

Put. LARS OLSEN
DOKKEN
15th WISCONSIN
COMPANY H

FOREWORD

Lars and Knudt Olsen Dokken were my father's two oldest half-brothers. They were the sons of Margit Knudtsdatter Flaaten (1814-1886) and Ole Olsen Fosgaard (18?-1846) of Hol, Hallingdal, Norway. They had 4 children: Lars (1839-1863), Astrid (1841-1845), Knudt (1843-1862) and Turi (1845-1897). After Ole Fosgaard died in 1846, Margit married (a year later) my grandfather, Kittel Larson Dokken (1818-1897) from Skurdalen. From this union there were 4 more children: Ole (1848-1928), Ambjorg (1853-1927), Astrid (1857-1929) and my father Lars (1859-1923). In 1857 they immigrated to America and settled in Perry Township, Dane County, Wisconsin where my father was born. The 3 step-children took the Dokken name. But after my uncle Ole and father grew up, they dropped Dokken and adopted the more Anglicized Kittle-son. After the war was over, in 1865, they moved to Treupeealeau County and settled on a farm between Etrick and Blair, which remained in the family till 1936.

From the book: Oberst Heg og hans Gutter (Colonel Heg and His Boys) by Waldemar Ager, I gleaned a few facts of interest regarding The Fifteenth Wisconsin Volunteer Regiment, to which my uncles belonged.

After the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, the Governor of Wisconsin chose a young Norwegian named Hans Christian Heg to recruit volunteers for the Union Army. He was born in Norway and came to America with his parents in 1840. They settled in Muskego, where the first Norwegian Lutheran Church was built and the first newspaper was printed. Hans Heg entered public service and was the first Norwegian in Wisconsin to hold an elective office. He was an upright and courageous young man. Through his efforts, about 3500 Norse immigrants volunteered for service. An all-Norwegian regiment (the 15th Wis. Vol. Reg.) was formed and Hans Heg became its Colonel. Lars joined this regiment in Dec. 1861 and Knudt in Feb. 1862. They received \$100 bounty and \$13.00 a month.

After a few months basic training near Madison, they were sent South to war. On March 30th, they met their first combat at Union City, Tenn. From there you can follow their long, slow, wearying trek in Lars' letters. It was not always the whole unit. Two companies remained on Island No. 10 and were sent out later as reinforcements. After the Battle of Stone's River where Lars was wounded and the North lost 13,000 men, they set out again and in July were the first to cross the Tennessee River. In Sept. came the historic Battle of Chickamauga where Colonel Heg and more than half his regiment fell. The State of Wisconsin erected a monument to their memory there. Under the command of Gen. August Willich, they stormed Mission Ridge near Chattanooga, then Rocky Face Mt., Kenesaw Mt. and Reseca. At New Hope Church they suffered a heavy loss, but it is said their flag was carried to safety by the wounded Major Wilson, whose right hand had been injured. From there on they entered almost daily skirmishes as they followed Sherman to Atlanta. Here, in the fall of 1864, the 3-year enlistment period of most of the men came to an end. The regiment disbanded, many went home, others were transferred to other regiments or were placed on guard duty until the end of the war. The regiment had lost over 33% of its men. Many were taken

Bowling Green, Ky.
Nov. 3rd, 1862

Unforgettable parents,

I will now take the opportunity to take pen in hand and write you a few simple lines to let you know that we have returned to the same town we left on Sept. 17th. We arrived here on Nov. 1st. We left Crab Orchard on Oct. 20th and marched to Lancaster, from there to Danville. We camped for a couple of days near a small town called Lebanon. On the night of the 26th about 4 inches of snow fell on us, which lasted about a day. It was very cold for us without tents. We rigged up some brush huts under which we lay at night. On the 27th we took to the road again and arrived here on the 31st, where we were mustered for inspection, the first in two months. But we have not received any pay, so we have 4 months' due us, which we hope to get soon.

We don't know how the war is going and cannot tell you anything about that. But we did get our knapsacks back, with all our clothing. We had left them there when we went to Louisville.

Also, many of our men are out of the hospitals and have rejoined us, namely Arne Helgesen and Jul Haaverud and many more. Please will you greet Engebret and Paul P. Tröv from their nephew Syver Larsen that he has come back to the regiment and is in good and sound health. Ask them to write to his father as soon as possible. He has not had a chance to write home since he left the regiment. He is content and well. Also greet them from me and their friends here.

