

Letters from Boot Camp

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United States Naval Training Station, Camp Waldon
Farragut, Idaho
(Pay Rate: \$50.00 a month)*

*Wed, Dec 16, 1942
Camp Waldon
8:00 pm*

Dear Dad & Mother,

Again I'm asking you to send something to me. I want a package of type paper, several pencils and my study book for the license test. I think this license test book is in my shelf up in the bathroom closet. Will appreciate this greatly.

That failing of the radios is due to a lose connection, so if you want to do it, I would suggest that you trace it and find out if the ends of it are firmly tied down. If not tied securely, it would be a good idea to solder it. All the materials are down in the cabinet. The control on the right top, if lose, will shift and short thereby blowing a fuse. Can be fixed by removing knob, re-centering the back portion and then tightening up the I-nut. Hoping you won't find any difficulties in attaining new tubes for it. An idea is to change the type 80 tube in the lower chassis to a type 83. Set won't heat quite so much.

Later on, may send for the English handbook. Will see then. Found out today about the test I took and found I stood quite high. It was, indeed, fortunate I went in as an apprentice seaman for if I hadn't, I would go directly to sea. If all goes well I may be able to go to school right after grad--if not, my schooling will be delayed until the next quota. The radio field has one of the largest quotas, so I believe I'll go. Put down all my experience and my test is high, so I think I'll get my choice.

*Received Mother's letter of the 11th and am glad she wrote. I enjoy these letters a lot and this one was most welcome. The shots aren't effecting me very much, but I am kept very busy any more and there is very little time to do any writing, so I shall be sending only a few and those will be somewhat short. Hope you don't mind. Am just a little curious as to what will be in my Christmas package. Ah, yes, I received Dad's letter today and read it very thoroughly. This is the answer to both. Well, ink and time are running out. More later.
Love, Gene*

*Sunday, Dec. 20, 1942
Camp Waldon
2:30 pm
Dear Mother & Dad,*

Thanking you a million for the fine Christmas gift you sent me. Mother, I thank you especially for that most delicious of cakes. It came through in fine condition and when I sunk my teeth into it--ah! There was only one trouble, though, the cake was so good that by the end of an hour it was all gone! The rest of the eats went the same way! I got my share, but the rest of the guys were around also.

The pictures were fine and now have something to look at now and then. The indoor ones were particularly good.

Thanking the kids for the magazines we all have enjoyed them. The knife was quite the deal. I now can carry one in my blues. The one I had they issued to me are really too big to carry.

The mixed nuts were delicious, but I managed to save one package for later use. The cookies were

exceptionally good. So I am hoping that I'll receive some more at a later date. All in all, the box made a very fine, if premature, Christmas for me. The camp is planning a rather extensive program in the eve of and Christmas Day.

Will be due for my next liberty about then. Intend to have a picture of self taken then. It'll be a little late, but it is to be my present to you.

Receiving plenty of drill now and lots of exercise. Started exercises with arms on Wed. Found that after a time or two through the drill that my shoulders became very tired. After I become used to it, I will be bothered no longer. I hope.

Chances are we might be leaving here sooner than expected. One of the earlier companies has already gone and they only had 2 weeks more drill than the one I'm in. If such is the case, I'll be leaving in about a month. The bulk of the company will, in all possibilities, go to school.

Managed to slightly hurt my left ankle and it does bother me at times. Strangely enough, it is only when I'm wearing the leggings.

Closing now and wishing you the Merriest of Christmas and the Very Happiest of New Years,

*Your Loving Son,
Gene*

Tues. Dec 22, 1942

Camp Waldon

7:40 pm

Dear Mother,

Today, I received the very nice card and letter you sent. Always glad to hear from home and your letters make very interesting reading.

Snow there, eh? Well, that's fine. I sure wish I were there to enjoy it. There is none here now. All there is here is a sea of mud. We slog around in a rain on a field of mud. What weather!

Speaking of correspondence, I have so much to write that I'm about 2 or 3 behind most of the time. Most of my friends are writing now and also are a few to whom I wrote that are perfect strangers.

So, Cousin Gene wants to join the Navy, huh? Well, I shall proceed to outline the beauties of boot camp for him--and are they, though! Having a reasonably rough time anymore. Had inspection today and got some extra instructions, which means I'll be rolling my clothes for the rest of the week! But to make it worse, my liberty depends upon whether I pass another test or not. Tonight, spent 2 hours on guard duty for having some books under my pillow.

