

Woody



Pvt. Wesley R. Woodbury

US51127845



This account is built around a series of letter to and from my uncle “Woody,” Wesley Roland Woodbury, and chiefly concerns his 1952 death during the undeclared war in Korea. If you don’t anticipate reading through everything about him here, let me recommend that you at least jump to “a parting tribute” at the end. You can always come back later to the short biographical section and the letters which constitute the core of this article. The letters, arranged chronologically beginning with what I’ve designated as WRW Letter 1, tell of his brief life as a soldier.

the boy, Wesley

My father, Victor Walter Woodbury, was born in 1927. His younger brother, Wesley, youngest in the family, was born in 1930. They spent much of their childhood living at 40 Baldwin Street in Livermore Falls, Maine, and shuttling to their grandmother Goldie Jensen's home at the Fairbanks end of Farmington, and to their great-grandparents' place, the Sweet camp, on Porter Lake in New Vineyard. Besides his younger brother, Wesley, Victor had an older brother, Donald (1923), and two older sisters, Dorothy (1924), and Virginia (1925). Their mother, Clarice (Hines) Woodbury had divorced their father, Everett Hugh Woodbury, in 1936, when the five children ranged in age from thirteen and six.



about 1941, front: Wesley, Clarice, Virginia; back: Dorothy, Donald, Victor

When Wesley, the youngest of the family, was about 11 if not before that, his father, Hugh, left Maine and went to work in Massachusetts. It's unclear whether the younger four of Hugh's five children saw much of him at all after 1936, though. From some letters in my possession, it is clear that Donald stayed in touch with him, visited him when he could while serving in the Navy, and stayed in touch until Hugh's death in 1945.

When I was a kid, we often heard stories told about my Uncle Woody; he was much on peoples' minds for several years after he died (when I was two year old). While it was not OK to talk about my grandfather, Hugh, it was apparently comforting for the adults in my world to talk about Woody. I knew he had made the news several times as a 12-year-old runaway, sometimes accompanied by Wags, his dog. Even though he had made it to Boston at least a couple of these times, (always with a fabricated story of where he was headed and why), he apparently did not reconnect with his father.

HORATIO ALGER METHOD FAILS LIV. FALLS BOY

PORTLAND, April 26-AP-Wesley Woodbury, 12, agreed tonight after a talk with a Portland clergyman, to return to his Livermore Falls home and wait a few years before striking out in the world to get a job.

Wesley and his cocker spaniel, Wags, left home last week, came to Portland by train, hitch-hiked to Boston and there was dissuaded by police from continuing on to Philadelphia in search of work.

En route home, Wesley missed a train connection here—purposely, he told police, because he didn't want to go home for "they won't let me work." At police headquarters he talked with the Rev. John Hyssong, and finally agreed to go back to Livermore Falls. Wesley and the dog stayed overnight at Mr. Hyssong's home.

'Meanest Man' Steals \$20, Maine Boy's Fare to Visit Parents

At 12 years of age, Wesley Woodbury has his private candidate for the meanest man in the world—a kindly-faced stranger who stole his \$20 fare to Philadelphia, where he planned to visit his parents.

The disconsolate youngster remained in Boston last night, with his runaway pal, a cocker spaniel named "Wags," awaiting a trip back to the home of his foster parents in Livermore Falls, Me.

Wesley told police he asked the stranger to purchase his ticket at the Portland railroad station, but that the ticket-seller questioned his projected journey. The man never returned, so he hitchhiked to Boston, with only \$9 left of his nickels and dimes savings. Here, his trip was halted when patrolman Patrick Diver found him wandering about wide-eyed in Scollay sq.

By the time he was 14, Woody was a resident at Good Will-Hinckley, then a school for troubled boys, and he ran away from there at least once as well. When he was four months shy of his 15th birthday and about to graduate eighth grade, his father, Hugh, was driving a small dump truck in Cambridge, Massachusetts, when it was struck at a railway crossing by the Minute Man Express at full throttle.

I heard the stories about Woody (always Woody, never called Wesley) up until I was, say, ten years old, and then not much after that. Our family continued growing until I had four younger sisters and a little brother, so Dad had less opportunity to dwell on Wesley. He made sure to drive from Ohio to Maine to visit his mother at least once a year, though, and on most of those trips he took me along as his sole passenger. I remember details of several of those adventures (for me) as early as when I was probably four years old. Almost every year, too, our whole family made a camping trip across country to see the Grammies, Clarice and Goldie. The world was changing and along with it our worldly cares. So over time, Woody was not forgotten, but there was less and less said about him.

Among the stories I heard was one about Wesley thinking he was going to get into amateur boxing and challenge Rocky Marciano, who was just getting started in his career after WW II, when Woody was in his late teens. Rocky lived in the Boston area and was making his boxing start there, an area with which Wesley was possibly familiar. When he was sixteen he did spend three months on the run, from August 21 until November 16, 1946, and was apprehended in Hope Valley, Rhode Island. Was he chasing Marciano then? Apparently he never went anywhere in amateur boxing, though, so there was nothing more to that story.

APRIL 25, 1943

BOSTON

NO CHANCE TO REVIEW ARMY

Maine Lad of 12 Is Going Right Back Home

Wesley Woodbury, 12, of Livermore Falls, Me., will be back home tomorrow, and without his chance to see a lot of soldiers, as he wished to do, but it isn't the fault of the army. They were willing to do their bit, even with a jeep thrown in for good measure on the sightseeing trip.

Wesley was picked up Friday in the West End with his pet dog, Wag. He told police he had hitchhiked from Maine to see the soldiers. Mrs. Clarice Woodbury sent money yesterday to

Boston police to pay his fare back home.

It seems, however, that Wesley later told police his story of wanting to see the soldiers wasn't the whole story. He said his real parents live in Philadelphia and that he had saved up \$29 in nickels and dimes to go and visit them.

When he got to Portland, Friday, he didn't dare to go and buy a railroad ticket himself, so he gave \$20 to a man to buy the ticket for him, and the man never returned with the ticket or change.

Police consulted with officials of juvenile court on the matter and they suggested that the boy be held until Monday and then sent home, but the suggestion of the army for a sightseeing tour in a jeep was turned down by the court.

SPOTLESS TOWN

MORGANTON, N. C., April 24 (AP)—Because of a wartime reduction in business, the Burke County Bar Association has petitioned the county commissioners to abolish the County Criminal Court for the duration.

Missing Livermore Falls Boy Found at Gardiner

LIVERMORE FALLS — Wesley Woodbury, 12 year old son of Mrs. Claris Woodbury of this town, missing since Sunday noon, was located Monday evening at the home of his brother, Donald Woodbury, at Gardiner. The lad had hitchhiked from his home in Sunday's storm.

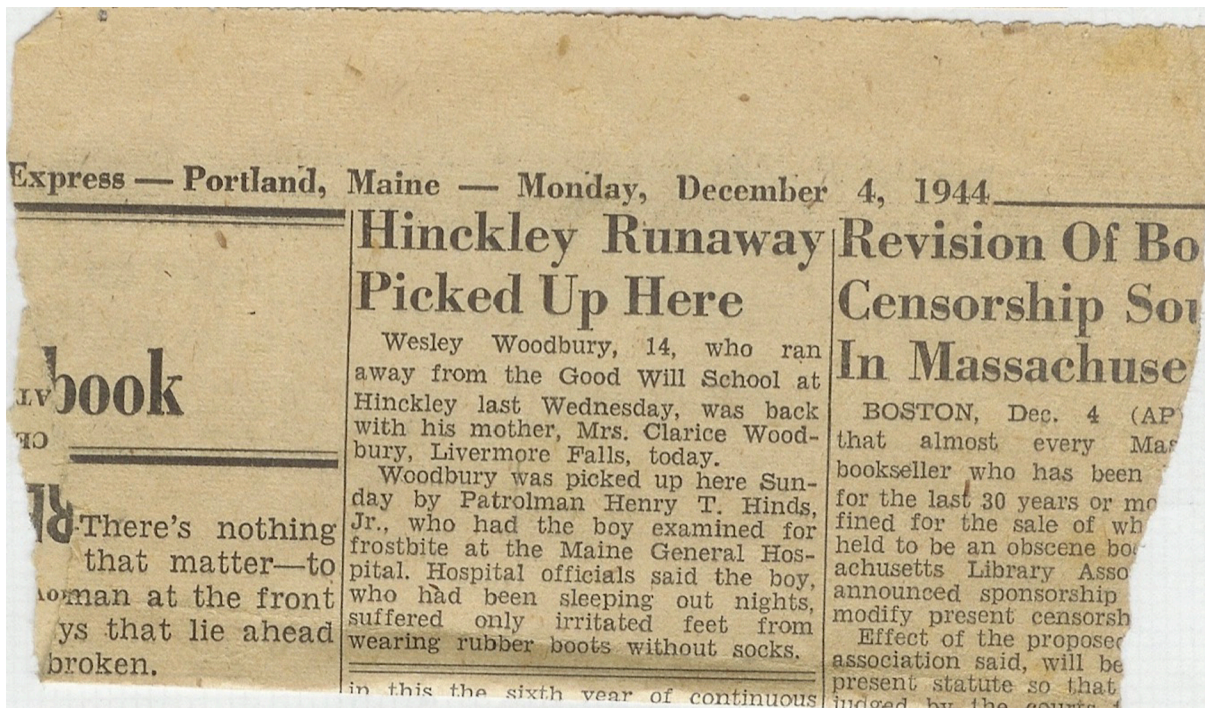
The lad was turned home Monday night by Deputy Sheriff La-

roche, after Winthrop and Gardiner officials had been called into the search. According to the story told the deputy, the lad had walked to North Livermore, secured a ride to Leeds, and another to Augusta, and had walked the remaining miles to Gardiner.

The boy's mother had not reported the disappearance of the lad until Monday.

a very troubled youth

At some point when he was between twelve and fourteen Wesley was apparently implicated in participating with some other boys in causing a fire that burned two barns at the Franklin County Fair Grounds in Farmington. There is no record I know of that he was ever charged with it. An undated newspaper clipping, however, is included among the sixty pages of records that my cousin Dan Kinney obtained from the Maine Department of Corrections in December, 2018. (Dan had petitioned the Maine District Court in District Seven for Wesley's juvenile criminal history.) The newspaper clipping includes only this to suggest how the fire started: "Officials learned a group of youths were seen leaving the grounds a short time before the blaze was discovered."



Virginia (Woodbury) Norris recalled that her younger brothers Victor and Wesley would sneak out at night, steal cars, drive them around until they ran out of gas, and then abandon them. Dad was the older of the two boys, but it was Wesley who was always in trouble for the things they did together.

I don't know when Wesley was initially sent to the school for troubled boys at Hinckley. The preceding newspaper clipping makes clear that he was already there by December of the year he turned fourteen. But between December 1944 and the following springtime he returned home to his family in time to graduate the eighth grade on June 15, 1945. During the next three weeks he succeeded in stealing another car, for which larceny he was arrested, sentenced, and committed to the State School for Boys in South Portland on July 9, 1945. He would turn fifteen eleven days later.

The record on the next page states that he admitted to stealing nine cars altogether up to that point. Compare Wesley at age eleven in the family photo with his mug shots at age fifteen (minus eleven days), bearing his inmate number 5404.

While being incarcerated at the State School for Boys was a move in the wrong direction from the "reform" school in Hinckley, Wesley was failing to reform himself and was about

Name	Wesley Roland Woodbury		Sex	Male	Color	White
Alias						
Crime	Larceny of car		Place	Livermore Falls	Date	
Arrested by			Date			
City or Town	Biddeford	County	York	State	Maine	
Sentence	State School for Boys July 9, 1945		Sentence Expires: July 20/51			
Date of Probation			Probation Expires	Probation Officer		
Date of Parole			Parole Discharge	Direct Discharge		
Marks and Scars	Base of right index finger.					
Date of Birth	July 20, 1930		Nationality and Descent			
Height:	5' 2 1/2"		American			
Weight:	112 1/2		Naturalized <input type="checkbox"/> Alien <input type="checkbox"/>			
Build:	Stocky		Occupation:			
Complexion:			Birth Place:			
Hair:			Livermore Falls			
Flaxen	Brown	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Residence:			
Blonde	Black		Livermore Falls			
Sandy	Grey		Education:			
Red	Bald		Grade 8			
Eyes:			Single <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/>			
Blue	Red		Nose:			
Slate	Black	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Straight <input type="checkbox"/>			
Brown	Glasses		Concave <input type="checkbox"/>			
			Convex <input type="checkbox"/>			
			Roman <input type="checkbox"/>			
Relatives	Mother - Mrs. Clarice Woodbury					
Associates and Remarks	<p>State School for Boys</p> <p>South Portland, Maine</p>					
Previous Record:						

to give the system a run for its money. Meanwhile, brother Victor was a senior at Livermore Falls High School in the fall of 1945, his sisters and brother Donald already graduates.

The following is from a summary provided by the State School for Boys and was included in the records obtained by Dan — wording as written in the official document:

September 29, 1945	Escaped at 2:45 p.m. with two other boys.
October 2, 1945	Apprehended by Andover, Mass., police and taken to court in Newburyport. Returned in custody to school. They had stolen two cars, food, clothing, and miscellaneous articles. Warrants were filed and the boys returned to the school.
December 28, 1945	Ran away at 6:20 p.m. with another boy.
December 30, 1945	Returned in custody from Melrose, Mass.
May 21, 1946	Escaped from his cottage at 10:15 a.m.

May 23, 1946	Returned by mother.
August 21, 1946	Escaped from main building kitchen at 6:10 a.m.
November 15, 1946	Arrested in Hope Valley, Rhode Island, by state police while hitchhiking. Wesley stated that he had stolen nothing while a fugitive. He had travelled around through New York and several other states, working only a short while at each of many places. He was always asked eventually for either a ration book or social security card and knew that unless he left soon he would be found out. Wesley is a willing worker and a very likable boy most of the time. Apparently he is very unstable and when he becomes unhappy or upset about anything he just walks off. Merit standing -599 merits (in the hole). Merits necessary to earn release 959 or approximately 24 months. Recommend early release (six months?) if behavior improves and remains satisfactory.
November 17, 1946	Returned in custody to the school.
November 18, 1946	Transferred to the Maine State Reformatory for Men in South Windham.

The collection of documents from the Maine Department of Corrections includes a letter from the FBI to the State School for Boys, dated December 10, 1946, and signed by J Edgar Hoover himself, stating that the FBI Wanted Notice for Wesley's arrest was being cancelled.

It is doubtful that my grandmother, my father, or others in the family were even aware that the FBI had become involved in the case. One document affirms that Wesley's sentence, by the time of his grand escapade concluding in Rhode Island, was to last until his 21st birthday. It does appear, though, that he was released once he had earned his high school diploma. I have his diploma and it was issued by Livermore Falls High School, which he hardly attended. I can't tell when he was released, though. There is a page with a brief reference to seeing an Army recruited in late 1949, so evidently he was free by that time.

starting a new life

For all his troubles and mis-starts, Woody did manage to get the attention of a girl from Vermont, Dorothy Rutledge, and by the time he was 20 and after a suitable courtship, they were married June 23, 1951. The following summer, Woody was a new recruit in the U.S. Army and, all too quickly, he was going to war. But, during the next couple of months after his baby daughter, Brenda, was born July 23, 1952, he had a week's leave in which to get slightly acquainted with her. Then, following orders, he went west to San Francisco in October, 1952, to board the *USS General W.M. Black* for transport to Korea.

Since he was now a resident of Vermont, Wesley enlisted in the Army in Vermont. His funeral was held there as well, which explains the preparations being made in WRW Letter 9, and his grave is near the top of the cemetery on U.S. Route 2 outside Concord. My father told me Woody was blown up by a land mine — a North Korean mine evidently, since in WRW Letter 3 Woody states "Once in a while we go out into no mans land and take up mines." According to his military record his "remains" were recovered and, presumably, sent home. (But how are a soldier's remains kept from decaying while awaiting transport and then while being carted halfway around the world?)



Wesley at age 20-21

There are 15 pieces to this correspondence, some many pages long, others just brief. My grandmother, Clarice Woodbury, had hoarded hundreds of letters, postcards, clippings, newspapers, legal documents, certificates, and related paraphernalia. When she died in 1969, Dad became executor of her estate, had to sell her house at 234 State Street in Portland of course, and all her stuff found its way to Dad and Mom's house in Farmington and then eventually to mine. My parents added their own family papers to the mix — to the boxes of relics that Mom eventually sent home with me or brought to me at one time or another — and a mix it was when I began to explore it.

Unlike most things, though — because they were given to me for their postage stamps I suppose (I have always been a stamp collector) — I had already found these letters and had bundled them as a coherent collection before my father died. I brought them to a family reunion in New Sharon in 1996, thinking I might show them to Dad or to my cousin, Dan, but I came away without having done so. (Dan brought copies of the family tree that he had organized.) There was too much else going on, and if 40 people had all handled these letters, the lot would likely not have stayed together or even stayed in my hands. It almost certainly never would have been published. As it is, I lost them all later, as I shall explain.

Dad died two years after that reunion. At the time, I had considered photographing them and sharing them around the family. But my own immersion in worldly cares interfered with that. Wesley's daughter, my first cousin, Brenda, was living then, but I

knew not where. After visiting her with Dan when she was 18, I hadn't laid eyes on her or been in direct contact with her in over 25 years by the time that family reunion came around. Nor did she attend it.

We had been loosely in contact throughout that time though, primarily through her mother, Dorothy, and my mother, Dorothy. I had known that Brenda married Rocky Lane Hull in September, 1972, in Sharon, Vermont. That marriage ended in divorce after less than three years and I know nothing about that husband. Nor do I know how Brenda met Robert E. Merriam of Zanesville, Ohio, ten years her senior, who was an M.D. and clinical pathologist. After they were married they lived in Tustin and/or Ripon, California, and at some point they bought a house that had previously been owned by José Feliciano. Their son, Michael Merriam, was born in 1979 and my latest information is that he lives in Orlando, Florida. He is Brenda's only child and Wesley's only living progeny. Both Dan Kinney and I have been in touch with him and, so far as we can determine, he will probably not be having children of his own.

