

January 20th

Dear Folks:

I am going to make this letter short as this is too good a day to remain indoors long. For the past two weeks it has rained almost continuously, but last night it cleared off and today it is just like March or April. The winter has been so short that the frost couldn't have penetrated very far and things should dry up in a couple of weeks if the rain ceases, which, however, is doubtful. During the rainy season the thick clayey mud makes it very disagreeable as one soon gets literally plastered with it. On entering the billet we have to scrape it off with a knife. The natives don't mind as they wear ponderous wooden shoes which ~~they~~ they leave outside the door when they enter. A census taker would have an easy time in France: merely count the pairs of "sabots" on the doorstep.

The last few <sup>weeks have</sup> days we passed pretty quietly. Our instruction in machine gun tactics is progressing smoothly tho it is rumored that the battalion is to be equipped with a new kind of machine gun soon which will probably prolong our training. And then our captain is still to leave for his term at the officer's school, so we are still quite a way from the trenches. Our daily training varies from practice at the pistol range, drills with the gas masks, of which there are two, the English and the French practice in machine gun manouvers and also in sighting, and last but not least, actual target practice on a thousand inch range. Early this last week three men were taken from each platoon and are receiving instruction in signaling. They are practically the outgrowth of the old agent's squad, and I was one of those chosen. We are known as liason agents and our function will be to do all of the signaling. The nine agents are a fine bunch of fellows and we ought to get along fine together. We practiced four times this last week while the company were trudging around in the mud and probably after a couple of weeks we will spend most of our drill hours signaling.

Chan and I were on guard the other night together. My post was to guard Com any ~~to~~'s machine guns and as that~~s~~ company was preparing to move from town there was plenty going on to make my shift at guard seem short. Also I managed to get in quite a few hours sleep while off duty. The day after we were on guard, we spent on fatigue duty, cleaning the mud off the streets, etc.

Our first box from home arrived about last week. That is Chan's did. And then the night I was on guard a box arrived for me. Chan let me off from the guard house long enough to come up to the billet and open it. It certainly was fine box and came in pretty handy. As for the cake, the fellows ~~proniced~~ pronounced it the best that they had tasted and it surely was. We used the malted milk last night. We got a quart of milk, some some chocolate and we melted the chocolate and mixed some fine drinks, regular Alderman's "chocolate milk shake." The flannel sleeping bag will come in handy later but at present ~~find~~ the weather is too warm.

Well Mother, the fellows here are waiting for me, as we are going out for a walk, so I must close for now. Please send another cake like that last one.

Lots of love from,                      Shern

Monday, January 28th.

Dear Mother:-

Like all good things our mail has been coming in bunches lately, but not very much from you folks. Yesterday I heard from Bob Stecher, Main Sandoe, twice from Ray, Lucile, Arline Hayden, Alacia Wolfe. One nice letter was my only mail from home, and Chan drew a letter from you. The mail last night was very opportune for we certainly were low spirited. We spent the day from very early, till after six at the large machine gun range, twelve miles distant. We are taken in these large auto trucks, to this range where we shoot and maneuver, with all the other machine guns units of the division. When they all get lined up in one large field it certainly is an inspiring sight. Yesterday we were reviewed by the General

himself. I can't tell you how many guns there were, but it made a lot of racket. Today we took up some new stunts such as shooting with gas masks, etc. It was very exciting and enjoyable. Tho we are away from eight till six it is not hard as these trucks take us right to the field. When we get back, the guns have to be cleaned (an hour's job) and then we have to clean up for the next day. As for letters, we don't write any.

Tonight I received two fine packages, one from Uncle Vern and Aunt Mary and a pound box of Louney's from the Dartmouth Boston Alumni. The next letter that I write will be to Aunt Mary for it certainly was a wonderful box. A cake, dozen bars of chocolate, penochi, almonds, large box of candied dates, etc, etc.

Well, taps has blown and I still have lots to do to prepare for tomorrow.

Love to all,

Sherm

P. S. Your surmise in Chan's letter was very warm. Write often.