

For A Better Life – Family Letters

This letter by Robert Emmett Ikard, CSA, was written to his parents, Milton and Isabella Ikard, who lived in Weatherford, Texas.

Red River County
August 28, 1862

Dear Pa and Ma,

I wrote to you a few days ago, I have nothing new to tell you. Dr. J Conger is going to start home soon and I thought I would write you a few lines as I have neglected doing so before this. In reference to sending me some clothes, as to what I will need, you be the judge of that. I have all the clothes that I started with. I have bought a good pair of boots for winter. One pair of my jeans are a little worn.

Dr. Bobet, who is discharged, spoke of bringing clothes to the soldiers this fall. I think he will be at Veals Station. He belonged to Capt. Pat Saunders Co. I expect to get clothes from home, will be the only chance from what I can learn. I helped bury Lieutenant Plat today, who belonged to Capt. Pat's Co. Several have died since we arrived here. If you should send me any clothes be certain to get me a good Buffalo Rug about half dressed and send it, for they are the greatest thing out to sleep upon. The one I have is small and nearly worn out. Do this and oblige yours as I fear we shall see a hard time this winter. I expect it will be hard living where we will be, if we continue to live. Pa, I have hitherto declined complaining, but I must say I never lived so hard in my life before, as I have for the past few weeks. We get plenty of flour but nothing else scarcely, indeed bread and poor beef is about all we have and sometimes not enough of that. That (beef) the beef is not fat enough to cook itself, we have nothing in the way of grease to put in bread. I have made my meal once or more of bread and water, great dissatisfaction among the solders about something to eat. They complained to their officers but it did no good. I think this is too bad in a land of plenty, if it was where we could do no better, it would not be complained of. It is the cause of bad acts on the part of soldiers. Sir they go out at night and kill hogs, lots of them. I am sorry to say that Co. E has engaged in the same practice, that is, some of the Co. I am clear of this thing and I expect to remain so. When this meat is brought to our mess I do not eat it. I will live on bread first. Nothing more.

Adieu

R. E. Ikard

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Letter #2 Robert Emmett Ikard to Milton Ikard

Camp in Arkansas County, Arkansas
February 25th/63

Dear Pa,

Yours of the 25th was recd a few days ago, bringing the sad intelligence of the death of Uncle Elija. He has gone the way that many, many true Soldiers and Patriots have passed since this unholy War commenced; they have sacrificed their lives in the defense of our rights and liberties. This leaves me in good health, hope it may find you enjoying the same. I have nothing in the way of news to write you that is reliable. We heard a rumor however, yesterday that there had been another battle fought at Vixburg and the Federals were defeated, and we killed 5,000 to 10,000 threw down their arms and were captured. From the best information I can get, their soldiers continue to desert them and they are already divided at home, so I think the War will not last long and we all will be permitted to return to our homes ere long.

I came near forgetting to tell you that 150 of our men attacked the advanced guard of the enemy a few days ago down the Mississippi. The Feds were too strong and our men fell back and the Feds then took their boats and left; our loss was 1 man killed and a Lieut. missing, don't know their loss. There is not much prospect of getting a furlough now, if I was in bad health I could get a leave of absence to go home, but so long as I keep in good health I expect to remain here.

I am forced to write on paper that has been written upon. I believe some of the Company picked this up at an old Printing Office; our baggage is still behind and our paper with it. Everything begins to look like spring here, the trees are budding and the birds are singing. It has been raining today, it rains here about every two days, good for awhile.

R. E. Ikard

This was the last letter Robert's family had from him. In less than a month he was stricken with jaundice. He had been caring for his Captain Saunders when illness overtook him and very swiftly took his life. A letter to his father, Milton, from D. D. Lee explained the circumstances of R.E.'s death and burial.

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Dr. Milton Ikard wrote this letter to his son, Robert Emmett Ikard, CSA, about a month after the death of Robert on March 22, 1863, near Arkansas Post, Desha County, Arkansas. The mails were slow and not reliable.

