
10-29-1917

"My dearest people"

Paul S. Johnson

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/psjohnson_correspondence

Recommended Citation

Johnson, Paul S., "My dearest people" (1917). *Paul S. Johnson First World War correspondence*. 7.
https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/psjohnson_correspondence/7

This Letter is brought to you for free and open access by the CAWL Archives: First World War at Chapman University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Paul S. Johnson First World War correspondence by an authorized administrator of Chapman University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact laughtin@chapman.edu.

AMERICAN



ON ACTIVE SERVICE

WITH THE

AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Oct 29 1917

My dearest People:—

Things have been moving along, more red tape, more instructions, more purchasing, more inoculations. But one thing of note did happen today. The sun shone. That is the first view of the good French sun that we have been privileged to have and it looks almost like Houro. You see although it does not get very cold over here it does get cloudy. It remains cloudy. Sometimes it rains and sometimes it is just cloudy. Stories come in from the trenches of being wet to the skin for four and five days at a time.

The American Boys went into the first line trenches yesterday and we are all rejoicing. Not because four were killed the first day and more than that shall be killed on every succeeding day but because we are getting our hand in it, and the sooner we get our hand in the sooner

these horrible thing will be over with, and poor, noble, glorious, little France can go back to work again.

Your heart goes out to them. Here at our hotel we are warm and comfortably housed and fed. Paris and France to a large extent are sitting in the cold and have not fed bountifully, tonight. They have not much and what they have they realize they must conserve.

The French soldier is a hero. He is paid so little that when he gets ten days off he is glad to come to our warehouse and work 9½ days because he and his family need the money and we pay him about \$2.00 a day.

^{our} My first impressions of the French people is most favorable. I am glad that my mother's maiden name was French and that my sweetheart's name is France.

As to purchasing, I went down to quarters masters to get a second uniform. They did not have my size in stock so as not to come away empty handed I bought another

AMERICAN



ON ACTIVE SERVICE

WITH THE

AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

191

flannel shirt. It cost ^{\$}2³⁵ and is a bit less than it would have cost me in the States. I bought a service belt for ^{\$}28⁰⁰ Francs. A Franc is now worth about 17½¢ so the belt ^{cost} was worth about ^{\$}5.00. Those same belts are selling in New York for \$13.00. But over here they feel lucky to get that as the average French soldier could not afford one. He gets 5 cents a day and that would be three months pay. My pay started Oct 15. I shall not be on the job until Nov. 1, actively. During that half month I have had all expenses paid and I have received more pay than an ordinary soldier would receive in nearly three years. That is why your heart goes out to them. They are not fighting for pay, they are fighting for France and Victory. They certainly are wonderful.

Paris streets are always thronged with soldiers. I have seen here soldiers from

India, Morocco, Italy, Belgium, England, Russia, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and U.S.A. and I supposed that I have seen others whom I have not recognized.

Today, we had our interviews, tonight we received our appointments. Now we are to get on the job as soon as possible.

One of the greatest difficulties is that of transportation and then after the car is at the station it may still be a long way from the camp and the "Y" hut. Truck drivers are badly needed. In an unguarded moment I admitted that I had driven a machine. At once I was assigned to the Motor Department. So for a while at least you can picture me serving Jesus Christ by driving a truck load of chocolate and cigarettes to a "Y" hut, that the Boys may come to the "Y" hut to buy the things which their physical bodies crave and at the same time get a little of what their spiritual bodies need. It seems a long way off and it is absolutely the last thing which I expected



ON ACTIVE SERVICE
WITH THE
AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

191

to do. Many little dreams and air castles have gone "ker - slumps", but hardly anyone who comes over does just what he wants to and it will help my "originality box" in its work for it will now be taxed to think of ways to get in a word where it will count and we only do our best when our originality is taxed or when any capacity is taxed. So, I am happy and eager to get busy. First, I must learn and get acquainted with my engine so as not to get stuck too much for I will have a cargo of the Spirit of Jesus Christ aboard, expressed in a tangible way. The exciting part is that I will cover a large part of the country in which our troops are stationed. I will get acquainted with work in every quarter. There would be if every secretary were on the field over 1000 men for each, ^{Remember that} many men are in the office. Many are go betweens as I shall be. Somebody will be looking after

my thousand while I will be helping
several to look after their thousands. As
long as I am a part of the system and
"Sammy" is getting to know our chocolate,
writing paper, cigarettes, and God, I am
happy.

I was inoculated for para typhoid
today. They have the three typhoid shots
which I had last spring plus the para typhoid
all in one dose and that is the only way
They had it so I took the four shots all
at once. My arm is a little sore but
outside of that everybody is happy and
that soreness shall be soon gone.

I'm getting to feel quite at home here.
I have made several trips on foot and by
subway to various parts of town and
have not even become confused yet.
No street runs with the compass and
no sun shines to help with directions so
with map and yard stick in my hands
I make my way about.

The subway here is very nice and
goes most every where though not nearly



as rapid as in New York. The fare is 5 cents or 25 centimes ($\frac{1}{4}$ Franc) for premier classe, for seconde classe it is 15 centimes. The latter makes just as good time, but one stands up much more of the time. I generally travel seconde as you see more interesting things. When the guard is ready for the train to move, instead of ringing a bell he blows a cows horn which is suspended about his neck on a cord. The results seem to be about the same. First he shouts, "au voiture," then "Complet," toots his horns and away you go.

Yesterday a.m. we went to the Interdenominational French American Church. A slight memorial was held for those Americans lost to date.

Sinkings were heavier than in a couple of months last week. As a little American on board ship said (he has been in French Army since the beginning of the war), You

go over the top. You take the trench opposite you. Shells have hailed all about you.

You see this fellow go down and that one go. You go blindly on and if Jesus is with you, you get back. He must have been with us on our way over.

Write me often. Am not going to get downhearted for it is up to the Y. M. C. A. to keep the American Boys' heads up, but I shall need your letters powerfully bad. Make them short and often rather than long and seldom. One a piece ^{a week} from the four of you would not be bad for some are bound to get lost and some delayed.

Am still happy and eager to get a job which has always been my ideal of what true Christmanship really is, "Service".

Inclosed is from Paris edition of New York Herald. This is the trip that took even to the four francs, with the exception of the dinner.

Love — Paul.