



WORLD WAR I RESEARCH PROJECT

ARMY SERVICE EXPERIENCES QUESTIONNAIRE

(1914-1921)

Part I - General Military Service

1. Name William Edward Votruba Rank or grade Private First Class  
Present Address 403 Sixth Street  
City Traverse City, State Michigan Zip Code 49684  
Unit (Co., Trp., Btry.) Unit Section 591 Commanded by Lieutenant R. W. Ellis  
Under Col Jones Headquarters in Paris of (Regt., Div., Corps., etc.)  
Commanded by Col Section on 10/13/17 was attached to French Div #4 under General Killebrew
2. Enlistment: (date) June 19th 1917 (age) 25 years  
(place) Ann Arbor, Michigan for (term) Duration of war.  
Previous occupation Student at University of Michigan Let Dept., Business Administration  
Had you ever previously served in the Regulars, Volunteers, or National Guard?  
If so, when and where? No service of this kind  
Why did you enlist? I wanted to enlist - not be drafted and felt I could do more good in this service than any other I had learned about.
- What do you recall about entering military service (your initial reactions and experiences)? Arriving at Allen town after a night and day on train we were given some bad, poorly cooked food on dirty unwashed tin dishes. Many were sickened. Because of crowded conditions several had to sleep on cots under big trees. That night there was a heavy rain that turned clay to mud in giffy and we were soaked and also covered with mud.
3. Where did you train as a recruit? Allen town, Pa. Camp Train

Please guide me in this.

What were you trained in? We were vaccinated - given shots for Malaria and just about every disease or sickness. We did some marching - worked on small Ford Cars - changing tires etc. Drove around on a dump ground - around piles of garbage to show we could drive the car under difficult conditions

Were you trained in first aid, signalling, radio, or the use of any special equipment? There were some lectures on first aid - no training

What were your experiences, if any, at officers' training camps? No officers training camps

Did your training prepare you adequately for your service overseas? Please comment. No training at all. At San Diego <sup>France</sup> we were given the job of assembling Ford Ambulances that had come crates for overseas shipments. We were trained to operate Ford Cars. On the 13th of Oct. 1917 our first day in the war we were given Italian Fiat's Two drivers to the Ambulance.

4. At what posts were you stationed during your service? There were four outlying posts in the Forest of Herve. Crocourt B2, B1 up north and P1 and P2. The wounded were brought to us by Bretonniers (Stretchers bearers) through the trenches. At P2 and P1 we got wounded from Hill 304. <sup>France</sup> We took our pick and wounded to the clearing station and older French Drivers took them to hospital south of the battle field.

Did you have any unusual assignments? Outside of being busy the work did not change

5. What was your opinion of the weapons you saw or used in the service? \_\_\_\_\_

We did not have guns. The French 75 Cannon was a remarkable Cannon. It could fire very rapidly. Steel helmets slipped over our heads. There was very little chloroform or drugs to relieve pain. Gas masks were not much good. I have none issued to me.

6. What were your opinions of the equipment, clothing, and rations you were issued? \_\_\_\_\_

We did not get warm <sup>clothing</sup> enough for quite some time. I personally got sweaters. Some full length wool underwear and a wool skin lined Coats coat from home. The French did not like the civilian clothes we were wearing. They were around leggings that the bottom of our legs and not always neat.

7. What did you think of the quality of leadership while you were in the service? \_\_\_\_\_

For a month or two there was a French Lieutenant assisting our Lieutenant. He was on our own. As far as I know we had no problems. There was also a French Cook.

Do you recall any instances of particularly good or bad leadership? \_\_\_\_\_

In May 1918 while evacuating wounded on right bank of Meuse north of Verdun the French General in charge was Mangin, called the butcher of Verdun. Some of his orders were very ruthless and obeying them actually meant a death sentence to those concerned.

8. What did you think of the discipline at the time (lax, fair, moderate, strict, harsh)? Please comment. \_\_\_\_\_

We thought his discipline very harsh. Evidently his orders produced results regardless of those sacrificed who went to their death feeling they were doing it for the glory of France.

Do you recall any particular punishments for breaches of discipline? If so, please comment. \_\_\_\_\_

One of our ambulance Company was outspoken in his criticisms and wrote bitterly in his letters. He was court-martialed for this and given a reprimand and a small cash penalty, besides having it on his record. I think 25 or 30% of our unit felt as he did but of course we obeyed the censorship rules and were careful of what we wrote home to our friends and relatives.

At one time one of our outfit (Whelan/Hess) objected to a small serving our French Cook (Guisto) gave him. There were words and some blows struck. Guisto pulled a knife and that he was arrested and confined. There was a court martial trial in Paris. What did you think about military courts and justice?

About six of us who had witnessed the argument and fight went to Paris to testify.

Guisto was given a term in the labor department. It was a US Court.

9. Did you know of any reasons for desertion?

As far as I know there was no problem of this kind in our outfit.

Was there much theft in your unit? None

10. What forms of off-duty recreation were common? After being on duty at the Posts

for 2 or 3 days, we came back to the base for rest. First we had to wash the blood out of our amputations and to see that they were in good condition, then look after our clothes and laundry, rest and sleep. I played a violin and there were several others with a guitar or mouth organ. We played and sang songs.

11. How did you and your comrades get along with civilians in the U.S.?

No problems

12. What did you think of the medical and supply services in the service?

After 4 years of war Chloroform and pain killers in France were exhausted.

Blankets to cover the wounded were torn or soiled. When staying at our posts of leisure over night we used these blankets for our own use, often covered with blood.

How was the health of your unit?

The winter of '17 in the Forest of Hesse Account section was very severe and cold and

mentioned before, we did not have enough warm winter clothing. There were lots of Cottles

vermin and rats. There were many with deep colds - bordering pneumonia. Myself was in In Sept and Oct. 1918. There was much flu. Many were hospitalized and I died for about 24

13. What did soldiers use their pay for?

Wine, cherries, chocolate or what food could be found to buy.

The French gave us a daily ration of Porridge, a cheap wine, and at some times a bit

of yellow whiskey. The French at their posts were good cooks and made much out of lentils or vegetables, horse meat, cheese or rice. All meals had soup of some kind



14. Was drinking a problem? No If so, how was liquor obtained? \_\_\_\_\_

Here and there in villages could be found an Epicery - a little shop where some low quality wines could be bought. Brandy was available but for other liquors one had to go to a large town

15. Was there much gambling? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, what types? \_\_\_\_\_

The wages of the common French Soldier was 5¢ per day. One could not gamble much with that. As for members of our unit we were glad to rest after our duties at the front.

