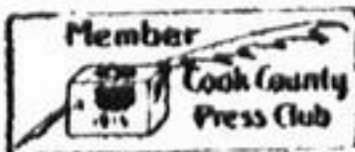


Downers Grove Reporter

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C. H. STAATS, EDITOR

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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

LIEUT. T. H. SLUSSER IN THE "BIG SHOW"

August 9, 1918. There is so much to tell you if I could write it all it would take me days to finish it all. I have been in the "Big Show" on the front north of Chateau Thierry. My last station in the line was on the banks of the river Vesle and I had the honor of going into action for the first time in the taking of the village of Georges, which I believe the papers mentioned as a somewhat brilliant affair.

August 10, 1918. When we came to the Chateau Thierry sector an order came out, cutting down the officer's baggage to 35 pounds each. This meant of course leaving bedding rolls behind. Accordingly I hunted around and found me an enlisted man's haversack and pack carrier and put into it all the private papers I had with me, etc. I also rolled up one of my O. D. blankets in a half of a shelter tent and was ready to move.

I carried this pack until we made the attack on the village of Georges. It was very hot and we had to go quite a distance through the woods. We were not told that we were going to make an attack and when I saw that there was something unusual going on I simply had to strip it off and leave it behind. I was also carrying a rifle and the heat was terrific.

We were then in the line of supports and swung out of the woods into a large open field sloping down towards the village. As we got down close to the village we ran into considerable machine gun fire and lay down to avoid it. Several of my men were hit in the thigh, the bullet coming out at the knee.

The only possible place where the fire could be coming from was the partially ruined church tower, facing us, over which the Germans had hoisted the Red Cross. We opened fire on it and things quieted down a little.

We then went into the town and located ourselves close up against a bank which afforded some protection on the other side of the town. Here we were shelled steadily for three or four hours, until dark. Several of our men were hit.

The next morning at 3:30 a. m. we went over the top in a big attack on Pelger Woods. My platoon was in first wave. I cannot tell you all about it now in detail but our platoon was finally forced to fall back and we suffered heavily from machine gun and shell fire. The only time I was touched was when some kind of a splinter cut a small gash on my right temple.

Our objective was gained anyway in spite of a temporary set-back and from then on (from July 31) to August 8, we were marching or holding supporting positions in the rear of the retreating Germans, up to the banks of the River Vesle.

Two days after the first afternoon's fighting I went back to the place where I had left my pack, hoping to find it. But I had no success. There were enough packs and personal belongings to equip a division, but I could find no trace of mine.

One thing which is so different from what you would imagine. I must tell you as it gives an interesting insight on life with the infantry, following up a retreating enemy. In the matter of sleeping at night, everyman hunts for some hole in the ground—a ditch will do, the deeper and narrower, the better, and if it is not deep enough, make it so. Why? For protection against shelling—it takes almost a direct hit to get you and direct hits are hard to get. Also in a ditch you are more concealed

from aerial observation and hostile planes have an unpleasant habit of coming over early in the morning before anyone is awake and shooting a few strings of machine gun bullets. Now, I have talked all about the war I can stand and probably more than is good for you. I hope that I have not told you too much for your own good and peace of mind. You must not think that the men in the infantry are in desperate peril, all the time. They are not—only occasionally is there much danger. So do not take the few high lights I have given you and construct the whole picture out of them.

On thing which gave me a great deal of satisfaction—I "found myself" with my men.

I begged, borrowed and stole food for them from other outfits. Our Commissary was very poor and we had but two cooked meals in ten days. Other outfits were better. Then a big shell tore a hole in the road near my platoon. An artillery kitchen fell in the hole and was abandoned temporarily at least. It had half a keg or so of ground coffee on it. We took most of it and for two mornings I made coffee for the boys, (when the rest of the company had none) in a big can, down in the smouldering ruins of some farm buildings, set on fire by the Germans.

Excerpts from letters written by Lieutenant Harry Slusser to his family.

LACEY WRITES WHILE SHELLS PASS OVER

Somewhere in France, Aug. 9, 1918. My dear Brother, Sister and Hubert: Have received several of your letters containing various pictures you have taken, and will say that I am mighty glad to receive them.

Now I have not written home very often the last month, but as often as I could, as we have been very busy. My mail keeps coming in but have not been able to answer any until now. I have a stack of it and do not know when I will be in position to take care of it.

