

**Glenbow Archives, Bell family fonds**  
**M-9377-2**

Fragments of letters [undated] [ca. 1917]

I went down to the canteen after supper and this dinky little affair was the best I could get in the way of paper. I am afraid I have kept you on pins and needle in regard to this confounded draft, but I haven't sent half the rumors we have had. I am on the draft at present of course, but I can be on and off twenty times before we do finally leave for France. After we get there we have, at the very least, three weeks at the.....

To learn bomb-throwing and anti-gas helmet drill. And we have had no bayonet fighting as yet, so will likely have to take a course in that as well. If I get another leave I think I will run down and see Mr. Bradshaw. It is quite a piece from this camp, and fairly near the other that we were at. I would have gone there on my first leave if I had known. A week end pass is no use for any place except London or Brighton as it is only 36 hours long....

H.T. Company C.A.S.C. Batt  
Stationed at North Camp  
Seaford, Sussex, Jan 14 1917

Dear Mother,

I missed writing last mail as I just got out of quarantine that night and of course had to work, and go down town. I got the parcel of candy and the Post ahead of the letter which is unusual. I also got several other parcels, one from Montreal fm Leslie, one from Aunt Annie Bowes and one from Miss Bradshaw. I haven't opened the one from Montreal yet as I have been too busy trying to punish the others. Miss Bradshaw's was cake, tarts and apples. It was very good too. The best English cookies I have ever tasted. Aunt Annie had socks, handkerchief, candy, cake and all else. The candy you sent was certainly fine, and say, perhaps I didn't half punish those stuffed dats. We are pretty well fed now. A little lean at supper but the Canteen is close. I haven't lost any on it at this job anyway as I only weigh 175 with my overcoat on. I put most of that on in quarantine. We certainly have a great time in there, were only wishing another case would break out. I wish you would keep the rest of the payments in the Bank, as I have quite a bit now, and pay day tomorrow. If you like you can send along a bank check and if I needed any I could cash it, but I don't think I will, have it marked for about three [?] pounds. I expect to be moved to Bramshott about the first of the month as I hear a draft is going there. It will be close to Aubrey as the 187 are at Witley. Will try and get him transferred in with me. I expect to be in France by

April, but not much need to worry on account of us as we should both be in the "Safety Corps" by then, the C.A.S.C." Tell Marjorie I will write her next mail. I must quit now as I am tired writing. I have written four and a half besides this today. Weather nice here yet, no snow, very little rain.

R.C.B.

Seaford, Sussex, Eng

Feb. 7, 1917

Dear Marjorie,

I am getting kind of tired of writing but will try and scribble a few lines. I have written to Mother, Aubrey and Gladys, and now to you, so you see it is quite a family affair. I am glad you like the little house, hope it is warmer than these cursed huts we are in. They are in somewhat the same style as a refrigerator. Keep us cool so as we won't get too fresh I guess. It is a good thing the weather isn't very cold here, or I am afraid we would be out of luck, as the stoves are only toys. I sent a bunch of badges home for Leslie. I hope they get there alright. If they do, there is a 100<sup>th</sup> brooch in it for Margaret. You remember I gave hers to you so I am making good my promise, if somebody doesn't steal them before they get there. Aubrey is still in Liverpool and will be for a while yet I guess. I got your box of candy OK and am certainly enjoying it. Am going to fill it up and send it to Aubrey as he is nearly starved by his accounts. At least he is on Hospital rations which are not extra heavy you may depend. Nearly enough to keep a mouse alive. I am going to put a little present in this for you. I want you to use it to take the kids to a good show at the Grand and buy a bit of ribbon or something for yourself. Anything you like as long as you spend it. I am well fixed so don't be afraid to.

