

IOWA HISTORY



McGuire Brothers Take Bullets Somewhere in France

“I was wounded in action on Nov. 8, 1918, chasing “Hans” out of beautiful France. Take it from me, we were hot on his trail when I got mine,” Harvey Jesse Taylor McGuire, an officer serving with 370th U.S. Infantry regiment, Company F, in France, wrote home to his parents in Des Moines.

One of three sons of Mr. and Mrs. A.O. McGuire, Jesse—as most people called him—gave a detailed account of the battle that sent him to an American Red Cross Hospital “somewhere in France.” The *Bystander* newspaper acquired a copy of his letter from his family and published it on December 20.

It had been raining for about six days when the Americans came upon a small village where German soldiers waited for them. Approaching the town over a crest of a hill, Jesse and his fellow soldiers faced the Germans’ machine guns.

“We kept right on after him,” Jesse wrote. The enemy’s guns “opened up and began belching out fire and brimstone.” But nothing stopped the Americans.

Jesse complained that because he was a senior sergeant he was called to be with the captain at the rear. He wrote that he would much rather have been leading his men. But Jesse’s position at the rear didn’t make the battle any safer for him.

As the men moved forward they encountered snipers, who “make things miserable.” Taking cover behind a hill, Jesse spotted his brother, First Sergeant James L. McGuire, who had been wounded. “Jimmie” had been hit three times by bullets; it was the third that incapacitated him. As Jesse made his way with his brother to a first aid station, he was hit. He made it to the station, was tagged, treated and sent to a Red Cross hospital in an ambulance.

There he met nurses doing “wonderful work” for the Red Cross. “These nurses should be given medals of honor for their work over here,” he wrote. He asked his mother to “give freely” to the organization back home in Iowa.

Jesse ended his letter with a poem titled “My People.”

*“I pray for strength to struggle on
From morning until night,
Through seas of blood if it need be,
That you, my people, shall be free.”*

Both Jesse and James survived their wounds and returned to Des Moines. James was active in the American Legion, serving in various officer positions. In the spring of 1919 Jesse spoke before the Iowa State Senate. Both brothers were regular speakers at events honoring the service of Iowans during the war.

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