

Clarence Rings collection

Section 1, Pages 1 - 30

This series of letters and transcripts from World War II are from Clarence Rings of Holton, Kansas, AMM 3/C-AMM 2/C, during his time in the Navy. Clarence was deployed twice to the Aleutian Islands, but was mainly stationed at Seattle, Washington; Whidbey Island; Norman, Oklahoma; and Ft. Barrancas, Pensacola, Florida. The letters were transcribed and annotated by his daughter, Lana Rings.

Creator: Rings, Clarence

Date: 1942 - 1945

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KANSAS
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

Clarence Rings

Letters from the Navy

1942-1945





I transcribed, researched, and annotated these
letters, and a copy is on file at the Archives of the
Kansas Historical Society.

Lana Rings

Transcribed and Annotated
By His Daughter
Lana Rings
Fort Worth, Texas



Clarence Rings collection

Introduction

As was common during World War II, my father, Clarence Rings, wrote letters home while he was in the Navy. He wrote many, many letters – to family and to friends. He sent pictures back and forth, and he was part of the family's Round Robin letters.

The family saved letters back in those days, so a number of his letters – to his mother and siblings – were saved. I'm sure not all were saved, for there are some gaps that can't be completely attributed to his being deployed at the time. He also indicated writing to a number of other people, and we do not have those letters.

I have attempted, in transcribing his letters and providing a context for them, to ascertain where he was during the war, and when. My research includes reading his letters carefully, matching what he says in those letters and his return addresses (often including the squadron and patrol wing it was under), with what I have found on the internet and in two books, Thousand-Mile War: World War II in Alaska and the Aleutians by Brian Garfield and The Aleutian Warriors: A History of the 11th Air Force & Fleet Air Wing 4, Part 1 by John Haile Cloe.

Dad joined the Navy and became a seaplane mechanic/flight engineer/plane captain on PBV-5 Catalina seaplanes. His deployment was to the Aleutian Islands, especially Attu and Kodiak, Adak and Kiska, during 1943 and 1944 and included the invasion of Kiska. His crew and plane would have been involved in patrolling the air and water for Japanese craft, ferrying people and supplies at times, even anti-shipping strikes and anti-submarine warfare. Some in his squadron even patrolled and struck over in the Kurile Islands. This happened, often in fog, high winds, rain, snow, and low temperatures.

His letters indicate that he began his Navy career in Kansas City, Missouri, passing his physical and getting sworn in. He then went to Chicago via the Navy's Great Lakes, Illinois center and spent about seven months there, where he went to AMM (Aviation Machinist's Mate) School at the Naval Training Center, Navy Pier, Chicago. He became an AMM 3/C (Third Class), then later an AMM 2/C. From Chicago he headed west on the train to San Francisco, where he stayed for about ten days, then continued on to NAS (Naval Air Station) Seattle and NAS Whidbey Island, Washington where he trained for several months at each. He was deployed twice to the Aleutian Islands, and was back in Seattle and Whidbey Island afterwards. His final stint in the Navy included NAS Seattle, Norman Oklahoma, and Ft. Barrancas, Pensacola, Florida.

During his Navy years he had many adventures, one of which was to meet a young woman on the train platform while visiting family in Topeka, Kansas. He and Estelle married in Seattle in 1945, and she joined him there, in Norman, and in Pensacola.

It was said in the family, that the war affected Dad deeply and that he was especially disturbed by having to bury the dead. I have not found exactly where or how this would have occurred, so although I believe there is truth to it, it still remains somewhat of a mystery.

These letters, transcribed, and the photos, reference, and context included, provide a glimpse into his life and adventures during World War II.



Dear Mother, Jan 19 Monday Evening

Passed physical today. Will stay at Savoy Hotel until ordered out. Had ~~supper~~ supper with

Geraldine + the boys. I'll stay here tonight, then go to the hotel. It took quite a while to go through the mill but they are examining a lot of men.

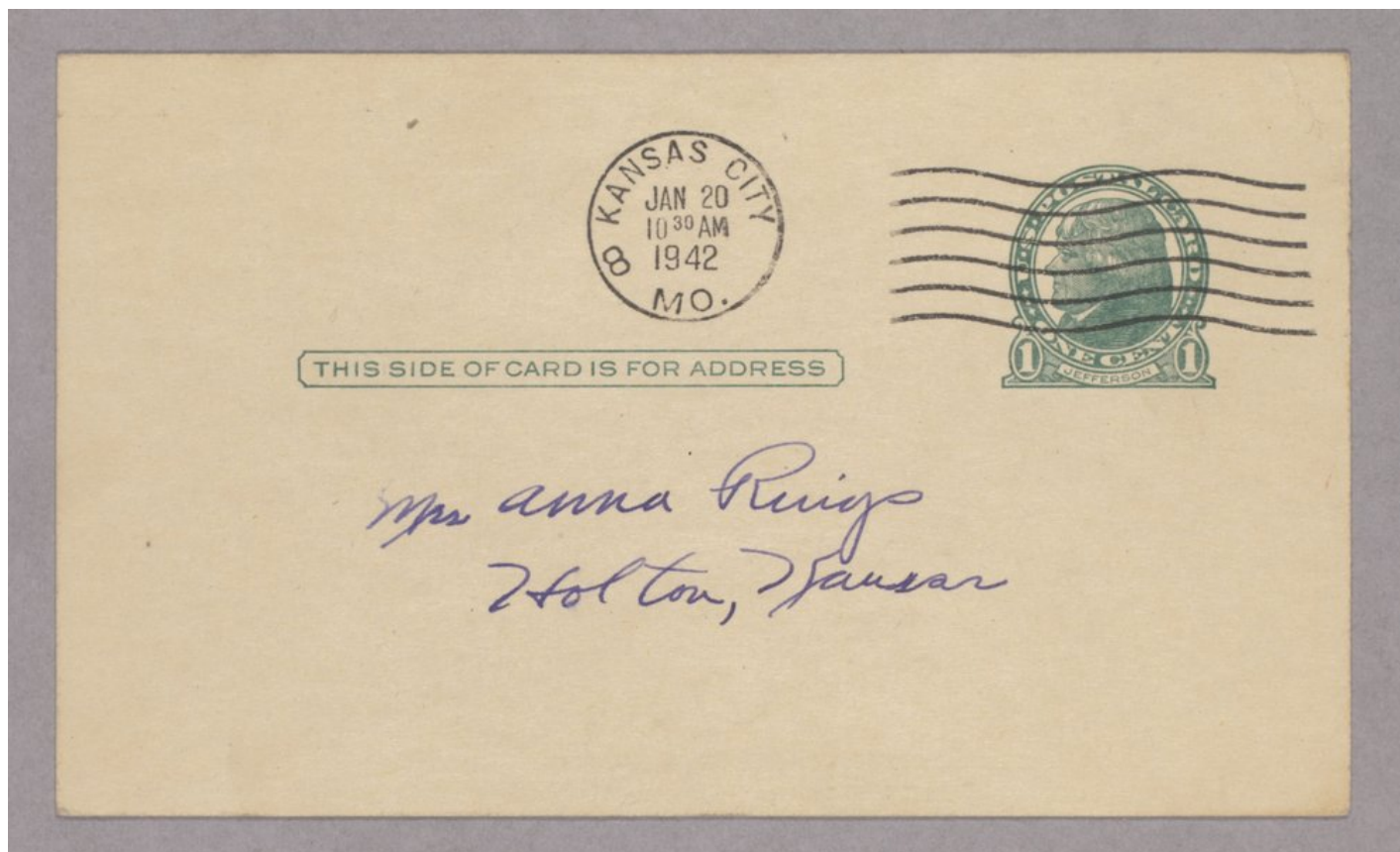
We sign up and get sworn in Tuesday. I don't know any other address so I'll call at Chucker for mail, for the time being.