Weatherford, Texas
April 17, 1863

Dear Robert,

I once more attempt to drop you a few lines. We are all enjoying good health and would rejoice to know that you have recovered and are yourself again. But we are denied the pleasure of hearing anything from you that is reliable since Capt. Saunders left. And the anxiety and suspense which has been ever present since then has become intolerable. I hope by this time you have regained your health and that soon we shall have the pleasure of hearing from you. I have nothing of interest to write you. We are enjoying a little repose by permission of the Indians, but don't anticipate that it will be of long duration. The prospect for a fruitful harvest is extremely gratifying and I think hunger and want will disappear from our country and that our brave soldiers will be enabled to keep the field and confront the myrmidons of a despicable and contemptible tyranny. Our prospects still look cheering at this, the beginning of the end. It does not appear as near at hand as I thought it did some weeks since.

Our brave soldiers must put on their whole armor and prepare for the greatest conflict that the world has ever seen. The revolt in Poland and Hungary will so occupy the time and attention of crowned heads, that the contest on this side of the Atlantic will drag along perhaps through the Baboon term before we have peace. Perhaps we may have it shortly. Let us hope and trust in God for success.

Adieu,

M. Ikard

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Milton Franklin Ikard, son of Elijah Harrison Ikard Sr., went to Texas to join his cousins, the sons of Dr. Milton Ikard, in cattle ranching. He wrote this letter to his brother, Elijah Harrison Ikard, Jr.

Wichita Falls, Texas

October 30, 1884

E. H. Ikard
Alto, Tennessee

Dear Brother,

I will answer your letter. This leaves me well as you could expect. We have been having some rain of late. Cattle is doing well so far as I know. We have been hard run this summer. We have bought some cattle and sold some.

We have been laying pay off some of our debt but find it a slow job. Beef cattle is so low they are not worth anything.

I do not know whether I can come home this winter or not. If I can raise the money I will come. I was sick about two months this summer and could not work. That threw me behind. Our kin folks are well out here.

Give my love to all. Tell Joe and Fannie that I think they write to me and tell me how the little one is. I hope I will see them this winter. Give my love to Ma.

Your brother,
M.F. Ikard

Milton Franklin "Frank" Ikard of Alto, Tennessee joined cousins in Texas working as a cowboy in the mid-1880s. The weather was good but the price of cattle was poor according to Frank in this letter to his brother Elijah Harrison, Jr.

Henrietta, Texas

July 27, 1885

Dear Brother,

It is with pleasure that I write you. This leaves me well. I can not get off to come home this summer. We are getting low prices for cattle this year. Times are hard in this country. Money is hard to get hold of. We have as fine crops here as you ever saw. We will make 35 bushels of corn and 40 bushels of oats. Grass is fine. I will come home when I can. I have worked every day this year. Give love to all.

M.F. Ikard

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Milton Franklin was a cowboy in Texas as a young man. He loved the West. Later, he became a rancher in Indian Territory, that became the state of Oklahoma. Even later in life, he ranched in Idaho. The winter trip to California was a great adventure with his Texas cousins.

San Diego, California
December 11, 1887

E.H. Ikard
Alto, Tennessee

Dear Brother,

No doubt but what you will be surprised to hear from me at this place, but stranger things have happened. I would have wrote to all at home, but I did not want ma to know I was getting farther from home. I knew she would be uneasy about me.

I did think I would come home this winter but it would have taken all of the money that I had to do it. And I would not have had anything left.

Our cousins busting in Texas hurt me as well as them. Will and Milt and some of Seborns boys are with me so I am not alone. We brought a car load of horses out here with us. We have sold them. We have three span of mules that we are going to work. I have one pair. We get five dollars a day for ourselves and team. I will stay here until the first of March if I can make anything, but have to be in Henrietta then.

I have not seen a fire here since I got here except in cook stoves. Trees are green and flowers are in bloom.

San Diego is a town of 2500 inhabitants and is on the Pacific. It is a grand sight to see it, see the ships and steamers coming and going every day. Land in this country is worth from 100 dollars per acre to 1000. You can't buy the poorest for less than 25 to 50. Town lots are worth from 1500 to 40,000 up near the center of the state.

