

[Letter No. 1]

[Postcard]

1 – 21- 42

Dear Betty,

Arrived at noon today and checked in. Think it will be OK – but sure will be long hours and lots of work.
I'll write more when I know more.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 2]

Thursday night [Postmarked 23 Jan 42]

Dear Betty,

I'm sure missing all of you tonight.

Started classes today and they sure do lay it to us. I had a shot in the arm this morning for typhoid and another in the other arm for lockjaw so both arms are pretty sore tonight. I also had a headache all day which I suppose was caused by the shots. Otherwise I am fine.

There surely is a mob of officers here for training, and more arriving every day. They are of all ages and grades. There are quite a lot of them as old or older than I am who are 2d Lts, so I don't feel so out of place. However, I have learned that transfer to other branches was stopped in December, so I regret all the time I spent in the Engineer School work. Sure could have used any QM knowledge that I would have picked up if I hadn't asked for transfer. However regulations as well as everything else change fast in wartime so maybe my chance will come some day.

We get up at 5:00 o'clock, eat breakfast and have to be in class by 6:20 AM, when its still black night out here. We stay in class until 9:00 PM with an hour and forty minutes for dinner and one hour for supper. Classed are one hour periods with ten minute rest periods, and a one hour drill period some time during the day. After 9:00 o'clock at night our time is our own, but it takes nearly half an hour to get back to quarters unless I'm lucky enough to catch a ride with someone who brought a car. The schedule is for six days a week, but I hope we have Sundays off. I wish I hadn't brought my civilian clothes because I'm not going to be using them here. I understand the course will last six weeks, after which we will probably be assigned to duty somewhere else, those of us who finish satisfactorily. I hope I can swing is, but I haven't felt so dumb and useless for years.

I won't take time to tell you about my trip out or the people I have met. They are a fine bunch. Ralph Wells, a Nebraska Project Engineer arrived here a day before I did. A lot of Texans are here, some from California, and everywhere. A lieutenant from Spokane moved in to share my quarters today. He is a war veteran and a family man same as me.

We can see the Rockies from here. Tell the kids I passed Pikes Peak and Longs Peak on the way out and had a fine view of both.

I'd sure like to see you all.

Lots of Love.

Jim

P. S. Will you write Yankton where I am? It may be some time before I'll get much writing done.

Address – Lt. J. R. Sorenson
3d QM Training Regiment
Fort Francis E. Warren, Wyoming.

[Letter No. 3]

Sunday, Jan 25, 1942

Dear Betty,

It's nice to have a day off, but now I'm lonesome for you and the kids and grandpa --- something I haven't had much time for during the last week.

I don't know if I told you what our schedule is but if I did I'll repeat and tire you out with it, same as it tires me.

In order to get dressed, shaved and eat breakfast before school starts I have to be up at ten minutes before five. That's long before sunup of course and dark as the middle of the night. First class is at 6"20 and classes continue all day until 9:00 o'clock at night, when of course its pitch dark again. The class periods are one hour with a ten minute rest between. Class room work is varied by calisthenics, close order drill, tent pitching, and all the things a soldier has to know. The boys would be tickled to see their dad drilling in the ranks. I am leader of the first squad, 1st Platoon, and all my "Privates" are Second Lieutenants. Our platoon leader is a Captain from El Paso. Bobby and Neal would be please with my Springfield rifle. In a week or two we will leave to hike out to the rifle range at Pole Mountain for a week's target practice. We will have to live in pup tents and sleep on the ground. In addition to our officers work we will be required to do everything the enlisted men do "So you can instruct your men", they tell us. That exactly right too. And I wish we could have had more of it in peace times instead of having it all poured on in a few weeks.

Yesterday morning, in addition to a very stiff physical exercise and drill we were sent through the obstacle course. In this course you have to run over a course with a lot of obstacles of various kinds, and at this altitude with the thin air it sure does make you gasp for your breath. You have to jump a ditch, scramble into and out of a trench, scale a ten foot wall, swing across a water hazard on a rope, hop and skip through a network of auto tires set about knee high, go through wire entanglements, climb ladders over a high bar, crawl through culverts, and a lot of other junk like that. Some of the more paunchy gentlemen were pretty wheezy long before they finished, but I imagine all surplus fat will be gone soon.

Presumably this training course will last six weeks, but nothing is certain. Three officers in this regiment got orders this morning to leave for San Antonio tonight. They had only been here two days.

I would like it all if I wasn't so homesick for you all. I knew I would be, of course. It sure would be nice to get a station at Leavenworth or Riley or some place near home.

Write often and have Bobby and Neal and Jean write sometimes too. Tell Jimmy to be good. I wrote a little letter to Mother today. How is Dad? Hope he got over his sick spell all right.

Lots of love to all.

Jim

[Letter No. 4 - Postcard]

Sunday morning, Feb 1, 1942.

Dear Betty,

I arrived and reported yesterday. I'm glad today is Sunday as I sure am all beat out.

They have moved us out of the Center and into the old post. Things are much handier here, but the hours are just as long.

I'm glad I got home but miss you all just as much as before, more maybe. There isn't anything new so I won't write a letter today. There was a letter from you waiting for me. That helped a lot.

Lots of love to all.

Jim

Correct address is now:

Lt. J. R. Sorenson

Officers Training School

Quartermaster Repl Tng. Center

Ft. Francis E. Warren, Wyoming

[Transcriber's note: JRS' mother died on 26 Jan and he was able to attend the funeral in South Dakota on 28th. He then went home to Kansas City on 29th - 30th, returning to Ft. Warren on 31 Jan.]

[Letter No. 5]

Tuesday night, Feb. 3, 1942

Dear Betty,

I'm all ready for bed but thought I'd write you a note first. Things are as usual, the same old grind. Didn't sleep very well last night because of a shot in the arm and was half sick all day, but feel all right now. The worst features are the early and late hours, and the long days. It's sometimes hard to keep awake in the classroom.

I miss you all a lot and get awfully homesick of course. I've only had two letters from you since I came. Don't know whether that's all you have written or whether the mail service is bad. Things don't run so very smoothly with so many people coming and going all the time.

There isn't anything new.

Sure wish I could see you and the kids and dad once in a while. How is everyone?

Lots of love to you all.

Write as often as you can.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 6]

Saturday night

Dear Betty,

I got your Thursday letter just before supper today after having given up hope of hearing from you this week. I've been back a week now and that's the first I've heard from you, except the one you wrote while I was in Yankton, and was waiting for me when I returned. The mail situation is queer here. I'm going to mail all letters myself at the post office from now on. There are too many channels to pass through if you ail them in a Hq. box or give them to an orderly. I've only had three letters from you since I left home and that seems like a long time. I heard one of the guys say between classes today that this was the first time in his life he had lived 30 days in only two weeks time. The days we work are so long that it actually does seem that way. If we were on reasonable hours the time would fly because we are so busy.

Today was a fine day here and as warm as spring, but it started to drizzle about dark and the ground is white with snow now. The mountains were all white this morning so maybe winter is coming back. Thursday was a terrible day, not very cold but almost as windy and dirty as the old North Dakota dust storm days.

I'm sorry to hear about the way the Dr. treated the Gerrings. There ought to be some way to jail those guys for highway robbery.

There isn't any change in the situation out here, same old fluttering around trying to get organized. They are trying to take care of the big expansion and build an army overnight. Impossible of course, but we've got to try.

I'm glad to hear you are all well. I'd like to see Jimmy lugging the footstool and looking out the window and all the kids, and you too of course. A youngster came into the classroom today and we all stared like yokels. Somebody said "Gosh, I'd forgot what kids look like."

It's all right to tell the Treasury Dept. to discontinue the notices.

Wish there was something of interest to write about but there is nothing, and won't be until we finish this school. Then I may get put in something equally dull and uninteresting --- probably will since this is the QM.

It's after ten o'clock and I'm going to bed. I intend to sleep most of the day tomorrow.

I was glad to hear Dad was well and hope he is rested up from the trip home.

Write as often as you can. Love to all of you.

Jim

[Letter No. 7]

Tuesday night, Feb. 10, 1942

Dear Betty,

Yesterday I received the letter you wrote me the Sunday after I left home the second time. It was a nice letter. I felt the same way you did, and like you, I didn't know how to say it. Wish I had you here now. I would sure try anyway.

I tried to write to you last night, but they gave us a lot of Army forms to fill out which had to be made out at once., so I sat up working on them until eleven o'clock,, which is awfully late when you consider our short sleeping hours. Then I fell into bed too tired to even tin about writing.

I think the main reason that letter was so late is because it was addressed to my old address – 3d Regiment. Leave that off after this --- they moved us across the creek onto the main post. I gave you the new address when I came back from leave.

About 5:45 this PM they assembled the companies behind the school and the Colonel announced that he had bad news for us. We all expected to hear something dire. Then he told us we were excused for the day, would not have to come to evening classes tonight, but could attend the stage show which is being brought in by the U. S. O. And then he said that beginning tomorrow we would come to classes at 7:30 AM instead of 6:30, and would be off at 8:00 PM instead of 9:00 o'clock. Those seem like lazy men's hours now. We all forgot we were at attention and gave the Colonel a roar that he must have like, anyway he didn't bawl us out. I didn't go to the show however, but went to the officers club for a haircut against tomorrow's inspection, and then came home to write to you.

I feel pretty good these days, except today I took a third typhoid shot and my arm feels like it had been mangled by a shark. I still have to take two more tetanus shots, one for yellow fever, and a smallpox vaccination. Don't get ideas about the yellow fever, that's routine for everyone nowadays.

They are piling on exams this week with most of them scheduled near the end of the week. I wrote one yesterday and got 100%, and another today for 94%. However, they were on subjects I had covered completely. Some of the subjects have been running since school started and I have missed a good 1/3 of the work. I hate to think of having to stand examination on them. There hasn't been a bit of time to read up on the parts I missed while on leave. I can only do my best, which may not be good enough.

Remember me to the boys and the girl and grandpa.

Lots of love for all of you.

Jim

[Letter No. 8]

Friday night, Feb. 13, 1942

Dear Betty,

This was kind of a red-letter day --- I got two letters from you, one of them attached to the valentine. That sure was nice too, and the candy is delicious, all three kinds. I don't know which kind was the best. Thank the boys for me, and Jean too for her nice valentine.

The weather has been rather disagreeable all week and it has been snowing all day today, not heavily, but just enough to make things all white. It's nice except during the drill periods.

My roommate went to the hospital on Wednesday, but I am still going strong. I feel good except for a day or two after my shots in the arm, then I am feverish and half sick for a day or so. However, I have finished my typhoid series --- three shots a week apart, and two tetanus shots which we take every three weeks. The typhoid is a lot the worst in its after effects. Only one more for the tetanus series, and then I'll have to take the yellow fever and smallpox inoculations. They wear you out with hypos I this army. I think my roommate was more worried than sick. He had just recovered from a dangerous throat infection when he reported and thinks it's a relapse. I was up to see him tonight. His name is Faraway and he comes from Minneapolis.

I surely hope your mother comes down with the Holcombs and stays with you a while. It would be nice if Aunt Kate would stay too. I'll bet they could have a good time together and they would be company for you.

We are still right busy although things are easier under the new schedule. The place is getting better organized though, and it's not as tough as it was at first. It was really something at first. We are the first class, and instead of the 30 or 40 officers they had planned for the War Department sent in several hundred to be put through the works. They tell us not to get the idea that this is hard work though, because we will have to work night and day for the next few months to help with the big expansion of the Army planned for the next year.

I feel bad because I couldn't get a valentine for your or the kids. They had a few at the post exchange some time ago, but that place is swarming with officers and men during the few minutes I have been able to visit it, and it is actually impossible at most times to get near enough to a counter or a clerk to buy anything. I haven't been to town either, except for a half hour last Sunday evening when I drove in with Ralph Wells. He is one of the Nebraska Project Engineers I used to visit on my trips. As you know Sunday night is not a good time to shop. I did get some postcards which I mailed to the kids yesterday. I'll look for something nice when I have the opportunity.

I packed my civilian clothes in a carton tonight and will try to get it mailed in the morning. They should arrive in time to have them cleaned and pressed by the time the war is over.

Thanks again for the candy, and love to you all.

Jim

[Letter No. 9]

Sunday P.M., February 15, 1942

Dear Betty,

They surprised us greatly yesterday by announcing there would be no school in the afternoon, so I came into town with another guy to see the sights. We shopped around a little and I bought you a couple of knick-knacks for a valentine at a ranch-outfitting and souvenir store. They were to wrap and mail it for me so let me know if it doesn't arrive. We then went to the Elks Club for a few drinks and then to the Plains Hotel for dinner. Just as we were leaving the hotel after eating I thought to ask if Earl was registered, and sure enough he was there. I had him paged, but couldn't find him, so we sat around in the lobby for half an hour and then he came in. He had wired me from Lusk in the morning but had used my old address, and I hadn't received it when I left for town. We sat around his room for a while and then we went out to the Officers Club for a few more drinks and then to bed. I slept till nearly noon today, had dinner, and then Earl came out. We loafed around my quarters for a while and then came in to the hotel again. It's 4:20 PM now and Earl hasn't eaten yet so I thought I would use the time to write you while he shaves and cleans up. I am going to use his tub for a good hot bath after a while. The showers at the barracks are usually cold on Saturday and Sunday, and I don't care much for showers anyway.

There isn't much news to write about except that the hours are easier now, and I hope they continue to give us our Saturday afternoons off.

I filled out a form to the QM General in which they asked --- among a lot of other things --- what my preference in station would be. They asked for three, so I named Kansas City, Fort Leavenworth, and Omaha as my three choices. However, I haven't an idea in the world that they will pay any attention to it --- it's just a form. However, I sure wanted to try. I certainly wish I could be where I could see you all frequently.

Write often as you can.

Love

Jim

[Transcriber's note: "Earl" is Earl Gearke, JRS' brother-in-law. Earl was a traveling salesman dealing in clothing; Wyoming must have been in his territory.]

[Letter No. 10]

Thursday noon, Feb. 19, 1942

Dear Betty,

I'll write you a hasty note during noon recess as there isn't much news and I want to get a little letter to you by Sunday anyway.

I got your Sunday's note yesterday together with the letters from Bobby, Neal, and Jean. I was awfully glad to get them all. I wish Jimmy could write too.

It's just a month tomorrow morning since I started active duty. So many things seem to have happened since that it seems a lot longer than that. I don't mind the work; the only hardship is being away from you and the youngsters and dad and home. If I could only get duty where I could get home week-ends, or better yet, stay at home it would be fine.

I had a short letter from Stella yesterday. Not much news in it, but she did innumerate a few of her ailments and what the doctor says. I guess they feel pretty lost on account of Mother being gone and especially since everything they did for so long revolved about her care.

I also had valentine cards from several of my sisters, including one from Hayes & Marie. Otherwise, I haven't heard from up there, except what Earl had to say. I wrote them a joint letter a couple of weeks ago.

It is some time since you said you were expecting your Mother and Aunt Kate. I hope they have arrived or will arrive soon.

I hope you have recovered from the cold. Take care of yourself.

Love.

Jim

[Transcriber's note: Stella is one of JRS' sisters. Marie is another, and Hayes is her husband.]

[Letter No. 11]

Sunday, Feb 22, 1942

Dear Betty –

I got your Monday's letter on Friday and your Thursday's letter yesterday. I am glad you liked the valentine remembrances. They weren't much, but it hard to find nice gifts when your shopping time is as limited as ours is.

I went over to the school to look for mail right after dinner and on the way back met a couple of officers who told me they had seen my name on a War Department Order transferring me and several others out of here to the QM Motor Depot at Stockton, California. I found a copy of the order in the possession of a young lieutenant who had come out from Chicago on it, and sure enough I was listed. The order is dated Feb. 13, and since none of us here have received it, it is possible it may have been rescinded. However, I am getting my things in shape, as much as possible today, as tomorrow is Monday and they may spring it on us then. It may be too, that we will first be required to complete the six weeks course here before it becomes effective, but I doubt that. I asked for duty near home and hoped I might get Ft. Leavenworth, or as near home as Ft. Crook or Omaha at least, but looks as if that's out. After all we are at war and wherever they thing they need us most is the place we will have to go, and that's the way it should be of course. I do miss you all a lot thought.

I would like to see the living room with the new slip covers. Maybe in a few weeks or months I can get leave and come home for a few days.

You said Handley had asked about Wells. He stays in a building next to mine, but his wife is staying with her folks in York, Nebraska. However, I met them both in front of the Officers Club a couple of hours ago. She came out to spend the weekend with him. It doesn't take long to get out here on a streamliner from Grand Island.

I'm sorry to hear your mother is sick again. Hope she will be well soon and can make you that visit.

I don't think you told me whether or not you received the civilian clothes I mailed home. It was quite a while ago and they should have arrived some time ago if they didn't get lost.

We passed in review before the General yesterday, and then took our place beside the reviewing stand to watch the regiments go by --- 10,000 men and officers. The General was highly pleased with the appearance of his Student Officer unit. The officers in the stand said you could have stretched a board down our ranks and touched every man in the ranks, which was really something when you consider that we had only had an hour's instruction and had only made a couple of practice tries in that formation just before the review. If you have ever seen a formal review you know how seldom you see a really good line in the march-past.

Well, I guess I've told you all the news. I'll let you know as soon as I know something definite about those orders.

Love to all of you.

Jim

[Transcriber's note: "Handley" was JRS' boss at the time he left for the Army. I do not know about "Wells", but can guess that he was a co-worker at the Public Roads Administration, with JRS.][See letter #29 for info on Wells.]

[Letter No. 12]

Tuesday night, February 24, 1942

Dear Betty –

I got your Sunday's letter right after last class today.

The Colonel assembled nine of us right after school this afternoon and told us our orders had finally arrived, (the ones I told you about Sunday). He said they, (the orders), would be ready for us in the morning.

It will take most of the day tomorrow to clear this post ant then we are off for California.

I hate to get any farther away from you and the children, but after all this is a war and we have got to resign ourselves to it I guess. After all, orders fly fast in wartime and I may get a post near K. C. before many months. In any case I'll keep my eyes open for a leave to come home for a visit as soon as possible.

Our destination is Stockton, and I will let you know a s soon as I arrive and get locate there. We expect to leave Cheyenne tomorrow night.

Lots of love to all of you.

Jim

Wednesday noon, February 25, 1942

Dear Betty ---

I wrote the letter on the reverse last night, but due to a rumor I heard I did not mail it early this morning as I had intended.

I spent a hectic morning attending to the thousand and one details of clearing the post and returned for lunch to find our barracks in quarantine. One of the officers went to the hospital yesterday and his trouble turned out to be scarlet fever. Someone told me last night that was what he had so I was expecting the quarantine.

If no new cased develop, (I hear), we will be released from quarantine next Monday. I don't know how this will affect my orders to California, but of course they will stand unless revoked. They were already old when received here, so they may get tired of waiting for me at Stockton. Of course those in other buildings are not affected.

They have arranged for class work in the mess hall, so we will have something to do.

They will send in our mail, so write often. They allow us to send out mail, so I guess there is no danger in this letter, but better burn this anyway, or at least don't let Jimmy play with it.

Lots of love --- and write.

Jim.

[Letter No. 13]

Sunday, March 1, 1942

Dear Betty –

I got the date bars and they were sure good. Thanks, and I hope to have some more some time. I haven't sent the card they asked for at the office, but I think I have them with me, although I haven't checked yet. Seems as if there never is a minute's time for anything except "must" things. The key to the office that they want is in that long key-container that I left in the upper chest of drawers. It is marked "Kresge" and has a number stamped on it. Handley will recognize it and will probably take it up to the office for you. I really shouldn't turn it in because I had it made and paid for it myself, but I'll not quarrel about it, especially since it is a key to a Federal Bldg. and they are pretty fussy about losing tack of who has them. I will mail them the cards when and if I find them. I asked before I left if they wanted them, but they didn't seem to be interested.

I haven't done anything yet about instructions. It's out of the queuing under present conditions, but I do intend to take care of it as soon as I can. We are still in quarantine, and don't know when we will be released. There is a rumor that it will be tomorrow, but nobody knows. An officer next door to me is from Moscow, Idaho, and his wife came to visit him Saturday morning. So far they haven't even been close enough to each other to speak, except by telephone. She is staying at the guest house, and comes out and looks across the parade ground when we are drilling. She is supposed to start back tomorrow morning, (they have three children a home), but I hope she can stay on until he gets out of quarantine. Looks kind of pathetic to see her standing there watching and is wild to get out to see her.

They work us just as hard as before we were quarantined if not harder. We have classes in the mess hall, furnishing our own instructors. We have twice as much drill and physical exercise as before.

Friday and Saturday we spent on the target range. Friday we spent all day zeroing in the Springfield and practice shooting. It was a nice day. Then yesterday we had to fire for record and the day was miserable -- 10° above zero and the wind blowing right off the targets and into our eyes. So that the boys won't be ashamed of their dad --- I shot well over the qualifying score Friday on my first attempt, and yesterday when it counted for record I bettered it by eight points. We fires from prone, sitting, kneeling and standing position for slow fire and from sitting and kneeling positions for rapid fire. Each man fires eighty rounds, using service ammunition and Springfield rifles. The boys would have enjoyed it. I did too.

I hope to get released from quarantine soon and get started for California. I'm not enthusiastic about going out there, because it is far from home, but I want to get started at my job and get it broken in so I can handle it. This school work, or assignment to a training regiment is a pain in the neck.

Yesterday was payday, but I didn't get my check because it had gone to the commanding officer for signature and had got out of the routine channel on account of my transfer. I hope you aren't running out of money. When I get settled I will send you my pay. I haven't been worrying much because of my pay from the PRA going on, but that won't go on forever. We are paid once a month. I haven't cashed my January check yet, (1/3 month's pay), and will use what I need of that for my transfer to California. After I get there and buy my khakis, (this is a "wool post"), and a new blouse, I won't need much money --- about a dollar a day for mess, and whatever I need for laundry, post exchange and officers club dues. We should get along all right under present conditions, but I hope the cost of living doesn't go up too much. I am planning on taking out \$7000 in gov't. insurance, (\$10,000 is the limit and I already have \$3000, so I can only take out \$7000 more), so the premium will be deducted monthly. I think the premium will be about \$9 a month, but I don't know exactly yet.

I am a little worried that the California orders may be revoked before I get started. I wouldn't care much except that I might get stuck here at the school for duty and I don't like the setup here --- not for permanent duty. I sure wish I had drawn Ft. Leavenworth where I could get home for weekends, and probably oftener.

How do you like my stationery? Since we got quarantined there is a shortage of everything and we borrow and lend back and forth for everything. I am reduced to using my note book. I could send to the post exchange for more, but since I have paid my bill and got a clearance there I don't want to open a new account.

I am still homesick and lonesome for all for you. Write as often as you find time.

Love,

Jim

P. S. I forgot to tell you I spent last Sunday P. M. in Cheyenne with a Captain and Mrs. Mitchell from Brookings. They have an apartment in town and had a gathering of officers and their wives who were State College graduates. There were about 9 couples and 2 unattached officers --- including myself. The assistant adjutant is a S. D. State man and was present with his wife. The Captain drove out to take me in and I returned with the adjutant. Captain Mitchell is a State Senator from Brookings and knows you dad. He asked to be remembered to him.

[Letter No. 14]

Somewhere in Nevada, 1:30 PM, Tuesday March 3

Dear Betty –

It's hard work writing at the speed we are making, but I want to get a note off to you to let you know I am on my way. We were released from quarantine a 3:00 PM yesterday and I got clear and caught this train at Cheyenne at 8:00 last night.

It has been a very interesting trip and we are due in Sacramento about 5:00 o'clock tomorrow morning. We should be in Stockton by 9:00 AM.

I am traveling with another officer, Captain Herbst, and old regular army man. There is an officer's compliment of a British ship on board enroute from Montreal to San Francisco to get together a ship's crew and take a ship somewhere or other --- I haven't asked where and they haven't told me. May be some more lend-lease. The third mate is a red moustache-and-bearded character complete with monocle who told me he had spent 17 years in Egypt and 6 years in India with the British Army. Very high-class looking and evidently one of the ruling classes, although he is not the captain. One of the younger chaps is a cockney from London, very hopeful of being home by June, married only 16 months.

We are passing through a series of tunnels now --- from sunlight to lamplight and back again which is trying to the eyes. There are mountains all around, we have been among them all morning.

We crossed Great Salt Lake this morning by the Lucin Cutoff and it was beautiful. It is a great trestle and earth-and-rock embankment many miles long. When you get out in the middle of the lake you can't see the shores at all, only high snow covered mountains on all sides, with rocky islands sticking out of the water here and there.

This would be fun if you and the youngsters were along. Some time I hope we can make this trip together, or one like it. There is a lot of this country for us to see.

We are slowing down for a stop, so I will hurry and address an envelope while I can.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Letter No. 15]

Wednesday, 4:00 PM

Dear Betty –

I arrived at my new station at 10:00 o'clock this morning. It is just outside of Stockton, and a nice place compared with Fort Warren, at least as far as climate is concerned. The grass is green, the fruit trees in blossom and looks more like June than March.

I haven't been able to get any stationery but hope to get to town tonight and do some shopping --- meanwhile this will let you know I have arrived and am well.

The trip out was interesting but uneventful. Lots of scenery and all new country to me.

I have been assigned quarters but am not settled yet. Due to the usual shortage, they are doubling me up and I am rooming with Captain Herbst for the present. They are still building and have another set of officer's quarters practically ready for occupancy, but they are expecting another bunch to fill them right away.

I'll write you a better letter as soon as I get settled and have any news to write about. Meanwhile I want to let you know my new address so I can hear from you.

Address – Stockton Quartermaster Motor Base
Stockton, California.

Love,

Jim

[Letter No. 16]

Sunday, March 8, 1942

Dear Betty –

It has been a beautiful day and I have loafed around doing nothing most of the time. I went to town for a while during the afternoon with another officer and drank a couple of bottles of beer. We considered going to a show but nothing looked good so we came on home again.

I have been putting off writing to you all day hoping there would be a letter from you that I could answer. The last time I heard from you was at Ft Warren. That wasn't so long ago but seems like quite a while not to get a letter.

I hunted out the cards the office asked for and sent them to Mr. Shoemaker this morning. Straightened out my foot locker and tried to get settled down to bachelor life. It's are to get used to.

It's hard to believe that it's still cold and wintry in the middle west. Here the grass is almost knee high, the mustard is in bloom in the fields, and trees and shrubs are all flowered out.

Stockton is in the San Joaquin valley not far south of Sacramento. It is about 80 miles by road from San Francisco and is connected with the bay by a canal so that good-sized ocean steamers can load at the port. There is considerable activity of course, much of which is very "hush-hush".

The town itself is very pretty with palm trees and flowering shrubs everywhere. There is a very large restricted district --- forbidden to all military personnel, both commissioned and enlisted. I drove through it yesterday on the way back from a neighboring flying field. The car was driven by a civilian and as long as we didn't get out of the care it was all right. We drove round and round several blocks. The district was swarming with Japs, Chinese, Mexican, niggers, and every oriental and colored race and cross-breed imaginable. Chinese and Japanese stores and business place with signs written in their languages. The district is wild and wide open and they say it's worse than the Frisco Chinatown, or any red light district in the country. Strictly out of bounds for the Army, however.

I am enclosing my February pay check. It is about eleven dollars less than I figure it should be when I get my longevity credit. However, in the future some of it will go for insurance, and I'll have to pay for my mess out of it. Just mail it to the bank for deposit --- they have a power of attorney for that purpose. I could mail it directly myself, but I have forgotten the official address. I have not endorsed it but that is not necessary for deposit because of the power of attorney the bank has.

I hope there will be a letter from you in the morning. This place would be just about perfect if you and the family were here.

Love,
Jim

In case I didn't make it clear in my last letter the address is:
Stockton Quartermaster Motor Base
Stockton, California

[Letter No. 17]

Wednesday Night, March 11, 1942

Dear Betty –

Your newsy Friday's letter arrived day before yesterday and I meant to write last night but felt so sleepy that I didn't get it done. It rained all of yesterday and last night and it sure was fine weather for sleeping. It was fine again today. I'm not used to such fine weather and I guess I have spring fever.

I got a box of candy from Myrtle and Helen Monday. It had been sent to Ft. Warren and forwarded here.

I got a kick out of your story of the trip down town with little Jimmy and his legs getting tired. Seems like I hardly got used to him walking at all before I left. I'll be looking forward to the pictures you said you would take. There is a ban on cameras in camp and since I couldn't finish out the film I had in mine I took it out and turned it in Monday for development. If I remember rightly there are a couple of pictures of the little fellow on that one taken at Christmas time. I'll send you some of course if they come out at all. I was using film twice as fast as any I had used before in that loading and may draw nothing but blanks.

I like it here fine but was disappointed in the assignment I drew. When I reported at Hq. the Adjutant took me in to see the Commanding Officer, as is customary. He asked me what experience I had had and I answered as quickly as possible --- "None whatever, Sir, in the QM branch", trying to get in a plug for a transfer, but he stalled that in a hurry by saying, "Fine, fine, then won't have a lot of things to unlearn." I thought he was joking but he assured me that he meant it; he would rather have officers that had not been broken in by someone else. Then he wanted to know what my civil occupation was and when I said I was an engineer he said, "Fine, we need a new Exchange Officer. Report to Lt. Kennedy and prepare to take over when he is relieved". Of course there was no answer to that except, "Yes Sir", but I did ask him informally a few minutes later what qualification an engineer was supposed to have as an Exchange Officer and he said both had to be able to handle figures. So now I will inherit the Post Exchange, the gasoline service, countless Coca Cola machines scattered over the post, and in all a general merchandise business amounting to \$22,000 to \$30,000 per month and growing fast. There are about 20 civilian employees and will be a lot more. Just now I am negotiating for a soda fountain. We already have a big beer bar and bottled soft drinks, but soldiers want ice cream too. A heck of an assignment for a guy that wanted to soldier. Well, that's the Army, they expect you to know how to do anything under the sun. Every officer has to take a whirl at mess, supply, or exchange sooner or later, but I hoped mine might be later. It probably won't last more than a few months and they may find someone in the new bunch coming in to take over from Kennedy, instead of me, and if I do have to take over the experience will undoubtedly do me good. The war will probably last long enough so that I will get plenty of other assignments.

Spring must be coming back there from the sound of your last letter. I wish I could come home once in a while and watch the lawn get green and the roses and peonies grow.

Love to all.

Jim

[Note: Myrtle and Helen are two more of JRS' sisters.]

[Letter No. 18]

Saturday Night, March 14, 1942

Dear Betty –

I got your Tuesday evening's letter at noon today, or it was in the box at noon. We have to clear our box of mail and orders every day and sign a list on the bulletin board every day between 11:30 and 1:00 o'clock to show that we have read all bulletins and orders of the day. Everyone goes to look for mail anyway, so everybody gets exposed to the Hq. bulletin board every day.

I got the box Thursday. Thanks for the date bars, and thank the boys for the candy. It surely was good.

This has been a miserable day, chilly and rainy and awfully windy. I saw a few trees blown down when I took the money to town to deposit today, and the palm trees were bending like they were in "Hurricane", if you remember that picture. Not quite that bad, but enough to make you nervous passing the wrong side of them.

Most of the gang has gone to town in spite of the weather, but I planned to stay home, write you a letter and go to bed real early to see if I could get enough sleep for once. No matter how early I go to bed or how long I sleep it seems impossible to wake up in the morning. Others complain about the same thing so it must be the climate that causes it. However, I ran into the Adjutant right after supper and he asked me if I wouldn't help him decode telegrams so I spent a fair chunk of the evening over at headquarters. I didn't have to but I thought it wouldn't be smart to say no, and besides I was curious to know how secret telegrams really are coded and decoded. It's very interesting and sometime I will tell the boys and Jean all about it. Just now we don't tell anybody about anything, especially in writing.

It snowed in the mountains yesterday and the upper part of the Coast Range was all white, especially Diablo --- a high double peak due west of us.

I'm glad the children had good report cards. It's too bad Jean can't be confirmed this year, but she can look forward to that for next year.

I finally got the picture of Jimmy developed. They are kind of disappointing, I think, but I am sending them herewith.

Lots of love to all.

Jim

[Letter No. 19]

Tuesday Night *[March 17, 1942]*

Dear Betty –

There isn't much happening, but I'll write a little to let you know I am all right.

Most of the gang is down town to see the St. Patrick's Day fights, but we are taking inventory at the exchange so I worked late and didn't go down. Lt. Kennedy's orders to move on have arrived and the auditor is here from Corps Area Hq., so I'll have to take over very soon. I don't like the job but that makes no difference in the Army --- you do it or else.

I had a short note from Myrtle the other day, and yesterday a box of candy arrived from Marie. There wasn't much news except that Earl, Helen and Judy had just got back from Omaha and that Mrs. Bride had died. I had already heard about Mrs. Bride from you.

I'm sorry I can't t least be home week-ends to rake the yard for you. I wasn't very good about that when I had the chance, but I would like to do it now.

The airplanes are very active overhead tonight. I guess some of the boys at the field are getting in some hour to their credit.

Guess I'll turn in now and get some sleep. Tomorrow will be a busy day.

I miss you all a lot.

Love

Jim

[Note: Mrs. Bride was the mother-in-law of Mom's sister, Helen ("Girlie")]

[Letter No. 20]

Friday Night, March 20, 1942

Dear Betty –

I got your letter today saying that your mother had been sick again. I surely hope that she is better again. Thelma will probably come down if you ask her to, without waiting for a ride with Earl, so that you could leave if felt like it. I hope there will be no occasion to go until you feel you want to go for a vacation and not on account of illness.

Official orders were published today assigning me to duty as Exchange Officer. However, I feel quite a lot better about it now because of a talk I had with the Colonel. He was getting into his car yesterday morning when I passed him on my way to Hqs and of course I saluted and said good morning. He called me back and told me that he knew I was not very happy about the assignment but he said they had to have someone right away and I happened along just at that time. He said that as soon as an officer with special qualifications came along he would have me relieved and that was a promise. In the meantime he said I would be expected to tie into it and run it --- which of course I intended to do all along. There is a lot of work and red tape involved in turning over a job of this kind and the old officer is still here working his books, waiting for the inventorying officer's report, etc. I have just had supper and am going back to work as soon as I finish this letter. There is to be a special meeting of the employees after we close at 9:00 o'clock tonight, and we are going to try to get off to a good start. From now on Lt. Kennedy tells me I'll be working until midnight more often than not.

I was very much interested in what you wrote about Mr. Johnson staying in the office and still being in the Army. I don't know what his assignment is if he can do that. Didn't think it was possible, but I've found that anything can happen. I sure wish I knew what his job is.

I'll be closing now and get back on the job. I'm looking forward to those pictures of Jimmy you promised, but don't stop at that. Take some of all the kids and have them take you and grandpa too.

Seems an awful long time since I saw you.

Love,

Jim

[Transcriber's note: "Thelma" was one of JRS' sisters. She never married, and may have been living with the Gearke's in Lincoln at this time. She often came to live with us when Mom had to be somewhere else.]

[The issue about "Mr. Johnson" is intriguing. This guy was a co-worker, but I do not know whether he "ranked" Dad or not. It seems that he was able to pull some administrative processes that Dad would have liked to have had put in place for himself, so he wouldn't have to leave home --- especially since he had already served in one war.]

[Letter No. 21]

Sunday Night, March 22, 1942

Dear Betty –

I'm writing you a couple of lines before going to bed. I meant to spend the day in the office but a couple of captains were driving to Fresno and asked me to go along so I jumped at the chance. Fresno is 122 miles south and the country is beautiful now. They have some fine parks over there and there were a lot of people out picnicking. I surely wished I had you all along. We got back about sundown.

There isn't much to write about as things are settling down to routine for me. I've got a lot to learn about running a business of course, but I guess I can get along.

I haven't heard from you since I got the letter saying your mother had been sick. I hope she is over the spell and won't have any more of them

I expect to be pretty well tied down now for some time but hope to get over to San Francisco one of these days. It's a town I've always wanted to see.

Wish I could see you all tonight.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 22]

Thursday PM, March 26, 1942

Dear Betty –

I got your Sunday's letter today and sure wish I could be there for the nice spring weather. The weather is nice here too, but it doesn't seem like spring because it is almost perpetually warm. Just different crops being harvested at different seasons.

I told you about my trip to Fresno last Sunday.

I can just imagine little Jimmy sitting on the steps with his little legs sticking out. I hate to miss seeing him growing up.

I am writing this in the office during a slack period. I set my own hours so I can do about as I please about when I work. I usually stick around all day and until we close up at 9:00 o'clock. Usually I am busy all through the day.

I was glad to get Bobby's and Neal's letter too. I will write to both of them sometime and to Jean too.

Speaking of letter writing, I wish you would send me the Handley's address. I want to write them a line sometime and want it to be for the family, so I would like to send it to the home rather than the office.

I am glad Neal got his Confirmation over with. I talked to the Chaplain the other day, but he is Protestant and there is no Catholic Chaplain on the post. However, they have a Catholic Mass on Sunday in one of the mess halls, and he suggested I see the priest then, or if I wished he would send him to me. I told him I would see the priest myself, but he must have mentioned it to someone because a soldier came into my office the night before last and said he understood I was going to join the Church and he was as pleased as a puppy. He said he had a book he wanted to give me but he hasn't brought it yet.

I'll be looking forward to the pictures. Bobby mentioned in his letter that he was going to send one of Jimmy soon. I hope you will take some of all of you.

I suppose Thelma is with you now. It will be relief to me to know you have someone there you can depend on to help you.

I'll bring this to a close and get back to work.

Love to all of you.

Jim

[Letter No. 23]

Thursday night, March 27, 1942 *[March 27, 1942 was a Friday; this letter was postmarked Mar 28.]*

Dear Betty –

I got your Tuesday's letter today with the personal tax notice enclosed. Captain Herbst, who lives in St. Louis, tells me there is a law in Missouri that men in the armed service do not have to pay personal taxes. He is writing his wife tonight to have her send a copy of the statute to him as he has one with his Army papers. When I get a look at that I will know better how to answer the notice.

I am taking a little rest after supper before returning to my store. We keep the place open until 9:00 PM including Sunday, but of course I don't have to be there all the time. However, I might as well be there as elsewhere so I spend most of my time over there. It is next door to the building where I live so I can be in and out about as I please.

Captain Joyner took some pictures on our last Sunday's trip to Fresno and he gave me a little album of prints which I am enclosing. I have labeled them on the back.

News is hard to gather in my present assignment and there isn't much to write about. I'll be going to the job again now.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Letter No. 24]

Sunday, March 29

Dear Betty –

I'm sitting in my office trying to think of some news to write to you. It's a beautiful day and I wish you were all here with the Plymouth. We would go over to Yosemite for the day.

I guess there is some news --- and good news at that. The uniform allowance originally set up for newly commissioned officers has been extended to include all officers, or so the rumor goes. I hope it is true so I can stock up with some clothes without drawing on the family budget. We change to summer clothes the first of May and Army clothing is sure getting costly. I'm going to get a new blouse too for my wool clothes as I feel conspicuous in the old whipcord. Everyone else is in the new dark green. I had to buy quite a lot of stuff at Ft. Warren because of strict uniform regulations at the school ---- most of which I can't use here. These include three pairs of OD wool pants, overshoes, additional shirts, monkey cap, field jacket, etc.

I'm getting kind of used to the place now and don't mind the work since Col. Sandelin promised to relieve me as soon as the proper man for the place came along. He gave me two enlisted men for my office too, although all the help is supposed to be civilians. I have 23 civilian employees besides these two soldiers and a little Greek corporal who runs our itinerant store --- a truck that travels around to neighboring detachments. One of my new soldiers was the manager of a Detroit department store before he was drafted, the other is an accountant from Chicago, so they should be a lot of help.

I hope it's as nice there today as it is here, so Jimmy can get those little legs exercised and the youngsters can have some fun too. They have set up archery targets where I can see soldiers shooting with bows and arrows from my windows. The boys would like that.

I suppose you are gardening full blast by this time. I'd sure like to come home for a few days just now. Hope I can some time this year.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Letter No. 25]

Friday, April 3.

Dear Betty –

I don't remember when I wrote you last, but it seems like a long time so I'll send this airmail to try and close up this gap. I have kind of lost track of time because I've been working night and day lately.

The reason for the night work is that the inventory made when the Post Exchange was turned over to me showed a shortage of over \$1000 in the accountability of the officer who is being relieved. Of course he can't leave until it's straightened out and he and half of my office staff have been working to try and locate the leak. The Colonel has appointed a board of officers to investigate the matter as secretly as possible, so at ten o'clock at night when everyone has gone home we have been going over and taking inventory in the two stores where the trouble has showed up. It's an awful job. Four officers and a detail of enlisted men and the civilian steward count every item and it takes most of the night. I got to bed after three o'clock this morning and about 4 o'clock yesterday morning. I get up at the regular time and work through the day too, so I get pretty tired sometimes. If we ever catch the person or persons that have been stealing it will be too bad for them. I know that the Lieutenant and the steward haven't had anything to do with it, but it could be almost any of the others. I happen to know that the F. B.I. has been contacted and showed an interest, so I am hoping they have someone here working on it now, although I probably won't know who the agent is. I'm sure anxious to have it cleared up as I will be responsible from now on, but I'm glad the trouble developed before I took over, rather than afterwards.

Tell Jean I got that nice letter and thank her for it. I wish I could be home for her birthday too.

I am sending you money orders for \$200.00 with this letter. My pay check is 271.00 but I haven't paid my mess bill, officer's dues, orderly fees, laundry, insurance, cleaning or other nuisance bills. I am holding out more than enough for those things this month but want to build up some reserve for contingencies while you still have my other pay check coming. I hope you will get a PRA check for the first half of April. We haven't heard yet whether we get the uniform allowance for sure or not. I haven't taken out the insurance yet. It's one of the many things I seem never to be able to get at, but I'm going to get a blank and make application as soon as I can get my mind off the thousand details that keep me in a dither. Gosh, what a job this is. I imagine I would like it if I was a merchant and didn't think I was in the Army to soldier.

I am enclosing a letter card from Myrtle. I have just written her that I wanted to help with the marker of course. I think they will be disappointed though, if they expect to buy one for fifty dollars. However, I don't know anything about it.

You can mail the money orders to the bank for deposit if you don't want to go down town.

I've got to hurry and eat now. There is an officer's meeting called for 12:55. I don't know what's cooking, but we must all be there.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Letter No. 26]

Easter Sunday *[Easter was on 5 April in 1942].*

Dear Betty –

The letter with the pictures came yesterday. I was glad to get them all. I think that one of Jimmy in his overalls is the best. The light and shadow marking on the other I think was the trouble, anyway I was sure pleased to get them. Jimmy looks as if he has grown and changed considerably since I last saw him.

The cookies also arrived and they are very good.

It is raining by spells today and quite windy and chilly. The permanently assigned officers moved into new quarters today leaving the old quarters to the student officers. The rooms were chosen in turn according to rank and as Captain Herbst wanted me to stay with him and he had a fairly early choice I have got a pretty good place to stay. Heretofore we have lived two in one little room, now we have a set of two rooms for each pair of officers. The Captain wants to get a linoleum rug for the floor and a couple of chairs so we can get comfortable. All that is furnished is the beds, we have got along with makeshifts up till now, although the Captain has a nice table and bench made for the old quarters. We brought them along of course. As in all temporary buildings the walls are unfinished with two-by-fours sticking out, but the place looks good compared with the others we have had.

I sent the notice of personal taxes back to the board of equalization telling them that I protested the raise and requesting them to check up on the statues regarding taxation of service men.

I'm glad about the raise in pay notice. Put it in the strong box with my other papers. I may need them some day. You said the notice was from "PWA", which is wrong I hope.

I was sorry to hear of Mr. Mason's death. I knew him well and liked him.

I hope you are having a nice Easter. It's gloomy and disagreeable here and I suppose a lot of people are disappointed.

I am going over now to mail this and then go see how things are going at the PX.

Love to all of you.

Jim

[Note: I have no information as to who Mr. Mason was.]

[Letter No. 27]

Wednesday Evening, April 8, 1942

Dear Betty –

The last letter I had from you said you had done your Easter shopping but Easter hadn't come yet. I hope you had a nice Easter day; --- it was rainy and gloomy here.

If we get the uniform allowance, and I think we will, I will do some shopping too. However, the sum they told us about is \$150.00, not \$175.00 as you read in the paper. I'm not going to buy anything until the uniform regulations are clarified. "Uniform" is a misnomer now.

Tell Neal I am glad he is taking good care of the .22. The boys would be delighted with the gun I am wearing tonight --- a big .45 Colts automatic. I am Officer of the Day and wish I had the boys with me to go around and inspect my guard tonight. They would probably enjoy that.

I haven't written the Handleys yet, but I found their address in your letter and intend to write as soon as I have time and am in the mood.

I'm sorry you are having trouble with the car. I think you can probably have it fixed without much expense at the Ford garage on Troost where Honey had her car fixed. Sounds as if a little work on the points or some minor adjustment might fix it. It will be hard on the battery if your engine is hard to start, and the way they are rationing things it will soon be hard to replace anything.

I understand that men in the service can send regular first class mail without postage now. I'm going to try it with this letter.

I am getting along fine except that it's a tiresome routine and I miss you all a lot. I hope I can get a leave at least once this summer.

Love to all of you.

Jim

[Note: "Honey" was Mom's sister, officially known as Katherine.]

[Letter No. 28]

Sunday PM, April 12, 1942.

Dear Betty –

Your Wednesday's letter arrived yesterday. It takes three days usually to get a letter from there. I suppose you are still in a mess over the painting and papering.

The "operatives" we hired to stop our losses moved in yesterday and they have already caught four of our employees and have got a line on two or three more. They work secretly in uniforms or civilian clothes making purchases and putting out bait for crookedness and when they find something wrong the employee is called out on an errand, taken to a room and given the works. One young fellow confessed to stealing over \$400.00 in the last two months, and probably got more.

Later.

I got this far when Captain Haywood came in and suggested a walk. We went out a mile or so on "Rough and Ready Island" and called on an old couple there. The Captain had met him casually a few days ago and was invited out. They are fine old folks and have one of the nicest homes I've ever been in, a big low-ceilinged rambling house on the banks of the ship channel. I wish you and the kids could have been with us and seen the gardens and fine old trees. They catch striped bass – thirty pounders, and salmon too in season. We had beer, milk, cheese, bologna, onions and crackers --- could have had anything we wanted. The old man is in a deal with the government to sell a piece of his land for a half-million dollars. We have a standing invitation to come as often and stay as long as we like. They drove us home when we left. I'd like to have a place like theirs to retire on some day, with a filipino house boy, gardeners and what not. I could get along without the filipino. Just now our little place on Lydia would look good to me.

Seems like there isn't much to write about since we have got settled into a routine. You asked if this would be a permanent station for me. It is probably as permanent as anything can be in the Army. I may stay here for the duration, but like everyone else I may be on the move again any day. However, I am considered as permanently assigned.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Letter No. 29]

Thursday *[16 April?]*

Dear Betty –

I got your Sunday's letter today and am taking time out after dinner to write you before going back to the office.

I'm glad to hear Thelma is with you now. I would like to see the kitchen now that it's all renewed. And I sure would like to see the roses when they get growing on the trellises.

We have finally got our investigation cleaned up and the old officer relieved. The FBI came in to take a hand but they were too late to do anything except question the people all over again. I will probably get the report of the board of officers today or tomorrow with recommendation as to what action to take against the guilty parties.

Lt. and Mrs. Wells stopped to see me this morning on their way from Ft. Warren to his new station at Merced. That's only 60 miles away and they said they would have me down to dinner as soon as they got settled. He is the Nebraska engineer that Handley asked about. *[in letter #11]*.

I won't get the \$150.00 uniform allowance after all. It is "payable to officers who first entered active duty on or after Sep. 26, 1941 for a period of more than three months, within three years after the date of their original commissions". That lets me out, and a lot of others. However, I will probably get a small increase in pay under the new pay bill. Not much, but it will help.

If you get the chance to come out here I want you to. You would have to stay in town of course, but I could get away nights and Sundays. I am planning on getting leave as soon as I can but don't know how long that will be. I surely miss you all.

Must be getting back to work.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 30]

Sunday, April 19

Dear Betty –

I got your Wednesday's letter last night and will try to answer your questions the first thing before I get to rambling on and forget.

First about the car. For mechanical work I think the Ford garage on Troost near 63rd is your best bet. For service – greasing, batteries, oil changes, etc. I like the Standard Station at 55th & Troost. The car does not need to be greased every month; all instructions say to do it on a mileage basis. However, since a grease job includes checking the batteries for water and checking the tires and those items may be forgotten too long otherwise it may be well to have it done more frequently than would be required on a mileage basis. Don't worry too much about it; just have them check the batteries & tires frequently when you are buying gas. I don't remember whether I had winter grease put in the differential and transmission last fall. I probably did. Anyway when the weather warms up have summer grease put in transmission and differential. Also drain out antifreeze and put water in the radiator. Save the antifreeze as it will be hard to replace.

About the insurance. I know about the Gov't paying our insurance while in the Service but it will all have to be paid back and I see no advantage in deferring payment as long as I am able to keep it up. For the present we will keep up our own payments. I haven't got in my application for the additional Gov't insurance but the blanks are here and I'll get around to it soon, I hope. Seems as if there just isn't time enough in a day to get everything done.

Allstate will send a notice of the car insurance to the office and it should be forwarded either to you or to me. If you don't get a notice a few days before May 16th call the local agent – Handley knows the number & address – and have him come and see you and fix up the renewal.

Now about the "furlough". Officers don't get furloughs --- they get leave. I hadn't planned on asking for leave for a couple of months yet – when I hope to have my new job whipped and my request will seem more reasonable. Of course I will let you set the time as far as possible, but it may be that I'll have to take what I can get --- or it may even be impossible to get leave later, depending on the war situation. However I'm planning on it. Better not get the kids looking forward to it though. I'd rather be sure of coming before they get to planning on it.

I had business at The Presidio and McClelland Field yesterday so I drew a command car and driver from the motor pool and went to San Francisco. I took a little time out to drive around the town and posts and enjoyed it very much. We went up on Telegraph Hill and had a fine view of the Bay and the Golden Gate. We could see the transports at the docks, freighters moving in and out of the harbor, and destroyers anchored out in the bay. After completing my business at the Presidio we drove around the grounds, through Fort Winfield Scott, around the bluffs past anti-aircraft and coast defense guns and through parks and boulevards. Found a fine high spot to look out over the ocean, the Golden Gate and the bay. Coming to town of course we crossed on the new Oakland-San Francisco Bay Bridge. When we left we crossed the Golden Gate bridge and drove north on the peninsula around the bay, past Mare Island Navy Yard to Sacramento where I had to visit McClelland Flying Field. A submarine was coming through the Gate while we were on the bridge, with just her conning tower and part of her deck showing. Away out we could see a fleet of ships coming in --- probably a convoy but too far out to identify. San Francisco has some beautiful homes. I tried to pick out the Barber House – One Man's Family --- but don't know whether I picked the right one or not.

I'll close now and take a quick look to see how the PX is getting along. Capt. Haywood was talking this morning of going back to see our new friends on R & R Island today and I want to be ready to go if the trip materializes. I wish you were all here to go along.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Note: JRS' reference to "the Barber House --- One Man's Family..." must be a little bit of humor. "One Man's Family" was a very popular radio show during the Forties. Because it was a radio show, there was of course no way for JRS to know what the fictional home of the fictional Barber family looked like.]

[Letter No. 31]

Wednesday, April 22.

Dear Betty –

I am returning the insurance questionnaire filled out as far as I can. You can get the mileage made last year from the gasoline record book we have been keeping.

I wish I could be present at the spring gardening and evening neighborhood gossiping. I can imagine Jimmy running around poking into things.

Too bad we didn't get a new garden hose last year. I think it would be a good idea to let the hose get good and dry, then mend it carefully with rubber friction tape, and then wrap it well with stout cord. I never took the pains to do a good job and then wrap it or I think I could have fixed it. The friction tape alone will not hold the pressure. Have you been able to get a couple of spare inner tubes for the boys' bikes? We have warehouses here so big that the officers and foremen have bicycles to ride around in them to supervise the work. Lots of people are riding bicycles to work so I wouldn't be surprised if there would soon be a shortage of tires for them.

We have finally completed the investigation of the shortages. Tomorrow is our monthly inventory date, and from then on I will be accountable. One of the employees admitted stealing \$480.00, and several others lesser amounts. I think some of those admitting the lesser amounts probably got away with more than the fellow that confessed to the larger theft. The total shortage was about \$1400.00 for six weeks. We have employed a private detective service, and the FBI made a separate investigation and since everyone now knows he is being watched we shouldn't have so much trouble. Of course we fired the main offenders, only keeping those who, we think, believed it was permissible to help themselves to a pack of cigarettes or candy bar when they felt like it, forgetting that every cent and every article must be accounted for in an Army establishment. Also, I called a special meeting of my council to request a substantial increase in pay for the employees so there would be less incentive to steal and so I could employ a better class of help. I got the pay schedule raised all right but not as much as it should be. However, I'm sure I can get what I want because the Colonel told me he is in favor of it and will put pressure on the council if he has to.

No it isn't four months since I left home, but it does seem at least that long.

I notice that the cost of the policy is increased but guess there is nothing to be done about it. If Allstate has increased I'm satisfied the other companies have increased even more. Yes, it is usual for them to send a new policy each year when they send the statement. You don't have to make your payment right away of course, just so you get it in before May 16th.

I'll close now and try to get this in the mail before the next pickup.

Love.

Jim

If there is anything doubtful about the insurance policy call the company and have them send an agent out.

[Letter No. 32]

Sunday, April 26, 1942

Dear Betty –

Your Tuesday's letter arrived today. You shouldn't work so hard at painting and housecleaning that you get stiff and sore. I know how it is though --- when you get started you get impatient to have it done.

I've been busy today catching up with some things I've been putting off too long. I have just mailed in my application for another \$7000.00 Gov't insurance. I named you as beneficiary and the four children as contingent beneficiaries. It is to be effective June 1st, so that they can make the deduction from my May paycheck for the first premium, and then deduct the premiums automatically every month thereafter. I hope I can hold out until June 1st although I dreamed last night that the Japs came raiding in big red bombers.

I went over to the enlisted men's mess after mass this morning and talked to Father Brennan, a priest from Stockton. I am to call him up Tuesday to arrange for instruction. He says he will try to give them, inasmuch as I have no regular off-duty hours when I can be sure of being able to go to town.

I read the clipping about Mr. Taylor with interest. He was away with a nervous breakdown when we came to Omaha and was sent to Jefferson Cit when he returned. He had another long leave of absence and didn't come to Kansas City until we had been there some time. That was when we inherited Bill Hart --- to make room for Taylor. I never knew him well, he never spoke unless spoken to, but seemed a very decent sort of man. He always minded his business and worked hard. I heard rumors about his woman trouble of course, but it was hard to believe he would have much trouble of that kind, to look at him.

Thank Neal for the vivid battle scene. It looks pretty gory, but I can't tell from the uniforms which side I am for or against.

I hope you get plenty of rain soon for the garden and lawn. Spring is very late here, so they say although it looks like midsummer to me. We haven't had any got weather at all.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Note: I have no info on the "Mr. Taylor" clipping.]

[Letter No. 33]

Wednesday, April 29

Dear Betty –

I am sorry to hear of your father's illness and am looking forward to good news in your next letter. Since I haven't hear from you since your Thursday's letter I am assuming and hoping that he is getting better.

Tomorrow is payday for the troops and we are preparing for the usual rush at the PX. This job would be fine for a lazy man who didn't care for Army work. I guess I am lazy enough but if I've got to be in the Army I'd like to be soldiering. I still feel though that I'll get a break sooner or later so have quit worrying about it.

I think I forgot to tell you that I had a card from Helen dated April 4th saying they had chosen a stone for Mother's grave and the price came to \$6.25 apiece. I had told them that we wanted to share the cost of course. Will you send them a check for it? --- to any one of the girls. Perhaps Helene told you about it when they were in K. C. It seems to me that the price must have been very moderate or I had exaggerated ideas about the cost.

I just remembered that Bobby would have a birthday on May 5th, so I wrapped up a little gift for him today. The problem now is when to send it so it will arrive on or near his birthday. If it comes too early you can hold it up, and if he feels badly about its not arriving you can tell him that something is on the way. I am also enclosing an airmail cover from Panama which I found in my mail. I thought he might want it to go with the Hawaiian Clipper cover the Handleys gave him.

We finally had a nice day today after about a week of windy or rainy weather. The natives called the last week's weather "unusual", the newcomers called it the "usual unusual" weather for California.

The guard at the gate called me over the phone today and said that the Philip Morris man was at the gate with "Little Johnny" and wanted to see me. I told him to pass them of course and in course of time little Johnny came in dressed in his costume, shook hands very politely, passed the time of day, then began passing out free cigarettes and giving his "Call for Philip Morris" yell just like he does on the radio. He looks like his picture and sounds exactly like he does on the radio. He sure draws a crowd --- probably mostly to look at his little imported car which he drives all over the country. We also have Jackie Coogan here. He is a private, stationed here, and not very well like, I gather.

I hope to hear good news about your father's condition.

Love.

Jim

[Note: Jackie Coogan was a movie actor who had been popular earlier as a child star. He may have had the typical arrogance of the trade, or was just resented by "common" soldiers because of his notoriety. They should have "cut him some slack", because this had to be a big come-down for him to now be just a Private.]

[Letter No. 34]

Saturday, May 2, 1942

Dear Bobby –

I hope you will have a very happy birthday. I'm sending you a little present in a separate package which I hope you will like.

How is the sail boat coming along? Take a picture of it some time, when it's finished, so I can see what it looks like.

I hope to get over to Yosemite one of these days. Wish you could all go with me.

Tell Neal and Jean and Jimmy that I will remember them on their birthdays too.

Love,

Dad

[Bob had been chosen by his woodshop teacher at school to build a very complicated sail boat. He did a very good job with it. This letter would have been for his 14th birthday.]

[Letter No. 35]

Sunday, May 3

Dear Betty –

I'm glad to hear your father is better. I have wondered what had become of his Seattle houses now that the Japs are being evacuated. He might try to rent them to Richardson and Little. There is a concentration camp for Japs on the southeast edge of Stockton, and a lot more scattered all through the area.

I wrote Bobby a letter and sent him a fly-box and a few flies yesterday. Hope they arrive on his birthday. I had them already bought when your letter arrived and when I heard he was worried about the fly situation I figured he would be pleased. I only bought enough flies to sort of trim up the box as I thought he was pretty well fixed in that line. The box is a pretty good one in that it does not crush the flies like a book and some boxes do.

I'm glad you like your first aid work. I think that's the most sensible of all the preparedness courses they are giving. It may come in handy some time.

Jimmy must be getting a lot bigger than I realized if he can reach the doorbell. I imagine the whole family is growing away from me for that matter.

It's certainly quiet around the post today --- nearly everyone is away for the week end. The Officer of the Day told me this morning that the old man was on the prod and was going to put a stop to the free and easy walking out of the officers on Saturday afternoons. It won't make any difference to me as I seldom leave the post anyway except on business.

I failed to make contact with Fr. Brennan Tuesday and he didn't call on Friday as he had promised. Yesterday he called me up and said he had lost his voice the day before but would like for me to come in and see him at 3:00 PM today – Sunday. I find now that his church is in the restricted district --- or at least the road to it runs through that district so I don't know how I'll make out. I'll be leaving son to find out.

I'm sending you money orders for \$200. I wish I could make it more. It scared me to find how much it costs to live here, even though I don't go in for social activities at all, and I know the cost of living is going up outside, probably even more. I sure could use a promotion, but no one but second lieutenants can be promoted until they have had at least 6 months active duty. It looks as if the new pay bill won't help either. We have all be hoping.

Love.

Jim

[Note: The mention of Grandpa Schneider's "Seattle houses" comes as a surprise --- I never heard anyone say he had even travelled outside of the mid-West before

JRS' casual use of the term "Japs" to refer to the interned Japanese-Americans illustrates how bad the mood must have been towards that class of citizen at the time. It compares to the way German-Americans were treated during WWI, although they were not interned.]

[Letter No. 36]

Tuesday PM *[5 May]*

Dear Betty –

A box of candy just arrived --- I haven't opened it yet but that's what I assume it is. I'll wait till after supper to open it. I don't eat much these days so I have to try to conserve my appetite for meals. Thanks a lot.

Bob's letter also arrived today. I'll be looking forward to a picture of that boat.

I am signing and returning the statement from the City Bond & Mortgage Co. You can check it from the monthly statement they send you every month. It shows a breakdown of interest, principal, taxes, etc. You will find those we got before I left all together in an envelope in the "safe". They used to send a card showing the breakdown for an entire year but they started the new system a few months before I left. If it looks all right send the signed statement in, if not, not call them up. Be sure you get the statement for the right month.

I don't think you should have the borer exterminating done now. I don't think they could get anywhere near all of them by local inspections. There were borers in the wood the house was built of originally and also in the wood we finished the attic with and we certainly don't want them to tear that all out just to hunt for a few bugs. I think you have a way of killing them with gas, but that must be used with great care. I believe they use a cyanide gas and one whiff of it will kill a person. You would have to vacate the house for some time. If I can get a leave some time during the summer I will look the place over carefully. I knew they were working but don't believe they are a very serious menace.

I didn't know that your mother had gone to the hospital. I'm glad to hear that they have both been able to go home. Looks as if Paul will get to do the tractor work now that your dad can't use it. Paul had better keep it in good working order.

I saw Father Brennan Sunday. He is on house duty this week so he can't start my instruction but says he will start next week. Meanwhile he gave me a "Penny Catechism" to read.

When you find time I wish you would wrap up "The Road to Oregon" and send it to me.

I hope Bobby had a nice birthday.

Love.

Jim

[Note: I have no idea who "Paul" is, unless he was a hired hand on the Schneider farm.][Jean informs me he was a Schneider relative who worked on that farm.]

[Letter No. 37]

Thursday evening [May 7]

Dear Betty –

The candy is very good but you shouldn't have used the sugar for it when they are going to cut down on it so soon. We get all the sweet stuff we need although of course it isn't as good as the hone made kind. Don't even think of sending any more.

I suppose all of the iris is blooming now and you can tell whether or not you got any of the rose colored ones. The roses should be getting ready to bloom by this time too. How is our shrubbery doing this year? I hope the gardener across the alley isn't burning them again.

They are landscaping this base faster than I ever saw it done before. It was all bare ground and buildings when I arrived, now we have green lawns around several buildings and will have it all seeded before long. They haul in big palms and evergreens as high as a house in trucks, plant them, and in one day an area will look as if trees had been growing there for years. Hedges are planted with full grown shrubs.

The weather is still quite comfortable but they say it gets awfully hot in the summer here. We go into cotton clothing on May 15th --- "Suntan" they call it now instead of khaki or chino. They sure are breaking their necks to avoid using names or doing things the old Army was familiar with. I bought some of my stuff this morning but not all of it. It's hard to do much buying now because everyone is afraid of being caught without necessities when the change comes and the sales to officer are made only Thursday forenoons so there is always a jam.

Wells and his wife passed through Saturday on their way to a new station at Sacramento, about the same distance north as Merced is south of here. I had gone to town to bank the previous day's cash so I missed them but they left word that when they got settled we could plan some visits. It always seems good to see someone from hone, but I very seldom see anyone I know. The man who delivers our milk came from Bancroft, Nebr., has been here two or three years and is awfully homesick. He plans to go back this summer. He worked for the contractor on some of my jobs between Lyons and Winnebago.

Haven't heard from the Handleys yet, but I suppose I should expect to wait since it took me so long to write to them.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 38]

Sunday, May 10, 1942

Dear Betty –

The weather is nice again after several days of windy, dusty weather. Yesterday was particularly disagreeable until evening when it cleared off as bright as anything.

Bobby asked what kind of flies they were that I sent him. I think there was a gray hackle, brown hackle, royal coachman, and one I don't remember the name of. Tell him not to send any fishing tackle until or unless I send for it because I don't expect to have much chance to use it anyway, not for quite a while a least.

I haven't had much instruction yet except to read the catechism. I expect the priest will probably call me today and arrange something. I think I wrote you that he was on house duty last week and wasn't free to leave. I like him very much.

Seems queer to think that school is nearly out and that one of the youngsters is about through with grade school. Soon it will be high school --- and then what?

How is Dad these days? He didn't seem as well the last few months I was home and I often wonder if he is getting along well. The coming warm weather will probably help him a lot.

I hope you have remembered to send the money for Mother's stone. I am sorry I forgot to tell you for so long after they wrote and told me how much it would be.

Hope you get delivery on that garden hose you ordered as it will probably be the last chance for a long time to come. I suppose the roses are about ready to bloom by now.

I've been smoking too much so I quit yesterday. I don't miss it at all but I'm sort of jumpy and irritable. That shouldn't last long, and then I think I'll feel better. Haven't eaten much the last few weeks.

Wish I could see you all.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 39]

Wednesday Evening [May 13]

Dear Betty –

How did Jimmy act for his first hair cut? You were just going to take him to the barber when you wrote you last letter. Suppose he made a fuss --- seems to me the other boys all did.

I'm glad your dad & mother are getting over their illness. It would be nice if they could drive down and stay a week or two with you in K. C. I imagine that in a few more weeks it will be hard for anyone to travel anywhere.

I don't know what to think of Father Brennan. He was so insistent that he would get in touch with me this week and arrange a schedule of instruction and I haven't heard a peep out of him since I called on him a week ago Sunday. Looks kind of like they don't want to be bothered.

I would like to see the garden. Did you plant many flowers or did you go "Victory Garden" conscious? You haven't mentioned yet how the shrubs are coming. I didn't get to trim them up this spring as I had planned.

I got the dividend check and will keep it un-cashed for the time being. Did you get the money orders I sent you after the last payday? I don't remember whether you mentioned getting them or not. I haven't heard from Mr. Handley yet.

I'm still running the Post Exchange and everything seems to be running along all right. It's pretty dull work and I don't have anything to write about which makes it awfully hard to write a letter. I'm still hoping for relief but am going to sit tight for a couple of months if necessary. After that I think I will be justified in having a showdown. If I start anything now I'm liable to ball up any chance for promotion --- which might materialize after six months active duty, not sooner under present regulations.

Love to all of you.

Jim

[Note: JRS' fairly frequent comment that he doesn't remember something that Mom had written earlier hints that he did not retain the letters that she wrote to him. This is unfortunate for this work, because it would be interesting to place their letters in proper sequence here to better show the interchange of thoughts between them. I have yet to locate any letters from Mom during the time he was still in the States. After that there are a hundred or so V-mails, which I will attempt to place in their proper sequence.]

[Letter No. 40]

Sunday, May 17

Dear Betty –

I've been getting behind in my letter writing and I think I have two to answer now.

You asked about my leave, (if any), and what to do about sending the boys up to the farm. It's awfully hard to tell what to do. It would take me three days to get home, three days back by ordinary transportation, which would leave me only four days at home out of a ten day leave. I wouldn't have any time for traveling between K. C. and Yankton. I had figured on catching a ride on a bomber, but that privilege has been abused to the point where they recently discontinued it. The streamliner would get me there in good time, but the coast streamliners are all extra fare trains. However the saving in time would probably be worth lots more than the extra fare. I had been planning to wait until after the middle of July to ask for leave, possibly in August or even September. Seems an awful long time to wait, but if I take it early it will be that much longer to wait for the next one. As for sending the boys part way with Mr. Handley --- I doubt if he would ever get as far as Norfolk in one day from K.C. unless he purposely laid out his trip that way. I haven't heard from him so don't know how they are handling the work now. You will just have to make your plans as though I didn't exist. Perhaps if you all went up for a while early in the summer you would all be willing to come back for the latter part of the summer and wait for me to come home then. I don't know what to tell you --- there are so many things to think about when I try to figure the best time to ask for leave.

Has Mrs. Handley brought her daughter and grandchildren over to see you yet? Didn't the son-in-law come along?

I was interested in clipping you sent about the floods. There is a dispatch from Nebraska City in the San Francisco Chronicle today telling about Missouri River floods in southwest Iowa & Northeast Nebraska.

We made a second trip to the old couple's home shortly after the first, then Captain Haywood got leave to go to his home in Colorado for ten days. He has recently returned and we haven't been anywhere yet. He is a lawyer and he helped me this morning to make out my claim on the bonding company for the money the PX lost in February and March.

Father Brennan called up Thursday when I was out and left word that he would call me at 2:00 PM Sunday --- today --- so I came over to my office to read and write to you and wait for his call. It is now 3:15 PM and I'm still waiting.

I have forgotten whether Jimmy's birthday is on the 18th or 19th. I only sent him a card this time. Tell him I'll try to make it up to him later. By the way I don't remember what day in June is Neal's birthday. You had better remind me so I won't overlook that one.

The book arrived yesterday.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Letter No. 41]

Wednesday evening, May 20, 1942

Dear Betty –

Four months ago tonight we went down to the Union Station and I started for Cheyenne. Seems a lot longer, although things haven't gone so badly after all. Being away from home and all of you is the only part that is hard.

I went to San Francisco yesterday with Captain Haywood. After we finished our business at The Presidio and 4th Army Hq. we went to the Bethlehem Shipbuilding Company's shipyard where Capt. Haywood had a confidential mission with the naval officer in charge of shipbuilding. After that business was settled the naval officer took us on a personally conducted tour of the shipyard. It was certainly an experience. There are 17,000 men working in that yard alone. We saw destroyers in every stage of completion from hulls almost ready for launching to practically completed ships on which they were mounting guns and putting on the splinter shields. There were also cruiser hulls apparently almost ready for launching. In big shops and open-sided sheds men were shaping, bending, turning and planning steel plates and structural shapes into ships parts. Cranes and hoists were moving overhead and riveters and welders out on the ships ways were slapping them together. And this was only one ship yard and only warships are built here. Multiply the work they are doing by the number of yards of equal size on the Bay and on both coast and it looks as though we will soon have something to worry the Japs with.

We went to Chinatown for lunch and had the only Chinese food I ever really enjoyed. The names were all Chinese and some the food was not to be identified by looks, smell, or taste, but it really was good.

San Francisco is a very interesting place and I wish I could spend more time there. If you and the kids could come along it would really be fun

It turned hot yesterday and was hot again today. Guess our nice cool spring weather is a thing of the past.

Love,

Jim

[Letter No. 42]

Sunday, May 24

Dear Betty –

We have just finished the monthly inventory. I was relieved from duty as Post Exchange Officer yesterday and the job given to a Major. The Executive Officer asked me a couple of weeks ago if I wouldn't prefer to stay on as Exchange Officer now that things were going smoothly but I told him I still preferred to be released as soon as I could and he said OK. He had promised to relieve me as soon as a qualified officer showed up and this Major has been in the merchandise business for years --- ran the jewelry and emblem department for the American Legion. However, I am to stay on as assistant for a month until the Major gets broken in. After that I think I will go to Utilities and work with the Engineers.

If I get assigned to duty with the Engineers I will probably have some road work to do and will need some of my stuff. In the attic --- the part of the kitchen and bathroom --- there is an old black cardboard suitcase with a lot of papers in it. There are a couple of black covered pamphlets on bituminous, (or oil), roads and stabilized base, and a couple of manila paper covered pamphlets on the same subjects, written by the Nebraska Highway people. Will you see if you can find them and send them to me? They are about the size of a composition book. They may be inside of a large envelope. Also send a copy of the Nebraska Highway Specification which you will find in my book case. It is a green covered book.

I felt badly about poor little Jimmy being so scared when he had his hair cut. Gives me a queer feeling to think that he wouldn't know me if he saw me now. Wish the kids could all stay the same as now until I got back.

Next Saturday is Decoration Day. I am going to send home a couple of dollars to help out with flowers.

You surely must be giving the house a thorough going over. Don't work too hard at it. Hope you get a better job on the screens than I did --- if you are going to paint the screens.

There isn't any news except about my relief. I am glad to get that but wish it were final and I didn't have to stay on as assistant. However, I think I can bank on assignment with the Engineer Officer, in fact I know he has asked for me, and I think I'll feel better satisfied there.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Letter No. 43]

Wednesday PM, May 27, 1942

Dear Betty –

I have been very busy the last few days turning over my business to my successor. I will probably stay on as assistant for two or three weeks but want to have all my property and responsibility turned over so that I can step out at a minutes' notice when ordered to my next assignment. The way orders are flying around here now, no one knows what to expect. A lot of officers have received orders during the last few days and are leaving for every imaginable destination.

The wife of my steward is leaving for Kansas City in a week or so to return with a friend who is visiting there. Her name is Mrs. Willard. I told her husband to tell her to call on you when she got there. Captain Haywood and I were out at their place for dinner a couple of weeks ago. She has never ridden on a train and is worried about it.

If Bobby wants to go to Hogan High rather than Paseo, and if you want him to go it's all right with me. He will probably do best where he is most satisfied.

I suppose you are not planning on a trip to Yankton on Memorial Day. Come to think about it that's next Saturday and you probably won't even have this letter by that time I'm glad they got the marker up for Mother. Suppose Thelma and Dad will be a little blue about not being up there.

I have duly noted Neal's and Jean's birthday dates and will send them something. It is just possible I may be home for Jean's birthday but don't let her get too sure of it. Hard to say where I will be by that time.

Must get back to work.

Love to all.

Jim

[Note: The issue of choice for Bob's high school is worth further discussion. The two institutions were about the same distance from home, but in opposite directions. Paseo was a public school, and therefore would have been free; Hogan was a Catholic school, and no doubt required some tuition. Because Bob had gone to St. Francis Grade School (?) most of his friends were probably headed to the Catholic school. That is where he went.]

[Letter No. 44]

Sunday, May 31.

Dear Betty –

Now that the youngsters are out of school and you have finished your First Aid course I suppose you will be leaving for Yankton soon. I'm afraid it will be a hard trip for you and I hate think of you driving all that distance but I suppose you feel you ought to go. Wouldn't it be best to drive to Omaha one day and stay overnight there? I would cost more but would be a lot easier.

The pictures of the Jim [James] River flood were interesting, but dim. I'm afraid their photo department isn't first class. I imagine that it will be a good thing to have that old mud stream rinsed out after so many years of low water.

We had the official opening of the Officers Club last night. I staggged it, danced two or three times, went through the receiving line and then went home to bed. The Colonel is quite insistent that we show up at the more formal occasions. We have to pay for it so they want us to use it.

Haven't had any luck with Fr. Brennan yet. He was out here about ten days ago with the Catholic Chaplain from the airfield and said when school was out he would be less busy and we could get going. Haven't seen him or heard from him since. Looks as if I'll have to wait until I get on a post where there is a Catholic Chaplain. We have two chaplains here now, one Christian and one Presbyterian. Priests come out from town to hold Mass for the Catholics.

It's awful hard to write a letter any more. The routine is the same and unless I go on a trip, which is seldom, there just isn't anything new to write about. I am counting the days until my first six months are up and I'll ask for leave then. Sure would like to be home with you all.

Love,

Jim

[Letter No. 45]

June 4, 1942.

Dear Betty –

I have just finished writing a note to Neal. I am mailing him a package for his birthday. I hope it arrives in time. I have been putting off mailing it until I heard when you expected to leave for Yankton. Didn't want to have it arrive in Kansas City after you had left and thought I might have to send it to the farm.

I would have liked to be with you on your last Sunday's picnic. Sundays are certainly long and dull here. If I had a car and could get out and see the country it wouldn't be so bad but I have to depend on someone with a car to remember to ask me along and people aren't driving as much as they use to.

You were asking if my change in assignment would mean a change in station or traveling. It will only mean that I will be assigned to Utilities, which is under the Engineers and I will stay on here just as before only doing different work. Of course we are all liable to be moved anytime and have been recently warned to keep our affairs in order. I wish I could be transferred to some place not so far from home so I could get home once in a while.

I am sending \$200.00 in money orders. They have deducted the premium for the new insurance policy I applied for but I haven't heard from the insurance at all. I instructed them to send the policy to you in Kansas City so be sure and let me know when it arrives. It was to go into effect the 1st of June. It seems that it takes a long time to hear from them. Some of the people who applied in Ft. Warren last January and February haven't heard anything for them, but I suppose they are in effect as soon as the first payment has been made.

The roads material arrived but I haven't had time yet to read it. I have to prepare the lecture for presentation at next Thursday's officer meeting and I kind of dread it. All officers in charge of an activity are required to present a half hour lecture on his duties before the bi-weekly meeting. The Major who is relieving me insists that I have to do it inasmuch as he hasn't had time to learn his duties yet and as the assignment was given me by name in a published order before he took over I guess I can't buck out of it. I'll be glad when the 23d comes around as I expect to be finally relieved then.

I hope you have a good trip home and a pleasant time when you get there. I'll be glad when I hear you have arrived as I have been worrying about that trip since you said you were going.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Letter No. 46]

June 4, 1942.

Dear Neal –

I hope you will have a happy birthday.

I am mailing a package to you which I hope you will like. There is a Chinese puzzle I bought in Chinatown and a Winchester knife. The puzzle works fine after you get the hand of it. I tried it. The knife should be a good one and give lots of service.

Have a good time on the farm this summer. Wish I could be there too. Perhaps I can go along next year.

I had a letter from Mother today saying you all went on a picnic last Sunday. I'm going to write to Mother today also but I am writing this to take to town for mailing when I take the money in to the bank, so you will get a letter and the package on your birthday.

Love

Dad

[Letter No. 47]

Sunday, June 7, 1942.

Dear Betty –

I've just got through talking to you on the telephone and I'm more lonesome than ever. Thought I would call because you would be out of reach for station-to-station calls if you go home this week. I cost \$2.35 station-to-station for 3 minutes on Sundays or at night, much more for person to person.

There isn't anything new to write about. I expect to be released from the PX very soon, at least by the 23d, but I think sooner. They are doing a lot of road work now and expect that will be my job.

I had a letter from Handley Friday after I had decided he wasn't going to write at all. He sent a lot of news about the Nebraska jobs and the office. He seems to like the job a lot better since the Little Colonel has been taken out of the Nebraska office and Sime put in. There have been a lot of changes since I left.

Did Jimmy know who was talking to him? I couldn't tell whether he was chuckling or protesting. Jean sounded natural.

I'm going to send this airmail so you will get it before leaving. After this I suppose I'll write to you at the farm. I'll be anxious to hear as soon as you arrive. It's liable to be a hard tiresome trip for you.

In about 6 or 8 weeks I'm planning on asking for leave. By that time I imagine the youngsters will be willing to come back to Kansas City. I wouldn't have time to go both to K. C. and Yankton and I think I would prefer going to Kansas City. Perhaps your Mother will be able to come home with you when you come back.

I hope you will have a good trip and that you find them all doing well at home. Have a good vacation..

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 48]

Wednesday, June 10, 1942

Dear Betty –

I suppose you are home tonight, or if not you will be leaving tomorrow. You said you would leave today to Thursday.

I usually get a letter from you on Wednesday but none arrive today. I won't feel easy until I hear from you and know you have arrived at Yankton OK.

Your last letter sounded kind of hurt because you had not heard from me at the usual time and implied you had waited for my letter before you would write to me. I hope you don't ever get to doing that. I've tried to explain that I'm awfully busy and even to get at writing a letter home isn't so easy. If you think so I'll give you an outline of my present duties.

In Special Orders published last week it was set forth that I, in addition to my "other duties", would act as Civilian Personnel Officer, (a full time job for a Captain heretofore), as Fiscal Officer, (formerly handled by a Major who thought he was over-worked), and as Summary Court Officer, as well as Assistant Exchange Officer for a Major, meaning I would do all the work as I had been doing before in the Post Exchange. Tomorrow I have to deliver the weekly lecture to the officers of the garrison, you know how I like public speaking, and Friday I am on the roster for Officer of the Day --- meaning that I have charge of the Guard and will be responsible for 24 hours for anything that happens on the post. In my spare time I am allowed to sleep. To cap it off the Major who relieved me as Exchange Officer received orders tonight to report to the Port of Embarkation at Seattle, which probably means I'll have to take back the P.X. The only difference that makes is that I'll have 4 jobs tomorrow instead of the 3½ I had today. I'm not complaining. I'll handle a couple more if they want me to, but don't feel bad if I skip a couple of days in writing.

I'll send this to the farm assuming you are there or will arrive soon. Write as soon as you can and let me know how you all are. I'll write a better letter soon.

Love to all.

Jim

[Letter No. 49]

Saturday Night, June 13, 1942

Dear Betty –

The picture and your Tuesday evening letter both arrived today and I was surely pleased. The picture is fine of all the children and I don't know of anything I would rather have had for a Father's Day gift.

You are surely home by this time and rested too I hope. I hated to think of you driving all that distance with such a crowd to look after. I hope you found everyone well.

Did Neal get his birthday package? It wasn't much but I wanted him to have it on his birthday and I got it together in a hurry.

The last couple of weeks have been a hectic time for me. I have had to take back the P. X. detail and I was pretty much in the dumps last time I wrote you. We took inventory today preparatory to making the transfer back again. The Colonel came into my office today and told me he would have an engineering job for me after the 1st of July and meanwhile not to feel back about getting PX job back. He said it is one of the most important jobs on the post, as important as command a battery or company, etc. Soft soap of course, but you know how the men like flattery. Anyway, with the arrival of the picture and your letter I feel better tonight.

I hope you will have a good stay at the farm. Take good care of yourself and of the kids. I'm still planning to see you in Kansas City lat in the summer.

Love.

Jim

[Note: JRS' frequent comments about his concern for Mom driving from KC to Yankton have some validity. The distance is approximately 400 miles; not an extremely long way, but tires & gas were already hard to come by. I believe the car was a 1939 Plymouth sedan, not overly roomy for one adult and 4 children. So far in the letters, there is no mention of whether or not Thelma and Grandpa Sorenson were included in the party. If so, things were plenty crowded, with seven passengers. I probably rode up in the space in front of the rear window.][The next letter mentions getting a trip to Springfield for Dad and Thelma, so they must have indeed accompanied the rest.]

[Letter No. 50]

Sunday, June 14.

Dear Betty –

Your Thursday's letter arrived this afternoon. It was a relief to know you had arrived OK and without trouble. I hope you and the youngsters will have a fine summer. I'll bet Jimmy is enjoying it --- and I'll also bet he'll be a spoiled boy before long.

Sorry to hear they have the flu at Marie's. Seems as if they have someone sick there most of the time. Maybe they should have the water in that well checked. You didn't say how you found your folks getting along so I assume and hope they are all well.

I'm glad Neal like the knife. I'll be looking for his letter. Is there any fishing in the creek for Bobby this year? I suppose Jean and Peggy will get a lot of playhouses built. If the girls, (my sisters), don't think of it I hope you will see that Dad and Thelma get a trip to Springfield. I imagine they felt bad about not getting there for Decoration Day.

We finished our inventory yesterday and the Board of Officers made the check today. I don't feel so bad about getting it back since I talked with the Colonel yesterday. I'm pretty sure of a change now although I think it will be August before I get relief.

I was sure glad to get the picture of the children. It's a lot of company. Did Bobby ever get a chance to try out his new boat?

Write often and tell me everything about the farm.

Love to all.

Jim

[Note: The observation about the well at Maries was interesting. When Mary & I stayed there on our way to Montana in June of 1961, I was shocked by the color of the water coming out of the faucet. When I took a bath, I could hardly see my feet when standing in the tub --- the water was so murky. I'm not sure if it was a well or a cistern, but it was definitely not a healthy source of water.

“Decoration Day” is now called “Memorial Day”]

[Letter No. 51]

Wednesday Evening, June 17, 1942

Dear Betty –

A week ago tonight you arrived at the farm. I have had only one letter since then, mailed Thursday morning and arriving Sunday afternoon.

I hope you are all well and getting along nicely. Is it hot here now? The weather here has been warming up lately but is not bad yet. They warn us that it gets terribly warm here in the summer time. From the fuss they make about a little heat though I don't think it will be so bad.

I'm back at my old job just marking time and waiting for the end of July when I hope to get a break.

I hope there will be a letter from you tomorrow. There just isn't anything to write from here.

Love Jim

[Letter No. 52]

Saturday, June 20, 1942

Dear Betty –

Your Tuesday's letter arrived this morning and I am answering it in business hours because I don't expect I will have any time to write tomorrow. The Willards are going to Monterey to spend Sunday with Mrs. Willard's folks and they asked me to go along. I get away so seldom that I jumped at the chance.

I hope you have got over the trip by this time. You said you were still tired when you wrote. I'm glad the kids are having a good time. They had better be storing up good times to remember while they can --- I'm afraid good times will not be so plentiful in the future.

You say it has been cold since your arrival at the farm. How are the crops looking? If the weather stays cool and rainy it looks as if they might get by without drying out again this year.

It's just five months today since I left for Fort Warren. Two weeks from today will be the 4th of July. I wish we could all go to Lake Tonganoxie, or Swope Park, or Schramm's pasture together this year. No chance, but just maybe we can next year or the year after.

How are the folks in town getting along? Do you ever see Dad? Is Thelma planning to go back with you to K. C.? It would be nice if you could take your mother back with you when you return.

I got the clipping. Too bad about young DeLong. He may be OK though and be heard from when they get the mess straightened out.

Must be getting back to work.

Love.

Jim

[Note: I can add nothing about "young DeLong".]

[Letter No. 53]

Tuesday, June 23

Dear Betty –

Your Thursday's letter arrived today. Seems to take longer as a rule for letters to arrive from there than from K. C.. Probably because of the time required to get to a through railroad.

Sorry Jimmy isn't enjoying the farm. Never occurred to me he would be afraid of the animals but I suppose it's natural at that. He hasn't had much contact with strange beasts.

I went to Monterey with the Willards Sunday. Saw some beautiful country and a very interesting old town. Went through a couple of old missions, old buildings, the 17-mile drive along the beach to Carmel and even found time to visit fort Ord. We saw the Seal Rocks with hundreds of seals, sea lions, and sea birds. Went out to the fish markets on Fisherman's Wharf and saw more kinds of fish than I ever saw before --- salmon, mackerel, sole, barracuda, crabs, lobsters, prawns, abalones, squids, etc. And even a big octopus hung up to the ceiling by his head and his tentacles dragging on the floor. They are nasty looking things and I can't imagine even a Chinaman eating them. The boys would have enjoyed the wharf and the Bay. There are 400 varieties of fish in the Bay, which should suit Bobby.

I'm sneaking his in working hours and must quit now to settle the Express Money Order Acc't and then have a Council meeting at 3:00 o'clock. Will try and write more soon. Hope you are all enjoying the summer.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 54]

Sunday, June 28

Dear Betty –

From the sound of some of your letters you are working too hard to call you visit home a vacation. Better take it a little more easy and try to enjoy the summer.

Things are about the same as usual here --- very monotonous. I went to San Francisco Thursday. I always enjoy those trips because there is always a lot to see in that area. Last night was the monthly party at the Officers Club. I went over to pay my respects to the Commanding Officer, danced with his wife and a couple of the other ladies and then went home.

Ralph Wells was over from Sacramento Friday and spent most of the afternoon with me. He had a recent letter from one of the boys who used to work for him and I had Handley's letter which he wrote early this month so we got a pretty good picture of what is going on in Nebraska.

Seems queer to think that next Saturday will be the 4th of July. I hope you all have a good time, but I also hope the youngsters don't get hurt. I suppose I'm more jittery because I can't supervise their fireworks this year. Doesn't seem a year since we drove over to Tonganoxie, even though the time does seem to drag.

