



UNITED STATES ARMY AIR FORCES  
MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA

May 30, 1943

Dear Miss Blaney,

I was very glad to hear that Ben Scuda is safe and well, and I know everyone at Bryant feels happy because Ben is a grand fellow. My mother sent me the clipping from the Evening Bulletin, and I read it over and over again because there could be no finer news. If you have Ben's address, Miss Blaney, please send it to me.

There must have been much enthusiasm "Stunt Night," because the letters I received from my classmates told me that they were looking forward to "Stunt Night." I have seen the clippings from the Journal, and I know who was responsible for the success of the program judging from previous years. Dr. Kranshawski Koussovetsky must be the lost member of the Polish Legion. (I hope George doesn't hear about this).

Although we are soldiers in uniform, we too, like the soldiers on the home front, like to take time out and dream of those who are miles away from us physically. I say take time out because a soldier has to be "on the beam" at all times during the periods of instruction, and during his free time he must organize his material and keep his belongings in the best of condition. As I think of Bryant, the first thought that enters my mind is, "How is the Ledger coming along?" May I have the second copy? I know that you, Miss Blaney, always get the first, and I am sorry that I cannot be the one to hand you that first copy.

Our trip to Miami was made by coach, and according to one of the conductors on the train, "This is the next best thing to a caboose to ride in." We took this coach from Devens on April 5, at 4:45 p.m., and we arrived in Miami at 9 p.m., April 7, about fifty-four hours without leaving the train once. We went through eleven states down the Atlantic Seaboard. We went down the Hudson, riding at the bottom of the Palisades. When going through West Point the conductor told us that there is only a few inches clearance above the train while passing under the tunnel. On the ground above the tunnel there are Ordnance buildings, and the Government will not let the railroad cut away a larger opening because it might undermine the foundation. In passing through Baltimore we noticed a difference in the weather. The trees were greener and the foliage was out. In Washington we saw the Lincoln Memorial, the Capitol, and in the distance the Congressional Library. The cherry trees were starting to bloom. We saw the new War Department Building--they call it the Pentagon. It is an enormous building. They were still wearing topcoats in Washington. Richmond is a beautiful city, but it also has its share



of slums. We saw Quantico where the Marine Headquarters is located. Here the soil is very sandy. The Marine Museum and the history of the Marine Air Corps is also in Quantico, Virginia. In Ashland, Virginia, the train went down Main Street and through the shopping district. We saw the people doing their shopping, and we could make out articles in the windows and the price tags. In Raleigh, North Carolina, we saw large tobacco warehouses on red soil. Some of these warehouses were about a mile long.

We were very warm, because we had our Olive Drab uniforms on and our fatigues on top of our OD's. That night we went to bed sitting, looking at the tobacco fields, and when we awoke the following day, we gazed upon the dismal swamplands of Georgia. In Savannah we noticed the signs on the waiting rooms, "White," "Colored."

In a large section of swampland was a long with seven turtles perfectly aligned, my first glimpse of army life. (A squad column.) A soldier asked a Southerner who was passing by the train in Jacksonville, Florida, if he would sell him a cigarette. The Southerner took out an unbroken pack and said, "Here friend," and refused to accept any money--that was Southern Hospitality sooner than expected, and the boys said that they thought they would like the South. We were now nearing our destination, and it was time to wash that, "protective film," of dirt and soot from our faces and hands. Each fellow shaved and took off his fatigues.

We were now entering a land that made you stop and think. I began to wonder. It looked every bit like a Hollywood setup. It seemed to be a man-made world of shining leaves waving in the sun. Palm trees, lemon trees, orange trees,--all strangers to a northerner. Then I noticed the long train forming an arc, being pulled by the engine moving like the throbbing of a heart and following the shore of the Atlantic. The train was always within one-half mile of the shore as we sped through New Smyrna, Palm Beach, and Miami. We got into trucks and rode over the bridge to Miami Beach.

