Head Quarters Co., "D" 1st Wis.
May 1, 1863

Dear Father:

We returned last night from an 11 days scout on which we captured a large number of prisoners, etc. On my arrival I found your 2nd and 3rd letters awaiting me. I have no time to write a long letter as we are today turning over our tents and drawing shelter or dog tents. I have also muster and payrolls to make out today, so have my hands full. I find that Lieut. Clock of Co. "K" has been appointed on the elite battalion, so being on the Roll of Honor, but remaining with the Co. The reason, I understand, is because there are but 4 captains with the Regt. and they can't be spared.

I send this by Adjt. Watkins. My pay amounted to $250.00. Feb. being a short month, my rations did not amount to as much as a larger month. The package address to Mrs. Elizabeth Phelps. You will keep until she calls for it. It contains $54.00. We expect another payment soon which will probably be the last for some time as things look very like a move.

Our brigade has again been changed, it now being the 2nd instead of the 3rd. Will write again soon and anxiously look for letters from you.

Your affectionate son,

Wm. S. Mitchell

With this I send $200.00, keeping $50.00 to use if needed.

No. 5

I don't know as you can make anything out of this, for I have all day been listening to witnesses.

Rooms of Genl. Court Martial,
Murfreesboro, May 8, 1963

Dear Father:

Your 5th letter I have just received. I must have two letters on the way, perhaps have arrived by this time. I was not surprised when you told me about Tom's affairs for I had expected it, and amy only sorry that I had not known how matters stood previous to my applying for a furlough for I think I could have procured it now as well as then. However, it can't be halped. I think Tom will have a good wife and as you say, if he is steady and attends to business I have no doubt but what he will do well.

As you see by this, I am in the Court Rooms, the Court having just disposed a case of desertion in face of the enemy. We have quite a lot of cases on hand and others coming in daily. We attend from 9 A.M. to 12:00 and from 1:30 to 3:00 P.M. so you see I have very good times as I do nothing else. Instead of rushing out at 3:30 in the morning to attend roll call, I now get about 7:00 and, in fact, am having quite a good time. I think, however, we will not remain here much longer. Everything is in readiness to move and when we do go it will be on the sly as it was when we moved on this place. We feel rather blue over the news from the Potomac but hope that the reports we hear are not true. If Hooker is forced back, this army will have to make up for his failure by making a desperate attack on the rebs.

I have but little news to write as I wrote you yesterday or the day before. Lieut. Caliger commands my company on all parades, pickets, etc. I still attend to the reports and business in general. We are living first rate and have been for some time. I can give you as good a meal, almost, as you can get at home. We have potatoes, onions, steak, ham, butter, eggs etc. So you see we are not starving. Sweet and all the boys are well. Messenger has used up most of his money, but sent home the other day $100.00. I think I told you he was Court Martialed but thinks he will be acquitted. If they find him guilty he will undoubtedly be dismissed from the service, but I hope not, for he would go to the d--l. He would not amount to anything afterwards.

No. 8

Room Genl. Court Martial
Murfreesboro
May 16, 1863

Dear Father:

Your last (no. 11) arrived last night. As you preceive, we are still running the Court and will probably have plenty to do for some time. Tom, I suppose, has not returned yet. How is his business? I hope it may be good as he will now have a wife to support.

We feel very bad over the news from the Potomac. At one time we entertained ideas that six months would end the war and had the news been confirmed and Richmond taken, I have no doubt but what we would have been home before winter. But as it is, I can't see anything but another winter campaign. However, we came for 3 years and are willing to remain. We last night organized a Union League in the Regt. Frank Bloodgood, the bearer of this, assisted by Capt. Wilson officiated. There is no news of importance. I have now no idea that "Rosey" will move as we expected we would had Hooker been successful. It may, however, depend on Grant's movements. Should he fail we will have all we can do to hold this place for the rebels will no doubt reenforce Bragg but <u>hold it we will</u>. Rosecrans will never fall back from his works while he has a brigade left.

We are all well and in as good spirits as the news will allow, but we are losing confidence in the Army of the Potomac. The men are probably as good fighting men as any in the world, but do not seem to be properly led. We were whipped out and out at Stones River but hung on with bull dog tenacity and finally won a victory. The Court has been called to order so for the present, farewell.

