

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

GET INTO THE GAME AND ENJOY LIFE

My Dear Mother:

You need apologize no more. Mother, about you pen for me is equal to any other. The only reason I don't write is that I don't have time. I don't strike me as being a job for a fact and rather unappreciative of the attention of others.

I suddenly decided to write you this evening, one of my sudden inspirational moods. Writing you has such good effect upon my thoughts, after I have finished my letter, I always feel as if I had done something really worth while, as I duty coupled with pleasure is doubly enjoyable.

I received a bunch of newspapers today containing accounts of the big Allied successes at Chalons Thierry, in the Somme Basin salient. It certainly looked good, the big headlines in the home papers. I can imagine what a good effect such news had upon the spirits of the people back home. And believe me it was some event here in France, too.

I don't believe I ever told you that I have been to Chalons. It was not exactly a visit, I merely passed through the town but when I tell you something of the history of this place, you will realize that I was highly pleased even to be able to pass thru it.

It was near Chalons that the famous battle of Cataluniques was fought in which the Huns led by Attila were defeated in the year 451. It was here that St. Bernard preached the crusade in 1147. Chalons in 1792 was the concentration point of the armies of the Republic. Napoleon established there his headquarters during that memorable campaign. This town possesses several remarkable churches, a few old homes of the sixteenth century, some beautiful boulevards, a monumental fountain representing the Marne, the Seine and the Aube, a museum with several works of art by Rembrandt, Holbein and VanEyck. So it is small wonder that I say I feel proud to have been there. The above is not original but taken from a writing. Now for a little original stuff.

Chalons is not what we would call a large place. Here it is supposed to be a city, but its size in our land is no more than a large village. (I mean in area, not in population). The approach to the town is most peculiar. Part of the town lies on a steep hill. You are in the place before you know it, and out of it, equally as soon. It is like most all French cities, the streets are narrow, the buildings close together. But as stated above, it possesses its works of art. All French cities appear to be very interesting until you investigate and then you find things that are rich in historical interest and rarity.

One place in particular I remember a town that is now well known in the U. S. A. They had a public square that was to be marveled at. It had a fountain in the center made of statuary of priceless value and all around this square was a picket fence of gilded gold. It was one of the most beautiful sights I have ever seen. The ancient buildings in this town had been boarded up and protected by sand bags as it was within range of the enemies' guns. No one could sufficiently vilify anyone who would maliciously destroy these priceless works of art and yet just that thing has been done in many instances by the hordes of the modern Attila. What will we do with them when they are finally in our power?

I am going to send you a few souvenirs as soon as I can gather them together and pack them for mailing. That sounds like I was preparing

to send a trunk full but it will be a very small package.

I am now sporting a service chev-ron and very proudly too. Of course, we all get them but no one has more than two, so when the war is over and I return home, I will be able to say that I was among the first in France, and were I boss a fool, I could have been here long before I got, and to think that there are even today able bodied young men back in the states in civilian garb. What good they are! How I wish I might tell each one what they are missing by his failure to respond to the call of youth. Tell them, Mother, to get into the game, the game that enables and brings forth the best a man possesses. This is the ideal life for the lazy man, for it either cures him of laziness or else kills him and of what use are the indolent ones to the world. The lazy are not always unintelligent. They just need a strong incentive to arouse them, and you get it in this life. You are fired with an incentive and an ambition that rivals the industry of an Edison. A strange transformation changes your nature completely. You forget you are an individual. You come to think of yourself as a small part of a great machine, a great organization, with a fixed purpose. You know that your little effort will eventually carry this organization to a great success and you will share in the glory of that success. It is a life that enthralles, it grips a man, heart and soul. And so I say to my fellow youths, get into the game and enjoy the life and the fruits of your effort that will some day become a reality.

This day has been cold and dreary, which reminds me of that little stanza you used to quote so often: "The day is cold and dark, etc." Tomorrow will be Sunday and I look forward to a pleasant day, enlivened by many letters and especially one from you. I am sure you will not fail me. So now I shall prepare for the night's repose, and with the preparation, I will offer a silent prayer for the many letters; more a wish than a prayer, for although letters are highly prized articles, there are greater things to pray for.

Good night to you, Mother. Please try to overlook the large blot. They have my curses, as does the pen and many of them. This pen I am sure is the innocent cause of my sacrilegious tendencies, and I honestly believe it will eventually rob me of my seat in Heaven. But here is nothing equally as aggravating as a scratching, hiccoughing, ink dropping pen. I know I have your approval. Best wishes.

Forever your devoted son,
Paul (Bentley)

"THE MAN ON THE WIRE"

Somewhere in France, August 19, 1918.

