

Dear Sally,

I can feel winter camp approachin as me toes are wet and cold standin guard here in this coulee near the town of Coon Valley. A number of Co E lads have been assignd to the van of the brigade sent to locate and destroy a rebel encampment in these parts. We have found them hold up on a large farmstead at the end of a nearby valley.

For this expedishun brother Stosh was brevetd to lieutenant, and what a fine lovely junyer officer he is. Why, when I was spakin to an old capturd reb after the battle he was remarkin bouts a prancin officer darting back and forth behind our skirmish line. The old geezer said it reminded him of trying to hit the little yella ducky at a county fair shooting gallery. He said it was even more difficult since the "black ploomd dandy" appeared to be skipping. I told the reb rit off that the dandy was very likely me brother.

On the first day here, colonel darlin sent out patrols in the nearby hills to locate any rebs. Since no contact was made we figurd the johnnys was feelin safe behind ther fences. With no hostilities our camp became a little lacks with rumor of some rit fine lasses nearby willing to share ther fares. Cpl Carlos, preferring the title: Herr Carl, and one pvt tall Jeff decided on ther own to leave camp to forage for a meal and to verify the rumor. They both belongd to the first platoon which was under the command of Lt "little ducky" Stosh. When ther sworrey was found out it got Stosh's Irish dander up. The two mischievers on ther return were made to stand on stumps in the center of camp and apologize to each member of first platoon. Cpl Herr Carl was blamin vague orders to justify his actions and when our colonel got wind of this it got his Irish dander up and cpl Stumpy was sent up into the hills for extended guard duty.

Sometime during that first day I was sent up into the hills to locate and ascertain the status of our patrols. While I was up ther on a trail some lass came a runnin and lookin quite lost. She calld me her guardian angel and askd how to find the federal camp. After some questions she said she was the woman of the farmstead the rebs had taken over. She was puttin on airs on how trublin the rebs was and wishd to spake to our commandin officer. Now Sally, would someone who claimd this area her home, be lost? I was thinkin reb spy. I may not be the sharpest tool in the shed — obvius knowin me paternal lineage, but I could smell me a rues. I sent the lass back to her farmhouse and told her to tell the rebs that the Iron Brigade would be along rit soon to send them packin.

Later that first day we had ourselves a skirmish with the rebs. It didn't mount to much as I was thinkin our colonel darlin was foolin the johnnys with a rues of his own. Stosh and I both came thru with no wounds along with cawsun Basil. A temporary truce was made as both sides settld down to tend to ther wounded and bury the dead. I was on a burial detail and had to say last rits for a number with no chaplain abouts. Now Sally you mits be feelin lowly for those poor lads' eternal destinashun thinkin the likes of our family was spakin prayers and supplicashuns on ther behalf, but the Lord works in mysterius ways.

Later that evening the fine folks of Coon Valley prepard a grand banquet for us of chicken, praties, squash and apple sauce. Also our colonel had turnd 50 years of age during the week and the local bakery had a large cake for the celebrashun. The evening was rounded off with music and fine conversashun before all retir'd to ther humble abodes to await the coming frost of dawn.

The second day dawned gray and cold. Church was attended well by our family since neither Pa, Stanley or Stuart was here to bolster the heathen ranks. After church we was back in camp and preparin for the hard work that lay ahead.

Rit off Stosh sent me up into the hills to lead a patrol to scout rebel strength and positions. It was a fine squad with privs Basil and dashing Jeff, who was very adept with the musket. Our orders were to only attane informashun and to try and avoid rebel contact. Things went along well until a rebel patrol came a strollin up the trail. Basil was at the point along with dashing Jeff when they first spyd the rebs. Soon ther were rebs pourin up the trail as we made backtracks for our own lines. We fell back until we reachd our pickets left flank. At this point we drew that line in the sand; mischief soon began.

