

Jan. 17, 1918

Mr. J.W. Neal
Norwalk, Calif.

Dear Mr. Neal:

I am heartily ashamed of myself for my slowness in writing you, and the longer I put it off the worse it gets, so now I will try and give you a full confession of my shortcomings and ask that you forgive me and we will begin over.

In the first place I want to say that I am learning just what you had to do in this place during the winter months, and am wondering how you ever did it all without help during the winter. Mr. White and I are busy four hours a day doing things that have to be done, and the rest of the time we are sorting potatoes, threshing small bits of grain, cleaning grain, and cutting wood mostly, and the rest of the time putting wood in the many stoves scattered over the place.

To go back to the time you left, will be the better way to give you the full news, all the news, and nothing but the news.

The season was all that could be asked for except a little rain from Sept. 7th to 20th during which time we had but .26 of an inch. There was just enough to keep grain from drying out, but did not hinder other work in the least. Nearly all the grain ripened as was cut in due time. What we found dry enough we threshed of the earlier cutting and then sent the machine to Gasser on the 26th of September, having word that our machine was on the boat due here on the 26th. Well, that boat did not get here, but unloaded at Chena and it was October 16th before our machine got to Fairbanks. Three days in getting it set up and out to the farm. To my surprise the thresher had wheels, and it can be hauled about very handily with the tractor. Thresher has only a 21-inch cylinder and able to do little better than the old one. However, it was fully equipped with straw carrier, return spout, and a bagger, so it does fairly well, but could have been nine inches larger without doing any damage to the power. Tractor has good power, but needs lugs for the wheels for soft ground work. These will perhaps come later.

We stacked all the rest of the grain and threshed all but the Marquis east of the stump patch. This was in the seat when it began to freeze and we are leaving it go until

spring. There is so much of the soft kernels in it that came from the grain heads that came on late that we expect most of it to be used for hog feed.

Yields were below what I expected. Russian H.G. [a variety of wheat] made little over 13 bushels per acre, Romanov [another wheat variety] a little over 15 bushel, and the Marquis [another variety] cost of cottage 15 bushel per acre. The B.F. oats made about 30 bushels per acre. Canadian in the back field between 50 and 60 bushels per acre. Barley yield light, but not get figured out. Field was so irregular.

Potatoes made about 12 tons, with one-sixth too small for market. Most of the potatoes were of excellent quality. All went into the cellar before frost came, and in good shape.

Fall plowing was all done by October 4th, except on the land I cleared in the hog pasture. We plowed there up to the 17th of October. Little rain came on the 3rd of October, and on the 11, 12 and 13th, and snow from the 30th to 31st, making .59 inches precipitation for the month. November gave us but .40 inch and December .22 inch precipitation, with 13 inches of snow to date. Now what worries me is this: What are the mosquitos going to do for spring moisture? Will this not give us pretty good opportunity to work the ground early in the spring? Will it not probably be too dry for the spring grains, or is there likely enough moisture come after a dry fall and winter for the spring crops?

The winter has been colder than normal so far. Got cold and stayed right there all the time. November and December said to be the coldest recorded here. I have not minded very much, but could stand warmer weather better. Good roads have been ours since I can. Cannot yet appreciate what you had to endure in poor roads. Autos going by every day. Three Nenana Stages by every day, also Proter and another stage to the Creek. Slightly frosted "Hunky Tin" late in October, and Mr. White got the radiator frozen pretty badly once since. It was out of commission for three weeks, but is now patched up and does business two or three times a month. Filled in with cement solid over the pipes in the frozen part and still holds. I purchased a new radiator, but waited until I had to pay \$36.00 for it.

We failed to get in our winter's wood supply before the cold weather came, as we ran too heavily on funds, so Mr. White and I have to cut wood about a fourth of the time now. We keep warm twice with the same wood that way.

The hogs are doing nicely this winter on barley hay, clover hay, and the few peas we cut for hay, together with potatoes and turnips and some ground oats and wheat that was so badly mixed that we could not separate without putting through the mill 10 or 12 times. Have sold four of the boar pigs for breeding purposes and one for fattening. One little sow had throat trouble and could hardly breathe. She fell off so badly that I killed her and found what I suspect of being TB. I am sending the glands and lungs to the Bureau of Animal Industry at Seattle for test.

