

Legends of Freeborn County

Letters a reminder of sadness of war

by Bev Jackson

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Bev Jackson is the executive director of the Freeborn County Historical Museum.

“Somewhere in France, Oct. 27-1917

Dear Mother,

Just a few lines to let you know I still well and hope to hear the same from you.

I seen a German Zeppelin that was brought to the ground the other day and it shure was some Zeppelin it was 700 feet long, and was worth at \$1,600,000. It was not far from where I am at. It was brought down at 9:30 in the morning and I seen it that afternoon. There were 16 prisoners taken off it by the French.

It has been a long time since I have hurd from anybody. I think all the mail is laying in the bottom of the sea because it has been about a month and a half since I had any mail form the states.

Do you ever hear from Harry. I don't only once since I came over.

Say Mother, I am going to send you a little piece off that Zeppelin. I tore a piece of it so will send you a little piece. This is what the hole out side of it is covered with. Well close for the night as news is scarce around here. Hoping to hear from you soon.

As ever, Your Son, With love to all.

When you write to Harry send him my address.

Corporal Raymond Christensen

Via New York

Signal Corps. Hdqs France”

“Somewhere in France Oct. 29-1917

Dear Mother,

Just a fe lines to let you know I am still on my feet.

You probably have read about the capture of the German Zeppelin L. 49 which has no doubt been published in all the papers. I drove over to (here there were several words that were scribbled over so they could not be read) to see it. And was worth going to see. Will tell you a little bit about it. This Zeppelin was one of the largest German dirigibles, and is the first one to be captured in tact in France. The airbag is approximately 700 feet in length and 100 feet in diameter.

It is similar in shape to that of a large size egg, and has comptments in the inside of the gas bag for cooking and sleeping which are as complete as the Pullman service on our best railroads.

The entire framework of the Zeppelin is made of aluminum and covered with a silk cloth to hold the gas. Over this cloth is a gum of some sort which is similar to mending tissue. It was equipped with machine guns and bomb chutes and other mechanical devices for carrying on a modern warfare.

We all got parts off it for souvenir and will send you a little piece from the gas bag. This will give you some ida what a Zeppelin is made of.

Well Mother I must close for to night as it is bed time for.

Have been painting my car to day. Hope to finish soon because it is some job to paint a car as I am no painter.

As ever your son,

Via New York

Corporal Raymond Christensen

Signal Corps Hdqs.

France

Write soon”

These letters were recently donated to the museum along with the small piece of the zeppelin. As I read Cpl. Christensen's letters home, I felt sad. Sad for the young man, for the people whose homes were the battlefields, and even for the instigators who thought that waging war was the only way to satisfy their egos or to solve their problems.

Will we ever learn?