

## Robert C. Hickey

*[Archive]: World War II Letters - Training and Italy/North Africa Service  
Company C 143rd Infantry Regiment 36th Infantry Division*

New Jersey, Florida, North Carolina, North Africa, Italy: 1941-1945

\$1800



A collection of 150 letters between Red Bank, New Jersey native, Robert C. Hickey and his family while he was serving with the Army in World War I. All letters are very good or better, most with their original envelopes with tears from opening.

A collection of letters written between 1941 and 1945 by Robert C. Hickey mostly to and from his father George Hickey while he was serving with the United States Army during World War II Company C 143rd Infantry Regiment 36th Infantry Division. The early letters describe his training with the infantry over 13 weeks beginning at Fort Dix, New Jersey then Camp Blanding in Florida, and a short stint for maneuvers in Fort Benning, Georgia. During this time he was learning skills, taking tests to find his placement in the platoon, eventually going to the machine gun squad after passing a skills test, and attempting not to be too homesick. Many of these letters discuss how to proceed with his recent purchase of a car, as he will not be there to maintain it, and attempting to be transferred to either an officer's training program or the Signal Corps Unit closer to home.

His father, George, was a prominent man in the drug manufacturing industry and worked for the Drugs Products Company, Inc. and writes eloquently to his son regarding various matters. He also sent letters to men he was friendly with in Washington including the Postmaster general, congressmen, and a senator in regards to Robert being considered for Officer's Training School. George and his second wife, Honey, also repeatedly ask the advice of mediums and psychics regarding Robert's army career and frequently write of their findings. "She says that we will shortly have good news; that you will be back sooner than we expect and it will come as quite a surprise to all of us." This type of prediction is interspersed throughout the letters and shines an interesting light on the dedication of a worried father.

Robert occasionally illustrates his letters with cartoons of himself in uniform. One of these was noticed by a commanding officer and he was asked to sketch maps, charts, uniforms, and planes during his time at Camp Edwards in Massachusetts. "I drew a cartoon to send to Eleanor and a Sgt. saw it. He asked if I would put it on the bulletin board. They didn't know I could draw as well. About ½ hour later I was called to the orderly tent and the 1st Lt. asked if I'd make some large maps of Japan and Germany for special school for officers and non-coms they are having nites for 2 weeks. Told me he saw the drawing. I also am to make drawings of Jap and Nazi uniforms and insignias." His father encourages his to continue drawing whenever asked in hopes he'll get a non-combat position in the group.

By early 1943 Robert was sent to North Africa. The letters from this time pass through the censor and he uses self-censorship often to avoid having pieces of his letters removed. He tells his family of being near a city and being able to visit, but not able to say which city it is. "I've been located near a city lately and get to go there about every two weeks. It's quite interesting. Strange people, sights, and customs. It's been good for me – this traveling." By fall he was "somewhere in Italy" but he was sent back to Africa in early 1944. He writes, "during Nov. and the first half of December I was fighting on the front in the midst of about the fiercest battling of the war so far. IT was really about as bad as I ever want to be in. I can't tell you of our losses etc. but...well I know what war at its worst is like now." In Italy he came down with bronchitis and was hospitalized through Christmas and eventually sent back to Africa for a "rest from combat." He continues, "I haven't written very often for several weeks ...I was much too busy dodging shells and bullets." Robert worries that because of all the moving around he won't get back to his original unit and thus will lose all his belongings and "souvenirs." "Had lots of drawings and a German bayonet and soldier's, or more specifically a paratrooper's cap, with wings and a swastika on it, I'd gotten in battle." In another letter he writes, "the doctor in Italy said he was amazed I'd gotten thru so much terrific action, narrow escapes, no rest, little food, for so long."

While in North Africa, Robert was wounded in his hand and was sent home to Camp Butner, North Carolina to recuperate and be reassigned. He discusses the strange feelings of being back in the States after being overseas and is concerned about new orders. "There's an awful lot to this coming home tho....Been living really almost in a different world, and feel very strange now." The end of 1944 saw him transferred to Atlantic City and worked at a redistribution center for men returning from overseas. The letters end shortly after in 1945 with Robert still stationed in Atlantic City and presumably helping with the end of the war effort to relocate veterans.

An extensive look at an American soldier who spent the over four years with the US Army during World War II from his training to his tour of duty in North Africa and Italy. [BTC#420077]

# LOOK

How General Marshall Views the War

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT  
The Woman Nobody Understands

DECEMBER 28, 1943 10¢ 12¢ IN CANADA



The Song of Bernadette  
(Page 47)

Dear Honey + Dad -  
Just a page from  
a magazine showing  
part of my job on the  
front. Thought you  
may be interested in  
it. We'll write as  
often as I can. Keep  
writing now. I'm getting  
your letters ok. Keep  
well and happy too.  
By for now  
Love to all  
Robert

AMERICAN RED CROSS  
The Robert Hickey 72237248  
Recd. Sec. 1st Repl Depot  
APO # 461 % Pm New York  
781  
APR  
12  
1944  
A.P.O.  
Mrs + Mrs Geo E Hickey  
58 W. Laren St.  
Reed Bank  
New Jersey  
PASSED BY  
U.S.A.

THE  
**DEPOT NEWS**  
 FIRST REPLACEMENT DEPOT

20/4/44

Dear Honey + Dad

Here's a couple of pages  
 I did on the mimeograph  
 while working on the Depot  
 news.

Will send some clippings  
 from the paper in other  
 envelopes. Can't send  
 entire paper. (Censor).

Love  
 Robert

Africa - 1944  
 Bob Hickey

Plenty of  
 "Policing-up"  
 in the Army!



RAT A TAT TAT



I'VE CHANGED  
 TYPEWRITERS!

(CLERK'S SCHOOL)



AMERICAN RED CROSS  
 Pfc. Robert Hickey 32237248  
 Co. 1st Regt Depot  
 APO 761 c/o Ft. New York

U.S. ARMY POSTAL SERVICE  
 761  
 APR  
 22  
 1944  
 A. P. O.

Free

Mrs + Mrs Geo. Hickey  
 58 N. Laren St.  
 Red Bank  
 New Jersey

U.S.A.  
 D. H. H. H.