

---

Joe Ruetz, '38, Escapes Death.

The Notre Dame Alumnus contains the following letter Joe sent to his family. The letter tells a story of courage and confidence in Our Blessed Lady, characteristic qualities of a true Notre Dame man. Joe, former N.D. football star, is now coaching in California and studying for a master's degree in anthropology. On one of his trips taken alone for the purpose of gathering material for his degree, he nearly lost his life from exposure and starvation. These excerpts from the letter Joe sent to his family were written while on the hazardous trip.

(Written Christmas Day) The hike back to Greenwater camp was the most frightful in all my experience. I hadn't been on the trail an hour before a howling blizzard struck. My horizon was limited to less than 100 yards, landmarks were invisible, most of the time the driving sheet of snow and deep snow obscured the trail - and I lost it. . . Stumbled crazily about on the icy slick rock, plodded with leaden legs through drifts of snow covering tummocks of sage or sand, fell down many times. I began to cry for it was the first time I had ever faced blizzard conditions. Then grim determination would set in and I'd rush forward, trying to make it. The Blessed Virgin once again aided me and I found myself overlooking Castle Wash. . .

Stumbled and fell many times into soft snow drifts, broke through the ice of the stream bed, finally crawling into camp. . . The last three days have been the most lonely and terrible I have ever spent. Two feet of snow blanketed the country and distances were endless. Had to force myself on and on over the obscured trail, never sure of the distance I'd made or what lay ahead. Wanted so much to get back to people and social life, yet ahead lay some 100 miles of faint trails, buried under heavy snows. Never have I suffered mentally so much as I do now. I keep saying rosary after rosary trying to relieve the terrible mental burden that presses me. . .

At night I would cut huge quantities of wood and keep a big fire blazing so as not to freeze. My shoes, warped and frozen, swelled my feet and cut them. Many times I broke down and cried - asking God and the Blessed Virgin to lend me strength in my need. . . Had lived on rice and coffee for a week. . . At a spot 15 miles from Blanding my legs collapsed entirely from the strain. Half dragged myself to an old abandoned trading post three miles down the road and stayed overnight. Was out of food entirely and supped on coffee alone. Up the next day, had a teaspoon of sugar for breakfast and started off, but my legs were done. . .

God's mercy and the good Blessed Virgin must have taken pity on me, for an Indian Service car came along and took me to Blanding. I actually got on my knees and thanked God when Blanding came into view. . . I had blazed a trail in three feet of snow for 150 miles for 12 days when I arrived in Blanding. The doctor was the first human being I had contacted in 23 days of loneliness. It was a frightful experience. . . and I found out, after 500 miles of solitude that man is, after all, a "social being" and the hermitic life is a warped one.

Senior Novena.

The special intention for the first day of the Novena, Monday, is the Grace of Courage to face in a Christ-like manner the duties of the future. Prepare for the Novena by Confession tonight.

Don't Wait Until Sunday Mass . . .

. . .for Confession. It's impossible for the four confessors to hear all confessions during Mass. Confess tonight in Dillon, Serin, or Cavanaugh.

PRAYERS: (Deceased) father of Bill Gorman (Cav); mother of Charles LoBue ex. '44. (Ill) mother of Bud Kolp '39. Six special intentions.