

Letters of  
Captain Allen  
M. Sumner,  
USMC

April 25, 1917 - July 15, 1918

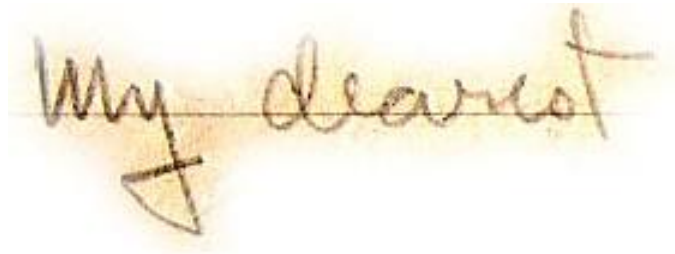


Captain Allen M. Sumner, USMC  
October 1, 1882 – July 19, 1918

Allen Melancthon Sumner was born in Boston, Massachusetts on October 1, 1882, the son of Allen Melancthon Sumner and Ellen Frances (Prescott) Sumner, prepped for college at the Pomfret School, Pomfret, Connecticut. Although he secured an appointment to Annapolis, Sumner chose instead to attend his father's alma mater, Harvard University. After graduating in 1904, he spent a period of time traveling. On March 17, 1907, Sumner was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps. Until 1909 he was stationed in turn at the Marine Barracks of the Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, and Norfolk Navy Yard. He was then ordered to Cuba with the 1st Provisional Regiment of Marines in the Army of Cuban Pacification. In December, 1909, he served on temporary duty on the USS *Prairie*. He retired on January 1, 1914, after seven years service. Sumner was recalled as soon as war was declared in April, 1917, and began serving on active duty at Marine Barracks, Quantico, on July 5th, 1917. When the 1st Machine Gun Battalion was formed in August, Sumner was assigned to 81st Company. Sumner's war record is as follows: Sailed from New York on December 14, 1917 on the USS *DeKalb*, arriving in St Nazaire on December 31. Trained in the Vosges and was in the front lines in March at Mont-sur-la-Cote on the Verdun Front. On April 29, he relieved Major Waller in Command of 81st Company when Major Waller was transferred to the 3rd Division to command the 8th MG Battalion. Participated in the action at

Belleau Wood and when Major Cole was wounded on June 10, and Captain Major became battalion commander in his stead (himself to fall five days later), Sumner took his place in command of the right front. Captain Sumner's death occurred no more than a month later on July 19, at Vierzy, near Soissons, where the 6th MGB was to take part in the attack on Tigny, the Aisne-Marne Offensive. He was hit by a fragment of a High Explosive shell and killed instantly. Later it was debated whether he had instead fallen during an air raid. Captain Sumner received the Croix de Guerre with Gilt Star, one for the fighting at Chateau Thierry and the second for actions at Tigny, as well as 3 Silver Star Citations. He is buried in Plot A, Row 13, Grave 25 in the American Cemetery at Belleau.

□



My dearest

April 25, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I lost my quarters again today as Major Halford is to get them, so I will have to pick out someplace in town for us to live in, and will start looking tomorrow. I'm so glad you are coming on May 1<sup>st</sup>. I think you had better take a train that gets in a Broad Street Station at 6 p.m. and leaves Washington at 3 p.m. as I can't be sure of getting permission to leave the yard before 5 o'clock and could[ ?] certainly meet you. I am very much disgusted at losing the quarters, but it can't be helped. If my bill goes through I would be 70 on the list of Captains as near as I can figure, over half way up as there are now 200 Captains. Mrs. Waller sent you her love. I haven't had a chance to call her yet. I had dinner and went to the theater with Major Hughes and his wife a few days ago. They have an apartment in West Philadelphia. Are you going to move Nanny Lee over to the Mason's when you leave? Have you ever checked her head up any higher now that the roads are better? If you have write me how she looked. There is no news much here. Recruits are coming in fast. Over 1,000 a day for the whole Marine Corps. We will be filled up by May 1<sup>st</sup> to the 17,400 authorized on the last bill. There is to be a big camp at Quantico I understand. It would be funny if I were ordered there.

Letters of Captain Allen M. Sumner, USMC

Love and kisses to you and Margaret. I read her letter. I miss  
you. Lots of love, Allen

May 5, 1917

*To Ellen Prescott Sumner*

Dear Mother,

I received the check safely and thought I had written you about it. Much obliged. We have been having some very wet and cold weather, disagreeable for this time of year. The Captains still have 'officer of the day' duty, it is only when one gets to be a Major that one gets away from that. We are all very busy with the large numbers of men coming in on account of the increase in the Marine Corps. Our two German prisoners (the rest of the crews of the German ships were moved to Forts McPherson and Ogilthorpe in Georgia) seemed very contented. We have to censor their letters and one wrote that he had fine food, was well treated and very comfortable and was learning to be a real farmer! We have them working in the Post garden under guard to give them exercise.

There is to be a big camp of Marines at Ocquequan, Virginia (I don't think that is spelled right) this summer so perhaps I will go there. It is between Washington and Fredericksburg on the RF&P.

I hope you like it at Warrenton. Margaret sends love and thanks you very much for the sweater.

With love, your loving son,

Allen



Letters of Captain Allen M. Sumner, USMC

May 30, 1917

*To Ellen Prescott Sumner*

Dear Mother,

I was glad to hear from you again but sorry that you are going to Washington as I fear you will find it very hot there at this time of year. I am still at the barracks and will probably be there some time longer. I am not to go with the expedition to France. Am very busy as usual. The recruiting for the Marine Corps is progressing splendidly and at the present rate the Corps will be filled up to the limit authorized by the last increase by June 30<sup>th</sup>. I must stop now as I have to go over to the yard to take one of my companies over to West Philadelphia for some exercises.

With love.

Your loving son,

Allen

August 6, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I was so glad you and Margaret could get down to the ship and give me another chance of seeing you both. Everything is getting pretty well shaken down now. The censored letters make it pretty hard to tell any news and doesn't leave much to write about.

Love to mother and a great deal to you and Margaret.

Your loving husband,

Allen

August 12, 1917

*To Allen M. Sumner*

*From Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I was more than delighted to get a letter from you the other day. As it had no number on it I suppose it is the only one you have written. My mother came down to King George down yesterday as Papa was coming and Adelaide was in New York with Esther Whiling [?]. Mother is here at Ralis [?]. I have to write on my lap so I am afraid you will have a harder time than ever to read my letters. Everyone asks for you in each one says if he was little older or a little younger he would rather go than do anything else. Please write often even if it is only a card. Margaret hardly lets me get out of her sight. She seems to miss you so. I have not been able to get up with your helmet but mother is making you another so you will have it before cold weather. Nancy Lee has gotten so slow it is no pleasure to drive her and no check on the bridal they use on her so she cannot be checked up and pokes along with her head nearly on the ground. Mrs. Mason doesn't drive her much and she just grazes around the yard all the time. I think that is why she has gotten slow. Bladen will make about 4,000 dollars on his wheat so he says he will buy a car in the next few days. A Ford is not good enough for him. He will get either a Buick or an Overland. Margaret and I plan all the time how we

can save money and have enough to buy a car when you get home. Best love dearest. From Margaret and me.

Lovingly,

Nan

August 14, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

It seems about a year since I have seen you and Margaret. We have had a very uneventful voyage so far. There is plenty of drill and watch standing to keep us busy. So what with the various schools, officers, French and non-comms, we barely have a minute to ourselves and it is hard to find time to write as the following schedule will prove.

9:15 a.m. quarters and slips drills

10:00 a.m. infantry drill full pack

11:05 a.m. French class

12:00 noon dinner

1:00 p.m. officers' school

2:00 p.m. signal drill

3:00 p.m. infantry drill full pack

4:00 p.m. non-comms school

5:30 p.m. officers' school

6:00 p.m. supper

7:15-8:15 p.m. study hour for officers

Officers' rooms are inspected at 8:00 a.m. and at 5:00 p.m. daily!

Besides there is one hour drill in addition to fit in for us also who have gun crews on the ship's guns and one watch every night of

form lessons and one every day to stand. However I am in good shape. Love to Margaret and much for yourself.

Your loving husband,

Allen

August 17, 1917, At sea

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

The time is slipping away but it seems a very long time since I saw you. I hope everything goes well with you. I will direct this to King George and the next one to 1915 S St. so as to be sure and reach you. We all wear life preservers all the time day and night and you would laugh to see us as they resemble a pair of blue sofa cushions one on the breast and one on the back. They are soft like a pillow, very light and not at all uncomfortable but rather bothersome in getting through doorways, etc. There is no news except the usual ship's routine. Weather has been beautiful with two days exception. One I borrowed a sun vester[?] from a Naval Officer to stand my watch in, and in my rubber boots and rain coat was as comfortable as can be. Although it was raining hard with considerable wind and sea. Well give my love to Margaret. With a great deal of love for yourself.

Your loving husband,

Allen

August 19, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I will send this c/o your mother as I am not sure just where you will be. Still beautiful weather, sea smooth. I don't mind these watches at all. We are now doing one in three which isn't so bad. No news. Everything is progressing as usual. It has turned warmer today. Much love to you both.

Your loving husband,

Allen



August 20, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

This morning at about 8:30 a.m. we were attacked by enemy submarines and beat them off after an engagement lasting about an hour and a half from the time the first gun was fired until the last. The 20<sup>th</sup> gun co. crew was the only marine crew to fire the other being blue jackets so the 20<sup>th</sup> co was the first of this organization to be in action against the enemy! We only got a chance to fire a few shots from this ship the destroyer doing most of the work but we saw a periscope coming at us and drove her under by our fire. Although I don't suppose we made a hit aeroplanes came out to assist us. Well I am certainly glad to be in. Much love to you and Margaret.

Your loving husband,

Allen

August 23, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I have been so busy in the last couple of days I haven't had a moment to write you. This censorship is so stringent it doesn't leave much of anything to write about. I have met some French and English officers and found one or two very pleasant.

Everyone seems tickled to see us. I hope to hear from you soon and hope you got my cable promptly. I will stop now to get this off. Much love to Margaret and you.

Your loving husband,

Allen

August 23, 1917

*To Allen M. Sumner*

*From Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

Not hearing a word is certainly an awful feeling. I have been at Powhatan since Sunday just got back to Cleveland in time to go to Mrs Allen Smith's to a Red leaves meeting a kind of all day picnic we had a good time and got lots of work done. Bu I am nearly dead I am so tired as I ride all the way down and back on a board in the back of the truck. I will leave here either 31<sup>st</sup> or 1<sup>st</sup> for 1915 S Street. I went to the Bank of Westmoreland yesterday (Bladen took us to the beach) and they were lovely to me said to call on them whenever I needed to that it had been a pleasure to do business with you. Margaret has improved so much down here in the country. Best love dearest each night I pray I will hear something the next day.

Lovingly,

Nan

August 26, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I sent a little gift by ensign Arvin(?) who is going to Washington and promised to get it to you and I asked him to drop around and see you if he had a chance. I also got a little purse for Margaret, nothing much just a little remembrance but it was too late to have Arvin take it so I will have to take a chance on sending it through the mail. I understand It takes a month for a letter to go each way so don't worry if your mail is much delayed. Everything.

[no signature]

August 27, 1917

*To Allen M. Sumner*

*From Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

The county [?] was gay enough to have his parties yesterday, one at Powhatan and one at Marmion. Page came for us in a car so we took them both in first to Powhatan and then on to the Lewises. I went to church this morning as Mr. Baker preached. The Smiths and all the old crowd were there. At the party yesterday several people were very much amused when they asked me when you sailed. I said I did not know where you were. I said I did not know. Mrs. Young spoke up and said she knew told[ ?] a date when she said you sailed and another when and where you had landed. Came to find out one of the Blacks went sometime around the time I came down so she made up her mind you were with his outfit. Everyone asked to be remembered to you. William Smith said not to just say he wanted to be remembered but to give you his very best wishes and love. Mr. Geery has introduced your bill in the Senate again so I hope this is the last and it will go through this time. Margaret said the other day "I wish you would open a paper and it would say the greatest man in the world and there would be a picture of my daddy, you know, I mean the greatest except our lord, Jesus Christ."

