don't see why they should.

There goes the darned bugle – it must be 3 o'clock. I'll have to finish this letter tonight.

It is now 6:30. Just finished chow. It is much cooler now, a nice breeze is blowing. I don't think it is as hot out here now as it was when we came here. It isn't that we are getting used to it because I don't think a person could ever get used to that kind of heat. I don't mind it nearly as much as I did. We get a chance to take showers nearly every night – guess I told you and we have movies, old ones of course but we enjoy them. They show them nearly every night right out in the open.

I finally got on a convoy out of here Saturday. Not to Los Angeles as I had planned but to Kingman, Arizona, about 120 miles from here. It was an awful ride in those trucks, but we were so glad to get a chance to get out of here for a while we didn't mind it too much. We left here Saturday morning around 7:00, got there at about 2:30 pm. I thought the mountains around us

here were big until I saw the ones we went over. Boy were they high. We crossed the Colorado and entered Arizona at a town named Topock. I had a pretty good time there at Kingman I mean. Went to church Sunday in a little old stone church more like a chapel. The town is called the gateway to Boulder Dam about 71 miles from the dam itself. I didn't get a chance to see it. We went to a movie Sunday afternoon there "Reap the Wild Wind." It was very good.



We left town about 7:30 Sunday night to come back to camp - got here around 1 o'clock this morning. All tired out. I saw a couple of old gold mines on the way - one of them was in operation - the other abandoned. I looked for some rings or bracelets made of petrified wood for Edna and Helen, but I didn't see any anywhere, maybe I'll get a chance to get some later. I bought some films so I'll be able to take some snapshots of this place and send you.

We are supposed to pull out of here soon. I don't know where we are going - maybe to another desert, maybe not. We are supposed to maneuver here or around here for 50 days they say, but it may be just rumor.

I got a letter from Mildred today. I will maybe answer it tomorrow.

I hope Edna gets along good with her job, and I hope she takes a liking to the hospital so she will be a nurse.

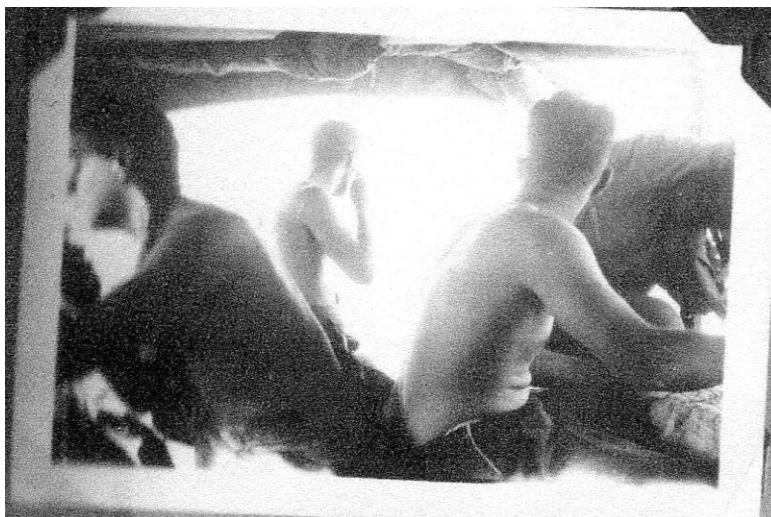
So Wendell got his questionnaire, well I really felt bad to hear that. I hope he gets into a better outfit than the one I'm in.

Thanks a lot for your prayers, Ma. I am sure they are helping me.

Love to Everyone,

*Clifford*

[Note, stones mentioned were not in the envelope and the envelope had not torn.]



*Shaving in the Tent.*





*Hard Labor Gang in the Desert.*

August 21, 1942

[Postmarked Los Angeles, CA Aug 23, 1942; PFC C. B. O'Connor Assn. 11064771, B. Co. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. #253, Rice, Calif., U. S. Army.

Friday Morn.

*Dear Folks,*

I received your letter of the 17<sup>th</sup> yesterday also got one the day before yesterday that you wrote Aug 2<sup>nd</sup>. It was of course sent to Texas. I guess I have all of the ones you sent to me there. I got a letter from Edna Wednesday – she seems to like Hartford and her job very much. I'm glad she does – hope she stays in the hospital. I was surprised to hear that she was watching operations.

We have this morning off so I'm taking advantage of it and trying to get caught up on some writing. I wrote to Mildred yesterday.

We don't have much to do now. You see we have been getting ready to move and we are just about done. It seems that all we do is pack and unpack in this outfit. This morning we had exercises – tough ones – and then we ran around for a while, that is kind of hard in sand, but we are getting used to it now.

This afternoon our Co. has been chosen to fire a salute to General Walker, head of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Arm'd Div. and Al Morrie & I were picked to go along. I think we are the only privates going – all the rest are sergeants & corporals. I guess 4 gun crews are going to fire. I hate to go on things like that – they are always so fussy about what we do. We have to wear clean overalls and clean helmets, etc. etc. etc. It is a bunch of baloney if you ask me.

The list has been put on the board of those to go on maneuvers and of course my name had to be on it. Boy I was mad. I don't know when we go – maybe tomorrow maybe Monday. Al Morrie isn't going. I don't think he is any way.

Now listen, if you don't hear from me for long periods at a time please don't worry about me. We may not get a chance to write very often on maneuvers that's the way it usually is. I heard we are going to stay out til Oct. 15. That is probably baloney too. I don't know what the rest of the Co. that stays here are going to do while we are gone. I don't see as there is anything for them to do except guard duty.

I'm sorry you broke your glasses, Ma and I hope you have new ones by now, also hope Pa has his teeth fixed.

I gave my name this morning for new glasses. I have 2 pairs with me but I don't think they fit right. I don't know when I'll get a chance to have my eyes examined.

About sending me candy. Well it would be hopeless. It would melt to nothing. We had some candles and yesterday I saw what was left of them. A puddle of melted wax like



***Walton Harris Walker, General, U.S. Army  
Reviewed the troops at Camp Rice, August 21, 1942***

water and the strings that's all. If you want you can send me cigarettes and don't think it wouldn't be fun to get them. I've gone without them a few times because sometimes we weren't able to buy any we were so far from any town, and our canteens would run out of them. We always have them here though.

The sun is real bright this morning not a cloud in the sky but it isn't awfully hot yet it is only about 10:30 and there is a little breeze. We are lucky to have that breeze, there usually is a little breeze all of the time.

We have a quite a few classes on identifying airplanes. I wondered if Pa has to learn the different types of aircraft too.

We get newspapers out here. I saw one this morning. It said that the Marines had mopped up the Solomon Islands. I hope they keep it up. They are good fighters.

Thanks a lot for the map you sent. I lost the other one. It must be around the tent here somewhere. Everything is in such a mess. 5 of us with all of our equipment. I got an old orange box to keep some of my stuff in. I'm using it as a desk now.

Well I can't think of any more except I wish you wouldn't worry so much about me. What was that letter from Washington about? I mean what did they say about my insurance?

Love to all

*Clifford*

Notice my address that is the way they want it written. That number is my serial no.

**Note:** Enclosed in this letter is a small blue-folded piece of paper; inside of this little package are some tiny sand pebbles. These may be those referenced earlier.



*Big Soldier (Indian), Anctil, Allen.  
Desert California, August 1942*

August 23, 1942

[Postmarked Aug 25, 1942 Los Angeles, CA; FREE, P.F.C. C. B. O'Connor A.S.N. 11064771, B. Co. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. #253, Rice, Calif., U.S. Army; written in blue-black ink on plain paper, single sheet, two sides.]

Sunday P.M.

*Dear folks,*

Well I thought I'd drop you a line and let you know we are not going on maneuvers. We were supposed to go this morning at 8 o'clock. First it was Fri. & then Sat. and now it is all off. I'm glad because I was scheduled to go. I don't know what is going to happen next – maybe all of a sudden they will decide to go. I don't think they know themselves.

I went to Mass this morning. Heard a good little sermon. The priest can't stay long as he has so many places to go. I was on anti-aircraft guard last night, kind of tired today. That guard is much easier than regular battalion guard when we have to walk back and forth on a certain post. Whenever I get guard again I'm going to try and get A.A. guard instead of walking.

I can't think of any more right now.

Love to all,

*Clifford*

I just got your letter of Thursday. It got here real quick, 3 days. Sorry to hear about Edward but he will probably find a job right away.

I'm glad the garden is so good. I had this letter sealed and was writing to Edna when your letter came.



August 28, 1942

[Postmarked Barstow, Calif. Aug 29, 1942; FREE; P.F.C. C. B. O'Connor A.S.N. 11064771, B. Co. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. #253, Rice, Calif., U.S. Army; written on blue-lined notepaper; two sheets, 3 sides.]

P.M.

*Dear folks,*

I received your letter of 23<sup>rd</sup> just now.

I have about an hour or so before we fall out again so guess I will answer it right now. We have to fall out at 2 in the P.M. now instead of 3. It hurts them to give us a little time we can call our own.

Well we are still on the desert, but it isn't nearly as bad as it was. The nights are cool now. We even cover ourselves up when we go to sleep. I have felt much better since it has cooled off a little. I have more ambition and feel like doing something. Before I didn't care what happened – all I wanted to do was sleep all the time. The days are still pretty hot, 120 degrees Monday P.M. at 2 o'clock. But that is better than 140 or more.

We are getting ready to move as I told you. There are a lot of rumors of going East. I hope we do. Then I'll get a chance to see you all.

Haven't heard any more about maneuvers. We had a lot of canned rations issued to us for maneuvers so we had to eat them up. Got pretty sick of the same thing all the time but it is gone and we are back on "A" rations again. "A" rations means fresh food; "B" rations means canned food; "C" small cans of hard tack, coffee, sugar & candy. A can about as big as a small tomato can.

We got here on the desert a month ago today. I'll never forget my first 24 hours here.

I am sending you a picture I cut out of the paper. When we were on the last problem I think this picture was taken. Those are "peeps" in the background. The men are carrying tommy guns. That's their gas mask hanging on their left side. The helmets are fibre inserts for the steel. We wear these inserts all the time. They are cooler than any other hat. They have straps inside that hold it off our head. We dress just like the men in this picture except of course we don't carry our gas masks all the time and we also don't wear our leggings all the time.

Those big bushes you see are grease wood and the small ones are sage bush.

We had a total eclipse of the moon here Tuesday night. It was pretty. The moon here is brighter than I have seen it anywhere. It shines on the sand just as it does on the snow. It gets almost as bright as day. We see an awful lot of falling stars. I've counted as much as 12 or 15 in one night. I'm sorry Earl Guy has to come into the Army.

You were wondering what time we ate supper. It is about 5:45 usually. We work until 5:30. We get up now at 5:45 A.M. instead of 4:45.

I must close

Love to all

*Clifford*

I'd like to be going home Labor Day.

Enclosed was the folded newspaper clipping mentioned, shown below. No words on it.



**Note:** Also enclosed in this letter, but not mentioned as being included, is a small dried sprig ... picked while it bloomed in the California desert in the summer of '42. It's shown below, with its dried shadow image where it's been folded all these years, with a portion of the letter dated August 28, 1942.



P.m.

Aug. 28/1942

Dear folks,

I received your letter of 23<sup>rd</sup> just now.  
I have about an hour or so before we  
fall out again so guess I answer it right now.  
We have to fall out at 2 in the P.m. now  
instead of 3. It hurts them to give us a  
little time we can call our own.

Yours truly,  
Clifford B. O'Connor



September 3, 1942

[Postmarked Los Angeles, Calif. Sept. 5, 1942; P.F.C. C. B. O'Connor A.S.N. 11064771  
B. Co. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. #253, Rice, Calif., U.S. Army; written on plain paper,  
single sheet, both sides, blue ink]

Thursday P.M.

*Dear folks,*

I just received your letter of Sunday Aug. 30. Also got the one you wrote Thursday, Aug. 27. I got that one Sunday.

I hope you will get to go to Hartford over Labor Day to see Edna & the rest.

I was surprised to hear that you have had posts up there already.

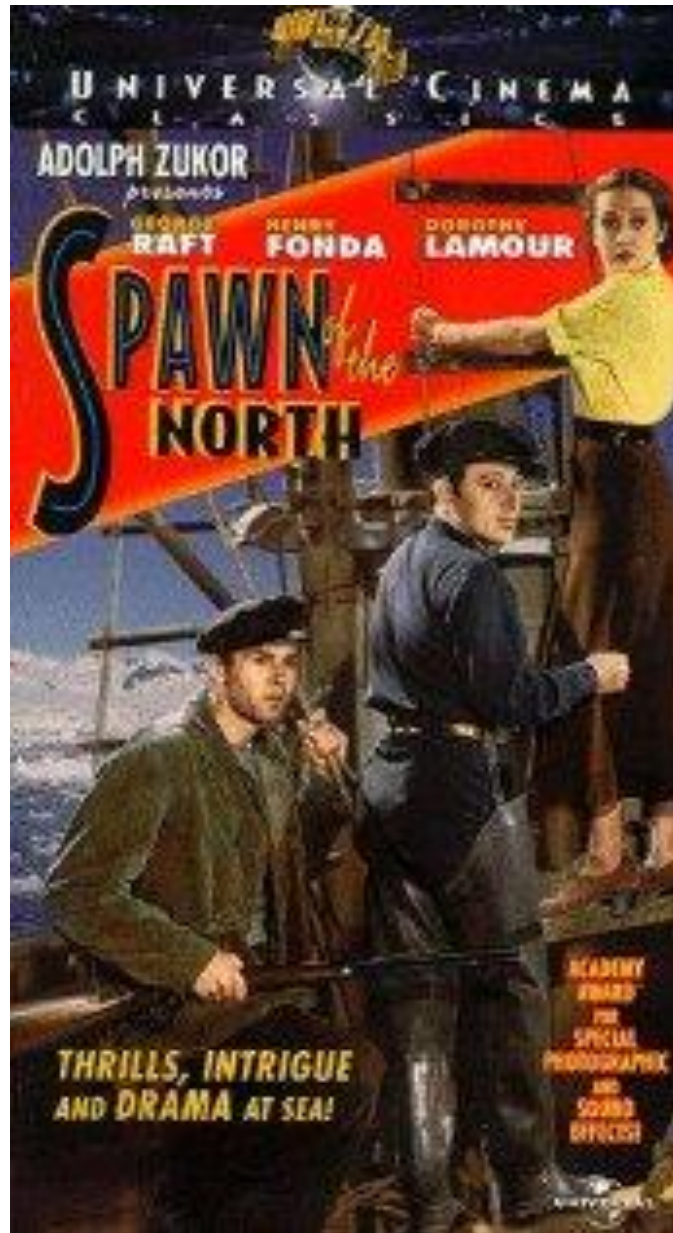
I got Jo & Lawrence's letter Sunday – I'll have to answer it soon. I don't get much time for anything. I guess I told you we have to fall out at 2 P.M. instead of 3 P.M. now. It is about 1:15 P.M. now. I just finished washing out a pair of overalls. We have laundry service but it takes too long for it to come back so I don't send any anymore.

I saw a picture of those tanks in a Los Angeles paper just the same as the one you sent me. No I am not in that group of men. They are from "G" Co. of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Arm'd Regiment 3<sup>rd</sup> Arm'd Div. I guess you saw the star with a 3 marked on it on the turret of the tank. That what you thought was something flying is a part of a door on the other side I think. When we were out on that problem I saw many scenes like that. We had some dust respirators issued to us yesterday but I don't think they are much good.

We are still planning on moving but nothing seems to happen.

I'm glad Edith likes Edna and uses her so nice.

I wish I could see that movie "Mrs. Miniver." I saw one last nite "Spawn of the North." I liked it. Most of the movies we see have old films and they keep breaking all the time. That's the only thing I or we have ever gotten from the U.S.O.



You must do a lot of writing now, Ma. You must get tired of it.

Yes I'm Private First Class but that's nothing only \$4. extra a month. I don't know how I come to get it. Glad to hear Bill Cleary is a Corporal.

Well it is nearly time to fall out. Must close, will write more next time.

Love to all,

*Clifford*





*September 6, 1942  
"Me. What a sun tan, eh?"  
Motor park in background (see arrow). Notice piece of  
Salt flat at extreme right at base of mountains.*

September 9, 1942

[Postmarked Barstow, Calif, illegible date; FREE; Ma noted "*Pictures in this letter*" on lower right. Enclosed was only one negative and no pictures; negative was not for one of the pictures named above – but was Cliff home on leave. P.F.C. C.B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. #253, Rice, Calif., U.S. Army]

Wed. P.M.

*Dear folks,*

Received your letter of Sept 3<sup>rd</sup> (Thursday). I got it Saturday – just 2 days getting here – pretty good, eh? I was surprised.

Well I've been in this old Army 7 months today. This last month really seemed to fly by.

Glad to hear you folks got some rain up there. Drinking that quarry hole water wouldn't be so good. We haven't had any rain since the last time I wrote to you about it. But it has been nice out here. Every day is the same. Sunshine sunshine all the time. If it only wouldn't get so hot in the afternoons everything would be O.K.

We are still waiting to move, it is getting to be an old story now. Some say there is going to be a problem starting tomorrow but I doubt it very much. Also some rumors going around of the battalion having a couple of days off next week to go to Los Angeles. It just doesn't sound possible to me. We would never get a break like that.

There are some rumors about some men being picked out of this outfit to go and help another T.K. DES. BN. somewhere. I would like to go. But they say our Commander is going too. If he went along I would rather not go. I can't stand him sometimes. The whole Co. feels the same way about it. Our Captain is pretty darned mean compared to the Commanders of the other Companies. When they take a group of men like that they call it a Cadre or a Cadry or however you spell it I don't know.

I got a letter from Bill Cleary he is a Corporal now. I think he deserves it.

I like that picture of you, Ma. I mean the one Helen sent me.

I am sending you a few pictures we took out here. I have some more to be developed. I hope they make them bigger than these. We asked them to make these prints big, but this is what we got back. I'm not in any of these shots but I'll send you some of me next time. The mountains you see in the background are the ones I was telling you about. They aren't very clear but it gives you an idea of how rugged they are.

How do you like our kitchen ha ha! What a kitchen. Those cans you see are water cans with B. marked on them. The fellow on the right is sitting on the cover to our ice box. It is buried in the sand. The fellow on the left in the kitchen is sitting down in front of the gas stoves. Our Co. is in the background on the left. All of our bunks are out in our Co. street in that picture of B. Co. We

had some bugs on our cots and we had to leave them out in the sun right up until last week. The sun killed them I guess. The mountains are about 3 or 4 miles away from the tents. You can see a few clouds in these pictures. We don't very often have any clouds here at all. Not one in the sky today.

It is nearly time to fall out so I'll have to close.

Will answer Helen's letter soon.

Love to all

*Clifford*

Just found out I'll be going out on the problem Friday, Sat., & Sun. I guess. And Tuesday we are to go to Los Angeles on a convoy. I can't believe it.



*The scenery around the training site at Camp Rice on the desert in California.*





*"Me again. My hands look like those of a Negro."  
September 6, 1942*



*Co. B Kitchen, Desert Training Calif. (Mojave Desert)  
August 1942  
Water in cans marked "B," for B Company  
Ice box buried in sand at right.*





*Some Other Kitchens.*

Sept. 13, 1942

[Postmarked Los Angeles, Calif., Sept. 15, 1942; FREE; P.F.C. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Rice, Calif., U.S. Army; written on small blue-lined notepaper, two sheets, four sides]

Sun. Eve.

*Dear Father,*

Got your letter, the one you wrote Labor Day. Got it Thursday.

Today didn't seem a bit like Sunday. I've been sleeping nearly all day. I worked last nite getting rations. Went to work at 9:30 and quit this morning about 6:30. Most of our Co. is out on a problem now. I was all set to go but at the last minute I found out I didn't have to as I had to go and see about getting some new glasses. I have to go back again and see about them Sept. 22. I have to go to work tonite at 9:30 again for rations. You see we go down to the rail head (*note: see picture e Freda rail head following the letter dated October 24, 1942*) and pick up all the food and bring it back here and split it up for each Co. We are on "B" rations now. Everything is in cans so we don't get a chance to eat much on the job. When we are on "A" rations the fellows picking up rations usually eat pretty good.

I didn't go to Mass this morning as there was none here. I guess they probably had Mass out on the problem.

The rest of the Co. left back from the problem have been performing regular Co. duty this weekend, as we are going on a convoy to Los Angeles this coming Tuesday through Thursday. I hope I don't have to stay back and go on guard – just my luck.

That picture you sent me of the fellow doing K.P. isn't doing any of our dishes because we haven't eaten from plates since away back in the middle of May. We eat from our mess kits. The darned things. We sit on the ground when we eat, have been since May. I think if I ever go back home I'll take my dinner out in the yard and sit down and eat it.

It gets dark out here very quickly. There is no twilight at all. Shortly after the sun goes down it is dark. I can hardly see to write this.

Hope I can get something nice for your birthday, Ma if I get a chance to go to L.A.

The nites are real cool here now. I can't understand how it gets so darned hot during the day. Today was quite hot.

Well I must close.

Love to all

*Clifford*

I suppose Pa is back from his out post by this time. It must be tiresome.

September 18, 1942

[Postmarked Barstow, Calif. Sep. 19, 1942; FREE; P.F.C. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, B. Co. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. #253, Rice, Calif., U.S. Army; letter written on blue-lined small notepaper, started in pen, then to pencil; two sheets, four sides]

Friday P.M.

*Dear folks,*

Got your birthday card and also a couple of letters. One you wrote last Thursday and one you and Helen sent last Sunday.

I suppose by the time you receive this you will have received your birthday card and present, Ma. I didn't have much time to look for a present but anyway I hope you can use that set. My pen isn't working so good so I guess I'll finish writing by pencil.

I had a pretty good time in L.A. but I paid for it. Riding in those darned trucks is enough. Going and coming I think it was 15 hours riding in the back of those trucks. We got back here Thursday morn. about 2:30 – had to go on a road march Thursday and I had to pull guard last night and to top it off we all had to take 2 shots in the arm and another vaccination. Every 6 months they are required to give us tetanus shots and a new vaccination. I had a hard job staying awake at my post last nite and I'm all in today, but I should get a good sleep tonite. That's all I need.

I wish you folks could have been with me at Riverside, Calif. We saw a place called "The Mission Inn." What a beautiful place, like an old monastery. In the olden days I guess they used to have a mission every so many miles through this part of the country just as we have cities today. It would take too long to begin to describe that place so I won't even try.



*The dome of the Mission Inn in Riverside, California.  
Contemporary photo from website, picture dated 2010.*

I haven't as yet received your package, Ma, but probably will tomorrow.

We are still here in the desert, understand we are going on another problem Sunday morning.

It is too bad Pa couldn't go as Air Warden at a different time. It must be awfully hard hurrying so on Sunday morning.

Tell Helen I'll answer her letter soon.

It is nearly time to fall out again. Must close.

Love to Everyone,

*Clifford*

P.S. Thanks very much for putting my name in for a Mass and enlistment in St. Joseph's Protective League. I shall pray to him often.

I suppose Lawrence and Jo will be moving tomorrow.

**Note: The pictures on the following few pages were taken on the trip to Los Angeles/Hollywood, California. Thanks for these is due to the family of Roland Anctil, whose sons let me scan them. Photo quality's not great, but the two-day trip is captured in a way that shows the fun of the tour of the Hollywood homes and other locales.**



*Home of Claudette Colbert in Los Angeles*





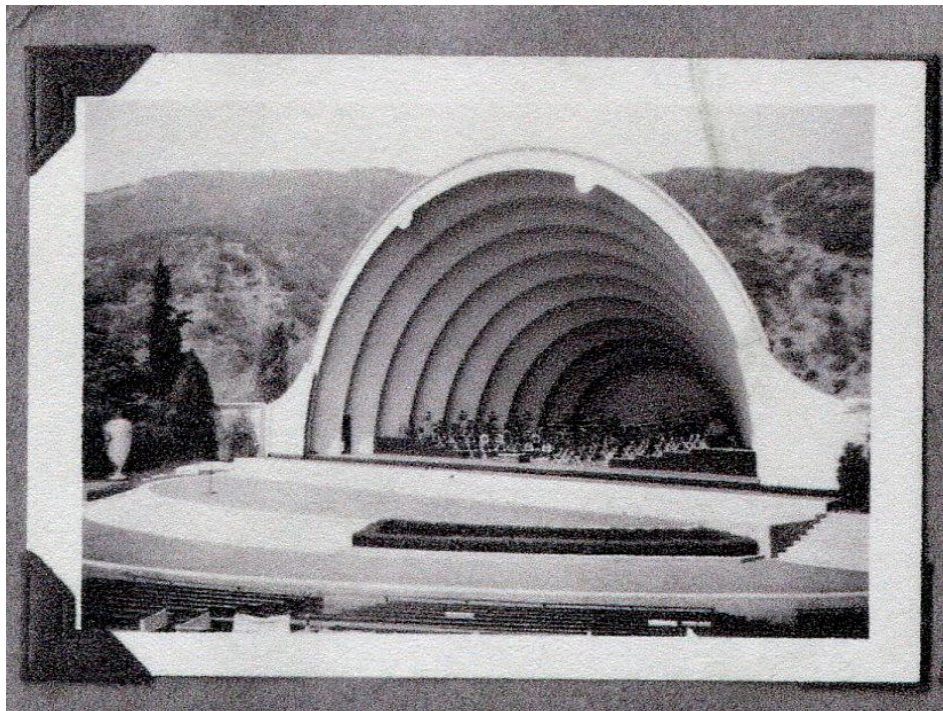
*The only note, "Los Angeles," pictures.  
Clifford's friend 'Ancil' on the right with a pretty brown-eyed girl ...  
Likely on the Hollywood homes tour ...*



*Date Palms in Indio, California.*



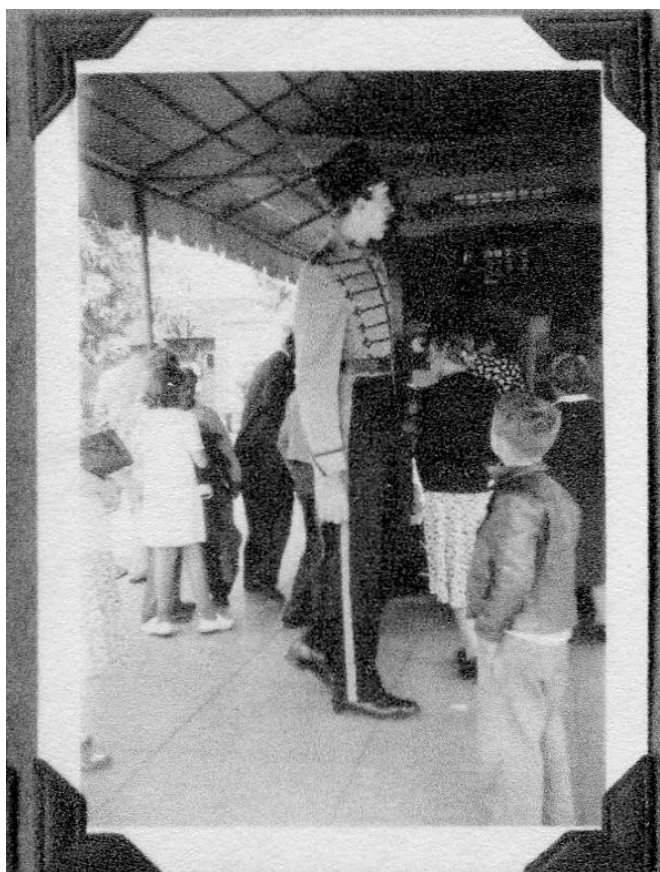
*Dorothy Lamour's Home in Hollywood, California.*



*The Hollywood Bowl.*

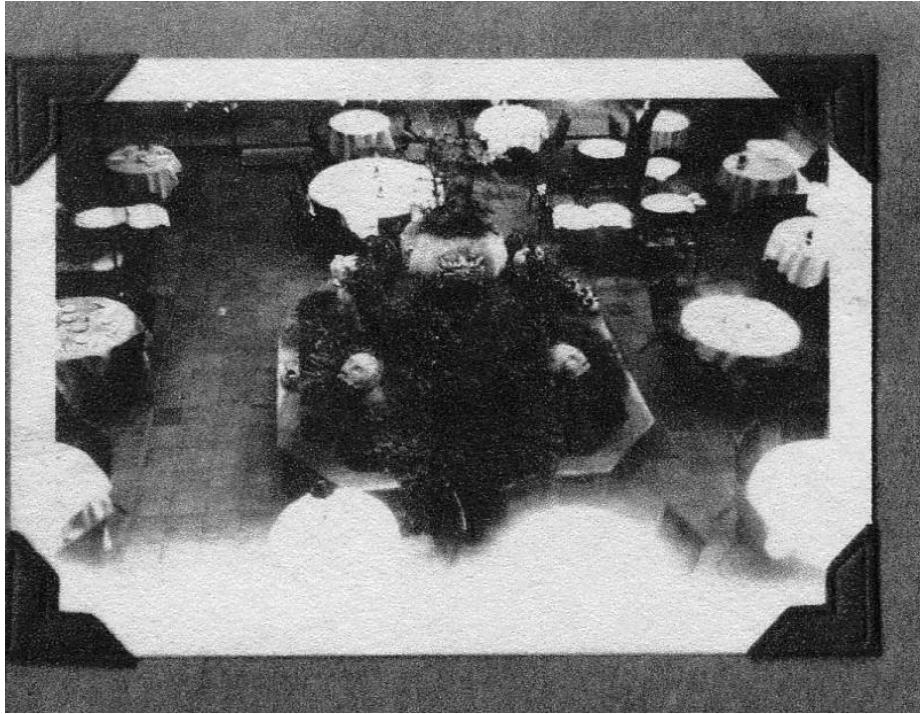


*Ginger Rogers's Home in Hollywood, California.*



*The front of the Chinese Theatre, Hollywood, California.*





*Dining Area at the Mission Inn, Riverside, California.*

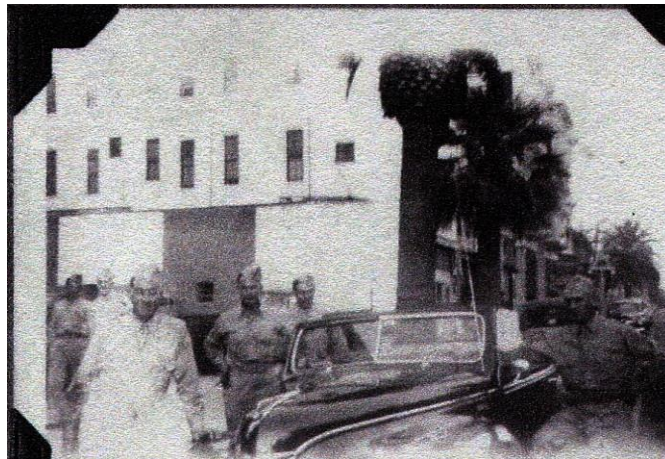


*The Mission Inn, possibly the same dining area shown above, in the Summer of 1942.  
Contemporary photo, picture from online display, dated 2010.*



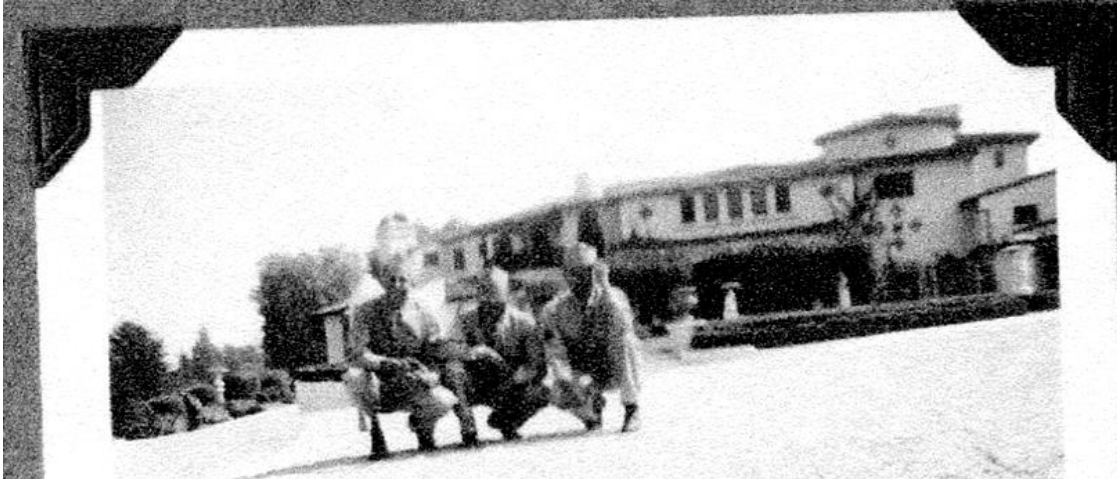


*Mission Inn, Riverside, California  
(Contemporary picture from website, photo dated 2010)  
Undoubtedly, the bougainvilleas were in bloom in the Summer of 1942.*

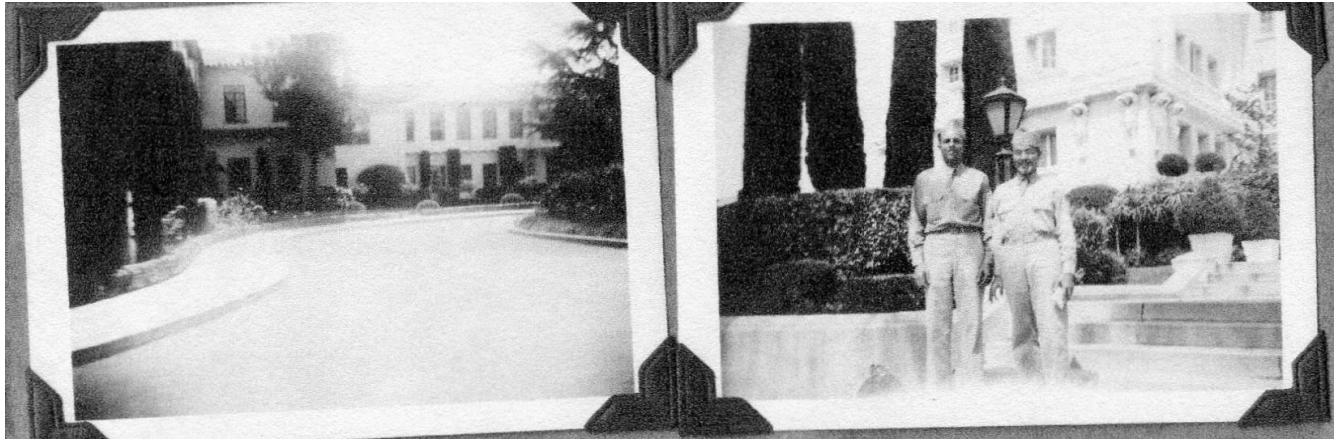


*“Making Believe” ... Main Street, Riverside, California.*

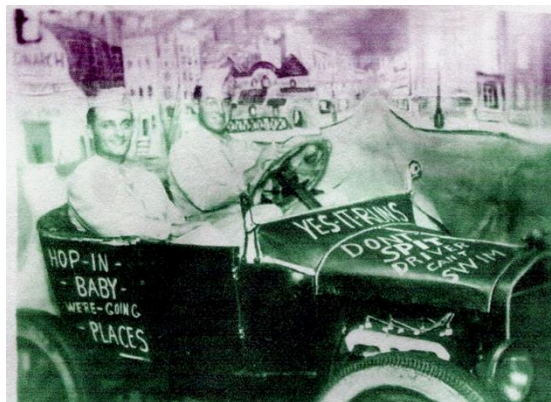




*Unidentified movie star's home, Hollywood, California*



*Left: Fred Astaire's Hollywood Home; right: Hollywood Hotel, Roland Ancil on the right.*



*Roland Ancil and Brousseau enjoy a light moment in a Hollywood "prop" on their trip to Los Angeles*



Ma, I meant to tell you this a long time ago. I wish you would have Lawrence clean my gun and put some oil or grease in the barrel unless he wants to use it. I don't care as long as it is clean.

There is another O'Connor in the Co. I guess I told you before. He is from Chelsea, Mass. He was in the C.C.C.I. in Waterbury, VT when they built the dam there and he worked with Francis Gavin and Jimmie Gavin. He said Francis was the nicest person he ever met and wondered if he was still around Barre. If he is and you can ever see him tell him I met William T. O'Connor ("Oakie").

A whole bunch of new men came out here to join us last week. We got about 30 or 40 in our Co. They came from Fort Knox. Boy they are suffering from the heat. We tell them it is cool here now compared to a month ago and they think we are kidding them.

Our mean old Captain is going to leave us soon I think. He told us he was going back to Texas for good. It is a good thing for both himself and us. The sooner he goes the better we'll like it. We have a whole lot of new officers now too. Some of them are very green, but swell fellows.

Well it is nearly time to fall out again. We don't do much now - gun instructions & map reading. Had a road march this morning.

Love to all





*Francis Gavin*

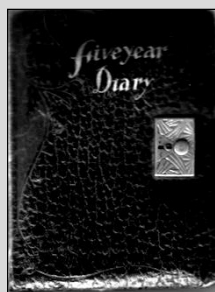


*Jimmy Gavin*



## From Ma's Diary:

*"Ma's and Clifford's Birthdays, September 1942 – ages 52 and 23, respectively."*



September 19, 1942 - Saturday

Very nice day. C is 23 today. L&J moved. I went to Barre in a.m. P helped L move & settle & I helped them in pm. Mary Cleary & friend O'Connell were here. Mrs. Robie came over. Mr. Sanborn was here at night.



*Mary Cleary (later Mrs. Don O'Connell) and Don O'Connell*

September 20, 1942 - Sunday

Rainy. We went to 9 o'clock Mass. P & Mr. Barrett went over to their post at noon. Josephine & Lawrence & children & Mildred & Marilyn were here for supper. We had pancakes. L brought Marm's bureau back down. I gave him the big one.

September 21, 1942 - Monday



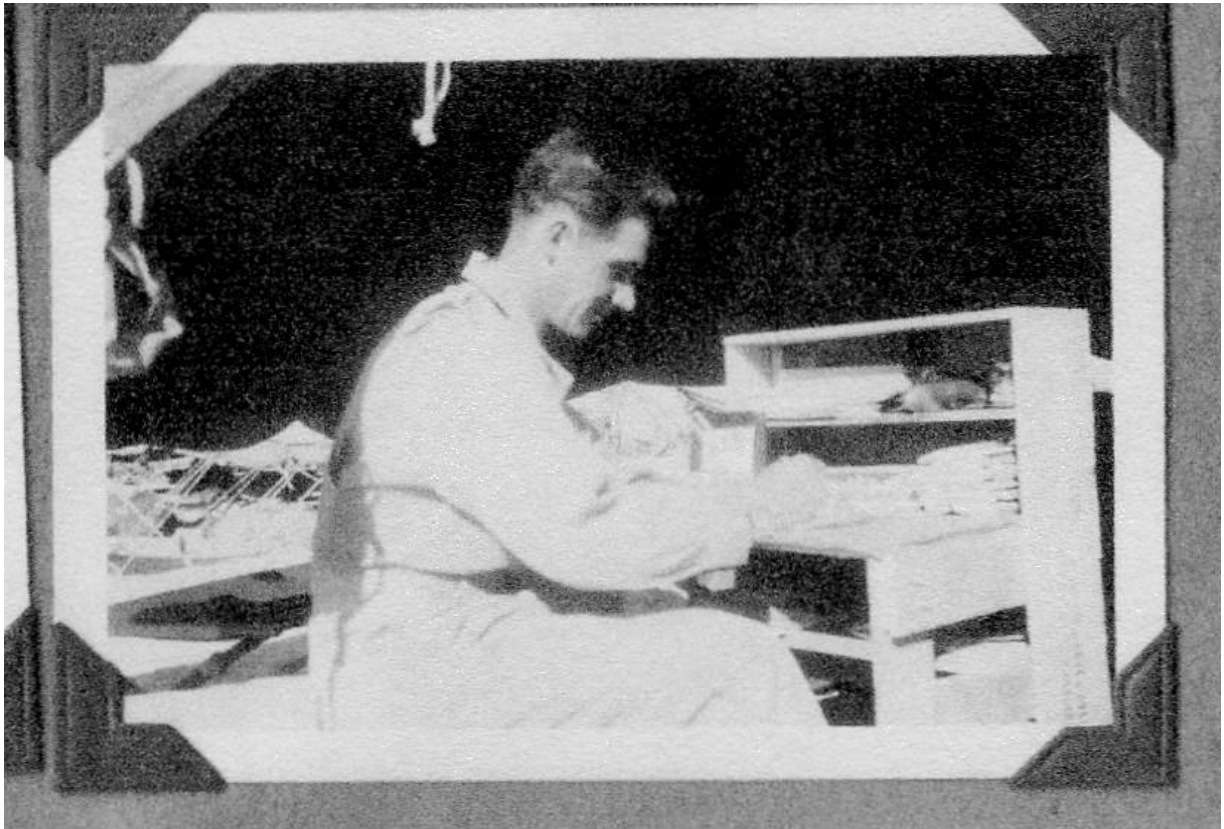
*Very beautiful day. 52 today. H made me a cake. P & L worked. I washed & mopped. Got cards from M & C & letters from E & C. Mrs. Robie wants me to go to Hartford with her tomorrow morning. She was over this noon & tonight.*

*September 22, 1942 - Tuesday*

*Very beautiful day. P & L worked. I am so tired that I told Mrs. Robie I wouldn't be going. I sent E's sweater down to her. I ironed & cooked & felt better by night time. I went down & paid the water rent at night.*

*September 23, 1942 - Wednesday*

*Very nice day. P & L worked. I washed & waxed the floor in the kitchen. I went down to see Mrs. Elmer Comstock in p.m. I have had a headache most all day. I got a nice tablecloth & 6 napkins from C.*



*Brousseau in tent; makeshift desk; writing letter.*

September 25, 1942

[Potmarked Los Angeles, Calif, Sept. 28, 1942; FREE; P.F.C. C. B. O'Connor 11064771 B. Co. 703 TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. #253, Rice, Calif., U.S. Army; letter written on blue-lined small notepaper, one sheet, both sides.]

Fri. P.M.

*Dear folks,*

Well I finally got all the mail I had coming – I got 6 letters & 3 packages last nite. I was reading them with a flash lite and also with the help of the moon – a full moon last nite I think. Thanks a lot for the presents, Ma. It seemed a little like Christmas. Mildred sent me a nice writing pad, cookies & some soap. Gertrude sent me a nice card, and some tooth paste and shaving cream. I forgot all about her birthday and I feel like a heel. Wendell sent me \$10. Gosh I was surprised. He said he expects to be examined soon.

The Co. came back from the problem yesterday P.M. I don't know why they came in early.

I didn't get a chance to go and see about getting my glasses. I couldn't get transportation – all the vehicles were out on maneuvers I guess. Maybe I'll go next week.

Well we haven't moved yet. We don't know what to think any more.

We haven't been doing much today except getting ready for an inspection tomorrow morning. Some more baloney.

I have a lot of letters I must answer and I can't think of any more.

Love to all

*Clifford*

September 26, 1942

[Postmarked Barstow, Calif., Sept. 27, 1942; FREE; Ma noted on bottom right, "Sal's address in here." P.F.C. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, B. Co. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. #253, Rice, Calif., U.S. Army; stationery three small blue-lined sheets; written on all six sides; blue ink.]

Sat. P.M.

*Dear father,*

I just got your letter of Thursday 9/24. It got here in 2 days, pretty good. I got a letter from you last nite, the one you wrote last Sunday nite. I had those two letters here in front of me and was getting ready to answer them, and I decided to go over to the supply tent to get a new cot as mine was all ripped. Anyway I just stepped out for a few minutes and along came a gust of wind (whirlwind) and took those two letters up into the air about 150 or 200 ft. in a cloud of dust and that's the last I saw of them. We get a lot of those darned whirlwinds. I hate to lose a letter.

I was surprised to hear Ray Teja has been made a Lieutenant also Allen Partridge. Glad to hear it. I wonder where abouts out here Teja has to report to.

If you could get me Bruce Gallant address I wish you would. Some time I might get a chance to go to Pasadena. We aren't going to move right away, I guess, as we are going on another problem Tuesday. 3 days I guess.

A fellow just came in the tent with one of the envelopes that blew away (ha! ha!!) he found it away down by the motor park.

I don't think we will move out of here until the middle of October. Some say we are going Oct. 5 – Oct. 6 Oct. 13, Oct. 16 – Oct. 19. Sept. 29<sup>th</sup>. I don't think they know what they are talking about.

It is quite hot here today. I seem to mind it more today than I have in a long time. Maybe it is because of the shot in the arm we got yesterday.

I'm glad Lawrence and Jo are all moved. I'll bet it seems funny for Lawrence to be back there again. I often think of the fun we used to have in that old house. I was just thinking the other day of the time Wendell and I were playing barber at the top of the stairs and Wendell fell off and the electric lamp fell down on top of him. I was peeking down over the top when you opened the door, Ma I guess you were kind of afraid to open the door that time. Poor Wendell.

There is a convoy going to Banning, Calif this afternoon at 4 o'clock, but I'm not going. They won't get there until about 10 tonite and have to come back tomorrow nite. Not enough time, and I don't think it is worth that long ride in those darned trucks.

We haven't been doing much today. This morning we had to clean some rifles and get ready for an inspection. We got all set and it was called off. That burns me up.

Our old Co. Commander hasn't left yet. But he is getting ready to. I guess I told you before. I'll be glad when he goes. He is the one that I told you about when I was in Camp Polk.

If Pa does have to go away and work I wonder where it will be. Probably a shipyard.

I got a letter from Sal Desopo he is in Illinois. His address is:

1<sup>st</sup> Tech. School  
Barracks T-192  
Chanute Field, Ill

He has had it pretty easy since he came in the Army. Pretty lucky. I would like to go to some school. I thought I had a chance to get into gunnery school awhile ago but somebody else got it. He was in the Army long before me. Back in Camp Polk I took an exam for Radio. It was an aptitude test. I passed with a high mark, but I didn't want to take up radio in the Army. The radios they had then used to drive half of the guys "buggy" dit. dit . da . da. etc. Today we have new radios they call them "Walkie Talkies." Just like field telephones.

Well I must close.

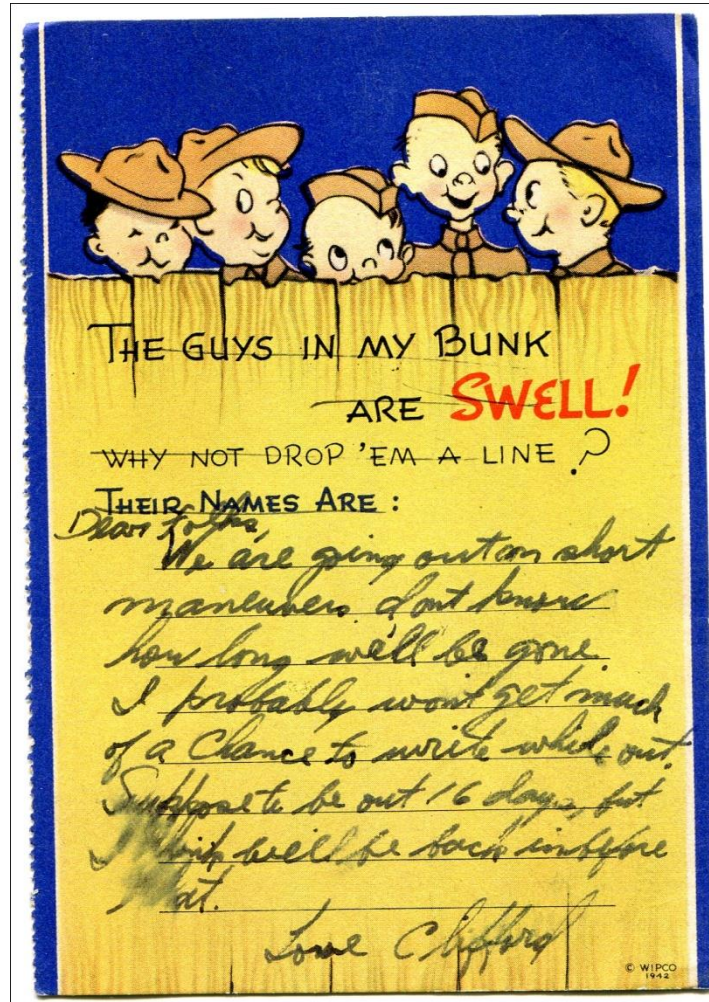
Love to all



P.S. Sure you can put a service flag in the window if everyone else has one.

September 30, 1942

[Postcard marked FREE, postmarked Indio, Calif. September 30, 1942; P.F.C. C.B. O'Connor 11064771, B. Co. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. #253, Rice, Calif., U.S. Army]





October 6, 1942

[Postmarked Blythe, Calif., October 7, 1942; FREE; On reverse of envelope, in Ma's handwriting, is "Arthur Nye, 2236 Las Lumas (?) St, Pasadena, Calif."; P.F.C. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, B. Co. 703 TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. #253, Rice, Calif., U.S. Army; stationery: single sheet of plain paper, both sides, in pencil.]

*Dear folks,*

I am still out on maneuvers. Guess we will stay out the full 16 days. We started last Tuesday. I think we are going to have two more problems. We had one already. They gave us yesterday off. We had to go back to our base camp and get our uniforms about 65 miles from where we are now. I went to Riverside, got back this morning at 5:30. No sleep last nite or nite before.

They brought us to Indio in trucks Sunday nite and we got a bus to Riverside. Got there at 6:30 this morning.

We are now camped about 25 miles west of Blythe, Calif. We are moving from this spot tonite I think. You see we go out and fight for a few days and then we take it easy for a day or two. Our outfit is attached to the Red army we fight against the Blue army. We had about 3 battles with them last week. We use blank ammunition of course. Last Friday morning at day break we had a quite a little battle I was thinking you were probably in church, it being first Friday.

There are rumors around now that we are going to move out of here right after these next few days of maneuvers. They say we are going to Camp Polk. I hope it isn't true.

I don't get much time to write so don't be worried if you don't hear from me as often as you used to.

I got your letter of Sept 27<sup>th</sup> and Oct 1<sup>st</sup> also Helen's letter with the pictures. I got a package from Edna Sunday. It was nice of her to send it to me. I'll write again as soon as possible.

Love

*Clifford*

October 10, 1942

[Postmarked Barstow, Calif., Oct. 12, 1942; FREE; P.F.C. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, B Co. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. #253, Rice, Calif.; stationery: three small blue-lined sheets, five sides, in pencil.]

Sat. PM

*Dear folks,*

Well the 2<sup>nd</sup> problem of these darned maneuvers is over. We pulled in where we are now until Tuesday Oct. 13. Then we go out again I think for 6 days. All of our vehicles are getting ruined. Boy we went over the roughest terrain I ever saw. We went over places I never thought any kind of a vehicle could go. We got a quite a shaking up.

This time the kitchen truck came with us but we only got one meal from it in 3 days. We had our own rations and I guess you know what they were.

I thought they were going to give us passes today after we got our vehicles cleaned up (that comes first even before us) and guns but they just made the announcement No passes. Our battalion did good, very good on this last problem, got complimented by the General, but still we get no passes.

We are camped this time about 10 miles west of Blythe. We will be allowed to go there until 11 o'clock tonite. Guess I'll go and get a shower at least if they have such a thing as a shower in that town.

They told us the 3<sup>rd</sup> Arm'd Div is going to give out furloughs after these maneuvers, but only 10 days, and what good is 10 days when a guy is 3,000 miles from home. The Co. Commander said we would possibly be nearer the East Coast soon. And I am going to wait and put in for a furlough then. I think it takes 4-1/2 days to go across the country so I would only have one day home if I went from here and it would cost a lot of money too.

I got your letter of last Sunday (Oct 4) yesterday. That picture of the machine shop sure looked familiar.

You were saying Pope Pelkey liked the Army whow! He must be nuts, or he has been having it pretty darned easy. I wish he could spend a few weeks with the 703<sup>rd</sup> I think he would change his mind.

I am hoping that Pa won't be sent very far away from home to work.

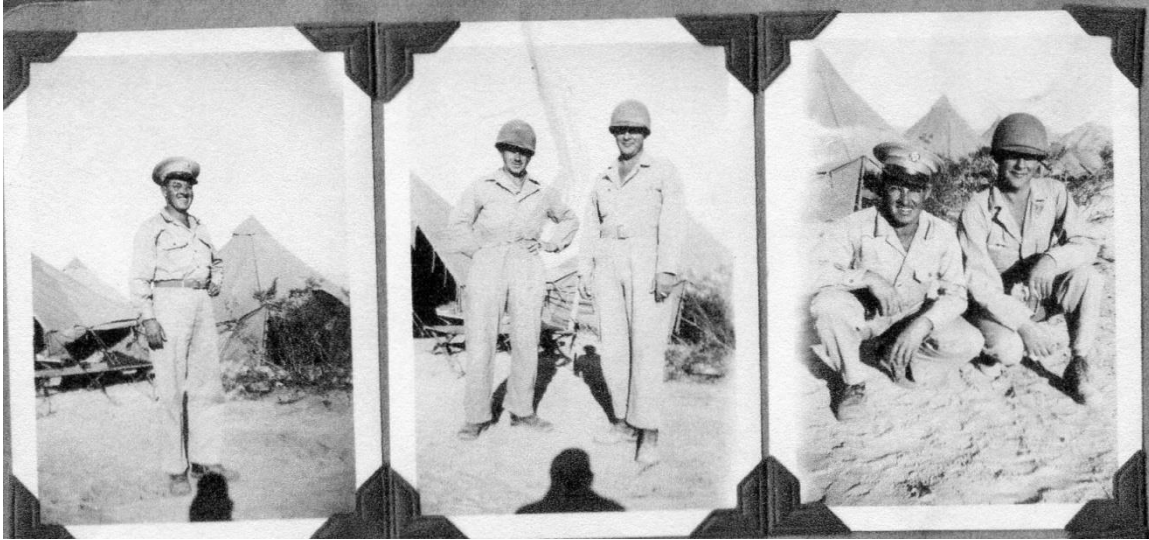
Boy those grease wood bushes raised hang with our tires on this last problem. We had 2 flats boy what a hot job patching those tires, whow!! It makes me mad to think how civilian people are sacrificing so much so the gov't can have gas and rubber and all they do is waste it out here.

Well I must close.

I will write again as soon as I can.

Love to all

*Clifford*



*California Desert Training*

*Left to right: Roland Anctil; Brousseau and Carlson; Anctil and Carlson.*

October 18, 1942

[FREE; P.F.C. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK DES BN. (H), A.P.O. 253  
Rice, Calif., U.S. Army]

Sun. Morn.

*Dear folks,*

Well I'm back from maneuvers – got in Wed. nite, but I've been pretty busy and haven't had time to write until now.

I have a lot of your letters here to answer. The last one I got the 15<sup>th</sup> - you wrote it a week ago today. Edna also sent a few lines in it. I got Helen's letter out on maneuvers. I guess I told you. That picture she sent of you, Ma, is swell. It seemed so good to me to see you smiling so in it.

I went to Mass this morning – we had a very nice sermon – one of the best I've heard out here. Father Ryan is very nice – I wish you could meet him. He does so well with hardly nothing to do with. He has an awfully lot to contend with. This morning he was dressed in overalls just as we are. He put on his garments and set up a little altar in no time and said Mass and then was off to some other Battalion to say Mass for others.

Well we are finally going to move out of here. It is definite now. We are going to Camp Pickett, Va. I'm not suppose to tell you, but every one knows it around here. (Civilians I mean). It seems the civilians know more about what is going on in the Army than we do. That's a fact too. The Govt. puts pictures of everything in magazines of everything they got. I was looking at one the other day and I learned more about a tank from it than I'd ever get a chance to here. We don't have tanks in our battalion.

We had a big party nite before last for our Battalion. Chicken, beer, and all kinds of good things to eat. We paid for the stuff with money from our Co. fund. It cost a quite a lot over \$300 for our Co. alone. The chicken was real good. I was on K.P. that day - boy what a day - I worked from 4 o'clock in the morning until after 10:30 at nite. I went on guard yesterday morning at 10:30. Walked 4 two-hour shifts – got off this morning at 6:30. You see we walk two hours and have four hours off. I don't feel tired this morning at all. I thought I would be.

The Co. is out on a 3 day pass - left yesterday morn. I wanted to go but it was my turn for guard duty so nothing could be done. I got a fellow to take my place but the Company Commander said that couldn't be done this time. Ordinarily it would be O.K. But he didn't want to mix up the roster (a book to keep track of the times we go on guard.). 29 of us had to stay back for guard. We will get a pass this Tuesday they told us. I might go and I might not. I want to get out again to get a little present for Edna & Helen - perhaps a bracelet or something like that. We are getting paid Tuesday so I'll have money. We are getting paid early on account of moving. The Co. Commander said we would probably move the 27 or 28<sup>th</sup>. I guess I told you we have a new Co. Commander now. He is a swell egg. As regular as they make 'em.

This Camp Pickett is somewhere around Richmond, Va. I think. They told us we were going to Blackstone, Va.

I'll get a furlough from there I guess. So maybe I'll be seeing you before long. I hope they don't take Wendell before I get my furlough.

I hope Mildred is feeling better now. I feel sorry for her.

It is real nice here this morning. Well in fact it is always nice here in the morning. Every day is the same. Sunshine all the time. The nights are quite cold now. Last night I wore my heavy undershirt and a field jacket too on guard.

We have our O.D.s (winter uniform) now. I don't know if we are supposed to wear them now or not. I'm going to try and wear them Tuesday if I go to town.

Well it is nearly time for dinner. I must close. I suppose Pa is at the post now. I bet he gets mad having to go up there. I don't blame him in a way, but I suppose someone has to do it. It seems silly, but we have to do a lot of things that seem silly too.

I'll write as soon as we get to Va. I'll try and mail some letters en route. We aren't suppose to mail any letters when we travel.

Love

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford".





*September 6, 1942 - "Communion on the Desert"*

*Clifford took this photo at Camp Rice. That it meant a lot to him and others is evident in his V-Mail request of June 20, 1944 (included later) and noted in Ma's entry on June 26, 1944. In a later reference, he tells that Al Morrie was here kneeling for Holy Communion.*



*This newspaper photo, with Ma's note and arrow to a soldier she felt resembled Wendell, was found among my father's letters. It was a Signal Corps Photo, no date. The importance of Mass and Holy Communion is obvious throughout all the diary entries and letters home.*



October 24, 1942

[Postmarked Barstow, Calif., Oct 25, 1942., FREE; P.F.C. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. #253, Rice, Calif., U.S. Army; stationery: three yellow-lined sheets, written on five sides; black ink.]

Sat. P.M.

*Dear folks,*

I have two of your letters here I haven't answered. One you wrote Thurs. Oct. 15, and one you wrote Sun. Oct. 18. I got one the 18<sup>th</sup> and the other the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

We have been pretty busy around here of late. Having foolish inspections. We had another one this morning of our clothes. I think all of these inspections are a waste of time. One good inspection should be enough. Some one must get things all mixed up and the result is "another inspection." You see they have to find out what we are short in our equipment and try and get it for us before we move out. That's what we have always done and it is a pain in the neck. I have all my stuff and it gets me mad to lay all my stuff out for a silly inspection every few days.

I have been packing my bags this afternoon, what a job! I guess you know what a "barracks bag" is. Anyway it is a big bag made of overall cloth we have two each. You should see all the stuff we have to put into them, wow!! I'm sure you'd never think the bags could hold it all. One bag we are going to ship probably in a different train than we will take and one bag we have to take with us. So we have to figure what we will be needing on the train and what we won't. We have to take a complete cotton uniform, and a complete woolen uniform, overcoat and all, and we leave here in overalls. I don't see why we have to carry both uniforms for. Maybe we will have to change on the train for some reason or other.

We are moving out of here Wednesday and go to Freda at the rail head and stay there one night and then leave for Virginia Thursday some time. At least that is what they told us.

I'll be kind of glad to leave here. It is much cooler here now and we have a lot of dust storms. The sun still gets hot in the afternoon but it is nothing like it was about 2 or 3 months ago. It is pretty nice here right now there's a quite a breeze and it is quite comfortable in our tent, but if we sit in the sun it gets too hot.

Gee that's too bad about all the tires Pa had fixed up isn't there some one he can make believe selling them to and then get them back again and keep quiet about it. Or isn't it lawful to sell them. That's a shame to turn them in. Boy it makes me mad to see civilians skrimp & save so the Gov't can waste it. Well that's the way a war goes I guess.

I like those pictures you sent me of Pa & Marilyn. I'm sorry you didn't come out good Ma. Maybe the next time it will be better. Pa looks like a real sentry in that picture at the post. And not a bad shot either. No Jap could sneak up on him. I think I'd want a gun of a larger caliber than that .22 if there were any Japs around though. I suppose he still hates to go up to the post

and thinks it is silly. But if he could only see some of the silly things we have to do he would change his mind I think.

You were asking what I meant by “passes.” Well a pass is a slip of paper stating that a soldier has permission to be absent from his post and duties from a certain time until a certain time. They give out a one day pass or 2 or 3 or 4 or 5, whatever it happens to be. I had a pass last Tuesday. I wish I hadn’t gone now. I didn’t have much fun. I didn’t get to see Bruce Gallant or Arthur Nye. We are so darned far from any where it takes up half of our time just getting to and from a town.

No, Ma, Dahlia didn’t send me a card or that is I haven’t received any as yet.

I’m glad Edna likes it better in the children’s ward. I hope she stays in the hospital. She was saying something about going in the shop to work. The shop is O.K. but I hope she will become a nurse some day.

I just heard that they are only going to give 7 day furloughs when we get to Va. I’m looking forward to getting in on the first bunch of furloughs given out when we get there. Morrie just told me that his mother told him in a letter that a fellow from Graniteville was home on a furlough and that he had 15 days. She said he was from out here in the desert.



*Al Morrie*

Well our Co. Commander told us that all other outfits gave 15 days and as I told you before we only were suppose to get 10 days. Some boys from N.Y. State left here on a furlough I believe

they got 12 days. Well anyway I can't hardly wait to get to Va. and get home to see all of you. I'll have to ask you to send me some money though. I'll write when I get there. I hate to send home for money, now if you haven't got it I'll probably be able to get it somewhere else. I wish I didn't go to town on that pass. If I didn't I'd have enough money to buy a ticket from Va. to Barre and back easy. It costs a quite a lot to go to town around here. Everything is expensive.

I hope Mildred is much better now. I hate to think of her lying in bed sick.

Well I must close now hoping you all are well.

Love

*Clifford*



*Freda, California, Railhead (Near Camp Rice; see map in letter of September 23, 1942)*

*Photo dated September 3, 1943*

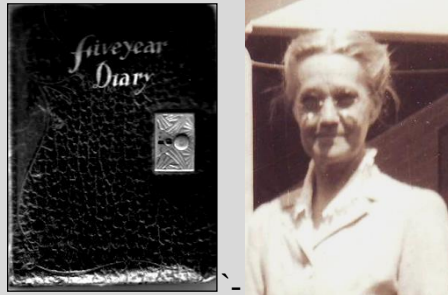


*(From a Division History of the California-Arizona Maneuver Area,  
by Frank Gilchrist, online at <http://www.90thdivisionassoc.org>)*

**Note: The following “Ma’s Diary” pages include the entire month of her diary entries for the month of October 1942, the end of Clifford’s desert training and the start of his Company’s heading back east.**

### **From Ma’s Diary:**

*“...Did not write to C as he is on his way east ...”*



*October 1, 1942 - Thursday*

*Nice day. P & L worked. Kerosene on a ration now & Gene says no rubbers can be sold till a certain date. Mrs. Robie came home at night & brought lots of birthday presents to me from Edna. Edna is half sick.*

*October 2, 1942 - Friday*

*Very cold but nice & bright. P & L worked. I went to receive & stopped at Lorenzini's & Annie's & Lawrence's. Started to walk to Barre in p.m. Got a ride away down. Changed Edna's sweater for skirt & went to Mrs. Converse's.*

*October 3, 1942 - Saturday*

*Very nice bright day. White frost last night. P washed Leon's boiler out in a.m. We went to Barre in p.m. & Mrs. Robie went with us. I got cloth for 2 sheets. P went up to Websterville at night.*

*October 4, 1942 - Sunday*

*Nice day. We went to 9 o'clock Mass and took Marilyn up with us. P went to the air post. Marilyn & Erlene Webber were here a while in p.m. L & J & children were here for supper then M & J came.*

*October 5, 1942 - Monday*

*Cloudy & little warmer & cleared off in p.m. P & L worked. I washed & mopped & cooked. Patrick was here in evening & Mr. Sanborn & Nina Bohoman. Got letter from E & card from C. He has got to go on maneuvers.*

October 6, 1942 - Tuesday

Rainy & dark. P & L worked. I ironed & made bread & rolls & put up my bedroom curtains & started to make Helen's winter slacks out of a coat I bought at the rummage sale. Got letter from E.

October 7, 1942 - Wednesday

P & L worked. Very beautiful day. I cooked in a.m. Leone came to ask me to go as substitute air post warden today at 12. with Mrs. Wilfred Perry. We reported one plane. Sewed in evening on slacks for H.

October 8, 1942 - Thursday

Another beautiful day. P & L worked. I went up to Lottie's in a.m. to see if I could ride down in p.m. Went to M's & she was not home. Got something for E's birthday in place of green skirt which I gave to H. Finished H's slacks at night.

October 9, 1942 - Friday

Nice day. P & L worked. I made an apron. Mrs. Robie was in. I went over to Elmer Owens for crabapples but they had none. I called up Mildred. She is sick again. Josephine & children came down at night.

October 10, 1942 - Saturday

Very beautiful day. P & L worked all day. Edna & Francis came at 11.20 a.m. Mrs. Robie came over in p.m. We went to Barre in p.m. & went to M's. She is abed today.

October 11, 1942 - Sunday

Very nice day. We went to 9 o'clock Mass & went to M's. She is feeling worse today. L & J & children & Helen Morrie & Helen, Edna & I all went over to the Post in the p.m. Francis & Russell came down at night.

October 12, 1942 - Monday

Very nice day. Cool. P & L worked. Edna & Francis started back at 6.30 a.m. I washed & mopped & cooked. Sent letters to W & C. Got letter from C. Helen worked all day for Mildred.

October 13, 1942 - Tuesday

Very nice day. Got letter from Edna. Went to Barre with Aja's. Mrs. Quilliman & Mrs. Barrett & Mrs. Robie were in. I got real sick about supper time with eye ache.

October 14, 1942 - Wednesday

Very nice day again. P & L worked. I made cup cakes & cakes & had May Vance for dinner & went up to Josephine's in p.m. & made doughnuts & went down to M's at night with P & H. Got letter from Wendell.

October 15, 1942 - Thursday

Nice day. P & L worked. I mended in a.m. & went to Barre in pm. Got coupons cashed & paid W's insurance & wrote to C. Made a lemon pie. Got a ride with Grace Norris going down.

October 16, 1942 - Friday

Very nice day. P & L worked. I painted the piazza floor & cooked. Lottie was down in a.m. P went down at night for Ossona to work on the car. H went with him.

October 17, 1942 - Saturday

Very nice day. P worked at Johnny's shed all day. I waited all day to go to get apples or go to Barre but I didn't get going. Got letter from E & C. C is still on maneuvers in the desert.

October 18, 1942 - Sunday

*Cloudy. We went to 8 o'clock Mass and to Ric's & Mildred's then home. Had chicken for dinner. Mr. Sanborn brought over a lot of beans he had thrased. It cleared off nice at night.*

*October 19, 1942 - Monday*

*Colder with showers. P & L worked. I washed & mopped. Sent letters to W, E & C and a birthday card & present to W. Mrs. Martelli was here tonight for doughnuts for Defense Club. I finished reading "Mrs. Miniver."*

*October 20, 1942 - Tuesday*

*Cloudy & cool. P & L worked. I cooked & ironed & went to Barre in p.m. with Mr. & Mrs. Aja and got a lot of things & went to M's. Mrs. Cozzi was there and her sister Palmera.*

*October 21, 1942 - Wednesday*

*Nice day. P & L worked. I made Helen's pajamas & made polenta & doughnuts & pudding. Air raid test at night. P went down to Ossona's to have his car worked on at night.*

*October 22, 1942 - Thursday*

*Very nice day. P & L worked. I finished Helen's old rose pajamas & made a pillow case & went out to Mrs. Waterman's in p.m. I wrote to C & E and got a letter from E. Libersont boy was here to look at P's tires.*

*October 23, 1942 - Friday*

*Cloudy & rained some. P & L worked. I covered 2 chair seats & top of footstool. Made 2 pies & doughnuts & rolls. H stayed down to Barre with Anderson twins to go to a dance.*

*October 24, 1942 - Saturday*

*Very nice day. Mr. Tracy came in morning. We went to Barre as soon as he left to meet H. P swapped tires for chickens with Ric.*

*October 25, 1942 - Sunday*

*Nice day. P took H & I to Mass but did not go himself. We waited a long while for him but Johnny took us home. H & I went up to Cleary's in p.m. & Ray & Gert took us home.*

*October 26, 1942 - Monday*

*Cloudy & rainy. P & L worked. I washed & mopped. Got a letter from C that they were moving East soon. Mrs. Robie came over in p.m. I cooked the partridge that P brought home.*



*Clifford's, and Al Morrie's, Co. B preparing to move east to Virginia out of the desert of California.  
Photo provided by the family of Roland Ancil.*

*October 27, 1942 - Tuesday*

*Very bright & cold. The ground was white with snow in morning. I cooked in a.m. and went to Barre with Aja's in p.m. & went to get oil ration blank & went to M's. Got a letter from Edna.*

*October 28, 1942 - Wednesday*

*Cool but very nice. P & L worked. I ironed & made jelly out of cider. Went over to Tracy's in p.m. Mrs. Downing came while I was there.*

*October 29, 1942 - Thursday*

*Very nice day. P & L worked. I did odd jobs & wrote to Edna in a.m. Made pies & painted swing & rocker in p.m. Got letter from C that he is starting East today. Tina Ryan & her mother were here in evening.*



*Clifford's Co. B, Starting East from the California Desert.  
Photo provided by the family of Roland Ancil.*

*October 30, 1942 - Friday*

*Very nice day. P & L worked. I took up the linoleum that was in the sitting room that I didn't like and took the cover off the set & made 2 apple cakes & went up to Josephine's & Guy's in p.m. Loraine came down & later the others came.*

*October 31, 1942 - Saturday*

*Very beautiful day. Tina Ryan was married today & they had our car. P & L worked & Helen & I went down when they did. Got a ride back with Leone. Helen went to a dance at auditorium at night.*

*November 1, 1942 - Sunday*

*Dark & rainy. We went to 10 o'clock Mass & to M. Brought her an apple cake. I made potatoe cakes for supper & wrote to W & E. Did not write to C as he is on his way east. L & J & children came down.*

*November 2, 1942 - Monday*

*Cold & bright. P & L worked. I washed & mopped & cleaned sitting room linoleum & waxed 3 floors. Clinton Taylor was here at night.*

*November 3, 1942 - Tuesday*

*Very cold & cloudy. P & L worked. I ironed & went to Barre in p.m. with Mr. Aja & got my tea kettle & went to M's. Ed. Guy was here at night.*

*November 4, 1942 - Wednesday*

*Cold & bright. P & L worked. I mended & made doughnuts & shortened my coat. Leone came for my finger prints. Helen had a tooth filled and it ached at night. I got a letter from Edna.*



*November 5, 1942 - Thursday*

*Cold & bright. P & L worked. I got a letter from C. He was in New Mexico when he wrote it. I got a copper tea kettle & am going to give the other one to the bingo party.*

*November 6, 1942 - Friday*

*Cloudy & a little warmer. P & L worked. I went over to receive it being first Friday. Went to Lorenzini's & Annie's & Lawrence's. P worked at Tony's shed today. We went down to get Helen at night.*

*November 7, 1942 - Saturday*

*Bright & cold. P & L worked in a.m. I went to Barre when P went in morning & got a ride back with Lorenzini in truck. P set out berry bushes. We telegraphed 50 dollars to Clifford.*



*Peter O'Connor on duty at 'The Post.'*  
*The exact location somewhere near East Barre has not been identified.*



*Peter O'Connor and Granddaughter Marilyn Cozzi  
October 4, 1942*

*... back to Clifford's letters, en route East ...*

October 31, 1942

[Postmarked at Fort Worth, TX Nov. 2, 1942; FREE; P.F.C. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. #253, Rice, Calif., U.S. Army]

En Route  
Somewhere in New Mexico

Sat. P.M.

*Dear Freda,*

Well I'm finally on my way East.

We left Freda Thursday about 1:30 p.m. We haven't gone very far – the train is quite slow and we have been making a lot of stops.

Our last night in the desert was a miserable one (Wed. nite) – it was as cold as the dickens and it sprinkled rain now and then. The wind was blowing to beat the band too. We were all pretty glad to leave the place Thursday.

I had to go on “train guard” from Thursday noon until Friday noon. There are 3 Co.'s of our battalion on this train. Each Co. takes turns pulling guard duty (24 men). 12 men for anti-aircraft and the rest for guarding some vehicles on flat cars. I had anti-aircraft. At the rear of the train there were 3 of us together and 3 more at the head of the train. The other guards were scattered along on the flats. It was quite cold out there at nite; our feet were freezing but the rest of our body's were warm. We had on plenty of clothing. It was a quite a job coming in for our meals, but we managed.