Yours affectionately,

Wm. S. Mitchell

P.S. I am anxious about Jennie. Hope she is better. Give her my love, also mother and the rest. Have Anna write. She hasn't answered my letter.

Billie

Continued.

P.S. I am glad you wrote about Pawlett. I always want to ask but when I write forget all about him. Sweet is well and sends regards to the family. Charley has not received the findings of the Court and is still under arrest. He is here at present. All your friends are well. The Regt. has just 500 men present and absent, about 300 present and about 250 for duty, just 2 full companies and one half. My company aggregate is 54 enlisted men and 3 officers, total 57. Of this I have 30 men for duty. Left the State with 82 men and have lost less than any other Co. in the Regt. That is by sickness. Good-bye.

B

Continued

of our own. I dislike the idea of renting when we can buy. I did think that I might on my return get in with Chase, but my capital would be small in such a business and I am certain he will give me a good salary which is better even than such a part of the business as I could secure don't you think so. Now if you can only get $700.00 or $800.00 out of Salsbury we could get a bully place. But you know best what to do and it may sound strange my advising you.

Well, Good bye, give my love to all.

Yours as of old,

Billie

No. 14

Murfreesboro, Tenn.
June 7, 1863

Dear Father:

Enclosed you will find $200.00, part of my pay. Pay amounted to $253.70, tax was 6.30. I wanted to send $250.00, nearly the whole, but have not sold my watch yet and am obliged to keep some money on hand. I have paid all my bills, sutler's etc. and have enough on hand by keeping the $53.00. I was not entirely out, so will have enough. I learned yesterday that the paymaster was quite mad when he found the officers who had been home on furlough had not mentioned it on the pay roll. He says the pay will be stopped on the next payment for the time we were home. The Col. is in the same boat. The regulations call for such remarks on the roll but they are seldom made. He cannot, however, stop full pay as the army regulations say that officers on leave shall have ½ pay stopped only. So at next payday I expect to have about $30.00 stopped which I can well afford as I had a good time and saw you all.

I received a letter from Billy Pawlett yesterday. He says he has written to you.

We have just had preaching by our Chaplain as it is Sunday and everything is quiet norwithstanding we have been just paid.

With love to all, I am

Your affectionate son,

Billie

No. 11

Camp 1st Wis., Murfreesboro
May 20, 1863

Dear Father:

I have received no mail from Milwaukee since the Adjt. arrived some time ago. We have no news here. Are still under orders to hold ourselves in readiness to move but still do not think we will. I am not relieved from The Court yet. We have just found out about all officers who have been promoted since leaving the state. Many of our officers have been promoted lately and it was rumored that our pay would be stopped so as to make the pay only that of the offices we held up to the time of mustering in at the new commissions. Mine, for instance, would be only 1st Lieut. up to this time as I have never been mustered in as Capt. But I saw Capt. Millard, mustering officer, and he will muster me as Captain from the time Starr left, so I am all right.

I have eleven rolls to make out. Six muster out rolls as 1st Lieut. and five muster in rolls as Captn. It is only lately that we have found it necessary to muster at promotion and there is a general rush of officers from every Regt. to be mustered.

We are having awful warm weather but we lay around with only pants and shirts on and manage to weather it. We have had strawberries, peas etc, nearly a month. Not quite so forward in Wisconsin, I guess.

Sweet and the rest are well, as is myself also.

Love to all.

Yours affectionately

Billie

No. 13

Camp 1st Wis.
Murfreesboro
June 1, 1863

Dear Father:

Yours of May 28th has just arrived. I think you are mistaken in regard to Vicksburg. We have had no news of its capture up to this time but look for it daily. God grant that it may come soon. Should Grant succeed in capturing the rebel army there, Bragg will have to fall back or will find himself in a troublesome position between "Rosey" and "Unconditional." I don't know what to think about our moving. We are all ready and have been for some time. Our Division was reviewed today by Genl. Rousseau. Negley, McCook and other Genls. were present. I was not out. Lieut. Galiger had charge of my company as we were busy with the Court till noon. The officers I wrote about were all released from arrest this morning and are again on duty.

