

Fort Anderson
Newbern NC
May 31, 1863

Dear Sister and Mother,

It is the Sabbath Day. I tried hard to get to church but could not, for all the boats were gone but the garrison boat and that run on a stump and sprang a leak as it was returning from town this morning with a load of soft bread. So all our attempts were useless. My pass ran till 4 p.m. and I could have heard two sermons if I had gone. So much for going to church in the army. When we do go we must have our boots polished, brass bright, clothes brushed, dress coat on, and wear side arms or we are not permitted to leave camp. Take it in a day with the thermometer up to- (as high as you please) and with heavy coats buttoned up to the chin and our belts on it is not comfortable to say the least of it.

It is very hot here indeed today and as we have not had rain for some time it is quite dry. If it was not for the breeze blowing on the river we should find it about impossible to live these days. I suppose you consider it rather warm up home. But if we were to go there we should undoubtedly find it cooler than this climate. The men stand the heat much better than they did last year, as they have got acclimated, and then they don't have such hardships to suffer as they did. One year ago yesterday our Picket within 4 ½ miles of Richmond were driven in by the enemy and twice the 92nd was drawn up in line of battle for a fight. Yesterday everything was a peaceable and quiet in the Regt. as in a country town. Last night we slept in high tents with elevated bunks and board floors, our good beds with cooling breezes blowing off the river; but a year ago last night encamped on a muddy plain so level that the water would neither run off or stand still. Casey's Division were exposed to a tremendous rain storm of several hours duration accompanied with the most terrific thunder and lightning and in shelter tents open at both ends, form feet high and no floors but our blankets on the ground and in the morning found themselves in the same predicament as you would to roll yourself in a blanket and lie down in the mud in the middle of well traveled road, when the frost is coming out in the spring. One year ago today even at the very minute I am penning these lines, I was on the battlefield at Fair Oaks and shot and shell and grape and canister were whistling in the air around my head. All around on the right hand and on the left men were falling like grass before the mowers scythe and the scenes of horror witnessed after the battle's close; think you I will ever forget them? But today is as calm and peaceable as one could wish. Looking river-ward behold the wharf and the gate way and the guard house quietly refreshing in the sunshine; and the hens are marching and scratching about clucking and the flies hum and buzz around as they were wont to do, of a sunny Sunday afternoon at home. And such scenes as this one almost forgets the gallant men who gave their lives that day for their country and now sleep in nameless graves far from home and friends. One of our Co. in particular I remember that day, John Oliver of Gouverneur only 15 years of age. Boy that he was he flinched not under that murderous fire, till a ball pierced his heart, then true to the last, as he was falling he partly turned toward Lieut. Fox and said,

“Lieut. I am killed!! He fell at my feet and I think was dead as soon as he reached the ground. The son of a poor widow, yet none died a nobler death than he.

There are others too that I remember seeing for the last time that day, and if you see Albert Sevens ask him if he remembers the dinner that 5 of us had that day first before the battle, and that he remembers that those five never met together again,

But all this is a soldiers lot and without changes of some kind the world would grow monstrous and as we have changed from very hard to quite easy we should not complain. Not only, should we not complain but we should be thankful that providence has so ordered events that we are still alive and enjoying earth's comforts.

As for myself where I review the past I am filled with the deepest gratitude to the giver of all good for his mercies unto me, and with the utmost confidence in his love am willing to trust all things unto Him. Trusting that He will still continue to preserve us from all harm I remain as ever,

Your son and brother,
John