

LETTERS HOME OF ANDREW E. TUCK, III, LIEUTENANT, F COMPANY, 506TH PARACHUTE INFANTRY REGIMENT, 1941 - 1945

I read his letters two times: Overall impression: a devout Catholic, dedicated to his God, his family, his country, the Airborne, the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment (of which he was a member when it was activated) and F Company of the 506th, where he began as a Platoon Leader, became Executive Officer after Normandy, and later Company Commander. A soldier's soldier. Tuck was F Company Executive Officer when I joined that unit as a replacement after Normandy. I hardly knew him. After reading his letters I wish I had known him better.

Tuck attended a military prep school, attended summer camp at Plattsburg Barracks after his junior year and joined the Army soon after his senior year. Considering he had but the equivalent of a high-school education my impression is that he was remarkably well educated for one who had not attended university. He could be quite articulate for one of his age, at times almost "painting a picture with words". There is ample evidence of a sense of humor and increasing nostalgia, especially in his later letters. I see only one negative, possibly due in part to the pressures of time and/or circumstance - his spelling often leaves much to be desired. Some letters are not dated.

Tuck was with the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment from the time it was activated. He began as Platoon Leader, 2nd Platoon, F Company. I think Russell Hall must have been his assistant in Normandy. When I joined F Company, Tuck had moved up to Company Exec and Hall became Leader of 2nd Platoon. I, as a 2nd Lieutenant, became Hall's assistant.

Copies of Tuck's letters were provided to me by his sister, Lorna Tuck Colbert. I have tried to excerpt from them comments I believe to be of greatest historical value and others that seem to best characterize the man, to show his dedication to his God, and his family, military unit and country and his sense of humor. It is very difficult for me now to appreciate that this man was just a year older than am I. He was unusually mature for one of his age.

After reading the letters two times I began typing excerpts from those where statements of interest were relatively short. About 20 letters contained so much of interest the task was more than I could cope with. For these I used a voice-recognition program to record text into the computer with about 85% accuracy. This added many errors, most of which I hope I corrected. It also corrected some misspelled words. I deliberately avoided changing some obvious errors because I wanted to be true to the man and what he had to say. I have otherwise edited to a small degree to make this more readable and understandable. Words misspelled and left so intentionally are followed by [sic]. I treated all in an individual letter as one paragraph and indicated omitted sentences by three or four periods as appropriate (...).

I have not used quotation marks except where Tuck added them. Unless otherwise noted, the words to follow (lightly edited as noted above) are from Tuck's letters. Comments in brackets are mine.

I did not excerpt all letters, only those with items of historical interest or that supported my impression of Tuck as described above.

I should note that while Tuck was known to me as "Andy", and to some of the men of F Co. as "Little Andy", he was known to his family as "Ed" or "Eddie".

Plattsburg Barracks, NY, 1941

July 13, 1941 [from Plattsburg Barracks, NY, to mother]

The work is hard but there is something fine to be gained....Now the important point. I want to wish you the happiest kind of birthday -cause we all know your [sic] the Queen of all Party Girls.

[Plattsburg, on Lake Champlain was a summer camp for ROTC training. Tuck apparently attended camp here after his junior year in military school.]

[Undated copy of a telegram from Headquarters Second Corps Area notifying all Professors of Military Science and Tactics that the previous minimum age requirement for appointments as officers has been reduced from 21 to 18.]

Camp Croft, SC, 1942

August 2, 1942 [Judging from postmark on an envelope Tuck is with 37Bn Co. D, Camp Croft, SC]

Undated [Letter to mother]

Arrived last night at Camp Croft in what "they" call the sunny south (and "they" are right). This place is hot....permanently billeted at the 37th Bn of the 7th Reg. Of all the officers I've met about 97% are Irish Catholics....All my love, Your Lt.

Undated [Letter to mother, Tuck is with 37 Bn Headquarters at Camp Croft, SC.]

We're working like the devil down here and the heat is something. Nothing but red clay whichever way you look....Your Lt, Ed

[Tuck obviously had been commissioned by this time. Camp Croft was near Spartansburg, SC and was a Replacement Training Center, one of four for infantry. It has since become a state park.]

Toccoa, GA , 1942

August 20, 1942 [Letter to mother from Camp Toombs, Toccoa, GA.]

This is a new camp opened about a month....Toccoa is a very pretty little town and hasn't been spoiled by the Army yet. I don't think it will be because there won't be over a Reg. Here at any time....assigned to the second platoon of Company F....officers are a fine bunch...from Lybia [sic], China, Alaska, National Guard outfits, West Point, etc....Most of the shelters are tents, however I live with four other officers in a nearly finished hut. This is just what I wanted - it is a newly activated Reg. Of the Airborne Command.

August 21, 1942 [Envelope postmarked this date with 506 Parachute Infantry, Camp Toombs, GA as return address. Post marked Toccoa, GA.]

[Camp Toombs was a Georgia National Guard Camp, site of the first parachute Infantry training center. It was six miles south of Toccoa, GA at the foot of Mt. Currahee and was later renamed Camp Toccoa. An interesting, illustrated description is available at <http://currahee.hispeed.com/toccoaphotos.html>]

August 22, 1942 [Letter to father from Camp Toombs, Toccoa, GA]

I'm in a new outfit which I'm sure will be the finest Reg. in the Army. We run seven miles uphill (I mean a mountain) except for the top, which is too steep to run up. Before that we run the toughest obstacle course in the country in 3 1/2 minutes, do 30 push ups, 10 pull ups, 100 yds dash and 50 yard duck walk. The first mile must be done seven min. - the first half mile in three. Don't forget what has to be done before and that this is uphill stuff. Each week the eight first ranking (a time keeper takes your time each event) officers go to Benning for their "jumps". That after two more weeks of "chute" packing. After five "jumps" you get your wings and boots (to keep). When you return to your Reg. - they give a party, in which a ceremony takes place. All the new man stand in line as they did for their mass "jump". As they are pointed out they have to drink from what is called the "Prop Blast Mug." It is made of parachute and airplane parts. However, ours has not been designed as yet. Neither has our formal insignia nor our informal insignia. But a contest for ideas is in progress now.... this is really a "top-flight" crew and I only hope that I don't "wash out" - we do lose a large percentage. Men who have seen action in Lybia [sic], China, and France etc. - are here with the new outfit. Every man, to stay with the 506, must be a qualified jumper, which means he's in A-1 shape. That goes for Chaplins, Dr, clerks, motor maintenance and the works. What a team - I'm as proud as can be that I've gotten this far in the Army's first Prchute Reg....I'm in the 2nd platoon, Co F, 2nd Bn.

