

[Letter #7]

Fort Ethan Allen, VT 5/27 – 17 [Sunday]
4th recruit Co.

Dear Friend Mary:

Your welcome letter arrived Thursday and was just in time to prevent me from having a case of the blues. For Mary I hope you would never know what it is to be with a big bunch who are always on the lookout for the mailman, and never get any letters. Every time he comes in we are all up and crowding around him to see who gets mail. And so far your two letters are all he has had for me.

Although Jim heard from home Wed. and they put in a sheet for me. Not that I care if the rest I've written to don't think enough of me to write, but the rest here are noticing it and wondering if I've no friends at all.

Everything here is well with us except that 4 out of every 5 have colds. It has been raining all week except yesterday and today. But it is nice now. It looks just fine like the 1st of May here today instead of the 27th. For the trees are just beginning to bud and there are a few mayflowers out on some of the hills.

I and the rest of the Rochester bunch took a tramp this morning after church. And we found flowers that we didn't know the names of. They were different from any we had seen. I picked a few intending to put them in this letter as they have a very nice perfume. But we got to fooling on the way back and the flowers got crushed (excuse scribbling) so that they were no good. But I'll send some later if I find any more like them.

I'm sorry to hear that your streak of ill-luck is still following you and sincerely hope that it will soon change. I also hope that your soaking that you got last Sat. night didn't result in a cold. They say it was some storm.

I see by the way you wrote that that dam John McKenna is still as contrary as ever.

I'm glad that you wrote what you did about Bessie as I always hoped that she was happy and often wondered if she was. I'm glad to learn that she is and earnestly hope that she always will be. For she is one good girl for all that she likes to raise the devil. Tell her I'm well and send her my best regards and good wishes.

But tell John that if I live to get back, that he has the worst beating that a man ever got coming to him, for letting you get wet last Sat. night. Also tell him to get busy with the hoe and help raise potatoes enough to feed the soldiers and the dear ones they left behind. Not that I'm condemning him for going to work on a farm for I think that it's the duty of every man, who can't see his way clear to fight for the country, to get out and help keep the food supply up. And he also deserves just as much praise; for the best army in the world would be no good with a starving country behind them.

We are still drilling to beat the devil for they sure intend to make real soldiers out of us by the way they act. There has none of our bunch got in the guardhouse yet, but there is no telling how soon there will be. As we have a payday soon. Then the natives around here will see one bunch of crazy devils if they never did before. There are about 5000 here now and nearly all broke. So payday will see one wild time I think.

Letters of John C. McGuire (transcribed from the originals 2010)

We were all out of tobacco this morning until one of our bunch borrowed a nickel and started gambling and won enough in an hour to keep the 7 of us in tobacco till payday. Some luck what?

I hope your sister has got over the measles and that you haven't caught them. I also hope that this finds you in the best of health and spirits. Wishing you the best of luck and that God may protect you, I remain
Your Friend

John C. McGuire

Answer soon as you seem to be the only friend I have left, even Mary McCabe seems to have gone back on me. Bye Bye – J.C.M.

[Letter #8]

Fort Ethan Allen, VT – 6/3 – 17 [Sunday]

Dear Mary:

Your welcome letter arrived Friday. And I was sure glad to hear from you, as I've usually got your letter on Thursday. And as I never stopped to think of Wed. being decoration day, I was beginning to get worried before I got it.

That sure was a joke about my last letter. I'd like to be on that street just long enough to unload my mind and tell some of them folks just what I think of them. I think they have a rotten nerve. Why I'd not even read a postal addressed to my own brother unless he showed it to me. But then you know some people are awful nosey about other people's business. It sure was no kid's work or it wouldn't have worked out the way it did. They evidently were afraid that something was getting by them. But we should worry. I will continue to write every week whether I hear from you or not and I hope you will do the same. Then if a letter is lost at either end there will be no misunderstanding between us.

I'm glad to hear that you are having some good times. As it gives me some happiness to know that you are enjoying yourself and not worrying all the time. For worry is of no use as everything will work out the right way in God's own good time. Although I know from bitter experience that it's hard to think so at times.