I have not received any letters from you since Louisville though I did get one from my cousin S. A. Sanderson on Oct. 24 saying you were all well. Also greet Knud Haaverud from his brothers Even and Jul that they, too, are well, except that Jul was in the hospital here in town but is feeling better. He is not able to go on any marches yet.

I have no more news at this time except that we may leave for Nashville Tenn. soon. So I will end my short and poor letter with my best and loving wishes to you all. Greet S. A. Sanderson and thank him for his welcome letter, also his parents. I don't have time to write to them at this time, but tell them I am well.

Sincere wishes from your devoted son.

Lars Olsen Dokken
Co H 15th Regt Wis Vol
9th Division, 31st Brigade
Army of Ohio
Via Louisville, Ky.
Please write soon so I will know how you are.
Greet all friends from me ... also Harold Hansen.

Camp near Nashville, Tenn.
Nov. 10th, 1862

Unforgettable parents, brothers and sisters,

Your welcome letters of Aug. 1st and 22nd arrived yesterday for which you are dearly thanked; also for the one I received on Nov. 3rd which was dated Sept. 26th. I was happy to see you were all in good health. I also am well to date but extremely footsore sometimes after these long marches which we have had now for a long time. I wish we could get a little time of quiet so we could rest up and recover a bit.

Also I want to acknowledge the six 3-cent stamps that you enclosed in the letter dated Aug. 1st, and the ten 3-cent stamps I found in another letter. You are heartily thanked for both. It is very hard to get hold of postage stamps here in the South, as we seldom get enough liberty to get into a large city. Also they are not available in all towns. We were able to send some money with the Chaplain one time this summer and he bought some for us. Since I came here I have sent letters to you and Helge that have amounted to 75 cents in stamps but I don't know if you have received them all. The mail service is very unreliable here in the South.

I must also relate that we left Bowling Green on Nov. 4th and marched towards Nashville. We arrived here on Nov. 7th and are camped about 10 miles from the city. I believe we will take it easy here for a while and rest up after the long marches. We cannot go any farther south as we lack provisions. The railroad between here and Bowling Green has been cut off. Provisions are brought in by wagons, hitched to three teams of horses, per wagon. The roads are very poor so it is difficult to get through. There are many troops encamped on all sides of Nashville.

I see by your letter that the threshing is done and that you got 54 bushles of wheat, which I was glad to hear. That was pretty good, as I've heard that it was not a good year around there, so you could not expect more.

As for the money I owe A. Sanderson, I don't know what to do about it, whether to ask you to sell the wheat or not. It may be a long time before we get any pay. If you could get a good price for it, I would ask you to pay T. Skarton for the oxen, as I still owe him. Wheat should bring a good price now. You could take out pay for the labor. I hope it is not too much trouble.

I must now close my brief writing. You are all dearly and sincerely greeted from me. Greet Ole and thank him for the letter. I see he worked hard during the harvest. Also thank Turi for her letter. Greet the Sandersons and all friends, Sven Nilsen and Harold Hansen. Live well in God. That is the wish of your loving son and brother.

Lars Olsen Dokken

Camp near Nashville, Tenn.
Dec. 12th, 1862

Unforgettable parents,

As I now have the opportunity, I will take pen in hand and send you a few lines to let you know that to date I am in good and sound health, for which I am thankful to God. And the same I see from your letter, dated Nov. 5th and received on the 27th -- also one from my sister on the 12th. You are all heartily thanked for them. I wrote to you on the day before I got these two letters. I see that you paid the interest to A. Sanderson which was good to hear.

We got two months' pay on Dec. 8th. I am sending A. Sanderson \$20 which I owe him for my brother's overcoat. I should have paid him long ago, but I did not have the money. This money I have a chance to send by Express Order from Nashville to Madison. How reliable it is, I don't know, but many of the men have sent their money that way. We are still due 4 months' pay. As for the money I owe T. Skarton, sell some of the wheat, but hold back as much as you laid out. When we get more pay, I will send some home to you as soon as I get the chance.

I received a letter from Helge Knudsen the same day as yours. He is well and had a good wheat harvest, getting 237 bushels of wheat and 84 bushels of oats. He got 20 bushels per acre.

On Nov. 28th, we moved camp to about 5 miles south of Nashville. I have no idea of how many men we have, but not far from here lies a large force of Rebels, so we expect an attack at any time. The rumor is they want to recapture Nashville.