16. Do you recall any songs that were popular during your military service? \_\_\_\_\_

We sang and played all the old songs as well as those of Harvard, Yale and some of the others. I am sure we played all popular US songs.

Our group loved music and when I was away from the base they took good care of my violin form

17. Do you recall any military slang words or phrases peculiar to those times? \_\_\_\_\_

"On the ambulance, the ambulance with blood behind our ears not infantry or Cavalry or G.D. engineers. We'll get the Kaiser by the - and cut his - off too and put it in the ambulance and bring it back to you"

Part II - Overseas Service

18. When you served outside of the U.S., from what port did you leave the U.S.?

Hoboken. Our boat was the Baltic. We followed the East shore to Halifax where we waited for a convoy of many loaded ships and their protective destroyers

19. What do you recall of your travel experiences (i.e., R.R., wagon, truck, or ships)?

The Baltic was very crowded but 5000. Considering war time conditions it was very good. The hold and lower decks swelled but there were complaints of Motion Sickness and wormy cheese. We were on it 4 weeks. Coming into Liverpool we were struck a gusting blow on our port side by a sub-marine. Rail roads were excellent from Verdun to Paris we took our ambulances

20. If you served abroad, what sort of country and people did you expect to find?

Driving through towns civilians were very kind and greeted us. At the front soldiers were exhausted after 4 years of war. They were very tired - ready to quit. They thought that US was too late in coming and in coming here just delaying the surrender to the Germans.

21. What were your first impressions of service abroad?

There we met and contacted personalities were very good to us - opened their houses to us. I think our members were all gentle minded too.

Did your views change later? Perhaps our being there <sup>early</sup> caused people to get used to us. Common place - old show. There were never any severe arguments or ill feelings on either side. We were there early and attached to the French Army.

22. How did you and your comrades get along with civilians in Europe, the Middle East, or Asia before, during, and after hostilities? \_\_\_\_\_

No problems

23. Was there much consorting with local women? Two of our unit picked up a disease and we understood were discharged dishonorably from the Army.

24. Did you know of or observe any looting by soldiers? No

25. How was the morale of your unit (mail from home, living conditions, general homesickness, etc.)? Most of us received many letters from family and friends also as many magazines as possible, many gifts of food, chocolate and candy.

26. Did you ever have anything to do with gathering of intelligence information (scouting, etc.) in France, Italy, the Middle East, or Russia? No

27. Did you know or observe any newspaper war correspondents? No

28. What did you think of the newspaper and magazine coverage at the time? \_\_\_\_\_

*Daily War time bulletins were posted at headquarters and at some bases however much information came from home papers from the states*

29. If you have read any histories, articles, or other recent writings on campaigns in France, Italy, the Middle East, Northern Russia, or Siberia, what is your opinion of their value and authenticity? \_\_\_\_\_

*I think they were very good and very well informed*

Part III - Combat Service

30. Did you take part in any combat action? Only as ambulance driver

If so, where, when, and against whom (Austrian, German, Turkish, Russian personnel)? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you recall you were thinking and experiencing at the time? \_\_\_\_\_

31. Did you ever participate in cooperative operations with the sister services? \_\_\_\_\_

*Arriving at Le Havre we found women ambulance drivers taking wounded from trains to boats*

*There were no women at the front for ambulance service or any other duties. There were women nurses in some of the hospitals 30 or 40 miles from the front*

*He  
1070*

32. Was your unit (company, battalion, regiment, division) ever attached to an Allied command? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, when, where, and which one? \_\_\_\_\_

Oct 13 1917 We were attached to the 4th French division  
May and June 1918 under General Mangin's 5th Division at Haudramont, Bras and other towns  
Sept and Oct 1918 Soumon La Faux and Chemin des Dames 29th Division

Were special procedures adopted to facilitate operations (i.e. attachment of interpreters, liaison officers, NCO's, special training or familiarization courses, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_

We did all or more than was expected of us and got along very well. They made themselves understood as far as that part our French was very limited.

What were your opinions on the troops of our other allies? (Canadian, Australian, New Zealand, Great Britain, France, colonial troops) \_\_\_\_\_

The Australian soldiers were tall and good looking about 6'2" or more. The British and Canadian were great soldiers. After the armistice we worked with civilians in the areas, Valle, Amiens, Arras area and results of the fighting there they were nothing to our French 29th division were great soldiers too at Soumon La Faux and the Chemin des Dames.

Did their arms and equipment differ from that of our soldiers? \_\_\_\_\_

I can not answer about guns and equipment. On two or three occasions our French Division used Colonial Doughboys ball iron to attack the Germans. These soldiers were wild eyed and dressed in their own fighting gear when going into battle. They were by

Did this cause any problem or difficulty in combat? \_\_\_\_\_ men and their appearance would

scare anybody. They were given lots of whiskey before they charged and gave a wild yell when in combat. They were terrible fighters. Many lost knives and if they did not draw blood of the

33. { Did you know of any problems between American and Allied units relating to communications, staff procedures, maintenance and supply, intelligence, etc. } \_\_\_\_\_

Germans to would cut gash on to own faces legs or ar.

When wounded it took three or four ambulance drivers to get them on a stretcher and into the ambulance for the trip to the hospital. They were absolutely no good at all in cold weather.

34. Did you and your comrades consider your enemy (Germans, Austrians, Turks, Bolsheviks) to be good fighters? The Germans were well trained and good fighters  
Toward the last however some ranks were filled with very young men.

Did you consider them well trained and led? They were well trained and discipline

Were they well armed? Yes.

What did you think about these enemies, as people? There are good and bad  
people in every country. Most Germans were misdirected by the Kaiser and his party  
in power, so to control the world they went too far.

35. How were American prisoners treated by the enemy? \_\_\_\_\_

In some of the stories I have read would indicate many American prisoners of war  
were badly treated.

36. How were enemy prisoners treated by U.S. forces? \_\_\_\_\_

I have seen many groups of prisoners being marched to the rear and  
put into stockades. I can imagine it was hard on them too to be  
prisoners of the French.