Here we found a beautiful well-planned city. Here was a city with beautiful, well-paved, and straight roads all in excellent condition. I found myself rooming with four fellows from Boston College, four fellows which I later found to be the finest roommates one could find in the Army. We worked as a team, and there never was a happier group. We shared everything we got from home, not only among ourselves but with the fellows from the other rooms who visited us frequently in groups of five or six at one time.

There are 858 WAACS here at Miami Beach. We sometimes get bananas with our Sunday meals. You can purchase banana splits. One of the favorite breakfasts here is made up of tomato juice, bacon, French toast with sirup, bread and butter, jam and a small bun.





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Here is the menu we had the Sunday following Easter: Vegetable soup, pork chops, mashed potatoes (rare) with gravy, applesauce, cold slaw, beets, bread and pork stuffing, beets, bread and butter (ha!) lemonade, grape-nut ice cream (small helping) You can return for more if you wish for anything but dessert. We do not always have butter, and we appreciate it more when we do get it.

Our day is divided into seven periods. Some of these periods are devoted to drill and others are devoted to classes. During class we sit in a squatting position in Indian fashion. Here you are given instruction that will some day save a life. Some of the material is not repeated because time is short, and shorthand has been my most valuable asset since I have been in the Army. I have every lecture that has been given. Each night I recopy my notes, condensing the material where possible, and all these notes are in one small notebook 2 x 4 inches. It would be impossible to remember everything and rewriting the notes in shorthand enables me to put volumes in one small notebook. This notebook is easily carried, and when you are waiting in line you can take your pocket memo and review shorthand and the lectures at the same time.

One night we waited in line for our pay from 4:10 p.m. until 9:20 p.m. On another occasion we had waited in line for 1½ hours and we saw this written on the wall, "When you reach this point you have only two hours to wait. At first we thought the sign funny, but we waited two hours. Yes, in the Army you hurry to wait, and you wait to hurry."

While marching the various flights sing. This is merely to put on a show for the people here at Miami Beach.--For their morale. Here is the reason as I was informed: One night a woman was sitting on her lawn, and a bunch of fellows who had been on K.P. came marching down slopily. Ten minutes later that woman got a notice that her son had just been killed in Africa. (Quoting instructor) How do you suppose she felt about everyone doing his bit? That is why we all march in formation and sing."

I was informed at a lecture that there is no such thing as the United States Air Corps at the present time. In March, 1942, it died. It is now the United States Air Forces. It is all-inclusive. It consists of the former Air Corps, Artillery, *also should never be forgotten while in school* Infantry, and every other branch of the Army which makes a self-sustaining unit.

The Infantry used to stop all "shindigs" and take all the bases and the Air Corps would come marching in, singing the Army Air Corps Song. Now the typist, the mechanic, has to get up and shoot.

Formerly, all you had to do was to go down the cellar and have a cup of coffee while the Infantry fought. But today,



everyone has to do the dirty work.

In between classes we have breaks lasting ten minutes. During that time we sit in the shade and hear recordings over the loud-speaker. There is a school nearby with a beautiful swimming pool, tennis courts, and outdoor tables with sunshade awnings where outdoor classes are held.

It is now getting a little warmer. The mornings are muggy. It rains when the sun is shining brightly. Showers are frequent and last five or ten minutes. The streets become flooded in that time from these cloudbursts. At first I thought this flooded condition was caused by a poor sewage system which is not the case at all. The highest point on this beach is twenty-two feet. Our hotel is four feet above sealevel. Miami Beach is all artificial. In fact, this was all swampland not many years ago, and it has been filled in, and it is only a few feet above sealevel. Incidentally the highest point in the State of Florida is 325 feet. Near Lake Wales there is a beautiful park where they have the Singing Tower one of the finest gems of modern architecture. At times during the year, and principally during the tourist season, they sing carols. Silver Springs pours enough water to float a boat carrying eight to ten people. The crystal-clear water enables you to see a dime lying on the bottom, eighty feet below the surface of the water through the glass bottom of the boat.

