

## REMINISCENCES OF A FIRST SERGEANT

Being the story of Sergeant 1/c Ernest L. Muzzall, Army Veterinary Hospital #1,  
First Army, A.E.F., 1918 – 1919

Feb. 13, 1918 Sworn in at Fort Lawton, Washington  
Mar. 08, 1918 Left Fort Lawton for Fort Riley, Kansas  
Mar. 10, 1918 Arrived Fort Riley, Kansas  
Aug. 13, 1918 Left Fort Riley for Camp Lee, Virginia  
Aug. 17, 1918 Arrived Camp Lee, Virginia  
Sept. 18, 1918 Received Warrant, S.G.O., Sergeant, First Class, Veterinary Replacement Unit #2  
Oct. 13, 1918 Sailed from Newport News, Virginia, for A. E. F. on U. S. S. Madewaska  
Oct. 26, 1918 Landed at Brest, France  
Oct 30-Nov 3 En Route to assignment at front, Blercourt and Army Veterinary Hospital #1  
Nov. 11, 1918 Armistice signed  
Nov. 26, 1918 Blercourt to Evacuation Hospital #15, Verdun  
Nov. 27, 1918 En route to Base Hospital #17, Dijon (via Souille)  
Nov. 28, 1918 Arrived Base Hospital #17, Dijon  
Dec. 05, 1918 Birthday in bed at Dijon  
Dec. 27, 1918 Moved to Plombiers  
Jan. 03, 1919 Back to Dijon and boarded Hospital Train #61  
Jan. 04, 1919 Arrived Mars Hospital Center, Base Hospital #107 near Nevers  
Jan. 24, 1919 Left Mars for St. Aignan Casual Camp  
Jan. 26, 1919 Arrived St. Aignan  
Jan. 28, 1919 Sent to Special Training Battalion, "Flatfoot Farm"  
Feb. 13, 1919 Back to St. Aignan  
Feb. 15, 1919 To Brest  
Feb. 18, 1919 Arrived Brest, hiked to Pontanazen Barracks, 5 miles  
Mar. 13, 1919 Received sailing orders

Mar. 14, 1919 Received marching orders

Mar. 15, 1919 Left Pontanazen Barracks at 6:30 a.m., boarded USS George Washington at noon.

Mar. 16, 1919 Sailed from Brest late afternoon

Mar. 25, 1919 Arrived New York. Debarked Hoboken, 1 p.m. Entrained for Camp Morrill 4pm.

Apr. 12, 1919 Arrived Camp Lewis – Tacoma, Washington

Apr. 15, 1919 Discharged from Army

Apr. 16, 1919 Seattle

Apr. 17, 1919 Everett, Oak Harbor

REMINISCENCES OF SERGEANT 1/C E. L. MUZZALL, ARMY MOBILE  
VETERINARIAN HOSPITAL #1, FIRST ARMY, A. E. F. 1918-1919

Forward:

At the request of my mother, Stella Murray Muzzall, upon my return from service in France with the American Expeditionary Forces, I endeavored to describe briefly some of the more apparent events of this service. As I have re-read this narrative, I have been impressed by the naivité of the writer, which, after all, was normal for a lad just out of high school with limited experience. The following lines are set down as they were written in April and May, 1919, in the family home four miles south of Oak Harbor, Washington. They may possibly be of some interest to my children, or theirs, some day.

Ernest L. Muzzall, March 2, 1964

On February 11, 1918, I was accepted for enlistment at Everett, Washington in the Veterinary Corps, United States Army and sent to Seattle for further examinations and to take my oath. Several miles from Everett the train was held up by a landslide, necessitating a round-about course to reach Seattle, where we arrived at 11:30 p.m., much to the discomfort of the Recruiting Service man who led us forthwith to the Great Northern Hotel to spend the night.

The following morning we were taken to the recruiting office where we received our first lesson in the waiting game, for we waited from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m. for our examinations. Finally we were led to the slaughter. An old and gruff major of medics, who appeared to have been recalled from retirement, put us through all sorts of stunts during the rest of the afternoon. We were then transported to Fort Lawton on the north side of Seattle. We were led to a pile of iron beds, mattresses and blankets by a "veteran" of six weeks service who assigned us to our quarters and instructed us in the art of Army bed making, the misery of reveille and policing quarters in the morning. He left us in a cloud of gloom and predicting dire misfortune for us on the morrow.

Ah, it was cold that night for Washington, so we shut all the windows in order to keep warm, but that uncompromising and heartless disciplinarian, the Officer of the Day, came around about 10 p.m. and opened all the windows wide exposing us to the wintry blasts straight off Mount Olympus. We tenderfeet, straight from home and mother and all such comforts had nothing better to do but pile all our clothing on top of our blankets and finished off with putting on our

socks. Even so we answered reveille in the morning with much chattering of teeth and shaking of limbs.

After breakfast about a hundred of us were given our final physical examinations and sworn into the service of the U. S. Army. We were also given the proverbial “shot in the arm” and vaccinated, to the accompaniment some complaint and, later, swollen arms. This was my introduction to the world of K. P. and fatigue duty. Since we had been issued no uniforms of any kind we wore the best clothing we had when we first arrived. I waited on table, carried coal, scrubbed many huge pots and pans, floors and windows, peeled potatoes, packed supplies into the kitchen and did the hundred and one other menial tasks demanded of the K. P. I never dreamed that so many different duties could be crowded into one short day and I was exceedingly thankful when the last dish was washed and put away and I could at last go to bed.

The next day we learned some of the school of the soldier – standing at attention, whom and what to salute, how to do an about face without falling over oneself. The afternoon was spent in learning that pointed so-called English walking shoes were never intended for marching. This kind of activity was fairly representative of my first three weeks in the Army except that standing guard became a part of the routine when after ten days we were issued uniforms. We then, one day, were given two more shots to complete the inoculations.

During this time I met Paul T. Wilson, a Yakima boy of my own age who was to become my best friend in the service. Near the end of the third week Paul and I received our orders to entrain for Fort Riley, Kansas, the Army’s largest remount depot and now being used as a training post for the Medical Officers Training Camp. We boarded the train in the evening with a feeling of gratitude that we were at last on the way to our training station. Little did we know of the bitter weather we were to experience at Riley. We had a few hours layover at Portland and later at Denver and enjoyed ourselves immensely looking over these two cities neither of us had seen before.

About 3 a.m. on the morning of March 10, we arrived at the Fort Riley station in the midst of a bitter and cold blizzard with the snow and dust about equally mixed for which, we were told later, Kansas was famous. As we watched the train fade into the distance we felt very forlorn until a voice came to us out of the storm. “You guys for Riley?” While I thought this a silly question, it was nevertheless a welcome sound. We handed him our travel orders and he started off with a “Follow me” thrown over his shoulder. We commented that it was cold. “Only 15 below,” he said, “and it frequently gets down to 20-25 below here.” He

led us to the section of the camp about a mile away where we were told that a certain squad tent was to be our home until further orders. Seeing that there was no heat we went to the mess hall next door and sat out the rest of the night where at least it was fairly warm.

And so began our training at Riley. The first few weeks were spent in interminable hours of fours right and left, school of the soldier, and, later, days at the stables learning the cavalry way of caring for horses. Then, days and days of cavalry drill out on the prairie. At first this was torture for the cavalry does not ride "easy" like a cowboy. But this soon came to be among the most pleasant of our experiences. Amusements were few and far between. We had one small "Y" building which was packed to suffocation every night. We had little compared to Camp Funston next door. When the weather got better there were outdoor movies and sometimes boxing matches.

