# CIVIL WAR LETTERS OF CHAPLAIN WILLIAM W. NORTON, 154th NEW YORK VOLUNTEERS, TO HIS DAUGHTER FRANKIE (LATER MRS. ORAMEL G. BEACH), OTTO, CATTARAUGUS COUNTY, NEW YORK

Transcribed from the originals in his collection by: Mark H. Dunkelman

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#### Dear Frankie

We are upon the point of starting upon a <u>long march</u>. Soon it will be impossible for me to communicate with you & I thought I would write you now before we go hoping that it will reach you. My health is very good & I have had much of kindness & favor shown me since I left you, & yet my heart is with you at home. I have received no letter from home excepting the first one, your note on the 19th two days after I left home

If I could return home now, I should feel that I had been well repaid for all my time & expense, & if I should be spared as I hope, I shall ever after have to rejoice in the part I shall have been permitted to take in this rebellion

Ormal just arrived here to day. he has had a long & rather hard time of it He is far from well, & I have been down to the city & got from the Christian Commission a bottle of Blackberry cordial for <u>him</u>. The probability is that he will go to the hospital to morrow & be sent back to the rear. most of the new men have the <u>diarrhoea</u>. The change of living & climate & all the habits & ways of living is so different from home life. That is his trouble, & he is poor in flesh, even for him. I have done all I can for his comfort, got him into good quarters & I shall continue to do so as long as we are within reach of each other.

Now Dearest Daughter I can but commit you & all my loved ones to our kind heavenly Father. Take as good care of your health as you can

Help Mother. be a second Mother to the younger children. be a faithful Christian & strive to win others to Christ.

give my love to all the young friends. ask them to pray for me. Try & keep up the Tuesday evening prayer meetings. be faithful in attendance as far as possible to the church meetings & live in <u>short</u> for Christ & heaven, & he will be with you.

be assured my heart is with you, & I hope my Chaplaincy will eventuate in good to you all

for the present good by Write me often, as if I \_\_\_\_ your letters will reach you sometime

Your affectionate father W. W. Norton

#### Dearest Daughter

I wrote you last evening. But as I have a good prospect of sending this to morrow by Surgeon Van Aernam, I thought I would write you again. I had supposed <u>Ormal</u> was before me, but when I arrived I found that he was still back. he came yesterday. Had had a hard time. been much exposed without sufficient protection <u>been sick</u> with <u>diarrhoea</u> & nothing done for it, until it is <u>chronic</u> in character & he is rather weak.

he will go back to Chattanooga & thence to Nashville, starting as soon as the Hospital train <u>arrives</u> which is expected to night. if so he will leave to morrow. He will have an easy ride, compared to what he had down here.

I write this to you not to alarm you, but to let you know the real situation of one you <u>love</u> best. He tells me that he has had increasing trust & confidence in his Savior. He was glad very glad to see me & receive your & other letters

I hope & trust that he will mend now that he is under medical treatment.

But <u>dearest</u> I will not disguise from you, that many are taken off with this disease

It is incident & unavoidable in Army life. Some escape entirely. the great damage is <u>negglect</u>. <u>Dearest</u> commit all into the hands of God & may he bless you both may your lives & health be precious in his sight, & you permitted to see each other again & be a blessing to each other

I have written this also as he will be absent from the Regiment & I shall not probably hear from him again till I hear through you, & this as the prospect is, as we are upon the point of starting upon a long campaign, & shall probably receive our letters by way of New York & the ocean after a few days

But it will be long long time even if we are successful & have a prosperous march before we come out so as to be in communication with <u>home</u>.