September 19 (1942) [Letter to parents]

In my third trial and second week of training (that is last Saturday) I qualified physically. This is considered good -- especially as I was third ranking officer (with 140 points). Now

we train troops in the morning, have special jump training in the afternoon 'till 4:30, and join our company 'till 5:30. At 6:00 (or 18: 00 as we call it) we have an officers' meeting and class. Then third mess after which we go to packing school 'till 10:30 or 11:00. This will go on for about 2 or 3 wks - Then we go to Benning. If all goes well - we'll go off controlled and free tower (250 ft) and jerk test tower and have exams Monday. Tues. we'll jump twice, Wed. once and Thur. twice. That's all. Then back to our troops again....Most of my boys are very young, a number are newlyweds and some are about to be papas. I wish they'd go elsewhere for their domestic advice....[signed] Your son, the Squirt.

Undated [Letter to parents from Toccoa]

I hate to keep writting [sic] these "two for the price of one" letters - but we have had a terribly hectic time of it here & believe I made a record - for I made three jumps Wed and two Thurs morning - qualifying in a day and a half. [Tuck was called back from the firing range] because they wanted to try jumping us here at Toccoa (we were the first to do it). [He returned to the] range about fifty miles away and found that my boy had the Bn record. One man got a possible [perfect score?] Gave him two bucks as I promise to anyone who made a possible. Also I offered three cartons of "smokes" per expert....Really, you get to love your men and I've got a swell crew.

Undated [Letter to family on Camp Croft, SC stationery but from Toccoa]

We of the 506, in the first place, are specialists, shock troops of, what we think, a fine caliber. You see this is the first parachute regiment. The 501, 2, 3, 4, and 5 are Bn's. All our men and officers are volunteers and from this the men with all the requisite qualifications, plus "guts" are picked. There are certain height and weight requirements. All personnel must have sound bones, and agile frames. The officers go through "jump training" as quickly as possible. In order to qualify an officer must gain at least the minimum in each event. For extra accomplishment additional points are given, in competition each Sat. -- the eight high scouring officers are picked and after two weeks of 'chute packing, go to Benning for their five qualifying jumps, then they get their wings. The events consist of the following:

[Tuck then lists the events, minimum time requirement, where appropriate, and "My Best"]

1. Toughest obstacle course in the country---3 min 45 sec---2 min 48 sec
2. 30 push ups---no time---37
3. 6 pull ups---no time---12
4. 100 yd in G. I. shoes in mud---13 sec---12
5. 25 ft rope climb (no feet used)---10 sec---made it
6. Standing Broad jump---at least 6 ft---7 ft 9 in
7. 50 yd duck walk---no time---made it
8. 3 miles up mt & back (six miles)---(First half mile, 3 ½ min)---didn't make it; (First mile, 7 ½ min)---didn't make it; (finish in 70 min)---didn't make it

These are all done in sequence in one afternoon. The first time I tried it, I "passed out" before I reached the mile mark in the last event. During the week, we tumble, do the

various events, jump from mock planes, do exercises and jump from "mock up" tower in the afternoon. In the morning we train our men in basic work, plus tumbling, obstacle [sic] course work and exercises, making believe it [is] nothing for us. Paratroops double time almost always, so I figure we run between 15 and 18 miles on a normal day. This mock up tower is really the nuts. When you are about to go you always have a funny feeling but once you [are] in the door you lose it, almost. It's about forty-five feet high. A jumper wears a harness, similar to that of a 'chute -- however his "risers" (web rope) are fastened to an overhead cable. The command is, position one -- then, stand in the door. You crouch slightly, head up, body 1/4 out of the ship and hand on the outside. The jump master shouts "go" and slaps you on the rump . You step out making a quarter turn in the air, feet together, head down, arms across your reserve 'chute. Then you fall twenty feet, shouting -- 1001, 1002, 1003. The cable grabs and you grab the risers -- and sail down to the ground. That's a lot tougher than in [a] plane jump. In fact your [sic] safer in the plane jumps than you would be crossing the street against a light and by a long shot. When and if we go to combat -- we will be the spearhead or advance guard in what is called -- the vertical envelopment. We expect to be in combat for a maximum of 3 days. Shock troops -- crack troops, go in and come out, untrained or poorly trained troops go in and stay. We've a grand commanding officer and he's got a grand command. Man for man, the 506 is the finest in morale and guts -- we've got to do the rest and will. I hope I can stick -- it would break my heart to "wash out" here. But they are doing it every day.... Mom -- how's the bites and burns and cuts. I hope you got a chance for a little rest. You know -- Ma's are scarce and I want mine in good working order.

November 8 [1942?] [Telegram to parents from Toccoa, GA. The telegram does not indicate the year but it must be 1942 since it was from Toccoa.]

I'M JUST BACK FROM DETACHED SERVICE COULDN'T WRITE LETTER FOLLOW

[In the documents I received, following the above telegram, is a photocopy of a large photograph. It shows 17 troops. Tuck's sister identifies her brother as second from the right, front row. All but one are wearing garrison caps. That exception is wearing a beret and a necktie suggesting to me he is British. Two men are carrying bazookas, one a light machine gun. One has a Tommy gun. The others are armed with rifles or carbines. Some do not appear to be American. The tall figure, third from the right, back row, reminds me of Charles Malley, who I remember as F Company 1st Sgt. A fascinating photo. Where was it made and when?]

Fort Benning, 1942

[Late November 1942, 506th ordered to Fort Benning for parachute training. Second Battalion marched 115 miles from Toccoa to Atlanta and travelled by train from there to Benning.]