In 1999 I started the web site, DamnYankee.com, and more years passed before I contrived to make good quality scans of all these letters. Some day... Some day, I decided, I would transcribe them and publish them on the internet. Then Brenda died on St. Patrick's Day 2007, apparently of a heart attack. This shook me; she was 54 years old, two years younger than I. So I did publish the collection of letters. Then I contacted Wesley's widow, Brenda's mother, later known as Dottie Shippee, who had later re-married and raised two more girls as well, Cindy and Gail Shippee. I had had sporadic encounters with Gail over the years, who lived in Orono, Maine, but years had passed between times.

By phone in 2007, I told Dottie about the letters you see here and I offered them to her. She said, quietly, "I would love to have them." I bundled them up and sent them to her. Too late to reach Brenda, whom I should have passed them on to, I hoped it wouldn't be too late for Brenda's son, Michael, but I doubt that Dottie ever passed them on to him.

Woody was Michael's grandfather, who may be of interest to him some day, just as my grandparents through several generations have intrigued me. In 2014, Dottie Shippee died. Within a few months I contacted Cindy Shippee to see whether she might know what had become of the letters. She didn't know and suspects that they were not saved when her mom's small apartment was emptied — they had to move things out quickly to avoid continuing to pay rent and much was simply discarded. I don't regret sending them to Dottie, though. It may have given some much-needed closure in her last years.

For that reason, the original letters are now lost.

I knew Woody, but I can't recall an image of him or a setting when we were together. My earliest memories include only the knowledge of him. Shortly after my first sibling, Ann, was born in Florida as I was, our parents moved us to Portland in the spring of 1952. Within a couple months of that, Brenda was born, Woody was in basic training in the Army, and then by my father's 25th birthday, October 21, he was crossing the Pacific on his way to Korea. By then, mid-October, we had moved to my mother's home town of Lima, Ohio.

My great-grandfather, George Hugh Woodbury, died in February, 1953. While I don't have memories of Woody, I do have a distinct recollection of sitting in the tall grass in front of the house in North Belgrade, Maine, where George had lived — sitting in the grass with Ann, who was by then barely a year old. My parents had brought us back to Maine, probably in the spring or early summer of 1953 after George's death, so I would have been two and a half years old. I have another memory of sitting in the bushes with Ann just off our camp road in New Vineyard, both of us crying over the inconvenience, while some

repair was being done to our grandmother's car — a flat tire perhaps. That would have occurred on the same trip to Maine, for certain, and only a few months after I last saw Woody.

All the while I was growing up I had a flop-eared stuffed brown dog that Woody had given me and which I have always treasured. While I didn't remember him in any distinct way, I seldom went a day, from my earliest memory until I was grown and left home, without seeing that dog. My oldest daughter, Ruth, now has it and knows its provenance.

So, like the aging memory of steam whistles across the valley on cold winter nights, I cling to what I can of Woody, and I offer up, at last, what I would have shared, if I'd had the publishing skills, by the time of that family reunion in 1996. Here, starting with the first letter, is the haunting exchange of correspondence that tells the story of Woody's last days and the aftermath.

Dorothy times four

When I was growing up I had to unscramble the Dorothys. Here's how it goes, starting with my mother:

Dorothy Miller (1925) married Victor Woodbury, becoming Dorothy Woodbury.

Dorothy Gladfelter (1912) married mom's brother, Daniel Miller, becoming Dorothy Miller.

Dorothy Woodbury (1924), dad's sister, married Carroll Kinney, becoming Dorothy Kinney.

Dorothy Rutledge (1930), married dad's brother, Wesley Woodbury, becoming Dorothy Woodbury. (Her mother was also Dorothy.)

Some went by nicknames Dot or Dottie, which was supposed to help tell them apart in casual conversation. It didn't help. Of these four, Dorothy (Gladfelter) Miller doesn't figure into this narrative but the other three do. Where there could be any confusion I have made notes to help keep them straight.

the letters

These were brought together from two sources: accumulated correspondence that my parents had saved of their own stuff, and accumulated correspondence my grandmother, Clarice Woodbury, had saved and which then came down to me from my father, Victor.

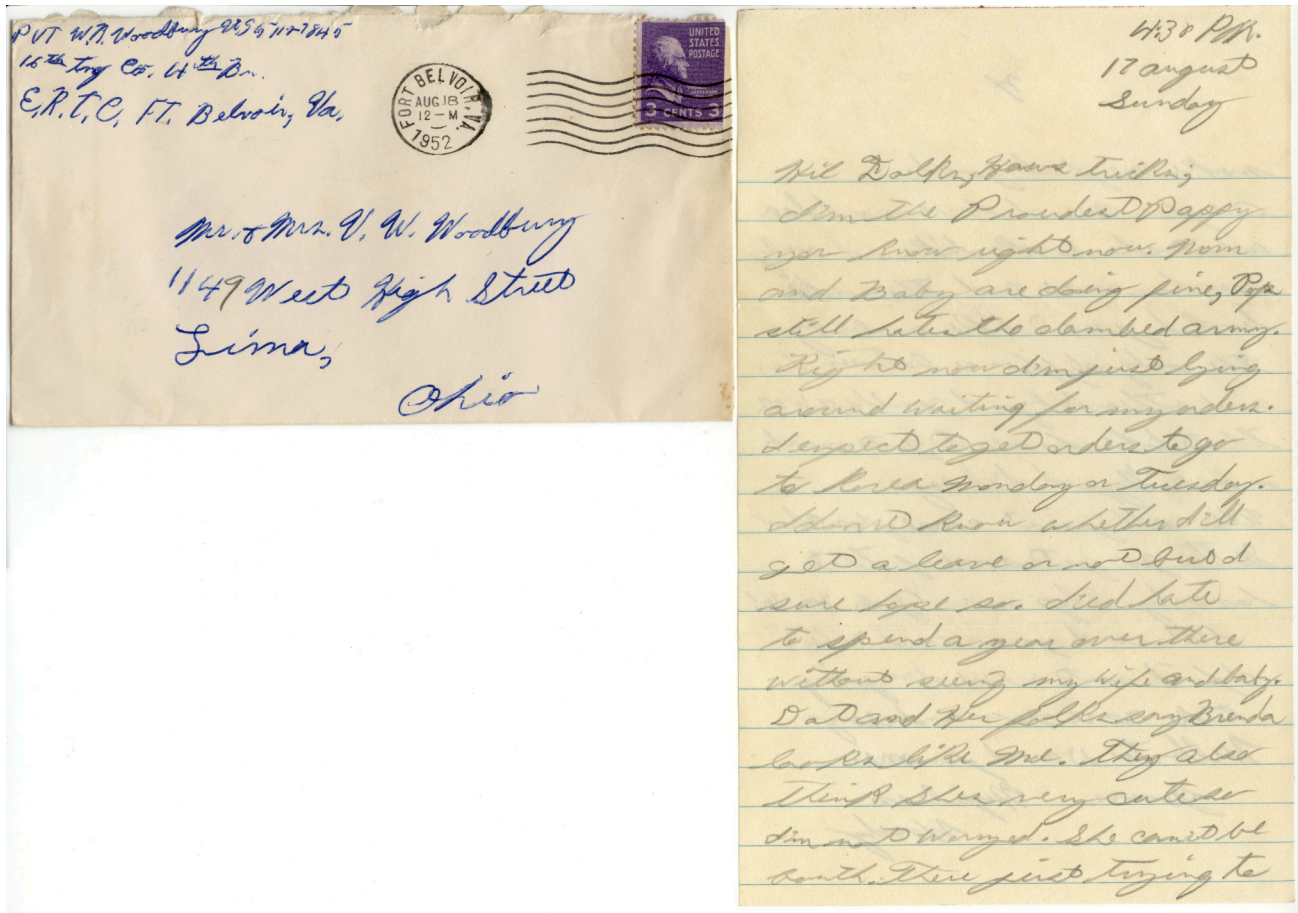
I've provided a transcription of each letter along with scans of the originals. Without the transcriptions one might give up on trying to read the handwriting, but seeing the original letters conveys so much more than the mere words. How do you describe an envelope with rubber-stamped imprints saying "VERIFIED DECEASED" and "RETURN TO SENDER"? (WRW Letter 4 and WRW Letter 5) The letters say it all, and I don't presume to explain or embellish over-much. There is nothing left at the end of the last pages but the hollow, ringing emptiness that remains when a soldier doesn't come home alive.

In the first few letters that follow, it's Dorothy (Miller) Woodbury, my mother, who was handling the correspondence. Letters from Dorothy (Rutledge) Woodbury, Wesley's widow, appear later and are plainly marked. Letters from or to his sister, Dorothy (Woodbury) Kinney do not appear in this exchange, although she is mentioned in some.

The original scans are in high resolution but are scaled here to fit the format of the book.

WRW Letter 1

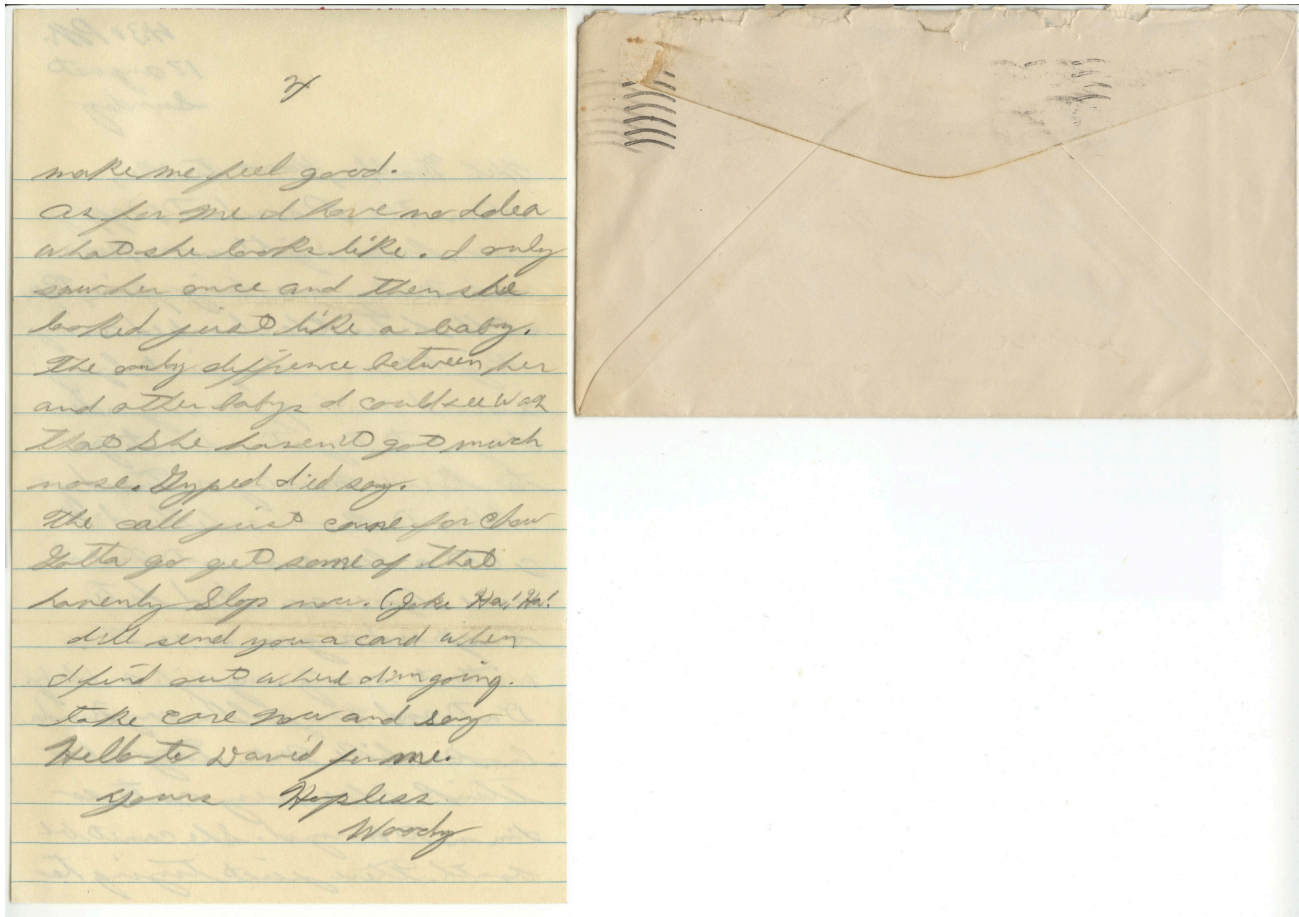
[Addressed to Mr. + Mrs. V. W. Woodbury, my parents. 1149 West High Street was the house that my mother grew up in and in 1952 was occupied by her sister, Margaret Irene (Miller) Bay and husband Charlie Bay. That's where our little family landed for the first few weeks in Lima after our layover in Portland — after leaving Florida.]



4:30 PM.
17 August
Sunday

Hi Folks, Hows tricks;

I'm the Proudest Pappy you know right now. Mom and Baby are doing fine, Papa still hates the dambled army. Right now I'm just lying around waiting for my orders. I expect to get orders to go to Korea Monday or Tuesday. I didn't know whether I'll get a leave or not but I sure hope so. I'd hate to spend a year over there without seeing my wife and baby. Dot and her folks say Brenda looks like me. They also think shes very cute so I'm not worried. She can't be both. There just trying to



2/

make me feel good.

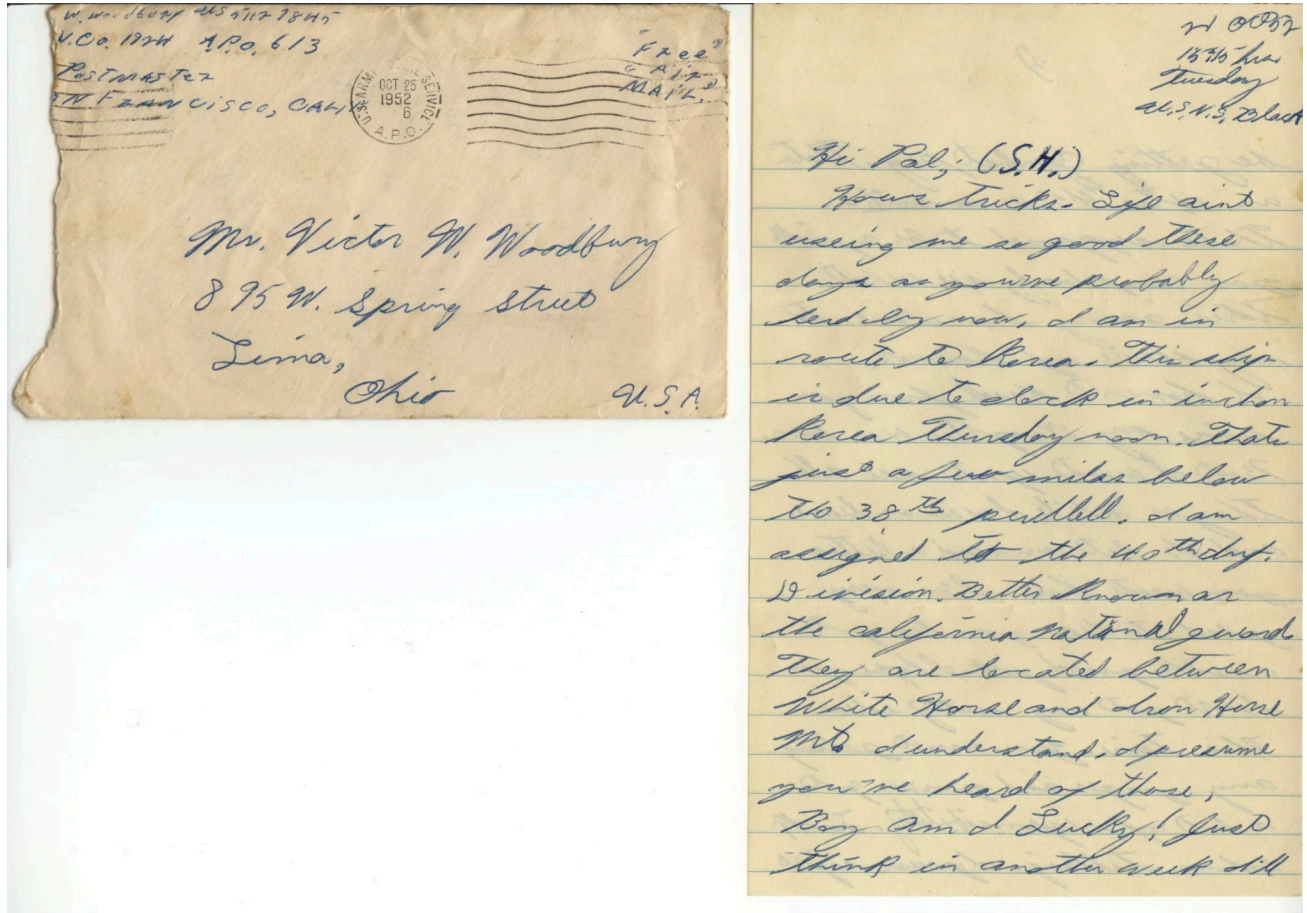
As for me I have no idea what she looks like. I only saw her once and then she looked just like a baby. The only difference between her and other babies I could see was that she hasn't got much nose. Gyped I'd say.

The call just came for chow Gotta go get some of that havenly slop now. (Joke Ha! Ha! I'll send you a card when I find out where I'm going. Take care now and say Hello to David for me.

