

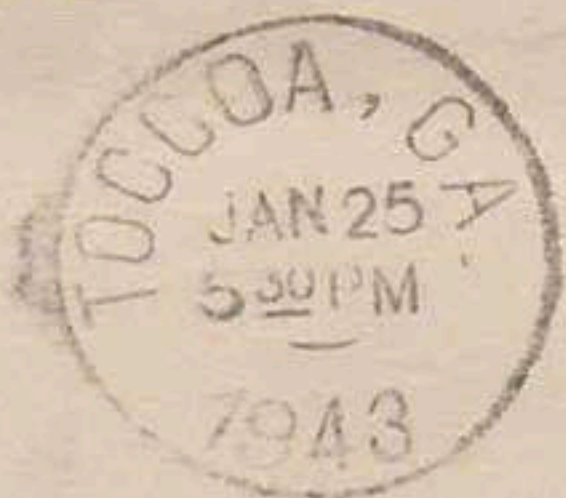
FROM Pvt. SIDNEY SMITHSON

COM. B 1st BN.

511TH PAR. INF.

CAMP TOCCOA

GEORGIA



FREE

CIVILIAN BOB MARK

2457 S. WENTWORTH AVE

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

IDLE GOSSIP SINKS SHIPS



January 24, 43

Hello Bobily;

How the hell is it in that cold corrupt city. Its about 65° here in the daytime which is all right with me.

Im in the Parachute Infantry and its the toughest best damn outfit in the world. Its hard and they wash out a lot but I think I'll make it.

The regular infantry averages 2½ miles an ~~hour~~ hour in marching. We have to average 6.

They have a fairly steep here three miles to the top. We'll have to run up and down that hill as fast as possible. We'll get a little conditioning first.

There was a contest yesterday

IDLE GOSSIP SINKS SHIPS

between all non-commissioned officers to see who could run the hill the fastest. First three men got a 10 day furlough and \$15-\$10²⁵. The record was broken by an Indian who ran it in forty minutes, five seconds which is amazing time. I can't see how he done it but he dood.

The men who didn't run it in an hour have to run it again today. Commissioned officers up to Captain have to run it

The oldest a Lieutenant can be is 32 and a Major has to be 40 or under so all the officers are young and they are all right.

I didn't feel any fear at all about jumping from an airplane until I seen one fly over today. The corporal told us it was just about at the height that we jump for our first jump. Damn that plane seemed high up. A lot of men freeze on there first jump but I won't. I hopes



I took two shots yesterday and they knocked me right on my back. I was only out for about 15 seconds. It was embarrassing as I was the only one to do it. Must have been the wild life I've been leading.

If you see any civilians who are squawking about rationing you can tell them from me they have no complaint. This is a new camp so we have very few luxuries. We have no metal trays for food so we have a six course meal piled on one plate. No forks, no coffee, no milk, very few cups so we usually drink cocoa out of a soup bowl. We have no foot lockers so we have to keep most of our stuff in our duffel bag. None of this bothers me though but being a soldier I naturally gripe

IDLE GOSSIP SINKS SHIPS

The soil down here is all red clay so in most places there's an inch of mud altho it hasn't rained for a week. It sure is sloppy.

I got a regulation haircut last night and I sure do look sharp. I'll be afraid to come home on furlough. There's not a hair on my head that's an inch long. Does it feel funny when I rub my head.

We are confined to the camp for seven weeks so I won't be drinking till then. I've also quit smoking. You'd be very surprised at all the beautiful virtues I've accumulated. I don't know how long I'll be able to keep it up. It makes me feel good but it's boring.

They're a swell bunch of guys in our barracks none of them being from Chicago. Were led around all day by a corporal as we can't go anyplace alone except to the latrine.

I think I'll sign off now I write.

again soon

Name SIDNEY SMITH S.O.N. U. S. Army

1ST BN. COM. B. - 511TH PARA, INF.
CAMP HOFFMAN N.C.