Raymond

Seaford, Sussex

Feb. 19, 1917

Dear Marjorie,

I was over to Eastbourne for the weekend and when I came back your letter was waiting for me along with one from Montreal and one from Toronto. Also that Aubrey had been up to see me. He

is in South Camp in the 21<sup>st</sup> Reserve. The 137 and 175 comprise it. He is in with the 175<sup>th</sup>, in fact all that are left of the 187<sup>th</sup> are except what are quarantined at Witley. I will try and get down to see him tonight if I can at all. I had a fine time over at Eastbourne. It is a very pretty place and quite a popular summer resort. Perhaps I didn't have some meals there, and oh you sleep on sweet Saturday night [sic]. It was just a fluke I got the pass, but a quite happy one for me. My, there are some nice girls over there too. The best I have struck in England yet. I am afraid if I was camped there I would be in danger of taking a wife back to Canada with me. There are a great many convalescents there, quite a large camp of them. "Boy Blue" is what they call them as all wounded are dressed in a loose blue suit with a red neck-tie. I wish you would try and get Mother into Calgary for a while I know what she is to worry but what on earth there is to worry over now I fail to see with me in the bomb-proof job and Aubry soon likely to be. Leslie is in France of course but he is always running the chance of getting a nice "Blighty" and getting back. I only wish I had one. Say if you do happen to get those badges any two that are alike send to Gladys and give Margaret the brooch in it.

Bye Bye  
Raymond

Seaford, Sussex  
Feb. 24, 1917

Dear Marjorie,

Another month nearly finished and still in England Well I hope before the next is finished I am in France but as yet there seems little likelihood of it as there seems to be no chance of getting there with this outfit, and it is such a cinch of a job I certainly don't want to leave it and go to the Infantry as I am afraid I am spoiled for that now after doing so little for so long. Aubrey is pretty tired of it, but hopes to get a six day pass Monday so that should brighten him up a little. I have put in a claim for him. I don't know if it will go through or not, but I certainly hope it does.

This is my third letter tonight so I am getting kind of tired. The weather is fine and warm again now. The people are out digging up their gardens and going right to it for fair planting all kinds of stuff. Some difference the [illegible] eh what.

I hope Mother takes the notion and goes into Calgary for a while it will do her good. It is certainly time she went some place or she will be beginning to grow to that old log shack. I got a box of candy from home the other night. Took part of it down to Aubrey so you bet it wasn't

long getting killed. I saw our old friend the airship flying over the sea tonight. And what do you think the old rascal was doing. Just hunting around to see if any of old Fritz's submarines were sticking around. It is the first time I have seen him for quite a while. There used to be a dredge about a mile and a half out from here keeping the channel clear for the transports taking munitions across to France and one day just about noon she took up a little mine with her mouthful of dirt, and of course straightway decided that she was needed worse at the bottom than the top so there she is. I didn't see her go down but some of the boys did. Well, don't work too hard this summer, as there is still another coming you know and I want a little bit of you left to do my cooking the next. That is always providing I don't take one back with me from here. She will have to be better than any I have struck yet if I do though. Well have as good a time as you can anyway.

Yours,  
Raymond

Seaford, Sussex  
Feb 28/17

Dear Leslie,

I am sorry I never answered your letter long ago, but to tell you the truth I had forgotten whether I had or not. I write so usual many it is hard to remember who I have answered and who I haven't. Aubrey is on Pass at Bradshaw's for six days. I only wish I had a six day coming, it would be handy. I sent you a bunch of badges in care of Father. I hope they reach you safely. There are several the same among them. Any that have a mate send to husband along to Gladys and keep the wife for yourself. I know you like the women best. By the way I suppose you are making quite a dash with those kids on Crescent Heights, the boss of a house and all. Well have as good a time as you can anyway, and get back and help at home as soon as you can. It is hard to say when we will get back but as soon as we can you can depend. The war news is pretty good lately as it may end before a great while. England is in fine shape now anyway, all kinds of man and munitions too. I hope I am here for a while in the summer as it must be very beautiful here then. Also lots of beautiful girls I think, but very scarce and all hog tied and branded now. This is a dandy job, no work to speak of, just drive, as men put our loads on and take them off. Am finished at five as a rule. There is a brooch in that box for Margaret Smith, give it to her with my love, nothing more, Be as bad you can and study hard.  
Raymond.

