

Apr 5 1918

Same Old Place -

Dear Father & Mother

I am grabbing up a few minutes now to start a letter - dont know how much I am going to get done tho - They are sure running us green in the face. I rec. your letter and certainly did appreciate it to the fullest and was also glad to get the receipt - altho as yet luck has been against me and I dont know how soon I will be able to complete the remaining degrees. Sure know the first degree by heart and can go thru it with out hardly a mistake.

Well the place where the colored reg. was is now filled up with drafted men. They just came in this morning. A nice looking lot of fellows - much better than what was sent down here before.

And Ill tell you what we have been doing and are going to do - A week ago Thursday morning we marched out to the rifle range. We sent out cots out the day before and slept on the floor that nite and marched out in morning with rifles and equipment. Was rather cool and walk was fine. That afternoon we began shooting and finished up Sunday nite - and that means we were shooting all day Easter Sunday - Something I never did before. Well we shot slow fire - rapid fire - and at all kinds of targets on 100 - 200 - 300 - 500 and 600 yd. ranges. Half were shooting and the other half were operating targets. Mon. morning the other half started shooting are not quite done yet.

The first nite out there it rained something a fright and until 9 oc. in the morning. Water was 2 & 3 inches deep in our tents and all over. I stayed in bed - got everything up on my cot with me and slept right along - wind blowed so hard sometimes I was afraid that the ground getting softer would let the stakes pull out and our tent would go off and leave us. But Texas soil is so hard that before the ground was that soft the storm was over and forgot about. We have been catching horned toads. We put one in one of our corporals mess kits the other evening - So at mess time we all fell in for mess and marched up to the serving place halted and one gave the order "open mess kits" and we all took off the kit lid and this corporal looked in his kit and saw that ugly horned toad, he actually turned pale - threw up his hands - let out o whoop and was out of the crowd in 2 seconds - his mess outfit all over the ground and the toad too. You would nearly have died laughing at the expression on his face and the way he went away from that kit. He came back and got his stuff when he seen the joke - but he said he didn't believe he wanted any supper. He is always playing jokes on every body is the reason we picked on him. He sent the Toad home to his father.

And yesterday fore noon I went out to the Artillery range which is 3 miles further out than the rifle range and on the same road. I saw the 3 inch field pieces firing he high explosive shells. Jove but those babys have some recoil to them. But they were sure doing some fine work. And their Barrage fire is almost deafening. They were firing at a range of about 3 miles. The piece would fire - one big yellow flash of fire & smoke and you could hear the shell sing thru the air and in 7 seconds you would see a big cloud of smoke and dirt, 3 miles away where the shell hit and in 7 or 8 seconds more you would hear the report of the explosion of the shell. At the same place they were using Lewis and Colts machine guns - those

noisy - deadly things sure can deliver the goods and do it fast. They are also using the Browning Automatic rifles. I got to see them operate too. Then we went to see the Stoaks mortar work. It looks like a gas pipe about 4 inches in diameter set at an angle of 45 or 50 deg up in the air. You drop a shell into the end of the gun and the shell slides down in and when it strikes the bottom the discharging force is sent off - throwing out of the gun all that was dropped in - sending it about 1500 feet in the air - you can see it travel - goes end over end in the air and is up so high it looks like a corncob. as soon as it lights it explodes and tears a terrible hole in the earth.

Well I saw all this in one fore noon and did not get a permit to see it either - just took a chance - didn't get caught and learned a whole lot that I have wondered about and always wanted to see and know.

Well that was Thur. morning - Thur afternoon we packed our packs and marched the 6 or 7 miles in from the range with out but one stop. I was about all in. I Bathed as soon as I could and got into clean clothes. And that nite about 12 or 1 oc. we were issued full equipment, slept on the floor 3 or 4 hours and got up at 5. ate breakfast and at 6 marched a couple miles out to our big parade ground and The whole division was reviewed by Gen. Bell and that was completed about 11 oclock. We came in - took another bath, for I sure was hot and sweaty - dust blowing and those packs are heavy - It is now 1:30 and dinner is ready.

The review sure was a big thing - Many people drove out from town in their cars to see it. just think of it - the whole division on the ground at once. One areoplane circled around over us a couple of times - looking at the maneuver. Sure was great.

Must eat dinner now -

Sat afternoon - yesterday after dinner was over we were given orders to get ready to march back out to the range again. We got here but was sure tired. a few blisters on the bottom of my feet was all that was the matter with me. I stuck them and drained them and today my feel feel fine as I did not go out on a detail this morning and it started raining hard so I went to bed and now at 3 oc. I am up and writing. or rather sitting on my cot - feet under my blanket. We ditched around our tent so the water did not run in this time - Jove but it did rain hard and for a long time too. No shooting today now. When we are all finished shooting we will go back to camp. That will be about next Wed. We will rest up a couple a 3 days and make ready for a 10 day hike - which will mean close to 70 or 80 miles hiking before we will finally get back to camp again. I suppose we will go to galveston and if so it will be about 120 miles all told. I guess they are going to make tough nuts out of us or kill us trying to. As for going across - there are many opinions as to that so I have no idea when we will go - or for sure if we will go. Everybody is hoping to go soon and we have now nearly full equipment and I have with the exception of a 45 cal. colts Automatic. all non coms - have to carry a pistol.

And when we return from the hike I guess there will be some more trench warfare for us. We have an extra hr. each day to work - go by new time and school 4 nites a week.

It sure isn't no fun now to be a soldier. Well if we have to do all this - I'd just as leave go across and get a shot at some of the guys that are causing us all this trouble and I do sure believe the U.S. boys will make a good record for themselves.

Today I rec your letter of Apr 1, 1918 your telling me about the sitting hens brot back days close to Walnut Corner and the locust grove - and how I used to play the game I am now playing, only then it was in fun - now rather real.

