

July 30, 1991

Dear Paul,

After we spoke on the phone last night, I went through copies of Dad's memorabilia for a selection of things I thought would be best for a presentation in the Historical Society Museum.

The best compilation is the one in Jim Mosby's book, *Living History of Perry County, Indiana*, pages 62 -70. The personal accounts given here beginning on page 63 were written while Dad was at Purdue after the war. It is interesting that the *One Exciting Night* on page 64 was written as an English class writing assignment. It is on Purdue paper and carries the instructor's comments and the grade "A". These are original verbatim accounts in his hand uncolored by any subsequent research or reinterpretation.

I went through the correspondence file and feel that the letters below would have a lot of personal interest, and tell how the war affected real people. Frances has offered to give the Historical Society the originals, but I thought having them typed and placed in order would in the meantime be even more useful. I realize these are somewhat personal, but that is the point.

I will be sending you one of the original framed citations for the time being and hopefully copies of the others.

Of course you probably have copies of all this as well as Mary's work.

Hope this helps.

Henry

SOME SELECTED WARTIME LETTERS OF HENRY STROBEL

The following letters, in chronological order, show the human side of the war. These are typed for better legibility. But they are certified true copies; not even punctuation changes have been made. /Signed/ Henry Strobel, Jr., Aumsville OR, July 1991

(Letter addressed to: Mr. Clemens Strobel, RR#2, Tell City, Indiana, U.S.A.)

June 23rd 1918

Dear father, mother, brothers, and sisters am well and hope the same of you all.

Well how are you getting along by this time

Private Henry A. Strobel

Co. D. 120. Infantry

American E. F. via New York

The weather is very cool here wheat and oats started to head out. I have not seen any sign of corn here.

Write often

As ever Henry

(Addressed to: Mr. Clemens Strobel, RRN 2, Tell City, Indiana, U.S.A.)

August 11 - 1918

Somewhere--

Received your letter today and glad to hear from you. Am well and hope the same of you all. You asked if any of the boys got seasick yes I should say so.

I seen Mike a few minutes ago he came out of the trenches last night, and Frank Kleiser I see him quite often. There are quite a few Indiana boys in our regiment. What branch of service is E. Ernst in and J. Klein.

Yes I could tell you some interesting storys.

Well I enjoyed this afternoon very much there were 15 of our old Co. G. men together and had a great talk, and we said old Co. G. had a meeting.

We have a dandy little church here. Wheat and Oats cutting is being done here now the grain is fine. The boys I had reference to were from Perry, Dubois Craford and Henry Wittmann of Evanston.

Write often

As ever Henry

(Addressed to: Mr. Clemens Strobel, R Rt. Tell City, Indiana, U.S.A.)

September 13 - 1918

Dear father, mother, brothers and sisters, am well and hope the same of you all.

Received 3 letters since I wrote last, please write often, I am glad to receive them.

Well we are back of the front lines again we had very good luck not very many killed out of our Co.

We certainly have had some experience of war. We are somewhere in France now. I received a letter from E. G. Ernst. of Huston Texas. says he has a good time I am glad to hear that.

Well I hope your picnic was a success.

You always say it is so hot there well I tell you it is not hot here we certainly have cold nights and some days very chilly we are here in France a week now and has rained every day since we been here.

I have not seen Mike for a month now.

Lots of grain out in the shocks here the harvest is very late here I seen a field the other day that was not ripe yet

You asked if I talk to the french girls they are no Bon no Compree. Ha. Ha.

I suppose I got you gessing now.

Women work very hard in France and Belgium. People in this country all wear hobnailed shoes for every day of course we Sammies do to.

Did any of that yellow corn grow that I brought from Iowa.

How many acres have you in corn and how many are you going to put in wheat.

How is the stock looking this year.

They certainly have some fine stock in this country I wish I had some of the horses and cows over in the States the last move we made I certainly seen the finest country I ever seen I thought I have seen some fine country in the western states but this has it all beat.

Excuse bad writing for I have no writing desk but I think you can read it anyhow.

Where did the folks' go that you say you suppose they are enjoying themselves.

I made an Allotment the other day to Frances E. Strobel for \$15.00 per month so if it comes you can use it if you need it, if not you can put it on interest and divide the " among you three Kate, Frances, and Albert.

Did you receive the letter about school.

I guess this is all for this time

Henry

(Addressed to: Private Henry A. Strobel, Co. D. 120 Infantry, American Expeditionary F. via N.Y.)

Tell City, Ind.