The highlight for me in May was making the M. O. T. C. baseball team at third base after which our company won the post championship. This relieved me for a time of considerable distasteful duties. This was especially appreciated as in June and July we had some terribly hot weather. For days it frequently went up to 107 degrees and we were told that on one occasion it reached 117. I don't know the truth of this but it seemed unbearable. In July I was given a ten-day pass and decided to go to Michigan to see my uncle and aunt, Alfred and Julia Murray Muzzall, my father's brother and my mother's sister. Their son, Dr. Harry Muzzall, was a dentist in Coopersville and he put my teeth in good shape. This trip was quite a happy experience for I was able to see my grandfather, Joseph Murray, who was almost a hundred years old, and my cousins, the Murray boys. I felt quite good that I had been raised a step in rank to private first class just a little while before.

On August 13, one hundred of us were sent to the Veterinary Training School, Camp Lee, Virginia. Our journey took us through Kansas City, St. Louis, Cincinnati, and through West Virginia and Virginia. To my surprise there were oil fields in southern Illinois and Indiana. Tobacco and cotton was not so surprising in Virginia. The poverty in the mountainous regions of West Virginia was depressing. Finally we were in the Blue Ridge Mountains and then entered the James River Valley which we followed until we arrived at Petersburg and Camp Lee nearby. This was a huge base where many troops received their final training before going overseas. Here we immediately began taking the final preparation. Our date of arrival at Camp Lee was August 17, 1918.

During the first week or ten days, I was able to visit the site of the Battle of Petersburg of Civil War fame, the city of Petersburg and Richmond, the latter only once. These cities looked old and interesting and very different than our Western and Midwestern cities.

We were immediately organized into Veterinary Replacement Unit #2 for overseas assignment. Lt. Bowman, our company adjutant, both at Fort Riley and here, had frequently urged that I apply for officers' training camp here and had, in fact, made a formal recommendation to the Captain that I be backed for this assignment. More and more responsibility was given to me in handling various duty assignments. Most of our men were drafted in early July from the poorer sections of New York City. They were an unusual breed to me and not very easy to get along with. Most of the acting non-coms (I had been named as acting sergeant) were from the Riley group. We had platoon, company and battalion foot drill and night drill under full pack and war conditions.

On September 18, I was called into the company office by the first sergeant of the permanent training cadre and, to my astonishment, was told that as of that moment I was first sergeant of VRU #2 and would have a small desk next to the captain's office. My job just then was to assist in getting the company ready to leave for France. He then handed me the official warrant signed by Colonel Griffen, commander of the Lee VT Camp. I would have been happy with a sergeant's rating but the assignment to be the chief non-com was more responsibility than I wanted since I was the youngest of the entire company except one. Besides that we were beginning to have troubles.

About the first of September the influenza hit us. It was a devastating thing and we were instantly put under strict quarantine. No passes, no unnecessary moving around from one part of the camp to another, and no evening entertainment of any kind. Within three days the base hospital was full and over-flowing. One of our four two-story barracks was set aside for the sick and orderlies appointed to care for them. Men were dying by the hundreds over the camp. We lost about two-thirds of our men to the sick list and more than half of the officers. Since the company was made up of 200 enlisted men and 13 officers this was quite a blow. For some reason I did not get the "flu" at any time.

It was a macabre situation. Men would go out to drill apparently feeling well only to collapse a little later and have to be hospitalized or put to bed. Ambulances would drive around and around trying to find hospital spaces for their very sick passengers. Within ten days so many men had died that the caskets had accumulated at the railway station, located across the drill field from our company,

so rapidly that they had to be stacked several high. The situation seemed not ready to get any better.

Apparently the camp commanders thought that nothing should be permitted to interfere with the smooth flow of men overseas so the required number of companies for the next shipment were named and their vacancies filled with men from other companies likewise shorthanded. This involved a great number of transfers and an enormous amount of paperwork. The company clerk was sent to the hospital at this critical time leaving us without anyone who could do clerical work. The monthly reports were just completed fortunately when we received orders to make up our passenger lists in 13 (why 13 so often?) copies. This I had to do myself although no typist. It was a long, tedious and difficult job most of which I did at night after other duties were finished. All this time we were plagued with men getting sick and necessitating changes on our records.

On the morning of October 11, we had orders to entrain at 5 a.m. the next day. Captain Eshelman of our company was a man approaching fifty years of age and a disorganized person and much disliked by both men and officers which added to our difficulties. My orders from the battalion adjutant's office were to be at the railway station not later than 4:45 a.m. and our camp grounds policed. I have neglected to state that for two weeks prior to shipping out we had been removed from the barracks and quartered in squad tents. These had to be strictly policed and made as near spotless as possible. I had allowed time on our morning schedule to do this by getting the company out at 3 a.m. At the last moment, however, the Captain decided that he personally was going to inspect every pack and ordered me to call the men off from policing the camp. Since the walls of the tents were rolled, this meant that newspapers and other litter blew all over the grounds. After the Captain had checked all the packs we were told that we could not wait any longer if we were to make our train. Upon arriving at the station a major from the adjutant's office called the Captain aside and in my hearing, upbraided him bitterly for the condition the camp we had just left. This infuriated Captain Eshelman and it was impossible to get along with him for many days.

After a short train ride we arrived at Norfolk and boarded the transport U.S.S. Madawaska, formerly the Prince Wilhelm II. On the ride down three more men came down with the "flu" and were taken to the hospital. The next day, October 13, we sailed for France. We were convoyed at first by two aeroplanes, which stayed with us until we were well out to sea, two battle ships and a whole fleet of destroyers and sub-chasers. On the second day out we were joined by a big convoy from New York. There were seven ships in our original group but I was never able to determine the exact number in the new convoy but there were many

and all camouflaged making them look very weird. Every fifteen or twenty minutes or so all the ships would zig-zag to make it more difficult for submarines to attack, we were told, although I never could understand why this was so. The weather was very stormy and the ocean extremely rough. As a consequence, there was much sea-sickness and it was a mess. Again, I was fortunate. I frequently felt queasy but never got really sick.

All the able-bodied men in our company were assigned to some kind of duty or another, some on fatigue duty, others on submarine lookout. Nothing was allowed to be thrown overboard and there were no outside lights at night, not even a lighted cigarette.

The battleships and other naval vessels left us when we were ten days out of Norfolk leaving us without any protection except our own bow and stern guns. The weather became especially violent at this time. We were told later that it was planned that a convoy of submarine chasers was to meet us at the time the battleships turned back. One of the large transports out of New York had developed engine trouble and was left behind. I wondered how it would feel to be aboard her and was thankful that we were not on her. However, she limped into Brest a day later without having had further trouble. On the eleventh day we travelled without any armed escort, a perfect set-up for attack by submarines but apparently there were none about. On the morning of the twelfth day a whole flock of submarine chasers appeared suddenly from the east – a torn-up and battered looking lot. They had come through exceptionally violent weather accounting for their lateness. Needless to say we were happy to see them, to say the least. The next day, October 26, Cape Finisterre appeared on the horizon at about noon. Four p.m. found us in the inner harbor of Brest. So ended a rough and hazardous voyage. The only pleasing thing, as far as I was concerned, was that non-coms of my rating and above were entitled to second class staterooms and first class dining room privileges. We had the third large table in the officers' quarters with white table linen and Filipino waiters. The other tables were occupied by ship's officers and Army officers.

While unloading of the ship began at once the troops did not disembark until the following morning. The nature of the harbor at Brest is such that large ships could not dock, but cast anchor in the central harbor. All supplies were unloaded onto large scows with shallow draft. Men were taken off on lighters, moved to the wharves and unloaded. Brest was a very old and drab city, especially along the waterfront. As we hiked through the city streets the windows were filled with women and old people, while the sidewalks were filled with children and young people too young for military service. They all cheered as we went by. It made us



all feel good and quite important. We were soon taken down several pegs, however, by American troops going in the other direction who shouted derision at us. "You won't feel so good tomorrow when they put you on the stevedore gang!" And, sure enough, on the following day many of our men were on the gangs unloading the ships.