Today, I went over the obstacle course after having spent 2 hours previous doing some stiff physical exercise. Sure was a tired fella. When finished, all I wanted to do was to lay down and rest.

Seems to be fairly certain that I will go to school from here. It is just as well that I didn't get the rating I tried out for. Would have stood no chance of going to school.

Sidewalks, what are they? No such thing around here. We walk in the road and it's all mud at that. This Idaho weather--foeey!

Have a tree set-up and decorated here; it looks real nice. The regiment has to all appearances planned a fairly good time for us on Christmas. Have received cards from all the others and also have sent out quite a few. Also some gifts from some of my friends. Received a letter from Carol telling of what she is doing. Returned and will probably hear from her in a short while. Her writing is most hard to read. Got sort of used to it, though. If I can find a paper, I shall enclose it. There is not much else to say, so will write later.

*Your Loving Son,
Gene*

Thurs. Dec. 24, 1942,

Camp Waldon

5:45 pm

Dear Dad,

The "nite" before Christmas and here I stand, 1500 miles from home. Oh, well. It is going to be a white one tomorrow as it has been snowing all day. The camp is going to do it's bit for us. Presented a surprise smoker last night that was really good. Lots of acts from here and several acts imported from Spokane. All told, it was very good.

Tomorrow morn we don't have to be out of our bunks until 9:00 a.m. unless we want morning chow. About all we do is to clean up here a bit, then enjoy a fine dinner. And, from all indications, it will be better then the one served Thanksgiving Day. The C.P.O. will be over at 2 p.m. and we will throw a Christmas party. Should be very entertaining.

Took a test on seamanship this afternoon, then checked back over it. Think I came out very good.

As a result of an inspection held on Mon, I now have to stand inspection of the roll of my clothes every nite.

Still very stiff from going over the Commando course the other day. Makes me feel like doing very little. Otherwise, I'm feeling fine and can't complain about anything at all.

10:00 p.m. Just got back from a show. Saw an old picture called "Devil Dogs of the Air," a cartoon and 2 shorts. So far, I've got till midnight to finish this letter, quite a change from normal isn't it?

The volume of letters coming in has dropped due to my writing a little less than usual. Time to do much like that is rather scarce.

Saturday we go up for our anti-tetanus and yellow fever shots. Spend entire day drilling. Won't that be nice!

Not much else to write now, so shall continue tomorrow night.

Your Loving Son,

Gene

Fri. Dec. 25, 1942

Camp Waldon

1:50 pm

Dear Mom & Dad,

Sending your way the menu for our X-mas dinner. Was most delicious, indeed; also very filling. Day is proving most enjoyable as the air is clear, sunny and a slight bit of snap in the air. Rained a slight bit last evening and then froze, so the roads are rather slick. A number of the fellows have taken dives. Some of them looked very funny as they tried to keep their balance!

We receive our liberty on or about Wed. of next week. On Mon, we go to the rifle range to shoot. Hoping I can run up a fairly good score.

Have been trying to find someone to shoot pool with this afternoon. Guess I'll be doing it alone.

Well, not much else to say, so I'll seal up this card and look for a stamp. Will write again soon,

Your Loving Son,

Gene

Supplemental note: the above mentioned menu included the following: Cream of Chicken Soup, Celery Hearts, Sweet Pickles, Ripe Olives, Virginia Baked Ham, Roasted Young Tom Turkey, Sausage Stuffing, Cranberry Jelly, Candied Sweet Potatoes, Creamed Whipped Idaho Potatoes, French Green Peas, Asparagus with Drawn Butter, Pineapple and Cottage Cheese Salad, Mince Meat Cobbler, Ice Cream, Apples, Oranges, Assorted Candies, Mixed Nuts, Bread, Butter, Coffee.

Tues. Dec. 29, 1942

Camp Waldon

9:50

Dear Mom & Dad,

Writing this as I sit here waiting for our battalion commander to come and check our clothes. Have all rolled and laid out on my bunk and in a few min. it starts. Hope all turns out well.

There is a chance we may be quarantined for measles. A fellow was taken to the hospital last night and another is a very sick guy at present. It may be the measles. To have such here would really put this company behind the eight-ball!

This week want to be very quiet for me as there are tests, drills, boat trip, etc.

We went to the rifle range yesterday for most of the day. Managed to place most of my 30 shots within a 2 inch circle. Was given a score of 137. The company average was 145, which is very good. The minimum was 130 per person. Found it hardest to shoot from a sitting position. The prone afforded a more steady aim, so I think my best shots came there.

