WAR CORRESPONDENCE OF PRIVATE CHARLES PERGLER

LETTERS HOME TO HIS MOTHER, MRS. MARIE PERGLER

From: To:

Private Charles Pergler Mrs. Marie Pergler

A.S.N. 36784369 2626 South Trumbull Avenue

Company A – 4th Platoon Chicago, Illinois

59 Infantry Training Battalion

Camp Wolters, Texas

Sunday, February 6, 1944

Dear Ma:

Only once before, I had the occasion to write to you, and that was when you went to Oregon. It seems kind of funny being so far away from you that I have to write, instead of going to see you and telling you what I want to tell you. I won’t tell you about what I am doing, because I write all that to Mildred, and her letters are your letters also. I hope that you will forgive me for not writing sooner, but I really didn’t have time. I believe the army keeps us busy all the time, so we wouldn’t become home-sick. But you can rest assured that I will write, as often as I can, and that I will always be thinking of the day when I can come back to stay.

 To tell you the truth, as much as I miss you, Mildred, Joe, Helen, and the kids, I wouldn’t want to come home to see you all, and then come back here. When I come home, I want to stay home. That is, I’m satisfied to wait until the war is over.

 We are worked very hard out here, but we are treated pretty good. Sunday is about the only time we have to write. That is if we are not doing special duties. I hope you are in the best of health, and not working too hard. I applied for an allotment for you, but I’m afraid you won’t get it. I will explain why when I see you. That will be in the latter part of May, when I finish my basic training.

 The weather out here is pretty nice, not too warm or too cool - just right. But when it rains, this Texas mud sticks to your shoes like glue. It rained like hell here last Tues., and as you know, in the infantry, wherever you go you hike. Well we walked in mud up to our ears (this is a little exaggerated.)

We came back to our barracks in time to go to bed, so we didn’t have time to clean our shoes. The shoes dried during the night, and the next morning we had to chop the mud off of our shoes with our bayonets. This is no bunk, the mud here really sticks, and gets as hard as a rock.

 I wrote Mildred, not to come see me, because she wouldn’t have any place to stay, and because I wouldn’t have time to see her if she did come out. So if you hear her say she’s coming out, talk her out of it. You will hear from me again real soon.

Love, Charley

Tuesday, February 8, 1944

Dear Ma:

Hiya toots.

 I received your letter today, and I was tickled to death to hear from you. I wrote you a letter Sunday. I hope you got it. Before I go any further, I want you to know that if you don’t hear from me for a few days, it will be because I will be far away from the camp, sleeping in a tent and I won’t be able to write much. You know that when I write to Mildred, that letter is meant for you also. Don’t worry about me sleeping in a tent, because the climate here is warm, and the clothing they give us is the best money can buy.

 Charlie Warlick is not with me, as far as I know. I did not know any of the fellows in my platoon before, but I sure know them now. We all get along pretty nice. As long as we have to eat, sleep, and work together, we might as well be nice to one another.

 My belly is almost gone, and so is my cough. I will let you know how we enjoyed the kolacky, after I get them. I know that they won’t last long.

 The first chance I get to go to town, I will have a picture taken, and send it to you. How did you like the picture of us at Fort Sheridan? Don’t we look like a bunch of convicts? The clothes we were wearing are called fatigue uniforms. That means work clothes. The O.D. uniforms are snappy looking outfits. Mine fits me like a glove. You’ll see when I get home on furlough. There isn’t anything that I can write just now, other than that I’m in good health and getting healthier every day. So just take care of your-

self, and when you see that big lug of a brother of mine, squeeze the shit out of him for me, and tell him I miss him and his family very much. I wrote them for a picture of the kids. The guys in the barracks here show off with pictures of their kids. Just wait until they see my brother’s kids pictures, then they’ll quit bragging. I will write just as often as I can.

Lots of Love, Charley

P.S. Give Helen a big smack for me. I’ll do it myself when I see her.

Sunday, February 13, 1944

Dear Ma:

How’s my little honey? Feeling well, I hope. I received your kolacky in good shape. They were very good, and we all enjoyed them. I hate to see you go through all that trouble, though. I would rather that you get plenty of rest after you get through working. They feed us good out here, and give us plenty. The food they give us is just what we need to blend with the toughening-up program that we are getting. My buddy that sleeps alongside of me is in K.P. duty this morning, and he wants me to go to the Presbyterian church with him when he gets through with his work. He is a nice, good-looking fellow, about 29 years old, from Wisconsin. I went to church with him last Sunday and it was very nice. The singing and the music was just about the best I ever heard in a church.