We hiked several miles through a downpour and in the mud past the old Pontenazen Barracks constructed and used by Napoleon as his headquarters at one time, we were told. We were billeted in a little plot of about five acres surrounded by a high stone wall overgrown with trees and vines. The rain had been coming down so long that water actually stood on the ground. The squad tents, each holding eight men, had been pitched only the day before and the job had not been very well done. The tents were so slack that water gathered by gallons in the slack canvas and some came through. There were no floors in the tents so we were compelled to put our shelter halves on the wet ground and lay out our blankets on them. There were no ticks or straw. We came through the same area on the way home and by that time there were wood floors, ticks, and some calking braids to be shredded for ticking. For food preparation we had a canvas fly stretched over a small area. Two depressions covered with sheet metal for cooking, several G.I. cans for making slum, and a few pans for the preparation of other food. The command tent and those for the commissioned officers had wood floors, stoves and folding beds.

Upon arriving here the captain found orders to send all of his able men back to the docks in the morning to help with the unloading of the ships. By the time we were to roll out at 4:30 a.m., practically all were wet through with no chance to dry out as it was still raining. We learned later that it rains most of the time in Brest. After the men were fed the inevitable slum, they set out on the five-mile hike to Brest, to return to be fed between 7 and 8 p.m. and all very weary. This was to be the routine for the few days we were in this camp. The second night a high wind blew down many of the tents, creating a very bad situation as the men had to try to put them up in the dark and in spite of the gale. As the men tramped about the lot, it became more and more muddy – a dismal situation. A permanent detail soldier told us it rained about 340 days out of the year. We could well believe it. We lost eight men to the hospital with the "flu" at this period. On the third day 60 men were detached and sent to the northern front and with them went my good friend Wilson, now a corporal.

We received our orders to move on October 30. We hiked back to Brest where we entrained at 10 a.m. This was our first experience with the third class compartments of the French railroads. Bare wood benches placed so as to run

crosswise of the compartments and rated to hold eight men. This did not allow any space for full equipment so it was a tight fit as the area was about eight by four feet. Some of the windows had been broken and not replaced. Fortunately, it was not yet very cold but it was very drafty. We were issued travel rations consisting of corned beef, hardtack, bread and canned tomatoes. These we ate as they were, cold.

We finally left Brest at 10:30 a.m. Surprisingly, the sun was shining and there were no signs of rain and our spirits rose accordingly. Although I was to be at Brest for about three weeks on my way home, I never saw a clear day here again. We were surprised at the well-kept railway tracks. We passed through numerous picturesque little villages, always clustered about the aged church or cathedral on the public square. The fields were very green and the farm animals all looked to be in the best of condition. The cattle seemed not to be of any particular breed that I could recognize but they were exceptionally large and fat. In most cases the house, barn and other farm buildings were built in one, using one part for one purpose, and another part for a second and so on. For the most part the farms were quite orderly but were not as clean as they might have been. The countryside was threaded by many small streams. Every now and then we passed a peasant woman on her knees by the stream, beating the clothing with a club on a rock. Everything was novel and interesting to our eyes but as the evening wore on it became cold and damp and the countryside lost its vivid fascination. It soon became dreary and our thoughts turned to thoughts of warm blankets and room to stretch our cramped limbs. We passed through the famous little village of St. Malo and we looked out toward the white cliffs of Dover. All we could see was a distant bank of fog and in front of it the quaint little village with its white walls and red tile roofs, its church steeple, all set in a little valley of brilliant green with the silver neck of the bay extending into the floor of the valley.

Always the farmer of this region had his little farm surrounded by a row of trees. These he keeps pruned so that they seldom attain a height of more than ten or fifteen feet. Because of the constant trimming they assume knobby and grotesque forms. The branches and twigs cut from the trees are carefully saved and used as fuel.

The countryside in Northwestern France is rocky and hilly with fertile, deep valleys in between. Altogether, this was a most interesting journey as we travelled east and then south, arriving at Rennes the first evening. Here the boys gave Captain Eshelman a lively time. Sharp eyes coupled with a keen thirst revealed a large and orderly array of beer kegs at the end of the station platform. Willing and eager hands rolled a barrel to the edge of the platform. A hole was readily made

and canteens and kegs were quickly filled by a dozen or so of the men. Someone reported this event to the captain but by the time he stormed onto the scene all was over and nothing but an empty keg to be seen. As he checked all the compartments all were present or accounted for. The Captain had assigned me to some work of the records so I knew nothing about these events until later.

The second afternoon we passed through Le Mans where large numbers of American troops were quartered. The railroad ran by a field where a football game was in progress. We had some difficulty in restraining ourselves from joining the spectators. The bright colors of the jerseys, the staccato sounds of the signal callers, and the exhortations of the rival cheering sections presented a very appealing scene.

The next stop was at Angers. The train made very slow time. Some of the fellows said that they could walk faster and get to a destination ahead of the train. Some fellows who were left behind at Saumur actually did hike along the track and caught up with us at Tours. Angers was located on the Loire River.

On the second evening we arrived at Tours, a fairly good-sized city and a very interesting one to see. Here an incident occurred that showed something of the character of our Captain. Before we left the ship in Brest, Captain Eshelman asked both Lieutenant Bowman and me for our keys to the company record box on the basis that we were going to be split up soon and only he should have the keys. As soon as we arrived at Tours the Captain went off some place taking the keys with him. I was left in the company headquarters on the train in charge of the records and other equipment. Soon after arriving, a delegation of personnel came aboard to check our records. It was made up of a major, a second lieutenant, and a sergeant. They asked me for the key to the record box. I responded that I had no key. The major said "Does your commander not know that under regulations the company commander, the adjutant and the first sergeant each are to have a key to these records?" I replied that he had taken them up and the reason given for doing so. His response was "We haven't time to wait and we must check these records." And to the sergeant, "Open the box." The sergeant took the fire axe from the wall and using the pick struck the hasp and lock from the box, breaking the lid in the process. The records were taken to the Army headquarters located in the station a few yards away. Shortly after, Captain Eshelman returned to arrange for clearing our company for further shipping orders only to find the records gone and to be apprised of the events. He flew into one of his usual rages and set out for the station flinging over his shoulder "We'll find out about this!" In about ten minutes he returned in a strangely chastened mood and said: "We'll just have to wait." At about 10 p.m. the major who had come with his adjutant and the sergeant to get the

records returned with them and our orders for the following day as well. "Over here, Captain," he said, "I would advise you to have someone ready to make your records available at all times and circumstances." "Yes sir," Captain Eshelman meekly replied and viewed the shattered top of the records box with dismay. We were told by a noncom in the station headquarters later in the evening that Captain Eshelman had attempted to upbraid the local officers for what they had done and they in response had given him unshirted hell for holding up the processing.

We finally were on the move again, our train being shunted onto almost every siding by trains moving in the opposite direction. About 1 a.m. we arrived at the small city of St. Aignan, a classification and reassignment center for troops. This was in the famous chateau region of France and at the confluence of the Loire and Cher Rivers. The men tumbled from the coaches into a heavy drizzle. Guides led our officers away to their temporary quarters and others took us to our billets located in narrow wooden buildings in which two decker beds made of two by four frames across which chicken wire had been stretched. We hurriedly threw down our blankets on the bunks and spent the rest of the night in profound slumber.

At 5 a.m. we breakfasted on the usual slum and it was better made here than in most places. Chunks of beef, onions, potatoes, carrots, macaroni or rice thrown into a G. I. can and cooked up into a mess, sometimes good, sometimes bad, depending on the skill or disposition of the cooks at the time. About all that could be said for it normally was that it was nourishing and sometimes hot.