BOB MARK

2457 S WENTWORTH AVE

CHICAGO

ILLINOIS





Dear Bob;

I've ran up Cusakee mountain for the last time in my life. I'm happy about the whole thing. The land around here is very level.

You may have read an article in Readers Digest which said a commissioned officer did not have the right to touch an enlisted man without his permission. This seemed very gentlemanly to me but a fairly pitifull sight showed me it wasn't true. The last time we ran the mountain the time was one hour six minutes. When we got to the one and a half mile mark one fellow fell down. A "shave tail", jerked him to his feet and told him to keep running. Down he went again.

"Why you Yellow Bastard," the looey yelled, "you're yellow, you're yellow, you're yellow"

That Looey is sure a powerful guy because he half dragged that fellow half way up and down. Most of the way the fellows toes were draggin and he was crying all the way.

Left Tocoa Thursday night and made the 250 miles in thirteen hours which is average time for a troop train. The 511th Band was on the station and also the population of Hoffman (100 people) to greet us. A band always makes me feel good.

There's no ~~any~~ mud or clay here, just sand. The roads are asphalt (or sumpin) and are hard for double timing, but except for that it's a good camp. We double time every morning and increase the length of time until we'll have to run seven miles in one hour. The parachute part of this outfit is all right but the infantry part is ~~hard~~ hard work.

We've been practicing positions for firing the rifle. After a day of this my left arm feels like it's broke. We'll probably start shooting late next week and I swear I'll better qualify.

Today being Sunday we were supposed to be free for the whole day but had to march four miles to Hoffman to present arms to the second battalion which came in today. Most of the fellows are sleeping now and I'm tired.

We had to have our hair cut again. This time it's one half inch on top and hardly any on the sides. No sideburns. I'm trying to make my hair stand up as it looks best that way.



Bob, you better enjoy those last few days. You'll regret it if you don't. You'll find the Army different than you expect, I believe. I did. Its boring at times but I get a lot of laughs. The corporals got on my nerves at first because some of them are really dumb.

The Commanding officer gave us, "at rest," today while we were in formation. Our squad corporal wanted to shine an apple so he called the squad to attention to line us up. I knew I was three inches behind the others but stood at attention. He yelled for the seventh man, myself, to move up. I stood fast. He yelled for a couple of minutes and then walked over to me and asked if I was deaf. I told him we weren't supposed to move while at attention. That was that. I like to needle him.

At Tocoa our squad was marching directly toward a platoon. Instead of saying "To the rear march," he said, "about face." We just yelled "as you were" and walked into the platoon.

We were stacking rifles and the shave tail told us it was 100 pushups for the man

who knocked them down. He did..

He sleeps in the bunk above me and that Parachutee is scared to jump to the floor in the morning. What a jerk. How he ever got through his jumps I don't know.

I'm sure glad we'll get paid soon as I'm nearly broke. Some money in my pockets will feel good.

About those pictures I believe I can send you some next week. If I had jump boots and a jump jacket it would really be all right. Have you seen any guys from the parachute troops yet. Their uniform is the best in the service.

As to that situation at work, I'm a union man so I believe you know how I feel.

Say hello to Momely & Popely for me and write soon. Those pictures of the soldier who didn't get a letter are true.

S'long

Name Pvt. SIDNEY SMITHSON U. S. Army

Co. B 511th PAR. INF. A.P.O. 468

CAMP MACKALL

HOFFMAN N.C.

ON
UNCLE

Bob MARK

2457 S WENTWORTH

CHICAGO

ILLINOIS



Sat. 13th March.

Dear Bob,

Here it is Saturday night and I don't have a thing to do except write letters which is really unusual. My shoes are shined and my rifle cleaned. We probably won't have any details tomorrow except going to church. Glory glory Hallelulah.

You can't even ignore me for a day. By the Grace of God, luck and the best army rifle in the world I made sharpshooter. Not that sharpshooter is anything to rave about but for a yardbird like me its a miracle.

