

March 16, 1918

(Carried in gas mask case and added to  
letter of Mar. 25---Post mark-Mar. 28.)

Dear Mother-

Not many days ago I wrote of being at the front and having the opportunity of firing at the enemy and of seeing how it was to be under fire, especially artillery fire, since that is what causes the famous knee-knocking sensation to new troops.

Just now I find myself again in the trenches, but in an entirely different situation from before. We have a very interesting little place here, which I would not be allowed to describe. Altho this is not (at the present instant) what is called a very active sector, yet things are going on all of the time, and whatever is going on we don't have to wait to learn about it in the newspapers, nor even to get it second hand from some runner carrying meals to the infantry through a communication trench. It is an interesting place, and especially as in our little combat group and dug-out, I am "de boss", since my superiors- lieutenant and sergeant- live some distance away, and may only visit us once or twice a day.

Odd snatches of sleep during the daytime are all that we get now and shoes and gas masks are never removed, yet I don't feel half as sleepy as I did ~~at the other place~~ at the other place, where we all had periods of several hours off duty at a time. Where we were before the thing that worried us most was the bad weather. Now our little dug-out is well heated and the weather is fine. Furthermore we are a lot more independant, cooking some of our meals, and eating as much as we want whenever we want (provided the grub keeps coming). The high quality of our eats is the envy of the infantrymen who are with us. For instance, yesterday morning we had bacon and eggs which we fried. Today we had griddle cakes. Our supply of jam, coffee, cheese, etc., is more ample than it was behind the lines.

By the way, our freinds here of the --th infantry are a very good bunch of fellows. You've got to give the infantry credit for taking the most active and dangerous part in the war, especially those on the listening outposts. These fellows drop in on us a good deal and they sure have some interesting things to say.

Did you know a Mr. Simonds who used to be in the assessors office in Hartford- now a second lieutenant? He knows Father- as well as everyone else in Hartford apparently. He likes our dug-out- says it is more comfortable and better ventilated than his own. Also he likes to talk about Hartford, so he spends most of his time conversing with us here. Perhaps you will hear from him later for this reason: during a little bombardment by the Boches this morning a gas shell happened to land and explode in the trench a few yards from our position. A couple of minutes later along comes the lieutenant, and noticing the pieces of shell lying in the trench (the gas shells don't explode with very much force) he poked around until he found the four or five fragments that made up the pointed tip, which relics he handed to his orderly to keep. Now his idea is to have these made into something useful- like a paper weight- as soon as we get out of the trenches, and then send it to Mayor Hagarthy of Hartford with a letter telling of how it fell among the youth of his city, etc. If Lieutenant Simonds carries out this plan it may appear in the papers.

Sherman is back with the rest of the company, in fact only a very small number of men are with us. There is one other corporal whose position is not far from us. In my bunch, I have Hobie Hyde and Harold Kropp. They are asleep here now and so close that I could touch them by reaching up from my own bunk.

Well, we are confident that we could make it interesting for the Boche



before they could get very far in this direction. At any rate the French order for this post read in part "Il doit s'y défendre jusqu'à la mort," and the order hasn't been changed.

I shall probably write again soon,  
Your loving son CHANDLER

March 27, 1918

Dear Folks:

This evening I was just talking to Lieutenant Simonds of Hartford, who was with us up in the line as I wrote before. His infantry is in a town with us now. Also I had a little talk with a Dartmouth 1917 man, whose name I couldn't recall, who is a lieutenant in the same rgt.

Last night Lieutenant Bissell of West Hartford was in town. I saw him but not to speak to.

Now that we are in a permanent place (at least for a day or so--perhaps a few weeks) we are getting some of our back mail which couldn't come to us while we were traveling.

