

Augusta Military Academy

Oral History

Loy Collingwood, '43
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LETTERS TO DRAYTON

Ft. Defiance, Virginia, wasn't exactly a town or a village—just a quiet, wide place in the road about a mile south of Mt. Sidney on the Old Valley Pike. Though modest in size, it genuinely reflected the charm, character and the history of the Shenandoah Valley. A few of the local residents still recalled the time, during the “War of Yankee Aggression,” when cadets from the Virginia Military Institute marched through here on their way to support Breckinridge at the battle of New Market. Since then, more than seventy-five years ago, time has whittled little change in the countryside or the rectitude of its residents.

Off the highway to the West, against the backdrop of the Allegheny Mountains, the Old Stone Church nestled peacefully in a stand of sturdy maples. Presbyterians had conducted Sunday services there since 1749. Alone on the east side of the road, its back to the Blue Ridge, stood a single-story, weathered, red brick building that served as post office, general store and one-pump gas station. A hand-painted sign centered above the doorway identified it as “The Fort.”

Chapter 1

About three hundred yards farther down the road a long, tree-lined driveway sloped to the right. A small, formal sign announced, “Augusta Military Academy, founded 1865.” Established by Charles Roller, a veteran of J.E.B. Stuart's 1st Virginia Cavalry, Augusta commanded the honor of being the oldest military prep school in the Commonwealth.

Sunday morning, 7 December 1941, dawned cold and bright on Ft. Defiance. Since early morning, a chilling wind had swept across the valley from the Alleghenies to the Blue Ridge. For Augusta's cadets, the uniform for church formation was overcoats.

At 1030 the corps of cadets, except those Catholic or Jewish who had already left in the school bus for services in Staunton, assembled in front of the barracks. From there they marched with muffled cadence to the Old Stone Church on top of the knoll hardly a hundred yards beyond the gymnasium. Platoon after platoon of gray-uniformed cadets filed in quietly and took their places in the hard, upright pews. Reverend McBride smiled, pleased with the attendance; as cadets occupied all the seats on the right side; while on the left, faculty and their families accounted for a few more.

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Viewed from the churchyard, Augusta's barracks seemed indestructibly stark. The symmetry of its partially ivy-covered, gray fieldstone and stucco walls vividly contrasted with the rolling farmland of the Virginia valley. The building resembled a square fortress-completely enclosed on all four sides with a large, open quadrangle in the center. A sentry box, containing an alarm gong, stood in the center of the quadrangle. There were two entrances-the main arch centered in the front, and a small postern gate in the right-rear corner. The barracks rose three stories on all sides except in front, where a tower above the main arch added two more floors. From a white flagpole rising from the tower's parapet, the Stars and Stripes whipped and snapped in the crisp wind.

Following the church service, cadets were free to return to the barracks without a formation. I joined **Angus Hines** and his roommate, **Billy Haycox**, as we slowly started down the hill toward school. Both Billy and I were juniors, but Angus, a senior and a serious student, was looking forward to graduating in June and then joining the Navy.

For a long time, probably since before junior high, we all knew that we would serve in some branch of the armed forces. As a result, the corps of cadets in general, and particularly the seniors and juniors, took the military portion of their training quite seriously. On the other hand, an all-male boarding school offered an abundance of opportunity for all kinds of pranks-usually referred to as hell raising. The most recent of these incidents provided the subject of our conversation and laughter as we ambled down the hill and back toward the barracks.

The barracks, constructed of steel and concrete, contained hot water radiators in each room. A continuous piping system connected all the heaters on the top floor and then down through the second floor to the first through holes drilled in the concrete floors.

Billy and Angus lived on the third stoop directly above my roommate, **Dave Douglass**, and me. Beneath us on the first stoop, or ground floor, roomed two new cadets who, when not studying, spent most of their time boot licking. The corps of cadets frowned on and covertly discouraged that sort of activity.

Last night, in the middle of study hours, someone had poured lighter fluid down the pipe running from the third stoop, through our room, to the first floor. Ignited from above, the ball of flame had shot through our room with a loud whoosh on its way to the first stoop room below. There on the floor, the pool of lighter fluid, more than a yard in diameter, had burst into flame with a brilliant flash.

Immediately, the two new cadets had jumped up from their desks, opened the door and shouted for the Officer of the Day.

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“OD! OD, Sir, our room’s on fire!”

As quickly as the fireball had appeared—it vanished. By the time the Cadet OD and the Corporal of the Guard had arrived from the guardroom, there wasn’t a trace of anything unusual—no marks on the pipe, not even a telltale stain on the concrete floor. The piping had been warm, but no warmer than the radiator itself. Unable to find anything out of the ordinary, the OD had ordered the cadets to resume their studying, and closing the door behind him, had left to return to the guardroom.

Smiling, Billy looked at Angus with a straight face and said, *“Roomie, remind me to get lighter fluid for my Zippo when we go to town tomorrow.”*

As we entered the main arch of the barracks, Angus suggested, *“Smiley, why don’t you come on up, and we’ll listen to some short-wave? It’ll be another hour before mess call.”*

He had brought a new Hallicrafters receiver to school, and we often spent time practicing Morse code. **Captain Roderick**, the strictest of the faculty officers, had previously operated W3DWE from a small shed behind the mess hall. Because of the war in Europe, however, our government had banned all amateur radio transmission, and he had to lock up his rig for the duration. Meanwhile, Angus and I had continued to sharpen our code skills by just listening to CW on his receiver, or sometimes sending to one another over a wire strung between our two rooms.

“That’s a swell idea, Angus. Give me a couple of minutes. I’ll go by the room and pick up my earphones. It’ll take only a minute, and I’ll be right up.”

After retrieving my headset, I hurried upstairs. Billy was not there, but Angus leaned over his receiver, listening intently. He saw me through the door’s window and motioned me inside.

“Hi, Smiley, I was just trying to find something on eighty meters that we could copy. There, pull up Billy’s chair. Let me have your headset, and I’ll plug it in.”

I handed him the phones and pulled Haycox’s chair closer to the gray, metal desk.