#### Part IV - Occupation and Demobilization

37. Did you assist in the establishment of civil government during occupation duty? \_\_\_\_\_

No If so, please comment. \_\_\_\_\_

38. How were local civilians treated by the allied military administrations? \_\_\_\_\_

In Dec. Jan. and Feb of 1919 our ambulance group worked with French  
civilians going into the country locating the sick and taking them to hospitals  
at At Quintin, Lulle, Arras and etc. After 4 years of war and being transported to the South  
France they pushed home by repaired railroads or tracks to see if their old homes were  
still standing. Many had poor clothing and little food and got sick with pneumonia or bad colds  
Many came home covered with sores and in rags

How were local civilians treated by the soldiers? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

39. If you were in the Regular Army or Marines, why did you choose to leave (or stay in) the service? National Guard? Organized Reserves? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

40. Date of discharge June 20 1919  
Where were you discharged? Battle Creek Michigan

41. What did you do after you were discharged? I had a fine home - father and mother and older sister. As soon as I was able I began to help my father <sup>in his</sup> wholesale and retail leather goods business.  
Did you find your military skills or education transferrable to civilian life? Not particularly, nearly all wanted to talk about war experiences

If the Army sent you to school, please recount your experiences there. \_\_\_\_\_  
No school - just \$60.00 in railroad fare to get home.

42. What were your expectations of civilian life upon leaving service (post-war America, G-I benefits, educational and career opportunities)? After seeing what other Veterans of War received I thought WWI Vets should get some benefits too, but I guess the \$60.00 we got is all that we can expect. Apparently they do not think WWI was a hard war and Vets are not worthy of help - anyway, if they delay long enough Vets will die off and so they won't have to do anything. It won't take long for the

43. Since the World War I era was a great national experience, did you learn anything about America or Americans? as out of 40 or 45 our section had but 4 left. Personally I do not need anything like a pension I am 90 years old and have enough to last me.

There are some Vets here that do need help and it would be good if they ever get help.



44. Was your service during World War I of any specific benefit (or detriment) when you returned to civil life? \_\_\_\_\_

*It took me quite a while to get adjusted  
Because of the illness of my father and needed home I was unable to go back*

45. Do you have any historical material to add to the Military History Institute? *To the University and get my degree*

Diaries?  Memoirs?  Letters you wrote home?  Photographs?  Insignia and unit patches? Books? \_\_\_\_\_ Camp and unit newspapers? \_\_\_\_\_ Other documents or memorabilia? (no uniforms, accoutrements, weapons, or munitions, however) \_\_\_\_\_

This questionnaire is by no means exhaustive. If you wish to explain or comment on matters not specifically requested, please feel free to do so on the blank side of this sheet. If you wish to add more than the space available for any questions, please do so on the blank side of this form and show the item number of the question. Please feel free to add more sheets if you care to provide specific details on any aspect of your service. Your recollections are an important source of information for historians and researchers.

*I have German maps of French territory which I feel are priceless - also about 45 French-National War Loan posters. These were a present to me after I got home. They were purchased at Brentanos Paris.*

*I am holding my diary and many items for a son who is a public writer and wants to put my experiences in story form. He plans to get the diary copy written.*

(If you served in the Navy, please write to us for a Navy questionnaire.)



ALLENTOWN TO ST. NAZAIRE

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Camp life at Allentown started with our arrival by train on the evening of June 23rd, 1917 and lasted until our August 23rd departure to the rail road depot for the ride to Jersey City on our start of the journey to France.

The two months of training, if one could call it that, was not much to write about, although I am sure I wrote a great many letters because it was a new life for me, so I made much out of the daily events. I wrote about my companions and how they reacted to the military life, and about some of the many kind Dutch German folks of the region who opened their homes to us for wonderful food and good fellowship.

The camp was located at the Allentown Fair Grounds. There was a very large red brick grandstand here under which was located a kitchen, supply room and many tables for feeding about 5,000 trainees. These, of course, had to take turns to eat and had to wait, standing in line, tin cups and tin plates in hand, waiting for their section to be called and seated. Having worked on a detail for the meat and other supplies, I would say they were unwholesome, unsanitary, if not down right unhealthy. The servings were messy, sort of thrown at us, carelessly shed on to our plates as we took our turn and moved along. One had to duck away and hold the plate without stretched hands lest the gravy or stew splash his uniform.

We were bilited on the far left side of the grounds in a section where small live stock had been exhibited at fair times, and which we named, "Sheep and Hogs".

In the early wake-up time hour, we were given time to wash up, make our cots, and police the grounds. There was always some pick up or sanitary job to do, also kitchen detail and so forth. Heavy garbage trucks and some guard duty was generally given to those who were in the dog house, who went over the fence or came in late on night passes.

There was always hiking and drilling and Sergeant LaMarre had a sharp strong commanding voice and knew how to command, so we got to be pretty good in our drilling and marched well. We felt proud of ourselves as a section.

About every few days we got stuck in the arm for something--- some illness real or imaginary, anyway, it hurt, and there were many days when we had a fever, ached or felt grumpy. I think we were treated for just about everything including poison ivy, bee stings and house-maid's knee

We enjoyed being free many nights and got passes for the asking. So we took in the City Parks, dance halls, movies and even Church. This gave us the opportunity to meet many nice girls. Because they were sorry for us, that we had to go to war, they were especially nice. Some of them wanted us to write them from over there.

During the last several days there were so many orders given-- followed by cancellations, that we were about to depart, that we began to take every order as a rumor or as a joke. Finally on the morning of August 23rd, we were told to pick up our cots and blankets and take them to the quartermaster. Then at messhall, we were each given black coffee, two ham and one cheese sandwich and a banana. That was it! That was when we were really off to war.

We had a full pack on-they were heavy and hurt our shoulders, we were equipped that way because we were told we had to march to the depot. After standing around for about two hours, a slight change was announced.

Some hot, very hot stuffy covered trucks were brought for our use and convenience.

At the depot there was a huge crowd to see us off. We had been told that it was hush--hush, and that our departure was to be secret!

Gus Baurman and I were on guard for more than an hour guarding the car door while others slept or rested. After that, I slept too, and did not awaken until we were coming in Jersey City--at least, that is what it proved to be. We were not told destinations--everything was so very secret.

Crossing the river by ferry was quite tame. Everybody had to keep his head below the railing in order that we not be seen. My first view of the city was quite impressive. The big buildings rising high into the dim hazy air of the early morning daybreak will be a sight long remembered. Going up the river to our dock we passed countless tugs and river boats and then I began to realize just how big New York really was! We were made to hang around the dock, fall in line, fall out of line, and finally, when we were given our berth tickets, and allowed to go aboard, we felt much relieved.

My bunk mates proved to be Spillar, Thorington and Wilcox. We were given third class passage with meals in the second class dining room. The meals were good. Poor coffee and tea, but lots of bread that comes in long loaves and butter. The meat was tough but we got along fine. I was pretty tired so slept in the afternoon. In the evening, I wrote letters and then watched the moon over the river and the many ferry boats before going to bed.