Our Co. has guard again tomorrow and again Nov 4. I don't think I will have to go on again unless the trip lasts until the 7<sup>th</sup> of Nov. I don't think it will.

We came through Flagstaff, Ariz. last night about 6 and boy it was nice there. I guess you remember my telling you about it. The big mountains in the background were capped with snow – what a scene. It is nice right here too. It seems so good to see green trees and grass. We just passed a little settlement - all the houses were made of mud. Just passed a little mud church with graves all around it. It had a board walk up over a fence and doors again leading to it.

The air is very good here so clean and fresh. It seems good to be able to breathe without smelling dust.

We have been getting swell meals so far. The food even tastes better up here in the mountains, and we all have pretty healthy appetites (I usually do have).

They have been coming around picking up letters to be mailed on this trip. They never did it before.

I hope you can read this writing. The train is swaying and jerking and it makes it hard to write. I got your letter of Thursday Oct 22. It came the 25<sup>th</sup>.

I hope Billy Cleary hasn't been sent over. I got a letter from Catherine O'Brien – she said how she saw Bill's wife and she told her how the Army had sent home some of Bill's clothes. I don't know what kind of clothing it could be unless it was some civilian shoes, etc.

They came around yesterday and took names for furloughs. I gave mine. I would like to be in the first bunch that go. I hope you can send me the money in time. I'll write as soon as we get there.

You were asking about my insurance. It is paid up until March 28<sup>th</sup>. I have the receipt.

I hope Wendell hasn't been called yet. And I hope I'll get a chance to see him before he does get in.

I sent Helen & Edna a little bracelet. I hope it got to them ok.

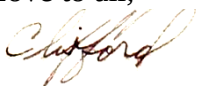
I think we are going through Texas. So far we have come along on the same route as we came out. They say we are going through Ft. Worth. I hope we take a route a little farther to the north. I like Texas but I would like to see some of the other states.

Tonite will be Halloween. I suppose the kids all will have fun. Saturday nite too. I'll bet there will be a lot of parties in the cities. Two years ago tonite I had a swell time at a house party in Hartford.

Boy it seems good to think I'm getting nearer home at every turn of the wheels. I can hardly wait. We left our tents up back in the desert - suppose some other outfit will be moving into them. I pity those guys. I imagine the winter is pretty tough back there, sand storms and all. The last two days we were there the sun didn't shine any to speak of. It had shone every day and all day before that.

Well I can't think of any more junk to write about so I better sign off. I'll write again in a day or so.

Love to all,

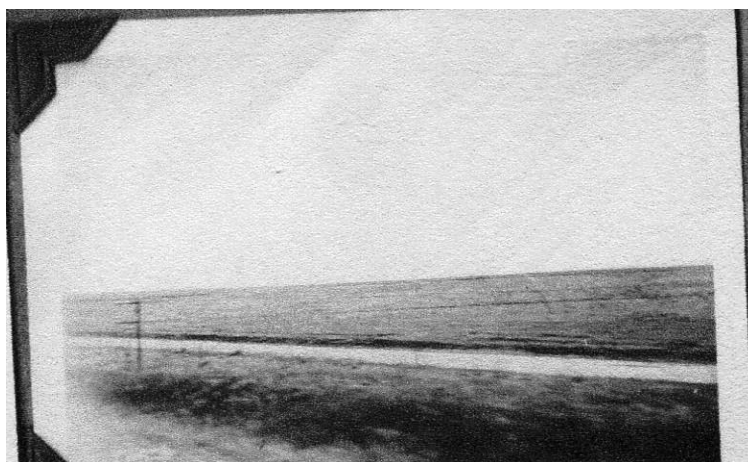


[**Note:** In the late summer of 1998 Kathleen Donahue visited me in Los Angeles, traveling up by train after a conference in San Diego. Our “family talk” recalled Ma's diaries, and I told her about the concept of this project (integrating my father's letters with Ma's diaries). On that visit she brought with her as a gift to me from her mother, my Aunt Helen O'Connor Donahue, the bracelet Clifford had bought for her and Edna in the desert. It is of an Indian style, with a thin silver band with inscriptions and green stones. KOB]

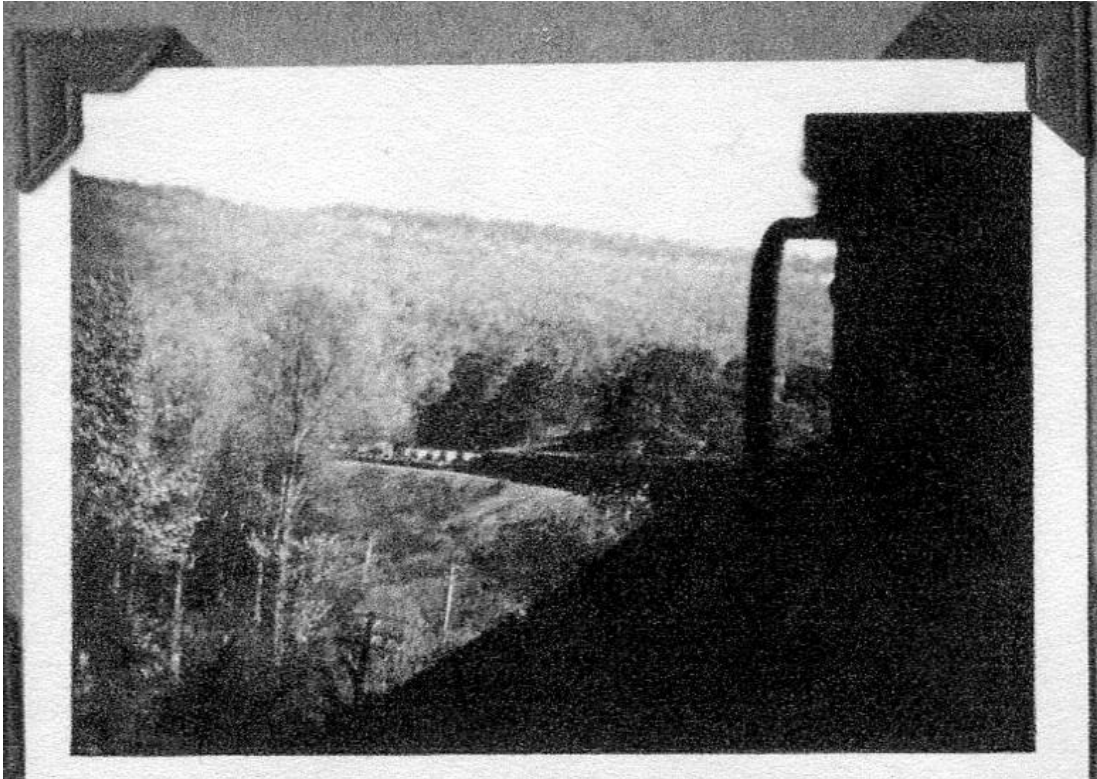




*Outward-bound from Freda Railhead in the California Desert (Photos on this page from the Ancil Family)*



*Cross-country scenery from the train heading east.*



*Heading east through Arkansas. Photo from the Ancil Family.*

November 3, 1942

[P.F.C. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN (H), A.P.O. 253, Camp Pickett, Va., U.S. Army]

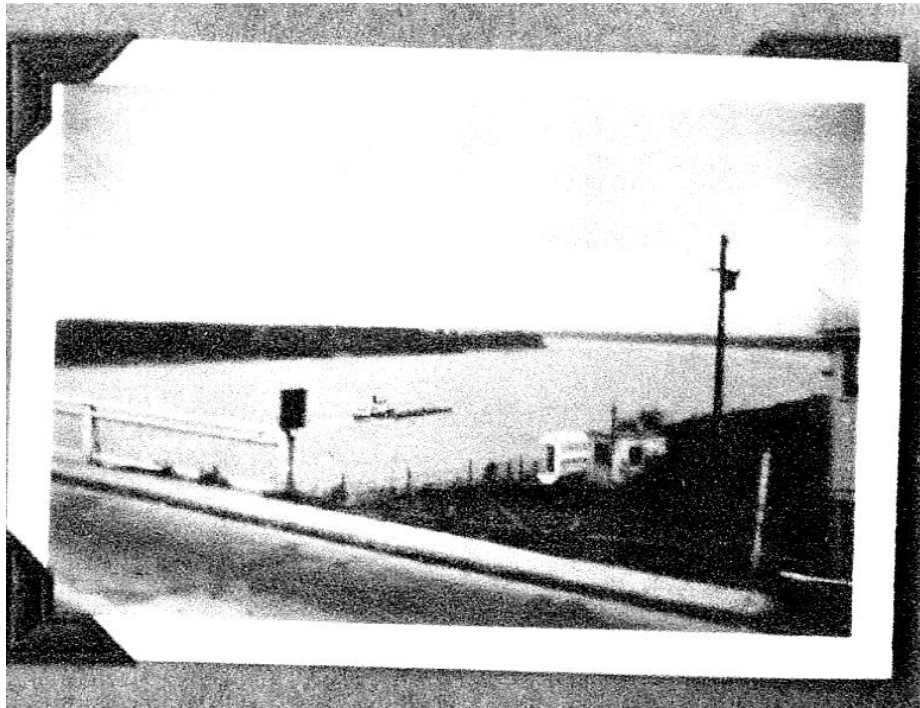
Lenoir, Tenn. (Mailed from Knoxville TN en route to Camp Pickett, Va.)

Tuesday P.M.

*Dear folks,*

Well I'm a little nearer home this time. We will soon be passing the new time line and we will then be on Eastern Std. time. That will seem good.

We crossed the Miss. River yesterday P.M. and entered Tenn. at Memphis. Tenn. Is a very nice state, a great deal like Vermont. Rolling hills and small farms – it seems good to see country like this again.



*Crossing the Mississippi River. Photo from the Ancil Family.*

From Clovis, New Mex. we went south to Coleman, Texas and then north through Arkansas. Ark., was a lot like Louisiana - very damp and swampy.

It was a lot warmer in Tex. and Southern Ark. than it is here. We got off at Chattanooga for exercise this morning. It was quite cool but the air did us good.

We haven't been having as much fun on this train as we usually have because the Major is very strict - we have to clean these cars until they are spotless every day, windows and all and we have been having classes on first aid, etc., some baloney!

I haven't had as much time to write as I would like to have had. This will be only my 2<sup>nd</sup> letter since we started. We will be in Camp Pickett about noon tomorrow they say.

Just passed a station named "Concord." We are to put on our O.D.'s (winter uniforms) today.

I have to help unload vehicles tomorrow so I'll have to wear my overalls over my uniform. There is a quite a scramble right now in the car – everyone is digging out their barracks bag and putting on the O.D.s.

I have just been told by one of our Co. clerks that I have been made a Corporal. The Lt. told me some time ago that I would be. I haven't heard anything official yet. I guess it is true though but address my mail as P.F.C. until I tell you different.

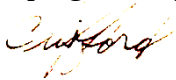
Al Morrie and I have been talking about our furloughs today; we are planning to get them together. I would tell you to send some money now to Camp Pickett but I don't know if the address they gave us is the right one or not. So I'll wait until we get there. If we get a chance to leave on furlough shortly after we get there, Al said he would call home and have his folks send him enough money for both of us to get home and I could pay him when I get home. That will save you folks from sending a wire too. He is going to have them send the money by telegraph. Of course if we don't get our furloughs right away I'll have time to write to you and have you send it by mail.

We are now coming into some city, probably Knoxville. Yes, it is Knoxville, a pretty big place.

Well I must close and get my O.D.s on.

Love to all.

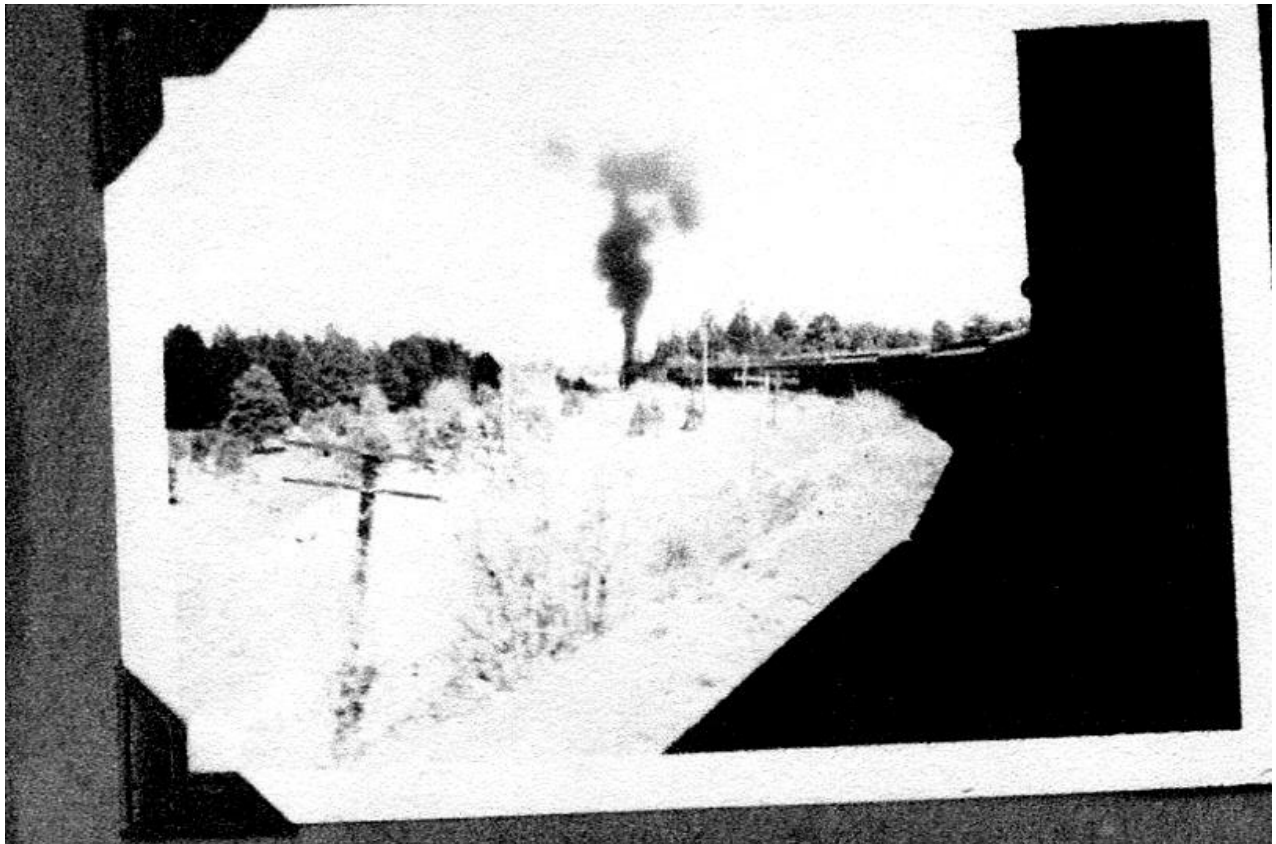
Hoping to see you all soon.







*The Mississippi River. Photos on this page from the Ancil Family.*



*East-bound troop train.*



November 4, 1942

[P.F.C. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN (H), A. P. O. #253, Camp Pickett, Virginia, U. S. Army]

Wed. Nite

*Dear folks,*

Arrived this afternoon about 3 o'clock. After unloading a few vehicles and getting assigned to barracks we are finally half-way settled and I have a few minutes to scratch off a few lines.

The spirit is very high in the ole 703<sup>rd</sup> tonite. I've never seen it quite that way before. We are as happy as a bunch of kids being assigned to barracks with good bunks, running water, showers & good toilets, etc., and of course most of us are eagerly waiting for our furloughs. There is some talk going around that furloughs will start Monday. Al Morrie went to the PX to call home, but there was a line waiting about a mile long so he decided to wait until later. He will have them send the money so in case we do get furloughs right away we could leave. Like I told you in my last letter.

It seems awfully funny to be in under a roof, and it seemed funny to make a bed. I got mine made and it doesn't look too bad considering I haven't made one in such a long time. I'm looking forward to taking a nice hot shower later this evening. It seems funny to waste so much water – showers, flush toilets, drinking fountains and all. I'll have to get "used to it" again.

Al & I just went down to put in the phone call and, no luck. The operators are all too busy so Al is writing a letter now. He is going to send Air Mail - it should get there by Friday noon. We might get a chance to leave this weekend. Oh boy I hope so.

Well it is nearly time for "lights out" so I'll have to close.

Hoping to see you all very soon.

Love

*Clifford*

November 8, 1942

[P.F.C. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A. P. O. #253, Camp Pickett, Va., U.S. Army]

Sun. p.m.

*Dear folks,*

I just came back from dinner. We had duck & ice cream – real good. I ate my share of it too. Boy, it seems I am always hungry. I eat like a pig. Not putting on any weight though.

I went to 10 o'clock Mass this morning. It seemed good to go to Mass in a building. We didn't have any sermon this morning.

Well I don't think I'll be able to go on a furlough for at least 2 weeks. I have to go to a gunnery school. Al Morrie is going too. I really don't have to go but the platoon sergeant asked me to so I figure I may as well learn as much as I can. After I get out of school I would like to leave right away. I would be home Thanksgiving Day. Boy that would be perfect.

I got the letter you wrote 2 weeks ago today. I got it Friday. It went to Calif. and back. Also got Helen's & Jo's – theirs went to Calif. and back too.

Glad to hear Helen is doing so good in school. Jo was saying they are pretty well settled up there now. I am glad she likes it. It must seem nice to Lawrence - every little thing about the house must bring back a thousand memories.

Well I like it here pretty good, at least we are in a camp. After living like a bunch of "gypsies" we really appreciate what we have now. I like it better here than I did at Camp Polk anyway. It looks like this would be a bad spot if it rained much. There is a lot of red clay here and I think it would be awfully muddy.

The last few days have been very dark and dreary - typical November weather. It isn't very cold here though.

I suppose Pa is at the post now and I'll bet you are kind of waiting to see me pop in. You must have gotten my last letter yesterday.

Al Morrie is kind of undecided what to do today. He wrote home for his money but it hasn't come yet. It is just as well we didn't get our furloughs yesterday. We wouldn't have been able to go. He just now decided to call up. He wants me to go down with him. I'll finish this letter later.

Well we went down to put in a call but some other fellows were there trying the same thing and they couldn't even get the operator so we didn't try. Blackstone, Va is about 3 miles from here. We were going to go down there but we were told you could not even get near a phone there they were so busy.

Al is going to write to them now.

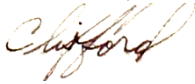
So Bill Cleary is in N.Y., N.Y. Well that looks pretty bad. His outfit is probably waiting for boats. Well I hope he doesn't have to go, but you know that is what we are here for. Things look pretty darned good on the other side now. I hope they beat that Rommel. They say they have him captured but I can't believe that. Those English aren't smart enough for that. If things keep going like they are now I don't think U.S.A. will have to send any more men over.

Well I am a Corporal now. I haven't seen the official notice yet, because it is going through on a special order. And it hasn't been signed yet. 12 men in our Co. got ratings this time. You better address my mail P.F.C. yet though until I let you know.

Well I guess I'll close now - I have a lot of letters to write.

I hope Mildred is much better now.

Love to all,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Clifford", written in brown ink.

November 12, 1942

[P.F.C. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. #253, Camp Pickett, Va.]

Thurs. Nite

*Dear folks,*

I got both of your letters. One yesterday (the air mail) and one today. They both took two days to get here. I wouldn't send any more air mail if I were you – it doesn't get them here any faster.

Up until yesterday Al and I were waiting to get the money. After I got your letter yesterday and found out you folks had sent the money I figured the money must have got here and was being held at Blackstone, a nearby town. So Al and I went down last nite and sure enough it was there. It must have been there since Sat. nite. I was kind of mad about them not letting us know about it, but we got it and all is well now.

The names and dates for our furloughs have been posted and darn it mine is going to be from Nov. 28<sup>th</sup> til Dec. 8<sup>th</sup> and Al's is from Dec. 28<sup>th</sup> til Jan 8<sup>th</sup>. We are going to see if we can get them together. The Co. Commander is pretty busy now and he has a lot of worries. I hate to bother him but I don't see why we can't if we can get someone to take Al's place. I only hope we can.

I was planning on going home for Thanksgiving but I guess I can't make it. Something always happens to take the pleasure out of everything in the Army. But I'm happy enough to know that I'll get home regardless of when it comes.

I am still going to school. It isn't much of a school - we are learning how to drive a vehicle something like a tank. Also learning maintenance. I don't like them very much. I've driven them a few times. They handle pretty good, but they are too heavy I think. 23 tons. They have an airplane motor something similar to the Pratt & Whitney, and I know a quite a lot about them! It was fun to go over the motor, very interesting.

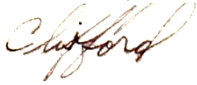
They told us they are going to start censoring our mail soon. May be a bunch of baloney as usual.

I was sorry to hear that Lawrence hurt his back and I hope it is better now. And I hope Edna and Mildred are better too. I sent a letter to Edna - I suppose Edith will forward it to Vermont.

So Wendell has to be examined again the 28<sup>th</sup>. I know he will pass. I suppose he does want to come in. I think I know how he feels. All of the young fellows are in the Army. And everybody looks at a guy in civilian clothes and wonders why he isn't in the Army. He won't be in for a little while anyway. I'll be able to see him when I'm home.

I am a Corporal now alright – I saw the order, but it hasn't been posted on the board yet. I don't know what is holding it up. You better still address my mail P.F.C. I'm not supposed to know it yet I guess.

Love to all,

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford", written in a cursive style.

I bought a garrison cap and belt last nite in town. We aren't supposed to wear them but I wouldn't wear one of those darned overseas hats home on a furlough. The hat & belt make the uniform look a lot better. I can't wait to get home and take the uniform off and get into some civilian clothes for a little while to wear around the house at least.



November 15, 1942

[Cpl. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN (H), A. P. O. #253, Camp Pickett, Va., U. S. Army]

Sun. p.m.

*Dear folks,*

Got your letter today just after I came from church.

Glad to hear Edna's cold is better and also Lawrence's back and I hope he will be going to work again tomorrow morning. It must have been hard for Pa to work such long hours. I suppose Pa is at the post now. I can see him there just waiting to be relieved just the way I feel when I'm on guard. It must be a cold job now. There goes chow call!!!

We had macaroni & cheese for supper – I can't eat that. I used to eat it every Friday when I was back in Hartford, but I can't eat it anymore, the darn stuff gags me and I throw it up. We had a swell dinner today. Fried chicken (good chicken) and good ole apple pie. I had "seconds" on the chicken, as usual.

I almost got on the furlough list to go this Wednesday (18<sup>th</sup>) but they mixed it up again and I have to wait until the 28<sup>th</sup>. I think Al is going the 8<sup>th</sup> of Dec. now. I would be going Wed. only they said something about going to school. I already have a slip of paper stating how I can drive and service the vehicle we were learning about. I don't want any part of driving though. But it is good to know how. Well anyway they said something about me going to learn some more. I don't know what it is all about. All I know is I can't go on furlough on the 18<sup>th</sup>, and boy how I would like to be at home with you folks on Thanksgiving Day.

I am a Corporal now so you can address my letters that way. I suppose I'll do something wrong and get "broke" to a private – it doesn't take much to do it. It means \$16. more a month, pretty good. No more K.P. and no more walking guard. I will have to pull guard just the same, but I will be Corporal of a "relief" or "shift" and post my men when their turn comes. Also I'll have another duty - C.Q. (charge of quarters). That will come about once a month. You see they have to have a (non-Com) (Non Commissioned Officer) in the orderly room every day. His duties are to get the Company up in the morning, see that the lights are out at the proper time at night, get the "hard labor gang" up in the morning. They are the ones that go "over the hill" or do something else wrong. They go to work at 4 o'clock in the morning, also again at 6 o'clock at nite until about 9 or 10 p.m. And they do Co. duty along with the rest all day. They don't kill themselves working but it's getting up in the morning and working so late at nite that hurts.

It has been very nice here today. The air is nice and crisp and makes you feel good. Most of the leaves have fallen here, but some are still hanging on in all their color.

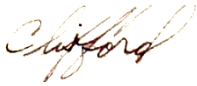
Gee, Wendell will be coming in the 28<sup>th</sup>. I guess they give them 2 weeks leave right away now. I hope he gets it. We will be home together. I hope they still give 2 weeks leave now. If they don't I won't be able to see him.

I don't know when Joe Converse is going on his furlough. I'll go over and see him and find out. Maybe he has gone already.

You were asking if Al Morrie is a Corporal. No he isn't yet but I think he will get a rating soon – he deserves one.

Well I can't think of any more to say.

Love to all

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Clifford", written in brown ink.

November 19, 1942

[Cpl. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN (H), A.P.O. #253, Camp Pickett, Va., U.S. Army; "hip.hip;" (*Helen's handwriting in lower corner, "Dear Clifford, Come home soon. We can hardly wait!."*) (See envelope pictured on the cover. KOB)

Thursday Nite

*Dear folks*

Got your letter today - got Edna's Tuesday. I hope her cold is better and I am glad to know Lawrence is better. I hope Helen made out good in her debate. I'll never forget mine.

Speaking of debates, I've been trying to decide whether I should stop in Hartford on my way home or go straight home and leave early and then go to Hartford & New Haven. There are so many I have to see and such a short time to do it all in. I am still undecided as to what I'll do. But I think I'll go straight home. I want to see all of you as soon as I can. But I hate to have to leave you folks early so I'll be able to see all my friends in Hartford. I'd like to be in Conn. about 3 days.

I am still going to school but this is a different school this time. I am now attending a gunnery school. I think I'll be through by Mon. or Tues. There are a lot of officers going to this school - it seems sort of funny to be going to school and learning things along with Lieutenants. Some of them aren't so clever.

I hope "Chink" Aja hasn't been sent overseas so soon. And I hope what Johnny says is true about the biggest part of the fight being over. That all depends on where we will be sent of course. Things look pretty good over in the desert of Africa now. If they only can keep it up. I haven't heard from Bill Cleary in a long time - I guess he is over by now. I got a letter from Sal DeSopo - he said he has a good chance of going to O.C.S. (Officer's Candidate School).

I suppose there is a lot of snow up home now. To tell you the truth I'll be glad to see it. It is nice here. The nights get cold but the days are quite warm. I like it here pretty good and I wish we could stay here longer.

There is some talk going around about them waiting until after pay day to let us go on furlough. I saw Joe Converse the other night - he is going the same time I am. I wish Al could come with us.

Well I can't think of any more to say. Will be seeing you all soon.

Love

*Clifford*

November 22, 1942

[Cpl. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN (H), A.P.O. #253, Camp Pickett, Va., U.S. Army]

Sun. p.m.

*Dear folks,*

I got your letter that you wrote Thursday yesterday p.m. I suppose Wendell is home now and I suppose he will be going up again after he is examined. I wonder if he will have to go to Devens from Hartford first before he gets his 7 day leave. I suppose they will give him a uniform and I don't think they issue them at Hartford. Maybe they let them have their leave before they get a uniform and before they have been interviewed. I don't know how they work it.

I will be leaving here Monday nite or if I'm lucky Mon. afternoon. My furlough starts Dec. 1<sup>st</sup> and I have to be back the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup> for reveille. I will go down to Blackstone some nite this week and see about a train. I don't know whether to take a bus as far as Richmond or not. Some say it is better to do that. They say it is hard to get a train from here to Richmond & Washington, but after that connections are good. I'd like to be able to catch the train that leaves Wash. D.C. that goes straight through to Montreal right through Montpelier. That's the train I used to get going from Hartford all the time. I imagine it must leave Washington sometime around 4 or 5 p.m. I doubt very much if I'll be lucky enough to catch it. Joe Converse is going the same time I am. We will have to get together and figure the quickest way.

I was over at the hospital yesterday to see about getting some new glasses. The ones I have don't fit me right. I have to go back again Dec. 12<sup>th</sup>. I've been trying to get new glasses for about 3 or 4 months I guess. Something always happens and puts it off. There always is a lot of red tape connected with anything the Army does.

I am still going to school. I guess there will be a couple more days of it.

Don't be worried about me not getting a furlough, because everyone is getting one. The Co. Commander we have now is a square shooter and is for his men 100%. He promised we would get them.

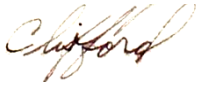
I went to 11 o'clock Mass this morning. I usually go to 10 but I felt like sleeping this morning. Next Sunday we are going to have a big Military Mass at our field house. Bishop O'Hara is going to be here. He is the Head Bishop of the Army, Navy & Marines. Two other Bishops will be present also. Some boys here haven't been confirmed yet so they will have a chance now. I plan on going to receive. I hope I don't have a detail to do Sat. nite or Sunday.

I got a card from Bill Cleary yesterday. It must have been sent a long time ago. It went to Calif. and finally got here. There was no date stamp on it. It was sent from Fort Dix. Have you folks heard anything from him?

I was glad to hear Helen got a letter for last year's work. I hope Mildred and Lawrence & Edna are better. It is about 4 o'clock now and I suppose Pa is at the post. It must be a lonesome place. It has been a dark dreary day here. Have raining and misting all the time. It is beginning to get dark now. I suppose it is up home too.

I can't think of any more. I hope to get home some time Tuesday Dec. 1<sup>st</sup>.

Love to all

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford", written in a cursive style.

### ***Home on Leave after Desert Training***

*In the pictures on the following pages, Clifford, Wendell, and Lawrence O'Connor share their last visit together. Wendell, who reported for Army duty the next month at Fort Devens, was killed in Italy on July 8, 1944.*





*The O'Connor Brothers, photo taken at sister Mildred's.  
l-r: Clifford, Wendell, Lawrence*



*l-r: Wendell O'Connor, Lawrence O'Connor, Johnny Cozzi,  
Clifford O'Connor, Peter O'Connor  
Taken at Mildred and Johnny's home on December 6, 1942.*



*Wendell and Peter O'Connor.*

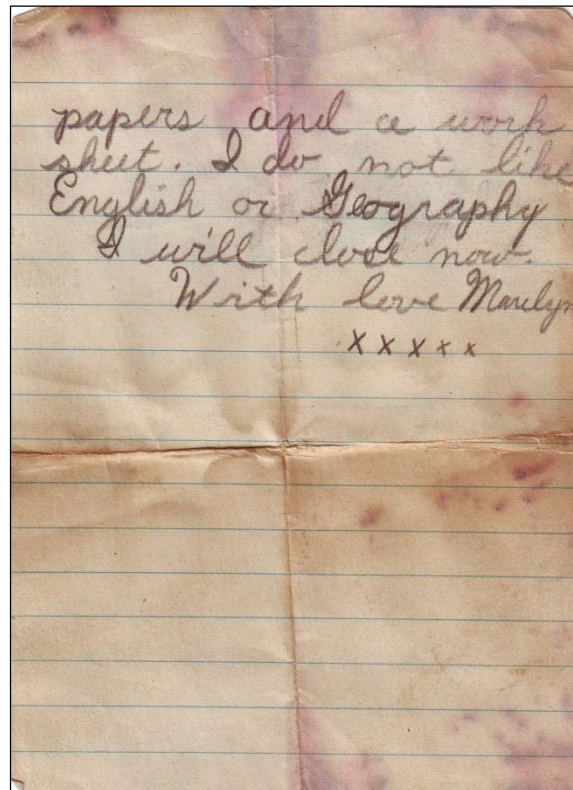
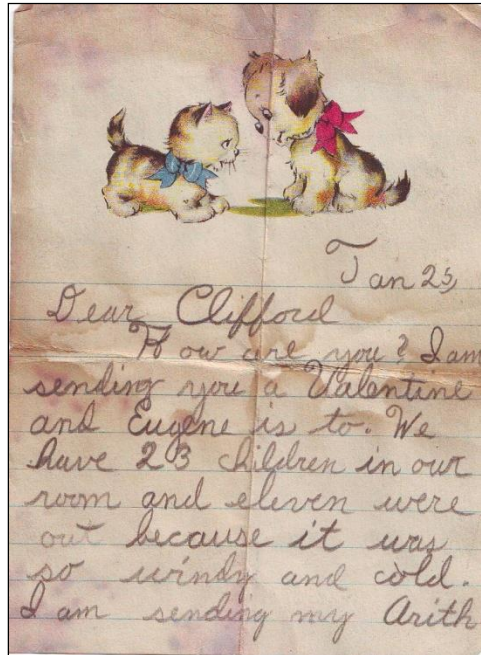


*Clifford O'Connor, December 1942  
33 Elmwood Avenue, Barre, Vermont ("M's")  
"After all Summer on Mohave [sic] Desert."*



*Clifford and Niece Marilyn Cozzi*

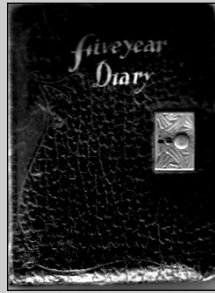




**This letter from little Marilyn meant a lot to her Uncle Clifford. Folded and tucked, he carried it in his wallet throughout the war. The wallet was found among his World War II things being prepared for display in the summer of 2006, at which time a copy was sent to Marilyn, who expressed astonishment at seeing it again after all these years and knowing what it meant to him.**

## From Ma's Diary

### *Clifford's Furlough Visit and Wendell's Leaving for the Army*



*December 1, 1942 – Tuesday*

*Fairly nice day, but snowed at night. P & L worked. I ironed. Mildred called up Morrie's to tell us that Clifford had got to Hartford & is coming up to be here tomorrow morning. Mr. Grenon was here in the evening.*

*December 2, 1942 – Wednesday*

*Cloudy & cold. P & L worked. Clifford came in the morning & W went down with P & brought him up from M's. My shoes came but I am going to send them back. We all went to Barre in p.m. Very icy.*

*December 3, 1942 – Thursday*

*Bright & cold & windy. P & L worked. W & C went to Barre when L went to work. They went up to Edward Guy's & Cleary's at night. They were up to Lawrence's last night.*

*December 4, 1942 – Friday*

*Cold & snowy. C & W & E & I all went to receive. We took Annie over too. Mrs. Moore was here in p.m. & W took her home. M & J & Marilyn & Joe & Annie & the boys & Gertrude & Ray were here at night. Morrie's were here too.*

*December 5, 1942 – Saturday*

*Fairly nice day. We went out to Morrie's farm with C & went to Barre & to Converse's in p.m. Rennie Sears was here in evening to see Clifford. W & C had supper up to Lawrence's.*

*December 6, 1942 – Sunday*

*Fairly nice day. Peter & I went to 9 o'clock Mass & the others went to 11 o'clock. Lawrence & Josephine & the children were here for dinner & supper. We all went down to M's at 4.30.*

*December 7, 1942 – Monday*

*Snowed some. I washed in p.m. P & L worked. C went to Hartford at noon time. W took him to Barre to take the bus to Montpelier Junction & W was gone till time to bring his father home from work. (Note: This was to be Clifford and Wendell's last time together at home.)*

*December 8, 1942 – Tuesday*

*Very nice day. P & L worked. This is the Feast of the Immaculate Conception but I did not go to Mass as it was quite cold & I would have to walk home. I cooked. Mrs. Robie was over. W & E & I went to M's at night.*

*December 9, 1942 – Wednesday*

*Cold. P & L worked. Wendell went to Hartford at noon. He went down with L when he went to work. E & I rode down with Mr. Aja & I went shopping & came home with P at night. E went to pictures.*



***Wendell O'Connor***

*December 10, 1942 – Thursday*

*Nice warm day. P & L worked. Edna went to Barre to go shopping with M. I went up to Lottie's in p.m. I made a slip for Loraine & kerchief for Josephine for Christmas.*

*December 11, 1942 – Friday*

*Nice day. P & L worked. I sent box of clothes to mission & made mince meat & a slip for Marilyn. E went to a dance with Marion Couliard & stayed with her all night.*

*December 12, 1942 – Saturday*

*Nice day. P & L worked in a.m. Mrs. Robie & I went down when they did. I went to M's when I got through shopping. Wendell goes into the Army today from Hartford. E & H & Marion Couliard stayed up to Lawrence's.*

***..." Wendell goes into the Army today from Hartford."***

*December 13, 1942 – Sunday*

*Stormy. P & L went to 9 o'clock in Barre & to M's. P went to the Post. L & J & children came down in evening. Loraine can say the poem Goosie, Goosie Gandy. I wrote a letter to C.*

*December 14, 1942 – Monday*

*Very cold with bright sun. P & L worked. I washed & mopped & waxed the floor. E ate supper at Couliard's. H had her music lesson tonight instead of tomorrow night. I sewed on Marilyn's dress.*

*December 15, 1942 - Tuesday*

*Cloudy & a little warmer. I made apple sauce cakes & apple pies. E & I ironed. She went to pictures at night with Marion Couliard. I finished Marilyn's dress. Leone came to get me to go to the Post tomorrow.*

*December 16, 1942 – Wednesday*

*Very cold wind. P & L worked. I went to the post with Mrs. Partridge. Wendell's empty bag came from Camp Devens today. I came home very tired & cold at night.*

***... "Wendell's empty bag came from Camp Devens today ..."***

Ma's diary reflects that home and village life goes on one year after the attack on Pearl Harbor and the declaration of war. And now Clifford and Wendell are both in the Army ...

December 13, 1942

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Dec 14, 1942, Camp Pickett, VA.; Cpl. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Camp Pickett, Va., U.S. Army; Stationery: Single plain sheet; two sides; blue-black ink.]

*Dear folks,*

Well I'm back at the old grind again. Got here at Camp about 11 PM. Thursday. I left Hartford Thursday morning at 5:39. Wendell and a friend of mine saw me off at the station. (**Note: Clifford and Wendell never saw each other again after this farewell.**)

I got a swell reception when I got back here. We have been so busy I haven't had time to write before Friday we had to go out on a bivouac with our destroyers. Stayed out all nite and came back about 8. Saturday morn I had to report to the hospital for my eye examination at 8:30. Boy I had to rush shave and clean up. I finally got there about 9:30. I have to go again Thursday P.M. They put those drops in my eyes and I couldn't write last nite. Today we had to go out and fire our big guns. I couldn't go to Mass. We got back this afternoon about 3:30. Well anyway we have been quite busy.

It is pretty cold here now. No snow though.

We have a big inspection tomorrow again. I have to get ready for it tonite.

Al Morrie can't leave till Dec. 21<sup>st</sup> on furlough.

I suppose you will be getting a letter from Wendell about the same time you get mine. I hope he will stay in Camp Devens for a long time.

I had a pretty good time in Hartford. I didn't get to New Haven.

I can't write much tonite I haven't much time.

Love to all

*Clifford*

P.S. I met Joe Converse on the train as we had planned.



December 17, 1942

[Envelope: Cpl C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. #253, Camp Pickett, Va., U.S. Army]

Thursday Night

*Dear folks,*

I have a few minutes to myself so I guess I'll drop a line.

I guess you have received my sleeping bag by this time. Now don't get excited and start thinking things. We had an inspection and we were told or rather we had to send home all our extra clothing - socks, underwear, handkerchiefs, towels, etc. I threw most of mine out. After I sent my bed roll home we were told we could keep them a while longer. If we go out on any maneuvers or long problems I'll send home for it. Maybe Wendell would like it. It is kind of dirty. I never had it cleaned. It will be nice to have after the war for camping. I slept a good many nites in it all over the country.

We are all packed up to move again. I don't know where or when. Our bags are all packed and we can't unpack them even to hang up any clothes. We even put our blankets in our bags when we get up in the morning. There are all kinds of rumors going around as to where we are going (same as usual). I don't believe any of them.

They say about 21 men will be able to go on pass for Christmas if we are still here. And I think we will be here for some time to come. I'd say until at least January. The names for passes will be drawn from a hat. I hope I'm lucky enough to get one.

It snowed here nearly all day yesterday. The ground is still covered. I guess it is unusual for this part of the country. It is quite cold too.

I went back to the hospital about my glasses again today. I guess I'll finally get them.

I haven't heard from Wendell as yet. I'm anxious to know where he is. Every nite when I hear "taps" I think how he is hearing it too somewhere - I hope he is still at Devens.

Christmas is a week from tomorrow. It is hard to believe that time has passed so quickly.

Well I must close.

Love to all

*Clifford*

Give my regards to Ajas and Hutchins.

December 18, 1942

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Camp Pickett, Va. Dec. 18 or 19, 1942. Cpl. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Camp Pickett, Va. U.S. Army. Stationery: Single long sheet; both sides; blue ink.]

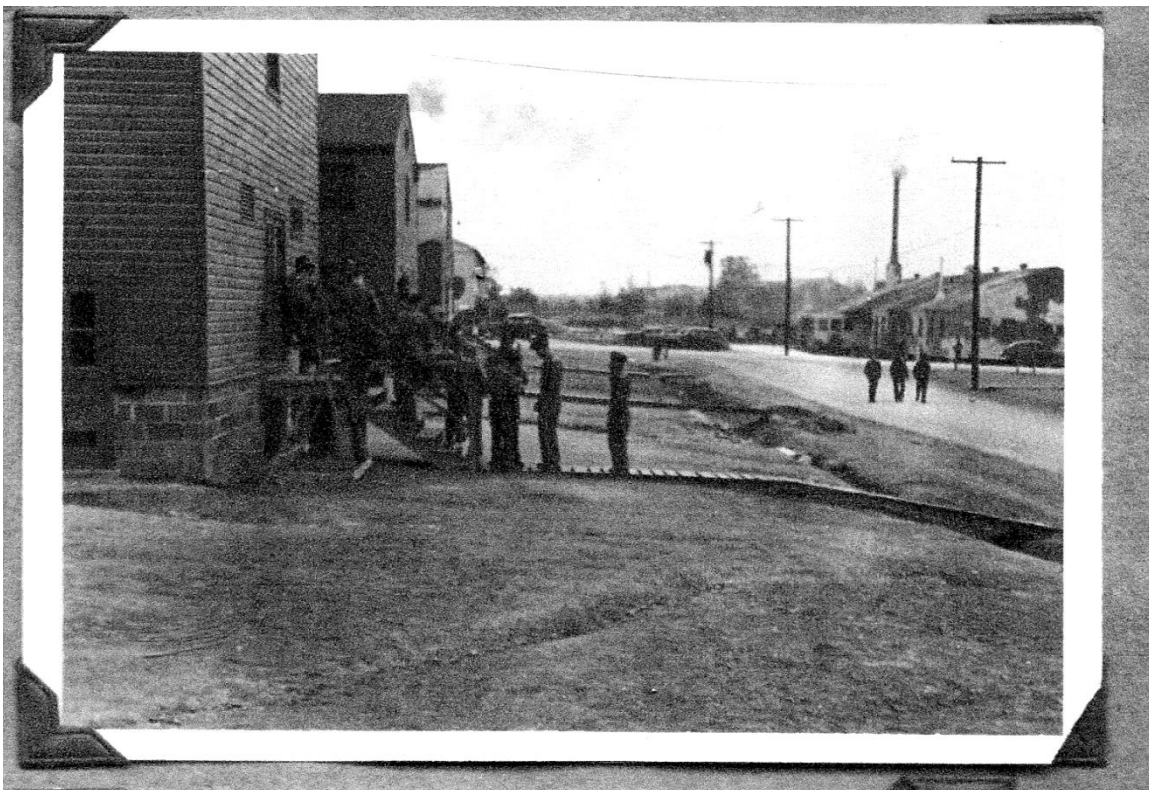
Friday Nite.

*Dear folks*

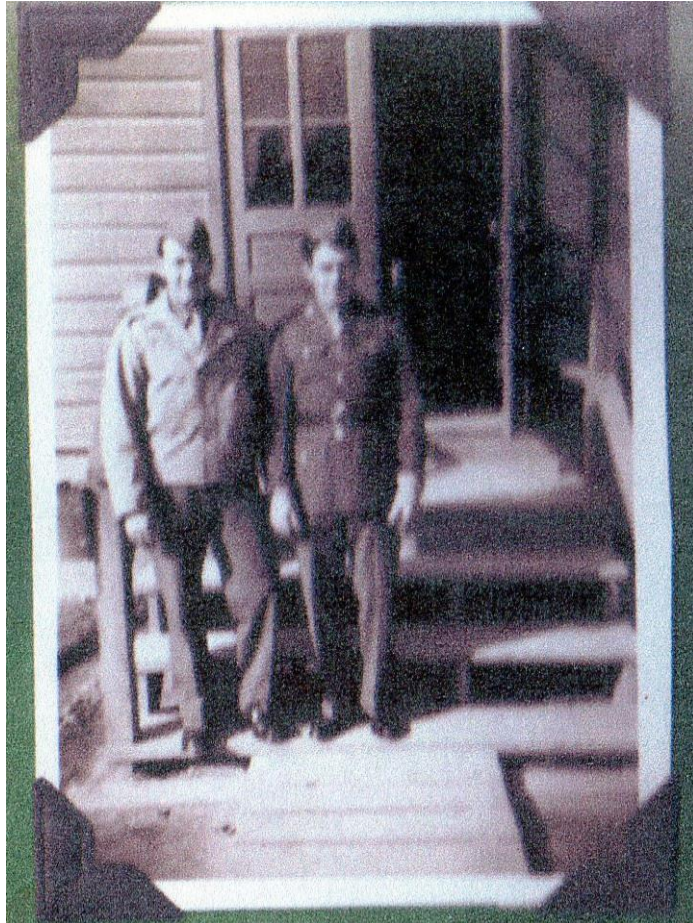
I wrote last nite but today I got your letter with the pictures. Those pictures aren't so hot. There must be some more or did you send all of them. The ones of the kids are good, and one of Edna & Helen and myself isn't so bad.

Nobody seems to know where Fort Monroe is. I heard of it but I don't know where it is.

Today was pretty nice. The snow has all melted and it is awfully muddy now. We are continually tracking mud into the barracks. I went to see about taking out \$5000. more insurance today. It will be some time before it goes through I guess by the way they do things in the Army.



*Company B Barracks, Camp Pickett, Virginia*



***Company B Barracks, Camp Pickett, Virginia  
Unidentified soldiers – possibly Ancil on left.***

I didn't see about my insurance when I was in Htfd. I will write them a letter and tell them to send the bill to you and I will send you the money to send them. It is not due until March 28<sup>th</sup> I think it is about \$29.00.

Just think I get \$5000 insurance in the army for about \$37. a year.

Tomorrow I'm going to try and go to Washington. I don't think I'll have to stay in camp. I was on charge of quarters Wed. and I have guard Mon. So I should be free for the wk. end.

I just wanted to drop a few lines to let you know I got the letter I must close now.

Love to all

*Clifford*





*Company Street, Camp Pickett, Virginia*

P.S. I haven't heard from Wendell. I just got the barracks boots and tried them on immediately they feel swell. I'll have to hide them, and I'm sure they will never find them during the day. They are just the thing for the barracks sitting around writing letters, shaving, etc.

Thanks a lot. That was a beautiful card too.

December 30, 1942

[Envelope: Cpl. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK DES BN, Camp Pickett, Va., U.S. Army]

*Dear Folks*

I suppose you are all waiting patiently to hear from me.

I got a pass for Christmas and went to Hartford. I had Christmas dinner at Nellie's. I went to New Haven to see Herb and Mary and Maggie and Bill. I only stopped a few minutes. I spent Saturday night in New York with a friend of mine. He was on a pass too. He is stationed in Albany as an M.P. Maybe I told you about him before. His name is Kelly. He and Sal and I used to go around together in Hartford.



*Nellie O'Connor Nerney, Francis Nerney, and Margaret Nerney.  
Photograph not dated. Nellie was Clifford's paternal aunt;  
Francis and Margaret, her children and Cliff's cousins.*





*Maggie O'Connor O'Brien*  
*Clifford's paternal aunt; sister of Nellie (preceding page)*

I had fun on my pass but I was tired out when I got back to camp. The train service is lousy and is very crowded. I had to stand most of the way. I caught a cold on the train and it got worse and finally developed into laryngitis. They brought me to the hospital yesterday morning. I'm not sick now. No fever, but a little sore throat. The reason my writing is so bad is because I have a sore hand. I smashed my little finger on my right hand. It isn't too bad, guess I'll lose the nail. The doctor is going to work on it this afternoon.

I suppose Annie has heard from Bill by this time. Nellie got a letter a day or so before Christmas. Lucille got two letters I think. It looks as though he is in North Africa to me, but they seem to think he is in England. I didn't see Lucille or the baby.

I got Edna and Helen's package today, it was swell of them. I had just run out of tooth paste too.

When you write, Ma, don't write in care of the hospital as I don't think I'll be here very long, just send the letter as you always do.

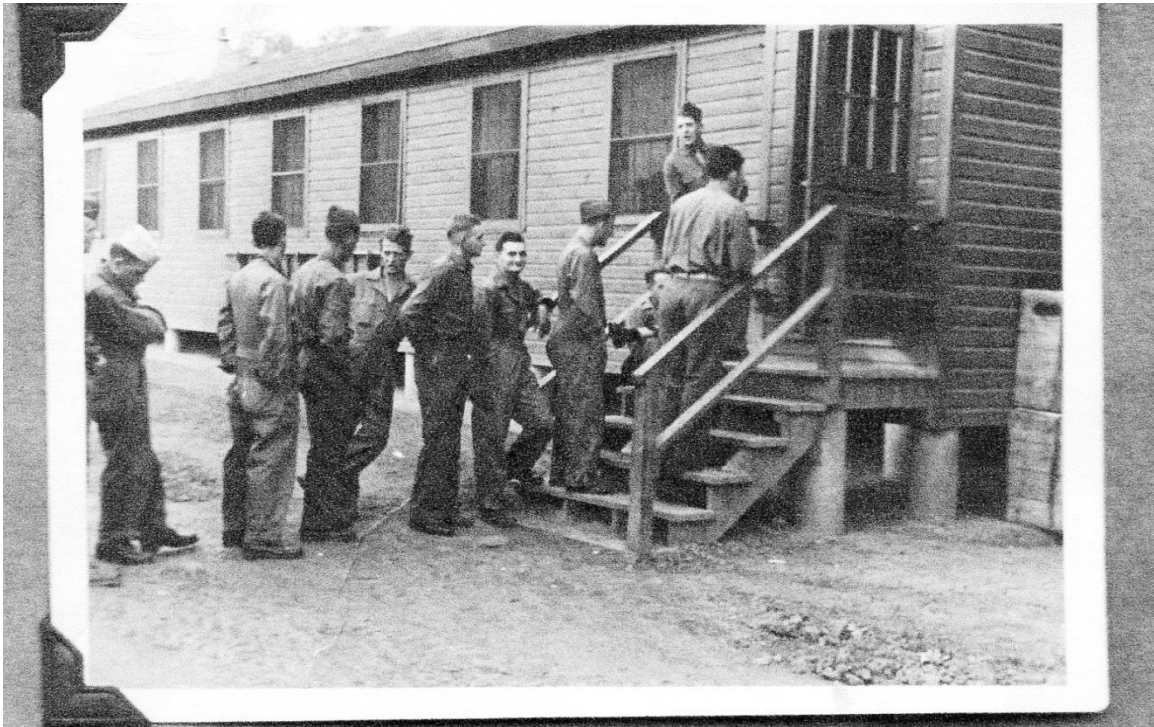
It has been raining here all last night and nearly all morning. It is very very muddy and damp here now. Nearly everyone in camp has a cold. I guess I can't take it any more – imagine me with laryngitis, but I haven't got it very bad, at least I get out of bed and walk to the mess hall for my meals - most of them eat in bed. The doctor is coming around now. I hope he says I can go tomorrow.

Oh boy, I go back to duty tomorrow. I don't know why they sent me here in the first place.

I can't think of any more to write.

Love to all,

P.S. Thanks a lot for the package Edna and Helen.



*Mess Hall, Camp Pickett, Virginia*

December 31, 1942

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Camp Pickett, Va., Jan 1, 1943, Cpl. C. B. O'Connor, 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Camp Pickett, Va., U.S. Army.  
Stationery single plain sheet, both sides, black ink.]

Last Day of a Terrible Year

*Dear folks*

I am back in the barracks again. I got out of the hospital this morning about 10 o'clock. I was only in there a short while but that was long enough. I feel much better now, and my hand doesn't hurt the way it did.

I got your big package yesterday it was swell everyone in the ward enjoyed it. So you can feel as though you made a lot of sick soldiers happy for a little while. The colored boys really went for those cookies they called them "cakes". I got a kick out of them. I went from bed to bed with the box, just as the other fellows do when they get a box.

I got your letter, the one you wrote the 27<sup>th</sup>, this morning. I haven't heard from Wendell at all and I'm glad you sent his address. Mo. Stands for Missouri definitely. Mont. is the abbreviation for Montana.

I never heard of the Ft. Leonard Wood. I wonder where it is. I may be able to find it from some of the fellows here.

Al Morrie is back I guess he got in last nite. He brought me the cigarettes and the note. Thanks a lot, Ma.

It is very nice here this PM for a change the sun is very bright and it is drying up some of the mud.

I am hoping you all have a happy New Year and wishing that this coming year will leave us with more pleasant memories than the past year has.

Love to all

*Clifford*

P.S. When I was in Htfd. I tried to call Mildred's about 4 times to wish you all a Merry Christmas, but I could never seem to get it. The call would go through O.K. as far as Montpelier but I couldn't get Barre. I was pretty mad.

## THE LETTERS OF 1943

January 3, 1943

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Camp Pickett, Va Jan 4, 1943. Cpl. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. #253, Camp Pickett, Va., U.S. Army. Stationery plain; single sheet, both sides, blue-black ink.]

*Dear folks*

I got the letter you wrote New Year's Eve, today. When I was in the hospital my mail got mixed up a bit. The mail orderly sent my mail to the Hosp. and I didn't get it all until after I was released. You mentioned in one of your letters something about you sending me two Christmas cards. Yes I guess you did, but no harm done, right?

I am glad to hear you heard from Wendell again. So he is in the Engineers, well that isn't too bad. We have a big engineer outfit right across the street from us. Pat Donahue was sent to an engineering unit in Camp Belvoir, Va. when he first came in the Army. He is now a Prisoner of War Escort Guard. *[Note this first reference to Wendell after he'd gone into the Army. KOB]*

We had to work this weekend. Today we were firing our guns a lot. I was on guard last night. We may get a day off during the week and we may not. We are supposed to however. They say we will work every weekend from now on while we are here, as it is the only day we can get the range to fire our big guns.

I was glad to hear that Milford Guy was home again. He is lucky. If things keep going so good on the other side it won't be long before this terrible mass slaughter is over with, and we will all be home again.

I went to Mass New Year's Day at 6:45 in the evening. Imagine having a Mass at nite. They do it often here. I tried to get to Mass this morning but there were no lights in the chapel at 8 o'clock and I had to go on the firing range so I couldn't make 11 o'clock Mass. It didn't seem like Sunday at all today.

I fired the machine gun today instead of the big gun as I used to. I am no longer in a destroyer section. As I said I'm a Reconnaissance Corporal. I don't care for it. Anyway our Platoon (1<sup>st</sup>) outshot all the platoons in all of the companies in the Battalion, and that is doing some shooting. Those German tanks haven't got a chance against the ole 703<sup>rd</sup>.

Well I must close and go and get some chow.

Love to All

*Clifford*

P.S. It has been a beautiful day here today. My cold has nearly left me. My throat is no longer sore, and I feel much better.



January 7, 1943

[Envelope: FREE; postmark Camp Pickett, VA Jan 8 1943. Cpl. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. #253, Camp Pickett, Va., U.S. Army. Plain stationery, blue-black ink, single sheet, both sides.]

*Dear folks*

Just received the letter you wrote Sunday.

My cold has left me and I am as good as new again. Also my finger is better. I hurt it while assembling a breech block of one of our big guns.

I got a card from Wendell tonite. It is the first I've heard from him. He was telling me about the obstacle courses they have to go through. And how they were restricted to a certain area. It makes me think of when we were in Camp Polk.

No I haven't received any cigarettes from Lawrence & Jo as yet. It was probably held up somewhere or lost. It is a wonder a lot more stuff wasn't lost. They had so much to handle. I may get it later on though.

Well we are moving from here a week from today I guess. They say it is definite. Rumors are that we are going to Indian Town Gap, Penn. I don't seem to think we will end up there though. But that is just the way I feel about it. If we do move Wed. (14<sup>th</sup>) it will be just as I had figured. I thought all along that we would be here until at least the middle of Jan. in spite of all the crazy rumors that have been going around. They say we are going there but not staying very long. I can't see any reason for sending us up there for a few weeks. They haven't openly told us we are going there, but conversations were "over heard" etc.

I will be glad to get out of this camp. I'm getting sick of it, of all Virginia in fact. The crazy weather they have here is enough to make any one sick of this place.

I guess I told you we work weekends here now and have Wed. off. Yesterday I went to a little place called Farmville. I had a pretty good time filling my stomach with bacon & eggs and steak, and then I went to a show.

I can't think of any more tonite. I guess I'll go to bed early as we have a big big road march scheduled for tomorrow.

Love to all

*Clifford*

**January 10, 1943**

[Dad wrote Jan. 10, 1942 on this letter.]

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Camp Pickett, VA., Jan 11, 1943. Cpl. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. #253, Military Res. Indiantown Gap, Penn., U.S. Army. Stationery one large single sheet, black ink, both sides.]

Sun. P.M.

*Dear folks*

Got your letter yesterday.

We were supposed to work today but they told us last nite about 5:30 that we would be off. It was too late to start out to go anywhere then – transportation is so bad down here. I tried to get a bus to town but couldn't so I went to the Service Club with a couple of friends. I went with the intention of getting a nice meal – a steak or something, but all we could buy was sandwiches.

They had a dance – a bunch of girls came down from Washington. I didn't see much sense in trying to dance. They had "tag" dances and a fellow would just get a girl and take about two steps and someone would tag him etc. – etc. So I didn't even try. I watched them for about ½ hr. and came back and went to bed.

I slept until about 10 this morning and got up and went to 11 o'clock Mass. The priest said it would be our last Mass on this post as we are finally moving. Going to Indiantown Gap, Penn. I'll be glad to get out of this State. I'm sick of this place.

It is snowing today and it is dark and dreary out. A good day to stay inside and get caught up on some writing.

I got Josephine's letter yesterday. I must answer it soon.

I'll be glad when we get to Penn. Maybe I'll be able to get to see you folks. I hope they give us passes, or at least wk. ends off. I'll be able to get to Htfd. at least. Something tells me I'm going to get a chance to see you folks again soon.

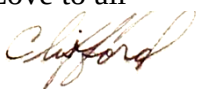
Some of our outfit is going by motor convoy and the rest by train. I think I'll go by train – hope so anyway.

I suppose Pa is at the post now and I can imagine how he feels.

It would be nice if Edna could get a good job up home, but she probably likes Htfd. better. I'm still hoping that she and Helen will be nurses someday.

I can't think of any more to say except I hope I get a chance to see you all again soon.

Love to all

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford", written in a cursive style.

When you write again send it to the new address.

January 14, 1943

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Camp Pickett, VA., Jan. 15, 1943. Cpl. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 T.D. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Military Res. Indiantown Gap, Pa., U.S. Army]

Thurs. Nite

*Dear folks*

I got your letter yesterday.

I don't have much time to write tonite so I'll just drop a few lines. We have been very busy today and will be tomorrow. Packing again. I have just finished packing my barracks bags and field bag. We have a lot of equipment to pack yet. The barracks bags will be packed on box cars tomorrow morning. We are pulling out Saturday at noon I think. Everything has been mixed up as things usually are in the Army. One minute they say one thing and then they say just the opposite. This morning they had all our radios in our vehicles taken out and just when they got finished they had orders to put them all back (a big job too). For a while this morning they didn't know whether or not we really would move. Remember I said some were going by motor convoy, well now we got orders to leave all our vehicles here and everyone goes by train. I don't know what to expect next.

I had to work this afternoon at the post ordnance shop. We had to make a couple of things for experimental purposes. We will take them with us to Indiantown Gap. I have to go back tomorrow morning to the shop and finish up. I like that kind of work for a change.

I got a letter from Wendell or rather a card. He seems to like it O.K. I'm glad he does.

I got my G.I. glasses tonite, they fit me pretty good.

I have to close, hoping to see you again soon.

Love to all

*Clifford*

January 17, 1943

[Envelope: Free; postmarked Indiantown Gap, PA, Jan 18, 1943. Cpl. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Military Res. Indiantown Gap, Pa., U.S. Army. Stationery single sheet; blue ink; both sides.]

Sun. nite

*Dear folks*

We arrived here at Indiantown Gap this afternoon. It took us a little over 24 hrs. It was pretty tiresome, we road in coaches. It was an awfully dirty train. Our clothes are all grit and grime. The first thing I did when I got here was to take a shave and shower. I feel much better now.

I like this camp so far. It is situated on high ground about 22 miles northeast of Harrisburg, Pa. they say. We are about 175 miles from N.Y. City. I think this is the best break we ever had being in this camp – I hope we stay here for a quite a while.



***Entry to Indiantown Gap. The stone gateway would have stood there during Clifford's training in 1943. The old camp is now a National Guard Center.***

***Photo taken by Karen O. Bray, Spring 2007.***

There is no snow here. I was surprised at that. It is a dark dreary day here and most of the southern boys of our outfit are very much disappointed in the north. If they hate it as much as I hated what I saw of the south I feel sorry for them. They used to laugh at us down there – now it is our turn. I hope it goes to about 30 below zero some of these days and give them a good taste of the good old north.

We are in barracks. These barracks are built the same as they are in Devens.

The meals on the train were good on this trip. I was surprised. (We even had real butter not peanut butter or apple butter.)



There goes the chow whistle I've got to go. I am as hungry as a bear.

I am back from chow. We have our own mess hall now and boy it is a pleasure to eat in it. It is just for Co. B. In Pickett we were eating with A. & C. Co.'s.

I think this is going to be a nice place. We are all pretty happy to know we are much nearer to our homes and loved ones.

I'll write more later.

Love to all

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford", written in a cursive style.

January 20, 1943

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Indiantown Gap, Pa., January 21, 1943. Cpl. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Military Res. Indiantown Gap, Pa., U.S. Army. Stationery: One long single sheet, both sides; blue ink.]

*Dear folks*

Received two letters from you since I got here, ones you wrote the 14<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup>.

It must be awfully hard getting around up there with all that gas rationing. It's a good thing you can get to Barre on Sat.

The papers here are all full of news about the big coal strikes down here. I think a Union is good. I always have, but during a war I think everyone should cooperate together. I don't think the men that work in the mines want to strike so much, but I think it is the radical leaders. If those guys would rather fight than work, they are welcomed to it.

Today has been very cold and windy, and I like it. It feels good to breathe some real fresh air. We went on a road march this morning for about 1 ½ hrs. It was only a short march. I actually enjoyed walking. We walked as fast as we could, even ran. I wish we would do it every morning for an hour or so. Before we left Pickett we had two big marches one 15 miles and one 20 miles that's a little too much. I'd rather walk about 5 or 6 miles every day. Rather than take a big march every week. I think it would be better for us too. Tomorrow we go out on a 12 miler. That's not bad. We haven't been doing much since we have been here, after we get our vehicles and everything I suppose the regular old routine will come back, problems, etc.

This country here reminds me of New England a lot. Nice hills and fields and mts. & woods. Today was the first chance we have had to even notice it. It was cloudy and raining the other days.



***Taken in the spring of 2007, this shows a World War II-era building at Indiantown Gap set in the landscape that Clifford said reminded him of New England. Photo by Karen O. Bray.***

A lot of the fellows are going to Conn. this week end. I would like to get to Htfd. But I don't think I'll go this week. I have an invitation to dinner Sunday at Harrisburg. A friend of mine here in the Co. has some relatives there and asked me to go down for dinner. I haven't been out of camp since we got here a lot of the boys went down they all seem to like the place very much.

There still is no snow here, but it sure looks like it will snow soon.

About Wendell – Ma, just because he was firing rifles means nothing. Every soldier has to learn to fire the small arms. It is a part of basic training. I wouldn't worry about either of us going over right away.

I hope Earl Guy doesn't go. It may be just a bunch of foolishness like it was with us for a while. Anyway that's what we are in the Army for to win this war and get home, and the sooner it is over the better it will be all around. You can not win by sitting around. Not that I want to fight but I know it is the only way. And that is the only way to look at it.

I'm going to ask for a 3 day pass after payday and maybe surprise you all by dropping in on you. No one has gotten a pass as yet but maybe they will give them out later.

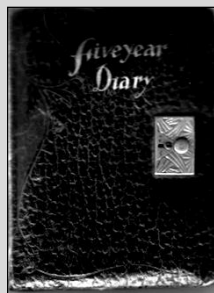
Love to all



P.S. Thanks a lot for the pictures. It was very nice of that woman to send them to you [*see Ma's diary entry of January 14 below ... we don't know who 'Miss Ellis' was, but she'd sent some pictures that Ma sent along to Clifford. KOB*]

### From Ma's Diary:

*“... Got a letter from C. He likes it in Penn. ...”*



January 14, 1943 - Thursday

Earthquake about 5:30 p.m but we did not feel it here. Very cold in morning & car would not start for an hour. Junior pushed it with Puck's car. E went down to M's to stay a day or so. I got snapshots from Miss Ellis.

January 15, 1943 - Friday

Snowed some. Little warmer. P & L worked. I fixed my dark blue coat so I like it now. Lottie was down in p.m. We got some mash at night for the hens, \$3.40.

January 16, 1943, Saturday

Bohomain's moved today from Mrs. Robie's house. Snowed all day. P&L worked. I went to Barre when they went to work & started walking home. Mrs. Robie was over in p.m. H&E&M played for school dance.

January 17, 1943 - Sunday

We went to 9.15 Mass. Nice day. Went to M's & Peter went to the Post at noon. Mrs. Guy came down in p.m. & Edward & his wife & baby came later.

January 18, 1943 - Monday

P&L worked. Very stormy all day. I washed & mopped. Edna helped & waxed the floor. Got letters from C&W & sent letters to them. L stopped in at night.

January 19, 1943 - Tuesday

Cold & stormy. P&L worked. E&I ironed. I went up to Cochran's to give him money for linoleum & I went to Lottie's. He brought the linoleum at night.

January 20, 1943 - Wednesday

Got letter from C. He likes it in Penn. L&P worked. Very cold day. Bright sun. Edna & I put the linoleum down in the sitting room. It looks good, cost \$9.75. E. went to Barre in p.m.

January 25, 1943

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Indiantown Gap, Pa., January 26, 1943. Cpl. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703d TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Military Res. Indiantown Gap, Pa., U.S. Army. Stationery: Single long plain sheet, both sides, blue-black ink.]

*Dear folks*

Got your letter Sat. It only takes a couple of days for your mail to get here.

Boy I was glad to hear Bill Cleary was so lucky. They all were saved eh? They certainly were lucky. I've been praying for Bill all along and I know you all were at home. I hope he gets through this thing O.K.

There is still a lot of fighting to be done in Africa. Most people think that the war in North Africa is all done, but there will be some hot battles before they are finished.

I spent the week end in Harrisburg. I guess I told you a friend of mine here has some friends there. We had a real Italian dinner yesterday. Boy I enjoyed it. The people's name is Halako. He used to be a boxer a very good one too. Steve Halako a light weight. He is married now and has 5 children. I had a lot of fun with the kids. They are all girls, the oldest one is about 8 I think.

We were under restriction here for a while last week. No one could go out except the married men with their wives in town. I think it was on account of the coal strikes. Anyway they lifted the ban and we were free to go out for the weekend.

It is still very nice here. I like it a lot. We don't have any snow yet. It has been real nice today. In the morning it is really foggy but it clears up before noon usually.

I haven't heard from Wendell since I've been here. I sent my address to him before I left Pickett.

I am still hoping for a 3 day pass so I can see you folks again. I wouldn't be able to go home on a weekend but I can get to Hartford. I may go to Htfd this weekend. I'm not sure.

I can't think of any more to write just now except that I hope you all are fine. I feel perfect and I'm eating like a bear lately. I guess I told you that the food is much better here.

Love to all,

*Clifford*



January 30, 1943

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Indiantown Gap, PA., Jan 31, 1943. Cpl. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Military Res. Indiantown Gap, Pa., U.S. Army.]

*Dear Folks*

Got your letter Wednesday.

I'm staying in camp this weekend. Nearly everyone has left for one place or another. It seems funny to be writing a letter and not hear any noise in the barracks. It don't take the boys long to clear out after inspection. I went to Harrisburg last weekend – had to wait 3 hrs. for a bus out of camp. I guess I told you about being invited to dinner.

The General was around this morning his name is Watson – a two star general, also General Hickey was here with him he is a one star general. The lieutenants here were jumping around trying to get us to get everything in tip top shape. I had to laugh at them – they were as nervous as cats.

I think we will be here for some time. At first I thought we would stay only a short while, but the way things look now – I think we will stay a quite a while. Sometime later on I'll send for my bed roll. That don't mean we are going on maneuvers, but I've found out we can have them now, and they can be taken overseas too. In fact they are recommended.

It has been snowing to beat the band here lately and boy it looks good. We didn't have any over shoes until today. Our feet got soaked, but now we are all set. The hills look nice and remind me of Vermont. The air here is clean and fresh just like Vermont.

I am glad to know that Wendell and I are under the protection of The Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph. It's about the best protection anyone could ask for. Tell Josephine thanks for burning the Vigil light I used to burn them very often but now I don't get a chance to.

Last Sunday I went to Mass at St. Patrick's church in Harrisburg. It was a nice church. The thing that impressed me most was that the children all sang the Mass, just as the choir would. I think it is a good idea they will know more about the Mass when they grow up.

There wasn't much of a sermon – the priest – I suppose he was the pastor – gave the total receipts and payment of the church for the year. He read them one by one. I was getting sick of listening to him, but I know it is customary to do that.

I still haven't heard from Wendell. I suppose he is busy. I remember how it was when I was in Polk.

I suppose Pa and the rest are up killing that beef this afternoon. At least you won't have to worry about meat for a while.

We had another big clothing inspection the other day, as we did in Pickett. I still have the barracks boots. I'll manage to hang on to them somehow or other. I'm wearing them right now.

I am going to try and get a 3 day pass next week. Some say we can get them and some say we can't. Anyway there is nothing like trying.

I can't think of any more to write just now. Hope you all are fine – I feel perfect.

Love to all

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Feb. 4, 1943

[Envelope: FREE; postmark Indiantown Gap, PA, Feb 5, 1943. Cpl. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Military Res. Indiantown Gap, Pa., U.S. Army. Stationery small plain, blue-black ink, two sheets, three sides.]

*Dear Folks*

I have two letters here from you. Guess it is about time I wrote, eh? Got one today you wrote it Sunday. So Edna is going back to Htfd. Well I know how she feels and can't really blame her. But I sure hope she goes in training after this darned mess is over.

You were certainly lucky to get the alarm clock. I didn't know it was so hard to get them.

I got a letter from Annie today. She told me a little about Bill. Gee I was wondering why he didn't write to me. She told me how he can only write 2 letters a wk.

This morning we went down to the field house and heard a wonderful lecture by Major General Oliver. He was in Command of the 1<sup>st</sup> Arm'd Div. He told us all about Africa and how they landed etc. Very interesting. They had to take the City of Oran it was in French hands at the time. And the French fought against them – a lot of men both American & Frenchies were lost. All for nothing, absolutely nothing. I can't understand it. Why should those French fire on us. They knew they were Americans. And when they finally took over the city the people were happy because the long waited for "Yanks" came. The French are now fighting with the Allies side by side with these men. I can't understand it.



**Major General Lunsford E. Oliver,**  
**March 17, 1889 - October 13, 1978**  
*Addressed Clifford's Company on February 4, 1943*

*Oliver was assigned to 1st Armored Division in January 1942 to assume command of Combat Command B (CCB), then promoted to Brigadier, then Major General later that year, before operations in North Africa. CCB landed successfully near the city of Oran in late November 1942 and started to advance toward the Djedeida airfield, occupying it with little resistance, before encountering its first major enemy resistance at Medjez-el-bab, Tunisia, in December 1942. [From Wikipedia.]*

The French he said were only poorly equipped, with old out of date weapons etc. And when they finally surrendered the French general told General Oliver that the only way he could keep up morale among his men was to keep promising them that the Americans were going to come with new and better equipment for them to fight with. And this would give the men courage – thinking we were going to give them all new stuff. But I don't see why they started fighting when the Americans did land there. The General told us he couldn't figure it out either. But he did say that there was an agreement between the French & Germans that as long as Germany would not march any further on France No troops of any kind would go through Oran or land there. Guess that is why they put up a fight. How foolish it was nothing was gained by it. Well so much for that.

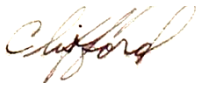
I didn't go to Htfd last weekend. I may go this one but I'm not sure. It is a long trip to make for such a short stay. Our Co. Commander is away for a few days and I can't see about getting a pass now. I don't think I can anyway. I may ask our platoon leader if he can do anything about it tomorrow.

We have a lot of road marches (as ever) got to go on one tomorrow night starting at 7:30 till midnight.

It is nearly time for lights out I'll have to close.

I'm glad Wendell likes the Army it will make it a lot easier for him.

Love to all



February 9, 1943

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Indiantown Gap, PA, Feb 10, 1943. Cpl. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Military Res. Indiantown Gap, Pa., U.S. Army. Stationery two small plain sheets, four sides, black ink.]

Tues. Nite

*Dear folks*

I got your letter Sat. noon just before I left for Htfd. Also got Mildred's. Got Mildred's cookies Mon. morning. They were swell.

Too bad you folks weren't at Mildred's Sunday when I called. I kind of figured you would be. But that's the way everything goes when you plan on it. Mildred told me that the Xrays proved out good for Lawrence. Boy I was glad to hear that.

