

Feb 28, 1918

Dear Folks,

I understand that we are now allowed a little more liberty in writing, so I will snatch a few minutes before I am called for duty again.

We know now that there is a war going on, for one reason because we do our work at night and take our sleep, if any, in the daytime. It was rather novel this noon to hear our cook come through the dugout brandishing a ladle and yelling, "If you fellows want any dinner you had better get a move on and be getting up." And there were those who replied drowsily, "Damn the dinner, what I want is sleep." However, when it was known that there was real turkey to eat, everyone came out.

Since ^{about} the time Sherman's birthday we have been in the war area and have therefore seen neither a civilian nor a woman. Our company until last night was very comfortably quartered in large cave, all of stone so that it didn't even have wooden supports for the "ceiling" which ceiling was thirty feet or so under ground. It was a fine place, no rats or "cooties", and we had a lot of fun in there, the whole company being together. Sherman's bunk was just around a corner about a few yards from mine.

We had a movie show in there one night, a magician another, and various concerts, also every Sunday a church service. That was luxury all right. Our work was not hard and of course everything we saw was all very new and interesting. There was almost always something going on above us. We hadn't been there more than a couple of days when we all saw a Boche plane swoop down on a French observation balloon very near us and send it down in flames. The occupant escaped in parachutes.

A couple of days later we saw an air battle which speedily ended with the destruction of the German. The airplane crashed down from way up from where each machine was nothing but a speck. The whole thing was in plain sight and many of the fellows ran over to the field where the wreck landed. I was on guard, but Sherman went over and saw what was left of the machine and the two aviators.

I haven't time to go on like that, but every clear day there was something doing, and many nights too.

You would never guess what part of the front we are at and of course it would never do to tell. The town was something worse for wear, inasmuch as there was literally not a building whose walls, and roof, or both, ~~had~~ had not been wrecked by shell fire. On the whole, life was pretty good while we were a reserve unit there. We got a lot of mail on one or two occasions. I haven't yet thanked you for the last box, which had in it some very useful things-- gloves, candles, Hersheys chocolate (that box is what I am now using as a writing table), and a flash light. The war has proved too rough for the flash light. Bumping around in the trenches put it on the fritz last night.

We are now in the line and our quarters are in a nice warm dugout, safe from shells which at present are whistling by now and then. Sherman is in a different place, but expects to visit here in his capacity as liason agent.

I fear that I can't go on and describe things much. The country right here used to be wooded but now looks as if a hurricane had passed over it followed by a forest fire.

I hope that you have taken my hint about not letting my letters be published as you did once. Judging by the experience of one or two other men here, another warning may be necessary. It only makes trouble for me as it is directly against Pershing's orders, and furthermore when I write letters home I

don't write them for everyone in Hartford.

Well, take care of yourself and we will do# the same. Don't worry about us just because we have to keep those irregular hours, or you will lose more sleep than we do. This life is all right until it gets monotonous which it hasn't yet.

With lots of love from
CHANDLER

March 5, 1918

Dear Emily,

This ought to reach you before your birthday, and perhaps we will get back into civilization in time for me to get some little present to celebrate the event. How old will the budding young lady be on April fifth? Fourteen, fifteen, or what? Remember when I used to get your goat by asking whether you were in the fifth grade yet?

When we get back from the front I am going to subscribe to the A. E. F. weekly newspaper called "Stars and Stripes". It is certainly interesting to us and probably will be to you, as it has more dope in it about our life here than I could ever write in letters. When I get a chance I will mail one or two home.

Dave Hitchcock's folks just sent him some good magazines and I have been looking over the January Atlantic Monthly and noticed some things about the war that you and Mother would like to read, if you haven't already. In one article, called "More Letters From France" there is a fine description of the French soldier- just the way we see him every day. Nowadays I talk for hours with Poilys from all parts of France, and also borrow their daily newspapers to read, since none in English get up this way.

One thing we do get up here and that is some good eats. Some of the things we have had are- turkey, pancakes, french fried potatoes, steaks, and other good things. Tonight we are going to have pancakes. This is an easy day for me as I have no time on duty during the day. However, I have to get in my sleep in fact that is abo t all we do when off duty, except eat.

We have been having rotten weather, but now the sun has come out and the snow which fell during the night is melting. Also the airplanes are again buzzing over our heads. If they are French or American machines they are probably observing the fire of our artillery. If they happen to be Boches they are probably taking photos to try to locate our dugouts or our machine gun or artillery emplacements, or else they are scouting around for a chance to shoot down our big observation balloons, which are always up back of us in clear weather. If they get one of them the men in the balloon will calmly jump out and come down ~~###~~ in parachutes. At first we were quite excited when they did this stunt, but now we don't think much about it. I can remember seeing nine such parachutes coming down.---- A fellow who just came in says that an airplane was just brought down a minute or two ago in sight of here.

I didn't tell you, did I, that MR. Wiley came up here one night to see Jack for a few minutes? I had a little conversation with him. He has not been very well and is going to Nice, to rest up at one of the many fine hotels there.

Keep writing, me petite soeur. The last package was fine. I am using the Hersay's chocolate box as a writing desk now. Your loving brother.
CHANDLER