

LETTERS HOME
FROM
OTILIA D. NOECKEL

Otilia Noeckel was born June 11, 1890. These letters were sent home to her mother and sisters Mary, Louise, Rose, Emma "Em", and Laura and her brother, Will, during the last part of World War I. Otilia was stationed in France for nine months, from November, 1918 through July, 1919. While these letters have been saved intact there are parts missing and some words which were not legible. In these cases, what looked to be the correct word was written inside brackets<>.

"Little O" refers to Otilia McCartie (Tucker), who was a cousin of Otilia Noeckel, who was being raised by Mary Noeckel.

Herbert Roseboro was a friend of the Noeckel family who had dated Emma, Laura and Otilia (all at different times, of course). Herbert never married.

AMERICAN YMCA
ON ACTIVE SERVICE WITH THE U.S. NAVAL FORCES OPERATING IN
EUROPEAN WATERS

Nov. 26, 1918

Dear mother -

Believe me I would not have missed this for the world. I am having such a wonderful, exciting, interesting and delightful time.

We have not quite reached our destination but are safe and sound, well and happy in France. We are at a Rest Camp for a few days and are enjoying ourselves very much.

We expect to be at our permanent place by tomorrow and I will then write all about everything.

With much love to all

O

O. D. Noeckel
U.S. Army Nurse Corps
Replacement Unit No. 4
Exceptional Item (M909W)
Am. E. F.

Nov. 28, 1918

Dear mother and all -

This is Thanksgiving and I know of no better way to celebrate than to write you. I know you are all very anxious for news as my other letters contained so little of it.

Now that we are safe and sound and permanently settled for the present at least I guess the censor man will not mind if I tell you a little about our trip over.

Poor Laura and Emma. I wonder if they are still waiting in Hobolsen to see the boat leave. We did not go across the river at all that day but left from an entirely different port on the other side. It was just about 5 p.m. the same day when we passed Miss Liberty on our way to Sunny France. We were convoyed for about two days and were met on this side when we were still two days out. We were a few hours less than seven days in crossing but we did not debank until 24 hours after we landed.

Now Em get out your map, run your finger along the coastline - put in your pin at Brest. That's where I am.

We did not come directly here at this hospital as you have probably noticed from my other letter. We were taken to a Rest Camp about eight miles from here or the same distance from Brest as this hospital is but of course in opposite directions.

We will never forget our adventure at the Rest Camp. We were sure enough soldiers all right - that is we lived like soldiers. We slept in frame barracks - 40 of us in each. We had such loads of good times that it seemed almost as if we were on a pleasure trip. It reminded me of a perpetual Normanskill picnic like we used to have in our barn when it rained. And it does rain over here. It has rained every day since we arrived and as far as I can make out it rains every day all year round.

The only means we had of washing ourselves was by using a pint of water in a collapsible basin some of us were lucky enough to have in our suitcases. We had a bucket of water in each barrack which was replenished from time to time by some kind soldier. This water was used for all purposes.

We had the most wonderful eats and never in my life have I enjoyed eating more even tho we had to line up like the soldiers for over an hour sometimes and we ate from mess kits and tin cups and usually standing.

The Rest Camp is situated at what used to be an old French fort. Everything is very antique, picturesque and attractive. There are large stone barracks of an old fashioned type, a huge prison and wonderful chateau all enclosed inside an immense stone wall.

There are all sorts of historic affairs connected with this place. Napoleon at one time was quartered here.

I met Miss Ford from Albany and one or two officers from Camp Taylor at the hospital of the Rest Camp. Aside from these I haven't met another soul that I know. I wish I could tell you about our Elizabeth at the Rest Camp but I'm afraid there are too many male members of our family who will read this.

Don't feel sorry for us. We are well, happy, comfortably situated, have plenty to eat and also have plenty to do. The horrors of the war is very evident all about us but of this and of this place I will tell you some other time. I must hustle back on duty now.

Much love to you all.

O.

Our Thanksgiving dinner
Roast pork with oyster dressing
mashed potatoes
creamed peas
bread and butter, jam
mince pie - coffee

This address will reach me quickest

O. Noeckel
U.S.A.N.C.
Replacement Unit #4
Exceptional Item (M909W)
Am. E. F.
A.P.O. 716

AMERICAN YMCA
ON ACTIVE SERVICE WITH THE U.S. ARMED FORCES OPERATING IN
EUROPEAN WATERS

Dec. 5, 1918

Mother dear -

You can't imagine how very attractive it is here. You know we are right on the sea coast and can look way out across the bay and out beyond that to where we know you and all the rest of the dear mothers are. We are so close to the water that a few of the wards are almost right on it. The shore is mostly rocky but in a few places there are very nice little beaches - I tell you Bermuda has nothing on this place for scenery if it only wasn't for the rain rain rain. I expect to be waterproof by the time I return.

The trees here are so beautiful they are all covered with a green moss or a heavy ivy as the case may be. Certain kinds have the moss others the ivy. I can't tell you what sort of trees they are as they are different from any I have ever seen.

The houses are mostly of stone and on the Ann Hathaway style. In the back yard is always one of those pretty attractive old fashioned wells. The kind that have a bucket on and chain. Sometimes it is hard to distinguish between the house and the barn in most places. The yards are very dirty and all littered with all sorts of things. I think the French people in this particular locality are not very thrifty. They are making enough money from the American soldiers.

The French children attract me very much. They are so strong and sturdy looking and have the fattest reddest cheeks. They can all call "Hello" and "Good bye" to us and most of them can say "give me a penny".

Brennan and Magneson and I have a room together. It is our home. We are furnishing by degrees or rather by installment. Today we hung our window curtains. They are made of <perils> paper, which came from rolls of cotton. We have one chair and a shelf a piece. The shelves we put up ourselves. We use them for our dressers. That's why we have three shelves and only one chair. The nice thing about our room is the fact that it has three windows. Our trunks will be here very soon then we will be able to fix it up a bit.

You all know how I hated woolen stockings. I like them now. I wear them all the time. I have to. Wool is the only thing to keep out the dampness.

Uncle Sam feeds us very well and I have an enormous appetite. I just adore the work I am doing right now. I am on a dressing team with another nurse and a surgeon. We dress wounds almost all day long. Today we did sixty. The horrors of the war are certainly evident around here. Some of the wounds are frightful and some of the poor boys have five and six of them. It doesn't seem possible that these poor wrecks are the same strong healthy robust lads who came over here just a few months ago. They are so anxious to get home but they certainly have remarkable grit and courage and are so cheerful with it all. They laugh and joke and call each other "you poor cripple" or some such similar thing.

The discipline is more rigid and severe over here than in the States. We are not allowed out after 9 p.m. unless on special occasions. We cannot go out of the hospital grounds even to take a walk without permission and then we've got to have a pass. We've got to tell who we are going with and when we will be back. This sounds as if we are rather closely confined but we really are not. We find plenty to do.

Sunday evening I attended services. A chaplain held them in our Mess Hall. We sang hymns without music and they were without music I can assure you. I wish I could sing. I can't even make a pretty noise but then you all know that. There were just about twenty nurses and three chaplains present. I don't believe I ever attended church on such a small scale before.

Let me know if the allotment arrives all right and be sure you take out what you need for Otilia or anything else you might want it for and my share towards the phone.

This ought to reach you before Xmas so I'll just add my Xmas greetings. I will be thinking of you all and trying to imagine myself with you. I know I'm going to enjoy mine here and I hope you all have the very merriest and happiest Xmas day you ever had. My gift to you all will be in my trunk when I come home.

With heaps of love to all.

Otilia

Use this address
U.S. Base Hospital 105
Hospital Center - Kerbuon
A.P.O. - 716
Am. E. F.
France

AMERICAN YMCA
ON ACTIVE SERVICE WITH THE U.S. NAVAL FORCES OPERATING IN
EUROPEAN WATERS

Dec. 14, 1918

Mother dear -

One of my patients is just leaving for home so I am sending this little message with him.

I am well and happy and enjoying myself immensely in a foot of mud. My work is so interesting I just love it.

A very merry Xmas to all and loads and loads of love.

I hope you, Mother, will have the nicest Xmas you ever had and that you are well. It won't be long before I will be returning.

Lovingly

O.

Always use this address
O.D. Noeckel U.S.A.N.C.
U.S. Base Hospital #105
Hospital Center Kerbuon
A.P.O. 716
Am. E.F.
France

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AMERICAN RED CROSS
ON ACTIVE SERVICE WITH THE AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

NAME Otilia D. Noeckel
Base Hospital #105
Hospital Center Kerbuon
A.P.O. 716

Dec. 15, 1918

Dear Mother and all -

Since I last wrote you I have had several most interesting experiences which I'm sure you will be glad to hear about.

It's strange but somehow in this odd far away place I do not feel nearly as distant from home as I did when I was at Douglas or when I was at Germany. And everything is so entirely different and unusual here you would imagine that I ought to feel strange and lonesome.

I think the most attractive and funniest experience was last Thursday when Magneson and I tried to do some shopping. Brest is about four miles from our hospital and on our half days we are permitted to go to town via the hospital ambulance. It's quite a treat though to ride on this ambulance as it only holds eleven and there are almost three hundred and fifty nurses here. This time however Magneson and I were fortunate and secured seats in the ambulance. It's a good thing we did for I'm sure I never would have reached town had I walked as I would have stopped to gaze at everything along the way. The road runs along the ocean at several different places and commands a beautiful view across to where many ships of all kinds are in the harbor. The water and boats always did fascinate me - but not always in the same way. I much prefer standing on the shore and just looking at it than I do sailing on it. There are many miniature farms along this road and all are still bearing vegetables. This hardly seems possible at this time of the year. I wish I could give you a good picture of the gardens around these houses but I never was good at descriptions. There is always an old well and lots of shrubbery and trees of all kinds of shapes and sizes. They have the appearance of being dark and dense. I think dense describes them best. Of course there is a wall around the yard or garden or sometimes a high iron fence.

The stores in Brest aren't much as far as stores go but we can get almost anything we want provided we can pay for it and provided we can make the shopkeepers understand; which we do after considerable attempts with the few French words we have picked up and with much maneuvering with our hands - that's where I come in handy - I always could make folks understand me best by using my hands.

