

July 18, 1918.

Dear Mother and Dad;

Received last night your letter of the 24th of June and it certainly came at a time when I needed it the most. The news it contained made me very happy and contented to think my letters are appreciated so much. It was the only thing I needed to brace me up and believe me I needed bracing very badly. Since last Sunday night I have been under a continuous rain of shells from the German batteries on the opposite side of the hill. Also to make things worse a continuous machine gun and gas shell firing followed by heavy rains. On the line here, we have rain every hour, due to the artillery. This also made worse by dozens of German planes dropping bombs on us only inches away. This warfare is quite exciting. At first I was scared nearly stiff and jumped as though shot when shells went off near me. Now I am getting somewhat used to them and when I hear a wiz, I just duck flat on my stomach and lay a few seconds after the shell has struck. I have had shells strike only 20 feet away, not touching anybody in our party. Also had an airbomb drop within 25 feet; except for showering us with dirt it did no further harm. Day before yesterday a shell hit only 15 feet away from me, knocking me flat on my back and making me lose a whole plate of honest to goodness American beans.

I certainly think God is protecting me, because many have left us for good, including our Y. M. C. A. man Mr. Murry, who was hit by an exploding shell as he came from the Hospital where he was helping our wounded boys.

Last night we had a fearful wind, rain and electric storm. It was something awful. To-day we are drying out and trying to get some sleep before to-night's activities. Yesterday for the first time I saw huge tanks in action. I also saw several aeroplane battles in which one plane crashed to the ground, coming down in circles and the other two came in a huge cloud of flame and smoke. Yesterday they brought five hundred German prisoners past us. taking them to the rear. A lot of the boys got souvenirs from them, as they all were made to turn out their pockets.

I would be glad if you would show this letter to Grandma and Aunt Florie and Aunt Annie. I can't possibly get time to write to them. Nevertheless let them read it and give them my love.

I received a very nice cheerful letter from Mr. Jarrett. Do you remember me stating of writing to him? He let all the Edson bunch read my letter so he must have liked it.

I would be glad if you would show this letter to Mr. McIlhenny and Mr. De Cray. I am sure they would enjoy them. It is too bad about the smokes, but it cannot be any different. If the Major must sign them, I can't get his signature and he is too busy now. Have you tried J. Wanamakers yet?

Remember me to everybody and tell them I will try and write.

Ever lovingly,
Howard

Remember I am well and happy