“There’s a bunch of automatic stuff on here today. It’s much too fast for us. Would be nice, though, if we could somehow record it and play it back at a slower speed.”

Angus tuned to the proper frequency to get a time hack, and we both set our watches. It was exactly 1230. Then he went back to slowly tuning from one end of the band to the other.

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When he found someone transmitting at about ten words a minute, he smiled.

“Hey, that’s more like your speed, Smiley. Here take my notepad and pencil. Let’s see how good you are today.”

It wasn’t long before the bugler sounded First Call for mess. We set aside the headsets, and Angus switched off his receiver.

“We can come back after lunch,” he said. “By that time, maybe we’ll be able to find some-one transmitting in voice from overseas, or even a short-wave news broadcast from the BBC.”

Leaving the room, we squared our hats and joined the line of cadets hurrying to formation. The wind seemed to be picking up as the First Sergeants called out their reports. Finally, to the crisp cadence of parade drums, the battalion marched to the mess hall. Peeling off by squads, each platoon proceeded up the steps and through the dark green doors until every member of the corps stood at attention behind his chair.

“Seats,” ordered the First Captain.

A muffled rumbling followed as the battalion moved as one man to seat itself and prepare for lunch. Each table accommodated ten cadets—a cadet officer at the head, a cadet non-commissioned officer at the opposite end and four cadets on either side.

Although it was popular to complain about the cooking, Sunday’s fare usually provided a special treat. One thing was certain—there were always plenty of apples and stewed tomatoes. This was apple country, and at every meal they showed up in one form or another. Today they were, like the tomatoes, stewed. Rumor had it that **Lieutenant Fontaine**, the Post Steward, added an especially large dose of saltpeter to the stewed tomatoes on Sunday because the Corps went into town on Mondays.

For Augusta’s cadets the weekend seemed backwards. Sunday afternoon, unless it was raining, featured a dress parade. Monday mornings consisted of three hours of military tactics, and in the afternoon—penalty tours for those with demerits or town leave for those with clean slates.

The closest town was Staunton, home of **Mary Baldwin College** and **Stuart Hall**, both girl’s schools, and **Staunton Military Academy**, Augusta’s staunch rival. The negative feeling between cadets of the two schools had grown so strong that the two Commandants agreed never to permit

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both corps into town at the same time.

After we had finished our lunch, the First Captain dismissed the battalion, and we exited the mess hall—one table after the other. Stepping out through the doorway into the bright, afternoon sunlight, I shivered as the cold wind gusted around the corner of the barracks. Dark clouds off to the west were beginning to look a lot like snow.

Hurrying through the main arch and up the metal stairway, I went directly to Angus' room, knocking and entering all in the same motion. Billy, stretched out on the upper bunk, casually leafed through the Norfolk newspaper, while Angus, bent over his Hallicrafters, copied code to a lined note pad. As I sat down, he pushed the earphones up on his head.

In his deep, Suffolk drawl he said, *“Some clown on here is saying that planes are bombing one of our island bases in the Pacific Ocean. He’s going too fast and doesn’t have a very good wrist, so I’m having trouble telling where his words end. Hang on a minute, Smiley, maybe we can get something on one of the voice frequencies.”*

Carefully he rotated the large tuning knob. *“There, that sounds like a broadcast in English. Can you hear him okay?”*

The faint voice coming in over the crackling static sounded British. He was talking about airplanes bombing someplace called Pearl Harbor.

“Where the heck is Pearl Harbor, Angus?”

He smiled. *“Oh, you Yankees—it’s a darn good thing you’ve come south for an education. Pearl Harbor is one of our largest naval bases. It’s in the Hawaiian Islands between California and Japan.”*

“You mean someone is attacking one of the Hawaiian Islands? Has he said who’s doing the bombing?”

“I can’t tell yet for sure, but I think he said the planes had Japanese markings. Be quiet for a minute and listen; let’s see if we can get some more information.”

Somehow this whole thing didn’t sound like a hoax, or another one of those War of the Worlds broadcasts. Sure enough—the announcer kept saying that waves of Japanese planes were bombing the harbor and airfields and that they had hit some of our warships in the harbor.

Billy untangled his long legs and climbed from the lower bunk. *“Smiley, let me listen.”*

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I handed him the headset. As he listened, his expression began to change to one of dead seriousness, and his face reddened.

“Angus, where’s this coming from, England?”

“Nope. At first, I thought so, but now I think it’s Australia, or New Zealand, or maybe Hong Kong. Or, it could be coming directly from Hawaii.”

Billy’s face flushed. *“What the heck can those dummies be thinking of? They don’t have any call to go around attacking our islands. Angus, did they tell you when this all started?”* He handed the headset back to me. *“What’s a dinky little country like Japan doing attacking our Navy base, anyway? How far do you figure it is from Japan to the Hawaiian Islands, anyway.”*

Without waiting for an answer, Billy left the room and hurried along the stoop to see if anyone had picked up a news report from one of the local radio stations. By this time several commercial stations had interrupted their scheduled programs to cover the news. **WRVA** in Richmond came in loud and clear, as their newsman repeated the latest details of the attacks.

Meanwhile, Angus had pulled his amateur radio operator’s handbook from his locker and located a time-zone chart of the world. He smiled when he found what he was looking for.

“Smiley, Billy has a good point. It says here that it’s about 4,000 miles from Tokyo to Honolulu. That’s almost twice as far as it is from California to Honolulu. Nobody has bombers that can fly that far without refueling. Wonder where those planes could have come from?”

“Darned if I know, Angus. I never studied much about that part of the world.”

Taking off my headset, I sat down on Billy’s bunk and thought to myself, what would those guys hope to gain by attacking a large country like ours? Maybe this whole thing is just some kind of a big mistake. On the other hand-if it isn’t a mistake-does this mean we’re in the war?

“Clang, clang, clang!” The alarm gong reverberated from the sentry box interrupting the Sunday afternoon stillness. I opened the door and stepped to the railing along the stoop. There stood the Commandant, **Major Roller**. The Major, smartly attired in tan cavalry britches, riding boots, and olive drab blouse complete with Sam Brown belt, waited patiently while the OD again rattled the gong. “Clang, clang, clang, clang!” All around the barracks cadets stood attentively, lining all three stoops waiting to hear what the Major had to say.

