

A POET AT WAR

The Story of a World War I Marine

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*The Story of a
World War I Marine*

Edited by

JAMES P. GREGORY, JR.

*Dedicated to
my grandparents:
Ahma, Papa, and Pampi*

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PREFACE

IN 2018, THE UNITED STATES remembers the 100th anniversary of American participation in combat during the First World War. Once the United States joined the war, it took only 19 months until the surrender of Germany. Throughout those months, the US mobilized more than four million soldiers to partake in the war, with half of those participating overseas. Out of that four million, more than nine thousand Marines served overseas.¹ These Marines fought some of the most important battles of the war, never losing ground to the Germans.

Otis Wilbra Joslyn Jr. enlisted in the Marine Corps on February 20, 1917, before the US officially declared war. During his training and through his time in Europe, Otis sent home letters to his family. These letters shed light on what he did in training, his deployment overseas, stories from combat, the armistice, and Occupation Force duty on the Rhine. These letters describe his thoughts and actions as the war progressed around him. Otis also kept the letters his father and mother sent him during the war. These, paired with Otis' letters, give a well-rounded look into his life during those three years. He also kept a small diary in which he recorded every location the 83rd Co, 6th Marine Regiment visited. This list is transcribed in the back of this book.

The unpublished letters are transcribed from the original documents and incorporated in their original form with misspellings, punctuation errors, and notations. Many primary

1 Mitchell Yockelson, "They Answered the Call: Military Service in the United States Army During World War I, 1917–1919," *Prologue* 30, no. 3 (Fall 1998), www.archives.org.

and secondary sources are incorporated to create a more complete record of this Marine and the 83rd Company. The poems that begin each chapter were written by Otis during the war and shortly thereafter. This book aims to tell his story and show how he played a role in some of the most decisive battles of the war.

I want to thank James Coburn and his family for preserving these documents and Otis' history for the last 100 years and allowing me to access all of the letters. I would like to thank Byron Scarbrough for helping in the research of the 83rd Co. I also owe many thanks to Steven Girard for pointing me in the right direction for research whenever I got stuck and providing priceless documents for the research; without him, I would not have been able to do justice to Otis' legacy nor the 83rd Company's. I also want to thank Kevin Seldon for his help in the research. I would also like to thank my grandparents for providing a comfortable space in which to creatively work on the book. Finally, I would like to thank my fiancé, Audrey, for supporting me throughout the entire writing process.

INTRODUCTION:
 PRE-WAR AND
 AMERICAN LEAD UP

A Poet at War

*You were wounded,
 but bullets never touched you in Belleau Wood.
 War lingered when you left the Great War.
 Scars of survival blasted your days,
 Wheat fields of Soissons trampled by your run
 brushed the enemy as Marines fell before you.
 Hand-to-hand combat; you saw in their eyes
 a loss of innocence fade to rest.
 One-hundred years have passed since Belleau Wood.
 Delicate seedlings of wheat rise one-by-one
 marking ground once mixing blood.
 Ghost guns fire from empty chambers,
 silent now that you're gone*

JAMES COBURN (GRANDSON OF OTIS JOSLYN)

OTIS WILBRA JOSLYN JR. was born on October 11, 1895 in Charleston, Missouri to Otis and Augusta Danforth Joslyn. He was the first child of six—sisters Evelyn (1896), Grace (1899), Floy (1899), Emily (1904), and brother Lewis Danforth (1907). He grew up in Charleston, Missouri until leaving to attend the University of Missouri in the College of Arts and Sciences. In 1917, he made the decision to join the Marine Corps as the United States went to war.

The War

Austria's Arch Duke, Franz Ferdinand, was assassinated on June 28, 1914 in Sarajevo, Bosnia. This caused a wave of violence to race across Europe as blame was thrown from one country to another. The culmination of this blame was World War I. Russia, Germany, France, Great Britain, the Austro Hungarians, and the Ottoman Empire waged massive all-out war on each other, ruining the picturesque landscapes of Europe and the Middle East. By 1917, the war had been raging for over three years. It pushed rapid industrialization as new machines of war were deployed in great numbers across three continents. Along with the machines, innovative methods of warfare were developed to combat the devastating firepower the machines could put out. Trenches became the means of transportation, message relay, and defense as they proved to be safe out of the scopes of the enemy. Trench networks spread over 500 miles from the English Channel to the border of Switzerland. This created a stalemate as neither side could dislodge their opponent from their position.