Everyone was fine at Htfd. And they were all asking for you. I stayed at Rose's house. I guess you know that Dorothy Houghton and her sister were staying there. They are working in defense now.

I went to see Bill Cleary's wife and baby. The baby is very cute. I held it for a few minutes.

I got in Htfd. at 8 o'clock Sat. nite, and had to leave Sunday nite at 7. I didn't have much time, but I had a pretty good time.

I am on guard tonite and what a pain in the neck it is. They are using a new system to "post" the guards, and it is harder on everyone. The men get mad and start arguing with us corporals, they think it's our fault but we got new orders and that's all there is to it.

There are 3 "reliefs" (shifts) 9 men to each one. They relieve each other every 2 hrs. that gives the men 4 hrs to sleep between shifts. My relief is on now. I posted them at 7 they will be off at 9. Then I'll be able to sleep till 1 A.M., and put them out again. There is a big road march tomorrow – 25 miles – I don't know if us fellows on guard will have to go or not. We get off at 7 A.M. It will be hard if we have to make it tomorrow. Well if we don't go tomorrow we will have to go Friday. I'm going to see about getting off next Monday. The only way we can get a pass now is to get Monday off. Or in other words a "24 hours pass." I wouldn't get to Barre until Sunday morning and I'd have to leave Monday morning. It would be a long time without sleep and a long tiresome ride, but I'm going to try it.

Well today makes 1 yr's service for me. Can't see as it has done me any good. Did a lot of traveling, probably learned a little, but not much. I could have had a very good job at Pratt & Whitney's by this time.

I got Edna's letter. I suppose she has gone back to Htfd.



Gee Helen is doing swell in school. I wish I had studied a little harder. Kids in school don't usually realize that someday most of the stuff they study about is going to help them later on. And how true it is.

Well I must close and get a few winks.

Hope to see you all soon.

Love to all

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford", written in a cursive style.

P.S. (over)

You were asking about Al Morrie. He is still with us. I'm in the same barracks with him. He works at the Officer's Club as a bartender every other nite. He does Company duty too. I guess you know he is a gunner, a good one too.

Feb. 15, 1943

Envelope: FREE; postmark Indiantown Gap, PA, Feb 16, 1943. Cpl. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 T. D. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Military Res. Indiantown Gap, Pa. U.S. Army. Stationery, gold-embossed "Indiantown Gap Military Reservation, Pennsylvania," single sheet, both sides, blue-black ink.]

*Dear folks*

I have two letters from you that I haven't answered. I was so sure of going home last week end, I didn't bother writing. For some reason or other there are to be no more passes given out. The order came out Friday morning. I had asked for Sat. Sun & Mon. off. Every time I plan on something it never works out. I'll try again next month some time. It was the first time I had ever asked for a pass.

I was glad to hear Mildred had a baby and I hope she is feeling good now.

I went to Reading, Pa. this weekend. It is a big city. We had a lot of fun.

The sun is still showing here and it is after 6 o'clock. The days are getting much longer. It has been awfully cold here today. We went on the range to fire our big guns but it was too cold so we came back. Some of our tanks and other vehicles froze up.

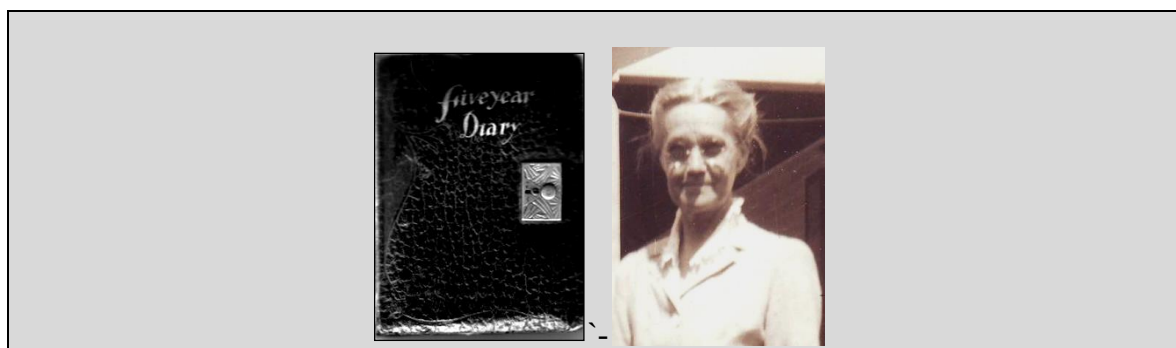
We have a lot of road marches I guess I told you. We marched 29.3 miles last Wednesday. Boy that's a long walk. We were all very tired. I didn't get any blisters lucky eh? Got another march tomorrow not a very long one though about 10 miles I guess.

I don't think they know what to do with us here. We have a lot of inspections & marches that's all. Think we will be here for a quite a while.

Love to all

*Clifford*

### From Ma's Diary:



February 24, 1943 – Wednesday

Very dark & dreary. Rained some. P & L worked. E & I went to Barre with Mr. Aja & Flora & went to Mildred's. I stopped at the school house to get my ration books on the way home. The baby is very cute.



*Eugene Cozzi, May 12, 1943, 2-1/2 months, taken a few months after this diary entry.*

February 20, 1943

[Envelope: FREE; postmark Indiantown Gap, PA Feb 21, 1943. Cpl. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap, Military Reg. Pa., U.S. Army. Stationery plain white small sheet, blue-black ink, two sides.]

Sat. Evening

*Dear folks*

I am spending this wk end in camp. Nearly all of the boys have gone out somewhere.

It has been a very beautiful day here. Last wk. we had a few real cold days. Today was just like spring.

I have two letters here from you and will answer them both now. One you wrote last Sunday & one Thurs. I was glad to get Wendell's picture, he looks very good. I was surprised to hear it was 50 degrees below zero in Barre. Whow!! It must have been cold. I showed the clipping to some of the Southern boys and they said, boy that sho am no place for us.

Guess I won't be getting home for some time now. They won't give any passes. I'm going to try again next month. I saw Joe Converse Thursday. He is hoping to get a chance to get out too.

It is awfully quiet around here this evening. I'm all alone in the day room. It's the first time I came here to write most of the time there is a gang in here. I'm listening to an old junk of a radio we have. It plays a little bit, but not very good – better than nothing.

I took out 5,000 more insurance – or did I tell you about it? You say they didn't send either Wendell's or my policy to you. I don't know what they do with them probably they hold them for us. I'll find out about it and let you know.

I won't be needing my bed roll for some time – at least I don't think so. Don't worry about sending me any candy, Ma. I know you would if you could. I don't eat much candy anyway.

I don't write letters like I used to – guess you have noticed. Somehow or other I can't seem to find anything to say.

I plan to go to receive in the morning at our chapel.

I must close and write to Mildred & Annie.

Love to all

*Clifford*

I got Helen's letter Thursday.

February 24, 1943

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Indiantown Gap, PA, Feb 25, 1943. Cpl. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap Military Res., Pa., U.S. Army. Stationery gold-embossed, Indiantown Gap, Military Reservation, Pennsylvania; two sheets, black ink, three sides.]

*Dear folks*

Received your letter today also got Edna's today.

I was C.Q. (Charge of Quarters) last nite. Went on at 5 P.M. got off tonight at 5 P.M. and boy I was busy. The biggest part of that job is running errands, answering phone calls, etc. Sometimes it is real easy, but it wasn't last nite & today.

It rained here today a quite a lot, but it has stopped and it is getting much colder out. The snow is all gone, but I expect more soon.

So they are still taking boys in the Army up there, eh? I don't see why they want so many. I think they have plenty now. What few are left should be kept to put out production.

They are planning on a big drive this Spring & Summer I guess, and I hope they push right into Berlin and demolish everything and every Nazi. After that has been done I think Japan will come easy. They may strike at both places at the same time but I doubt it. That Rommel is sure giving them a time of it over there. He must be a very smart man.

We had a fellow here (a corporal) who was over there and in a few battles. He told us a lot of things. Very interesting too. I guess we asked him a million questions. After what he told us I still don't like English tactics. I never did. But he said the soldiers were good fighters and willing to fight – (I hope)

Glad to know Mildred is feeling well and the baby too. Sorry to hear about Johnnie's arm. It must be a painful thing. We had a fellow in our outfit whose shoulder was always going out of joint, I pitied him – they finally transferred him to a service unit. I saw him suffer one night on the desert on maneuvers for hours before we could get the medics. There is nothing you can do about it I guess except pull it back in and wait till the pain goes away.

I never hear from Sal DeSopo any more. Last I heard he was in a bombing sqd. Possibly he has been sent over, but I doubt it 'cause he hasn't had much training along that line. He was put in there only about 2 or 3 months ago. Maybe they consider that long enough. They are liable to do anything in the Army.

Got a letter from Rene Sabetti today he is not in yet and I hope they never get him. He sent me a picture of himself and the deer he shot last Dec.



We are still doing the same thing here road marches, inspections, etc. Same old stuff. I am feeling fine – this northern climate does a person good.

Well I can't think of any more.

Love to all

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford", written in a cursive style.

Thanks for the letter, Edna.

February 28, 1943

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Indiantown Gap, PA., Mar 1, 1943. Cpl. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap, Military Res., Pa., U.S. Army. Stationery two small plain sheets; black ink; three sides.]

Sun P.M.

*Dear Father*

I received your letter yesterday. I will fill out or rather sign that slip for the insurance and send it today. We will be paid Tuesday. I will send you about half of the money for the insurance then, and the rest when we are paid again. There is a 30 days grace period as you know and you won't have to pay it until April 28<sup>th</sup>. I will have sent all the money before that though.

They tell me I am making sergeant soon. I haven't gone out of my way to get it or I haven't asked for it and I don't want anyone saying that I did. I think the rating should go to someone else but they don't think so. I will be "Chief of Section" in charge of 2 tanks. It is a big job if it is done right. That's the way I plan to try to do it. I will do my best. That's all that should be expected of me. I don't think I know enough about it to be a sergeant but then again I know as much as the rest of them and there are a lot of guys in this Army holding down jobs that they never should have gotten in the first place. Don't address my mail as Sgt. yet.

I went to 8:30 Mass this morning, had a good sermon. I missed going to receive last week. Josephine probably told you. I wanted to go this morning but I got up about 4:30 and went to the toilet and darn if I took a drink of water, never thinking. The chaplain has been having a Mass Friday nites at 5:30 and hearing confessions then too. We could go to receive if we fasted from solid foods for 4 hrs. and from liquids for 1 hr. It doesn't sound right to me but that's the way it was. We always have an N.C.O. meeting on Tuesday and Friday nites at 5:30 so I never got to Mass at that time. He told us this morning that he would not have any more Masses then. I guess he never got much of a crowd. He said he might say Mass on some other nite.

I'm glad Mildred is well and I hope she will be up and around soon.

I suppose Edna will soon be going to Htfd. I hope she gets a good job.

Wendell is running a bull dozer, eh? I bet he likes it. He is in a pretty good outfit. They learn to build a lot of things with just a little of nothing to work with. I've seen different jobs that engineers have done. I was surprised at some of them.

All of the fellows here said that their insurance policies were sent to their people. You say you haven't received either mine or Wendell's. I will look into it.

We have a quite a lot of snow here now. It started Friday. It is very nice out now.

I saw a good movie yesterday “Keeper of the Flame” Hepburn & Tracy acted in it. It’s the best show I’ve seen in a long time.

Well I guess that’s about all I can think of for now.

Love to all

*Clifford*



**March 3, 1943**

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Indiantown Gap, PA, Mar 4, 1943. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap, Military Res., Pa., U.S. Army. Stationery: One single sheet, gold-embossed eagle, Indiantown Gap Military Reservation, Pennsylvania, black ink, both sides.]

Wed. Nite.

*Dear folks*

Got your letter today. Thanks a lot for the snap shots. You came out very good, Ma. The others are pretty good but a little blurred. The one taken behind the house is very nice. I wish I could really see it – I mean the hill with all the snow.

Tomorrow I am going to ask for a pass for Monday. I am almost sure I won't get it, but as I said before there is nothing like trying.

I told you in the last letter that I would be made sergeant soon – well now I am one.

This afternoon a friend of mine got a telegram saying that his little cousin was hit by an automobile and seriously injured. I let him take my over coat to go home, as his is in the dry cleaners. If I get a chance to go out this week end I will have to borrow one.

I am sending this money order to pay my insurance. I will send more next month. I will be getting more money now that I am a sergeant and I may be able to send some to you to help you out. I guess the food prices are awfully high now, not only that but I guess it is hard to get what you want. I do hope you have enough ration tickets to get all the can foods you need. We must be sending an awful lot of food over across.

I was sorry to hear about Mrs. Amedy I hope she gets better.

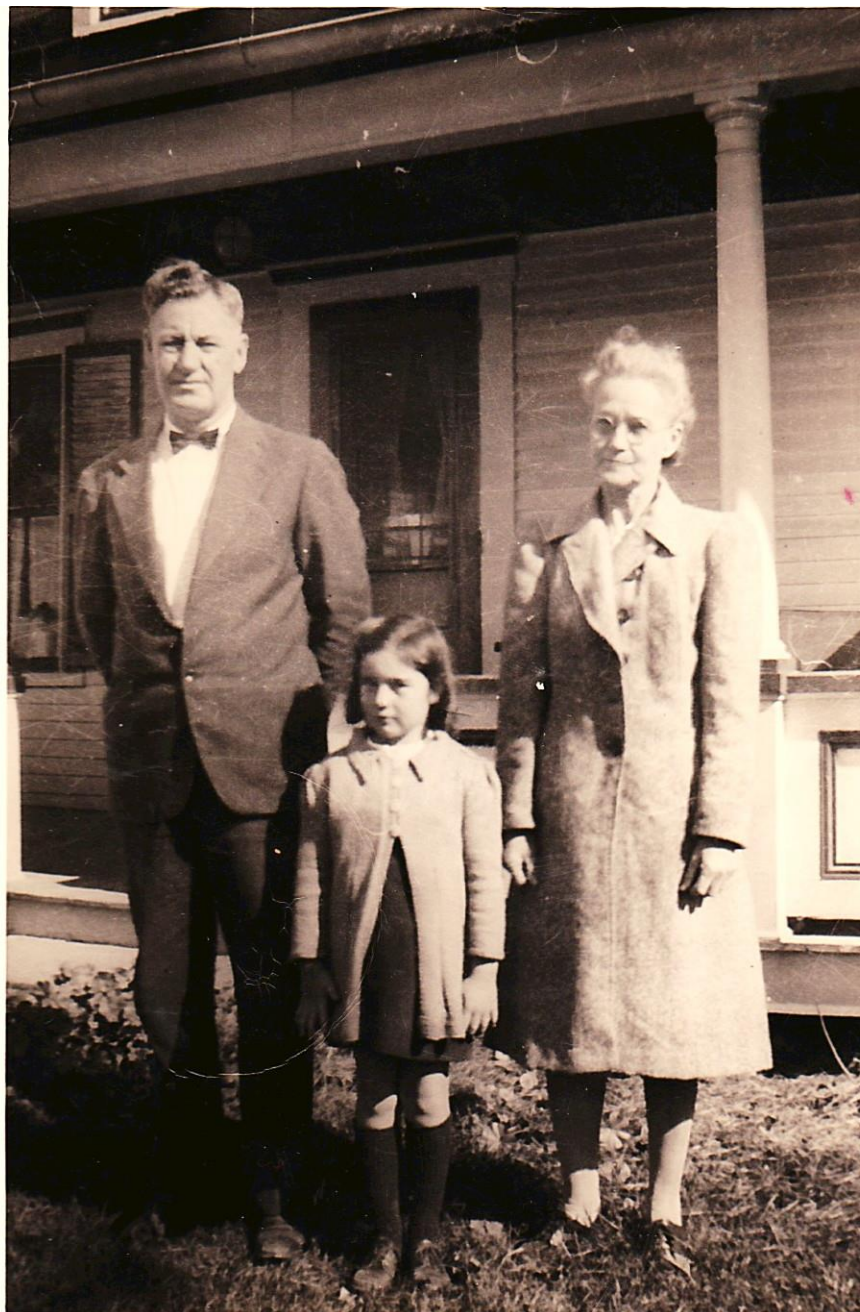
I suppose Edna & Helen are in Htfd now. I hope Helen don't get any more cold. Htfd. is an awful place to have a cold it is usually damp, and colds hang on for a long time.

I pity poor Mrs. Perrault she must do a lot of worrying. I hope you don't worry too much about Wendell & I – but I know you do, Ma and Pa too.

Well I think I'll close and go to the movies – it is now about 7:30.

Love to all

*Clifford*



*Peter and Lula O'Connor with granddaughter Marilyn Cozzi, Clifford's niece.  
[It's not known which "snapshots" were included in this letter, though this was taken during  
the time he was at Indiantown Gap.]*



**March 9, 1943**

[Envelope: FREE Postmarked Indiantown Gap, PA., Mar 10, 1943. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap, Military Res., Pa., U.S. Army. Stationery: Single sheet, gold-embossed, "Indiantown Gap Military Reservation, Pennsylvania;" both sides, black ink.]

*Dear folks*

Got the letter yesterday that you wrote Thursday. Glad to hear that Mildred and the baby are getting along fine, and I hope the new formula works good for the baby.

I just got out of another N.C.O. meeting. They are a pain in the neck every Tues. & Friday night. They last about 1 hr. to 1 ½ hrs., but they take up time. I could be writing letters or doing something else.

It has been pretty cold here lately. Yesterday we were on the firing range all day firing our bigs in our tanks. Range firing is a very slow process and there is always a lot of waiting around, and boy it was cold out there.

I couldn't get yesterday off. I asked for it last Thursday. Our whole Co. is anxiously waiting for a pass. There is a rumor that we may possibly get a few days off soon. We go on the big range again soon – if our firing is satisfactory I think we will get a pass. They always have Tank Des. Outfits work on a competitive basis so the men will try harder to do their best. Whenever a pass is involved you can bet we really put out all we have.

I suppose Edna is looking for a job and I hope she gets a good one. I hope Helen had a good time while she was in Htfd.

Tomorrow night ashes will be given out at the chapel. Al Morrie and I are planning on going. I suppose you will be going in the morning or you may wait until night and go with Pa.

Well I guess I'll close.

Love to all

*Clifford*



*The chapel at Fort Indiantown Gap.  
Photos taken by Karen O. Bray in March 2007*



**March 10, 1943**

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Indiantown Gap, PA., Mar 11, 1943. Ma wrote side notes on this envelope, to remind herself what news to include in the next letter: i.e., "Edward Guy ...; about baked beans & Stubly; tell him about Earl & Pereault boy." Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap, Military Res., Pa., U.S. Army. Stationery: Single plain small sheet; both sides; black ink.]

*Dear folks*

Got your letter today. Guess I'll answer it right now.

We went to the chapel tonite to get the ashes. It only lasted about 20 minutes. The chaplain would liked to have stayed a little while and give us a little sermon, but he had to go and administer more blessed ashes.

I am glad Helen got back safely and glad to know Edna has done so well. That school she will attend is on the corner of Park St. and Laurel St. right across from Pope's Park. There must be an awfully lot of girls working in Pratt & W. now. I sure would like to be back there.

It was quite warm here today and thawing too. It makes a lot of mud around the barracks.

The chance for a pass I told you about is out for this wk. Possibly next wk. we will get it. You must get sick of reading about passes in all of my letters. It looks like that's all I think of. We aren't doing any extensive training now and I don't see any reason why we can't get a pass once in a while.

Al Morrie has gone to a movie tonite. I would have gone but I had to do a little laundry. My overalls were so greasy I was ashamed to wear them. Everything in a tank is greasy and boy we get plenty of it on our clothes.

I will get a picture taken and send it I've been going to have some nice pictures taken for a long time, but I never get around to it.

Well I guess that's about all I can think of for now.

Love to all

*Clifford*

**March 14, 1943**

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Indiantown Gap, Pa., March 15, 1943. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 53, Indiantown Gap, Military Res., Pa., U.S. Army. Stationery: Single small gold-embossed letterhead sheet, Indiantown Gap Military Reservation, Pennsylvania, both sides, black ink.]

Sun. Morn.

*Dear folks*

Got your letter yesterday and Helen's Thursday.

Oh, oh, I have just started writing and here comes the mail clerk with the mail. He just tossed me a big package from you. I'll have to stop writing and see what it is. ----- Whow!! A nice box of cookies. You shouldn't send things like that I know you want to but it must make you awfully short of sugar. The cookies are real good. A little hard but that's the way I like them.

I went to receive this morning Al went with me. I thought I'd be late for confession but I made it. We of course had no breakfast and these cookies taste swell.

It is a beautiful morning here a little snappy but the sun is shining and it should be real nice this afternoon.

I went to Harrisburg last nite with the same fellow I went with before. We visited with that family I told you about. We got back here in camp just about midnite.

Tell Helen, thanks, for writing to me. I'm glad she had a good time. I can imagine how tired she was. I suppose Edna will have today off. Or maybe they work the same way we used to just before I came into the Army. Work 5 days and have 1 off. Giving you a different day off every week. I don't care much about that system.

I just now noticed the cake in the bottom of the box. It is swell. It must have taken a lot of your sugar. Anyway thanks an awfully lot for sending them.

I must close and get ready for chow.

Love to all

*Clifford*

March 21, 1943

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Indiantown Gap, Pa., March 22, 1943. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap, Military Res., Pa., U. S. Army. Stationery: Two small sheets, with blue eagle/shield; three sides, black ink.]

Sun. Morn.

*Dear folks*

Got 2 letters here from you and its about time I wrote.

I was glad to hear Earl Guy has been discharged also Al Morrie's brother. I bet they are glad.

It is a beautiful morning here nice and crispy. In some places around here the hills are starting to get green. It sure looks good – of course it may snow and spoil everything – March is a funny month.

We went to Mass this morning – had a nice little sermon. It is now about 10:30 I suppose you folks are down at Mildred's now. They are going to have a Mission here next week at a chapel in Area 3. It is a quite a little walk down there, but I imagine we will go for a few nights at least. There is a Father Alexis St. Onge here I don't know him, but I saw his name on the card telling about this Mission. I think he comes from Barre. This Mission will be given by a Father Sweeney I think.

It won't be long before the trout season opens up there. I wish I could be there for it. I got a letter from Rene Sabbato. He told me he is going home for Easter and wanted to know if I could possibly get home then. I hope I can.

I don't know what to do today. It seems funny to be setting around and not hearing any whistles blowing for us to fall out. I have a quite a few letters to write. I guess that will keep me busy. I think I'll go to the movies today. A good show is playing "Forever and a Day."

I suppose Pa will be going to that darn post again tonite. I bet he gets sick of it. Can't blame him.

Well it is almost chow time and I guess I had better close. I think we are having pork chops today. The food here is still very good.

Love to all

*Clifford*





**March 24, 1943**

[Envelope: Postmarked Indiantown Gap, PA., Mar 25, 1943. Appears to have had the customary „Free” noted at top but most of right-top is torn off. Sgt, C. B. O’Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap, Military Res., Pa., U.S. Army. Stationery: Two small sheets, with eagle and flag shield in blue; four sides; black ink.]

Wed. Nite

*Dear Father*

Got your letter this evening – I have some time to myself to nite so I guess I’ll answer it right now.

We have an N.C.O. meeting every nite now from 5 until about 6 or 6:30 – except Wednesday and of course Sat & Sun. we don’t have them.

I got a letter from Edna yesterday. She seems to like her job very much. I’m glad she does. She learns pretty fast and should get along pretty good. She told me about Mary being sick. Something always seems to be wrong with her.

So Wendell is in Penn. now. I tore the letter open so fast I ripped the part that you wrote his address on. I made out – Engineer Personal Replacement Depot Transfer Shenango, Penn. Is that right? I never heard of that place and nobody here seems to have. I hope it isn’t far from here so I can see him and maybe we could get home together sometime. I have been looking on a map for it, but I couldn’t find it.

Things look like we will be here for a quite a while. I only hope so. We are all hoping that we will stay here for the summer. It seems too good to be true, and probably too much to expect.

It has been very nice here lately – a bit cold and windy, but nice. It snowed a little the other day but it soon melted and is all gone now.

I’m glad to know that Mildred & Johnny’s baby is doing so good.

We go on the big range to fire our guns again Friday. We will fire for record. I am hoping that my section does well. If we do well enough we may get a pass. I have a couple of darn good gunners they should do good if they don’t get excited everything will be O.K. I am enclosing a picture of our tank destroyers. It has been a quite a military secret for some time, but when they start putting it in magazines I guess it is no longer such. The U.S. always shows all they have got to the public some day they will wake up – I hope. We haven’t been able to even talk about this and take pictures of it and all of a sudden we see it in one of our current magazines and news papers. The picture shows a right front view of it. It resembles a tank very much however there are some differences. Menacing looking, isn’t it? You probably have seen pictures of it before and know as much about it as we do.

Well I must close now hoping you all are well.

Love to all

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford".

Another road march tomorrow. I better get some sleep.

Enclosure: Magazine picture of tank destroyer as described in letter.

March 27, 1943

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Indiantown Gap, PA, Mar 28, 1943. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap Military Res., Pa., U.S. Army. Stationery: two small sheets with blue eagle/flag emblem; 3 sides; black ink.]

Sat. P.M.

*Dear Folks*

I got your letter this noon. Haven't heard from Wendell as yet maybe I'll get a letter tomorrow. Someone said that Shanengo is on the other side of Pittsburg. That must be about 200 miles from here. Has he mentioned in any of his letters about being in any special Division or attached to one or anything? He probably won't have to go over just yet. You know when we came here we all thought we would be sailing right away. In fact we were supposed to go from Pickett about Jan. 15, according to a Colonel that was here lecturing about Africa. I guess I told you about him – he had been in Africa and came back.

Rumors are flying around about us going here and there, but they don't mean much. It looks to me as though we would be here for some time to come.

Well we went on the big gun range yesterday and things didn't go over so good. Result – no 3 day passes. Al Morrie and I are planning very much on going home soon. Can't let you know when.

I hope Joe is home by now. Annie wrote me a letter she told me about it.

I don't blame Pa for getting mad about the butter and things like that. There is no reason why everybody should have to skimp like that. We don't have butter all the time either and a few other things and boy we get mad too. I guess they are giving it all to the other countries or it is going to the bottom of the sea. I get a laugh out of this Lend Lease Act. What suckers we Americans are.

I suppose it is better for us to send food and supplies than it is to send men. But look what Russia did. They weren't even telling the people about us giving anything. It is supposed to be straightened out now, but is it? After Nazism and Hitler and all his Krauts have been taken care of and also Japan. I think we have another big problem which most people are overlooking and that is Russia. They aren't fighting for nothing and certainly not to preserve Democracy in the U.S. It is bad to think like that much less to talk about it, but it is the truth.

It has been a dreary day here and sprinkling a little bit. I hope it clears up for tomorrow.

Well guess I'll close hoping you are all well. Love to all

*Clifford*

April 5, 1943

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Indiantown Gap, PA, April 5, 1943. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap, Military Res., Pa., U.S. Army. Stationery single plain sheet; black ink, both sides.]

Mon. Morn.

*Dear folks*

It seems strange to be writing so early in the day. It is only 8:15 A.M. I am Sergeant of the Guard went on yesterday at 11:30 A.M. till tonite at 4:30. I was planning on going out this wk. end too. Today I will have a good rest, nothing to do but stay here in the guardhouse with my first relief. The posts don't have to be walked during the daytime but they keep some guards on hand just the same.

It is a very nice morning here. It snowed a little last nite but it has all melted now. The Co. is going out on a problem today and will be coming back tonite, I guess. I don't have to go and I'm not sorry. I hope they don't take my tanks either.

Wendell sent me a card I will write to him today. I'm going to try and get a pass this coming wk. end and go home.

I was sorry to hear Ray Fitzpatrick has lost so much weight. He probably will get it all back after he gets over the effects from the shots. I still weigh the same as I did when I came in possibly a little more but not much.

I got a letter from Bill Cleary, boy I was surprised and glad too. I'm going to answer it today. I wrote him a couple letters but I guess he didn't get them yet. He wrote it March 18, and I got it the 31<sup>st</sup>. It was held up in NY for some time according to the postmark. It was stamped March 21<sup>st</sup> by the A.P.O. in NY. It don't seem possible that it could have gotten from Africa to NY in 3 days but it must have, and it took 10 days getting from NY to here. He sends his best regards to you all was asking about Mildred & Johnny and the baby.

I am going to get a money order today from the mail orderly and I'll send it in my next letter.

I have two letters here from you one of March 29<sup>th</sup> and one of April 1<sup>st</sup>. I didn't write to anyone all week. I usually wait till the wk. end now. I can't think of any more so will close hoping you are all well.

Love

*Clifford*



April 7, 1943

[Envelope: FREE; postmark Indiantown Gap, PA, Apr 8, 1943. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap Military Res., Pa., U.S. Army. Plain stationery, single sheet, both sides; blue-black ink. *Figures on reverse of envelope: \$15.00 plus \$20.00, total \$35.00 less \$27.87, with a total of \$7.13 ... is this what Ma had remaining from the money order? KOB*]

Wed. Eve.

*Dear Folks*

I got your letter today. Sorry to hear of Mrs. Amedy's death. I didn't know about it before. I knew she was very sick but hadn't heard about her dying. I feel sorry for Russel & Bobbie.

I'm glad Edna got home I bet she was glad to see you all. I must write to her tonite I got a letter from her the 31<sup>st</sup>.

You must have felt awfully about not having any meat and Edna bringing company. We get plenty of meat here – a quite a lot of pork.

I got a letter from Mildred yesterday. She was telling me all about the baby. I would like to see him.

I am sending this money order so you can pay my insurance. There will be a little left you can get something you want with it.

This wk. end I'm going to try for a pass again, but I don't think I'll get it as our platoon leader is pretty sore at all of us right now. If I don't get a pass I'll probably go to Htfd for the wk. end or I may go to N.Y. to meet an old friend of mine who used to work at Pratt & Whitney. We will be free from Sat. noon till Mon. morn I suppose unless he restricts us for something.

There is a good show playing tonite "Reap the Wild Wind" I'm not going as I have seen it before.

I think we will be going on some problems soon, Ma so you can send my bed roll sometime along. No hurry. We were supposed to go out tomorrow nite but I understand it has been called off until it gets a little warmer. The nites are pretty cold here yet. I think the best way to send it is by express.

I'll never forget the nite I sent it home we all thought for sure we would never see them again at least not for a long time.

Well I can't think of any more so will close hoping you are all well.

Love to all

*Clifford*

P.S. You probably know Al Morrie is in the hospital – he has ulcers I guess.

April 14, 1943

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Indiantown Gap, Pa., April 15, 1943. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap Military Res., Pa., U.S. Army. Stationery: One single small plain sheet; both sides; black ink.]

Wed. Nite

*Dear folks*

Received your letter also the bed roll and the salami & rolls. I am eating it now and boy does it ever taste good!! I gave a little to some of my best friends they thought it was swell. You must have had a quite a time of it trying to get it. I figured it must be hard to get that kind of stuff now. I can't thank you enough for it.

We went out Monday morning as I told Mildred we would. We didn't stay over night. It rained nearly all day. It was a short problem anyway.

You mentioned that Wendell is in N.Y.C. I hope I can get to see him. But I doubt if I'll get a chance. We will be free this wk. end and possibly next. After that we are going to work 7 days a wk. At least that is what they told us tonite.

Al Morrie is out of the hospital now, and he and I are planning on going home this coming wk. end. Now don't plan on it too much because anything can happen and spoil everything.

We are supposed to parade before General Watson (Division Gen.) Friday morning. The whole Div. will be there. Then we are supposed to be off until Mon. morning. It sounds good but may not be true. It will probably be my last chance to get home for some time. I hope we make it.

Oh! Oh! Here is a black out. The alarm is blowing now. I must hurry and end this letter.

Hoping to see you all soon.

Thanks again for the salami.

Love to all

*Clifford*

April 17, 1943

[Envelope: Two 3-cent stamps, Air Mail, postmarked Indiantown Gap, PA April 19, 1943. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES BN. (H), A.P.O. 253 Indiantown Gap Military Res, Pa., U.S. Army. Single small plain sheet, blue-black ink, both sides.]

Sat. P.M.

*Dear folks*

Well by this time you folks have probably seen Al Morrie.

It has turned out to be a nice day here and I suppose it is up home too. I wish I was there. Oh well. If everything goes right I'll be with you Easter wk. end.

Gee, thanks for the maple sugar. I wish you wouldn't send those things that of course you have to do without.

Poor Wendell. I'm sorry to hear he is all set to go. It may not be so, but when you get into N.Y.C. and mail is censored it looks bad. I wish I could have seen him it makes me mad. This darn war has made a lot of people unhappy and I suppose it will make a lot more before it is over. I'm going to write to Wendell as soon as I finish this. I don't see why they send the poor young guys with no training I pity them. When he gets on the other side he will be safe for a quite a while I think. Of course that all depends on where he is sent.

I expect after this battle for Tunis & Blizert is over they will reorganize the 2<sup>nd</sup> Arm'd Div. & 1<sup>st</sup> Army. That should take a quite a while after that I suppose there will be an onslaught on the main land of Europe.

Tomorrow I'm going to try and go to Communion.

I hate to ask you but I guess I'll have to. If you could spare \$10. I wish you would send it. Don't make yourselves short now. I'll be able to get it somewhere if you can't make it. We may take off Thursday nite on our passes if we are lucky. Otherwise it will be Friday noon.

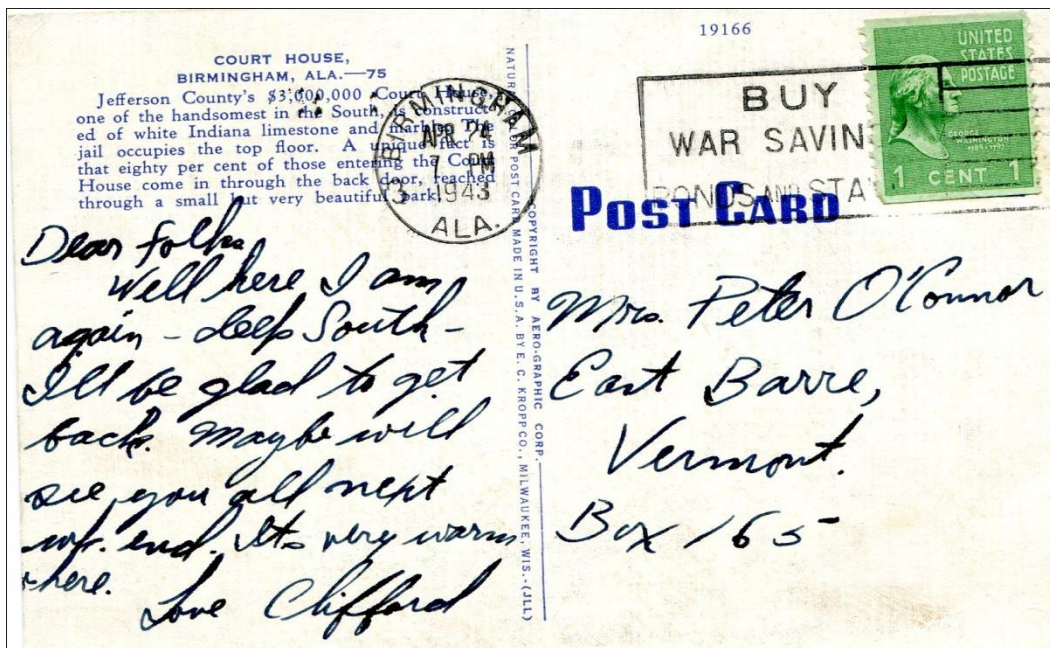
Well thanks again for the sugar I must close and write to Wendell.

Love to All

*Clifford*

April 24, 1943

Postcard from Birmingham, Alabama:





April 30, 1943

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Indiantown Gap, PA., April 30, 1943. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap, Military Res., Pa., U.S. Army. Stationery: single sheet folded into quarters; black ink; three sides written.]

Friday

*Dear Father*

Well I'm back from Alabama – what a trip. Very tiresome. I got back here Wed. P.M. I haven't had time to write until now. I got your Easter Card and the money.

I was thinking of Pa on his Birthday. I didn't send any card because when I thought of it it was too late.

I went to Mass Easter Sun. in Montgomery, Ala. At 9:30 it was very hot down there and it was a bright sunny day. I started back with my prisoner Monday nite. He didn't give me any trouble at all. He has been A.W.O.L. for 11 months. He didn't come back he said because he thought we were still under that mean old Captain I told you about so many times. He said he would rather be shot. I think I would have had a tough time with him had that Captain still been in Command here. I felt foolish following him around with a pistol hanging at my side. I was embarrassed and I can imagine how he felt. I had hand cuffs but did not use them. We rode all the way back in a coach – I rode down from Washington D.C. to Birmingham in a Pullman – that was OK. But coming back I wasn't suppose to sleep at all. However I did a little.

I asked about my pass as soon as I got back, but it looks bad. I may get it later. I'm not planning on it.

Have you heard any more from Wendell? I think of him all day long and wonder where he is.

It is raining here today. Tomorrow we are going on a problem and Sunday we go out firing all day I think.

Well I must close

Love to all

*Clifford*



*May 1943  
Fort Indiantown Gap Military Reservation, Pa.  
“Koley, Scottie & I” (Clifford center)*

**May 4, 1943**

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked May 5, 1943, Indiantown Gap, Pa. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap, Military Res., Pa., U.S. Army. Stationery: Single small plain sheet, folded in four sheets, two sheets written, black ink.]

*Dear folks*

Got your letter also Helen's.

We have been pretty busy here lately. We are supposed to have a big inspection here some time along.

Tomorrow we go on another problem we have a lot of them now. They just last one day. We are suppose to learn a lot from them, but we really don't. I hope the officers are getting something out of them, 'cause all we get is a darn rough ride across the country.

Have you heard anything from Wendell. I suppose he is nearly there by now. He must be thinking of us and wondering what we are doing just as we are of him.

Here I go again talking about a pass. – I may possibly get home a few days or at least one day soon. I won't say when so you won't plan on it. I'm not exactly sure.

It is pretty nice here now a little chilly but not bad.

I got a letter from Edna last Friday she seems to like her job and is getting along fine.

I am very very tired tonite and just can't think what to say so I had better close and get some sleep.

Love to all

*Clifford*

May 10, 1943

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Indiantown Gap, PA., May 11, 1943. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771. Co. B. 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap, Military Res., Pa., U.S. Army. Stationery one sheet folded into quarters; four sides written, blue-black ink.]

Mon. Nite

*Dear Folks*

I guess it is about time to write. We have been awfully busy here lately. Getting ready for a big inspection. Today we stood inspection in ranks for neatness & cleanliness etc. It went over good tomorrow it will be the barracks & mess hall. They are a pain in the neck to me.

I'm sorry I didn't get home last weekend. I didn't get out of camp until quite late Thursday. Al Morrie did the right thing and took off early. I had to stay and see that my tank was cleaned up. They miss a sergeant much quicker than anyone else. I just couldn't leave early that's all.

I finally got out of Harrisburg on a train about 11 P.M. I didn't know where I was going whether I should go to Htfd. or where. I finally met a pal of mine and I went home with him to Providence R.I.

Have you heard any more from Wendell?

Tonite it is raining to beat the band here, but has been pretty nice all day.

I got Jo's letter last Thursday. I haven't been doing much writing at all lately. There is so darned much cleaning to be done I haven't had time.

On the way back to camp Sat. nite we met a Scotch soldier in N.Y. we had a lot of fun talking with him. He sure likes the U.S. I got talking to him about the Limey's and found out they feel the same over there as a lot of us feel here. He looked funny with the "tammy" they wear and the big red tassle hanging on it.

They told us in Providence that it was impossible to get some potatoes. Is it the same way up home. I never realized that it was that bad. We usually have them here but sometimes we don't get them. We have been getting a lot of pork lately. I suppose all the beef is sent over in the desert in No. Africa. I don't suppose pork would keep good there. We never got pork while on the desert in Calif.

When I was in Ala. I had a quite a time getting something to eat one nite it was after 1 o'clock and they aren't suppose to sell any food to soldiers after that hour except those on furlough. I finally got a meal because I was traveling on special orders. The food shortage is worse in the South I guess.

Well I guess I'll close – I am fine and hope you are all well.

Love

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letter being a large capital 'C'.



May 17, 1943

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Indiantown Gap, PA., May 18 1943, Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap, Military Res., Pa., U.S. Army. Stationery single small sheet; black ink, both sides.]

Mon. Nite.

*Dear folks*

I have two letters here from you and its about time I wrote. I just finished writing to Mildred & Johnny and now I will try and think of something to say to you folks.

I would have written before but we have been very busy. Problems & firing etc.

I'm glad you heard from Wendell. If he is in Africa he will be safe for a while any way. The picture you sent me was very good of him.

I managed to get to Mass yesterday even though it was a duty day. We went out on a problem last nite. It was very nice out there, but I can't say as I enjoyed it. I suppose it is about the same up home as it is here.

Al and I may be home soon for a short stay. We have been going straight since last Sun. and are due for a little time off. I'm not planning too much on it.

I can't think of anything to say I guess I'll close and take a shower and go to bed. I can't help thinking of Wendell and how much he would enjoy a shower now. When we go on problems we think we have it tough, but I guess we shouldn't complain.

Love to all

*Clifford*

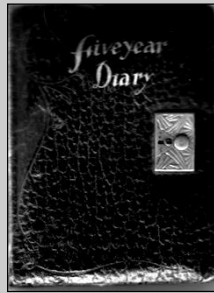
A good thunder storm is brewing here now.



*This picture of Wendell was taken in April 1943.  
Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri*

**From Ma's Diary, May 21-23, 1943: ...*"C came in morning with Al Morrie to stay till Sunday noon ... He was very lonesome and sad going away."***

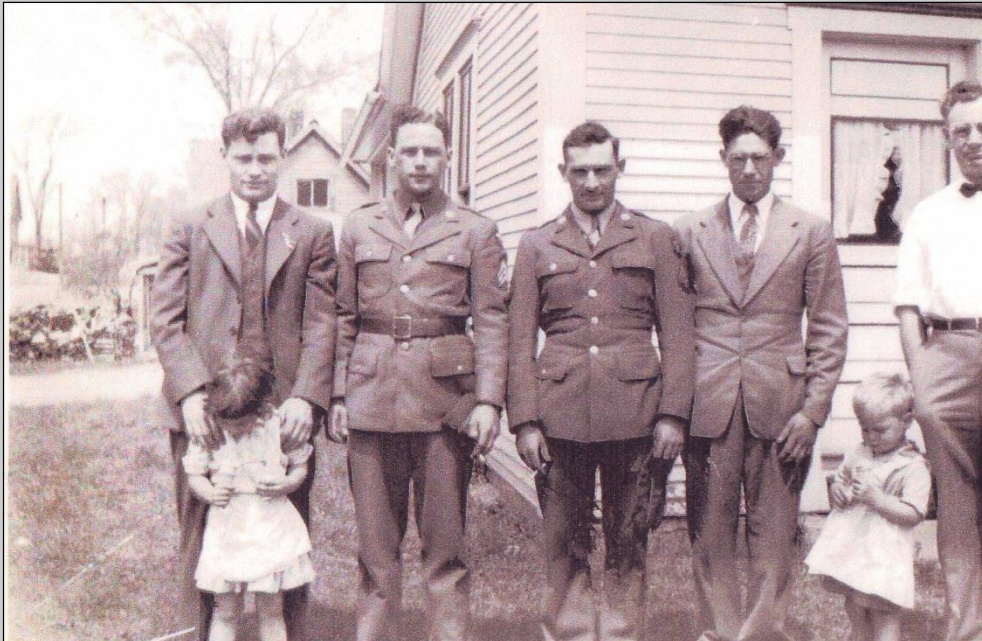
**Clifford's Last Home Leave Before Going Across;  
Al Morrie's Last Time at Home.**



May 21, 1943 – Friday

*P & L worked. C came in morning with Al Morrie to stay till Sunday noon. H stayed down to M's in p.m. & came home with L at night. C & P stayed up talking till 5 o'clock in morning.*

***"...C & P stayed up talking till 5 o'clock in morning."***



***(l-r) Lawrence with Lorraine O'Connor; Clifford O'Connor; Al Morrie; Wyness Morrie, Al's brother; Bobby O'Connor; Peter O'Connor (Pa). Sunday, May 23, just before Clifford and Al headed back to camp.***

May 22, 1943 – Saturday

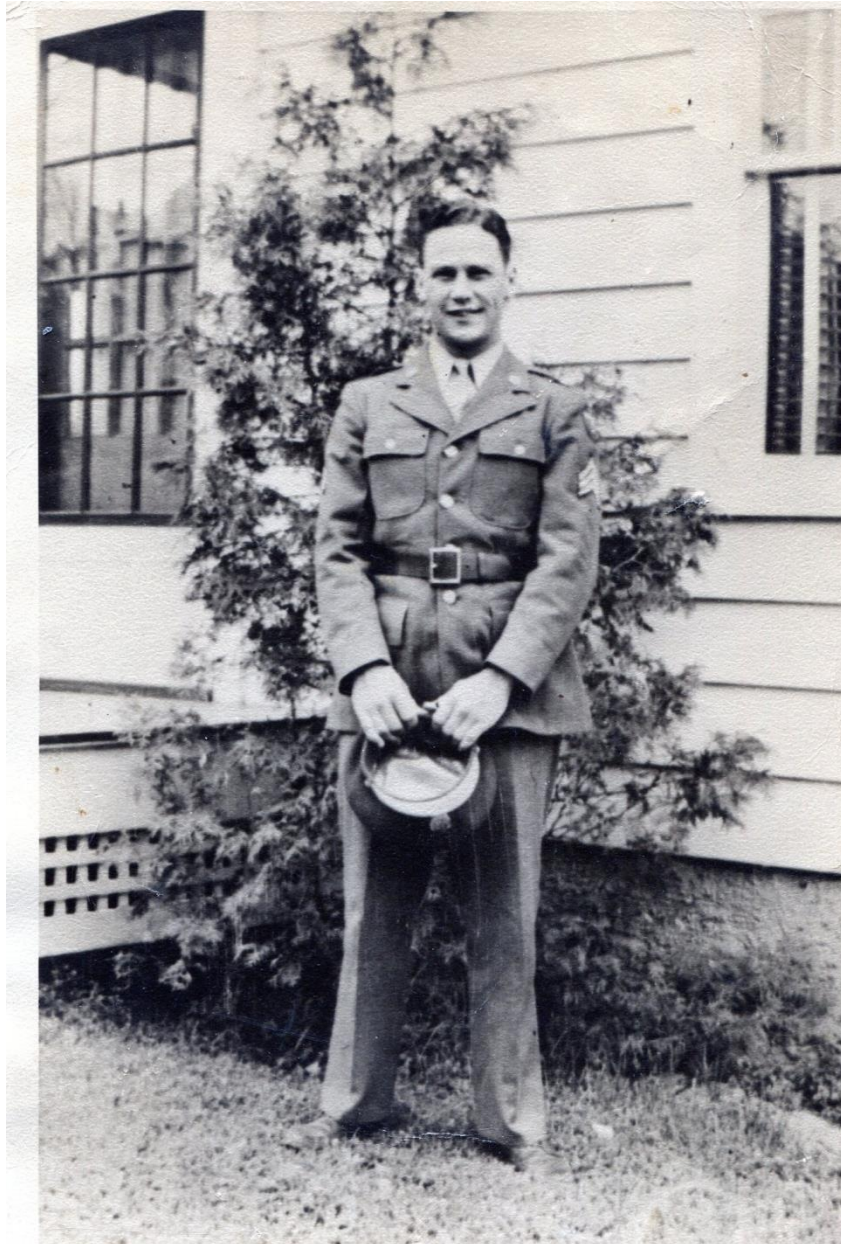
*Helen & I are just sick we are so tired from being awake all night. P bought 2 pigs. H & C & I went to Barre in a.m. & Lottie went down with us.*



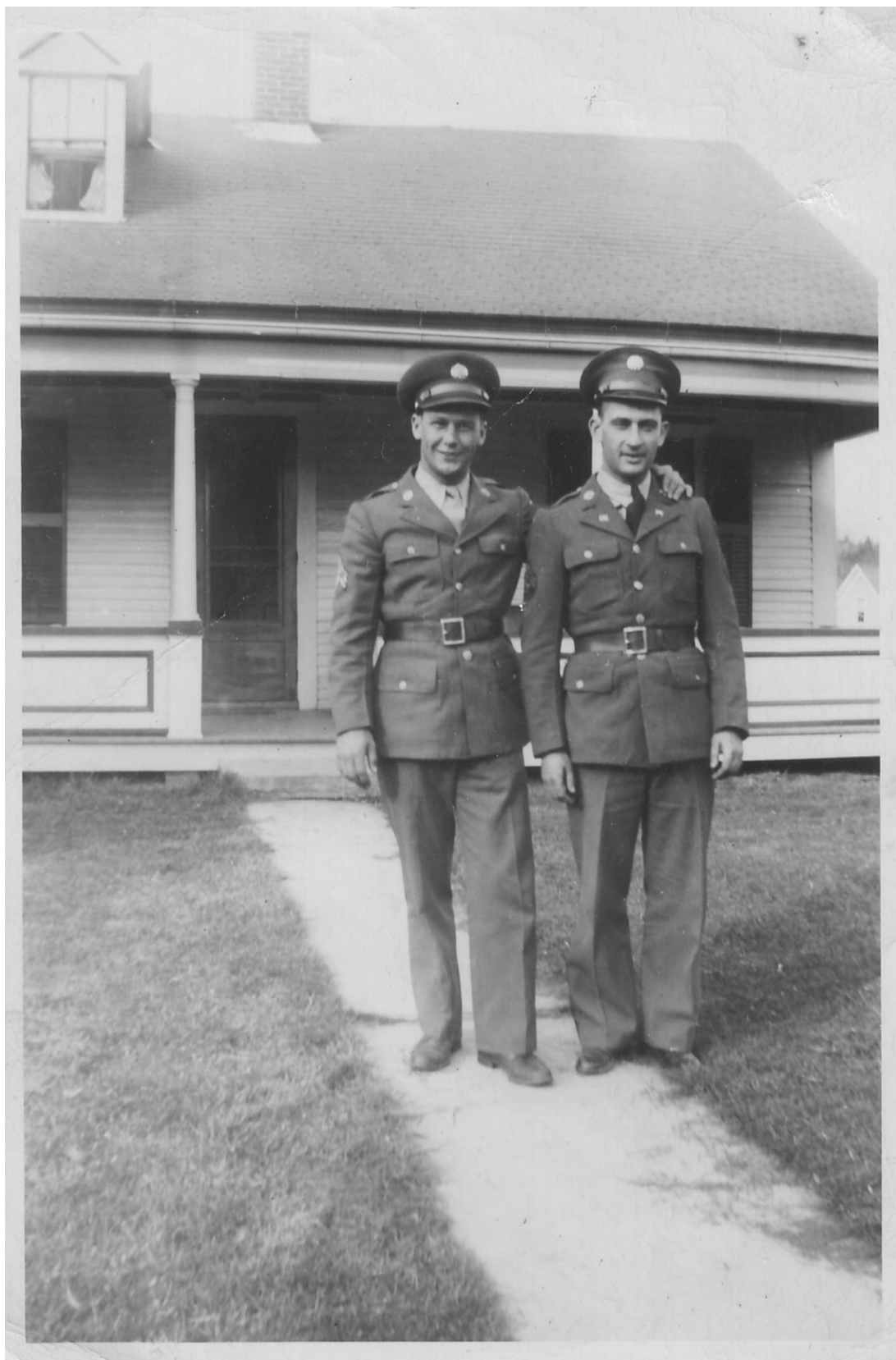
*May 23, 1943 – Sunday*

*P did not go to Mass or to the post. Very nice warm day. C & H & I went to 9.15 Mass. L & J & children were here for dinner. C went back at noon. He was very lonesome & sad going away. P was out again till late at night.*

*“...C went back at noon. He was very lonesome & sad going away.”*

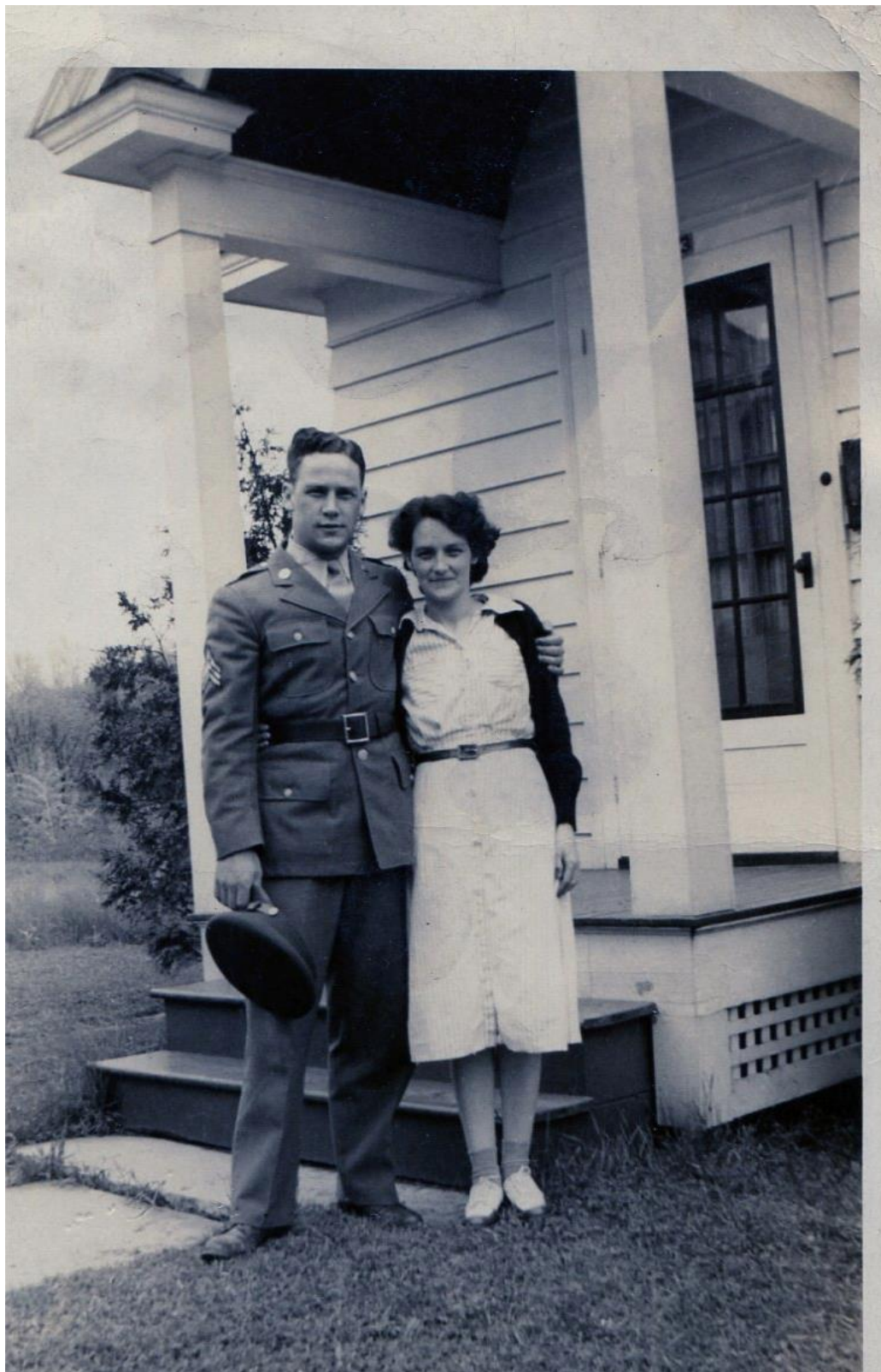


*Clifford O'Connor, May 1943*



*Clifford and Al Morrie.*





*Clifford O'Connor with sister Mildred O'Connor Cozzi, May 1943.  
Picture taken at Mildred's home in Barre, Vermont.*



May 24, 1943

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Indiantown Gap, PA, May 25, 1943. Ma wrote, "answered," on this envelope. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap, Military Res., Pa., U.S. Army. Stationery as above, single small sheet, black ink, both sides.]

*Dear folks*

Well I'm back at the old grind again. We got in this morning about 4:55. We haven't been as tired as we had expected to be today.

Edna & Mary Cleary & Francis were at the Station in Htfd to meet me. They had a camera and took a few shots. The train only stopped about 5 minutes. I'm very glad I saw them even if it was only for a minute or two. They all looked very good, and thought I did.

The letter you wrote Thursday morn. was waiting for me here.

We haven't done much of any thing today except motor maintenance, getting our vehicles in shape for the problem Wednesday.

It has been really chilly here today.

I was just reading about that terrible train wreck in N.J. I suppose it was sabotage. There are an awful lot of Germans around there I guess. I should think they would try to wreck a freight train with war supplies rather than a passenger train. But of course a passenger train wreck acts more on our morale I suppose.

I hope you folks have calmed down a bit and aren't still arguing about the chicks & pigs.

Well I guess I'll hit the hay it's only 8 P.M. but I'm a little tired.

Love to all

*Clifford*

We had some new potatoes for dinner today. I was thinking how much you folks would have enjoyed having them.



***Union Station, Hartford, Ct.  
State Capitol in Background***

*(Undated, contemporary photo; same scene as Clifford would have met when his sister Edna and cousins Mary and Francis met him briefly as described in his May 24, 1943, letter.*



***1940's postcard image of the Hartford, Ct., Capitol building visible in the above photo.***

June 3, 1943

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Indiantown Gap, Pa., June 3, 1943; Ma wrote "Answered." Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN. (H) A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap, Military Res., Pa., U.S. Army. Stationery: Single small sheet, both sides, black ink.]

Thur. Morn.

*Dear folks*

I got both your letters and the laundry & cigs. Thank you very much and also the snap shots, they are very good especially the ones of Helen and I and Mildred and I. I didn't expect them to be nearly as good. I would like to have the negatives after you folks are done with them so I can have some more made – I want to send some to Pat & his wife and maybe Edna would like some. I look like a German out to beat the world in that picture I've took together, Ma. Sometime we'll get a good picture together also with Pa. That proof isn't bad, but I look kind of funny in it.

I got a letter from Wendell June 1<sup>st</sup> he wrote it May 1<sup>st</sup> – air mail too. It took an awfully long time getting here. Nothing was cut out of it – it was not a V-letter. He said it was nice there and he was feeling fine – said he got a kick out of the Arabs. He said he wrote you a letter that same day. He is getting a quite a sun tan he says. I must write to him today. I was very glad to hear from him and dropped everything when I saw the letter.

I am Sgt. of the guard today and I have time to catch up on a little writing. The Co. is going on a road march today again I suppose we guards will have it tomorrow.

We had a couple of problems since I came back, but we are just rested up now.

I am sending \$20. by money order to pay back what you folks gave me. I wish you would use it if you need it and not put it away for me.

We are still getting good meals here – a lot of mutton and usually potatoes. Every time we have potatoes I think how you folks would enjoy them. I think I eat enough of them to feed a good sized family.

Thank Mrs. Aja for bringing down the antipasto for me.

It is a very nice day here, but a little muggy.

Love to all

*Clifford*

June 12, 1943

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Indiantown Gap, PA., June 14, 1943. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN. (H), A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap, Pa., Military Res., U.S. Army. Stationery: Single long plain sheet, black ink, both sides.]

*Dear folks*

It is Saturday and I'm staying in camp this wk. end. In fact I guess I'll be staying in for a few more of them. A few of us were caught in town by the M.P.'s without neck ties on. A report was sent in and we have been restricted for 30 days – imagine such a thing? I did not have my pass with me as I was going swimming in an old quarry hole and I didn't take my money and my pass was in it. Well anyway I am restricted nearly was broke to a pvt. You don't have to do very much to get into trouble in the Army. I only wish that M.P. was alone he never would have been able to send in a report on me but there were 6 of them. I wouldn't mind it so much if we were doing something wrong but we were just out of uniform. They could have told us to put our ties on and walked off, but oh, no – not those guys. Some day maybe we can square the bargain up. I heard our restriction had been cut down to 2 weeks I hope it has.

I got a letter from Bill Cleary he wrote it May 15 and I got it June 7. He said it was lonesome where he was – even worse than the old farm.

Your letter came today with the films. I was sorry to hear of June Peroni has spinal meningitis. A friend of mine in the Army in Calif. had it quite bad a few weeks ago. He is much better now. For a while they thought he wasn't going to live.

I am doing charge of quarters this wk. end for a friend of mine. It isn't my turn but as long as I have to stay in I may as well do it and let him go to town. I would probably have been going to Reading, Pa. this wk. end. Went to Mass at St. Paul's it is a very nice big church. One thing that remains the same no matter where a person goes is the Mass. Everything else may differ a little to what we are accustomed to, but the Mass is always the same. I like to go to Mass in different places and see different churches, at first I used to feel as though I hadn't been to church at all if I went to Mass in a strange town, but I don't feel like that any more.

It has been nice here today and yesterday but it has been lousy before that raining nearly all the time. I am sending a few pictures in this letter you folks may as well keep them at home. I don't have any place for them. I have enough snap shots hanging around now.

Well I guess I'll close and get to some more writing. You are probably in Barre shopping now, Ma it is 3 o'clock.

Love to all,

*Clifford*

June 19, 1943

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Indiantown Gap, PA, June 20, 1943. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap, Military Res., Pa., U.S. Army. Stationery gold-embossed of the Indiantown Gap Military Reservation, 3 sheets, 5 sides, black ink.]

*Dear Folks*

Got both of your letters one you wrote Sun. & one Wed. I have not received the picture, but probably will get it soon. You certainly are having a time of it with those colored films. I had no idea there was so much red tape to it. If I had have known that I would just have them printed plain if it can be done with that type of film.

I'm glad you heard from Wendell again, and I'm glad to know he is O.K. So he was in Tunis I thought he was there. I wrote to Bill and told him how his and Wendell A.P.O.'s were the same. It may not make any difference, but I should think it would mean they are somewhere near one another if not very close.

Today I got a letter from Edna too. She also was telling me of the holiday they will have off. I don't know if we will get it or not. If we do (and if my restriction is lifted) I think I'll go to Coopers Town, N.Y. with a very good friend of mine. He has asked me to go up with him a number of times.

I think I'll get to see you folks again pretty soon – this time I'll be able to stay a little longer.

By the way did you get the little records in the mail.

I didn't send you a Father's Day card, Pa but I mentioned it on the record and that's better than a card – hope you think so too.

They had a little machine up here in our P.X. (Post Exchange) or a little store whatever you want to call it. I thought you'd like to hear my voice so I made one. I didn't know what to say – that's why it is so short.

I am sergeant of the guard tonight it's not my turn, but I'm doing it for a friend he paid me for it of course. It's no joke being Sgt. of the guard around here now. Before it was a snap – sleep most of the time, but now they got us on the ball. A few prisoners escaped a while back and now they keep us busy watching them and the hard labor gang – what a head ache. We have a little stockade of our own for our Battalion alone, and it is a pain in the neck. No other outfits have one. They send their prisoners to the Post Stockade. That's where they belong anyway. I'll be off at 11:30 tomorrow morning and I'll be glad. Next wk. I'm getting a bad detail I've been dreading it for weeks and it finally came around to my turn – Sgt. of the hard labor. Then I'll have to get up at 4 o'clock every morning and make them work until 6:15 a.m. then they have breakfast and usually they are turned over to their companies to do company duty (regular training) sometimes they work all day. Then again at night at 6:30 until 9 o'clock they haul stone and slate and dig



ditches. They are ones who have gone A.W.O.L. I have to get over them – a lot of them are friends of mine and believe me it is easy to make enemies on that detail. It lasts for 7 days. Every Sgt. gets it in turn. I wish they would do away with hard labor it is just a lot of trouble for everybody.

We have been having some tough training for the last couple of wks. getting ready for a physical fitness course. We had it Tuesday. I got 100% - whow!! What a course – it included a 4 mile road march in 50 minutes full field pack and gun. 300 yd. dash in 45 seconds (no equipment) pig a back races – crawling, creeping, jumping, etc., our company did very well compared to some of the others. It's rumored that those getting 95% or over will get 3 day passes, but I can't believe such a statement until I see it happen. Yesterday some of us noncoms from "B" Co. had to go up and check "A" Co.'s men as they went through – timing them and keeping records. Our Co. did much better it seemed to me. Some of their men passed out on the road march. I think it was the heat more than the strain of the march that got them. I don't know what they think we are – super men – I guess. We do more road marching than any outfit I ever heard of and we always walk faster than the rest do. I think I'd rather go across than to take those darn marches.

Well I think I had better close I've written more in this letter than I ever have in the last 6 months.

Love to all

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford".

July 6, 1943

[Envelope: FREE; postmarked Indiantown Gap, PA, Jul 7, 1943. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN.. A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap, Military Res., Pa. U.S. Army. Stationery plain, single sheet, both sides, black ink.]

*Dear Folks*

About time I wrote I guess. I have 3 letters of yours here that I haven't answered – the last one I got yesterday.

I suppose Edna has gone back and probably Helen went with her.

Have you heard from Wendell again? I hope so.

When I sent that little record I kind of figured it would make you lonesome – but it is nice to have – they played it for me and I didn't think it sounded like my voice at first either.

Gertrude sent me a card from Montreal the other day.



*Gertrude Cleary, Clifford's cousin, undated.*

It has been pretty warm here the last few days, but a few days of last week were chilly. There are a lot of darn flies around here and I suppose there are at home too. I'll never forget the time we had with them in Texas last year about this time – I think those flies are what caused us to get diarrhea. They were always crawling on our food.

We had a good demonstration here last wk. of some bombing from airplanes and strafing and artillery fire. Our tank destroyers stole the show by hitting every target and completely wrecking it. They used old trucks as targets.

The boys are playing a few tricks around here tonight. Right now they are putting a bottle filled with water in a guy's bed. There is a cork in the bottle with a string tied to it and the string is tied to the bed. When he gets in bed he immediately feels the bottle and reaches for it and pulls on it to get it out, and when he pulls the cork comes out and soaks his bed. They are always doing something like that.

We are supposed to get short furloughs soon I don't know when I'll get mine next month some time probably. My name was on the first list to go but was crossed off on account of being restricted. Two bunches left already, about 25 men leave a Co. at a time.

Well I must close. Love to all

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford".

July 11, 1943

[Envelope: Postmark Indiantown Gap, PA Jul 12, 1943. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771  
Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap, Military Res., Pa., U.S. Army.  
Stationery plain, single sheet, both sides, blue-black ink.]

Sun. P.M.

*Dear folks*

Got your letter Wednesday, and I'm finally getting around to answer it. We have been rather busy here for the last few days. Had a big inspection again. Some big shots were here from Washington D.C. late one day last week. The Under Secretary of War – Patterson – was up here in our area. We all were surprised.



***Robert P. Patterson, Sr., then U. S. Under Secretary, later  
Secretary of War, September 1945-July 1947 (Post-war photo, from online)***

I think we are going to move from here very soon. Furloughs are being given out. I may get mine this coming Wed., but I can't plan on it. Everyone is to be back here by the 26<sup>th</sup> I think I'll be getting about 7 days.

I suppose Helen will be starting back from Hartford tonight.

Al Morrie and I went to receive this morning.

Well the Allies are doing very good over there now. Sicily will soon be ours I guess. The next move will probably be up through France. I don't see how Hitler can last much longer.

I haven't heard from Wendell but I hope you folks have. He is no doubt pretty busy these days.

I hope Gene Nerney has gotten over his spell and is feeling better.

Yesterday was a very nice day here but today is dark and dreary. It rained a little this morning. It is very quiet around camp today. After Mass I washed out a pair of coveralls and then put on the boxing gloves and sparred around a little with a friend of mine. Now I'll write a few letters and then take a little nap.

I hope to see you all very soon.

Love to all





July 13, 1943

[Envelope: Free; postmarked Indiantown Gap, PA, July 14, 1943. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap, Military Res., Pa. U.S. Army. Stationery single sheet with United States Army insignia at top; black ink; both sides.]

*Dear Father*

Got your letter I am ans. right away 'cause I wanted to let you know that I heard from Wendell. He is still near Tunis I believe. It was dated June 19. I got it Sun. nite. Pretty good, eh? One word was "cut" I believe it was "Tunis" because he said how he was in a town and in his last letter he mentioned being in that city. He sent me a 5 franc note they get paid in French money he said. I was very glad to hear from him. I wrote to him tonite.



**5-Franc Note from Wendell.**

*Clifford's collection included several notes from his war years, this being the only 5-franc note, Banque de L'Algerie, among them. There is another 20-franc note among the collection, showing "Tunisie," on the next page, indicating these very notes must have come from Wendell.*

I'm not sure when we will be leaving on our furloughs, but it will have to be some time between now and Sun. I'm almost positive of that. It seems we have to qualify on a new weapon (firing it) before we will be permitted to leave. I'm not worrying. I hope Al and I will be going together and I believe we are.

I hope Mildred is feeling better by now. She should get out and get some of the good old sun shine and fresh air.

Well it is quite late and I guess I'll get to bed. First call is early in the morning.

Hope to see you all soon.

Love

*Clifford*



July 29, 1943

[Envelope: Free; postmarked Indiantown Gap, PA Aug 10, 1943; Ma's notation in lower right "boxing pictures in here." Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap, Military Res., Pa., U.S. Army. Stationery as above; two sheets 3 sides, black ink. Two snapshots enclosed – boxing (names on reverse of each).]

*Dear folks*

About time I wrote I guess. We have been quite busy since I came back. I left Htfd. Mon. about 1:30 in the afternoon and got here about 8:30. That is I got to Harrisburg and I got to camp about 10 o'clock Mon. nite. Wednesday there was a big inspection and I stayed up Tues. nite till quite late getting my junk ready. Yesterday I was in charge of a detail out on the range and got back in to find my name on the bulletin board to box. I didn't want to go into the ring especially with the guy they had me up with. He and I are the best of friends. I was pretty mad about it but to be sports we went at it. Both of us got pounded big I guess, but no serious blows were delivered on either side. We are still good pals – it was called a draw – fights between friends like that should be. I think he hit me more than I hit him though. There were about 10 fights everyone enjoyed them I guess, but I had other things to do last nite rather than box and watch others box. I wanted to get my stuff straightened out – after an inspection it is always a job and I wanted to write to you folks last nite too. *[Note: Pictures of the boxing described here are included following the next letter.]*

Well we are still here at the Gap waiting. We don't know what to think any more.

I got your letter Tues. also Helen's from Htfd.

I suppose Marilyn is having a lot of fun up to the house, but probably a little lonesome by this time.

Tonight there is a free movie over at the "Rec" hall, guess I'll go and see it.

I had a pretty good time in Htfd.

Love to all

*Clifford*

P.S. I am sending in the same mail a picture of our whole Co. I am sitting in the front row – 8<sup>th</sup> from the left. Morrie is standing in the 3<sup>rd</sup> row 17<sup>th</sup> from the left. Our Captain "Merle Goodrich" is sitting about in the center with the two silver bars on his collar, those sitting on his left and right are 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenants, with a single bar on their collars.





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*Clifford sent this picture of Company B, 703<sup>rd</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion, home from Indiantown Gap Military Reservation, Pa., under separate cover, but referenced in a letter written on July 29, 1943, soon after he had returned to camp from furlough. The company at that time had pretty much completed state-side training and was preparing to “go across” 6 weeks later.*

*The cropped group photo here represents about half to two thirds of the entire company. Visible, however, in this central section, are Clifford, Al Morrie, and their friends Eddie Arsenault and Roland Anctil, both mentioned elsewhere. The four good friends are sitting as follows:*

***Clifford O'Connor** is 2<sup>nd</sup> from the left, front row (man on his right shown with left shoulder only);*

***Eddie Arsenault** is 9<sup>th</sup> from the left, third row;*

***Al Morrie** is 8<sup>th</sup> from the left, third row, right next to Arsenault;*

***Roland Anctil** is last on the second row, right end.*

**August 9, 1943**

(Dad dated this Aug. 9, "1942" - obvious error)

[Envelope: Free; postmarked Indiantown Gap, PA., Jul 31, 1943. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap, Military Res., Pa. U.S. Army. Stationery gold-embossed "Indiantown Gap Military Reservation, Pennsylvania. Two sheets, three sides, black ink.]

*Dear Folks*

It is Monday nite again and I am tired as I usually am after a weekend. I went to Providence with my friend again. I had fun but it is a long tiresome trip. Hardly worth it.

We are still here at the Gap probably will still be here this time next year. I don't know what is up. The old War is going pretty good now I don't see how it can last very long if they keep going like they have been. Germany is now going to fight entirely a defensive war they say and that means a long drawn out affair.

This afternoon a General gave us a lecture. His name is Gailhouse [see name correction in August 17 letter below (KOB)] he is British and was in Africa fighting against Rommell. He said a lot of things some of them were true I guess.

I got a letter from Bill Cleary last Tuesday. He hasn't met Wendell as yet or hadn't had up until then. He said that they had been servicing Wendell's outfit right along I hope they can get together. Seeing one another ought to give their morale a quite a boost.

Tomorrow we are having a review for old General Gillem. He was in Camp Polk when we were there and then he went across to take over the 2nd Arm'd Corp. I think it was. Anyway he is back here now and we have to march tomorrow. I just had my uniform washed and pressed this P.M. both my suits were quite dirty from riding on the train to Prov.