R2, Box 107

Sept. 27 - 18

Dear Brother -

Received your letter dated Aug. 26 We're very glad to get it. Well how are you by this time? We are all right hope the same of you.

We are having some cool weather now. We had three little frosts but has not frozen things down so far.

We sowed oats Monday and will start to sow wheat right away. We are cutting our cane today. We haul it to Heinze to have it made, we haven't much.

We have the same horses we had when you were home. All look fine. You ought to see Ted, he is just like a picture - (so) fat that he'd almost roll and only runs on pasture. John has a horse or colt rather. He will be two years in spring, the only (one) he got. I wrote before that he sold his other one.

You wrote about me going to school, of course I would like to but you see we all expect and look for you to be back soon and then I am sure you will need the money so I guess I'll not go, that's what papa thinks too, perhaps times will be better in another year with this war one doesn't know what to do half the time Am glad you still think of me. This war business is just about the same only worse, all the boys are gone from around here & all from 18 to 45 registered, every body is just working to get the crops out. We don't know anything about it only just people's talk and not much to that and I guess I'd better not write it.

Frank is still at Camp Sherman Ohio. He is getting to like it better since he is broke in a little. Frank Hildenbrand and Joe Kleiser crossed the big pond too.

Mary and family are OK and we never from Theresia, & Joe & Minnie have a Little Soldier since Sept. 23 but they don't know what they will name him yet. Fickers family is just like always going over the top when you (see?) them.

There is no news around here at all, we don't leave home and no dance any more either. I never heard any dance for about 3 months so you can think it is not like it was when you were home. Everybody waits for the boys to come back. I talked to Anna P. in town Saturday and she is waiting for the boys to come back too. So I'll close.

Best Regards from all. As Ever, Sis Frances

Excuse bad writing am sitting behind the stove. We have a mail box-number it is 107.

(Addressed to: Mr. Clemens Strobel, RRN2 Tell City, Indiana, U.S.A.)
Oct. 4, 1918

Somewhere in France.

Am well and hope the same of you all.

Received your two letters yesterday dated August 27th and Sept. 5th. Well I am sorry that Frank had to leave. I have not seen Frank Kleiser for some time he has been in the Hospital.

We went through the greatest thing History has ever known you will read about this.

Mike Schaefer has fallen. + .

We are back of the front for a few days.

You tell Baldis Fuchs Hello for me and tell him that if I have a little time I will write to him tell him to write to me for we are certainly very busy.

Lots of the boys have fallen + .

Tell them that ask about me to write!

This is not a very nice letter but best I can do now.

Will write at first opportunity

As ever Henry

(The event referred to above is the battle which merited my father the Distinguished Service Cross. He was wounded on October 10, 1918 and, as shown by the trail of post marks on the envelope, did not receive the September 27, 1918 letter from his sister Frances until May 27, 1919 in Camp Taylor, Kentucky, following his hospitalization in Bath, England!)

(Postcard addressed to: Mr Clemens Strobel, RRN2, Tell City, Indiana, U.S.A)
Oct 17th 1918

Dear parents

Left France this morning am on board of a Steamer sailing for England where I go to a Hospital for treatment.

I am well except my arm which is getting along niceley. Hoping you are all well

As ever, Henry

(Addressed to: Mr. Clemens Strobel, R.R.N. 2., Tell City, Indiana, U.S.A.)
Nov 21st 1918
Bath, Eng.

Dear father mother brothers and sisters, am well and hope the same of you all.

We have very chilly weather here it is very damp here, lots of dark and foggy days.

I hope you are getting along alright and getting the crops in alright.

Well my arm is getting along alright.

Well I guess everybody is happy now on the peace terms.

How far did Franck get did he start for overseas or not.

My mail is balled up somewhere in France I have not had any mail since I been in the hospital

Did you receive some money from our Chaplain Sgt. Gross McClelland I gave him 200 hundred Francs and \$15 dollar in U.S. money, if you received any how much was it.

Do you receive any Allotments yet.

I am nearly lost that I cant get any mail. I suppose I will receive it soon.

I think they are shipping lots of the wounded heros back home now, of course they do deserve it lots of them do.

I tell you some Battle we went through, but it is over now. Thank God.

This is all I know this time

As ever Henry

Bath War Hospital
Ward 7. Bath
Eng.

(The following letter is from an army buddy)

July 13, 1920
Tuesday Night

Mr. Henry Strobel.

Dear Friend : -

I am almost ashamed to write to you for I have waited so long before answering your welcome letter received last spring.