Yours Hapless
Woody

WRW Letter 2

[Addressed to Mr. Victor W. Woodbury.]



21 Oct 52
 15:15 hrs
 Tuesday
 U.S.N.S. Black

Hi Pal; (S.H.)

Hows tricks. Life aint using me so good these days as you've probably herd by now. I am in route to Korea. This ship is due to dock in inchoon Korea Thursday noon. Thats just a few miles below the 38th parallel. I am assigned to the 40th Inf. Division. Better known as the california National guard. They are located between White Horse and Iron Horse Mt. I understand. I presume you've heard of those. Boy am I lucky! Just think in another week I'll

2/

be getting combat pay. That's an extra \$45. a month.

That's supposed to be a joke you can plainly see what this army has done to my sense of humor.

I haven't heard from you since my Daughter was born. But I went up to see Al Thayer while I was on leave and he let me read a letter you wrote him. I'm very glad to hear you have got another good job. I hope you don't get any nutty ideas this time. You ain't getting any younger and you've got a lot of responsibility. Look who's talking. I guess right

3/

now I'm as close to the bottom as a man could ever get.

I expect to be in Korea from 9 mos. to a year. That is if I'm lucky. I don't seem fair. With all the single men there are going to Europe but who am I to say. I'll just have to stick to the old saying. "Not for me to reason why, but for me to do or die."

I'll give you a little dope on the past few mos. and you can guess the rest.

First I spent a very pleasant leave with Dotty and Brenda. Then I flew to Oakland California. Mom flew as far

2/

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as Boston with me. It was her first time up but she was so busy talking she didn't even know it. You know our mom. Always got to get in a last word.

Well I crossed the states in 18 hrs to the tune of \$157.00 and began my processing in Camp Stoneman. That took 14 days. Then I was put on the "General W. M. Black U.S.N.S." and I pulled 14 days of K.P. between Frisco and Yokohama. At Yokohama I boarded a train that took 4 hrs. to travel 35 miles. ~~The latest thing in Japanese~~ The latest thing in Japanese

5/
rail development. I was in "Camp Drake" just 48 hrs. That's 14½ miles west of Tokyo. Then I returned by rail to the black for another 3½ days of sea life. Now I have captured the honor of duty as Latrine Sargent.

Right now we are in the "Japan Sea". We will probably enter the yellow sea sometime tonight.

I guess my daughter will be about David's size when I see her again. I hope she's as cute. Wish I could see him now.

I am sitting on deck now. It is a beautiful day. I imagine

4/

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I am sitting on deck now. It is a beautiful day. I imagine

5/ it will be a lot colder tomorrow at this time.

Here in the Orient we don't pull any K.P. and very few detales. at Camp Drake the Japs do it all and I understand it is all done by South Koreans in Korea. That don't hurt my feelings any.

While we were at Camp Drake we turned in all our outter cloths and got combat dress. now the O.D. pants and shirts are for every day instead of class A. They have all been impregnated against the lice and disease carrying ticks that we will contact over here. after all the needles I've

6/ had stuck into me I should be emuned to everything including women and eating.

Speeking of women you should see the sluts theyve got in Japan. Some of these guys are nuts about them. I can't see it. They say after I've been here a couple months I'll change my tune, but I know better. They just haven't got the wife I've got. as long as shes waiting it'll take maney a year to change my tune.

This damn deck gets pretty hard sitting. Don't know why they haven't got 3 or 4 thousand

6/

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Here in the Orient we don't pull any K.P. and very few detales. at Camp Drake the Japs do it all and I understand it is all done by South Koreans in Korea. That don't hurt my feelings any.

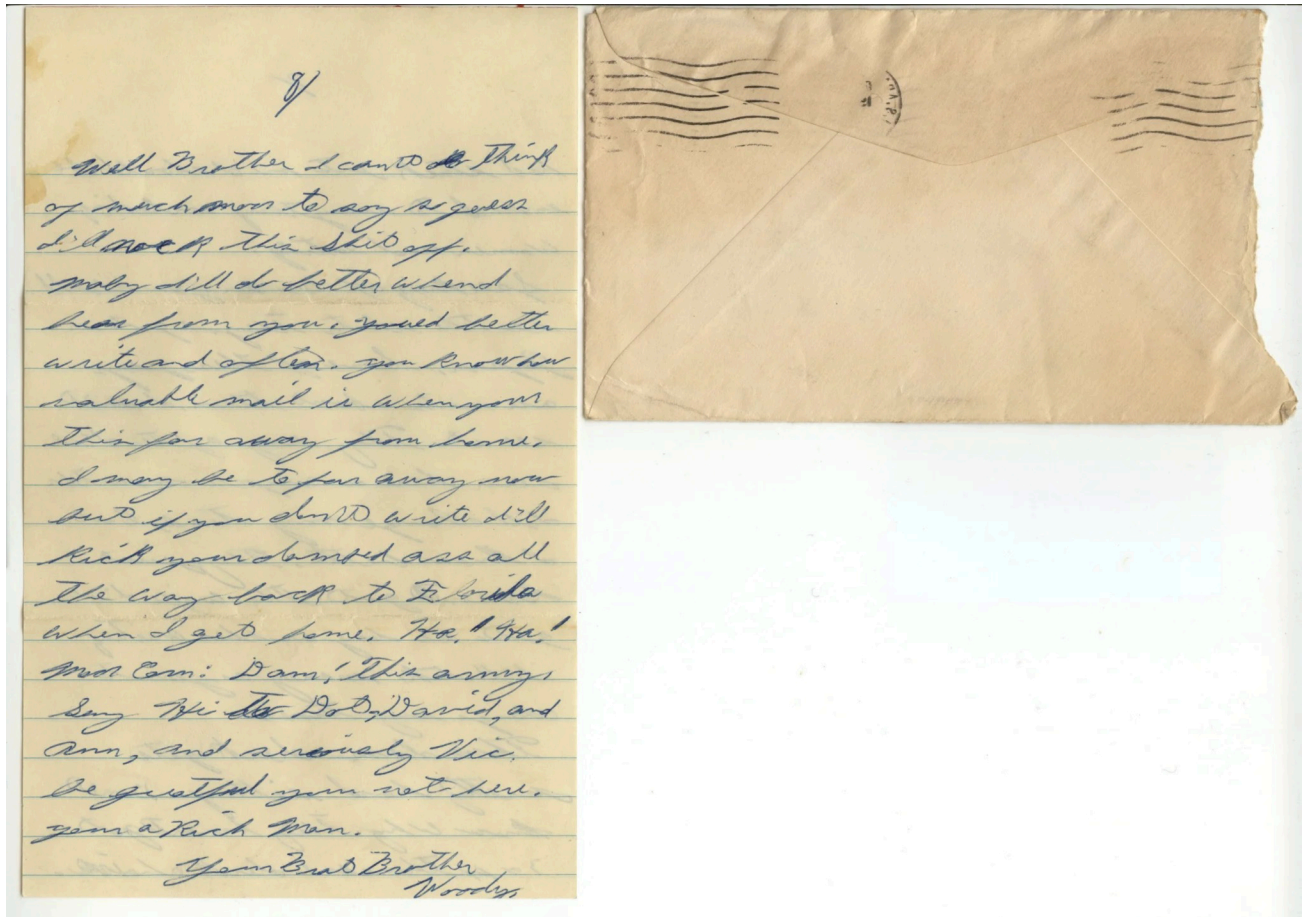
While we were at Camp Drake we turned in all our outter cloths and got combat dress. now the O.D. pants and shirts are for every day instead of class A. They have all been impregnated against the lice and disease carrying ticks that we will contact over here. After all the needles I've

7/

had stuck into me I should be emuned to everything including women and eating.

Speeking of women you should see the sluts theyve got in Japan. Some of these guys are nuts about them. I can't see it. They say after I've been here a couple months I'll change my tune, but I know better. They just haven't got the wife I've got. as long as shes waiting it'll take maney a year to change my tune.

This damn deck gets pretty hard sitting. Don't know why they haven't got 3 or 4 thousand deck chairs.



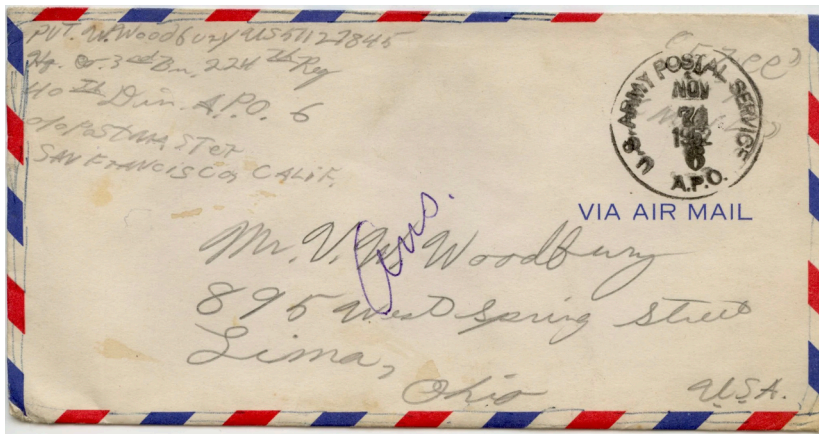
8/

Well brother I can't think of much more to say so guess I'll nock this shit off. Maby I'll do better when I hear from you. You'd better write and often. You know how valuable mail is when your this far away from home. I may be to far away now but if you don't write I'll kick your dambd ass all the way back to Florida when I get home. Ha! Ha! Mad Cow: Dam! This army. Say Hi to Dot, David, and Ann, and seriously Vic, be greatful your not here. Your a Rich Man.

Your Brat Brother
Woody.

WRW Letter 3

[Addressed to Mr. V. W. Woodbury.]



9:10 P.M.
5 Nov. 52
No. Korea.

Hi Pal;

Letters are pretty hard to write up here. When I write the folks I have to smooth things over so they won't worry. That leaves me pretty much nothing to write about. I don't feel that is necessary with you however I'll just tell you facts and you can keep them to yourself.

The second day I got in Korea I got a good look at the things that are really happening here. The train that brought me to the front stoped right beside a Hospital train. I watched them putting wounded men on the train. The ambulances were bringing the men down faster than they could

9:10 P.M.
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2/

get them onto the train. It was a sight that made me so sick I had to turn away and vomit.

Right now I'm in a fairly safe place. Our own artillery is behind us firing over our heads into enemy lines and the enemy are on the other side of the hill throwing artillery and mortar back at them. You can see how cozy that makes us. The other night we had quite a shower here. (artillery that is I was told that 160 rounds hit us between 7 PM and Midnight. You can bet your sweet ass I didn't bother to count them. I just hugged Terra Firma and hoped like hell, It continued until morning but not quite as bad. Not a sole was hurt by

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all reports though. ^{3/} A sargent
 here that had 35 points stepped
 on an enemy mine and went
 home quatermaster style. He
 was realy to bad, he had just
 a week until he would have
 rotated. another guy came
 into our outfit the outfit
 and lasted only 5 hrs. Mortar
 got him square in the face.
 His helmet looked like a sieve.
 A Lutement got schratnel right
 in the groin. From what I was
 told it tore his private right out.
 That is realy a pity I think I'd
 rather have my head shot off
 than my nuts.
 We are a lot better off than
 those No. Koreans though, our

3/

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 what I was told it tore his
 privats right out. That is
 realy a pity I think I'd rather
 have my head shot off than
 my nuts.

We are a lot better off than
 those No. Koreans though.
 Our planes and artilery are
 strafing

4/
and bombing hell out of them 24 hrs. a day. So far the only planes I've seen are our own. Theyed sure play hell if they ever struck back.

There is a guard fifty machine gun mounted on the hill right over my head. Right now he is pounding his guts out.

I've heard so dam much of this blasting that it doesn't even bother me now. I can sleep right through the worst of it now.

I guess our outfit will be on line until about May. If I can keep my ass in one peace that long I'll realy be lucky. This place can realy raise heck with a guys nerves.

Once in a while we go out into no mans land and take up mines. The last time we

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5/
 went out one of our own company
 dam near opened fire on us. They
 mistook us for Reds and we
 nearly got the shaft.
 Things could be a lot better
 here, but I suppose they could
 be worse too. Just be thankful
 your not here.
 Well I guess that about it
 as far as activity is concerned.
 as you can see life here is
 very dull.
 This'll kill ya. a lot of
 guys here are sleeping in tents
 and us that do have bunkers
 aren't much better off. The
 bunkers are to weak to stand
 very much pounding if we got
 zeroed in. Sooo What are we

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 What are we

6/

doing about it?? Why of course! Were building a Latrine for the officers. We are using the best logs we can get and reinforcing it with plenty of sand bags and stones. And to top that off it has a stove and electric lights. Thats what I call looking after your men. What do you think of it?

I've got to close this letter and write my Dotty. Love to Dot, Davy and Ann.

Your Brat Brother
Woody

P.S. Take care of that job. Work is plentiful here.

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WRW Letter 4

[See notes at the end; also note that this letter begins in the handwriting of my mother, Dorothy (Miller) Woodbury.]



7 November 1952
Friday P.M.

Dear Woodie,

We were very pleased to hear from you. Since we haven't been too good about writing we needed a good reminder. Guess you like most to hear about David from us. He's sitting here at the table with me writing a letter to Uncle Woodie, which I shall enclose. We have your picture on David's dresser in our bedroom + he gets it and carries it around and talks to you a lot. He calls that little truck you gave him his "thank you Uncle Woodie, truck." The dog he named "Elsa." It's his "thank you Uncle Woodie, dog." Whenever he sees a picture of a man in any kind of uniform in a paper or magazine, it's Uncle Woodie.

Hope you like the pictures. We'll try to send some occasionally. David talks all the time and says everything. His most recent achievement is a turkey gobble.

-2-

He love trains and knows which car is the "red caboose." He's writing about the turkey gobble-gobble right now to you. Ann sits up alone and has 3 teeth now. She's a real little fatty too. She's about the same age David was when you first saw him, but doesn't get around as much - too fat. She's cute though. Bet Brenda is a little cutie. Did she inherit her mother's red hair?

A little about us in general. When we first got to Ohio, Vic made application at the banks and went to work at Lennox Furnace Co. machine shop - nights. Spent days looking for something days + keeping contact with banks. Got a day job in blueprint office at Baldwin-

-3-

Lima - Hamilton (former Lima Locomotive Works) where they make cranes, shovels, etc. Vic loved the locale - trains, trains + more trains, but didn't think much of the job. Too much time idle, not enough to keep busy. Finally the Metropolitan Bank of Lima came through with a job - about \$100.00 less per mo. but a secure job and more to Vic's liking so he left B-L-H, and is now a teller in the Metropolitan Bank of Lima, Ohio. And we are all very happy! We rented an unfurnished 3 room apt. - 2nd floor. Most of all we needed furniture and furniture we got. My folks, friends of family + neighbors came through with

-2-

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-4-
everything but a refrigerator - So \$2.00 down + \$2.00 per week we got a 2 yr old refig. We just started paying for the refig. this week - got the interest + carrying charges paid now!

We have a couch, easy chair, 2 rocking chairs, coffee table, end table, library table, floor lamp, wall lamp, 2 table lamps, chest of drawers, bed, springs, mattress, dresser, dressing table, 2 book cases, 6 chairs, 2 high chairs, crib, gas range, kitchen cabinet, table, pictures, curtains, draperies, dishes, pans, and more stuff people just didn't want or need any longer. Had 3 iron beds we sold for metal. Also got 2 old rugs. Not much to look at but keep floor warmer and quieter on people downstairs.

September + October were beautiful here. The weather has finally gotten

-5-
to the "stay-cold" point. We had temperature in high 60's even after the 1st couple of days in November.

Ann just made a fragrant odor in her britches that is escaping into the room so I'd better fix her up and let Vic finish this when he gets home.

Just think of the diaper changing you don't have to do! Seriously it would be a pleasure compared to Korea, we know. We got to see "Ike" get elected to Presidency on television. Spent Sun. thru Wed. at my brother's house this week. While his wife was in Chicago we kept house for him + my nephew. They have a television set, so we didn't only hear the acceptance, but saw it. Except for the mob - you almost felt

-4-

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as if you were there.

Boy, we know it's going to be cold over there -- when I walk home from work I just thank God I'm in Lima -- we wait for the day you get home -- about rotation, maybe we can make a date to see you in Vermont next Sept. or Oct. -- as you know

Eisenhower is in -- and that means every one of you guys will be home sooner than any of you dare hope.

Boy, this guy is staying in Lima till they bury me. -- wonder how your family is and shall write before we mail this. Don't hear much from Maine but then we don't write much. thought maybe if we move into a house next spring and you aren't home we would get Dorothy + Brenda to come stay a few weeks --

2

of course this visit would depend on what is doing at that time boy! I should tell you about my in-laws! Last Sunday Dot's brother's wife Dot, went to Chicago so we moved over to their house until Wed. Well I spent my time watching the Elec Voting + results, of course Dot + I voted absentee ballot in Florida. Any way one afternoon Dot's nephew -- the other Dot's boy wanted to play football, so I played football -- my team consisted of one four year old and myself -- the other team was two 12 year olds -- my team won 32 to 0 but me! next day I'm like a 90 year old man at work couldn't even stand up straight

-6-

as if you were there.

[Continued by my father, Victor.]

Boy! We know it's going to be cold over there -- When I walk home from work I just thank God I'm in Lima -- we wait for the day you get home -- about rotation, maybe we can make a date to see you in Vermont next Sept. or Oct. -- as you know Eisenhower is in -- and that means every one of you guys will be home sooner than any of you dare hope.