Most of the fellows are sent to Chicago. It is indefinite how long we will be here.

Sally Jo is a healthy Cate youngster and little trouble.

Chuck + Sally looks well.

Loveingly
Clarence



Clarence Rings collection

Thursday 1/22/92

Dear Mother,

I'm having a swell time visiting the K. C. people. I stayed with Geraldine the first night; the hotel Tuesday and with Chuck last night. We've seen Paul's and Harry's and will try to see Evelyn and Elmer.

They let me check out of the hotel and stay in Town as long as I like, or until we get a draft.

The Chief petty officer arranged for a street car to take about 90 of the boys to South east Kansas City to the Jewish Community Center. We saw a play by talented local talent which will run for a week.

This one was "Heartbreak House" by Bernard Shaw. Rather deep and involved and quite good. The audience was made up of the recruits, dramatic and speech students from the schools and dramatic enthusiasts, or Comp tickets for the initial showing.

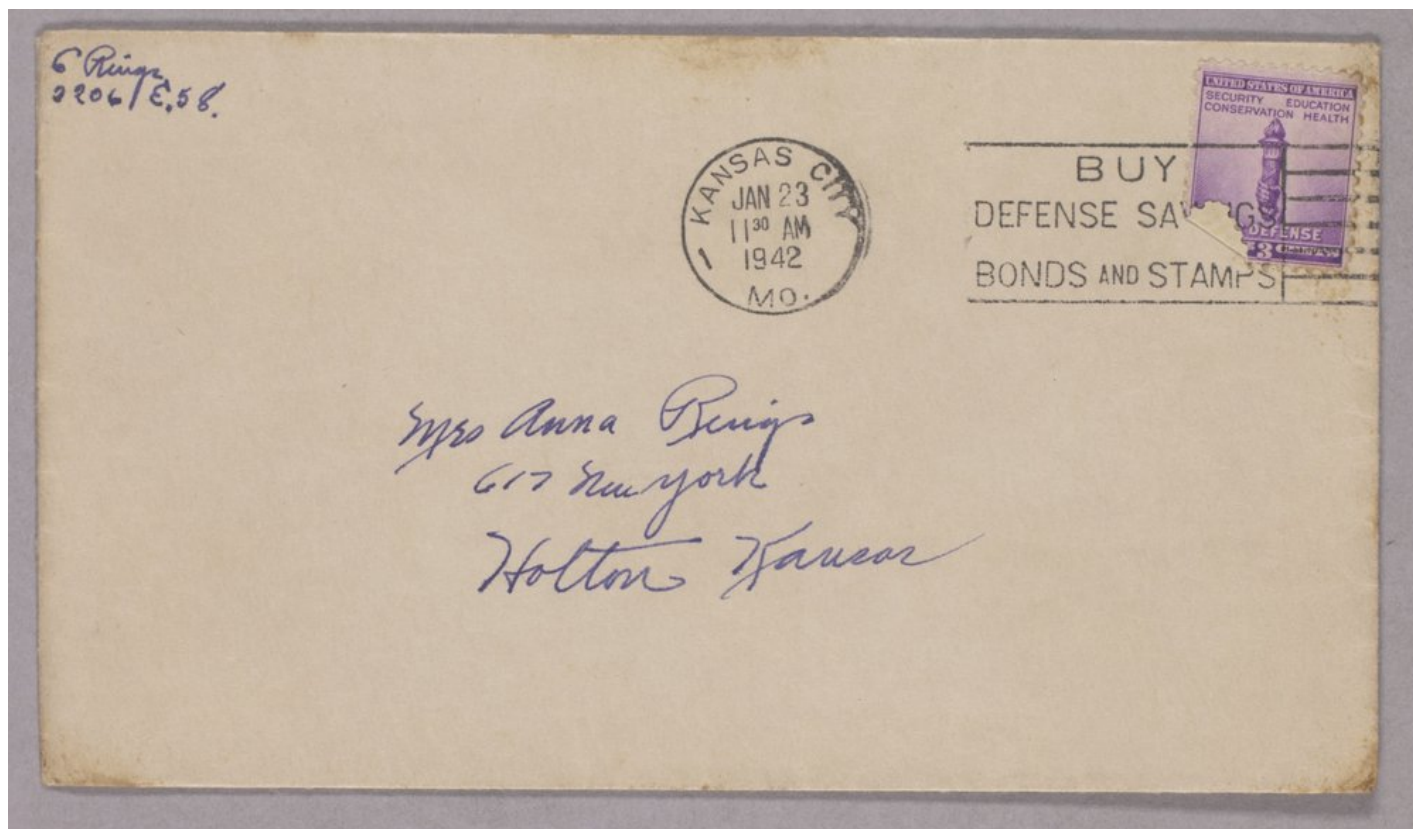
Adair Gray and a Law student from Washburn are here waiting to go.

