

World War I Journal
Corporal Ross J. Pettijohn

On **January 4, 1917**, at the age of 26, I enrolled as a student at Link's Business College at Boise, Idaho and was attending school there when war was declared between the United States and Germany, on **April 6, 1917**. I wished to complete my school work before enlisting, so studied day and night and finished it about November 1st. I then wired to Twin Falls, Idaho to ascertain whether or not I had been called by the draft board of that county, and being assured that I had not been called, I reported to the Army Recruiting Office in Boise. On my way there I met a fellow student named Homer Beutler. I asked him why he was not in school. He said that he was on his way to enlist, so we went together. We were accepted. We were told that a regiment of artillery for overseas service was being formed on the coast, so we chose that branch. We were to leave for Fort Douglas, Utah the next morning. I shipped my trunk home to Twin Falls, and made arrangements to leave.

I was getting room and board at the Whipple home at 1120 Washington Street. Charles Whipple decided to enlist also. He left the next day after we did.

I went to Links and said goodbye to the teachers and my few acquaintances. They wished me the best of luck. About a dozen recruits gathered at the station that evening. There was no band in attendance, and very few of anyone, but those that were there shook hands all around and said "Give them hell!". There was some delay because of a derailment between Boise and Meridian but we finally got aboard the train and were off to the big war. I could not but wonder how many years it would be, if ever until I again stood in Boise, and if anyone would remember.

We arrived in Salt Lake City, Utah, **November 5, 1917** and reported to the recruiting office at 2nd South and Main Streets. We stripped off our clothes and had a beauty contest after which we went to the Chesapeake restaurant and had lunch. Then we took a street car for Fort Douglas. There were three of us from Boise, John Coski having joined us at Glens Ferry.

We were assigned bunks in the recruit barracks. There were about 200 recruits there. I saw a good many boys I knew. Each day, detachments would be sent to training camps and a constant stream of recruits came to fill their places. Next day, we again posed for the doctors and got a shot in the arm. This was a vaccination for typhoid. Then we took the oath to do our duty and support the Constitution "for the duration" or until properly discharged.

Next day we heard that a detachment of coast artillery recruits was to be sent to San Diego, California, and everyone wanted to be on the list. My name was not on it, as the names were taken in alphabetical order. Instead, I was put on K.P. duty. I had visions of an eternity of scrubbing huge greasy pans, peeling potatoes, etc. When the roll was called for those to go, one man was missing. I stepped out to see what was happening, and the clerk asked me if I wanted to go. I did. So I went.

We had a fine trip. Changed cars at Los Angeles. On the way to San Diego, I got my first sight of the ocean. We got into San Diego about dark. We were to report to the C.O. at Fort Rosecrans, which is across the bay from town. The last boat had left, so we reported to the Military Police station for instructions. We got rooms in a hotel and proceeded to see the town. We were in uniform and couldn't do anything very radical. Next morning, we took the Government boat for the Fort across the bay. We were assigned to a recruit company and located in tents. We found San Diego to be a fine city with a wonderful climate. When we left Boise, the weather was very cold. Here everything was in full bloom. Roses were climbing over the barracks.

We started in drilling immediately. One day I was again put in K.P. duty. Each company kept a roster and the men were taken in order for 'Kitchen Police' duty. I hadn't scrubbed many pans when a sergeant came and told me to report to the company office. With the guardhouse in mind, I went in. The First Sergeant asked me if I could hammer a typewriter. I said that I could. He told me to take off my fatigue uniform, for I had a job! From that time on, I was in the office nearly all the time.

A battalion of artillery was formed at the fort for overseas duty. A battalion is made up of two batteries, with three battalions to a regiment. Battery "A" was formed from the 2nd Company, C.A.C., and Battery "B" from a company of National Guard stationed there. About 150 men were needed to fill up these two companies to battery strength (250 men). These were picked by the captains of each company. Captain Ranney, who was in command of Battery "A", asked me if I wanted to join his outfit. I said that I did, so he put me on his list.

We were given some special drilling with gas masks and instructed in trench warfare, etc. We practiced rolling packs. We carried three blankets, an extra suit of underwear, two pair socks, extra pair shoes, half of a pup tent, towels, soap and other toilet articles, mess kit and cup, condiment and bacon cans, tent pole and pins, besides an overcoat, rain coat, rifle, bayonet, canteen, ammunition, and first aid pouch. This made about 70 pounds.

On **February 27, 1918**, we were told to be ready to leave in the morning. About 4 am, we rolled out and had breakfast. The battalion was then formed with the Color Guard carrying the flag in front. All the companies at the Fort were lined up along the line of march to the dock. They came to "present arms" as we marched between the two lines. The boat was loaded to the limit. We crossed the bay to San Diego and boarded a train for Frisco. The clerks had to make a "sailing list" of the entire battery. These lists showed each man's full name and home address, the

name and address of nearest relative, and it certainly was some job to try and write on that train, which jolted and swayed like it was off the rails. We finished the list on the dock at San Francisco. There, we learned that we were to go somewhere on board the transport Northern Pacific. We boarded the transport on March 1st with the other two battalions, one from Washington, and one from Oregon. Sailed out through the Golden Gate on the morning of March 2nd. One of our corporals deserted in Frisco and was sent to Alcatraz Island.

I got my first taste of seeing the world through a porthole. The roll of the boat was a new sensation, and became more sensational all the time! We headed nearly west and there was much talk of the Hawaiian Islands and the Suez Canal. March 5th we saw islands in the east. We saw very few ships. The weather was getting better. We saw some flying fish. We slept in the hold, in three decker berths. The lower berth was "par bon" if the man above got seasick.