December 12, 1942 [Letter to family. postmarked Fort Benning, GA; return address

indicated as "Company F, 506th Parachute Infantry"]

Please have patients [sic] [because of] letters "few and far between". Enclosed are some clippings in a series about our record smashing march - 120 miles in all....We averaged 17 min to a mile. In my platoon we have a boy who carried [a light machine gun] all the way, for a steak and five bottles of scotch....I'm happy as the devil in the Paratroops and proud to be in its finest Reg.

1943

February 2, 1943 [Letter to family from Fort Benning]

The 506 has received its first slap in the face. I've been on an advance detail at our new camp. There was an awful [lot] of work -- but it was to be a first-rate training area. Then it came -- the orders were stopped -- and the 505 got them. We now find that we're going to the "Bama Hell Hole" -- just across the Chattahooche River in Alabama. The last outfit in that area had more than one hundred AWOL's all the time. Do you remember me speaking of my platoon Sgt. -- who had spent twelve years in the USMC? Well -- I returned to find he'd gone on a "payday drunk" and ended up in Macon -- some 150 miles away. I had to bust him after getting bailed out of jail before the MP's got there. You can buy a lot of these local outfits out.

February 27, 1943 [Letter to parents]

We just finished a "mock" campaign which involved the capture of two airfields in north Florida. Some of it proved very successful while we find that a lot is to be learned....Here we are in yet another camp and I mean brand new. It will be the main base of the ABC (Air Borne Command). There will be two or three Air borne Divs. - with Prcht Regs, attached,....I don't know just what they have planned for the 506 but we think there [sic] grooming us for a special mission we unattached - yet have complete equipment and priority on everything....After hearing these guys that have come back - you feel like you can't ever let up. Every one of 'em says that when you get there - no matter how hard you worked, you'll wish you did more - then maybe Joe or Mike or some other Trooper would be still fightin [sic].

February 27, 1943 [Letter to "Ganny Darling"]

The service is treating me like a king - kind of an out ranked king - but never the less, royalty, such as it is today. Really though, I'm crazy about Army life and an incorrigible 506 Booster.... P.S. Excuse haste and waste [but] my uncle -the one who made the pants too long (and everything else too short) has bargained away most of my time.

Camp Mackall, NC

Undated [Letter to Mother. Postmark not legible, but return address indicates F/506, Camp Mackall, NC.]

I don't think [we] will come back to Mackall again

[June 1, 1943, 506th was attached to 101st Airborne Division]

July 27, 1943 [Undated letter to mother with envelope postmarked this date]

[Tuck had been home on leave; returned to camp at 3AM; troops had already moved out on a maneuver(?)]

The day before yesterday - we loaded on a train and here we are at Fort Bragg, NC.

July 29, 1943 [Letter to father]

I knew all about that Prcht operation in Sicily. We studied the preparation made in Africa. That was something I couldn't risk talking about. You'll never know how close I came to going on that as an observer.

Undated [Letter to parents, on stationery with "CURRAHEE" over the 506th symbol and under that: Company "F", 506th Parachute Infantry, United States Army]

Last Wednesday I took five lads and set out to make an all time marching record and also to more clearly define man's degree of endurance. Our aim was to do 100 miles in 30 straight hours, however we fell short of that mark. We made 88 and some odd tenths miles in 23 1/2 hours. The first 38 in nine hours. That is - non-stop walkin! [sic] It was very cold that night - in fact the water in our canteens froze - We didn't "sweat", so it was like driving dry pistons. Our joints swoll up and we couldn't walk the last twelve miles....I may get to New York for a day or so - but I'm not counting to [sic] much on it.

[September 15, 1943, 506th arrived in England]

England

Undated [Letter to father from APO 472, New York]

"Ye Olde Wind Tunnel", definition of a Nissan hut -- about 75 feet long and fifteen feet across, including the backroom. Backroom contains bedding roles, a sink and our humble bar. (A keg of Limey beer and assorted whiskeys or reasonable facsimiles there of). In

the front room there are fourteen beds, seven to a side, with each officer's gear stowed neatly on the wall above his "sack". And in the center of the large room is a stove, circumscribed by about eight easy chairs, a table, some straight back chairs, a coal bucket, a pound [British currency] 40 gramophone -- -- wireless, and [for] our leisure hours.

On the wall are maps of every part of the world, with advances plotted on them and a long green shelf with twenty mugs on it. Each mug marked: Old Kall, Maginot, Biscuit Butt -- etc.. Six mugs are marked like this: You're lucky to be here -- don't make it a habit." At one end of the building it is portrait of "Jerry" bending over and looking through his legs.

He looks surprised. Every weapon, from a water-cooled M.G. to a .45 pistol has been fired at him. It was quite drafty when we first came -- thus name....Enclosed is a picture for my scrapbook...

Undated [Telegram]

Five umbrellas all better than Chamberlains. Love to you all. [Signed] Lieutenant Stinky

October 4, 1943 [V-mail to father from England]

Thought you might contact the local Chief of Police and get a black-jack and some brass knuckles to include in that package also a piano wire about [?] feet long....Now that we've had our rest its back running up and down hills, riding tanks in the attack and playing cops and robbers all night. C'est la damn [sic] guerre

November 25, 1943 [V-mail to sister Lorna; Tuck had just learned of her engagement to be married.]

Evenin' Beautiful - he bowed deeply from the waist and smiled . A big happy smile, as he congratulated her on being the fine choice of a fine fellow. No joke, Snod - it [sic] wonderful to hear it officially. In fact, I'm damn [sic] pleased.

November 25, 1943 [Letter to mother; looking toward the Christmas season.]

Well - good night now. I'll meet you with the Wise Men at the manger and we'll whisper our prayer at the feet of the child Jesus on that Night of Nights.

November 25, 1943 [Letter to father; Tuck comments on his sister and several friends about to be married]

We single people have got to get home and get busy or there won't be anyone left.

1944

January 5, 1944 [V-mail to father]

[Signed] Love to you, The Squirt

January 23 , 1944 [V-mail to mother]

Hi Ya Beautiful.....I might also report that little Andy [illegible] is enjoying the use of all his facilities - appendages not including digestive tract.