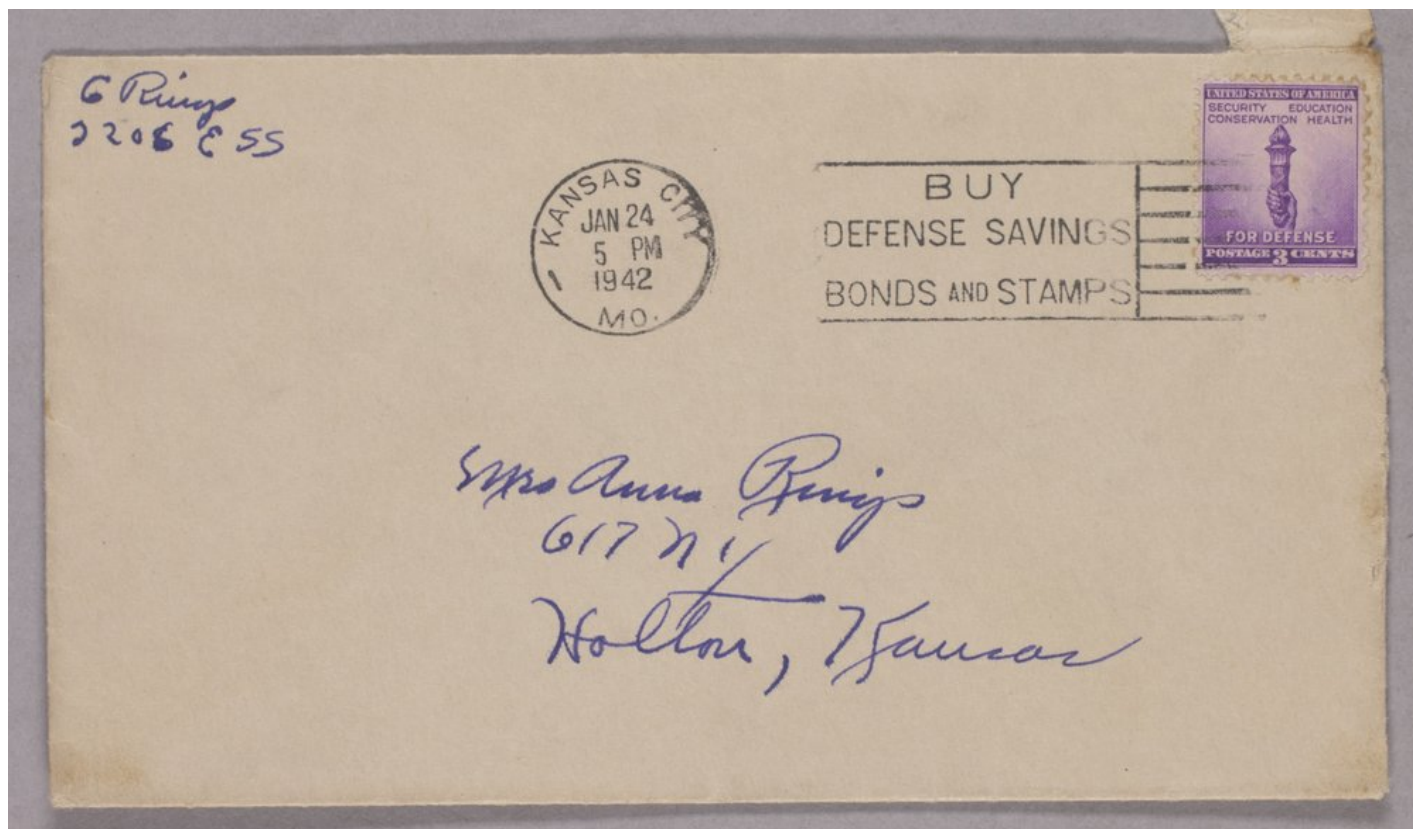
Chuck & Sally took Jubie & I through Swope Park. The three large seals were really having a lively time. It is strange how so many of the animals go through the same movements over and over and place their paws in exactly the same track every time around.

Chuck couldn't be located in a nicer place for his work. I hope it advances along so he can remain there a good time.

Hope you are all O.K. Every one here is fine. Sally is going to grow up fast. Paul's children are fine looking youngsters. Reed is nine & Ken, two.

If I don't see you before we get away, I will in five months, ordinarily. Regards to all and
Love Clarence





Clarence Rings collection





Dear Folks,

There may be a letter addressed to Chuck in my stuff. I've lost it in the shuffle. I'll write to him again so it won't matter.

I had an upper berth coming from Kansas City. It just 12 hours. yesterday we sorted our stuff and packed the things that are to be sent home. It may be 1 or 2 weeks before they get there, C O D by Railway. I forgot to enclose money in stuff so, will send \$0.50 now.

We went through a long line yesterday and were issued clothing and uniforms. It is pretty good stuff. We also had our blood tested. You can dispose of any of my old clothes. The best can go to Carl, Glen, Bob or Ivan or Red. Bob might be able to wear the shoes.

The main objection in the barracks is that there aren't enough places to sit. And we have to stay pretty close for a while.

Today or soon we get our hair cuts and sea bags.

I don't know as any of that stuff you asked about needs attention. Chuck has the letter but I don't think there was anything that needed to be done.

We're still having the same weather. I guess it is this way except a few weeks in summer then it is steamy. It isn't so bad, just monotonous.



Paul Christman, the football player is our
chief Petty Officer. It seems O.K.

He's coming now so I'll sign off for the
presens

Clarence

Friday 1/30/42

Dear Folks

Our Company left the Great Lakes Training Station and is at the Chicago Pier. The City is at the edge of it or vice versa.

