CAMP CROFT
SOUTH CAROLINA

Thurs., 6/10/43
6 P.M.

Dear Dot,

Recd the letter you wrote Tues. morning, and was very pleased to get it. I missed you when you left; and I must confess it was not easy to say good-bye. I was certainly glad to hear you enjoyed your visit. I know for my part that I fully enjoyed yours, but felt that perhaps things just didn't go smoothly enough, or were poorly planned, and that perhaps the whole affair didn't quite come up to your expectations. I guess I just plain forgot that whenever two of us Shielders are together that's all that matters, since we always have a good time & have reaped the most pleasure from doing things on the spur of the moment. Here's looking forward to when we're all together again soon.

That Monday training was just as exciting as we told you it was going to be. The course itself is what is known as a "battle conditioner". It is designed to accustom the infantryman to the sound of exploding shells, and the chatter of machine guns as the bullets whiz over your head. It is also intended to give us a quick but sound foundation in village fighting and the handling of explosives for use against tanks, barbed wire, and material. In ~~fact~~ itself the course is divided into four sections: Demolition, village-fighting, infiltration, and the use of grenades in the jungle. The village fighting and grenade sections may be passed over, since they were the least interesting. But the infiltration and demolition sections are

another thing.

We first underwent the demolition course, whose basic feature was the exploding of dynamite charges close by at unexpected moments. The idea of this, as I said before, was to get us used to the sudden, crashing explosions of dynamite and T.N.T., since in combat high explosive shells would be detonating all around us. Along with this practical method of training went a lecture and demonstration class in the handling & detonating of dynamite, the making of Molotov cocktails from a few handy raw materials, and the destruction of barbed wire entanglements with the use of T.N.T. All, I assure you, very interesting.

Right after lunch, in the hottest & dryest part of the day, we went thru the infiltration course. This consisted of a short length of ground covered with small mounds, shell holes and barbed wire, the highest strand of which was only six inches off the ground. Over this piece of terrain we had to inch our way on our stomachs or backs, with two machine guns keeping up an incessant fire of bullets only 30 inches off the ground. The mounds we had to crawl over were 15 inches high, so there was not much room to spare. And every so often, less than 6 feet away, a charge of dynamite would explode with an ear shattering sound, throwing up geysers of dirt & dust which promptly settled down over us. The heat was terrific, and when we turned over on our backs to go under the barbed wire, the sun beat down unmercifully, all but blinding us. The dust and dirt choked our throats and caked our mouths, so we could not even spit or swallow. And since we were sweating profusely, the dust and sweat made a slimy mixture that covered all our exposed parts with a dry, irritating layer. At the end of the course, just in front of the machine guns, was a deep trench. After passing the barbed wire we crawled into this, and baked in the hot sun while

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we waited for the other fellows to flop into the trench. When everybody was in, at a given signal (detonation of a dynamite charge), we charged a row of dummies behind the machine guns with fixed bayonets! That was all.

The fellows just dropped to the ground from exhaustion. The course is only 56 yds long, about from our house to Connor's. But I tell you, Dot, that when I was finished, I was utterly exhausted, physically more "shot" than at any previous time in my life. The same held for my buddies, and all this may sound gruesome and illogical and nonsensical to you, Dot, until I tell you that just then we possessed a mental and physical emotion or feeling we had not before felt in the Army. WE WERE FIGHTING MAD!! And I'm not kidding!! If that row of bayonet dummies had been Japs or Germans instead of what they were, we would have torn them to pieces! Perhaps you can't realize that I, and other American boys, could get so fighting mad, but I assure you, had that dummy I charged been a Jap, I would have rushed pell-mell at him, run him thru, and, with the greatest of pleasure, whipped my bayonet off my rifle and sat down on the Jap's still warm and living body and ~~bit~~ literally hacked ~~at~~ him to pieces!!

When our officer-instructors told us that morning that we would be exhausted and mad with anger at the end of the day, we took what they told us with a grain of salt. But their every prophecy came true. And we came to realize that this stuff about ~~it~~ it ~~was~~ being

only the enemy govt, not the people, with whom we ~~were~~ are at war, is just so much bunk. To fight and live, the infantryman must hate the enemy! Harry Bertrand says "They call it the infiltration course, but I call it blazing hell!"

Well, to get off that and onto another subject, my letter writing has been sadly lacking the last week. While you were here, I would not ~~think~~ think of writing. Monday night we were all too shot to write. Tuesday was a hard day, too. Wednesday I pulled K.P., getting up, of course at 4:30; and at 5:30 P.M. I was relieved from K.P. to go on guard duty. Formal guard mount & instructions consumed 2½ hours, and I drew the 1:30 AM to 2:30 AM. shift. So you see, tonite's the ~~first~~ first time in a week that I've had a chance to write. And I've got about 6 letters to get off, which, in all probability, I won't get off.

Mom sent me a roll of film. I'll send it on to you. And don't forget to send Mom & me some prints of the pix I've taken with my camera.

That bottle of rum was taken care of. After the fellows in the latrine had their "shots," one of the boys put it in his foot locker. So we had rum cokes Monday night to finish the bottle off.

Well, Dot, that's all the news so I'll sign off now. I didn't tell Mom too much about that machine gun stuff, but if you ~~think~~ think it won't worry her, send this letter on to her. That's all.

Love and prayers,

Frank.

P.S. I lost my Macaulano medal and 1 dog tag on the infiltration course.