I got a check for \$1016.51 from the bonding company last Friday which cleans up the mess I inherited when I took over here. I was much pleased that I made a 100% recovery of the funds, and I think the Colonel is too. He has been quite genial recently and hints of better things to come. There aren't many attractive jobs in a place like this --- nearly all administrative --- but most of them are preferable to this one.

I wish I could be with you there for a few days at least. I'll bet the kids are having the time of their lives.

Love to all of you.

Jim

[Letter No. 55]

Wednesday, July 1, 1942

Dear Betty –

It's a hot disagreeable day out here. I was beginning to think the stories about the heat out here was a lot of bunk, but I'm beginning to think there may be something to it now.

Lt. Wells was here from Sacramento this morning to draw some trucks for his outfit. They are getting ready to move out for foreign service, but of course he doesn't know where.

The Colonel called me in the other day and said he plans to make me utilities officer and put Capt Herbst on this job. However, the order isn't published yet and I don't know when the transfer will be made. An inventory will be necessary of course. I hope it doesn't blow up like last month when they sent a Major to relieve me. After the inventory is made and I get a clearance I would like to get a leave and come home. The difficulty with that is that I can't make plans until I know when I am to be relieved. I don't want you and the kids to cut your vacation short on that account either. I'd to have the kids feel that I was responsible for their having to go home before they are ready. On the other hand if I wait too long I may get ordered away and not get to see you at all. I'll write as soon as I know when I'll be relieved and let you make the plans. Meanwhile don't say anything to the kids about the possibility I may come home. After all it may be a long time.

This letter sounds disjointed --- I'm trying to work and write at the same time and am being constantly interrupted.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 56]

July 2, 1942

Dear Betty –

I was relieved of the PX job today and assigned to Utilities. The inventory will be on the 12th and 13th. It will take about a week to settle the accounts --- and then I am coming home on a ten day leave --- if you and the kids want to be there.

The Executive Officer said I could leave on the 19th which would bring me into K. C. about the morning of the 21st I think. Haven't consulted a time table recently.

I would rather put it off until August, but the way things look now I might not be able to come at all if I put it off too long. This way I can work it in between two jobs.

If you would rather stay on just say so, and I will postpone my leave and ask for it later. I would rather spend it at K. C. however and there won't be time for both places --- only about 4 days at home. Hope the kids won't feel put out about shortening their vacation.

I'll send this airmail so you should have it Monday. If you want me to wait and take a chance on getting home later let me know as soon as possible.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 57]

July 4, 1942

Dear Betty –

I hope you and the youngsters will have a nice time today. Wish we could all make the same trip we made last year.

We are working as usual today, the only difference being that most of the personnel will have to parade down town this afternoon. It's a nice cool day after about a week of blazing hot weather.

I am getting things ready here at the Exchange to turn over to my successor after inventory next Sunday, (not tomorrow), meanwhile spending as much time as possible on my new job.

The Executive Officer was in my quarters last night. He told me an order had come through to send an officer to the Camouflage School at Ft. Belvoir, Virginia, (The Engineer School), and that they would have sent me if I had lived in the east. They had sent the order on to the officer in command of the Motor Transport School for him to detail one of his officers. I told him I would like to go, so he said I could probably get Col. Alstrip to send me, but I found upon inquiry that it did not involve a change in branch, and that I would probably be returned here afterwards so I decided to let it ride.

I'm going to make a formal request for leave starting the 20th. A little skullduggery will enable me to actually leave on the 19th, arrive at K. C. the morning of the 21st and have 5 or 6 days at home. I hope you won't be too disappointed about cutting your vacation short. I'd rather wait a couple of weeks longer, but orders are flying thick and fast and outfits are leaving on short notice. I might not get leave at all if I don't go soon.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 58]

Monday, July 6, 1942

Dear Betty –

How did the 4th come off for you? It was just another day here but I hope you all enjoyed it.

I am having a hectic time trying to take over two new jobs and get rid of the old one. I want to get everything straightened up before I take my leave.

I found out that a lot of officers were applying for leave so I cut through a lot of red tape Saturday and got the Colonel's approval on my letter of application for 10 days leave beginning July 20. I was afraid if I waited I would lose out for a couple of months and I really need a leave right now. I'm tired all the time and jittery as a cat. I think the order granting my leave will be published today.

I expect to leave here on a "VOCO" at 1:55 AM Sunday the 19th and travel a day before my leave starts. Then the Executive Officer, or someone, will sign me out on leave in the book at 1:55 AM Monday. The day of departure counts as a day of duty so I can travel another day before my leave starts. Should arrive at K. C. at 7:45 AM on Tuesday, by Santa Fe), the 21st, the day my leave starts. That way I can get six or possibly seven days at home instead of only four. I sure hope this won't shorten your vacations too much. I would rather have waited, but it would have been a long wait before I could shake loose again and I really need badly to get away for a while. Now while I am changing over is the best chance to go.

I am sending \$100.00 in Express Money Orders in case you are short of funds. I will bring the rest of the paycheck with me -- when I buy my ticket.

Lots of love

Jim

[Note: I have no information as to the meaning of "VOCO", other than it was probably some military acronym involved with a leave of absence.]

[Letter No. 59]

Sunday, July 12, 1942

Dear Betty –

I got your Thursday's letter today. Kind of makes me feel like a heel to interrupt your vacations, with the kids and you all enjoying it so much. Hope the youngsters don't resent it.

Probably wouldn't have been able to get leave if I had waited. The few that have been granted recently touched off the fireworks and Hqs. is getting swamped with applications. That was what I was afraid would happen so I tried to get in early. The Colonel said yesterday leaves would have to be curtailed.

I am planning to leave in time to arrive at K. C. at 7:45 AM on July 21. However, they say that trains are running late everywhere now due to traffic congestion so it may be late in the day when I arrive.

Be careful and drive slow going home. I don't want you to have an accident. This is going to be a long week waiting to start.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 60]

Wednesday, July 15, 1942

Dear Betty –

I haven't much to write about but wanted to send you a little note to let you know I haven't forgotten that our anniversary is nearly here. Haven't been able to get out to buy you anything, but hope I can make it up to you when I get home. It's hard to wait now.

I'm sending this to Kansas City because I think you will have left Yankton before this could arrive there.

Hope to see you soon.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 61]

Friday, July 31

Dear Betty –

I arrived on time last night. The trip wasn't bad except I was homesick and blue all the way. Seemed twice as hard leaving you this time, although I thought it was bad before.

Quite a number officers have left and are leaving today. I'm back in Utilities for the time being and probably for good. The QM told me this morning that I would probably take over although Capt. Bedford has not been relieved.

I'm up to my ears in work and haven't time to write anything except a note. Just want you to know I got here OK -- and miss you all an awful lot. I'll write more as soon as I get time.

Lots of love to all of you.

Jim

[Letter No. 62]

Sunday, Aug 2, 1942

Dear Betty –

I haven't had a letter yet to answer and there is no news so It's hard to think up a letter. I'm lonesome and blue and everybody is gone except me apparently. There is nothing to do so I am putting in my usual Sunday in camp.

Capt. Herbst left for St. Louis last night. His pay check didn't get here in time so I staked him. He is going to wire the money back when he gets home and then I will send you a money order.

The Capt Purdy from K. C. we read about in the Star arrived and was immediately ordered to Fort Mason. I didn't meet him but I read the order this morning.

The Ordnance Dept is taking this post over. Don't know when the change will be effective and no one else seems to know much about it. The dope is that most of us will be transferred from the QM to Ordnance, but people assigned to certain activities will stay in the QM. I don't know how it will affect me. There will probably be definite orders in a few days.

I hope you are all well and that I will hear from you soon.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 63]

Tuesday, Aug 4

Dear Betty –

I'm getting back into the feel of it again and feel a little better. Sure felt lost when I first got back.

I got a letter from you late Sunday after I had written you. Capt Herbst was to arrive in St Louis this afternoon. I wish I was just beginning a leave instead of just lately back from one.

I had the film developed and got it back today. I just had strip prints made and they all looked pretty good except one failure so I sent the negatives back to have enlargements made. They should be ready by Thursday and I'll send you a set.

Tomorrow I am going to San Francisco with Major Hancock, the Base Quartermaster. We are to check on our lease and find out for the Colonel just what areas he actually commands. Both of them seem to have more confidence in my abilities than I have, which would be nice if I could make it last. Hope they feel the same way six months from now.

It is pretty hot here now in the day time but usually gets nice and cool during the night. I sleep under a blanket and always sleep best in the morning when it is almost cold.

There isn't any new, just the old routine grind. The new theatre will soon be finished so I will be able to go to a show without going down town. I have been to only two shows since I arrived here in March.

I miss you all the time and am looking forward to the end of the war so I can stay with you all the time.

Love,

Jim

[Letter No. 64]

Saturday, Aug 8.

Dear Betty –

It's a dull day and nothing new has happened to write about, but I'm sending you \$200 in Postal Money orders.

They are having a military funeral this afternoon for the Sergeant Major who died a Reno last Sunday from a heart attack. There was a delay in relatives arriving so the ceremony has been rather long deferred.

I got the enlargements of the pictures. They are not as sharp and clear as the contact prints. I could have done better I think. Will send you a set as soon as I get them wrapped. They are too big with their fancy edges to put in an envelope. They are all pictures taken at home except one of Carmel Mission. Father Junipero Serra, the Mission Founder is buried there.

I hope the weather there isn't hot and that the time before school starts isn't dragging too much.

Sure wish I had my leave ahead of me instead of past. Capt. Herbst will be starting back from St. Louis next Tuesday morning, so his time at home is nearly up too.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Letter No. 65]

Wed., Aug 12, 1942

Dear Betty –

I'm writing this during duty hours and in a hurry so it will probably be a disjointed affair. I have a lot of different assignments and have to jump from one place to another. An order just came in listing a General Court Martial to be convened to try pending cases and I am on that too. So I should be a lawyer also. Remember how I used to work and fuss over Courts-Martial in the Extension Courses?

I am mailing a package to you this afternoon. It contains the pictures I mentioned, a birthday gift to be delivered to Jean on her birthday, and another pair of slippers for you. I tried to get red ones a size smaller than the green ones I brought you but they are getting low in stock and didn't have that color, so I got a pair of gold colored ones. I hope they fit and that you like them. If not, use them as a gift for someone on your Christmas list that can use them. I sent a Jean's present so she would be sure to get it for her birthday.

I must get to work now.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 66]

Sunday PM, August 16, 1942

Dear Betty –

I hope the youngsters are over the mumps. Don't remember whether I ever had them or not but the people I have seen with them always looked awfully uncomfortable and miserable.

I'm glad to hear Bobby is out getting jobs, not so much on account of the money, but because it will teach him to be self reliant and break him of his fear of asking for work. That always has seemed to worry him.

Captain Herbst returned from St. Louis last Thursday. Like me, he enjoyed his time at home but the long trip both ways wasn't much fun.

It was lucky that I took my leave when I did. I have been detailed a member of a General Court Martial and you can't get leave while a member of a Court. We have a lot of cases to try and more may come up before we get through so it may be a long time before I get relieved. Sometimes a General Court lasts for months. A General is the highest Court in the Army and only cases involving sentences of imprisonment, dishonorable discharge, or the death penalty, (if found guilty), come before it so you see it isn't exactly a holiday job. The members of the court are assigned by the Commanding General of the Corps Area.

It's a fine day here and not too hot. Capt. Herbst is Officer of the Day and taking a nap in our bedroom. I've nothing to do so will go over to the Club and have a couple of beers.

I miss you all and keep hoping that I may get a break and get sent to a post nearer home. Even if I didn't get home any oftener it would seem better to be closer to you and to know that I could get home in a little while when I did get a leave.

Lots of love.

Jim

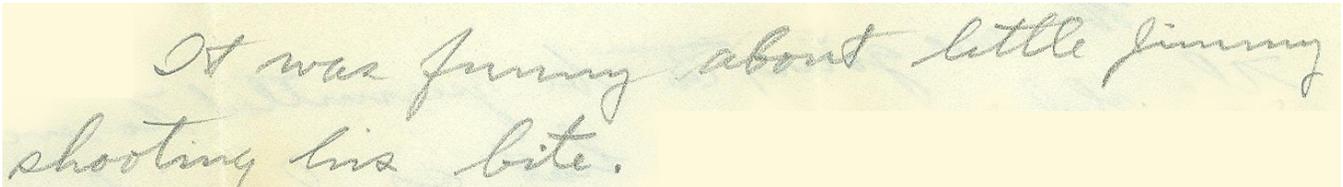
[Letter No. 67]

Tuesday evening, Aug 18, 1942

Dear Betty –

I'm writing this now instead of tomorrow so you will have it before Sunday and not get to thinking you are "forgotten" again. I don't understand why there was such a long time between letters last week. I know I have written frequently ever since I got back and there shouldn't have been any laps as long as that between letters.

It was funny about little Jimmy shooting his bite. I surely miss him and all of you of course. Hope the kids are all over the mumps. *[Note: I seldom have had any trouble reading JRS' handwriting, but this word, "bite", has me stumped. I include a scanned image of the actual sentence in case someone else has a better guess at what is meant. . Not having Mom's original letters from this period is unhelpful.]*

A scanned image of a handwritten sentence in cursive ink on a light-colored background. The text reads: "It was funny about little Jimmy shooting his bite." The word "bite" is written in a slightly unusual, cursive style that is the subject of the letter's note.

I have received another assignment, into the Base QM office. Had hoped to stay in Utilities until that was taken back by the Engrs. at the end of this month on the chance that I might transfer with them. They intended to let me stay at first for that reason but they are so short of officers that everyone has at least two or three extra jobs. The QM told me last night that I would have to work with Capt. McCandless the Purchasing & Contracting Officer and Salvage Officer to be ready to take over his duties. Capt. McCandless doesn't know it yet but he is booked to leave soon. I don't know where he is going. At this rate I'll soon have had a try at every staff officers job in the Army.

We are going to be permitted to wear the old campaign hat so I wish you would send me mine. It's all boxed up and set out in my room. *[This has to be the hat that he wore while serving in the First War. He kept it in very good condition throughout his lifetime, and I now have it. Its original box has disappeared over the years, however.]*

It's three years since we made our trip to Kansas City looking for a place to live. I wish those days were still here.

Love to all of you.

Jim

[Letter No. 68]

Sunday, Aug 23

Dear Betty –

I got your Wednesday's letter today. Seemed a long time since I had heard from you and I was beginning to think you weren't going to write me this week.

I'm glad the slippers fit. I never did learn whether or not Thelma could wear hers. I meant for you to keep the locket for Jean until her birthday but it's all right for her to have it if she understands it's a birthday present. I'll try to mail a card to arrive on time.

Seems queer to think of Bobby starting to High School. It seems such a little while since he was a little fellow like Jimmy. I hope he gets off to a good start, that's half the battle. Do Neal and Jean dread starting school again?

I am going to San Francisco tomorrow. I have over ten thousand oil and gasoline drums to reclaim, clean and rustproof, (I'm now Salvage Officer among other things), and am going to S. F. to see about equipment for the job. We will probably build our own, (we usually do), but I want to visit a couple of oil companies and wineries to see how they handle it.

San Diego is a long ways from here and it isn't likely I'll see Clara Muller unless I get a change of station. I wouldn't mind the change of station, but I want to go east if I change --- to Leavenworth or the K. C. Depot or Ft. Crook or Ft Robinson. However, I've nothing to say about where I'm to go, and the Commanding Officer here is a lot better than most. There aren't many places where I would have got my promotion as soon as I got it here --- within two days of the day I became eligible. It's a lot more satisfying to earn your Captaincy on active duty than to get it by correspondence.

I never knew the Fern Patterson you mentioned but I did know a Patterson in Springfield --- her father I suppose. Russell, I think was his first name, but I'm not sure.

I too think the picture of Jimmy you liked was the best of the lot. He was acting up and purposely mussing his hair when I took his picture. That's the reason I took several shots. All of them could be improved by using a different paper and focusing the enlarger more sharply. Some day I hope to print them myself.

I'm going to try to get Mr. Handley's letter answered today. Haven't written him since I got back.

All my love.

Jim

[Letter No. 69]

Sunday, Aug 30

Dear Betty –

This has been a hectic week and I think I have missed out on writing you a letter lately so I'll send this air mail to try and catch up a little. I just have more to do than I can get around to. Monday I had to go to Frisco and yesterday I went to Richmond on S. F. Bay, (where Kaiser has two of his shipyards). Spent the day in the Standard Oil Refinery studying their methods of reclaiming oil and gasoline drums.

Yes, I am still on the Court Martial and will probably be so indefinitely. We disposed of one case this week and I don't know how many more will come before us. It's not a pleasant job.

The candy and book arrived Friday. Have started the book and like it, and the candy was delicious. I hope you didn't short the family on sugar to make it. The hat also arrive O. K. and I was sure glad to get it. The sun out here is too bright to be without a hat brim to shade your eyes.

Today is Jean's birthday and I hope she is having a nice one. I suppose the present I sent to her seems old to her by now.

I haven't heard from Fr. Brennan so it looks as if he ignored your letter. Still intend to go through with it but think I can get along without him. I have a catechism which I read occasionally and as soon as I am able I will find someone to instruct me. Just now it seems as if taking on anything more would be just too much. Have been hoping we might get a Catholic Chaplain, which would simplify matters.

I had a letter from Myrtle a couple of weeks ago and I am going to answer that now. She didn't write much news and said there wasn't much going on up there.

A month ago today I got back from my leave. Seems lots longer ago than that. I'm wishing all the time for this war to end so I can be with you all the time.

Love,

Jim

P. S. I'm now in the Ordnance Dept The address is now Stockton Ordnance Motor Base.

[Letter No. 70]

Monday, Aug 31

Dear Betty –

I didn't get your Monday-Tuesday letter until today as I arrived home from Richmond Saturday evening after the office closed. When I wrote you yesterday I did not know who made the various donations to my birthday gifts. Thank Bobby, Neal and Jimmy for the candy and Jean for the diary. The candy was the best I've had for months and the diary is very handy to make notes on what I have to do each day. The book is interesting even if the language gets a little rank --- as far as I have read it --- but it's not written just to be nasty like a lot of the books the "Literary Guild" goes in for these days.

I had a letter from Mamie today --- the first, I think since I came to the Army. She says they like it fine in Grand Forks. Bob is in Willmar, Minn., and Vivian is taking her O. B. training in Minneapolis.

There is no news since yesterday. I'm hoping to be home for my next birthday.

Love,

Jim

[Note: "Mamie", (Mayme), is another sister to JRS; 2 years younger. I do not have dates for her marriage, or for the births of the two children mentioned here, but assume she got an earlier start at raising a family than did JRS.]

As to the diary from Jean mentioned here, I have no idea if he used it as a diary or not --- the only diary-like item available to me is the small, (4" x 3"), 2-ring, looseleaf notebook that seems to have been initiated at the beginning of his service.]

[Letter No. 71]

Thursday, Sep 3

Dear Betty –

I am enclosing three postal money orders for \$275.00. Be sure and mention receiving them in your next letter.

I'm making this a quick one at the office. We are awfully busy and inspectors are here from the Inspector General's Office, which doesn't help.

The weather has been very cool for the last week or ten days which is a great relief. However, I guess it has its drawbacks as I caught an awful cold night before last when I was Officer of the Day and feel pretty rotten. Has hectic night that night.

I too Captain Herbst downtown to dinner and a show to celebrate my birthday. Just returning what he did when he had his birthday some time ago.

Next week the kids start school. Makes me homesick to think about it and Bobby done with grade school for good. They will soon be grown up.

I finished the book last night. It was a good story even if the author did get a little realistic and plain spoken at times.

Wish I could write you a long interesting letter but this is just a dull grind and there is nothing to write about. I miss you all the time.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 72]

Saturday, Sept. 5

Dear Betty –

I just got your Tuesday's letter saying you hadn't heard from me for over a week. There is something wrong somewhere. I'm a busy guy but I never have gone as much as a week without writing you. I wonder if maybe some of the "Free" mail isn't tossed out somewhere along the line. I'm going to put a stamp on this.

I'm up to my ears in work, as nearly everyone else is. Tomorrow I am leaving at 5 o'clock in the morning to take a truck convoy up to Yosemite and bring back some CCC buildings, (and anything else I can get hold of and pry loose). I have to take care of housing troops that come in at all hours in batches of sixty to five hundred to drive trucks away, look after salvage and anything else the Base Quartermaster might want done. I'm still on the Court and have to take my turn at Officer of the Day, so I'm not fooling when I say I'm busy.

I'm sorry to hear about the illness of Earl's mother and the death of your cousin. Seems we all have to have troubles. I know Earl was worrying about his mother last winter when I was home for mother's funeral.

I am glad you are getting some use out of the Swope Park swimming pool. Wish I was there --- maybe I could finally learn to swim.

A captain newly commissioned from civil life gave a big party at the officers club last night. I went over but left about eleven o'clock and went to bed. These parties and dances would be fun if you were here, but they are not much fun for a stag. I don't care about attending them at all but the Colonel always shows up and likes to see a turnout so I guess it's good policy to show up once in a while so he won't forget I'm around.

By the time you get this the youngsters will be back at school. Does Bobby like the idea of starting a new school? I hope he gets started right and will like it. Neal and Jean will be right at home of course.

How is Dad these days? Hope he still enjoys his daily ramble. Wish Thelma would be satisfied to stay with you but if she wants to get into defense work I imagine it would be better for her. There should be lots of jobs just now.

Lots of love

Jim

[Letter No. 73]

Monday, Sept. 7, 1942

Dear Betty –

I want to get a letter off to you tonight because I don't know how soon I will get to write you again.

I started out for Yosemite yesterday at 5:00 AM with a truck convoy and returned this morning about 1:00 o'clock with nine big truck loads of brand new portable buildings that had never been erected. The Colonel was so tickled with what we found that he told me to go back and get everything I could lay hands on. Tomorrow morning I am going back with a bigger convoy and 35 soldiers and civilians to establish a camp in the park and tear down and haul away all the CCC camps we can get away with. I will stay overnight and then come back and work out of here looking for more camps to carry away, while the labor detail tears down and loads the stuff we have located. There will be a convoy up one day and down the next. They gave me a Lieutenant to command the camp and an old Sergeant to handle the men while I ride around in a staff car to supervise and hunt up the stuff. I think it will be a lot more interesting than routine work, but don't expect it to last long.

Our first camp will be more than 6000 feet high; more than 3000 feet above the floor of the valley. It's surely a beautiful country with some of the biggest pine and fir trees I have ever seen. We will live in tents. The kids would sure enjoy it and I wish they were here --- you too, but you would have to stay down in the valley.

Today was Labor Day but it was just another day to me, just as yesterday, (Sunday), was. Hope you enjoyed the day.

Love to all of you.

Jim

[Letter No. 74]

Friday, Sept 11, 1942

Dear Betty –

I'm finally finding time to write you a letter. Don't know when I last wrote you but it seems quite a while ago. I've been in charge of removal of CCC camps and property from Yosemite Park and Stanislaus National Forest and it's quite a job to see that the convoys move in time, establishing camps, seeing that the men are fed and taken care of. I traveled the park with a ranger guide, searched out the stuff we wanted and arranged the terms with the Park Service. The Quartermaster thinks my letter to the Park Superintendent is a classic; shows it to everyone he sees. He thinks I pulled a fast one and seems immoderately pleased. The Colonel seemed pleased too, but he only grunted and grinned and said "All right, get up there and take everything you can get your hands son." There was really nothing to it but I'm glad if they are pleased.

I felt kind of bad when I read the clipping about Nicky's death (One Man's Family). Always like him a lot --- anyhow better than Paul. Paul isn't my favorite on that program, but I don't know why.

I don't think it will be necessary to bank the house to keep the water out. The water will not hurt the foundation, except discoloring the walls. The leaking could easily have been prevented by proper backfilling, and I hope to remedy it some day.

It's beautiful up in Yosemite now although falls are nearly dry. Our first camp was way up in the north side, almost 7000 feet high and it gets cold at night. The sky is so clear and it's so quiet it's almost like a dream. The pines and fire trees are enormous. We had to post a bear guard to keep the bears out of our rations. I was in a hurry but the ranger who guided me was so anxious to show me things when he found I was interested that I let him take me on several side trips. I saw the Big Trees --- two groves of them, with the tunnel tree and Grizzly Giant, 3800 years old, and was escorted to Glacier Point at sunset. That really takes your breath away. You look straight down more than 3000 feet to the floor of the valley, most of the waterfalls are in plain sight and to the east is the High Sierra, more country than I've ever seen from one place before. I sure wish I could see it with you and the children. I had dinner with the ranger and his wife that night. They have a dandy four-room apartment at Government Centre, with every conceivable convenience, for \$15 per month. They are a young couple expecting their first in January. He is a graduate engineer and has served in almost every National Park in the U.S. He has recently been commissioned a Lieutenant Jr. Grade in the Navy for mapping work and is waiting for orders.

I don't stay in the Park any more but may have to make an occasional trip to check up on the work.

This is a school week end for the youngsters. I hope Bobby likes his new school. I suppose it's too much to expect Neal to like his old one.

I miss you all a lot.

All my love,

Jim

[Note: This second reference to the radio show, "One Man's Family" is amusing. I never thought of Dad as someone who would become emotionally attached to a fictitious character on the radio; but I guess it was a fairly common occurrence then.]

[Letter No. 75]

Monday, Sept 14, 1942

Dear Betty –

I'm glad to hear the children are getting started to school with some enthusiasm. They will get a lot more good out of it than if they dislike it.

My cold has been bothering me a lot but seems to be getting better today. You can be glad you are not washing my handkerchiefs. The weather has been awfully hot for the last three or four days and seems especially so after my trips to the Park. The camp is established up there now with a Lieutenant in command so I only have to look out for this end.

A new commanding officer has been assigned here and we are all wondering what he will be like. He hasn't arrived yet. The present Colonel is a fine old man and we all hate to see him go. He may stay of course in a subordinate capacity until he reaches retirement age next November. He will probably be retired one day and ordered back to duty on the next, that's the way they are doing now.

I got a kick out of your remarks about Jimmy ---- turning down your bedclothes at his bed time, etc. I know only too well I'm missing a lot not to be around him at this time. Nobody wants to see this war end soon more than I do.

Our new movie theatre has been completed so we can see a show without going down town. I went last night with Capt. Herbst and saw "The Talk of the Town".

A newly promoted Captain has just reported bedbugs in one of his barracks so must go see what to do.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 76]

Wednesday, Sept 16, 1942

Dear Betty –

Another hot, miserable day and I feel it a lot more because of my cold which still hangs on. In the morning when it's cool I feel pretty good except I'm tired all the time. Maybe it's just laziness.

I mailed you a package today. I never opened it but received the invoices "No charge" the other day. When I made my last trip to San Francisco, Mahoney insisted on calling on a man named Lee who was staying at the St. Francis hotel. He runs a cosmetic business in St. Paul or Minneapolis and was out here on business. One of his brothers is a Capt. Lee in our Medical Detachment and another works for Mahoney as a civilian in Utilities. Mr. Lee bought us several highballs and then took our names and addresses saying he wanted to send us something for our wives. The package contains what he sent.

I found a copy of "A Lantern in Her Hand" in a bookstore the other day and sent it to your mother. Thought she would like it since she seemed to enjoy the Aldrich books she read while visiting us.

I hope the children like their school work. Does Jimmy get lonesome for them while they are away? I hope we won't have to live like this another year. I miss you all the time.

Haven't had a letter from you since Saturday.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 77]

Saturday PM, Sept. 19, 1942

Dear Betty –

Your Wednesday letter arrived this morning. It's three o'clock now and I'll try to answer it now. This has been a very hectic day and this is the first minute I've had to sit down all day.

I'm homesick for the nice fall weather you say you are having. It gets quite cool here at night and then blazing hot in the daytime. I sure don't care for a country where they don't have all four seasons. The main difference here in the valley is heat in summer and rain in winter. Of course if you go up in the mountains you can have plenty of snow and cold in winter.

I didn't know Bobby was taking military training in high school. Do they have a Junior ROTC there? I thought the high schools had it only for the upper classes. It would be alright to get Neal a violin if he is serious about wanting to learn to play but I doubt he would stick to it.

Do as you please with the money you said they were sending you for the Seattle property. I never felt we should take anything from any income they might get from it and they probably need it a lot more than we do. I'd like to see your folks make a good business deal on that property and have some money to enjoy for a while.

I sure enjoy the notes you put in about Jimmy. I'm surprised he didn't take off his clothes before taking his bath. Probably knew he would be stopped when you found him and figured time was short.

Must get back to the grind. Lots of love.

Jim

[Letter No. 78]

Thursday, Sept. 24, 1942

Dear Betty –

I got your Sunday letter today. Your comments on the weather make me want more than ever to be home. It is fairly cool here too, but not like the fall weather we have at home.

I had a letter from Bill Slattery yesterday. I wrote to Tom a week ago Sunday and he forwarded the letter to Bill at Sacramento, 50 miles north of here. He said he almost got in his car to drive over without waiting for supper, but decided to wait and write for directions on how to find me. I wrote him last night so expect him any day now.

I also had an answer from Vincent Smith. He was surprised at my address as he had forgotten I was on Reserve. He wanted my advice as to what he should do about the Army, but I can't advise anyone about that. Half the time I don't know what to do myself. He said he was making a trip this fall but would get no closer than 1200 miles from here. He expects to be in Kansas City and said he would call you up.

Also had a letter from your Mother thanking me for the book and giving me a report on the news and the crops. Everything seems to be fine up there.

We had another trial by General Court Martial yesterday. This soldier was a tough character with a criminal record as long as your arm and got a stiff sentence. He comes from Pennsylvania. Some of his past crimes had been committed while he was out on parole. He'll probably be surprised when he learns about Army prisons.

Do Bobby and Neal ever take any pictures with their cameras? I would like to have some of all of you.

Love to all.

[Note: Bill Slattery was an old Army buddy from WWI. Possibly Tom was his brother?. I have no information on Vincent Smith.]

[Letter No. 79]

Monday, Sept. 28, 1942

Dear Betty –

I didn't get a letter written yesterday. Bill Slattery came over from Sacramento to spend the day and didn't leave until quite late last night. It's good to see old friends once in a while. We didn't do much except talk but we did plenty of that.

I'm wondering how you made out at the courthouse about the increase in taxes. It burns me up to have them raise taxes so much when I haven't got a chance to appear before the equalization board. They do that as a routine procedure I think, knowing that a certain number of people will appear to protest and they can make a compromise with most of those. They also know that a large number will not appear so they have more money to spend and distribute to the racketeers. I know there are laws that are supposed to protect service men who can't pay their taxes or insurance premiums, but I think the payments are only deferred and have to be paid eventually, so there is really no advantage. Better to pay as we go and not pile up a big debt that we might never get paid. Times will probably be hard after the war, at best, without being in debt.

Poor Jimmy. I wonder why he is so afraid of barbers. Sure wish I could see him --- and all of you.

The new commanding officer was expected today but has not arrived. The old Colonel is in Atlanta but will be back. Don't know whether he will stay on here or not.

There isn't any news --- just the same old humdrum routine. It looks tonight as though it may rain. The rainy season will soon be here and then they say it rains most of the time.

I don't feel so good tonight. Guess it mostly because I'm homesick and blue. Lots of people are that way these days.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 80]

Friday, Oct 2, 1942

Dear Betty –

I thought I wasn't going to be able to get a letter off this PM before the Post Office closed, but the Court-Martial I was on since this morning adjourned at 2:30 until tomorrow so I rushed over and bought 3 money orders for \$275.00 which I am enclosing. Please mention it in a letter when they arrive so I can destroy the receipts.

I'm also enclosing the letter for the Bond and Mortgage Co. which you wanted returned. I doubt that we will be able to do anything about lowering the tax and if you make a notation on the form that we have improved our attic they will probably boost them just that much more. However, do what you think best. I don't understand though what made the B & M man change his mind about the tax being high when he saw the amount we still owe on the property --- the assessor doesn't care about that, the tax is the same regardless.

Col. Firestone, our old commanding officer died the night before last in DeKalb, Illinois, enroute back from Atlanta, Georgia. He had recently been relieved from this command, and I understand was to have a better post and a promotion to Brigadier General. We all feel very badly because he was a swell fellow, a fine C. O. and a very able soldier. He had a list of officers he wanted to take with him when he left and I was told I was included. I was hoping he might get the K. C. Depot or some post near home but that's out now. I got the news while on an all night detail unloading R. R. cars ---- got to bed at 4:00 AM yesterday.

I'm glad to hear Nettie finally kicked through with the money she owed Mother. I hope Thelma can get hers now. It's funny that the girls didn't get the references for Thelma. She certainly has a right to pick her own job and the place she wants to work. Why doesn't Thelma write to the people for references herself? I'm sure they would send them.

I was interested to hear that Brown had retired. Thought he would stay as long as he lived.

Hope the frost hasn't hurt the corn up home.

I miss you lots and love you.

Jim

[Note: I have no background info on the "Nettie" and Thelma issues.]

[Letter No. 81]

Sunday, Oct 4, 1942

Dear Betty –

A year ago tomorrow --- which came on Sunday then, Mother had her stroke and Dad and I drove to Yankton. It was a bad time from then until she died, and worse then. Seems a shame now that she couldn't have gone quickly, like Col. Firestone. We are having funeral service for him tomorrow. He will be buried at Kittanning, Pa.

Capt. Herbst and I have been listening to the World Series. He is from St. Louis and a Cardinals fan.

It's kind of warm again today, not like October should be. I've been wishing all day I was back there and could go hunting. If I'm home next fall I'm going to go hunting with Bobby and Neal. I suppose the trees are changing color now and Swope Park should be fine for picnics.

There isn't much news --- just the old routine again. Our Yosemite work is almost finished. I will enclose a clipping from our camp newspaper which was published a couple of weeks late. Had to get Lt. Iverson out of there in a hurry the other day. Orders arrived at 2:30 PM that he was to be at the S. F. Port of Embarkation by midnight. I got the Park Supt. on the phone, he sent a ranger to camp while we got his clearance in order. He reported back here and was on his way by 9:00 o'clock. Probably well on his way to Australia by now.

We are still waiting to see what the new C. O. will do. Maybe a lot of us will be on the way to new stations before long. I don't like it here very well any more and would welcome a change --- preferable farther east.

I'm lonesome for all of you.

Love.

Jim

[Note: The clipping described the detail involving acquisition of the CCC camp buildings in Yosemite.][The Cardinals beat the Yankees 4 games to 1 that year.]

[Letter No. 82]

Wed. Oct 7, 1942

Dear Betty –

That must have been some Wild Irish Dream you had to remember it so vividly. Usually I forget all about them as soon as I wake up.

I'm glad to hear you got the car serviced for the winter. Hope you had the antifreeze in the radiator checked. I suppose you poured back the old Prestone solution. If you didn't have it tested it would probably be best to have it done right away and add whatever amount of new Prestone is required. It will probably be hard to get this year or even impossible unless some dealer has some left in stock. The old car will probably have to do for many years, so don't take a chance on a broken engine block.

Sorry to hear about Stein's death. I never was particularly fond of him but he was one of the fixtures and there aren't many of the old timers left.

There isn't much to write about here. The work is mostly routine and very dull. It's hard to keep pepped up when you don't have much interest in your work and just keep plugging to keep from being a washout. One thing I can't understand is why you so often say that my letter finally arrived. I know I write often --- oftener than I get your letters anyway, and there shouldn't be any very long waits. Maybe they don't bother particularly about delivering "Free" mail.

That was a nice letter I got today --- you wrote it Friday, so you see it took a long time for it to arrive. It was full of news and tickled me about Jimmy trying to telephone, and running around the neighborhood. Sure wish I could see the little scamp, and all of you.

My cold is much better and I feel pretty good. I still wish I could be back there for the autumn weather --- I always want to be back of course, but this season of the year is my favorite back there.

Tell all the children hello for daddy and lots of love for you all.

Jim

[Letter No. 83]

Sunday Oct 11

Dear Betty –

We had a rain last night --- the first I've seen since last May, except when I was home. It's quite chilly today and clouding up again, so maybe the rainy season is here. Kind of early for that they say, but California weather is noted for being always unusual.

There was an informal reception at the Club last night for two of our Lt. Colonels --- Sandelin and Aldrip. One is going overseas, the other to Ft. Warren. Most of the officers who were here when I came have left and a lot of others have come and gone. There is a big re-assignment going on now. Don't know whether I'll be changed around or not. I'd welcome a change from this post but wish I could choose my station. One officer left for Fort Crook the other day. That would have suited me.

Kind of planned to go to Sacramento today to see Slattery but got up late and lost my ambition to travel. They say the buses and trains are always crowded and sometime there is no room at all. They are certainly restricting travel every way they can.

You said in your last letter you were canning grapes and pears. Do they allow you enough sugar for canning? I hope they don't get too stringent with their rationing. Looks kind of silly to have to start rationing this early in the game after years of restricting the raising of food.

I wish I could write newsy and entertaining letters but seems as if nothing of interest ever happens any more. Your letters are always full of news, but of course I'm interested in all that happens back there. I hope this war starts going our way soon and that I can go back home to stay.

How are the children getting along in school? If the boys take any pictures I want some. I'm lonesome for you.

Love

Jim

[Note: Fort Crook was located at the present site of Offutt Air Force Base, which is adjacent to Omaha, Nebraska. That is only about 200 miles from Kansas City, and would have therefore appealed to JRS as an assignment.] [I was not aware that there had been a restriction on the raising of food.]

[Letter No. 84]

Thursday, Oct 15

Dear Betty –

I got your Saturday's letter yesterday. Wish I could have been with you on the wiener roast that night.

I had almost forgotten about Bus and Mary's crippled baby. Guess I just took it for granted that he was getting well. I hope he will get over it as he grows up.

As usual I'm sneaking time out to write and am being constantly interrupted. I go on as Officer of the Day at 4:00 PM and will probably be busy all night too. We are building a drum cleaning plant in the salvage yard and a thousand other things are going on and have to be looked after.

I'm on the post so constantly that everyone is getting the habit of calling me for about everything. They know I also stay home on Sunday so about every week some officer who is planning to do something over the weekend and has drawn the O. D. tour asks me to take his turn for him. I'm learning to say "No" just dandy. Folks will impose on you if you allow it, I find.

Next week some time I expect to go up to Yosemite for a day or two to turn over the property left there to the Park service. Wish you all were here to make the trip with me. You could see the sights while I worked. We hauled out three camps and part of a fourth. Another detail is now up there after a fifth.

It rained yesterday again and is clear and cool today. I guess the winter rainy season is just about here.

Must go now. One of these days I hope to take time to write a real letter ---- if anything happens worth writing about.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Note: "Bus", (Edward), was one of Mom's two brothers. "Bus and Mary's crippled baby" is Richard, who was born with cerebral palsy in late 1930. He lived a very heroic life in spite of this great adversity, writing books and getting a Masters degree. He died in 2010.]

[Letter No. 85]

Sunday, Oct. 18

Dear Betty –

I'll try to get off a letter but what I'll write about is a problem. Your letters are always entertaining and I'm ashamed of the ones I write.

It's hard to realize that Jimmy is talking. Wish he could stay the way he was when I last saw him until I get back. He was such a loving and entertaining rascal last summer.

I think I told you in my last letter that I was going back to Yosemite soon. I expect to leave next Tuesday, stay overnight and return on Wednesday. I have to go over the camps with the "I & I" Officer who will condemn the property we left in removing the stuff we wanted. This is necessary in order to turn it over to the Park Service and "get it off our paper". If that isn't done it will have to be otherwise accounted for or someone will have to pay for it. We have received notice that the roads up there are already covered with ice and snow at times and we want to get the job done before winter sets in. It looks a long way from winter down here but that country is way up high, at least in spots.

You wrote that Thelma was thinking of taking a course in sheet metal work. Where would she be working afterwards. For the bomber plant, at Lakeside or where? They are certainly beginning to use women here lately. A few weeks ago they were only used in offices, now we have them driving trucks and cars, handling machines in the warehouses, and riding bicycles as messengers. A lot more practical, I think, than wearing uniforms and playing soldiers like the "WAAC's". These gals don't wear uniforms, just anything they please --- often coveralls or slacks. A fellow remarked to me yesterday that he had never before seen so many hip pockets with so much in them.

Wish I was there to eat some of that baking you are planning to do. We have good stuff in the Army, and lots of it, but the cooks manage to spoil most of it.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Letter No. 86]

Friday, Oct 23, 1942

Dear Betty –

I had a very nice trip to Yosemite this week. Went up with a Major and a Sergeant to drive the car. We managed to combine business with sightseeing and had a very enjoyable time.

We slept in a cabin at the lodge. It was about like the night we spent in a cabin at Yellowstone --- took an hour to get the bed warm enough to go to sleep. We had the fire all laid in the stove so we could drop in a match when we got up in the morning. The next morning was cold and frosty and there was a bear at the door when we went outside. The deer are so tame up there that they are a nuisance. There was a herd of does and fawns at the "Fallen Monarch" big tree. I walked up to a doe and gave her a cigarette butt. She spit it out and then licked my hand. Her fawn let me walk right up to it. Could have caught a nice pet for the children if I could have got it out of the park.

The second day we went to Hetch-Hetchy dam and reservoir in the Tuolumne River canon. We ate dinner with the officer of the guard at the dam and then drove home. From the top of the dam we could see big trout in the reservoir swimming near the surface. They told us the season was closed for the spawning season. Bobby and Neal would sure have enjoyed that place. I took a number of pictures in the park but haven't had them developed yet.

I'm glad that Bobby joined the Boy Scouts and that Neal is interested too. They will get a lot of good out of it I think. The Boy Scouts of San Francisco have a big camp up in Yosemite Park.

There isn't any news, as usual. I sent each of the youngsters a souvenir of the Park and folder cards to you and Thelma. If the pictures turn out will I'll send you some but I've used my camera so little in the last few months that I'm guessing most of the time when I use it now.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Note: Unless he borrowed that cigarette butt from his companions he must have taken up smoking again --- after "quitting" back in May.]

[Letter No. 87]

Sunday, Oct 25, 1942

Dear Betty –

I just got your Wednesday's letter and Neal's note. That was a nice letter the Sister wrote about Jean's work. Tell her I am proud of her, and thank Neal for the letter he wrote.

I slept late this morning and missed breakfast so went to the PX with Capt. Herbst the Exchange Officer and had doughnuts and coffee. He got real cream for our coffee which made it a feast. We almost never have cream, and canned milk always did spoil coffee for me.

How is Bobby getting along with his algebra? I suppose they still teach that subject in High School. I hope he masters it because I don't know of anything that will be more generally useful to him, no matter what work he goes in for, and it's essential in some lines. I remember that Lad had trouble with it and didn't worry much about it because he had got the notion that no one ever used it after leaving school.

Why does Lad want to quit his job to husk corn? He might be able to earn more money for a while but corn husking doesn't last long. I think you are right about being drafted would do him good, but with his family they won't get to him for a long time, especially if they go ahead with their plans to take the 18 and 19 year olds first.

I had a chance to go to San Francisco yesterday to stay over the week end and to ride back tonight with a Captain who lives there and drives home every Saturday. I intended to go at first and then got to thinking that I wouldn't enjoy it much anyway as I know very few people there and would be just as lonesome as I am here. Wish now I had gone because Sundays here certainly do drag, and I could have found something to pass the time in S. F. They have some of the finest parks I've ever seen, museums, galleries, and scenery. I have a card to the Army and Navy Club, (Peter B Kyne is one of the directors), but I haven't been there yet.

I'm missing you a lot today, and every day.

All my love.

Jim

[Note: "Lad" is the other brother of Mom's; he would have been about 27 years old, and had 3 small children. I don't believe he ever served during the War.] ["Peter B Kyne" was a popular novelist of the time. According to Google, he was a Captain in the 144th FA in WWI; since JRS was in the 147th, I thought they might have had some common ground that prompted the comment here. The 144th didn't arrive in France until August of 1918, and left in January of 1919, so it is unlikely that they knew each other from that time.]

[Letter No. 88]

Wednesday, Oct 28, 1942

Dear Betty –

I'll try to get a quick letter off. It's another busy day and tonight we, (the permanent officers of the garrison), are having a big dinner at the Stockton Hotel for the new Colonel. It will cost \$2.25 a plate ---- too much, but it's one of those things you are expected to be present for. I'd rather not go at that price, all I'll get out of it will be a headache.

Tell Bob thanks for the letter. One of these days I'll try to get a letter written to all the kids. Did Jimmy like his little bear?

Bob asked if I took any pictures in Yosemite. I did, and took them to the photographer in the Chaplains office yesterday because the commercial photographers don't do very good finishing. I saw the negatives this morning and some of them look pretty good. He is going to print them today or tomorrow so I will send them in my next letter, if they look worth sending.

It's windy and quite chilly here today. It rained last night.

There is an ocean-going steamer at the dock today loading cargo. She is all rigged out with guns and life rafts. Wish the boys could see her. Very few ocean steamers come up here since the war but there are a lot of river steamers that come up from San Francisco and the delta towns.

I had a letter from Myrtle telling about Bob Montagne's new baby. She said she had been in Omaha for a couple of days and stayed at Lorraines. I wish she wouldn't go running off to get a defense job. It's all right for people out of work or in poorly paid jobs, but when the war is over the defense workers will have to look for new jobs while people who dept their old ones won't have to worry. However, it's her business.

Must back to work. (sic)

Love

Jim

[Note: Bob Montagne was JRS' nephew, being the child of Mayme.][This little bear must have been the small black-colored one that I favored for so many years. I used to cut its hair with scissors, and claimed that the hair grew back.]

[Letter No. 89]

Saturday, Oct. 31, 1942

Dear Betty –

I'm glad you mentioned bonds in your letter. They keep sending questionnaires asking how many we are buying and urging us to buy more. I have been stalling by telling them that you were buying the bonds and would put all our savings over a moderate bank balance into bonds. I don't want to obligate myself to buy any specific amount now that living costs are going up so fast. I think it would be better for you to do it if you have anything left after paying the expenses each month --- always keeping some out for emergencies of course. It must be costing a lot more to live now than it did six months ago and I don't know whether or not you will have much left after settling the bills. If I buy bonds here and take out the money to pay for them here you might have enough to get along with.

Tonight is Halloween and there is to be a dance and reception for Col. and Mrs. Churchill, the new commanding officer and his wife. I'm not planning to attend. I should be correct but don't think my absence will be noticed in the crowd. The dinner the other night wasn't so bad, but not worth the money. A few of us detoured by way of an American Legion meeting on the way home. They insisted on feeding us again after the meeting. It was the first Legion Meeting I had attended since leaving Valley City.

I hope the youngsters will have a good time tonight. Jimmy is almost big enough now to be interested. Out here they are asking the kids through the newspapers to go easy and not destroy property.

I am sending a few pictures I took at Yosemite. Will send more another time as the whole bunch would make the letter too heavy I'm afraid. I was disappointed in the workmanship, would have got better prints down town.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 90]

Monday, Nov. 2, 1942

Dear Betty –

I am enclosing three money orders for \$275.00. I donated \$2.00 to the local community chest, another “drive” that we are expected to donate to. I knew you would have to give to the K. C. Chest so I gave as little as I could get by with here. Don’t see why I should have given any here but it’s one of those things you can’t get out of.

Six more officers are packing up today for new stations. The nearest to home is Terre Haute, Indiana. Others are going to Oregon and West Virginia. There are very few left of the people that were here when I arrived and I wouldn’t be at all surprised to be on the list soon. I would welcome a transfer farther east. Don’t care much for this country out here. It’s sure a dull place for me. I don’t attend the social functions ---- except stag affairs --- and now that tires and gas are worrying everyone I seldom get a ride in a car, except occasionally on official business. Sure wish they would send me to Lakeside, or better yet, I wish this lousy war was over.

I’ll enclose a few more of the Yosemite pictures. They are not very good but the negatives are sharp and when I get home I can do better.

Have you heard whether or not Myrtle has gone to Omaha? I probably won’t hear from Yankton for a long time. They write by spells --- usually two or three letters within a short time and then no more for a long time. I wonder if Helen and Earl are planning to move down there too.

I’m lonesome for all of you.

All my love.

Jim

[Letter No. 91]

Wednesday, Nov. 4, 1942

Dear Betty –

I want to write you a letter but I don't know what I am going to write about. Everything here is the same day after day.

Major Joyner received orders today to proceed to Camp Carson, Colorado Springs. He is one of the bunch that come out from Ft. Warren when I did. There aren't many of us left and I wouldn't be surprised if we were all gone soon. Most of us are speculating on our chances of getting nearer home. I can't get much farther away unless they put me on a boat.

The weather has turned cold and windy and a lot of people have bad colds. This is the worst place for colds I've ever seen. So far I have escaped the current epidemic but I had a bad one in September that I thought I never would get over.

I wish I could have been home with you all for Halloween. I'd like to hear Jimmy talk and see him read the Post. I wonder if he has forgotten me completely.

I'm hoping the boys will take some picture to send me soon. One of these days I'll write the youngsters a letter apiece. Maybe there will be some news soon, if I get orders to move.

I suppose Thelma will be gone when you get this I suppose it will be hard for you to find a girl to come in and help you when you need help. Better get one located if you can. I remember you used to have trouble with your hip every winter and that would be bad when you are all alone. Wish Thelma had wanted to stay.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Letter No. 92]

Saturday, Nov. 7, 1942

Dear Neal –

I wrote to Bobby yesterday so I will write to you today. Tell Jean her turn is coming too.

It's a nice cool day, sunny after a foggy morning. A sergeant is drilling a platoon of soldiers just outside my windows and he sure is pouring it on. I'll bet you would like to be watching.

There is a deep water channel running past the camp and connecting with San Francisco Bay. Sometimes a big ocean freighter comes sailing up to load a cargo, but not very often since the war started. Every morning a lot of river steamers go down stream to load fruit and farm produce to bring back. This morning they had to keep their fog horns blowing.

We are dismantling a big airplane in the salvage yard. It crashed and sure is a mess. When they hit the ground they get all crumpled up.

We had a camp in Yosemite for a whole month this fall. One day while I was back here a bear went into the kitchen of a lady who lived near the park and took a slab of bacon away with him. The lady was so mad she grabbed a rifle and killed the bear, then she was afraid the rangers would arrest her for shooting it so she gave it to the Sergeant in charge of the detail. He took it to camp and skinned it to make a rug and they butchered it for meat. When I got back to camp the weather had turned warm and the meat was spoiled so I didn't get any.

I hope you like school this year and that you're making good grades. Are you taking good care of your rifle? We will get some hunting done when I get back.

Love

Dad

[Bob's letter is not in the stack, so he must have kept it himself --- or it never arrived.] [Not so --- Mom evidently pulled all of his letters to Bob and kept them in another bunch. I found a number of these later, (including the one mentioned here), and am transcribing them as time allows. JCS 28 Aug 13]

[Letter No. 93]

Sunday, Nov. 8, 1942

Dear Betty –

I'm sending Jean a letter and Jimmy a postcard today so they will all have had a letter from me this week. I'm looking forward to the pictures that Bobby is taking.

I took up the matter of the watches with the Post Exchange. They are out of the less expensive kinds but the Steward said he would find out from the salesman next time he came in whether or not they were still available. It's getting hard to get some things now, even in the Army Post Exchanges and they have a good priority.

Don't worry about my Christmas present, and don't spend much on it. Just a keepsake is all I want. I wish you would tell me what you would like. I think I can buy things here that you can't get outside any more, but I don't seem to have any knack for shopping. Seems as if all I ever get you is jewelry and you have everything I see in the show cases. Tell me what you would like.

I got an announcement card from Bob & Margaret about the new Baby. Judith Ann, or Judith something is what they call it. Am I supposed to send something for it?

I had a short letter from Stella but not much news. Chet enclosed a note wanting information about a Military Police unit they are activating in Omaha to be composed mainly of veterans. It seems that in the Interior they are setting up Internal Security Districts and taking in overage veterans to guard bridges, etc., to relieve Army units. He said the initial pay is \$50.00 per month plus longevity pay. He wanted to know if I knew anything about it so I asked our M. P. Officer here who told me there is such a set up and he would try to get the details tomorrow. Looks as if Chet is getting restless to get in the Army.

How is Dad these days?

Love.

Jim

[There is no evidence of Jean's letter, or the postcard so they may have met the same fate as Neal's.] [No information the baby mentioned.] [Stella was one of JRS' sisters. Chet was her husband; he had served in WWI at the same time as JRS.]

[Letter No. 95]

Friday, Nov. 13, 1942

Dear Betty –

I got the date bars and the book today. The package was mis-sent to the supply division and they called me yesterday and asked where I wanted it delivered. A messenger finally got around this morning and gave it to me after I had signed various papers, showing date and hour of delivery. This Army is too unwieldy to move, let alone fight.

The bars are awfully good. I have only read the preface of the book. You had better not send any bars or candy any more as you will be needing your sugar and we always have all we need here. I do appreciate this batch though as I was getting hungry for date bars again.

I got your letter yesterday saying that you probably would not need a statement from me to get gas for the car. I hope that is so. I sent the statement by airmail Tuesday but was afraid it wouldn't get there in time to help you out with your local registration board.

I didn't tell you in my Tuesday's letter that I had a letter from Mr. Handley last Sunday. It wasn't as long or as full of news as his other two. He did tell me though that he had been raised to \$4000 for meritorious service. He thought perhaps Sime had been instrumental in getting it for him but wasn't sure. Thought Mr. Shoemaker might have given it to him. He also said Dick had enrolled in the "Volunteer Officers Corps", whatever that is, and was to take his physical soon. Said that might work out all right if his number didn't come up first. These proud old American families amuse me. They glory in their fighting ancestors, but are willing to let the immigrants sons do it now --- and their boys must have commissions if they have to go.

Thanks again for the bars. I will read the book.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Letter No. 96]

Monday, Nov. 16

Dear Betty –

It's a cold raw day and threatening rain. The office force ate lunch in the office, the women have gotten together a potluck or picnic dinner in honor of a Warrant Officer who is leaving for school at Camp Lee to work for his commission. As usual it was a conglomeration of salads, pickles, olive, etc. and I feel indigestion coming on. I didn't want it but was invited and couldn't very well refuse.

A boiler inspector from the Coast Guard is here to inspect a boiler we recently installed in the salvage yard to clean oil drums. I'm waiting now for a telephone call from the man in Sacramento who furnished the boiler to find out if he has any papers on former inspections.

You didn't say whether or not the money orders arrived this month. I think I mailed them on the 2nd of the month.

I'm sorry to hear that your Mother has been sick again. The main reason I wanted Thelma to stay with you was to have things fixed so you could go home if your Mother had a spell again. Better try to locate a trustworthy woman and break her in. I suppose it will be hard to find anyone that's any good nowadays since there are so many jobs available. Anyway, I hope you won't be called home on account of any sickness, but it will put you in a bad fix if you were with nobody to leave to take care of the kids.

The pheasant season opened here yesterday and I wanted to go out but had an appointment with a man from a big cooperage firm in S. F to look over our plant and besides I would have had to rent a gun which I didn't want to do.

I get a lot of pleasure out of your comments on what Jimmy and the other children are doing when you write.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Letter No. 97]

Tuesday, Nov 17

Dear Betty –

I got a letter from you yesterday just after I had mailed one to you. It contained the card from Thelma and acknowledged receipt of the money orders.

Wonder if Chet passed his physical exam. They are evidently starting on the married men but seems funny to me they have gone to the older men so early in the game. Of course Chet has no children, but neither has Dick Handley and I know a lot of young married men out here without kids that haven't been called.

It started to rain in earnest last night and is still at it. It isn't really cold but sure feels like it when the wind blows the fine rain right through you. I'm getting good use out of the old raincoat I bought to use at Ft. Omaha.

I'm glad little Jimmy liked his mail. I'll have to remember to send him a card occasionally.

I haven't been able to find the watches you asked me to look for. It seems they are awfully hard to get. A salesman I used to know when I was in the PX promised to try to locate some in his company's stock when he got back off his trip but I haven't heard from him yet.

This would be a fine day to sit in front of the fireplace with you and the family. I get mighty lonesome for you in my bleak old quarters.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 98]

Saturday, Nov. 21

Dear Betty –

I got your letter and Jean's yesterday. Tell Jean thanks for me. I think she writes a nice letter. Bobby's grades looked very good to me but he should be able to do better in Gym. If he isn't good at making baskets he will never get better without practice and the only way to get practice is to assert himself and keep trying.

I hope the pictures turn out good and that they will soon be finished. Seems an awful long time since I have seen you.

Laddie is going to get himself so tied down with a family that he won't be eligible for the draft and will have to find a job to stay with. It should be easy to find work now and if the kid is smart he will hunt up a good one and get solid in it before the boys start coming back and jobs will be scarce and times hard.

I still haven't heard anything about the watches so perhaps you had better not plan on them.

Our rainy spell finally passed and the weather has been sunny but cool for a couple of days. However it looks a little threatening again and I'm afraid we are in for some more. I don't mind the rain, but the whole place, except on the roads, gets to be a sea of mud. I got into a hole up to my knees in mud yesterday.

I had a letter from Helen yesterday which I will enclose. I hope Myrtle isn't silly enough to head for Washington. Army people and Gov't. employees all say it's an awful place to live now --- no housing or room. She sure gets flighty ideas.

All my love.

Jim

[Letter No. 99]

Monday, Nov. 23

Dear Betty –

Your Thursday's letter arrived this morning. All those ration and coupon books must be an awful nuisance. I see that they are going to ration butter, cheese, and eggs soon. Only a little while ago they were paying the farmers for refraining from producing and now they act as if we are short of everything. All wars are screwy, but seems to me this is extra much so. As yet the coffee rationing hasn't hit us but expect it will as soon as the stock on hand is depleted and we have to requisition more. Don't worry about me, I'll get along. I hope you and the family won't run short.

The package was not misdirected. It was just mis-sent in the distribution on this post. They get supplies for different activities mixed up some times.

I am planning to ask for leave after Christmas --- about the middle of January. I would give a lot to be there at Christmas time but am afraid it would be next to impossible. We have had several directives on leaves and furloughs and the orders say that they will be granted up to 10% of strength between Nov. 26 and Jan 12 but must be arranged for and train reservations made far in advance. The railroads have served notice that they will be swamped during that period. With leaves available for only one out of ten and everyone wanting to go you can see that the chances are slim. I figure there will be a big let down in travel after the holidays and then I should be able to make it --- if leaves are still to be had. I will have completed a year's service in January and hope I can get 15 days. That's only a hope but I'm sure hoping. Of course, if by some remote chance I can get leave a Xmas time I'll take it then and fight for train space.

I'm lonesome for you but not as much as I would be if I couldn't plan to see you in a few weeks.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Letter No. 100]

Thanksgiving Day *[26 Nov 42]*

Dear Betty –

Your Sunday's letter has just arrived. I could enjoy seeing a snowstorm and your offer to have a fire in the fireplace makes me plenty homesick.

We are working as usual today, as are all government agencies I understand. There will be a special dinner at the officers mess and there is always special Thanksgiving meal for enlisted men so the feasting part of the day will go on as usual, but it won't seem like Thanksgiving to me. Next year I hope I can spend the day with you.

I read in the paper that there was a possibility that gasoline rationing might be postponed for as much as six months. It would be nice if your folks could drive down for a visit with you before winter sets in. If your mother can stand to be away from the farm that long why don't you have her down to stay for the winter. She would be a lot more comfortable and she would probably feel more at home now that she has been there a couple of times before.

Did Neal make the snow shovel in manual training? I can imagine him visualizing all the wealth he will accumulate with it. Does Jimmy really make any thing when he works or does he just pound for the noise? I'd swap my Thanksgiving dinner for a look at him, and a whole lot more to hold him for a minute.

The Chaplain is having a special noon service in the chapel and got permission for the men to be absent from duty an extra 15 minutes to attend which pleased him greatly. He was just in to ask us to attend, but I doubt we will find room. The services will be amplified through the loudspeaker in the steeple so it won't be necessary to go in. It's nearly time for it to start.

I hope you all enjoy your dinner. Wish I was there.

Love.

Jim

[Note: JRS has been gone for 311 days and this is the 100th letter he has written home; averaging a letter every 3.1 days]

[Letter No. 101]

Sunday night, November 29

Dear Betty –

It's nine o'clock and I'm just getting started on your letter. I slept late this morning, went to Captain Evan's house for breakfast at noon. About three o'clock, just as I got back to the post the Ed Mahoney's came out and took me to their home for dinner. Have just arrived from there. Mahoney is a civilian employee in the Post Engineer's office --- title: Sup. of Maintenance.

Had a good but not very cheerful Thanksgiving dinner. Last night was the monthly formal dance which I attended but did not enjoy much.

I hope you have your gas rationing business all straightened out. Everywhere I go I hear people discussing ways and means for getting more gas. It seems most of them feel they can't get along with their allotment. Wonder if we will ever get back to the good old simple days when the only difficulty in buying whatever you wanted was getting the money to pay for it.

I am enclosing a clipping from the local paper mentioning Major Beaver. Is he the son of the high school principal or is it the old man himself? I think the son was a lieutenant in the reserve not long ago. Seems I read that he had been given a Regular Army commission not long ago after completing a year's tour of duty at Ft Lincoln --- under the Thomassen Act. He could easily be a Major now though. It's unlikely that the son would be with the S. D. National Guard so the clipping doesn't indicate that the Yankton boys are in New Guinea as I thought when I first read it. I think the younger Beaver was commissioned in the Infantry and will probably be with a Regular Army or a draftee organization.

Tell Jimmy I'll be coming home to see his "baby" some day, and as soon as I can. Tell all of you that I miss and love you all.

Jim

[Letter No. 102]

Tues. Dec. 1

Dear Betty –

I am enclosing the usual \$275.00 herewith. Let me know when you receive it.

I'm hoping you will take care of the Christmas shopping for the family --- as usual. It's hard to get away to do much here and the selection at the Post Exchange is not very great. Hope to find something for you and the kids and grandpa. I think you had better buy the clock you want back there. I could send one but am afraid the trip through the mail wouldn't do it any good.

It doesn't seem possible that Christmas is almost here. It's quite warm and there are still leaves on the trees and flowers in bloom. I haven't had an overcoat on this year. There has been a lot of rain though.

There has been rather a bad epidemic of flu and colds but so far I haven't had the flu, although I thought I felt it coming on a few times. Just imagination I guess.

This isn't much of a letter but I wanted to get the money in the mail for you. I am going out now to pay my mess bill, laundry bill, club dues and orderly fees. They are raising our mess costs again and I suppose your bills are going up fast too.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Letter No. 103]

Thursday, Dec 3

Dear Betty –

I just got your Sunday's letter and the pictures. I'm tickled to get both. Jimmy looks a lot older than he did when I saw him but spose that's natural. Seems a long time. Thank Bobby for the pictures.

I also had a letter from Honey in the same mail --- the first I've ever had from her. She says she is sending me a box of pralines. What are they? She said the weather is cold, there is snow on the ground, and your father is still picking corn and they have several big cribs in front of the house. She also said your Mother wasn't so well again, but suppose you have heard that.

I got the clipping about Major Beaver. I sent you one from the local paper in my last letter. I'm inclined to think it's the younger Beaver, but since I don't know their first names or initials I'm only guessing.

I'd like to have seen Jimmy with his "ghost powder" on. In fact I'd like to see you all --- and I'm hoping I can in a few weeks.

My Christmas shopping is proceeding slowly and unsatisfactorily. The PX has ordered some big "Teddy Bears" and that should take care of Jimmy --- if they arrive in time. I got some trinkets for you and Jean and Grandpa, but haven't found anything yet for the boys.

When Neal takes the pictures I'll be expecting one of Bobby. I missed him in this batch.

All my love.

Jim

[Note: This must be where the larger of my two bears came from. He sent me a smaller one a month or so earlier; among the souvenirs from Yosemite that he sent the family. I always liked the smaller one best.]

[Letter No. 104]

Sunday, Dec. 6

Dear Betty –

It's a cold, rainy, gloomy day. I sometimes wonder where California got its reputation for fine weather.

The box from Honey arrived and turned out to be candy. I didn't recognize the word she used in her letter and expected one of those Bohemian cookies with a fruit filling and poppy seed on top.

I was down town for a couple of hours on business yesterday and was looking around afterwards for Christmas presents for the boys. My Jewish "technical adviser" in Salvage was with me and taking me around to the places he considered the best. He took me into a store --- one of several he owns and rents out, by the way, and when I mentioned I was looking for something for Neal he reached up and unhooked a little pocket knife from a card and told the proprietor, his tenant, to wrap it up and send it to Neal. It was all wrapped up, stamped, and addressed to Neal and I will mail it in the morning. You can explain Bobby that I will send him one like it with his present so he won't feel discriminated against. I hope Neal will write a note of thanks to Mr. Philip Berstien, c/o Base Quartermaster, Stockton Ordnance Base. A Christmas card would be nice. He really is a fine man, loves to do things for people, and naturally likes appreciation. He is always buying cigarettes and candy for the soldiers and last night gave a big feed for a lot of us. He is a retired business man, quite wealthy but thinks his experience as a junk man would be valuable to the government in the Salvage section, and he is right.

I still haven't got my Christmas shopping all done but hope to get a box in the mail this week.

I must get a letter of thanks off to Honey now.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Letter No. 105]

Wednesday, Dec. 9, 1942

Dear Betty –

Your package arrived almost as soon as your letter. I haven't opened it yet.

I mailed you a package Monday. There was a little of something for all of you except Jimmy. I am still awaiting the arrival of some nice big Teddy Bears at the P. X. and when they come I'll send his. They told me yesterday they should be here today.

I got my uniform allowance and bought a complete new uniform, cap, shoes and trimmings. My old one looked terrible. I was so pleased with my new clothes that I had the Chaplain's photographer take my picture. I got them last night. They are un-retouched, so a little brutal but I guess they flatter me at that. I had enough made to send one to each of the youngsters and grandpa and an 8" x 10" for you that you can put in the old frame if you like it better than the old one. Also will send one to each of my sisters and to your mother. I'll send them when I can get some mailing envelopes.

Had a package from Myrtle and Marie. Haven't opened it yet but guess it's candy or cookies. It's packed in a tin can. I'm still eating at Honey's candy. It's all run into a big chunk but it tastes good.

I was invited out to dinner by the Quartermaster last night but was on a 24 hour duty tour and couldn't go. He stubbed his toe and broke it yesterday --- at home --- and he sure feels cheap about it.

I hope you have your Christmas rush work done and can take it easy and enjoy the season. I want to be with you awfully much but try not to think about it --- and then I cheer myself up with the thought that I'll see you before very long anyway.

Love to all of you.

Jim

[Letter No. 106]

Monday, Dec 14

Dear Betty –

I went on O. D. yesterday and feel dopey today but will try to write a few lines anyway.

Hope Jean is over her sick spell and that you have got rid of your cold. This country is very bad for colds. I got a bad one last September 1st and haven't been completely rid of it since, it just gets worse and then better. I'm used to it now.

I had a long letter from Marge this morning saying she had made some candy and was mailing a box to me. She said there would be some fruit cake from Honey and a sample of her own. She said they are all going home for Xmas and fussed a little because she wouldn't be able to go down and help Honey get ready. Said they had no heater in the car and couldn't take the baby out much on account of the cold. Sounds like they are having Christmas weather up there. Wish I could see some of that kind. Here it gets chilly and damp, but it's shivery and raw and doesn't bite. Perhaps it's just as well as it will make Christmas seem more like just any other day and I won't miss it so much. I've got nothing to kick about though, lots of the people are a lot farther from home and will have a rough time besides.

I'm beginning to be afraid I won't get Jimmy's bear to him in time for Christmas, it still hasn't arrived. If he doesn't get it in time you will have to explain that it's on the way. I hope the other package has arrived OK. I got yours sometime ago but haven't opened it yet. I'm glad you got the kids a Christmas tree. Out here they are very scarce. It has been the custom for people to go up in the hills and cut their own on forest land set aside for that purpose, but with gas and tire rationing in effect I understand the Forest Service isn't going to bother with it.

Love.

Jim

P. S. This is now the Stockton Ordnance Base, without the Motor.

[Note: "Marge" is another of Mom's sisters; "the baby" is probably Tom Schramm --- he is a couple of years younger than I am, and would have been considered a baby. I am not sure I understand the difficulty of going to help Honey. All of the years that I was aware of the Art & Marge Schramm farm it was a very short distance from Yankton, Utica, and the other places of note. Unless they were living somewhere else at this time, I cannot see the big deal of a trip "down home".

[Letter No. 107]

Thursday, Dec 17

Dear Betty –

I am just back from mailing Jimmy's teddy bear. They arrived this morning and I had one of the original cartons wrapped for mailing without opening it so it should arrive in good shape. They are the nicest bears I've ever seen and I think he will like it.

I wrapped up seven of those pictures and mailed them to Stella today. I asked her to distribute them and send Mamie's and Cleo's to them. I don't know their addresses. I heard from Mamie once but failed to write down her address.

The remnants of the Fort Warren gang is having a stag dinner tonight. Quite a lot of them have gone and we thought we should have a party before the bunch was all broken up. I had an invitation to dine with Capt. Evans, the Signal Officer tonight and would have gone except for the previous engagement. He likes to have company as he had to confine his wife in the State Hospital a few weeks ago --- some trouble similar to Bill Slattery's wife's I understand --- and he is pretty badly broken up about it. He has a nice apartment in town and his fifteen year old daughter keeps house for him.

The weather is gloomy a usual. I haven't seen the sun for days. The fog is thick every night and usually last till after noon and it stays cloudy after the fog lifts. I have a cold all the time, as does everyone else, and its worse now than it has been for weeks.

I have put in my request for leave, but haven't' heard yet whether or not it has been approved. It will probably be effective after the middle of January if it is approved.

Was hoping for a letter from you today --- seems a long time --- but it hasn't arrived yet. Mail is pretty erratic these days.

I hope Jimmy will like his bear.

Love.

Jim

[It bothers me that he was so concerned about my acceptance of this bear. It was indeed a nice one; but the smaller one he gave me earlier was much more loveable.][Mom had sent him a Christmas card on 16 Dec. with a letter inside.]

Wednesday

Dear Jim –

Your box arrived Monday and I have unpacked it. I know we'll enjoy your remembrances. The pictures came yesterday. Your face seems much fuller than in the old one but you don't look happy. Bob is much disgusted with me for thinking so --- he says you look like you're just ready to bank an ander. *[Have no idea what an "ander" is.]* Anyway, we're all glad to get them --- Jimmy wouldn't part with his so I could keep it nice for later years. I finally allowed him to keep it until bedtime, but the first thing this morning was "Where is my Daddy?"

I guess I'll have to have a new Thermostat installed for the furnace. It has been acting up lately --- wouldn't come on for such a long time and then when it did it would run and run. Yesterday, it wouldn't come on at all so I called a company and when the man came, he just turned it away up & it came on. He said they had lots of trouble with this type, that they weren't even making them anymore, (in fact aren't making any kind anywhere because of war orders). The mechanism is sealed in and the wires become corroded & fail to make contact readily & sometimes fail altogether, and once going, there's trouble the other way. He didn't charge for the trip --- guess he knew I'd need more work & hoped I'd remember his company with it. It will cost \$11.50 installed. If I should have to leave, it's not safe to leave with the children as it just isn't automatic. If it didn't come on during the night some cold weather, pipes might freeze and burst, so much as I hate the extra expense, guess I'll have to do it. It was forty minutes after I turned it up this morning before it came on and it's still going now but isn't too warm in here --- just right, I think. Yesterday, we had no heat until 12:30 other than the gas oven & fire in the fireplace. That was the time the repair man came out.

Mother wrote she was planning to send two chickens for our Xmas. She also said she had ordered some things sent to us from the catalog house. If she has no better luck than I had, not much of it will come.

When I was looking over the Xmas card table, there wasn't a single card for husbands there, tho for every other member of one's family, but I thought the one I'm sending would serve very nicely.

I'll write again before Xmas but doubt if they'll reach you soon enough. We'll miss you a lot at Xmas but there won't be the let-down afterwards as we'll have your January visit to look forward to.

Love from all.

Betty

Neal wrote to Mr. Berstien. The boys are proud of their knives. Jean's teacher sends the Sacred Heat badge for you.

[Letter No. 108]

Sunday, Dec 20

Dear Betty –

I got your last Sunday's letter yesterday, so it appears as if the Christmas jam in the mails has arrived. I hope Jimmy's package will get there before Christmas, the other was mailed in plenty of time so it should be there now. I got Bob's package the other day and one from Marge. I haven't opened any yet except a couple that I knew were candy only. Honey sent a box of candy and Marie & Myrtle one. Marge implies that hers is all food so I don't know when I'll get it all eaten.

It's eleven months today since I left for the Army. Seems a long time to me. I haven't heard from my application for leave, whether it has been approved or not. I kind of think it will be --- but not for as long a time as I asked for.

The Willards have asked me to spend Christmas with them. However, they are going to visit relatives, either at Modesto or Livermore, and since I volunteered for the Officer in Charge detail in our office for that day I may have to stay within phone call of Hqs, in which case I won't go. We are required to keep a skeleton force on for the day, and since all the other officers except myself have either families or girl friends to visit with, I thought it would be decent of offer to take the job. It doesn't make much difference to me where I spend Christmas if I can't be with you and the family.

I enjoy your letters so much, especially when you put in the doings of the kids. Wish I could reciprocate with newsy letters.

I hope you will all have a happy Christmas and I'll be thinking of you all the time.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 109][Christmas card]

Tuesday 12 - 22

Dear Betty –

Just got word that my request for 15 days leave had been disapproved but that request for 10 days would be approved. Have submitted a new letter and hope there will be no hitch.

This isn't that kind of card I wanted to send but didn't have much choice. I hope you will all have the happiest of Christmases. I'm lonesome for you.

All my love

Jim

[Letter No. 110]

Saturday, Dec. 26

Dear Betty –

I just received your Sunday night's letter with enclosures from Bob and Neal.

I surely hope you all had a nice Christmas. It was a nice day here but of course I missed you a lot. There were people in and out of my quarters all day so I wasn't lonely, just a bit homesick like everyone else that couldn't be home. We had a very good dinner.

First thing in the morning I opened my presents. They were all nice and I thank you all. I'll use one of Bob's envelopes to mail this, and read his book which I have been intending to buy for some time. While reading I will puff away on the pipe Neal sent. It's a dandy. I liked Jean's stationery and Jimmy's handkerchiefs very much. The book you sent me is a compilation of the Babe and Joe stories I have read in the Post but I am glad to have them in a collected form. I'll send or bring it home for my bookcase and future reference. I was particularly pleased with the little chess set. I have always intended to learn that game but never got around to it. There are several chess players here so maybe I'll get good at it.

We had an office Christmas party last Thursday with a tree and a feed. We drew lots for buying a 50 cent present.

The PX employees gave me a pint of whiskey, a carton of cigarettes, and a set of sterling silver Captain's bars. I don't know why they should buy me anything --- I'm not their boss any more so it isn't apple polishing.

I have resubmitted my request for leave and am sure it will be approved for ten days. It will be sometime during the last two weeks in January --- I can't say exactly when I'll arrive. They say train service has been terrible for weeks. I'm going to try to fly one way at least.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 111]

Tuesday, Dec. 29.

Dear Betty –

I received your Wednesday's letter this morning, ---- written two days before Christmas and Christmas seems a long time ago.

I'm blue and half sick today. I wrote you that I had applied for a 15 day leave, though I didn't expect that much. It was returned from Hqs with a notation that 15 days would not be approved, but if I wished to take 10 days the C. O would approve it. I immediately sent in the request for 10 days and yesterday it was returned marked "Disapproved" and note from the Colonel --- "Only one leave of over 3 days is permitted in a fiscal year during these days of extreme emergencies." In as much as the fiscal year starts on July 1, and I had a 10 day leave in July I'll have to wait until next July for the next one. It isn't a War Department regulation but a ruling of the Chief of Ordnance and I'm in the Ordnance Dept. now so I'm stuck.

We can only hope that the order may be changed or that I may be sent to a station where a 3 day leave will be worth while. There is also another remote possibility but we can't bank on it. Once in a while a troop train is sent out of here and the officer assigned to command it usually gets a few days off at his destination. If I can get that job on a train going near Kansas City everything will be fine. However, there is a lot of competition for that detail and you know I'm not a good politician and it is only possible, not probable, I'll get a break.

I have just received an order to investigate court martial charges against a soldier and to have a formal report of my findings on the Colonel's desk on the morning of the day after tomorrow so I've got to get at it right now.

Sorry I had to write this letter. I was so sure I could go home that I feel a lot worse than I should. I'll try to find some way.

All my love.

Jim

[Letter No. 112]

Saturday, Jan. 2, 1943

Dear Betty –

I am sending you three money-orders for \$275.00. Let me know when you receive them.

This has been a long dreary week. I'm glad Christmas and New Years are past. I was so sure of coming home in January that it seemed twice as bad to be told "no" as it would if I hadn't been planning so hard on it. Guess I'll just have to be patient, try to make the time go fast, and hope for a break or a change in policy.

The Colonel and his wife were "At Home" yesterday from 5:00 to 7:00. I attended, as did all officers who possibly could. It's an old New Years Custom of the Service, therefore a "must".

I'll not try to make a news letter of this, there isn't any news anyway. Hope I get a letter from you today.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 113]

Monday, Jan. 4, 1943

Dear Betty –

I'm up to my ears in work but want to get a letter off to you today. I got your Thursday's letter today.

There is a troop train leaving very soon, (tonight), for the east and I just learned about it today. They have already assigned a young Lt. who has been here only 2 weeks for the job --- and he doesn't even want to go. If I could have had the job it would have been good for a five day stopover in K. C. on the way back. It makes me sick. The officer who sends them out told Cap. Hughes just the other day there wouldn't be any trains for some time. Hughes wanted to go to his home in Pennsylvania. There is a little clique of school officers who handle this business, and they apparently want to keep the garrison officers out of a good detail. I'm still hoping for a break thought later on.

I think the Handley's will be disappointed if they expect Dick to go to officers training right away. I've talked to some men out here who have signed up for the same thing and they were told that they would first have to be drafted then serve 90 days of basic training. If they were then considered satisfactory they would be sent to Officers Training, if not they would be returned to their homes. It's supposed to be practically impossible to get a commission in the combat arms, (as Tank Destroyer Units are), direct from civil life any more.

Thank Jean for the nice letter. Jimmy should be able to write one soon. *[Right --- I'll be 3 years old in only about 4½ months!]*

I hope you are all well. Don't feel too disappointed about my not coming home. Maybe I'll get a train later on, or a transfer or something.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 114]

Wednesday night, Jan 6

Dear Betty –

I'm sorry about not getting home to take care of all those things that have to be done in January ---- car licensing, settling that tax business, etc. Remember, if you discuss the taxes with anyone that I'm not interested in deferred payments. I want to keep up our taxes as we go along and not have a big debt to pay later, but I do object to their raising the taxes while I am away, and I'm not so sure that old law I sent you a copy of doesn't exempt me from certain taxes while in the Army, and not to be made up afterwards. However, don't worry about the business and don't bother with it at all if it's hard to get away from home ---- and I know it is with all the work and responsibilities on your hands and no one to help you.

No, the Government will not allow me any more insurance than I have now. \$10,000 is the limit, including any policies now in effect. Of course, we could cash in the \$3000 policies that are practically paid up, but there would be little point to that as they are worth twice as much as insurance as in cash. If you think the Bankers Life policy is too expensive we can change it to a cheaper form ---- term insurance for instance which pays off only in case of death. That might be better for the duration at that, but we could probably not convert it back after the war. In any case if you change it make sure that no "war clause" creeps in. I doubt they would insure me under term insurance without a war clause, and then it would be worthless.

There is something else I want to attend to as soon as I get your answer to this letter. I'm going to make an allotment of my pay to you. I have already made arrangements, of course, to have the premium for my Gov't Insurance, (the \$7000 new policy), held out each month. I'm going to allot the portion of my pay that I don't need here so that it will be paid direct to you each month and the Finance Officer will give me a check for the difference. The reason for this is that if I should be sent overseas it might be months before I would be able to get any money back to you. This way you would get a check every month no matter where I go, even if I were a prisoner of war. Would \$250 a month take care of you? I have been sending \$275, and getting along nicely with the remainder, but if I should go across I might need a lot more than I do here. Of course if I don't go overseas I can continue to send the other \$25 by money order. I suppose, in fact I'm sure that it must cost a lot more to run the home than it did when I left so I'm worried about how we can make my pay cover both ends of our establishment. What I hold out now nicely covers my expenses and usually a little left over --- except last month when I had to dig into my savings and clothing allowance. I don't spend money on parties either, although I do buy some liquor --- not nearly as much as most of the officers. There are some Club parties you can't avoid in a place like this --- in fact you are billed for them whether you attend or not. Anyway, as I said I get along nicely and a little bit more if I am careful. The only thing that worries me is I might run short on the same amount in a foreign county. As I said before I can continue to send more by money order while in this country, but would \$250 keep you going if I went where I couldn't send more?

The reason I want to attend to it now is this. About a week ago a questionnaire and certain documents were sent to all officers on the base, which from their urgency, wording and other things, indicated that all the officers who could be spared or replaced here would soon be sailing. I understand now that the whole thing has been placed in abeyance for the time being, but it could be revived at any time. Don't worry about it, I may never go, but I want to have things in shape, just in case. Plans change fast nowadays.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 115]

Sunday, Jan 10, 1942 *[sic]*

Dear Betty –

Yesterday your Monday's letter arrived. You said that Earl had phoned Saturday evening but didn't say whether he had been out to the house or not. I have been wondering whether the tire and gas rationing had stopped his traveling business but evidently he is still on the road.

It's 11:00 AM and the fog is so thick outside I can't see more than a hundred feet. Every day almost it's like this until late in the afternoon and then it usually clears up --- unless it rains. The climate must be very bad because most people seem to have colds all the year around, even during the hot season.

It must be a relief for you to have the holidays over and the youngsters back in school. I hope they had a good vacation. I'm glad to have the holidays past and a good start on a new year. Maybe it won't be so long before July after all. The last six months passed fairly rapidly after all. It's nearly a year since I came into the Army.

I wish you would send me my old army discharge, my National Guard discharge and my letter awarding the Purple Heart. I think they are all together in an envelope in the strong box. Also I think I should know how much interest our bonds drew during the past year for my income tax report. Only the Savings Bonds and the Defense Bonds, not the Bonus Bonds as I can remember that. The simplest way is to take the amount due each year from the table printed on the face --- by six months periods I believe --- from each bond denomination separately because they vary in amount as I recall from 25.00 to \$1000.00. I don't think I'll have to pay a tax on the interest but they wanted the report nevertheless last year, and it seems to me they were going to tax income on all bonds sold after a certain date.

I'm still hoping that somehow I'll get to see you in less than six months, but not planning to strongly on it. Anyway I love you and will come as soon as I possibly can.

Love to all.

Jim

[Letter No. 116]

Dear Betty --

Tuesday, Jan 12, 1943

I got your Thursday's and your Saturday's letter together yesterday. I am retuning the assessment blank with a note to the assessor herewith. Inasmuch as they are not going to collect it anyway I am merely signing it without notarizing it. If they insist on notarization return it, or notarize another one for them.

About the hospitalization insurance. I called at their office and had my name taken off but retained it for you and the children. They gave me a new card which I turned over to you. I forget what the money adjustment was and don't remember whether payments were to be by the month or year. It should be listed in that list I made out before I left.

I hope you don't have any trouble getting the car license plates. I don't know what blue card Pearl was saying you needed. I always just took my certificate of ownership when I went up. It may be well also to take the card in the container on the steering post.

I like your story about Jimmy losing his pencil behind his ear. Was he hiding it purposely or had he forgotten where he put it? Sure would like to see him --- and all of you. Captain Hughes is away on his leave. I took him to the train and felt pretty low about not being able to go too. It shouldn't take so very long for six months to go by and I hope by then they will be giving fifteen day leaves --- or longer. I'm pretty busy these days.

There was a reception for a visiting general at the Club last night. I didn't get this letter written then as I should have done so am writing on duty.

Remember me to Grandpa and the children.

Lots of love to all.

Jim

[Note: "Pearl", (Gherring), was one of the spinster sisters who lived next door at the time. I'm sure they offered Mom a lot of advice on many issues.]

[Letter No. 117]

Sat, Jan. 16, 1943

Dear Betty ---

I got your Tuesday's letter today and am writing this in the office to get it in the mail before the last pickup for the day. There isn't much to write about but I'll send a note anyway.

This last week has been a hectic one and I'm glad it's about over. There are too many things to be done all at one time. I like to be busy steadily and not snowed under part of the time and resting the rest of the time.

I was interested in the account of young DeLong in the story you mentioned. I think I have seen that article running serially in some magazine but seldom read that kind of stuff --- most of it is tiresome. However, if I had known that someone from home was in it I would have read it. I'm going to look for it tonight.

I'm not feeling so good today. Lots of people have the flu and nearly all of us have colds. I'll be alright again in the morning. I never get sick enough to stay off duty.

I went to a show last night with Capt. Evans and Lt. Carlson at the College of the Pacific --- "Arsenic and Old Lace", given by the Little Theatre group of the college. It was well acted and the first stage show I remember seeing since I took you to "Abies Irish Rose". Lt. Carlson graduates from this school today and will report back to his Field Artillery outfit so we had a few drinks after the show --- which may have something to do with my not feeling good.

I've been about an hour getting this far due to constant interruptions but there isn't much to write about anyway.

Wish your dream about me being home would come true. After all we are now over the hump and it's less than six months to the time I'll be eligible for leave again.

All my love.

Jim

[Note: I am not aware of the "young DeLong" issue.][See letter #118 for more on this.]

[Letter No. 118]

Tuesday, Jan 19,

Dear Betty ---

No letter again today and I'm lonesome for one.

I'm Officer of the Day and was up practically all night so I'm pretty tired and sleepy. I'll be relieved in one more hour.

Just a year ago tomorrow I reported at Leavenworth for duty so I'll have finished a year tonight. Seems an awful long time. Don't think it would have seemed so long if I had been in the field, or overseas, or better yet, if I could have been stationed close enough to home to get home once in a while. It was better under the old Colonel too, the present C. O. is a different man, not a bad guy, nor hard, but not the kind you get to know. I'm sure glad I got my Captaincy before he came --- promotions will be slow now --- almost none since the Old Man died.

Bobby and Neal would have been interested to have been here last week when General Hatcher was here. I didn't realize until after he left that he is the man who used to write firearms articles for the outdoor magazines for years as Captain and Major Julian S. Hatcher. He is an internationally known authority on guns and I used to read all his stuff in Field and Stream, Outdoor Life, Hunting and Fishing, etc. Wish I had time for that now.

You asked about Bill Slattery. I had a card from him at Christmas time. He said he would like for me to come up anytime but I never seem to be able to get away. He is tied up with his car because of gas rationing and trains and busses are so crowded that you can't depend on getting a ride. Hope I can get up there one of these days.

I saw a copy of the book, "They were expendable". They listed the men involved in the back of the book. DeLong was listed as from Santa Cruz, California. I suppose he was married had his home there.

Hope you are all well. Bobby & Neal had colds when you last wrote.

Love to all.

Jim

["They Were Expendable" was a book about the exploits of some PT boat crewmen in the early days of the War. It was later made into a movie with John Wayne starring. I still have no idea what tie DeLong had to the Sorenson family.]

[Letter No. 119]

Thursday, Jan. 21

Dear Betty ---

It's a rain windy day. I don't know where California got its reputation for weather.

