

June 21st, 1918.

Dear Mother and Dad;

Just received wonderful piece of luck. The American Y. M. C. A. opened an American Base Canteen or store. To clap the climax they paid us last night. I bought one box of cigars, half pound pipe tobacco, penknife and some chocolate bars, "French". This morning they are entirely sold out. I even was able to buy American matches. The fellows have nearly gone mad, as it is the first pay they have received since April 15th. They only gave us one month, but we will be paid again in five days.

We are now training with a French Battalion who just came out of the trenches. They were among the men who held the Germans at the point leading to Paris in their last great drive. They are fine men and still full of fight. A number of them have won the French War Cross, which is the highest order in the French Army given.

In some of my travels I passed over the battle ground of 1914 where the Germans drove within 14 miles of Paris. I have been in those trenches and through some of the old bob wire entanglements. In some of our maneuvers we used a machine gun emplacement built by the French 35 feet up a tree. I gave command of three roads. I also climbed over a road block of earth, about 35 feet thick with steps and machine gun emplacements used and built by the Germans. It blocked the main road to Paris.

We are now stationed in a huge barn adjoining a magnificent chateau. The owner has been killed and his son is a Lieutenant in the French Army. In another chateau I had a swim in an artificial lake in the grounds. It was a wonderful place, but has been neglected for four years. The people in our billett certainly have some wonderful stock. They use oxen as means of locomotion. They have some fine breeding horses and sheep. Nearly all the stock has been used by the Government. The big hay teams are drawn by oxen. They are tremendous animals.

This afternoon I met a Belgium refugee who spoke English fairly, German, French and Belgium. Using three of the lingos I managed to carry on a good conversation with her.

This past week we have had very poor weather, heavy rains at intervals all day. We drill rain or shine generally in raincoats. To-day aeroplane guns were firing nearly all day, put up a heavy barrage around our division. Planes with mounted machine guns patrol our drill field all day. At night the sky is swept by huge searchlights.



About a week ago I saw a wonderful night air raid on a railroad and provision center repulsed. The sky was rent by shrapnel and shells, also streaked with beams from searchlights. Shrapnel fell all around us and was picked up for souvenirs.

Retreat will soon sound and I must mail my letter. Sunday expect to receive more mail.

I hope and pray daily for close of war and to see home. I am in good health and happy. There is no cause for worry. This is straight and take the right meaning. The rest I can't put into words.  
Good bye, with love,

Your ever loving and devoted son,

Howard.

Tell all to write as mail is a tonic only we can appreciate. I have not the time myself to write often.

P.S.--- Send watch if possible. Mine blown to pieces.