The streets are very narrow and the sidewalks ever so much so and are close to the buildings - most people walk in streets just as they do in Wall Street in New York. There are all kinds of shops and stores but most of the articles for sale are junky. The French people are great for fancy pincushions, handkerchiefs, souvenirs, ornaments and such <truck> and you can get any amount of it here. The real necessary things are outrageously expensive. Common ordinary yellow washing soap is 20 cents a bar, oranges 20 cents a piece, white grapes 40 cents a pound. Candy cannot be purchased at all and cakes (little sugar cookies) are 10 cents a piece. These are just a few of the things I happened to notice.

After traveling up one street, down another in and out a dozen different stores, in the Y.M. Navy canteen and Army canteen we succeeded in getting what we went after. We accomplished this mostly by finding the article we wanted, pointed at it then showing a hand full of money and letting the clerk help herself.

We had to get a basket to carry our purchases in as paper seems to be scarce. Nothing is wrapped up for us. I bought a flat iron for \$1.25. Some salted almonds which were most delicious for 40 cents - only about a half cup full. Washing blueing for 10 cents. Magneson paid 3 dollars for a mirror for our room. We paid almost four dollars for cigarettes for my patients. I could have gotten the same amount at home for about \$2.50.

The wash blueing was our biggest propositions although our smallest purchase. We hunted and hunted and could not find anything which looked like it until finally I discovered it in a store which was a combination of a wine saloon and nut store. It was all done up neatly in little paper packages in a glass jar in the window for display. The madame shook her head when we pointed to it and showed us it was not to eat by pointing to her mouth. Likewise we showed her we knew what it was by pointing to our clothes and so accomplished our shopping. Next we tried to find an eating place. This proved to be a big proposition as every store that looked like a restaurant or lunch room was only a wine saloon and there were more of them than any other sort of store or shop. In fact almost every store no matter what

kind has a wine saloon in the rear. A great many of the shops displayed a sign in the window which read "We serve eggs, tea, coffee or chocolate". But when we got inside we could not make them understand what we wanted. We found a little tea room on a side street where we were able to get some cream cheese, cookies and cocoa for a very reasonable amount and we were served very nicely. Only "ready to serve" food can be sold here between meal hours. It is against the law to eat food which has to be cooked between meals. By the time we finished our little luncheon we discovered that our pocketbooks were also finished, so we came home feeling that we had had quite an education. All this we did while it rained, rained, rained. It hasn't stopped yet and it gets muddier every day and it is the slipperiest, stickiest, quickest mud I ever saw. The only thing which really troubled us was the fact that we could not get any candy. If I had to do it over again I would bring only 25 dollars worth of service checks and the rest in candy. Some of the shops have a neat little way of fooling us into buying what looks like candy but is really nothing but minced figs. Sometimes they are in little tin foil papers and in a variety of shapes that we are sure it is candy. Some are in bars with nuts stuck in. They are in wax papers and in fancy boxes. They are round balls covered with chocolate etc. But we have learned our lesson and will not be misled again.

My trunk has come and it is in fine condition - just as if I had only packed it yesterday. I find though that there are few things in it that I really need. I have practically no use for anything except what the Red Cross has given me. As I do my own washing and ironing I wear just as little as possible. With my woolen underwear, my tights, woolen stockings, gray uniforms and sweater I am very comfortable.

I'm afraid I am going to disappoint a few people when I tell you that I have not sent those Xmas boxes. It is only about ten days to Xmas and everyone here tells me it would be foolish to send them as so many of the regiments have gone home and besides I have not had word from any of the boys and there has been ample time. About six letters came today for nurses in our unit. This is the first and only mail we have received but we expect it will come right along now. I hope so - I do not ever remember going so long without home mail. Just a month ago today since I left Laura and Em standing in the drug store across the way from the Albert.

Brennan has been sick for a few days. She had grippe. She is still off duty but feeling fine. Magneson and I are very well and eat the biggest meals three times a day.

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Up until now there hasn't been a thing here in the way of recreation, neither for officers, nurses, or enlisted men. Last Saturday a Red Cross building was opened. We had a dance in the evening for officers and nurses. I went and had a fine time. I met an officer who lived in the next tent to Herbert at Spartanburg. His name is Williams. I also met a convalescing officer who is going home soon. He lives in New York and has promised to call 421 Irving Ave. for me.

President Wilson landed here Friday. It was a gala day for Brest. The entire town was dressed in her prettiest clothes to welcome him. Flags and banners streamed from buildings in great numbers. Across the principal streets were huge banners with "Welcome Wilson" and "Hurray for President Wilson", etc. Everybody turned out to see him. Pershing and his staff and oodles of other important people marched with him from the dock to the R.R. station. An aeroplane and a bi-plane flew overhead. The best part of this event was a big naval ball given that evening in honour of his escort. We were invited and went in full dress uniform - our white regulation uniforms, black shoes and Red Cross Capes. There were only nurses, Red Cross workers, American stenographers, Aides and etc. there. It was a most exquisite affair and we all forgot the rain, mud and our work for the time being. It seemed funny to go to a real evening affair dressed in a costume that at other times is my common ordinary every day working dress - but that's how I went and I went - not in a taxi but in a big truck which the Navy sent for us. Fancy going to a dance in a truck.

The dance hall was used that night for the first time since the beginning of the war in 1914. It is the largest and most aristocratic place in Brest. All the big affairs used to be held there. It is quite a wonderful place, huge mirrors covering almost the entire wall on two sides. Bay trees and flags were the chief decorations. There were two excellent bands (Naval of course). As soon as one finished a piece, the other would start one.

This all seemed so strange and unreal after what we had been used to since coming over here that we hardly knew how to act.

Miss Stark from Albany, a graduate of our hospital is here. She had charge of the Op room when I was first in training. She arrived only a few days ago and seemed real pleased when she discovered me. She says she heard that Base 33 was on its way home.

Our unit has been made into a Base Hospital - We are No. 105 - thus the new address. We have taken over half of this hospital. We have our own officers, enlisted personnel, etc. - everything except our own operating room and our mess. That's coming later. We will be here permanently for awhile at least.

This letter is much longer than I intended it to be. I have gone so much into detail - (knowing Em's fondness for detail - guess she will enjoy it anyway). I haven't told you a thing about my work. I will have to leave that for the next time.

I am going to number all my letters so you will know if you receive them all. This is the 4th I have written, including the one on board the steamer.

I trust you are all well and as happy as I. I wish you all the very happiest New Year and hope that by next year we may all be together.

Much love to all

O.

Please send me Elizabeth S's address.

O.

-5-

Dec. 28, 1918

Dear Mother and all -

If my mail is as slow in reaching you as yours is in reaching me by this time you must be thinking that I am at the bottom of the "briny deep". I have only had one tiny little letter since I left New York. However I am more than thankful for it as it came at just the right time. It was from Capt. Reed written Dec. 18 at Liverpool England and it came Xmas eve. I do not worry about the mail as there has only been about a dozen letters so far for our entire unit. Of course I am more than anxious for some and would greatly appreciate it.

Xmas wasn't so bad over here. I really enjoyed it very much and I was very happy in spite of the rain and mud and being away from home and friends.

My Xmas shopping was not very extensive although it did use up two of my half days off. Most of the time was spent in locating the articles I wanted. I gave Magneson and Brennan each a china cup and saucer. Up until now we have been using tin cups or bowls. I purchased cigarettes for my patients. But the most difficult task was getting decorations for the tree I had in my ward. The shopkeepers did not have their Xmas tree ornaments displayed in the windows like we do at home. I had to go in and ask for them. I succeeded in getting sixteen little tinsel affairs. I tried so hard to get red tissue paper but I could not. It is one of the few things I can say in French and it disappointed me to be turned down when they understood what I wanted.

I am not in a dressing team any more. I have charge of a ward. We are constantly evacuating. Some days I have forty patients - some days not any. I had a full ward over Xmas. There was very little of the holiday spirit among the patients at first but by the time the tree was decorated and the greens put around everybody seemed happier and entered into the game. The Red Cross donated a tree to each ward. With some cotton, sea shells dipped in red ink and the ornaments I got in town for decorations it looked very pretty. There was not trouble getting Xmas greens. It grows around here in great abundance. Holly, mistletoe, laurel and many other varieties which I do not know by name. The Red Cross gave each patient a pair of socks filled with nuts, raisins, candy, cookies and two handkerchiefs. About noon all but five of the patients received orders to go home. They were so pleased and happy they nearly raised the roof.

Brennan, Magneson and I had our Xmas at 1 a.m. Brennan went to midnight mass which accounts for that unearthly hour. I tried to make things as near like home as possible so while the girls were on duty during the day I decorated our room. It was a regular <bowl> of greens. On the table was a huge bunch of something with small shiny leaves and red berries. In a basket on the wall was a bunch of holly with white edges. Stuck in each window curtain was some long grass like green leaves. I had a Xmas candle on the table too. All the boxes which Em worked so hard to pack formed part of the decorations too. We had such fun opening them just as if they belonged to us. My how glad we were for them. We utilized every bit of the contents except Edgar Potter's wrist watch which I am taking good care of. Some candies and cakes were used for the tree on Brennan's ward. I made packages of the handkerchiefs, soap, pencils, little books and <smoles> for the corps boys who did not get a thing. We each fell heir to a pair of Mrs. Potter's socks which we wore inside our boots and they are just the thing. In the P.M. I entertained a whole mob of little French kiddies and I gave them each a <springabr> (German cake). Their eyes nearly popped out of their heads. Each day since then a half dozen or more have come back asking for more.

I do not think the French hold Xmas as we do. They celebrate mostly by drinking. Magneson and I were at Brest Xmas eve and we never saw so many intoxicated people in our lives. I can understand more and more why respectable French women are not on the streets after 9 p.m. Young boys 12 or 14 years old were so drunk they could not walk. We saw women 40 and 50 years old smoking cigarettes with the soldiers and as drunk as lads. This is not the French that we read about at home. I am glad I am an American. The women here are not respected as we are at home and they do all the hard laborious work. And talk about dirt and filth - it is just awful. They surely are a very dirty race.

