"BIG BOY"

A DIARY OF WORLD WAR I

By Quiren M. Groessl

QUIREN M. GROESSL

Quiren M. Groessl.

PREFACE

That this diary has a first part is just plain luck. Before our regiment left Texas for the East Coast on February 2, 1918, I had purchased a notebook in which I kept a record of dates and events that were of interest to me. But the notebook, along with whatever other personal items I had in my pockets or on my person, were all taken when my clothing had been cut off after I had been wounded. I never expected to see any of my belongings again and, in fact, I had entirely forgotten about them.

Almost a year after I had set aside my notes for Part Two of this diary, my mother received a letter from the War Department stating that if she could present proof that she was the mother of the deceased, Quiren Groessl, certain personal belongings would be sent to her. It didn't take me long to get off a letter to the War Department saying that I was very much alive and that the personal belongings should be sent to me. In due time, the parcel arrived. It contained a prayer missal, two letters and a pocket notebook, all of which had been recovered from the pockets of my uniform which had been cut off of me after I had been wounded, and later retrieved by the Salvage Section.

The two letters also brought back fond memories, as well as vivid reminders of past fears, pain and sufferings. One letter from a girl I had dated shortly before I enlisted was covered with my dried blood. The other letter was from a girl from my home town. It was not addressed to me, nor was it intended for me, but by a very remote chance came into my possession while in France. I was able to put together Part One of this diary from the notes and the two letters.

The notes for Part Two of this diary were put down on paper months after the events occurred. During the intervening time spent in various hospitals, I had gone over each incident and every detail hundreds of times in my mind. I could not close them out of my memory. At the urging of one of my doctors, I put these thoughts down on paper hoping that it would act as an escape valve restoring my peace of mind.

The idea was a good one but carrying it out was something else. I had completely lost the use of my right hand and arm and the left arm had only limited function. Each time I tried to write a word, the paper was pushed away by the pencil. My determination to learn to write left-handed, and my ability to do so, were many weeks apart. Countless hours and innumerable sheets of paper later, I was tempted to give it up as a bad job. At the continued urging of my doctor, I decided to stay at it for another couple of weeks. Finally crude writing began to take shape and Part Two of the diary was eventually recorded.

The notes were later put aside as more important things came along. I still had a living to earn and a life to live. I had my schooling to finish, a business to run and a family to raise.

Now, at the age of 70, my children raised and gone from home, and with time on my hands, I began rummaging through some of my old files and came across my notes of 48 years ago. I decided to spend some of my retirement time in making the notes readable. Perhaps someday, one or more of my grandchildren may be interested in reading one segment of Grandpa's life.

May, 1966

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QUIREN GROESSL "STRUCK THE OLD HOME TOWN" MONDAY EVENING

Large Number Gather at Depot to Greet First Returned Algoma Hero From Battlefield of France—Is Gradually Recovering From Bayonet Wounds.

OCT. 25 1918

Quiren Grossel, among the first of the sturdy lads of this community to offer their all for the freedom of the world, is the first to arrive back home, not in the same condition that he left, but encumbered by disability caused by the bayonet of a German soldier who paid the penalty almost immediately following the moment he struck young Groessl down. Quiren arrived Monday evening and was met at the depot by a large delegation of citizens who were anxious to greet Algoma's first returned hero. Stepping off the train he fell into the fond embrace of his mother, was escorted to a waiting automobile, all the time grasping hands of friends and greeting them in the warmest of his good nature. Flags flew from every mast and vantage point in the city in honor of his arrival.

The first news of his coming was Sunday evening when he spoke to one of his brothers at home by phone from Milwaukee. He requested that his coming be kept a secret. However, Monday morning, the news which had leaked out in some manner, spread like wildfire about town.

'Tis needless to say that Quiren is busy these days relating his experiences in the war zone to friends. He was virtually beseiged by friends, and more especially by parents of boys who are still "over there", who were anxious to get any first hand information of the condition there with hope of gaining something regarding their own boys.

The experiences through which Quiren had gone were of such a nature, that is not believed that one of a thousand, could have successfully duplicated. His experience of three Ger- [illegible] ing to induce him to go to Berlin ahead of the rest of the boys, [illegible] Quiren just naturally determined not to go that way, and didn't, speak louder than words of the qualities that were contained in his make-up

It is Quiren's greatest desire to get back to France. Although he is slowly regaining the use of his right arm, it will take many months, if ever, before he will have fully recovered and his hopes are likely never to be fulfilled He says when he reads the newspaper reports of the falling of towns, which he and his comrades had at one time talked of capturing he feels a sensation akin to homesickness. He wants to be with the boys when they march to Berlin and it is to be regretted that it may not be possible for one who has so signally honored himself and the community in which he has lived to have that opportunity of sharing in the glory that he helped to win for American arms.

Quiren's wound was a deep cut from one shoulder across the back just below the neck. Every nerve controlling his arms was severed and when the bayonet struck the spinal column, the concussion caused paralysis of the lower limbs and this was the reason for his absolute helplessness for many hours following his wounding. American doctors pronounced the operation performed upon the wounds by the French physicians as the most wonderful, every nerve being connected, and this skill is the only thing that saved for him the use of his arms.

"At the time when Gen. Ludendorf commenced his great drive on the Somme front in March, we were on the Lorraine sector. At this time we were ordered to the Somme front as reserve. Our work then consisted of repairing trenches and putting up barbed-wire in front of the trenches. During the time our brigade was in reserve, the communicating trench was spotted by the enemy and kept under constant shell fire and destroyed, making it impossible for food and supplies to be carried up to the men in the front line. That brigade as on duty nineteen days without being relieved and receiving only the supplies that could be brought to them under

WAR CORRESPONDENT TELLS OF "BIG BOY"

"Big Boy" Better Known Locally at "Squeegee" Groessl—Writer Was In Same Ward With Groessl

The following is an article written by Floyd Gibbons, the famous war correspondent which appeared recently in The Columbiad. It refers to Quiren Groessl of this city, he being known as "Big Boy" among the fellows in the ward at the hospital where he lay recovering from the bayonet wounds. The article follows:

This happened in the United States Military Base Hospital at Neuilly sur Seine, on the outskirts of Paris. It occurred in Ward 160 and took place in the early days of June of this year when the first big flood of wounded American soldiers began streaming back from the then flaming fronts.

There were fourteen of us in ward 160. Our wounds were various and many. The occupants of the ward had tasted the best that the enemy had to offer in the form of shell, bullets or bayonet. Almost every other bed was urmounted by a tall wooden apparatus from which the fractured limbs of those in the beds beneath were suspended. These wooden structures gave our ward the appearance of a collection of miniature oil derricks.

Our visitors were numerous. We received the best of care. It was easy to bear the pain under such circumstances. In addition to the representatives of American organizations especially engaged in this work there were many Americans, men and women who came and sat by our bedsides. They brought us cigarettes and chocolates and fruit and wrote letters home for us.

The Case of "Big Boy"

There was one case in the ward that received more attention than the others. He occupied a bed over in one corner.

He had been captured by three Germans who were marching him back to their line. In telling me the Story "Big Boy" said: "Mr. Gibbons, I made up my mind as I walked back with them that I might just as well be dead as to spend the rest of the war studying German."

So he had struck the man on the right and the one on the left and had downed both of them, but the German in back of him got him with the bayonet. A nerve center in his back was severed by the slash of the steel that extended almost from one shoulder to the other, and "Big Boy" had fallen to the ground.

"Big Boy" lay there paralyzed and helpless. He liked to smoke, and when there did not happen to be a Knights of Columbus worker or representative of some other organization present, to assist him, he had to call upon the services of our very hard working orderly, Dan Sullivan. Sullivan seemed to know every time "Big Boy" needed a smoke. The paralized, wounded man's bed was placed close to the door that led from the ward to the corridor. We would see the door open four or five inches and we would get a half view of Dan Sullivan, one arm piled high with a stack of pots and pans, and a cigarette hanging from one corner of his mouth.

With his face free hand he would extract the cigarette from his mouth. Then the hand would be projected through the crack in the door and extended until it hovered over "Big Boy's" face. Then it would descend and the cigarette would be stuck in "Big Boy's" mouth like a pin-cushion. Then the hand that had conveyed the cigarette and the arm attached to it would be weirdly withdrawn through the crack in the door.

"Big Boy" would puff away like a Mississippi steamboat for four or five minutes. The door would reopen not more than four or five inches, the hand and arm would be inserted again and the cigarete would be plucked out of "Big Boy's" mouth. That was the [illegible] that happy sufferer enjoy [illegible]

All women visitors entering the ward or leaving it would stop at "Big Boy's" bedside and would learn of his pitiful condition either from the nurse or from the chart attached to the foot of the bed. They would look into "Big Boy's" face and with eyes wet with pity they would mournfully shake their heads, at the same time saying "poor boy."

Of all things in the world that "Big Boy' detested it was to be called "poor boy." If you feel sorry for an American soldier who has been wounded, don't manifest it by adressing him "poor boy." He won't like it, because it leaves nothing for him to say and besides he does not feel sorry for himself and doesn't want to feel sorry for himself. Self-pity is not to be found in an American hospital where our wounded rest. Each one of the wounded men feel particularly lucky to be alive after what they have gone through and they would greatly prefer a visitor's congratulations on their good luck to be among the living.

Tw American women visitors were standing by "Big Boy's" bed one day. One of them carried a large cluster of roses in one arm. She picked one of the flowers and placed it solemnly on "Big Boy's" defenseless chest. He looked up at her with a smile which she accepted as a token of overwhelming gratitude. The woman walked out of the room with the feeling that she had obtained the benediction that is to be derived from the doing of a kindly act.

As the door closed behind her we heard "Big Boy's" drawling voice as he called out for the orderly. He said "Dan—remove the funeral decoration."

THE MANITOWOC DAILY HERALD 1918

ALGOMA BOY WHO BATTLED 3 GERMANS SINGLEHANDED, MADE ESCAPE, WELL KNOWN HERE

A graphic account of how a Yankee, formerly of Co. F, beat up three German captors has reached here. Querin Grassel of Algoma, now a member of one of the companies of the Twenty eighth Infantry, is the plucky soldier. Grasse is well known in Manitowoc county and is a first cousin of John Kellner of this city and the Kellner at Kellersville.

In a skirmish the soldier got in advance of the rest of his company and was being taken back as a German prisoner to the German lines by three big Huns.

The sight of a German prison camp was not appealing to Grassel and he battled with the trio and got the best of the entire three, laying them low and returning to the American lines seriously wounded in the hand to hand encounter. In the fracas he had received a deep stab in the back.

Grassel's name appeared in the casualty list last week as seriously wounded. The member of the company that sent the story home, states that the plucky American is improving [illegible] rapidly, and will not suffer any [illegible] from his wound.

QUIREN GROESSL OUTWITS GERMANS

"Lick 'Em" Against Five to One Odds —Escapes with Bayonet Wound to Own Trench.

1918

That the German machine made soldier is inferior to the young, virile, resourceful American was clearly demonstrated in a lone battle made by Quiren Groessel of this city against the Germans at the time he received the wound that sent him to the hospital for repairs. We are glad to note that Quiren has recovered and is about ready to get into the fight again, if he is not already there. The dashing spirit, the grit and nerve he displayed when cornered in an apparently hopeless position, corroborates the late newspaper dispatches that the Americans are fighting [illegible] and fear is not incorporated [illegible] make up.

The heroism of young Groessel described in two letters that have been received. One was written by Urban Kashik to his parents and the other from Allen MacMillan to his parents at Sturgeon Bay. Urban in describing Quiren's brilliant feat says: Quiren Groessel is still in the hospital, but I have heard that he is expected to be out soon, and I will be glad to see him. The Germans made a raid on his company while I was in a back support line, and while he was kept busy with three in front of him, two Germans grabbed him from the rear and tried to take him prisoner to their lines, when a shell hit near them and they dropped him. Quiren picked up a rifle and clubbed one, but the other jabbed him with a bayonet. He managed to get back to his trench. I sure admire him for his grit.

The McMillan lad in his letter speaks of his comrade's heroism and he says: "One of the boys who belonged to our old Company F who was from Algoma by the name of Groessl, was captured by three Germans and was taken across to their lines and there he beat up the three, but received a stab in the back But he got up and beat it to his company. He is now in the [illegible] and getting along nicely."

FLEES FROM THREE GERMAN CAPTORS

Milwaukee Journal 1918

BADGER STABBED IN BACK CRAWLS OVER NO MAN'S LAND TO SAFETY

Is Hero of Company Which Shows Same Fighting Spirit—Now Unfit for Service, Is Sent Back Home.

BY SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT OF THE JOURNAL

Sturgeon Bay, Wis.—Several weeks ago there came back from the trenches of the western front the story of Corp. Quiren Groessel, Algoma, Wis., who, single handed, escaped from three Germans who had captured him, and now Corp. Groessel himself has returned to this country, physically incapacitated for further active service.

It was through letters from his comrades that Groessel's feat became known, he himself simply stating in his letters that he had been wounded and was in a hospital. A letter received from Allen McMillan, Sturgeon Bay, who is in the same company as the Algoma man, bore the first news of Corp. Groessel's escape from captivity.

Mr. McMillan stated that the story had become known throughout the entire regiment and that Quiren was the hero of the company. While the Germans were vainly trying to stem the tide of allied victory, a party of Germans made a raid on the American trenches.

During the hand to hand fighting which ensued, Corp. Groessel was surrounded and outnumbered by the Germans, and although he put up an excellent fight, he was finally forced to give in. Three of the raiding party were detailed to take the American back to the enemy trenches.

Unable, because of his exhausted condition to resist, Guiren was carried over to the enemy lines. Upon reaching the German trenches, he put up a spirited fight and, as his comrade wrote home "beat up the three of his captors and, although stabbed in the back escaped."

Crawling across no man's land, the Wisconsin lad finally reached the American trenches and, thoroughly exhausted, found his own company. For a time, because of the serious nature of his wounds his life was despaired of, but prompt medical treatment saved it.

Declared Unfit for Service.

To the infinite disgust of Corp Groessel, the army medicos declared him unfit for further active service and, despite his protests at being unable to take another crack at Fritz shipped him back to the states. Now having fully recovered from the effects of his wounds he was sent to the military hospital at Fort Dodge, Ia.

Corp. Groessel's original company was the Fighting F of the Fifth Wisconsin, composed of Door county and Algoma men which was formed here in the spring of 1917. He was among the first from the latter place to enlist.

This company was in training here for a few weeks in July and August and spent the remainder of the year at Camps Douglas and MacArthur. While at the Texas cantonment, the original company was split up to fill the ranks of other outfits and at this time Corp. Groessel was assigned to the One Hundred Twenty-eighth infantry. It was while with this regiment that he performed the feat which will go down in the history of the state.

Other Heroes in Same Company.

However, Corp. Groessel is not the only member of the Door county Algoma company to uphold its reputation. John Wasserbach, another Company F man, has been awarded the Croix de Guerre for bravery in action. He was reported severely wounded several weeks ago; it is thought that it was in the same action that he was [illegible] that he won the highest [illegible] that France can award. Joseph [illegible] who later died of wounds, was [illegible] for bravery.

Company F has been hit, with the possible exception of the Fond du Lac company, as hard as any national guard organization from the state. Ten of the men who left last August have been killed and thirty wounded. [illegible] one-third of the names of the [illegible] who left here last August have appeared in the casualty list.

The fighting spirit which enabled Quiren Groessel to escape, single handed, from three Germans is typical of the Thirty-second division, which, composed of Michigan and Wisconsin troops, is smashing the Hindenburg line under the leadership of Gen Haan. These Yanks from the middle west have been named by their French comrades, "the terrible ones" as the Germans is utterly unable to stop their fierce attacks.

29 remain from original Company F

By KETA STEEBS

The war to end all wars began for Door county soldiers Aug. 17, 1917 when they with their Kewaunee county comrades shipped out for Camp Douglas.

They still talk about that sunny summer day, the Company F boys still living, and although their voices no longer carry the vibrant assurance of youth their recollections are distinct, their words resolute.

Ask Grover Stapleton, or Ed Reynolds, or J. C. Weitermann or any of the other remaining veterans, 29 in all, how it felt to be part of that proud company on that beautiful August day when they, like Johnnys all over the land, went marching off to war.

You can't ask Archie Lackshire. He was the first to die And you can't ask any of his 24 comrades who were killed in trenches or succumbed to tear gas or the men who breathed their last in veterans hospitals but you can still get the story from Company F's dwindling survivors and it's a story worth hearing.

The bands were playing spiritedly that day, they tell us, and men, women and children from the length and breadth of the peninsula lined Cedar street waving their country's flag. The crowd was large, probably the largest ever to gather in Door county's short history, and emotions were mixed. Pride, joy, sadness, scepticism and criticism were the order of the day depending on the age, sex and political views of the spectators.

Not all Door countyites lining Cedar avenue that day believed America's entry into World War I was justified. Many of those who did believe it was time for this country to intervene also believed the holocaust which had been raging in Europe since 1914 would end once America's might was felt. Those adhering to the latter view doubted if the boys would ever get farther than Camp Douglas.

The majority of Americans, however, believed the only way to prevent future wars from erupting was to effectively put an end to this particular conflict no matter how long it might take. Those volunteers making up the ranks of Company F were not only doing their duty as they saw it they were also heeding President Woodrow Wilson's rallying cry to "make the world safe for democracy" thus ending world wars forever.

History would prove them wrong but no man alive on Aug. 17, 1917 could foresee Dec. 7, 1941.)

Men who just a few months before had labored on farms, clerked in stores, fitted shipbeams, taught school, fixed motors, attended school or fished for a living found themselves leading dual lives in May of 1917. On Apr. 6 of that year the United States declared war on Germany and the men of Door county were quick to respond. Although they worked at civilian jobs by day, nights were spent drilling at Market Square.

The gymnasium of Sturgeon Bay high school doubled as a dormitory for the benefit of out-of-town soldiers who were encouraged to look upon the makeshift barracks as their home away from home.

Each member of Company F was the proud possessor of a soldier's kit complete with toilet articles and sewing supplies, courtesy of the local chapters of the American Red Cross. Rookies their men might be but the women were making sure they were well-equipped rookies.

During the latter part of July Capt. Ed Reynolds, 1st Lt. Ralph Perry and 2nd Lt. Haney Ihlenfeldt, both of Algoma, were appointed as company commanders, replacing Watson whose departure was not noticeably lamented.

Trained at Fort Sheridan's officer training school, the three local officers were greeted warmly by their troops. Reynolds, newly married and just finished with the Reynold's Preserving Company's pea canning for the summer, already had his men's good will and he lost no time gaining their respect as well.

His old soldiers still chuckle when they recall the morning the youthful captain spotted an unsteady rookie who, when accused of being drunk by his perceptive commanders, answered sheepishly, "Aw, cap'n, you should've seen me last night." This same man later suffered severe wounds in battle.

Upon arriving at Camp Douglas, a check of the company's rolls revealed three under-age soldiers who were promptly weeded out. Lester J. Leitl, another young man eligible for discharge, was hidden in a tent until his 18th birthday arrived. His accomplices tell us that all important birthday was just a few days away.

Intact until they reached Texas, it took no more than a week at Camp MacArthur for the Door-Kewaunee men to be assigned to other regiments. Company F men found themselves serving with the 1st Company, 121st Machine Gun Battalian, Company G of the 128th Infantry and the 57th Depot Brigade.

The three officers, Reynolds, Perry and Ihlenfeldt, were also given assignments separating them from men of their own company. Sgt. John Acker of Sturgeon Bay was immediately promoted to sergeant major and assigned to an ammunition train commanded by Major Imhoff (the same officer who had sworn him in at the Opera House.)

Stapleton and Charles Nelson, the first two men to join the company, were sent back to Sheridan where they quickly earned their lieutenant's bars.

Capt. Reynolds was placed in command of the 121st machine gun battalion (nicknamed Les Terribles) and after one pitched battle, earned the Croix de Guerre proving to the French the appropriateness of their hastily bestowed nickname. F G. Langemak, another noted Door county soldier, was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

This, of course, is jumping ahead of the story. First the men had to get to France — a journey which, for many, offered one-way-passage only. Split by now into many different companies the Door-Kewaunee soldiers left Waco for Camp Merritt, N. J., on Feb 2, 1918 and 16 days later set sail for the battlefields of Europe

They made their mark at places like Chateau Thierry, the Marne, Soissons, St. Michel and the Argonne. Twenty-five young men of the 155 who had answered roll call that hot departure day in August were killed in action and twice that number were wounded. Lackshire was the first to die from Door county and Ernest H. Haucke was the first Kewaunee county man to be killed. His name and Lackshire's were later adopted by their respective American Legion Posts.

No story of Company F would be complete without mentioning the by now legendary feat of a certain Algoma soldier named Querin Groessl. Captured by the Germans after he had been wounded, Groessl, despite being stabbed in the back managed to escape and rejoin his company. He is also credited with having the satisfaction of beating up two of his captors before taking leave.

Company F returned to Sturgeon Bay on April 11, 1919 with 80 physically unscathed soldiers. Today's roll call, in addition to listing the before-mentioned Groessl, Stapleton, Weitermann and Reynolds, reads as follows:

William Burlo, Ole M. Christenson Howard Collard, N. J. DeJardine, Grover Eichinger, Charles Ellis, George Feller George Fellows, Clyde Helgeson, Edward F. Jennerjohn, Jerry J. Jerabek Urban Kashik, Carl Koutnik, Henry Kugler, Lester Leitl, David Lessard Allen MacMillin.

Also, Gilbert J. Monty, Paul Mueller Charles Nelson, Melvin Peterson, Elmer Smith, Edward Torstenson, Anton Vertz Clarence Zastrow and William Zivney

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

AN EARLY MORNING RIDE IN A CLOSED TRUCK

A brief summary of my first notes show that after Christmas, 1917, troop movements at Camp McArthur, Texas, were being closely guarded. The Division Commander and his staff tried to keep everyone from knowing that our Division was about to depart for overseas. We could see, however, that what had been company streets and lines of tents the day before were now open spaces. These changes were taking place slowly and quietly, but the size of the camp began changing on January 2, and from then on the movement of troop trains was steady. When our turn came to leave on February 2, only the artillery batteries were left in camp. A day or two later on the train to Camp Merritt, New Jersey, we learned from a newspaper that the Steamship Tuscania which was carrying 32nd Division ammunition and supply trains had been torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine. No account of the number of casualties was carried in the paper. We knew that the Division had suffered its first losses, and it had a sobering effect. It brought the war that much closer to us.

February 5, 1918

Camp Merritt is an embarkation camp. The next move from here will be to the docks of some large city along the Hudson River. Then onto a troop ship which will evidently be joined by other ships, to form a convoy for crossing the submarine-infested Atlantic, for France and the battle fields.

Unlike Camp Douglas, Wisconsin, or Camp MacArthur, Texas, where we slept in tents on army cots, we are housed in long low one story wooden barracks equipped with metal beds and soft mattresses. It is quite an improvement.

But like the other camps, "Taps", or lights out are sounded by the Regimental bugler at 10:00 PM and "Reveille", or time to get up, is sounded at 5:00 AM and by now it had become second nature to be in bed before Taps sounded, and out of bed seconds after the first notes of Reveille are heard.

February 10

So far we haven't been doing much in the way of drilling, but we have had a few equipment inspections to see what, if anything, we were short of. We were also told, in a round about way, that if we had any cherished possessions that would not be essential to us overseas, now was the time to send them home or to get rid of them

if we couldn't get them in our barracks bags. The bags we had wouldn't hold much more than our blankets, extra uniform, underwear and socks, and a few personal toilet articles such as a razor and shaving cream, tooth brush and paste, and a few other small items.

February 12

The latest latrine news is that we will be here for several weeks to undergo some special type of training. But, rumors are flying so thick and fast that one can only hope some of them are true, and that others are not true.

February 14

I am making this entry in my notebook down in the hold of a ship after a really hard day, and an exciting one. I heard Taps last night at 10:00 PM, but I did not hear Reveille this morning.

I was awakened from a sound sleep by someone shaking me by the shoulder. It was too dark to make out more than the dim dark shadow of a form bending over me, and before I could say, "Who are you, or what do you want?" a hand was firmly clamped over my mouth and a low voice whispered in my ear, "Don't try to talk, and listen carefully. Get dressed, pack all of your belongings including your blankets in your barracks bag. Do not waken anyone in the barracks and be out on the Company street in ten minutes." Then he was gone.

I lay there still half asleep trying to figure out if I had been dreaming or if what seemed to have happened really happened. Slowly I turned back the blanket, sat up on the edge of the bed, and when my feet touched the cold floor I was wide awake.

The barracks was a long one room wooden building capable of sleeping 75 men on either side, with a narrow aisle between. My bed was the third one from the front on the right side. A narrow shelf above each bed had space for a razor, shaving cream, toothbrush and paste, and a very few other items. The rest of our belongings such as underwear, socks, extra shoes, uniform, poncho and books and writing material all had to be kept in our barracks bags, which stood on the floor in the aisle between the beds, along with our rifles.

Overhead, running down the center of the main aisle and suspended from the cross-bracing of the roof rafters, were electric light wires from which at regular intervals a drop cord with a lightbulb was suspended. They were all turned on or off by a single switch at the front of the barracks. I didn't dare turn on the lights or everyone in the barracks would be awake in an instant.

As I dressed in the dark, I could hear the slow measured breathing of the boys on either side of me and the gentle snoring of some who were farther away. I was tempted to awaken one of the boys next to me and ask if he knew what this was all about, but I realized that he

wouldn't know any more than I did, and our whispering might awaken others.

After nearly eight months in Uncle Sam's Army, I was accustomed to taking orders without asking why, but this order in the middle of the night had me a bit concerned. The latest latrine news in the camp was that our outfit would be at Camp Merritt for several weeks undergoing special training. Could this be a part of that training? Or could it be something worse? Had some member of my family met with a serious accident or severe illness? I was searching my mind for a reason why I alone out of my Company of 150 men should be stealthily awakened in the dead of night, and just as stealthily taken from my comrades and my Company.

The contents of several letters I had received from my mother while I was still at Camp MacArthur, Texas, came to mind. I hadn't considered their contents seriously at the time, but now as I continued to dress, they seemed to take on an ominous meaning. From those letters I had learned that in time of war there were those who considered themselves 100% Americans and who became suspicious of everyone else. They were the super-Patriotic who could do no wrong, but believed that everyone else could.

Our community, a typical small town made up of ordinary people from all walks of life, whose ancestors had migrated to America from Belgium, England, France, Holland, Germany and many other countries, had been a very happy community. All nationalities blending together, inter-marrying and working and playing together to make a better life for all.

But, America's entry into the war had changed all that. The first change was not too noticeable, but gradually like a cancer it grew insidiously from a whisper here, and a subtle remark there. A name mentioned in an undertone, and gradually more names spoken of derisively. A can of yellow paint thrown and splashed across the front of the store of one citizen whose parents had come from Germany many years before. And before very much longer many more people of German ancestry were automatically suspect in the warped minds of the few. And as time went one, the few grew in numbers.

Among those who became suspect was my father. He had come over to America from Germany with his father, mother, brothers and sisters in 1867, at the age of 11. It made no difference to those super-Patriots that he had been just a boy when he came to this country and was now past 60 years old. That he had lived a decent life, married an American girl and raised a good Christian family. It didn't matter to them that up to now he had been one of them and that he was well liked in the community. It hadn't even been of any concern to them that one of his sons had voluntarily enlisted in the army and was even then on his way over to France to fight the Germans. Or,

perhaps that was one of the reasons that he, among others, were summoned to the Kewaunee County Courthouse to be questioned as to his citizenship and as to his loyalty to his country.

At 11 years of age, a boy in a strange land has so much to see and to learn and do that he wouldn't have much time to think or to be interested in whether his father had become an American citizen. He would just take such things for granted, if they even entered his mind at all.

Most of these things I knew or learned from mother's letters, but up to now hadn't thought too much about it because I couldn't believe that things could be as bad as her letters intimated. Nor had I, up to now, learned the outcome of the investigations. Could it be possible that my grandfather for some reason, or no reason at all, had failed to obtain his citizenship and, therefore, my own father was not a citizen, but an alien who might be subject to an internment camp?

If that were true, then even I, though born an American citizen, could be suspect and my volunteering misconstrued as trying to serve the enemy from within. It all seemed so far fetched, but at the time it wasn't the least bit funny to me. I was deeply worried and concerned.

I had never questioned an order before, but I was sure going to do so now. Fully dressed except for my shoes which I carried suspended by their laces about my neck, my barracks bag packed and in my hand, my rifle suspended by its sling from my shoulder, I stealthily made my way to the door and out onto the stoop facing the Company street.

It had been warm in the barracks. Out here on the street a cold raw wind was flowing, causing me to shiver as I sat down on the stoop to put on my shoes. It was quiet here. Light streaks were beginning to make their appearance in the wintry sky, but it was still too dark to see any distance along the street. As far as I could see it was deserted, except for the faint glow of a street light some distance away. A lonely feeling of anxiety slowly began to creep over me as I sat there, not knowing what to expect next.

Then, out of the darkness, a tall solitary figure could be seen making his way toward me. When he came closer I recognized my Company "Top Kick", Louis Heinricks. "What the hell is this all about?" I asked as he came within whispering distance. I will never forget how relieved I was at his answer.

"Groessl", he replied, "You have been chosen for a special mission, but for security reasons I cannot tell you more about it at this time. In a few minutes a covered truck will pick you up. There will be a couple of other boys from other Companies who are on the same mission. Do a good job, and in a couple of days you will be joined by the rest of the Company." What Louie had said didn't tell me much, but it did ease my mind considerably and

Floyd Gibbons' Death Ended String of 20 Annual Reunions

Algoma Man Who Was Pal of Headline Hunter Attends Meeting Alone

By EDGAR NELL

ALGOMA, Wis. — "Floyd Gibbons is dead!"

Greeted with these words upon his arrival at the Wisconsin headquarters of the American Legion convention at Chicago, Algoma's Postmaster Quiren Groessel knew that the meet would not be the same for him this year.

Fate had ended the annual one-day reunion of two fellows who had become buddies in a hospital room during the Great War — a reunion which had been held at every convention for the past 20 years.

Story Goes Back to France

The story of this comradeship dates back to the American Red Cross hospital at Nuilly, France, on the outskirts of Paris. Gibbons, famed war correspondent, had been brought to the hospital from Belleau Wood where he had had one eye shot out and had been wounded in the shoulder and elbow while going to the rescue of a wounded soldier. Groessel, a member of the American forces, had been stuck through the neck with a bayonet while escaping from a group of German captors.

It was six weeks before Gibbons, temporarily blinded in the remaining eye also, even saw the completely paralyzed Groessel lying beside him. All of those weeks, however, and all of the weeks which followed, provided plenty of time for the two heretofore unacquainted men to become the best of pals.

After the war, both returned to America — Gibbons to continue his dramatic and sensational career and Groessel to Algoma to become prominent in local business, Legion and political circles.

Regardless of how great the distance [illegible] the two and regardless [illegible] happiness or sorrow the years showered down on these [illegible]-time buddies the annual convention always meant one day of reconnoitering through reunion. At these meetings, many humorous incidents would be recalled and laughed over and many incidents and stories, definitely not funny, would be shied away from.

Will Visit His Grave

Groessel left Algoma last week confidently expecting and anticipating a 1939 get-together. Getting the news too late to attend the funeral, he is leaving on Tuesday for Washington, D. C., where he will visit the grave of Gibbons at Mount Olivet cemetery.

This year's postponed "reunion" will be held on an entirely different note than those of the previous 20 years. Sadness instead of gayety, Silence instead of celebration. These will be its theme.

Floyd Gibbons, globe-trotting war correspondent, who died of a heart attack last night at Stroudsburg, Pa.

ON AND DEARBORN STS.
CHICAGO

The Chicago Tribune

THE WORLD'S GREATEST NEWSPAPER
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TÉL. LOUVRE 04-26

2nd April, 1919.

Mr. Quiren M. Groessl,
Algoma,
Wisconsin.

Dear "Big Boy",

Pardon this tardy reply to yours of February 14th, but they have got me assigned on a desk job away over here in France, and I have not had a chance to answer.

I am certainly glad that you have made the remarkable recovery from your wounds, and that you are now wielding the ruler from the teacher's desk in the city schools of Algoma. I believe you will be able to maintain discipline. I surely would like to step into the school room some day and witness it.

I told the story of "Big Boy" from the Atlantic to the head waters of the Missouri, and it knocked them out of their seats every time.

I am expecting to return to Chicago by the 1st May, and you may be sure that, if my way ever leads up into Wisconsin, I will indeed step in and see the "Big Boy" "laying down the golden rule".

Most sincerely yours
Floyd Gibbons
FLOYD GIBBONS,
Director,
THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE,
Foreign News Service.

FG/EC

PS. Keep in touch with me.
F.G.

I felt much better about things in general. I knew now that the things I had been worrying about had nothing to do with my being here, at this ungodly hour.