I received a letter a few days ago from Edward Bray, a relation of Thos. Bray in my Co. He wants to enlist. I have written to him. Should anyone ask you as to how they can join the Co. tell them by applying to Capt. Trowbred. This conscript act is hurrying them up.

We have plenty of rain and the air is quite pleasant. In regard to consolidation, I have since learned that it will not be carried into effect. Still, if new Regts. are organized I should like a Major's position. Of course I do not want everyone to know I am fishing for a position, therefore please do it quietly and do not go to any unnecessary trouble for I am contented with my present rank. The main object would be to have a while at home.

Did Tom or you receive a letter from me requesting 2 dozen photographs of mine forwarded to me. In case the letter has not reached you, send the straight armed ones. I am glad to hear Tom is happy and earnestly hope he may always be so. I wrote you on the 30th but having little else to do and knowing you are anxiously watching our movements I will often. Does mother retain her good health? She must not worry about a fight here. I don't think it looks like it. Love to her and all the family.

As ever your

Billie

P. S.

I received a letter from Anna by the Adjt. but as I had written a few days before, did not answer it. If she is not busy have her answer mine. How badly I feel about Jennie. I hope she is better. What dreadful pain she suffers with her trouble. And the little ones, I hope they are as lively as ever. And Courtenay, give him my respects. I do wish this war was over. If Grant succeeds in capturing Pemberton I think it won't take Rosey long with Grant's assistance to wipe out Bragg. It's big talk, but Grant must not let his prey slip from his grasp and all will be well. How I could enjoy home after what we have been through.

Wm. S. K.

P.S. If you can get 2 gold watchew cheap, say $20.00 send them to me <u>privately</u>. I can get from $30.00 to $40.00 through my Sergt, raffling them off.

P.S. I loaned one of my boys, Thompson, $10.00 to get home with. He was discharged and very low. He did not stop in Milwaukee but wrote to me for your address which I sent him and told him to send the money to you.

No. 10

Camp 1st Wis.
May 30, 1863

Dear Father:

I received your letter last night dated May 24th and No. 10, same No. as this. We are still in the same position ready to move at a moment's warning to pounce on Bragg should he attempt to reenforce Johnston. I am still attending court but expect to get through next week. A few of our officers got on a bender last night and made considerable noise. Today they are all under arrest by order of Genl. Rousseau. They are the following, Capts. Goodrich, Green, McVeau and Wilson. All captains. I am the only captain now in the Regt. as there are but 5 altogether, and I am on special duty. Do not say anything about this, for I consider I am doing wrong in writing it and would not like to have it get out. I keep out of all their scraps and drink nothing but beer. I understand that they are to be court martialed but do not believe it.

I think the idea a good one to buy a nice house and lot. I think it is better than paying rent. The only difficulty would be in getting a comfortable house for what money we can raise. Courtenay's house just suits me. How comfortable we could live in such a one. Now if we could get a nice little homestead for about $2500.00 I think we might make connections. If we can only work a few hundred out of old Salsbury I would like it. I have been thinking if you manage to keep half the lot where the barn stands, with what money we have we could build a nice little brick house. I do not like the ward, but if we can save buying a lot by living there, it would be better. It won't do to go too far out of the city for we will probably both be in business in town. Chase, I think will do the right thing for me. Use your own judgment should you conclude to buy, for I know it is good. Don't you think the 4th is the best ward? Get somewhere near Courtenay's. Mother would like it so much. Of course it will take some time and you will post me. In the meantime when you write tell me how much we can raise. Have you any money with Tom. Well, good night, love to mother and Anna. Family grows less, doesn't it?

Your loving son,

Billie

No. 9

Murfreesboro,
May 21, 1863

Dear Father:

Adjt. Watkins arrived today. He brought the coat and letters. I had not heard from you since your 11th letter some time ago and was daily booking for his arrival. The blouse is just what was wanted but think he charged pretty well for it. They sell here for $10.00 but, of course, not as good cloth nor made as well.

We yesterday received orders to hold ourselves in readiness to move at a minute's notice and I understand the orders have been issued to the whole army. Something will be done soon. I don't think we will advance. Report says that the rebels are moving around our right flank with the intention of drawing "Rosey" out of his works. They dare not pass our right to advance on Nashville for that would leave their communications exposed. I can't guess what is up so will have to wait and find out. Expect to move tomorrow. We are nearly through with the Court Martial, one or two cases only remaining.