We had orders to sleep below, but a lot of us took a blanket and slept on deck. Too hot below. I slept out on the stern nearly every night. There is plenty of fresh air out there, but the stern of a boat bucks like a bronco, and the spray comes over occasionally to make things pleasant (wet). As we went south, the North Star sunk nearer and nearer to the horizon. Our little boat seemed like a tiny island in a universe of water.

The mess hall was down by the boilers. It was a very "pleasant" place to dine! The K.P.'s were stripped to the waist. They put the mess kits into a cage and soured them in a vat of boiling water. The soap and grease stuck to them and consequently flavored the otherwise tasteless chow.

They always fed boiled cabbage and greasy pork the first few days. It gave you a good appetite. I went down to the mess hall about once a day.

March 7th: Saw a school of jumping tuna fish.

March 10th: At daylight, no land was in sight, but soon some small islands appeared in the east. These were covered with tropical vegetation. Bright colored birds flew through the trees. The town of Panama is about a mile from the canal entrance. A gasoline launch came out to meet us and a pilot came aboard. He wore a white duck suit and a wide, high crowned straw hat. We went directly into the canal, so all I saw of Panama was adobe walls and tile roofs. The Pacific entrance to the canal is east of the Atlantic entrance, for the reason that the isthmus makes a bend at this point. The town of Balboa is some distance inland. Miraflores is near the locks. The canal is on sea level for some miles on the Pacific side.

There was a detachment of soldiers at Miraflores. They said that they wished they could go back to New York. Too hot there. We all crowded along the rail on the side where there happened to be something to see, and the boat would heel over and almost capsize! Then an officer would come and chase a bunch over to the other side. The locks were a very interesting sight. We arrived in Colon, at the Atlantic end of the canal in the evening and tied up overnight. We were not allowed off the boat. We got a chance to buy some fruit from peddlers on the dock. The salt pork and cabbage had lost their charm. There was a canteen on board which opened every day for two or three hours. A line of men would form to wait for the canteen to open. I heard one fellow say that he didn't know what they had for sale, but if he got to the window he was going to buy a hell of a lot of it! It seemed like half of our time was spent standing in line. Chow lines, canteen lines, inspection lines, clothing lines, pay lines and a thousand and one other breeds of lines.

We pulled out of Colon early in the morning of March 11 and ran into some rough water, much worse than any we had seen before. Most of the boys turned green around the gills. However, it was not so hot, and that helped some.

March 13th: We are among the Bahama Islands. In the evening we saw the mainland off Florida in the west. The cooks have changed the menu. The name "slum gullion" fits it exactly. The diagnosis is dishwater, stale bread, mule meat and a few trimmings like hair, soap, mutton tallow and bones. Then the lot is thickened with Portland cement. Sure "fine"!

March 14th: Someone started a peace rumor. Starting rumors if one of the army pastimes.

March 15th: We rounded Cape Hatteras and struck the roughest weather on the trip. I did not get seasick but felt none to hearty. I remembered my father, Captain Dyer Burgess Pettijohn, telling of rounding Cape Hatteras in small steamers during the Civil War. We entered Chesapeake Bay and tied up at Norfolk, Virginia. The bay was full of shipping. Battle ships, destroyers, tugs, and hundreds of merchant vessels and small craft. As we passed a battleship, their band played "Over There". We stayed in Norfolk the rest of the day but were not permitted to leave the boat. A sailor in the docks said that the reason he joined the Navy was because he got drunk and patriotic at the same time.

March 16th: We were on our way to New York. Had beans and prunes for breakfast. Tasted mighty fine. By evening, we were outside the New York Harbor. For some reason we did not go in, but turned south again. There was much conjecture on where we were bound for. However, at about 5 p.m. we again turned north and laid outside the harbor all night.

March 17th: Passed the Statue of Liberty. Saw the famous skyline of New York. We unloaded and boarded a train for Camp Merritt, New Jersey. This was a good camp. We had lots to eat, no work, and good barracks. I got two letters while there. We left Camp Merritt on March 24 at 6:20 a.m. I hammered a typewriter until my fingers were sore, making another sailing list. Had to make six copies. We boarded the train at Cresskill Station. Left New York at 6 pm March 25th. We were ordered below until out of the harbor. When we came up we could just see the light of the Statue of Liberty.

We were on board the famous liner Mauritania. The crew were mostly men who had been wounded and unfit for land duty and boys. This boat has a battery of six 6" guns, four forward and two aft. The gun crews looked like they knew their business. They had several lookouts up in the 'crows nest' with field glasses. We were assigned to Compartment 'K' which is as near the bottom as possible and still be in the ship. We had hammocks to sleep in, but I took mine down and flopped on the floor. One day a bunch of the boys were in our compartment telling how brave they would be if we were torpedoed. Just then, "boom" went a terrible explosion! One of the braggers shouted "Don't get excited, boys!" and just about tore the stairs down in getting up. They found that the gun crews were trying out the guns and one had been fired just over their heads. I was on deck at the time.