Lovingly,

Nan

August 29, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

After writing you about the way the soil dried out we had steady rain for several days which made things a little different.

Yesterday we went out on all day hike[?] which was really very pleasant. As we stopped at a sort of a summer resort for dinner. I miss you very much and hope the war will be over before so very long. We are all gradually getting used to conditions here and it's not nearly as bad as I expected and a great deal more interesting.

Best love to you and Margaret.

Your loving husband,

Allen

20<sup>th</sup> Company 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment

August 31, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

You needn't worry about our getting to the front any time soon for from present indications it looks as if our original idea as to that was about right in every respect. I wish you would get one of the sheepskin vests with the wool inside and send it by mail to me. You can get one at Meyers Washington as I saw some there just before I came away and they will certainly come in handy. You know what I mean, just a vest not a coat, skin outside, wool inside about 40 inches chest measure. I understand paid post will reach me at the address you have. Everything is going much better in the battalion for reasons which I can't tell now on account of the censor. I hope Arvin saw you as he can give you some news anyhow he is a nice fellow. It is pretty cold here already especially before daybreak but in the middle of the day warms up some. Have seen quite a bit of the English officer I wrote about. He seems a very nice fellow. He is just back from East Africa, where he was in considerable fighting. Best love to you and Margaret.

Your loving husband,

Allen

20<sup>th</sup> Company 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment



September 5, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I miss you very much and was so glad to hear from you and Margaret the other day. I suppose you have seen Arvin by this time or he has called you up so you have some real news. We do a lot of hiking over these magnificent roads. Yesterday we stopped for dinner in a very pretty little wood and the only thing to remind us of the war was an aeroplane which flew low above us. It was a beautiful day. The French people are wonderful in their spirit and everyone has gone out of their way to be nice to us. Much love to you and Margaret.

Your loving husband,

Allen

20<sup>th</sup> Company 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment

September 5, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

Got my first letter from you on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Weather rainy and disagreeable, but not as cold as formerly. Tell Margaret I enjoyed her letter and will write to her soon.

Much love,

Allen

20<sup>th</sup> Company 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment

September 6, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

You would laugh if you knew where we are. It is so different from what most everyone would imagine. I do wish I could write you a more interesting letter giving some idea of what we are doing as it is all so interesting. I have met a number of French officers some with the "Coeur de Guerre" and Legion of Honor and believe me the French army is magnificent in its spirit. I am picking up my French rapidly and can now converse with almost anyone although of course my grammar is not yet good.

Everywhere the people as a whole are in the war breast and soul even the children and no one before coming over here can possibly understand what it means to them. The other day as we were on a hike through a little town a woman in black with a little boy also in black stood in a doorway to watch us pass. As I went by at the head of my company she said something and the little fellow stiffened to attention and then ran out when I smiled at him and took my hand in both of his and walked by my side for quite a way. He was just about Margaret's age and made me think of her as he had big brown eyes. Such a nice little kid I was sorry when he said "au revoir". Everyone always turns out to watch the Americans pass and we are constantly made to feel how the people feel about our coming in. By the way you might find it

interesting too look up Bordeaux in an atlas. Much love to you  
both.

Your loving husband,

Allen

20<sup>th</sup> Company 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment

Letters of Captain Allen M. Sumner, USMC

September 11, 1917

*To Margaret Page Sumner*

Dear Margaret,

Haven't heard from you for some time. I suppose you are at school now. Write me all about it. How did you like going back to King George?

Much love to you and mother.

Daddy

20<sup>th</sup> Company 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment

September 12, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

Don't tell anyone not even family where we are as you never know how it gets around. I know I can rely on your discretion. It has grown quite warm here. There are delightful bathing beaches near here with many nice French people there for the summer, in spite of the subs which have been very active lately. I suppose Arvin told you about our encounter on the way over so I won't enlarge on it, except to say that one of my 20<sup>th</sup> Co. gun crews was one of the ones to do some of the firing. As a spectacle it was really superb and I will tell you all about it when I get home. I suppose you have been in Washington since the first. We do a great deal of hiking usually to some beaches near here. You really wouldn't know the war was going on to see the people in the streets here, as everyone seems cheerful although of course there is a considerable scarcity of young men, who are at the front. Food is plentiful apparently although coal and wood are scarce, also butter, and they do have one meatless [?] day a week in town but prices are very reasonable considering not as high as in the U.S. I think.

Much love, your loving husband,

Allen

September 12, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I am sending this by another ship so that you will certainly get at least one letter if anything happened to one ship. I have sent two letters dated the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> by Cam Smith who has the gun crew on a transport. Of course you mustn't mention to anyone how these letters get to you, or the information in them. The marines are doing finely and are in training with the finest body of troops in the French army. I won't say which they are. I have talked with many French officers back from the trenches and also on the Q.T. with French soldiers, and the morale of the army is magnificent, and everything is going fine. There is no truth in the reports that the French are all in. A few months ago things looked pretty bad for them in a way. Although there has never been any question of their holding their own. Now everything is looking up and their spirit is magnificent. It is a tough proposition however and no one looks for victory under two more years. Our battalion is to be on line of communication duty for a long while guarding bases, police duty in towns, etc. with no possibility of our getting into the trenches this year if then. It has rather taken the heart out of the men, as they can't help knowing it, as nearly all wanted to get right to the front. We go to Bordeaux in a week or so to take up our duty (?) at the base there.

The censorship is so strict over here no one knows where anyone else is. I hope you got my cablegram. There isn't much of any news as we work all day, and only get to town two afternoons a week, Wednesdays after four o'clock and all day Sunday off. I love you so much and do wish I would see you soon but we have to put this thing through and once it over with we will be so happy together again. I got a letter from Senator Gerry and he has put my bill through the Senate Naval Committee and says he will get it through the Senate this session, and will take it up himself with Mr. Carlin after that. The House won't take it up until after December however. I had a very nice letter from him. I haven't decided yet whether to stay in after the war or not but I think the bill had better be put through if possible as it will take a year anyhow.

Lots of love to you both, your loving husband,  
Allen



September 12, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I have a little more time before these letters get off so will write you another one. We are in a camp formerly occupied by the British and are all in buildings built on the portable plan of sections bolted together. Water is scarce also fuel, especially wood, but we have enough to get along and everything else is plentiful especially fruit, so much so that peasants come out as we march along these country roads and throw fruit to the men as they go by. I never saw so many pears in my life, small ones but very sweet and good, while the roadsides are everywhere lined with black raspberries so plentiful that no one takes the trouble to pick them. We also have very good melons. To give you an idea of the prices around here I got an excellent dinner with soup, fish, chicken, potatoes, meal and salad with cheese and fruit for dessert at a hotel at a seaside place near here last Sunday for five francs which at the present rate of exchange is about ninety cents. My mess sergeant said vegetables are cheaper here than in the states. You can get the finest dinner in town here for about a dollar. As I wrote you in my letter going by the other ship your letters to me are not censored so you can write any sort you want. This letter is practically a duplication of the other so must be sure and get one through as of course there is always a chance a ship

might be sunk. I am glad you checked Nancy Lee up and I hope you checked her up good and high, as I think she would get back in shape quicker and go better if you did. Write me all about it. I think it would do her good not to uncheck her when you stop unless it was for a very long time but leave her standing checked up very high. Don't you think that would be a good thing to get her so she would hold her head up again the way she used to? Did you try that? Well I expect you are tired of talking about horses, but it makes me think so of you when you write about them.

Lots of love and kisses to you and Margaret.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Letters of Captain Allen M. Sumner, USMC

September 14, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I forgot to number my last few letters and lost track of the number so I will start now at fifteen as that is about right, and will try not to forget again. I sent a package for Margaret. The little cap is a copy of a French soldier's fatigue cap the color of the field uniform. The little helmet their trench helmet. Let me know if it gets to her. Everything is going much as usual.

Much love to you and Margaret.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

20<sup>th</sup> Co., 5<sup>th</sup> Regt. U.S. Marines

September 15, 1917

*To Margaret Page Sumner*

Dear Margaret,

I suppose your school has started now and I can imagine you walking up S Street every morning. Are the same little girls there this year that you knew last winter? When I get home I will have so much to tell you and mother. You would be interested, I know, to see all the different uniforms they have here, and how differently the French soldiers drill from our Marines. Well, I must stop now to catch the mail. Take good care of mother. I miss you very much and hope it won't be long before I am home again.

Kisses and hugs for you and mother,

Your loving daddy

Capt. A.M. Sumner

20<sup>th</sup> Co., 5<sup>th</sup> Regt. U.S. Marines, A.E.F.

Letters of Captain Allen M. Sumner, USMC

September 17, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I do hope my cablegram got to you alright as one or two went wrong somehow and were much delayed. I think the mail facilities will be much improved as time goes on and letters will get over and back much quicker than they do now. I got two letters from you today, and was so glad to get them. Also one from Peter Gerry saying he had gotten the Senate to pass my bill by unanimous consent with an amendment to provide that my service in the reserve would count in my total length of service.

Much love and kisses to you and Margaret.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

20<sup>th</sup> Co., 5<sup>th</sup> Regt. U.S. Marines, A.E.F.

September 18, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I have another opportunity to send a letter by a friend on a ship so this also is not to be mentioned that you got it this way as it is uncensored, and will not be mailed until he reaches the U.S. We haven't moved yet from St. Nazaire but expect orders most any day to Bordeaux and I wrote you, where we will do provost guard duty for a while. I am well and everything is going nicely. Lots of love to you and Margaret.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

20<sup>th</sup> Co., 5<sup>th</sup> Regt. U.S. Marines, A.E.F.

Letters of Captain Allen M. Sumner, USMC

September 22, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

No mail from you since I last mentioned getting a letter, but I hope to get a big bunch pretty soon. Don't believe any rumors unless officially confirmed. I heard there was one going around Philadelphia which would have caused you considerable worry, and not a word of truth in it. We get rumors supported by the most circumstantial evidence which afterward turn out to be false. It alternates hot and cold here, mostly pretty cool with much fog in the morning. Love to you both kisses.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

20<sup>th</sup> Co., 5<sup>th</sup> Regt. U.S. Marines, A.E.F.

September 23, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

Nothing much to write about. We had a baseball game against an army team today which was rather good fun, as there was a big crowd out and much enthusiasm on both sides. They won 3-1. The work continues about the same. Fortunately with one or two exceptions one you know, this is a very congenial outfit and everything now is well shaken down and runs pretty smoothly. Lots of love to you both.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

20<sup>th</sup> Co., 5<sup>th</sup> Regt. U.S. Marines, A.E.F.



September 27, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

The insurance slip was forwarded to me by mistake. If you haven't paid it already telegraph Diggs and Mosely by night letter explaining and then please mail them the amount, as you only have until Oct 9 to pay it in and if not paid before that they can cancel the insurance. Remember it comes every 3 months and if they don't let you know write to them. It is due Dec 9, march 9, June 9 September 9 with one month's grace to pay it in. Please write me all about your financial affairs as I would like to know how you are getting on. This letter is going direct. We move in a few days to the place I have mentioned let me know what regiment Sylvanus is in. Alfred Sumner is in the 19<sup>th</sup> Engineers (rail way) Regiment over here but there are so many troops over here and no information given out to us I don't know where he is. We don't ever know except by rumors just where the rest of the Marines are. I love you so much and miss you both. I hope my packages to you both got there safely one to you and two for Margaret.

With much love and kisses to you both.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Letters of Captain Allen M. Sumner, USMC

Capt. A.M. Sumner

20<sup>th</sup> Co., 5<sup>th</sup> Regt. U.S. Marines, A.E.F.

