

Sunday, January 17

1943

Dear Pogue,

Your letter which you wrote the day after Christmas reached me only two days ago, just about time I was deciding you had been shipped out of the country. Both Mrs. Cox (with whom I share this apartment) and I were away during the holidays, and while we were away, we asked the people across the hall to get our mail out of the box for us, to keep the box from getting too full. (Not that we get so much mail, but it's an awfully small box.) They kept the mail in two groups, mine and Mrs. C's, and not until she returned from her long visit out in Phoenix, where she went to see her son get his wings, did we discover that your letter had been put in her stack of mail.

You Pogues are hard to get letters out of, anyway. Mary Frances has been owing me a letter since before you did, and I promised to make her little son's picture, too. I'm just waiting for the photo I'm to make it from. I had a very amusing letter from her back in the fall, in which she wrote a very clever description of the energetic process of looking after two children.

Congratulations on your sergeantcy. Your telling me about the hardships that go with it leaves me a little alarmed, though, because I can't make out what one word is. You said that they ~~put~~ ^{whacks} orders the man you displaced and "another man under me who ~~whacks~~ ^{whacks}. "Whacks" is the only thing I can make out of that, and I thought he could be court-martialed for that, for striking a superior officer. Or do you let him get by with it because he's from Kentucky? Anyway, I hope he doesn't whack you very hard.

The trouble about answering your letter, Pogue, is that when I read them I immediately have a great desire to talk to you and ask you dozens of questions about people we've both known and lots of other things, and then, by time I get around to answering them I get to feeling I know nothing to write that could possibly be of interest to you, because all the army boys I've talked to seem to be living in a very absorbing world of their own, about which they'd rather talk than anything. It's all right then, because I can listen, but I don't exactly know how to go about writing a listening letter. I can't keep from thinking, though, that all the men who don't get in the service before the war is over are going to be left out in the cold when it comes to conversation among a group of men. A friend of mine, who's now an hostess with the Chicago-Southern Airlines, with headquarters at Memphis, brought her fiance around to see me before leaving town. He's in the army, and the Kempers, who live across the hall from us, came over also. Pete Kemper was going into the army shortly after that, and he and this boy talked army, army, army from five until seven o'clock, with us females left in helpless silence. So any time you hear the women in a crowd monopolizing all the conversation, as they're supposed to do all the time, I'll bet you there are no army men among the group. I enjoy hearing talk about the army, but the point is, I'm too ignorant about it to give much in return. So I'm going to take it that you are no exception to the rule and will continue to write, even though my answers don't have very much about the army in them, and what I do seems rather humdrum (it does to me at least) compared to your daily life.

My brother was inducted during the holidays and is now stationed at Camp Gordon, in Georgia. He's being given special small arms training, to make him into a guard for government plants and projects. He's wildly enthusiastic about the army (he wrote me two ten page letters bubbling over with what "great stuff" everything was) and says if he can get into Officer Training, he is going to make the army his career; that it beats managing a Kroger store by far. I don't know what his wife will think of that. His commanding officer is a Kentuckian, and as Winks is the only other man from Kentucky in the division, the officer has been exceptionally nice to him. Or so he thinks.

I was interested to hear about Joe Horrell being in the navy and having been in England, and about Seay. Someway or other I'd heard about Dudley Porter and Ernest Bailey. What was Joe doing before he entered the navy? I don't think Joe ever had much liking for me. When I first started working on the College News and he was working there too, I thought he was worth getting acquainted with, but I don't think he appreciated my efforts at all. Anyway, after being the victim of his sharp tongue a number of times, I abandoned my efforts and never got to know Joe very well. I've always had the impression that he was rather brilliant, though; not so much a thinker as Joe Freeland, but more skillful at getting what he wanted. Is Joe Freeland still practicing law in Paducah? I haven't seen him since he left law school here at U.K. For a short while I roomed with one of the campus communists and heard him cussed out almost every day. Seems he carried too much weight in the local chapter of the ASU, and the communists, who regarded him as a Marxian socialist, couldn't abide him, especially as they considered the ASU their own child. I don't know what's become of the ASU in the last year or two -- I haven't heard anything about it. All the kids who kept it going seem to have gone into the army, in case of the boys, or married and are now having families, in case of the girls.