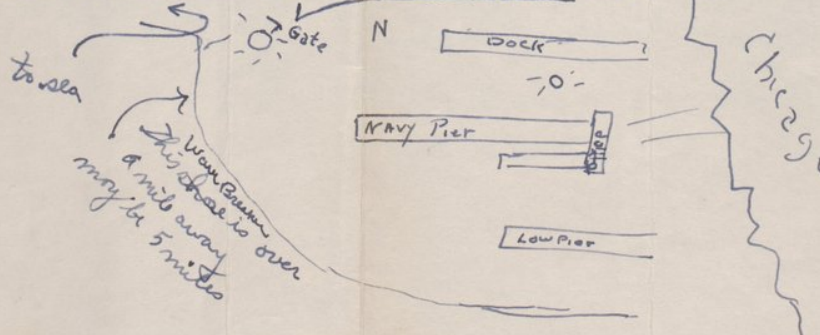
The Pier stretches toward the east about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. It's the biggest place I ever saw. The section we are in has bunks for 1560 men, without a partition. Officers and messengers ride bicycles down the aisle. Some use roller skates. I understand that anyone can skate at certain times. This is called the Naval Pier Training School. The mess hall on our end of this floor seats about 2000. Seven or eight thousand ate breakfast there.

The bunks are three deep and placed two together, making six men in a bunch. We have lockers here, but no ditty bags, too. On the top bunk you can see a block or two west and east.

This looked rather bad at first. It reminds me too much of a zoo of caged monkeys, but we like it better than at the Lakes. You can roam around and have more going on.

After breakfast, which was really good, we went down stairs and out each side to view the lake. On the south stretches the dock, a little to the south east is the gate and some light towers. At night you can see the light of the City. Visibility is poor today. The fog is almost a mist. The water is a pale whitish green, rather rough. There are two observation towers on the east end of this pier. I hope we can get up there.

The north side looks across a bay to a ridge of shore in the distance which curves to the south.





We should get "shots" today. We know how a Ford feels when it goes through the assembly line. We line up here for clothes, then for physicals, here for "shots", line up for mattresses and blankets. Line for Chow, line for washroom. Line for shots etc. We haven't had anything bad yet. We had to stop a minute ago to swab the deck. There isn't much work yet. I stood guard one night from 12 to 4.

I did think I'd suffocate on those electric elevated trains. They are almost air tight. Coming back all 40 men ate their x @ x cigarettes. We breathed smoke for an hour.

Some of the boys stay here for schooling. I don't know just what courses are given.

Just as we were leaving the Lakes, The Chief from I.C. brought in another 120 or so civilians. you never saw so many men. The navy is supposed to go to 500,000 this year and I understand Chicago & the Lakes are making room for one or two hundred thousand.

We saw the worlds largest office building. I counted 60 windows on a row along about half the breadth of it. It must be 30 to 50 stories high. There are a lot of skyscrapers you may glimpse from the electric & street cars.

I feel fine. we all have colds from this dam p atmosphere and such large rooms are drafty.

Sally I wish you would send this to Earl. He can send it home. It isn't too convenient to write, here.

Earl Rings
504 1/2 Van Buren
Topeka, Kansas

greetings to all
Clarence

new address →

Clarence M. Rings #218
Company 8 Section B
Naval Pier Training School
Chicago, Illinois



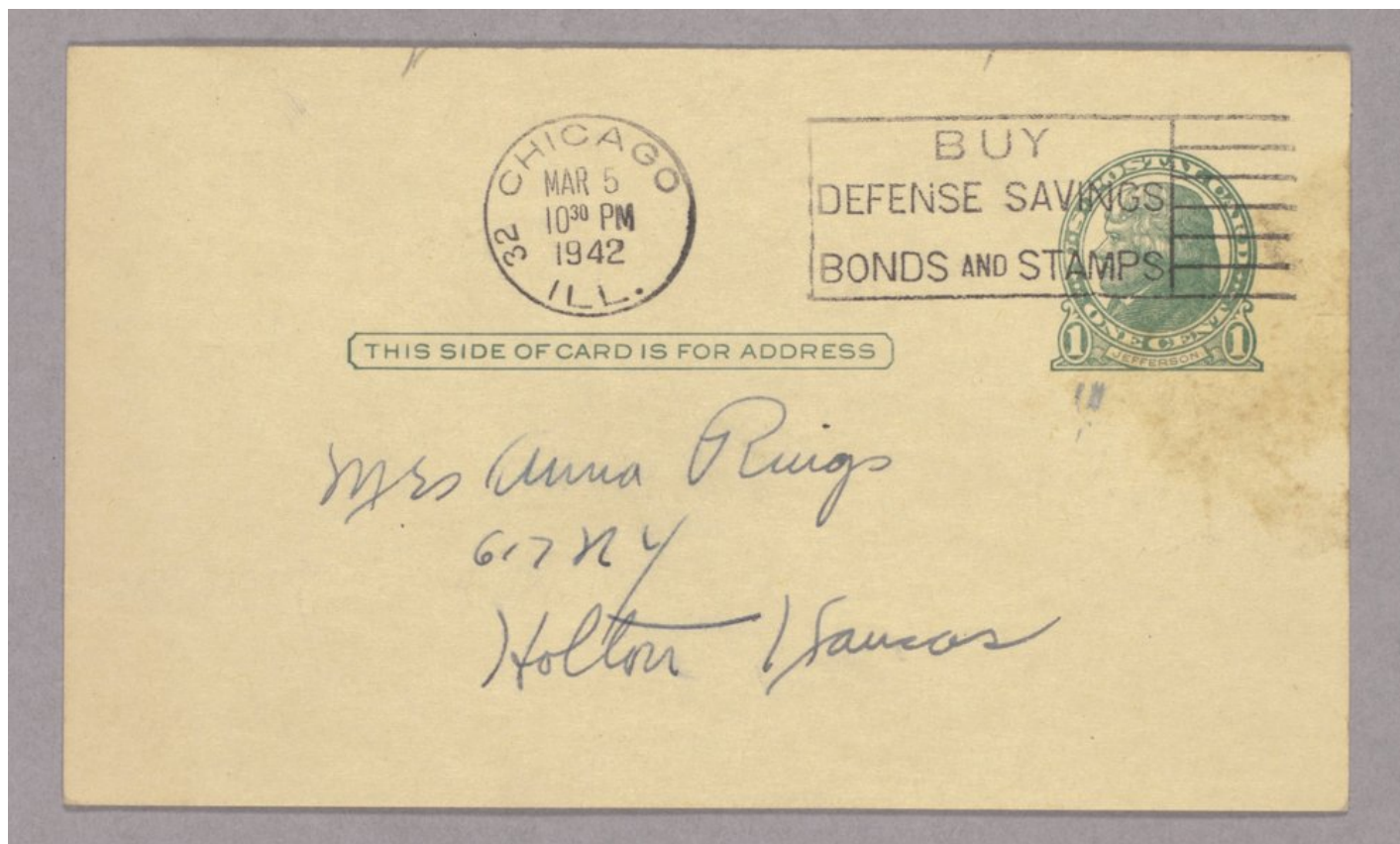
2-5-92

Dear Folks

Have a 7 day leave
Will be in Holton
Sunday the eighth

Be seen you

Clarry





Thursday 2/5/42

Dear Folks

We just had some marching and are waiting at our bunk for our first pay check. We get some now and the rest later. They issued \$2.85 canteen stuff so we get \$2.15 today. You don't need much money here.