There were about 3,000 soldiers on board, besides 400 Red Cross nurses and a considerable number of unattached officers. The upper decks were reserved for the nurses and officers. Soldiers and other low animals stayed below. Our food was punk. I never found out just what it was. Part of it seemed to be cat meat (at least we found fur and claws also tails and intestines). We wore life jackets all the time. They were stuffed with something that looked like cotton, and were supposed to support a man in the water for two hours. The crew said that after a man had been in the ice cold water two hours he would be willing to sink. We stood lifeboat drill twice a day. Two days from Liverpool, four American destroyers came out to meet us. Two went ahead and two stayed alongside. They were a great sight as they plowed through the waves.

April 2nd: Liverpool in sight. We tied up near the liner Carpathia (later sunk by subs). Stayed on board that night.

April 3rd: Out on the dock. The land felt good to our feet. Lots of traffic about the docks. We marched a short distance to a railroad station, boarded a train and had a good trip across England. We had rations of corned beef and hard tack. This tasted okay at first. England looked like a toy country to us. (at this point it had been 5 months since leaving Idaho)

One of the boys from Texas said it looked like they were just fooling when they made that country. We traveled third class. Piled off at a station or two and were served something they called coffee. Arrived in Romsey in the evening and marched out to the so called rest camp. We rested our stomachs there. From then on we dreaded being sent to a rest camp. We left on April 7th at 9:45 a.m. and marched twelve miles to Southampton. My 70 pound pack felt like a ton before we got there. We marched about three miles through the streets at attention and got a rousing welcome. Swarms of small boys ran along after us and asked questions. We rested on the dock for an hour or two and had our first and only experience with English money. Talked to some Australians who had been on the Turkish front and were now going to Flanders. They had been in the service four years.

We boarded a little old side wheeler cattle scow named Mona's Queen. We were crowded into the hold of the boat like sardines with no room to sit down. We were on the boat twelve hours, and I think that was the hardest night I ever put in. We reached Havre about daylight and another pleasant surprise awaited me. We lined up in regular order, the tallest men on the right of the line. The first and second sections were ordered to fall out and unload the boat, so we packed cases of canned goods up two flights of stairs, and had canned bill and hardtack for breakfast. Then we marched 5 miles up a steep hill to another rest camp (camp #1). We rested here until April 10th. Then we marched down the hill again and were introduced to the famous '40 and 8' which were French boxcars. Each had painted on its side "40 hommes, 8 chevaux", which meant that the car would hold 40 men or 8 horses. It held us, but there was no room to spare. We went through Versailles the first night and Orleans the next day. Saw a lot of fine country and had a good time in general, barring the 'corned willie' and hard tack.

If we could have extracted nourishment from the scenery, we would have gotten fat! We arrived in Limoges on April 12th. This is a large town of about 100,000 population. Our quarters had once been Napoleon's barracks.

It looked like it had never been cleaned out since he was there! A high stone wall enclosed the grounds, and guards were stationed on it to keep the boys in and the girls out, but we went over the wall every night in mobs. At first we had all the liberty we wanted, but soon the roughnecks got into trouble in town and then we had to go in squads with a non-com in charge. Later we could get passes from the 'skipper'.

Lots of rain and fog. Nearly all have bad coughs. We made the acquaintance of vin rouge (red wine) and vin blanc (white wine), two brothers whose society was much in demand. Wine was about 1 franc a liter (about a quart). Most of the boys were broke. We had not been paid since February. They shot craps and played blackjack as carefully as if they had been playing for \$10.00 bills.

April 25th: Mail day for the first time since leaving New York. I got 18 letters. Took a bath at the public bath house in town. Issued straw ticks and straw to fill them. Luxurious compared with sleeping on boards, and hardwood at that!. I was working in the company office. No end of reports and records.

May 3rd: Most of the battery left for Nexon, a small town about 14 miles from camp. The rest were to go to school. I was studying telegraphy. Others were taking up telephone work.

May 5th: Nothing was doing yet. We had 3 days of real rest.

May 9th: Seemed to be a screw loose in the school work. We practiced some in the barracks, but mostly did bunk "fatigue" and ate. Good chow.

May 12th: I was ordered out of Nexon to take the office work. The other clerk, Corporal Dismukes from Amarillo, Texas was promoted to Sergeant. This meant that I would be Corporal.

May 13th: I packed my barrack bag and put it on a truck for Nexon, and climbed up beside the driver. We drove through the most beautiful country I had even seen. It couldn't have been painted any prettier. When we got to Nexon,

a funeral was in progress. The procession, led by the priest, came down the road to the church, the people walking in pairs. Then they went to the cemetery. I later walked through the cemetery and saw graves over 100 years old. They decorate them with wreaths made of wire and spun glass.

The battalion was billeted about the town. Our battery office was located in a barn back of a wine shop and blacksmith shop. The 'top sergeant', mess sergeant, supply sergeant, one bugler and clerk slept downstairs on the floor. Upstairs was a sergeant with a few men. The kitchens were in the next room, which was open on two sides.

May 23rd: Charles Lamb, the bugler and I went down to the town washing pool and hammered out some clothes. The pool was about 15 feet square and had flat rocks along the sides. The old women bring their laundry there and hammer it out with heavy wooden paddles. Charles was a boy about 20 years old with big dark eyes, and looked very saintly, but during seances with fermented spirits, he was transformed from a "lamb" into a lion!

May 25th: Payday. Our first one since leaving the fort. The boys all swarmed the wine joints and were shooting craps and playing blackjack. At retreat, half of the men were too far gone to get in line. The line looked like a row of animated scarecrows.

May 26th: The celebration still continued. The noble heroes billeted upstairs got into a free-for-all fight. Riley finally had to be bound and gagged to restore peace.