Dear Mr. Staats:
Since you are good enough to send me the Downers Grove Reporter, which I appreciate very much, I thought I would write you a few lines. I don't think it will be long until I read my letters, "Somewhere in Germany." So many of our lads are wearing the "Gott Mitt Uns" belts, you would think the Quartermaster had issued them to us. If the Kaiser don't soon wake up and come across to our terms we are going to Berlin and make him and his seven sons know what unconditional surrender means. It will cost us lives as gas shells, machine gun bullets and bombs kill men, but he will pay double for all of us he gets. I could write for hours and tell you only part of our experiences during the past few weeks. So I will write you of a few that impressed me most and they may interest you.

My first touch of high life was to build a road up to and across "No Man's Land" for the Cavalry to cross on. My job was to put up pickets, as guide posts, so the Cavalry could see the way in early dawn. Every time shells and machine gun bullets would start coming my way, down I would go, and believe me I can go mighty fast. I had had luck ones and got caught in a barbed wire entanglement just as Jerry began to send his regards my way. I tried to throw myself on my face but the wire held me up. I happened to think of that piece of poetry written by a Canadian lad, "The Man on the Wire." Finally I tore myself loose, leaving part of my clothes and some skin on the wire. O, she is a lovely war alright. At zero hour the Infantry and tanks went over. Some of us went along, making the way across No Man's Land and Jerry's front lines for the Cavalry, which was to follow. I won't soon forget the sight of those smudged in front line trenches, with dead Jerry lying everywhere. Then came a sight it was worth ten years of a man's life to see, the Cavalry following the Infantry, on the double with their sabres drawn. It was a grand sight, every man and horse in the pink of condition. Jerry was sure getting his with our Infantry and Cavalry and guns cutting him up and our airplanes dropping bombs on him. Shortly after we started back as our job was finished. We had many souvenirs, including Jerry watches, rings, helmets, gas masks and the "Gott Mitt Uns" belts.

After sleeping a few hours, I went on to an Aussie dressing station where there were many wounded, most of them Jerry's. Some were dying and some were dead. I knew the Australian was a great fighter and I admire him the more of any of the soldiers over here, but I never knew how good they could be both to their own boys and to the wounded Jerry's. Let me say here that the Aussies are alright and will help us Yankee boys any time. One poor lad I noticed with his eyes filled with pain from a bayonet wound in the chest. He could not have been over 15 years, and as I watched him he passed into the land where there is no war. War is Hell, and the quicker we finish this job, the better the world will be off.

The next morning we buried our dead. This impressed all of us and made us see our duty more clearly.

The next lovely job was to clean up a village that the Yanks had driven Jerry out of the night before. We arrived at 4 a. m. after an all night hike, and went to work. It was no longer a village, just a pile of stones and rocks with dead Jerry's and bones lying all around. Jerry ammunition, guns, rifles, helmets, gas masks etc. were scattered everywhere. It was some mess. They had a Yankee dressing station here and I talked with several of the wounded Yanks. The Yanks had made their German prisoners stretcher bearers. It looked good to see them work.

Since then we have moved again. We call our company the night show. We show one night and then hike on with our bloody packs. We are now working every night putting up barbed wire, etc.

The other night we got lost with our gas masks on in one of those wrecked villages. The road we were on was filled with shell holes. I fell in one half filled with water. I no sooner got out of that one when I fell into another. And it is no snap to climb out of those holes with your mask on. After keeping up this delightful walk for about an hour we found ourselves back where we started. By this time Jerry was making it pretty hot for us with mustard gas and whizz-bangs. Some of us found an old hole. Here we lay for two hours with our masks on while they dropped shells all around us. I thought our time for pushing up daisies had arrived. But at daybreak he let up a bit and we found our way out. It was a wonderful thing that gas mask, but I sure was glad to take it off.

Well, Mr. Staats, I will close for the present wishing you and all my friends the best of luck, and when you write Walter send him my regards. The only boy from Downers I have seen lately is Warren Wells. He is O. K. The company I belongs to and the one I'm in are each two of our regiment that have been near each other lately.

Yours truly,
Adolph F. Winter

GILBERT LACEY LOCATES CHUMS

August 22nd, 1918.