Letters of Captain Allen M. Sumner, USMC

October 2, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I have a new job now, have been detached from my company, and have a staff job with the Army at headquarters, line of communication. You can imagine pretty well I think where that is. Had lunch with Uncle Rannie today. I have just reported and will tell you more about it later. I hated to leave the company but this is a so much broader field. Much love to you both.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

U.S. Marines, Headquarters, L.O.C. , A.E.F

October 7, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I have been very busy ever since taking over my new job. I am now acting as Assistant to the Chief of Staff, Line of Communications, and as we have to keep track of the movements of every body of American troops from the moment they land in France, you can image it is some job. I start work at 8:30 a.m. every morning, Sundays included and am supposed to quit at 5:30 p.m. but every night so far I have had to work up to 6:30, sometimes later, but have Sunday afternoon off as a rule, but not always. It is most interesting work however as I can keep in touch with everything over here. We have more Generals coming into the office than I ever saw before. Four came in yesterday, Major Generals, and two the day before. I go to work every morning in the Assistant Adjunct General's car which makes it convenient. I have a very bright young officer under me, a graduate of Princeton with honors, Phi Beta Kappa, who speaks five languages fluently. As we have to deal with the French a good deal my French comes in handy, and I am getting along nicely with it. My address from now on will be as given at the end of this letter. I went to the train, before I left, to see my company off in another direction, and they cheered me from every car. They were a fine lot, and I hated to leave them.

Everything was going so well. However, this is an opportunity not to be missed I suppose. Uncle Rannie says he had nothing to do with getting me here and I think he would say so if he had. He is with the French. Lots of love.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

U.S. Marines, Headquarters, L.O.C. , A.E.F

October 8, 1917

*To Allen M. Sumner*

*From Mary Morris Sumner*

[First page missing]...is the constant stream of company. The Ikeisals[?] have been here twice in a month and Mason Young is here on a job to advice the government in the carrying out of this insurance bill so he will be here a week. Martha has someone in to either lunch or dinner about every day. Your mother went to King George to pack up some of her things to bring them up for apartment at the Highland. King George is most interested in the war they are doing lots of Red Cross work and the men drill every day and all Saturday afternoon to perfect the home guard company. Everyone John, Bladen, George, Fred and all their wives sent their best love to you and hope to see you in King George before next fall. Mrs. Minor asked after you and Page says whenever she goes to the beach all the men at the bank ask after you and are so interested to know what the news from you is. I did not see Nancy Lee while I was in King George and am glad I did not for they let her head drag so and we love to see her checked up way up so her nose points out. I tried to get her back into the habit of holding her head up by never unchecking her while she stood but the little I used her checking [?] did not make any impression on her. Best love dearest. I can stand most

anything but this talk I hear about the war not being over for  
years.

Your loving wife,

Nan

October 12, 1917

*To Allen M. Sumner*

*From Mary Morris Sumner*

My Darling Boy,

A chance to get a letter to you by a friend. I know dearest you will not like this new duty but it is much better than the trenches. Everyone has to do what they are told to and if the duty is not to their liking all the more credit to them for doing it well. I hear from Uncle Rannie you are going to Paris for a while on a visit I hope you have a good time. I thought of you the other day I saw two beautiful horses checked way up with their noses pointing out they had on clanky [?] harnesses covered with chains and I know you would just have loved them. I think they would have held their heads up any way but the driver took no chances and had them checked tight. I am sending you brushes and gloves by Cole as I think this is safer than by mail. I must get this off right now so good by dearest. Take good care of yourself for your government, your wife and Margaret.

Lovingly,

Nan



October 17, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

Things are going along about as usual, with plenty of interesting things coming up day by day which unfortunately I can't tell you about on account of the censorship. The work is most interesting, about the most interesting I have ever done in some ways as it is wonderful to be where you can see everything develop bit by bit toward the final result. I hope the mail situation improves as time goes on as I think it will. I have moved to a hotel room by the YMCA for officers, which is comfortable, cheaper and what is most important here now well heated, which the others certainly are not. Hot water every day which is a great luxury anywhere here, one hot bath a week being the rule in the best hotels. Best love to you and Margaret.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. Allen M. Sumner

5<sup>th</sup> Regiment Marines, Headquarters, L.O.C. , A.E.F

October 23, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

Your cable for my birthday arrived here on the fifteenth, having been mailed somewhere else in the meantime, but I certainly appreciated your thinking of me. My work here in the office is very interesting, but confining, and it is hard to get exercise although I walk every chance I can get. My mail isn't coming regularly at all, I don't know what the matter is, but there are kicks[?]) everywhere about the way the postal service is being run here. I had tea the other day with a French aviator who used to be a Captain in the Chasseurs, the crack troops of France, he is a Marine enthusiast and wears the Marine Corps insignia someone gave him on his uniform with his "Croix de Guerre". He was one of the officers detached to instruct the Marines before he went into aviation. One thing about this job of mine, you meet many other[?] people worthwhile, and there is a constant stream of Canadian, English, Australian and New Zealand officers passing through on leave from the front so I run across a good many of them from time to time and hear yarns from every part of the front in fact from every part of the world. One whom I got to know pretty well had been fighting for two years in East Africa and had a lot to say about poisoned wells, etc. There are a good many Russians here and the unhappy state of affairs in their own

country doesn't seem to interfere with their pleasure here, but no one mixes with them and they play around mostly by themselves.

Lots of love to you both.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. Allen M. Sumner

5<sup>th</sup> Regiment Marines, Headquarters, L.O.C. , A.E.F

October 27, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

My mail is way behind and it sometimes takes a letter a month and more to reach me. I hope when you start addressing them direct to headquarters they will come sooner. I am still interested in my job, and am lucky to be able to spend the winter here as some of the fellows up the line are having a tough time of it with mud, etc. Much love to you both.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. Allen M. Sumner

5<sup>th</sup> Regiment Marines, Headquarters, L.O.C. , A.E.F

November 6, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

Not much to write about of interest as my daily life is very much of a routine one. You know I never enjoyed telephoning much. Well you would laugh to see me getting action over a French telephone, as my chief doesn't speak any French and is convinced that I do fluently. He always yells for me whenever the French operators cut him off, which they always do! I am going out to dinner with a young British captain tomorrow who used to be a schoolmate with me at Pomfret! He has lived in England ever since he left college and, in fact, is half English. He is up from the trenches on leave and goes back in four days. Do you remember the stories in the Saturday Evening Post by Harris Dickson [?]? I met him the other day. Also Frederick Palmer. Had dinner with Meade last evening. There is an election commission over here to hold New York State voting among the soldiers and one of them took me to the Ritz to lunch the other day and insisted on feeding me the limit from oysters on with champagne, which I didn't want, as I had to go back to the office afterwards, so you see I am not suffering for luxuries at present. The wool vest arrived yesterday very much obliged. Also, I have had the helmet too. I get some letters from you about one every two weeks now

which is an improvement. Lots of love to you and Margaret.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

5<sup>th</sup> Marines

Headquarters L.O.C. A.E.F.

APO 702

P.S. Too bad about the sinking of the Antilles, wasn't it? I saw General McNair just after he got here. He was on her. He said she sank inside of five minutes. His watch stopped after he got in the water so he could tell pretty exactly.

Put my address like this.

Capt. Allen M. Sumner

5<sup>th</sup> Marines

Headquarters Line of Communication

A.E.F.

APO 702 Via New York

If you put the 702 on it, it gets here quicker as that is the post office number.

November 11, 1917

*To Allen M. Sumner*

*From Howard Ostulwut*

Dear Captain Sumner,

I have been trying all day to get in touch with you but in vain. I am leaving tomorrow (Monday) for England and will go from there to America. Because of my necessitated early departure, I have made arrangements for Captain Peaslee of our commission to take any package home to America, that you may care to send by him. Peaslee is stopping at the Officers' Club-Hotel Richmond here in Paris and will be here for another week. He will gladly do this for you and you can feel at perfect liberty to ask him. I have already taken the matter up with him and he will be ready and willing to do what you want. It may be that Major McAdams will want to send something along too. Please accepting thanks for the many courtesies which you have extended to me and to our commission generally. I know that we could not have done our work without your existence. It has been a great pleasure to perform our labors with such efficient aid. I would like to leave you convey the thanks of our commission to Major McAdams also.

Sincerely yours,

Howard Ostulwut

November 11

November 12, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I am sending a few presents for Christmas by a friend of mine who is going back in a day or two. Wish you would do them up nicely. Also, the lingerie and handkerchief ought to be washed before being handled much as they are done by hand and one can't tell who did them. I couldn't find any tissue paper so fix them up before Christmas. Sorry it isn't more but I have been very hard up ever since being here as it is most expensive living, so much so I think I will apply to go back to troops in the spring. I hope my bill goes through. Now both Platt and Collier have got their Captaincies so both rank me, so I am not in command of the 20<sup>th</sup> company anymore. I mean would not be if I went back. It makes me rather sore, especially when I see all these Army Reserve Officers getting quick promotions. I am trying to get a chance to go to a machine gun school over here, but don't know whether I can work it or not. I am glad to be able to be here this winter as the wind is frightful where the rest of the regiment is in training, no lights allowed at night and the work going on just the same. The 20<sup>th</sup> Co. of course is comfortably fixed on Provost duty, living in what used to be a big music hall. Got a letter from Platt telling me about it. I have a piece of the outer skin of the last zeppelin to be brought down, which a friend of mine stripped



off, and would send you some for a war relic, but I am afraid the censor might loiter[?] it out. I wish you would write me more news in your letters as now I have to rely on what other husbands here from their wives. Is there any talk of sending a division of Marines over? How many regiments have gone to Cuba? What is doing down there? Is there anything stirring in Mexico? You being in Washington ought to here all the latest. Is there anything in the rumor we hear of a bill being introduced to increase the Marine Corps to 50,000 temporarily with a permanent strength of 30,000? Do they provide for a full complement of Majors, Lt. Colonels and Colonels? What are they doing about my bill? Is Peter Gerry handling it or is Harlan Carlin going to take it up in the House? Is anyone else in the House doing anything about it? See cousin Edward if you can and try and find out something after Congress meets in December. Now about personal matters. You have never said a word as to whether the Youngs have paid the rent on the place and I have been worrying about it. Let me know just how things are going there. How are you fixed financially? I have frequent inquiries from Uncle Rannie but can't give him any answers because you have never told me whether you have money enough. He said he would send more if necessary. How is Margaret? Uncle Rannie said he heard she wasn't well but I hadn't heard a word from you about it, and naturally I thought it must be worse than it probably is or you would write me about it. Do you go to the theater or out to

dinners or luncheons? You never mention doing so. Now don't think I am trying to lecture but I really want some news and you could give it to me so easily. By the way, you will be amused to know that I am living with Hunter here in a double room now. He was the one who suggested me for the job I have now as he was right there when they wanted someone capable of filling the place! There is to be a big shakeup pretty soon however, with the new General taking command of the L.O.C. so anything might happen, and nothing would surprise me or worry me very much. I miss you and Margaret very much, but we might as well make up our minds to two more years of war at least. I think I wrote you I dined and spent the evening a few days ago with an old schoolmate of mine who is now a Lieutenant in the Cold Stream Guards. He has been wounded twice and led his company during the last attacks. I have talked with any number of people back from the front – Canadians, New Zealanders, Australians, and English and French and all look for at least two more years. I love you so much and it is most discouraging to think of so much longer before we see each other, but we have to see it through, that's all. Well I'll make a bargain with you. I'll write longer letters if you will, so do give me some news and tell me how you both are and what you are doing. With all kinds of love.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Letters of Captain Allen M. Sumner, USMC

Capt. A.M. Sumner

5<sup>th</sup> Marines

Headquarters L.O.C. A.E.F.