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“Gentlemen,” he began solemnly, *“this is a sad day—a very sad day. I’ve just heard news that, without warning, Japanese planes have attacked our bases in the Hawaiian Islands, and we have suffered casualties. I know many of you have fathers and other family members in the service; some may even be stationed in that area. My first thought was to cancel dress parade for this afternoon. Instead, I’ve decided that we should go ahead and show support for our fighting men over there by having our best review of the year. The most important thing we can all do now is to be patient. Just as soon as there is more official news, I’ll let you know. That’s all I can tell you just now. As you were!”*

I went back inside to join Angus. Soon cadets jammed the room, asking for more news. Everyone seemed to be talking at the same time. Angus took off his headset and stood up.

“Look,” he said with a stern expression, *“there just isn’t any more detail available. One transmission said that more than two hundred planes attacked Pearl Harbor, several battleships were sinking, and some cruisers and destroyers had received major damage. Many of our planes were destroyed on the ground. That’s all I know. You don’t have to leave, but will someone please close the damn door—it’s getting downright cold in here.”*

As I rose to leave, I looked at Angus. “What do you make of all this?”

“Beats me, Smiley, but it surely does sound serious, doesn’t it? Seems to me as though we’re in the war whether we want to be or not. Why don’t you come on by after parade, and we’ll check again. I’m sure there’ll be a lot more information on the evening news, too.”

The barracks was usually a noisy place on Sunday afternoons, but today was noticeably quiet with only the occasional bang of a door closing to interrupt the stillness. Doug had left to place a Loy phone call to his mother in Washington, DC, and I decided to head down to the rifle range and get in some practice.

Bunky Harriman, the team captain, had already unlocked the door to the range and opened the large closet where we kept the rifles. The Army required all military school rifle teams to fire identical weapons—22 cal. barrels mounted on ‘03 stocks, with iron sights.

Within minutes, **Stafford Whittle** came in, and the three of us set out to make a contest of it. Practicing in the prone and sitting positions could become pretty boring. So, when **Sergeant Wilson**, the coach, wasn’t around, we would set dimes on their ends, holding them in place on the target mounts with blue thumbtacks. Of course, at fifty feet, we couldn’t see the dime’s outline, so we’d aim just slightly above the center of the blue dots. When hit dead center the dimes flattened into something looking like little silver butterflies. Usually the loser had to buy the sodas, but

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today no one seemed all that thirsty. After an hour or so we called it quits, cleaned the rifles and returned to prepare for the usual Sunday review.

By the time the corps formed for parade, the temperature had dropped another ten degrees, as a flurry of light snow began to cover the parade ground. Considering the freezing conditions, the parade turned out to be a big success. Everyone, including D-Company, the youngest cadets, marched in step. It seemed as though, during the past three hours, the entire corps of cadets had aged a couple of years.

Major Roller reviewed the parade mounted on a large roan gelding—something he usually reserved for special occasions. As he and the First Captain, **John Minor**, cantered past each company, even spectators parked in their cars surrounding the parade grounds could sense the stiffened military bearing of the entire corps. Make no mistake about it; although some were only twelve years old, these were young men preparing for war. They might not have realized it when they awoke this morning—but that message was certainly pasted to the inside of their foreheads now.

By Monday morning three inches of powder snow covered the ground. **Colonel Fulton**, the head of the ROTC detachment, scrapped the military tactics exercise scheduled for that morning. Instead, we all planned to listen to **President Roosevelt** address the Congress.

News from the Pacific was not good. In addition to the attack on Pearl Harbor, Japanese planes had also bombed Clark Field, our airbase near Manila. Reportedly, that strike had wiped out most of our B-17s there on the ground.

At lunch, Major Roller usually took the opportunity to pass along any instructions he had for the cadets. *“That was an excellent review you all put on yesterday,”* he said. *“One of the finest I can remember.”* He closed by directing his remarks to those cadets who were eighteen years old. *“Gentlemen, I know you feel a strong moral responsibility to volunteer for military service now. As I said yesterday, be patient and apply your energy to your classroom work and military training. After graduation there will be plenty of time for you to serve your country.”*

The snow and cold weather discouraged many cadets from boarding the school buses for town. Most seemed content to defer their Christmas shopping until they got home. I would have gone to the range again, but Bunky had left for town and taken the keys with him.

That evening Major Roller entered the mess hall just as the battalion was finishing dinner. He looked tired and seemed concerned. As he stood to speak, all conversation stopped.

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“Gentlemen, I want to tell you again how well you all did in yesterday’s parade. Now then, I’d like for all cadets who are, or will be, eighteen before the first of June to remain here in the mess hall for a few minutes. Mister First Captain, you may dismiss the remainder of the battalion.”

During the fifteen-minute study break that evening, I went to Angus’ room to find out what the Major had to say. Apparently, that afternoon while in Staunton on town passes, a number of cadets had gone to the recruiting office to enlist. Anticipating something like that might happen, Major Roller had alerted the recruiting officers and arranged to have any enrollment applications held aside and not validated for the time being. At the meeting in the mess hall he suggested that he could enroll all the older cadets in the Virginia Militia. That would allow them to finish the school year and graduate before joining the service. Angus said that most everyone in the room thought the Major’s suggestion made a lot of sense.

The days remaining before Christmas vacation seemed to go by in double time. Only one week remained until examinations, and then we’d be on our way home for the holidays. The situation in the South Pacific grew worse. The Japanese had inflicted much more damage at Pearl Harbor than originally reported. To make matters worse, in the Philippines Japanese forces were moving steadily toward Manila.

