

In the midst of the Great Depression President Roosevelt introduced a series of programs referred to as the New Deal. The programs were designed to provide relief for the unemployed and poor, reform of the financial system, and recovery of the economy. One of these programs was the Civilian Conservation Corps, or CCC.



It was through the CCC that Oscar, Arthur's younger brother, found work with Company 879 in 1937. The Company was stationed in Uvalde, Texas. Their job was to develop land that would become a state park. They laid out roads and trails, cleared camping and picnic areas, and constructed park buildings among other things. In 1941 the development would be opened as Garner State Park.

Oscar remained working with the CCC until he enlisted in the U.S. Army in October of 1940; he was a young man of 21 years. Joe had enlisted a month earlier and Arthur enlisted in November 1940. Arthur and Oscar were assigned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment stationed at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. Joe was with the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, 8<sup>th</sup> Engineers at Fort Bliss in El Paso.

In the military one meets people from all over the country. This can be both exciting and intimidating and Oscar was a timid young man. He would write to brother Charles who had moved his family to Brackettville where he worked in a grocery store.....

San Antonio, Texas                      June 3, 1941

Dear brother Charles, Glad to have heard from you. May God give you better wages so that you can save to support your lovely family when they grow up to go to school. I hope you like your job and stay until you wish. A grocery store is a good place to work.

I have been writing a letter to every one of my sisters and brothers, especially Mother every week. I like to know how you all are for it still might be a long time till I see you and all. I am sending half my pay home to help Edward with the car. I don't use the pay and I want Mother to have a good time and my younger brother too.

This month I started sending \$15. I had been sending \$5 to \$10 and presents. I have left only \$3 or \$4 to go places for a month; not enough for a soldier. The rest of the money is for Company bills (dry cleaners, barber, articles and laundry). We have to be clean and shaved with a nice looking military haircut always. Co. Commander has two big eyes to look at you every time of the day. So you see what I have of enjoyment is nothing. Always thinking what time war starts or when I might go out what job am I going to take?

I am going for the sixth time on maneuvers and for the second time to Brownwood. A long, slow, weary travel and sometimes fast. I like to be a soldier but if I had a better pay. I only get \$30 as in the CCC's. I have worked for only \$30 since I began and they are not called work but government projects. It isn't hard nor is it a lazy one either; but what I am thinking is "what am I going to do when I go to civilian life" if I don't have a misfortune. Please brother pray for me for I am not afraid in the army but in civilian life I have to help Mother and I want to have a happy life, but how? A \$30 man cannot do a good living.

I think I have to break my heart for I can't find a girl I love for a good friend to be a future wife. This world is hard to take now. I don't know; but since I went out of school which I could have finished if someone helped me but no one had even enough for themselves. So I decided to go and see what world I had to take. I have been out of home and have sent Mother but very little money and I am the same ignorant one.

I go to big city spots in San Antonio only twice a month sometimes never;

*but New Yorkers take me and they learn every time they take me that I don't know good English, which if we had thought of talking it every time, even among ourselves, we would know it better. That's another obstacle that stands on my path of life until I will be old and of no count, that I might have learned a little English. I don't have even the accent. I was going to school but on account of war we go every month on maneuvers and just can't pay the tuition. I think I just have to wait and be ignorant.*

*I still have much to write. I might go home and see you in July, but I am never sure. War! War!*

*Best wishes and love, your brother Oscar*



The 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, also known as the “Indianhead” Division because of its’ shoulder patch, included three Infantry Regiments; the 9<sup>th</sup>, the 23<sup>rd</sup>, and the 38<sup>th</sup>.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment was known as the “Manchu” for their involvement in the Boxer Rebellion in China in 1900. Their motto was “Keep Up the Fire”.



2<sup>nd</sup> Division shoulder patch



9<sup>th</sup> Regiment Insignia



While stationed at Fort Sam Houston Arthur and Oscar were deployed to training camps in North Texas and Louisiana many times with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division on maneuvers. In between these maneuvers they would return to Fort Sam. It was during one of these breaks in maneuvers in 1941 that Arthur would meet up with Pito.