Shortly after, a large covered truck pulled up and came to a stop. Louie tossed my barracks bag through the rear flap of the truck. As I climbed into the truck Louie said, "Good-bye and good luck." I could vaguely make out the blurred forms of other men seated on the floor of the truck and could hear their subdued voices. The rear flap was closed and fastened shut. A moment later we were on our way.

We had gone only a short distance when the man seated nearest to me said, "I am Williams from M. Company, what's your outfit?" I replied, "I'm Groessl from G.Company. Do you know what this is all about?" "I was just going to ask you the same question", he replied. The others in the truck spoke up. One asked the same question I had asked my top kick. "What the hell is this all about?" Another asked, "Where are we going and why all the secrecy?" I mentioned what Louie had told me about going on a special mission and that we would be rejoined by our Companies in a few days. That made them feel better as they had not been told anything except to keep their mouths shut and to be on the Company street as soon as possible. None of us had the remotest idea of where we might be going or why.

We had been traveling about 12 minutes, according to my watch, when the truck came to a stop. All conversation ceased as we tried to listen. We could hear words being exchanged between someone in the driver's cab and someone on the ground, but all we were able to make out was, "You may proceed." The truck had apparently been stopped at the main gate by the guard.

The truck quickly gathered speed. In the back we bounced around, our voices growing louder as we tried to make ourselves heard above the noise of the truck. We could tell from the sound of the speeding truck that we were in open country, but in which direction or where we were going we had no way of knowing. One of the boys near the tailgate reached up and pulled on the rear flap which gave sufficiently to get a glimpse outside. We could see that it was getting near daylight.

In the black interior of the truck it seemed like we had been traveling for hours, but my watch showed that from the time we had been stopped until the truck slowed down, and the outside sounds changed, we had been on the road for only 25 minutes. The sounds outside now seemed to be bouncing back at us, a sort of a walled-in sound or echo, like riding between tall buildings. Another peek through the flap proved our guess to be right. We were riding down the streets of some large city, but there was no sound of traffic. No car horns or the sound of meeting cars or trucks one associates with a large city. Perhaps it was too early in the morning, or possibly we were traveling

Streets on which traffic had been rerouted temporarily. It was only 4:30 in the morning and we seemed to have the city to ourselves.

After another 18 minutes the outside sounds seemed to change again. This time it was an entirely different sound, but one I recognized. It was a hollow rumbling sound which I had often heard before while riding over a wooden bridge with wood planking for the floor or driveway. Before we could figure why we would be driving over a wooden bridge we came to a halt. Next we heard the sound of a large door on rollers being pushed open. The truck jerked ahead for possibly 50 or more feet and again came to a stop. Then we heard what sounded like a large door being shut, but this time it seemed to come from behind us.

Now we distinctly heard the door in the cab of the truck open. Someone stepped down and walked to the rear of the truck. The back flap was unfastened and pulled aside. The officer who had apparently been riding in the cab and who had opened the flap said, "OK men, take your bags and rifles and get down." Once out of the truck we noted that we were in a large warehouse, about a city block long and half as wide. On one side were high piles of boxes and crates which were being loaded onto hand trucks and hauled out through doors near the side of the warehouse.

There was considerable noise inside the warehouse, but it didn't stop the officer from introducing himself as Major Johnson. He then proceeded to brief us on why we were here and what we were expected to do. His remarks, as I can remember them, were about as follows: "You men are in a large shipping warehouse on the docks at Hoboken, New Jersey. Just out of those doors ahead of you is the Steamship Covington which will transport your Companies, as well as the other Companies of the Regiment, to France. You eight men have been chosen by the Regimental Commander, through your Company Commanders, to be sent here ahead of the troops so that you will have time to study and know the ship from end to end, and from top to bottom. When the troops arrive, it will be your duty to see that the Companies assigned to each of you are conducted to their respective quarters with a minimum of delay."

"However, that will be only the first part of your duties. In the event of an emergency at sea, it will be up to you men to lead the Companies in your charge to the life boats and life rafts assigned to them. I am sure you know the kind of emergency I am talking about. Learn the ship thoroughly so that if some of the passageways you plan to use are blocked, you can use alternate routes to lead the men with a minimum of confusion and time. Your duties end only after the ship docks in France."

CHAPTER TWO

A LONELY GOOD-BYE TO THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

The large door at the front of the warehouse was opened and we followed the Major out onto the dock. Tied to it was the largest ship I had ever seen. I looked up at it in awe and amazement. It was painted in long diagonal streaks, broken at intervals, and in several different colors which seemed to run into each other. This was called camouflage and was supposed to make a ship harder to see, and to hit, if sighted by a submarine. Guards were posted at either end of the ship and at various intervals along the dock.

Near the front of the ship, cargo booms were swung out over the side of the ship, and on the dock below men were busy loading large cargo nets with cargo. When the nets were filled a workman on the dock raised his arm in an upward motion and the net was hoisted above the topside of the ship. The cargo boom then swung in over the side and disappeared from view, and apparently the cargo net lowered into the cargo hold where it was unloaded. I was feasting my eyes on things I had never seen before and was enjoying every minute of it.

It was early morning, and across the Hudson River I caught my first glimpse of New York City with its tall buildings. Several large ships could be seen tied up at the docks on the New York side of the river, with smoke and steam rising from the funnels and exhaust pipes.

Tugs with barges in tow were puffing their way up and down the river. Over to one side a lone ferry could be seen leaving the Jersey shore headed for New York City. To my left, buses and cars could be seen carrying the city workers over one of the large bridges to their jobs in the city. I had read and heard so much about the city, but until today had never seen it, even from a distance. How I wished for a few moments that I could be a passenger on that ferry or in one of those trucks, to spend just one day in New York.

My wish was short-lived, however, for just then the Major called us together for a last few words before he went back to the Camp. He said, "You boys had better take a last look around and feel the firm ground underfoot, and remember it, for once you cross that gangplank you won't set foot on American soil again until the war is over."

When he said that I got a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach. The words from a poem flashed through my mind. "In Flanders Field the poppies grow - between the crosses - row on row - that mark our place." And I knew deep down inside that even after the war was over, some of us would never set foot on American soil again.

We had been happy and carefree a few moments before, but after the Major made his remark about not setting foot on American soil again until the war was over, each of us got the message in one way or another, and silence prevailed among us.

Our names were called out and three Companies were assigned to each of us, as we moved up the gangplank. Each of us was taken in tow by a sailor who said, "Follow me, soldier, and listen carefully." And as I followed, my sailor explained, "The Companies assigned to you will be quartered in compartments which are two decks down. Try to remember each passageway we go through and each turn to reach your compartments."

After a number of turns and down two flights of stairs we emerged in a compartment which was about 35 feet long and the width of the ship. The sailor continued his briefing, "Before the war this ship was a combined cargo and passenger ship, and this compartment like all of the other compartments had been cargo holds. Each compartment had been refitted to carry troops, 150 men, or one Company, to each compartment. Except for a couple of hours on deck each day, weather permitting, your Company and the other Companies in your charge will live and sleep in these compartments for as long as it takes to carry you to France." He then took me to the other two compartments where Companies H and I would be quartered.

None of the compartments were much to look at so far as accomodations go. The steel walls, floors and ceilings were all painted a light gray. Iron pipes about 1¼" in diameter had been welded to the floors and ceilings about six feet apart, and in rows about 30" apart, down the length of the compartments. To each row of upright or verticle pipes there were welded horizontal pipes. The first row about 24" up from the floor, a second row about 30" above the first row, and a third row another 30" above the second row.

In all, there were ten double rows on which canvas had been stretched and fastened onto the horizontal pipes, making five bunks long and three tiers high, in each of the ten double rows. An aisle of about 30" separated each of the rows of bunks. I, being the first of our Company aboard and having the responsibility of three Companies, had first choice of any bunk I wanted. Because I wanted free access to the stairway, I picked a bunk near it and stored my gear on it.

Each compartment had two round portholes about 12 or 14 inches in diameter on each side of the compartments, which the sailor said could be opened during the day for fresh air when the weather was mild and the sea calm, but which had to remain closed and locked during rough weather as the portholes were less than four feet above the water and would be under water much of the time when the sea was rough. The floor of the compartment was below the water line of the ship.

No toilet facilities were provided in the compartments. Anyone having to use these facilities had to climb one flight of stairs and make his way down a dimly lit passage to the "Head" located in the stern of the ship. With 150 men in each compartment, the stairways were going to get an awful workout.

Four small lightbulbs encased in metal guards were fastened to the ceiling. These could be turned on in the daytime, but at night, or as darkness approached, they were turned off by some member of the ship's crew, just in case the blackout curtains over the portholes should be pushed aside by someone, intentionally or otherwise. The only light in the compartment during the dark night hours was a small blue bulb over the stairway.

Two meals per day would be served from the kitchen. Each Company would be assigned a special time to report for meals, and they had to be on time or lose out on the meal, as some 3500 to 4000 men had to be fed at each meal.

After the sailor had given me time to look around the quarters and after he had finished his briefing, he asked me to take him back over the route we had come to make sure I knew the way. I became lost on the first try, so we went over the route, over and over again, until I could do it with my eyes closed.

The next phase was a bit more difficult. Starting from the compartment stairway, I was led through other passages and up to the very top deck, which was four decks above our compartment. He led me to the life boats and pointed to three of them and a life raft assigned to my Company, and then the life boats and life rafts assigned to each of the other Companies under my control. He advised me that each boat was capable of holding 40 persons, and the life raft 25-30 persons. Then we started all over again, from the lift boats back to the compartment and from the compartment back to the lift boats until I had him convinced that I could lead the way without a mistake.

We had used up practically the whole morning and it was now time for the mid-day meal, and I was hungry. I had had no breakfast this morning, and was on the go from the time I was so rudely awakened earlier until right now. Each of the eight soldiers who had been with our sailor friends were escorted to the sailors' mess room where we were welcomed by the sailors who were already there. We were told to sit wherever we could find an empty seat at any of the long tables, each of which seated about 20 people. And so we had our first meal with the Navy.

Food was brought in on large platters by the mess crew and placed before us. Right then and there I realized that I had joined the wrong branch of the service. Roast beef, mashed potatoes, gravy, homemade baked bread, fresh vegetables and fresh homemade raisin pie with ice cream. What a way to live. I'll never forget that first meal as long as I live. And the meals that we had for the next four days were just as good.

After the meal, our sailor escorts told us to go through the ship on our own and not to miss a single thing. We started at the top and worked our way down to the very bottom, and from stem to stern. We had the run of the ship from wheel house to the Captain's quarters to the sailors' quarters, and down to the boilers and the engine room. We were told to find and make the best use of our time learning our way around. As one of the sailors bluntly put it to us, "Your lives and the lives of your men will depend upon us in an emergency." No one had to remind us what that emergency might be; we were all aware of its possibilities.

Each morning after breakfast, and each evening after dinner, we soldiers would make our way to the top deck. There we would look longingly across the river at the big city, watch the large ocean liners arriving and departing for unknown places. We watched the heavy traffic across the bridges, and the ferries going and coming. Off duty sailors would visit with us and we soon learned to know quite a few of them. We also learned that we were not the only ones who would like to visit New York City.

Security was so tight that when boats from overseas arrived in the States, especially from countries in the warring areas or from the countries engaged in the war, the sailors on those ships were not given shore leave if they were scheduled to make a return trip in the near future. One loose-mouthed or drinking sailor could inadvertently give away information that could cause the sinking of his ship on its return trip when loaded with war supplies or troops.

Some of the sailors had made several round trips without having once set foot on dry land. After hearing the sailors' tales of woe we didn't feel too badly about our not being able to go ashore or to visit the big city.

Every man on the ship tried to make us feel at home. The officers were always willing to answer our questions. We spent many interesting minutes with them and the Captain in the wheel house. We also had conversations with his staff, who had made the crossing under wartime conditions several times, and had some narrow escapes.

But it was really the petty officers and the rank-and-file sailors from whom we learned the most and who, even though we hadn't met all of them personally, always had a warm welcome of "Hi, Soldier", for us wherever we went on the ship. We, in turn, always greeted them with a "Hi, Sailor".

We spent considerable time watching the engineers and firemen at their work in the bottom of the ship. I didn't envy them one bit making a crossing of the Atlantic in submarine-infested waters.

We watched the cargo holds being filled with thousands of quarters of beef, which were stored in freezer compartments. Tons of materials and supplies were destined for France and the war. We felt secure in our knowledge of the ship, its avenues of escape and the alternate routes.

February 18

At noon today, our fifth day on the ship, we were advised to be on the lookout for the troops who would be arriving about 3:00 in the afternoon. We were at the gangplank waiting for them when the first Companies arrived. From 3:00 until after 5:00 we escorted Company after Company to their quarters, where we told them to stay until further orders.

When G Company came up the gangplank I was greeted with such comments as "We wondered if you had gone A.W.O.L." and "We thought you had been interned in a concentration camp", and other joking remarks. Of course, the boys from the Company had wondered what happened to me when they stood roll-call in the morning I left the camp. No one seemed to know where I was and it became the topic of conversation for the next few days.

After G Company was safely below deck and in their quarters, I learned from Frank Prokash, an old Company F man from my home town, that Mrs. Ihlenfeldt, the mother of Lieutenant Haney Ihlenfeldt, also from my home town, had visited the camp on the same day that I had left. She brought a letter for me from my mother which she gave to her son, Haney, to deliver to me. Because the officers were not quartered with the enlisted men of the Company, he gave the letter to Frank, his brother-in-law, to deliver to me. I read the letter immediately and wished that I had had the opportunity to visit with Mrs. Ihlenfeldt.

Chow time for Company G was at 5:30 so I called the "Top Kick" and asked him to call the men together with their mess kits. I then led them to the kitchen for the first time for the evening meal. After this first time it would be up to the Mess Seargent to see that the men got to their meals on time. I couldn't be tied down with that chore as there were too many other things I could be doing up on deck where the excitement was.

There were no definite chores that the eight guides had so long as there was no emergency. We had the run of the ship and we weren't going to spend any more time down in the troop compartments than we had to. We only had to be ready in case of an emergency.

Feeding between three and four thousand troops twice a day was no small chore for the kitchen detail, and I am sure it was no pleasure for the troops either. Each Company had a specific hour for their meals and that meant the lines had to keep moving in order that the various

Companies were all fed in their alloted time. Each Company had to file by the serving tables in single file, get their mess kit and coffee cup filled as they walked by, and start eating as they passed the other boys on the way to get their food. It was no simple matter, but the best that could be done under the circumstances.

The food was the regular slum that we had been accustomed to while in the camps. We had hoped that we would be better fed while on the boat. I guess the old saying, "you can't teach an old dog new tricks" still held true. The cooks from the Companies knew only one way to prepare food for 150 men and that was to prepare slum which could be cooked in large kettles. Whenever I had the opportunity, at least once a day, I would go over to the sailors mess and eat with them. The food the troops were getting was nourishing, but couldn't compare with what I had become used to during the five days that we ate with the Navy.

After eating their food and washing their mess kits the men from various Companies returned to their quarters so that other Companies could be served. There wasn't room in the narrow passageways for more than one Company at a time. I returned to the compartment just long enough to deposit my mess kit on my bunk and then headed topside as I was sure that now with the troops aboard we would soon be on our way.

When I got up on deck, I found the ships loading crew still at it. As I watched them I began to wonder how much more could be loaded before the ship would sink. About 7:00 the last of the cargo had been loaded and stored. The ship's hatches were being secured, and the loading booms were being fastened down. I felt reassured now that before this evening was over we would be underway. When the officer in charge of the loading crew finally dismissed them, I asked when the ship would leave. I had visited with him on several previous occasions and we understood each other. He gave me a knowing look and said, "I don't know, soldier, but if you should happen to be up on deck about 11:00 you might see something of interest".

That was enough for me. I made my way back down to our Company quarters bursting with the news that I couldn't tell. It was quite dark in the compartment; the overhead lights glowed dully in the thick haze of cigarette smoke. A couple of crap games were in progress, but most of the men were gathered in small groups discussing the latest latrine news, or talking about the great adventure we were soon to embark on. By 10:30 most of the men were in their bunks, some still talking, but most were asleep.

At 10:45 I buckled on my side arms and quietly went back up on deck. I wasn't going to miss a thing if I could help it. Not a soul could be seen moving about as I stepped out on deck and slowly started walking toward the side of the ship. I passed within a foot of sailors who were stationed at frequent intervals along the ship's

side at their lookout stations. Most of them recognized me and let me pass without a word being spoken. It was an eerie feeling to be walking the deck without so much as a "Hi, Soldier" from any one of them.

Not a sound of movement could be heard on the ship which was in complete darkness. I couldn't figure out what to make of the silence, but decided to keep going toward the stern until I was stopped.

As I neared the stern, it appeared to me that the warehouse and dock were moving away from the ship. I knew that couldn't happen, but stepped over to the rail and looked down. All I could see was open water between the ship and the dock.

There was no vibration so I knew that the ship's engines were not turning over, but we certainly were moving out into the center of the river. Making my way to the other side of the ship I could just barely see two tugs far below, one at the bow and the other at the stern, each one quietly puffing away as they pulled the Covington out into midstream. Then, without any visible sign, the lines were cast off and the tugs pulled away from the ship and just as quietly disappeared from view. Moments later I could feel the deck under my feet vibrating as the ship's engines were started. Our ship was headed down the Hudson River toward the sea.

I stood at the rail for perhaps 15 or 20 minutes watching the blurring New York skyline, which was blacked out, slowly receding in the distance. A sailor at his station just a couple feet from where I was standing whispered to me, "We will be passing the Statue of Liberty in a few minutes. If you want to see her, go to the other side of the ship." I thanked him and crossed over to the other side just in time to see that gallant lady with upraised arm holding the torch, outlined against a dark skyline. She, too, was blacked out, but very distinct against a moonless sky. A lump came into my throat as I watched her receeding into the darkness. As I bade her goodbye, I wondered if and when I would see her again.

Standing out here all alone with my thoughts, watching a world that I hardly knew fading out of sight, made me feel cold and perhaps a little frightened. Frightened of what, I didn't really know, but I experienced a depressing feeling that I could not shake off.

A cool breeze was blowing as we neared the mouth of the river. I sought shelter from it against the back of the deck house, where I sat huddled on a bench still trying to watch the shoreline as we silently glided by. I was hoping to see other ships coming in our direction to join us. There were none. All I could see was the fading shoreline as we entered the Atlantic. Finally, there was nothing but open water as far as I could see and I began to wonder if we were the only ship making the crossing.

I dozed off for what seemed just a moment, when suddenly I was wide awake. A sudden motion of the ship making a sharp turn to the right threw me off balance and I almost fell to the deck. It was easier to see now. The sky was bright with a few cottony clouds floating above, and the sea was still. I made my way back to the side of the ship looking for other ships to join us. Out of the clear, I saw a ship bearing down on us from the north. Soon, from every direction, I could see ships coming to join us. The Covington, with the others, made a dozen in all.

The other eleven ships left from other ports along the Atlantic sea shores at predetermined times to rendezvous with us, making up the convoy. All arriving ships seemed to know the positions they were to take as they formed into three or four staggered lines. Periodically, as I watched, all of the ships made a thirty degree turn to the right. This course would be followed for a set time and then as if a signal had been given, all ships made a sixty degree turn to the left. This zig zag course would be continued for the entire trip across the Atlantic. It was the best way so far devised to prevent submarines from getting a set position for sending a torpedo into the ship's side.

Full daylight was approaching as I made out the form of a sleek ship belching black smoke from its funnels, and traveling at high speed toward us. After it got directly in front of the convoy, it made a sharp turn and took up the lead. I later learned that it was the Cruiser Huntington which would be our only armed escort ship. We were entirely dependent upon the Huntington for protection, except for the one six inch naval gun mounted on the stern of each ship in the convoy. My watch told me it was 6:00 in the morning. I had been up on deck all night, and I decided I had better go below and get some sleep.

CHAPTER THREE

CROSSING THE SUBMARINE-INFESTED ATLANTIC

February 19

I had barely fallen asleep when the clump, clump, clump of hobnailed shoes on the iron stairway leading to the deck above awakened me. For a moment or two I couldn't make out where I was, but the babble of 150 voices in the compartment soon brought me around.

It was 8:15 by my watch. I had been asleep just about two hours. The roll of the ship reminded me that we were at sea and I was anxious to get back topside. I only had to put on my shoes to be fully dressed. We had all been cautioned the evening before not to undress in the event we should have to make a hasty exit from the compartment and from the ship.

Buckling on my side arms, I again went topside where I could see our ships in formation, the Huntington in the lead, and miles and miles of ocean. It was a magnificent sight and yet a scary one. No one knew what the next hour might bring in the way of lurking submarines. Not all of the ships would be hit, but no one knew which would be the target if a torpedo came streaking toward us. Our ship was in the center of the convoy, but that didn't mean we were entirely safe. A submarine could surface to periscope height long enough to get a torpedo away, and quickly submerge again before one of the convoy ships could turn enough to get their tail gun in position to fire. I wished that the boys from our Company could be up here with me to see and feel the thrill of it all, and also to share in some of my anxiety.

I knew I should not talk to the sailors stationed at their vantage points along the side of the ship, peering through their binoculars out over the open water. I knew what they were looking for, and I didn't want to be responsible for diverting their attention for one second. That second might be just the difference between a safe trip and a disaster.

The weather was clear and the sea calm. About 10:00, the first of several Companies were allowed up on deck to enjoy the fresh air and the invigorating sea breeze. In a matter of minutes about 1000 men were scattered all over the deck, talking excitedly about their first glimpse of the ocean, and the ships making up the convoy. They had a glorious time while it lasted. At the end of two hours, they were ordered back to their quarters so that another group of 1000 or so could have their turn on deck.

Because of the activity on deck, I missed my midday meal with the Company so I made my way over to the sailors' mess room to eat with them. After that I spent several hours with the men from various Companies in their compartments, keeping them informed on what was going on. Most of my day was spent up on deck, and by the time the evening meal was served, I was ready to call it a day.

February 20 and 21

The past two days were very much alike. The weather was beautiful for the middle of February and the sea remained calm. Our crossing so far was like a cruise for me. I suppose it was not so fine for the men who were only allowed up on deck two hours per day, and had to spend the rest of the day down in the holds of the ship.

February 25

The past three days were really bad ones for all concerned, ships' crew and soldiers alike. The Atlantic at this time of the year can spawn some pretty rough storms, and on the afternoon of the 22nd, we ran into one of them. The ships rolled and tossed so badly that the sailors had to use lines strung along the decks to get from one place to another. The waves were extremely large and washed over the bows of the ships. No troops were allowed on deck for fear of their being washed overboard, and all portholes were tightly sealed, as they were under water most of the time.

The air in the compartments was stagnant and smelled heavily of perspiration. To make matters worse, many of the boys became seasick. A few buckets had been provided for such an emergency, but there were not enough and none were in the right places when needed. Many men were too sick to leave their bunks. Vomit was everywhere in the bunks and on the floor. The smell was terrible, even though vents from the decks allowed some fresh air to be blown down into the compartments. The only reason I didn't get seasick was because I spent as much time as I possibly could topside in a sheltered part of the ship, or down in the sailors' quarters with the off duty sailors.

Some of the men below decks were so sick that they didn't leave their bunks for four days. Few reported for meals and I am sure some of them wished the ship would sink to end their misery. I didn't try to make any entries in my notebook until today, after the sea had calmed down considerably.

February 26

Had a bad scare this afternoon. The weather was nice and the sea calm. Several Companies of men were on deck enjoying their first fresh air in several days. The convoy which, during the storm had scattered somewhat, regrouped in regular formation. All were zig zagging according to plan, when it happened.

The George Washington, with about 5000 troops aboard, was on our right. The wheelsman on the Washington, which was a larger ship than ours, either missed his cue or something went wrong with his steering mechanism. All of the ships except the Washington turned to zag while the Washington continued to zig and was headed directly at the Covington.

Those of us who saw what was about to happen were petrified and there wasn't a thing we could do to avert it. Luckily someone up on the bridge had his wits about him and blew a short blast on the Covington's whistle. This brought the Washington literally up on her hind legs as her engines were reversed, just in time to keep her from ramming us. It was a very close call. From where I stood on the deck, I would be willing to swear there wasn't more than 15 feet of open water between the sharp bow of the Washington and the side of our ship. Had the Washington rammed us, we would have been cut in half, with a tremendous loss of life.

February 29

According to the sailors I visited with each day, we would be entering the war zone the next day. All lookouts had been doubled and the ships were spaced farther apart so that in the event of a submarine attack the ships would have more maneuverability and would better be able to make a run for it in any direction.

March 1

Had another real scare today. About 2:00 this afternoon we heard a sharp blast from the Huntington's whistle. Before we knew what it was all about, I was nearly knocked off my feet. The Covington made a sharp left turn and the ships to the right of us made sharp turns to their right. The Huntington had turned broadside to us and let go with every gun it had on the side facing us, right down the alley where we had been a few seconds before.

None of us on the Covington saw what the Huntington fired at, but I don't think they were playing games in the war zone. Later in the afternoon I learned from a petty officer that the ship's log showed a possible hit by the Huntington. (The Covington was later sunk on her way back to the United States by a German submarine, July 1, 1918.)

March 2

One of the cargo ships in the convoy had dropped behind the rest of the convoy. Semaphore signals were being exchanged from the cargo ship to one of the other ships. My guess, and the guess of some of the sailors on our ship, was that the cargo ship had developed engine trouble and had to slow down for repairs. These evidently could not be made with the engines running at full speed. She dropped farther and farther behind until she finally disappeared from sight.

The other ships in the convoy dared not slow down or stop in the war zone for fear that they might become sitting ducks for any lurking submarine. All we could do was hope that the cargo ship would soon get her troubles fixed and get moving again.

About noon today we sighted what appeared to be speed boats approaching at high speed. There were eight of them and they were a welcome sight. Called submarine chasers, they were more like hornets. They had terrific speed and were about 80 feet or more long. Each of them had machine guns mounted up near the bow on either side and light naval guns fore and aft. Their real sting was in the Y gun and the depth charges they were equipped to fire.

A depth charge looks very much like an oil drum, about four feet high and about 2-2½ feet in diameter filled with an explosive charge that can be set to explode at any desired depth in the water.

The gun that fires the depth charges is fastened in the center of the boat and is called a Y gun because it resembles the letter Y. It is about five feet or more high. To load and fire the gun, the loading crew first roll two of the depth charges onto a lifting device, the charges are then set to explode at a desired number of feet down. The lifting device then lifts the charges onto the two tops of the Y. The gun is then fired, which hurls both of the depth charges up and out over both sides of the boat. The boat, which is running at full speed, is far away by the time the depth charges have hit the water and sunk to the desired depth.

If a submarine is detected and submerges, or is detected by the boats listening devices, the submarine chasers will run rings around the area in which the submarine is detected, dropping depth charges as fast as the gun can be loaded and fired. A submarine caught within the circle has only one chance of getting away from the crippling or destroying explosion. That chance is to dive for the bottom or as low in the water as it is safe for the sub to go without being crushed by the water pressure.

The eight sub chasers, spaced at regular intervals, continued to circle the convoy from the time they picked us up until we were safely in the English Channel and ready to make port the next morning.

March 3

Now that we were in the English Channel, practically all of the troops were allowed up on deck so that they could get their first glimpse of land. It wasn't our homeland, but it was land, and any land looked good to us. We didn't much care where it was.

As we proceeded up the English Channel, which at this point was about 55 miles wide, we could make out the land as a hazy background. As the Channel narrowed, we were able to see both the English and the French coastlines much

more clearly. Shortly after we were able to see the white cliffs, which were just as the sailors had described them to us. With solid land now on both sides of us, I felt much safer than I had for the past 12 days. I am sure that all of the soldiers and sailors were also greatly relieved as we made our way into the harbor at Brest, France.

CHAPTER FOUR

FROM PONTANEZEN BARRACKS TO PERCY LA PETITE

March 4

None of the troops were landed on March 3. Don't know why the delay. We expect it might be that we entered the harbor at low tide and would have to wait for the tide to come in before the water was deep enough to get close to the docks. I asked one of the sailors and he confirmed my guess. He said "The ships would drag bottom if they tried to dock at low tide, especially with the heavy loads all of them were carrying". About half of the ships carrying troops disembarked them today. Our ship was among the last to unload.

Apparently the time of arrival and the name of the ports the ships were to dock at was restricted information. Other than the dock hands, there wasn't a single civilian to be seen. While I didn't really expect a welcoming committee to greet us, I hoped that there would be some French natives about who might wave a friendly hand at us. I was expecting too much. The word did get around, however, and by the time we landed, it took French soldiers and the local Gendarmes to hold the crowd back.

It was good to get both feet back on solid ground again and to get the cramps out of our legs that 15 days of inactivity aboard ship had brought. I was trying to compensate for the roll of the ship as we marched across the docks and onto the streets of Brest.

For the first 10 or 15 minutes of marching we felt fresh and the marching invigorated us. The crowds of French people waving and shouting, "Vive Americans," was thrilling to us. These people knew we had come to help them put an end to a war that they had been fighting for nearly four years.

As we continued on our way, the crowds thinned out and the shouting died down. We found ourselves on a winding hill road which seemed to get steeper as we went along. When we finally came to a stop, we were up on the plains above the city of Brest where we saw what was to be our camp for the night. It was a large group of stone buildings which looked rather forlorn and neglected. The buildings were cold and damp, but worst of all, dirty. They looked like they had not been used for years. The only fixtures inside were wooden frames on which chicken wire had been stretched for bunks.

These buildings were called the Pontanezen Barracks, and they might have been used by Napolean's troops at one time. To us, they were just a dirty group of buildings which we had to clean before we could sleep in them. They may have looked forlorn, but I'll bet we looked more so.

It was getting dark by the time we had them cleaned enough to sleep in. It didn't take us long after we had eaten our supper of slum to roll out our blankets over the chicken wire and to crawl into bed. Even though not very comfortable, we did fall asleep.

March 5

Early this morning after another breakfast of slum, we hit the trail down the winding road to the outskirts of Brest. On a railroad siding stood a troop train waiting to take us on the first leg of our journey, somewhere across France, and inevitably to the front lines.

It was all still an adventure to us. While everything wasn't exactly the way we had pictured, we were still having fun and were looking forward to the many new things we expected to see at every turn in the road. We were about the most happy-go-lucky bunch of fellows one could find anywhere. The war we had come over to fight was about the farthest thing from our minds.

I didn't pay much attention to the train until just before we got on it. Then I noticed that it was far different from those we had been used to back home. The coaches were made up of compartments which one got into from doors on either side. One row of four seats faced the front and another row faced the rear in each compartment, with an aisle between. There was no way to get from one compartment to another while the train was moving. When the train came to a stop you could get out and walk a narrow running board alongside the coach. The locomotive seemed much smaller than the ones we were used to. The train whistle was a high, piercing sound which we heard for the first time when the conductor signaled with a small whistle he carried on a chain about his neck. He waved his arms frantically at the engineer and we were on our way. Where to, no one knew.

We tried to see as much of the scenic countryside as we could while passing through. It was far different from that at home. There were small farms and villages where the farmers lived but no single farm homes along the roads or highways. Our train made no stops and we only caught glimpses of the villages as we passed by them. After several hours of gazing at the passing countryside, someone discovered a sign along the railway right of way which said "Paris". Shortly we were entering the outskirts of the city.

We could hardly believe our good fortune. Our first day in France and here we were entering Paris. Everyone had suggestions and ideas on what to do and where to go on our first night in Paris, the capital city of France. It was the city we had all heard so much about. I had dreamed of someday visiting Paris, but never thought it would be so soon. We were like school kids again. I guess we even forgot that we were in the Army and under Army orders. We should have realized that we would not

be permitted to run wild. We were soon brought back to reality for the train kept right on chugging along with only an occasional screech from the locomotive whistle as we neared road crossings that led into Paris.

We bypassed the entire city and only when we were out in the countryside again did we realize that our hopes were just dreams and that Paris was not for us, at least not now. Maybe it would become a reality someday, but for the present it seems there were more important things that had to be done first.

Toward noon the train came to a half on a siding on the outskirts of a village. There we detrained. From here on we were to see France on foot. As we marched along we would barely leave one village when we could see the church spire of the next village, which was no more than three or four miles ahead. Each village was different from the one before, yet there was some similarity to all of them.

Each village had one long slightly curving street with barns and six or eight foot walls between each barn. These lined both sides of the street, with an occasional building set apart from the others, containing either the local store or a cafe. There were no sidewalks. That space was reserved as a place of honor for each barn's manure pile. One could tell who the prosperous farmers were by the size of the pile just beside the barn door.

The church was generally at one end of the street and as a rule there were no cross roads or streets. A door in the wall between the barns led into a courtyard from where you could see the back of the farm house. The front of the house faced away from the barn and courtyard, overlooking the open fields beyond.

Late afternoon found us entering a much more pleasant village. Only one side of the road had barns and adjoining homes, all facing the road. The other side of the road bordered on a small river which was about 25 or 30 feet from the road, and the ground between sloped gently down to the riverbank. I'm sure that in the summer this area would be green with grass except for one area which housed the one cafe in the village. This village was "Percy La Petite".

Companies G and H were ordered to fall out here, while the remainder of the Batallion went on to the next village where they could be billeted. We were assigned billet space in small groups of one or two squads each, depending on the space available in each of the barn lofts or the barn floors.