It still rains every day but we have had two wonderful sunshiny days. Xmas and the day after. I attended Xmas service Xmas morning in the Red Cross but I had the privilege of taking communion given by a Chaplain who has just returned from the front. He was wounded and is now on his way home. He trained at Taylor.

The day after Xmas Brennan, Magneson and I went across the bay to a very interesting little old fashioned village. The cards I have sent the youngsters and Louise will tell you more about it than I can write. On our way over we saw youngsters in wading in the bay - imagine the 26th of December wading in the ocean and still if we did not wear woolen clothes we would be cold. Another odd thing we saw was a strawberry patch all in bloom.

Brennan gave me a cute little plant for Xmas and
Magneson two beautiful handkerchiefs.

We have our room all furnished now. We boast of an oil
stove, one chair, one table, three shelves. We have
curtains for our windows. They are made out of my laundry
bags. The girls join me in sending love.

Love to all,

O.

-6-

Jan. 1, 1919

Happy New Year to you all -

This is New Year's Day and like all other days it has poured rain all day long. Sometimes I almost doubt if there really is a sun but of course I know there is.

I have received letters from Herbert and Fred Smythe within the last few days and now I having a fine time trying to explain about their Xmas packages. I feel like a poor fish.

Fred was at the same Rest Camp when he first came over that we were at the first few days. Neither he nor Herbert are so very far from here but of course just far enough that they cannot come to see me <any> but I was glad to get their letters. They were almost like messages from home.

We have very little to do now as most of the wards have been evacuated including my own. However I suppose in a few days we will be filled to our capacity again.

I do not believe I shall ever get accustomed to the French people. I cannot say that I like them real well. They are not a very neat and tidy people neither are they very clean. Rose and Sam could never stand them I know.

Mother I know you are going to have your wish as I am almost sure we will not be over here very long. The patients are going home so rapidly now.

Please save all the eggs you get. I am just longing for one. It is absolutely impossible to get them here.

I'm real proud of myself. The other day when we were in town I ordered the entire meal in French. We had fried chicken, fried potatoes, bread, endive salad and tea.

Nothing exciting happens here so there is nothing interesting to tell you this time-

Very much love to all

O.

AMERICAN RED CROSS
ON ACTIVE SERVICE WITH THE AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Jan. 7, 1919

Dear Mother -

At last some real honest to goodness mail has found me. Of course it is old by now but brand new to me and I enjoyed it as if it were only written a few days ago. Two months was such a long time without any home news. Never in my life have I appreciated letters so much. They came Sun. A letter from Laura, one from Mary, both written the day after I sailed. A Xmas card from Herbert, one from Mable Van and a note from England. The best part of it is now that we are located in the A.E.F. our batch of mail will follow right along. We will eventually get everything addressed to Unit #4. You can understand how much we appreciate mail here when I tell you that it is almost absolutely impossible to get any American reading material. The only books or magazines we have had are those we brought with us. I'd pay a dollar for a Knickerbocker Press. The Red Cross gets hold of some papers and magazines occasionally but naturally the patients come first and by the time they have finished them they are hardly readable. If I saw a clean or new looking magazine I would be afraid to touch it.

I was more than surprised to discover that Laura and Em saw us go on the 57th St. Pier. I think I did mention before that we came over on the La France. It is a beautiful boat and our accommodations were excellent. We had 1st class passenger state rooms. It was camouflaged which took away most of the deck room but that did not bother me. I never need any deck room.

I was more than pleased to learn from Mary's letter that I was remembered at 7 High St. and that Mrs. Swartz also inquired for me. I will send a card to Swartz's.

The sun can shine a little bit here. Last week it shined several days for a few hours at a time. Brennan, Magneson and I got in some good hikes. We walked to the next little village and bought some apple fritters and bananas for our supper one day. I saw a couple of American soldiers guarding the R.R. station and like Rose used to do to that <man> at the information bureau in the Grand Central. We asked them when the next train left for New York. They told us if any trains were leaving from there for New York they would not be standing there. We could take their word for that.

I think we must be having real winter weather here now as we have had several hail storms lately. Last night the wind blew so hard we thought surely our barracks would collapse. It did take off part of the roof of three of the wards.

Isn't it strange that we keep so well under these conditions but we do. I have never felt better in my life and was never any happier or any more contented and aside from duty we don't have a blessed thing to do or a single place to go. Of course it takes a lot of time to keep ourselves washed and ironed, bathed, etc. I smile when I say ironed, as all I ever iron is my uniform and cuffs and collars. Sometimes I celebrate and press my aprons. Very often too we celebrate by going to bed at ten instead of nine. That's when we have a feed in our room. We had one last night, tea and onion sandwiches.

I have not heard from Guy since I left New York. Surely I ought to hear very soon. He knows my Unit #4 address. I cannot imagine where he is as I am afraid he could not go on with his training for I believe all training camps closed after the Armistise. I have written to his home address hoping to locate him there.

It will interest you to know that about 35 of my patients were on the "Northern Pacific" which was so nearly wrecked at Fire Island. One of them carried a New Year's message for you. I wonder if you will ever get it.

Several of our officers have been ordered into Germany. I rather envied them but maybe we will be ordered there later. One never knows what to expect in the Army.

Em's Xmas cards to Brennan and Miss Richards came yesterday. Perhaps the others will come today. We think Brennan's real clever. She hasn't heard from her home either and has asked and asked. No one seems to know anything about the 84th Div. A few patients have gone through here who were formerly with it but such a long time ago they could give us no information of any value. A darkie yesterday told me he left Camp Taylor with the 84th and came over here with them and was wounded soon after arriving. He said there was a sgt. of the ambulance company in the same ward with him. When one of the other patients asked "What happened to him did he die" he answered "No sirree he ain't goin to die he's done paralyzed." I thought best not to tell Brennan that.

With much love to all-

O.

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AMERICAN RED CROSS
ON ACTIVE SERVICE WITH THE AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Jan. 17, 1919

Dear Mother -

How quickly the months pass by - another month has gone since I left the good old U.S.A. and I have had only two home letters in that time. I cannot understand what delays the mail, however I am not alone in my annoyance as practically every member of our unit has the same trouble - no mail from the States. There must be oodles of it somewhere and what fun it will be when it finally does arrive.

Miss Jane Delano of the Red Cross dropped in on us one day last week. No one knew she was coming. We had a fine talk from her and heard a lot of home news. We were all worried about unofficial reports we had heard of a recurrence of the flu epidemic but she assured us that it was not severe and not all over the country but just in certain localities.

This is a small world after all. Brennan had her first letter from her sweetheart and he is attending the same officers' school that Edgar Potter did. Incidentally I have not heard from him but have had another lovely letter from Fred Smythe.

While attending a little affair at our Red Cross nurses club I overheard an officer patient say something about New York. Always glad to meet anyone from my home state. I asked "are you from New York". He answered "Yes I am and you are too. You're Miss Noeckel from Albany." I could not believe my ears at first and after entering into conversation with him I discovered that he was Dr. Vasburg, Ted Reed's friend, and that old beau of Florence Crists. He was on his way to the States. He's been at the front and had a bullet wound in his shoulder. I would not have known him as he has gotten so much older.

21

We have had very little to do lately so Magneson, Brennan and I have had some most interesting excursions. Each day we try to accomplish something. We've hiked and hiked until Brennan's feet got sore. We visited one of the oldest French prisons. It is in Brest and part of it is an old chateau where the French Royalty used to live in the time of Napoleon. Queen Ann when she was visiting France stayed here. The prison part is a dungeon which is partly below sea level. Our French guide told us a great many things but I only comprehended about half of what he was saying. We had to crawl on all fours to go through some places. The torture and inhuman treatment which some of the prisoners went through is almost impossible to believe.

Magneson has a birthday next Monday so it necessitated another shopping expedition. Our lights have a bad habit of going out just at the time they should be going on and they usually remain out for the rest of the night, so I could not think of anything better to give her than a candlestick. It is brass and very odd, can be used for a paper weight also. Brennan got her a French dictionary. I saw some wonderful French embroidered lingerie and could hardly resist purchasing some but I would have no use of it now and it is outrageously expensive but it is beautiful.

I wonder if I have told you that we are in the part of France known as Brittany. You have read of the strange customs which still exist. They make the famous Brittany china and lace here. The china is the kind which has many bright colored ornaments and figures on a heavy porcelain. The lace looks like heavy embroidery on net.

In one of our hikes the other day we met a lot of women working in the fields in their bare feet. Imagine the middle of January outdoors in bare feet. Of course it is not cold but damp damp damp and mud mud mud. I'm thankful every day for all my woolen clothes and for Mrs. Potter's socks.

It's strange to write write write and never get an answer, but I know it's no one's fault.

With much love to all -

O.

AMERICAN RED CROSS
ON ACTIVE SERVICE WITH THE AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Jan. 21, 1919

Dear mother and all -

At last I have gotten some mail, three letters came Sun. and two yesterday. They were all quite recent though, from Dec. 22 to Jan. 1 so you see I have missed a great many in between. However those written last came first so I imagine I will eventually get the others. I had a hard time trying to make out what was being talked about in most cases. But I know that all at home are well and that is most important.

I did not receive the cable Laura sent but I am not surprised as all non-official cables were put aside until all official ones were delivered and some of the girls are only getting theirs now. I tried to send one home but I was discouraged. They were piled up here nine days ahead.

You seem to be having equally as poor luck with my letters. I write every week religiously and I always number them. Aside from home letters I have sent several cards to the different members of the family. I have written to Will and to the Johnsons and Smythes. I got cousin Louise's New Year's card yesterday. I surely was glad for it. Tell her thank you for me.

How I missed all the good things at home this holiday season. I want some chicken so bad. I believe I could eat a live one. I can't say I'm crazy about French cooking.

I wonder if it's cold at home. I cannot believe that there is snow and ice somewhere in this world. All I know is rain, mud and wet. It's strange how one can become accustomed to it and not mind it. I wear more woolen clothing in a day here than I did all winter at home. I often wear three pairs of stockings.

