

Jan. 14th, 1903.

Dear Father:-

Your letter of Jan 11 came today and I was glad to hear from you. The first class will graduate now in about two weeks and the present second class will graduate in February 1904. Our semiannual exams begin now in a few days and from the rumors, they will be very hard. About twenty or thirty fourth classmen are in a fair way to "bilge," and there are four or five in our class that have lots

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of cause to worry. As for myself, I think I can pull through all right. My term standing (as near as I can figure now) will be about eight or nine in the class, that is, I think so, you see there are lots of chances of making a complete failure in the semiannual exams – and they count a great deal. My roommate and I stand about the same in the final average.

The crew squad will start up right after the semiannual exams and I intend going out just for the exercise in it. Of course it will take every

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bit of my spare time but I would rather do that than try football or some other rough sport. And again, I like rowing.

Now, I will write about some of the happenings around here lately. About a week ago, on Thursday morning at 1:30, the entire battalion was turned out, and we had to stand at attention in full dress uniform for quite a while. The cause was this – some daring midshipman had taken one of these patent fire extinguishers and set it off in the Officer in Charge's room. Of course the officer woke up at once and tried to catch the fellow, but he was too late – the fellow had jumped from a gallery down on a brick walk a distance of about twelve feet, everybody was turned out and there we were on dress parade in the middle of the night. Well, they kept us there for a while but no one would "own up."

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Finally they let us go to bed again. The next morning the officers were looking for somebody that limped and they left word at the hospital to look out for anybody that came over for hurts about the legs, because they were sure that the man was hurt, they had found some blood on the spot where he landed. The first classman (that's who did it) owned up the other day and now he is living on the Santee. Whether he had a grudge against that officer, I do not know but it certainly looks that way.

And the other day the Secretary of the navy came down to confer with the superintendent about naval affairs. The Battalion was on dress parade to receive him. He was in the Supt's carriage and as he drove in the gate, the band began to play, - this caused the horses to run away. Just as they got right in front of the

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battalion, the secretary jumped out. Well, after he had been picked up and brushed off and his stovepipe hat straightened but, he looked as if he had been in a free for all rough house. He had a

black eye, and his face was all scratched up. Otherwise, he wasn't hurt any, no bones broken or anything like that. Well, while all this was happening, people were yelling, ladies were fainting, etc. but the battalion I am glad to say, didn't wiggle, just looked straight to the front.

The Secretary will be here for several days, to see about the new buildings. The Armory is completed now and it is a magnificent building. The Boat House is also completed and the lower work on the Main Quarters has a good start. When everything is finished, it will be something fine.

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I suppose you saw something in the paper about some "brutal hazing" going on at the Naval Academy, and also that there will be a Congressional investigation. Such as there was at West Point not very long ago. Well I will tell you the bare facts of the case and you can decide for yourself whether the thing is right or wrong. First I will explain what is meant by "class rates." Each class here has certain privileges, the first class has the most and so on down. The 4th class has no privileges at all. Now – it is a 1st and 2d class privilege to "french out." Even a 3d classman does not have that privilege. Of course, "frenching out" is contrary to regulations, and the fewer the people to "french" the less the danger of being caught. Well – one plebe frenched out. In this way, he broke one of the unwritten laws. Another law, and a very old one, is that no plebe shall walk on "Love Lane."

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Well, to go on with the story, this same plebe broke that law, - and now having done two things which he knew he shouldn't have done, he should have been prepared to accept the consequences. He refused to be "run" on account of it, ~~and~~ so, according to custom, a plebe has his choice of two things, 1st, to take the "running" peaceably or (2) to name the time and place. This plebe chose the latter and the first rattle out of the box, he had his jaw broken. It was a fair fight. The upper classman was smaller than the plebe, but he could box. The plebe was put in the hospital, and somehow it leaked out and the papers got ahold of it and they are certainly painting things red. Each paper adds something new. Now from what I have written, you will see that the fourth classman has no one to blame

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but himself because he brought it all upon himself by his actions.

Now in case of a Congressional investigation you need not worry about me because I have not been mixed up in any hazing so far and I don't intend to be. One thing, there are enough people in the Academy to see that the plebes keep their places. As to a fourth classman walking on "Love Lane" – this summer while the three upper classes were on the cruise, an old officer here at the Academy chased several plebes off of that walk. He said to them, "Why - even the old admirals on that bluff yonder would rise in their graves if they thought a plebe was walking in "Love Lane."

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Well, I will knock off chewing the rag about this business and close my letter.

My best love to Mama, the children and all the rest.

Your son,

[signed]

Chester W. Nimitz

P.S.

There are some old customs here and they may seem foolish to outsiders, but they are old customs and they are respected as such by everyone that ever graduated from here.