



With the Colors *June 15, 1943*

Fred Hoecherl, who is with the United States Army in North Africa, writes his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Hoecherl of Willow Hill: "I will drop you a few lines to let you know that I am getting along fine from the operation. The doctor who did the work is rated a good surgeon. He practiced in Cleveland, Ohio, before going to the Army. I am at the medics' tent and have a cot to sleep on—the first since in this country. The doctor and the chaplain come over to visit quite often.

"I will tell you something of our activities over here in Africa. We landed at Safi, Morocco, on November 8, at 11:00 a. m. The doughboys went in at 4:00 o'clock and took the docks and warehouses. We didn't have to fire a round from our pack 75 millimeter howitzers, because the doughboys took care of all opposition without much difficulty. We landed on the beach in a ramp boat and had quite some difficulty getting the howitzer out of the water onto the sandy beach. We got an Arab to pull it up to the warehouse with a team of donkeys. There were snipers firing from the cliff opposite the beach where we landed. The battle didn't last much over a day there but at other points it took about three days.

"We stayed at Safi for three weeks and then we marched over 215 miles in nineteen days to Port Lyautey. We walked sixteen days and rested three. We put on a parade through Casablanca one Sunday afternoon. It is a very fine city with many French people living there. We had garrison drill while at Port Lyautey and it was here that we received our 105 millimeter howitzer from the states. We turned the 75 millimeter pack howitzers back to the ordnance.

"After leaving Port Lyautey, we moved by truck across Algeria to Tunisia and arrived at Thala February 22, our first day in action. The battle lasted only one and one-half days there and the Germans took off, retreating seventy-five miles. We didn't follow up because other troops did and we guarded Kasserine pass for a few days. On March 4, we moved from Kasserine pass to a point near Sebeitla to guard against an enemy attack. On March 14, we moved back to a defensive position. A few days later we moved to a defensive position between Gafsi and Sebeitla.

"On March 25 we went into action a few miles southeast of Gafsi against the enemy. Then we were in action against the enemy at El Guettar for two weeks. The Germans used a lot of planes there and did a lot of bombing and strafing with machine guns.

"Our howitzer got two bullet holes but these didn't hurt it any. The enemy would come over every night in planes and drop flares looking for a good target; they would usually leave some bombs too. I saw a group of our planes shoot a Messerschmidt down and I saw one shot down by land troops. In fact I saw several planes shot down and they usually burn.

"On April 7 the enemy retreated toward Gabes. On the eighth we moved to a small mountain near Tebessa for a three day rest. On the eleventh we moved to the northern front and bivouaced one day at El Cann.

"The next day we moved in position against the enemy at Sedjenane. We had to move into position at night and camouflage so the enemy couldn't spot our position and adjust on us. On April 19 the enemy spotted our position and fired on us with 150 or 210 millimeter guns. Those shells would go zing, explode and there would be a big hole in the ground. That was the worst day that I had in battle. Although I didn't get a scratch, shells were landing too close for comfort. One shell landed within eight steps of my foxhole but I was in the gun pit at that time. Another shell landed within five steps of our gun pit but we were in our fox holes. A shell had to hit closer than that to be fatal.

"On April 23 we moved up a few more miles. Then in a few days we moved up again into another position. On May 2 the enemy took off and we moved back to a bivouac west of Bizerte for a few days. Then on the night of the eighth we moved in near Bizerte and the next day the enemy surrendered at that point. The city of Bizerte is nearly ruined from shelling and bombing. All of the towns around that district are in ruins.

"The Germans have the Messerschmidts, Focke-Wulfs, Heinkels and Stuka dive bombers. The Messer-

schmidts bothered us the most. They have a 88 millimeter gun on their tanks that is wicked, it has such a muzzle velocity, but our boys found out that our tank with a turret that revolves completely around is the best. My job through all the battles was gunner on the 105 millimeter howitzer. We did a lot of firing at night.

"I suppose you wonder if I was in action so now you have the dope as everything happened. I came through all of it fine, although many of the boys were less fortunate."

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Staff Sergeant Forest W. Alexander writes from Stinson field near San Antonio, Texas: "It's raining this morning. I haven't much else to do so thought I'd drop you a few lines. Enclosed you will find some clippings from our weekly paper here. We're celebrating our first year at Stinson. I was one of the first to come here.

