

SARGENTRIVIA

Vol. I

192 Bishop St., New Haven 11, Conn. November 17, 1943

No. 12

Ye editors were pleased to receive a letter, containing news of interest to the family, addressed to Sargentrivia, the first so addressed. It is hoped that many will develop the habit of sending to the editors items of news and reports of activities of members of the family. Ziegler Sargent, editor; Agnes W.B. Sargent, assistant editor.

Colonel Theodore Babbitt wrote from Tangier, North Africa, on October 6th: "I've been traveling again. I went off Saturday noon to see Fez and came back via Casablanca where I had business with the Commanding Officer, Atlantic Base Section. We arrived in time to get a brief view of Fez before dark, and had an Arab dinner at the house in the old city occupied by the Office of Economic Services. We were the only guests and got the works as far as food and entertainment went. The dinner consisted of three courses of chicken, plus the usual soup first and honey-cakes and fruit afterwards, and then the household put on a bit of singing and dancing for us. It was more characterized by enthusiasm than skill, but everyone was happy. Next morning we picked up our guide, a Moor who was born in Fez, but who has lived and traveled all over the world, including five years in Boston, and he took us through the old town. I now feel that any other Arab town will be a bit of an antiolimax as Fez is the real thing. It is very old in the first place and owes its size and importance to the fact that it is built right on three rivers, none of which dries up in summer. It is literally true that you are never out of the sound of running water in Fez. There are fountains on every corner, if you can call them corners when there isn't a right angle in the place and few straight stretches of more than fifty yards, and every house of any size has a couple of fountains in the courtyards and that makes all the difference in the world to a country and for a people whose main occupation in summer is water.. It also makes the city easier to keep clean and there are fewer of those sharp acrid smells that you associate with other Kasbahs, Medinas, or whatever they call the native quarters. Our guide took us all through the various "souks" or "zoocs" (depending whether you speak French or Spanish.) The street where they sell spices is the most wonderful of all. The smell of peppers, saffron cinnamon and lots of others I don't even know by name, just picks you up and carries you along with no conscious effort. We went to the house of a cousin of the guide's for lunch. It was really marvelous and I gather it is one of the show places of Fez. The lunch was strictly kosher and again consisted of three chicken courses plus the fixin's. You know, though it sounds monotonous, it's really very interesting to see what different things can be done with chicken. One course is boiled, another sort of baked and the other roasted. We ended up with mint tea and then more or less ran as I had to get to Casablanca. We didn't find the C. O.'s house until after eight and then found that he had put us up at the official guest villa. That is the most Hollywood creation you ever saw off the screen. The German Armistice Commission had requisitioned it before the landings and they got out in such a hurry that the closets were still full of wonderful brass bound uniforms. On the way home I made very good time all the way to the Spanish border, but from there on things happened. I had a puncture which I had to change myself, being alone, and although I had pulled up in the middle of a long straight stretch through utterly desolate and uninhabited country, by the time I had the old wheel off, I looked around and saw a solemn circle of Moors of all ages and sizes looking on. They always do that, and I can't figure out where they come from. They had no comment to offer, nor did the performance seem to amuse or depress them. They just rose up from behind bushes and came and stood. After that my speed was cut down by Spanish roads and by herds of assorted beasts, because these people seem to run mixed bunches of sheep, goats, cows and donkeys, mules and horses all along the roads at all times of day. A few miles out of Tangier I had to give the right of road to five camels. There is a new Spanish Counsel in town, who has just come from a four years' tour of duty in Cologne. His tales of the bombardments are really terrific. He is a good authority because he has seen the development from the first R.A.F. raids with 500 pounders and little incendiaries, to the present U.S. block-busters, and all from the receiving end. The Italian declaration of war on Germany ought to clear up a few local questions, although it will make a few more even muddier than they were before. We have both kinds of Italians here you see, and the Fascists are a bit turbulent from time to time, although they have so far confined most of their attentions to members of their own colony."

Dorothy Sargent Wiser's birthday anniversary was on November 4th. We hope she had a singing telegram.

Aunt Helen Sargent celebrated (quietly, we are told) her 83d birthday on November 5th. Many happy returns of the day. For the past three years she has been living in a small apartment. Her address is Mrs. Edward R. Sargent, 671 Orange St., New Haven 11, Conn.

Captain Murray Sargent, Jr., celebrated his 30th birthday on November 12th. Many happy returns.

Daisy Sargent Fisher celebrated her 20th birthday on November 13th. Details of the celebration have not reached ye editors, who wish her many happy returns of the day.

Rebecca Jackson Sargent celebrated her 25th birthday on November 15th. Ye editors wager that Jimmy, her husband, who is on the move under army orders, sent her a singing telegram if it was possible to do so.

