

[Letter #25]

Fort Ethan Allen, VT – 10/3 – 17

Dear Mary:

Your welcome letter arrived today. I'm sure glad to hear that you are some better and I'm still praying for you to get entirely well.

I'm sure glad for you that you have your father with you and I hope he lands his job and stays with you. For I am sure you would be happier if you and he were to go keeping house. For then you would have no one chewing at you all the time. And you could do more as you liked in your own house than you can if you are staying with someone else no matter who it is.

I suppose Ed was to blame for him and Gertie being late at the train the day we left. I'll bet he got H—whether he was or not. I'd sure hate to be in his shoes. But at that I'm sorry they were late for they always treated me well. And Ed and myself were always chums. (When we weren't fighting.)

I heard from Louis today. He says they are feeling fine and that Bryan is beginning to act like a human being again. But he says that he was some sore for a while. Lou claims that he never felt as much like jumping his job as he did the night they left. He was anxious to know who went home with Elsie. I don't know whether it will be safe to tell him that I was the guy or not. He wants us to try to meet him and Bryan at our uncle's in Mass. some Sunday, but I don't know whether we will be able to or not.

We are on guard again today. So I'm writing this between reliefs. I drew a lucky post this time. There are 3 of us and a corporal posted over the quarantine corrals. And there has been no one near us to bother us all night or day and we have sure had some fun telling stories etc.

I haven't written to Elsie or any of the rest of them since I came back and about Elsie I don't know whether I should write or not as I wouldn't want to make either of the sailors sore at me. But maybe I will write to her for they both should have sense enough to know that I mean nothing but friendliness.

Mary, what did you mean when you said it would be better for both of us if we didn't see each other again. Do you mean that it hurt you when we left or do you mean that you don't want to see me again? I sincerely hope it is not the latter. For I've been looking forward to the time when we will be home altogether. And while I never intend to force myself on you, I'm hoping that we may have many good times together. For you are the best friend I've got on earth today. And I never want to lose you. So I'm praying that it's God's will that we may meet again. Or is it that I did something while I was there that made you dislike me?

Will close for now as it is time to go back to the fort. Good bye for now and remember I'm hoping for your happiness and health no matter how it affects me. May God bless you and watch over you is the wish of Your Friend

John C. McGuire

Give my regards to all and be sure and answer soon.

J.C.M.

[Letter #26]

Fort Ethan Allen, VT – 10/7, 1917

Dear Mary:

Your ever welcome letter arrived this noon. So I will spend a part of this afternoon properly by answering it right away.

No Mary, I didn't say anything about my cold in my other letter for the reason that I felt too miserable to talk about it. Then also I didn't want you nor the rest [to] know how near all in I was. After I got back here it settled into my chest and from there to all my muscles and I was stiff and sore all over. I went to the hospital 3 or 4 different mornings. They gave me salts and also (don't laugh) they doped me with asperin tablets. Wouldn't that jar you after me telling you not to take them? I certainly felt as if the joke were on me.

That was why I didn't write to Louis or anyone else excepting yourself till yesterday. But I started last night and have written lord only knows how many letters since. And I'm not half through the bunch I promised. But it's not likely many of them will be answered. Not more than once anyway. For a lot of them are like Ed and Gertie. Always squealing because one doesn't write to them. And when one does, they forget to answer. But for all that I always try to write when I promise to.

I wrote to Elsie this morning more because you seemed to want me to than anything else. Not because she isn't a nice girl, but because I may make some of my brothers sore at me again.

If you think the McKennas were only coming to the station to satisfy their curiosity that day, I'm glad they were late. But if they had got there they would have been disappointed. For both you and Mother carried yourselves like true American women should, according to my idea. You were not like some of them soft babyish ones we seen that morning. Who for all their tears may not remember their boys as long as mother will her sons and you will your friend.