"We were stationed at Duncan field and used to come here to build barracks and such, so we could eventually be transferred here, so on June 6 of last year we were. You may use the clippings as you like, but I thought it might be of interest to some one at home.

"Also would you please change my address on the Press as follows: Staff Sergeant Forest W. Alexander, Hg. and Hq. squad, 28th A. D. group, Stinson field, Texas.

The paper reads: "Commending all Stinson field personnel for their 'unstinting' efforts during the past year, Colonel Clarence F. Horton, our commanding officer, today called upon each one of us to 'redouble our efforts in the determination that by the time Stinson field is two years old the force of our arms will have triumphed over the forces of darkness.

"In a special memorandum dated June 6, 1943, Colonel Horton made public a letter from Major General W. H. Frank, commanding general of the Air Service Command, in which Stinson field is cited as an outstanding Air Depot Training Station. Such a report could not have been gained without the unstinting aid of every officer and man,' Colonel Horton declared. 'You have done well. However, he continued, there is no time for rest or self congratulation. We have done a good job; we can and will do even better.' "

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Private Ky Andrews writes from Camp Hood, Texas: "I am all right and getting along fine. I am in Camp Hood, Texas. It's a nice place and lots of pretty country. I was stationed at Camp Bowie, Texas, then we were transferred to here. We marched from Camp Bowie to Camp Hood, a distance of about 150 miles. I am writing this letter while on "C. Q.," Charge of Quarters, and it is fifteen minutes to 6:00 in the morning. I don't get off of C. Q. until 5:00 p. m. this afternoon.

"I have been given my first stripes, which is a private first class. Next month I will be a corporal, I hope. We get a promotion here in this camp every month. It's been raining down here off and on all week, and it is getting bad. The mud around here is like glue.

"The water has a bad taste and I can hardly drink it. I've been having a good time down here in Texas. I'm a gun commander, which is an acting sergeant, but I have to wait for my promotions, which won't be so long, I hope.

"How's everything around home these days? I hope they are all all right around Newton. Tell all my friends to drop me a card as I want to hear from home."

His address is Private First Class Ky "Wildcat" Andrews, Company A, 653rd T. D. battalion, Camp Hood, Texas.

Private First Class Forrest Kinsel writes from Lowry field, Colorado: "I thought I would tell you of a few things I have seen since I have been at my third camp. I just got back from Denver. It sure is a swell place. I can also see Pike's peak and the Rocky mountains from my barracks. I have seen and learned most in my previous two months, than I did at Newton in years.

"I like the Army o. k. and would say that it is a swell life for any young man. I'm in a Cook's and Baker's school. It is easy and most of all I sure get plenty to eat. Now I am on the night shift, and work one night (eleven hours) then I'm off for two days and one night.

"This is a swell camp. It has flowers around the barracks, and concrete walks, bowling alleys, a cafe, and many other things. Micky Rooney was at the Service Club last Monday night in person. He sure is a swell actor. The program was broadcast over some of the Denver stations; maybe some of you heard it.

"There are four of us boys here from Newton. Private Calvin French, Corporal Earl Huff and I are in the same barracks. Private Lloyd McCormick is only a block and a half from us."

His address is Private Forrest Kinsel, 67th Mess squadron, Lowry field, Denver, Colorado.

Corporal Warren E. Hunt writes from Camp Luna, Las Vegas, New Mexico: "Last week I graduated from the Curtis-Wright school in Buffalo, New York, and was one of a small group sent out here to Camp Luna. This is the same place where I received my basic training last winter.

"The camp has improved a lot in way of new roads and buildings, including a theatre and chapel. It still has its thin air and typical dust storms every afternoon, and we don't have sheets to sleep between, either.

"Since I arrived here I have been through classification and have been classified as a C-46 specialist in the Air Transport Command. Here I am to receive training in weapons and will fire on the rifle range for medals. I will also receive instructions in gas mask drill and will be issued all equipment that I have not received before now.

"After this training which will last three weeks or longer, I will wait to be assigned to my squadron and sent out to do my part on the line."

