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The Rouen Post, January 1938

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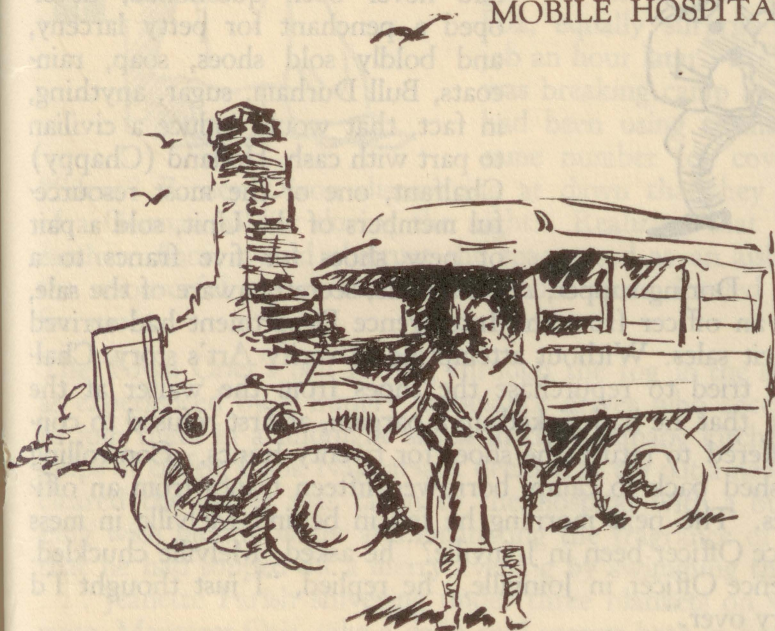
THE ROUEN POST

A PAPER DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF ROUEN POST No. 242

WILLIAM STACK

Editor

MOBILE HOSPITAL No. 4



In July, 1918, Base Hospital No. 21 was requested to furnish the personnel for an auto-chir, which subsequently became Mobile Hospital No. 4, A. E. F. Lt. Col. Clopton together with Major Post, Captain Johnson, and Lieutenants Abbott, Eberbach and Lueking, twenty nurses under Miss Ruth Morton, and thirty enlisted men were detached for this service. The hospital mobilized in Paris where the original members from Base Hospital No. 21 were augmented by men from other Base Hospitals in the A. E. F. On September 2 the Unit moved to the 4th Army Corps in the San Mihiel sector and was set up at Trondes where Field Hospital No. 161 and Ambulance Company No. 310 were

assigned to the Unit and together these organizations acted as a provisional evacuation hospital.

There were very few admissions in this area. Only 235 less serious wounded were received and 85 operations performed. The next move was to La Grange aux Bois where the Unit was set up in a small French camp. This was a more active sector and 464 patients were received, all of whom were classed as transportable cases of head, chest, abdominal and large bone wounds. The operations at La Grange aux Bois numbered 351 with 30 per cent mortality. Ninety cases were admitted moribund and six deaths occurred in the ambulance before reaching the Hospital. The last station was at Cheppy behind the 5th Army Corps and nothing but tents were used. This was the last phase of the Argonne offensive. Many cases were brought in during the first two days but the line advanced so rapidly that the active period was comparatively short.

The twenty nurses under Chief Nurse Ruth Morton remained throughout the Unit's service but were returned to Rouen earlier than the men. Some time about New Year the Mobile Hospital personnel was redistributed to its parent units and the former members of Unit 21 returned to Rouen.

♦ ♦ ♦

While Mobile 4 was encamped on the Polo Grounds in Paris, Philip Conrath and Jules Silberberg found a large tin of Piper Hiedsick tobacco on a table by Hoyle Smith's cot and for three successive mornings the predatory pair started their day with a generous slice of Hiedsick. On the fourth morning, Conrath opened the tin and his anticipatory smile gave way to a look of annoyance. The tobacco had been removed, and in its place was a small white card on which Hoyle had printed "STUNG."

♦ ♦ ♦

Dear Art:

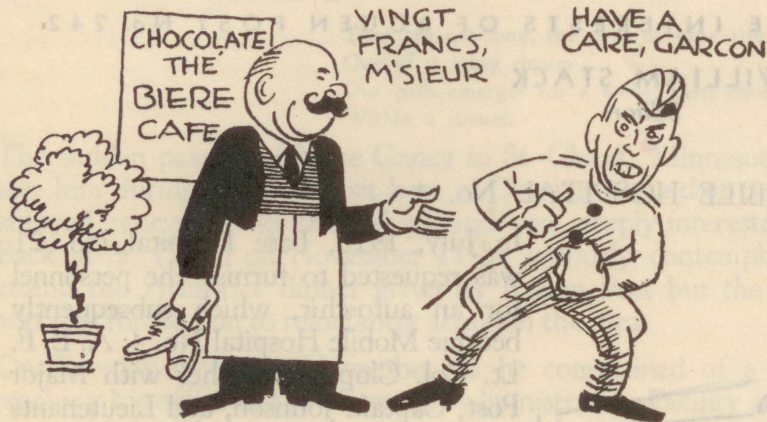
I should certainly love to be with you all on Monday, January 10, and I am going to make every effort to do so. My best regards to all the fellows.