At 8 a.m. we were directed to proceed on foot to Selles-sur-Cher about 15 kilometers east of St. Aignan. Trucks picked up our packs and we started out in light-hearted spirits on a beautiful day – moderately cold but bright and clear, altogether one to please the soul. It was Sunday and the peasants in their two-wheeled carts and in holiday garb were on the roads to attend Mass. For the most part they were in black, the women's attire relieved by a dash of white here and there and by huge white lace headdresses. The roads were magnificent, 'tho they had seen much wear and tear from war-time traffic. Airplanes passed back and forth overhead.

As the morning wore on it became much warmer. Captain Eshelman became tenderfooted and tired. The permanent cadre guide who was accompanying us set the pace and moved right along. Soon the Captain was limping and complaining constantly. He had made the mistake of wearing thin-soled dress boots instead of regular service type shoes. Finally, he ordered our company to halt while the other companies proceeded on their way leaving us behind, much to the disgust of our men. By the time we were about six kilometers

from our destination a Dodge touring car came along and upon being hailed by Captain Eshelman, the driver stopped. Captain Eshelman and the four lieutenants climbed in, leaving me in charge of the company. In about an hour we reached Selles-sur-Cher minus our C. O. and officers.

An officer of the French Foreign Legion took us in charge for billeting. We were taken across the river to the village of Borgeau. This was the headquarters of the First Depot Division. There were many units of the 41<sup>st</sup> Division around but I did not see anyone I knew. Our quarters were for the most part in tumbledown huts of stone with flagstones of very uneven conformation for flooring. That it was not intended for comfort I well realized before morning. Some of the fellows were billeted over stables which were occupied at the time by their regular inhabitants. We messed across the river in Selles-sur-Cher at the headquarters of the 41<sup>st</sup> Division in the historic Chateau du Norge, whose owner left, we were told, at the beginning of the War. This was a hike of over two miles, three times a day, besides our routine work.

Our officers were quartered in French homes and had mammoth feather beds with canopied tops. They were frequently so high that a ladder had to be used to get into them. The French use very little fuel. The madam places a few little pieces of wood and charcoal in the fireplace and gently blows it into flame. She then hangs a little kettle on an andiron and moves it over the coals. She will get a meal for a family with less fuel than it usually takes us to start a fire with.

All the houses here had stone floors which are swept each morning and then sprinkled with water from a can with three or four small holes in the bottom. In spite of primitive conditions most of the homes were quite clean. The people were very friendly and hospitable.

After less than three days here we received travel orders for 80 men. This took all but a handful of our remaining men. Most of these went to a base hospital at Bordeaux. In this group were practically all the men who were my friends at Camp Lee. Late the same night the rest of us received entraining orders to proceed to Neufchateau. It was here that I left Captain Eshelman and all the commissioned officers including Lieutenant Bowman, our adjutant, a very fine man and officer and whom I liked very much.

We were put aboard a boxcar and our rations thrown in with us as usual. It was a very cold night and we suffered from lack of any heat. The only source of heat was from the bodies of the forty of us who were crowded into the one car. The cars were very dilapidated with many cracks which created many drafts. The next day we passed through Vierzon, Bourges and Nevers. Nevers is a

tremendously interesting city set in a picturesque background. We stopped in a siding for about a half-hour. In the immediate foreground flowed the Loire River, banked by miles of masonry. Here one could step from a boat to the street. Crossing the river and leading to the city were two wonderful, arched, bridges made of stone. Nevers is built on a hill, the streets being terrace-like in structure and lined with shade trees. At the crest of the hill is a huge cathedral, the spires reaching to the sky. As we gazed at the great building two American planes circled over the city, their white wings glistening against the intense blue of the sky. As we watched, there came to us the high voices of children playing on the quai. The Loire Valley is beautiful beyond words. There were a few light patches of snow on the higher elevations. Oddly, although it was quite cold, the fields about the city were very green. Now it was time to move again and we swung around the base of the hill upon which the city was situated, crossed one of the two bridges and headed east for Dijon and then Neufchateau.

There is one wonderful organization that I have neglected to mention which was responsible for any bit of comfort we may have had – the American Red Cross. During these days of continuous travel we had no hot food and lived on ‘iron rations’, made up of canned corned beef, bread or hardtack. But once or twice a day we would stop at some city or village where the hard-worked but wonderful American women served us with hot coffee. Their friendliness and concern for us was heartwarming. The sight of their blue uniforms, white aprons, the red cross on cap and apron looked better than gold to us.

We passed through Dijon after dark and so were not able to see anything of the city. We finally reached Neufchateau about 5:00 p.m., cramped, stiff and dead-tired from long hours of travel in overcrowded box cars, caring for nothing but a place to drop ourselves and our packs. Since we had to lay over here until the next day it was necessary to find a place to spend the night. Finally our commanding officer, a lieutenant, gained the reluctant consent of the Y.M.C.A. Secretary for us to sleep on the floor of the auditorium after a show, then in progress, was over. As it was about five hours before the time set for the end of the program at 10:30 p.m. we had some time to put in so we went out to look the town over. Neufchateau was the last rail center before Verdun or on the St. Mihiel front so it was a crowded and busy place because of the troop movements to and from these areas. Neufchateau was quite modern for a French city. I walked into a small “epicerie” to buy some apples and was startled to see some canned milk on the shelves labeled “Cascade Milk, Snohomish, Washington”.

Later in the evening we went to the Y hut and stood around the edges of the audience to watch the latter part of the program of army talent perform. As soon as

the show was over we helped fold the chairs and put them away. We wanted brooms to sweep up the debris but were told that they were not then available, for what reason we did not know. So we put our blankets down as best we could. There were so many men sleeping in the place that we were packed in elbow to elbow. The show had been put on by the members of a base hospital located nearby.

Boarding a train again the next morning (Third Class French coaches this time) we were soon on our way again and, this time, the last lap. We were to proceed to Blercourt, a small village just a short way from Verdun. It was here that we were to join Army Mobile Veterinary Hospital #1, First Army. A mobile hospital was the counterpart of a field hospital in the Medical Corps. This move took us directly into an area fought over from the beginning of the war. We were pleased to reach the end of our travel and join our assignment but somewhat apprehensive, too. The reason for this was that in the Vet. Corps we did not have the rating of non-combatants given to the men in the Medical Corps. For this reason we were armed with Colt 45 pistols and had been given thorough instructions in their use at Fort Riley. We could be called upon in any time of need to serve as combat troops. As it turned out, this never happened. Our lieutenant was very nervous. He told me that he had a wife and family at home and he had no desire to go to the front. He had thought he would be assigned to a base hospital, but here he was – Lieutenant Cusick – headed for Verdun.

The nearer we got to the end of our journey the more terrible were the evidences of modern warfare. Torn up and demolished villages, cast off equipment and broken gun carriages, parts of uniforms, shell craters and churned up ground. Buildings left standing were scarred by rifle, machine gun and shell fire. Yet in some of the villages the French people were returning to their homes apparently to stay. We stopped at a little crossroads village with a name that sounded like Charleroi but I am not sure this is right. Here the Red Cross had coffee ready for us.

As the day wore on we passed through more and more torn up regions. The destruction was inconceivable unless one saw it. This was the place where the heaviest fighting went on during the late summer of 1918. Here again were vast amounts of war debris. At last we came to what was left of a small village. There were but two walls left standing. The north wall of the station carried the name Aubrécourt and one wall and part of another of the mayor's home. This place had seen terrific action in September. We were held up here for about an hour and spent the time watching the German POW's clearing up the debris. They looked at us in various ways; some appeared curious, others were sullen, and a few seemed

to be amused. I wondered if it were not that they said to themselves that we did not know what was in store for us soon.

