

MILTON BARNES to RHODA BARNES

NOTE: Barnes noted a shortage of paper as he wrote this, one of the most difficult documents in the collection to transcribe. After covering four pages he turned them right side up and continued writing between his original lines back to the salutation. His hope that Brigadier General James A. Garfield, a fellow Ohioan, would soon be in the line of command above him to offset the many Indianans was soon realized when Garfield was made Chief of Staff of the Army of the Cumberland. Barnes' friend "Farrar" had been Garfield's brigade quartermaster (MILTON BARNES to RHODA BARNES, Sept. 30, 1862) The participation of "Uncle Joe" in "the fight at Arkansas Post" refers to the capture in early January of Fort Hindman at Arkansas Post, some 30 miles west of Vicksburg, by the political general John A. McClernand as part of his effort to win glory by taking Vicksburg from the north before Grant could. (See MILTON BARNES to RHODA BARNES, Nov. 29, 1862, NOTE; and March 5, 1863.) "Butternuts" was, like "Copperheads," a derisive term for Democrats seeking a negotiated peace. Milton explains this in his letter of March 5. Barnes was acting regimental commander during Colonel Lane's absence during "February-March 1863".

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Febry. 19th 1863

My own beloved and very dear wife

[also Feb. 20 and Feb. 22]

I had been out yesterday with the regiment to work on the fortifications, through the mud and rain, got to the river and could not get over except on the new rail rail road bridge. I left my horse under guard and walked over and set the boys to work and [was] not feeling very well, had a stitch in my back between the shoulders, could hardly turn myself, so I crossed over again and returned to camp, intending to lie down on my bed of husks and take it easy for the rest of the day, when lo, "the mail has come" exclaimed some one and "there's a whole pile of letters for you". I jumped out and after them, forgetting my stiff back almost, and here was two nice white backs, real fat little fellows[.] I knew where they were ^{from} of course, I had been waiting anxiously for some days and none had come and was beginning to feel quite disappointed and [I] tell you when I saw these it made me fairly bound with delight - I commenced on No. 1 Sabbath day February 8th and had litterally [sic] devoured it, then on No. 2. likewise

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got my dinner, took a dose of Swans powder and cayenne pepper, went to sleep and woke up this morning nearly well, it was a sciatic pain, and is about gone. suppose it was in consequence of so much wet weather, which we have been having while you have been having snow - I have been a little tardy in writing for a few week [sic] past partly because I have been expecting the P.M. [Pay Master] around every day, and still thought I would defer writing until I could write that that distinguished personage had made his grand entry among us, [erasure] now although he has not paid us yet. I have to record the gratifying fact that he is supposed to be among us and on one occasion was actually "visible to the naked eyes", and it is reported that on tomorrow he will be here with the green backs to pay us for the time of two months only! and perhaps before I mail this I will be able to write as one having a little money, the first for a long time, but two months pay will not put me out of debt, I am sorry for this, if I could get four months pay it would set me all right and [I would] have some left. I will soon have six months pay due me, just think of it! here absent from my loved ones almost six months! What changes have been wrought in that time and what we have all been called to pass through! [I] have been in two battles without getting so much as a slight wound! and marched nearly a thousand miles, besides rail road travel! Would that the next six months time, and the next thousand miles travel would bring me home, even up to our own little garden gate, and to the embrace of my darling wife and baby and Kind Mother whom I am glad to learn is about well, and able to go to church again, even if the preacher was a secesh sympathiser. Well now I will try to answer your letters this time having them lying before me,

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I usually read them two or three times over [□] then lay them away in my trunk and when I go to write, have to trust to memory and that accounts for my not answering some things right away which you may have noticed, I like your "talk" to "your own Milton" very much indeed, [□] it sounded like the little talks we used to have when all alone and I was'nt bothered reading the "Commercial" I was much interested in your adventures after Muly ^[Mooly] & the pigs and did really "pity" you. I am so sorry you have had to worry yourself so in the snow, and our neighbor Ike was so gallant, but never mind darling I will try to make it easier for you when I get home to stay, you shall have help all the time to do these things for you. I believe I told you in my last letter about getting the letter and package you sent by Mac, and about liking the shirt so well and also about Farrar coming over since and staying all night with me and apologizing for not calling with me before, I believe Gen. Garfield has not been assigned to my command yet. They have rooms up in town yet. I would like very well if he were assigned to the command of our Brigade or Division. Our Corps & Division commanders are both Kentucky men, and Col. Wagner is an Indianan and all the other regiments in the Brigade are Indianan & I am getting very tired of them, would like to have somebody else with us from Ohio, if there is any favor going in the Brigade it is going to fall on Indiana. I could'nt help telling the Chaplain ^[MaFarland] what you said about Jim Criswell, it tickled him very much indeed. It only happened that he was at the house just a day or two. he has been with us in the field all the time, enduring the same hardship, and exposures, and living as all the other soldiers do. No man in this regiment has labored harder, suffered ~~more~~ more and saved himself less than he. All through Kentucky while we were on that terrible march he had his horse and marched