No you are not the cause of Mary McCabe not writing. I got a letter from her this week and she says she has been so busy that she couldn't write. They have a baby boy at Moore's, where we were that Sunday night.

I got a letter from [cousin] Josie McGuire yesterday, the first since Easter. She says she is well but near dead from caring for her father as he is pretty low most of the time.

We are having about 2 nice days a week here and the rest rain. And also the bunch keeps growing larger; there were 1700 came in from Monday till Friday. Then there were more yesterday and today. And still we have met no one from home. I guess the Rochester boys must be afraid of the cavalry. But as for my part I wouldn't exchange for no other branch of the service if I can help it.

Jim heard from Dad this week. He says they are well, but that it's awful lonesome there now. Which I don't doubt. But let us hope it won't be forever.

We were at church this morning. We sure have one fine priest. He told us this morning that soldiers were allowed to eat meat even on Fridays. And that there were only 6 fast days in the year for them. Those 6 are Ash Wed., the last 3 days of Holy Week, the eve of the Assumption and the eve of Christmas. He also said that any soldier who hadn't made his Easter duty had till Sept. as the Pope had granted them that extra time. So you see it's great to be a soldier.

Did you have to see the soldiers in the parade decoration day before you thought of me? I don't like to think so. For everything beautiful that I see reminds me of a certain girl with the nicest eyes in the world. Just how often I'm thinking of you I won't say. As you might think I was spreading hot air. So I'll just say that I haven't seen the girl yet who can come up to you for good looks and disposition.

I tried to find some more of those flowers today but search as much as I liked I couldn't find any. But I'll not give up.

We were assigned new rifles this week, but we haven't got our own horses or saddles yet, so we are using the old troop's outfit part of the day. But we are expecting our own soon.

Payday is Tuesday. Vermont sure had better look out then.

Don't think that your letters are too long for I could sit up all night reading your letters if you sent them that long. Will say goodbye for now. Give my regards to all and remember that a letter from you is always welcome to Your Friend

J.C. McGuire

Every one in the building who seen me writing and there are almost 50 of them told me to send their love so you see you have a load of love in this letter. But every one of the fellows are told the same thing.

J.C.M.

[Letter #9]

Fort Ethan Allen, VT 6/7 – 17 [Friday]

Dear Mary:

Your always welcome letter arrived this noon, and as you say you have the blues, I'll answer it right now while I have the time. Not that I've much hope of cheering you up at this distance, but I know it always helps a little to learn that I've a friend somewhere, when I feel that way. I'd give the world to be near you for a while so as to do my poor best to comfort you. But as it is, the best I can do is to repeat my promise to help you in any way in my power and to keep praying for your happiness.

Mary you may not believe it, but last Sunday I also was blue as the devil and had no reason that I know of to be that way. I didn't mention it in my last letter as I didn't want to make you feel bad. But the truth is that whenever I think of you (which is real often) an awful load of lonesomeness comes on me. I know I'm foolish, as I know there is no hopes of ever being anything but your friend, but I simply can't help it. But even my own brother don't know I'm lonesome as I can keep on raising the devil. No matter how I feel. And I wouldn't let the bunch here know I was lonesome if it killed me.

But I'm awful sorry that the old blues are back at you again. For I'd be willing to suffer anything for the rest of my life if you could only gain happiness from it.

I'm sorry you had the break with Agnes for I know what it is to break with a chum. But as I have objected to girls that someone else picked out for me I can understand how you feel about it, as everyone should chose their own company.

We have had fine weather this week till today. But it is raining now. That's the only reason I have time to write now. We started on a hike this afternoon. But we had to turn back after going about 3 miles. We just got in when it started to pour.

Yesterday was pay-day but they held the bunch pretty well in check, only letting part of them leave the fort at a time. So as to keep tabs on them. My turn comes tonight, but I don't think I'll go as I have a bad cold. And don't want to get worse and have to go to the hospital.