February 10, 1944 [Letter to mother]

I had a series of pictures like the one enclosed. However, they got lost with some baggage This is the only one left. It has quite a story behind it that, perhaps, may never be told. Very valuable photo, to me anyway. [In this letter Tuck refers to having been in the hospital.] The Squirt.

February 15, 1944 [V-mail to father]

...they [letters] were very well received by "Little Andy" (dubbed such by my men, I understand)....I did receive the wire and black jack as well. Handy items - both....I spent a little time down at Bournemouth - famous seaside resort. The rest did me the world of good & returned to troop duty fresh and ready (but just a little "hung over").

April 20, 1944 [Letter to mother from APO 472 New York City]

It's very beautiful here now and old England's countryside is lush, green and friendly looking. There are some nice things about this place -- not too many -- but some....All of us here in the "Wind Tunnel" (our home). A little history on the Wind Tunnel, (Ye Olde). Originally, there were twelve officers billeted in it, temporarily. This was to be until better quarters could be attained. Then we figured that we were in the thing so damn seldom anyway -- why move? -- besides we liked the company. These and several other factors were drawn up into a formal letter. Said letter went to the Commanding General and we're still here and delighted....Lt. Richard Roush (alias fartsack) is in the same. "Maginot" Maher, known as such for elaborated beliefs and views on field fortifications is sharpening knives. Chuck Semon, topper from an Oregon lumber camp is greasing his field boots (we call him "Big Timber"). Biscuit Butt Hall, so named for his ample base is wishing he was back in Florida and is letting us know it. "Little Willie" (Lt. Williams) is throwing a knife at the back door. Willie's an Arkansas boy with a big hunk of Indian in him. Mewborn (Legs), demolition expert (ex-OSS), is booby trapping everything in sight with balely charges. "Dusty" Rhodes, drawing his theories on the attack of a fortified position on the floor with a piece of chalk. Baranowski, communications officer, the Baron to you -- is in a tangle of tubes and wire that would make Marconi's head swim. Old Kall (Lt. Kelly) is

demonstrating pugilism to "Cotton" (Lt. McMillan) S.C. boy from Clemson Military College. The rest of the guys are playing cards and "Little Andy" is trying to write a letter. Oh yes, the Boran's 15 pound [British currency] dog is generally making a nuisance of himself. At 2400 we go to a briefing for a problem.

[Note: According to Pulles "Screaming Eagles", a Lt. Warren R. Roush was with E/506; Lt. Charles H. Semon was with F/506 and drowned on June 6, 1944 (Koskimaki lists him as Charles A. Semon, KIA. Pulles lists several "Williams", the one referred to here is most likely Earl R., with HQ-SV/506. The Lt. Kelly referred to is probably John W., B&D/506. Pulles indicates he was "coach boxing team". Pulles lists a Lt. Joseph F. McMillan with D/506 and a Lt. Joshua M. Mewborn with 2HQ/506. Maher is Lt. Phillip J., 2HQ/506 (Pulles refers to him as "Magino".) Lt. Peter Baranowski, referred to as "Mad Russian" by Pulles, was with 2 HQ and D/506. "Biscuit Butt" Hall is Russell E. Hall, KIA at Veghel, Holland on September 23, 1944.]

April 22, 1944 [Letter to sister]

Snod ole' gal -The kid brother is delighted about the coming knot tying party....Have every bit of happiness when ever you can - it doesn't cost anything....I'd like to see our little fairy go to the alter - but then I'd probably get drunk at the reception after [tripping] over your train at the church....[signed] Tuck III

May 10, 1944 [Letter to mother from APO 472, New York]

Do you want to go on a dream with me? I'm tugging myself back to reality. It's quite a job. A little jingle keeps running through my head. Here I am on a hillside – master of all I view. That is, master to toy with each beauty in my mind. Each green hill bows gracefully into a valley. Each valley smiles back up to me, its face wrinkled with roads and gardens and clustered houses. A portrait of an old man, - this – with the smoke of a village curling lazily over him. What a story he could tell of foreign friend and foreign foe. From back before a single plow had violated virgin soil, 'till now, when all his coat is quilted like a rag doll. From half clad men in caves to the dwellers of the Nissan hut. Of that that was and is no more and that that was and always shall be. Land unharnessed and work, - the rights of man and war, - the law of God and peace. Patient old man, let me take one of your hills. That one, tethered into a huge bouquet by twisting turning hedgerows. Let me offer to God in Thanksgiving for that that was and always shall be. "This is England in the spring of forty four and warriors gaze eastward as warriors have before".

June 18, 1944 [V-mail to parents]

I have been receiving the benefits of your prayers but can always use more, In any of mine family and country are foremost....Great love and God's blessing to you, Ed.

June 24, 1944 [V-mail to father]

It's been rough as hell, but now things are quieting down as far as our units concerned. Right now I'm in a foxhole O.P. about 300 yards from enemy O.P.s We aren't getting anything but occasional sniper and 88 or 105. Nights are marked with a good deal of shelling. I took a patrol out last night into the enemy M.L.R.; mission accomplished and "Troopers" returned safely. Not only am I well but happy as hell and prouder of the outfit than ever. [signed] The Squirt.

June 24, 1944 [V-mail to mother]

I'm dirty as a pig. Expect to do something about that today.

June 25, 1944 [V-mail to father]

Tomorrow we move to the OPL again from the MLR - even out there things are pretty quiet. The toughest part of this outfit's fight is over. We've met and whipped "his" finest units, out numbered and outequipt. We (our outfit) were the first allied troops on the continent. I've a lot to do now - so , good night - God bless you. Your loving son, Ed.