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with the men, frequently carrying their guns for them when they would give out, and has not missed more than two or three Sundays preaching since we have been out, besides he has acted as regimental post master, which is very laborious, all to accomodate the men, and without being required to do it but from choice, he is very industrious, and I can testify that he neither "drinks, swears", nor "plays cards," like other soldiers!!!!!! and I know of no Chaplain in this army who does. please say so to my friend Criswell for his information and benefit. Pity we have not such a man for Chaplain as Mr. Miligen [Milligan] would make? I think if Jim [Criswell] could only be with us a short time and see how soldiers live it would teach him some sense. I think I could convince him that all soldiers do not drink, swear and play cards. There is a good deal of swearing in the army and occasionally some drinking but the morality of the army I think will compare favorably with that at home. in fact the temptations to wickedness here is [sic] nothing compared to what it is at home where you pass a drinking saloon everytime you go to your office or workshop. I appreciate your good Kind Words of warning and advice. I know it comes from a pure source, from a pure loving and true heart, and I hope to profit by it, and pray that it may be even as you desire it. I know I am not what I ought to be, but I know that your wishes and prayers to that behalf find a ready echo in my own poor heart. You speak of Joe Ferguson being all right. I am glad of that, I think Joe is rather a sensible boy. his father [Col. Ferguson] I have just learned has been under arrest in Bowling Green for getting drunk and abused the President and Genl. Rosecrans &c &c. I give you the rumor just as I got it. Is it true that he writes to his wife and endorses his letters thus? or did somebody make that in him? By the way, which do you like best, the way I now endorse my letters, or the old way. Mrs. Rhoda &c? The other is the shortest & I think

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the most proper and etiquetical [sic]. I see by the papers that Col. L. [L. Lane] got home safely. did he call this time? what do you think of him? I am like the boy. I have'nt anything to say as to him.

Poor Dr. Shively. I wrote him about his boy [Dan] just what I felt. I liked the boy, but had no idea he would publish the letter and was very much surprised when I saw it in the paper, which I am indebted to your kindness for. We had an address read to the regiment on the secesh sympathisers and took a vote on it. giving them fits, I sent it to the Times. it was written by Col. Connell of the 17th Ohio. The boys adopted it without a dissenting voice. All the Ohio boys have voted on it I believe. I am afraid the Vallandighams in the legislature wont vote for the bill allowing us to vote after they see that, but I see some of them are advocating the bill, for effect, I suppose, not surely with the view of getting their votes, for I dont think they will get very many, or I am very much mistaken. However there are some here I suppose would vote anything if it was only labelled Democratic[.] Democracy is a stubborn disease when it gets in the blood.

Feby 20th[-] am quite well this morning, except my back. I get a little stiff, although I had a good sleep in my rather comfortable tent. We have fixed ours nicely now, mine has a brick floor and a bedstead made up off the ground out of boards, covered with husks. I am almost as comfortable as I would be in a house - The boys have all built brick chimneys and fireplaces to their tents. I am surprised that Mrs Patterson should be so terribly excited about her boys. There are not two more healthy looking fellows in the regiment. They are as fat as bears, better fed than they were at home I'll bet. as for her notion that officers fare better than the men, it is all in her eye. we purchase our provisions from the same place the men get theirs, the commissary[,] and just the same kind. that is if there is any left after the men get theirs, and it

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frequently happens that ours comes out very short, so much so that we have to borrow from the men. we have no other source to go to except the Sutler, and I am very sure I have bought less to eat from the Sutler than the average of the men have. I am getting tired of people at home encouraging their own sons in the army in their squeamish notions about their hardship - instead of encouraging them to do their duty and stand up to it like men and heroes. They discourage them, and send them papers and letters that are calculated to demoralize them and even to induce them to desert.

It does seem strange that Tirza can talk so plainly and say the words you attribute to her. Pa would love to see her, yes indeed he would, the little darling. do you think she would have any kind of recollection of me? I reckon not. poor thing!

I read Bingham's reply to Val. [Vallandigham] and was very much interested in it - I think he got the traitor on the hip, dont you? I suppose Val would like to be arrested and become a "blessed martyr"[.] I think that's what he wants.

I hardly know what to think of Albright, whether he is a friend of mine or not. I used to think he was. whenever being friendly to me, dont operate against his own interest, but that you know, dear is very natural, and man like, if not God like, so I reckon Mr Albright is my friend after all. I am glad to know at any rate that he manifests any interest in me, and treats my darling with kindness & courtesy. Capt. Hunter is getting well, will be able for duty in a few days. he looks much better. poor fellow has been quite sick. I think a great deal of him. he is very upright and consciencious. [sic] another Capt resigned today. Capt. Hannabl[sp?] of Dresdon, ^{[sic] [-]} This leaves us only four Captains and three of them unfit for duty.

The young Mr. Meek that Lindy enquires about, dropped out on the march through Ky.