Seaford, Sussex

March 12/17

Dear Mother: -

I was very pleased indeed to get your letter the day before yesterday and it was the first I had heard from you in four weeks. I can't understand what is holding the mail up but there is some reason as we are all the same fro mail. I wouldn't put Army P.O. on them if I were you as it only delays them. The only time to do that is when I have no address and then just put C.A.S.C. Army P.O. London. Aubrey was moved to Bramshott on Thursday. I tried to get him transferred and put in a claim for him but it is not possible to get a transfer into the A.S.C. if you are an A2 man, that means fit for general service in the Infantry. I wanted to transfer in with him but he would not hear tell of it so hear [sic] I stay until kicked out, as it is a regular home hear [sic] in fine weather, and it is getting fine and mild now, and very little work now. A great deal of soft ran but very little wind for a change. I haven't heard from Leslie yet but expect to soon. I will get another photo taken and send one to Aunt Annie Bowes. Also send something to the Gray girls after pay day which is Wednesday. This is the worst place for schools I ever did see, must be all of fifty here, but not all being used except by the Military. I think I have received all the boxes of candy you have sent, an awful bunch at any rate, some dandies too. That pineapple was excellent. I only have a few minutes left before pulling out so must close, is just one now. We have an hour to one & a half for dinner.

Ray

Seaford, Sussex

March 19/17

Dear Marjorie,

Your letter of the 14<sup>th</sup> of January came to hand yesterday. It had been chasing all over England trying to find me as you made a mistake in the addressing of it. Address them thus in the future.

Dr. Bell No. 212126

H.T. sec C.A.S.C.

Seaford, Sussex, Eng.

You had put it Sec. "C"

A.S.C, Seaford

and it had been sent to the Imperial A.S.C. I think. I haven't heard from home for a long time, the last was written about the 1<sup>st</sup> of February so I am not getting a great deal of mail as I have only

heard once each from you, Mother and Gladys in seven weeks. Nearly all the boys are the same, I think a lot of it has been sunk. I know that at least one weeks mail went down on the Laconia. I was down in Eastbourne yesterday afternoon. it was a most beautiful day, one of the finest I have seen in England, and all kinds of people on the go up and down the promenade. I wouldn't mind spending a couple of weeks there in about July or August, I think I will take a trip up to Brighton after the next pay. We are not doing much work here now, mostly killing time and cleaning harness neither of which is very hard. I suppose you will be losing your job as housekeeper soon if Leslie keeps on. By then you will be going to a house of your own I suppose. Who is he anyway, you forgot to say. Bye Bye,  
Raymond

Seaford, Sussex, Eng  
March 24, 1917

Dear Leslie,

I have just finished writing to Mother so may as well write you too. Things are very quiet here at present. We had a little excitement Sunday, as a General Mobilization was ordered, but is pretty well quietened [sic] down again now. We were "C B'd" for a couple of days but are fine again now. Chester Roper was up to see me last night. He is down in South Camp in a "B C" Reserve and is expecting to go back to France before long. He got a shrapnel bullet through the body, but is alright again now. I hope you have received the badge safely long before this, as they cost me quite a bit, and were a fairly good collection for a small one. I am having a dandy time lately doing as near to nothing as possible and still doing anything. It is Hut Orderly, just have to keep the Hut swept out and everything tidy. I was taken off the team on account of them getting so thin. The main reason they were so thin though was lack of feed as they feed them very poor. The weather is pretty good here lately, a cool wind at times but we would call it warm in Canada as it is quite easy to go around in your shirt sleeves. Very little rain lately for a wonder so take it all in all the weather is jake. I was to a dance the other night and expect to go to another here on Tuesday night. We had a fine time last time and hope to have a better one next time as I know one or two of the Janes now and didn't know any at all the time before. I haven't heard from Aubrey for a few days but think he is still in Bramshott. I think you are wise in joining the "Y" as you can have a good time in it only you are a little late in joining. Well must close as I am sure there is no news to tell of from here. Don't marry that nice little girl till I come back as I must be your best man.

Yours

Raymond

Seaford, Sussex

April 5, 1917

Dear Marjorie,

It must be getting kind of monotonous for you to see the same old address at the top of all my letters as I have been here so cussed long, ever since the beginning of November. Almost begins to make one think of it as home. I don't know what the people at home and elsewhere think of me hanging around camp this way and not going to France. Oh well I should worry and go home with a whole hide eh Kid?

