

[Letter #13 – stationery from Knights of Columbus Soldiers Association of Vermont]

Fort Ethan Allen – 7/8 – 17 [Sunday]

Dear Maura:

Your welcome letter arrived yesterday. I was sure glad to get it as it was two days later than usual and I was beginning to worry thinking that perhaps you were sick or that something was the matter. You will never know how much I was relieved when I got it.

Am glad to hear that you are well. But I wish you could have had a better 4th. We sure had a dull one here also as payday didn't get around in time. Our troop club gave a dance in the Armory in Burlington the night of the 4th. It was a great success as far as money goes. The hall didn't begin to hold the crowd. I guess there must have been about 700 fellows, but not over 100 girls. But even at that that was not room to dance much.

We are sure having some nice weather here now. No rain in a week. But I'm knocking on wood when I say that.

We walk over 10 miles every day now as they say they want to get our muscles hardened in. There were 16 men picked out of our troop this week to be 1st class privates – Jim, S. Hyland, T. Maguire and myself were the first 4 to be picked. So that ought to show that old Rochester is not disgraced by the bunch of fellows that came here from there. I'm not saying it to brag about myself, but we were picked for being the neatest and best drilled men of the troop. And here is another boost for the Irish. 13 of the 16 are of Irish descent, 1 English and 2 German. It will mean \$3 extra a month as well as the honor of being considered the pick of the troop.

Jim was not in that picture I sent you. I haven't got a picture yet with him on. But there was a man took one of our platoon the other day so I'll have one with him on when I get those. We are figuring on having one taken with just the 2 of us with horses and full equipment the first chance we get.

We asked for a furlough today and were told that we wouldn't be able to get off till the last part of Aug. or the first part of Sept. We are trying to fix it so that the 7 of us can get off together. If we do, Rochester wants to look for a few loud days and nights.

But you can be sure that I will want to take up as much of your time as you can possibly give me. For I'm still able to see your dear beautiful face every time I wake up at night. And I'm thinking it will always be so whether I live 40 hours or 40 years. Even though I know you will never be any nearer to me than a friend. But there is one consolation in knowing you are the best friend I've got. For I've got nearly as many letters from you as I have from all my other friends and relatives put together. I have always been cheered a lot by your letters and you may be sure I'll never forget it.

Mary, I'd like to know what difference it makes to the rest of the Murphy tribe how Willie's wife looks as long as he loves her. I know that most of the misunderstandings that happen between married people come from just such talk as you say they are shooting. That sure is a good one about Jim and I wouldn't be surprised if you had guessed the reason. But I hope that Bessie will not have to suffer on account of it.

I'm sorry to hear that Agnes has gone and left you to your loneliness. I only wish that I could come and take her place. But no doubt you have met lots of nice girls and fellows by now. And will not be caring much whether either Agnes or I ever come back. (Now you will say I'm jealous.) But I'm not as I'd like you to have the best time possible always.

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

Will close for now. Hoping you are well and that I'll hear from you soon. I am as Ever Your Friend

John C. McGuire

Please excuse scribbling. J.C.M.

[Letter #14: stationery of Army & Navy YMCA]

Ft. Ethan Allen, VT – 7/15, 1917 [Sunday]

Dear Mary:

Your always welcome letter received Thursday. It's needless to say that I was glad to hear that all is well with you, for I'm always that. But Mary you sure had a surprise or two in it this time.

That sure was an awful death that overtook Martin Hynes. But that goes to show that the Army is not the only place where a man can get killed. For Death will always find us when our time is up. No matter where we are. But I'm sure sorry for his folks especially his mother. For she has had her share of trouble. And she sure worked hard bringing them up, if ever a woman did. But at that she will know where his grave is. And I'm afraid there will be many a mother and sweetheart in this great country of ours who would give the world to visit the graves of their dear ones before this thing is over.

