

The Memoirs of

Bernard Elden Knapp

Letters to
Parents from
Basic Training 1953

Boise Ida. 15 Jul.

Dear Mom;

Just a note for now, doing fine. Our payroll has started today. We are in! Our picture will be in the Post. We found out we are headed for Fort Lewis in Washington. Our bus leaves to the Railroad station (city bus that is) in 15 Min. Harold and I are in the Boise PostOffice. We stayed in the Idaho Hotel, the same one we stayed in for basketball last winter. Will be in Ft. Lewis at least 10 days. Will let you hear from me again soon. as always Bernie.

Thur. 17 Jul. 1953

Dear Mom, Al, Lois, and all.

Well arrived in North Ft. Lewis today Thur. Went all night from Boise by train slept on a pullman ate supper on the train. Arrived here about 3 O'clock.

We saw a lot today. We left Boise on the Portland Rose. changed trains at Portland, came to Tacoma this morning. We saw tug boats and barges along most of the way and many large draw bridges, I guess that we saw some steamboats and some even larger. There were large lumber yards every since Nampa.

I'll send you my address, we'll probably be in Ft. Lewis about a week or so, you may get one letter to me before I get moved from here.

We traveled in good style to here, I was surprised to find out what things are like, not as I expected. There are two groups in since we arrived. We saw Ft. Lewis from the bus we went to North Ft. Lewis, a separate camp, so I may not see the fellows that I knew that were stationed at Ft. Lewis. However I may get away Sunday and if I can I will try to attend the L.D. S. services, I think they have them at Ft. Lewis, if they do I may see some of the fellows. The camps are really much larger than I supposed they would be. We'll get started on tests, lectures and other stuff tomorrow I guess. I hope and pray that I may come out of these tests with a chance for something better than regular army. Love Bernie.

Dear Dad;

This army is really a boy scout organization if I ever saw one, everybody tries to pass the buck to everybody else. The Sergeants give every one under them the devil, and it goes on down. We were given our clothes yesterday, a barrocks bag then told to strip down and donate our clothes to the churches or put them in the bottom of the bag. They gave us a good fit on our shoes. I can't say that much else fits except my hat, socks belt, and tie.

Today is 18th I am in Service center at North Ft. Lewis we've just had a floorshow. Clothes; they gave us two pairs of field boots, one of oxford, # of dress sox, 6 work sox 2 towels 2 belts, 2 ties, 2 work shirts, 2 work pants, 5 dress

pants and shirts, $\frac{1}{2}$ doz. each of underclothes a rain coat and a jacket, 4 caps, a necklas and we'll get tags with our names and serial number blood type. The Chaplain mentioned 3 groups of religion, Jewish, Catholic And Protestant, some L.D.S. fellows had an X on theirs.

I had a good time Monday night. Mary Ann got off so we went to Shelley to a good musical show, with Gordon McRae in "Desert Song" it's beautiful in color.

I got up early and visited with Al and Lois. All of us went to the Armory in al's car and I left on the bus. You probably saw our picture in the Post, the four of us are still together. I'm going to Church in the morning, there are plenty of guys who went be so the army won't suffer for help. After the first day I got sort of used to sergents hollering.

Monday we will be given about 8 or 9 tests They are graded by machine so that we will know the score almost as soon as we are finished .There will be four months of basic, we then could apply for officers training, but looks to me like officers are married to the Army. I have never seen so many negroes , but they say there not many here- none in my barracks - some Indians here too.

Should an emergency arise the fastest and only way to get in touch with us is through the Red Cross, giving them our add.& serial number.

Your loving son Bernie

Week of July 23 1953

I must have done alright in tests today because I stayed with about $\frac{1}{2}$ the group to take O.C.S. test, even if I had a chance I wouldN't take it because it means another year and the active reserve till one is 65. I went to Church. They can't keep you from attending Church. I think I have never heard a more inspiring Sacrament Service. J Earl,Olson and I we took Harold with us. I played a little ping pong and waited around till 1:30 for Priesthood Meeting. When I walked in was I ever surprised, I saw three fellows from Ricks,I went with them,after meeting, to their barracks until the 7 Oclock meeting. There are 3 or 4 fellows from Rexburg I sure enjoyed seeing them.

I enjoyed Sacrament Meeting. There was one fellow who talked,he and only been a member since last week, he was converted while bunking with a returned missionary, he was certainly glad to have met so many good L.D. S. Men and be baptized before shipping out. He has been through his four months of basic. I felt better after going to Church. I'll let you know my changed address, that should be fairly permanent about 16 weeks of basic training.