Oh-Oh! Here comes the bad news!

Sunday, Jan 3, 1943

Dear Dad & Mother,

Once again I take up my pen and write more on this letter. A lot has happened up to date.

Expect to be paid in full on Jan 6 and on the 8th we are to graduate. We are receiving our last amounts of equipment, etc.

Last 2 days the company got into plenty of hot water. Started from as we left regiment headquarters. We weren't in step, rubber-necking, wiping our noses in ranks, talking and one fellow had his hands in his hip pockets. Halt was called by Commander May (whom we passed) in which several of the fellows looked back at him--result--we were ordered to double-time around the grinder for 1/2 hour. Given his extra instruction and ordered to drill all rest of day & Sat, too, we stood watch 12 to 4 Sat morning for our extra instruction, drilled all day, then, to top it off, I stood 2 hours extra instruction this morning! (12 to 2 am) for not having shoes shined. And so it goes. Other company's are running into trouble, too, so guess it must be contagious!

Liberty was given to Co. from 9 am to 12 tonight for having the highest score yet made on the rifle range.

Thanking you a lot for the box of candy sent. It has proved very nice, indeed. Broke at present, so can't buy any at all.

As usual the papers arrived 2 weeks behind, but still got quite a bit of reading done. Around here it snows, melts, freezes and snows again. We are most always wading in something! My shoes are wearing thin and I'll soon have holes in my rubbers.

Thinking that when I start getting paid regularly, I'll send all I don't need home. As time goes on, I think I'll have Dad obtain for me text books. Rest of money can go into bank, etc. Will be paid twice a month and I think that after awhile I will have some of my pay allotted home, so won't see any of it. Best way it seems.

Sending to you last 2 previous issues of Station paper.

Have heard that Don Johnson enlisted when the short re-opening came. Whether he has gone or what, I don't know as there has been no word. Most of the others, if not gone by now, are to soon go. Will be a strange town to return to with all my friends gone. Seems that the fellows going to sea are receiving leaves. Haven't been told where I'm going as yet. If all goes well, I won't be over in out-going unit very long, but will be sent on. Sure will be glad to leave here and the sooner, the better.

Very well equipped with reading material, but am handicapped by a lack of time. When one does laundry, writing and then cleans up there isn't much left. Up till now, have been able to do only a little with the math. Hope to increase some.

Well, not much else to write. More later on.

Your Loving Son,

Gene

P.S. Tell Gracie I appreciate her letter very much, indeed. Most interesting reading.

Monday Jan 4, 1943

Camp Waldon

8:05 pm

Dear Dad,

Once again, I'm going to ask you to do something for me. I want you to use the money I left at home and obtain a slide-rule. Obtain one having the A,B,C,D,E, F & K scales at least. If possible, find one having the additional L, S & T scales. I don't know what the exact cost will be, but believe it will run from about \$5 to \$10 dollars. One made by Kueffel & Esser I believe is available. Many of those on market are of Japanese make, which I don't want as they don't work so well. There should be a text on use come with them, but it not, please purchase one and send it along. I now find that one will be very useful to me in my math studies.

The second favor is to find a book called "Alternating Current Circuits." I don't know who the author is, so it will be very difficult. I believe there are 2 books listed under that name by different authors. It seems to be a college text, so university might have such a book. It is published by the McGraw Hill book company. I originally found one listed last year, but have since forgotten the information. Place I looked at was the Century Book Store on 9th and Hennepin. At present, only with information about book as I may later have you purchase and send to me.

Well, all is fine here and for a while it looks as if I will have enough time to do more studying now. The exact date of grad. still seems to be uncertain and apparently has gone to the fifteenth of the month, so I really don't know. The company has more become a guard company, which means we get 6 to 8 hours a day of guard duty as yet, my name hasn't been listed, but it soon will be.

Day passed very uneventfully here. I was outside most of the day. Got really cold as the temp seems to be low and a fairly strong wind was blowing. Received some snow a few days ago, which makes all look fine.

By the way, have also located some more math books, which I believe I'll obtain later on. More study for me--provided there is the time.

Well, there is not much else just now that I can think of, so I'll continue soon.

Your Loving Son,

Gene

Fri, Jan 8, 1943

Camp Waldon

10:45 am

Dear Dad and Mom,

I received the very fine pictures you took on Christmas Day. I surely wished I had been there on that day. Christmas here was good, but not like home variety. I got quite a bang out of Gracie's expression when she was opening her stocking! Lloyd has a queer one on his face! Pictures of tree and gifts were, indeed, very good.