The last two nights we have had a chance to sleep, being disturbed only by our alert calls three or four times each night. But that is nothing to us now, as we just reach for our masks and have them ready for any future alarm, and off to sleep we go. I am starting this letter with the intention of having plenty of time to finish it but do not know the outcome. There is so much to write about in such a short time that one hardly knows what to write first. Was glad to receive Carrie's letter a couple of days ago along with several others from home and friends. Right now the Hun shells are passing over my head singing their merry songs, and I am glad that they are going over and not stopping to tell me their mission.

We are located on quite a hill and to the right of us is a six inch battery, and to the left our own which, when being fired makes it impossible to hear your own voice while trying to talk. But sleep, say, I can sleep right through it all. Say, but I am glad I am here; I would not miss it for anything. Yes, we have hardships galore, but that makes you feel all the better after it is all over. Have seen some great sights, sickening and otherwise. Just think of holding ground just taken from the Huns a couple of days ago, and that is what we have done, and some in less time than that. We do not know what retreat is. Our slogan is "ALWAYS ADVANCE", and hope it always will be.

One of the girls asked me how we made the French people understand that is very simple to us now. All

of us can use a few French words and some speak fairly well. You asked when we work all night if we handle ammunition. Yes, we do, and sometimes have to go a long way after it. The distance does not matter what we want cooked, etc. Why, if it only does the desired work when once fired from the gun. Oh, yes, I was going to say where we are at present and have been for a month or so, there are no civilians so we cannot have our "French-fried" and eggs, etc. but wait until we get another chance at them. Our mess at present is very good but have practically no drinking water, and what little is used is boiled or else doped with chemicals. Have not had a bath for a long time, but this afternoon if I can get hold of a little water will take a real bath. If I don't the cooties will be making nests on my hide.

Received a letter from Frank Dewey this a. m. and he and Rube Dimer met George Staiger in a Y. M. C. A. just shortly, but they are a long way from here. Would like to see them as well as the others over here.

Florence wrote that she has ordered from England two boxes of candy sent me but so far have not received them. Seems funny as others have received packages from there and Paris.

We are expecting to be relieved at almost any time now, and then to a rest camp. Say that sounds good to us, and it can't come any too soon. Only hope we won't be called back until our full time is over. Now this has been quite a long letter and it will have to be for all the dear ones at home, as my time is very limited. Hope the rush will soon be over.

Oh, Yes I might add that I have been made acting corporal of a section which adds more work. Guess I am nearly as busy as you are. How about it? Am feeling fine and dandy. Oceans of love for you all. I am your loving brother.

Gilbert R. Lacey

EXCERPTS OF LETTERS FROM EARL DOWNER

Dear Mother: I will write a few lines to let you know I arrived safe in France and I wasn't scolded at all. The weather is nice and I hope it is there top. The country looks pretty. I hope you received my last letter I sent.

I haven't seen any of the boys from Downers Grove yet but I hope to soon. Did you do your threshing yet? I suppose you are awful busy. I am getting along fine. You don't get many letters now but don't worry, you will get a few.

Did you hear from Johnny? I wish I knew where he was but I will look for him. You know I can't tell you all I would like to. How are Fred and the boys getting along? I guess Carl will be having a great time this summer. I hope Pa is getting along good with his work, know it is hard for him with it all to do also.

It seems as if it was two years since I saw you but I hope I will again soon. Tell the folks around there I haven't forgotten them even if I am far away.

Well as I am writing on my mess kit it makes it hard and I have written all I can think of this time. Write as often as you can for that is the best news of all that comes from home and I will get it even if it does take a long time. The wheat looks good here but the fields are small. Well I must close now. Good bye and God bless you, as ever.

Dear Mother and Father:

I will write you a few lines to let you know I am all right and hope you are to. I was out to take a swim in river near here and that is the only way we have of taking a bath. There are a lot of blackberries along the road but very few apples. Don't forget to send the Reporter if you can.

Does Carl come over to see you? I suppose he comes alone now and helps Pa with the work. Well as it is getting late I must bring this letter to a close, hoping to hear from you soon.

Yours truly, Earl (Downer)

REHM SEES THRILLING AIR BATTLE

France, Aug. 14, 1918.

Dear Folks: At last we have moved from our old office and am stopping here for the day and night. We intend to move closer to the lines to-morrow, at one time we were quite close to the lines but the Jerries have been pushed back so far we must move in order to supply our men who are following.