Thanks for the data on the income tax, discharge papers, etc, They arrived yesterday. I just got an income tax blank today and haven't started work on it yet.

I'll sure feel bad if they discontinue PRA. It's mighty reassuring to know you have a job to go back to when and it this war gets finished and plenty disturbing if the job blows up. I agree with you that we would probably have a better chance of selling the house this year or next than we ever will again but I hate to think of it. Think we had better just go ahead on the assumption that the job will last. That bunch was always a gang of pessimists --- guess I was myself. Always thinking ahead to what might happen.

I haven't yet checked the discrepancy between the figures you arrived at for interest on the bonds and the ones I turned in last year. I think it was probably because only interest on bonds issued after a certain date could be taxed and I turned in my bonus bond interest also. Why I don't know as they are tax exempt but I found them added in a notation on the form.

I got Marge's package all right and am ashamed for not writing her. Also had one from Lad & Mary, Honey, and several of my sisters. Honey's came early and I think I thanked her, but the others came in all in a bunch and it seemed such a job to write to all of them so I kept putting it off. Will try to get it done soon.

How is Superman Jimmy? And Jean and Neal and Bob and Grandpa? I'm just waiting for time to pass so I can get leave and see you all again. January is nearly gone and it won't be so very long before June 30 arrives. Time seems to be passing faster than it did at Xmas.

It sure dragged then.

Love Jim

[Letter No. 120]

Friday, Jan. 22

Dear Betty ---

Just a note to tell you I'm sorry and ashamed for forgetting your birthday. It has been a mean time and I've been awfully busy but that's no excuse.

I am mailing you a little gift ---- belatedly --- which I hope you will like. I promise to remember next year. I love you anyway, even if I do forget anniversaries.

Jim

[Note: Her birthday was 18 January.]

[Letter No. 121]

Sunday *[Jan 24.]*

Dear Betty ---

I could use some of that winter weather for a change. It was winter here too the first of the week, well below freezing at night, but it's so damp and foggy that the cold is much more uncomfortable than at home. It's not invigorating at all. Then when it warmed up again it rained and the wind blew for three days. It's quite nice today, but the ground is a mess.

Neal must have registered the wrong letter as the one I got with the papers in it had only ordinary postage. It got here safely so that's all right. I still haven't started to work out my income tax. The man who obligingly brought me out a form brought the wrong one.

The Supply Division gave a part for the garrison officers at the Club last night. I didn't intend to go but people kept coming in my quarters and after a few drinks I got in the mood and went over. It was quite a nice party, lots to eat and drink, dancing, etc. I would have enjoyed it if you had been there. One unsteady captain spilled a cup of coffee down the side of my new coat and my old pinks. It stained them pretty badly and I was a little worried about it this morning --- these clothes cost plenty. I tried a brush on them and was surprised when the stains brushed right off. It's a tight weave and I suppose the coffee stayed on the surface and dried there instead of soaking in.

January will soon be gone and after a couple more months pass by I can begin to look forward to coming home again. I hope I can manage to wangle 15 days instead of 10 by that time. Won't be able to if the present Colonel is still in command then, but it's quite possible he won't stay here much longer. There are rumors to that effect, but maybe it's only wishful thinking. He's not popular.

Had a letter from Stella yesterday. There wasn't much news init --- mostly about people I didn't know going off to the Army.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 122]

Thursday PM *[Jan 28]*

Dear Betty ---

I got your Sunday's letter today. Seems a long time between letters but I guess that's because time seems to drag so slowly.

Still haven't got started on my income tax return. Also I haven't written any thank you letters for Christmas. Seems like when the day's work is over I don't want to do anything. I guess I'm just getting lazier and lazier.

I hope Bobby's second attempt at developing pictures was successful. If he got any good ones I hope he will send me some. He won't have any trouble after he has had a little experience and learns to be patient and careful.

A messenger just came in with a memorandum that the General Court-Martial will meet at 1300 PWT Feb. 2. We haven't had a trial for some time.

I'm so tired today I can hardly sit in my chair. Don't know what's the matter with me. I'm not sick, but I can't get to sleep at night and I wake up tired in the morning. Maybe they are right when they say old men shouldn't be in the Army. Still, it isn't army work we are doing, maybe I would feel better in the field.

I had a letter from Honey the other day. Maybe I had it before I wrote you last and have already told you. I can't remember what was in it except that Bus had been home and your mother was doing quite well.

I'm glad you mentioned hearing from Mrs. Towne and Mrs. Nicholls. I wondered if you would hear from them at Xmas --- especially Mrs. Towne. I don't remember the other lady nearly as well. Mrs. Town must be an old, old lady by now.

Does Jimmy still like his bear? I can imagine the little rascal begging off from going to bed because of a bad cold. He didn't talk at all when I was home last.

I wish I could write you a good letter but there just isn't anything to write about except the weather and routine --- both very dull. Wish I could see you.

Love.

Jim

P. S. Name changed to Stockton Ordnance Depot.

[Note: "PWT" refers to "Pacific War Time"; a form of daylight savings time instituted during wartime.] [Don't know who Mrs. Towne & Mrs. Nicholls were.]

[Letter No. 123]

Tuesday, Feb 16

Dear Betty ---

I am enclosing a money order for \$100.00. Quite a comedown from what I usually send but it's only 14 days until the next payday so I hope it will tide you over that long.

Back on the job and find it just as tiresome as it was before I went home. However, it did help to get away. Of course the trip wasn't all pleasure but I'm sure glad I got to see you and the kids.

The weather has been fine since I got back and looks as if spring will be here soon. Wish I could be home and see the lawn get green and the roses in bloom. There are lots of roses here of course but your own always look better.

They are getting ready to launch four shops in the shipyards across the channel. I have my boys watching with instruction to call me up when they appear to be ready so I can go down and watch. I've seen lots of ships and shipyards but I never did see one slide down the ways and four of them should be quite a sight.

How is Dad getting along on his new job? Have the children caught up the time they lost out in school while I was home? Does Jimmy still think I "better carry him"? Sure wish I could.

As always in this place there is now news.

I love you.

Jim

[Note: JRS had just returned from emergency leave to attend the funeral of Mrs. Schneider, (Mom's mother). Leave was from 29 Jan to 13 Feb. He evidently got to spend about 8 days in Kansas City with his family before leaving.] [I was not aware that Grandpa Sorenson ever worked during this period.]

[Letter No. 124]

Thursday, Feb 18

Dear Betty ---

Your last Friday's letter was one of the nicest I've ever had and I've read it over and over. I can't say it as well as you did --- but I feel the same way about you. I'm only looking forward to the end of all this and coming back to you. Of course I didn't mind about Bobby not going to the station when I left so you can reassure him on that score.

We are having beautiful weather --- hasn't rained since I got back. I haven't been out in the country but they say the almond trees are in blossom and the other fruit trees soon will be. It's quite nice here for a few weeks in the spring, then it gets hot and dry. I suppose the cold spell that came just before I left has gone now and you are looking forward to spring too.

I couldn't find my cigarette lighter when I returned. Thought I put it in my bag but guess I must have left it on the dresser. Will you send it some time when it's convenient? There is no hurry about it.

Captain McCaudless', (the Quartermaster), baby has been very sick for the last few days. He is better today and will probably come out all right. He is about Jimmy's age.

I brought the papers to the office today intending to make out our income tax report but as usual things kept turning up to interrupt and I haven't even got a good start yet. I suppose as usual I'll only just get it done in time. Haven't any idea yet how much it will be or if there will be a tax to pay but they say that exemptions are cut down and the tax much higher so I suppose we won't get by for free this year.

All my love.

Jim

[Note: Mom had sent a Valentines Day card with a short note inside. It is included here]

Just back from the Union Station Feb 11, '43.

Dear Jim

I picked out this Valentine several weeks ago and could have handed it to you before you left, but I thought it would be nice to have something waiting for you at the end of your trip.

Jimmy made quite a fuss about not getting to go with you, and has started "Wish Daddy tum come home." again. I must say, nothing seems very important or worthwhile now, except that you do come home to stay. I'll just have to keep busy --- it's the only way to make the time pass rapidly, and there's plenty to do, that's sure.

I hope you rest well on your trip back, and that you get time off again in the summer.

With love,
Betty

[Letter No. 125]

Sunday, Feb 21

Dear Betty ---

Our spell of nice weather seems to have come to an end and it has started to rain, not very much yet but there will probably be plenty before it clears up again.

It was just a week last night since I got back but it seems much longer. The long tiresome ride back makes it seem as though on had been hone for weeks before arriving.

I have been watching Capt. Fisher and his dog through the window. He has a big police dog that he has carried around in the army for years. They are inseparable and every day the Captain takes him for a walk and throws a stick for "Baldy" to chase and bring back. Today he refuses to throw the stick but ordered the dog to bring a ladder lying on the ground in front of the new officers club. Baldy can't quite handle it. He turns up one side of the ladder and then trips over it and he is so mad. He tries, then lets go, barks, jumps up and down like a spoiled kid and then tears up the lawn with all four feet.

We lost eight of our dogs in a fire Thursday night. Am sending a clipping about it. I am one of a board of three officers to "investigate, fix responsibility, make recommendations", etc. Have also been put on the examining board for candidate officers. These board, courts-martial, etc, of course are in addition to regular duties – sort of spare time jobs.

I haven't got the mail yet this morning --- it's too early for it to be distributed. I'll call for it when I mail this --- and I hope there will be a letter from you.

I worked on my income tax yesterday and got the rough copy made. The way I figure it we won't have to pay any again this year, even though there is less exemption for dependents. The beauty of Army pay is that you declare only base pay and longevity pay --- quarters and rations don't count.

Remember me to Dad and the children.

Love to all.

Jim

[Letter No. 126]

Wednesday, Feb. 24

Dear Betty ---

I got your letter enclosing Neal's picture. Was very glad to get it and I'm sorry Bobby and Jean did not have theirs taken too.

How is the food rationing working out? Will you be able to get enough to eat for all of you? I hear so much about it, and so much grumbling, that it worries me.

Last night I worked until 10:30 on the Officer Candidate examining board. Tonight and tomorrow I am Officer of the Day, and Friday there is a General Court-Martial trial and a meeting of the investigating board. Don't know what will be coming up for Saturday and Sunday, but if nothing else turns up that will probably be a good time to get my "booster" shots for typhoid and tetanus. We have to have a booster at least once a year and if we let it go too long we have to take the whole series over again.

It looks to me as if your dad's plan to have Bus come home on a year's leave of absence is a good one. They claim that the farm help shortage is acute and it would be a good way for Mary to find out if she wanted to farm. Then if they didn't like it it would be nice to have the old job to go back to. I wonder though how Paul would fit into the picture. And Rita might become a fifth wheel too.

Seems an awfully long time since I was home. I'm already planning on my next trip but that seems even farther away.

I wanted to wait for the afternoon mail to see if there is a letter from you before writing this but there wouldn't be time after that before going on guard. Looks as if I may have a wet and disagreeable night.

Love.

Jim

[Note: I have no information on where Bus is that he needs a leave of absence to come home. I was not aware if he had been drafted or something of that nature.] [However, I called his son, Joe, and found that Bus was running a "retread shop in Fargo". He had a football injury that made him 4-F, but he was compelled to render some assistance to the war effort. The shop utilized German POW's to produce tractor tires, etc.]

[The "disagreeable night" JRS anticipates is bad enough for the Officer of the Day, who rides around in a jeep, checking on the guards on their posts; it is even more disagreeable for those privates who have to stand/walk around in it for 2-hour shifts.]

[Letter No. 127]

Saturday, Feb. 27, 1943

Dear Betty ---

Your Sunday evening's letter arrived yesterday. I was beginning to think I wasn't going to hear from you this week.

I am going to send this by registered letter and will return the document you sent me some time ago. There will be a copy of the 1942 income tax return and the 1941 copy you sent to me. Also the Army and Nat. Guard discharges, the Purple Heart letter and a true copy of same. Better put them in the strong box.

I will mail the other copy of the 1942 income tax return direct to the Collector of Internal Revenue in Kansas City by registered mail today.

I was tickled about Jimmy inviting you to go away and leave him alone at Gerhings *[sic]*. He is a funny little tyke and I suppose he felt quite grown up alone a tea party. This has been a hectic week and I am glad tomorrow will be Sunday. I'm going to sleep and loaf all day, unless something turns up to break up my plans. Never know when something will come up to put you back to work when you live on the post and are always available.

I'm glad to hear Richard is going to get such a good job. The salary seems fantastic when you stop to think that Army people are flying the same type of planes and doing the same work for a fraction of the money, but I've seen so many screwy things --- see them every day in fact --- that I don't think anything will ever surprise me again. I'm glad though that Richard will be getting it if the job is there anyway. I'm curious to know how dad is getting along with his job. Don't think you have mentioned that in any of your letters. Also am wondering if Neal has developed that film yet and what kind of picture I got of Jimmy.

It's clear again today after a week of rain. Seems good to see the sun.

Wish I could see you again ---- hope to get home again some time next summer.

Love.

Jim

[Note: There was no envelope with this letter. I expect that is due to the fact that it had contained a number of documents that JRS wanted Mom to store in the "strong box" --- the envelope probably went with them.] [I have no information this "Richard", unless it is the same person referred to as "Dick" in earlier letters; who I believe was the son of one of JRS' colleagues.]

[Letter No. 128]

Monday, March 1

Dear Betty ---

I am enclosing a cashier's check for \$275.00. We have a branch bank on the post now so am taking advantage of it. A cashier's check only cost a dime, while P. O. Money Orders for the same amount cost 64 cents. Let me know when it arrives.

Your Thursday's letter came yesterday. Did you have a nice time at the Handley's dinner? Is Jimmy still fond of his comb? Maybe if he learns to use it now his hair won't be as unruly as his older brothers.

Yesterday was a beautiful day and being Sunday I felt restless to get out and go somewhere. However the ground was too muddy for walking and of course riding is out of the question these days so I stayed home and slept and read. One of these Sundays I want to walk out and call on the Lindleys. It's beautiful out there in the spring and I haven't been there since last September.

Next Thursday it will be a year since I arrived here --- March 4th. Things have changed a lot since then. The worst change was Co. Firestone's death. I think most of us appreciated him while he was here, but a lot more when he was gone.

So it's settled that Bus is coming home. Is he just on leave of absence or is he quitting his job? Wonder if Paul will stay. I suppose the deal will have its disadvantages for Honey and Rita.

I hope you have got all the ration details straightened out and that they are allowing enough to eat for my big family.

I'm writing this during the noon meal period as I won't have much time this afternoon. We are experimenting with a drum cleaning plant. If it works we have thousands of gasoline and oil drums to clean and return for use. Must go now.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Note: JRS' concern about Bus' return impacting Honey & Rita was well-founded. Honey had been widowed in 1937 or 1938, and had 2 small children living with her at her Dad's house. Rita was not married yet, and may well have been living there as well, although she may have been in Nurses Training at that time, and might have been living at school. Bus had a wife & two small children, with another due in the fall. That old house would be getting pretty crowded.] [Rita was not yet at Nurses training; see ltr #150]

[Letter No. 129]

Wednesday, March 3.

Dear Betty ---

I got your Friday's letter and the package of clothes and the lighter yesterday. Thanks a lot.

I'm sorry about all the trouble and nuisance you are being caused by rationing. The nuisance of it is bad enough but I'm worried for fear they will make it hard to get enough for you to eat. I'm glad you at least have a garden plot to plant every little bit helps.

Was sorry to hear Paul is leaving. The old place will seem even more different. Of course it will never be the same again in any case.

You asked about our dog investigation. A board consisting of Major Bostwick, Lt. Fairwether and myself has just completed and submitted its report this afternoon. Our finding was that the fire was "maliciously and willfully started by one William Cooper, civilian guard at the kennels on the night of the fire", etc. We have his signed confession, he is in jail at Sacramento under \$5000.00 bail, and will be indicted before a Federal Court on a charge of sabotage, so he will undoubtedly be out of circulation for a long time. I'd hate to be in his shoes if any of the guards who lost their dogs ever get their hands on him. I'm glad that detail is over but there is no end to these boards. Every Tuesday night three other officers and myself meet at 6:30 to examine soldiers candidates for Officers Training Schools. It's usually 11:00 o'clock or later when we get through. Then every time there is a car accident, fire, accidental death, suicide, or violation of an Article of War, either an officer or a board of officers has to conduct a formal investigation. I suppose it's good education but it's sometimes awfully disagreeable. Monday I was on a General Court Martial trial of a deserter. You would be surprised at some of the things people do and how many queer ones there are.

I'm counting the days until I can come back to you.

All my love.

Jim

[Note: The newspaper clipping enclosed with letter #125 says that William Cooper was the person who discovered the fire. It is often such a person who is eventually found to have started the fire, for a number of different reasons.]

[This "Paul" was noted in some of the 1942 letters; he was evidently a relative who lived with the elder Schneider's and helped run the farm. The invading hoard of people probably influenced his departure.]

[Letter No. 130]

Friday PM *[March 5]*

Dear Betty ---

Just a short note today to return the Bond & Mortgage Co's letter and say go ahead with the new plan, unless you know of some reason not to. I'll trust your judgment just as far as my own.

I'm assigned to a new department --- Supply --- and will be in a dither again while learning the job. I wish I could get transferred somewhere else and get an assignment I liked and understood.

You must be having nice weather if the tulips are up and other flowers beginning to grow. Hope the flowers will be nice this year.

Tell Bobby not to worry about breaking his front sight. We will get fixed. Is Neal still having trouble keeping tires on his bike?

You haven't mentioned dad or how he is getting along on his job in any of your letters.

I've got to get my desk cleaned out and get ready to report on my new job in the morning. I'll write more Sunday.

Love.

Jim

[Note: This mention of Bob's front sight is interesting. The only firearm that I know about being owned by Bob is the Winchester Model 24 double-barreled shotgun that he got upon graduation from high school. Although shotguns technically have "front sights", they are not of the type that would be broken; and Bob was still several years away from high school graduation. Neal had a Model 34 Remington .22 rifle, which would have had a front sight, but I don't believe it had once belonged to Bob.]

[Letter No. 131]

Sunday, March 7

Dear Betty ---

I'm feeling pretty dopy today and it's going to be hard to write a letter but I'll try anyway. There have been a couple of cases of meningitis recently and as a precautionary measure they are filling us full of sulfa drugs. We are supposed to take it in diminishing doses for four days.

Sorry to hear the weather turned cold just when your plants were getting started. That's what usually happens when spring weather comes too early.

I'm not surprised that Thelma didn't try the bank job. She never did have much confidence in herself. Maybe the job at Gurneys will get her started on the way to a permanent job.

I'm wondering if Earl and Helen will arrive in K. C. today --- you said in your letter that they were to be in Omaha yesterday and would be coming down. I hope some of your family will go down and visit with you this summer, unless of course you are going up to Yankton for the summer. I've been wondering if Bus and Mary taking over the farm would change your plans.

It's a disagreeable day outside today with the wind howling and dust blowing although the ground was muddy yesterday. Tomorrow it will probably be raining again. I would like to get out of California for good. Missouri would suit me fine.

I hope you won't wait too long to use your ration points and lose out on your groceries. Others may do the same and you might not find the things you need. Will you be able to get along on your shoe allowance? Seems to me that the youngsters used to wear them out real fast.

I'll try to do better next time I write. It's about time for my daily dose of dope, also I should go over to the hospital for a shot in the arm before I have to start the whole series over again.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Letter No. 132]

Wednesday, March 10

Dear Betty ---

It was a nice long letter you wrote me last Thursday. I got it yesterday afternoon.

I was glad to get news of dad, thought I'm sorry if he feels bad about his job not lasting. If you have mentioned it before I overlooked it, and I don't think I would do that. Too bad that Bob's pictures always come out backward but its very simple to remedy --- just turn the negative over.

That was a queer deal about your dinner party, but knowing the lady I'm not surprised and I wouldn't let it worry me either. Wonder how Dick feels about having to go to the Army. I think they all feel badly because he couldn't be commissioned directly without being exposed to the plebian status of an enlisted man first. However, it won't be long to wait for his commission and then they can feel proud. I think he will make a good officer too. Did you go to the auction?

Today we are having a sunny day, the first nice day we have had for a long time. This climate is bad for the health and there is always a lot of sickness it seems. I never get really sick but I never feel really well either and that's tough when you have to work. I think the old rugged climate of the middle west is best, even if it is mighty uncomfortable sometimes.

I'm glad Jimmy still remembers to write me even if he never does send them. How did Jean's dress work out --- were you able to lengthen it enough?

It will be nice of Honey and Rita can get down to visit you this summer. The arrangement, (having Bus come home), will probably work out all right for everyone except Paul, and in the long run it will be better for him too once he breaks away and gets used to a new job. I suppose at first it will be like leaving home for him.

I suppose it's hard on the oldtimers, (at the office), to get ordered to Alaska. Guess it's a tough job but I think I would prefer it to this.

Wish I could see you.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 133]

Wednesday, March 17

Dear Betty ---

I have just come from lunch and will try to write a quick letter before I go back to work. We are holding Court-Martial and adjourned until on o'clock --- or rather we recessed.

The cookies arrived last night and I have just opened the package. They are very good and thanks a lot.

Will enclose the signed invoice contract for insurance. I'm sure we have the old policy with the rest of our FHA papers because I remember very clearly an envelope with the Williams Ins. Co. on it and containing an insurance policy.

Tell Neal I'm glad to hear about his excellent report card.

Russell Christensen and a brother, (not Lyle), were in town last night and came out to see me. They have been working in a shipyard at Alameda, on the Bay, and were on their way to a defense job in an air base somewhere in western Utah. They hadn't liked the job at Alameda, but gathered they had been laid off on account of a cut down in the help. They said there was an awful lot of loafing on the job and they couldn't get in as many hours a week as they had wanted, and also that the red tape of getting in and out was a nuisance. They were driving Russell's car and I asked how they could get gas. They said defense workers could get all they needed. Looks like we will develop a new type of transient --- wandering defense workers looking for greener pastures.

I have finished the book "Faith of Our Fathers" and will send it to you soon. I have also started re-reading the Catechism --- using one of Father Brennan's notes for a bookmark. I am also trying to read up on military subjects in my spare time to freshen up my little bit of knowledge in case I get assigned to a new station, so my reading is a bit jerky.

Must hurry and get this mailed on my way to court.

Love,

Jim

[Note: Unless there is a letter missing from this stack this is a little strange. JRS has been writing home every 2 or 3 days since leaving, or takes the time to apologize for not doing so. This letter follows its predecessor by a full week, and he does not make mention of the delay.] ["Russell" was the husband of Cleo, one of JRS' sisters.] [Mom had written him a letter on Wednesday, 10 Mar 43. I will include it here. There appears to be no connection between the comments in these two letters.]

Wednesday A. M. *[postmarked 10 Mar 43]*

Dear Jim --

We had another snow last night --- Neal was surely peeved when he saw it, since he had just decided Spring was here to stay. I don't mind since it keeps down my house-cleaning urge a little and one can't do much until the furnace is turned off.

Mrs. Handley came over Monday afternoon for an hour and a half before going on to the beauty parlor. She doesn't go to the men anymore --- she's beginning to think that everything can't be quite with two men who live together as they do." She can't see "why Dick had to go." I really felt sorry for her --- I'd feel badly too --- but there's certainly no unfairness about it. Alice has taken a room about two blocks from the Handleys and will eat dinners with them. They sold their furniture. Dick may not pass the physical --- then maybe all this will have been for nothing. They can't decide what Dick would be 'specially fitted to do outside office work. Mr. H. says he can't be in the heat --- he just peels and peels. I imagine there's many a boy doing things he didn't think he could stand. I know it's difficult to face these readjustments --- but why fume so much when it has to be done.

Jimmy is pawing thru the buffet drawer again to see if he can find something new. He was over at Gherrings a couple hours Sunday and Pearl said she was sewing --- only answered questions now & then. Finally, he came and stood beside her for some time not saying a thing until he remarked quietly, "I bother Mama too."

I will call the City Bond & M. this morning to send the paper I'm to sign. I wrote the Hosp. Service yesterday as they've neither sent me my new certificate nor card showing my new standing. I see no need for it, (the twins can't come this year), --- but I may slip on the ice.

Helen & Earl haven't shown up if they're here. Your Dad is stiff with rheumatism but all right otherwise.

Lots of love, Betty

[Note: Don't know what "twins" she refers to.]

[Letter No. 134]

Sunday, March 21

Dear Betty ---

It's the first day of spring and raining. Also I have got a bad cold so I'm not in the mood for rejoicing. This is a bad country for colds --- you never get completely over one. You suddenly come down with a very severe one, then it papers off till you are nearly well and then starts all over again with a bang.

Yesterday I was called to Sacramento for an interview with a Major Parker of the Corps of Engineers. He told me that he would recommend my transfer and he was quite sure it would be approved. Later in the afternoon I met him on the street on his way home and he told me he had already written and mailed the letter, so with a letter I wrote the Chief a week ago I have hopes I may get a job I like before very long. Major Parker said my first assignment would probably be as a Post Engineer or Assistant to a Post Engineer but from there I would be in a position to ask for construction work.

While in Sacramento I went to the Bureau of Reclamation Office to see Bill Slattery but he was at home sick. He has no phone and he lives out in North Sacramento and after listening to directions for reaching the place by bus and on foot I decided it was too late in the day to try to find him. If my transfer comes through I'll probably get there quite frequently anyway.

The boys would have enjoyed seeing old Sutters Fort. The city has grown all around it and it stands in a beautiful park just like it was a hundred years ago. The park around the State Capitol is also very fine and covers several city blocks.

I'm in favor of letting Neal take violin lessons if he is really interested. If he does well I'll see that he gets a good violin. Meanwhile you had better rent one until you find out if he really is interested enough to stay with it. I remember when Rany gave Cleo his violin --- a very good one too --- on the condition that she would learn to play it. After a couple of lessons it stood in a corner until Rany rightly decided to take it back.

All my love.

Jim

P. S. The nuts did not go to waste.

[Note: "Rany" was the husband of Mayme, one of JRS' sisters. "Cleo" was another sister.]

[Letter No. 135]

Monday, March 22

Dear Betty ---

I got your Wednesday's letter today.

It cleared up and was nice today after a dreary rainy direst day of spring. I still have a bad cold but it has got over the most uncomfortable stage and I don't mind it so much.

That was quite a lengthy visit Earl and Helen paid to Kansas City. I'm glad you got the dresses. Seems as if you don't often get any new clothes and I never think of buying things like that for you. I'd probably botch the job if I tried.

When are they planning on taking dad up to Yankton? If he wants to go it's all right of course but I think he will always want to come back to K. C. He will probably enjoy the change for a while though. I'll bet he will get awfully lonesome for little Jimmy. How did Judy and Jimmy get along?

If you were here with your new dresses next Saturday night we would attend the formal opening of the new officers club. It's a fine place but I never attend their dances. Usually I stop in for a few minutes and dance a couple of duty dances but I don't enjoy it. Did I tell you that Phil Berstein gave a party for a few of the officers last Friday night? He took us to a night club and dined and wined us. It was the first time I have left the post since I got back from my leave. They had a very clever marionette act in the floor show.

When I was in I was in Sacramento Saturday Major Parker said I might expedite my assignment to the Engrs. if I wrote a letter to the Commanding General of the 9th Service Command so I'll get at that now. Wish I could see you.

Love

Jim

[Note: "Judy" is my cousin, daughter of Helen & Earl Gearke. She is about 2 years older than I am.] [I think JRS had an unrealistic opinion of my influence on Grandpa Sorenson.]

[Letter No. 136]

Thursday *[March 25]*

Dear Betty ---

I got your letter and Neal's yesterday. I'm glad to hear it's finally warming up back there and you will be able to get at your gardening and growing things. It is quite warm here today and I'm already beginning to dread the coming of summer.

I'm writing this under difficulties. They have the radio on full blast in the next room and it bothers me. It really doesn't make any difference as there isn't any news anyway. I still haven't heard from my application for duty with the Engineers, but it's pretty early to expect an answer from an Army activity. They usually take their time until you have forgotten all about it.

You said in your letter that Dick Handley should be sent somewhere soon. I take it from that he was still at Ft. Leavenworth reception center. They will probably be very impatient until Dick gets his commission and then worry about him from then on. I wonder what branch he was assigned to.

Has Mann left for Alaska yet? It's just possible I may meet him up there. It's just possible I may meet him up there. Mrs. H. had a novel way of commenting on how lucky Mr. Mann is. She must be a grass widow at heart. Maybe she envys you your status too. The longer I know that woman the queerer she looks to me.

I'm beginning to get over my cold a little I think, but I'm tired all the time. Don't know if it's pre-spring fever or the climate. Anyway I would welcome a change from here.

It's nearly eight o'clock and I'll take this over and mail it and then go to bed. That's all there is to do any more.

Wish I were home.

Love

Jim

[Note: It is apparent that JRS does not like Mrs. H; he has had less than flattering things to say about her quite often in his letters. "Grass widow" is a term that has several meanings, all related to a woman separated from her man in one way or another. JRS used it to mean "divorced woman".]

[Letter No. 137]

Sunday [March 28]

Dear Betty ---

I'll try to write a letter but there still is no news of interest.

Last night was the formal opening of the new officers club ---- another effective step towards the winning of the war. I went over with Dr. Sanderson --- a contract surgeon --- consumed numerous cocktail, had a very good diner, danced once, and was home in bed by midnight. Everything was free --- that is it was paid for out of the club dues.

It would be nice if Honey should come down to Kansas City to take a business course. It would be company for you for the summer anyway and she might get a job in K. C. and settle there permanently. After all she wouldn't have anything to hold her in Yankton any more if she brought the youngsters and business opportunities back there must be rather limited.

I can tell from your letters that you are anxious to get out and work on the yard and in the garden. Will dad be able to spade the garden for you this year? Bob should be big enough now to be quite a help. It's hard to realize that another school year will soon be over, seems just a little while since you were getting the children ready to start school.

I wonder why the Bureau is paying off accumulated leave. Maybe they are going to stop granting leaves. We have been paid mine up to the time I left for the Army. I don't know if it continues to accumulate while on military leave but I doubt it.

It's a fine day and maybe I will walk out and see the Lindleys this afternoon. Wish you were here to go with me.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 138]

Wednesday, March 31

Dear Betty ---

Another month has passed, for which I am thankful, and it was payday today. I am sending a cashier's check for \$275.00 herewith.

I'm tired tonight and there is no news to write about --- at least not good news. Yesterday I received a copy of Major Parkers letter recommending my transfer to the Engineers as a Post Engineer and a memorandum in reply stating that the 9th Service Command's allotment of Post Engineers is filled for the time being and therefore the transfer is impractical at this time. The Major sent me a note to keep in touch with him so he could try again if an opening came up. I still haven't heard from the letter I wrote to the Chief of Engrs. So I have not quite abandoned hope. I would much rather have a favorable reply from him than from the 9th Service Command as I am interested in a Post job only to get transferred and then ask for construction. Also if the Chief details me I might go anywhere and not be tied down in this Service Command. I might get nearer home.

I went out to the Lindley's place last Sunday afternoon and enjoyed my visit. It's very nice out there. Also called at the hospital and had a booster shot for tetanus.

I hope you are all well and happy. I'm missing you.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 139]

Sunday, April 4.

Dear Betty ---

It's a fine spring day and I feel like going fishing but will probably sit around and read and sleep all day. Wish I could take you all for a ride like the one we took the last Sunday I was home.

I got Bob's letter with yours. By now I suppose he has the motor installed in his plane. Too bad about breaking his rifle sight but we will get it fixed some home. I once made a front sight out of a penny but I don't think his barrel is slotted like the older type so that probably wouldn't work.

The Supply division --- to which I am now assigned --- gave a party for the garrison officers at the club last night. I wasn't in favor of it but the majority was so I just kept still and paid my assessment --- \$7.50. Added to my regular, (compulsory), dues that makes a stiff bill to pay for amusement that I don't care about. The club is a very pleasant place to loaf with a few friends when off duty but the social functions get tiresome.

I still haven't heard from the letter I sent to Washington about transfer and I'm getting braced for another disappointment. However, I haven't given up hope entirely. It's a strange Army that won't even give a man a chance to earn his pay, and that's all I'm asking.

Keeping track of all that rationing red tape must be a headache. I'm glad that Laner is being helpful. Looks as if all the years of giving him our business will pay dividends.

By this time I suppose the lawn and trees are getting green and your early flowers are coming out. It's nearly three years since we moved to that place and I will soon have been away half that length of time. I hope dad is better and that they will come down from Yankton to take him up there for a visit at least. I still think he will want to move back before very long though.

Has Neal finished the film yet? I would like some pictures.

Love.

Jim

[Note: This issue of the rifle continues to confuse me. In early letters, (from 1942), JRS admonishes Neal to keep his rifle clean, but there is no mention of Bob having a rifle. Because "rifle" is specified in this letter, my comment in letter #130 about a shotgun is not meaningful.] [I have no information about "Laner"; maybe he was an accountant or a lawyer that the folks sometimes used. Rationing was a serious issue in those years, and a woman trying to run a household of her size, (plus an elderly, ill father-in-law), must have been tough for Mom.]

[Letter No. 140]

Tuesday, April 6.

Dear Betty ---

I got your Friday's letter today and will try to get a quick one in the mail before the final 6:00 o'clock pickup.

I'm a little worried about dad. He never used to show any great anxiety to get up to Yankton but would patiently wait for the chance. I'm afraid he is sick or thinks he is which amounts to the same thing. I hope they will come and get him since he is so anxious to go.

I had a letter from the Engineer Office at Command Service H. Q. which said that my letter indicated that my experience was in line with the present needs of the Corps of Engineers --- highway engineers for duty with construction battalions --- and advised me to write direct to the Chief. I had already written the Chief --- three weeks ago last Saturday --- but it gives me some encouragement that it may be favorably considered and my transfer put through. Wish they would make up their minds and say yes or no, but there is so much business going on that you never know if correspondence gets where it is intended or gets lost or filed without reading. The efficiency experts are snarling up the Army just as they used to do outside.

You must be working hard on the house and yard. Makes me weary just to read about it but I guess I'm lazy. I didn't used to work so hard at it. Wish I could be doing it now though. I'm awfully sick of this place and hope that my transfer comes through because it might give me a different outlook on things.

I'm getting sunburned and weather-beaten but feel pretty good --- seem to have got over the worst of my current cold. I broke a piece out of a back tooth and spent a couple of hours in the dentist's chair yesterday.

Will try to beat the mail with this.

Love to all of you.

Jim

[It has been noticed that many of JRS' letters are dated the same day as the postmark. That would indicate a fairly good postal pickup system. He is hurrying to get this letter in the 6:00 o'clock PM pickup, and the postmark is still April 6. I still do not know how many times per day the mail was picked up.]

[Letter No. 141]

Sunday, April 11

Dear Betty ---

I'll try to get a letter written in a hurry. I have been so busy lately I have even forgotten when I last wrote you.

We are in the throes of preparing for an inspection by the Chief of Ordnance in less than ten day --- and there will be no rest for any of us until that is over. Have been working late nights and beginning this week I will have to work until 3:00 AM every other night. I spent all this morning in the warehouse with three critical inspecting officers and getting instructions on what is to be done. Came in for noon mess hoping to have a Sunday afternoon to myself but got ordered to attend a conference at HQ at three o'clock. They sure blow up and get wild when the boss is coming.

I'm still hoping for favorable action on my transfer so I can get away from here. A lieutenant just got his transfer to the Finance Dept. a couple of days ago and he made his application January 11, so you see it takes time. When I checked with the Adjutant last Friday to see if there was an answer he said it was much too early to expect an answer yet. It has to go through half a dozen offices and to at least two Chiefs of branch.

I suppose the garden is up by now --- at least part of it. It's getting warm here and we will soon be getting into cotton clothes again. I imagine the Copakens are learning about agriculture chopping up all that new sod.

I have been wondering if you have heard any more news about Aunt Tina. None of the girls have written me about it but I don't blame them for writing seldom to me --- I don't write very often to them.

Tell Jimmy I sympathize with him over the cut finger. I hope Neal will finish his film soon and that there will be pictures of all of you. Has Grandpa gone yet?

Love

Jim

[Note: "Copakens", the neighbors 2 doors to the north, must be preparing a "Victory Garden" to raise some of their own food.] ["Aunt Tina" was the sister of JRS' mother, who accompanied her on the voyage from Denmark to USA. She married and moved to the Seattle area. Not sure what was the subject of JRS inquiry here.]

[Letter No. 142]

Wednesday, April 14

Dear Betty ---

I'm too tired to write but I want to get a note written anyway so you won't think I am forgetting you.

This has been a hectic week and will probably continue to be. After that it may ease off for a little while, but something is sure to put us in a dither again very soon. I'm still in the dark as to the disposition of my application for transfer for transfer but am still hoping. It would be a great relief to get away from here.

I am returning the slip from the Bond & Mortgage Co. I believe that exemption of taxes does not apply to real estate, except that I doubt we could be dispossessed as long as I am in the service, for nonpayment. However they would have to be paid eventually so there is no object in not keeping them up now.

Have been reading in the papers about the flood in Omaha and neighboring parts. I suppose there will be trouble when it reaches Kansas City for the people in the lowlands. Myrtle sent me a package of Grand Forks papers the other day. There was no letter but the headlines were all about the damage being caused in Mandan by high water in the Heart & Missouri rivers.

Russell must be making a grand tour of the country on defense work gasoline. When he left here he was going to Utah. Must not have found a job he likes. You said Cleo would go there, (Grand Island), if he "decided to stay". He won't, so Cleo had better stay put.

I'd better quit before I fall asleep. I can't think straight.

I'm lonesome for all of you.

Love

Jim

[Note: This is the second time JRS has made sarcastic remarks about his brother-in-law being able to burn scarce gasoline under the guise of looking for defense work. He must not have been very fond on Russell. See Ltr #133.]

[Letter No. 143]

Saturday, April 17

Dear Betty ---

I took a nap after dinner and almost couldn't wake up. It has been a very busy and tiresome week and I am just about all in. I don't get this Sunday off either as I am officer in charge of the Supply Division on that day so can't relax and get ready for the next mad week of merry-go-round.

The School is giving a party tonight but I don't plan to attend --- except to go to the bar for my beer.

I'll send Bob some rubber bands if I can but they don't use them very much in the Army and I don't know whether I will be able to locate any. We used a lot of them in the old highway office and I have a notion that Mr. Handley might bring the boys some if he knew they wanted them.

I don't think I ever met the Henry Wagner who spent his furlough there last week. I hope he had a good time but I don't think there is any reason why you should put yourself to any extra trouble or work to entertain distantly related soldiers on furlough. A lot of organization are spending a lot of time and money showing enlisted men on furlough a good time. Of course you couldn't do otherwise when he walked in on you.

A man who used to work for me when I was exchange officer just came in and asked me to attend a farewell party the P. X is giving for the steward --- Dean Willard --- next Wednesday night. He is leaving for the Army on the same arrangement as Dick Handley "V.C.O." If I am not working that night I am going to attend.

If I ever get assigned to a job I like I hope to write your more interesting letters. I wish I could see you every day.

Love.

Jim

[Note: Bob was probably wanting the rubber bands to power the wind-up "motors" in the model airplanes he was building. They were probably unavailable in stores at the time due to war rationing of rubber.] [This "Henry Wagner" may have been the soldier I remember sitting on the couch in the living room. Over the years I had rationalized that it was my memory of JRS during one of his infrequent trips home; but I had always felt it was a stranger.] [I have yet to learn what "VCO" stands for.]

[Letter No. 144]

Monday, April 19

Dear Betty ---

I've just come off the "blacktop" and will try to write you a note before going to dinner.

The Colonel returned from St. Louis yesterday, a flock of inspectors who have been in and out for the last two weeks returned simultaneously and everyone is wondering what is up. The Chief of Ordnance is due on Wednesday and after that I hope we may have peace and quiet for a few days.

I was glad to get the clipping about the Omaha flood. The news was in the San Francisco papers but of course very much condensed and few details given. I imagine the high water has reached Kansas City by this time. I'm glad we don't live on the bottom land.

I'm sorry that dad's trip to Yankton is being delayed since he seems anxious to go up there. The girls shouldn't announce their plans until they are ready to go through with them. I wonder though if it would be a good plan to change his room around too much for a while. I still think he will be back in a few months. I want him to make his home wherever he wants to of course, and if he would rather stay in Yankton or Grand Forks it's O. K. --- but I still remember that after a week or two in Yankton he always talked about "going home" to Kansas City.

Don't work too hard at housecleaning. You say you get dizzy on ladders. If you do that you should stay off ladders and let the painting go unless you can hire it done.

I always thought Bus' Mary would soon tire of farming and want to quit but I didn't know she resented coming. Thought she always talked about how she would like it --- but I guess maybe she was play-acting for your dad. She used to try hard to make a good impression on him.

I'm glad Neal finished out the film. I'll be looking forward to seeing the pictures.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 145]

Thursday, April 22

Dear Betty ---

I am just back from hearing General Campbell address the massed troops and civilians of the post and will try to get a note to you in the last mail for the day. There isn't much to write about thought except work and that isn't interesting.

I went to a party for Dan Willard, the P. X. Steward, last night. He leaves for the Army next Monday. I left before midnight but he said the party didn't break up and go home until 4:00 o'clock this morning.

Today has been hot, the first really warm day this spring. I wish we could have a let down in the rush and bustle now that the Chief's visit is over but I know better than to expect it. They can always find an excuse to get excited and run around in circles here.

I haven't given up hopes of a transfer yet or I would be feeling really bad.

I sent you a couple of pictures Monday. The names of all the people except two are written on them. The two unnamed are Mrs. Sing, wife of the Post Surgeon, and Mrs. Rush, a friend of Capt. Hughes. The men used to meet at the club at 4:30 for a drink before dinner and got to be known as the 4:30 Club. We seldom get together any more, and so many new officers have arrived that the old garrison officers are in the minority now and no longer have the place to ourselves.

Tomorrow afternoon the garrison is to be released from duty to hear some famous singer --- Thomas, I think, sing "The Seven Last Words of Christ". I don't know where they can find a building big enough to handle the crowd if we all go.

I hope there will be a letter from you tomorrow.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 146]

Saturday, April 24

Dear Betty ---

I got your nice card and letter and Neal's letter this afternoon. It was the first letter I had received since last Sunday and sure was glad to get them. Was beginning to wonder if something was wrong. Neal's letter and plan drawings were much appreciated, and I'll be looking forward to the pictures.

Did dad take his things with him and plan to stay away? I hope he will have a good home wherever he decides to stay.

Tonight is the monthly officers dance and tomorrow there will be an Easter Sunrise service on the lawn after which a bronze memorial plaque and the chimes in the chapel steeple will be dedicated to the late Co. Firestone. I don't plan to go to the dance so may be on hand for the church services in the morning.

There was a big aerial demonstration at San Francisco this morning ---- some kind of training maneuver. A lot of the planes flew over here. I counted 62 big bombers in one formation. There were a lot more in the air in smaller groups.

This has been a windy, dusty day ---- almost like the old dust-storm days this afternoon.

The rush and work of the last two weeks has eased up for the moment and yesterday and today were quite restful for a change. I'm still hoping for favorable news on my transfer before we get another merry-go-round rush.

Tell Jimmy to wait awhile before he starts carrying you around.

I couldn't get any Easter cards at the PX and haven't been down town during shopping hours since I came back from leave. I'll be thinking of you though.

Love.

Jim

[Note: I doubt that JRS' regrets about his dad leaving KC for South Dakota were shared by Mom. It had to have been an extra load to have her father-in-law living in an already full house for all this time. I never heard her speak badly of that time, however.] [Mom sent an Easter card postmarked 20 Apr 43, with a short note as well as a letter from Neal. They are both copied here.]

Monday P.M

Dear Jim

Just a little letter as Neal is enclosing one too. Yours have been coming farther apart lately but if you're so busy, I'll excuse it. Expect it's hard to write anyway, when you've no interest in anything but an answer to a request.

Your father is leaving this evening and Helen will meet him in Sioux City. Earl has a job at \$7.00 a day, don't know what, but it's temporary. Hayes is alone at his station so no one is free to drive clear to Omaha. Mayme had another letter from your

Uncle. Your Aunt Tina is better but still in the hospital. The other dress, Helen said she'd send, arrived today and it's quite pretty --- I haven't tried it on yet tho.

I had to have the battery charged Saturday --- 2.00 for a half hour job. I was advised not to waste any more money on it if it went down again --- just get another. He said two years was longer than most people could use a batter and ours will be two years old in July. Notice has come for the Allstate Insurance too, \$29.16 --- I'll pay it soon. It's around six dollars less than last.

I'm going to hold this until morning so I can send Neal's pictures if they're any good. He forgot them so they won't be ready until after six this evening. He's the "forgettimest boy".

Hope you have an enjoyable Easter. I think we will all go to Mass together. Wish you could be with us.

All our love, Betty

Did I tell you that Jimmy is planning to carry me when I grow little and he grows big?

Tues. A. M. The pictures were not ready when I called for them. Your Dad got away OK.

Dear Dad,

I hope you are not transferred to the engineers because you will have to go to Alaska. I am getting a good job from a lady down at the corner. I got a dollar for raking her yard. Henry Wagner came to visit us last Friday, that is the 9th of April. I offered to go for him to get his pants at the cleaners and he gave me the change which was 40¢. I also have Missus Geering to work for. I am going to go to the golf course and get some money for caddying because it ought to pay good for the men who did it before are in the Army. I am going to manual training this summer. I have already made 3 things this year, first was a cutting board, then came a shelf and now I am making a tie rack. I am varnishing the tie rack and while it dries I am making a box to put small things in. I will draw the plans on the back to show you how they are made.

Neal Sorenson

[Letter No. 147]

Tuesday, April 27.

Dear Betty ---

It's a gray drizzly day trying hard to give us a last soaking before the dry season sets in. Last year our last rain came on May 15, unusually late the natives said.

Sunday morning I got up and attended the outdoor sunrise Easter service. It was a fine morning but the service was unimpressive and stagey. Our chaplain is a poor speaker and, I think, not too bright. Anyway he makes you feel more like you are at a political rally than in church.

I had Easter cards from the Gearkes, *[Helen & Earl]*, Truesdells, *[Stella & Chet]*, and Koenigs, *[Marie & Hayes]*. There was a note from Helen saying dad had arrived safely last Tuesday, and that he didn't look so very well.

Today the Post Engineer gave me a letter from his headquarters saying that the Corps of Engineers wants 900 engineer officers with highway and construction experience. I immediately prepared another letter and took it to our headquarters for approval but the Adjutant told me that the Officer Procurement Division, which had written the letter, could do nothing for me but only acted on new officers appointed from civilian life. They can't act on transfers, which is a function of the Chiefs of Branch. What an Army! He did promise, however, that if there was no answer to my application to the Chief of Engineers by next Saturday he would send a tracer to jog it up.

I wonder how you are getting along with the housecleaning and gardening. Hope you are through with it and can take things easier.

I have to go to the Officers Candidate Board now. We meet every Tuesday afternoon or evening to interview and make recommendation on enlisted men who want to go to officers candidate schools. Wonder how Dick Handley is making out.

Love to all of you.

Jim

[Note: We always called the "Koenigs" "King", without pronouncing it in the Germanic way. I don't know why this was; if JRS was just trying to be difficult with his brother-in-law, or what. They seemed to get along well, so this does not seem to be a viable conclusion.] [It is curious that JRS is always asking mom about various projects she is working on, as if she never reports any progress on any of them. It would be helpful to see what her letters contained.]

[Letter No. 148]

Sat. May 1, 1943

Dear Betty ---

I am enclosing a cashier's check for \$275.00. Be sure and mention its arrival.

Your Wednesday's letter arrived today and was newsy even if hurried. I like your comments on what all of you are doing. Seems almost like being there sometimes. I'm glad Jimmy can be out a lot again as I know how he enjoys it.

Neal's pictures arrived the day before yesterday. They are good but all of them were taken with the subject too far away from the camera. When he learns to get up closer for pictures of people they will be fine. I have a reading glass which brings them up closer and see [sic] them plainly. Thank Neal for me. Tell him too that I am glad to hear about his good report card.

I am mailing a book to Bob for his birthday. Don't know whether it will arrive in time or not. I will also write him a letter today and send him a dollar so he can buy something he wants. I never get down town any more for shopping and there isn't much for boys to be had at the P.X.

I finally received my application for transfer back, covered with indorsements [sic] of approval --- except the final one from the Adjutant General's Office ---- "Not favorably considered because there are no openings at the present time", etc. --- and they are trying to get 900 new officers with highway and construction experience. It was sent direct from the Chief of Ordnance to the Adjutant General and there is no indorsement [sic] from the Chief of Engrs. For this reason I think I shall send it back --- direct to the Chief of Engineers requesting his comments. I have about given up hope of transfer however, always something happens to spoil it.

Say hello to Jean and Jimmy for me.

Love to all.

Jim

[Letter No. 149]

Sunday, May 2

Dear Betty ---

I wrote to you and Bobby yesterday so there isn't much to say but I'm so blue and lonesome for you that I've got to talk to you anyway. I have just re-read your long Easter Sunday letter. I like that about Neal buying you a plant with his hard-earned money. He is a fine boy and I'm proud of him. In fact we have got four of the best children in the world.

I have just come from the matinee at the Post Theater. "The Moon is Down" is the picture showing. It is a picture of the German occupation of Norway, in case you haven't seen it. It was better than the average, I think.

Sundays are long and bleak in this place. Most of the people go to town but I gave that up long ago. There isn't anything to do there except go to a bar and drink too much and that gets tiresome. The gas and rubber rationing prohibit the trips around the country that I looked forward to when I first arrived here.

There are many changes in the wind here now. But none that I know of that involves my getting out of here. The school is to be discontinued and moved to Santa Anita. It was probably the most efficient activity on the post and most of the officers connected with it are good friends of mine so I hate to see it go. There has been quite a shake up in Department heads, which was to be expected after the late inspection.

Does Jimmy miss Grandpa much? I'll bet he, (Jimmy), is missed by Grandpa. And I know I miss you all.

Love

Jim

[Note: It is expected that JRS would go to movies on post to help pass his free time; but it is strange to see his mention of it in these letters. I cannot remember one instance when he ever went to a movie with the family after he arrived back from the war.]

[Letter No. 150]

Thursday, May 6

Dear Betty ---

I have been feeling bad all day and thought I was going to be sick but am feeling better now so I guess there was nothing wrong. Haven't lost any time for sickness yet so guess I'm tough.

I'm glad to hear you got your money from your endowment policy. Never doubted you would get it but hadn't remembered about it for a long time. I have forgotten too if you told me about the final payment on my \$2000 gov't policy. I made the first payment in May, 1923 and think it should have been paid up on Feb. 1. All of my Army insurance, except that which I took out last summer, should be paid up.

Was also pleased to hear that Rita would be able to take nurses training. If she doesn't get away on her own soon she will probably never leave the farm. That wouldn't be pleasant under the new set up.

I had a letter from Carole Koenig the other day which I am enclosing. I'll have to send her an autograph for her collection.

I can't remember the date of Jimmy's birthday although I know it is sometime this month. I am going to send him a birthday card and if it arrives too early you can save it and put it in the mailbox on the correct date. Can't seem to remember anything any more.

Hope the gardening and the housecleaning are progressing satisfactorily. The roses should be blooming soon.

It's getting hot here now and we go into summer uniforms on Saturday.

Love

Jim

[Note: Carole was the eldest daughter of JRS' sister, Marie. She wrote a nice letter and asked for his "autograph", as well as those of other soldiers for her collection. She also said that "I suppose you know that grandfather is in Yankton." And "Grandfather says that he was lomesome for jimme." ---- So I guess I underestimated his feelings for me.]

[Letter No. 151]

Sunday, May 9.

Dear Betty ---

Your Wednesday's letter arrived today and the one you wrote last Sunday arrived yesterday. The mail service³ seems to be rather erratic these days.

I was glad to get the clipping about Joe Foss. There was an article about him in the Saturday Evening Post for April 3 which you may have read.

General Glaney was here yesterday. At 3:30 there was a reception for him at the Club ---- receiving line and cocktails. Some other general is due next Tuesday so I suppose we will do it again. I don't know why, but general officers have been buzzing around thicker than flies lately. Maybe they serve some useful purpose.

I'm sorry to hear about the dry spring you are having. It will be bad for the lawn and garden, but worse than that if it's widespread and we have a short crop this year it can be serious since we have contracted to feed the whole world and are already on rations. The last few days out here have been windy and disagreeable. Today is still and quiet but will probably be hot.

Yes, I was disappointed about my transfer being disapproved. I went to San Francisco with Mahoney and Lt. Cotterman, the post engineer, to interview the Officer Procurement Service there. They were advertising over the radio and in the newspapers that 900 officers with highway and construction experience were urgently needed by the Corps of Engineers. They were sympathetic but their job was to get officers out of civil life, transfers were not their business. I have returned the letter direct to the Chief of Engineers "requesting indorsement by the Hq. designated in basic letter in view of advice from Hq 9th Service Command that officer with highway engineering experience were urgently needed by the Corps of Engineers". I did this because the letter was sent direct from the Chief of Ordnance to the Adjutant General and there was no indorsement from the Chief of Engineers, to whom the letter was addressed. I don't expect anything to come of it now except to get my ears slapped down again for being a nuisance. Meanwhile the Colonel has put me on his staff as "Engineering Advisor", sort of liaison officer between him and the Post Engr. And thinks I should be happy. It's not so bad do far, but there is plenty of room for grief working between two branches.

Hope the housecleaning is over. We don't have any curtains at the windows here.

I'm ashamed not to be able to remember Jimmy's birth date. I'll send a card for you to put in the mailbox at the proper time.

Love.

Jim

[Note: "Joe Foss" was a South Dakota boy who made good as a Marine Corps fighter pilot Ace at Guadalcanal. He received the Medal of Honor and was later governor of SD. I don't know if JRS had any special relationship to Mr. Foss, other than also being a native of SD.]

[Letter No. 152]

Wednesday, May 12

Dear Betty ---

Your nice Sunday's airmail letter, and the children's, arrived today. I'm glad to hear you finally had rains.

There is nothing new here. Last night we had a farewell party for Co. and Mr. Rundel who are leaving for a new station at Detroit. They are going first to West Point to see their son graduate on June 1. Col Rundel has been Commandant of the school and most of us have been wishing he was Post Commander.

Tonight there is to be an officers stag party at the Club --- beer & pretzels. Tomorrow we are expecting a visit from another Brig. General ---- and I suppose another reception and cocktails. I don't want any more cocktails for a long time.

I'm glad you had a nice Mothers Day. Maybe next year I can be home for the occasion --- can hope so anyway. I like to read your comments on what everyone is doing while you write. Seems almost like being there for a while.

Twenty five years ago today Mamie and Rany were married at Junction City, Kansas. I got the news in July while watching for barrage rockets from the top of a high tree in Alsace. Twenty four years ago today Bob died at St. Nazaire. It was always a blue day for Mother.

I have given up hopes of transfer and will try to forget the whole thing and get along the best I can here. My present assignment on the staff has been quite pleasant so far but I still feel I'm not earning my pay.

Yesterday we had a little demonstration that I wish the boys could have seen. We wanted to wreck the remains of the dog kennels that burned some time ago so we got a tank and smashed it down and crushed the lumber down for burning. The big tanks are fast and heavy and will smash most anything they hit.

I'm writing at the office. Must leave soon for an Officer Candidate Board meeting.

Love.

Jim

[Note: The "Bob" whose death is mentioned here is JRS' older brother, who died of peritonitis after an appendectomy in France.]

[Letter No. 153]

Sunday, May 16

Dear Betty ---

I got your air mail letter with the clipping of the floods in the Ozarks. Looks as if the spring drouth *[sic]* has been broken. The radio this morning reported a lot of soldiers at Ft. Riley hurt by a tornado.

Mr. Sprague wrote me a short letter saying he had delivered the money for your matured policy to you and that he hoped the war would soon be over, etc. We all wish that.

There is supposed to be open house on the post today and the electric amplifier system has been playing calls and marches most of the day ---- but there are very few visitors. It's a nice day for a change and I guess that people would rather be doing something else when they have the chance. It has been very cold and disagreeable for a long time. Unusual.

It's the Mullis' own fault if their boy has to go to the Army as a private. He was in the ROTC and had the chance besides to enroll in some Naval Officers training program before I left the office. The old man was running around with forms, telling about it, asking advice, etc. He finally said one of the boy's profs had advised against it. I think they were trying to see too far ahead --- and hoping he could avoid the war altogether. He won't stay in the ranks long though, with his training, unless he is so cocky the O.C.S. board will turn him down. From what I hear he is ornery, and makes enemies easily.

I'm hoping your hip trouble has cleared up again. That's one reason why I worry about your being there alone. It used to disable you completely some times. Can't you hire someone to do the heavy part of the housecleaning?

It is nearly Memorial Day and you will send some money up to your folks for flowers of course. I will send some to my sisters for the Springfield cemetery.

I'm glad you got a new battery for the car. I thought perhaps it would be hard to get one these times. Now if you can make the old tires do until the synthetic rubber gets on the market it will be fine.

I am awfully tired of this place and wish I could move --- preferably near home, but somewhere anyway.

Love,

Jim

[Note: "Drouth" is the word we always used to describe a long dry spell, (instead of "drought"). I do not know if the proper spelling/usage changed at some point, or we had just always been wrong.]

[Letter No. 154]

Thursday, May 20

Dear Betty ---

Well, little Jimmy has had his birthday and I hope he enjoyed it. Was wishing all day yesterday I could be helping him celebrate.

I don't know what to tell you to do about the boys' vacation on the farm this summer. I will be eligible for another ten days after July 1st but don't know when I should ask for it. I would like to come as soon as possible but there are two disadvantages to taking it right away --- or rather for asking for it right away. First, it will be less than six months since I was on leave and the Colonel may not let me go so soon. Also, if I take my leave at the beginning of the fiscal year it will be a whole year before I can have another, whereas if I wait until fall or early winter I will be able to look forward to another leave in just that much shorter time. Sounds silly, but what I'm trying to say is that coming back from a leave and the first few weeks afterward are the hardest part of being away from you --- after a longer time and when ~~you~~ I know ~~you~~ I can go home it's not so bad, but coming back and knowing it will be a whole year before ~~you~~ I can leave again it's pretty tough. Got my persons badly mixed up there. When do you think it would be best for me to come?

There is nothing new here and I still don't like this place. The weather is hot and getting hotter every day. I wish we could have some of the cool weather you write about.

I'm glad you sent the money home for the marker. I must remember to send some money up for Memorial Day flowers next week.

I wish I could be home with you to stay.

All my love.

Jim

[Letter No. 155]

Sunday, May 23

Dear Betty ---

It's only ten o'clock but already uncomfortably hot. Summer seems to be here full blast and I dread the next few months.

I'm glad Jimmy like his card and his "dime". Next in line for a birthday is Neal. We seem to have space our babies pretty close together. *[The first 4 took 12 years!]*

I am still trying to decide when I should ask for my next leave. There is quite a movement of officers going on now and I have been hoping I might get a change of station soon. If I should be sent east I could probably get a ten days delay enroute if I passed anywhere near Kansas City. It's useless to plan though --- I may stay here for duration, or I may leave next week. This silly ten day limit is a hardship on officers living a long ways off. Officers living nearby can take several leaves just under ten days and use up all their leave, as well as sneak in a few trips on "official business" with convoys.

I didn't understand about the new instructions for mailing --- or addressing mail --- that you mentioned. I haven't heard anything about it. Is it an official order from the P. O. or is it newspaper talk. It's easy to comply with but I don't see what possible use it can serve. It might help in the case of letters mailed locally to a K. C. address.

I am trying to remember how the place should look now. The roses ought to be starting to bloom and the trees are fully leafed out. I suppose the lawn is beginning to look pretty ragged since you decided to let it go to seed. Dad would like that --- he used to get pretty disgusted because we kept it mowed. Maybe he was right too. Have the wrens come back to Bob's bird house? I'm surely looking forward to the time when I can come home to stay.

I'm going to write a note to Stella now and send a few dollars for Decoration Day.

Love,

Jim

[Note: The "new instructions for mailing..." must refer to the addition of a "zone number" to the city designation. He has carefully written "Kansas City, Mo. (4)" on this envelope, and all subsequent ones, except the next one --- it must have been difficult to break the habit. Postal zones were in place long before the requirement of ZIP Codes.] [I still have the wren house to which he refers. This letter helps set its age: at least 67 years in 2010.]

[Letter No. 156]

Wednesday, May 26

Dear Betty ---

I got your Friday's letter and the newspapers yesterday. I got tired just reading about your standing in line for ration books. That must be an awful nuisance. And I read the other day where one of our brilliant Washington experts said we would probably stay on rations for ten years more as "we would have to feed the world" for that length of time. I suppose the rest of the world is to be given a ten years vacation to sit in the shade while we give them everything they need.

I had a letter from Donny Gearke this morning written last Friday. He said that Helen, Earl and Judy had left that morning for Kansas City so you have probably seen them. They had taken dad to Viborg the preceding Wednesday and he had a visit with the ancient great-aunt there. I think they said she was 97 when I last saw her. If that was so she must be 99 now.

Tell the boys that I have got some rubber bands for their airplanes. I am going to try to get some more as I don't think I have enough, and when I do I'll send them home. They are not the regular airplane motor bands but I think they will be just as good if they link them together.

The weather has cooled off and it's fine today. There is nothing new to write about but I am keeping busy and feel pretty good. I think I told you that I am now on the Colonel's staff and as his "engineering advisor" I have plenty to do. He wants advice on some goofy things sometimes but I can always retaliate with the same kind of advice.

I'm still mulling over when to ask for leave. I'd like to come as soon as possible but I hate to come back after leave knowing I can't have another for a whole year. Also I may get turned down because of my comparatively recent emergency leave. On the other hand if I wait too long I might get sent out of the country and lose out altogether. Wish I was back on the old job with the war behind me.

All my love,

Jim

[Note: Donny Gearke was probably the same age as Bob or Neal, so I'm not sure why he would have been left alone while his parents and sister traveled to Kansas City. Viborg, a few miles north and east of Yankton, SD, was known as "Danville" when the elder Sorensen's lived there. I would love to know more about this "ancient great-aunt"; this is the first I have learned of her existence.]

[Letter No. 157]

Tuesday, June 1, 1943

Dear Betty ---

I'm sending the monthly stipend herewith. Got the check yesterday but the bank was closed so I stood in line for half an hour this morning to get it cashed.

I tried to find something for Neal's birthday at the PX but it's awfully hard to find anything for boys there and I almost never get down town any more.

I finally bought him a sterling silver St. Christopher medal --- the only thing I saw that I thought he might like. I'll send it, and a dollar to buy whatever he likes, in time for his birthday. I still have the rosary and medal he gave me a long time ago.

I think it will be a good plan to let the boys go up to Sioux City with the Handleys. Better be sure to have someone from Yankton meet them there though. I won't be eligible for leave anyway until the first of July and by that time they will know whether they want to stay all summer or not. If Col. Johnson should get my transfer through it might delay my leave for some time. I would have to break in my new job first. I'm not planning too strongly on the transfer though --- it's fallen through too often when I thought it was all set.

Is the school that Honey is to teach the one north of the farm that you took me to see once? It will be handy if she stays at home --- but how does she get along with Mary? Guess Honey can get along with most anyone. It may be smart for her to keep on teaching. I read in the San Francisco papers that almost no one is taking the teacher exams this year. They will be scarce soon and teacher should get good pay. I'm sorry though that she won't be down to stay with you next winter.

I'm planning on going to Sacramento to see the Johnsons next Sunday. It's an uncomfortable bus ride --- when I was up to see Major Parker I had to stand up all the way back.

Love,

Jim

[Letter No. 158]

Saturday, June 5

Dear Betty ---

There isn't much to put in a letter but I'll try a little note anyway. The usual routing prevails and things are very dull --- not even the usual rumors to speculate about.

You will probably receive this on Neal's birthday. The youngsters' birthdays seem to fly around. I hate to think of them growing up --- they seemed just right the way they were when I left home.

I am planning to go to Sacramento tomorrow to call on the Johnson's, if I can get on a bus. Everything is so crowded these days that there is usually standing room only, and sometimes not that. I'm anxious to know if the little Col. has taken any action yet about getting me assigned to his branch. He was very positive he was going to do it when he was here, but knowing him as I do I don't put much stock in it. If the Service Command sends him someone to take the place he will forget all about it. Anyway he may not have as much influence here as he seemed to have in Omaha.

I keep thinking of Neal's birthday. Remember I had an appointment to inspect a job with Wynkoop and the Construction Engr. From Bismarck and I call Valley City to call it off? And while you were in the hospital I took Bobby out to work with me. He played around the transit with a little toy car in his hand and when he dropped it I would have to quit work and find it for him. Then Neal got impetigo and we used to take him to the Dr's office and hold him on the table while the doctor worked on him.

I wish I could see the roses and the peonies. Does the neighbor's gardener still burn trash next to the hedge?

I hope that letting the bluegrass go to see will help the lawn.

Love.

Jim

[Note: This "little Col." must have been JRS' boss with the Bureau in Omaha; and he is now in the Army.] [The plan to "let the grass go to seed" fit right in with JRS' evident dread of operating a lawn mower. He used that same line many times to put that job off until someone else did it. I never saw him operate a mower, except to make sure that the new power version we got in KCK worked --- then I operated it.]

[Letter No. 159]

Wednesday, June 9

Dear Betty ---

I got your letter about the tax troubles you are having. Hope you got them straightened out without too much trouble. It's news to me that separate taxes have to be paid on the garden plot. I was quite sure that it was included in the description of the property in the tax notice or at least is included in the contract papers that the Bond & Mortgage Co was supposed to take care of. However, it's so long since I've seen those documents that I can't recall details at all.

I went up to Sacramento last Sunday and spent most of the afternoon with the Johnsons. They have a nice little apartment and like it fine. They both want to live in California when they retire --- but not this far north. I enjoyed my visit very much. Co. Johnson said he had everything fixed at his end for my transfer. However, I have to write the Adjutant General through Col. Churchill, then he said the A. G. would send the letter to McClellan Field where they would indorse it to the effect that they wanted me. I have the letter written but haven't sent it to the Col. for his indorsement yet and don't know whether he will approve it or not after the other application was turned down. I've had so many failures at transfer that I'm about discouraged --- and beginning to think I don't care much anyway. What I am more interested in is getting a station near enough to home so I could come home often on short leaves.

I'm sorry about the way the house and gas rationing tie you down. If you want to go home for the summer why don't you just close the house and go? I don't think it would be wise to rent it though --- in these war times you would be apt to find you couldn't get rid of your tenants when you wanted it back. Also if it stayed vacant too long I think the insurance would lapse. You could go up for a month's vacation or so and then bring Honey or one of the girls back to stay with you a while.

Bob said he would take some pictures and I will be looking forward to them I get awfully homesick and lonesome for you all.

There is nothing to do except routine work and not much of that just now. There are rumors that many Ordnance Officers will be transferred back to QMC. I don't care for QM work --- but maybe if it happened I'd get nearer home. I'd like that.

Love,

Jim

[Letter No. 160]

Thursday, June 11 *[Friday]*

Dear Betty ---

Your Sunday's letter arrived yesterday. Seemed queer to hear that it's hot back there --- it's been very cool here all of this month. I like it that way but the natives don't and they go around apologizing and saying they can't understand it, it never happened before.

I didn't know until I read Honey's letter that Bus and Mary had their youngster in Rochester. You may have mentioned it but I'd forgotten. I sure hope the doctors can do something for him.

Of course Bob may wear my flannels, and all of my clothes that fit him. I didn't realize that he was growing up so fast. He will probably be a lot bigger than me before he stops growing.

I wrote another letter yesterday requesting transfer to the Air Forces, Engineer Section, Sacramento Air Service Command, McClellan Field and asked the Colonel if he would approve it by endorsement. I was afraid he wouldn't after the other one had been turned down but I explained my old boss was asking for me specifically. He looked pretty grumpy but finally said, "Well, since you want to go to the Engineers I'll do it but I don't like this business of other people taking my good officers." I never thought he considered me a good officer but I hope he meant it. Anyway I'm not really expecting the transfer to go through, but I'm trying this one time more.

I'm glad to hear the Majors are such good neighbors. With the Gerings *[sic]* on the other side we are well fixed for next door neighbors.

There is a dust storm blowing outside and it makes me want more than ever to go home and see our roses and the new-seeded lawn. The new seed should be ripe soon.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Note: Bus' youngster at Rochester would be Richard, who was born with cerebral palsy. He lived to be 70 years old, but had a very difficult life.]

[Letter No. 161]

Sunday, June 13.

Dear Betty ---

We are both evidently living in a freak weather section --- you with your rain and cold and me with my cold and wind. I am sorry that the roses got such a beating but they will probably recover and the rain should make the blue grass seed plentiful and give it a start when it ripens.

I'll be looking forward to the pictures that Bob took. I hope they turned out well. Jimmy must be a lot bigger than when I saw him last. I can picture the poor little scared fellow in the barber chair asking the barber not to hurt him.

Neal's letter was very interesting. I suppose the boys will be gone before I get around to sending those rubber bands for their planes. Have been planning to mail them but it seems so hard to get even those little things done. He asked if he could take his rifle to the farm for the summer. I don't know what to say to that. I hate to deprive the boys of a chance to use them. There should be little danger if they had ever had instruction in their use but they haven't. Also there are so many youngsters up there all of whom will want to shoot and some of them will be reckless or ignorant of the safety rules. If I could be sure they would be careful, shoot only at what they can clearly see and identify and remember that a bullet doesn't always stop where it hits I would be tempted to let them shoot. I do wish though that I could be with them at first. They have grown a lot since I left and you probably know tier capacity for good judgment better than I do. What do you think?

I received the check and was glad to get it. We have a good mess now but its cost, and laundry, fees, etc. have almost doubled the cost of living here since I came --- they charge a flat rate whether you eat or not --- so I am usually on my last pins by the end of the month. I get along all right but have to avoid some of my expected "obligations" and sit on the side lines to do so --- which suits me fine.

I hope to see you all this summer or autumn. It's lonesome here and hard to wait.

Love.

Jim

[Note: The term "mess", as used here, is not indicating an undesirable situation. It refers to the "mess hall", in which he eats his meals.]

[Letter No. 162]

Thursday, June 17

Dear Betty ---

Your Sunday's letter arrived today but the pictures you mentioned are not here yet. I hope they are good.

The weather has turned hot again and everyone is complaining. Last week, some nights I slept under three blankets and my overcoat, now I don't want even a sheet.

I should have written yesterday but was Officer of the Day until four o'clock, up practically all the night before and pretty tired. The O. D. tour is much more work than it used to be --- all civilian guard posts as well as military have to be visited twice each night, bills of lading prepared after midnight have to be signed, all ships and barges that come in have to be boarded and inspected, fire station checked, etc., so there isn't much time for sleep in a twenty-four hour tour.

Did you like "The Moon is Down". I don't remember that I recommended it so very highly although I thought it was pretty good for a war picture. I'm sick of war pictures and seldom go to shows on that account.

I had a hunch that Bus and Mary wouldn't care much for the farm, at least I thought Mary wouldn't. Bus thought he would like it but he had been away quite a while and has got used to a different life. I hope he has his old job to go back to if he decides to quit farming next year. What has become of Paul?

I have been having difficulty reading close-up and fine print the last few months and a week ago Saturday went to Stockton Field hospital to have my eyes examined. They have a dandy eye clinic there. The doctor said my eyes were unusually goo except close up and said he would get a pair of reading glasses for me. He advised me not to get bifocals until my next pair as my eyes would be changing for the next five years of so. Today I went over and got the glasses and am wearing them now. They are dandy for reading but feel kind of uncomfortable. I can't see distant objects so have to take them off and put them on again. I don't think I'll wait long to get bifocals --- they must be a lot handier.

Had another letter from Carole yesterday with some colored crayon pictures from "Bobby" and a little plastic "good luck charm". She said she "wrote to Neil to weeks ago and I haen't gotten it mailed yet". She said Bob Montagne came May 22 and brought along a picture of his baby for grandpa. Jimmy Christiansen same down "Morialday" and Cleo was coming that night --- June 3. Marie had just recovered from tonsillitis, then she got a cold. Carole is a good reporter but a little hard to read sometimes.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Note: The "Bobby" in Carole's letter refers to her little sister, Roberta, whom we all called Bobby.]

[Letter No. 163]

Sunday, June 20

Dear Betty ---

The book and pictures arrived yesterday and both were very welcome. I have the pictures in front of me now and also the group picture of the children that you sent last year. Yesterday I also got your Thursday's letter with the clipping of the flood. This morning's San Francisco papers said that the flood was beginning to recede at Kansas City.

I'm sorry that you had all that trouble to go through about the taxes but I'm glad you got the back taxes paid on the garden plot. It would be just too bad to have some smoothy lay low and buy it up for taxes if we hadn't taken care of it. I imagine there are plenty of folks looking for opportunities to pick up those little pieces of land and make a good deal on the nuisance value to sell it back to the original --- or next owner of the adjoining property. It might be a good thing to have someone make a check on that strip just north of the garden where they keep the smudge burning. I've always had a hunch those people don't own that and that the Gerings have just as good a right to it. If they could buy it for a few years' back taxes it would make a nice addition to their place and do away with a neighborhood nuisance. If there is going to be any doubt about cancelling personal taxes it may be best to pay those too when billed --- as long as they are not too high --- rather than have to pay a lot of back taxes some day. Next time however I won't "voluntarily" send in a sworn statement for them to quibble over.

We went on a red alert about one o'clock this morning and blacked out shortly after for about one hour. At this time and for the next two months there is a heavy fog belt a couple of hundred miles off the coast and there is a prevalent feeling that the Japs will sneak in at least a carrier or two to even up for the Tokyo raid. I don't know what happened to spook them last night. We have gas masks and helmets now and beginning very soon all officers will be required to carry side arms --- pistols --- all the time. A platoon of parachute troops could do a lot of damage here in a few minutes if they weren't smacked down right away.

The weather has turned cool again after a couple of days of record breaking heat for this time of year. Looks as if we may get through June without too much discomfort and then after July and August we won't have long to wait for cooler weather. Last year it got hot early in May and stayed that way until October. It hasn't rained for weeks though and probably won't until late September.

I haven't seen the Johnsons since I went to see them in Sacramento. When I hear what action has been taken on my transfer I will begin to plan on my time for asking for leave until then I will just let things ride. I would surely like to go home soon but the short leaves granted here make it necessary to plan to make the hours count --- and it's a long time until the next one comes due.

All my love. Jim

[Note: The garden plot was an odd piece of land that stuck out at the back of our lot. I believe the Majors' lot also had such an addition, but the Gherrings' did not extend that far. At my tender age, it never occurred to me that this place where we made our garden was a separate piece --- and it appears JRS had the same problem. I would have thought that mom would have asked Mr. Copaken to help with this issue --- he was an attorney, a realtor, and a good friend. His two sons were my best friends.]

[Letter No. 164]

Thursday, June 24

Dear Betty ---

Today I got your last Sunday's letter and letters from Bob and Neal.

Our weather remains cool but today is disagreeable on account of a high wind. When the wind blows from the west it picks up the peat dust on the islands and delta and covers everything --- just like the N.D. dust storms use to.

I could sure go for some of those beans, creamed like you used to fix them. We have plenty of them but they just boil them in water and they are tasteless that way. All of our food is good, and plentiful, but Army cooks can't cook like you can. I hope you have the lawn looking good again. If the weather turns out right to start the seed we should have a good lawn again.

I gather from the boys' letters that they expect to leave for the farm soon. How are you planning to send them? Are you going up there this summer for a visit? If the girls need a rest for their "nervous exhaustion" I should think it would be a good idea for them to come down there and spend a few weeks with you. They would be company for you, but I suppose the whole bunch of you would work as hard as ever instead of resting.

We moved our offices around yesterday --- what for I don't know except the Colonel wanted us to, which is reason enough. I moved my desk four times and finally landed right in the place I vacated a week ago on a different move. I am still on the Staff and still getting along but I don't know for how long. I was a little bit sick yesterday and don't feel so good today, but better anyway. I never feel very good any more, but neither do I ever get sick enough to take time out for it. I hope some time to get a break and get back in the middle west where I think I would feel a lot better. Maybe they will finish this war sooner than I expected and I can come home to stay. That's all I want, with a good job so I can keep our home and raise the children right. This is a miserable way to live, but I don't want to let our house go and start dragging you and the kids around the country again.

I still haven't heard from my transfer so haven't started any plans for leave. You and the youngsters go ahead and plan your summer and I'll try to fit my leave to fit in with your plans. I think it might be good for you to go up to the farm for the summer too, but that's up to you of course. The neighbors could keep an eye on the house for you.

Wish I could be with you.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 165]

Sunday, June 27

Dear Betty ---

Sunday again and nothing to do but sit and wait and watch the hours drag. I get so tired of this sometimes I don't know what to do.

I'm wondering what you are doing back there. Neal said in his letter he "hoped to be on the farm for the 4th of July so he could fire firecrackers". That will be next Sunday so they will have to leave soon to get there, if they haven't already gone.

The last class in the Motor School graduated yesterday and the school is moving out on the 30th. With the school officers and student officers gone there will be comparatively few of us left. With so much room they plan now to give us two rooms apiece to live in, put in regular furniture and fix the quarters up nice. Living will be much more comfortable then but I hope to be gone before that work is finished. I haven't heard any more about my transfer but it's too soon yet to expect it. Haven't seen Johnson since I was in Sacramento.

We have just had an alert and the siren is blowing for an air raid, (1:00 PM). Must go see what's up.

They blew all clear at 1:45 and I can resume my letter --- or could if there was anything to write about. The weather is beautiful today, not at all hot for late June. We have been pretty lucky so far, last year by this time we had had almost two months of uninterrupted hot weather.

The roses in front of the Club --- right in front of my window --- are grand. They planted a border of little rose trees around the lawn and along the walk, each tree about three feet high before it branches out, and each having a different colored roses. Wish we had a couple for our lawn to go with our bushes and climbers.

Wish I could see you all today. Hope I can before so very long, maybe in a couple of months. All my love.

Jim

[Letter No. 166]

Wednesday, June 30

Dear Betty ---

I am sending a cashier's check for 275.00, air mail so you should have it by Saturday.

I suppose the boys are on their way to the farm now. Bobby is probably quite worried but it's good for him to get out on his own. I hope they will have a fine summer and not get in any trouble. Maybe Honey is right and you should go up there too. It must be kind of lonesome for you.

In the letter you enclosed from Honey she said she had finished a letter to Jim and Ed. Must be some other Jim as I haven't heard from her for a long time, around Christmas time I think. I feel sorry for her. The arrangement is working out just as might have been expected, there just isn't room in any house for two families. I'm sure though that she would get along all right with you. After all there would be only a part of two families that way.

I don't think you ever told me what had become of Paul. It must have been kind of a wrench for him to leave after being there so long. The boys will miss him this summer. He always found time to entertain them.

Yesterday I received word that my request for transfer to the Air Force had been forwarded by the Chief of Ordnance, approved. That puts it up to the Adjutant General. It got that far before but that was a general request. If the A. G.'s office gets in touch with McClellan Field it will probably go through ---- provided Col. Johnson is there to take action. He told me he expected to be K. C. around the 1st and continue on east on business so he may not be there to take care of it personally. He said he had it fixed up. But people are prone to forget and they move around so fast you can't bank on any one. For all I know Johnson may have been transferred elsewhere already.

Today half of another year has gone by. The months can't go fast enough until I get back to you.

Love

Jim

[Note: I can't help but notice a difference in the apparent respect JRS holds for his former bosses at the Bureau. When mentioning others in the Kansas City office, he almost always used "Mr." to precede their names. He refers to this one as "the little Colonel" on several occasions, and sometimes with "Col.", but most often just "Johnson". I don't know if this was deliberate, or just a casual slip of etiquette.]

[Letter No. 167]

Sunday, July 4.

Dear Betty ---

It's a beautiful day but lonely. No letter today and not a thing to do. There are only three or four of us on the post.

I hope you and the youngsters are having a nice Fourth. Wonder if Bobby and Neal were able to get any firecrackers. Must be kind of lonesome for you with them gone. A summer on the farm should do them good though, especially if they are given some real work to do.

They are having a parade down town with a demonstration of vehicles and bombs but I didn't feel it would be worth the trouble of attending. The Colonel is to be Grand-Marshal, and will then leave for Detroit for a couple of weeks. When he comes back I hope I will know about my transfer one way or another so I can start some plans for leave. I am now thinking tentatively of trying to get home around the 1st of September as that will not interfere with the boy's summer. I think they felt a little bit bad about having to come home early last year. However, I doubt they will enjoy it so much this year without you there.

I had a letter this week from Carole Koenig. She "supposed I was too busy to answer her other letters." I did answer at least one of them, if not both, but suppose she has forgotten *[sic]*. She said Myrtle had been home for a vacation and was going back the next day. Didn't mention dad. I wonder where he is staying now.

On the twentieth it will be a year and a half since I left home. Believe me if I get transferred to Johnsons outfit I am going to try to get him to have me sent back somewhere nearer home. If I have got to spend the whole war in a station like this it might as well be some place where I could get home once in a while.

They are showing "7 Graves to Cairo" at the post theatre tonight and I think I will go. Don't care for war pictures but there is nothing else to do.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Letter No. 168]

Wednesday, July 7

Dear Betty ---

I have just finished writing a short letter to each of the boys. Your last Saturday's letter has just arrived so I shall continue with my correspondence. I'm writing this in the office so I am subject to interruptions and don't know when I'll finish it.

It must be lonesome for you now after being used to having so many around for so long. I hope you can go up to Yankton. It should be a less hard trip with only Jean and Jimmy than with all four of them, but I suppose you plan to bring the boys back with you. The only thing that worries me is the tire problem. The old tires must be getting pretty thin and I suppose they are practically unreplaceable [sic] if they give out. It would be very awkward for you to be stranded somewhere without a tire.

I imagine the boys will be having a good time on the farm. I'm glad Marge is going to be strict about their swimming. Swimming in crowds without life guards is always dangerous and I doubt if either of the boys realize their limitations, since all their swimming has been in pools. There is always a tendency for kids to show off and to take dares to do things they shouldn't do for fear of being thought "sissy".

Tell Jimmy I was very glad to get his letter. I must send him and Jean a card when I can get to the PX and buy some. Sure wish I could see the little rascal. He is growing up too fast. I still think of him as crawling on the floor or just learning to walk --- like he was in those movie films. I'm sure glad we got those.

I wasn't surprised at the clipping about the congestion at the Union Station. Traffic is jammed everywhere and of course it's worse on a holiday. I always dread traveling these days. I don't have much of it to do but Johnson says that if I am transferred to his outfit I will have to be out in the field a lot. I hope if I have to be traveling much it will be by car, not by train. Traveling conditions is the reason I never have considered Christmas time for taking leave --- everyone is on the move then.

I have just been interrupted by a sergeant who came into thank me for a chance to go to officer school. We had a board meeting last night to examine four enlisted men and he was the only one we passed.

Ed Mahoney, a civilian employee in the Post Engineers office was commissioned a Captain the other day and leaves for Fort Belvoir the 8th. We had a surprise party for him last night. The M.P.s went to his home where he was entertaining guests, arrested him, put handcuffs on him and brought him out to the post, where we had a mock court-martial. He was a little bewildered at first but not for long.

Must hurry this if it is to catch the noon mail.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Letter No. 169]

Saturday, July 10

Dear Betty ---

My transfer went through and I expect to leave for McClellan Field on Tuesday.

I have a thousand things to get done so won't try to write a letter now. Will let you know my new address as soon as I get settled.

All my love.

Jim

[Letter No. 170]

Monday, July 12, 8:30 PM

Dear Betty ---

I am all cleared and ready to leave for my new station. They are giving me a staff car and a driver to take me to McClellan field tomorrow morning. It's only about 50 miles away.

I sent my old black locker trunk home by express today. I have a regular foot locker now so put a lot of odds and ends in the old one to get them out of the way --- my old blouse, sam browne belt, cap, etc. Also a few books I enjoyed but can't carry around in the limited space I have.

I hope you have heard from the boys by now. I haven't, but only wrote to them the other day.

I am tired tonight and am going to bed early. As soon as I get my assignment and learn my new address I will write you.

The charges on the trunk are prepaid and I will enclose the receipt. Tell Jean and Jimmy daddy says hello ---- and hope to see you all in a few weeks.

All my love.

Jim

I got the Ins. Dividend check.

[Letter No. 171]

Tuesday, Jul 13

Dear Betty ---

Arrived at my new station about 10:30 this morning. I have been spending the rest of the day getting processed ---it's now 20 minutes to six, and I am far from thru yet.

Col. Johnson asked me to go down town to dinner at 5:30 but I excused myself, had too much to do. Besides, he is entertaining several high-ranking officers and I haven't got the fancy summer blouse that they go for here.

I don't know how I will like it here --- it's always difficult and lonesome breaking in a new station. Sure wish you were here tonight.

I can't write much as yet because I don't know anything yet, just feeling my way but I wanted to send you my new address right away. It is:

Box F41, Officers Section
SASC McClellan Field
California

When I get settled I will go and call on Bill Slattery who lives only a few miles away in Sacramento.

All my love.

Jim

[Letter No. 172] [Anniversary card]

Postmarked 14 Jul 43

“Best Wishes on Our Wedding
Anniversary”

∞

“Our years together,
Sweetheart,
Have shown me very clearly
That all my Happiness
Just comes
From loving you so dearly!”

Jim

[No letter enclosed]

[Letter No. 173]

Sunday, July 18, 10:30 AM

Dear Betty ---

I have just been over to He looking for mail but there was nothing from you. I did get your last Saturday letter yesterday --- forwarded from Stockton. There was a letter from Neal today, forwarded from Stockton, which I will enclose. I think the boy is a little homesick, notice he has the days all counted. So far I haven't heard from Bob.

In your last letter you were considering going home to the farm and said if you did it would have to be before the 21st. If you decided to go you will be gone before this letter arrives. Hope you got my new address before you left so your letters won't be delayed.

As usual in the Army there was a mix up in my transfer. I requested transfer to the Engineer Section of this Service Command of the Army Air Forces. My War Department orders assigned me to the Air Corps, this Service Command, Army Air Forces. Consequently I have to wear the Air Corps insignia, sign my title Captain, Air Corps, and am liable to assignment wherever they see fit. Col. Johnson had me assigned to his Engr. Section and has taken up the matter of Engr. Transfer with Hq. Army Air Service Command at Patterson Field, Ohio. He called them by telephone and they had the gall to ask why I hadn't asked for transfer to the Engrs. in the first place! However, they would take the matter under advisement and see how things work out.

Col Johnson is much like he was in civil life, works early and late and wants his people to do the same. He told me to come to the house and make myself at home any time.

When I get settled I'll call Bill Slattery and suppose I will have another place to go when it gets too lonesome. This is a queer post. Seems to be no friendliness, everyone leaves everyone else strictly alone, and they all sit as if they were under a strain. There has just been a change in command and the new General is very strict and hard boiled so that may be the reason for it. The General who was relieved --- General Perrin --- was well liked. He is the youngest general officer in the Army and came from Custer, S. Dak.

I expect to get started on my inspection trips next week. Our projects extend from Chico on the north to Santa Maria, not far from Los Angeles on the south and to Tonopah, Nevada on the east. Johnson tells me the Post Engr. at Chico is Capt. Tyson. He was in the Minot Div. when I was there, afterwards met him in Omaha at a Res. Officers meeting at the Rome Hotel. Last time I saw him he was running instrument for Ralph Wells at Central City, Nebr. He was 1st Lt. Coast Artillery Reserve at that time.