I have not seen Charley Messenger since his trial. He is at Redyville. I have just sent a message to him to the effect that his uniform had arrived and that we expected to move, so if he is not under arrest still he will probably be in. I sent either to you or Tom for some photographs. I have promised several of my friends some and my company especially want a few. Please send them as soon as convenient. I also received the box of cake by the Adjt. And Tom had quite a number of friends quite a number tried it. I have a letter from Tom, one from Anna and one from Chandler, all of which shall be answered as soon as possible. Today we are packing up our coats, extra blankets and all articles not needed in a summer campaign. Our boys have got to come right down and carry knapsacks. They have not done this for over a year. It will come hard this hot weather but we have got to come to it. The paymaster has just sent orders to have our rolls completed by Monday. If we do not move (Ithink we will) by that time, he will pay us off for March and April (2 mos.) Will write again soon. Am glad to hear Jennie is improving.

Love to all,

Billie

Headquarters Co. "D" 1st Wis.
Murfreesboro
June 5, 1863

Dear Father:

Yours of May 31st arrived today. I have lost track of the numbers but think this No. 12, same number as yours just received. We have had quite exciting times here for a few days. Yesterday our picket line was attacked by a large force, but the enemy were repulsed. I think it was a demonstration in order to allow Bragg to make some important move, perhaps to evacuate. The prisoners which we captured say that news had reached them to the effect that "Rosey" had reenforced Grant and held this place by a small force only. I think they have seen their mistake, or it not they undoubtedly will should they favor us with a call. Night before last we were hustled out of bed at 11 o'clock to inspect our companies and issue to each man eight days rations, three in haversacks and 5 in knapsacks. We did so. I waited until one in the morning, stacked arms and turned in. Since then no marching orders have arrived. They may, however, come at any moment as McCook's corps had quite a fight yesterday on the Salem Pike. A few minutes ago a citizen was hung just outside our camp. He had been tried by a military commission for murder, was found guilty, sentenced to be hung. The murder was one of the most brutal I ever head of. This fellow is a rebel bushwhacker and killed a union man.

I have had quite a row with the Quartermaster, Nate Bingham today. He wanted to break up my Co. team by taking away the best mule and giving a broken down one in return. He complained to the Col. but I have not heard anything about it yet. I have still my old team and I am bound to keep it. This Nate Bingham is the quietest cute rascal in the army. But I got him tight. I know of dealings which if brought before a Court Martial will cashier him.

In regard to my promotion we had better let it drop. I could get the recommendations but there will be no consolidating here and it will probably be some time before new Regts. will be raised. I wrote you in my last to use your own judgment in buying a house. Could not we get a good place near Courtenay's cheap, say $2000.00? But unless you can make Salsbury come down we could hardly raise that. I like the 4th Ward. In your next say what the prospects are. The Paymaster has at last arrived. Will pay off in a day or two for two months (March and April), if we don't move. If Tom or Courtenay really need the money, of course you would not want it, but I think we had better get a nice little place

Murfreesboro
June 8, 1863

Dear Father:

Your 13th letter of June 4th date has just arrived. I wrote day before yesterday and have little of interest to say. We were paid off yesterday. I have just sent by express a package of $200.00 to you. The watch I still have but will get off my hands soon as I don't think it is fine gold, although keeps good time. I have forgotten how much I have sent you in all and would like to know. Should you see a good chance to invest it in a house and lot I think you had better do so. I would like to see you and mother nicely established in a comfortable home of your own.

We are receiving reenforcements daily but do not know whether it is to hold this place or advance. We receive orders every few days to be ready to move. I am still on the Court and will probably be busy until we move. Sweet is well and sends regards as do all your friends. Papers come through regular but Messenger receives the Sentinel so we have all the news. By the way, he is all right, was acquitted by the Court but to receive a reprimand from the officer commanding Signal Corps.