We got a dandy delivery of mail today, in which I received one letter from John, one from Harvey, one from Margaret, two from Lee and several others. I don't think I have any complaints to make about the mail, do you? A week or two ago I received 14 or 15 letters that is the best I

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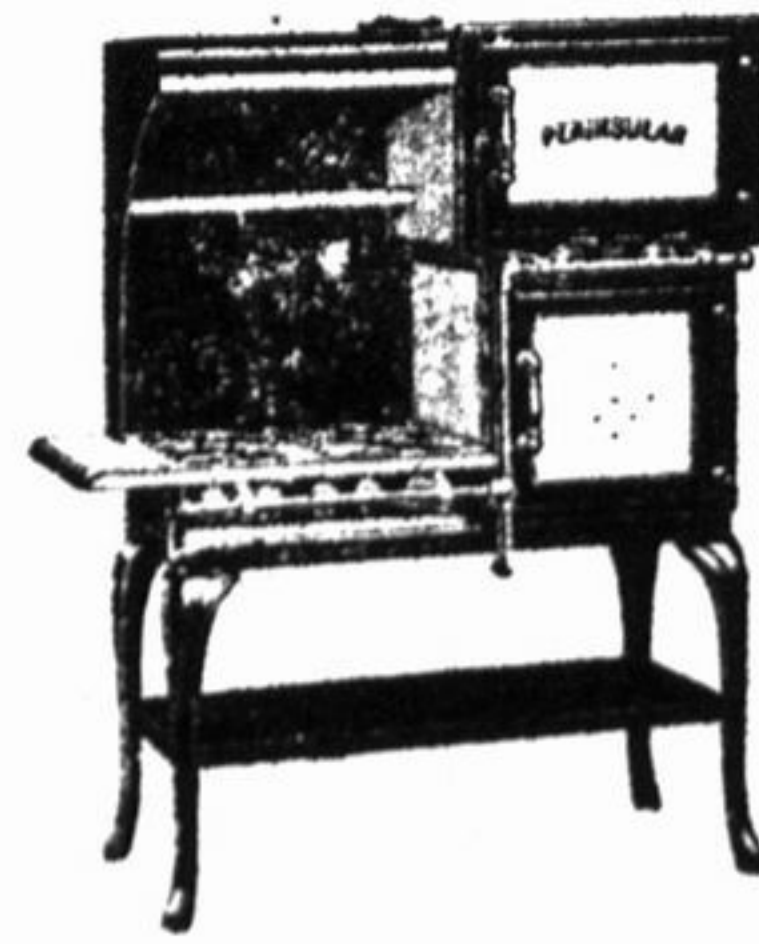