I sent Basil back to report to colonel darlin while dashing Jeff and I turnd to face the music. Colonel commended Basil for his report and sent him along with Stosh and another patrol to check on the now ringing musket fire in the hills above camp. Upon ther arrival things had settld down as the rebs retir'd for healthier ground. Lt Stosh's blood must have been up for he orderd us forward back up the trail to find the rebs. We strung ourselves well down the trail with cpl Dave and Basil a ways in front and again under orders to not bring on an engagement. Sometime during this patrol, Lt Stosh felt that the better part of valor was to return to camp and cozy up near colonel darlin.

Sally the excerpts to follow may be disturbin to some readers and yung listeners so proceed with cawshun. While our patrol was strung out on the trail and Stosh was bravly retreatin back to colonel darlin's side, a large reb patrol came directly towards me from out of the woods. They was a comin back to have another go at the trail. To save cpl Dave and Basil from capture, a dutch pvt and I fired at the rebs and when they went down for cover I signaled the cpl and Basil to move off the trail and further up the hill to work back to our lines. The pvt and I then retreatd back down the trail and again drew that line in the sand. One of the rebs starts waving a flag ( not white ) and askin for a parlee. He set his musket down and walkd towards me; I movd toward him with me musket at the reddey. The reb starts blatherin abouts a truce he made with a cpl and that our firing was in violashun of that truce. Well no cpl made any truce with the rebs so I told the johnny such. At this time Lt Stosh was approachin from the camp and took over the parlee. Basil and the cpl soon returnd safe and sound. Stosh returnd from his chat and promptly placd meself and the dutch pvt under arrest. Me own brother, Lt Braveheart, placin me under \*#@!!\*#18#@ arrest. For savin Basil and the cpl from capture and holdin our left flank, I was put under \*\*!!#@#!\*#! arrest!!

With muskets invertd and with bayonet-fixd guards, we were escortd back to camp. I was a little concern'd of what lie ahead since I already had the dubious distingshun of truce breakin in the past. We were marchd before the almyty Colonel hisself. Judge, jury and execushinor was emblazond on his shoulders and the wrath of God was in his eyes. With a voice as from the mountain tops he askd; "which of you shall spake for both your actions?" Being the sergeant I lookd over at the pvt who's face hintd of involuntary bowel movement and urin discharge; I shall spake says I! Drawin upon me last reserves of curage, thanks in part from that evenin's conversashuns with pa's ancestors, I proceeded with me testimony. Though colonel darlin was upset that we engagd the enemy, he was thankful the patrol preventd the rebs from endangerin our left flank. Case closd, and the pvt and I walkd away with our arses both intact nor resemblin chewd angus!

*As the day got on things began a brewin as the artillery boys began exchanging jestures of ill will. Finally colonel gave the command; "forward Iron Brigade, for God's sake forward" (or something to that effect). The first platoon with the fair and lovelly Lt Stosh bolted forward toward the center of the rebel line. I was left in charge of first platoon's reserve squad. As the lads were well across the cut corn field ther came a volley from the hill upon our left flank. In fact Sally, it was the exact place I was earlier that day tryin to defend which resultd in me arse almost in the guardhouse. Colonel darlin says to me; "sergeant, take that hill - again!" So I rush the reserves up the hill towards the rebs. It was a stubborn donnybrook for a time, but as the reb center began giving way so ther comrades did on me front. At this point the battle became a turkey shoot as we fell upon them like wolfs upon the sheep. Rebs was falln and skedaddlin all about the farmstead. Colonel darlin had his victory!*

*Sally, the family came thru unscathed except cawsun Basil's leg wound not requirin amputashun. Bein soon winter camp he shall be sent home for a short spell to receive tender lovin care from Miss Millie O'Toole. Hopefully I shall be reunited with Stanley, Stuart and Pa in the near future. Most likely it shall be within the confines of a public house wherein pa has claimd squatter's rits for king and queen.*

*Well then Sally here's adeau, mit your ritin hand be trublin you?*

*Your brother,  
Stephan*