

Santa Fe, New Mexico
January 24 - 1944

Dear Boys:

This letter is long overdue but January has been a month full of the things that make grey hairs. In the first place my Frank Jr left Jan 12 as I told you he would in my last letter. When I stood at the old ranch gate about dusk that cold snowy winter's evening and waved to that big bus as it sped by, I reached a new low in grief. It was too dark to see his face - I could only see him wave. He is now in the Medical Corps - Camp Grant, Illinois - 70 miles out of Chicago. I have no address as yet but hope to have by tomorrow.

Dave Thornburg left the day after Frank - went to Ft. Bliss##, too, but is now in Sheppard Field (where Irving is). Don't know yet where Little Shaffer was sent but he'll let me know soon. Donald LaNoue has a medical discharge from the Army - have heard it was tuberculosis and then again I heard it was "pilot's fatigue" - I don't know. He is supposed to be in Denver in a hospital. Jimmy Hill was in the hospital in San Diego for a while. He is now in Quantico, I heard. He hasn't yet received my last letter - he was transferred before it reached the first address. Harry Richards has been heard from - Lenora received a letter from him from a hospital in Sicily. No-one knows the extent of his injuries but it is good to know he is no longer "missing in action". Someone told me that Barbara Stinson didn't marry after all - no-one knows that for certain either. I talked to her aunt the other day - she hadn't heard from the Stinsons# at all. James passed his pilot's exam (James Richards) but Jack Hennigan washed out and will now return to mechanics school. Jack Benson left for the Marines December 30. Billy Byrne is in Stanford. Richard Cook in Texas A & M, Frank Willard in NMMI. George Henning left Jan 7 - think he is on the ocean now. Connie Mendenhall is going to school in Stillwater, Oklahoma. Becky Back is working for the State Welfare. Ruth Showman and Phyllis Calkins run around together, I hear. Frances Antoine and Claramae Bemis are a Los Alamos on the government project for the duration of the war. Jeanne Butler is here working for the Draft Board. Gene Petchesky has a six-months medical discharge from the Army - some sort of heart disturbance, I hear. A letter from Jeep tells me he (J) is nearly six-feet-three and weighs 185 pounds.

Blaine was in the battle of Tarawa. He was back in San Diego recently, had a 72 hour leave - his folks went out to see him. He is gone again now. Tony and Paul are both supposed to be home on furloughs right away.

What a time I am having with Al and his crowd of ninth graders! Honestly, they keep me in the state Dagwood Bumstead gets in when he puts his head down on the table, pounds his fist and says "Give me strength". The little girls think I am so-o-o-o wonderful - they try on my shoes, they want to wear my rings, they pass around my ear-rings, they want me to braid their hair in pig-tails like mine. The boys skid across the floor from one end of the room to the other and end up with a bang against the front door. If I'm living out-of-dours when you come back, it will be because the south end of the house has found life is too much of a struggle. The last party Al had out here really gave me quite a turn. We have a hole in the floor of the bath-room where our furnaces are serviced - it is covered over, you understand, but it is about three feet square and is noticeable. I opened the bath-room door and very nearly stepped four feet down - someone had removed the trap-door. I could hear mumbling under the house, so I gingerly stepped over the place and peered down into the hole. About that time up came the tousled head of Bobby Dwyre - "Would it be asking too much for you to confide in me just what you are doing?", quoth I. It wasn't - he had suddenly decided that he would look under the house to see whether there were any skunks or raccoons!!!! There weren't, so we closed the hole and, if he read the gleam in my eye aright, he'll do his hunting elsewhere in the future. All I need now is my neck in a crutch to round out an interesting life on the ranch. Yesterday, four of the crowd came out with the avowed intention

no has told you all this news but here it is anyway

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More later - when more news comes up. Be careful - take care of yourselves and hurry back

Love
map
Marie Packard

Suppose Dave has told you all this news but here 'tis anyway

Francis address

Pvt Francis O Packard Jr

38583975

HQ Co 6th Med Trg Regt.

Camp Grant - Bks T-129

Illinois

US Army