Lyman & Jack came out to visit last night. It's nice to see someone you know. I can't go out for 2 weeks yet. Then we may have liberties for one or two evenings. If we are sent to a ship from here there will, likely be no leave. I suppose there might be one after 4 months of school for those who attend. Nothing is very certain. So, I'm not planning on anything.

We took several aptitude tests but have no report on them.

Well, we have to go somewhere, all finish later, ***

That was just a little first aid lecture. We put on our white outfits and sent the blues to be altered. I have a good fitting outfit. I just had to have one pair of pants legs hemmed.

We have now. One mattress and cover. 2 white wool blankets 1 pillow and case. 1 ditty bag for small articles. 1 sea bag. 1 pair ea. shoes, gym shoes, rubbers, 2 uniforms of whites. 2, of blue and a blue dress smiddy with white stripes on cuff & collar. 2 each of hand towel & bath. 1 blue sweater, 1 knit cap. 3 white hats and 1 dress hat. 1 knit gloves. Shoe brushes, scrub brush, hair brush & comb, 1 overcoat or Parade Coat. (about like a blue Mackinaw). 4 sets of under clothes & 1 dog handkerchief.

We get a few more things including a hammock.

To move, the hammock & bedding is lashed into a long roll. The rest goes into the sea bag and ditty bag. You keep out the ditty bag like an over night bag & tie the rest together and ship like a trunk, when traveling. There are some kids that aren't nearly as big as the duffle bags.

Clarence Rings collection

We have a good Chef here (C.P.O. or Chef Petty Officer).
He hollers at the boys and gives them the dickens in a
good natured way.

The only drill we have had is; "right face", "left face", "about face",
"to the rear, march", "Haul Salts", "Forward March", "Company Halt",
"Parade Rest", "Attention", and marching.

yesterday we learned some knots and studied our
Bluejacket manual.

We call this 3x5 between our bunk and our bedroom. It serves
6 fellows. The lockers are at one end the other opens to the aisle.
We have a pretty good lunch in ours. Potatoes, Beef, and
Shuttle & Shuttle.

We stenciled the rest of our clothes last evening. I visited Newling
took a shower & scrubbed some clothes, besides. We have an 8 inch
board above the wash basins that we use to put the clothes on
and scrub with soap & water. The wash room has basins for as
far as you can see; one row on each side & two in the center. Up at
the other end is only a "40 holder".

It looks like another company is leaving, at least part of it.
I guess that's about all for this time.

Adair Gray and a slick boy from Circleville are in
this company.

Belong till later

Clarence

Co. 8B - 218
Navy Pier
Chicago, Illinois

17824
B. 14 we go for our
second shot.

↑
This is one of the ways you
sign your pay check



U. S. NAVAL TRAINING SCHOOL
NAVY PIER, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Mary, I could use a mimeograph machine. I write so much the sound thing and can't remember whom I've told what. I'll send a Round Robin to the girls.

Tell Bob to send Jack a card occasionally. He needn't take much time. Just tell of little of what he is doing. 455 Arcturus, N.Y., N.Y. Postmaster. Jack says the first months are the hardest.

We all go to services each Sunday. They are held for Catholics, Protestants, Jewish, and Christian Science. We have good Chaplains. We are now having choir from town here. The Chicago Philharmonic choir came out last week. It wasn't a big group, but, pretty good. They sang about six numbers. We like the services.

Did any one get the little radio? If so what was the charge or was it fixed? Some of the boys have them here.

Holtz would miss the movies if they should leave. I hope one will stay.

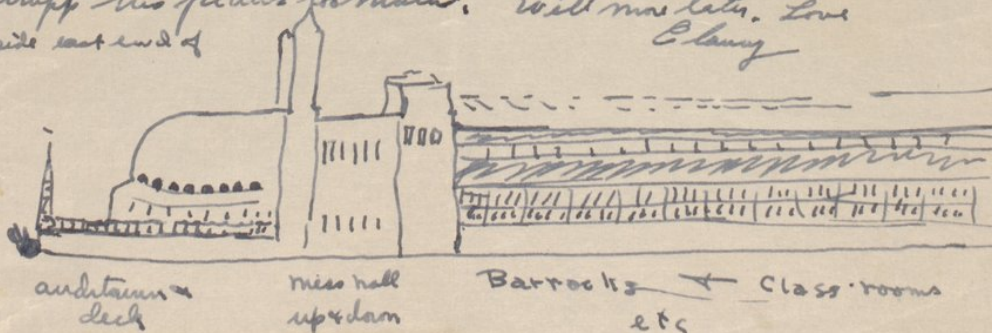
Carol here is a ship parked by a house. Some sailors live on them.



The lights of town were a good view last night. We went to the end of the pier to see "Tom, Dick & Harry". That is the only place you can get on the water front. Before sunset the water was very blue with snow covered ice floating in chunks. It would have made a fine color picture. That was the other sunny day I've seen here.

Bob is doing all right it appears. Hope the war doesn't interrupt his plans for much. Well now later. Love
Clarence

North side east end of
Pier.



Dear Chuck & Sally, Sally Jo,

I had a letter returned from you, I put it 4/8th that. There wasn't anything of particular interest in it.

This second shot is making the arm pretty sore. Some of the fellows were laid up last nite. We will be pretty good tomorrow.

Congratulations on the raise. I hope they can steadily advance you there.

That seems like a nice environment. The equipment is new and clean and the surroundings are pleasant.

It is quite a contrast to the mob and dirt down town.

Sally Jo is growing a lot. She is a cute kid.

We are getting lots to eat and haven't had much to do yet.