Mary, I'll never be able to tell you how much I value your friendship even though I'm satisfied that it will never be anything else. For I'd rather have the friendship of a girl like you, than the deepest love of any other girl living. And I'm very much relieved to know that that was all you meant in your last letter. And as for what folks will say that's not bothering me at all and I hope you don't let it bother you. I don't believe I ever said anything to anyone to lead them to think that we were more than friends. So if they misunderstand it's their own look-out not ours. And no matter what anyone says, we will know in our hearts that neither has made a fool of the other.

God knows I hope the day s never coming when we have to part for good. For even if the desire of your heart should be granted you (which I hope it may), I'd nevertheless like to come and see you both once in a while. And that ought to convince everyone that we are friends till death.

So please Mary keep right on going up to see Mother and Dad. I know they will always be glad to see you. And I'll answer for it that they never misunderstand and that they will never think the less of you no matter what happens.

I'm sure worried about that cold of yours and you may be sure that I'll keep right on praying for you. Though the prayers of a roughneck cavalryman may not go far. I'm also sorry about what you wrote about your father not coming back. I was hoping from the bottom of my heart that things were going to be more cheerful for you. But never say die dear girl and bear up under your cross for God is probably

only trying you and you know it's always darkest just before the dawn. And that every cloud no matter how dark has a silver lining.

I promise you girl that from this on I'm going to lead the best life a soldier can lead. And I'll offer all my trials and sufferings from this on to the Blessed Virgin that she may use her influence to your health and happiness.

That ought to take a load off Sandy's mind if he knew my resolution, for he still thinks I'm bound for the guard house. So it's no more booze except on furloughs. For that is the cause of most of a soldier's troubles.

So Mary, I beg you to let me know if there is anything at all I can do to make it easier and pleasanter for you at any time. I also hope that it's God's will that we meet again before I go across.

Hoping this finds you as near recovery as it does me, I remain as ever, Your True Friend.

John C. McGuire

[Letter #27]

Fort Ethan Allen Vermont – 10/12 – 17

Dear Mary:

Your always welcome letter arrived today and as always I was glad to hear from you. Because Mary, while I don't know why your letters always seem to mean more to me than any others I receive. Even from home.

I'm sorry to hear that your cold is no better, and I do wish, dear girl, that you would take the best possible care of yourself and not be exposing yourself to more colds for Iola [sanitarium] is a bad place for a nice sweet girl like you to spend any time in. So please Mary, don't go anyplace again where it's apt to be cold without dressing yourself warmly.

It's too bad that you had to have that old fool and her kids along to spoil your day at the fair. I can just imagine the kind of time you must have had. But please God, things won't always be that way.

I had an answer from Elsie yesterday and by the way she wrote she sure has her troubles. But she says she didn't lose any sleep over Bryan's behavior that night. Which is just as well, for I heard from Louis today and among other things he said that Bryan was just crazy about a girl he met in New York. He is sure one darn foolish boy, even if he is my brother.

Lou says it will take him all his time to keep him single till the war is over. But he is the one that will have to put up with it so the rest of us shouldn't worry. But I don't altogether like the idea of an actress for a sister in law unless she is different from others of her profession. And by the way Lou talked she is not. For God's sake don't repeat this for Mother would worry if she knew it. And as she couldn't mend matters it would be better that she don't hear of it.

We are having our usual daily amount of rain here and it's just as pleasant as ever. I got tired of tramping around with that scout detail that I worked so hard to get on. It wasn't much fun standing ankle deep in mud signaling or making maps so I asked to be transferred into the drivers squad. I'm swing driver now on No. 1 gun. I think I'm going to like it better. But I'm going to keep trying everything till I get what I like best.

If at any time you don't get a letter when it's time for one don't think wrong about it. For everything points towards a quick long move. And I may be prevented from writing for a while very soon. But you may be sure I'll never keep you waiting any longer than is absolutely necessary.