Tell John he has mistaken ideas about his straight late [a reference to a railroad brakeman]. For the boys in the army are better off and have less to worry about than the best straight early man [another type of brakeman] working for the N.Y.S. Ry. And that's no lie and one can have just as good times too if he wants to. For there is a city near nearly every army post.

There are all sorts of rumors going around as to where we are to be sent next but no one knows for sure. Some say to France others say the border and others say the filipines. There was a few sent here from Syracuse Saturday night. But it's only guesswork where they will send us next.

They keep getting new ones every day and as the place is full now they will have to move some of us before long. But we have no way of knowing who will go or who stays.

We haven't heard from home this week unless Jim got a letter today. But I haven't seen him since last night. Tell Ed and Gertie that I'll write soon and also give my best regards. Also the kids.

You sure served Pearl Smith right. But I think it should have been her mother you shook instead.

Letters of John C. McGuire (transcribed from the originals 2010)

Will say goodbye for now and good luck. Hoping that the blue devils will soon leave you forever I remain As Ever

Your Friend

John C. McGuire

Write soon and let me know how you are. And say who is W. Murphy going to marry?

J.C.M.

[Letter #10 – Army Navy YMCA stationery]

Fort Ethan Allen, VT 6/17, 1917 [Sunday]

Dear Maura:

Your ever welcome letter arrived Wed. But things have been happening so fast here that I really haven't had a minute I could call my own till now. I'm glad to hear that you have been feeling better. For every bit of sunshine helps.

Mary we are out in camp at last & in our own regiment away from all the rest. But a regiment covers as much ground as a fair sized village for there are 14 rows of tents with 16 tents and a mess hall in every row. We are sure lucky for the whole 7 of us got in one troop & the troop is nearly all Irish. With just enough wops and pollocks to push the hard work on. You see anyone that is late getting up in the morning or has got around late for drills has to do all the extra work & you can bet that the Irish see to it that they are all on the job in time. They call our tent little Ireland. There are 7 of us in it and all our names but one begins with Mc.

Mary if you are ever unable to sleep, just try to sleep in a tent. It seems that I hardly strike the bed at night that it's time to get up. I very seldom wake up at night at all.

I've been one sick kid since the last time I wrote. I had such a bad cold that I could hardly talk. I was at the hospital 2 days and they sure drove it out of me. But I'm all over it now. "Thank the Lord."

They sure are making it as pleasant as possible for us here. The YMCA has put up a big tent here with all the latest papers and magazines, a Victrola as well as stationery & pens & ink. The Knights of Columbus are also building a large building for the same purpose. Then the uniform is a free pass to every church social, dance, dog-fight, etc. that happens in all the towns around here.

But there is talk that we will be moved soon. I only wish they would send us to Syracuse or somewhere up that way. For while I don't know what homesickness means, I'd give a month's pay just to be with you and look at your dear sweet face once more. If only for a few hours. Now don't say I'm foolish. For you know yourself that one can't control such things as love. Even when there isn't a chance on earth. But if I go to France I'll always think that I'm fighting for my God, my country and my Mary. That sure ought to make me do my duty if anything will. For while all the rest of them will be fighting for the same God & country, none of them will have as nice a friend behind them as I will.

Tell your sister that I'm glad to hear of her recovery & give her my best regards. Also give my regards to Agnes & I'm glad you made up. If you see Willie Murphy give him my congratulations. If I have time tonight I'll write to the rest. If not I'll write tomorrow night. Remember me to everybody and also remember that I'm always

Your Friend,

Johnie

My address is now John C. McGuire, Troop A, 18th Cavalry, Fort Ethan Allen, VT.

I hope you got back from Caledonia this time without the blues.

Letters of John C. McGuire (transcribed from the originals 2010)

We didn't hear from home this week. If you have time would you please see if they are all right and oblige your friend J.C.M.

Please excuse scribbling& Be sure & answer soon.

J.C.M.

