January 18, 1919

Dear Uncle Ebb;-

"In the land of the Midnight Sun" would be a very good title for this letter if letters had titles. It's full of surprises to us men here, not all of them by any means pleasant. But I would rather be here any time than to have stayed in Camp Custer when I had the chance. I've had some grand old experiences in the "Old Country" which I'll treasure all my life, I imagine. One is not permitted to tell of military experiences so I'll have to confine myself to what's going on among the Russian people.

In the first place, they are the most ignorant people I ever met in my life. The majority of them are unable to read and hardly a one can write. This may not be true of the higher class or aristocrats but of those whom I have seen and talked to seldom have I met one able to write. It is not the fault of the people, although they are lazy and unambitious but of the Russian system. It's a case of too much religion and too little schooling. At least, that's the way it looks to us men here. Practically every village has its church, in many cases two or more. The people are very particular about their families attending school. As for schools one is not likely to find anything resembling a schoolhouse in three or four villages and then maybe a little one room ramshackle affair will be found in a village that does service as a school. It's a bad state of affairs and until Russia begins to pay some attention to her education problem she is bound to have trouble. The youngsters are beginning to learn a little. They appreciate the value of education. Many of them are learning English. They are wise because there is no doubt there will be much English spoken here after the war is finished. I wish they'd speak a little more English right now as the Russian language is very hard to twist one's tongue around.

Another thing wrong with this country and its people is they don't work enough. I never knew a place that has so many holidays. Their Xmas came about thirteen days after ours. From then on for about two weeks straight they had nothing but holidays. Every afternoon they masked and went around to all the houses in the neighborhood and sat like dummies waiting for someone to guess who they were. In the evening they go to a dance in some house and dance till three or four o'clock in the morning. They went home, slept and started to someone's home to visit. That sort of work doesn't get much work done nor bring much food into their homes. It seems to be a case of play first and work last or never. Seeing people like these makes one appreciate U. S. A. more.

We hear that Germany is through but we know the Bolsheviks aren't so we have no idea when will be coming home. Hope it's soon, though.

Well, Uncle Ebb, one of the boys gave me this paper and I didn't notice it till I had written two pages so you'll overlook, please and thank you. Aunt Amie said you weren't any too well but I hope you are better by now. I am feeling fine but am rather busy. Very little time to write letters. Received a picture of Loyal in his sailor suit. I can't tell you of anything that has pleased me more. He's some boy. Best regards to you and Aunt Celia and the family and drop a line once in a while please.

Edmund