The other day we had a wonderful hike away out in the country and gathered huge bunches of pussy willows and cow slips. They are about the most attractive feature of our room now.

Magneson's birthday was quite a success. It consisted mostly of a feed which I prepared in our room on our dinky little oil stove while Magneson and Brennan were at the Nurses Club which is just an old wooden barracks the Red Cross has fixed up for us. Our menu consisted of clam chowder (canned), sardines, asparagus salad, creamed potatoes, olives, cheese (which came out of Fred Smythe's box), cookies (I saved from Xmas), tea with lemon. We toasted marshmallows and burned our fingers and tongues. After supper we went to the first movies we have seen since we left New York. They were at our club. Some officers had a little magic lantern affair and it really worked fine. They showed "Seven Keys to <Baldpate>". After the show they just packed the whole thing in a box as big as a suitcase and walked off.

You don't seem to know where I am although I have mentioned it in several letters. Perhaps by now you have gotten them but I will repeat - I am at Brest - it's right on the coast. And no the work is not a bit hard. I like it all very much and I am well and happy.

I have relieved on the shell shock ward several times lately - my own ward being evacuated. I found it very interesting but oh so sad. They treat the patients a little different here than I am accustomed to.

I have a great big washing to do so I will close until next week.

Lots of love to all

Otilia

-10-

AMERICAN RED CROSS
ON ACTIVE SERVICE WITH THE AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Jan. 31, 1919

Dear Mother and all -

I almost forgot to write this week. I was so busy that I did not notice the days slipping by. The end of last week our hospital filled up to its capacity and it always means a lot of work to get the patients ready to go home. They must be bathed and temperatured, fed and clothed. Each man takes back with him a full equipment and that is part of our work here to see that they have the proper clothing and enough of it. Just as we get acquainted a little bit with them in comes a boat and away they all go.

I discovered the other day that there is a doctor in my own unit from Albany. He is a captain. Shaible is his name and he's a brother to Joe Shaible, a nurse who graduated from our hospital the year before I did. This doctor is a prominent pathologist in New York City. His home is now at Cambridge, Mass. He married a very wealthy society widow from Cambridge. Her sister is Mrs. Walloee who was a patient at the hospital when I was there with Louise Karlbrunner. Ben Smith and Miss Kearny were her nurses and she knew that Mr. Smith who visited our house once. He was Jane's patient in Pav. 7 and later got into that mess with the little pupil nurse. You will probably recall all this. Capt. Shaible says he knows Herbert at least he remembers the family very well. He knew how the boys used to sing at St. Peters. He has asked me to surely let him know if Herbert comes here as he would like very much to see him. I hope Herbert does come this way. I would like to see him myself.

I'm getting a little more mail now. Two letters came this week. I mean two envelopes. The letters were mostly Laura's. Em had added a little on one. Also I received that card to be filled out for the Red Cross which I attended to at once.

Some of the cases we have in now are tragic. Not those on my ward - they are all almost well and in good condition but the ones on Brennan's ward nearly make my heart break. I visited there for a few minutes the other day, then came to my room and cried for a half hour. Fifteen men are absolutely totally blind from wounds received - and many of them have various other wounds besides. One young fellow twenty three years old has both hands amputated and both eyes out. A hand grenade exploded in his hand. He is the best sport ever - sings all day long and is always joking and jollyng asking for a mirror, gloves or something of that sort. Of all the patients I have seen the blind ones seem happiest but I fear it is mostly camouflaged.

Feb. 1, 1919

This is Rose's birthday. I thought of it too late to send a card so I'll just express my good wishes right here. Rose, I wish you good luck, happiness and the best of health for this new year of your life.

We had a huge surprise yesterday. Gen. Pershing inspected our camp, so I have had the opportunity of shaking hands with him again. He came to the nurses club at noon, made a little speech and greeted every one of us. But better still - he came again in the evening to a little social affair which the officers of our unit were giving. No one knew he was coming. He danced with several of the nurses who did not happen to have a partner at that particular time and he signed all our dance programs. We felt quite honored to have this happen to our unit, as we are the youngest organization here.

Loads of love to all

O.

Feb. 7, 1919

Dear ones at home -

The Leviathan came in the other day laden with mail for the A.E.F. and I came in for a generous share of it. I have had two or three letters from home every day this week. Some of it was old mail which had been written the latter part of November. There were two Xmas cards from both cousin Louises. Also I have had my first letter from Guy which was written Nov. 30. Isn't that a long time for mail to come from the States. I have written him repeatedly with no success. Two of my letters were returned to me.

We are all quite upset. Our unit has been broken up. Thirty-five of our nurses and thirty-five including the chief nurse of Base 65 have been transferred to the hospital we were at when we first landed in France. Our chief has been made chief of the entire center. I am most thankful that I am one of the ones left behind with her, for she surely is an excellent little woman.

Naturally with so many of the nurses gone, the rest of us are somewhat busy. Last night a thousand patients came in and several of the nurses had to work until midnight. At present I am on duty in the nurses infirmary. We have a lot of nurses and Red Cross workers sick and I am a lot busier now than I have been in some time.

We lost another of our unit last night. I think Laura and Em met her in N.Y. Mrs. Hicks is her name. She had flu in the States and I do not believe she ever fully recovered. She was sick all the way over and never did a day's duty over here. She was in the hospital all the time. Brennan specialled her the last three weeks and Miss Gould was her special for about six weeks. It is extremely sad as she leaves two small children at home.

I have met a captain who was at Douglas when I was there and I knew his uncle at Taylor. He was a major and the chief surgeon there. The captain is attached to our unit now.

At last I have found a place to get fresh eggs. I bought a dozen today for seven francs or a dollar and forty cents. That's some price for eggs, isn't it? I feel as if I could eat the entire dozen at once.

I smiled when I read Em's letter telling me to buy a diary. I've long grown out of the habit. And don't you know that we were not permitted to bring cameras. However we can have them now and Magneson and I are going to town on our half day next week and try to purchase one fifty-fifty.

I surely was surprised to hear about Dr. Page. No doubt everyone else was too.

All the nurses returning to the States go through here. At present we have about a hundred waiting for the next boat. It makes it very crowded here for us.

So Millie F. has another son. I can hardly realize that she is a mother of two children. Please give her my very best wishes.

Did my allotment reach you yet? Please let me know. Sometimes the first is long in arriving.

It has been extremely cold at night here for the past week. When I get up in the morning I am reminded of our little room upstairs, how cold it used to get in there when <Schnie> and I used it for our sleeping quarters. I just hate to get up in the morning. I shiver until my back aches.

There's no more news so I will finish for this time.

Much love to all-

Oie

Thur. Feb. 15, 1919

Dear Sister -

I just discovered that we can have packages sent to us now without going through any red tape at all. I would love to have some good Kodak pictures to bring back with me and as it is impossible to get cameras over here, I am writing to ask you to send me one. Magneson and I spent several hours in town yesterday hunting for one but without success. We could find cameras all right but no films to fit them and besides I doubt if we could manipulate the French made camera.

I'm afraid the Brownie No. 2 at home is not in good condition so draw enough money from my account to get a new one and as long as you are getting a new one, get a good one. I think I would like a No. 1 or 2, a folding. I am quite familiar with them. If you think that No. 1 A takes a nicer size than the No. 2 A - why just get it. However you may know of a better and nicer kind. Use your usual good judgment. Also send about 8 or 10 films to start with and as I use them I can let you know and you can send me more.

You see Magneson and I are planning to go to Paris and Nice on our leaves which are due any time after March 15 and of course we will want a camera to take with us. Do not mention this leave to anyone as there is nothing definite yet. We would like to go about April 10th.

You send the package insured so if it should get lost we will not lose the money. Address it to Base Hospital 65 Hospital Center Kerbuon A.P.O. 716 France. This hospital is now No. 65. Thus the change of address. But anything addressed to 105 will always reach us.

You might put in a few tubes of cold cream. We cannot get greasy cream here. It is all that evaporated kind.

I know I'm a terrible nuisance and I hope I can repay you some time.

We are very busy now but find ample time for recreation and when that camera comes I know of a lot of views I am going to take providing the sun will shine long enough.

I trust you are well and enjoying your work as much as ever. Your birthday will soon be here. I wish I had something to send you. I'll bring it with me from Paris.

With much love

Oie

Feb. 23, 1914

Dear Mother and all -

This has been a very pleasant week for me. I've gotten all kinds of mail from home, some which was sent in Nov. and Dec. and some which was sent very recently. I know a lot of things now which I did not know before. I know that you are receiving my allotment all right. That Wilhemina and Em have both had the flu. I heard several times that they were well again but I did not know what it was they were well from, however I'm very glad they are well. And little O Two has been sick and is all well again. And I'm so glad she likes school so well. I hope she will always like it.

Herbert visited me this noon for a little while - gee but it was great to see him. When he left I experienced the first home sickness I have known since coming over here. I tried to send Em a cable telling her that he would be home soon but as we do not get reduced rates any more it would probably cost me at least 10 dollars. It is thirty cents a word and I would have to pay for every word and number in the address also the signature. I figured that it was not worth while as it might reach the same fate that my Xmas cable did.

I wish I had Em here. My jersey dress has to be fixed and I don't know how to do it. It's stretching and getting too long waisted. It is such a comfortable thing and I wear it a lot.

Had a nice letter from Elsie. She is still near Paris and seems to like it very much.

Herbert will bring you all news so I will not write any more this time.

Love to all

O.

-14-

Feb. 27, 19

Dear Mother and all at home -

As the soldiers say this is a great life if you don't weaken but I'm afraid I'm weakening a little tonight. Magneson has gone on night duty as supervisor and it leaves Brennan and I rather lonesome, but I suppose poor Magneson is more so. But however this is not the worst our unit is being split up some more. Twenty-five nurses left today for Pontarlier and tomorrow fifteen go to St. Nazaire. We fear that it will be this way right along now until no one of our original unit is left except the chief. You see the other unit opened this hospital so it's really theirs and if nurses are needed from here for other places it naturally means that we are the ones to answer the call.