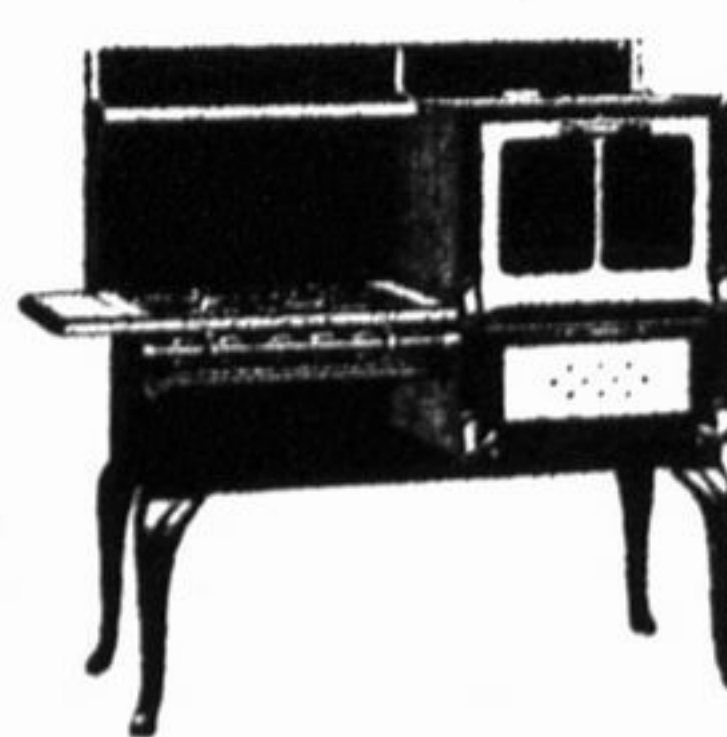
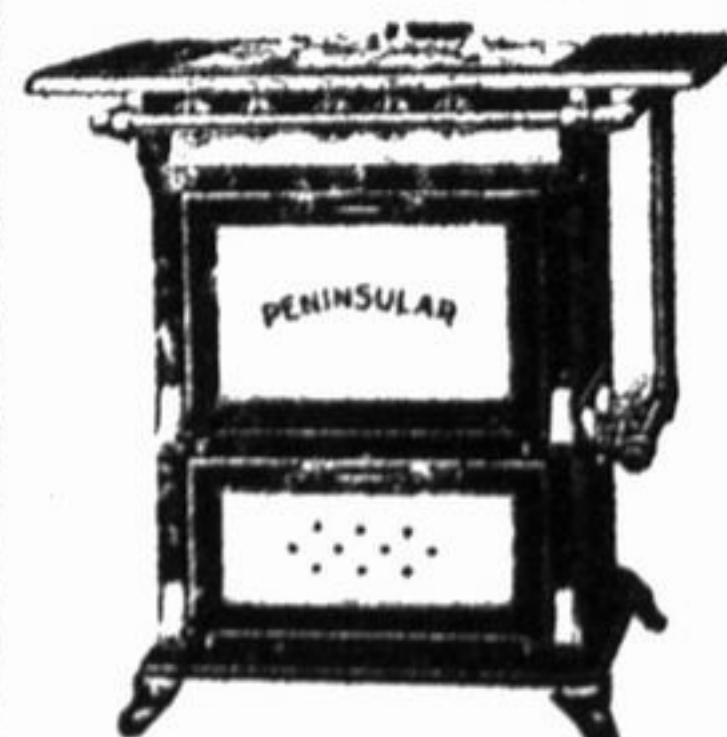
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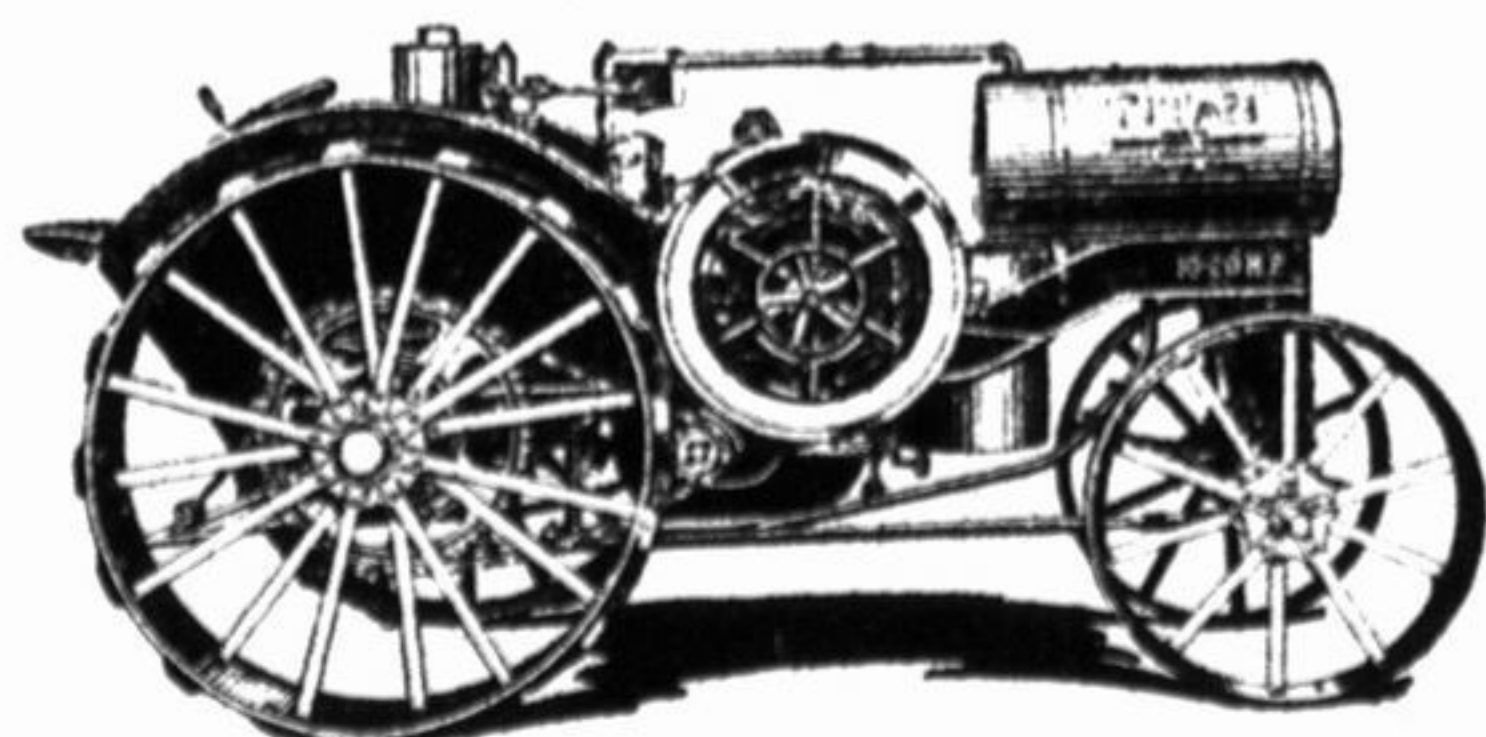


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have done so far. The receiving of letters is fine but it sure keeps me busy answering them.

