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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

ADOLPH WINTER BURIES HIS BUDDY

Somewhere in France, Oct. 6th, 1918. Dear Mother:

Today is Sunday and for the last ten days we've been hitting it pretty hard. It seems we have been working forever, building roads and then more roads for the never ending ending stream of artillery, ammunition and supplies ever going forward, but there is one consolation, the more we work the quicker the war will end.

I received your letters of Sept. 5 and 13, also letters from Al, Sis and the boss. Letters are a wonderful thing over here. They are like bright rays of sunshine thru the dark clouds, you know someone is with you and has not forgotten you. Here is only part of a mighty machine always moving forward. Death cannot mean much to us, we see so much of it, we don't pay the cost, it's those back home that do.

We sure drew one lovely job. We went over the top six hours ahead of the dough boys and built a road thru the swamp and two bridges across the creek, just a few yards from Jerry's front line. It was a pale moonlight night but we had a smoke barrage to protect us. We finished the bridge just about ten minutes before the dough boys arrived. It was one beautiful place with thousands upon thousands of machine gun bullets whistling by and overhead, and shells doing the same thing. We had orders to complete the job regardless of casualties and we did. But the dough boys will take my hat off to them Mother. It would have thrilled the heart of any American to have watched them come across the swamp to our bridge, in the early, misty morn with their bayonets fixed, I, with my Buddie and a few others, were putting the finishing touches to our bridge when they came along. A sergeant was leading them with an automatic in one hand and a trench knife in the other. He was killed just as he reached our bridge but regardless of the dead and wounded, on they went across Jerry's front line trenches and to his second.

I watched the first few waves go over the bridge, then my Buddie was hit. I started carrying him back to our front line to where the dressing station was but he died before I could make it. I put him in a shell hole and put my raincoat over his face and then went back as there was still plenty of work to do. It was two days before I could go back to try to find him. Gregg, Mary Heinta's brother, went with me. We found him just where I had left him with my raincoat still covering him. We buried him in the shell hole and put his rifle at his feet and a wooden cross I made at his head. We then took off our hats and whistled taps. It was hard, he was only eighteen and I had lived, marched and fought with him since we hit France. He was a fine lad and had done his bit for Uncle Sammie.

I received my first box of cigarettes and the few I smoked were great. I was smoking them very carefully to make them last when Jerry made a direct hit at my dugout with a shell. I have not yet found my rifle, belt or half of my clothes. What I did find was full of holes. I had just arrived at my dugout back from work about 4 a. m. when the shell hit, but not bad. I was not touched but we were both black and blue from the concussion.

You know that sweater, helmet and socks you gave me, well they are no more. I am keeping what's left of my mess kit as a souvenir. I've polished a new outfit, they are not hard to polish up here as many of the lads have no further use for them. But Jerry slipped one over on me at that. There were about fifty cigarettes left

and they were blown to bits and I haven't been able to police any since. I've been smoking coffee in cigarettes and its not bad.

I understand we are allowed a package of three pounds. I will let you know as soon as I know definitely. I see by your letter of the 13th that the firm appreciates what I am doing and that they published one of my letters. Well its mighty nice of them and I appreciate it and also thank you for sending the copies to me. It made me feel doggone good. I may work for the firm when I get back if they pay me the dough.

Tell father I hope he is well and often think of him and give him my best. I will close now wishing you the very best of everything.

Ad. (Adolph Winter).

WALTER JOHNSTONE VISITS FRENCH LODGE

France, October 18, 1918. My dear Folks:

As I have nothing to do for a while I will start my weekly letter, and finish it in time for Monday's mail.

I received your letter of Sept. 10, last Monday, and was to hear from you again. My mail is coming pretty regular now. With yours I also received one from uncle George and David which I will answer in a few days.

Well, Mother and Father, how are you both keeping yourself. I am still healthy and well and able to eat my three meals per day.

I suppose you are having pretty fair weather back home in good old Downers Grove. The weather here has been fine lately, although the nights have been pretty cold. But we just roll up in our blankets and forget about the weather.

The Masons had another meeting Tuesday night. I had another fine time. A week from last night, or Thursday evening the 24th we are going to have another, and a large time in general. The French lodges differ from ours in many ways.

I received a couple of copies of the Reporter which you sent. I certainly enjoy reading them, even if the news is a month or two old. It is new news to me.

Last Sunday afternoon another fellow and myself took a hike out in the country. We came to a little village, which consisted of a large church, four or five houses and about the same number of cafes. The fields were blue with grapes.