June 28, 1944 [V-mail to family]

After Twenty one (21) days contact with elements of the enemy the unit has retired from the forward area. Now for a much needed rest and a little regularity about our 'ten in one' rations. The Regiment fought like veterans of Indian and modern warfare both....[Illegible] here and music (guitars and harmonicas) and small talk all around, as the "troopers" rest in this wooded area. All of [us] imagining what we'd be doing at same time [at] home and what meals we like to eat and how we'd like to see our familys [sic]

June 28, 1944 [V-Mailto mother]

This is Sunday and a beautiful one at that. Chaplain Maloney (a jumper from Rochester, New York) is coming around this afternoon to give Holy Communion. He's certainly done a fine job on this operation and has the respect and admiration of all the unit. We're all a lot more tired then we ever thought we could get, having little sleep since we started before D-Day. The first 72 hours I lived on D rations (chocolate bars), then K & now 10 in one which is swell. The morale of the troops is very high. "Jerrie" doesn't like us a bit, They call us the "Big Pocket Devils" who don't take prisoners. I only hope that we can get a little rest now and we'll be rarin' to go again.

June 29, 1944 [[V-Mail, APO 472, to family]

After twenty one (21) days contact with elements of the enemy the unit has retired from the forward area. Now for a much needed rest and a little regularity about our "Ten in one"

rations. The Regiment fought like veterans of Indian and modern warfare both.... They are fine here and music (guitars and harmonicas) and small talk all around, as the "troopers" rest in this wooded area. All imagining what we'd be doing at the same time at home and what meals we like to eat and how we'd like to see our families.

July 21, 1944 [Letter to father; under the date, Tuck notes "The Wind Tunnel"]

Back again to "Merry Old England" and strangely enough, happy about it. It hurts a little to see the empty beds, but according to plan, proceeded last night, to get drunk as hell in their honor. You probably remember me speaking of Freeling Colt - hated to lose him. Never knew a finer man. The Regiment has been decorated with the Presidential Unit Citation (comparable to the DSC for each man.) We are very proud of that....I've been offered a chance to stay in the service. If I did, it would have to be the Airborne or not at all. Maybe I'd try to transfer to the Marines after the war.

July 21, 1944 [Letter to sister]

My dear little sister,...I do very much wish I could be at your wedding. I'll lean over that way, to be as close as possible on the wedding day....They're [sic] so many things I have to "catch up" on. I haven't twisted your neck out of joint in an awful long time or broken any of Mom's ribs - or anything.

July 21, 1944, England [Letter to mother]

"Mollie" you're a stock holder in the finest unit in the world.

August 6, 1944 [Letter to Jim, future brother-in-law, then at the "College of Physicians and Surgeons"]

I wish terribly that I could be there to "hold the ring" for you. I'll be might [sic] proud to call you brother. It's just as well that I'm over here. I'd probably trip in the isle, lose the ring and get disgracefully pickled at the reception.

August 10, 1944 [Letter to sister]

Enclosed is a note that I read to the men while flying over the channel....

September 10, 1944 [Letter to mother]

I felt very close on that day of family joy....We're enjoying a lovely St. Martin's summer just now - and all the world seems to slumber....Enclosed is a snapshot of Staff Sgt. "Black Jack" Borden, who conducted himself in exemplary fashion throughout the various engagements. He once held a town with only seven men for better than a score of hours (an ex-boot legger)....I don't know that I have mentioned it before - but I am now Company

F's second-in-command (Executive Officer). The troops look fine in spite of many discrepancies.

Holland, 1944

September 27, 1944 [Letter to family]

I would like to have a few cans of Nescafe - if you can get it. Coffee and a cigarette are a soldier's best friend. Some canned milk (small tins) and sugar (or saccharin)

October 11, 1944, Holland [V-mail to Father]

[Tuck indicates that before D-Day he had loaned Freeling T. Colt \$250 in return for a post-dated check. Colt was KIA in Normandy.]

I am in excellent health and plan to remain that way despite the plans of Herman the German. There is not much to say that is permitted. Things were surprisingly easy at first but they changed.]

October 13, 1944 [Letter to parents]

Our "chow" seems plentiful enough now - but a bit tiresome. Breakfast; tea and stew. Lunch, stew and tea - etc., etc!

October 15, 1944, Holland [Letter to father from Holland]

The German soldier -- contrary to popular opinion -- is as formidable an opponent as I've known. Our troops have again been highly commended by all commands. They're still the fine soldiers that I served with two years ago. Each time I write I feel cramped [sic] as I can't sing the saga of fighting Fox. However, I can say that we (my unit at the time) were mentioned favorably in regimental dispatches. Let me tell you the story of Manning G. Haney, private first class, parachutist, but most of all machine gunner. Any kind of a machine gun was all right -- but let's start this thing from the beginning. Haney was from Kentucky -- back Hill Kentucky, and he was as loyal to that state as most men are to themselves. So to the world at large his alias was "K.Y." and those letters were printed big and bold on everything he owned or came in contact with. In fact, the only time I saw "Manning G" attached to his name was on the roster and on M.P. reports. He'd left the back hills sometime back -- when we first met him. That was at Toccoa, the place where the boys were separated from the men and then the men from the machines. Since he'd left home, at fourteen to tour the country -- he'd carried "soup" in the Texas [?], "bummed it" in the CCC and topped it off by being a parachute fire ranger in Montana. His service record read: white, skilled labor, age 19. That was two years ago and more. Now let's look in the Company Service file. Here it is, Haney, Manning G.

Sept. 5, '42 Light Mg 1st gunner rated expert.

Dec 21, '42 qualified parachutist
Feb. 11, '43 First place M.G. contest, Contestants: camp complement.
Feb. 26, '43 PFC to Cpl
March 7, '43 Cpl to Pvt. (AWOL) Special Court
July 16, '43 Broken leg -- jump injury
Sept 2, '43 AWOL from the hospital (case never went to trial)
Dec 3, '43 Attended Commando School in Scotland

Two reports submitted

1. A fine combat soldier, excelled on all weapons
2. Served four detension [sic] sentences

June 15, 1944 Decorations

1. Presidential Unit Citation
2. Purple Heart
3. D.S.C.

(KY had seven different guns during operations. Three American, one British, three German.) (In France) I can't take anymore excerpts from his record due to security. Just this:

Sept 29, '44 Sgt. Manning G. Haney (KIA) Recommended for the Congressional Medal. There he was the next morning (the 30th). Coon skin cap with "KY" stitched across the front in white beads, jaw set and a .50 cal twisted and distorted into kind of a monument. That .50 was from a wrecked Thunderbolt, but like any other MG it knew the master's touch. For the Army the story ends like this: Sgt. Haney, Manning G. (KIA). To "Fighting Fox" it ends like this: "Haney, KY, back hill bastard -- get another on that gun." And each trooper to himself, "Thanks K.Y. "For this and all the other times. For pushing Hogan out of the 'plane in Tenn, for that five bucks in Charlotte and that qt. of whiskey at St. Marie Dumont, for the Hinies [sic] that didn't get through at Carantan [sic] and for what you would have done tomorrow.

