

In the trenches
Dec. 15th 1864

My dear Pat -

It has been some time since I wrote you and still longer since you wrote to me - over a month since I have heard a word from you. My silence has been unavoidable. We had been expecting a fight on the right, and have been moving about, and then the weather has been so cold I could not write in the open air and had no where else to write. But I can't conceive what has delayed you so long - it might be the mail however. I am very anxious to hear from all at home. We have had a severe spell of weather lately, some snow with it and have suffered greatly in the trenches. They give us such a limited supply of wood, and then until yesterday no place to stay in that our sufferings have been very intense. But we moved back to our place on the line night before last and pitched us a fly and made us a chimney and now compared to what we were are quite comfortable. But they are constantly moving us about and in this way prevent us from making the preparation we might for the cold weather.

Poor John Longest was killed on the 8th of this month by a sharp-shooter while coming from his picket post. This will go very hard with his wife and little children. He was killed instantly - shot through the body. Did you get the things I sent by Owens' boy? The jacket and buttons? Have the negroes finished getting in the corn, and are you making preparations for Christmas. If I live as long I expect to spend in these trenches the worst Christmas I ever spent. How do the children get along? Has Kate grown much? Do Willie and Betsy still go to school?

I understand that Mrs. Longest is going to move from Plain View. She has rented a place somewhere below. You must write to me, dear Pat, as soon as you receive this. I have been so often bothered since I commenced to write that I have forgotten nearly everything I had intended writing about. Put the ploughs to work as soon after Christmas as you can. Now may the Lord have mercy on my wife and little children and provide for them. I was quite sick last night with a fever, but feel better today.

Farewell, my best love to you and my little ones.

Yours affect. husband

Jos. L. Pollard

In the trenches
Dec. 15th 1918

My dear Paul -

It has been some time since I wrote you and still longer since you wrote to me - ever a fortnight I have heard a word from you. My ailments have been unavailing. We had been expecting a light on the right and have been waiting about, and then the weather has been so cold I could not write in the open air and so we were glad to write. But I can't conceive what has befallen you so long - at night on the wall however, I am very anxious to hear from all at home. We have had a severe spell of weather lately, some snow with it and have suffered greatly in the trenches. They give us such a limited supply of wood and thus mail yesterday, no place to stay in the trench, the night before last and pitched for we moved back on our side on the line right before last and pitched as a rule and made a change, a change compared to what we were and quite comfortable. The day afterwards, we were about and in this way prevent us from taking the respite we were for the cold weather.

Your John Burgess was killed on the 15th of this month by a shell-fragment which came from his own side. This will go very hard with his wife and little children. He was killed instantly - shot through the body. Did you get the little boy, the jacket and the hat? Have the doctors finished getting in the corn, and are you making preparations for Christmas. If I live as long I expect to spend in these trenches the whole of Christmas. How do the children get along? Has Kate grown much? Do Willie and Betty still go to school?

I understand that the hospital is going to move from Blain view. She has turned a piece somewhere below. You must write to me, dear Paul, as soon as you receive this. I have been so often bothered since I intended to write that I have forgotten nearly everything I had intended writing about. But the struggle to work as soon after Christmas as you can. Now may the Lord have mercy on my wife and little children and provide for them. I was quite sick last night with a fever, but feel better today.

With my best love to you and my little ones.

Your devoted husband

John L. Burgess