May 31st: Unfavorable news from the front. Lots of refugees were coming in. Old men and women and children came plodding along the roads, pushing carts with part of their belongings. The great German drive was on. We learned that the order was out for us to go from Havre into the trenches, but miscarried and never reached our colonel until too late. We would have been watching daisies grow from the roots up by then.

The Chateau de Chalus, where Richard Coeur de Lion was killed, was near and was fairly well preserved.

June 6th: We had breakfast at 6 a.m. The Battery was drilling hard on the guns, which were 9.2" Howitzers. They were called "nine-point-two's".

June 15th: This was fair day. They had fairs on the 15th and last days of each month. The peasants did their trading and brought their stock for the Government buyers to inspect. They had some fine beef stock and sheep. The battery was ordered out into the country to practice placing the guns. We hiked out about 5 miles and worked all day in the hot sun. Did not have enough water along, and got very thirsty. When we got back, Charles Lamb and I sampled some cider. It was hard. Then some vin rouge, then some vin blanc. We did not get tipsy, but did get sick!

June 16th: D. S. Nelson (Cook Nelson) and I went down to the gendarme's house this evening. They are very nice people. They gave us some wine which was a revelation. The wine we get in the shops is a twin brother to vinegar.

Sunday 23rd: Lamb and I went to the soldier's bathhouse. The water was ice cold. In the evening a bunch of roughnecks had a free-for-all in the wine joint in front of our billets. They threw bottles and chairs and a good time was had by all. There was no guardhouse there, so they were punished in a cruel and unusual way. The outhouses and latrines were most vile and unsanitary, and they had not been cleaned since Noah's flood! So a cart was procured, a number of large galvanized cans placed on it and the offenders put to work cleaning out these places. They filled the cans by shoveling and then pushed the cart out into a field near town where a hole was dug and there they emptied the cans and went back for more.

When they would start down the street, all the people would flee as from the plague. This fragrant institution was called the 'honey wagon'. The detail was in charge of a corporal who had flown the straight and narrow. They would send one of their number for wine occasionally and kept just sober enough to stand upright. It was comical, (if it could be observed from a distance) to see the honey wagon come zig zagging down the street, propelled by a mob of hilarious youths, surrounded by a halo of stench and profanity.

June 24th: Sgt. Julian Van Assche and I took a walk over the estate of the Baron de Nexon which adjoined the town. There was a small castle on it. The tower had portholes for crossbow men. There were deer in the park.

July 4th: The town had a big celebration. The people were making American flags, counting the stars and stripes in our company flag. They made them all sizes and proportions (some were square!).

July 6th: The battalion went on a 20 mile hike in heavy marching order. The boys say that the colonel was a little fuller than usual, and wanted to show off before his lady friends, so he had the outfit pass in review a half a dozen times. Coming back, a lot of the boys dropped out. They came straggling in all night.

July 20th: Went with Kerzak to the school up on the hill. The family in charge of the school were cultured people and they had a modern home. One of the girls spoke English, some.

July 21st: Some Italian opera singers gave an entertainment on the plaza. They were fine!

July 22nd: We were packing up to leave.

August 1st: We rolled our packs, said goodbye to our French friends, and marched to the station. We had a good trip through fine country. Saw several very old castles perched on the tops of hills. Arrived in La Courtine at 7:30 p.m. This is where the artillery tries out the guns. As we got off the train a soldier standing by said, "Cheer up boys, it's only 1 kilometer to camp instead of the usual 5 kilos!" There were about 50,000 soldiers there. We had good barracks. They were occupied by Russian troops at one time. After the Russian revolution, the French and Russians had some difference of opinion and the French used machine guns in the argument. The machine gun oratory won the argument. Bullet marks are all over the walls. We had lots of work there, preparing to go to the front.

August 13th: Hammered a typewriter until 3 a.m. making firing data for the guns.

August 14th: Went on rifle range today. Made a score of about 45 out of 50.

August 17: Had a grand review for the brigadier.

August 18: About 40,000 colored troops came in. They were field artillery.

Sunday: A band of colored soldiers had a revival meeting under a tree in front of our barracks. The speaker warned them of the evils of wine, wild women and gambling. A lot of our boys got in a fight with some of another regiment and as a result our outfit is confined to quarters.

August 21st: We left La Courtine at 9:15 a.m. We were learning to like the old 40 and 8 boxcars. We rode through a fine country - thousands of acres of vineyards. The boys called them vin blanc forests.

August 22nd: We were still going north. Passed through Dijon.

August 23rd: Another day on the boxcars. 10

August 24th: Arrived in Rouvroy at 4 a.m. Hiked into town and got a little sleep. I slept in a barn with another donkey. This was a typical French small town. It was on the Marne river. The country was quite rolling and not so fertile as the other places we had been. I was billeted with Sgts. Van Assche, Ebbing and Rasmussen. We went through a donkey barn into our boudoir. The redeeming feature was that the inspecting officers didn't know where we were and also that there was a wine joint in the same building. A nice girl tended the bar there. We didn't have to stand at "calls" because I was Battery clerk and had left our names off the rolls.

August 28th: We were ready to leave. This town was our base. We left our heavy baggage there while we were at the front. Sgt. Ebbing stayed there as a caretaker until our return. We had our packs on, waiting for the order to fall in. The wine wagon had just arrived, so we all gathered around for a farewell drink. We drank the wine and beer as fast as the girls could draw it from the kegs. At the last minute, Capt. Ranney told me to say with the office records which were on a truck, so I got out of marching! At last we were off. We pulled out into the main road and waited for a French truck train to pass. I never saw so many trucks in my life. They were driven by French colonials from Indo-China. They must have been an hour in passing.

