

August 20, 1918.

Dear Mother and Dad;

I suppose you have been anxious on account of few letters lately. The truth is, we have been on the line both in the firing line and reserve ever since July 8th and I just have had to write whenever I get the chance. Good news!. Our Division expects in six days to go back to a huge rest camp. There to rest up, retrain, get new equipment and fill up our ranks, also to get rid of the cooties. Fully 2/3 of the men are alive with them and it is quite comical watching fellows looking over their shirts for cooties. Every once in a while they have, all together, a cootie hunt in which armies of them are killed. They come mostly from not being able to take our clothes off, which often happens for weeks at a time.

On Sister's birthday I was just coming out of the line after being under a four day incessant artillery fire. It did no harm to us except to prevent us from sleeping and getting the grub carts up. They always come up at night and sometimes never reach us owing to such heavy fire. You see the Boche keep up an incessant fire on all paths, roads and woods, in which troops may be quartered, guns implaced or roads in use. This makes it pretty hard for us at times in the grub line. Several times we only could get one warm meal in every 36 or 48 hours. The rest was eaten mostly of cold canned goods. The American army issues to us a small pint can called canned heat, which we just put a match to and heat our coffee or beans by. I had some very nice toasted bread and jam just before our relief came in.

Thinking of Sister's birthday reminds me of two years ago down at Wildwood. The very pleasant time I had. I am very glad you and Mother are at the shore, it will do you both worlds of good. I received a very nice letter from Aunt Lottie. I answered it at once. At that time she spoke about Dad staying with her while you went to Boston. It is much better for both of you that you are at the shore. It makes things better all around. Maybe next summer I will be able to be with you and then "Oh my!" what a time we will have.

Just now I am way up on top of a mountain with my shirt off and my back against a tree writing this letter, while I wait any signals from two aeroplane observers, who are on the lookout for enemy planes. Upon sighting a plane they give the alarm to me and I blow a call to the men down in the valley, which is a signal for everybody to get under cover and keep out of sight. This helps us to keep our position secret and safe from "Jerr's" shells and bombs. We have knicknamed the Boche "Jerry" that is always what we call him. Passed a grave yard yesterday in which two hundred (Jerry's) were buried. I also walked along two railways which the Germans had built while they occupied the French territory. They are almost back now to the old Von Hindenbur line. There we will have a huge job on our hands.



Have you received the letter with the Colonel's signature in it. Be sure and send the air cushion pillow. If you can't send it direct, just transfer through Wanamaker's in Paris, they have them.

Remember send papers and magazines. Tell Bill, he will be glad to send me a Top Notch or Adventure magazine. They come in very handy even in the Trenches when Jerry stops Hell and gives us Heaven.

Remember me to everybody and many congratulations to you Dad on your birthday, the 18th of September. This will, I hope, reach you by then. I am well and happy.

Ever Lovingly,  
Howard.

P. S. -- About the time you get this I will be 21 years of age But no danger leaving home when I come back. I will be glad for Dad and you to take care of me until ~~xxx~~ maybe some day when I get married.