November 20, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I am afraid my last letter was a disagreeable one so I hope you won't pay any attention to it. I hope to hear from you soon as I haven't had one for some time. I am going to put in an application soon to take the course at the machine gun school, as I think it will do me a whole lot of good, and there is really nothing here except routine work, in my present position. These headquarters are going to move shortly anyhow. I see Sylvanus every now and then, also Uncle Rannie. H[?] now has command of the regiment temporarily and he was in town the other day and asked me how I would like to come up there as his adjunct, but I can't see it. I don't want to get under him again if I can help it. I like some of the Australians I meet very much, they are a fine lot of men. This ought to get to you well before Christmas. The thing I sent for Margaret was made by a wounded French soldier as was also the toy for Johnny and the ring for Fritz. The little ring was made from a German button. Well, best of love my dearest and to Margaret also.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Letters of Captain Allen M. Sumner, USMC

Capt. A.M. Sumner

5<sup>th</sup> Marines

Headquarters L.O.C. A.E.F.

November 26, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I do hope the Christmas packages which I have sent by a friend, an Army officer who went back to the States, arrived safely. I couldn't think of a thing to buy for Mother, that I could afford to get, as I have really been pretty hard up, so if you can I wish you would subscribe to some magazine for her that she wants and send it from both of us. I have written about your packages and thank you very much. You sweet thing for them. I will tell you again I have so far received the helmet, another package containing the sheepskin vest and shaving cream (which was fine). I wish you would send more of it if it is not too expensive as I can't find it over here. Unfortunately the package was broken in transit and one tube was all smashed but the other was alright. Someone brought it over I think but it was mailed over here to me. I also received a flat package which I have been holding to open on Christmas as it had a Christmas seal on it. I am plenty warm enough. The weather here has been very mild, but rain nearly every day. When I tell you I have only worn my raincoat here with the exception of one or two cold evenings when I wore an overcoat, you can imagine how little cold weather we have had. I bought you one Liberty Loan bond which you will get sometime next summer probably. Wish you would give it to

Margaret from me and let the interest accumulate to start something for her. I am going to take out \$10,000 of the new war insurance over here. I am sorry to say I shall have to cut off the \$20 from your allotment which has been going to the Old Colony Trust Co. You will get it for November on the last of the month, but I have stopped it from then on. In a few months I will make it once again, but I really need it to get straightened out here and I got your letter saying you would get along without it. I hate to take any money I have made over to you but will absolutely have to do it. With that I can get along finally. I need new shoes and uniforms and shoes don't last long over here, and it costs as much as a new pair to get any half soled and very difficult to find a cobbler to do it. Everyone is much elated over the latest British drive, but there is a long way to go yet. Do you remember John Melvin that used to be a shipmate of mine on the South C? He was reported missing when the Aleide was torpedoed and I am afraid he was lost. I felt pretty badly when I heard of it. Love to you both.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

5<sup>th</sup> Marines

Headquarters L.O.C. A.E.F.

December 4, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

They have now a new Commanding General Lines of Communication who appointed a new Chief of Staff so that my boss moves down one and becomes Assistant Chief of Staff and I go back to my Company. They are in a city on the coast as I wrote you before. My address from now on will be as at the end of the letter and if you APO 705 on it will go quicker. I sent Martha a cable wishing her happiness. Write me more in detail about Margaret. You just say she is well and enjoys school but I wish you would try and put in more details. Also about yourself and what you are doing. You needn't worry about my going to the Front as my company is now doing Provost duty (Police duty) and there is no indication of their being moved. Lots of love to you and Margaret.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

20<sup>th</sup> Company Base Det. 5<sup>th</sup> Marines A.E.F.



December 15, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I am now settled down again in the place I told you about once, the fourth largest city in France, a sprawling town that lies along both sides of the river with miles and miles of docks. Well, the blow has fallen, and on account of the Reserve Law, Platt and Collier now rank me as well as all the non-coms who were commissioned Second Lieutenants as late as June of this year. It is enough to take the heart out of anyone, but I try to think that I came over here to do my best and take what comes as a soldier should but it is pretty hard. Of course it was impossible for me to stay in the Company as second in command so Col. Catlin also is in command of the 6<sup>th</sup> stationed here in camp has had me detailed and put in command of the headquarters Co of the base battalion of the 5<sup>th</sup>, which gives me a Company, but it only consists of 65 men and is kind of an orphan organization in poor shape. All the men practically are doing duty here as guards in the station here so there is practically no chance for drill. The worst feature is that nearly all the officers of our battalion are now away at different schools which leaves a brand new captain in command of the battalion, who although now senior to me, only came into the Marine Corps as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. last February! I have concluded Clifford was about right. Now do everything you can

about my bill. It means absolutely nothing to leave it in the House Naval Committee as it might not be reported out at all this session. Write Claflin the facts and get him to see if he can't get Senator Gerry to push it in the House. Also you ought to be able to get Senator Omen (?) and your cousin Edward to do something. I get all kinds of sympathy but that does no practical good. All my old non-coms nearly have come to me and told me how everyone in the Company hoped I would take it again. Platt was as nice as could be and told me if he had anything to do with it, I knew who would have the Company and wants me to suggest anything and that he would be glad to carry it out, but it puts me in a pretty bad position. Well it can't be helped but do everything you can to get that bill through the House as I can't do anything from this end. I am going to study all I can and try and go to a machine gun school. Well, Merry Christmas to you both and lots of love.

Your loving husband,  
Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner  
20<sup>th</sup> Company Base Det. 5<sup>th</sup> Marines A.E.F.

December 19, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I wrote you how I lost my company, and that is now permanent I am afraid. Everyone from Col. Neville down wanted to fix me up but in my present status, until my bill passes, there is no chance of my getting a company, as there are three and sometimes as much as four Captains now in each company in the regt. as reorganized. Since we came up [illegible] the base detachment has gone out of existence, but [other?] Companies were attached to different battalions of the regiment and kept intact mine among them. Greene is temporarily in command of the first battalion and has made me his adjunct, so I am taken care of am mounted and I have also been made town mayor of the town in which we are billeted. The latter job involves making all arrangements for billeting incoming troupes, settling all disputes, claims etc. with the French, seeing that French laws are carried out etc., and in fact acting as a go-between the French and Americans in the town. It is rather good fun. I have a fine system underway with a card index of each billet, a fire department of my own, etc. as I have a sergeant of Marines who was formerly the junior partner in a New York broker's office as my assistant who likes the system (as much as I do), everything is progressing finally. Most of my job consists in pacifying old peasant women whose manure has been

moved or whose fences have been damaged and have settled each case so far without a single claim for damages! Now I am with the regiment I go of course wherever they do but we have quite a complicated system of training laid out for us which will take a good while so don't worry about my going into the trenches yet a while. We drill and shoot on the range in all weather, rain, hail or snow, it makes no difference and it is remarkable how soon one gets so the weather doesn't bother one at all. I am getting corns on my head from wearing my tin hat that all have to wear at drills otherwise am in fine shape. When the wind is just right we can sometimes hear a faint rumble of the guns at the front. I am awfully busy but will write as soon again as I can. Am writing by candlelight as have no lamp and oil is very scarce here. Am billeted with the Major (by his invitation) so am very comfortable in a room in a farmhouse (stone) with a big feather bed and what appears like another one to put on top of me for a cover. The farmer's wife administers (?) the sheets which are clean as can be. Love to Margaret and you.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 5<sup>th</sup> Marines A.E.F.

December 22, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

Had two letters from you, one dated November 20<sup>th</sup>. I am going to start numbering my letters again as I am sure some of them are lost because I know I wrote you more than you got. In order for you to understand how important it is for you to use every means in help in getting my bill through I will repeat what I said in my last letter. On reporting back to my company I discovered that Platt now ranks me so would have the company. Col. Catlin was very nice about it and immediately had me put in command of the headquarters company here, a poor organization of only 67 men, nearly all on special jobs so I never see most of them! However, I am resolved to do the best I can no matter where they put me. We are very comfortable here. Now it's up to you to write Claf to get Peter Gerry to do all he can to help my bill through the House. Also I should think Senator {Diver?} would help now. It doesn't mean anything for a bill to be before the House Naval Committee for it will never get out unless it is pushed and Carlin hasn't shown any disposition to push it yet that I can see.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 5<sup>th</sup> Marines A.E.F.

December 27, 1917

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

If convenient and you feel flush I wish you would get me the things marked X on the enclosed Wannamaker's list and mail them to me. Be sure and pack them securely as the package I got with the wool vest in it was broken open when I got it. If you don't feel flush just send me the wash basin and wool boot. I need those the most. I have never received the aluminum cooker nor the Christmas packages but nearly everyone is in the same fix so I suppose they will arrive eventually. We are very comfortably quartered here as I think I wrote you, in an old theater and dance hall arrangement, and have a very good officer's mess. I haven't taken a single meal in town since I came here and when I get my pay at the end of the month will be in good shape financially once more. I am going to take the \$20 allotment for a few months though, as I need some things, shoes particularly and they are very high here. I have also got to get a new raincoat as mine leaks now. It has had pretty hard use since I came over though. Have never received the breeches you said you sent from Heilberg. We had an entertainment Christmas Eve given by the men with songs, recitations, boxing bouts and movies and Christmas Day a football game in which the 20<sup>th</sup> company team with only one officer from the 17<sup>th</sup> company playing with them,

beat the 6<sup>th</sup> regt. Marines team 26 to 0. As they had about 2,000 men to choose from it looked pretty good and also they outweighed us about 15 pounds. Love to you both and wishing you a happy new year.

Your loving husband,  
Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner  
1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 5<sup>th</sup> Marines A.E.F.

PS – I sent a cable to Martha to reach her on her wedding day.  
Let me know if she got it.



December 29, 1917

*To Margaret Page Sumner*

Dearest Margaret,

I was so glad to get your little letter the other day and I hope that you will write to me again soon, because I miss you very much. I hope you had a nice Christmas. We had a snow storm today but only a little snow stayed on the ground. We are living in what used to be a theater and restaurant before the war. All built around a yard with rows of sycamore trees in it in a big arched gateway leading into the street. Where they used to take in the tickets, the sergeant of the guard stays and there is a Marine on guard in the gateway with the old theater sign over his head. Funny, isn't it? I saw Uncle Rannie a good many times before I came down here also Uncle Sylvanus. I wish I could send you some picture postcards but the censor won't let them go through. I hope you are having a good time at school, and when I come home you can tell me all about what you have learned. Happy new year and best love for you and mother.

Your loving daddy

Capt. A.M. Sumner

HG Company Base DET 5<sup>th</sup> Marines A.E.F.

December 29, 1917

To Mary Morris Sumner

My Dearest,

I hope my little Christmas parcel got over safely. I hope you didn't mind my asking you for more news in your letters. I love your letters and always look forward so to getting them, but you have no idea how shut off we are from hearing any real news. By the way, please stop my subscription to The Daily Times. The Sunday Times I like to get, but I never get the Daily until it is over a month old usually and it isn't worthwhile to keep it up. Do write me all you can about Margaret. I miss you both so much. I shall never forget the way she looked when we left the dock in Philadelphia, holding onto your shirt and leaning against you. I watched you both as long as I could see you. As I look back over last year I realize how selfish I have been in many things towards you, but you know how much I love you. Uncle Rannie told me in regard to Martha that he had the greatest confidence in your judgment and it was a great relief to him to know that you approved. Happy New Year. I hope 1918 will see me home again. Don't worry. With much love. Your loving husband,  
Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

HG Company Base DET 5<sup>th</sup> Marines A.E.F., APO No. 705

January 3, 1918

To Mary Morris Sumner

My Dearest,

I am enclosing a copy of the amendment passed with my bill by the Senate. Will you please find out if the bill now in the House Naval Committee cleared[?] this amendment if it is likely to be inserted in committee? You can see how important it is to have this amendment as otherwise I would have a lot of numbers[?] during my service since April 7 up to the time the bill was actually signed by the President. Your cousin Edward ought to be able to find out if you don't want to go direct to Carlin. I also enclose an old club bill I found as I can't remember whether it was paid or not. Will you pay it if no? I'm glad you are going to write Claflin. Don't bother to send me the hundred dollars. I want you to have it. I am all straight now and can get along well on what I have with the twenty dollar allotment for a while until I can get a few things. I received a sleeping bag for which much obliged. It will be most useful. The parcel was pretty well smashed and the string was almost off. A pasteboard like that won't stand the rough usage. Have never received the fur gloves, guard for watch and other helmet. I am afraid the panel must have been broken in transit. My Christmas box came. It was fine. Best love to you and Margaret.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

HG Company Base DET 5<sup>th</sup> Marines A.E.F., APO No. 705

I am all over my grouch about rank and will do my best anywhere they put me. Only I hope that bill passes soon! Am in fine health and spirits.

