

Shekell Triplets Inducted into the Army

A mother's plea to keep her sons together was granted by the commanding officer of Fort Benjamin Harrison, where the Shekell triplets were inducted. The request was sent from Kentucky Governor Keen Johnson on behalf of their mother, Mrs. Harry Shekell.

In his message to the Army, Johnson explained that the boys from Hazel were 18 years old and ready to join the Army, but they wanted to remain together as they had never been separated. The family had two other sons already in service.

When the young men arrived at the training camp, the Indianapolis Star featured a story about their special situation, repeated here.

John A., James B., and Joseph C. Shekell were raised on a 30-acre farm in Calloway County on the same day in 1924. The triplets, of whom two are spitting images of each other, and the third is a reasonable facsimile, were preceded to Fort Harrison by the telegram.

The mayor of Murray, Kentucky, and the sheriff and most of the population of Calloway County seemed to share this wish, and so did the Calloway County Draft Board.

James, who weighed 105 pounds and stood 5 feet and 4 inches high, said that examining officers at the Evansville, Indiana, Induction Center were prepared to reject him for being underweight and passed him only to help the morale of his brothers.

He also shared that the boys started school together, left school together, worked and played together, and even started to smoke together (when they were 10 years old, they admitted guiltily), had never been separated, and had never been away from home before.

Mr. and Mrs. Shekell got around the difficulty of telling them apart for the first three months after their birth by just not naming them, so that it didn't matter, James said. But there was hell to pay later when they went to school, especially since they dressed alike. James didn't mind being punished for what John did, but he hated being called Joseph at the same time. The boys got around this by leaving school after the seventh grade.

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Sources:

"Entreaties Swamp Army, So Triplets Stay Together, Indianapolis Star, June 5, 1943, page 30

"Calloway County's Shekell Triplets will Train Together in Army Camp: Governor Johnson's Telegram Gets them Attention at Fort Benjamin Harrison Center," *Ledger & Times*, page 6.

"Entreaties Swamp Army, So Triplets Stay Together", *Indianapolis Star*, June 5, 1943, page 30