I was out with Chester last night and had quite a chat. He is engaged to Janet Buck isn't it? One of them at any rate and seems quite gone, talks of getting spliced as soon as he goes back and all this nonsense. Some married man eh what. He expects to go back to France before a great while but doesn't now just when it will be.

The weather is quite a lot better now, in fact today is really beautiful. Must be fine along the sea front now. Will beat it down there as soon as I can get away. By the way the fellow that Chester chums with knows Vern Adshead very well was in the same section for awhile. Vern is still down at Shorncliffe at the Signal Base. I haven't had much mail lately, got a letter from Jim yesterday, and one from Aubrey the other day but that is about all I have had. Aubrey has been taken off draft again and doesn't know when he will go. I suppose that you took the kids to the Grand, but wasn't Wilfred one of them or am I mistaken. I know you went but possibly he took you. Oh do be careful as the English girls say.

[no signature]

Seaford, Sussex

April 16/17

Dear Marjorie: -

I suppose by this time you have given up all hopes of ever hearing from me but far be it from that, although a little late. Yes, I think I had better bring a little English wife back with me, as I have an awful hunch that there won't be any single sister "waiting for me there". I know that air on North Hill is bad alright. Just look at Ceril [?]. As for this 2:30 A.M. stuff nix on that, or rather on the kid, as I am afraid he would soon be "napoo" (that a new one eh?) if he tried any of these stunts. I am glad Mother consented to go into Calgary if only for a short time, as I know she needed a change badly, also a rest if I am any judge. I suppose by the time you get this you will be out on the farm again so I am going to address it there. The weather has changed at last. The new moon came into effect last evening and with it the spring weather. Today is just a jewel, clear and sunny, but up till lately we have had really wretched weather. Not so very cold but sleet, snow, slush, mud, rain, sun, wind and nearly everything connected with the word weather all jumbled up in a heap. Yes, I am quite sure those "girls" at Sunday school were quite nice, especially to walk home with eh what. No, I don't suppose you ever do see anything, oh no, but I'll guarantee you hear a good deal. As for being so good, well times change you know, and as they say over here, Well this Wah Time, you know. Well you must be thoroughly sick of all this babble so I will close before you quit reading.

Raymond.

April 30/17  
Seaford,Sx.

Dear Father: -

I was very pleased indeed to get your fine long letter, and to hear that everything is progressing favorable. I suppose by the time this reaches you, the crop will be pretty well in. I hope so at any rate. The weather has been exceptionally fine here lately, fine and warm, lots of sunshine and no rain at all. It is great weather for fighting and mistake. They are taking full advantage of it too. The fighting has been very bitter indeed lately, and I am afraid the losses have been very heavy. There have been one or two sent back from France to South Camp and they say the German losses have been stupendous. They say the British have lost a lot, but mostly wounded, where as the Germans killed has been very heavy, the British shellfire is so heavy now that it is almost impossible to live under it. I see by this morning's paper though that the German fire is heaviest it have been since July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1916. They are apparently trying to hold the line they are on now at all costs. I had another letter from Mother since I wrote her last, written before the one I answered so you can see the mail comes in very queer indeed. I also got another box of candy yesterday. She certainly is sending enough of them now. One every week for the last three weeks. I haven't heard from Aubrey for about two weeks so I think he must be training at the base in France. They put them through a very thorough training there, and takes quite a long time as a rule. Chester Roper said he learnt more there than all the rest of the time he was in the

Army. I see a good many of the 100<sup>th</sup> in the casualties, one Lieutenant out of the Company killed. No word of Leslie though so he must still be safe. Chester is on draft to go back this week. News is very scarce so will have to close. Don't try and get along without a man even if you do have to pay 76 a month as five acres more of grain in will make up the difference it would make for both Mother and you. I am doing practically nothing and having a splendid time.  
Yours, Raymond

[postscript] Thanks very much indeed for the check. I am using it to visit some of the towns near hear on midnight passes as they are the only pass you can get.

