

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



In Honor of Veterans' Day

During WWI while our boys were serving in the armed forces, the Brighton Argus would publish "letters home" from the service men. The following was taken from the Brighton Argus on July 17, 1918:

"Peter Leitz, Jr. writes of remarkable experience in Front Line Trenches."

"Somewhere in France, May 30, 1918:

My Dear Parents:

I wrote you a letter a little while ago and as it had a little too much news in it, it was returned to me so I will write you another one and see if it will pass.

How are all the folks at home? I am as well as can be expected; have just come out of the hospital. I was there for a few days getting over the effects of shell shock. You see we had a little excitement in our trench one day—we started to bombard the Huns at 11p.m. and it lasted until 6:30 a.m. We sure gave them hell; they also sent some back to us. A shell landed in our trench and killed a fellow who was standing next to me, also a lieutenant, sergeant and three other privates, wounding a number of others but I was in luck then and did not get a scratch. Our trench was partly destroyed and my lieutenant gave me a message to deliver a little ways back, when a 6-inch shell landed near me and exploded. The only thing that saved me was because it was so near to me that the force of the explosion threw me into the air. I bet I turned over a half a dozen times before I fell; that's how I got my trip to the hospital. After I get my eats I will be on duty guarding an ammunition depot.

There sure are some dandy fellows in my company, and we all have got lots of nerve because that's what you need here.

I started to write this letter on my gas mask but one of the boys just finished writing so I got the little box that he was using as a desk. I have been in a few gas attacks and if there is anything more like hell on earth I would like to know what it is, but it did not get any of us. I wish you could of seen me a few minutes ago, you would of laughed yourself sick. I was "reading my shirt." You no doubt do not understand

what I mean; well I will tell you. I have a few pets and they stay on my shirt next to my body. We call them "cooties;" it is hard to keep them off of your body even if we bathe and change our clothes often as they are in the billets and dug-outs. We use some powder that keeps them off but when you run out of it you get cooties instead.

I am sending you a little paper called the "Wild Rose;" it is the Mother's Day edition; it is printed by our chaplain.

I have received only one letter from you and that one was forwarded from New Jersey. I tell you a letter from home helps a fellow a lot over here as we have lots to think of but our minds go back home most of the time. Tell all the kids to write. Don't worry about me as that won't help a bit. Hope you are all in the best of health as it leaves me. Will close now with love.

*From your son,
Pvt. Peter J. Leitz
Co. M. 168 Inf.,
American Ex. Forces"*

Peter was part of the "Rainbow Division" and saw much action in the trenches in France. In service for approximately 1-1/2 years, he returned home in April 1919, after being "gassed" and in the hospital for 10 weeks and near death for some time. The gas had wrought havoc with his heart and lungs.

Peter went on and married and began a wonderful life here in Brighton and raised a great family. One of whom is our own Norma Jean Leitz Pless.

The above was submitted by Mindy Kinsey.

In reviewing this story with Norm Jean Leitz Pless, she gave us the following update regarding her father. "He was a hero to me, not just for serving his country but devoting his life to do for others and give back to his community all his life. He was finally acknowledged by his country by receiving a Purple Heart in the early 1940s."