You can look on the mountains and see snow and down in the valley oranges, figs and all other kinds of fruit is growing. It is a sight to look at. It is fine country for a rich man and plenty of work for a poor man, but I am afraid it will not last. They are coming by the thousands.

M.F. Ikard

Give my love to all and tell Mother that I will come and see her as soon as I can. Love and good wishes to all. Write soon and tell me what you all hear.

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The merry and lighthearted Milton Ikard Jr., son of Dr. Milton Ikard, writes to his cousin, Andrew Jackson Ikard, son of Elijah Harrison Ikard Sr., with a good measure of teasing about “the girls.” The two must have done some courting while Milton was visiting in Tennessee.

Elm, I.T. (Indian Territory)

April 11, 1888

We have a cousin here at work for me named A.J. Ikard-same as your name

Mr. A.J. Ikard
Alto, Tennessee

Dear Cousin,

Your kind letter of March 5 is at hand yesterday. I was truly glad to hear from you as it calls to mind the happy hours I spent so pleasantly while I was with you all and hope ere long to visit you again. But can't tell what will happen.

I did not see any girls as I came back that I was acquainted with as I did not stop only at Jefferson and only about 10 hours there.

I am very sorry that Mip (Mrs) Abernathy is not expected to live. I wish I could have seen her while there.

You and Mip (Mrs.) Patton was inquiring about me and thought she was in love with me. You can tell her that I think of her often and think that I love her much better than she does me. And when I come back I will do my best to capture her and bring her home with me and turn her to love the beautiful rolling prairies of Texas (and me as well).

The grandest sight you ever saw. Just think of it, as far as your eyes will let you see you can behold green grass dotted here and there with pretty prairie flowers sending forth their sweet smelling savors (enough to charm a given Miss Patton).

I am now building some cow pens to begin work. Yes, I can imagine I hear Miss Tilly pawing ivory now. If she plays the organ. If(?) she plays harp (you know) I would like to hear her (in a barn) I guess she is high toned now. Yes, I would like to be present and saw you draw straws. (Oh, I am so sorryful to disappoint you)

I know it was fun to you to see she and he split up. You see the new went out while I was with you that I had gone to Tennessee to hunt me a wife. And when I got back my Texas girl had gone back on me. Well I think it was bad for Mr. Goodman to give our Tracy trip away (for the boys there), as Frank and I ran away and we can stand it.

Tell him when Tex gets back he will be glad to see him. I am like him, have not been drunk since. Well give my love to all of the folks and all inquiring friends, especially Miss Patton.

M. (Milton) Ikard (Jr.)

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Yes, I had a fine time at the stock meeting. It was a grand affair. The supper cost over three thousand dollars and more pretty young ladies than you ever saw. They tripped the fantastic toe till three in the morning.

Tell Cousin Lige and Bud and the other boys I think they might write me a few lines and let me know how the world is using them.

Letter to George and Alta Ikard from Fred Ikard, age 18.

Fort Lauderdale, Florida

July 5, 1925

Dear Kids,

I will write you a few lines this morn to let you know I'm still alive and as happy as if I had good sense. Oh, Boy, Alta I'll have to hand it to you for writing a real letter. The other kids just write about a page and ring off. You make me homesick when you speak of Medicine Park, etc. I'll bet you had some time yesterday (the 4th).

I had a very good time. I spent most of the day at Hollywood. They had the grandest parade you ever saw. You may see it sometime. There were several move – on the job. One of the prettiest was a double deck Hollywood bus all decorated, a group dressed in Colonial costumes in the upper deck, an orchestra below.

There was something interesting all day, water polo, swimming, diving in the new casino, a dance all afternoon and evening in the big tea room.

I didn't dance any yesterday. I dance very well now. I have plenty of chances to dance. There are three a week at our Beach Casino, about that many at Hollywood Tea Room and Country Club. I don't go to the country club, cause they drink and in other words are a pretty rough lot.

Don't think that all they have is dances. They have some of the finest churches what ever. The Baptist is a live wire church with about two hundred members. Of courses there is more than that goes there. I think every denomination under the sun is represented with a church except Holy Roller. They have a Nazarene Holiness though. I don't think I'll go to Sunday School this morning. I've run around till I'm tired.