I am very glad to learn that Jennie is recovering and hope she will be entirely well when this reaches you. Tom has written but once since the marriage. I know Mira has the first claim on him but tell him he must write once and awhile. What do you think of the war? If Grant captures Pemberton's forces I firmly believe that six months will end it. He must, however, be perfectly successful and not allow any of the rebel force to escape. But I have little fears on that score, as Vicksburg is well surrounded. I should like to see Col. Starr very much but, of course, can not. We had a report that he has resigned and gone to California, but I know better. He is too patriotic for that. I am trying to get Sweet a commission in Co. "A". He is a good fellow but no military man and never will make a good officer. Still I want to see him do well but have better men for officers in my own Co. Of course keep this quiet. He has not got the ambition, business faculty, or knowledge for a good officer. We get along first rate. Have never had a word wrong with him. He always is respectful. Has never spoken to me except as "Captain." Still he never can make as good an officer as the 2nd Sergt, George Lund. Messenger expects to be mustered into the regular army. In that case I should give the Lieutcy. to Sweet as next in rank, if I do not succeed in getting a

Continued.

stay long as an order has been issued calling all Signal Officers together. I had a talk with Col. Starkweather. Explained to him how I remained with my company, performed my duty etc. and asked for a leave of absence. He replied that he was well aware how faithful I had been and that I certainly deserved a furlough and he would do all in his power in my behalf. But at the same time informed me (what I well know) that to procur a furlough was almost impossible. However, I have his good will and I think as soon as an opening occurs he will do all he can for me.

As we move in the morning I will have to pack up so good-bye. My love to mother dear, and all the family.

Yours affectionately,

Billy

Direct via Louisville.

No. 68

Camp near Murfreesboro
January 11, 1863

Dear Father:

I have just received two letters from you of the 21st and 25th Dec. dates, also one from Tome and one from Anna, so I can't grumble for want of mail. Our victory here is more complete than was at first supposed, yet the rebels are concentrating at Talahoma and if they do not give us battle there, they will at Chattanooga. The army is being re-organized throughout. We are now the 3rd Brigade, 1st Division, instead of 28th Brigade. When we move from here we in all probability will have to reduce transportation. Large droves of mules arrive daily, which leads me to believe that we shall have but few wagons and then only for provisions. It will be impossible to take wagons over the mountains. We fought 75,000 rebels here. Many were of the Potomac Army sent here after the Fredericksburg battle. Their killed and wounded far exceed ours, although they have captured more prisoners than we. Our force was about 40,000, far less than the rebels. You have heard I suppose that Norm was captured and from what I can learn was taken to Chattanooga or Vicksburg. Jim Hodges also is in the hands of the secesh. Capt. McVean who was wounded has gone home on leave of absence. John Davis, Capt. Green and others of the Sanitary Commission are here. I rather expected you along.

The officers of the 24th are a lot of homesick fellows. The majority of them want to resign. Henry Drake has been promoted to a Lietu. for gallant conduct on the field. He will make as good an officer as there is in the Regt. The officers in this Regt., who like myself have had no furloughs, are dissatisfied. Many want to resign. I offered mine to the Col. (Bingham) and he would not accept it. I told him I did not want to resign if I could get a leave of absence. He said he would do all in his power to get one for me but did not want me to leave him. So here I am and shall hold on a while longer, but in the spring should nothing turn up I will leave. Chase says in a late letter that my situation is always ready for me. It is good of him but I don't know but what I can do better as to wages.

Everything goes quietly on. We are having a good rest after the hard times before Murfreesboro and I feel like a new man.

Enclosure with No. 87.

Capt. Goodrich is all right. Tell his wife so. I am writing on paper that he got from his wife's last letter. Our wagons are in Nashville, We have no tents, baggage and but two or three blankets in the company. The balance are back. But our victory is food, clothing and everything else to us.

George Bleyer was wounded and captured. We shall probably now have a chance to wash up and change clothes. You have heard Richardson tell about the Russian war. Lying in the rifle pits was a good deal like it. No rations, no fire, no blankets and drenched to the skin.

Four companies of the 24th stood their ground until ordered to fall back. Some of the companies made good time to the rear. I don't know as they were to blame as the whole line gave way. But what makes us feel sore, they were supporting Bush's battery and lost two of his pieces. Our rations are out again today.

The enemy are in full retreat, probably for Chattanooga.

No. 87

2½ miles from Murfreesboro
January 4, 1863.