This leaves me well and getting along fine and hope you are the same.

I hardly ever hear from any of the Old Co. D boys but I am always glad to hear from any of them. I was glad to know you got the British Military Medal for you were certainly entitled to it.

I hope your compensation has been straightened out alright for you should have been getting it for a long time. Yes I belong to the American Legion and think every EX Soldier should belong. What do you think of the bonus do you think we will get it or not?

You asked me what part of the state Wilmore is in. It is in the Blue grass section of Kentucky, it is on the Southern Railroad about twenty miles from Lexington, south of Lexington.

You said something about Blue grass seed and if you want any you can write to C. S. Brent Seed Co. Lexington , Ky. I think that would be the best place to get them.

I have been real busy farming this year have worked nearly every day of the past few months. I am raising tobacco, corn, wheat, and oats.

Do you ever hear from Nash or Berrine(?) any more?

Well I must close for this time as it is getting late and I have to work tomorrow but will promise to write sooner next time. Let me hear from you soon. Wishing you all success and happiness I remain as ever your friend

John D. Rohrer
Wilmore
R#1 Kentucky

(Also, the attached correspondence regarding the British medal and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier are interesting. Dad declined, not surprisingly, to travel to New York to receive the decoration from the Prince of Wales in 1919, but did go to Washington to represent Indiana at the Unknown Soldier ceremony in 1921.)

TRUE WAR STORIES

(The following were written by my father at Purdue University after the war. The first of these is apparently an English composition assignment marked with an "A" grade. I have omitted the instructor's suggested changes. Otherwise these are certified true copies.)

One Exciting Night

One cold rainy night I was lying on a listening - out - post way out in No Man's Land in the poppy covered fields of Flanders. It was near the old famous city of Ypres, Belgium. It was a dark, drizzly night for a misty rain was slowly falling and it was also very chilly.

As I was lying there watching and listening it seemed as though time had nearly stopped, seconds seemed like minutes and minutes like hours and hours like days or even months. In front of me at times it seemed as there were black objects moving around forward and backwards. Cold chills began to run up and down all over my body and my hairs were trying to stand on end and throw off my heavy iron helmet, but I had the (helmet's) strap under my chin so the helmet stayed on all right. While there all kinds of thoughts came into my mind thousands I suppose. Here is one that was constantly in my mind.

What am I going to do when those Germans jump up in front of me or might even capture me?

While I was lying there watching and listening, mice and rats came running through the grass and weeds making noises, and those black objects out in front of me kept me continuously on my nerves thinking that those Germans might be coming. But behold! This time there was a real black object moving around in front of me.

I quickly raised up and aimed my rifle on the moving object as good as I could in the darkness and hollered, Halt! Who's there? and the dark moving object at once answered my challenge, and said, "I'm American are you?". I at once recognized his voice, so I advanced him and as he came near I saw that he had something large on his shoulder. I asked him where you've been and what you've got?"

He answered in an excited tone of voice and this is what he said. "We were on a ration detail and we got lost. some of the boys got shot and we had a --- of a time, but I've got a German machine gun".

The Trip Across

We embarked for over-seas at Boston, Mass. May 7th 1918 on the (HMT Bohemia).

This was an old British boat which was a long ways from being clean. Used for transporting cattle before the great conflict. We were very badly overcrowded on this boat, and the food anything but good or edible, it (being) composed of mostly of Australian rabbits and goat meat for some time. Then we were cut down on rations that we were almost starved. We then found some potatoes in sacks, we ate all we could and filled our pockets with them. We were then forbidden them.

Then the men or rather the soldiers got their heads together and started planning, and finally decided to have an exhibition. The exhibition was supposed to be staged between the American Doughboy and the British Cooks. The exhibition was to be an act in front of the points of Bayonets manned by the future American Expeditionary Force. The British Cooks were supposed to be rounded up and with fixed bayonets forced overboard into the ocean!

We the "doughboys" or the "British Cooks" had luck or perhaps both, as our officers had found out of this proposed exhibition and placed our cooks in the kitchen and thereafter we fared better.

The trip across the ocean took 16 days about a day or so was spent in the harbor at Halifax, Nova Scotia waiting for our convoy.

We encountered several attack(s) by German Submarines and it was rumored they were accounted for (sunk).

While crossing the English Channel between Folkstone, England and Calais, France two boats collided or rammed and the writer saw a number of thrown overboard by the impact and some of the men could be found.

On landing in England all men of this division were given a letter of welcome from his Majesty King George V.