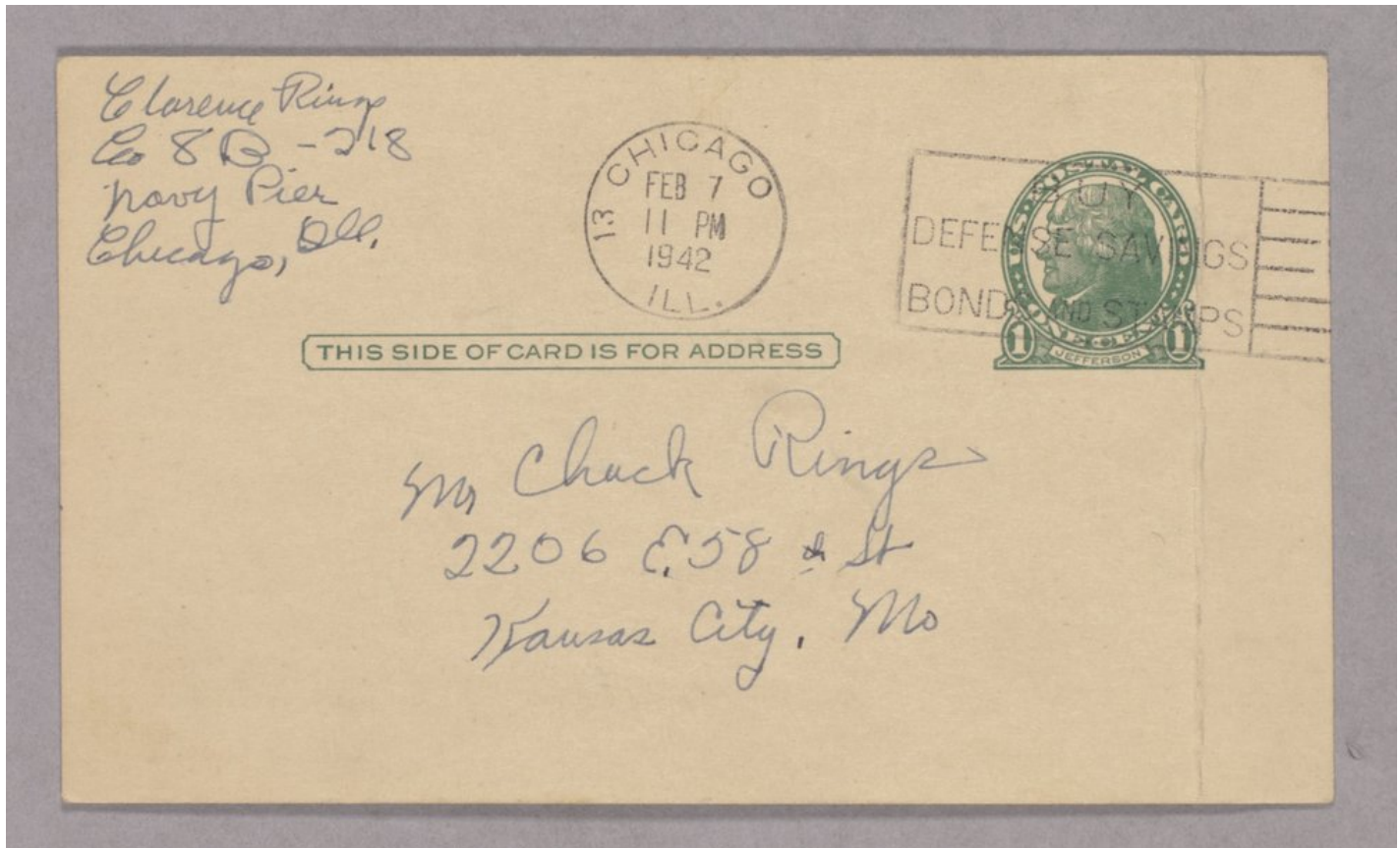
I rather expect to go to mechanics school here. The course takes 4 months.

Syman Newlin & Jack visited me Tuesday. Syman is getting fleshy. They are looking fine.

Red's folks are coming to Chicago, I understand.

Good bye for now. I thank
Clarence

Clarence Rings collection





U. S. NAVAL TRAINING SCHOOL
NAVY PIER, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Wednesday 2/11/42
Company 8B

Dear James

Glad to hear that you are getting along. Thanks a lot for the spending money. We have everything furnished, except toilet articles and writing material. Somehow, everyone here is crazy for sweets, so we consume a lot of candy bars, at times.

Chicago had a 4" snow. Afterwards the air was the quietest I've noticed here. The slush froze on the lake a long ways out. We noticed seagulls near the dock; the first time we had seen them standing. Usually they are on the wing. There had a hunk of meat, they were picking at. They make a sound like a chickadee or meadow lark. When they take off they make a rum like an airplane.

The drill yesterday was a good work out. We also did exercises with the pieces. They should develop the physique. The marching, on slick packed snow, looked like a bunch of clucks. It was nice out, though, are there signs of spring, inland?

I ran this Illinois farm land looks good. The weather is rather dreary, but the land is just slightly rolling. Creeks & rivers have very shallow banks and are very winding. From high ground to low is usually $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 mile slope. We saw large dairy barns from the train. Also much corn ground where check row systems are used.

I got a letter from Jack Pettie. He's O.K. I think he liked the Idaho better than the Arcturus. Our manual has pictures of both.

yesterday was about a regular schedule. We have Rerills at 5:30. I shave and clean up in the morning. Some of us have to sweep & scrub our quarters at this time. anywhere from 6:30 to 7:30 we have chow. 8:30 is muster and drill begins. We get 2 or 3 hours. We come back at 1000 or 1100 and study mammals and have chow from 1130 to 1330. (1:30) This is free time. at 1330 is more drill or whatever and the rest of the time till 16:30 is study. Chow usually comes around 1700 (5:00) The evening is free for writing movies, games, showers, Laundry, etc. The visiting rule has been changed. Only parents can visit, now and that is just in the week preceding departure.

Leave & Liberty is taken from some Companies. I don't know about ours. It all makes little difference to me. Jack Hettles address is ²¹³Arcturum, New York, N.Y.; if you want to send him a card sometime.

