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Dear Unanimous

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Dear Unanimous

By SAM BATTELL

Muskrat Creek, Idaho,
July third.

My dear Unanimous:

I got your letter about two weeks ago but since you wanted something you could read I hesitated to answer it until I could get the assistance of Mr. Underwood. As the fella says, "Why don't you get a typewriter so we can interpret your effort?"

I have been having a wonderful time. First I was repairing and rehanging telephone line, then I took a small trail crew out and ran them about three weeks until the regular boss got in, after that I took a pack string out and have been doing office duty the last week. Then the end of the fiscal year came around and you have to have a good head in the office at least once in a while. Had $6.33 yet to spend and it took two days to figure where to use it.

I'm going back to Two Mouth some time today, if it stops raining. Last night I wanted to go to town to celebrate but a lightning storm was forecasted so Uncle says you better stick, so I done it. All that I could have done was get a little tight. A dance was being thrown but all that I have is corked boots and I couldn't have got within gunshot of the floor.

I'm getting to be quite a timber beast. Wear a hickory shirt, copper riveted pants, wide belt, black galluses, corked boots, heavy wool sox, pants turned up 10 in. above the sidewalk, a little black Garibaldi hat and a short black pipe. You would not suspect me of being the Pride of Onawa.

Wish you were here. We have a pool here quite unlike the college pool. You can take a light into it, don't have to use a case knife or spatula to pick the lock, don't have to let a man down from the balcony on the soft end of a belt to enter or anything. It is about 25 miles long and 6 or 8 miles wide in places. The office assistant has a wife which cramps the style of us back to nature swimmers. They went for a boat ride last night so we dove off the dock and got all wet.

Guess I'll ring off.

Horatio.

Muskrat Creek, Idaho,
August third.

Dear Anny:

Reference is made to your letter of July 25. I wish I could master the art of writing a long letter without saying anything
like you have. Don’t think I’ll get out of this country till Christ-
mas. I think I can get a job with Uncle as a scaler or something
to keep me busy.

To correct some false impressions, I am a Smoke Chaser. My
specialty is hitting brush and hopping hills in quest of that
devastating smokemaker, Fire. This summer I have been trail
crew foreman, packer, boatman (but not vulgar), office fellow
and so forth—ad infinitum.

I also go out and string the lady visitors along when they stay
in the boat while the high and mighty males come ashore to
transact business and other things. The packer says, “Ray,
why in Hell do you stay out here in the sticks? Why don’t you
go to town where you can exercise that talent?” You see I
took his girl away from him. I love me, I love me, not?

I got set back the other day tho. An elderly lady says, “It’s
such a nice outing for you boys.”

I bought me a pack frame to take the sharp corners off the
cans when I run the hills. Even the three days rations gets
as rough as a true forester’s whiskers. Also I now have a smoke-
chaser’s saw. It is only good when another man is along because
it’s a two man falling fake. It is a regular 5 ft. saw that rolls
up into a bundle 18 in. across, has wood handles and a heavy
leather case to carry it in.

Oh, yes, I almost forgot. The other day I was expecting a sud-
den and violent death. You see her old man is mean with a
shotgun. I brought her over here, put two outboards on the back
of a skiff, got out the surf board and we went aquaplaning. It
was almost supper time when we took the girls home. As they
were in bathing suits it looked bad I suppose, walking in at
supper and at a hotel. Anyway after supper she went for a
walk and the first I heard, the cook, who is also young, though
married and awaiting divorce, called up and wanted to know
if the young lady had been here. Then she wanted to know if
any of the boys were out. Of course we were all innocent, so we
took a few pictures of a lightning storm, answered the phone and
then went to bed. The next morning when the boat went up
there was the old man, looking like he wanted a pint of blood.
He didn’t get any from me.

I wish you were here. We could more than double the profits
with half the ante. Every time I even think of doing something
I say to myself, “I wish the Perfect Gentleman was
here.” Of course I would be reduced to second fiddle but it
would be worth it. I could manage. I have before. (Editor.—
Unanimous claims the above is fictitious, deceptive, false, exag-
gerated, extravagant and defamation of character.)

At that I’m not doing so badly. This girl’s mother over at the
hotel wanted me canned because I couldn’t find the boat they
were on one Sunday and they had to go hungry all day. The
next Saturday night they threw a birthday party over there and at the close of the festivities, no other hostess being in sight, I stepped up to her and announced, ‘‘Well, I’ve had a very pleasurable evening.’’

She had been sitting like a sandbag all evening watching me smoke cigarettes and eat candy, with a scowl on her face like an Alaska Indian Totem Pole. Afraid to leave the room for fear I would steal the wall paper I guess. Anyway she snapped out of it, jumped up and said, ‘‘I wonder where the hostess is. I’ll go look for her,’’ and then she beat it out into the other room.

Well, it was a great night. I had four or five days of whiskers on, a hickory shirt, my denim overalls and a wide belt. A great fellow! However, I had washed my hands and face (which same was a concession) and had taken off my corked boots. Also I had contributed a box of candy (the only other box was contributed by my friend the packer) and you know that all helps.

Having no more foolishness to indict and having disclosed nothing containing truth or importance, I will proceed to close.

Horatio.

S  S  S

Camp Five, Dublin Lbr. Co.
October Fifteenth.