The United States avoided being dragged into the quagmire of the European War. Instead, the US sold aid to France and Great Britain. However, as the aid increased, the Germans began using U-boat submarines to track and attack the American shipments in the Atlantic Ocean. By 1917, these attacks had escalated to a point that the Americans could not ignore them any longer.

On top of the U-boat attacks, the United States faced another threat below their own border with Mexico. Pancho Villa, a Mexican revolutionary, raided the southern territory of the US around Columbus, New Mexico, killing eight soldiers and nine civilians. This caused U.S. President Woodrow Wilson to send the army under Brigadier General John Pershing into Mexico to pursue Villa.²

2 Thomas Boghardt, "Chasing Ghosts in Mexico: The Columbus Raid of 1916 and the Politicization of U.S. Intelligence during World War I," *Army History* (Fall 2013): 7–10.

On March 1, 1917, President Wilson made the Zimmerman telegram public. This was a telegram from German Foreign Secretary Alfred Zimmerman to the German ambassador in Mexico. It proposed a military alliance between Germany and Mexico in the event that the United States declared war on Germany. It promised the return of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona to Mexico at the end of the war.³ On March 18, President Wilson learned that German submarines sank three American ships in the English Channel as they headed back towards Texas.⁴ On April 6, 1917 the United States Congress declared war upon Germany.

The nation now prepared to go to war. No one could envision how great the American war contribution would be but they began to collect supplies and manpower. American citizens started to see the war as a duty to not only country but to the security of the world. Otis Joslyn was another young American, 22 at the time, who was eager to fight the Germans.

3 Byron Farwell, *Over There: The United States in the Great War, 1917–1918* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999), 33–34.

4 Frank Freidel, *Over There: The Story of America's First Great Overseas Crusade* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990), 4.

CHAPTER ONE: BASIC TRAINING

A Mother's Prayer

*Christ born of Mary — help I pray!
The shrieking bombs make fearful day;
My body broken 'neath the cross,
A world gone mad, the pain and loss.*

*All peoples suffer from war's plan,
Thy teachings spurned by willful man;
False war-gods stalk the swirling earth
To sow dark hatred, fear and dearth.*

*All Christian love is cast away
As banshee shells death's music play.
The nations lock in bitter strife —
The cheapest thing — a human life.*

*As Mary loved — I loved my son.
The sands of my life course have run;
Give him Thy spirit on this earth,
So he may aid in world's rebirth!*

OTIS WILBRA JOSLYN JR.

ON FEBRUARY 20, 1917, Otis Joslyn enlisted into the Marine Corps at Paris Island, South Carolina at the age of 22 and was assigned to the Company "G", Marine Barracks. Paris Island was an eight-thousand-square-acre piece of hot, insect-infected, flat bog that became the primary recruit depot and training ground for Marines who came from

east of the Mississippi River.⁵ When the Marines arrived in 1917, the island was still being constructed. It had no roads, barracks, nor latrines capable of handling the thousands of new recruits.⁶ These new Marines were given physical work to strengthen their bodies. This consisted of digging the latrines, trenches for pipelines, collecting shells for roads, and mixing concrete for the barracks and other works.

While at the island, Otis underwent training to become a leader and an effective Marine. He used his college education to propel himself into a leadership position. This was expressed in a newspaper article in *The Evening Missourian* from March 8, 1917: “Otis Joslyn, a former student in the College of Arts and Science...expects his University training to assist him to become an officer.”⁷ On April 25, he qualified as a marksman. Due to a predisposition to leadership, Otis began as a Private but quickly rose in the ranks to a Corporal in May of 1917 after only 3 months.⁸

It was a hard life of training, but it was meant to be. Another recruit at the island, Thomas L. Stewart, quoted in a letter home, “the life on the island really shouldn’t be called a part of the life in the service for they make it hard on recruits purposely. I suppose so they won’t crab if they ever run up against anything like it on an expeditionary force or

5 James Carl Nelson, *I Will Hold: The USMC Legend Clifton B. Cates, from Belleau Wood to Victory in the Great War*, (New York: New American Library, 2016), 26.