His address is: Corporal Warren E. Hunt, Recruit Detachment squadron, Barracks T-537, Camp Luna, New Mexico.

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Private James R. Spencer, son of Mr. and Mrs. Maynard Spencer of Rochester, New York, who is attending an Adjutant General's department school at Fort Washington, Maryland, wrote his grand-parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Spencer of Newton that he likes army life fine. He had five weeks of basic training at Camp Lee, Virginia, that he also enjoyed very much and gained ten pounds. He is now taking training in a machine records unit and will continue his school work until July 7. He sends best regards to Newton friends.

His address is Private James R. Spencer, C. T. U. 8, Barracks 123A, Adjutant General's school, Fort Washington, Maryland.

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Staff Sergeant James Lee Diel spent a few days over the week end with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. James R. Diel of Newton. He is jumpmaster of a troop of the 506th Parachute Infantry from the 101st Airborne division and had participated in maneuvers in Tennessee last week, where he was "captured" after a parachute troop assault on an objective. After being evacuated by air to Evansville he came on home. He was recently injured when struck on the head by a bundle of equipment dropped from his plane after he had made a jump, but has completely recovered.

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Forest W. Alexander, son of Mr. and Mrs. James I. Alexander of Route Five, Newton, has been promoted to the grade of technical sergeant and is stationed at Stinson field Air Depot Training station near San Antonio, Texas. He is with the 28th Headquarters squadron.

An ex-student at Willow Hill Township high school, young Alexander enlisted in the Army last February and served at Scott field, Belleville, Camp Robinson, Arkansas, and Duncan field, Texas, before being transferred to his present post.

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Private First Class and Mrs. William Sauerland of Arlington Heights are the proud parents of a baby son, born June 8 at Northwestern hospital, Des Plaines. He weighed seven pounds and one ounce, and will be christened the name of Keith Allen. The father is stationed at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, where he plays a baritone in the band. Mrs. Sauerland will be remembered as Marcella Schafer, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Pius Schafer of Southwest of Newton. Mother and babe are doing fine.

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Corporal Melvin Weaver, United States signal corps, radio division, left for Camp Beale, California, Sunday night, after a short visit with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Weaver of Newton. Melvin has just graduated from air advanced Radio Training school at Lexington, Kentucky, and is attached to the Thirteenth Armored division in the radio communications repair and maintenance division.

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H. Maynard Honey was enlisted in the "Seabees," construction battalion of the United States Navy, at Springfield, Thursday. He is a Chief petty officer and will go into construction work. Mr. Honey has had eight years of mining engineering experience in the tropics and will be a valuable asset to our Navy, Ray E. Everly, local Navy recruiter, says.

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Private Oscar Rubsam is here on a furlough from Camp Kearns, Utah, near Salt Lake City, visiting his parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Rubsam. He is convalescing from an illness of pneumonia, and has just been released from the hospital. He said it snowed there a week ago. He likes the Army fine and has gained ten pounds since he left.

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Howard B. Riley of Newton, a student in the Air Corps at the University of Tennessee, is playing the trombone with the Air Corps orchestra, which broadcasts over Station WBIR, Tuesday evenings at 8:00 o'clock.

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Don Dufrain, son of Mr. and Mrs. Amos Dufrain of Newton, has been promoted to sergeant. He entered the Army five months ago and has been in an artillery battalion at Camp Hulen, Texas.

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Sergeant and Mrs. Thomas H. Fithian are spending a seven day leave with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Cecil D. Fithian of Newton. Tom is an aviation cadet at Biloxi, Mississippi.

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Aviation Cadet Homer Winter is spending a few days' furlough with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. R. W. Winter of Rose Hill vicinity. He is studying meteorology at New Yory university, New York City.

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Private Robert Dhom is spending a short furlough with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Dhom of Newton. He is in an Engineer battalion at the Army Air Base at Dyersburg, Tennessee.

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Private Thomas Spencer was home a few days last week from Camp Blanding, Florida, visiting his wife and baby and his mother, Mrs. Elmer Townsend of Newton.

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Staff Sergeant and Mrs. Paul Robards are the parents of a seven pound, twelve ounce daughter, Paula Kaye, born last Sunday. Paul is stationed in Hawaii.

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June 13, 1943