

John H. Daughtridge
2431 NW 41st Street, Apt. 5312
Gainesville FL 32606

December 20, 1998

Mr. John Hackney, Jr.
Box 998
Wilson NC 27894-0998

Dear John:

What a letter—what a memory—and what a thrill you gave me with a copy of your war diary to Stephen Ambrose. Incidentally, I have not read *Citizen Soldiers*, but being a bookaholic, I have read about it and know how much Ambrose must have appreciated your letter.

I am doubly grateful to you for enclosing the old family pictures and a copy of Mary Harvey's letter which complimented yours. It so happens that the only Hackneys that I have had recent contact with (by mail) are Mary Harvey and her sister Hack Thigpen, so I am taking the liberty of sending Mary Harvey a copy of this. As for Hack, we have never forgotten the warmth of the marvelous reception we received at the reunion she had on September 17, 1988, in spite of the fact that we were the "out-law" Daughtridges instead of the "in-law" Hackneys.

Now about the pictures which I cherish particularly since I have never seen them and have nothing even close to them. I assume you have your own copies and intended that I keep these. If this is correct, I would like to burden you for some more specifics concerning them. Bear in mind that I left the area—and the Hackney family—in 1925, when I was 15—first, to college in Charleston, SC (The Citadel), and then immediately upon graduation, to work with DuPont at a plant in Charleston, WV. I mention this so you will forgive some of my lack of knowledge about the pictures. First, am I correct that the single person picture is young Grandmother Hackney? As for the group pictures, I certainly recognize Grandfather Hackney with Grandmother and Ella and Lula in the front row. Also, I can pick out my mother and father, Tom, Jim, and Bess for sure. The others I need help to identify. The other group picture is a blank for me, except Jim and Bess—perhaps the little girl is Lula? In spite of my lack of recognition, I have a vivid memory of my last attendance at one of Grandmother's famous Thanksgiving dinners—there were about 75 present and there had never been a death in the family.

Now as for the war years—you may wonder since I graduated from The Citadel in 1930 at age 19, why I wasn't in it. Believe me, I tried to get into the Army before I was lucky enough to land a job with DuPont, but in 1930—during the Great Depression—the Army wasn't adding anyone, particularly 2nd Lieutenants. When the Japs hit Pearl Harbor 12-7-

41 I had eleven years' experience with DuPont (five on shift work in the West Virginia plant and six at headquarters in Wilmington, Delaware), and I had lost my commission by not going to summer military camps, and I had a high draft number. Furthermore, had I been called, DuPont would have gotten me deferred because of my war work with them. The West Virginia plant I spent five years at was one of only two synthetic ammonia plants (raw material to produce all gun powder and most explosives) in the US. Incidentally, the third plant was also built by DuPont at Parkersburg, WV and started operation on Pearl Harbor day--how's that for timing! Of course, all ammonia was controlled by the War Production Board in Washington, where I spent about as much time as in Wilmington, Delaware.

Another wartime anecdote that kept me out of the service concerns radar, which you mentioned. Before it spotted the Japs coming into Pearl Harbor, it won the Battle of Britain, which perhaps saved us all. You may not know that radar was a British secret invention that was made possible by also discovering how to make polyethylene--the very necessary plastic so common today--that was the insulation on all radar wire. Without polyethylene and its unique electrical characteristics there would have been no radar, and without radar Goering's (Hitler's) bombers would probably have eliminated Britain before we ever got in the war. Britain licensed DuPont and Union Carbide to make polyethylene and both plants were located near Charleston, WV. There were only eight cable companies in the US who could make polyethylene insulated wire for radar, and I was responsible for working with them to be sure that our product was satisfactory for their use. So on two counts--ammonia and polyethylene--I feel that I did my share--but not like you did--offering your life.

As for our present--Eunice and I moved into a retirement home 2 3/4 years ago about 2 miles from Lee. We are very comfortably located with everything provided, even toilet paper. We had many foreign travels for about fifteen years after I retired in January, 1970 with more than forty years with DuPont. Like Anne I am now limited with walking, having had both hips replaced with titanium 5-6 years ago. I didn't break anything--just wore out with arthritis. At our ages we consider ourselves lucky.

Certainly I remember Lou and Tom Bridgers and your visit to Wilmington and Winterthur. Give Lou my best! Also, in reference to your daughter in Hendersonville, we know it well, having spent time and played golf at Wainsville Country Club many times.

When I started this it was just to be a short thank-you note, but then I got carried away with the thought that you might like to know about a little bit of the home side of the war.

With Love to All,

Jack