There had been one encouraging development, though. On Friday, 12 December, The New York Times carried a War Department communiqué confirming the sinking of a 29,000-ton Japanese battleship thought to be the Haruna. The following day the same sources confirmed that it was **Captain Colin P. Kelley, Jr.**, who, *“had successfully attacked the battleship Haruna, putting that warship out of commission. In the destruction of this important unit of the Japanese Fleet, Captain Kelley lost his life.”* That Sunday, the 14th, The New York Times carried more details. Under a picture of Captain Kelly’s wife and son they wrote, *“Her husband, an Army flier, was killed in action after scoring three hits on the Japanese battleship, Haruna, leaving her in flames. The vessel later went to the bottom.”* Within days, Colin Kelly was posthumously awarded the DSC—and the country had its first hero of World War II.

It was wonderful to be home for Christmas, with time to relax with my family and visit old friends. But the war had a sobering effect on everyone and everything. Almost overnight, advertisements for War Bonds appeared on outdoor billboards as well as on the radio. Even the announcer for the regular Saturday night broadcast of Your Hit Parade reminded us that, *“Lucky Strike green has gone to war.”* The familiar green cigarette package with the red bull’s eye had now become white with a red bull’s eye because the manufacturer, American Tobacco Company, could no longer import the proper ink from Europe.

Each day the news seemed worse. Headlines read, *“Wake Island falls to the Japanese,”* December

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23; *"Hong Kong is taken by the Japanese,"* December 25. On 26 December, General MacArthur, knowing he could not defend Manila, declared it an open city. The following day Japanese planes defiantly bombed the undefended city, starting huge fires. All three Pittsburgh newspapers, The Post-Gazette, The Sun-Telegraph and The Pittsburgh Press carried lead stories expressing outrage.

Reflecting the mood of the nation, our congress reacted. Burton Wheeler, Senator from Nebraska, rose to condemn the Japanese, "... *they are an in-human and half-civilized race and in the future will be treated as such.*" Another Senator, George W. Norris, of Nebraska, warned, "*Their cities are open to attack; when we are ready, we will burn them off the face of the earth.*" Mother, Dad and I listened to the evening news-astounded at how rapidly the Japanese were changing the face of the map. Mother voiced her concern, "*Dad, just how far do you think they can go before we stop them?*"

My father, usually a cheerfully, positive person, stroked his mustache-something he inadvertently did when pondering a problem.

*"Funny you'd ask that. Just yesterday at the office we were discussing that very thing during lunch. Everyone seemed to think that the Japs had not yet met any real opposition. **Spence Britain** thought that even if they did land in California or come down through the Aleutians, they'd never get past the Rockies. We'll just have to wait and see. The idea that they could land in California seems a little far-fetched, but two weeks ago I'd have thought Hawaii was perfectly safe."*

"Dad," I asked, "*since they're going to move the Rose Bowl game from California to Durham, North Carolina, do you think they'll still have the Rose Parade?*"

"Son, your guess is as good as mine. I really hadn't thought about it. Now that you mention it, though, I wonder what they'll do about all the tickets that have already been sold? Heck, the same is true about the All-star game. They're moving it from San Francisco to New Orleans."

Although the stark reality of the situation did not go unnoticed in our family, never once did any of the three of us mention the obvious. The war in the Pacific was going to be around a long time—certainly long enough for me to be in it.

When it came time to return to Augusta, Dad and Mother drove me to the old P. & L.E. Station on the south side of the Monongehela River to catch the morning B&O train to Washington. Reservations on trains between Pittsburgh and Washington were scarce because the large steel corporations had top priority. Their people went back and forth daily for meetings with the War Production Board. Once in awhile there was a cancellation. With the help of the purchasing agent for United Engineering & Foundry, Dad was able to get me a seat.

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That night as I trudged through the main arch at Augusta, everything looked the same, but there seemed to be a more serious attitude throughout the school. Many cadets had fathers who were in the service. They didn't talk much about the war, but you could tell they worried about it—especially the juniors, the little guys.

On 23 February, The Associated Press wire service broke a story that sent chills down the spines of Americans from the coast of California to New York. That evening just after sunset off the Santa Barbara coast, the calm waters of the Pacific parted as a Japanese submarine surfaced and began shelling the Barnsdall oil refinery.

The following day, Tuesday, a Late City Edition of The New York Times headlined the event—“SUBMARINE SHELLS CALIFORNIA OIL PLANT”. Lawrence E. Davies filed the story from San Francisco that provided on-the-scene coverage.

Lawrence Wheeler, proprietor of Wheeler's Inn situated in the midst of the Ellwood oil field, gave an account of the shelling. *“It started about 7:15. I know it was about that time because we were serving dinners to customers and listening to the President's speech, and he was about half way through. Suddenly we heard a loud report, followed a few seconds by another. One of their shots whistled over my Inn. We notified the Sheriff's office and they said planes would be here in ten minutes, but we never heard any planes. I went outside and walked over to where I could see the ocean. It looked like a submarine about a half mile offshore, cruising slowly down the coast and firing at regular intervals.”*

From the Ventura County Sheriff's office came word of widespread reports of flares sent up from land points about the time of the shelling.

G. O. Brown, oil field worker who was one of the first to report the attacking vessel, said that he had seen it “very clearly” and that *“it was so big that I thought it might be a destroyer or a cruiser. I have seen many submarines and this was larger than any of those in the United States Navy that I have seen. It was lying idly on the surface. Then it began shelling, shot after shot, with great regularity. I counted twelve shells that burst. The firing lasted for twenty minutes.”*

A report on the submarine's movements was given the Santa Barbara Sheriff's office by the **Rev. Arthur Basham** of Pomona, Calif., visiting Montecito, which is about four miles east of Santa Barbara and sixteen miles east of Ellwood. He said he had seen a submarine off the coast about 8:30 o'clock heading south toward Los Angeles and flashing lights as if it were attempting to signal with the shore.

Coinciding with reports of mysterious signal lights in the Santa Barbara-Ventura area were

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accounts of flashlight signaling in various points of Los Angeles. One witness said he had seen flashlight beams flashing at the end of the Venice Pier.

