

J. A. Clawson, Editor

Letter from Albert Johnson

(Concluded from page one)

Our hospital is to handle only slight cases so we will have rather pleasant work to what we have been having. All in all—I am faring very well in Germany with the Third Army. My duties are those of chief ward-master for the whole hospital, see that everything comes off O. K. in all the wards.

I see by the papers that we are allowed to tell all about ourselves and what we have done in France and Germany if we went there. I shall tell you briefly just where I have been and what we have done. I will commence with leaving the U. S. A. Here goes:

We left our last camp, the base hospital on Long Island, on May 9, went down East River and got on the S. S. Caserta, an old Italian cattle boat made over into a troop ship. There were about 2000 soldiers aboard. We left the Hoboken pier at 6 p. m. May 10, and went out in a drizzling rain through what is called "the Narrows." We were all kept below deck during the first hour or two. We were soon out in the old Atlantic with 14 other vessels. The President Lincoln was one of them and was sunk by sub on its way back from that trip. All in all about 40,000 troops were in the one convoy. The first few days nothing happened I wasn't sea-sick in the least, never felt better in fact. We were not allowed on deck after 9 p. m. and were not allowed to smoke after dark. All the ships traveled with no lights showing we saw some of the wireless apparatus flash and that was all the light that ever appeared. There was some signalling with searchlights. We had a daily drill with life-boats. We all had a place reserved on a raft where we were to go if a sub attacked us. About the third day out we had a little rough sea. Our main deck dipped water so you can see we rocked a little. I rather enjoyed it, even though we did slide around some and had trouble sitting or standing still long enough to eat our meals. The whole trip was very quiet. We zigzagged around a lot, never going straight more than an hour at a time. I never thought the ocean could be as quiet as it was. I enjoyed the trip very much. I really like the sea. When we were about eleven days out we were met by a large number of these small gun-boats or destroyers. They frisked around and through us like squirrels. The morning we first sighted land was on the 22nd. An airplane or two was then added to our escort. We have to in the harbor of Brest in northwestern France without anything going wrong on the 13th day out. On the 14th day out, the 23rd of May, our ship was pulled alongside the dock and we landed. The Company went to Pontanensen Barracks where Napoleon used to train his men. I stayed at the docks for a couple of days, then went on up to camp.

Brest was my first foreign city and it sure looked funny to me with its stone houses and barns in the same building and both right out on the street. All the kids wanted pennies and cigarettes. My French that I had studied at College was almost all forgotten but I made out some things.

Well, we played ball, etc. for a week at Brest and then we got on a train with 40 men in a small French freight car and some cold food for a three day trip through Tour, Dijon, Is-sur-Tille and Langres. You have seen a lot about Langres lately. Well we were quartered in some new American Barracks about two miles from that old walled city for one month, the month of June. We had nothing to do but clean up the place a little daily and look around. I visited Langres several times, and played ball near there. Then on the 1st of July we loaded all the hospital equipment, tents, beds, mattresses, medicines, instruments, etc., that we had received there into large American trucks and moved up to Malilly, a large concentration camp near the front. I might mention that Langres and Humes where we stayed a month are in northeastern France, not very far from Switzerland. Malilly is northwest of that, south of Rheims. Well we barely got to Malilly when rumors of the Big German drive reached us. We pulled out at once

for Reary-sur-Coole, a small place right near Chalons. Here we set up our 25 or more tents to receive patients in and 20 or more tents for the men to sleep in. We had quite a large camp, all tents. Here I was put in charge of the X Ray machine for the first work with it. We were barely ready when the Germans started their big drive on July 15 at 12:15 a. m. I was asleep that night and woke up from the noise at 12:18 so you can see I heard it from the start. We had heard stray shells dropping from time to time the week we had been there and heard French and American guns replying. This was different, though. I have since heard the cannon in the Chateau Thierry drive, the Soissons drive the Argonne and Verdun drives and the heavy bombardment the last six hours of the war, but none was worse than that on the Champaign front on the morning of the 16th of July. It was to be the German's last drive to win peace. They found us ready and you know what happened. We were at that time near the lines 10-15 kilometers which was as close as any units like ours was supposed to come. On the 15th we took in over 800 cases of the famous 42nd or Rainbow Division. They had all been struck by shrapnel and high explosive shells. They surely were a bunch of badly shot up men. We were new then too and it effected us more than the same things later. In three days we took in 1500 cases, several of them gassed. That's our first taste of war. To add to our troubles we were there visited by a German bombing plane who tried for us but missed us by fully 100 feet. I wrote you about that. The next night he turned his machine gun on us. I'll tell you more about all this when I get back. Anyhow, in four days we pulled out for the Chateau Thierry front by truck. We set up about 15 kilometers from that place in an old castle or chateau—Chateau Perouse. That was just when the Germans started to go back to the Aisne river. We stayed there two weeks then pulled up into the newly retaken country north of Chateau Thierry. We located at Colncy, a short way southeast of Pere-en-Tardenois. When we came there the Germans had been gone five days though the lines were only a few miles away. We had to clean up German machine gun positions, dead horses, and lots of shattered buildings on our camp-site. There were bodies of French, German and American soldiers all about our camp still unburied. The smell was not always pleasant and the flies were simply awful. We were here a month and a half. I visited the front while there and had my first taste of shell fire near me. It did not bother me much though I confess their howl or whistle as they go by isn't the most pleasant sound. A sergeant was killed when a shell hit the road ahead of us; not one of our men. At any rate we got back and later the Americans and French crossed the Aisne and advanced beyond. Then the American army got ready for its St. Mihiel drive and we loaded on a train and pulled for that region. We went this time to a small town near Souilly, 12 kilometers from the famous Verdun. Here we set up and waited quietly hidden for two weeks after the St. Mihiel offensive. That offensive proved much easier than expected and only a few hundred wounded came from the whole thing. Then the Argonne fight started. We heard all the bargages and saw several airplane fights. German aviators came over regularly but none bothered us. We used to operate on our 200 cases a day for days and days there. It was everything from shrapnel to machine gun, rifle, airplane, bomb, hand grenade, bayonet and accidents. That Argonne offensive was surely a bitter and terrible fight. We finally won through, but the Americans there can call themselves lucky that came through it all. While at this place, Fontain Ranton it was called, I visited Verdun several times. That must have been quite a city once. Now it is nothing but ruins. It's a shame, and time will never rebuild it fully. That town was shelled for four years straight nearly every day. Hardly a building remains as it was. Hardly a building that doesn't have to be torn down and rebuilt. It was a city I imagine of some 50,000 or 60,000 people once. Not a civilian there.