The first day that rifle scared Hell out of me as it was the first gun I'd ever fired. The second day I wasn't scared but my timing was all wrong. On rapid firing we have 60 seconds to drop from standing to sitting, kneeling or prone, fire eight rounds, reload, fire eight more. The time seemed so short that I machine gunned it which didn't help my score any. I only made 201.

The third day was record firing and I got the timing better and made 251 out of a possible 300. The company average was 232. I believe there were nine experts out of 150 men. They are all P.F.C.s now. My scores are on the next page

We had an inspection a week ago. Before it started we were lined up at attention. The corporal really looked sharp. He passed down the line straightening us up. When he came to me I stood stiff at attention then slowly reached out and pretended to fix his tie. More fun. I may have told you that one before.

You'd be surprised at the things we do here for relaxation. Last Sunday we had a big football game in the barracks. We had about 6 men on a team and knocked over double bunks and messed the place up in general. There's someone wrestling with somebody else all the time and they don't kid about it. They try Judo or anything. One guy got me off balance and slammed me over his hip. It's a good thing I landed right or I'd be a hospital case. fooling around is the best way to relieve the nervous tension we build up during the day. A couple hours out of the camp would sure help a lot but we won't be able to leave for another month.

I helped clean coemoline off new machine guns last night until 11.30. It sure is a dirty job. Then about 5 fellows and myself took a shower. The water was like ice. We threw soap and S.D. brushes at each other for a half hour singing and screaming at each other as if we were crazy. I guess we are. When we finished I was sitting on the toilet stool when one guy reached over the wall behind me and squirted the water from

in emergency as it isn't too accurate as the barrel is very short. Anyone who makes effort on one is really good. It fires faster than a regular machine gun as it fires at the rate of 600 to seven hundred shots a minute. However it only takes a magazine of 30 rounds. It weighs about 10 lbs and there is no kick to it, just the tendency to rise. On my first two shots I hit the target but the third was about ten feet above it. That's at only 27 feet yards too.

Will fire the other weapons next week and will fire for record on the Tommy gun Mon. or Tues. More fun. This army life is getting interesting.

The 511st PAR. INF. now belongs to the 11th. Air Borne division, which is made up of Parachutists, and Gliders. These bombers or transport planes flying around pulling gliders^{ies} all day.

There's quite a difference between Par. and Gliders. The Parachutists are all thin and usually small while the Gliders are all heavy and big. I've never seen such fat hind ends in my life as in a formation of Gliders. a couple miles of double timing would kill them.

That Lieutenant is superman. He really is. It hardly seems possible but I've heard he can do 1000 (yes one thousand) pushups. I can do about 30. He can do 100 pushups with either hand. I can do none. The corporal of mine is the one who knocks down rifles and sleeps above me.

POSITION	TIME	RANGE	SCORE	POSSIBLE	SHOTS
SITTING	SLOW FIRE	200 YDS.	16	20	4
KNEELING	"	"	17	20	4
STANDING	"	"	14	20	4
STANDING TO PRONE	65 SEC.	300 YDS.	60	80	16
STANDING TO SITTING	60 SEC.	200 YDS.	76	80	16
STANDING TO KNEELING	60 SEC.	"	68	80	16
			<hr/>		
			251	300	60

I fall down on standing to prone as I still can't get my left elbow completely under the rifle and it keeps slipping. Rapid fire sitting is duck soup and I made 12 bullseyes and 4 fives on it. On standing slow fire the gun shakes like Hell. Enough for the rifle.

The next couple days I spent in the pits running up targets and marking them. Its boring work.

This week we spent our time on a round robin. Each day we had outdoor classes on the Browning light machine gun, Thompson sub machine gun, 60 mm. mortar, and the Carbine. Its all very interesting. My head is just crammed with facts.

Today we fired 10 rounds on the Tommy gun. They aren't fired like the movies show. Its just about impossible to fire more than three shots without the gun rising and firing into the air so they are fired in short bursts. Its no damn good except at close range and

The fire extinguisher right on my back. I nearly hit the ceiling. If any civilian seen how we act they'd think we were a bunch of crazy insane fools.