Private (first class) John N. Deming, who changed his address about November 1st to 1st Fighter Command Recognition School, 327th Fighter Group, Army Air Base, Richmond, Va., wrote ye editors on November 7th: "Your copy of Sargentivia arrived yesterday, and as usual I read it with much enthusiasm. You seem to have an uncanny sense about sending the paper to just the right place. I thought I'd write you to tell you about the work I am doing, because I think that it will be of interest to those in the service. Having been with the Coast Guard for the last seven months, I hardly expected to be here in Richmond with the Air Corps. But while on furlough I got a wire to report back to camp. There they couldn't give me any information other than my ticket to Richmond and my orders, which didn't tell me a thing other than when to report. It wasn't until I reported for class last Monday that I was told I was attending an instructors school for the teaching of Recognition. The whole idea behind the school is that because of lack of a knowledge of recognition too many lives and too much equipment have been lost, and the stories which are told to prove this point are unbelievable. The school is attended both by officers and enlisted men of the ground forces as well as the air corps. Our job is to train men in the Renshaw method of recognition which is recognition by form rather than detail. To improve our vision we have to recognize planes, tanks and ships - the greatest speed being 1 second for ships and 1/100 of a second for planes. So you can see that if we blink we don't see the slide at all. It is really amazing how your eye becomes trained and is able to take in the form of the object in that short time. Of course some planes are harder to recognize than others, but by knowing the recognition points on each we can name them. I believe that now when pilots are trained they get many hours of recognition. It's a fairly new idea and those who can be trained in this country are at a great advantage to those who have had to learn it the hard way in actual combat. The work is interesting, but at the same time it keeps us jumping and at the books, for we have to know the history, background and general description of ships, planes, and tanks & armored vehicles. I haven't been to Richmond yet, but I'll have to get in and go on a cook's tour and see the sights. Thanks again for being so faithful in sending Sargentivia - it's really swell."

John Sargent will celebrate his birthday on November 19th. We wonder if it will resemble his twelfth, described by his father in a letter written on November 20, 1884: "John had a birthday dinner party yesterday. On the evening previous he had Arthur Foote in his room and they were having grave consideration of the subject of the Menu for the Birthday supper. Lizzie had promised John the supper and he was to make up the bill-of-fare. It was to be a family supper. After a while the meeting was ended and John told Laura, confidentially, what the extras would be - viz: Baked beans, chocolate cake and chocolate for drink. John's guests were Arthur Foote and the Smith boy who was at Goshen. Quite a party of the younger members of the family joined in blindman's-bluff after supper, and the birthday party was quite a happy one."

Colonel Theodore Babbitt was recently decorated in absentia as an Officer of the Order of Military Merit by the Brazilian Minister of War, acting for the Brazilian government. Peggy wired the news to her sons in Pomfret School, one of whom told the headmaster about it, and also told him that "Daddy has moved, but I don't know where, because I could not find Absentia on any map."

The first Sargent to graduate from Yale was the Rev. John Sergeant, Yale 1729, missionary to the Indians in Western Massachusetts. He, however, was not of our Sargent line, but was a grandson of the immigrant Jonathan Sergeant, who, curiously enough, took the oath in New Haven in 1644 and settled in Branford, later moving to Newark, N.J. The first of our family was John Sergeant, Yale 1793, a lawyer of Windsor, Conn., not a very near relative (No. 262 in the "Sargent Genealogy.") The first of our branch to graduate was Dr. Henry Sargent, Yale 1841, of Worcester, Mass, son of Colonel Henry Sargent of Leicester, elder brother of Joseph Denny Sargent. (The simplified spelling of our name as we know it was not in general use in the eighteenth century.)

Aviation Cadet Lawton G. Sargent, Jr., wrote November 5th: "Well, here I am at Basic at Bush Field. We got in last night after the strangest bus ride I've ever had. Our bus left Camden at 10:00 and didn't get here until 7:00 P.M.! It broke down 3 times and we visited every town on the way down till there were cadets scattered all over the country side. Supposedly it was a four hour trip! Don't travel by bus. Well, Primary, its learning, experiences, merits, and pleasures is behind us. I sure did enjoy it and know I learned a great deal. We had our laughs and sorrows, lost friends and made new ones; and I guess we're ready to start Basic. We finished flying the PT last Saturday when I had my front seat ride to get used to the change. (Here we fly front seat solo.) I sure do hate to lose my last instructor (ol' D.F.) as he was really tops and largely responsible for my advance. We had quite a ride Sat. as he put me on my own and told me to do what I wanted even if I knocked the hell out of him! He tried to mess me up on a partial outside loop, so I put him in an inverted spin and then we did acrobatics, whifferdills, cabon eights and everything else all over the sky. He did some snap rolls and we finally came down well beat out. Saturday night we went to a barn dance. ... It was quite an evening and about everyone was celebrating. Then Monday we had our parade, banquet, and dance and ended things up. We sure hated to say good bye to Mrs. Glover, as she certainly was nice to us and we did a great deal of eating and cooking at her house on weekends. But, as I say, that is now behind us and basic and its troubles ahead. This place looks like it's going to be tops, but hard. Of course I don't know much about it yet, but so far so good; it's even smaller than Camden. The food is cafeteria style and excellent; and being civilian run makes up for about everything. Instruction should be the best available as these men have been flying BT's for some time. You can now really tell you're at a flying field because the constant roar is always around. As the BT's use controllable props, the change from low to high pitch after take off really makes a din. Here we do more cross country flying, some acrobatics, formation flying, night flying and still more types to make us more proficient. The upper class started night flying last night. This means they fly till 2:00 A.M. ... I can imagine night flying and instrument flying will be quite interesting—as well as exciting. When you get to basic you really start flying a more complicated plane—as well as a more powerful and faster one. Here we must worry over prop control, changing gas tanks, flaps, lights, and numerous other things that fit into the pattern of flying. We are about 12 miles from Augusta—as for getting to Macon (130 mi.) it looks doubtful; you have to be married to get overnight passes, and then the time element figures in as I don't see how I could ever get there! Then, too, you are likely to fly 7 days a week most any time. ..." His address is A/C Lawton G. Sargent, Jr., Sq. 4, Cl. 44C, Army Air Forces Basic Flying School, Georgia-Aero-Tech, Bush Field, Augusta, Ga.