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8/

More about in-laws - Dot's youngest sister and her husband are regular cowboy fans - they drive up from thier town, 30 miles every Saturday night and park thier two kids 3 + 4 - at our place so they can go to jamborees - consequently we can't get out - they come after thier kids anywhere between 1 - 6 AM! One day they didn't come after them until the next night so we took them to church - then there is Dot's oldest sister, they don't have any kids but when they think I'm out of work early there they are - waiting for me and usually it's painting or lugging something Dot does thier laundry and I've been mowing the grass

9/

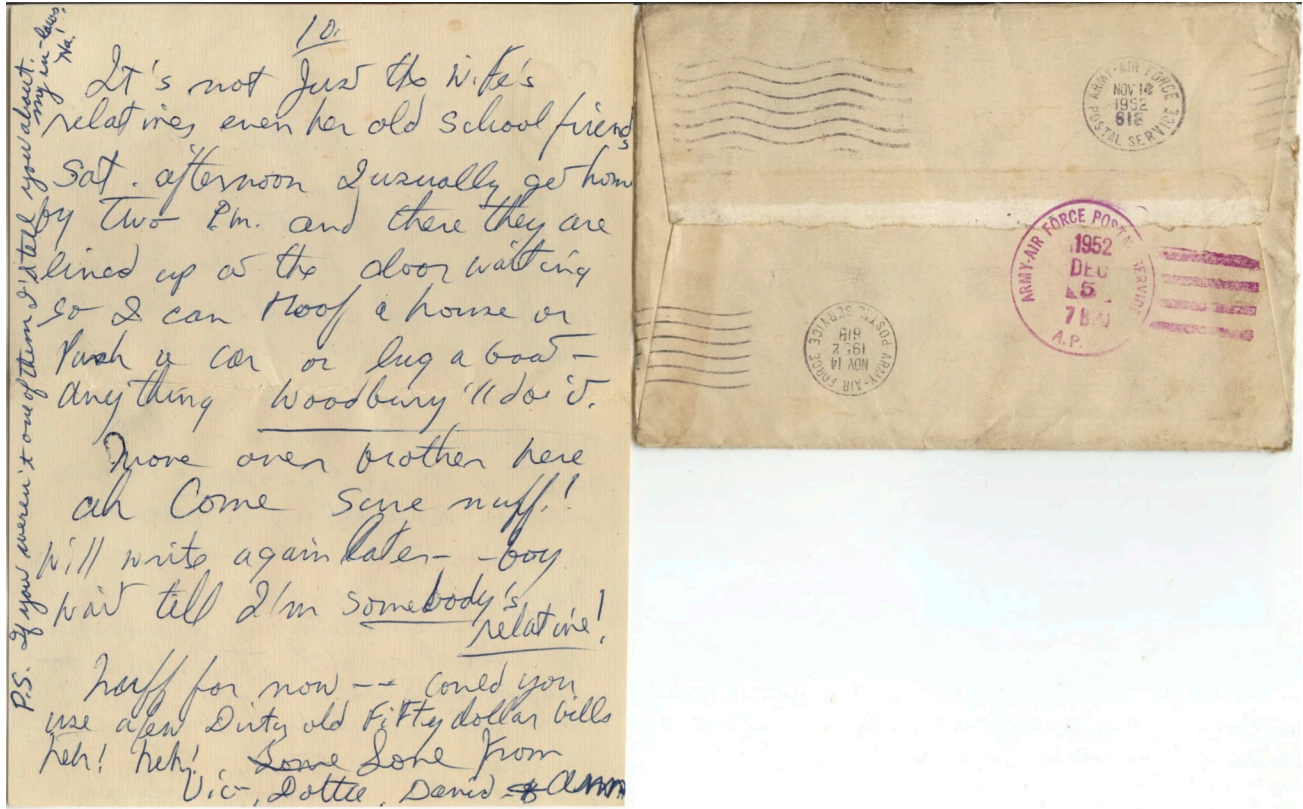
Then there is school - the American Institute of Banking has a course in Commercial law so am taking it; of course the very nights I'm going to study is when Dot's Relatives come to call - then every so often the bank has some kind of a meeting - at night - take next week for example - Monday night a meeting - Tuesday is supposed to be a holiday, but what happens now the relatives find out. So I work Tuesday Wednesday night is school night Thursday is supposed to be a night off but you wait, somebody'll show up - Friday night study - Sat night baby-sit. Sunday - Collapse -!

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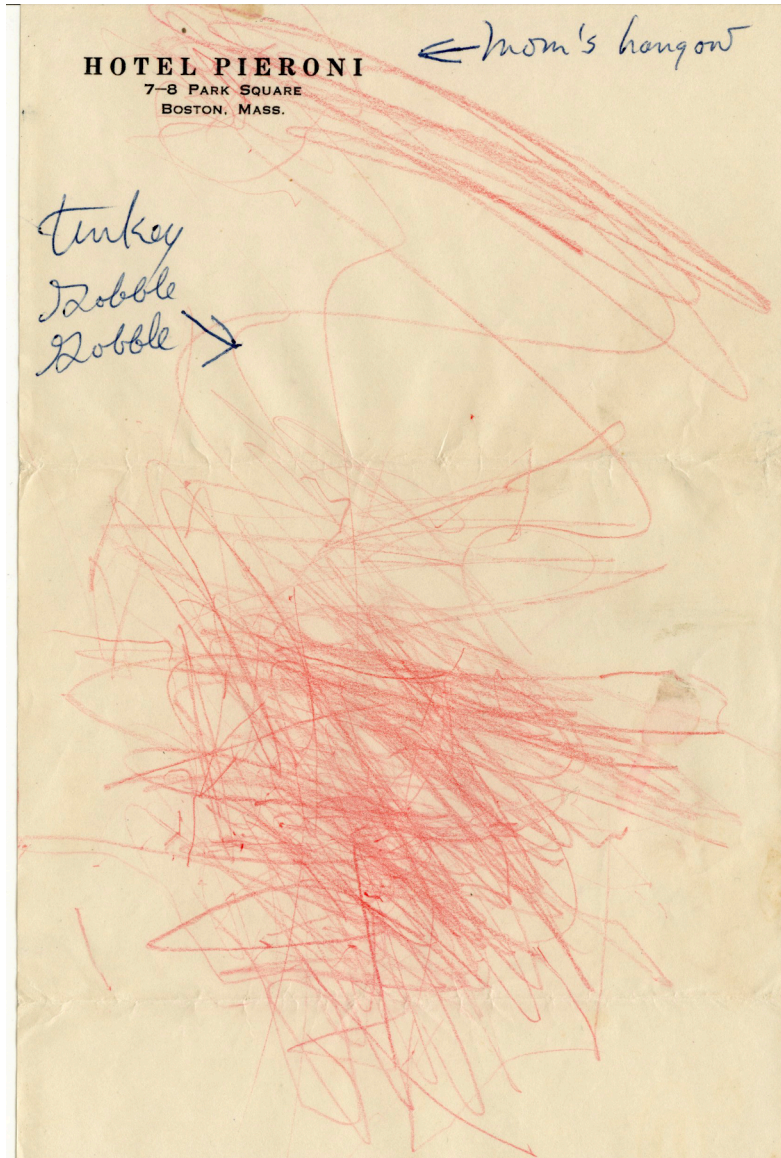
10/

It's not just the wife's relatives even her old school friends Sat. afternoon I usually get home by two P.M. and there they are lined up at the door waiting so I can roof a house or push a car or lug a boat - anything Woodbury'll do it

Move over brother here ah come sure nuff!
 Will write again later — boy wait till I'm somebody's relative!
 Nuff for now — could you use a few Dirty old Fifty dollar bills heh! heh! Love from
 Vic, Dottie, David, + Ann

[Dorothy's handwriting again.]

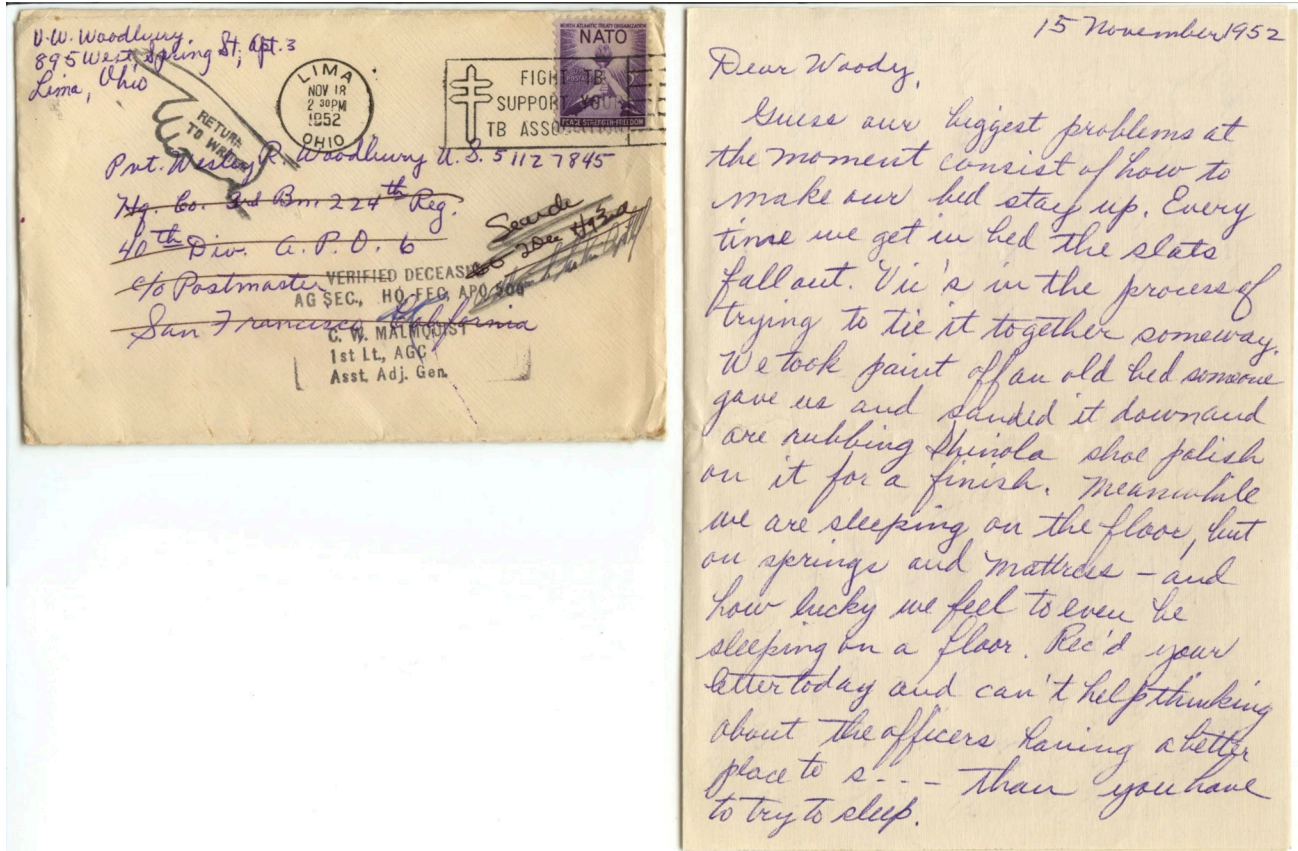
P.S. If you weren't one of them I'd tell you about my in-laws. Ha!



[NOTES: "Mom's hangout," Hotel Pieroni, refers to Vic and Woody's (Wesley's) mom, Clarice Woodbury, who lived in Portland but evidently spent a lot of time in Boston. Dorothy, who started this letter is Victor's wife, Dorothy (Miller) Woodbury, also referred to as Dot. Dorothy and Brenda, mentioned together, are Woody's wife (Dorothy (Rutledge) Woodbury!) and daughter, not to be confused with Vic and Woody's sister, Dorothy Woodbury Kinney, (who is not mentioned in this letter. Whew!) The in-law who went to Chicago is Dorothy (Gladfelter) Miller, wife of Dot's brother, Dan Miller. The in-laws who dropped their kids off on weekends are Roy Hume and Dot's younger sister, Glenna (Miller) Hume, and their kids are Georgia and Janet. And the other in-laws mentioned are Charlie Bay and Mom's older sister, Irene (Miller) Bay.]

WRW Letter 5

[Dorothy's handwriting.]



15 November 1952

Dear Woody,

Guess our biggest problems at the moment consist of how to make our bed stay up. Every time we get in bed the slats fall out. Vic's in the process of trying to tie it together somehow. We took paint off an old bed someone gave us and sanded it down and are rubbing Shinola shoe polish on it for a finish. Meanwhile we are sleeping on the floor, but on springs and mattresses - and how lucky we feel to even be sleeping on a floor. Rec'd your letter today and can't help thinking about the officers having a better place to s--- than you have to try to sleep.

-2-

Yesterday we sent your Christmas package and sent it via your old address and today rec'd letter with new address. Hope you receive the box O.K., but imagine it will be late.

David is writing his letter to Uncle Woody. He's telling you about the "choo-choo train and loco motor" as he has named the locomotive.

Last night we were given free tickets to a football game and had our first real night out together since we left Sarasota. Beautiful night, the weather hasn't been below 50° at night for a week & has been in 60°'s in daytime. Unusually warm weather for November. Colder than this in Florida when you were there in Nov. last year.

Ann is now in the hair-pulling stage. Her daddy is the luckiest one in the family now, it's a long reach over his high forehead.

Now David is writing "Peter, Peter, Pumpkin-Eater" to you, and writing while riding his tricycle, so if you have trouble reading it

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Now David is writing "Peter, Peter, Pumpkin Eater" to you, and writing while riding his tricycle, so if you have trouble reading it

you'll know why. Must get
the little stinker ready for bed
so will turn this over to Vic.

Back again. Vic said he'd
finish the bed, I could finish
this letter and he'd write later.
Want to write to Mom, too, so
will sign off now.

Love + best of luck
to you Woody,

Vic, Dottie, David + Ann



-3-

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Back again. Vic said he'd finish the bed, I could finish this letter and he'd write later. Want to write to Mom, too, so will sign off now.

Love + best of luck

to you Woody,

Vic, Dottie, David + Ann



WRW Letter 6

[My mom, Dorothy's, handwriting — This letter, written on two sides of one sheet and never folded, was never finished nor placed in an envelope.]

22 November 1952

Dear Woody,

Not much news this week. David is writing is usual letter to Uncle Woody. Sorry he writes such a foreign language. Ann talks about as foreign as David writes. He's intelligent though — after all look who his uncle is.

28 Nov. 1952

Don't remember what delayed the completion of this letter previously. Today is day after Thanksgiving. It's snowing beautifully. First time Vic + I have seen snow for 3 years + it's beautiful. David's first time to see snow + he is in the hospital + can't see it with us for first time. Guess our Thanksgiving can be for doctors, drugs, + hospitals. Wed. after

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noon David ⁻²⁻ woke up from nap with 103.6° temp. Took him to Dr. in evening after he had retained fever + indicated sore throat + found he had bronchitis. Yesterday A.M. he woke up with 104° + kept going up + at 1:00 P.M. he had 105.2°. We called doctor + he said take him to hosp. By 7:30 last night his temp. had gone down to 102° + he was sitting up talking + "reading" a book. Doctor thinks he will be able to come home tomorrow.

So this A.M. we don't yet know what he thinks of the snow. From what we read + hear of Korea you probably have had enough of the old man winter already. We are just beginning to have some + love it.

-2-

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So this A.M. we don't yet know what he thinks of the snow. From what we read + hear of Korea you probably have had enough of the old man winter already. We are just beginning to have some + love it.

WRW Letter 7

[Received ten days after Woody was killed — delivered to Victor at his place of work. I don't know how many days passed before Clarice was notified. Since this was sent from Vermont, it's evident that she had driven over to be with Woody's widow, Dorothy, immediately after receiving the news.]

WESTERN UNION
TELEGRAM

117

CLASS OF SERVICE
This is a full-rate Telegram or Cablegram unless its deferred character is indicated by a suitable symbol above or preceding the address.

WESTERN UNION
W. P. MARSHALL, PRESIDENT

1201

SYMBOLS
DL=Day Letter
NL=Night Letter
=Int'l Letter Telegram
VLT=Int'l Victory Ltr.

