

How Pops Corresponded with General Burress

by Hank Williams, 399-AT

In 1945 Hank Williams, 399-AT, wrote to his dad, Henry, Sr., who had been a first sergeant in the 27th (NY) Division in WWI. Hank sent this correspondence to the Marshall as an example of General Burress' compassion.

October 26, 1945

Dear Folks,

Here is my application but I don't think it's worth much because of the two years of language requirement. If you think it would do any good, send it in anyway.

Yesterday I went to the football game in Bad Cannstatt just outside of Stuttgart and saw our team beat the 29th by a streak of luck. It was a very exciting game though!

You won't find Dillstein because it is just a suburb of Pforzheim—you know, like Brooklyn is to New York.

I know Mom likes Andy [Tyschen], but Pinky Burress is the finest general this Army has ever seen. That's why the 100th is such a swell outfit to be in.

Love, Henry

“So” his father continued, “I wrote this letter [to General Burress] and sent Henry's original letter with it.”

Henry B. Williams, Sr.
Four Valhalla Way
Verona, New Jersey
November 22nd, 1945

Dear General Burress:

I am an ardent home-front booster of the famous 100th Division. Of course, I have come under the spell of it's fame because I have a son who has been with the Division for almost two years.

The morale, loyalty, spirit, and the enthusiasm my boy has shown for the Army and particularly the Century has impressed me greatly. With experience that comes with the years, I realize that these traits are inspired by the leadership at the top. It has given me great satisfaction and confidence to have my son under your leadership, and the other leaders under your command.

How does one of the tiniest cogs of your organization, a “rear rank” Pfc. feel about your leadership? Well, the enclosed letter seems to answer that. I am taking the liberty of sending it to you, perchance you would care to stick it in the bottom of your pile of war commendations.

The claim, “I know Mom likes Andy,” refers to General Tychsen's most thoughtful Mother's Day greetings of a year ago. That message created pretty tough competition for any man—in the hearts of mothers.

I have been watching for a 100th Division insignia since the end of the war. Well, two weeks ago I saw one in the Newark Athletic Club. I introduced myself and it was no less than Sergeant Harold Buckley. Being a constant reader of the “Sentinel,” I had an interesting short visit.

I am going to trust that you will not bother to identify the boy who wrote the enclosed (I could be shot for doing what I have done), but the feeling was so spontaneous that I did want you to know.

With my heartiest congratulation on your splendid achievements, I am,

Sincerely,
Henry B. Williams, Sr.

“And to my surprise,” Mr. Williams said, “here is General Burress’ very cordial reply.”

HEADQUARTERS VI CORPS
APO 46 US ARMY
Office of the Commanding General
02 December 1945

Dear Mr. Williams,

I can't tell you how much I appreciate your letter of November 22d, together with that from your son. Nothing that has happened to me for a long time has made me feel so proud. Your letter and that of your son will go at the top of any commendations I may have, rather than at the bottom. The highest tribute one in my position can get is the approbation and good will of his soldiers.

Of course, anyone who thinks well of the 100th Division strikes a responsive chord in my heart. While I am not in a position to make comparisons, nor would I do so if I could, I am sure that no unit was blessed with finer or more loyal and more intelligent young Americans than we had. They gave a good account of themselves and performed every duty and task in training, combat, and occupation in a manner in which the whole country can take great pride.

I wish I could have the pleasure of meeting your son, but I am afraid he may be on his way home by now. It may be that I have seen him, as he is one of the original members of the Division. It is, of course, difficult to remember many individuals because of the large number who have been with the Division at one time or another.

It was interesting to hear that you had met Sergeant Harold Buckley. He did a fine job for us and is, I think, a fine man. Hoping to have the pleasure of meeting you and your son some of these days, and with best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you and yours, I am,

Sincerely,
W. A. Burress
Major General, United States Army, Commanding

April 2010 Association Newsletter