You know those air battles I have been telling you of, well that is what this is about. This incident took place Saturday night, Aug. 10. Along about 11 p. m. one of our friendly Jerries came over to drop a few bombs. Yes and very few he dropped. It did not take long until our powerful searchlights were playing the heavens when once the hum of his powerful motors were heard.

It was about 11:30 when our light rays located him, then the fun commenced. A few anti-aircraft shrapnel were fired at him but they soon ceased firing when they saw our planes on the job, there were several of our planes that surrounded the Jerry and that gave him no chance whatever. The only thing for him to do was to go forward and that he did. Soon the machine gun battle commenced and as our aviators are superior in all ways to the Jerry's it did not take long until the earth was on its way to meet the burning Jerry machine.

Of the four Jerry and Allied machines I've seen brot down this was the prettiest. It was the fourteenth shot that did the damage. You know in some cases phosphorescent bullets are used, that's how I know which shot did the work. After the fourteenth shot was fired the machine burst into flames and in less than a few minutes it had fallen.

It was about three miles from us but sounded as if it was only three blocks. You can imagine what a noise three tons of steel would make falling thru the air from a height of 10,000 or 12,000 feet. I forgot to tell you the battle lasted from 11:30 p. M. to 11:53 p. m.

Bright and early Sunday morning, Theron, another fellow and myself went over to see the machine, and can say it was nothing more than a lot of debris. We were lucky enough to get a few souvenirs off the plane and of course Theron was not satisfied with those so he decided to rifle one of the finished Jerries. Well he rifled one alright and got a 20 mark note but as luck would have it I went a little farther and found a 50 mark note. That sure was luck don't you think? All of the fellows thought we did fine, so do I. The Major wanted my 50 mark note so I left him have it and in return he gave me \$15.00.

I did want the mark note too, but I thought as a souvenir a five or 10 mark note is just as valuable. There will be plenty of opportunities to get more of them. Guess you folks will think we are awful for rifling a Jerry, but that's nothing over here, all of the fellows do it.

It gets no one shoulders, its effort need only be limited by your requirements; as long as it gets fuel, oil and water it gives power. At the height of a busy season, you know what it means to you to have plenty of power so you can take advantage of every favorable hour. In the morning full power is available in a moment—no feeding, watering and harnessing to be done.

One man can handle a greater amount of power in a tractor than with horses. It is about all the average man wants to do to handle four horses when plowing or enough power to pull one or two plows. One man on a tractor can easily handle enough for three or four plows.

Titan 10-20 Causes No Injurious Soil Packing.

Because of the large diameter and wide face of the drive wheels, the Titan 10-20 has a pressure of but 11 pounds per square inch on the soil. As compared with this, a 170-pound man wearing a No. 8 shoe creates a pressure of 14 pounds per square inch, while a 1,000-pound horse pulling a load creates a pressure varying from 18 to 33 pounds per square inch.

Of 110 owners of tractors in the Northwest, 101 say the tractor does not pack the soil.

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Will give you a brief description of the machine. First of all it was brot down from a height of 10,000 or 12,000 feet, August 10, 1918 at 11:53 p. m. In length it was 96 feet, width 156 feet, it carried seven or nine persons, had five motors 300 horse power each, weight about three tons, and had a speed 90 or 100 miles per hour, and five propellers, it also carried 10 to 15 bombs weighing 300 lbs each. It was the first machine its size to be brot down in France or Allied country.

DWIGHT COX AT FRONT THINKS HE'S LUCKY

France, August 9, 1918.

Dear Folks: We are all well and I hope to get some letters answered while I can. We sure have been having a busy time of it as you can see by the papers and it's only too true. We sure have had our horseshoe with us alright as our battery has suffered no casualties as yet. We have been on the go for some time and now have been relieved for just a little and hope soon to be at the rest camps. As we and our horses need it, but of course shock troops are here and everywhere so we cannot tell what will come our way until it hits. My Bond is paid up and I hope to be able to take another soon. We have been paid so I have \$60.00 in French wall paper and waiting the pleasure of the rest camp.

Yes, we have been on the front ever since we arrived with the Battery. Just at first it was a little easy for us. But say, talk about washing and bath-rooms, Ha! Ha! Our clothing would run at the sight of water (continued on page 6)

Lovingly, Laurence (Rehm)