

## SARGENTRIVIA

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No. 5

Having had unexpectedly good luck in reproducing bits of family memorabilia as tail pieces, ye editors were too optimistic in the last number in attempting to reproduce the photograph of Aunt Laura Sargent as a young girl. Had that been a success, other old photographs would have followed in due course. In this chapter of our family history on the march is an unusual variety of experiences of members of the armed forces. Ziegler Sargent, editor; Agnes W.B. Sargent, assistant editor.

Major Horace Pettit of the Medical Corps wrote to his wife, Millioent Lewis Pettit, from India on February 21st: ".... People who write about India dramatize it, so don't swallow all you read. All the things listed are here, but most of them are like rattlesnakes in the Berkshire Hills, you hardly know they are there. We had one earthquake which shook my bed before I went to sleep one night. 'Earthquake', says I sleepily, and turned over on my other side. The same quake did considerable damage to the building I lived in when I first arrived at the place that reminded me of Rose Lane. Jordan and Flamm were there and just missed the chimney falling near their beds. I've seen one or two freshly killed deadly snakes, but that's all. The ignorance is so sublime the people seem happy in a childlike way. It is amazing to see them contentedly in filth and rags. Many are really pathetic beyond anything you have ever seen. One feels completely helpless. The rich make money out of the famines, so they are not likely to make any changes. Don't worry about the effect of these things on me. I'm really not exposed to the long list you wrote. I'm quite as safe as if I were in Philadelphia. We get a sprinkle of the kind of patients Fran and Paul have, but practically all of ours are our own kind. I can't figure out why Washington has the peace jitters, unless something is known there that we don't know. It still looks like a long hard war to us. We think we haven't spent half the time we will spend here. It is a big job that lies ahead and we are here to finish it. Don't underestimate the Japs and don't let anyone else do it in your hearing. I was guilty of that error once, but not now. The war in Europe isn't near its end yet. I wish they would stop feeding optimistic pap to those at home. What we will need is more endurance. We'll win, whatever that ultimately means, but not for a long time. Remember when you read the paper that this is an election year. ...." His address is O-407395, 112th Station Hospital, A.P.O. 465, New York, N.Y.

Emily Sargent Pettit celebrated her 18th birthday on March 2d. Ye editors wish MInd many happy returns of the day.

Stevia Warren Sargent, Weir's youngest, celebrated her 11th birthday on March 4th. We hope she had a singing telegram.

Millioent Lewis Pettit celebrated her birthday on March 8th. On the same day Connie and Jane Fenn celebrated their 6th wedding anniversary and Dicky and Barbara Sargent their 3d. Many happy returns to all of ye.

Peggy Fisher Babbitt celebrated her birthday on March 10th. Mary happy returns of the day.

As an illustration of the fact that it sometimes takes years for a husband and wife to learn each other's likes and dislikes, ye editor recalls an incident that occurred at one of the big family Thanksgiving or Christmas dinners at 51 Elm Street. His mother told members of the family within hearing that "Henry's favorite dessert was rennet custard" (sometimes called "junket"). "Henry" also heard the remark and rose in his wrath to say that he had never liked rennet custard, in fact disliked it, and he objected to his wife telling the family it was his favorite, that he had eaten it for years without complaint because he thought it was good for the children, but vowed he would never eat it again. It was a long time before the laughter subsided. But Dad kept his vow. Had he lived, as he fully expected to, he would have reached 93 years on March 4th.

Second Lieutenant Roswell G. Ham, Jr., received his commission in the Air Corps in November 1943. After winning his commission Roddy was sent to Lowry Field, Denver, Colo., where his fluency in French brought about his appointment as Liaison Officer to the French Air Forces on that post. While an officer candidate at A.A.F.O.C.S. at Miami Beach, Fla., he was an instructor in aircraft recognition. The following account, based on his own experiences in England, was published under the title "Sweating 'Em Out" in the January 1944 issue of "Air Force" (the official service journal of the U.S. Army Air Force) and was broadcast over one of the hook-ups: "There isn't a lonelier spot in the world than a fighter field after the planes are gone. You sit there on your ammunition and wait. A squadron of Thunderbolts has roared over the channel to fly top cover for a flight of B-17s. There are fourteen men in those fighters. Thirteen of them are your friends. You have swapped addresses and hoisted beers with them. But the fourteenth is even more than a friend. He is flying your plane.