Thursday, August 24th:

This morning was spent watching people on the dock visit with friends on ship. Some of the girls threw their finger rings, and other articles of adornment, while fellows threw over hat cords. The boat and dock crews

were as busy as can be putting away the cargo, which was lifted by machinery from the dock and then dropped into the hold of the ship. "The Baltic". It was a very interesting sight. My but our boat was crowded! There were more than 1,200 aviators and they with the nurses and medical men, and the engineers made over 3,000 I am sure.

At noon we had hardly finished our dinner when there was a cry, "We are off", and I looked out over the port hole and found that we really were moving. People cheered and waved and there was a lot of weeping. Gus and I could feel for a lot of them. We were glad that we did not have to say good-bye.

Soon after we had cleared the dock and the tugs began pulling us down the river a guard came and made everyone go below deck. It was a shame not to have a last good view of the U.S. but orders were orders. I managed to find a port hole and watched the sights along the river. Boats ferried and small craft were going back and forth, and even cars were being transported on flat scows. Ellis Island did not look good to me. Everybody crammed to get a last farewell look of the Statue of Liberty. It sure made one have a strange feeling when he thought of how long it might be before he would see it again. We passed countless boats of the U.S. Navy, also a few foreign boats. A couple of French Liners came in U.S. bound that looked good. We soon came to the heavy swells of the ocean. I did not feel bad at all, but a lot of fellows got giddy. I spent the rest of the afternoon on deck reading and sleeping.

Friday, August 25th:

We had morning exercises but many of the fellows could not stand up. I did quite a bit of reading. Made friends with an old white haired waiter who gave me a magazine. The ocean was a beautiful picture today. Quite heavy swells and it looked dark and wicked. We from Michigan, gave a sing



for the nurses, officers and first class passengers, which was appreciated.

Saturday, August 26th:

This morning, some of the boys said that we went due south last night, for which remark they were roundly kidded. We struck the Newfoundland banks of fog early in the morning and had a damp day of it. It was not so very bad and we were on deck all day. About 5:00 our boat began to slow up and take soundings. After a lot of signalling, finally a two-masted sail boat loomed up out of the fog and a pilot was brought on. It was very interesting to watch how carefully our boat was guided along. Pretty soon we could see the shorelines and then our harbor came into view. It was just like a big bottle with an island in the neck part. On both sides of the island, were submarine nets, huge lights played on us from the mainland and the island as we went through. We found the town of Halifax sort of huddled up against the hills, and for a long while we watched the lights of the town and neighboring ships flicker in the fog. One of the stokers was taken sick and as he was going back to New York, I asked and gave him a letter to mail.

Sunday, August 27th:

This morning after breakfast, I came above board and saw four British cruisers in line near us. We did not see them last night because of the fog. Two big Belgian relief ships were making their way across the harbor. They evidently did not have much in their holds, because they rode high and their propellers cut high out of the water.

The town looked very pretty banked by the green hills with their patches of fir and evergreen trees. Gus and I took in the beautiful view and then settled down to read and listen to the Church bells.

We had a good dinner of roast pork, peas, potatoes and English pudding. Our waiter favored Gus and me with an extra portion of pudding.

He is very nice--looks something like our T.C. Rev. Brown. He was suffering with a burned hand. During the afternoon we wasted at least 2½ hours in a fake life boat drill. The rest of the time was spent in reading and talking. We have the damndest band on board. They have about three pieces learned now. They sound very "Circusy", and when they play, "The Bells are Ringing", one can shut his eyes and fairly see the elephants waddling around the circus ring or doing their stunts.

In the evening, we were to have a battalion sing for the nurses, officers and first class passengers. It ended in a farce due to the lack of leadership. There seems to be a little hard feelings on the part of the "dub" element towards us and college men in general. Last night there was some whisker cutting that might have been serious if it had not been stopped. I went to bed early and had hardly got settled when a fellow by the name of Hauser of Grand Rapids, Michigan came over and introduced himself and asked to borrow some reading material.

Monday, August 28th:

On guard from 6:30 to 7:30. Woke them all up. Another beautiful day. We are getting mighty soft from our easy life on ship board. Today a fellow came up to the side of the boat and sold us fruit through the port holes. It tasted very good. I spent time writing letters and read some. Tonight, Gus and I are in the dining room, some of the fellows are playing and singing at the piano, others are scattered around playing cards or reading. The air is thick with smoke.

Tuesday, August 29th:

Today a big ocean liner, like our own, came into this port loaded down with soldiers. They came so close to our boat that we could see red (Calvary) hat cords. We cheered and they responded. I spend a lot of time waiting for the magazine man who had promised me a book--was rather

provoked. Slight headache--too much reading and no exercise, I guess. After supper, Deyo, Gus (Baurman) and I walked the deck. Later Gus and I bought a raisin pie. Diamond, <sup>Cusby</sup>Cusby, and Cook came into Gus' room and we had quite a talk about Ann Arbor, Olivet & Albion school days. Everyone knew something about some one that some one of us knew, and soon nearly the whole state was drawn into the web of gossip.

Wednesday, August 30th:

Early this morning our boat took up anchor and moved further up the bay. We have a wonderful view here. The shoreline is just as beautiful as can be. There is a big hotel or resort building on the west. We can see the railroad trains along the shoreline very plainly. Today I met Morley of Saginaw and Johnson of Newark. Both had attended the University of Pennsylvania. I was pleased to have this opportunity to meet Morley, (nick-named "Ginger") as I have heard of him so much. Early this morning we saw two submarines crossing our rather small harbor. They submerged and came up again. There are at least 15 big ocean liners and big sail boats at anchor waiting for a convoy. Today it was rumored that we won't leave until next Tuesday. It is a beautiful moonlight night. On board, some of the fellows danced to the music of the band which is improving.

Thursday, August 31st.:

This morning I hated to get up. Soon after exercises we were allowed to take our lifeboat down and we rowed about the harbor and among the boats at anchor. It was a lot of fun and we were all hungry for dinner. In the afternoon most of our section had another opportunity to go out in the life boat, but I did not care for it. Am miserable with a sore throat.

Friday, muster role this morning. Many of us questioned the selection of one or two for first privates. We could not understand why they were favored--what they had done. For me it was no worry. I was

taken to Dr. or Major Coe, who gave me some pills for fever and swabbed my throat with iodine. I felt some better but did not go sailing though later I was sorry, as the crowd was allowed to go on shore, and reported a very good time. My magazine man, after considerable hounding, finally brought me, "Les Miserables". Now I have something to read. Tonight the sunset on one side of the boat was absolutely wonderful, and the rising moon on the other, made one think this world is heaven. I never saw such a combination of colors in my life. I don't wonder that Longfellow took this country as a setting scene for "Evangeline". The fellows gave a Michigan sing and later when Gus and I returned to the back of the boat, the band was playing some waltzes. We had a regular party because Gus can step off like a regular woman.