On the morning of November 8, we arrived at our post and what was once the very small village of Blercourt about eight or nine miles west of Verdun and on the Verdun-Metz Highway. All was rubble except on the side of a slope and all about was mud and more mud. There were also dugouts to be seen in the hillside. We were told at once that some shelling was still going on and that there were certain places to be avoided, particularly at stated times.

The number of men in Mobile #1 had varied from 60 to about a hundred men from time to time. Before we came it was down to about 60 and we were immediately given assignments. Although we came in as replacements we were told that we would retain our ranks unless our work indicated that we were not entitled to them. Since the company already had a first sergeant whose warrant was older than mine I became the second rated sergeant in the company. My duties were to help with the records work as needed and to take my turn in the field checking injuries to artillery horses, disposing of those beyond saving and on order of a commissioned officer, and bringing back those marked for shipment back to a base hospital. These were brought in on the customary picket line. This was a heavy rope with single-or double-trees at the front and rear depending on the number of horses to be handled. If not more than six or eight were to be brought in, a single, mounted lead horse was used with a mounted rear horse following. This was dirty and difficult work but horses were so important to Army transport that all efforts were made to save every possible horse. How else could field artillery be moved?

On the ninth, two of the boys who came up with our group were struck by shrapnel and killed and several others were wounded. Two others who had a little spare time were out looking for souvenirs were apparently hit by a shell and all of us thought they surely must be killed. However, they came out of the rubble badly shaken. Several went down to help them and found them dirty, scratched and bruised but otherwise unhurt.

Some distance to the north and east our artillery was very active as was the Germans'. This included both light and heavy guns. The enemy seemed to be concentrating on lines of communication and supply. During the afternoon of November 10<sup>th</sup> and the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup> the artillery fire on both sides was terrific and continuous, mounting in intensity as the morning wore on. It seemed incredible that such powerful and sustained fire could be continued so long. When it seemed impossible to stand it any longer suddenly it was quiet except here and



there an occasional was heard. It was 11 a.m. of the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month. It was a strange quiet and shortly the word came through that the war was over, an armistice had been signed. No more apprehension, no more strain – only mud, debris and all the other offal of war about us. There had been rumors of an armistice for days coming to us from the French as we were working our way to the front. Now it was here. All the long months of grinding preparation for front-line service suddenly seemed futile after a few days of active duty with our new outfit. What now?

The end of the war seemed to be a vast anticlimax. For weeks the Allies had been concentrating artillery, supplies, and men on the front before Metz. This was to be the last and most powerful drive of all and was designed to end the war for good. This was the all-important and keystone defense sector of the German Army. We had been told that there were many Allied prisoners of war in Metz, gathered there by the Germans in order to discourage our artillery from shelling the city. After the Argonne-Meuse sector and enormous defeats along the entire front and owing largely to extremely dangerous economic conditions in Germany, the Bosch with his usual cunning decided to quit short of complete ruin and chaos. Had the Allied drive continued three weeks more the pincers which were reaching around the Hun army would have closed and Allied artillery standing almost hub to hub would have pounded him to pieces.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> orders came through for our company to receive all the horses we could possibly accommodate, and to send back to Neufchateau and the base hospital there all horses on hand. We worked all that day and night and most of the next morning in a heavy downpour and in mud half-way to the knees. The horses had to be loaded at Souille, a railhead about 10 kilometers to the south. All these hours we struggled in a reeking, sodden, mud-plastered jam of equine suffering until the last horse had been pulled, skidded and led the long, hard kilos to Souille, there to be shoved or hoisted aboard the “Hommes 40, Chevaux 8” waiting for them. On the return trip the cars would bring men and supplies. It was regulation to send a veterinary lieutenant in charge of the train assisted by a sergeant and an enlisted man for each car, if possible. It was usually not possible and one man might have to look out for more than one car.

Details were being sent out all about our sector where artillery were stationed and soon returned with anywhere from twenty to sixty horses. We simply did not have room for such numbers so men were set to work constructing shelters from salvaged corrugated iron sheeting. It was one of the wonders of the war to me where all of these sheeting came from – we even nailed it to posts driven into the ground and slept on it. We were to hold horses only so long as it took to

classify them and send them with a detail to Souille. They complained there that they had neither the room or the cars to handle the numbers we were sending them. Horses that were judged by veterinarians to be unfit for shipment and treatment were destroyed on order of an officer.

Most of this time I worked with the classification detail under Lieutenant Cusick. This continued until about the 19<sup>th</sup> as I recall it now, when an order came through for a detail to go to Metz for a shipment of horses rounded up there, why and by whom left we never knew. We were to go in two motor trucks and bring the horses back on picket lines. The trip up was hectic and unpleasant. In addition to the continuous rain, the entire countryside was a scene of desolation. It was depressing beyond words. In the first few miles we found ourselves in a constant traffic jam made up of our own artillery coming out (both French and American) and infantry coming off the front and going somewhere else for further duty or rest as the case might be.

The men and animals were a dismal sight and the sour and acrid stink of war filth pervaded the air about them. The men were in always muddy and frequently torn uniforms. Equipment was mud-spattered and worn. Men hollow-eyed and worn to the verge of exhaustion. Battery after battery of French "75's" rolled by, all camouflaged to the limit. Interspersed among military units were many refugees – men, women and children apparently returning from within the German lines. They were free to return – to what? They made their way along the road as best they could apparently without food, shelter, or warm clothing, with the hope of finding their homes again. No doubt that in a large number of cases their homes had been destroyed. These were the first of the wretched and war-worn people to filter back from behind the German lines. There were old men and women, prisoners of war some of whom were ill or recovering from wounds – American, French, English and a few Russians, all probably with one idea and that was to be back among friends. An outstanding thing was the patience and consideration shown to these people by the troops coming out, tired as they were. They were frequently seen to be giving bits of their scanty food supply to children and others and even helping them to carry a part of their loads.

Although it was only about 60 kilometers or about 38 miles, it took us almost a day and a half to get to Metz because of the terribly crowded traffic conditions. We were held up constantly and had to grind along in low gear much of the time. The Germans had only recently evacuated the city and American and Allied military authorities had only taken over within the last few days.

While Metz is a very old city much of it appeared quite modern. It was the capital city of Lorraine and belonged to France until the War of 1871, we were told. It is located at the confluence of the Moselle and Seille Rivers. As in most cities in France the city was sharply divided between the old and the new. The old part had extremely narrow streets but the new had many large squares and fine stone buildings, the most prominent of which, as usual, was a large cathedral.

That night we bedded down in a building which had apparently been used as a warehouse. The lieutenant, after contacting the veterinary officer in charge of the corral, said that there was nothing we could do so late in the day. If we cared to, we could look around a bit and be ready to go to work early in the morning. That was the last we saw of him. When morning came – no lieutenant. The first lieutenant in charge of the horses said that we had to get them out of there as he had to care for more coming in. We asked him where they were coming from but he was vague about it. “Oh, all around here.” By 9 a.m. or thereabouts he finally said that we would have to get out. I protested that an officer would have to sign for them. His response was that since the commanding officer of our detail was not available I was the ranking non-com in charge and would have to sign for the horses. This I did with great reluctance. We rigged our travelling picket lines, secured the horses along them and set out for Blercourt. These horses were, for the most part, uninjured or perhaps had some minor trouble, which unfitted them for duty, and many others were strays.

The entire return trip was made in a heavy rain. This seemed to be a constant state of affairs. We were soaked most of the time for our slickers were not very repellant; in fact it is doubtful in that rain and wind any cover would have been effective. The first night we were obliged to secure our picket lines in the lee of a bank from which a hedgerow grew. We pitched our pup tents and bedded down as best we could. It was necessary to stand guard as the horses were extremely restless and had to be watched constantly. This was difficult, in the extreme, as it was quite dark.