Must write a note to the boys. Don't forget my address: Box F41, Officers Section
S.A.S.C.
McClellan Field,
California

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 174]

Wed. Jul 21

Dear Betty ---

I've just got back from a trip to Mather Field, about 18 miles away. I'll try to get a note written to you in the office so I can mail it on my way to lunch.

I must be getting very forgetful --- was sure I sent you my address in my first letter. Before I forget I'll write it down --- Box F41, Officers Section, S.A.S.C. McClellan Field. Your letter came through all right with just McClellan Field for an address but there are so many people here that it's best to put it all on.

I haven't heard from Bobby yet, and just the one letter from Neal that I sent you. Hope they are both getting along all right. I imagine it was hard for Bob, at least at the start, to follow Art and Bub the way they are used to working.

I think I will like the work here much better than my old job and the country is much nicer too. However, it's a hard post to get acquainted on for some reason, and the cost of living is much higher. They have civilians working in the mess and the cost is way up. You don't just order a meal and pay for it. The entrée is about what a good meal should cost, extra for coffee, salad, soup, dessert, etc. Also they charge for quarters, one tiny room shared by two officers. I have a youngster from Boston, a 2nd Lt. for roommate. He is a nice little fellow. Initiation fee for the Club is \$10.00, a smaller monthly fee after that. You have to pay your dues whether you use the Club or not. It's a very ritzy place, swimming pool, games, reading room, bar, etc. But no one seems to use it much except to play the slot machines. Folks go crazy over them though I don't know why --- you can't win.

The old part of the field is very pretty. It was started in peace times, 1937, and the buildings are solid concrete painted apple green. There are fine lawns, shrubbery, flowers, and trees, all very well kept. Of course we now have our "splinter city", the temporary wartime construction like all stations. That's pretty dismal.

There is an enormous air traffic through here --- bombers, fighters, training ships, and lots of freight planes. Lots of hangars of course, and shops for rebuilding and repairing planes. Besides the military personnel there are 18000 civilians working. This is the Service Command Hq for all Northern and Central California, part of Oregon and most of Nevada.

I haven't tried to get in touch with Slattery yet but intend to call his office some time this week. He has no phone in his home.

The weather here is ideal. It has been cool all summer, while normally it is hot every day from May until September. All the natives are puzzled, and I guess it isn't good for the crops they grow here, but I like it. Of course there is time for plenty of heat yet.

This office is so busy, and jittery on account of the new General wanting everything changed at once that I haven't thought it wise to bring up the matter of leave. As soon as things settle down and I get acquainted with the work I will take it up with the Col. I wouldn't want to come home anyway until you are all there and I suppose the boys will want to stay on the farm until about the 1st of September so there is no hurry. I wish I could come home to stay.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Note: "Art" is the husband of Mom's sister Marge, and "Bub" is their oldest son. Their farm was the preferred staging point for all of the boys who went up there, including me. All of us left a scar on that farm; Bob drove a team of horses through the corner of one of the barns, Neal killed a pig with a rock as it was giving away his hiding position, and I covered up uncounted corn plants while learning to cultivate.]

[Letter No. 175]

Saturday PM, July 24

Dear Betty ---

I was going to write you tonight but Col. Johnson asked me to go home from work with him tonight to stay all night so will try to get a little note off in the afternoon mail. The Johnson are having a little party I guess.

Still haven't heard from Bob and only once from Neal. I hope they are getting along all right and enjoying themselves.

I called Bill Slattery Thursday and he came out that night and took me riding in his car. He came back to the field with me and stayed until midnight. We stopped at his house on the way back but it was dark and he supposed Margaret and the youngsters were asleep so we didn't go in. His oldest boy --- nearly fifteen --- works on the night shift in the shops here on the field. Bill said his sister Helen, living at Wagner, had her first baby about 6 months ago. She is over forty. Caesarian was necessary. I don't know if you knew here or not, she was the oldest of the family and in school at Springfield before the war.

I've got to get back to work now. I'll write more when I can take a little more time.

All my love.

Jim

[Note: When JRS refers to "before the war", I am assuming he means WWI]

[Letter No. 176]

Monday, July 26

Dear Betty ---

I didn't get a letter written to you yesterday so will get at it now.

Saturday afternoon Col. Johnson took me home with him to spend the night. Mr. J., the Col., and I went to a very good Chinese restaurant for supper, then out in the country to the home of a Captain for a party. We played "Tripoley", (I lost six cents), until 2:00 AM. Got up at 10 o'clock Sunday morning and had a New England breakfast --- baked beans, pancakes and maple syrup, and fried eggs. Got back to the field at a quarter to twelve.

At 1:00 o'clock Bill Slattery came out and took me to his house for dinner. His sister Margaret keeps house for him because his wife is in an institution. He has two fine boys --- they were with him on his visit to Minot --- and a third boy who is dumb, and they though he was deaf for a long time but he isn't. He is a very nice looking child but to right mentally, very nervous and queer acting. Margaret and Bill both think the world of him and I doubt his own mother could be better to him than Margaret is, and of course they feel terrible about him. Someone has to be with him all the time. After dinner Bill and I walked over to call on another sister of his --- Veronica. She is married to Maynard DeRoos who lived across the road from us one summer and used to play with Cleo and Helen. He works out her on the field, as does Bill's oldest boy, not quite 15. Mr. Mrs. Sykora, late of the Buick garage in Yankton, were visiting Veronica, (they now live in Vallejo where Sykora manages a restaurant), and they had Helen Hardy with them. Don't know whether you remember her or not, she may have graduated before you were in Springfield. She is going back soon to teach her 18th year in Huron Junior High. Helen used to be a very pretty girl and she is still a very nice looking woman although her hair is quite gray. It was quite a S.D. Old Home Week. Margaret gathered up a big bundle of Springfield Times for me to take home and I read awhile before going to bed, consequently you didn't get any letter last night. That paper is about the corniest I have ever read --- Normal Pulse page and all --- but it's interesting to read what the folks back there are doing. About half of the paper is devoted to letters from people in the service. Bill's brother John back in Springfield subscribed to it for them last winter.

I got your Thursday's letter today. I'm glad you finally came to a decision on the trip to S. D., although I don't know whether I am glad or sorry about the way you decided. I know it must be lonesome there with most of the family gone and a week or two up home would probably give you a lot of pleasure, but the trip alone with the kids and on those old tires wouldn't be much fun. Too bad some of the folks can't come down to see you for a little while at least. I've been thinking today it might be a good idea to get your Aunt Margaret to come with the boys from Sioux City when they get ready to come home. She has always been wanting to come down and that would give her a good excuse.

Haven't heard from Bob yet and Neal has only written the one time so I suppose they ae busy and having a good time.

I hope we can all be together again soon. I'm missing you all the time.

Love,

Jim.

[Note: I guess Child Labor Laws came into being after the War; Slattery's 14-year-old boy working on post?!]

[Letter No. 177]

Friday, July 30

Dear Betty ---

I meant to write you last night you last night but it was so hot and sticky I couldn't work up even the little energy required for writing a letter. I'll try to get a little one written this morning while it's cool and before the rush starts.

The weather has been very hot all week. It has been an unusually cool summer until now. When the sun hits you out here during a hot spell it really burns.

I got your Monday's letter yesterday with the clipping and Neal's letter enclosed. Also got a letter from Bob which I will send along with this.

We are awfully busy here now. We work from 8:30 until 5:30 and everything has to go with a bang of course. It is much more interesting work than I had in Stockton though and being busy makes the time go faster. All officers have to do a least three hours of exercise each week, on at least three separate days of the week and then make a written report to the General each Monday telling what you did, where and when. Failure to comply requires a "reply by endorsement" explaining why, which is always embarrassing. We have to make the letter in the form of a certificate so it had better be the truth. Sometimes it is hard to get the time in, but Col Johnson is going to get up a schedule for this office so we can get the time in. Exercises that count include swimming, obstacle course, volleyball, squash, handball, golf, tennis, badminton, softball, skating, hiking, and regular classes in the gymnasium. I got swimming and gym trunks and shoes yesterday so I can try them all. There is a fine swimming pool on the terrace of the Officer Club and I hope to take up where I left off and maybe learn to swim a little at least. Up until now I have taken my exercise in hiking which is good but not enough.

No news and I must get to work.

Love.

Jim

[Bob's letter: Sunday Eve. July 25

Dear Dad: I received your letter today. It was drifting around over at Schneiders so I did not get it right away. I am sorry I have been forgetting to write but I have been plenty busy. I am going to write mother when I am finished with this. I am glad to hear you were fortunate enough to get into the engineers, (via the air corps). We have been threshing and have finished 2 fields with 3 still ahead of us. I sure am feeling swell although I get pretty tired by night. I hope you take your leave soon, maybe we can go duck hunting in the fall. We were over at Schneiders to day and had all the ice cream I could eat which is 4 big dishes. Down in the creek the water bolls with carp every time we throw a stone. I sure wish I had my fly rod. I caught a bass down at the lake about a foot long. The lake is low and the water is pretty awful. You should see the pheasants we scare up every day practically. I sure wish you would write about your experiences aboard planes. I sure wish I could get in on some of those experiences you have. Seems like you have done practically everything. I don't look forward to the remaining threshing season because it sure is hot. My feet were covered with prickly heat. How are you feeling. Do you like your new location better. I will have to close now because I have to write to mother and get to bed. We get up early around here. Love Bob

[Letter No. 178]

Monday, Aug 2

Dear Betty ---

I'll try to get a quicky off during office hours this morning. I didn't write yesterday but haunted the post office for a letter from you which arrived this morning. Just got paid this morning too so couldn't have sent any money yesterday.

I am sending a cashier's check for 250.00. That's less than I used to send but I haven't got my bills yet and don't know how much I will need to square up here. I know it will be considerably more though than at Stockton. That was a good post financially but I was rotting away there and I'm glad I got away.

Before I forget I'll answer you question about what branch I am in. I am in the Air Corps now. I think there is a good chance of eventually going to the Corps of Engineers. Maybe I had better explain this present set-up of the Army. It's divided into three major branches --- Army Ground Forces, Army Air Forces, and Army Service Forces, each under its own Commanding General in Washington, all in turn under the President through the War Dept. Chief of Staff --- Gen. Marshall.

Army Ground Forces are the old ground fighting forces --- Infantry, Artillery, Tank and Mechanized Forces, etc.

Army Service Forces, (formerly Service of Supply), are the QM, Ordnance, etc.

Army Air Forces are the Air Corps and many air borne contingents of the Army which were formerly ground and service forces. It is possible to belong to QM, Ord, Signal Corps and Engrs and still be in the Army Air Forces --- in fact we have people from all branches, including Medics and Nurses here wearing the Air Forces shoulder patch, (a blue cloth patch with gold wings embroidered on it, and a white star with red center.) Everyone assigned to this Field for duty must wear the Air Forces shoulder patch, but wears the insignia of his branch on his collar and blouse. For instance Col Johnson wears the Air forces patch on his shoulder and Corps of Engineer insignia on his collar since he is an Engineer Officer assigned to duty with the Air Force. Since my orders assigned me as an Air Corps Officer I wear the Air Forces patch on my shoulder and the Air Corps insignia , (gold wings crossed by a silver propeller), on my collar and sign my title as Captain Air Corps while he signs his Lt. Col C. E. Sounds complicated but it isn't when you get the idea. Our work is the same; in the Engineer Section of Hq. and Hq. Squadron, but he can only be assigned to engineer work since he is still under command of the Chief of Engineers. I am assigned to the same work, but the Commanding General can change my orders and send me on any duty he sees fit because I am under the jurisdiction of the Chief of the Air Corps.

I moped around yesterday and did nothing but sleep and wander around. It sure was lonesome. During the week we are so busy I don't know which way to turn. I should be busy right now working up a new chart for the Col. He is still wild about charts and reports and wants them right away as usual.

I haven't written the boys lately. Meant to do so yesterday but wasn't in a good mood for writing letters. Haven't even got around to send Jean and Jimmy a card as I intended to long ago. Tell them I am thinking of them and will send them cards soon, when I get to the PX, (which is a long ways off by the way down in the troop area).

I must get back to work.

All my love.

Jim

Will try to get permission for leave as soon as I get a breathing spell. Probably won't be able to get away until about the middle of September, but can't say definitely yet. I'll stump the Col. one of these days when he seems in good humor and see what he says.

Jim

[Letter No. 179]

Wednesday, Aug 4

Dear Betty ---

We moved our office today and things were in a kind of uproar so I'm pretty tired tonight. Meant to write you earlier but sat over in the Club and read "Field and Stream" until my eyes ache.

I plan to ask soon for my leave and don't know exactly when it would be best to take it. I thought some time in September or October would be best, I don't want to wait until too close to Thanksgiving or Christmas as that would be a difficult time to travel, and it's hard enough at any time. I want to wait until the boys come home of course. I was talking about it tonight to Capt. Root, the Col's chief ass't and he says he is going to talk to Col. Johnson about leave for all of us. He says we all out [*sic*] to take one, but the Col. has been reluctant about taking it up with the General --- you know how anxious he is to get along with his boss --- but Root says everyone else is taking leave and there is no reason we shouldn't. He has a lot of influence with Johnson, who always listens to his recommendation with more respect than he shows most people so I will wait for Root to soften him up. The he will probably announce when he, (Johnson), wants to take his leave and adjust the time for the rest of us as we will be gone only one at a time. When would you suggest I should come --- if I have a choice?

I'm afraid the above is kind of rambling and doesn't make good English or good sense even, when I read it over. For instance --- of course the Col won't "take up" the matter of our leave with the General, that will be routine for the adjutant --- the General wouldn't even know we were gone --- except for Johnson who as a member of the staff attends the staff meeting every day and would feel it fatal if the General should want him and he was gone.

Guess I better get to bed before I start talking pig latin. Went over the obstacle course last evening and a long hike by myself tonight so I'm ready for sleep.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 180]

Saturday, 8:00 PM

Dear Betty ---

Your Sunday's letter arrived yesterday and I meant to answer it last night but Bill Slattery came out to see me and stayed late. I had your letter in the office and tried to get a chance to write from there but was on the go until after six and now it's over in my desk.

I've got to get in another half hour's exercise this week so after I finish this I'll get in my gym clothes and go through the obstacle course a few times.

We are sure working hard at the office, mostly useless and foolish work, but necessary because someone with rank has ideas and gives orders. However, I find that's the case wherever I go and might as well be doing that as something else.

At dinner tonight I talked with a young Lieut., a navigator in the Ferry Command just back from a trip to India. He is part of a crew what stopped here to have a minor repair made in their plane. Said he had crossed the Pacific sixteen times and the Atlantic five times since last August. He is an Army officer and I asked him about the civilian pilots of the Ferry Command we see here so often. He said they are mostly Pan-American, or other big airline pilots, flying on contract. Mostly they are too old for Army pilots or deferred from the draft for one reason or another. Said they don't get as big pay as they used to -- only \$1200.00 a month for pilots, \$900.00 for co-pilots, \$500.00 for radio operators. \$12.00 per diem while away and at the end of the year \$500 for each plane delivered. Seems as if Uncle Sam could struggle along delivering planes with his own help at Army pay rates, but maybe it's all right. I find I seldom know the right answers any more about anything.

It has been nice and cool again for the last three or four days, a welcome relief. I woke up with a headache this morning, something I seldom have any more, but it's about gone now.

Still haven't stumped the boss for leave. Now that it's getting close to time for the boys to come home I think about it a lot and wonder when I should ask for it. I want to come as early as possible and yet the longer I wait the sooner will come the time when I will be eligible for another leave. Foolish isn't it?

I haven't written the boys for some time. Hope to get at it tomorrow.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 181]

Tuesday evening

Aug. 10, 1943

Dear Betty ---

The end of another hectic day and I'm all in. Most of the civilian help in the office is either sick or vacationing and I've got to work like a nigger for the time being. Must be nice to be a civilian employee --- when things get too much for them they calmly walk out and come back when they feel like it.

As soon as my dinner settles I am going out on the obstacle course for my exercise. Exercise is really restful when you are tired from nervous strain. I'm afraid I'm not going to learn to swim though. The pool is always so full of people --- and practically all experts that I hate to go in and flounder around. Maybe when the hot season lets down it won't be so popular and I won't feel so conspicuous. People out here grow up in the water and I honestly think the sight of a person who couldn't swim would draw a crowd of spectators. For the time being I take my exercise on the obstacle course and hiking.

I'm sorry to hear that Mrs. Gering is not getting along so well. Too bad when people get old so many of them can't spend their last years in peace, but that's the way things are.

Haven't heard from the boys for quite a long time but I wrote them both on Sunday. Bobby has written once, Neal only twice I think. I suppose the little rascal was homesick at first and lonely away from Bob --- it was right at first he wrote, both letters close together, and he is probably adjusted now so time goes faster. The summer should do them both a lot of good. I imagine there is a lot of work this time and not all play like it used to be. I suppose they will be coming home soon now to get ready for school. Hope Honey does come down as you seemed to think she might.

I still don't know when I will get leave but am still planning on September or October. September will be here before we know it. Well the faster time passes the sooner the war will be over and I can come home to stay.

It's near the end of the sheet, the sun is almost down and I must get into my trunks and shoes for my exercise. A Young Lt. from Milwaukee is going to pace me tonight. He'll probably wear me out.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Letter No. 182]

Friday, Aug. 13

Dear Betty ---

I got your Sunday's letter with the clipping yesterday. The Fitches seem to have had a hectic time.

I can sympathize with you about the heat ---- we are in the throes of another heat wave here. As usual the office is in a uproar to have all the work out before it even arrives and I am dog tired when I finally get home. I will be duty officer at our activity Sunday so will miss my one chance in a week to sleep late.

A couple of days ago we got word from Patterson Field that they were going to write a new manual --- a board of officers was named to do it, and as is always done in the Army they started passing the work down the line. Col. Johnson is apparently greatly flattered at being chosen to write the chapter on Air Force Intransit Depots but like the rest he will be very sure not to do any of the actual work.. He farmed out the bulk of it to me, the rest to his executive officer, who promptly passed it on to the two available civilian employes that were on duty today. All other work is to be considered secondary --- but we all know the other work has to go out on time nevertheless. The Col. announced today that we would have the work out next Monday morning if we had to work night and day --- complete with maps, layout plans, plans for buildings and all. He'll get something all right but I'd hate to vouch for the usefulness of it. I would kind of enjoy it if I could take my time, but like everything else he nags and fidgets until he gets the work done --- then it usually lies on his desk for weeks. I'm really curious about the working of the little fellow's mind. I believe he would allot exactly the same time to design a battleship that he would to a set of book ends. No sense of proportion and absolutely no idea of the amount of work required on different jobs. Our write-ups will be consolidated, edited, re-written and brought out as a technical manual. The high-rankers in the board will probably get D.S.M.'s for distinguished service, Col. Johnson a letter of thanks and the guys what do the work will be lucky if they don't get nervous breakdowns.

I asked Capt. Root, the executive officer yesterday if he had talked about leave with Johnson yet. He said he hadn't had a chance but hoped to this week. He also said he thought we would have to wait until all the civilian employees had had theirs. The letter assigning the writing job to the Col. said he would be called in to Patterson Field, (Dayton, Ohio), to discuss and explain "his" work about Sept. 1 --- so there goes my chance for an early leave --- or at least it looks that way. It's no use even discussing leave with him in his present state of mind. I would like to be home before the youngsters start school but it's out of my hands. I'll be lucky to get leave at all in September or October and will just have to take what I can get.

Captain Johnson, camouflage officer in our section asked me to go with him on a plane ride this afternoon to view his camouflage work from the air but I had to decline on account of press of work. I haven't been to town once since I got here --- a month ago today --- except the time I went in to stay with the Johnsons and twice Bill Slattery came out for me. It's sure a lonely and dreary life, but I'm getting accustomed to it. With all the work time passes fast and that's the main thing. By the way I don't even know when school starts back there and I don't think you even mentioned getting the last check. My roommate swears they lose a lot of the mail out here ---- says his mother and his girl back in Massachusetts are both mad at him for not writing, and he writes regularly. Hope they didn't lose the letter with the check.

I haven't heard from either of the boys for a long time so I suppose they are busy and happy. By now I should think it's about time to think of getting home to get ready for school.

I got a little present for Jean's birthday the other day, at the P.X., which I'll try to get in the mail to arrive approximately on time. It's only a silk pillow top which she may not care about but it's hard to shop for youngsters on an Army post. I looked for something to send the boys too, but had no luck.

Haven't had supper yet and it's after seven so must get going. The mess closes at 7:30. Don't want much to eat these hot days but don't feel good if I don't eat something.

Hope to see you soon but I can't say when or even guess close. Still hope to make it in September or October.

All my love

Jim

[Note: I cannot offer any info on the "Fitches".]

[Letter No. 183]

Wednesday, Aug 18

Dear Betty -

I meant to do this last night but Bill Slattery came out for me about 7:00 o'clock and took me to his house where I spent most of the evening then he came back with me to my quarters and stayed until midnight so I didn't get at it.

There isn't any news anyway, just the old routine grind. The little Col. is still fluttering around keeping everyone confused so we don't accomplish much but today he had business down in Stockton so we look forward to a quiet and serene day.

I was reading this morning that they had shut down the swimming pool in K. C. on account of the high polio rate. This is the time of year I always need to feel uneasy about that sickness. Hope you can keep the youngsters away from crowds. I sure wish the doctors would find out the cause and cure so something could be done to guard against it.

I'm wondering if the boys are home from the farm yet. I imagine they have changed a lot over the summer. Bob will probably be bigger than I am when I next see him. Hope they summer away from home has made him more self reliant.

The leave situation is still up in the air. The senior captain here --- Capt. Root ---- wants to go soon and Col. Johnson expects to go to Patterson Field soon --- but doesn't know when. If they don't get together pretty soon I think I'll just decide when I want to go and ask for that time. I'll probably not get it but at least will have a show down.

I didn't draw Sunday duty last Sunday after all. They changed the roster and put me down for next Sunday. Slattery wanted to arrange to have Margaret fix up a lunch and all go up in the mountains for the day but that will have to wait now. I sure would like to go, seldom get off the post and its beautiful country up there.

Must get back to work now --- reports, charts, and other foolishness. Will see you as soon as I can.

Love.

Jim

[Note: People not raised in the '40's & '50's may not remember how terrified everyone was of the Polio threat. Swimming pools were especially suspect as places to contract it. That went away in the mid '60's when the Salk vaccine was developed.] [Dad's prophesy about Bob getting taller than he was no doubt came true. His separation papers show his height at that time as 5' 8", and his weight at 135 pounds.]

[Letter No. 184]

Saturday Night, August 21

Dear Betty -

It has been a hard day at the office and from the work that was piled up when I left I know I won't have much time for writing tomorrow so I'll get at least a not written tonight. Have just got back from the hour's hike I needed to fill my weekly quota of exercise so I can certify with a clear conscience on Monday morning.

There is a dance at the club tonight and from the sound of the music they are already hard at it. I haven't attended any since I have been here, don't know very many people yet, but have looked in on some of their parties. It looks to me as if people work awfully hard at having fun these days ---- and only succeed in boring themselves.

I mailed Jean's package Friday and hope it will arrive on or before her birthday. I have a birthday card already addressed in my desk at the office which I will mail tomorrow.

Yesterday I had a birthday card from "Stell, Chet, and Donny", with a little note from Stella. I don't know when they think my birthday is --- guess they want to make me old before my time. Stella said she "had heard I had moved, wondered how I liked the new place", and that they had been down to Lincoln last week to visit Earl and Helen. The Gearkes moved to Lincoln the 1st of July --- except Donny who wants to finish the 7th grade in Yankton. I didn't know before that Helen and Earl had moved.

I'm wondering if Neal and Bobby are home yet. In your last letter you said that Girlie had said they were coming home this week and you were expecting word to that effect. I hope that Honey or someone up there came down with them --- or will come down with them. It must have been a long and lonely summer for you and I hope some of the home folks can spare the time to visit you for a little while at least.

I am going to bed early since I won't have my usual extra hours sleep tomorrow. This is the sleepingest country I have ever been in, but I'm still tired when I wake up.

All my love.

Jim

P. S. All the rigmarole on the envelope is on account of new regulations. Address is the same as before.

[Note: I was surprised to see the mention of the Gearkes' move to Lincoln from Yankton; I thought they had always lived in Lincoln.] ["Girlie", (Helen), was another of Mom's sisters at whose farm we sometimes stayed. I preferred not to; although I liked Aunt Girlie, two of her sons were constantly tormenting me, and I wanted to avoid that as much as possible.] [Mom was probably a little amused at JRS' constant reference to a "lonely summer" for her, since she still had Jean and me to keep her busy.]

[Letter No. 185]

Wed. Aug. 25

Dear Betty -

Your last letter, written Thursday, said you expected the boys home that day and that Honey and her children were coming down too. I'm glad and I hope all hands arrived O. K. I suppose the boys have grown and changed a lot during the summer.

I hope that Honey can stay on with you at least until school starts. It would be nice if someone could come down and spend a couple of weeks with you every two or three months.

It's beginning to seem a long time since I had a day off. Worked harder than ever Sunday, and Monday I didn't even leave the office from 8:15 in the morning until a quarter to six --- even forgot to eat lunch. The Col. works as hard as anyone --- an poor Capt. Root, Ass't Chief, works harder than anyone. He, (Capt. Root), is getting to be a nervous wreck and I expect to see him crack up one of these days. It isn't anyone's fault --- the work is just there and we happen to be understaffed in our office so it's a grind. The Col. is really a pretty good fellow, and sometimes when I have accumulated a good mad and am about ready to blow up he does or says something so decent that it makes me ashamed of myself.

Did Jimmy get the car built for you? I hope you will be able to get a wagon for him. He is just the age when wagons are very important, and it seems to me the old one was broken before I left home.

I hope Jean will have a nice birthday. Seems only a little while since she was a baby.

I put in another application yesterday for detail in the Corps of Engrs. It seems they are expecting orders from Patterson Field that only Engineer Officers would be assigned in the Engineer Section so Col. Johnson said get busy and try again. He indorsed the letter to the General recommending approval.

Wish I was home.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 186]

Saturday, Aug 28

Dear Betty -

Your Wednesday's airmail letter arrived yesterday but in the rush and flurry of working all day taking my compulsory exercise after supper I haven't been able to get at answering it until now. It did seem quite a long time between letters but I knew you had company and made allowances --- also my own letter writing lately hasn't been so hot.

It is now 5:10 and the civilians have gone home. We military personnel have to stay until 5:30, (usually it's about six when we get away), but today the work seems pretty well caught up and I'll try to get a letter written.

If I'm not mixed up this is Jean's birthday. Hope she had a good time. Nine years ago I took Mildred and Anna Marie down town after it was over and got them high on beer ---got pretty high myself I guess.

Bill Slattery was out Friday night and said he would come out and get me Sunday, (tomorrow), and we would go for a ride up in the hills. Margaret is going to put up a picnic lunch and she and the boys are going along. Sounds good to me after being cooped up on the post for so long.

I'm sure glad Honey and your dad got down to see you. I thought all along they wouldn't care for having Bus and Mary running the place but I'm glad they tried it anyway. Can Bus go back to his old job now?

Just had a little visit with Col. Johnson and it is now after 5:30. Think I'll get out before a lot of last minute work arrives.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Note: Mom must have gotten tired of JRS' continued mis-remembering of birthdays--- Jean's is August 30, not 28 --- because there is a page in the back of the small notebook he carried listing the birthdays of each of us. It has the proper dates, suggesting that she corrected his memory. I don't know who "Mildred" and "Anna Marie" were, and also don't know if Mom was happy to be reminded of JRS taking them out for drinks after Jean was born, and Mom still confined to the hospital.] [If Honey, Danny, Peggy, Bob, Neal, and Grandpa Schneider all came down together, they must have driven someone's car --- that must have put a dent in the gas & tire ration books.]

[Letter No. 187]

Wednesday Sept. 1

Dear Betty -

I just got my check and will try to sneak a letter to you during office hours. I couldn't get a cashier's check so am sending three money orders for \$275.00. I got along pretty well this month so will try to get back on the old basis and send you \$275.00 each month. If I get behind I'll just hold out more the next month and catch up again.

Capt Heiman, Camouflage Officer, asked me to go to town with him for dinner tonight. I went with Bill Slattery and family for a picnic last Sunday so I am getting to be quite a social lion, or something. We drove up into the foothills to Placerville and then to Coloma where Marshall made the first gold discovery in 1848.

Your birthday present arrived today and I like it very much. I hope Jean liked hers as well.

I again took up the matter of leave yesterday. Col. Johnson wants us all to have leave, but he is expecting to be called in to Patterson Field any day now, and the time of leave for all of us hinges on that. When he learns what time he is to go we can all start to plan, but we will have to synchronize with each other so the work can go on. I told Capt. Root, the Executive Officer, that I was anxious to know plenty of time ahead so I can make reservations and he said he would let me know as soon as he could.

We are in the middle of another heat wave. I'll be glad when the summer is over, even if it does get damp and rainy and stays that way for months.

I just got through making out a long report for the Hq. Air Service Command, giving my life history in detail. I think it is in connection with my recent request for transfer.

When the weather moderates and I get to feeling better I'll try to write better letters.

All my love.

Jim

[Note: JRS is still sending money orders or cashier's checks home each payday. I wonder what happened to his plan to have an allotment sent directly to Mom?]

[Letter No. 188]

Sunday, Sept. 5, 1943

Dear Betty -

I am writing this from the office as I drew Sunday duty again today. Capt. Root finally cracked up as I thought he would. He was a wreck yesterday with toothache, sinus trouble and general nervousness and will probably spend some time in the hospital getting in shape again. He is the Ass't Chief and works too hard for any man --- and worries too much. I came to the office to substitute for him today and will probably have to handle most of his work for a while.

I'm glad I got the trip up in the hills last Sunday as I'll probably be tied down pretty close now for some time. I am booked for some inspection trips this month however so will probably get away for a while but they won't be pleasure trips. After I get used to the inspection I'll probably enjoy the trips, but it's all new and I'll be thinking of the work all the time.

Still haven't heard any more about the Col.'s expected trip back east and don't know when any of the rest of us can get away. I'm pretty sure it won't be this month anyway.

I suppose the youngsters are getting ready for school. Were they glad to get home from the farm or do they miss the place?

Wonder if dad misses his old home in Kansas City or is he satisfied at Yankton. I suppose the monthly pension or whatever he gets will go a long way towards keeping him satisfied. I'm surprised they were able to get it for him.

We should be getting to the end of our hot season soon and then maybe I'll get to feeling better. I'm well enough, but always tired and nervous. I'll sure never want to live in California. Wish I could spend the whole month of October back home.

As soon as I know anything about my hoped for leave I'll let you know. My roommate left by plane for Boston yesterday on leave. He has been here for training since just before I came and hasn't had a thing to do but lay around. He is in another unit --- 1st Communication Squadron --- supposed to do the same kind of work Richard does for the Ferry Command.

Love.

Jim

[Note: The "monthly pension or whatever he gets..." would have been a welcome addition to the household budget in Kansas City during all the time Grandpa was living there. I wonder why no one bothered to apply for it before.] [The stamp on this envelope is interesting. It is just 3 cents, so it would have gone by slow mail, instead of air mail. JRS could have sent it for free if he had wanted, and it would have taken the same length of time.]

[Letter No. 189]

Wednesday, Sept. 8

Dear Betty -

I got your letter yesterday telling about Neal's narrow escape and was surely relieved to hear he wasn't badly hurt. I have always been worried for fear some such accident --- or worse --- might happen but hated to deprive the boys of the fun of bicycles just because there is always a chance of getting hurt. I hope it will impress both of them with the need for being careful.

Also got your airmail letter with the blanks for income tax estimate. By a recent ruling members of the armed forces don't have to submit a report until next March 15, when they will also have to pay the taxes due. I think I shall defer it until after New Years when the Treasury Dept. puts out the new Income Tax Forms. There are a lot of kinks applying to service men which there is no way of showing on the estimate so there is no point in doing it now. For instance we have an additional exemption of \$1500 and I couldn't find any way to show it on this form but undoubtedly there will be a place on the long form.

I'm glad to hear Jean enjoyed her birthday. It's nice to be able to give the youngsters a good time --- only hope we can continue to do so, at least while they are still children. I'm afraid the next generation won't have as good a life as we have had.

If it had been the Japs or the Germans who folded up today instead of the Italians I would be in the mood for a celebration. As it is I guess no one is very excited about it. Of course it helps and it brings us just that much nearer the end of this brawl.

We are still rushing around at the office trying to keep out from under. Capt. Root is better but still not well, although he is at work again. We are constantly on the verge of getting together on the leave decision but I never can pin down the rest of them long enough to get any decision. I've about given up hope of getting home this month. I don't mind that so much it's just that I want to know when I can go --- and not have to wait too long.

I enjoyed Neal's letter. Tell him to be careful in traffic and of course that goes for all of them.

Love to all of you.

Jim

[Note: This must refer to the time Neal was hit by a car while riding his bike. I believe he was knocked unconscious for a short period time, but otherwise able to make it home unassisted.][After discussing this event with Jean, I am not sure that my version is correct; she believes that his wreck was simply a crash with no car involved. She was more apt to know about this as she was 9 years old. I thought my version had been passed on to me by Mom. This is another example of how it would be great to have Mom's letters to check against, rather than making speculations of what JRS had meant when referring to them.]

[Letter No. 190]

Sunday, Sept 12

Dear Betty -

Slept late this morning but still feel tired. I don't think this climate agrees with me.

I have your Tuesday's letter saying the children were off for another school year. Looks as if I'll have a grown up family when I get back.

I have just returned from the office. I am not on duty today but decided I would go over and settle this leave business once and for all. I told Capt Root, the executive, that I was going to see the Col. and why. He said to let him talk to him first, and since he is the executive I couldn't do otherwise. He went into the Col.'s office --- private as in K.C. --- and when he came out he said "We better not bring it up now. He is in a bad mood." Seems that in the General's Staff meeting this morning it was announced that the bulk of our troops would probably be moved to another post. This will presumably cut down our work a great deal --- or so the Col. thinks --- and will probably require a cut in his force. Maybe I'll be on the move again. I don't care particularly --- in fact would welcome it if it got me nearer home --- but the Col. seems to think it's tragic. Root said he would try to get the leave business settled yet this afternoon before going home but I haven't much faith in it any more. Next time I catch the Col. in a jovial mood --- he gets that way sometimes --- I'll get a yes or no from him. I'm beginning to think there is something fishy about Root's stalling, although I can't figure out what it can be.

I wish I could have been on the picnic at Swope. I suppose Jimmy does likes them now --- he is old enough to appreciate them and to notice a change in routine.

It will probably be too late to figure on September for leave now. I told Root this morning that I was planning on October --- any time that would work in with other leaves, just in case he gets to talk with Johnson about it today. The Col.'s trip to Patterson Field has evidently fallen through although it may develop later in time to disrupt any plans we may make.

I hope the youngsters will like school, and I also hope to see you all soon.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 191]

Wednesday, Sept 15

Dear Betty -

I got your Saturday's letter today. Intended to answer it tonight but Bill Slattery just called up and said he would be out tonight so probably wouldn't have time tonight so am scribbling *[sic]* a quicky *[sic]* at the office. Just wanted to tell you that I think I have the leave business fixed up. Col. Johnson said he would approve it, but he is taking his the last of this month so that time is out for me. As soon as I can find time I'll write a formal application. Think I shall ask for the middle of October. Don't dare to wait too long or I might get gipped *[sic]* out of it altogether.

I'm practically alone with the work these days and it's piled high. Must get at it before the Col. decides we have too much to do to grant leaves.

Be seeing you next month.

All my love.

Jim

[Letter No. 192]

Sat. Sept 18

Dear Betty -

Your Wednesday's letter arrived today and I'm writing this from the office because I won't get at it tonight. Col. Johnson asked me to go home from work and spend the night with them.

The Col. approved my request for leave and unless the General disapproves I will be home about the middle of October. Expect to have six or seven days.

I am enclosing a clipping about the loss of one of our submarines. I visited the commander's parents in Monterey last year. At that time he was in Honolulu resting up from a long cruise Jap-hunting in the south Pacific. My steward in the PX was his brother-in-law.

Hope nothing happens to ball up my leave. After my last experience --- last December when I asked for leave and was turned down twice --- I've been leary *[sic]* about it. I got home of course in January, but that wasn't a pleasure trip.

We are still short handed but manage to get along. I was afraid the Col. might not let me go until our injured man got back -- he will be laid up for at least six weeks --- but he said it was O.K. He is taking the last week in September himself.

This isn't a very good place for writing letters. If I get this in the box now it should go out on the last afternoon mail.

See you soon.

Love

Jim

[Note: Not sure if the "injured man" is Capt. Root, who had the breakdown, or someone else. Root was back at work a few letters back.]

[Letter No. 193]

Tuesday, Sept. 21

Dear Betty -

I hate to write this letter. My request for leave was disapproved by the General. I asked for 7 days at home plus travel time --- in this case 6 additional days --- which is the way leaves have been granted heretofore. However, the C. G. has changed his mind and says only 7 days total --- not enough if I come by train. I checked with operations to see if I could get a plane ride. Cargo planes leave daily --- but recently they have discontinued carrying passengers. I can get no commercial plane priority --- unless for emergency, (which I hope I will never need one for), or if destined for or returning from overseas. I called the United Airline Office --- the only one passing through here --- and tried to make a reservation. They said they would check and let me know but they haven't called back so I guess it's no soap. Last night Capt. Heiman called in my name and they told him that without priority they had to know weeks ahead of time. Then of course some one with a priority could come along and take my reservations.

I haven't given up trying but things look very unfavorable --- except as the Adj. Generals office told me this morning "why not wait awhile, the policy may change."

A lot of officers are being assigned to overseas duty so don't be too surprised if you hear I am slated. But don't worry about it, there is nothing definite about it yet, and these flurries often blow over. And then if I should get assigned to foreign *[sic]* duty the chances for a fifteen day leave are good. Regulations provide for that and I sure will try for it if they put me on the list.

I'm pretty blue and homesick today and would give about anything to be home with you. I'm getting sick of being disappointed in the matter of leave.

Don't give up hope though --- I'll get to see you somehow, and as soon a possible too.

All my love

Jim

[Letter No. 194]

Saturday, Sept. 25

Dear Betty -

It's hard to write a coherent letter when in a constant dither, as I have been for the last two or three weeks. We are still operating way under strength and too busy to think.

I have tried every way to get home on seven days leave so I could have at least a little time with you but am balked every time. The people in the Adj. Gen's office predict the new policy will be changed before long and I can get a decent leave.

I'm being constantly interrupted so this won't be very plainly written. No use waiting till tomorrow and writing a long letter leisurely as I meant to do as a Major General is due for a visit and we all have to work Sunday to impress the buzzard.

When I wrote you last I was on a roster for overseas duty. I didn't tell you that --- only warned you I might be going soon. Col. Johnson raised a fuss because he couldn't spare either of his air corps officers so I was taken off and the detachment chosen left yesterday. I felt kind of lousy about getting alerted without a chance to see you and the youngsters, and I'll admit I was relieved when the Col. told me I wasn't going this time. He was told his set up would probably be safe for another 60 days --- and in that time lots of things can happen. For instance, my transfer to the engineers may go through, or there may be no more rush orders for a lot of people. I've seen these flurries come and go. In any event I hope the leave policy will be changed soon so I can have one good visit with you anyway. There was a request for further information about me the other day relative to my transfer so it's at least being considered. If it goes through I'll sure try for a station nearer home.

I sure have felt bad all week about the whole thing. I'm hoping someone can get the old man to change his mind. He probably will as soon as some high ranker wants a leave. Then I'll put in for mine again. I'm thinking tentatively of early November now. Don't worry, I'll get home if there is a possible way. It's mail time.

All my love

Jim

[Letter No. 195]

Sunday, Sept. 26

Dear Betty -

Am on Sunday duty again, as are all the officers of this section. General Frank, commanding the Air Service Command is expected today and we are putting on a show for him. There isn't much to do though, for a change, so I'll try to write you a letter. There isn't much news though and the mail room is being moved today so there will be no mail distribution and I won't know until tomorrow whether or not there is a letter for me. Wish I could have slept late this morning and used the day for a rest.

It is nice and cool today for a change after a very hot, disagreeable week. I don't like the climate here any better than I did when I first came out.

Things have quieted down again here after a great deal of flurry and hurry. A lot of officers and troops left yesterday and the day before. If the Col. had not interceded I would probably have been with them. I didn't ask him to do it of course but he didn't want his organization disrupted and went to bat about it. I'm glad he did too because if I go I want to go with an engineer unit so I will know something of what it's all about, and I want to see you and the children first. Hope my transfer goes through before the next call comes.

We are "desired", which means commanded, to be present at a formal buffet supper and dance for the visiting general at the Club tonight. I haven't even had time to get a hair cut for two weeks so I'll be a sad looking tramp. I plan to go in just long enough to say I was there, leave a card and then go to bed. I never can seem to get enough rest any more.

I'm still hoping for a break to come home. All I can do is wait for a change in policy, which everyone seems to think won't take long. Col. Johnson has been ordered to Patterson Field for a week beginning Oct 11. He will leave here two or three days before that date and will probably be gone two weeks, so that time would be out in any case. If the policy changes I'll try again for early November, or at least before Thanksgiving when the trains will be packed.

Love to all.

Jim

[Letter No. 196]

Wednesday, Sept 29, 1943

Dear Betty -

Nearing the end of another hectic day. Seems long since I've heard from you but I've lost all track of when I last wrote to you too. I hope the mad rush will moderate soon as I think it will.

There isn't much to write about. I'm still marking time and waiting patiently for a change in the leave policy. Hope it comes in time to get a trip home before the Holidays, when train space will be rationed and unavailable. I'm not going to bank on leave any more but sure will keep on hoping.

Sunday night the General put on a dance, buffet supper and show for visiting dignitaries. I attended ---- as I had to ---- but didn't dance or even eat. Had a few beers which are always free on dance nights. Col. and Mrs. Johnson were there and I spent some at their table.

Some of the entertainers were nationally known musicians and radio people. The one that interested me most was Sergeant Ezra Stone, (Henry Aldrich), who talked over the public address system in his radio voice. He is short, fat guy with a short mustache. Sounded funny to hear his voice while looking at him.

Hope there will be a letter tomorrow. Wish I could see you all. Maybe another year will bring a break so we won't have to be apart all the time.

Lots of love.

Jim

P. S. My box number has been changed to 576, Officers Section.

[Note: "Henry Aldrich" was a popular radio show about a teenage boy and his exploits. It has always interested me how some of the big-time entertainers of the day stayed home to do their "bit for the effort" by doing just what they did in peacetime ---- Ronald Reagan and John Wayne come to mind; while others, like Jimmy Stewart actually went into combat.]

[Letter No. 197]

Friday, Oct. 1

Dear Betty -

I am sending a cashier's check for \$275.00. Was in hopes I would be using part of this month's pay to buy transportation home but it didn't turn out that way.

Your last Sunday's letter arrived yesterday. I would like to see a day again like you described Sunday. The change in season is what I think I miss as much as anything out here, next after my family of course.

I hope the eye doctors will be able to help Bobby's eye trouble. I never realized until I had to use them what a nuisance eye glasses are. I have hopes that Bob's trouble will correct itself as he gets older.

I am awfully tired these days and can't look for a day off until a week from Sunday. Next Sunday I will be duty officer, last Sunday we all had to be here so it will be three weeks of steady grind. I sure hate to get up mornings. One of our best civilian engineers got back today after a two weeks absence so that will help and if the other one gets out of the hospital eventually it will make things so much easier that it will seem like loafing.

In the last two days I have seen two orders granting leaves of 10 days and 11 days to two different officers, so it looks as if the policy is being changed from the strict 7 days leave. The general is back east just now so that may have something to do with it --- they figure he will never see the orders perhaps. However, Col. Johnson is leaving for Patterson Field the 7th and won't be back before the 21st. When he gets back Capt. Root wants 5 to 7 days to go to Los Angeles so it looks like I'll have to wait until early November at least before I could possibly get leave --- even if the policy has changed. I wouldn't mind at all if I could be sure of a full 13 days leave --- and could be sure I would be here to take it if I got the chance. There aren't any immediate plans to take any more from here, as far as I know, but it can happen any time. We will hope for the best.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Letter No. 198]

Tuesday, Oct 5

Dear Betty -

I'll try to get a little note written before the work begins to pile up. It's still early in the day and the mail hasn't been processed and passed out for action yet.

You asked about my saying that a 15 day leave would be granted to people alerted for foreign service. The regulations do say that but leave a loop-hole ---- "except in case of emergency". High ranking officers and generals soon get to regarding themselves as little tin gods and when so inclined declare "emergencies" at will, and they can get around anything. However, I am not alerted as far as I know. Usually no one knows very far in advance when he will go.

I'm sorry if Bus and Mary are going to stay on at the farm. I will probably end up by your dad, Honey and Rita all leaving, if they stay.

It's too bad the Gherrings are unable to find anyone to stay with Mrs. Gherring. Thousands of people, young and old, men, women, boys and girls, are rushing around making motions at doing "useful" work and accomplishing very little. I have to laugh when I read how "absenteeism" among war workers is delaying the war effort. From what I have seen I think more work would be done if 50% of the "workers" were permanently absent and the rest were properly supervised. However, it's the country's policy to have everybody working, and lots of people on a fat payroll helps a lot at election time.

The work is beginning to come in and I must get at it. I'm optimistic about getting home in November if I am not shipped out or under orders by that time. I'm counting the days, and about the middle of this month expect to try again. The Adj. General said he thought the Commanding General would give me leave if the circumstances were explained to him. Col. Johnson would be reluctant I know to bother him, but Capt. Root, who will be in charge while Johnson is away, said he would write a good strong indorsement and take it to the General in person. Anyway I am going to try again and am still hoping to see you in November.

Love.

Jim

[Note: I am not sure what all the controversy is about Bus and Mary staying/leaving the farm. I never heard any talk about them causing trouble there. I don't remember them being there on any of the occasions I was --- and Bus was my God-father, so there would have been some fuss made when we were together, I would think.]

[Letter No. 199]

Sunday, Oct. 10

Dear Betty -

It's kind of a dreary, half-gloom day, quite cool and acting as if it would like to rain. Soon the rainy season will begin and I'll get just as tired of the rain as I am all summer of the sun and heat.

Col. Johnson left Friday night for Patterson Field at Dayton, Ohio, for a week's detached service. We expect him back about the 20th or 21st. He told me when he was leaving that he might return via Kansas City and spend a day there. He thought he would probably not have time to call on you but said he would at least call you up on the phone if he stopped there at all.

This is the first Sunday in the last three weeks I haven't worked so you can imagine I slept long and late this morning.

My roommate got his orders last Friday and is leaving Tuesday for a field at Las Vegas, Nevada. He is just a youngster, a 2nd Lt. from Boston. He has been good company and I'll miss him a lot. He thinks his new assignment is for final training before shipping out for foreign service.

It will soon be three months since I arrived here. One good thing about being busy is that time goes fast and it's hard to realize how long it has been. Seems only a couple of weeks.

By the way, what has become of Dick Handley? Has he got his commission yet?

I would like to see Jimmy "looking cuddly" in his new pink pajamas --- and all of you of course. Also would like some nice fall weather like you have described in your last letters. I'm going to try again soon for a leave in November. I imagine it will take a special dispensation from the General if I get it because they say he has got awfully jug headed lately about leaves. No one seems able to show him the injustice of his system --- or maybe on one has tried very hard. Anyway we can keep on hoping.

My last smallpox vaccination "took" --- the first time since my first when I was a five-year old. I almost lost the use of my arm for nearly a week but it's practically well again. It took on nearly everyone. I think they used some old stuff that had been warm too long, or a rusty needle, or snake venom.

I hope Bus gets his old job back. I doubt they would be satisfied on the farm, and I'm sure your dad wouldn't be satisfied with them there. You never did say what had become of Paul.

I'll keep trying and hoping to see you soon.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 200]

Thursday, Oct 14

Dear Betty -

It's getting so I don't like to write any more because I never have any good news, and usually it's definitely bad.

I have been hoping that if the General knew the circumstances he would relent and fix it so I could have a few days at home. Planned to write my request next Monday for leave about November 8th. Capt. Root, who is executive officer of this section, and in charge in the absence of Col. Jonson said he would write a good strong indorsement and take it to the General personally. Today, when he returned from staff meeting he told me it was absolutely useless. A Col. brought in a request from one of his officers for a seven day leave, plus travel time, and the General blew up. Said he had already made his stand clear and wanted to hear no more about it. The base commander went back after the meeting anyway to try to get a decent leave for a Lt. in his outfit whose wife back on the east coast is ill --- (Root said "dying" when he told me about it) --- and the General said he could have seven days, same as anyone else. With no priority on a plane, (which you can't get except when on official business), the Lt. wouldn't be able to go and return in less than eight days, so he couldn't even get there let alone having any time to spend there. During the discussion in the staff meeting someone tried to point out the difference it made between people living nearby, (there are a lot of Californians on this post), and those who live a couple of thousand miles away. The General said he didn't give a damn if they wanted to go to Africa --- seven day was the limit.

Now I don't know what to do. I could take seven days, probably leave a day early by getting someone to sign me out on the register next day, and in that way get two days at home. Or if I could be fairly sure of staying here a few months I could sit back a while and wait for a change in commanding general --- this one came shortly before I did and the general before him wasn't here long. Everyone liked the guy that was here before. They usually don't stay long apparently.

If I take the seven days now and then stay on until the command or the policy changes I will kick myself for spoiling my chance for a decent leave for a long time, (most commanding officers give only one "long" leave in a year.)

If I wait I may ship out without seeing you again at all. The flurry of sending out people has died down again but may revive any time --- on the other hand there may be no one sent out for a long time.

It's hard to decide what to do. I can come home, but a day or two is an awfully unsatisfactory leave. I wouldn't even feel I had time to unpack my bag. The weather is fine here now, the best I have seen in California. Soon we will have fog and rain every day.

I shouldn't be writing gloomy letters I guess. After all lots of people have a lot worse troubles. It's just that I was so sure of a week at home that I planned too much on it, and even when I got a "No" the first time I thought it was only temporary. I'll just have to make the best of it and keep on hoping. I won't have it on my mind so much any more so perhaps it won't bother me so much.

I'll be seeing you sometime.

Love,

Jim

[Letter No. 201]

Monday, Oct 18

Dear Betty -

I received your last Friday's letter today. I'm pretty busy but in view of your statement that my letters seem few and far between I'll try to write a note in working hours so this one will be delayed as little as possible.

I received orders today from Hq. Army Air Forces detailing me in the Corps of Engineers so I'll have to change my costume jewelry again. I'll still be in the Air Forces but not in the Air Corps.

I spent yesterday, (Sunday), afternoon with the Slatterys. Had dinner there and Bill came back to the Field with me and stayed till almost midnight. They save their Springfield Times for me to read. Sometimes there is something of interest but most of the people mentioned are strangers.

There isn't much news. Capt. Johnson of this section asked me to go home with him for dinner tonight so will have something to kill time for a little while. I welcome anything that makes the time go faster. The evenings get awfully long just sitting around.

Col. Johnson is expected back tomorrow or next day so apparently he is not going to stop in Kansas City.

Now that I have got my detail in the Engineers after all these years of trying to transfer it doesn't seem to interest me at all. The only difference is that now they can't send me into some air corps activity which I know nothing about. However, I am going to devote some thought and investigation towards the possibility of getting a geographical transfer out of the Ninth Service Command, preferably to the Seventh. I'm not building any great hopes on it though.

I'm still hoping to see you before such a very long time goes by, but can't even guess when it will be. Lots of love to all of you.

Jim

[Letter No. 202]

Friday, Oct 22.

Dear Betty -

I'll try to get off a quicky in reply to your last Monday's letter. You evidently hadn't received my letter yet telling about our hard nosed c. g.'s decision on leaves. I'm still marking time and hoping for a change in his ideas, or a change in generals.

I already have told you about my detail in the C. of E. They can't ship me out at a moment's notice as an Air Corps officer now. Of course they might want engineer officers next time but that won't be so bad --- I'll at least know something about my duties. Also I think it will give me more time to get a leave home first, in some way or another.

Col. Johnson came back Tuesday without stopping in K. C. He returned by train via Chicago and Omaha. We weren't so busy most of the time while he was gone, but we are more than bustling around again now, although there isn't any more actual work to be done. He just has the knack of making big jobs out of little ones.

The last two or three weeks have been the nicest weather I have seen in California. It's cool all the time, and has been sunny mostly, although we have had a few cloudy days and two or three showers --- showing the rainy season is getting near. However, the weather isn't as invigorating as fall weather back home. No zip to it.

I'm glad the youngsters like their school work. I'm a little surprised Neal would ever admit it wasn't so bad but always thought most of his dislike for school was an act. I suppose little Jimmy is getting impatient to start school too.

As usual news is nil here. The Col. came back full of new ideas and full of ambition so there will be a general revamping of this section. He is going to get two more officers, (what for I don't know), and two more enlisted men. We will be falling over each other.

I'm still hoping to see you before so very long.

Love.

Jim

[Note: There was a letter from Mom postmarked Oct 7, 1943 that included notes from Jean & Neal. All three are copied here.]

Thursday.

Dear Jim --

Your last two letters arrived the same day so it seems quite a while since I heard from you --- the check was received too.

I hope you aren't missing any letters I write --- not that there's so much in them but I wouldn't want you to think I'm not writing.

It's almost time for the children to be returning home from school and I tho't I'd get this written before the confusion started. Bob seems to like High so much this year. Did I ever tell you what subjects he's taking? English, Geometry, Spanish, Biology, Religion & Gym. It's rather a heavy schedule, leaving him only one study period, but he's managing to handle it so far. Neal likes his teacher better this year but is looking forward to High. He volunteered to coach the 3rd gr.

Football team for Fr. Fuez but Neal had so many wanting to assist him, he turned it over to another boy. Jean likes school as always and Mrs. Copaken says she's doing well in piano. Jimmy is a show off, a tease, a pest and a sweet little boy, all in one. He still gives your picture many a "puss" and says "that Daddy in the picture doesn't go away."

I had a card from Thelma this week asking for a copy of the Star --- she didn't say why. Myrtle is working with the Boeing Field Corp. at Seattle after taking a week of training for the job. Thelma said they'd not heard from her since she started work tho. There was no mention of anyone else on the card.

Jean, Jimmy and I saw "Action in the North Atlantic" Sunday. Jimmy grew tired and sat on the floor where he found a wad of chewing gum and we didn't discover it until on the way home. Jean grabbed it and threw it away in great disgust but Jimmy was peeved. "I was making bullets out of it", he said. I told him he must never handle gum that someone had chewed and he said "well, (that's his favorite prop), there was no else gum to play with."

You must get leave to come home soon, Jim. I'm most uneasy about you since you so narrowly missed being sent out. It may be several years before you could come home, if such a thing happened. That's bad enough to think about and then, if we couldn't see you first! I'm hoping you get that transfer soon and come back this way to be stationed nearer home.

With all our love, Betty

I'm sticking Jean's letter in --- she'll never get around to writing another.

5717 Lydia
Kansas City, Mo.
September 23, 1943

Dear Daddy

Will you be my adopted soldier? If so, I promise to pray for you every day and I will receive Holy Communion every time I can. I am in the fourth grade at St. Francis Xavier School. We are learning to write letters. I would like to hear from you. I do hope the war will soon be over so you can come home pray sometimes for your daughter. Thanks a lot for the pillow case.

Your loving daughter

Jean. *[Original of this letter is being returned to the author.]*

Dear dad,

How are you? It makes me feel pretty rotten to know you can't come home. I licked 3 guys today. When I was coming down the street 3 guys asked me if I wanted a fight and I said yes. So I started in on one of them and the rest got scared. The boy I cleaned up on was just about to cry and he was just as big as me. Last week I made a pipestone pipe. I am getting along fine in school. I got a good picture of a dog named butch and I sent in for him at Remington company. I got another flat on my tire. I found a nail about an inch long had gone through and rubbed a hole in the innertube. I gave Dub a dollar for his 4 ft. sled. The Majors are cutting down the big maple in front of their yard. I hope the war last long enough to be in the army. I cut apart Major's old stump with our ax. I joined the boy scouts a couple of weeks ago. I hope I see you before Easter.

Neal

[Letter No. 203]

Wednesday, Oct 27

Dear Betty -

I've been pretty much under the weather for the last few days but feel better now so will get a not written while the Col. is out attending a court-martial and things are quiet in the office.

Have been out all morning inspection construction jobs on the field. Because of so many of our civilian employes [sic] being sick so much of the time I have had to stick in the office most of the time. I never saw such brittle people as these Californians --- seems they are always sick and they quit the minute they feel bad.

I was interested in what you said about Lt. Noll being home on a 12 day leave last Thursday because in front of me I have Special Orders No. 259, dated Oct. 25. Paragraph 8 reads like this -- "2nd Lt Robert R. Noll 01003001 AC, 1st. Det, 15th SCU, McClellan Fld, Calif. Is granted a seven (7) day lv, effective o/a 2 Nov. 1943. Auth: AR 605-115, 14 Jul 1942". I don't know the Lieutenant but I see in the Post Directory that he is in the Adjutant Generals Dept., and lives in the Bachelor Officers Quarters next building to mine. He may have a lenient immediate superior who will help him stretch a seven day leave to twelve days. Wish I had. My boss is much too cautious to risk anything. The General has got him buffaloed. I'm still hoping, but don't know how I can do anything for the time being. I've got a couple of guys watching for departure of tactical planes, (the only ones we can ride any more), but no one knows very far in advance when the [sic] are leaving and there is little or no time to get orders cut.

There isn't much to write about except the work and the weather. The work is just tiresome routine and the weather is fine.

Yesterday all officers in the grade of Captain or higher were required to go to the Post Theater to hear a lecture and see movies made by a local Colonel home on leave from Africa. He was Quartermaster, headquartered in Cairo, and was Supply Officer for the 9th Air Force during the African and Sicilian Campaigns. The films were of good scenes but mostly overexposed --- most of them worse than mine.

A lot of work was just dumped in my basket so must [sic] back to work. Remember me to Jimmy and all the children. They'll be forgetting they ever had a dad.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Letter No. 204]

Sunday, Oct. 31

Dear Betty -

I have just been over to the mail section and found your Thursday's letter waiting for me so this Sunday started off fine for me.

It's almost like October weather at home today, only not as invigorating. Never could understand why California weather is always so depressing. Wish we could have a picnic at Swope Park again.

Last night there was a big Halloween party at the Club. They had all kinds of gambling games rigged up --- roulette, blackjack, crap and dice --- anything you wanted to play. It didn't cost me a cent ---- the beer and refreshments were free and I didn't gamble, just watched. Of course all nine of the Club's slot machines were going full blast, as they are every night. They are the main source of revenue for the Club. I never could understand why so many otherwise intelligent people try to beat an unbeatable mechanical device. Guess we are all queer in one way or another. \$3000 a month is the profit to the Club, so I have been told and from observation I'd say that's conservative.

I hope Bobby's new glasses will fit him this time. I can't understand why they have so much trouble fitting him. His skin trouble will probably improve as he gets older --- he is at the age now when that is a very common condition --- but it's a good idea to see a specialist just the same. It sometimes takes a long time for it to correct itself.

I hope the youngsters had a good time Halloween. I was thinking last night about the Halloween we spent out at the big stone house the first year in K. C. Jean was paying visits to all the neighbors in her costume and about half scared of herself.

Do you ever run the movies any more? Wish I could see them again. I'm glad we got that camera and wish I had taken more films with it.

The office has been a very trying place since the Col. came back and it seems good to have a whole day to loaf and read and write or do whatever I want to do. The little fellow means well ---- he just doesn't know. Yesterday about half of the civilian office force threatened to walk out on us. It took a promise of a raise to make them stay. The Col. didn't want to do it but he finally was made to realize that we would have a hard time operating at all while breaking in a new force. I don't like to see people take advantage of circumstances to dictate but in this case I don't blame them. The people in our office work twice as hard as they would have to elsewhere, and are paid less because of the Col.'s reluctance to give promotions.

I wish you could take some pictures to send but suppose you can't get film any more. I tried to get some at the P. X. for Slattery and they said they get only one shipment a month and it's all gone a few minutes after unpacking it. If I happen to be there at the right time I'll get some to send home.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Letter No. 205]

Monday, Nov. 1

Dear Betty -

Enclosed three Money Orders for \$275.

I wrote you yesterday and there is nothing new to add. Still busy but that is nothing new.

I'm lonesome for you.

All my love.

Jim

[Letter No. 206]

Friday, Nov. 5

Dear Betty -

Seems a long time since I've heard from you but guess I haven't been doing so well myself. There was no letter again today.

Still awfully busy but accomplishing not so much. It's nerve wracking though and I sure could appreciate a rest. The only good thing about it is that time goes a lot faster and that's what I want --- the faster the better.

Today we are having an old fashioned windy day like we used to have at home.

I was interrupted here for a couple of hours to go over to see the base commander about a detail to make a traffic census. He gave me 32 men and 3 non-coms so at midnight Sunday we start counting traffic for 24 hours for three alternate days. It's about a new underpass and 4 lane highway we are going to try to get the Public Roads Administration, (remember them?) to build for us.

Just went down and checked my mail box and found your Sunday's letter, which evidently wasn't mailed until Tuesday, telling about the fun the children were having for Halloween. I can imagine little Jimmy did enjoy it. Wish I could sit in front of the fire with you all on these cool nights. Maybe I will again some day.

I can sympathize with you about tying up the rose bushes. As I remember it, it was like wrestling with an armful of wild cats. Remember I was doing that during Pearl Harbor, which shows how much longer I used to put things off than you do.

This is going to be a busy month --- but they all have been up to now. We are in the midst of a reorganization --- losing help all the time and no let up in the work to compensate for it. The trouble is the work comes in batches and must be done in a breathless hurry, then we have a short breathing spell, then at it again. I don't work well under those conditions.

It's almost time for retreat --- after that when the office closes I must hurry home and dress for dinner. The C. G. has decreed Class A uniforms will be worn after retreat and he means it so that's that.

All my love.

Jim

[Note: This CG brings to mind the cliché of the unbearable officers that Hollywood made familiar --- it's hard to believe that there actually were people like that who survived long enough to reach that position.]

[Letter No. 207]

Thursday, Nov. 11

Dear Betty -

I got your Sunday's letter today and as usual am trying to write to you in the office. It's best to do that because by night I am usually too tired and disgruntled to be fit for anything. All this week I have had to take care of a traffic count detail in addition to my other duties and they have to be on the job 24 hours a day, in shifts of course. They only count on alternate days, but still there is a relief going on or coming off each midnight, when the count begins and ends. I'm so sleepy now I can hardly keep awake. I'm thankful it will be finished at midnight tomorrow night.

Seems queer to hear about it snowing back there. Here on the Field the lawns are trees are as green as ever and flowers are in bloom. I think it was Monday some one told me he had read there was a big blizzard back in Nebraska and Kansas. People out here feel so sorry for people back there but I sure wish I was back home, blizzard or no blizzard.

It's hard to write news from here too --- everything is tiresome routine. Col. Johnson asked me today to come home with him next Saturday to a party and to stay all night. Capt. Evans, from Stockton Ordnance Depot sent word that he and his son would stop and pick me up on Thanksgiving Day and take me along to spend the day at his mother's house in Auburn. Someone will have to be on duty however on that day same as others and since I have no family here I suppose I should take the shift and let the others go. Haven't discussed it with the Col. yet.

We are still operating short handed --- three people out sick today which is average, one officer in the hospital for an operation, besides the poor guy who broke his back several weeks ago and may never be able to work again. Sometimes I'm tempted to take sick leave and go to the hospital for a rest myself.

Some day this will all be over and I hope it will be soon. I, too would say a lot of things to you if I could see you. I'm still hoping for leave and I'll sure get home somehow if there is any possible way.

Today is Armistice Day. 25 years ago we finished up on mess. I sure wish this one was cleaned up.

Must get back on the job again. Remember me to the children and here is all my love.

Jim

[Letter No. 208]

Saturday Night, November 13

Dear Betty -

It's 8:20 PM and I'm still at the office. Just sneaked out for a hamburger and a cup of coffee and returned. A Major General came on the Field last night with the usual furor they always kick up ---- or rather is kicked up for them. This afternoon our commanding general issued orders that no officer would quit his post until relieved and we are still waiting for relief. May be here all night. The same orders apply for Sunday ---- get to work at the usual time and stay on the job until relieved. Col. Johnson had to call off his party which he had planned for tonight.

Orders were cut for me today to make a trip --- about four days starting Monday. I have to go to Merced, Fresno, and Lemoore. It will be the first field trip I have made since coming here four months ago today. Expected to make a lot of them and was supposed to have done so, but the work has been so constantly coming in and we have been so short of help that I have had to work at a desk like a slave. I'm afraid I am a nervous wreck and a trip should do me good. I have been up late all week on account of the traffic survey I had wished on me ---- which is finally completed --- and I'm just as well pleased not to go to any party tonight. Of course I would have had a good supper and breakfast and a real bed to sleep in -- all of which would have been very welcome.

I don't remember if you ever mentioned whether or not the trunk I sent home from Stockton ever arrived. You may have told me a half dozen times but the way my memory works I would probably forget all about it. Always seem to have too many things on my mind.

Father Gunn, a young Catholic Chaplain across the hall from me is giving me instructions. He is the only Catholic Chaplain on the Field and therefore very busy, but he calls me into his room a couple of nights a week and gives me the works. Thought maybe you would like that.

It's now a quarter to nine and the Col. just came in and said we could go home now --- all except himself and three other staff officers.

I'll go now and try to make up for a lot of lost sleep. Wish I had you here to tuck me in and keep me warm all night.

All my love.

Jim

[Letter No. 209]

Friday, Nov. 19

Dear Betty -

I'm back from a very pleasant inspection trip and of course up to my ears in work ---- but I must take time out to write you the good news. My promotion to Major came through today. It means a very substantial increase in pay and relief from some tiresome details, such as Officer of the Day.

Dean and Mrs. Willard, (my ex-steward and his wife), called on me last night. I am to meet them tonight and go to dinner at the house of a relative of theirs. He is being inducted the last of the month and they are out visiting friends and having a last fling before he goes.

I think the trip did me a lot of good, feel much better except for a very bad cold which everyone seems to have now.

Hope the news will help make your Thanksgiving happier.

All my love.

Jim

[Letter No. 210]

Tuesday, Nov. 23

Dear Betty -

Will try to get a little note written between spasms. Our civilian engineer who broke his back is on the job again so the help situation has improve but seems as if they think of a lot of additional things to be done as soon as you have a little help so the work doesn't slacken up much. However, I don't mind working hard when they recognize it by passing out promotions, so I'm not kicking.

Caught a very bad cold on my tip and I guess it's wearing me down. I'm awfully tired but feel all right otherwise. Still think I need a change of climate but don't know how to go about getting it.

Was told yesterday to prepare for a four day trip to Reno and Tonopah, Nevada, starting today, but it was later decided that it would be unnecessary. I was kind of glad I didn't have to go just now because I wanted a little time to get over my current case of sniffles before taking on a new one. Everyone seems to have colds most of the time --- why it's so is a mystery to me. The famous California climate is going to get an awful beating when the easterners out here get home.

It's hard to realize that Christmas is so near. Don't know how I'll get my Xmas shopping done. Can't find time to go down town and selections at the P.X. are kind of limited, especially for youngsters. They have some cute teddy bears, but that's what I sent to Jimmy last year.

I have Col. Johnson to thank for my promotion. He recommended me on Sept. 29 but due to a change in T. O., ("Manning Tables"), it looked as though no promotion to Major could be made in this Section, so the papers were held in our Hq. until Oct 22 when the matter was cleared up and the Board of Officers convened to pass on recommendations. Once they got on the way it came through in record time. I didn't tell you before because I didn't want you to be disappointed in case of a hitch somewhere along the line. The beauty of it is the order reads "Capt. To Maj. CE". Had it read AUS (AC) --- as most of them do --- it would have been good only the Air Forces and would have had to be vacated in case I went back to Ground Forces. I'm please about it.

All my love.

Jim

[Letter No. 211]

Saturday, Nov. 27

Dear Betty -

There is a lull in the work and I'll try to get a letter written before the big rush begins again. I'm still sniffing with a cold but it's getting slowly better.

Hope you had a nice Thanksgiving. It was the same as any other day here except lots of extras in the way of food of course. Slattery called up and invited me to his house but I couldn't leave during duty hours. Capt. Evans called up on his way to Auburn but I couldn't go with him either. I don't know how he got away for a whole day but that's a different command and guess it's not as tough to get away. There was a big party at the Club during the evening but I only stayed long enough to drink my quota of free beer.

There is a big shake up and reorganization going on here and no one knows what it's all about. The general opinion is that all branches and service in the Air forces will be done away with and all absorbed into the Air Corps. Fine thing after I finally get the right to sign myself Major CE and wear the castles. I have been hoping they might give us the chance to go back to the Ground Forces but haven't heard anything about that. If they should release me I would surely try to get back somewhere in the Seventh Service Command. Then I could get home once in a while at least. Col. Johnson requested three more Engineer Officers from Patterson Field but this morning I saw a telegram from P & T cancelling the requisition "in view of contemplated transfer of certain installation to other commands". Well no one knows what it's all about so we can only wait and see.

I still haven't got started on my Christmas shopping. Guess it isn't much good to ask for suggestions on what to get for the children because I'll probably have to do my buying at the PX and the choice isn't very large. I get off the post very seldom and then only on official business with limited time to get it done --- and with a driver keeping a log of every place I stop and how long I was there. They watch the use of transportation like a hawk --- all you need for official business, but none at all for anything else.

Sure wish I could be home for Christmas but don't expect to be unless a miracle happens. I imagine it would take official orders to get room on a train or a plane now. The orders have been eased to allow enlisted men 15 day furloughs --- but the 7 day leave for officers is still in effect.

Guess I'd better get back to work. The Col. has developed his love for charts and reports to a mania and I've got the whole force working on revisions and corrections. Better get around and see what's been done.

All my love.

Jim

[Letter No. 212]

Tuesday, Nov. 30

Dear Betty -

I am sending you three money orders for \$275.00. My check this month was made out on the old pay schedule but they will give me a supplemental check for the difference in a couple of days. Next payday I will be able to send you more money than I have been sending.

There isn't much news to write about. The weather is dark and gloomy and I still have my cold --- bad but a little better anyway. The work has slacked up but the Col. keeps us just as busy in slack times as in busy times working at trifling things that he feels are very important, and then changing his mind and his instructions from day to day. He is just as flighty as he used to be but now he hasn't anyone to put the brakes on some of his wilder ideas. Well, I suppose I shouldn't criticize but it makes me so tired sometimes I don't care what happens.

I'm glad to hear Mrs. Gering is better. I'll bet she enjoyed being over for Thanksgiving. Wish I could have been there too.

We are still wondering what is going to happen to our activity here --- the Engineer Section I mean. The others are pretty worried about it, but personally I wish they would discontinue it and send us back to the Ground Forces. I don't feel as though I am contributing anything very useful to the "war effort" here. Still, it seems wherever I have gone I have felt the same way, everything moves so ponderously that you get the feeling most of us might just as well be somewhere else.

Must get this in the mail and get back to my charts and reports.

All my love.

Jim

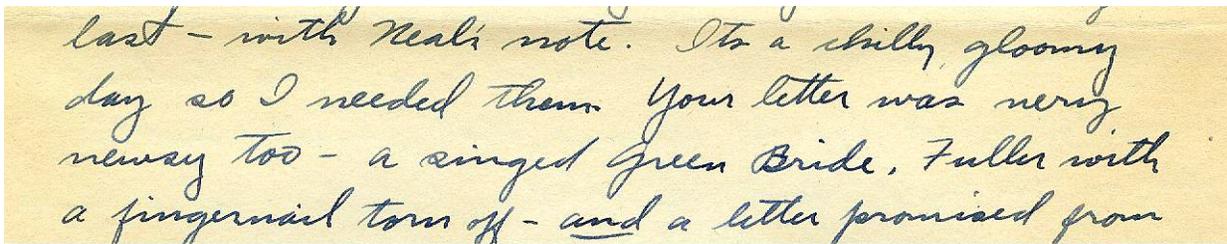
[Letter No. 213]

Sunday, Dec 5

Dear Betty -

This is one of my rather infrequent Sundays off and I slept until almost noon.

Have just been over to check my mailbox and found your letter of Tuesday and Thursday last --- with Neal's note. It's a chilly gloomy day so I needed them. Your letter was very newsy too --- a singed Green Bride, Fuller with a fingernail torn off --- and a letter promised from the Handleys. I'm wondering if Dick is really not interested in Officers training and also wondering if I. B. Jr.'s commission doesn't rankle a little. Guess I am in an uncharitable mood today. Anyway, I wish I could have Dick's 6 days plus travel time.



last - with Neal's note. It's a chilly gloomy day so I needed them. Your letter was very newsy too - a singed Green Bride, Fuller with a fingernail torn off - and a letter promised from

[Note: I do not know what to think about this letter. JRS' handwriting is very cramped and stiff. I cannot guess what "a singed Green Bride" would be, and don't know who "Fuller" is. Same goes for "I. B. Jr."]

I also envy you having your Christmas shopping almost ? done. I just get a snatch of a glimpse at thing now and then. The officers in the gravy train jobs spend all their time hanging over the limited selection at the PX or catching a G. I. bus to Sacramento while the hard workers try to snatch a minute or two on the way to and from work, and can't even get near the counter. The other night I got near enough to buy a couple of things for the boys --- Bob and Neal. They have miniature games of various kinds for the boys that haven't much space to carry things around and I got a chess set for Bob and a backgammon game for Neal. The chess was on the same order as you sent me last Christmas, but not as good, you can't close the case and put it away to finish another time like my set. When I got it home and checked I found there was one piece missing so had to spend another day getting that fixed up. Haven't mailed anything at all yet so your Xmas as far as I am concerned will probably be delayed.

I had a "Congratulations" card and note from Marie and Hayes yesterday. They said dad would like to hear from me. I'll have to send him a card soon --- I never wrote him a letter in my life and wouldn't know how to go about it.

The work is still rushing --- and always will be as long as the little Col. is in charge of the Section. About a week ago he learned that General Frank is due on the post about the 10th --- or earlier --- so all hands have been feverishly preparing charts, reports, etc. for the august eyes of the Gen. --- and everyone but the Col. knows that the General won't even look at them. Ambition can be a terrible thing.

I'm still having my sessions with Chaplain Gunn. Don't know how long it will be before he figures I am fit for bap**t**ism. [sic] He is beginning to urge that. I go to church so maybe he thinks I'll do after a while --- but I have so few Sundays to sleep and am so tired at getting up time that I'm afraid I'll never make it. I'm doing my poor best though. The chaplain is a swell guy.

Marie said Thelma had gone to Seattle to join Myrtle but they hadn't heard from her since she left. Those two are the restless members of the family and I hope they will settle down and be satisfied soon.

Tell Bob and Neal and Jan and Jimmy --- and you --- that I'm so lonesome for you all that I don't know what to do ---- but I have a hunch I'll be seeing you all before so very long --- even though I can't be home for Christmas.

All my love.

Jim

[Note: JRS' comment about having never written his Dad fits with what I found while working on his journal from WWI. I assumed his lack of letters to his parents, although frequent to siblings and friends, was due to their lack of English skills. I had been corrected on this point by one of his sisters, who said they both read & wrote English.]

[Letter No. 214]

Thursday, Nov 9 [Actually December]

Dear Betty -

Just a quicky in a short and infrequent break in the rush to get ready for a visiting General. Must go to a school on Courts-Martial tonight, (they make us take our instruction during off duty hours here), and have an appointment with Chaplain Gunn afterwards so can't write then.

Just received your Sunday letter. Col. Johnson called me into his office day before yesterday and asked if I had rec'd my efficiency rating for this year. He was surprised that they were still rating us, but had just received his, (Excellent). I am kind of sore at hearing mine was only "Very Good". Seems to me that if Shoemaker is going to rate us during our absence the least he could do is carry us at our last rating on active duty --- which he did in Col. Johnson's case, but not in mine. Superior is the lowest I ever got before --- and that was marked down in Omaha after two or three years of Excellent because Washington kicked about so many Excellents being sent in from our office. Being new in the Service I couldn't kick too much then, but it never was marked up to Excellent again. I'm wondering if Very Good is high enough to get me my next automatic raise. Anyway I think it's lousy of Shoemaker to mark me down during my absence. Col. Johnson is out with a visiting officer from Patterson Field. When he comes back I'll ask him what he thinks about it --- but can't squack [sic] too loud --- they are still thicker than thieves and correspond regularly. He said he had a letter from Shoemaker the other day in which Shoemaker said he wished he had us both back on the job. Malarkey.

Just received word that the General for whom we are preparing will arrive Saturday --- and all officers will remain on duty every day and night until specifically relieved. The following Sunday I will be duty officer. Never do get any time off.

The wind is blowing a gale and outside it looks almost like our old Dakota dust storms.

I finally got my Xmas shopping done --- such as it was --- and took the stuff over to have wrapped for mailing. Don't know when I'll be able to mail it. It's all in a jumble so I'll tell you now who the things are for so you can re-wrap them for the Xmas tree --- if they get there in time. Yours is in a red plush box so you won't have to open it to identify it. Jean's is a locket with Air Corps insignia on it, (I couldn't get Engr.'s insignia). I got Bob a miniature chess set like you sent me last year --- but not as good. You can't close his up and resume the game later like you can mine but it was the best they had. I got Neal a similar game except for backgammon. You can change them around if you think best. For Jimmy I was stumped but finally bought him a little Air Corps pin to wear on his coat. I didn't do so well but it's hard to find anything in a P.X. I haven't bought anything for Dad or the sisters. Hope you have done whatever is necessary in that line. Haven't even been able to get any decent Xmas cards yet.

The plug that the dentist in K. C. put in my gold bridge when I broke the original out is out again, I need new glasses and want to go to the Finance Office to arrange an allotment for you so you will get a check each month if I go overseas, make my will, and a dozen other things but just can't get around to it. I could go for a good long rest.

Must get back to work. Hope this will be a nice Christmas. Get a nice tree for the kids.

Love.

Jim

[Note: I cannot remember this pin.]

[Letter No. 215]

Sunday, Dec 12

Dear Betty -

Gen. Frank arrived yesterday and we are all required to remain at our desks until he takes his departure, so I'll write you a letter during a lull. The Col. has gone to staff meeting and I've laid my work aside for the time being. It's twelve o'clock and I'm a little hungry, for a change. Usually go to the P. X. snack bar at noon for a bowl of soup and a hamburger. Think I'll need more today.

My cold is gradually wearing off --- as they always do eventually. The weather has turned fine again, after a rather bad storm during the middle of the week. It didn't rain here but the wind reached a velocity of 72 miles per hour --- 100 mph at San Francisco ---- where some damage was done.

I finally got your Christmas package mailed --- day before yesterday. Hope it arrives before Xmas. Wish I could have got something much nicer --- but as usual I alibi and think I'll do better next time. Hope I'll be able to do my Xmas shopping back home next year.

I squacked [sic] to Col. Johnson about being marked down in rating by Shoemaker --- not that he could help it --- and he told me that Shoemaker marked everyone down to Very Good last year on account of Washington crabbing about so many high ratings from that office. Maybe I was being sore without reason, but I'm still pretty sure that what I saw on the Col.'s slip was "Excellent".

After all our work getting up charts and reports for the visiting General I doubt he will even look at them --- as I have contended all along --- but not to the Col. The latest dope is that he will be leaving this afternoon sometime and he hasn't even been near this place yet. It would take a couple of hours for him to wade through all the trash we have prepared for him, if he were interested. Well, we always did like to win our wars the hard way --- keep a lot of people working at non-essential jobs. We sure have been wasting a lot of man hours the last two weeks.

Tomorrow will be five months since I arrived on this post. Haven't exactly enjoyed it but the constant work has made the time go fast. Doesn't seem nearly that long. Anyway, I'm sure I wouldn't have got my promotion for a long time --- if ever, had I stayed on at Stockton, so that's a break anyway. If I never get another promotion now I still won't have done too badly.

I'm going to break off now and go to lunch. Hope the old General leaves early so we won't have to hang around all day.

All my love.

Jim

[Letter No. 216]

Friday, Dec 17

Dear Betty -

I've suddenly decided I haven't written to you at all this week, or at least since Sunday so I'll try another quickly. *[sic]*

Yesterday I spent all day in court, (I have been put on the General Court-Martial here), and last night had to go to the usual Thursday night school. Had an appointment with the Chaplain after the class, but he was so tired he asked to postpone it.

Maj. Root --- the section Executive Officer, has been on leave to Los Angeles all week so have had to handle his work as well as my own. Day before yesterday the Col. was gone and had to take over for him too, attend Staff meeting etc. I'm not fooling when I tell you I have been --- and am --- busy.

Had a letter from Bob Montagne yesterday. He is in a Field Artillery Replacement Center at Camp Roberts, near San Louis Obispo. If I remember I'll inclose *[sic]* it when I send this.

I got a box of candy and Xmas card with quite a long letter written on it from Marge. Last year she sent me a big box with candy and nuts, (complete with nut cracker and picks). Don't see how Marge gets any Xmas preparations done at all with all those kids and the work she has to do. I spose some of them are a lot of help to her now though.

We have been hearing that the flu epidemic is getting bad back there. It hasn't got started very strong here but they are kind of worried and making plans for it when it arrives. I hope it doesn't strike any of you. Better keep the children home from school for a while. I'd sure hate to have any of you get sick.

It doesn't seem possible Xmas is almost there. Trees and grass are still green and flowers blooming all over the post. Sure would like to see a good snow storm.

Take care of yourself and the kids.

All my love.

Jim

[Note: It may seem strange that JRS is so concerned about the flu, but it must be remembered that only about 25 before this the world had experienced the Spanish Flu pandemic that killed dozens of millions.] [Bob Montagne's letter follows:]

U. S. Army Service Clubs, Camp Roberts, California 12/11/43

Dear Uncle Jim,

I don't suppose this is exactly the proper way to address a Major but since I am only a Rookie I hope to be excused. I have just gotten my first letter from home since arriving here & in that was the news of your promotion. "Congratulations". I am in a quandary about what the T.A.S.C stands for & can find no one here who seems to know.

I took my physical for the Army on the 17th of Aug. & was sworn in on the 19th with a 21 day furlough. I suppose you know I was working for Armour Packing Co. I went back to work on my furlough & on the 30th of Aug. my knife slipped severing the tendons to the first two fingers and the main artery on the back of my left hand. I had it in a cast for 6 weeks and was under treatment every day until I went on active duty the 5th of Nov. I went to Ft. Snelling, Minn. I took all of the tests for the Air Corps, (V.F.T.), which I passed with a mark of 2nd high in the group. 242 in the Flight test & 128 in the I.Q. I waited shipment to basic for 2 wks & then they discovered my hand would only make about one half of a fist & washed me out. Two days later I was on my way out here. The flight Surgeon & Doctors there said I would get a Med. Discharge. That's the last I heard of that. I was put on the 155 mm Howitzer which I'm not too crazy about but I do like the M1 carbines we use. I still hope to get something done about my hand and get back into V.F.T.

I have one week of my actual Basic Training behind me & so far Army life seems to agree very well with me. I have gained 12 lbs. & feel better than I have for a long time.

I do miss the family a lot though.

Margaret's twin brothers are in the Air Corps. One of them just completed his pilots training & the other has been assigned to a photography trailer *[sic]* unit.

I must write home tonight so had better cut this short for now but I would like to hear from you when you have a moment to spare of which I don't imagine you have too many. I know I don't.

Sincerely, Bob

[Letter No. 217]

Tuesday, Dec 28

Dear Betty -

Arrived at the Field at 11:30 AM after a very tiring ride. When I got to the office they very cheerfully told me they had wired me a priority yesterday. That would have gotten me a plane ride today to arrive a day late unless everything clicked, which it never does these days. Made me sick though to think I could have had at least two more days at home --- and they said they would have covered up for me for at least one day if I had been late. That's the trouble with these hurried departures, there isn't time to have a definite understanding. When Maj. Root was driving me down to catch the plane I checked with him and it was agreed that I would have to be back today, and that they would send a wire ordering me back today with enough priority to insure a plane ride back, the wire to be sent within a day or two. Today he said they couldn't do that because the wire had to be worded "immediately". If I had stayed home until today I might just possibly have got an early plane, and by bumping someone with less priority ---- and its doubtful if anyone could travel with less than a "three", have arrived in time to keep out of trouble.

I have just opened your Xmas package and it was swell. Tell the children thanks a million. Your card and nice letter were here too and helped ease the blues a lot. There are also packages from Honey, Myrtle, Stell & Chet, and from Mamie. I haven't opened them yet but they look and feel like candy. The one from Mamie is pretty good sized and I think I'll open it now and see what is in it. It was candy, cake, cheese crackers, etc. Looks like I'll get fat.

There was also a card from Helen and from Donny asking why I didn't write. No address of course. And none of the folks except you ever use my correct address. If I wasn't an old settler and well known here their letters and packages would never reach me.

Train service has certainly slowed up and I can see why they insisted I would have to leave Christmas night if I wanted to be sure to get back on time. The train I took used to get to Denver in the early morning after and to Cheyenne by noon. Now it gets to Denver at 3:30 PM and doesn't leave there until 5:05. There were a lot of worried people on that train who were overdue at their stations. We were four hours late at Ogden, much later at Reno, but made up most of it coming from there.

I'm not working this afternoon as I'm still on leave ---- until midnight tonight --- and they aren't very busy at the office anyway.

Wish I could have had a full week at home but it was swell anyway while it lasted. I'm hoping something will happen soon to make a decent leave possible soon. I wouldn't feel too bad if the General should die, he is too ornery to be alive anyway. If he doesn't die soon I hope I will get a change of station where I can serve under a white man. My roommate had a tale of woe as soon he saw me. The Gen. found him and another newly made 2nd Lt. smoking the other day in a "smoking area" --- where all smoking in the industrial area is supposed to be done. He bawled them out, had them relieved from duty, assigned to another outfit, and has them on orders for shipment away from here --- and they still don't know what wrong they have done.

All my love.

Jim

[Note: The card that he mentions contained notes from all four kids, and they are copied here.]

Dec. 21, 1943

Dear Daddy,

I just got home from school. I have to go to my music lesson pretty soon. The Christmas tree is up now. I just can't keep on the subject can I? There isn't much to say but I wish you were home for Christmas. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Lots and Lots of Love.

Jean

[The original card will be sent to her.]

Dear Dad,

I hope you have a good Christmas. I have sent your present. I hope you enjoy it.

Neal

Dear Dad,

I wish you a merry Christmas and Happy New Year. We all wish you could be with us at least on Christmas. The picture book of the Field was sure interesting. Do the planes keep you awake nights? I wish I was old enough to do something to help end the war so you could be home for all holidays.

Bob

Hello Daddy: Jimmy *[Articulate little guy isn't he?]*

I'll squeeze in some love too, Betty.

[Letter No. 218]

Jan. 1, 1943 *[actually 1944]*

Dear Betty -

Got your Tuesday's letter today. Am enclosing a cashier's check for \$300.00. Hope to get an allotment made so that sum will be sent direct to you every month. Then I will mail you whatever accumulates above my needs here.