To you Dad, I offer congratulations that you have completed 25 years with the company. I'm very glad, indeed, to hear such news.

Except for the first 3 shots, none have bothered me in the least.

The obstacle course consists of walls, a rope maze, a tunnel and an inclined log. There is plenty of running done. At present, course is very icy and not safe, so am very glad we don't go over it. I really can't see any object in the course, as it isn't complete nor does it offer any sort of training. That is only my opinion.

For the past few days have had more than enough time to myself. Have been able to get everything done and still have time to spare.

The climate and conditions of the camp don't make for the very best of health. Colds are frequent and hard to shake. Have been bothered by my sinuses every time I go swimming. Went to bed early last night with a slight fever. Have had a headache almost all day. Has cleared up at present.

I think I'll go over to the canteen and possibly shoot a few games of pool. Haven't been over there recently due to a lack of dough and also of mood.

Have heard a lot about the process we are likely to go through during grad. Doesn't sound so good.

Whew! What a problem it is to find ones skivies in the laundry house! There are so many down there! One of my mattress covers seems to have vanished. Will probably find it about the middle of next week! Quite a problem to clean ones clothes with bar soap, brush and cold water. Most of us get a fair job done, though.

The Captain's inspecting the regiment, so I guess I won't be around the barrack in the morning. Detailed over to the drill hall, so all is taken care of.

What a relief it is to have guard detail. I have plenty of time to do things during the eve. Had entire day to myself, but didn't do much.

Stepped on a scale tonight and it said I weight 178 lbs. Minus only my coat. Guess I've lost instead of gained it. Came in 183 lbs--about a 5 lb. loss.

Well, that's about all I can write now. More soon.

Your Loving Son--Gene

Letter from "A" School

Of this, Dad wrote in his service book, "*Made Class A school, so I was finally sent.*"

Fri, Jan 29, 1943

Naval Training School (Radio)

Northwestern University

Evanston, Illinois

Batt 9, Sect 1

Dear Mom & Dad,

Here I am, going to school on the outskirts of Chicago. Started from Farragut Tues. morn and arrived here at noon, Thurs. Will start on Mon our 4 months of training. Passed thru the Twin Cities about 1:30 Thurs. morn. Found it too late to try phoning. Arrived on a sunny, warm day, but, at present, it is snowing. Not very cold, though, which is fine. My new address is complete except for my name and rank. Speaking of which, I hope to be a 3rd Class Petty Officer when I leave.

We rise at 5 am, spend an hour on calisthenics, then go to chow at 7:30. Class begins at 8:15 and continues till 4:30 with a hour break for chow. Have the barracks in 2 buildings: (1) Swift Hall of Engineering (2) Lunt Administration Bldg. They are located a block or so from the new technology bldg. Getting a final requisition for clothes.

Saturday, Jan 30, 1943

3:50 pm

Just returned from the Tech. Bldg, where we took a test. Gave us an intel, a letter and 2 code tests. Also have to learn to type. Looks like a hard job ahead. The officers around here have been handing out several talks to us. One being for us to make sure that we get on the trains from Chicago's loop early enough that we aren't late. Receive 20 hours extra duty if we're 1 minute over leave.

Once again, I'm waiting for my mail to catch up with me. Also for my pay number to be fixed up. So the finances are low, to say the least. Asking you to send me postal money order for 15 or 20 dollars. I don't know

when I'll get paid and I think I'll be taking the next liberty that comes up, which is a week from today.

The buildings were not originally intended for a barracks, so it is a rather screwy set up. There are 15 of us in a small room over the main entrance. The bunks are tiers of 3. We march to school, to chow; in fact, about anywhere we go.

Before going on liberty, we have to line-up for inspection of our uniforms. And do we have to be clean.

Takes about 40 -60 min to go from here to Chicago, so one has to have a 12-hour liberty to do much.

Unfortunately, all 48 hour leaves were cancelled just before arriving, so unless one has a 70 mile limit, they can't go home. Sure wish I could come home for a weekend!

Well not much else to write about at present, so I shall write again soon.

Your Loving Son,

Gene

{About events after he finished here, in his service book Dad wrote: "Transferred to Philly Naval Yard, May 18. From there to Norfolk, May 29--aboard USS Velocity, June 1."}



Photos of Lunt & Swift Hall at Northwestern University, present day.

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