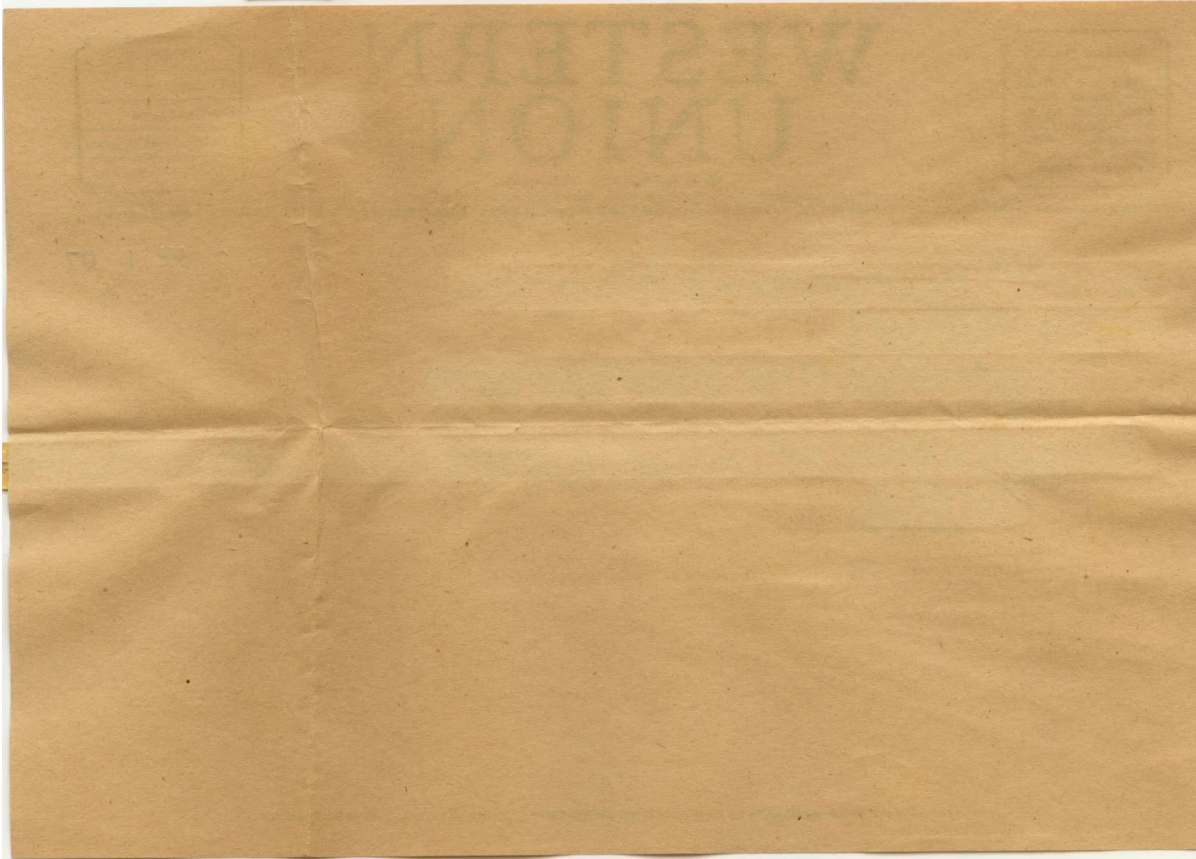
(15)

The filing time shown in the date line on telegrams and day letters is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination

CTA193 RA320
B.SJA022 PD= ST JOHNSBURY VT 2 1214P=
VICTOR WOODBURY=
CARE METROPOLITAN BANK= LIMA OHIO=
WORD RECD WOODY WAS KILLED IN ACTION NOV 22 LETTER FOLLOWS=
: MOTHER=

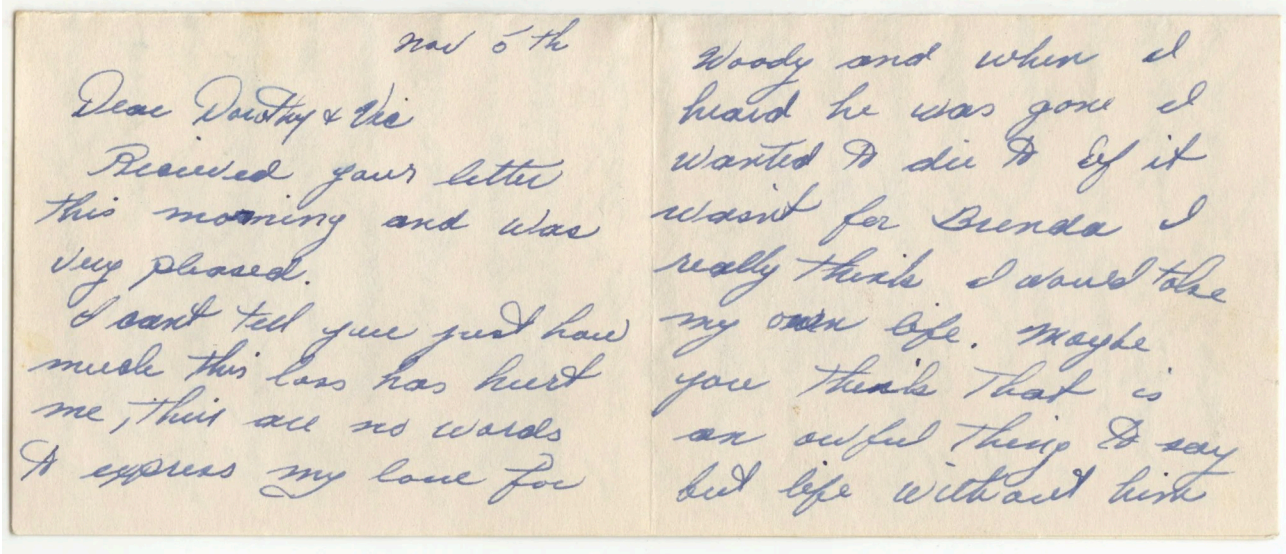
1952 DEC 2 PM 1 07

THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM ITS PATRONS CONCERNING ITS SERVICE



WRW Letter 8

[From Dorothy (Rutledge) Woodbury; note that she dated it November 5 when in fact it was December 5 and postmarked the next day.]



Nov 5th

Dear Dorothy + Vic

Received your letter this morning and was very pleased.

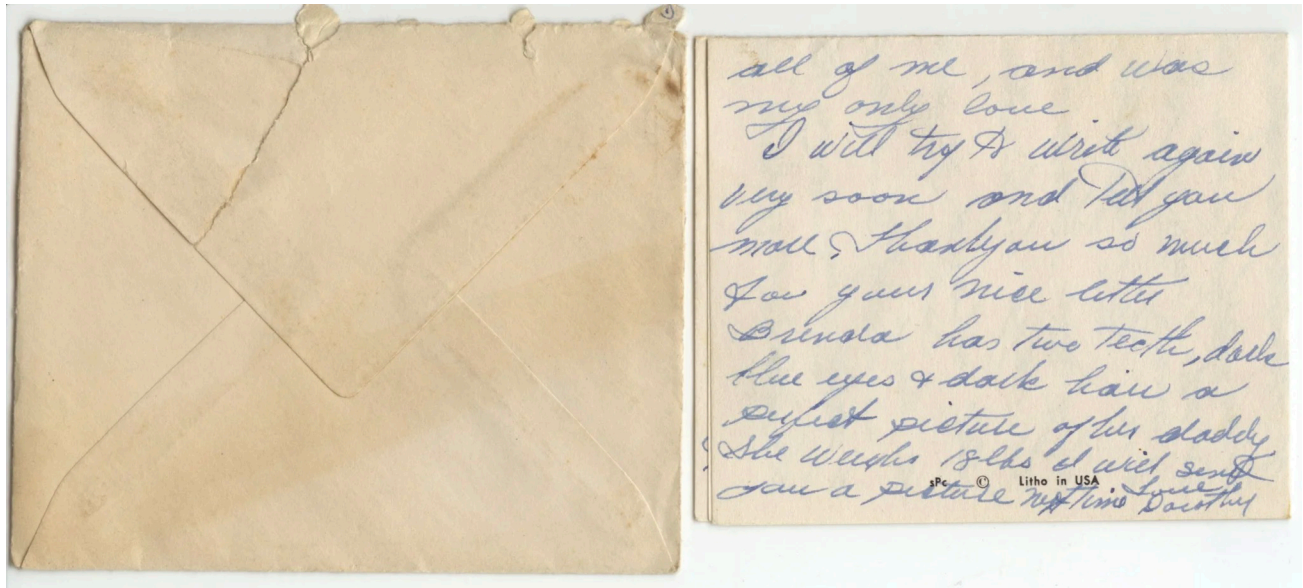
I cant tell you just how much this loss has hurt me, there are no words to express my love for Woody and when I heard he was gone I wanted to die to If it wasn't for Brenda I really think I would take my own life. Maybe you think that is an awful thing to say but life without him

just doesn't have any meaning
 I prayed so much and so hard
 for his safe return. I just couldn't
 believe God had done this to me
 I feel so lost and the pain
 is almost unbearable and it
 gets worse with each day
 as yet I don't know many details
 about his death but I just hope
 he wasn't blown to bits by one
 of the mines I do know that
 was what he was doing ~~at~~
 at the time. I got three letters from
 him the day ~~he~~ received the
 telegram his last written the 21st
 the day before he died

We shared a wonderful love
 a love few couples ever achieve
 I gave him every bit of love that
 I was capable of giving he had

just doesn't have any meaning I
 prayed so much and so hard for his
 safe return. I just couldn't believe
 God had done this to me I feel so
 lost and the pain is almost
 unbearable and it gets worse with
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 one of the mines I do know that
 was what he was doing at the time.
 I got three letters from him the day
 I received the telegram his last
 written the 21st the day before he
 died

We shared a wonderful love a
 love few couples ever achieve I
 gave him every bit of love that I
 was capable of giving he had



all of me, and was my only love.

I will try to write again very soon and tell you more. Thank you so much for your nice letter
 Brenda has two teeth, dark blue eyes + dark hair a perfect picture of her daddy
 She weighs 18 lbs I will send you a picture next time

Love
 Dorothy

WRW Letter 9

[From Clarice Woodbury, Woody's mother, postmarked January 24, 1953. Nick on page 2 is Clarice's half-sister, Nicolene (Jensen) O'Dell, Goldie's son with husband, Walter Jensen. Leon on the last page is Nicolene's husband and father of their son, Ernest, called EA.]



P.S. on back of 1. Friday

Dear Vic + Dot -

So sorry you had to phone. I had hoped every day to get a letter because you didn't answer my letter asking if you were coming and you did say you were change-ing work so we didn't know if you would be able to or had changed your mind. We really did have to know they sand an escort and we have to know in advance as far as possible -

2

Donald wrote he wasn't coming -

Nick was operated on today did something to a rib so it will heal quicker I sure hope it does. this time she sure has had her trouble. I think she'll be back in the nursing home in a few days (about a week) so send her a card if you have one handy to Deaconess Hospital Boston 15 Mass -

I think I told you as far as I know now. Dot + Carroll plan to go from Farmington

3,

by car -

If its a week day Ginnie plans to come to Portland and take the 8:30 A.M. train with Grammie - If a Sunday (I got a card today saying) Heman will take her and others that want to go (of course that depends on the weather for they can have some awfull storms in those mountains in fact we never know when they start out and it may not be Sunday anyway - I will probably go up early I don't know yet but that the plans now -

2

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3.

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I will probably go up early I don't know yet but that the plans now -

4-

By the way Vic, I
 didn't say anything about
 your getting through at
 the Bank, ^{to anyone} I just said
 you were looking for a job
 with more money -

Everyone has their trouble
 so why worry them with yours.

Last summer I asked
 you not to tell Dad Woodbury
 you were out of work he
 was too old a man to worry
 but you didn't take my
 advice so you probably

5-

wont this time after
 all you are 21 and if
 you aint smart enough
 to tell things to hurt
 yourself its not my
 fault or business but I
 do wish you would think
 it might also hurt
 someone else -

I also didn't tell
 your sisters that Woody
 overstaid his leave -
 You do as you please -
 now you know I rather you didn't,
 (over)

4.

By the way Vic. I didn't say anything about your getting through at the Bank to anyone. I just said you were looking for a job with more money -

Every one has their trouble so why worry them with yours.

Last summer I asked you not to tell Dad Woodbury you were out of work he was too old a man to worry but you didn't take my advise so you probably

5.

wont this time after all you are 21 and if you aint smart enough to tell things to hurt yourself its not my fault or business but I do wish you would think it might also hurt someone else -

I also didn't tell your sisters that Woody overstaid his leave -

You do as you please - now you know I rather you didn't.

(over)

I know you won't like this letter but you wouldn't any way and I don't feel good today so I shouldn't be writing any way don't phone to answer it -

I have your phone no. 98182 and Westernhouse 73811

Any way I'm awful glad to hear you are coming and shall do all I can to have Dot have services after you get here. I hope Dot doesn't get too tired working who takes care of babies etc?
Grammie & I both send love to all - I'll feel better soon I hope
in some please excuse Love Mother

10:30 P.M.
P.S. Leon was just in on way home from Boston he says Nick is doing fine he's going back Sunday and home Monday again - Mother may go up Tuesday if we haven't heard anything from Vermont

I hope you get this Monday really I didn't mean half I said please forgive kids I'm an old meanie and I know it - Someday I may improve they say something's do with age maybe not mothers.
It's late so goodnight -
Love from us both
Mother

I know you won't like this letter but you wouldn't any way and I don't feel good today so I shouldn't be writing any way don't phone to answer it -

I have your phone no. 98182 and Westernhouse 73811

Any way I'm awful glad to hear you are coming and shall do all I can to have Dot have services after you get here. I hope Dot doesn't get too tired working - who takes care of babies etc?

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10:30 P.M.

P.S. Leon was just in on way home from Boston he says Nick is doing fine he's going back Sunday and home Monday again - Mother may go up Tuesday if we haven't heard anything from Vermont

I hope you get this Monday really I didn't mean half I said please forgive kids I'm an old meanie and I know it - Someday I may improve they say something's do with age maybe no mothers.

It's late so goodnight -

Love from us both Mother

WRW Letter 10

[From Dorothy, my mom/Victor's wife, to his brother, Donald — This letter was mailed two days before Woody was killed, but it was returned to sender because of the address.

So Dorothy wrote a note on the back of the first envelope and then re-sent it in another envelope, which was also returned to sender. Donald Woodbury had placed himself out of reach of his family, which requires that his story be told in its own right some day. Nicki on page 3 is the same as Nick in WRW Letter 9.]



17 November 1952

Dear Don,

Suppose you had given up hearing from us again. We have been thinking of you, but are just really getting settled into living again, and finding time now + then for correspondence.

Our Ann was born on April 18th (10 lbs + 12 oz.) She wasn't yet 3 weeks old when we sold our possessions in Fla. + moved to Maine first week of May. It wasn't a wise selection of location in the North, though, as far as employment is concerned. We spent 3 mos. up there looking for a satisfactory job with no success.

My brother + sister-in-law had vacation last week in July + 1st week in Aug. so they came to Portland for us + again we packed our clothes + few

-2-

remaining possessions and moved to Lima, Ohio – my former home. Plenty of work here and Vic found a job right away – nights, though, at Lennox Furnace Machine Shop. Spent days looking for a day job while waiting for references etc. to come through for job in a bank. Only 2 weeks at Lennox then got a job at Baldwin-Lima-Hamilton (former Lima Locomotive Works) which is making cranes, shovels, etc. now. And after a month there his bank job came through, so he is now a teller at The Metropolitan Bank of Lima, O. We lived not a month with my sister + finally found an unfurnished apt. Between relatives and friends we managed to furnish 3 rooms with only refrigerator to buy.

It all constituted somewhat of a loss to us and expense to your mother + Grammie + also to a couple of my relatives, but we are happy to be out of the South. Mom + Grammie know we gave Maine a fair try + although they may have wanted us in Maine, they felt we should go where the work was. And my folks are pleased to have us closer to them.

Never said much to the folks about you except that we had heard from you a couple of times. They do like to hear from you, guess you had written them around the same time we last heard from you. They (Mom + Grammie) are

remaining possessions and moved to Lima, Ohio – my former home. Plenty of work here and Vic found a job right away – nights, though, at Lennox Furnace Machine Shop. Spent days looking for a day job while waiting for references etc. to come through for job in a bank. Only 2 weeks at Lennox then got a job at Baldwin-Lima-Hamilton (former Lima Locomotive Works) which is making cranes, shovels, etc. now. And after a month there his bank job came through, so he is now a teller at The Metropolitan Bank of Lima, O. We lived not a month with my sister + finally found an unfurnished apt. Between relatives and friends we managed to furnish 3 rooms with only refrigerator to buy.

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Never said much to the folks about you except that we had heard from you a couple of times. They do like to hear from you, guess you had written them around the same time we last heard from you. They (Mom + Grammie) are

-3-
buying used clothing + reselling it. Not much in it for them, but it's time consuming.

Nicki is in Boston, still in TB Sanitarium. Vic got to see her when we were in Maine. She has both TB + diabetes and doesn't show much improvement. She'd probably enjoy a letter from you. Her life is pretty much centered around her fellow patients + the rest of the world is somewhat distant now. Don't know if she'll ever be strong enough to go home + renew a normal life. Her address is 198 Pilgrim Road Boston 15, Mass.

Woody is in Korea. His wife had a little girl in July (Brenda Joyce) Believe he saw her only once before he was shipped overseas. Address is: Pvt. Wesley R. Woodbury, U.S. 51127845 Hq. Co., 3rd Bn. 224th Reg. 40th Div., A.P.O. 6 San Francisco, Calif.

-4-
Our "kiddoes" are both growing. Ann sits alone, has 5 teeth now. She's 7 mos. old. David recites several nursery rhymes, sings some of "Jesus Loves Me", and what he isn't eager to do, or learn about isn't worth talking about. Naturally we think they are the best ever + being a father you know what we mean.

Enough about us - imagine a lot has happened in your life since last January. Dennis + Donna Marie? Your fiancée? Insurance job?

Ever have a couple of days at a time off work? Any transportation? Maybe you could drop in on us some week-end.

Our transportation consists of a wooden wagon we pull Ann + David in and we walk.