Magneson and I had quite a nice little party last night. Two officers took us out to dinner at a chateau near here. We had a delightful feed and the place was most attractive. Just a little tiny room filled with all old fashioned furniture mahogany, funny little camp mirrors, a darling little fireplace and such funny chairs. When we returned I was informed by a nurse that some captain had called to see me and seemed much disappointed that I was not in. He was on his way home and only had a little time here. Naturally I was curious to know his name and all about him. I was told that his name was Reed and he had left a note in my room for me. Well you can imagine my surprise when I discovered that it was Ted. He has just gotten his captaincy. He called again this afternoon and after I had spent a very annoying half hour trying to get off duty so that I could see him and had visited with him for another hour, he informed me that he had been transferred to an ambulance company which is located in Brest. Can you beat that. I'm sure if I had known that he was not going home I would not have bothered so to see him. He's the same old Ted, though much improved in appearance. He wears a little moustache and looks well in his uniform.

This sure is a strange land. Lilacs are already in bloom. I have a huge bunch of them in my room. A patient gave them to me.

I am wondering if any of you have been reading the articles in the New York papers about this camp and Brest. There seems to be a lot of criticism which is very unjust. From time to time nurses and officers have gotten clippings from folks in the States. Should you see any of these articles do not believe them, they are absolutely untrue. This is a first rate camp and hospital. We were inspected by Gen. Pershing himself and he pronounced the entire post in fine condition. There is an article in the Evening Telegram of Feb. 13 which is worthwhile reading - it's so ridiculous.

Sunday Mar. 2

I don't seem to be able to finish my letters in one sitting any more, something always interrupts. I had to stop writing this letter the other day to take my weekly bath. This great feat is only accomplished by very careful planning and calculating. I have to watch my opportunity for a place on the stove to heat my bucket of water. Then I have to hang a blanket across the corner of a little sheltered place where I can perform this important operation and be screened from the eyes of the public.

I invited Ted to a little party we had here Friday night and he not only came but he brought four other officers: two captains and two lieutenants. One was Lieut. Richmond from Rochester. The doctor who was in the Constabulary the same time Herbert was. He seems to be a fine fellow. I had forgotten that I met him in Albany over a year ago. Maude Randall introduced me to him. Our party was quite a success. The Red Cross secretary not feeling well, I was hostess for the evening. Ted's friends all liked it so well they say they are coming often.

Yesterday I got a whole bunch of papers Em sent. It sure was great to get them. I enjoyed the Press very much.

It's a whole week since Herbert was here and by this time I suppose he is almost home. I was sorry I had no way of feeding him while he was here, but I know he would not have gone in our Mess Hall with almost 250 nurses.

The chief nurse I had when I went to Camp Taylor and about ten other nurses from there are here on their way home. They have been over about eight months. It seemed rather good to see them.

I think I mentioned before that I met Capt. Shaible from Albany, the brother of Miss Shaible, the nurse. He isn't here any more, he has been transferred to Savonay.

Much love to all

O

-16-

Mar. 14, 1919

Dear Mother and all at home -

The other day I got a whole heap of back mail and I learned a lot of things I did not know before. I was surprised to hear that there was a star in the flag at the 4th church for me. It pleased me very much. I do not know who is responsible for it but whoever it is I thank them.

It was the first time I heard about Barbara Engle's husband too. Isn't it wonderful to have such ambition.

Another one of our unit died yesterday - Miss Babcock. She had double pneumonia - it's this beastly climate. One never realizes they are sick until they are almost dead. We are sending a purse to her people. She helped support some younger members of the family.

The country is getting more beautiful all the time. Primroses and gardenias are the chief attraction now and they are beautiful beyond description. I never saw such gardenias, they are red, pink, white and pink, and white and much larger than any I ever saw in the States.

We are getting more comfortable here every day. A large new steam laundry had just been completed. We now have tablecloths and have had ice cream twice.

I have seen a lot of Ted Reed. He comes out here several times a week. His ambulance company has charge of all the transportation from here.

Have gotten several bundles of magazines and newspapers recently. It sure was great to get them. I thank Emma very much.

There really isn't a thing to write about this time. I just want you to know that I am well and happy.

Much love to all

O.

Sunday April 6, 19

Dear ones at home -

My vacation is over and I am back in my fatigue clothes and so busy that I can only write you a little bit. Just enough to let you all know that I am well and happy and enjoying my work more than ever.

In a day or two when I am better settled I will write you a long letter all about my delightful vacation. Never in my life have I had such a marvelous time and I do not ever expect to have such a time again.

I trust you all received the various cards I sent.

We are busier than ever here now. I have charge of a T.B. ward. There are 32 very sick patients - all bed ridden. There is only one nurse helping me and two ward men so you can see we have our hands full.

Dorothy Broeffle no doubt has told you all about me and how comfortably we are situated and that Dr. Post went through here and that I had quite a talk with him. Poor fellow he is heart broken.

I met Dave Eisle at Nice. He looks great and seems to enjoy the A.E.F. Also met a nephew of Miss Hilbe at Chateau-Thierry. He is a sailor.

I expected to find a lot of mail when I returned. I was rather disappointed as there were only four letters and were all from Nov. and Dec. A great many boats are expected in this week and I'm hoping for better luck.

Much love to all

O.

Sunday April 6, 19

Dear Sister -

I wanted to write you before I went on my vacation but it came so suddenly and I was so busy the last days that I did not get the opportunity.

I'm so ashamed of myself for bothering you about the camera and the other things. I did not know you were not feeling well. The Post Office officers here told me I did not need a request from my C.O.

I hope you did not do anything about the books I asked for. You must have felt like choking me when you got that letter.

I wonder if you sent the camera. It has not arrived yet. I borrowed one while on my leave. I hope to be able to send you some pictures very soon.

That was some trip I had. I never expect to see anything like it again. You'll hear all about it very soon.

Heaps of love

O.

Sun. April 10, 19

Dear ones at home -

Before I enter into the story of my vacation I want to tell you a few other things. My mail comes so mixed up that it usually takes several weeks to get the details of anything you write me about. It is only very recently that I discovered that Em had been quite ill when she was in New York just after I left. In a very recent letter I read about Mary being ill at one time too and of Em B. and the youngster having the flu too. Cousin Louise I learned had the tonsillitis but was all well again. Mother seems to be the only one who has been well all the time. I'm so glad if that is true and very sorry to hear about all the others. I guess N.Y. isn't any too good for Laura's throat.

When this reaches you I hope you will all be enjoying the very best of health and that the spring weather will be on in full force doing wonders for all of you. I'm sure the Johnson's, Smythe's and Noeckels will welcome it by going out autoing. Motoring will be a real tonic for both Rose and Louise and will also help Em B. get the flu bug out of her system. I know how long that nasty little bug can bother. I get symptoms of mine occasionally still.

Even though I do not mention it I always remember the birthdays and anniversaries. I started my vacation on Mother's and Louise's anniversary and today is Rose's. This ought to reach home about a week before Em's birthday and so I have something to mark each eventful day.

Dr. Crane and Dr. Dickenson from Albany are here now. Both are captains and are on their way home. Ted and I had quite a reunion with them last night. We were all planning to go out to supper tonight but we admitted almost a thousand patients to the hospital today so we were too busy to carry out our plan. It is now about 8:30 and I just got off duty and Ted is still working. However I did manage to take a walk to the bay with Dickenson and we had tea at our Red Cross. He has been over here almost two years and looks just great. He sure is a fine fellow. Has been with the British so much, he talks just like one.

Had a wire from Capt. Reed Fri. saying he was leaving Liverpool via Brest on the Harrisburg to go back to the States to have an operation on his ear. Ted being transportation officer he was able to get me on board the Harrisburg by doing a little camouflaging. After considerable questioning and much <pagening> we found that he had been crossed off the sailing list.

I have a ward full of very sick soldiers and I am working very hard - thus my delay in writing. But I am very well and I just adore my work. Two patients died on me last night and I'm afraid I'm going to lose another tonight.

Now about my vacation - I made absolutely no preparation at all. In a misitte bag I put my toilet articles, nightly change of underwear, a fresh silk waist and an abundance of cuffs and collars and handkerchiefs. You won't know what a misitte bag is so I will explain. It's a khaki colored canvass bag almost like a school bag. It straps over the shoulders and hangs on one side. If you saw me walking on Pearl St. with that strapped over my shoulder you'd probably think I was a farmer from away back. But they are great, I'll never travel with anything else again. It leaves the hands perfectly free to handle passports, traveling orders, tickets, writing cards, etc. Also you can sit down to a hasty meal in a restaurant and let the bag dangle at the side of the chair and it won't bother you a bit.

We left Brest at 5:30 p.m. arriving at Paris the next a.m. at 7 - no, we did not have sleepers. French trains do not have them. We had a comfortable 1st class compartment. All the others in the compartment were nurses who were traveling with us. There are not diners on French trains either but twice during the night we stopped long enough to get out for coffee and sandwiches at Red Cross canteens.

On our arrival at Paris we discovered that due to so many A.E.F. folks in town we were only allowed to remain twenty four hours. We secured a delightful room in a splendid hotel right near Red Cross Headquarters in one of the best sections of town and very centrally located. We had real sheets and pillowcases for the first time since coming to France. There were five single brass beds in our room, hardwood floor, plenty rugs, two dressing tables, four easy chairs, three straight chairs, two double wash stands, two clothes trees, a huge cupboard, a large bay window with six windows, electric lights galore, and a large library table. All the furniture was mahogany but the wallpaper was red and I hate red wallpaper.

Our party consisted of Brennan, Magneson, myself and two other nurses from here - they are sisters and very charming. Their names are Jorsted.

We only spent enough time in our room to brush up a bit then went out to see what we could of Paris in 24 hours. We were most fortunate in discovering that the Red Cross conducted a trip about town every morning at ten o'clock so of course we trotted right along with the party.

