

"WITH THE COLORS!"

Y.M.C.A.

113 F. A.

American E. F.

Sept. 6, 1918.

Dear Father and Mother and Sisters:-

This should really be a letter to Father alone if I were "counting" letters for he has written me three and Tom three since I have seen a letter from any of the rest of you. And believe me it was good to get them. They are the only letters from America I got in the last two mails. The last one was written on Aug. 11th and the one before it on July 30th. I am convinced there are some letters lost somewhere. The last one I got from ^{Blank} Emma was posted on July 28th so you see we are not exactly swamped with mail over here. In fact the mail system is about the most inefficient thing in the A.E.F.

The service of supplies over here has greatly surprized me. We all always kicking about something, and we get pretty tired of canned stuff, but we get enough of good wholesome food to keep us well and strong. And once in a while we get nice beef and mutton. In the gun pits it is a little hard to get things just right, especially on account of smoke giving the position away, but even there they live ^(well) (good) enough.

We have seen some pretty air work around here. I wrote about an aviator bringing three sausage balloons down one after another. Day before yesterday another was brought down along this front. The aviator hung way above it out of sight almost, but the anti got busy, and the balloon was hauled towards the earth. The air man did a nose dive for thousands of feet it seemed circled the balloon firing with his machine gun until it was in fire. The two observers jumped & came sailing down in their parachutes. Then as the aviator turned to flee to safety two planes which had been climbing to get above him dived in pursuit and shot at him until over the front line trenches. While around the balloon an intense bombardment was carried on by the anti-aircraft cannons.

Yesterday I went again to a forward observation post. This time to a different one and looked over at the German lines. The villages along the front on both sides are absolutely shell riddled, and I doubt if in these villages I visited yesterday there is one house not torn up. All who live there live in cellars, and of course very few are there except soldiers. Near one village quite close to the front some southern negroes were working when the Germans shelled a road near them. They dove in in short order, and they say it took their corporal several hours to find them again.

A few nights ago I was at one of our battery positions, and just after I left to go back to one of the little destroyed villages, the enemy turned loose two flare stars. 'Twas amazing how completely they lighted the landscape. The signals along

the front at night are interesting to me who enjoys fireworks.

Am having trouble getting any writing material for the men. The K. of C. Y.M.C.A. and Salvation Army all ran out. Now the K. of C. only has any. Am going down after dinner & try to get some more from them.

The Salvation Army is doing great work up here. They have ladies over, who make pies and doughnuts, and nothing does more to remind men of home than those same pies and dough-nuts. All these agencies are crowded in little houses and places here, but all are doing their bit. They have trouble getting supplies up near the front, and the men are so anxious for anything of that kind, sweets and tobacco.

Because of striking matches at night many men decided to take to chewing tobacco. But the trouble with that is that a gas alarm may be sounded at any moment, and then the man with the chew and a masque on is considerably out of luck.

In your letter to Tom, Father, you advised him to cultivate his letter writing habit. I have censored only one of his, and he certainly has the talent. His captain told me he wrote the most interesting letter in the Battery, and if I get a fair sample I would say that he certainly does. Before you wrote him I told him to cultivate the gift that he has along that line.

No doubt the reason my letters go so much quicker than his is that I censor my own and send them as soon as written. Tom's have to be censored by an officer. We are short of them in our regiment and with several hundred letters to read I guess the officers get behind at times. If Tom would bring his letters to me I would send them off at once, but he doesn't take the trouble

to bring them around, though I am only a few hundred yards from him.

So Frances is thinking of coming over! She will find a whole lot of real hard work, and not much romance about it either. Along the road coming up we passed the Red Cross Stations where they gave us coffee and sold us dough-nuts and sandwiches. 'Twas good to see the American girls although they are always too busy for you to talk to them long for your train soon pulls out and they make coffee for the next ones. I imagine Frances will freeze to death over here this winter, but still she wont have to be in a dug out or bivouac.

Have about told all I an tell. Hear that Stuart McQuire's hospital unit is near us. I'd like to see Thomas Boushal and some of the other boys. Maybe I will later on.

Lots of love to all. Oh yes - Don't send any 2nd class mail except magazines, Sat. Evening Post preferred. Something with stories. If any interesting news in papers cut out clippings and send them along.

Again, lots of love,

Ben.

O.K. B. R. Lacy Jr.,
Chaplain 113 F.A.

Addressed:

Mr. B. R. Lacy,
Raleigh, N. C.
U.S.A.

Censored by
B. R. Lacy Jr.,
Chaplain, F.A.