Vic is going to school on Monday nights (guess they going to change days, though)

-3-

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-4-

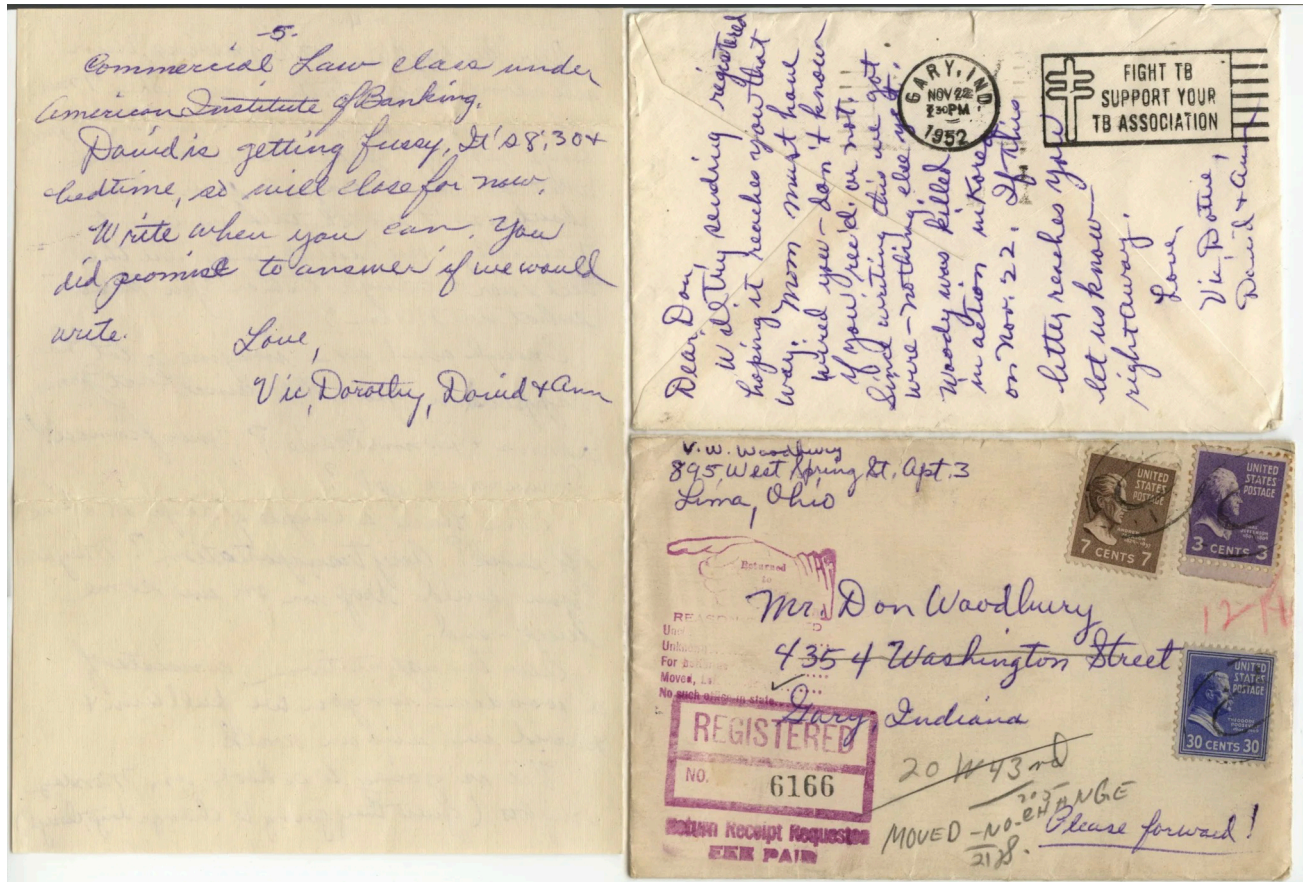
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Our transportation consists of a wooden wagon we pull Ann + David in and we walk.

Vic is going to school on Monday nights (guess they going to change days, though).



-5-

Commercial Law class under American Institute of Banking. David is getting fussy. It's 8:30 + bedtime, so will close or now.

Write when you can. You did promise to answer if we would write.

Love,

Vic, Dorothy, David + Ann

[On back of original envelope:]

Dear Don,

Will try sending registered hoping it reaches you that way. Mom must have wired you – don't know if you rec'd. or not. Since writing this we got wire – nothing else yet. Woody was killed in action in Korea on Nov. 22. If this letter reaches you let us know right away.

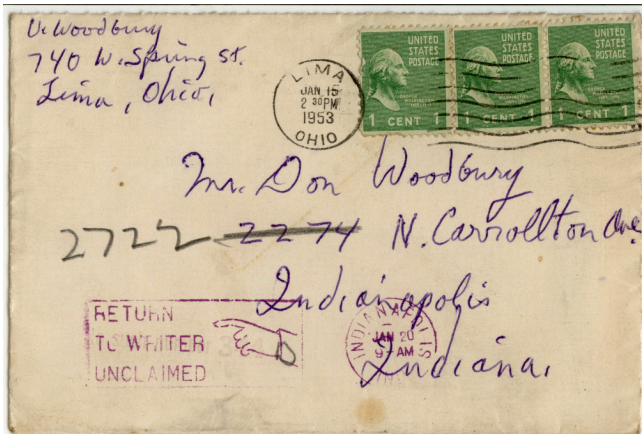
Love,

Vic, Dottie,

David + Ann

WRW Letter 11

[Written by Victor; he meant 1 - 12 - 53, see postmark.]



note new address 740 W. Spring
740 W. Spring Lima, Ohio
Lima, Ohio 1 - 12 - 52

Dear Don:

Expect you have heard from Mom by now.

Thought I had better write and inform you and your Missus, that we are in Lima, Ohio. (Look up on map.) About 60 miles from Fort Wayne, Ind. This is Dot's home town and we moved here last August. I'm with Westinghouse here, Production Expediter.

Your Xmas card just forwarded to us — we had written a couple of times since Aug. but got the letters back.

The nature of this letter is to suggest a get to gather. (over)

note new address
740 W. Spring
Lima, Ohio
1 - 12 - 52

740 W. Spring
Lima, Ohio
1 - 12 - 52

Dear Don:

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though I had better write and inform you and your missus, that we are in Lima, Ohio. (Look up on map) about 60 miles from Fort Wayne, Ind. this is Dot's home town and we moved here last August. I'm with Westinghouse here, Production Expediter.

Your Xmas card just forwarded to us — we had written a couple of times since Aug. but got the letters back.

The nature of this letter is to suggest a get to gather. — (over)

2.

We sold our car when we left Florida. So don't have transportation at least not until summer.

When the date of Woody's funeral has been decided I will take a leave of absence for about a week — and take a day too Vermont a day there, one day in Maine and a day to return. Don't expect to get fired for it and feel it would be worth anything as I wonder who will be the next one and don't want to miss the opportunity to see all the folks I can — —

Was my idea that maybe you would go to Vermont with me — Concord just outside St. Johnsbury next page

2.
We Sold our Car when we left Florida. So don't have transportation at least not until Summer.

When the Date of Woody's Funeral has been decided I will take a leave of absence for about a week — and take a day too Vermont a day there, one day in Maine and a day to return. Don't expect to get fired for it and feel it would be worth anything as I wonder who will be the next one and don't want to miss the opportunity to see all the folks I can — —

Was my idea that maybe you would go to Vermont with me — Concord just outside St. Johnsbury — next page

3.

Plan to go by bus as it is
~~cheapest~~ cheaper and could make
it in one day - 24 hours

Drove from Portland to Lima
last summer, left Portland
at 12:45 p.m. on a Friday
and arrived Lima at 12 Sat. noon
would not have been 24 hours but
had 4 adults + 2 kids aboard
and they had to pee pee or something
most of the time also did some
sight seeing -

I don't intend to take
my family as the expense and
time factor would be ~~prohibitive~~ Prohibitive

Feel that Mom needs all
moral support possible and
know your presence would
reaffirm her belief in God

3.

Plan to go by bus as it is cheapest
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hours

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something most of the time also
did some sight seeing -

I don't intend to take my family
as the expense and time factor
would be prohibitive

Feel that Mom needs all moral
support possible and know your
presence would reaffirm her belief
in God

4.

Please write anyway and I hope we
can work out some arrangement
by which we can get to Vermont
when necessary together —
Have just moved last Sunday

Address is
740 W. Spring
Lima, Ohio,
tel. 98-182

Dottie will write Jayne when we
get settled —

Write soon — Love
Vic, Dot, David + Ann

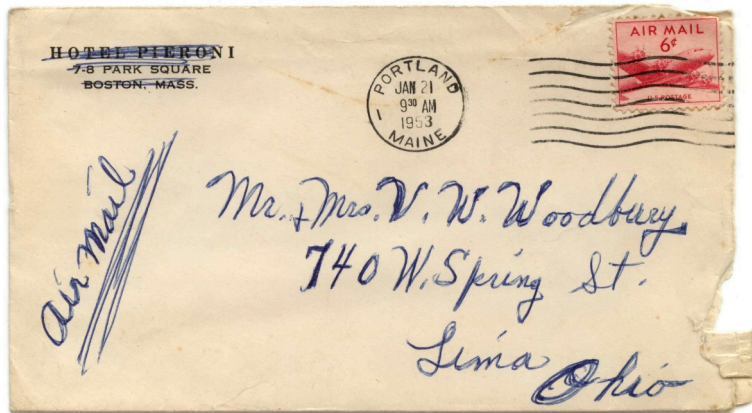
P.S. misplaced your address in
moving hope this reaches you

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Write soon — Love
Vic, Dot, David + Ann

P.S. misplaced your
address in moving hope
this reaches you

WRW Letter 12

[Written by Clarice. Donald, Dot, and Ginnie are siblings of Wesley and Victor. Carroll is husband of Wesley's sister Dot. They are parents of Dan Kinney, previously mentioned.]



Monday
 Dear Kids,
 I've wondered why I didn't get an answer to my last letter have looked every mail, all the other children answered right away as to their plans.
 Donald wrote that he wouldn't be able to make it. Dot + Carroll wrote they would go by car from Farmington so as to get here that night
 Ginnie wrote she plans to go and so far as I know now she will leave Portland on the 8:30 A.M. train of course she may change her plans in fact they may all. Ginnie will have to get to Brunswick at 6:30 in order to make the train I haven't heard

1. Monday

Dear Kids,

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2.

from her since she found that out but expect to tomorrow.

I do hope you let us know if you plan to come or not and if so what your traveling time will be etc.

I'm at shop and haven't time for more now will mail tis on my way and hope to get an answer very soon —

Bee arrived unexpectedly from Boston last night has gone to Farmington and has to be back in Tewksbury Friday — I'll have to mail this after I get home as I haven't the new address here with me. Hope you all like your new home. Love to all

Mother

from her since ^{2.} she found that out but expect to tomorrow.

I do hope you let us know if you plan to come or not and if so what your traveling time will be etc.

I'm at shop and haven't time for more now will mail this on my way home and hope to get an answer very soon —

Bee arrived unexpectedly from Boston last night has gone to Farmington and has to be back in Tewksbury Friday — I'll have to mail this after I get home as I haven't the new address here with me. Hope you all like your new home. Love to all
mother

3.

at home —
 I do hope to hear
 from you by the morning
 mail. So we will know
 if you are coming or not,
 I also expect to hear
 from Ginnie again tomorrow.
 Love to all
 Mother —

C. Woodbury
 655 Congress St.
 Portland
 Maine

3.

at home —

I do hope to hear from you my the morning mail.
 So we will know if you are coming or not.

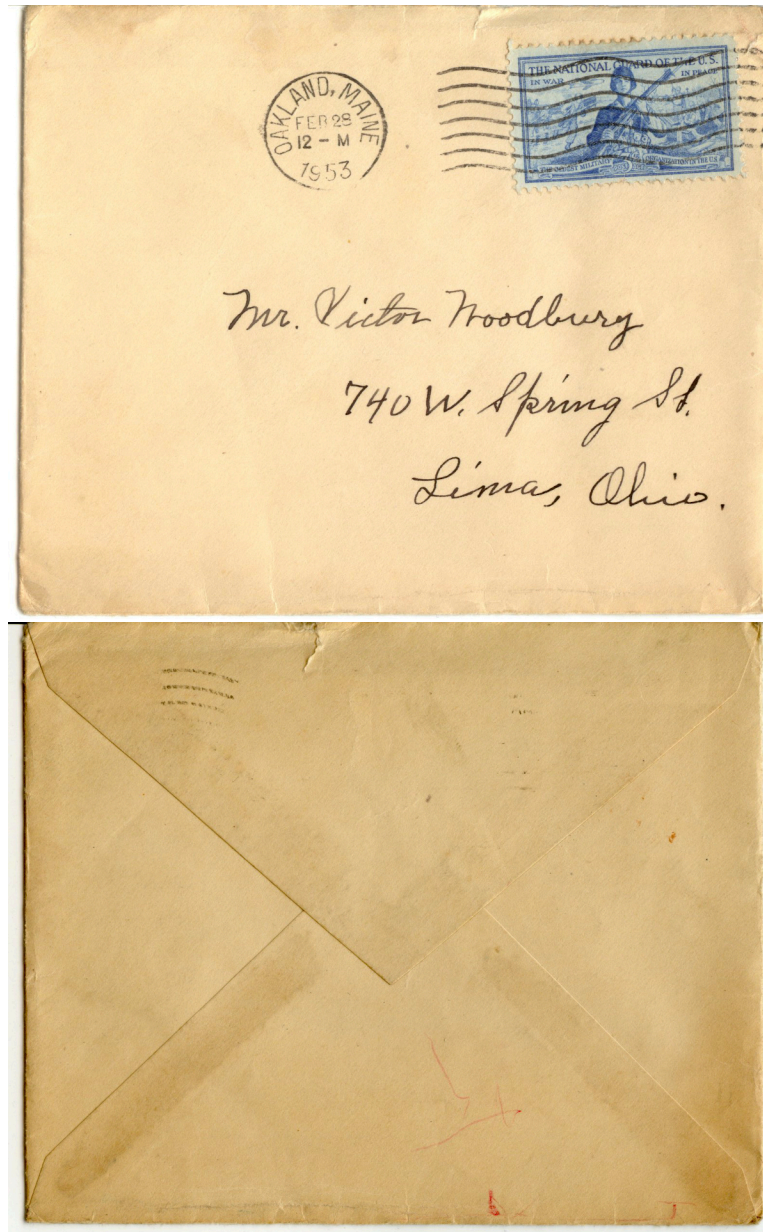
I also expect to hear from Ginnie again
 tomorrow.

Love to all

Mother—

WRW Letter 13

[Not quite three months after Woody was killed, his grandfather, George Hugh Woodbury, died in Belgrade, Maine at age 79. This was written by Nellie (Sanborn) Woodbury, his second wife (not Woody's grandmother). Walter was her son with George. George's death only added to the confusion and tumult in the family at the time. Is there irony in the stamp?]



Feb. 27th 1953

Dear Dorothy + Victor

This is a lonesome day it is snowing and I think winter is here to stay through March.

Walter stays nights with me but goes to Waterville to work early in the morning. They would have me out there to stay but the water here would have to be shut off here and then on again. They talk of moving here in the Spring and try raising chickens, farming, his wife would like that and he still keep the job he has now.

I feel bad not to have any late pictures of George. Would you send me one of the snap shots you took of him here and we will try to find something for you. I just found some pictures you took here in 1951 they are good ones and I am so glad.

Feb. 27th 1953

Dear Dorothy + Victor

This is a lonesome day it is snowing and I think winter is here to stay through March. Walter stays nights with me but goes to Waterville to work early in the morning. They would have me out there to stay but the water here would have to be shut off here and then on again. They talk of moving here in the Spring and try raising chickens, farming, his wife would like that and he still keep the job he has now.

I feel bad not to have any late pictures of George. [crossed out: Would you send me one of the snap shots you took of him here] and we will try to find something for you. I just found some pictures you took here in 1951 they are good ones and I am so glad.

Guess you think this is a funny letter. I do not like to write letters but do like to get them so please over look all the mistakes. I got up this morning at 5:30 got Walter up and on his way now it is only 1 o'clock and he will not be home tonight. I miss Geo. so much life is not worth living with out him. He went to the hospital in ambulance Feb. 8 and lived untill the night of the 13th.

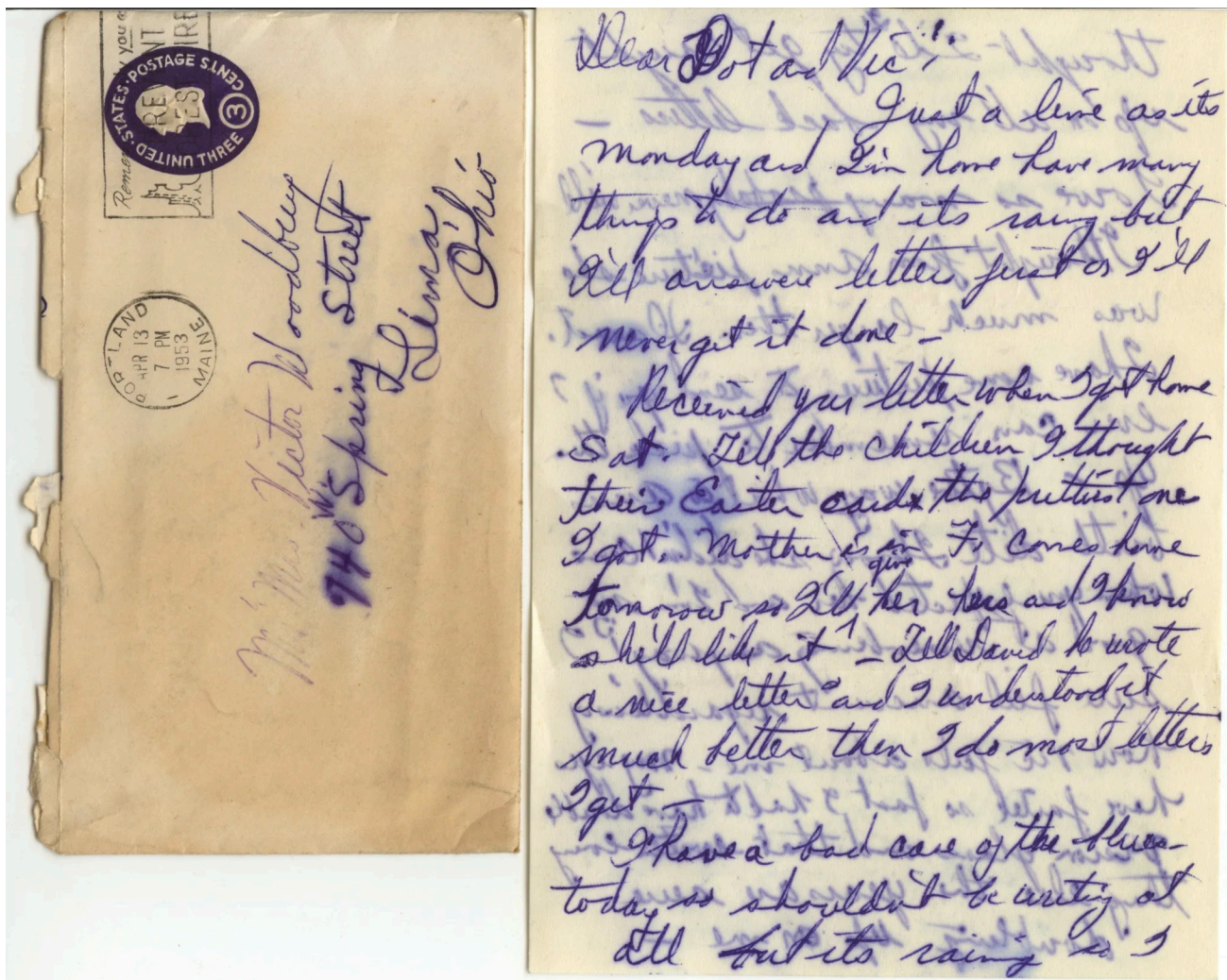
There is so much more to write.
I will close with
with love to you
Nellie

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There is no more to write
so I will close with
with Love to you
Nellie

WRW Letter 14

[Written by Clarice, mentions many names but not all are familiar. Dot in the greeting is my mother, Dorothy (Miller) Woodbury, Victor's wife. Victor is Woody's brother. Mother on the first page is Clarice's mother, Goldie (Sweet) Jensen, also referred to as Grammie on page 3. David and Ann are Victor's first two children who were ages two-and-a-half and one at the time of this letter. Dot on page 4 and page 7 is Woody's older sister Dorothy (Woodbury) Kinney. Ginnie (Woodbury) Norris is Woody's next-older sister. Grammie C. is Bertha (Curtis) Woodbury, Woody's grandmother and first wife of George Woodbury who is mentioned in the previous letter. Bertha remarried after her marriage to George and is Bertha Cochrane in this letter. Dad on the last page also refers to George Woodbury, who had just died in February. Dot in the very last paragraph is Woody's widow, Dorothy (Rutledge) Woodbury. Others remain unidentified.]