 The weather was very warm out here last week, but this week it was very cold. You can’t trust this Texas weather very much. I received a letter from Aunt Anna last week, but so far I haven’t been able to answer it. I will get a chance to do it today. We got three shots in the arm yesterday, and it made me think of Emil Rada. I was wondering if he could handle the needles as good as the mug that gave them to us. He took two at a time. A needle in each hand, and he jabbed two men at one time. That’s what I call being good.

 Joe’s kids each wrote me a letter. They sure know how to write. I bet Lorraine looks nice in her feather bob, or whatever you call it. I got a nice military cap for my pal Joey, and I’ll mail it today if the post office is open.

 The instructions we get are very interesting. Different things all the time. That makes the days go by very quickly. There are all different branches to this infantry business. The one I belong to is called a rifle company. We will have to learn how to handle mortars, machine guns, and anti-tank guns, but our chief concern is just rifles. I will be at this camp just 17 weeks. After that I will get sent to another camp. I hope the next one will be close to home. I will write again just as soon as I can.

Lots of Love, Your Son Chas.

Monday, February 14, 1944

Dear Ma:

I received you Valentine with the two bucks in it, and I also received the box of cookies. I appreciate it very much, but I feel bad when you do that. I know you mean well, but I would like it better if you didn’t send anything. I know that when you send something, you are making a sacrifice of something that you should have for yourself. If you just keep on writing, I will be satisfied. I also know that there is nothing that you wouldn’t do to make us happy. So please, just write, and don’t spend any of your hard earned money on me. It won’t be so long, and I’ll be back home again. This war won’t last forever.

 If you want to know about what I’m doing here at camp, just read the mail I send to Mildred, I keep her posted on all that stuff. I had to put on my long underwear for today’s hike, and boy-oh-boy did it itch. I have to write to the kids yet, and I haven’t much time, so I’ll sign off and write you a nice long letter Sunday. Don’t forget, I think you’re swell for trying to be so good to me. So don’t spoil me, just write, and don’t send anything.

So With Love For You Always, Your Son Chas.

Sunday, February 20, 1944

Hello Honey;

Another Sunday rolls around, and with it comes my time to visit with you. I pretend I’m sitting down talking to you, instead of writing, and it works pretty good. The cake you sent was very good, but it didn’t last long. You shouldn’t go through all that trouble though. Just write once in a while, and that will be enough. Come to think of it, by the time you get this letter, it will be a month since the last time I saw you. I hope you will look the same, when I see you again. As far as me, I guess I’ll look a lot differ-ent. For one thing, I’ll be skinnier, and for another I know I’ll look blacker. I can tell by the look of the other guys, they all look darker than they did when we first got here. I still didn’t answer Anna’s letter. I just don’t get time. They keep us busier than a cat covering shit on a tin roof. There is always something to do. We never get through.

 How is everything with you? I suppose you’re busy as usual. Just take care of yourself and don’t be sick. I could of got a pass to town last night, but I stayed in so I could get caught up on my mail. There isn’t much doing in this small town anyway. There’s too many soldiers. I’m learning a lot of things in this man’s army, and believe me, when I become a civilian again I’ll appreciate what little I’ve got. I’ve still got a lot of letters to write, so I’ll have to sign off. I’ll write again the first chance I get.

Lots of Love, Chas.

Sunday, March 12, 1944

Hello, Ma;

Sunday again, and my time to visit with you. These Sundays are going by very fast. Tomorrow we start the 7th week of our training. Then it will be ten more before I can see you again. Time really goes by pretty fast out here. I received your letter yesterday, and I don’t have to tell you that I was glad to hear from you, because by now, I’m sure that you know it. I was surprised that Georgie got married. I only hope that he got a nice girl. It’s a funny thing about this getting married business. A guy might not even dream of getting married, yet when the right girl comes along, somehow he knows that’s the one that was meant for him. Just as in my case. Now that I’m away from Mildred, I realize more and more just how much she really means to me. It’s hard to explain, but it’s just as though a part of me was missing. That is what makes this tough job much easier. We know that someday we will come back to stay, and when we come back we will appreciate, more than ever, that which we left behind.