After the attacks part of the Southern California area was blacked out. The signal for an “alert” was flashed at 7:55 o'clock and radio stations went off the air immediately. (The all-clear was given at 12:12 A.M. today, The Associated Press reported.) Somewhat ironically, the same front page carried an item titled, 3,500 C.I.O. Men Quit Shipyards on Coast in Row Over 10-Hour Day. Continued on page eight, the story mentioned that approximately 17,000 workmen were idle in closed plants in the San Francisco Bay and Seattle areas over the same issue.

The 27 February issue of U.S. News and World Report carried an interview with Senator Guy Loy Mark Gillette from Iowa, in which the Senator he spotlighted the danger of having alien Japanese living in California.

Although American-born Japanese are regarded as U.S. citizens, they also are held to be subjects of Nippon unless they specifically renounce the Emperor. Few renunciations have been made and all citizens may be conscripted into the Japanese service. Evidence of a tightly knit Fifth Column is being uncovered daily by the FBI. West Coast raids on Japanese colonies have yielded truck-loads of guns, ammunition, dynamite and bombs, as well as cameras and radio sets. Even Japanese Army and Navy uniforms have been found. Already 3,800 enemy aliens have been brought into custody, but officials fear that the surface has scarcely been scratched.

Thus the House of Representatives has approved \$300,000 for an FBI investigation into Japanese activity in the Pacific area, and plans are being made to evacuate all Japanese-citizens and aliens alike-from strategic areas.

Wow, I thought, those people out in California have plenty of reasons to be scared. There's no getting around it. The war had now come to their backyard.

The week before our rifle match with **Fishburne Military School**, I awoke to find my face and stomach covered with small red blotches. **Miss Mac**, the school nurse, said I had chicken pox and ordered me to stay in the infirmary.

Each day Doug brought me my assignments and left them with the nurse. I completed the work and gave the papers to Miss Mac so he could pick them up the following day. By Wednesday, two days before the match, I began feeling like my old self again. When the doctor made his rounds that day, I asked if he would discharge me in time for the match. He shook his head and said he thought it would be at least Saturday or Sunday before he could let me out of the infirmary. That was a big disappointment. I had not missed a match, and particularly didn't want to miss the last

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one of the season.

During the past week I had noticed that the doctor visited the infirmary early each morning. As I began to feel better, Miss Mac looked in on me less frequently, and then only before meals to check my temperature.

Each afternoon Doug would go by the PX, pick up a cold drink and bring it to me. When he knocked on my window, I'd first close the room door and then slide the window up a few inches. He'd fill me in on all the news, and we'd chat for a few minutes. I told him what the doctor had said.

“Doug, if Sergeant Wilson would let me fire on Friday, I'm sure I could sneak out of here, and no one would know the difference. Heck, for the past few days, except for meals, the nurse hardly ever comes to check on me. Would you mind asking the Sergeant if he wants me to fire-assuming I can find a way to get out of here.”

“Sure, Smiley, I'll stop and see him on my way back from classes. If he's not there, I should be able to catch him before drill this afternoon.”

Doug was a great roommate and a good friend. He was about six feet with reddish blond hair and a ready smile. Because we were about the same height, the administration assigned us both to the same company and paired us as roommates.

When it came time to do my assignments that evening, I had trouble concentrating on the lessons. Instead, in the back of my mind, I kept searching for a way to get out of the infirmary and back in again without anyone seeing me. When the doctor arrived the following morning, I asked again if I could be released in time for the match.

“Son, I told you yesterday that I'd discharge you Saturday or Sunday. Now don't ask me that again. You don't want to be giving the chicken pox to everyone on both those teams, do you?”

When Doug came around about noontime, I quietly opened the window.

*“Hi, Smiley, I saw Sergeant Wilson. He said he'd really like to have you fire. He heard that **Fork Union** beat Staunton last week. If you all could win Friday, there's a good chance that you'll win the district championship.”*

“Hey, that's great news. Is there any way you could bring me some clothes just before lunch formation tomorrow? If you can, then tell Sergeant Wilson that I'll be at the range at 1600 sharp. He'd have to let me fire right away, otherwise I wouldn't be able to get back here before the nurse comes around at

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dinner time.”

“Sure, but do you think you can pull that off? How ‘bout this window? Can you get it open far enough to slide out?”

I pushed up on the frame as hard as I could. He was right-I couldn’t raise it more than about six inches.

“Doug, you push up on the bottom while I push on the top.” The window jerked loose and slid up another six inches. *“Good, that’s got it. I can get through there.”*

Quietly we lowered the window, and Doug waved good-bye.

“I’ll be here tomorrow ‘bout noon. Do you want your overcoat or jacket?”

“The jacket would be best, I guess. Don’t forget to roll up a tie and put it in the shirt pocket. Thanks, Doug.”

The next day everything went just like clockwork. The nurse came in a little before noon, took my temperature and brought lunch. I could feel my heart beating with excitement and hoped it wouldn’t affect my temperature-that might complicate things. No sooner had Miss Mac left than there was a knock at the window. It was **Bob Small**, one of my teammates.

“Hi, Smiley, Harriman sent me. He thinks I should come by about 1530 this afternoon, and the two of us go to the range together in case someone sees you. He thinks it’ll look more natural than you being alone. I’ll be here at 1530, be sure you’re all ready to go.”

“Okay, Bob, but if anything goes wrong, and I can’t get out, I’ll pull the shade down. If it’s down, don’t knock-just leave and tell Sergeant Wilson that I couldn’t get out. I don’t want to get you guys in any trouble.”

“Smiley, you gotta get out of here. The Sergeant said that if you can fire well enough to be third, we’d have a good chance of winning the District. I gotta go before someone sees me here. See you at 1530 sharp.”

Within a few minutes there was another knock at the window. It was Doug with a bundle of clothes under his arm. I opened the window, and he shoved the clothing inside.

“Here ya go, Smiley. I sure hope, after all this trouble, you win this afternoon. I’ll come by at study

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*break this evening to pick up this stuff, and I'll bring an empty laundry bag just in case the guard stops me on the way back. That way they'll think I'm on my way back from the cleaner's shack. Oh, **Unk Hamilton** asked me if you were going to get out in time for the match. I told him I didn't know. You don't suppose he knows something do you?"* Doug said good-bye and slipped around the lilac bush just outside the window.

