

LETTER FROM WAYNE TO HIS FOLKS

France.

July 1, 1918

Dear Folks:

It is just about a month ago that I wrote you my last letter...To begin with, I still retain my good health, good looks, and happy disposition, though how it happened I am at a loss to understand. Yesterday we came out of the lines (not trenches) after 28 days of hell. Some day some one will tell the story as it should be told. How the Marine met the French retreating, met the Huns drunk with victory, and hurled them back. I am convinced that had it not been for the United States Marines, Paris would surely have been taken before this. If I could transfer my commission from the army to the Marine corps, I would do so. It is an honor to serve with them. The first two weeks were awful. We were rushed in unexpectedly and things were hot from the start. There were no trenches, all open fighting over hills and fields and woods - like our grand-daddies fought in '61 plus explosives, shrapnel, machine guns and gas. The machine guns played the land, going here and there, aiding one attack and repelling another. Our company was represented in every fight in the sector. For 18 days this went on. We had nothing to eat but canned beef, bread and water (one canteen a day) which had to be brought by hand under constant shell fire. Night and day they kept up that constant rain of high explosives and shrapnel. I have seen men go crazy and be taken to the rear from the shells. Some are raving maniacs and others just follow where they are led with glassy eyes and expressionless faces. I was too busy to pay much attention to the first man I saw killed, and later it was all in the days work. Two of my old Culver classmates were killed. One was Frazer, Gibson's room-mate. The other was Ulmer. My hall Capt. Murry, who used to inspect my room and put me on report, got it in the legs. All the officers in this Company except the Captain and I received slight wounds. Last night was the first time I have had my shoes off for 29 days. I was very lucky, in the whole time I did not have what we call a close shave...

...The food was bad, water was scarce, the men got sick but kept on fighting. In 18 days I had three cups of lukewarm coffee. We prayed for relief but it never came. On the 19th day we received some canned apricots and jam from the Red Cross. There was about one-half can per man and it was a Godsend. It would bring tears to your eyes if you could have seen the way it was received by the men. Dirty, strained, and tired, their throats raw from shell smoke, after 18 days of canned beef and shell fire, the ration of jam and apricots meant more to them than their soul's salvation...

The last ten days we were in, it quieted down a bit. They got hot food up to us and we managed pretty well. I lost about everything I took up there, including my diary. That was the only thing I minded, for I had kept it faithfully all these months. I will write again in a day or so.

Love to all.

Wayne.

Letter from Wayne to folks - docsteach. (n.d.). <https://www.docsteach.org/documents/document/wayne-to-folks>