January 6, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I forgot to enclose the club bill in my last letter so here it is. I think you paid it before I left. The Marines at last are to be taken off lines of communication and go up for training. Of course, it will be a long time before any go in the trenches and the base detachment will be held behind the lines somewhere, so there is nothing for you to worry about. My idea of going to a machine gun school are knocked in the head for the present anyhow, and I am going to wait to see what turns up. The base detachment as near as anyone knows is to be kept intact somewhere behind the lines to train men coming over to fill up the regiment to the new strength. I miss you and Margaret so much, but you must be brave as we have to put this thing through, and maybe peace isn't as far off as most people think. There are plenty of signs both ways. Keep after my bill all you can, because it means more to me over here than you can realize. I love you so very much and think of you always. Teach Margaret love of God, faith and patriotism while I'm away. Good night dearest.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

HG Company Base DET 5<sup>th</sup> Marines A.E.F., APO No. 705

I have just finished the fruitcake and the candy, both were fine.

Give my love to Martha and your family.

January 11, 1918

*To Allen M. Sumner*

My Dearest,

I have spent this week working on your bill. It seems impossible to get to see Carlin but I will keep on going until I do see him. I wrote to Tom Stanter [?] to see if he could stir him up any. I hope to get it through by February 1<sup>st</sup>. I know it seems very slow to you dearest but remember how slowly Congress moves. I saw by the Journal you had all been put together and you would soon go into it. Dearest God knows I don't want you in the trenches but I love you so much to want you to go with your men and I am so afraid your being a reserve will keep you at base headquarters. I have been so worried about you for this week I had that queer dream that I always have when there is any change in your life and duty. I went to the Naval hospital yesterday to see Edgar Pendleton. It certainly gave me the blues to see all those men there and to know how many thousand there were over there. I am so thankful you are safe so far. This war is making better men and women of us and I feel that when you come back we are going to mean more to each other and will live down that last horrible year in King George. It funny I feel as if I had changed a lot in the first five months you have been gone. I wonder if I have and you will notice it. If I have changed it is for the better. I will tell you that. I went to Ruth's last night to see the

Russian dancers. They were fine. Went with Mr. and Mrs. Bowie [?], Sue and Max Williams. We went to the Shoram[?] for supper afterwards. We hear peace talk all the time but talk is all and no peace. Bob has started on his third week of being sick. I hope he will be well enough to go back to school in another two weeks. It is a great responsibility to have other people's children. Best love my dearest. Try to write oftener, not a line since before Christmas.

Lovingly,

Nan



January 12, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

We move out in a day or two as I told you. We are really lucky to have been in comfortable quarters so long. Please make me some more pairs of flannel pajamas and mail them to me. Only don't put them in a box but wrap well with strong paper and string. I miss you very much. I am glad you are having a good time. I suppose all entertaining and parties will soon be a thing of the past in the States. I understand most of it has been cut out now. Don't send me that hundred dollars as I won't need it. I am now on my feet financially and will have very little expense from now on. I had to borrow from Uncle Rannie when I left Paris, but have paid him back now. Be sure and let me know how Bob is getting on. Col. Melville[?] is over here now in command of our regiment so Hiram had to go back to second in command, so perhaps things will be a little different. I shall be glad to be actively at work again as this life here was really enervating and everyone is getting soft. I am now temporarily adjunct to Maj. Green. I hope my bill passes soon. Clifford was wise not to get himself in a similar predicament, but of course I am not complaining and will do my best anywhere they put me. Love to Margaret and yourself. Don't worry. This war can't last forever and think how nice it will be when we three are together again.

Your loving husband,  
Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner  
HG Company Base DET 5<sup>th</sup> Marines A.E.F., APO No. 705

I have just finished the fruitcake and the candy, both were fine.  
Give my love to Martha and your family.

January 24, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

Your letter reached me up here where it had been forwarded ahead of me. As you know by this time I haven't seen Uncle Rannie now since December 12<sup>th</sup>. The only thing he said about Martha's marrying was that it was a great comfort to him to know that you approved as he thought you had a very level head and he thought it was a matter a woman could decide much better than a man. He seemed to think everything was alright if you approved.

....[ Pages missing]

January 28, 1918

*To Margaret Page Sumner*

Dear Margaret,

You ought to see the house I am living in now. It is a stone two-story house with a stone barn and a cow stable close to it all around a yard with a high iron fence between it and the street like this: [drawing].

There is an old woman, the wife of the farmer, who lives here, who cooks me apples on a kind of iron grill on legs that she puts right on the hot ashes of a great big fireplace. They have some nice cows but all their horses except two have been taken by the French army. There are some old French soldiers here and some who have been wounded who mend the roads. The Marines sleep in the hay lofts and some in portable barracks. The mud is just like King George but the roads are all good, made of stone with a thin layer of mud now on top. You ought to see me in my new steel helmet. It is fine to keep off the rain! There are woods near here where they have lots of foxes and wild boars. One of the officers saw a wild boar yesterday. The farmers are plowing now and it reminded me so much of King George. Love to mother.

With much love,

Your loving daddy

Letters of Captain Allen M. Sumner, USMC

Capt. A.M. Sumner

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Marines A.E.F. New York

January 29, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

[first two pages missing]...Has to be censored several times. Everything is very interesting and I wish I could write you something about it but we can't mention anything at all on account of the strict censorship. We are working hard. I am well and very fit. There has been a good deal of rain but the magnificent roads dry out almost immediately as does the soil, quite different from my experience with Virginia and at Quantico. Well, the best advice I can give is don't believe half what you hear or read about conditions as there is the greatest case for optimism. Lots of love to you both.

Your loving husband,  
Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner  
20th Company, 5<sup>th</sup> Regt., US Marines A.E.F. New York

February 1, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

Three letters have come today from you dated from Dec. 28 to Jan. 4. The first I have had since the one dated Dec. 23, which I got a while before coming up here about four weeks ago. I am so glad to hear my bill is not languishing in inn[?] and dis[?] in some pigeonhole in committee because I know unless someone who is really interested like Senator Gerry takes a hand in the proceedings as you say he has done, nothing but promises will result. You smart thing, of course I didn't mean "why don't you do something" but you certainly have done wonders and I appreciate it every bit. I was pretty discouraged at first, but I just made up my mind that it was my duty to do the best that I could under any circumstances, so I have grown philosophical about it. There are so many majors and captains in the 5<sup>th</sup> now that there are two and sometimes three captains to a company, and I was told that in view of the uncertainty of when my bill would pass, that they couldn't hold a vacancy for me in command of the 20<sup>th</sup> company but would have to assign some other captain and the best they could assure me of was that I would not be put in a company under anyone who would be junior to me if my bill passed! As Greene is apparently also likely to be moved when another major returns, I might lose my job as adjunct (it is really a

1<sup>st</sup> lieutenant job you know) and be put in some other infantry co. as second in command! There are several companies I would much prefer not to go in on that status. They say if I was now reinstated I would of course be given the 20<sup>th</sup> but the regiment has to be reorganized right now and nothing can be held open on a chance. So the other day I was offered an opportunity to go as second in command of a machine gun company under Lit Waller who is now a major, if a vacancy occurred. I decided to take it up and by chance one of his officers was detached leaving a vacancy. Cole who commands the machine gun battalion approved, and now my application is in and only awaits General Doyer's approval for me to be transferred. I think I will like the work, it is most interesting, and although it will put a severe strain on my mathematics, in the indirect fire dupe[?], I am anxious to tackle it. I will be mounted which is easier on bikes[?] anyhow, and being in a brigade machine gun battalion makes one independent of any regiment. I enjoy handling the mules and altogether I hope the thing goes through, which of course depends on General Doyer. I rode over and had lunch with Lit and Sibley the other day. By the way, I have just gotten from Cole my breeches and fur lined gloves and both were most welcomed! Your other Christmas package came today. It was broken. Please pack things like that in a wooden box after this. It is really the only way to get them here safely. And don't bother to send me anymore oradress[?], because I really don't care for them. You don't mind my telling



you do you? The candied fruit was fine. The coffee, herring, bouillon cubes, etc. will be most useful. That sort of thing is the best now. I can always use them. Hope you send me two pairs of heavy pajamas soon I need them. I am very comfortable here considering no fires allowed except from 2 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. to save word! I haven't minded the cold here but it's very damp. I wear two undershirts, shirt and my heaviest sweater under my blouse in town and out.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 5<sup>th</sup> Marines A.E.F.

February 4, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I am sending with this a little birthday letter for Margaret, and as I can get no other present here one of the photographs I had taken for my identification card. One is also for you. You can keep her letter and one photo until her birthday and give it to her then. I hear my request to go to the 81<sup>st</sup> co has been approved by the general but nothing official has come in yet. I expect to hear tomorrow. You have never said a word about the Christmas presents although I have letters now as late as Jan 4. They weren't much I know but I couldn't afford any more and I thought Margaret would be interested to know hers had been made by a wounded French soldier. I threw some live grenades today from behind sandbags. You pull out a pin and then throw them as far as you can and then duck behind your sandbags and in a few seconds there is an explosion and the fragments go "zing" over your head. It is funny to see some of the men the first time they throw a live one. They try so hard not to show how nervous they feel! But a time or two and they don't mind it at all. The gas mask is uncomfortable but not as bad as you would imagine as you can breath quite freely through your mouth but have a device like a clothespin that clamps on your nose. I think mine will be quite patrician by the time I have worn it a few more. Love to you both

Your loving husband,  
Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner  
1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 5<sup>th</sup> Marines A.E.F.

February 4, 1918

*To Margaret Page Sumner*

Dear Margaret,

I am sending you a little picture for your birthday, as I can't leave here to go anywhere where I can buy you anything and there is nothing in this little town that you would like. I hope you will have a very happy birthday and have some other little girls in to help you enjoy the day. I can't realize you are or will be on your birthday nine years old! You must be quite a big girl now. Write to me when you can. I am always so glad to hear from you. I miss you and mother very much and I hope the war won't last much longer so I can come home to you both. Most of the houses here have red tiled roofs which look very pretty from a distance.

With best love and wishing you many happy returns of the day,  
Your loving daddy

Capt. A.M. Sumner

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 5<sup>th</sup> Marines A.E.F.

February 13, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I am now with the 81<sup>st</sup> machine gun company of Cole's battalion and working every minute nearly. I am in a little town about eight kilometers from where I was before am well and find the work most interesting. I was sorry to have to give up the 20<sup>th</sup> for sentimental reasons but this work is very far more interested than infantry work, and never monotonous. We have stables in the morning, drill from 8:00 to 12:00 noon and from 12:45 to 3:15 N.C.O. School (which all officers attend) from 4:00 to 5:00 officers and NCOs school every night from 7:00 to 8:00 and sometimes up to 8:30 so you see it keeps me busy. I forgot afternoon stables which is at 3:30 p.m. Every night at school we work out fire control problems in indirect and barrage fire. I also have to study evenings after school to catch up as the others are of course ahead of me in this work but I don't mind it and am in fine shape physically. Lit Waller, now a major, is in command of the co and I am second in command. The mules remind me of King George! Also the mud house. Will write again soon. Best love to you both.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Letters of Captain Allen M. Sumner, USMC

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Battalion A.E.F.

