

Dec. 21, 1941



U. S. NAVAL RESERVE AVIATION BASE
ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Dear Folks,

This will have to take care of Christmas presents for the time being since I have not as yet been off the base and do not anticipate getting off until Christmas Eve. In spite of a good code sender, who gave us six straight tests of 100 characters (letters and numbers $\frac{1}{2}$ in groups of five "words"), I did not get off this week-end, though I think I got no more than five mistakes in any one. One had to be perfect, and none was. Nine words a minute is the rate our particular group is supposed to be able to take, but the majority can't. A new system of a test every day will be instituted this week, which will give one a much better chance and eliminate some of the mental hazard, which wrecks me.

Everyone is getting Christmas leave, about half late Wednesday ^{afternoon} ~~night~~ to late Friday night, and the other half early Sat. morning to Sunday night and again Wed. P.M. to Thursday P.M. The second is broken up, but doesn't include Christmas. The first, though shorter in all, is better for me because the McGeebees have invited me for

Their family "Christmas Eve" dinner, and the Schiefflins for Christmas day. These should of course be very pleasant. Though one wonders what it will be like at the house of one's commanding officer.

On Christmas Eve and Day one's mind will constantly wander in the direction of home. Though it can't do one any harm to miss it for once, as so many people do so often. To get away from the base would be a decided pleasure in itself, and to get southern hospitality as well will make it downright enjoyable I imagine.

Life here at the base is, you may gather, a little tough, but even after only a week one has got somewhat used to things. Discipline, for instance, is far more strict than at Squantum, demerits, the equivalent of a black mark at G.S. - one hour of marching instead of one hour of running circles - being handed out for such trivial offenses as having one button unbuttoned, talking when marching between buildings, etc. (we are supposed to march everywhere, though the non-talking is not rigidly enforced. Already I have had three four-hour watches, about average, one from midnight to 4 A.M., another (on a different day) 4 A.M. - 7 A.M. $\frac{1}{2}$, and another from noon to 4 P.M. We carry loaded .45's and at night challenge everyone if outdoors. These



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are all around the inside of the fence. Those ~~indoors~~ ⁱⁿ outdoors are in such places as in the hangar, tower, halls, etc. I'm not supposed to "pass out information", but there can be no harm commenting on the general course of life here.

There are a few hundred students here, divided into two main groups, the Cadet Reserve, such as we from Squantum, who have finished their preliminary flight training and are here for just ground school, and the Flight Training group, who are just learning to fly. We're in the majority and come from coast stations from Squantum to Miami. There is talk of making this at least a semi-advanced flight training base, which isn't surprising judging from the great length of the runways.

We get up at 5:30 and in eight minutes are dressed and out for exercise (in the dark). We have a daily barracks inspection after breakfast and afterwards go to muster and thence to classes, which last until 4:45, with an hour out for lunch (11-12 for us). The first week our classes consisted of

navigation for two hours and drill for one hour.
Then after lunch, aerodynamics and fundamental
naval science, each for an hour, code for an
hour and physics for two hours. We had
a smattering of all of these except physics
at Squantum, and they are not too difficult.
They are fairly interesting and mostly
reasonably well taught. Physics is just
elementary and an introduction or brush-up as
the case may be. A long day, but ^{except voluntary code.} no night classes.

I thought one hasn't been outside the fence
except on a detail that barricaded some of the
approaches to the base, one can see a bit of
what the country looks like. It is probably
typical piedmont (as opposed to the flatter,
lower coastal plain). The soil is very poor
and distinctly red, the vegetation mostly
shades of pine and oaks of various kind.
The topography is somewhat rolling, and
on the horizon is bald Stone Mountain,
extraordinarily like Watatic in shape. Since
we're over 1000 ft. above sea level (Atlanta
is the highest big city in the U.S. except Denver
or is supposed to be - how about Salt Lake City?).
The nights are frosty, but the nice days
warm up quite nicely.

Well, Merry Christmas to All,
and to all a Good night!
Love
Toots