I think of you all, & try to commit you to God daily in prayer, hoping of his having mercy that we may meet after a few months, all meet & all in health. Love one another. help Mother, help Willie & Alfred & Stephan & Eddie & Bell, & God give you his richest blessings. give my love to all. tell our young friends that I of course cannot correspond with them weekly after we commence the <u>march</u> for which we are undoubtedly preparing, but they must remember me in prayer that I may be restored to them

> Your affectionate Father W. W. Norton

Before Savannah Ga Dec 17, 1864

### Dearest Frankie

To day for the first time in a month we had the pleasure of hearing that a large mail had come & was being distributed to the various Regiments. only part of it could be distributed to night. I received 6 letters. put them in my pocket untill I had carried some letters over to the Hospital, & distributed them. then I went back to my Tent & opened them--the first I opened was from Bro E I put it up, opened another from Lydia--put it by unread opened one from Mr Cox laid that aside, & next opened yours. Tried the other Two one from Mary Vosburgh for my dear friends of the Tuesday evening prayer meeting, & another one from Bro E. was disappointed in not finding any from Wife. Then I commenced reading them, commencing with yours of course. Was glad to hear of your good health. O how I do long to see you all. Imagine me surrounded by waggons & Tents & Teams, with Hospital Tents off about 40 rods right in the Woods, pine Woods with here & there an Oak. I sat down by the fire before our Tent just at Sunset. The Rebs who have not fired much To day had just opened a cannonade along their lines in front of us & then I read those peaceful home letters amid the very din of War.

I have been working hard in the Hospital all day. have written quite a number of letters for the sick soldiers, distributed paper & envelopes among them & attended the funeral of one who died last night

My health is very good, & In answer to your prayers I hope to be preserved from all the perils that are around me & be permitted to return to you again. My heart is at <u>home</u> I long after you all, & my prayer is that an unbroken band we may meet in a few months at farthest I have written from here twice, & sent by private conveyance. We shall have regular mail arrangements soon, when I will write Providence permitting every day or two.

I hope Tomorrow in the mail which yet remains to be to receive several letters from <u>home</u> do write often, Directing now as before, excepting to <u>Savannah Ga</u>, instead of <u>Nashville Tenn</u>

5 of our boys, Two of them officers from the 134 N.Y. who were captured at Gettesburgh came in last night. they escaped from <u>Columbia</u> S.C. Had been 21 days on the road. They report that <u>Mr Pool</u> & the other officers of the 154th now in prison are well

I hope soon to write you from the city of <u>Savannah</u>, but fear that many brave boys must fall ere we enter it.

With a heart ful of love to you all, & wishing to be remembered to all the friends, I remain

your affectionate Father W. W. Norton

I want Willie to write, & Alfred also Tell me all about home, & your affairs with love to all

## Savannah Ga Jan 4th 1865

## Dearest Frankie

I must keep up the habit of writing you although I have not yet received any thing from home later than your Thanksgiving Letter. it seems a long time to wait as we have here, with communications open, sending out mail daily <u>but</u> no mail arriving

I am very well, & very busy Let me give you an idea of my work yesterday I first went & got a Team started after a load of wood That took me untill 9 o clock & then walked nearly a mile to the Hospital my armfull of reading which I had obtained of Rev Mr Alvord agent of the Boston Tract Soc. Saw a few of the men & got some of the boys to distribute the Reading through the wards. I then went back 3/4 mile or so to a chaplains meeting at the head Quarters of Gen Howard. We had a good meeting lasting until noon. Then went over to camp & got dinner & was around among the men untill 2 o clock when I rode about a mile out to the cemetery & assisted in the burial of 3 who had died in the Hospital. The rode back to camp Took a lunch as I could not wait for supper & did not wish to return to camp again last night & then walked again a full mile to Hospital & went with the Confederate Chaplain to a <u>Dr</u> \_\_\_\_, who is teaching a Young Ladies Seminary, & was introduced & visited a while then went to try & find Rooms of Christian Commission & & returned to my lodgings very tired, so much so that I have not entirely recovered from it this morning. We (the Christian Com chaplains) have arranged for services at one of the city churches every evening commencing this evening. the Preaching will be by chaplains & I shall probably take a part in it after a while We hope in this way to do good Well how do you all do. What news from Ormal. I felt afraid that he might not recover Let me know about him.

