

Downers Grove Reporter

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"And The Star Spangled Banner Forever Shall Wave, O'er The Land of The Free and The Home of The Brave."



LETTERS FROM DOWNERS GROVE SOLDIER BOYS

JOHN BRYAN HAS BEEN "OVER THE TOP"

Somewhere in France June 21, 1918.

Dear Mother:

I am going to write to you again, as it has been a long time since you heard from me, and I know how you feel when you get one.

Just now the boys are singing: "Wonder how the old folks are at home." And it makes me think it is a long time since I wrote you. The 2nd Div. was relieved from the front line, it wasn't the trenches this time, but what they call "open warfare" it sure was a great experience for me. No doubt by the time you get this letter you will see by the papers what good work the 5th and 6th Regts. Marines did. One thing, I am glad of, that on the morning of the 8th of June, we went over the top, and believe me, we made the Germans retreat. The 3rd platoon, the one I am in, took a machine gun strong, hold of the Germans, without losing a man, but lost some later. There are about 28 left out of our platoon, and I think we will get a medal of honor.

You sure have to shake hands with this 6th company. We have given ourselves a good record and we are going to keep it going till we come back home. God was with me this time, as I asked him to spare me for the sake of my dear folks at home I've learned to look to him.

L. A. Overton took the 76th Co. over the top and there wasn't a man who wouldn't follow him. We sure were glad, when our platoon leader, and he was going to lead us there, we were all raving to go. I was lucky and didn't get wounded by shrapnel, but got a good dose of gas. But I stuck out, a few got gassed but I had made up my mind that they would have to carry me away, before I would leave, as I knew it was my duty to be one of them to hold the Germans from breaking through, after we had driven them back.

There is a lot more I would like to say, but it would be breaking the censor's order and that I won't do.

Will close for this time hoping you are all well and may God take care of you all until I return, as my highest ambition is to return from this great war. I am as ever,

Your loving son,
John.

Dear Mrs. Bryan:

Our company "76" has certainly been through ten days of strenuous as well as dangerous work, and I am glad I can say it has made a name, not only for itself, but me, as a Co. Commander as well. You can't imagine how I do take pleasure in writing to the Mothers of the boys in my company, because they are doing such good work and braving every danger that comes up; they deserve worlds of credit. I take pleasure again in telling you, your boy has done splendid work, and is very eager to do more. His work has been very faithful and he has performed his duties most diligently.

Don't worry, I will take good care of him as long as he is under my command.

His Co. Commander,
M. C. Overton, 1st Lt.,
U. S. M. C.

LETTER WRITTEN BY ED. PFAFF BEFORE SAILING

Camp Crane, Allentown, Pa. My Dear Folks:

I received your letter this morning and was glad to hear the news from home, and now I guess that you have expected to hear that we will be going for so long that it will surprise you a little bit to know that we really are.

I am quite sure that before the sun rises tomorrow morning it will find us on our way, and you know, dear folks, how anxiously we have awaited the day. I have very little time to write now as I waited as long as I could to write you all that

I could. Now please don't worry about us, for you know that whatever is best, God will care for us, on sea as well as on land.

I wish I could write you a real good letter tonight but am really too much rushed and of course, feel quite thrilled to think that we really are going and I know you understand how lonely I am for you all at times but dare not let myself be down-hearted in such times as these.

We surely are well equipped, have everything almost that one can think of to make us comfortable, and have been taught to take every precaution possible in taking care of ourselves, our health and everything.

I am enclosing a letter read to us in a Y. M. C. A., service, you remember the first one I wrote to you about, when I first came here. The Y. M. C. A. speaker read it to us and I thought it so good that after the service I went up to him and asked him to let me have a copy of it, which he gladly did, and I have been saving it since then for this occasion and I think it the most wonderful letter I ever read. And it is as near to what I would like to say as anything could be. It is a letter written by an English Aviator to his widowed Mother just before going into battle in the morning. It is so wonderfully worded, plain spoken and yet very comforting I think, especially this paragraph: "I have been looking at the stars tonight and thinking what an insignificant thing the loss of say forty years of life is compared to them, it seems scarcely worth talking about."

It certainly is a great comfort to know that you folks all feel as you do, and it makes it so much easier for me, for all of you to keep up your courage and keep strong and well, is going to help me to get back home again more than any other thing that could be done for me. I know that you miss me just as much but to know that you can send me away with a "cheer and a smile" will help me face conditions that it will be necessary to do with the same spirit. And I hope to see you all looking as nearly the same as the lapse of time will permit until I see you again.

Well, good night, dear folks. I know you are too proud to worry, for we will be alright I know.