This whole thing was getting to be serious. Unk was captain of C-Company, our company. He was also captain of the football team, secretary of the monogram club, president of the student body and president of the honor committee. Boy, if the word was out, we were in big trouble. The honor committee—hadn't thought of that. From now on, I'd better be careful about what I said.

Now I had to find a place to put the clothes. There were two double-deck, iron bunks in the room. I looked under the top mattress of the other bunk. Thin steel strips connected by springs supported the mattress. Couldn't put the trousers there, or they'd look like waffles in a couple of hours. I opened the door to the bathroom. Sure enough there was a hook on the back of the door. The trousers, shirt, jacket and cap could go there. I stuffed the shoes and socks under the pillow of the top bunk, and putting the underwear beneath my pillow, climbed back into bed.

I was out of breath, warm and beginning to feel more than a little nervous. I didn't have much of an appetite for lunch. When Miss Mac came to remove the tray, she seemed concerned that I hadn't eaten everything. Maybe it was just my imagination.

At 1515 I got out of bed, fished out my shoes and socks, and taking my underwear, ducked into the bathroom and closed the door. I dressed in a hurry, pausing a few minutes to catch my breath. It was exactly 1530 when I left the bathroom; opened the window and quietly climbed through. I felt as though my heart was in my mouth, as I slowly lowered the window and slipped around the lilac bush just in time to see Small coming toward me.

"Okay, Smiley, glad to see you made it. Let's cut through here," he whispered, leading the way around the far side of the infirmary and closer to the gym.

In a few minutes we were at the range. It was dark inside. Sergeant Wilson had already dimmed the lights behind the firing line and turned on the bright lights illuminating the target area. That was good. It would be harder to recognize me from a distance. Cadets from both schools were firing a few rounds to check their sights. Not one of my teammates came anywhere near me, but Sergeant Wilson walked up as if nothing was out of the ordinary.

"Collingwood," he said with his usual poker face, *"I want you to fire first. You won't have time to get off any practice rounds, but I'm sure no one has tampered with the sights on your piece. Pick out any mat you want on our half of the line, and let's get started. Good luck."*

I flopped down on the nearest mat and carefully counted out my ammunition. Slipping the sling over my arm, I rolled over on my stomach, stretched out, took a deep breath, let half of it out and

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began to squeeze off shots. When I finished all four positions, I felt as though I had done fairly well, not my best, but not too bad either. I seemed a little shaky in the kneeling and off-hand positions and was certain I had jerked a couple of rounds out of the bullseye.

Each of us fired one target from the prone, sitting, kneeling and off-hand positions. Then both coaches had to score each of the targets. That took time, so I said good-bye to Sergeant Wilson and **Colonel Fulton**, the senior Army instructor on the post, and hurried back to the infirmary.

It was beginning to get dark, as I quietly opened the window and climbed through. Once inside I closed the window, slipped into the bathroom and shut the door. As quickly as possible I changed into my pajamas, and rolling my clothing into a ball, left it in the bathroom as I hurried to get into bed. Feeling tired and a little shaky, I lay back and wondered how well I had scored.

Thirty minutes or so later Miss Mac came in with my dinner tray. “*Oh,*” she said calmly, “*you’re back.*” I froze. Instantly I could feel my face turning red, and my whole body getting clammy. Something had gone wrong. She knows. Miss Mac stuck the thermometer in my mouth and reached for my wrist.

“*Hmmm,*” she said looking at the thermometer, “*and you have a little fever. The doctor isn’t going to be very happy with you in the morning. Wouldn’t want to be in your shoes.*” With that she turned and left the room.

It was dark out now, and the quiet was ominous. There was a knock at the window. It was Doug. I quickly closed the room door, forgetting for the moment that the clothes were in the bathroom, and hurried to open the window. “*They know. Somehow they know. Miss Mac knew I was gone.*”

“*You’re kidding. How could they know-unless someone ratted on us? Guess you might as well keep your clothes here.*”

“*No, you better take them back to the room. Just as if nothing has happened. We don’t know yet what they know, and there’s no reason why we shouldn’t stick to the plan.*”

I quickly gathered up the bundle of clothing and pushed it out the window. Doug stuffed everything into his laundry bag and disappeared into the darkness, while I got back into bed and tried to relax. I could feel the shakes starting again.

Now what do I do? What offense have I committed? I started to talk to myself. Probably guilty of gross disobedience of a direct order. Direct insubordination. What can I get for that? They wouldn’t expel me for that, would they? Is that an honor court offense?

There was another knock at the window. I jumped out of bed to open it. It was Doug again.

“*Forgot to tell you-I saw Harriman. He said you guys won the match. Gotta go. Just wanted ya to know*

“*Doug, did you hear how I did?*”

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“No. I don’t know.”

As I closed the window behind him and got back into bed, I felt a little better. At least we won the match, and maybe the District championship. But some of us were in deep trouble. How deep, I’d just have to wait and see.

The next day the doctor came by early. *“Young man,”* he said, *“that was a very foolish thing for you to do.”* He took out his stethoscope and began to listen. *“Not only did you disregard my instructions, you’re likely responsible for giving chicken pox to the entire Fishburne Military School, and you’ve given yourself a heart murmur. That’s serious. You are now to stay in bed at least until Sunday depending upon how long it takes for this thing to settle down. Under no circumstances are you to leave this bed except to go to the bathroom. Do you understand me?”*

The doctor discharged me from the infirmary Sunday afternoon. The following morning the penalty list appeared on the bulletin board in the main arch. There was my name; beside it—thirty demerits for direct disobedience. I thought to myself, At the rate of six or seven tours a week I’ll be walking tours for five weeks. Five weeks! By then it’ll be graduation. That means I can’t leave this place for the rest of the school year.

As it turned out, the rifle team registered a really good season, beating everyone but Staunton, and we did win the District championship. In May, Colonel Fulton, the commander of our ROTC training detachment, was notified by Headquarters, Third Corps Area, that Augusta Military Loy Academy had also won the **Hearst Trophy**. He immediately scheduled a review for presentation of the awards. It was not to be the usual Sunday parade, but a full-blown, US Army-sponsored presentation ceremony.