***Lt. Gen. Alvan C. Gillem Jr., 1888-1973***

***First commanding general of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Division, April 1941-January 1942, dubbed it the "Spearhead" Division. Commanded XIII Corps, 9<sup>th</sup> US Army September 1944 to September 1945, coming within 50 miles of Berlin, the closest of all US troops.***

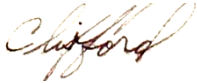


I am sending a couple of snap shots taken the night I fought. That's me in the dark trunks in case you can't make it out. The blurry one is where I landed a good one – a hard right he just missed my right ear with a left.

My friend I go to Providence with is squatting in the corner at the extreme left. He is a Scotchman but doesn't talk or act like one.

It has been very nice here today a little hot but not too bad. I got your letter today – that you wrote Wed. nite

Love to all

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford", written in a cursive style.



*July 1943  
Indiantown Gap, Pa.  
Left-Cliff Rising; Right-Clifford O'Connor  
Referee Eddie Arsenault, behind Clifford's left shoulder.*



*July 1943  
Indiantown Gap, Pa.  
"Rising and Me"  
Friend Scottie Ewart on extreme left on edge of canvas*

August 17, 1943

[Envelope: Free; postmarked Indiantown Gap, PA, Aug. 18, 1943. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap, Pa., U.S. Army. Stationery one small plain sheet; black ink, two sides.]

Tuesday Evening

*Dear Folks*

About time I wrote again. I have two letters here from you.

I hope you haven't been worrying about me, but I suppose you have. We are still here at the Gap. Doing about the same old stuff. We have had a quite a few lectures lately from some big shots. I told you about General Gatehouse (it is Gatehouse instead of Gailhouse). General McNair was here last wk. and spoke to us for a little while. We also had a British Major here speaking for a while.



***Lt. Gen. Lesley J. McNair (May 1883-July 25, 1944)<sup>1</sup>***

Last wk. end I went to Cooperstown, NY with my friend – a German boy – Walter Eggleston. I had a lot of fun. It is beautiful country up that way. Just like Vermont and N.H.

It is getting cooler here almost like fall. I suppose it is the same up home. The nites are nice to sleep.

We all had to get “butch” hair cuts again imagine that!! I got one last nite but it was not short enough to suit them so I had to get another one after supper tonite. It is real short now about ½ an

inch. I don't mind though but I'll never forget how mad I was when I had to get it done in Louisiana and California.

We are having another big inspection tomorrow morning. Equipment etc. I think this Div. has more inspections than any other Div. in any army in the world. They want to make absolutely sure that we have all of our stuff and that is it properly marked, but I don't see any reason for so many darned inspections.

I haven't heard from Bill or Wendell lately.

Well I can't think of any more to say except please don't worry.

Love to all



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1

The following information was obtained at <http://www.ultimatehistoryproject.com/mcnair.html>, with the article, "An Army for Victory: Lesley J. McNair's Influence in Organizing the U.S. Army, 1939-1944," by Marc K. Blackburn. General McNair was tragically killed by friendly fire while executing Lt. Gen. Omar Bradley's plan to break out from Normandy on July 25, 1944:

*McNair created a standardized training system to answer the challenges of transforming ordinary citizens into soldiers. To accomplish this daunting task, McNair relied upon a realistic training regime: starting with basic skills, then small unit training and finally making the transition to training at the division level. The system worked. Enlistees progressed from general proficiency in the fundamental tasks of the soldier to the special skills needed to wield the power of an infantry or armored division in combat. Regardless of where a soldier was inducted and initially trained, the same general pattern of building on his basic skills was followed throughout the war.*

I include this reference here in consideration of how Clifford's letters to this point, interspersed with the mundane sharing of information with the "Dear Folks" back home, clearly convey the sense of this training system at work with a regular soldier as he approaches the time to enter the fight ... Clifford shipped out with Company B, 703<sup>rd</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion one week after General McNair's visit to Indiantown Gap. (KOB)



**August 18, 1943**

[Envelope: Free; postmarked Indiantown Gap, Pa., August 19, 1943. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap, Military Res., Pa. U.S. Army. Stationery: single small sheet with blue eagle insignia at top; both sides, pencil.]

*Dear Folks*

I just wrote last nite, but I'll write again tonite as I have a few minutes. I just now received your letter of the 15<sup>th</sup>.

What Mrs. Guy heard is a lot of "Marlarkey," and ridiculous. I don't know how anyone could start such a rumor. I don't think there is anyone in this whole 703 Battalion from Roxbury even. Anyway I didn't hear anything about going after anyone.

We are now out in a field with our tents pitched and full field equipment laid out on the ground for inspection. In fact we have been here since early morning it is now 7 P.M. and are we disgusted. I think we will be checking our stuff in the moon lite tonite. We get our stuff all marked a certain way with our own number and then we have to change it all over. Very typical of this Army.

You were asking in your other letters if my poison ivy was gone – yes, it was O.K. about a day or two after I got back from my furlough.

I would like to be home now and see Maggie and the rest. Give my best regards to them all.

Well guess I'll close.

Love to all

*Clifford*

August 22, 1943

[Envelope: Free; postmarked Indiantown Gap, PA, Aug 23, 1943. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap, Military Res., Pa. U.S. Army. Stationery single small sheet, black ink, both sides.]

Sun. Nite.

*Dear folks*

Got your letter and will answer it tonite as I have plenty of time. I was surprised to hear that Wendell is in Sicily. I hope he isn't in the actual battle. His outfit seems to be following the main force.

I hope and pray that Lawrence doesn't have to get into this. I don't think they will take the men with 2 kids. Gee, I don't see why they need any more men.

I am sending in the same mail my pictures. I have no place for these here they will only get ruined. You would probably like to have them anyway.

Today I am charge of Quarters. It is real quiet and I don't mind that a bit. I am awfully tired tonite. I went to Lancaster yesterday and came back here for 12 noon today to take over charge of Q. and I haven't had much sleep. I would like to go to bed right now, but I can't until at least 10 o'clock and I'm getting up at 4, not so good.

It has been very nice here today. A few of the boys are kicking a football around out front. It reminds me of a year ago in the Desert. It was awfully quiet there all the time just like it is here tonite, and we used to kick the ball around about this time of nite a lot. It is now 8 o'clock. The sun has just settled behind Indiantown Gap in the mountains.

Ma, I wish you would send Nellie a picture of me. I promised her one of the colored ones, but I guess it would be all right if you sent her a regular one. I am sending the negatives of those that came out so good. I never got a chance to have any made.

Well guess I'll close.

Love to all

*Clifford*

Aug. 25, 1943

[Envelope: Free; postmark Indiantown Gap, PA Aug 26, 1943. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, Indiantown Gap, Military Res., Pa. Stationery plain, blue-black ink, one sheet, two sides. Enclosures mentioned not in envelope or marked on front as was typical for Ma.]

Wed. P.M. 4:15

*Dear Father,*

I got your letter yesterday. Also got one from Wendell – it took 10 days – not bad, eh? He said he finally got my first letter it took 2 months to get to him.

I don't have much time to write I just came from confession and will be going to Communion at 5. I think it was nice of them to arrange for us to get to receive before we leave. It will seem strange to go to Communion at this time of day.

We are leaving here tomorrow morning early.

I am enclosing a badge and a couple bars. I have another bar for the tommy gun and one for the carbine rifle coming, but I don't think we will ever see them. The medals don't mean anything to me but being able to shoot does.

I will write again as soon as I can, it shouldn't be long. I don't think we are going very far this time, that is not right away, maybe the next move –

I will offer my Communion for Wendell and my own safety also Billy's.

Love to all

*Clifford*

Please don't worry about me – I know that is asking a lot, but anyway please don't.

**Note: Per Clifford's Chronology (see Introduction), he sailed from Staten Island on the S.S. Shawnee, shown on the next page, at 11:00 a.m. on September 5, 1943.**

**... Found among his letters were two that were undated, one of which appears immediately below. As he prepared to sail, he sent home the address of his "girl," later wife, Dottie Smith. Charles Demi, referred to also, later served as Cliff and Dottie's best man at their wedding on August 24, 1946. The dated letters home continue on September 18, 1943. [KOB]**

#### Undated

[Envelope: Free; censor-stamped and signed; no postmark except black wavy lines (no date); Other Nana had written in pencil then lined through the words "send snap shot" in bottom right.]  
Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 4745 – c/o Postmaster, NY, NY, U.S. Army, No date – no postmark; censored]

*Dear Father*

Got the letter you [small section cut out]

I suppose Mary and Don are up there now. I would like to be there for the wedding. I hope Edna finds a good place to stay, it must be pretty hard trying to find one now.

I was surprised to hear that Leo Lacarno had been discharged from the Army.

Ma, I would like to have you send a snapshot of me to a friend of mine in Hartford. Here is his address

Charles Demi  
Bondmore Hotel  
Htfd., Conn.

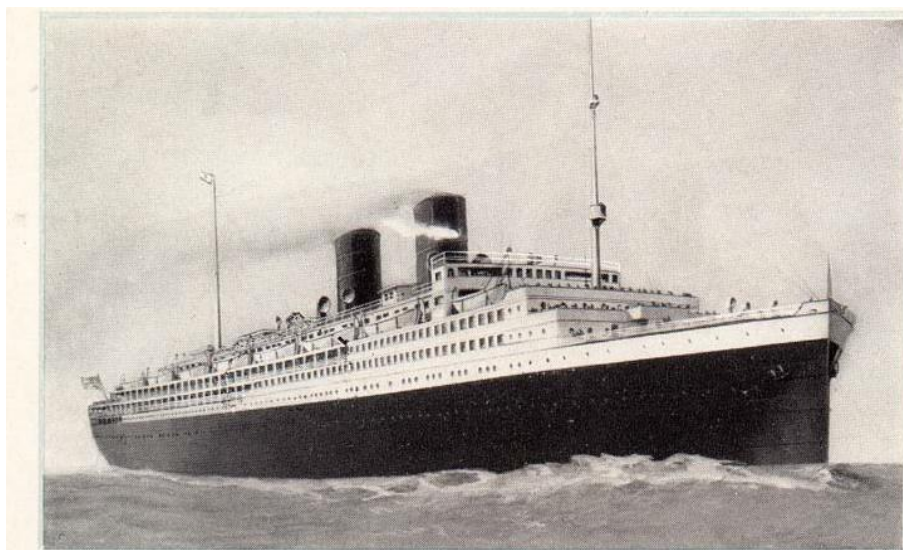
There is no hurry. He wanted a picture and I don't have any with me now. I also want to give you my girl's address in Hartford. You might want to write and ask her if she heard from me or something sometime.

Miss Dorothy Smith  
68 ½ Laurel St.  
Hartford , Conn.

I must close now.

Love to all

*Clifford*



*The New S.S. "Shawnee" and the New S.S. "Iroquois," latest additions to the Clyde Line fleet, which comprises six of the newest and most magnificent steamers in Atlantic Coastal Service*

**Troop Ship S.S. Shawnee.** This picture was found online at the website of a family evacuated on this ship in January 1942, from Panama, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the outbreak of World War II. It's not likely that the troops were served the same fare, but the family's website includes a copy of the menu in early January 1942 and indicates that the civilian service was excellent. Reference: <http://www.shoreheritage.com/notes.html#warclips>

| <b>Luncheon</b>                       |                         |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Sour Mixed Pickles                    | Pickled Onions          |
| Giblet Soup                           | Hot or Cold Consomme    |
| Baked Yellow Tails, Fine Herbs        |                         |
| Poached Eggs, Florentine              |                         |
| Country Sausages with Mashed Potatoes |                         |
| Fried Calf's Liver with Onions        |                         |
| Braised Beef a la Mode                |                         |
| Creamed Parsnips                      | Stewed Tomatoes         |
| Boiled Potatoes                       |                         |
| Assorted Cold Cuts :                  |                         |
| Corned Beef                           | Pickled Pig's Feet      |
| Headcheese                            |                         |
| Vegetable Salad                       |                         |
| Lemon Blanc Manger, Currant Jelly     |                         |
| Ice Cream                             | Cake                    |
| Assorted Cheese and Crackers          |                         |
| Hot or Iced Tea and Coffee            | Buttermilk              |
| U. S. A. T. SHAWNEE                   | Saturday, Jan. 17, 1942 |

| <b>Dinner</b>                       |                                      |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Grapefruit Cocktail                 | Queen Olives                         |
| Chilled Celery                      | Consomme Printaniere                 |
| Cream of Barley                     | Grilled Salmon Steak, Maitre d'Hotel |
| Compote of Peaches with Rice        |                                      |
| Smoked Ox-Tongue with Spinach       | Chicken Fricasse                     |
| Roast Lamb, Mint Sauce              |                                      |
| Carrots and Peas                    | Steamed Rice                         |
| Buttered Beans                      |                                      |
| Snow Flake Potatoes                 |                                      |
| Hearts of Lettuce, Russian Dressing |                                      |
| Cabinet Pudding, Fruit Sauce        |                                      |
| Ice Cream                           | Nabisco Wafers                       |
| Fresh Fruit                         |                                      |
| Assorted Cheese and Crackers        |                                      |
| Tea                                 | Coffee                               |
| U. S. A. T. SHAWNEE                 | Saturday, Jan. 17, 1942              |

**Shawnee's Menu, January 1942.**



**Note:** The following postcard was sent to Clifford's family from the War Department at the time he deployed overseas, providing them with his A.P.O. number/address. Following the postcard is Clifford's first letter home from overseas. It was mailed via V-mail.

After the transcription, a copy of the actual V-mail form is included. Many such arrived in East Barre, from both Clifford and Wendell, censored and stamped, throughout the war.

**WAR DEPARTMENT**

Hq., N. Y. Port of Embarkation,  
Office of the Commanding General,  
100 OFFICIAL BUSINESS St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE TO AVOID  
PAYMENT OF POSTAGE, \$300

Mrs. Peter O'Connor  
East Barre, Vermont

Please address me as shown below until otherwise advised:

|                     |         |            |           |             |                      |
|---------------------|---------|------------|-----------|-------------|----------------------|
| TYPE<br>or<br>PRINT | Sgt.    | Clifford   | B.        | O'Connor    | 11064771             |
|                     | (Grade) | First name | (Initial) | (Last name) | (Army serial number) |

Company "B"  
(Company, battery, etc.)

703rd Tank Destroyer Bn.  
(Regiment or other organization)

APO No. 4745

c/o POSTMASTER - N. Y. - N. Y.

The above complete address should be placed on all mail sent to me.

My cable address is AMGIBO

NORMAL SIGNATURE Clifford B. O'Connor

The APO number, city, State, and cable address will be inserted by the port postal officer; the remainder of the card will be completed by individual concerned or designated person.

W. D., A. G. O. Form No. 206 (January 23, 1943) 16-32626-1 GPO

September 18, 1943

[V-Mail, dated September 1943; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B 703 TK. DES. BN, A.P.O. 4745, c/o Postmaster, New York, NY]

*Dear Folks,*

I'm overseas now and getting along fine. We had a very good trip, a few were a bit sea sick but I was lucky.

I haven't received any mail from you as yet, but hope to everyday. Some of the boys have gotten letters from home already – the mail service seems to be very good.

We are living in huts – they aren't bad at all. By the way Al is still with me in the same hut in fact. We were planning on going to receive in the morning but as yet no Catholic Services have been arranged for, but I'm sure they will be within a week. I suppose you will have a special little thought for me tomorrow, Ma. We will both share it.

The country is beautiful here, very much like around home.

Give Cliff White my best regards. I will write to Wendell tonite I haven't heard from him as yet.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

(Note: "Tomorrow" refers to Dad's birthday on September 19.)



PRINT THE COMPLETE ADDRESS IN PLAIN BLOCK LETTERS IN THE PANEL BELOW, AND YOUR RETURN ADDRESS IN THE SPACE PROVIDED. USE TYPEWRITER, DARK INK OR PENCIL. WRITE PLAINLY. VERY SMALL WRITING IS NOT SUITABLE.

No. 2312

11064977

1473

ARMY EXAMINER

SENTERS NAME  
MRS. PETER O'CONNOR

SENTERS ADDRESS  
EAST BARRE  
VERMONT  
BOX 165

SENTERS ADDRESS  
CL B 70376 DESER

NEW YORK, NY

SEPT 1943

DATE

CENSORS STAMP

Dear Folks,

I'm overseas now and getting along fine. We had a very good trip, a few were a bit sea sick but I was lucky.

I haven't received any mail from you as yet, but hope to every day. Some of the boys have gotten letters from home already - the mail service seems to be very good.

We are living in huts - they aren't bad at all. By the way Al is still with me in the same hut in fact. We were planning on going to Revere in the morning but as yet no Catholic services have been arranged for, but I'm sure they will be within a week. I suppose you will have a special little thought for me tomorrow, Ma, we will both share it.

The Country is beautiful here, very much like around home.

Give Cliff White my best regards. I will write to Wendell to note I haven't heard from him as yet.

Loving Son  
Clifford

V-MAIL

Clifford's first mail home after arriving overseas (transcribed on preceding page). One might note that this form had had the date censored out ... or Clifford had been told not to date the form; one who knows Clifford, however, will note his words to Ma, "I suppose you will have a special little thought for me tomorrow, Ma. We will both share it." September 19 ... Clifford's birthday! His 24<sup>th</sup>.

The V-Mail form became familiar to "The Dear Folks."

September 20, 1943

[V-Mail; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor, Co. B 703 TK DES BN, A.P.O. 4745, c/o Postmaster NY, NY]

*Dear Folks,*

I can tell you where I am – it may ease your mind a bit. It is England. I have not been to any of the towns yet, but plan to soon. I get a great kick out of the way they speak here; we sound as funny to them I guess. I took a little walk through the fields yesterday everything is very neat and nothing is wasted here. Everyone seems very polite especially the children – they really go for our chewing gum and candy (sweets).

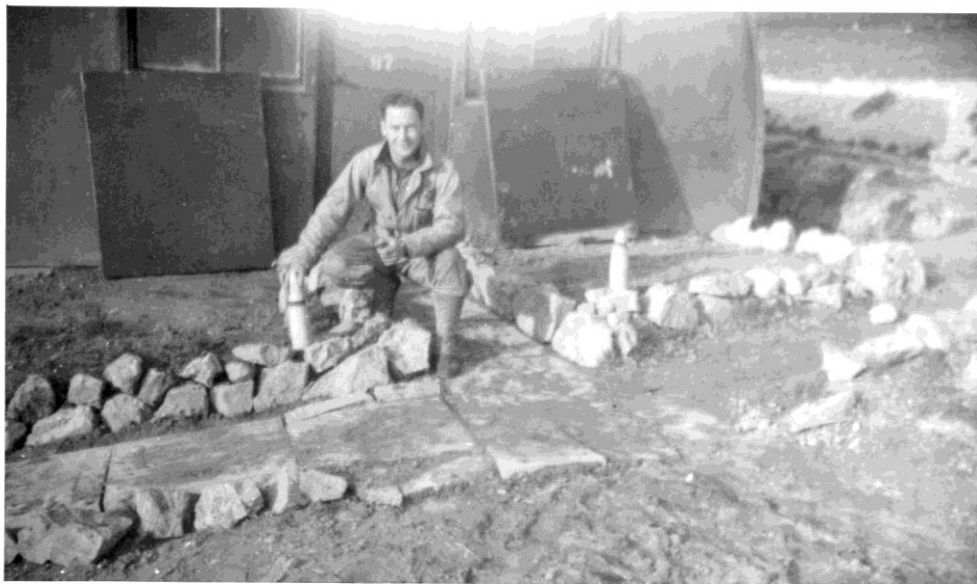
Ma, if you want to send me anything please make it razor blades either single or double edge and handkerchiefs and heavy socks if you can and also some after shave cream.

I hope you have a very happy birthday, Ma. Also Edna. Hope Mildred & Gertrude did too.

I haven't heard from anyone as yet.

Loving Son

*Clifford*



*Clifford in front of a "hut" as he'd referred to them in his first letter home, see September 18.*

September 26, 1943

[V-mail, date-stamped Sept 27, 1943; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 4745, c/o Post Master NY, NY, no place named – via V-mail]

*Dear folks,*

I have 3 letters here from you, Ma dated Sept. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, and 16<sup>th</sup> and one card from Edna & Helen. It was a quite a bit of news. Edna did a good job describing the wedding, it must have been nice. I certainly would like to have been there. I did receive the invitation from Mary.

Edna & Helen, I really appreciate you writing to me I won't promise I'll always answer, but one letter to all of you will do I guess. It must be nice to be home again Edna and I bet Ma & Pa and Helen are glad. Helen you might give Miss Goodell my regards if she remembers me I liked her, had her for three subjects. So you are taking French?? I wish I had.

I would like to get some snap shots of some of the farm houses and cottages here to send you, Ma you would like them. Very few buildings here made of wood. Mostly brick & stone.

We are going to have Mass at 1 o'clock this P.M. I haven't heard from Wendell or Bill as yet. I will write to Jo & Lawrence & Mildred & Johnny later.

All my love

*Clifford*

P.S. I'm feeling tops

*[Note: Clifford's cousin Mary Cleary married Don O'Connell on September 4, 1943, the day he sailed for England. Always thinking of home, on that day, while sailing "across" from Staten Island aboard the U.S.S. Shawnee, he noted in the Chronology shown in the Introduction that it was "Mary Cleary's wedding day." KOB]*





*Wedding Portrait of Donald O'Connell and Mary Cleary O'Connell  
September 4, 1943*



*The Friendly Family Front Lawn Wedding Picture...*

*Don and Mary Cleary O'Connell with from left to right in rear:*

*Unknown gentleman, Gertrude Cleary, Ray Fitzpatrick, unknown gentleman, Joe Cleary, Annie Cleary, unknown woman, Nellie O'Connor Nerney, Maggie O'Connor O'Brien.*

September 30, 1943

[V-Mail, no location identified, date-stamped Oct 1, 1943; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 4745, c/o Postmaster N.Y., N.Y.]

*Dear Folks*

Today I received 4 letters and 2 birthday cards. 2 of the letters were from you, Ma dated Sept. 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. Lawrence & Jo's letter was dated Sept. 7<sup>th</sup>. Wendell's was written Aug 20<sup>th</sup> but it went from Sicily to Penn. and then here. The birthday cards were from you and Lawrence & Jo. I was very happy to get them all and hope they keep coming. Your mail is not censored coming from the States, Ma. I thought you knew that before, so you can write on both sides of the pages.

It is very comfortable in our quarters tonight most of us are writing letters, some are playing cards. We had a good football game this morning I really enjoyed it.

I would like to have seen Edna & Helen digging potatoes. I bet they are glad to be together again.

Wendell and Bill couldn't have met in Africa or he would have mentioned it. They were so close together, it seems a shame. I'm planning on going to confession and communion tomorrow. Al Morrie too.

Love to all

*Clifford*

**October 4, 1943**

[V-mail, no location identified. Date-stamped Oct. 5, 1943; censor-stamped and signed.  
Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 4745, c/o Postmaster, NY,  
NY]

*Dear folks*

I have two letters of yours to answer one dated September 19<sup>th</sup> the other the 23<sup>rd</sup>. I got them the first of the month. I am awfully sorry I let your birthday slip by me, Ma and also Mildred's and Edna's.

I spent yesterday in a good sized town on the coast. It was a beautiful day. I was looking for something to buy for you folks, but I didn't find a thing. We rented some bicycles and had a great time driving around. Left side of the road you know.

One fellow [censored out area] bought a violin and he sure is going to town playing jigs tonight. I wish I could jig like you, Pa. It is a quite a change and we all enjoy listening to them.

I am feeling fine and seem to have a bigger appetite than ever if you can imagine such a thing. I am going to take out an allotment sometime this week.

Loving Son

*Clifford*



*Clifford's father, Peter O'Connor, doing the jig, something he was known for doing when the occasion fit!  
Mildred's taps her toes while little Marilyn watches her grandfather.*



October 11, 1943

[V-mail, no location identified, date-stamped October 13, 1943; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 4745  
c/o Postmaster NY, NY.]

*Dear folks,*

I received your letter of the 28<sup>th</sup> today I'm glad you finally got one of my letters, and by this time you must know where I am. I am still in the same place. Tomorrow I plan to go to Bournemouth with some friends. We will be going to Mass there. It has been lovely here [censored out area] just like the beautiful days of Indian Summer back home. They are having a movie here tonight I think I will go. It will be good to see one again. I wrote to Wendell a couple of times, but haven't heard from him except for the one I told you about. I also got your letter of the 26<sup>th</sup> and Edna's too. Glad to know Bing Weeks was home. He must have been gone for a couple of years at least.

We have our fiddler going again tonight.

I am feeling fine and sincerely hope you all are.

Best regards to all.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

October 21, 1943

[V-Mail date stamped October 21, 1943; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 4745, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY., no location identified.]

*Dear folks*

Today I am Sergeant of the Guard and have a little time to write. Last Friday a lot of mail came in for us. I got yours of the 7<sup>th</sup> also Helen's and Helen's of the 4<sup>th</sup>, a Christmas card from Pat Guy and wife, a letter from Bill Cleary it went to Indiantown Gap and back here, also a letter from the Girlfriend. Yesterday I received your Christmas package – gee, I don't know how to thank you. I don't see how you possibly got so many things in that box and just what I wanted too. It was swell. I didn't expect it quite so soon. I hope you didn't think I was going sissy when I asked for after shave cream, Ma, but shaving every day is rough on anybody's face. I am sure cold cream will be just as good when it comes. I haven't heard from Wendell hope you folks have. Pretty soon you probably won't have to go to the air post at all, Ma it must get boring. Well thanks again for the package and best regards to all.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

**Note:** As first identified earlier in Cliff's letter home just before he sailed overseas, his reference here to "the Girlfriend" is to Dottie Smith of Hartford, Ct., - later his wife and my mother.  
[KOB]



*Clifford O'Connor with Dorothy (Dottie) Smith, of Hartford, Connecticut.  
His "Girlfriend" before the war, they became engaged soon after his return and married in 1946.  
Photo taken in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1943, on furlough.*

October 28, 1943

[Envelope: 6 cent airmail envelope; APO postmarked Oct 30, 1943; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 4745 c/o Postmaster NY, NY, U.S. Army. Stationery two lined notebook sheets, black ink, three sides.]

*Dear folks*

I am going to write this letter the old way for a change and send it air mail. I don't like to write on the V-mail forms.

Got your air mail letter of October 17<sup>th</sup> telling of Mrs. Lorenzini's funeral. I thought you must have written one before saying something of her death and yesterday I got your V-mail letter telling about it and about Lucille being there with the baby. The air mail beat it here for a change. I was sorry to hear of Mrs. Lorenzini. I never did get to know her very well it seems that I never got around to go up there and talk with them. I'll bet Annie was glad to see Lucille and the kid. I am glad Herby Phillips has made Captaincy he is a swell fellow, must know his stuff too.

We are still here in England. This afternoon some of the boys went out hunting rabbits, use different tactics here, they get a couple of ferrets from an old fellow in town and they use them. It is legal here. I think they caught 6 of them today. They are frying them now and soon we will be having a feed all of the boys in the hut are patiently waiting and the fiddler I told you about is going full blast screeching out an old time jig.

I haven't heard from Wendell at all glad you folks are still getting letters. I got a letter from my old pal Artie Kelly – the guy from N.Y.C. I used to work with at Pratt & Whitney – he is now in Africa – hadn't heard from him in a long time.

Well here they come with the fried rabbit I must close and get my share – don't usually miss out on anything to eat. I'm feeling fine and hope you all are at home.

Glad to hear that Jimmy Milano is a chaplain. I'm sure he will make a good one.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

**October 29, 1943**

[V-mail date stamped October 29, 1943; censor-stamped and signed; one small area of censored markouts visible in heavy black ink. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 4745, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY.]

*Dear Folks*

Got your air mail letter of October 2<sup>nd</sup> on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. The V-mail beat it here by far. Also got Edna's letter of the 11<sup>th</sup> before I got that air mail one. I got Edna & Helen's package Friday. Gee, it was swell. Thanks a lot kids, I am pretty well stocked up now on toilet articles. The only thing I need now is a new razor. You see I bought a bunch of single edge blades, and I lost my razor on the boat and now I have a double edged razor and not any blades.

I went to Mass this morning at 7:30 didn't get to receive but I plan to this Thursday evening.

I went to a city named Bath a couple of weeks ago there are ruins there of an old Roman (city) at one time called Aquae Sulis. We went through the old Roman baths. Hot water comes right out of the ground also went through the Bath Abbey real old and interesting, there are tombs right in the walls of the church.

Well it is chow time and I never miss that, chow has been good here. Haven't heard from Wendell.

Loving Son

*Clifford*



November 2, 1943

[Envelope: 6 cent airmail envelope; APO postmark Nov 6, 1943; censor-stamped and signed.  
Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 4745  
c/o Postmaster NY, NY., U.S. Army. Stationery two blue-lined notepaper sheets; black ink; three sides.]

*Dear folks*

Got Edna's letter of the 22<sup>nd</sup>, yesterday. Most of the boys have gone to town. I didn't feel like going myself and anyway I have some writing to do.

I guess I told you that I went to Bath on a pass I bought a few Christmas cards and will start sending them soon. They aren't very nice and I have been looking for some better ones. One fellow got some real nice ones with pictures of cottages and the general country side you folks would like them. I can't seem to find anything you would like for presents there isn't much for sale here along that line. I hope I find something soon.

I am sending a couple of ten shilling notes for Edna & Helen. They are worth about \$2. apiece. The only paper money they have here are these notes and 1 pound notes which are worth about \$4. (20 shillings). I guess they have some 5 pound notes but we never have seen any yet. They have twice as much silver coins as we have in the States.

Last night I went to Mass at 5 o'clock had a short sermon but it was nice.

Edna mentioned that it snowed there already. It won't be long before there will be plenty of it I suppose. I'd like to be there to go hunting now, especially for the deer season which will soon be opening. There won't be many hunters in the woods this year. Speaking of hunting the boys went out with the ferrets and caught a bunch of rabbits we cooked them (fried) and sure had a feed, then we got the fiddle player on the ball and started to sing that was last Sunday night.

I can't think of any more just now except that I'm in the best of health and hope you all are. Haven't heard from Wendell or Bill. Do you know if Pat Donahue and Howard are still in the States?

Loving Son

*Clifford*

**November 3, 1943**

[V-Mail; date stamped as marked; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 4745, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY]

*Dear Folks*

Got your letter of October 21<sup>st</sup>, Ma also Edna's of the 17<sup>th</sup> & also Helen's of the 20<sup>th</sup>. Glad you are all well.

I went to Mass this morning and received. Last night I was reading an article or rather a short story in the "Messenger of the Sacred Heart" that you sent me. "In the Shadow of the Cross" and this morning the priest spoke of the hard times the priests went through here in England years ago.

I haven't heard from Wendell or Bill it seems to me I should have by this time. I will write again to them soon.

I suppose everyone celebrated Halloween up home last night.

Tell Edna I got a letter from her girl friend Ethel.

I haven't been to London as yet but may go soon.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

November 9, 1943

[V-Mail (censored), date stamped as above, no location; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK DES BN., A.P.O. 4745, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY]

*Dear Folks*

It is Sunday morning again. Al and I went to Mass in town for a change. We got there a quite a bit late, but as Pa always says better late than never.

It is a [censored] morning here [censored] and [censored] just the kind of a day I like. The [censored] have [censored] and are [censored censored.] I would like to be home and starting out hunting or just tramping through the woods would be O.K. Yesterday we went out with the ferrets and caught five rabbits – great sport.

I haven't heard from Wendell or Bill hope they are alright. Got a Christmas card from Mrs. Guy and Sam and one from Pearl. Nice of them to think of me. Yesterday I got a package from the Citizens Victory Committee. Well it is about time to start down for dinner and am I hungry I am feeling tops and hope this letter finds everyone the same at home.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

**Note:** The actual censored V-mail as it was delivered in East Barre is shown below, clearly indicating the censor's pen, as indicated in the transcribed letter above.

PRINT THE COMPLETE ADDRESS IN PLAIN BLOCK LETTERS IN THE SPACE BELOW, AND YOUR RETURN ADDRESS IN THE SPACE ABOVE. IF YOU ARE A MEMBER OF THE U.S. ARMY, NAVY, AIR FORCE, MARINE CORPS, OR COAST GUARD, PRINT YOUR SERVICE NUMBER IN THE SPACE ABOVE.

No. **16-613**

**MRS. PETER O'CONNOR**  
**EAST BARRE,**  
**VERMONT**  
**BOX-165 U.S.A.**

**11064771**  
**SGT. C.B. O'CONNOR**  
 SENDERS NAME  
**CO. B 703 TH. DES. BN.**  
 SENDERS ADDRESS  
**A.P.O. 4745**  
**Post MASTER N.Y.N.Y.**  
 DATE

ARMY EXAMINER  
 14736  
 CENSORS STAMP

NOV 9 1943

Dear Folks,

It is Sunday morning again. Al and I went ~~to~~ <sup>in</sup> town for a change. We got there a quite a bit late but as Pa always says better late than never.

It is a ~~very~~ morning here ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> just the kind of a day I like. The ~~house~~ <sup>house</sup> and are ~~very~~ <sup>very</sup> I would like to be home and starting out hunting or just tramping through the woods would be O.K. Yesterday we went out with the ferrets and caught five rabbits - great sport.

I haven't heard from Wendell or Bill hope they are alright. Got a Christmas Card from Mrs. Guy and Sam and one from Pearl. Nice of them to think of me. Yesterday I got a package from the Citizens Victory Committee. Well it is about time to start down for dinner and am I hungry. I am feeling tops and hope this letter finds everyone the same at home.

Loving Son  
 Clifford

**V...-MAIL**

**November 13, 1943**

[V-Mail, date-stamped November 13, 1943; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 4745, c/o Postmaster NY., NY.]

*Dear folks*

Got your air mail letters of October 10<sup>th</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> and Edna's of the 28<sup>th</sup> – today. You said you wanted to send a camera, Ma. Never mind it. I can borrow one easily, but the trouble is we can't get any films. I haven't heard from Wendell or Bill. No, their letters would not have to go to New York and back again. No doubt they have written, but the mail may be held up somewhere. I am glad you got the package from Wendell. Tonight we are listening to an old victrola one of the fellows bought in town. It is awfully old but still plays the records aren't quite up to date either but it is good to hear music again. I suppose you folks are preparing for the winter I hope you can get enough fuel, the furnace must use a lot. Are they as strict on rationing as they were last year? And how about the gasoline do you get any more than you did? We get plenty of good food. I am feeling fine – hope you all are too.

Loving Son

*Clifford*



**November 17, 1943**

[V-Mail; censor-stamped and signed; date stamped as above. No place name.]

*Dear folks*

I have two letters here of yours to answer dated October 31 and November 3. I don't think I told you in my last letter that I got Lawrence's & Jo's package. I must write and thank them I can't seem to find time to write enough – perhaps laziness. Al and I did not get a chance to go to Mass last Sunday. We were quite busy. I haven't heard from Wendell or Bill. If you get Ora Violette's address please send it to me also Louie Levin's I have misplaced it. It is quiet in the hut tonight most of the boys have gone to town. I was talking to Joe Converse today I think he is going to London or someplace on a two day pass tomorrow. I may go some day this week.

Love to all

*Clifford*

**November 23, 1943**

[V-Mail, date stamped as above; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN, A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY]

*Dear Folks*

I have three letters to answer one from you, Ma & one from Edna & Helen.

I received my request package yesterday those things certainly will come in handy especially the socks & handkerchiefs. Also got Mildred & Johnny's package yesterday. Glad to hear that you got another "S" from school Helen and I'm sure that you can get another one this year. Just keep trying. It must be tough with a poor teacher in chemistry it is hard enough with a good teacher.

I went to Communion Sunday morning. Haven't heard from Wendell or Bill I can't understand it.

I suppose you are about to get supper ready now, Ma. It is 9:50 here and my bed time.

Love to all,

*Clifford*

November 27, 1943

[V-Mail, date stamped as above; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY]

*Dear folks*

I have three letters from you to answer two of yours, Ma of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> and Edna's of the 17<sup>th</sup>.

It is Sunday and Al and I went to Mass in the village. It is 2 P.M. here and I suppose you folks are at the 9 o'clock Mass in Barre. Glad you heard from Wendell. I hope it isn't cold in that part of Italy where he is.

I'll bet a lot of the hunters have come back with their bucks tied onto the fender of their cars by this time.

I couldn't send everybody a Christmas card so please tell Mrs. Guy & Pearl and anyone else I missed that I didn't have any more.

I got a message from a friend of mine back in the States on Edna's letter. He must be working in some V-mail office and saw my name on that letter. I was quite surprised. Guess I'll close and take a nap.

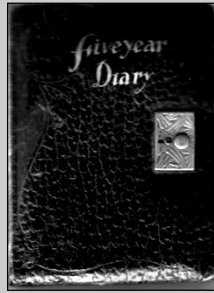
Love to all

*Clifford*

**Note:** The following six pages are from Ma's diary for the holiday months of November and December 1943, recording the daily events surrounding Thanksgiving and Christmas, including the receipt of mail to and from Clifford (C) and Wendell (W) – Clifford's from England and Wendell's from Italy. (KOB)

## From Ma's Diary:

### *Thanksgiving and Christmas at Home in Barre, Vermont ... Lula O'Connor's Daily Entries for November and December 1943.*



November 1, 1943 – Monday

Very nice day. All Saint's Day. E & I & Helen Crozier went to Mass in Graniteville. Lottie & Annie & Nellie & Frances were here in the afternoon. I went up to Jones' in the evening to see Ella.

November 2, 1943 – Tuesday

P & L worked. Cloudy. Rained in p.m. I washed & E mopped. I sent a box of candy to W & Josephine put some in, too (his first request). Nellie & Frances went back to Hartford.

November 3, 1943 – Wednesday

Cold & cloudy, rained at night. P & L worked. I ironed & made plain doughnuts & baked beans. E went down to Mildred's to stay to-night. I went over to Cora Tucker's in p.m.

November 4, 1943 – Thursday

P & L worked. H & E & I went to confession in evening. Cold & cloudy. E came home on the stage in a.m. She & H played at night for defense club dance. I went to Barre in p.m. & to the dance for a while.

November 5, 1943 – Friday

Partly cloudy. P & L worked. Mrs. Lapoint & I went to receive in Graniteville. E went to Barre to go to a dance with Marilyn McCormick. H had some kids in to play games.

November 6, 1943 – Saturday

Very nice day. P & L worked. I started walking to Barre & got a ride. I went to 2 rummage sales & got 2 dresses & a coat & rug. E & I got a ride back up. We got a letter from C.

November 7, 1943 – Sunday

Very nice day. P & L started to work after Mass. We went to 8 o'clock Mass in Barre. E received communion. M & J & children came up in evening. P got home late from work & very tired.

November 8, 1943 – Monday

P & L worked. I sent letters to C & W. Rainy all day. I washed but did not put the clothes on the line it rained so. I got a package ready to send Clifford.

*November 9, 1943 – Tuesday*

*Cloudy & very dreary most of day. P & L worked. I went down with P when he went to work to help take care of the baby as Mildred went to the hospital to take care of Edna Pironi.*

*November 10, 1943 – Wednesday*

*Cloudy. Snowed a little. P & L worked. I ironed in a.m. & went to the post in p.m. with Grace Norris. We got a letter from C. I wrote letters to C & W while at the post.*

*November 11, 1943 – Thursday*

*Rather cold & cloudy. P & L worked all day. Armistice Day. I went over to Robie's in a.m. & up to Lottie's in p.m. Helen had a bunch of boys & girls here dancing in p.m. Sam Guy fell to-night & broke his shoulder & wrist.*

*November 12, 1943 – Friday*

*P & L worked. Cold & bright. E has a cold. Lottie was down in the morning & gave me a rug. Hetty Emery was here in p.m. H stayed down with Dot Collins.*

*November 13, 1943 – Saturday*

*Cold. Clouded up in p.m. L worked in a.m. E & I went to Barre in a.m. & met H. We all came home at noon with L. J & L & children came down in p.m. P cleaned out the hen house.*

*November 14, 1943 – Sunday*

*Cloudy & cold. We went to 9.15 Mass. We went to M's afterwards & got 5 gal oil from Johnny. Father Demasi is going to Greensboro as a parish priest. Some boys came here in p.m. from Barre.*

*November 15, 1943 – Monday*

*Cold & snowed some. I washed & E mopped & waxed the floor. I cooked in p.m. L & P worked. I got a letter from C & E & H got letters from W. He is now in Italy.*

*November 16, 1943 – Tuesday*

*Snowed a little all day. P & L worked. L's car got working bad last night & he had to leave it on the Barre road & went up here about 11 o'clock. E & I ironed. I fixed P's pants and H's skirt & my dress.*

*November 17, 1943 – Wednesday*

*Nice bright day but cold. P & L worked. E and I went to Barre in p.m. to see Elda & went to M's. Helen went to the church supper. Lawrence's car is still working bad.*

*November 18, 1943 – Thursday*

*P & L worked. E worked for Gen. Cloudy & snow is still on the ground. I wrote to the boys. Genevieve & Lottie & old Mrs Scott came in. I made my mincemeat.*

*November 19, 1943 – Friday*

*Very beautiful day. P & L worked. H stayed down to M's last night. We got a letter from C. E cleaned the sitting room. I painted the big mirror frame & a box & washed double windows.*

*November 20, 1943 – Saturday*

*P worked at Bianchi's. L worked. Nice day a little cloudy. I went down in a.m. & p.m. to Barre. E went with me in p.m. I got a dress & rubbers to a rummage sale. E went down to Marilyn Mc's.*



*November 21, 1943 – Sunday*

*Cloudy but rather nice. We went to 9.15 Mass. H stayed down to M's & E went there after Mass. P & I went up to Jones' in p.m. M & J & children brought H & E up at night. Jos. & L & children were down.*

*November 22, 1943 – Monday*

*Big storm through the night & still snowing. P & L worked. P got stuck in the morning. E & I washed & mopped. E shoveled paths. L brought his car down here at night it was drifted so up there.*

*November 23, 1943 – Tuesday*

*Drifted & still snowing. Not many ploughs out. P worked but L did not. E worked at Jones' in a.m. Dorothy Hall was here last night. We got a letter from C yesterday so I wrote to him again to-day.*

*November 24, 1943 – Wednesday*

*It has stopped snowing at last. P & L worked. L still keeps his car here as the road up to his place is not ploughed yet. I cooked for Thanksgiving & got quite a lot done for tomorrow. We got another letter from C.*

*November 25, 1943 – Thursday*

*Very beautiful day. P put on the double windows. Thanksgiving Day. M & J & children were here for dinner & L & J & children here for supper. Everything came out alright. We got 2 letters from W & some pictures.*

*November 26, 1943 – Friday*

*Still piles of snow. Marilyn came up with P. Very beautiful day. P & L worked. P found a bag of oats on the way to work. I worked on my rug that Lottie gave me. Edith Roark came over in evening. H had a lot of kids here at night.*

*November 27, 1943 – Saturday*

*Mrs. Barrett came up in morning. Cloudy not very cold. P & L did not have to work. Marilyn & Helen & I went to Barre on the 1 o'clock stage & P came down for us at 4 o'clock. Mary Cleary had her operation to-day.*

*November 28, 1943 – Sunday*

*Cloudy. L & J were here for supper. We went to 9.15 Mass & went to M's afterward. We took H & E up home with us. Bill Roark died suddenly to-day about 10.45. We went over there in the evening.*

*November 29, 1943 – Monday*

*P & L worked. I washed & mopped & cooked. E helped. L feels blue because he can't get the money from Les for a car. H & Seena went around for money for flowers for Bill. Mr. & Mrs. Jones came down in the evening.*

*November 30, 1943 – Tuesday*

*P & L worked. Cold. Cleared off in p.m. L did not get up here till 11.40 from work at night. I ironed & mended. Edith came in toward night. Jones brought the ½ pig down. \$15.60.*

*December 1, 1943 – Wednesday*

*P & L worked. Snowed some. Grace would have been 63 today. I cooked in a.m. & went to Barre in p.m. & stayed till P came home. I got coupon cashed for \$25. Mr. & Mrs. James came down in evening.*

*December 2, 1943 – Thursday*

*P went to work at 12 o'clock. Cloudy, rather cold. P & I went to Bill Roark's funeral. I went to Barre in p.m. with Jone's. P worked till 10.30 p.m. I wrote to C & W and finished fixing Lottie's rug.*

*December 3, 1943 – Friday*

*Grace died 17 years ago to-day. P & L worked. E & I got a box of things packed & sent to the Negro's mission. Mrs. Jones came in p.m. This is First Friday but I did not try to go to receive. Get too tired.*

*December 4, 1943 – Saturday*

*P & L worked. P worked at Tony's. Very nice day. I started to walk to Barre in a.m. Got a ride some of the way down & back. I got a letter from W. I went to a rummage sale & got some things.*

*December 5, 1943 – Sunday*

*Bright & cold. L & J & children were down in evening. P had a sinus headache & we did not go to Mass till 12 noon. We went to Sky's afterward. Bruno & Val have got a baby girl. Mildred was on for Val last night.*

*December 6, 1943 – Monday*

*P & L worked. P went to Williamstown to work after 4 until 10 p.m. Cold & cloudy. Stormed at night. I washed. E mopped & waxed the floor. I wrote to C & W. I made lard out of Leo's fat pork. The black board came for Marilyn.*

*December 7, 1943 – Tuesday*

*P & L worked. Cold. Edna & I ironed & made lard. Doria was here for dinner. E stayed with her last night & will to-night, also. I made 2 pies & cookies.*

*December 8, 1943 – Wednesday*

*Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Wilfred Gillander is dead. P & L worked. E & I went to Mass in Barre. We rode down with Doria & her brother in law. We went to M's and stayed to dinner. E went to pictures & I came home in p.m.*

*December 9, 1943 – Thursday*

*P & L worked. H & I fixed a nice little table for Marilyn. Very nice day. Helen went to M's after school & P went & got her & Edna after work. I sewed on Jos. house coat & cut out a dress for Marilyn. Lottie came down in a.m.*

*December 10, 1943 – Friday*

*E stayed at Doria's last night. Little colder. P & L worked. I finished Josephine's house coat & have got Marilyn's dress cut out & one pair of pajamas for Bobby & Loraine. I went over to Robie's a little while.*

December 11, 1943 – Saturday

Very cold & windy. I do not feel well. L & P worked till 1.30 p.m. Dot Collins stayed with Helen last night & went down with P this morning. M & J & children came up about 4.30 for a little while. I sewed on M's dress.

December 12, 1943 – Sunday

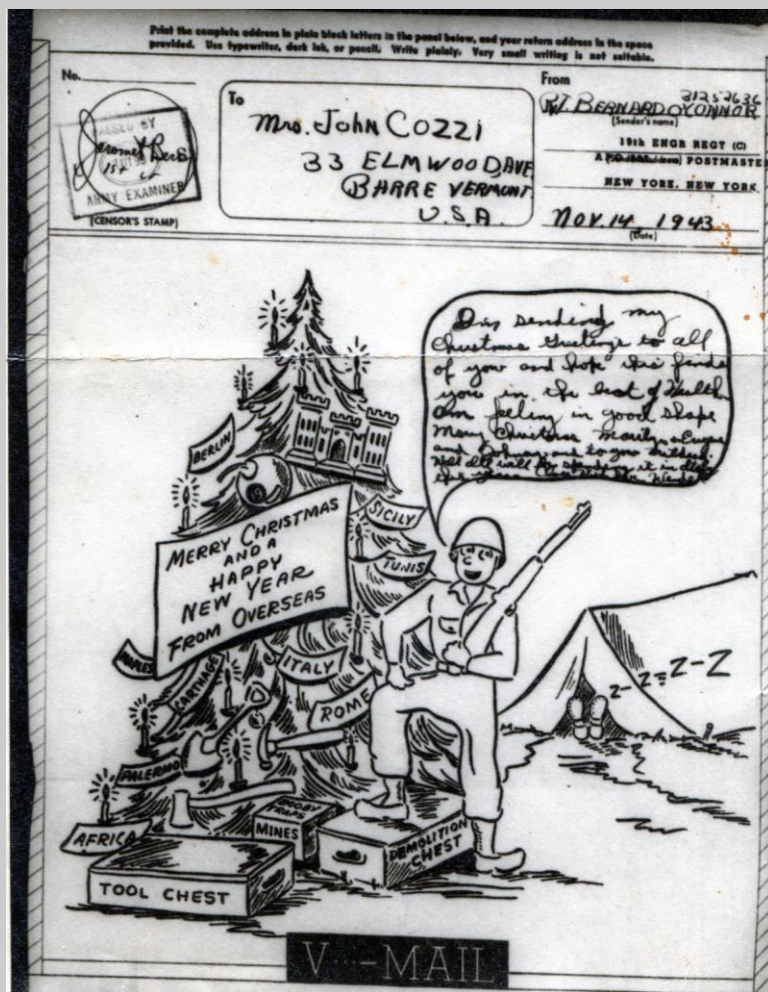
Cold & stormy in a.m. Warmer in p.m. Peter could not start the car when we wanted to get to 12 o'clock Mass and it would not start so we did not go to Mass at all. Jos. & L & the children came down for supper. Loraine has a bad cold.

December 13, 1943 – Monday

I washed & mopped & cooked. We got 13 eggs. Very cold & windy. P & L worked. E went up to L's to take care of Bobby & Loraine while Jos. went to Barre in p.m. I sewed on Marilyn's dress in evening. P has a cold.

December 14, 1943 – Tuesday

9 below here in morning. P & L worked. E still stays with Doria nights but did not to-night on account of not feeling well. I got a V Christmas card from W. E & I ironed & I finished Marilyn's dress & cut out M's pajamas. [Note: Copy below of V-mail card to sister Mildred from Wendell.]



*December 15, 1943 – Wednesday*

*20 below at 10 min. of 9 in a.m. Cold all day. P & L worked. P coughed most all night. E went to M's to stay with the baby while M got some teeth out. I went shopping. E stayed at M's. I got a letter from Wendell.*

*December 16, 1943 – Thursday*

*P & L worked. Very cold but bright sun. L is 28 to-day. He dropped a stone on his toe. E came home at night from M's with P. I sewed on Bobby's & Loraine's pajamas. I got a letter from Annie telling that Gert is going to be married.*

*December 17, 1943 – Friday*

*P & L worked. Cold again. P sat up till after 1 o'clock with the radio on & then coughed most of the rest of the night. I sewed on M's pajamas.*

*December 18, 1943 – Saturday*

*I am tired out from not sleeping last night. Quite warm. P took E & I & Helen to Barre. Doria & Lena went with us. We nearly finished our Christmas shopping. Joe was here drinking with P. in the p.m.*

*December 19, 1943 – Sunday*

*Warmer & cloudy. P did not go to Mass. Still has a cold. H & E & I started to go to Mass in Graniteville church. I got tired & came back. They had to walk all the way & it was slippery. Curtis folks came over in p.m. The girls made molasses candy.*

*December 20, 1943 – Monday*

*Cold & blustery. P worked new hours 7 till 3. We got a letter from C written Nov 28. I washed & made Christmas cakes & pies & pudding. E washed & waxed the floor. I finished M's pajamas in evening.*

*December 21, 1943 – Tuesday*

*H & E got letters from W. Cloudy. P & L worked. E & H & I ironed. Peter killed 4 roosters last night & I finished dressing them to-day. H helped to pickle them. I cut out & sewed on Loraine's dress.*

*December 22, 1943 – Wednesday*

*H & E went & got the tree. 10 below here in morning. P & L worked. I sewed on Loraine's dress & went to Barre in p.m. & came home with P. Mrs. Jones was down in evening.*

*December 23, 1943 – Thursday*

*11 below here in morning. P & L worked. I finished Loraine's dress & cooked & went up to see Lottie. She is sick. Mrs. Jones came down at night for us to go up there for a while.*

*December 24, 1943 – Friday*

*29 below here in morning. P & L worked. I made Helen's dickey & did up presents. I got a regular letter from C with money order for \$15 for presents for the children. They all came for the tree in the evening.*

*December 25, 1943 – Saturday*

*Warmer. Christmas Day. We went to 10.30 Mass. L & J & children were here for dinner. P had L take him & Joe Cleary away & stayed all p.m. L has his new car.*

*December 26, 1943 – Sunday*

*Very nice bright day. We went to 12 o'clock Mass. P would not go in to Mass. I made a chicken pie before I went. L & J were down in the evening.*

*December 27, 1943 – Monday*

*P & L worked. I washed & mopped. Nice & warm. Cloudy. I sent letters to the boys, thanking C for the \$35. We got 2 letters from C. Frances & Patrick came down in p.m. Dot Collins stayed here at night.*

*December 28, 1943 – Tuesday*

*P & L worked. P worked at Tony's from 12 to 6. Very cold & windy. Bright sunshine & a crust. I got a letter each from W & C & cablegram from C sending Holiday greetings. H went down to Barre with D Collins. I finished the other 2 pr. pajamas for & L & B.*

*December 29, 1943 – Wednesday*

*Very cold bright sun. P & L worked. I went to Barre in p.m. & came home on the stage. I got a little table for Gertrude & Ray & I got myself a gray tweed coat.*

*December 30, 1943 – Thursday*

*P & L worked. Colder – 10 below. I finished fixing my coat. I wrote to C & W. Gertrude & Ray came down to get H & E to trim church. Doria came in a while in forenoon & p.m.*

*December 31, 1943 – Friday*

*No work for P & L. We all went to Gertrude's wedding. Very icy but not so cold as it was yesterday. The girls & I came home about 1.45. P stayed till night. Francis & Patrick were here in evening.*

*... returning to Clifford's letters for the  
remainder of the Year 1943 ...*



December 5, 1943

Envelope: 6 cent air mail envelope, APO postmark 6 Dec 1943; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11065772, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster NY, NY.  
Gold-embossed stationery of the United States Army, two sheets, one sided with blue-black ink.]

*Dear folks*

It is Sunday morning again. Al and I went to Mass here in Camp. It was hard getting out of bed but we made it. The Mass in the village is a little later but we wanted to go here this morning. I plan to go to receive for you, Ma on Wednesday.

I am sending a money order with this letter for you to buy some little things for Marilyn, Gene, Lorraine & Bobby. There is nothing I can get here. I'll bet the kids are having a lot of fun in the snow now.

The roads must be pretty bad with the lack of snow plough operators, and how about the gasoline – does it freeze in the tanks this winter?

I got a letter from Mildred and I will answer today. Haven't heard from Wendell or Bill yet.

The notes I spoke of in my letter a while back were returned to me. It is against the law to send them I guess.

I am feeling tops and hope all of you are the same.

Love to all

Loving Son

*Clifford*

Tell Mrs. Moore I was asking for her also the Hutchin's & Aja's & Morrie's and wish them a Merry Christmas for me.

**December 10, 1943**

[V-Mail, no location identified]

*Dear folks*

I got two letters from you today, Ma. The air mail of the 14<sup>th</sup> & the V-mail of Thanksgiving Day. Also got Helen's of the 16<sup>th</sup>. I got a kick out of reading the French part. Write some more that way, Helen I'm very rusty on my French but it is fun figuring it out.

Sorry to hear about Sam Guy, but I really had to laugh when I read it. He certainly has hard luck. It is too bad that the tubes are gone on the radio, but find out what ones are needed and the model of the radio maybe Cliff White can get some if he can't I have a friend here in my hut named Roland Anctil who has an uncle in Waterbury, Connecticut who owns a radio shop. His address is André Anctil, 547 So. Main St. Roland says to write to him and he will too. Maybe you can get some after all. I hope so. Al and I went to Mass today at 5 PM. I'm sorry I didn't get to receive though. Haven't heard from Wendell or Bill yet.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

**December 16, 1943**

[V-Mail; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster NY, NY. No place named.]

*Dear Folks*

Got your letter of the 29<sup>th</sup> was sorry to hear of Will Roarke what a sudden death!

Al and I went to Mass this morning here in camp. I am a little bit late to get to confession so I plan to receive Thursday if I can get to Mass.

I hope Mary Cleary is coming along fine. I can imagine how she feels.

So you have plenty of snow there now. I suppose you will be glad to see it gone. I wouldn't mind seeing some for a change.

Wendell was lucky to get up on Mt. Etna. I wonder just where he is in Italy now. I still haven't heard from him or Bill. Got a letter from Josephine yesterday. Well I can think of no more to say. I have a hard time to find suitable words to fill a single page.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

**December 17, 1943**

[V-Mail; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster NY, NY. No place named, but contents indicate from England]

*Dear Folks*

I received your package with the candy and razor today. Thanks a lot and by the way the fellows send their thanks for the fudge too – you see we still divide our packages. It is about 8:30 now and I just finished cleaning up and was I dirty? Most of the boys have gone to town tonight and it is real quiet in our hut. They will be in soon as the “pubs” close at 10. I hope they bring some “chips” back. They call French fried potatoes “chips” over here. And that is about all that is for sale to eat in town at night. Well I can think of no more to say. Haven’t heard from Wendell or Bill as yet. I am feeling fine.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

**December 21, 1943**

[V-Mail, date stamped December 21, 1943; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster, NY., NY.  
No location identified.]

*Dear Folks*

Got your letter of December 2<sup>nd</sup>. I have been wondering if Edna has gone back to Hartford or not.

I finally got a letter from Wendell & Bill. Wendell's was dated November 25<sup>th</sup> and Bill's the 7<sup>th</sup>. Poor Wendell doesn't seem to get many breaks. I guess they don't think much of Italy. They can write about a lot of things that we can't. At least it seems that way.

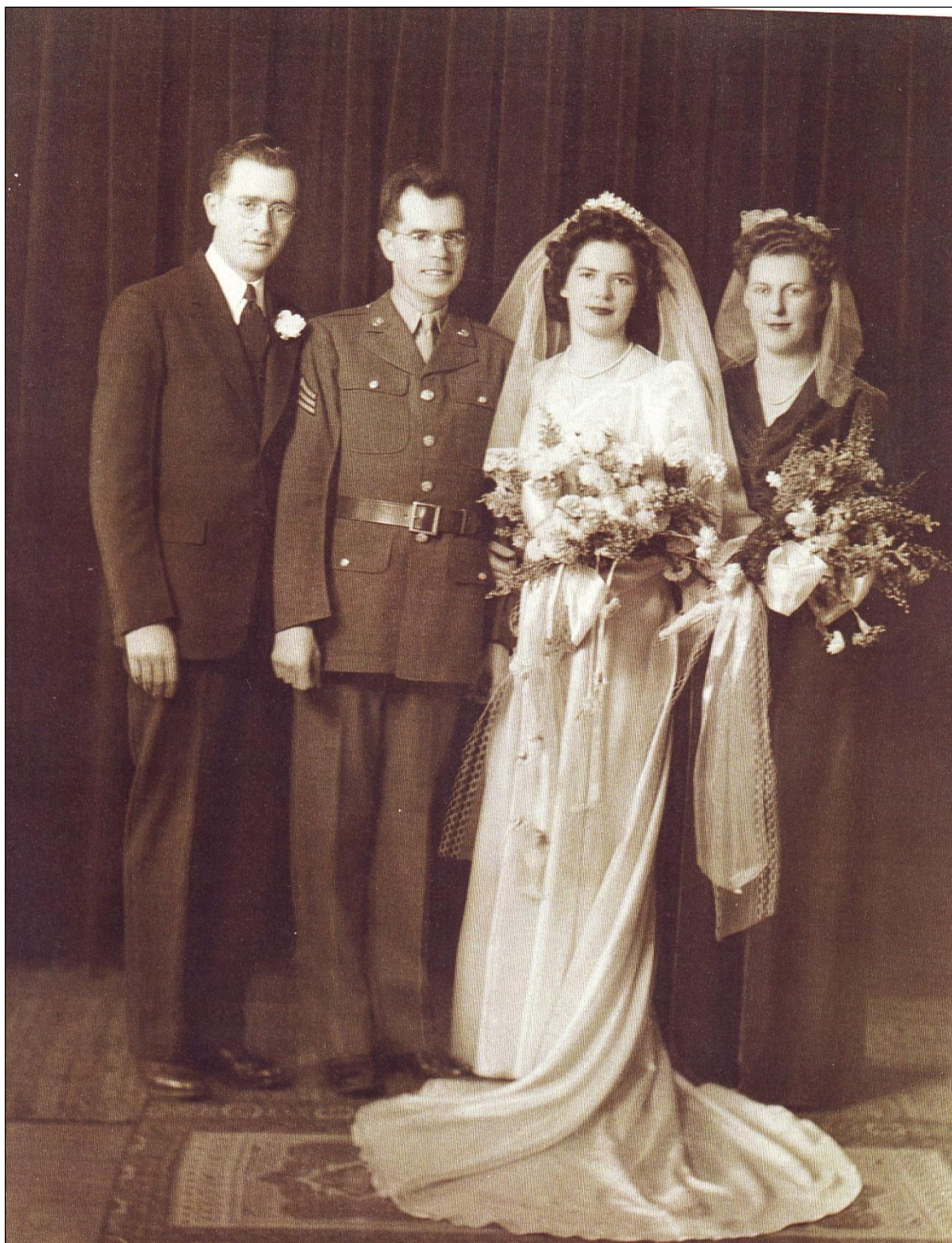
Lawrence's birthday was yesterday. I don't have any cards and I didn't have a chance to write. Have been real busy for the last week or so. I see Joe Converse every day now. We talk about home etc. every morning. He drives me to work and back.

The fields are still green here some differences than back home, eh? But I still prefer the snow to this.

Loving Son

*Clifford*





*New Year's Eve wedding portrait of Clifford's first cousin Gertrude Cleary and Raymond Fitzpatrick, December 31, 1943.*

*Best man – Ray's Brother Clarence (Red) Fitzpatrick*

*Maid of Honor Gladys Chenette (Gertrude's Girlfriend from Montpelier)*

*[Note: The following letter was one of the two undated letters; the first was inserted as page 1943-77. This one seems to “fit” here, as he’d mentioned in the last letter having heard from Wendell. Also, the question about Aunt Maggie and the kids still being at Aunt Annie’s probably meant that they’d gone up to Vermont for the wedding of Gertrude and Ray on New Year’s Eve. KOB]*

Undated

[Envelope: Free; only wavy lines appear - no postmark, no date, no APO mark at all; censor-stamped, no censor signature. Sgt. C. B. O’Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES BN. A.P.O. 4745, c/o Postmaster NY., N.Y., U.S. Army; Stationery: Single sheet, one side; black ink.] [Censor-cut at top right where date would appear; no date on envelope either.]

*Dear Folks*

We aren’t doing much of anything today so it gives us plenty of time to write. The only trouble is I can’t think of anything to say.

Guess I told you in the last letter that I heard from Wendell.

Al and I are still together in the same barracks in fact. Don’t know if I told you about his arm or not but he hurt it a while ago – it is much better now. We will be going to Mass together in the morning. We went to receive Wed. evening and also heard a very good sermon given by a civilian priest.

Are Maggie and the kids still at Annie’s? Give them all my best regards if they are.

I sincerely hope and pray that Lawrence isn’t called.

Love to all

*Clifford*

## THE LETTERS OF 1944

January 2, 1944

[V-mail date stamped January 5, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. No location noted.]

*Dear folks*

I have received a quite a few letters from you since I last wrote. Hope you haven't been worrying. The last letter I wrote to you came back, must have said something wrong again. Got your Christmas card, also heard from Wendell again. Hope you folks enjoyed the holidays. I had a little fun, more than I expected. Had Christmas dinner at an Englishman's home. It was really good. They made us stay for tea and supper and tea again. It was 11 o'clock at night when we left. I got to Mass Christmas day in a real church. The first time I went to a real church since I've been here. Couldn't get to Mass the following Sunday. We did however get to Mass yesterday (New Year's Day) and this morning too. It is almost time for dinner and I am really hungry as usual.

[Side note: "I got the picture Edna sent."]

Loving Son

*Clifford*

January 8, 1944

[V-Mail date stamped Jan 8, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 1164771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY. No location noted.]

*Dear Folks*

I received your letters of December 19<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, Ma, and also Edna's of the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Glad to know you are all well. I got a letter from Wendell dated December 7<sup>th</sup>. He said he had received 5 packages from home. I'll bet he was glad to get them. It is about 9:30 P.M. here now. I have just finished shaving and cleaning up and feel like a new man. I know I haven't been writing very regularly but I can't seem to find anything to say. Al and I have been talking about the time we had on our last furlough tonight. We are both feeling fine.

Glad to know that you got the radio going again.

Loving Son

*Clifford*



January 11, 1944

[V-mail, date stamped Jan 11, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY. No location named.]

*Dear Folks*

I received your letters of December 24, 27, and 30<sup>th</sup> and Helen's of the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Glad you sent Wendell's letter. I am surprised at how much he can say in his letters. Katie Boyce sent me a Christmas card. I didn't send her one darn it. It is about 4:30 P.M. and getting kind of dark already. I think I'll go to town to night so I had better get started cleaning up. Glad you got the money orders. Well there goes the chow whistle and I am hungry. I am feeling fine hope this letter finds you all well at home. I think I will get a short furlough soon. Would like to spend it in Ireland but I may go to Scotland.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

January 15, 1944

[V-mail date-stamped Jan 15, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY. No location identified.]

*Dear Folks*

I am Sergeant of the guard again to night and have a few minutes to myself. Guess I'll take advantage of the time by dropping you a line. Can't think of much to say except that I'm fine and certainly hope this finds you all in the best of health. I'm looking forward to a furlough, probably isn't worth planning on but nevertheless it will be a change. It won't be a long one, but I kind of plan on going to Ireland – northern Ireland of course. I would love to get into Southern Ireland but that is impossible right now I guess. I'll probably send you a clay pipe and shamrocks for St. Pat. Day, Pa. We took a couple of snapshots the other day. I hope they come out good. I'll send you some as soon as we get them back.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

January 18, 1944

[V-mail date-stamped Jan 20, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY. No location identified.]

*Dear Folks*

Got your letter of January 7<sup>th</sup> today, Ma and also Edna's of the 3<sup>rd</sup>. You were asking about the package that Lawrence & Jo sent. I got it long ago and sent them a letter thanking them, but perhaps they never got it. I wrote to them last Friday night again. Yes the little flashlight did come in handy, only it burned out too quickly and no batteries of that size around here, anyway I have another light now.

I went to Mass Sunday we have a new chaplain now. Haven't had the chance to meet him as yet. They are kept really busy. I would like to have you send me some small size cigars. I really enjoy them. Can't get them here. We do get cigars but they are no good. Robert Burns if you can get them.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

January 25, 1944

[V-mail date-stamped Jan 25, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY. Ma wrote on the side of this V-mail form, "Received this Feb. 5." No location identified.]

*Dear Folks*

Got your letters of January 2<sup>nd</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> also got a bunch of Christmas cards that must of got held up some place.

Gertrude must have been pretty nervous waiting to get to church on her wedding day. I'm glad everything went over all right.

We went to Mass this morning had a very nice but short sermon.

I have a little laundry to do this afternoon then I think I'll get a bicycle some place and go for a ride. It seems funny to ride bikes but everyone rides here from 6 to 60. I suppose you are about ready to start to 9 o'clock Mass right now it is about 1:30 here.

I may get my furlough the early part of next month.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

January 29, 1944

[V-mail stamped Jan 29, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster NY, NY. No location identified.]

*Dear Folks*

Got your letter of the 13<sup>th</sup> also Helen's and Edna's. Thanks for that address I may get to see her some time. Some of the boys have been on furlough here and seem to have enjoyed themselves. I don't know when I will get mine now.

It is strange that Gertrude didn't get any presents in Hartford at all. They are all making plenty of money there too. The wedding was kind of sudden wasn't it? Or maybe I'm wrong the last time I saw her she said she was going to wait until the war was over, but I can't blame her in a way.

Haven't heard from Wendell for some time. I wish he would get shipped to North Ireland or here any place but where he is now. Got a letter from my old friend Kelly he is in Italy and wants Wendell's address.

Loving Son,

*Clifford*



February 2, 1944

[V-mail date-stamped; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771  
Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY. No location identified.]

*Dear Folks*

Got your letter of January 16<sup>th</sup>, yesterday. Also got one from Wendell. He is O.K. but has been pretty busy for the past few months I guess. I sent him Kelly's address this morning and I sent Kelly his address yesterday. They were both asking for them. I hope they can meet each other, but it would be a miracle I guess.

It is Sunday morning – I got up early and went to breakfast for a change and now I have to shave and get ready for Mass at 11:15.

Wendell was saying how he would like to be home in all that snow and boy I would too, but I'll bet you are sick of seeing it by now. I'm glad Milford got another furlough.

Joe and Annie shouldn't feel that way about Gertrude. Maybe Ray will never be sent overseas. I hope not anyway.

Love to All  
Loving Son

*Clifford*



*Happier Days - Wendell O'Connor, 1939  
Photo taken in East Barre, Vermont, while he was  
still in high school.*

February 11, 1944

[V-mail dated Feb 11, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771 Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY. No location identified.]

*Dear Folks*

Got your letters of January 20<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>. I wish you wouldn't worry when you don't hear from me for short periods like that. There is nothing to worry about really.

Annie sent me an invitation to Gertrude's wedding.

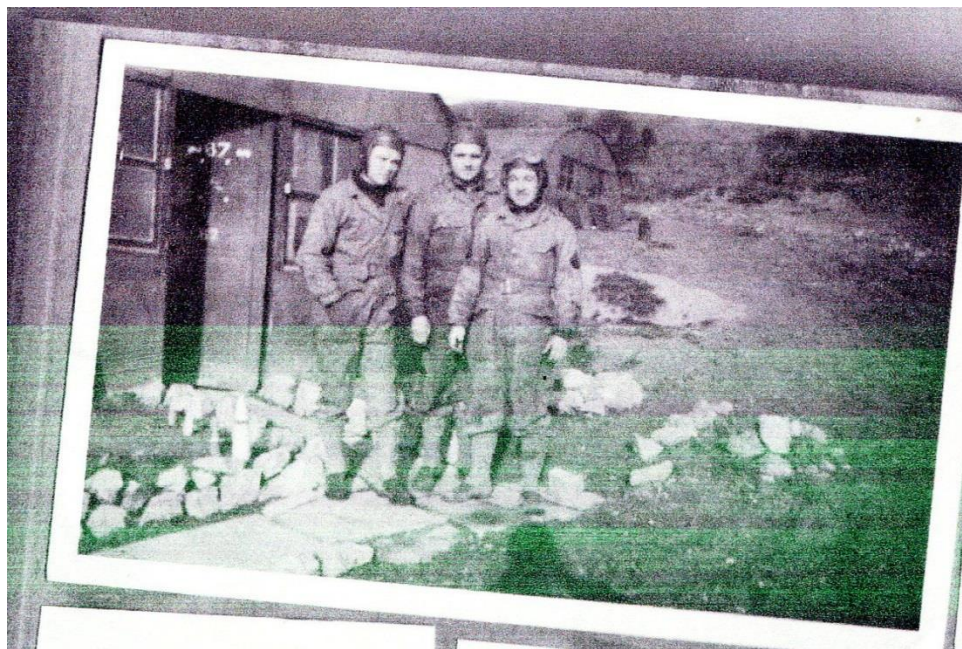
I remember when I got the one to Mary's. The day she was married we shipped out, or rather got on the boat. [see *Chronology in Introduction. KOB*]

I was planning on being on my way to Glasgow, Scotland today, but conditions arose to make it impossible. If everything goes okay I will go next Wednesday or Thursday the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup>. I can't go to North Ireland. My friend Anctil is going too. Morrie may join us but I doubt it.

I am glad you got that beef I'll bet it comes in handy. We get a lot of beef here. I am fine and I hope this letter finds you all in the best of health.

Loving Son

*Clifford*



***Roland Anctil, far right, others unidentified, in front of huts. January or February 1944.***

February 17, 1944

[V-mail date-stamped Feb 17, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster NY, NY. No location identified.]

*Dear Folks*

Got your letter of January 30 glad you got some cigars. I got my ration today and got some pretty good ones. Sorry to hear of Helen getting sick and I hope she is better now. Well tomorrow is the day I was to leave on furlough but it has been cancelled again. I will probably get it later. I was kind of mad when I found out about it but there is nothing that can be done about such things. Some day this mess will be over, disappointments will be only memories. When I think of Wendell and Bill it makes it easier to take.

I would like to have you send me one of my khaki shirts.

Well I must close and write to a friend of mine in the hospital, and then hit the hay.

I am fine hope you all are well.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

February 22, 1944

[V-mail date-stamped Feb 22, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY. No location identified.]

*Dear Folks*

I got 3 V-mail letters from you last week and a letter from Edna which she wrote before leaving. Also got Helen's letter today.

It is Sunday and I'm on charge of quarters. We went to Mass this morning at 11:30. We are going to have services this coming Wednesday for the ashes and also a Mass Thursday afternoon. I plan on going to receive them.

It is very quiet around here today.

I got a letter from Wendell the other day he is O.K. I am fine and hope you are all well.

You didn't have to go to all that trouble to get the cigars. I wouldn't have asked for them if I had have known they were so hard to get. Anyway thanks a lot. I'll be waiting for them.

Loving Son

*Clifford*



February 26. 1944

[V-mail date-stamped Feb 26, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster NY, NY. No location identified.]

*Dear Folks*

Got your letter of the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup> also got one from Edna also one from Dorothy Fitton. Glad to hear that your cold is better, Ma. Al and I are telling the boys about how cold it used to get back home if you could hear some of the stories you would laugh. I got a letter from Annie the other day telling about the wedding. I was sorry that Freddie Baldor was shipped also Pat Donahue. Edna said that Howard was in San Francisco – hope he doesn't get sent to the Islands.