Don't take that Gold brick job. I don't think you'd like it. Did you ever think of jumping out of an airplane.

I got a letter from George in which he sent me to Hell sixteen times and damned me 20 times. It was an interesting letter. Keep me informed on his progress into the army. I hope he makes it. I'd laugh myself sick if he ever got into the army as a buck ass private. He's too proud to realize that that's the best thing in the Army.

I ought to get those pictures developed by next week.

Give my love to your mother and father. I miss them.

S'long.

Sid

P.S. Your compliments on my writing has given me a swelled head. When I write a letter I hate to mail it.

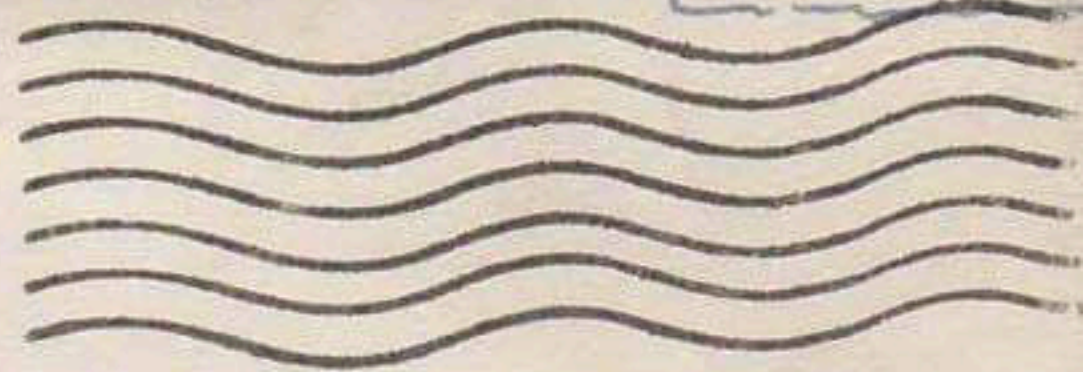


FROM PVT. SIDNEY SMITHSON

CO: B 511TH PARA. INF.

FRYING PAN

FORT BENNING, GA.



FREE

MR. BOB MARK

2457 S. WENTWORTH

CHICAGO

ILLINOIS



PARATROOPS
FORT BENNING, GA.

Dear Bob;

I wrote you a letter on the troop train coming down here but couldn't find the damn thing after I wrote it. What a case. Just finished two days of jump training. If everything goes OK I'll make my first jump on the 31st. This jump training is quite the thing.

The officers in our Regiment haven't anything to do with us in jump training. We take all orders from jump sergeants and they are nealy nough. The officers can come in the area where we train but have to follow the Sergeants orders. Its funnier than hell seeing a Looney get Hell bawled out of him by a buck sergeant. Its something I couldn't see enough of.

We are in "B" stage which consists of Mock towers which are about 40 feet high. We jump out of these and are stopped after 15 feet by a cable. Its to get correct position in the door and correct jumping.

Mock planes which teach us the proper conduct in a plane.

Suspended Harness which is for practice

in guiding a chute.

A landing trainer in which we slide down an "I" beam on a pulley. We are released about four feet from the ground and go into a tumble. Its rough. u

We stand at Parade Rest or Attention all day. It gets tiring

Our regiment lost a lot of men in basic training. We lost our first man in Jump training today. He refused to jump off the mock tower. A lot more will drop out. Maybe I will but doubt it very much. I've taken too damn much to drop out.

See some cheering sights here, fellows going around with broken bones all over the place. Yours truly ain't going to be that way.

We learn to pack chutes in the afternoon. Try sitting on a table at attention with your hands behind your back. I've done it for fifty minutes and it really hurts.

They call this place the frying pan and that's just what it is. Its 90° or above every day. We have fellows standing at every drinking fountain with salt tablets and we have to take one whenever we drink and one with every meal. You know the most delicious drink in the world is cool water.