We had ten tests this morning, reading some, praticle math., and mechanics. We get a private interview tomorrow. We got our "dog tags" to day. And at church we filled out a slip and got our church books , the small copy of the Book of Mormon ,Principles of the Gospel,and L.D.S. tags.

Love Bernie

AGT. 27 Jul. '53-

Once today I felt great, was put on a big detail, watering lawns, the shubbery is mostly evergreens, the natural trees are firs. We had four lengths of garden hose prob. 100 yds. about every third barracks and kooked the hose in the sinks through the window and watered around the building there are about 20 barracks, the lawns are large, there were six of us two to each set of hoses. After dinner we did it all over again. The grass looks the same as the grass in the swamps and banks along Tom's creek where it is wettest, I saw a little clover scattered and plenty of moss. It must be a swamp grass it sure takes the water. Im surprised there aren't lily's and water cress. The water is warm it never did get cold to drink.

A McKenzie kid from Arco came, a grandson of our neighbor Eight fellows from Jefferson Co. came All were returned missionaries. If there are 52 weeks to a year I just have 50 $\frac{1}{2}$ left in the first round.

Sunday; Show this pictuer to Al, looks like a real happy character don't you think? You look into a machine, sign reads, Hold still when red light is on, It's like looking into a mirror you see yourself. Then the pictures look like they should be hanging in the Post Office some place, ha, ha. I just finished about five games of ping pong won four of them. I read a little tract I got in Church last week "Two years in Service can be Profitable" By Pres. Clark. Have another one, What Mormons believe' Ray Thompson from Sugar City is giving the Priesthood lesson today. They are serving coffee and doughnuts, the doughnuts are good and the water is not bad. J. Earl is going to Bliss Tex.

I went through 16 Hrs. K.P. today. Some mess halls are better than others. Some of the cooks-- most of which have a rank of Corp. Sarg. etc.-- are Pretty ignorant, they know that you are here at the R.C. for a short time and they treat you like slaves, others are nice.

We had a G.I. party today, that is where you scrub the floor with scrubbing brushes, then you sweep them with brooms, then with mops, and then dry mops. Windows, walls, everywhere cant even use the shower untill after inspection Sat. about (9 oclock. One kid had to scrub floor with toothbrush, one had to gig a hole 6x6x6 and put a cigaret butt in andfill in that he through on the ground. love Bernie.

Tues 28 Jul. 1953

Dear Dad; How is every thing in Island Park? Are the Huck-leberriesripe? Today we are in Ft. Ord.** If I were a Gen. the fellows who dont smoke would't have to pick up cigarette stubs.

We left Ft. Lewis by bus, we traveled for about 45 min. At the Seattle Tacoma Olympia airport we boarded a large United Airlines Plane. There were 23 of us and about as many other pasengers, we flew to San Francisco, I did not sit by a window and besides I was just above a wing. I did see the ocean, many high snow capped mountains and the Golden Gate

Bridge. When we got to Los Angeles we flew from there to Monterey on a smaller plane -held about 28 or 30 beside baggage we came into the Fort by bus. Jay West went to Texas, Olson went to Virginia, Harold Ireland and I are here , that's of the four of us who left Idaho Falls together.

I thought it would be hot here but I have'nt seen the sun yet just fog. It has been colder than in Washington, and today we were issued winter clothing, wool jackets, trousers, long underwear, wool caps, and gloves. They say it is as cold as it will get the yeay around here, so I guess it wont be bad if it's never colder than this. At least it will be better for training than it would be if it were hot. Wou have to wear full uniform every where outside of your barracks, that could be warm on a warm day.

I just saw Mr Watt's daughter-in-law, she was an Andrus from Thornton you would know her father, Don Watts, her husband is stationed here I understand. Kenneth Patterson, a missionary from Burley, has been in the same group as I since we were in Washington, and in the same barracks I hope we dont get separated I like him, He's a swell guy. We are the only non -gentiles ,or heathens in the barracks. There are really some rough characters here I tell you. Love Bernie.

Add; Pvt. Bernard E. Knapp US 56211695
Co. M 63rd Inf. Regt.
Fort Ord, Calif.

*written before
last one*

Sat. July 25, 1953,

Dear Dad;

How is everything going? Well, if we could do all the work assigned us here and then do something else we could work two hours and rest ten. There are a lot of kids here who never worked before. You have noticed how people around the mill watch you work. Their eyes nearly pop out, Kids here talk about working but they don't know what you mean. If you ever work they watch you like it was something they never saw before.