Spencer Allen.

THE ROUEN POST

CHALFANT OUTWITTED

"Hope of ill gain is the beginning of loss."—Democritus



The chronic shortage of cash among members of Mobile Unit No. 4 caused numerous sales of Army and Red Cross supplies to French civilians. Men whose honesty at home had never been questioned, developed a penchant for petty larceny, and boldly sold shoes, soap, raincoats, Bull Durham, sugar, anything, in fact, that would induce a civilian to part with cash. Holland (Chappy) Chalfant, one of the most resourceful members of the Unit, sold a pair of new shoes for five francs to a

waiter in a Joinville cafe one afternoon. During supper, Art Melville, secretly aware of the sale, remarked within Chappy's hearing that an officer from the Intelligence Department had arrived in town and was hot on the trail of illicit sales. Without attempting to verify Art's story, Chalfant hurriedly returned to the cafe and tried to repurchase the shoes from the waiter at the original sale price. The latter, realizing that he had picked up a bargain, at first refused to consider Chalfant's proposal, but at last offered to return the shoes for twenty francs. Controlling his temper with difficulty, Chalfant rushed back to camp, borrowed fifteen francs from an officer friend and finally recovered the shoes. The next morning he fell in behind Melville in mess line. "Art, how long has that Intelligence Officer been in Joinville?" he asked. Melville chuckled. "As far as I know there isn't an Intelligence Officer in Joinville," he replied, "I just thought I'd give a few of the boys something to worry over."

SERGEANT PUCKETT



SGT. PUCKETT

Through a recent letter from Colonel James Fife to Bill Engel, we have finally discovered the whereabouts of Sergeant Roger Puckett. According to the letter, the former gallant of the Route D'Elbeuf is rounding out his army career as Superintendent of the National Cemetery at Natchez, Mississippi.

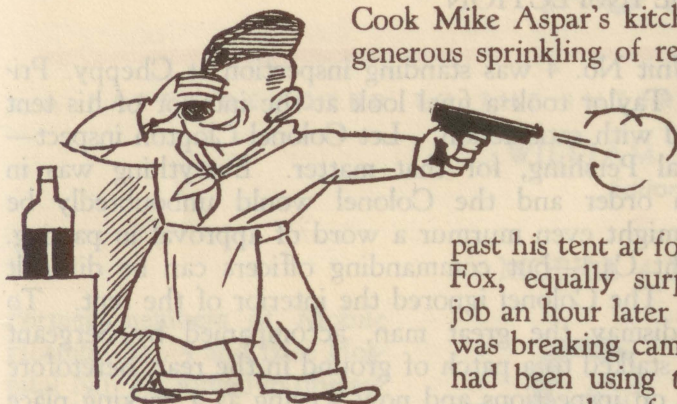
"He used to send me two gallons of paper-shell pecans every year, and they were very good," wrote the Colonel. "I don't know whether they were grown on the inside of the graveyard or outside, but they came in handy around Christmas."

As Sergeant Puckett wanders amid the silent army now bivouacked in the old port town of Natchez, we wonder if his thoughts stray back to the days in the Norman forests, when he and his pal, Cook Bellios, sought favor with women faggot-pickers by the lavish distribution of British Army rations, canned beef, marmalade and issue cigarettes. No doubt, he winces at the thought of the little munitions worker in Petit Quiville who flattered him into replenishing her wardrobe and then disappeared with a dashing French officer. Puckett was a quaint character in those days—one whose idiosyncrasies have become almost legendary. Our paths divided years ago, but across the abyss of time, we can still hear his thin apologetic voice: "Don't blame me fellers, them's orders. And besides, you volunteered to come over here—they sent me."

**JANUARY 10th—MOBILE HOSPITAL No. 4 NIGHT—JANUARY 10th
HOTEL KINGSWAY—8 P. M.**

THE ROUEN POST

RETROSPECTION



Cook Mike Aspar's kitchen associates removing the top and adding a generous sprinkling of red pepper to a mince pie Mike had baked for Adjutant Johnson. This bit of thoughtfulness effectually stopped the ambitious cook's effort to curry favor with the Adjutant . . . Colonel Clopton's pained surprise at seeing the Unit's Fiat water truck whizz

past his tent at forty miles an hour over a bumpy road. Driver Fox, equally surprised when he was removed from his soft job an hour later . . . Spencer Allen checking blankets as Unit 4 was breaking camp at Cheppy, and discovering that one officer had been using twenty-seven blankets for a mattress and the same number for covers . . . Sergeant "Filbert" Depke and

"Silent" Forney Dixon discovering at dawn that they had erected a hospital tent over the grave of a German soldier during the night. Realizing that the grave, located in the center of the earthen floor, would obstruct the space used as an aisle when the beds were placed in position, the resourceful pair removed the wooden cross, leveled the mound and reported the tent ready for use.