Our rolling kitchen was set up on the river side of the road and our evening meal of slum, coffee and French bread (the first we have had) was ready by the time we deposited our gear in the billets where we were to sleep. Once we received our ration of food, we were on our own. We sat down at the side of the road in small groups and ate as heartily as if we had all the comforts of home.

The French people were curious, for we were the first American soldiers in their part of the country. They were friendly as well. They spoke to us in French and we talked back to them in English. For the first few days neither of us made much sense, but eventually, by sign language and the aid of French dictionaries which each of us carried, we managed to get along fairly well.

Some of the more adventurous of our men found the lone cafe. Everyone who was able to squeeze into the cafe was soon drinking wine, warm beer or Cognac. The cafe owner, in his best French, tried to tell the men that they must take seats at the tables to be served. Our men were accustomed to standing at the bar. This misunderstanding, along with too much cognac, soon led to arguments and a fight broke out. The military police soon arrived and cleared the cafe of American soldiers. Henceforth, the cafe was off limits except for limited hours and a specified number of soldiers at one time.

We didn't know the value of the French money and had been paying 3-5 times what the wine, beer or Cognac was worth. It hadn't taken the shrewd cafe owner long to figure out that every American soldier was a millionaire who just loved to have his money taken from him. The Americans soon became aware that they were being taken to the cleaners and decided to get even. French paper money came in several different sizes while American bills were all the same size. The men began passing out cigarette coupons, which came in every pack of cigarettes, as money, and they were accepted by the cafe owner. He must have gotten enough coupons to paper the entire inside of his cafe and living quarters.

Each day the Batallion was marched out to an open field. Here the real training for war had commenced, and was continued all day, with only a short break for lunch. In the early evening after supper we would gather together in small groups to play blackjack, poker or to shoot craps. Others just sat around to talk about the folks back home, write letters, or tried to visit with the natives. On the one Sunday we were in Percy La Petite, nearly everyone in the two Companies attneded mass. Only a small number of them were Catholic, but it was the only church in the village. Those who attended must have felt the need of faith and divine guidance.

CHAPTER FIVE

BAPTISM OF FIRE, DEATH AND DESTRUCTION

LETTERS FROM HOME

March 11

This morning the Companies were ordered to fall in just as on every other morning. Instead of being marched out to the drill field, we were given some very disheartening news. We were told that there would be no more Company drilling. The entire Batallion had been made a replacement Batallion and most of the men would be sent to the First Division as replacements for the 28th Infantry Regiment, which had to be rebuilt to full strength to make up the losses it had suffered in action.

At the time, each of us felt that we were being done a grave injustice. We had drilled and worked hard together to make our outfit the very best we knew how. We believed we were a smooth operating unit and should remain together as a unit. Of course we had nothing to say or do about it. The orders had come from the "top brass".

A few weeks later all of us realized the wisdom and full import of the Companies being broken up and assigned to many other Companies of the First Division. The losses of any one Company could be terrific and had we remained together as a Company, our communities back home would have been having dozens of casualties reported in a single day.

We were given time to pack our bags and to say good bye to the officers and non-com's who were to remain behind. Then we were led to trucks that carried us to a village up near the front. The 28th Infantry Regiment was in a rest area, having just returned from the front lines.

We were met by Major Rasmuessen who ordered us to stand at ease. He addressed us as nearly as I can recall, "You soldiers are wondering why your Batallion was broken up and made a replacement unit for my Regiment, and I'm going to tell you why. My Regiment is the best damned Regiment in the whole U.S. Army and I want to keep it that way. Army headquarters knows the record of your Batallion, so when I asked for replacements they sent me the very best they had. I am proud to welcome you to the 28th Infantry. The Companies you will be assigned to will welcome you and make you feel at home, and they will also give you the benefit of their front line experience."

As names were called out, each man stepped forward and was assigned to a Company. I don't know how many of old Company G were here as replacements, or the Companies to which they were assigned. Things were happening too fast to keep track of each person. I know that Archie Lackshire (the first man from old Company F to be killed)

went to A Company of the first Batallion. Clarence Capelle and I went to E Company of the second Batallion. Ernest Haucke (the first Algoma man killed), Joe Jindra, Urban Kashik, Frank Lidral and Clarence Zastrow went to F Company. Jindra and Lidral were both later killed in action. Oliver Norstrum (also later killed in action) went to M Company of the third Batallion. Many others from our old Company went to other Companies of the 28th Regiment, but I can't at this time remember their names or the Companies they went to.

We had been in France less than two weeks and much had already happened to us. Instead of the once happy unit of just a few days ago, we were now with strangers, mostly boys from Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Kentucky. To make matters worse, none of us had so far received any mail from home, and possibly wouldn't receive any for several more days, now that we had a different mailing address with a different Division. It certainly didn't help our morale. In my case, it didn't hurt too badly as the boys of E Company gave Clarence Capelle and myself a nice welcome, and after a couple of days we began to feel like we had always been with the Company.

March 15

After a rest period of three days, and once again at full battle strength, the 28th went back up to the front in a support area at Beaumont, in the Aunseville Sector, not too far from the city of Toul. Here I and the other replacements received our first baptism of shell fire from the Germans. In the past we had not been close enough to hear more than the rumbling of the big guns at the front. However, the sound had been so faint that we were not the least bit disturbed by it, at least not any more than we would be by the rumbling of thunder.

When the Germans dropped the first shells in Beaumont after we arrived, I didn't know what it was all about. I stood there like a sight seeing tourist looking for the cause of that loud shrill whistling sound followed by a much louder sound of the exploding shells. After the "old timers" shouted for me to get down and I saw them sprawled flat on the ground, it didn't take me long to do the same thing.

I had been scared several times in my life before, but now that I could hear these shells coming over I really began to know what fear was.

The Beaumont area was a very active front. Day and night shells of all sizes and descriptions were dropped at irregular intervals, all over the area. Beaumont, like most French villages, was a one street village. What made it different from other French villages we had been in was that it had been under shell fire for so long that there wasn't much left of it. The civilians had long since

departed with all of their possessions. All that remained were the shambles of the blown-in walls of homes, and the remains of leaning barn walls. There wasn't a whole building in the village.

We were at a military disadvantage here in Beaumont and for a mile or more on either side of the village. The German forces were heavily entrenched in the hills just beyond the village. They had excellent observation positions. They safely looked down upon us and saw every move we made, but we were unable to see them. The Germans were not only in an excellent strategic position, but were up high and dry while our troops in the trenches were down in the wet lowlands. Our trenches could only be dug a few feet deep. Even then the water from the hills, because of the ever constant rain, soon had our trenches knee-deep in water. The top part of the trenches had to be built above ground. What little protection they afforded was from the saplings placed close together and woven into a basket-like fence, with ground thrown in front of it for as much screening and protection as it would afford.

A main highway ran parallel to the front between Beaumont and the trenches. The trucks and men who had to travel that highway suffered many direct hits. It was in this area that I saw the first casualties of war, in the forms of killed and wounded. I found it hard to believe that human beings could and were deliberately killing one another. I began to wonder what sort of propaganda could make young people want to fight a war such as this.

The French troops who were on either side of us had a large field rifle which was mounted on a flat car. In the daytime, they kept it hidden in a wooded area somewhere in back of the lines where it was safe and unseen. Each night after dark we would watch a small donkey engine push the flat car with the field rifle mounted on it up a narrow guage track almost behind the remains of the barn in which some of us were billeted. A dozen or more high caliber shells were quickly dispatched to targets picked out by observation planes during the day. The gun was then quickly pulled back to its hiding place and the track again covered with dirt and straw camouflage material.

This big rifle was evidently doing considerable damage and the Germans were doing their best to put it out of commission. By the time the Germans thought they had the proper range, the gun was no longer there. We troops were there to take the saturation fire of shells they sent over.

March 20

Received my first letter from home today. It was from my mother. On the back flap of the envelope, and also at the top of the first page of the letter was the number 11. Mother had explained to me in a previous letter which I had

received while still at Camp MacArthur in Texas that she would start numbering each letter to me so that I would know the order in which they were written. I wondered what had happened to the other ten letters.

In this first letter received, mother said she had received the letter I had written while on the boat, on the way over to France. She had not received any letters from me since that one and wondered why. I hate to admit it, but I had written only one or two letters home, and they would evidently be enroute several more weeks before getting to the home town. Mother also mentioned that all at home were well and were hoping and praying that the war would soon be over. She said "The old town isn't the same anymore with all of the young boys gone. The draft had taken all of those who hadn't enlisted and they were now in the training camps." I wrote a short note home saying I was as well as could be expected. I didn't tell her that I was sick at heart at the awful things I had seen, or that I was frightened every moment of the day and night.

March 29

A very unusual thing happened today that might occur one in a million times. Mail call sounded and I was among the first to respond. I was hoping to find a letter from home. The Company clerk had not one, but two sacks of mail so I felt sure there would be one letter for me. Following his usual routine, he took a handful of letters from the bag and called out the names of the soldiers they were addressed to. As the names were called, they stepped forward and shouted, "Here", and claimed their letter. Some of the boys received two or three letters, but in that first bag there wasn't a single one for me. As there was still another sack, I still had hopes.

Then the Company clerk announced that the second sack contained letters all addressed to the Batallion Commander from girls back home. My hopes were shattered. He also announced that anyone who wanted a letter from some girl could step up and take one from the sack. Most of us considered it a big joke, but as long as I had not received a letter from home I, like many of the others, took one from the sack.

I stepped aside to let the others take a letter and glanced at the envelope to see where it was from. The postmark was Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and the date was March 16, 1918. This letter had been mailed more than a month after I had left the states, but the letter inside was dated February 18, the same day that the troops had come aboard the Covington. It must have laid around in Milwaukee an entire month before being mailed.

While the letter was not from home, it was fairly close to home and that helped some. The letter read as follows, "To a soldier boy in France: Dear solider boy; You are wondering who I am and I am wondering the same thing

about you. It isn't an easy matter to write a letter to a perfect stranger, but I am going to try my best. I am attending the Milwaukee Normal School. President Pearse, our head, has asked each girl in the Normal to write one letter to a soldier boy in your Company, so that is why I am writing this letter.

I have three other soldier boys to keep me busy writing letters, but it seems I can always find time for just one more. One of the three is my brother. He is a Private in the 128th Wisconsin Infantry. He is at New Jersey now and I expect will soon leave for France. Believe me, I am proud of him and proud of all our American boys and the work they are doing and will do in France.

I suppose you have seen service in the trenches already. We get little snatches of news from the trenches once in awhile, but very little personal news. Just what we get from the papers and that isn't very much, nor reliable. So I am real anxious to hear from someone who really knows something about it.

You are still in the dark as to whom you are writing. In case you would like to answer this "epistle", I'll try to make it a little easier for you to answer it by describing myself. I am nineteen years old, about five feet, six inches tall, light haired, blue eyes. There, that sounds like a description of persons the family is looking for and can't find.

I am taking the primary course at Milwaukee Normal and like it fairly well. I am not very fond of study just now. The war spirit has got me. I'd rather be doing Red Cross or Relief work just now, but I've got to finish school first and do my "bit" the best way I can now.

Now I've come to the end of my letter and find I haven't told you anything of interest. But, I promise to do better next time I write (that is, if you care to answer). Wishing you the best of luck in your undertaking from a girl in the U.S.A. that would like to be your friend." The letter was signed Rosabell E. Kashik, 1264 30th Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Talk about a one in a million shot, this was it. Rosabell Kashik is a younger sister of Urban Kashik who not only comes from my home town, but up until a couple of weeks ago was a member of my old Company G of the 128th Infantry. He had enlisted at the same time I did in Company F of the 5th Wisconsin Infantry, which was disbanded at Camp MacArthur, Texas, and we were reassigned to Company G, 128th Infantry. Urban is now in Company F, the Company next to my Company E of the 2nd Batallion of the 28th Infantry. I have known Rosabell practically all of her life.

CHAPTER SIX

WE LEARN FROM THE FRENCH

A CIGARETTE LIGHTER AND A TRENCH KNIFE

March 30

We have been under almost constant artillery fire ever since our arrival on this front, and are fast learning from experience to distinguish between incoming and outgoing shells, and whether French or American outgoing. We have learned from the sound of the whine about how close a shell will hit, and also to tell the difference between a high explosive shell and a shrapnel-type shell which explodes in the air and bursts into thousands of steel splinters, any of which can cause a severe wound or death. We can detect the gas shells, which sort of rumble as they come over, and which have frequently been used by the Germans.

We spent a fair share of time behind the front lines, but we also shared some time with the French in the trenches. The French, who had been in the war several years before we got into it, taught us many lifesaving things. We learned not to light a cigarette in the trenches with a match. The glow of a lit match can be seen quite some distance by the constant peering eyes of German snipers. The French learned this lesson the hard way, by having some men being killed as a match flared. Each French soldier who smoked, and most of them did, carried a special lighter. When sparked by a steel wheel against a flint it caused the spark to ignite a cord-like wick which gave off a faint red glow which couldn't be seen more than a couple of feet away. I liked to smoke, and wanted one of the lighters, so I managed with hand motions and a few French words to make it known to one of my French soldier acquaintances. Several days later this French soldier took me to a wooded area some miles behind the lines.

The French had about a half dozen mobile machine shop trucks parked here. These enclosed trucks housed everything possible in the way of machines and equipment needed to repair or rebuild small arms, rifles and machine guns. The mechanics with the trucks were specialists and could do or make almost anything. In their spare time, they made up lighters from old shell casings which they sold to the men in the lines.

While the soldier I was with visited with his French buddies, I had an opportunity to look around the shop we were in. One of the mechanics was working on what appeared to be like a hunting knife. He had improved it by fastening an eliptical metal hand guard about a half inch wide from the back end of the handle to the juncture of the

blade and the handle. As I watched he welded eight or ten pyramid-shaped metal studs to this hand guard. When finished, he removed the knife from the vise, slipped his hand around the handle with his knuckles under the guard, and showed me how to use it. It was a deadly weapon. The studs on the metal guard were like brass knuckles. A blow with them to the head could kill a man, and the blade could kill just as quickly.

Most of the French infantrymen carried these knives in a leather sheath fastened to their belts. I decided that if it was a good weapon for the French, it ought to be a good weapon for me. I don't know if any other Americans ever got one of these French knives. They were not what we would call Government issue. I carried mine on my belt under by blouse to keep it concealed.

We Americans were like babes in the woods. We came over to France to fight a war that we knew nothing about. A few obsolete artillery pieces, and no hand grenades. We relied on the French for grenades, which while effective were also very tricky and dangerous to the uninitiated. The French grenade had a tin cap on the top which, when removed, exposed a metal pin about a half inch long with a small knob on the protruding end. The knob on the pin was supposed to be hit on the top of your helmet while on your head, so that the pin would be driven into the grenade thus setting the ignitor off in four seconds or less. The grenade would then explode in hundreds of razor sharp fragments. If you were lucky, you got it off and away in time. If not, you were either wounded or dead.

Luckily, we had patient French instructors. They would take a platoon of about 40 men out away from everyone, find a stone wall about five or six feet high and line us up along the wall. We were then given dummy grenades. In their best English, they explained how to use the grenades.

We watched and mimicked everything they did, even to throwing the dummy grenades over the wall. Next, we were given live grenades and told that no matter what, once the grenade was hit on our helmets, we were to get rid of them over the wall. As is always the case, someone didn't listen carefully enough, or thought that the real grenade would give a pop to let the person know that it was active. One of our gang hit the pin on his helmet, and since he didn't hear any sound, he hit it a second time. Luckily, one of the instructors standing just a step or two from him grabbed the grenade from his hand and heaved it partially over the wall before it exploded. Everyone flopped to the ground and no one was injured, but it taught the rest of us a lesson not to waste any time getting rid of our grenades. If our instructors hadn't been so patient and so willing to take the risks they did, many of us, including myself, might not be here today to tell about it.

We learned many things from the French who had been in this awful war for four years, and other things from our own experiences. We learned to eat, sleep and live in trenches that at times were knee deep in water and mud. We learned to live like animals being hunted down; to live with rats and to bear the sight of blood. We saw our friends and buddies shot by machine gun and rifle fire and others carried back on stretchers with an arm or a leg blown away. We gradually grew hardened to the sight of men blown to bits, and their insides scattered over the ground. I honestly didn't know that any human being could see and experience these things and come away from a war in his right mind. I know that I lived in constant fear of death and I wasn't sure of how much more of it I could take.

What we had gone through up to now, I soon learned, was just the beginning; the breaking in and conditioning period of what was yet to come. We who had engaged in combat with the enemy and were still being exposed to the tempering fires of war had grown from boys to men in a very short span of time.

Our eyes were opened and we were seeing at first hand the opposite side of the picture that had been painted to us. All that we had previously been exposed to was the sound of bands playing, flags flying and the drill fields as thousands of neatly dressed, precision marching men passed in review. Gayly colored posters showing victorious armies were all a part of the propaganda tuned to its finest, to appeal to the youth of our country.

This was nothing new to America or to all of the other countries of the world. It had been going on for generations, and always aimed at the younger generation who, because of their youth, inexperience and gullability, had not been made mistrustfull of the half truths being fed to them. We were now beginning to learn and understand that wars were started by old men, and fought by young men.

We realized now for the first time the truth, when we saw the dead comrades, or what remained of them, being carried in ponchos or blankets to the rear areas for such burial as a small group of soldiers can give them in the nearest shell hole. The dog tags removed from around their necks and tied to the rifles and stuck bayonet first into the ground to mark the spot. Then, if he was lucky, much later when the war has passed this area by a burial party will come along, dig up the remains in the poncho or blanket and re-bury it in a Government plot of ground.

We see the truth in the faces of the terribly wounded boys being carried back on stretchers to first aid stations. Some of these with a piece of shrapnel or a rifle or a machine gun bullet through their lungs are gasping for

air. Others have stomach, head or face wounds. As we view these things, we understand more clearly than ever that we are being conditioned to do what these men have done before us. To fight a war and perhaps to be maimed or die for the old men who would not try to settle arguments or problems by open discussion, instead of by secret treaties and intrigue.

There are no flags flying or bands playing up here. The only instruments heard are the instruments of death and destruction. The singing we once heard by marching men is now the moans and cries of pain from the wounded, left lying where they fell, or on the stretchers as they are carried back to be patched up.

CHAPTER SEVEN

COOTIES, THE ENEMY WITHIN

April 3

We were relieved tonight by troops of the 26th Division, at about 10:00. From the noise and confusion made by the relieving outfit, we were almost certain that this was their first time in the trenches. We couldn't help but feel sorry for them and the beehive they were stirring up. We knew that the less noise we made, the less likely we would be heard by the enemy and the less chance there was of being shelled during the change.

As one of the Companies of relieving troops filed into the trenches, one of our Companies would quietly file out. Each man held onto the pack or belt of the man ahead of him so as not to leave a gap, until we had cleared both the front line trench and the communication trench.

On our way out we tried to quiet the incoming men, but they were scared and in a bad state of confusion. They had come up to the lines over roads that were pock-marked with shell holes filled with water from the constant downpour of rain. No lights were allowed for fear the enemy would see them and shell both incoming and outgoing troops. In the darkness it was almost impossible to keep your footing in the mud. Trying to feel their way forward in the darkness, many of the new men slipped and fell into the water-filled holes. Others behind stumbled and fell on top of them and it soon became a madhouse of shouting and swearing men. Occasionally an officer, who should have known better, would flash a light. All we could do was to tell them to douse it and to calm down, but to little avail. I thought back to my first trip into the lines, with seasoned men leading us, and I knew just how these men must feel.

We couldn't stop to explain to them or we would be holding up the Companies behind us. We moved as fast as we possibly could to get out of the trenches, and didn't want to be caught in the shell fire we were expecting at any moment.

Either the Germans were sound asleep, which we knew wasn't the case, or they were biding their time. We managed to make a complete withdrawal without a single shell coming our way and, by midnight, were several miles behind the lines in a heavily wooded area. We were assigned to a group of French barracks. These were built in the woods so that observation planes would not see them on their daily trips over the area.

After we first entered the barracks we thought how lucky we were to be able to get into a nice dry place for a night's sleep. A couple of lanterns were lighted and

what we saw looked even better than we had a right to think of. The floor had a thick layer of straw and it was almost like being able to sleep on a mattress.

We hadn't been permitted to smoke on our way back from the lines, and now with all this straw on the floor we were not permitted to smoke in the barracks either. Many of us went outdoors to take a final smoke before hitting the sack.

It sure was good to get rid of our packs and to feel free to light a cigarette without the danger of drawing enemy fire. We had had a long day and a hard night, so we didn't linger very long over that cigarette. Soon all of us were in the barracks spreading out our blankets on the soft straw, anxious to crawl between the blankets to keep warm as well as to get some sleep.

We didn't try to take off our clothes, just removed our shoes. The lights were extinguished and everyone crawled inside of their blankets. In less than a minute some of the boys were snoring, but before I could get to sleep I and all of the others found that we were caught in a booby trap, and it was already too late to do much about it. That thick layer of straw on the floor was our undoing and we had no one to blame but ourselves. We should have known that we had no right to expect only what we got.

I was almost asleep when I felt something crawling along the neckband of my shirt, and before I could brush it off, I felt others crawling on my belly and across my chest. Seconds later every man in the barracks was on his feet, most of them cussing and swearing like mad. The straw on the floor was alive with cooties from the Morrocans and Algerians who had slept there the night before. All of us were crawling with this special breed of lice. There was no sleep for anyone; in fact, we all left the barracks and spent the rest of the night under the trees, scratching madly.

Just before dawn, we heard the roar of greatly increased gun fire. What we had feared earlier was now happening. A heavy barrage was being laid down on that portion of the 26th Division that was in the front trenches. This was followed by a raiding party. The Germans came over in such large numbers that we were alerted and ordered to get ready to hike back to the front to help stop them from driving a deep salient into our lines. We were not ordered to return to the front, however, as the Germans had only raided the newly arrived troops. On the following day when we arrived in an army camp just outside of Toul, we learned that the 26th had suffered heavy casualties.

April 4

This is the first real camp we've been in since we landed in France. The barracks are permanent and built of stone. Before we were permitted to enter them, we had to be deloused. Company after Company stripped to the skin and our clothes were thrown into large baskets which

were run through a delousing machine. In the meantime, we took hot showers and were dusted with a delousing powder from head to foot.

After our clothes came out of the delouser, they were passed through a heated room where they were dried. This took some time, and as we had no other clothes to wear, there were hundreds of us running around in the delousing area in our birthday suits.

To make sure our clothing was free of cooties, we inspected the seams of our shirts and britches thoroughly. If one was found, and some did manage to survive the delouser, we held a lighted match or our cigarette lighter to them and burned them off.

The barracks were clean and equipped with a bunk, chair and nightstand for each soldier. Toilet facilities and showers were provided on each floor. This was the nearest thing to home that any of us had been in since enlisting.

April 5

Early this morning our Regiment was ordered to fall in for inspection. Truthfully, we were a sorry looking lot. We had tried our best to make ourselves presentable. After the delousing treatment they had received, nothing but a new issue of uniforms would ever make us presentable again.

The General who made the inspection obviously had never been near a delouser and didn't know what havoc they could produce. Less than an hour after the first inspection, every Company had been reassembled and were standing at attention while the Captains were giving us hell.

We were told in no uncertain terms that we were the worst outfit in the Army, and that we would be made to pay for it. Our Captain Johnson had us polishing shoes, rifles and equipment until they sparkled. There was plenty of grumbling and a few threats in undertones by some of the men concerning what would happen to Captain Johnson once we were back up in the lines again. I can't say that I blamed the men and I was just as angry as they were. Our sorry condition was not of our doing. It was the fault of the delousing equipment which we were compelled to use. Our clothes were not dirty and ragged, but just plain wrinkled beyond description.

CHAPTER EIGHT

FREE WINE, THE GISOR SECTOR AND A FORCED MARCH

April 8

It was too good to last. This morning at reveille we received our marching orders, and would be on our way within the next couple of hours. The Germans had started an offensive on March 21 in the Picardy Sector, and despite savage and stubborn defensive action, the French forces were driven back several miles before they finally brought the advancing Germans to a halt just outside of Cantigny. Colonial troops had relieved the exhausted French reserves who had fought so valiantly and stubbornly, and Colonials were holding. The high command knew that as soon as the enemy could regroup and replenish their ranks with men and supplies, the drive would be resumed. The First Division was badly needed and was ordered relieved from the Lorraine Sector. Orders were to proceed as quickly as possible to the Picardy Sector before the enemy started the offensive rolling again.

To this time when we were about to leave the Lorraine Sector our Division losses had been six officers and 137 men killed or had died of wounds, 19 officers and 384 men wounded, and three men captured or missing in action. A total of 25 officers and 524 men.

The Division was assembled and entrained just outside the city of Toul. The troop trains were no longer the compartment type coaches in which we had our first train ride. We were no longer newly arrived Americans, but just ordinary soldiers that were badly needed and would be transported by any means possible. The cars were what we called in America "cattle cars" and we were herded into them like cattle. Each car had painted on its sides "40 Hommes or 8 Chevaux" (40 men or 8 horses). This was to be our mode of transportation and it was much better than walking.

After several hours of traveling, the train pulled into a siding in order to let another troop train pass in the opposite direction. While we were parked on the siding, some of the boys in our car noticed that a French supply train was parked on another track next to us. Standing just opposite our car was a wooden tank car labeled Vin Rouge. We knew that the French army was supplied with a daily ration of wine, or Vin Rouge. Here before our eyes was refreshment for the taking.

After a quick conference, a plan was put into action. One squad of eight men fired their rifles in unison so that it sounded just like a single shot, into the tank car just above the three quarter full mark. Two squads with two canteens each boarded the tank car and filled the canteens as the red wine spurted out through the bullet holes.

The plan worked beautifully. We got our wine, the tank car would only let out wine until it reached the bullet holes, and thus the French were assured of their wine ration, but only a three quarter ration.

Perhaps eight horses could be comfortable in these open-sided cars, but 40 men couldn't. The wine helped to chase away the chill caused by the fast moving train, and it also helped to take our minds off what lay ahead of us.

Several hours passed before we came to another stop. Here we witnessed a coup more daring than the one we had just pulled off. The train stopped on the main line beside the railway station of a fairly large city. The conductor went inside the station to get orders as to whether we were to continue on or to wait for oncoming trains. He was in the station for a comparatively short time, then came out, blew his whistle at the engineer, and motioned with his arms to proceed on our way. Our car was quite a way back from the station, but we were looking out through the openings in the sides of the car and through the open door, trying to see where we were and why we had stopped.

Just as the engineer blew the locomotive whistle, signaling that we were to start, five men from the car opposite the station door jumped down and rushed into the station. Two of the men were carrying rifles. A moment later four of the men came out of the station with the red hot, pot-bellied stove resting on the two rifles. It was carried by the men right to their own train car. The fifth man followed with a bucket of coal and several lengths of stove pipe. The train was rolling along as the last man was hauled aboard by his comrades. The station master dashed out of the door shaking his fist at the train as we passed him by. I know those boys had a warmer car than the one we were in.

April 9

We detrained last evening about 7:00 just outside of another village. I wish I could remember the names of all the villages we pass through or even the names of those we stop in, but it is next to impossible. I can't even spell or pronounce the names of most of the villages we stop in. We are again billeted in the barns and according to the latest news, we are southwest of Paris in what is known as the Gisor Sector. The location doesn't mean much to me other than that we are not in a combat area. It is quiet and peaceful here, and only once in a while we can hear the faint rumble, like thunder, of the distant guns. I wouldn't mind staying here until this bloody war is over.

April 10

We are undergoing a new type of training called "open warfare training" and have been told that it means the end of trench warfare as we knew it. From now on we will be

expecting to go on the offensive against the enemy. Apparently the powers that be feel that with the arrival of the Americans in greater numbers the allied armies have sufficient strength to start driving the enemy back rather than continuing the holding tactics we had been doing up to this time. It is supposed that once we get a drive started we will continue the advance and keep the enemy off balance, eventually driving them out of French soil and back into Germany. From what I have seen of the German army, it is still strong and won't give up ground without a severe struggle. I hope the "Big Brass" know what they are doing.

April 17

Shortly after chow call this morning, we were ordered to pack anything that we didn't need at the front into our barracks bags. These would then be stored until our return to the rear area. This can mean only that sometime today we will again be on our way up to the front lines.

Until today I had been carrying my camera strapped to the small of my back under my pack. The only pictures I had been able to take were of the convoy, some of the troops aboard the ship, our troops in some of the French villages where we were billeted, and some of the French homes and French people. At the front we were either under fire too much of the time or it was raining too hard to be able to get any good pictures. I decided to leave the camera behind this time as it was rather awkward to carry.

Several rolls of film that had been exposed were safely stored in my barracks bag, but I didn't want to leave my camera in the bag. My biggest fear was that it might get damaged. I had seen barracks bags stored before and wondered how anything breakable could ever survive their handling. The bags were picked up on the Company street, thrown into large trucks and hauled to an available vacant building. They were again unloaded like sacks of grain and stacked in the building right up to the ceiling. I don't know how a camera or any other fragile article in the bags at the bottom of the pile could withstand the weight of all the bags on top of them.

It happened that in this sector we had a YMCA Canteen, the first one I had run across in France. We would gather there evenings when we were off duty. We could get free stationery and write letters home, or just visit with other soldiers. The Y was in a large tent. One could buy cigarettes or chocolate bars, as well as find shelter when it rained, which was most of the time.

A Mr. Beck was in charge of the Y and I decided to ask him if he would be good enough to keep my camera for me until I returned. At first he hesitated about doing it. I suppose if he did it for one person he would be asked to keep other things for other soldiers and could be loaded down with a lot of extras. After he finally agreed

to keep the camera for me I told him that if I didn't come back to claim it he was to open the back and in it he would find the address of my parents, to whom he should send the camera after the war was over and he was back in the States. He hesitated quite a while, but finally put the camera in his own locker with his personal belongings saying, "I hope you will be back to claim it soon."

Our batallion left the Gisor Sector under forced march. Fifty minutes of hiking then a ten minute rest, another fifty minutes of hiking and another ten minute rest. At noon we were given a half hour rest period to eat our lunch, which consisted of our "Iron Rations," a can of corned beef or bully beef and a package of hard-tack which each man carried in his back pack. These rations were not to be used except in time of emergency, and the noon lunch period this day was considered an emergency because the rolling kitchens that were to feed us were horse drawn and the horses could not keep up the pace of marching men. The kitchens were nowhere in sight when we stopped at noon.

One can of Corn Willie or one can of Bully beef was opened and shared by the four men in the front of the squad, another can was shared by the four men in the back row of the squad. A box of hardtack was also shared by each of the four men and the lunch was washed down with water from our canteens.

At the end of the first day when we stopped for the night, we had walked about 30 kilometers, and rolled up in our blankets without any supper as the kitchens were still nowhere in sight. We slept on the side of the road in the ditches and in the fields beside the road.

CHAPTER NINE

SCAVENGING FOR FOOD

VILLERS TOURNELL

April 18

We were awakened this morning by the commotion of hundreds of men moving about, talking and cussing and the smell of food. The rolling kitchens had caught up with us sometime through the night and the cooks took turns keeping the fires going and cooking the slum. None of us did any griping about getting the same old slum. We were hungry and ate it because that was all that there was. When you are hungry you aren't too choosey.

Today was a repetition of yesterday. No rolling kitchens at noon, so the second man in the squad opened his can of meat and carton of hardtack which was again shared with the four of us. Again, when we stopped for the night there was no sign of the rolling kitchens. We had traveled another 30 kilometers.

My half of the squad who had been sharing each others food decided to do something about it. We recalled that shortly before stopping for the night we had passed a small village, possibly a mile or less from where we now were. As tired as we were, we hiked across the fields to the village to scavenge for food.

We went house-to-house, buying a crust of bread at one house, a dozen eggs at another house, and a bottle of wine at another house. We kept up the calls until we had gathered four chunks of bread, six dozen eggs, and two bottles of wine. At the last house in the village we didn't try to buy food because we believed we had enough. What we did need was a woman's knowhow and the necessary stove and frying pan in which to scramble the eggs. With our limited French, we were able to persuade the lady of the house to prepare the eggs for us. She provided us with plates at the table in her kitchen and the four of us sat down to eat, drink wine and relax.

When the first pan of scrambled eggs was ready they were placed before us and we helped ourselves while trying to convince the lady we wanted more. The "beaucoup more" we repeated to her and which we believed meant "much more" must have been close, for another pan of eggs was presented and it disappeared as quickly as the first one. The lady must have thought we were a little crazy for we kept insisting "Beaucoup more" until each of us had eaten a dozen eggs apiece, the crusts of bread and a bottle and a half of wine.

We were finally full of food and we gave the remaining two dozen eggs, the half bottle of wine and a handful of francs to the lady for her trouble. I don't know how much money we gave her, but she seemed extremely pleased.

We still didn't know the value of French money, so it might have been that she was just pleased to get us out of her house. With our bellies full of food and wine, we had forgotten how tired we really were as we made our way back to where our Company was. We rolled up in our blankets and were soon sound asleep.

