

World War II Letters from "Chuck" Pressentin



Anti-Aircraft Training, North Carolina



On Nov. 24, 1942 Chuck received his diploma in Electrical Engineering from the National Schools. He came through the course with about a 79 average. For the class the average was 73. A clipping from the Sedro-Woolley *Courier-Times* described his achievement:

PVT. PRESSENTIN IS HONOR GRADUATE
Pvt. Charles W. Pressentin, Sedro-Woolley, who some time ago was selected by the Army for specialized training in electricity at National Schools in Los Angeles, California, has just completed this training and was graduated with honors. Pvt. Pressentin is the son of Mr. And Mrs. Charles Pressentin, 524 Warner street.



Chuck's Letters from Camp Davis, North Carolina



Chuck now started seeing some more distant parts of the United States, as his training in an anti-aircraft unit sent him via New Orleans and Atlanta to Camp Davis in North Carolina. On a postcard from Atlanta he wrote:

Hi Pongee, Your brother is sure seeing lots of country isn't he. I've sure enjoyed my trip so far. I get a kick out of these people. I like to hear them talk. Will write again soon.

He arrived at Camp Davis in early December and spent the next six weeks there in training. He also received his first promotion, to Corporal in the E Battery Enlisted Division, Anti Aircraft School.



Camp Davis, North Carolina

The camp was located about 30 miles northeast of Wilmington, North Carolina, deliberately sited in an isolated, swampy area to "Seek isolation from interference to insure uninterrupted training." Part of the camp was located at Fort Fisher, near Cape Fear which had been a Confederate Army stronghold during the Civil War.

At the time Chuck entered anti-aircraft training, no one knew how the role of the anti-aircraft forces would change during the war.

Anti-aircraft Artillery History

At the beginning of World War II the US antiaircraft artillery force was very much the poor stepchild of the Coast Artillery Corps. The German Blitzkrieg in Europe forced a widespread reevaluation of the Army's AAA capability and, beginning in 1940-1941 there was a vast expansion of the arm. On 30 September 1942, it was proposed that 811 AAA battalions be organized (with a total strength of 619,000 men).

However, this massive buildup of AAA units became largely redundant when another formerly poor relation of the US Army, the Army Air Corps, wrested command of the air from the Luftwaffe in 1943 and 1944. In 1943 the AAA regiments were broken up into separate battalions. Many AAA battalions were disbanded to provide replacements in 1944, and some were converted to artillery. A total of 258 battalions were inactivated or disbanded between 1 January 1944 and 8 May 1945.

Camp Davis Letters, North Carolina

Postcard, dated Dec. 8, 1942

Return Address: Cpl. Chas Presentin, E Battery Enlisted Div., Anti Aircraft School
Camp Davis, N.C.

*Well this will be my home for the next 6 weeks. I'm sure going to have lots of
studying to do. We go to class 10 hours a day.*



Letter dated Jan. 14, 1943

Cancellation mark on letter has "Free" written over it. And "Thanks Uncle" under "Free."
Charles' return address: Cpl. Chas Presentin, E Battery Enlisted Div., Anti Aircraft School
Camp Davis, N.C.

*It's too bad you couldn't have been with the folks over the holidays. They really must have had a
good time. Even Otto Presentin wrote me how much he and Grandma [Wilhelmine
v.Presentin] enjoyed it. It seems they got the violins out and had a jam session.*

*Tonite is our last night of school. Our Subject today has been identification of aircraft. It's one
of the Subjects I'll have to teach after I leave here. We are having our graduation exercises
Monday morning. We should find out where we are going to be shipped at the same time.*

*Is Al [Al Kemmerich, Pauline's husband] still stevedoring! I had a letter from my red-headed
Swede in Portland and she says she's holding down two jobs. Works at Meier & Franks all day,
then works from 7 till 12 in a drugstore.*

*I'm keeping my fingers crossed hoping I'll get to come back to the West coast. It will just be my
luck to wind up at either Camp Sheridan at Chicago or Camp Edwards at Boston, Mass. Those
are both swell camps but it would mean I wouldn't have the least chance in the world of getting
home for a furlough. I want so badly to see the old home town again. I should have some more
stripes when I leave here and I'd like to take them home and push them down Stendal's throat.
I'll write as soon as I get a new address.*

Your brother, Chuck

P.S. I received 3 pints of venison today from the folks and are we going to have a feed.

Camp Davis Letters, North Carolina

Letter dated January 22, 1943 It is an Air Mail letter with 6 cents postage printed on it. Written on stationery, with a red, white and blue "V" logo at the top.
Return address: Cpl. Chas Pressentin, E Battery Enlisted Div., Anti Aircraft School
Camp Davis, N.C.

Yours was the first letter I've had in several days. Everybody thinks I'm gone from here so consequently I haven't been hearing from anyone. I've graduated from my course here so now I'm just laying around until I'm assigned to my next Camp.

To pass the time I've been doing a little instructing and listening to lectures on airplane identification. I'll be expected to teach the latter after I leave here. That's a pretty important subject in anti-aircraft.

I called the folks the other nite. I've tried any number of times to call home but I've never been able to get any further than Chicago before. The other nite I don't believe it took over 3 minutes. It only cost \$3.55 for 3 min. I think the folks got a kick out of it. Gosh! I hope I can get home on a furlough. If I'm sent back to California I'll be able to come home for 7 days and also spend one day with you on my way south. I'm just counting the days until I leave here. I've seen all I want of the east coast. Give me Skagit County any old day. This spot where this camp is located is just an old swamp. All you can see is a few scrub pines and sand. It's also located right on the Atlantic Ocean. About the "creepers" I don't see how they could live here.

While in California I found out where Lillian was at but didn't bother to look her up. I heard though she was scared to death I would, while I was there. [Charles was married to Lillian (last name not known) at some time.]

All my buddies have been moved out. They were all satisfied to take camps here on the East coast. I'm still holding out for the West. After I leave here, I'll spend three months teaching what I've learned. After I've put in this time, I'll have the chance of coming back here to become a commissioned officer.

M..... Pressentin and his brother are down in Georgia now and will soon have their commission. I'm still in the best class of the service as Anti Aircraft is next to the Air Force as far as intelligence is concerned. They are in the infantry school which requires the least. Just to acquire my present rating I've had to pass much stiffer exams than they would to receive their commissions. All they want is the gold bars. I'm really learning something I'll be able to use after I leave this. M.... wrote to me and acknowledged this very thing.

All of us sure enjoyed the eats that I've received. The grub here has been terrible. We haven't seen butter for a month. Well I think I'll see if I can't get a pass and go to town. I've found me a little blonde WAAC that seems to enjoy my company. She's lots of fun. Used to be a school mam in Houston, Tex. but just got fed up with it. Kinda the way Tink [Charles's sister, Caroline] did. The folks are worried about Bunk's [Charles' sister, Erma] back. She's been having trouble I guess with it lately. They think it's from that wreck she was in a couple of years ago.

Well I hope I'll be seeing you before long. I'd like to parade my uniform and stripes (I'll have more) off to you. Till then,

Love to all, Chuck