 We have been doing a lot of shooting lately, and are going to do a lot more in the near future. All the boys in the 3rd and 4th squads of the 4th platoon thank you for sending me that chocolate cake. I was given the honor of getting the first piece. After that they all grabbed, and nothing was left. You see, I didn’t have time to open the package until after midnight. That was when we came in from a ten mile speed hike, on a hot night. We were plenty tired and hungry. We got hot coffee from the mess hall. So you can imagine just how much the cake was appreciated.

 Have you any boyfriends yet? How is the ice man? It’s a shame you have to pay so much income tax. You make so little, and pay so much, it just don’t seem right. They ought to take more from the high salaried persons, and let the ones that aren’t making so much alone. I still have a lot of writing to do, so I’ll sign off now. Take good care of yourself.

Your Son. Chas.

Saturday, April 8, 1944

Hiya Honey;

Received a package today. As yet, I haven’t opened it yet, but I believe it is the cake you sent. Tonight when we are through, we will sail into it. Thanks a lot Ma, I appreciate it very much. You won’t know your son, when you see him. My hands and face are black. Only my bald head is white. You’ll be surprised to see how thin I am. Yesterday, I got the picture that Millie sent me. I suppose she showed it to you before she sent it. She sure looks good on the picture, don’t she? I can’t keep my eyes off of it. I carry it with me wherever I go.

 I was sorry to hear that your back was bothering you. You work too hard. That’s why I didn’t want you to bake for me. I wanted you to rest yourself instead. When the war is over, I want a mother to come home to, so take good care of yourself, won’t you? Pretty soon my basic training will be over, and I’ll be coming home for a visit. I can hardly wait. So take good care of yourself, and don’t let any of those 4-F wolves get you.

Love, Your Son, Chas.

Thursday, May 23, 1944

Dear Ma;

How’s my little honey today? Earlier I wrote to Mildred and told her that I would be home before long. That was before I went to the dentist. Now that I have been to the dentist, I’ll have to write and tell her that I’ll be a little late in getting home. I have to have a lot of work done, and they can’t finish in time, so I have to stay here until they do. Anyway, I’ll be home before the 10th of June. Every day now we turn in part of our equipment. By Saturday we will have it all in. You know Saturday is the end of our training cycle. From now on we won’t work very hard until we get to our new camp, which will be after our furlough. It will be one of the biggest days in my life when I will come home to see you, Mildred, Joe, Helen, the kids, Mildred’s Ma and all my friends. Four months isn’t a very long time when you’re with your friends, but it’s a lifetime when you’re not with them. A few of the fellows are bothering me to go to the beer gardens with them to get a bottle of beer. So, I’ll have to sign off, and go with them. Don’t worry, I’m in excellent shape physically, and I can hardly wait now, until I’ll be home with you again.

Lots of Love, Chas.

P.S. I’ll squeeze the crap out of you when I get home.

Monday, July17, 1944

Italy

Hello Ma;

Received your letter, and was very glad to hear from you. I had a pretty nice boat trip, and now I’m in Italy. Don’t feel bad about my being so far from home. I’m glad that the war is here, and not where I live. I know that when I get back everything will be just as it was when I left. Mildred wrote and said that you had your vacation. Too bad you couldn’t have had it when I was home. Just have patience, and before you know it, I will be back and finish the bourbon that you had for me. Take care of yourself and be a good girl.

Love, Chas.

August 10, 1944

Italy

Dear Ma;

I’m in the best of health, and am wishing that you are also. Always around this time of year, I worry about your hayfever. I don’t write very often because I don’t get much chance to. During the day I’m kept busy, and at night it’s too dark to see. We don’t have lights at night, so you see, I’m handicapped. When we get back I’ll have a lot more to tell you than I can put in a letter. Years ago, when I was still taking painting lessons, a fortune teller told me that I was going to do a lot of travelling. I never dreamed that I was going to travel as much as I did. I travelled in almost everything imaginable. I even rode in a Jeep for about 15 miles. I will write more the first chance I get.

Lots of Love, Chas.