I imagine Christmas was rather lonely for lots of the soldiers. I got to go home after all, and our family was all there, which made it pretty nice, though Winks had to leave right after Christmas. I think it's swell of you to be so decent to those lonesome soldiers from Kentucky who can't write. I imagine they saw to it that you had more stuff to eat than you could use at Christmas.

I've already sent those mystery stories I mentioned in my other letter to my brother but I'll probably have some more before long, and I'll send them to you, particularly as he writes that there's a big reading room on the post with more stuff to read than he can get through for a long time.

We're having exams at the school where I teach during this coming week, which would ordinarily mean a week of loafing for me, as I don't give exams in art. However, this year I have a 9-A homeroom and as they will go to high school with the new semester, they and I are up to our necks in Class Day and things like that. A few of the boys are sixteen and are having their parents write permission for them to join the marines. In a class of younger kids recently we were talking about the state of affairs that probably would result if the war went on another year, and every boy in the class either said he wished he could get into the army or, in most cases, said they would be if they could get their parents to give their consent to enlistment at the age of sixteen. Several of them expressed a fear that the war would be over before they could get in. Lexington Junior High has quite a number of former students in the armed forces due to the fact that it is the school attended

by those boys and girls from Irishtown who do go on to junior high school, and by all those in town from the very low income groups. These students are all older than the normal junior high age, and the boys regularly enlist as soon as they become sixteen. Hardly a day passes but that we have as a visitor a former student in uniform, home on furlough. I don't think Indianapolis gets many of these inducted from this section of the state, as they seem to be sent to Ft. Thomas.

The university enrollment is off about 400 students this quarter. It now has quarter semesters, instead of half terms, and there is talk among university personnel about a cut in salaries. The public school teachers all met last Friday to ask for a raise.

I haven't seen Dr. Tuthill in a long time. Dr. Clark of the history department (did you know him?) is writing books quite regularly now, since his book on the Kentucky River turned out well. He has a contract with some publishing house and is preparing a book on the country store. He is having me do some illustrations and is going to submit them to the firm and see if they will use them. I'm afraid they won't, as the firm has a staff of artists they usually use, but keep your fingers crossed for me, and maybe I'll be lucky. I'm really not very hopeful, though.

I envy you getting to see and hear all those shows and concerts. I used to get over to Cincinnati now and then, to see a play or art exhibition, or go to the ballet when it came there, but having figured out what my income tax is going to be, I've almost stopped breathing. "Bambi" is the only good movie I've seen in a long time -- it's great, but not up to "Dumbo" at that. It's a little on the sentimental side, but it's all animals, and I think Disney is far better with animals than with anything else. He's better, too, when he sticks to comedy and fast movement in his animals. The animals in his things that move very slowly, like the deer in "Bambi", don't seem nearly so natural as the ones that whisk around. But see "Bambi" if you haven't, and if you like Disney at all. I'd rather see his pictures than any of the ordinary type, but I understand that lots of people think a fondness for his movies is protracted childhood. A funny thing happened in the theater while I was seeing "Bambi". When his mother was shot, and he was running around calling for her, a tearful voice floated down from the colored balcony, "Honey, you po' ol' mammy's daid."

Everyone keeps asking me why I don't join the WAACS or the WAVES until I'm beginning to feel ashamed, but the fact is, I haven't any desire to do so. Somebody's got to keep on teaching school and it might as well be Christine. The only thing that appeals to me about the WAACS is getting sent abroad, and if I joined for that reason, my parents might as well be confined in an insane asylum, so I guess I'll stay out unless they start drafting women too.

I hope my inability to talk army talk in my letters won't keep you from continuing to write. I like to hear about what you're doing and what goes on. When I get letters that make me want to talk to the person ~~who~~ I think they're tops in letter-writing.

Sincerely

Christine