

June '44

Dear Joe and James,

I've never written to you two specifically. I assume that pop or mom have read you the letters I've written. This one here is a different one though. It's sort of a last will and testament. I hate to think what would happen if mom were to get her hands on it. Hopefully, you'll never read this.

To my loving older brother Joe, I give my.... No, it's not that kind of will. It's the opposite kind. I'm not giving away my possessions. I'm promising something. I'm not sure how I start.

The camps where we learned everything were perfect for creating a baseball league. Picture this. There were hundreds of guys, all in perfect fighting shape, with nothing to do during any free time. Mind you, we didn't have a lot of time to ourselves. We were granted some free time most evenings and a little on Sundays. There were some days when we had time, but we were all dead tired because our Drill Sergeant ran us ragged.

During chow one day, I brought up the idea of playing some ball. Quite a few jumped right in and loved the idea and that's how our own league formed. The only problem was that nobody had a glove or a ball or even a bat. I took the idea to the chain of command and they loved it. Two or three weeks later, we had a crate of G.I. baseball gloves, balls, bats, and bases. We had enough for one team. At the end of the inning, the defense took off their gloves and either set them down on the grass or handed to the other team as we switched.

I had a number of great players in my platoon and we won most of the time. What made it so great was that we were able to forget things for a little while. The competition was fierce, but no one was worried about becoming a gold star. There was one game where a CO had to be called in to ump the game. He had a lot of fun with that title, so much that he joined up and served as the ump for all of the games. We all enjoyed his efforts because it was the only time when we could argue with his call and not get into a heap of trouble.

I tell you two this not to brag about what I did. The game is truly something that makes us who we are. There are a few in my squad and platoon that care little about the sport. They're

book types. Most, however, can name several players on their favorite team. We often get into heated conversations about who has the better team. Now mind you that we rarely get up to date news. So most of our arguments are based on history and not this current season. From what I know, the Sox don't have much to talk about this season.

Think about baseball for a moment. When you go to Comiskey, what happens? You forget about life for awhile and you enjoy the game. The game brings us all together regardless of creed. I hear all sorts of whoppers about Dagos and Jews and Krauts and Polacks during chow, but none of that is on the field. Everyone is judged by their passion about and ability to play baseball. The same thing happens at a Sox game.

This got me thinking that our neighborhood could use a little something like this. We have enough able bodied men on our block who could make up a team. What if we were to go to the surrounding blocks and get them to create some teams too? We'd have to make sure the mom's come out to cheer. We'd need everyone to come out to forget about the war. Everyone can play regardless of color or creed.

This could be our chance to stop being known as the Cholera capital of Chicago. Instead, we would be known as the baseball town where everyone is encouraged to live life. I hope this doesn't sound too hokey. Everything I do is about death. I need a little life to keep me moving.

This is my manifesto. Take it or leave it. When I get back, we're going to start a neighborhood league and I'll be the commissioner. It's going to be hard to do, but I'm going to bring home whatever baseball loot I can find over here. It will be my way of remembering you two, the game I love so much, and the starting supplies for our league.

I miss you guys a lot. Stay smart. Work hard.

Your loving little brother,

David