I wrote to <u>Mary Beach</u> from Atlanta giving her information about him. did she receive my letter. If so tell her I shall expect an answer immediately Do write me & tell me all about affairs at Home

Col Jones starts for home to day. I wish I could do the same, but I must be content. I do not know when I shall get any pay will write to you all about what you may have to do in a few days

> from your affectionate Father W. W. Norton

When is Willie & Alf & all home & little Bell is she well & good

## Savannah Ga Sabbath Jan 15 1865

### Dearest Frankie

Your kind letter was received to day, & it gives me great pleasure I do assure you to hear from you, & to feel that you are a christian, & trying to live for Christ & heaven.

I wish to caution you Dear Frankie about one thing. \_\_\_\_\_ I fear to wound your feelings if not offend you. it is this--I have some fear from what you write that you may let your interest & love for Ormal lead you to spend to much time there, & the negglect of home duties & thus burden your Mother (who you know is not very well) with cares she should be relieved of for my sake & especially for your Mothers sake be careful upon this point. As to the letter you inquire after I cannot say whether I received the one you intended as an answer to mine in relation to Ormal or not. I have received one in which you thank me for my care of him &c

I will now say that I wrote you & also to Mary Beach to prepare you for the worst. When Ormal left Atlanta I thought it very doubtful whether he recovered. I knew his only chance was rest & good treatment I trusted he would get this at Nashville, but advised him to get a furlough & return home if possible

The account you gave of his condition is not very encouraging & yet he may gradually regain strength, & his disease assume a more favorable appearance But I dont think he will be able to do any military \_\_\_\_\_ during the term of his enlistment Give him my best regards also remember me to <u>Mary</u> & the rest of the family

I am very well & very comfortably situated, & yet are rather expecting to be compelled to leave here for another campaign. I rather dread it. 1st because we cannot expect as good weather as we had on the former, 2nd We must expect to meet with more opposition. yet if such is the order of our leaders, I am ready to go forward trusting all in the hands of that God who has been merciful to me & mine in the past

I hope you will correspond with Willie regularly & frequently I have written two letters to him directed to Randolph <u>please</u> mention this to him in your next, so he will be sure to get them from the office

Give my best regards to all the young friends, & believe me your

affectionate Father W. W. Norton

P.S. please excuse my bad writing as this is the 4th letter written this evening & it is late & I am very sleepy & tired but I thought I must write you tonight

## Camp near Raleigh N.C. April 28, 1865

#### Dear Frankie

Our mail closes at 1/4 past 10 o clock & it is now past 9. But I will try & pen a few hasty lines by this our last mail ere we take up the line of march <u>Homeward</u>

Well Thanks be unto <u>God</u> whose right hand & whose holy arm hath gotten him the victory. during my connection with the army I have seen much of hard marching & yet I am very grateful that I have not been compelled to witness much of actual warfare. I have seen no battle field, strewn with the dead & dying. I have seen something of suffering in Hospitals I endured enough of hardness to make me long for <u>home</u>. a few weeks now & if I am spared, as I hope in answer to prayer which I know is being offered for me, & I shall once more be with you

I would like to write this morning to the Tuesday evening meeting, but cannot possibly find time, as I see. remember me to them. I have received nothing from Miss Vosburgh of late, perhaps because she is away

Remember me personally to all the friends as you see them.

As to the time you may expect me, do not look to soon, as I expect delays, & it will probably be July or there abouts before we can be mustered out.

I shall not probably see <u>Ormal</u> before I reach home as he will hardly get around so as to join us at Washington, though he may. remember me to him

The Weather here has been almost as warm as summer for some time, though not quite perhaps. yet it gives earnest of being disagreeably hot here soon I rejoice that we are northward bound.

We start to morrow morning at 4 o clock.

I hope for a pleasant journey as we will not have to forrage, even for our animals, & it is pleasant to see so much of our now united country.

Mr John Meloy has just called at my tent. He is connected with the Railroad transportation from the coast up for the Government.

That intended to write a letter to Ally to send with this but I must close & cannot do it. tell him <u>Pa</u> will remember him as soon as I find <u>time to write</u>

Love to all

In great haste

Yours Truly W. W. Norton

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