My cold is about better. But as usual there is something else. About a week ago there was a sore came on my face. I didn't think much of it at the time. But it spread all over both sides of my face. It don't itch, but still the doctor says it is a mild form of eczema. My face is all covered over with oxide of zinc ointment. You would sure laugh if you could see me. All the fellows say I look as if I were all lathered up to shave and didn't have time to finish. But they say it isn't hard to cure so I'm not worrying.

I'm sure pleased at what you said about our friendship for it proves I was not mistaken in you. I don't know anyone whose friendship I could value anywhere near yours.

Hoping this finds you in improving health and that you will always keep a little place in your heart for me. I remain Always Your Friend.

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

J.C. McGuire

I don't know if I will be able to see you again before we leave. But I heartily join you in hoping so. But if not, God's will be done by us all.

I wrote to Mary Reed last Sunday. So I may get that sweater.

Goodbye for now and God bless you.

J.C.McG.

Best regards from Jim. Give my regards to all and be sure and answer soon. J.C.M.

[Letter #28]

Fort Ethan Allen – 10/18 – 17

Dear Mary:

Your always welcome and cheering letter arrived last night, but I was down to the barbers when it came so I didn't get it till this morning. I sure hope that by writing it you didn't get in bad with the floor walker [at the department store where Mary worked]. For it sure makes me feel like fighting when I think of anyone bawling you out. Especially such a stiff as he looks to be.

I'm sure glad your cold is better and I beg you to take care and not catch any more.

You and Mother sure have some times trying to keep dates with each other, but while religion and church is al right, I think Mother and Mary McCabe are dippy about church. I think they both missed their calling that they didn't take the veil [become nuns]. For they both act as if they would rather be in church than anywhere else. But lord knows they can't be good enough to more than make up for the shortcomings of some of their relatives (myself included).

I heard from Mary Reid the other day and she was telling all her troubles about losing her place and everything else. She was saying that she was in to see you and that she intended to try and get better acquainted with you. So that I could not say I was the only one that had you for a friend. That must have been Katherine McCabe that was with her that day.

This has been a great day here. You see they got a lot of the fellows to buy liberty bonds at so much a month. Lord knows how much they raised. But our battery alone has bought over 12 thousand dollars worth. So it's safe to say that the 3 regiments must have over \$200,000.00 worth. They called today Liberty Loan day and we had no drills. But we had a parade of all the soldiers in the fort followed by a football game. Then tonight there is about 3 or 4 free shows at different places in the post. Jim has gone to one of them, but I feel that I've done enough running around for today.

There has been no farther talk of moving, but everything is in shape for a quick move when the word does come.

Mary it was an awful temptation not to take French leave [AWOL] last Sat. Two of the fellows from home got passes for 2 days and Tom Maguire went with them without a pass. But I'm glad now I didn't, for they wired and sent the police up to Maguire's house Sunday night and made him come back. He is in the jug now waiting for trial. The other two Hyland and Kramer haven't got back yet. So I guess they will be in Dutch also.

My face is a little better but I can't shave yet. And believe me I've sure got a nice beard started. There is not much news as everything is about the same here. So still wishing you all God's best gifts of health and happiness, I remain your friend till death.

J.C. McGuire

Give my regards to al and be sure and answer soon. Best regards from Jim. Good night and God bless you my dearest friend.

As ever, Johnnie

[Letter #29]

Fort Ethan Allen – 10/25 – 17

Dear Mary:

Your letter arrived at noon today, and needless to say it was welcome as always. For I never write to you that I don't count the days, that I may know when to expect an answer.

I'm glad you are feeling well and I sincerely hope you will keep right on improving till your health is perfect.

Everything is about the same here, except that we are beginning to pack up. They say that it's only a matter of transportation that is holding us back now. Where our destination is – no one knows. But as long as we get out of here none of us cares much where we go. For it's cold as the devil here and beside the most of us are sick of looking at the same scenes every day.

Jim and myself are both feeling well. My face is about all healed and I'm sure glad of it. For while it didn't pain me much, even a homely cuss like me hates to look any worse than God intended him to.