I don't feel much like writing to night and I don't know what to say. I am fine ad hope you all are at home. I suppose Edna will get home tomorrow or maybe Sunday. Hope she gets along fine in the Hospital.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

February 29, 1944

[V-mail date-stamped Feb 29, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY. No location identified.]

*Dear Folks*

Got your letter of February 17<sup>th</sup> today also got your beautiful Valentines. I am glad to hear Tommy Nerney is feeling better and hope he continues to. Poor Wayne Spaulding, I pity him if they take him in.

It is Sunday afternoon Al & I went to Mass this morning – We have a new chaplain he is very busy and seldom gets time to give us a sermon. We are going to have Mass again on Thursday P.M. and the Stations of the Cross and Mass Friday P.M. Before we know it Easter will be here.

Well I guess I'll close and write to Wendell. I am fine and hope this finds you all well.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

March 2, 1944

[V-mail date-stamped Mar 2, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY. No location identified.]

*Dear Folks*

I got your package yesterday the 28<sup>th</sup>. It didn't take very long to get here, did it? Everything was swell, thanks a million!! There is nothing like a package from home.

We have just been having a quite a time fixing a light for a bicycle. We must have a front and rear light says the "bobby." We finally have them both working and a friend of mine is going to town after some "chips" (French fries). I doubt if he will get any but there is nothing like trying. "Chip Shops" here are like soda fountains in the States. I wish I had a few barrels of lard and a few sacks of potatoes I'd make a fortune in no time. Thanks again for everything.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

**March 4, 1944**

[V-mail date-stamped Mar 4, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY. No location identified.]

*Dear Folks*

Got your letter of the 20<sup>th</sup> also Helen's I'll answer hers later. You have plenty of snow and it is really cold eh? Well I suppose it won't be for too much longer. I suppose Edna is home now. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March (?) and it has come in like a lamb. Tomorrow I plan to go to confession and communion. The days are getting much longer now. They say during the summer here that it doesn't get dark until about 11 o'clock at night. I suppose that is including war time and daylight time, etc.

Haven't heard anymore about my furlough.

Haven't heard from Wendell or Bill for a while – anyway the mail seems to be messed up a bit now. Guess I'll write to Bill to night. I'm feeling fine.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

March 7, 1944

[V-Mail date-stamped Mar 7, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY. No location identified.]

*Dear Folks*

Got your letter of the 24<sup>th</sup> this morning just after Mass. I went to receive Thursday afternoon and the Stations of the Cross Friday.

I was very sorry to hear that Lawrence had been called to Rutland. I sincerely hope there is nothing wrong with him, but I hope he doesn't have to come in same for Edward.

No I haven't had my furlough as yet still waiting – not so enthused about it now anyway.

I did receive some socks in a package, but I told you about them long ago. I would like some more of them if you can get them without too much trouble. I don't dare to even send the ones you sent me to the laundry for fear they will steal them and send back some of their lousy ones. We finally got some photos developed they came back about 1“ by 1-1/2” very small. I'm going to try and have them enlarged then I'll send them.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

March 17, 1944

### **St. Patrick's Day**

[Envelope: This letter was opened and resealed with tape with a crown on it that says "*opened by examiner.*" It was mailed in a brown American Red Cross envelope. Marked "Free."

Postmarked from Glasgow, 17 March 1944. (Note: Of all the letters this is the only one that has a ribbon around it – it may be the ribbon that was around the shamrocks – as it is a green, pink, black and white striped small piece of gros-grain ribbon – see below.) Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703. TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY. Stationery: Two plain sheets, one side each, in black ink.]

*Dear folks*

This is one day I shall never forget. I'm in Glasgow, Scotland. Got here last night (on furlough). Have searched the city for some shamrock and finally found some and here is some of it. I got hang from the M.P.s but I am still wearing it and I still will – nobody will ever stop me from "wearing the green."

The people here are very very nice to us in fact I shall hate to leave here, and go back to base camp again.

St. Patricks Day means as much here if not more than it does back home. This morning I met a quite a few real Irishmen and sang "forbidden" songs etc. "Carey of the Hill" and a few more they are ascarded to sing them of course (we are not) We get along swell together.

Love to all  
Loving Son

*Clifford*





*Special Letter Home – the St. Patrick’s Day letter Clifford mailed from Glasgow, Scotland, with shamrocks enclosed – something that apparently garnered the suspicion of the mail censors, who opened and resealed it. The shamrocks, alas, did not make it to Vermont, but the beribboned envelope did.*

*[I like to think of the kind-hearted examiner who had to take the shamrocks from a soldier on St. Patrick’s Day, but who had the heart to leave the bow. KOB]*



March 19, 1944

Postcard from Glasgow, Scotland



March 22, 1944

[V-Mail dated-stamped March 26, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 Tk. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster, NY NY. No location identified.]

*Dear Folks*

I just got back to camp from my furlough and found your letter of March 9, waiting for me. I also received those of February 28 and March 2. I haven't written since March 5 and I suppose you are all worried. I have been very very busy and I didn't get time to write before going on furlough. I did send some cards from Glasgow also some Shamrock, but you probably won't get them for weeks. I think Scotland is one of the most beautiful places I've seen especially Loch Lomond. The people treated us so nice we all really hated to leave. I will tell you more about it later. I will be busy for the next couple of days and will not write

I finally saw London had breakfast there this morning.

Love to all

*Clifford*



March 24, 1944

[Envelope: 6 cent airmail envelope; APO postmarked 26 Mar 1944; censor-stamped and signed; Ma wrote in lower right corner, "Clifford's picture in here in Highland costume." Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster NY, NY.]

*Dear Folks*

Well here is a laugh for you. It took me about an hour to put those things on. I wish it was colored it would knock your eyes out. Yellow skirt, red & green socks, dark green jacket, black & white hat and a flashy scarf oh. yes, that thing hanging down in front is a "spurn" I don't know what it is for – made out of some kind of fur. Those skirts are very thick about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch. I will send you some cards later.

Loving Son

*Clifford*



**Clifford (right) and his good friend Roland Anctil on furlough in Glasgow, Scotland, on St. Patrick's Day, March 17, 1944.**

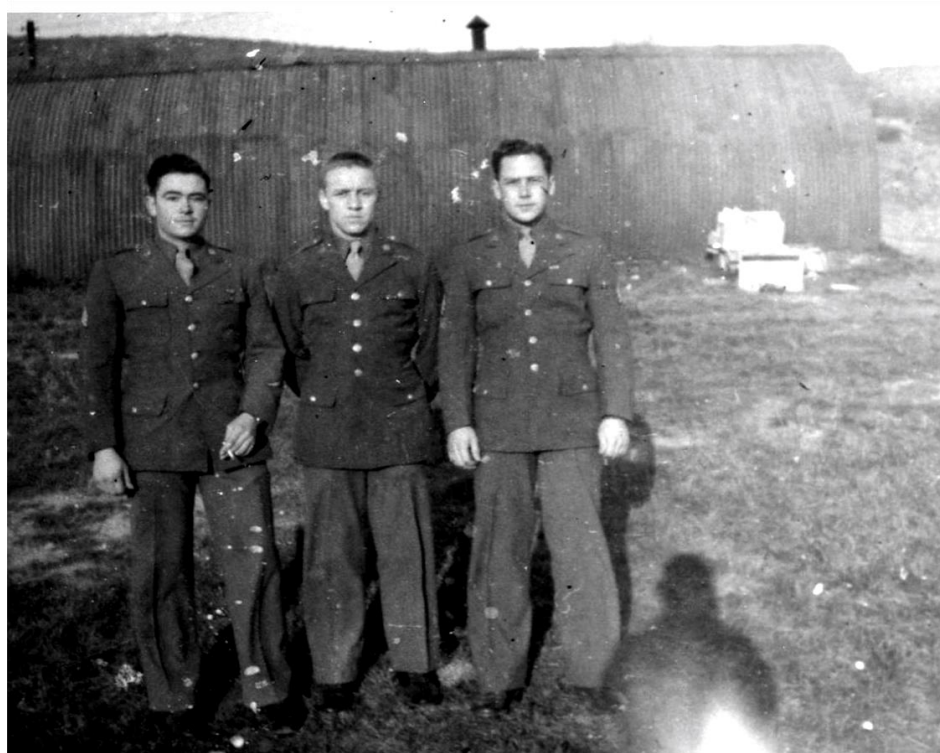
March 28, 1944

[Envelope: 6 cent airmail envelope; postmarked APO 31 March 1944; censor-stamped and signed; Ma noted on bottom right, "*Photo cards of Clifford in here.*" Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster NY, NY. Stationery: Tissue-like paper, single sheet, blue-black ink, both sides. Three photographs were enclosed; a group photo in front of "hut," and two photos of Dad alone in front of it – he's got a pipe.]

*Dear folks*

[Noted at top left, "I think my insurance is due this month or was it last month? I will send some money next month for you to pay it."]

Finally I'm sending the pictures I spoke of sometime ago. Hope you get them O.K. The fellow in the middle is the one I went to Cooperstown N.Y. with last summer when we were at Indiantown.



*In England; photo taken in January 1944.  
Left-right: Gore, Whitey, Clifford.*



*In England, January 1944. Clifford O'Connor.*

I received the package with the shirt & socks & candy thanks very much also today I got Marilyn's little package I appreciate it a lot. I will write and thank her soon. I also got your letters of the 13<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>.

The days are much longer here now and next week we set the clocks an hour ahead it won't be dark until 9 P.M. then.

I can't think of anything to say tonight except I'm fine and thanks again for the package. You won't be getting the Shamrocks I sent from Glasgow – I messed up a little mailing them almost got in a jam, but everything is O.K. now.

Loving Son

*Clifford*





*Clifford, England, January 1944  
Noted on reverse, "Loving Son, Clifford"*

April 1, 1944

[V-mail date-stamped Apr 4, 1944, Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY. No location identified.]

*Dear folks*

Received your letter of March 19<sup>th</sup> also got Helen's of March 20<sup>th</sup>.

We are off today and what a day off it is.

Tomorrow is Palm Sunday – a year ago I was getting ready for my trip to Alabama. A lot of things have happened since then. It seems like 5 years ago to me.

Today our hut looks like a Chinese laundry everyone is washing clothes and hanging them up to dry.

We have a victrola for today and are listening to some good numbers.

Well Lent is nearly over and I haven't done much penance this year but I'm sure you folks made up for it.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

April 9, 1944

[V-Mail date-stamped Apr 9, 1944. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY. No location identified.]

*Dear Folks*

Got your letters of March 23 & 26 today also got the "Sentinel" dated March 9, and Edna's of the 26<sup>th</sup>.

Today is Good Friday I planned on going to the Stations of the Cross this afternoon but I couldn't make it – I did get there in time to go to confession though – there is no Mass tomorrow so I will receive Easter Sunday. We are lucky to have Mass as often as we do I think. We have a new Chaplain now, a major, he looks very much like Howard Donahue.

I'll bet Lawrence & Johnny are really "sweating out" being called up. I feel sorry for them and Mildred & Jo and the kids too.

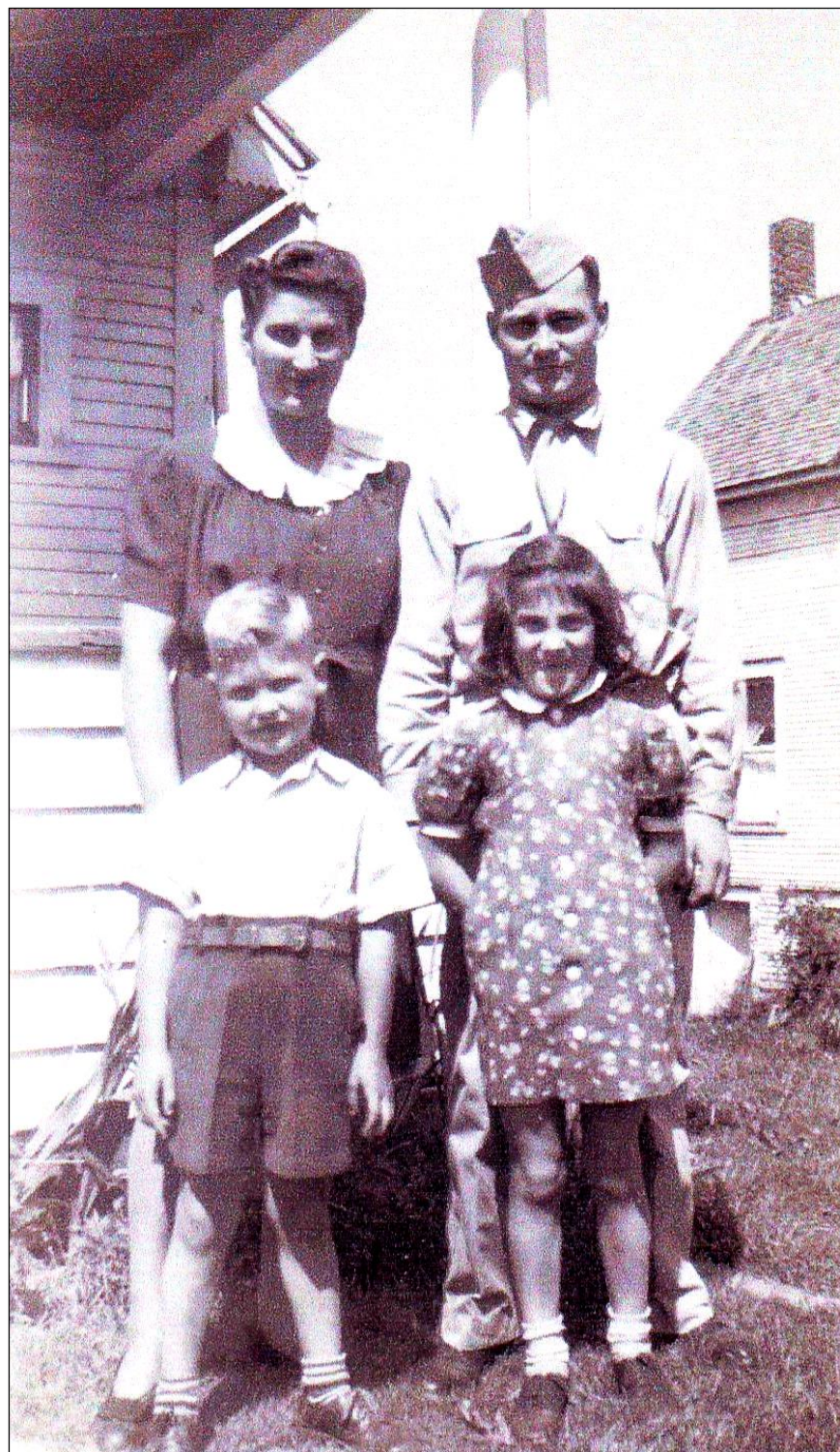
Well I think I will close and get some rest. I am fine, hope everyone is at home.

Love to all

*Clifford*



*Mildred and Johnny Cozzi and children  
Photo taken July 23, 1944  
Johnny holding Eugene; Mildred, Marilyn  
(Marilyn's eighth birthday)*



*Lawrence and Josephine O'Connor  
with Bobby and Lorraine  
Photo taken after Lawrence was called up, Spring or Summer 1945*



April 10, 1944

[V-Mail date-stamped April 10, 1944, Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY. No location identified.]

*Dear Folks*

Received your letter of March 30, Ma also got Edna's regular letter and V-mail and Helen's V-mail too. They do very well to write as often as they do and I really appreciate it a lot.

This is Easter Sunday or I should probably say Monday as it is just after 12 midnight. I went to receive this morning. There were a quite a few at Mass much more than usual. Just like back home. There are always some who go to church once a year Easter Sunday and probably Christmas. I'm Sgt. of the Guard tonight. It is very quiet. The moon is full and very bright.

Sorry to hear about the dysentery. I can't imagine what was causing it. I know what that is and I know how you must feel. I certainly hope you are all well again. I am fine.

I'm glad that Johnny did not pass and I only hope and pray now that Lawrence doesn't have to go.

Love

*Clifford*

April 19, 1944

[V-mail date-stamped Apr 20, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY. No location identified.]

*Dear Folks*

Got your letters of April 2 & 6. Also got Edna's last letter. I got one from Wendell dated March 27. He seems to think that Lawrence is in the Navy. Maybe he is by this time, but he couldn't have been then.

Glad to hear that you got the picture I sent, by this time you must have the others.

I'm glad you got a little dog – I bet Helen has a lot of fun with it. It must be quite lonesome around there now. Especially around this time of the year.

We went out last Saturday afternoon and got some rabbits and had a good meal, but we got soaked getting them. I am very tired tonight the bed will feel good. We are lucky to even have a bed I guess. Don't think anything of it if you don't get letters as regular as usual.

Love to all,

*Clifford*

May 3, 1944

[Envelope: 6 cent airmail envelope; postmarked 4 May 1944; censor-stamped and signed.  
Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster NY, NY.  
Stationery: single plain sheet, black ink, one side.]

*Dear folks*

I have not written for some time hope you haven't been too worried. I am enclosing this money order for my insurance and alumni dues. You can expect more money orders from now on. I have been going to make out an allotment for months, but I never seem to get around to it. I'll just send it home this way.

I have received a lot of letters from you in the past couple weeks including the package with the socks or did I tell you about it before. Also got the Easter card and Mildred's too. I have a quite a stack of mail to answer I don't think I'll ever catch up.

Sorry to hear about Sam Guy, but glad to know that Edward, Lawrence, Johnnie and Bruno don't have to come in to the service. I'm feeling fine.

Love to all

*Clifford*

May 9, 1944

[V-mail date-stamped May 9, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY. N location identified. Note: Ma had penciled on the top the word, "request," regarding the pepperoni.]

*Dear folks*

Nearly time for me to write again hope you haven't been worried. Got your letter of April 27. I suppose Lawrence has been examined again – I hope he doesn't have to go. I went to receive this morning. I missed Mass two weeks in a row, but through no fault of mine.

I hear that only steak and beef for roasting is rationed now over there is that true? If it is I would like to have you send me some pepperoni some of the boys have received some from home and it wasn't spoiled either.

I got a letter from Bill saying that he just missed seeing Wendell. I had two letters from Pat Donahue, you know he is here in England too. I may be able to meet him, but I doubt it.

Haven't heard from Wendell lately. I'm enjoying the best of health and hope you all are.

Love to all

Loving Son

*Clifford*

May 11, 1944

[V-Mail date-stamped May 13, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 253, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY. No location identified.]

*Dear Folks*

Got your letter of April 30 – I was glad to hear that Bill & Wendell finally met each other. I'll bet they were glad to see one another. I wouldn't worry about Edna having to be sent overseas. By that time everything will be O.K.

I went to Mass this evening at 5 o'clock.

It has been beautiful today I wish I could be out on some lake fishing right now. I suppose Johnny has been to Lake Morey a few times. It must be hard on account of the gasoline. Rene Sabbatto writes real often about his fishing trips.

Haven't heard from Wendell lately but expect one soon telling about meeting Bill. I would like to run into those two some day.

Loving Son

*Clifford*



May 23, 1944

[V-Mail date-stamped May 23, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY.]

Same place – Sunday Eve.

*Dear Ma,*

Got your letter of May 8. It is about supper time back home now. I suppose you are busy getting it ready, Ma. It is 9 P.M. here and is still very light out – doesn't get dark until about 10:30 now. I went to Mass this morning but didn't get to receive. It is very easy for us to receive now.

I don't go out of camp very often now usually go to the movies. We have 3 a week.

I haven't heard from Wendell in a quite a while. I got a letter from my old pal Kelly he is still trying to find Bill & Wendell.

You were asking about the old girl friend. I guess you mean the girlfriend. Yes, I do hear from her real often. She is real nice. I wish you could have met her, Ma. Well some day you will.

Well I guess I'll close and write to Wendell and the girlfriend.

I am feeling fine.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

May 25, 1944

[V-Mail date-stamped May 26, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY. No location identified.]

*Dear folks,*

Got your package with the sugar cakes, candy and batteries, thanks a lot. I started to read the messages of the Sacred Heart, but it is getting late so I decided to write to you before it got dark. It is now 10 o'clock and we still have about ½ hour of daylight left.

Al Morrie was just over visiting I gave him the "Times" you sent in the package. He enjoys it.

I went to the movies tonight, a musical show "Is Everybody Happy" not too bad.

It is very nice here about this time of night everything is so green and fresh (it should be) the trees are beginning to blossom and the air is sweet. Something like apple blossoms.

I suppose Pa is home from work now and you are about to have supper. Well guess I'll close – I'm feeling fine.

Love to all  
Loving Son

*Clifford*



May 26, 1944

[V-Mail date-stamped May 26, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor  
11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY.]

Same Place  
Wednesday Eve.

*Dear folks*

Received your V-mail of May 15 and the air mail of the 11<sup>th</sup> both today. I'm glad you liked the flowers – I was glad to get the chance to send them. Glad to hear that you got a picture of Wendell. I will have some more made of the ones I sent you and send them to him.

I have to laugh every time I read about the little dog I'll bet he makes you mad, Ma.

I hope you have finished papering, Ma it must be awfully hard on you.

Those boys shouldn't have sent their things home it just makes their folks worry all the more. God knows it is bad enough the way it is.

Well it is about my bed time so I'll close and hit the hay. I'm feeling fine and hope you all are.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

May 30, 1944

[V-Mail date-stamped May 30, 1944. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY. No place identified.]

*Dear Folks*

Got your letter of May 18 also Helen's. Glad to hear from you again and also glad to know that you received the money order. I got a letter from Wendell yesterday – he told about meeting Bill. I hope the weather down there is as nice as it is here now.

I went to Mass this morning also to receive had a good sermon too.

I have been quite busy today doing laundry and trying to press. Didn't do too bad even if I do have to say so myself. It would sure seem nice to go to a dresser and open a drawer and take out a nice white shirt all laundered and put it on once more. Oh, well those days are coming.

Well I guess I will close and go for a little walk.

Love to all

Loving Son

*Clifford*

*On this date Clifford received his last letter from his youngest brother, Wendell. Wendell died on July 8, 1944, from combat injuries received on that date.*

*As Clifford's correspondence with home reveals over the next several months, Clifford repeatedly talks about not hearing from him and asks about whether or not they have.*

*This letter from Wendell was the only of his letters that survived among Clifford's things. It is transcribed after the copy. (KOB)*

To  
 -11064771-  
 Sgt. C.B. O'CONNOR  
 CO. B, 7034 TK DES. BN.  
 U.S. ARMY,  
 APO. 253

TBW. O'CONNOR 3125263L  
 (Sender's name)  
 CO. F, 194th INFS. APO. 464  
 (Sender's address)  
 NEW YORK NY.  
 May 11 1944  
 (Date)

PASSED BY  
 10199  
 ARMY EXAMINER  
 (CENSOR'S STAMP)

Hello Cliff:  
 I got your letter awhile back and  
 have found time to write. Well as you probably  
 know Bill and I finally met up and it seemed  
 down nice to see each other we also ran  
 into Tommy Metigue. We went to church and  
 then went and had a few bottles of wine  
 together you might have had word from him.  
 I hope you have anyway. I got a couple  
 of V-mails from ma last night they came  
 in about eight days. She said she got a  
 letter from you in about a week that coming pretty  
 fast. Well I bet you have a quite a time  
 hunting rabbits I suppose they are damn good to eat  
 I don't think I ever ate any. Well I can't write  
 much more. ~~take~~ take care  
 of yourself Cliff. Wendell

V...-MAIL

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1943 10-28143-4



## WENDELL'S LAST LETTER TO CLIFFORD:

May 11, 1944

V-Mail

To:

Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771  
Co. B, 703<sup>rd</sup> TK. DES. BN.  
U.S. Army.  
A.P.O. 253

From:

Pvt. B. W. O'Connor – 31252636  
Co. F, 19<sup>th</sup> ENGRS. A.P.O. 464  
New York. NY.

Hello Cliff:

*I got your letter awhile back and have found time to write. Well as you probably know Bill and I finally met up and it seemed dam nice to see each other we also ran into Tommy Mctigue. We went to church and then went and had a few bottles of wine together you might have had word from him I hope you have anyway. I got a couple of v-mails from Ma last night they came in about eight days. She said she got a letter from you in about a week that's coming pretty fast. Well I bet you have a quite a time hunting rabbits I suppose they are dam good to eat I don't think I ever ate any. Well I can't write much more. Take care of yourself Cliff.*

**Wendell**

June 2, 1944

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail envelope; postmarked APO 3 June 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o Postmaster NY., NY. Stationery: Two small plain sheets; one side only (two pages written); black ink.]

*Dear Folks*

Got your letter of May 25. Glad to know Pa's cold is better and I hope Helen is better by the time you receive this.

I have been very very busy the last few days – please don't worry if you don't receive letters regularly. There is no need for worry really.

I don't seem to know this Capt. Judd – I have heard of that St. Hospital though.

I finally got a letter from Wendell dated May 11. I was real glad to hear from him again. Haven't heard from Bill lately though.

Went to a good movie tonight Charles Laughton in "The Man from Down Under."

By the way I'm enclosing a money order I think I'll make out an allotment soon. If you ever have any use for the money please use it.

Well it is getting dark – time to go to bed. The nights are very short here now.

Love to all

Loving Son

*Clifford*



June 9, 1944

[V-Mail date-stamped Jun 9 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY. Same place.]

*Dear Folks*

I suppose you have been worrying a lot about me these last few days. There is really no cause for it, but of course it is hard for you to believe that.

I saw a wonderful movie tonight "Thousands Cheer" best one I have seen since I've been here.

Sunday I plan on going to receive again and I will go every chance I get.

It is 9:30 P.M. and still very light out if it wasn't so cloudy the sun would still be very bright. We go to bed when it is light and get up when it is light – getting used to it now.

I am enjoying one of the cigars you sent I still have a few left. Can't think of anymore so I had better close. I made out an allotment today for \$50.00 about time, eh?

All my love to everyone

Loving Son

*Clifford*





June 10, 1944

[V-Mail date-stamped June 10, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor  
Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY. Same place.]

*Dear Folks*

I wrote last night and here goes again. I would like to write to you every day but there is nothing to say.

Got your letter of June 1<sup>st</sup> "Air Mail." Mrs. Judd's husband is right about the mail and I know I have told you about it twice before.

Gee, thanks a lot for the picture of Wendell I was darn glad to get it. He looks rugged enough God pity the hun he gets a hold of. I will send you the negatives of those two pictures I had taken and you can send them "developed" to him. Getting pictures developed is a real problem.

Sorry to hear about Nellie – hope she is getting on fine. I have some laundry to do now.

Am feeling fine.

Loving Son

*Clifford*



*B. Wendell O'Connor, photo dated April 1944.*

June 15, 1944

[V-Mail date-stamped June 15, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M., NY, NY. Same Place.]

*Dear folks*

Got your letter of June 5<sup>th</sup>, and I suppose it will relieve your minds somewhat to know that I'm still in England. I guess you folks know as much about what is going on as we do. So there is no need to say anything about it.

Today I got a letter from Edna & Helen and Katie Boyce. First time I've heard from her. I always liked her very much. I must write to her tonight.

Congratulations on your 33<sup>rd</sup> anniversary, hope to be home for the next one.

Love to all

*Clifford*

June 20, 1944

[V-Mail date stamped June 20, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor  
11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY.]

England

*Dear folks*

About time to write again, but I really don't have anything to say. It makes it easier to write when you have letters to answer.

Yesterday was Sunday and I got to Communion in the afternoon.

Remember those pictures I took of the Chaplain saying Mass out on the desert? I wish you would have some more made (I think you have the negatives of both of them) and send one each to these addresses:

Mrs. Joseph Anctil, Box 712, Edmundston, New Brunswick, Canada  
Her son Roland asked me.

Also send one to:

Mrs. Deldina Arsenault, 1875 Thomaston Ave., Waterville, Conn.  
Her son Edward asked me.

They will appreciate it a lot.

I am fine hope you are all the same.

Loving Son

*Clifford*



*September 6, 1942 - "Communion on the Desert"*

*Clifford took this photo at Camp Rice, during the Mojave Desert training period. That it meant a lot to him and the others who were days away from being shipped into France, is evident in his request. In a later reference, he tells Ma that Al Morrie was in the group kneeling to receive Holy Communion.*

*Training is over ... Clifford's next letter indicates that he is in France. (KOB)*

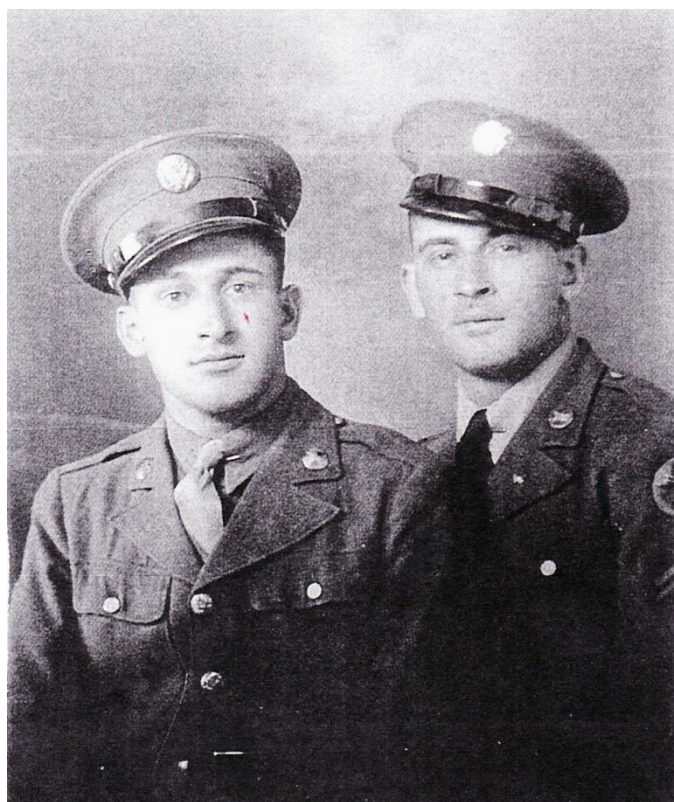




*Clifford's Friend, Roland Anctil*



*Clifford's Friend, Eddie Arsenault*



*Clifford's Friend Al Morrie (right),  
with his brother Lawrence (1943)*

July 3, 1944

[V-Mail date-stamped July 3, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M., NY, NY.]

France

*Dear folks,*

Well, I'm here and in perfect shape too. Today is Sunday and believe it or not I went to Mass and received Holy Communion in a little French church. I was surprised to see the churches still here. Most of the people seem very glad to see us. Can't blame them I guess. I wish I had taken more French in school now, however. I can get along a little bit. I wish my friend Anctil was here he would be right at home. He wanted so much to get to France, but he got an attack of appendicitis at the last minute.

I got your package the other day the sausage was swell, thanks a lot. Also got Helen's letter and I just now received your letter of June 22.

I suppose you will all have a pretty quiet fourth.

I am feeling tops.

Love to all

Loving Son

*Clifford*

July 7, 1944

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail envelope; APO postmarked 8 Jul 1944; censor-stamped and signed.  
Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230  
c/o Postmaster NY., NY. Stationery: Single small sheet, one side only, black ink.]

France

*Dear folks*

First I want to let you know that I'm O.K. and after all that's about all you folks want to know anyway I guess.

I haven't been getting much mail lately, and I haven't written any either.

This is my second letter since I came here.

I am enclosing a money order for \$75. Next month my allotment should be coming out.

This is one place where money is about useless. We can't buy anything.

Thinking a lot about all of you.

Loving Son

*Clifford*



July 8, 1944

[This letter was to his and Clifford's sister Mildred (Mrs. John Cozzi) from Wendell, from Italy.]

Print the complete address in plain block letters in the panel below, and your return address in the space provided. Use typewriter, dark ink, or pencil. Write plainly. Very small writing is not suitable.

No. PASSED BY  
U  
EXAMINER  
(CENSOR'S STAMP)

To **MRS. John Cozzi**  
33 Elmwood Ave.  
Barre, Vermont.

From **CLIFFORD B. O'CONNOR 3125436**  
(Sender's name)  
**C.O.F. 1944 EMBROIDERS (S)**  
(Sender's address)  
**A.P.O. 764 NEW YORK NY**  
**July 8, 1944**  
(Date)

Dear Mildred

Will write a few lines to let you know  
how all right and hope you are all well too.  
I just received your letter tonight of June 26th  
and glad to get word from you and thanks a lot  
for those snapshots you sent, they really come out  
well. The kids are all grown up Marilyn is  
big now, and Jean is a big boy you won't believe  
when you said I wouldn't hardly know them. Boy they  
are sure good looking kids.

Well Mildred you asked for some cards well  
we aren't allowed to send them of any place we  
have seen though but I will try to get some out  
sometimes. I'm going to send home a Jerry Belmont  
and a few other things when I get time just for a  
keep safe. All the boys are sending them home.

Bill and I met up with the other day for the  
second time and we were sure glad to see each other  
again. We were talking over old times and a great time I tell  
I can't write much more. Give my regards to Johnny. Give it  
to the family and Jean.  
Will close this. Love  
Wendell

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1943 25-28142-4

Letter written by Wendell to his sister Mildred, possibly his last letter, as he was killed on the night of July 8, 1944. This letter was provided to me by Mildred's daughter, my cousin Marilyn Murray, who found it among her mother's war years' souvenirs. (KOB)

July 18, 1944

[V-Mail censor signature stamp [lacks usual “passed by” section]. Sgt. C. B. O’Connor  
11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY.]

France

*Dear Folks*

I have time to write right now and I guess I had better take advantage of it.

First I want to tell you that I am feeling fine. You will be glad to know that I went to receive Communion Saturday and again today, but couldn’t get to Mass Sunday. Saturday we had only confessions and communion directly afterwards – no Mass, but today we did have Mass. The Chaplains over here are really doing their share in this.

It is much warmer and nicer here than it was in England – most of the time.

I get mail from you quite often, also Dottie. Thanks a lot for the pictures of you, Pa, Edna & Helen they are swell. Well, Ma a year ago I was on my furlough and this time next year we will all be together again I’m sure. I will write whenever I can and also go to Communion as often as I can.

Love to all

Loving Son

*Clifford*

|                                                                                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Note:</b> This letter includes the first use of “Dottie’s” name in Clifford’s letters ... he’s thusfar referred to her as “the Girlfriend.” (KOB)</p> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|



July 22, 1944

[V-Mail stamped and signed; no date stamp. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o Postmaster, NY, NY.]

France

*Dear folks*

Here I am again. I'll bet you are really waiting for letters these days. I am still fine and I certainly hope Wendell is.

France is a bit different than we expected. I know I was surprised at a lot of things anyway. We don't come in contact with civilians very much. They all seem glad to see us. We give them candy etc. All they have to offer is cider and I don't like it very much. They have all been through an awfully lot and we feel sorry for them.

The houses here are nearly all made of stone with a roof usually of real tile but sometimes you see one with thatch, and some of course without any. All the women wear wooden shoes and most of the men.

Getting meals ready is one of our headaches and of course dishes. I don't see how you ever cooked for all of us kids, Ma and never complained either.

Love to all

Loving Son

*Clifford*

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Note:</b> Neither Clifford, nor his family, yet knew that Wendell had been killed. As the letters reveal hereafter, Clifford's family was notified on July 24, 1944, but decided not to tell him right away. He learned the truth through a piece of returned mail, stamped "Deceased." This word is not stated outright in the letter he writes home, but it is one my brothers and I remember well in my father's infrequent outward reflection on this sad loss and the way he said the word. Clifford kept Wendell's memory alive for us from the time we were very young. (KOB)</p> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

July 24, 1944

[V-Mail censor stamped and signed; no stamped date. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771,  
Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M., NY, NY.]

France

*Dear folks*

It is Sunday again and I have time to write. This morning we went to Mass and Communion. I have never seen so many at Mass before and especially receiving.

Yesterday Al & I met Joe Converse on our way back from the field we had Mass in. I don't see him very often in fact it was the first time since before we left England. He is fine and apparently doesn't know about his Mother 'cause when I asked him how everything back home was he said O.K. I didn't say anything to him about it.

It is very quiet right here now and it seems nice. Haven't heard from Wendell lately or Bill.

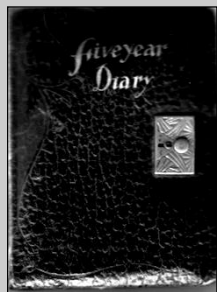
I suppose you folks are eating dinner now it is about 6 P.M. here. It stays light until about 11 almost the same as England. The climate is much more constant here – warmer than England.

Love to all

Loving Son

*Clifford*

|                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Note:</b> The next three pages include two from Ma's diary at the time they were notified of Wendell's death; following them is a letter from Cliff's first cousin Bill Cleary.</p> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**From Ma's Diary:*****Clifford's Family Receives the Telegram about Wendell's Death:***

July 24, 1944 - Monday

Nice day. P worked till noon. We got the telegram 11.30 that Wendell died on the 8<sup>th</sup> of this month from wounds received in action. ...

*Wendell O'Connor, photo undated.*



July 25, 1944 - Tuesday

Nice day. P worked & went back for 6 o'clock at night. He and I went over to see about Wendell's funeral. Lots more people came to see us.

July 26, 1944 - Wednesday

Nice day. Cloudy in a.m. P worked. St. Anne's Day but I do not feel well & did not go to Mass. I went down to M's when P went back to work at 6. We get lots of sympathy cards.

July 27, 1944 - Thursday

P worked & went back to work at night. I feel a little better today & went up to Aja's a few minutes in p.m. We still have lots of callers & cards coming to us.

July 28, 1944 - Friday

Nice day. P worked. We have received 40 cards & letters. We got one from Governor Wills today. I went up to Jones & Lottie's in p.m. We have got 40 cards & letters & 81 people have called.

July 29, 1944 - Saturday

Cloudy. P worked. L took me to the priest in p.m. & to Barre & to confession at night. M brought E home at night. They had been to confession.

July 30, 1944 - Sunday

Cloudy. P & E & H & I & L all went to Graniteville to receive for Wendell. A lot of callers came to say the rosary & L had to go & get Peter at Peroni's.

July 31, 1944 - Monday

Nice day. P did not work. Today is Wendell's funeral day. There were a lot of people at church. The insurance man came to see about Wendell's policy. I wrote 4 letters in evening.

***Letter to Clifford's Family from Cousin Bill Cleary about Wendell's Death:***

August 8, 1944

V-Mail

To:

Mrs. Peter O'Connor  
East Barre  
Vermont

From:

T/4 Wm. J. Cleary  
29<sup>th</sup> Ord. Co. APO 464  
c/o Post Master, N.Y. - N.Y.

Dear Aunt Lula and Family:

*Received your letter today, I just can't believe that the news is true. I had planned to go up & see Wendell again before this, but as things were then I was in the hospital for nine days with malaria. I had already asked permission to go & see him. Gee we had such a good time together the last meeting, I planned we would do the same this next time. He sure was in good health, nice & fat. He was looking the best I ever saw him. The way things are right now I couldn't tell you anything. But as soon as I'm permitted to do so, I'll write & let you know. What I have learned so far isn't much. One thing I can say is from what one of the boys said, is that he didn't suffer at all. It was all so sudden. So you can be thankful for that. I've seen some of the poor boys linger on for days. Next week when the Chaplin comes, I'll have a Mass said for the repose of his soul. Of late that's about all the Chaplin is doing, saying masses for the poor boys. Well Lula & Pete don't take it so hard, There isn't anything that can be done now but pray for him. I'll not forget him in my prayers for the rest of my days. Do you know that Wendell & Mac Tigue is the only boys I've met while overseas, That is from home town. I have always said that when our time comes, there just isn't any way to get around it. Sure hope that Cliff & myself make it home safely. If not then we know that God has a better place for us. Don't worry about me telling Cliff. It's best not to for some time I think. Keep your spirits up as best you can & pray that nothing more will happen to the rest of our family. May God give you courage.*

Best regards to all,  
Bill

V-Mail; text typed; date-stamped August 8, 1944; censor-stamped and signed; outer envelope postmarked U.S. Postal Service, August 18, 1944.



August 8, 1944

[V-Mail. (Top left corner moth-eaten; part of censor-stamp and signature visible.) To:  
Mr. Peter O'Connor, East Barre, Vermont, Box 165, U.S.A.; Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co.  
B 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY.]

France

Hello Pa,

I don't know just what got into me but I have had a feeling to write to you for a quite a while. I don't think I ever did send a letter addressed to you, and I think you will be darned glad to get this.

I suppose you are working just as hard as ever every day and living pretty much the same except now that you have that little dog it makes a little change. I know how you always wanted a dog and I often look at the picture of you and Ma. You with the dog and Ma with the cat. You look so proud of the dog I can't help but laugh.

I often think of the last time I was home on furlough and used to pick you up at the shed every afternoon and then stop at the Dugout for a couple of beers. I think that was about the only time I did spend talking to you much. I was always so busy or thought I was, running around from place to place. I didn't send you a card even for Father's Day. It completely slipped my mind and I'm sorry about it. To the best Dad in the world.

Loving Son



|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Note:</b> This is Clifford's only letter written directly to his father, "Pa," written, though unknown to him at the time, one month to the day after Wendell had died.<br/>One can sense that it must have been a difficult letter to write, and to receive. (KOB)</p> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|



*Peter and Lula with Dog (Sank) and Cat*



*Pa and Helen, with Sank.*

August 8, 1944

[V-Mail censor-stamped and signed; no date stamp. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771,  
Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M., NY, NY.]

France

*Dear folks*

I got your letters of July 9-13-17-18 and was very glad to hear from home again, and to know you all are well. I was surprised to know Helen was in Boston and I hope she enjoys herself.

The Norris boy is real lucky I think, although it would seem funny to stay in a house.

I'll bet you really enjoyed going out to Washington, Ma. [*a village near East Barre (KOB)*]. A lot of times I think of places to take you after I get back you never did go much of anywhere.

The weather has been perfect here and it is a big help. I suppose the papers are full of the great news of the big drive. It seems good to hear the church bells ring in these towns. I can just imagine how good it seems to the people here.

I haven't heard from Wendell for some time – hope you have been getting mail from him.

I can't think of anything to say except that I am still O.K. and still hoping and praying for the end of all this as you all are back home. It must be real nice back there now. Give my regards to Annie and all the rest.

Love to all.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

August 18, 1944

[Envelope: 6 cent airmail envelope; A.P.O. postmark 21 Aug., censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771. Co. B 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY., U.S. Army. Letter written in blue-black ink on small lined notepaper (see second para. in letter), three sheets, five sides.]

France

*Dear Father*

I think the last time I wrote to you was Aug 4 but I didn't get a chance to mail it until a few days later.

I have time to write a real letter, and on German paper. He doesn't have any more use for it. And I'm short so here goes. [*This is a vague, curious, and unresolved reference. Possibly stationery found in a billet ... (KOB)*]

I just wrote a long letter to Dottie – guess she will faint when she reads it. I usually write to her on V mail.

I hope you haven't been too worried about me for the past few weeks, but I know you have.

Thanks a lot for sending those pictures to those two mothers. I told Arsenault about it. He really appreciated it. Of course I can't tell Anctil. He must still be in England. No, Ma I'm not in either of those pictures. I took them. I think Al Morrie is in one though. By the way I saw Al today and Joe Converse too. First time I saw Joe since July 23. He is O.K. We were glad to see each other and to know everything was still O.K. Joe is in Headquarters and stays with trains usually and I don't see him very often.

I haven't been to Mass or Communion since July 23 – have been pretty busy.

Today has been a real day for us. We had a shower, a meal with our old kitchen crew and above all a complete change of clothes. We feel like rookies now.

I have letters from you dated from July 23 to Aug 4. Also got a few from Edna & Helen. I suppose Edna is having fun at Malet's Bay now and I was glad to hear from Helen about Boston. Glad she had fun. By the way, Helen I couldn't believe you got 145 bowling 'cause I never got that but when I read further down the page I understood. I yelled out to my assistant gunner that you got 145 – he is a real bowler from Michigan and he couldn't believe it either then as I finished the letter we both had a good laugh. When I get back home you will beat me I'll bet.

I hope it is as nice back home as it is here. I mean the weather. It is too darn nice to fight a war. I wonder how it will be here in the fall. By then let's hope this war will be over. The way things are going I don't see how they can last much longer. The dirty -----



Believe it or not some of them are Catholics. I couldn't believe it, but it is true. I know they even had priests. I don't see how they could fight and still be Catholics. Hitler really has them buffaloed. I guess we should feel sorry for them but it is hard to do.

I haven't heard from Wendell lately, hope he is o.k.

Well the boys are calling for me to come and eat so I will have to close.

Will maybe write tomorrow – think I'll have time.

Love to All

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Cliff", with a stylized flourish at the end.

August 20, 1944

[Envelope: 6 cent airmail envelope; A.P.O. postmark 24 Aug 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 110764771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY., U.S. Army. Letter written in blue-black ink on small paper, 3 sides written.]

France

*Dear folks*

It is Sunday and a beautiful day again. Yesterday I got to Mass and Communion. Today we are going to have a Mass. I will receive again. Al & I went together yesterday. Here comes Al now. I will have to quit writing and go and try and find out where Mass is going to be said. - Well we are back. Major Wurm said Mass – no sermon – we received again. When I returned to my tank I found two letters here from you dated Aug 7 & 10. The air mail gets here as quickly as the V. It is so nice to get a regular letter, but it must be hard for you to think of what to say to fill the pages.

I didn't know that Chink had been wounded and I hope it isn't bad. I feel sorry for Mr. Aja. I suppose he will never get better.

It was nice of Mrs. Stratton to write to you. I haven't written to her for a long time – think I will today.

Glad to hear that Edna had a good time in Hartford & New Haven. I guess she deserves a good time after so much studying.

It is very quiet where I am now and I am all rested up again. I slept all night last night. It really seemed good.

Speaking of laundry, I washed out a quite a few things the other day and it came out pretty white too. I hate to wash clothes.

I was planning on doing a lot of writing today but so far I have only written two. As soon as I sit down I have to get up to do something – oops interrupted again –

I'll finish this letter some time today. I started about 2 pm and it is about 7 pm now. I don't know what else to say except that I am still o.k. We are looking for the end of all this just as you folks are, only I'm hoping and praying twice as much that it will be as soon as you all think.

Love to all,

*Clifford*

P.S. Did you get the allotment pay for July?

September 1 - 3, 1944

[Envelope: 6 cent airmail envelope; APO postmark 13 Sep 1944; East Barre Parcel Post stamp Sep 30 1944; Ma's note on bottom right in pencil, "written Sept. 1-2 & 3, request for sweater." Stationery four small sheets, blue-black ink, 8 sides.]

France – Belgium [*Note inclusion of "Belgium" in address (KOB)*]

*Dear folks*

About time to write again I suppose you all have been very worried about me. Well I'm fine and feel especially good this morning – the air is cool and brisk just as I like it – it reminds me very much of my vacation time – remember how I used to wait until the fall for mine. The nights are getting cooler here and are much longer than they used to be – it gets dark about 9 o'clock now.

Last night the moon was nearly full and I couldn't help but think of the nights we use to have corn roasts and wienie roasts up in Couture's pasture. We stayed in a wheat field last night the wheat had been cut and gathered probably a week or so ago I'm glad these farmers around this part of France got a chance to harvest it. There are endless fields of potatoes ready for digging around here. France seems to be very productive. It seems good to get away from the hedge rows and thick apple orchards and get out where you can see something.

We have seen a lot of France in the past month and the people were certainly glad to see us standing along the roads showering us with flowers and occasionally giving us a bottle of wine or cider and sometimes running along side of the vehicles handing up precious eggs and maybe a half a loaf of black bread.



***It was the same in all of the French towns. There were the hastily tailored flags, the crowds and the joy of liberation. This photo, and this caption, appear in my father's well-worn history entitled, "Spearhead in the West, 1941-45, The Third Armored Division."*(KOB)**

You should see the long loaves of bread about 3 ft and it is only about two or three inches wide kind of oval shaped. We get white bread now and then with our rations – I gave a fellow a piece of it with some of our canned butter he hadn't had any white bread for 4 years he said. We ran into a few people that could speak very good English and they told us stories that would make your hair stand. I am improving in my French every day but how I wish I had taken another year of it in school.

I started writing this, this morning it is now about 2 p.m. and I am a quite a few miles from the old wheat field. And we are now in another apple orchard – what did I say about being away from them?

We had our dinner and are ready to roll again. We had some black bread that had been baked in a charcoal oven – some char coal was embedded in the bottom of the bread. I really like that bread. It is very tasty in comparison to crackers.

We are all getting pretty good at making meals – usually throw a stew together – it is the quickest way and I think it is good for us. Well, enough of the blarney – I received your letter of Aug 13 and Helen's of Aug 3 & Mildred's of Aug 2. Also got the Optimeter from Whitcomb all of my crew as well as myself enjoyed it very much and oh yes I got the Sentinel with the Class day speeches in it – it is also well worn and well read by this time.

Thanks a lot for your letter Helen and the Miraculous Medal – just the day before I got it a nun in a big city away south of here gave me a large Miraculous Medal too. It is about the size of a Sacred Heart badge. I now have three of them and I'm sure they are helping me a great deal. Yes I did receive the French book you sent me a long time ago in England, but now it is in my barracks bag and if I ever catch up to it or it catches up to me I'll dig it out. The people in this part of France speak much different than they did in Normandy. I can understand fairly well but oh boy when I try to talk it is murder!! Thanks a lot for the picture of you ... you are getting to be a real young lady. My crew all admired it too. ....

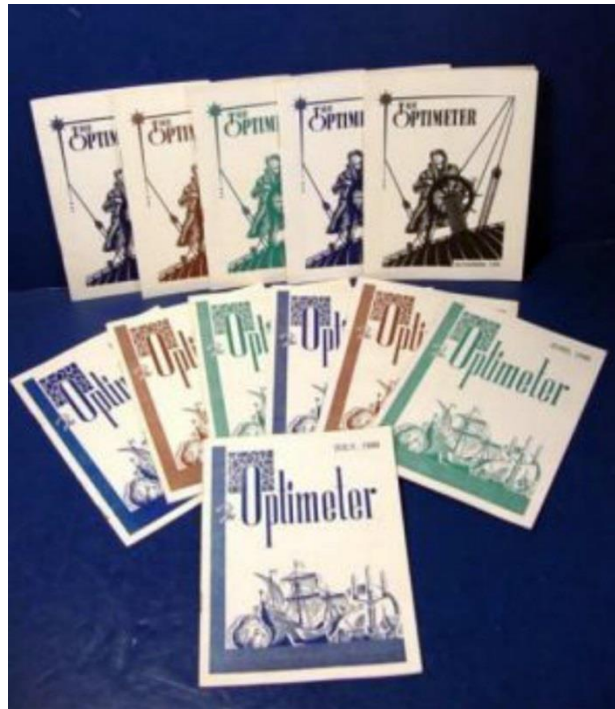
Well it is now Sept. 2 about 1 p.m. and the old orchard is far behind. I'm now writing with a German pen. I lost the nice one that Pratt & Whitney sent me when I was in Camp Pickett. Well I think I have rambled on long enough and I had better finish this while I have time.

If you want to send something I wish you would send me a *heavy sweater [these two words were circled in pencil, probably by Ma; also, there was a date stamp under them (censor's)]* as I think I'll be needing it. One of my old ones will be O.K. if there is one hanging around the house.

It is now Sept. 3<sup>rd</sup>. I am now in Belgium and feeling fine.

Love to all





“Optimeter” periodical, reference here to copy(ies)  
sent from friend back home.

September 11, 1944

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail envelope; APO postmarked 15 Sep 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Envelope marked "Save, with double underline, probably by the Barre Newspaper Office; lower right-hand corner Ma wrote, "*tells about General.*" Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY. Stationery: This stationery belonged to the German general killed on September 8, 1944, as told in this letter and as documented in the news clipping of the Barre newspaper; top left corner of the stationery is noted in pencil "Sgt. Clifford O'Connor, East Barre, Son Mr. & Mrs. Peter O'Connor, now in Germany." Single sheet, both sides, blue ink.]

Belgium

*Dear folks*

Here I am again and this time I have a lot of news but no time to write. We have been traveling to beat the band and are kept quite busy.

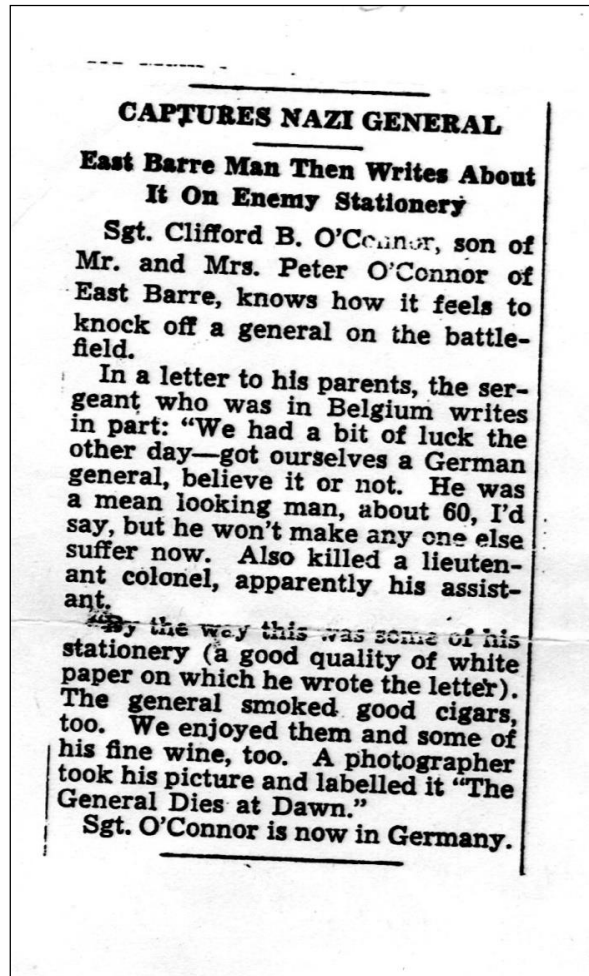
Yesterday was a quite a day for us. Started rolling real early in the morn. It was a beautiful fall day, but kind of cold. We came to a town and halted long enough for a few of us to go into a church. Mass had just started. It was High Mass too – the music and singing hit us away down deep. First time I heard a High Mass since oh, I can't remember when. Anyway we were called out just at Gospel time. I knew it was too good to last.

I have never seen so many flags in my life all shapes and sizes. The poor old Stars & Stripes flies in all shapes over here. I think some of these people never saw an American flag before. They must have been hiding their flags from the Germans for some time. Most of them are home made. Women even make dresses out of them Belgium, England, France and U.S. combined.

We got some new clothes again yesterday and I even took a bath in a house hot water too. We were guarding a road near the house and the people couldn't do enough for us. We gave them some of our rations to cook for us and we really enjoyed that meal – didn't taste at all like G.I. rations. And last night we slept in their kitchen it seemed good to get in out of the cold air for a change. All in all it was a quite a day for us.

We had a bit of luck the other day – got ourselves a German General believe it or not. He was a mean looking man about 60 I'd say, but he won't make anyone else suffer now also killed a Lieutenant Colonel apparently his assistant. By the way this was some of his stationery. The General smoked good cigars too we enjoyed them and some of his fine wine too. A photographer took his picture and labeled it "The General Dies at Dawn." Perhaps you saw it in the papers. That morning I thought all the time it was Mildred's birthday and I was going to get her a good souvenir but it was the 8<sup>th</sup> of September instead of the 7<sup>th</sup> anyway I got a souvenir.





*Clifford's hometown newspaper, from Barre, Vt., The Times Argus, published this account, as provided to the paper by Clifford's parents.*

Yesterday I was looking at a few prisoners and they all had Rosaries around their necks believe it or not. They were part of the S.S. troops too. With the skull & cross bones for an insignia supposed to be real. Huns from the bottom up.

Well I'll write more later – maybe from Germany. Haven't heard from Wendell in a long time.

All my love to all  
Loving Son

*Clifford*

I am feeling fine.

*Note: In the historical booklet entitled, "Call Me Spearhead, Saga of the Third Armored Spearhead Division," page 27, recounts: "The night of Sept. 7, Gen. Konrad Heinrich, commander of the 89<sup>th</sup> German Inf. Div., was killed as he attempted to drive through a roadblock near Liege in a sporty convertible cabriolet. He was the fourth German general for whom the division had accounted." (KOB)*

September 12, 1944

[Envelope: 6 cent airmail envelope; APO postmark 15 Sep 1944; censor-stamped and signed; Ma wrote in lower right, "written Sept. 12 in Germany." Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY. Stationery; single sheet plain, blue ink, single side.]

GERMANY*Dear father*

Well here I am in the fatherland. I don't know where those hunks are running to, but they should stop soon before they run into Stalin.

The last town we came through in Belgium was crowded with civilians giving us soda and flowers etc. and then we came through some thick woods – real desolate looking and stayed there last night, had a little fun this morning.

The people right near the line didn't receive us as we have been accustomed to. They didn't seem to know whether to hail us or not I guess – one would wave and then some of the others would start. I had one flower thrown on my tank this morning. We usually get about 1,000. There are no civilians right here now and I don't blame them. Our Air Corps and artillery are really going to town today.

I am still feeling fine and I hope you all are back home. Have you received my allotment as yet?

Must close now.

Love to all.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

**Note:** With this letter, Clifford has passed into Germany. In the same historical booklet entitled, "Call Me Spearhead, Saga of the Third Armored Spearhead Division," cited in the preceding letter, on page 29, it affirms a dramatic change in the reception by the citizenry as stated in Clifford's letter. It recounts: "There were bitter glances. V for victory signs, flowers, and vive l'Amerique declarations disappeared. Eupen was a sullen, paradoxical town. A few Belgian flags hung from the windows, the white banner of surrender trailed in others. This was border country, a place of conflicting emotions, bitter hatred, and suspense. Last stop in Belgium. The somber-eyed civilians of Eupen glanced furtively at the triumphant armor of America and wondered whether the vaunted West Wall could possibly halt the avalanche."

September 18, 1944

[Envelope: Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN, A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY. Stamped and signed by censor. Ma's note of enclosure of francs.]

Germany

*Dear Folks*

I have a few minutes to drop a couple of lines to let you know I am still O.K.

I received your package – everything was swell – just about in time for my birthday too.

This letter may be a little late getting to you because they are going to hold it until the money order I'm enclosing comes through. I'm also enclosing a 100 francs note for a souvenir. We got paid in money a little different than that in France. Last month we got Belgian money. I will send a bill of each some time.

Have to sign off now.

Love to all,

Loving Son

*Clifford*

September 20, 1944

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail envelope; APO postmarked 23 Sep 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Ma wrote on the bottom right, "*written the 20<sup>th</sup>; Mildred has read this.*" Stationery: single sheet, both sides, blue ink. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY. Stationery: Single sheet, both sides, blue ink.]

*Dear folks*

Yesterday was my birthday, but I couldn't write, as much as I wanted to. I suppose you were thinking about me all day, and my thoughts were back home too, as they have been for the past couple of weeks. The boys all tried to do a little extra for me yesterday as we always do when a birthday comes around.

Today I got a long letter from Edna and I had a few good laughs as usual. Also got a card from Mildred and a little letter from Marilyn.

I haven't heard from Wendell for a long time – have you? You never mention anything about him. I haven't written to him for a long time, but I really haven't had time. I do hope he is O.K. also Bill.

You seem to think I am only allowed to write so many letters, but it is not true, Ma. I can write any amount but I just don't have time. I would like to make my letters more interesting and I could too, if I could write anything but you know how it is. Especially now. I guess you know where I am. In my last letter I told you, but I think it was censored.

I suppose the weather back home is the same as here. Dreary and cloudy but sometimes the sun comes out and is real warm.

I have been wondering if things are still rationed like they were. It is maybe better by now.

I have been thinking about the time Sal & I took a trip up through the White Mts. and back through Vermont. I never hear from Sal now. I often wonder what happened to him. Sometime I'll get around to write to his folks and find out. I heard from my old pal Artie Kelly who was in Africa Sicily & Italy and now is in Southern France. I was surprised to know that. He is in the M.P.s and I guess he has it pretty rough for that kind of an outfit.

I have been wondering if you got my allotment money and the other money I sent. If you want it for anything please use it. I can't seem to put my mind on writing today so I will quit. I am still fine and I hope all of you are. Love to all

Loving Son

*Clifford*

September 22, 1944

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail envelope; postmarked APO September 27, 1944; November 11, 1944 parcel post mark; censor-stamped and signed – letter also contains East Barre parcel post stamp of Nov 11 1944 inside the letter, on the back side of the sheet. Ma wrote “*written Sept. 22, request for coffee,*” on bottom right. Stationery: Long single sheet, both sides, blue ink.]

*Dear Folks*

I have been writing to beat the band today this is about my 7<sup>th</sup> letter I guess. I just finished a long letter to Mildred took me about 2 hrs to write it. Not that I was writing all that time but I did a lot of thinking filling in those pages as you will find out. I got your letter of Aug. 27 and Sept. 3 and Helen's of Aug. 28. I certainly hope by this time you have received a letter from Wendell.

Boy, Annie has certainly had her share of visitors this summer. They all like to go to good old Vermont when ever they get a chance. I've been wondering where I will settle down when I get back. I did not know about Cliff White having a wife. What does Margaret plan to do now anyway? She must be like me. I don't know what I want at times.

It has been a lovely day here but is getting cooler now. We put our watches back an hour and it gets dark even quicker now. I suppose it is the same back home. -----

I hear a voice outside my destroyer that I haven't heard since away back in England. I'm going to see if I'm hearing things. ----- I wasn't, it was an old friend of mine who had his leg operated on and is back with us again.

The boys are busy getting something together to eat, and I think I better go and help them. Going to have meat & rice (dehydrated) and french fries, good eh? I eat like a bear but don't seem to gain any weight. I'm just the same as ever about 160.

I asked Mildred to send some coffee if it wasn't rationed and I'd appreciate it a lot if you would too, Ma. But if it is still rationed don't send any. We get coffee enough for one meal a day and usually have it in the morning. For dinner the beverage is suppose to be synthetic lemon powder mixed with water (Vitamin C) but nobody likes it. For supper – boullion powder, and we seldom use it except to mix in a stew. So we want Coffee Coffee and also canned milk if you can send it.

Well I can't think of any news so I'll close and see what I can do to help with supper. I'll be a big help to you, Ma getting meals when I get back as long as there is a can opener and a can to open. I'm good at that, and heating water for coffee, ha ha. I could make an old reliable stew, but I don't think you would care for it.

Love to all  
Loving Son

*Clifford*

September 24, 1944

Sunday P.M.

[Envelope: 6 cent airmail envelope; APO postmark 27 Sep 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY. Stationery plain, two large sheets, blue ink, three sides.]

*Dear Father*

Received your letter of Sept. 7. Glad to hear you got my allotment for July & August. I also sent some money orders. I guess you have received them by now.

I was going to write to you this morning when I was doing a lot of writing but I heard we were going to have Mass at 1 o'clock so I waited till now and I have a little more to write about.

We went to Mass in a real church in a nearby town. The name of the church is St. Francis Xavier's but I never saw it spelled the way it was before, but I could make it out.

I am so surprised to see churches here. I can't figure this war or world out. It just doesn't make sense. The church was small but beautiful. I never saw so many statues in any one church, all life size and painted in beautiful colors. The only thing that wasn't extra nice were the stations of the cross they were paintings on canvas about 4 ft. square and looked a bit out of place there among so many other statues in the church one would think they should be too. I think St. Monica's Church in Barre has the nicest stations of the cross that I've ever seen. The stations here run the opposite way around the church as I have seen elsewhere. I think a church in Fair Haven, Vt is like that too. The pews were large with little doors at each end and some had names on them and such names. I could never pronounce them. A lot of civilians attended the service. I was surprised – saw two civilian priests also.

As the choir sang (English) Mother Dear Oh Pray for Me most of the women sang in the congregation in their language of course. The music nearly made us cry. I never thought happiness would make me feel that way, but I understand now. We all had General Absolution and went to confession later (after Communion).

Our priest said Mass that is one of the U.S. Army chaplains, and what a sermon, first one we had in so long it reached the hardest of hearts. More men go to church now than used to. I had a nice day yesterday. I went to a big town back in Belgium on business with some others, but it really was a treat to us.

Saw some real civilization for a change – street cars running and civilian cars dashing about, stores open for business and old fashioned "hackies" or whatever you call them – horse drawn taxi with the driver way up on top all decked up in his long black cape and top hat and a big long whip. I had to laugh. Also saw an old fashioned funeral procession the priest out in front with a large crucifix followed by a double line of altar boys – then came the horse drawn hearse (sp).



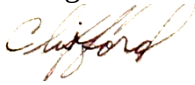
And then the long columns of civilians they all had umbrellas and needed them. I felt sorry for the priest he was soaked also the little boys. It was so slow and touching. Well to look at the better side of it we had some ice cream (crème glacée) imagine that?!! I wish I could go on a trip like that every day. We were packed in the truck like sardines and I didn't want to go at first as I wanted to write letters, but I'm glad I went now. Nothing like a little diversion. Wish I had time to go into some of the stores I would like to send you something – what would you like for a souvenir most of all? I know you want me home safely most of all but outside of that, what? The Blessed Mary and St. Joseph & the Sacred Heart will take care of me, Ma, don't worry, if I'm not worrying why should you?

The sun is coming out now and the wind is blowing hard. I hope it dries this place up it is a terrible mud hole at the present, but we can stand the mud I guess. We are safe here and I want you to know it, and don't worry about me you will just get sick and run down.

I just received a card from Mary C. and a letter from Dottie and also a letter from C. O'Brien. I had better answer them right now.

Love to all

Loving Son



Sept. 29, 1944

[No envelope – via V-Mail; no location mentioned.]

Dear folks

I will have to hurry and scratch this letter off. Just want to let you know I am still O.K. Got a letter from Lawrence & Jo last night – will answer it when I get time.

Last night I saw a wonderful movie “Song of Bernadette.” Enjoyed it very much. I hope you can see it some time.

Today the sun is shining for a change it makes a guy feel better.

I haven’t heard from Wendell or Bill. Certainly hope you folks have. Maybe the mail is held up some place as it often is.

I see Al Morrie every day now, he is fine. I planned on going to Mass with him at 3 p.m. I hope I can make it.

Can’t think of any more so all my love to all.

Loving Son

Clifford



October 5, 1944

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail envelope; APO postmarked 6 Oct 1944; censor-stamped and signed; Ma's note in lower right, "*this tells about Wendell's letter coming back.*" Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY., NY. Stationery: Single large sheet, folded into four pages, written on all four, black ink.]

Germany

Thursday A.M.

*Dear folks*

I was going to write a V-mail because it no doubt gets to you much faster but I have a lot to say and it deserves being written on regular stationery. It must be terrible for you people back there just waiting for a letter. I realize it more now than ever before. All I can say is that I am fine and safe.

Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup> I got the biggest shock of my life I can't explain it and I would rather not anyway. I got a letter back that I wrote to dear Wendell (may the Almighty God have mercy on his soul.) I thought it over and I decided to write and tell you about it. Somehow I feel as though you folks knew about it some time ago and just couldn't tell me in a letter. I appreciate it very much it must be awfully hard for you to write to me, Ma. Ma, you have a lot of courage more than a lot of soldiers. Somehow or other I had a premonition to the whole thing not having heard from him in so long and you never mentioned him in your letters. When the letter came back I kind of knew what it was, was a little afraid to open it and that one word written across the front is stamped deeply in my brain now. I wrote the letter away back in France July 27. Yesterday I went to that same little church I mentioned before and received. I had the chaplain mention him in the Mass, and today the Mass will be said for him at 3 PM. I will receive again and a lot of my friends are going too. The chaplain was very nice but didn't have long to talk to me.

I am no one to console – I only hope that you have heard about this terrible thing from the War dept. You certainly should have. I do hope you didn't receive the news as I did, I am glad I was in a rear area when I got it. By the way I still am. I am not one to be revengeful but I can say that a few of those dirty low down lousy rats have paid the price for it, only it was too good for them. And they all will pay for their destruction some way, if not here, they will be taken care of elsewhere.

I received your letters of Sept. 11 & Sept. 20. I know you didn't have a happy birthday there is no use mentioning it. I also got your V-mail of Sept. 14 and Helen's of the 13<sup>th</sup> Got a quite a few birthday cards.

Sorry to hear of Mr. Comstock he has had a very hard life. Glad Gerald got home I'll bet he was glad. I'm happy to know that Mr. Aja is getting better.

I got a letter from Bill dated Sept. 2. I was so glad to hear from him. He didn't mention anything about being sick.

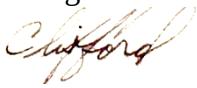
I am writing this letter in a house we have a fire going in the stove and it is quite cozy. It seems good to sit in a chair and write on a table.

I had a shower this morning. It feels good to get all cleaned up.

It is chow time now – hear they have steak real steak – hope so. I am feeling fine, and I do hope you all are at home.

Love to all

Loving Son

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

October 7, 1944

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail envelope; APO postmarked but not legible; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230 c/o P.M. NY., NY. Stationery: One long sheet, folded into four sheets, written on all four, blue-black ink.]

Germany

*Dear folks*

Got your letter of Sept. 24, was surprised to hear of the hurricane, got a letter from Dot and she told me all about it in Hartford, and how they had been warned about it on the radio, but I guess they didn't believe it.

Yes, I suppose all you folks hear now is election talk and a lot of baloney.

It was nice of you to get all of those old clothes and things to send over here for the needy. What you heard is kind of exaggerated a bit though, I think. I have seen some very poor people without much of anything but never with paper clothes. It seems what they needed most of all were shoes. In France they all had wooden ones stuffed with straw – in Belgium most of the people seemed better off and here well they seem to have plenty. Everyone wears leather boots or rubber ones. I guess that mustached maniac saw to it that they had plenty here in this country at somebody else's expense.

A lot of the civilians have fled with the soldiers or were evacuated – some stayed and waited for us to come. They were very afraid of us and expected anything to happen to them but I guess they are glad they took the chance now. Some are friendly, but would probably stick a knife in your back at their first chance. I have no use for any of them, to me they were at one time supporters of the army that caused all of this. Of course some of them had no alternative but how does one tell who they are?

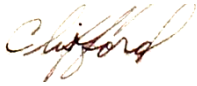
I am in a nice little house now. Have a fire going in the stove, and the sun is shining in the window. It is quite cheerful. It is a sort of a 3 room flat, down stairs is exactly the same, a bedroom, kitchen and small living room. The fuel we are using is something quite different than anything I have seen. It is some sort of stuff like compressed coal dust in the form of a small brick it burns very good and throws very good heat. The people that lived here apparently were very religious. There are beautiful pictures hanging everywhere and a lot of crucifixes and little holy water containers hanging everywhere. I wish I could meet a German priest that could speak good English and get the story, the real story about this country. As you know there has been a lot of propaganda. We got a lot of it in the States and of course the Germans got a lot about us. I am thoroly mixed up now – thought I was before, but I didn't know the half of it. And neither do you people back there. Radio & newspapers are wonderful but oh boy, how they can throw it.

Our old kitchen crew is feeding us now and I mean feeding us. I ate so much for dinner I thought I couldn't walk away. Pork chops for supper I think. Maybe I will go to a movie tonight may as

well take advantage of the opportunity. I didn't get to Mass yesterday or today, but I did go Thursday and went to Holy Communion it was a sad Mass for me. A lot were there – church was nearly full.

Well, think I'll sign off for today hope you are all well. I am fine.

Loving Son



P.S. I don't think you need to send a fruit cake in a tin container anything will hold it. Would really appreciate one.



Oct. 9, 1944

[Envelope: 6 cent airmail envelope; APO postmarked Oct. 12; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY. Stationery one large sheet, green ink, one side.]

Germany

*Dear folks*

I have been trying to get time to write to you all afternoon. It is now about 7 P.M. and if nobody bothers me now I'll write.

This afternoon I started to sew 3 blankets into my old bed roll and I was working the needle like a regular tailor hurrying to finish so I could write some letters, but as usual I had to go someplace. I'll have to try and finish it tomorrow.

I am in the same house I mentioned before – get to sleep here about every other day. We have a light rigged up and it makes it real nice. I plan on going to a movie tonight. I think it is "Moon Over Miami." We are very lucky to get a little entertainment.

Today has been very dreary & foggy – sure wish we could get a couple of weeks of nice weather it would mean a whole lot. The Germans are very lucky and take advantage of this weather. I thought I had a lot to write when I started, but now I can't think of a thing to say.

I am fine and hope that you are all well at home.

Love to all

Loving Son

*Clifford*

October 9, 1944

V-Mail. Germany.

*Dear folks*

It is Sunday again and a swell day it is too. The sun is very bright and it seems good to see it again. I did not get to Mass this morning, but I will try and make Mass at 3 this afternoon. A lot of civilians were going to Mass this morning.

I am writing in the same house, we have it cleaned up and it looks swell. Last night I slept in a real bed using my own blankets of course. It was the first time I was in a bed since I was on my furlough in Scotland. I really hated to get up this morning, but when they have hot cakes at the kitchen truck it would make any one get up.

It is about 5 a.m. now in Vermont, guess you are all in dream land.