Mary did you ever experience joy and pain at the same time? Well I felt that way when I read your letter. I was more glad than you will ever know to hear that things are breaking right for you again. But as I've never told you a lie since I knew you, I'll not say that it didn't hurt some. I walked to Burlington and back that night just to relieve the pain. A distance of 6 miles each way.

But don't worry dear, for the knowledge that you have a chance of happiness more than makes up for it all. As that is what I've been praying for. And no matter what happens or where I go I will always pray for the happiness of my dearest friend. For Mary that is what you are. And it's awfully good and sweet of you to promise to remain so. No matter where we are. I pray to God that I may always be worthy of your confidence and friendship.

I'm glad too, Mary that you tell me of your troubles for I know by bitter experience that it helps a lot to have someone to whom you can tell everything that's on your mind. I'm not thinking you soft for it neither. And Mary there is nothing I would like better than to have you confide in me the same as you would an older brother if you had one. And I pledge my sympathy and all the advice it's within my power to give. And as long as we both live I will always protect you from both man and devil. Whether your name continues to be Miss Farrell, Mrs. Hynes or Mrs. anything else. It will always be the same and I'll always think of you just as I do now.

Say Mary: My brother Louis wrote to me some time ago and among other things he asked me to send him your address. He said he would beat my time if I did. I hope you will not be offended, but I sent it to him. So if you haven't heard from him before now, you may look for a card from him soon. But look out for he is an awful jollier if he is my brother.

They are beginning to let some of the fellows go home now. And as soon as I hear from Louis again I'm going to try to arrange it so that we can get home the same time they do. We won't get a very long time as they are only giving 3 or 4 days to each man. Some of the fellows asked for leave of absence sometime in October. But they were told flatly to take it before then as we would certainly not be here that long.

All you hear from Sunday morning till Saturday night is France or Russia. And everyone is eager to go and have it over with. For if all the boys in the country are as eager to go as this bunch is, the Kaiser has got an awful beating coming to him.

Give my regards to Ed, John, Gertie and the kids. Also to Pat. And don't forget to remember me to your sister and the folks in Caledonia. If you see Willie McKenna, tell him to drop me a line.

Will say goodbye for now. And dear, I hope you won't feel bad because I said the news in your letter caused me some pain for the joy of knowing you are going to be happy makes up for it. I am and always will be your True Friend

John C. McGuire

Be sure and answer soon. And Mary dear I wish you wouldn't talk of not caring whether you live any longer or not. Because God never created anyone as beautiful as you to let you suffer all the time. Always try to think that your sorrow and suffering is for some good purpose and that it will sometime all be turned to joy is the hope & belief of your Friend J.C.M.

There is no danger of adding any more to my name so don't order any larger envelopes.

J.C.M.

[Letter #15: stationery of the Knights of Columbus Soldiers Association of Vermont]

Fort Ethan Allen, VT – 7/19-1917 [Thursday]

Dear Mary:

Your welcome letter arrived today. Am sure glad to hear that you are feeling well. But Mary you must have surely mistaken my meaning in my last letter if you say it made you sorry that you told me what you did. For no matter how it made me feel otherwise, I was sure happy to think you had confidence enough in me to confide your joys and sorrows to me as you have. It shows that I've got your trust and friendship anyway. And I hope that as long as we are both alive that we will always be as good friends.

I've meant to write a little note of sympathy to Mrs. Hynes, but so far I've always forgot it when I've had time. But I'll sure do it before I go to bed tonight.

There is more talk of Europe than ever now. And they are drilling the devil out of us as usual. They are making us walk faster and farther every week. This morning we covered 14 miles in 3 & 1/2 hours. Some walking. But the horses are beginning to get here so the walks will soon be over.

You see so far we have only had horses when the old troops weren't using them. But there are about 2000 new ones here now which will be out of quarantine soon. Then there will sure be some fun. For there are a lot of lively looking ones among them.