There is no more news to tell you at this time. I had to leave my brother's clothes in Corinth and I have not seen them since. I don't know when I will be able to get them. I must tell you the prices of things here. A pound of butter is 75¢, tobacco is \$1.50 a package, black thread is 25¢ and a 3-"paegles" bottle of brandy is \$2. As for coffee and sugar, I don't know.

Our Col. Heg returned to the regiment on Dec. 7th - with a whole case of items for Co. C; things that had been sent to them from their homes, like hose, boots and shoes. He said he had gotten some new recruits from Madison who will join us soon.

So I will close my poor and short letter, with kind greetings to all around there, but first and last to my dear parents from their loving son, Lars.

My address is the same as before. Please write when you have time. Will you please get the note from A. Sanderson when he receives the money from me? Live well in God.

Greet all.

Lars Olsen Dokken

Hospital near Murfreesboro
Jan. 10th, 1863

Unforgettable parents, brothers and sisters,

I must now in my sad condition try to take pen in hand to let you know how I am getting along.

We left our camp near Nashville on the second day of Christmas (26th) to drive the Rebels from Murfreesboro. We marched a long distance through rain and mud that reached almost to our knees. In the evening we met in combat and had a sharp set-to. We took a cannon and 5 prisoners. The rest fled from us. That night we rested but the next day we pursued them again, through rain and bad weather. We did not meet up with them again till Dec. 30th. *We had a battle that day, and several of our regiment were wounded and killed. In our company, one was killed and two wounded. All was quiet until the next morning, when they were ready again and opened up with terrible firing. The Rebels got the upper-hand over us and we had to retreat. I got a bullet through my thighs. The bullet went in one side and was removed from the other, so I have a wound through both buttocks. But I am thankful to God who saved me from a hasty death, which happened to so many of our men there.

I was left behind on the battlefield. The Rebels came around me from all sides. One cursed and said, "Here lies a damn Yankee". I lay still, but first they had to take some things from me. So they took my blanket, my canteen and a red-leather wallet that held all my letters from you. Also they took a little case that contained needles and thread and other little things. They also took my 'Double Explanation' (of Catechism), and that I miss the most. I thought surely I would be taken prisoner, but two days later our troops drove them back many miles and our men returned, which made me very happy. How many men our regiment lost, I do not know. There were many killed and wounded. Our Lieutenant-Colonel was killed.

As for my wounds, they are painful but bearable, and I hope that with God's help, they will heal soon. I expect to be sent to a General Hospital in Nashville.

Your most welcome letter of Dec. 5th was received and I was happy to hear you were all well. You will forgive me for not writing before but I had no opportunity. I sent an Express Order of \$20 to A. Sanderson on Dec. 13th and a letter to you at the same time. Was the money received? Perhaps mail has come to my regiment or company but I don't know how it will reach me. But I will try to write again as soon as possible.

Lars Olsen Dokken

(This letter was written in pencil.)

* The Battle of Stone's River, Tenn. Dec. 30, 1862 - Jan. 3, 1863

Nashville, Tenn.
 Jan. 20th, 1863

Unforgettable parents, brothers and sisters,

To-day I must try to write a few simple lines to you to let you know that I am now in the General Hospital in Nashville. I came here on Jan. 12th. I wrote to you on Jan. 10th, in pencil, and told you how I was wounded on Dec. 31st, 1862. I will retell it, in case you did not receive my first letter. I believe you have already heard of the battle that took place at Murfreesboro, which began on Dec. 30th. On the morning of Dec. 31st, I was wounded in both buttocks. The bullet was removed from the right side, close to the surface, so the bullet passed almost clear through. The pain has been hard sometimes. I cannot stand on my feet at all, so I am bed-ridden. But I hope with God's help, I will be myself again. How soon it will be, I cannot say. But we hope that in time we will see each other again, if it is the Lord's will, so let his will be done.

I must tell you I received your letter of the 5th, on Dec. 16th, for which I heartily thank you. I was glad to hear you were all in good health. Again I will tell you that I sent \$20 to A. Sanderson by Express Order from Nashville on Dec. 13th. I sent a letter to you on the same day. Whether the money arrived or not, I have not heard, as I have not had any mail for a long time. There may be letters for me with my regiment, but I don't know where they are now.

So I must end this poor scribbling at this time. I beg you to greet all relatives and friends around there, but first and last, you are my unforgettable parents, brothers and sisters. To you I send sincere and loving wishes. To live well in God is my wish for you. Your devoted son and brother,

Lars Olsen Dokken

My address is: Gen. Hospital No. 8
 Nashville, Tenn.

