

Box 125
Grantsburg, Wisconsin 54840

13 May 1982

Dear Joan and Bill:

Many thanks for your good newsy letter. It was interesting to note that you had been back to the States and that your enjoyable trip was coupled with good weather.

As you no doubt already know, we, here in the Midwest, have had one of the worst winter seasons on record and were very glad to have April come around. Now we are having almost daily rains and storms with accompanying flooding and land slides. The snow was super abundant this past winter and broke the all-time record in many areas. The cold was the worst but I managed to keep indoors much of the time. I really did not suffer from the cold this past winter.

This past week the vegetable and flower gardens were planted - very small - but something that has always been enjoyable. Our tourist season is now upon us with the opening of the fishing on May 1. The balance of the fishing season opens this Saturday. In addition to that, one of our local clothing merchants sponsors an annual 17 kilometer race and that will be this coming Saturday. Even though the race is small by most standards, he has had it for so many years that it now has some TV coverage from Minneapolis. He also has had many of the names frequently taking part in other big national and international races. Dick Beardsley, the runner-up in Boston this year, was the winner here a year ago. Mr. Carlyle has insisted that I take some 35mm slides for him. A few others are doing the same besides motion pictures and video tapes.

Your information about Wacol was most interesting. I do not recall, exactly, the number of buildings included in our section, but I know that each Company (B & C) each had two buildings, the Officers had one, then there was one each for the Mess Hall, Medics, Headquarters, Headquarters Detachment, Motor Pool personnel and the Latrine with outdoor showers and lavatories. The barracks occupied by the part of "B" company of which I was quartered, was the easternmost building of the group. The Headquarters building was about in the middle with the Medical Building the farthest to the west. The Officers Quarters were the closest to the fence and railroad line. The whole area was bush and with tall grass and a few ant hills. We were not permitted to trim any of the bushes or grass. Our small drill and training area was down near the railroad tracks. Our hikes were done along the road past the station and into the woods. A couple of times we were taken to the Australian rifle range for some target shooting. At that time there was quite a space between our unit and the OCS buildings. Those buildings were closer to the road and entrance. We did not have a gate at that time and usually no guards were stationed there. Our guards were on the road as one entered the 738th area. A tent was set up at that point. The Supply sections for each company and headquarters and Battalion were in tents and scattered in various places within the limits of our camp area. We had no movie equipment so we were invited over to the OCS section to see theirs when they were able to get them. Since our location at Camp Columbia was only temporary, we were not permitted to put up anything of a permanent nature. We were moved to Camp Whinstanes a few days before Christmas when those buildings were finally completed. The accompanying sketch is what I remember of the location of areas and buildings at Columbia.

When we were transported to Australia in July of 1942, another MP Battalion was also on the ship, namely, 720th. They were quartered in the ballroom of the Mount Vernon and we were on the same deck but around the perimeter of the promenade (enclosed by windows). The latest edition of the American Legion Magazine notes that the 720th is having a reunion this June. This is the first I have heard anything about them since arriving in Australia. I have often wondered where they were stationed and how they were distributed around the Pacific theater. Yesterday I wrote to the organizer of the reunion and asked if he might fill me in with some information. If not, I will have to look elsewhere. Our two Battalions were the only army personnel on board, the rest were Naval units to set up the hospital in Wellington and the nucleus of the 5th Air Force which was headquartered in Brisbane. The ship was full of officers and hardly any enlisted men. However, we had a might good trip across the Pacific with 3 good meals each day.

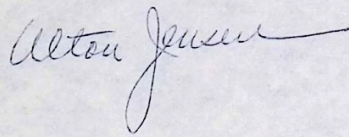
Strange as it may seem, I am contemplating a return visit to Australia this fall in September or October. If tour arrangements can be made satisfactorily to include the New Guinea cruise for the 40th anniversary of the arrival in US troops there in 1942, I may swing down and include Townsville and Brisbane and maybe take in some of the Commonwealth Games. Plans are tentative and difficulty with the New Guinea Cruise is holding things up at present. My former tour agency of last year has finally gotten some concrete information and is trying to work things out for me. I am also competing with calls from my cousin in Norway to come over there and not go to Australia again. This cousin lives near Oslo and those from my Mother's side live up the fiord from Bergen.

There are two other anniversary reunions this year for me. One is my High School class and that will probably be our last big one as so many are passing away these past few years. The other one is my Mother's family reunion near Moorhead, Minnesota. This is an annual affair and not everyone goes every year so there is the opportunity to meet different cousins each year. Both of these are in August.

A local couple has a married daughter who is teaching in Melbourne and they are expecting Barbara and her family to come for a visit in December. I had Barbara as a student one quarter at the University and I visited her when I was in Melbourne. At that time I was also entertained by the Graham Godden family near Melbourne. He is a ham radio operator of whom I spoke when visiting with you. He and his wife are planning to come to our town sometime later this year. He was here two years ago with his family. Since he works for an airline, he is financially able to make these trips. It will be very nice to see these people again.

I have enjoyed your letters and especially my visit with you last year. Thank you both for such a wonderful attention to me, a stranger.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Alton Jensen", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.