We saw the famous Eiffel Tower - the highest in the world. We crossed the Seine River several times, mostly to see the artistic bridges. We saw the exterior of all the principal government buildings, the place where Pres. Wilson meets with the rest of the officials of the Peace Conference, the Louvre where the most wonderful pictures and pieces of sculptures of the world are kept, the Parliament, the Arch of Triumph, the largest arch in the world. It represents the triumph of Napoleon. The Place de la Concorde where we saw the Obelish and many German war trophies. We also saw that beautiful and famous promenade where Paris Elite love to show off. We saw ever so many other historic and beautiful buildings but what impressed me most was the Pantheon de la Guerre. This is a panorama painting of the war. It occupies the entire interior of one building. On the background is the whole war zone. The burning of Rheims the destruction of Chateau-Thierry, Argonne Forrest, Verdun, Mitz and so forth. Airplanes are seen flying about, armies are mobilizing in the foreground, while in the back they are engaged in fighting. The base of the picture represents every country which was engaged in the war. Each has a little portion of its own. U.S. is represented by numerous people standing on the White House steps and each one can easily be recognized. Pres. Wilson, Col. House, Mrs. Vanderbilt, Ex. Pres. Taft, Sect. Baker, Col. Roosevelt is there and is sort of beckoning to the American citizens. The citizens being represented by an Indian, a cowboy, a colored man, laborer and the professional man. We spent an hour there but I was not satisfied. I feel that I could spend a half day and still there would be more to see. I'm sure there was never such a work of art before. We were told that the canvass is only weighted down and when the French people were finished with it they were going to send it to America as a money making proposition. It was worth a trip to Paris to see this picture.

Napoleon's tomb impressed me greatly also. There is a peculiar sort of amber light in the tomb which no one has ever been able to produce again. No matter what kind of weather it is the light is always the same.

In the P.M. we visited the interior of a lot of buildings, the most important being the Louvre where we saw the Winged Victory and the Venice de Milo. All the best pictures and most of the statuary is still at Bordeaux where it was taken during the war. We went all through Notre Dame Cathedral, the Metropolitan Church of Paris and the Saint Chapelle, considered the most beautiful piece of architecture in the world. But here as at the museum all the stained glass windows are still Bordeaux.

The following morning we proceeded to Chateau-Thierry where we visited Belleau Woods and Hill 204 where the U.S. Marines did such splendid work. We were quite surprised to see that already the fields which had been the scene of battle only a few months ago are being cultivated. Gradually the farmers are returning to their scarred property and starting life anew. Just outside of Chateau-Thierry we passed through a little town called Voux where there isn't even one whole room left. I just think not one room in a whole town. We saw the trenches, and dugouts, the broken down fences, trees, barbed wire entanglements. All over the evidence of war was very marked, shells, mess kits, pieces of guns, hand grenades, clothing and all kinds of things were still lying around. Anybody could pick up a German helmet. I sent one to Capt. Reed. We even stumbled upon a couple of unburied Germans at Belleau Woods.

We were very fortunate at Chateau-Thierry in getting a car and a driver who knew all about the place to take us around. While we were eating dinner at a little dinky hotel, some hard boiled colonel came in and sat opposite us. We were discussing how we would manage to go about and he overheard our conversation and offered us his Cadillac and driver for the P.M. Of course we accepted.

We had some experience that night. The only room we could get in town was in the attic of a hotel which had been shelled and was not repaired - there was a big hole in the roof of the room, where Brennan, Magneson and I slept. During the night it rained as usual and in the a.m. the only dry place in my bed was the spot where I had been lying. I had to drain the water out of my shoes which contained enough almost for a bath.

The journey from Chateau-Thierry to Pheins I will never forget - it has given me a different feeling toward the French people. The poor souls to have their homes and property destroyed like that. We passed through one devastated village after another. In most towns there isn't a whole house remaining. I cannot tell you neither can you imagine or picture such ruin. We traveled along the Marne for miles and from the train we could see the dugouts, trenches and entanglements of both armies. The sights at Pheins were even worse. It must have been a beautiful city at one time but it makes your blood curdle to see it now. The beautiful cathedral is all shattered to pieces. We passed up one street and down another, over another direction but it is all the same, just one great big ruin.

I try to think how it will ever be cleared away but that's impossible to my mind. It would take all the men in Germany a whole year to clean up that city alone. The population I believe is or rather was almost 200 thousand and it is completely and absolutely ruined. We went in some of the houses and it was so pathetic. A few photographs would still be on the walls. Here and there a baby's shoe or some such familiar home article.

The Red Cross is doing a lot here for the refugees. We had dinner in what must have been at one time a very nice hotel but only half of it remains and the Red Cross use it for a wet canteen. We noticed that quite a number of the inhabitants had returned and were living in one of two rooms of what were at one time beautiful homes.

The Van Hindenburg line is not a great distance from Pheins and we saw just a little of it. We had to hustle back to catch our train back to Paris. It was interesting to note the difference in the trenches. All along they had been just ordinary temporary places but at the Hindenburg Line they are cement and permanent.

The country from Brest to Pheins is not particularly attractive. It is quite level in fact almost entirely level with very little tree country. The Marne is real pretty in some places but is narrow and muddy. Truck farming and the production of grape and wine and champagne manufacturing is the chief industry.

I can work a hundred percent better after seeing those terrible sights. How these poor people must have suffered - no one knows.

We were some tired women when we returned to Paris that evening and did not waste much time finding rooms and getting to bed.

The next morning we visited the shopping districts of Paris. Oh, boy some classy stores. They have New York beat to pieces. I'm sorry but I must admit it and Paris itself is far more beautiful than New York. They have no elevated trains to spoil the city and the most wonderful subway system ever. You can imagine how splendid it must be when we use it without the least bit of difficulty and we had to change cars too. It was so simple.

40

We left at 2 p.m. that day for Nice, the Atlantic City of France, but I call it the Atlantic City of the World. The trip grew more beautiful each hour and I was sorry when night came that I could not see any more. I woke up at Marseille the next a.m. and got my first glimpse of the Mediterranean. It was a beautiful picture. The water is so blue, the sand so white, the almonds trees were covered with pink blossoms and the olive trees with their peculiar shade of green gave just the right touch.

From Marseille to Nice we passed through gorgeous scenery, occasionally running right along the Sea then again we would be way up high.

Nice is the City of fashions of the world, I guess. It is here where the Elite, BonTon and Smart Set spend their time. And to think that Uncle Same is monopolizing so much of it to entertain his nieces and nephews. The Y has taken over the Casino for the enlisted men. This is a huge pavilion built at the side of the boardwalk and extends out over the Mediterranean. The Y also has a club for American officers.

Needless to say I had a wonderful four days at Nice. I was doing something every minute. A stroll on the boardwalk in the a.m. to watch the styles go by. Jack Johnson and his white wife were very prominent strollers there. Everybody just gazed at them but they didn't mind. In the p.m. I went driving with an officer from here who happened to be on leave also. We went in one of those things where the driver sits way up high in the back. We always stopped for tea either at some fashionable hotel or the officers club and always danced after tea. Then I would go to my hotel to dinner and later to the officers club to an entertainment and dance after the entertainment. It was at one of these dances I met Dave Eisile.

But the best part of my stay at Nice was the trip to Monte Carlo and Italy. It took a whole day in a comfortable touring car. I wonder if anyone has ever been able to describe that trip. I know I can't. The visit to the casino to me is a mere detail and hardly worth mentioning compared to the rest of the trip. Of course the building is magnificent and it's a wicked shame that a beautiful place like that should be used for such a purpose.

I wonder if you know that Monte Carlo is in a country all by itself. I didn't know it before. It is called Monaco and ruled by the Prince of Monaco - Prince Edward the II I believe. We were privileged to visit his palace and museum.

Monaco is one of the wealthiest countries in the world and only covers 360 acres. It is the most beautiful country in the world.

See if you can picture this: a beautiful deep blue rippling sea with a pure white shore, great big tall purplish mountains covered with gorgeous flowers, and a little white house with red roof village tucked among this - If you can you have a picture of Monte Carlo.

I know Mother will be interested in the flowers so I'll mention a few of them or rather as many as I can remember. Daisies, yellow and white, roses, poppies, loads and loads of six week stock of all colors and all shades, orange and lemon blossoms, almond blossoms, calandula bougainvillea and heaps of others. Beautiful pansies, violets and primroses by the millions.

I must not forget to mention the shops in Monte Carlo. They are wonderful - such gowns, jewelry, lingerie, antiques, adorable little tea shops with delicious pastries, florists I'm sure cannot be duplicated anywhere else. Fortunately my pocketbook did not contain an over abundance of francs or I might have tried to buy the whole place.

From Monte Carlo we motored to Menton an attractive little town just over the Italian border. Here we had the most delicious blood oranges I have ever eaten. At Menton the mountains are very high and rugged. At noon we ascended the very highest mountain of all by means of a cable car. Never before have I gone up as steep a place. On one side was a daisy field on the other a lemon and tangerine grove. Doesn't it seem odd that these things grow on a mountain side? However, the mountains all throughout that section and in fact wherever we went on our trip were cultivated. They are all terraced by stone walls from the bottom to the top no matter how steep the mountain. Sometimes the terrace was so small that it only held three or four olive trees or perhaps a few rows of some kind of vegetable or a flowerbed.

At the top of this mountain we found a large classy hotel - it was the only thing up there and used up all the space of the mountain. We wondered how on earth they ever got supplies up there but evidently they did as we had a great big real dinner there from soup to nuts - honest to goodness ice cream, real cream puffs and all.

The view from this hotel is great. We could look into three countries and away out over the Mediterranean and I wondered if there was a higher place or a more beautiful place in the world. I know that combination is only seen at the Riviera. The blue sea, the huge mountains which are of a purplish gray color and the white beach.

From Nice to Menton we motored along the base of the mountains and returning home we took the road which goes over the top of them. I never was up so high in my life before. I actually became a little bit dizzy. We stopped in an old fashioned town away up on the top of what I was sure must be the highest mountain in the world but I guess it wasn't. We climbed away up to the very tip of it and there saw the ruin of an old temple which was built in the time of Caesar Augustus. We passed many ruins of old temples and forts which date back to Bible time. Off in the distance and across the Mediterranean we could just see the outline of Corsics and beyond we could see the snow capped Alps. On the border between France and Italy is the highest mountain of all and at the top of this mountain is a mammoth fort built in Napoleon's time. During the present war it was ready for instant action. It's a mystery to me how anyone ever gets up there. They told us that artillery stationed up there could fire many miles into Italy.