Dear Father:

After 5 days of severe fighting we have driven the enemy from their well chosen position and from trenches that with their force they might have held against double our number.

January 5

Since writing the above we have marched through Murfreesboro and are in camp about 2 miles out on the Shelbyville Pike. We left Nashville on the 26th Dec. in a heavy rain storm. Since then I have not had any of my clothes off and except to empty the water out of my shoes, they have been on night and day. The men have had their accoutrements on also all the whole time. The battle opened on the 30th Dec. The rebels surprised our center about daylight, driving our troops before them. The 24th was among the number and I am sorry to hear that several of the 24th officers and some of the troops, ran before the enemy had fairly opened upon them. Cam Reed was taken Very sick and advised Hibbard to take the Regt. off the field. This is private. Don't say anything about it. Time will bring it out. Will Eldred also left his company. We were not there at the time. Our brigade was sent on a pike to the east to hold a bridge. Our train was attack by a large force of cavalry. We drove them away but not until they burned some 16 wagons belonging to the 79th Penn., 21st Wis. and 24th Ill. The next day we arrived at the battle field and were immediately thrown to the front and held the ground for 3 days. 48 hours as ley in rifle pits ankle deep in water and under a heavy shower of shot, shell etc. It rained constantly for the last two days and being not more than two blocks from the enemy, we had no fires. Thus we passed New Years, not a happy one I assure you. The 4th day the enemy threw a tremendous force against our left wing, which gave way, but Negley came up with his division, charged, routed the enemy and drove them across the river. So fierce was the fight that the water was almost red as it flowed on by us. Lieut Chandler was in the charge with the Pioneer Corps. I shall never forget the sight of carnage and blood and I hope I may never be called upon to see another such. Strange to say, we had but few wounded and one or two filled, although we lay in an exposed position. Capt. McVean received a shot in his leg which will use him up for some time. My company is all right and everybody else that you know. Will write as soon as I can.

Billy

No. 86

Camp on the March South of
Nashville
December 28, 1862

Dear Father:

We are again on the tramp. Left Nashville the morning of the 26th. We are now about 20 miles from Nashville near Nolensville. We are again having hard times. We have had two days of very rainy weather. The mud is knee deep. We lay down in the mud and get up in mud. Everything in the shape of clothing is wet through. But today we have pitched tents and will remain, so we can have a change. McCook is in the advance and I guess giving the rebels fits as we have heard heavy cannonading for two days. Last night we pushed forward to reenforce him but found the rebel position evacuated and McCook also gone. He is following them up and giving them the benefit of nearly all his batteries. The 24th is with him and they have probably had a fight. We can't be far from Murfreesboro, although on a different pike. Negley is on the Murfreesboro road and we can distinctly hear his guns. He is probably shelling them. I don't think the rebels will stand. They have fallen back as we advance and I think will continue to do so.

Last night, as night before, we were completely drenched as we had been marching all day in the rain. To make it more uncomfortable we have to either sleep in our wet clothes or put them on in the morning. We had just entered camp last night and were not here 5 minutes before we were ordered to move forward 2 miles to a range of hills and form a line of battle. We did so and stood nearly an hour in as hard a rain as I ever saw. But McCook's guns, or the sound, died away and we came back. We demolished a house and placing the boards in the mud near a fire, we laid down and I slept as comfortable as could be. I do not know what is going on in the advance but I suppose we are driving the rebels before us. I wish we had a few more McCooks. "He is lightning on a limb." Capt. Goodrich has been ordered back to his regiment and is now with us. Messenger is with me but he can't march. Sweet marched along with the company and stands it well. Col. Larrabee of the 24th left us yesterday. He is going home to recruit for his regiment, and also his health, which I understand is not very good. I think I wrote before Court Larkin has resigned. Soldiering was too much like work for him. I will close as I have some business to attend to before we march again. I send my love to all the family.

Your affectionate son,
Billy

Continued.

How do folks look upon resigned officers? Well, my case would be different from those new officers such as the 24th. I have worked for 15 months as faithfully as any officer in the service. I do not consider myself a coward or shirk by leaving the service.

I will close with my everlasting love to mother, yourself and all the family.

Yours, affectionately,

Am. S. Mitchell