As nearly as we could judge we had made about twelve miles the first day which was not as much as we had hoped. Our delay in getting started was the main reason but travelling with pickets is slow at best. The second night was spent in what was left of an old barn, as was the third night. In the latter case, despite the fact that one end and the corner of the building had been blown off by high explosives, the roof and remainder of the building were comparatively whole. We were grateful for a dry floor.

On the entire trip we lived on iron rations, cold, and we were mighty tired of them at the end. All through this trip home I wondered what it was all about. Why were these horses not held at Metz until rail connections were established or use was found for them by the Army of Occupation. The answer I never learned.

Another complication affected my own disposition. Before leaving Camp Lee I had contracted a touch of dysentery. It was apparently under control during the trip across the Atlantic. My condition became aggravated by the constant cold and irregular meals. On this trip I began losing some blood and began to feel very ill. By the time we arrived back at Blercourt, conditions had gotten out of hand, and I collapsed. When I came to I was in an ambulance on the way to Evacuation Hospital #15 at or near Verdun, November 26. On the 27<sup>th</sup> along with an ambulance load of others I was taken to Souille where we were loaded aboard a French hospital train. This train I can still smell and it was far from pleasant, but the warmth and sense of being cared for, were. We spent Thanksgiving Day on this train and arrived at Dijon at about 8 p.m. where we were taken off on stretchers, loaded on ambulances and delivered to an American Base Hospital located in the buildings of a girls' school in connection with the University of Dijon.

My feelings at this time were very mixed. Here I was, sick and in a strange land, and my morale a bit low. When we were unloaded from the ambulances we were set down on the ground in an interior court. It was snowing lightly. Shortly we were moved into the Red Cross hut until we could be sorted out and assigned to proper wards according to our afflictions. I was taken to a medical ward of what I learned was Base Hospital #17. It was a temporary, one story, frame building accommodating about 40 men. (Note: Many years later a check with the Veterans Administration indicated that I was treated for "lumbago, bronchitis, acute diarrhea, and inflammation of the Eustachian tube." 1958) The doctor said that in addition to the dysentery I had apparently gotten a bit of gas as my bronchial tubes or area showed the kind of irritation typical of this kind of injury.

How good the clean white sheets and a bed with mattress and springs: How good the hot shower taken with the aid of an orderly! How extremely good the simple hospital fare was, mainly because it was hot! These were the plusses, but altogether, it was not a pleasant place to be. Every day there were several deaths in the ward and the inevitable screen placed around the bed of the deceased. But as day followed day the convulsive and uncontrollable jerking of the muscle layers of my body moderated. The adhesive tape shell enfolding my body was removed and the internal bleeding diminished. At the end of a little more than two weeks I was permitted to get out of bed and move about a little.

The Red Cross service entered our lives in no small way here. The first day in the hospital one had put in an appearance, that is, a moderately young woman, and asked if there was anything she could do to be of service. She said that she could write home for me if I desired. At first I thought this was a good idea but then I knew that if Mother got a letter written by someone else she would be very disturbed. So I said that after a day or two I would appreciate it if she would bring me some writing materials. Because of the constant moving around and the frequent re-assignments I had not and would not receive any mail from home while in the AEF. But the Red Cross provided hot chocolate in the hut at mid-morning and mid-afternoon, reading materials, and some kind of amusement or entertainment in the evening, if you could get there.

My twenty-first birthday, December 5, was spent in bed and noted by me only in a disinterested sort of way. I became acquainted with a Corporal Harding of Syracuse, N. Y. He occupied the bed on my left. He had been stationed in Dijon for more than a year and had become well acquainted in the city. In the latter part of December I was permitted short passes of a few hours duration. Harding took me about the city and showed me many points of interest. It was an extremely interesting old city of about 75,000. I became acquainted with the Ramode family through him. We saw the palace of the Dukes of Burgundy and the museum nearby containing many interesting things.

While I became attached to the city I found the French ways strange and I could not make much out of their language beyond learning the words for some things to eat and drink and a few simple questions. With Harding I saw a monument in a large park – it was Napoleon. It was on the north side of the city and reached by street-car. It was a very clear day and in the far east there was a bit of white barely appearing on the horizon. These were the Alps he said and when weather conditions were just right they could be seen more clearly.

There were many parks in Dijon, most of them having deer, swan, and ducks and a variety of other creatures. The city was full of American soldiers but there were occasionally French and Colonial troops to be seen, probably on leave or only recently discharged from the Army. The city was old but attractive in its own way. However, the only bathtub I saw outside of the hospital was one in an “ultra-modern” store downtown. Of course, I had little opportunity to really observe this but Harding told me that they were few and far between.

Souvenirs of any kind were extraordinarily high in price. It really made little difference to me anyway as I was suffering from lack of funds having received no pay since arriving in France. But it was very interesting to wander

around on the old and crooked streets and wonder how long these ancient buildings had stood there. The streets were very narrow in some places and the street car tracks ran close beside the narrow sidewalks at points. It was actually unsafe to get too near the curb for fear that you might get brushed off by a passing car. There were many streets which, after wandering here and there would come to a dead end blocked by the wall of a building or just a high wall of stone.

Base Hospital #17, our hospital, was a Detroit unit and was situated in a large stone building used for a girls' secondary school in normal times. It was adjacent to the old Dijon University buildings and not a great distance from the Hotel de Ville or city government buildings. It was a graystone building with wings extending from each end and with several single-story barracks in the court which were used as hospital wards. It was the second one from the left as you entered from the front of the school in which I was assigned. Though the buildings were temporary and cheaply constructed, they were comfortable. Every effort was made by all of the people connected with the hospital to make our stay comfortable and to get us back on our feet as soon as possible. These services were provided under difficult conditions and it was obvious that the load was heavy.

Christmas came before we realized it. On Christmas Eve the Red Cross girls provided us with a fine tree in the hut and there was candy and oranges for everyone. We awoke on Christmas morning to find at the foot of each bed a pair of heavy wool socks filled with nuts, cigarettes, oranges and candy. At noon we had a wonderful dinner, with turkey, chestnut dressing and all the usual things except cranberries. In the afternoon there was a band concert and a quartet came around with a small piano and sang two or three songs in each of the wards. The French Croix Rouge girls came around and gave each of us little mementos. Mine was a small handkerchief with "To our dear allies" embroidered on it. They danced with us for a little while in the court yard. It was a very enjoyable day. It was not until night that I wondered what was happening at home.

The day after Christmas a lot of us were loaded into trucks and taken a few miles into the country to a place the name of which sounded like Plombiers though I have not since been able to locate it on a map. This was a convalescent camp located in what had formerly been used as a school for Catholic priests. The village was a very pretty little place, located in the hills and on the banks of a little river and a nearby canal. We were here about a week and we were then taken back to Dijon. With several hundred more we boarded the famous Hospital Train #61 to be taken to the Mars Hospital Center just outside the city of Nevers in the Loire Valley. The hospital unit to which I found myself assigned was Number 107 which had just arrived from the States. The organization, food and buildings were

very poor. Our only comforts were furnished us by the Red Cross girls and women who worked early and late to help everyone.

The barracks were of concrete and sloppily constructed. They were situated in a muddy field under an inch or so of wet snow. The girls wore rubber boots and slopped around in the mud from barracks to barracks in order to talk with the sick and to provide them with whatever small items they might need. The barracks were cold and full of drafts. Flurries of snow which fell from time to time blew in under the eaves and settled on the beds making them damp. The snow also fell on the concrete floors and formed puddles here and there. Altogether it was a very dismal place.

I began to run a temperature on the second day at Mars and had to spend ten days in bed before my temperature came down and I felt fairly normal again. It was ironic that while some of us were ill, two musicians, a Mrs. Green of Ohio, a vocalist and a Monsieur Pierre, a violinist performed for us. I can't say that I was in a position to enjoy it.