April 19

Today was somewhat different from the past two days. By noon we had marched nearly 20 kilometers and were tired and hungry. It was my turn to furnish the noon lunch and I was glad to get rid of that extra pound can of meat and half pound of hardtack. While we were seated on the ground on the side of the road, eating our rations, we heard the sound of a shot nearby. It was unusual to hear gunfire since none of us had ammunition in our rifles while marching, unless near the front lines or going into the lines.

It wasn't long before we learned what had happened. One of the boys in the next Company who was carrying Cognac instead of water in his canteen, had inbibed a little too freely. The urge to express his pent up feelings overcame his better judgment and he inserted a clip of shells in his 45. Without realizing what he was doing, he discharged his Colt. The bullet hit a mule hitched to a supply wagon, breaking its leg. The mule had to be disposed of, and the soldier who fired the shot was placed under guard and told that he would have to pay for the mule. His pay was to be stopped as of that day and would not be resumed until enough had been withheld to pay for the mule. With overseas pay of $30.00 per month, less deducations for insurance and bonds, that poor devil would receive no pay for at least the next six or eight months, if he survived the war that long.

April 20

We marched another 25 kilometers today and are within ten or twelve kilometers of our destination. The area just ahead is exceedingly active and we can go no farther in the daytime without drawing heavy artillery fire. We will remain here in Villers Tournell until dark and then go on to the next village, or wherever we are headed for. After a brief look around the village, I am of the opinion that there is nothing here to make us want to stay. The village had been badly shot up before we arrived and there were no people foolish enough to stay. They and their families had taken all of their possessions, cattle, furniture and personal belongings that they could haul or carry, and gone back to safety. The village was still being heavily shelled as I looked around for a safe spot for our squad. In one farm yard I found a John Deer hay rake standing lopsided, with one wheel badly bent and broken from an exploding shell. The name John Deer made me think of home and the Haney-Gasper-White Farm Equipment Company which handled the John Deer line, only a short distance from my home.

April 24

We did not go to another village after dark, but remained in Villers Tournell for three days. We were subjected to terrific shell fire day and night. The Germans either knew or suspected we were there. There was no place in the village where one could find safe cover from the shell fire. There was no point in our staying here and taking the punishment being meeted out to our troops. We were unable to respond to the fire and sooner or later our losses would be mounting steadily. We were pinned down and had to do one of two things. Either retreat to a village farther back or go ahead to possibly get away from the fire.

Companies E, F and G were ordered to fall in for a forced march up closer to the lines, to Rouquencourt, where we would be taking up support positions. Company H was to go on to the village of Coulemelle, also in a support position.

We had made the march of several miles to the near outskirts of Rouquencourt without the loss of any men, primarily I think because the Germans didn't think we were fool enough to advance in the wake of the intense fire they were subjecting the rear area to. In fact, the fire here seemed to be somewhat less, and we were feeling pretty good about having walked out of the intense fire. Just as we began to think we had it made, we received a rather loud and nerve shattering welcome.

An American artillery unit had set up their guns in the ditch along the right side of the road we were marching on. Because of the darkness, we were unaware of their presence and because of the heavy rain we didn't hear or see them until every gun in the battery had fired off a volley of shells in the direction of the enemy.

Some of our troops were so close to the guns that the concussion knocked them off their feet. For a short time there was a mad scramble among the men. Then we realized that the explosions we had heard were not proceeded by the high piercing scream of incoming shells. We knew it had to be local artillery. To add insult to injury, we were then greeted by the laughter of the gun crew at the surprise they had given us. Some not too polite language was directed at them by the doughboys, but the gun crew had the last word. As we proceeded down the road we could hear them shouting, "You guys are going down the road you don't come back from."

Minutes later we made a left turn in the road and entered the main street of Rouquencourt which ran parallel to the front. The Germans had been stopped at Cantigny, which was the last village before Rouquencourt, and only about two kilometers away. Even though the enemy had been stopped they had not let up on their artillery fire on the village. We thought it was bad in Villers Tournell, but it was worse in Rouquencourt. The Germans had every

intention of leveling the village and wiping out any opposition. When they resumed their drive, they would then have no one to oppose them.

The only safe place we could find to get any rest was in the root cellars under the remains of existing houses. My squad found a cellar and we crawled into it, unrolled our blankets in the dark, and tried to get some badly needed sleep.

CHAPTER TEN

ROUQUENCOURT, WORST SHELLED VILLAGE TO DATE

April 25

During the night while we were asleep, Company E's rolling kitchen moved into the courtyard adjacent to our root cellar. They were ready to serve breakfast when we rolled out in the morning. For once, we were the favored few, and had only to walk about 20 feet to be served our breakfast. The rest of the Company had to come from their various shelters to our courtyard to get their food.

When I reached the serving line, I was pleasantly surprised to see Clarence Capelle assisting with the serving. After the rush was over and the Company fed, I learned from Clarence that on the forced march he had acquired some nasty blisters on his feet. The First Aid doctor had assigned him to kitchen detail where he wouldn't have to do much walking for a few days. We had a nice visit, but I couldn't help feeling sorry for him. He seemed so alone, and he still hadn't received any mail from home. He started to talk about home and his folks and he expressed a wish to be back with them. I felt the same way, but tried to cover it up. I knew I could easily feel the same if I let myself go for a minute. I tried to cheer him up, but was afraid I would start blubbering if I didn't get out of there soon. I made up an excuse about having a chore to do and left. I realized that he was dejected and homesick, and I was getting the same way, but didn't want to have him see me that way.

Shortly after I returned to our root cellar, a couple of the boys and I decided to take a look around what remained of the village and to try to locate the rest of our Company. I wanted to run into some of the other boys of old Company G, especially those who had originally been Company F boys from Algoma and Sturgeon Bay.

We were amazed at the punishment the village had taken over the past week or so. Practically every home and barn had sustained severe damage. The village was in the direct path of the enemy drive and was being shelled unmercifully. The possible 200 or so inhabitants, with the personal belongings they had been able to gather together, had been forced to flee for their lives.

In the center of the crossroad in the village stood a pockmarked, lifesize crucifix of the crucified Christ. Jagged pieces had been torn from the body by flying shrapenl. What really shocked me was to see the use being made of the crucifix. About a dozen telephone and signal corps wires running across the street intersection had been fastened near the top of the cross to allow mobile equipment to pass underneath the wires. These had been strung up the night before by signal corps men. In time of

war you make use of whatever is at hand to serve a purpose.

The crossroad to the right went up a hill. About half way up on the left side of the road stood a red brick house, the only one in the village that looked as if it hadn't been damaged too seriously. It was now being used by Major Rasmuessen as his headquarters. At the top of the hill on the right side of the road and adjacent to a highway running parallel to the front lines stood what remained of the village church. Part of the roof and walls facing the front had been blown in by direct hits, but the near side was in fair condition. The cemetery adjoining the church was a shambles. Graves had been blown open and the shattered remains of caskets and the bones of the dead were lying about.

The highway at the top of the hill was only about a mile and a half from the front lines. This highway connected with other villages where troops were in reserve, just as we were. Supplies and ammunition had to be transported along this highway to the other villages. The Germans knew this, as the road could be seen from their observation balloons and from their low flying observation planes in the daytime. The road was not used in the daytime for that reason, but as soon as it became dark the road came to life, with trucks of every description and with every kind of cargo. It was at night that the road got its heaviest shelling so as to slow up delivery of badly needed supplies.

After seeing the damage done to homes and some root cellars, we decided we had better go back to our own cellar and see how safe it really was.

The walls and roof of the house over our cellar had been blown in by near or direct hits, but so far the cellar itself was intact. It was about five feet high in the center of its arched roof, about eight feet wide and about ten feet long. The walls and the arched or vaulted ceiling were of field stone and mortar and we didn't believe that anything other than a direct hit could penetrate it or blow it in. We decided to make it even safer if possible. We dragged heavy timbers from other wrecked homes and barns and piled them on the floor in the house just over the root cellar. After that, we felt much safer.

April 26

I tried to locate the billets or cellars of more old Company F boys this afternoon. I hadn't seen Urban Kashik, Ernest Haucke or either of the Lidral boys, Carl or Frank, since we arrived in Rouquencourt, and was anxious to find out how they were making out.

As I was passing by a brick wall adjoining two barns along the village street, I heard the sharp report of what I thought was exploding shells on the other side of the

wall, and instinctively was down on my stomach in the street. Then I remembered that I hadn't heard the familiar piercing scream of incoming shells before the explosion. It had to be outgoing shells. Sheepishly I got up from the ground. I hadn't heard of any artillery units being in the village and was curious to open the door leading into the courtyard beyond the wall. I expected to see an American battery if there was one there, but to my surprise I was greeted by a Frenchman who saw me and called out, "Onter American Soldat". Stepping inside the door I was greeted by a French Lieutenant who spoke enough English so that we were able to have a pleasant visit.

A battery of French Seventy-fives were set up, and this crew really knew how to use them. The soldiers were smoking their vile French cigarettes and one was offered to me. I refused, thanking him politely. I had tried smoking them once before and they nearly made me sick.

Not to be outdone in politeness, I reached into my shirt pocket and pulled out a pack of American cigarettes and offered one to each of them. Luckily I had a full pack as there were sixteen men in the crew, including the Lieutenant, and each one eagerly accepted. These men had been with Americans before and loved our cigarettes which contained a better grade of tobacco than theirs did. There were many "Ah's" and "Bon's" as they lit up and puffed the cigarettes I had given them.

I had visited with the French soldiers and the Lieutenant for about 15 minutes when the Lieutenant glanced at his watch and then gave the men an order in French. The crew members sprang to their posts beside the seventy-fives. The shell passers for the three guns each picked up a seventy-five millimeter shell and passed them to the fuse cutters who set the fuses and passed them on to the loaders who in turn shoved the shells into the breech blocks of the guns. A fourth soldier slammed shut the breech block, locked it and quickly stepped back and away from the gun. The lieutenant gave a hand signal, the lanyard was jerked by the fifth man, sending three more shells on their way to the German lines. The three gun crews worked so smoothly together that it takes longer to tell about it than it took to get the shells in the air and on their way.

After the shells were on their way, the entire crew walked over to a two-wheeled cart on which was fastened a large barrel containing wine. They opened the spigot and filled their cups with the bright red liquid. One of the men spoke several words to the Lieutenant who responded with a "Wee, wee" and the soldier drew another cup full and offered it to me. It was the same good old Vin Rouge my buddies and I had taken a couple of weeks before when we raided the French tank car on the railway siding. It wasn't a strong wine, but much better than the chlorinated water we Americans had to drink.

Each day when I could find time, I visited my French friends and always took along a pack of American cigarettes. In return, I got either a large cup full or a canteen of Vin Rouge.

There wasn't much for us to do in the daytime other than to keep our equipment clean, and to duck for cover whenever a German observation plane or German shells came over. This was almost constant. We made up for it after it got dark. Companies E and F were assigned to dig a communication trench from the field just a short distance from the church to the front lines. We would cross the highway at the top of the hill, enter the field about 100 yards or more and then start the trench leading up to the third line of trenches, about a half mile distance. Then on to the second line which was another half mile ahead, and finally to the first line which was possibly another half mile away.

In six nights, from dark to just before dawn, our two Companies dug the mile and a half or more of trench which, unless you walked across the open fields, was the only way of getting to the forward trenches. It wasn't healthy to cross the open fields.

We tried to camouflage the trench before heading back to the village each dawn, by covering parts of it with netting, straw and brush. The Germans seemed to know that something was going on out there each night. Their observation planes had probably spotted the trench or noticed a difference in the color of the earth from one day to the next. Each night we were subjected to shell and shrapnel fire as we dug, and from which we lost several men, killed and wounded.

April 30

This morning when we returned to the village, we found our courtyard in a mess. One or more shells had made direct hits on our portable kitchen. Luckily the kitchen crew, with the exception of the fireman who kept the fire going under the cookers, were asleep in their slit trenches near the back of the house. The fireman, who heard the shells coming, had time to dive into his hole. No one was injured. The kitchen, however, was a complete wreck and what was to have been our breakfast was scattered all over the landscape. Once again we had to resort to our Iron Rations, which had been replaced after we arrived in Rouquencourt.

Hook Pouler, the Company Mess Sergeant, and his kitchen crew were out looking for another kitchen when we returned to the courtyard. With no one left to guard the food stores, our squad helped ourselves to a few items we couldn't get anywhere else. We didn't take large amounts or anything that would be easily missed. Three or four onions, a dozen or so potatoes, half a loaf of French bread, salt and a five or six pound chunk of beef from the quarter hanging in the shade beside the barn. We knew we had better

help ourselves before other men from the Company came for their breakfast and found no kitchen. We also scrounged around in the remains of the farmer's vegetable garden and found a few more potatoes and a rutabaga which had escaped the watchful eyes of the farmer's wife last fall. One of the boys came up with a metal pail from one of the nearby wrecked houses, and we were ready to cook our own breakfast.

We didn't want Sergeant Pouler to come upon us while cooking his beef and vegetables, which by now had been cut up into cubes and was in the process of being cooked, so we built our fire in the next courtyard. After about three quarters of an hour our pail full of stew was ready to eat, and we all dove in like we hadn't had a meal in a week. It needed more seasoning, but tasted even better than any we had ever gotten from our kitchen. At least it had more meat in it.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

DEATH OF MAJOR RASMUESSEN

GUARD DUTY ON HIGHWAY

May 2

We entered the second line of trenches last night. Whoever had been here before us had left some of their comrades behind. While trying to reinforce a section of the trench, someone sunk his shovel into a caved in portion of the trench and opened up a cavity from which came the awful sickening smell of decaying human flesh. One or more unknown soldiers were under the cave in and we had dug into their grave. We had to abandon that section of trench after covering the opening and dug a new section around it.

While in this section of the trench, several of us would go out at night to pick up heavy beams from wrecked barns and houses and drag or carry them back to our trench. They were placed over the top of a small section of the trench and covered with dirt and dried grass. It gave us more confidence and we had that much more protection from flying shrapnel.

May 5

A low flying observation plane flew the length of our trench today observing or taking pictures. We were under our overhead shelter and I don't think he saw us. Just as he passed by we all fired our rifles at him, hoping someone of us might be lucky enough to hit him or damage the plane and force him down. We evidently missed, for a few minutes later he came back flying just above the trench top with his machine guns blazing away as fast as they could fire. No one was hit, but there were a few misses and a couple of pretty scared boys.

Before going up to the trenches, we had been told that we would get only one hot meal a day and it would be after dark. The food detail could only bring up food under cover of darkness as it had to be hauled within easy walking distance by truck. From the truck, the food had to be carried through the communication trench, or carried above ground, which was very dangerous. The other two meals were to be from our Iron Rations. We were promised, however, that the one hot meal would be something special. It would be either steaks or roast beef, mashed potatoes, gravy and hot coffee.

We must have been naive to listen to, and believe, that such food was even a remote possibility. Each night we looked forward to the hot meal, and each night we got the same cold slum. It was so cold that we had to use our mess kit covers to cut through the fat and tallow in the slum, which had become cold and solidified in order

to get it out of the G.I. cans it was brought up in. The food may have been hot when it left the kitchens, but by the time it had been dumped into the G.I. cans, which were no more than glorified garbage cans, the cooling process had started. The ride in the truck to the head of the communication trench took at least a half hour, and after being carried by the food detail down the length of the communication trench to us, another half hour or more had passed so you can be sure it was cold. We would have made the best of it if only it had been edible and not so full of fat and tallow.

May 15

We've been out of the trenches for a couple of days, and I've had a chance to renew my visits with my French artillery friends, and to exchange American cigarettes for Vin Rouge. The village changed considerably during our stay of six or seven days up near the front. We had been subjected to sporadic fire up in the lines, but I don't believe it had ever let up on the village. Buildings which had previously been damaged were now completely down, and just rubble. The house over our root cellar had received several more direct hits and was a shambles, but our root cellar with the extra bemas on top had stood the shelling well. We were mighty glad we took the extra effort to reinforce it.

I drew guard duty yesterday up on the highway past the church. It was about the most exposed position and I dreaded it, but it had to be done by someone and it was my turn. As usual, it was raining and after only a short time I was soaked and miserable, standing out there on that windy, rain soaked road all alone. I thought for a moment that I was hearing things and that my mind was playing tricks on me. Between the sounds of exploding shells in the distance, I could hear soft organ music, and it seemed to be coming from inside the shell damaged church, just a short distance away. I dared not leave my post to investigate, but whoever it was was playing beautifully. For a time I forgot that I was wet, cold and miserable. The music continued for about a half hour and then there was silence, except for the never ending sound of express trains traveling overhead to the back areas. A few minutes later I caught a glimpse of a French soldier limping slowly out of the church and making his way down the hill to the village.

As the darkness deepended, the highway came to life. Large trucks loaded with supplies and ammunition would come barreling down the road. It was my job to see that they came to a stop and gave the password, before I permitted them to go on. The drivers were supposed to know that this was a checkpoint and they were supposed to stop for identification. If they tried to go by

without stopping, something had to be wrong and my orders were to shoot to kill. It was a dangerous place to be as all trucks were running with hooded lights and the drivers were not able to see more than a small portion of the road ahead.

I had checked out perhaps twelve or fifteen trucks and was familiar with the sound they made as they approached, but now I was hearing a strange sound. It was the snorting of a motorcycle traveling at a fairly fast speed. I hadn't been told about any motorcycles traveling the highway, so I didn't know whether the driver had been warned about checkpoints along the highway or not. I released the safety catch on my rifle, determined to shoot if the driver tried to go by without stopping. The driver had either been warned or he saw the glint of my bayonet on the rifle as I brought it to my shoulder. He was nearly abreast of me when he shut down his motor and slammed on his brakes so hard that it almost threw the passenger in his sidecar out onto the highway. After challenging the driver for the password, he gave it to me, and I asked him what the hell he was doing out on a night like this. He answered, "I am taking this correspondent to Regimental Headquarters." He then introduced me to Irving Cobb, the well known war correspondent from Paduca, Kentucky. We visited for a few minutes and they were on their way again.

May 20

During the shelling last night one of the shells hit in the backyard of the red brick house that Major Rasmuessen was headquartering in. He and his aides started for the shelter in the cellar, but before the Major reached the cellar, another shell came through the end of the house seriously wounding him. He died a short time later. It wasn't until after his death that I learned what a professional soldier he was.

When Germany declared war on France and England entered the war along with her subjects, including Canada, the Major who was then a civilian left the States for Canada and enlisted in the Princess Pat Regiment. He went overseas with the Regiment and saw extensive service. He was one of the few survivors although seriously wounded. By the time America entered the war, he had recovered from his wounds sufficiently to return to the States where he tried to enlist in the U.S. Army.

In spite of his disability, and because of the wealth of experience he had gained in the Princes Pat outfit, he was gladly accepted and attached to the First Division in an advisory capacity, with the rank of Major which he had earned in the Canadian army. He wanted to be where the action was and he was attached to the 28th Infantry. We were all proud of him and felt bad about his being killed, but we had seen so many of our buddies

killed that we were well hardened to seeing and hearing about the death of anyone in the outfit.

May 23

Last night after dark the 28th was pulled out of the lines and replaced by the 18 Infantry Batallion. On our way to the back area, we had to pass through Rouquencourt and right past the barn and courtyard in which our kitchen was set up. We were in a single file and silence had to be maintained, but nothing could silence the klop, klop, klop of hobnailed shoes on the roadway. Sergeant Pouler and the cooks evidently heard the noise of marching feet and came out to the road to see what was going on. I am sure that in the darkness he couldn't recognize our Company from any other Company, but someone from our Company recognized him. As this someone passed by he hauled off and let the Sergeant have a fist to the nose, knocking him to the ground.

I had already passed by so didn't see the blow, but from the commotion that followed, we knew something out of the ordinary had happened. Not a word was spoken so it wasn't until we were out of the village and to the trucks waiting for us that I learned one of our boys had repaid the Sergeant for all of the hot meals and steaks we had been promised, but hadn't received.

Most of the boys in the Company knew that the Sergeant liked his liquor. None of us had any proof, but we were sure from things we heard from the mess crew that he was cheating on us, and trading beef and other supplies to the French in exchange for Cognac. Consequently, none of us felt sorry for him.

After we were all loaded into the trucks, we were driven further back of the lines to the village of Maisencelle. Here we were to train for a full scale attack, with tanks, planes and the works.

May 24

We reached the Maisencelle area sometime after mid-night and were told to crawl into whatever shelter we could find for the remainder of the night. Bright and early this morning we received our first briefing on how the attack was planned, how it would be executed, and what each one of us was expected to do.

Most of the boys were supposed to follow the tanks, spread out in a semi-straight line with about 15 feet between each man. Certain of these men were to be on the lookout for our planes which were to have flown over just before we started across the fields. On their way back they would drop metal cannisters containing messages showing just where the strong points and machine guns were located. The messages were to be relayed to the tanks so that they could crush and destroy them.

In the simulated attack the defending forces were French soldiers using blank ammunition in their rifles

and machine guns, but from the sound of them it was like the real thing. We went over the attack several times in the two days we were there.

The purpose of the attack was twofold. One was to retake the village of Cantigny, which was a salient point from which the Germans had a distinct advantage in observation and control of fire. The second reason was to test the Americans on their own for the first time. May 28 at 5:45 AM was the time set for the real attack. I only hope it is as easy to take Cantigny as it was in the simulated attack.

May 26

The 28th is back in the lines, but only my platoon from our Company and one platoon from each of the other Companies are in the front lines. The remaining three platoons from each Company are in the second line of trenches. As yet I don't know the reason for this arrangement. Whoever issued the order must have had a good reason for doing it.

We were kept busy the first part of the night trying to make our section of trenches as defensible as possible by increasing the height of the parapet in front of the trench. Some of the boys dug shallow shelters into the front wall of the trench, facing the enemy. These shelters were dug at the firing step level and were about 18 inches deep and the same height. They were just long enough for a man to squeeze in in case of early morning shelling with shrapnel.

Toward midnight we had done about all that could be done, so one soldier stood watch on the firing step while the rest of us tried to get some sleep, huddled in the bottom of the trench. Each hour the guard awakened one of the squad who would relieve the guard so that he could get some sleep. I had the last watch from four to five o'clock. From then on, all of us would be on alert until daylight.

PART TWO

CHAPTER ONE

HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT AND ESCAPE TO OUR LINES

May 27, 1918

Morning will soon be here. The first grey streaks of dawn are beginning to appear in the Eastern sky, and the luminous hands of my watch show it to 4:42 AM. Except for the rumbling of heavy shells high overhead and the occasional swoosh of a magnesium flare as they slowly parachute down over no man's land bathing it in an eerie glow, it has been a comparatively quiet night.

Suddenly the sky ahead seemed on fire as the flashes of hundreds of German big guns lit up the darkness. The air was filled with the piercing whine of approaching shells, followed by the violent explosion as they hit in front of our position, and for several hundred feet on either side of us.

Large clouds of dirt were thrown into the air by the exploding shells as the rolling barrage crept slowly closer and closer to our trenches. There was nowhere to take shelter except to crouch down on the firing step whenever it seemed that a particular shell was coming close. The couple of minutes that it took for the barrage to reach our trenches seemed like an eternity.

Just as the first shells hit our trenches, the tempo of fire changed to an ugly roar as the barage shifted from the slow rolling barage to a three-sided box barage. The shelling directly in front of us stopped as the big guns raised their aim, and we were boxed in on either side and in the rear by a steel wall of exploding shells.

The waves of German soldiers I expected to see following closely behind the barage were not there. Except for one lone moving figure out there who had been wounded and was throwing himself about on the ground, there was not a living soul to be seen. For that matter, neither was there an American soldier to be seen in our trenches on either side of me. The two boys with me were lying on the bottom of the trench, either killed or wounded. Taking a quick look out over no man's land, I was about to step down from the firing step to see if there was anything I could do for them when it happened.

Something heavy landed on my back, my arms were pinned to my sides by a pair of arms, and I was pulled backward down from the firing step to the bottom of the trench. A German soldier grabbed my rifle from my hands while another standing beside him said, "Las em gehn," and the soldier on my back released his hold on me. Then the one who had given the order to let me go gave another order, "Rouse mit em," and by pointing with their bayonetted rifles, I was ordered out of the trench toward the German lines.

German intelligence must have been very good for they knew that fresh troops had come into the lines the night before. The raiding party of possibly a hundred men, as I learned later, had followed the rolling barage, but over to one side of us. After crossing the front lines, they turned to the right or left, and came upon our position from the rear. The sole purpose of the raid was to get prisoners, and I was one of the unfortunate ones.

A German soldier on either side of me and a third one behind me all with their bayonets pointing at me convinced me that this was not the time or the place to argue with them. With the order of, "Raus mit em," followed by, "Hande hoch," we climbed out of the trench and started at a fast pace toward the German lines, about a hundred yards away.

About 50 or 60 feet from the German trenches, I caught my first glimpse of German helmets moving about in the trench. Perhaps the sight of the helmets caused me to hesitate, but the tip of a bayonet in the back forced me ahead as the German behind me shouted, "Mach schnell." A strange feeling came over me as I felt warm blood running down my back where the bayonet had cut. I decided that I didn't want to spend the rest of the war in a German prison camp. This had to be it.

Deliberately stepping into a shallow shell hole in front of me, I pretended to fall. I hoped it would look real enough to my captors to allow me to lower my arms. They had no reason to expect resistance from me so close to their lines. They had taken my rifle away from me back in our trench. In their haste to get me back to their lines as a prisoner, however, they had neglected to search me and to relieve me of my trench knife which was tucked safely in the waistband of my breeches.

About this time our artillery unknowingly came to my aid. A battery of shells from our lines came screaming over as I was climbing out of the shell hole I had pretended to fall into. From the sound of the shells, they were going to hit nearby. The Germans on either side of me quickly fell to the ground and I could only hope that the one behind me did the same. I was too angry at the German behind me who had nicked me with his bayonet, and too determined to try to get away to even think about getting hit by shell fragments.

Before any of the Germans could regain their feet, I had my trench knife in my hand and struck at the one on my left, catching him in the area of the throat. He fell back to the ground. Unable to pull my knife free I grabbed the rifle which had fallen from his hands and, swinging it like a club, caught the German on my right with the butt end of the rifle across the face or neck and he too fell to the ground.

Then I made the mistake that nearly cost me my life. Had I thrown the rifle at the German behind me instead of trying to bring it around to use against him, it

might have thrown him off balance and spoiled his aim just as he lunged at me. I will never know if that split second might have spared me or not, for his bayonet was already on its way as I turned to try to avoid it.

The bayonet entered just above my shoulder hitting my spine a glancing blow, cutting nerves and muscles, and cutting me open from shoulder to shoulder. My knees buckled under me, my arms pulled up at the elbows, and I fell forward on my face. I couldn't breathe and I couldn't move. A kick in the ribs by the German rolled me on my back. Bending down over me with his bayonet poised for another quick thrust, he gave a peculiar grunt and fell over backward, dead at my side.

I had no idea of how long I laid in front of the German trench before I regained some recollection of what had happened or where I was. It couldn't have been more than eight or ten minutes from the time the barage had started until the time I was struck down, but considerable time must have passed since then as it was now daylight. I was dazed and couldn't seem to think or move.

I must have been in a state of shock from the wound. I didn't seem to be concerned about bleeding and I realized that I was beyond the aid of our troops who were at least a hundred or more yards behind me. They possibly didn't even know I was out there and even if they did they could not come to my aid. Nothing seemed to matter at that time and I just seemed to take for granted that everything would work out fine.

I heard what seemed to be the heavy roll of distant thunder as large shells passed by high overhead, but I had no realization that there was any immediate danger either from shell fire or from the Germans so close by.

As my mind slowly began to clear, I could see a hazy sun shining down upon me and my thoughts went back to my home town along the shore of Lake Michigan where we often had days such as this in the spring of the year. Perhaps I was delirious at times. These thoughts and many more were in my mind and I was at peace with the world. I was back home with my mother, father and brothers and the war was far away over the ocean, with no cause to worry about it.

Suddenly I was wide awake. Over the past months I had seen buddies of mine who had been wounded and had heard the plaintive cries of those beyond our help who in their delirium cried out with anguished voices. Now, in the sudden stillness I could again hear the cry of a human in severe pain. I questioned what I was hearing for it did not sound like anything I had heard before. I could not make out what was being said, but gradually it came through to me and a voice not too far away was crying, "Oh my gut, oh my gut." This person, whoever he was, was wounded. I could only hope that he would not be heard by the Germans for fear it might bring a blast of machine gunfire at us.

Another sound made its way to my brain. A shrill high piercing sound which grew louder and fiercer as it approached. I had heard that sound many times before when under shell fire from the Germans. This time the shells had a slightly different sound and were coming from the wrong direction. The Americans were shelling the Germans and some of the shells were falling short of their mark. Several fell so close to me that when they exploded, I was hit in the face and other parts of the body by the ground thrown into the air by the explosions. I thought then, "what a way to die, killed by our own artillery."

As suddenly as the shelling started, it stopped, and the stillness brought me a little closer to reality. I could no longer hear the cry of, "Oh my gut," and I knew that the shelling must have put an end to the suffering of that person. Only then did it dawn on me that the poor devil was a German soldier who, in his agony, was saying in native tongue, not "Oh my gut" but "Oh my God, oh my God."

What seemed like endless hours passed and the sun was much higher in the sky. My arms fell to my sides and I began to feel pain starting in my back and arms.

I wasn't thinking very clearly and I drifted off into unconsciousness for short periods of time. I can remember that my legs which were doubled up dropped to the ground and for the first time I began to experience fear as I could feel a lump under my right hip, and I knew it had to be a "German potatoe masher" (an offensive hand grenade).

At first I tried to roll off of it, but to no avail. I just could not move even as I counted the seconds before the grenade would explode, tearing me to pieces. Nothing happened. Now I was sure it was a dud which had failed to go off. It could still explode if moved about to any extent, so I tried to lie as quietly as possible.

As time went by, the sun shown brighter and I became thirsty for a cool drink of water. Then another piece of the puzzle fell into place. That was no potatoe masher under me. It was my canteen filled with cool water, fastened to my ammunition belt. My mind was relieved, but not my thirst for I could not use my arms to reach the canteen.

Until now I was only partially conscious of the dilemma I was in. My back, neck and arms were throbbing with pain and I could feel it starting down into my legs. I did not dare to call for help as I was too close to the German lines. I knew that only by myself and with the help of God I might be able to survive. I prayed that it be his will to help me and tried to think of something I could do in return for his help, even entering the priesthood. I knew almost as quickly as the thought entered my mind that I would not keep such a promise, and that I could not bargain with Him. If He would help me, it would be because He had further use of me. From now it was up to me if I was to survive.

As the pain in my legs became worse, I could feel them beginning to jerk and tremble and I knew I could move them slightly. Slowly I tried to move my right leg and it responded to my will. My thoughts now were to get as far away from this spot as possible. By moving the right leg to the right and pushing it against the ground, I was able to turn from my back onto my stomach. Then, by drawing the left leg and knee to an upward position and pushing it against the ground, I was able to roll onto my back. I had now moved my body one complete turn, or about a yard, farther away from the German lines, and a yard closer to our lines.

I have no idea of how many times I repeated this push and roll procedure, but each push and each roll, while it caused me severe pain, also gave me hope and confidence that I would make it back to our lines. I paused to rest only when I couldn't muster the strength to go on.

Warm blood was flowing down my neck and back and I knew I had to get help soon. In my near panic, I completely forgot where I was. My only thoughts were of getting help before it was too late. I managed to get to a sitting position, but how I managed to get to my feet with the use of my arms is something I am unable to explain.

Staggering drunkenly, my head hanging down and my arms hanging helplessly at my sides, I fell to the ground trying to cross the parapet in front of our trench. Even before I could cry out for help, the lookouts in our trench had alerted the others who laid down a covering fire. Two of our boys crawled partially out of the trench, grabbed me by the blouse and pulled me into the trench.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DAMNED X-RAY WON'T WORK

NEXT STOP A FRENCH FIELD HOSPITAL

Lying safely on the bottom of the trench, my blouse, shirt and undershirt were cut up the back with a sharp bayonet, and removed. The white tape which held my dog tags had worked its way into the wound and had to be cut off and removed. The dog tags were given to our platoon commander, Lieutenant Simon. They were never turned in as the Lieutenant was killed the following day.

The First Aid men who were also the stretcher bearers had used up all of their first aid bandages trying to cover the wound and had to borrow a few from the boys in the trench. I was placed on a stretcher, covered with a blanket and started on my way back to the Batallion First Aid Station.

When the stretcher bearers reached the first bend in the trenches, they could not make the turn as the stretcher was too long to go around the corner. *(Trenches were not dug in a straight line, but in a series of bays. If a shell hit in one bay it would not injure or kill more than the few men in each bay, whereas in a straight trench more men would be wounded or killed.)*

While I was only 5', 6½" tall, I was stocky and weighed over 190 pounds. The only way to get the stretcher around the corners was to lift me with the stretcher above their heads until it was high enough to clear the top of the trench and then walk it around the corner. The two bearers could not do this by themselves, so the Lieutenant ordered two soldiers to assist them. Between the four, they managed to hold me clear of the trench for a distance of several city blocks before they came to the communication trench which led to the rear.