February 17, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I really didn't intend to try and keep from you the fact that I was sick in Paris, but just didn't think to write about it. I really wasn't very sick anyhow. Had a bad cough which got worse from being couped up in an office with no chance for exercise and fresh air, so the doctor sent me to the hospital where I had a fine rest and got rid of it. I was only in the hospital about a week, and barring the fact I had to spend Thanksgiving there didn't mind it at all. Had a most interesting roommate there one of the new captains in aviation who was commissioned to take charge of construction work, not flying. He was president of an automobile parts manufacturing concern in Chicago and vice president of a steel mill, a Harvard man and very entertaining. I heard he had made a million. On Thanksgiving some of his friends in Paris sent him champagne and turkey, lot(?) house grapes, which he shared with me had quite a Thanksgiving dinner! Do you remember the tooth that has always bothered me and that Dr. Fonge[?] heated[?] It started to abscess again over here a couple of times so I decided to quit monkeying with it, and had it pulled. It broke off and they had to get the root out a little at a time. It took half an hour to get it all out and they had to cut in under it. However, of course, they used cocaine or something so it wasn't as bad as it sounds

they found a growth on the end of the root what is called a septic growth which is what has been bothering me all this time and causing the face ache I always had in King George when out in the cold. Now I never have neuralgia or face ache no matter how sharp the wind is. It is lucky I had it out when I did. So much for my ailments! Now I am in fine shape. Fuel is a tough proposition because it is cut one day to be burned the next so you can imagine how green it is. We are only allowed fires between 2:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. to save wood so I wear about the same amount of clothes indoors as out! It is remarkable how one gets used to the cold though. If you send me anything send me heavy pajamas, socks (size 11) and stomach bands. Also an aluminum heater as I never got the one you sent. And pack them securely in a wooden box if possible. Also beef cubes, coffee (like you sent me), cocoa and the herring. I am well fixed on tobacco for a while. Matches (safety) are hard to get. I got the smoking jacket and really haven't an idea what to do with it. It will be fine after the war though. Underclothes are always welcome. Love to you both.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Battalion A.E.F.



February 24, 1918

*To Margaret Page Sumner*

Dear Margaret,

There is a little French girl who lives in the same house I do here, in fact it is her father's house, but he has been taken prison by the Germans. She is just ten years old and lives here with her mother, big sister and a little brother. She was very much interested when I told her about you. There is a very old church right across the street from where I live. You ought to see all the mules we have in the company to pull the machine guns on little carts. There are 26 in all with two horses and some of them are very bad indeed but most of them are very willing and go through all the drills as if they enjoyed it. Some of their names are Blue, Snake, Whitey, John, Rabbit, Brownie, and a whole lot more. We shoot machine guns nearly every day and now the mules don't mind it a bit. We went out on an all day maneuver Thursday in a snow storm and on the way home a mule ran away and got down at the bottom of a steep bank and we had a time getting him up again. Today being Sunday I took a ride over to the town I used to be in before I came to the machine gun battalion and saw some of my friends. Write to me soon. I am always so glad to get your letters. I love you very much and miss you and mother a great deal. Be a good girl and take good care of mother till I get back.

Your loving daddy

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Battalion A.E.F.

Letters of Captain Allen M. Sumner, USMC

February 24, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

Please fix up Bonwit Teller by paying them a little as I don't want to get reported.

With love.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Battalion A.E.F.

March 2, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

Friday we went out on another all day maneuver again in a driving snowstorm. It cleared later in the day however. I had command of the company as Lit was with Major Cole. I understand a number of our Lt. Cols. and Majors (Hiram among them) have been recommended for commissions in the National Army with increased rank. If Cole should go, Lit would have the Machine Gun Battalion and I would get the Company (provided my bill passes OK). If the increase goes through before my bill does I will be in a fix unless they decide at headquarters to make me a Major in the reserve. By the time you get this I expect to be on my way to the trenches. Wish I could tell you just where but can't on account of the censorship. I hope the weather warms up soon. By the way I have no income tax return here and should have put one in before March 1<sup>st</sup>. As you have power of attorney you could do it. It would go in King George. [Crossed out: I am enclosing a form from a newspaper to show you my income but of course it will have to be on a regular form.] The allowance I don't think is an income under the law. You had better ask Fred what to do about it as if it isn't put in the government will find out my pay and tax me an extra fine. My total pay is \$2010 (April 1/17 to Dec. 31/17) next from farm \$800 = total income \$2810.

Letters of Captain Allen M. Sumner, USMC

Give my love to Margaret with a great deal for you. You can get an income tax return from a bank or from Fred.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Battalion A.E.F.

I have exemption on income tax off \$2000 with \$200 for dependent child – total \$2200.

March 2, 1918

*To Allen M. Sumner*

*From Col. J R Kean*

My Dear Allen,

I was thinking of you yesterday that I must get in communication with you and today comes your letter written on Feb. 7<sup>th</sup> postmarked the 10<sup>th</sup>. Where it has been all this time I don't know but I should certainly have received it before I left Paris which was Feb. 17<sup>th</sup>. I was ordered down here to be Chief Surgeon L. of C. and the very next week they determined to create the Service of the Rias[?] and send all the Staff Depts. down here from Hdqs. A.E.F. So when all the Generals come down the staffs will be consolidated and I will be here. Bradley's assistant a sort of Deputy Chief Surgeon but continual [?] any little less I make one for myself as I did when I went to the Ambulance Service. Just before leaving Paris I inquired if your baggage had ever arrived and found that there was as yet no record of it. A notice had come from Bordeaux of the shipment by express of a package to the address 76 Rue Constantine but the Paris office vowed they had never received it. I sent Berl [?] on to see about it in person when I received the notice and also informed them that the address of my office was 47 Rue de Ponthieu. We left the place at 27 Rue Constantine about middle of December. I left instructions with the quartermaster Corporal Byles to look out

for it if it turned up. I will write to Col. Jones too to call up the express people again and make inquiries. Have you any receipt from there. If so you had better send it to me to send in as evidence. I will ask Byles to return it. My last letter from Nan was received Feb. 9<sup>th</sup> Martha mentioned in her last that Nan had written about their new arrangements but the letter has not yet come. It is curious how much longer some letters take than others. I got two in today's mail from the Surgeon General's Office one dated Jan. 11<sup>th</sup> and the other Feb. 5<sup>th</sup>. Nan has been a perfect dear about Martha and I am very grateful to her. I have written her that anything she wants to do about the house will suit me.

With best wishes.

Sincerely yours,

JR Kean

Hdqrs. S.O.R.

A.P.O. 717 AEF France

Your baggage was addressed to 76 Rue Constantine and I think there is no such number. The American Express have been told to send it to 47 Rue de Ponthieu but it might as well for you to write to them. They are all mighty stupid.

March 10, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

The cold weather has broken at last for good I hope and it is now much warmer. When you get this please mail me ½ doz cans Prince Albert, ½ doz cans sold alcohol, and 2 doz Gillette razor blades. How about the pajamas? I need them as I am now reduced to one pair of heavy pajamas! I packed up the smoking jacket for storage today. I hated to do it, as I would have liked to have had it with me because you gave it to me. But our baggage allowance is so low we have to cut out everything not absolutely necessary. Well I will be in the trenches before long just how long I can't tell you but probably before you get this letter. I will repeat what I said in my last letter about income tax. Please put in a return for me and include my pay and also \$800 from the farm. That is all our taxable income as the other is an allowance. You can get the blank from a bank and it will have to go to King George I suppose or perhaps to Baltimore which may be the nearest US internal revenue office. You can do that with the power of attorney as I have no blanks here and no way to get them. It should have been in by Mar 1 but I forgot to ask you to do it. I am working very hard and like the work it is a good company, but a different class of men from the old 20<sup>th</sup>. By the way, Kite is a Sergeant in it. You remember hearing of him at



Phila? Give my love to Margaret dear girl that she is. With all  
kinds of love for you.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Battalion A.E.F.

March 17, 1918

*To Allen M. Sumner*

*From Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I love that picture you sent to me but my throat chokes up every time I look at it. What has happened to you over there dearest to make your eyes so sad? Everyone says you will all be changed after going through it but the change has come so soon. Your picture just makes me want to put my arms around you and pet you until all that war look leaves and the tenderness comes back. I wish dearest there was just a little chance to love and pet you that way. When you come home to stay we will make up for all this. So many people here this winter have given up their cars and have horses. It is a pleasure to see the pretty horses with their shiny harnesses and checked up first the way you love them. We both love horses so don't we dear. Margaret is getting along so much better now is getting her strength back very fast and will go to school day after tomorrow. Remember dearest I love you and my thoughts are with you all the time.

Your loving wife,

Nan

Letters of Captain Allen M. Sumner, USMC

March 21, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

This is the very first time I have had a chance to write you since my last as all mail was held up for a while, but will be able to do it after now. We are at the front which is all I can tell you on account of the censor. The weather is much warmer, food plentiful also water so we have no break(?) coming. Best love to Margaret and to you dearest.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Battalion A.E.F.

March 25, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

As I wrote in my last letter I am now at the front which is all I can tell you now on account of the censor. We are more comfortable than I had thought we would be and everything is going nicely. It is now real spring weather, but the nights are still pretty cold. However, I have plenty of cover. The sleeping suits arrived and are fine. Now if you will send me about ½ doz cans of Prince Albert every month, a can of that coffee and of chocolate and a jar of the herring every now and then I will be well fixed. Two or three pairs of socks would come in very nicely wool, size 11. I don't need any other warm things now. Solid alcohol I find I can get cheaper over here also put up in a more convenient form. You can buy it at any grocery store in any large city and every leave I get (7 days every four months now) I can lay in a supply also matches so you needn't send me them. I think of you all the time. With lots of love to you and Margaret.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Machine Gun Battalion A.E.F.

March 30, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I am now up in the trenches but it is very quiet where we are with only very few shells now and then to remind us that we are actually facing the enemy. I am very comfortable in my dugout with a wooden bunk with wire bottom. A bed sack stuffed with straw for a mattress and a sandbag also filled with straw for a pillow and you can imagine I sleep soundly whenever I get a chance. I have a stove to keep me warm, a litite [?] and chair and some sliders (?) also plenty of water and food so it is not too bad. I am in fine shape, in fact never felt better in my life and best of all there are not "cooties" or bugs of any kind in evidence, at least in my dugout. I hope the big German drive will be their finish as everyone thinks it is a last desperate attempt to break through altogether and everyone awaits the issue with confidence in our allies. Some territory of Rhone will be lost temporarily. With best love to you both.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Machine Gun Battalion A.E.F.

April 2, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

Things are pretty quiet here so you needn't worry about me. Very little shelling and that mostly small stuff. We had a chance to get our machine guns into action against the "Boche" at midnight the other night, but of course I can't tell you about it on account of the censor. The second night we had three gas alarms but all were false alarms. Rats swarmed everywhere. I have a happy family that lives in my dugout with me. The weather has been vile. Rain for three days and the mud is knee deep in some of the trenches I have to go through in making the rounds to the guns. Also not being able to take off your clothes day or not for ten days at a time is not exactly comfortable but "c'est la guerre" as the French say, and like everything else one grows used to it. I am in the front line trenches now. Lots of love.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Machine Gun Battalion A.E.F.