6 Ibid, 27.

7 “Otis Joslyn Enlists in the Marine Corps,” *The Evening Missourian*, March 8, 1917, www.newspapers.com.

8 U.S. Marine Corps Muster Rolls: 1893–1958. Microfilm Publication T977, 460 rolls, Records of the U.S. Marine Corps, Record Group 127, National Archives in Washington D.C.

something where it can't be helped.”⁹ Stewart also mentions that at one point the Marines were told point blank: “Don't write home and tell your impressions till you get to the barracks as you might influence men not to enlist.”¹⁰ On the island, guest officers told stories of the war and the brutality of the Germans to the Marines, which created a fervor in some to go overseas. Otis mentions that one such lecture from a British officer on the horrors within Belgium created such rage inside of him that he went back to his barracks and rammed his bayonet into the wall until he calmed down.

During the training on Paris Island, the men could request furloughs to visit home and take trips to local towns for a break. One such town the Marines were allowed to visit was Savannah, Georgia. There, the Marines would attend dances and make a good impression of the corps to the civilians. Otis was also lucky enough to secure a furlough and returned home for Christmas, staying from December 19 to 30.¹¹ Life on the island was hard but it prepared the Marines before they moved on to further training.

Shortly after returning from his furlough, Otis transferred to Quantico, Virginia on January 8, 1918.¹² Outside the town of Quantico was a six-thousand-acre camp built as another training ground.¹³ It was here that the Marines received their combat training for the conditions they would face in Europe. Trench warfare became the standard exercise. In the mountains around Quantico, practice trenches and barbed wire entanglements served as their school. The Marines

9 James P. Gregory Jr, *The Story of One Marine: The World War I Letters and Photos of Pvt. Thomas L. Stewart*, (Ashland, OR: Hellgate Press, 2017), 42.

10 Ibid, 15.

11 U.S. Marine Corps Muster Rolls.

12 U.S. Marine Corps Muster Rolls.

13 Nelson, *I Will Hold*, 29.

were also trained by Canadian, English, and Scottish officers on the hell that was France. The training involved “machine gun instruction, bayonet drill, dummy hand grenades, rifle range practice, trench digging, trench warfare, combat drills, and the basic principles and fundamentals of modern warfare.”¹⁴ These were supplemented with lectures on gas by the officers.

It was not all training, though. The Marines had the opportunity to take trips into Washington D.C. on the weekends, since it was not too far from Quantico. Otis took trips as often as he could while also visiting family and friends that lived near Virginia. These trips gave the Marines a way to reconnect with civilian life. They attended dances and gatherings hosted by groups like the YMCA or caught a show downtown. Some men also had the good fortune to be invited by locals for dinner and nights out on the town. It was a stark contrast between the war and their training and the life of the American public.

It was also at Quantico that the Marines were assigned into companies, battalions, and regiments. Otis was assigned to the 133rd Replacement Company, 1st Replacement Battalion (USMC). He trained at Quantico for only one month before being shipped to France.

Letter from Otis to Mother, October 11, 1917

Paris Island, S.C.

My Dear Mother,

Well, twenty two years ago tonight I spent my first night on the old world snuggled close against your

14 United States Marine Corps, *History of the 96th Company, 6th Marine Regiment in World War I*, (Washington DC: U.S. Marine Corps, 1967), 49.

side. I want to thank you and Father for bringing me into this world a sound baby. Also for the training you have given me. Wherever I go I always feel at ease because I believe myself to be a thoroughbred. I am, I have found my dear mother, a very Autocratic Democrat.

Thanks to you two I believe that I would be unable to do a real, mean, dirty thing such as going back on a pal in time of stress or ruining a pure, good, girl. These, according to the law of the eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth that I am living by, and loving, are the essentials to real greatness.

Two weeks from today I am going to go up for a transfer to go to France. I want to win the gold braided hat cord over there. Why mother, a man that other men will charge into Hell with ought to be in the trenches with a commission. Your twenty two years old baby boy can and must do that. I am not bragging, I am stating a fact. I can get under their skins.