It is your plane, just as though the government had placed it personally in your hands. You have armed it and caressed it and cared for it and now you are sweating out your ship. As you sit there on a bleak, windy airfield, you feel lonely and apart from everything. You are shut off even from the few men in the nearby dispersal area who go about their own business and try not to think about what is happening 25,000 feet over the target for today. But you do think about it. You think about the man in your ship. You are responsible for his life. It is your job to make sure that his guns don't stop firing when an enemy fighter comes blasting into formation. You swear and pray and feel better for it. You wonder what your man is doing. And you hope he'll be able to tell you about it himself. You are sure you sent him on his mission without any ammunition. You know you looked up that ejection shoot thirty times and saw the ammunition, but that could have been yesterday. You are positive that the breeching wasn't exact. You are certain there was a split cartridge case. Then you realize that you went over the ship with a mother's care and it was perfect. But you worry. The wind sweeps across the lowlands and bites into your sheepskin coat. There's a heavy ground fog and the sun is hidden behind an overcast. You have never been so lonely in all your life. Then the strange stillness is shattered by an RAF pilot on a bicycle who yells 'Naafi oop.' That means tea and doughnuts at the mobile canteen. 'Naafi' is British for Navy-Army-Air Force Institute which is like our USO. You walk over for tea. Sometimes you get good old American coffee. After a while, you wander into the radio room and listen to the pilots in your squadron talking to each other. They are only about sixty miles away over the French coast and you can hear everything they say. Most of the time you don't know who is talking, but when a voice says, 'They've got me. I'm going into the water,' you stretch and strain and try to recognize the inflections and the tone. Then you sit back. It isn't your man. An armorer stands up and asks for a cigarette. He offers an excuse and walks out. It was his ship. You know how he feels. 'They've got me' means death. And it hits you hard. You expect it and live with it and see it many times. But still it hits you. You watch the poker game. The players are ground men like yourself, and they are playing poker with one eye on a pair of aces and one eye on the sky. The first thing you learn as a ground man in a combat zone is how to count. When your squadron comes home you learn to count them while they are still barely visible. You look for holes in the formation, the obvious sign that somebody is missing. Identification experts will tell you that all P-47s look exactly alike. But you feel you can pick out your ship while the formation is still miles away. Then you start listening. You can always tell if there's been a battle by listening to the whistle of the wind in the cannon blast tubes. If they have met the enemy the patch over the gun ports has been shot away, and that eerie whistle always causes a cold sweat no matter how many times you've heard it. When the ships come in you get ready to rearm them, for most of the time they'll go right out again. You stand on the edge of the runway and as soon as their wheels touch, you start running. You look for your ship and your man. Sometimes he doesn't come back and you go over and help another armorer. But your heart isn't in it. You walk into the radio room again to find out if your man has landed at an advanced airdrome. There's always a chance, and you play that chance right into the ground. Maybe he's in the channel and the air-sea rescue outfits have him. You don't show your feelings. No one does. When it's all over, you casually walk up to a returned pilot and ask him what happened. Very often a lost man will turn up a couple of days later. He'll just walk in as if he had been in the barracks all the time. You never show your enthusiasm. It would be out of place. You merely look up and say, 'Glad to have you back.' Then you go about your business as if nothing had happened. The relationship between a pilot and his armorer is unlike anything you know in the States. There is no such thing as officer and enlisted man. You go into London and tour the pubs with him, you share a bed with him. You don't remember the last time you called him Lieutenant. There is no truck with rank. I've seen a lot of combat and I've known a great many men who didn't come back. But the worst thing that ever happened to me was when my plane - my man - was shot down in combat. I was listening in the radio room and I recognized his voice. I had heard him say 'Another beer' too often not to know that nasal twang. He and another pilot were evidently chasing a Jerry. The Nazi was pulling away and my man must have had a more direct angle on him. I heard him say, 'I'll go down and get him.' A voice yelled, 'No, no, get back in formation.' Then silence. Finally, a tired, pained voice said, 'I'm hit. I'm going into the ditch.' That was all. The Germans got him with an old trick. He followed the Jerry down and another one dove on him. He didn't come back. Somebody asked me what happened and I gave the expected answer. 'He boomed,' I said."

March 11th is the birth date of both Roswell G. Ham, Sr., and Jr. Many happy returns of the day to both of ye.

Chaplain (First Lieutenant) William H. McCance wrote from Fort Lawton Officers Club, Seattle, Wash., on February 28th: ".... Things are fairly slow at the moment. You see our ship had some trouble in Alaskan waters and we came home without our quota of troops as planned. We took a battalion up in good shape, however. Since nobody has written, as I remember, about the cold north, I might say for the benefit of folks at home that even houses heated with the limited amount of oil are much more comfortable than the quonset huts I saw up there. As you know, they are corrugated iron buildings about 40 feet by 15. They are partially buried in the ground which serves as protection from the cold wind and whatever. They are heated by oil stoves, electrically lighted, where I was, and almost covered with snow in some sections. One of the hard things about life up there is the isolation. These posts are cut off from the outside world. Air mail does get in and boats every now and then. The social life is practically nil except for the discussions friendly groups have at the officers club, and the enlisted men have in their Service Mens Club. Here there is ping pong and pool and radio also, for recreation. And there are a few nurses and a couple of Red Cross ladies who are given quite a whirl as you may easily imagine. The soldiers seemed healthy and in good condition. The officers at the mess where I ate on two occasions were a jolly lot, kidding my friend the Chaplain and one another in true American fashion. ...."