Leather watchstraps are useless in this part of the country. Perspiration will rot a leather strap in two weeks. I bought two watchstraps in four weeks. I now have a canvas strap that matches my suntan uniform. Your hair and nails grow noticeably faster here.

We had a cloudburst today. While marching down the street some of the boys tried to avoid the water. A Lieutenant said to one of the privates, "Don't be afraid, get in there and swim." By the time we neared the hotel you could hear a squishing from each footstep. The water was over our ankles, and some fellow said, "Breastroke, March."

We had calisthenics in the rain one morning. We would wash our hands in the puddles in front of us. We were lucky if our clothes did not float away. Everyone remains at attention, but the uniforms remain dripping at ease.

In the morning you hear the rustle of palm trees, and it sounds like rain. Soon you become adjusted to it.

Here is some of the language you hear around the hall and in the rooms. "Well look at Heddy Lamarr." "That's my girl, what do you expect?" "I know there's a man shortage now." "Why you, I got her before the man shortage."

"Are those my own clothes on my bed, impossible." All those who want a furlough, fall out in the hall." "All those who feel like doing K.P., please fall out." "Train leaving for Boston in a few minutes."





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There are approximately 360 hotels at Miami Beach, 347 are being used by the Government. Seven hotels were bought for \$13,000,000 by the Government. Five million dollars is the rent per year.

We do our own washing in the Army. That is, most of us do. The Captain was telling us that the other day the whole flight had fallen in with the exception of one soldier. Three minutes later he came running out of the hotel, panting, his shirt unbuttoned and half on, his shoes unlaced, his right hand holding his pants while with his left hand he attempted to put on his hat and comb at the same time. The Sergeant asked him, "Say Joe, where do you think you're going? Don't you know you're supposed to be out on time or you will be AWOL?" "Yes, said Joe, but I've got a good excuse." "Well, let's hear it, barked the Sergeant, and it had better be good." "Well, last night I put my socks next to my bunk, and the fellow who sleeps above me jumped right on my sock this morning and bent it so badly it took all this time to put it on."

My Greatest Impression--On Sunday morning I leave the hotel at a quarter to nine and walk along the beach on Ocean Drive and arrive a few minutes before the Mass begins. Here in Lumus Park, among the palm trees, is a makeshift altar under a wooden roof from which is suspended canvas sides that undulate in the Ocean breeze. Kneeling devoutly on their white handkerchiefs, waves of communicants pray. It is a peaceful scene...the green grass around you... the wall of warm gray stones which borders around the green of the Park...the rustle of palm trees in the Ocean breeze...the restful rays of the sun filtering through the leaves of the palm trees, the larger trees seeming to pass their beauty on to the smaller ones. As I listen to the soft inspiring notes of the organ, there comes to me thoughts that would take me at least thirty minutes to tell, but they passed through my mind in as many seconds. First I thought of the high school students, their plays, their athletic contests, their dances and rallies, and their spirit. I thought of my classmates at Bryant and the people I had worked for and studied under. I thought of home, my family, and my friends. Then from above came the heavy drone of an airplane that seemed to encroach upon the peacefulness and reminded me of the reasons why I was here. Then all was quiet again.

You could see above the heads of the gathering the gray hair and benevolent face of Father Wierzalis who spoke with a slight Polish accent. After the final prayers of the Mass, I walked over to the stone wall that separated the green grass from the golden sands of the beach, and with cupped hand, I peered into the distance observing everything on the horizon. Then with my roommates, I walked by the hotels which have a varied beauty of their own. We stopped for a pleasant glass of orange juice and returned to our

hotel. This is a typical Sunday at Miami Beach.

I had my Wisdom Tooth pulled Monday, and with it went my last trace of Wisdom.

Thank you for the Bryant paper, Miss Blaney, it feels good to know what is happening at Bryant.

I don't know how to end this letter, so I'll do as one of the soldiers did one night when he was restricted. He picked up a broom swept passed the C.Q., down the stairs, out the door, past the guard, and out to freedom!

Always,

*Legs*