

Letter from Lee W Reuter to his sister Julia.  
Riot duty East St. Louis 1917

July 6, 1917 (Guess that is the date)

Dear Sis,

This letter is a continuation of my others and is for all.

At seven o'clock last night a bunch of us spread our blankets on the shipping platform and round the place, had to wear our side arms and have loaded rifles convenient. We tried to sleep and did very little (of that). However, all were still, the cement floor covered with 1 doubled LW blanket and a couple of sacks for pillows. Suddenly we were stirred and the sarge of guard banged away. We waited ready and 16 men ran full speed towards Black Valley. Our guards are now way out and in groups with no single false alarm. Next time I was in the group. It was a false alarm. On our return our guard fired from a tower over our heads. I think he was scared and fired at us. Made one more trip. Had lunch at 12 midnight. George had charge of 7 of us at 1 AM and we took our post at 21st and Brady right in one of the tough places. Ten shacks, prairie, and factories. We shifted guards hourly. Relief before us shot a man who died today. We have orders to shoot at the third call of Halt. The rain came at daylight so we climbed on porches for shelter. Six were ordered in and four I instructed to march post until relieved which was to be at 7 PM. But no relief came even at 9 PM. I did not want to fire because of conditions and could not leave either. At last I found a kid and sent a note. Bout 2 :30 AM we were relieved .....9 hours guard. I fried an egg for Louie and me. We were relieved of guard duty til tonight. Socks were issued. We took showers and then had dinner. Shoes issued this PM so I'm like a real guy. Tried to sleep but it's too hot so am writing. Have to go all over with rifles. Been on guard three nights now during a period both thru dawn and sunset. Feel tired yet happy. We expect something all the time. I have bites - flies and mesquitoes (sic) scratches, sunburn, bums etc. But it is OK. We stop cars - whites, blacks, groups, wagons -- we search them at night. We pass at day all but suspicious. I've stoped a lot. Last night I stoped four big fellows and searched them.

My shoes and socks make me feel like a real soldier -- even if my hat is out of shape. :)

Send me news of what is going on at home. Lots of love to Mother, dad Grandma, Louise and yourself.

As ever  
Your loving brother  
Lee.

Excerpts from the letter of July 13, 1917 East St. Louis, Illinois

**Lee Reuter to his mother. — —**

.....Very little excitement has been ours and some rumors of going home. ....

We have not had our clothes off since we left except to shower or to wash them. Then we have to run around wrapped in a blanket or in our mattress cover. (they are those white cloths you saw. We fill them with straw bu haven't had time to sleep on them yet. )

Night before last I was on post. I had just relieved Moore and walked down the alley to the Brewery Street. There i saw a flash of flame and everything lit up. I went to the end of my post, asking a watchman if he turned in the alarm. He said it was off his beat. then I beat it back to the Brewery and thru their arch. Thought it was their stable from the flames. In the courtyard the stable hands were rising like wild I sent one to call the Fire Department ( later found that another watchman had turned in the fire). Saw another building blazing, ran back, fired a shot into the air as I was supposed to - at regular intervals. No response. Fired four shots in all. Finally George came and an officer from M Co with a squad but not our company guard. I directed the fire department to the fire. Then went back to our company guard house, roused the guard who had not heard me, loading my rifle as I ran. I was put to guard the hoses until the fire was out.

Found out later it was just the coal pile and a shed but I was commended by the Lt as the danger was knocked out.

It is so hot we can hardly move. A strong dry wind has been blowing all day from the west and tents are going down all the time. Dust fills the air and we are grimy with it as it sticks to our body when we sweat. Our blankets are filled with dust. It come so thick that a person nearly chokes and is blinded for a time.

I spent all this morning learning our General Orders which are 12 in number. I know them by heart now.

Well, I have to go take a shower and get ready for our hours of drill. I am feeling OK,, Of course, irregular sleep and the heat makes lazy but I did

have a good sleep last night. Nearly 4 hours on the ground with a blanket and 5 hours on the cement floor with a blanket.

Really have to close now. I am all cramped up from 17 different positions trying to write this. George is off of drill right now and reports daily to the doc as he is have another flare up.

We are all hoping to get passes for time in St. Louis but don't know if so.

Was vaccinated 2 days ago. Guess it took.

I am happy and have all I need.

Your loving son,  
Lee.