Early Sunday morning we left the Riviera on our homeward trip. For two days we traveled throughout the snow capped French Alps. The first night we stopped at a little French (naturally) village called Digne. It was most attractive snuggling down between the big mountains in a peaceful little valley.

In our rooms we found neat little notes inviting all Americans to the protestant minister's to tea. Of course we were all curious so we all went. Well I never saw such hospitality in my life. It was their way of showing their appreciations to the Americans. They were charming people - the minister, his wife, a daughter about 18 and two young boys. The parents being educated in England spoke a perfect English. They were able to show us the latest Home Journal, Christian Herald and Literary Digest. There are very few protestants in France and the minister told us he had as much work to do there as he would in Central Africa. It was here we learned that in Monte Carlo so many people commit suicide at the casino after losing their money that it takes one man to carry out the bodies. I mean one man is employed for that purpose alone.

From Digne to Grenoble where we spent the next night the trip was even more beautiful and wonderful. The tops of the mountains were all covered with snow and at the bottom the flowers were blooming.

Grenoble is the summer resort of France. Our time being limited we were only permitted to stay 24 hours. I hope Mother received the Edelweiss flowers I sent from there. They grow in abundance at the top of the mountains. Snow shoeing and skiing is the chief attraction at Grenoble. I never saw skiing before. There's a large university for soldiers of the A.E.F. at Grenoble. Many of the boys are taking advantage of it so the town is filled with Americans.

On our way back we spent another 24 hours at Paris. This time we did a little shopping and visited the <Madelino>. At night we went to Grand Opera. Hamlet was played - gee it was delightful. I can close my eyes and see and hear it yet. The building itself is grand but I cannot go into detail as this letter is getting too long.

At Chateau-Thierry I met a sailor who turned out to be Miss Hillsie's nephew. All the way we were constantly meeting people we knew - At Nice I met at least ten nurses and six officers.

I bet you will never want me to write such a long letter again.

Heaps and heaps of love to all

O

Wed. April 23, 19

Dear Mother and all -

While on my vacation I lost count of my home letters so I will not try to number them any more but just trust to luck that you get them. Will you let me know if you got the great big fat one I wrote about my trip. I would hate to have lost it - it took a long time to write it.

I suppose Arthur Dickenson called you up and told you I wanted some tan stockings. I will enclose the order for them in my next letter. I am waiting to have it signed now. I hope he will go out to call on you. He is a mighty fine fellow and has gotten so English over here that at first he seemed almost like a stranger. He is the chap who goes with Louise Vogel. I wonder if he told you about the nice party we had. You know he is one of Ted's classmates and while he was here Capt. Crane and Major Wilson were here too. All Albany doctors. There are several other officers here from New York State who happen to be particular friends of Ted's and Ted in his usual generous spirit thought he ought to have a reunion of some sort. And believe me we did. In the p.m. we went to a big athletic meet. Ted did several stunts - took part in a relay race and a running board jump and something else. I forget what it was. All the different organizations in Brest were competing for entry into a big affair which is to take place in Paris very soon. Ted's organization got two entries one for a tug of war and the other for a relay race. After the meet we went to the Ambulance Poole (Ted's organization) and had tea. Two Y.M.C.A. canteeners served it to us. At 6:30 p.m. we went to dinner. We had a private dining room in a nice little eating place. There was only one other nurse besides me and seven officers. Magneson was coming but she could not get off in time. After dinner we all came out here in the ambulance. It was good to see so many Albany people together and when Dick left a few days later I was really homesick for the first time.

I think I neglected to mention last week that while in Paris we spent almost an entire day at Versailles. It was so interesting. We were in the 'Hall of Mirrors' where peace is going to be declared. I learned a lot about French history and saw where all royalty used to live.

Sat. I had a Big Day. Quite an unusual event - was invited on board the "American" to lunch and a dance. We left camp at 9:30 a.m. and did not return until 6 p.m. We dined with the Commander and officers of the ship. Some feed - the largest and best since I came to France. Real American coffee and ice cream which came from New York. We had everything from soup to nuts.

The "American" is the next largest boat to the Leviathan. It is a hospital ship. Used to be called the "Amerika" and belonged to Germany. Several hundreds of our patients were on board and we had great fun visiting them. They were very comfortably located. The ship sunk in New York harbor about a year ago and after it was restored it was made into a hospital boat. It surely is a remarkable boat. They have just as good an operating room and dental rooms as I have ever seen in any civilian hospital. The kitchens are so clean you could almost eat from the floors. When we returned home that night I was sure I had reached the limit of social functions in the A.E.F. I could not see how anything else could be more attractive than a dinner and dance on board such a beautiful vessel. -- But I have had one more adventure since then which I think surpasses it. I can't understand why I am so fortunate to be invited to all these nice affairs.

Last night ten nurses and ten officers from here were invited to an entertainment on board the President's boat, the George Washington. I went with Captain McDaniel. He was down at Douglas when I was there and his uncle was at Taylor. Ted went with another nurse from here. Magneson and Brennan being on night duty could not go. Capt. McDaniel being a particular friend of Col. Koerper (our commanding officer) we were in the colonel's party. Col. Koerper and the commanding officer of the George Washington are good friends so we were his guests for the evening. The ships cannot come right into the docks at Brest and it is necessary to go out on a lighter or smaller boat. The commander sent his own gig for us. It is the one Pres. Wilson rides in and it's some little boat. The passengers sit away down low in a little <torreau> like - all upholstered in white. One would almost imagine they were riding in a limousine.

We were shown all over the boat and it's a regular floating palace. The Pres. apartments are all mahogany and amber. Mrs. Wilson's white and sort of raspberry color. There were numerous rooms, living room, smoking room, lounging room, bathrooms galore, rooms for maids, nurses and valet. All were most attractive and in exquisite taste. I don't blame the President for riding in that boat.

The entertainment consisted of movies and of course dancing. I saw the 27th Div. in New York.

The music was delightful and they served us an excellent supper at 10:30 shrimp salad, ham sandwiches, olives, coffee, grape juice, ice cream and pastry.

A British fleet is in port waiting to escort the Pres. It was all lighted to represent Liberty and they were continually sending up fireworks which added to the scene.

Lucky for me that we have work to do and not all play or I'm afraid I would be a much spoiled girl before I get home.

The patients still keep going and coming in huge numbers. I cannot understand where on earth they all come from. I did not think we had so many men in U.S.

It's terribly lonesome nights with both the girls on night duty. Now I know you'll wonder how I have a chance to get lonesome as I always seem to be going out some where. Only one night a week are we allowed out after 10:30 so you see if I do go out often I must come in early and it's after I get back in that I miss them. But night duty is staring me in the face and soon I suppose it will be Bren and Mag going to all these nice places and yours truly on night duty. But I won't mind. I'm willing to take my share with the rest.

There's a new rumor afloat which seems to be official. We are going to turn this place over to the Navy about the middle of June and we are all going home. Hurray if it's true.

I do hope you are all as well as I am and I think of you all all the time. I'm always telling someone or other something about some member of the family -

Love to all as usual -

O.

Tues. Apr. 29, 19

Dear Mother and all -

We have the strangest weather over here now. It is colder than it was all during the winter. At least I seem to mind it more. But to look at the flowers, vegetables, and growing things one would think it was the middle of summer. I wish I could share with you these wonderful wild flowers and they seem to grow in such impossible places. They stick out of the little tiny crevices in the rocky cliffs along the shore or out from stone walls along the roadside. And again I see some growing on the bark of a tree.

It is rumored that all Americans must be out of France by July. If that is true - you will see me home before the summer is over. But of course one never can tell anything about these Army rumors.

The Knickerbocker Press has been coming quite regularly lately. It's good to read all the home news, but of course I'd much rather read it in home letters which have been rather few for the past two weeks. I can account for this though. There has been no mail steamer in for several days. A whole lot usually come together and then we don't have any for a long time.

We are not permitted to go to Brest for the next two weeks. The socialists are having a convention and so many disagreeable things are happening that it is not safe. Even the soldiers and officers aren't allowed to go unless on very important

*****the rest of this letter is missing *****

May 8, 19

Dear Mother and all -

A letter came from Em a few days ago which made record time. I can't quite understand it only 8 days from Albany. But since then I have had two which were mailed by Laura in New York a week and ten days earlier.

It is really delightful here now flowers and green growing things every where. The weather too has improved immensely. It hasn't rained real hard for almost a whole week. Somehow it's hard to understand this climate for really things are not much further advanced then they were during the winter. We had flowers and fresh vegetables then too. Of course there is a greater variety now and it's cold enough for our sleeping bags and three blankets at night.

For Louise's benefit I finished reading the "Bent Twig" and found it most attractive. I'm delighted with the mother in the story. There is lots of food for thought in that book.

I was shocked to hear about our Engle. Doesn't anyone know why he did it. He could not have been in his right mind.

If you have not already done so do not bother about my tan stockings. If we are returning in July I can manage all right.

I'm glad my allotment comes regularly and please use as much of it as you need for any purpose at all, not forgetting Otilia and the phone. I know in the spring when there is nothing coming in it is hard to manage at times so please do not hesitate to help yourself.

We are working a new system here now. We work in relays in three shifts - first one from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. - second from 3 p.m. to 10 p.m. and night duty from 10 p.m. to 8 a.m. This makes it fine for night duty and as I have not had mine yet I rather like this plan. Last week I worked on the first shift, this week I'm on the second so I have all a.m. to sleep in. I am still on the T.B. ward. I'll be glad for a change though. The patients are so desperately sick and so many of them die.

Went to town this a.m. and on my way home I ran right into Miss Roach. I hardly knew her.

Had another note from Mabel. She says she has not heard from Em in ages and is wondering why. I'm going to try to go to Paris next week to visit her. Guess I can get a weekend off.