My Dear Folks:
At last a little time to write home but it is quickly getting dark. At last we are away from all noise of the guns of all description and while at first it seemed rather strange, yet it seemed good. We landed here night before last and since that time have very busy getting things straightened out, checking everything that was lost or worn out to be replaced by new. The days are warm and the nights beautiful. Tonight, Dear Folks,

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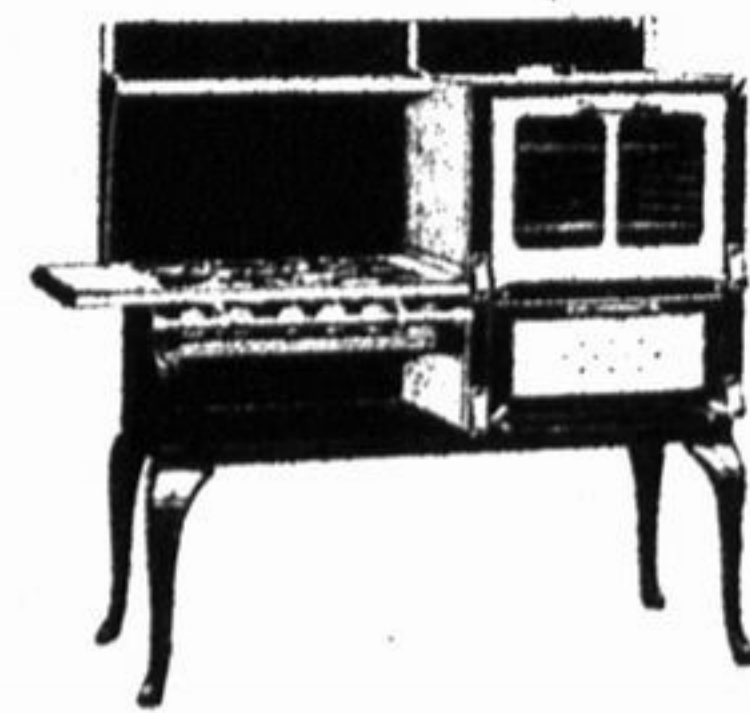
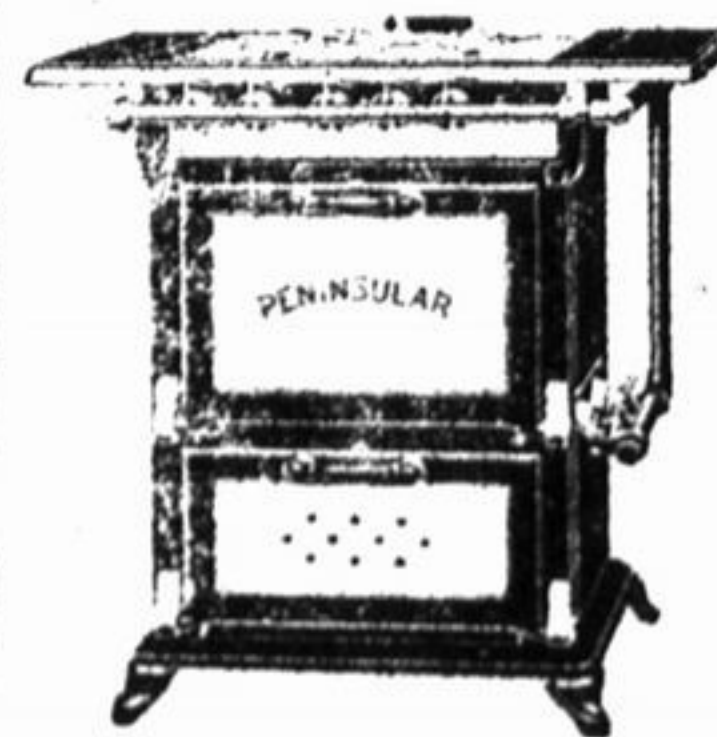
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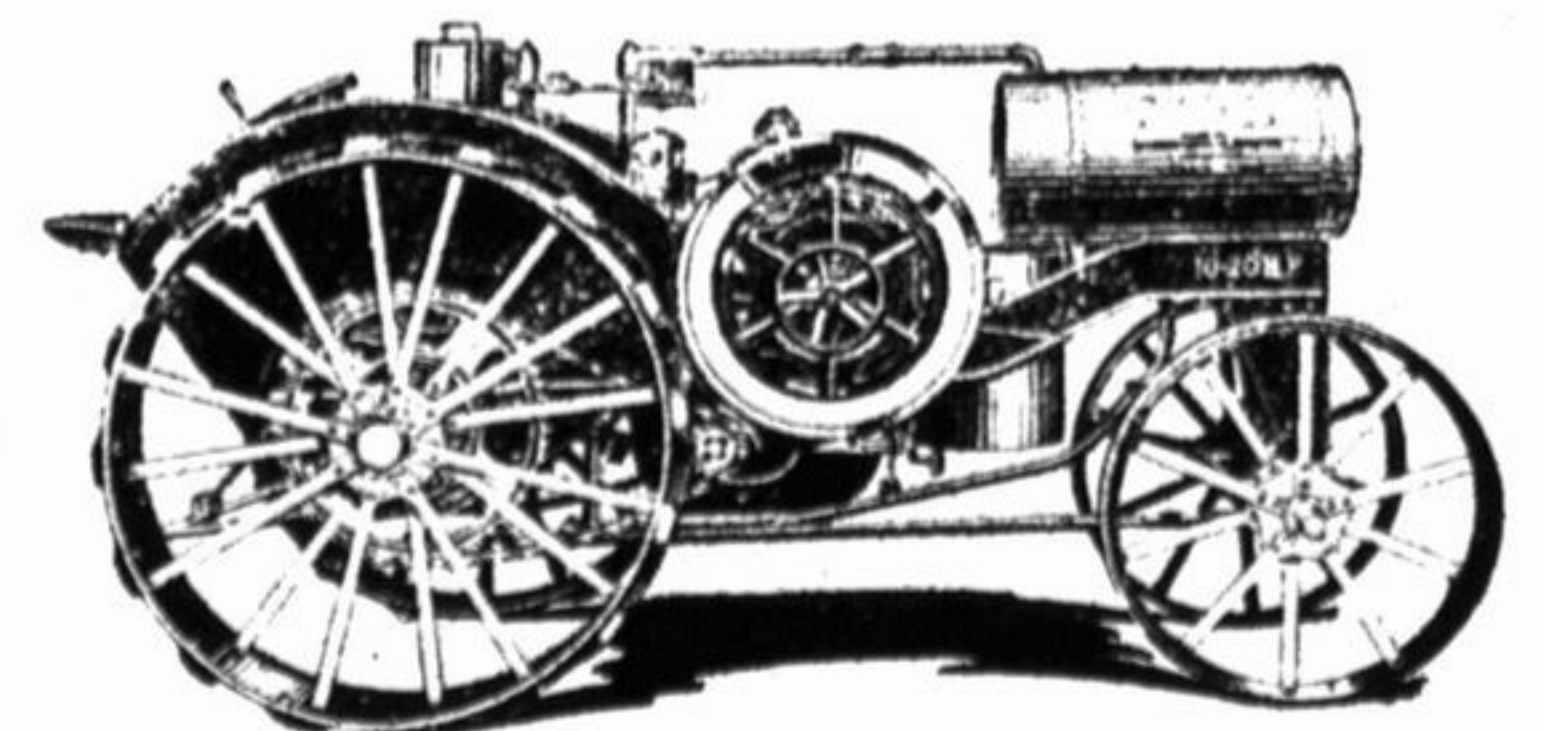