From here on, the going was much easier with no sharp corners to maneuver around. The distance from the front lines past the second and third lines and on to where the communication trench ended was more than a mile. From that point to the Batallion Aid Station, located in the basement of a church, there was about a half mile of open country. We had just started across the open field when a German observer spotted us and a shell was on its way toward us. When the stretcher bearers heard the shell coming they laid the stretcher on the ground and laid down beside it until the shell exploded. From then on it was pick up the stretcher and run like hell until they heard the scream of the next shell approaching. They would then quickly lay the stretcher down on the ground again and flop down alongside it until the shell exploded. This procedure was repeated a half dozen times before we

made it safely into a wooded area. I was considerably shaken up and had more pain, but the main thing was that we made it.

From the woods to the church was only a short distance. I was carried through a shell hole in the wall into the basement of the church. Medical records show that I arrived at the church or Medical Aid Station at 12:00 noon.

My stretcher was placed on the ground where there was a clear space. As my eyes became accustomed to the semi-darkness, I made out other stretchers lined up along the wall waiting to be either treated or evacuated after they received first aid treatment. I saw the glow of cigarettes as they were being puffed and I heard the barely audible voices of the wounded. After a relatively short time, my stretcher was picked up and carried to a lighted area where the doctors were giving the best first aid available.

When it came my turn, the doctor asked, "Where is your wound?" I replied, "In the neck and I can't use my arms." I was helped to a sitting position and held there while the bandages were removed. Someone gave a low whistle. The doctor said, "Give this man a cigarette." It was lit and placed between my lips. I puffed on it for a minute or two. In the meantime, a clean dressing was applied and I was given a shot to ease the pain. The cigarette was removed from my mouth and I was laid back on the stretcher. Then I was given a shot of anti-tetanus in the belly and a cross was painted on my forehead with iodine.

Just before I was carried out to a waiting ambulance the doctor said to me, "We have done all that we can for you here and are sending you back to a field hospital for surgery." The ambulance ride was a nightmare. The other two wounded were in the bottom section of the ambulance and I was in the upper section. The driver started out very smoothly, but as we got into open country, the Germans spotted us and again they started shelling the road. The driver drove faster and faster and then suddenly would apply the brakes. If we had not been strapped into our stretchers, we would have been thrown through the partition that separated us from the driver and his assistant. We knew that the driver was doing this to confuse the aim of the German artillery, but it wasn't doing much good for us in the back end. At other times the ambulance swerved to avoid shell holes in the road. That was just as bad as the sudden stops and starts. The smaller shell holes he took in stride, and it was just the bigger ones he tried to avoid.

After several miles of this mad driving, we finally reached a bend in the road. This put a large woods between us and the German artillery. The driver pulled over to the side of the road and came to the rear of the ambulance to see how we had fared.

One of the boys who had a chest wound had started to bleed quite badly. The driver tried to stop the bleeding

as he apologized for the rough ride he had given us. We knew that except for his erratic driving we might still be on that road somewhere in a badly smashed up ambulance. I was dulled from the shot the doctor had given me and probably did not feel the bouncing around as much as the others. I do recall saying to the driver, "It takes a damn good driver to hit all of the holes and you hit most of them." The driver was unable to stop the bleeding from the chest wound, and he laid it on the line to us. He said, "I can take it easy from here to the hospital, but if I do I am afraid this boy won't make it." The other boy with the badly smashed leg said, "We have already taken the worst you can dish out; drive like hell again and get him to the hospital."

American Field Hospital #12 was a tent hospital. We were unloaded and carried to the receiving ward. Each of us were then carried off somewhere. I was taken into the X-ray section and placed on the X-ray table. The X-ray man positioned me for the picture and then positioned the lamp. He said, "Take a deep breath and hold it."

As I lay there holding my breath, I felt that the worst had already happened, and from now on things couldn't help but get better. Then a few choice swear words and the comment, "The damned X-ray won't work," brought me back to reality. I knew the cards were still stacked against me.

Out into another ambulance I went with orders to the driver to get me to the nearest hospital. Away we went on another fast ride for eight or ten miles. I was again carried into the hospital entrance and laid on the floor beside other wounded men. The driver tried to convey to the receiving nurse that I was an American wounded. Following a brief wait, I was taken to the X-ray room and after the picture was taken the doctor, in broken English, asked, "You want to sleep?" About then I didn't care what happened to me. I was very tired and badly needed rest. Thinking that I would be put into a comfortable bed I replied, "Yes." I was then wheeled into a room where my breeches, shoes, socks and underdrawers were removed and a white sheet placed over me. A moment later I was wheeled into a brilliantly lighted room.

It wasn't until now that I realized that I was in a French hospital. The conversation about me was in French between the doctor and his assistants and a nurse who was in the process of putting on a face mask. She came over to where I was lying on the cart. At a word from her, two aides lifted me onto the operating table on my stomach. The nurse opened a bottle of clear liquid which she poured onto a strainer with cotton in it. She then shoved the strainer under my nose and a sweet smell similar to banana oil drifted up to my nostrils. I couldn't get my breath. I tried to move my head away from the strainer, but couldn't. The nurse knew her business, for just as I tried to cry out that I couldn't breathe, she pulled the strainer away, and as I gasped for air she pushed it right back under my nose. That's all I remembered.

I have no idea how long I was on the operating table. I had arrived at the hospital between six and seven PM and was in surgery within a half hour after arriving there. My next recollection was of waking up with a bad taste in my mouth and being very thirsty. My recollection of the hospital is somewhat vague, but some of the things that took place there are burned into my memory. It was French Hospital #37, staffed by French doctors, nurses and orderlies. All of the patients were French soldiers until I arrived.

It was broad daylight. French nurses and orderlies were moving about the ward which contained about 40 beds with wounded soldiers. Food was being served to those who could help themselves. Those who needed help were being fed, but no food was brought to me. The pain in my back and arms was starting up again and I was thirsty. I called out for water and one or two of the nurses looked my way. Not knowing what was meant by water, they went on about their duties.

Minutes later the patient in the bed next to mine called, "Dilue" and in no time at all a nurse was giving him a drink. I called out "Dilue, dilue." a nurse came over to my bed, looked at the chart at the foot of my bed and then explained that "Dilue was par bon" for me and walked away.

I was beginning to feel forgotten when the doctor who had operated on me came over to see how I was doing. As he spoke to me in his broken English, some of which I understood, I looked up at him. He looked very tired, but he had a gentle look about him. He was wearing a brown Van Dyke beard, neatly trimmed, and he spoke to me in a very kindly voice. I repeated my plea to him for "Dilue." He tried to make me understand that water so soon after surgery might cause me to become sick to my stomach, but my plea for water must have touched a tender nerve. He poured a tablespoon of water into a glass and before giving it to me said, "No swallow, spit it out". I swished the water around in my mouth and then spat it into a container he held to my mouth. Then he poured another tablespoon of water into the glass, held it to my lips and said, "swallow". Nothing that I can remember ever tasted so good.

With the little French I knew, and with the little English he knew, he made me understand that I would get well. On the following day I would be moved to an American hospital, where I could get better attention. He then gave me a shot to ease my pain and left.

May 29

Shortly after noon, I was taken my ambulance from the French hospital to another French hospital at Beauvaix which was staffed by American doctors and nurses. The

receiving nurses, however, were still French. Carried into the receiving room of the two-story stone building, I was placed on the floor beside other soldiers who had arrived just minutes before. The French nurses were moving about between the stretchers checking on the patients. One looked down at me and smiled, then turned to the soldier beside me and said something in French which I didn't understand. She left for a moment and came back with a syringe. She raised the blanket of the soldier beside me and I heard the soldier shout at the top of his lungs, "Get the hell out of here with that. I already had a shot of tetanus".

The voice sounded vaguely familiar, but it wasn't until many choice swear words later, and a groan as the tetanus shot was jabbed into his belly, that I recognized the voice of George Gulligan, an old Company F member from Algoma.

Gulligan and about 30 other soldiers had been in an open truck on their way up to the front when a hand grenade exploded in the truck, killing several soldiers and wounding several others. Kelly, as Gulligan was called, had received a piece of iron from the grenade in the flesh of his hip. He had received first aid at an aid station, but apparently in the haste to take care of everyone they had failed to mark his forehead with the iodine cross after administering the tetanus shot.

Before I could say more than, "Kelly" I was picked up by stretcher bearers and carried up a flight of stairs. There I was put to bed in a large room with about 30 beds. Some were empty, but with the number of soldiers still in the receiving room it wasn't long until all the beds were filled.

George Culligan asked the stretcher bearers to please place him in the bed next to me if possible because he was a friend of mine. Permission was granted and he was placed in the bed on my right. For the first couple of days I wasn't much company to Kelly, but he was good for me.

I still couldn't move my head or limbs and most of the time I just laid there with my eyes closed or just staring up at the ceiling. I didn't feel like talking to anyone and had a lot of pain. I hand't had any food since the night of the 26th except for a glass of warm broth on the evening of the 28th, and a small bowl of soup for my noon meal on the 29th just before I left the hospital for the Beauvaix hospital.

The evening meal was served shortly after I had been put to bed and a tray of food was placed on my bedside table. I didn't know it was there. In fact, I didn't seem to be aware of anything going on around me. If Kelly spoke to me, I didn't hear him. When the orderly came to pick up the empty trays my food was still there untouched. Asked why I hadn't eaten, I replied, "I'm not hungry". The tray was carried away and a short time

later a nurse came to my bedside to see what was wrong. She explained that an American soldier had to be pretty badly off if he wouldn't eat. After examining my medical chart, she said, "I'm going to get you some food and feed you." She had discovered from the chart that I was unable to use my arms or to move my head. From that time on, the doctors and nurses checked on me at frequent intervals, and I sensed that my condition wasn't good. I ate very little, though the doctors, nurses and nurses' aides did everything they could to build up my strength by feeding me malted milks, orange juice and chocolate milk.

Kelly learned of my real condition by observing and asking the nurses about me while I was under sedation. He was concerned. When Red Cross workers came through the ward with chocolate bars and other treats, Kelly would ask them to leave two bars with him. Then at odd times he would break off a piece of chocolate and feed it to me. He would reach from his bed over to mine, and place a piece of chocolate between my lips and I would suck on it until it was gone. Every half hour or so a nurses' aide would stop at my bed to talk to me, but I wasn't up to doing much visiting as yet.

One day Marjorie Talbot, a nurses' aide from the Smith College Relief unit, who had been especially kind to me, asked me if I had any brothers, sisters, or parents. She said she would be glad to write a letter to them for me.

I did dictate a very short letter to my mother saying that I was in a hospital having been wounded, and that the letter was being written for me as my arm was still too sore for writing at this time and that after a couple of weeks I would be able to write myself.

When I had finished, Marjorie said, "Don't you owe your parents more than that. I feel they have the right to know that your wound is more severe than you made it out to be." That made me a bit angry and I replied that "My parents were more than two thousand miles away. Why should I worry them any more than I had to. It would only upset them and cause them to worry all the more about me." That bit of anger did me much good mentally and physically.

Prior to then I hadn't tried to think about home or my parents. I didn't want them to know of my real condition, or to have them see me as I was, so unconsciously I kept putting them out of my mind and thoughts. Now that it was in the open, I decided I had to face up to it. From then on I began to feel better and to want to get well.

Many months later, after I had been discharged and was back home I wrote a letter to Marjorie, who lived in Brookline, Massachusetts, to thank her for the attention she had given to me, along with the desire to fight. I also thanked her for the five Franc note she pinned to my hospital gown when I was asleep the day I left the Beauvaix hospital. She knew I had no personal belongings or money. In her note along with the five Franc note she said, "When you get to Paris and are feeling up to it,

have a good time for you and me." The return letter I got from Marjorie about a week or ten days later was most revealing to me. It said, "You will never know how happy I was to get your letter. Now that you are back home and so much better, I can tell you a few things we couldn't tell you while you were in the hospital in Beauvaix. We did everything we could for you because the doctors had told us they were concerned that you would never leave there alive." At that time dying had never entered my mind. I had been worried about loosing the use of my arms and head motion, but never a thought about dying.

VIEW OF U. S. MILITARY HOSPITAL NO. I, FORMERLY KNOWN AS AMERICAN AMBULANCE HOSPITAL: PARIS

Courtesy

HE ENTRANCE TO AMERICAN MILITARY HOSPITAL NO. I AND ITS FLEET OF AMBULANCES WHICH BRIN

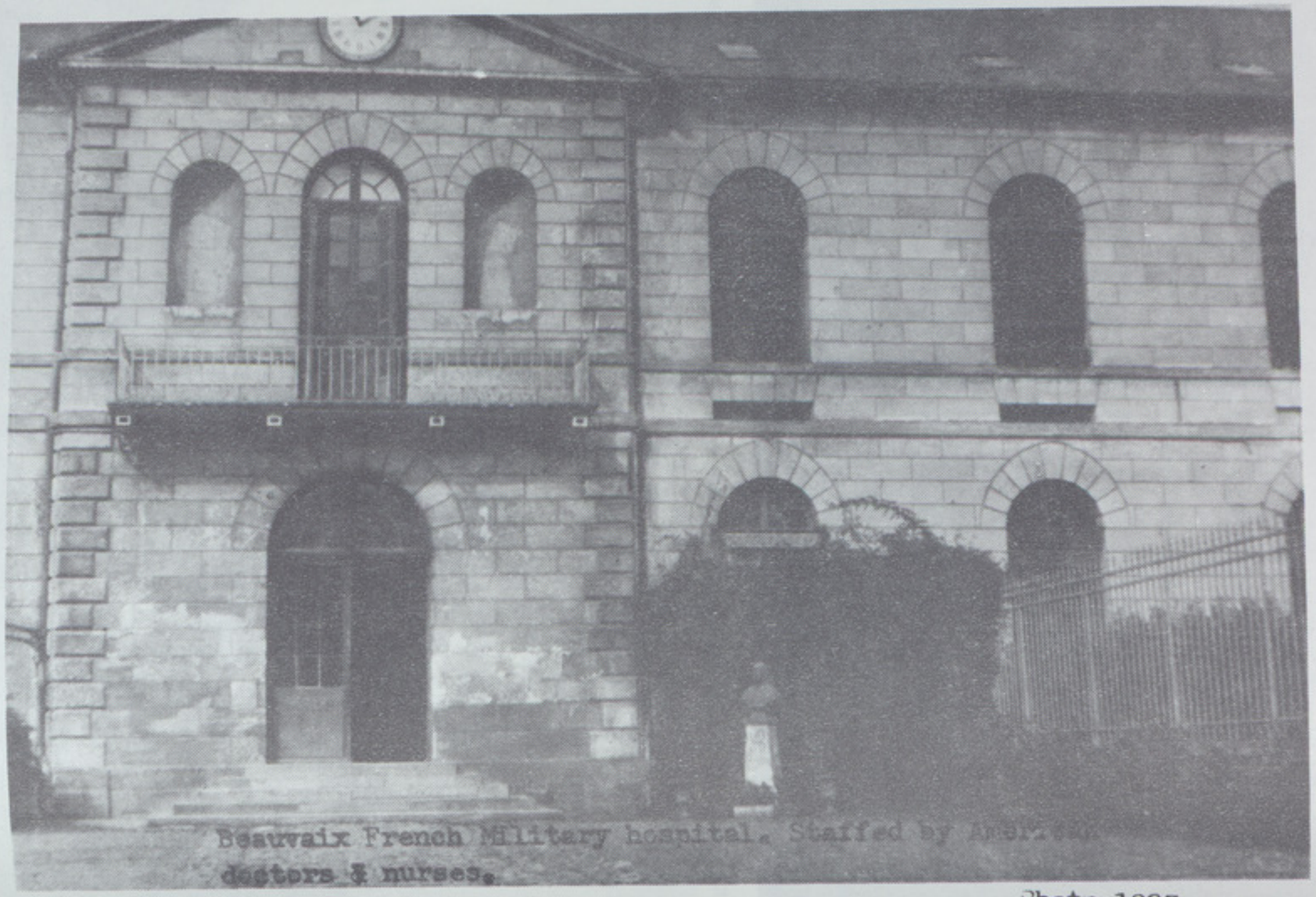

Photo 1927.

BEAUVAIX FRENCH MILITARY HOSPITAL

CHAPTER THREE

AMERICAN RED CROSS HOSPITAL #1

BIG BOY AND A SOUVENIR

June 7

The trip from Beauvaix hospital to the American Red Cross Hospital #1 at Neuilly, just outside the city of Paris, was made by Red Cross hospital train. I had thought of visiting Paris many months before when, as newly arrived troops, we rode through the outskirts of Paris in a troop train. This wasn't at all the way I had hoped to visit the city. But there I was. When I was transferred from the stretcher to the Ambulance train at Beauvaix, my medical records were hung on the side of my bunk. Normally, they were given to the patient to hold so that they would go wherever the patient went, but in my case, because my arms were useless, the records were hung on the bunk.

When the hospital train arrived at the Neuilly Station, the doors in the train were swung open and the stretcher carriers came aboard, lifted us out of our bunks onto stretchers and carried us out to the waiting ambulances that would take us to the hospital. As each ambulance was loaded, it started off. There were so many ambulances that progress was slow. After six or seven blocks of travel our ambulance came to a stop. The driver came to the rear door to tell us we were only a few blocks from the hospital, but that because there were so many wounded men on the train we had to wait in line until the ambulance ahead of us could be unloaded in the courtyard of the hospital.

Through the open door of the ambulance, the aroma of freshly baked bread and rolls reached our nostrils. The driver asked us if we were hungry. We all were and said so. He told his companion in the cab to pull off to the side of the road while he went to the bakery. In a few minutes he returned with some of the sweetest smelling buns and rolls, and handed one to each of the boys in the lower section of the ambulance. Then he held one out to me. I didn't reach out to take it and he asked, "Don't you want one?" I wanted one desparately and told him so, but said, "You will have to hold it for me", which he did, bite by bite.

By this time most of the ambulances had made it to the hospital and were unloaded. When we arrived we were carried immediately onto the green grass in the courtyard. We didn't have to wait long before each of us were assigned to the various wards in the hospital. I was assigned to ward #160, which I later learned was called the Chicago ward.

There were 14 beds in ward #160 and 13 of the beds were occupied when I was wheeled into the room and placed in the one empty bed near the door. The attendants had just finished placing me in the bed and were on their way out when the head nurse came in and asked me, "Where are your medical records, Big Boy?" And from that day on I was called Big Boy by everyone.

Up to that moment I hadn't given a thought to my records. I just thought that the stretcher bearers had picked them up when they carried me out of the train. Now it dawned on me that my records had remained on the train and that they were miles from here by now.

Here I was, in a strange hospital with nothing but my own say so to establish who I was. No name, no serial number or any other means of identification. I could have said I was Black Jack Pershing and they had no way to dispute it. Apparently this was not the first time that records had been missing. A Field Medical Card was obtained from the office and the following questions were asked, "Name, serial number, evacuation hospital, other hospitals, date of first admission to a hospital, were you operated on and diagnosis." I had to admit I didn't know my serial number, or the hospitals I had been in except Beauvaix hospital, and that I had been admitted to the first hospital on May 27, had been operated on, and admitted to this hospital today, June 7, 1918.

I was then made as comfortable as possible, and told that a doctor would be in to see me shortly. The boys in the ward had been quietly listening to the questions asked and the answers, and after the nurse left they began questions of their own. "What front were you on? What outfit were you with? Where were you wounded? Do you want a cigarette, etc."

I did ask for a drink of water. The boy in the bed next to me, who had a leg in traction suspended by a wooden framework and a series of ropes and pulleys referred to as an oil derrick, replied, "Help yourself. There is a bottle of water and a cup on your bedside table in easy reach." I had to tell him I couldn't move my arms. Then I learned of the plight of each of the other boys in the ward. Only one of them was able to get out of bed, but he had both arms broken and was in casts up to his shoulders. The others were either in traction or had wounds that would not permit them out of bed. I learned that when injured or sick men were on the road to recovery, they soon found ways to make their wants known and cared for. Several of the boys picked up their metal cups, placed them over the necks of their water bottles and started shaking them back and forth. This set up a terrible clamor.

Within seconds a nurse came dashing into the ward while the boy in the next bed explained, "Big Boy wants a drink of water and he can't use his arms." The nurse

poured a cup full of water, put her arm around me and lifted me to a sitting position, then placed the cup to my lips and let me drink. Up to now the only liquids I had to drink had been through a drinking tube. It sure felt good to be able to drink from a cup again.

When the doctor finally arrived he examined my medical chart, which didn't tell him very much other than my name and that I had been wounded on May 27. He too started asking questions. "Just where is your wound? What caused it? Can you move your arms? Can you move your head? Can you move your legs?" To all of which the answer was "No." Then he asked if he could have a look at my back and neck. The nurse put her arms under the small of my back and raised me up while the doctor removed the dressing, and examined the wound. He replaced the old dressing with a new one. Then more questions. "Had I been operated on? In what hospital? What had been done in the operation? Did I have much pain? and many more questions I am unable to recall at this time. The doctor then left orders with the nurse for a shot right after the evening meal, which was then being served, and another shot if I should need it through the night.

Dinner that first evening in Red Cross Hospital #1 was much like the others I had had in other hospitals along the way. Either a nurse or a nurses' aide would sit beside my bed and spoon small portions of food into my mouth. One of the aides who fed me quite regularly and whom I got to know quite well, Juliet Goodrich, was the daughter of a wealthy shipping line owner from Chicago. The Goodrich Steamship Line served the ports of Lake Michigan and made regular stops at Algoma. Juliet was a very well meaning and willing worker and would do anything for the boys. She was doing menial work because she wanted to be of real service to us, but on many occasions because she was so eager to help, she caused us pretty bad moments. In her haste to serve us, she would inadvertently bump one or the other of our beds, which caused us severe pain. While she was very apologetic and we forgave her each time, there were times when we wished she would be transferred to another ward.

My first night in ward #160 was a quiet one. About 9:00 the nurse gave me my shot and I rested comfortably for several hours, even dozing off for some time. I was wide awake, however, when the breakfast cart was wheeled into the ward, and with the aid of a nurse, ate a good breakfast. Shortly after the breakfast trays were cleared away, the agony cart came in and I was initiated into the ranks of ward #160.

Being the first bed by the door, I was the first one to get attention. My dressing was removed and Dakin tubes were attached to my neck, just above the wound. A bottle of Dakin solution was suspended above my bed permitting the solution to drip into the wound at a regulated speed.

A new dressing was applied and I was laid back on the bed. Only once during the process did I let out a groan. That was when the old dressing was pulled off while adhering to the wound with dried blood.

As the cart and the doctor and nurse went from one bed to the next, I soon found out why the boys in the ward referred to the cart as the "agony cart". Each patient had his own peculiar way of fighting off what each of us dreaded and tried to hide from our fellow sufferers. We all knew the pain would last only a fraction of a second, yet we somehow were never able to accept it. It was a dreaded interval after the doctor said, "Well, how are you?" and the moment when the nurse would tug off the blood-stained bandage on which the blood had dried and adhered to the wound. Some would grit their teeth and grunt, others would let out a low moan, while one boy would wail and howl. A Jewish boy would set up a regular chant of, "Oh Yohy, Oh Yohy". The wails, grunts and chants didn't help the patients very much, for as the doctor and nurse worked on one patient the other 13 would give him a bad time by imitating, and fiendishly laugh with glee at his discomfort. Just as soon as the cart was moved to the next patient, the boy who had just finished wailing or moaning was the first to join in with the others. We called the Jewish boy's chant a Jewish lullaby.

Frank Samaritan, an Italian boy, had received a slug of shrapnel through the chest and lung, and he nearly died on us several times. Someone would tell a funny story and like the rest of us, Frank would start to laugh and then to wheeze and gasp for breath. He wasn't doing too well as it was, but the laughing and gasping for breath was making him worse. The doctors finally had to move him out of the ward and onto the porch, from where no one returned. I was happy to learn months later that Frank had made it, and was sent home.

With Frank moved out of the ward, the nurse had barely time to change the bedding when another soldier was wheeled in. As he was being lifted into Frank's bed, all eyes were on him and we saw that his right leg was off at the knee or just above the knee. He had evidently come right from the operating room as he was still under the anesthetic. Talk was resumed, but in a subdued tone so as not to disturb the new patient.

About an hour later we heard moans from the new boy and then we heard him say, "Please move my leg, it hurts very much". Our nurse was a very understanding and knowing person. She went over to the boy's bed and said to him, "I will move your leg for you". She then reached under the covers, placed one hand on his thigh and with her other hand pretended to move the leg that wasn't there. The nurse later told me that it was quite common for a new amputee to seem to have pain in the removed

FIELD MEDICAL CARD.

NAME Groesal Quiren
(Block letters.)

RANK Private No. Does not Know

REGIMENT OR STAFF CORPS 28th Inf, Co. E.

~~SICK~~ WOUNDED
LINE OF DUTY—YES ~~OR~~ ~~NO.~~
(Strike out descriptions which do not apply.)

FIELD HOSP. NO. French ? EVAC. HOSP. NO. Amer. Hos. Dianvais

DRESSING STA. NO. ? CAMP HOSP. NO.

DATE OF ADMISSION May 27, 1918

MORPHIA
DOSE AND TIME

A. T. SERUM
DOSE AND DATE May 27, 1918.

DIAGNOSIS A. Y. D. (Papers lost).
Operation May 28 (" ").

American Red Cross Military Hospital nº 1,
American Expeditionary Forces, France.

BASE HOSPITAL NO.

DIAGNOSIS (*if altered from above*)
Bayonet wound neck post [illegible]
[illegible]
In action near Cantigny May 27, 1918.

BASE HOSPITAL NO.

DIAGNOSIS (*if altered from above*)

Report of Disability Board

Held at Base Hospital # 8
under G. O. No. 41, G. H. Q. A. E. F., March. 14, 1913.

August 15, 1918.
(Date)

Groesal, Quiren M. (Name) Not Known (Number)

Pvt. (Rank) Co. E. 28 Inf. (Regt. or Dept.)

Admitted from

Sent to

1. Nature of Disability : Bayonet wound neck post and back perforating and laceration severe. BATTLE.

2. Disability { ~~XXX~~ did not } exist prior to entry into service.

3. Disability { is ~~XXXXXX~~ } in line of duty.

4. Classification : "D"

(Enter letter indicated A, B_1 B_2 C_1 C_2 D)

5. Nature of duty recommended : Return to the United States.

J. F. Connor
Capt. Medical Corps.

R. Payaweather
Capt. Medical Corps.

J. J. Nacey
1st. Lt. Medical Corps.

DUPLICATE — One copy to the Statistical Section, A. G. O., G. H. Q. A. E. F., and one to organization the which the officer or soldier is transferred.

Form No. 25, S. D., A.

member, sometimes for long periods of time, and that it was evidently due to the severed nerves twitching in the upper part of the member. While the amputee suffered considerable pain and discomfort, he made it with the assistance of a shot or two through the night.

When the agony cart made its rounds the next morning we were all wondering what the doctor would tell the boy with his leg gone. We didn't have long to wait, for when the nurse uncovered the stub and the doctor touched the dressing, the boy knew and cried out, "Oh my God, my leg is off". Then he broke down and sobbed. Later that day after he was more composed, we tried to cheer him up. We learned that his name was Dan Bailey and that he lived on a farm in Minnesota. Loosing his leg was a pretty strong pill for him to swallow. He knew that his days of walking behind a plow on his father's farm were over, and farming was the only thing he knew. After a couple of days he became somewhat reconciled and entered into the conversations, especially after learning the plight of each of the rest of us.

About a week after Dan Bailey had gotten out of his slump, he had a visitor. A big strapping hulk of a man, wearing a Knights of Columbus uniform, came strutting into our ward. He carried a cane on his arm and a box containing cigarettes, which he passed out to each of us on his way over to Dan's bed. When he got there he looked down at Dan and asked him how he was feeling and where he was wounded. Naturally Dan, who still felt pretty bad about the loss of his leg, began telling the K of C worker that without his leg he was a hopeless cripple and would be useless when he got back home on the farm.

That was all the K of C worker wanted to hear. He said to Dan, "Look at this", and he did a jig all over the floor. After a few minutes he stopped and said to Dan, "In a month or two from now you will be able to do just what I have done". "You've got smart talking", Dan replied, "You have your legs, I haven't". With that the K of C worker took the cane he was carrying on his arm and struck it a resounding whack against his leg. From the sound, we knew that he had an artificial leg. I know it surprised Dan. Then, to our amazement, he struck the cane against the other leg, and we all knew that he had not only one, but two artificial legs. From that day on, Dan Bailey improved in disposition, and knew that he had much to look forward to when he got back home.

June 25

One of the boys from my Company came into our ward looking for me. He had been wounded the day after I had. A bad flesh wound in the leg. He had a souvenir for me. It was the bayonet that had struck me. He had taken it from the dead German's rifle the following morning when the Company went over the top to take Cantigny. He had

seen the fight between me and the Germans, but was afraid to shoot for fear of hitting me, until after I had been struck down. I asked him about the other boys from the Company, and the news wasn't good. Quite a number of them had been wounded and several killed on the way over. It was he who had shot the German poised over me. In making his way back to the aid station after he was wounded, he took the bayonet, hoping he would find me in the next day or two. He carried that bayonet with him from one hospital to another for nearly a month before he caught up with me.

From the day at the first aid station when the doctor had one of his assistants give me a cigarette while he looked at my wound until today I hand't had a desire to smoke. Today during the visit from my buddy and with the smell of his cigarette, the urge came over me. I asked the nurse if I could smoke. She lit a cigarette for me, placed it between my lips and told my buddy to remove it when the ashes got too long. I puffed for a couple of minutes and then he removed it, knocked the ashes off and replaced it in my mouth for a few more puffs.

After that first cigarette, I had to depend on K of C workers or visitors to sit at my bedside while I smoked. Later I made a deal with Dan Sullivan, the orderly. I would supply the cigarettes and he would light and place one in my mouth whenever I wanted one. About every half hour Dan would pass by the door, poke his head in and ask, "How about it big boy, are you ready for a smoke?" If I said "OK", Dan would proceed down the corridor to wherever he went and a few minutes later on his way back he had a lighted cigarette in his mouth for me. When he got to my door it would be pushed partially open, just far enough for his arm to come in, the hand with the lit cigarette would hover over me and down would come the cigarette right into my mouth.

After puffing away for a couple of minutes, Dan's arm would again slip through the opening in the door, reach down and pluck the cigarette from my mouth and the arm would disappear. That was the way I enjoyed my smokes.

There were many sleepless nights in ward #160. No matter what hour of the night, you could always find one or more of the boys who couldn't sleep. We would talk about our families, girlfriends, what we did before the war and the things we could remember about our home towns. We passed many a weary hour that way.

CHAPTER FOUR

A NIGHT WE WON'T SOON FORGET

June 28

Tonight was a night that none of us in ward #160, or for that matter any of the boys anywhere in the hospital, will soon forget. The Germans had decided to pay a visit to Paris. Mobile sirens could be heard racing up and down the city streets giving the air raid warning. Soon after we could hear the roar of the airplane motors and the thump of aerial bombs exploding in the city. A few minutes later we could hear the all clear being sounded.

The nurse had drawn the blackout curtains when the sirens started and was about to open them after the all clear. Before she had the first one open, we could hear the high pitched whine of a shell traveling in our direction. The Germans had built a huge gun, which had been moved up under cover of darkness into a woods about 25 miles from Paris. This gun, named "Big Bertha" had commenced firing. It was a shell from this gun that we could hear rushing at us in the darkness. One shell hit a building across the street from the hospital. Another struck a building directly behind the hospital. We could hear the shell fragments raining down on the roof of the hospital. The thought went through my mind that now they had the range and the next one would be right on target.

But the third, fourth and fifth shells struck far off in the direction of Paris. Big Bertha was not intended to help win the war by its effectiveness, for it could not be trained and held on target as smaller weapons could. It was intended as a morale breaker by bringing the terror of war to the civilian population of Paris.

After the shelling stopped, we all laid there for several minutes. No one spoke a word until Floyd Gibbons, who had lost an eye in the war, broke the silence. "Do you boys know what I am going to do after this war is over and I am back home? I am going to give lessons on how to wear a monocle." That broke the tension and soon each of the other boys came up with their own versions of what they would do after the war was over.

Bill Curtis, over in one corner of the ward, had been hit in the throat by a piece of shrapnel, and could barely whisper. He said, "I am going to give vocal lessons". Dan Bailey, with the leg missing, said, "I'm going to give tap dancing lessons". Red Shannahan, with both arms broken and in plaster casts said he was going to be a boxer. "With these stiff arms I'll only have to hit a boy once and he will be out cold". When it came my turn I remembered that we had an old Civil War veteran in our town who, whenever the weather was nice, put on his blue Civil War coat with the brass buttons and his blue campaign hat with the gold cord. He would come out on his front porch and sit in his

rocking chair and rock. We kids from blocks around would gather at his feet on the steps of the porch and listen to the thrilling tales of how he fought and won the war. We believed him then, but now, having gone through a small portion of this war, I knew that no one person could have done all of the things he said he had done and live to tell about it. So, for my contribution, I said, "After the war is over I am going to put on my olive drab uniform, sit in my rocking chair on the front porch and outlie the G.A.R. (Grand Army of the Republic)."