Saturday, September 1st.:

This morning the bay is calm as can be and to look across it with its countless boats and beautiful shore line is a wonderful picture. A sister ship of our boat came into the harbor this morning and is anchored near us. We can not tell whether she has troops or not. I did very poorly at French today.

Sunday, September 2nd:

After sitting up exercises, I went to Church. The service was Episcopal and given by the Captian in the first class dining room. It was the first service I had attended in nearly two months and I was glad for the opportunity. Today there is a feeling of restlessness among the fellows. In the evening, we watched a big boat of black recruits from the West Indies come in. There are four boats of troops in the harbor now- close to twenty ships in all. After this, Gus and I went into the dining room to read, however, there was little opportunity to do this. There was much trouble and a loud argument between several army officers and the

boat officers. We learned that it was about some wormy food served, and the filthy conditions of some of the tables.

Monday, September 3rd.

This morning started bad. The first thing I did was to drop my watch. It refused to go for awhile, but is ticking now so I don't know how badly it was damaged. Next, I found Gus had loaned a magazine that did not belong to me and that was given to me for my personal use. As I had cautioned him not to, I feel badly about it. I was on guard in the afternoon but Wilcox took my place so that I might hear Major Coe. His voice was almost inaudible from where I stood, but from what I could hear, it was most interesting. It was about surgery and the care of wounded. We had no French in the afternoon.

In the evening, I meant to do a lot of reading, but found myself talking with Fox, <sup>Paley</sup> Pallon, Scrogge and some others. Scrogge told a story that went like this---"An old gentlemen came into Charlevoix, Mich. and addressed a resident asking, "Where is your Y.M.C.A.?" The other looked at him with a sort of surprised expression and answered, "there ain't no Y.M.C.A., the P.M. is all that comes in here."

We stood at the rail and talked for a long while. A full moon came up and the night was beautiful. <sup>Paley</sup> Pellon came from Fort Logan H. Root because it was overcrowded. I have a book, "My Unknown Chum" and read for an hour or so until my room-mates came in to go to bed.

Tuesday, September 4th, 1917:

Well, this is the day we are doped out to leave, according to rumors. Last night I counted 26 boats in the harbor. It seems as though they must be all here now, that are ready to go. The meals seem better now that a general inspection has been made. Hope they keep it up. Today was more or less monotonous. In the afternoon we had inspection for throat trouble.

Two men of other sections were found to have mumps and were taken to shore. I had a nice visit with Birch of our section. His home is in Elyria, Ohio. After supper, Cook, Deyo, Otley and I played cards. Cook and I were partners and lost all three games played.

Wednesday, September 5th:

Spartallis offered to give Gus and me French lessons so we studied for an hour or so after dinner. At 4:00 Major Coe gave us a lecture on army sanitation that was much enjoyed. After his lecture when we had just resumed our little class in French, there was a shout and everybody rushed to the side of the boat to find that our propeller was turning. I looked at my watch and it was just 5:15. We ate a hurried supper and were up on deck as we left the harbor. Passing the other boats it seemed that every door way and every window had some one in it waving a farewell and cheering us on. Our boat was second and three others followed. As we passed out of the harbor and into the open water, we saw a large boat that had run ashore. It was high and dry. The sunset was glorious. The group had a little sing and then most of us went below. I played cards with Deyo, Cook and Riegleman until my head was splitting from the stuffiness of the little room.

Thursday, September 6th:

I woke up with a headache and otherwise miserable. After I crawled out on deck, I saw that there were thirteen boats in our party, many more than I had hoped for. It made us all feel more secure. I had very little appetite and spent most of the day trying to sleep off my headache.

Friday, September 7th:

This morning, I felt lots better. Out doors there is quite a bit of wind and the sea is lashing and twisting itself into all kinds of shapes. A lot of fellows are sick today. I spent all morning out on deck trying



to study French and read a bit. In the afternoon a heavy cold wind came up. It was real stormy and much of our limited deck space was wet from spray. Some of the afternoon was spent in reading but my bones ached from setting in uncomfortable positions. There is absolutely no place where one can rest or take it easy. That is, for us privates. About 5:00 I thought a hot salt bath would feel good, but the small heated, steamy bathroom, rocking from side to side, and the water in the big tub bobbing back and forth--up and down, splashing on to the floor, was too much for me and I lost my equilibrium very quickly. Suffice to say, that I didn't care for supper, but took a blanket and rolled up in it on deck and remained there until nine or ten o'clock. The night was so dark that I bumped into several people and many things before I could get down stairs. It was absolutely impossible to distinguish a thing two feet away and our boat had no lights.

Saturday, September 8th:

I woke up this morning very little rested but much steadier, outdoors a heavy rain had stopped much of the roughness of the ocean and though we rocked considerably it was much more comfortable. I read "Miserables" and played cards. Spartellis being sick, we had no French.

Sunday, September 9th:

I have just had breakfast and morning exercises. This is a wonderful morning. The sea is very much smoother and our ride ought to be pleasant barring accidents today. It seems hard to believe that danger is so near to us. We fell in for life boat drill and while we were waiting for the inspecting officers to come, Sgt. LaMarre passed out cigars--the gift of "Ferdinand Bull" who was disqualified for the service back in Allentown because of heart trouble. Gus and I attended services in the morning. This time the dining room was nearly filled.

In the afternoon, Major Coe gave us a talk to brace us up and give us courage. In the evening our boat zigzagged a great deal and there was considerable signalling. This gave much opportunity for rumors to start and being at loss as to what all this meant, I could not help but feel ill at ease. We tried playing cards, but there was no thought of cards.

Monday, September 7th:

I could hardly believe it was morning when I was awakened by the call to first mess today. The port holes were all closed and the only light was from a few electric bulbs in the hallway. The air in the night was very bad, but they threatened to make it still worse as all ventilators and passage ways and hatches are to be closed as we get near the danger zone. This will be most likely tomorrow. At present we are averaging about 12 to 14 miles an hour. We have been zigzagging all day long. It was fair today, cool with very little sea. My cold is making me miserable. This morning Gus and I talked about business opportunities in T.C. I became so enthused that I feel that the war and my life in the army is a burden, holding me down. I wish it was all over with so I could get back to my old work. We had drill-exercised and French as usual. Major Coe talked to us this afternoon about our work in France. Beginning tonight we have to guard our quarters at night as well as daytimes. The night shifts are of two hours. Everybody feels good tonight because we were given steak for supper. We really needed a change.