April 5, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I am still in the trenches and very well indeed. Today for the first time in four days we have some sun which is most welcomed you can believe. It is very quiet here, with only a little shelling occasionally in spots. The nights are cold. I have to keep on my clothes all the time so sleep in them with my wool vest on two pair of blankets (one the sleeping bag you made me) and in overcoat on top of me, so you can see it isn't exactly Spring like at night. The trees are all budding and the grass (what there is of each) is green though and there are little blue flowers out in no man's land here and there as well as on the parapets of the old trenches, but in the trenches is nothing but mud, knee deep in some I have to go through. It is a wooded country back of the lines, and right up to them in fact with rolling hills and deep ravines, and little shell battered villages. Little else than jagged sections of a wall here and there with a few pitiful roofs still up, hanging in air almost, and their supports shot through and through. In their little villages, in cellars and ground floors still intact almost out toward the enemy lines, amid the broken tile and wreckage where some of our men are stationed. A shell burst over the roof of one of our kitchens the other day taking off most of the roof. A lieutenant in our company who is in charge

there, in reporting on it wrote “a shell burst above the kitchen carrying away the roof no material damage done” it has been the joke of the company ever since. A couple of days ago some shells came over and burst pretty close so I had all the men get into their dugouts. After it was over I went out to investigate and found the cook still at work in the galley. I asked him why he hadn’t gone into the dugout with the rest. The shells had gone over the galley. He is an old marine. ”I was working dinner Sir and it would have spoiled if I had left it” was his reply. The lines are pretty far apart here. The men don’t get much sleep as they have to dig nearly all night, improving positions, etc. I wrote you we had a chance to get our machine guns into action against the “Boche” at midnight the other night. I hope you are alright financially. I will be able, I think, to start the \$20 allotment again in a few months. We all hope the big German drive is the last of the war. Well dear don’t worry, in a quiet sector like this there is almost no danger. I know you have done all you can for my bill. The only thing to get it through would be for someone in the House to push it. Otherwise it will never be brought out of committee I am afraid, but if we can’t get anyone to do it, we will have to trust to its being reported out anyhow. I am not worrying about it anymore. I love you so much and appreciate everything you have done so much. I am very proud of you, dear, and when I get back will try to show you just how much I do love and think of you. I am sorry to have come down on you about the



insurance but had no way of sending you money. Love to you  
both.

Your loving husband,  
Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Machine Gun Battalion A.E.F.

April 6, 1918

*To Margaret Page Sumner*

Dearest Margaret,

Well here I am up in the trenches, living in a little steel walled house in the side of a big bank of earth, and feeling very well indeed. There are lots of woods here, right up to the trenches and it is a beautiful country with hills and long valleys dotted with little stone villages with red tile roofs, only all the villages near and between the trenches are empty and shot to pieces so that there aren't very many roofs still standing and they are full of holes. Of course all the people that live there had to leave long ago. The trees, though, back up the trenches are beautiful now, all bursting with buds and there are little blue flowers everywhere in the woods. I heard a bird singing today and I thought of you and the way we watched the birds in their nest on the porch pillar in King George! With love for you and mother.

Your loving daddy.

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Machine Gun Battalion A.E.F.

April 10, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I am now out of the trenches for a few days in a rest camp (so called) before going in again for another tour. We had a bad night as far as weather was concerned, the night we were relieved. Black as the inside of your hat and raining. Lit and I of course were the last to go and we finally reached camp and turned in at 4:30 a.m. You can imagine how dark it was when I tell you that I reached out and touched a man standing in the path who belonged to another outfit, and couldn't see him. Of course we could show no light whatever, but occasionally the flash of one of our guns would light things up for an instant when we passed near. I rode through a town that had been shelled this morning. I have a nice little mare, rather light, but showing many good points and enjoy riding whenever I am not in the trenches. I have been mounted (on paper) ever since joining the company, but we had only just gotten the horses we were supposed to have when we went into the trenches so before there wasn't one regularly assigned to me. Of course when we go into the trenches we leave the horses and mules behind the lines and get them again when we come out. All eyes are now turned toward the big fight at the British front. It is a critical time, but we are all hopeful and confident of the outcome. Love to you both.

Your loving husband,  
Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner  
81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Machine Gun Battalion A.E.F.

April 15, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I got two letters from you today. It is just about a month since I heard from you. I got a nice one from your mother, and please tell her I intend to answer it, but haven't much time. We go in the trenches again soon now for a longer stay this time. Our regiments have had some remarkable escapes of men under shell fire. If I didn't know them to be true I wouldn't believe them myself. One man driving four mules bringing up rations was shelled and got out to hold the mules. While he was at their heads a shell exploded in the middle of the four killed three mules and mortally wounded the other and blew them all up, the mules and the marine all landing in a heap. He crawled out absolutely unhurt! He had lost his helmet however (it was at night) but found it close by and just as he clapped it on his head another shell burst nearby and a fragment hit his helmet. He came into camp none the worse for wear and was back on the job with another team the next night. There are a lot of other incidents almost like that. I don't understand why you haven't gotten more letters as I have written always once a week and more often when I could but will try and do better. All our leave here has been cut off for the present. I have so far gotten from you the two Christmas boxes, the wool vest, wool gloves and breeches from

Heiberger[?] I have them on now, the breeches I mean, the package with the candy for the French children, the package from Myers, I think everything except the cooking outfit which I fear was lost. Mine does very well though. Do send me some more maitland[?] and chocolate and coffee like you sent before as it is impossible to get them here and as I am often up all night in the trenches. They come in fine. Can you send me regularly about six cans of Prince Albert on the first of every month? It would be a great help. Also a box of writing paper. Underclothes I am alright for also pajamas (I only get a chance to use the cotton now about 10 days every month). I love you so very much dearest and I am glad you are working because our country will need everyone now in one capacity or another. With much love to you and Margaret.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Machine Gun Battalion A.E.F.

April 16, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I am going to write you again today because I miss you more than usual. I hope you go to the country this summer with Margaret as you both will need the rest, and I suppose you will go to King George. If you do I hope you will try and get Nancy Lee in shape again, especially get her head up again will you? Do you think you could get a good strong overdraw check and heel[?] her up really high? I think it would be a good thing to leave her checked up while she stands don't you? Do you still like a horse checked up as much as you used to? I am going to try to write oftener now even if it is not so much at one time. I appreciate you more every day my dearest and love you more than I can tell you. Don't worry about my being comfortable in the trenches as I always have a warm dugout and straw to sleep on, which really isn't bad at all. Much love.

Your loving husband,

Allen

P.S. I can't send you any anniversary present to get there on May 12<sup>th</sup> so will only send my love.

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Machine Gun Battalion A.E.F.

April 24, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

Just a few lines to let you know I am alright and in good shape. We have rain nearly all the time here. A few days ago it snowed and there was some snow on the ground the next morning and the next night a frost, but it is warmer now. The sweater came also the gloves, shaving cream, soap and candles. Very much obliged. Love to all.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Machine Gun Battalion A.E.F.



April 27, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

Four letters from you tonight and I was so glad to get them. Margaret's Easter cards were so nice. Easter Sunday morning I slept late and I had been up nearly all the night before owing to the Boche being too inquisitive and some of him coming over no man's land near us, but he didn't stay long except some who will never go back. It wasn't right at us but close so that some of our guns got into action. The rest of Easter day I spent in fact slogging through muddy trenches, knee deep in some places, and in fact didn't remember it was Easter until that evening. I am back in the trenches again in a little different place. We get shelled more or less every day so far, but it really isn't so bad as you might imagine, and everyone as the British say, has "their tail up" and is in fine spirits. I live in a dugout that I think must have been a wine cellar in peace times. It is under a ruined town that is very completely ruined indeed and every shell that hits what's left of the building above knocks more stones down on top of our dugout making it that much safer. Some of the men live in the same dugout (it is partitioned into sort of rows with blankets hung up for doors) and yesterday during the shelling they were laughing and joking about it, so you can see everyone is in the best of spirits. I have a good bunk and am comfortable though a

bit cramped for room and we have to burn candles day and night if inside. Of course much of my time is spent going around the trenches to see how things are going but the cluch [?] boards are good here so very little mud. I hadn't heard anything of Jordan's death. We never hear anything in the front line you know. I am not in the big battle but everyone is itching for a chance to get there. I love you so much and appreciate more every day my dearest how fine you are. With love to all.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Machine Gun Battalion A.E.F.

May 1, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I am trying to write you oftener, and now will you try and give more news in your letters dear? For instance no one here knows what amount of insurance was passed by the house as we heard it was. You would have found that out you see but I suppose you thought I had all the dope here. Remember we get no news in the front line except intelligence reports in our own sector. And an occasional communiqué from other fronts. Once in a while we get hold of a Paris edition of the Tribune but not every day by any means. So you see, all news is welcome. No one knew of Jordan's death until I got it in your letter. It takes just a month for a letter from you to reach me and papers sometimes two months to get here, usually about five mules[?]. Lit Waller has been detached to go to the Army (against his wishes) so I am now in command of the company, but at the passing of the increase or soon after three lieutenants in the company will get their captaincies and will rank me unless they make me a Major in the Reserve as you said they intended. I hope so as I don't care to lose another company by being ranked by my lieutenants. The men in this company were absolutely devoted to Lit more than I have ever seen men in a company feel for their company commander. He took them as recruits and built up a fine

company in every way. Officers and men without exception we are all most sorry to lose him. He will I supposed have a battalion in the Army now. The "American E. F." has to be written that way now in addresses. I am still holding down a collection of muddy trenches.

Your loving husband,  
Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Machine Gun Battalion American E.F.

May 5, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

It has been pretty quiet in the front line now for a while. I am still holding down a bit of trench. I wrote you Lit Waller had gone to the Army and I am consequently in command of the company.

The weather at last has turned warmer but it still rains much of the time. An unusually wet Spring the French say. There has not been much shelling here lately, which of course makes everything more comfortable. It takes just a month for a letter from you to reach me now. Life in the trenches is pretty monotonous most of the time especially in a quiet sector. I love you very much and realize more every day how much you mean to me. I appreciate so well what you are doing back home to help me. Love to all.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Machine Gun Battalion American E.F.

May 8, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

Just a few lines to let you know I am alright. It has been very quiet here the last few days. We had a couple of warm days but rain almost every afternoon with a heavy thunderstorm last night and the trenches were as [?] as a[?]. Much love to you both.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Machine Gun Battalion American E.F.

May 14, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I am very much afraid that you will worry when you don't hear from me, as all mail is held for a while owing to our being on the move, but I hope this letter will get off soon. I wanted to write on the 12<sup>th</sup> to tell you how much I loved you but found out no mail was going out. I hope you won't find it too hot in Washington. The last few days summer has come with a rush and it has been pretty warm and very dusty on the roads. I hope the increase goes through. We heard it was held up in the Senate but don't know the reason. Real news is a scarce article with us, and we really know much less about what is going on, except in our immediate front than you do. I am going to make you another allotment of \$20.00 as soon as I see the paymaster. The commutations we don't get yet and haven't heard anything officially about it. Of course we will get it back to the date of passage of the bill, but the comptroller has to render a decision first and all that takes time. I can spare \$20.00 more a month now and I think you ought to have it. I hear from Uncle Rannie once in a while. Much love to you both.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Letters of Captain Allen M. Sumner, USMC

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Machine Gun Battalion American E.F.



Letters of Captain Allen M. Sumner, USMC

May 17, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I only have time to write you a few lines to let you know I am alright. We have been on the march for three days and I have not been able to send mail for three days before that on account of being on the move. Am out of the trenches now for a while anyhow. Love to all.

Your loving husband,  
Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Machine Gun Battalion American E.F.