I am not sure as to breeding of the two gilts here. Which sow are they from? Are they registered or not?

That old wagon box or rack like in the back field was gobbled onto by a neighbor. Did it belong to the station?

I received your letter written on your way out, and have not yet gotten at the inventory, as it will be necessary for me to make an entire new one to include all the items mentioned in your letter and all property on hand July 1st. Some of the ones mentioned in your letter were included in the one we made up, while some did not. I wrote Dr. Georgeson [founder of the experiment station in Fairbanks] whether it was necessary, and he seems to think it is better to make up a new inventory. So may it be. I'll get off soon now.

I hope that you are feeling right at home on your new little farm now and that all is going nicely. Mrs. Neal's letter came some time since and we were glad to get it. Mrs. Snodgrass will write her own, if she has not already written. The family is in town now and the three oldest in school. We are in Chas. Johnston's house and they go on the Island. Getting along fine. Mrs. S. has her hands more than full though. She has not been well for some time, and the houseful of youngsters nearly wears her out. I get in Saturday nights for Sundays and a square meal.

Mr. White and I were fortunate enough to get four caribou, two moose, and two sheep in October, so we have meat for the winter. We ran out to Beals Cashe with the car and killed three caribous at mile 20 going out, and one at mile 23 as we came back. We

killed the moose and sheep near Beals Cache. Lyman Williams and his brother went out with us and we hired a team to haul their winter's camping outfit there and the team hauled our meat back. We made a keg of kraut so we will get through the winter some how.

I was most agreeably surprised in getting a new typewriter by express on the last boat this fall. The Doctor bought a new Underwood with 14-inch carriage. It is a dandy. Now White and I are trying to sell the Fox. There are four second-hand machines in town now for sale, so we are not getting rid of this one very fast.

Mr. White said today that he would try and get the money due you through by March 1st. I, too, will try and get my first installment to you when due. It may be a little late owing to the slowness of the mail coming from Sitka since the Alkai has been wrecked. It often takes a month for mail to come through.

I have not quite caught up on the extra expenses of coming in yet with the family. I came a little short of clothes and shoes for the children, so have to pay some of the Fairbanks prices for such articles. Will have them all wearing moccasins another year from the moose hides taken this year. If the prices keep going up, I'll have to get skins tanned for all their clothing.

No doubt you are where you can see the effects of the war upon the business of the country better than we, but we will feel it another season when the cost of clothing and provisions get full benefit of the new prices. We are all going on the new order of eats now.

I am promised a small mill another year, so if worse comes to worst, we can grind our own eats here. I think I will rent an acre from some good farmer here and sow a little wheat for family use.

It has been impossible for me to meet with the people of Fairbanks on many occasions this fall and winter. Have not yet gone into lodge. Get in for Church now. We have our hands full with the children. It is like pulling teeth to drag out after supper and go to town, so we just do not go.

I was glad to hear that you were about to get your new car. What did you get, and how does it compare to "Hunky Tin?" If we ever get our paid for, I will feel that one cannot afford to do without one. I will hold my nose to the grindstone for a year nor two

more, and if we cannot see some for future years. That is all I can do here now with a family the size of ours. Fifty a month saved will put me even in two years. The car will carry me to the coast, and then I hope to sell it and what things we may have gathered up here for enough to take us to Seattle. Then somehow, we plan to get to Idaho.

My mother is coming up next summer to live with us for a while. It will be her third trip to Alaska.

I have a brother living in Los Angeles, who lost their oldest boy in September by an auto running him down on his wheel on the streets of Los Angeles. He lived three hours after the accident. He was a fine lad of about 16 years.

Should you ever happen to have the time look H.L. Snodgrass up. I do not know just what he is doing now, but usually at office work at bookkeeping or auditing.

Now Mr. Neal, I hope that you have forgiven me my long silence and that you will write me a good letter some of the days. I will most surely do better another time.

Mr. and Mrs. White ask to be remembered to you. Mrs. Snodgrass and the whole family join me in the best of wishes to you all for the coming year. May it be a happy and prosperous year to you.

Sincerely yours,

(signed)

M.D. Snodgrass

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