

September 8, 1942

Mr. Gelston King
30 Kilby Street
Boston, Mass.

Dear Sir:

The bearer of this letter is my son, Warren Haskell Pettingell, who will be nineteen October 15, 1942. During this past academic year he was a Freshman at Harvard, but as I believe that the registered youth of eighteen and nineteen will be called during the next academic year and he will be nineteen next month, I do not think it wise to send him back to college with the prospect of being called out before the academic year is finished.

He is a rugged, healthy boy who played on his Freshman Lacrosse team and apparently can pass any physical examination with the exception of that of his eyes. He is very near sighted. In order to have this definite, I have had his eyes tested by Miss Dorothy O. Fowler, Chief Clerk of Draft Board No. 2, of which I am Chairman, who does all the eye examinations for our Board. Without glasses his left eye is 20/100 and his right eye the same. With glasses his left is 20/15 and his right 20/13. Without question when reached in the draft he will be accepted for limited service, but he cannot be accepted for enlistment for the regular Army or any ordinary Army or Navy service.

This is the cause of the present interest in seeing you. His attitude is that he will not go in the draft because he does not want a non-combatant service. He is afraid of being put in some service where he will be utilized for office work or in Ordinance or the Medical Corps or Quartermaster.

The situation is somewhat accentuated because he has a brother who is a Lieutenant in the Navy and is an aviator of some standing and experience. He flies a patrol bomber with a crew of fourteen and recently attracted some attention by discovering 61 survivors of a torpedoing of which there had been no earlier notice. He picked up ten of these men who were injured, one of them so badly that he died before he was gotten ashore, and the doctor of the ship which had been sunk, and with the eleven men plus his crew of fourteen flew back to port, the landing and the takeoff being somewhat of a difficulty in a rolling sea.

The younger boy is considerably affected by his brother's experience and says that if he goes to Canada he will be accepted for flying with corrected vision. I do not wish to have him enlist in Canadian or British outfits and I would like to get something for him, which will promise an opportunity for action.

Mr. Milton F. Connelly of Amesbury told me about your talk with his boy and suggested that my boy's vision corrected may be enough to get him into the Amphibian Engineers. After that talk I called Mr. Everett T. Brown who sent Mr. Connelly to you and asked his permission to send my boy also.

Warren has some assets, which may be of value. He has had a year in college and in that year he took the freshman course in mathematics getting a B. Navigation and surveying should be easy for him. He is interested in boats having sailed several years on the Merrimac River and after a Boy Scout experience in which he passed all of the test for an Eagle Scout with the exception of bird study, joined the Sea Scouts in which he went as far as he could. The past summer he has served as an instructor in sailing at a YMCA Camp in southern New Hampshire, having courses in seamanship with sailing craft, and in skiffs and canoes. He is also a senior lifesaver. These things would not seem to lessen his value for enlistment if only his eyes were sufficient.

My whole interest is in getting him in something, which will keep him in the United States. If it will also mean combatant work neither I nor my wife have any objection. His brother is daily in personal risk but our ancestors have been New England people for more than 300 years, who have always in youth accepted the risks of the sea and other activities of that period of life. We do not ask for a soft berth for the boy but we do not want him to go into the service of another country under another flag.

I say this with deliberation although my mother was born in Canada, the descendent of a Revolutionary soldier from Massachusetts, and he father was put in jail in 1838 for treason, having participated in the MacKenzie King Rebellion in Ontario, and having been released from jail only to prevent his death in that institution, the death occurring a few days after his release. Despite my family associations with Canada, I still want the boy in the American Service.

If therefore there is anything that can be done for him, I hope that it may be done and I thank you in advance for anything you can do.

The boy is well trained for life, is physically able, will undertake any hardship or any roughness of service because it is ingrained in him physically and mentally that he is to accept what comes and is to give one hundred percent service. He has a good mind, a good body, a good heritage. Like his brother he will be cool, thoughtful and devoted in any crisis. I hope you can do something for him.

Sincerely yours,

Hon. Charles I Pettingell, Presiding Justice
Massachusetts District Court Appellate Division (Northern Jurisdiction)