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and we have been unable to hear anything of him since. You probably noticed a letter in the Jeffersonian from one of the 97th boys by the name of Moore, from the convalescent camp. The boys are intending to rail ride him or something of the kind when [he] comes back to the regiment. the whole letter was a batch of lies from beginning to end, but just suited to the views of the [Cambridge] Jeffersonian. I think Martha was about right when she said you need'nt believe anything you see in that paper. I will write to Frank [Barnes] soon. I wrote one to Clark [Barnes] a few days ago. Frank seems to stand it better than Clark. I wish they were with me. I think your neighbors are not improving much of late. I wish you were out of the neighborhood, dont you? darling? I would like to come home soon now, when the spring opens up and you will have so much to do, but dont know if will be. I intend to try it anyhow, but dont know how I will succeed. I think I ought to be allowed that privilege once a year anyhow. you do I know, dont you darling? So Mathew Thompson is going to go into business again. and Andy Hutch & Ed Nizer are in Hayes place? I intended to have them get me up a box of something nice after I get some money and express it to me. it would be cheaper than to buy of the Sutler, but there were so much [sic] of the nice things sent to soldiers in boxes got spoiled. I have seen great rolls of butter sent to the boys so strong when it would reach here that it was unfit to eat. I am so sorry that goods have got up so high, but you must have them dear if you need them, anyhow. I see so much cotton going to waste here, great bales of it lying out in the field, raw cotton I mean, we are right in cotton growing country. Several cotton gins are right close to camp. They look like an old fashioned tramp mill of 50 years ago, just as Whitney the New England Yankee made it,

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not a particle of improvement[.] if the Yankees had these cotton plantations awhile they would work a great change in things I know. There is an utter want of enterprise among the immutable grey-black population here.

The Chaplain has just handed me a Mt. Vernon [Ohio] paper which was sent here by mistake[.] it contains a letter from the 96th regt. [-] Uncle Joe's [-] they are a way down in the Arkansas, and were in the fight at Arkansas Post. I will send you the paper.

Sunday morning, Feb. 22d. Yesterday we were out foraging all day and marched in all about twenty six miles, coming back it rained terribly and was quite cold, and very windy. I was afraid of being laid up with my back, but this morning I feel quite well of it and rather ~~than~~ better than worse of the wear. Tomorrow we are to be paid. it is superb. I dont know yet how I will send my money home. There is an agent of the State here but he will not return probably for a week or two yet, and then the money will have to go through the State Treasury and from there through the county treasury, and [you?] get it from there, but it will be so slow that way I think I will send mine right to you by express, but will see further about [it]. The rail road is now in operation through to Murfreesboro and at any time that you may want to send anything to me by express you can just direct it right through to me at this place, and if we are not here I can get it by sending back. but I am pretty sure we will not move from here perhaps for a month yet and may be not then. This place is going to be made a post for supplies and strongly garrisoned. This is Washington's birth day. Genl. Rosey [Rosecrans] has issued a very pretty general order about its observance, but out here in this wilderness place I dont think we can have much of a celebration about it.

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I think if I was at home I could make a right good little off hand speech on the occasion, one of the best I ever made was on such an occasion at Barnesville, but did'nt get even a compliment! I think I could pitch into the Butternuts right beautifully. I would want no better fun, but with us here its no time nor place for talking. all action, action! action! There! I have just received a letter from you dated Jan. 29th I had two written since that one. You speak in this of Mr. Miligan [sic] being at our house and making such a nice prayer, and for me. I could not help dropping a tear! It may be in answer to your prayers that I have been preserved! how it may ever be thus, until I am once more safely at home with my loved one.

Poor Baker did write to you about me? Poor blacks. I get really interested in ~~them~~ some times. some of them that we have with us are very trusty, but others are stupid and dont seem to care for anything. The Chaplain, Major and I were at supper the other evening, and Mary had got us up a real nice supper. She is very clean and nice about her cooking. I said to them when the war was over I wanted to have them all to tea at our house some time, and Mary should get our supper for us[.] They all thought it would be very nice. I did it to see what Mary would say, her eyes fairly danced with delight at the prospect of getting there, but then after thinking a moment said, "but Ise afraid dat'll be a long time"[-] she is so pleasant and so faithful I dont see what we would do without her, but I wish she was there now to help you darling. it seems to me you are having a real hard time to get along, having so much to do. The Chaplain went to Nashville some time ago. Mary sent money by him and got her a dress. she went to a house and made it herself in about a day and it looks really well. she has plenty

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to keep her warm. I got her a pair of boy's shoes to keep her out of the mud. you will like her very much.

There now my dear I must exit. I dont know whether you will ever be able [to] read this letter. I expect you will think I am scarce of paper, which is a fact. I can scarcely get enough sometimes to write on so I thought I would make good use of this shred, but I reckon you can make out the most of it, if not all. It is getting a little colder, we have some real spring weather but the most of the time it has been only wet. The boys are pretty well about headquarters. All are very anxious for pay day to come round. some of them I expect have families at home that need it, and I fear my poor dear ones as much almost as any of them[.] Now darling good bye for this time. be of good cheer, and dont fret about your dearest[,] about me. Your image is before him all the time, restraining him from evil and cheering him forward in discharge of duty[.] Believe me dearest trying to do my duty and always remembering my loved ones at home, am trying to trust in him who always is able to protect us both from harm & danger[.] Ever loving & true Milton

I would be glad if you would enclose me a few Postage stamps, they are hard to get out here.