September 9, 1944

Italy

Dear Ma;

Received the letter you wrote Aug. 31. and was very glad to hear from you. Thanks a lot for the money you put in it. I’m glad to hear that your hay fever don’t bother you, but it worries me a lot when you write that you would like to be with Dad. I know that you are lonesome, and I wish that I was in a position to remedy that, but that’s impossible for the time being. Just have patience, and keep your spirits up. The war can’t last forever. I’m working in the personnel office now. I don’t know how long the job will last, but so far it’s o.k. I’ve even got a bunk to sleep on. So you see, it’s not so bad after all. The weather is getting cooler right along. I think before long we will have cold weather here. I’m in the best of health, so don’t worry.

Love, Your Son, Chas.

September 24, 1944

Italy

Dear Ma;

Received two letters and a package from you this week. I’m starting to get the letters and packages regularly now. Thanks for the buck that was in the letter. That paper soap is really nice. My buddies got quite a kick out of seeing soap come in paper form. I’ll have to write V-mail for a while because I ran out of envelopes and I can’t buy any out here. If you can, please send me some envelopes. I have paper. You don’t have to worry about me changing in any way. If I do change, it will be for the better. I feel as if I got a break by being sent out here to Italy. I can’t explain why, but after this business is all over and I come back home again, you will probably agree with me, that I couldn’t have been sent to a better place. I’m in good health, and I’m eating pretty good. We don’t have much in the line of entertainment, but we manage to have a nice time between ourselves. I will write to you every chance I get, but if you don’t hear from me for awhile, don’t worry, I’ll be all right.

Lots of Love and Kisses, Chas.

October 3, 1944

Italy

Dear Ma;

How’s my honey today? Fine I hope. I’m in the best of health, but I’m developing a hell of a big appetite for some good old fashioned Bohemian dumplings. I haven’t received any mail from you in about two weeks. I know it’s not your fault, because we were moving again, and it takes a little time for the mail to catch up. I received the cigarettes that you had Mildred mail out to me, and I want to thank you very much. The army is giving us a package a day now, and with what I have on hand I can keep going for a while. The food is good, and we get plenty, but it don’t compare with the meals you made. Bakery goods we get very little of. We can’t even buy it in the towns. When I get back I’ll bother you plenty to bake for me, until I get my belly full again. Today is a nice day for a change. It’s a pleasure to be able to eat without having the rain filling up the plate and cup. Be a good girl, and take good care of yourself.

Your Son, Chas.

October 21, 1944

Italy

Dear Ma;

Forgive me for not writing any sooner, but I just couldn’t help it. I haven’t received any mail from you for over three weeks, so naturally I’m worried as to how you are. I received the package you and Mildred sent me for my birthday, and I want to thank you both very much. I get plenty of everything now, so please don’t send anymore, unless I ask for it. I’m in good health, and as happy as can be under the circumstances. I hate the thought of being so far away from home, but I’m very thankful that the war is here, and not back in the good old U.S. I know that you are writing every week, and I can’t under-stand why I’m not getting your letters. I suppose I’ll get them all at once. Don’t work too hard, and take good care of yourself.

Love, Your Son, Chas.

HEADQUARTERS 361ST INFANTRY

Office of the Regimental Chaplains

A.P.O. 91 c/o P.M. New York

10 November 1944

Mrs. Mildred Pergler

2442 South Homan Avenue

Chicago, Illinois

My Dear Mrs. Pergler:

By this time you have received the official War Department notice that your husband, Private Charles Pergler, 36784369, was wounded in action in Northern Italy on October 26, 1944 and died of those wounds on November 1, 1944. This news must have been a severe shock to you, and we, his comrades, want to express this word of sympathy.

Private Pergler and his company were set up in a defensive position. They were dug in well, but during a heavy barrage, an enemy artillery shell landed near your husband’s foxhole and he was wounded seriously by shrapnel. He received immediate first aid treatment from his aid man and was quickly evacuated under the cover of fog and darkness. In the hospital he received the finest medical attention, but seven days later he passed away. With full military honors he was laid to rest in a United States Military Cemetery in Northern Italy. A Christian funeral service was conducted for him by a Protestant chaplain.

Any words of sympathy we might express seem so feeble in this, your hour of sorrow. God alone can give that peace that passes all human understanding. However, it may be helpful to know that your husband was a good soldier and was well liked by the officers and men of his company. He loved his home, his country, and the God-given principle of freedom. In true faithfulness to his duty, he fought of preserve them for us and, in so doing, gave “that last full measure of devotion.” He gave his life that others might live.

May God’s blessings be upon you.

Sincerely Yours,

Wilford N. Vanderpool

Chaplain, 361st Infantry