Seaford, Sussex  
May 21, 1917

Dear Milly

Just a note as I have a whole bunch of letters to write, and I am no awful lazy. Yours is the latest letter I have had from Alberta, in fact the only one for a week or so. I had one from Gladys the same time as the one from you, but that was all the Canadian mail I got last week. No, I can quite believe it didn't take little Milly long to find another nice little girl to take her home from school, and keep her lips nice and rosy (I can see the blush) and all that kind of thing, you know. Knowing you as I do I think likely you know lots of nice girls. Sorry to say that I don't as there is always somebody there first somehow. I hope you are not getting lonesome with Marjorie away don't you miss her pleasant face? Give my best regards to Leslie and Mrs. Hayens. Aubrey says he saw Chester Roper in France at the base I think. Glad to hear you are doing so well in school. Say, just eat about three David Harums for me will you. Can't get ice cream to call it that, over here. Am still doing nothing as usual, still Hut Orderly.

Bye Bye  
Ray

Seaford, Sussex  
May 31<sup>st</sup> 1917

Dear Mother,

There hasn't been any Canadian mail yet, so there is not letter to answer yet. I don't know what is the matter, but it is not your fault I am sure, as no one is getting any, the whole mail must be held up somewhere. There is very little to write about as one day is very much the same as another. The weather is still fine, and everything is looking at its very best. There has been a little bathing but it is pretty cold yet so I haven't tried it, but will before long now. In one way the time goes very slow, and yet looking back it seems to go very fast indeed. Just a year tomorrow since I enlisted, and it doesn't seem half that in one way and yet in another way it seems a great deal more. I was down at the station last night watching a draft going to France, and it made me feel an absolute piker, when I think of having been in it a year, and still here doing absolutely nothing, and both Aubrey and Leslie over there. There was a small draft taken out of here for Bramshott yesterday but they were all Mechanical, Transport and Bakers so of course I didn't have a chance of going, and there doesn't seem to be any chance of it and yet they don't really need half of the men they have around here, and nearly half of us are men that should really be in France. The worst of it is there seems to be no possible chance of getting over with the A.S.C. and I am sure I don't want to have to back to the Infantry in order to get across. Well I guess I will just stay here and enjoy myself as all true soldiers should.

Love Ray

Seaford as usual

June 12, 1917

Dear Mother,

The last week was a very lucky one for me in regard to mail as I had about three from you as well as a couple from Marjorie, another couple from Gladys and one from Beatrice. In Marjorie's last letter she said the wheat was all in, and most of the oats so they were making good time. I am very glad you managed to get into Calgary, even if it was only for a little while. Father will have to try to get in for the fair, I hope he does. I was very pleased to hear you had gone around to visit Mrs. Doney and that you got his address. I will write him as soon as ever I get time. I am quite a bit behind with my letters at present so will have to buck up and write some. The weather has been fine lately, not too hot and frequent showers. Everything is looking at its very best now; there is no mistake this is a pretty country in summer. I was down to Eastbourne yesterday on a midnight pass. Arrived there about 3 o'clock and left at 9:30. That is really the most pretty place I have ever seen, with the exception possibly of Oxford, but as I only passed through there can not say for sure. But Eastbourne is just a perfect place in every way. No wonder it is one of the finest watering places in England. Take the town itself without the sea is just a picture, fine broad avenues, bordered with magnificent trees. The town lies in a slight hollow just at the foot of Beachy Head.

I hope everything is going well at home and that you are not worrying your self. Received the Posts OK both together. Some splendid stories and articles in them.

Love Raymond

Tell [illegible] I will try and write her next mail. You'll have to get her doing the Turkey not to reduce soon [?] I think.

Seaford, Sussex

June 14, 1917

Dear Marjorie,

I am going to tell you right at the start that I am not going to try and write as long a letter as you did, first, because I am too lazy, second – too tired, third – too sleepy – 4<sup>th</sup> – no news – reasons late hours – cause of late hours – dance – cause of dance several itchy toes, slippery floor, good music, nice girls, good dancers.

