

Transcription of WWI Letters

These letters are found in the Military Collection, WWI, County Records, Box 4 of the North Carolina State Archives. All three soldiers were writing to relatives in Fayetteville, N.C. about their experiences.

Letter 1: From M. B. Person to his brother, J. P. Person

Letter 2: From Charlie Jones to his mother, Mrs. Mary Jones

Letter 3: From Dewey Lewis to his mother, Mrs. Alice Lewis

Here are some possible questions to ask after students have read the letters:

1. From what location are each of the letters being written?
2. How does the tone of the letters differ?
3. Have students compare the education levels of the writers. Which writer seems to be the most educated and why?
4. What do students find particularly interesting about the letters?
5. What questions do the letters raise?
6. What does Charlie Jones's fascination with the currency and the time indicate about how extensively he has travelled in the past? (Have students research if his description of time differences is correct.)

France
Nov 19, 1918

Dear Bro-

(p. 1) Will ans your letter I received to day was glad to hear from you but sorry to learn you all had been sick.

You gave several names of persons at home but fail to say where they were sick or dead. I understand that Tom B Williams & Walter Maners(?) ar both dead must have been (p. 2)what you had reference to but I hope it isnt not so. Neal Johnson was telling me about Tom and Walter being dead.

We havent any of that kind of Deasease in our regiment that I know of. About all we have is colds & cooties. But I have seen in papers where some Divisions have it and also noticed where they have been dieing in England with it. I hope they will soon stop it back in the states.

as I was speaking above about us having cold & cooties I have a cold but no cooties. You dont get them only when you ar in the trenches or (p.3) sleep on a bunk where some infested one have been.

Well Carl guess you all were proud to learn when we had finished Jerry ever thing was going our way when the end came. My division was fighting like Hell in a place where the Germans had already lost five hundred thousand men alone not counting what the French (p. 4) have lost we were around Dead Mans Hill one of the grave yard of Europe a place where every French Man had swore that They should not pass Guess you remember about the news paper reports of 1914. about "city of the Dead. and a place

where you can read about in ever paper you pick up now and that is Verdun is is one of the most torne up towns in all Europe (p. 5) that is what is on top of the Ground but a large part of it is down under the Ground I went to a good show over ther the other day perhaps one hundred feet under the day we took over the front was the first day in four years that they failed to shell it but they made up for it the next two days and about the battle fields that is the most Harble sights in the world I will never be able to explain how it looks for it is imposible after the armistice I took a walk out over the battle ground which is out about one mile from the town the Germans have been there for four years and they have fought back and fourth over the Hills time after time about the first thing I saw was a French Grave (p. 6) yard at the front of the Hill where over five thousand Frenchman ar buried side by side and as I went on over the Hills I came to the main part of the field where there is not a living tree not even the roots except cross which have come up in the last year or so and remember it was a forest before the war. there is shells guns and barb wire and all kind of war instruments and the worst of all is the men lieing around that have (p. 7) never been burried you can hardly step with out stepping on skeletons and graves the shells have blown some that have been buried out of the ground and you can walk along in the trenches and see their feet sticking out from the edge of the trenches some of the boys found one whole skeleton and stood him up and put a gun in his arms and boots and pants on and left him standing up just like he was on guard. Some sight (p. 8) to see well as I have wrote more about that than I ought to will speak of something else we ar moving down in southern france now got to hike one hundred and thirty miles some hike isnt it? No it is not bad now for we ar coming home before long and we dont mind it at all dont know just when we will come but I understand the first army came back first and we ar in it. I got a letter from Clyde yesterday said he was well but had just got out of the Hospital and was on his way back to his company I think Jerry shot Him in the legs He said he was "slightly wounded" in the big drive. I dont think he was in the hospital long for He is back with his company now.

Well Carl you speak about my allotment you ought to have got one (p. 9) ever month for they take about all my pay for it write and tell me how much you get monthly and about my horse if you cant get any thing for Him to do I think it would be a good idea to sell him for he is some expense to you all I know but you can do as you please use your own judgement about it Say I want you to send me Ottis & Floyd's address. Mama sent it to me before the armistice but I was in (p. 10) business then and lost it I want you to write to Ottis and give him my address and tell him to write to me I have something for him. I think we will be back in the States by January and mabe before Xmas. I hope so any way it is some cold over here now it snowed some the other night. Well Carl you can tell Mr Arnett and all the rest that have boy in our outfit that they ar all ok. I saw them all since we quit fighting (p. 11) and they ar all well they have some thing to tell when they get home believe me I think ever one have souvners

It was some sight to see the Boys coming in from the fight nearly every on had a german helmut gun or something on therr back Just as much as they could navigate with. One company has got a German machine gun and our company have got a Burrow or what we call a jack ass back in N.C. the Germans used him as a pack carrier before we got him well you said something about my girls being lonesome arent they plenty of soldirs back ther for them Now I thought ever girl in the whole country had them one.

I would have wrote to them but I havnt had time Ha Ha

(p. 12) Well I have wrote about ever thing I ever thought of I will close excuse this writing for we have nothing to write on but our knee and in a barn at that ans real soon and a long letter I have got four letters from home address as before

M B Person

Tell Jim to write

Somewhere in France

Aug. 7, 1918

Dear Mother:

Just a few lines to let you know that I arrived here safely & had a nice trip.

This is a fine country & although it is much different than England & I like it over here very much. The weather over here is much better also as it rained every day we were in England. Of course we were only in England a few days & perhaps we would have had better weather had we staid there longer.

I ran across some of my old friends in my old machine gun company to-day & it seemed good to see them, although it would have seemed much better if I had seem them in the U.S.A. They were all well & enjoying themselves.

We have a lot of fun over the money they use over here as well as we did while we were in England both of which is considerably different than our own. The money system they use here is as follows:

5 centimes	equal to our	1 cent
10 “	“	“ “ 2 “
25 “	“	“ “ 5 “
50 “	“	“ “ 10”
1 franc	“	“ “ 17½“
5 ‘	“	“ “ 87½“

We soon get used to this but it sure seems funny after using our own so long.

Another peculiar & interesting feature here is to see the large number of women doing mens work. They are used nearly exclusively on the railroads, in the factories & even on the boats. This of course is due to the fact that it will liberate inst so many more men to go to war.

About the only men we see here at all without uniforms are those past 70 yrs. of age. This of course is a much different condition than is existing in America at the present time.

The time of day here is also very different than in America it being about 7 hrs earlier here. In other words when it is 7 o'clock in America it is only 12 o'clock here.

We are rather unsettled at the present time but in a few days we will no doubt get down to business once more.

Will write you again in a few days. Remember me to all my friends & write when you get a chance.`

Love—Charlie

Address Pvt. Charlie Jones
Hdqts. Det. 310th Eng.
85th Division
American Exp. Force
Via NY

Brighton Eng.
Oct 10 – 18

Dear Mother

I will drop you a few lines to let you know I-m getting fine as I posible can now so dont bee worried about me mother for I am able to bee setting up in bed with the help of a back rest. So mother I-am getting along fine The Red Cross was up and gave me lots of stuff:

Mother I dont think I will ever see the front any more The nurse told me that the wound I had would keep me back of the lines until the war is over Mother I will bee marked for life in my walk my left leg will probily bee stiff but Mother I am praying that it wont.

Well I will have to go back to bed so good bye

Dewey Lewis
Block 72(?) ward 22
Kitchener Hospital
Brighton England