

Going to a dance,
watching snipe
✓ and a gray fox,
etc.

Not much of a
letter it seems
to me now
(8/10/01)

T.R.



U. S. NAVAL AIR STATION
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

Feb. 23, 1942

Dear Folks,

Many happy returns
of the day, Pa! I wish I could have
sent you Dumbo. He's magnificent.
For a change I didn't go out to
the beach for the week-end. After
seeing Dumbo, I went to the cadet
dance in the station's auditorium.
It was tremendous and quite a
haul. One of the boys had a date
with a girl from Atlanta, whom
I had met there, but who was
substituting for another girl who
walked out on him at the last
minute, going with someone else.
Naturally he got sore and, since
there was free liquor, well
lubricated. He had asked me
to "wolf" so he could dance with

~~The substitute so he could come~~
with his first choice, which ended
with my taking ^{the former} over and his being
left in the lurch when he got
nowhere rapidly with the latter!
It was pleasant enough, only
the girl had recently had a cold
and got tired, and the check room
was so small that it took at
least a full hour of standing in
line to get her map. I think
I should have enjoyed myself
more if I had got mildly
plastered myself.

On Sunday I slept till 1:00
and looped the rest of the time
spending a few minutes sitting
on the bank of a nearby creek and
watching through my indispensable
binoculars four Wilson snipe
probing the mud ^{for food} with ^{their} long bills,
not many yards upstream. The
other day I had an equally
pleasant view of a gray fox,
whose large ^{facial} expression to his face



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indicated that he didn't know if it really was anything that had made him stop and look around. Though we were a scant thirty feet apart. When I "unfroze" to lift my glasses, he thought he might as well get going, but he didn't hurry. Evidently I was safely out of wind. I used little adventures make one for the time being completely oblivious to the almost constant roar of planes overhead.

Well, now two of the four solid weeks of ground school are over. We continue with engines, studying their actual operation, old models mounted on heavily braced stands being used. The instrument panel being for the sake of wind protection ^{and sound protection} in a very

small stack, about four by five,⁴
immediately in back of the whirling
propeller and the roaring (and
back firing) motor. Nine weeks of
navigation have just begun, so
for just an hour a day, and we
have two hours of aerology for
two weeks. The rest of the time
is spent in radio and signal
classes. Learning to send code I
find amusing, but not easy in the
most correct, relaxed manner.

Yes, it's a nice life here and
will, with flying, be even more
interesting and much more exciting.
Even flying, however, we shall get
very tired of at times. It's quite a
nervous strain, especially with
instructors shouting at you, and of
course it's still dangerous even
when japs aren't shooting at you.
Actually it's surprising there
aren't more accidents with so
many planes with green pilots at
the controls in the air at one time.



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There are by the way a lot of swell fellows here. The average is really very high. Perhaps half got all the way through college, but those several years out probably bring up the average age to more than 23. I am not the oldest in my class now, but after all it is now well over 100 (recently a group given a chance to through exam was promoted from the class below, whereas none of us were given the chance, an innovation). There are quite a few Harvard men, Pocellian to Kennedy (one each, neither of whom I know to speak to, from '38). The first man to graduate from here was a Harvard man, whom I met once. Two classes below me and varsity cox. He's now an instructor here, and there's another ^{I know better} Howie Turner, who just got his wings. There are three on the same floor in this

building who include one whom I⁶
knew before, one whose brother I
knew and a third that just looked
familiar when I first saw him —
and all recently from del party
stay lines. J. Pyne, Groton '37?
is here, so Bumbo says, but I
haven't seen him. There are just
too many guys here. Otherwise
I might introduce myself to
my old classmates, whom I know
by sight, but who wouldn't know
me from Adam — so I think I'll
turn to "Pride and Prejudice", which
I'm rereading.

Love to all
T.R.