Tuesday, September 11th, 1917:

My cold is some better but as there is a cold rather disagreeable wind, I stayed in practically all day. I had a nice talk with Bylon, a practical nurse, today who told me of some of the countries he had visited and some of the people he had known. He is a mighty good heart

and I want to know him better. No French today--couldn't get a book, so Gus and I spent some time playing cribbage. At supper we were given assorted pickels, head cheese, punk tea, marmalade and bread and butter. I liked the bread and butter. After supper, several fellows came to our quarters and played cards 'til about 9:30 or so. I stayed on the bunk and read and had just as much fun. Tonight we sleep with our clothes on and with life jackets handy.

Wednesday, September 12th:

I read quite a bit this morning. It seems hard to realize that we are in danger of being sunk and to see everyone with a life preserver in his hand or about his neck. This seems much out of place. All of the hatches are closed and we are shut off from the rest of the ship. Our boat is zigzagging continually. This afternoon we had a lecture again by Major Coe who talked of military courts and so forth. We were exposed to the wind and I nearly froze. The lecture had very little interest for me. After supper, Cook, Deyo & Bauman came into our room and talked until a late hour.

Thursday, September 13, 1917:

I could hardly sleep last night. There was little opportunity to sleep or rest anyway because of the confusion and talking. We slept with our clothes on and there was absolutely no ventilation. In our crowded quarters, resting was out of the question, though I did fall asleep a couple of times. At 4:00, Scroggie came in to wake me up for guard duty, but I lay awake waiting for him, so he had no trouble getting me up. There were two guards from our section, Joe Ponton and I, and six or seven from the others. We sat at the foot of the stairs and talked. About 5:30 some one came down and said our convoy was in sight. It was not long after that that a considerable difference could be felt in the

speed of our boat. As soon as I was off my job I went on deck and there a pleasant sight greeted my eyes. All of our 13 boats were close together with our convoy of 11 or 12 U boat destroyers making circles and cutting in and around about us. It surely gave us a lot of assurance.

After breakfast, I made my blanket roll and did a small washing but could not finish because one of the ship's crew chased me out of the lavatory. These Englishmen get my goat! When I came up on deck again, our boat, the Baltic, and the other two boats of the White Star Line, Magentic and Belgic, had left slower boats behind and were striking out on their own hook, protected by three destroyers, zigzagging in great fashion. I had absolutely no desire to study French. After supper I had a long visit with Fox who told me a lot about his home life. It was foggy and dark as pitch. Gus was on guard. The Lt. of another section came along. He wanted to know how we were getting along. He did not have much to say but managed to make small talk for ten or fifteen minutes. Riegleman said, "I did not think it was in him", and that expressed my sentiments.

Friday, September 14, 1917:

This morning when I emerged from "The Black Hole of Calcutta", I found that our boat was all alone with our destroyer #38. The others were far to the head or south of us, out of sight. There was a heavy fog that was very wet and disagreeable. About breakfast time we could see the coast of Ireland in the distance. Then came inspection.

This morning went peaceably. Some of the Aero boys translated a message from the destroyer which stated that a sub had been spotted and the longitude and latitude were given. However, we had all confidence in our escort, so the message did not worry us very much. At noon the fog lifted and the day became beautiful.

After dinner we came into the Irish Sea and passed quite close to some rocky promontories. Some how or other, I was terribly sleepy in the afternoon and had a great deal of difficulty finding a place on deck where I could stretch out. It seemed as though every place I went the guards chased me out. Once after I had found a pretty decent sort of place, somebody spilled some water so that it came trickling down on me and I had to get up. So I gave it up as a bad job. But as soon as I became thoroughly awake I did not mind because I found the scenery very interesting. Several boats passed and two dirigibles flew overhead--one directly over us--the pilot waving as he passed.

After supper we settled back to enjoy the scenery and what we could of the trip which was fast drawing to the end. Later, as I had a rough face, and could avail myself of the one pint of distilled water allowed, I thought it a good time to go down stairs to our cubby hole to shave. I had hardly finished when Cummings came rushing to the top of the stairs and yelled, "Hustle up fellows and see the fun, our destroyer is chasing a sub." Already our boat was zigzagging at a terrific rate. Without thinking, with still soap on my face and with my straight razor in my hand, I went to the top of the stairs to get a look-see. I no more than stuck my head out of the stairway, then I was greeted by a string of violent expletives--most of which I had heard before, but never so forcefully, or vehemently, telling the world how dumb I was and ordering me to get my life jacket. You can bet I did so promptly!

I rushed up stairs as fast as I could and joined our group at our life boat and life raft. Crews were working on the ropes of the life boats.

Our boat was belching smoke, rushing and listing from side to side--zigzagging so fast that boards in the deck at our feet wracked and windows cracked. It was difficult to stand. Back of us the water churned and

our destroyer slashed, turned and twisted about making circles. Guns were firing. Suddenly, there was a flash and a terrible explosion and a great geyser of water went high in the air. Our boat trembled all over. Then five loud whistle-blasts sounded, lights came on, and life boats were being lowered.

There was very little confusion except for some of the crew who were badly frightened and who rushed out of turn to the life boats. Others just stood and waited for commands. Off in the distance we could see the Belgic and the Magentic, their stacks sending great smoke, hurrying at their best speed. Messages were being flashed at a furious rate. I have never seen such fast action as the little destroyer displayed. She rushed at the sub as a terrier would at a rat--dropped a bomb and then hurried away as though looking for another victim.

We stood in line for awhile contemplating as to how cold the water would be and how long it would take to get to shore when one of the ship's officers came up and told us that our boat had not been hit, but that the shock we felt was due to the concussion caused by the explosion which had destroyed the sub.

There was very little sleep that night as everyone had to talk it over with everyone else--a dozen times. About 9:45, Gus and I walked together watching the signal lights along the shore--both of us feeling very thankful over our narrow escape. Gus said, "And to think that there are twenty or so dead Germans floating out there in the dark."

Saturday, September 15th:

I slept soundly during the few hours that remained after our many sessions below deck, and when I came up on deck I found that--we were at the mouth of the Mercy River, waiting for the tide which would enable us to dock at Liverpool.



We arrived in at the dock about noon or one o'clock. We were at lunch at the time. The one impression I got coming into the harbor was the sameness of the architecture. The houses were all of a blocky substantial type--many in a row and built together. The first policeman I saw made me laugh. His uniform was like that of a circus clown. Everywhere were soldiers in uniform and hundreds were dressed in blue suits, white shirts and pink ties, who I afterwards learned were convalescents. When I went near the depot which was just beyond where we landed, I saw many in pitiful condition.