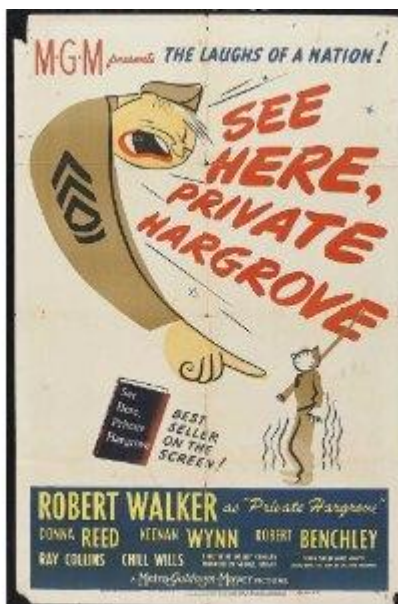
Last night I went to a movie, "See Here Pvt Hargrove" we all enjoyed it – had a bunch of laughs anyway.

Well I have a few more letters to write, but not much to say except that I'm feeling fine and I hope that you are all well at home.

Love to all,

Loving Son

*Clifford*



October 11, 1944

[Envelope: Free; APO postmarked 14 Oct 1944; censor-stamped and signed; also contains inside parcel post stamp of Dec. 11, 1944, East Barre on the first page of the letter. Ma wrote on lower right-hand side of envelope, "*Request for blades.*" Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M., NY. NY. Stationery: Single long plain sheet; one side; blue ink.]

Germany

*Dear Folks*

Got your letter of Sept. 18. Sorry to hear you didn't get to the first Mass at St. Cecilia's Mission, Ma.

About the Xmas packages you don't have to go to any trouble. It must be hard to get things now. I don't need anything real bad anyway. Could use some single edge razor blades though. I have plenty of double edge ones to use in case I run out so there is no hurry.

I'll bet Edna does look nice in her Cadet uniform and I'll bet she is proud. It is the only kind of uniform I want to see a girl in. How about Helen is she still planning on being a nurse? I always pray that both of them will be and good ones too.

I got a letter from Nellie & Rene Sabetto today they sent their sincere sympathies about Wendell (God have mercy on him). It was the first I heard of it other than that terrible letter I got back.

I am fine and in no danger. Plan to go to a movie tonight.

Love to all

*Clifford*

October 16, 1944

[V-mail, not date stamped, censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230. c/o P.M., NY, NY.]

Germany

*Dear Folks*

It is Sunday again. I can't go to Mass this morning but I will read the Mass from my Missal. It is a lovely morning here in fact it has been that way for a few days now let's hope it keeps up.

The leaves are beginning to turn here and it is getting very pretty. I suppose it is the same back home. Hunting season is open now and I suppose Johnny will be going when he has a chance.

It is about time to start getting dinner ready getting meals is a pain in the neck used to be fun. We made some dessert yesterday out of some pears & apples good too.

I can't think of any more to say tonight except that I am fine. Give my regards to Pat Guy when he comes down.

I'll close and write to Dot.

Love to all

Loving Son

*Clifford*

October 19, 1944

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail stamp; APO postmark October 22, 1942; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY., NY. Stationery: Two long sheets, three sides, blue ink.]

Germany

Thursday Nite

*Dear Folks*

Got your letter of Sept. 28 also Edna's of the same day and Helen's of Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>. Surprised to hear that you hadn't been getting many letters from me. It must make you worry so much.

I am in a house again but not the same one. It isn't nearly as nice as the other one was. By the way Al Morrie is staying in the other one now. I see him at chow. He is fine and still making his never ending predictions.

We have a light rigged up here and it makes it nice to be able to write letters at night. I've been quite busy all day. Had a nice shower this morning and a change of clothes. This PM. I went to Mass at 3 o'clock. Mass was said on St. Joseph's altar. I don't know why – guess I should know though. Maybe for a speedy victory. I went to receive there were a quite a few there. I'll try and go every day while I am here.

It does seem strange to read in your letters about Helen going out. My goodness I can see her now in my mind only a kid. Well I'm not getting any younger myself. When I get back I'll have to work fast to make up for these last few years. I'm glad I'm not married now though, honest. It is bad enough to be over here and single.

An alarm clock is ticking away on a dresser here in the room – it sounds so familiar. I close my eyes and that ticking carries me miles away from this stinking rotten country. Funny what a little thing like that will do to a guy. It is unusually quiet to night and I can think straight for a change. Thinking is bad they say but a little is darned good once in a while. The clock says 7:30 it must be about 1:30 home. The nights are very long here now gets dark about 6:30 or 7 – dawn about the same time in the morning. I remember in France at first when it was light up until 11 pm. not so awfully long ago but it seems ages. Exactly one month ago a few miles from here at this very minute a group of us were squatting on some straw in an old cow's stable with a bottle of champagne taking a toast to my birthday.

This room is just full of religious pictures in fact the whole house is. Even little holy water holders on the walls and crucifixes. Every German home I've been in is the same way. Can you answer that one? Maybe just this part of the country is Catholic. I don't know but certainly it can't be this way all over.

Some of the non Catholics in our Army must feel funny about it all too.

I got a couple of letters from Dottie. She told me she got a nice letter from you guess you must have written it about Oct. 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup>. I'm glad you write to her. She is really a swell girl and beautiful too. I was just thinking today about what to give her for Xmas. Think I'll do the same as last year.

I suppose all the kids are waiting patiently for Halloween night so they can get into some deviltry. I remember how I use to. I guess they don't raise so much Cain as we did though. It is a wonder we weren't all put in jail for some of the things we used to do.

Well I've been rambling on without saying anything much guess I'll close and write to Dottie. Hope you get this soon. Give my regards to Ajas & Hutchins & Robies & Pat Guy.

Love to all  
Loving Son

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford".

P.S. I sent home some money the new way about two weeks ago. I hope the letter didn't frighten you when you got it. They don't let us send any more money orders now.





*This picture of my mother, then Dottie Smith, may well have been one my father had with him during the war. KOB*

*Dorothy (Dottie) Smith, Picture Dated March 1941*

Oct. 20, 1944

[Envelope: Sgt C.B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY. Stamped – Passed by, etc.]

Germany

Friday Night.

*Dear Folks*

Here I am again – not much news but better than nothing.

I just came back from a movie – “Bermuda Mystery” I think it was. It was a very dark night as usual and muddy as ever. You would laugh to see us stumble around in the dark, tripping over everything imaginable.

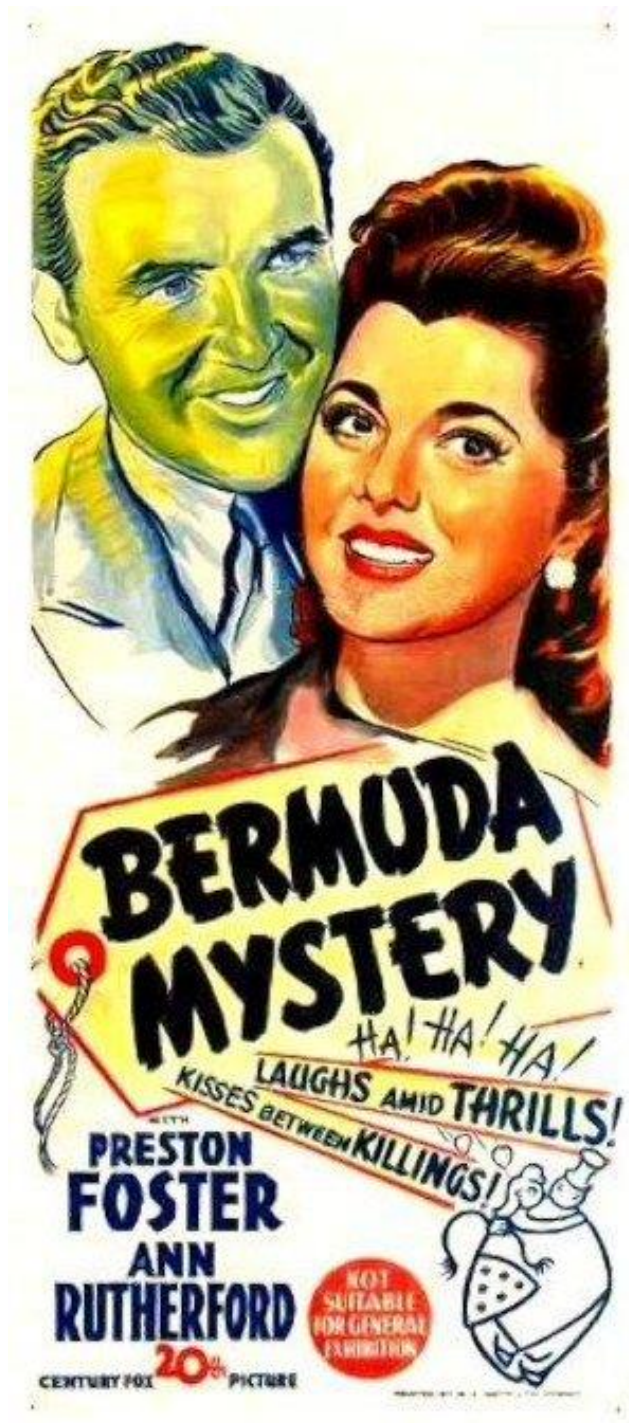
This morning I went to a dentist – had a little work done – this p.m. I went to a movie and then to Mass and received – quite a day, eh? Tomorrow I have a job to do and I hate it – laundry.

We are now all huddled around a little light trying to write – and there is so much talking going on I don't know how we ever manage to get anything written at all. And the light is nearly burned out so I think I'll call this off and write in the daylight.

I am fine and hope you are all well.

Loving Son,

*Clifford*



October 21, 1944

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail stamp; APO postmarked 24 Oct 1944; censor-stamped and signed; Dad wrote at top, double-underlined, Via Luftwaffe. Ma wrote in lower right, "*pictures in here.*" Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M., NY, NY. Stationery: Single long sheet, both sides, blue ink.]

Germany

Saturday P.M.

*Dear folks*

Just came back from Mass – received again. It has turned out to be swell this afternoon for a change. There is nothing like a bright fall afternoon for me. I only hope it stays this way for more than a couple of hours.

I started my laundry this morning and finished this P.M. and it looks darned good if I do say so. The next big thing is getting it dry probably more of a problem than washing it.

Even went to a movie this morning "Bud Abbot & Lou Costello" had a few laughs – plan to go to another one tonight.

I am now sitting in a sort of an attic smoking a cigar and writing beneath a sky light in the roof not bad, eh? We are rigging up a light for tonight a better one than we had for the past few nights. My assistant driver used to be an electrician so we shouldn't have too much trouble. It is starting to get chilly usually does about this time of day.

I am enclosing a picture of Der Führer and some of his suckers. I wonder what the people in this town think of him now. You should see them dragging their belongings in an old cart or slung over their worthless backs. Sometimes I almost feel sorry for them, but that is just exactly what they want. They figure their last chance is to try and make us believe they had nothing to do with the Nazi party and never had any use for Hitler. Even the German soldier tries it. I only hope that no one believes him. I don't think many do. They are maybe forced to shoot but they don't have to shoot straight and I think they could easily escape from their superiors and surrender to us – maybe they think we will kill them. Something holds them back maybe their dirty Nazi hearts, eh what? How about that picture of the guy holding the swastika looks proud doesn't he? The rat – should stuff the darn thing down his throat.

Well enough said for today – hope I hear from you soon.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

Enclosed: Two small black-and-white photos of Hitler, et al. (commercial photos; German printing on reverse).



*Image from an “Abbott and Costello” film of the 1940’s*

October 22, 1944

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail envelope; APO postmarked 23 (probably) 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY., NY. Stationery: Single long sheet; one side; blue ink.]

Germany

Sunday Nite.

*Dear folks*

It is quite late but I can't go to bed for sometime yet so I'll drop you a few lines.

Sunday again and about this time you are having supper or getting it ready. It has been fairly pleasant here today. This morning a lot of the townspeople turned out to go to church. I was surprised to see so many don't know where they keep themselves the rest of the week. They were dressed quite nicely and seemed to respect a Sunday as we do back in the States. I went to Mass and communion at 4 P.M. had a good sermon too. The church was packed full of G.I.'s. I often wonder what these civilians think when they see us all going to Mass. They certainly must harbor different thoughts for us now than they did a few months ago.

I just finished reading about the landings in the Philippines looks like a tough battle. Those yellow bellies must be as thick as flies down there.

Got a letter today from my old friend Kelly he is in France landed the first day of the landing in southern France. He has been to Africa Sicily Italy and now France must be sick of it.

Well I can't think of anymore to night.

I'm fine and hope this finds you all well.

Loving Son

*Clifford*



October 24, 1944

[Envelope: 6 cent airmail envelope; A.P.O. postmark 27 Oct 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY. Letter written in blue ink on plain paper, single sheet, two sides.]

Germany

Tuesday P.M.

*Dear Father*

Got your air mail of Oct. 8 also the V mail of Oct 5. Thanks for sending the clipping from the Times – makes me feel kind a (sic) proud but Gee it sounds as though I did it all myself which was not the case.

That was such a nice letter, Ma and since I've read it – honestly I really feel better. I fully understand how hard it was for you to sit down and think of words to cover such a subject and believe me, Ma you did a wonderful job of it. A mother always comes through. I am not angry that you didn't let me know before, at first I thought I was but I understand and know you were trying to help me by not telling me as you put it about me getting reckless.

I do hope that you are feeling O.K. now, Ma and that your stomach is better. Affected me like that for a day or so, but I'm O.K. now.

Yesterday I went to receive again in the P.M. and will go again today.

It is a swell afternoon here – from the window I can see what is left of somebody's gardens – mostly cabbage, a few beans of some sort and some strange looking onions. There are a quite a few apple trees and pear trees here. The pears are very hard and russet color winter ones I guess, but they are very tasty. I won't be as happy as I usually am about seeing snow this year, but maybe it will be better than mud though.

I was very sorry to hear of Chink Aja being wounded the second time. The poor guy – I hope it wasn't serious and I hope this time he gets into a non combat outfit or maybe even stays in England. I remember how we used to think England was such an awful place but -----

Well thanks a lot for the letter. I'd like to learn it by heart. No one could write a better one.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

October 25, 1944

[Envelope: 6 cent airmail, Army Postal Service, 24 Oct 1944, Sgt. C. B. O'Connor, 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., APO 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY. Censor stamp and signature.]

Germany

Wednesday nite

*Dear Father*

Got your letter of Oct 9 (V-mail) and the air mail of Oct 12 today. I got 5 letters altogether – sure was glad to get them. Just received Mildred's of Sept. 15.

I'm glad you got the money order O.K. I remember the week that it was sent – what a week that was and that letter I wrote on Sept. 20 must have been a pip. I don't remember what I said but I do remember that day. Will never forget it.

I have been writing to you nearly every day for about 5 days. I hope you don't get them all at one time. There must be a lot of mail going and a lot more coming. The A.P.O. at N.Y. must have their hands full especially now with all of the Christmas mailing.

I went to Mass and Communion this p.m. and offered it for your intention. I do hope it will do some good.

This morning I went to a movie, I had seen it before but I stayed and enjoyed it again.

Haven't seen Joe Converse in a long time but he is right near here someplace. Some of the fellows from my Company have seen him around, but I never happened to run into him.

I am glad you got up to Burlington. I remember how you used to like to go there so much. It must have been a nice trip especially at this time of the year.

I don't have much to say tonight so I guess I had better sign off. I am fine.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

October 28, 1944

[No place name]

[Envelope: 6 cent envelope; postmarked APO 30 Oct 1944; envelope censor-stamped and signed; letter postmaster's stamp and date. Stationery single sheet, blue-black ink, two sides.]

Saturday P.M.

*Dear folks*

Just came back from Mass. It is a beautiful fall afternoon the air is so clean & fresh makes me feel like going out walking, but where? No fooling it is swell here today. Didn't get to Mass yesterday there were a lot of German civilians there today. There was one of their priests hearing confession, I guess. I paid particular attention to the children during Mass and got another surprise. They know and seem to understand the Mass as well as I do. That kind of knocks a story I heard right in the head.

I got a letter or rather two of them from Catherine O'Brien today she writes quite often. She enclosed a few snapshots. Gee I'll hardly know them when I get back. Bill is a young man and Marguerite has changed so much.

I am smoking a pipe a guy brought me back from a town in Belgium. I've been wanting one for a long time and what a pipe it is. Cracked and probably worth about 19 cents back home. But it cost 100 francs (\$7.00). I wish you would send me one if it is possible to get a decent one.

I had a quite a few souvenirs but I threw them all away and I've found out I can send them home now. Maybe you people didn't want any of them anyway. I still have a few but I don't want to send them in the mail.

There isn't much new and it is nearly time to go to supper. I'm fine.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

October 30, 1944

[Envelope: Via Air Mail; 6 cent airmail stamp; APO postmark 1 Nov 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY. Stationery plain sheet, blue-black ink, two sides.]

Germany

Monday Morning

*Dear Folks*

Monday again and a dreary old fall morning. I wouldn't be surprised to see some snow before long. The leaves are falling fast some trees are real bare now.

By the time I finish this letter the mail should be in. I kind of expect a letter from you today. Not much mail has been coming through these last few days.

Yesterday I had a nice shower and got some clean clothes got back just about time to go to Mass. The church was filled. Many of us received Holy Communion. I offered it for your intention, Ma.

Have been seeing some pretty good movies lately especially "Marriage is a Private Affair." We all liked that one. It was so realistic. I don't think it has been shown in the States yet. Last night I saw "Janie" it also was very real to life and comical too.

The last couple of nights have been very beautiful here. The moon getting bigger and brighter each night lights up the country side almost like day. Our bombers left some beautiful trails across the clear sky – a very pretty sight to us. If only the days were so clear.

It is very early morning in Vermont now and I suppose Pa is getting up and getting ready to go to work starting another week. They are going by real fast.

I am fine and hope this finds you all well.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

Mail came in – I got your V-mail of Oct. 16. I will try and write to Jo & Lawrence more often I understand how they feel. Good old Lawrence, boy what I wouldn't give to see him. My platoon Sgt. is very much like Lawrence husky as they make 'em doesn't know his own strength. I also got a very nice letter from Pat Donahue. I didn't think he had it in him. It was swell. He enclosed a clipping from the "Times."

I just came back from Mass and Holy Communion.







November 6, 1944

[Envelope: 6 cent airmail envelope; APO postmark 9 Nov 1944; censor-stamped and signed.  
Stationery plain, single sheet, one side, blue-black ink.]

Germany

Monday Morning

*Dear Father*

Monday again and a dreary one too. I got your letter of Oct. 19 (air mail). Also got a nice long letter from Lawrence and Jo. Yesterday I got a package of very nice chocolate mints, it was pretty well mangled but they were all there. I think Gertrude sent it. Nice of her.

It must be hard for you to walk to church so often I know you always used to like to walk from Websterville, Ma but from East Barre it is a quite a long way.

It was pretty windy here last night and yesterday but not as bad as the wind you spoke of.

Yesterday I went to Mass and Communion at 3:30 had a good sermon too. These Army chaplains will have a lot to talk about when they get back. They should be very interesting to listen to. I'll never forget the mission we had at Graniteville a long time ago. That Mission Father had been in Belgium during the last war. I don't remember his name though.

No, Ma I am not where you think I am not far from there though. I have seen it.

Well I must write to Lawrence & Jo this morning so I'll close hoping you are all well. I am fine.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

Nov. 12, 1944

[Envelope: 6 cent Air Mail, Army Postal Service, marked 253, Nov 15 1944, Censor stamp/signature. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. B, APO 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY.]

*Dear Father*

Got your letter of October 22 telling about you buying the Chalice for the church in Washington. I think it was the best thing you could do. I feel as though Wendell is happy just as you do.

[Because of the way the envelope was opened there are some portions of some sentences missing in this letter.]

... Sunday again and about 2:30 I am going to start ... I suppose at this very minute you people are getting ready to go to 9 o'clock Mass also. I will finish this after Mass.

It is now about 7 pm and I'll try and finish this. I went to Mass and Communion this afternoon. The church was full. I didn't expect so much of a crowd today, but the church was full as usual.

A very good friend of mine has just returned tonight. He has been away from us for a long time. We are all glad to see him and we have been swapping stories since he came here. If they all could only walk in like he did it would be great.

The clipping you mentioned in your letter was not enclosed. Maybe you decided not to send it – anyway I'd rather not read it.

It is quite noisy here right now and it is hard ... anyway there isn't much to say except that I am fine and I hope this finds you all well.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

(over)

Nov. 13

Monday morning

The ground is all white and the air is brisk and has that good old smell of snow The first snow always does something to me, at least we can't see the mud now. I'll bet there is a lot of snow home now and the kids are having loads of fun,

Nov. 13, 1944

[Envelope: 6 cent Air Mail, U.S. Army Postal Service, Nov 15 1944. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor  
11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., APO 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY. Censor stamp and signature.]

Germany

*Dear folks*

Received your Christmas card today also your letter of Oct 1<sup>st</sup>. It was a long time coming. The card is beautiful with a lovely verse. I think it was very nice of you and Pa to go to Mass together on All Saints Day. It must have been hard to get to such an early Mass.

I wrote to you yesterday and added a little to it this morning but I feel like scribbling a little now as I write again.

The snow is melting and it is sloppy out, but it still seems good to see it. I suppose I'll get my fill of it though before this winter is over.

I am back in the first house again where I wrote that letter telling about the bed roll. It is real nice here. The water is turned on and we have it fixed up pretty neat.

I got a letter from Pat Donahue today he expects to ... up this way before long and has hopes of running into me. I would like to see him. He sounds a lot different in his letters.

Also heard from Mildred – think I'll answer it today.

I'm glad the sweater is on the way, but I have one now - they issued us swell ones last week – pretty near time they gave us sweaters. We can't kick though, the supply has really been on the ball. We are also getting more coffee now also.

It looks like we will have a white Christmas - let's hope and pray that next year we will all be in the front room with a bright tree and all of this will just be memories.

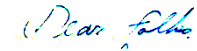
Loving Son

*Clifford*

Nov. 19, 1944

[Envelope: 6 cent airmail stamp; APO postmark 22 Nov 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Ma noted on bottom right "*copy of sermon in this letter.*" Enclosures: newspaper article and reprint of Hq Third Arm'd Division, sermon dated 13 Nov 1944. Stationery blue-lined, one full sheet folded and written on three sides; black ink.] **Note:** *A copy of the sermon is reproduced at the end of the "November Letters," along with a transcription.*

Germany



I haven't received any mail for a few days and I haven't done any writing. It is Sunday again – didn't get to Mass today though.

It doesn't seem possible that Thanksgiving is this week. I remember last year in England. We had a swell dinner but they made us walk 20 miles before we got it. We kicked about it then but I'm sure every one of us would be glad to be back there and do it all over again now.

Speaking of eating boy we fixed up a swell dinner today we even baked a cake. Used some fruit bars – raisins – pancake batter – chocolate bars – cereal and canned milk. It didn't raise very much and it weighed about a pound to the cubic inch, I guess.

I almost forgot to tell you – my old friend Anctil is back with us. Remember I told you how he got appendicitis back in England before we left. Also a few more boys that have been in the hospital for some time are back with us now. It is good to see them again.

The mail just came in. I got a letter from Dottie dated Nov. 7. All is well with her.

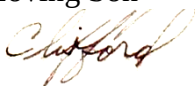
I'm enclosing an article about our Division thought maybe you would like it.

It has been very nice here today and believe me the Air Corps is really going to town. The snow is all gone here but I'll bet there is plenty of it in Vermont. It gets dark very early now making the nights very long. I'll be glad when this winter is over.

I suppose you are very busy now, Ma getting ready for Thanksgiving. It of course won't be like some of the others we have had, but I hope you all enjoy it. I am very near the spot where I spent my birthday, but it is just a little different now.

I can't think of any more to say and anyway I can't see to write.

Loving Son



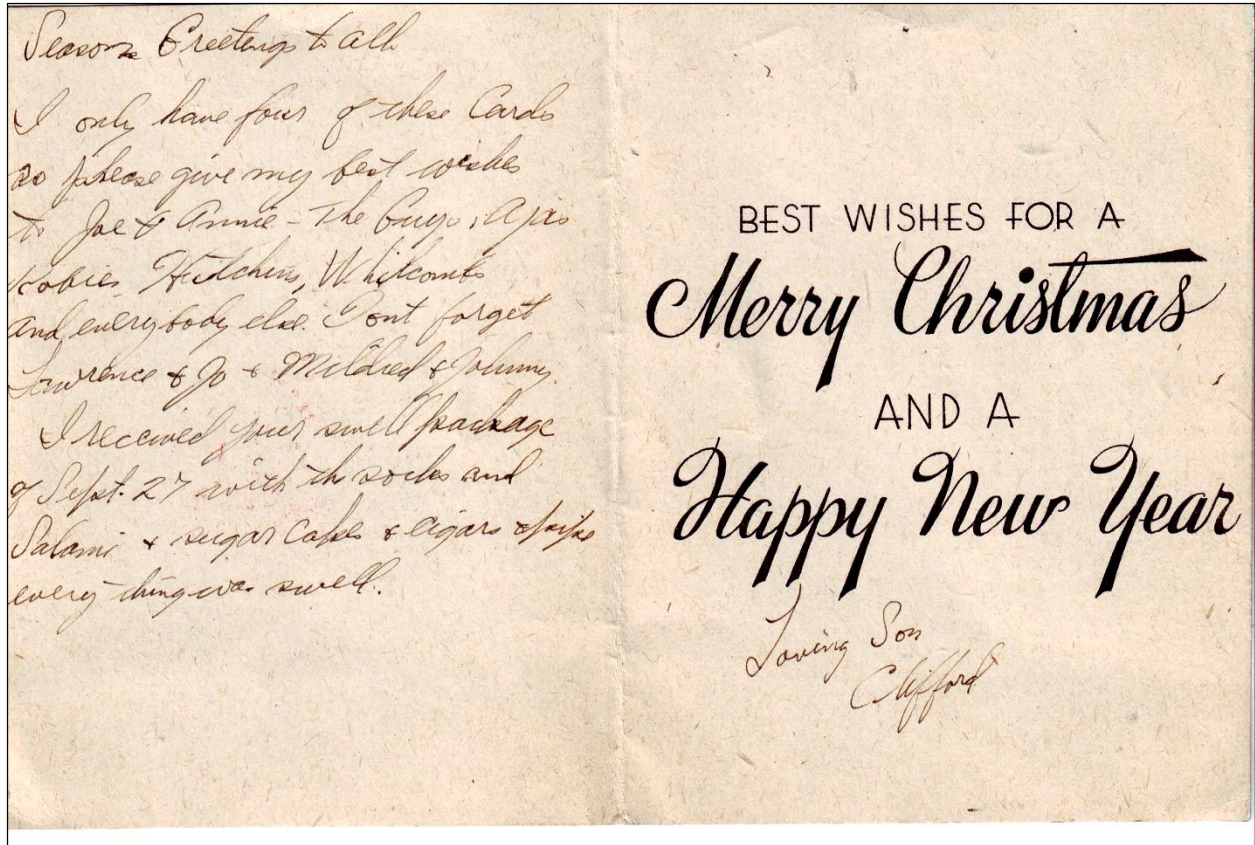
November 22, 1944  
(postmark)

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail stamp; A.P.O. postmarked Nov 22, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Only part of return address readable; envelope shows much handling – A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY., NY. Unlike all mail (with the exception of his V-mail to Pa only on Aug 8 1944), this card was addressed to “Mr. & Mrs. Peter O’Connor & Family,” East Barre, Vermont, Box 165, U.S.A.]



*Front of Clifford's Christmas Card, 1944*





Seasons Greetings to all

I only have four of these cards so please give my best wishes to Joe & Annie – the Guys, Ajas, Robies, Hutchins, Whitcombs and everybody else. Don't forget Lawrence & Jo & Mildred & Johnny.

I received your swell package of Sept. 27 with the socks and salami & sugar cake & cigars & pipe everything was swell.

Loving Son  
Clifford



November 25, 1944

[Envelope: 6 cent airmail envelope; APO postmarked Nov 27, 1944; censor-stamped and dated. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY. Stationery: Large single plain sheet; folded in half; writing three sides; black ink.]

Germany

*Dear folks*

I received your letters of Nov. 5 & Nov. 9. First I want to congratulate you and Pa for being chosen as Sponsors for the Confirmation at the church. I am very proud of both of you and I have told my friends about it. They all thought it was swell.

Sorry to hear that Chink Aja isn't getting any mail, but all of the boys that have been in the hospital tell us it was the same for them. Some didn't get any mail until they came back to us. All they were worried about was if their folks were getting their mail.

Thanksgiving has passed and I had my turkey. When I was eating it I thought of you folks back home. I'll bet you didn't enjoy your dinner as much as I did. You were probably thinking that I was eating a "C" or "K" ration. But no kidding we had turkey and dressing and even cranberry sauce.

I am now in another house we have it cleaned up pretty good. There is an old grandfather clock here and we were tinkering with it nearly all night trying to make it tick finally this morning we got it fixed. It has beautiful chimes and rings every quarter hour. It sounds like Big Ben in London. I also found what I thought was a base for a lamp and rolled it over in a corner and it started to play a beautiful tune "Silent Night." We took that all apart too of course and it still works this morning. It looks very very old.

There is no snow here now and I really don't think we will have much. It is the rain we worry about most of all. Today is beautiful though. The sun is actually shining.

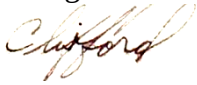
We have been rumaging around the house through cupboards and shelves etc. finding a lot of books and magazines – how I wish I could read German. I would especially like to read some of the old news papers and really find a few things out. We also found a lot of religious pictures and a Crucifix in nearly every room as usual. I am beginning to wonder what some of the non Catholic boys in the Army are thinking. I can't figure it out and I'm sure they don't know what it is all about.

I hope that by this time Annie has heard from Billy. I haven't heard from him since I don't know when.

I did not know anything about that piece in the Hartford paper you spoke of.

I can't think of any more right now.

Loving Son



November 26, 1944

[Envelope: 6 cent airmail envelope; APO postmarked Nov 27, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY. Stationery, single small sheet, folded so two sides written, two blank; black ink.]

Germany

*Dear Father*

It is Sunday again. I got to Mass and Communion this morning. They had Mass in an old building now being used for movies, etc. Believe it or not the altar was set up on a "bar." I think I have seen everything now. It must seem awfully funny to you. But it doesn't at all to us. We have been to Mass at so many different places. Anyway it is Holy Mass no matter where it is said.

The sun is out and it is very nice out this morning. Many of the civilians are out apparently on their way to church a lot of them say "*goot morgen*" but never receive an answer.

The little music box I mentioned yesterday is chiming off an old German folk song pretty catchy little tune. I have heard it many times in the movies but I don't recall the name of it.

You have no doubt read about the current cigarette shortage and have no doubt thought that I have been affected, but I really haven't. We have been very fortunate and never have been "hurting" for cigarettes. We couldn't always get popular brands but nevertheless we always had smokes. I see by the papers that some girls in the states are smoking pipes, wow!! What next.

My old pal Anctil went to church with me this morning it seemed like old times.

I don't have much time right now so I'll close.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

HEADQUARTERS THIRD ARMORED DIVISION  
Office of the Commanding General

13 November 1944

Officers and Men, Third Armored "Spearhead" Division.

The following sermon delivered by Chaplain Paul H. Maurer on Sunday, November 12, 1944, is considered to be of such beauty and significance to the members of the 3rd Armored "Spearhead" Division that it is reproduced for the benefit of those who were not privileged to hear it.

*Maurice Rose*  
MAURICE ROSE,  
Major General, U. S. Army,  
Commanding.

Shelley said that the poets "learn in suffering what they teach in song." Had I the gift of composition I would translate the suffering of the Third Armored Division and put it to music. The world would possess a symphonic masterpiece indeed. That contribution would serve as an eternal inspiration to posterity. In that "Spearhead" Symphony I would capture and put on paper the cadent pianissimo of the Louisiana birth of history's greatest armored unit. In swaddling clothes of thin-skinned and untried armor this youngster romped through the Southland's *spongy swamps*, grew into adolescence with the hot music of the desert on its lip saw the purple twilight melt into the star-studded night and in moon-drenched sea dreamt of manhood. The clickety clack of wheels on twin bands of steel carried this robust young giant to Camp Pickett, thence to Indiantown Gap, on to Camp Kilmer, New York's sky line and the Atlantic.

Fear of the unknown and mysterious deep failed to still the song within his iron clad heart—a song in which one caught the echoes of Crusader's airs, hymns of Pilgrim and Pioneer, chanting psalms of praise as they blazed a path from East to West, a prayer in their hearts, a gun in their hands.

The swish-swash of waves through fair weather and fog brought the Division to England. Comparative peace prevailed. Dance orchestras at Red Lynch, Warminster, Wincanton, Sutton Veny, Fonthill Bishop, were unsuccessful in silencing the martial strains which insistently challenged his every day with reveille and closed it with taps. Salisbury's dismal plains, frosty, star flecked and chilly ushered in an English spring replete with all the uncomfortable damp and soggy trappings.

Restlessness and a burning desire to engage the foe in mortal combat finds the Third Armored lying on LSTs and LCTs for three days and three nights as the worst storm in twenty years strikes and lashes the Channel. The tempo of that gale is as nothing compared to the force with which this unit will sweep through France and Belgium in a few days.



Now to capture the music of high courage as the Third hits the Normandy Beach, then the singing of the birds in the apple orchards of Calvados punctuated by guns fired in anger at the enemy beyond St. Lo. Recall that whirring din from out of the blue as three thousand planes unload their lethal cargoes and the ground boils. Villers-Fossard and the Third reaches man's estate! St. Jean de Daye, Mortain, Purple Heart Hill---prayers beside little crosses and stars of David at La Coudre, Marigny, Gorron-----"I Am The Resurrection And The Life....."Sh'Ns Yisreayl.....Requiescant In Pace...". hallowed harmonies of Protestant, Jew and Catholic, joined in the requiem of death from whose graves a living, vibrant and impassioned chorus emanates. (Take up that refrain and with reverent hands, touch your instruments and play that refrain again and again).

But we must be away into the struggle at Ranex, Frementel, Folaise-Argentan, Corbeil and the Seine, on and on this mighty symphony of heroism rises and swells as it sweeps relentlessly forward. Tanks at Chateau Thierry, sacred soil, tanks at the Marne, tanks at Soissons, tanks, tanks blasting enemy armor into a blackened and charred debacle at Mons, tanks at Charleroi, tanks at Namur, tanks at Liege and reaching a crescendo chord of triumph as they lunge with mighty thud against and through and over and beyond the steel and iron of the Siegfried Line after a wild, swift, cyclonic drive unparalleled in military history. No, I have not forgotten the sound of those droplets of blood, drip, drip, drip, from a mangled stump of an arm or that brave smile, I haven't forgotten the long lines of singing wires of the Signal men, Engineers bridging stream after stream in total darkness: the sound of motors in the night, long supply columns: the pyrotechnics of the Ack Ack; the chatter of typewriters in the hands of clerks, destined to play their part in this vast score; the crunching bull-dozers chewing hedgerows: Artillerists feeding the hungry maw of the big guns; Air men in their tiny craft; the skilled hands of our Medics; the muddy, slugging guts of our Doughboys; the hurried heartbeats of men in foxholes; tortuous, haunted hours the stench of death, decay, desolation and destruction; the pensive stare of a young child with a wounded doll in her arms: the clippety clop of wooden shoes; I haven't forgotten the clanging discords, the utterly demonic glee of the SS, pride of Prussian Panzerden, their whipped arrogance in our PW cages, where Herren Volk melodies were forever stilled in defeat.

Through it all we hear the over tones of a grim loneliness, heart breaking agony, bleeding experience, indomitable courage, an unrelenting, uncompromising, unswerving devotion to the Spearhead Division and the fortitude of trusting faith in our officers-----General Rose, conducting this mighty symphony, a baton, not red with blood, but a baton crowned with an eagle and pointing to the stars.

And after this tumultuous surge of war's music, the closing bars would bring the soft, clear, ringing chime of a church bell, calling the Third to worship in the holy hush of a sanctuary, far removed from the sounds of warfare. Then the comfort and peace of hearth and home, a maiden's prayer, a father's hand clasp, the devotion of a loyal wife, a mother's tender lullaby and a babe wrapped in sleep---here is the tender from the wars.

Transcription follows ...

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*The swish-swash of waves through fair weather and fog brought the Division to England. Comparative peace prevailed. Dance orchestras at Red Lynch, Warminster, Wincanton, Sutton Veny, Fonthill Bishop, were unsuccessful in silencing the martial strains which insistently challenged his every day with reveille and closed it with taps. Salisbury’s dismal plains, frosty, star flocked and chilly, ushered in an English spring replete with all the uncomfortable damp and soggy trappings.*

*Restlessness and a burning desire to engage the foe in mortal combat finds the Third Armored lying on LSTs and LCTs for three days and three nights as the worst storm in twenty years strikes and lashes the Channel. The tempo of that gale is as nothing compared to the force with which this unit will sweep through France and Belgium in a few days.*

*Now to capture the music of high courage as the Third hits the Normandy Beach, then the singing of the birds in the apple orchards of Calvados punctuated by guns fired in anger at the enemy beyond St. Lo. Recall that whirring din from out of the blue as three thousand planes unload their lethal cargoes and the ground boils. Villers-Fessard and the Third reaches man’s estate! St. Joan de Daye, Mortain, Purple Heart Hill – prayers beside little crosses and stars of David at La Cambe, Murigny, Corron ---- “I Am The Resurrection and the Life.... “Sh’Ms Visreayl....Requiescant in Pace...”, hallowed harmonies of Protestant, Jew and Catholic, joined in the requiem of death from whose graves a living, vibrant and impassioned chorus emanates. (Take up that refrain and with reverant hands, touch your instruments and play that refrain again and again).*

*But we must be away into the struggle at Rames, Frementel, Falaise-Argentan, Corbeil and the Seine, on and on this mighty symphony of heroism rises and swells as it sweeps relentlessly forward. Tanks at Chateau Thierry, sacred soil, tanks at the Marne, tanks at Soissons, tanks, tanks blasting enemy armor into a blackened and charred debacle at Mons, tanks at Charleroi, tanks at Namur, tanks at Liege and reaching a crescendo chord of triumph as they lunge with mighty thud against and through and over and beyond the steel and iron of the Siegfried Line*



*after a wild, swift, cyclonic drive unparalleled in military history. No, I have not forgotten the sound of those replete of blood, drip, drip, drip, from a mangled stump of an arm or that brave smile, I haven't forgotten the long lines of singing wires of the Signal men, Engineers bridging stream after stream, in total darkness: the sound of motors in the night, long supply columns: the pyrotechnics of the Ack Ack; the clatter of typewriters in the hands of clerks, destined to play their part in this vast score: the crunching bull-dozer chewing hedgerows. Artillerists feeding the hungry maw of the big guns; Air men in their tiny craft; the skilled hands of our Medics; the muddy, slugging guts of our Doughboys; the hurried heart beats of men in fox-holes – tortuous, numbed hours – the stench of death, decay, desolation and destruction; the pensive stare of a young child with a wounded doll in her arms: the clippety clop of wooden shoes: I haven't forgotten the clanging discords, the utterly demonical glee of the SS, Pride of Prussian Panzerdom, their whipped arrogance in our PW cages, where Herren Volx melodies were forever stilled in defeat.*

*Through it all we hear the over tones of a grim loneliness, heart breaking agony, bleeding experience, indomitable courage, an unrelenting, uncompromising, unswerving devotion to the Spearhead Division and the fortitude of trusting faith in our officers-----General Rose, conducting this mighty symphony, a baton, not red with blood, but with a baton crowned with an eagle and pointing to the stars.*

*And after this tumultuous surge of war's music, the closing bars would bring the soft, clear, ringing chime of a church bell, calling the Third to worship in the holy hush of a sanctuary, far removed from the sounds of warfare. Then the comfort and peace of hearth and home, a maiden's prayer, a father's hand clasp, the devotion of a loyal wife, a mother's tender lullaby and a babe wrapped in sleep----home is the tanker from the wars.*

**End of Transcription ...  
December 1944 Letters Follow.**

December 7, 1944

[Envelope: 6 cent airmail envelope with 6 cent airmail stamp; APO postmark Dec 8, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY. Stationery – three sheets of onion-skin; 3 sides. Enclosed rosary beads without cross as described in letter, in another sheet of plain onionskin paper.]

Germany

*Dear folks*

Received your letter of Nov. 20 today. I take it you all had dinner Thanksgiving Day at home. Christmas I suppose you will go to Mildred's or Lawrence's house.

Very sorry to hear of Joe Perrault and I hope he hasn't been killed. He was no doubt taken prisoner.

A couple of our boys were heard from after long months of waiting. I'll bet their folks were glad. They are now in a prisoner camp.

I got another package today. Also a couple of letters from Dottie. She told me she finally answered your last letter. I guess she didn't know what to write, about Wendell I mean.

I am still in a house and not doing bad at all.

Some of the boys went to a movie tonight but I wanted to stay in and do some writing so I didn't go. I guess I shouldn't have written on the back of this. I can hardly make it out myself but I'll finish it now that I have it started.

It is very dark out tonight, but it has been very nice today.

I forgot to mention in my letter the other day that I saw Joe Converse and had a quite a talk with him first time since we have been in Germany. He is looking very good, and the same as ever. We talked about a lot of things just like you and his mother must do.

I'll close now and will probably write tomorrow.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

I just came off guard and I'm not tired so I think I'll write a few more lines. I'm enclosing my rosary. I thought maybe you would like to have it. It is pretty well worn and parts of it are strewn from here to England. It was given to me in Indiantown Gap just before coming overseas. Words can't begin to tell how much comfort these beads have given me, and never have I been without them. I lost the cross somewhere in Belgium but I had the figure of our Lord in my pocket right

up until the other day. I changed clothes at the shower point and of all things to leave in my pocket it had to be that and also the Miraculous medal Helen sent me and also the one a man gave me in Corbell, France. I have never felt so sorry over losing anything.

I still have the Rosary Annie gave me and I will use it from now on.



*Clifford's Rosary Beads, as returned in this letter.*

December 15, 1944

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail envelope; APO postmarked 16 Dec, 1944; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY., NY. Stationery, five small sheets of onionskin, one side only written on each; black ink. Clipping enclosed from the Stars and Stripes.]

Germany

*Dear Folks*

I have three letters here from you waiting to be answered. I don't feel much like writing but I'll see what I can do. Yesterday I got three packages and a bunch of letters. Lawrence & Jo's package came with coffee & cream and by the way the coffee is delicious. Also got one from my old friend Charles Demi in Hartford and one from the Brown & Thompson store in Hartford I don't know who sent it – one of those the stores pack and send.

I told you I had received an Xmas card from you. I guess it was in one of your packages I don't remember now.

I am enclosing a clipping or rather a picture of Vermont that was in the Stars & Stripes (our paper). It seems good to see a picture of open terrain without tank tracks running all over it and no trenches or shell holes scattered around. I guess after all that is just why we are here so that there never will be any tank tracks and everything else on those beautiful hills.

I was very glad to hear that you had received a card from Bill C. I haven't heard from him in a long long time, and I do hope he is on his way home.

I think I am sweating out Lawrence's deferment as much as the rest of you are. I always mention it in my prayers. I never want to see him in any kind of uniform. I think I know how he feels though. He no doubt wants to get into it and do something he thinks will help, but I don't feel that way a darned bit. You and Pa have sacrificed enough – yes too much already.

I was glad you told me about Our Blessed Mother appearing to those children and I thoroly believe what she said. She is so much stronger than any gun or any bullet.

I am also glad you told me about Jo's dream about dear Wendell (may the Almighty God have mercy on him) and I feel sure he is very near me. I know your prayers helped me and I know he was with me not too long ago. I like to feel that he is anyway. I never wanted to keep mentioning him but I notice you and the rest always do in your letters. It used to make me feel terrible when I read your letters and I felt like telling you to never mention him, but now I think it best to talk of him – after all it wouldn't be right to just forget he ever existed.

Lawrence's birthday is tomorrow and what a wonderful present it would be if he were deferred again. I suppose you are all getting ready for Christmas now. I would love to go out and get the

tree for you. I used to like that so much. I remember Lawrence & Wendell and I used to look forward to it we would always bring one back that was away too tall for the house, and felt so bad about sawing it off.

There is no snow here and I do not have to sleep on the ground when we do go out so please don't worry about me. I couldn't catch a cold if I wanted to.

Oh, yes I nearly forgot – I am in the 1<sup>st</sup> Army & the 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Div. I thought I told you before. You must have heard of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Div. if you didn't you should have. I am not in that so called glorious, glamorous all praised 3<sup>rd</sup> Army. We have done a very big job I think but maybe we don't get credit for it back in the States. Well in the States nobody knows the score anyway so we don't give a darn.

I was sorry to hear of Rombo Potiun (sp?) but I guess he is better off too. Do you ever hear about Rolland Potiun I have often wondered where he is.

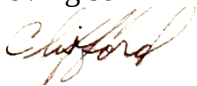
Glad to hear Kenny Hutchins was home – bet he was glad so he feels 30 years old too, eh? I think I understand.

The mail will be in soon and I expect some letters. Getting mail is great fun but then you have to answer the letters which is a great effort to me at times. I remember when I used to enjoy writing and I wrote some real interesting letters to you when I was on the desert and other places in the states. How I would love to be back on the desert now.

Well I have written more than I thought I would when I started I have to quit now. Hope you haven't been too worried about me for the past few days. I know you haven't been getting mail from me.

It should be about Christmas when you get this so Merry Christmas to you all.

Loving son



**Note:** As Clifford closed this letter with his “Merry Christmas” greeting, little did he, or anyone, know that they were just hours away from being a part of the biggest battle of the war ... the Battle that changed everything.



*The following photo appears within the pages of the history entitled, "Spearhead in the West, 1941-1945, The Third Armored Division." Its cover graces the front of this collection. The book was cherished by my father for the rest of his life after he noted its receipt on March 26, 1946. It's dog-eared and annotated throughout, and no doubt absorbed a few tears.*



*After his letter dated December 15, 1944, Clifford did not write home again until New Year's Day 1945. (KOB)*



## THE LETTERS OF 1945

Jan. 1<sup>st</sup> 1945

[Envelope: 6 cent airmail. U.S. Army Postal Service, Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., APO 230, C/O P.M. NY, NY. Censor stamp and signature.]

Belgium

New Year's Day

*Dear Father*

Many things have happened since I last wrote to you and if I had the brains I could write a very interesting book I think.

You folks are no doubt worried stiff about me. I haven't had the chance to write before this.

I have received many packages and any number of letters. I don't remember now who they were from. I do have a couple letters from you dated Nov. 15 & Nov. 23.

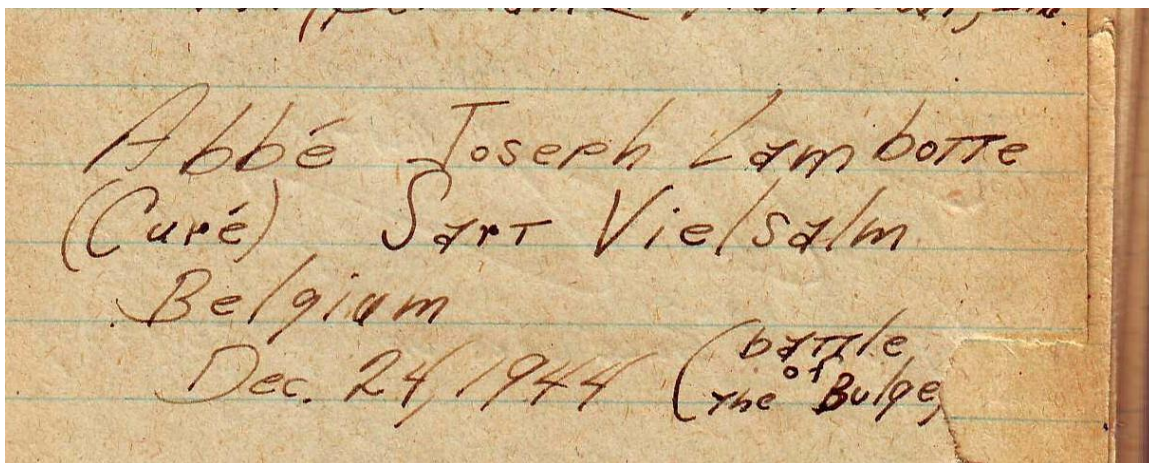
Today I got a letter from Bill C. I thought for sure something had happened to him, but I guess he is O.K.



***Bill Cleary, Cliff's first cousin.***

I didn't get to Mass Christmas Day or today. I did go the day before Christmas though. I spent part of Christmas in a priest's home. He was swell but was awfully worried and had a good reason to be too. He was crying when we left because he knew well enough what was coming.

I wonder if he rang Christmas in. He wanted so much to. I would like to go and see him again sometime but it wouldn't be healthy for an American soldier in that town now, but maybe in a few weeks it will be O.K. again. ***[Note: The priest referred to here is Abbé Joseph Lambotte, whose name I found in my father's well worn address book, annotated as seen below to show the Christmas eve date during the Battle of the Bulge. He never got back to see him. (KOB)]***



I had so many things I wanted to tell you, but now I can't think of half of them.

The day before Christmas a couple of youngsters came to the old padré and wanted him to get them a Christmas tree. I told him I wanted to go after it too. So we all went. Couldn't go too far of course and we ended up getting nothing more than a branch but the kids were tickled with it. I made up a box of candy and things and gave it to them before we left. I wish you could see that priest - he worked awfully hard sawing wood and running around, never stayed still for a minute.

I am now in an old farm house which reminds me very much of Uncle James' farm and the old road even makes it seem that much more like it.

I'll write as often as it is possible.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

[The following Internet photos and description locate Vielsalm geographically with respect to my father's experience during the Battle of the Bulge, though his notes about Christmas Eve there do not specifically identify this church as that of Abbé Lambotte. KOB]



Vielsalm, Belgium, reflected in the lake



St Gengoul's church in Vielsalm

Vielsalm is located in the Ardennes mountain range, including the third highest peak in Belgium. The town, which takes its name from the River Salm, is surrounded by forests and farmland and has a central lake. It is situated between two main roads, one leading from Liege to Bastogne and one at St. Vith, leading to Bitburg just across the border in Germany.

January 12, 1945

[Envelope: 6 cent Air Mail, U.S. Army Postal Service, 17 Jan 1945, Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., APO 230 c/o P.M. NY, NY. Censor stamp and signature.]

First letter this year

*Dear Folks*

Finally I have time to drop you a few lines. I truly don't feel much like writing but I feel as though I must write as I know how worried you must be about me.

I have a million things I want to tell you, but I am in no mood to do it now.

I have been receiving mail regularly and believe me I have plenty of letters to answer. I have only written two letters since I left Germany – one to you and one to Dottie. She must be terribly worried too.

Got your letter of Dec. 24. I don't suppose you spent a very nice Christmas. I thought I was going to spend a fairly nice one but it didn't turn out that way.

You must be going through terrible agony waiting to hear from me. I do wish you and Pa and all the rest of course wouldn't worry about me. It does absolutely no good. And I'm afraid you will just get sick or something. What's to be will be. I feel certain God and his blessed Mother will guide me through this thing and see that I get back to you and be the dutiful son I want so much to be. I have never done much for either you or Pa, but I promise to make life as easy and joyful for you both when I return.

I suppose all of you have heard about poor Morrie (may the Almighty God have mercy on his soul). The last time I saw him he was using an axe showing us how it should be done. He was real skilled with it. I think that was Dec. 20. He must have got it the 21<sup>st</sup> or 22<sup>nd</sup> as near as I can figure it. If our darned vehicles were made right it wouldn't have happened. Some day our Ordnance Dept. will smarten up and do something right for a change. But then as I said before what is to be will be.

He was a very good boy and always kept himself close to God (I am sure he is better off far better off.) It happened very quickly as it usually does and he did not suffer – thank God. I'd rather not tell you any more - I suppose you would like to know the details as all the public yearns to hear such things and after they hear them they say I wish I didn't listen.



*Al Morrie, photo taken in the California desert during the summer of 1943.  
Al, a tank gunner, was killed in the Battle of the Bulge, on December 23, 1944.*

I got a letter from Bill C. No date on it. I certainly was glad to hear from him.

Glad you got a card from the Strattons. I haven't had time to write to them. They worry about me too I know. But as you say they don't know what real worry is.

I received a very very nice card from Father Dussault and a little book called Knight of Our Lady Queen of the Skies about a Sergeant Lovasik. He certainly must be a saint in heaven now. But I think he wrote and told his poor mother too much. She must have worried enough without getting letters like that.

The card Father sent me was beautiful. I must write to him. I would like very much to meet him.

Tonight I am relaxing in a small Belgium farm house. It is very crowded as are all of the homes here. These poor people really are going through hell. If only some people – the right ones I mean – could have a taste of this, this war would soon be over I'm sure.

The houses here are strange – the cow barn connects onto the kitchen in most of them and the smell is terrific. It must be awful in the summer. As long as we have a place to sleep we don't care where it is. A cow barn would be a palace sometimes. These people are very nice to us and go out of their way to help us. I know if I were in their wooden shoes I would be so sick of seeing soldiers. I'd go crazy. One day they have the Germans here and the next day they have us – they don't know what to do.

Have you heard the latest about the Germans having women on the front it is no joke. It is true. Boy oh boy they must be rugged to stand this. Rugged or crazy I don't know which. I don't understand how the Germans ever broke through with so much stuff – they weren't fooling around and I don't mean maybe.

Please give my regards to everyone back there. I don't have any time to write. I hope you can read this terrible scratching. I am in a hurry to finish as I want to just sit down and rest. I am in no danger please don't worry. I wish I could write to you every day. It would be swell for you to get a letter every day, eh?

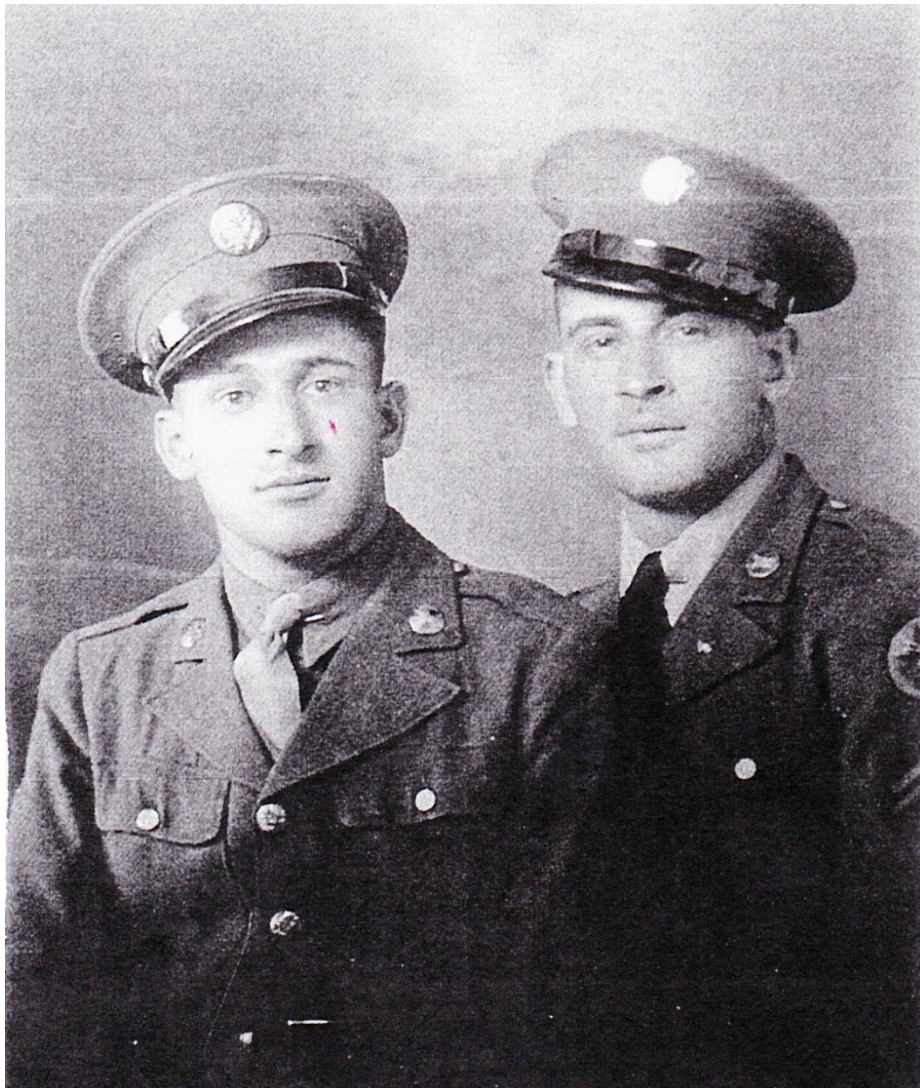


Best regards to all

Loving Son

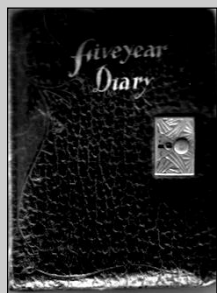
*Clifford*

P.S. I was so glad to hear that Lawrence has been deferred again. Our prayers have been answered. I can't write to Mildred and Johnny or Lawrence & Jo now. I have received a quite a few letters from Mildred. Please give them my best regards. I wish I was in a writing mood but I need some nice peaceful rest and I'm going to have it.



*Al Morrie (right) with his Lawrence, 1943.*

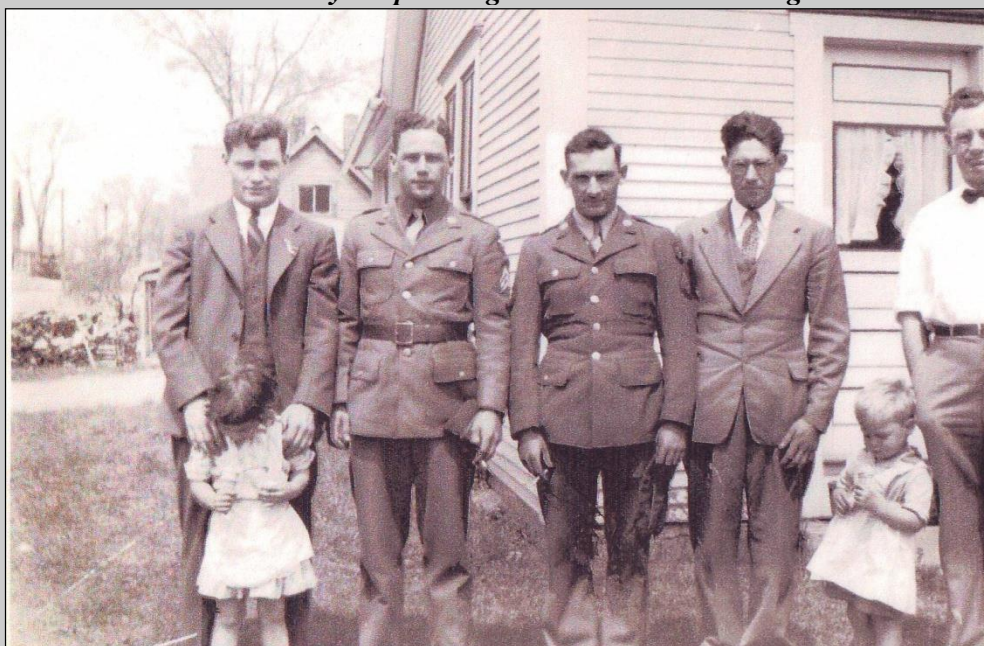
*From Ma's Diary: [repeated from May 1943] -- Clifford's Last Home Leave Before Going Across; Al Morrie's Last Time Home.*



May 21, 1943 – Friday

P & L worked. C came in morning with Al Morrie to stay till Sunday noon. H stayed down to M's in p.m. & came home with L at night. C & P stayed up talking till 5 o'clock in morning.

*“...C & P stayed up talking till 5 o'clock in morning.”*



*(l-r) Lawrence with Lorraine O'Connor; Clifford O'Connor; Al Morrie; Wyness Morrie, Al's brother; Bobby O'Connor; Peter O'Connor ('Pa'). Sunday, May 23, 1943, just before Clifford and Al headed back to camp.*

May 22, 1943 – Saturday

Helen & I are just sick we are so tired from being awake all night. P bought 2 pigs. H & C & I went to Barre in a.m. & Lottie went down with us.

May 23, 1943 – Sunday

P did not go to Mass or to the post. Very nice warm day. C & H & I went to 9.15 Mass. L & J & children were here for dinner. C went back at noon. He was very lonesome & sad going away. P was out again till late at night.

*“...C went back at noon. He was very lonesome & sad going away.”*



January 13, 1945

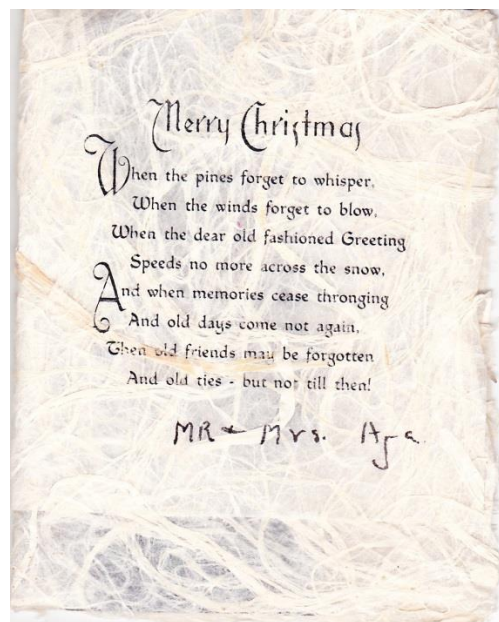
[Envelope: 6 cent airmail envelope; postmarked A.P.O. Jan 17, 1945. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230 c/o P.M. NY, NY. Censor stamped and signed. Written in blue ink on grid-lined paper, two folded sheets.]

*Dear Folks*

I feel much better this morning than I did last night. I wasn't sick physically but just down in the dumps you know. I had a good nights rest uninterrupted for a change. This morning I shaved and washed off a little grime and believe me I feel 100% better now.

Right now I'm in a back room or shed of this old farm – have a fire going and have rigged up a table to write on. The kitchen is very crowded with all the guys trying to wash up - some trying to get dinner ready. We all take turns cooking – boy it is a pain in the neck. I don't mind it so much back here but there are places where it is kind of hard to get meals.

I received a lot of mail this morning which also helped to boost the old morale up a few notches. Got your letters of Dec. 3 & 7 and Helen's of the 24<sup>th</sup>. Got a lot of Christmas cards - by the way please give my thanks to Mr. & Mrs. Aja for their beautiful card – very nice of them to send it.

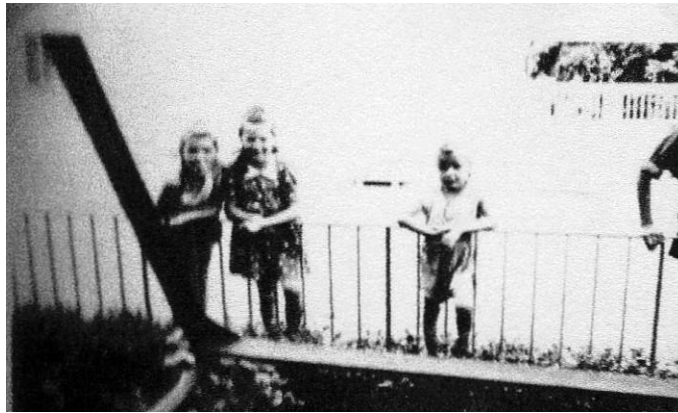


***Christmas Card from East Barre across-the-street neighbors, the Aja's, for all the years kept among Clifford's things. Their four sons served during the war and are mentioned frequently in Clifford's letters to and from home.***

When you told about poor Annie having such a time of it with the chimney fire and all I had to laugh but I feel sorry for her as well.

Also got Whitcomb's Optimeter but I haven't had time to look at it yet. I enjoyed it very much - it displays such good fellowship I think. And I can't help but think of Myron - he is so much that way.

There are some very cute little kids living here. I have been having fun with them. The poor things know nothing but war war war. They are the picture of health itself. It must be hard to bring up a family under these terrible conditions. They are very well mannered too. I was congratulating their parents last night. And the look on their faces told me what they have been through to have those children. After all they have been through they still can laugh and apparently enjoy themselves - just living. I don't know what they do for food but they seem to manage.



*The Children (photo from Anctil's album)*

You said Bill C. is staying in a hotel - boy oh boy I wish I was in an ordnance outfit. The enemy is as much of a stranger to those boys as the enemy is to you folks back in the States. Some of them may see them but when they do they have been stripped of their arms and ammunition and are in a P.W. cage or on their way there. He has no doubt seen some rough times - it is no joke just being over here, but a lot of guys have it pretty darn easy. If I knew 3 years ago what I know now I'd be in some quartermaster outfit back in the States if I was in this Army at all.

The little kids here are out sliding on an old home made sled only one can get on it and they take turns. We gave one of them the name of "buzz bomb." In later years she will have a quite a few memories of the Yanks and will no doubt have a house full of them just like now.

***The above photo was in the WWII photo album of Cliff's friend Roland Anctil ... from above paragraph, the one they'd named "Buzz Bomb" must be one of them!***

I wouldn't make a home in any one of these rotten countries over here - each one is a sore boil ready to pop open, and the people just have to stand for it. They don't know any more about politics than some of our hillbillies down in Louisiana or the hills of Tennessee. Just let things go and go about their farm work without caring a darn. That is why the rulers have their way so much. The people don't seem to care who is at the head of their government as long as they don't

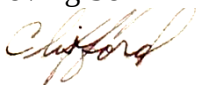
bother them. I don't know enough about politics to say any more, and I just hope the same thing doesn't happen in the States.

I have heard rumors about so called unconditional surrender being changed or something about it. But as far as I'm concerned this war can stop today. I don't care at what terms and I am not alone with this feeling. There will always be a war so why drag this one out so darned long. Make them short as possible. I know it is easy for somebody to say fight them until they are all dead – kill them all – sure – sure - let them do it for a change and see how much fun it is. I want Germany beat down to nothing too so she won't start anything again. But why didn't somebody smarten up about 10 yrs ago when it would have been easy to do it. And those Japs oh boy did they ever pull it over on U.S. Everybody and his brother was out collecting old junk and such to send them and now whow! Is it coming back right out of a muzzle of a gun - good old American steel. I remember Grampa told us what would happen. He knew and so did a lot of others but there was good money in it so it kept going on - money money – that's the answer to the whole thing I guess. Well now that I have blown off some steam I feel better. Everybody gets that way once in a while I guess.

I suppose everything is pretty much the same back home. The roads must be terrible to get around on. Well about 3 more months and the old winter will be over. Helen must freeze going back and forth to school. I hope Pa hasn't had much trouble with the car in the mornings. That has always been such a headache.

I have a lot more of writing to do so I think I'll sign off.

Loving Son



January 14 (?) 1945

[Envelope: 6 cent airmail envelope; postmarked A.P.O. Jan 17 1945. Censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY. Letter written in blue ink on plain paper, single sheet, two sides.]

*Dear Father*

I think today is the 14<sup>th</sup> – if it is it is Sunday and it is a beautiful day. The sun is shining bright and it reflects off from the snow and is blinding. I read the Mass this morning – also read it Christmas day. I would like to get to Mass one of these days but probably won't get the chance for a few days at least.

Last night just before dark the kids were out sliding and insisted that I take a ride so my old pal Anctil and I got on the little sleds about 18 inches long and we took off down the slippery road. I struck a pile of dirt and the sled stopped but I kept going right on the seat of my pants – we had a good laugh and tried it again. I had more fun in those few minutes than I have had in a long time. It reminded me very much of old Brook Street in Websterville. I suppose Lawrence's kids are having as much fun as we used to have.

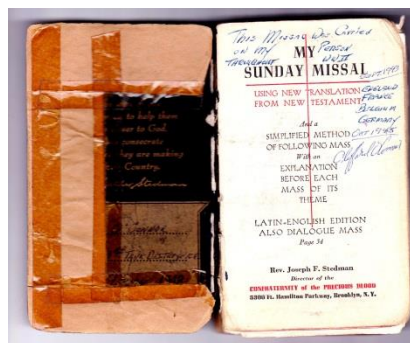
I hope this weather keeps up for a while – these kind of days don't help the Germans a bit. Our planes can work on them and boy the Huns hate that.

I want to write to a few more people so I guess I'll sign off.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

The mail just came in and I got a card from Mildred & Johnny and a letter from you dated Dec. 17. Also a nice letter from my old boss Mr. Bennett at Pratt & Whitney. I guess they are terribly busy now in the Experimental Dept. A big bunch of planes just went over and every time I see them I think of how those men back in Dept. 54 are making those huge formations of bombers possible.



*Cliff's Missal, "...carried on my person" throughout the war.*



January 22, 1945

[Envelope: 6-cent air mail stamp; air-mail envelope; APO postmarked 24 Jan 1945; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY., NY. Stationery: two plain sheets, three sides, blue ink.]

Belgium

*Dear Father*

About time to write again, eh? Honestly though I haven't had time to bother with letters. I have received some letters from you but I have forgotten the dates on them they are on the back of my tank but I'm not going out and dig them up. Anyway you probably don't care about the letters I receive it's the ones I send that really count, right?

I think the last letter I wrote to you was when I was in that little old farmhouse where little "buzz bomb" was.

To nite I'm in a nice house and there aren't any shell holes in it or any around here for miles. It seems great. I saw some trucks go by with the head lights on it looked so strange. First head lights I've seen since I left England. These houses even have electric lights, whow! These people don't know how lucky they are compared to some people or maybe they do.

I got to Mass Saturday, and Communion but I didn't get to go yesterday. Believe it or not my name has been drawn to go to Paris on a pass. I didn't know at first whether I wanted to go or not as I think it is nice right here but I'm going. I've made up my mind. Would like to have gotten it a few days ago. It will be a long cold ride but probably worth it. There is a lot of snow here now. I am very glad I didn't send those Russian boots home for a souvenir now. I wore them a lot and had no worries about cold feet, but the sole started to come off of one of them so I couldn't wear them for a while, but today I took them to a cobbler and had them fixed. Boy I'm glad I can use them again as my feet have been a little chilly.

The man that owns this house used to be a customs official in the Belgian Congo in Africa and I wish I could understand more French. He would be very interesting. My friend Anctil was talking to him this P.M. He showed us a crocodile skin with the head still on it. He said he shot many of them. He has his little boy here with him and he is as black as a Negro back home and has all of the characteristics of a Negro. The man's wife apparently is a native of the Congo and she is still there. He is waiting to return as soon as he gets transportation.

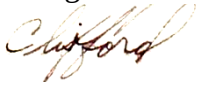
Last night I had more fun than I have had for a long long time. Anctil was stationed near here in a reinforcement camp for a long time waiting to come back with us and he knows a lot of people around here. He and I and a couple of others went visiting boy I had a good time I'll never forget it. First time I have relaxed like that and enjoyed myself for nearly 7 months. It was like going home for Anctil he speaks excellent French and everyone likes him. Even this morning I noticed

a lot of kids calling to him for his first name as we went by they recognized him right away. The people here are very nice they must get so sick of seeing soldiers around.

I am very tired tonite and I want to write to Dottie and then go to bed and sleep sleep.

I leave for Paris at 7 a.m. Be back in 4 days.

Loving Son



January 26, 1945

[V-Mail, with envelope; no date/stamp imprint in censor area or date stamp on form, but envelope is APO postmarked Feb 14, 1945 (may have been Feb. 4). Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M., NY.]

*Dear folks*

I am now in Paris and believe me it is a quite a place. I haven't seen much of the city yet, but I intend to tomorrow.

I am staying at the Grand Hotel best in Paris a good friend of ours manages this place. That's why we got in. The room is really nice private bath and all and the meals are excellent. It is nice to forget about the war for a few days. We got 72 hr. passes instead of 48 lucky, eh? I will really hate to leave here. We are hoping the Russians will push to Berlin before we go back.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

Feb. 3, 1945

[Envelope: Envelope is in a very deteriorated condition – some tape over A.P.O. postmark, the word, “Free” legibly noted on torn off piece. Censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O’Connor, Co. B 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY. Written on tissue-like paper, in black ink; single sheet, one side.]

Ma noted on lower right “(Call Me Spearhead book in here).” My father made numerous annotations throughout this small book – a most moving entry on page 6, where he wrote a few words near a description about action on July 8, 1944 – his first day of action and the day on which his brother Wendell was killed in Italy (see letter dated July 8, 1945).

Belgium

*Dear Father*

I don’t have much to say tonight except I am fine.

It has warmed up considerably here and the rain has melted nearly all the snow. It is just like Spring – the days are getting longer too. I wish this was the end of the winter, but of course it isn’t.

I am still in the house I mentioned before. It is very nice to be in a house – the people here are very neat as are most Belgians. The women seem to never finish their work, they can’t stand any dirt around any place. They take great pride in their stoves. These stoves are awfully awkward things but they seem to like them. There isn’t much coal around here – France is the same. I saw people chopping trees along the streets outside of Paris.