They have every kind of outfit here you could think of. Also a hell of a lot of W.A.A.C.s.



PARATROOPS
FORT BENNING, GA.

Say you mentioned Frisky is good at firing the rifle. What was his score. as to a 50 caliber machine gun I've never seen one.

Duke is nearly getting around. I've only been drunk once since I've been in and that on 3.2. It's hell to be in a dog state. I've finished my basic training but they still treat us like rookies. We can't leave the post here why I don't know except that if you miss a days training here you are dropped back to another Battalion. In addition we had to go to Church last Sunday. If we have to go this Sunday I ain't going to do it. I mean that.

Thanks for writing even when I didn't answer. I had spring fever and bad. I've gotten over it now.

I long for now. I'll write next week and tell about the free towers.

Sid

FREE



FROM PVT SIDNEY SMITHSON

CO. B 511TH PARA. INF.

A.P.O. 468

FORT BENNING, GA.



MR BOB MARK

2457. S. WENTWORTH

CHICAGO

ILLINOIS



PARATROOPS
FORT BENNING, GA.

Dear Bob;

This place gets to be more like Riverview every day.

Last Week we kept busy in the morning jumping en masse out of the mock door, jumping out of the mock tower, practicing slips and body turns on the suspended harness, sliding down the landing trainer, and climbing around the trainasium or plumbers nightmare. It was a lot of fun but this week is even better.

We went out to the 250 feet towers this morning. Went up twice and got the thrill of my life. They pulled us up about 240 feet and then told us which way to slip. Slipping is pulling down two risers so as to go in the direction we pull the risers. You'd be very surprised to see how much parachutes can be steered. I went up with my ~~back~~^{face} toward the wind. If I stayed that way it would mean landing backwards which is bad. When I got up to 240 feet the instructor yelled through the megaphone for me to climb my rear risers to slip away from the towers. I started to climb and they pulled the chute up to 250 and released me. I slipped away from the tower alright but

was still backwards so I made a body
turn by putting my right hand behind my
back and grabbing my left risers. Then grabbed
my right risers and twisted myself around
for a perfect landing. The other tower was the
control tower. We go straight down but
the landing shock is much more. It jolts
Hell out of us but sure is fun. I know now
why they give paratroopers extra money. In our
Platoon which is 50 strong as its over strength.
One man broke his ankle, one man sprained
his ankle so bad he'll be out for a week, and one
fellow wrenched his shoulder on the control tower.
There were eight broken legs in our Battalion of about
550. all these injuries are unnecessary. The fellows
either landed on their heels, or weren't loose enough,
or landed sideways. It sure feels funny going
up a tower for the first time after the guy
that went up two men before breaks his leg.

I could jump all day on those damn things

We got our jump boots Saturday so
everyone is spending their spare time shining
them. These the best damn looking boots
in the country.

These two pages were stuck together.

I long for now.

Sid.

PVT SIDNEY SMITHSON

CO. B 511TH PARA. INF A.P.O. 468

U. S. ARMY PARACHUTE TROOPS
CAMP MACKALL N.C.



FREE

Mr BOB MARK
2457 S. WENTWORTH.
CHICAGO
ILLINOIS

bad
body
position



Monday June 14, 43

U. S. ARMY PARACHUTE TROOPS

Dear Bob;

Well I crawled away from five jumps so am now a Para-trooper. There was quite a number of injuries, none of them serious but I was lucky getting away with only a slightly stiff neck. We made a damn good record in Benning. No one refused to jump in our Battalion.

Here is the best description of jumping I can give. We got up about 5:30 in the morning, ate, loafed around a while. Then at 7:45 we marched down to the packing sheds

They called of our numbers and we filed into the store room and drew our chutes which we had packed the night before.

Then to the inspection line where riggers inspection took place to see that the chutes were O.K. Before the third jump the rigger noticed my static line was twisted twice around my shoulders. I'd have been a dead duck if he hadn't seen it.