The Perfect Gentlemen,
The Eldora Argonaut, ad infinitum:

See, I have retained me Latin. Reminds me of a story. One of the local products went into a drug store to buy a fountain pen. The soda jerker puts down the copy of True Confections he’s all wrapped up in and condescends to display some sales psychology. The local product sees one he likes and tries the point out by writing ‘‘Tempus Fugit.’’ The soda jerker takes a squint, throws out another pen and says, ‘‘Here, try this Mr. Fugit.’’ End of story, you may laugh now.

Oh, yes. I received an honorable discharge from Uncle and am now with the Dublin Lumber Co. Needless to say I am now buying my own stationery and literary supplies. My official capacity is Saw Scaler. That is, each day I go over the areas the sawyers are working and count the number of logs they have their number on. They are worth 5¢ per log per man or 10¢ per log per crew.

That sounds delicately simple but I occasionally have to scratch around to find a tree they have felled several others over. Some times the log I walk rolls suddenly or the bark slips off and so do I. The sawyers are all makes and breeds. French, Irish, German, State-o’-Maine and Mountain Negroes. Before I came up here an old boy said to me, ‘‘Too many Mountain Negroes up there.’’ When I got up here I look around, not a negro in sight but I do find several Montenegrins.
This is a government timber sale of fire killed timber. Practically 100 percent white pine. Trees up to 30 in. D. B. H. Must have been great before the fire. Since the fire the stuff has developed a layer of blue sap stain.

One of the last things I did for Uncle before leaving his employ was to take a pack string over to another ranger station. About the time I was supposed to start with the string a 1.08 in. rain developed and stalled me off. Then the saddle horse got sick. Exactly in the same manner as the lady in the Lydia Pinkham advertisements. However having none of Lydia’s pills handy we had to prescribe different treatment. Among other things we made her eat about half a pound of salt and applied a generous dose of Cayenne pepper. She recovered. If I can’t get a job as assistant to Major Stuart I’ll hire out as veterinary.

Had one happy experience just previous to the big rain. Was up near the head of the lake without a boat for a short time. Had to go either around the head of the lake or borrow a boat to go across to a fire. So I hiked down to the tourist camp and woke up a lady tourist and says, “Can I borrow your boat, the one with the motor on it?” She says, “There’s a ranger’s cabin over this way. Go ask the ranger. If he says all right, you can take it.” I says, “Thank you. I’m it.”

I went to the big city the other day and dropped into a hock shop. Bought myself a .32 Special for $6.50. Now I plan on spending a few Sundays at my lady friend’s hangout and we are going to give the local deer a treat. I believe she told me she had a .22. Don’t you kind of feel sorry for the deer? Think of them out there in the cold, dying, laughing themselves to death!

We have an old Frenchman in the camp here who will straighten up suddenly and yell at the old German across the bunkhouse, “What you do when you don’t do noolinks?”

Having started at the end and worked forwards like Perk Coville used to lecture—in the approved European manner—I will close.

Horatio.

Camp Five, Dublin Lbr. Co. December Twentieth.

Dear Unanimous:

Expect this to be your last letter from me for the time being. Am coming. Will be in Ames about time to register for the winter quarter.

Went deer hunting one Sunday in November. Went over to the lake and rented a boat and motor and started up the lake. At least thought it was up. It was after dark. Anyway when I got to the wrong end of the lake I turned around and started
back up. Got to the head of the lake about 11:30 p. m. They were waiting for me—two girls all alone. It had been storming out and Idaho in November does not grow columbines. I was cold. After a little tho they got me hot—no, warm. What I mean is that I got warmed thru after I had inhaled a quart of hot coffee.

Needless to say I got no deer. I came down the lake next day and walked into camp, 8 miles over a slushy right of way. Right after that it got colder than—you name it. It was so cold you had to back up to spit. We have to keep a fire going so that the hookers can keep the spare ropes on it to thaw them out. The jammer gets so stiff that we have to run it in low gear to shift. The logs are all frozen in the decks and the loading crew is going broke buying powder to break them with. And when they break, the owner of the trucks looks worried, the loading crew looks sad, the only one that is at all happy is the scaler—and I’m paid by the month.

When I first came up here a pile of my mail went up to Musk-rat on a slow boat, was unloaded, readdressed, went down the lake via the same slow boat. It hung around the postoffice until someone drifted over to get the occasional mail. I received 12 letters in one bunch. The fellow came into the office and asked, “Who’s this Horatio?” I told him it was this and he said, “Mr! You have 400 letters!”

This is quite a camp. They never heard of Bryan out here. They do everything we were told isn’t being done anymore, sleigh hauling in winter, drive the rivers in the summer and spring.

That puzzle peg you sent me is still a puzzle. Forty men in camp including this couldn’t work it. When you sent it to me I wondered what kind of a game you were trying to put over on me. Anyway, I put it out in the open and tried it once or twice. Then somebody else would take a whack at it. The camp boss tried it, the head book keeper tried it, the walking boss tried it. They all had the same story which ran like this: “A couple winters ago when I got snowed in down on Goose Creek the old man there had one of these and showed me how to work so I could do it good. Now you do it this way.” And then they’d sit down and wrestle with it a couple of times and go on with their story, “But damned if I can do it now.”

Well, as I says I’m coming east. A big burley from the wide open West where men are men and women are all that they are expected to be.

Horatio.