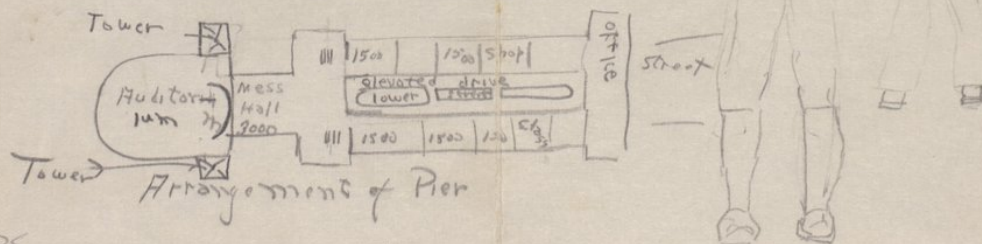
It was still snowing at lunch time. Its pretty deep.

Here is our dress blue uniform. Until our detention period is over we wear leggings and a guard hat which is or stockung cap.

Write again when you can. Were getting along O.K. but its always nice to get mail.

Tell Geneva I want to see some of her writing.

Love Clarence



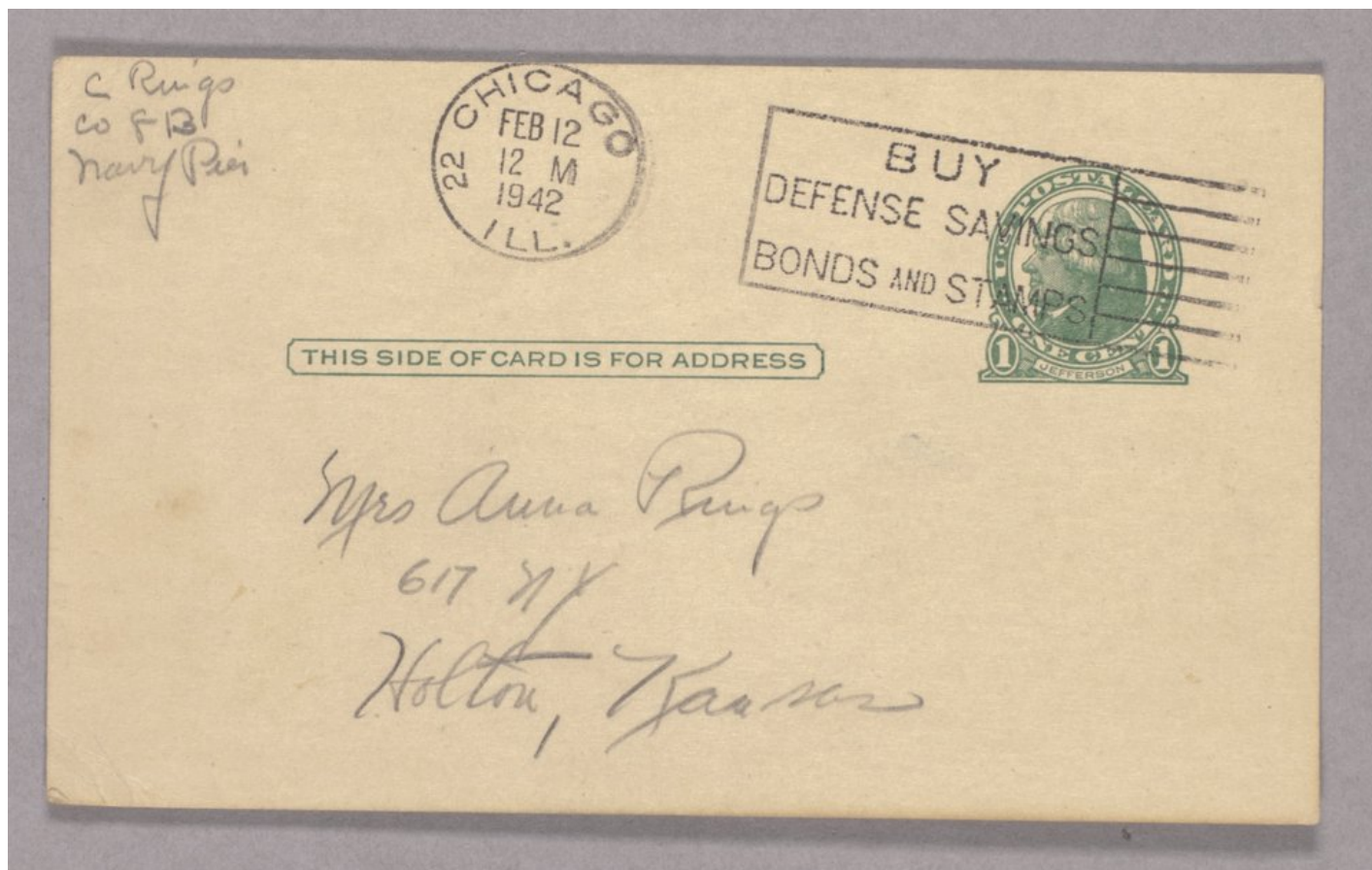
P.S.
How's your Hog, Ivan
Garden planning sounds good, too.

2/11/42 2000 (8:09)