I do not want you to worry about a thing. If you do not hear from me remember good news and no news are the same. Never before have I felt the pure joy of being normally healthy.

With my love,
Your boy

Letter to Dad from Otis, October 25, 1917

Paris Island, S.C.

Dear Dad,

I have been over to the Y this afternoon and have heard a Mr. Scoville, who was a captain in the British Army in the Boer War tell of scenes in France. To hear

him talk certainly makes a fellow want to go over. I came back to the bunkhouse, put my bayonet on my rifle and rammed her in the pine wall a few times. I am going to get Lieutenant White, my old drill instructor, the one who made me corporal, and go up for a transfer to Quantico for oversea service. You know I went up five weeks ago and was told to come back now.

He (the British captain) told of going to a hospital in Belgium and going into a room where there were over two hundred French and Belgian girls from 15 to 22 giving birth to German babies. Also a hospital where there were little children who had been blinded and some with hands cut off by drunken German soldiers.

One time three American Ambulances picked up 22 wounded Germans, the Germans opened machine fire and wounded American nurses.

He told of some place where 5000 Canadians held back 80,000 Germans for 11 days and twelve nights being in the trenches all of the time. He also told of Haig's "little army" who fought the Germans to a standstill at the beginning of the war. He saw the great advance at Vimy Ridge where 60,000 Germans were blown to Hell. It took 6,000 miners, 2 years to dig under Vimy Ridge. They put 200,000,000 lbs of explosives under it. He saw Sir Douglas Haig put on the electric switch. He has been doing Y work. I must go "over the top" and if there is any way to go I'm going.

With oceans of love,
Your boy, Otis

Letter to Otis from Mother, November 16, 1917

Charleston, MO

My dear son,

I had your postal saying you had received and were enjoying your birthday cake, also telling of the club where you could meet pleasant people and have good reading matter. A young Corporal called on Dad and told him good news of you. He thought and talked a good deal of you on your birthday and I would have a letter from you written on that day and it has come, a very splendid good letter too, expressing the highest sentiments. I am glad you are so giving and well and strong that you rejoice in your young manhood. It makes us, who are you Mother and Father, seem young again, and the Legend of the Phoenix is indeed true.

Now sonny-boy as to your going to France, study the question well. Remember that you are working for "Uncle Sam" now, and perhaps he will send you to the front when he thinks the time is right. Also remember that the hardest part over there is to wait patiently day by day, doing the common-place things, until the time is ready for some activity.

Also think of the condition of the trenches at best, I know you are not afraid to die, but it is much harder to live, day by day, fighting the same old battles than to do one great act of heroism. You have only one period of life on this old world, use it as best you can, your soul is immortal, you will have countless other spheres of activity but I believe right here is the place of greatest importance for the souls of man.

Now, sonny-boy, above all things, do not be taken prisoner by the enemy. I fear the atrocities inflicted upon young men far more than I fear all their guns.

If you should be taken, keep a brave heart and a clear brain, it may be only for a little while.

No, I am sure you could not do a mean, dirty act toward another. Neither must you sin against your own body which is the temple of God, grander far than any made by man, for God himself is the architect, and upon the Mothers and Fathers, has he conferred the great honor of being the builders. I think it a great honor to be able to have garnered the confidence of the men under you, that is because you have the “one touch of nature that makes the whole world kin”. The touch of a kind and loving heart.

The old Norse legends of the Valkyries is true, only with us of a broader civilization, the thoughts and prayers of the Mothers and of the brave soldiers are the...[MISSING]

Letter to Mother from Otis, November 25, 1917

Paris Island, S.C.

My Dear Mother,

My address is 3rd Company, 2nd Platoon, Overseas Battalion, I received the letter that you wrote me while you were in St. Louis, and I am very glad that you went and had a good time.

You said that you hoped that I was reasonably happy. Why I was never happier in my life, now as I am pretty sure of doing what I have dreamed of at least 100 times about since the war has been going on.

I am acting Sergeant now—just the same as I was an acting Corporal. I may be a sergeant in a month or two or a year—one can never tell.

In two other letters I am sending some pictures home. You can open and look at them. There are some

pictures of me in them. I am enclosing a picture of myself that I like better than and one I have had taken. I was looking solemn as usual when a fellow stepped out of another bunkhouse and yelled "Smile, smile, smile" at me and of course I went and did.