The day of the review was warm and sunny; the uniform for the corps was full-dress whites. Cars and spectators jammed the road circling the parade ground. There were even newspaper reporters and cameramen with their Speed-graphics—some all the way from The Baltimore News. Captain Manch had the band practicing overtime, and the music was great. With the entire corps assembled on the parade ground, Bunky Harriman accepted the Hearst Trophy on behalf of the team, and Colonel Fulton pinned the Hearst medals on each of us. I received a second medal for having had the highest average score for the entire season.

Then, the First Captain ordered, *“Pass in Review!”* It felt great to stand there with Colonel Fulton and Sergeant Wilson on our right, and the First Captain, John Minor, and the Adjutant, **Punchy Guerrant**, on our left while the entire battalion trooped by at *“Eyes Right.”* It was a memorable day for the rifle team—and it wasn’t over yet.

At dinner following the review, Major Roller awarded a major monogram to the members of the

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rifle team who had fired for the Hearst Trophy. The best part of that was that a Monogram Club member could wear his monogram sweater with a white shirt and black tie to the tea dances, instead of the stiff-collared, fatigue coat.

Graduation week, the highlight of the year, arrived in a flurry of activity. **Les Brown** and his orchestra played for the final ball. At the time the dance committee had originally contacted Mr. Brown's booking agent, they had planned on Doris Day being there, but instead the band brought two cute, young, blonde vocalists. They looked so much alike, they could have been twins. When they weren't singing, those of us in the stag line kept them busy on the dance floor. The music sounded great, and the figure-perfection; the final ball was certainly the event of graduation week.

Following the actual graduation ceremony, we all said good-bye to our friends, shaking hands and signing one another's yearbooks. It was hard to believe that most of the graduating class would be in the service within a month. Unk Hamilton and I had become good friends during the past year. As we shook hands and wished one another "good luck," I realized that within just a couple of days he would be a Second Lieutenant in the Army Infantry. Boy, the war was slowly, but surely, inching closer.

I boarded one of the chartered buses headed to Washington, DC. From there, the B & O's Columbian would get me into Pittsburgh around 11:00 that night. The sun was setting as the train crept slowly through the complicated rail network around Washington. Letting the seat's back down a little, I stretched my legs and relaxed. It felt good to be on my way home. I knew this would be my last summer there for a long time.

Pittsburgh had changed dramatically, a different feeling permeated the air—a sense of urgency. Its mills, blast furnaces and coke ovens ran three shifts, seven days a week. The sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, reports of Japanese pilots machine-gunning our troops as they waved white flags in surrender, the Bataan death march and the rape and murder of civilians in the Philippines had more clearly defined the enemy—and it wasn't a pretty picture. The enemy had proven themselves to be the "in-human and half-civilized race" Senator Wheeler had said they were.

The war had invaded everything. A window in many homes displayed a small red banner with one or more silver stars in the center, indicating that a member of that family was serving in the armed forces. Sadly, in some instances, a gold star had replaced the silver one, showing that a service man or woman had been killed. "Remember Pearl Harbor" had become the byword.

Various branches of the armed services were offering university scholarships and commissions to those who qualified. Each branch advertised some kind of incentive that would provide high school seniors the opportunity to complete the school year and graduate with their class. I took examinations for both the Navy V-12 and the Army's Air Cadet programs.

Upon returning to Augusta that fall, I found an entirely different atmosphere throughout the school. The Army's old Third Corps Area had now been designated as the Third Service

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Command. Colonel Fulton, the former professor of military science and tactics, had been promoted and reassigned. And Sergeant Wilson had been selected for Infantry Officer's Training School.

Meanwhile, the Army had confiscated all of our old '03 rifles. Until new M-1's arrived- we'd have close order drill with brooms. The regular Army personnel responsible for our military training were all new. One had been wounded in North Africa. All seemed intent on making first-class soldiers out of us by the end of the school year.

With my two new roommates, **John Hockman** and **Spotswood West**, I shared a room in the fourth stoop tower directly above the main gate—a prime spot. The third stoop tower had doors that opened to the rest of the stoop, and an inside stairway to the fourth stoop. It was impossible for anyone to approach the fourth stoop without our hearing the third stoop doors open and close. By placing a blanket over the front window, we could study until all hours without anyone noticing.

Johnny and Spotty were great companions. Spotty was tall and slender, had a ton of freckles, wore sometimes-clean glasses and usually had something witty to say. Johnny, on the other hand was more serious, easy-going and quiet. The three of us looked forward to enjoying the relaxed freedom of our new location.

In October, I received notification that I had qualified for both the V-12 and Army Air Cadet programs. I chose the Army Air Corps because I felt it offered a better chance to become a fighter pilot.

None of the new, regular Army personnel assigned to the school's ROTC program was a rifle expert, and with Sergeant Wilson's reassignment, the rifle team had no coach. Major Roller solved the situation by appointing **Major Cherrington**, a recently retired artilleryman from Ft. Monroe, to be the team's sponsor with me as coach. To make matters worse, **Stafford Whittle**, one of our best shots had transferred to **Kentucky Military Institute**. Aside from myself, that left us with only two other cadets who had had any match experience. The outlook for the rifle team didn't seem encouraging.

Actual results were worse than I anticipated. Because of gasoline rationing, several of our matches were canceled, and the team won only two of the remaining four head-to-head matches. When it came time for us to fire for the Hearst Trophy, I sent Major Roller, with a copy to Major Cherrington, a list of cadets who I felt should comprise the team. I picked the five best shots in the school. For reasons I could never understand, Major Roller or Major Cherrington chose several that were not on my list. In disgust, I wrote a letter to Major Roller tendering my resignation as coach and included the keys to the range and its lockers. There was no reply.

The day finally arrived when we were to fire targets for the Hearst Trophy. As I entered the main gate from my last class, Major Cherrington waved me into his office. I entered, saluted and

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remained at attention.