Floyd Gibbons not only had an eye shot out, but had received a machine gun bullet through the right elbow and another through the right shoulder. His was a real story and he was a remarkable man.

A war correspondent for the Chicago Tribune, he had been down on the Mexican border in 1916 and 1917. There he reported the skirmishes that the First Division under Black Jack Pershing were having with Pancho Villa, the guerilla bandit.

In 1917, the Imperial German Government had announced that on and after February 1 its submarines would sink without warning any ship found in the war zone. The Chicago Tribune contacted Gibbons and asked him if he would accept an assignment to London to see how things were going over there. Gibbons arrived in New York and learned that passage had been booked for him on the German Steamship Frederic VIII, on which the discredited German Ambassador, Von Bernstorf, was guaranteed safe passage. Gibbons cancelled his passage. He chose an English ship, the Laconia, which was loaded with war supplies for England, 70 passengers on their way back to England, and a crew of over 200.

Ten days out from New York on February 27 and in the war zone, the Laconia without warning was torpedoed and started sinking. The ship had to be abandoned and was then torpedoed again to make sure it sank. Gibbons, with 23 other passengers and crewmen in one life boat, contined to row their boat in order to keep from freezing throughout the night and were picked up the following morning by an English patrol boat and taken to England.

I was still in college when the papers carried the story that Gibbons had cabled back to the Tribune. I became one of his admirers, never dreaming that I would one day meet him and become a close personal friend. For 20 years after the war had ended, and until his death in 1939, Gibbons and I had a one day reunion at each of the American Legion conventions.

Six weeks after Gibbons' story had been published in the papers and during which an American ship had been sunk, America declared war on Germany. When the First Division landed in France, Gibbons was there to greet them and their General Pershing.

When the First Division went into the lines, Gibbons was with them and he stayed with them wherever they went. Months later, when the Second Division made up of the 9th and 23rd Infantry and the 5th and 6th Marines

went into the lines at Belleau Woods, Gibbons was with them. He was advancing across an open field with a Batallion of the 5th Marines when the Germans who were concealed in a woods, opened fire with machine guns. The Batallion was almost wiped out. Gibbons hit the dirt like everyone else and tried to crawl through the wheat to safety. The wheat moved when crawling through it and the Germans lowered their fire. One bullet hit the ground in front of him, ricocheted up and struck him in the left eye, coming out through the side of his head and through the helmet. Another one hit him in the shoulder and a third bullet hit him in the elbow. It wasn't until after darkness had settled that he was able to crawl back to safety. He was in ward #160 when I got there.

Gibbons had a remarkable memory, and on days when the time seemed to pass slowly, he would devote his time to helping us improve our memories. One of the boys in the ward would copy down in the order in which the rest of us would call out the name of objects up to one hundred. After a moment, Gibbons would name each object in the exact order they were given. At the end of ten days most of us were able to call out 48 to 50 items without a miss. This game helped to wile away many a pleasant hour for all of us.

Gibbons was well known in Paris and almost every day French dignitaries and friends stopped in to see him. He, in turn, would introduce them to us. Gibbon's wife, Issabel, also called every day and each time she came she was loaded with candy, cookies or cigarettes for her boys in ward #160. We called her the "angel of ward #160".

Many American women came to our ward to visit with us. Some wrote letters back home for us while others just asked if there was anything they could do for us. It gave us a good feeling to know that there were people who cared and wanted to help. One of the women stood out in my memory, because she stopped in to ward #160 frequently. Her name was Elsie Janis, one of America's finest song and dance entertainers. She had given up a fine income back in the States to come to France to entertain the wounded troops in the hospitals.

On two occasions I received a real shock. The first time was when a group of four women came into the ward. One of them looked at the chart at the foot of my bed and said, "This man comes from the black eye state". The four of them, without a word to me, went on to the next bed and visited with each of the other boys. I was completely ignored.

Those who were old enough when the war started will recall that when the vote to declare war against Germany was taken in the U.S. Senate, our Senator from Wisconsin, Robert LaFollet voted against going to war. From that time, Wisconsin was known as the black eye state. It didn't make any difference to those women that I was in a hospital bed,

wounded in that war. I was from the black eye state and nothing could change that.

The other time was when two American women came into the ward. One of them carried a large bouquet of roses. As was customary, they stopped at my bed and read the chart. Then one of them said for all to hear, "Poor boy". The one with the roses took one from her bouquet and solemnly placed it on my defenseless chest. I know it must have given her much personal satisfaction to think that she had done a kindly act. After they had made the rounds of all the beds and quietly closed the door as they left, everyone in the ward took up the cry, "Poor boy, poor boy". When Dan Sullivan came around for my next cigarette, I said, "Dan, please remove the funeral decorations".

CHAPTER FIVE

"BASTILLE DAY"

WE CELEBRATE "BIG BOY'S" GOOD NEWS

Many amusing incidents happened and because of all of the good natured teasing and razzing that went on, each of us came to realize that we were greatly dependent upon one another. The joshing and teasing helped to carry us over the rough spots, and made the going more bearable. There were many days when without the moral support of the boys in the ward, I could have become very bitter.

Three weeks had passed since I had been wounded and to the present time I had not received any encouragement from either the doctor who changed my dressing each morning, or from the two specialists who came to my bed each morning to check on me. They couldn't seem to figure out why with my arms and legs paralyzed because of the severed nerves that I should be having such severe pain in my extremities. It didn't seem to make sense to them and they told me so.

At first I was afraid to know the truth because I was afraid of what the truth might be, but finally I had to know. The answers to my many questions were always qualified, but finally they told me that possibly I would not regain the use of my arms and legs.

July 8

When the two specialists returned to my room a second time today I became apprehensive. I could not tell from their faces if they had good or bad news. It was good news. They informed me that my medical records, which had been left in the hospital train, had been recovered. From what the records showed, the French doctor had done an excellent job, and they were now sure that I would regain the use of my arms and legs. Not as good as they formerly were, but I would use them again. They said it would be a long, painful process, but I should keep up the fight. I think the doctors were as happy for me as I was.

July 9

Because the doctors knew now what surgery had been done and that no other operation would be called for, I was booked for surgery to close the wound. I survived the surgery, but spent a couple of uncomfortable days because the closure pulled my head back and held it in that position until the wound had healed and the skin stretched.

Word was making the rounds of the hospital that the French government was preparing for a celebration in Paris on July 14, Bastille Day. Units from all Allied Armies were to march in the parade down the Champs-Elysées. My 28th Batallion was to be one of the units.

July 14

The announcement was made throughout the hospital that every ambulant patient who wanted to would be taken by ambulance to the reviewing stands to see the parade. There was much rushing about in the corridors as patients made their way to stairs and elevators, to get to the ambulances waiting for them in the courtyard below.

Red Shannahan was the only ambulant one in our ward. He was fully dressed and was setting on the edge of his bed waiting for the word to go. When the word came for Red, he looked around the ward at the rest of us. Perhaps he saw a couple of long faces, or just felt sorry for us, or perhaps that Irishman had another idea forming in his mind. Whatever the reason, Red spoke up for all to hear and said, "If some of you damned goldbrickers would get up off of your fat duffs we could all go. I'm afraid to leave you guys here alone for fear you won't be able to wipe your noses if you have to. Besides, I don't want to see the damn parade anyhow." With that statement, Red remained sitting on his bed until we heard the last of the ambulances leaving for the parade downtown.

Something had really been brewing in Red's head. After the sound of departing ambulances had died down and things in the ward had settled almost back to normal, Red turned to us and said, "As long as we can't go down to the party, how about having a party of our own? I've got a little money, and if some of you guys will part with some of your's, I'll go out and get a couple of quarts of champaign. We will celebrate Bastille Day right here in this bastille."

Red knew that a couple of Marines in the ward had been paid a few days before and that a few of the others had some money in their night stands. Each of the boys who had money gave what they could spare to Red. Gibbons then asked Red how much he had. It amounted to enough to buy three quarts of champaign. Gibbons said, "Red, take 100 Francs from my drawer (he still had both eyes bandaged) and get a quart for each one of us. We'll make this a real celebration now that we know Big Boy is going to use his arms and legs again."

Almost a half hour had gone by and still no sight of Red. We had begun to wonder if he had possibly taken a couple of drinks at the cafe and forgotten all about us. Just then, who should come walking into the room but Red with the cafe proprietor carrying a case with 14 quarts of champaign on his shoulder.

Before he could even set the case down on the floor, the head nurse came bounding into the ward. She had spotted the two just as they turned into the ward and she knew something was going on. She was an old timer and had a knack of being in the right place at the right time.

In a stern voice she demanded, "What's the meaning of this?" and ordered the Frenchman to remove the champaign immediately. All of us begged and pleaded with her to be reasonable, but it seemed to no avail. We tried to explain to her that we were just about the only patients left in the hospital and that the rest were all downtown having a good time. Why would she deny us, who couldn't leave our beds, just a little bit of cheerfulness in our dreary old ward. There was no sign of relenting in her face, or in her manner.

Our ward nurse, Louise Schott, God bless her, came to our aid. She called the head nurse aside and, after a few minutes of whispered conversation, the head nurse started for the door. Just as she was about to step out she turned, winked at us and said, "I'm sorry I did not have time to visit your ward today, but I will make it tomorrow." Then in an aside to the nurse, we heard her say, "I'll hold you responsible" and she was gone.

The Frenchman quietly stole out of the room empty handed and Louise got busy handing out quarts of champaign to those boys who had the use of their arms and were able to open their bottles. In a few minutes corks were popping and everyone had an open quart at his bedside to partake of at their pleasure. That is, everyone but me.

I could hear cups being filled, the drinking and smacking of lips, along with "Ah's" and "Oh, boy, this is good". Nurse Schott came to me last, poured a cup full of champaign, then propped me up in bed and held the cup to my mouth. By the time my cup was half empty, some of the boys were on their second. It wasn't long before the voices grew louder, much laughter began and a bit of off chord singing. It didn't become boisterous. Each of us knew that we owed a great deal to Nurse Schott, and we were not about to get her into trouble.

After I had emptied my first cup, Nurse Schott said she had an idea. She left the ward for a few minutes and returned with a long bent glass drinking tube. Placing the quart of champaign between my legs, she inserted the drinking tube in the bottle and propped me up a little higher so that the tube just reached my mouth.

All of us in the ward had been in bed for weeks without exercise and the champaign began to take its toll. The laughter and talking gradually became subdued until all I could hear was heavy breathing. Then I could no longer hear even that. I too had slipped into the best sleep I had had in months.

I was awakened by the rattle of dishes on the breakfast cart being pushed into the ward and the usual commotion that serving entailed. Everyone had been served and I could hear the rattling of dishes as the boys were eating. No one came over to feed me. I finally asked the Marine in the next bed if I didn't rate any breakfast this morning. "Holy cow", he shouted for all to hear. "Sleeping Beauty has finally come back to the land of the living." Then I got a going over from everyone in the ward.

When the agony cart and its crew came into the ward, it started all over again. The nurse with the cart glanced in my direction. Seeing that I was awake, she turned to the doctor and said, "Sleeping Beauty has decided to join us." The doctor came over to my bed, looked down at me and asked, "How do you feel, my friend?" I couldn't make out what was going on. What was all this Sleeping Beauty stuff about, and why the "my friend" from the doctor? He had never called me friend before, why now? I did answer his question, however, and told him, "I feel lousy". That set off a gale of laughter by everyone including the nurse and the doctor.

Still not knowing what it was all about, I asked, "What's so funny?" It was then that I learned that after Nurse Schott had finished taking temperatures, she returned to my bed to see how I was making out with my champaign and found me fast asleep. She removed the drinking tube and the bottle which was empty. I had drunk the whole quart of champaign through the tube.

I had been asleep for three nights and two full days. No wonder they called me Sleeping Beauty and no wonder I felt lousy. From that day on I was the envy of everyone else in the ward. The doctors had been concerned about all the narcotic shots they had to give me to stop my pain. Now they had an alternative. My medication was changed effective that day. Instead of morphine, I was to receive three or four ounces of brandy each evening just before lights out time. When the nurse came to my bed that night with a glass half full of brandy, I had the last laugh on the buys who were given an aspirin tablet and a glass of water.

It was a sad day in ward #160 when some of the boys had convalesced sufficiently to be shipped out to other hospitals. We had become a close family. We had shared some awful days, and some pretty happy days together. Floyd Gibbons was the first to leave. He had progressed to a point where he no longer had to remain in the hospital. He was free to leave, but had to report back to the eye ward once a day for treatment. The eye ward was on our floor and Gibbons stopped in to see us every day. Then one day he came in to say good bye. He was on his way back to the States on a lecture tour. He told us before he left

that he would tell the folks back home about a bunch of boys he knew personally who were putting up a fight to get well.

One after another, as the boys improved and could get around, they were being sent to base hospitals further back; some to be fitted with artificial limbs, others to convalesce and go back to their outfits, while others would be shipped back to the States.

July 24

Newly wounded filled the beds as fast as one of our gang was moved out. Today when I was told that everything had been done for me at this hospital that could be done, I was reconciled to leaving good old ward #160 and Red Cross Hospital #1. I was the last of the old bunch there. The new boys coming in were fine fellows, and some of their wounds were just as painful as ours had been. There was something, however, with the absence of the old group that wasn't the same.

On Board SS. La Lorraine,

Enroute New York to Bordeaux,

December 26th. 1918.

Private Guiren H. Groessl,
Algoma, Wisconsin, U. S. A.,

Dear "Big Boy":

Your bully little letter of October 25th. I received with great joy which increased as I read that you had made such wonderful recovery. You had the toughest wound of anybody in old 160 and if anybody ever put on a stiff upper lip and made a fight for recovery, you surely did. I want to congratulate you on your success.

I have made some forty or fifty lectures and in each of them have told the story of you and all the other boys in our ward and I made them laugh and cry with it. I am writing this on my way back to France where I hope to meet Mrs. Gibbons on the dock at Bordeaux and I know that she will be glad to hear that you have fully recovered. By the way I got a letter the other day from Frank Samaritan. Can you remember "the dying Wop"? He is not dead at all. He fooled all the sawbones.

Well old timer write to me whenever you get a chance, because I will always be glad to hear from you and will always look forward to the time when we can meet again and talk over the days that we lay side by side on our backs in old ward 160.

Sincerely your friend,

FG-LG.

Floyd C. Gibbons

CHAPTER SIX

BASE HOSPITAL #20 AND MORE GOOD NEWS

July 25

After bidding good bye to my nurse, Louise Schott, my doctors, and to my smoking companion, Dan Sullivan, I was taken to an ambulance train. After several hours of riding in a bunk, we reached Base Hospital #20, in the southern part of France. Everything was done for me here, including massage and physical therapy, but my legs and arms would not seem to respond. After more than two weeks of painful therapy, a slight tremor was noticed in my left arm and I was able to move a finger ever so slightly.

August 12

I guess the doctors at Base Hospital #20 gave me up as a bad job. This morning three doctors came into my room and gave me a good examination, and then stepped out of the room for a consultation. I could hear their voices in the corridor, but could not make out what they were saying. After about five minutes one of the doctors re-entered the room, came over to my bed and very rudely said, "You are eating food and occupying a bed that we need for a soldier who will be able to go back to the front. We are shipping you back to the States." I didn't like the way he put it to me, but I liked very much what he said and didn't know whether I should laugh or cry.

August 15

Today I said good-bye to Base Hospital #20. I hadn't been here long enough to make any close attachments and was anxious to get started on my way back to the States. I didn't know my next destination, but later that afternoon our ambulance train arrived at Base Hospital #8 at Savaheny.

The door in the center of our car was pushed open. Someone on the loading platform came to the open door and began looking in the various bunks to see if he knew any of the new arrivals. When he turned in my direction, I got a look at his face and shouted, "Dolly". He gave me one look and said, "Squee", a nickname I had had for many years. Then he said, "I'll be right back", and disappeared from the door. I didn't know what had come over him.

Stretcher bearers came aboard, lifted us from our bunks and carried us off the train. My first glimpse of Base Hospital #8 was not a pleasant one. It was made up of hundreds of one-story barrack-type buildings. They reminded me of army barracks back in the States, but here there was a central hospital facility. I was carried past dozens of these barracks until we reached the second from the last, and was taken inside.

There were about 40 beds on each side of the barracks and most of them were made up and not occupied. An orderly had opened one of the beds near the center of the building and I was deposited there. The orderly asked if he could do anything for me and I replied, "Yes, I would like a drink of water." When he arrived with the water, he held it out to me. I had to tell him he would have to hold it to my mouth as I couldn't use my arms. He sat me up and held the glass while I drank.

Next I was given a bath, and about that time the lights came on. I had my first good look around. The fellow in the bed on my right was black. I could not turn my head to see the fellow on my left. I was tired and hungry, and I was somewhat dejected by the comedown in hospital surroundings. This was nothing like the hospitals I had been in. Then, too, I was unhappy about the way Dolly had run off and left me at the train. After the evening meal, I lay there staring up at the ceiling until it was time for lights out. Then I was given my glass of brandy to help me sleep.

The following morning before the agony cart came around, I had been fed breakfast and propped up in bed. I could see the black boy lying there very quietly. On the day before I had been tired and irritable, and after seeing my surroundings including the black boy in the bed next to me, I had resented the whole setup. I hoped I hadn't showed it.

I learned some things that morning when the agony cart crew went to work on the black boy. I had lived all of my life in a small city where we had no black people. I had hardly ever had any contact with them, or known one to speak to. I no doubt had a feeling that blacks were different.

When the nurse turned back the covers on the black boy's bed I was watching. I saw the doctor and the nurse start at the shoulder and slowly work their way down to his ankle. Every couple of inches they were pulling off a blood stained dressing that had dried and was sticking to the wounds. At each pull, I could hear a slight groan and I knew then that black people hurt and felt pain just as whites do. I realized that the only difference between he and I was the color of our skin.

After the doctor had checked my neck and back, I asked the black boy why all the dressings? He told me he had been caught in the cross fire of a machine gun and had received 27 machine gun bullets from ankle to shoulder.

During the few days I remained at Base #8 at Savaheny, the black boy and I became friendly. Before the war he had been a janitor in a large apartment building in New York City, and he had a wife and child waiting for him back home.

On the third day after my arrival at Base Hospital #8 two old friends came to my bed. Dolly, whose real name was Henry Daul, and Kuts, whose real name was Urban Kashik, both from my home town, Algoma, Wisconsin, and both from old Company F. When Dolly had left me at the train he had gone to find Urban who was also looking on the train for anyone he might know. By the time he found Urban and got back to my train car, I had already been carried out.

We had all enlisted in Company F back home. This Company was made up of boys from Sturgeon Bay and the northern peninsula, and boys from Algoma and vicinity. After we had arrived in France, we had been split up and became replacements for the First Division, each of us going to a different Company. Dolly had been wounded in the leg and that was just about healed. Kashik had received a bullet through the forearm and was still wearing a splint. Both were well on their way to a full recovery, and no doubt would soon be back with their Companies in action.

I must have looked a sight when they found me. They had been searching barracks for two and one half days. When they found me that day I had a three-day beard. The orderlies were not as anxious to keep us shaved as had been the way at other hospitals. Dolly said, "Tomorrow I'll bring my razor along and give you a shave. If we locate any other boys from Company F we'll bring them along too." The way it felt on my face, Dolly must have used that razor to open cans of bully beef. Each stroke of the blade felt worse than when the nurse used to pull off a dried dressing that had adhered to the wound, but after it was all over I did feel much better.

August 18

Urban Kashik came alone today. He said that Dolly had been shipped to his unit that morning. Urban had been told by his doctor that he too would be sent back to his unit in another week or so. That was the last time I saw Dolly or Urban until after the war back home. That same evening I was told that in the morning I would be on my way by ambulance train to Base Hospital #1 at Brest, France. There, in a day or two, I would be on a steamer and headed for the good old U.S.A.

CHAPTER SEVEN

BASE HOSPITAL #1, BREST, AND A TRANSPORT FOR HOME

August 19

I told the black boy that if any of my friends came looking for me to tell them that I was on my way home. Shortly thereafter I was carried to the ambulance train and we were on our way. It was another long tiresome ride and I was uncomfortable when we finally reached our destination. After a short ambulance ride, we arrived at the basement of a very large church or cathedral.

As far as I could see there were rows of beds with seriously wounded soldiers in every bed. There must have been 100, and all being readied to go back home. I was fed my dinner, and between mouthfuls the nurse told me we were in the city of Brest and that in the morning after our breakfast we would be transported to the docks. There an American ship would be waiting to take us home.

August 20

The evacuation from Base Hospital #1 to the ship had begun. All of the ambulant patients and those who could shift for themselves were taken first. When it got down to the last half dozen patients, I got kind of worried. I thought we might be stuck with beds down in the holds of the ship. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Another boy and I were carried aboard the Steamship Mengelia and taken to a cabin on the top deck. Like me, he also had to be waited on. We had a cabin all to ourselves except for the orderly who was with us 24 hours a day to feed us, to tend to our needs, and to carry us out to the life boat if need be.

We were escorted out of the English Channel and the next day out into the Atlantic. From there on we were on our own. The ship followed a zig zag course. We had one submarine scare during the 12 days we were at sea. At sometime during the trip I must have mentioned to our orderly about my saying good-bye to the Statue of Liberty on my way over and on the afternoon that our ship pulled into New York harbor he came over to my bed and said, "Now would you like to say hello to your old girl friend?" With that he picked me up in his arms and carried me out on deck just as we were passing the statue. This time it was broad daylight and we were going in the opposite direction. I don't think I can try to explain the kind of feeling that came over me at the sight of the lady with the upraised arm, and what she stood for. I only knew that it felt pretty nice to know that I was back home again, and would soon have my feet back on American soil.

Having my feet back on American soil almost didn't happen. While being carried down the gangplank from the ship by two stretcher bearers, the one in front stumbled and fell to his knees tilting the stretcher to such an angle that I started sliding off the stretcher. Luckily for me the man in the rear quickly lowered his end to the gangplank and grabbed me. I would have slid off the stretcher and down into the water between the ship and the dock, perhaps never to have survived to record these events.

In my early school days I had often read about people who had emigrated from foreign countries to the United States and were landed at Ellis Island. They had to remain there under quarantine until there was no question of their having any communicable disease and until their papers were in order. I never dreamed that someday I would set foot on that same island, or that I would experience the same kind of a thrill that the early immigrants had. Perhaps my feelings were not exactly like theirs', but I knew that it was one of the biggest thrills of my life when I was finally on the island. Good old American ground. Ground, I recalled the Major telling us just before we went aboard the boat that was to take us over to France, we would never see or feel again until the war was over.

I also recalled the shudder that went through me at the time, and the poem that flashed through my mind, "In Flander's Field; the poppies grow; between the crosses; row on row; that mark the spot".

Now that I was safely back and on American soil I was so happy and so relieved that I would have kissed the ground had I not been on a stretcher being carried to the building that was to be my home for the duration of the quarantine period.

After being transferred from the stretcher to a bed, I asked the man who had carried me to hold me and let me put my feet on the floor just to be able to say I had both feet back on American soil again. That accomplished, I lay on the bed and thought about the immigrants who had come to this island before me, and of their hopes and expectations and the disappointments that some would endure. I couldn't help but think how worried and thrilled they were about the new country they had adopted.

While I wasn't an immigrant coming to a new country by adoption, I was a citizen coming back to the land of my birth after having been treated rather harshly in a foreign land. I and several hundred other Veterans experienced the same treatment the immigrants had experienced years before. We, too, were held in quarantine for two weeks on Ellis Island after being unloaded from the Steamer Mengelia.

The quarantine lasted from September 2 to September 14. During this time I sent two telegrams to my parents. The first one on September 3 simply saying, "Arrived safely, here for a few days only, condition good, writing." The second one sent a day later said, "Wire me $20.00 at once". Needless to say, I got the money.

On Ellis Island I took my first steps. My legs had lost most of the numb feeling and I could move about the room without assistance. For the first time in months the orderly helped me to get dressed in my uniform, instead of a hospital gown or a pair of pajamas. I still had to be fed and bathed and tended to, but I was beginning to get around by myself. Just being back in the good old U.S.A. had a healing effect all its own. I knew I was feeling much better and getting stronger than I had been in months.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONVALESCENT HOSPITAL #11

I THREATEN TO GO A.W.O.L.

On the afternoon of September 14, our quarantine ended and we were ferried from Ellis Island over to the Jersey shore where we went by train to Cape May, New Jersey, to Hospital #11. This hospital was formerly a resort hotel on the ocean shore. It had been taken over by the government and equipped as a convalescent hospital. The wounded from overseas were to be admitted here for treatment and for convalescing.

Physical therapy was now playing a large part in my recovery. Heat lamps and massage were helping to make my legs stronger, but so far did not seem to help much in my arms. Because of a decided droop in my right shoulder due to a severed trapezius muscle, the right arm and shoulder had to be supported by a sling. This was only removed during therapy and when in bed. The left arm hung limp at my side. I was permitted to be up most of the day and allowed to walk about in the hospital and to the therapy rooms.

Finally the day came when I was permitted to leave the hospital building and walk about the grounds. Later, I was permitted to cross the street in front of the hospital to walk on the Boardwalk, which paralleled the ocean and onto the beach. Here I sat for hours on the sand watching the ocean, and often thinking of what was still going on on the other side. Every day when the weather permitted, I was on the beach breathing the fresh sea air and thanking God for having brought me back.

Hospital #11 was located about a mile north of the city of Cape May, and had its own exclusive beach. Occasionally, I would see people walking along the beach from Cape May, but when they neared the beach in front of the hospital, they all turned around and headed back the way they had come. I thought their actions were odd and it seemed very strange that no one from the city of Cape May had ever come out to the hospital to visit the wounded. While in the hospitals in France we had many French and American visitors who were all anxious to do things for us if they could. Back here in America no one came to visit us. In fact, we seemed to be scorned and I could not understand why. I could not believe that the American people would ignore us completely, but such seemed to be the case.

One day while sitting in my favorite spot on the beach, I noticed a young woman walking along the water's edge. What caught my attention was that she had not stopped

and turned around when she reached the private beach where I was sitting. I saw her glance in my direction as she walked by. She continued on for a short distance, then turned and headed directly toward where I was sitting, but she stopped about 20 feet from me.

My arm in its white sling must have attracted her attention for she asked, "What happened to your arm, soldier?" I replied, "I can't use it because of an injury". Advancing a few steps closer, she asked, "Were you in a car accident?" I began to wonder what sort of people lived around here. Didn't they read the papers or listen to the radio? Didn't they know that there was a war on, and in wars people get hurt? I was on the verge of being rude, but controlled my answer. I told her that I had just returned from France, where I had been wounded and that I was no longer of use over there so they sent me back to get well again if possible. She looked at me in amazement for a spell and then said, "Do you mean to tell me that you are in this hospital as a wounded soldier?" By now she had come up to me and was kneeling in the sand before me.

Now she was curious and wanted to know more. I told her that "a couple of weeks ago a ship loaded with wounded men had returned from France, and we were all now at this hospital. Also that none of us were able to understand why we were completely ignored by our own people. It was all so different from the way the French and Americans in France had treated us. Until today, not one civilian here had so much as walked on the beach in front of the hospital. Why were we being ignored as if we had the plague?

I could see that what I said disturbed her. She appeared to want to be friendly, but something was holding her back. Then it seemed to pop right out of her mouth before she could stop it. "Do you have a venereal disease?" I was hurt and so angry that I said, "Hell no, where I came from there were no women to contract venereal disease from. There were only dead and wounded men who had been fighting for their lives."

I guess my fit of anger cleared the air. She was sitting beside me, and in a few minutes the whole matter was cleared up to our complete satisfaction.

She informed me that the soldiers who had been sent to Cape May to get the hotel ready as a hospital, and who would be the orderlies, kitchen help, etc. had reached the Cape several weeks before we arrived. During that period, on their evenings off, they spent much of their time in the city. The townspeople had entertained them royally. However, they must have known that once the disabled and wounded arrived it would be they who got the attention. The word was passed around that the soldiers who would be coming to the hospital were soldiers from various camps around the country who had contracted a venereal disease of one kind or another. This was to be strictly a venereal disease hospital.

I was able to assure the young lady that if there were any venereal cases, it would have to be among the orderlies and other help only. Every one of the returning wounded had to be free of any disease before they could be shipped back home. I also assured her that it was almost an impossibility for any of the wounded men to have contracted a venereal disease because at no time were the fighting men in an area where there were women or camp followers. The only women we saw were the very old who were fleeing from their wrecked homes, the nurses in the hospitals, or the women who came to visit us.

We must have spent the better part of two hours talking. She apologized for the way she and the townspeople had ignored our being there. When I said I had to return to the hospital for dinner, she helped me to my feet and walked with me to the hospital door. She then asked, "Are you able to leave the hospital grounds and, if so, I should very much like to take you for a drive tomorrow to try to make up for our bad manners."

As far as I knew, no one had tried leaving the hospital grounds up to this time. The best answer I could give her was, "I will find out when I get inside. If I can go, I'll be happy to have you show me around." At the hospital door, she said, "I will be here tomorrow after lunch. If you have permission, I will be parked in the driveway just outside this door waiting for you."

With that, I said, "If I can leave the hospital to go with you, I'll be out here and if not I'll still be here to tell you so". I entered the hospital thinking this was the last I would see of her. On the chance that she meant what she said, I did go to the commanding officer, who in turn referred me to the doctor in charge of my therapy. He was elated at the news and said, "It will do you as much good as your afternoon treatment to get out of here for a while and be with people on the outside". He also mentioned that he and some other staff doctors and nurses were concerned about the number of boys who were depressed because of loneliness and long confinement with only hospital companionship. None of them could understand why we were not visited by the townspeople. Then I told him what the lady had told me, and he was amazed.

September 20

"This may be the beginning of a new day for me", I said to the nurse who was feeding me my noon lunch. I explained to her about my meeting with the lady on the previous afternoon, and her promise to come to the hospital to take me for a drive. When I finished my lunch, the nurse walked me to the door to see if what I had told her was about to come true. There in the driveway, for all to see, stood a Rolls Royce and behind the wheel was the young lady from the day before.

We had a wonderful afternoon together, seeing the city of Cape May. Later we took a long drive along the ocean to Atlantic City. When we arrived, Marion, whose name I learned along the way, parked the car on an isolated strip of beach. We sat there getting to know each other. Marion asked if I smoked, and I said, "Yes, I like to smoke, but am not able to do so by myself as yet". She reached into her jacket pocket and produced a pack of cigarettes, lit one and placed it between my lips. As she did this, I thought how thoughtful of her to get the cigarettes for me. Then, she broke the spell, and took another cigarette from the pack and lit it for herself. Remember, I was a young boy from a small town and had a lot to learn about the changing habits of the people back here.

This was the first time I had ever seen a woman, other than an old granny, smoke. I wondered what sort of a woman I was with. As we sat there and smoked and talked, I realized that I was still just a small town boy and was learning how the other half of the world lived. For every question Marion asked me about my family, my home town, my future plans after I was able to leave the hospital, she told me about her family, herself and her past life.

Marion had married at age 22, and after several years of incompatibility, was divorced from her husband who was then Ambassador to Italy. She was now living with her parents on the outskirts of Philadelphia. They were spending their summer at the summer home in Cape May. By the time we returned to the hospital late that afternoon, I was happy to be able to call her my friend.

Before dropping me off at the hospital, Marion asked if there were other boys who were able to leave the hospital, or would like to have visitors. I assured her that there were. She said she would have several cars there the following afternoon. I reported this information to my doctor and he said he would have plenty of boys to fill the cars.

The outing the next afternoon was just what the doctor ordered for the boys. Six large cars were waiting for us when we came out of the hospital door. There were eighteen boys and three were assigned to each car. I, of course, went with Marion. After an hour of driving around the countryside and through Cape May, we ended up at the home of one of the ladies. There we had a picnic lunch in a beautifully wooded yard. We returned to the hospital at 5:00.

Each day thereafter, when the weather permitted, the ladies picked us up for outings and picnics, or just for long drives in the country. It proved to be good medicine for all of the boys. I knew that the ladies were happy to be doing these things for us. Several times when the weather was bad, Marion came out alone to pick me up and to spend time at her home where I met her parents and enjoyed a cocktail or two.

It was always a pleasure to get away from the hospital with Marion, because I had a rough schedule there. The therapy, heat lamps and massage took up most of the mornings and left me tired. In the afternoon there was an hour of intense massage to my legs and arms. My left arm seemed to be responding quite well and I was happy about that. The right arm showed no response, in fact, we were unable to find any signs of circulation in the arm.

Each day the doctor in charge would come over to the massage table and ask the same question, "Any response?" Each day the therapist would give him the same answer, "Not yet, but I am sure if we stay with it we will bring it around". I wasn't too sure, however, and after these past weeks of treatment, I was about ready to call it all off. I was of the opinion that further treatment wasn't going to restore the use of the arm.