Wish I could have known about that airline reservation before I left. I had an understanding it was to me sent me right after I left for home --- in fact I remember Col. Johnson cautioning me that the first thing I should attend to when I got home was to arrange my reservation for the trip back. You just can't take chances with this General, he won't accept excuses of any kind. I'm sorry to have lost that time at home but it would have been over now anyway.

There was a party at the Club and the gymnasium last night and lots of people don't feel very good today. I didn't have much fun, drank only a little and feel all right.

I am trying to get a small box of rubber bands wrapped for the boys. I will address it to you. There is a small package in it for your birthday --- also a little gadget for Jean. I marked them with your names. If you wish you can save Jean's for her birthday, just in case I won't be able to send her anything then, or you can give it to her right away. It's not so much anyway.

I don't think my leave did me much good. The travel takes so long and is so miserable that it seems as if I didn't have any time at all at home.

Love.

Jim

[Note: I can't believe he is still fussing over these rubber bands for the airplanes that Bob & Neal are building --- he first mentioned them back in mid-April of 1943, and still has not sent them home.]

[Letter No. 219]

Tuesday, Jan 4, 1943 *[actually 1944]*

Dear Betty -

I got your letter saying your dad is contemplating selling the farm. I suppose it is the thing to do but I hate to think of it. The place has seemed like home to me for so many years it makes me homesick to think of never being able to go there any more. I don't think your dad will be at home anywhere else either, but guess it can't be helped.

I took the film I exposed while at home to the PX for development the day after I got back and got the pictures today. They were all fairly good, but one of the two I took of Jimmy is especially good. I am going to have some more made and will send them to you of course. Maybe I'll send the ones I have, but want to keep them for awhile anyway. It takes a long time to get finishing done.

Sunday was a bad day here. A B-17 bomber exploded in the air directly over the field and scattered debris all over the place. All but one of the fourteen aboard were killed. Later in the afternoon of the same day another plane took off for the east with passengers, airmail, and cargo. It crashed and burned, killing three more. I mailed an airmail letter the day before with a cashier's check in it and hope that wasn't aboard. I don't think it was as the plane that burned was an Army plane and probably had only official mail on it.

I'm trying to remember whether your birthday is today or the 18th. Years ago I figured out it was one week from the 11th, but I can't remember which way. The 11th of January always sticks in my mind because it seems something always happens to me on that day. I sent you a little remembrance which I hope has arrived if today is the day.

Wish I could be back to enjoy the snow. That's something almost unheard of here. When the air is clear, as it is today, we can see the snow covered peaks over in the Sierra Nevada, but usually it's too foggy or misty. I'm glad there was a little snow for Xmas anyway.

All my love.

Jim

[Note: This is the second year in a row he has messed up on Mom's birthday.]

[Letter No. 220]

Friday, Jan 8

Dear Betty -

I just received your Monday's letter and will try to write now while the Col. is in staff meeting and I am not subject to interruption every five minutes. We have been relieved of jurisdiction of our sub-depots, so our real work has fallen off considerably. In order to keep things humming and make us appear useful the Col. has invented a lot of jobs for us, none of which accomplish anything, but involve a great volume of reports and records. He is a master at that sort of thing and it looks as if we will be busier than ever.

It looks now almost certain that all the Arms and Services, (Signal Corps, Engineers, QM, Chemical Warfare, etc.), now detailed in the Air Forces will be eliminated as such and transferred to the Air Corps. I don't like it, but there is nothing I can do about it of course, so will make the best of it.

I made an allotment of \$300.00 per month to you yesterday. It is to be effective March 1st --- that is the first deduction will be made from the pay check I will receive on March 31st. There will probably be a ten days delay --- so they tell me --- in getting your check to you, so you should receive the first one about April 10th. Meanwhile of course, I will continue to send you cashier's checks or money orders out of my January and February pay. What I have left will be more than ample while on a station where quarters are declared inadequate, but if I ever get stationed where quarters are adequate and I lose my quarters allowance it won't be. I'll build up a reserve for contingencies and then send the remainder to you periodically.

Have you given any thought to buying the old home farm? I don't know whether that particular deal would be wise or not, but I still feel it would be better to have our savings in land or real estate. I think that property is already on the rise due to lots of other people feeling the same way --- and prices will probably soon be high. A little plot of good land with a few buildings would be a fine thing to have.

Must get back to work. This is an artificially busy day.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 221]

Tuesday, Jan 11

Dear Betty -

I got your Thursday's letter with the account of Mann's death. Sure was sorry to hear about that, I always liked him. He was a quiet, hardworking, gentlemanly sort of man, never seemed involved in the bickering and jealousy that always exists in an office. I showed the clipping to Col. Johnson. He said it was hard to realize --- always thought Mann looked the picture of health. Well that's three gone out of the people who were in the office when I came to Omaha --- Miss Heap, Taylor & Mann.

They sure got quick action on the sale of the farm. I had hoped they might take their time thinking it over and change their minds eventually. I remember though there always used to be a little impatience among the heirs about your dad staying on and the small income from crops during the dry years. I guess they all wanted their share out in a lump. Well, anyway we have lots of pictures of the old red barn and the house so we can always remember what it looked like. The new owners or tenants will no doubt change things around in a hurry --- they always do. I'm glad Bob and Neal had one good long summer there.

I had three boxes of candy from Christmas time --- from you, Myrtle and Honey --- I should say four with the one Jean gave me when I left. Last night I decided to have some and found the ants had got into all of them. The cellophane hadn't been unwrapped but was cracked or broken a little. Those little devils get into everything out here. Between the ants inside and the gloomy, wet weather outside, California isn't so good in the winter time. It's sunny today though --- for a change.

We are in the midst of a manpower survey so I have that job assigned to me for our Section. It's a small section but breaking it down the way the Man Power Utilization Board wants it done is a big job even in a small organization. We spend so much time on statistical work that I sometimes think we never will get down to work useful toward winning the war. Wish I was home.

I suppose the children are back in the school routine by now. Hope Bob and Neal were able to use the rubber bands in their planes.

All my love.

Jim

[Letter No. 222]

Friday, Jan 14, 1944

Dear Betty -

I got your last Sunday's letter yesterday. By now I suppose Helen and Earl have left and your party for the Handleys is over.

Before I forget I want to ask you to send a couple of the income tax blanks that you said were sent home. I want to get at making out my return and I won't get any blanks unless I call for them and it's hard to get to town during business hours.

I hope you got the tax deal straightened out O.K. It was perfectly natural to overlook the State & County taxes since they didn't send you a notice. I would have done the same if I had been there. It would have been too bad if we had lost our garden, but no one else could make use of it --- unless one of the neighbors would give them right-of-way across their property --- or if one of the neighbors would buy it up.

I finally have made my will, also two Powers of Attorney and a letter to the Adjutant General's Office giving the name of my insurance company. As you know I have also taken out a life insurance policy for \$7000 government insurance --- all I could get because of the \$3000 paid up policies I have, (they will allow only a total of \$10,000). I have made a monthly allotment to take care of the premiums on the government insurance, (National Service Life Insurance), and a monthly allotment of \$300 to you, effective March 1, 1944, to be deducted from the check I will receive March 31, and subsequently. I don't have the Gov't policy --- don't know if it is furnished or not but they have been deducting the allotment for it since May 1942. I have the application from in my 201 file and note that it is dated April 26, 1942. On the form I requested that the policy be mailed to you so you should have received it long ago.

You will be getting a big official envelope one of these days but don't let it scare you. It will contain (1) My will, (2) a General Power of Attorney, (3) a Power of Attorney for Collection of Checks drawn on the Treasurer of the U. S., (4) a copy of a letter to the Adj. General, (giving name of my insurance company), (6) a War Department booklet entitled "Personal Affairs of Military Personnel and Aid for their Dependents", (7) a duplicate of the extract from W. D. Special Order No. 319 promoting me from Captain to Major. Take good care of them.

I made my will out leaving everything to you. However, I had the usual clause put in for the four children to share alike in the event you predecease me. It was therefore necessary to name a guardian for the children and that had me stumped for a while. Both to their grandfathers are getting old and I didn't think it wise to name them. They suggested that I appoint a brother or sister of mine or yours, so I started to write Stella's name, then reconsidered and put in your sister Helen's instead. The reason I did that was the religious angle --- thought you might prefer it on that account. Anyway I hope no one will ever have to exercise the guardianship.

All of this doesn't mean I am leaving for overseas --- just the common sense thing everyone should do as routine, and I should have taken care of it long ago. It is known, however, that a large shipment will leave this field for various destinations within a short time, and it isn't exactly unlikely that I may be sent out too. Don't worry about it though, it's just as possible I may stay here for the duration. If some time you don't hear from me for quite a long time you can assume that I am probably on the way. Once we start no one can write, telegraph, phone, or communicate with anyone, and at times the orders don't leave any time for notification before starting. Notice of arrival is sent as soon as the movement has been accomplished.

As I said before, I haven't received orders so don't get the idea that I am on my way. I feel a lot better for having attended to the matter and should have taken care of it long ago. I hope I got the childrens middle names right --- had Bob's and Neal's transposed at first but think they are right now.

All my love

Jim

[Note: It seems strange that Mom would feel obligated to host a party for people who are in much better financial circumstances than those who are trying to make do with the husband gone, salary reduced, and four small children. Over the years I gathered that the Handleys were generally people who leached off others --- possibly the wrong impression, but the one I had anyway.]

[Letter No. 223]

Monday, Jan 17

Dear Betty -

I got your Friday's letter today, written after you had just finished your week's social whirl. Hope you are rested up by now. It must have been inconvenient for you to have the Gearkes on your hands right up to the time of the party. Did the Handley's enjoy it? And did you enjoy having them? Your comments were very sketchy.

I think you are right in thinking it unwise to buy the old place because of the problem of relatives. We wouldn't be able to clear it anyway and if we should buy land I think we should buy only what we can pay for --- and be sure it isn't too high. Something like that 40 acre tract your dad wants to buy would be more like it, but 125 is a high price to pay for land in that country it seems to me. I'm afraid we missed the boat not buying something when land was so cheap a few years ago. Guess I never was intended for a business man.

We are pretty busy again after a spell of not much to do. This week will be a hectic one --- next week I don't know. I never look ahead farther than a week any more.

There are very insistent rumors that there will be a change of commanding officers ---- very welcome news if true. But again I would have to be looking ahead to enjoy that improvement, (we all think the chances are excellent that any change will be an improvement), and that is against my policy.

I suppose the boys enjoyed having Donnie visit them --- they always seemed to get along with him --- and Jean would no doubt go for Judy.

I hope you have mailed the income tax blanks to me. I want to get our return made, and from what I hear it will be a complicated job this year. Most people I have talked with say they can't even read the forms, let alone understand them.

Must turn in and get some sleep now.

Love.

Jim

[Note: Actually, Judy was much closer in age to me than to Jean, having been born in Dec of 1938. Of course, that doesn't mean she & Jean wouldn't get along --- they no doubt did, but I remember Judy & I paling around in later years.]

[Letter No. 224]

Saturday, Jan 22, 1944

Dear Betty -

Today I got three letters from you all mailed Jan 19 --- one regular, one airmail and the envelope full of income tax forms. I can get to work on those now.

About the farm first --- I guess it would be too late to do anything now, even if we thought it a good idea. However, my interest, like yours, is mainly sentimental. It would be nice to keep the old place and let your dad run it as long as he is able, but he is already having a hard time getting the work done. After that we would probably have misunderstandings with in-laws, or have to put up with strangers for tenants. If we were farmers ourselves it might be fine, but under the circumstance I don't think it would be a good investment. Also we couldn't pay for it in a lump sum and it's hard to say if your dad would have enough left out of his share to cover the rest ---especially since the price may be bid up for about the price Fishbeck bid in.

Poor Jimmy must have had a bad time for the while when he lost you in Jones store. Did he get his flag? I'm glad you got the license plate, sticker, and drivers license business fixed up. That always seemed like a long disagreeable chore to me.

Did Mrs. Handley say what organization Dick was assigned to at Fresno? We have a Specialized Depot at Pinedale near there, also a Training Center at Fresno, and quite frequently some one from here goes down there. I was there for about a day in November. He is an optimist, however, if he expects to make it from K.C. to Fresno in 48 hours these days, unless he flies, in which case it shouldn't take nearly that long.

I hope Neal wins the prize for the puzzle he is working on but I also hope he isn't getting his hopes worked up too high.

Thursday was two years since I put my trunk in the back of the car and headed for Ft. Leavenworth to report for active duty --- and got sent right on to Ft. Warren. I wish the next two years were past also.

I'll return your dad's letters and the clipping herewith as you requested. Whatever you have done about the matter is OK with me, and you have power of attorney now. I think buying the farm would be unwise, but if sentiment has got the upper hand and you want to and can buy it, it's all right. Anything I have is yours.

All my love

Jim

[Letter No. 225]

Wednesday, Jan. 26

Dear Betty -

There isn't much news but I'll write a note anyway. I sent the negatives of the pictures a couple of days ago, hope they arrive safely. *[Note added on 18 Jul 10: While beginning work on 1945 letters, I found an envelope postmarked Jan 20, 1944. It had no letter inside, but did have the negatives mentioned here. They were of JRS, in uniform & in civvies; also w/Jimmy. Don't know where the letter is.][Had no luck scanning these negatives.]*

I had my eyes rechecked for bifocals two weeks ago and my new glasses should be here tomorrow. I am going over to the hospital first thing in the morning to see if they have arrived.

Had my first inoculations Monday in a new series --- for cholera and typhus. They didn't make me sick, but they sure do make your arms sore. Everyone has got to get all vaccinations and inoculation up to date, and besides there are always "booster" shots coming due so it seems I have a sore arm most of the time.

I bought an alarm clock at the commissary this morning which I will send to you when I get it packed for mailing. A Big Ben for \$1.67 looked like a bargain when they are almost unobtainable outside. I got the last Big Ben they had in stock. They had some plastic ones at the same price but don't think they are nearly as good. I figured you needed a clock badly with only the old Baby Ben and Dad's old heirloom, both of which are probably on their last legs.

The band is coming down the street for retreat. Wish you all could see and hear them.

I went to a squadron party last night put on by the 1st Communications Squadron. Didn't think I wanted to go but all the squadron officers are friends of mine and didn't feel I could say no. Most of the people there were enlisted men and their girl friends, but of course the unit officers were expected to attend and I was a guest. They had fifty cases of beer, a case of bourbon, and some rum. I stuck to beer and left early but had a fair time.

Have been wondering how the farm sale came off.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 226]

Sunday, Jan. 30

Dear Betty -

I am on Sunday duty and all alone at the office. There isn't much to do and it's a tiresome detail but someone has to be on hand in case the general wants something.

Was just down to check my mailbox but there wasn't any letter. I'm wondering how the folks came out on the farm sale. In your last letter --- written Monday --- you said you would let me know all about it as soon as you heard, so I'll probably be hearing in a day or two.

Since you mentioned it I think it may have been better to have named Thelma as guardian, but I'm hoping no one ever will have to take that job. It just goes to show how our kid bringing up still hangs on after we are old. When they suggested a brother or sister of mine or yours it never occurred to me to name one of the younger ones. Thelma was just a kid to me and Stella was my older sister who used to boss me. Helen was your older sister and Laddie and Honey were practically babies when I first knew them. I guess we all stay relatively the same as we grow up and never realize we are growing old.

I got a long letter from Mamie the day before yesterday which I will enclose. I was surprised at her comment "Suppose you got rather a surprise to open her, (Aunt Tina's), Xmas card and find a bill". I didn't get any card from her --- nor from Myrtle and Thelma either, but I did get a box of candy from Myrtle. I imagine they all sent me cards but those sisters of mine can put the weirdest addresses on a letter of anyone I know and they were probably misspent and ended up in the dead letter office.

I still haven't got the alarm clock wrapped for mailing. I'll try to get at it as soon as I can --- there are always so many little things to do in our time off --- buttons to sew on, laundry and dry cleaning to get together or call for, shots to take, schools and lectures to attend, etc., that I'm always behind and getting the habit of procrastination so badly that it seems I never get anything done. Tomorrow I have to get two more shots in the Cholera & Typhus series, make an appointment with the dentist, check to see if my new glasses are here, attend a training film, and in the evening comes my session with Chaplain Gunn. The little Col. will see to it that I keep busy during duty hours.

All my love

Jim

(Mamie's address is 1001 Cherry, Grand Forks, N.D. in case you want to write her.)

[Letter No. 227]

Feb. 1, 1944

Dear Betty -

I'll send you a quicky enclosing a cashier's check for \$300. Also will enclose a copy of excerpts from the Revised Statutes of Missouri, 1919, dealing with taxation. Maybe sometime you can get an opinion from Mr. Copaken as to whether these laws have been superseded, or are still in effect. Presume they refer to personal taxes only.

Your last Wednesday's letter arrived Sunday right after I mailed your letter to you. I'm sorry to hear you have been under the weather and hope you are all well again.

I'll be expecting news of the farm sale. I can imagine Neal and Bobby didn't like to see it sole any more than we do. They have had some good times there.

I have an appointment with the dentist at 2:00 o'clock and must stop now and call a car to take me over to the hospital. Was over there yesterday for shots but couldn't get the work started on my teeth until today. The plug under my bridge that I had fixed in K. C. a few years ago came out some time ago and I want to get it fixed while I have the chance. Dental, eye, and medical services are free of course. I am expecting a new pair of glasses to arrive any day.

Nothing new --- the same old tiresome routine.

All my love.

Jim

[Letter No. 228]

Thursday, Feb 3.

Dear Betty -

Your Saturday's letter arrived yesterday.

I don't think the green slip you enclosed , (Interoffice Memorandum, Jan 15, 1944), means a promotion. The reason I think so is because my grade is still P-3 as it was when I was Associate Hwy Engr. They used to grade us like this: Jr. Hwy Engr. P-1, Assistant Hwy Engr P-2, Associate. Hwy Engr P-3, Highway Engr P-4, etc. I think it probably means a re-designation of titles in grades --- probably did away with Associates or assistant, or Jr's. If it had read Highway Engineer P-4 I would be quite elated. Anyway, I'll return the Memorandum herewith to file in the strongbox with my other civil service papers. Col. Johnson may have heard something bout the Civil Service Circular 433 to which reference is made since he and his wife keep in touch with the Shoemakers. I'll ask him when I get the chance.

I mailed the alarm clock to you today. I think I did a pretty fair job of wrapping it and hope it arrives O.K. It has a loud, repeating alarm --- the alarm runs a while, then stops awhile, and runs again if you don't get up and shut it off. I don't think you could sleep through it.

I'm sorry the old place didn't bring more as long as it had to be sold. Wonder what your dad plans to do? He doesn't have to worry about a place to stay of course, as long as we have a home and a job. I hope we will always be able to take care of our folks. I suppose he still feels too active to retire altogether, but he will soon be old and he isn't in very good physical shape or wasn't when last I saw him.

I haven't started on my tax return yet but still have good intentions.

Father Gunn is taking a week's leave in Los Angeles. He thinks his promotion to Captain will come through soon and that he will be shipped out soon after so he wanted to visit his old cronies while he was sure of the chance. He said the other night we were getting close to the end of the instruction course. Don't know yet whether he thinks I'm fit to be taken in or not. Threatened to give me an examination if I didn't start asking questions or giving him an argument. I just listen. After all, I've read it all before, most of it a couple of times.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 229]

Wednesday, Feb. 9

Dear Betty -

I had a letter from Myrtle today. It was sort and not much news, but she is a riveter at Boeings, making more money than she ever did before. Thelma has finished a course of instruction and is working there too. Aunt Tina is in bed most of the time.

I checked on that memorandum you sent me for the office, (Highway Engr. P-3), and as I suspected it didn't mean a thing. I got a copy of the circular from the Personnel Branch here and it was merely a directive to do away with all high-sounding titles. For instance there will be no more Jr., Senior, or Associate Highway Engineers --- all will be Highway Engineers with the rating shown by number. For instance I will be a Highway Engr P-5, Handley same title P-4, and Col. Johnson, (Ex Senior), will be P-5. The grades have not changed, merely the prefix. The same holds good in all civil service jobs.

I hope the Gerings have found some one to take care of Mrs. Gering. It must be hard for you to spend so much of your time over there. I know too, that it would be hard not to help them all you can because they are good neighbors. Don't let them wear you out though.

We have been requested by our commanding officer to buy "at least one additional bond during the Fourth War Loan Drive", and make a report to him by March 1, 1944, so that it may be credited to this command. I dislike being made to feel I have to buy bonds at anyones request, and I think we have been buying our share for a longer time than most. If you will tell me the date you bought the \$525 worth you mention in your last letter and where the purchase was made, (Issuing agent), I will put them down to appease them. I suppose you got them at the Post Office or Federal Bldg.

I finished up my shots for typhus and cholera Monday and have now had all they give except yellow fever, which they don't give any more until you are definitely on your way. Lots of people have been very sick from those.

Slattery was out to see me last night. He left a few copies of the Springfield Times but I haven't read any of them yet.

Col. Johnson is in conference with a couple of Colonel from Patterson Field. Expect he may have news for us when he gets through. We have been expecting quite a reduction of personnel due to revisions and consolidations of activities and I wouldn't be surprised if it will come soon now. I wouldn't mind another assignment myself so am not worrying about it.

Wish I could hear Jimmy sing his songs.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 230]

Sunday, Feb 13

Dear Betty -

Your nice valentine arrived today and the candy yesterday. Thanks a lot. This time I'll beat the ants to the candy --- it's nearly all gone already.

I was afraid the Gherrings would have trouble finding anyone to stay with Mrs. These days there are so many jobs that pay high wages for doing nothing that no one wants to take a job involving housework.. I hope the new lady turns out more satisfactory. You have enough to do without having a caretaking job on your hands.

Still haven't got adjusted to the idea of the old farm being gone. Just got to thinking of it years ago as a place that would always be there to go back to for vacations or any old time we wanted to. I'm afraid it will be a hard time for your dad when he has to leave for good. I hope he will have enough from the sale to enable him to get started on a small place.

I hope the storm wasn't too hard on the shrubs. I have been wondering if it wouldn't be a good idea to wrap the evergreens out front good and tight with cord so they wouldn't spread all out of shape in snow and sleet storms. I would only have to be done in the spring or late winter when the wet, heavy snows come. Maybe it wouldn't work, it was just an idea I got.

I've finally got all my "must" things taken care of ---- inoculations, glasses, dental work, etc. I had the porcelain replaced under my bridge for the second time. It feels better now but the dentist that did the work said it might not last a week --- or it might last a couple of years. He wasn't much impressed by the work of our Omaha neighborhood dentist who did the original work, said the reason it breaks out is because my upper teeth come down on the porcelain instead of only on the metal bridge, and porcelain can't stand the stress. Old rough-and-ready relieved the situation somewhat by grinding back the outside edges of my uppers with an emery wheel, which didn't please me much, but I suppose it will make work for some civilian dentist after the war when the uppers get good and rotten. I've always had a notion all dentists fix your existing cavities and then drill or punch holes in the enamel of your good teeth so as to have more cavities to fix in the future.

Must get to bed now and get rested up for my detail as "Administrative" Officer of the Day tomorrow --- a new idea our genius general dreamed up for field grade officers, (who are normally exempt from O.D. duties).

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 231]

Friday, Feb 18

Dear Betty -

There is a lull in the work now so will send a small note in answer to your Monday's letter. I suppose your new snow is gone by now. Anyway the winter weather probably stopped your perennials from getting too big too early.

No, I hadn't heard about Bob Montagne's new baby. Probably had notice sent me by some one of the family but it failed to arrive. Too bad Bob didn't have a bigger family sooner so he could have been exempted. Don't think he was very anxious to go --- most of the youngsters aren't. However, from some of the stories I hear dependents don't have nearly as much bearing on exemptions as they did. To avoid Army service they rush into defense industries and demonstrate their patriotism at a high rate of pay.

I don't see how Mart expects to pay for \$100 land. Seems to me he had hard going as a tenant farmer, and his landlord wasn't too tough in those days either. I hope he makes out all right, but I'll be surprised if he isn't back to tenant farming in a couple of years. He won't have your dad to fall back on for machinery, threshing, and help.

I was surprised that Bus was turned down for physical reasons. Always thought he was in fine shape. I have an idea that he is too much overweight. Anyway, now he can concentrate on his job training without that on his mind. I hope he works up to a good job with Firestone. Have they ever been able to do anything for their first youngster?

I think both Mamie and Myrtle said that Vivian was graduating soon and coming home to stay for a while. I hope she will get a job for a couple of years and pay her folks back some of what it cost to send her to training. It cost Rany quite a lot, at first anyway. Maybe she was paid for the later stages. I understood she would be eligible for commission in the Army when she graduated, and since they claim to need nurses badly I wonder why she isn't applying. Maybe she wants to get married.

Think I had better quit and clear out my basket again. There isn't much going on just now but there is always a lot of routine paper work to attend to.

Love

Jim

[Note: "Mart" was Mom's uncle Martin. He was about 12 years older than Grandpa Schneider. Bus' son, Jim, told me that his father was exempted due to an injury suffered during his high school football days. Vivian is Mayme, (JRS' sister), & Rany Montagne's daughter; she became a nurse and entered the Army.]

[Letter No. 232]

Monday, Feb 21

Dear Betty -

I've been wondering how you enjoyed your Sunday dinner with the Handleys. Hope you didn't arrive and find Mrs. H. had forgotten all about it and gone for a ride or something.

I'm glad the Gerrings finally have found someone satisfactory to take care of Mrs. If she is good they had better hang onto her. People can sure be independent these days.

Have been working at gathering material and writing an outline for Col. Johnson's lecture to be given at the Post Schools next Tuesday. Two nights a week the officers up to and including the grade of Captain have to attend a school conducted by senior officers. It takes the place of the school formerly held once a week for all officers. I don't think it's worth the time and energy involved but orders must be complied with.

I have a temporary roommate now --- a Captain in the Sanitary Corps out from Washington on a mission of some kind. His name is McClung and I learned yesterday he was born and raised in Greenbrier County, West Virginia where the Handleys originated. He didn't know H. L. personally but knew who he was. Said his, (McClung's), "Great Grandpappy" founded the first settlement in that country and the Handleys and the somebody else settled in the region soon after. He knew the clan well. Could probably work up a first class argument between him and Handley if I could get them together.

It's windy and rainy out today, but I guess the natives are glad of it. The winter has been unusually dry and they are worried about crops next year. They have to irrigate everything they grow here so it isn't so much the lack of rainfall here as the lightness of the snow pack in the mountains, which seems to tie in with the rainfall here in the valley. From your description in your last letter you are not short of snow back there any more.

Has your father found a farm to move onto yet? If he is going to continue farming I hope he hangs on to enough machinery. I understand farm machinery is still on the critical list and almost unobtainable.

There is no news here. Things have quieted down for the time being and the work is pretty light.

The General is away on a six or eight weeks plane tour of the air bases in the South Pacific and things are more pleasant with him gone. If the Japs don't interfere with his return things will buzz again in about a month.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 233]

Saturday, Feb 26

Dear Betty -

We are in the midst of another inspection but it doesn't ruffle things as much with the General away. His second in command is an easygoing old Colonel who doesn't get excited.

I have figured our income tax to the best of my ability. The long form is enough to drive you crazy *[sic]* this year but I found that my military exemption brought the amount on which we have to pay income tax below \$3000 so I use the short form which is much simpler. With our exemptions our income tax is zero as usual, but the Victory tax figures out \$22.18. I will send a money order or cashier's check for that amount with my return form to the Collector at K. C. and then we can forget about it until next year.

So Mr. Shoemaker figures Col. Johnson and I will be back soon. He may be right or he may be wrong. He is probably referring to the article that came out in the papers about a month ago to the effect that officers over 38 years who had been commissioned directly from civil life, or were Reserve or National Guard would be discharged or revert to inactive status. I gathered this meant those who were not assigned or for whom no suitable assignment exists. Several officers I know have already been discharged or are awaiting discharge. Unassigned officers from here are sent to a pool at Fresno, and I understand they are letting out those over 38 who arrive there. Just now our little section is being reorganized and it is possible will go out of existence or be so organized that we will be surplus. In that case it is entirely possible that one or both of us will be unassigned and inactivated. Of course I suppose the public would consider it a stigma to be discharged in time of war --- it would be assumed to be a sign of inefficiency, (which it may be in some cases), but except for that I wouldn't feel at all bad to get an honorable discharge or go on inactive status any time. I'm perfectly willing to let the youngsters take over. Of course I won't ask for relief, neither will I feel bad if they tell me to go ---provide it is for over-age reasons only.

What are they going to do with Dick Handley now that he is grounded for the work he was being trained in? That kind of thing is what makes me so discouraged about the Army --- just like discharging over-age officers. They can't make up their minds. I read the other day that almost 1¼ million men have been discharged from the Army since Pearl Harbor. They draft men, decide afterwards they are not physically qualified, or they change the age limits again and turn them loose. We are going to have an enormous veterans problem after this war, even if we only count men who were drafted and then sent home after a few weeks. Lots of them will have "disability" case against the Government.

I'd better quit griping and close this.

All my love.

Jim

[Note: The "Victory tax is another new one on me. It was passed in the early days of the War to compensate for the low number of people who had to pay income tax at the time. I believe it was about 5%.] [JRS' reluctance to risk public scorn for being released due to his age will result in a trip to the war zone.]

[Letter No. 234]

Sunday, Feb 27

Dear Betty -

Bill Slattery just called me up and told me that his second son Timmy --- about Neal's age --- was killed yesterday. He was riding his bicycle, with another boy on his way to a Boy Scout meeting and was hit by a bus bringing workers out here to the field. The funeral will be held at St. Josephs church in North Sacramento at 9:00 o'clock Tuesday. Father Gunn --- who has met Bill on some of his visits out here, said he would try to arrange his affairs so he can go with me.

Timmy was a fine, bright boy, and it was a shock to hear about it.

I've always worried about our boys riding their bikes on the streets, and all the youngsters having to cross traffic in the streets. I hope they will always be careful.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 235]

Wednesday, March 1

Dear Betty -

I have finally got my income tax form completed and am mailing a Bank of America money order tonight to the Collector of Internal Revenue at K. C. for \$22.18 for Victory Tax --- not income tax. Next year I hope they will have a simpler form. The short form isn't bad, but makes no allowance for exemptions except for dependents.

I am enclosing herewith a cashier's check for \$300. Next month the allotment should go into effect and you should get a government check for that amount. I was told that it takes some time and that you will probably not get it until about the 10th of April. I don't know whether the delay must be expected every month only the first month it is in effect.

I was slightly amused, (and irritated), at Mrs. Handley's request that I do something to make Dick an officer. (I got your Sunday and Monday airmail letter today). Dick will have to initiate the action himself and thru his Commanding Officer. After that it's up to a local board of officers on his own post whether he is rated eligible or not for attendance at one of the numerous Officer Candidate Schools (O.C.S). I sat on such a board at Stockton --- but I wouldn't have a thing to say at Hammer Field, except possibly as a character witness, if asked, but I won't be asked, since I don't know a thing about his military proficiency. If the board passes a candidate he is put on a roster to await his turn. Each Service Command, (there are nine in the U. S.), has a monthly quota to such of the Officers Candidate Schools as are still accepting candidates and the quotas have been greatly reduced. If he is finally sent to OCS it's strictly up to him. It isn't as easy as formerly for enlisted men to get commissioned since many thousands were sent up the first year of the war. Mrs. H. has weird ideas about officers being "exempt from the laws" and doing as they please. I sat on a General Court-Martial Monday that tried a Lieutenant for infraction of flying regulations --- he flew his plane 20 miles beyond the local flying area on a training flight. Enlisted men have privileges denied to officers. An officer is held much more strictly accountable for his actions and has a lot more to lose if he gets in bad. As for going to Hammer Field --- I can't leave this place for more than 24 hours without official orders being published by the Adjutant General, and the orders must state that I am on official business, and what that business is. Unless under orders an officer must confine his movements to within radius of 25 miles of this post. He may go as far away as 100 miles for a period not exceeding 24 hours, provided he gets the consent of the Adjutant and registers in and out. Sure, I'd help Dick if someone would point out how. If his application is processed, and I am asked, I'll recommend him.

I went to Tim Slattery's funeral yesterday and it was a miserable day. Of course it wasn't nearly as bad as if it had been one of my own, but it was pretty awful bad just the same. He was such a bright, lively, happy kid. Reminded me a lot of Neal. His Boy Scout troop was there in uniform with the troop colors. Father Gunn couldn't be there but he sent notes to Bill and the parish priest. I didn't talk to Bill or any of the family, just attended the mass, saw them come in and leave. It's an awful blow to Bill and to Tim's older brother. The boy sure took it hard. Bill just seemed dazed. He said over the phone he couldn't seem to realize what had happened. Betty --- caution the children to be careful. I worry a lot about them

Love,

Jim

[Letter No. 236]

Monday, March 6

Dear Betty -

I came up from Sacramento this morning to make a building survey. Expect to go back tomorrow. I haven't been out to Hammer Field as there is no longer any activity out there under the Air Service Command jurisdiction. However, I will try to stop there tomorrow on my way back from Mt. Campbell rifle range and look up Dick Handley. Better not say anything to his folks about it yet though, because I may not be able to make it and if they should find out I had been here and not seen Dick they wouldn't like it.

Your dad's letter was interesting but I gather he isn't very happy about leaving the old place. Too bad the deal with Bus didn't work out, or that he couldn't get along with Paul. After all, if it hadn't been for Paul I imagine he would have had to quit a long time ago. Anyway, I'm afraid it's going to be a hard job and take a long time for him to readjust himself.

I hope you have been able to get a new battery for the car. I understand it's pretty hard to get anything in the way of car repairs any more. The Col. had some work done on his car the other day and you should have heard him when he got his bill. By the way, he still registers his car back there and has brand new Missouri license plates.

What is Dub Major going to do in Parkville? I understood he wanted to go to the Navy, and I suppose, to the flying branch -- if he is like most of the youngsters.

So Neal is still anxious to get into the Army. I can imagine how he feels about it at his age, and I suppose he will leave home early to butt his head against the world. However, I hope the war will be over before either he or Bob are old enough to go.

Poor little Jimmy --- I suppose he will have a dread of dentists for a long time. I'm glad he didn't have to be hurt that time anyway.

I met a number of officers today at the training center here who used to be at McClellan Field. At least one of them --- a Major --- is slated for discharge because he is unassigned and over 38. Quite a lot of them are going out that way. However, I am still assigned so I don't think I am on that list. Regulations change so fast nowadays that no one knows where he stands for very long.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Letter No. 237]

Friday, March 10

Dear Betty -

I got your Sunday's letter yesterday. You asked how the Victory Tax was figured. I haven't got the instructions here so can't tell you exactly except that there is a table showing the tax for different incomes, and a factor, (fractional), to multiply the figure by to correct for dependents. There is not nearly so much exemption as there is on the income tax. I have sent the return and the money to the Collector so we won't have to worry about it for another year --- unless it is wrong, or they think it's wrong.

Chaplain Gunn is a Captain now and quite happy about it. I gave him a set of my old bars about a month ago when I knew he had been recommended for promotion.

I got a notice from the Office of Dependency Benefits acknowledging receipt of my allotment request. My copy said a copy had been furnished you so I'll keep my copy in my 201 file, unless you have not received yours.

Have been pretty busy this week. I got back from Fresno Tuesday night and was on a General Court-Martial all day yesterday. We have a big mapping project under way now which will take a long time to complete.

While at Fresno I had to go out to Mt. Campbell rifle range, about 25 miles east near the beginning of the foothills. I stopped at Hammer Field for gas and went around to Dick Handley's Squadron orderly room to look for him. He was out at the Mt. Owens gunnery range for the day but the lieutenant on duty at the orderly room offered to send out and have him brought in if I wished. I didn't feel I had the time to wait, nor did I like to interfere with any training programs, so declined his offer. However, he said he was going to the range later in the day and would take a message so I wrote Dick a short note to send out with him. Anyway you can report to Mrs. Handley that I called to see Dick, and that I will be glad to help him anyway I can. However, he will have to initiate the action for a commission himself, unless his commanding officer does so.

Must get back and push my draftsmen now. The Col. is very fidgety --- and warns me that he will hold me "absolutely responsible" that it is done on time.

Lots of love

Jim

[Letter No. 238]

Sunday, March 12

Dear Betty -

It's a raw breezy day, not pleasant but in a way a relief from the too-nice weather we have been having. It was beginning to get too warm for wool and office work.

I hope your sore jaw is better. Did the dentist break the tooth or hurt the jaw bone when he pulled it? So many people nowadays [sic] complain that dentists break the socket when the [sic] pull teeth and bone splinters have to be removed afterwards.

Col. Johnson told me the night before last that he had been unofficially informed by Patterson Field Hqs. that the Engineer Section at all Air Service Commands would be reduced to two officers --- there are three of us here now, (eight when I arrived). He said one of us could expect to leave for other assignments --- or non-assignment --- soon, or possibly all three of us might go. Yesterday he talked with Patterson Field and was told that there would be a general shifting around at our and all similar establishments. They told him that I would probably be sent either to San Francisco with Col. Huntington or to Air Service Command Hqs. at Patterson Field. They didn't know whether Col. Johnson would stay here or be moved, nor what they were going to do with Maj. Root --- they were considering it at the time.

I would rather go to Patterson Field than to S. F., because Dayton is only about 550 air miles from Kansas City and there would be a chance of getting home oftener. Of course nothing is sure in the Army until you have your orders in your hand, (and then they are often rescinded before they can be effected), but it looks as if I'll be leaving here quite soon. Anyway, I'm kind of picking things up and getting ready for a move. Some time this week we should have something definite.

I haven't seen, heard from, or called up Bill Slattery since the funeral. I had a feeling he would probably rather be left alone for a while and Chaplain Gunn thought so too. I'm thinking of calling him up at his office some time this week and asking him out some evening soon. He has no phone at this home. There isn't anything to do to entertain him out here except to take him over to the Club and buy him beer and talk. A liquor store has been opened down town for military personnel only --- you get a card enabling you to buy one bottle per week --- so I have a pint of whiskey in my locker now. Maybe I could warm him up for an hour or two but when you feel like he does now it won't do any good.

It's clouding up outside so will probably be raining soon.

I'll take this over and mail it now and then sort out trash. Junk sure accumulates when you stay put a few months. I'll let you know as soon as I hear anything definite.

Hope I'll be near home soon.

All my love.

Jim

[Note: This is another letter that is very cramped in its penmanship. Written with a fine-tipped fountain pen, (rather than the more usual pencil), it has very small words, and closely-spaced lines. Not sure why this is the case; unless he felt the smaller sheet of paper, (6¼" x 9¼"), would restrict his message]

[Letter No. 239]

Thursday, March 16

Dear Betty -

I am all alone with the office today, Col. Johnson and Maj. Root being in San Francisco for a couple of days. Things run much more smoothly with the old man gone and we all wish he would be gone oftener *[sic]* and stay longer.

Tomorrow I have to attend a General Court-Martial. Don't know who we are to try, or what for, (we never do until we arrive at the Court-Martial room), but I always welcome it as a break from the monotony of the office. Last week we tried a soldier for attempted rape, found him guilty and sentenced him to five years. Maximum sentence we could have given him was 20 years. If he had succeeded --- as he probably would have if a civilian hadn't interfered --- the sentence would have had to be death or life imprisonment. We sure have all kinds of cases!

The General is back from his South Pacific trip but hasn't got into the harness yet I guess. Anyway things are still running smoothly --- which usually wasn't the case when he was here.

I haven't heard anything further on my anticipated transfer elsewhere. I hope I draw Patterson Field in preference to San Francisco --- but would even rather go to Oklahoma City, where there is an area Air Service Command similar to this. I don't know if there is to be any change of vacancy there but sure wish I could have that station if there is. That would be considerably closer to home than Patterson Field, and since the Specialized Dept in North Kansas City is under Oklahoma City Air Service Command jurisdiction I might even get a trip home on official business once in a while. However, I don't expect any such break as that. There are too many possibilities and it's foolish to anticipate anything --- just leads to disappointment.

I hope your Dad's venture in farming on Mart's place works out all right. Is he going to farm the place or only work for the new owner? I'm afraid he won't work out very well as a hired man, but he probably wouldn't be very happy working in a factory or defense plant. He can always try that if farming doesn't work out.

It's so nice out today I think I'll go out and circulate awhile. The Col. is always stewing because I'm not our familiarizing myself with the work enough --- and then he keeps me so busy with trifling details that I can't ever leave the office. Still is consistent as ever.

I'll let you know as soon as I hear any more about my move. Hope the news will be good.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Note: Mom's dad would have been about 66 years old at this time ---- probably considered too young for a farmer to consider retiring. I never did pick up on the reason for selling his farm in the first place. If it was due to poor health, I would think he was too ill to work for someone else. JRS' first mention of this is in Ltr #219, but no reason is suggested. This is another example of the lack of Mom's letters seriously limiting what we know of the times.]

[Letter No. 240]

Sunday, March 19

Dear Betty -

Major Root just came in with a teletype from Patterson Field saying that under the new reorganization, (two engineer officers to each area Air Service Command), I am surplus and since there is no suitable assignment for me at this time and I am over 38 recommends to the general here that I be place on an inactive status. The message "requests comments" from the general and Major Root says if I want to stay in he and Col Johnson will go to bat and try to keep me in, but of course I will have to go elsewhere. He wants to know by tomorrow so they can phone Patterson Field.

Of course I want to get out and back to you and the youngsters. However, I know that our friends and neighbors back there will attribute it to failure and I don't like that.

It looks very much as if I'll soon be back with you --- and nothing would please me more except for public opinion, which I shouldn't care about, but do.

Don't say anything about it to the youngsters or anyone else until it's settled and I get my orders. Policies change so fast these days that you never can tell from one day to the next what is going to happen. I hope to see you soon.

All my love.

Jim

[Note: That his own reluctance to face perceived censure back home was a major reason for JRS' staying in had always been just a vague idea for me. . Mom had hinted at this on a few occasions, and It would be very interesting to know how she reacted at the time to this line of thinking on his part. I had always attributed it to typical military SNAFU.]

[Letter No. 241]

Tuesday, March 21

Dear Betty -

From the enclosed copies you can see that it looks as if the old man will soon be coming home. However, Col. Padgett says that it will be at least three months before it will be effective, and the War Department will have the final say. A lot of things can happen in three months, (policies change fast these days), so don't bank on it as a sure thing. I wouldn't tell the children yet, or anyone else, although I suppose it will soon be known through Mr. Shoemaker. Col. Johnson asked if he should tell Shoemaker --- it might affect his plans in setting up his force for post-war planning. I told him it didn't make any particular difference, only if it fell through I'd rather not have it made public. It's no disgrace I know --- just a policy to weed out the older men as soon as their present assignments terminate, but everyone will interpret it as intended to weed out the inefficient and nothing will ever get it out of their minds. The newspapers gave it a lot of publicity and certainly managed to give it that implication. Except for that I would be very much pleased, as it is I'm glad anyhow. I want to get home and I'm satisfied I can do as much good there as in the Army.

A lot of the older officers are being inactivated from here now under this policy but most of them are being sent to the replacement pool at the Training Center at Fresno to await their orders. That is the reason for Col Johnson's comment No. 2, par. 2 & 3 on the routing and record sheet. He wants to keep me here until I go on the inactive list.

Of course, if I am inactivated I will still be subject to being called back to active duty if my "services are required by a change in the military situation".

Your Friday's letter just arrived. I'm glad your dental work turned out satisfactorily and that you are through with that for a while.

The radio said last night you were having a blizzard back there. I hope it isn't bad.

Hope to be home for good in about three months.

Love.

Jim

P. S. I don't care if you tell the youngsters, or anyone else if you wish. Just thought that in view of the long time it will take to process it the deal may fall through and then it would save a lot of explanation not to have said anything.

[Note: Here are excerpts from the two relative communications that JRS included with this letter:

"...THIS HQ HAS ADVISED THAT FOLLOWING NAMED CE OFF IS SURPLUS TO CE REQUIREMENTS WITHIN YOUR COMD. PROVIDED THIS SITUATION EXISTS ACTION SHOULD BE INITIATED TO RELIEVE OFF FROM ACTIVE DY UNDER PROVISIONS OF EXISTING DIRECTIVES APPLICABLE TO OFFS OVER 38 YEARS OF AGE FOR WHOM NO SUITABLE ASGMT EXISTS...

MAJOR JAMES R. SORENSON, CE O-305385

YOUR COMMENT CONCERNING THE ABV IS REQUESTED.

(RECEIVED SASCC 20 MARCH 1944 - 0829)"

“(“Routing and Record Sheet ”2. Believe Major Sorenson would be of more value to the service if retained on his present duties at Headquarters McClelland Field than on any other assignment in the area until relieved from active duty. 3. It is recommended that Major Sorenson be retained on this present duties until relieved from active duty providing such action in consistent with current policies. Mar 20 – 1944))

[Note that “War Department” was the name of what we now know as “The Department of Defense.]

[Letter No. 242]

Sunday, March 26

Dear Betty -

I'm on Sunday duty today and will have to sit at my desk all day. Just got off a tour of duty yesterday as Administrative Officer of the Day --- a new one they dreamed up here to see that field grade officers stay on the duty roster. It all helps to make the time go faster.

The last letter I had from you is last Sunday's with letters from Bob and Neal. I was glad to get them. I suppose you are all busy with the garden and yard getting ready for spring.

It would be nice if Honey could come down and stay with you for a while anyway and get a rest from her troubles. I had no idea Mart's place was such a rats nest. It's almost a new house and should be in good shape.

I don't know what the present status of my relief from active duty is. Col. Johnson seems to think it's his duty to keep me in, has told the Deputy Commander and Chief of Personnel and Training that I should be retained. They have suggested ways and means --- such as transfer to another branch of the service where they have vacant assignments, etc., but I told the Col. I wouldn't consider that and have explained to him that I would rather have him let the thing go through and nature take its course. Maybe it isn't right to feel that way, but I would welcome relief from duty. It will take a long time to process it and policy may change before it's completed so I'm not really expecting it to go through. Also, I'm pretty sure that this is going to be a long war in spite of the optimists, (can't see where we have gone very far towards winning it yet), and before it's over I'll be willing to bet that all the officers they release now as over-age will be called back to active duty if they are able bodied. Meanwhile I would like to spend a few months at home with you and the youngsters. I figure I would be on leave of absence from the Army just as I am now on leave from my job. Anyway, as far as I can learn the "comments" requested by the teletype have not yet been forwarded.

It's a fine day outside and I wish I could be out. I suppose you are having fine days now and then back there ---- with the other kind mixed in, that's the way it usually is at this time of the year.

Have Bob and Neal ever finished their model planes? Wonder if they ever go over to the little park to shoot their bows and arrows. Do you ever hear what has become of Dad? I wonder if he doesn't miss Kansas City and little Jimmy.

It's almost noon so I'll hurry this down to the mail branch to catch the noon mail.

Lots of love.

Jim

[Note: Anyone who has read through all of JRS' letters, beginning in January of 1942, will probably be struck by the significant improvement in his attitude during 1944. 1942 and 1943 both held many frustrations for him, and he expressed this feeling in most of his letters home in those years. It is not apparent that he is receiving much better treatment from the Army, but he seems to have resolved to make the best of it. Here he is telling about his boss trying to keep him in the service when an honorable way out is available; and these last two letters indicate that he is almost hoping that his release does not happen.]

[Letter No. 243]

Thursday, March 29 *[March 29, 1944 was a Wednesday]*

Dear Betty -

I am sending you copies of action to date on my relief from active duty which I think I self explanatory. In compliance with Para. 2 of Gen. Howard's letter I think it best to wait further developments before me make any plans or announcements.

If the policy is not changed and unless a glitch occurs it looks very much as if I may be home with a couple of months, for a while at least. I hope it goes through.

The Col. and Major Root are in San Francisco today and I am alone with the work. There isn't much to do, but have to be on the alert all the time.

I will keep you informed of developments as soon as I have anything, but guess all there is to do now is wait. Hope to be with you soon.

Love

Jim

[Note: This letter contained 8 onion skin carbon copies of various military letters concerning this relief effort, including JRS' formal request. In this letter, he once again states his date of birth as "1 September, 1898", instead of the correct date of "1896". The quoted date is still adequate for him to qualify as "over 38", but it is a mystery why he always used it during WWII. It is even listed on his military ID card. Of course, I never had occasion to ask him why there was this discrepancy, but have assumed there was a mistake made early in the induction paperwork, and he didn't want to make a fuss by getting it corrected. He had to continue the "deception" during this process or risk all kinds of bureaucratic nightmares.]

[Letter No. 244]

Tuesday, April 4

Dear Betty -

I got your letter, (and Jean's), of last Friday. There isn't much news but will try to get a little note written anyway.

You must be getting evening-up weather now to make up for the fine weather you had last winter. We have been having warm dry weather for a long time but yesterday it clouded up and today it is raining a little now and then. In about a month the rains will be over and then there won't be a drop until September or October.

Slattery is coming out to see me tonight. He seems to be trying hard to get back his interest in things and is doing all right.

One of our engineers was called from his home by telephone shortly after he got to work. A telegram from San Diego said his father, (who was on this way to visit him from the east), was seriously ill in a hospital there. After he had left to arrange for the trip another wire came saying his father had died. He is the same fellow who broke his back last summer. Bad luck sometimes seems to run in streaks.

I'm sitting around these days trying not to hold my breath waiting for a decision on my request for relief from active duty. I know it has cleared this Hq. but will have to clear ASC hq. the Adj. General, and possibly the Chief of Engineers. I don't expect any difficulty unless there is a change of policy. Already there are rumors that they have stopped releasing officers, (due to developments in the theaters of operations), but haven't seen or heard anything official to that effect as yet. I sure hope I get out before the policy does change, as I'm certain it will sooner or later. The thing this Army is best at is changing its mind.

I'm glad Neal got the tricycle fixed for Jimmy. I'll bet he will have a lot of fun with it.

I'll run down and mail this and get back on the job.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 245]

Friday, April 7

Dear Betty -

I've got the office to myself today. Col. J. and Major Root are in San Francisco on business. I expected an easy day but had to spend the morning very busily initiating a new project for the General. Things are quieter now and I'll write you a little letter.

It's clouding up and looks as if we may have rain for Easter. I hope it will be nice back there anyway.

Wish I was back to spade the garden and rake the lawn. I crave work like that now but suppose I will get lazy awfully fast if I ever get exposed to work like that again.

I suppose Majors was pleased to see Dub in a Navy uniform. I'll bet it made Neal restless and envious. I surely hope this war will be over before our boys get into it.

There is no news as yet about my relief except that it cleared this field without a hitch, as I knew it would. Hope it gets all the way through the echelons and is approved before the policy is changed.

Hope the Gerings will be able to replace their housekeeper soon. It would be hard on you to double at helping them out and get your own work done and it would be hard not to do it too.

What are the boys planning to do this summer? I don't suppose it will be practicable to send them up to Yankton since the old farm is gone. Of course they might be welcome at Marge and Arts but I doubt they would enjoy it as much as last summer. Of course if I came home I would like to have them around but imagine they will get restless pretty soon after vacation starts. Now that they are getting big they will probably be able to find plenty to do without leaving Kansas City. Wish we could take one of our old vacation trips this summer but with rationing as it is that will probably be out.

It's almost time for the civilians to leave so I must sign the daily journal and send it on its way. Military personnel has to stay on the job for half an hour after the civilian help leaves.

Still hoping to see you soon.

Love

Jim

[Note: "Majors" lived in the house next door on the south. "Dub" must have been a couple of years older than Bob, and thus able to join up.]

[Letter No. 246]

Thursday, April 13

Dear Betty -

Your Sunday's letter just arrived and I'll try to get this written before the Col. gets back from lunch and things start bustling again. Business has been brisk the last few days. It runs by spells.

There isn't any news. I'm still waiting to hear from my request for relief but it's a little early to expect news yet. Meanwhile the rumors are thick enough to keep me uneasy --- some claim the policy has been changed and no more officers will be released. The Col. saw a personal, (not official), letter in San Francisco last week from an officer at Patterson Field to a friend in S. F. that stated it was planned to send me to help Col. Huntington, Engineer Officer for Col. Jordan who is C. O of the Pacific Overseas Command at San Francisco. That's where they send the supplies to the troops in the Pacific Theatre. However ---- it wasn't official and I knew it had been considered a long time before and was probably just a holdover rumor. Anyway I'd feel a lot better to have my orders for home in my hand.

I have to attend garrison school tonight. All officers have to attend two nights a week one week, three nights the next week, two the next, etc. The General believes in keeping us busy all the time, which is commendable I suppose. Tomorrow *[sic]* there is another session of the General Court. Seems I'm always a member of a General Court. I don't mind though, it a relief to get away from routine for a day now and then.

Yesterday I sent my quarterly estimate of our income and victory tax for next year. As usual the income tax will be nil but the victory tax figures \$44.28 so I sent the required $\frac{1}{4}$, or \$11.07 to the Collector of Internal Revenue at Kansas City. Of course that will be changed if I get out of the Army so will be amended in the July 15th report.

I'm glad the youngsters had a good Easter and hope you enjoyed it too. Did you have a good time at Green's birthday party? You didn't mention the Handleys being there. Don't they click with the Greens?

I've got to bring this to a snappy close. Hope I can write soon that I am coming home. I'll sure feel blue if I don't get relieved ---- probably won't be a chance like this for a long time again.

All my love.

Jim

[Note: "Green" was another of JRS' colleagues at the PRA. They lived only a few blocks away from us, and the party may have been at their home. Mom was a good spouse to attend social events related to his work while he was gone.]

[Letter No. 247]

Tuesday, April 18

Dear Betty -

I'm supposed to be out on the range but the Col. and Major Root are both down town so I'm taking care of the office. It's a fine day and I would like to be outside.

There is still no news and don't know whether I'll be able to take care of that puttying job or not. I hope so.

Tonight I have to go to school again --- three nights this week. I don't mind going to school if they teach something interesting but when it's all old stuff and the instructors are as bored as the pupils it's a waste of time.

I got the enclosed announcement from Smith the other day. No letter, just the announcement. I don't think there will be any difficulty getting back my old job, but if I didn't have that job to go back to would look him up right away --- when and if I got out of the Army. However, I never had much faith in committees and organizations getting jobs for individuals. You have to hunt your own.

I'm also inclosing a letter from Stella, mostly about dad. I'm surprised he is considering an operation, he must be pretty bad. I used to tell him that was the only way his rupture could be cured but he always said "I'm not going to let them cut on me". Where he got the idea that I had insurance on him I don't know, unless he thought he was included in that hospitalization group policy. It bothers me because I know he must be in bad shape to consider an operation. I haven't answered Stella's letter yet, surely it wouldn't take a family conference to take action if he needs it. Naturally I want them to do what the doctor advised, but when doctors disagree it's something else.

Father Gunn has gone to Santa Barbara for a week for some kind of retreat. The orders read "to fulfill obligations required of Catholic Chaplains" but he had to go at his own expense. However, it doesn't count against his leave time. Haven't had a talk with him in a long time --- he was very busy during the latter part of Lent and then had to get ready for this business.

I'm hoping to see you soon.

Love.

Jim

[Note: "Smith" must be another of JRS' co-workers; announcement is about a "post-war construction commission" being established by the American Society of Civil Engineers.] [Stella's letter is copied here, strange punctuation and all. I don't know what was available for Grandpa Sorenson at Chadron or Norfolk.]

"Yankton, S. D., April 10, 1944

Dear Jim:

What ever has happened to you. never hear a peep out of you any more.

Dad has been wanting some one to write you. he has been to the Dr here. Dr Smith. several times. seems to think he wants an operation now. Smith. says he doesn't think he can stand one. Then he went to Dr Obets. who gave him an examination. he told Dad. he was in good shape. & would operate when ever he was ready. he seems to think you have some kind of an

insurance on him. keeps talking about it all the time. We don't know what to do. Wish you would write him. I am sure we don't want to take on a responsibility like that. Unless all were agreed. We have talked him into going to Chadron for a while. We are taking him to Norfolk tonite. he gets into Chadron 12:15 tomorrow noon. He is quite lame. but seems to feel pretty good.

Helen. has the mumps. They came to Yankton last Thur. planned to spend Easter here. Helen. broke out with the mumps Sat morning. So they left for Lincoln in the afternoon. Called them this eve. Earl. said she was pretty miserable. Judy. just had them. & Don. just got out of his cast a short time ago. broke 2 bones in his wrist. right arm.

Russell. is on a defense job in Pasco. Wash. they plan on moving out there if he likes it. & of course Myrtle. & Thelma. are in Seattle.

Wish you would drop us a line.

Love, Estella.

[Letter No. 248]

Sunday, April 23

Dear Betty -

I got back last night from a two day detail at Ft. Bragg in connection with installations of some Signal Corps equipment. Drove over in a staff car with a civilian engineer and saw some beautiful country. Going out we drove up the Sacramento, then west across the Coast Range on the ruggedist mountain roads I've ever been on, through the Redwood Forest on the west slope, then up the coast on the cliffs above the ocean. Coming back we took another route, through Santa Rosa, where we stopped to wander around in Luther Burbank's garden, then through Glenn Ellen, Jack London's home in "The Valley of the Moon", Sonoma where the Bear Flag Rebellion occurred and the Republic of California was organized, Agua Caliente, Napa, Vacaville, etc. Never saw so many flowers in my life --- lupines, broom, azaleas, and California poppies everywhere. I think I have seen most of the high spots in California now and wish I could leave.

The mail section was closed when I got home last night and is still closed today so I have been without mail for three days. I went over the first thing this morning hoping there would be a letter from you and some news about my application for relief. They used to keep the mail section open on Sunday, but I understand that was discontinued last Sunday so I'll have to wait until tomorrow for news.

The General has wangled an enormous addition to our already large Officers Club and they had the grand opening last night. I didn't go over at all. When I got home I met a Lt.Col. in the hall and he invited me into his quarters for a drink. We had a tremendous shot of brandy apiece, then he went over to the dance while I went to bed and read the Saturday Evening Post until I fell asleep. I feel fine today but most of the people I've seen look pretty gloomy, although they all declare it was a good party.

You must be getting the place looking like Burbank's garden with all the planting you are doing. I wonder where you find room for it all. However, I'm sure it will look fine, you always did have luck with your planting. By the way, I saw some rose-colored iris in the old boy's place yesterday so I suppose he developed them. How is ours doing --- the one you got from Miss Meistrik?

It shouldn't be long now before I know one way or another if I am coming home this spring. This waiting is hard to take.

Love.

Jim

[Note: This "Ft. Bragg" is not to be confused with the military base of that name in North Carolina.] ["Miss Meistrik" was Mom's boss when she worked in the office of the County Superintendent of Schools. They remained friends over the years.]

[Letter No. 249]

Thursday, April 27

Dear Betty -

I got your Sunday's letter today with the newspaper clipping about the flood. You really are having rain back there.

I am just back from a two hour inspection of construction on the Field and am trying to get this written during office hours. Have to go to school tonight.

Am going to inclose a letter which I received from Cleo today. I wrote dad a couple of weeks ago and they still seem in a stew about what to do about his trouble. I don't know what to tell them, when doctors disagree I'm sure I don't know the answer.

Yesterday when I reported at the Court-Martial room I was told to call the office right away. When I phoned them they told me to call Operator 3, Washington, D.C. right away, the War Department evidently wanted to talk to me right away. When I got the operator she couldn't locate my party so I put in most of the day worrying and wondering what it was all about. Figured they had turned down my request and had a hurry-up assignment for me. When the call finally came through again I was told that it was believed I had the qualifications desired for Far Eastern civil affairs training and they would like for me to make application for that. I had read the Circular, (W. D. Cir. No. 136 – copy inclosed), so I knew what it was about. I said I wasn't interested. There aren't any jobs in the Army I am interested in any more but I didn't say that. Anyway, it indicates that my request has arrived at the top and I should have an answer before too long. I don't think they will detail me to the job if I don't want to go. It would probably be an interesting assignment, certainly should be for a single man, but all I want now is to get home and stay with you and get acquainted with my family again. When I asked for relief I meant it, and if they didn't want to let me go they shouldn't have given me the choice.

Wasn't it the 27th of April we moved into our house? Four years ago today, and I've been away a lot more than I've been at home since we bought it.

Must close now and pick up the tag ends before quitting time. School starts at 6:45 which doesn't leave much time for eating first. Col. Johnson is very much provoked --- he has to go too.

Love

Jim

[Note: This envelope contained a number of items, one of which was a newspaper clipping showing one Lt. Truxes, of Chadron, having his flight wings pinned on by his wife the former Mildred Harris. This is the son of "Bill", whose relationship to Cleo, (who sent the clipping to JRS), I do not know.] [Circular 136, referred to in the letter, was also enclosed. One line in it states: "Because of the importance of the ultimate missions, it is not desire to take into the training program any office who is not keenly interested in the assignment." Later letters may answer the question as to whether or not JRS became "keenly interested".]

[Cleo's letter if copied below. (It probably answers my question in ltr #248. about the draw of Chadron – that must be where she was living at the time.)]

"520 Shelton, Chadron, Nebr.

Sunday. April 23 '44

Dear Jim: -

Dad got your letter yesterday & wanted me to write & let you know he received it. He has been feeling better this last week than he has felt for some time but I certainly feel sorry for him as it is so hard for him to get around. The trip out here was terrible hard on him for a couple of days as the train between here & Omaha is like riding a lumber wagon as they are using old coaches now that they haven't used for a long time. He has been a little worried this last week as he passes blood all the time, he has done that off & on all the time but says it has never kept up like now but says it seems to make him feel better. He seems to think an operation will help, so I told him last nite I wouldn't say one way or another, now it was up to him. Bill is going to talk to a Doctor here & see what he thinks about it. Doc. Apt's at Yankton told Dad he should have the operation as he can fix him up as he is in good physical condition, good heart, blood pressure & all. Told Dad he had quite a few good years before him. I know he sure eats good & if he didn't smoke so much I would hardly know he was around. Still has always said he was so hard to take care of but I certainly cant see it so far. You know you have to over look a lot of things in an old person as we are all going to get old. Will let you know what Dad decides.

Suppose Stell told you that Russell was in Wash. He seems to like it real well. They employ 60,000 men on the project so you see it is quite a place. They have all kinds of fishing ther from bass to Salmon, says they catch Salmon up to 80". It is on the Columbia river where the Snake river empties into it. This project is a DuPont affair & no one knows what it is going to be. Russell says they are going to employ a lot of people after it is done & they are building a lot of new homes at Richland for housing. We May go out this summer as he seems to think he will locate there.

What do you think of Myrtle getting a diamond. I only hope she is sure. Guess he is a real nice fellow and certainly seems to think a lot of her.

We have been doing quite a lot of fishing lately as Bill hasn't gone back to work since his operation. Did any one ever tell you Bill had a very serious operation in February & for about 3 days we didn't know whether he would live or not. It was suppose to have been an operation for galstones & when the Doctor cut him open he said he never saw such a mess in all his life & didn't know how Bill had lived so many years like that. His stomach was pushed out of place & grown onto his liver & his intestines grown onto his liver & to top it all off the anesthetic wouldn't take so they had quite a time. He had two bad spells after he got home from the hospital & he was supposed to go back & have his gall bladder removed but decided to wait as Bill Jr. graduated & he & his wife were coming home on leave & now he feels so good he has decided to let the other operation go. He feels better now than he has for years & eat & enjoys his food which he never did before. I am enclosing a picture of Bill Jr. & his wife which was in the World Herald. He is now at Liberal, Kans. For nine weeks & then he thinks he might be sent to Lincoln or Sioux Falls & then I guess it will be overseas for him. He is flying the B-24 & is just crazy about flying.

Well Jim I seem to be rattling on here & by the way do you expect to get a discharge?

Must get to work, hope this finds you well & you might drop us a line when you have time. How is the family, Dad talks about little Jim all the time.

Love. Cleo

[Letter No. 250]

Sunday, April 30

Dear Betty -

I'm waiting for 2:00 o'clock when I have to go on duty as "Administrative" Officer of the Day. It's a 24 hour detail and I have a very bad cold, complete with coughing and runny nose so I anticipate an uncomfortable time.

I am inclosing a letter which I received from Cleo yesterday. It looks as if poor Dad is about through and it won't be a pleasant ending either. I haven't answered it yet as I should be hearing from the second check up in a day or two. Hope the doctor is wrong in his diagnosis, and of course there is a good chance he is. I sometime think they know as little about their business as most professional men --- they certainly disagree enough. Wish I was out of this Army, I can't get time or freedom to do anything or go anywhere. I'd like to talk to Dad and get his story. I know though that he must feel it is serious and also he must be suffering a lot or he wouldn't have considered an operation or even have seen a doctor.

I was just looking at the pictures we took at Nebraska City the day we took the "Blossom Trail" trip and drove over to Sidney for Dad to visit his old pal Hansen. I'm glad I took him that time. It was the last time they could even see each other. The pictures are stamped April 30, 1939, five years ago today, and a Sunday too.

There isn't much to write about. I'm going to write Bob a little note in lieu of a birthday card, which I couldn't find at the P.X. I've got a few little things together for his birthday but am afraid I won't find a box and get it wrapped and mailed in time to arrive for his birthday. I'll send the note separately.

Love.

Jim

[Note: Here is Cleo's letter:

"Chadron, Nebr. April 25 '44

Dear Jim.

I took Dad to a Doctor here to-day as he has been passing blood in his urine (?) ever since he came. He said he had been doing that for 5 or 6 months but only about once a month but he has been here two weeks & it hasn't let up in fact is a little worse so I took him up & the Doctor here is almost certain he has Cansor of the Prostrate glands & says he is in very bad shape & there would be no use in an operation. The trip out here was hard on him & he shouldn't have come & didn't want to as he said he told Stell he couldn't stand it but for some reason or another she was bound to get him out of Yankton. He has a terrible pain in his hip (?) & Doc says he is sure that is caused from the Cansor, I have to take him back Friday for another check up.

Jim what do you think we should do with him, if this is Cansor. You know it will get worse & he has to have a permant place to stay as he shouldn't be kicked around from one place to another, it is to bad to have a big family like ours & not have a home, I sure feel sorry for him. Now I don't know what you think about this suggestion & it perhaps isn't necessary to carry it out right away as he can stay here for at least another month but I believe it would be a good idea to get him a room at the Hospital at Yankton & give them so much a month for them to take care of him & we could each give a little every month & with what he gets it should be plenty as I don't think you should always shoulder all the expense as he is our responsibility too. Now I have to take him back to the Doc Friday & I will let you know what he says. You think it over & if you have a better suggestion let me know.

It is still pretty cool here had to get another 50 gal. of oil but hope it will be the last.

Maxine & Jim are fine & I am sure you wouldn't know either one of them as Maxine is an inch & a half taller than I & Jim almost as tall.

Well Jim I must go and fix a little something to eat as my son says he is hungry.

I will let you know what the Doctor says after he sees Dad again, but says he must be quiet.

Lots of Love, Cleo.”]

[Letter No. 251]

Wednesday, May 3.

Dear Betty -

I'll write you a small letter from the office. Have been a little more than half sick the last three or four days with the worst cold I remember ever having. Feel a little better today, but all in.

I still haven't answered Cleo's last letter as I was waiting for her report about Dad's Friday visit to the doctor. I talked to Major Eastman, a surgeon in our hospital, and he said the symptoms indicate that the Chadron doctor's diagnosis was probably correct. He said an operation would probably not do any good, as tentacles of the cancer would be imbedded in adjacent organs. He wouldn't hazard an opinion as to how long Dad could last in that condition --- said it might be only a short time --- or quite a long time.

I got Bob's package in the mail yesterday but it won't get there in time for his birthday now. I am sorry about that, but he will know it is coming anyway.

It's a week since I had my call from Washington and I still haven't heard from my request. Of course it is still too early to have gotten any orders after a board had mulled it over, and they probably have thousands before them. I'm beginning to think though that it probably won't go through. A Major Holmwood, who applied a month or more before I did has just received notice that his 20 years experience in the telephone business is just what the Signal Corps wants and he is being transferred from the Air Corps to the Signal Corps and will be sent to Maryland. I suppose some reviewer will decide the QM or Ordnance needs me and I'll be on my way to a new assignment. Of course, maybe I am just borrowing trouble but this waiting is a strain on the nerves, especially when you have a California cold.

I'll go down now and mail this leaving it open just in case there is news from Cleo.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 252]

Friday, May 5

Dear Betty -

I came over today on some business connected with our standby field at Madera. Had to leave on short notice and I didn't get all my business finished but expect to get back to McClellan tomorrow night. Slattery has invited me to the house for Sunday dinner or it wouldn't make much difference whether I got back tomorrow or not.

It was a hot trip and kind of miserable on account of my cold. When you catch a cold out here it is really something and takes forever to get rid of it.

Col. and Mrs. Johnson left this morning on a seven days leave which they will spend up in the redwood country near Fort Bragg.

I hadn't heard anything further about Dad when I left this morning, nor anything about my relief. Orders came through day before yesterday for one Major to go home so some requests are being approved. I guess that business just puts one in a big grab bag ---- they pass the list around and if your qualifications happen to strike someone's fancy he can ask for you. Fine business. I hope nobody likes mine.

I hope Bobby has had a nice birthday. Sorry I didn't get his package off sooner so he could have had it today. Jimmy will soon be celebrating his, and Neal not much later. Hope I can get their's taken care of in time but it never seems to work out that way.

I'm awfully tired tonight and am going to bed now. Either my "over 38" is catching up with me, or my cold and the heat have got me down.

Love,

Jim

[Letter No. 253]

Thursday, May 11

Dear Betty -

I got your Sunday's letter today. Still haven't heard anything further about dad. I wrote Cleo the other day and told her I thought her idea of getting him a room at the hospital was all right. Also told her that I had asked for relief and that if it was granted I would get up to see dad and would have more time to look into what we might think should be done --- operation, etc.

The weather is very cool here too. I slept with my overcoat over my blankets the last two night. Seems to be a queer spring everywhere.

Have you found out yet why Myrtle is coming back from Seattle. The few times I ever hear from the girls they talk about some guy wanting to marry her and assume I know all about it. Wonder if Thelma is coming back too.

We expect the Col. back tomorrow. It has been very quiet and peaceful with him gone. Now we can expect to rush and bustle about working hard at nothing. That guy can make a major project out of picking up a pin.

I seems to me it would be a good thing for Honey to buy the old McClean *[sic]* house if she can get it so cheap. It probably wouldn't cost so much to put it in fairly good shape as she would have lots of help. And she would probably enjoy it too. Also, it would give her a home of her own, and with your dad now living on rented farms and all unsettled, that would be something. She might make some income out of renting rooms too. As you say though, it's hard to advise other people, you don't know what they have in mind for the future.

I still haven't heard from my relief request. I'm haunting the mail section constantly and still hoping. Certainly I ought to be hearing one way or the other before so very long. Time sure passes slowly these days.

I spent most of Sunday with the Slatterys. Had a good dinner, we talked a lot and took some pictures with Bill's camera. Bill and his oldest boy came back to the post with me and we spent the evening in the Club.

Love.

Jim

[Note: I take exception to JRS' spelling of the "McCLean" house only because this is the first time I've seen this particular version. The family name of Mom's mother is recorded at various places in the family history as "McClane", MacLain, & McLain. I assume the house in question here is the one in downtown Yankton that Honey lived in during at least one of my visits to her. If this was the one at 714 Pine Street, it is also the birthplace of Mom. It seemed that Aunt Honey lived in a different house every time I was there.]

[Letter No. 254]

Monday, May 15

Dear Betty -

I got your Friday's letter today --- also War Department orders to report at New Orleans on a new assignment. No relief for the old man.

Will probably leave here Friday. Have wired New Orleans for a ten day delay en route. If this is granted I'll see you next week. If not, I don't know when.

Next few days will be hectic ones clearing the Field. I'll let you know as soon as I get an answer. Meanwhile must get started on the thousand things to be done.

I'm sorry it turned out like this. Had hoped to be home for a long stay at least. However, it can't be helped --- so I'll do my best.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 255]

Tuesday night – May 17 [May 17 was a Wednesday]

Dear Betty -

Just received a wire from New Orleans ---- “Delay enroute disapproved.”

I hope I will be able to get leave after I arrive there. It's only 24 hours from home. For the present there is nothing I can do but get ready and leave. Expect to leave Friday night.

Love,

Jim

I'll try to get Neal's birthday package wrapped and mailed before I leave. Keep it for him until his birthday. Love.

Wednesday morning.

I have arranged to travel to New Orleans via Kansas Cit. Here is my itinerary:

Lv Sacramento	11:05 PM	5/19 (Friday)
Arr K .C.	7:55 AM	5/22 (Monday)
Lv K. C.	7:00 PM	5/22
Arr New Orleans	11:35 PM	5/23

If the train is on time I'll have eleven hours at K. C.

Love.

Jim.

[Letter No. 256]

Thursday, May 25

Dear Betty -

I'm all checked in and ready to start school tomorrow. I'm not going to like it --- wouldn't like anything now after getting my relief turned down --- but will have to make the best of it.

The course only lasts 8 or 10 days, after which we will supposedly be finished TC officers. We will then be assigned to some duty --- troop or administrative --- and go to work. The post is the old Army air base on the south shore of Lake Ponchartrain.

We have to stand formation like recruits --- first call at 5:30, reveille at 5:40, first class at 7:30, retreat at 5:45 PM, one hour off for lunch.

Can't tell you much about prospects. As always we can hope for the best and expect the worst. It wouldn't seem so bad if they hadn't dangled the bait of relief from active duty and then pulled a fast one. I can't help feeling resentful and that's a bad attitude in the Army. It's hard enough to keep your nose clean without that.

For the next ten days or two weeks my address will be:

Officers Department, Class No. 8
The Transportation Corps School
New Orleans Army Air Base
New Orleans 12, Louisiana

It was nice to see you all for the little time I had. If I get a desk job here or anywhere in this country I'll get a leave as soon as I possibly can. I want one as long as possible though --- it's too hard coming away from home again to do it for just a day or two. Haven't got over the blues from Monday night yet.

All my love.

Jim

[Letter No. 257]

Sunday, May 28

Dear Betty -

I've been here less than a week but it seems like a year. It's hot, and the work is tiresome and boring so the time sure drags.

I shouldn't have looked around when I went through the gate at the station last Monday. Little Jimmy's face puckering up to cry still haunts me. I realize now, and have for quite a while that I had no business going into the Army. I should soon be hearing from my letter requesting relief, and when I do I'll try again. They can't do any more than say "no", and eventually they may change their minds. Anyway, while the present policy remains in effect there is a chance.

Have you heard how dad is lately? I wish I could have got to see him.

I should finish this orientation course this week and then will probably either be sent to one of the specialist courses here or be sent down to the replacement pool at Camp Plauch on the river. It's no use trying to figure out what they will do and it's a tiresome business waiting.

It's lonesome here today. Almost everyone has gone to town and the place is deserted. I had planned to go out and loaf in the park by the lake but it's cloudy and thundering so will stay inside for a while. The lake is only a few hundred feet from the gate. A lot of people sit on the sea wall and fish or catch crabs.

Tell Jimmy and the youngsters I'll be home as soon as I can, and I'll try to get home to stay before very long.;

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 258]

Wednesday Night, May 31

Dear Betty -

The end of another day and three more days to go in this rat race. I will finish the course Saturday and probably will go to Camp Plauch on Monday, unless they have an assignment for me. I won't know a thing until I see my orders.

Haven't had any mail yet except a letter from Helen which I received last night, forwarded from McClellan Field. It's mostly about Dad and I will enclose it with this. I wish you would write up to someone in Yankton and arrange to send up my share of the expense. I am getting more out of my paycheck than I need now and will send you the surplus as soon as I get settled down where I can send a registered letter.

This business about dad worries me a lot. If I don't get leave soon I probably never will see him again. Of course a leave at this time will not be much of a rest and going up to Yankton wouldn't leave much time to spend at home. That is a selfish thought though. What worries me is thinking of the misery poor dad has got to go through. I don't see why old people, so many of them, have to go that way. A quick heart attack would be a lot better.

I still don't know what the chances for a leave are, but I know what happens to a Colonel when he is promoted to Brigadier General, as has happened here recently. Most of them turn out to be pathetic little men who take themselves and their rank with a lot of seriousness. I found no officer here who was granted any delay in route --- and of course most of them tried for it. I'll come home on leave as soon as it is possible, but don't bank on it very soon. Also, as soon as I get a reply from the Adj. Gen. on my request for relief, (which may be a long time), I'll write another.

I hope you are all well and that I will get a letter tomorrow.

Love to all of you.

Jim

[Note: JRS' comments about a Colonel being promoted are somewhat confusing --- did he start to tell about a specific incident, and then get side-tracked?][The letter from Helen was not in the envelop I have.]

[Letter No. 259]

Thursday, June 1

Dear Betty -

Today I got my first letter from you and it helped a lot. Sure have been down in the dumps since arriving here.

Tonight it was announced at Retreat that the Orientation Course had been terminated and that all officers in that course would report tomorrow morning for their new orders. I had two days to go to finish it --- but it didn't amount to anything anyway.

What it means I don't know, except that I will no longer be at this place -- (the school), after tomorrow. Whether I will go to Camp Plauch, the Port, Jackson Barracks, or to any one of the hundreds of Transportation Corps set-ups, I haven't the least idea.

This is about all I have to write about now. As soon as I have, or know of, my next address I will let you know.

Love,

Jim

[Letter No. 260]

Sunday, June 4

Dear Betty -

It's very hot and I am sitting in my room in my pajamas to keep myself from melting my few clean clothes all out of shape.

They discontinued the course at the school very suddenly as I wrote you and sent most of us to the Army Service Forces Training Center at Camp Plauche, at the edge of New Orleans, and gave us at least tentative assignments. For the time being I am Assistant Executive Officer, ASFTC. Of course assignments are not permanent, but I am quite satisfied with what they gave me. Nothing they can give me would look good though after having planned to long on coming home of course but it's not as bad as a lot of others got and I may eventually get *[that?]* too.

I went to church this morning and hope to continue to do so and then after a while get the Chaplain to finish what Father Gunn started.

I don't want to raise our hopes too high but I feel that as long as I haven't been notified of disapproval there is still some chance of my relief being approved. I have heard of cases when officers who requested relief were sent to another branch and then getting relieved. After all it takes about three months as a rule for them to come through and it's only a little more than two months since I applied. However, I don't want to build up my hopes for another let down. An endorsement of disapproval may arrive any time and that would be hard to take if I got all hopped up again.

My address is: ASFTC, Camp Plauche, Louisiana. Do not address it Ass't Executive Office, as I may be on a different job when it arrives.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 261]

Monday Night, June 5, 1944

Dear Betty -

I'm getting settled down to my duties again but still pretty restless.

Am hoping that tomorrow I can get away long enough to get a couple of money orders or a cashier's check for \$200.00 to inclose with this.

Must get to bed and get some sleep. The days are long and the weather is hot.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 262]

Sunday, June 11

Dear Betty -

Another dreary week has gone by. I was beginning to feel like the forgotten man when yesterday afternoon a batch of mail arrived for me --- the fathers day cards from you and the children, two letters from you --- one written Saturday and one written Thursday containing the three checks, and a State College Alumnus. I felt better.

I am still here, on "detached service" assigned temporarily to Headquarters ASFTC as "Ass't Executive Officer" but the title is a joke. They have more unassigned field grade officers here than they know what to do with and have us making all kinds of inspections and anything they can think of to keep us busy. I think I would be able to get a ten day leave but hesitate to ask for it now when everything is so unsettled. I might want or need a leave very much later and wouldn't be able to get it if I took one now and it would be very disheartening to face a long summer here without prospects of a leave --- that's about all that makes it bearable now, to know that I probably could get away for a little while. Have been hoping that if I were sent to another station in the U. S. I would be able to get the customary delay enroute which was denied me, (and everyone else), when I came down here. Also --- if I am to be shipped overseas the Army Regulations provide that anyone who has not had a leave for six months, (that will apply to my case the 29th of this month), should, if possible, be granted up to 15 days leave before shipping out. Then again, if I should get relief from active duty, I would be paid for all accrued leave as terminal leave, which would amount to a good sum, as well as having my transportation paid. Of course, if dad is as sick as the girls say he is I should forget all other considerations and try to get home and see him while I still can. I don't know what to do.

It would be nice if you and the children could go back to Yankton with your dad if he comes down to Excelsior Springs. Dad would sure like to see you and the youngsters. I am going to write him today. I find I have a print of the picture of Jimmy and me and an extra one of that good one of Jimmy in his sailor suit so I will send them to him.

Just as I was ready to start for church this morning it started to rain heavily. I had on my last clean shirt and pants --- the laundry situation is terrible here --- so I changed into dirty clothes again because I don't know how long my last set will have to last me, put on my "shower proof", (but not rainproof), top coat and started out. Immediately the rain stopped and the blazing sun came out so I had to take my coat off. I guess I don't live right. I sure wish the laundry which I arranged to have forwarded from California would arrive, and also the stuff I sent to the New Orleans laundry. It takes forever to get anything back these days.

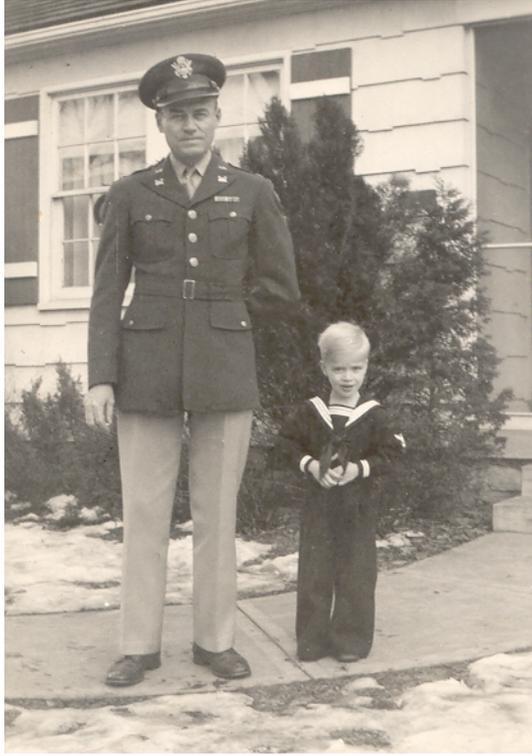
Guess I had better close this now and try to get a letter written to Dad.

Love

Jim

[Note: I wonder why Grandpa Schneider was coming to Excelsior Springs, Mo at this time?]

[Here is the picture I believe he was going to send his Father:



[Letter No. 263]

Friday, June 30

Dear Betty -

I arrived safely last night --- about two hours late. Reported for duty this morning as everyone was very cordial and hopeful that everything would be well with Dad. Naturally I worried all day yesterday and this morning until I got the enclosed telegram that Dad came through the operation. That made me feel a lot better.

Col. Hoagland sent me out with another officer to make an investigation toward cutting down our interior guard posts and we had hardly got started when a soldier came for me in a jeep with orders to report to Col. Hoagland immediately. An "alert" order had just arrived stating that I had been "tentatively selected for assignment to a task force subject to early movement overseas" and directing me to report to the camp surgeon for physical examination. I was OK'ed by the surgeon and have started to take care of the "musts" required of overseas officers. Took an examination in map reading this afternoon and saw a film strip on censorship of the mails --- all about what you mustn't write home about. Tomorrow I'll probably get the gas chamber, (old stuff for me since 25 years ago). Monday or Tuesday out to the range to fire the carbine, and then the infiltration course where you crawl a hundred yards under and thru the wire with land mines exploding to scare you and machine guns firing over you to you to keep you down.

Of course, lots of people get alerted without ever sailing, so it may be revoked, but it looks like this is it. It usually takes from a couple of weeks to a month or sex weeks after alerting before people get to a staging area for final processing. Anyway, once you get to the final stages before embarking everyone is pretty much incommunicado, so if you fail to hear from me for some time in a few weeks don't worry about it.

As far as I know I am the only officer here alerted on this particular order, but a number are still around after having been alerted for considerable length of time.

The laundry which I left in California arrived while I was gone so I am a lot better off for clothes. There was also a short letter forwarded from McClellan Field from Van Smith acknowledging the letter I wrote him about his new job.

I am looking forward to Helen's letter and hope it will have good news about what they found when the *[sic]* operated on Dad. I hope they found they would be able to make the cure permanent.

Well, I guess that's all the news. I would rather come home than anything that could happen to me, but if I have to stay in the Army ---- as evidently I will --- I would rather go on foreign service for a while than stay on this post and in this climate and do the work I would fall heir to here. After all that's what we are supposed to be here for, to at least get somewhere near the fighting and maybe get in a lick for luck. I only hope I get sent to a cool climate and get an assignment that I can handle satisfactorily.

All my love.

Jim

[Note: At some point JRS must have gotten the feeling that someone was reading his mail and determining what his assignments would be based on his desires --- always the opposite. He dislikes the climate at New Orleans and wants a "cool" one ---- the Philippine Islands do not fit that.]

[Letter No. 264]

Sunday, July 2

Dear Betty -

I still haven't received Helen's letter about Dad and there is no mail on Sunday so I won't hear today.

It is raining and fairly cool for this country. I have been going over my gear sorting out the junk that accumulates, does no good and takes up locker space. I have just finished wrapping a small package which I hope to get in the mail tomorrow. Mostly old insignia that I can't use any more, and little knick-knacks I don't want to carry along but don't want to throw away. You will find the cap ornament that Jimmy kept nagging me about. There is also a tiny pin, (eagle & coat of arms), in a little square box. Give that to Jean. I may not be where I can send her a birthday present next August so that will supplement the Engineer insignia pin I sent last winter as birthday present.

There isn't much news. I expect to take the routine gas instruction tomorrow and leave early Wednesday morning for Camp Slidell rifle [sic] range for my firing. Will probably have to stay overnight and go over the infiltration course Thursday morning.

Last Sunday I was home but it already seems months ago. Funny how time drags the first few days after getting back from leave.

Wish I knew when I was going but won't know until the orders arrive, and then only in a general way by the Port of Embarkation or staging area to which I will be sent, and a statement of the climate to prepare for. For a while after reporting back Friday morning I thought I would be going home for good soon. Col. Hoagland told me that the Port had called, (on the preceding Monday), and asked if I was available for release, Washington wanted me. He assumed they were referring to my letter requesting relief and since he knew I wanted to go home he answered that I was. For a couple of hours I went around with my head in the clouds, then got called in and told I was going overseas instead of home. It's OK but I'll be missing you a lot.

Must close and go eat.

Love.

Jim

[Note: This is a classic example of how "assuming" causes big problems. If the colonel had asked why "Washington wanted" JRS, he might have learned the true reason for the call, and might have diverted the order. Maybe not, but one should never answer big questions after assuming he knows the reason for the question. For his part, JRS seems completely resigned to whatever hand he is dealt.]

[Letter No. 265]

Wednesday, July 5

Dear Betty -

I got your Sunday's letter today. Still have not received the following letter Helen promised in her telegram, or any letter from any of the rest, so I don't know how Dad is getting along, or what the doctors found when they operated. It sure would help to relieve my mind just now when I have a lot of other things to think about.

By now you have my letters telling you that I am alerted for overseas shipment. Tomorrow I expect to go to the rifle range about 40 miles away. Will have to leave at 4:45 in the morning and will probably be there all day. After that I will have taken care of all the things I was directed to get done, and have nothing to do until I get my actual orders, which should be here within the next few days. The orders will state what clothing to carry and I will probably have a little time at a staging area to complete my equipment.