By this time I had more or less lost track of time, perhaps because of any objective. When I had been out of bed for a few days about two hundred or so of us received orders to go to St. Aignan, the famous or infamous "St. Agony." We boarded a string of dilapidated French box cars, the everlasting iron rations thrown in after us and we were on our way. It had turned colder and there was considerable snow on the ground. Unbelievably, we spent two decidedly uncomfortable days in those box cars with no heat except that produced from a five gallon oil can suspended from the ceiling with hay wire. The fuel was coal scrounged from along the tracks during our innumerable stops. Of course it was hard to tell which was worse, the cold or the volumes of smoke produced by the coal. This problem solved itself when the can finally disintegrated from the heat and the coals fell to the floor setting fire to it. The men demonstrated a peculiar attitude about this, someone saying "Let the damned thing burn." And burn it did until a hole was burned through the floor and we were about to suffocate from the smoke. Better sense then prevailed and the live coals were kicked out the open doors and the coals in the charred floor cut out with knives from mess kits.

The two days spend on the train was unbelievable for the reason that it was only about 160-170 kilometers from Mars to St. Aignan, or about 100 miles. Again we had the experience of being shunted on to every siding along the way. In any event, we arrived at our destination on January 26 at about 9 p.m. No provisions seemed to have been made for us so there was nothing to do but wait, standing around in the mud in a light but very wet snowfall for three or four hours.

The officer in charge of our train finally arranged for us to come inside the depot headquarters where it was warm for the rest of the night.

The next morning we were “deloused.” That is we were taken into a building where all our clothes were taken away from us and placed in a wire basket. These were placed in a rack mounted on wheels and the whole thing placed in a steam room where they were left under some pressure for about a half hour or so. In the meantime we were required to shower completely and to saturate our hair with a liquid soap preparation and to scrub thoroughly. When our clothing was given back to us it was all marked in a waffle-like way by the pattern of the baskets. This never came out completely.

Our billets were double loaded so that there was not even sleeping room on the floor of dirt. Consequently some had to sleep outside as best they could. On the 28<sup>th</sup> we were taken by truck to a camp called “Flatfoot Farm” by the soldiers because it was here that suspected malingerers were sent for retraining when they developed sudden and serious foot difficulties. Here we were to wait until we were assigned to casual companies for shipment home. This was not a very pleasant place to be. We were quartered in squad tents and at first slept on the ground. After two or three days there were enough tents with wooden floors to accommodate most of us. Since all of the men in our shipment were recently discharged from the hospital this exposure was not good. There was no stove or fuel in the tents and with no duty assignments for us we simply sat or stood around all day after our tents were policed in the morning. To make matters worse the captain in charge of the area insisted that the tents (walls) be rolled by 9 a.m. and not unrolled until 5 p.m. We stood no calls here. The food was very carelessly prepared and the whole mess hall staff had an antagonistic attitude toward the transients. This may have been because from the captain down to enlisted men they had only been in the AEF for three or four weeks and were told that they would be among the last to go home.

After a few days Sibley stoves were placed in the tents but they did little good. We were issued two or three small and rather green sticks each day per tent and by saving for two or three days we could then have a fire for an hour or so. We were not permitted to buy wood from the French for some unknown reason. Whenever we thought we could get away with it we would take off our shoes and crawl into bed to keep warm. After a few days in this section we were moved to another area where we were given ticks and a little straw to put on our beds. In every way the situation was bad here. Morale was low, food very poor, both in quality and preparation. Men received harsh punishment for the least infraction of



regulations. This punishment took the form of removal from the evacuation list. All were very bitter about their treatment.

We were notified here that if any wished to serve in the Army of Occupation they could do so by applying and by passing a physical examination. I knew of no one here making application.

On February 13 my name was posted for evacuation. Back we went to St. Aignan where we were assigned to Casual Company #1453, all Washington and Oregon men. On February 15 we left St. Aignan on an American train, with American box cars and engine. We still had our steel helmets and would give them up only at Fort Lewis. They made a good seat in box cars. It took us two days to reach Brest where we hiked back to the very same area where we had been camped the previous October. As I write this it seems that I had a very complaining attitude but this was the normal state of mind of all soldiers at this time.

We were in the season of heaviest rain on Cape Finisterre. As usual we had the poorly pitched squad tents. The mud was deep and duck boards, put down in an attempt to keep men out of almost knee-deep mud, quickly disappeared from view. Since there was no wood available for the Sibley stoves the men had to be watched that they did not break up the duck boards for fuel. Since there had been so much complaint about food these complaints had even reached the ears of Congress so the mess halls here were doing a pretty good job. The Marines had charge of the camp and were doing a very good job. They were very systematic. After about two weeks we were moved into barracks near the old stone Pontenazen Barracks. Here we were to spend another two weeks.

Here it was simply a question of putting in time until our sailing orders came in. Since we were a part of no division we would get no preference. We saw both the 27<sup>th</sup> (New York or O'Ryan) and 37<sup>th</sup> (Maryland and Virginia) Divisions come and go. The 27<sup>th</sup> boarded the Leviathon. Time hung heavy as there was nothing to do and passes were hard to get. A sergeant by the name of Holbrook, another by the name of Turnbull from Spokane, and I went on pass to a little village called Goneau one afternoon. It was about three or four miles in an easterly direction from camp. A mounted policeman of the 41<sup>st</sup> Division (American) stopped us on the street in Goneau and asked us what we were doing there as it was a closed town. Holbrook said we had a special pass and handed it to him. The M.P. looked it over and said "I don't get this. We were told that no troops were to come in here under any circumstances." Holbrook said "Well, I guess there are always exceptions. There were some things the C. O. wanted." The M.P. reflected a

moment, looked the pass over again. "It looks o.k. but watch your step." He went on his way. Turnbull said "We had better be out of here before he goes off duty. This was the first intimation that something was not quite right. It seems that Holbrook had access, through a friend in the sectional office in the permanent command, and had secured a pass form, filled it out for the three of us, forged a signature and stamped it with the official imprint. Since this was a court martial offense carrying stiff penalties I became very nervous about the whole situation.

In a little while by going from one small store to another we managed to pick up some potatoes, eggs and bread. We took these to a small café where we arranged to have the madame fry the potatoes and make an omelet for us. We purchased a bottle of champagne from the proprietor, a French infantryman who had just been discharged from the army. This was by far the best meal we had had since Christmas. Doc (Holbrook) bargained for a bottle of India rum which he proposed to give to our temporary C. O., a Marine first lieutenant. This took some little time and I began to wonder if we would get back to our quarters safely. We started back at about 7:30 p.m. and got through the main guard post without much difficulty. The guard again called attention to the fact that passes were not supposed to be issued for this area but said it looked o.k.

Holbrook and Turnbull made one more trip to Goneau. Someday I hope to be able to write a good story about this as it almost caused them to be left behind, as on the 13<sup>th</sup> our sailing orders came through and on the 14<sup>th</sup> our marching orders arrived. On the 15<sup>th</sup> our marching orders came and Holbrook and Turnbull were not to be found. The C. O. called me in and asked if I knew where they were. Since I did not know but could only guess I told him if he could get me a pass to Goneau I thought I could get them back in time. After some consideration he decided to do this. The two sergeants were capable non-coms and I figured he wanted their services during the month we still had to serve. As I suspected, they were in Goneau, and after much persuasion they began to understand that they had better get back to camp in a hurry. In any event we did get back to camp in time to answer our final roll call there and to march to Brest where we were to board the George Washington. President Wilson had just debarked for his second round of meetings with the other allied leaders in Versailles. We sailed in the evening just at sundown. As we sailed into the sunset I had mixed feelings. The first was a feeling of gladness that I was on my way home. At the same time I had an unformed, vague but strong feeling of regret as if I were leaving many things undone and many experiences unaccomplished. This was soon crowded out by the joy at being on the way home. The last rays of the sun barely revealed Cape Finisterre as France faded into the horizon.