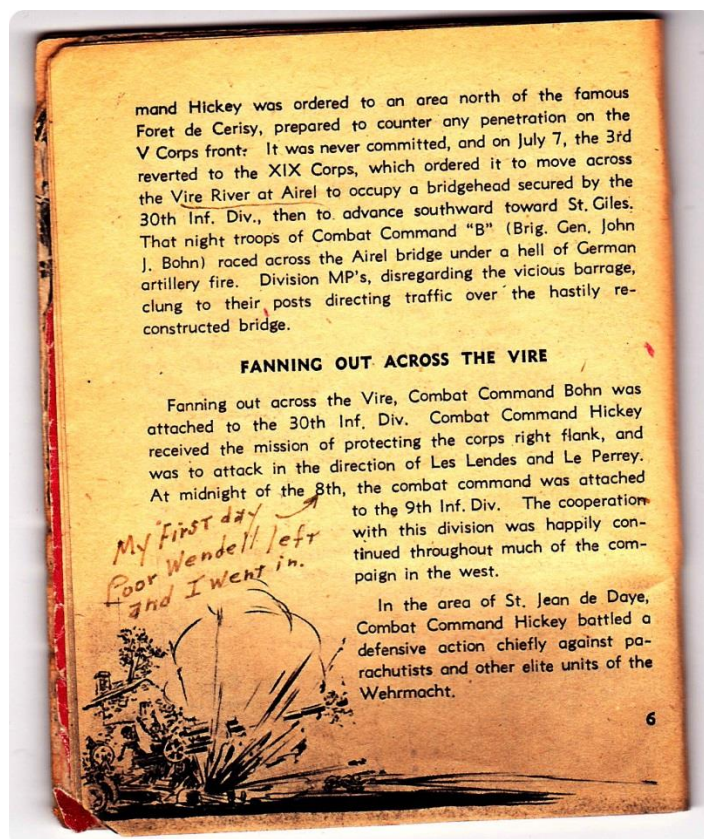
I’m enclosing a little book about our division. I think they should write another one now. [...and they did ... see next page (KOB).]

Loving Son,

*Clifford*



*The booklet on the left was enclosed in the letter of February 3, 1945; left is the sequel. My father's annotation on page 6 reproduced below notes the significance of July 8, 1944 ... Clifford's first action and, unbeknownst to him then, the day his brother Wendell died in Italy.*



February 5, 1945

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail envelope; APO postmarked Feb 7, 1945; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY., NY. Stationery: Two small sheets; four sides, black ink. [Note: In two or three places there are black smudges, two of them particularly made me think that they were from tears falling. .. whose? (KOB)]

Belgium

*Dear Father*

I received your letter of Jan. 10 today. Glad to hear from you as usual. Whow 19 degrees below there, eh? It is not cold here now and as I said in my last letter the snow is gone here, but the winter is not over.

Ma, I wish you wouldn't keep thinking of me as fighting all the time. As you put it wild eyed, long bearded, and frightened. You will just keep worrying and worrying and get sick from it. Worrying doesn't help me and it doesn't help you any either.

I don't think poor Wendell may God rest his soul prayed to die but I do think the poor kid is better off. It must be terrible there now they never seem to be making much head way on that front and I know why.

About your letters being lost. I don't think any of them were, really, and I think I got all my Xmas packages, too.

I was sorry to hear that the poor little Bullard boy got it. He was so small and young; I suppose by this time you have heard about Al. I haven't been able to find out just where he is buried yet.

I got a lot of mail today and I don't feel a bit like answering any of it but I suppose I have to in order to get more. Sometimes I enjoy writing especially when there is something to write about but other times like right now I hate it.

It is very very quiet around here, which is good. It is very dark out can't see 10 ft – and it has been that way for the last few nights.

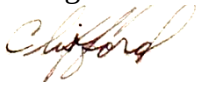
It is very cozy here in this little kitchen. The old man 85 and lady 79 are sitting by the stove just thinking I guess. I get a kick out of the old man he is very healthy and eats like a bear I don't understand how he does it. All he does is smoke his pipe for exercise. I guess that is a job in itself the pipe is so big. The first day we came here we kept giving him stuff to eat my goodness I was afraid we would have a corps on our hands in the morning but oh no. He was back for more the next day. He will eat anything.

I haven't seen Joe Converse in a long time but he is O.K. He was asking one of the boys about me a couple of days ago.



I guess the Russians are about ready to make that final lunge across the Oder River and hit what is left of Berlin. I wish that would end the war but it of course will not. We will no doubt meet those Russians some day and that will be the day. Even then it won't be over not for my money. At least things do look brighter both here and in the Pacific. I'll bet everybody in the States has their ears bent to the radio now. We are fortunate and I have a radio in the next house. It is good to hear music again.

Loving Son

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford", written in a cursive style.

I'm fine.

Feb. 9, 1945

[Envelope: Free, U.S. Army Postal Service postmarked 10 Feb 1945; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY. This letter on small plain paper in black ink; one sheet, two sides.]

Germany

*Dear Father*

Well I'm back here [*Germany KOB*] again. I expected it even before this. Things are about the same here as they were. Living conditions are pretty good right now. I have a cot to sleep on and I'm inside. We also have plenty of coal. Hitler saw to it that Germany would have coal I guess, but I don't think he figured we would be using it. There is no snow here now and it isn't too cold.

Just before I left Belgium I found out something I never knew. It was about Our Blessed Mother appearing to a little girl named Mariette Beco in a small town not far from where I was stationed. I stopped in at a hospital (to see about getting some glasses) for a little while. Anyway I met the Mother Superior there she could speak English and she told me the whole story about the "Virgin of the Poor" also she gave me some literature on it. I have read it and I'm going to send it to you tomorrow. I went to Confession to an old priest there he also could speak very good English. He had a great long grey beard I'll never forget him. I haven't had the chance to get to Holy Communion yet but I will as soon as I can.

I got Edna's letter of Dec 15 today, also the Optimeter from Whitcomb.

I'm fine and hope you are all well.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

February 12, 1945

[V-Mail. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M., NY., NY. Censor-stamped and signed.]

Germany

*Dear Father*

Got your letter of Jan 28 and I was very sorry to hear that Lawrence will soon be coming into the Army. I hope he talks good and fast and plenty to get into what he wants. He is a darned good man around machinery too good to be put into something else. But I know the Army they don't ever ever give a man a job he knows how to do, guess that is what is wrong with it.

This afternoon I'm going to Mass and Holy Communion at 3:00. It is now about 11:30 a.m. and I guess you will soon be getting up and getting ready to go to Mass. I'll be at Mass the same time you will if you go to 9 o'clock Mass.

I am fine and hope you are all well.

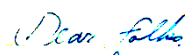
Loving Son

*Clifford*

Feb. 14, 1945

[Envelope: 6 cent airmail stamp; postmark APO Feb 18, 1945; censor-stamped and signed. Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY. Ma wrote in the bottom corner, "*Letter of Commendation in here.*"

Germany



Got your letter of Feb. 5 & 1<sup>st</sup>. I was very sorry to hear about you, Pa and I sincerely hope you are feeling fine again, why, I can't imagine you being sick, never saw you sick except from a big head.

Glad to hear that Bobby Whitcomb is home he must be glad too. I hope he gets rid of his cough.

You sound as though Bill C. has been wounded or is sick or something my goodness if anything is wrong don't be afraid to tell me I think I can take it. I have taken a lot of rough bumps since I left. First I thought Bill was on his way home and now, this, boy I can't figure it out.

I'm glad Dottie sent you those pictures. Don't feel slighted now. I intended to send you a set (4 or 5) but I've lost the negatives or misplaced them or something. I just can't find them now. We had a lot of them made but the men all wanted them I had one set so I sent it to her. It was nice of her to send them to you. Thoughtful little cuss after all. I will write to her and have her get some more made and send them to you. That is the only thing to do now. Unless I find the negatives. Those pictures were taken with a German camera & film.

I was also sorry to hear about Joe. Can't imagine anything being wrong with him either and I certainly hope he is O.K. now.

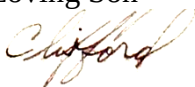
We are staying in a show room of a store I think it used to be some sort of a store anyway. We are having one time of it keeping the stove going, got the pipe stuck out through the blacked out windows and I think we should put another pipe on the front of the stove and run it out the door so the wind could blow right through. I don't think any smoke is going out the pipe now at all. Instead of a draft in the pipe the wind blows down into the stove.

I got to Mass & Holy Communion today. The church was very nice I was surprised.

I have been to two movies since I've been here. "This is the Life" & "Dough Girls" (lousy).

I can't think of any more tonight guess I'll close.

Loving Son



P.S. I'm enclosing another commendation we received. I believe I sent you the one we got especially for our 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon back in Aug. in France.



*The Commendation Letter issued to the 703<sup>rd</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion, on January 9, 1945, and enclosed with this letter home, is reproduced on the following two pages:*



HEADQUARTERS 82D AIRBORNE DIVISION  
Office of the Division Commander  
APO #469, U. S. Army

9 January 1945

SUBJECT: Commendation.

TO : Commanding Officer 703rd Tank Destroyer Battalion,  
APO #230, U. S. Army.

THRU : Commanding General, XVIII Corps (Airborne),  
APO #109, U. S. Army.

1. Upon the relief of the 703rd Tank Destroyer Battalion from support of this Division in the initial stages of its operation on the northern flank of the German penetration, it is my pleasure to commend your organization for its splendid performance during the period 20 December 1944, through 1 January 1945.

2. The officers and men of your command showed a fine spirit of cooperation in the solution of the numerous problems developing from the tactical situations in which we were involved. The skillful and soldierly performance of the 703rd Tank Destroyer Battalion was particularly gratifying and materially helpful. I would like all of them to know of my appreciation for their contribution to the successes of this Division during the period of their attachment.

/s/ James M. Gavin,  
/t/ JAMES M. GAVIN,  
Major General, U.S. Army,  
Commanding.

200.6 (G-1) 1st Ind.  
HEADQUARTERS XVIII CORPS (AIRBORNE), APO 109, U. S. Army, 15 January 1945.

TO: Commanding Officer, 703rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, APO 230, U.S. Army.  
(THRU: Commanding General, VII Corps).

It is with pleasure that I add my commendation in recognition of the accomplishments of the 703rd Tank Destroyer Battalion while serving within my Command.

/s/ M. B. Ridgway,  
/t/ M. B. RIDGWAY,  
Major General, U. S. Army,  
Commanding.

201.22 - 2nd Ind.  
(9 January 1945)  
HEADQUARTERS VII CORPS, APO 307, U. S. Army, 24 Jan 1945.

TO: Commanding Officer, 703d Tank Destroyer Battalion, APO 230, U.S. Army.

THRU: Commanding General, 3d Armored Division, APO 253, U. S. Army.

I also desire to commend the 703d Tank Destroyer Battalion for its outstanding performance of duty while serving with the 82d Airborne Division during the period 20 December 1944 through 1 January 1945.

/s/ J. Lawton Collins,  
/t/ J. LAWTON COLLINS,  
Major General, U. S. Army,  
Commanding.



201.22 3d Ind.  
(9 January 1945)  
HEADQUARTERS THIRD ARMORED DIVISION, APO 253, U.S. Army, 25 January 1945.

TO: Commanding Officer, 703d Tank Destroyer Battalion, APO 230.

It is with great pleasure and pride in the service for which you have been commended that I transmit this correspondence which should be brought to the attention of all members of your command.

/s/ Maurice Rose,  
/t/ MAURICE ROSE,  
Major General, U.S. Army  
Commanding.

201.22 4th Ind.  
(9 January 1945)  
HEADQUARTERS 703RD TANK DESTROYER BATTALION, APO 230, U.S. Army, 30 Jan., 1945.

TO: Officers and Men, this Battalion.

1. I wish to add my commendation to the officers and men of the battalion for another mission successfully accomplished. Especially deserving the above commendation are the officers and men of "B" Company, which, as the only armor present in a very large division sector, functioned so capably even by sections and single guns.

2. This communication will be read to all officers and men.

W. E. SHOVALTER,  
Lt., Col., 703d TD Bn.,  
Commanding.

This document, not violating censorship regulations, may be sent to friends and relatives through the mail.

February 15, 1945

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail stamp, "Via Air Mail," APO postmarked 18 Feb 1945; censor-stamped and signed. Ma wrote on bottom right "*request (made)*" *re sugar cakes*." Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY., NY. Stationery: Three small plain sheets, six sides, written in pencil.]

Germany

*Dear Father*

I have two letters here from you to ans. Jan 18 & 20. You sounded terribly worried and I was very glad that you received my letter of Jan. 1<sup>st</sup> I don't remember what I said now. Please don't think of me out floundering in the snow, Ma. And about the dreams of me coming home pale & thin. I'm as healthy as ever and not skinny to say the least. Everybody says I'm getting fat. I don't think I am but I haven't lost an ounce. Honest and I feel perfect. Feel better now I hope so.

It is a beautiful day here too nice to stay inside but I don't know anywhere else to go. I received some mail today yours of the 20<sup>th</sup> and Edna's of 15<sup>th</sup> Dottie's of 17<sup>th</sup>.

I hope Pa is feeling better. If it is as nice back home as it is here he could get outside and enjoy the nice fresh air and get well quick. If I was home today I'd be taking off for a nice stream with a fish pole I'm sure, but I think the season isn't opened yet. It looks as if the winter has gone for another year, but it hardly seems possible it is only the middle of Feb. Maybe the winters are light here we have no way of finding out as we aren't allowed to speak with these bums.

They all seem to want to have us speak with them and I can't blame them any. When we walk by with our mess kits full of good healthy American rations their eyes pop out and their greedy hand automatically is thrust out palm up. I have to laugh to watch the men pick up cigarette butts from the street. It must cramp their pride a bit, eh, what? They all seem fairly well clothed especially the women silk stockings on nearly all of them and they all wear boots with high tops. I would like to get a pair of them. I found a single "spur" am looking for the mate to send Edna or Helen.

About these furloughs to the States they aren't easy to get and we don't have any thing to say about it. If you have been wounded and hospitalized you stand a good chance of it has happened a couple of times. Battle fatigue may help you out but that is a terrible thing a fancy name for "shell shocked" that term isn't used any more in the Army.

Don't tell me Pete Aja volunteered for the infantry, whatever happened to him? Married life was no good maybe, eh? He probably said he volunteered but I doubt it very much. They have been putting a bunch of those lucky guys back in the States into the infantry. He may have volunteered but if he did he is goofy & don't know what he is asking for, but will probably soon find out. It must be hard on his folks, 3 boys overseas now.



You must just live from day to day waiting for a letter from me. I don't know which is worse, honest being here or being a parent back home waiting to hear from a son. I know you always think of the worst why not try and think of the best. I should think it would be easier that way.

A friend of mine in the platoon just met his brother last night first time they have seen each other for 3 years. I enjoyed watching them and listening to them. I often think of the time I missed seeing dear Wendell when I was in [word crossed out] If I knew then what I do now, I would have seen him.

Joe Converse just went by with his truck I didn't get a chance to see him. One of my friends yelled to me but I didn't get to the door in time.

I think I'll quit writing and go out and throw a ball around a bit.

Loving Son

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford". The script is cursive and somewhat stylized, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

P.S. Sometime along you could send me some sugar cakes, Ma.

February 24, 1945

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail stamp, Via Air Mail; APO postmarked March 1, 1945; censor-stamped and signed [postmark date seems suspect on this – unusual delay for mail. KOB] Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY. NY. Stationery: Two small plain sheets, four sides, in pencil.]

Germany

Sat. PM

*Dear folks*

About time I wrote again I hope you haven't been too worried. Got your letter of Feb 8 also Edna's of the 8<sup>th</sup> and also hers of Jan. 15<sup>th</sup>.

When I write to you folks I usually write to Mildred or Edna or Lawrence & Jo at the same time. I suppose you all get them at once. It is not very good that way but it is the only way. When I feel like writing and have the time I must write to everyone I can.

I am still staying inside. It isn't very cold here now. In my last letter to you I mentioned the films I thought I had lost but I have found them and have sent them to be developed it will be some time before I get them though.

Yesterday I went to Holy Communion and I plan on going again this afternoon.

Sometime ago I wrote to Father Dussault I have been wondering whether or not it got to him. The mail should have gotten through alright at that time. That was during the Battle of the Bulge but the Germans were stopped when I wrote it.

My old pal Ancil just gave me a haircut and later on I am to give him one. If you can picture me cutting hair.

I hope you are feeling better, Pa. It must be hard for you to sit around and do nothing as you have never had to do it before.

I suppose Lawrence is sweating out the 27<sup>th</sup> of the month. I feel sorry for him and also Jo and the kids. It makes me mad to think of it.

I don't know what else to write except that I am fine. The mail usually comes in about 5 o'clock and I'll bet I'll get a letter from you after writing this one. I wish it would come in earlier.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

P.S. I saw Joe Converse a couple of days ago he said he was going to Paris on pass. I received your letter of Feb 15. I'm glad you folks got my letters I wrote away back in Jan. I sure hope Pa is well enough to work but climbing up and down that darn crane won't be good for him.

March 7, 1945

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail stamp on Via Air Mail envelope, APO postmarked March 13, 1945; censor-stamped and signed. Pvt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. N.Y., NY. Stationery: Single long sheet folded into four pages, all four written, in pencil. Enclosures: Although not mentioned in the letter, two German stamps were included in this letter.]

Germany

*Dear Folks*

Got a letter from you yesterday dated Feb. 25. I also have received your letters of Feb. 15 & 18. I have been thinking a lot about Lawrence being in the Army already and hoping and praying that he would get into a noncombat outfit. But you said he wouldn't come in until March 12.

I hope Lorraine & Bobby are better. I can see them with their mittens on putting ice into the ice cream freezer with their eyes popping out waiting for the ice cream.

I haven't heard from Dottie for a few days but probably will get one soon.

I suppose the radio is going full blast back home now with all the news. It probably sounds good to you all.

You mentioned Al's mother receiving the purple heart. I think a decoration will come too. I'm not sure but I think so.

I got a letter from Helen dated Feb. 17 telling about going to college. I will write to her later when I have more time.

I hope Pa is feeling better now, and able to work again.

I got Edna's V-mail a few days ago.

We have been having regular March weather here and no snow.

I don't know what to write except that I'm feeling fine.

Love to all

Loving Son

*Clifford*



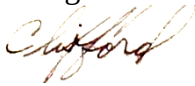
March 10 (?) 1945

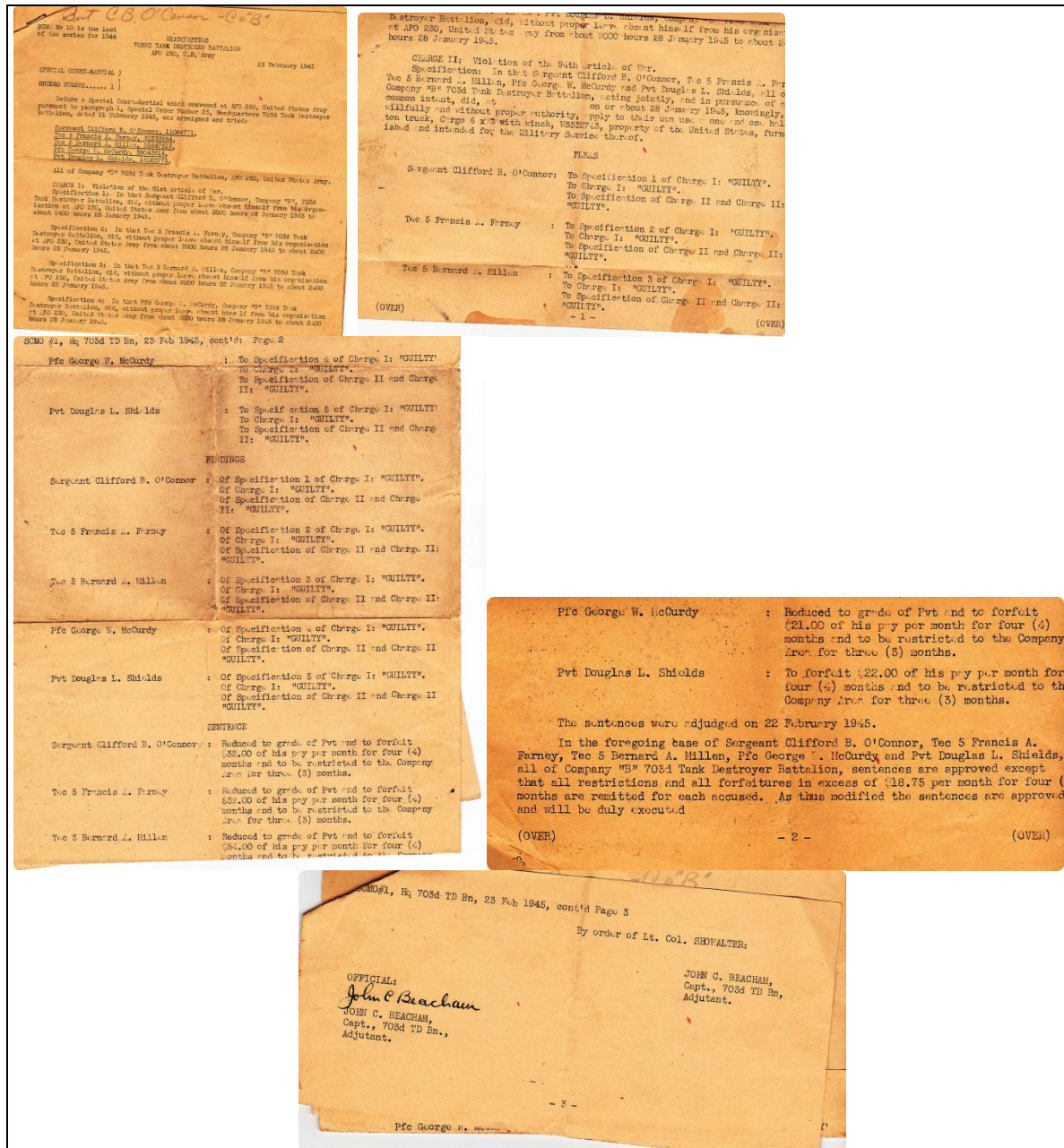
I started this letter a few days ago but I didn't get it mailed. Will finish it now. Today I received your letter of Feb. 11 you sounded very worried - I'm O.K.

I have a little story to tell you. I am a Pvt. now. But please don't think I messed up on the front or that I'm a poor soldier that is not the case. I was "busted" for misconduct and not for inefficiency. It is a long story and I don't feel in the mood to write tonite. It happened Jan 28 away back in Belgium on a rest period after the "battle of the bulge." We took a truck without permission to go to a little town the roads were icy and we had an accident one of my very best friends was killed so we were punished.

I'll be a Sgt. again as soon as possible. I'm doing my same job. It is very easy to get into trouble in the Army as you know. Some people get away with everything. *[See following document and note (KOB)]*

Loving Son

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Clifford", written in dark ink.



This excerpt is what Clifford writes about in his letter. In late January he and several other soldiers had taken an Army truck without authorization for four hours. (Ref. Chronology in Introduction that includes this disciplinary action). He was assessed a penalty and rated from Sgt. to Pvt. for four months, after which he was reinstated, and soon thereafter elevated in rank to S/Sgt. for the remainder of his service. Several letters refer to this period.

March 17, 1945

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail stamp; APO postmarked March 20, 1945; censor-stamped and signed. Pvt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY., NY. Stationery: Two small plain sheets, four sides, in pencil. Enclosure: As noted, small map (reprinted in '45), "CC 'B' 3Δ Battles of Normandy, N. France, Belgium, & Rheinland – July 7 – Sept 15, 1944," drawn by Maj. Scott Reynolds, 5/Feb 45/773<sup>rd</sup> ENGRS./398.]

Germany

*Dear Folks*

I just finished writing to Johnnie. I was really surprised to hear from him. I was so glad I answered it right away.

I started to write to him this morning and was interrupted so many times I just finished it. It is about 4P.M. now.

We are all pretty well set up in this house – got a stove set up and I'm quite comfortable now.

The other day I received a Christmas card from Edna sent Dec. 5. I guess you heard about that shipment of mail that was mixed up so much.

We have a radio hooked up and "When Irish Eyes are Smiling" was just played & sung now they are playing "My Wild Irish Rose." St. Patrick's Day today and I can't help but think of a year ago today. I didn't get a chance to go to Mass today but tomorrow being Sunday we should have a Mass.

I have a couple of V-mails here from Edna – no date on them, She seems to like to get up home to see you folks – doesn't she? Well it is chow time and I don't want to be late. I'm still a "chow hound."

Well supper is over and a few more things detained me so it is now about 7:30 P.M. I should never have started writing today. The mail has come in and I got your letter of Mar. 1<sup>st</sup>. I don't think the War Dept. should send the personal belongings of a soldier home after he has been killed unless it is something very important. That \$5. especially it is such a trivial thing. But I suppose it is the only correct thing to do. The graves registration detail doesn't want to keep such things. I don't suppose anybody wants them so they just get rid of them by sending to relatives.

I didn't know that Herby Phillips was in the outfit you mentioned. Tell me which regt. and if it is the Inf. or Cav. If it is the Inf. I must have just missed him yesterday.

Our rations just came in and boy oh boy it must be hard to get matches in the States. If every outfit gets as many as we do they really must be a critical item at home either that or the match factories are going full blast 24 hrs. a day including Sundays.

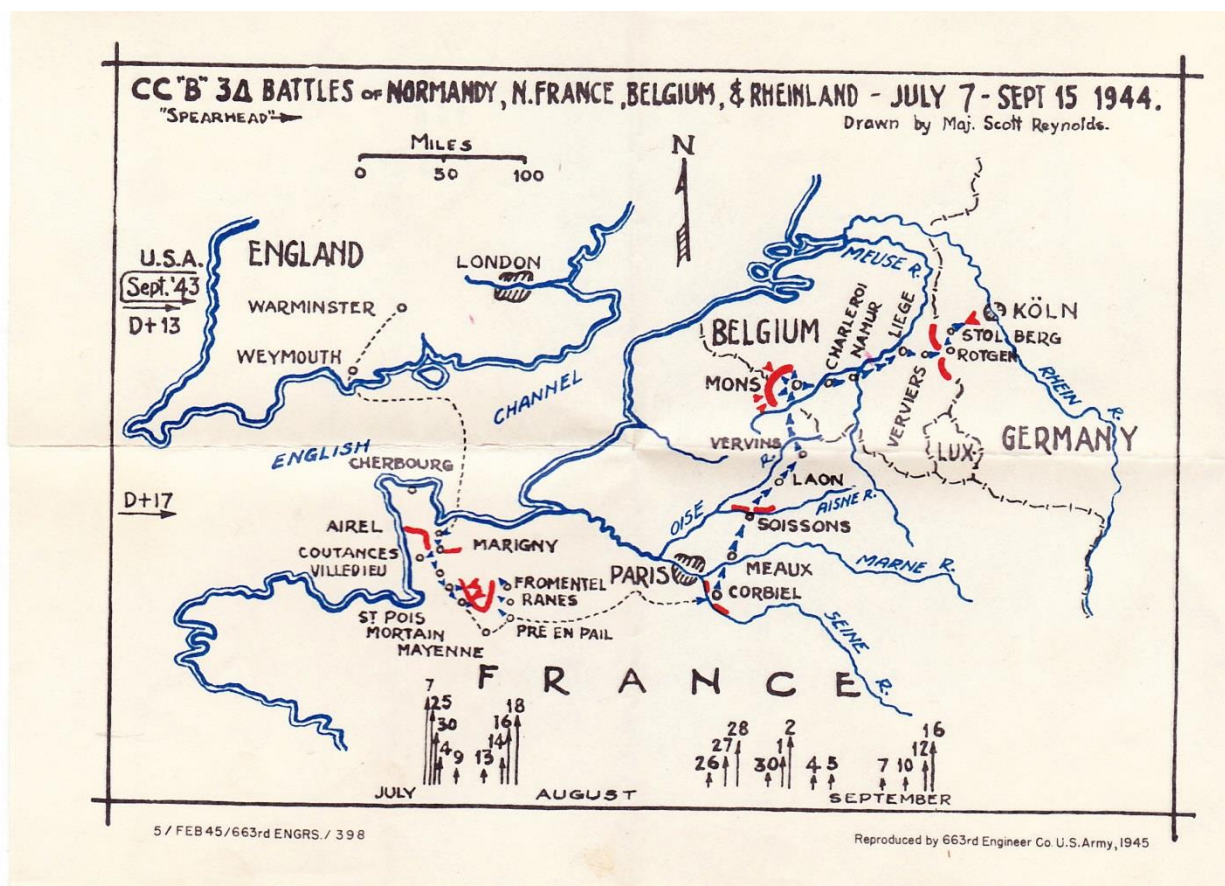
I'm enclosing a small map showing our route all the way from England to Germany. It is a long trail to look back on, and I'm glad it is all behind us.

Well I think I'll close – will write again tomorrow maybe.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

I hope Pa is coming along fine.



Command Command (CC) 'B' 3d Battles of Normandy, N. France, Belgium, & Rheinland – July 7 – Sept 15, 1944,” drawn by Maj. Scott Reynolds, reprinted 5/Feb 45/773<sup>rd</sup> ENGRS./398; enclosed in the letter dated March 17, 1945.



March 19, 1945

[Envelope: Free; APO postmarked March 22, 1945; censor-stamped and signed. Pvt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY., NY.

Stationery: Two small plain sheets; three sides, in pencil. {A portion of the bottom of the first page was torn off – it appears about five lines of writing. Unfortunately, on the back side it related to Al Morrie and Dad's thoughts about wanting to write to his mother. It's left me with the impression that it may have intentionally been torn off for some reason ... possibly to give it to Mrs. Morrie, or something about Wendell's loss ... always now to be a mystery ... what were the words lost now to time? KOB}.]

Germany

Mon. Nite

*Dear Folks*

I just received your letter of March 5 also got Mildred's of Feb. 4<sup>th</sup>. I hope this letter doesn't take as long getting to you as hers did coming here. I have no air mail stamps they are hard to get. It seems they try to discourage us from sending air mail. I hate V-mail.

I'm in another house and we are still straightening it out. The furniture is the same as [Note: the bottom portion of the first page of this letter has been torn off. KOB] ... others. Stove beds ... but the ... books (?) ... Yesterday and today we walked a couple of kilometers and got to Mass again. We also received again.

Arsenault & I went together Anctil was busy cutting hair. Just today we were talking about Al and how much we miss him. It must have been Bill Crochetier that wrote to Mrs. Morrie. I didn't know anything about it. I haven't seen him lately. Anyway it was very nice of him to do it. I would like to write her a letter but I don't know what to say and ... [section missing here.]

You mentioned some "mastachkoli" that Julie Cato made whow! That is a hard word to pronounce and I haven't the faintest idea of what it is.

It has been very nice here today all of the civilians were out spading their gardens this soil is perfect for gardening. I was in an old chapel the other day. It was a real old building I think it was made just for the people that worked on the farm nearby. There were still some flowers on the altar apparently it was used not long ago.

Well I guess I'll close I don't know what to write I'm fine – and I hope you all are.

Loving Son,

*Clifford*

March 23, 1945

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail stamp; Via Air Mail; APO postmarked March 26, 1945; censor-stamped and signed. Pvt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN. A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY., NY. Stationery: Two small plain sheets, four sides, in pencil.]

Germany

*Dear folks*

I received your letter of Feb. 22 with the pictures. Mildred had sent some to me but some of them I hadn't seen before. Eugene has certainly grown since I last saw him. Marilyn looks very cute in her First Communion dress & veil.

A lot has happened since you wrote that letter, and the war here looks as though it is nearer to an end.

It has been beautiful here today almost like summer. I never thought there was such a difference in climate as compared to the climate back home.

Flowers are blooming & trees are budding & the grass is getting greener. This country reminds me very much of back home about the middle of May.

I'm writing this in a kitchen of an old house. I guess you could call it a small farm house. It is 6:30 and the sun is just sinking behind a hill giving a promise of another nice day. Almost as soon as the sun goes down a chill comes over the air.

Yesterday I received a V mail from Lawrence & Jo dated March 5. I suppose Lawrence is in the Army now and you have probably had a letter from him. I'm anxiously waiting to hear from him too.

I wonder if Francis will like working for Gene. It will be a quite a change for him.

With the summer months coming it should be like a vacation to him. I would consider it a vacation anyway.

I hope Pa is sleeping better now than he has been. It must be hard to go to work after tossing & turning all night.

I haven't been getting much mail lately. I know you have all been writing but it probably is held up or something.

You asked me to please request something in my next letter. Honestly there is nothing I want just now. Nothing you could send.



I'll close now hoping you are all well. I'm fine.

Loving Son

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford".

P.S. You will receive my allotment money up to and including March 31<sup>st</sup>. I'll make out another one as soon as I make my rating back.

April 1, 1945

[Envelope: Six-cent airmail stamp; Via Air Mail; APO postmarked April 6, 1945; censor-stamped and signed. Pvt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230 c/o P.M. NY., NY. Stationery: Two small plain sheets, four sides, in pencil.]

Germany

Easter Sunday

*Dear folks*

Finally I have time to write and believe me I have a lot of writing to do. I will answer about four letters with this one. I have received two from Mildred Feb. 4 – March 10 with the pictures of Marilyn and Eugene, and two very nice letters from Helen and yours, Ma of March 14. Also got Jo's V-mail of March 5 or have I already told you about it.

I kind of thought that Lawrence would be put in the Army all along.

I was very sorry to hear about Gene Nerney.. He was a very good man and everyone will miss him a lot. I was just thinking about him the other day. I remember when I used to go to the store for eggs and he used to ask me what kind of eggs I wanted rooster eggs or hens eggs. He was always fond of children, and always seemed to find time to play around with them no matter how busy he was.

Speaking of eggs – this morning I had about 6 or 7 fried eggs imagine that – fresh eggs on Easter morning. Very lucky, eh? I think I will eat 6 more later on.

I got to Mass and Holy Communion this morning and we had a good sermon first sermon we have had for some time. The civilians had their Mass at 10 – high Mass and we waited for them to finish then we went into the church and our chaplain said Mass. There are just as many Catholic churches in this part of Germany as there were at the border, and just as many crucifixes along the roads just like France & Belg. I used to wonder if there were any chaplains in the German Army I never thought there were any Catholics in the Army but I've heard it is about half & half of course the Nazis are not Catholic neither are the protestants – just plain Nazis.

Last Sunday a quite a few miles from here we got to Mass too.

I suppose the papers are full of news back home now and you probably know more about what is going on than I do. Probably hard for you to believe that but it is true.

You mentioned "Banco" Lamay being in the Merchant Marines I always thought he was in the Air Corps.

This morning I saw an old "Town Crier" I had to laugh he had a bicycle and his bell. A few people gathered around and he jabbered something to them and took off to another section of town.

It is mid afternoon here and I suppose you are in church now.

Love to all

*Clifford*

I just got your letter of Mar. 11 & package.



*... "This morning I saw an old "Town Crier" I had to laugh he had a bicycle and his bell. A few people gathered around and he jabbered something to them and took off to another section of town." ... as written in this letter above.*

April 4, 1945

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail stamp, Via Air Mail; postmarked APO April 6, 1945; censor-stamped and signed. Pvt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY., NY. Stationery: two small plain sheets, three sides; in pencil.]

Germany

*Dear folks*

I have time to write again although I don't have much to say.

I just wrapped up a package for Helen & Edna. Some perfume I had a fellow get for me in Paris. I addressed the parcel to Helen. They can argue over who gets which bottle. I don't know which one is the best. One is Arpège and the other is the next best to Schnell #5. Those names don't mean much to me but they are both very good perfumes.

I wish I had another another box and some paper I would send some German belts & buckles to you. I wish I could send one to all my friends but wrapping them is the problem. I would like to send Johnnie a German rifle too. It is permissible. I just found out. I have smashed a lot of rifles by running over them with my tank. I didn't know I could send them home. I'll pick one up again though I have a number of pistols but no luger yet. I never have looked very hard for one to tell you the truth. When we get the chance to pick things like that up we don't feel in the mood. There is usually something more important to worry about.

I wonder what kind of weather you are having back home now. It hasn't been too bad here I do hope by summer time this whole mess will be over with. We have seen all kinds of nationalities of people in the last few days. Russian, French Belgians, Poles, Italians, Hungarians, Dutch, and of course plenty of Germans. Most of those other nationalities were forced laborers. I guess they have been pushed around a quite a bit. We freed many prisoners of war from those countries.

I don't know what else to say I am fine and living in a house one of the few that weren't bombed or burned out.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

April 20, 1945

[Envelope: Pvt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 T.D. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY; Stamped and Signed]

Germany

*Dear Father*

You no doubt have been very worried about me this last couple of weeks. I think the last time I wrote was back at Paderborn. We have come a long way since then, believe me.

I have been receiving your letters pretty regularly. I believe the last one was dated April 2<sup>nd</sup> or thereabouts.

I don't remember what was in all of your letters and I don't have all of them here with me. You would laugh if I told you how I lost them. I can laugh now, but it wasn't funny then. I received Whitcomb's March "Optimeter" some time ago but as yet I haven't had time to look at it.

I have seen many things since I crossed the Rhine, some of them were almost unbelievable sights.

I haven't seen anything about the 3<sup>rd</sup> Armd. in the Stars & Stripes lately. I don't know if we are on the secret list or what.

I guess maybe you did read about us getting that V-2 bomb factory intact. My Plt. Leader was one of the first to enter it. We found a guy there from Lawrence, Mass. He had a quite a story and was he glad to see us?

Yesterday I sent a German rifle and sword & bayonet and belt to Johnnie. I don't know if he will ever receive it or not. I hope the ammunition case I sent it in stays together. It is a heck of a job sending things home. I would like to send many things but it is too much work and I don't have time to do it anyway.

A couple of my very good friends have left for the States. They no doubt will stay there now. My old Plt. Leader Lt Silva was one of them – he kind of hated to leave us (almost cried), but it's a hard offer to turn down.

I am still a pvt., but soon I will be a Staff Sgt. I am doing the job now. Plt. Sgt. Due to that mix up I got into back in Belgium my rating is held up. You wouldn't understand so there is no use explaining it.

You said in one of your letters that someone told you not to send a package to Germany because we wouldn't get it. Tell her she is goofy. We get packages like anyone else and the service is surprisingly good too.

When you thought I was in Cologne I was just outside of the city. We could see the cathedral but I never got down to go into it. I haven't been to Mass since Easter Sunday.

It is a beautiful day here just (like) summer. The nights are still cold and the mornings too.

Right now I'm sitting in an orchard – the trees are blossoming and the leaves are getting pretty big.

I have been receiving letters from Dottie right along. I haven't written to her in a long time. She must be worried or at least I suppose she is anyway.

I'll bet it is swell back home now.

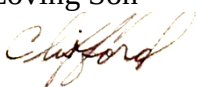
You wanted me to request something in my next letter. There really isn't anything I want, honest. The only thing we want and we are waiting for is the collapse of Germany. It may be a long time yet but it sure looks like it should be soon.

I heard the Russians have jumped off again. I hope they drive right up to our lines. I'll kiss the first one I see. They are probably saying the same thing about us.

Well I'll close and try and write to Dottie.

Best regards to all,

Loving Son

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford".



April 23, 1945

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail stamp; APO postmarked April 27, 1945; censor-stamped and signed. Pvt. C. B. O'Connor, Co. B. 703 TK. DES., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY., NY. Stationery: Two small plain sheets, four sides, blue ink.]

Enclosure: Postcard-sized American Red Cross Mother's Day card with logo of 3AD and "Always Remembers Mother," signed *Loving Son, Clifford.*]

Germany

Note at top left, "I sent some flowers to you Ma did you ever get them?"

*Dear folks*

They gave us a Mother's Day card to send home so I may as well write a letter and put in with it. I have time to write – it is fairly quiet here now, and believe me the morale is very high. We are all feeling in the highest of spirits. It looks like this war is finally coming to an end. I wish I could hear the news now. I'll bet the "big picture" looks good. The Russians are not far away and I guess they are going strong. I admire them and I suppose they feel the same way about us.

I am writing this from what appears to have been a Gestapo headquarters or something of that nature. I never saw so many swastika banners. I think there are enough of them to decorate every city in Germany. I have a nice big flag about 10 feet long I'll send it to the States when I get time to wrap it up, and I think I'll have plenty of time to myself very soon.

It seems too good to be true, honestly I can hardly believe it. If I have to stay over here for any length of time after the cessation of hostilities that is (organized hostilities) I think I will take up some sort of a correspondence course. This reminds me very much of finishing high school. I didn't know just what I wanted to do, and I still don't I guess a lot of us are in the same boat. Speaking of boats I hope the next boat I get on will be riding on a compass set due west and stop at New York, and then I hope that will be my last long boat ride. It would be swell to get home this summer it is a fantastic dream maybe, but they can't stop us from dreaming.

I haven't written to Lawrence as yet but I plan to do to as soon as possible. I hope he isn't sent to the C.B.I. He probably will be though. I hate to think of going there but if I could take his place I think I would. I have never had the chance to be married and have a family but I think I know how he feels about the whole thing.

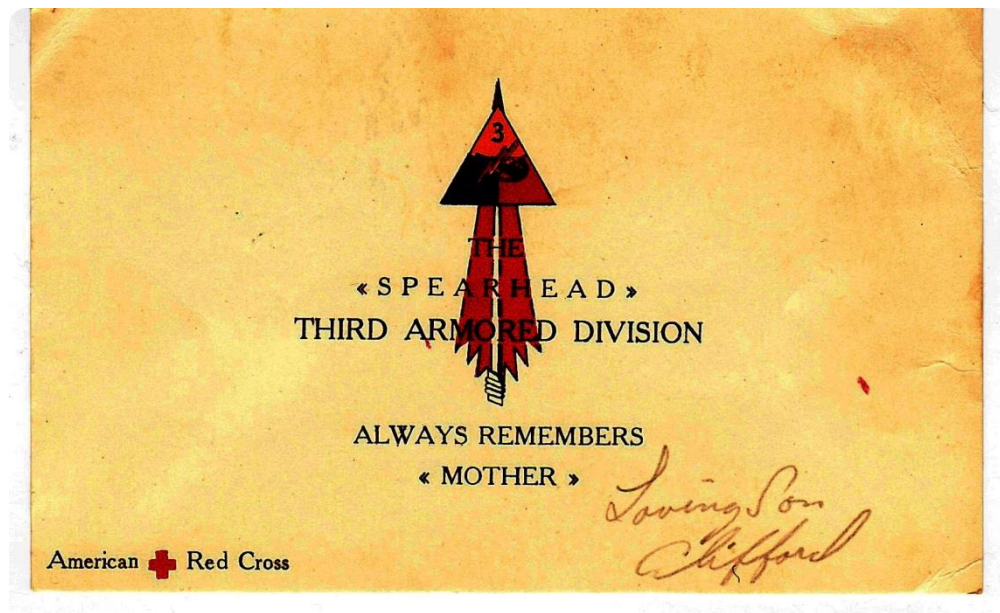
I am still acting platoon Sgt. but as yet I do not have a staff Sgt. rating, and personally I do not care if I can help my platoon by doing this job I'll do it regardless of the rating. After today my rating will not be held up on account of that accident back in Belgium. But there are a lot of other things that might hold it up. The Army you know. I would like to get the rating just to please you folks I know you felt terrible about me being "busted." I know you will feel better to know that I am doing this job even as a pvt. Right?

I do a lot of riding in a wheeled vehicle now. It seems funny not to be in a tank. I have ridden thousands of miles in a tank, no kidding.

The weather here is very typical for April, raining one minute and the sun shining the next. As long as I'm inside it can rain all it wants to. Will write again soon.

Loving Son

*Clifford*



***Note: The flag Clifford referred to in this letter is now encased along with his other memorabilia in the museum operated by the American Legion in Windsor Locks, Ct. [see Epilogue (KOB).]***

April 26, 1945

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail stamp on airmail envelope; APO postmarked April 20, 1945; censor-stamped and signed. Pvt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY., NY. Stationery: Two small plain sheets, four sides, in pencil.]

Germany

*Dear folks*

Today I received your letter of April 15 and Mildred's of April 13, good service eh? I have been very busy these last few days but not busy the way we used to be. I mean fighting. I am now in a very safe area believe it or not. It seems wonderful to be back here no noise only peace and quiet and sunshine. Today I heated some water and took a good bath in an old wooden tub. I got the first layer of dirt off at least and I feel like a million again. Today we drew lots for a trip to the states, a very good friend of mine won. He is very excited and doesn't know just where to begin to get ready he has his stuff scattered all over the room, picking out this and that to take with him. I think I forgot to mention in my last letter to Mildred that I had received her package. I was at a road block on the Autobahn highway to Berlin at that time.

You said something about Lawrence getting out of the hospital. I didn't know anything about him even going into one. Hope it was nothing serious.

I still haven't written to him I should have plenty of time to write as soon as we get settled.

It has been beautiful here today just like summer. I suppose it is the same at home. Yesterday I saw a very beautiful place. It was the home of a Baron & Baroness. I was really taken up with the whole place. It must be nice to live that way all the time. Those are the people I suppose who really profit by wars and of course manufacturers.

Joe Converse drove by here yesterday however I didn't see him to speak to.

I was sorry to hear that you had been sick and I hope you are feeling better now.

My rating hasn't come through yet but probably will soon.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

April 30, 1945

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail stamp; APO postmarked May 2, 1945; censor-stamped and signed. Pvt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY., N.Y. Stationery: Three small plain sheets, six sides, in black ink.]

Germany

*Dear Folks*

To nite I have time to write I have some letters here from you dating from April 4 to April 18.

I'm glad that Lawrence is out of the hospital. I pity him. I know how he must feel. I was very lucky during all my training. I did have to go to the hospital once but only for about 1-1/2 days, and another time in Texas I was in a hospital tent for a few days but I was very lucky compared to some.

We are not doing any fighting now and haven't for a few days and we don't expect to do any more here. At least I hope we don't. Everything seems to be well in hand and I guess you people back there are thinking the war is over and you probably have been thinking that way for some time now. We have been hearing some wild rumors too over here but now we have a radio and it seems good to get the news and hear music.

About our General Rose he was a very good man and will be long remembered as a very good leader. I don't see how you could even think of such a thing as our whole div. being captured, Ma. It is ridiculous. Those dirty hunns are afraid of this Div. they have felt its sting many times. Gen. Rose was always going up to the front to see how things were going on. It is a shame he could not be alive to see the end of this dirty stinking mess over here. He had a lot to do with this coming end. And the same for Roosevelt.

I haven't written much in the last few weeks, and I'll bet you have been terribly worried about me, but I am just as well as ever feeling "tops". It seems that since I have had this job as platoon Sgt. I don't have as much time to myself as I did. Of course things have been happening quite fast lately and we have been doing a lot of moving around. I promise myself I'll write as soon as I get settled but I haven't been settled down for some time. I do expect this time I'll have some time to spend writing and doing little odd jobs I need to do.

Right now I'm in a little room by myself with a fire going. It is just cool enough to make a fire feel good. The electricity is on in this town and I have a swell bright bulb in this room. It works much better than a little candle, and I can feel safe to take off my clothes even my shoes and pants and enjoy a good rest.

It doesn't seem possible that the war is nearly over. I didn't think I would feel this way about it. It is very hard to explain, honestly I just can't realize it. There is no noise out side no flashes and bangs and other crazy wild sounds all I can hear is beautiful music from the radio in the next

room. I can only thank God and you all for your prayers that I am still here able to enjoy this just as I was before I came over here. I was never wounded never scratched by a bullet or shell.

I am not in the mood to write to night and it is taking me a long time to write this. I only want to take it easy and rest and clean up and keep cleaning up soap and water do wonders. I never used to care very much for the uniform back in the States, but I would love to put on a nice clean, pressed pair of trousers and a jacket like we used to wear then and a shirt and neck tie and a pair of low shining shoes. Of course. I would like much better to be putting on a civilian suit but that's impossible right now.

Oh, yes I nearly forgot to ask you didn't you receive any flowers from me for Easter, Ma? I sent some to you and Dottie. I'm glad Dottie got them but I wish you had received yours too. Maybe they will deliver them Mother's Day I hope so any way.

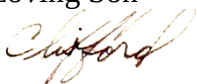
I had planned to write to Dottie to nite but it is real late and I have to be up early in the morning. We have reveille now imagine that. I had stood it so long I've forgotten how to spell it.

A friend of mine was lucky enough to go to the "Riviera" rest camp in southern France. I would love to go there a G.I. lives like a king there for 7 days they say.

Well I must bring this mixed up mess of words to a close and go to bed I mean bed too. I have a cot to sleep on, and believe it or not the same old bed roll I bought away back in Louisiana. It is still in one piece too.

An announcement was just made over the radio that Himmler is working on a new peace plan the rat.

Loving Son



Thanks a lot for the pictures. You and Pa look swell. I had to look twice to recognize the two girls that turned out to be Edna & Helen my two kid sisters whow! Have they changed? I'll never know them when I go back. I have been looking at them for about a half an hour.

May 1, 1945

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail stamp; APO postmarked May 3, 1945; censor-stamped and signed. S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY., NY. Stationery: Single small plain sheet, both sides, in pencil.] *{Note: In my original, random transcribing of these letters, this is the last one I've typed from the original – just after typing Wendell's and retyping Bill's (Kathryn typed Bill's when we first started this project up in the 'little room' over a year ago – I had put Wendell's and Bill's on the bottom of the stack on purpose. Of Dad's, there are 270 letters dated during the years 1942, 1943, 1944, and 1945. KOB, July 16, 2006, in Fort Worth, TX}*

Germany

*Dear Father*

I don't have much to write about tonight and I don't feel like writing anyway so this will be short.

I am now a Staff Sgt. Today I start out with a new slate. All the fines and other charges for that accident back in Belgium have been cleared up. My allotment should have kept coming to you up to and including March 31<sup>st</sup>. So I didn't lose too much out of it.

All the news on the radio sounds good on all the fronts. I'll bet everyone in the States is going wild.

I often said I would do this and that when the war was over but I guess it will be just another day for us.

It has been swell here today. The sun is very nice. Some lilacs are out in full bloom here now. It is really beautiful country here no kidding.

Loving Son

*Clifford*



May 4, 1945

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail stamp on airmail envelope; censor-stamped and signed; APO postmarked May 7, 1945; S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN. A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY., NY., Stationery: Two small plain sheets, four sides, in pencil.]

Germany

Fri. Nite

*Dear folks*

It is quite late and I'm tired but I will write a few lines. Today I received a letter from Jo, Mildred Helen and Edna & you, Ma. It is not really right to answer all of them with just this one letter but that's exactly what I am going to do. I may get some time to write this week end. I still haven't written to Lawrence as yet. I'm glad Helen has her license. It must make it much more handy for you Ma. I had to laugh when I read the part she wrote about you being afraid when she goes down the hill by the hospital and I don't blame you. I think I would have one hand on the door latch ready to hop out myself. All kidding aside though I'm glad she feels proud driving around. I am very proud of her graduating pro merito, whow! She is really on the ball and I'm also proud of Edna doing so well in the hospital. I'm very anxious to see them they seemed to have changed so much these last 2 years. I wonder if I have changed that much.

I have a new pair of shoes and a pressed pair of trousers for tomorrow and my web equipment is all cleaned up it feels good to be that way again.

I was very glad to hear that Lawrence had gained 11 pounds apparently he only weighed about 150 lbs. when he went in. I always thought of him as being much heavier than that. I don't know what I weigh now. The last time I weighed myself was in England I think it was 11 stones & 7 pounds or about 161 or so. I think I am about the same. I'm still a little "shorty" though.

I just had a couple of doughnuts the Red Cross Clubmobile brought around this P.M. First we have had since oh I don't know when. I was thinking how good a nice cold glass of fresh milk would go now. I have not had a drink of fresh milk since I left the good old U.S.A.

I'm feeling fine still living inside and sleeping on a cot which feels just fine.

Think I'll crawl into that old bed roll and try to dream of you all.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

May 8, 1945

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail envelope, additional colored stamp imprint left, but stamp gone; APO postmarked May 10, 1945; censor stamped and signed. S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, U.S. Army. Stationery: Two small plain sheets, four sides, in pencil.]

Germany*Dear Father*

Well today is the day I guess. We have been waiting so long for this and when it comes – I don't know just what to say. I suppose you can't enjoy this as much as you would if you knew I was safe. Well I am, and have been for a quite a while.

This is a beautiful day here just like summer. I am very tired and would like to go out and lay in the sun all day, but I guess I can't today.

Yesterday we had a little fun we got the good news then about 9:15 a.m. and we drove our tanks through a number of towns with the sirens going full blast boy the civilians were about scared to death. I'll bet the hens won't lay and the cows won't give milk for a week. The tanks make enough noise let alone the sirens. I had a good laugh out of it all. No kidding. I don't think the civilians could figure out just what was going on but some of them must have had a good idea what was up.

We are all so thankful this thing is over we can't put it into words, but I guess you know how we feel.

I hear that things are really popping in the States. Everything is open house in N.Y.C. Whow what a time I'd like to be in on it. I feel sorry for the boys in the Pacific, and I hope that war doesn't last too much longer. That war is still going on and that thought keeps jumping up in our minds and it kind of spoils everything. When our entire air forces go to work on those yellow – they will know just what the Allies can do.

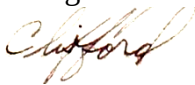
***... "King George is going to speak tonight and I guess he will give the official announcement that this mess is over here." ...***

It is chow time now and I'll have to quit – We are getting very good food. Plenty of meat & potatoes. Boy those spuds sure taste good. Spuds are the one thing I really missed when we went out on an operation. The 10-in-1 and K. & C.'s rations do not contain potatoes.

I haven't heard from you or Dottie in a few days.

Yesterday I dreamed I was home again. It is nothing new I do it real often, but now it seems I do have a chance of making it.

Loving Son

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping underline.

May 10, 1945

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail envelope; APO postmarked May 13, 1945; censor-stamped and signed. S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY., NY. Stationery: Single small plain sheet, both sides, in pencil.]

Germany

*Dear folks*

Received your letter of May 2<sup>nd</sup> today only took 7 days coming boy that is something.

I have been trying to get caught up on my letter writing and what a job it is. Every spare moment I have I spend with a pencil scribbling as fast as possible to my friends. I haven't written to Dottie yet and neither have I received any from her.

Anctil, Arsenault and I were figuring how we would spend our stay in the States last night – foolish of us to think about such things maybe, but it is fun to even think about it. If I do get there I think I'll spend the biggest part of my time with you just taking it easy, but maybe I'll be different all together and want to keep running around. It's like finishing school I tell you. I only wish it was finished for good, and it is or should I say was a rough school.

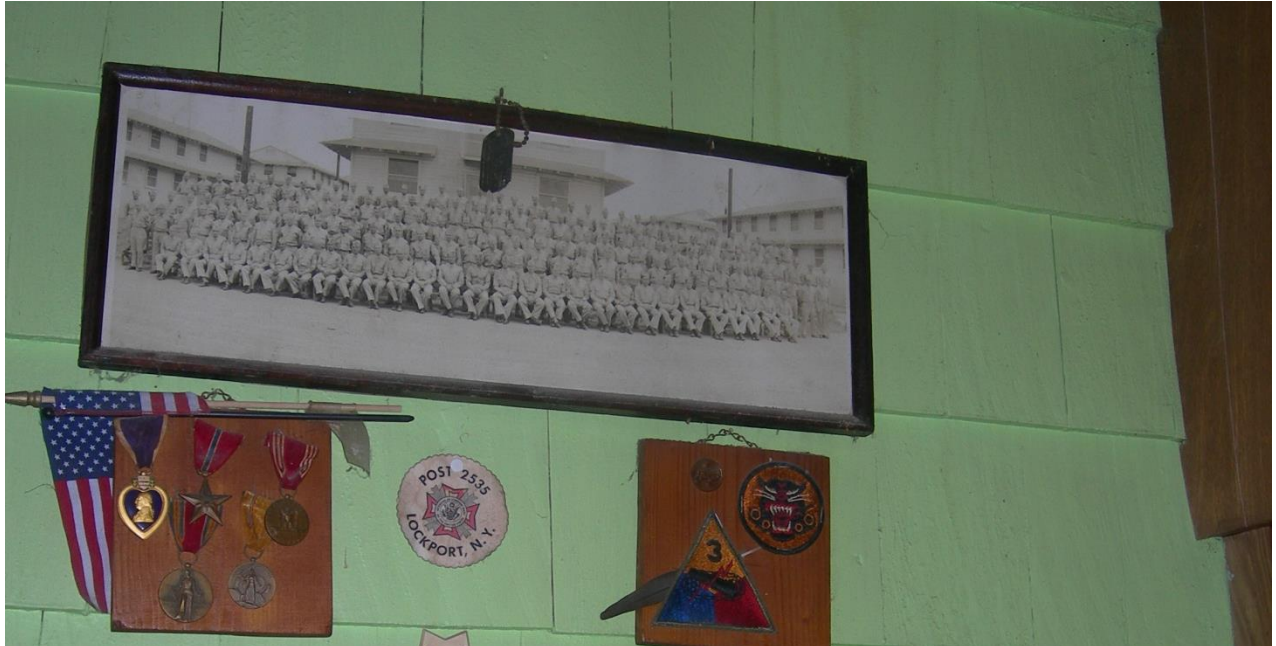
It has been beautiful here today just like summer.

Yesterday I had shower first for a long time I think Cologne was the last place. It felt very good. It was a long ride but I guess it was worth it.

You weren't very far off with your prediction of the end, Ma, were you?

Loving Son

*Clifford*



*Clifford's buddy and life-long friend, Eddie Arsenault. I took these pictures in breezeway of Eddie's home in Prospect, Ct., where he lived with his wife Connie and where they hosted Army reunions on many occasions through the years. Known to us as Uncle Eddie and Aunt Connie, they proudly served as Godparents for my brother Kenneth. [KOB]*

May 16, 1945

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail envelope; censor-stamped and signed; APO postmarked May 17, 1945. S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY. Stationery: Single long plain sheet, both sides, in pencil.]

Germany

*Dear Father*

Finally I can tell you where I am. I'm at Darmstadt directly south of Frankfurt. This city may have been nice at one time but now it is kaput all bombed, nearly flat in some sections. We are very fortunate and are living in a swell house honestly I wouldn't ask for anything nicer. Beautiful big rooms and lovely furniture, bath tub etc. running water electricity. It is amazing how they got the water lines repaired and the electricity back again. But I don't give a darn how they did it. They have it and I'm enjoying all the conveniences of home right now. No fooling. A radio is going now a swell band is swinging it out oh, boy what a life it is almost like a furlough just to relax. We have a lot of guard duty to do of course and I'm continuously figuring out a guard roster and patrols etc.

I have a room to myself with a sink with water a table to write on, a phone hooked up to the C.O. strictly garrison eh? This section of town wasn't hit bad and it must have been a strictly residential section and for people with money. The German people sure go for comfort. They are next to us as far as modern conveniences go.

**When we were pulled off the line we were at Dessau near the junction of the Elbe & Mulde river.** (*Ref. Chronology in Introduction.*) The Germans were very stubborn in that sector and insisted on fighting it out. Sometime I'll write and tell you about some of the places I saw. I do not feel like writing now. There are so many other things to do like cleaning up and cleaning up and cleaning up again it sure feels nice to be clean and have decent clothes on.

I suppose you are wondering just as I am as to what will happen to me next. I wish I could tell you. I do not know.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

I'm enclosing a little pamphlet to show how they work into religion even. I never saw this soldier. [Note: Enclosed in this letter was a religious picture/prayer card, in German, as described above. It resides now on loan from the family inside the display case of Clifford's artifact collection of World War II memorabilia in the military museum at Memorial Hall, Windsor Locks, Ct. I have described it on the inventory as a "memorial card for Nazi soldier, with relic of black serge shirt with Swastika emblem." This item was in one of the houses Clifford and his crew occupied at the end of the war. KOB]



May 20, 1945

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail envelope; no postmark date; censor-stamped and signed.  
S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY., NY.  
Stationery: Two sheets of onionskin, two sides, in pencil.]

Darmstadt, Germany

*Dear folks*

Got your letter of May 10, today. It made me so happy to know that you got a letter from me on V.E. day or rather the day after. I know I didn't write to anyone for a long time. Gee, it must be so hard on you folks when you don't get any letter for a long time. Of course you always keep thinking about the worst thing that could happen I know. Well the Good Lord and his Blessed Mother have seen me through it all I am very thankful. When I think back it seems impossible. Thanks to you all for your endless prayers. Today I got to Mass but was too late to go to confession. It was the first time I have gone to Mass since April 22 up near Dessau.

Your novena has been answered Ma and today they asked me to take 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt job, but I do not want it, and I won't take it unless I have to. I know I'm no man for the job. You see some will be going out of this outfit with higher points than I have, and a lot of jobs are open. The job I have now is plenty for me.

Today I'm all dressed up, pressed trousers and shirt (I did it, and not bad either) even shined shoes. Can you imagine an old pair of combat shoes shining. Whow!

It is beautiful here today. I'm trying to write this as fast as possible. I have to go somewhere very shortly. There are a lot of displaced persons camps here Polish, Italian, Russian and every other nationality imaginable. Some of them are pretty ragged (rugged) places. They have been treated like animals for so long they don't know what living a normal life is. I often think how wonderful it is the war never came to U.S.

I received Mildred's letter today also. It was written May 11. You people must have been terribly surprised at that snow storm.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

Yesterday I received your letter of May 6.

May 26, 1945

[Envelope: 6-cent airmail envelope; APO postmarked 27 May 1945. Other Nana's note on right side, "3 snapshots in here." S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN. A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY.NY, Stationery: Single onionskin sheet, folded into four sides; all four sides written, in pencil. Enclosures: Three b/w snapshots all taken on May 10, 1945 in Saubach, Germany – two with Nazi flag and one of town crier.

Darmstadt  
Germany

**No more censors hurray!**

*Dear folks*

It is Saturday afternoon and we have the afternoon off. Had an inspection this morning it seemed funny to stand an inspection after so long. I'll take all the G.I. stuff they can throw at us rather than go to the Pacific though.

As I stand now I have 84 points just lacking one lousy point, how about that. Kinda mean I think.

There are a million-one rumors going around here as they are everywhere else I guess.

Today I received Marilyn's letter of Mar 17. I haven't been getting much mail. I don't know what can be wrong. Haven't heard from Dottie in a long time. I guess the shock of the news of the war being over was too much for her. Either that or she has hooked up with some 4-F or something. I can't blame her if she does.

I'm enclosing a few pictures we took while we were at Saubach (saw back) a small town East of Hallē. In that picture #2, I was scratching my behind. I was wiping it with that lousy flag.



***Pictures taken at Ausbach, Germany, on May 10, 1945. Clifford far right in picture on the left; the one on the right appears on the website [www.tankdestroyer.net](http://www.tankdestroyer.net).  
(See Epilogue for additional information)***

It is beautiful here this afternoon the sun is real warm, but a cool breeze is blowing. There is a cherry tree just outside of my window and the cherries are getting ripe already. Some of them are good to eat now. We are planning on making some pies.

We have had ice cream a couple of times since we have been here. The cooks mix it up and send it to be frozen. It tastes real good.

I went to a show the other day "Junior Miss" a Broadway show I enjoyed it. Haven't been to a movie since we were near Cologne. They have movies here but I never got around to go yet.

If we stay here for a long time I'm planning on studying a little bit. There is suppose to be a big educational program opening up soon for the G.I.s over here, and I think I'll take advantage of it. We are all mixed up and don't know what to plan on. One minute you hear one thing and the next minute you hear just the opposite. I would like to know just what will happen to us in the next few months.

Well it is chow time and you know me.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

There is a German soldier living right next door to us. It seems strange to see them running around without taking a shot at them.

May 27, 1945

[Envelope: 6 cent stamp, U.S. Army Postal Service, May 29 1945, S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor, 11064771, Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY]

Darmstadt Germany

*Dear folks*

Received your letters of May 13 & 17 & Edna's of May 18. Also the Sentinel. It made me very happy to hear that you had received the flowers, Ma. If I remember right that was when I ordered them for. Some of my letters must have sounded awfully screwy to you folks sometimes. When I think back of some of the times I used to try and write I just sit and wonder how they sounded to the reader.

This morning I got to Mass at 11 o'clock but didn't get to Communion. We used to be able to receive Communion anytime, after eating even, but now it must be different. Anyway we had breakfast and didn't know for sure if we could go or not. I haven't been to receive this month even once and this is the month I should be going very often. But it isn't my fault.

Guess I told you I have 84 points. If they ever decide to drop that critical score I'll be in, but until then I'll just have to sweat it out.

When you spoke of getting Lawrence a bed roll it made me think of my old sack. Remember I told you how I sewed in extra blankets and I ripped out the zipper and sewed up the head end of it and used the foot end for my head – well I'm still using it and that old sack is still good – no shrapnel holes through it either.

One day I strapped it on the left side of my tank turret instead of the right where I used to always keep it. And that day or should I say days we received the worst artillery we ever had - all the equipment on the right side of the tank was cut & ripped but the stuff on the left side was o.k., including my old bed roll. When I beat the dust out of it is like beating a rug, whow! I used insecticide powder on it a couple of times a week just in case. If I was Lawrence I'd get one as soon as possible. The Army issued some back in the bulge but I gave mine away – it wasn't any where near as good as my own. The issue type are o.k. for the summer time though. A lot of boys will have some funny stories about being all zipped up in one and having to get out in a big hurry.

Well I have a lot of writing to do so I'll close.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

June 2, 1945

[Envelope: 2 cent envelope with 6 cent airmail stamped over; A.P.O. postmark June 8, 1945. Other Nana's annotation in lower right "3 enlarged snapshots"). S/Sgt C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B 703 T.D. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY] Enclosures were three black and white snapshots of tank and crew, with identifications and dated Sept. ? 1944. These pictures were always among Dad's prized possessions – one Christmas he had enlargements made and sent to all – the one he used to make copies from had a crease across it, patched up as well as the photography process could – it was the one he'd sent "Dottie" as above, married to Cliff on August 24, 1946.]

Darmstadt, Germany

*Dear folks*

Nearly time I wrote again I guess. I have received two letters from you, Ma, May 21 & 24 and today I got one from Mildred of May 23.

I got a letter from Lawrence the other day and I answered it today.

I'm enclosing some pictures of myself & crew - I had them enlarged, it took about 3 months for them to come. I thought I had lost the negatives but I had only misplaced them. These pictures are the same as the ones I sent to Dottie.

I had to laugh when I read that part in your letter about you thinking I was in Le Havre waiting for shipment home. I do not plan on going home for some time. You people think all of us can go home all at once I guess. That's impossible. The only ones that left our Co. so far are the lucky guys with about 95 or 100 points and they are still on the Continent I'll bet. Those holding 85 points are still with us but plan to leave some time along. I guess I told you I have 84 points. By the way you no doubt have been hearing a lot of rumors about us 1<sup>st</sup> Army going to CBI and all that - 3<sup>rd</sup> Arm'd Div is no longer with the first Army – we are now in the 9<sup>th</sup> Army. General Collins VII Corp Commander 1<sup>st</sup> Army really hated to see us go. He gave us an inspiring little talk not long ago. I guess we really did do a good job so far.

Today we had an inspection again. Just like back in the States. My platoon billets were the cleanest and neatest in the whole battalion. The Colonel said this house was nicer than his own home. I have always been very strict about keeping our living quarters clean. Good bringing up.

They tell us we can go for trips around here for a distance of 100 miles. I'm going to try and get a fishing trip organized. I would like to go down near Switzerland but that is out of our limits I guess. They should do something like that for us. We can't do anything around here – no fraternizing and same movie plays for a week. They try to keep us busy just nagging about maintenance of our vehicles, etc. People in the states probably think we just go to school and rest the rest of the time but that is baloney. No schools have started here yet, and I'll be glad when

they do. Our afternoons are for athletics mostly but sometimes you just don't feel like playing ball, etc. We have to anyway – no fun.

Oh well soldiers will always kick I don't care how good we have it.

I'm pretty satisfied here though.

Loving Son

*Clifford*



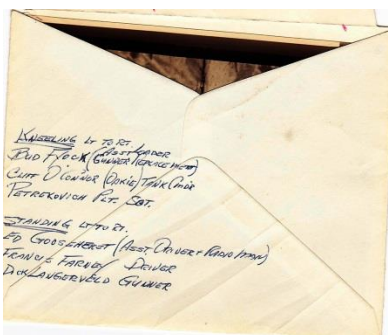
***“Buddies”***

***My Tank Destroyer and Crew, Just East of Breinig, Germany***

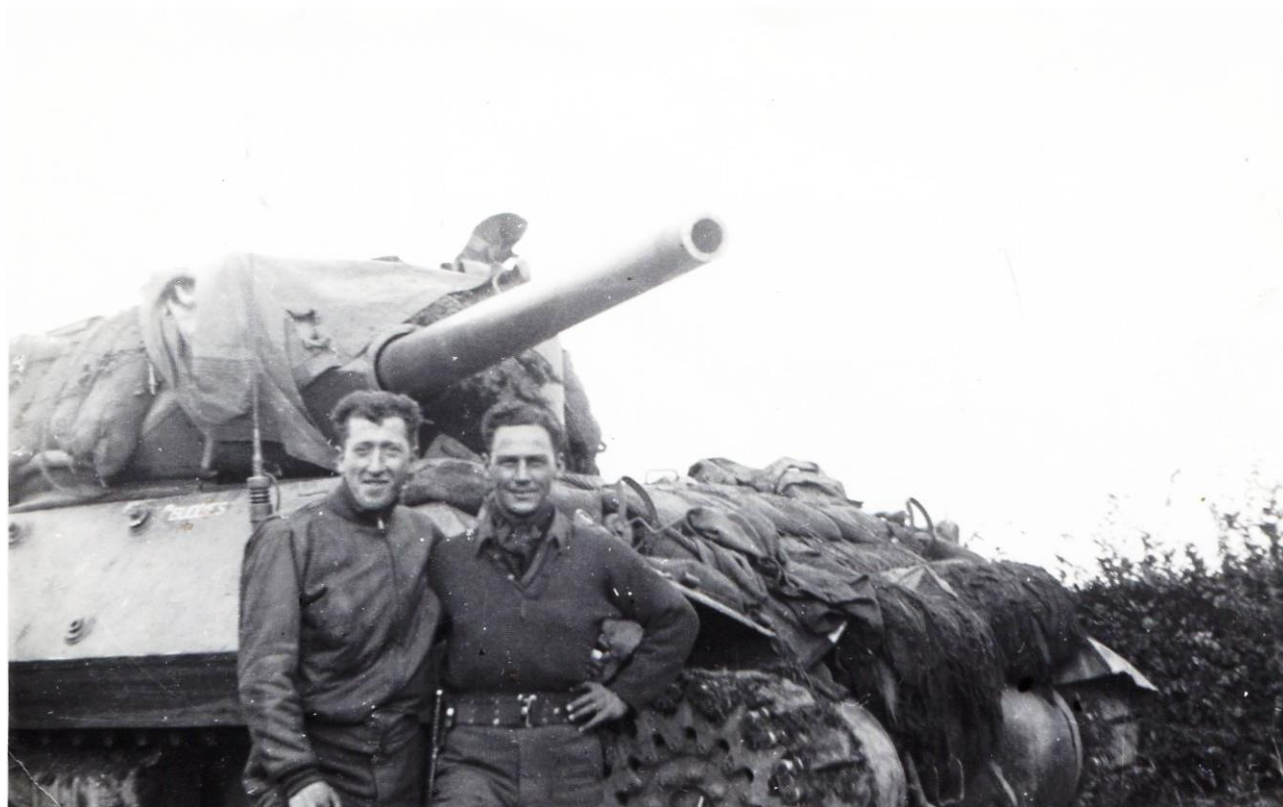
***October 1944***

***(Kneeling, l-r, Bud Fyock (Asst. Leader, Gunner Replacement); Cliff O'Connor (Oakie), Tank Cmdr.; Petrovich, Plt. Sgt.; Standing l-r, Ed Goosherst, Asst. Driver and Radioman; Francis Farney, Driver; and Dick Langerveld, Gunner)***

***Envelope Containing Original Negative and Identifications:***







*Cliff O'Connor (right) with Tony Cimino*



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*The World War II Letters of Clifford B. O'Connor*

June 6, 1945

*First Anniversary of D-Day, Invasion of Normandy*

[Envelope: 6 cent airmail stamp and 2 cent postage envelope. S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771 Co. B. 703 TK. DES. BN., A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY]

Darmstadt, Germany

*Dear Folks*

Today is a holiday day. It is a wonder the Army would give us a day off but I guess they feel as though they really should. **A year ago today was a bloody one for a lot of boys.**

I got up feeling like a chicken this morning – made a quick patrol and enjoyed the ride - the air is nice and fresh early in the morning. Every morning I see hundreds of civilians on bicycles – they get out real early – I don't know where they all go but they all seem to be in a hurry. There are more bicycles here in Germany than there were in England and that is saying something. There are not many civilian cars around. I always wondered while we were driving when we would see all the automobiles all these nice big highways were built for, but one never saw the autos except for the ones the Air Corps spotted and made a short job of. The Air Corps really did wonders in the war, and boy were those Huns afraid of our old P-47 "Thunderbolts" - they called them Jabos (Yabos). And in their estimation all American pilots are butchers and slaughterers. Many civilians of course were killed in different attacks, but that is something that can't be helped. But I suppose they can't understand that. I used to feel sorry for the Belgian civilians in the bulge when we used to attack a town - miraculously though, not many were killed. They would go into their cellars and say the Rosary. If the Germans would decide to stay in a town and fight it out it was tough luck for the civilians.

Yesterday I received your letter of May 27. I don't get much mail lately and when I get a letter it really makes me feel good.

I sent Edna & Helen \$25 a piece yesterday. My allotment will be coming again in July.

I'm still in Germany and still living in this swell house. The old lady and old man that used to live here are out puttering around in the garden behind the house, watering their flowers and picking cherries and strawberries so we won't get them.