[Letter #11]

Fort Ethan Allen, VT 6/24, 1917 [Sunday]

Dear Friend Mary:

Your welcome letter got here Friday. I am glad to hear that you are well. But sorry to hear that your sisters are not fully recovered. For the one I met was surely a nice girl, in fact pretty near as nice as her sister but not quite. I'm also sorry to hear that you may have to change your address. But it might be as well if its got as that. It sure does beat the devil what trouble some people have getting along while others seem to get along nicely for the same cost.

Say Mary, I'd sure like to see you in a red cross cap. I'll bet you sure would make a stunning nurse. Why, we would all be getting sick or wounded on purpose just to have such girls as you look after us. Now that is no lie.

I think we will get to France all right if things keep on the way they are going. But we look to the luck of the Irish to bring the most of us back some time. As for myself, I'm not worrying. For while I'm not good enough to go to heaven, the devil has hell enough now without me going there to make it worse.

You say you hope I go to church. Well I sure do whenever I can. I've missed two Sundays since I left home. But couldn't help it either time as I was under orders till after church time each time. The priest said this morning that he was going to start a Holy Name Society here & wants us all to go to confession every month at least.

[other pages missing?]

[Letter #12]

Fort Ethan Allen, VT – 7/1 – 17 [Sunday]

Dear Mary:

Your ever welcome and cheering letter arrived Thursday. And it's needless to say that I was glad to get it. For Mary – I've got so that I look forward to your letters more than anything else that happens.

I put off answering it till tonight and as it is raining like the devil again. I can't even go over to the YMCA without getting soaked so I am writing this in bed. We have electric lights in the tents now so we can write and play cards etc. now till 9 o'clock.

Mary, I'm sorry to hear that your throat is bothering you and I sincerely hope that it don't turn out to be tonsillitis or anything else serious. At least I'm praying that it isn't if prayers from the likes of me are any good.

I didn't get to confession last night, because I had to work in the kitchen yesterday. It was late when we got through and I felt so tired that I hadn't ambition enough to clean up and change my clothes to go out. So I've put it off till next Sat.

I am sending you a picture that was taken one day as I was washing a few clothes in a wash dish. The fellow that took it came up behind me and when he was all ready he called me and I just looked around as he snapped it. The sun was in my eyes and it looks as if I were getting ready to cry.

I am also sending one that was taken Decoration day when we were putting up tents. The Lieutenant in this picture is in France now.

We have different rumors every day about when we are going but no one knows anything for sure. We are to go on the range this week shooting for record. I've been doing the best practicing I know how. As I'd like to make marksman or sharpshooter. For there is extra money for either as well as the honor that goes with it.

I got a letter from [brother] Lou this week he says that he still thinks the Navy is the only place. But of course I can't agree with him.

So you saw Willie Murphy before he took the long leap. I'd sure like to have seen him as I can imagine just what he was like. I can also see old Joe when the women kept him waiting so long. I'll bet he did rave.

Ed sure gave Gertie what she deserved by getting drunk, Don't you think? I always said that if I had a woman that was always chewing about every little thing that I'd not even live with her. For if there is anything I hate on earth it is a husband and wife always chewing. If she didn't want to be bothered with kids what did she ever get married for? But I know there is times when he isn't all he should be so I guess it's 6 of one and half a dozen of the other, don't you?

The two who are dressed like I am in this picture are Rochester boys, Maguire and Hyland. Steve Hyland was going to confession with me last night. He says he hasn't been there in 5 years. He got all prepared to go and then he was signed up for guard duty last night. So that's another reason that I put it off.

Letters of John C. McGuire (transcribed from the originals 2010)

I hope that your father [James Farrell] came down Friday and that you saw the circus. I wish I could have been there to go with you. As I never had a chance to take you to any thing better than the movies. But let us hope for better days to come.

If I were you I wouldn't worry what anyone told Duke [Hynes, a mutual friend]. For they can't tell him anything bad about you without lying and lies are always found out sooner or later and besides I know from what he said that Sunday that he will believe nothing bad about you.

Will say goodbye for now. Hoping this finds you better and enjoying yourself.

I am as ever Your Friend

John C. McGuire

Remember me to all including your Sister. J.C.M.