I hope that what you think of John is so. But I sure hope he gets a girl that will make him toe the mark. As a good girl is the making of any man if she handles him right. Tell him I wish him the best of luck. But if he draws like some of his family did, he might better die. (But you needn't tell him that.) I know I'd rather be dead than have someone forever chewing at me. Wouldn't you?

I got a letter from [cousin] Josie yesterday saying that her father was dead. In one way he is better off as she says he has been unconscious for a long time and that he just slept his life away in the last.

I'm sorry for your sisters, for while I've only had but one sty in my life I'll never forget it. Give them my regards & tell them if they happen in the city at the time we come home that we will be a sight that will cure sore eyes. Especially if the sailors get home at the same time. Some Vain, am I not?

I suppose that now that Lou is writing to you that you will soon like him the best. As that is generally the way with him he gets all the nice girls. But I hope that he or no one else will ever break our friendship.

Mary: when I wrote to Ed & Gertie I asked them to send me the date of your birthday. But as I haven't heard from them and I think it's the 21st, I [am] sending you a small present. It's not much and as I've seen nothing up in this God-forsaken country that I thought you would like, I'm leaving it to you to get what you want to.

Wishing you the best of health and many happy returns of the day and the blessing of God forever, I remain Your Friend,

John C. McGuire

I hope to be home next month but have no way of being sure. Give my regards to all.

J.C.M.

[Letter #16]

Fort Ethan Allen, VT – 7/24, 1917 [Tuesday]

Dear Mary:

Your cheering letter arrived today. Am sure glad to hear from you and as I've got to go on guard tomorrow night I'm answering now while I have time.

Mary I'm sure glad that things are breaking your way at last. Even though I know I lose all hope when they do. But I sure am glad for you and it would only be mean for me to feel otherwise. I'm also glad you were able to get back at Mary M. [illeg.] smoothe a way as you did. I'm sure she must have felt small and cheap.

I can't say that I'm surprised to hear that some of the fellows were drafted. How did John come to escape? I got a letter from Mike Hynes today along with yours, but the draft doesn't worry him any.

Say what in the world did Bob Murphy cry about? He sure didn't feel homesick before going did he?

I guess there won't be much danger of Ed having to go. As he has enough to do at home. (Also enough war.)

We were told today that there were pretty good chances of our regiment being made into provisional field artillery as long as the war lasted. I sure hope it's not so, not because I wouldn't like it, but they couldn't possibly get us ready as Artillery for France before March. And we all want to get a shot at the dutch before then.

We heard from [brother] Lou Sunday. He said he was going home about the 10th of Aug. We both put our names in then. But there are so many on the list that we aren't sure we will get it. But please pray that we will be able to make it all at the same time.

Lou says for me to say goodbye to my girl. But I wrote and told him that no soldier would chase a girl who would leave him for a watery old sailor. He says you are too young for an old bat like me anyway. But I'm not worrying.

Well Mary I'll say goodbye for now as it's getting late and we have inspection and parade tomorrow. Give my regards to all. And don't forget me altogether in your new found joy.

I remain as ever Your Friend,

John C. McGuire

Answer soon.

[Letter #17]

Fort Ethan Allen, VT – 8/1, 1917 [Wednesday]

Dear Mary:

Your welcome bit of a letter got here yesterday. Was more than glad to hear from you, but dear girl I'm sorry to hear that you are not well. I hope and trust that when you get this you will be all better.

Mary I wish you had some of the good health that I've got. Especially now that things seem to be breaking more favorably towards your happiness. But keep on smiling and trusting in God and everything will surely come right for you in the end. Because Mary you know that the lord chastises those he loves. But don't think I'm kidding you when I say that. For I know how hard it is to think that way at times.

You sure must be having some excitement at Zimmer street. But you see most of the good men have enlisted. So the roughnecks think they can do anything now and get away with it. (More self praise.) I'm glad that you got the watch again though, as it would have been fierce if you had lost it altogether.