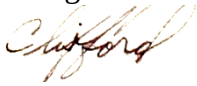
Every morning she beats us out there to the strawberry patch – it makes me laugh to see her. I get a kick out of the old man – he goes out to our trash can and fishes around in there for our cigarette butts. He is a real distinguished looking old gent and looks so funny poking in a trash can. Their pride is cut down a couple of notches.

In Stolberg the civilians used to dunk down into our garbage cans after small pieces of meat in the slop. Sometimes go right in up to their elbows also for bread all slopped up with garbage. They were really hurting for food then. I don't know what these people eat here – there is nothing for sale anywhere. I did see a few fresh vegetables being sold the other morning, but that was all.

This is a typical summer morning and how I would like to be home enjoying it.

I laid awake last night for hours just thinking. I am just beginning to fully realize that dear Wendell is gone.

Loving Son



June 8, 1945

[Envelope: 2 cent envelope; 6 cent airmail overstamp; A.P.O. postmark June 9, 1945, S/Sgt C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Co. B. 703 T.D. BN, A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY]

Darmstadt, Germany

*Dear father*

Received your letter of May 31 yesterday telling about Wesley Morris having 3 bronze stars. He certainly doesn't have any bronze stars. He no doubt has the battle stars which are little bronze stars that go on our theater ribbon. He probably thinks they are bronze stars. It is just like I told you in one of my letters – everyone that was even in the vicinity of the battle gets a star (unfair to frontline troops). I know a guy who wears 7 battle stars and he never has heard an enemy gun or even an enemy shell. For instance for the battle of Normandy everyone that was in Normandy any time from June 6 up to some date in July got a star whether he saw the enemy or not.

You seem to be under the impression that we will continue to get points but we do not. The point system goes from Sept 16 1940 to May 12 1945 and that's all, after that nothing counts - that is, in this theater, maybe in the Pacific the points are still counting I don't know.

I hope you can get enough meat & sugar to get along on. It is a shame I think U.S. is hurting for meat we must be feeding half of the world now. I would think they would make sure they fed U.S. citizens first. We don't get any too much meat either but we get enough. I weighed myself the other day maybe I told you I weighed 75 kilos or 165 lbs. I am not thin by any means.

It has been raining here quite frequently lately. The sun will be shining nice then all of a sudden it will start raining.

At night we can see heat lightning away off in the distance. It seems funny to see the big flashes and know it is only lightning and harmless. I guess it will always seem funny to me now.

The mail is in. I hope I get some today. My pen is kaput again. I received Helen's invitation to the commencement exercises for a week from today. Can't quite make it.

I just finished dinner and I read the Stars & Stripes and I feel a little better. The critical score will be out in three weeks. It doesn't say the score will be dropped, but in order to release 2,000,000 men I think it will have to be lower than 85. I have 84 as you know, and I think I stand a very good chance. I hope to be home by this winter.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

June 10, 1945

[Envelope: 2 cent envelope; 6 cent airmail-stamped; A.P.O. postmark June 12, 1945, S/Sgt C. B. O'Connor, Co. B. 703 TK DES BN, A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY, NY]

Darmstadt, Germany

*Dear Folks*

Received your letter of June 4 today – it certainly got here fast, only 6 days, imagine that. Helen's commencement card came in 8 days with a regular 3 cent stamp – that was good too.

By this time you have received some of my later letters and know that I have 84 points now. We haven't been officially told as yet that we get two additional stars but we are almost certain that we will get them. Those two stars are for the Ardennes and Central Europe and we certainly participated in both and I don't mean maybe.

The Stars & Stripes paper looks good today. The critical score will be out soon and it seems from all indications that it will be lower than 85. Now that don't (sic) mean I'll be on my way home in a month or so. So you can tell Mildred to rest at ease on that phone call. I only wish I could be giving her a ring in the near future, but as I see it I won't be home until this winter. I have a date to keep in Sept. in the States – Sept. 1945 but I don't think I'll make it. Last year while sweating out some artillery shells in Mansback Germany a friend of mine agreed with me on a party that we would have September 19, 1945 in Conn. He and his girl friend and Dottie & me. It doesn't look like I'll make it though.

I'm glad Johnny got the case I sent him. Those things I sent him were all battered up. I sent them from a little town just south of Dessau near the Autobahn highway – Lingeneau was the name of it. I packed the case while on a roadblock position on the Autobahn, 81 kilometers from Berlin.

That rifle is the regular German army rifle and is not anywhere near as good as ours. It is very accurate but for all around purposes it does not compare to our M-1 Garand rifle. Lawrence is no doubt armed with an M-1 and it is heavier than the one I sent Johnnie. The one I sent is an old model – the Germans have another one a little different. Many of the Germans were armed with light automatic weapons – they were something fierce.

I told you in one letter that I am now in the 9<sup>th</sup> Army. I hope you don't think that Joe Converse was transferred alone. Our whole Div. is now in the 9<sup>th</sup> Army.

I see the poor old 1<sup>st</sup> Army is going to catch it again in the Pacific.

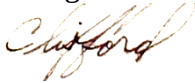
When I started writing this I never looked at the other side of the paper and now I find out it is a piece of scrap paper I used. I'm not going to rewrite the letter so I guess this explains all the names you see on the back page of the letter.

Guarding these displaced person camps is a pain in the neck but a necessity - if they ever got out and got at some of these Germans a lot of blood would be shed I'm afraid. Most of the Russians have been sent away and some Italians and Polish have gone too. These people act like animals, no fooling. I feel sorry for them.

There are an awfully lot of marriages in these camps lately especially the Polish. I can't understand it. They all live together anyway. There must be something behind it.

I guess I have blabbed on long enough. I went to Holy Communion this morning.

Loving Son

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Clifford".

Per comments above, the back side of page 2 has been crossed through but legible under the top line "Guard - Polish D.P. Camp #3 & 4" are names and dates for guard duties - also noted is the Russian D.P. and A.M.G. Warehouse.



June 16, 1945

[Envelope: 2 cent envelope with 6 cent stamped over; postmark June 17, 1945, Return address area torn off – *who took it to write letter back ?(KOB)*; Stationery of The Third Armored “SPEARHEAD” Division]

Frankfurt, Germany

Saturday morning

*Dear Folks*

I got your letter of June 6 yesterday also got Johnnie's of the same date.

I'm up here at Frankfurt and will be here for a few more days. The outfit is still at Darmstadt and I think we will be there for some time to come at least everything seems to point that way.

I was sorry to hear about Patrick leaving for the Navy. It don't (sic) seem possible but of course all those kids have grown up considerably since I left. I'm glad he is getting into the Navy though - it is a much cleaner and healthier life. They have everything better than the Army . Of course the Air Corps is the best but the Amy is the worst. There are a lot of good jobs in the Navy. I hope he uses his head now and gets a good one. Sometimes there isn't much a guy can do about it though.



*Cliff had just heard that his first cousin Pat Cleary had left for the Navy when he wrote this letter home. Today, March 10, 2015, as I complete this project, I've just heard that Pat passed away this afternoon. Ever a patriot, he is shown here in a parade sometime around 2000. He was faithful as both family and friend to Clifford. May they both rest in God's peace. [KOB]*

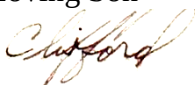
You said Ray Teja was around with a cane - what happened to him? I thought he was up in the Aleutians. He must be crazy if he wants to go back into it again. I don't think anyone who has seen much action wants to go back at it.

I pity Lawrence in that terrible sultry heat. I know what that is. I can't stand the heat either. It is very nice here now – typical summer weather.

I suppose Billy C. will be getting home soon. The boys are moving from here very very slowly and probably will continue to for a while. Everything is still all messed up.

I got to Mass and Holy Communion last Sunday - guess I told you. I hope I get to Mass tomorrow.

Loving Son

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford", written in a cursive style.

June 17, 1945

[Envelope: 6 cent airmail stamp; postmark June 18, 1945; S/Sgt C. B. O'Connor 11064771  
Co. B. 703 TK DES. BN. A.P.O. 230 c/o P.M. NY, NY]

Frankfurt, Germany

Sunday nite

*Dear Father*

It is about 9 o'clock and I soon will be going to bed but I thought I must write to you today. I just found out today is Father's Day and I want to wish you many happy returns of the day, Pa, the best old dad in the world. If it was as nice back home as it has been here today you sure had a good one.

I received Edna's letter of June 6<sup>th</sup> and as usual I got a few good healthy laughs out of it.

Today I got news that my old outfit the good old 703<sup>rd</sup> T.D. Bn. is going to be all busted up and made up of just men with 85 or more points and eventually get sent home. In a few days I along with most of my old buddies will be sent to some other units in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Arm'd Div.

I told you I had 84 points well now I'm not so sure if I have or not. It seems they are having trouble getting credit for those two other battles I told you about before. Everything is all mixed up and it will just take time to get it all straightened out. Until then we will just have to wait. I am not worried so don't you be. I still expect to be home this winter, possibly sooner. If the points are lowered I'll get out soon after getting to the States, if not I will probably be among the troops that will be instructors on different things.

My mail will no doubt be all mixed up now. In fact it has been for the last couple of weeks. I will keep writing to you at least once a week to let you know what is taking place.

I got to Mass this morning and Holy Communion. The priest as usual was an Irish one. It seems that most Army chaplains are Irish - at least the ones I meet are nearly all Irish.

It is getting a little dark to write so I'll sign off for now. It's nearly 10 p.m.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

I wish I could be home to talk with you today, Pa.

June 29, 1945

[Envelope: 2 cent envelope with 6 cent airmail postage; postmark A.P.O. June 30, 1945; S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Hq. Co. 2<sup>nd</sup> BN. 33 Arm'd Regt., A.P.O. 253, c/o P.M. NY, NY; Stationery of The Third Armored "SPEARHEAD" Division]

Morfleden, Germany

*Dear Folks*

Well I am at my new outfit – Headquarters Co. 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. 33<sup>rd</sup> Arm'd Reg. Assault Platoon Sgt. The boys here are swell, but of course it is not like being with my old plt. in the 703<sup>rd</sup>. We had been together so long we were like brothers. It was like leaving home all over again. Tomorrow I'm going back to Darmstadt about 15 kilometers South and West - I am just East of the Autobahn highway that runs North & South up through Frankfurt. I think I am nearer to Pat Donahue now - he is just west of the Rhine about 10 miles from Mainz. As I said I am going to Darmstadt tomorrow to see my old boys. Most of them are scattered all around the surrounding towns and on weekends they go back to the 703<sup>rd</sup> so I'll be seeing them all tomorrow.

This outfit is pretty good but very strict (G.I.) about the wearing of the uniform, discipline, etc., strictly garrison. I eat chow with the first 3 graders now so I eat from a plate - it seems very funny to be waited on. I took a ride in one of my new "chargers" yesterday and I hate them as I do all tanks. I hate to hear the motors roar. I hate everything about them. Just to hear an engine turn over and start to cough and blat makes me feel funny inside. And I am hoping and praying for one thing and that is that I get out of here and get on my way to the States & home & you before training starts again. I definitely have 84 points now and last nite's Stars & Stripes said that the critical score will be 78 or 80 and that every soldier eligible for discharge will be home by June 1946. I am hoping that soon I will be sent out of here and get started through the long process of going home. It is a very very slow procedure I must say. Anyway I definitely will be discharged but it will simply take time, and during that time I do not have the slightest intention of going through any tactical training I don't care what happens. I simply am not taking any interest in any part of it from now on. At present we are not training just fooling around killing time and waiting for the critical score so they can get rid of the ones with enough points. I feel sorry for the poor guys with anything less than 76.

Since I came here we have fought the war over about 6 times among ourselves at nite. Each one bringing up something that happened at this place and that place.

There is one boy in the company with me that came from the 703<sup>rd</sup>. He & I came in the Army the same day. He is from Springfield, Mass. Name Paul Keller, Jewish with an Irish name, but a swell guy. I met a boy here I hadn't seen since June '42 in Camp Polk – he also came in the Army with me but was transferred out of the 703 'cause he could (not) quite make a road march we had. I'll never forget that march as long as I live.

I guess by this time you know I was in a hospital up at Frankfurt for two weeks. I don't know why they kept me as long as they did guess they gave me a break. It was a good rest. I am as good as new. There wasn't anything wrong in the first place – my piles didn't bother me much.

They are doing a lot of operations now that they wouldn't do before – hemorrhoids & cysts especially. A lot of boys have cysts on the spine. They say they don't hurt but anyway they operate on them – it is best I guess. I guess they are caused from riding on hard cold seats. I don't know what else would cause them.

Tonite I saw a good movie “My Pal Wolf.” About a little girl and a dog. I enjoyed it very much probably because I like kids so much. If Francis Nerney could see that show I'm sure it would bring tears to his eyes, and would bring back many memories of old “Fido.” We have a cute little dog here in the house – call him Spearhead – he is about as wide as he is long and has little short legs. The boys picked him up some time ago on the front when he was first born. He drinks champagne like a trooper and goes staggering around and finally goes to sleep. One fellow is going to make a uniform for him and dress him all up.

It is pretty cold here now for this time of the year – rains a lot and is something like the weather you were getting a while back. We could stand a fire in the stove tonite.

I was going to send a snapshot of me taken June 2<sup>nd</sup> along in this letter but it is too heavy now so I'll send it in the next one.

I got Edna's letter of June 6 and Mildred's of the 7<sup>th</sup>. I haven't gotten any mail since I came here but there is no doubt some are on the way over from the 703. You see it goes there and then back to A.P.O. and then here.

Use my new address.

Love to all

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Clifford".

Tell Marilyn I wish I could have crawled in that ammo case and went home. I was thinking the same thing when I sent it.

Give my best regards to Lawrence when you write. I hope he is getting along fine. If he could only get transferred out of the infantry and get into maintenance or driving or anything like that I would feel much better.





July 2, 1945

[Envelope: 2 cent envelope and 6 cent airmail stampover; postmark Jul 3 1945; S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Hq. Co. 2<sup>nd</sup> BN 33 A.R., A.P.O. 253, c/o P.M. NY, NY. Stationery of The Third Armored "SPEARHEAD" Division. Envelope contains Other Nana's note "picture & poem in here."]

Morfleden, Germany

*Dear folks*

Got your letters of July 13 & 21 – very surprised to hear about Catherine O'Brien's wedding, and very happy to hear that Billy Cleary is home. I can imagine how he feels & how his folks & Lucille must feel.

It seems like a dream. He had been over here for a terrible long time - since November 1942, I think. I think he came into the Army Jan. 6, 1941 – 4 ½ years is a long time to take what the Army gives out.

I also got Mildred's letter of June 19 with the clipping of the Airborne attack show at B-M airport. It must have been a good show.

Today I signed my point voucher or rather I initialed it because the other 10 points had been added totaling 84. I expect to get out but when of course I do not know.

A bunch are going from here July 5 – I don't expect to go then however. I told you about the 703<sup>rd</sup> being filled up with men with over 85 points – they are still sweating it out just sitting tight and waiting to go. They are a wild bunch I'll tell you. I was down to visit the old boys over the weekend. I feel just as they do – they don't want to do a darn thing and I don't blame them a bit. I am hoping the score will be out in a few days. Today's paper will be out at supper time - I hope it has some news about it.

I'm enclosing a snapshot I promised you in my last letter and a little poem a soldier wrote. I think it is so true.

It is very cold here now – almost like fall weather and it rains a lot.

Well I have a lot of writing to do so I'll sign off now.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

Enclosures: Snapshot standing alone next to the side of a building under a tall rose bush. His writing on reverse "Darmstadt, Germany, June 2, 1945"; and newspaper clipping of poem entitled: "Not All Could Win" by one J.F.

*Not in vain did you die, the statesman breathed  
On the solemn rows of the dead.  
You still live on, the poet sang  
And bowed his saddened head.*

*For what purpose, then, if not in vain?  
What good was in the strife?  
What more is there for a man to gain  
After he's lost a life?  
Live on—do I see the evening stars?  
Do I feel the ocean's breath?  
Can I know the tender warmth of love  
In the cold, gray void of death?  
Asleep in the breast of a foreign land,  
Wrapped in a cloak of sod,  
What prize did my costly struggle win  
But another soul for God?*



July 6, 1945

[Envelope: 2 cent envelope, stamped with 6 cent airmail. A.P.O. datemark July 7, 1945. S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Hq. Co. 2<sup>nd</sup> BN. 33 A.R., A.P.O. 253, c/o P.M. NY, NY]

Morfelden, Germany

*Dear folks*

Got your letters of June 25 & 27<sup>th</sup> also Mildred's of June 19. I hope poor Billy is out of this darned Army. He has certainly had his share of it. I must write to him.

Today a bunch of guys are leaving on the point system. I only hope that I get in on the next shipment. The points haven't been officially dropped as yet but I think it will be 78. Rumors are flying around as usual – some are ridiculous but it is fun to listen to them.

I have been wondering when you people would begin to run short of grease – I mean lard. It seems that the people in all these occupied countries were hurting for grease more than anything else. They didn't have much sugar, butter or flour either.

I hate to think of you people standing short on anything. It makes me very mad. Our food rations were cut down considerably some time ago, and believe me we felt that, but now it is much better.

I am glad Helen has a job and I hope she likes it.

It has been raining nearly every day here – lousy weather for July and it is rather cool.

I hope it is nice where Edna is. I'll bet she is having a time. I can see those girls packing up and taking off out of that cabin with the bags.

Well I'll close and get ready to go to dinner. My mail is coming in pretty good now.

Love to all,

*Clifford*

**July 8, 1945**

*First anniversary of brother Wendell's death.*

[Envelope: 2 cent envelope with 6 cent airmail stamped over; A.P.O. postmark Jul 9, 1945, S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Hq. Co. 2<sup>nd</sup> BN 33 A.R., A.P.O. 253, c/o P.M. NY, NY Stationery of The Third Armored "SPEARHEAD" Division]

Morfelden  
Germany

*Dear Father*

Sunday again and it is a swell day or at least it has been so far. It is now about 10:30 a.m. Today we will have Mass at 4:00 p.m. I will receive Holy Communion for Wendell. I suppose you were thinking the same thing I was all night last night. A year ago, just about this time we crossed the Vire River at Arel France and I got my first taste of battle. Little did I know that poor Wendell was in another world then.

Tomorrow morning I'm leaving on a pass to France. I will be away from all this for a few days.

A bunch of new men came in and we have been having a time getting them straightened out. We are told the points have been lowered to 80 but as yet I haven't seen anything to make it official. I hope I get out of this outfit before too long. We have excellent houses to stay in but we have to put up with an awful lot of G.I. baloney and I'm no garrison soldier and don't want to be. When we were pulled off the line at Dessau we said we would take anything they threw at us as long as we didn't have an enemy to contend with so I'm not going to say too much. I guess we are just getting fed up with the Army, that's all.

A bunch of guys are leaving today to be flown home – they all have over 100 pts. The lucky devils - they should be home tomorrow nite. It seems impossible - they can't believe it themselves.

I suppose Billy is enjoying all the comforts of home and I'll bet he appreciates it. It must be nice in Vermont now. Lucille must be so happy – give them my best regards. I am still planning on being home this winter.

Loving son,

*Clifford*

July 17, 1945

[Envelope: 2-cent envelope, over stamped with 6-cent postage mark; APO postmarked July 18, 1945. S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Hq Co. 2<sup>nd</sup> BN. 33 A.R., A.P.O. 253, c/o P.M. NY. NY; Stationery: Two long sheets of Third Armored "Spearhead" Division logo stationery, four sides, in pencil.]

Morfelden, Germany

*Dear Father*

I'm back from France. We had 6 days in Lyon, France. I guess you know where that is. In southern France where the Rhone and Saône Rivers come together. It is a real old city the western side of it still looks real ancient. We stayed about in the center of the city between the two rivers at the Hotel Bristol, run completely by the Army. It was not nearly as nice as it was at Paris but we had good food and plenty of it for a change. I guess you read about how all of France celebrated Bastille Day July 14<sup>th</sup> well Lyon was no exception. Fireworks and all. The kids had a great time. They had a big fireworks display at midnite. I wasn't as enthused as I used to be to watch it.

It took us about 21 hrs. to get there – went from here to Strasbourg on trucks crossed the Rhine there and took a train to Lyon. We didn't bring nearly enough rations with us, and believe me we learned a lesson. Coming back was a little different I saw the mess Sgt at the place we ate and got some sandwiches. On the way back from Strasbourg it rained all the way 5 hrs. in an open truck. I have to laugh when I think of it now we looked like a bunch of drowned rats. Traveling a couple hundred miles when I get back home will seem like just going back and forth to work. When I got back here I found plenty of mail waiting for me. I wasted no time reading them either.

I was very sorry to hear about Mr. Aja but I guess he is really better off. There you people go again what's the matter with you anyway of course they should tell Pucho. Why in the world should they keep such a thing from him? He will find out anyway and will be as mad as I was. Boy oh boy I'll never forget that day.

Did I tell you I got to Mass & Holy Communion July 8 and I also got to Mass last Sunday at St. Blandine's Church at Lyon. It is a real old and big church. They seem to build them so beautiful on the outside and inside they don't seem any nicer than churches in the States.

I was just thinking I have been into a lot of churches since I left home. I have heard Mass at every place imaginable even right next to a manure pile sometimes. But it still is Mass no matter where it is said.

It seems terrible to think you people don't get good meat and plenty of it back home. It must be all going to the Pacific. In England we used to eat like kings, steaks & chops all the time and plenty of potatoes. You folks will have to see about getting a couple of pigs this fall if it is possible. I guess you will have to turn them loose like the swampers in Louisiana and let them do



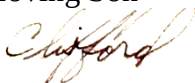
for themselves. Those hogs down there must have been plenty tough eating though. When we were coming through Germany we used to catch little pigs and chicken rabbits and turkeys and everything and have fresh meat when we got a chance to cook them. We weren't suppose to do it of course and now if we did it would be real hard on us.

I'll bet there will be plenty of deer hunters out this fall and they will be really looking for them and not just for sport. There are a lot of deer here in Germany, but these civilians have no way to get them unless they use bows & arrows. One of our soldiers was fined \$25 for shooting one not long ago and had to give up the deer too. The fine was placed on him by our Army officers of course and not the civilians.

I haven't written to Bill yet. I never get around to write until nite time and we are supposed to put out the lights at 11 it is now nearly midnite. I would like to have been there for Billy's party.

Well I guess I had better go to bed. I haven't heard anything new on the points, but don't you worry. I'll be home this winter. So tell Pa he'll smoke up some ham. His ham is the best I ever ate. You have no doubt heard about the 6 & 7 Arm'd Div. going home in Sept. and the 3<sup>rd</sup> staying throughout 1945. Well I hope to be out of the 3<sup>rd</sup> before that time at any rate. I'll still make it home for the winter. I have a strong feeling that I will anyway.

Loving Son

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Clifford", written in brown ink.

July 18, 1945

[Envelope: Two-cent envelope, with 6-cent airmail stamped over. S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Hq. Co. 2<sup>nd</sup> BN. 33 A.R., A.P.O. 253, c/o P.M. NY., NY; Stationery: Single long sheet of Third Armored "Spearhead" Division stationery with logo, both sides, in pencil.]

Morfelden, Germany

*Dear Father*

Today I received my first letter with my new address on it. It was yours of July 11. When you read about different armies going to the States don't get excited as that means only Army headquarters is moving and does not include the different outfits that made up the Army over here. Outfits are detached and attached in a matter of minutes believe it or not. Rumors are still flying around and they would have us home very soon however I still say this winter. I'm a stubborn cuss. We are trying to get reorganized and it is a pain in the neck. I'm now the plt leader (1<sup>st</sup> Lt. is new and most of the men are new so you can imagine what a mess it is. I think it is silly and useless to try it now but who am I? Many of us have over 80 points and rumors are that the points have been dropped to 80 but nothing official has come out on it as yet.

Tell Pa he does not have to write I understand how he feels and I appreciate it a lot. I would like so much to just sit and talk to you and him for hours. There is so many things to talk about and I'll bet when we do get together we'll probably just sit and look at each other even that would be fun.

That was very nice of the Chaplin to send you that little leaflet. He probably got the picture from Memorial day exercises. We had the same thing.

You said you liked Don O'Connell better than Cliff White – not me. I did not know Don very well but I liked Cliff better anyway.

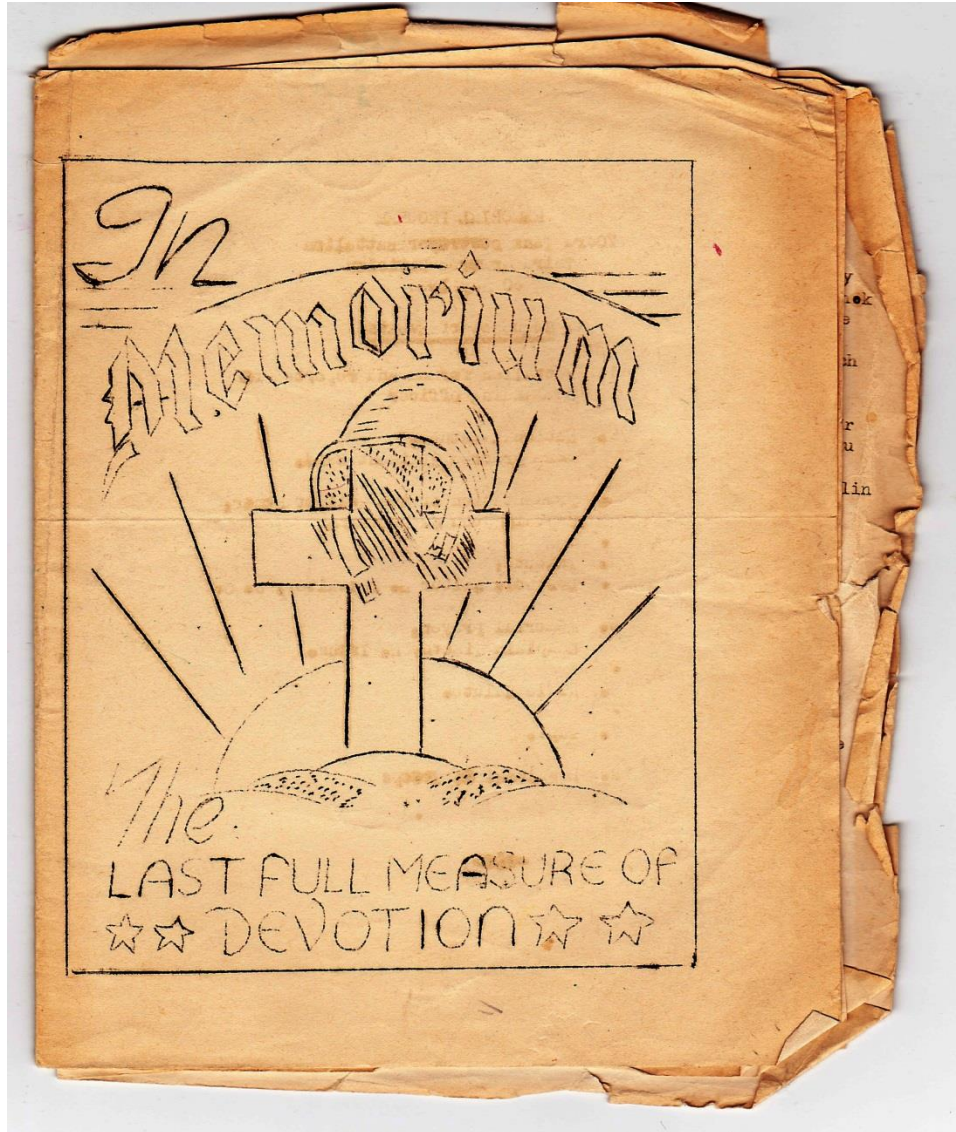
Mrs. Aja must be very lonesome now boy oh boy 4 boys gone away that's too much.

Yes I have been hearing from Dottie pretty often. She is very well and not working, a lady of leisure at present. I'd like to be home now.

I have a little job to do before I go to be so I had better get started. Tomorrow we have a dirty stinking, silly full field inspection. You would think we were a bunch of rookies. I don't see how anyone could choose the Army for a career.

Loving Son

*Clifford*



*Both his mother's, and Clifford's own, copies of this Memorial Day 1945 are worn as shown in the photocopy above. The role of honor of the 703<sup>rd</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion, Third Armored Division, is presented therein.*

July 21, 1945

[Envelope: Two-cent airmail envelope, with 6-cent postage mark; APO postmarked July 23, 1945. [Note: no censor stamp/signature KOB], S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Hdq. Co. 2<sup>nd</sup>. BN. 33 A.R., A.P.O. 253, c/o P.M. NY., NY. Stationery: One long sheet of Third Armored "Spearhead" Division stationery with logo, both sides, in pencil.]

Morfelden, Germany

*Dear folks*

Got your letter of July 15 today when I came back from Mass. We had it at 4 PM. I don't like to go to Mass in the afternoon. You folks were probably just coming out of church when I went in; it being 10 o'clock or thereabouts in the States. I think there is 6 hours difference in the time.

That was a terrible accident Jane Curtin had. It is a wonder she wasn't killed outright. If I remember her correctly she was very big and spunky and always worked like a man.

I'm very glad to know that Chink is home. Poor Mrs. Aja she must be so glad to have him back.

The Stars & Stripes said the critical score would be out in two weeks but it said that about the middle of June too. I kind of believe them this time though. It also said the number of men going home will drop 40% next month. So many boats are being used for the Pacific area. I think now that the war there will not last too long. I always thought there would be a long fight in China before an invasion was attempted on the mainland of Japan. But they are doing so well there now that I really think something big is about to happen darn soon. The Japanese air force seems to have faded out very quickly & also their subs. I can't understand it. I don't think even the big shots figured on things going as quickly as they have these past few weeks. I think they are now planning on an early invasion. There must be more supplies and men down there than we can visualize. I kinda got a feeling old Stalin is going to join us before long.

I'll say Tommy & Cliff keep the roads busy between Barre & Hartford. Francis does pretty good for himself too. It seems every time you write one or the other is on the road going or coming. I don't think it will be necessary for me to take a train from Hartford when I get there.

We had a quite a time the other day – pulled a surprise raid on the German civilians searched every house in three towns. That was only our sector. It was done all over. We got up at 2:30 am and started raiding at 4:30 am. Worked until 5 pm we were very tired. It was kinda funny getting them out of bed so early they were scared stiff did not know what was coming off and us trying to speak German what a laugh. We didn't find too much. Except a lot of people without proper identification.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

July 29 [No year written. KOB]

[Envelope: 2-cent envelope, with 6-cent postage stamped over; APO postmarked July 30, 1945. S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Hdq. Co. 2<sup>nd</sup> BN. 33 A.R., A.P.O. 253, c/o P.M. NY., NY. Stationery: Single long sheet of Third Armored "Spearhead" Division logo stationery; both sides, in pencil.]

Riviera Rest Camp

Noted at top left: "Got here yesterday at 11:30 a.m."

*Dear folks*

Well I sure do get around eh? Here I am at the Riviera on the Mediterranean at Nice, France. Flew down took only 3 ½ hrs we ran into a storm over Switzerland and had to circle it otherwise we would have been here about a half hr. sooner. Some boys who came by train said it took them two days with all the switching around etc. We were very lucky to fly down and I enjoyed every minute of the flight. We flew over Lake Geneva and another large one also Geneva itself. It was a little rough over the mountains but we all enjoyed the thrills - very much like a roller coaster.

We have very poor accommodations here, I'm surprised that they aren't better this hotel is centuries old it seems and no water 5 in a little room. However we are fortunate in this room as outside the window there is a hose with running water. We climb out on the roof to shave & wash. The other hotels have water and are beautiful. Some of them right on the water front. In peacetime I guess these 7 days here would cost a person thousands of dollars. I wish you could see how nice it is at the beach. Just like any other I guess but it's the "Riviera" Monte Carlo is not far. I plan to visit there soon. I spent all this P.M. lying on the beach and swimming occasionally I have a wonderful tan started.

I went to 10 o'clock Mass this morning. It was a high Mass and I enjoyed it. It was long and it was hot but it was the first high Mass I heard since I don't know when.

Thursday we plan on going on a fishing trip. I'm sure I'll like that. I did not like it when I first landed here but now I think it is perfect. I guess we can overlook our poor "rat hole" of a room because the rest of the city is wonderful. The points haven't been lowered as yet but it should be out in the next day or so. Then I'll be transferred to the 5 6 or 7 Arm'd Divs. I'm hoping anyway.

Loving Son

*Clifford*





*Clifford at far left in left-hand photo; others unidentified on reverse. In right-hand photo, on reverse, Cliff wrote, "Me, Johnie & Davy, Near Monte Carlo, Aug. 2, 1945, Riviera, France."*



*"Davy, Olie, and Me on the boardwalk in front of the casino, Nice, France."*



*"4-Musketeers at the American Red Cross Club, Riviera, France"*



August 7, 1945

[Envelope: 2-cent envelope with 6-cent air mail over-stamped, APO postmarked August 9, 1945. S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Hdq. Co. 2<sup>nd</sup> BN. 33 A.R. A.P.O. 230, c/o P.M. NY. Stationery: Two long sheets of Third Armored "Speared" Division logo stationery, four sides, blue ink. Enclosed: Small newspaper clipping from Stars & Stripes, re "Bronze Stars."]

Morfelden  
Germany

*Dear folks*

I'm back from the Riviera and I'm still gloomy about the points not being lowered. I found three letters from you waiting for me. It seems funny that you didn't hear from me for so long. I do an awful lot of writing and I'll try and do more from now on. I don't know what to begin to say in this letter I have been telling you all along that I would be home this winter. I truly believed I would and I guess I had you people about convinced but now those hopes are shattered and what will happen now is a mystery to me. I assure you. I wish I had more education and a few connections with some so called big shots I would like to find out just what is taking place. There seems to be something rotten in Washington and the Army seems to be behind it all in my opinion. I have been in a very bad mood these last few days but I'm getting over it now. There is nothing else to do but take it I guess.

To resume training is what I dread most of all. If they are going to send me to fight again I wish they would and get it over with. I attended a class today and had to listen to a bunch of baloney I learned years ago. I forget more about it than the instructor knows I think. Classes now just turn out to be arguments we know the best way to do it from actual experience. The books don't work on the battlefield always. If a person likes the Army it is altogether different but I don't. The first Sgt. is leaving us soon and he hounded me to take his job when I got back from furlough. He was very surprised when I told him no! I guess he finally found out I really mean it because he has another guy up there now. He just wants somebody to take over so he can get the heck out of here I know. He has over 85 pts. and I don't blame him but I'm not going to take it I don't care what. I don't even want what I have now. I just don't want responsibility I'm fed up. I think I'll keep this job that I have and stick it out and wait and see what will happen maybe they will count the score again, but I don't look for it until next year and then I think the critical score will be raised. I will have 100 pts by January – long time away, eh? But to let everybody out with 100 pts. then would be exactly like lowering the score to 68 now. See what I mean? But of course by that time a lot of things could happen. Maybe even the war could be over.

I was surprised when you told me of Louis Lombard still remembering me. He must be very old now. I was thinking of him just the other day. Was also surprised to hear of Joe Roark's death. He never was very well.

You said the supper you went to cost \$8.15 for 7. Perhaps you didn't get very much but I think that is very reasonable. Imagine paying \$16.00 a single plate. That is what it would cost in Paris.

And some places \$20. France is a rotten place now. The country is nice but the people are no good in my opinion a bunch of money grabbers the whole lot of them. Black market predominates they can't seem to stop it. They seem to want money more than anything else. When we came through France we were hailed as Libérateurs Vive les Americans "Oh, Oui, mais maintenant" hook the G.I for all you can get is their motto. France has been through an awful lot I think it is the worst country in the world as far as politics go.

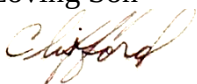
I went to Mass last Sunday at Notre Dame Church in Nice and a priest came over and tapped me on the shoulder. I was kneeling no one seems to kneel there anyway he said there was a Mass for G.I.s across the street so I went with him he spoke excellent English and gave us a sermon that the French people would not like to hear not about politics but everything in general. It was what a lot of guys should hear.

I'm glad Chink is home and I know he is. His mother must have been so glad to see him. I suppose by this time that Pat Guy is home too. Lawrence will be happy I'll bet when his furlough comes up.

I'm enclosing a clipping from the Stars & Stripes it is just exactly what happened in some outfits. I saw our old major today he was transferred to this Reg. He got himself a bronze star no one knows how of course. So when you see some guys wearing decorations don't ask them how they got them because they should be ashamed to tell you. I suppose it was the same in the last war. Did Al Morrie's star ever get to his folks he really did earn his. It is a small thing to get back for a healthy man the same thing goes for a purple heart.

I don't think this is a very interesting letter but it is something to read anyway. I'm fine and as brown as a berry from the Riviera sun.

Loving Son



Sidenote on front sheet re the meal prices mentioned: "Of course soldiers don't pay for their meals when on pass or furlough. Those prices are for civilians in civilian cafés."



*Sister Helen Lucille O'Connor's Graduation from  
Spaulding High School, Barre, Vermont  
June 14, 1945*

August 8, 1945

[Envelope: 2-cent envelope with 6-cent airmail stamped over; APO postmarked August 9, 1945. S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Hdq. Co. 2<sup>nd</sup> BN. 33 A.R., A.P.O. 253, c/o P.M. NY., NY. Stationery: Single sheet of Third Armored "Spearhead" logo stationery; both sides, blue ink.]

Morfelden, Germany

*Dear folks*

Got off guard tonite and found two letters from you waiting for me also one from Helen and one from Father Dussault. Your letters were dated July 30 and Aug 2. They both came very quickly.

I suppose you all miss Edna very much already and no doubt she is lonely too and will be that way for some time, but I think she will get over it quickly.

I'm glad Pat Guy got home on furlough. He must be kidding when he says he likes the Army. If anybody can say it and make himself believe it it makes everything much easier. Sometimes the Army is O.K. if a person gets into an outfit he likes and is doing a job he likes everything is fine.

I'm glad Mrs. Aja went to camp it will do her good. I would like to be at a nice lake for the summer. Here I am complaining and I have had two furloughs just lately one to Lyon and one to the Riviera one of the best resorts in the world. I should consider myself lucky I guess.

I do not have time to write to Helen so I'll add a few words right in this letter.

Helen you look beautiful in your graduation gown. It is hard to look at it and realize you are my kid sister. I am very proud of you and especially since you have decided to go to college. I have kicked myself many many times for not going. I'm kinda glad that you gave up your work at the defense plant. That is no place for a girl like you. If you feel like working over at Curtis' farm why don't you go but don't work too hard get a lot of sun. After all you're supposed to be on a vacation now you know. I'll match sun tans with you when I get back home, but I'm sure you will beat me. I did very well at the Riviera in the sun and swimming nearly every day. The Mediterranean is very nice and blue and warm and I never have seen water so buoyant, but it was rather rough. I wish I had 30 days there instead of 7. It seems that I am always complaining, eh? I must be getting to be an old grouch.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

August 10, 1945

[Envelope: S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Hdq. Co. 2<sup>nd</sup> BN 33 A.R., A.P.O. 253, c/o P.M. NY.]

Morfelden, Germany

*Dear Folks*

Friday night and I am not a bit tired and my morale is soaring so I think I'll write a few lines. Today started out to be a bad one – Our General “Hickey” – is leaving us and we stood a review in a pouring rain for a couple of hours, but when we got back we heard that the war in Japan is practically over. I'm as excited as a little kid. There is a radio next door – the boys are lucky to have it and I keep running over to get the latest news. It seems the whole word is waiting on the Congress of the United States. Since the news came out about the atomic bomb I have been in a very happy mood. My morale never has risen so high since our new Pershing tanks with their long gun tubes came rumbling down through the streets of Stolberg, Germany last February. We really needed those new big tanks. I think we appreciated them at that time more than a furlough. That bomb must be a terrific thing. Much worse than we can possibly realize, and am I happy that we are in the delivering end of it. I have to laugh when I read about Japan saying it is inhuman and contrary to International Law. To me rules are silly in a war. Anyway Japan can say nothing about such things – she has no room to talk. My only regret is that the bomb wasn't completed in time to give these Krauts a taste of it, and probably a lot of American boys would be alive today.

This morning we were asked so nicely if we would like to volunteer to go to the C.B.I. What a laugh. I didn't see any hands go up. However, some young officers did they say. (?) They probably have not seen anything as yet. As a result this afternoon a sort of a draft was held and some boys were chosen – “low pointers.” They leave us immediately, but I don't think they have anything to worry about, and probably will never get there unless it is for occupation.

Have I told you we are moving from here – going somewhere near Stuttgart (spelling is wrong), but any way it is south and east of here about 40 miles. I am very anxious to know what will happen if we get there and the war ends. I do hope that the training schedule is torn up and forgotten about. I imagine that it will be. This mighty 3<sup>rd</sup> Arm'd Div. is going to remain in the Army forever. This Div. will never be broken up they tell us. That of course does not mean that we will have to stay in. I imagine they will keep the lowest point men and then after a long time will have only volunteers. You would be surprised but some guys want to stay in the Army.

I am going to miss this nice house because I don't think we will get one as nice as this where we are going. I suppose these civilians will be happy to see us go so they can come back into their own houses. Other soldiers are coming but they are taking different houses I understand.

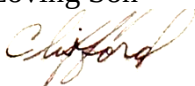
They finally got our movie machine fixed and it is operating again. Tonight I saw “Christmas in Connecticut” with Barbara Stanwyck. I liked it very much. And it made me wonder just where I would spend this Christmas. I think the last Christmas I spent at home was 1941. I haven't spent

many with you since 1936 I know. If I get home to be with you all for this one I will be very thankful. It is possible, but there are so many many men with the same idea in mind and we know that all of us can't make it but still we hope and it is fun to think about it anyway.

I can imagine how happy the news about Japan makes Lawrence feel. He may have to go down there but I doubt it very much now. These must be very tense hours back in the States. Everyone must be waiting by the radio for the least bit of news. I feel so happy for the boys fighting over there. The news of that bomb must have given them so much of a lift.

Guess I close hoping everyone is fine. I feel perfect.

Loving Son



*[Note: The letter issued to "Every Member of the Third Armored 'Spearhead' Division from General Doyle O. Hickey, dated 8 May 1945, follows this page. Yellowed with age, folded away for decades, it once again becomes a part of Cliff's war years. KOB]*



HEADQUARTERS THIRD ARMORED DIVISION, APO 253  
Office of the Commanding General

8 May 1945

TO EVERY MEMBER OF THE THIRD ARMORED "SPEARHEAD" DIVISION:

I offer to each of you my sincerest congratulations today on "Victory in Europe Day", the one we have all been awaiting. To each of you who has bravely and tirelessly carried on in order to make this day possible I, as your Division Commander, express the thanks of a grateful nation at home.

The accomplishments of our Division and its records against the enemy are well known to the entire world. As long as military history is studied and armored warfare is recounted, each of you may have the knowledge that your part in its making has been surpassed by none. I repeat to you the remarks of our Corps Commander when he said, "There have been a few great Divisions in the war and The Third Armored is one of these great Divisions".

Let us not forget to pay tribute to those brave comrades of ours who have made the supreme sacrifice or who remain in hospitals, in order that peace might once more reign.

May a Divine Providence continue to keep you safe in order that you may once again, and soon, be with your loved ones at home.

  
DOYLE O. HICKEY,  
Brigadier General, U. S. Army,  
Commanding.

August 14, 1945

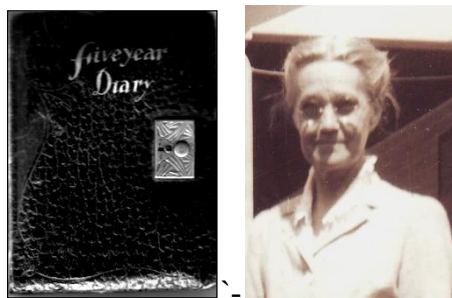
[Envelope: 6-cent airmail envelope; APO postmarked Aug 16, 1945. This envelope has a typed address and return address. S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Hdq. Co. 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn. 33<sup>rd</sup> A.R., A.P.O. 253, c/o P.M. NY.NY. Stationery of the Third Armored "Spearhead" Division, single sheet, both sides, blue ink.]

Obersontheim,  
Germany

*Dear Folks*

Well we moved – left yesterday at 8:30 a.m. and pulled in here at about midnight – had good luck with the tanks, because we went real slow. The billets here are not as nice as they were back at Morfelden, but I am satisfied. This house is very old and looks like a wreck from outside but inside it is not bad at all. The plumbing here is very typical of European plumbing – not so hot. But we have enough water to keep clean so I'm happy.

We brought a radio with us but it doesn't work here perhaps the current is different or the voltage is too, but I don't know what it is. We are "in the fog" as far as the news goes. They say the war is over and we are just waiting for President Truman to announce V.J. day. It seems like a dream – the war over.



Ma's Diary August 14, 1945 – Tuesday

**"Very nice day, quite warm though. P worked. I ironed. H finished her dress & string blouse.  
At 7 o'clock it came over the radio that the war with Japan is over."**

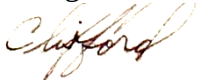
Well I wonder what we will do now. No silly training I hope and all those inspections I hope are over. Boy! Oh boy, I may get home this winter yet. I suppose everyone is very happy back home, but for some reason or other I don't think they will all celebrate like they said they would.

Tomorrow is the Feast of the Assumption. I noticed a church here in town and if a chaplain doesn't come around I'm going to Mass with the civilians. The people here seem more religious than they were up around Frankfurt & Darmstadt.

On the way down yesterday we began to see little shrines along the roadside again and crucifixes just as we saw in France and Belgium and when we first entered Germany. The trip was beautiful – country very much like New England – small farms all the way down scattered among the hills. We came up and went down some very big mountains too. I have my eyes on a nice pair of skies in case we are here when the snow comes.

No mail came in today – didn't expect any on account of moving but tomorrow there should be some.

Loving Son



August 15, 1945

[Envelope: S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Hdq. Co. 2<sup>nd</sup> BN 33 A.R., APO 253, c/o P.M. NY]

Germany

Wed. Morning

*Dear Father*

I wrote to you last night but now that I know for sure that the war is over I'll write again. Assumption Day and the first day of world peace since I don't know when – about 1932, I guess. We certainly owe the Blessed Virgin some prayers today. I can't even begin to think that the war just happened to end today – I'm sure Almighty God had it this way.

I don't know how I feel exactly – I'm as happy as possible I guess, but I feel like bawling – I don't know why. Peace time! Peace time!! The radio keeps saying it even when giving the correct time. It is now 6:50 a.m. peace time.

We got a generator and hooked up a radio and kept tuned to the news last night.

It is nearly time to go to breakfast so I'll have to quit. I hope a chaplain comes around and says Mass this morning. We will go to Mass with civilians anyway if he doesn't.

I'm wondering what is taking place at this moment in U.S.A. It is about 1 a.m. in New York. Well now all I'm waiting for is a boat I guess and it can't come too soon to suit me.

Loving Son

*Clifford*



*“The “Iconic Kiss,” Times Square, New York City*



August 16, 1945

[Envelope to Mrs. Peter O'Connor, East Barre, Vermont, Box 165, U.S.A., From S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Hdq. Co. 2<sup>nd</sup> BN. 33. A.R., APO 253, c/o P.M. NY; Other Nana's writing on lower right corner, "*Snap Shots taken at Riviera in here.*" Small black and white photo enclosed. Daddy's writing identifying the three pictured as "Johnie-Corlette & Me, Near Monte Carlo, Aug 2, 1945." Stationery of The Third Armored "Spearhead" Division]

Obersonthiem

Germany

August 16, 1945

*Dear Folks*

Received your letter of Aug 5 yesterday. I have been writing to you very often lately and I shall try to keep it up. I know how glad you must be when you get a letter. When Helen goes away to school you will be very lonely. One by one we have been drifting away from home. Speaking of home – that is the main topic of conversation here now. Just tonite we were talking about our civilian clothes and wondering if they would fit us. I don't think I have changed too much - perhaps a little heavier, but maybe you will notice other changes in me. I seem the same as ever to myself except a little older & wiser I guess.

I was very sorry to hear about poor Morris Gallant. He must be dead. I take my hat off to those fighter pilots - they saved us many times. Some of them had more nerve than brains but that is what won the war I guess. What was he flying - a 47-51 or 38, do you know?

I am enclosing a picture we took at the Riviera high on a mountain looking towards Monte Carlo. The girl was our guide - she came from Indo China - spoke very good English, very nice too. I think she looks like Mildred and also like Mary Potvin. The boy on the left really fell for her, I think. We had some photos made and she is going to send them to him and he will send mine to me. So I'm waiting for them - expect them any day now.

You were saying it is hard to remember what you have written to Lawrence, Edna, and I. I find it hard too. I write to a lot of people and I know how it is. I used to keep a roster of who I wrote to and when I wrote, also when I last received a letter from them.

We have our radio going and right now they are describing London on the 2<sup>nd</sup> night of peace. Guess they are raising the dickens.

Today started out to be a holiday and I had some work for the boys – they didn't like it a bit. After we got started at it we were told that the holiday had been called off so they all felt better about working. Nobody wants to do anything unless they have to - I'm the same way too. I want to be a civilian and that's all.



Tomorrow, however, is a holiday. Sleep till 8 or even after if we want to. I always wake up early though.

If these troop movements get going like I expect them to I should be home this year. Imagine that! Oh, how I hope and pray to be with you this Christmas.

Well I have some more letters to get off – guess you are wondering about me and Dottie – don't worry everything is fine.

Loving Son

*Clifford*



*Clifford's note on reverse, "Southern France, 1945.  
Left to right: Paul Keller (Springfield, Mass., unidentified, Cliff O'Connor (far right),  
sitting soldier and girl are not identified.*

**August 19, 1945**

[Envelope: S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, Hdq 2<sup>nd</sup> BN 33 A.R., APO 253, c/o P.M. NY, NY]

Obersondheim, Germany

Sunday PM

Received your letter of August 9 day before yesterday. You mentioned Edna having it pretty tough – poor kid. I haven't heard from her since she went there.

Very sorry to hear about Mrs. Converse.

About that letter you got back that was addressed to me. No wonder it came back - here is the way you had it addressed – my name & number then Co. B, TK. DES. BN. Then APO 230 c/o Postmaster NY, NY.

You know there are many many tank destroyer battalions, but the letter should have reached me and would have if someone wasn't too lazy. They don't realize what a scare a person could get from getting a letter back. Those numbers stamped on the envelope don't mean anything to me. Unless it was the date July 23 – 23-7. It must mean that.

I went to Mass and confession and Holy Communion this morning, first time I've been since July 8. It is a dark dreary day here, looks as though it might rain any minute. Rumors are flying fast as usual. Some say we will be out of here by the middle of next month on our way to Reims & Le Havre. What a birthday present it would be for me to get on a boat. I really expect to be home for Christmas. We will soon be turning in our vehicles.

I hope that the rationing of different things quits in the U.S. now. Especially on sugar. I heard that gasoline is no longer rationed.

I've forgotten if Lawrence's furlough started the 2<sup>nd</sup> week or 3<sup>rd</sup> week of August. Anyway I'll bet he'll be glad to get back. He may have to go to the Pacific but I think he has a chance to miss it. Some boys are going to be sent over here for occupation to make up the 450,000 troops they want. It wouldn't be so bad here in Germany for him.

I went to a movie last night – Banjo on My Knee – a very old movie but I had some good laughs. Wendell would have enjoyed some parts of it I know. He and I used to always get a kick out of hillbilly acting. The movie was about the Mississippi River “rats” or “hogs” whatever they call them.

Every time some hillbilly music used to come on the radio at home Wendell would stick out his leg and tap his foot just like a hillbilly just to give me a laugh and I would call him old “Sy” and he would laugh. I have a very big lump in my throat now and during parts of the movie I did too.

Guess I'll sign off.

Hoping to see you Christmas.

Loving Son

*Clifford*



August 23, 1945

[Envelope: 6 cent overstamp on 2 cent envelope; postmark APO Aug 23, 1945; S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, Hdq. Co. 2<sup>nd</sup> BN. 33 A.R., A.P.O. 253, c/o P.M. NY.; Single sheet of stationery; two sides; blue-black ink.; Stationery of the Third Armored "Spearhead" Division]

Obersontheim  
Germany

Thursday Morn.

*Dear folks*

Got your letter of Aug. 13 yesterday. It is nearly 7:30 a.m. and I'll try to drop you a few lines before we fall out for our first formation. We are getting our vehicles ready to turn in and I can hardly wait to get it over with. It will be a big relief to me when they are gone. There is so darn much maintenance to be done on tanks.

The weather is very strange here now. Rain and stop and shine and then rain again. It is a little warmer today than it has been. The nights are real cool – good for sleeping though.

Rumors are still flying around but not quite as heavy as they were for a while. I personally think us guys with more than 80 pts. will be sent to another outfit, and I hope it is soon. I would like to get sent to the 14<sup>th</sup> Arm'd Div. they have just been alerted.

I was very sorry to hear about Phillip Carrier those darn quarries are very dangerous places I'm glad I never worked in them and I don't plan on ever working them. I'm kinda hoping to get my job at the Aircraft but I may get fooled. I write to the boss now and then. He answers too. I would like to go to school and take a course on airplane engineer. assembly or installation or anything. I signed up for three courses to take over here guess you have heard about our I&E (information & education) program. There were no subjects on aircraft engines at all, and that's what I want. I won't be here long anyway. I hope!!

I've been wondering if Lawrence got home on furlough. I hope he got it. He may be sent over here for occupation.

Well it's a short letter, but better than none. I am fine hope this finds you all well.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

Two nights in a row I have dreamed that I was on my way home. And when I woke up I wasn't quite sure where I was. The dreams were so real. That's all I think about all day every day. You can imagine how much work we do. Ha ha!

August 24, 1945

[Envelope (enclosed in the same envelope as letter dated August 19, 1945)]

Obersondheim  
Germany

Friday afternoon

*Dear Father*

Got your letter of August 16 today, one week coming – excellent time – you know it takes that long for me to get letters from some G.I.s over here in France and even right here in Germany.

I hope Lawrence's furlough wasn't cancelled – I don't think it was.

Haven't heard from Edna – would like to have her address. I feel sorry for her working so hard and being away from home and amongst a tough, hard bunch.

So the old siren was going all night on Victory night, eh? I can imagine what a noise it must have been. Everything went on as usual here.

I just came back from a stage show - "Central Park" - or something like that. It wasn't exactly the type of a show a G.I. wants and I don't think it was appreciated very much. It was very colorful and the costumes were pretty and some of the gals were nice but I didn't care for it.

At present we are preparing for a Command inspection of vehicles. It is supposed to be the last and final one before turning them in – I can hardly wait to get rid of the ugly looking darned things. Some of them are in awful shape. They should be I guess. It is chow time. I'll finish when I come back. ...

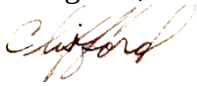
Since my last sentence I have eaten supper and washed and shaved. It is raining again – usually the days start out fine, sunshine and beautiful - and then during the day it rains at least 5 times. The weather here now is just like it was last Sept. and October at Breinig, where we took those pictures I sent you. It is very much like the fall of the year now.

At supper I got another rumor – Dec. 23, 1945 is the day we are supposed to sail - boy oh boy we get some hot ones. I don't know where all the rumors start – the old saying in the Army is that they come up through the toilet (usually the 3<sup>rd</sup> toilet seat in the latrine) ha ha. I was told that men with high pts. - that is between 75 and 85 - will be shipped out to another outfit but nobody knows anything for sure.

I'm glad to hear that canned fruit and fuel oil, etc., are not rationed any more. So the meat is still rationed, boy you're telling me it is rationed and how I know it. I would like to know where it is going. No doubt to black marketers in the States and over in France as well. Those French are a

crooked bunch, don't seem a bit thankful now. Probably a good percentage were better off when the Germans were there.

Loving Son,

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Clifford". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping tail.



August 25, 1945

[V-Mail – typed. In envelope postmarked APO Sep 2, 1945. S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771 Hq. Co. 2<sup>nd</sup>. Bn 334 R., APO 253, P/M NY, NY]

Obersondheim, Germany

*Dear folks*

DEAR FOLKS: FLASH!! FLASH!!!!

I don't know if I should write this letter or not but I just can't stop myself from doing it. This will be the best news you have heard since the capitulation of Japan. I hate to get you all excited and then have something happen that would spoil everything, but so far everything is going good. I have just been told to pack my stuff and prepare to leave this outfit Monday Aug. 27<sup>th</sup>. I'm going to the 106<sup>th</sup> Infantry Div. and it is supposed to sail from France September 15<sup>th</sup>. Can you beat that?

I have been so excited since I heard it I don't know what to do. I started to pack my junk and have it strewn all over the room and then I decided to write to you and tell you the wonderful news. It hardly seems possible to me. All men with 83 and 84 points are going and next week they say men with over 80 pts. are to leave.

I can't say when I'll be home, but it won't be too long from now. Oh, I don't know what else to say I'm so darn happy that I don't know what to do. Hoping to see you soon.

Loving son

*Clifford*

August 30, 1945

[Envelope: 2 cent stamp; postmark w/6 cent airmail; dated Sep 1, 1945; S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor 11064771, "C" Co. 423 Reg. 106 Inf., A.P.O. 443, c/o P.M. NY, NY]

Edenheim, Germany

*Dear Folks*

Well, I have taken my first step in the direction of home. I'm in the "C" Co. 423 Reg. 106 Inf. I think all of us that were sent from the 3 Arm'd came to this Reg. Monday I met many of my old friends. All with 84 pts. like myself. It reminded me very much of the days at Camp Polk. We had a regular reunion – no celebrating though 'cause we were out in a cow pasture. We were then assigned to different companies, and we probably won't meet again until we go to our assembly area or possibly until we load on the boat. If everything goes as scheduled we should leave here Sept. 3<sup>rd</sup> or shortly after and we are to sail Sept. 17<sup>th</sup>.

I should be a Civilian early in October.

I don't think there is much use in writing to me now even to this address, because I don't think I would receive it. I think they will start holding mail in NY for this A.P.O. soon. I haven't received any mail since I've been here and I don't expect to get any for a while.

We don't do much of anything here – ball game in the mornings and just "dream" in the P.M.s and stand retreat at 5:30.

I'll keep writing to let you know where I am.

Hoping to see you soon

Loving Son

*Clifford*

September 7, 1945

[Envelope: 2-cent envelope, with 6-cent airmail stamped; APO postmarked September 9, 1945. S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, C Co. 423 Reg., A.P.O. 443, U.S. Army; Stationery: Single sheet of blue-lined paper, both sides, started in ink, then pencil.]

Odenheim, Germany

Friday Nite

*Dear Folks*

I'm still here waiting to go to Le Havre. We were supposed to leave here the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup> but something has delayed us. We are now expecting to leave Sunday morning early and it is quite definite that we shall.

I do not expect to be in Le Havre very long but it could be possible be a week or even longer. At any rate I expect to be home by the end of the month. Perhaps not home but in U.S.

I haven't been doing much these last few days. Just laying around thinking what I'll do when I get home but I'm so mixed up I haven't come to any definite decision and I think I'll just wait and get home first and then plan. I have been doing a lot of reading these past few days – you see there is absolutely nothing to do here no movie or anything. We played ball the first day or so but now no one seems to have the ambition.

We all feel the same I guess – just waiting to get home.

By this time you have no doubt received my letter telling about going home and have probably been upstairs to look at my clothes and doing different thing to get ready. It must bother you terribly, Ma to look at my things along side of Wendell's and if it affects you like I think it does I'd rather you wouldn't get anything ready for me at all. I think most of my clothes will fit except maybe my pants - I have a quite a belly. I can't understand it with the chow we are getting, but apparently it agrees with me.

Helen will probably be away to school when I come busting in. I hope I get home when just you and Pa are home, Ma. I know how excited you all must be after receiving my letter and I guess you know how I feel.

I won't be writing again from here – perhaps I'll drop a line from Le Havre.

Love to all

Loving Son

*Clifford*

P.S. It is Mildred's birthday give her my regards – a year ago tonite we pulled into position and met the general in the morning and killed him. I still have a beautiful Nazi badge I took from his breast Mildred will get it as a present when I get home.

*[Note: The next letter is the last one before Cliff sailed for home... .]*

September 17, 1945

[Envelope: 2-cent envelope; 6-cent airmail postage stamped over; APO postmarked September 18, 1945. S/Sgt. C. B. O'Connor – 11064771, C Co. 423 Inf. Reg., A.P.O. 443, U.S. Army. Stationery: Single sheet blue-lined notebook paper, one side, blue ink.]

Camp Lucky Strike  
France

*Dear Father*

I'm here at Lucky Strike waiting to go to Le Havre and get on that boat. We thought for sure we would be on the high seas by this time, but something has delayed us. I do expect however to leave here this week. This camp reminds me only too much of Camp Polk Louisiana. Rains a lot and plenty of mud. I'll be glad to get going. We can still make it to the States by the end of this month.

I'll bet it is swell at home now. Today isn't as bad as it has been the sun is out now and it is very warm.

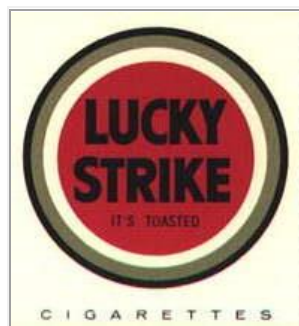
I will be getting my discharge from Ft. Devens. I think I'll go from there to Hartford and report to the Draft board and at the same time I can see all my friends there and then I'll go up to Vermont and take it easy for a while.

See you soon.

Loving Son

*Clifford*

Hope you can read this, I'm writing on my knee.



*Camp Lucky Strike (Janville, France)  
(5 miles northeast of Cany-Barville)*

*Internet images below from <http://www.skylighters.org/special/cigcamps/cmplstrk.html>*

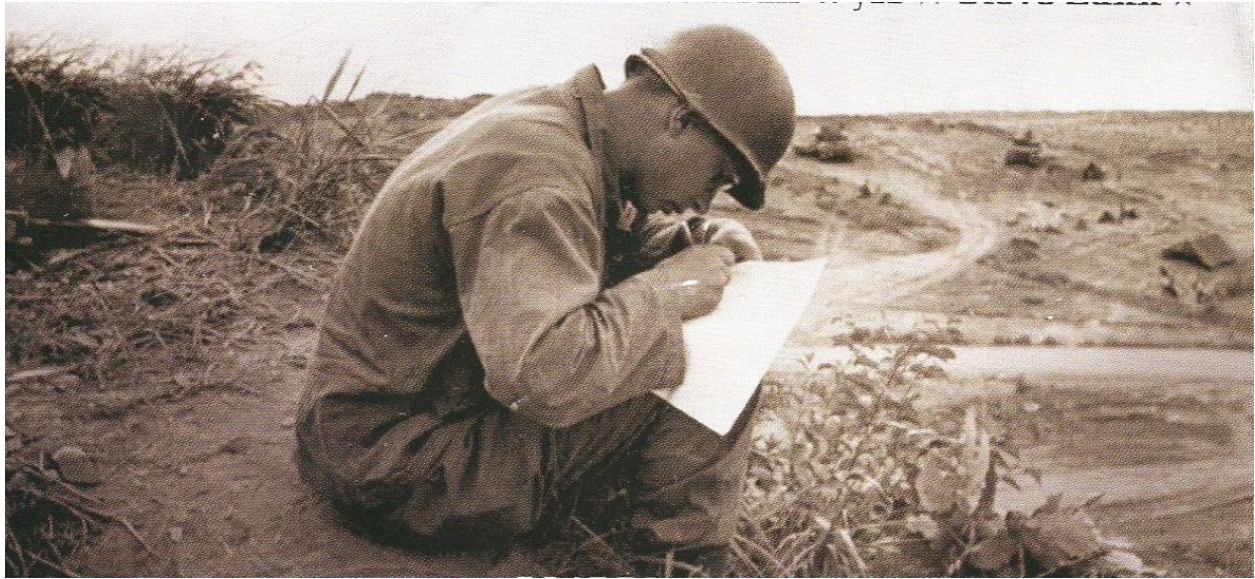


*A long line of GIs carrying war souvenirs to bring back to the United States following the surrender of Germany waits outside the so-called "Booty Tent" at Camp Lucky Strike*



*Inside the booty tent, GIs "register" their booty.*





While writing this last of his “War Years Letters” on his knee from Camp Lucky Strike, waiting to board a boat for home from Le Havre, Cliff was no longer wearing combat attire. However, he may well have written many of those that appear in this volume in just this kind of setting ...

*The above photo of an unidentified soldier is from  
“War Letters,” edited by Andrew W. Carroll. (ref. [www.warletters.com](http://www.warletters.com)) ...  
Whoever he was, hopefully his letters will not be forgotten either. (KOB)*



*Our parents rest in a gravesite in Saint Mary's Cemetery in Windsor Locks, Ct.  
Clifford died at age 69 on August 1, 1990; Dottie at age 79 on January 18, 2003.  
Our brother Peter designed the granite stone to include the insignia of the Third Armored  
“Spearhead” Division. A candle glows there every year, usually in deep snow, to honor all of the  
sacrifices in the cold winter of 1944 during the Battle of the Bulge.*

## EPILOGUE

Most of Cliff's collection of artifacts has been put on display in a case at the American Legion's Memorial Hall of Gensi-Viola Post 36 in Windsor Locks, Connecticut, where a small museum has been established for local veterans.



Over the years, Memorial Hall served as a prominent location for the many veteran-related activities that served as the foundation of family life from the early 1950's when the town of Windsor Locks expanded dramatically with the influx of veterans purchasing homes in the small town. Many happy memories. Inside the turret on the top floor, the veterans' museum has been established as part of the American Legion.

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***The following tribute there introduces the artifacts and World War II memorabilia of Clifford B. O'Connor:***

This case contains the WWII artifacts of S/Sgt. Clifford B. O'Connor, Windsor Locks resident from 1954 through 1990, when he died on August 10 at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Northampton, Ma.

Born on September 19, 1919, in Websterville, Vermont, he had moved to Hartford, Ct., and was employed by Pratt & Whitney Aircraft at the outbreak of WWII.

He was a Tank Commander with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, Co. B, 703<sup>rd</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion, Combat Command B, 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored "Spearhead" Division, commanded by General Maurice Rose, later by General Doyle O. Hickey after Gen. Rose's death.

A volunteer for Army service two months after Pearl Harbor, he left Hartford by bus at 5:30 a.m. on Monday, 9 Feb 1942, with 49 other young men bound for Fort Devens, MA. His training was at Camp Polk, La., Fort Hood, Tx., Camp Rice in the Mojave Desert, Ca., Camp Pickett, Va., and Indiantown Gap, Pa.; he sailed on September 5, 1943, at 11:15 a.m., on the U.S.S. Shawnee from Staten Island to Avonmouth, England; and, after D-Day, boarded LCT Weymouth for France, landing at Omaha White Beach on June 28, 1944. His first combat action occurred days later, at midnight on July 8, when Combat Command B crossed the Vire River under heavy shelling.

After Normandy, he fought in northern France, the Rhineland, the Ardennes, and in central Germany, where his personal notes show that *"when we were pulled off the line, we were at Dessau near the junction of the Elbe and Mulde Rivers,"* on April 21, 1945, and *"out of battle for good,"* on April 23. [Note that his Tank Commander's map, displayed atop other maps on this shelf, remains folded at Dessau, Germany.]

Sgt. O'Connor's combat boots, dog tags, and helmet serve as universal symbols of service members in every Theatre of Operation. Along with other items, they still convey the concept of service to our country in the cause of freedom, now more fragile than ever in the War on Terror.

In this context, an integral part of the display comprises the personal effects taken from a German General Officer – Lt. Gen. Konrad Heinrich, Commander of the 89<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. O'Connor's tank crew killed Heinrich at dawn on September 7, 1944, *"as he attempted to drive through a roadblock near Liege in a sporty convertible cabriolet. He was the fourth German general for whom the division had accounted."* On that day and the next, his tank and other units in the Command *"captured a fifth German General Officer, Bock von Wulfingen, and destroyed 35 enemy vehicles and seven MK IV tanks."* [Ref. displayed pamphlet, Call Me Spearhead, Saga of the Third Armored "Spearhead" Division and Sgt. O'Connor's account as excerpted in the Times of Barre, Vt.]

Grim reminders of the enemy, General Heinrich's fur-covered knapsack and most of its contents are displayed below. Items that remain in the possession of the family include the Iron Cross taken from his neck, a manicure set, and his pistol. Some of his items were consumed – Sgt. O'Connor's letter, written home on the dead General's stationery, refers to the *"good cigars and fine wine"* they'd enjoyed. Other German items include Nazi flags and banners, a sniper rifle, and a religious memorial card picturing Ferdinand Gloth, who died *"14. Oktober 1942 sein junge Leben fur das Vaterland."* The card, with its black serge relic from the young Nazi's shirt, was obtained by Sgt. O'Connor just after V-E Day at his house at the time in occupied Darmstadt and mailed home on 16 May 1945.



**Cliff sailed for home from Le Havre, France, at 6:03 p.m., on Thursday, September 20, 1945, on the U.S.S. Victory; docked in Boston at 11:30 a.m. on September 28, 1945; and reported, first to Camp Miles Standish, and then to Camp Edwards, where he was discharged on 2 Oct 1945. After 44 months in service, he celebrated his homecoming on his family's freshly painted piazza, in East Barre, Vermont, on Saturday, 6 Oct 1945. Δ**

He returned to work at Pratt & Whitney in East Hartford until his retirement in 1977, relishing every opportunity to learn as much as he could about the design and manufacture of jet engines, developing a passion for the JT-9D engine, on which he worked for many years. [See *letter dated January 14, 1945, for war-time perspective on his job there.*] He made fast friends there among his coworkers as he had among his tank crew buddies, with whom he remained in touch throughout his life.



**Top: A shelf of artifacts in the display case in Memorial Hall veterans' museum in Windsor Locks, Ct.; Bottom: Cliff's Pratt & Whitney desk sign and Third Armored Division ring (left), with the small crucifix he brought home from a farmhouse he and his crew had occupied in Germany during the final days of the war. This crucifix is still hanging in the kitchen where he hung it in 1954.**





*August 24, 1946*

*Cliff and Dot were married in the original brownstone Saint Joseph Cathedral, Hartford, Ct.*



*Dottie and Cliff with Karen and Peter, and, in front, Kenny and Kathy (ca. early 1960s); the inset is Dad with Ma, ca. mid-1970s.*



*Top left: Kenny, Cliff, Ma; right: Peter, Cliff, Ma; bottom left: Ma and Kathy; bottom right, Ma and Dot.*



*Above, Lula Nye O'Connor and Karen O'Connor Bray with Clifford, 1965  
East Barre, Vermont*



\* \* \*

A tribute to Clifford is being prepared for submittal to a website established to honor the men who served in the U.S. Tank Destroyer Forces. Please see [www.tankdestroyer.net](http://www.tankdestroyer.net), which states the following:

*“As the years since WWII continue to add up, much of the history is being lost and forgotten as families have no outlet to share the memories, photos and documentation from their father’s or grandfather’s time in the service. If you know of someone that served in the Tank Destroyer forces, please work with us to add them to our Honoree area. Use the Honoree tab on the Homepage and download the form to provide us with the needed information. If you have materials about a Tank Destroyer Veteran or a Unit that you could share, we would be honored to include it on the site. Please use the Contact link and the supplied form or send email to [info@tankdestroyer.net](mailto:info@tankdestroyer.net).”*

Only recently did I become aware of this site, and only to be astonished during my initial browsing to find my father’s picture among the few displayed in the Gallery for the 703<sup>rd</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion, one of the very pictures I had already inserted into this book. It had been provided by the family of one of the men pictured (see page 1945-57). The information that follows appears on the website and is reproduced here to complement the letters written home during World War II by Clifford B. O’Connor ...

\* \* \*

## 703rd Tank Destroyer Battalion

**Unit History:** Activated on 15 December 1941 at Camp Polk, Louisiana. Landed in France on 1 July, 1944. Saw first action near Hautes Vents on 13 July. Participated in Cobra breakout at end of month. Held in reserve during Mortain battle in August. Crossed the River Seine on 26 August, reached the Siegfried Line in the vicinity of Eschweiler, Germany, by 12 September. First battalion converted to M36's beginning 30 September. Fought along West Wall until mid-December, then transferred to Ardennes after launch of German offensive. Fought to reduce the Bulge in January, 1945 and joined drive to Cologne in February and early March. Crossed Rhine River on 23 March near Honnef and participated in envelopment of the Ruhr. Slashed east to stop line at Dessau by 14 April. Attached to: 82d Airborne Division; 3d Armored Division; 1st Infantry Division. History text from the book The Tank Killers by Harry Yeide. Used by permission.

**Combat Equipment:** 7/44 - M10; 10/44 - M36

**Commanding Officers:** Lt. Col. Prentice E. Yeoman; Lt. Col. Wilbur E. Showalter

**Code Name/s:** Amber

**Campaign Credits:** Normandy.....Jun. 6, to Jul. 24, 1944

Northern France.....Jul. 25, to Sept. 14, 1944

Rhineland.....Sept. 15, 1944 to Mar. 21, 1945

Ardennes-Alsace.....Dec. 16, 1944 to Jan 25, 1945

Central Europe.....Mar. 22, to May 11, 1945

**Awards:** Croix De Guerre (French or Belgian "Cross of War")

**Location August 1945:** Cologne, Germany

**History of the 703<sup>rd</sup>:** The book, *Spearhead in the West, the 3rd Armored Division*, is a 260-page WWII History. [The front cover of this book appears as the cover of this volume. The following two historical booklets were also among Dad's prized possessions. (KOB)]