I got my shipping orders Fri. I will leave for Ft. Ord Mon. It's near San Francisco.

One day I watered Lawns all day, One kid had a lawn mower for about 7 hrs. , a wheelbarrow would have cut about as much. Swamp grass must be the variety no lawn grass would grow in so much water, they have moss and toadstools growing in them funny they dont have waterlilies.

I did reel well on my tests ,the interrigation officer said I did average on radio and well above average on all the others, He said I can apply for nearly any school which might be open ,we can make application in about six weeks, to pass O.C. S. takes a score of 115 I got 114. I don't care thought. If you Pass it you are in the reserve until you are 65 and have to spend two full years after you get through with 9 mo.

or a year of schooling. They put down that I had taken art and typing. I'll get some sleep we get up at 4:30, on K.P. it's 3:30 till 7:30, 16 hrs Sun. we sleep Late 5:30 ha, ha,
Tell all hello, yours Bernie.

Mon Aug. 3 1953

Dear Mom.

Well it seems like ages since I have written. I guess I'll finally have a permanent add., at least for 8 weeks, unless I should get a break, it will be 16, we are in a 16 week basic company. A heavy Infantry co. It will be larger guns for foot soldiers, machine guns, bazooks, recoil rifles, etc.

The lights are out early than usual, generally 11:30 and we get up about 4:45 or 5:15, it's a long day when you start that early. Tell every one hello, aunt Jenny if you write to her

First four weeks we were quarantined like prisoners. we have about one hour free time scattered over the day, when we must shine shoes mend clothing and do laundry. Our platoon sergeant is a Negro, There are two LDS twins from St. George but I am not lucky enough to have one. Things should get better that is we will likely lose our quarantine, that depends on how we do things and of the 6 platoons in our M Co. guess we have the worst reputation, that means we get the last choice of everything, we have some smart alects in our platoon. We had classes about 6 hours today, we got our M1 rifles yesterday. We were marched to church yesterday. $\frac{1}{2}$ It was Sac. Meeting, Eld. Spencer W. Kimball spoke about 8 minutes. Hello to everyone

Love Bernie.

Dad, dont send my camera we have no way to lock anything.

Tues July 28 '53

How are you? Sunday some of my friends were at church. I met Kenneth Patterson, a returned missionary, from Burley, He's a sweet guy, a little taller and heavier than I. He volunteered at priesthood meeting to talk in church, he certainly gave a wonderful talk. He shopped to Ft. Ord with Harold and I Jay West went to Ft. Bliss Tex. Bet it's hot there. About like Wash. here.

Monday morning we left Ft. Lewis by bus. At Seattle Tacoma, Olympia airport we left by large U.S. airliner, there were 22 fellows and a sargent plus the ordinary passengers 15-25 plus all our baggage. We left 12:15 and were in S.F. about 4:20. The airport at Seattle was larger building than the two I.F. hospital nurses home and Temple combined I guess. We didnt go in it they had other stations where we got our tickets, larger than I.F.

Rail Road Depot. Guess S.F. is pretty large, we saw the ocean, the Golden Gate and Say Bridge from the air. We flew from S.F. to Monterey on a smaller plane it held about 30, we came to the Ft. by army truck.

We came here to the service club to get awet from doing detail, if your around the barracks they get you sleeping, waiting or whatever. The fort is enormous in size, I dont really

know how large for one thing it is built upon rolling hills.

An orchestra is playing it is made up of G.I.'s who have checked out instruments just to play them. This wasting time goes slow, I went to the barracks, the orderly is a new draftee like myself, he said don't come in go to the P x or Service club or you'll get put on detail. The Service Club was not open so I sat on the porch took my Testament and read most all the First Gospel. After dinner we marched about two miles where we were given clothes, woolen jackets and pants leather gloves and long underwear two caps and infantry button.

After about a month of basic we can put in for schooling I think I will do like Harold plans, he is going to put in for "Training Aids" he says that has to do with lettering and such. They give you 1st 2nd 3rd choice. I did well enough on my tests.

The PX is a large modern store, with everything to sell. Ft. Ord is the size of a city, more compact than a town, not so many vacant lots. Kenny said yesterday when we got on the plane, "Oh, if my mother knew where I was she would just die." He was in Va, and S.C. on his mission and sounds like a southerner
Love Bernie.

Have been chosen one of 20 to work for C.I.C. Counter Intelligence Corps.