Private John M. Sargent's new address is Company 11, Barracks 20, Armory, University of Illinois, Champaign, Ill. His company was shifted from Syracuse, N.Y. about November 1st. Before leaving he had a dinner meeting with Colonel Kerry and Sylvia Skerrett after the Colgate-Cornell football game.

First Lieutenant James C. Sargent of the Army Air Corps has recently gone overseas, destination unknown. His address is A.P.O. 12574, C/o Postmaster, San Francisco, Calif.

Teddy Babbitt has recently become a naval aviation cadet at the Navy Flight Preparatory School at Williamstown. His address is Aviation Cadet Theodore F. Babbitt, U.S.N.R., Battalion XI, Platoon 4, U.S.N.F.P.S., Williamstown, Mass.

In the Sargent family the name Joseph has been passed down from father to son for nine generations: Joseph Sargent (1663-1717), Joseph Sargent (1690-1760), Joseph Sargent (1716-1802), Joseph Sargent (1757-1787), Joseph Denny Sargent (1787-1849), Joseph Bradford Sargent (1822-1907), Joseph Denny Sargent (1860-1936), Joseph Weir Sargent and Joseph Weir Sargent, Jr.

Joseph Bradford Sargent was first elected Mayor of New Haven in November 1890 for a two-year term beginning January 1, 1891. It should be noted that those were the horse and buggy days. The railroads had done very little to eliminate grade crossings. The mayor-elect was determined to reduce the high toll of accidents at the numerous grade crossings in the growing city. In his old letter book is a copy of the following letter which he wrote on December 31, 1890, to the president of the N.Y., N.H. & H.R.R.: "The acceptance of a free pass for the coming year upon the railroads of your company, between stations in Connecticut, would not quite comport with my ideas of the proper personal independence, on my part, in the relations and possible future negotiations between your company and the city of New Haven, by its Mayor, although I am aware that it is customary to accept. Therefore I most respectfully return the pass, with thanks for the courtesy."

Our ancestor, Thomas Denny, the second of the eight children of Daniel Denny, the immigrant, was born March 19, 1725. Two of his sisters were married to Sargents. He was married twice. A son by his first wife died in infancy soon after her death. His second marriage was to a widow, Mrs. Mary (Chaplin) Storrs of Pomfret, Conn., on October 21, 1755. Two of their three children were married to Sargents, Mary (our ancestor) marrying Joseph Sargent, father of Joseph Denny Sargent. He lived in Leicester, Mass., on the farm where his father had first settled, rose to be colonel of the militia, was town clerk in 1772 and a selectman 1765-1766 and 1769-1772. He represented the town in the Massachusetts General Court for the five years next previous to his death and was a member of the first Provincial Congress which met at Concord October 11, 1774. Soon after its convening, illness caused him to return to his home, where he died October 23, 1774, at the age of 49. The increasing difficulties with the mother country caused the inhabitants of the town of Leicester and districts of Spencer and Paxton to give their representative in the General Assembly written instructions. The first of such written instructions were apparently voted in town meeting October 17, 1765, and Thomas Denny was elected one of the three Leicester members of the committee which drew up the instructions to Captain John Brown, the representative. On May 19, 1773, after electing Thomas Denny representative, they gave him instructions of which the following is the first paragraph: "You have, for several years past, successively received the almost unanimous voice of us, your constituents, to represent us in the Great and General Court, or Assembly, of this Province. And it is because we have found you faithful in our service, willing to receive our instructions, and gladly to execute our commands, that we have now given you a fresh testimony of the confidence we repose in you by once more electing you our representative; whereby we have intrusted you with the preservation of all our rights and privileges, which we hold as dear as our lives." (Washburn's "History of Leicester" contains the full text, also those of other years.) Mrs. Thomas Denny was born June 13, 1722, living until December 10, 1810, and was a daughter of Benjamin and Tamison (Walden) Chaplin, who owned a large tract of land in the north-east part of Mansfield now the town of Chaplin in Windham County, Connecticut.

The card illustrated below was printed on the back of a playing card (the five of spades), the invitation being intended for Joseph Denny Sargent, great grandfather of ye editor's generation.