We were given lots of grapes by some of the people who were picking them. For a package or two of Bull Durham one can get all the grapes he can eat. We went on a little farther when we came to an old farm. Outside were several large kegs which had contained either vin rouge (French for red wine) or grape juice. So we went in and saw a couple of French men making red wine. One of them was throwing grapes into a large vat with an old dirty pitch-fork, the other was in the vat spreading them around and stamping on them with large hob-nailed shoes. And they were not the cleanest shoes I have seen either. At the bottom of the vat was a hole and through that ran the grape juice down a trough into a pail. Such is the life of a grape.

I am still taking French lessons and am beginning to understand the language and with the aid of my hands and shoulders, I am able to make them understand.

The other day while going to the Barracks from the Mess Hall, I heard some one call Johnstone, and on turning around, I found an old friend from Morton Park. He is in the Quartermasters Department here.

I suppose you have received my letter of last week which contained the slip for the Christmas Box.

Yesterday I got a fine sweater and also a pair of woolen gloves which come almost to my elbows, from the Red Cross, so I ought to keep warm during the cold winter months.

The first course of this morning's breakfast consisted of four packages of tobacco. As yet I have not learned to smoke, but get rid of the Bull Durham by giving it to French and American soldiers in the various hospitals around here.

Well, how does the war look to you now. The French people, at least some of them, think that it is almost over. Some, when they meet you on the street, shake hands with you and say, "Finila Guerre", which means the finish of the war.

For the last couple of mornings we have had no drill on account of the wet weather. The mud gets deeper every day. We ought to have boots.

Well, my dear Folks, I guess I have said enough for this time, so with lots of love to all, I'll remain your affectionate son,

Walter (Johnstone)

BOB DICKSON ENJOYING FRANCE

France, October 20th, 1918. Dear Folks:

Received your letter last night, also one from Ida Smith. No doubt you have got some of my mail by now. Was going to cable you when I reached England but I thought you would get my card just as soon. Some of the fellows did cable and their cards got there about 12 hours later, so you see I saved some coin. (No I'm not short) so don't take this as a gentle hint. As you might know our wages raised 20 per cent as soon as we left the U. S. A.

Suppose you are wondering where I am and the kind of a place this is. Well, as to where I am you will have to be satisfied with France. Now the kind. The people are grand, they just can't do enough for us. They think we are as many Angels dropped from the Heavens. They go along with their wooden shoes, driving their oxen hitched to a cart and never in a hurry. Now that the grape season is over don't know what they will do to occupy their time this winter. Do not think it gets very cold here as they have no stoves, all they use is fire-places. Right now I have a large grate fire roaring in front of me, and all I have to do is to look into it and I can see all your faces. Wonderful place that fire, don't you think?

Well, Mother, how is everyone? Hope none of you got that sickness that seems to be raging out there. Was very sorry to hear of Rose Bunning's death. That is one thing I can boast of, my health. Never felt better in my life. It is getting late and my candle is burning low so I will have to stop for this time. Now be sure and write often, one letter a week won't do. Tell Dad that I am looking for a letter from him, also from the girls.

Well, keep the home fires burning, I will be coming home pretty soon.

Rob. (Dickson)

ACACIA CLUB OF THE 149TH

France, Sept. 17th, 1918. Dear Dad and all:

I received your letter today and was more than glad to hear from you. I also got the cards you sent me.

We got the Dixon papers you sent and we enjoyed them all, I'll tell you.

You want to know what we are doing, well Fred and I are driving and are both on the same hitch. I drive the pole team and Fred the swing team, and the lead team is driven by a fellow from Englewood by the name of Maurice Frank.

We are all working hard and so far have good health and can't complain any. We have done things that would seem impossible to do in civil life, things I never will forget. We had a couple weeks rest a short time ago and while there some of the worthy brethren of the 149th formed what they called an Acacia Club of which there are about 90 in the regiment. We had a big banquet and I tell you it was some affair. Our menu consisted of roast mutton, all you could eat, new potatoes and green peas, lettuce salad with garlic dressing, cheese, coffee and bread.

Also had red wine (vin rouge) and cigars and after this a toastmaster and short speeches. I tell you it was some grand affair. They held one last winter before I got over there at the first training camp.

We all had a good time and I wish you all could have been there with me.

We don't see any of the Chicago depot shoes, mostly Boston. We are at present wearing what we think are English made shoes. The upper is made about the same as you make. The first sole is nailed on and then a heavy sole stitched to this one and also nailed. It has an entire heel plate when you only put on a horsehoe. It left

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E. C. KIRKMAN WRITES TO SCHLITZ Nowhere in France, Sept. 14, 1918. Dear Schlitz: From the above you will notice that I have moved and am now located at our new base. I arrived here about two week ago and have been here just two weeks too long to suit me and from the looks of things, I am here from now on or as long at least as this little mix-up we are in lasts. I am still with my same company, our work being to see that all motor trucks cars, etc., in the A. E. F. are (continued on page 7)