I wonder what you and the kids did to celebrate the 4th. It was just another day here with no observance at all as far as the Army was concerned. However, the papers say that the public flocked to beaches and amusement parks and caused quite a traffic congestion.

The weather has been comparatively cool since I got back, with showers nearly every day, but today is quite sunny and it's apparently warming up.

Hope to hear soon that Dad is better and that the operation cured his trouble.

There isn't anything new to write about, just the old tiresome stuff.

Wish I could spend all this waiting time at home.

Love,

Jim

[Note: Mom wrote some notes on the trip that JRS had made during his emergency leave to South Dakota on the back of this envelope. A scanned image of that is included below.]

Thu	22	Wed	27
Fri	23	Thurs	28
Sat	24	Fri	29
Sun	25	Sat	30
Mon	26	Sun	1
		Mon	2
		Tue	3
		Wed	4
		Thurs	5
		Fri	6
		Sat	7
		Sun	8
		Mon	9
		Tue	10
		Wed	11
		Thurs	12
		Fri	13
		Sat	14
		Sun	15

June 15 - Thurs
 June 16 - Fri
 June 17 - Sat
 June 18 - Sun
 June 19 - Mon
 June 20 - Tues
 June 21 - Wed
 June 22 - Thurs
 June 23 - Fri
 June 24 - Sat
 June 25 - Sun
 June 26 - Mon
 June 27 - Tues
 June 28 - Wed
 June 29 - Thurs
 June 30 - Fri
 July 1 - Sat
 July 2 - Sun
 July 3 - Mon
 July 4 - Tues
 July 5 - Wed
 July 6 - Thurs
 July 7 - Fri
 July 8 - Sat
 July 9 - Sun
 July 10 - Mon
 July 11 - Tues
 July 12 - Wed
 July 13 - Thurs

Thurs. - June 15 - Jim arr. K.C.
 Fri - 16 - Stay in K.C.
 Sat. - 17 - to Yankton
 Sun - to Hospital
 Mon - Hosp. - Marie's - glass broken
 Tues -
 Wed - Grandpa taken to Omaha
 Thurs. - Hayes takes us to
 Fri - Home to K.C.
 Sat - Sun - Mon - Tues - Wed (in K.C.)
 Wed - June 28 - Jim left for New O.
 29 - ~~30~~ - Grandpa
 operated.

[Letter No. 266]

Sunday, July 9.

Dear Betty -

Another dreary week gone and another starting. I have completed all my required preparatory stuff and am waiting for orders. They should arrive any day now --- may even be in Hq now for all I know. The weather has turned hot again and I'm sick and tired of heat. I hope they send me to Iceland or Alaska or some place where I can get chilblains again. Of course my first choice would be Kansas City but I know that's out now.

I suppose Helen and Earl are there now. I got a letter yesterday from Helen about Dad. No doubt you have heard all about it by now. Looks as if poor Dad hasn't much to look forward to except misery.

You asked about the necessity of paying the Victory tax while I am overseas. As far as I know it doesn't make any difference, except that I think we may have more time to make the payments. However, since it will have to be paid we may as well pay them when due rather than let them pile up. There will be enough taxes to pay when this war is over without having a lot of back taxes to take care of.

What are the boys doing to pass the time this summer? I wish they could have had the old farm to go to. Summer vacations are going to be a problem from now on. They are getting too big to have so much idle time on their hands. Do you think your Dad may be down this summer? I know he had supposedly changed his plans about that when we were home but thought maybe he would change them again. Anyway I suppose Rita will come down on her vacation and maybe Honey too. I suppose she is pleased about getting the house fixed up. She will probably make it a nice place in a hurry.

I think I'll write Dad a little note now.

Love,

Jim

[Letter No. 267]

Wednesday, July 12

Dear Betty -

I got your Monday's letter today. There isn't much news to write in reply, I'm just back in the old rut --- on duty until I get my orders. I am expecting them daily, and momentarily all day long.

I've had reports on Dad from Myrtle, Mamie, and Helen. They are somewhat conflicting but I gather he is doing as well as can be expected, or better. I'm not optimistic enough to think he is cured, but am hoping anyway. I wrote to him Sunday. Wrote to Bill Slattery after I came back and had a letter from him yesterday. He said that he had written to his brother Jim in Omaha by airmail to go to the hospital to see Dad.

I am inclosing the receipt for the Post office Money Order I sent in payment of our quarterly victory tax. Also ten dollars for you to buy an anniversary gift for yourself. I just can't get down town to shop --- and the stuff at the PX is junk for that purpose. Just knick-knack jewelry made up in service emblems, and you must be pretty tired of that. There must be something you would like that I would never think of.

It's awfully hot here again --- I have to keep a blotter under my hand to write at all.

Must get to bed now and try to get some sleep. Have to get up a lot earlier here than I did at McClellan Field.

All my love

Jim

[Note: People of the generations that did not grow up using fountain pens, with their propensity for heavy deposits of ink on the page, may need a definition of "blotter". It was a rectangular piece of heavy, absorbent paper, about 3" x 7", usually containing advertisement for some product on one side, that one used to soak up this extra ink to prevent its being smeared. JRS has modified its use to absorb the sweat on his writing hand.]

[Letter No. 268]

Sunday, July 16

Dear Betty -

My orders have arrived and I will soon be on my way. I have requested fifteen days leave and if granted I will be home early next week. Can't say exactly when on account of difficulty of getting train reservations. My request has been approved by the Hq, but has to clear the Post Commander's office yet, so perhaps you had better not say anything to the children yet.

The anniversary gift arrived and I don't think of anything I would rather have --- except to spend the day with you. I won't quite be able to do that but hope to be there soon.

That's all the news. I'll let you know as soon as I can if my leave is approved. I'll be thinking of you on our anniversary.

All my love,

Jim

[Letter No. 269]

McClellan Field, Aug 9, 1944

Dear Betty -

Got to Sacramento about 9:00 o'clock this morning and came out to the field to spend the day. Naturally there are a lot of changes in the personnel but I meet people I know every few steps. Sure seems a nice place after New Orleans. It's nice and cool today.

Co Johnson is still here ---- I'm writing this at my old desk. Chaplain Gunn went overseas a month or more ago. Johnny Miller, who was returned here from Las Vegas after I left, was sent to the east coast a couple of weeks ago. He is alerted for overseas too.

I promised Neal I would send him a chain like mine for his medal but when I checked at the PX they were all out. I'll try again at Camp Beale but don't know when I'll be able to send it if I do get one there.

The cause of my feeling rotten the last day or two at home turned out to be a bad cold. It was very bad by Monday night and I hardly slept at all. It's better now --- but still miserable and I carry two handkerchiefs, which is about half enough.

I expect to stay over tonight and go to Camp Beale tomorrow. Probably the last chance I'll have in a long time to do as I please.

I hope you didn't have any trouble getting home from the station Sunday night. Write as soon as you can and let me know how you and the children and Dad are. I think I left my temporary address: ASF Personnel Replacement Depot, Camp Beale, California.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 270]

Camp Beale, Calif. August 11, 1944

Dear Betty -

I arrived yesterday and signed in. Have spent the day in routine "processing" and have made pretty good headway already. Don't know how long we will be here of course but it will take a few days at least to get everyone equipped and deficiencies corrected. Have drawn my "must" equipment but have a few things yet to get which I will have to buy.

I like this camp a lot better than my last station. They treat us like officers and gentlemen, which is something I had been away from for some time. The weather gets quite hot in the daytime, but I slept under both of my blankets last night.

My cold is better and I think I'll be as good as new in a day or two.

I wonder how dad is getting along. Haven't had any mail yet.

Hope everything is OK at home. Write as soon as you can.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 271]

Wednesday, Aug 16

Dear Betty -

I got your letter yesterday and sure was glad to hear from you. I meant to leave my temporary address while at home and thought I had done so, but evidently forgot to since you waited for a letter.

I won't be here any more when you get this. I don't know where I will be, and of course if I did know I would be honor bound not to tell. As soon as I light somewhere and can, I will write of course. Some trips nowadays take a long, long, time to complete, so don't worry too much if you don't hear from me for a long time.

I'm sorry I didn't get a lot of things done while I was home on leave. So many things I intended to do and say just never got accomplished. Seemed like I was dopy and never could get around to them.

I hope Dad is getting along all right but have already written off any ideas I had of seeing him again. Hope he doesn't have too bad a time.

I have a lot of things to do and must be getting at it.

Take good care of yourself and the youngsters and I hope to be able to help you with the job before so very many more months.

All my love,

Jim

[Note: Mom's letter follows:

"Aug. 9, Wednesday

Dear Jim -

I'm going to start a letter to you tho I realize it will be the end of the week before I'll hear from you, and then perhaps won't have an address.

The day is already very warm and will probably exceed the 98° forecast. I'm trying to get up courage to start on my ironing.

You're probably enjoying the day at McClellan Field. I do hope you have a good time. I felt that I gave you a very unsatisfactory send-off Sunday evening. I wasn't worried about car trouble on the way home --- I just didn't think I was adequate to another goodbye at Union Station. The time before was not so bad as I counted on you being back within weeks maybe. I'll not give up give up hoping this last order will fail to materialize tho.

Bob is down town for his exercised. He thinks his vision is sharper after two of them, but I think it's a lot imagination. He wears some kind of contraction & is supposed to read 'til his eyes water and hurt. Sounds most radical.

You'll be glad to know that the neighbors in the rear had that big trash pile hauled away Mon.

There was a letter from Helen written Friday evening. They had taken your Dad to Omaha the day before & she said he was more comfortable "when they put the tube back on. They are giving him penicillin to see if they can dry it up. They may have to get up there and burn it out. The Dr. was going to check on it to-day". (I quoted directly from her letter.) She went on to say that there would be no more trips to Omaha as the Dr. can't do anything else for him, except to clear up things temporarily --- that the tumor had none too far to get it all. Helen said she might have to call Thelma back as she couldn't

do the work alone. I think that would be a crying shame myself, but I can't say anything. I'm sure Cleo could arrange to stay in Lincoln if she'd make up her mind to it. It won't be convenient for anyone --- those things never are. Your father will have to be at the hospital for a week at least, Helen said.

I had a letter from Mrs. Sedler. She's living in Fremont, Nebr. with Edwarda & husband --- both she & "Uncle Dick". She said Edwarda had lived with her in Omaha & the husband came in when he could & they were getting tired of that & planned to have their own home. Evidently he works at Fremont. Anyway, Mrs. Sedler decided to visit Claire in St. Louis while Edwarda was still there to be with "Uncle Dick" and she planned to stop over a day and visit with me, she said. However, she received two "special delivery" letters in one day from Edwarda telling her to hurry home that the place had been sold and they they had thirty days in which to vacate, so she had to pass up our visit. She got a good cash price for her home & other articles she disposed of. "Uncle Dick" is in a bad way mentally --- doesn't know any of them --- asks her if she hears from Mrs. Sedler --- that he'd write to her if he knew her address, etc.

The old neighborhood is quite changed, Mr. S. said. The seminary & minister's home were sold & re-modeled into apartments for defense workers & the three ministers' homes in the 1900 block are for sale.

It's time to prepare lunch now. I'll just add to this from time to time until I can send this --- if there's anything to say.

Fri.

Bob is mowing the lawn. Neal is reading, Jean & Jimmy are playing out side. It's 3 P.M and I've just finished canning some peaches --- just a few tho I may get a bushel next week. There has been no more mail of importance.

My tax bill came after I called them about it but guess I'll have to go to bat about that too, as it's at least three times what it was last year. Some more fumbling, I suppose. Discovered it was personal tax statement instead of Real Estate so there's that to try to settle. Haven't paid that since you left

Sat. A. M.

Just received your letter with an address so I'll send this on. There was a letter from Helen too --- written Wed. She thanked us for the check, said she expected some folks from Yankton & told them to come by way of Omaha & pick up Grandpa as the Dr. said he could be released. There was nothing more said about his condition. She did say --- about the money --- that it would be put with some Aunt Tina had sent, to draw on as needed --- that she hadn't even had an answer as yet from any of the others.

I've had no mail since you were here, from the home folks, but I know they're threshing and very busy.

I'll send this Air Mail but doubt it will travel any faster than by usual routes.

With love for all.

Betty

Helen said Dr. Adams, (State Hospital), has died --- wondered "what the old girl will do now, as they had to move out."

[I have no information regarding Mrs. Sedler or why "Uncle Dick"'s name has to be in quotation marks. These may have been neighbors from a previous residence.]

[Letter No. 272]

19 August 44

Dear Betty -

No mail again today so I suppose you are waiting for my APO number. You won't get that for some time yet but if you continue to write my old address at Camp Beale it will be forwarded. It's likely I won't actually leave the country for a few days or weeks yet, but I will be at a new station very soon where I will not be able to give my location. However, mail will be forwarded and I won't have so long to wait to hear from you. (I've only had one letter since coming here.)

I am enclosing a Gov't check for \$162.89. If there is any question about your endorsing it you can get out the power of attorney I made out for you at McClellan Field. I'll probably have more money overseas than I will need and I will cable accumulated surpluses home through the finance officer.

I just wrapped up my blouse and pinks this afternoon and took them over to Hq to have sent home by express Collect.. I would have mailed them and paid for them myself but facilities are not available here and we can't go to town any more.

Hope you are all well and that Dad is getting along all right.

Love

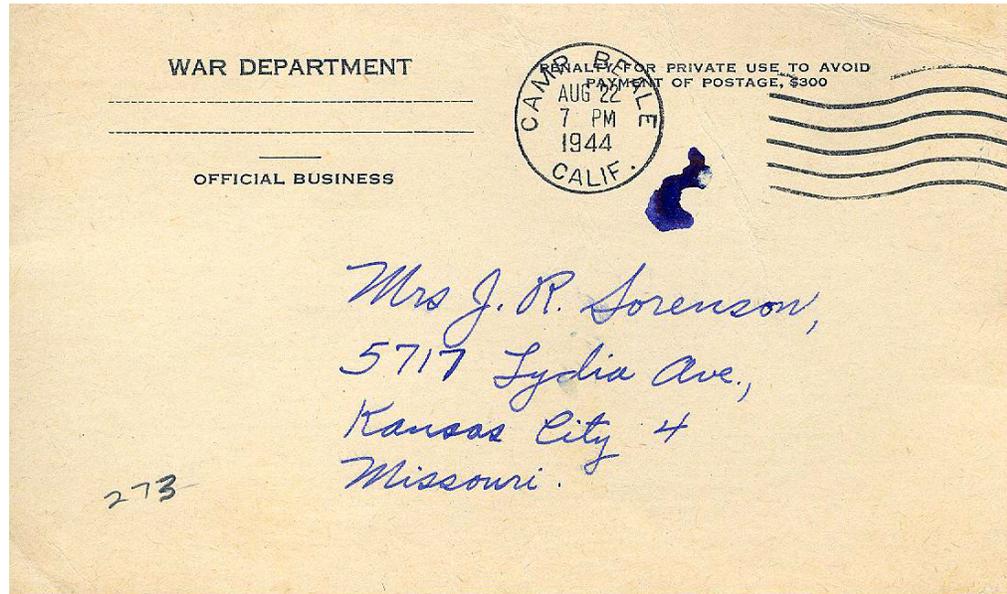
Jim

In case you have lost my address:

ASF Personnel Replacement Depot
Camp Beal, Calif.

I won't be here for any more mail distribution but mail will be forwarded to me at my next stop, where I may stay for some time.

[Letter No. 273]



NOTICE OF CHANGE OF ADDRESS
(Sufficient cards will be distributed to each soldier when his mail address is changed to permit him to send one to each of his regular correspondents and publishers.)

Date 17 August, 1944

This is to advise you that my correct address now is—

Major James R. Sorenson 0-305385
(Grade) (Name) (Army Serial No.)

(Company or comparable unit) (Regiment or comparable unit)

APO No. 7988 % Postmaster San Francisco, Calif.
(Strike out if not applicable) (Name of post office)

Signature James R. Sorenson

NOTE.—Newspapers and magazines may need your old address for correct processing.

My old address was _____

W. D., A. G. O. Form No. 204* (1 November 1943)
*This form supersedes W. D., A. G. O. Form No. 204, 8 April 1943, which may be used until existing stocks are exhausted. c16-33987-3 GPO

[Letter No. 274]

WAR DEPARTMENT

PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE TO AVOID
PAYMENT OF POSTAGE, \$300

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

Mrs J. R. Sorenson
5717 Lydia Ave.,
Kansas City 4
Missouri.

274

NOTICE OF CHANGE OF ADDRESS

(Sufficient cards will be distributed to each soldier when his mail address is changed to permit him to send one to each of his regular correspondents and publishers.)

Date 21 August, 1944

This is to advise you that my correct address now is—

Major James R. Sorenson 0-305385
(Grade) (Name) (Army Serial No.)

(Company or comparable unit) (Regiment or comparable unit)

APO No. 7986 % Postmaster San Francisco, Calif.
(Strike out if not applicable) (Name of post office)

Signature James R. Sorenson

NOTE.—Newspapers and magazines may need your old address for correct processing.

My old address was _____

W. D., A. G. O. Form No. 204* (1 November 1943)
*This form supersedes W. D., A. G. O. Form No. 204, 8 April 1943, which may be used until existing stocks are exhausted. c16-33987-3 GPO

[Letter No. 275]

August 23, 1944.

Dear Betty -

I am still in the U. S. but

The Censor's razor removed a piece about 1" x 6" from this paragraph.

(A round stamp on the front of the envelope says: "Passed by Examiner. Base 1662 Army")

I have just returned from the chapel after being baptized by a Catholic Chaplain, (a Jesuit priest). He promised to send you a copy of the certificate. I'm glad to have finally kept my promise to you and Mother, it was the only unfinished business I had to settle, as far as I know.

Have only had one letter from you since leaving home, but maybe there will be one this afternoon. If you write to the address written below I should have mail soon after my arrival. It may be a long time before I can write a reply.

Hope Dad is better, and that you and the youngsters are well.

Happy birthday to Jean.

All my love.

Jim

Major James R. Sorenson, O-305385
APO 7986
% Postmaster, San Francisco, Calif.

[Note: This is the first experience I have had with wartime censorship of soldiers' mail. I had been told that officers could certify their own letters, but this may have been early in the process; obviously, JRS was not completely informed on the rules. It would be interesting to know if the letter-writer was informed of his faux pas --- it is doubtful that the letter was returned to him. If it had been, he probably would have re-written it, withholding the offending words. The censor cut the end off the envelope and taped it shut upon completion of his job.]

[Letter No. 276]

New Guinea
Sept. 13, 1944

Dear Betty -

Just a line to let you know I am safe and well. Naturally I can't write a very newsy letter now.

I haven't had any mail yet and am looking forward to some catching up with me soon.

Did Father Ewing send you my baptismal certificate? He promised to do so. I sent you a check for \$162.89 before I left the States. Hope it arrived OK.

I expect to send you a couple of hundred more soon. The Finance Officer will cable it home and it will be delivered as a check. Living does not cost much here so I should be able to send you considerable money in addition to your allotment.

I miss you and the children a lot of course. That's the hard part of foreign service --- to be so far away and no chance for leave for a long time. I hope Dad is getting along all right.

My address:

Casual Officers Detachment
5th Replacement Depot
APO #711
% Postmaster, San Francisco

Love,

Jim

[Letter No. 277]

New Guinea
Sept. 14, 1944

Dear Betty -

I wrote you a little letter yesterday but I'll try a few lines again today. There isn't much I can write about now. Maybe I can do better later on.

I gave the Finance Officer \$200.00 today to forward to you. I was told it might take six weeks before it will be delivered but you will know it is on the way anyhow. Let me know when it arrives.

I hope there will be some mail soon. I'm worried about Dad.

Love to all

Jim

[Letter No. 278]

New Guinea
Sept. 16, 1944

Dear Betty -

This will be the third letter I've written you since arriving here. There really isn't much point in writing when my topics of conversation are so limited but it will let you know that I am getting along OK.

This will not be a permanent station but may be here for some time. Wish I could settle down some place and get to work at my assignment. Seems as if I have been on the move a long time now.

I haven't had any mail yet and am looking forward to hearing from you soon. I've been out of touch for a long time and wonder how things are at home. Last letter I got from you said they were bringing Dad back to Lincoln after his second trip to hospital. I suppose they found they couldn't do anything for him.

The children will have been in school a long time now. How do they like it? How is Bob getting along with his eye treatments?

I am sending my letters by air mail as it is supposed to be somewhat faster than V-Mail from this place. V-Mail is supposed to come through a little faster from the States.

I hope everyone is well and that I will get some mail soon.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 279]

New Guinea
Sept. 19, 1944

Dear Betty -

No mail again today. I hope there is some on the way.

Am still in the pool but had my interview today so I may have my assignment and move to my permanent job soon.

I'm getting along OK but the time drags naturally. It's not a good climate to be idle in. Keeping clean is the hardest thing and just about keeps us busy. None of the conveniences of the camps and stations back home. There are a lot of new and interesting sights and experiences which I will be able to write about later. We are paid in Australian money --- pounds, shillings, and pence since this is a territory of Australia just as Alaska and Hawaii are territories of the U. S.

I hope some mail breaks through soon. Some people are getting it in bundles, others get little or none.

I should wash some clothes but guess I'll wait until tomorrow. It's hard to rustle up anything to do it in.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 280]

New Guinea
Friday, Sept. 22

Dear Betty -

I'm hoping for a letter this afternoon. Haven't heard from you since I was at Camp Beale, and that is a long time now.

Have finally got my assignment and it sounds highly interesting. Just starting a short but intensive training and getting organized. I'll be very busy all the time for the next few days, and probably longer than that. The assignment I can't discuss now, and probably not for quite a while.

We are living in a clearing in the jungle, in tents. The country and natives are very interesting, but description will have to wait for awhile. We are well taken care of and as comfortable as possible under these conditions. There are parrots and all kinds of strange trees and animals. I saw a little black dog chase a wallaby, (a small kangaroo), into the clearing and back in the jungle this morning.

Hope you are all getting along all right. That's the worst of being out of touch for so long; I get to worrying about how things are at home. Also, I am wondering how Dad is getting along.

In a couple of hours the last of our two daily mails will be distributed and I'm hoping for news. My address is the same as I gave in my last letter. I'll send my new one as soon as we arrive. Meanwhile mail will be forwarded, (or should be, it doesn't seem to be done in my case). Write often.

Love

Jim

[Note: These last few letters have been very difficult to copy. JRS has taken to writing on semi-transparent stationery, (made to be lightweight for Air Mail), and is probably using a No. 4, (very hard), pencil. These two facts combine to make for handwriting that is barely readable.] [It is somewhat ironic that, now that JRS is in very interesting surroundings, with an interesting assignment, he cannot share that with his family members.]

[Letter No. 281]

New Guinea
Sunday, Sept. 24

Dear Betty -

Last night I got two letters from you, one postmarked Aug 24, (the birthday card one), and one Aug 29. Hope there will be more tonight. Also had a letter from Slattery.

I'm awfully busy now and will be for some time. We are organizing and equipping for a move away from here very soon. Since you don't know where we are that doesn't mean much to you. The assignment sounds like a very interesting thing but will require a lot of work. About our mission I can't write at all, but later I will be able to tell you something about happenings prior to this. Accounts of where we have been, how we got there, who we saw or what was done, are restricted until a certain time interval has elapsed, so you will have to put up with very sketchy letters for a while.

I'm worried to hear that the Omaha doctors didn't seem to have helped Dad, although it was about as I expected. I suppose there is a might slim chance of his lasting much longer. Only hope he doesn't have too much suffering.

Today is Sunday, which is just another day so far as work is concerned. The Army in this theatre surely works and lives a lot differently from the way it does in the States.

Wish I could write more, but you know I never was very good at letters even when I could write everything I pleased.

I miss you all, all the time and hope I won't have to be gone too long.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 282]

New Guinea
Sept. 29, 1944

Dear Betty -

I am getting ready for a move from this spot and have been too busy to do much writing. Mail is coming through better now and I have had several letters from you in the last few days. You said something about finding a more direct mail address than "% Postmaster, San Fran". My APO, (Army Post Office), address will change from time to time, but as long as I am outside of the U. S. Mail is addressed % of the Postmaster, S. F. If I should go to another theatre some other Port's Postmaster might be named, but I would let you know in that case.

I'm getting along fine. I may not be able to write you during the next few days, but will resume when I can find the time. Take care of yourself.

Love to all.

Jim

[Letter No. 283]

At Sea

Oct. 4, 1944

Dear Betty -

I am on the move with my new outfit. Sure have been flitting around the last couple of months, and expect to-do a good deal more of it before I get back home.

Wish I could write more. A letter from here has got to be very much devoid of news. I try to write quite frequently just to let you know I am all right. I'm getting black as a native from this sun.

I expect to be out of touch for quite a long time as far as receiving mail is concerned but hope you will write often. Mail will catch up eventually.

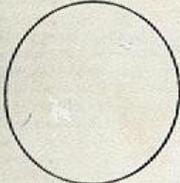
I hope everything is well at home.

Love Jim

[Note: Beginning on October 7, Mom began using the new "V-Mail" system of writing to JRS. Although her previous letters were evidently not retained, these V-Mails are available. Because they are so small, being reduced to about 4" x 5", I have decided not to attempt to re-type them, but will insert jpeg scans of each into the letter from JRS that most closely lines up to it in time. Two such scans follow.]

provided. Use typewriter, dark ink, or pencil. Write plainly. Very small writing is not suitable.

No.



(CENSOR'S STAMP)

To Maj. James A. Sorenson
0-305385
Casual Officers Detachment
5th Replacement Depot
APO 711
40 Postmaster, San Francisco

From

Mrs. J.P. Sorenson
(Sender's name)
5717 Lydia Ave.
(Sender's address)
Kansas City 4, Mo.
October 7, 1944
(Date)

Dear Jim - I always print in all these addresses first so, if I make too big a mistake, I won't change to re-write a letter too.

I had a letter from Mayme yesterday. She says your father is about the same as he had been for some time - lies down most of the time. She is in touch with her own Doctor in regard to his health - said she was writing to you, as I sent your address.

I bought a chair for the living room yesterday - an inexpensive one. Fr. Sipehan has asked me to organize a discussion club and I haven't enough chairs to be presentable - I still won't have but I don't want to buy any more of the present kind - ^{there are} only a few spring-filled ones as yet.

Your last letter sounded like you had a little enthusiasm for your job finally. I'm glad it's that way so long as you have to be there.

Bob just rescued Jimmy from having his ear pumped full of air - he was holding the tire pump to his ear while MarieAnn pumped.

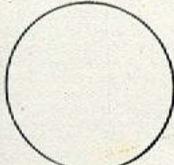
I sent you a box Thursday. I'm surely anxious that you get the smaller package I sent 1st class the Friday before - the last one isn't so important. Lots of love,

Betty

V - MAIL

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.



(CENSOR'S STAMP)

To Maj. James P. Sorenson
O-305385
Casual Officers Detachment
5th Replacement Depot
APO 711
c/o Postmaster, San Francisco

From

Mrs. J. A. Sorenson
(Sender's name)

5717 Lydia Ave.,
(Sender's address)

Kansas City 4, Mo.

Oct. 9, 1944
(Date)

Dear Jim -

I received your Sept. 29 letter to-day, saying you were about to move on so suppose you're in a new location by now. I also received the \$200 you said would be sent me soon. I'm surely glad to get it - not that I am hard pressed for funds but there are always so many bills from September through December that the extra money will be much appreciated.

I bought Dixon's ping pong table and they donated the paddles. The boys and Jean seem very pleased with it. D. sold a lot of stuff and stored some - they may never return to H.C. - I know she'd rather not because of her key fever plus other reasons. She called Mrs. Handley (who has been quite put out at Mrs. D.'s neglect of her) and Mrs. H. took her off over the phone for a half hour. Don't we have fun! There's something to be said on both sides.

Helen and Earl are in town. Helen says they'll be out some evening - they left the children with friends.

Neal is playing on the Freshman team against Southwest High to-morrow. He's pretty light in weight - hope he comes out whole.

Bob took his test Friday on eye progress. The Dr. was very pleased at his progress and Bob says he knows his sight is better but he isn't so sure it's very much better. He took his 51st exercise to-day.

Jean and Jimmy are as usual. I must get to bed - 6:30 A.M. comes too soon.
With love, Betty

V-MAIL

[Letter No. 284]

Thurs. Oct. 13 [Mom's notation: Friday was the 13th, the day the armada assembled.]

Dear Betty -

Last time I wrote you I was aboard a ship coming to this place. I am still in New Guinea but a long ways from where I was before. There is lots of room to move around on this island, which is the second largest in the world. I will not be here long. I'll give you my new address at the end of this letter. It is not the address of this place, (I don't know what this APO no. is), but is the address of our next stop. I have been out of touch for a long time. Last time I heard from you was a letter dated Sept 7, rec'd Sept. 29. I won't get any mail again until arrival at my next stop. I may get another letter written before I leave here, if not you won't hear from me for quite a long time. It's hard to get any writing done here --- we are living under very primitive conditions. By the way -- I am not with the Transportation Corps any more but have an engineering assignment.

Your last letter said you had received my baptismal certificate. The priest was a Jesuit and knew Fr. Fuze when he, (Fr. Ewing), was young and had just joined the Society.

Haven't heard from any of the family except you since I left the States. Naturally I am anxious to hear how Dad is getting along.

I know my letters have been pretty vague and unsatisfactory, but I think at my next stop I will be able to write more freely.

Don't worry about Xmas packages or any other packages just now. Probably wouldn't get them for a long time anyway. I hope you will write lots of letters though. I sure hate to be out of touch for so long. Hope everything is OK at home.

Love

Jim

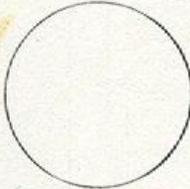
Major James R. Sorenson O-305385
C. A. Section, PCAU- No. 1
Hq. 6th Army
APO #442
% Postmaster, San Francisco

P. S. You have been putting eight cent airmail stamps on your letters. Airmail to or from here costs only six cent. (I have an 8 center left from the States which I will use on this.)

[Note: This letter was written while JRS was aboard an LCT, (Landing Craft, Tank), at Hollandia, New Guinea, (now Jayapura, Indonesia), having traveled along the NE coast of New Guinea after leaving Oro Bay on 30 Sep on the Liberty ship "J. S. Hutchinson". Between 15 and 25 Oct he was on LST-552, (Landing Ship, Tank), during which time he participated in the famous "Battle of Leyte Gulf", the largest sea battle in history, prior to landing at near Tacloban. LST-552 was hit by one of the Japanese Army's newly formed Kamikaze units, with heavy damage and mortality.] [An LST is much larger than an LCT, being over 300' long compared to under 200']

provided. Use typewriter, dark ink, or pencil. Write plainly. Very small writing is not suitable.

No.



(CENSOR'S STAMP)

From

To Maj. James R. Sorenson
O-305385
Casual Officers Detachment
5th Replacement Depot
APO 711
c/o Postmaster, San Francisco

Mrs. J. P. Sorenson
(Sender's name)

5717 Lydia Ave
(Sender's address)

Kansas City 4

Mo. 10-14-44
(Date)

Dear Jim -

I'm looking forward to that long letter you promised - hope you've reached your new location and have found your assignment as interesting as you anticipated.

We're having lovely weather now - my fall plants have not arrived yet - I hate to miss this favorable weather for working outdoors. The azaleas have been blooming for some time now - my one clump of pink ones is beautiful.

Our discussion club held its first meeting last night - I think will like the book chosen for study this year.

Helen and Earl drove out Thursday morning but I missed them - had gone for groceries - wish they had called on the phone - I was only gone one hour.

I had a letter from Rita this A.M. She was 22 on Monday - can you recall that time? She's in the diet kitchen now.

I haven't heard any more about your father but Maryde will probably keep you informed.

With love,
Betty

[Letter No. 285]

Tuesday, Oct 17

Dear Betty -

I am aboard ship again but still in New Guinea. Seems I've spent more time at sea than ashore since I left the States.

In my last letter I told you I would try to get another note written to you and then would be unable to write you for some time. This is the note.

Have been out of touch with all mail deliveries since late in September and cannot expect any more for some time. Will try to write you a real letter before so very long.

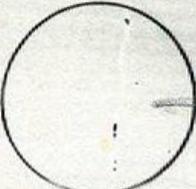
Love

Jim

C. A. Section
PCAU-No.1
Hq. 6th Army
APO #442
% P. M. San Francisco

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.



(CENSOR'S STAMP)

To Maj. James R. Sorenson
O-305 385
5th Replacement Depot
APO No. 711
c/o Postmaster, San Francisco
Casual Officers Detachment

From

Mrs. J. R. Sorenson
(Sender's name)
5717 Lydia Ave.,
(Soldier's address)
Kansas City 4, Mo.
Oct. 17, 1944
(Date)

Dear Jim -

We're having real fall weather now. The nights and mornings are chilly until the sun warms the atmosphere.

I took Bob, Jean, Jimmy and Patry to the park Sunday thinking to give Jimmy a ride on the miniature train. There were long lines everywhere, even for the pony ride so we went thru the zoo instead - took a second look at a pair of Wallabies, since you mentioned them in your letter.

Bob had his first lesson in driving the car on Sunday. It won't take long but the stopping and starting have him bothered as yet, especially in traffic - me too.

I had a group check to endorse and return to Dad yesterday. It was for our share of Uncle John's estate. We had seventeen dollars to be divided seven ways. Said it a joke, but the law requires it be done that way.

There has been no further word by your father so I presume everything is all right.

Next expects you to stroll out in the jungles occasionally and pick up souvenirs left by the Japs.

Hope there's a letter to-day - your Sept. 29th was the last.

With love,

Betty

V-MAIL

[Letter No. 286]

Philippine [sic] Islands

Oct 27, 1944

Dear Betty -

This is just to let you know where I am and that I am well. I haven't written you for a long time but I told you then that I would be out of contact for some time.

Any kind of letter about my comings and goings will have to wait for some time. I'll try to write a note often and keep you informed of new addresses.

Haven't had any mail since Sept 28, but that's natural. Have moved fast and often.

I hope all is well at home. Am looking forward to some mail soon.

Love Jim

C. A. Section

PCAU-No.1

Hq. 6th Army

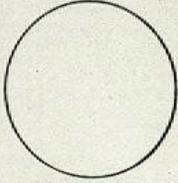
APO #442

% P. M. San Francisco

[Note: JRS is truly observing the directives to be silent on his activities. On 25 Oct his LST had been hit by a Kamikaze attack and he had landed on Leyte under fire. There had been many casualties in this action and afterward. In later years, he described many of these events in gruesome detail, including Americans being burned due to stupidly being bivouacked next to a fuel storage facility that was hit by Jap bombers --- they begged to be shot to be put out of their misery. By the 27th his nerves may have settled down enough for a short letter like this.]

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. _____



(CENSOR'S STAMP)

To Maj. J. R. Sorenson
O-305385
5th Replacement Depot
APO 711
c/o Postmaster, San Francisco

From

Mrs. J. R. Sorenson
(Sender's name)
5212 Lydia Ave.
(Sender's address)
Kansas City, Mo.
Oct. 21, 1944
(Date)

Dear Jim - I keep trying to figure out where you are. As you went at sea when you last wrote, it would seem that was too early to have been a part of the Philippine invasion, but it would require time for an armada of 600 ships to gather, so it's possible you were a part of it. That must have been a sight to remember!

Had letters from Marie and Cleo Friday. Cleo was sending you a fruit cake and fudge. We were advised not to send soft candy from here. Anyway, if it doesn't arrive O., you'll know she meant well. Hayes painted their house ivory with buff trim and red roof. Russell's Aberdeen boss wants him back.

Bob and Neal are at the football game - old rivals (Rockhurst and Hogen). Jimmy is playing with friends and Jean is bicycle riding.

Our second session of the study club met here last night - fine attendance. Will meet elsewhere next.

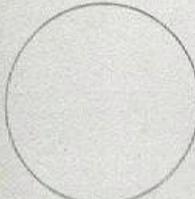
The leaves are falling fast. We had thunder showers and hail lately. The Fall mums are just beginning to bloom.

I must write Mayme or guess I'll not find out how your father is. The girls talked as tho he was feeling the same - not too good - not bad.

With love,
Betty

V-MAIL

Print the complete address in plain letters in the panel below, and your return address in the space provided on the right. Use typewriter, dark ink, or dark pencil. Faint or small writing is not suitable for photographing.



(CENSOR'S STAMP)

TO: Maj. James R. Sorenson
0-305385
C.A. Section, PCAU-No. 1,
Hq. 6th Army
APO # 442
2/0 P.M. San Francisco

SEE INSTRUCTION NO. 2

FROM

Mrs. J.R. Sorenson
5717 Lydia Ave,
Kansas City 4 Mo.

(Sender's complete address above)

Oct. 24, 1944

Dear Jim -

I have to go for groceries in a short time but will let you know I received another letter yesterday, one written just before you expected to move out again. I hope it won't be too long before I know where you are - it makes writing a little less vague.

Myrtle wrote her thanks over our gift, said she was sending you a box and a picture of your Aunt and Uncle. Her husband and I believe have each had salary raises lately. Jimmy just came home almost in tears. He thought I'd gone to the store without him. Yesterday, he helped Louise Major celebrate her second birthday. Jean is preparing for a Halloween party next week. Are you able to get recent newspapers? I have thought of sending some copies but the news would be ancient by the time it reached you. No doubt, it will be Thanksgiving by the time you read this. Wish I could run up to Yankton for the day.

Honey said Dad had gone to Mitchell as a Farmers Union delegate. She was having Danny's eyes tested for glasses.

I hope you'll soon be getting mail again. With all our love,

Betty

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP?

REPLY BY
V...-MAIL

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP?

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT PERMIT NO. 1

[Letter No. 287]

Philippine Islands
November 1, 1944

Dear Betty -

Some mail finally arrived and I got three letters from you last night.. The latest was a V-Mail letter dated Oct. 4. Also has quite a newsy airmail letter from Stella, dated Oct. 5. She said dad was in Grand Forks and not feeling too good. He wants to go to Rochester and they don't know what to tell him. There was also news about Hayes painting his house, etc.

You said you hoped I could tell you something about my experiences "not military of course".

Almost anything I could say would be classed as military information and it's awfully hard to write any kind of interesting letter. I have had a lot of experiences, but an account of them will have to wait. About all I can do is give you a general locality --- Philippines Islands --- and let you know I am well. When I get back I will tell you all about it, or perhaps later when present activities are past history I can write about them.

Last night was Halloween and I wondered what the kids were doing. I hope they had a good time. Next year I hope I can spend it with you.

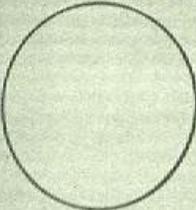
I'm very busy these days but took time off this morning to write this. I miss you all a lot and get awfully homesick.

Love

Jim

Print the complete address in plain block letters in the space below, and your return address in the space provided. Use typewriter, dark ink, or pencil. Write plainly. Very small writing is not suitable.

No.



(CENSOR'S STAMP)

To Maj. J. P. Sorenson
O-305385
C. A. Section
C. PAU-Nol.
Hq. 6th Army
APO # 442
4/2 PM San Francisco

From

Mrs. J. P. Sorenson
(Sender's name)

5717 Lydia Ave.
(Sender's address)

Kansas City, Mo.

Oct. 30 1944
(Date)

Dear Jim -

The last week has been perfect for nice October weather - hope we have two or three more like it.

Jimmy wants to write to you but he had had to quit that with this V-Mail. Guess you hadn't received any of it when you last wrote - hope my little package reaches you soon - but afraid the leather will be ruined by the heat.

Stella and Marie sent you a box, so did Myrtle and Cleo. I said she was kept busy sending cigars, medicine or clothing to your Dad - I guess he's in no worse condition.

She've had the best corn in years in S. Dak. and Marge says everyone is busy picking. Mimi and Bull stay all "strand maid" while going to High.

I haven't seen any office people other than "strand" lately. Alice Handley is here.

Mr. Major re-shurfaced his front porch because it had cracked in places - will fix the walk next - Dad had been home the best week - goes back to-morrow. Jo. O'Hara was home a day on his way to another location. He expects to be sent out before long, I guess.

The Minister, across and down the street a house or two, moved out and a new family moved in - Catholics too - we're getting thick.

Mrs. Sherring gets no better but she can be this way for years, the Dr. says, with her trouble.

We think of you all the time and will be relieved when you're home to stay.

V. M. A. I. L.

With love, Betty

[Letter No. 288]

The Philippines
Sunday, Nov. 5

Dear Betty -

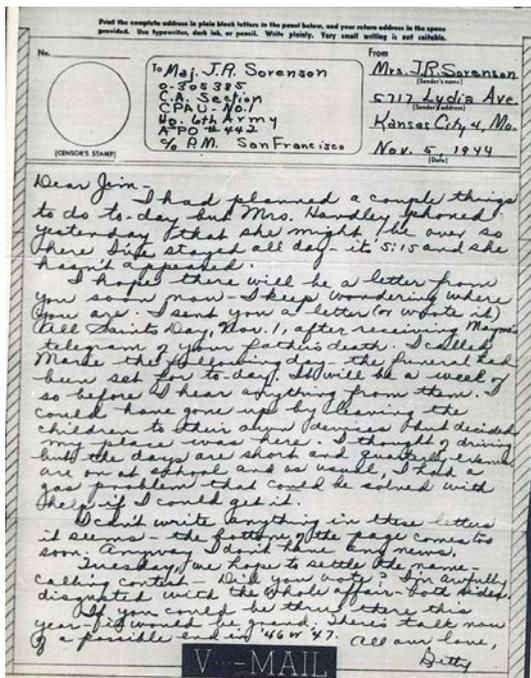
This is the first Sunday for a long time that I have been able to spend as Sunday should be spent. Our unit has been very busy so we finally relaxed for one day. I went to church this morning in a church built two hundred years ago. Had dinner with a Filipino family, together with some other officers and correspondents. I can't tell you what we ate because I couldn't recognize most of the dishes. The food was very good however, with lots of variety.

I haven't spent enough time in one place to draw my pay for September and October. However, I haven't much use for money just now so it makes no difference. I can get it later. I'm sure glad though that I made an allotment to you. It would be hard and slow to get money home just now. I don't remember if you ever wrote that you got the check for \$160 I sent home from Camp Beale in August. I also sent you \$200 dollars form New Guinea through the Finance Officer. You should have that by now.

I'm still getting along fine but can't write much about things yet. I'm awfully homesick of course, and hope I won't have to be away so very much longer. As soon as things get a little more settled I hope to be able to write oftener and more.

Love

Jim



[Note: This word of the death of JRS' father did not reach him until 27 November, according to his journal.]

[Letter No. 289]

The Philippines
November 8, 1944

Dear Betty -

Mail is beginning to trickle through and today I got your V-mail dated October 9. I'm sure that there are a lot of earlier ones on the way. I hope to do less changing of address in the future and then mail should come through much faster.

The election back there is over by now and in a few days we should hear the results. I sent for a ballot before leaving the States but have not received it yet, so I didn't vote this time.

It will soon be Thanksgiving and Christmas. Sure will miss my white Christmas this year. I'm afraid I never was intended for tropical life. When I get home I'm going to spend a long vacation in the pines or up in the mountains --- a long ways from palm trees.

I wrote Col. Johnson a note from New Guinea, and today I got a long letter from him telling me all the news from McClellan Field. He seems to think it likely he may get a new assignment or possible inactive duty. He was talking about that when I left though so I imagine he is just where he was then.

I wrote to Dad, and also to Stella yesterday. I wonder how he is getting along. I should write to him oftener but it has been hard the last few weeks to get any writing done.

Wish I could write a newsy letter but that is taboo just now. I've had a lot of experiences but most of the telling will probably have to wait until I get home --- or at least until this operation becomes ancient history.

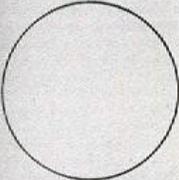
I miss you all the time and that's the biggest hardship now.

Love

Jim

[Note: His father died on November 1, but he won't learn of it for several weeks yet.]

Print the complete address in plain letters in the panel below, and your return address in the space provided on the right. Use typewriter, dark ink, or dark pencil. Faint or small writing is not suitable for photographing.



(CENSOR'S STAMP)

TO: Major J.R. Sorenson
O-305385
C.A. Section
CPAU - No. 1
Hg. 6th Army
APO # 442
% Postmaster San Francisco

SEE INSTRUCTION NO. 2

FROM

Mrs J.R. Sorenson
5717 Lydia Ave.
Kansas City 4, Mo.

(Sender's complete address above)

November 10, 1944

Dear Jim -
I'm to lunch alone to-day. Jimmy
has been invited to eat at Okie's. Mrs.
Oll. has been ill and Patery had stayed
out of school to care for Kathleen and
liked J. over there to help entertain K.
Malyne undoubtedly wrote you and mention-
ed the Sacred Heart badge she sent here to
keep for your return. A Sister gave it to
Grandpa and he told a lot of it so M. that you'd
like to keep it. Your father had a peaceful
end - went like he was asleep, Malyne said,
I know that will be comforting to know.
I am getting Christmas buying done - the P.O.
wants all packages in the mail by Nov. 1st this
year. I may have become such a task but I
don't think I'd care to ignore it anyway.
I'm taking Bob and Neal down to-mor-
row for overcoats. Bob's eyes have
improved but the progress is slow.
I've been out somewhere every day or
evening this week - the weather's been nice
so I want to go while it's comfortable to do it.
One day soon, I want to devote to getting the
yard ready for winter - tie back the roses,
prune some shrubs, burn leaves, etc and
grade the ground for Spring planting.
I'm baking bread to-day - the children look
forward to baked beans and fresh bread
on Friday.
Your last letter was written Oct. 17. I'm
anxious for them to start coming again. With love,
Betty

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE
ADDRESS AT TOP?

REPLY BY

V...-MAIL

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE
ADDRESS AT TOP?

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT PERMIT NO. 1

[Baked (white) beans were one of the few suppers that met the Friday prohibition of meat in those days. The homemade bread made it more palatable.]

[Letter No. 290]

The Philippines
Sunday, November 12

Dear Betty -

Your Oct. 7 letter came today and the one dated Oct. 9 came Nov. 8. I suppose my letters come through the same way --- the later ones first. I haven't received any except forwarded mail yet but hope it will soon be coming through addressed to my present address. That should shorten the time enroute considerably.

I am getting along fine. I can't write about my present whereabouts or doings but enough time has elapsed so I can tell you about the earlier stages of my trip out. Left S. F. on August 26 on the liner "Matsonia". She is a nice ship that used to run from S. F to Hawaii. Handley will know her. We arrived in New Guinea in fast time, touched at a couple of ports there and finally debarked on Sept. 13. At the Replacement Depot there we were assigned to different units and preparations were made for our different jobs. I drew a task force --- you know by now what it was --- and after a short stay in another part of New Guinea we started for this place. I have traveled in every kind of craft almost, since the "Matsonia"; freighters, landing ships, barges, "ducks" and what have you. Have been ashore for quite a long time now.

When we crossed the equator on the way down here we had "Neptunus Rex" ceremonies according to custom. The ship's company gave all who had never crossed the line before a rough initiation and presented us with "Shellback" cards for our future protection. We also crossed the International Date line, of course, and since we were going west we lost a day. Will pick it up coming back. I had a narrow escape from not having a birthday this year but the day we dropped wasn't it. Well that's all ancient history, present events will have to wait before I can write about them.

Am looking forward to the time when I can come home --- so is everybody else, I guess. The packages you mentioned have not arrived but I presume they will be stored and held until Christmas. I don't know how that is handled. I hope this coming Christmas will be the last I will have to spend away from home.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 291]

The Philippines
November 15, 1944

Dear Betty -

I got two V-mail letters from you yesterday dated Oct. 14 and Oct 17. I hope I will soon be getting mail addressed direct instead of forwarded from old addresses.

This is Commonwealth Day in the Philippines, a holiday something like the 4th of July at home. It is being observed in the portions of the Islands that we have occupied.

Too bad your plants didn't arrive in time for planting during the nice weather. I'd like to be there to help. I know I used to be lazy around the place but I think I would like to putter around at it now. I surely miss the fall weather and the Indian Summer anyway.

You mentioned that Earl and Helen had called while you were away. From the number of times they have been in K. C. lately I assume that business is good. Stella said Russell's boss wanted him back in Aberdeen but he hadn't decided yet whether he would go or not.

Last night I got hold of a copy of "Time" magazine with an account of the earlier invasion operation over here. It was quite interesting to me because I saw a great deal of it at first hand.

I hope the youngsters still like school. Suppose Jimmy is looking forward to starting school too. I wish I could see you all.

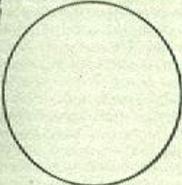
Love

Jim

[Note: This is another of JRS' refrains about wishing he could help with yard work & other jobs around the house. He quickly got over that feeling upon returning --- I never saw him mow the lawn, spade the garden, paint the house, or any of those domestic tasks that seemed so appealing from afar.]

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.



(CENSOR'S STAMP)

To Maj. J.P. Sorenson
O-805385
PCA U#1, Hq. 6th Army
APO 442, 4 PM San Francisco

From

Mrs. J.P. Sorenson
(Sender's name)

5717 Lydia Ave.
(Sender's address)

Kansas City 4, Mo.

Nov. 18, 1944
(Date)

Dear Jim - I was day-dreaming when I wrote the address above or I wouldn't have short-spaced myself but guess it will go thru all right.

Your Nov. 8 letter arrived the 16th. I think the Air-mail service is excellent.

Mrs. O'Hara has been in the hospital for over a week - the doctor doesn't seem to know what's wrong but they sent for Jr. and he's home for a two week's visit.

"Dub" is home too but just for the week end.

We're celebrating Thanksgiving the 23rd of this month. I'll fix a big dinner to satisfy the boys but plan to see "Going My Way" at the Southtown, if it's showing.

Neal is over at Sherrings assembling a wagon I ordered for Jimmy's Xmas. He's getting a doctor set besides. I'm dressing my doll as a bride for Jean and have a housecoat for her besides. Bob ^{is up to} has a couple games he thinks he'd like and Neal, a football and something else. I'll get each a box of chocolates too, if I can. This will give you some idea of what we're giving them this year.

With love,
Betty

V - MAIL

[Letter No. 292]

Philippine Islands
November 19, 1944

Dear Betty -

There was no mail again today. Seems ages since I've had a letter. I know it isn't your fault that mail is so erratic because I'm sure you write regularly, but the service is sure erratic --- either none at all or two or three letters at once.

It's hard to write without a letter to answer or comment on but I can let you know I am all right. I've lost a lot of weight, and just now have a bad cold, but those things are minor. I expected to lose weight in the tropics since those latitudes are not my kind of country.

Next Thursday will be Thanksgiving and in only a little more than a month it will be Christmas time. It's hard to realize down here.

How are the children getting along in school? I suppose they have a whole flock of new interests and hobbies. Jimmy will soon be traipsing off with them.

I often wonder how your dad is getting along and if he still feels lost without the old farm.

Hope I'll hear from you tomorrow.

Love

Jim

[Letter No. 293]

The Philippines
November 22, 1944

Dear Betty -

Yesterday came your Oct. 30 letter which was quite newsy. I sure wish I could have seen some of that nice October weather you mentioned. That always was my favorite time of the year and there is nothing like it in the tropics.

Tomorrow will be Thanksgiving Day. I suppose we will have something special to eat --- otherwise it will be just another day as far as routine is concerned. I hope you will all have a good day and enjoy your dinner. Could go for some cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie myself.

I met a medical Major from McClellan Field the other day --- the first person I have seen that I knew in the States. We had dinner together and a big talk-fest.

I'm glad the crops were so good in S. D. Maybe the farmers can get a new start after all the years of hard times.

No news as usual.

Love.

Jim

[Letter No. 294]

The Philippines
November 26, 1944

Dear Betty -

Capt. Roman, our unit doctor, just came to me and brought your Nov. 2 letter telling about Dad. It was the first news I had about it and of course it's a shock although I thought I was prepared for it. It's probably for the best though. One of my worries has been thinking of poor Dad and how tough things were going for him. I think I told you that when I saw him in Lincoln I was sure it was for the last time.

I'm in the hospital but don't let that worry you. I had been feeling lousy for quite a while and lost a lot of weight, (as I expected to do in the tropics), and our commanding officer and Capt. Roman thought I needed a physical checkup and a rest. They brought me here on Thanksgiving Day and for the last four days I have been sleeping and reading. They marked me "Duty" this morning and I would be back to my outfit now except for the fact that another hospital unit is taking over this establishment and I have to get a clearance from them too. [They?] are going to send a jeep over for me tomorrow and then I'll be back on the job. I'm really all right again --- in fact they couldn't find anything wrong with me --- which is what I knew in the first place. Just too much knocking around in too short a time. I'm all right now.

I still can't write you much news and I'm not in exactly the mood just now anyway. Later I'll try. Capt. Roman also brought your letter of Sept. 28 in which you said you had read a letter from a boy in England and he filled whole pages. I could too -- - if I were in England, but ever since I left the States I have been either preparing for or in the middle of an active military operation, (which is still in progress), and not back in a base somewhere. There is a big difference --- and I guess I'm too old to take the interest in new scenes that the youngsters do. I'll tell you all about it someday.

I'll miss poor old Dad and I can remember now so many little things I could have done for him that I never got around to. I too hope he finds lots of park benches and old friends.

Love

Jim
(over)

P. S. While I was writing this they had a change of heart and said I could go back to my unit --- where I am now. Feeling fine.

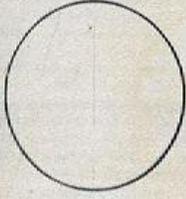
Love,

Jim

[Note: I am curious about the fact that the unit doctor is bringing JRS his mail --- on two different occasions at least. Did all mail go through that process, so the doctor could cull out unhappy tidings?] [The fact that JRS continued to use a hard-lead pencil to write these letters is becoming a real problem. In addition to the faint marks of the pencil, the paper has yellowed somewhat, so the contrast is very slight --- difficult to make out. He was however, careful to use ink when addressing the envelopes, so there was no problem for the postman.]

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No.



(CENSOR'S STAMP)

To Maj. J.R. Sorenson, O-305390
PCAU #1, Hq. 6th Army.
APO 442
4/0 PM San Francisco

From

Mrs. J.R. Sorenson
(Sender's name)

5717 Lydia Ave.
(Sender's address)

Kansas City 4, Mo.

Nov. 28, 1944
(Date)

Dear Jim -

I promised to take Jimmy to see Santa soon so we did that this morning. He had a ride thru Wonderland on the train - it's really quite a place I believe most of the children are too small to know what it represents this year. There were characters from fairy-land all around. Last year, it was a snow scene with Santa and reindeer. Jimmy talked to Santa but not much. "Here's the sack" he said after reaching home. I guess he was put out because he was too bashful to tell all he intended. Shopping is the worst ever this year - a big price on everything whether it has any value or not. I still have a few things to get but am thru for the most part. Expect X-mas will be past by the time you receive this.

A man called to look at Neal's bicycle - thinks a friend may buy it if Neal wants to sell. He isn't home from school yet.

I have all our X-mas cards ready to mail. Told a few friends your address thinking they might write you a letter now & then.

I'll try to get a copy of that Times number you mentioned, about the invasion of the Philippines - expect you'd like to keep it. I saved the papers for a week then, tho I only guessed you might be a part of it.

There's nothing unusual happening here - were just waiting for you to come home.

With love,
Betty

V-MAIL

[Letter No. 295]

Philippine Islands

Monday, Oct 30 *[This letter was not postmarked until Dec 1, which is why it is out of sequence here. It did not arrive in Kansas City until December 8]*

Dear Betty -

This is the second letter I have written you since I arrived here. Perhaps you will get this before the other arrives.

Everything is OK and I am well and getting along fine. I miss you all a lot and that is the worst hardship. It will help when mail begins to arrive. As yet I haven't had any mail at this place but hope that some sent to other addresses will catch up soon.

I'm still in the dark about Dad's condition. The latest letter I got from you was dated early in September.

How do the youngsters like school this year. Is Jimmy still anxious to get started?

Tomorrow night is Halloween and I suppose they will have a good time.

It's hard to write letters now, as news has to go through proper channels. Where I have been and what I have seen will have to wait for some other time. I have moved fast since leaving home and naturally have seen many interesting and exciting things. Sometimes I wish I had brought my camera but anything other than essentials gets in the easy and usually discarded or lost.

I hope you are writing often.

Love.

Jim

C. A. Section, PCAU #1
Hq. 6th Army
APO #442
% PM, San Francisco

[Note: We can all wish he had taken his camera along!]

[Letter No. 296]

The Philippines
December 1, 1944

Dear Betty -

Yesterday should have been payday, but we found it would be necessary to wait a few days for our money. I had hoped to draw my September, October, and November pay --- which has accumulated due to lack of paying facilities because of my frequent moves. I wanted to send you some money in this letter, especially since I suppose you will be needing extra funds to help settle Dad's affairs and I know that there are always extra expenses this time of the year. I hope to collect within the next three or four days and then I will send you some money orders.

I am feeling much better since my four day rest in the hospital which I mentioned in my last letter. I think I dated that letter Nov. 26 while it was actually written on the 27th. It's hard to keep track of the time nowadays.

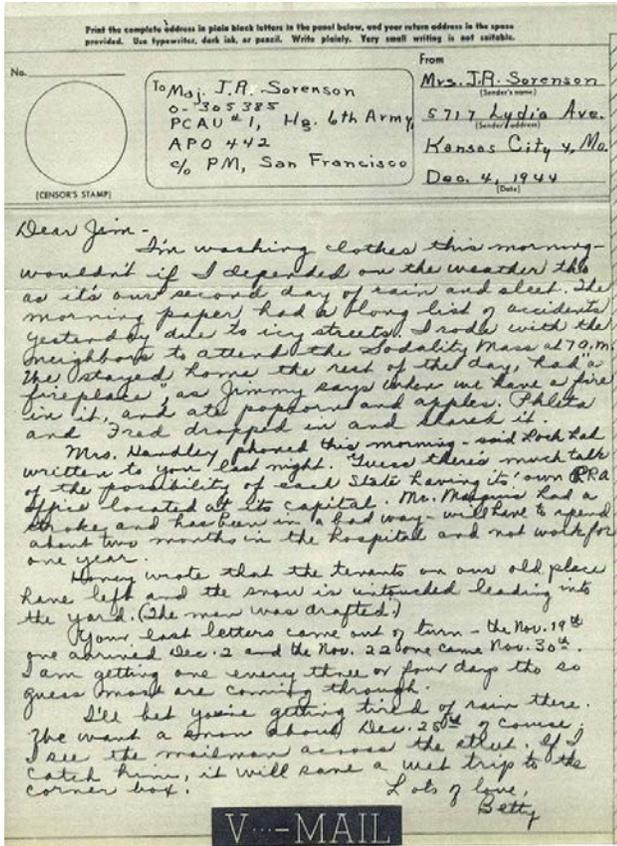
By the time you get this it will probably be very near Christmas time. I wish I could send you all some nice Christmas presents, but shopping facilities are very limited here as yet. I hope to make it up to you in the future. I have not received the package you sent for my birthday, or any other packages, but suppose they will arrive when the Christmas mail is distributed. I received a Christmas card and letter from Marge the other day.

I am enclosing seven bills of the money the Japanese have issued during their occupation. I have lots of it and will send more from time to time so the youngsters can all have some souvenirs.

I hope you will all have a very happy Christmas and that I can be with you next year at this time.

Love.

Jim



[Note: There were no Jap bills in the envelope; photo from JRS Journal is included here.]



[Letter No. 297]

The Philippines
December 6, 1944

Dear Betty -

Seems a long time since I've heard from you --- the 1st of December. The letter was dated Nov. 5. Hope there will be one this afternoon.

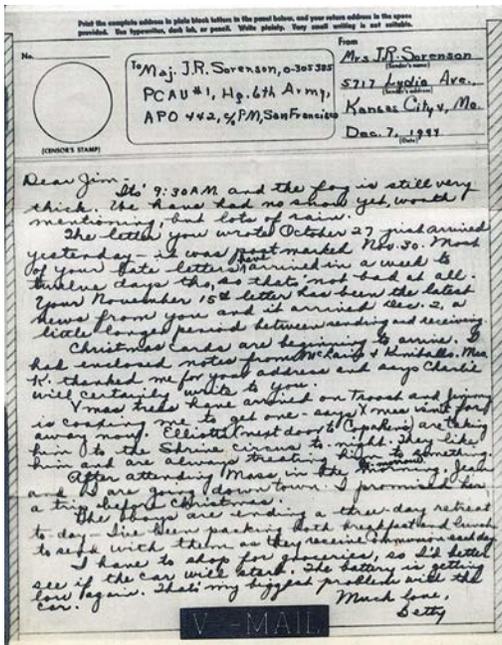
There is no news, but will let you know I am all right. Had hoped to send you some money with this but there was another delay in the pay and I don't know when I will get it. I'll send it as soon as I get the money and can buy some money orders.

I still haven't heard about Dad's death from any of the girls. They probably sent my mail to one of my older addresses and it takes a long time to get letters that way. It's a long time arriving, no matter what the address. I suppose the funeral was held at Springfield.

By now you are busy preparing for Christmas. I hope it will be a very happy one. Be sure and buy the children --- and yourself --- something nice for me.

Love.

Jim



[I remember this trip to the Shrine Circus very well. They bought me a box of Cracker Jacks, and I was very disappointed at the "prize" in it. Believe it or not, it was a "plastic" envelope to be used to keep ration stamps in. A four-year old could not be expected to find much to want with one of those.]

[Letter No. 298]

The Philippines
Monday, Dec. 11

Dear Betty -

I got two letters from you on Dec. 1, dated Oct 31 and Nov. 5, and then no mail until today when your Nov. 10 letter arrived.

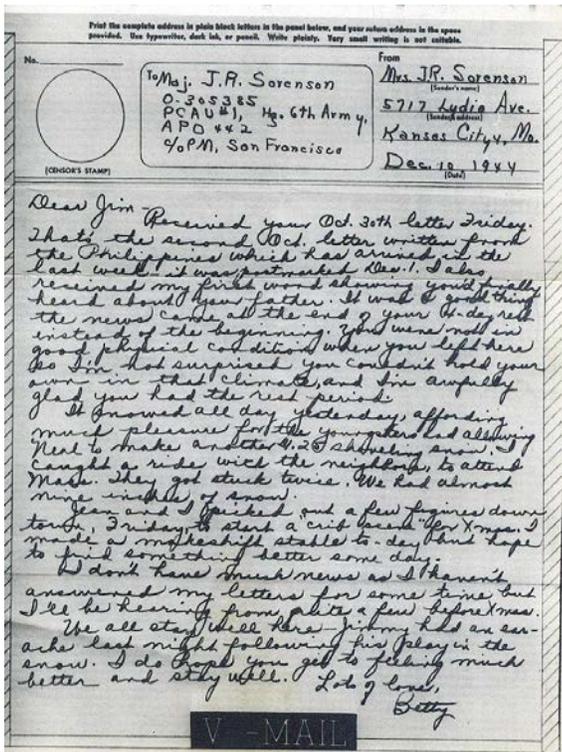
I also got paid today for September, October and November. Have just returned from giving the Army Finance Officer \$500.00 to be sent to you. He said it might take twenty days for it to arrive, but even in that event you should have it by New Years Day. Hope you haven't been running short of cash with all the extra expenses you have had the last few months. I find I could have made a larger allotment as well as not, (there is extra pay and very few expenses on foreign service), but am afraid it might lead to a mixup and delay if I do it now.

No, I haven't heard from Mayme or any other of the family since Dad died. They are very careless in addressing mail and have probably used an old or incorrect address.

I am still well, and homesick and anxious to be home of course. I hope you and the children will have a very happy Christmas. Sorry I couldn't contribute this year. Next year I hope I'll be home and make up for it.

Love.

Jim



[Letter No. 299]

The Philippines
December 14, 1944

Dear Betty -

Another little note to say I am OK. Mail is still unaccountably slow. My last letter was dated Nov. 14 and I got that Dec. 11, the date I last wrote to you. You still didn't know I was in the Philippines, so mail must be slow both ways. I came in with the invasion force, so I've been here about as long as anyone. Still haven't heard from my sisters about Dad.

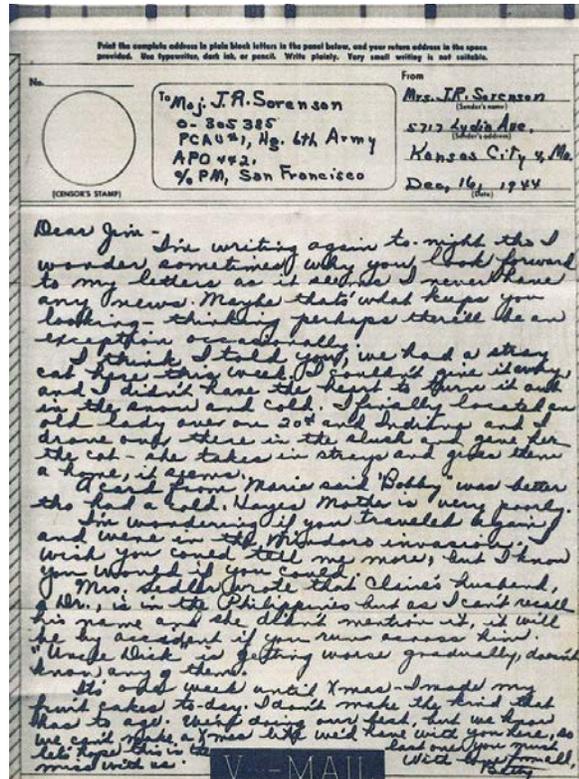
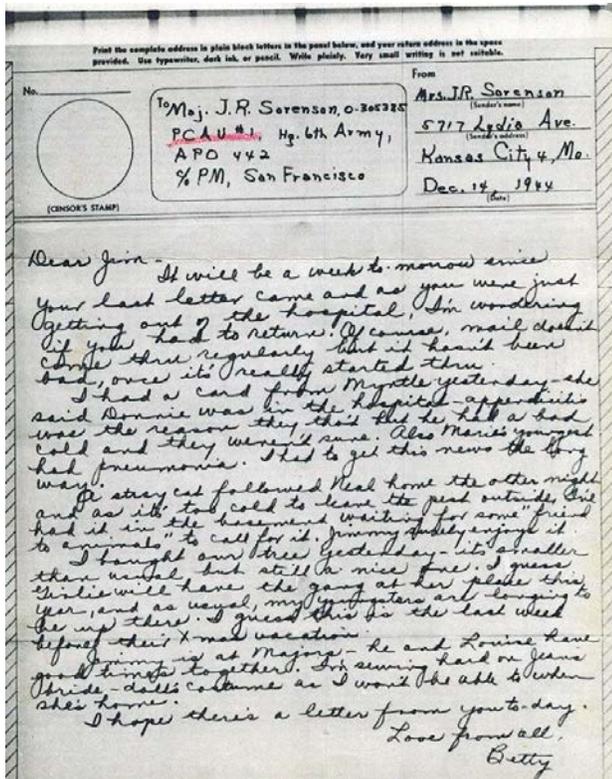
I told you in my last letter that I had sent you \$500.00 which should arrive about New Years. Be sure to let me know when you get it so I won't be putting tracers on it. You have mentioned the arrival of all other sums I have sent so I know you have got it except this last one.

You won't have this until after Christmas but you will know I was thinking of you and wishing I was home. I suppose about now Bob and Neal are putting down their tracks in the play room and running their trains, (with Jimmy's assistance of course), and Jean is interested in dolls and clothes.

I was glad to hear that Dad didn't suffer at the end. I was afraid it would be very bad, with that kind of illness.

Love to all of you.

Jim



[Letter No. 300]

The Philippines
December 20, 1944

Dear Betty -

No mail again today so I have no letter to answer or comment on but will send you an "OK" note anyway. I don't know what has happened to our mail service, it's several weeks since any mail has arrived for anyone, except a rare stray letter once in a great while --- but none for me. Hope the situation --- whatever it is --- will clear up soon.

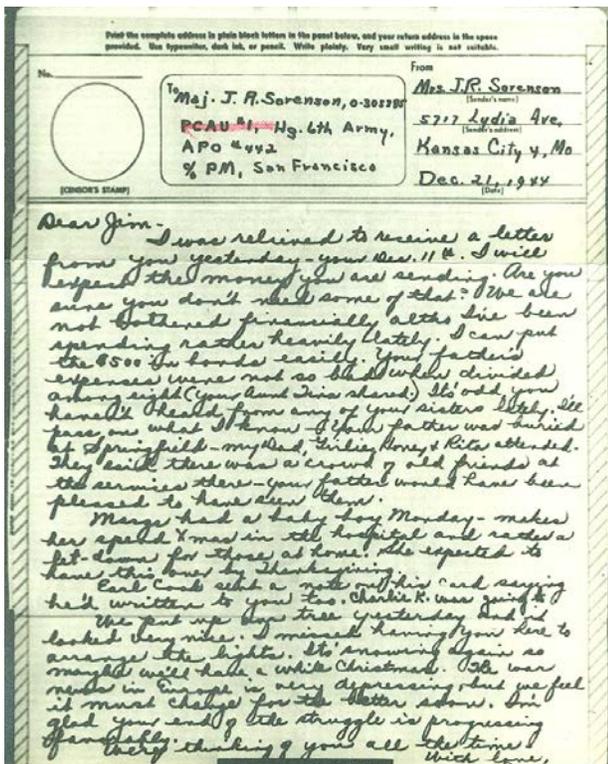
The Red Cross reported Dad's death to my C. O. yesterday and he came to break the news, not knowing that I had already been informed. I had a bad scare for a few seconds for fear it was additional bad news from home. The way mail doesn't get here makes it seem twice as far from home, it takes so long to hear about happenings back there.

It's nearly Christmas and I'll wish you "Merry Christmas" again although it will be long past when you get this.

Love.

Jim

[Note: It is somewhat surprising that JRS is so surprised about the slow mail delivery; it must be considerably better than he experienced during WWI. Mail in those days had to travel via ship, not aircraft, and, once in country had to travel via various ground-based conveyances that could not have been very efficient. There is no doubt, however, that arrival of mail from home is greatly anticipated; and, when it is perceived to be late, it is hard to take.]



[Letter No. 301]

The Philippines
December 24, 1944

Dear Betty -

Tonight is Christmas Eve and I hope you will all have a very happy time and that Santa Claus will be good to all of you. Sorry I couldn't help him out this year.

The mail situation is unchanged. I haven't had a letter since your V-Mail dated November 10, which I received December 11th. Not a word from any of the family since before Dad died. I don't know what the trouble is ---- there is very little mail arriving for anyone in this unit, although a few letters trickle in, some of them dated very recently.

I am staying the house of a well-to-do Filipino. He has arranged to have a priest hold mass in the yard tomorrow --- Christmas morning. They are very devout Catholics and the priests are visiting here constantly. There are a lot of soldiers and officers quartered in the neighborhood and a lot of his employes [sic] live on the grounds and all around the place. Some of them have a lot of difficulty getting to church so he decided to bring the church to them.

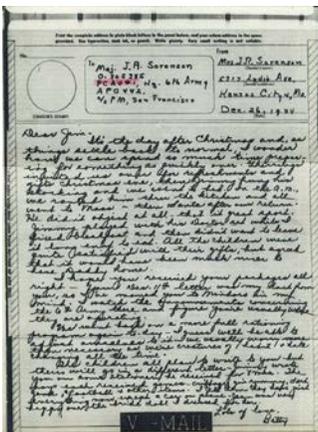
Have been in one place for quite a while now but am expecting to move on again before very long. I, with a number of other Engineer officers, expect a new assignment. We have asked for it, and surprisingly higher authority listened to us. Our present units are engaged in interesting work, but there is little need for engineers in their particular job and we -- and evidently the Army also --- think we would be of more use and more at home, in other organizations.

It is now 9:00 AM here, so it is 7:00 o'clock last night in Kansas City. It won't be today there until 2:00 PM here, which will be midnight for you.

I am feeling fine again so don't worry about me.

Love,
Jim

[Note: JRS must be playing a little game with his sisters --- waiting to see how long it takes them to contact him about their Father's death. He could very easily have written to one of them, saying what he knew, etc.]



[Letter No. 302]

The Philippines
December 29, 1944

Dear Betty -

I am very busy preparing for our next move and don't know whether I will be able to write you again from this place.

I wrote you last on the day before Christmas. I told you then that we were not getting any mail. Since then things have been better --- on Christmas day I got your Nov. 28th letter, next day one dated Nov 18th and yesterday I got two dated Dec. 4 and Dec 7. Also received one from Earl Cook, a card from the Shoemakers and a letter from Handley. He told me about the proposal to establish State offices, which you also mentioned in one of your letters. I am quite disturbed about that, as it would probably impact our future considerably. I have been looking forward to a long time of enjoying our first real home since we stared out together. I hope nothing comes of it.

I have not received any packages at all since leaving the states. They will probably dribble in at long intervals eventually.

One Christmas Day we were guest at dinner of the people where I am staying. They have treated me swell and when I have more time and can do so I will send you the names of the household and how they live. The day was as pleasant as it could be under the circumstances but it is always a dreary time away from home.

I'll close this now and hope to write again before we go

All my love.

Jim

P. S. later your Dec. 10 letter just arrived. I haven't time to write more. I have just been assigned to command this unit and have a rush job to do. Will write again as soon as I can ---- but as before, will be out of touch for some time.

Love

Jim

Inclosing letter from Cleo --- just received.

[Cleo's letter follows:

"Sunday, Nov 27th '44

Dear Jim:

This is a beautiful day with the ground covered with snow but the sun is out nice & bright. We had quite a snow storm here yesterday. Russell & Jim went hunting yesterday about noon & came back with 34 lovely all mallard ducks. Bill, Jim & Russell are out to-day. We cleaned 18 of them last nite & gave the rest away. Wish you could be here to have some with us for Thanksgiving. Nebr. you know didn't change the date. Suppose you had Turkey.

Haven't heard from Betty for quite a while. Saw Helen, Honey & Reta at Dad's funeral. Reta wears a Cadet Nurses Uniform & looks real nice. Hear Vivian Montagne will soon be going across. Says she is scared but thrilled to death. Dad would like so much to have seen Bob but guess it just wasn't meant to be.

Had a letter from Myrtle yesterday seems funny to think of her cooking & canning for herself. She had Roy & Sue over for Thanksgiving dinner. Said she had received a letter from you. Well Jim there doesn't seem to be any news.

Hope this finds you O. K & write if you can find the time.

Love Cleo] [She evidently thinks that JRS already knew about the death, because she talks about the funeral as if no further explanation is necessary.]

Print the complete address in plain black letters in the panel below, and your return address in the space provided. Use typewriter, dark ink, or pencil. Write plainly. Vary small writing is not suitable.

No. (CENSOR'S STAMP)

To Maj. J.R. Sorenson.
0-305385
PCAU #1, Hq. 6th Army,
APO 442,
9/0 PM, San Francisco

From Mrs. J.R. Sorenson
(Sender's name)
5717 Lydia Ave.
(Sender's address)
Kansas City 4, Mo
Dec. 30, 1944
(Date)

Dear Jim - This will probably be my last '44 letter to you. I'm hoping the new year holds much better things than the last three have, but when we consider how many ways conditions could be worse, we have no right to complain either, I suppose.

Can you get Income Tax forms there? I received some for you but don't know whether to forward them or not. They're due Mar. 15. I paid your Dec. 15th installment - Hope we didn't duplicate again. I also have the furniture insurance to renew after three years.

Dad wrote that he was having a monument erected on our cemetery lot and wondered if I wanted Sorenson engraved on the other side. I told him "no" - not at this time and besides, I think I had only one place there & might never use it. Mother wanted that place next to her folks as I gave \$5.00 for what she said were just two places - Dad says it's a full lot of six. What do you advise?

Bob & Jimmy are working over the train upstairs, Neal is at Fred's and Jew is making an elevator with the erector set & with Patry McNeill's help. School takes up again next Tuesday and I'll be glad - I may get some work done again.

The \$50.00 have not arrived yet but imagine the Season's mail has slowed down delivery somewhat. I have a page clipped from the R.C. Times, I'll send in another letter. It's a condensed report of the year's news. Hope the new year brings you home safe & well.

With love,
Betty

V...-MAIL

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1941 O-328498

[Note: Mom must use "regular" mail in addition to V-Mail, because she has mentioned sending clippings etc before. I do not think V-Mail allowed for such inclusions. If so, they have not survived, as is the case with most of her letters prior to the V-Mail experience.]

[Letter No. 303]

The Philippines
January 13, 1945

Dear Betty -

I last wrote you on Dec. 29 and told you I was moving again. I have been on another sea voyage since then and am on another Island now. You can probably follow my travels better in newspapers than by my mail.

Of course this has disrupted our mail service again, (it never was very good anyway), and I don't know when I'll hear from you again. Your last letter was dated Dec 10 and I got it Dec. 29, unusually fast time at that.

I am feeling fine again, but more homesick than ever. I suppose everyone is. Sure would like to get back to the quiet life, take you all out for Sunday dinner and go hunting and fishing with the boys, and swing Jean and Jimmy in the park.

I hope nothing comes of the plan to locate the PRA offices in the State capitals. I would hate to leave Kansas City now that we had planned on settling there for good. Sure wish we could stay in our present home for a few more years at least. I've never been in Jefferson City, but have seen all the other places. I think I would prefer Lincoln to any of the others, but would lots rather stay where we are. Where would you rather go if we have to move? We probably won't have much choice in the matter, although I should think I would have some consideration about getting my old assignment back. The boss said I would.

This landing was a spectacular operation, as the first was also. I suppose they always are. Everything is going fine.

I hope to get settled somewhere soon, long enough at least for some back mails to catch up. It's bad enough to be so far away and have to wait so long to get the news and find out how you are getting along. I wish the children would write once in a while. I miss you all, all the time.

Love.

Jim

[Journal entry: "Tuesday, Jan. 9 'A-Day'. Entered Lingayen Gulf last night. Heavy bombardment began at dawn. Zero hour - 0930"]

Print the complete address in plain letters in the space below, and your return address in the space provided on the right. Use typewriter, dark ink, or dark pencil. Faint or small writing is not suitable for photographing.

TO: Maj. J. R. Sorenson, 0-305385
PCAU #1, Hq. 6th Army
APO 442
% PM San Francisco

FROM: Mrs. J. R. Sorenson
5717 Lydia Ave.
Kansas City 9, Mo.
Jan. 5, 1945

Dear Jim - I received your Dec. 24 letter and now I'm anxiously awaiting the next to see if you received your Christmas packages. The Robs have not arrived but don't worry about it - mail is likely to be sloughed down in December.

Roberta Lee sent a card from Hawaii, and a Navy kid has been added to her household. Mrs. Handley has never said a thing about it. Did I tell you Marge had another boy Dec. 18?

Mrs. Coated, on the new corner of our street died of a heart attack Yuletide week. She lived there alone. So I imagine there'll be new neighbors there before the long, butterfields there moved into the neighborhood.

The last Post had a picture of a Neptune Rex ceremony on the back page. Wondered if your engagement was anything like that. (Miss Westcott is teaching in Mankato, Minn., this year a last minute decision. There's a great shortage of teachers.)

Jimmy and I are going out to buy groceries now, and later the battery driving are hard on it. The snow's you. Well, Betty

V-MAIL

Print the complete address in plain letters in the space below, and your return address in the space provided on the right. Use typewriter, dark ink, or dark pencil. Faint or small writing is not suitable for photographing.

TO: Maj. J. R. Sorenson, 0-305385
PCAU #1, Hq. 6th Army
APO 442
% PM San Francisco

FROM: Mrs. J. R. Sorenson
5717 Lydia Ave.
Kansas City, Mo.

Jan. 9, 1945

Dear Jim - I hope, by the time this is received, that you'll be caught up with delayed mail. It must be hard waiting so long for letters. I know it seems ages since you last wrote, and that was your Dec. 24 letter.

Jimmy and I went (down town) yesterday to get the car license, city sticker and do some banking and shopping. The weather promised to become bad so I took the trip earlier than planned this week. We had good weather this morning and blizzardy weather yesterday afternoon. Hope the mail will fly out from you.

Nelson (Frank) sent a fine (chick) the other day. That leads up to everything we borrowed in fact, no one owes us as much as we can't plan to live off any relatives in our old age.

In trying to get (up courage) to call in papers, though the set doesn't here but it involves (as much) more difficulty than in ordinary times, I dread it. I don't like to see Bob off to the eye (Dr. Connors). He has helped him but it's a slow process. Ned is working his letter for the final time to day. I thought I would yesterday and based on the letter last night. Jean went to school all dressed up for parties, take the day Jimmy says he can whistle about but he's a templeamental artist - must be in the mood.

Lots of love, Betty

V-MAIL

Print the complete address in plain letters in the space below, and your return address in the space provided on the right. Use typewriter, dark ink, or dark pencil. Faint or small writing is not suitable for photographing.

TO: Maj. J. R. Sorenson, 0-305385
PCAU #1, Hq. 6th Army
APO 442
% PM San Francisco

FROM: Mrs. J. R. Sorenson
5717 Lydia Ave.
Kansas City, Mo.

Jan. 11, 1945

Dear Jim - I was glad you received so many letters around Christmas time even tho the packages didn't arrive. I'll be very disappointed if you don't receive the folder of pictures I had taken of the family. It was mailed around the 15th. The check for five hundred dollars arrived this week. I can put enough with it to buy a thousand dollars worth of bonds.

My Handley called to tell me that had been transferred to Intelligence and is now located at Baltimore. The phone only say will soon be in service tho.

Are you allowed to tell me what PCAU means? I try to keep track of you and 6th Army is a large territory. You said you were in command of your unit. For odd when profession is made. As a response, I kind know very little about the Army, so I still don't know much about what you're doing. I'm going to hate waiting for the next letter. I should hope you record, but I don't believe you're getting a lot of letters the way you are. Well, Betty

V-MAIL

[Letter No. 304]

The Philippines
January 18, 1945

Dear Betty -

I'll have time for only a short note to let you know I'm OK. I am responsible for this unit now and don't have much time to myself. Interruptions come every few words I write.

Since we have moved our mail service has been disrupted of course but hope it will catch up soon. It was just getting fairly good when we left our last area.

I told you in my last letter that we had moved to another Island. You probably have a fair idea where it is by this time.

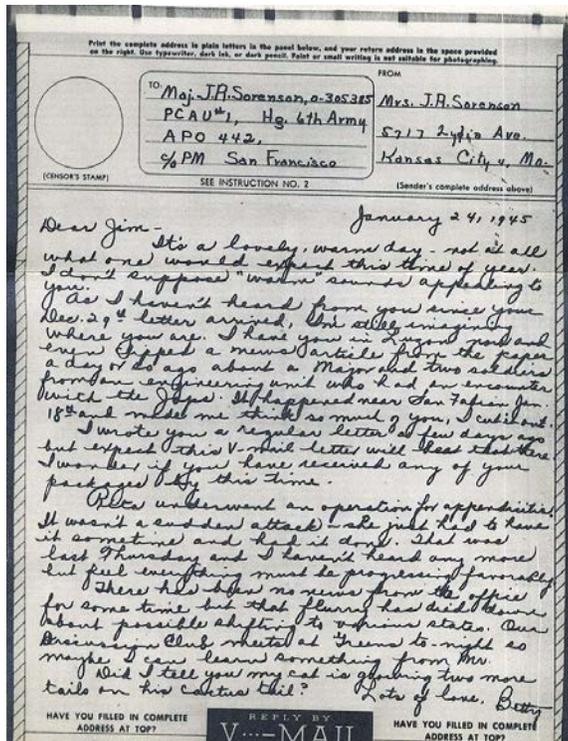
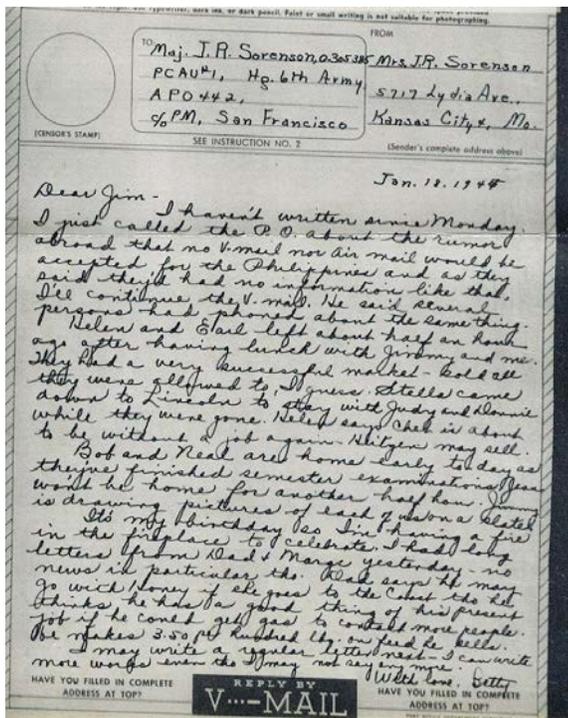
The country around here is beautiful, much nicer than our last stop. I still don't like the tropics though and have only one ambition --- to get back home.

I hope everything is going well with all of you. It's a long time since I've heard from you but I know it's not your fault.

Love

Jim

[Journal entry: "Mon. Jan. 15. Beached east of Lingayen, 11:00 A. M. (Yellow Beach). Debarked."]



Print the complete address in plain letters in the panel below, and your return address in the space provided at the right. Use typewriter, dark ink, or dark pencil. Post or seal writing is not suitable for photographing.



TO: Maj. J. A. Sorenson, 0305285
PCAU #1 Hq. 6th Army
APO 442
7/4 P.M. San Francisco.

FROM:

Mrs. J. B. Sorenson
5217 Lydia Ave.
Kansas City, Mo.

(SENDING STAMP)

SEE INSTRUCTION NO. 2

(Sender's complete address above)

January 25, 1945

Dear Jim -

I'll write you another note. I expect these short letters are better than none and state all that can be said for them.

Our nice weather continued. I went to a luncheon and card party at Parkhurst this noon - there were a big crowd because of the nice day. I talked to Mr. Green a little last night and he said he didn't know much about that rumor concerning the possibility of state offices being maintained in the various capitals. He thought to-day the post told me you'd probably be interested to know that John is a Quaker now instead of a Baptist, that Mr. Schomaker is Division Engineer and that the Dakotas and Minnesota are also in this division now.

Jimmy stayed at the airport to-day while I was out. He has invited the above Kettles and I have invited them to tomorrow. The word is that your Mother died. My Mother will be gone (I hope) Sunday. It still seems to me that someone else, and only at home does the full realization come to me.

I just called Hank (dog) - nothing new there yet but its nearing the hour. I think I like this new assignment. All my love, Betty

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP?

REPLY BY V-MAIL

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP?

POST OFFICE REGULATIONS PERMIT NO. 1

[Letter No. 305]

Philippine Islands

January 26, 1945

Dear Betty -

A little mail caught up with us a couple of days ago and I got your Thanksgiving Airmail letter and your V-Mail of Dec. 16. Tell Neal I was very glad to get his letter. I hope that, when things quiet down and I have more time, I will find time to write letters to all the youngsters. I have lots of things to tell them that can't be told yet.

I also had a letter from Mamie dated Nov. 29, mostly about Dad's last days.

I am getting along fine although very busy. The country is very pretty and the climate has been fine --- at least compared with what we had in our first operation. I have experienced hotter weather in North Dakota than any I have seen since I came to the tropics. However, the constant summer weather wears you down and I would like a good Dakota blizzard for a change.