Your loving son,
Edwin Pfaff.

The following is the letter referred to by Ed. in his letter:

"I am writing this letter just before going into battle about dawn in what ought to be the biggest battle yet fought in France, one which ought to help end the war quickly."

"I am writing you this letter in case I am one of the costs and get killed. I do not expect to be, but such things have happened and are always possible."

"I never felt more calm and cheerful in my life, before and every officer and man is ready to do his duty. It is impossible to fear death out here, when one is no longer an individual, but a member of a regiment and army. To be killed means nothing to us. It is only you who pay the costs."

"I have been looking at the stars tonight and thinking what an immense distance they are away; what an insignificant thing the loss of say forty years of life is compared to them. It seems scarcely worth talking about."

"Well, good-bye, you darling. Try not to worry about it and remember we shall meet again really quite soon."

ALEX GOLLAN'S FIRST LETTER FROM FRANCE

In France, June 19, 1918.

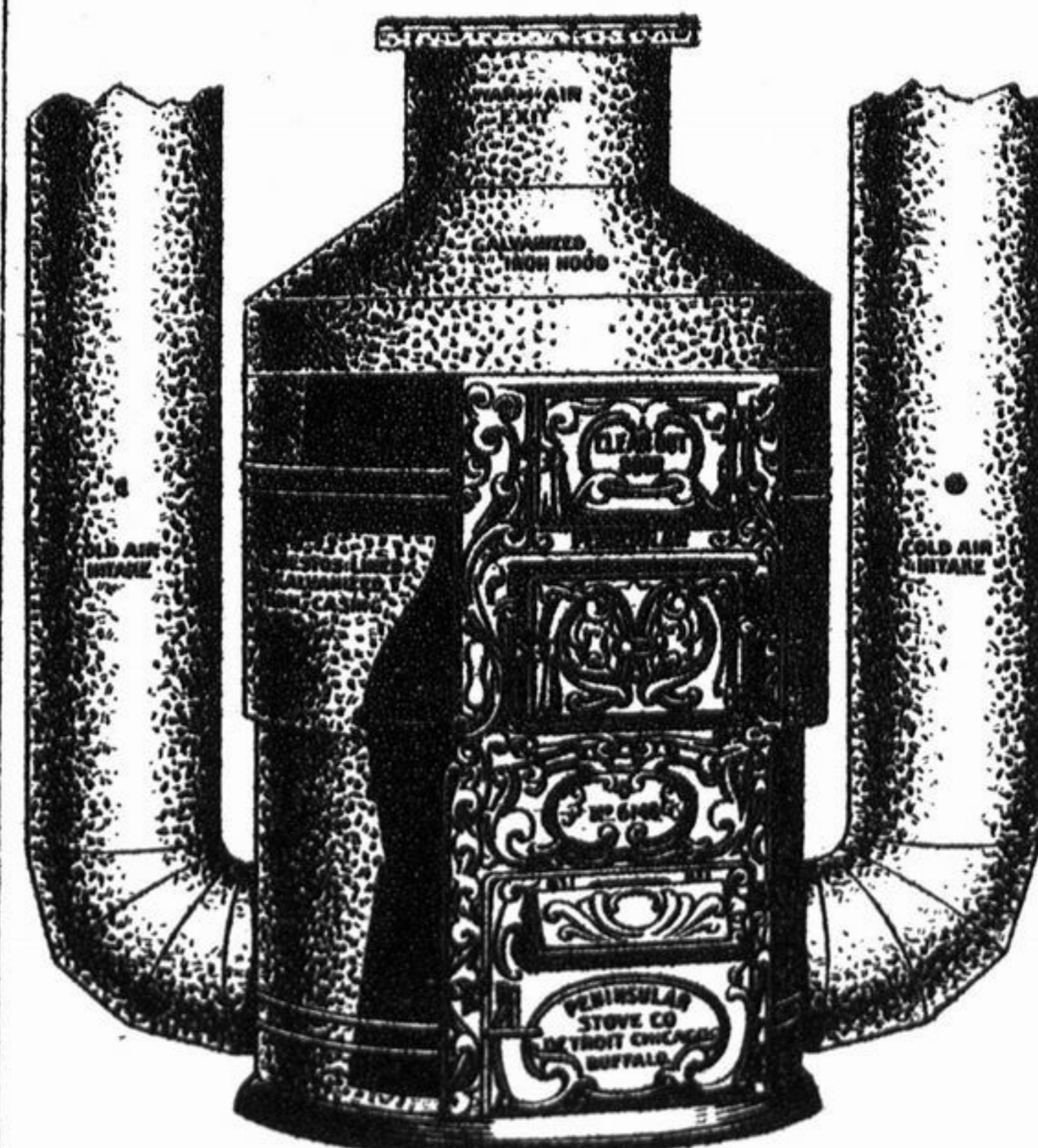
Dear Mother:

I suppose you have received the card announcing the safe arrival of our ship here, and your anxiety has been relieved, somewhat. We had a pretty pleasant trip across, considering everything. Some days the ocean was so calm you could hardly see a ripple. The first Friday night and Saturday we were out our company were on watch and I was seasick the whole 24 hours. Throwing up about once every 15 minutes.