Gus and I were given a job handling the officer's baggage and I was honored by being baggage smasher for Major Coe. Later we were detailed to go on the boat for rations and narrowly missed being taken down the river as the boat began to clear the dock when we were down in the dining room. Gus, Ranft and I had an exciting time climbing down a rope ladder, to the dock far below. The ladder turning and twisting completely over, made it hard to get a footing. Those on dock yelled to us and urged us to hurry. They held the bottom of the rope ladder and walked along the dock keeping abreast of the moving boat. Sometimes our heads were down and our feet up as they played out the slack. Once or twice we dipped some and splashed in the dirty water of the Mercy. Finally they were able to grab us and jerk us on to the dock.

From the docks we crossed a bridge where about 30, three compartment cars were waiting for us. They were tiny and the whole outfit reminded me of a dog and pony circus show. The rails were like those of the Michigan E. & W. R.R. But I should give the road credit for pretty good service. It was the London and Great Northern. Our fellows nick named it the "G.O. & P."

In our compartment were Deyo Hunter, Wistrand, Boyd Scroggie, Easlick Jones and I. Just as we were about to leave we saw the "Y" man, to whom we gave our cables, arrested as a fraud. It made me peeved that our messages to the folks at home of our safe arrival would not go.

Soon we started. The country was like a garden. Every field was green and well cultivated, the foliage and hedges were also nice and green. People waived and cheered us from their windows and doorways all along the way. We stopped several times and always got out and romped around. We ate corned beef, cheese and bread, and some sandwiches that were made for those higher up, but which had found their way into our coach--in some manner.

We had quite a while at Birmingham. Gus and I sent cards and drank some ale which was flat and tepid. My! What a crowd of men those bar maids had to serve--all clamoring at once. We stopped off at Oxford for a minute or two and then slept all the way to Southampton. We arrived there about 2:00 or 2:30 and then hung around in a big warehouse for a long time--much longer than necessary I am sure--we were awfully tired. After they decided to go, we marched through the town, about 3 miles to camp. The night was black and there wasn't a sound but that of our 2300 marching through the streets. Some of us struck up whistling which was cheering. We got into barracks about 4:00. The place was military--plain and dismal. We were assigned to a shack (CII) and just as soon as they said, "fall out", we threw ourselves on the floor and slept.

Sunday, September 16, 1917.

I woke up several times during my sleep, conscious that I was cold, but too tired to fix my roll-up. Mess in the morning was coarse bread, tea and fat ham. I finished up at a Salvation Army shack with some cakes and tea. Later, I went over to the YMCA where I wrote a letter and sent a second cable home. They were kind to us there. Wylit and I were late for noon mess so we bought some cakes from the Salvation Army man, who was not very anxious for our business, and ate them under the trees. While eating, an Englishman came up to us and visited. He told us of phases of the war--had a brother-in-law--a German prisoner who was working as a farmer. A little girl gave us some heather.

At 2:00 we left camp for the docks. All along the way, people were out to see

us and children grabbed our hands and marched along with us. Southampton is quite a large town. Its homes and buildings were all strange and very foreign looking to us.

At the docks, we had a long wait. We had mess and lots of time to waste. We couldn't leave our section. At 7:30 our boat was ready and we, with several hundred others, went aboard. It was named, "The Antrim". For an ocean boat, it was rather small, and for the enormous number on board, it was a death trap. It was so old fashioned and so crowded that even though we had life preservers and two destroyers for escorts, we were all concerned and nervous during the whole 7 or 8 hours of the trip.

It was frightfully cold and hardly a place to stand. The minute one sat down several stumbled on him as there were no lights. Carroll and I dozed together leaning against the rail where we found a canvas wind break. Later, Rudy Wuench and I found a place in one of the aisles where we could sit on the floor and rest. We struck up a conversation with some tall goodlooking Australians who were on their way back to the front after recovering from "blighty" in England. They assured us that they were not at all "crazy" to go back and that our journey was not going to be a picnic.

Monday, September 17, 1917.

We were awakened about 7:00 by members of the crew who stepped on us. Both Rudy and I had fallen into a sound sleep. After some delay, we formed ranks on shore and marched a couple of miles to a camp. It seemed a mighty long distance and we all ached from our packs.

LeHaver has quaint, old fashioned, worn out homes across the river from where we landed. We saw many German prisoners working at menial labor handling freight and so forth.

On our way to the camp, we passed many herds of cattle, some driven by women and children. There were many dirty children who asked for pennies. The rest camp is quite an institution--not so barren as that at Southampton. There is a YMCA and

other buildings where one can buy things reasonably. We were given a meal of coarse bread, cheese and stew which was good. I slept soundly after this food until about 3:30 when I learned I could have a shower--the first in an age. Supper was tea, coarse bread, butter and a coarse cake. We are now writing in the YMCA. We have been assigned to, and sleep in, little round tepee tents--the fellows began giving "warhoops" just as soon as we saw them.

There are nine of us assigned to this little tent and when we are all in it, it is surely crowded. There is a wooden floor and we sleep with our feet to the center pole. Our legs are twisted at times with others and it is difficult to turn from one side to the other without disturbing quite a few. All the work here is done by German prisoners. Rudie Wuench talked to some today and they seemed confident Germany would win the war.

Today, we were assured that we were shot at twice by the submarine last Friday. One shot or torpedo hit us a glancing blow at the front of the boat and damaged our boat to considerable extent. The other missed the front by a very short distance--we were fortunate! The Baltic is said to be in drydock for repairs now.

Tuesday, September 18, 1917

After we got squared around in the morning, Gus and I walked over to the YMCA and center buildings. We bought some chocolate and wrote some letters at the "Y". Here we got into some conversations with some English Blighties, most of them were discouraged with the war situation and England in general. I asked one fellow if a revolution in Germany would be the only thing that would end the war and he replied that there would be a revolution in England first. They all complain of England's treatment. They feel that they are absolutely nothing. After they have won their discharge by service and being made permanently unfit, they are not allowed to go home. The officers have very little respect for the common soldier. They told us of their experiences in no mans land. From their description, it will be a long time before the German will be forced out of France.

Long hospital trains with their wounded come to the sidings at the dock. We have watched the wounded being assisted, led, or carried on stretchers from the train to the boat. The air is filled with the smell of iodo-form or other medicines, the sights are awful and very depressive.