Enough of this trash, now to nothing I guess. Yes, I believe you had better come over and be my steno-chaperone. I believe it would be a good idea, only one condition, you furnish the dough, I do the rest. You write the letters, I read them. Say that's two conditions isn't it? Never mind just a slight slip. I really don't know what to write about, one day is so much like another. Weather is still fine, not too hot, and nice showers now and again. I haven't been in bathing yet but intend to soon. I am just doing enough work to keep up a good appetite, I guess you know how easy it is to keep mine up, the trouble always was to satisfy it wasn't it? They are feeding us very good now, I seldom buy a meal down town any more. Not much use anyway, as you can only buy 35 cents worth, that means two poached eggs on toast and a cup of coffee. Or something like that. I am going to put in for a six day pass as soon as I get sufficient [illegible] ahead, but it seems to take a long time to save up any. I don't know if they sent the signed Pay for May or not. I had to bust that three pound check in order to send Leslie a pair of boots and some socks so I still have about two pound of that left. I got a whole stack of Lifes from Miss W. E Mc the other day. Kindly thank her for me , seeing that I can't do it personally. They went pretty well around the Camp I think. I sure enjoyed them. After getting your little saying what you weighed I went down and got engaged to one that weighs just one hundred and eighty, so I hope to have a decent sized pal for you to boss around the house. That word napoo is from two French words, which mean gone under, or something to that effect. Well must close for this time. Send along a couple of hundred to get married on with you. Two quid is not enough.

There are a few mosquitoes here too but not a great many. Say just perhaps they don't bring nice big bumps up over some of the people here. They blame the Canadians for bringing them with them. I don't see how it can be any nicer there than it is here, and as for flowers, while you have one there they have three different kinds here. Don't be afraid to give Comet lots of work it is what he needs to get him in condition for when I need him. I hope you will be able to read this awful scribble. My pencil is worn off and am sitting on a bale of hay with my knee for a pillow for the pad. Well, Bye bye for this time. You might send me a nice engagement ring too, or half a dozen would be better.

[no signature]

Seaford, Sussex

June 18, 1917

Dear Mildred,

Your letter came over in fairly good time, about three weeks, or a little over. It came the same time as one of Mothers written about five days earlier. I suppose by the time you get this you will be thinking of getting your friendly old enemy the rake in shape again, for pounding the colts on the tail. Well, be sure and scratch a good bunch of it together won't you, as I am afraid I'll not be able to get harvest leave this year to help finish up the last little bit. I hope you managed to get through your exams, without any trouble but I don't think you would have much trouble unless you were too busy showing those nice little girls how to do theirs instead of doing your own.

I am going to enclose this in Mothers letter, as I suppose you will be home long before this reaches you. It will likely take about three weeks or so. Say, how would you like to have been me yesterday, out in the Briny. Mind you the first plunge too. It is a little easier to swim in if you get on top of a wave especially, but it is also easier to get a belly full, when one of those waves come creeping up behind you, and you don't see it. I am having a fine time, not working too hard, just doing as little as I can get away with. I am afraid there will be no use me going back on the farm any more. All I would be doing was eating, and getting ready to eat again. They are feeding us fine now, but if ever you dare to say hash to me after I get out of this, why napoo [sic] for yours that's all. Yes that is all.

Ray

Seaford, Sussex

June 21, 1917

Dear Leslie,

Just a line in answer to card, which came in last mail. I am afraid this will have to be a very short letter as there is really nothing to write about. The weather has been fairly showery lately and is quite cool today. Quite a change to what it was there for awhile. I have not heard from Aubrey for some time but expect to before long now. I had a fine long letter from Mrs. Mac yesterday, and one from Milly, also one from Mother with yours, so have been very lucky for mail this week. And last but not least, I got the box of cookies. My, they were certainly fine. Also the candy in the bottom. I certainly did enjoy it. I am trying to get you a few more badges to take back with me but haven't got many yet, but am always on the watch for any new ones I can pick up cheap. I don't think I will transfer out of here, although I am getting pretty well fed up with it at times. But I don't expect to be here more than another couple of months as they are making us all fit, that they possibly can, and I understand they are going to put unfit men in all our places but where they will put us is hard to say. Well, I don't know as I care a lot, as one gets so thoroughly sick of doing nothing around here. In reality though, it is really a home what with midnight [illegible] and all. I understand that we are not to have them after the first of July. Well, I hope everything is going on well at home, and you are not working too hard.

Well Bye Bye now.

Raymond