

January 11 1918

Dear Folks.

I have about five minutes between inspection and supper. Lately the idea of sitting down and thinking what you were writing has grown more and more impossible and out of the question. A few words in odd moments must suffice.

Without exception we have schooles or meetings for instruction every night nowadays, and I have been trying to spend the rest of the evenings at a nightly school of French, taught by our interpreter, who is a very capable teacher. Several of us including Rick Gowen, Sherman, Jack Wiley, Dave Hithhookk and I have been in the so called advance class. — We have been translating English newspapers into French and carrying on all conversation in French. Pretty good dope.

My squad has been changed around somewhat since our arrival here. It now contains Hobie Hyde of tennis fame, and Ernie Alton, who was in my tent at Niantic. For a while Tink Woodmancy, brother of Harold, was with us, but not now.

We have been making good progress for the past few days since the Christmas and New Years let-up, and usually are quite ready to turn in when our evening classes are over. However on account of rain and slush and generally unfavorable weather, we did not go out today, but had indoor work instead.

By the way, I am now equipped with a good pair of rubber boots reaching to my hips, so dampness underfoot does not worry me, as it would without them.

This is the third instalment.

This morning we have been having a thorough examination in all the stuff we have been going over during the last few days. Everyone was called up one by one, and marked on what he knew.

It has been so long since I have written that I don't know where to begin. On the day after New Years, we ~~got~~^{had} had quite a little ceremony

with our French instructors. When we met them out on the hills they drew up into line facing our company in fine military style and came to a salute. Then their officer made us a speech wishing us a happy New Year and wishing success and happiness ~~and~~ to ourselves and to our families in America. Our Commanding officer then replied in characteristic American style, by merely, # "wishing them the same", and we took up our day's work.

I have with me your letter of December 7th to Sherman, which is very good except where it dwells on your worrying about his health and condition. This was somewhat depressing to both of us to think of your worrying ~~with~~ out being to reassure you immediately and personally that we are all right. However, we don't blame you for feeling funny after reading Jack's letter in which he incidentally mentions Sherm's cold. That has been a joke for a long time around ^{here}, but I don't blame you for taking it seriously. Sherman and I are both in good health at present. Since about Christmas time I have been feeling better every day.

A few more Christmas packages have come but not any from home. A day or two ago we received some fine home made candy from the Green's of Alfred.

A warm knitted sweater came recently from- of all persons- Mr. R. H. Cole, secretary of the Conn. General, and I was even more surprised when I read a note from him stating that he knit it himself during his idle moments. There is still hope of the boxes from you people getting here if they were good and strong, for such things are arriving every day or so.

Today is a fine bright day, a little colder than any this week but not uncomfortable. There is still a good deal of snow on the ground in spite of the recent thaw.

It is now almost taps. I have just come from French class. The classes are held in the village school room with small desks (for us) and with numerous maps and charts on the wall. One side of the room is draped with the Tricolor and the American flag.

The young son of the family downstairs comes up almost every evening and pays us a visit. His name is René, age 16 years. He likes to look at American magazines that have pictures and to converse as much as possible.

The French mayor asked me last night if I had read the "le grand discours" of President Wilson, meaning his speech to Congress on December 8, on the peace conditions. The Frenchman seemed to approve of it but had the erroneous idea that it was delivered in New York.

Mr. Wiley arrived at ---- the town near ~~the~~ our village yesterday and Jack was given permission to spend the day with him. Mr. Wiley is going to be stationed near here and we all expect to see him soon.

I went into town a week ago but didn't do much. ~~###~~ Possibly may go this Sunday p.m.

Will write again when a chance comes.

With lots of love,

Chandler.

January 21, 1918

Dear Folks:

Last night your letter came dated Dec. 13, and replying to an old one of mine in which I described our billet- the old one. However, last week we moved to a new and much better room- large, high, and light, with plastered red walls. It is easily accessible, being on the second floor in the rear of one of the village cafes. Just now the cafe is closed for a month, on account of some illegal selling of some spirituous liquors. It is a place that is always in trouble with the authorities.

The weather lately has been warm and springlike, especially yesterday and today. There is much discussion as to whether this is really spring or only a January thaw. It looks like the real thing. The snow has all gone and the roads and high ground are temporarily fairly dry.

The best weather we have had and it makes every one feel good.

Yesterday morning we had an inspection but our afternoon was free and I had a great desire to take a walk to a place of great historic interest not far away. No one else was ambitious enough to walk that far, so I started out alone in the direction I thought was right. For part of the way I had a ride in a motor truck but at a certain cross-roads I had an idea that I wanted to turn off the main road, so I gave a jump and landed in the middle of three French soldiers who had just started out from that town for a walk. It turned out that they were going for an afternoon walk to the same point that I was bound for, so I joined and was with them all the rest of the afternoon, answering all the while in my fluent(?) French.

They were Parisians and all fine fellows, the best French privates I have met. Their regiment is a noted one which was decorated at Verdun and has also fought along the Somme, which my friends said was the worst part of the French front on account of the mud. They declared that in eight days they were going into the trenches again.

In an hour or so, after walking crosslots and overhills with a wonderful view, we came to the historic spot which I hardly dare describe. It was thronged with French and American sight seers, officers and men, who now replace the ordinary tourists who used to crowd the places before the war. Together with the Frenchmen I then descended into the village itself where there were more places that must be seen by all visitors. In the register my companions in blue wrote the following under date of January 20, 1918, "Trois poilus du---ieme reg't au promenade avec un corporal Americaine". under which we all signed our names.

About this time I came back from the fifteenth to the twentieth century, brought back by the realization that I had only an hour to get to the railroad, which was several kilometers distant. After saying good bye to the poilus with some regret, I lit out at a good clip, passing

through several small towns, all much alike, until I came in sight of the gare. It was then pretty dark and I was twelve kilos from my home station-fare 20 centimes or fourteen cents. Opposite the station there was a cafe, full of American and French soldiers all of whom were waiting for the 5:17 train, the same as I. In spite of the vehement assurances of the waitresses or barmaids or whatever you call them, that the train wouldn't leave until 6 o'clock, all of the customers filed out at 5:17 and waited in the station until the train came an hour afterwards.

It is time to turn in after a busy day. Sherman and I are both in fine health. With lots of love, Chandler.

Post Scriptum: My government insurance for \$10,000 (mentioned in previous letter) has gone through, and my application bears the number 10841 Better write it down somewhere.

I have Father's good letter enclosing clipping of Wilson's address to Congress.

As far as I can make out we get all of the war news that is given out by the authorities, in our daily papers so that only local news need be enclosed in letters from the U. S. A. C. T. G.