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kins walk in camp to see us. As his bunch was driving thru the village, and seeing some American soldiers, asked what outfit they belonged to. They told him the 14th so he was not long in getting up here. I think he saw all the Downers Grove boys. He is looking fine. He got here at 10 a. m. and stayed for noon mess and left at 3 p. m. About 4:30 Mike Schlander came in. His company is about 25 or 30 miles from here and he heard we were here so he came over and stayed all night. It sure is wonderful to meet some of the boys from home and talk over what we used to do. The weather is beautiful but the nights are cold. Some of the boys went in swimming but the water was so cold they almost froze.

September 7th. We are now located again somewhere and giving the Germans some medicine. I do not have a team to drive but ride single. Love to all.
Your loving son and brother,
Gilbert R. Lacey.

RAY MORGAN
FEELING FINE
August 23, 1918.

Dear Mother, Father and Family:
I have been receiving your letters quite regularly, in fact I have re-

ceived all as far as possible. I do not know why I haven't written sooner but I guess it was laziness on my part.

The country here is very beautiful and very pleasant. The crops are mostly either in shocks, or else in conical stacks. The methods of harvest are very simple, the people use the cradle and bind their bundles by hand, using no twine. Once in awhile you see an old binder grouping the grain to be bound. The farm work is chiefly carried on by women. The stock is of certainly a fine quality, very large and fat, (that is the biggest share of it).

I have been up to the lines twice now and under severe shell fire. It was nothing like I had anticipated, I imagined that more would get wounded than did when I first went into the front line. I was somewhat afraid of Fritz's machine gun fire, but I soon got used to that for I was on ration details that were under his fire for several minutes at a time. Another thing I found the meaning of the phrase (Dig yourself in). When we first landed in the front line it was mud knee deep no dugouts and the trench was about half, or rather not half, deep enough. It was formerly a German trench. While digging dug-

(continued on page six)