September 1st: It had been arranged so that all the men rode on the trucks. This was much better. One night the truck caravan came to a halt on a hill. The truck behind the one I was riding in was hauling the firing beams which were iron beams about a foot square and 14 feet long. They were used to bury in the ground, making a sort of dirt box to keep the guns from kicking over or out of position when fired. A soldier was sitting on one of them with his feet in front of the end. The truck behind failed to stop, and bumped into the beam, which was sticking out behind. The beam was driven through the front end of the truck, crushing the soldier's legs in front of it. The poor fellow was in great agony and moaned while they were trying to pull the beam loose. It was about 20 minutes before we were able to get him loose. Luckily there was a doctor in the caravan and he gave the soldier an anesthetic and put him to sleep. He was rushed to a hospital, and we never heard of him again but he must have lost his legs.

We would travel all night and rest in the daytime. In the daytime everything had to be under cover of the trees or camouflaged. The camouflage was like burlap and colored to imitate the grass and foliage.

On the evening of September 1st, we had just finished a banquet of corned beef and hard tack and the men were preparing to make the last lap of our journey to the front. It had started to rain. A soldier of our battery named Lloyd Whitmore, from Oregon, decided that he had had enough. He leaned against a tree and put the muzzle of his rifle under his chin and pulled the trigger.

His brains were scattered over the ground. His reason, as near as we could find out, was that he had contracted a venereal disease at Limoges and had been under arrest and in the isolation squad at the battery. He imagined that he was getting worse, however. He was engaged to a girl in Oregon and was very despondent over the trouble he had gotten into, so he decided he would stay in France.

September 2nd: We were nearing the front. The rumble of the guns was louder each kilometer we went north. We climbed a hill and there before us in the night, we could see the flashes of the guns and the signal rockets. One of the boys yelled, "I want to go home!" Airplanes hummed overhead. They must have been Boche, for searchlights were sweeping the sky for them. They were trying to bomb the roads. Once or twice, bombs did fall so near that they threw dirt and gravel over us. We entered a woods. A guard stopped us and told us that we were going into a warm place and to have our gas masks ready. At last the trucks stopped, and we piled out.

It was pouring down rain, and as dark as pitch in the woods. We got the order to form single file and place a hand on the shoulder of the man in front of us. We crossed a stream on a narrow footbridge, and then were told to sleep anywhere we pleased. There appeared to be no choice, so I put my blankets down in the mud and flopped! My tin hat served as a pillow. The others did the same. It was cold (like sleeping under a street sprinkler). It was about 3 a.m., so we didn't have long to wait for daylight. When it was light, I looked around and saw the top sergeant with his overcoat turned up around his ears, walking back and forth, trying to get warm. We learned that we were in the Saint Mihiel sector. It was comparatively quiet. The gun crews started to work, placing the guns and the truck drivers were hauling ammunition.

There was some shelling going on. Every night the roads were full of men and guns and trucks hauling ammunition. As soon as daylight came, they all disappeared. There was a narrow gauge railroad which ran to the reserve trenches. It hauled shells all night. We could see that something big was about to be pulled off. A shell struck the crossroads in the midst of heavy traffic and killed several men and horses. The hole was filled, and traffic resumed. They said that more artillery was concentrated in that sector than had ever been in a like area. The 75's were

everywhere. The three Battalions of our regiment each had eight 9.2" Howitzers. The shells weighed about 290 lbs. and were about the heaviest guns used except the naval and railroad artillery. We were assigned trenches, roads, dugouts, etc., to fire on. I was not on a gun crew. I carried orders and reports to and from headquarters and did anything else that the occasion called for.

We slept with gas masks in position, ready to be put on. A gas guard was stationed with a huge klaxon, ready to give the alarm. (The klaxon sent out a hair raising screech.)

September 9th: The great Saint Mihiel offensive started at 11 p.m. It was preceded by an ominous silence. Somewhere off in the distance, a gun boomed. Then the air was split by the crash of 10,000 guns. They fired steadily for hours. The night became as bright as day, so that our motorcycle riders could speed 60 mph along the roads. The explosions blended and sounded like the roll of a great drum. Two 16" naval guns near us fired every minute or two. The violence of their reports cannot be described.

Soon there was a stream of ambulances coming back from the front loaded with wounded soldiers. Then, after daylight, the prisoners began pouring back. Our guns did fine work. They made direct hits on every one of their targets. They would make a hole 10' deep in the ground.

Afterward, we went over the ground and saw what our guns had done. One shell landed on top of a dugout and exploded inside, killing all the Bosh there. The barrage gradually died out until only an occasional report was heard. The naval guns fired all day. They said that they were shelling Metz. We soon got orders to move, and on September 16th, packed up and pulled out. We had no idea where we were going, and it seemed as if no one else did, either.

We traveled all the roads in that part of France. We would meet an outfit one day, and next day, meet them again. Every regiment had some design painted on their trucks and outfit. Ours was a white bear. We finally headed into the woods near Mount Vaucon and Very.

On September 20th we arrived in position at daylight. We had just stopped, when a gas alarm sounded and we unloaded the trucks with gas masks on. We were dead for sleep, but immediately went to work camouflaging the kitchen and digging gun pits. The roads were knee deep in mud.