The Steinmeyers have invited me over next Sunday to take dinner with them and I think that I shall be able to go. I have gone over twice in the past month to see a meal of Mrs. Steinmeyer. I sent a postal to Alina and she immediately showed it to the young lady and said "Look Edith what my soldier Boy sent me." Edith said that he was her Soldier Boy. Alina replied "Edith just let me have him and you can have all the rest." Dr. Steinmeyer is superintendent of the schools in Beaufort County. He has a lovely family, marriage, and love with real loud children must be alright. But the greatest love I will ever have is for you. Wounded men say "mother, mother" not "wife, wife" or anything else.

Your own baby boy,
Corporal Joslyn

Letter to Mother from Otis, December 11, 1917

Paris Island, S.C.

Dear Mama,

I am enclosing a picture of myself after I had demolished the birthday cake and two clippings from a Savannah paper that will tell you what a great time I had Saturday and Sunday.¹⁵ It makes us feel very proud, the compliments that we received. You can

15 Only one clipping survives and the headline reads "Marines Honor Guests of City".

imagine the dance after most of the boys had been here on the island so long. There were certainly a lot of subtle, admiring glances exchanged by Marines and girls. Really mother, it was the sweetest and prettiest lot of girls I have ever seen. As you see the Daughters of the Confederacy were on the “good time” program. These northern lads certainly have received a good impression of the south and Southern women.

I met a Spanish and French girl who was born in Argentina and you know I always like brunettes best. She certainly was a dream. The blackest hair, the brownest eyes, and the sweetest voice, if I were 18 I would be desperately in love with her. Told her so and she seemed to like it. She had engagements for all the time I was there so I said “Adios”

We have been parading for motion practice all morning.

I had Sunday before last dinner with the Steinmeyers and certainly had a splendid time. Things are much more pleasant than when I first came here. From Jan 21 to Sept 27 is a long time to stay away from nice girls for a fellow like me. I have made good here—am an acting Sgt now. Right guide for company. Have made good in Beaufort and Savannah. To be frank, I have service in my blood and breeding. People know that my folks are what you all are. I am a very good dancer now. Dance straight as a pole. The matrons in Savannah worked my dancing—once in a while I could see an approving smile.

Love,
Otis

Letter to Mother from Otis, December 1, 1917

Paris Island, SC

Dear Mother,

We are now having the coldest weather I have seen on Paris Island. Everyone thought that we would be off of the Island by this time, and everyone is a little disappointed that we are not. I have quit thinking when we are going to leave. It will come someday, out of a clear sky, when least expected.

I received the cake yesterday which came in good condition and I am enjoying it very much. I am going to take a big hunk of it down to Gunnery Sgt. Callahan tonight and we go down to a little store and get some hot coffee and enjoy ourselves. He was a Sgt. that I was under while drilling recruits. He is acting Sgt. Major now, and a fine man.

I suppose all the girls will come home for Christmas. I would like to be home too but do not think I will be able to be there.

I will be on Paris Island ten months tomorrow.

I have not been over to see the Steinmeyers since the time I told you about. I would like to have Dad typewrite a letter to Dr. Steinmeyer thanking him and his family for the kindness they have shown and the interest they have taken in me.

If you and Dad decide to come to see me we had better wait a while to see where I go. We might go to Quantico, VA and that is only a little ride from Washington. I might be able to get off and come to some city. Then you all might not think it best to come. We might go any place in the world when we go. We can see about this later.

I wrote Dad a letter and hope I shall hear from him soon. I am well, in good health and spirits.

What did you think of the clippings? Keep care of yourself and don't worry about me.

Your boy,
Otis

Letter to Danforth from Otis, December 18, 1917

Paris Island, S.C.

Dear Brother,

I received your box with the cake and will open it on Christmas. I hope you will have snow for Xmas time. The Steinmeyer boys have seen snow only once. In Savannah when it snows all the little boys and girls have a holiday from school. Do you go rabbit hunting anymore? I would like to go on a good hunt like we did last Christmas—wouldn't you? Be a good boy.