Have been constantly on the move since the landing here --- never staid in one place more than two or three days. Am moving on again tomorrow.

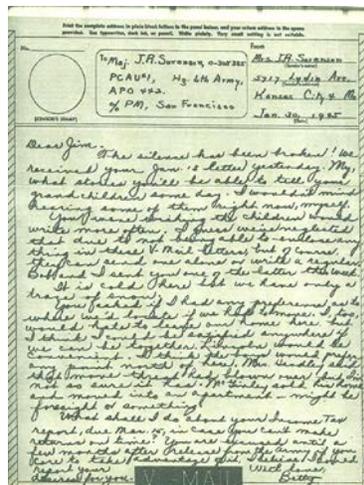
You would enjoy a trip to this country --- in peace time of course. There are flowers everywhere --- hibiscus, bougainvillea, and dozens of varieties I don't know the names of. There is also a lot of bamboo, some as big around as a goodsized tree. When thirsty we slash the end off a green coconut with a bolo and drink the juice. Papaya and bananas can be picked almost anywhere. The people use carabaos, (water buffalo), zebus, and small ponies for work and transportation. Carabaos are also used for riding. The people are very hospitable and it is hard to avoid invitation to dine with them. They feel hurt if you don't accept, and they always make it a banquet when they have guests.

Neal asked if I had seen any Japs. Tell him I have seen plenty of them but most of them were either the worse for wear --- or in the process of getting that way. So far they haven't staid put for long.

Love.

Jim

[Journal entry: "Sat. Jan 27, Lv Gerona 8:00 A. M., arr. Concepcion 9:30 A.M."]



[Letter No. 306]

The Philippines
January 31, 1945

Dear Betty -

Yesterday I got your Dec. 30 Letter, the first mail since our last interruption. I will try to answer some of your questions, but I'm afraid I can't help much. Re the income tax ---- I think forms will be available here. Just now no one has time to attend to those things and since overseas military personnel has an extension of time for such things I wouldn't worry about it. The income tax will be zero or negligible anyway, with all the exemptions, so the Victory Tax is the only one that will amount to much. If things ever quiet down again and I have access to forms and the instructions I'll attend to it. It may be best for you to send me the forms & instructions at that, then I can take care of it as soon as I am able.

About the memorial your Dad is getting, I want you to do just whatever you would rather. I didn't quite understand what you said about the lot you bought --- did you mean you thought you had bought a lot that you thought had two vacant places and was told that there were six burials there or six vacant places?

I hope the \$500 has arrived by now. It should have been there about New Years. I have two more months pay coming now and may not be paid for another month or two. I will send the surplus in the same way when I get the chance.

By the way I have been assigned to another unit. My address will be the same except substitute PCASU#3 in place of PCAU #1. I reported in to my new unit last night.

I feel bad this morning. Do you remember that a long time ago Neal gave you a little pink glass rosary that he had got from Uncle Rob, for you to give to me? It was in a little red tin "NR" laxative box, with an Immaculate Conception medal from Jean? I treasured it highly, and recently I have carried it in my pocket for safe keeping in case my baggage was lost --- it's sure hard to keep it with you here. Today it's gone, tin box and all. I have been looking everywhere for it but fear I lost it yesterday on my trip to this place. I still have Jean's medal on my identification tag chain.

I'm sorry I haven't been able to write more often. We are rushed all day, and can't write at night because everything is blackout and we can't have lights. A rumor is that a lot of mail has arrived and will be distributed soon. Hope it's true.

Love Jim

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. From

To: Maj. J. P. Sorenson
 a-305385
 PCAU #1, Hq. 6th Army
 APO 442
 % PM San Francisco

From: Mrs. J. P. Sorenson
 (Sender's name)
 5717 Lydia Ave.
 (Sender's address)
 Kansas City, Mo.
 Feb. 4 1945
 (Date)

(SENDER'S STAMP)

Dear Jim - This has been a day of good news! Manila re-entered, and the resistance is expected, there is no doubt of the outcome. It suddenly makes the return of all of you seem only a matter of weeks. I don't really expect that but I do feel more hopeful of a quick end to the whole business.

Mrs. Handley called this morning to tell me Alice had a big boy yesterday. Sick can't get home now either. She's all well tho, so they'll be waiting when he can come. Ill try to get to the hospital this week!

Money was turned down by Sears. They considered one other application and here and the other person had had previous experience in that kind of work, so was given the job. She felt badly about it but Jimmie is sure that it was better so. She just wants to get a change. We've had more snow lately and Jimmy had so much fun playing in it and snow. Talking the little girl across the street. He's asleep now. The boys are doing their home work and Jean is reading comics. There's a good radio program of music. Wish you were here.

With lots of love,
Betty

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No. From

To: Maj. J. P. Sorenson a-305385
 PCAU #1 Hq. 6th Army
 APO 442
 % PM, San Francisco

From: Mrs. J. P. Sorenson
 (Sender's name)
 5717 Lydia Ave.
 (Sender's address)
 Kansas City, Mo.
 Feb. 8 1945
 (Date)

(SENDER'S STAMP)

Dear Jim - I thought mail would come from you a little more regularly after hearing from you last week but there's been nothing since. Guess there are other things more important than letters these days tho.

Our Discussion Club continues to meet once a week but three more meetings will finish us. The met at Mulvihill's last night (next door to Green's). Neal visited with Mr. T. until I was ready to come home and got himself a job caring for their furnace while Mr. is in Cornell next week auditing of something.

Alice and baby are doing fine. Will come home from the hospital Sunday. They have a nurse hired and Alice's Aunt is coming Saturday so Mrs. Handley thinks she can make out.

Jimmie is over at Major's, waiting Louise. He "dropped in" on Elliott too and gathered a few pebbles of candy. Jimmie got a plant out by the expression "dropped in." Jean has gone to a friend's for some clothes and the boys are hanging around waiting for dinner.

We don't seem to make or receive much news to write about but this will let you know we're well, missing you all the time, and waiting for your return post keeps.

With love,
Betty

[Letter No. 307]

The Philippines
February 4, 1945

Dear Betty -

I went to the Finance Office today and drew two months pay. I am enclosing a Treasury of the U. S. check for \$400.00. They don't send money by P.T.T as they did the last two times I sent money, so this is the only way I could send it except by Postal M. O., and there is no post office in the immediate vicinity. I wanted it made payable direct to you, but they said the correct way was to make it out to me and type on the back: "Pay to order of Mrs." etc. and then indorse it, which I did. You can't argue with a Finance Officer. You will note that the name is incorrectly spelled. I endorsed it the same way, as is required on Gov't checks. You can indorse it correctly in the presence of the cashier and there should be no trouble in cashing it. Or he may require endorsement the same as the typed name.

Yesterday I got your letter dated Jan 9, and the day before one dated Jan. 5. In the Jan. 5th letter you said the \$500.00 had not arrived. You didn't mention it on Jan. 9, so I suppose you hadn't got it yet. This overseas assignment is working out pretty well financially. I sent you more today than I drew, but put some surplus with it. It's almost impossible to spend money here except for laundry and haircuts --- and they both come cheap. A whole day's ration costs less than an average dinner or supper in an officer's mess in the States --- and they don't charge at all for meals eaten aboard ship. I've spent a great deal of time at sea so that's all to the good. Cigarettes are issued free at the rate of one pack a day --- and beer, (when you can get it, which is very seldom), costs 8 cents a can. Also, there is a 10% increase in base pay for foreign service. I have been so far ahead of post exchanges that I haven't been able to buy anything. All of which helps in the old bank account.

I'm glad Bob is getting benefit from his eye exercises. Congratulate Neal for me on winning his letter. I hope Jean will send me one of the pictures she had taken. I'd like to hear Jimmy whistle.

The day before I left my old outfit I had a presentation formation and pinned decorations on two of my men --- one for gallantry in action and one Purple Heart. They were awarded in Army General Orders. Three others in the same unit have been decorated since the beginning of the Philippine Campaign. We have shot and captured Japs so Neal needn't feel hurt about his dad not having been where the shooting was. It's pretty quiet in this part of the island where I am now. Everything is going fine.

Love, Jim

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.



(CENSOR'S STAMP)

To Maj. J. R. Sorenson, O-305286
PCAU#3 Hq. 6th Army
APO 442
% PM San Francisco

From

Mrs. J. R. Sorenson
(Sender's name)
5717 Lydia Ave.
(Sender's address)
Kansas City 9, Mo.

Feb 14, 1945
(Date)

Dear Jim This is Ash Wednesday as well as St. Valentine's Day and another fine day when the temperature may reach the sixties. Wonder if you found the little rosey. Whoever filled it in that container will think it a "hard pill to swallow," indeed. Cleo wrote that Mayme had undergone the operation and was doing fine. Russell was working again and should have been able to get much information from the doctor about his trouble. Mayme was having her picture taken for graduation. I have lots of letters again, but haven't received many lately. I always owe Marge. I think she sits down and answers me the soon as she hears from me.

Your last two letters have sounded much like yourself. I'd like to see that country with you under more tranquil circumstances. Can you explain what PCAU is and did you lose command of your unit when transferred to #3?

I'm sending on the tax blanks. As to the cemetery lot, I'll explain about them when you come home. Dad hasn't said any more about it.

Jimmy is blowing bubbles and is going to pass out Valentine's soon. We didn't send you any Valentine's as we didn't buy any ^{party} stuff but for sure you'll get plenty. Love, Betty

V-MAIL

[Letter No. 308]

The Philippines
February 13, 1945

Dear Betty -

The last letter I got from you was dated Jan. 18, the one before that Jan. 9. You didn't say in either one that the money I sent in December had arrived. However, in the Jan. 18th letter you referred to one you had written the Monday before, so maybe you reported it in that one --- which I haven't received yet. I still have the receipt, of course, but the money should have arrived there long ago. I am losing all confidence in the mail, and every other type of communications, that's the reason I'm anxious to hear.

Everything is going all right --- mostly routine now. I am going on an interesting trip tomorrow, but most of the work recently has been dull. There is a lot going on and new sights to see, but all that gets tiresome after a while. Wish the time would go faster and I could get home sooner.

Your latest letter was written on your birthday. Sorry I couldn't buy you something. I think I wrote you on that day, but I'll admit that I didn't remember it was your birthday. That's not nice, but I'm afraid I'll overlook lots of birthdays and anniversaries for some time to come. Not the July one, of course.

It was news to me that Honey planned to go to the coast. Is she planning to settle there or just a visit? I suppose Lad is all settled and feeling at home out there by this time.

The mail for today hasn't arrived yet and will probably not be here until late. I hope there will be a letter from you.

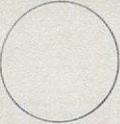
Love. Jim

[Note: There are some strange things going on here. The envelope in which this letter came is postmarked Feb 14, but Mom has written on it "Rec'd Jan 29". The next letter, postmarked Feb 16 has "Rec'd Jan 30" on the envelope --- this strange error on Mom's part continues at least through Ltr #310, where she has "Rec'd Jan 6" written on an envelope postmarked Feb 21. At the other end of this is the problem with letters being postmarked late. This letter, written on 13 Feb was postmarked the following day, but the next one in my list, (Ltr #309), written Feb 9, wasn't postmarked until Feb 16 ---- thus it's being listed later.

[The "interesting trip" was one of the first of several to Manila. He was there when the 503rd Regimental Combat Team parachuted onto Corregidor Island in Manila Bay.]

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No.



(CENSOR'S STAMP)

To: Maj. J. P. Sorenson, 0-305385
PCAU #3 Hq 6th Army
APO 442
% PM San Francisco

From

Mrs. J. P. Sorenson
(Sender's name)

5717 Lydia Ave.
(Sender's address)

Kansas City 4, Mo.

Feb. 15, 1945
(Date)

Dear Jim -
I sent off a letter yesterday but I guess a dozen of that kind a day wouldn't add up to one good letter for all the news contained in them. I wanted to let you know immediately that I'd received the \$400. I expect I'll put it in bonds too, as I did the last amount. The house needs a lot of things but there's so little choice in anything, if you can find it for sale at all, and the quality so poor for the price, that I want to wait. We'll have a nice sum saved for some good times together before our family has grown away from us.

I'm planning to go to Handley's this afternoon with a gift for the new baby. The next six weeks, I'm not planning much, except to attend church services as often as I can.

The weather has been so warm that the tulips on the south, sheltered side of the house are three the ground. They did that last year too and came out all right but sometime I'll lose them for being in such a hurry. I'm planning to write a letter to - not V-Mail, to you.

With love, Betty

V-MAIL

[Letter No. 309]

The Philippines
February 9, 1945

Dear Betty -

I got a couple of delayed letters from you the other day --- written about Christmas time. There was letter from Jan in one of them. Thank her for me. I'm still trying to find time to write all the youngsters.

There were also letters from Stella and Mamie --- all written in November or December. I haven't got any of the Christmas packages yet ---- or the birthday one for that matter.

I sent you a check for \$300.00 in my last letter. I mention it here so you will know it was sent --- in case it doesn't arrive. Mail is sure tricky and irregular over here. From comments in your letters I figure my letters to you arrive in about one-half the time it takes yours to get to me. The non-arrival of the Christmas packages is probably due to the fact that they were mailed in October to my New Guinea APO address and I have been so many places since then that it never has caught up. Some will probably arrive eventually but I don't expect all of it. My sisters have all said they sent boxes --- mostly food I gather. Hate to think the shape they will be in. I've seen a lot of them that others have received and usually they are a mess.

There isn't anything new to write about, just the old routine. I am well and getting along all right. I'm not a heavy as I was but don't expect to be in this climate.

Am sending a few more Jap Philippine Pesos for the kids. I have a few Australian bills --- pounds and shillings, Dutch East Indies guilders, (I was there too and was paid in that money once), but they are legal tender and valuable and they won't let us mail those --- nor the good made-in-America Philippine money we are paid in here. One peso = ½ dollar. In New Guinea we were paid in Australian pounds & shillings.

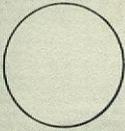
I hope this squabble will be over soon and I can come home.

Love, Jim

[Note: In his letter of 4 Feb, (referred to here as "my last letter"?), he said he was sending \$400.00, not \$300.00] [The unnamed place where JRS was paid in guilders had to have been Hollandia, now Jayapura, Indonesia. At that time it was part of the Dutch East Indies' portion of the island of New Guinea. He was there from 5 Oct to 18 Oct, 1944, just before going on to Leyte.]

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.



(CENSOR'S STAMP)

To Maj. J. R. Sorenson
O-305385
PCAUM 3 Hq. 6th Army
APO 442
4 PM San Francisco

From

Mrs. J. R. Sorenson
(Sender's name)
5717 Lydio Ave.
(Sender's address)
Kansas City 4, Mo.
Feb. 20, 1945
(Date)

Dear Jim - Since my last letter was a regular, there may be a longer time than usual between these last two.

Jimmy and I have to go forth to replenish the family larder in a little while. He is hoping there'll be some animal crackers in stock.

I joined the General Bonavia Club of our church last night. Mrs. Monahan's sister and I went down - her husband is with the 7th fleet at Manila. It was misting during the evening and my windshield completely fogged over so that I had to drive all the way home in low and with my head out the side to see.

There was a paper collection yesterday so I went thru all of ours and took the front page news to save for you - just that concerning the Pacific, and I thought you might like to keep some of it.

Our springlike weather has vanished but that is good - we won't get so anxious to get at gardens, etc. I brought in a petunia plant last fall and it's about to burst into bloom now.

I have much to do so must get at it. We miss you and remember you in our prayers always. With love,
Betty

[Letter No. 310]

The Philippines

20 Feb. 1945

Dear Betty -

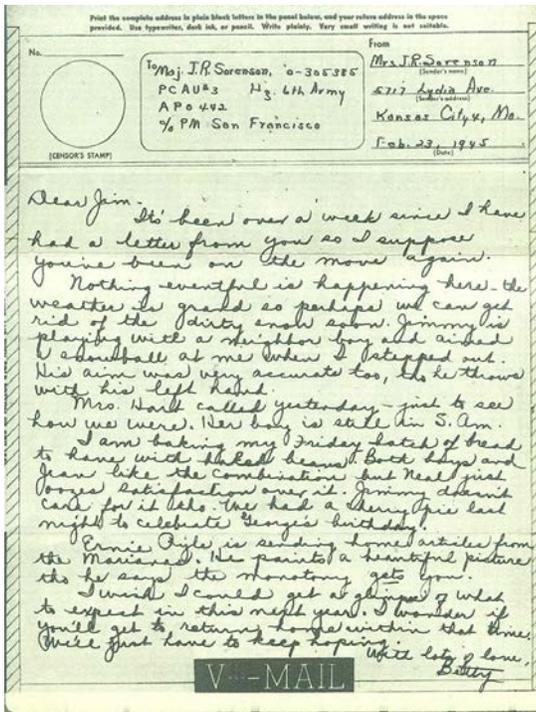
I haven't written you for some time but the reason is the usual one. Have been working and moving around a lot. Your last letter, V-mail dated Jan. 24, arrived here the 16th. Your guess was right.

Had a letter from Cleo the other day saying she "supposed I had heard about Mame having an operation". I hadn't, but her letter was dated Feb 5 and written much later than any I have received. I hope Mame got along all right. Also, I hope Rita has recovered from her operation which you mentioned in your last letter.

Also had a letter from Col. Johnson the other day, dated Jan. 16. He seemed a little discouraged and fed up. Said he had been on the list for reassignment and the General had recommended his relief from active duty at his request. He said he was sweating it out to see if he would go back to Kansas City or be transferred to the Transportation Corps. Perhaps he is back on the job at K. C. by now. Hope he has better luck than I did. Sure could go for a long rest and some civilian clothes.

I've seen some interesting places lately and wish I could tell you about them. All I can say now is that I am well and getting along O. K.

Love Jim



[Letter No. 311]

The Philippines
26 February 1945

Dear Betty -

I received your letter of January 9th today with the clipping of the years events enclosed. Thanks a lot. I have had five letters from you of more recent date --- but that's the way the mail is over here. I still haven't received any of the Xmas boxes that you and all my sisters sent. I hope the picture folder isn't ruined when it arrives.

I got you V-mail saying you had received the \$500 I sent last December. Hope the check I sent early this month has arrived.

Yes, I have often thought lately that Bob will be eligible for the draft in a little more than a year. I hope the war will be over by that time. In any case they ought to let him finish his high school work. Anyway it would take some time after registering before his number would be drawn --- it might take a long time, as has happened in many cases. Anyway, things will have changed by then, and I don't think the public will stand for peacetime compulsory military service. I know there is a lot of talk about it now, but I have seen war-time hysteria before, and within a few months after the war is over everyone will be so sick of anything military that I think there will be a complete reversal of opinion on that matter.

It's just six months ago today since I sailed for New Guinea. Doesn't seem possible to have covered as many thousands of miles and been to as many different places in that time, as I have.

I had a nice letter from Col. Johnson the other day. He seemed pretty tired and fed up. Said he had asked for relief from active duty and was waiting to see what happens. Wouldn't be surprised if he would soon be back on the old job --- as I wish I were.

You asked again, in your Jan. 30 letter, what to do about my income tax. Don't worry about it. I'll have lots of time to take care of it when I get back. I find I won't have to pay income on my pay while serving in the Philippines, so the Victory tax is all that will require payment. In the Army, only base pay is figured in computing income tax so it would be trifling anyway, with all my dependents to cut it down. Subsistence pay and quarters allowance doesn't count --- and that is a substantial part of Army pay.

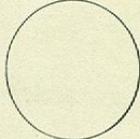
I am feeling fine and would be satisfied if I weren't homesick. I sure am impatient to get back home. I suppose everyone is.

Love. Jim

[Note: His predictions on the draft proved to be 'way off. He lived to see two of his sons, (Bob & Steve), drafted. The draft law expired in 1973, but all males are still required to register with the Selective Service.]

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No.



(CENSOR'S STAMP)

To: Maj. J.R. Sorenson, o-305385
PC AU #3 Hq. 6th Army
APO 442
%PM San Francisco

From

Mrs. J.R. Sorenson
(Sender's name)
5717 Lydia Ave.
(Sender's address)
Kansas City 7, Mo.
Feb. 27, 1945
(Date)

Dear Jim -

A letter from you yesterday (your Feb. 9th) and another to-day (Feb. 13th)! Such good fortune doesn't come my way very often any more. I hope you're not worrying about the money you sent - I've received the \$500, also the \$400; in fact, Jimmy and I just returned from depositing the latter. It's certainly grand to have. When I think how long it takes to save that much, it's like a windfall.

I went out to start the car to go after groceries but the battery is down again so Jim waiting for the boys to give me a push. I just had Jim charged the first part of Jan. Mrs. O'Brien, whom I saw Sunday, says Mr. Johnson had been discharged from the Army and is coming back here. Suppose that will mean a little shifting around at the office again. They say there's a lot of kidding going on down there as to who he needs more one place than another, especially who will be sent to the new additions (Main & Dakotas).

We are hoping for a quick end to this war too, so you + all can come home. Is there any danger you may be sent to China? With love
Betty

V-MAIL

[Letter No. 314]

The Philippines

March 13, 1945

Dear Betty -

I haven't had a letter for a long time, but I haven't written for several days either. Mail has been held up again for some reason but hope it won't be for long.

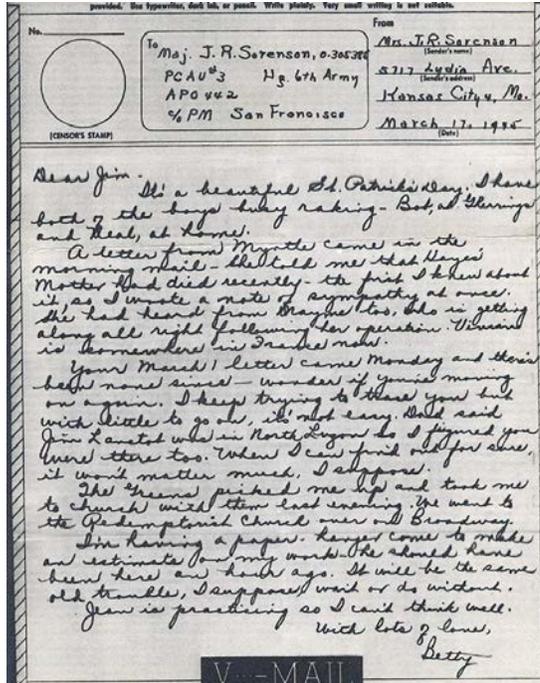
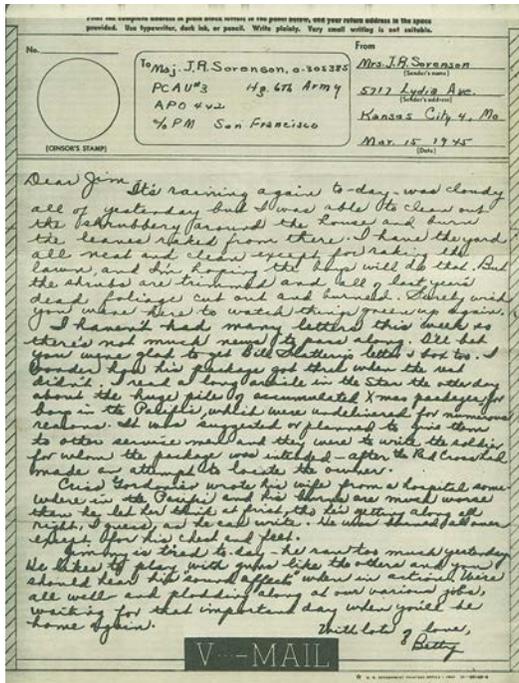
I'm sending you two money orders, for \$150.00. Let me know when they arrive. I have had word that all of the money I have sent so far has arrived.

There isn't any news, as usual. Wish this war would end soon. Every day I am wishing more to be home.

What is the status of the proposed change in the District? Hope they don't change things around so much that my job will no longer exist when I get back. By the way, I think I am due for another automatic raise next month, in Public Roads I mean.

Hope there will be a letter tomorrow.

Love, Jim



[Letter No. 315]

The Philippines

March 19, 1945

Dear Betty -

There seems to be another bottleneck in our mail again --- not that it's unusual. I haven't heard from you since long before I wrote my last letter. However, I did get the letters from the children, dated December 26. Thank them all for me. Tell Jimmy he misspelled a couple of words but I was able to read it very well. I enjoyed all the letters very much.

Everything is going well over here and I am feeling as good as I could ever expect in a tropical climate. It doesn't seem to be hurting me at all but I sure get tired of it. Wish they had sent me to Alaska if I have to spend the duration out of the U. S.

I hope you are all well and everything O.K. When the mail is delayed I get to worrying. It's bad enough to be so long out of touch, even when mail comes through at its fastest. Maybe there will be a letter tonight, it's always late in the day when mail arrives --- if any.

Love, Jim

[Note: I can relate to JRS' frequent comments about the climate wearing him out. Although my 16 trips to that part of the world were all of much shorter duration than his, I always noted how fatigued I was upon leaving.]

[Letter No. 317]

The Philippines
March 27, 1945

Dear Betty -

I just received your letters dated Feb. 27 and March 1. They are the first I have had for a long time. I hope the mail situation clears up soon.

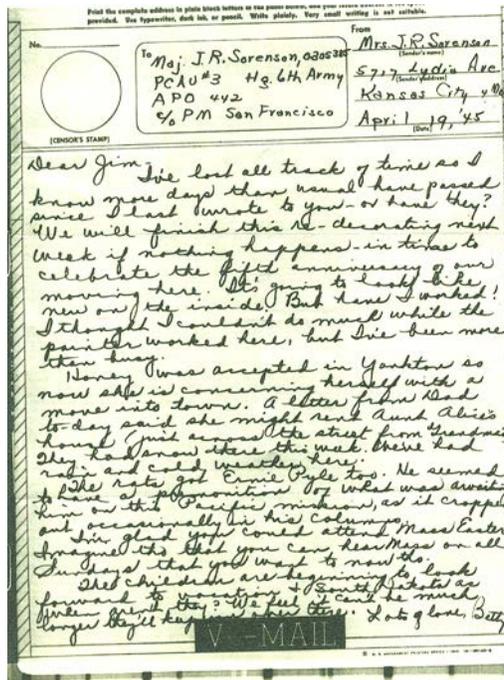
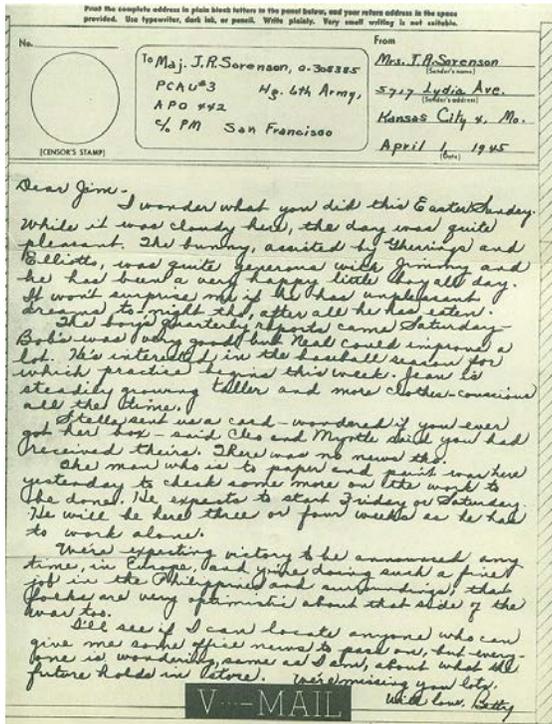
I also got a letter from MacConley [?], one of our civilian engineers on McClellan Field. He told about Col. Johnson's relief from active duty and the farewell party they gave them. I suppose he is back at work now. Wish I had been as lucky about getting relieved.

I hope you had good luck with your order from the new catalog. Maybe the good old days will be back soon --- when you could buy anything you wanted.

I judge from one of your letters that the re-shuffling of the office will probably go through soon. I hope they don't make their distribution so that we will have to leave K. C. when I come home. With all the seniority there is in that office I imagine I'll have about the last choice in location.

Sure --- I would like to hurry home. I know the time is flying and the children will be greatly changed when I see you all again. I miss you all.

Love, Jim



[Letter No. 318]

The Philippines
Easter Sunday

Dear Betty -

Your Feb. 1 letter arrived the day before yesterday. Haven't had any of recent date for a long time.

Also had a letter from Mamie dated December 10 ---- how is that for delayed mail? She enclosed a newspaper clipping of a picture of Vivian in uniform. Sure is a nice looking girl. She said she had sent an original picture to you so you probably have it by now. Mame's letter was newsy as they always are, but it's so old now that none of it would be news to you.

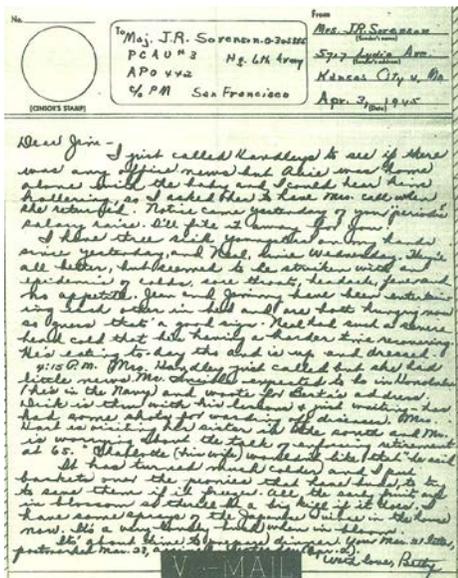
Went to mass this morning in an improvised tent chapel at the field hospital. No, I'm not a patient --- it was just the nearest place to go.

I still haven't received any of the packages you sent --- either last August or for Christmas. However, someone in the unit still gets a package now and then so maybe they will arrive some time. Hope the pictures will be O. K. --- but judging from the shape most packages are in the leather folders will be moldy and the pictures probably spoiled. I hope not.

Tell Jimmy I am glad to hear he is a good boy and when I get home we will all go shopping for presents.

Hope there will be mail today. It arrives late in the afternoon, when there is any.

Love, Jim



[Not sure which "uniform" was in the photo he got.]

[Letter No. 319]

The Philippines

April 4, 1945

Dear Betty -

Your March 7 letter has arrived, also a Christmas card from the Cassils. That's the way the mail comes --- old and new all mixed up.

I suppose it's really spring there now. You had a snowstorm when you wrote you last letter. I will be five years this month since we moved in our house. I lived in it less than two. Hope we don't have to move away when I get back.

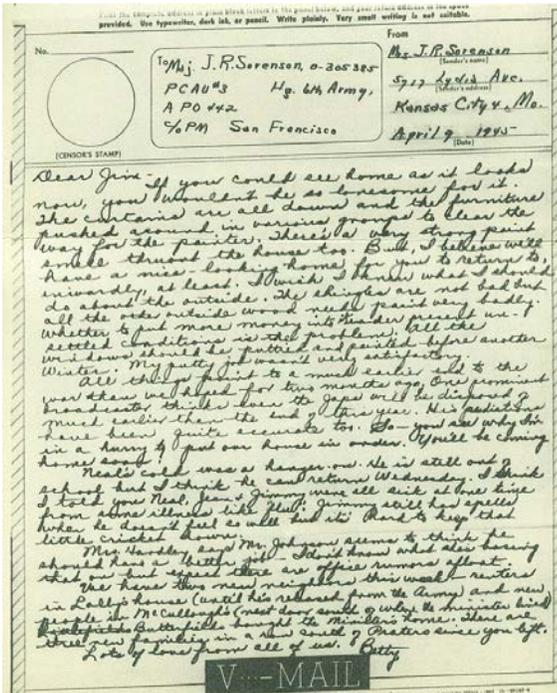
I suppose Colonel Johnson is back on the job by now. Wonder if he will get Nebraska back --- and how Handley will like it if he does. Maybe the Colonel will be a little more amiable now.

Things are as usual here, everything OK but routine. Have been in one place for several weeks, the longest stop I have made for a long time.

You are probably getting the garden planted and the yard fixed up now. I feel as though I would like to be helping, but I suppose I would just be loafing as usual if I was there.

Love, Jim

[Note: He arrived in San Jose, Nueva Ecija, (central Luzon), on Feb 20, and has been there since then.]



[Letter No. 320]

The Philippines

April 12, 1945

Dear Betty -

Two V-Mail letters arrived yesterday, dated March 15 and March 17. You were cleaning up the yard for spring. Sure would be nice to see the seasons change again. I hope you found a good paper hanger and got the work done OK. You still have the old house cleaning urge I see.

I am well, but a little dopy from the monotonous warm weather. Never a change to pep you up like we have at home. Today has been quite hot and I am pretty tired. I often wish I had been sent to Alaska instead of the tropics. Or better yet --- had been sent home.

It's an awful chore to write a decent letter out here. There isn't anything you can say about anything interesting without violating some censorship regulation. And yet I know that lots of stuff gets through that's not supposed to. It's hard to understand why papers and magazines can write up all the details while individuals have got to be very hush-hush about everything. Maybe it's all for the best. Anyway I'll have to save the stories until I get home. Meanwhile, I might as well get a rubber stamp saying: "I am fine and hope you are the same."

I haven't made any sea voyages recently so I have been in the same general vicinity since early January.

I hope the youngsters don't grow up too fast before I get home. We will all have to get acquainted all over again. I miss you all the time.

Love Jim.

[Note: JRS' disappointment with the need for censorship is especially understandable at this time. Consider this portion of his WWII journal:

April 9, 1945. Lupao, N.E. Capt. Kusaki killed by guerrillas.

(This entry leaves much unexplained. The story was told to JRS' children a number of times. He was in his "office" one day when a group of guerrillas came in carrying a Jap sword, a stamp which was used to sign documents, and a "gunny sack". These people presented the first two items to JRS, and then dumped the contents of the sack out onto the floor. Out rolled Capt. Kusaki's head. JRS accepted the stamp, but declined the head. He never said who got the sword. There may be several reasons why JRS was especially brief in his entry of this event in his journal, but most likely it was to avoid problems later if it fell into Japanese hands. He no doubt knew that there would be serious repercussions if he were taken prisoner and this entry were read. He probably declined taking the sword because he was on the move so much, and had no good means to carry "war souvenirs". He brought home very little from the first war also. This was left out of his letter of 12 Apr 45, which was of course subject to censorship; however, on 8 Jun 45, the occasion of his son Neal's 14th birthday, he wrote him a letter in which he told of this incident, and made an imprint of the stamp.) This 4 months spent at San Jose must have contributed much to JRS' WWII combat recollections. It was here that he probably made the many trips over Balete Pass, the stories of which he retold a number of times. Stories of dead Japs lying in the road each morning, which JRS would cause to be bulldozed out of the way, only to have them dragged back out at night by marauding, hungry dogs. One of his most vivid accounts was of being startled by a dead Jap still sighting at him down the barrel of his rifle. These dead were the result of the Battle of Balete Pass, which was fought by units of the 25th Division from 27 April to 15 May 45; a period of time when JRS' "office" was at San Jose, no more than 25 miles to the south. It is not clear what his duties were that required these trips back and forth.]

Print the complete address in plain black letters in the space below, and your return address in the space provided. Use typewriter, dark ink, or pencil. Write plainly. Vary small writing is not suitable.

No. (CENSOR'S STAMP)

To: Maj. J. R. Sorenson, 0-305385
 PCAU #3 Hq. 6th Army
 APO 442
 % PM San Francisco

From: Mrs. J. R. Sorenson
 (Sender's name)
 5717 Lydia Ave
 (Sender's address)
 Kansas City 4, Mo.
 April 12, 1945
 (Date)

Dear Jim -
 I've managed to find a corner of the table that I can lean to write on. Are we in a mess! The painter will put the last coat of paint on the living room to day so we can get back into a little order again by Sunday but when he works on the ceiling, it will be torn up again. The papering will take so long. I can't write straight - it's so willy willy as we have to keep windows open. I painted Jean's room yesterday but don't know whether I can do that and the house completely as planned. I want to get thru before he papers and I can't put in many full days. Everyone else is very busy too, I guess, so I get very few letters and little news in a month.
 The neighbors are spring-mad again. Mr. Magid will have two gardens again. He's planted in a hot bed now. Mr. Dike is trying to have a nice lawn and Phyllis and Mrs. Gifford are digging about in their yards. Mrs. G. says she's off to health.
 I have to buy groceries to day and catch up on some other neglected home work. Read in back to school.
 With love, Betty

No. (CENSOR'S STAMP)

To: Maj. J. R. Sorenson, 0-305385
 PCAU #3 Hq. 6th Army
 APO 442
 % PM San Francisco

Mrs. J. R. Sorenson
 (Sender's name)
 5717 Lydia Ave
 (Sender's address)
 Kansas City 4, Mo.
 April 14, 1945
 (Date)

Dear Jim -
 Jim still crowded on the corner of a cluttered table - This is the ninth day since the painter started and he has the kitchen and bathroom to paint yet decided all the papering and ceilings to do. He said it would take three weeks when he started this. I put out the first coat on the rear rooms but decided I didn't want to drag out the rest so long, so he's putting on the second.
 I had both good and bad news from Honey Friday. She had been asked by Beaver if she'd like the 2nd grade in Yonkers next year. She wrote back all once as Jim waiting to hear more. She said Kate Holcomb isn't expected to last much longer - she's had several heart attacks. Of course, she's last longer now than I thought she would when I last saw her, but we're never ready to let them go. Her Philip is in the European theatre of operations which hasn't helped her health any.
 We are all mourning the President's death here, and as usual, have the feeling, belatedly, that here was a very great person who had more virtues than faults. There have been many beautiful musical programs all day yesterday and continuing to day. It is hard to think of everything ending so suddenly for one who has always doing things. We should pray that President Truman be capable of the big job ahead of him.
 Lots of love, Betty

[Letter No. 321]

The Philippines

April 18, 1945

Dear Betty -

Your March 12th and 21st letters arrived together, with the St. Patrick one ahead. Mail still comes in spurts ---- either none at all or two or three together. I got a copy of the Yankton P & D the other night with an account of Dad's death that Stella mailed early in November.

I hope you liked the red rug when you got it laid. It's hard to visualize it because our rugs have always been green, or so I remember it. Suppose you have the papering and painting all done by now. Don't change the place too much or I won't feel at home when I finally get back.

I read in our little mimeographed news sheet that there has been snow and cold weather in the north and west, and tornados in Arkansas and Oklahoma. Sure hope none of the bad windstorms visit K. C.

How is the car working? It's sure getting along in years but guess it will have to do for several years more. I know it has had good care and is in better shape than lots of cars not half its age. I wonder if you can get any tires? The old ones aren't worn out yet but they surely must be getting rotted out.

I've been thinking the house may be getting in need of paint. It looked good last summer though ---- so maybe it can go a couple of years yet. I still think we got a good buy on that place, although Dad thought it was kind of a sleazy job. I suppose the tree in the back yard that he was afraid I would cut down, is getting big by now.

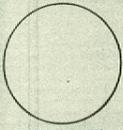
Has Honey decided to go to the coast or what? You said she applied for a Montgomery Ward store job but it fell through. I suppose she is teaching this year isn't she? It's hard to keep track of people any more. I have to think hard sometimes to remember where my sisters are living now.

The youngsters will soon be out of school again. Vacation time will be a problem for you this year. Wish I could help you.

Bob will be having a birthday about the time you get this. Wish him a happy birthday for me --- that's all I can send him for now.

Love, Jim

No.



(CENSOR'S STAMP)

To Maj. J. P. Sorenson, O-305 385
 PCAU #3 Hq. 6th Army
 APO 442
 90 PM San Francisco

From

Mrs. J. P. Sorenson
(Sender's name)
 577 Lydia Ave.
(Sender's address)
 Kansas City 4, Mo.
 April 22, 1945
(Date)

Dear Jim I wish you were here to admire and re-decorated home. I chose paper in gray tones - panel effect in the living - room and panel with flowers for the dining room (Companion papers). I kept the same colors for the bedrooms except Bob's. I hope you'll like the results. The decorator will finish Wednesday.

Aunt Kate was somewhat improved when Marge last heard from her but the children were given little hopes that she could last much longer. My sisters all planned to drive out there on a Friday and back on Sunday, but the Dr. advised them to wait until she was stronger.

I haven't had much time for flowers as yet but think I'll manage all right later anyway. Only one of the three roses I set out last fall, lived, so I still have only three. I don't feel like bothering with any more 'til your future becomes a little more assured, tho I shall report the failure of these plants and may get replacements. My tulips are lovely now - Kathleen's have gathered a handful yesterday. The summer roses are filling with buds. This is a grand time of year - from now until June.

With all our love, Betty

V-MAIL

[Letter No. 322]

The Philippines

April 20, 1945

Dear Betty -

Last night I got your –Mail of March 29 and the night before your V-mail of March 27 --- also your regular letter of Feb 16 with the picture of Jean and the clipping about Neal. Regular letters aren't good --- they take so long that the news is way behind the times. Airmail or V-mail is *[sic]* much faster, although they are slow enough.

I like the picture of Jean, and the picture and write of Neal were good too. I wish the folder of pictures you sent a long time ago would arrive. Thank Jimmy for the letter he enclosed. It was very interesting.

Honey was fixing her house ---- or having it fixed when you wrote, and you said she was planning to sell it. I thought she had planned to live in it. If there was a little land in the neighborhood for your dad to raise garden truck it would be as good a place as Mart's for them I should think. Me and my suggestions again. I should mind my own business.

I got the letter with the income tax but I haven't opened it yet. I always did hate to wrestle with those things and I think I will wait until I get home and get the whole works done at once. However, I'll check and see if I have to do anything about the Victory Tax. I think not, because no one else is bothering about it. We have plenty of other things to do.

According to the news you are having rough weather now. The reports didn't mention Missouri but did say Arkansas and Oklahoma had windstorms and floods, rain in Kansas & Nebraska and snow and cold in Colorado and Wyoming. Hope there wasn't any damage in Kansas City, but I would enjoy a good snowstorm or some cold weather.

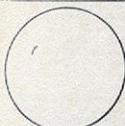
Wish I could watch the garden grown, and Jimmy's short rows. That little mess of dirt we hauled in the first year has surely raised a lot of vegetables and flowers. I'm glad we held out for that piece of land before buying. Does the neighbor's gardener still burn his trash next tour fence and shrubs?

Must get to bed now.

Love, Jim

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.



(CENSOR'S STAMP)

From

To: Maj. J.P. Sorenson, 0305385
PCA 043 Hq. 6th Army
APO 442
% PM San Francisco

Mrs. J.P. Sorenson
(Sender's name)
5717 Lydia Ave.
(Sender's address)
Kansas City 4, Mo.

April 27 1945
(Date)

Dear Jim - I'm putting my home back to-
gether again so don't worry it will
be in order by the time you get back.
The paper handler left Wednesday afternoon.
Everyone says he did fine work and I'm
satisfied so hope you will like it too.
Mrs. Handley dropped in Wed. and stayed
for lunch with Jimmy and me. She says
Dick is in San Francisco and ready to go out.
There's been nothing new at the office - one
of the girls repeated the contents of a letter Mr. J.
dictated to Wash., saying he that he deserved
something better in the light of his experience.
Mrs. H. said it might mean assistant to Mr. Glenn
Rockhart III is growing fast and the Handleys are
talking seriously of building an addition to
their home where the elders will live when
Dick comes home. They want to keep the baby
near them.
There are about six weeks of school left.
This year has passed quickly - too fast - the
children are growing away from me.
Jimmy had California 44th birthday over the
radio yesterday and he said "Oh, boy! I keep
talking about my Daddy." When I explained that
you weren't there any more he said that he knew
it but you were there. He hasn't forgotten you
but hurry home soon as you can. We miss
you too.

With lots of love,
Betty

V-MAIL

[Letter No. 323]

The Philippines

April 29, 1945

Dear Betty -

It's hot and sticky and there isn't any news but I'd like to visit with you awhile so I'm trying to write. I haven't had a letter in ten days so I can't comment on new from home.

It's getting close to the end of the school year and I suppose you are busy trying to make plans for vacation. It's quite a problem I know. I wish your dad still had the old farm. That would be a nice place for all of you to spend the summer. If you go I hope you won't rent the house. Perhaps you could hire someone to mow the lawn and have the neighbors check on the house now and then. That is if you are planning to go.

It's getting cloudy and I wish it would rain. When it does start raining we will all wish it would quit. Wish we could have some nice variable weather like at home.

I am well but not at all energetic. Hot weather always did wear me down and when it drags on forever it's a lot worse. Makes me wish for Alaska or North Dakota in the wintertime.

I can't even write a letter so may as well give up. Maybe there will be a letter tonight so I can add to this.

Love, Jim

Print the complete address in plain black letters in the panel below, and your return address in the space provided. Use typewriter, dash ink, or pencil. Write plainly. Very small writing is not suitable.

No.	From
	Mrs. J. R. Swanson <small>(Sender's name)</small>
To: Mr. J. R. Swanson, 0-305325 PCA U ³ Hq. 6th Army APO 402 San Francisco	5717 Lydia Ave. <small>(Recipient's address)</small> Kansas City, Mo. May 1, 1945 <small>(Date)</small>

(CENSOR'S STAMP)

Dear Jim -
I'm recovering from a bad cold, spend as much time as I could in bed the past two days and think I have it well in hand. I had scarcely any all winter so guess it all came at once. Anyway, we've all had it now so should get back to normal again. I don't suppose head or chest colds are very common where you are.
The (bad) storms have mixed us but we've had a lot of cloudy, rainy weather. I haven't gone at all in the garden since I put in a few early things weeks ago. They've just been out at all - still.
Mrs. Green called yesterday, said Brown was in the city - might live here again. Mrs. Elmer said Mrs. B. was most unhappy in the Gosh, Johnson and back too from Mountain.
A card from Alice said she was very busy that she hospital was full most of the time. She said Grandma wasn't looking well at all. Guess some everyone else a letter to would hear from them for a while.
The annual outdoor dance program is scheduled for tonight but it looks like it will have to be postponed - every year it rains or something to spoil it. Guess it's all prepared for it and looking forward to it but let's start raining at 1:30.
I have to go to the store to find something to feed my family.
With love, Betty

V-MAIL

[Letter No. 324]

May 3, 1945

Dear Betty -

After having had no mail since April 23 a big batch arrived last night. My share was two letters dated Feb. 23 and March 20. It doesn't pay to send "regular" letters, they are so old by the time they arrive that the news isn't news any more --- V-mail and airmail has *[sic]* left them far behind. Most of the mail arriving here is airmail and that is much to most satisfactory.

Your Feb. 23 letter had a clipping from the K. C. Star showing pictures of the home town and I sure was glad to see them. Many of the officers have their hometown papers sent to them. I always thought that was a good way to clog the mails and fill shipping space and didn't even consider it. Now when I see the mail bags come in all stuffed out with packages and newspaper and just a handful of letters I feel that I'm just a fall guy not to do the same thing. Most of the big city dailies have a miniature overseas edition that does not take much space, but I don't know whether the Star does or not. The only time I get to see one is at a Hqs. way up in them mountains where I go occasionally, and that is a regular size edition.

I hope you have got the starting trouble fixed on the car. It's spring now back there and you shouldn't have any more winter trouble.

I'm going to send you another money order as soon as I can get to an APO. Should be able to spare about \$300. My civilian paycheck is going to look pretty small when I get back but I guess we can get along. The way I figure I should have had a raise in April.

Your March 18 letter was mostly a letter of transmittal for a letter from Neal. I was glad to get it. I'm awfully sorry that I can't get a harmonica for him. Haven't even seen one since long before I left the States. I know that everyone claims that all production is coming overseas now but I don't believe even a small part of that stuff. About all we ever see is the essentials ---- and we are satisfied with that, but the magazine and newspaper blah does make me awful weary sometimes. Tell Neal I'll get him the best harmonica I can find when I get back but there are none here. I would like one too.

Bob will be having a birthday the day after tomorrow. I hope I can find time to write him a letter on that day. Jimmy is due for a letter this month too, and Neal in June and Jean in August. The hardest thing I've had to stand in this war is the thought that the children are growing up and I'm not there to enjoy them while they are doing it That's what you have done to me, the finest wife and the best family a man ever had.

I've got to go to bed now. Army Hqs. informed us by telephone last night that another batch of mail was on the way down. Hope that folder of pictures will be there.

Love, Jim

Print the complete address in plain black 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. From

To Maj. J.R. Sorenson, O-305380 *Mrs. J.R. Sorenson*
(Sender's name)
 PCAU#3 Hq. 6th Army *5717 Lydia Ave.*
(Sender's address)
 APO 442 *Kansas City, Mo.*
 %PM San Francisco *May 3, 1945*
(Date)

(CENSOR'S STAMP)

Dear Jim -
 Your last two letters were nice and long. I don't think you've received the pictures I sent - seems they'd most surely have been delivered by now. Third card picture was held between two pieces of transparent material, the condition of the leather probably wouldn't have hurt them and any thing else I sent was packed to go thru safely, but guess something went wrong.
 Maxine graduated May 10. I had her announcement and her picture in the mail yesterday. I have never heard anything (more) of the Truesdell boy - he's probably released if he was held prisoner by the Germans. I hope he escaped the terrible treatment of some prisoners.
 Maxine's dad dead, and according to reports seemingly backed by authority, his pal, Hitler, is dead too. It doesn't seem important anymore as their power to do evil waned over anyway.
 The iris and bifocal wreath are the main flowers now, with the tulips lingering on late stages. She writes about the roses that failed to grow. I don't expect to do much planting of new things this year.
 Don't look to get all the politics in Neale's room to-day. It's impossible to take it in.
 With love,
 Betty

V-MAIL

Print the complete address in plain black 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. From

To Maj. J.R. Sorenson, O-305380 *Mrs. J.R. Sorenson*
(Sender's name)
 PCAU#3 Hq. 6th Army *5717 Lydia Ave.*
(Sender's address)
 APO 442 *Kansas City, Mo.*
 %PM San Francisco *May 6, 1945*
(Date)

(CENSOR'S STAMP)

Dear Jim -
 We had the nicest Sunday to-day that we've had in a long time. I will be with Pearl as she sunned herself in the back yard, consulted Mrs. Mead regarding applications for canning sugar and talked awhile with Mrs. Monahan and Prater. Almost every yard had someone stirring about in it.
 Bob Montague and a friend came out for a few hours between trains yesterday. They are on their last legs for love so you may meet up with him before long too. Rex is in Germany now with the 9th Army. Maxine recovered from her operation all right, Bob said.
 No, honey don't sell her plane she's considered it. She had it rented out and plans to live in Aunt Abbie's place as it's in better condition. Dad hasn't done so well with his selling - hasn't gone out much, he said, because of weather and lack of gasoline.
 I made Bob's cake to-day as we couldn't celebrate yesterday because of Bob's visit. Mr. Guthrie (who hit the duplex in red) invited the boys to go fishing to-day but something prevented him going - that a disappointment.
 It really wish you were home - it's a long time since you left - do if you didn't know.
 All our love,
 Betty

V-MAIL

[Letter No. 325]

May 4, 1945

Dear Betty -

I wrote to you yesterday, but I'll send a little letter now. Today I got your V-Mails of April 1 and April 3.

I'm glad the children had a nice Easter, but sorry they got sick right afterwards. I hope they got over it soon. I can imagine Jimmy had a good time and thinks highly of the rabbit.

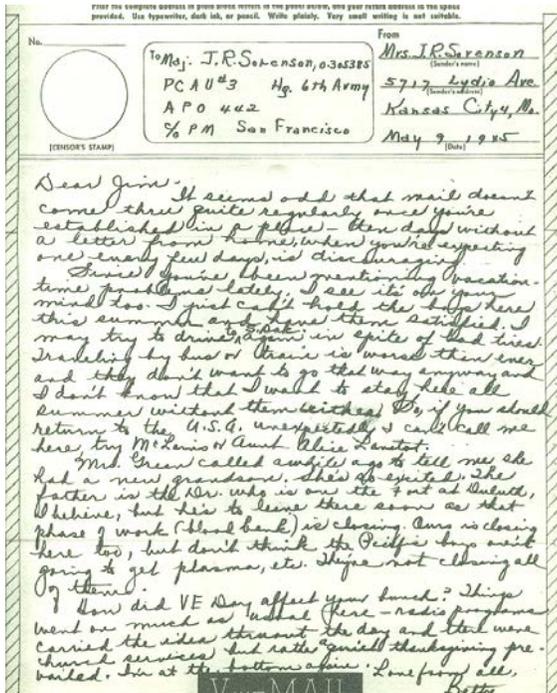
I've caught a cold somehow and have a bad case of sniffles and sneezes. I wouldn't mind if it had been caused by cold weather but a cold in this country is as irritating as a headache when you haven't enjoyed a bender.

I am inclosing money orders for \$300. We won't be able to save as much when I get home so it will be nice to have some socked away. I was glad to hear about my salary raise, although I was expecting it. That is the third since I left and altogether they will add up to an additional \$25 a month which will be a help. Must have quite a lot in the retirement fund by now too --- if they are still putting it in, as I've heard they do for employees on military leave.

I miss you lots.

Love, Jim

[Note: This letter was written on "United States Navy" stationery --- wonder what sailor was that far inland?]



[Letter No. 326]

May 12, 1945

Dear Betty -

Your April 12 V-mail arrived on the 10th. You were in the middle of a painting and papering spree with the house all torn up. I hope that's over and everything orderly again.

The whole neighborhood was evidently gardening and lawn polishing. Is our lawn still in pretty good shape or has the watergrass taken the whole thing over? Guess we will never have a good blue grass lawn until we get some shade over it.

I was glad to hear that Neal was back in school and over his sickness. There can't be much of the school year left. Hope you have figured out a satisfactory plan for the summer.

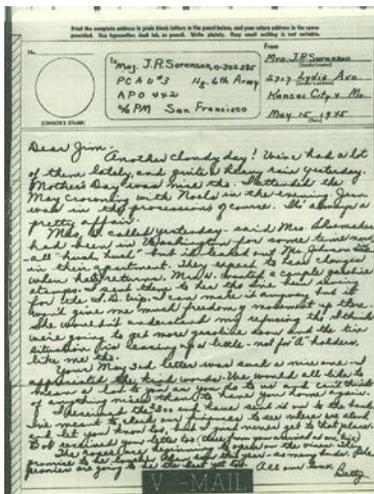
I got a Christmas package on May 9th from Stell & Chet and Marie & Hayes. The contents were in pretty good shape for the time they had been on the way.

I have had a very bad cold for about a week but am much better now.

I'm still curious about what they are going to do about the Roads reorganization. I suppose that will remain a cloudy guarded secret until the boss has his plans all made.

I've got to write a "thank you" letter or the Christmas box.

Love Jim



[This deal about Mrs. Handley pressuring Mom for 2 gasoline ration stamps makes me mad, even 65 years later. Her husband earned more money at the job, and they had a much smaller family to provide for --- yet she can't get along on what she has!]

[Letter No. 327]

May 17, 1945

Dear Betty -

Your April 19 and 22 letters arrived together. You were just finishing the redecorating of the house. Sounded like a nice job and I sure would like to see it. I hope it will still be fairly new when I see it again.

Day after tomorrow will be Jimmy's birthday. I'll write him a letter on that day but it will be some time after the big event when he gets it. It's hard to realize how big he and the other youngsters are getting. I've missed too much of their growing up already. The old movie films I took will be pretty nice to see again.

I'm glad Honey got the teaching job in Yankton. Don't think she would be very happy away from there, among strangers, and if she teaches in the city schools it should be a better job.

It will soon be Decoration Day again and I won't be able to make the annual pilgrimage to Springfield. Wonder how much longer that old custom will last. The crowd was getting pretty small, (except for the second and third generations), last time I was there and a lot have gone since then. It used to be a great event for Dad --- most of his old friends would be there.

How does it seem to have lived in your "new" house for five years? I only lived in it a little more than a year and a half --- and that seems like a long time ago. You said that the window sills were beginning to rot. I hope you can get someone to put some paint on the bare spots --- maybe Bob could do it. I suppose it will need an all over coat by the time I get home, and also the roof will need staining. Should be able to make it look bran new again.

I am getting along all right except I'm too impatient for this business to be over so I can get home. We are getting into the wet season and have usually one rain a day. When it really gets started it rains almost constantly, so they say. Luckily the most of our job is done in this area.

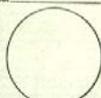
By the time you get this there will be very little left of the school year. I'll be anxious to hear what you decide to do about the vacation months. Wish I was there to drive you up to the farm and spend a few weeks there myself. I feel like I'll want a good long rest when I get back before going to work. It's nice to know that it's reasonably sure that there will be a job for me to go back to, but I'm still uneasy about the shift that is probably coming. I doubt we will be able to get as good a place if we move, and I'm sick of moving anyway.

Love, Jim

[Note: JRS could very well claim to be sick of moving; the house he left to go to war was the 27th place they had lived in since being married 15 years earlier.]

Print the complete address in plain black letters in the panel below, and your return address in the space provided. Use typewriter, dark ink, or pen. Write plainly. Very small writing is not suitable.

No.



(SENDER'S STAMP)

To: Maj. J.R. Sorenson, 0-305220
PCAU #3 Hq. 6th Army
APO 442
% PO San Francisco

From

Mrs. J.R. Sorenson
(Sender's name)
5717 Lydia Ave.
(Sender's address)
Kansas City 4, Mo.
May 18, 1945
(Date)

Dear Jim - I'm in a hurry this morning. I'm having a party for Jimmy's birthday tomorrow so have to do. The Joan's finger is swollen and black & blue, so guess she had to take her to the Dr. It's crooked or I wouldn't think much about it, and she has no idea what may have caused it.

I ordered the sled sent to you - that your letter sounded as if you'd enjoy it. Let me know how the sled is and if you'd like to continue receiving it.

The time for the Spring servicing of the car so I took it to a garage yesterday. My brake was not functioning anyway - she had to go bad all at once. The cylinder head was almost dry so he put fluid in, but I have to have a new part. He did service it until a week from Monday tho - from a quick look around, I'll need a new muffler too. I took the car to a different place - a number of people recommended it - corner of 57 and Thos.

Today promised to be clear so maybe it will work up. We sat around in our winter coats last night to see the children's outdoor entertainment. They're counting the days 'til school is out.

With love,
Betty

V-MAIL

[Letter No. 328]

Monday, May 21

Dear Betty -

Your May 6 letter arrived last night after I got to bed so I read it by flashlight. It made unusually good time --- probably because it was intercepted at Army Hqs. and did not have to come through any other Hqs., (we are attached to an Inf. Division so there are two echelons between our Army APO and delivery -- from Army to Corps to Division). Takes time.

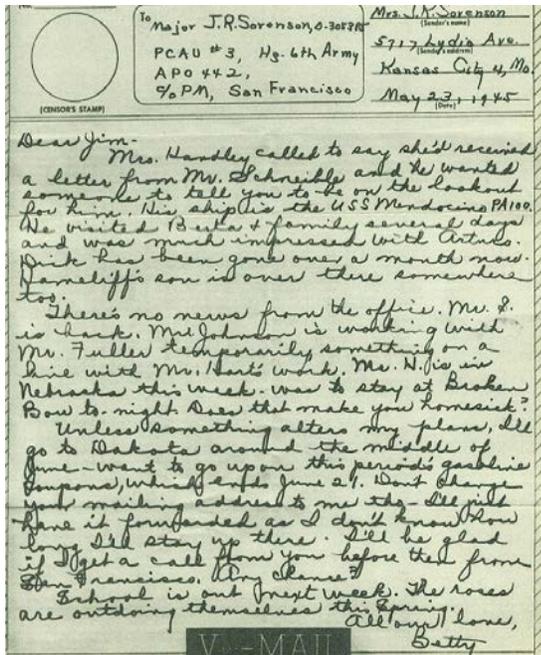
I wrote Jimmy a little note on his birthday two days ago. Hope he had a good time.

So Dick is on his way over. I understand that most of the boys who have spent all their time in the States are going to have to come over and take their turn. It's good news for the poor fellows over here who have been away for several years. There were a lot of boys here, (in the Pacific Theatre), long before the North African and European fighting started. They have fought in the worst terrain in the world and they sure deserve a break now. They can't be sent home until replacements arrive, hence it's good news when they know that some of them will be going home soon. So Bob Montagne is on his way too. We always hate to have our own in it, but it's only fair after all.

We got a beer ration the other day --- the first in a long time. By scouting around I found a few non-drinkers in the outfit and bought theirs, so got two and a half cases. It won't last long but it's sure good while it lasts. Maybe it will put a little weight on me again. I can't eat well in hot weather so I don't stay very fat.

I'm anxious to see the house since you fixed it up but of course have no idea how long it will be. I've been thinking of some experiments to try on the lawn when I get home. It was getting pretty thin when I left --- of bluegrass anyway.

Love, Jim



[Letter No. 329]

The Philippines

May 19, 1945

Dear Jimmy -

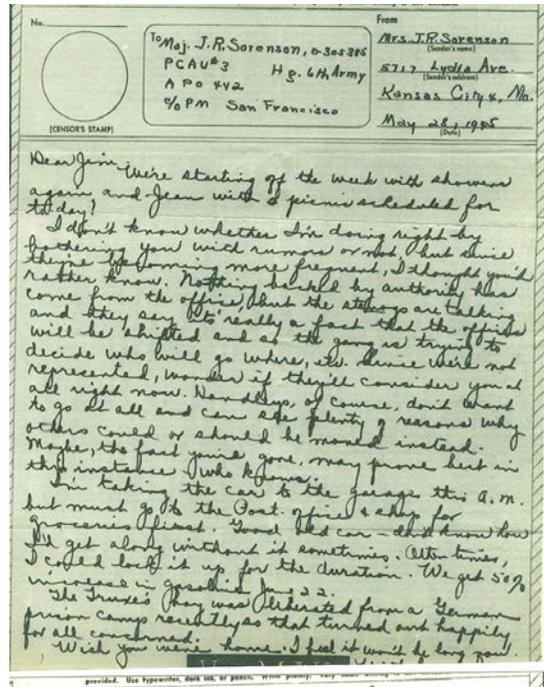
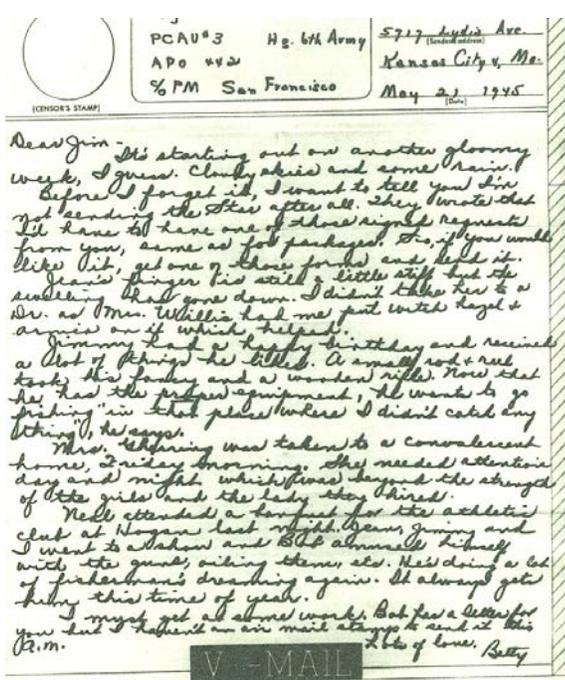
Today you are five years old. When I went away you were just a little fellow. Mamma will bake a cake for you with candles on it. I can't send you a present this time but I hope that next year I can buy you something nice, and also have a piece of cake.

Next year you will be going to school. I'll bet you will like that. Pretty soon you will be studying geography and then you can read all about the Philippine Islands. It is always warm here and it never snows, except sometimes on the high mountain peaks. We have lots of different kinds of fruit. We can pick bananas, coconuts, guavas, papayas, mangos and lots of other things whenever we want to. There are lots of flowers too. It's much nicer in Kansas City though and I wish I were there. There used to be a lot of Japs here but we have chased them way back in the mountains now.

I know you will be a good boy. When I come home we will take a vacation and go on a trip somewhere.

Love, Daddy

[Note: This letter had been opened by the censor, but nothing cut out.]



[Letter No. 330]

Saturday, May 26

Dear Betty -

It's a hot day and this will probably be sweat marked. Your last letter was dated May 9 and you evidently hadn't settled the vacation problems yet. I hope you will be able to buy some tires if you decide to drive home. We hear that the tire situation supposed to be a little better. Of course the old ones may be in pretty good shape because they haven't had hard use --- but they sure are old.

You asked how VE Day affected us. There was no celebration at all, but we were mighty happy about it anyway. It means a lot of people can go home and also that all of our strength can be concentrated over here in a few months so that we can hit harder and in more places at one time. That should shorten the war a lot --- but we aren't figuring it is anywhere near over yet.

Whatever you do this summer I hope you will all have a good time. Hope I can be with you next summer.

Love. Jim

[Note: On May 29, Mom wrote a "regular" letter, one of several that she sent in addition to V-Mail, but this was one of only five that were carried home by JRS. A copy follows:

"May 29, 1945

Dear Jim,

I'm so provoked! I wrote a whole page, in small writing, thinking I had thin air-mail paper, and found I'd written on the back of the cover, a sheet several times too thick. So, I'm starting all over again.

We just had a hot egg sandwich as the children felt hungry and now Jimmy is asleep. There's no school to-morrow so they're staying up late. There are only two days of school left, then I suppose I'll hear nothing but the Yankton trip. We plan to go about the middle of June. Just got the car back to-night after two days at the garage --- bill \$24.72. I believe the charge a fair one tho considering how high prices and labor are now. He put in a "Master eye", (brake cylinder, \$6.75, muffler & tail pipe, \$5.85, and 6 new spark plugs \$3.90. Those were the bigger items, then there was the regular servicing, labor & "tune-up". The garage man said the car was in fine condition and wondered if I wanted to sell it. He broke a gallon jug of my anti-freeze on the way over here so I'm afraid I'll have to resort to alcohol next year. I could only get one quart of the other all last Winter.

Mrs. Handley just had a letter from Dick to-day. He'd just arrived in the Philippines & wanted your address. Funny he didn't take it when he left here.

Phleta and I are going to investigate the rear plot, at the City Hall as soon as school is out. I wouldn't feel like doing anything about it now, as things are so much "up in the air" but it won't do any harm to find out. The new neighbor is very friendly and acts like he'd like to oblige us about the land as far as he can. He plans to build a duplex in there this year tho & must have a real entrance to his garage which means at least two of those lovely cedars must go. We still doubt he has title to that land tho. He called it "an alley" so we wondered. He has a nicely-tended potato patch next *[sic]* our fence now. Our climber roses are the admiration of the whole neighborhood again. Wish you could get a color film of them now -- they are so much larger than when you first took a picture.

I don't think I could trust Bob to do any painting --- he isn't very good at that sort of thing, but it's the windows mostly that need the paint & most need putty first. The side-walls look fine yet. I'm not going to worry about them tho with things as

they appear now. I think we could realize \$3000 cash for the place as is and the buyer continue with the payments as we do. I haven't consulted any one --- it might be one could do very much better than that as homes are being sold at outrageously high prices. A little 2-bedroom house near Handleys sold for \$13,200 the other day.

Hope you don't think I'm unfeeling about our home to consider prices, etc. I don't want to sell at all but don't feel it can be avoided perhaps, so must face that possibility. I made a mistake to "send down roots", I guess. I knew there was nothing certain about our location but I did feel the force would be kept longer that five or six years after going to all the expense of the move. The longer we live here tho, the harder a move will be. Don't misunderstand, I'm not planning to sell until you're home and we find we have to.

"One Man's Family" spent its whole period to-night in farewell to the various Barbours by Jack. He's off to the Pacific. It left me very depressed as it brought back the atmosphere of your leave-taking. One just never feels quite adequate on such occasions & wonders afterward why he wasted so much time saying nothing.

Well, I'll have plenty to say when you return. Hurry!

With love, Betty.]

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. (CENSOR'S STAMP)

From
Mrs. J. R. Sorenson
(Sender's name)
5717 Lydia Ave
(Sender's address)
Kansas City, Mo.
June 3, 1945
(Date)

To: Maj. J. R. Sorenson, O-305385
PCAUM#3 Hq. 6th Army
APO 442
%PM, San Francisco

Dear Jim - This Sunday evening - Bob is playing records, Neal is reading, Joan is piecing a jigsaw puzzle and Jimmy is asleep. I took them and Joan to see "Dumbo" and "Bambi" today and Jimmy enjoyed them so much they were repeats for Joan but she wanted to see them again.

I spent yesterday in the yard preparing my flowers and vegetables for leaving. I'd have to go over them some again and even then, the weeds may get there before our return. The yard looks fine except the front which is thin of blue grass. This spring has been fine for the blue grass tho - lots of moisture and cool weather. My Canterbury bells are in full bloom now, also the roses and the peonies. Our mock orange is in bloom and the morning paper says they're blooming in Okinawa too. Fred Righlander will mind our lawn while we're gone and Phlete will attend to other details. Maybe you should write me direct in case of Dad - just as you think best - I'll try to let you know by my travels as far ahead as possible - plan to go around the 15th now.

Our Major who finished at Parkville, Kansas, in July, has been selected to go to Northwestern now for his Engineering course. He had luck! Wish I could find out something like that for Bob.

Jimmy hasn't received his birthday letter yet. Ed Roberts wired his mother he was getting his birthday & guess Jimmy expects one too. What are you all doing? Be that a forbidden subject?

Love of love, Betty

V-MAIL

[Letter No. 331]

May 31, 1945

Dear Betty -

Three of your letters arrived together --- May 3, May 11 and May 15. The May 11 letter came in its original condition marked: "Unsuitable for Micro-filming". It had a slip enclosed giving the reason, so I'm sending it herewith as instructed.

Seems to me it takes a lot of gall for Mrs. H. to ask for gas when she knows how badly you will need it if you go home this summer. The old gal has never lacked nerve.

You are right when you say you are sure I have at least 85 points. I had an even 100 on the date they figured them. However, a lot of people have considerably more, and there are other factors involved, especially in the case of officers. It all boils down to this --- a person will be released when it is decided that he can be spared, or there is someone available to take his place. I'm not making any plans yet based on any idea of an early discharge. However, it's comforting to know I'm not too far down the list --- it may mean something later on when the really high-point people have been taken care of. I have three bronze campaign stars, (not counting those from the last war), which count quite high, and of course points for children count highest of all. If they would let me count points from the last war I could really get a high rating. It would also be a boost if I could count points for all the children. The men who were drafted a year or more before Pearl Harbor and were sent overseas early will have a high rating, but of course many of them have no children.

I'll bet the place looks nice now with the roses and flowers in bloom. It's too early for the lawn to be sunburnt so that is probably at its best now.

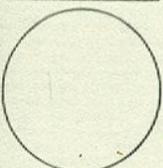
With the proposed cut-back of contracts and reconversion of industry it looks as if there will soon be a chance to buy some of the things you need which haven't been available for a long time. Perhaps you will be able to get some tires before too long. However, the old car will probably have to do for a long time yet. There will be a big scramble for any new cars that may be produced in the next couple of years. A lot of people will sell their old cars at fancy prices just before the new ones begin to come out, but I'm afraid they will have to pay even fancier prices for new cars until normal production gets started. No one yet knows how to get around the old fashioned law of supply and demand.

By now you have probably made your decision on you plans for the summer. Maybe you will be gone from K. C. when this arrives. I hope you will enjoy the summer, whatever you decide to do.

Love, Jim

[Note: I am confused by his statement: "It would also be a boost if I could count points for all the children." Why is he not able to count all of us?] [The slip explaining what mistake Mom had made on the May 11 V-Mail was not in this envelope, so it is not known how she messed up after so many earlier successes.]

No.



(CENSOR'S STAMP)

From

To Maj. J.P. Sorenson, O-305385
PCAU#3, Hq. 6th Army
APO 442
5/PM, San Francisco

Mrs. J.P. Sorenson
(Sender's name)
5717 Lydia Ave.
(Sender's address)
Kansas City 4, Mo.
June 6, 1945
(Date)

Dear Jim - The Philippines have nothing on us for rainy weather. At least, we're threatened with it if not getting it all the time. We have had only a few sunny days this whole Spring.

Jimmy's birthday letter arrived Monday. It was postmarked the 29th, delayed because it was opened for inspection. That's the first one so handed since your last written in U.S. & Jimmy was very proud of you if.

I have to write the folks to let them know what day to expect me. It's a little hard to do since I haven't decided definitely. Jimmy doesn't know whether he wants to go without Betty or not and I feel a lot the same way. It will be a relief to get Bob's head up there tho. They're so disappointed here.

Do you're able to get beer - can you have it on ice? As I recall, that wouldn't prevent your enjoying it tho - the lack of ice.

The boys' reports have not been mailed to me yet but John received hers. She had "First Honor" but she had had that before. She'll be in the 6th grade next year. I think the boys passed in all their subjects but the final exams. Always keep them guessing.

Neal will be fourteen Friday - he had an awful time making sure everything he does puts him in a class with the "regular fellows." He wants a birthday cake but no candles.

June 17 is Father's Day, believe, and we send you only our love but lots of that. Wish those pictures could turn up a bit at that time.

With love,
J.P.S.

V-MAIL

[Letter No. 332]

June 5, 1945

Dear Betty -

Your May 18 and May 21 letters both arrived yesterday. I hope Jean's finger is all right again. If it isn't I hope you have had a doctor look at it, but of course you would. It's not a good idea to take chances with an infection.

I'm just as glad you didn't subscribe to the Star for me. I would like very much to have it but it would be bulky and take a lot of mail space, which isn't fair. A lot of officers do get great quantities of papers but I think that class of mail should be limited. If there were some way to subscribe for one paper a week, like the Sunday edition it wouldn't be so bad.

I haven't sent for anything since I left the States, but I would like to have a couple of synthetic bath sponges --- those soft rubber affairs. Do you suppose you could send them? I've never seen any of those request forms you spoke of, nor do I know anyone who has. Judging by the great amount of packages that some of our people get there must not be any difficulty in mailing them in some places at least. I'll inquire around and learn the system.

I'm wondering whether you will be at home when this arrives or whether I should address it to Yankton. I don't know where you will be getting your mail there, if you go up, so I'll continue the old address until further notice. School must be over by now.

I wonder what place Jimmy had in mind when he wanted to go fishing in that "place where he didn't catch anything". I'm glad he had a nice birthday. It's almost time to write Neal a birthday letter --- all I can do this year.

I'm sorry Mrs. Ghering had to go to a convalescent home. She will probably miss her own home a lot, but I can see where it would be too much for the girls to take care of here and make a living at the same time.

Haven't received the letter from Bob that you said was ready for mailing but will be looking forward to it. I wish I was home.

Love, Jim

P.S. Just talked with some of the officers on package mail. They tell me they just write their request in a letter. Don't bother too much about the sponges, they are probably hard to get and I can do all right without them.

Love, Jim

[Note: This letter was forwarded to Yankton, as Mom had arranged. It is interesting that the postmaster in Yankton evidently felt it was necessary to open it; or at least that appears to be what happened --- there is a postmark stamp on the first page. Mom either did not notice this, or was given a satisfactory explanation, because she doesn't mention it to JRS.]

June 5, 1945.

~~12th St 1st~~

05385,

San Francisco.



Mrs J. R. Sorenson,
17 Lydia Ave.,
Kansas City 4

Missouri. of Edw Schneider
Yankton So Dak

... was some way to subscribe
week, like the Sunday edition
so bad.



... not for anything since
but I would like to have
thetic bath sponsora - there

[Letter No. 333]

The Philippines

June 8, 1945

Dear Neal -

Today you are celebrating your fourteenth birthday and I hope you are having a good time. I wish I could buy you a present but you will probably have to wait until next year for that. I haven't heard yet whether or not you will go to South Dakota for the summer. Whatever you do I hope you will all have a good vacation.

It's getting pretty hot down here now. It never gets very cool at any time of the year. The kids don't know what snow looks like. I don't think you would like to live here, but you would probably enjoy a visit for a couple of months. It takes a lot of sailing to get her though.

I can't tell you much about what goes on here, but maybe you would like to know what my weapons and equipment are like. I have a .30 caliber carbine, a 45 automatic pistol and a trench knife. Also carry a canteen and a compass on my belt. For equipment I have a shelter tent, blankets, a bed-roll, and a jungle pack. In the jungle pack I carry a jungle hammock, a poncho, extra clothes, etc. A jungle hammock is a handy gadget that can be hung up between two trees for a bed. It has a waterproof canopy over it and mosquito netting all around to keep you from getting malaria. The netting is closed with a zipper so it isn't good to sleep in where there is danger of enemy patrols at night because a man could be bayoneted before he could get unzipped and get out of bed. Of course I don't carry all of this equipment at one time. Usually we have trucks and jeeps to carry the bulky stuff.

All of our soldiers in this outfit are Filipinos but they were trained in the U. S. Army. All of the officers are Americans. We also have several squadrons of Filipino guerrillas to help in our work. They like best to catch Jap patrols and put them out of business. A guerrilla officer gave me a Japanese captain's signature seal the other day and then his men dumped the Jap's head on the ground in front of me. They cut it off with the Jap's own saber. I didn't want the head but I kept the seal. All Jap officers carry a seal to sign their orders. This captain's name was Kusaki and looks like this [*] I didn't get enough ink on it.

I hope you will have a fine vacation and enjoy getting back to school. Keep in good shape for football next fall.

Love, Dad



"signature" seal the other day and then two men dumped the Japs head on the ground in front of me. They cut it off with the Japs own saber! I didn't want the head but I kept the seal. All Jap officers carry a seal to sign their orders. This Captains name was Kusaki and looks like this - . I didn't get enough ink on it.

I hope you will have a fine vacation and enjoy getting back to school. Keep in good shape for football next fall.

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.	To	From
(CENSOR'S STAMP)	Maj. J.R. Sorenson, O-305385 PCAU #3 Hq. 6th Army APO 442 % PM, San Francisco	Mrs. J.R. Sorenson 5717 Lydia Ave. Kansas City 4, Mo. June 11, 1945

Dear Jim I guess I'm slipping pretty badly when I forget to print your complete address but there are so many interruptions, I'm surprised I didn't do it long ago. Bob and I went down today this a.m. to get him a new suit. We found one something like a navy with stripes you own. It needed some altering so he'll go after it tomorrow but he seems to like it fine, didn't want the sport type that Neal insisted upon. I phoned Handley to find how the roads are Mrs. is in St. Louis, and Mr. will find out and call me later. Alice was the only one home. She sent Nick's address as you could locate him more quickly. 282 Replacement Co., 172 Replacement Battalion, (PO 711) Nea been in Manila, she said. We are going to Yankton Friday. I didn't try to get new tires but I can't get anything but recaps yet. I'll drive at a moderate speed etc and just try to beat any records. I know it's the best thing to do - the boys have had only one week of vacation so far but they're lost. Neal has Chaddie over at the Blue Hills Golf Course and now Swope pool is open so that helps. Bob mows lawns and golfs for walks but there is still a lot of time to spare. Bob wants an early dinner as he and a friend are going to a show. With lots of love,
Betty

V-MAIL

[Letter No. 334]

June 11, 1945

Dear Betty -

You said in your last letter that you expect to leave for Yankton about the middle of June so I'll send this there c/o your dad.

Your May 29 letter came last night, which is excellent time --- probably because we sent a truck to Army Hqs and intercepted that batch of mail a couple of echelons back in channels --- also it was airmail.

I'm glad you got a good job of servicing on the car and the cost sounded reasonable. I don't believe it would be advisable to sell it, although I know you could get a big price for it. However, a replacement would cost in the same bracket, and it would be hard to find a second hand car at any price in as good condition as ours. New cars will not be available for a long time and their cost will probably be very high.

You were discussing the possibility of having to sell our house. From the tone of your letter I got the idea that there was probably an earlier letter on the way that hasn't arrived yet, in which you may have told me what Shoemaker has found out, and how it is likely to effect *[sic]* us. I hope we won't have to sell. I know we could get a good price, but our replacement would cost way out of sight, and rents will be up accordingly if we go back to our old way of renting instead of buying. Besides, I was looking forward to a long peaceful time in our old home. It always suited me fine and I know you like it. Of course if we gotta go we gotta go.

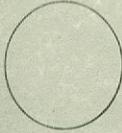
I wrote Neal a birthday letter the 9th but suppose that won't arrive until after you have left for S. D. I hope you all have a good time this summer. If the boys take their guns and do any swimming I hope they will be extra careful. I worry a lot more about all of you than I do about myself.

I expect the Lanctot boys will be home this summer. They both must have high credit points. I don't know how it will work out in my own case. We are such a fly-by-night unit ---- attached here and there and everywhere and I guess no one feels responsible for looking out for us particularly. I have the second highest rating in the outfit --- one officer has me beat by one point. If the things work smoothly and a quota is assigned us, as it should be, I may get a break --- But I've learned never to bank on anything in the Army until you have it in your hands.

Love, Jim

provided. Use typewriter, dark ink, or pencil. Write plainly. Very small writing is not suitable.

No.



(CENSOR'S STAMP)

To: Maj. J.R. Sorenson, 0-305385
PCA U #3 Hq. 6th Army,
APO 442
70 PM, San Francisco

From

Mrs. J.R. Sorenson
(Sender's name)
5717 Lydia Ave.
(Sender's address)
Kansas City 4, Mo.
June 14, 1945
(Date)

Dear Jim -
It's the day before the leaving! You know how that goes! Everything is lining up nicely so far tho.
Could you tell me where you earned the three bronze stars? I figured Lyti would entitle you to one but I just have to guess from there and try to picture what an engineering unit might be doing.

Our roses have just about all opened out but they're still lovely. I think I'll take some to Grandma - she's celebrating her birth day to-day - 86, I believe. There won't be so many flowers, except petunias for some time now, in our yard, so I won't be taking them. We're leaving everything in good condition but I know we won't return to a weedless garden, unless Phyllis weeds it. She is using the extra ground there.

Maybe I'll have more news from S. Dak. to write about. Helen wrote for your address and Earl was sending you some magazines they were getting up at his place of business. Helen says they continue to prosper and like their set-up just don't go out to sell anymore but handle it from home and Earl works in a store too. Guess Stella and Ted left Yankton for Lincoln tho I haven't heard. All write from Yankton.

With love, Betty

V-MAIL

[Letter No. 335]

Sunday, June 17

Dear Betty -

I suppose you are in S. D. now, but will comply with your instructions and send this to K. C. I sent one letter to Yankton, c/o your dad before I got your letter saying I should not change your address.

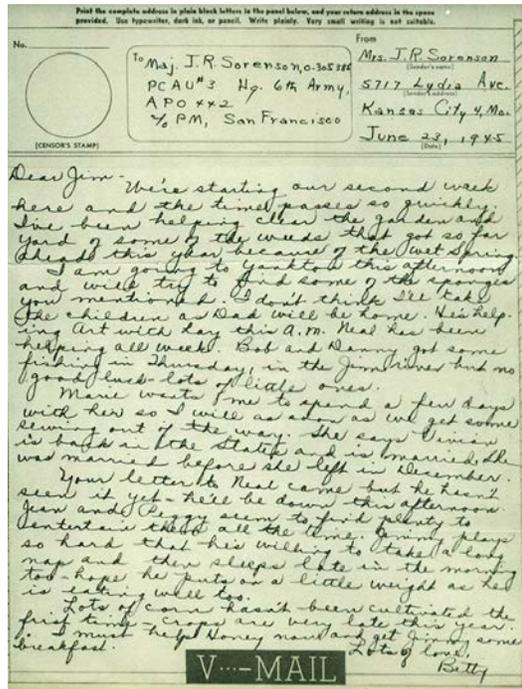
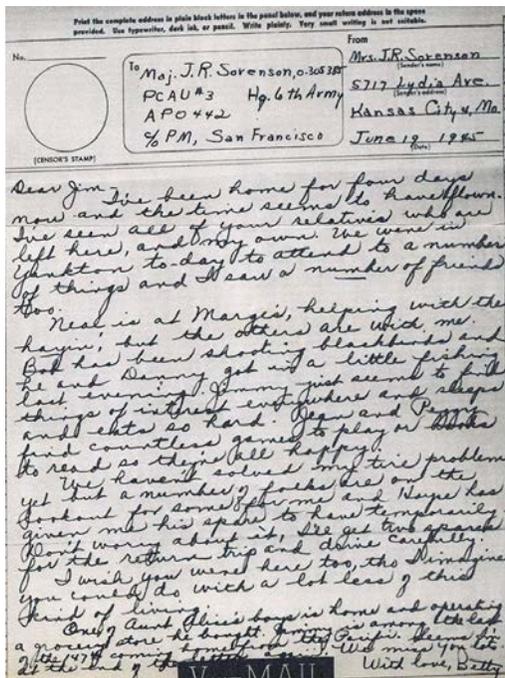
The last letter I got from you was dated May 29. You said you hoped you would get a phone call from me in San Francisco before you started for the farm. No chance of that. I don't think the children will have their stay on the farm cut short this summer, as they did one year, by my arrival home. I have plenty of points --- many more than many people I know who have gone home already from other outfits --- but it seems that no quota has yet been established for us --- why is a mystery --- and that it will be some time before we will have one. By that time, of course, the policy may have changed or they will have released all they can spare. I'm still hoping, but don't make any plans based on my early return.

I hope this will be a very pleasant summer for you and the kids. I'd give anything to be with you. I've got my heart set on a long vacation before going back to work.

I knew the Handleys would know of a lot of reasons why they shouldn't be moved in the new reorganization. Ironical too --- because they always spoke disparagingly of K. C. and lived there only because they had to. All of the force will have good reasons for not moving, so I imagine the junior employee --- which is me--- will have nothing to say in the matter. I hope the changes will be made soon and we can stay.

Have a good time and get a good rest. I'll be back as soon as possible, but I'm afraid that won't be soon.

Love, Jim



[Letter No. 336]

June 25, 1945

Dear Betty -

Last night I got two letters from you dated June 3 and June 6. You still didn't know when you would leave for S. D. and were undecided whether I should send mail direct to your Dad's address or use the old one and have it forwarded. I don't know which would be best.

