

36th Evacuation Hosp.
Ft. San Houston
Texas
January 9, 1943

Dear Art & Betty,

Greetings again from the land of the sunny south. Salutations from the land of rolling plains, grazing longhorns and tough sargeants.

So you folks have gone and got yourself burned out since I've left. Well, it's too bad that had to happen but I'm darn glad you had the place well insured anyhow.

Thanks a lot for the cards. I've already put them into use. Cards of that type are especially handy to busy folks like politicians, Sunday School Supts, and soldiers.

Well – this is Saturday afternoon and of course we have the afternoon off (except for a chosen few). The chosen few were those who were unfortunate enough not to pass Saturday morning inspection. Those individuals are cleaning stoves in the field kitchen.

Of course, anyone needing a haircut does not pass inspection. One of the men, a lean lanky Vermonter, who needed a trim was foolish enough to let a couple of the boys, who offered their services free, operate. Result: a rather jagged-herring-bone fringe above the ears resolving into alternate tufts in the posterior cephalic region. Note: He is now cleaning stoves.

Naturally, we all like radios in our tents. However, radios are not permitted to be present during inspection. Now we aren't told what to do with them but are told simply and plainly not to have them there. What's to do with them? We solved the problem today. We tied a rope around it and hung it out the rear window. After the inspecting officer inspected inside we pulled it in quickly as he went out to inspect the rear. Simple! Now that was not original. You could look down the whole line and see radios being pulled in – one right after another.

Well, I seem to be enjoying the army as well as can be expected. Of course it is more or less monotonous after a time. However, I think the good features over-shadow the poorer aspects. There are many, many who think oppositely. There seem to be quite a few who regard the army as a sort of confinement. They are laying all sorts of hopes on a sudden armistice so that their confinement can be removed

We seem, at present, to be putting quite a lot of study into tropical sanitation. A couple of our officers have left to go to a special Tropical Sanit. School. So I'm drawing a few conclusions.

Well, I guess I'll close now and drop up to the post movies and see if there is anything worth attending.

As ever

Pvt. Dr. Gordon Nelson P.P. (Pill Pusher)

PS. Here's hoping that it won't be long before your back in your own domain.

(Letter from Gordon Nelson to Arthur and Betty Nelson)

Camp Young
Desert Training Center, California
Serv. Co., 37 AR, 4th A.D.
apo 254, c/o Pm, Los Angeles, Cal.
Jan. 17, 1943

Dear Art,

If you have read Pa's letter, stop here, because I expect this will be another carbon copy. We have been on the move pretty steady for the past couple of weeks, and I haven't had much opportunity to keep up with my writing, but am making a desperate try to bring it up to date over the weekend.

The day after I got back from my New Year's weekend trip to Los Angeles we started out for a few days on a tactical problem in the fine art of desert warfare. (Pretty good, huh?)

We got started early Tuesday morning, headed out into the "big country", with no sign of a road except what we made as we went along. I am now the assistant gunner on a 37 M.M., self propelled mount, which in plain language is a 37 M.M. gun, mounted on the back half of a $\frac{3}{4}$ ton truck. (I also still hold my mail job). We travelled by compass almost entirely, and kept in contact with the other units of the regiment by radio. Some of the time I rode in the half-track, which carried the company commander and the radio operators. While I was in that I was behind the .50 cal. Machine gun. That was some trip! All the time we were out, the wind blew a regular hurricane, and with all those trucks, tanks, etc. to help stir up the sand and dust it was really terrific. We wore goggles and dust respirators almost all the time, and at times the dust was so thick you could hardly see where we were going, right in broad daylight. I think it was Friday when we came back in, that time, and spent the weekend here in camp, then went right out again Monday morning, for another week of it. It was a little better this time because the wind wasn't quite so bad. But there was still plenty of dust flying. They rationed us pretty close on water, and if we wanted enough to drink we had to go rather light on it for washing and shaving. For that matter it was pretty hard to find time for such things, anyway. I think I probably washed my face about every other day, and didn't shave all the time we were gone. I got back to camp looking somewhat like old man Preble's boy. I put my Reader's Digest into my field bag, to pass the time at some of our frequent stops, but found just one fault with it – the thing was too popular! While I was in the half-track there was a first lieutenant and a major with me, and every time I laid the magazine down, one of them would grab it, and you just don't tell a major to keep his hands off! Also there was another lieutenant, in a peep, and he kept coming after it. Right after we got back, he left camp, on a five day leave, and I expect he still has it. But I had read most of it, and I'll bet that's the last time he gets his hands on it! The Reader's Digest is almost an official army magazine. There are at least half a dozen men in this company that get it. Just before Christmas I saw several of those gift cards come through the mail.

Yesterday we had a tent inspection, and it kept me rather busy for a while getting things ready, as I was the only one left in my tent. One fellow is in the hospital with a bad tooth, and the other two are out on a weekend pass. After dinner I put in a couple of hours getting my "big gun" – the 37 m.m. – cleaned up, then went after the mail. Right now I think I will quit for a while and go to chapel, which is held just above here, outdoors. The Chaplain has a peep, transformed into a pulpit, and the band furnishes the music. It is really very good.

I had a swell time in Los Angeles over New Year's, looking around Hollywood and L. A. I also went out to Eagle rock and found Alyce Wendelstadt, and took in a swell evening, dining and dancing at the Coconut Grove, with the big shots of Hollywood and L.A. Nothing's too good when we go to town! I forgot to take my camera with me, so bought a second hand one when I got there, and when I got the pictures back I found the camera had a leak in the bellows, so the pictures didn't come out so good. I sent them home, so

you can see them sometime when you are down there. I also took some pictures with my own camera, out on maneuvers, that should be pretty good when I get them back. I had to go a little easy on the pictures out there, as there are so many things we can't take pictures of – tanks, guns, etc. – and the company commander was right there with me most of the time, but I think I got a few good ones.

I got a swell letter from Bea the other day, all about affairs at home, and her heart troubles (Camp Edwards).

I made a little purchase the other day – a sleeping bag. I know that sounds funny, with the army furnishing us with blankets, but out here on maneuvers, sleeping on the sand, with the wind blowing it down your neck etc. they a great institution. It's made of canvas, quilted inside, and all rigged up with snaps and zippers, so when the wind gets too rugged I just pull it up over my head and let the old wind whistle! It's better than a steam heated apartment!

P.S. How's things going on the house?

As ever,
Cliff

(Letter from Clifford Nelson to his brother Arthur Nelson Jr.)