On the way to France first sergeants had rated staterooms and dining room privileges. When we went aboard the George Washington the first sergeants were assigned staterooms as before. However, we were hardly settled when word came around that we were to be reassigned to the bunks in the hold. The reason was that a large contingent of nurses were taken aboard at the last moment and, being commissioned officers, were entitled to the staterooms we occupied. So to the hold we went and slept on canvas bunks stacked eight high. And no white linen and silver but back to the old mess kit and self-dumping aluminum cups. No one really cared and the special accommodations on the way to France now seemed merely a pleasant bonus but of no particular importance.

The voyage home was wonderful. The weather was clear and fair most of the time. There were many important people aboard, among them Captain Kermit Roosevelt and his wife and children, Miss Florence Gompers, daughter of the great labor leader, Samuel Gompers and many others. More depressing was the presence of large numbers of wounded and maimed soldiers. And then there were many nurses returning to the States. There was a relaxed and almost festival air on the part of both passengers and crew quite in contrast to the trip to France.

On the morning of March 25, nine days out of Brest, we sighted the U. S. coastline. It was a wonderful feeling when at 12 noon we floated slowly by the Statue of Liberty and into New York Harbor. We docked at Hoboken where there were large numbers of people waiting who cheered as we came in and many then scanned our ranks eagerly as we came up the gang-planks. Occasionally there would be excited calls as some relative saw a familiar face. Since I knew that no one here would be expecting me I had little interest in the crowds.

An interesting thing happened in the harbor as we came in. A boat decked out in a great sign saying that it was the official welcoming boat of the Mayor circled about our ship with a band playing. Scores of small boats of every kind and description dashed about the harbor. Overhead several airplanes circled about. On the nose of one of the plane was a newsreel photographer strapped to the plane and busily cranking his camera as the plane swooped down toward us then flew away. (Note: I saw a newsreel in a theater several years later and recognized our ship and many of us in the group on the deck. 3/13/64)

A train of Pullman cars was waiting for us and we were soon at Camp Merritt, N. J. We were here twelve days with nothing much to do. When we first arrived the "silver-strippers" (officers and men who had all of their service at home) tried to get the veterans of the AEF to stand calls. This they would not do. Rather than create a great deal of trouble the permanent staff let it go. I had two passes

here. Read about a dance to be held for service men at Paterson and went down but it was very uninteresting. Requested and got a pass of three days to go to New York City. Saw a few shows and enjoyed myself just walking about the downtown streets.

On April 6 orders came through for us to entrain for Camp Lewis. I had tried to get my discharge at Camp Merritt plus a travel allowance home but was turned down. When we went aboard our Pullman Sergeant Holbrook said to Turnbull, "Let's stake a claim on the drawing room." So four of us, Holbrook, Turnbull, a Corporal Woods of Portland and myself moved into the four-passenger drawing room with all our gear. We were no more than settled when the Pullman porter came along and protested our occupancy. He insisted that this space was reserved for officers. Holbrook, the salesman, never at a loss for words and gall said, "Now, look here, we are non-commissioned officers helping with the administration of the train. We are assigned to this space." With that he closed the door. A short while later a group of four officers came along and looked in. One said, "This is the number of our quarters but there must be some mistake as it's occupied." They did not question us and since they did not return satisfactory quarters must have been found for them somewhere else. Holbrook apparently could get away with anything and we kept the quarters clear through to Lewis.

The trip back to Washington was an exciting one. At every station of any size and especially at Buffalo, N. Y., crowds met the train and there was much shouting and laughing. The first lieutenant in charge of our section was the same officer assigned to our company when we arrived at Merritt. He was filled with a sense of his own importance and he wore three silver strips indicating eighteen months of service in the U.S. Neither of these characteristics made him very well liked by the men and the friction grew as we crossed the continent. By the time we reached Havre, Montana, conditions had become almost impossible as the men would do all sorts of things to harass him. There he threatened to have the whole lot court martialed. Jeers were all he got for his pains.

At Dubuque, Iowa, the Red Cross women, bless them, loaded our cars with home-made pies and they were good! How wonderful they were to us from beginning to end! At Spokane we were marched up town to the Davenport Hotel Restaurant where we were given a fine luncheon and some very attractive girls sang several numbers for us. At last we arrived at Seattle. When I got off the train there was my sister Gladys to greet me. This was a surprise to me as I had not wired home hoping to arrive at home unannounced. So while the rest of the fellows were taken up town to dinner Gladys and I went to a restaurant to eat by ourselves. She had taken one look at my disreputable uniform which had never

been very good to begin with and certainly had not improved any – its trips through two “cootie mills” and a lot of hard service wear and exclaimed “What a terrible uniform!” It seems that the Seattle P. I. had carried the names of all the Seattle area soldiers who had returned on the George Washington. It had also published the exact train and the time we would arrive in Seattle. So I was the only one to be surprised.

This was my first news from home in over seven months. It was then that Gladys told me of the death at Camp Lewis in October of my cousin Glenn Muzzall, who was also my very dear friend. He was one of the many hundreds who died of the “flu”. I knew then that nothing would ever be quite the same again.

We arrived at Camp Lewis on April 12. Here we were put through a systematic processing. All of us who had been in hospitals were given physical examinations. The medical captain who looked over my record said that I would be held at Lewis for several days for further examination and observation because of my medical record. This I did not want at all and said so together with the question, “How can I get out of here and go home?” I was told that this was unwise but if I chose I could sign a clearance form, which I did at once, went back to the barracks, which by this time was empty. I did not wish to go home in the worn-out uniform I was wearing so went to the supply room to see if I could persuade the sergeant to give me a better one. There was no one there but the place was open. There were no new uniforms but there were some good used ones. I picked out a blouse and pants that fitted me fairly well, put them on and left my old uniform there. The day before I had given up my pack and helmet after all those months. I had worn or carried them so long they seemed a part of my anatomy.

Next I walked over to the canteen and bought a cheap suitcase to put my extra clothing and a few souvenirs in and set out for the bus station. I had a lost feeling. What was this? Then it occurred to me that I had not been alone or separated from other fellows in the service for a long time. Also there was always something exciting about to happen. Now I was no longer in the Army. No longer would anyone respond to griping by singing “You’re in the Army now, you’re not behind the plow; you - - - you’ll never get rich, you’re in the Army now”.

As I stood around the bus station waiting for one to Seattle, a man wearing a “Y” uniform came up and began a conversation. He asked me what I was going to do now that I was out of the Army. I said that I planned to go to WSC in the fall if I could find enough money. He asked if I had any claim on the Army for disability since, if I did have, the Government had passed a law which would help disabled

veterans get an education. I told him that I had signed a statement that I was in good physical condition. He told me that I had made a serious error, as indeed I had, and this came back to haunt me later. In any event, here I was a free man again. The date: April 15, 1919.

Mother met me in Seattle and together with Gladys we went home to Oak Harbor together. And so ended my first and, I hope, my last with war and military life. My hat is off to the boys who spent from a year to eighteen months of the best years of their lives in the mud and trenches of France. Above all else credit should go to those who will pay for the rest of their lives because of crippled bodies, and to the mothers and families of those boys who will not come home at all. As for myself, reaching the fight at the end I was very lucky or fortunate to come home in a fairly sound physical condition.

In retrospect I must say that I would not have missed the experience under any circumstances. I learned much about our country, about France, how to live with other people under trying conditions, how to organize and direct a company of men, and how to adjust to different conditions. I learned that war as now carried on is a horribly wasteful thing, a destroyer. I have the feeling that I did what I should have done by serving in the Army.

Now the war is over. The opportunities of our wonderful country are open to us again with the chance to make as much or as little of ourselves as we will. So, as the French would say "Fini la guerre".