The McCances staged a one-day reunion at 188 Bishop Street, New Haven, where Molly and Forbes have been staying, Mary arriving from Philadelphia on March 8th and the Chaplain on the 9th, crossing the continent by plane having a 15-day leave. Forbes departed on the 10th for army duty at Orono, Me.

Private Cornelius Kimball Ham has left Yale, and on January 6th reported as a Marine at Parris Island, S.C., where he is about to complete his boot course (a Marine and Navy term for the initial training). By eye exercises while at Yale Kimball considerably improved his eye rating. He wrote recently: "Mess duty - what a madhouse! Can you imagine getting up at 3:30 A.M. and remaining awake until 10:00 the following evening? We don't get much sleep now, but I do intend to make up for it when given the opportunity. My particular job is standing by on the N.C.O's tables (2). Lord, what vociferous chow hounds! I have been on the dead run for two days filling their every wish. The schedule for the remainder of this week's work goes something like this. 3:30 - hit the deck! Until 4:00 we shave, wash and make up our bunks and then run over to the mess hall. Early chow for us at 4:30, which is followed by some preparation for the first shift of platoons. Bedlam tears loose for an hour while we are run ragged. We then clean off the tables and swab down everything that is washable. We repeat this routine again for lunch and supper, again washing all in sight. After each meal the tables are set for the following meal. All is secured around 7:00 in the evening, which leaves us some time - I usually hit the sack when this opportunity comes. Perhaps the time passes rapidly this way. \*\*\* A week ago to-day we had preliminary record day where I fired 314 for an expert rating. Unfortunately that was merely familiarization routine to prepare us for the next day's record. These two days provided ideal weather conditions, being almost the same throughout. Everything proceeded favorably and I was headed for expert until the 300 yard line came up. Then a ten mile an hour wind changed our dope slightly and my coach advised me to leave the windage alone. Our combined calculations proved slightly in error and my shot group was to the left. I felt like a race horse who had broken his leg in the last four yards; needless to say more people lost out on that firing line, and priceless points were scattered to the winds. I eventually wound up an even 300 out of 340 - just six short of expert - which qualifies me a sharp shooter. My eighteen day stay on the range was the most enjoyable time as yet spent on the island. I learned a good deal about the various small arms used by the corps, and enjoyed the whole affair. The platoon sergeant who guided us through was given a bond and cigarettes in appreciation. 90.3% qualified when the shooting was over. \*\*\* Now and then there are a few individuals who seem to lack a sense of teamwork. Here's a case to-day - During the customary bayonet course this afternoon the men in the platoon who were not actually undergoing instruction were doing some spare track work around two high radio masts nearby. A few men took short cuts and sadly enough were seen by the sergeant. The D.I. called us all together and asked the men to step forward and confess to cutting through the towers instead of around said objects. He claimed that five men had taken this route, but three, and only three, stepped to the front. The sergeant made repeated orders for the other two to step forward - but no action on their parts. Thus, another lap around the towers with the rifles at high port. The three men who had admitted their guilt were allowed to sit that one out, which shows that honesty usually ends you up on the right side of the fence. Again the sergeant asked for the other two, but again no response. Once more we ran the six hundred yards around the towers with rifles and cartridge belts. Now, we have some men in our outfit who are over thirty and peddled in certain regions. For them I feel sorry, as the younger fellows had enough trouble running that course in the sand. When the culprits failed to show themselves two more times and we had completed two more laps, you can well imagine that our tempers were on edge and certain death would follow the identification of the low heels. The sergeant sensing our wrath asked the platoon if they knew who the so and so's were, and, if we knew, to keep it among ourselves and to forget telling him - he knew the identity of the other two. When we finally returned to the barracks and had collapsed in small heaps of humanity, the sergeant requested the presence of two men - the two who we thought were guilty - in his room, which was a subtle method of pointing out the two to us. Later he announced that he had a date that evening with a woman Marine and his presence would be lacking for the evening. These words marked the death warrants of the two unmentionables. I'll have to continue this tomorrow, for taps sound in three minutes. \*\*\* Well to resume, the unmentionables were given what we call a G.I. bath, which consists of a shower then rolling the person in the sand sans clothes, and finally drying him with our scrubbing brushes. \*\*\* This all sounds pretty cruel, but why have a man of that type go into combat with a total lack of responsibility for his fellow men? We all believe that he will play heads up ball from here in."

