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Jack P. Bell World War Two Correspondence #113

Jack P. Bell

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Private J. P. Bell
78th. Signal Co. 78th. Div.
Camp Butner, N.C.
A.P.O. 78

Mrs. Jack Bell
345 W. River St.
Elyria, Ohio
Camp Perry
Mar. 15, 1943

Dear Fink,

I'll kind of get this started now and maybe I'll have more to add to it later.

We've had a sort of a half-baked physical exam so far. Shortarm and rupture check.

We've just had chow. Not bad. Pork, bread dressing, potatoes, bread and butter, and jello.

I didn't mark any address on this because I don't know just what it is, but I probably won't be here very long anyway. I'm in barracks 13.

We're going to take our test pretty soon. We're just waiting for the order now. They say we'll get our uniforms this afternoon.
First day of Spring

Started - On troop train
snowing in the
Virginy.

South East of Roanoke, Va.

Dearest Fink,

I'll write a few lines now, as
much as this swaying coach will permit.
Too bad I couldn't have stuck around a
few more days, and gotten a week-end pass,
but this is the army. I've seen a lot of
practically the same country we saw to-
gether on our vacation. We left Roanoke
a few minutes ago. Had about a half-hour
stopover there. From what I could see out
the train window we didn't miss much
by not seeing their downtown section last
fall. Remember, we just hit the edge of
town?

Three of us are sharing two seats in
this day coach. My buddies are Jim Baker
from Amherst. A former trumpet player in
a dance band, and Henry Burroughs from
Exeter No. 4, Former Oberlin College student, and drafted through the Oberlin Board. Both seem like swell fellows, and are good traveling companions. Right now they're mapping. It's pretty hard to register as full nights sleep on their coaches, I don't care myself. You know me when I travel, I hate to miss anything.

We left Perry at 5 o'clock yesterday afternoon. We had supper on the train last night, and breakfast this morning. This army is alright. They really take care of the men. They have a stove in a baggage car built with bricks. For supper we had salmon, boiled potatoes, string beans, pickle, cookies and ice cream and coffee.

For breakfast we had bacon, scrambled eggs, bread, jam, coffee and an orange. It's quite all right.

I think old Dixie is down us dirt today. Here it is first day of spring and it started to snow just as we left Roanoke. It's hard telling where we're going. The only thing that's definite is that it will be South. I just asked the train man what our next stop would be. That's about all you can ask without seeming too curious. He said it was Lynchburg Va. We don't know where we're going, and we don't know what branch of the service we're in, but in the meantime I'm enjoying my free trip anyway. There's a little difference between traveling through these hills in a car and
it, and if I can't I'll see if I can find a sucker. The first nite we got here we didn't stay at the camp proper. They have a concentration camp about four miles from here. Sometimes in the future they'll move all the Japs they have at Fort Bragg over there. That's where we stayed Sunday nite. It's known here as Messy Center. Named right too. It's a regular mud hole.

We'll be quarantined here for 21 days. That means that we're not even allowed to go to the PX unless we can get a man come to accompany us.

I feel sort of fortunate getting into the Signal Corp. When they started assigning us to Companies yesterday there must have been about 300 men. Most of them went into regular infantry Company. Four of us got Signal Corp.

I guess after we get started in classes we'll have more time to write. Now usually part of our evening is occupied. Tonite we'll have to
mark all our clothing.

You'll probably notice that your post card was written on and erased, then written again. I wrote the card at Merry Center, but there was no place to mail it so when I got here I thought I might as well put the address on. I didn't know what my address would be when I was out there.

We have more equipment to take care of now. Bells, suspenders, a pup tent with poles and pegs, and mosquito netting.

Tomorrow is your birthday, honey. I sure wish we could celebrate it together. With the setup we have now I won't even be able to call you, but I'll be thinking of you as I always do. When I get a chance to get out I'll get a little gift for you.

I slept better last night than I have any night since I've been in the army.

Here we get 2 blankets and a comforter. At Camp Perry and Merry Center we only had 1 blanket. That extra cover makes a lot of difference in sleeping comfort.

Darling, will you please send me one of our big bath towels? The army only gives us one, and that's not quite enough.

It's 6:05 evening now. I just have to write a line here and then when I get a chance, this evening I have to take a code aptitude test. That will be the next interruption.

I've just come back from the test room so I think I'll wind this up now dear, and maybe I can get a sergeant or corporal to mail this.

I'll try and write more next time.

Happy Birthday, Sweetheart,

All my Love,

John

Jack
Private J.P. Bell

78th. Signal Co. 78th. Div.

Camp Butner, N.C.

A.P.O 78

Mrs. Jack Bell

345 W. River St.

Elyria, Ohio
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Dearest Fink,

I'll write a few lines now, as much as this swaying coach will permit. Too bad I couldn’t have stuck around a few more days, and gotten a week-end pass, but this is the army. I’ve seen a lot of practically the same country we saw to—gether on our vacation. We left Roanoke a few minutes ago. Had about a half hour stopover there. From what I could see out the train window we didn’t miss much by not seeing their downtown section last fall. Remember, we just hit the edge of town?

Three of us are sharing two seats in this day coach. My buddies are Jim Bauer from Amherst. A former trumpet player in a dance band, and Henry Burroughs from
Exeter N.H. Former Oberlin College student, and drafted through the Oberlin board. Both seem like swell fellows, and are good traveling companions. Right now they’re napping. It’s pretty hard to register a full night’s sleep on these coaches. I don’t care myself. You know me when I travel, I hate to miss anything.

We left Perry at four o’clock yesterday afternoon. (Sat.) We had supper on the train last night, and breakfast this morning. This army is all right [sic]. They really take care of the men. They have a stove in a baggage car built with bricks. For supper we had salmon, boiled potatoes, string beans, pickle, cookies and ice cream and coffee.

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I think old Dixie is doin’ us dirt today. Here it is first day of spring and it started to snow just as we left Roanoke. It’s hard telling where we’re going. The only thing that’s definite is that it will be South. I just asked the train man what our next stop would be. That’s about all you can ask without seeming too curious. He said it was Lynchburg Va. We don’t know where we’re going, and we don’t know what branch of the service we’re in, but in the meantime I’m enjoying my free trip anyway.

There’s a little difference between traveling through these hills in a car and
a train. In a car you usually climb one. The train’s roadbed follows a river through the mountains, and then if there is a high one, and there’s no way for the train to skirt it they cut a tunnel thru’. There’s very little sensation of climbing on this train. Of course now we’re out of the hills for awhile.

Tues. morning. 10:15

This army is O.K., but you don’t have much time to play around. I’m just waiting for a clothing check. They do this to see if we have everything that was given us at Camp Perry. We had some drill this morning.

In my card I told you I bought a wrist watch for $3.00. I’m afraid I got stung. The darn thing was an hour fast this morning. I’ll see if I can regulate
it, and if I can’t I’ll see if I can find a sucker. The first nite we got here we didn’t stay at the camp proper. They have a concentration camp about four miles from here. Sometime in the future they’ll move all the Japs they have at Fort Bragg over there. That’s where we stayed Sunday nite. It’s known here as Messy Center. Named right too. It’s a regular mud hole.

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I'll try and write more next time.

Happy Birthday, Sweetheart.

All my love,

Your husband,

[underscore] Jack [/underscore]