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Title: Letter from Whitfield Bell Jr. to Brooks Kleber

Date: June 16, 1942

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Archives & Special Collections
Waidner-Spahr Library
Dickinson College
P.O. Box 1773
Carlisle, PA 17013

717-245-1399

archives@dickinson.edu

309 W. Chesapeake Ave.
Towson, Maryland
June 16, 1942

Dear Kleb:

It certainly was good to hear from you, boy! Bill Koch had told me he saw you in Philadelphia in May and that you were off to officers candidate school, but didn't say where. Now I can write direct and not via Bangor as I was intending to do soon. Congratulations on making the OCS. So after August it'll be Lt. Kleber! Napoleon's old marshall had better watch his laurels now! Drop Mr. Malcolm a card when it's official, so that he can run in the next Alumnus.

Speaking of officers, Dick Ellis was in Carlisle at the end of April for a night. He had a four or five day furlough on completing his course at Albany, Ga., and made a flying visit home with a stop-off in Carlisle. I saw him just a few minutes, but he looked swell and more than usually handsome in those air corps clothes he wears. Where he is now I don't know. And I guess you know that the papers in April or perhaps as far back as March carried an announcement of the Cockey-Stewart engagement. John O. is still at Randolph Field, I take it. Del Francis and Janet were in Carlisle overnight sometime in April. Late in February he was taken ill with tropical dysentery - one day in the jungle he was awfully thirsty and chanced a drink of water from the natives' unboiled supply - which, from what he said, really ripped his innards up. After several weeks in the hospital in Trinidad, Del flew up to New York on the Lisbon Clipper, had been taking treatments there, and when he was in Carlisle was hoping that he'd be able to be transferred to another post, at least one in a cool or even cold region, where he won't have to risk another case of dysentery, and where, also, Janet will be able to be with him (for they won't allow her to return to Trinidad.) All in all, I guess they had a tremendously interesting experience, though hardly the best place for a honeymoon; but both were hoping not to go back. Tom Bietsch, too, was in Carlisle for several days at the same time Dick was back. His boat, which is a converted yacht on coastal patrol out of Charleston harbor, was laid up for repairs, and he was able to get away. We had a good gab in the library one morning; and Tom had some amusing tales of what happens to plates on the table when the ship begins to roll, how you have to hook your arms through the bed-rails to keep yourself from falling out when the sea is rough, of one trip when the water supply was exhausted for a day till the vessel reached port, and some references only to picking up some crews of torpedoes tankers.

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And while we're on the house, Jim Steele made Raven's Claw this year. The others were Jim Bacon, Sam Brown, Jom McElfish, Tony Capello, Rusty Jacobs, Fred Dautel. I guess you didn't know these fellows too well, for you were a senior when they entered school. One factor which had a lot to do in determining the selections and with ruling out what to the campus, were more obvious choices, was the desirability of having in Ravens Claw men who were pretty certain of continuing in school. For example, Norm Olewiler went in the army right after commencement. But to get back to the House: financially things wound up in fair shape. Perhaps, if all the outstanding bills are collected this month and next, we were in good shape. But next year will be another story. In the first place, the senior class is poor: small in numbers, not remarkably outstanding on the campus, lacking in energy and leadership and concern for the house. The sophomores are better, or some of them, that is; but several of them are signed up in the Air Corps and not certain when they may be called, one pre-dental student is leaving at the end of the summer session in September, another pre-med is leaving at the end of his junior year; and all are more or less influenced by the aw-what-the-hell attitude which has very naturally got hold of the campus. In the second place, next year, we shall have fewer students and that means less income, our costs in some lines are increasing, and the boys are unwilling to make the necessary reductions in expenditures. For example, we just can't afford a janitor next year. Some wanted to drop him for the summer, but the others - and a majority - wouldn't hear of it and their ranks will be increased next fall. To get it across to them that what we can't afford we have to do without is just impossible. And to make matters worse, some of last year's seniors, who didn't know a damn thing about it and didn't take the trouble to find out, spread a lot of wild stories about the state of the house's mortgages and indebtedness and left the general impression that the chapter trustees and Mr. Spahr run the house as a sort of personal investment and source of private income. If they only knew the truth - at least they've heard it now - the trustees are usually the ones who reach down in their own pockets to meet the deficits when the boys fail to collect dues and board from the active chapter. Incidentally, in scholarship, we still cling doggedly to our last place among the Dickinson fraternities.