If you had the Sunday Press sent to me it does not come. I seem to get the daily ones O.K. Please phone them in regard to this.

Ever so much love to all

O.

Since writing this letter a Sunday Press came - there is no pictorial supplement with it - Don't they have them any more.

Mother's Day
May 11, 1919

This is your day and I want you to have a little message all for yourself from me. I am thinking of you and I love you dearly. It will not be long now before I will be home. I think in July some time. The Leviathan came in this a.m. so tomorrow we ought to have a lot of State's mail.

Much love

Otilia

Thurs. May 22, 19

Dear Mother and all -

Don't you think me fortunate to have had another trip to that wonderful and delightful city. I thought it beautiful before and now I think it charming - I suppose you are wondering how and why I went again. Magneson wanted to meet an officer friend of hers there and thinking it did not look well to go alone suggested I go with her. At first we were afraid our chief would not permit us to go. But after explaining to her and she having some errands for us to do there - all we had to do was go.

I found Mabel first thing. I think she has gotten older and quite a bit thinner. I really do not think she looks well at all but she had quite a bad cold which perhaps accounts for it.

Paris certainly is delightful all dressed up in her spring clothes. I kept thinking over and over again of what Mrs. Fisher said in the "Bent Twig" - "There is only one thing more beautiful than Paris in April and that is Paris in May". I have seen both and I certainly agree with her. By the way Mabel heard her speak when she was in Paris.

Magneson met her friend all right so I spent most of my time with Mabel. However one night all three of us went to the theater with Magneson's friend. We saw Gaby Desly.

I spent most of my time roaming around in the parlors and looking at the pretty things the shops had on display. I did a little necessary shopping - bought two pairs of tan stockings at 9 francs a pair - that's about a dollar and a half. Later I was sorry I bought them as I noticed that all the Elite of the most fashionable promenade did not wear stockings at all. But then of course I belong to the working class and not the Elite.

One afternoon Mabel, Magneson and I hired a horse taxi - (Taxis are about the cheapest things in Paris and horse taxis much more so than motors). We drove all about that attractive park called the Bois de Bolgone. We stopped for tea at a charming little place where we had some real honest to goodness ice cream. We noticed a very interesting and distinguished looking English speaking party sitting at the next table and soon discovered that it was Lloyd George and several other British people - no doubt more or less distinguished but of course we did not recognize them.

Well I'm back in my fatigue clothes again. I'm on night duty. I am supervisor or night Supt as we call the one holding that position. I rather like it but have my usual trouble trying to sleep in the daytime but I have not had night duty since a year ago Feb. and I guess I can stand a month of it as well as the rest of the nurses and besides I might be sent home before the month is up. The patients are going through so rapidly now. The latest dope is that the nurses on our base will all be away from here by July 1.

I'm wearing a service stripe but it looks so insignificant compared to the three and four which some of the nurses have earned.

I missed both Edgar Potter and Elsie while I was in Paris. Isn't that too bad. Let me say write here I did write to Potter and I gave Herbert the watch.

A friend of Howard's went through here just before I went to Paris. I discovered her in a very peculiar way. When I returned from my lunch I found a casual nurse on my ward looking at the different patients to see if she knew any of them. I informed her that it was contrary to our rules and regulations to allow casuals to visit our wards without special permission from our chief nurse. She said she had asked an officer and that he told her she might go through the ward. But I insisted that that would not do so she would have to go to the chief nurse as I was responsible to her for carrying out that order. Then she said "aren't you Miss Noeckel. I caught a glimpse of you at the Red Cross last evening. Miss Roach pointed you out to me. I'm Sally Ingalls and I know your brother-in-law very well". However, that did not move me and I still insisted that she could not come in the T.B. ward without permission from my chief. I had to be as good as my word but I'm afraid she thinks me an old grouch.

You ought to see me trying to use the typewriter. All my reports have to be typewritten and it's about the hardest thing I have to do, but I am doing better each time. I have to make out a list of the seriously ill for the chaplain and the Red Cross. The second night I was on duty the chaplain came in my office and said he came to see who was on night duty as he was still looking for some of the letters that belonged to the words of the report that was handed to him that morning. I told him he probably did not understand my system - I use the one finger Hunt and Peck system.

Much love to all

O.

June 2, 1919

Dear Mother and all -

I'm afraid I've grown careless about my home letters since I have been on night duty but I simply cannot muster up enough ambition to do anything except what is absolutely necessary. Night duty is a regular nightmare to me but somehow I am rather enjoying this. Can you picture me in such a role as night Supt. The patients in the convalescent wards call me the A.N.C. doughboy because I do so much hiking they say no matter what part of the camp they go to they always see me hiking it to some place.

The weather is absolutely delightful here now. All sunshine and flowers. We have almost twenty hours of daylight. And it has not rained for about ten days except for an occasional shower. This morning before going to bed I took a long walk and was amazed to discover the change in nature. Since I have been on nights the grass has grown so tall I could easily hide in it. The foliage on the trees is so heavy and thick the sun can't even peep through. And such wild flowers - bright red poppies, yellow daisies which look almost like our <colyopsies> white daisies bigger than any I have ever seen, buttercups and the most wonderful clover. I never saw any like it - the blossom is long and narrow and of a deep maroon color. The foliage is deep green with a white border and ever so many are four and five leaved. I do not know what it is used for but there are fields and fields of it around here and I have noticed that the farmers mow it down like grass when it gets about two feet tall. The cliffs along the shore are covered with digitalis flowers where last month they were purple with hyacinths.

I wandered around the grounds of an old chateau and I felt as if I was living in a fairy land. Roses were blooming everywhere. The chateau itself was covered with ramblers and wisteria.

Memorial Day was almost sacred here. All roads led to the A.E.F. cemeteries for the Americans that day. All unnecessary work was suspended and everybody who possibly could attended religious worship at 8:30 a.m. after which we formed for a parade to the cemetery. Our commanding officer and staff led, followed by the band, firing squad, nurses, officers, patients and enlisted personnel. We marched three kilometers to the cemetery. I cannot tell exactly how many were in the parade but I know there were four hundred nurses and almost twice that many patients, some of them could hardly hobble but they did not give up. Many of them wore bandages on their arms or heads.

I thought as I marched along how much some mother, wife, sister and sweetheart would give to be in my place that day.

The Red Cross decorated each grave and with so many wonderful flowers in season the cemetery looked like one beautiful garden. Each grave was literally covered with blossoms and each cross which marked the grave was freshly painted white.

The ceremony at the cemetery was most impressive. The flag was lowered to half mast - the chaplain prayed and had a short funeral service - taps was sounded, and three vollies fired over the graves.

I can imagine how lonesome it must be at home without little O. but I presume you see quite a lot of her.

I can see mother working hard as usual outdoors. I know that there is lettuce, rhubarb and nice little onions and how I wish I had some asparagus with some of Mary's delicious dressing. I'm afraid there won't be any more asparagus by the time I get home. As things looks now we will not be able to leave until the last of July.

Heaps of love to all

O.

June 24, 1919

Dear Mother and all -

I can't remember when I wrote you last it's such a long time ago. I guess it was on my birthday. But I have sent so many messages by folks returning through here that I'm sure you have not missed my letters. I wonder do you receive all the messages I send by the various nurses and doctors I meet over here.

It surely looks as if things are coming to a close at our hospital very soon. This morning 250 of our enlisted personnel left for a rest camp for a few days and from there they will go home. Ten doctors and twenty more nurses were relieved from duty yesterday to go home on the next boat. Those of us who are left are working rather hard now. We haven't so many patients but we have a great many bed ridden cases which are very difficult to handle. They are cases which were sent here from Bordeau and Savonay simply because there was nothing else to do with them as both those places are closing. The cases are old bed ridden T.B's, broken backs, and others who will always be invalids.

Now I have some real news to tell you. Ted Reed was married the other day. He has an adorable little wife - much too good and fine for him. She was a Red Cross worker over here at the Docks in Brest. She is small, dark and most attractive. She had orders to return to the States and I guess Ted could not stand to see her go so he married her. They had quite some time about it. I think she is a divorcee. I had met her several times and I really think her most charming, the height of refinement and good breeding. Ted came in yesterday and told me all about it and I told him I thought him very lucky as she was too good for him. He said he knew it and can't understand how it all happened.

Now Mother I would like nothing better than to go into Germany but of course that is absolutely impossible. The only place Americans can go at present is around <Coblence> where our Army is stationed. My next leave is not due until August 4th and I'm sure I will not be here by that time any more. And if I am here and do take a vacation and go to Germany I could only go to the American leave area which is only where our Army is, so you see it would not do me any good. As long as I am in the Army I can only go where the Army permits me to and if I get out of the Army (which would be a very hard thing to do) before I get back to the States I would have to pay my own transportation back. I imagine it will be...

*****the rest of this letter is missing*****

Dear sister and brother -

I'm very sorry I could not get over to see you again - but orders is orders. And besides it would not have been any easier to say good-bye than it was last Sunday.

Isn't it just wonderful that I can cross the ocean again and all at the expense of Uncle Sam. I really think I am very fortunate. I would not have missed this opportunity for anything.

The bathrobe is going to be a big comfort to me and is going to keep me so warm and cozy - just like Rosie's old red one used to. But mine is by far the prettiest one I have ever seen. Once again let me say thank you both a thousand times for it.

I wonder when I will get the next flivver ride - I bet I will never appreciate any ride any more than I did when Sam gave me when he brought me from 421 to Albert. It was so easy and nice to just jump in the car and in a few minutes find myself at the hotel. Thank you ever and ever so much Sammy. Rosie I will miss all the good eats I had at your house. It was all so good after nine months of Army food. Of course you both know that I thank you all many many times.

If you are not living in the Big City when I come back you will have to come down any way for I surely would get lost without you.

Rose why don't you go home for a few days or go to see Serene. I'm sure a vacation would do you a world of good. I guess after all you did have a touch of the flu. Nasty isn't it. It bothered me because I could not do more for you then just phone each day but you understand it was not my fault.

Brennan and Magneson want me to say good-bye and thank you for them. They are both good friends to have.

Much love to you both.

Oie