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Letter, Virginia Brainard to Dudley and Merl Brainard [October 11, 1942]

Virginia Brainard

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Sunday, Oct. 11, 1942

Dear Mother and Daddy,

I went to Des Moines ~~with~~ yesterday with four other girls and Bob Jess and got a formal. It was ~~a~~ \$16.95 and I think that that's very good--I was afraid I'd have to pay about \$20--the kids here couldn't believe that that's all it cost~~s~~. It is sort of red-orange silk jersey. I had my joice ~~mixed~~ between red, white, pink, baby blue, some sad colors of blue that make me look dull and yellow. Of course you know that ~~red~~ I ~~do~~ look better in red than in any other color. It has a slim skirt and ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ the front drapes from my right shoulder to my left side at the waist---very smooth! It has a belt studded with gold nail heads. The skirt is perfectly plain in back but in front has gathers and two pockets. I think it's very stunning. It makes me look very ~~stax~~ stately, especially with my hair short. But it's just about what I wanted. It's a very welcome relief from all the formals I've have with wide, tight girdles around the waist and very full skirts. I feel comfortable in it. I paid \$4.29 down on it so the balance is ~~\$20x~~ \$13 and I can pay it about any time. We shopped at Younkers first and found this one there. But I wasn't sure so I walked around to about 5 other places and then went back to Younkers and got this one. It's really smooth. Only now I'll have to get gold slippers, too. But I showed you my silver ones and said I'd have to come to it sooner or later. I've had them 6 years. I saw some gold ones here for \$2.49 or \$3.

Mother, it's just the kind of dress I've been wanting and it's sophisticated enough so that I'll be able to go any place in it next year and not feel too much like ~~xxxxxx~~ I was a refugee from a college prom!

~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ One of the gals drove us down in her car so that didn't cost me anything that way and Fred bought my ticket back to Ames. Bob went down to try to enlist in the Naval Air Corps Reserve and they rejected him. He's in perfect physical condition except that his right leg is $\frac{1}{2}$ inch shorter than his left! He said that they laid him out on a table and measured him with a yardstick. And so he was rejected and was just crushed. ~~He~~ Now he says that he's going to make the rounds of all the reserve corps until he gets into one. The Army Air Corps Reserve is the next stop.

I called Fred yesterday at 5:30--as soon as he was off work--and he said he'd be downtown as soon as he could get there. I had written to tell him I was coming down. But he said he'd have to hitchhike so we drove out to the camp to get him. The camp is ~~xxx~~ more than 10 miles out of Des Moines. He was waiting for us at the gate which of course was patrolled and he had to present his pass before he could leave. Then we drove ~~xxxx~~ in and around the camp and saw his barracks. It was very interesting. It was the first army camp I'd ever seen and I was fascinated. The barracks that were built at the camp during the last war are red brick and very nice looking. The new ones are wood covered with tar paper and Fred is in one of those. There is a club for non-~~xxxxxxx~~ commissioned officers and the service men's club. Fred says that the WAAC's come out to camp quite often and want to dance and be danced with, etc. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~

There wasn't time to see much because the other girls had to get back to Ames in time for dates so they drove us back downtown and went on. By that time it was 7:30 and there wasn't time to do

quite a bit for being in the army.
much because Bob and I had to take the 10:00 bus back to Ames. But we ate and then ~~went~~ window-shopped. The town was think with WAAC's of course and Fred won't salute them. But he has a very snappy salute for his superiors. We ~~went~~ stopped at the Register and Tribune building and watched them run off the Sunday papers. It was wonderful, Fred explained all ~~about~~ about how ~~and~~ huge newspaper office is run and promised to take both Bob and me through the whole plant the next time we come down. He knows alot of people that work there. Bob and I took the bus back to Ames at 10 and Fred took the 10:00 trolley back to camp. It was fun but not very satisfactory. I can't stay down there long enough to go to a show or dance unless I stay over night and I haven't anyplace to stay. And we can't talk much--just walk around or sit in a restaurant. But I liked it. The shop windows are very lovely with their fall displays and it's a relief to get out of Ames.

Fred hasn't been up here since Sept. 28---two weeks. And I guess he won't be able to come up again until November. He hasn't had any money at all. He got his \$51 Sept. 30 and paid it on his college loan. ~~That~~ He ~~has~~ even has to hitchhike into ~~Ames~~ Des Moines. He borrows pin money from Bob who is practically rolling in money---that's where he got the money ~~from~~ for my ticket last night. I suppose I could have bought my own but he wanted to do it and afterx all, he really should. It ~~is~~ so wonderful to see him ~~for~~ for even a few hours. We both walk along just about inarticulate, we're so glad to see each other. ~~Anyway~~ I thought it wouldn't be hard without him when he's so close but it is. Of course, it will ~~not~~ be easier as time goes on but right now I do miss him so much I just ache. I feel sort of blue ~~right~~ right now, anyway, because I just saw him yesterday and seeing him always affects me like that.

I was pledged to Theta Sigma Phi this morning at 9:15 and it was very nice. Just five of us were pledged so it ~~is~~ quite an honor. I am now wearing a bow of green and orchid ribbon with a pen point tied in it--the pledge pin. When I'm initiated in a month I'll get a ~~at~~ gold pin shaped like a matrice--matrices are the letters that cast the slugs on a linotype machine.

Fred and I are still fighting at ~~the~~ drop of a hat. I'm at my wit's end as to what to do about it. He says he doesn't want to fight with me and I say it's his fault that we fight--if he wouldn't make ~~me~~ me so mad, etc. I ~~don't~~ ~~try~~ to be patient like you said but sometimes it just ~~isn't~~ isn't in me and it's hard on my constitution. Our trouble is that we should get married and we can't. I tell him that I will not marry him for years. Of course, getting married wouldn't stop our scrapping but it would help remove part of the cause--it would give us both some security and something to ~~work~~ work towards together instead of struggling along blindly and trying to stick together. I come so close to breaking up with him sometimes. The only thing that stops me is that I can't get along without him. I don't know what's going to happen to us. I suppose I'm just feeling sorry for myself but right now I'm never been so unhappy in my life.

I'll write again this week when I feel better. This has sure turned out to be a morbid letter. I'm sorry.

P.S. I bought ~~2~~ sweaters at Stevensons--the brown one & yellow one--then the white blouse, too.

Love,
Virginia
Did I ever send you my schedule?

I haven't gotten Fred's picture yet and he hasn't heard from Bob yet but one since he's been in the army. His mother's out of town nursing a sick aunt. But I guess the whole family are poor as usual. But I guess the