We had another liberty loan parade here yesterday. The whole 3 regiments marched to Burlington. I didn't go myself as I was weighing horses. I was some disappointed when they started out, but it rained nearly all the time they were gone. So when I saw how wet and muddy and tired they were when they came back, you can bet I was glad that I was prevented from going. Some of the fellows were envying me my luck and they said that the devil sure took care of his own ~~that time~~. Maybe they are right, but I hope not.

I got a letter from Louis tonight, but he must have said something the censor didn't like for there was so much cut out of it I couldn't make much sense of it. I'll have to tell him when I write again to be more careful what he says.

I haven't heard from anyone else excepting mother since I wrote to you last. She says you were up to see them. And Mary dear girl I'm glad you were. For they sure like you and I know they must be lonesome. You may be sure I'll never forget your kindness.

There is one more favor I'd like to ask of you Mary. Will you say a prayer for me to get to mass more often than I do? It seems as if every Sunday lately there is something extra to be done. I don't think I've had a chance to go since I was home. Not more than one time anyway. But as it's not my fault I hope the lord won't hold it against me along with the rest of my sins.

I'll try and find a nice fellow to write to that other girl you wrote about. I have very few close friends outside the Rochester bunch. And I suppose she would rather hear from someone from somewhere else. But I'll do the best I can and you may be sure no tough guy will write to her.

How is John? And have any of you heard from Willie? I heard from [cousin] Josie a while back and she said that Joe Hynes was to be married. So that's probably where big-mouthed Murphy was mistaken when he was telling Ed & Gertie.

Will close now with best wishes for your health and happiness. Hoping to get a nice long letter from you before I leave here. I remain as ever Your Friend,

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

John C. McGuire

Give my regards to all including Elsie and be sure to answer soon.

Johnnie

I'm still thinking as much of you as ever and lately you are mixed up in my dreams every night. So please answer son as I'd hate to leave and not hear from you. J.C.M.

[Letter #30]

Ft. Ethan Allen, VT – 11/30, 1917

Dear Mary:

Your always welcome letter arrived this noon and as it's raining like the devil outside and we can't drill, I'll seize the opportunity to answer right away.

I'm indeed very sorry to hear that your cold has come back and I do hope that you will see a doctor and have it tended to and cured before it leads to something else.

To tell you the truth Mary, I have been worrying about you even when I read in your letters that your cold was better. For while they say that it's wrong to believe in dreams, I dream so little that I'm a regular old woman for thinking about things when I do. And for the last 2 or 3 weeks I've been dreaming something or other every night and every time you are mixed up in them. So can you blame me for worrying?

I'm also sorry that that old fool Gertie has one of her fits again. I don't know what she and the likes of her think they can get by being sulky. For it only makes things unpleasant for themselves and everyone around them. I often wish you were staying somewhere where folks acted like human beings and not like animals.

Has that dam[n] fool John been getting fresh? If he has and I find it out, I'll surely settle with him when we meet again. For I sure can't stand for anyone treating you like anything else but the way a lady should be treated. For anyone that insults you more than insults me and has got to answer to me for it. Even if it was my own brother. I only wish that this thing was over so that I could be near enough to make them respect you at least.

Everything is about the same here except that there is more rain than ever. We can't leave our tents without wading through water. We have also got orders to move by next Monday at the latest. They tell us that we are going to Hattiesburg, Miss. But while it may be true, it sounds rather phony to some of us, for more reasons than one. But I don't care if it is true for it will be summer there instead of winter and most of us are heartily sick of these cold mountains. It wouldn't be bad only for the fact that it's hard to keep a tent warm especially when it's always wet.

I'm glad that Willie [Murphy] likes the army for it may make a man of him if he gets back all right. He will sure get woke up from some of his ideas. (I know I did anyway.)

So Joe Hynes didn't win much of a prize. That is sure surprising for he used to be some sport. He used to make fun of some of my friends because they weren't as good looking as the chickens he used to travel with. But since I've met you no one can say that I haven't the best looking friend in those parts or anywhere else.