One day on her way home from work Pito sensed someone following her. Shortly after she arrived at the little house on Goliad Street there was a knock on the door. To her surprise it was Arthur. She was overwhelmed with joy to see him and he looked very handsome standing there in his uniform. He came in to greet Pito's mother and sister Cookie with a hug and they were so happy to see him too. He also met Jimmy for the first time; what a fine young boy he thought. At first Jimmy was a little shy as he peeked out from behind his mothers' skirt at this strange man. But Arthur went down on one knee to shake Jimmy's hand and they took a liking to each other and became pals.

On another visit, Arthur took Pito to a downtown bar where he introduced her to a waitress who worked there. The waitress seemed to know Arthur well and was very friendly with him. Arthur told Pito that he was thinking of asking this waitress to marry him and what she thought about that?

Pito answered.....

*Arthur, she's not the type for you*

Well.....Arthur responded.....

*Will you marry me?*

Pito could hardly believe this moment was happening; the farm boy she loved since her childhood in Eagle Pass; the handsome young man in blue jeans wearing a big western hat; now here, splendor in his Army uniform, so close to her. The words seemed to rush up from her heart.....

*Oh yes, yes I will marry you!*

In the months that followed they would visit as often as possible. Oscar and Cookie were also developing a renewed friendship and would accompany Arthur and Pito on

occasion. Maneuvers with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division would keep Arthur and Oscar away for weeks at a time. They were preparing for war, which everyone knew was inevitable. Then it happened.



The Imperial Japanese Navy attacked the U.S. Naval base at Pearl Harbor in Honolulu, Hawaii. President Roosevelt would address a joint session of Congress and the nation on the following day.....

*“Yesterday, December 7, 1941 – a date which will live in infamy – the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.....*

*The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian Islands has caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. I regret to tell you that very many American lives have been lost. In addition, American ships have been reported torpedoed on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu.....*

*The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications to the very life and safety of our nation.*

*No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people, in their righteous might, will win through to absolute victory.....*

*Hostilities exist. There is no blinking at the fact that our people, our territory, and our interests are in grave danger.*

*With confidence in our armed forces, with the unbounding determination of our people, we will gain the inevitable triumph, so help us God. I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7th, 1941, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese empire.”*

The declaration of war with Japan was passed almost unanimously except for one vote. A few days later Germany and Italy, the Axis powers in Europe, declared war on the United States.



With war now declared Arthur and Oscar would be spending more time training, never knowing when they might be leaving the States. In July of 1942 the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division would be transferred to Louisiana VIII Corps and be re-designated as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division.

Many young men and women answered the call to service. The youngest of Arthur's brothers, Edward enlisted in the U.S. Army in October 1942. He was 20 years of age. Pito's brother Leo enlisted in the U.S. Navy also in October 1942 at age 22.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division returned to Fort Sam Houston in late September and Pito and Arthur would plan their marriage ceremony. They gave their marriage vows to each other on November 3, 1942 at the San Fernando Cathedral in San Antonio. The historic San Fernando Cathedral, which dated back to the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, was a beautiful building in the heart of the city. Jimmy was baptized there and Pito attended services there regularly. Marrying Arthur there was more than a dream come true for Pito.



After the ceremony the family gathered at mama Lupita's house for a small reception. Soon after they were married Arthur adopted Jimmy as his own son. Jimmy was so happy to have Arthur for a daddy and never was a word spoken or a thought given otherwise.

Pito and Arthur would soon be apart from each other. In late November 1942 the 2<sup>nd</sup> ID packed up and moved by rail to Camp McCoy in Wisconsin. The Division would spend the next four months there in intensive training for winter warfare. Part of the training was learning cross country skiing with full combat gear. The winter training ended with winter maneuvers in Michigan. Upon returning to Camp McCoy the soldiers continued training, preparing them for the type of battle they would encounter overseas.

Arthur would write to Pito often but could not mention any details of his training except that he had fractured an arm and was also hospitalized with a case of the mumps.