We cut brush and built a road from the main road to our position, about a quarter of a mile. That evening the Captain came and gently imparted the news that he had a job for me. I tried to remember when I didn't have one. He grabbed two others, and we started out in his car. Another followed on a motorcycle. The job was this: the guns had been loaded on railroad flatcars 14. after Saint Mihiel, and shipped to our new position by rail. Our supply point or "railhead" was Ippecourt, near Bouilley. This point was about 20 kilometers from our position. The country was traversed by a network of roads. We were to pilot the guns from Ippecourt to our position.

It was just dusk as we started. A short way out, we came to a sign, "take left road, road to right is in sight of the enemy". It was dark, so we took the right hand road, as it was nearer.

We went through the famous Clermont on Argonne, which was completely demolished. It was shelled every night. The Germans tried to put the bridge out of commission there. We stepped on the gas. The Captain told me to closely observe the road so that I would not lose my way coming back with the guns. As it was as black as the ace of spades, I might as well have been blindfolded! We arrived in Ippecourt, which was only a station. We had no blankets or rations and had had nothing to eat since morning.

There was a big Y.M.C.A. warehouse there full of supplies. The man in charge generously gave us a ten cent box of soda crackers. He wanted to know whether we had any souvenirs or not. We felt like giving him a souvenir that he would remember! We lay down on the station platform and slept. Didn't have any trouble in going to sleep. The Captain went back to the position, after giving us instructions. We were to stay there until the guns came in. The gun crews were with them and would have chow. We were to immediately unload and start for the positions. Each of us to pilot a gun, keeping the guns separated and getting to the position by daylight if possible. If not, camouflage the guns and leave them not nearer than 6 kilos to the front.

The guns were expected next day. They didn't come. We were hungry and getting more so every minute. We managed to bum some chow from a bunch of engineers nearby. They were not anxious to feed us, as it was against orders to feed anyone except their own outfit.

That afternoon, three of us got on Bugler Mellinger's motorcycle and went down to Souilley. We went to a Y.M.C.A. joint. They had nothing but cigarette papers, and not many of those! We found a Red Cross station. There was an American girl there. She served us hot chocolate and sandwiches. We were a tough looking trio. Whiskers about 10 days old, gas masks hanging on us. Six shooters on our hips, tin hats on our heads, and mud over all. Some contrast to the sleek looking Y.M.C.A. heroes and "gold brick" soldiers there. The girl opined that we had been up front. After getting seconds on the lunch, we rode back to Ippecourt.

The guns arrived next evening. We rushed for their chow. All they had was hard tack, but that tasted better than any cake I ever witnessed. We unloaded the guns and I was elected to guide the first one off. They were hauled by huge caterpillar tractors. My caterpillar driver was George Washington Lee, from Texas. It was now dark and raining hard. The caterpillar, gun and caisson and gun carriage hooked together were about 60' long. I had to guess our roads. The Military Police stationed at the cross roads didn't know the name of the next town.

I soon had a presentiment that I had guessed wrong. We got mixed up with a bunch of horse drawn field artillery. They were ahead and behind us and got stuck on a steep hill. Some of their horses balked. The road was

slippery, and they had a sweet time getting up that hill! We finally got away from them and then explored France all night. Near daylight, I saw a signpost with a name on it that I recognized - it was Parci. We came down a long hill with hairpin turns in it. The gun caravan could just barely make the turns. We had to make them, for we couldn't turn around.

We got down the hill and came to a river. The bridge had been hit by a shell. We looked it over and decided that it might hold up the gun. I breathed a sigh of relief when it was across! I did not fancy going back and telling the Captain that No. 1 was at the bottom of the river. In Paroi, I scouted around and found a Military Police station, or rather they found us. That caterpillar made as much noise as a battery of machine guns! The M.P. said that we were 3 kilos from the trenches. George Washington Lee voiced the opinion that we had better "get the hell out of there"! We all agreed. It was now about 3 a.m., and would soon be daylight, so we decided to hunt a place to camouflage the gun.

As we started out a side road, Bugler Mellinger appeared like an apparition by my side as I was walking in front of the caravan. He said he had been sent on his motorcycle from Ippecourt to the position to bring back a truck with some chow, and had lost his way. After we covered the gun, the other boys pulled their water soaked blankets off the carriage and rolled in the mud somewhere. Mellinger said that he had left his machine at Paroi, so he and I walked back there. We decided to wait for daylight and then find the road to camp. He said he had tried every road in that territory, and had not found the right one. He slept in his sidecar and I lay down on the floor of a house. That is, it had been a house, but the roof had been caved in by a shell. My clothes were soaked, but I was asleep in two minutes!

We were gently roused by the whistle of a narrow gauge locomotive about 10' from where we slept. We got up and found that there were several soldiers there, who had gotten lost from their outfits in the night. They were asking if we knew where the 2nd division was. We had no trouble in finding the road to camp. I went to the Captain's dugout. He had been up for several nights, and was sitting at his table sleep. I told him where the gun was. He said it was okay, and that they had decided to bring them on in by daylight. They got in about 4 p.m. and we pulled them into the pits by hand.

This position was quite interesting. The woods showed evidences of fighting. Nearly every tree was broken off by shells. Shell holes everywhere. And more coming all the time. Several of the boys had close calls. Shrapnel burst overhead, and we could hear the bullets and pieces of shell zip through the brush. The Battalion Headquarters was moved to Vraincourt, 3 or 4 miles away, and I was sent down there the evening of the 23rd to do some office work. Vraincourt was a deserted village. It was shelled that night. I didn't sleep well. Some of them struck so close we could hear the stones and tile roofing falling, after the explosion.