Mother just did something I'll have to tell you about. She walked by our pictures and said, "Hello, Kids." She and Henry are looking at them and discussing them now.

Oh Say, I don't know if anyone told you. I have a new suit I think is pretty nice. It is York Blue, only cost me \$40. Clothes are pretty reasonable here. What clothes I have are real ones, if I say so myself.

Well I don't guess we can come back before spring. I guess we will come then if you all are not down here. We are coming back in a new Nash sedan or something like it. That surely is a fine trip.

Well I'll tell you a little about my job. My pay is advancing slowly but surely. I'm getting \$22.50 a week with Saturday afternoon off. I get a \$1.50 raise a week every month. I get through with my about three p.m. every day now. My boss encourages me to stay with him. I could start as a plasterer's helper at \$5 per day. Plastering plasterers get \$12 to \$16 for eight hours here. Most any old body can make eight dollars at carpentering. The reason I'm staying with my job, it's an education to me. I handle the

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calculating and adding machines pretty speedily. I can write pretty fast on the typewriter with the “hunt and peck” system. I am learning to write with the touch system.

Well Mildred, you’re going to have to drink more milk or Jr. is going to be as big as you. I bet you kiddies have oodles of fun on the farm with your little pony and everything. I wish I could see you today. It won’t be awfully long till we can be with each other. Won’t that be a grand day? I’ll close and let someone else write a while.

Fred

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Letter, Lanson Odell Ikard to son George

Fort Lauderdale, Florida
September 6, 1925

G.W. Ikard and Family
Dear Kids one and all,

Was glad to hear from you and to hear that you got home All OK. Well things are sure going some. There are 1500 houses under construction here now. I learned that yesterday. We are well and doing fine. I am still working for Mr. Peabody. I get \$6 a day! Driving nails. He is going to build 100 houses, so you see he will have work for you. He sure liked you. Yes, I have two houses for sale. I can hardly keep out of the game. I have a lot for you to build a shack on. Won't cost you a cent. It is close to our house. I don't want to sell my home here. You won't be able to find my house, they are building so fast. One was started across the street west of those two little shacks north of us. It beats the world, you can hear hammers ring day and night. Henry is carpentering, gets \$9 per day. His feet blistered and got sore, so he quit. Fred is still timekeeper for Gate City Planing Mill. Everybody works but Mother. She makes hers easy. She charges \$5 per week for sleeping. I think she will beat us. Hers is all profit. She can get all the boys that we can make room for. Well, Alta, I think I put in a grocery store and give you and May a job clerking. This is a fine place for a store here on this corner. You and May could take care of the store while George and I work at the carpenters trade. I sure wish George would sell the farm and send me the money so I could invest it here.

Say the ocean is fine.
Yours truly,

L.O. Ikard

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George W. Ikard wrote this letter to his mother, Betty, just before sailing from Seattle to Adak in the Aleutian Islands. Betty was carrying this letter in her handbag when she had a stroke on the train and died in Breman, Georgia.

Seattle, Washington
Friday night
April 4, 1944

Dear Mother,

Received your letter yesterday. Sweet, I was so glad to hear from you. I hadn't heard from any of you in about a week. Haven't heard from Alta since a week ago Tuesday. Think her letter might be up to West Construction Co.'s office. I am going there tomorrow and see. If I don't have a letter from her, I'm going to send a telegram to see what is wrong.

Bless her heart. I love her and am anxious to have a letter from her. Honey, your letter comes right through and I am glad.

I'm glad you are going to Mae's. Think that is the wise thing to do. And you can count on me. I'll come to see you as soon as possible. Florida may be our home by the time I get back from the north.

Glad Betty got to come. Where is her husband? Is he still in Florida? Does Letitia still live in Duncan? Is Jim getting along OK? Is Helen still working at Fort Sill? I wrote Jim a card but haven't heard from him.