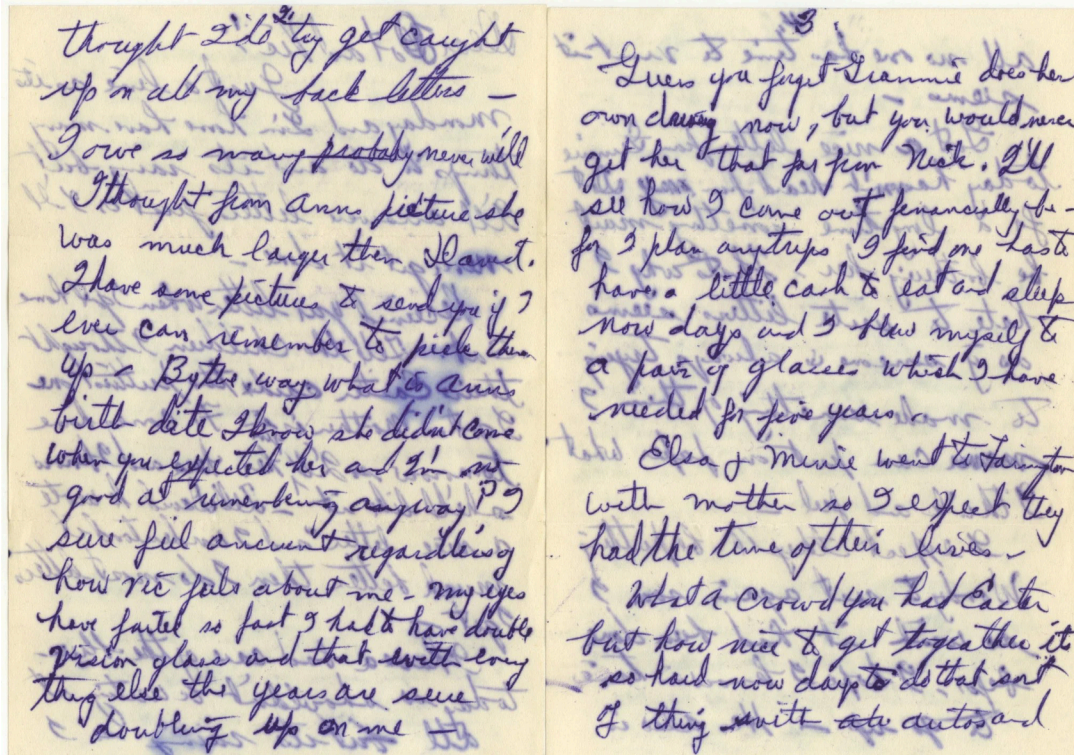
1.

Dear Dot and Vic:

Just a line as it's Monday and I'm home have many things to do and its raining but I'll answer letters first or I'll never get it done —

Received your letter when I got home Sat. Tell the children I thought their Easter card the prettiest one I got. Mother is in F. [Farmington] comes home tomorrow so I'll give her hers and I know she'll like it. Tell David he wrote a nice letter and I understood it much better than I do most letters I get —

I have a bad case of the blues today so shouldn't be writing at all but it's raining so I



2.

thought I'd get caught up on all my back letters — I owe so many probably never will
I thought from Ann picture she was much larger then David. I have some pictures to send
up if I ever can remember to pick thru them — By the way what is Ann's birth date I know
she didn't come when you expected her and I'm not good at remembering anyway? I sure
feel ancient regarding how Vic feels about me — my eyes have failed so fast I had to have
double vision glass and that with every thing else the years are sure doubling up on me —

3.

Guess you forgot Grammie [Goldie Jensen] does her own driving now, but you would never
get her that far from Nick. I'll see how I come out financially before I plan any trips I find
one has to have a little cash to eat and sleep now days and I blew myself to a pair of glasses
which I have needed for five years.

Elsa [Clarice's aging white terrier] and Minie [?] went to Farmington with Mother so I
expect they had the time of their lives —

What a crowd you had Easter but how nice to get together it's hard now days to do that sort
of thing with autos and

all no one has time to visit it seems —
 Got a nice letter from Ginnie today hasn't heard from my Dot for a long time something must be bothering her. That's why I hate to write letters seems as if someone is always trying to make something of them I never can put on paper what I think and feel —
 I expect they'll be putting Woody to rest again soon I so wish it had been done before. I hope I know in time to go up — He also is

to be awarded the Bronze Star don't know as I'll get an invite to that or not. time will tell —
 We have had rain nearly every day for so long its so depressing I'm just looking forward to some sun. When we have a winter without much snow we make up for it somehow —
 That snap of David in the kitchen was so cute. I've seen him look like that so many times. They were all cute — They grow up too fast believe me I know —
 Next time I write I'll try being in a better frame of mind —

4.

all no one has time to visit it seems —

Got a nice letter from Ginnie today hasn't heard from my Dot for a long time something must be bothering her. That's why I hate to write letters seems as if someone is always trying to make something of them I never can put on paper what I think and feel —

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We have had rain nearly every day for so long its so depressing I'm just looking forward to some sun —

When we have a winter without much snow we make up for it somehow —

That snap of David in the kitchen was so cute. I've seen him look like that so many times They were all cute — They grow up too fast believe me I know —

Next time I write I'll try being in a better frame of mind —

6.
 I see Pat Pauletts mother
 once in a while Pat is married
 and works in the Globe office
 (laundry). Have seen Johnnie
 K. once since Woody went —
 Saw Adams she looks bad
 hear that Bill is tipping the bottle
 too much (thats probably the reason)
 but she should know she went with
 him 22 years b4 his wife died.
 Hatch baby sits for Eileen so she is
 working & going to get a new car
 has been working since baby was
 eight weeks old.

7.
 Anyway it keeps Hatch out of
 mischief. She was in shop
 Sat. as E. had the day off
 Boy I'm glad shes working I don't
 want her around my neck all
 the time — I don't know
 any news about the rest of the
 people you know as I don't go
 much have been to F. just once
 since Nov. and wasn't sure as
 Dot was pleased to see me or not.
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 heard about Woody — She must
 be very old by now — I hope

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to look her up sometime I go
 to Boston also Grammie C.
 I haven't been up since Dad passed
 way — Don't know when I'll get
 courage again —
 Hope I'm in a better mood next
 time I write.
 You planted the seed well
 see if it grows — anyway thanks
 for the invitation —
 Lots of love to all
 Mother —
 Included is a card I should have
 sent it in Feb. but had hoped
 Dot would send me one for a keepsake
 I didn't put my name on as I didn't feel
 a brother expects thanks he is on the thanking side



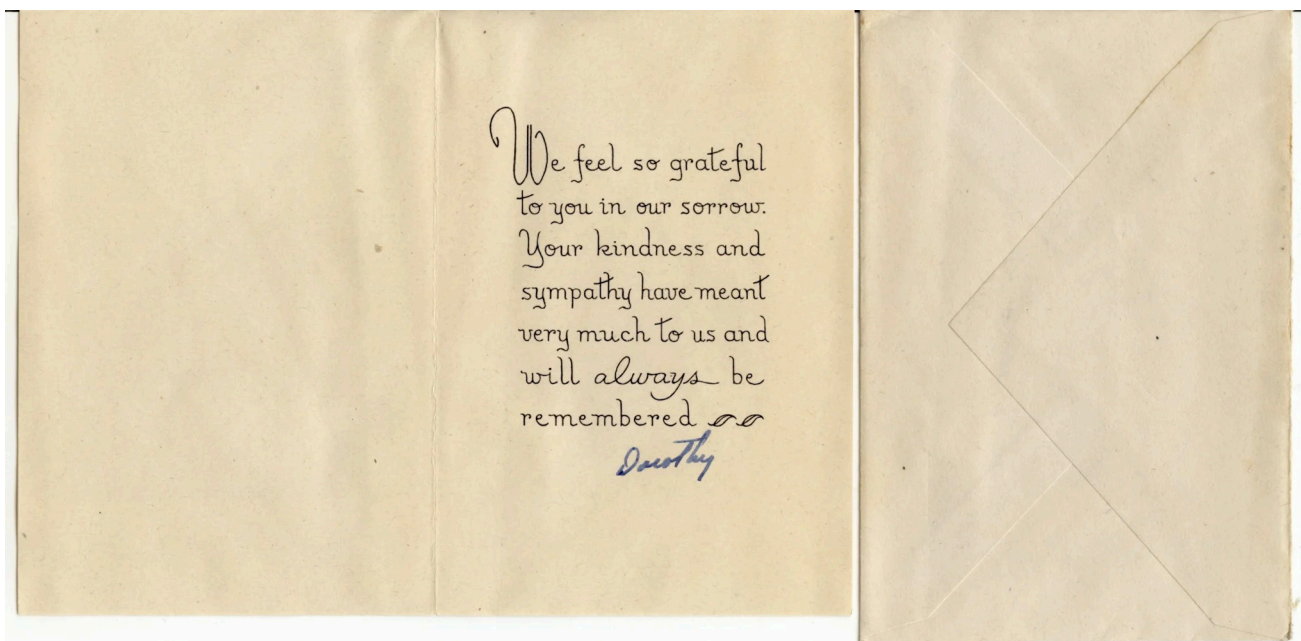
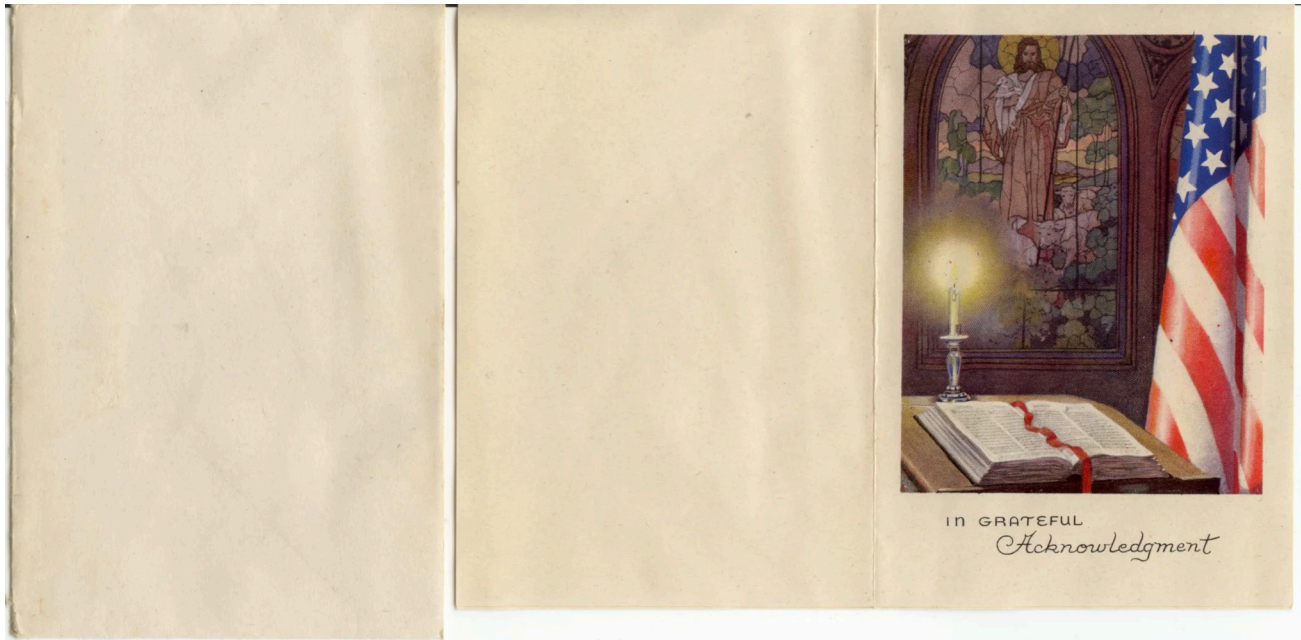
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[In this as with other letters in this series, I have attempted to transcribe the written text while faithfully retaining the writer's peculiarities and errors of spelling and punctuation. Sometimes, though, the aggressiveness of spell-check prevails and a correction gets past me. The errors in preserving the errors are strictly my own. -DAW-]

WRW Letter 15

[A decade after her father, "Woody"/Wesley, was killed, 10-year-old Brenda, a fifth-grader, wrote this letter to her grandmother. The script is clear enough that a transcription should not be needed, although unfortunately the second page was not scanned completely and the original no longer exists.]



Dear gramie (1)

We are on our school vacation now and I didn't have anything to do so I thought I would write.

We are living in Leesburg Florida and go to Beverly Shores school it is very big and nice all the children are very nice also. I miss you very much I haven't seen you for five years and I would like to see you very much.

I am sending you a picture of me it is not very good but the wind was blowing and did not have time to comb my hair.

I suppose that is not a very good excuse but it's the only one I've got.

I am listening to Christmas carols on the radio. Our Christmas tree looks

(2)

ice with all the presents

Tue. Dec. 18, we had our
a party at school. I got
let from a girl named Judy
& it came from Hawaii.

Last birthday I got a tether-
are you are wondering what that
pole with a ball on it and
le play at a time it is big
to be set up outdoors. Tail and
and I play it all the time.

now in the fifth grade and
the grades I am making:

Ed - B Spelling - B
rip - A Arithmetic - B
Music - B

-C Miss Schofield
Studies - C Teacher

C

-C

(3)

Down here the schools are much
harder than the ones in V.T. they are
bigger and better than the ones in
V.T. The kind of arithmetic we have
in Florida is like this. $7 \overline{) 358}^{53}$ and
this, $4 \overline{) 276}^{726}$

The kind we have in V.T. is like
this, $9 \overline{) 3573}^{392}$ and this, $4 \overline{) 208}^{52}$

In Florida we have long division
and in V.T. we have short division
using only one number. We have
been in the school a short time and
my arithmetic grade is kind of low
but it will get better as I learn

(4)

how to really do it. I guess that
is all I have to say. I want to wish
you a very

Merry Christmas

Love

Brenda

P.S. I hope I see you soon
Gail Cynthia and me of course
want to give our love.

Gail	Cynthia	Brenda
1010	1010	101010
1010	1010	101010
1010	1010	111111
1010	1010	000000



Brenda Woodbury

BRENDA J. WOODBURY, JERICHO — Brenda Joyce Woodbury, the admired actress and playwright, died on St. Patrick's Day at a great but mysterious age. Known for her emotional generosity, swift intellect, and astonishing creative power, she found the world a beautiful, if disordered, place, and left the planet much improved. Her talents as an artist were surpassed only by her gift for being a mother; at that good art, she was genius itself. Brenda is survived by her mother, Dorothy Shippee; her sisters, Cindy Hardy and Gail Kill; and by Michael Merriam, her son. A funeral service will be held Saturday, March 24, at 1 p.m. in the Ready Funeral & Cremation Service South Chapel, 261 Shelburne Road, Burlington. To send online condolences to the family, please visit <http://www.readyfuneral.com>.

[Brenda was 54 when she died on March 17, 2007.]



In the candid picture above, Brenda is about 18 (with long necklace), same age as my sister, Ann Woodbury, seated in the foreground. The others in the picture are Brenda's mother, Dorothy Shippee behind Brenda, and her other daughters, Gail on the left and Cindy on the far right. I surmise that the picture was snapped in the Shippee house in Vermont on a visit that I may not have participated in. (I would have been in the Army at that time.)

Brenda married Rocky Lane Hull in Vermont in 1972 and they were divorced in 1975 after living apart for longer than six months, according to the court record. In 1976 she and Robert Lee Merriam were married. Son Michael came along in 1979. Her acting career took her around the country, but I have no source of details on those years.

Bob Merriam was remembered fondly by Brenda's mother Dorothy in a letter she sent me in 2009. But the couple had eventually divorced and Brenda ended up back in Vermont by the time Michael had grown up.