*Camp McCoy Wisconsin      March 23, 1943*

*My dear wife Pito: I wrote you a letter yesterday and here I am writing you again. You know what? I got about fifteen letters today. They were keeping my mail back; maybe because they didn't have time to get it to me. Anyway, there are letters from you, Jimmy, Joe and Mother. Honey, in one of your letters you say that you would like to come to see me maybe this summer.*

*That's very nice of you honey. Just wait a little while; I don't know if we are going to stay here much longer. Anyway I had in mind that if I got a furlough, say in May, I would send for you. I really would like to go home and see everybody but well I don't know. Pito if you come and live here with me, I know a small town close to Camp McCoy named Sparta where I can rent a couple of furnished rooms. I have wanted to have you close to me but it was very cold here and I was waiting till after the maneuvers. Honey, I will write you and let you know in time. I am doing okay and will be out of the hospital in a few more days. I love you very much honey and miss you very much. Enclosed is all my love and many kisses.*

*Forever yours, your husband Arthur*

It was in April when Pito travelled by train from San Antonio to Wisconsin to join Arthur. Jimmy stayed home with mama Lupita. One of Arthur's Army buddies had a wife staying in Tunnel City, which was a small community close to Camp McCoy, so Pito would also stay there. Arthur had to stay quartered at the Camp and would see Pito on every leave he got. At least they were close for now.



Pito and Arthur by the railroad tracks leading to the tunnel  
at Tunnel City, Wisconsin

Oscar had become less timid and his fellow soldiers easily made friends with him. He also made friends with the locals in Wisconsin. He wrote to his sister Tete's oldest son.....

*Camp McCoy Wisconsin January 16, 1942*

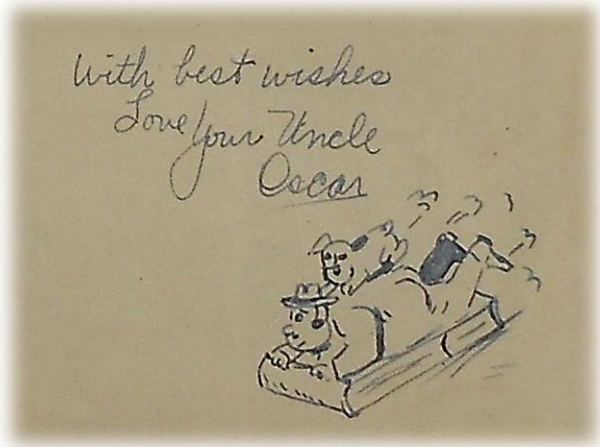
*Dear Daniel Boy, I appreciate your kindness of thinking about me and dropping me a lovely interesting letter. How is your Mother and your younger brother? Regards also to your father.*

*Tonight after supper two of my girl friends came over and called for a friend of mine and me to go sleigh riding with them. That's the first time I had ever gone sledding and it's more fun than playing chase the cat. That hill was slippery as a greased roller coaster and twice as steep. Once we hit a big bump that bounced me up in the air and when I came down the sled was gone. I spent more time picking my girl out of snow banks than I did on the toboggan.*

*We went to a U.S.O. show called "Soup to Nuts". Boy, it was swell and laughable.*

*Do write to me and tell me how you are doing in school. I sure would like to know what games you play. Do you play baseball anymore?*

*Give my love to Nana. Regards to your Aunt Mary and family. Thank you once more for your kind letter. I certainly hope to hear from you again.*



Pito stayed in Tunnel City from April to August 1943. It was a wonderful time to be with her husband. They both knew that it could be the last time they would have together but Pito would ask God to wipe those thoughts from her mind and she would remain positive as always. On the train back to San Antonio, as the Pullman car rocked side-to-side in unison with the clanking of the wheels over the rails, Pito was thinking of

the good news she was bringing home; she was going to have a baby! Once she arrived home everyone was happy to hear the news.

September would be a busy month for Pito as Jimmy was starting his first year of school. Leo had met the girl of his dreams and was getting married in early September. Her name was Inez and went by the nickname Tinzi. She was a beautiful person and everyone loved her dearly. She would always be considered as one of the sisters in Pito's family.

Arthur's brother Joe was discharged from the U.S. Army in September 1943. He had spent the last fifteen months in an Army Hospital recovering from severe burns, which would partially disable him, caused by a fiery explosion while on maneuvers. After his discharge Joe returned to Eagle Pass to live with Nana and Mary and her boys. His mother was thankful to have one of her sons back home and continued to pray for the safe return of her other sons. It would be a long distressful wait that seemed like an eternity.