Left with the feeling that my right arm would be useless, I made up my mind that I would do everything possible to make the left arm strong enough to do the work of both arms if at all possible. I asked the physical therapist if I would be able to strengthen the left arm by squeezing a rubber ball and she agreed that it might help. At least it would help to limber up the fingers which had become somewhat stiff. She thought the idea so good that the very next day she presented me with a rubber ball that I could hold in the palm of my hand. For weeks I had this ball in my hand, squeezing it almost every waking moment. It was a slow, tedious process, but I would feel the arm getting stronger and was gradually closing my fingers more than before.

Now I began thinking about the right arm. Perhaps I could help the fingers on that hand to close. If so, it would at least be of use for holding things. Whenever I thought of it, I would grasp the fingers of the right hand with the fingers of the left hand and try bending the fingers into a fist. They were so stiff that at first I could not see them move. After days and weeks of trying, it did loosen them up until the day came when I was able to grasp the rubber ball with the fingers of the right hand and squeeze it enough to hold it. When the nurse saw what I had accomplished on my own, she gave me another ball, one for each hand.

I had been at the hospital in Cape May for over a month. I felt that I had received the maximum recovery of my arms that was possible. I began asking the doctor, "When can I go home for a visit with my family?" Letters arrived from home, and one of the nurses wrote letters home for me, but it wasn't at all like being there. Even though my letters kept telling the family that I would soon be writing by myself, I felt the family was getting to the point where they would not believe me. From little things they wrote, I got the feeling that they

believed I had lost one of my arms, and possibly both. I wanted to see my folks to assure them that I wasn't as badly off as they might be thinking, but the doctor kept putting me off from day to day.

Finally the day arrived when the doctor told the therapist to discontinue the treatment. He was now convinced that nothing more could be done. The therapist wasn't convinced, however, and asked the doctor to let her continue until the end of the week, saying, "I believe I saw a faint glow of pink in the arm today". He gave her permission to work on it for a few days longer. The next day, about half way through the treatment the nurse, in her frustration, slapped my arm harder than I had ever seen her do it before. Then she let out with a shout, "I've got it, I've got it. Look Groessl, look at the color. We have circulation going again." When the doctor arrived he was as elated as we were. I was quite excited, for I had given up hope of ever using the arm again. Now I had a chance for at least partial recovery of the arm.

Another week of treatment satisfied me that now it was safe to make a trip home. The doctor, however, had other ideas. Finally, in desperation, I told him, "Doctor, if you don't let me go home now for a week or two, on one morning you are going to find my bed empty. I will be A.W.O.L."

The doctor asked me to go with him to his office. He was understanding about my wanting to see my family, but he was more concerned about getting the best possible results with my arms. He promised that if I would continue treatment for another two weeks, he would find a way to get me a pass to go home.

A week passed and the arm was responding beautifully. Before I could approach the doctor again about going home, he said to me, "I think I have something that might interest you. We have just received word from the Treasury Department that the 4th Liberty Loan Drive will be starting in two days and they would like us to send two wounded soldiers who are able to travel to Cleveland, Ohio. They are to lend atmosphere on the platforms while public speakers do the job of selling the bonds. I would like to recommend you. It will get you out of the hospital for a couple of weeks, which will do you good. After you return, we will talk about your going home for a visit with your family and friends."

I was interested, and I asked the doctor where I would be going. He said, "You will be in practically every state and large city east of the Mississippi River." The wheels in my head started clicking when he said east of the Mississippi River. Chicago was east of the Mississippi and Chicago was only two hundred miles from home. One way or another I was going to see my family.

That afternoon when Marion came to pick me up, I told her the good news. I would be leaving the hospital the next day and would be gone for about a month. I figured two weeks on the Liberty Loan Drive and another two weeks at home. While Marion was happy about my being able to get away from the hospital for a while, she said, "A month from now I won't be here. We leave for Philadelphia about the middle of October. On your way back to the hospital you will have to come through Philadelphia. Call me from the station and I will come down to pick you up. You can stay with us for a few days." I promised. Then we drove to her home for a farewell drink.

CHAPTER NINE

4TH LIBERTY LOAN TOUR

MEET MY BROTHER AND PARENTS OF 1ST DIVISION BOYS

September 25

Bud Everhard and I were driven to the railway station in Cape May this morning. Tickets to Cleveland were purchased from the voucher books given to us. These would be used to provide us with whatever money we might need for meals and hotel rooms if not provided by the local Loan Committee. After our arrival in Cleveland, we reported to Liberty Loan Headquarters. There we met wounded soldiers from other hospitals, as well as several from Canada and Britain who had been brought here to help put the Loan over.

Each of us carried a visible war injury. One had a leg off above the knee, two had an arm off above the elbow, two wore eye patches over a lost eye, and several like myself had arms in slings or had to get around with the aid of crutches. There could be no mistaking the fact that each of these boys had been where the action was.

September 27

After one day of orientation and the making of schedules for each of us, we were on our respective ways. My first stop was Lexington, Kentucky. The train arrived there about 4:00 in the afternoon. I checked in at Liberty Loan Headquarters about 15 minutes later and was given a warm welcome. I was advised that a meeting had been scheduled for 7:00 PM in an auditorium which held several thousand people. I would be picked up at my hotel at 6:45 and escorted to the stage by the chairman. There I would be introduced to the audience by the local judge who would entertain the crowd until my arrival. The meeting would then be turned over to me.

"Hold it right there," I said, "Just what do you mean the meeting will be turned over to me. I am not the speaker, I'm just here to lend atmosphere for the drive." It took a great deal of persuasion before I agreed to go along with their program. They were finally able to convince me that they had no speaker who was prepared to make a speech or even give a short talk on the war. I countered with, "Neither am I prepared, and what's more I have never given a speech in my life."

I finally gave in on condition that I be taken to my hotel where I could be alone for the next hour or two to try to work up a short talk. I know I had a lot of things I could tell the people about, but I wasn't sure I could say them in front of an audience.

At my hotel, the chairman introduced me to the clerk at the desk and told him to see that I was given anything I asked for. He then left saying, "I will be back for you at 6:45". I was tired from the long train ride, and edgy just thinking about making a speech. I asked the clerk if I might have dinner served in my room at 6:00 as I wanted to lie down and rest.

A bell boy took my bag to the elevator and in a few minutes we were in the room. I laid on the bed for 15 minutes trying to collect my thoughts, but the longer I laid there the more nervous I became. The thought entered my mind that a good stiff drink would help to settle my nerves, and give me the courage I now lacked. I called for the bell boy and when he arrived, I told him I needed a pint of whiskey. He looked me in the eye and said, "Soldier, don't you know that no one is allowed to sell liquor to a man in uniform?" I replied, "So what, when you get back here with that whiskey I won't be in uniform. Besides, didn't you hear what the chairman said to the desk clerk? I was to be given anything that I wanted, and right now I want whiskey." I was finally able to enlist his aid with the help of an extra buck.

When the whiskey arrived, I took a stiff drink and after a few minutes the tension seemed to ease. Dozens of incidents and experiences began flooding my mind and I was sure I could remember them for the listeners. Dinner arrived and I ate most of it. I was afraid that if I ate more the glow I was feeling might be dulled by the food.

Promptly at 6:45 my phone rang. It was the chairman and he was waiting in the lobby. I became a bit panicky about then and I could feel the courage draining out of me. Another stiff drink, a stick of gum to mask my breath and I was on my way to the elevator and down to the lobby.

The elevator ride to the lobby was nearly my undoing. When I stepped out of the elevator on the ground floor, I was dizzy. I weaved slightly as I approached the desk where the chairman was waiting. He came forward to meet me and asked, "Are you all right?" I replied, "Just tired and a bit weak, but I'll be OK." He took me by the arm and guided me out the door and into a waiting car, which took us to the auditorium.

The auditorium was filled to capacity. The local judge who was acting as Master of Ceremonies was on the stage speaking to the crowd as we walked up the center aisle. When we reached the stage, the judge paused to ask me my name and the outfit I had served with in France. He then introduced me to the assembly by saying, "This young soldier left a hospital bed to be here tonight. He has already given a full measure of devotion to his country, but he is willing to give more. I can't tell you people why you should buy Bonds, but I am sure he can."

His words to the crowd did something to me. My brain seemed to clear, and I began to relax. I suddenly realized that there wasn't a person out there in the auditorium that knew me. Not one of them could contradict anything I would say since none of them had been where I had recently come from.

The words seemed to flow out of my mouth. They seemed to be stumbling over one another in their haste to be said. Gradually I seemed to run out of steam. I was tired, and exhausted. I thanked the people for listening and sat down. I do remember receiving a hand from the crowd.

After that the Master of Ceremonies, the chairman and their workers took over the meeting, signing up pledges for Bonds, and by 10:00 I was back at my hotel. Not much was said on the way back except that I had given a fine talk. They would be looking for me in the morning when I was to be given a report on the amount of Bonds sold.

After I got back to my room, I did a lot of thinking. The chairman didn't talk very much on the way back, and he didn't seem too enthused by my talk. It dawned on me that possibly I had made a fool of myself. I tried to remember some of the things I said, but could only recall small portions. I decided that the thing for me to do was to get out of the city of Lexington as quietly as possible.

Packing my few belongings, I walked out of the hotel. A cab took me to the railway station where I learned I had a 40-minute wait for the train back to Cleveland. I went into the coffee shop for a cup of coffee. The girl that took my order asked as she placed my coffee before me, "Aren't you the soldier who spoke at the auditorium this evening?" I was now sure that I had made an ass of myself and replied, "No ma'am, but she said, "You aren't kidding me soldier, it was the same voice and the same arm in a sling. I just want to tell you that you had many people, including myself, in tears and that you gave us a picture of war that we won't soon forget."

Many questions later I decided that I had better go back to my hotel and get a good night's sleep. I was going to need it for another hard day coming up.

September 28

I entered Liberty Loan headquarters this morning rather hesitatingly as I had a confession to make. I was not prepared for what happened when I walked in. The receptionist greeted me with a very pleasant, "Good morning, you are to go right in." I entered the chairman's office and found not only the chairman, but two newspaper reporters waiting for me. I was introduced and one of the reporters commented, "You did a beautiful job last night". The chairman said, "And I have the facts to prove it. Your talk last night sold over a quarter of a million dollars worth of Bonds."

I couldn't believe my ears. I decided that I still had a confession to make, and told them bluntly that the night before I was slightly inebriated and when I talked it was the liquor doing most of the talking. I could recall only the first part of the talk. I only hoped I had not talked foolishly. They looked at me in disbelief, and one of the reporters said, "If you were plastered last night boy, you had better get plastered again this afternoon, for we have you booked for the same talk at one of the large manufacturing plants at 2:00.

I objected, saying, "I can't give the same talk because I don't know what I talked about". To which he replied, "Don't let that worry you, we have your entire talk in shorthand. It is being transcribed right now and will be ready in a few minutes." When I asked why it was being transcribed I was told that time was a factor at some of the industrial plants. While they liked the talk as it was, it had to be shortened to 45 minutes to meet with the plants' available time. They wanted to go over the talk with me to see what I could leave out to meet the time limit. Once again, I couldn't believe what I was hearing. "Do you mean to tell me that I talked for 45 minutes?" The reply I got was, "You not only talked for 45 minutes, you talked for an hour and fifteen minutes. We are only sorry that we will have to leave out some of it at the plants. At all other public gatherings we want you to give the whole story as we have it recorded."

When the transcribed talk was brought in, I looked at the number of pages and again said, "I can't believe it". They all had a laugh and the chairman asked, "Do you think you will be able to give 45 minutes of this without getting plastered?" I had to laugh with them.

I spent the next two hours reading and rereading the transcript, trying to decide which parts to leave out in order to bring the talk within the alloted time. While reading what I had said the previous night, a feeling of well being came over me. I hadn't said anything that wasn't true, and I had given a straight-forward account of events and experiences which the public apparently were anxious to hear.

After the 2:00 talk to over 1000 people at the plant, I knew that I would never again have to be afraid to get up in front of a crowd to speak. Pledges that afternoon were over $100,000.00.

September 29

It was a rat race from here on, but I was beginning to like it. On to Louisville, Kentucky, the next afternoon for an outdoor rally in the ball park that evening. An outdoor rally meant a large crowd, and the bigger the crowd the more anxious I was to please. I was enjoying myself for the first time in many months, and we were selling Bonds. We had pledges of over a million dollars that

night, and I was a part of it. At the hotel after the rally, the Louisville chairman asked if I was tired, and I had to admit that I was.

September 30

This morning I learned that I was free for the day but had to be in Mount Vernon by noon the following day. I told the chairman that I had a brother at Camp Taylor, outside of Louisville whom I hadn't seen in over two years. He assigned one of his staff to drive me out to the camp and to wait for me.

We arrived at the camp gate at about 9:00. The guard at the gate informed me that no one was permitted to enter or leave the camp. The camp was under heavy quarantine with the Asian Flu. I asked to speak to the Officer of the Guard, that it was very important. The guard asked for my identification or credentials. I showed him my authorization from the Treasury Department, indicating that I was a wounded soldier on assignment to the Liberty Loan Drive, and that I should be shown every courtesy.

With that information, the guard called out, "Officer of the Guard, Post #1." The guard at post #2 took up the cry and it continued until it reached the guard house. In a matter of minutes an officer appeared. Words were exchanged between he and the guard who pointed at me.

While dressing this morning, my arm felt so good without the sling that I decided to leave it off. I didn't expect to be very active today. When the officer of the guard approached me and saw that I was in uniform, he expected me to snap to attention and to salute. I stood at attention, but did not salute because I was unable to raise my right arm to do so. He halted four feet from me and said rather harshly, "Soldier, don't you know you are supposed to salute an officer?" My reply was, "I do sir, but I am unable to raise my right arm". He apologized and then courteously tried to tell me that it was impossible to admit anyone to the camp. Not even parents who had come to the camp to see their dying sons were being admitted. I politely advised him that not even the flu was going to stop me. I was going to see my brother if I had to go to the top brass, even to the Adjutant General, by whose orders I was in Louisville. After that he said he would see what he could do. He made a call from the phone in the guard's hut. After about five minutes, he returned to where I was standing and asked me to accompany him. He advised me that he had called the Regimental Commander who in turn called the Brigade Commander. He in turn called the Division Commander, who requested that I be brought to his headquarters.

When we arrived at Division Headquarters, the officer who had brought me strode to where the general was seated at his desk, stopped, and when the general looked up, saluted. I remained behind, just inside the door. After

an exchange of words, the general got to his feet and walked to where I was standing with his hand outstretched. I had to offer my left hand.

After we were seated at his desk, I learned that all of the men in the camp had been civilians three months before, and the officers were National Guard officers who had been activated. The Division had been readied for overseas duty and would be going in another couple of weeks but for the flu epidemic. Now the hundreds of men who had died would have to be replaced and trained.

The general was interested in learning what conditions were like in the war zone, and asked his staff members to gather around. When they learned that I was from the First Division, they fired every question in the book at me. They asked how I was wounded, was the going as rough as described by reports received back from the front and did we suffer many casualties?

After about an hour of questions, the general asked what he could do for me. In no uncertain words, I advised him that I had come to Camp Taylor to see my brother who was in the Medical Corps. The general said, "I shouldn't do this, but for you I will". He ordered one of his aides to put through a phone call to the Medical Section to locate my brother. He was to be escorted out of the tightly restricted area, provided he showed no signs of having the flu. The general then asked for a volunteer to escort me to the meeting place.

When my escort and I arrived at the place designated, I saw my brother Emil standing there with a guard. He seemed a bit perturbed and had not been told the reason for coming to this place. When I got to within about 40 feet of him, he recognized me. I will never forget his greeting. "How the hell did you manage to get into this place?" Until that moment he didn't even know that I was back in the States.

After inquiring about my condition, the latest news from home and family, and other small talk between brothers, he told me about conditions in the camp. He said that according to the best information, the boys were dying faster than they could be prepared for shipment to their homes for burial, and that they were stacked up in a barracks like cordwood. This I am sure was a slight exaggeration by someone. My brother, Emil, did not come in contact with the sick or the dying. He and his co-workers had been working round the clock, preparing drugs and medication for the sick and dying.

Needless to say, we were very happy to see each other and we had a satisfying visit. I left him with the admonition that he take care of himself, since he was in much greater danger than I had been. He and his guard returned to their quarters while my escort took me back to the main gate where my driver was patiently waiting to take me back to the hotel.

It had been a satisfying morning. I was happy to have seen my brother and to know he was well. When I arrived, I arranged with the driver to see him at headquarters after lunch. As I watched him drive off and was about to enter the hotel, another car pulled up at the curb. A voice called to me and a man got out of the car and approached me saying, "I heard you speak at the ball park last evening and I would like to shake your hand and tell you that I am very proud to know that we have people like you". He shook my hand and before I could say or do anything he said, "Have a good time with this". He returned to his car and his driver whisked him away before I could even say thank you. He had given me a twenty dollar bill.

After lunch, I returned to Loan Headquarters. Another speaking engagement had been planned at another industrial plant for 4:00. The local committee wanted to get as much mileage out of me as possible while I was there. The plant had about 2000 employees and they were eager listeners. I do not know how many bonds were sold or pledges made at the plant as I was on my way early the next morning for Mount Vernon.

October 1

Stepping down off the train at Mount Vernon at 11:30, it looked like the whole town was at the station. A band struck up a march as a charming young lady stepped up to me and said, "I am the local chairman, will you please come with me". On the way to her car she said that I was to have lunch at her home, and that at 1:30 PM I would be taken to the city park where I would meet the city officials. The band started down the street, followed y school children and quite a few of the townspeople. Flags were flying from every vantage point and the sidewalks were lined with people waving at us as we passed.

The lunch turned out to be my first home-cooked meal in over two years. Kentucky fried chicken and everything that goes with it. My hostess showed me the true meaning of Southern hospitality.

The park was only a short distance from there and after relaxing for a half hour, we started for the park. The weather was perfect and we walked the two blocks. As we neared the park, the band began playing another march. This continued until we were on the platform, which was decorated with red, white and blue bunting. Here the city officials were waiting for us. After introductions all around, my hostess turned to the assembled people and after brief comments, introduced me as the speaker.

I had been informed by my hostess that many of the townspeople had sons in France and that some had lost sons over there. As I looked over the crowded park, the people seemed unusually quiet. I could almost feel the heartache in the faces of some of these people. That

afternoon after I had finished my talk, I told my first white lie of the tour and felt good for having told it. Before the afternoon was over, I had told several more white lies.

In all of my talks, I mentioned that I had served with the First Division, Regular Army. This Division was made up of enlisted men, many of them from Alabama, Tennessee, and Kentucky. My Company had been about 30% from these states. Thus, it wasn't strange that after my talk, relatives of some of these men came up to me with tears in their eyes, asking if I knew their son Billy, John or Herman.

These people were desperate for news of their loved ones from someone who had been over there with them. I just couldn't say, "No, I did not know them". That first white lie came hard, when I said to some, "Yes, I knew Billy or Joe, and that they were well when I last saw them," and then saw the look of happiness that came into their faces. It was like a benediction to me. I felt deep inside me that I had done the right thing. Any hope that I was able to give them now would help to relieve the anguish and the uncertainty that each of them were now experiencing.

What these people did not know, and what I did not tell them, was that it had been several months since I had been with the Division and that in those months many of these boys could have either been wounded or killed in action. I felt that if any of these people's sons had been wounded or killed in action, they would hear about it soon enough.

The First Division had suffered many casualties even before I left, and I knew it had suffered many more at Cantigny, Swass, St. Mihiel and other engagements. It wasn't, however, until the war was over and the Division was on occupation in Germany that I learned how badly my Company and the Division had been hurt.

In January of 1919, two months after the Armistice had been signed on November 11, I wrote a letter to the Company commander asking about some of the boys I had known in the Company. The reply I received was written and signed by the Company clerk. He informed me that my letter had been turned over to him because the Company commander I knew had been killed in action. The new commander did not know any of the old Company members. The clerk stated that his records showed that of the original Company of 150 men, 66 were alive, but that my letter now made it 67. I had been carried on the rolls as dead of wounds.

Official records of the Division show that 3,742 were killed in action, 16,858 were wounded in action, of which 1,222 died of their wounds. Another 425 died of diseases and 124 were listed as missing in action and presumed dead.

I spent some time with the mothers and fathers who had boys over in France, but I couldn't tell white lies to all of them, only to some of the parents of boys who were in the First Division since these would be the only ones I could have known. The Chairman waited patiently for me to end my visiting and then drove me over to Broadhead, Kentucky, where I talked again that evening.

From this point on it became a nightmare of trains to catch and engagements to keep; Corbin, Middleton, Knoxville, Chattanooga, Nashville, Bowling Green, Frankfort, Covington, Cincinnati, and other stops and talks, and finally back to Cleveland on October 19.

CHAPTER TEN

I GO A.W.O.L.

A GRAND HOMECOMING

October 20

I checked in at Cleveland Headquarters this morning and was told that the reports from all of the cities I had been in were very good. I was free for the day to rest up for the climax, which would be the following day, October 21, in the afternoon and evening. Just as I was about to leave for my hotel, one of the lady workers came into the office with a report of some kind. The Chairman, after accepting her report, asked her if she would like the day off. If so, he said, "I will appoint you to be this young man's escort", pointing to me. She was to show me the sights of Cleveland and we would be free until the following afternoon at 2:00 when I was due for a plant rally.

Not being sure that the young lady was even mildly interested in spending a lot of time with me, I excused myself by saying that I wanted to go to my hotel to rest for an hour or two and, if the young lady would really care to show me the sights, I would be ready if she would stop by and pick me up at 2:00.

Alma called for me at 2:00 on the dot, and we set out to see the city. She was just about my age, good looking and as I later learned, a college student on loan to the Liberty Loan Drive.

We had a grand time for several hours wandering around the town seeing places of interest. We later found ourselves near the shore of Lake Erie. It reminded me so much of my home town on Lake Michigan that we sat on the beach for a long while. I could look over the water and picture myself at home on the beach.

We walked to a bench and sat there for an hour just getting to know each other better. We later had dinner at a downtown restaurant and went to a movie, the first one I had seen in over a year or more. At about 11:00 Alma dropped me at my hotel, saying as she left, "I will be here at 10:00 tomorrow morning. You are in my care for the rest of your stay in Cleveland." I went to bed tired but happy. I don't know when I had enjoyed the companionship of another person so much.

October 21

Alma was waiting for me in the lobby when I got there at 10:00. She was even more charming and beautiful than I remembered her from the previous day. We saw more of the town, had lunch at a quiet restaurant and then took a bus to the industrial plant near the lake for my 2:00 talk.

There was a large crowd of workers to talk to and by now I was right at home. It seemed the larger the crowd the better I liked it. This was my last afternoon rally. I only had one talk to give at the evening rally and I would be finished with the drive.

After the talk we went back to the little park by the lake where we had spent several hours the afternoon before. We talked about ourselves and our future plans. Another two hours were spent over dinner sharing the remaining few hours before the evening rally.

Leaving the restaurant, we headed for the downtown corner of one of the leading banks where the rally was to be held. We almost missed the rally. When we got there the streets and sidewalks were so crowded with people that we had to literally fight our way through the crowd. I don't think we would have made it in time for my talk if we hadn't asked the help of a policeman. I can't say if it was because I had a girlfriend on the stand with me or if it was the size of the crowd, but I was more at ease than I had been at any time. I wanted this crowd to buy bonds, and I think I tried harder than I ever had before.

October 22

This morning I learned at headquarters that we had sold almost a million dollars worth of bonds. I was now free to return to the hospital at Cape May. My vouchers for railroad fare, meals and incidentals were ready for me and my train was scheduled to leave at 4:30 P.M. It was 11:00 A.M. and I hoped that Alma would show up before I left so that I could tell her how much I had enjoyed her company, but she was nowhere to be seen. Bidding the Chairman good-bye, I asked him to give Alma my thanks for having shown me a good time.

After lunch, I headed for the Union Station to find out about a train for Chicago. The Chicago train was due to leave at 4:38, just eight minutes after the train I was supposed to take for the East. After checking my bag in a locker, I made my way back up town.

On my way back to the station, I noticed a large limousine which had pulled up to the curb. The lady inside appeared to be motioning to someone on the sidewalk. A moment later a chauffeur, dressed in a dark uniform and wearing black leather putties, approached me and said, "I am sorry to bother you sir, but my employer, Mrs. _____, would like to talk to you, will you please step over to the car?"

The chauffeur's approach had been unexpected and I missed the name of his employer. I went to the car to see what the lady wanted to talk to me about. The window was being turned down as I approached the car and the lady said, "I was at the rally yesterday afternoon. May I drive you to wherever you are going?" I informed her that I was on my way to the Union Station to get a train for home. "Get in", she said, and I got in.

In a few minutes we were at the station. I was about to step out when the lady said, "You would make an old lady very happy if you would have dinner with me at my home this evening. You could take a later train home." I thanked her for the kind invitation and said, "I appreciate your kindness in asking me, and under other circumstances I would be very happy to accept, but I have not seen my parents or my family in over two years and right now that comes before anything else".

I bought a ticket for Chicago and retrieved my bag from the locker. It was now about 4:10. In another 28 minutes I would be on a train headed for home and no one would know. The thought had hardly entered my mind when I saw Alma running toward me. She had been at Liberty Loan Headquarters just minutes after I had left there. When she learned that I had checked out she came to the station.

I didn't want her to know I was not taking the train East. I was afraid she might inadvertently mention to her boss that I was on my way to Chicago instead of going back to the hospital.

The train announcer said, "Passengers for various cities between Cleveland and Philadelphia, please go to gate number three". I tried to say good-bye to Alma, but she said, "I am going to go to the gate with you to say good-bye". Now I was concerned and had hoped to say good-bye here and after she left I could walk away from the gate and wait for my Chicago train.

As we neared gate number three, I noticed the gate keeper checking tickets as they were held out by the passengers. A sailor and his girlfriend embraced just as they reached the gate. The crowds moved around them and the gate man did not ask to see the sailor's ticket when he finally went through. I knew now what I, too, was going to do.

At the gate I put my good left arm around Alma and she put her arms around my neck. We kissed and then I rushed through the gate. Looking back, I saw Alma making her way toward the station entrance. That was the last time I saw that delightful girl.

I wandered around in the train shed for a few minutes and headed for the Chicago train on track number five. Soon the train was underway. I had a seat to myself and tried to relax. The clickety-click of the wheels reminded me that every mile was bringing me closer to home. Mental pictures of my parents and brothers kept flashing through my mind, and it seemed to me that we would never get there. After several stops, a gentleman sat down next to me. We introduced ourselves and talked about the war. He noticed the gold chevron on my sleeve and inquired about it. He mentioned that he travelled to Washington D.C. frequently on business with the War Department, but that he hadn't seen a similar gold chevron on the forearm. I explained that it was given to soldiers that had been wounded in action.

When the dining car steward came through the cars announcing dinner, the man in the next seat insisted that I join him for dinner. During the meal he explained that the company he represented sold the government many of its weapons. After returning to our seats, he opened the briefcase which I noticed earlier he had taken with him to the dining car. He removed from it a Mills Hand Grenade and asked, "Have you ever seen one of these?" This one was not loaded, he said, as he handed it to me to examine. I had not used the Mills Hand Grenade and told him so. The only grenades we had to use up until the time I was wounded were the French grenades with the metal pin on the top. You had to hit it on the top of your helmet and get rid of it quickly. He then showed me how the Mills grenade worked. They were much safer than the ones we had been using. He then asked, "Would you like an unloaded Mills grenade for a souvenir?" When I replied, "Yes", he said, "I will have one made up for you with a metal base so that you can use it as a paper weight." I still have that grenade paper weight on my desk in my radio room at home.

My travel companion was interesting and the time passed rapidly. Before I realized it we were in the Northwestern station in Chicago. He checked on a train for Milwaukee for me, and within ten minutes I was headed for Milwaukee, one step closer to home.

Chicago to Milwaukee took only about an hour. I impulsively took a cab to my brother Frank's address and was welcomed into his home where we talked and visited until the early morning hours.

It was at Frank's home that I got the first real inkling of what my parents and brothers had been going through. Their worry about my not only being in danger and of having been wounded or still worse of not coming back at all was very real.

It wasn't until very late when Frank's children and his wife, Helen, had gone to bed that he brought out a brown envelope with his return address imprint in the upper left corner and gave it to me. The envelope was addressed to Private Quiren Groessl, Co. E., 28th Inf. A.E.F. via New York. The postmark from the Milwaukee Post Office was June 21, 1918, at 10:00 PM.

Across the front of the envelope, my name was stamped in red ink, "Directory Service Given, Cannot Be Delivered As Addressed, Central Post Office." Another red ink stamp said, "Return to Writer", and in two places were the letters M.C. over what appeared to be a date. But the real shocker came when I turned the envelope over and found in bold black print, "Deceased, Verified Casualty Section", Central Records Office, A.M.E.F.

October 23

This morning after a refreshing sleep and a home cooked breakfast, I took a cab to the United Coal and

Dock office where my brother Frank was the Office Manager. I had an hour to wait for the train to Green Bay. Brother Frank wanted to call home to tell my folks I would be on the evening train. I persuaded him not to as I wanted to surprise them. It was against his better judgment, but he gave in to my wish.

The ride from Milwaukee to Green Bay seemed endless. After arriving at the Green Bay & Western station, I was about to get on the train for Algoma when I ran into Harry Walker, the conductor whom I had known for several years. He was surprised to see me and he remarked, "I'll bet your folks will be glad to see you step off this train". I said, "They don't know I'm coming. I want to surprise them."

Harry excused himself saying he had to pick up his orders, and I made my way to a seat in the train. My seat was on the north side of the train and as we neared Algoma I could hear the Algo a Plywood Company whistle blowing. I thought to myself, the 5:00 whistle for quitting time. Then as we rolled past the plant I saw hundreds of the plant employees standing along side the tracks, shouting and waving at the train. Now the train had slowed down, and we were approaching the station. Harry Walker came over to my seat, as he had on several occasions to visit. He picked up my bag and walked at my side between me and the train windows on the station side, but I thought nothing of it until we were on the train platform.

I heard someone shout, "There he is". A band started playing and there on the station platform was a large crowd, with my mother, dad and the two smaller brothers standing in the front. I recall my mother giving a quick glance at my arms before she rushed to meet me. I put my arm around her and kissed her. We held each other close for a long moment. I heard her whisper, "Thank God you are home". A firm hand shake with my dad, and I knew he was glad to see me.

Jim McGowan, an attorney and the Mayor of Algoma, approached and said, "Welcome home". He then directed us along the platform while I said hello to as many as I could as we passed. At the end of the platform, cars were waiting to drive us home. As we drove up the streets of Algoma, with the band in the lead, I was reminded of the parade in Mount Vernon, Kentucky. I could not resist asking Mayor McGowan how he knew I was going to be on the train. He said Harry Walker telegraphed ahead to the Alg ma station agent from Green Bay. In his message he said "Let the people know that Algoma's first returning soldier is on my train".

I don't know how they were able to get the w rd around in such a short time so as to have the band and the school children there, and the flags flying, but they did. Shop keepers and people who couldn't make it to the station lined the streets waving and shouting. I was deeply touched and if I could have gone into a corner by myself, I could have cried with happiness.

Face of envelope sent to me by brother frank

Back of same envelope stamped "Deceased" Verified Casualty Section,and returned to sender.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

DISCHARGED FROM SERVICE - JANUARY 5, 1919

October 25

Many of my relatives and friends came to visit. They brought me clippings from the Milwaukee Journal, The Press Gazette, The Manitowoc Herald, The Door County Advocate, and the local papers from months before concerning my capture by the Germans and my escape though wounded. The clippings were left with me as a keepsake.

Mother showed me one of the few letters she had received written for me on June 3 by a Red Cross aid, Marjorie Talbot. I was in the hospital in Beauvaix, France, at the time and had been wounded and unable to use my right arm at the time. Then she showed me another letter, one that she had written to me on July 5. It was numbered 19. In it she said that she had received my letter of June 3 in which I had mentioned that I was wounded. In her letter she asked how I was wounded and why I could not use my arm to write. This letter had been returned to her without explanation and stamped "Return to Writer".

It wasn't until July 23 that the War Department, through the Adjutant General's Office at Washington, D.C., sent a telegram addressed to my father and which was received in Algoma at 5:10 PM stating, "Deeply regret to inform you that it is officially reported that Private Quiren Groessl, Infantry, was severely wounded in action May 27." signed, McCall, The Adjutant General.

My mother said that after receiving that telegram they were more worried than before. They knew from my letter of June 3 that I had been in a hospital on June 3 and now this telegram of July 23 could only mean to them that I had been returned to the fighting and this time was seriously wounded. They could not believe the Government would hold up information for that length of time.

October 28

Had several wonderful days at home visiting old haunts and friends. The war seemed many miles and years away. I still had much pain and discomfort from my wound, but being home made up for it all. I visited with most of the mothers and fathers of the boys who had enlisted in Company F and gave them the word that when I had left them they were well and getting along fine. I had to tell Urban Kashik's mother and father that when I left the hospital at Savaheny, Urban was coming along fine. He might be shipped back to his Company in a couple of weeks, but I tried to make it appear that he would not be back in the lines for some time.