Please write as soon as you have this in hand as I long to hear from you and how you are getting along, and please inform me if the money has arrived or not, and all the news of the neighborhood.

I am enclosing a small paper in English which was enjoyable to read.

Lars Olsen Dokken

Nashville, Tenn.
Feb. 5th, 1863

Unforgettable parents,

I must now take pen in hand and try to write you a few lines to let you know that I am about the same as when I last wrote to you on Jan. 20th. I think you must have received that letter by now. I am in the same hospital. As regards my wounds, there seems to be no improvement so far, but I hope that with time they will get better, but it seems to take a long time for them to heal. The pain is very severe at times, especially at night when I cannot sleep, so the hours drag for me. I have my book of Hymns, which I read as often as I am able, when there is not too much ache and pain in my wounds. I hope that God will grant me good health again, for He helps all those in want and need. I hope He will help me also.

I am poor and full of trouble
O merciful Jesus, come
And let my weak heart taste
Your sweet gospel
That I even so here in life
Must rich and blessed be.

And I hope that in time we will see each other again. How soon it will be is hard to tell.

So I will close my short and humble writing for this time. I ask you to greet all relatives and friends. But first and last, you are lovingly and sincerely greeted from your devoted son. Live well in God; that is my wish.

Lars Olsen Dokken
Gen. Hospital No. 8 Ward #1
Nashville, Tenn.

Please write soon.

Nashville, Tenn.
Feb. 26th, 1863

Unforgettable parents,

To-day I must take pen in hand and send you a few simple lines to inform you that I received a letter from you dated Feb. 20th; also two others, one dated Feb. 6th and the other Dec. 19th, which were forwarded to me by my regiment. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for these letters. It was good to hear that you were all well.

I have been quite ill now for some time and that is the reason I have not written before. Now I am a little better but my wounds are open and draining day and night, although the pain is not quite so severe, for which I am glad and thank God. I see that you have heard that there is poor nursing care in the hospitals here, which is not unusual, but I do not lack for anything. I have not been able to eat much. Sometimes I get a little milk which is the best for me. I have bought a few things that I can eat, but everything is so high-priced, and now my money is gone...and no pay in sight.

You ask me if I can come home. That I cannot tell you yet. I think it would not be for a long time, because I cannot get out of bed and on my feet. When my bed is made, they lift me from one bed to another. But with God's help I hope I continue to improve, which happily, I seem to be doing.

At the time I was wounded and lay out at night, I did have some help, because the Rebels built a fire near me which kept me warm day and night. I had some provisions with me, so I had something to eat, but the time dragged by slowly those days.

I was happy to hear that the \$20 arrived safely. Did my letter of Feb. 5th arrive? Please greet Halvor Hilesten and Hans Volstad that I have heard nothing about Ole Milesten, as there are over 20 hospitals here and I cannot get out to look him up. As I am the only one from our regiment in this hospital, I do not know where the others are. Greet all those at Stensrud and Volstad, also all friends and neighbors and A. Sanderson and family.

When I get my pay I will try to send some home to you, but when, I do not know. There is no more news at this time. Greet E. and P. Paulson and Sven Nilsen, but first and last my sincere and loving wishes to you. Live well in God is the wish from your beloved son and brother.

Excuse my poor writing, as I am flat on my back and it is very difficult to write this way. So live well in God.

Lars Olsen Dokken

Please deliver the enclosed note to Harold Hansen.

Nashville, Tenn.
March 16th, 1863

Unforgettable parents,

I will now take time to take pen in hand and send you a few simple lines to inform you that your letter of Feb. 27th came, for which I thank you with all my heart. I was happy to hear you were all in sound health for which I thank God.

Also, I am happy to inform you that I am beginning to feel a little better, as my wounds seem to be healing a little, so I hope, with God's help, I will soon be well again. But I am afraid it will take time, as I cannot help myself yet. I am still bed-ridden. It is hard, because time passes so slowly. I must be patient as I know God will sustain me. He will not place bigger burdens on me than I can bear.

Regarding my wounds, the bullet went in the left side and the bone was shattered somewhat on the right, but not enough to do permanent harm. The doctor removed some small pieces of bone a few days ago.