October 18, 1944 [Letter to father from "Somewhere" with the airborne]

First, two mud caked 'troopers that, somehow, look trim. Their equipment stashed neatly about their person. Four grenades hanging ready, from their shoulder webbing. Helmets garnished with sprigs of the surrounding foliage. And the cleanest thing they have, that M-1 -- rides at high port. The whole scene is alive with the light of their darting eyes. -- "Scouts, one and two -- leading out." Just behind them -- squad leader, Sgt. Mather, ex foreman a Rhodesian copper mine. His boys were Zulus and Oboginies [sic] then. Quite a picture, with his German pack, his low slung .45, his rifle slung cross -- back and his naked glasses flopping on his chest. Oh yes, from under his helmet and down across his shoulders floats two feet of camouflaged parachute silk. On his heels the gun team and accompanying riflemen, each carrying a box of mg. ammo. And so passes the point. Then it's comical sort of column; each man loaded with unit and personal essentials. German, British and American issue. Each face adorned with a Van Dyke or "mutton chop" -- just so that he can't be called ill shaven. And trailing the motley crew a caravan wondrous to

behold. A GI 2 1/2 ton [truck] bulging from its every slot. German diesels, motorcycles of every description. Armored cars and horse carts and just horses. As each knife laden boot passes & each odd vehicle rolls by, we say that's "Fighting Fox" going on & on & on.

Along our travels "first soldier" Malley (Top Sgt) picked up a Dutch radio from some German officer's quarters. Last night we tapped in on a "Limey" search light for power and "Dirtie [sic] Gertie" really gave us hell via krautland. It seems that our pilots are murdering their civilians. What a shame -- I suppose they've forgotten about the "field day" they had at Warsaw & Paris and then London. In fact, a nation at war should be able to count her civilians on one hand. Anyone who is doing his or her job be it at home, at the factory, or in business is as important as the man at the front. Keep the home front rolling -- we can't do without [any] of them and Germany can't do without theirs. We've got to close our eyes to humanism 'till it's over. Total war, only, has a chance of bringing total peace. [Signed] The Squirt

October 19, 1944 [Letter to mother from "Somewhere with the Airborne"]

If you asked me a month ago I would have told you to expect me for Christmas -- but now I'll push that up just twelve months and then cross my fingers. I'm not complaining. This is one job we just can't "ram" our way through. If a cup of coffee isn't sweet enough with three lumps of sugar, it isn't a smart idea to throw it away or even to drink as it is -- not when it would take only one more lump. I'll be glad when we get to Germany, if we do. Give me total war and let's finish the job. You can't play football in a drawing [room] and have any respect for the furniture. By the same token war must completely absorb "the all" of its battlefields. Fondest of my dreams, is the one where I'm living, again, on the third floor at 80 Chatsworth or "roughing it" it at Aquista on the lake. You can't imagine what a picture of contentment accompanies these visions. All, by the way -- to the lilting straining of kitchen "sizzles". And what really counts are the people who go with our little white house.

October 19, 1944 [Letter to sister from "Somewhere with the Airborne", Fighting Fox Co.]

...the shave I should have had the day before yesterday but figured that yesterday would do and I'll be suffering from in-grown whiskers by tomorrow. Time, in my life, is, somehow -- overlooked if not under rated....The saying about the whispered prayer in the fox hole is as true as Roosevelt's three terms.... I can say -- as always, the troops are enjoying the highest standards of morale and combat efficiency. They have already been mentioned favorably in dispatches too numerous to list here and have received unit citations from five countries or four & two more from our own. They are the source of everlasting pride to the command. It is with the feeling of privilege that I serve with these fine troops. Contrary to popular opinion -- the war will be carried to Germany and on by willing and enthused soldiers of the American armies. With the troops at the front, international disputes and differences minimize considerably & units of British and American components operate in keeping with the highest standards of military service. Mutual respect of the combat soldier

-- individual for individual will cement our relationship if not undermined by these half-thinking hair brains in the capitals. Distrust is developed in conference rooms not behind machine guns.... God bless you, your husband and your new life.

October 19, 1944 [Letter to sister from "With the Airborne Somewhere", Fighting Fox Co.]

I was mentioned again yesterday in dispatches. Lucky devil that I am!...And will you ship me a calendar of events to include birthdays ect. [sic] of all the family. (I know when Christmas comes.)...[Has tried to write Jim a couple of times but is at a loss because he doesn't know him.] It's like the bum asking for his first dime outside of the Waldorf.

October 22, 1944 [V-mail to sister Lorna, now Mrs. James W. Colbert]

You know these troops are hard to "get down". A guy was wounded pretty badly a while ago and a medical aid man was working on him. While in the process he was hit again. This is what he said. "You better hurry up medic, they're gaining on you." Another soldier was just on the "edge" & was being treated. "I bet those bastards broke a leg getting at my roll". Those were his last. Funny guys! Best love to you. "Little Andy"

November 17, 1944 [V-mails to family from "somewhere with the airborne".

[Note: This message is an exception to the rule in that it consists of four V-Mails rather than the usual one. In this, Tuck relates the death of Russell Hall. Earlier, Tuck indicated he was Platoon Leader, 2nd Platoon; Hall was apparently his assistant. After Normandy, Tuck moved up to Company Executive Officer and Hall took over 2nd Platoon. In Holland, I, as a 2nd Lieutenant, was Hall's assistant. Hall was killed in the action at Veghel, Holland, September 23, 1944, during which I was wounded.]