September 24th: We stayed there the next day and on the morning of the 25th, got orders to move quick. We lost no time in getting out. About an hour after we left, the town was shelled and knocked flat. We heard that there were 12 killed and 17 wounded there. We moved back into the woods about one and a fourth miles from the guns. The big drive started the evening of the 26th. We found a phonograph and played "Little Liza Jane" while the barrage went over. We found a few records, but no needles. We used sewing needles and pieces of wood. The Top Sergeant and I had a dugout of our own with a fireplace in it. It was under a big tree. I burned my overcoat, trying to dry it out.

October 1st: Took mail over to the guns. I can see a double line of observation balloons. They extend to the horizon on each side. German airplanes have shot down several of our balloons lately. Lots of air fights.

October 4th: We left for Verdun at 6 p.m. We got there about 2 a.m. and stood in the street for a long time while the officers located quarters for us. At least it seemed a long time. The shells were coming over, every half minute.

At last, we were led up a hill and into a three story building. Again, I didn't sleep any too well. Next morning, I found that we were in no great danger. We were in the citadel of Verdun. It was sunk in the hillside, and was even with the ground, and had 15' of dirt on top. We went into the famous underground defenses. Verdun had been a beautiful city of about 75,000 population, and had fine parks, bridges, and a great cathedral. Now, every structure in town was ruined by shellfire.

October 6th: I was detailed to take a truck load of supplies out to the gun position which was about 2 miles north of town on the shady side of a hill. It was unusual for a truck to travel this road by daylight. We saw lots of German airplanes observing the operations. Our anti aircraft guns opened on them. It was a pretty sight. The anti aircraft shells explode and the smoke looks just like a snowball. They seldom hit one, but they do make them fly high! In a few minutes, shells began to come over. Most of them went over us, as we were on the opposite side of the hill from the Germans. We unloaded without sitting down to rest. Then we went up the road a quarter of a mile to a spring, and filled a barrel with water for the cook's dugout. There were two or three other trucks there also. A shell burst in the road, killing a truck driver and wounding several others. At last, we started back to town. I did not know a truck could travel so fast. Just as we got to town, a big shell struck just ahead of us, and threw stones all about us.

October 8th: The drive started at about 3 a.m. Our truck drivers were hauling ammunition night and day. They slept sitting up at the wheel. Several of them were gassed severely.

October 9th: Two dough boys drove a big bunch of Austrian prisoners through town and stopped at the Citadel for a drink of water. They were a poor looking bunch, and didn't have many souvenirs. They were almost starved.

October 12th: Sgt. Dixmukes and I went down to the College du Marguerite and took a bath. It is by the big cathedral. We had to dodge shrapnel. There were no civilians in town. We have not seen one for a month.

October 13th: Great excitement over peace rumors! The firing still goes on, however. A bunch of dough boys celebrated all night in the citadel. Next morning they had to go into the trenches, and over the top.

October 17th: Big gas attack. A shell struck about 25' from us and uprooted a big tree. Another gas shell struck the front of the house. We put on gas masks. After awhile, we got orders to take them off. I took mine off and could smell gas, so put it back on in a hurry. Some of the boys were slow, and got gassed. Several went to the hospital. About 80 Frenchmen on the ground floor were gassed very badly. We heard of several who died from this gas attack. This gas irritated the membranes of the lungs and throat, causing a secretion of water, which, if severe, filled up the lungs, causing strangulation. A gas victim usually died with eyes and mouth wide open, gasping for breath. The little I got, gave me a terrible cough.

October 24 to 26th: Heavy shelling.

October 27th: We heard that the Germans had recaptured hill No. 310. We left Verdun at midnight for another front. Shells were still coming over as we pulled out. The Germans had a few guns which could still reach the town. We had a very cold ride that night.

October 28th, 1918: We passed through what had once been heavy forest. It was a wilderness of broken trees, shell holes and barbed wire. All kinds of guns and equipment were scattered about. We could see the little shelter holes where the soldiers had crouched for protection. Some were full of water and looked like a bleak place to enjoy life in. Little piles of empty rifle shells lay near. German prisoners were working on the roads. They were mostly boys and old men.

October 29th, 10 a.m.: Reached Lancon. The guns were already in position at Senuc, which is 2 miles away. We expected another drive.

October 31st: Drive started. Our guns fired on the Bois de Loges near Grandpre. Here was some of the hardest fighting of the war.

November 1st: (finished school at Link's one year ago)

We moved our battery office to Senuc, where the guns were. A French battery was firing as we passed along the road. One gun fired over our heads just as we were directly in front of it, and nearly deafened us. We were the only company on Senuc and had the pick of the town for billets.

I took a detail out to look over the field. We went up through Grandpre and up the hill of Mont le Mort Homme, or Deadman's Hill. The dead were thick. We saw lots of one company. I think it was the 315th Infantry.

November 7th: The 79th Division was coming back from the front. All morning the road was filled with men and guns. They were in good spirits. I saw one fellow driving a trench mortar, who wore a silk plug hat he had found somewhere. They were plastered with mud.

November 10th: We were waiting for orders. It was getting cold, with ice freezing at night.

November 11th: We got the word that the "guerre a fini". The war was finished!

November 14th: We got orders at 4 a.m. to move and at 8 o'clock, pulled out. We went to Floville, then MontFaucon, St. Menehould. Camped at the side of the road at night. The ground was frozen and it was very cold.