Your Brother,
Otis

Letter to Mother from Otis, December 18, 1917

Paris Island, S.C.

Dear Mother,

Brigadier General somebody is coming to the Island today, and he will inspect our Battalion tomorrow.

We are still having rather cold weather. I imagine that the little Steinmeyers are delighted to see ice and I expect that they had some skating.

How is dad getting along with his farming interests? How did the corn turn out this year and how does the wheat look?

Some time ago I received a letter from Uncle George and have answered it. He gave me Aunt Nettie's address. Preston Apartments, Baltimore, and I sent a postal to Grace, who is engaged in Red Cross work.

I will be glad when the war is over for I want to see a lot of country—Canada, all of the United States, Mexico, and some of South America. I expect to row and ramble for at least three years after the war—and I think Dear Mother that I will be on the go most of my life. I might go to a school of Navigation after the war and get on some Tramp Steamer or I might get into the Secret Service. Really I might be anything from a Horse Trader to a preacher—I would never be a preacher.

As I would come home Xmas I am sure that I would have to tell a good many people that it was none of their business why I joined the service when I did.

I read in the paper where Roy Howlett is thinking of joining the Marines. I believe that it will do him a great deal of good as it does really everyone who comes into the Service.

I see where Jack Hall has gone into Aviation.

—Outside for Chow—

I found a package in my cake box and will not open it until Christmas. It looks like Danforth is writing so I suppose it is from him.

Please excuse writing but I hold the box on one knee and sit on a bed or another box

With love, your boy,
Corporal Joslyn

Letter to Mother from Otis, January 1, 1918

Paris Island, S.C.

Dear Mama,

Just a few lines to let you know that I arrived here safe and sound.¹⁶ We arrived in Savannah 15 hours late. I spent a few pleasant hours out at the Honigan house. Mary was away but I met her sister Naomi who is two years older and lot prettier than Mary.

I was on a transfer list, and would have gone to Quantico, VA—I presume if I had been here but I have no regrets. I understand that on the 7th there are going to be 25 corporals transferred and I might be in that lot.

Everybody seems to have had a good time and are now ready for any work that Uncle Sam may have for them.

I received the knitted good and the case for my identification tag as well as the letters and candy.

I was pleased that Vera had made me a box of candy—But no picture of any description has she sent, I have asked her about the picture all I am going to.

She may not be the right one for me. She seems to be of the “Blue Ice” variety. Then if I ever took her in my arms and give her a few kisses and she was sure blue ice I would not want her because we would just naturally be mates. I am sort of angry with her but will, of course, not let her know it.

I went down and saw Harry Lee today. He seems pleased with everything and is glad that he has joined the Marines instead of being drafted into the Army.

16 Arrived back at Paris Island from his furlough home for Christmas.

I took the cigars to Sgt. Callahan and he thanked me in the Marine way that once out of the service I would think was abuse and no gratitude at all.

I have not the least idea where I will go or where I will be a month from now but am ready.

Lots of love—will write you when I leave,
Otis

Letter to Dad from Otis, January 5, 1918

Paris Island, S.C.

Dear Dad,

The Battalion has been reorganized. The tall men of each company are on the ends and the small men in the middle. I have a platoon now. A platoon consists of five squads, and a squad contain eight men. A bunk house holds our platoon so I am an acting sergeant with a platoon now, where is better than being right guide.

Sunday morning in Savannah I called up my friend Miss Mary Honigan but she was in Florida. Her mother came to the phone and asked if it was not Mr. Joslyn. She asked me to come to see them anyway, and I was glad to do so. I met again Mary's sister, Naomi, who is about two years older and prettier than Mary. She is about Evelyn's height but not so heavy, and blue eyes, and black hair, a real Colleen and a regular girl. I drank coffee and ate fruit cake until I was about to bust. The way Naomi jumped out of bed and got dressed (May, 10 years old, told this) when she heard Corporal Joslyn was coming must have indicate that she was glad to see me. I met her father, and he said that the Overseas Battalion made many friends in

Savannah, Naomi called up a girl friend and went down to the train with me. Last but not least she gave me a big box of fruit cake.