If you see Alta or Gerald, tell them hello from me, and I said I'm lonesome for them. Gerald wrote one mighty sweet letter to me. Have you heard from Fred recently? Do you hear from Luther often? Mother, the weather here now is wonderful, not hot nor cold. And the wind never blows a bit. No dirt blowing in your eyes. I just love it here in Seattle. If my family isn't in Florida when I get back. I hope they are here.

Mildred is going home to be with her mother while I am away. I'm awful glad she decided to do that. She may be there by the time you get this.

About bed time so I'll quit for this time.

Good night, Darling, and I'll be seeing you in due time.

Your son,

George

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Fred O. Ikard was somewhere in the Pacific with the Seabees when this letter was written. WWII would continue for more than a year, but Fred was thinking of post war years and expecting good times with Betty. Fred refers to a check that Betty would want to continue to have even if she lived with her daughter Mae in Florida. Mrs. Britton was the postmistress in Cyril and the only federal employee in town. Her advice was sought on matters of government. Betty perhaps feared that she would lose her monthly Social Security check if she located in another state. This letter was written two weeks before Betty died; her last letter from Fred. Mae expected Betty to live with her permanently, but Betty had a garden growing when she took the train from Cyril. She anticipated a visit.

Tuesday night
May 2, 1944

Dearest Mother,

Received your sweet letter a couple of days ago. Mom, I am glad in a way you didn't go to Florida just yet. You wait and go about Christmas. Maybe Leona and Lanny might go with you for about 3 or 4 months. From about Christmas until the first of April. You talk to Mrs. Britton. I think you can go for a visit and draw your check just the same.

Mother, when this war is over, I think I will settle back in Cyril, build a new home and live a settled life. I have a good sure living in Cyril and good connections to sell cars. So I imagine we will make our home there.

Mom, I hope you continue to be well. I hope to spend some more happy days with you.

Lots of love,

Fred

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Betty Gilliam Ikard wrote this letter to her daughter Mae Ikard Hicks' family a few days before starting a train trip to visit the Hicks in Florida.

Cyril, Oklahoma
May 11, 1944

Dear Mae, Bud and Girls,

I will answer your letter I just received. Glad all was well. I am just fine, all but my wrist is hurting this a.m. Well Mae, Betty's husband don't get to come out here so Betty wants to go home. And we will leave Cyril Monday the 15th. Now don't worry we may be on the way longer on account of the war. We will have a three hour lay over in Memphis, Tennessee and another in two other stations. So don't worry at all. Maybe we will get there sooner than we think.

Mother

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Mae Ikard Hicks wrote this letter to her family when her mother Betty Ikard died on a train trip from Oklahoma to Florida where Mae lived. Betty was accompanied by her granddaughter Betty Louwanna Ikard McGuire. Mae went to Breman to claim her mother's body and to transport it by train back to Cyril, Oklahoma.

Breman, Georgia
May 18, 1944

Dear Bud and Family,

Will try to write you a few lines. I just finished talking to you. Am sending Mother's baggage checks. Please get her bag and trunk when it comes. I didn't go in to see her until about 5 o'clock this afternoon, was afraid I couldn't stand the trip afterwards. But Betty decided to go back with me, so I went in.

She looks so happy and peaceful and like she was in good health. She got sick this side of Anniston, Alabama. She had been talking and laughing with Betty and decided to take a nap. She raised up and started vomiting and never spoke another word.

The doctor said she had a stroke and died of cerebral hemorrhage. The Doctor and hospital bill was \$35. She has a beautiful white silk dress. The expenses here at the funeral home were \$260. I am writing a check for that. I had to buy Pullman tickets to take her home. For the three of us, it will be nearly \$100. Honey, I have no choice here, just have to take what I can get. This town is about the size of Cyril and no time or way to get around.

Now don't worry about me. I guess I took it pretty hard at first, but know that she would rather go quick than linger and suffer.

Poor Little Darling Mother bought a ticket for Florida and landed in heaven.

Betty said the last thing she told her was to be sure and wire me from Atlanta to meet her in Jacksonville. She said she never saw anyone enjoy a trip so much as she did up until she got sick.

I am going to bed now and try to sleep. We will only be on the train one night.

I will come home soon as I can.

Take good care of yourself and the children.

Love,

Mae