So you are not going to raise many chicks then this year.

What Art Cunningham died of - broke out in one company in 130 Infantry - The patient was taken to Base Hospital and no more cases were heard of.

And Guys trouble - jove Id hate to have him sleep in some of the places I've slept in in the last few months, but outside of not getting to see my father and mother occasionally, I have no regrets, very glad Ive done what I have. And of all I've learned - real lessons - not only in army life but in dicipline that will be long remembered and very usefull in any walk of life.

And have had to do so many things I thot impossible for my endurance that it puts confidence in a fellow and there is very little you really fear. 12th of April last year I never dreamed so much could happen to me by this time. And it is now hard to recall all that has taken place in the last year - seems like trying to recall all that happened in my life before this last year. I am now at YMCA and have succeeded in getting a no count pen and some ink. But I don't like to use a pencil and I did not bring my fountain pen out with me.

And you were speaking of your experience in the past year - and I guess I am not the only one that has been having experiences and between the two of us - I think I am getting off the easier of the two.

The fellow you saw with the cross on his arm - must have been in the Avaition Service as that is the emblem of a propeller in a circle - or at least I've seen some fellows from Ellington Fields with the same Emblem on his arm.

I noticed the clipping you sent me in the paper at the date it came out - There may be some truth in it, but I hardly think the loyalty to the government will ever be shaken in Germany. The power that drives them is more to be feared than the opposing power.

Yes your envelopes are real patriotic and are very good envelopes and not only helps save but can make use of something that is too good to thro away and yet no one was going to use them in any other way. They are a much better grade of envelope than I have at my disposal.

Aunt Laura is very busy I think. And I imagine writing is hard to get at. I am not getting to see them much now. I sure would have enjoyed Easter with them but no chance. And even now a new ruling has gone into effect that on Sun. nites you all have to be in camp by 10 oc. and that sure "nuff" fixes my coming in on the 11 oc train - would give me just from 1:30 PM to 8:30 P.M. - not much time. But perhapps we will not be in this camp much longer and while we are here yet we will likely be just as busy Sundays as any other days so I need not worry about going to Alvin. At this stage of the game it seems to be all work and no play for us, which is right if they really intend to send us across. I am going to take my trunk to Aunts with all the things I cant take across or don't really have to have. For the less you have the less there is to carry and care for. My knitted goods will most all have to be sent home and what I keep will

just be red cross things so if we have to leave them I wont need to feel bad because of it being knitted by some one I know.

If we do go across I am going to leave the trunk with aunts and they can send it to you and I will pay all expenses. but if it so happens we go to some other camp I will have them send it to me there, that way I can be prepared for any kind of a move we may make.

There sure will be a number of things I am using now that I will get along with out and will be glad to get along with out them if by doing so I will not have to carry them. For you sure are going to lose every thing that makes your pack heavier that you just don't have to have. When you carry an 8 lb. gun and equipment between 16 and 25 lbs besides, for 7 or 8 miles in a couple hours - there is no wonder there are blisters on the bottoms of my feet when you consider we hiked a little over 21 miles (going in from range - at the big inspection and coming back out again) all in 48 hrs. It was pretty hard on those of us that has been doing very little drilling the last month or so.

Your little Service Emblem is on the same order of the flag Aunt has. A red felt flag with the white square in the center and the blue star in center of white. I am very near sending one home to you but wondered if you did not already have one. There were a number of small things I intended to do before I put in my application for Masonry - now the smaller things will have to wait or go undone. I have not been able yet to get my other degrees altho I have my first one (my instructor tells me the best he ever saw one get it in the length of time Ive been working on it) But they are making it so hard to get down town now that it is very provoking.

Say don't you know this war is a fine thing in a way - a person had no idea of how to appreciate peace times when I first left home - but believe me I know now how I could appreciate the priveleges I had when I left a year ago. I'm glad now I did not know then of the things I would have to go thru, for if I had I sure would never have had the nessessary ammount of nerve to enlist. But as it is I have had a whole year to get used and toughened to it, which I am thankfull for. And if you would just only worry about me as little as I worry about myself and my safety - your worries sure would cause you the loss of no sleep what ever.

I have been writing along here paying no attention and now find my self on my 8th sheet of paper, but that doesnt worry me either - I really don't know what I have been worrying about that would cause the two gray hairs I have on my head.

So you say there are a great number of troops being moved thru Danville.

All of us here are in hopes of being moved soon - We hate to think of men being drafted in for 3 or 4 months and sent across and here we are a whole year now and no real prospects of going yet. What you wrote about us being fitted for border duty appeals to me as being very reasonable tho I have no idea if that is what we will do or not.

I rec. a letter from Maude today to and she wanted to know if there would be any possible chance of seeing me before I left this country - and I rather think not - as your chances of seeing me here would be very small and I could not get home hardly under any circumstances.

Most any of the drafted fellows at Camp Grant and other camp get leaves of absence most any time but here it sure is impossible.

Well I have my hair cut Army regulation. Captain made us all do it. My longest hair is only about an inch long. It is a far better looking head of hair than the first time it was cut that way when I was a kid.

You see my hair was trained that way for the last 4 years and it is very thick and stands well and all of them in Alvin never noticed the change until I mentioned it to them the last Sunday I was there. And they said it looked as well if not better than so long and sure is cleaner and cooler.

Well I am sorry Sr. Loff did not get to see you that nite for I sure would like to hear from her and Mary. I have so little time to write that I cant always keep up a correspondence with my bros. and sisters and if there is any news about them please write it for it is the only way I will ever hear of it - I suppose they are still alive or I would be notified other wise. And when you have time write again to your loving son who is coming back some time and hope you are there when I do.

Paul B.