

John Ely Diary 88th Illinois Infantry

Dec. 5

Snowed A.M. Most boys cold – My rubber blanket protects me and is worth a farm.

Dec. 7

Freezing – fire in tent – Articles of war read again drew cartridges

Dec. 8

Batt. drill, and Co drill. orders to pack up and be ready to march

Dec. 9-10

drill and picket

Dec 11

Letters from mother and Vine.

Dec 12

Rec'd shelter tents "the boys will not take them."

Dec. 13

Guard – wrote Vine, rec'd letter from her - rheumatism.

Dec. 14

Washed clothes

Dec. 15-16

Drill, fix clothes. "Old Col. got very mad and cursed us" Reconnaissance

Dec. 18

Battal [sic] drill – Got 50 cents worth of tobacco and loaf of bread. "Hurt my leg like thunder"

Dec. 20

Built fireplace in tent – picket Heavy cannonade - Stood in line of battle

Dec. 21

Brigade review, Prayer meeting at tent. Corporals all reduced in ranks for not haveing [sic] shoes blacked

Dec 22

Forage – got 4 geese, drink of milk and canteen of buttermilk

Dec. 23

Wrote Vine. Got things ready for Xmas dinner

Dec. 25

Letter from Vine and Mother, all excitement had fight today – bread and cakes for supper

Dec. 26

Move forward. Drove rebs [sic] all days. – rain and mud

Dec. 27

Rain all night moved toward Murfreesboro heavy rains. shelled and skirmished.

Dec 29 March all day – line of battle all nite [sic] rain Woke up and found self lying in water, blankets all mud and water.

Dec. 30

Fight – lost 5 of our men

Dec. 31

“Rebs [sic] attacked us at daylight. drove them back twice. 21st, 24th, 36th gave way. we then retreated [sic] Chased us into the woods, formed our line again and drove them back twice, Rebs [sic] chased us through the timber Lost 160 men Got lost from the Regt in the P.M. and did not find them untill [sic] next day. the ground is covered for miles [sic] with the dead”

End of year 1862

“Well Vine here is a small vacant place and as I have almost dispaired [sic] of ever receiving any more letters from home I may as well fill this up with some kind of trash I have been sick seince [sic] commencing [illegible] very sick for two or three days but am getting well now fit again for duty we will have a good Dr now I think. Our head Dr died seince [sic] the fight and Pierce of the 36th has been appointed in his place. a change that I am very glad of. Vine I do not know as you will care much about this diary but I will send it to you. It will not be apt to interest you much but such as it is you are welcome to keep it for me. Vine untill [sic] I come home. And I should be so unfortunate as never to return to you then I wish you to destroy this little memory of pat [sic] [of my life. If I am sacrificed in this wretched ill conducted war I want all the little notions that would remind one of me destroyed, And forget as soon as possible that ever I was fool enough to have any thing to do with this affair. Bought wit? is the best, when you do not pay to [sic] dear for it, if we never meet here and do in another world, you will find me a wiser man than I ever was here. If Often think I shall ever walk from the road up to my House again and weather [sic] you will standon [sic] the poarch [sic] to greet me or not. When that event does happen it will be a happy day for me. Yes, Vine, Happy will be no name for what I will then enjoy. This is a cold day in Tenn. the ground is froze and it is snowing very fast, it rained for twenty four house [sic] rained hard before it froze up. It looks to me like old Ill if I was at home I should be getting my old jumper out and should begin to look around for Vine to take a ride. But I expect I shall have to forego the pleasure of

sleigh rideing [sic] this winter and attend to the sterner duties of soldering [sic]. But I expect to make up for all lost time when I get home again, yes home again, is not that a sweet word, it never sounded half so sweet to me before But I expect if write any more such trash to you that it will make you feel bad but I may just as well tell the truth as to lie. But for all this I yet have firm faith in seeing Vine again and spending many happy years with you. But no more of this. Theodore is very sick at present. I have not seen him for two days but the boys say he is crazy. Austin seems to have gotten entirely out of the notion of going with the girls in his last letter to me he says he is through going with half married girls. He thinks it was a good joke on [missing] Gray. He told me how long he has basked in Virges [sic] deceitful smiles, but he did not say anything about her mittening [sic] him. He also said he was done going with Em [illegible] he did not find out untill [sic] lately that she was engaged but that he had now heard [sic] it from a source which he could no longer doubt. Good for him. You have never told me how you get along how you going to school nor what you study. How many scholars do you have and are you haveing [sic] a good time I hope you are. [illegible] is now first Lieut [sic] and commands [illegible] is left of Co g. He wears his honors very [illegible]. One of the boys got a letter from Dave Brown he says he is not well would come back again if his folks were willing. Poor thing. he never [illegible] out one day and never seen any of the [illegible] of a soldiers [sic] life, but he has seen enough for him to blow on. Now my Dearest good bye love and a kiss for you and remember your ever faithful. John.

Camp on Stone [sic] River Tenn [sic] Jan 16th 1862 (maybe 3)

Vine, agreeable to my promise before leaveing [sic] you I am now about to send you a short account of mi [sic] actions during the last year, for seven months of that time I was at my happy home, And where I could see you every day. time then was short and passed very pleasantly. Them were seven of the Happiest months I ever passed. Happier than I expect to be for seven to come. Five months of the Twelve has been passed in the service of my country. In the tented field, far, far away from all that I love or hold dear on earth. In that short time I have lerned [sic] much of men and things, War hardens mens [sic] hearts, transforms them it seems to me almost into brutes. I have seen men that I have no doubt were tender hearted and affectionate at home, turn and leave a fellow being, leave him to die, leave him without a word of sympathy or apparently without regret. Here man must take care of himself or he falls. All are friends yet no one cares for another. Shoulder straps ruels [sic] the day. A private is nothing but a machien [sic]. And moves as they will instead of seeing a Dr., to get medican [sic], you are taken there for the purpose of seeing wheather [sic] you are for for duty or not. Your own feelings are not consulted if he marks you fit for duty on duty you must go. This practise [sic] has killed thousands of men and will kill thousands more. It is true we have won a great Battle here. But it was a dear victory to us. but dear as it was it was the first we have gained for many weary months. The army is dissatisfied. We are miserably feed [sic] and worse cared for. It is impossible to find a man in our entire army but what is home sick, tired of this war and all anxious for Peace at any tearms [sic]. And now wors [sic] than all the rest the rainy season has commenced. And we are not

prepared for it with nothing to sleep on but our blankets and the wet ground. And some the time with any shelter. It begins to tell fearfully [sic] on our numbers. Our Hospitals are filling up to overflowing The [sic] receive less care than we do. for we can see a little to ourselves. But Vine, it is no use of complaining I believe that the Government is ruined lost, Many more lives will be sacrificed in attempting to save it and to satisfy the ambition of souless [sic] men. Oh for a man that had the interest of his country and not money at heart. Although I am doeing [sic] well as I expected to, yet Vine I with the rest am heartly sick of this wholesale murder. and I shall get out of it as soon as possible. I write this confidental [sic] to you Vine. The boys are ashamed to write how they are used in the Grand Union Army But one only needs one day in camp to satisfy himself and be satisfyed [sic]. Officers are resining [sic] by scors [sic] but no such priviliges [sic] are accorded to privates the sick cannot even get furloughs. We let them rip. They cant [sic] kill us all, some of us will [illegible] [illegible] home to our friends and loved ones. But much suffering must be endured but better times are comeing [sic].