From that place we moved to Farmerville, directly below the Argonne forest. This was a town just west of Verdun. Here we were when the end came. Here we also were shelled and two of our sergeants killed

and eight men wounded. I was lucky enough to get by unharmed although a shell hit only some 50 feet away but never went off. It was a big ten-inch and would have gotten me nicely as I was busy getting some wounded men and patients away before we all were shot up. I picked up a piece of shrapnel large enough to kill a horse near me. I still have it. I heard several go by.

Then peace came and we celebrated. Then we moved by a funny little railroad with a two-foot track span to Sanilly where the general headquarters were for some time. From there we pulled for Germany on a train on the 8th of December. It took us about twelve days to reach Coblenz. We passed through the country fought over for four years. Germany is in good condition where we are now except that her food supply is not very large. No fats or soap to be had and her money is going down daily. We now get 166 marks for 100 francs or about the same as \$20.

There are only a few troops in this city. Our men are all out near here in camps, forts, etc. They sell ice cream here but it isn't much good, about like our sherbet. Meat is very like. Leather, too, is very expensive. I had a pair of shoes half-soled for 15 marks. Their bread is dark and tastes like saw-dust. They make something they call "apple pie" which tastes like more saw-dust. Eggs cost at least one mark apiece, not a dozen. Milk can't be bought. Clothes are fairly cheap. Shoes cost 90 to 100 marks a pair. Beer costs 30 pennings a stein but is not good for the men say that drink it. Wine varies in price. We are right in the heart of the wine country. Moselle wine is famous—the world over: We were on the train on a siding for 4-5 days on the Moselle. The country was beautiful and is hero too. We can trade a bar of soap for an officer's helmet here where we used to pay up to 200 francs for it in France. There are so many we never bother. I haven't even got one though they are so cheap. I got a gold-plated belt buckle on a nice belt used by officers in the German army for a handful of lard.

The German people are NOT glad to see us of course, but would rather see us than the French, they say. They surely are ancient enemies. Germany also can't see that she is really defeated. She still boasts of her army and her Kaiser. I really believe they want that beast back on the job. Right now they are beginning to wonder what is going to happen. They see their credit falling away, their food getting scarce, foreign soldiers in their cities. No wonder they want action on peace. They are not bankrupt, though. The inhabitants of Coblenz are well dressed, some extravagantly so. They don't seem to be down and out. They have beautiful homes, a good street car system, a clean, well lighted city of some 60,000 inhabitants. The schools are all running. Civilians are about their business as usual. No German soldiers dare appear in uniform on the streets. The stores have good stocks but no foods, candies or

meats. Most of the things we buy get quite reasonably. Soon I suppose they'll notice the American dieters have money and double up their present prices. It has rained a lot lately but doesn't bother us much. Have had a little snow on Christmas eve. We had a Christmas. Had a good dinner, good program and a Christmas with candy bags for all. Today Sunday, but we have worked as usual. We hope to get home the spring some time and expect remain here in the meantime. Sergeant Albert I. Johnson Evacuation Hospital No. 4 A

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Teachers' Examination for Elementary Certificates Notice is hereby given that an examination for teachers' elementary certificates will be held at the Chamber of Cooperators on Thursday and Friday, Feb. 13 and 14, 1919. For Fourth Grade Certificate (Second Elementary) Thursday Forenoon Reading Rules . . . 8:30 to 9:00 Preliminary . . . 9:00 to 10:00 Arithmetic . . . 10:00 to 11:00 Civics . . . 11:00 to 12:00 Thursday Afternoon U. S. History . . . 1:30 to 2:00 Geography . . . 2:30 to 3:00 Grammar . . . 3:30 to 4:00 Friday Forenoon Spelling . . . 8:30 to 9:00 Pedagogy . . . 9:00 to 10:00 Reading . . . 10:30 to 11:00 Friday Afternoon Physiology & Hygiene 1:30 to 2:00 Agriculture . . . 3:00 to 4:00 For Third Grade Certificate (First Elementary) Thursday Forenoon Reading Rules . . . 8:30 to 9:00 Preliminary . . . 9:00 to 10:00 American Literature 10:00 to 11:00 Botany . . . 11:00 to 12:00 Thursday Afternoon Elementary Algebra . . . 1:30 to 2:00 Plane Geometry . . . 3:30 to 4:00 Friday Forenoon Physics . . . 8:30 to 10:00 Psychology . . . 10:30 to 12:00 Friday Afternoon Manual Training . . . 1:30 to 3:00 Domestic Science . . . 3:00 to 4:00 TENA P. RYGER, County Superintendent of Schools

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