A lot of fellows have received various Hartford newspapers, and it sure is interesting to get all the news, especially the war news describing our own doings at the front. Of course none of this stuff is in the Paris papers, so I request that you send all of the Hartford papers, especially the war news, that you can, because it is better to read this stuff a few weeks late than not at all. This applies to war news, especially that dealing with American troops. I had no idea until now that so many details were appearing in the American press. You probably know what sector we were in and a good deal of what happened, at least this seems to be disclosed in various dispatches that I have seen. However, in the accounts of Hal Eadie's death, the place was given wrong in the Hartford Courant. Eadie was a young Dartmouth lieutenant who was hit by shrapnel and died in a dressing station right next to Sherm's dug-out. It was in nearby sector and the other side of a ruined town. If you want to look up accounts of activities where we took some part they should be about such dates as Feb. 28, March 5th, and March 16 and 17th, especially the latter when I was up with the infantry in the front line. Don't forget to look up "L'illustration" of March 2 which has a drawing of an incident which we were near although we had no part in it ourselves.

Well, the Yankee Division has come through its first chance at the front in good shape and it is rated pretty well. Our own Hartford battalion had the distinction of having no casualties which caused some French to call it the bomb proof battalion. ~~xxxxxx~~ I trust our gun found Germans for some of the several rounds ~~xx~~ that we shot. Only one gun in the company fired more than we did.

Speaking of our division, or rather the American army in general: one afternoon I happened to be standing at our battalion headquarters and noticed several French officers who were watching with interest what was going on--autoes and trucks moving about with supplies, errands, etc., in a busy manner, and our interpreter (or in army slang, our inter-rupter) who happened to be there remarked "Do you know what those officers are saying?" They are just saying, "These men know how to make war." This was at least a compliment for our headquarters (back of the line). I can also say that our American artillery is fine, and were always on the job answering all of the Boche batteries, and putting across a heavy and accurate barrage whenever it was necessary.



xx As for my own part in the life,- the first time I was up it was about half of the company. I wrote home several times while there. We lived in a dugout which was not under much of any enemy fire at the time, and we had to walk some little distance to our firing positions where our guns were. We walked on a path above ground at night unless the Boche were firing in that direction, otherwise through a boyau or communication trench, which made a ~~longer~~ longer trip as the trench was shaped like this ~~XXXXXX~~ 0\_0 0\_0 0\_0 0\_0 0\_0

When we got relieved from our tour of duty we returned to our positions back of the line where we lived in a cave, which I have mentioned before. I wrote a letter from there about March 12th which I wrote in Ed Garrette's dugout. Did you get it?

Just before that I had received orders that three of us- our section sergeant, Sid Rodda, corporal "Pop" Allen, and myself were to return the next day to the front with two machine guns and a small number of men to work them. In this way three of us with our lieutenant saw twice as much service as the rest of the company. The place where we went this trip was down in the front line with our guns set so as to mow down the Boche if they should come across No Man's land. Only the listening posts were ahead of us at various places. We were tight with the infantry and could see and hear everything that was going on, so that we had more excitement in one night there than in a week at our former location and the suspense was several times as noticeable. I wouldn't have missed it for a lot. Pop Allen's gun hadn't been in position for an hour when the German shells began to land around us and one of their 77's went thru the camouflage and wall of his emplacement and then right under the seat of his gun, breaking a piece right out of the tripod and burying itself in the sandbags behind the gun. Luckily it didn't go off or a couple of our men would not be with us now. No shell happened to land quite as near my gun, but they were not many feet away one night, and the Boche machine gun bullets had a habit of whistling around at almost any hour.

We were finally relieved just in time for our party to get back to our cave-home for a few hours sleep before our whole battalion left there for the trip away from the war area. No chance to get a bath. We shaved at railroad station while waiting to entrain.

Since then we have had some great times, and have seen a lot of ~~XXXXXX~~ fine places, but I shall have to postpone that spiel until another letter.

(I have just spotted here in the Y. M. C. A. one of the infantrymen who lived in the little dugout with us at the place which I described above.)

Yours, CHANDLER