CLASS OF SERVICE	SYMBOL
Day Message	
Day Letter	Blue
Night Message	Nite
Night Letter	N L

If none of these three symbols appears after the check (number of words) this is a day message. Otherwise its character is indicated by the symbol appearing after the check.

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

NEWCOMB CARLTON, PRESIDENT GEORGE W. E. ATKINS, FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

CLASS OF SERVICE	SYMBOL
Day Message	
Day Letter	Blue
Night Message	Nite
Night Letter	N L

If none of these three symbols appears after the check (number of words) this is a day message. Otherwise its character is indicated by the symbol appearing after the check.

RECEIVED AT 510 PM /ALGOMA WIS JULY 25. 1918

NUMBER	RECEIVED BY	
7 GB/F		32 GOVT

DATED WASHINGTON D. C. 520 PM

TO FRANK GROESSEL

ALGOMA WIS.

DEEPLY REGRET TO INFORM YOU THAT IT IS OFFICIALLY REPORTED THAT PRIVATE QUIRIN GROESSEL INFANTRY WAS SEVERELY WOUNDED IN ACTION MAY TWENTY SEVENTH.

McCAIN THE ADJT. GEN RA.

October 30

Today a delegation from the Liberty Loan Committee from Kewaunee came to see me. Kewaunee County was having trouble putting the Loan drive over and the county was still short of its goal. Hearing that I was home, the committee came to see me to enlist my aid. A well-publicized meeting was arranged for October 31 at Rubens Hall in the Belgian area, and a capacity crowd was on hand. People came forward willingly and pledged to buy bonds. It was a pleasure to speak to and visit with these people and again to feel that I was doing something worthwhile.

However, that was the last speech I made. There were two trouble spots in the county where the farmers were of German descent and these people couldn't understand why they should be buying bonds to help kill their relatives in Germany. I could appreciate their feelings to a certain extent.

When the committee drove into the farmyard of one of the more influential far ers of that area, I was with them. The committee was going to try to convince this farmer to buy bonds, and if he did the others would follow suit. I wasn't prepared f r what followed or the tactics used. I was first introduced to the farmer as a wounded soldier who had just come back from France. I felt that in this case it was the committee's job to sell bonds and not mine. The committee got to the point where they began using threats. They told the farmer he would be run out of the country, and that his home and barn might be burned to the ground. It was disgusting and I told the committee members so. I was ashamed that I had gone with them. To think that American people would turn on their neighbors in this manner. This to me was extortion or blackmail, and I refused to be a part of it. I recalled the letters I had received from my mother months before, telling me of the whispering campaign in Algoma, and of the horrible experiences my own father had gone through along with other people of German ancestry. It was hard to believe when I read it in mother's letters, but here I was seeing it at first hand. I knew now that it was true; that neighbor did turn against neighbor.

Several days later I had another similar experience. A prominent citizen in the community asked the cashier of the Citizens State Bank to ask me to come over to the bank. This man wished to talk to me. Prior to this time I don't think he hardly knew I existed, and I w ndered why he wanted to talk to me now.

When I arrived at the bank, Mr. Boedecker, the cashier, directed me to the director's room in the rear of the building where this man was waiting for me. He sho k hands with me and asked me to take a chair. Then he said, "I know that you were wounded fighting for your country and mine, and I want to do something for you to show my

gratitude. When you get discharged from the Army and are back home I would like to set you up in a business. I will get a building for you, stock it with furniture, and send you off to school to be a mortician. You can run your own funeral establishment. How would you like that?" It nearly floored me. No one had ever made me an offer like that for any reason. Because it took me so much by surprise, I told the man that I would have to think it over since I was not sure when I would be out of the hospital or the Army, or what I would be able to do once I was out.

I should have known that there was something wrong with the offer, for no one makes an offer like that without a string attached. My delay in not accepting the offer immediately was evidently unexpected. His real motive came out in the discussion when he inadvertently said, "I'll get that S.O.B. if it's the last thing I do". He was trying to use me to get even with the local mortician whose ancestors were German. I left him, feeling very disgusted with some of my fellow men.

November 8

The stay at home with family and friends was so enjoyable that I all but forgot time. I should be thinking about reporting back to the hospital at Cape May. I told my parents that on the following morning I was going to Sturgeon Bay to visit with the wives and parents of some of the boys of Company F.

November 9

Just before boarding the train for Sturgeon Bay, Harry Walkor came over and said, "There is something big happening over in France. The telegraph wires are busy flashing the news, but the agent in the station can't quite figure it out. It is something about an armistice." I don't think I had ever heard the word, armistice, before so it didn't mean much to me either. I got on the train and was soon in Sturgeon Bay.

My first stop was at the Haen home on the main street, and I was greeted with hugs and kisses by the girls who were married to two of the boys from Company F. We had a nice visit and were just about to sit down for noon luncheon when all hell broke loose. Whistles started blowing, church bells ringing and people rushing out into the streets shouting, "The war is over, the war is over". Soon a band was marching down the street followed by workers from the shipyards and hundreds of townspeople. We rushed out onto the porch to see the excitement. Attorney Bill Wagner saw me. The parade was temporarily halted and I was hustled into a car to go down the street in the parade.

Later that afternoon I spoke with some of the mothers of Company F boys. By now I had nothing much to tell them. Their fears were dispelled by the news that the war was over, and the joy was visible in their faces. Little did

some of them realize that their joy would turn to sorrow as the belated casualties lists continued to come in. (I had been wounded on May 27 and it was not until July 23 that my parents received a telegram from the War Department. Captain Ralph Perry of Algoma was killed just a few hours before the real armistice was signed.) The following day we learned that the November 9 armistice news was a false alarm.

November 11

Because of the false alarm, I had the pleasure of celebrating the real armistice at home with my own family and friends on November 11. I had gone up town when the news broke. The whistles started blowing and the bells ringing. I soon learned that being up town was the wrong place to be. Wherever I went or whoever I met insisted that I have a drink with them. I could have gotten drunk out on the street. Every man I met had a bottle of liquor, even though our country was supposed to be dry. So after one or two drinks, I ducked into an alley and headed through back yards for home. I didn't want to hurt anyone's feelings by refusing to drink with them, but I knew that if I stayed around I would soon be drunk.

November 12

After the excitement of yesterday, it dawned on me that I had been home for 21 days and during all that time had not notified the hospital where I was. I was still in the Army and by now had been A.W.O.L. for three weeks. I went to the railway station and sent a telegram to the hospital saying, "Home with my family. Please send me a 30-day furlough." The same day I received a telegram back saying, "You have ten days to report back to Hospital #11".

It was more than I had a right to expect, but I had hoped that they would permit me to spend Thanksgiving with my family and possibly Christmas. The ten days they gave me to report back meant that I had to leave home on the 20th of November to get back in the allotted time. If I wasn't on my way back by the 22nd, they could throw an A.W.O.L. charge against me and make it stick, for I was technically A.W.O.L. right now. I wasn't sure what was in store for me when I did get back, but wasn't about to tempt fate any further. Whatever they decided to do to me, my being home with my parents and family had been worth it.

November 21

I arrived in Philadelphia about 10:00 in the morning and my train for Cape May would leave at 2:30 PM. I called a cab and asked the driver to take me to the address Marion had given me. We drove out of the city and into the suburbs. He finally pulled up before an estate surrounded by a high iron fence. The driver stopped at a large gate which was closed. I got out of the cab and looked through the gate at the large mansion, and decided that I didn't

belong there. It was out of my class and I knew I wouldn't feel comfortable in these surroundings. I asked the driver to take me back to the railway station. On the way the driver told me that the Daugherties were one of the wealthiest families in Philadelphia.

I made my train connection and arrived at the hospital after 5:00 PM on November 21. Luckily the office was closed when I arrived. I checked in with the head nurse who assigned me to my old room for the night, saying, "I don't know what the Old Man will do with you when you report to him in the morning". At any rate, I missed what might have been a pretty rough going over that night.

November 22

An orderly awakened me in the morning with the statement, "The Old Man wants to see you right away, and I don't mind telling you he's in a bad mood". I took the elevator to the ground floor, walked into the Chief's office, stood at attention and asked, "You wanted to see me, Sir?" He glanced up from his paperwork and gave me a cold look, which said here comes the whole damn book.

"Groessl", he barked, "Where the hell have you been these past four weeks? You were supposed to be back here on October 21. When you didn't report back, we started searching for you. We called every large city hospital between Cleveland and here, and asked every Police Department to be on the lookout for you. We were afraid you had become ill or something had happened to you." My only reply was, "I'm sorry, Sir. After I finished in Cleveland, an urge came over me to see my family, and I went home. I thought my therapy doctor would have told you that I had home on my mind."

That statement softened him up a bit, for his next remark was, "I don't blame you for wanting to go home, I might have done the same thing in your position, but you should have wired us. We did a lot of worrying about you." I could only reply, "I'm sorry, Sir, but I was so happy to be home that nothing else seemed to matter". With that he dismissed me saying, "I will want to see you again after I have talked with your doctor".

Three days later, on November 25 which was Thanksgiving day, I was again summoned to the Chief's office. He was in a much better mood and told me that the doctor found me in much better condition than I would have been had I not been away from the hospital. The doctor apparently was on my side. His next words were really a surprise to me, when he said, "Groessl, you left here on September 25 and returned on November 23, so you have 60 days of ration money coming to you. I'll see that you get a check for that amount in the next couple of days." While I didn't want to push my luck, I did blurt out, "What about my furlough travel expense?" He looked at me and grinned, "I'll see that you get travel pay from Algoma to Cape May, but going from Cleveland to Algoma was on your own". I left his office feeling that there were a lot of fine people in the world.

December 17

My condition had improved to the point where I was declared ready for discharge from the service. I was put in charge of a dozen other convalescents being sent on to Camp Grant, Illinois. There we were reassigned to the 3rd Convalescent Unit from which we would eventually be discharged. Every day we expected to hear the good news, but Christmas came and went and we were still at Camp Grant. New Years Eve and New Years Day were just as cheerless and just another day.

January 5, 1919

This was the big day for me, and I was finally given my discharge from the Army with a 100% disability.

The bayonet that had pierced my neck damaged the 5th and 6th cervical vertebr e and cut many of the root nerves, thereby impairing my ability to turn my head from side to side. The severed trapezius muscle on the right side caused the shoulder to droop six to eight inches lower than the left shoulder. The shoulder drop, in turn, caused my body to lean to the right putting pressure on the sciatic nerve. This resulted in considerable pain in the right leg from the hip to the ankle. There was also involvement of the right arm with functional loss of use other than slight flexion of the elbow and slight side and forward motion. The nerves that controlled arms and legs had been sutured by the French doctor at the French Field Hospital. They were mending slowly and in time my disability rating would be greatly reduced according to my recovery.

The doctors all agreed that I would never again be the strong person I had once been. I could no longer indulge in body contact sports, golf, bowl, swim or any of the things that normal, active persons did. From now on I would have to sit on the bench, alive but often an unhappy onlooker.

My first stop was Milwaukee, where I took a cab to my brother Frank's home. There was no train for Green Bay in the evening and it was after 9:00 PM, so I decided to spend the night at Frank's home again.

A light was burning in the house so I paid the cab driver and rang the door bell. When brother Frank saw me at the door he informed me that the children had small pox and the house was quarantined.

My cab had already gone, so I asked Frank to call another for me. I planned to check in at a hotel for the night. Frank had a better idea. He called the Charles Beth home two blocks away. The Beths were distant relatives, but close friends of Frank and his family.

The Beths were most gracious and made me feel at ho e. We did a lot of talking that evening. The next morning after breakfast, I took a cab to the station and caught the train for Green Bay, and from there another train to Algoma. Thus ended y career in Uncle Sam's Army.

It might be natural to suppose that my handicap and my constant companion, pain, have soured and embittered me and perhaps it has some. I don't know what my life might have been without the disability. I had what was left of a life to live, and I tried to make the best possible use of it. I may have been down at times, but I was never out.

In the years that followed, I adjusted to a certain way of life. I learned to live with the pain. I found hobbies that I could enjoy, and have gotten pleasure and happiness from the things I know I can do and have avoided the things I should not do.

For the past 25 years of my life, instead of thinking about golfing, bowling and other strenuous sports, I have spent much of my time in my radio room, improving my mind and learning how the other half of the world lives. During these years, I have made more than 20,000 amateur radio contacts and many friends in other parts of the world.

Most of all, I have found love and happiness in my home, in the loving girl who became my bride and the mother of our children, and in being able to raise a fine family of whom I am very proud.

EPILOGUE

November 11, 1968

My one regret at this late date is that I did not start this diary at the time I had enlisted, instead of waiting until we were ready to leave Camp McArthur, Texas. There were many interesting things that happened while Company F was at Sturgeon Bay, Camp Douglas and Camp McArthur. I am no longer sure of the order in which they happened or that I will be able to recall all of them or even the dates on which they occurred. I will merely try to summarize them in the order that they come to mind and not necessarily in the order in which they occurred.

Company F was organized a short time after war was declared on Germany on April 7, 1917. I was away at college at the time and joined an Infantry Company at the school the day war was declared. Each day after school we would join our Company for close order drill under the leadership of Forest Polk, one of our shop instructors. He was a m mber of the local guard. It was voluntary and we did it just to get familiar with the drill and to learn what soldiering was all about. There was also satisfaction in knowing that we were trying, even in this remote way, to help win the war. We knew that before very long many of us would either be enlisting or be called to serve. The more we knew about it, the quicker we would be ready for whatever lay ahead.

After school left out for the summer vacation, I returned to Algo a. Company F was then in the process of being organized and I enlisted on June 29, 1917. Shortly after that, all of the enlisted men were ordered to report to the Sturgeon Bay High School for indoctrination and drill.

Until that first meeting was called, I had only known the 31 boys and two officers from the Algoma area. One hundred twenty-two boys and one officer were from Sturgeon Bay and the towns and farms in the Door County area. Each one of us had volunteered our services.

That first morning we were met by Captain Watson, a sergeant and two corporals, all from the Fond du Lac National Guard Unit. The officers who were later to command Co pany F were Captain Reynolds of Sturgeon Bay and First Lieutenant Ralph Perry and Second Lieutenant Haney Ihlenfeldt of Algoma, but they were still at Officers' Training School.

Captain Watson and his three assistants started us off with the basics of close order drill. This was done at Arlee's Ball Park, about a mile west of downtown Sturgeon Bay. They were very considerate of us the first couple of day, however, they learned by close association that we were not the tough bunch of lumberjacks we had reported to be.

We had no equipment, no rifles and no uniforms. In fact, we had no Company mess hall, barracks or even tents to sleep in. All of that was taken care of by the good people of Sturgeon Bay who donated cots, couches, blankets and whatever other sleeping equipment was needed. All of this was placed in the high school gymnasium where most of us slept. The boys from Sturgeon Bay stayed at their own homes for the nights.

The Congretational Church members set up a mess hall in their basement and the ladies of the church attempted to feed us. They did a great job of it, but the quarters were too small and they could not feed 150 men in the time allotted for the noon meal. About 50 of us were sent over to the Moeller Hotel for our meals.

After the first half day at the drill field, we were marched down to the front of the Moeller Hotel where we were dismissed for the noon meal. The obvious happened. We were 150 hot, tired and thirsty men and all made a mad dash for the Moeller Hotel Bar for a beer before lunch.

It took the bartender and his helper quite a while to serve us that first time, but from then on there was no waiting for a beer. One hundred fifty beers were waiting for us on the bar the next day when we were dismissed, and every day thereafter. I don't think the bar ever lost a single dime on the whole bunch.

We were allowed just one hour for our lunch period which meant that we had to eat and be back inside the ball park ready to start drilling when the hour was up. At that time, we had a lot of respect for Captain Watson and his staff. To us, they were Army men and acted like Army men. To us green recruits, it meant strict obedience and no goofing off while drilling. We were, however, still a bunch of young kids who had no idea of the serious step we had taken when we enlisted.

All of us were caught up in the frenzied excitement, the speech-making and we wanted to do as much as the next one to help win the war. We had no idea of what war was all about. All we could see were the marching men, the bands playing martial music, and the flags flying in the breeze. We were all engulfed in a form of hypnosis. We believed that we were the ones who would have to win the war. There was no thought of hardships or long, forced marches with packs strapped to our backs made heavier by the never-ending rains. There were no thoughts of sleeping as best we could in wet clothing night after night, huddled in the corner of a barn if we were lucky, or in the corner of a trench, under constant shell fire and the ever present fear of death.

It didn't occur to us that we might be wounded or killed by enemy fire, or that perhaps some of us would never come back. We did not stop to think that the Germans had been planning for this war for many years before they started it. And they did not start it until they thought they were ready to overcome any and every obstacle, to win even if it meant sinking American ships and engaging us in that war.

ALGOMA BOYS OF COMPANY F
M. GONLAGH, C. CAPELLE, G. CULLIGAN, R. ZASTROW, F.PRO-
KAGH, E. HAUCKE
Seated: G. MOUTY, C. KOUTNIK, G. FELLONS, F. LOHNEY

CAMP MCCOY
MRS. E.KRAUCE, J. PROKASH, J. BREY, J. CULLIGAN, P. KASHIK,
J. MOUTY
Seated: C. ZASTROW AND G. MOUTY

Roster and Rank of Company F at Time of Enlistment – 1917

5th Wis Inf
Revised Guard

CAPT. EDWARD S. REYNOLDS

1st LIEUT. RALPH H. PERRY

2nd LIEUT. H. E. IHLENFELD

1st Sergt Milton Abell
Supply Sergt James O. Langemak
Mess Sergt. John H. Webb
Sergt. John C Acker
Sergt William E Behringer
Sergt Lester W. Brann
Sergt Emery Eatough
Sergt. William A. Worley
Sergt. Fred A. Zastrow
Sergt. Jerry J Jerabek
Sergt. Ernest Peterson
Corporal Wm Bourgeois
Corporal Bernard DaMere
Corporal Lester Leitl
Corporal Melvin Jenkins
Corporal Frank Schuyler
Corporal John Weitermann
Corporal Melvin Peterson
Corporal Henry O'Dean
Corporal Chas. Gislason
Corporal Walter Herzog
Corporal John Culligan
Corporal August Wasserbach
Corporal Clyde C. Helgeson
Corporal John Gudmundson
Corporal Querin Groessel
Corporal Frank Durkee
Bugler Howard Collard
Corporal Carl J. Koutnik
Lance Corporal Albert J Taube
Mechanic William Duwe
Mechanic Hostak
Bugler Fritzhop G. Langemak
Cook William Zivney
Cook Edward Augustine
Cook Harlow Rockwell

FIRST CLASS PRIVATES

Merton H Andrews
Sylvan H. Baudhuin
Andrew A. Bathke
Leon Bourgeois
John Christianson
George Culligan
Noah De Jardine
Grover Eichinger
Elmer Ecklund
Harry W. Erickson
William Fagg
J C Fritschler
George Feller
Ernst Haucke
Harry Hartel
Joseph Jindra
Victor A Jackson
Frank Lobrey
Gilbert Monty
Leo M. Moeller
Allen MacMillan
Daniel O Hern
Frank B. Parkman
Earl O. Richmond
Edwin Severson
Milton Van Dreese
John Wasserbach
Edward Walter

PRIVATES

William Anderson
George Anderson
Christian Anderson
Walter Ahlswede
Arthur Bridenhagen
Edward Brase
William Burlo
Henry Bournoville
George Bubnik
Andrew Corbisier
Daniel Culligan
Harry Collard
Ole Christianson
Louis Connard
Victor Corbisier
Clarence Capelle
Elmer DeGodt
Henry Daul
John B. DeWitte
Fred DeVillers
Charles Ellis
George Fellows
Henry Felhofer
William Giesner
Walter Groth
William Gerlach
Frank Havel
George Jorgenson
Oliver Johnson
Henry Jenner, ohn
Edward Janosky
Urban Kashik
Gust Kinderman
Oscar Krueger
Henry Kugler
Andrew Kruk
Leonard Knutson
John Lavasser
Carl Lidral
Archie Lackshire
Eugene Lemense
Frank Lidral
David Lessard
Albert Meyer
Roy Maples
Oscar Marx
Paul Mueller
John Macco
Henry Motquin
Delbert Murray
Oliver Norstrom
John Pok
Frank Pietto
Henry Pfister
Joseph Pivonka
Oscar Peterson
Frank Prokasa
Herbert Pallister
John Rockwell
Melvin Shoemacher
Julius Solway
Sam Skippon
Elmer Smith
Joseph Sawyer
William Stephenson
Ernest Tagge
Elmer Tweedale
Edward Tostenson
Edward Virtz
Sylvester Virtz
Anton Virtz
Frank Virtz
Henry Virtz
Gilbert Vetting
Herbert Weisner
Lloyd Walker
Henry Walker
Eli Wood
Frank Weis
Robert Zastrow
Frank Zettel
Clarence Zastrow

DETACHED SERVICE

Grover Stapleton
Chas. L Nelson

We knew absolutely nothing about war except the glamorous things we had read about in our history books, which made war seem so simple and easy. We never thought to count the cost, or that we could not win without sacrifice and suffering. We just knew that our enthusiasm would bring us through victorious, and that in a few short months we would all be coming back home again as heroes.

So it was that each day we lived for the present as a bunch of very happy boys. Each of us tried to be the first one back inside the ball park. Not because we were so anxious to c ntınue drilling, but to grab a paddle which some of the gang had made, and to whack the others on the seat of the pants as they came through the gate. The first ones got only a wha k or two, but the last ones had to run a gauntlet of about 100 guys.

One day s me of the gang got back to the park ahead of the others. As we came through the gate, we were grabbed and thrown to the ground and held there while another fellow with a p ir of cli pers clipped a swath down the center of the head. The , like a sheared sheep, we were released and all wed to run. After each one was released he joined ın the fun a d helped to hold the next one down until he, t o, was sh rn of his locks. Eventually, everyone in the C a y had the rest of his head clipped by the barber downt .

Company F tr ı ed five days a week. Over the weekend we were allowed to go h me as long as we were back on the drill field o M day orning. After one of these weekends, we nearly lost the privilege of goıng home. On this particular Mo day orni g, the Company had fallen in and had been order d to execute a squads right. The entire Company, with the exceptıon of one squad, went right. This one squad went half right and half left. Captain Reynolds, who had return d ro Officers' Training and was now in charge, quickly called the Company to a halt and briskly walked over to the squ d that was in disarray. He stood directly in front of one of the men who was still suffering from a hangover and barked, "Kinderman, you are drunk". Poor Gus tried his best to focus his eyes on the Captain and replied, "Captaın, you should have seen me yesterday". Gus was escorted to th gy nasium where he was permitted to sleep it off.

On August 15, Co pany F was notified that we would entrain for C p Douglas, Wisconsin, on August 17. On the night of A gust 16 the Poulous brothers, who operated a restaurant ın Sturgeon Bay, gave a going away banquet for all of the mem ers of Company F. The banquet was nice and we all enjoyed it. So e of the boys craved more excitement, however, and wanted to have a last fling before leaving Sturgeon Bay.

Joseph Jindra, one of the Company F boys, had brought his dad's new car to Sturgeon Bay for the evening. After the banquet, he and four of his pals decided to live it up

before departing for Camp Douglas the next morning. I am not sure what happened, but can quite accurately guess it. They stopped at several saloons and had a few drinks in each place. Most of these were free because they were with Company F. It was inevitable what happened. Joe was normally a reliable driver. His mind somewhat fuzzy from liquor, he listened to the urging of his pals to drive faster so they could get to the next saloon. This added up to disaster. The car hit the ditch and rolled over several times, throwing the five boys out of the once new car.

The next morning one of the boys who had been with Joe was carried onto the train on a stretcher and another made it with the aid of a pair of crutches. The other three, although bruised and sore, were all able to make it under their own power.

The morning of August 17 dawned bright and clear. It was a beautiful morning, the sun was shining and just about everyone in Sturgeon Bay and the northern part of Door County was gathered at the Green Bay & Western station to see Company F off. We marched briskly behind the Sturgeon Bay band, from Market Square to the station where a train of empty coaches awaited us.

It was a time of intense emotion as the Company was brought to a halt beside the station. Mothers, wives and sweethearts as well as fathers and brothers were gathered there to say their good-bye's. They were looking beyond the clear skies and flying flags. In their own hearts they were seeing their loved ones leaving for unknown places and the horrors of what lay ahead of their boys on a foreign battlefield.

After the tears, the farewells and the best wishes from everyone gathered there, the command to entrain was given. In less than five minutes at 6:15 AM, everyone was on board and the train, consisting of four coaches and a baggage car left Sturgeon Bay bound for Algoma. Here the Algoma boys had to go through the same emotions we had witnessed at Sturgeon Bay.

Algoma mothers, wives and sweethearts were no different than those at Sturgeon Bay. Tears were shed and we were embraced. We were embarrassed for we could only see the grand adventure ahead, and not the reality our mothers and families were seeing. After the last good-bye's were said and the train was again underway, there was a long period of subdued talk. By the time the train passed through Casco, all of our troubles and sadness were behind us and we were the same jolly bunch of kids off on a grand, new adventure.

At 2:00 PM our train pulled into Camp Douglas. For the next couple of hours we were busy setting up tents and trying to make a Company street on a piece of land that had been a pasture. But, we made it.

That evening Company F had its first taste of battle. Several of the other Companies that had arrived at camp a day or two before us decided to initiate Company F by cutting tent ropes and laughing at us as the tents fell in. This was to be our first experience sleeping in tents. We noticed the activity in some of the neighboring Companies and decided that something was afoot. We posted a couple of guards to walk the Company street, as we had been advised by our Company commander.

After taps had blown and all lights were out, the Company was supposedly in bed. Our guards spotted slinking figures between the tents of the other Companies slowly making their way toward us. The guards quietly opened the flaps of our tents and warned us as they continued their patrol. We were ready for them when they made their dash to our street. A free-for-all ensued and we were able to drive them off without a single tent rope having been cut. The next morning we were issued uniforms which we were mighty proud to wear, especially after the previous night's battle. From then on we were a part of the Fighting Fifth.

Our stay at Camp Douglas was uneventful except for the one Sunday when our mothers, fathers, wives and sweethearts hired a special train and made an excursion trip to Camp Douglas to spend the day with us. This was just prior to our leaving for another camp, and it was the last time that some of our boys saw their loved ones.

On October 22 we left Camp Douglas for Camp McArthur, Texas. Our stay at Camp McArthur saw a big change for us. Company F was disbanded and many of us went to Company G to fill up this Company. Some of the other Company F boys went to a machine gun outfit and one or two went to the Regimental Band. On February 2 our Batallion left Camp McArthur, Texas, for Camp Merritt, New Jersey. There was no question now in any of our minds as to where the next stop would be.

SEQUEL

On the 10th anniversary of America's entry into World War I, the American Legion held its 9th annual convention in Paris, France, during the week of September 19, 1927. This pilgrimage of the American Legion to France represented the largest movement of people motivated by a common cause which the world had ever known during time of peace.

There were good reasons why I was among those attending this convention. Had I known in advance, however, what was in store for me, I might never have gone. After having worked hard during the months of May, June and July, 1927, studying for my Pharmacy License, and after passing the examination, I was badly in need of a rest. I hadn't missed a National Legion Convention since 1922 and didn't want to miss the annual reunion with my old buddy, Floyd Gibbons. He was now the Foreign Director of the Chicago Tribune in Paris and Berlin. Our reunion was a one-day affair held each year during the National Legion Convention. We used this one day reminiscing about the days we spent together in old Ward #160 in the American Red Cross Hospital in Neuilly, outside of Paris. Incidentally, we also bent a few elbows during the reunion.

There were other good reasons for attending the Convention. During the war I had only seen Paris from a troop train as we passed through the outskirts of the city on our way to the front, and a second time from the window of American Red Cross Hospital #I. Now I wanted to see Paris under different circumstances, and in my own way.

However, there was another underlying motive. I wanted to visit the graves of some of the boys I had served with who hadn't come back, and I also wanted to visit the battle fields, especially the one where I had been wounded.

Prior to sailing for France, I had written Floyd Gibbons telling him I was coming and also sending him the names of the cemetaries and battle fields I wanted to visit. He not only had the complete itinerary planned, but he also had arranged for a car and a driver. Luciene had been a driver for the French High Command during the war and knew every road and crossroad along the battle fronts.

I had promised my youngest brother, Joe, who was in his senior year in journalism at Marquette University that I would take him along to the convention. On the boat to France I met George Carey of Beloit, Wisconsin, Lawrence Collins of Everette, Washington, and Dr. Bernstein of Cresson, Pennsylvania. All of them had served in my batallion, the 28th Infantry Batallion, and had been on the same fronts. When they heard of my plans to visit the battle fronts, they all begged to be included. I

Rouquencourt.

Battle scarred church near highway near front lines at Rouquencourt.

Battle scarred crucifix at cross road.

promised to do so if I could get a car large enough to accomodate all of us, including Luciene Chasseuing, our driver. This was no problem. Gibbons merely asked for a larger car and it was ours.

The day the convention ended, Luciene picked us up at our hotels and by 6:30 AM we were on our way. There were many places we wanted to visit and we were not able to cover more than two fronts in a day. This included villages, battle fields and cemeteries where our boys were buried.

At each cemetery we checked the rosters of the Companies that each of us had served in and then went to visit the graves of each of the boys we had known, to say a silent prayer at each and to take a picture of the graves.

On the last day of our tour, we drove to the village of Rouquencourt, the last village I had been in before I was wounded. Our first stop was at the crossroad where the battle-scarred, life-sized crucifix was still standing, minus the telephone and signal corps wires that had been fastened to it during the war. The ravages were still clearly visible.

We were given a royal welcome by the villagers after Luciene told them we were Americans who had lived and fought in their village. I visited my old root cellar and the old church up on the hill where I had stood guard on the highway which passed there. Then we went up the road leading to what had been the front lines.

After about two miles of driving, I asked Luciene to stop the car and I got out. I told the other guys, including my brother Joe, that I was near familiar territory and that I wanted to feel my way across the field to where I had been wounded ten years before. I asked them to stay about 100 yards behind, as I wanted to concentrate on landmarks and I didn't want to be disturbed by their talking.

After a short walk, I saw the patch of trees I was looking for and I knew I was getting close to where our trenches had been and to where I had been wounded. As I continued to walk across the field toward the trees, I felt a strange sensation and a sense of excitement come over me. It was so real, I was trembling. Just as I was about to walk past the cluster of trees a Frenchman came dashing out of the trees toward me, waving his arms and shouting, "Parte tout suite" which in any language means "get out of there fast". He grabbed me by the arm and tried to pull me into the trees. I knew what he had said, but could not understand why he wanted me to leave the field. Before I could shake myself loose, I knew. A terrific explosion rent the air a short distance in front of me and even before I felt the ground tremble I was flat on my belly on the ground. At that moment the war was still on and the Germans were still shelling us. While I didn't hear the shrill whistle of approaching shells, I could hear bees buzzing overhead from flying

Entrance to root cellar used by my squad. Home above was entirely rebuilt after the war. (Photo taken in 1927) Rouquencourt.[redacted].

shrapnel, and a second later I saw and heard something hit the ground just in front of me. Without stopping to think, I reached out to pick up the object and burned the inside of my hand and fingers from the still white, hot piece of metal.

By then Luciene, my brother Joe, and the other men were beside us. The Frenchman, through Luciene, told us that he was a demolition engineer. He and his assistants had been working this field for some time, searching for unexploded shells. They had just filled a shell hole with them, covered them with dirt, set a fuse and lit it as I appeared on the scene. He had dashed from his shelter in the trees to try to stop me from walking right into the explosion. Talk about a "big moment". This was it, nearly getting killed on almost the exact spot where I had been wounded ten years before.

After dressing my hand with ointment, the Frenchman accompanied us to what remained of the trenches where we looked for souvenirs. We were cautioned not to pick up anything until he had first examined it to make sure it was not booby trapped.

Each of us managed to find a souvenir, but brother Joe found one that he might not have lived to show his friends back home. He saw a small egg-shaped object lying half buried in the dirt near the trench. In his excitement, hé forgot the Frenchman's warning, picked it up and called over to us, "Look what I found". The Frenchman was visibly shaken, and when I saw what Joe had in his hand, I was really frightened. Using Luciene as an interpreter, he told Joe to stand perfectly still and not to move his arm. From the expression on Joe's face, I knew that now he, too, was frightened.

The Frenchman slowly walked up to Joe, gently removed the object from his hand and told him to walk to where we were standing, paralyzed with fear. He threw the object far away from where we were standing and fell flat on the ground. As the object hit the ground, it exploded. Joe had picked up a German hand grenade which evidently had been thrown but had failed to explode.

By now I realized that we had been tempting fate. I'd had enough for one day. I wanted to get out of there as quickly as possible and said to the others, "Let's get the hell out of here before one of us does get killed".

We thanked the Frenchman for all he had done and headed back to Paris. We stopped along the way to get a picture of my old hospital in Beauvaix, which is now a school.