I got a letter from [brother] Lou but could make nothing out of it because of the way the censor cut it up. But maybe he was moving and happened to mention where he was going.

I wrote to Elsie about 2 weeks ago. But I guess she doesn't care much about writing for she never answered.

I didn't find anyone to write to Miss Green as most of the fellows are already writing to 3 or 4 girls. So Sunday I gave her address to [Bill] Kramer and he said he would sure write, for somehow or other, he said, the name sounded familiar to him. Maybe she would rather have heard from a fellow not from Rochester. But tell her that with my limited amount of real friends that was the best I could do. And anyway, he is sure a darn nice fellow for all that his folks are German. I always call him the Carp.

I haven't heard form home since I wrote to you but I'll probably get a letter tomorrow. You must have been to pray right away after getting my letter for Sunday I had nothing to do all day till 4 o'clock in the afternoon. I'm going to try to get to confession Sat. night if I don't get stung. Which I'm hoping I won't. We sure have a fine chaplain.

Now Mary dear, I don't want you to feel bad about not sending me cigarettes or anything like that for I understand just how careful a girl has to be in times like these to make ends meet, especially on the small wages most of you get. And besides I'm not like some of the fellows that expect their friends to keep them in tobacco, etc. Then they take their money and shoot crap or spend it in some other foolish way.

Will now close so as to get this letter in the next mail. Now for God's sake dear do take the best possible care of that cold. Hoping to hear from you right soon and that you will be better.

I remain as ever Your Friend

John C. McGuire

Write right away and I'll probably get it before I leave. But if I don't they will forward it.

God bless my sweetheart Mary and grant her all health and happiness. J.C.M.

Jim is well and sends his best regards.

[Letter #31]

Ft. Ethan Allen, VT 10 [11]/4, 1917

Dear Mary:

Your always welcome letter received yesterday and as always I was glad to get it, but I'm very sorry to hear that your cold is still with you and I sincerely hope and pray that it will leave you very soon. As for myself I'm in the best of health and at times I'm as near happy as is possible under the circumstances.

No Mary you misunderstood me when I said that I dreamed of you a lot for I had no trouble about sleeping. In fact all the dreams I had of you were pleasant, but as I seldom dream at all it gets me to thinking when I do. Of course you know that I'll never see enough of your dear sweet face even in my dreams. And by the looks of things it will be a long time before I can look into those wonderful eyes of yours except in my dreams.

I did not get to confession last night for the reason that I knew that we would be loading stuff on the cars today so that I would be unable to get to Mass. We expect to be all loaded and on our way by Tuesday noon, so that this is probably the last time I shall write to you from here.

I trust that you have heard from your father by this time or that he got back in time for his job. For it would sure be fine for you if you had a little place you could call home to go to at night.

You and Mother sure do have great times going to missions and the like. You must be trying to make up for the ones like myself that don't get to church. I used to laugh at Mary McCabe and tell her that she was church crazy, but I honestly believe from what Dad tells me that Mother is getting as bad. But there's one thing sure, prayers never harmed anyone. I only wish I had more opportunity to go myself. Maybe I'd lead a better life if I did.

The 19th regiment left Friday and yesterday. So after we leave here Burlington will be pretty dead. My ink just gave out so I'll have to finish this with a pencil as I haven't time to go after more.

It's been good weather here for the last few days which seems strange for this place. But it sure is cold here nights.

I haven't heard from any of the rest of the folks except from home since I wrote to you last. They say they are all well there and Mother says that Bryan sent her a picture of his girl. She says she is sure some chicken.

I'll have to close for now as I've a lot of work to do. Hoping you have the best of luck and health and that I'll find a letter from you when I get to Miss.

I'll close for now. Give my regards to all and cheer up for you will undoubtedly be happy some day. Such at least is the wish of your friend.

John C. McGuire

My new address is

Battery A
76th Field Artillery

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

Hattiesburg, Miss.

May God bless you.

J.C.M.