May 24, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

My mail went out yesterday for the first time in about two weeks and two of mine to you went it. There is no use writing more as they couldn't go any sooner. After leaving the trenches we marched three days doing twenty-five miles one of the days over land stopping over night in little villages where we were billeted in all sorts of different houses. Then a three day stop in a little village another day march, a night on the train, a fourth march of two days and here we are, billeted in a dirty little village, the dirtiest I have seen in France. The country we passed through was beautiful farming country with little winding streams and long winding white roads bordered with poplars and it was such a relief to get away from the ruined houses and fields all pock marked with shell holes that we had come from on the line. We expect to move again soon and I hope are through with trench warfare and expect to get in on the big battle but no one knows how soon. It was very hot all the way but as I was mounted I enjoyed it and the men and animals all came through in good shape in the company except one horse that ran a nail up in its foot, and my little mare who went lame from an infection she got I think in the poor stabling we had back of the lines while we were in the trenches as it was an awful place to have to keep

horses but of course couldn't be helped under the circumstances. I am afraid I will have to turn her in, as she is not fit for service in the field right now. She is I think nearly thoroughbred, very fast and a fine jumper, something like Nancy Lee on a smaller scale and although a little nervous for field service, she just suited me and I hate to lose her. My mounted orderly who takes excellent care of the horses named her "Cricket" because she jumped around so much! She had dirt thrown on her from a shell that exploded by a road one night (I wasn't on her as I had just gone on foot at the time) but it didn't seem to make her gun shy particularly and she is afraid of nothing, just high strung like Nancy Lee. The first Sergeant's horse is very steady under shell fire, remarkably so I think. One night in a ruined village just back of the front lines he stood perfectly quietly while the Boche dropped some shells in a field to the right and our artillery put down a barrage in front of our trenches not very far away, with a one pounder banging away within fifty yards in flares going up everywhere. Just after that I rode him back up a road that had been gas shelled and he shied all over the place! The smell I suppose. It didn't hurt him a bit though, and of course it was very local and we were soon out of it. I was certainly glad I was mounted though so as to get through it in a hurry as I was by myself and I certainly hate gas, although in the usual concentration one is perfectly safe if you get on your mask quickly. Like a lot of things in this war the chances are all on your

side. For instance the Boche shelled our front lines for four hours one day concentrating on two ruined towns (my dugout was in one of them) and only killed one man and wounded two, and they were careless, poor fellows. Day after day they shelled without hitting anyone. I am going to make you another allotment as soon as I can. The liberty bond you will get soon as I am buying it in installments. Love to all.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Machine Gun Battalion American E.F.

May 24, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

This is the last chance I will have to write for some time I expect as we move again shortly and very likely the mail will be closed. I have had several letters from Lit since he left the company. He is now in command of an Army infantry machine gun battalion. There is talk of our adopting the British officer's coat over here but nothing has been ordered about it yet. I think you can guess about where we are and expect to get into action before very long. It is a relief to get out of the trenches anyhow and we are all glad of the big chance to do something to help win. I got a card from Sue but none from Lena. Will write Sue soon. Can't you mail me any magazines you are finished with? Remember we are stuck in little villages miles from a railroad much of the time, or rest camps (so called) with no reading matter for most of the time. Sometimes there is a Y.M.C.A where we are but most of the time not. Leave has all been stopped. Old magazines would be okay (except Saturday Evening Posts) as I see so few that I manage to borrow from other officers in the company, and if I have seen them will hand them on to the men. Well, everything is going well and I am well. I do hope you won't find it too hot in Washington. Can't you write longer letters and give more news? Remember we up at the front are cut off from all news. For ten

days I got no mail and didn't see a newspaper for two weeks. Now we don't ever know how things are going at other parts of the front except by rumor nor how men or officers get along once they leave the company to go to the hospital unless they write a letter. For instance, I heard three times Captain Miller had died only to find out later he is alright again now. So don't believe anything you hear from over here unless you get it from headquarters Marine Corps, as all sorts of rumors go around. This continual secrecy gets my goat. Most of it however is of course necessary. I had to part company with my trunk it was back at our rest camp (so called) but when we finally came away from the trenches we left everything not absolutely necessary and trunks etc. were sent back to be stored so I am living in a bedding roll limited to 75 pounds and wasn't ever allowed to keep a cot. I suppose I won't see my trunk again until the end of the war and that is way off somewhere as you probably realize. Well good night dearest. Your letters are the greatest help just as you are the finest wife a man ever was blessed by having, so write as much as you can. Love to you both.

Your loving husband,

Allen

P.S. I am in the best of spirits. This letter is not to make you think otherwise. Only when I get your letter saying we could get anything here in France it got my goat and then made me laugh.

Cargo space is the only way more packages can be sent by mail. I think it is right though!

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Machine Gun Battalion American E.F.

June 14, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I suppose you have seen in the papers what we in the Marine Brigade have been doing as it is in the papers over here. I have sent you two field post cards, all I had with me as I have been where I couldn't change my clothes or wash for the past two weeks and haven't even been able to get a hot meal in that time, but I am well and still going strong, living on canned stuff. I hope they will pull us out soon and let everyone get a little leave to get their minds off of what we are going through now. However I can still stand it quite some longer if necessary. Well we licked the Boche good and proper wherever we met him, as doubtless you saw by the papers. I have a German helmet and rifle and would have picked up many more, but don't know how on earth to get it out of here when we are relieved. Will have to carry it myself in addition to my own equipment I expect. The company did well, and luckily we didn't have as many losses as some. I will have a great deal to tell you when I see you again dearest, won't I? I am afraid you must have been worrying about not hearing from me but could not get a letter out and only got the two post cards out by chance. Everyone is pretty tired but in good spirits. Best love to you dearest. Will write as often as I can. I got two letters from you today. Don't worry about money. I will make an allotment as



soon as I get out of the front lines and can save some for you I know besides. Love to Margaret and you dearest wife in the world.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Machine Gun Battalion American E.F.

June 21, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

I do hope all my letters are getting through to you now, as I know you must be worried after it came out in the papers about us.

Please communicate with mother whenever you hear from me, as I haven't had a chance to write her for a long while, first because I could[n't] get letters through and then paper is awfully scarce. I have written you four times in the past ten days 2 letters and 2 field postal cards. I won't try to tell you of anything I have been through during the fighting as I want all my letters to go through without any delay. I am so far [not legible] a scratch even and in good health generally. Best of love dearest and to dear Margaret. You know didn't you I took out \$10,000 war risk insurance through the paymaster Marine Corp and am paying my monthly premiums from my pay. Will make you an allotment just as soon as I get in touch with the company field clerk etc. again but don't worry as I will have money saved up. No news yet about our commutation it is probably held up pending a decision of the comptroller of the treasury. Cole died of wounds. Ted Fuller also killed. You probably heard Sergeant Kite in my company was killed. Do you remember him?

Your loving husband,

Allen

Letters of Captain Allen M. Sumner, USMC

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Machine Gun Battalion American E.F.

June 29, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

Well, I am out of it now with the company for a short rest and reorganization. It has been the hardest work I have ever done, but I am glad to have been through it all. Have been under shell fire pretty continuously bombed once by aeroplanes under machine gun and rifle fire and have come through without a scratch, thank God. Can't tell you how many men we lost nor how many officers were wounded in the company on account of the censor, although of course losses are inevitable in fighting such as we have been through. Capt. Williams was killed. You remember him don't you in Phila when the 5<sup>th</sup> left? I wrote you Cole died from wounds and Fuller was killed. Capt. Robinson was killed I don't know whether that is the one you knew or not. I don't think so, or there is another one with the sixth who answers your description better. First Sergeant Grant of my old company was killed. Platt is alright. I saw him this afternoon. Hunt is now quartermaster of the first battalion he is alright so far as I know, but I haven't seen him for a long time. I grew to like him very much over here. Col. Catlin was wounded. I was with Sibley for a while, he is alright. Don't know how you work this gov't ban on the farm but go to it. I don't think we had

better sell the farm just yet, do you? If you can get a car it would be fine. Lots of love to you and Margaret.

Your loving husband,

Allen

P.S. Mail me any magazines you have read.

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Machine Gun Battalion American E.F.

July 8, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

Things aren't quite so hard now as we have our rolling kitchen up with us and can get hot food but I hope soon we can get out altogether and have a chance for leave as no one has had any. Lit is back again, now in command of our battalion in Cole's place.

The company is filled up now with new men (also some new officers) I am anxious to get it back somewhere where we can get a chance to train them in many things you can't do in the lines.

Most of the wounded officers and men will be back with the company before long, many of the men are already back, and bring back word all are anxious to get back to the company. Well it has been pretty tough work for a while and some of it I never will be able to forget. Most of it I want to remember, what many of the Marines did during those days was magnificent. Tell Margaret I am very much pleased she is getting such good marks as her report showed. Am always so glad to get a letter from her.

Did you ever receive my policy of the war risk insurance for \$10,000? Lots of love.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Machine Gun Battalion American E.F.

July 15, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

My Dearest,

Well I am still well, a little back of the front line for a rest, but we are all still sleeping on the ground and it looks as if we would for some time. I have had built a little dugout, just a square hole in the ground under the trees with a roof of split logs and sand bags but it keeps me nice and dry even in a hard rain. The men are fixed up in about the same way with every variety of shelter from boughs and shelter tents to logs covered with dirt. It is remarkable how quickly men learn the value of picks and shovels once they have been on an active front as we have. Before that no one wanted to carry embedding [?] tools and they had to be made, but now everyone keeps one as close as possible and we have a lot of little German shovels they took from dead Boche and they are a very handy little tool, with a leather case to carry them. I got a German helmet, rifle, bayonet, etc. and could have gotten any number I wanted if I could have carried them away as they were scattered all over the place where we were, as there were many German dead and the prisoners usually throw off their helmets, throw down their rifles and then put both hands flat on top of their head. Then they start yelling "kamerad". A number of my men who had lost their blankets during the first fighting used some found in the German trenches and dugouts



that were taken with disastrous results as the “cooties” came over to us with them, but now we are rid of them I think. Personally I have not had any trouble that way I am glad to say. I hope we go further back and have a chance to get leave before going up in the front line again, but no one knows, or at least won't tell. This is a beautiful farming country and some of the wheat fields were the finest I have ever seen, beautiful wheat, all dotted with red poppies. The little villages were beautiful too and I saw the transformation of one from a pretty little peaceful village to a wrecked mass of broken stone by German artillery. In fact I have seen several villages demolished. It is one of the things that makes it so necessary to end this war the only way it can be ended so such things will not occur again in the immediate future. By complete and final victory over the Hun. It was a sad thing to see the refugees streaming back when we first came up here and then see their farms and fields torn and blasted afterward. With lots of love.

Your loving husband,

Allen

Capt. A.M. Sumner

81<sup>st</sup> Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Marine Machine Gun Battalion American E.F.

July 27, 1918

*To Mary Morris Sumner*

*From Major LWT Waller, Jr., USMC*

My Dear Mary,

I have been trying to get the chance to write you for some days, but it has been impossible to find the time to do anything. Now that a few moments have turned up, I want to tell you about Allen; and Mary, please believe me when I say I am more sorry than it is possible to express at having to write this letter to you. Of course by now you will have received the bare official notice of his death. His end came as he would have wished it, at the head of his company at about 10 a.m. on July 19<sup>th</sup> the second morning of the big Allied attack now still going on. He was struck by a fragment of a high explosive shell in the stomach and died very shortly afterward. His death was painless as he was unconscious from the moment he was hit. He is buried about 200 yards south of the cemetery of the small town of Vierzy which was about 10 kilometers inside the German lines when we started the advance. His grave is marked with a cross and his name and is a matter of record in the files of the 81<sup>st</sup> company. That company, my old company, was very badly cut up in this fight, but did wonderful work. We left the Belleau Wood area and came here by motor truck taking part in the first days' attack. We reached Vierzy by dark and rested for the night. At daylight the attack was

resumed but went slower than the first day, the German resistance has stiffened up a great deal. Allen was with one of the platoons of his company waiting the signal to attack. They were under very heavy shell fire and he had placed his men under cover as much as possible while he remained exposed to watch for the signal. He was hit while so doing. His company buried him where he fell under very heavy fire it was impossible to move him. I have had his field gear collected together to save what was valuable and forwarded to the regular depot from which place it will eventually be sent to you. He had a trunk in storage which I will try to locate. As I remember it, he had some things stored with friends or relatives in Paris but I know of no way to find out unless you know. His accounts will all be closed up through the regular channels. If you want any information about those Father will give it to you. If there is anything I can do for you here please tell me what it is and it will be done. It is useless to try to tell you how sorry I am, I simply can't express it. I know how much of a blow it must be to you. It is a blow to us all. We have lost one Major and two Captains killed and three Captains wounded in this battalion so it would seem as if we have had our share. Allen did not die in vain. He left his work a shining example to all the officers of the battalion to influence their conduct to make them better able to head to the ultimate victory which is sure to be ours. Please let me know if I can do anything for you.

Your cousin,

Littleton