Gertie sure has some opinion of soldiers, hasn't she? But then she is to be excused as she never seen anything but the tin-soldiers in the N[ational] Guard. And believe me there is as much difference as day and night. There is a regiment of Vermont guardsmen near us so I have a good chance to compare them. If she has been reading my letters she sure didn't see any thing complimentary to herself. But then anyone who would read some one else's letters don't deserve to.

Mary I'm no longer a cavalryman. The whole regiment was changed this morning to Provisional Field Artillery. So that that will add a little more to my address. But not much. Jim and myself are both cannoners. But we may be changed as quite a few that drew the lot of driver can't fill the position. You see a driver has to ride one horse and lead one and keep right in place no matter what happens. I think I'd rather be where I am but there isn't much hope as I showed up too good as a cavalryman to get away from the horse end.

We had a picture of the men of the troop taken some time ago and I'm glad now we did. As it isn't likely the same bunch will ever be together again. I ordered one intending to send it to you and Jim ordered one to send home. But through some mistake we only got one between us. And as Jim paid for half I had to send it home. I hope you will go up and see it. As it's the plainest one I've seen taken here. Some of the troop were split up and about 90 more came to us to make up a battery, so you see it's just like starting in in a new outfit.

We haven't heard from Lou since I wrote you last.

Will say goodbye for now as I'm sweating like a butcher. Give my regards to all and be sure and write soon as you will never know how a letter from you cheers the heart of Your Friend

John McGuire

Address:

Pvt. J.C. McGuire

Battery A. P.F.A. (18th Cav.)

Ft. Ethan Allen, VT

Please excuse scribbling.

[Letter #18]

Ft. Ethan Allen, VT – 8/8, 1917 [Wednesday]

Dear Maura:

Your welcome letter arrived tonight. I was sure glad to hear from you as I somehow had the feeling that all was not right with you. But I'm relieved to hear that you are all right.

That sure was tough about little Elizabeth. For while she was only a baby and is sure better off than most of us ever will be, I know they will be feeling bad about it all the same. Please give them my sympathy, Mary, for I know how they feel.

You asked me to try to find out when I'd be home. Well Mary I asked the troop clerk tonight where I stood in the list. He went and looked and told me it would probably be some time between the 22nd of Aug. and the 5th of Sept. So that's the nearest I can find out. I'd sure hate to have you absent when I do come, for I count you 1st among the few good friends I have there. And God alone knows when I'll ever get there again. I've a faint suspicion that it will be my last appearance at least for a long time.

Tomorrow is pay-day here so I expect there will be another wild night tomorrow night. It sure is some fun when 6000 maniacs get turned loose all at once. But so far there has been no very bad disturbances except a lot of noise. Tell Ed that 8 of us are able to kill a half B'bl [bushel barrel] of beer when we get the chance. Which isn't often.

You haven't said any more about John getting married. Is he still thinking about it, or has he changed his mind?

I'm glad your cold is some better. I wish you could get up here in the mountains for a while. There are no colds here in the summer. They make us go swimming for 2 hours every day now. I had my picture taken in my bathing trunks Sunday. But the fellow that took it was called home last night. His sister is dying. So I don't know when he will have it finished.

Our old Rochester bunch is broken up now. One was transferred to another regiment. One is in the guard house; one is off on furlough and two are in the hospital. So that only leaves Jim and myself here at present. But we still have our old bunch of Irish around us.

Everyone calls our tent little Ireland because the Irish all gather around there every night. And you would swear you were in the old country to hear them. Our first Seargent is Irish himself. But he says the Irish are the curse as well as the back-bone of the regiment. For every bit of deviltry is blamed to little Ireland whether any of us are to blame or not.

Will say goodbye for now. Wishing you the best of health and all the happiness in the world. And also looking forward to the day that I'll see you again. I remain as always

Your Friend
John C. McGuire

I hope you find mother at home this week as I know she will be glad to see you as you stand ace high with her and Dad.

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

Say have you hypnotized that brother of mine? I haven't heard form him in a dog's age. I'll be getting jealous of you if he don't write soon. Ha Ha.

J.C.M.