

Co. B, 312th M. G. Bn.,
American Expeditionary Forces.

Saturday, February 15 1919.

My dear Mrs. McGavock:-

Two letters from you have reached me indirectly to-day - one addressed to the Commanding Officer, Camp Meade; the other to General Kuhn. Both were referred to me for answer; and I am more than happy to do so because of the genuine affection and respect with which I shall always remember your son Leon. Nothing that I can say can take away your sorrow in his loss; but I want to express my deep sympathy with you, and to clear up certain of the details that you asked about.

During the period of this company's active operations, "Mac" was assigned to my platoon. As he no doubt wrote you, we took over our first sector in the lines on the thirteenth of September, holding it until the twenty-sixth when the general drive along the whole American Front started, and our company joined in the advance, taking Montfaucon and a number of smaller villages on either side of it. The five days during which this drive was in progress are among the most strenuous that any of us will ever spend; but through it all and through the long marches to the rear following our relief, I remember clearly "Mac's" cheerfulness and helpfulness, making light of the work and helping the others to put up with hardships. Fighting under the conditions that we did at that time certainly brings out everything that's in a man; and I can assure you that your son measured up fully in every respect to the standard that you would have had him set. He proved himself every inch a man.

As a result of his fine work, he was immediately promoted by Captain Lombard to be a sergeant. But we didn't have him with us long afterwards. The exhaustion told on him, as it did on so many others in the company; and on the eighth of October, while we were in rest billets at Courouvre, he was evacuated to the hospital with influenza. Ever since, I have been trying to get some information on his case and how he was making out. But not till to-day did I receive official word of his death. I persistently refused to believe the rumors; but the official notification is apparently undeniable. It seems that he passed away on October 15th at Evacuation Hospital #16, his influenza having developed into lobar pneumonia. On October 17th, he was buried in grave #31, American Plot, French Military Cemetery, Revigny, Department of the Meuse.

Everyone who knew him loved and respected him. And I think the thing that we admired most in him was his affection for his mother. Frequently I have heard him talk of you and all that you meant to him. You were the very center of his life; and he must be very near to you now. But should you ever feel lonely for him, I know it would do you good to hear the many fine things that are said about him on all sides whenever his name is mentioned. He was a popular favorite, and won his way forever into the hearts of those who knew him.

I appreciate your desire to have his body transferred to the United States, and I have written to find out what steps must be taken to enable you to do so. If I remember right, the bodies of American soldiers are not allowed to be taken home. But I am making inquiry; and I shall let you know if I find it can be done. Meanwhile, please accept my warmest sympathy and the hope that I shall have the privilege of meeting you when I return to the States.

Very sincerely yours,

Fous W. Washburn
1st Lt., Co. B.

Military

Mrs. W. R. McGavock

10-24-1955

OK

Fous W. Washburn
1st Lt., Co. B.

St. John's College
Cambridge University,
Cambridge, England -

My dear Mrs. McGavock:-

Your letter dated the
fourteenth of March has just reached me,
having been forwarded from the Battalion,
which I left almost two months ago.
I'm tremendously glad that you received
my letter, late as it was, and that
what little information I was able to give
was of comfort to you. It makes me
all the more ashamed of what must
have been a general slip-up by the men
at the Hospital as well as the officers of
the company to know that it was the
first word you had heard of your son's
death since the official telegram.
Please don't think too harshly of us, however,
for we only received word of his death
ourselves in January.

at present, I am on detached service at the University here, and consequently away from all the company records - offhand, I'm sorry to say I couldn't even give you the designation of the Hospital he was in. But I shall write to the Commanding officer of the company and ask him to look it up and let you know. This will, of course, mean some delay in your hearing from them, as I understand they are on the move toward home now. But in the end, it's bound to be a satisfaction to you, as I feel sure you must have left some message for the mother that he worshipped so whole-heartedly.

You are very good indeed to invite me to visit you, and without knowing when or how I'll be able to bring it about, I'm going to accept right now. Birmingham is a long way from Philadelphia, which is my home, and I'm a long way from home still.

But I should like very much to see
you and know a little better the woman
who was everything to one of the best
soldiers I ever knew. Meanwhile
please accept my kindest regards
and the feeling that we have a very
close bond of sympathy in the loss of
your son.

Faithfully yours

Louis W. Washburn

April 25th 1919.

St. John's College
Cambridge University
Cambridge, England

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Your letter dated the fourteenth of March has just reached me, having been forwarded from the battalion, which I left almost two months ago. I'm tremendously glad that you received my letter, late as it was, and that what little information I was able to give was of comfort to you. It makes me all the more ashamed of what must have been a general slip-up by the men at the Hospital as well as the officers of the company to know that it was the first word you had heard of your son's death since the official telegram. Please don't think too harshly of us, however, for we only received word of his death ourselves in January.

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(p. 3)

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Louis M. Washburn

April 25th 1919