Brenda's unattended death in 2007 occurred at her own apartment in Jericho, Vermont. Her mother told me that it was due to cardiac arrest, but Dorothy also allowed that Brenda had recently been reclusive and depressed and had worried for some time that she may take her own life. And perhaps she did.



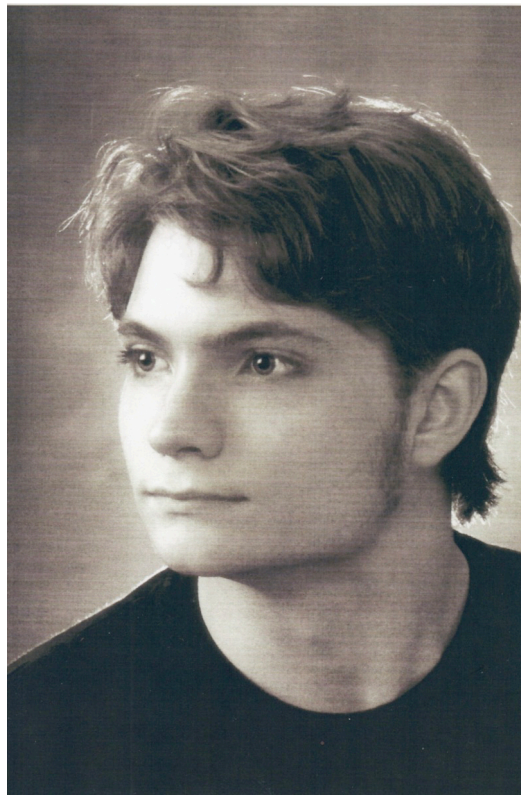
Brenda Woodbury Merriam

MARIAM BERZON AGENCY
714-631-5936



Brenda Woodbury Merriam

MARIAM BERZON AGENCY
714-631-5936

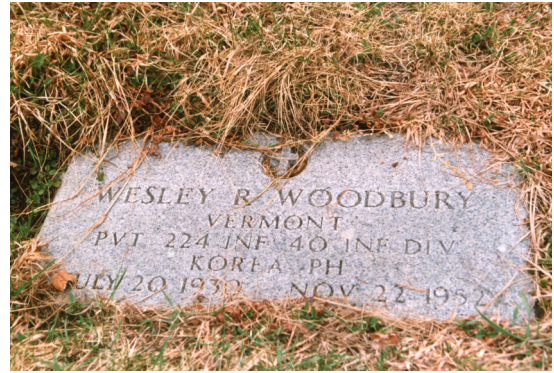


[In 2009 Brenda's mother, Dorothy (Rutledge) Woodbury Shippee, sent me two publicity photos of Brenda (Woodbury) Hull Merriam, also the photo of Robert and Brenda's son, Michael Merriam. Michael's father, Robert, died in 2020 and I never had any contact with him.]

Woody - a parting tribute
March 12, 2017

Grove Cemetery lies two miles or so west of Concord, Vermont. It occupies a couple of acres on a steep slope on the north side of US Route 2, isolated from nearby houses. Summers on the hillside are verdant and sweet, but under the arctic winds of winter the same hill must be desolate and bone-chilling; but why would that matter?





My first recollection of visiting this cemetery might have been when I was about ten or twelve years old. But no doubt I had been there when I was quite young as well. I think I went there once more with cousin Dan Kinney when I was about twenty. When I was in my sixties, some friends and I took a northern route on a long-distance fishing trip from Medway, Maine to Lake Ontario, and as we crossed into Vermont before crossing into Québec I realized that we would be passing the cemetery, so I asked their indulgence to stop and let me look for something.

It is such a distinctive setting that I recalled almost exactly where I needed

to go. I remembered, after more than 40 years had passed, that there was a marker high on the slope, near the back of the field, and in probably less than a minute I found it:

Wesley R. Woodbury, Pvt, US Army, July 20, 1930 – November 22, 1952.

My friends gave me a respectful quarter hour to walk around and take in the silence, the loneliness, the finality of it all. There was something else on his grave marker stating which unit he was in: the 40th Infantry Division, 224th Infantry Regiment.

He was one of two from the 40th Division killed on November 22. Before the combat ended, 155 more from the 40th have given their lives. Really, though, now that you may have read a little of his story, what difference is there between Woody Woodbury, my father's younger brother, and all the rest who have died in uniform?

First, more about him.

It was August, 1952, when Woody was able to spend a few weeks at home with his wife and newborn daughter before returning to duty. He crossed the Pacific aboard the *USS General W.M. Black*. After some delay in Japan, he landed in Korea.

In a November 5 letter to my father, Woody wrote: "Letters are pretty hard to write up here. When I write the folks I have to smooth things over so they won't worry. That leaves me practically nothing to write about. I don't feel that is necessary with you however. I'll

just tell you facts and you can keep them to yourself. The second day I got in Korea I got a good look at the things that are really happening here. The train that brought me to the front stopped right beside a hospital train. I watched them putting wounded men on the train. The ambulances were bringing the men down faster than they could get them onto the train. It was a sight that made me so sick I had to turn away and vomit.”

In that letter he went on to describe how three members of his unit had been killed. And he added: “I guess our outfit will be on line until about May. If I can keep my ass in one peace that long I’ll really be lucky.” (He spelled poorly.)

And in the same letter, he wrote, ominously, prophetically: “Once in a while we go out into no man’s land and take up mines.”

What was there left of him after a land mine lifted him and half a ton of dirt twenty feet into the air in a split second? Is it the concussion that kills, or maybe the hundreds of pieces of gravel piercing like bullets? Does it lift you so suddenly that your joints pull apart all at once? Or does it literally tear you to pieces? Do you see your guts fly past your face before you black out forever?

Just before I turned two, Uncle Woody gave me a stuffed animal — a copper-colored dog. My oldest daughter, Ruth, has it now and knows its provenance. His widow, Dottie, re-married and had two more daughters, Gail and Cindy Shippee. I saw my cousin, Brenda, on a few brief visits in my younger years, lost touch for most of our adult lives, and in 2007, when she was 54 and I 56, she died of a heart attack.

Did she ever hear the stories of her father’s troubled youth? I wish she were still around so that, in our old age, we could meet again and reminisce. The letters here, the newspaper clippings, and the court records that Dan turned up in 2018 should have been hers to keep.

Here’s the difference.

What’s different about Woody is this: It’s a punch in *my* stomach, a kick to *my* balls. And I hope I can make other people wake up and realize that anyone can be next — to be punched, kicked, or killed.

Woody didn’t die for his country. He died for Korea, sure. And he died for politics. Just about every American military casualty since the Civil War did not happen in defense of the United States but was a sacrifice in another country that posed no threat to our sovereignty. Woody gave up what should have been another sixty years of doing what the rest of us have been doing all the while he has been chilling his bones on a Vermont hillside.

He could have been raising his daughter and having more children. He might have enjoyed rock-and-roll, but he never heard a note of it. He might have liked to try out a Corvette when it first appeared. He didn’t get to see Neil Armstrong step onto the moon. He never saw a computer.

May 30, 2023, was the seventy-first Memorial Day since Woody bit the dust, or maybe more precisely, since the dust bit him. We are asked to remember those who gave everything so that the rest of us might have something. OK, remember this: From 1950-1953 there were 36,516 Americans who did not return from Korea alive, and 4,759 are still missing in action. From 1959-1975 there were 58,272 Americans who did not return from Viet Nam alive, and 2,489 are missing. And since 2003 when we set out to defeat terrorism-in-the-name-of-Islam, more than 7,000 have given their lives, and there are at least 3 missing.

Altogether, since I was born — after World War Two, over 100,000 Americans have not returned from undeclared wars on foreign soil. And I am acutely aware that, wherever our

guys died, uncountable hundreds of thousands of humble humans from those other countries have died as well.

We can't honor these war dead by holding a barbecue on the Monday nearest Memorial Day. We can honor them by derisively interrogating anyone calling for more of the same senselessness that killed Woody — prolonged entrenchments with no commitment to ending things immediately and decisively. Does that mean we should not defend ourselves? Not at all.

It's about war.

As a naïve 19-year-old I joined the Army during the Vietnam war. But you can call me a pacifist, because it's not in my nature to want to hurt anyone. You can call me a war monger, too, because it's not in my nature to submit to getting hurt, and I believe the only way to stop the killing is to stop the killer fast. I joined up in 1970 because, if I had not done so, my draft number was next to be called, and then I would have had no say in where I would be sent.

I have this idea about war. It's like, if the bully punches you once, but you're not prepared to resist, then you've been warned, and you'd better be prepared for the very next punch. If, sooner or later, the bully punches you again, and you're still not prepared, by default you have decided to accept whatever he decides to deliver, because life isn't fair and the strong and pushy — the narcissists with political power and with delusions of self-importance, decide how the rest will live.

Once a bully hits you, though, even the first time, he has forfeited all his rights: the right to choose your response, your weapon, the setting, the timing, the intensity, and the duration of your response, whom you enlist to help you, and whether he survives or is reduced to dust.

If the bully is a kid on the playground, you can surround yourself with protective friends or go to the principal. If you're a nation and the bully is another nation, you have no one to run to. It's up to you, and you had better not be ducking around and trying to find your escape route and protecting your nose while he rearranges your internal organs. You're sure as hell an idiot if you're trying to talk peace while he dislodges your teeth.

If you're a nation, and a bully hits you, I think you should lay him out flat, suddenly, and with everything it takes to forever prevent the next punch. I know America doesn't start wars, but when America gets sucked in by some "tinpot dictator with a bad haircut and a pet word for God," (P. J. O'Rourke's words, not mine), I cannot comprehend why we tiptoe around with so-called diplomacy and feed our soldiers to their bullying. If the bully punches first, I think he ought not have time to draw another breath before he gets knocked out cold instantly. The United States has had the ability to do that ever since the end of World War II.

If two other countries are slugging it out and our homeland is not threatened, send some weapons or advice to one or the other, if there is a clear reason, but not our own people. My



own preference, rather than sending soldiers and sailors to spill their guts in war after interminable war, would be to decapitate the regime that wants to pick a fight. We can do that, but of course that justifies the enemy's doing the same to the head of this country. So be it. If you want to be President, accept the possibility. If you don't want that responsibility, step aside and let someone with courage assume the presidency.

Our reason for going into Korea in 1950 was all about making the so-called United Nations look important and had nothing to do with protecting the United States. If we've blundered into a treaty to protect some little foreign country, then we need to treat the bully the same as if he had hit us in the nose personally, because the bully which is North Korea is still there, and still just as evil 71 years after Woody was killed (as of 2023). And we still have troops on the ground there. What the hell is that all about? What will we do when the North resumes where it left off in 1953: "negotiate" or annihilate?

Therefore, because we're still playing war games in Asia, we have announced to the rest of the world that the United States is willing to march another 100,000 enthusiastic young American lemmings over the same precipice over the next, say, 70 years, so that diplomats can continue pretending to work for peace. In the words of Lewis Forester, "while Congress is patting each other on the back and referring to themselves as the honorable Mr. So-and-So, men still die." These are the politicians in pressed suits whose motives need to be questioned, who argue that civilian casualties of a decisive response would be too high, who believe it is fitting and proper to kill 100,000 more Americans *in undeclared wars* in the name of peace during one more lifespan. (These thoughts have been expanded upon in my novel, *Cold Morning Shadow*.)

Here's a radical thought: Armies are comprised of civilians. Read up on Article I, Section 8, Clause 12 in the Constitution. The last time Congress declared war on an enemy was in 1942. Drafting civilians, especially in the absence of a declared war, does not make them professional soldiers. It makes them frightened civilians who want to go home. The uniform that Woody was wearing did not make him a sinister threat to world peace. It made him dead.

Instead of crushing the bully before he knows what hit him back, we put troubled kids from backwoods places like Livermore Falls, Maine, on the ground in places like Inchon and Pleiku and we tell them that, if they just hold the ground for a few more days or weeks, our diplomats will have this all solved and they can go home to the mom and baby they left behind. This is what makes me mad. Our diplomats haven't accomplished anything in Korea in seven and a half decades.

When I visited his grave on that recent trip through Vermont, there were fresh flowers lying at the base of Woody's headstone. His widow, Dottie, then alone and in her seventies, still lived in Vermont. She might have known about the flowers.

Humans have an astonishing capacity for cruelty and violence, as well as for creativity and compassion. In the mere century or so since all the world's populations have discovered one another and, during the same period, communication among all nations has become possible, it is the great shame of mankind that we have not all come together and put an end to war. But more than the shame upon the succession of leaders in all countries is the shame upon the people who have allowed arrogant tyrants to rule them, including tyrants who rule by divine right, dictators who rule by suppression, and elected go-gooders who push idiotic schemes by forcing compliance with feel-good executive orders.

I'm not proud to say I "served" my country. I'd prefer not to have a country. I'd prefer not to dwell among beings who accept living under dogmas that require conflict with other

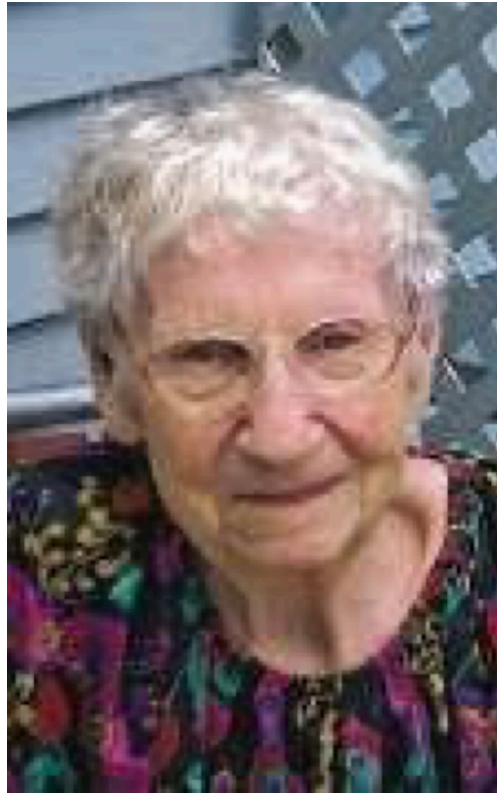
collectives of people — other “nations.” But I was young when I joined, and I saw myself faced with criminal penalties for refusing to serve. As for my own easy time in the Army, during the Vietnam war, I am reminded of the line in Milton’s short poem (On His Blindness): “They also serve who only stand and wait.” I served my time. Yes, while I was enjoying myself in California and Europe, I was available for any other assignment the Army might have thrown at me, any new goof by the politicians, any new field that needed to be cleared of mines. But I was only called upon to wait, (and decrypt Russian radio communications). Then I was sent home and permitted to lead the life that my uncle was denied.

I don’t begrudge the Korean people Woody’s life. Perhaps, though, the sadness told in this collection of letters and the brief history of this troubled youth and proud daddy will reach just one future politician who is tempted to negotiate treaties obliging our senseless sacrifice or who is tempted to politeness when responding to bully regimes who don’t deserve diplomatic deference.

le Déserteur (“the Pacifist”)

Messieurs qu'on nomme grand, je vous fais une lettre	<i>Men whose names are great, I am writing you a letter</i>
Que vous lirez peut-être si vous avez le temps	<i>Which you will read perhaps, if you have the time</i>
Je viens de recevoir mes papiers militaires	
Pour aller à la guerre avant mercredi soir	
Monsieur le Président je ne veux pas la faire	<i>Mister President, I don't want to do this</i>
Je ne suis pas sur terre pour tuer les pauvres gens	<i>I am not on Earth to kill miserable mankind</i>
Il n'faut pas vous fâcher mais il faut que je vous dise	
Les guerres sont des bêtises le monde en a assez	
Depuis que je suis né j'ai vu mourir des frères	
J'ai vu partir des pères et les enfants pleurer	
Les mères ont trop souffert quand d'autres se gobergent	
Et vivant à leur aise malgré la boue de sang	
Il y'a les prisonniers on a volé leurs âmes	
On a volé leurs femmes et tout le cher passé	
Demain de bon matin je fermerai la porte	
Au nez des années mortes j'irai par les chemins	
Je mendierai ma vie sur la terre et sur l'onde	
Do vieux au nouveau monde et je dirai aux gens	
Profitez de la vie éloignez la misère	
Les hommes sont tous des frères gens de tous les pays	
S'il faut verser le sang allez verser le vôtre	
Messieurs les bons apôtres monsieur le Président	
Si vous me poursuivez prévenez vos gendarmes	
Que je serai sans armes et qu'ils pourront tirer	
Et qu'ils pourront tirer	

Adapted from the song by Boris Vian & Harold B Berg, recorded by Peter, Paul & Mary. Published in *Sing Out!* (Vol. 13, No. 2), April-May 1963, “Le Déserteur” was composed at the height of the long war between France and the Algerian nationalist freedom fighters. It was recorded by one of France's most popular singers, Mouloudji, an Algerian himself by no strange coincidence. The French government promptly banned the song and confiscated all recordings. Long may it echo down the canyons of history.

Emptiness, Bewilderment, Silence

DOROTHY G. SHIPPEE – JERICO – Dorothy G Shippee, 84, of Jericho, went to be with the Lord on Thursday, Nov. 20, 2014, in the Williston Respite House. Dorothy Rutledge was born on Nov. 19, 1930, in Concord, Vt., and her parents were Henry and Dorothy Aldrich. She was predeceased by her daughter, Brenda J. Woodbury of Underhill; and a son-in-law, Douglas Kill of Orono, Maine. She was also predeceased by her brothers, Roger of Ocala, Fla., and Rodney and Rupert of St. Johnsbury; and sister, Marilyn Palmer of Ferrisburg. She is survived by two daughters, Gail Kill of Orono, Maine, and Cindy Hardy of Essex Junction, Vt. She is also survived by six grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren, residing throughout the country. The family is having a private celebration of her life, per her request. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to The Respite House, Williston. [A. W. Rich Funeral Homes]