I had a fine time in the sleeper coming from Cairo. There was a lady and her three boys coming from Montreal to Birmingham. I had given the kids some Swedish in the sun room, and they told their mother about it. So I had the boys, upon the request of the mother, doing Swedish for the other passengers.

I met an old gentleman who was a second lieutenant at San Juan hill and he wanted me to stop over in Birmingham and visit him. Three ladies got off at Birmingham and took the trouble to shake hands with me and say goodbye. There was a lady who lived way up in Wisconsin who was going to visit her husband who coaches on the rifle range. I helped her along.

I wish you could see my platoon. They will average close to six feet and 170 pounds.

I was surprised when Marraine kissed me good bye at the station. She would not kiss me when I brought her home from the dance. I said half-jokingly if she was going to kiss me goodbye and she did—Whew! I felt it until chilling breezes of the Father of waters cooled me off a bit. She is a warm one—but sweet and nice. However, my heart is with my “Potsdam gents.” Managed to get thru the furlough without getting familiar with the fair sex.

Lots of love, Your boy,
Otis

Letter to Mother from Otis, January 10, 1918

Quantico, VA

Dear Mother,

I am now at the above address, situated upon the bank of the Potomac River, thirty four miles below Washington. My address is 133 Co, 6th Reg. Quantico, Va.

We have better chow than we had on Paris Island. It is, of course, colder here but I am certainly glad that I was transferred with the Battalion. We have liberty from Saturday 12:40 noon until Sunday night at 11:30 PM when we get the last train from Washington to Quantico. I intend to go to Baltimore this coming Saturday and visit Aunt Nettie and Grace. Also hunt up Roslyn Landon. It certainly is fine to be able to go to the two cities and in fact any place that we can go to in that time. They give a lunch here every once in a while and Mr. Wilson and Mrs. Daniels come here once in a while as chaperones for the girls who come from the cities. My, I certainly am glad that I am a United States Marine.

Every evening there is a Band Concert that precedes the picture show at the Y. It is also nice to see a train go by once in a while, and to get rid of that isolated feeling that we had on Paris Island.

I do not know how busy we will be here or when we will go but I do not care if we are here all winter, in fact, I hope so.

I have found out where my "Buddy" Warren Clark is, and am going to write him. He was on guard at Brooklyn Navy Yard and his girl came down to meet him when he was relieved. A fellow came along and insulted her and little Warren beat him up. Warren

got two black eyes, 2 teeth knocked out, and his head cut, but as the lad told me, you ought to have seen the other fellow.

With lots of love,
Your son,
Otis

Letter to Otis from Mother, January 14, 1918

Charleston, MO

My dearest Sonny boy,

We have had two fine letters from you since you left us at Christmas time. It was certainly a very, very happy Christmas for us all to have all my dear children at home once more seemed to me the greatest pleasure I could ask. It is one that I am sure will live in the memory of us all as long as life shall last. I see you now in your soldier clothes and not as a civilian and we think you are a mighty fine soldier. As Dad said, you are an ideal looking soldier and wore your uniform with more grace than any boy he had seen returning from the camps.

It is well you left here when you did for the train on which you went to Cairo was the last one for several days. It turned cold and we have been having a series of heavy snows ever since. It has been like a Michigan winter.

Dad had a nice letter from Dr. Steinmeyer. I am certainly glad you did not take advantage of a foolish girl and betray the splendid hospitality that had been shown you. I will enclose the letter. So you found a pleasant place to spend a few hours in Savannah and another pretty girl. Well it is good that Vera sent the candy, she has you still in mind any way, and she is right about the picture. You can keep a memory picture of her which will not fail with the hands, perhaps of someone else.

Marraine is a sweet little girl, more sweet than triscuit, I expect and I am glad that you had a last glimpse of her so as to overcome any lingering fondness.

I received 5 letters in one mail, which is unprecedented for me, I asked Dad to choose or guess the one I opened first. He selected the one from you which was correct. I have a heart and soul love for my boy.

So glad you saw Harry Lee. Crawford Edwards has also been sent to the Island.

The More boys have both gone and others are going.

We had a very sad death with funeral service yesterday. Egelle Howlett was ill only one week with a complication of disease. Her poor mother is heartbroken as they were inseparable companions. Egelle was a sweet little girl, a sort of a toy for her mother, but with a kindly smile for everyone, and really unspoiled.