It's on nights like this, miserably cold and wet that I dream fondly of my almost too fortunate youth. (that must sound silly to you!)...Not so long ago I lost a good friend -- I wish, Mom, that you would write to his Mom. In short this is what happened: Early one morning Lt. Hall's plt. was taken under a very heavy mortar and artillery preparation, followed closely by an SS armored assault. He withdrew his unit to a more favorable position & from this new point of vantage rallied his people for the counter thrust. This was done under the most fierce enemy fire of almost every description and was in the best tradition of the parachute service. It was in so exposing himself, with utter disregard for his own safety & with only his troops in mind -- that Hall gave his life for his comrades, his unit, and his country; a deed lauded by God as well as man. Hall was extremely well liked by the men and officers of this organization and equally respected for his military dexterity. I'm sure that he is remembered fondly in each soldier's prayers as he is in mine and as he is in the conversations of all ranks. I've written to his girl (a WAC S/Sgt.) but I have so many of these things to do I'd like to make the one to his "Mom" a little different. I think it would do a lot of good.

[Tuck provided Mrs. Hall's address.]
Mrs. Dina [Dena?] A. Hall
15 West Avenue
St. Augustine, Florida

December 1, 1944 [Letter to sister from France]

I've only now, just now, gotten to France (where? I can't say) and am situated quite well. In fact, I'm happy as hell. I share a small (easy to heat) room with the Bn Intelligence officer. I'm there now. Yes, mam, complete with two beds (straw), two lockers (none too steady) one sink (none too clean) and some other furniture (like the lockers). We have a damn good radio which compensates for a lot. Back to the room, all this stuff tends to fill our little home rather well. As a matter of fact, getting in or out is no slight feat. It is only with the keenest study and most constant practice that this becomes a mere challenge and not sheer, foolhardy suicide. But, as I said before, I'm happy as hell and I mean it. (No mud and a roof that only leaks a little). Cognac & champagne & other wines are quite plentiful [sic] & inexpensive. (With or without syonide [sp.?) [sic]. Lifting the bottle in our little room is difficult, but I'm practicing diligently.... Margot, my "Limey" honey, was going to China but was offered a job in England's most popular, highest paying paper "The Daily Express". She had formerly been with the Daily Telegraph and the Sunday Chronicle. I'm afraid that I'm awfully fond of that little Welsh gal.

December 5, 1944 [Letter to father from France]

I know that k.y. Haney would be only too proud to be of aid in a War Bond Drive. Glad the little story was of some help. I sent a letter acknowledging receipt of both the "snap blade" knife and the "knuckles"....Thanksgiving had a great meaning this year. It does every year - but appeared more intense to me this time. I am fortunate in so many ways. There are very few men who have come through as many "close ones" as I have, unscathed....I have a wonderful home and family. And, My God, I'm thankful to You for that.

December 14, 1944 [Letter to Mother from France]

Returned last night from a "forty -- eight" in Paris -- your beloved Paris and, Lady, I can see why it is. Never in my life have I seen a more wonderful place. Quite expensive, but well worth it's cost. (not as expensive as London however.)...Just before dinner I went to a "snazzy" little cafe and imbibed quite freely in cognac. Result mild paralysis. In the process I met a very beautiful model who spoke about three words of English -- but was a real lexicon with the hands and eye. Depending on my "extensive" knowledge of the language and a steady flow of champagne, we got on famously. Had dinner at a French officer's mess and went to the Lido club. (A very slick "lay -- out.")

PS. Picture enclosed is of two of the four (at the time) existing Co Commanders and the Bn Executive officer.... From right to left -- Parachutists only):

Lt. Tuck -- Co F C.O.

Lt. Nye -- Co. E C.O.

Capt. Winters -- Bn Exec.

Lt. Ricky -- Co. F. -- Plt. Ldr.

Lt. Wills -- Co. C -- Plt. Ldr.

Lt. Thomas -- (Co. F.--ex--officer) now Bn. S-4. I don't know who those other guys are.

Dad asked if I was running Fox. I am and have been for about two months, but am certain that I will lose it, however, it has been good experience and the Army must run on date [and] rank in the large [long term?].

December 16, 1944 [Letter to "Nookie"]

The reshaping and mauling our little hardened, proud units is a matter of both constant and profound personal interest to me. And, although it fluctuates as much as the franc, my pride at lowest ebb jeopardises [sic] every seem [sic] of my blouse. The Reg. And the Div. lead the list in combat expertinense [sic]. [Wishes 'merriest kind of a Christmas to you and Jim", so "Nookie" must be Lorna]

[December 18, 1944, the 506th left Mourmelonfor Bastogne]

Belgium, 1945

January 16, 1945 [Letter to mother, with the Airbourne in Belgium]

Christmas this year was like never before and at a fleeting glance, you'd have said, "I'm sorry!". I can't say that I wasn't, a little, that night when we would have been "hanging our stockings by the chimney with care". That's on one side of the ledger. And on the asset side? For one thing, M.G.M. couldn't have set the stage more perfectly. It hadn't snowed all day and through a crisp clear night I searched the star studded canopy for one "of wonder -- the one so bright." Evergreens, reminders of things immortal -- bent patiently under their burden of snow as if a pattern for life and here and there, on their frost pinched tips, gems....[This is a 3-page letter but only page 1 is legible.]

January 18, 1945 [Letter to sister from Belgium]

Circumstances (emphasis on syllables one and two) were strained for some time and writing wasn't what the situation called for. However, Christmas Eve and Day were family days if only in the mind....I could see the snow and the wreathes in the windows. -- The twinkling lights of the tree and the warm ones from shaded lamps shown out of the frosted Windows and I hastened my pace. 'Flew by Lunken's place, slammed through the gate

in front (it was opened as usual -- Dad wasn't the last one in!) And I ran, for I could hear the laughing voices within and the excitement that 'rose in me, made my chest ache. I must have yelled -- so wild was my delight, 'cause Mom opened the door before I knocked. Then the scene swam before my eyes and when it cleared I was in the living room. It was warm -- warmth that wasn't new -- but like the occasion we often encounter that we have dreamed of before. The same thick rug sunk shyly under my feet, the fire crackled its merry welcome -- and the light that danced from all those blue eyes would have made the northern lights in their midst but a flashlight beam at high noon.

