Aug 18 1918

My dear father & Mother -

I will now start you a letter. hoping to get it finished and sent soon, but can never tell. I rec. 2 letters from you a couple weeks ago. dated July 4 & 10. This is the first chance for answering I've had. Things are quite busy with us and we have little time at present for writing, I have at least.

Am wondering how things are at home now. Jove I wish you could write oftener. I try to write as often as I can, which I know is not often.

Your letters come thru all ok. Write as often and as much as you wish for all your mail is sent thru & not touched, so you dont bother the censors by writing me a big newsy letter every once in a while, and tho it takes some time to get here it is all late news for me.

The weather is very warm at Present. hasen't rained now for a few days and getting around is very good, also sleeping is much better for you dont have to be so particular where you lay as it is dry & comfortable.

How is Arthur's - tell them they might write, as a line from them would be greatly appreciated. Ill admit I can't write more than I do and probly wont be able to answer them only thru letters to you. Yet I believe they can find more time to write than I can. I just finished a letter to Cecil today. Rec. one from her a short time ago and was a mighty newsy letter with the best picture of her I've seen. and it was a big long letter too. So when you write, tell all you want to and just as often as you feel like. Send me some pictures if you have any. they do one a whole lot of good I think.

I had a lively time last evening dodging some shells. One landed close to me, so I made a run for the closest trench and the next one lobbed down almost where I was standing. Jove the mournful wail of those pieces of shell going over your head sure put the wind up you once in a while. Quite a few dropped close but only 3 or 4 came real close, and also this evening a big boy lobbed down a 50 or 60 yds from me. I flopped down tho in time not to catch anything altho several pieces came by me - picked one up and it was hot as h---.

So you need not fear that we dont have any excitement over here, for we do every once in a while, the above is merly the latest news. I cant tell all, so I just tell the latest.

Not long ago I fired my first shell and only one across the line. I wonder what it did, was large enough to do a hell of a lot. I pulled the string on a big 9 inch Howitzer, took quite a bit of nerve to do it, but I had my ears full of felt so the concussion of the heavy charge would not burst my ear drums and did the job up fine. The shells weigh about 1/6 of a ton. Great big devils they are. That was the only shot Ive fired & all I care to on a gun of that calibre. Id much rather shoot my 45 colt. Got lost the other nite. That is a rather ugly feeling to have, to get out by yourself after midnight and get lost, so completely that you have no idea which way to go. Well I kept cool (the night was very chilly & I had no coat on) and when I found I was getting where I had no business to be, I changed my direction & finally got where I belonged. As it happened I ran into none of Jerrys out posts so I am safe and sound as if I were at home.
You'll have to admit this is a great old war we are having over here and if I am lucky as the boys say - I'll probly get to go home after it is over. And yet the work is interesting for it is one of the bigest games of chance, the largest gamble in a mans life and odds are very much against you. I like my work much better than any thing Ive seen over here yet. So much depends on you personaly.

How is Guy making it. Are they still holding him first in one camp then in another? Does seem like they could settle on something at least. We are getting quite a bit of training over here. Practical stuff you know. no camp like over in the states, you are given a front line in some sector & waite orders to hold or go over, that is the training we get. Damn good training too. For once you learn a lesson you are not very apt to forget it. Every thing means business with your life at stake, so you know there is to tom foolery going, just genuine grim old business. You never think of your self so much, you think of what you have to do and to getting it done properly - so if something comes up you can't be the blame.

July is my last Liberty bond pay. If the bond is sent to you let me know. Beginning with August an allotment of $15 a month should come to you. I owe daddy some for lodge and also for sending home the trunk, so take out of it all I owe you and the rest (if you don't need it) you may put to my credit in the bank as it is all I'll have when I get home. If you get no allotments let me know right along, for sometimes they neglect things and I can remedy it here at this end. I may also send some money home thru the Y.M.C.A.'s as I very often have no chance whatever to spend any and dont like to carry too much around with me.

Tell Arthur to use my kodak or any one for that matter and get some pictures of them selves, and send them over, and of course I want you to do the same. It is the next thing to seeing you to set down once in a while and see some pictures from home. For in a way this is a lonesome old life, believe me - even tho it is exciting sometimes. And a few words from home & some snapshots sure put a shot of life into you, and makes you feel like you are something more than an atom to some one at least. So hoping in the future to hear more from you and a line from Arthurs too. I am as ever your loving son - Hoping you feel as fine & fit as I do I will close & try to write again soo.

Paul B Hendrickson Cpl.

Hdq co. 129 Inf. A.E.F. Via New York.

[Note appended to top of letter, perhaps by his mother forwarding letter on to other members of the family to read]

I recd this Sept 25. good while coming. up to that time I was under the impression our mail went thru the cencors hands. the July 10th letter was the last one before going to Crawford and Aug. 7 the first after getting home.