

Letter No 5

1. Somewhere in
France

Feb. 14th 18.

Dear Mother.

I am a bit late in ans but we
have just moved again which accounts
for it. I wrote Reynold a long letter yester-
day; is he still at New London. Wish he
was here to share some of the excitement
I've been having the past few days.

At first I didn't think I'd better say any
thing about going to the front for fear
you might worry. Of course the Com-
pany is in the trenches but the Band
is doing detail work behind the 3rd
line trench. This only lasts a short
time & the company goes back for
a rest & are relieved by another Co.
in the trenches.

We are situated in a town of
ruins. I don't believe there is a house
in the whole place that isn't totally

destroyed. The first night I slept in the ruins of a church; Brad & I made our bunk up on the platform in front of the altar. Four of us are now living in a one story house, the roof has been blown off by shell fire. The floor above us however is reinforced with sand bags which makes it dry & pretty safe. We have a fine little stove & get along very well. Our food is much better too. This morning we had hamburger for breakfast; we've had steak & beans several times this week and once we had griddle cakes. There was some leftover & we came back & fried a few ourselves; they sure were good with syrup.

There is a very interesting cave on the hill just above us; they

say it will accommodate hundreds & thousands. It was built by the Germans who held it for over two years. It is fitted up with electric lights with tables & bunks etc. & safe from shelling. All the entrances are named, New York, San Francisco Brooklyn etc. I got lost several times in it myself. The ground all around here is just covered with great shell holes; it was once the scene of a hard fought battle.

The German anti air craft shells explode with a black puff of smoke while the French explode with a white puff. In this way one can easily tell who is doing the shooting. This morning was a bean-

tiful one & we soon saw a couple air
planes appear over head. It wasn't
long before white puffs & then black
ones appeared, believe me it was
exciting the shells were rained at
them thick and fast but neither
plane dropped. These airplane fights
can be seen nearly every clear day.

Just back of us a big balloon
goes up for observation every day.
It is held by a heavy cable & mes-
sages can be sent down to the
station by means of this wire.

There were a few clouds in the sky
and a German aviator took this chance
to come over & destroy the balloon.

He swooped down out of the
clouds like a flash & turned his
machine gun on the balloon;

The German made his mark & the great bag of gas took fire. The French turned their guns upon this plane but he was too quick for them; he disappeared among the clouds again & was safe. There was a French & American officer in the balloon but fortunately they were uninjured but came to earth in an immense parachute. This was all done in less than 3 min I believe. I witnessed the whole thing & believe me it was some sight.

There are no stores here & as yet we have had no mail but expect to soon.

The only neighbors we have are the rats which are very

thick + pretty familiar.

We spend our evenings playing cards or reading. I weigh about 150 pounds now & never felt better in my life.

How is everything + everybody at home? Is Clara still working for the Lawyer? How are you + pa + Carleton getting along this winter? You might tell Uncle Will about this + Ethel if you get a chance; I probably won't get a chance to write them right away. Please write as often as possible.

With heaps of Love to
all
Carle.

Miss Earle Barker
163rd U.S. Inf. Band
Hdqrs Co
A.E.F.

O.K.
R.G. Lane
1st St. Inf.
U.S.A.