We then marched (ain't getting military) into the waiting room or as we called it the sweat box. We sweat in there usually for about fifteen minutes before the air-

plane came up. Once we stayed in that room for three hours waiting for the ceiling to lift and every minute I felt a little worse. That Parachute gets damn uncomfortable. The harness is so tight it makes a person round shouldered.

Slight pause in this letter for a call of nature.

Then the plane comes in and twenty four men file in. The first one in is the last one out. For some reason I was in the second stick all five jumps. Was number 2, 3, 3, 5, 9. ~~4~~ Ninth was the best. We taxi over to the lane we are to go down. Then the pilot tests both his engines until the planes shake the plane until it seems as if its ready to fall apart. a louder roar and the plane moves off. As soon as the plane leaves the ground we light up. Guys that never smoked before smoke like fiends. Somebody starts to sing and we all join in but it dies out. We talk but nobody cracks a joke and there's very few smiles.

The jump master is standing in the door waiting until we pass over the field. He hasn't a worry in the world. The butterflies are going mad in our stomach. I'm scared but I knowe every one else is. I know damn well I'll jump though I look at my hands and see no trace of trembling.

About seven minutes have passed and the jump master yells "First stick get ready." Then "Stand up." The usual orders are given and out the door they go.



U. S. ARMY PARACHUTE TROOPS

The plane makes a wide circle and we see the other fellows drifting down.

In about three minutes we hear "Get ready." we stomp out our cigarettes and grab our static line snap fasteners.

"Stand up" Up we jump and fast and switch over to the other side of the plane, grabbing the cable along the top of the plane to keep our balance. My knees feel weak.

"Hook up." We hook our static line ~~to~~ snap fastener to the cable.

"Check your equipment" We check the fellows back pack in front and then ourselves especially our leg straps and static line.

"Sound off for equipment check"
The twelfth man sounds off "12th O.K."
and its carried down the line.

"Stand in the door" and the first man does so. We move up and close up very close. The first man stands in a crouched position looking straight ahead his hands on the outside of the plane and his left foot in the door.

"Is everybody happy" "Hell Yes" we yell. "You damn live is the answer."



U. S. ARMY PARACHUTE TROOPS

"Then lets go." and out we go. It seemed as if the plane was going about five miles an hour while we were inside but outside it seems as if we stepped out of a warm house into a blizzard. The prop blast is terrific. Its only two seconds before the chute opens but its the strangest thing how much thinking goes on. None of it though about home or anything like that. ~~The~~ My head is down and and I see the ground and its very far below. I check to see that my feet are together, my body bent. Head down, and hands across reserve. I start to do a backwards summersault and I can see the fellows chute in front of me open so I figure its about time for mine.

Crack and its open. The body shock is realy hard but I hardly feel it. Then I'm standing in air. Its a wonderful feeling. What the Hell was I scared of. It takes nearly a minute until we reach the ground from twelve hundred feet. seems as though well never get down. I could float for hours.

I look down and by the way the parachutes are lying on the ground.

I can tell what way the wind is blowing. Make a body turn and put my back into it. Check to see that my legs are slightly apart and even. About twenty five feet the ground starts to rush up at me. I land hard tumble and lie there and get out of my harness.

Roll up my chute and walk to my the trucks. Boy what a feeling. I could lick the whole damn world. We talk the jump over for hours.

We got back here for Saturday before last. On Tuesday we got our wings and jump boots. We get about the same thing here as we did before except we run $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles before breakfast. We ran it this morning and then at 3:00 we ran for record. The only excuse I have for my remarkably slow time is the heat. The temperature was pushing 100° . I made it in 29 minutes. The whole Battalion ran including the officers. My C. O. made the record running it in 22 minutes. That's damn good time.

The hopes of a furlough soon seems to be fading as all the N.C.O. will probably get to go first. However I'm still hoping. Hope springs eternal.

I long for now

Lid

Send Georges Address