11-12-1918

Elmo Culbert First World War Correspondence
#12

Elmo S. Culbert

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UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

Return after five days to

THE HOFFMAN HOTEL

Opposite Union Depot
FRANK HOFFMAN, Prop. and Mgr.
Steam Heat, Hot and Cold Water in Every Room
LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS

Mrs. Elmo J. Leilbert,
Salt Lake City, Utah.

To Shields State Co.
Sweetheart mine:

Where shall I begin, dear? My first impressions of the south? Well, let's see. First, upon leaving L.C. we had to travel via day coach, which wasn't the most comfortable in the world. But we did it, rather than foot out the extra dough for a standard sleeper—the only thing our train carried. You see, our tickets called for 2nd class passage. It's still real hot back here, so I slept with the window open all night. I had my good old bath robe around me. We hit south through Mo., over into Kansas again. If I woke up this A.M. in Okla. and here's where I seemed to sense the first difference. Kansas was prosperous looking, where as this
you to me, heart & soul.

Baby girl, if the opportunity comes to stay here & receive my com, what shall I do? You always know best, so I want to hear from you about it. The trouble with me is, I have nothing in the way of a good position to go back to - I wouldn't work for Lambert's again, I will simply have to start all over again. But maybe we had better wait & see what they want to do with me here. In any event, I shure do want my girl with me.

Received your telegram yesterday, dear - it was just like you. I know just what every word of it meant to.

Did I tell you yet that your package arrived with your Dad's gift? It was very acceptable dear & I was out of tobacco & haven't been paid as yet - am about busted, I know, though, that part of
Somewhere I have read a pretty thought that runs something like this: "They even have violets here, heartbreaking blue ones that simply beg to be plucked by given to you. No one has told them that you are thousands of miles away, by they wonder why I pass them by."

Dear baby girl, that thought flashed through my mind, and I silently said a prayer for you—just you. Sweet girl of mine, fill that weary heart with care and your burdens might be lighter. We've tried so hard to make good—just for you.

A horrible thing happened just after we pulled into F. Smith, Ark. We had just alighted from the train to stretch our legs when we heard a large explosion close by. A coffee factory had exploded.
and almost simultaneously was a roaring furnace. Twenty-five girls were caught in it. I didn't have a chance in the world. I saw one girl jump from the third story to break her legs. One man crawled down a drain spout from the third story, also, but nobody else got out. It was awful. And quick - I never saw anything like it in my life. Our train left about ten minutes after, so I couldn't get any details as to cause or anything. It had a very depressing effect.

Our afternoon's travel took us along the shores principally of the Arkansas River - nothing but swamp land and ramshackle towns. The people inhabiting this section,
outside of the niggers, look like an ignorant, illiterate, degenerate class and the old expression of "White Trash" was forcibly brought to my mind. I passed the remark that they looked like "Nobody Home." Garner added: "Looks like nobody ever lived there."

Rather an amusing—although also touching—thing took place at one station. A large group of drafted niggers were entraining for this camp—yes, there are niggers here too—and of all the bowling & boohooing you ever heard, this took the cake. Every young fellow had his women folks & they would take turns singing who could wail the loudest. Dear, it shouldn't have been anything to laugh at, for it brought home forcibly our lead taking,
but I couldn't help it. I laughed until the tears ran down my face. One long, tall girl actually collapsed like an umbrella. The next minute was laughing as gaily as though nothing had ever happened.

They are a peculiar class, I know they are going to interest me. The people getting on & off our train - white people - also talk the broad southern kings, and I kept my ears open.

Dear I think I told you we would arrive here at two. Well, I was wrong. We weren't due until eight & arrived at nine. Our camps lays 14 miles out of town, and as we were hungry & tired we decided to stay in town, get
something to eat, get a good nights' sleep, I show up in the morning. Well, we pretty near couldn't, as this town is under strict quarantine, no soldiers are allowed in it. All of the hotels & public places are visited every hour by the M.P. (Military Police) if any soldier found is arrested. Well, after parleying for a few minutes Garner made arrangements to get us in this dump—right across the street from the depot. Where we are, not allowed to leave the house. We have just been in to eat—next door, and now are ready to turn in.

Sweetheart, this is some camp. Between 80 & 85 thousand men here. The third largest camp in the U.S. Some camps—what? But I'll tell you more about that after I've
been out & have seen it.

Good night, sweet sweet little wife of mine. Your boy shall retire soon with you swaying his mind to sleep. How I do love my girl.

Sweetheart, good night.

Elmo.
[Page 1-Envelope-Front]

[Image- black and white photograph of The Hoffman Hotel]  [Image –green U.S. postage 3 cents stamp of President Washington facing left]

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country look forlorn and poor. And one of the first things I noticed were the latrines along side of a station. One was marked “White Men” and the other “Colored Men”, Also, we were carrying an extra coach in which the niggers rode. None of them are allowed in the white people’s coaches. And every station has its separate waiting room for “Colored” folks. It started to rain early and this seemed to add to the desolation. Another thing I noticed early –I was passing large fields of cotton –the first I have ever seen. We got out at an eating house at noon and sweetheart –I was forcibly reminded of you then, for I saw some violets in bloom. I jumped a fence and picked a couple
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