The Major looked at me with a stern expression. *“Collingwood,”* he began, *“I understand you wrote a letter to the Commandant in which you tendered your resignation as coach of the rifle team.”*

“Yes, Sir.”

“Sergeant Collingwood, does that mean you aren’t going to fire in today’s match?”

“No, Sir. I resigned only as the team’s coach.”

“Why didn’t you come to see me about this?”

“Because it was Major Roller who assigned me the job as coach, Sir.”

The Major rose. With a hostile glance, he said, *“Collingwood, I certainly hope you will try to do your best this afternoon.”*

I could feel the back of my neck and my face getting warm, as I looked him straight in the eye. In fact, I looked straight through his eyes and right out the back of his head.

“Sir, I always do my best.”

“Sergeant. You’re dismissed.”

After saluting, I took one step backwards, did an about face and left the Major’s office. As I climbed the stairs to our room, I was visibly angry. He had no right to insinuate that I might even consider throwing the match.

When I told my roommates what had happened, Spotty looked at me with one of his infectious grins. *“OoooEeeee, Miss Agnes-Smile, don’t let that guy get under your skin. Just don’t think about it. Go shoot the best score you’ve ever made, and tell him to stick it in his ear.”*

Johnny chimed in, *“Spotty’s right, Smile. Don’t let him get to you. Heck, in a couple of months you’ll be graduating and leaving here for good. Forget about what Cherrington said, relax and just do the best you can.”*

As it turned out, the rifle team did not score well for the Hearst Trophy. Although I had not shot my best, nonetheless it was good enough to win the individual title for the Third Service Command. At dinner later that month after the results were published, Major Roller awarded me another major monogram. It was a nice gesture, but the feeling was far different from last year when the team had won.

When spring arrived, we had some very interesting visitors. Several of last year’s graduates who had already seen combat returned for visits. One had been wounded, and another, who had joined the Navy, had his ship shot out from under him in the Pacific. We sat there in amazement listening to their sobering tales. There was no doubt about it, the war took on another dimension when last year’s upperclassmen related their actual experiences.

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Our stepped-up military training bore fruit. During the examination and field exercises conducted by the Army's Third Service Command, we won top honors.

For some reason the last few months of that senior year seemed to pass more quickly than the rest. All of a sudden it was graduation week, not the grand celebration of previous years, but graduation none the less. No dates from home for the final ball. Gasoline rationing and a government imposed 35 mile-per-hour speed limit prevented many parents and friends from attending. Instead, girls from nearby Mary Baldwin, Fairfax Hall and Madison populated the figure. It was a great evening.

For those seniors who were leaving Augusta and heading to war, the final parade was something special. There were more than just a few moist eyes in the ranks when First Captain, **Earl Cabaniss**, ordered, "*Pass in Review.*" I'm sure I wasn't the only one on the parade ground, cadet or spectator, who wondered how many of our class would never be able to return for an Alumni Weekend.

In a few hours I was again on my way to Washington to catch the B & O's Columbian to Pittsburgh. This time, though, as I lowered the seat's back and stretched my legs, I wasn't reflecting on Augusta or thinking about summer vacation. Instead, my thoughts soared. I dreamed of becoming a fighter pilot. And I was now one step closer to realizing that dream.

It would be a short summer holiday though. Most of my friends from Aspinwall High had already left for the service, and I wouldn't be far behind. Orders for me to report to the Army Air Force on 20 July were waiting for me at home.

Although gasoline was tightly rationed, Dad had carefully conserved his B-stamps for me to use, but there really wasn't all that much to do. He was as disappointed as I. Foods, such as dairy products, meat, sugar and coffee, were also strictly rationed. Meat, in particular, was in short supply-when the local butcher had any, it was usually gone by noon.

One morning the mailman delivered a V-mail letter with an Armed Forces Post Office (APO) return address. I recognized the uneven handwriting immediately-it was from Unk, now Lieutenant E. F. Hamilton. Carefully opening the tissue-paper-thin, stamp-less envelope, I sat down to read. Unk wrote that he was on board a troopship that was heading across the Atlantic. He was now a platoon commander, and his men had just been issued their M-1 rifles. Until now they had trained with broomsticks. None of them had ever before actually fired a rifle or a machine-gun-or tossed a live grenade. "*Smiley,*" he said in closing, "*I really wish you were here to teach these men how to shoot.*" I thought to myself,-wonder if those guys know how lucky they are to have a real leader like Unk heading-up their platoon?

Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, if it didn't rain, I played American Legion ball for the Veteran's Hospital team. The hospital was only about half a mile from home, so I could easily walk to the

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field. The majority of the patients were real baseball fans. Most were WWI veterans, suffering from tuberculosis-the result of their exposure to mustard gas.

Since they were not permitted to leave the hospital grounds, they'd listen daily to Rosie Rosewell's broadcast of the Pirates' games on radio. Then, two evenings a week thirty or more would come out for our games. A few walked unattended, some came on crutches, many powered their own wheelchairs, but there were others that the orderlies had to wheel out. Unable to cheer or yell as loud as most fans, they'd loudly applaud almost every play-good or bad. They really enjoyed being out in the fresh air and watching the game. For us-they were a great crowd to play for.

Thursday and Friday evenings I worked behind the soda fountain at Mr. Freid's drugstore in Aspinwall. Beneath the white and black marble counter, eight cardboard tubs of ice cream, each a different flavor, rested on the floor in a large freezer. Behind the counter stainless steel containers with spouts and plungers held the various kinds of syrup. Mounted above the counter, large spigots supplied plain ice water or pressurized carbonated water. On the customer side, stood four revolving stools. Across the room against the far wall, two booths with high-back benches provided seating for eight. It was the best-equipped ice cream parlor within five miles.

The pay wasn't much, but Freid's was the place young people gathered, and I knew every customer by name. On Friday nights, when the movie theater next door let out at 9:30, high school students filled the store. For the girls seated at the counter, I'd always slip an extra scoop of ice cream into their sodas-that and a smile never failed to get a good conversation going. Summer vacation was short, but it was great while it lasted.

You can view the 1943 RECALL here:

<https://galleries.amaalumni.org/Recalls/Recall-1943/>