November 15th: We stopped in Senancourt for a few days. The mail came while we were there. I didn't score. Bugler Charles Lamb was transferred from our outfit at this place. He did not want to leave us. We stayed in Senancourt until the 22nd, when we left at 6 a.m. We went through Bar le Duc and got into Rouvroy at dark. We were glad to get back! The girl at the wine shop had died of the flu while we were away.

We had to coil up endless red tape here. Made a complete check of our equipment and sent in a requisition to complete our equipment "C". The only bright spot was our old friends, vins rouge and blanc.

November 24th: We left Rouvroy at 4 p.m. Stood in the rain at the station until 8:30. Thanksgiving day in boxcars and the only celebration we had was when we stopped alongside of a train of wine cars. One of them was leaking, and we gave a Frenchman some francs to bring us a bucketful but we were wrong in supposing it was wine, because it must have been pure alcohol. We arrived in Brest at 1 p.m. and stood in the rain until 1:30, then went to Camp Pontenazen. The mud in our tents was knee deep. No floors. It rained all the time we were there. We slept in our clothes, and were wet all the time. The kitchens fed 10,000 men each and were like stockyards. Nearly all the men were sick. Conditions were much worse than at the front!

We were allowed no liberty. The men grew desperate. Even the officers were savage. Every man who was able had to work. They went 5 miles to the docks and carried sidewalk to camp on their backs. I had to make another sailing list of 12 copies. It took a week. The rain ran down our necks, as we hammered the typewriter. The top soak got sick, but wouldn't go to the hospital. He got a bottle of wine, and we heated it in a tin cup on the stove. That cured him.

One night a storm blew down half the tents. We left Brest January 15th, 1919. Marched down to the docks and got on a tugboat which took us out to the transport Haverford. We slept in hammocks and everything seemed fine, compared with our stay at Brest. The old tub was very slow. 15 knots was about all she would do. We went south from Brest. There was a company of colored infantry on board. They were casualties and had all been wounded. Some of them were decorated for bravery. I heard one say as we passed some island, "Those are the Canary Bird Islands." The home trip seemed like a long old grind, notwithstanding the fact that we had lots of amusements on board. The band played every day and we had shows and prizefights. The men shot craps all night. Two or three chuck-a-luck games were running on deck all the time.

January 29th: We had crossed the gulf stream and the air felt cold.

January 30th: We had reveille at 4:30 a.m. We were in the Delaware river. It had taken 15 days to cross the Atlantic ocean. All kinds and sizes of boats came to meet us! Bands played, and all the factory whistles and ship's sirens were screeching. At the dock, the Red Cross served us ice cream and cake - the first for a year! We put on a parade in Philadelphia, and got a big write up in the papers.

The conditions at Brest also came in for an expose'. We went from Philly to Camp Dix, New Jersey.

January 31st: The Battery went through the delouser. All of our clothes were baked with live steam and we took a REAL bath! We had good barracks, and lots to eat at Camp Dix. Got a lot of mail.

February 8th: Had some dental work done at the camp hospital.

February 11th: We left Camp Dix by train to Canton, Ohio, Chicago and Kansas City. This was the Colonel's home town, so he put on another parade through the streets, after which he had a big dinner at the Hotel Baltimore. Then we were turned loose. We surely made good use of the time until 1 a.m. when our train left. Our Battalion went to Camp Kearny, California by way of Wichita, Kansas to Amarillo, Texas then Los Angeles, over the Southern Pacific railroad.

We stopped in Los Angeles for several hours and I went to a show. The other two battalions went to Camp Lewis, Washington to be disbanded. We got into Camp Kearny at 7 a.m. on February 18th.

February 20th: Went to town with Sgt. Woods.

February 22nd (Saturday): Had a great parade in San Diego, in honor of San Diego's own, as they called us. They turned out the Sailors, Marines and Cavalry and passed in review with our outfit on the reviewing stand at the fairgrounds.

February 26th: All the Battery were disbanded except the old regulars who remain in the service. I was sent with a detachment by boat to the Presidio of San Francisco. We had a first class trip on board the passenger boat Governor. Arrived in San Francisco at 1:30 p.m. We did nothing in 21.

Frisco but wait to be discharged. Private Eno was the only man of the Battery with me. He lived in Lovelock, Nevada and was telling me of his girl. He was going to be married soon after he got home.

One day I went down to the camp post office to call for my mail. Eno said to get his, also. He had not heard from his girl for a long time. He got a letter. He opened it, and his face took on a painful expression. The letter was from his girl's husband requesting him not to bother his wife with love letters. His girl had married a slacker in his absence. We were discharged on March 8th, 1919

I got transportation to Boise, Idaho. There were about a dozen discharged soldiers on the train, and we certainly had a rousing time on the way to Ogden, Utah. There, the bunch broke up, and I was alone. I went to Minidoka, Idaho, and paid my fare from there to Twin Falls, Idaho, my home town, where I arrived at noon on March 11, 1919. I stayed at home for a few days and looked over the town. I found that I was a stranger in my own home town. All the jobs were held by slackers and girls, if I may be pardoned for mentioning the two in the same sentence! I finally went to work for the Gem State Lumber Company at Melba, Idaho.

(During the summer months in Melba, the handsome young twenty eight year old war hero met Hilda Moore, who was staying there with her parents and operating a little ice cream parlor with her sister, Martha. They were married on the 18th of October, 1919 in Boise.)