Dear Folks,

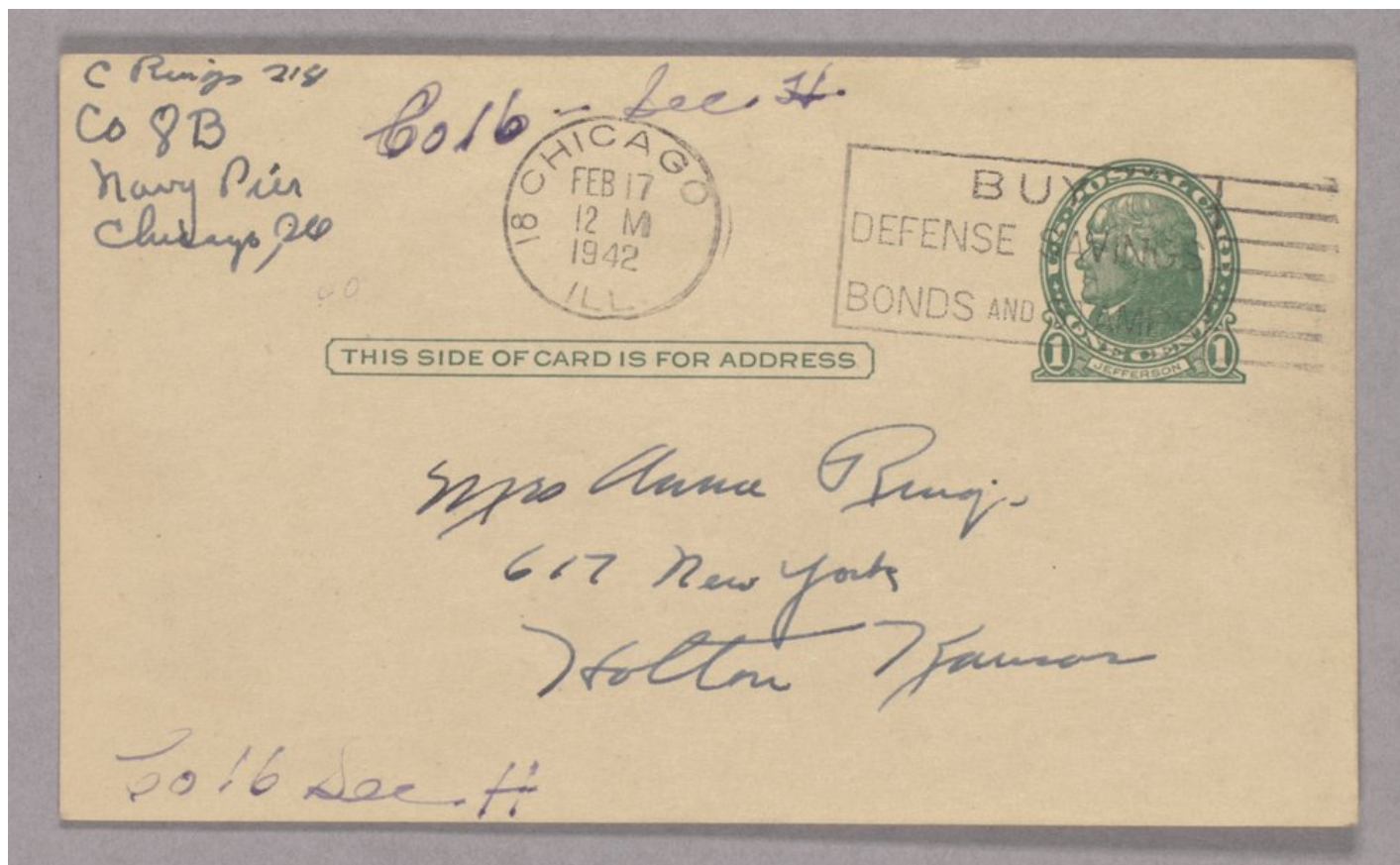
How is every one? Can Janet walk?
 Carol there is a small tractor here
 that pulls little flat cars up and down
 the hill. you would like it. But if you
 had one of our mugs, you offed would
 not get cold. They are large, thick and
 without handles. It has been still and
 nice since the snow. It covers the lake
 for a long ways so we don't have raw
 winds. Only at times can we get a clear
 view of Chi. It's large buildings go
 almost to the horizon north and the
 shore and town can be seen 10 or 15
 miles to the south on South Shore. It
 is always different. Esther are you getting
 any valentines? How is the theatre? We can't
 hear well in ours. Do you feel any older, mom?
 Mary, you want to write to Evelyn. You would
 like to see this home and baby. Kathleen is
 very cute. Sally Jo is a fine baby, too, and
 good. you might send my long harp and
 a small one. They should have quite a lot
 of paper wrapped around them. I sold one,
 Heard from Jack H and June. Did washing
 this afternoon. Matt covers P. slip, D. bag.
 Still having dull & semaphor study
 get shots (back) tomorrow. Can have visitors
 after Saturday. Still think likely will go to
 our MM school. Good bye till later. Clarence

Clarence Rings collection



2-16-42
Dear Folks,
got a nice letter from Ellen this morn.
What is the name of the people Hamilton
stay with. We have phone booths in the
basement & can call anywhere. I phoned
Newline the first Sunday here. I started
to call Nell & and but Chy Hgt costs
30¢.
at the Canteen & mess hall the waiter
is always right. a Canteen is a cage
20 x 40 alike on each side where two lines
form. Soap, candy, toilet stuff, writing material
cigarettes, money holders, lighters, skates,
wooden slippers, pens, pencils, stamps, magazines
are the main things sold. It is open at
noon & evening. Candy is sold at certain hours.
Had a good workout in Auditorium this A.M.
I'm listed to stay here for H.M.M. school. We
got 1330 to see about it. We get another
five today. All shots taken. Last was mild.
Saw "Glamour Boy" Sat eve. There every one got
some good home made cake. We get cake here
but it isn't always fluffy. Esther, I take
a small batch of fudge. you have to give
most of it away there. No restriction
in mail here. On Coast & on ship, censors.
May, have chunks of cement for you. No beach.
Time to go. More later
Clarence.

Clarence Rings collection





Company 164

Wednesday, 2/18/42

U. S. NAVAL TRAINING SCHOOL
NAVY PIER, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Dear Folks

Well, here is a new address. The old one will serve all right, too.

Some of us got out of "boot camp" yesterday and can go without leggings. Those from our company who will be ATMs and ATMs will stay here to go to school. Co 16 is for machinists. I don't know if we will change companies again or not. Others who will go to school went back to the "Lakes". The rest of the Co. are waiting to be shipped to sea duty. They are guards now.

We just had a swell chow: Roast pork rack, potatoes, gravy, peas, salad, soup, Cherry pie, ice cream & coffee. Five or six days a week the fare is pretty good. A few chows are not much to brag about.

I got a card from a bunch of Lorman kids yesterday, and one from Brownie this morning.

We still don't do a lot. We cleaned the quarters this morning. Soon, I expect they will have us lined out.

We might get liberty most any time. Our school will start in March. Then we will have liberty, I understand. Some of the fellows are anxious to get out. I'm pretty well satisfied. Of course it will be nice to get around some.

Keep the change here from my insurance for postage and stuff I may want later.

I waited a half hour for a phone booth to call newbies but they were out. I talked to Jack about 10 days ago. They're OK.

I hope Geneva is getting all right. The kids ought to have some good times this summer. I'll bet the walkers feel pretty proud of themselves. Geneva Lee James, I read what you wrote about Charles. He's pretty smart, huh?

Clarence Rings collection