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I do not expect to be at the College for the summer session. As a matter of fact, I am not certain yet what I shall be doing for the summer - or for the winter for that matter. Right after commencement I tried to enlist, but was rejected because of my eyes. My draft board seems not quite certain what is my status, but inclines to the belief that if you're rejected by the army, you're out. At any rate, I've written to a friend of mine, a colonel at the Carlisle Barracks, to inquire whether there is any back door into the army that I might sneak through; and I've put in an application for the Red Cross foreign service. Frankly I don't think there is any chance of the former; and I'm not confident I've got what it takes to do the latter. But I don't want to teach till the war's over; and I would give my right arm to get into Europe and even stay there a couple of years after the war to help clean up the mess that famine and disease are making there. You know, Kleb, I've been getting tremendously interested in medicine and especially in medical history, and even caught myself the other day toying with the idea of giving up history and studying sanitation and public health - a significant and important field for the next generation. It wasn't Dr. Shryock's influence, so much as my working down here last summer at the Institute of Medical History at Hopkins. This winter I've been reading some on medical matters, and can see vast possibilities. Dr. Shryock is greatly interested in my interest, and tells me that after the war, when I have my degree, I must come down to Penn and study for a year or so under him in his new paper department of medical history.

Speaking of Penn, Powell completed his dissertation, which has been accepted, and he will receive his degree at the next convocation - at which time, he expects to be in the Naval Reserve. Ted Haupt has a commission in the same, and is awaiting call to service. Bob Lunny received a commission as lieutenant j.g. in the Navy and at the beginning of the month was at a desk in the Widener Building in Philly interviewing applicants for commissions in NR. but expecting within a couple of weeks to be assigned to active duty. Kent Forster, ~~he~~ Bob told me when I saw him, was planning to enlist. Dick McCormick received a commission in USNR and then, when he reported to duty was given a routine physical exam, which he flunked -- whereupon he announced that he thought he must be eligible for a pension, but the papers were sent to Washington for a ruling, but I have not heard what the story was. Dr. LaMonte, who has travelled all over the Near East, though he flunked the physical on a dozen counts, is now a lieut. commander, I think Bob Lunny told me, and stationed in Washington. Jim Parker got his master's in American Civilization, and so did Thelma Smith, this month. Vic Merca do, whom I saw in April when I was in Philly, was trying to get into Naval Reserve, but how he hoped to do it, with a 4-F classification, I don't know. I wonder what Him Marshall would say.

(over)

Mention of the Navy made this flash through my head: Ham Bacon, who was on the Lexington, is safe. His father had a letter from him at the end of May, from California. It said nothing at all of the Lexington or of why he was there, but as it was obviously dated after the Coral Sea Battle, it is certain Ham was one of those rescued. And speaking of the Navy and Phi Psi - Johnny Jones was in Carlisle in May: he had received his commission and was on a three weeks furlough before reporting to Norfolk where he now is. Chuck Davison completed his training course on the Fraire State and when last in Carlisle was on his way to Norfolk, too.

Bob

Out of paper. This'll have to do till later. Best of everything.

Was a line from Harry Nettle in May. He is
on the New Mexico. So Postmaster at San Francisco,
and said to give the fellows his best, to tell them
their ship is free of cost and giving a good account
of themselves. Geo Jones was back for
Commencement. Marvin Michael was married
in Washington to a local girl on May 16 - and
presumably now has a church in the Baltimore
Conference. Stillington got back to
Cohite family after the spring - in March
Evelyn Fardens engagement to Still was
announced. He is at Fort Monmouth - though
a Cavalryman he is studying communications.

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