It was my first touch of soldiering, for the naval officer instructing us in our duties told us "not to call for a relief if we were merely sea-sick, for we weren't sick we were merely feeling hum." Well I can say I felt mighty bum and couldn't eat anything. But after that got along nicely.

On account of the enemy and not wanting to give him any information he might be able to use, we can't give you folks details such as the ship we sailed on or when or the length of time it took us to come across.

We are in this camp only for a couple of days and then we move to some other camp for training. The climate here seems to me much cooler than in the States. The country though is beautiful and the French have every bit of the fertile soil un-



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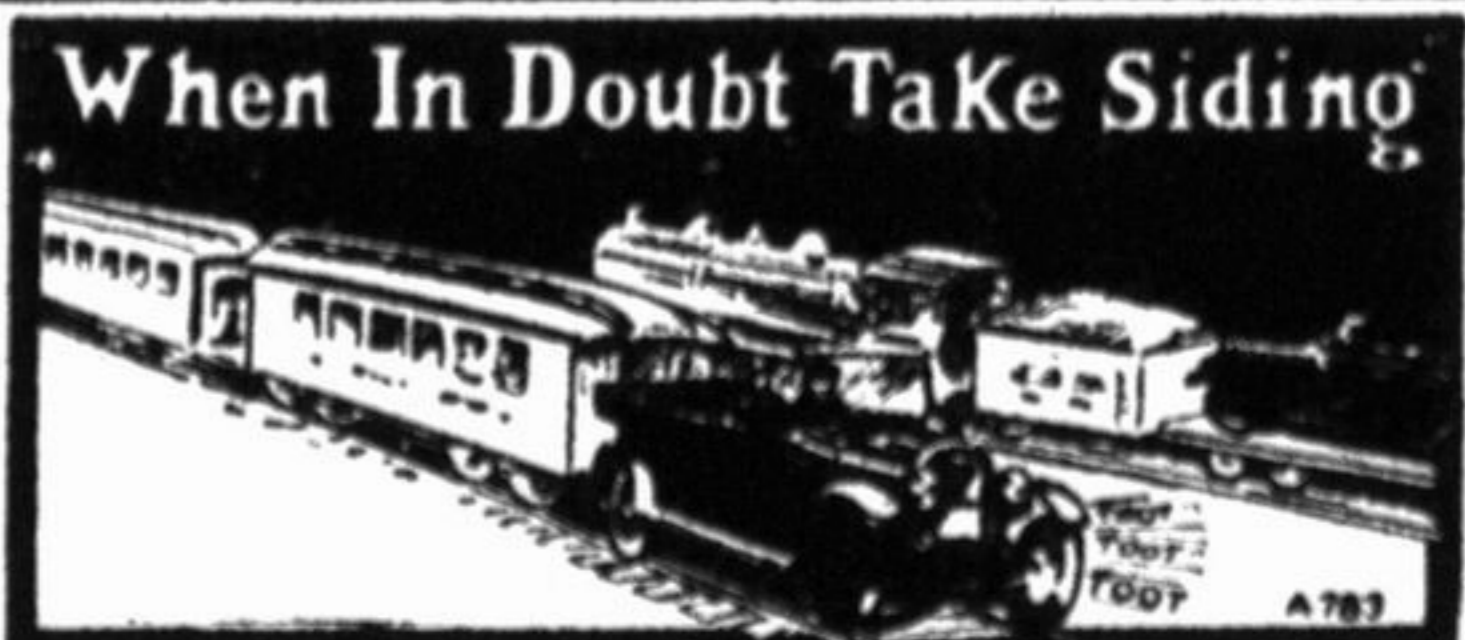
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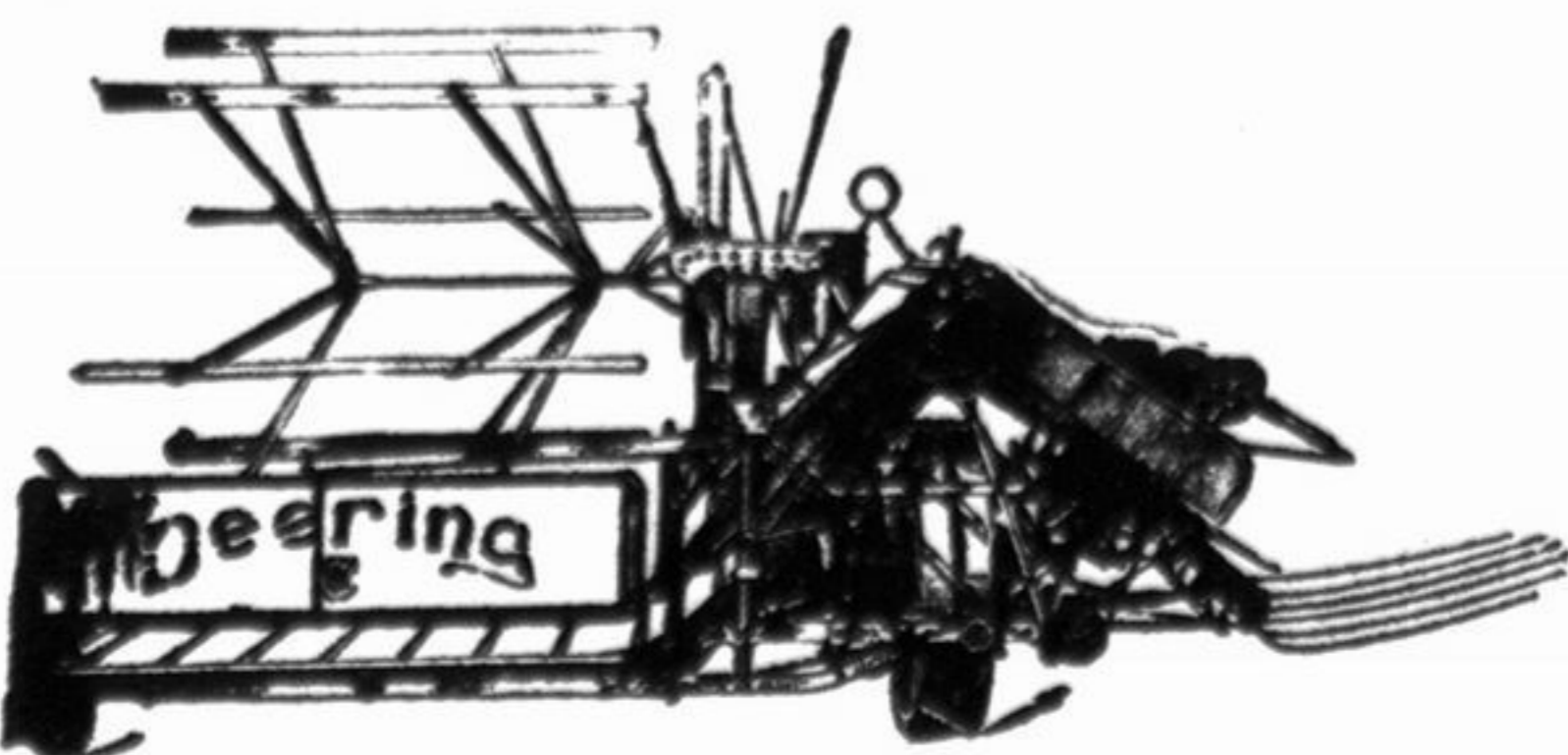
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JOHN CAIRD MET JOHN BRYAN "OVER THERE"

Somewhere in France.

Dear Mother:

Am taking this opportunity to write before going for the Boche.

Am feeling fine and "ravin to go."

Met Buck (John) Bryan a few minutes ago. If anybody in Downers Grove thinks that they are not represented tell them that old Buck is recommended for a Croix du Guerre and a medal of honor. Before I saw him I saw some of his Buddies and they told me about him. He sure gets credit from his platoon and

used to it, and so far I am holding up alright. It sure shows the yellow streaks and also the manhood in the fellows.

This is a very rushed letter and if I don't get it in it will be quite a while before you hear from me. Will write as soon as relieved.

Buck and I are going to keep track of each other, so if either one gets bumped off you folks at home will know that we are taking care of each other. Buck is skinny but he sure is a man. We are coming home together some day. He'll have his little old medals and I'll try my best to have some to match.

Lots of Love,
John Caird.

On to Him.
"I can't live properly on \$75 a week," complained the young man. "Yes, you can," said his guardian. "The real trouble is you want to live improperly."

Too Much Thought of Self.
"Sometimes," said Uncle Eben, "a man thinks so much about his own comfort that he makes hisself puffyky miserable."