

113 F. A.

June 16, 1918.

Dear Folks:

We are in France and nowhere near the battle line. In fact I think they are going to let us tell you just where we are, and I would tell you now, but that the order allowing us to do so has not officially reached us yet.

And believe me, we are glad to be here. Crossing the waves from France to England the men had no place to sleep except on the floor & deck of the boat. The night we spent near the French port was anything but comfortable for men or officers as all except me had to sleep on the floor, and the only reason I had a cot was that I was quite sick that day and the day before. Also we did not have our own blankets so had the English outfit in the camp issue us two apiece which were not nearly enough as it was quite cold, and besides the blankets were so old that we imagined "cooties" were in them - and you know what imagination can do. Col. Cox and the Majors all had the floor for a couch. The men were in round tents so small that they slept around the pole like spokes in a wheel thusly -
Floor of tent (drawing). One man said they had to stack feet. The next night which was night before last they spent sitting upright in French R. R. Cars. We were on the train over 24 hours getting here. The night we were at the port camp almost all the men heard the big guns of the offensive. I did not as I was beginning to get better and slept quite well indeed.

And right here let me pay my respects to Mr. Mercurious Calomel. He is the gentleman that put me on my feet. When I really began feeling wretched I took other things, many other things but they played me false. Then I remembered the time I came back from Ft. Monroe in the same fix and how old man Mercurious helped me then, so I goes to my physician and tell him I wants him to call in Mr. Calomel on the case. He agrees to do so, and after a few very sick hours I am a well man again. Well too - for though still a little weak yet I am feeling better than I have since leaving Sevier. I know people do not usually introduce Mr. Calomel thus publickly into good society, but in the Army he associates with the best and enters into high society. In fact I hear that General Health often consults him. I know Mr. Good Liver feels under obligation to him.

I have seen some things in France I have seen before and many things I had not. I had landed in the French port before. Also I had travelled over the part of the road we travelled before. I had spent part of a summer in a good size city we came through. Never have I seen France look so beautiful as she did yesterday and the day before. Except for the absence of men, the presence of German prisoners working at certain points, and the guarding of bridges and tunnels you could hardly tell war was on. We have seen scarcely any British and French soldiers, and not so very many American. But as far as we can see, which is not very far - our troops are going to measure up well, and our way of handling camp & transportation situations equal

and excel anything else in that line. This is the only American & the only decent camp we have seen since coming over.

I am proud of Tom. He is a good soldier and he never kicks wrongfully. He is a good man to have in a Battery. He is not only clean, morally I mean - none of us were clean any other way until this morning - but he is cheerful and willing. The other day at the port camp, after he had been on guard part of the night before and had slept on deck what little sleeping he had done, I went down to see him. He was curled up on the ground with his head on his bedding roll which weighs about 70 lbs & which he had carried from the dock to the camp - about four or five miles. He was asleep, but waked up when I called his name. I asked how he had fared the night before. With one eye closed he squinted up at Capt. Morrison and me and said - "Fine, after coming off guard I managed to stay on the deck so could sleep some." How he slept on a wet deck with only three blankets and a shelter half is more than I can see.

We arrived at the station four miles from this camp about six-thirty yesterday & the Y.M.C.A. was there to serve coffee & sandwiches. Tom was selected on the detail and we saw him hurrying past ladened with big iron tubs of coffee. The Y.M.C.A. here, by the way, is on to its job and doing fine work. At some of the other camps we saw they were not so good.

I did not try to have a religious service today for the regiment, but sent word, or took it rather, for the men to attend the Y.M.C.A. service at 10:30. Quite a sizable crowd from our regiment went. Next Sunday we are going to have a service

regimental, in the Y.M.C.A. I find that all three of the secretaries are Presbyterians. It seems to me that more of our men are going into that work than any other church - that is for the size of our church.

We do not know how long we will train here, but I imagine that a few weeks will see us moving up close to the front. I have an idea that Foch and Pershing expect to use the Americans in a big counter-offensive sometime before the snow falls. Many expect the war to be over by Christmas a year, but I can see no grounds for their hopes. Personally I feel greatly relieved that the German drive is temporarily checked, and think that if the Allies can sustain the next attack that it will then be a question o(f) time before Germany will have to either yield slowly or hurriedly. This is undoubtedly her greatest effort and if it has failed or does fail the ball will begin rolling the other way.

By the way - You get as much news as we do, absolutely. Hope all are well.

~~I love you all dearly. Am finding out anew how much I do love you.~~

Devotedly,

Ben.

Please write to me - No mail yet & 3 wks today since embarking.

Addressed:

Mr. B. R. Lacy,
Raleigh, N. C.
Les Etata Unis.

O.K.
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1st Lt.