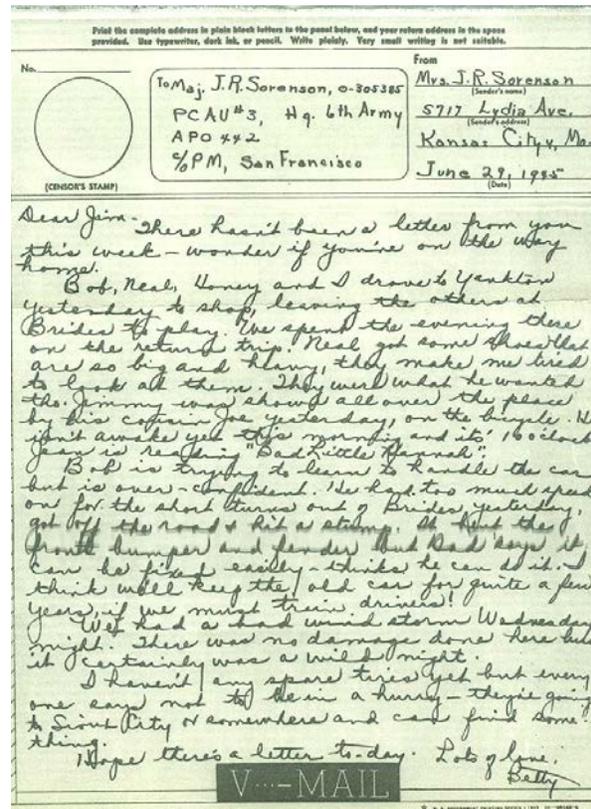
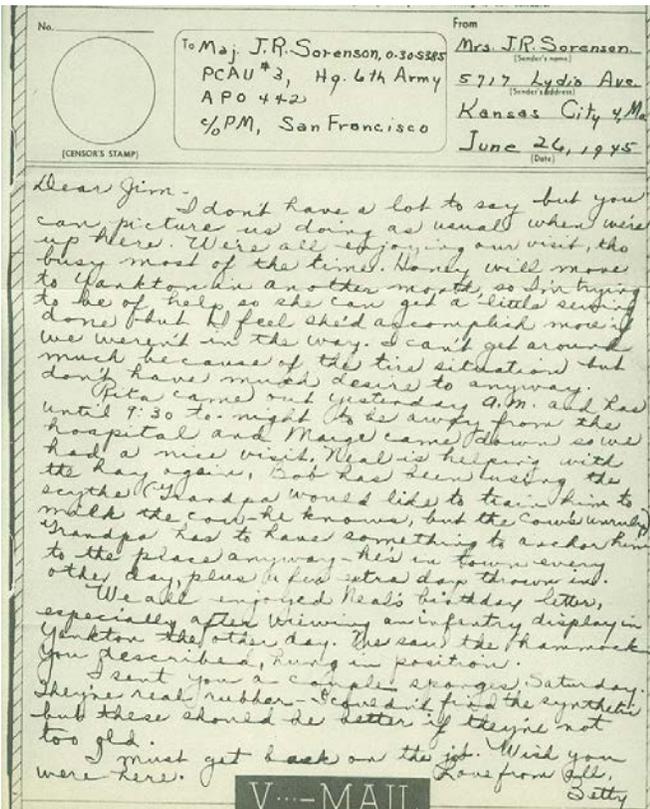
There really isn't anything to write about. We have run into a spurt of business again and will be pretty busy for a while.

I hope you have arrived safely at the farm by now and enjoying yourselves. I would like to be there with you. It will be a new experience for Jimmy I suppose, he will hardly remember his previous visits.

This isn't much of a letter, just to let you know I am well and kicking. This has been a hard day and I've got to get up very early tomorrow so I'd better get to bed.

Have a good time and write me all about it. Hope I can be with you on the next trip up there.

Love, Jim



[Letter No. 337]

Monday, July 2

Dear Betty -

Last night I got your June 14 letter, "the day before leaving". You have now been in S. D. for two weeks and are having a fine time I hope. I'll bet the boys are enjoying it, but I wonder if they are getting any work done.

You asked when I earned the three bronze campaign stars. On a recheck it was found I was entitled to four instead of three, but as only two of them were hot, as far as I was concerned, I figure I only "earned" two. However, regulations authorize two more, and they count five points apiece so naturally I'll take credit for them. I have 105 points and if we are ever assigned a quota I should get an early release. But don't hold your breath --- I'll believe it when I get home.

You said you were trying to picture what an "engineering unit, (that's wrong --- you mean engineer unit), might be doing. They do plenty, including fighting. However, I am not in an engineer unit, but Engineer Officer of this unit. Actually there is no real engineering work to do, I'm a misfit in this kind of organization, but they find plenty of work for me just the same.

I suppose there is no harm now in telling you what the credits were for. The "earned" ones were the Southern Philippines Campaign, (including Leyte), and the Luzon Campaign. The others were for being present in certain designated areas in the Southwest Pacific during certain designated periods. They were very tame affairs. The others were quite interesting since the Japs disputed our right to the beaches. If you saw a copy of "Yank" at the time of the first landing you probably saw a picture of the ship I was on afire from a bomb hit. The Navy was very busy with the Jap fleet off shore at the same time, and there was plenty of action. That's a long time past now.

Have a good time and take a good rest this summer. I'll be home as soon as I possibly can --- but it will be quite a while at best, and may be a long time. I'm sure I won't be there in time to share your vacation anyway.

Love, Jim

Note new address ---

PCAU #3, APO 70

c/o PM, S. F.

[Note: This new APO address indicates a transfer to another area, although still within PCAU #3. His journal entry for June 16: "Lv San Jose, proceeded to Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya"; and he remained there until July 18: "Lv Bayombong, proceeded to Illagan, Isabella Province." Based on his earlier comments in letters, he has probably been detached from service with one infantry division and attached to another, but of course will not indicate that in his notes.]

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. From **Mrs. J.R. Sorenson**
 To **Maj. J.R. Sorenson, O-305285**
PCAU #3, Hq. 6th Army
APO 442
5/17 Lucha Ave.
Kansas City, Mo.
5/17 1945
 (Sender's name) (Sender's address) (Date)

(CENSOR'S STAMP)

Dear Jim - It will get hot to-day but we've had some quite cool nights lately and yesterday was chilly. We spent the day at Margie's and she had a big dinner for several relatives with birds and close together. You'll never think retarding existed to see the table she set - six fried chickens and a large pork roast, two kinds of cake and four pumpkin pies, besides all the other usual things. She spoiled my youngsters for home living.

An old friend of the family, Mr. Smith's father died Sunday. We will say rosary at the home in Ohio to-night and attend the funeral in the morning. Daddy had made an appointment for having their car fixed, and we had already planned to spend the day in Yankton, so that is having dinner for us.

The 4th will be spent very quietly, I think we plan to fix a picnic picnic as the child now don't get disappointed too much, but most farmers will spend the day in the cornfield as the season is so late already.

Gene stayed at Margie's for a few days and they'll all be up there to-morrow, he guess. That would like to stay there all the time but he interferes with Hub's work. But seems satisfied help about a blackbird in a white) and help with the few jobs to be done. Jimmy is interested with a lot of love, Betty gathering.

V-MAIL

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. From **Mrs. J.R. Sorenson**
 To **Maj. J.R. Sorenson, O-305285**
PCAU #3 Hq. 6th Army
APO 442
5/17 Lucha Ave.
Kansas City, Mo.
July 7 1945
 (Sender's name) (Sender's address) (Date)

(CENSOR'S STAMP)

Dear Jim - How quickly the time passed! We've been here three weeks and have been so busy all the time. I had thought we'd have many unhurried hours to read and wait but guess I should have known better where there are six children to be considered. Honey should be getting a much needed rest but insists she's glad we have to make this our headquarters. She is moving into a four-room house in August so won't be able to have such mobbed drop-in any more.

We spent Tuesday in Yankton and had a picnic supper at the lake on the 4th. It was perfect for such an affair. We started to fire a few fireworks in the late evening but a heavy windstorm drove us inside the second time this week.

I'm going in to Marie's Sunday to spend a few days. Neal and Dannie will visit Brillies, but Bob will go in with me at least. I want a "tire-changer" along since I found out one can haul blow-out. Bob discovered some skunks at the old place and is anxious to go a-hunting now. Gene and Jimmy just soak up every minute of enjoyment. They're more contented than the older boys.

Lot's of love, Betty

V-MAIL

[Letter No. 338]

Sunday, July 8

Dear Betty -

Tonight I got two letters from you --- one dated June 11 and one June 19, the latter written after you arrived in S. D. I was relieved to hear you made the trip OKI --- was afraid you might have trouble on the way with those old tires.

I'm glad the children are enjoying themselves, as I knew they would of course. They'll have a lot to remember when they have to settle down to the old grind. I can imagine Jimmy can find plenty to interest him.

I'll not be able to locate Dick Handley by the APO you gave. I recognized the one he had at Replacement as I came through there nearly a year ago --- although it has moved its location several thousand miles since then. If I knew his unit I could make a good guess at his locality, but people with the same APO can be --- and frequently are --- many hundreds of miles apart. The lower numbers I can generally recognize, but in four figures I'm lost.

When we left New Guinea last October we were told we could take our footlockers, but at the last minute we were ordered to leave them. They never have caught up since, but about the first of the month, I got a form letter from the Base Quartermaster at a place I left six months ago advising that my locker was there and requesting instructions for its disposition. I figured that if I had it forwarded here I would be gone before it arrived and it never would catch up with me, so I asked that it be sent home. It will probably arrive next fall or winter --- but don't get excited, just because my baggage gets there it won't mean I'm on my way with it. There is little of value in it, but the trunk is an old issue no longer obtainable and I thought a lot of it. I live out of a canvas bags now and it's sure messy. We look more like tramps than soldiers over here.

There isn't any news. I'm fairly busy but not accomplishing much, which is normal in this business. I could do a lot more good at home. Have a good rest this summer.

Love, Jim

[Note: I'm not sure at this stage of copying these letters when the trunk arrives, but I remember very well the smell that emanated from it forever after. It had a very strong odor of mildew and mold, as did everything it contained.] [This letter was opened by the censor. Nothing was cut out, but the process kept the letter out of circulation so that it was not postmarked until July 13.]

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. From

Mrs. J.R. Sorenson
(Sender's name)

10 Maj. J.R. Sorenson, O-305385
PCA #3 Hq. 6th Army
APO 442
5/PM, San Francisco

5717 Lydia Ave.
(Sender's address)
Kansas City, Mo.
July 12, 1945
(Date)

(CENSOR'S STAMP)

Dear Jim - I guess I've run over my time for writing but I haven't found a quiet place to write until now and it's not likely to last. The Bob, Jean, Jimmy and I came in to Mabel's Sunday - have been having a nice time but shall go back to Honey's again tomorrow. This kind of living is too full of commotion for me. Bob is helping Hayes at the station as he's a bit short-handed. You want to stay here longer so I'll let her Jimmy is left everywhere. Neal stayed at Grubel and I haven't heard a report on him.

Stella and Chel drove in this a.m. - had a day off. Stella is very dissatisfied at Lincoln. Helen & Earl have bought a nice home there but can't move in to some official moves end. As their own place, where they're living now, is rented already, they're very uneasy about the situation.

Unless I told you Virginia Montague was married before coming east. Her husband is discharged now and she too, so someone they'll be setting up housekeeping in Monticello.

I brought your letters in to let they read them, so they know what I know of you, lately, at least.

I haven't done much about the trees but must get busy on them soon. Wood love, we sure would you were here too!

Betty

V-MAIL

No. From

Mrs. J.R. Sorenson
(Sender's name)

To Maj. J.R. Sorenson, O-305385
PCA #3, Hq. 6th Army
APO 442
5/PM, San Francisco

5717 Lydia Ave.
(Sender's address)
Kansas City, Mo.
July 12, 1945
(Date)

(CENSOR'S STAMP)

Dear Jim - I'm out at Honey's again. I had planned to stay at Mabel's until today but Dad had his car in the garage for repairs and no way to get out home so I came out. I was satisfied anyway. Marie and Hayes are swell people but those youngsters wear me out! They promised to be back tho. Their year is lovely this year. Hayes has shut off the old drive and decided to go to the station. He has no help now. Neal is driving the stacker down for Art again.

I haven't had been no letters from you this week, so I'll look for you to come soon. That's what I'm going to think every time I don't hear from you on the dot.

Jimmy has a Bob haircut of which he's very proud. He insisted upon it because Neal had one but it "doesn't stand up like Neal's" he says. The place where he didn't catch any fish is Prairie Lee Lake, southwest of K.C. Wilbur took him last summer. Bob didn't fail his look, thinking he wouldn't notice but he's always resented that.

I'm enjoying my visit here and the time to return to R.C. will come too soon. If you were there, it would be different.

Lots of love,
Betty

V-MAIL

[Letter No. 339]

July 10, 1945

Dear Betty -

Today I got your June 16 letter written the day after you got to Yankton and saying you blew out a tire on the way. I had been a little worried about those tires on that trip and I'm glad it didn't cause any trouble except the delay. Those old tires have a mighty good record considering their age. I don't think we have ever had a flat before on that trip. Hope you will be able to get a couple of new ones.

I wonder how Stell and Chet made out for a house in Lincoln, or will they move in with Helen and Earl temporarily? Do H. & E. still live in the house where we visited them last summer?

You mentioned how glad you were that Honey would not "have that job next winter." What is she going to do? You have mentioned several things that she was planning to try for, but I don't remember that you ever said what the final outcome was. Maybe you did, but I'm kind of confused about where people are or what they are doing any more. Even have to stop and think hard to remember where all y sisters are. I almost never hear from any of them --- but of course I don't deserve much --- I almost never write. If people knew how hard it is to write from a theatre of operations they would never expect an answer to their letters. There is plenty to write about of course --- but I have never gotten over my oldfashioned *[sic]* idea that an officer's certificate means exactly what it says and when I sign my name on the envelope as my own censor I certify that I haven't said anything I shouldn't --- and that sure cramps my style. Of course, we are subject to spot checks, and I've heard that officers are worse than enlisted men when it comes to blabbing, but since all of the men's' letters are censored less of the forbidden stuff gets through. Of course, we read all about it in the magazines and the war correspondents' tripe, but presumably the enemy can't read printed matter, and since it's 95% baloney anyway that information would only be confusing to him.

The above tirade hasn't contributed anything to this letter except bulk, but it gives you a two-page letter, which is quite an accomplishment. I'm OK but getting might weary and fed up. I don't expect any release under the "point system" --- although scads of officers are going home with fifteen or twenty points less than I have. In the case of officers it depends on the decision of some individual --- and so far I know of no one in our little activity that has been "re-deployed" or expects to be.

Love, Jim

[Note: The "June 16" letter describing the blown tire must have been a "regular" one because no V-Mail mentions it, and there is none with that date. She repeats the fact in her Jul 22 V-mail.] [The "tirade" against the censor program is somewhat ironic --- this letter was opened by the censor. Again, nothing was deleted, but the process delayed the postmark until July 17.]

[Letter No. 340]

Sunday, July 15, 1945

Dear Betty -

Last night I got your June 23 and Jun 26. I'm glad you are all enjoying yourselves. It will be good for the children too. Hope the weather has cleared and that the crops will catch up.

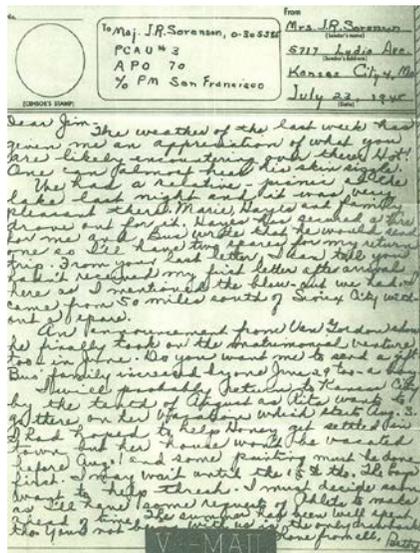
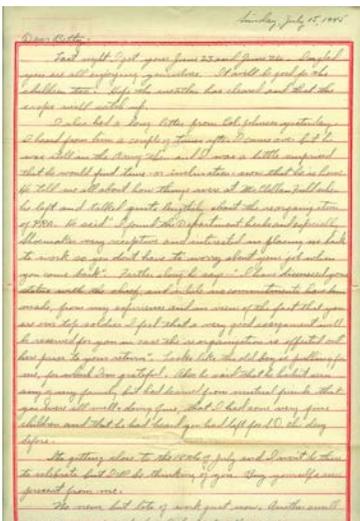
I also had a long letter from Col. Johnson yesterday. I heard from him a couple of times after I came over but he was still in the Army then and I was a little surprised that he would find time - or inclination - now that he is home. He told me all about how things were at McClelland Field when he left and talked quite lengthily about the reorganization of PRA. He said "I found the Department heads and especially Shoemaker very receptive and interested in placing us back to work so you don't have to worry about your job when you come back". Farther along he says --- "I have discussed your status with the chief, and while no commitments have been made, from my experience and in view of the fact that you are our top soldier I feel that a very good assignment will be reserved for you in case the reorganization is effected out here prior to your return". Looks like the old boy is pulling for me, for which I'm grateful. Also he said that he hadn't seen any of my family but had learned from mutual friends that you re all well & doing fine, that I had some very fine children and that he had heard you had left for S. D. the day before.

It's getting close to the 18th of July and I won't be there to celebrate but I'll be thinking of you. Buy yourself a nice present from me.

No news but lots of work just now. Another small move coming up and then I think it will ease up.

Love, Jim

[Note: JRS has used many different types of paper to write these letters home --- borrowed Navy stationery, "Big Chief" tablet, etc. but this is the first time has used Japanese stationery. The sheet is larger than my scanner can handle, but I will include what can fit. There are two Japanese "characters" in the lower left hand corner that did not show in the image.]



[Letter No. 341]

July 18, 1945

Dear Betty -

There is no news but I'll write a little note to let you know I haven't forgotten the date. Hope I'll be home when it comes around again.

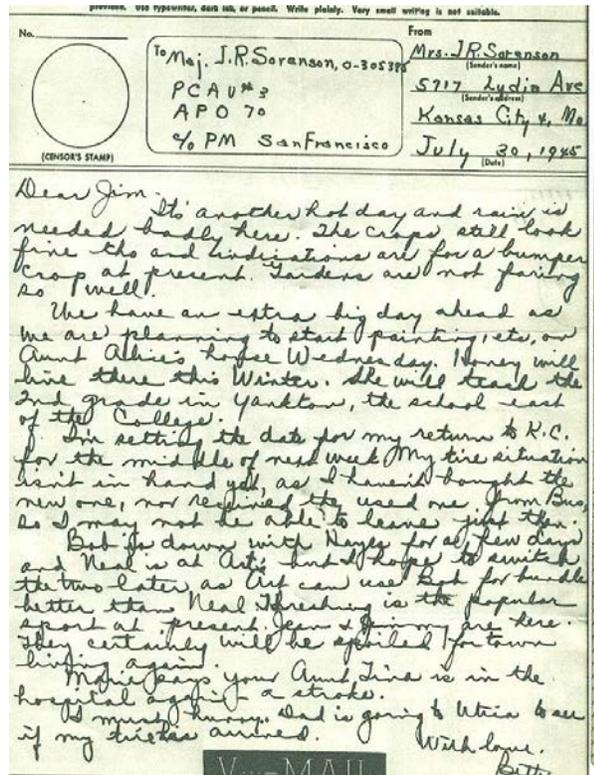
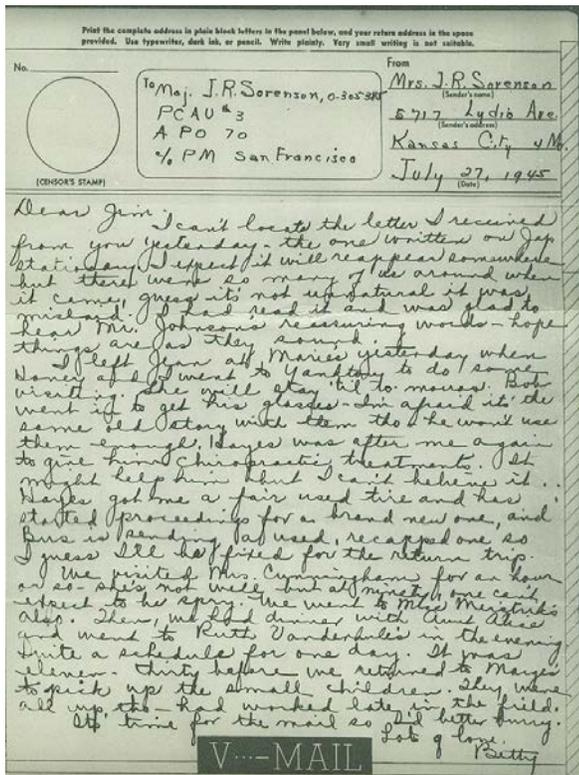
I hope you are all well and enjoying the summer. In about a month I suppose you will be going home to get ready for school.

I'll be sending home some money as soon as I can get a Money Order.

Wonder if you have had any luck getting tires. I don't like to have you driving on the old ones. Take care of yourselves and have a good time.

Love, Jim

[Note: This letter was censored; nothing removed. Delayed 6 days.] [On this date he left Bayombong and went to Ilagan, Isabella Province. He was still there when the war ended]



[Letter No. 343]

Saturday, July 28

Dear Betty -

I've got your July 7 and July 10 letters. They seem to come in pairs but they make pretty fair time.

I'm wondering when you plan to leave for home. You said Honey was moving into a four-room house in August so I suppose you won't be able to headquarter there. Also I suppose you will have to be home some time before school starts.

Is your dad going to town with Honey or will he stay on the farm? The reason I'm wondering when you will go home is that I have some money orders to send you and I'd like them to go direct and not to an address where they have to be forwarded.

No doubt the youngsters will be reluctant to go home. I know how much they have always enjoyed their vacations up there. I hope we can all have many more.

Sorry Stell and Chet are so dissatisfied at Lincoln. Too bad they didn't investigate the housing situation there before leaving Yankton. Hope it doesn't turn out like the Vermilion experiment.

I had heard that Vivian was married but don't remember who told me. It must have been you because it's a long time since I've heard from any of my sisters.

I'm wondering what has become of Bob Montagne. Last I heard he was supposed to be alerted for overseas. Probably he is over here now but I don't even know what outfit he is with.

We are expecting our activity to be disbanded very soon and will probably go to a school or training camp. Expect to be re-organized for a somewhat different kind of work. However, I'm afraid we are frozen as far as release is concerned and can look forward to staying until the war is over, or there is a change in policy. The "critical score" of the point system does not apply to officers. Lots of them have gone home, but I don't know how it was done.

What luck did Bob have with the skunks?

Love, Jim.

Print the complete address in plain black 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.

<p style="text-align: center;">No. From:</p> <p>Maj. J.R. Sorenson, O-3053285 PCAU #3 APO #2 4052 4/PM San Francisco</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Mrs. J.R. Sorenson</p> <p>5717 Lydia Ave. Kansas City 4, Mo.</p>
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SEE INSTRUCTION NO. 2 (Sender's complete address above)

Dear Jim - We arrived home about seven last evening without having had any misfortune on the entire distance. It was a pleasant day for traveling too. (Pete's cab) back which was.

Something happened to the lock on the right door of the car Monday just as I was ready to leave for town. (Mabel put the key in the ignition, got out of the car and about the door. It locked and as all windows were shut and the other door locked also, we were in a fix. The boys worked most of the afternoon and I finally got it off the hinges sufficiently to insert a long rod to push down the lock. We are unable to unlock it from the outside now but I'll get the lock fixed tomorrow. It needs some retouching with paint too where they pried so much. Otherwise, it's still a good car.

I haven't talked to any of the Bureau people yet - have been too tired and busy since my trip. Hadden's letter seems to bear out the rumor of our being moved but I still hope.

Home, seems so very nice to return to. Jimmy said this morning as he saw out the door, "Oh, I'm so happy!"

Mrs. Herring is taking home again - seems more frail than ever. Nursery home. Tell our boys, Betty

Have you filled in complete address at top? Have you filled in complete address at top?

V - MAIL

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT PERMIT 1011

Print the complete address in plain black 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.

<p style="text-align: center;">No. From:</p> <p>Maj. J.R. Sorenson, O-3053285 PCAU #3 APO #2 4052 4/PM San Francisco</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Mrs. J.R. Sorenson (Sender's name)</p> <p>5717 Lydia Ave. Kansas City 4, Mo.</p>
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SEE INSTRUCTION NO. 2 (Sender's complete address above)

Aug. 12, 1945

Dear Jim - We had an announcement, an hour ago, that Japan had accepted our peace terms, but it was corrected almost as soon as made, so we're still awaiting the favorable reply. It is now 10 P.M.

We are not yet back in the swing of things as I've been quite tired and I'm trying to work in a little excitement. I went for Pete also. The weather is so warm, it rather complicated things.

In your last letter, you spoke of the possibility of your going out to a school for a period to prepare for a new assignment. I hope the expected peace will change that and that you'll be sent home instead. Jimmy Hadden said you were doing rehabilitation work.

I haven't called Hadden yet - must do that soon to see if there's anything more to learn on the changed aspect. I hate to get further confirmation of the thing but at the same time I'm trying to think of P.C. as our home for only a limited time now. Neal & I want to go. It just wouldn't be bad, if not for you. I'm not sure but it would be a treat up if I had to choose. I don't expect you'll be given any choice tho.

I wish you were here - it's over a year since I saw you - must be long a letter. Love & love, Betty

[Letter No. 344]

Thursday, Aug 2.

Dear Betty -

I've got your July 12 and July 15 letters today --- still arriving in pairs. Wish they would come spread out so they would arrive oftener.

Was interested to hear Hayes has closed the old drive and seeded it to lawn. That must mean he has built a new drive --- from the east I suppose. I haven't seen their house since they finished the upstairs. I remember it most vividly when dad and I slept up there during the "Armistice Day" blizzard, when the snow blew through the cracks. I'd sure enjoy that experience again.

Your mention of Marge's ice cream did make my hungry. I suppose the people in Manila are faring all right but I haven't had any ice cream since I left the States. About two months ago we got hold of some ice and made a couple of frozen mixtures but I wouldn't call it ice cream. We get fresh meat quite often but most of it is canned --- and Australian packed at that --- and all our vegetables are dehydrated. Tonight we had canned beans, sliced bologna and unusually fresh bread with real butter --- the best meal I've had for a long time. I love beans in all forms but the present Army mess doesn't provide them very often. Last time I was in Manila last February --- you didn't get ice cream. The Japs still owned everything south of Pasig and there was fighting everywhere. The prisoners were still in Santo Tomas and Bilibid and most of the town was burning. I hear it is quite a night club town now. Kind of expect to be stationed there soon myself for a little while.

I'd like to see Jimmy in his G. I. haircut --- all of you of course. I can't keep up with him. He was only just learning to walk good when I left. I'm glad Neal and Bob are learning something about farming and service station work. That will be good for them. Is Jean learning how to cook and keep house?

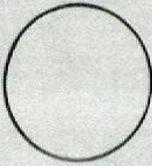
I hope a chiropractor or an eye doctor can help Bob's eyes. I never had much faith in the "exercise" doctor, but felt I couldn't object to Bob's trying it, since he was so much sold on the idea. A year should be long enough for a demonstration and I think it would be best to go back to the orthodox treatment. I wear glasses myself now for reading, and don't like them, but lots of people wear them all the time and get used to them.

I miss you all the time.

Love, Jim

provided. Use typewriter, dark ink, or pencil. Write plainly. Very small writing is not suitable.

No.



CENSOR'S STAMP

Maj. J.P. Sorenson, 0-35386
PCAU # 3
APO 70
4PM San Francisco

Jean Sorenson
(Sender's name)
5717 Lydia Ave.
(Sender's address)
Kansas City, Mo.
Aug. 14, 1945
(Date)

Dear Daddy,
It's certainly a good feeling to have the war over! Other people seem to think so' too, the way they're working toward what seems like going but is only fibre crackers. Even the little kids yell and ring bells, carry flags and blow whistles. Jimmy played Neal's drums!

I don't know whether this is going to be good news to you or not but it was for me, I'm going to get a kitten. A baby Tom Cat. I can have my choice of a black one, yellow striped one, light yellow one, and a black striped one. I don't know which to take.

Now hurry up and get home so we can really celebrate.
Hope your okay and get leave soon.

Lots and lots of loves
Jean

V - MAIL

POST OFFICE DEPT. PERMIT NO. 15

[Letter No. 345]

August 6, 1945.

Dear Betty -

Last night I got your July 14 letter. Sure remembered about the 18th. Beat you tis time --- I remembered on the 18th --- not the day after.

Seems queer to think the boys are driving tractors for the harvest. When I last spent a vacation on the farm they were interested only in playing and shooting and watching other people work. What has become of Paul? Does your dad do any farming at all any more?

I got pretty homesick when you told about visiting the old place. I'm glad it didn't bother you too much. From your description I get the impression that no one is living on the place. Last time I was there the Chinese elm now blocking the door was just a weed. I had managed to get the walnut tree on its feet but it wasn't very big.

Today I got three envelopes from Magees at Lincoln. They contained little booklets "Post Yarns" selections of stories from the Saturday Evening Post, small enough to slip in a shirt pocket, and a card from Helen and Earl. One is an Alexander Botts Story. Remember how your mother used to enjoy them?

I'm glad you got Bobby fitted with glasses. I've discussed it with Major Kline, our medical officer, and he advises very strongly against chiropractic treatment. He says it is not only useless but dangerous. Among the other things he says the visionary nerves do not leave the brain and are in no way connected with the spine so no spinal adjustment, (which he says cannot be accomplished anyway except by using casts over a long period of time), can affect eyesight. I suggest you take him to an eye specialist clinic in Kansas City.

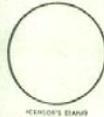
Allowing two weeks for arrival I thing I'll send my next letter to K. C.

Love, Jim

[Note: There was no "July 14" letter in the batch at my disposal, as was the case with several others that JRS' acknowledged getting in his earlier letters; there is no easy explanation of this. Mom had written on 15 Jul, which was acknowledged in Ltr #344, but she may have also written a "regular" letter on the 14th.]

Put one postage stamp in plain black letter in the panel below, and your return address in the space provided. Use typewriter, dot ink, or pencil. Write plainly. Very small writing is not suitable.

No.



RECIPIENT'S NAME

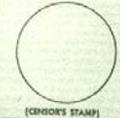
Maj. J.R. Sorenson, o-305385
PCAU #3
APO 70
5/PM San Francisco

Mrs. J.R. Sorenson
(Sender's name)
5717 Lydia Ave.
(Sender's address)
Kansas City 4, Mo.
Aug. 14, 1945

Dear Jim - We've been celebrating since
six o'clock. In our neighborhood, the small
children have done most of the noise-
making, marching, flag waving, bell-
ringing, and drumming. (What a drunk, several
neighbors came first. Mr. Copeland has a
whiskey waiting for you - hope you can
stand it now.)
From what I can learn, you're scheduled
to go to Rimini. Mr. Johnson (the office) would
and car storage had been arranged so the
more can't be left off. Mr. Havelly isn't going.
Alice told me he told Mr. C. He didn't want
to go. That seemed to come as a surprise but Mr.
C. said he could make other arrangements
and did. You, Mr. Beland and Mr. Johnson are
of the old crowd but there may be something
there when the form is complete. Most are
handling the states they did previously, but
so far, Jim told, there's no Kansas office. This
is all pick-up stuff but I believe it's real.
I took Rita to the bus station last night.
It didn't seem like she was here any time
and I was really too tired to stop and with
her much. They seemed satisfied tho.
Our place was in first rate condition
for having been left two months. My flower
border is consumed by weeds tho so I'll have
a job ahead to clear that out.
Jim, glad we can send your return
soon now. With love, Betty

V - MAIL

No.



(SENDER'S STAMP)

To Maj. J.R. Sorenson, o-305385
PCAU #3
APO 70
5/PM San Francisco

From

Mrs. J.R. Sorenson
(Sender's name)
5717 Lydia Ave.
(Sender's address)
Kansas City 4, Mo.
Aug. 12, 1945
(Date)

Dear Jim - It's Sunday evening again. We
spent about four hours at the movies so
the day passed quickly enough. Havelly
stopped by but didn't come in because
it looked like baby's bedtime. They want
you to try to get some of the leaflets
dropped for Japan. I hope you have a
couple of 'em that you truly to say some
thing about with your ship ablate. I asked
Chet to try to get one, but don't know
what success I'll have.
I'm anxious to hear from you now
that peace has been declared. I surely hope
it means an early release for you. Think
you can make it for Christmas!
Your menu didn't sound so fitting to
me but as long as it tasted good, your
appetite must be all right. The other very
well on the farm and certainly shouldn't
complain, other fare at any time here
either - just had to do more planning
monthly.
Gasoline rationing is off already and
all canned goods, except meats, are about free.
It won't be long until the food situation
is near normal again and I believe it can
be done and food needs countries in Europe
too, insofar as shipping is available.
I've heard no news from the office
situation and don't propose I will, with the plan
to be with Johnson at Rimini during 2 months, I
believe. Lots of love, Betty

V - MAIL

[Letter No. 346]

August 14, 1945.

Dear Betty -

I haven't had any letter from you since the 8th, but hope two or three will arrive soon.

I'm wondering if you went home on the 10th as you thought you would or will go the 15th --- tomorrow --- as you said you might. It was good news that you were able to get spare tires.

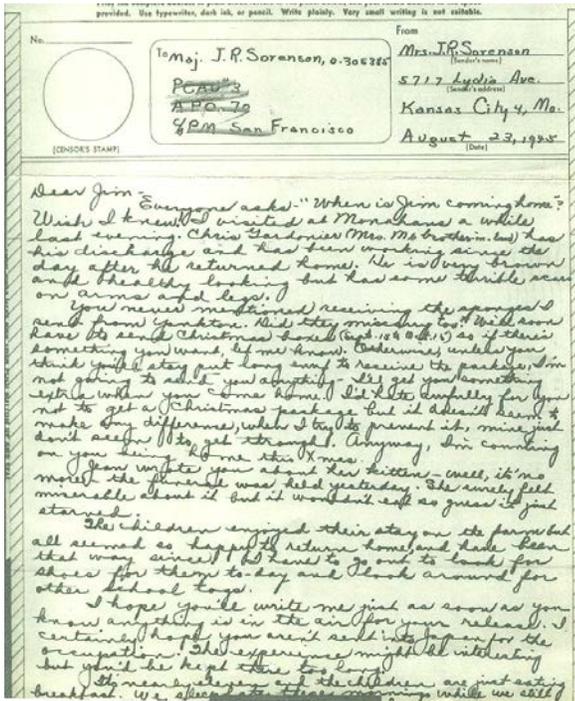
We are disbanding and going to a new assignment. We move tomorrow or the next day. Same old address will do until further notice.

We all feel fine about the Russians coming in to help us. We would have finished it ourselves, of course, but this should shorten the business very materialy [sic]. We all want to get home as soon as possible.

I sent you \$300 on the 8th. Let me know if it doesn't arrive so I can send the receipts.

Love, Jim

[Note: The location of their next assignment is "Camp Morgan, San Estaban Ilocos Sur".] [The Japanese surrendered on the 15th, so the purpose of this move may have been eliminated before they arrived. JRS may wonder later about the benefits of "the Russians coming in to help us". They gained many benefits from that move even though their contributions against Japan were minimal. Of course, their efforts against the Germans had been extremely important.]



[Letter No. 347]

Wednesday, Aug. 8.

Dear Betty -

I got your July 22 letter tonight telling about the picnic at the Lake the night before, also that you were going home the 10th or 15th. I'm glad you got the spare tires for the trip. Two extras are not too many considering the age of those on the car.

I am enclosing money orders for \$300.00. Let me know when they arrive.

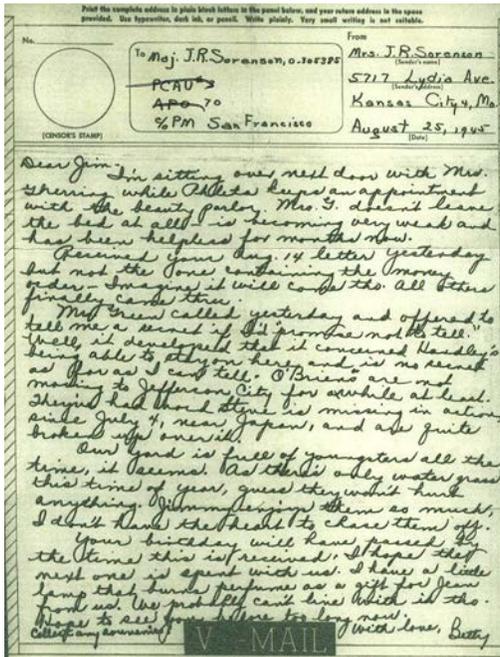
I was surprised to hear about Van Gorden. He was always a live wire and a ladies' man but when he stayed single so long I thought it was for good. I think it would be nice to send them something for a gift.

Also had a letter from Bill Slattery at Carson City tonight. He seems to think I'm practically on my way home --- or arrived there already. He is very cordial in his invitation to visit them on our "rest up" vacation tour and says Margaret backs him up on it. Says they have everything in Carson City --- "14 bars, clubs, gambling houses, only 11 miles to Lake Tahoe and 30 miles to Reno".

I hope you will have a nice trip home and won't need the spares. I'm awfully glad your vacation was so pleasant.

Love, Jim

[Note: This letter is badly out of synch; written on the 8th, but not postmarked until the 19th. He mentions the \$300 again in his letter of the 14th.]



[Letter No. 348]

Aug 23, 1945

Dear Betty -

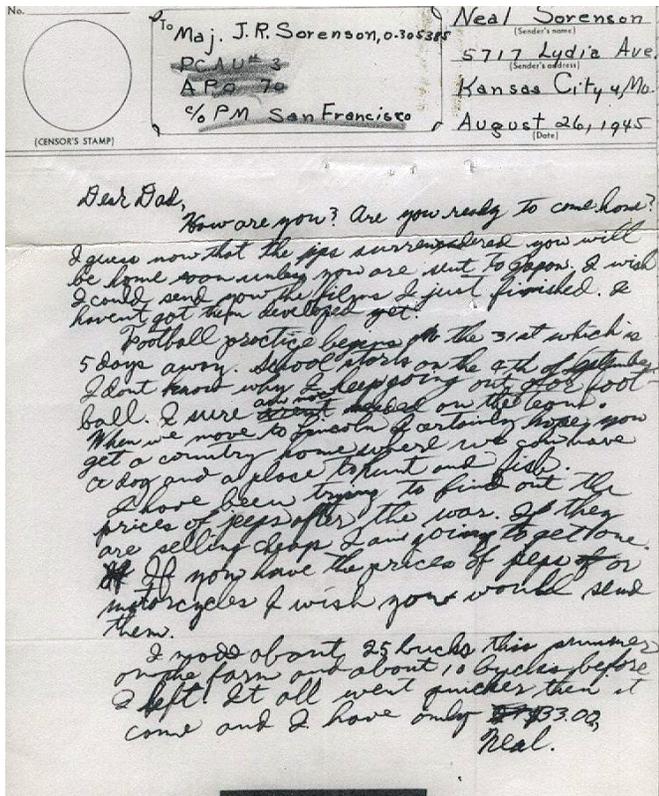
I am sitting in a camp waiting for orders. We all expect to be on the move again soon. Expect I will have to go to Japan before I get home. Lots of people here are eager to go but I have no desire to go there and spend long months in garrison. Would much rather go home right away.

This camp is in a beautiful spot --- a thick coconut grove right on the ocean. We don't have much to do except wait and take a new series of inoculation shots. I should be immune from all diseases for years to come. Most of the people take a daily swim in the ocean, play soft ball, volley ball or whatever they like.

Now that the Japs have folded up there is a lot of unrest and everyone wondering where we will go from here. There isn't much doubt that most of us here will have to start on a new mission soon, but of course there may be a few who will get an early start for home.

I haven't heard from you since you went home. Last letter was dated July 30. Hope everything went well on the trip and you found things OK at home.

Love, Jim



[Letter No. 349]

Sunday, Aug 26, 1945

Dear Betty -

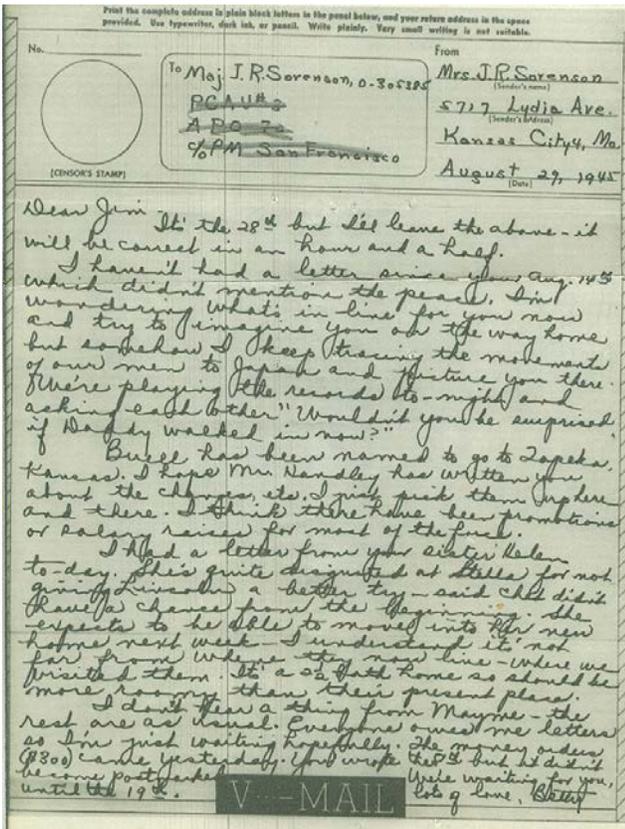
It's just a year ago today since I left the U. S. It is still hard to realize that the fighting is over and just a question of time before I'll be coming home.

I had a letter yesterday from Dick Handley. It had been mailed two weeks before and was delayed, probably because the address was wrong. The name of the place he is stationed was cut out by the censor but I'm pretty sure I know where it is and I expect to be there myself very soon. I'll look him up, of course.

I am waiting impatiently for the President to make his announcement of the official ending of the war and to see if the point system critical score is to apply to officers. At present the criterion is "if a replacement is available or you can be spared".

Jean will be having a birthday soon. I'll write her a letter, that's all I can do now.

Love, Jim



[Letter No. 350]

Tuesday, Sept. 4

Dear Betty -

I got your Aug. 4 letter today, just a month old. Mail seems to be bottlenecked again and I haven't had a letter for a couple of weeks.

I suppose you are all settled at home and the youngsters back in school. I'll be looking forward to some more recently dated letters arriving soon.

Have moved again since I wrote you last. We are being reassigned to new duties and this camp is a very busy place --- organizing new units for a move in the very near future. I have let it be known that I don't care for any further travels. Don't know how much good that will do --- but so far I have not been assigned. I think it may be due to the fact that I have a fairly high point score and I may be able to hang back until the new point system for officers is released. If I stand high under that system --- and I don't get sent out with the first few units I may possibly get started for home before too long. However, don't bank on my early arrival, it takes a long time to process people for release, even after they get on the list --- which I am not on yet.

I also got letter from Handley today which I will enclose to let you know what is probably in the plans for me.

Apparently I am not to have any choice in the matter, as Handley seems to have had. I don't mind the assignment, (except that I don't care to work under Johnson), but I hate to think of selling out and moving again. I suppose I've got too sentimental about the "new" house because I've been away from it so long and it has always represented the home I've been wanting to go back to for so long. It still seems new to me because it was still that way when I left --- nearly four years ago. I've always thought, though, that Lincoln would be a pretty good town to live. For one thing, it would simplify sending the boys to University, and there are women's colleges for Jean too. However, I've accumulated quite a lot of leave and will probably have several weeks after I get home before I'll have to go to work, and I can look things over and things will probably be settled down by then. When we have decided what we want to do I can at least go to the boss with a request if we don't like what he has in mind. If, as Handley says, he is going to be partial to ex-service men, he should at least consider their requests as much as others.

I'll let you know as soon as things break so that I know anything. Hope I can get home within the next few months --- or weeks would be better.

Love.

Jim

[Note: Enclosed with this letter was one from Lock Handley, (written on Wardman Hotel, Scottsbluff, Nebr. stationery {"Plain rooms \$1.00 Up; Rooms with Bath \$1.50 Up"}), which lays out the conditions JRS can expect at the office when he returns to civilian life. It is included here to help illustrate the situation.] [This may very well be the boss JRS had told about from his days in KC, when he would delay their leaving the office for a field trip until it would ensure that they would arrive at their destination too late in the day for any regular rooms to be left at the hotel. He would insist on renting a storage room at a reduced rate and pocket the difference in the per diem.]

"August 9, 1945

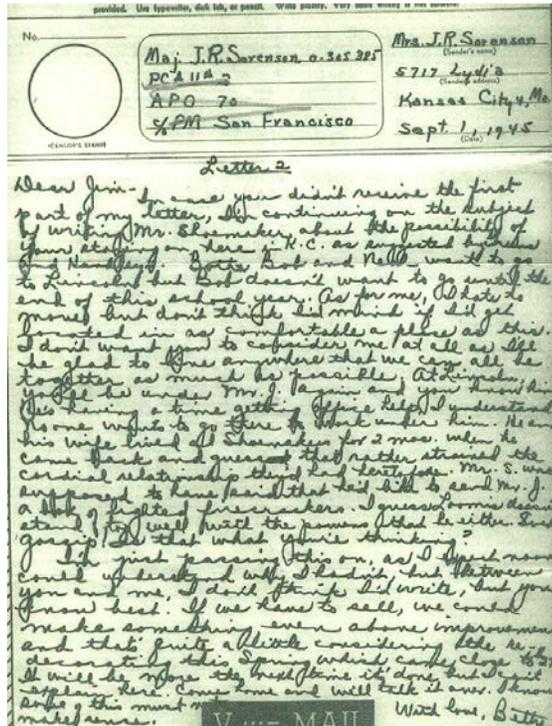
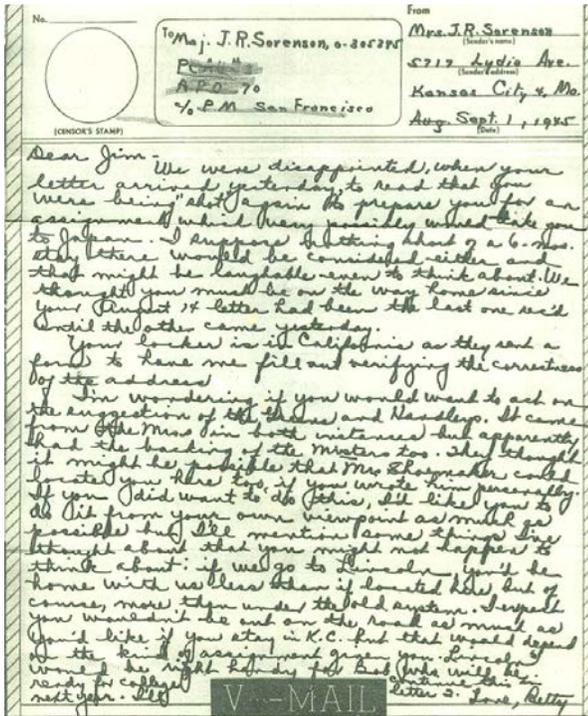
My dear Jim:

Received you letter late last week. Thought you would be interested in hearing of the recent developments. District Engineers have been named as follows: Nebraska, Johnson; Missouri, O'Brien; Iowa, Mickey. No action has been taken for Kansas as yet. I think the boss is in an argument with Washington about Loomis. He wants Loomis in Kansas but Washington wants him as a staff officer in the Division in charge of Planning and Programming. That is only my private opinion. Sime has been named staff officer in the Division in charge of design and Mackey in charge of Construction and Maintenance.

Johnson is now signing his mail as D. E. and has rented office quarters in the Terminal Bldg. in Lincoln. He hopes to move before Sept. 1. He is like a hen with two chicks for that is all he has --- Babcock and me. He advised Deke that for the present he would be the planning and program engineer and also administrative officer. Told me that I would be in charge of design construction and would be executive officer. I tried to ascertain what that last title meant and have concluded that I will have a desk outside the CO's door and do all the work.

Anyway, Mr. Shoemaker called me in and asked when I wanted to move and I told him "Never". He then asked if I didn't want to move to move to Lincoln. When I told him that I positively did not, he said that I could remain in Kansas City and called in Mackey and told us that I would be assigned to him as soon as he could arrange for someone to take my place in Nebr. Told me that I would work out of Kansas City as headquarters until he arranged for a man. He may change his mind.

Anyway, Shoemaker is going to try to get all ex-service men for any additional men. Just between us he is probably going to hire Jim Henry who is just out of service. Your place is ready for you and all calculations are being made with that in mind. You will be in charge of design or construction and maintenance in Nebraska and will get a P5 (Senior) rating when you return. The base rate for that now is \$5180. All for now. Let you know more when I hear. Sincerely, Lock



[Letter No. 351]

Tuesday, Sept. 11

Dear Betty,

I'm wondering why I don't hear from you. Your last letter was mailed from Yankton and dated Aug. 4. By now you must have been home for a month and the children back in school.

The sponges you sent me arrived Saturday. They had been mailed June 23 so they didn't make very good time. They are just what I wanted.

I am at the staging area for organization of Military Government companies and their shipment to the Army of Occupation. I have not been assigned yet and hope I will not be. They have finally put the point system in effect for officers. In my grade I need 100 points to be eligible and I have 106, so I may be on the list before very long --- especially if I remain unassigned, and I understand they are holding back a little about assigning officers over the critical score to occupation duty. Of course it will take some time to get things organized and there isn't enough transportation available to send out everybody in a short time so I don't expect to get home so very soon. However, I now have hopes of being home by Christmas which I hadn't thought possible before.

I hope there will be some letters today.

Love, Jim

Post the complete address in plain block letters in the panel below, and your return address in the space provided. Use typewriter, dot ink, or pencil. Write plainly. Very small writing is not suitable.

No. 1

TO: Maj. J.P. Sorenson, 0-305285
PCAU # 4
APO 70
1/2 PM San Francisco

FROM: Mrs. J.P. Sorenson
5717 Lydia Ave.
Kansas City 4, Mo.

Sept. 4, 1945 (Date)

DEAR JIM: The children are off to school this morning, except Jimmy. He is expected Sunday. She really thinks she will be getting no regular schedule and chasing around for the rest of the year. Don't expect to see Bob Montalvo - he never left the States. He and another soldier were here Sunday on their way to Canada to pick up a persimmon. He is still considering accepting officers training. He didn't have much to say about Pangey Mayme - she's back will but Bob says he'll see her change a lot. He closed shop when he feels like it and doesn't spend long hours at home any more. Jim and I are waiting to hear from you. I'd like to see if you are coming home or send some one to Japan. Short mention was made of a Army air force landing in Ryukyu Islands and I wondered if that might be the job number of your unit. They've been having a lot of 94° and up heat. I wonder how you're doing so much of the same. The complexion as much about it. Even the water glass is dried up on the lawn. I let water run on the ground under the shrubs, etc., last evening as we've had no rain for a long time. Here's how home now so will have to commiserate with you. I have to get groceries and this book unscrambling. I have to get groceries too. With love from all, Betty

V - MAIL

FROM

TO: Maj. J.P. Sorenson, 0-305285
PCAU # 4, APO 500
1/2 PM San Francisco

FROM: Mrs. J.P. Sorenson
5717 Lydia Ave.
Kansas City 4, Mo.

SEE INSTRUCTION NO. 2

September 11, 1945

DEAR JIM - The children are in school again but they'll be coming home before I have half my work done. Jimmy comes at noon and camp, then the real start arriving soon after two - thirty. With Bob walking to 59th Main to the Dr. beach evening and Neal with two hours of football, we still will be a broken-up family until evening. I'm still waiting to hear whether you can come home very soon. Your letter sounded as if you still think you'd have to go on to Japan too. I had a long letter from Uncle Bob yesterday. He's so happy with Hill's, is selling insurance again. His wife works too. Collette's man was ready to leave (I think) when they last heard, for some reason. He's Leonard Ditz, in case you've forgotten. I'm thinking seriously of banking Mr. M. Miller to putty our windows and paint them and the trimmings on the house, shutters, eave troughs, etc. I thought you'd be home in two or three weeks. I don't think you'd then the weather will have changed and you'd be in the working of one either. I don't think about it. Love, Betty

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP?

REPLY BY V - MAIL

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP?

[Letter No. 352]

September 17

Dear Betty,

I've just been over to the Post Office, and still no mail. Last letter was dated Aug. 4 and sent from Yankton. Haven't heard a word from you since you went home.

My return home has been delayed again. Two days ago we were told that no officers with points over the critical score would be assigned to units of occupation, but would stay here until orders home would be cut and transportation available. The yesterday we were told that "due to recent developments" all Military Government officers were declared essential and all unassigned officers in the area would hold themselves in readiness for movement to one of the occupied counties at short notice. We are all busily getting ready. We will travel by air and leave very soon.

Since we were put on the so called "essential" list it means that we can be kept on duty for a period of six months from Sept. 2, or until next March 2. However, we were told that the situation will probably be ironed out long before that time and we would then be processed for return home in the order of our points. You can imagine how we feel after thinking we would soon be home, but there isn't anything we can do about it. I still hope and expect to get home before March, but my chances of getting home by Christmas, as I hoped, are shot or at least very slim.

I don't know what my address will be or what organizations I will be assigned to. I'll let you know as soon as I can. The address I have been using is that of the "housekeeping" unit of this camp. All casuals have to use it while here.

I've been wondering why I don't get any mail. Hope everything is all right. It's worrisome to be out of touch so long.

Love, Jim

[Letter No. 353]

Sat. Sept. 22

Dear Betty,

Yesterday I got a letter from you and one from Jean. Both were dated Aug. 14 and you were celebrating. They were the only ones I've had since one you wrote on the farm on Aug. 4. The mail situation is all balled up.

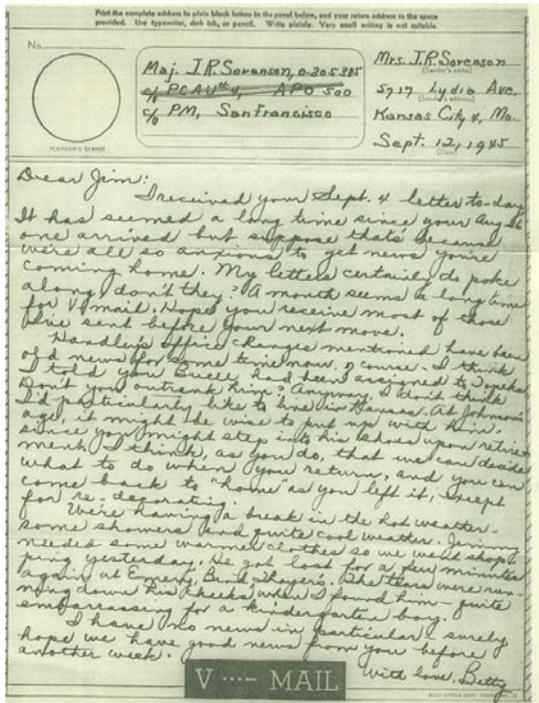
We are still alerted for our flight to Korea. We were to have left this morning but it was called off, presumably because of weather conditions.

I hope there will soon be a change in the policy that can freeze a few of us indefinitely regardless of points. They have lowered the score again so a lot more people are now eligible but we can't get release and there is nothing we can do about it.

Did Jean get her kitten? She couldn't make up her mind which color to choose when she wrote.

I've been thinking what we would do about the house when I get home. This delay in getting home may change the set up - --- maybe someone else will be sent to Nebraska and they will keep him there. I surely don't want to go to any other state than Nebraska. I wouldn't mind going to Lincoln if we didn't have our house. It's possible I suppose that by the time I get back they'll have something else in mind --- might even stay in K. C. like Handley. No use worrying yet --- first thing is to get home.

Love, Jim



[Letter No. 354]

Sept. 28, 1945

Dear Betty,

I got your Sept. 7 letter today, the first recent letter I've had for weeks. I've been moving around a lot lately and I guess it will be some time before my mail gets straightened out. I told you last time I wrote that I was alerted for a fast trip to Korea. We are still waiting for transportation and don't know when we will get away.

I wonder if you got the \$300 I sent you early in August. You may have mentioned it in one of your letters that went astray.

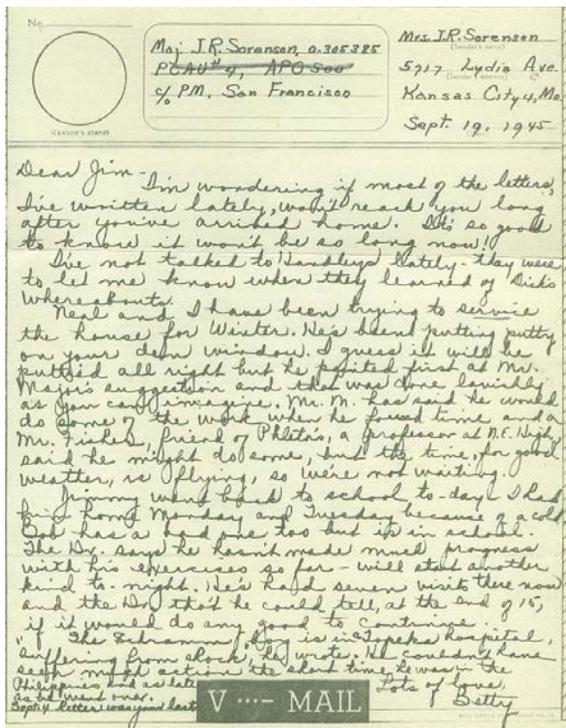
It seems funny to think of Jimmy going to school. I suppose it's kindergarten. Seems no time at all since Jean started.

Of course I approve of anything you do to help Bob's eyes. I hope though that unless there is a decided improvement soon you will discontinue the exercise treatment and take him to a clinic for a thorough examination. The right people may be able to help him since he is so young, but wrong treatment might do a lot of damage.

The time passes awfully slowly now that the war is over and I can't get home. It's going to be a dreary and lonesome wait. I hope I'll get some mail anyway.

If you can get film I would like to have some pictures.

Love, Jim



[Letter No. 355]

Seoul, Korea
October 7, 1945

Dear Betty,

Have been on the move pretty constantly since the 1st of the month and it's some time since I've had a chance to write.

Left Nichols Field, Manila, the evening of the second but only went as far as Clark Field about fifty miles north, where we spent the night. Next morning a leak in a wing tank was discovered so we laid over all day and night and finally got another plane the next morning. Then we went to Okinawa, and spent a night there. On the 5th we went on to Korea. We stopped to refuel in Japan, (Kyushu), and when we got to Nagasaki the pilot circled over the city to give us a look through holes in the clouds. Didn't see much of the part that was wrecked by the atomic bomb, but had a fine view of the harbor.

I am quartered in a very nice Japanese hotel, called a tea house. The floors are covered with matting and there are tapestries and paintings on the wall. The most luxurious home I've had since I left the States.

This town is the capital of Korea and really a nice town. There are a lot of fine public buildings, and it isn't all shot up like Manila and the other places I've been in during the last year. Street cars are running and light and water service is functioning. Seems mighty civilized.

We have an officers mess in the big dining room of the capital building. The food is not so good --- we are living on "C" rations, but expect to have fresh meat and vegetables soon.

I like it much better here than in the Philippines, mostly on account of the climate I suppose. Never could stand the tropics. This place is almost as far north as Kansas City and the weather so far has been about the kind we have in October at home

I am definitely in Military Government, much against my will. We are taking over all government bureaus, industries, railroads, etc. Practically all industries and big business were handled under government bureaus under the Japs. They have been in control here for 30 or 40 years. I have been tentatively assigned to the Bureau of Transportation.

There are a lot of officers here who have recently arrived from the States after a year or two of university training in Mil. Gov't who are eager beavers and very ambitious and enthusiastic. Those of us who have been here a while, and especially those who have ample points for discharge are plenty sore about the business. We were ordered to this duty without any training or desire for the work --- and then were informed that officers in this branch are essential and separation on the basis of points will not be considered. Under present law they can hold us for six months after Sept 2, or until next March 2, and under the present policy that's what they intend to do. They are now asking for volunteers to stay until June 1947. It is unfair to take away our right, but there are so comparatively few of us that there is not much hope of getting any consideration of our case. We all know that there are thousands of officers with a low point score who could be detailed to relieve us and who have as good qualifications for the job

I suppose it will be a long time before mail catches up. My present address is: Hq. XXIV Corps, Military Government Section, APO 235, San Francisco.

Love, Jim

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.



Maj. J.R. Sorenson, O-305385
~~PCAU #4~~
~~c/o APO 500~~
c/o PM San Francisco

Mrs. J.R. Sorenson
(Sender's name)
5717 Lydia Ave.
(Sender's address)
Kansas City, Mo.
Sept. 23, 1945
(Date)

Dear Jim -

I understand they're going to discontinue V-mail the last part of October. Well, you should be on the way home by then anyway.

I've been trying to fix the house up so it will take the winter weather and also look presentable in the Spring too. It could stand a much more thorough job, but that will wait for you. Don't get scared now and have the boat turn back to Manila.

The children are well launched on their school year now. Jimmy likes school but not that "getting up" in the morning. He's very proud of himself that he can come home alone already. Gabi is in the sixth grade now and shows marked improvement in her music too. Neal hates school but is willing to try to do his work. Bob seems to manage his studies without too much trouble. Neal quit football. We had very promised him, and the rest, a dog when school is out. It's a wild thing to do but Neal actually craves to own one. I can understand his side of it but dread to think of keeping one in town. Lots of people do tho.

The end of the paper comes too soon but it's just as well, I guess when you get to scribbling.

V...- MAIL

Lots of love, Betty

POST OFFICE DEPT. PERMIT NO. 1

[Letter No. 356]

Seoul, Korea
17 October, 1945

Dear Betty,

Today I got four letters from you --- one undated, (the day you got home from Yankton), the other dated Aug 12, 19, and 25. I got one dated Sept 7 before I left Luzon. Also got a birthday card today from "Myrtle and Harry" with a newspaper clipping which I'll enclose. I hope my back mail will soon catch up, and now that you have my address I should get mail in a short time. The trouble has been that I have changed locations so often and "attached" here and there so mail had no chance to catch up.

I guess I'm stuck here indefinitely. An ambitious individual in the old setup's personnel section wired the War Department that he had some 300 officers qualified for Military Government detail because of field experience, although most of us were not graduates of their training school and not in the least interested in such work. Naturally the W.D. took him at his word, (he omitted the latter part of course), and said personnel officer put an MG-MOS number on our 66-1 cards --- which caused us to be frozen in service for 6 months after 2 September regardless of points. The lug that got us frozen has been awarded the Bronze Star for "meritorious service" and we are taking the rap. Naturally there are a lot of soreheads here and we are still hoping that we can get a hearing from higher authority. I'm sure I would be on my way home by now if I hadn't got this put over on me. They have been sending specialists in Mil. Gov't to school for three years in the States and certainly must have a lot of low points men they could send over to take over now. Everybody here is wrought up about the whole system. Back in the States they can't send men over if they have a few points while over here men with 100 points and over have to wait for replacements to take their places. Some of the officers frozen in with me have over 130 points many have over 110. I have 108 myself since it was refigured in September. We are in one of four categories where the Army doesn't have to consider points.

I haven't drawn my pay since Jul so I should be able to send you some money soon when my voucher is ready. I still don't know whether you got the \$300 I sent you in August. We get paid here in Yen, (exchange rate 15 to 1). I don't know how long it will take me to think in terms of dollars again.

Looks as if it's hopeless to figure on getting home for Christmas this year. The next one I suppose we will spend in Lincoln. I don't like the idea of selling the house and think we should hold on to it until we know things are settled. We might just get nicely settled in Lincoln and then get ordered back to Kansas City. Maybe the boss will have reconsidered and found a place for me on his central office staff by the time I get home. He'll have had plenty of time. It may be too, that Johnson will get tired of waiting for an assistant and they will send someone else. Anyway, I'll have a lot of terminal leave coming and won't have to go to work for some time when I get out so I can look thing over. A new home in Lincoln will cost a lot more than we paid for the one we have.

I hope the mail bottleneck is broken.

Love, Jim

[Note: The clipping from Myrtle was from an August 7, 1945 paper including comments about how the atomic bomb "might prevent future conflicts" by Dr. E. O Lawrence, "one of the principal pioneers in development of the new missile." This man was a student at South Dakota State at the same time as JRS --- I do not know if they were friends, or even acquainted at the

time, but JRS commented on his famous classmate many times over the years.] [The issue about "The lug that got us frozen..." getting the Bronze Star is interesting --- I wonder if he spent any time at the Officers Club, drinking with those 300 officers who were affected? A pretty medal on his chest wouldn't protect him from an iron pipe being laid across his head in a dark alley.]

Post the complete address in plain block letters in the panel below, and your return address in the space provided. Use typewriter, dot ink, or pencil. Write plainly. Very small writing is not suitable.

No.

Major J.R. Saranson, O-305285
PCAV #4
APO 500
% PM San Francisco

Mrs. J.R. Saranson
5717 Lydia Ave.
Kansas City 4, Mo.
Oct. 4, 1945

Dear Jim - I certainly was disappointed to receive your letter this morning! How that sound "terrible"? Well, we were all prepared to welcome you home just any day. There had been no letter from you for three weeks as we were sure you were out that way. I do appreciate the let-
know you must have experienced too, upon learning you would be delayed, and the fact, our mail hasn't been getting to you, could be helping matters much. You & I've all written to you since the middle of August and quite often.
We are all well. News from home hasn't been arriving lately, but things all very busy. Dad is keeping over 200 head of cattle, Dad expects they may have to move as they place has been sold. He'll talk of driving to Fargo to visit Ann and honey is busy, and Phyllis is in her position as a school grade teacher in the Beadle school near college. Rita too, is working hard on her last year in middle school. Dad says he's still in Portland - he expects to be there there sometime this and next month. What he plans to do next, I don't know where Dad is. Helen, Blanche and I can't see M. She moved into the home they bought. Carl had gone to Chicago for three days. He was here talking about a week. I had an announcement of a son, born to Mr. & Mrs. J. J. J. of Greenwood, Minn. I had mail from Virginia with a date that was the end of this old paper again. Hope putting it in the mail.
Mum and Betty

V --- MAIL

Post the complete address in plain block letters in the panel below, and your return address in the space provided. Use typewriter, dot ink, or pencil. Write plainly. Very small writing is not suitable.

No.

Maj. J.R. Saranson, O-305285
PCAV #4
APO 500
% PM San Francisco

Mrs. J.R. Saranson
5717 Lydia Ave.
Kansas City 4, Mo.
Oct. 8, 1945

Dear Jim - I'll try to write more frequently to help cover the period until you return and I hope that will be much shorter than you think. There were several letters between the Aug. 4 & 14th so you missed some but they may have arrived by now. I think all our youth has of something for Xmas if I get your new address in time. I'll probably be back sometime your way as I haven't the least imagination about your needs over there but I hope to think of you not getting something from us. We only had eight days left tho.
Mrs. Hawley called last night. Mrs. and Alice are doing about the best to make the way back over to Saran and the way to make the way going into Kansas this week on some work. I hope you'll be well in change in Kansas. I guess she and that was rather an surprise. I'd have no kidding a terrible time finding a home. Mum has is still safe & he has a hotel room in Topeka. Mr. O'Brien comes home well and he got work at all over and Mrs. is still here awaiting her long return. She had no further word of the boy whose plane was last seen in a gliding descent off the tip of Korea. Maybe you'd locate him again and well I hope so. Betty had seen very nice people and drove a fine and good fortune.
Yesterday was of pretty fall day. It's cloudy again today. Hope I feel your new address soon.
With love, Betty

V --- MAIL

Auth: Am. Theatre & World War II Victory Medal
Rel. Pref: Catholic

OFFICER'S AND

DESIGNATION	SPEC. SERIAL No.	DATE	(30) INIT
Engineer, Staff	7010	19 Jan 44	
Airport Engineer	7970	19 Jan 44	
Unit Officer, Training Center	2622	30 June 44	
Traffic Control Officer	7607		
Civil Affairs Off. Mil. Gov't (Engineer)	8104-8	30 June 45	
(31) REMARKS: Comm. Res. QMC, 1933-TTFD to Ord. 1 Aug. 42, Sec. IX, Cir. 245, WD, 1942 as changed by Sec. III Cir 267 WD, 1942-Detailed AC per Sec. I, Par. 10, SO 183, WD, 2 July 43-Detailed G.E. per Par. 17, SO 245, AAF, 12 Oct. 43, Detailed TC per Par. 10, WDSO 111, 9 May 44. Malaria control TNG completed Jan. 1944, Censorship film shown June 44, Infiltration course 6 July 44, Gas chamber 8/16/44, Gas chamber (CL+CN) July 44 (15) M/P Ratings obtained from WDAGO Form 66-2 - K.J.T.			

IMPORTANT - UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL THIS CARD BE FOLDED, ROLLED OR DESTROYED
Victor Form 107 of World War I, Alsace (Defense Sector), Aisne-Marne, Meuse-Argonne. - Purple H Officer is qualified in Map & Aerial photo reading to extent required for proper perform

[Note: The offending "qualification" was added with a 30 Jun 45 effective date. There is nothing to indicate what JRS has done to warrant this additional qualification, so the personnel officer was probably stretching a bit.]

[Letter No. 357]

Seoul, Korea
October 24, 1945

Dear Betty,

There isn't any news but guess I'd better write you my periodic notice that I'm OK. There still is no mail since the four letters I got the other day written in August. Mail seems to be all balled up --- and so is everything in the Army these days. You would think things would go smoothly since the fighting is over, but instead there seems to be more confusion than ever.

I finally got some wool clothes which helps a lot. The climate is pretty cold to come to from the tropics in tropical clothing at this time of year. I'm just getting over a bad cold. Except for that I have felt a lot better since coming up here.

There is still no indication that anyone in this activity will be released before March --- certainly there isn't much chance of getting out by Christmas even if they do change the policy soon.

I hope everything is all right at home. It makes me uneasy not to hear from you for so long. Hope things will settle down soon.

Love, Jim

[Note: The last V-Mail from Mom was October 8; she now returns to using only regular mail sent via air mail. The following letter from here was written in pencil, and is extremely difficult to read on the yellowing paper:]

October 26, 1945.

Dear Jim --

I seem to have used all presentable stationery but I want to get a letter off this morning so will use this. It won't take ink very well.

I am sending several snapshots --- the films were just developed but the pictures were taken last Fall and Winter. We can't produce the pictures you do, but we'll try again, when I can get some film. There was none Tuesday but this situation should improve soon.

Jean and Jimmy are all excited about Halloween as usual. Jean has five parties ahead of her. The boys don't care so much anymore.

I went shopping Wednesday --- am trying to beat the Xmas rush a little. I had planned to go again today but find I have too many things to be done at home.

You have mentioned March 2 as the latest you can be held in the Army. Are you sure of that? Does the "6 Months after" date from the signing with Japan or from the declaration from Congress? I've been told it's from the official action by Congress.

V-Mail may still be sent but it isn't photo-philmed *[sic]* anymore so there's no object in using it.

I'm glad you're so comfortably located. Maybe you'll feel like writing more often now.

I'll bet you'd like to have all these warm clothes you left behind. I haven't received your locker as yet but have had three memorandums regarding it. I think it's in K. C. now as the last letter was post-marked here.

I guess I told you the Dr. advised Bob to quit the exercises as he wasn't benefiting by them. He is very interested in physics and is stewing about his college course --- wishes you were here to consult. Pers. Truman has a service bill before Congress

tho, that, if passed, will take care of him for a year. Neal doesn't like school and does only passing work --- he was more enthusiastic last year. I think he'll have to have his tonsils out --- had an attack last week --- he may improve in his studies if he does. Jean's grades weren't as high as usual but I expect them to improve. She takes sewing this year and likes that. Her music shows a lot of improvement, I think. Jimmy likes school --- doesn't want to stay home once he's up but he gets notions sometimes when first awakened.

I haven't heard from any of your folks for a long time, and mine are as usual. Everyone is so busy --- I wonder where we're all headed.

The mail came and went leaving me nothing. I had an enlarged snapshot of Aunt Kate and Uncle Chas. Holcomb this week. It certainly is a good one and they both look so happy.

I must get to work. Hope that office letter gets results.

With Love. Betty

[Note: The comment "Hope that office letter gets results.", only makes sense when JRS' letter of 3 November is read. She had evidently told him, in V-Mail letter that was not processed as such, (and therefore is not in the stack of V-Mails), that the PRA office in Kansas City had petitioned the Army for his release.]

[Letter No. 358]

Seoul, Korea
October 27, 1945

Dear Betty,

The last three days I've had 4 letters from you dated Sep. 11, 12, 19 and 23. Now that I have settled down and you know my settled down address mail should come faster. Everything has been forwarded so far.

Also had a letter today from Bill Slattery dated Aug 29 enclosing an article about K. C. from the Aug 25 Sat. Evening Post. He thought I would be home soon and insisted I visit him. He has a Bureau of Reclamation office of his own in Carson City. He is specially proud of his Truckee River project.

There was also a letter from Thos. MacDonald, Commissioner of Public Roads, mailed in Washington June 9 and addressed to my first APO. It was a form letter of course to "Public Road Personnel with the Armed Forces", saying how "proud he was of the services we had rendered" and giving a resume of the work that has been done on roads during the war, listing the appropriated funds and how they are to be spent during the next three years. "In all this planning We are not overlooking our employees on military furlough but rather are definitely planning for your return and holding places for you. You are not only entitled to your old job or a better one, but we need you and want you to come back." Also asks that we write him of our wishes and any plans we may have in mind after release. Too bad I don't know enough about the new set up to know what to ask for.

Bobby's letter of Aug 21 also arrived today. I hope we will be able to make all the trips he suggested. We will try, and I'm sure we will be able to make some of them at least.

There are pheasants here just like the ones at home but don't think I'll be able to find the time and the equipment at the same time to go hunting. There are also tigers but I don't crave to hunt them, anyway not till I learn something about the business. Not so many years ago they sometimes came right into town and carried people off, at least so I've read in some of the travelers books in our library.

I'm kind of glad you are thinking of buying a dog for the kids. I feel kind of mean to have deprived them of a pet for so long, since they are so wild about pets --- especially Neal. I hope if you get a dog it will be a wire haired terrier. I like them better than any breed of dog I know and I suppose the kids will like one kind as well as another --- or are they set on any particular breed? Anyway I hope they don't want a police dog or a Doberman.

You still haven't told me if you got the money I sent in August. Still haven't drawn any pay since July but ought to have a sizable payday soon.

Had fresh meat today for the first time in several weeks, also fresh bread. We've been living on canned rations, spam, dehydrated vegetables, etc. for a long time. Expect we will eat better now. Also got wool clothing which was badly needed. It's pretty cold here.

Love, Jim

[Mom's letter of October 30 follows:

"October 30

Dear Jim –

I'll send this Air-Mail to see if it goes thru faster than the "regular" I sent the other day. I enclosed some snapshots in that one so it was too heavy for Air Mail.

Your locker arrived Saturday, the lock broken and smelling to the skies of mustiness. I've washed the clothes but the smell doesn't air out of the rest of the stuff very fast. The glass on clock and mirror was broken but the ink bottle, miraculously and fortunately, wasn't.

The weather is typically October kind this week. The children are having their annual costume party at school. Jimmy is a ghost and as bold a one as you would want. He seems to like school fine, so far. Jean is enjoying her fourth party and has another to-morrow.

I'm trying to work in one shopping trip down town each week to care for my Xmas buying but I just have to steal the time. I'm so busy from six-thirty to eleven each day, I'm bewildered. I'm putting on weight in spite of it --- guess it's that fried chicken I had on the farm this summer.

I owe everyone letters again so have had no recent news from relatives. Hope our letters have caught up with you by now. I told you I received the August \$300, but I'll repeat in case that letter never arrived.

I've become completely resigned to the idea of leaving K. C. providing I can go north or no farther south. I'd hate Jeff. City, I think --- I don't care to write the main reason.

There won't be any Xmas for you --- I hate that but that's the way it worked out. Maybe something will happen and you'll be sent home in time to be with us. We'' be hoping.

Lots of love, Betty"]

[Note: I remember that "ghost" costume. It was just a skull mask with a white sheet wrapped around me. I was aggravated because my blond hair stuck out above the mask, allowing everyone to know who I was.] [I never heard JRS say if his trunk had been looted during the trip back home, but I would suspect that any souvenirs he may have acquired in New Guinea were pilfered.] [I never heard Mom expand on her "hate" of Jeff City.]

[Letter No. 359]

Seoul, Korea
3 November 1945

Dear Betty,

I am enclosing money orders for \$250.00. Finally got a payday.

I got a couple of V-Mail letters from you the last one dated Oct 14 said you had received the money I sent in August. The letters came just as you wrote them. They quit Photostatting them on Oct 15 or said they would , but evidently they stopped before that. Or maybe your letters didn't arrive for processing before that.

I am feeling a lot more hopeful again. Evidently they are going to remove M. G. Officers from the critical list --- to some extent at least. Eight of the highest pointers are awaiting orders for home and expect to leave very soon. When they have gone I will be fourth from the top of the list and should be in the next bunch. I've been told there is a good chance that I would be on my way by the end of the month. If so, there is a fair chance of getting home by Christmas. Of course policies change forth and back and I've been steamed up before, so don't plan too hard on it. At any rate I think now I'll be out well before the time limit to which they could hold us.

You said in your last letter the office had sent a letter requesting my relief and would send me a copy. Haven't received it yet. Anyway I don't think anything they have done or will do will speed things up. Expect to get out by regular channels on my points.

I'll let you know as soon as there is anything definite.

Love. Jim

[Note: After not being paid since July, he can only send \$250 home?!] [See my footnote on Ltr #357 for comments on this letter from PRA]

[Mom's Nov. 4 letter follows:

Nov. 4, 1945

Dear Jim --

Your October 24 letter arrived yesterday --- that isn't such bad time considering the way mine reach you. However, I stay put and you don't.

Everything is very routine here so there's nothing new. Time has a way of flying very fast tho as I never get everything done in one day that I plan to do.

Earl called out an hour ago --- here for another market. They like their new home but have been changing a few partitions, etc, and experiencing the difficulty of obtaining lumber, sinks, etc. He said he bought Helen's Xmas presents already --- a 7 x 4 mirror for over the fireplace and a 9 x 15 rug.

I'm glad you were able to get warm clothing --- only wish you had this you left here. Are the shops in Seoul as depleted as those in Japan, (Tokyo)? We read about some of the places having no much more than a few notions for sale.

Jean has the radio on full blast. It certainly is a much used instrument. Someone has it on all the time. Bob was practicing on the typewriter for a while --- he isn't taking it this year but does pretty well. Neal took part in a parade of floats from his

school today, celebrating a football game. His school was beaten 31 to 0 so he was quite deflated by the time he returned home. Jimmy still makes the rounds of the neighborhood.

Gen. Wainwright is appearing here Tuesday. Most of the schools are closing for a half day so the children can view the parade.

I haven't talked to Handleys for some time. Mr. Green called from the office the other day to read a letter they'd received from you --- dated Oct 18, I believe.

Well, I'd better prepare for rest. The alarm sounds too early in the morning, but four children's needs can't be cared for in a few minutes and I have to put up four lunches besides.

With love, Betty

[Note: General Wainwright was MacArthur's second in command at Corregidor and was sacrificed to the Japs when "Dugout Doug" took off by PT boat for safety in Australia. Wainwright endured POW status during the entire war, and was heralded as a hero when he returned afterward.]

[Letter No. 360]

Seoul, Korea

November 9

Dear Betty,

I was informed that my name was being submitted to the replacement depot today. When transportation becomes available orders will be published directing me to report to the depot, and shortly afterwards should be on my way home. It may take only a few days, or two or three weeks, but things look brighter for getting home this year. Hope to be on the way when you get this.

They have evidently reversed their ruling that officers in this category can be declared essential. I don't think it was ever the intent anyway. Quite a lot are being let out and there is quite a bunch ahead of me waiting for ships. Hope I get a fast one.

I sent you some money Saturday. Hope it arrives O.K.

No more news now. I'm hoping to see you soon.

Love, Jim

[Note: Journal entry: "8 Nov. S. O. 10, Par. 2, Rel'd from 10th Army AAA and ordered to report to 11th Prov. Personnel Center 21 Nov."] [Stay tuned!]

[Note: Mom's November 9 letter follows:

"Friday – Nov. 9

Dear Jim –

We had a heavy rain for a short time yesterday which left us with rather cold weather, although the sun is shining brightly. It is better for a Thanksgiving atmosphere tho. It's still hard to realize the distance we're apart – that Thanksgiving will be over by the time you receive this. Maybe not tho --- your letters reach me in less than two weeks.

I've been trying to locate a wagon for Jimmy's Xmas. He hasn't asked for anything else but has quite a lot of faith in Santa's ability to get him one. I've phoned around but they're either not stocked yet or won't be in. Western Auto expect one which sounds like what I'm after but it's over sixteen dollars. Prices are away out of sight for the quality, I think

Jean's sewing class is having a demonstration of its work this afternoon so I plan to go down and look it over. I was teaching her how to make cookies the other evening and decided the lighting of the oven should be part of it. We had a near-bad accident. She was so fearful of the flame, she held her match too far from the jets. Gas collected too long before lighting and then suddenly burst into flame and just swept across her arms and hair singeing all the short ends. I don't know how long it will be before she regains courage to try it again.

Jimmy is getting so independent. He comes all the way home from school alone and want to go alone too but I like him to stay with Jean --- he wanders too much, or loiters.

Bob's quarterly report was very fine but Neal, with the exception of English, just passed and failed in Religion. He has promised to work harder this quarter and has been doing that so far. Did I tell you Marge's Bub didn't return to High this year. He failed all subjects last year.

I've had no mail for some time and have been too busy to answer the letters I owe, so there's no news to pass on. I haven't even seen or talked with any of the office people for some time now.

Do you get around much in Korea, or do you stay in Seoul most of the time?

There's the mail already! We have two deliveries a day now but I seldom receive anything in the P. M.

Your Oct. 27 letter was in this delivery --- quite a nice chatty letter. Neal has a collie dog in mind but we won't get one probably, 'til we move now so you can pick the dog along with the children.

Love, Betty

[Note: The saga of Jean & The Oven was told & retold many times. What Mom left out of this letter to JRS is that she grew impatient with Jean's reluctance to put the match where it could ignite the gas jets, and pushed her arm in. She told this story on herself, and always expressed a certain degree of shame.] [I remember walking home alone, but have no memories of walking to school with Jean --- of course, Mom was reporting current events, while my memory has to go back 65 years, so it is subject to error.] [On the issue of breed of dog, I was surprised to read JRS' preference of wire-haired terrier --- I never heard him say that. In any event, the dog, (Mickey), was a "collie-shepherd", meaning not listed with the AKC.]

[Letter No. 361]

Seoul, Korea
November 13

Dear Betty,

My name went in on a list submitted to the separation center on Sunday so I should be on the way home soon. The orders will probably be cut within the next few days and it's possible I will be on a ship some time next week.

Your Oct. 30 letter arrived Nov. 9. Airmail is much faster than regular mail. I hope I'll be on the way home before you get this though, so the speed of mail won't make any difference any more.

I don't know yet what Port we will arrive at of course. Many ships from here go to Seattle. Might get to see Myrtle and Thelma.

It still doesn't register in my mind that I'm going home. Naturally I'm impatient to get started before there is another change in policy or something else happens to delay me again. I'll with again as soon as I know anything definite.

Love, Jim

[Letter No. 362]

Seoul, Korea
November 26

Dear Betty,

I've been postponing writing to you hoping there might be some news, but no luck so far. Hoped to be on my way home by now but I always get set back when things look good.

On November 10 I was included in a list of 24 officers sent to a personnel center for publication of orders to go to the States for discharge. A couple of days later someone in a higher headquarters got wind of the deal and wanted to know by what authority "critical category" officers were being released without consulting that headquarters. So on Nov. 15 a radiogram was sent to Hqs. of U. S. Army Forces in the Pacific, stating the 24 officers were surplus to Military Government in Korea and recommending that they be returned to the States for discharge. On Nov. 18 orders were cut at the Personnel Center directing me to report to that center on Nov. 21 for shipment home. The orders arrived here on Nov. 20 and were promptly rescinded pending a reply to the radiogram of Nov.15. So far no answer has been received. If action is favorable new orders will be issued promptly and we will be on the way soon. If not, we will just have to sweat it out for another three months. In either case there isn't any chance of getting home by Christmas. Meanwhile, officers recently arrived from the States say that Military Government Affairs in the States are being discharged with only 75 points --- same as other officers. We are sure getting a lousy deal over here and nothing we can do about it. We are holding our breaths waiting for the answer to the radiogram. Should have been here days ago, but since this is the Army it may take many day more.

A Captain Borella left here for his home I Vermont the other day, (not an M. G. officer). He was on the same orders as I was and I would have been with him if that part hadn't been rescinded. He plans to stop and visit relatives in K. C. and said he would call and see you if possible, or at least call up. He can explain the tie up better than I can write it. If the answer to the radio is favorable I'll probably be on the way before he gets there, if not I don't know when I'll get away.

Love, Jim

[Note: Journal entry: "Wed. 20 Nov. above order rescinded." Anyone who has read through the previous 360 letters, and has seen in how many different instances the Army, or someone in it, has shafted JRS, will find no reason why he would ever consider staying in the Service. However, according to Mom, after they promoted him to Lieutenant Colonel, they actually asked him to do just that, promising another promotion shortly later. I can guess how hard he struggled not to laugh in their faces.]

[Letter No. 363]

S. S. Bluefield Victory

Thurs. Night. Dec. 27

Dear Betty,

We are anchored in San Francisco Bay where we arrived at 10:00 tonight. Left Fusan Dec. 15 and had a fast run although stormy most of the way.

I am going to try to call you as soon as I get ashore but from what I hear about long distance difficulties it may be a long time before I can get a connection so maybe an airmail letter will arrive as soon as a telephone call.

There is only a small detachment of army and Navy personnel aboard and I don't know how we will be processed before starting home but hope I can leave soon. My separation center will be Ft. Leavenworth.

I hope you are all well and had a nice Christmas. Wish I could have been home.

This morning when we were about ten hours out we received orders to proceed to New York via the Panama Canal and it looked most of the day as though we were in for another two weeks at least delay in getting home. We sent a couple of urgent radio messages telling the authorities about four enlisted men aboard who are on emergency furlough and finally got the order cancelled just as the Captain was about to change his course for Panama late in the afternoon. Close call.

I'll be home as soon as I possibly can.

Love, Jim

[Note: Thank God for enlisted men!]

[Letter No. 364]

January 2 *[1946]*

Dear Betty,

I'm still waiting for that train. Have been at Fort McDowell on Angel Island in the Bay since the 28th. Yesterday they loaded a lot of us on a harbor boat and sent us to Oakland. We thought we were going to be loaded on troop trains but found it was just another camp --- Camp Knight this time. This is supposed to be the last stop before the separation center. I may move out today, or maybe not for several days. Next stop will be fort Leavenworth, and then home.

Love, Jim

[Note: Although this is the last letter available, JRS was not yet home. To fill in the blanks, I will insert the last few entries he made in his little journal.]

Passed Golden Gate Bridge 9:15 P.M. Anchored 10:00 P.M., 13 days, 4 hrs. from Fusan.

Fri. Dec. 28. Arr. Ft. McDowell, Angel Island, 10:30 A.M.

Mon - Tue, Dec 31-Jan 1 - Sacto

[I took this to be Sacramento, but I am not sure now why he would have gone up there, given the unhappy times he experienced there.]

Tue. Jan. 1, 46, Lv Ft. McDowell, arr. Camp Knight (Oakland).

Wed. Jan. 2. Entrained at Oakland. Lv 6:00 P.M. via Western Pacific.

Sun. Jan 6. Arr. home in K.C. 1:30 A.M., report Ft. Leavenworth 5:30 P.M.

Tues. Jan. 8, 1946. Promoted to Lt. Col. C.E. and released from active duty with 57 days terminal leave - (expiration date March 8.) Lv. Fort Leavenworth 4:30 P.M. Arr. home 6:00 P.M.

Fri. March 8, 1946, terminal leave expired, active duty terminated.

Fri. March 1, 1946, reported for work to PRA Div. Office, Kansas City.

Mon. March 25, reported to Lincoln Dist. Office.

Tues. July 30, 1946, moved to Lincoln. Hq. transferred back to K.C. effective June 1, 1949.

[This last sentence must have been added years later; and must have been made with considerable bitterness.]

Sat. July 23, 1949 - closed sale of Lincoln home.