The girls are busy at school again, and I have been busy with the multitude of things left behind. Danforth is at home during these heavy snows as he has a "game" leg.

Am glad you received the warm wove things. Write to grandma as she made them and suggest that she make others for you such as your socks. She will be glad to do so and we want our boy to keep warm. Let me know also the articles you need, you can help some one else if you get too many which is not likely.

Keep us informed of your changes, send my book home if you leave for other parts. I would like for you to read it if possible. Brother Minor quoted you in his new years sermon.

With love and dedication,
Mamma

Letter to Mother from Otis, January 16, 1918

Quantico, VA

Dear Mother,

I went to Baltimore Saturday and Sunday, and saw Aunt Nettie, Grace, and the Landons. I knew Grace and she knew me the minute I saw her. I called up Roslyn and asked her if she remembered a little boy who use to live around the shore and she could not think who it was so I told her it was Otis Joslyn. She said "What? Well where did you come from? This is like a thunderbolt our of a clear sky." So I proceeded to explain. She is teaching music and takes vocal. She is one of the few people I really enjoy listening to a solo. Cora is real tall but Roslyn is about 5'2, plump, with blue eyes and brown hair with the daintiest hands and feet.

Mr. and Mrs. Landon look the same. I do not remember Mrs. Frank Landon very well and like her very much. We talked over old time, some that she blushingly remembered. I had a delightful time.

Little did I think when we took our boat trip about 12 years ago, from Washington to Old Point Comfort, VA that I would be on the Banks of the Potomac in a Marine Camp.

Mr. Landon told me that Uncle Fred was getting fat and looking well. Uncle Fred, so Mr. Landon said, raised about 2,000 bushels of corn last years. The last baby is a fine looking kid.

I do not know how long I will be here, or where I will go when I leave, but would like to stay here until Spring. I would like to hear from some of you folks. I suppose Dad received a letter from me and I believe that I sent one to you too.

With lots of love, your boy,
Corporal Joslyn

Letter to Mother from Otis, January 18, 1918

Quantico, VA

Dear Mama,

Today I went and saw my company commander, Captain Burnes, and asked him if I could put in an application for the officers' training school here. He told me that he saw the Major, and would have to wait until some kind of order came out. He asked me how much schooling I had had, and I told him. Also if I had come thru the recruit station. I told him yes and I had drilled recruits for 7 months. He said "you are alright then, what is your name?" I told him and he said it did not make any difference whether I was here or in France as they had a school over there too. Now I do not know if they give any exam or not to get into the school but think that a recommended action in all. However, I am going to take a slam at it anyhow. Frankly, I could not pass at all in any hard math but I will make a crack at it anyhow. I do not think the exams are very hard whether you make good in the school and show the real ability to handle men that counts.

I would like to hear from some of you. I have not heard a line since I have been away—going on three weeks.

I saw Harry Lee when I returned to the Island. He seems pleased with the service. I tell you, old Paris Island is the best training camp, and has more discipline than any camp in the country.

The boys grumble while they are there, but when they get away they make fun of less dulled and disciplined troops. Then they are proud that they are graduates of Paris Island.

Just before I left the Island, I had the sweetest dream of you. Then I had the sweetest dream of Vera last night. I dreamed that she was crying and I had my arms around her, comforting her.

If I get a commission, I may be in the Marines all my life. Then, I may not get one and even get out at the end of the War. You can't tell a thing about me. I can't even myself. Don't tell anyone of my trying for a commission but Dad, and let it be a secret. We are well in this camp. Very little sickness. We go on long hikes thru the ice and snow carrying heavy marching orders about 48 lbs in all. Today some of my men were tired (in my squad) and so I carried two rifles in each hand (8.67 lbs per rifle) for about a half mile. I had count my clothing and my equipment about 70 lbs. Not bad eh! For a slender gent like me. I had just got thru telling one fellow that I had lived pretty clean and I showed them what I could do. I have quite a bit of endurance and believe I can stand as much as any other man in the platoon.

Write me soon,

Address 133 Co, Quantico, VA

With oceans of love and a kiss on each wave, I am your
Baby boy,
Corporal Joslyn