

From Harry S. Truman to Bess Wallace, January 19, 1919

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Camp La Beholle, near Verdun

January 19, 1919

Dear Bess:

I am certainly in a gladsome mood today-got two letters yesterday and one today. They were dated Dec 19-23-28. I am certainly glad to hear that you are up and almost well. You know I am pulling for you to be entirely well as quickly as possible. I don't know when I've been so worried as when I heard that you and Mary both had the flu, and I've never felt so fine as when I heard you were both getting well.

You asked me if you can address a letter to me at this place. No it can't be done because we may move any time to some little old town in the back areas and then the letter would never find me. If it is addressed to 129 FA American E.F. it will always catch up even if it is a little slow sometimes.

You spoke of C.C. Bunschu's having

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a letter published saying that we'd be home soon. C.C. will I guess because he was detached from the regiment and sent to the S.O.S. a few days after the regiment was pulled out of the lines. I always thought him a very efficient officer but the powers that be especially one second in command never did like C.C. and that principally was the reason he was sent back. The last I heard of him he was at Bordeaux awaiting transportation home.

Please let me beg of you not to say anything about my letter of commendation. I only told it because I thought I was very lucky and that you'd like to know it. You know the most embarrassing thing that can happen to a fellow over here is to have his enthusiastic friends or relatives publish his private correspondence or hold him up as someone who deserves especial credit. There's not one of us who have done anything that any other one of us could not and would not have done if the opportunity had offered. Most real citations-and citations can only be made by generals in general orders-are a terrible embarrassment to the men they affect. There were three of our lieutenants cited and they are having

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an awful time living it down. Webster's letters of commendation is causing him no end of kidding just because his folks don't know what a citation is and what it means. General Traub made the fact that I happened to have the best chief mechanic in the artillery brigade a subject for a general memorandum and he wrote me a formal letter of commendation on the condition of my materiel. His statement was that it "showed especial efficiency in the commissioned and enlisted personnel of the organization." Well the enlisted personnel did the work and should have the credit. I sent the letter to Boxley, and if you care to see it he will show it to you. However I don't want it published because it can cause me to be court-martialed for stealing it out of the files of the organization, and would cause me no end of embarrassment. My chief mechanic happened to be a

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whirlwind and I happened to be lucky, and that's all there is to it.

I have never seen Mary Paxton and I guess I'll be very lucky if I do. I would certainly like to see her. You know we can't go anywhere but to old ruined Verdun or out to Douaumont or some other skeleton surrounded place nearby and I don't suppose I shall see her unless she get assigned to the Verdun area.

Fred is mistaken about your having to get information about me from Miss Maggie. I have written her exactly four letters since I've been in France. I had no idea she would consider that they were worth any comment as I simply told her as I have you of some of the sad and funny things I've seen and heard about and told her of one of our night "Marches."

My long letter to you covered my tracks and experiences pretty well but I'm afraid if must have been an awful bore. I don't intend to talk about the war much when I get home if I can help it because the boys back in the S.O.S. can tell better stories than anything that really happened to us who were lucky enough to see any of the real thing

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and I think it will be better to let them do the talking - besides I've already told you everything that's happened to me from start to finish and you certainly won't want to be bothered with it again. I saw a piece in the "Herald" saying that some Congressman from Mass. Had skinned the armchair brigade alive because they had not been fair to Nat'l Guard officers. I'm going to vote from him for President when I get home. Enough said.

I do wish I could see you but I'm about of the opinion that summer will be well on its way when I do. We know nothing of our future movements and I doubt if Newton D. himself does either or cares much long as the draft boys are well taken care of. Be sure and keep writing. I love you.

Always, Harry
Harry S Truman
Capt Bty D 129 FA
American EF.