As for care, it has been quite good up to this time. But I do crave so for dairy foods which we do not get. As long as I had money, I was able to buy some (milk) every day. Now my money is gone and I see no pay forthcoming. It is now 6 months overdue. Milk costs 10¢ a pint, so it is very dear. The food here in the hospital is mostly meat, pork and potatoes, sometimes some applesauce, coffee or tea. We got a little butter at first, and freshly baked bread; but not any more. The bread is so dry I can hardly chew it. How I wish I were at home with you! Only God knows when I can come home. It is hard to say if they will let me come home when I do get well again. It is my wish that, with God's help, I shall be able to see my home once more.

There is no one here in the hospital that I know, only Yankees and Irish. Many are wounded and some are ill with other diseases. There are over 100 men in this ward, so it is a very large room. Others from our regiment are in other hospitals here in the city. Those who have been able to get around have come to visit me.

I hope I will get my pay before the interest is due. Just as soon as I receive it, I will do my best to get it off to you. I would also like to keep a little for myself.

I will close my poor and humble writings for this time. Please greet the Sandersons, Volstads, neighbors and friends. But first and last are my dear parents lovingly greeted from their devoted son.

Lars Olsen Dokken

On Feb. 26th I sent a letter with a note enclosed for Harold Hanson. I also wrote to P. Erikson Skarton. Greet the Paulson families. Please write soon. Live well in God.

This was his last letter. He developed an infection and died on April 1st, 1863 at Hospital No. 8 and is buried in the Union Cemetery there. Section E.

Grave No. 255
DKC

prisoners. 32 died of scurvy and disease at the Andersonville Prison in Georgia. The last grave dug there was for a Norwegian boy, Knud Hanson, of the 1st Wis. Cav. Reg. The number of his grave was 12,848. On April 9, 1865 this most tragic war of all time ended, with a loss of over 600,000 young Americans.

These letters were preserved by my father Lars, who passed them on to my brother Arthur, who was a Veteran of World War I. He gave them to his son Calvin, who served in World War II. Calvin has donated the original letters to the State Historical Society at Madison, Wisconsin, where they can be found among other Civil War memorabilia pertaining to the Fifteenth Wisconsin Volunteer Regiment.

Della Kittleson (Dokken) Catuna

Following these letters I have included a story about the 15th Regiment called "Gudmund Gudmundson", written by the well-known writer, poet and singer Erik Bye of Oslo, Norway. In it the names of the Dokken brothers frequently appear.

DC



A SONG

This poem was written by Lars Olsen Dokken when he was in the hospital. The original copy was lost but his sister, Astrid Kittelsdatter Ask, who lived in Ettrick, Wis. wrote it from memory, after having memorized it as a child.

From the book: Colonel Heg and His Boys, published in Eau Claire, Wis., 1916, by Waldemar Ager.

Yes, there's many who's now finding
Himself, this time of life,
See many tears aflowing
In this great tragic strife.
So father-hearts are breaking
In grief for his lost heir.
God, make their burdens lighter.
Oh Jesus, hear our prayer.

How many a poor mother
Must part from her dear son.
That mother-heart is bleeding
Yes, oft in pain alone.
She cannot hide her sorrow
In years and years to come,
'Twill to her death-bed follow
Nor leave her heart alone.

I was a lad of seven
When father fell from us,
Then next my eldest sister
And brother also dies.
My mother bore that sorrow;
'Twas her own flesh and blood.
Such things tear at the heart-strings
No one can help but God.

But that which God thus wills us
That pleases also me.
The cross he helps us carry
That lies across our way.
God, in your mind do hold me
You will not quench my light.
You may well change my fortune
So Home will meet my sight.

Here grieves so many a widow
Who's parted from her man
Ah, what a want and sorrow
In such a tragic land.
At home, the eldest children
Mere minors are, and small
God, dry their flowing teardrops,
When losses strike them all.

Young maidens there are many
Whose bridegroom went away.
No words can tell her sorrow
No comfort can relay.
That grief tears up the heart, yes
That I can tell you true.
It is the wound most painful.
You must believe that too.

It was not long thereafter
That I was ordered out.
Then all my body's vigor
Left me far en-route.
Then was a faithful brother
The best the world could hold.
Now, I'm estranged from mother
Could I but her behold!

I thank the God and Father
Up in the Heaven's realm
And all my soldier comrades
For their kind help, again.
The prayers I say are many
God help them one and all.
I never can repay them,
All those who heard my call.

How pitiful our tears were
That time we took our leave.
But great is still the gladness
When God gives us reprieve.
God, comfort those who weep now,
May prayers go up to you
Give them, O God, the pleasure
Of coming safely through.