Second Lieutenant Lawton G. Sargent, Jr., completed his pilot's course and received his wings and his commission at suitable ceremonies at Napier Field, Dothan, Ala., on Sunday, March 12th. He reached New Haven on March 14th when his promotion and 21st birthday were celebrated with his family. While still an aviation cadet he wrote on February 26th: "Well here it is Saturday night & I am lying about attempting to write a few letters, but as usual succeeding badly. We fly all day to-morrow, so there is not much point in dashing into gala Dothan - so far I have been to town once since my arrival here and that totaled a two hour visit. So you can see that Dothan presents a contrast to Bush and Augusta where Saturday was a rush for taxis, the blondes, and the bar. We really had some times there even though it cost a small fortune - but here I am actually saving money for a change! You write that you trust we are having 'lovely' flying weather! Possibly, and I feel sure that you have never been in Ala. at this time of year. It is still bad and we fight fog, rain, and low clouds, taking what time we can for a dash up-stairs to get in some time. For the past two weeks we have been flying formation as it never gets good enough for cross country or high enough for a lot of solo work to be released.



But formation is a lot of fun. We fly 'V' and echelon mostly with a few tactical two ship formations thrown in. We have been flying mornings lately, and if you're lucky to get up early and can find a hole in the clouds you can go up through the stuff into another world. It's really breath taking up on top with most of the earth out off from view and just billowy masses of fluff all around you. The sun tinges them in red and it's an effect you can't describe. Sometimes it's like exploring a big cave as you weave in and out of cloud banks and speed lazily along through gullies and trails. You really get the effect of speed up there as with something tangible you can see just how fast you tear by those clouds! Then we peel off for a merry 'rat-race' and chase each other around the sky in trail doing dives, climbs, lazy eights and other maneuvers. When there are clouds it's the most fun as you can chase each other around them or dive through them or dive on them and go skinning and skipping just on the top of some flat fluff. It's terrific! I have just returned from the instrument squadron and my 12 hour course there of radio work and instrument flying. I had a swell instructor - which was both lucky and good - and we got along fine & flew a lot of problems together. He graduated in 44-A! Having passed my army check (50-3) which consisted of a radio range problem - more clearly stated that consists of being placed in an unknown quadrant, orientating yourself, picking up the beam, flying in to the station, and then making a let-down and flying to the Dothan airport on a procedure timed let-down. All this is done from under the hood, and all you do is fly the plane from the instruments, time yourself as need be by your clock, and know where you are from the radio signals in your earphones. When you finish the problem you shake the stick which means you think you are over the airport at 300! It's darned interesting and shows you how much confidence you can have in your plane & radio! Course the real test comes when you get lost or have to fly in thru an overcast under actual weather conditions. Anyway, I got my instrument card. You learn a lot about flying the plane from your instrument course also - especially it helps at night as you have to know what in hell goes on! ... As for graduation - well, this is the story: we graduate on schedule, i.e. March 12th, but evidently we won't be finished flying by then unless the weather performs miracles - SO we shall continue to fly for an extra 10-12 days or so depending on conditions. Then we should get a leave which will bring me home around the 24th of March. You can't really tell anything or promise anything definite except graduation will be on the 12th. Our schedule is nice now as ground school is over and all we do is fly (when we fly!), eat, sleep, go to the movies, and have P.T. once a day. We are living a life we shall probably never forget - it is fun, thrilling, and exciting but it is also work coupled with many a worry and troubles that I won't enumerate here. There's a helluva lot that can happen. I am finishing this on Sunday Night as I fell asleep last night. We have been on the line all day, and I got in a good four hours but am thoroughly bushed at this point. We flew formation this morning and cross country in the afternoon; the cross country was a four ship affair and we did a little bit of everything along the way. Going past a basic school at Bainbridge, Ga., we spotted a 3 ship formation below us so two of us peeled off and made a diving pass at them pulling up sharply and having them looking up at us and wondering what the hell happened! To-morrow morning we shoot skeet all A.M., so that should be a lot of fun blasting away at those clay pigeons. ..."

Illustrated below is a promissory note of our ancestor Joseph Denny Sargent dated November 16, 1839, for \$627.13. It is "attested" by his son "Jos. B. Sargent", then not quite seventeen. On the back of the note (not shown here) are recorded annually the payments of interest. Though the maker of the note died May 25, 1849, payments of interest are recorded through November 16, 1860, also payments of \$200 "of the principal" on March 4, 1850, and of \$264.50 on March 21, 1850.

*Sixteenth Nov. 16. 1839 For value recd. I promise  
to pay Jos. Denny Sargent of Isaac R. Lillay &  
Heirs or order Six hundred Twenty Seven dollars  
& thirteen Cents on demand with interest annually -  
\$627.13  
Attest Jos. B. Sargent*