About 6:00, we were ordered to pack up and march out for inspection. As soon as that was over, we marched down to the depot. Some English and Australian squads marched down too. I can't express my thoughts as we were marching. We knew that the English and Australians were going to the front, but we didn't know where we were going. Off to the North in the distance, we could hear cannonading at the front...Most of us felt pretty serious.

We were put on the train. Our coaches were third class--most of the other kinds of troops were put in freight or cattle cars. In our section were Jones, Ranft, Easlick, Hunter, Deyo, Boyd and I. I had a small pocket memo book with a tiny map of France. The Irish Lt. looked at my map and told me that we were going to the mouth of the Loire river. He was the only one that knew--everybody else told us that we were going to Bordeaux. I didn't care as long as it wasn't the front.

As soon as our train began to move, we knew, because our car seemed to have one flat wheel--right under me--Jones and I stretched on one seat--Easlick and Ranft on the other--the rest hugged the floor, and we went to sleep.

Wednesday, September 19, 1917

We were awakened at a junction a short distance out of Paris. Here they fed us on corned beef, bread and jam. We were pretty much bumped around during our sleep--most of us were pretty stiff. Here we saw an Airdome with a dirigible at anchor.

After a couple of hours ride, our train continually side tracking, we stopped at Ramboulet, where some of us were given coffee. I ate some chocolate and went to a little corner store. Here we had our first taste of French wine. I found it rather sour. The place was rather crowded with soldiers and officers and we were later amused to see some of our nurses coming back to the train with flasks of wine.

I was surprised to see how much the soil and trees were like that of Michigan. Everything reminded me of the state-but the homes and the people. They even had quite a bit of wild mustard and wild carrot in their fields. Probably this was due to the lack of men to till the soil. At Chartres we stopped for a while and I was put on detail to guard a section of town under Sgt. Smith. My beat was quaint, an old street 12 feet wide, flanked on both sides with delicatessen stores and homes. It curled down around the side of a hill in a pretty fashion. Everybody knew that I didn't belong there but they smiled just the same. Coming back from the beat, I bought some grapes and joined the fellows. We had a few minutes so we went into a place to have some wine. Here was an English soldier and a very patriotic French landlord who gave us a royal welcome. Toasts were given--we were just getting started when Major Donnelly came along--so we left--much too soon. We could not locate Smith but later found that he had indulged just a bit too much.

At LaLoupe, we stopped for 3/4 of an hour, we had a minute up town and here had lots of fun making the natives try to know or understand what we wanted. We had a big time. We all think Millin takes the barbed wire prize for good Dutch. Sample, "Me no talk French--me Merikan." Everybody thought he was talking Indian. Some of the boys were entertained at hospital. They came back with big reports. I believed them because they came back to the depot accompanied by a couple of nurses, one of whom was jolly and most interesting.

Coffee was served by the nurses at Rognon. There is a castle here. Our train brought us into LeMans about 7:30 and we were here for an hour. Our section was given guard duty. Deyo and I were paired off. We walked the streets some--bought fruit and wine. All of the natives wanted to know where we were from and where we were going. Some school boys who had studied English in school came to us and tried to ask questions in their book-taught English. I guess the conversation was 50-50.

Thursday, September 20, 1917

I awoke about 6:00--damp and cold. Everybody ached from being jolted continually

while sleeping on the hard seats and floor. We passed through several quaint villages. The country became poorer. More hills and some rocky formations like those of Pennsylvania. At Nantes we stopped off for a bit. I was surprised to see so large and so busy a place. Our train went right down a prominent street and we could see quite a bit of the town. The windows and store fronts were full of people who waved to us. From now on we followed the Noire which is not very large and the banks are low. We arrived at our destination. St. Nazaire about 1:30. There was a big scramble to make up our rolls and get our things together. As soon as we were lined up, we marched down the main street and about 2-1/2 or 3 miles along the shore front and up along a long hill to our camp which was located on a large flat-sandy and clay, barren wind swept plateau North of the City. On the way, we passed hundreds of German prisoners on their way to work. The streets were lined with crowds of dirty kids asking for money. At the entrance of the camp, we were greeted by a burst of cheers from sections #92, 93 and 94 who dropped their jobs and ran to meet us. Our best surprise was to find many letters from home--the first we had for over a month.

For our quarters, we have been assigned an old barracks building. It is of old boards, tar paper and I believe a good wind could knock it down. It has a dirt floor and it is breezy. There are just boards for a bed and there is a hole under the door big enough for the biggest prize hog in the states to crawl through. There was not a good place to eat, so some of us took our tin plates of food and coffee and sat in the lee of the wind on the ground with our backs against the shack, but the gusts of wind from the ocean across this bare stretch of land brought swirls of dust and sand to our eyes and faces and put some in our gravy.

This was our introduction to the Camp at St. Nazaire.



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OUR TRIP TO THE FRONT AND OUR WINTER AT JUBICOURT

CAMP AT ST. NAZAIRE

Tuesday, Sept. 21, 1917:

I was on guard from 2-4. Too much snoring after that to sleep. Gee! but this is a cold place to sleep. Just boards for a bed and the wind brings gusts of sand through the big hole under the door. In the afternoon, Paley detailed six of us to go down town by truck to unload Fords from the boat which just came in. A good many National Guards came in to town and Camp today. They were coming off the boats as we got down town. Our work was simple as negro dock men did everything there was to do. After supper, I found the "Y" too crowded again for comfort.

I wrote a letter.

Saturday, Sept. 22, 1917:

Jones and I passed out hardware today to the ambulance body builders. It was a hard monotonous job and I was pretty tired and rheumatic besides. I have to guard tonight.

Sunday, Sept. 23, 1917:

We were on guard last night 12-2. I found it terribly hard to get up but as luck would have it, my beat was in front of the two mess tents and there were two fires to keep me warm and lots of hot coffee-bread and syrup, so I got along famously. We guarded again 6-8 and 12-2. I had just finished my last beat and was talking to Gus (Bauman) who had a kitchen job when who should come up but P.B. (Pork and Beans) Cleveland of Traverse City. A great surprise to see him way over here--Gosh! but it was good to see him. "P.B." looked mighty thin--had been sick. We showed him our chicken coop quarters and had him meet the fellows. While we were taling a fellow by the name of Hannah, who had attended classes with me at A.A. came in. All kinds of surprises. About 5:30, we left for town to get a decent meal, but I never had such a time getting a bite. We went to three places before we could get a thing, and then, spent an hour and a half getting eggs. There was a fight in the place because a house guard thought he had paid for his food and the proprietor didn't. All of the women in the place talked at once. After that, we went slumming, and such a slum!