January 22, 1945 [Letter to parents from Belgium]

I'm in the hospital, having sustained a very slight wound and will return to duty probably before you received the letter before this one.

Germany, 1945

April 16, 1945 [Letter to mother from Germany]

Here is the time for which we've been longing so achingly. Through the stench of rotting Normandy, the hopeless conflict in water soaked Holland, the evil bitterness of the Belgian winter and then the plunge across the steel girded Rhine. Now, Mom, the end is, at least in sight and now we dare to think there is such a thing. Victory! - Boche caput! Incredible!

May 21, 1945 [Letter to mother]

Troopers, trim, clean, brown, guard the whipped remains of Hitler's once mailed Germany. Even now the jaunty snow caps of the Alps are melting away. The great Allied summer must never leave - The German wintery arrogance must never replace those jaunty caps. (My spelling gets worse all the time)....I don't pretend to not like what I am doing. It's grown to be my life. I love Fox Co as much as a man could and I'll be lost, maybe a little bored without the company of the men who are the world's hardest men - the world's proudest men who were born to soldier and soldier hard.

Austria, 1945

May 21, 1945 [Letter to sister from Kaprun, Austria]

Yes,...it's over "over here" and just like any other tactical advance, we must exploit it to the fullest measure, this generation and the next and the next. God be our guide - holy saints keep true our sword's stroke.

June 3, 1945 [Letter to father from Saalfelder, Austria]

Tonight my letter to you must reflect my most heartfelt blow. A few days ago I was relieved as commander of Fox Company. I can't pretend that I am not deeply hurt, although I'm ashamed of this feeling. My record is spotless, my rating in leadership and military technique in field and garrison is from excellent to superior -- so I say to myself, why. A captain from Fort Benning, Ga. has taken over. He seems like a fine man and as his executive officer, I will support him to the utmost, of course. But -- I can't do my best. This is my fourth bad break. "Relieved without prejudice due to existing overage in T--0" .To "soldier" is one thing -- to bleed to death in your heart is another. I can't say it all -- it's just something else that I want to talk to you about....To leave my outfit will damn near kill me & to stay will too.

Undated, [Letter to parents from Austria, in response to theirs following receipt of his June 3 letter.]

[Tuck had apparently received a letter from his parents responding to his of June 3 in which he told them he had been relieved as CO of F Company.]

I can't say how wonderful it was to receive your letters "softening the blow". Many a man receives much greater ones (blows) -- infinitely more men, without the aid of such consolation. I'm a soldier, Dad -- and soldier I will, come what may. No need, then -- to worry about the support & loyalty I shall render. Duty is governed from above by command, from the troops by demand and in one's heart by pride. Take first my belongings, then my sustenance, then life -- then my command -- but you can only covet my pride. And Mother how can a man be better while in a shower of your love and understanding.

Undated [Letter to parents from Austria

[Tuck had apparently received a letter from his parents responding to his of June 3 in which he told them he had been relieved as C.O. of F Company.]

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July 24, 1945 [Telegram to Mrs. Marie F. Tuck, 80 Chatsworth Ave, Larchmont. NY]

THE SECRETARY OF WAR HAS ASKED ME TO EXPRESS HIS DEEP REGRET THAT YOUR SON 1/LT TUCK ANDREW E 3RD DIED IN AUSTRIA 7 JULY 45 IN A VEHICLE ACCIDENT CONFIRMING LETTER FOLLOWS=

WITSELL ACTING THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

OBITUARY

[Newspaper not identified, only the following at the top of the column:
Vol. XXXXVII-NO. 38]

Lieut. Tuck Loses Life in Austria

Trustee's Son A Victim Of Vehicle Accident July 7th

IN SERVICE 3 YEARS

The War Department has notified Maj. and Mrs. Andrew E. Tuck of 80 Chatsworth Avenue, Larchmont, that their paratrooper son, Edward, died in a vehicle accident in Austria on July 7th.

Member of the 101 Airborne Division twice cited in action, the 22-year old first lieutenant had been stationed in the Austrian Alps for some time, serving previously at Berchtesgarden. No details of the accident have yet reached his parents, who left last week to spend the summer at Seventh Lake Inlet, New York, in the in the Adirondacks.

Born in New York City, Lt. Tuck had resided in Larchmont all his life, attending Mamaroneck High School and Rye Country Day School before graduating from LaSalle military academy, Oakdale, L.I. The summer preceding his graduation he worked for his commission under the R.O.T.C. at Plattsburgh.

Lt. Tuck entered the service in August 1942, receiving parachute training at Tacao [sic], Ga., and Fort Benning, Ga., where he did test jumping and was awarded his wings and boots.

Overseas since August 1943, Lt. Tuck was a veteran of parachute jumps in Normandy, Holland and Belgium and was promoted to first lieutenant while stationed in England, where he received further training as well as in Scotland. He held the expert infantryman's badge.

Lt. Tuck, who served as commander of his company, was slightly wounded at Bastogne, where his regiment, the 506th Parachute Infantry, played a major role, and received the Purple Heart. His regiment also played an important part in the success of the Normandy and Holland campaigns, and participated in the fall of Carentan and the liberation of Eindhoven. The 101st airborne is a historic group whose acting division commander, General Anthony C. McAuliffe answered "Nuts" when the Germans demanded surrender shortly after the start of the Battle of the Bulge when the 101st was completely sealed from outside help.

In addition to his parents, the young lieutenant is survived by two sisters, Colleen, who resides with her parents, and Mrs. Lorna Colbert of 12 Chatsworth Avenue, Larchmont.

Major Tuck is a trustee of the Village of Larchmont. Mrs. Tuck recently retired after serving the woman's club Larchmont for two years as program chairman.

[Note: According to its web site, LaSalle was operated by the Christian Brothers, a Catholic order. In 1993 it was converted to kindergarten through high school.]