The Town Crier's bell ringing through the fog in the streets of Joinville . . . Mobile 4 hospitality as experienced by a hungry ambulance driver who accepted an invitation of two bibulous cooks to join them in a midnight snack in the company kitchen. As he munched a sandwich between gulps of coffee, Cook Napparsack decided to try out a new .45 automatic pistol and when the smoke cleared the driver was taken to the hospital with a bullet in his heel . . . Major Post, dripping with muddy water and emanating the fragrance of cognac, boasting to his sleepy tent mate that he had topped off a merry evening by swimming the River Aire four times—or possibly five . . . Jeanette Parish shivering under three blankets on winter mornings as she watched her tent-mate, Margaret Otis, take a daily cold sponge bath in bed.

Cooks Jim Sallee and "Tin Pants" Lennon using an axe to carve steaks from a side of frozen beef . . . Sergeant Roger Puckett's persistent but fruitless efforts to solve the mystery surrounding the destruction of ten canvas tent covers in the company laundry. While Corporal Neely amused himself with pistol target practice his helper Elmer Williams was engaged in stealing chocolate bars and the neglected covers burned to a crisp in the laundry drier . . . The pumpkin pie orgy, which was made possible by big-hearted Captain Eberbach who drove from village to village to purchase eggs for the filling. All that the Captain asked as a reward for his generosity was the assurance of two pies for himself. When the pies were baked the cooks invited several friends to sample the pastry; someone produced a quart of cherry brandy and during the merry-making that followed, all the pies, including those for the Captain, vanished from the scene.

The immense cross composed of fifty-two sheets stretched on a hill at Cheppy . . . Tanks crawling along the road near Varennes bearing banners announcing, "HOBOKEN BY CHRISTMAS" . . . the funniest sight in Joinville—Colonel Clopton's diminutive orderly dashing through the streets in one of the Colonel's discarded uniforms . . . The most cheerful man in camp—Private Grimm of the 77th Division, whose legs had been amputated at the hip . . . Thanksgiving dinner at Cheppy in 1918. Individual steaks, French fried potatoes and pumpkin pie . . . The cleverly illustrated menus prepared by Paul Corrubia and Elmer Wright for the Christmas dinner at Cheppy . . . New Year's Eve, 1918—Bill Pleuger and Frank Knecht crowding weaker comrades beyond the circle of warmth from a Sibley stove in a cattle car bound for Joinville.

♦ ♦ ♦

Two doughboys on their first visit to Joinville accosted an M. P. "What kind of a town is Joinville?" they asked. The policeman shifted his quid of tobacco and spat viciously in the road. "It was a damned good town until that Mobile 4 outfit arrived," he growled.

THE ROUEN POST

A SURPRISE INSPECTION



Mobile Unit No. 4 was standing inspection at Cheppy. Private Carl Taylor took a final look at the interior of his tent and smiled with satisfaction. Let Colonel Clopton inspect—or General Pershing, for that matter. Everything was in regulation order and the Colonel would unboubtedly be pleased—might even murmur a word of approval in passing. So thought Carl—but commanding officers can be difficult at times. The Colonel ignored the interior of the tent. To Taylor's dismay the great man, accompanied by Sergeant Schanuel, stalked to a patch of ground in the rear, heretofore unnoticed on inspections and now serving as a parking place for two gassed horses, a venerable goat, three battered bicycles, six frayed saddles and a dismantled motorcycle. Colonel Clopton gazed long and thoughtfully at the assorted wreckage. When he finally spoke his voice was stern, but his eyes twinkled. "Sergeant Schanuel," he ordered, see that this collection is removed as soon as inspection is over. Someone is evidently planning to convert Mobile 4 into a mounted outfit.

♦ ♦ ♦

During the Mobile Unit's stay in La Grange aux Bois Lieut. Ayres requested the Mayor to send someone to collect the camp garbage. Half an hour later a dignified bearded man, resplendent in a frock coat, entered the company office and announced that he had come for the garbage. It was Monsieur le Maire.

TREACHERY

In the closing days of the Argonne offensive, Mobile Hospital No. 4 moved toward Cheppy and "Judge" Neely was left in charge of the company laundry on the River Aire. A few nights later, the Judge and Pat McDonough, his assistant, tired of canned beef and salmon, plodded six kilometers over broken roads to procure a fresh beef tenderloin from the hospital kitchen. The cook on duty, apparently in sympathy with the hungry laundrymen, handed Neely a lumpy package, and the Judge and his companion hurried back to the laundry, stirred the fire, greased a frying pan and removed the wrapping with eager anticipation. As the contents were revealed by the dim light of a lantern, the tired and hungry pair stared with disgust and disappointment. The sadistic cook had presented them with a mass of gristle cut from soup meat.

♦ ♦ ♦

One autumn afternoon, Colonel Clopton, on a tour of inspection near Varennes, left his car to ask directions from a group of peasants sitting on a bench before an estaminet. The Colonel questioned them in what he regarded as excellent French, but the uncomprehending sons of the soil only shook their heads and looked at one another in bewilderment. Clopton finally gave up in disgust and returned to the car. Chauffeur "Piggy" Martin felt that a bit of moral support was in order. "Colonel, those stupid Frogs evidently took a different French course than you," he suggested. The Colonel gave the apple-cheeked chauffeur a sour glance and settled back in the seat. "Drive on," he commanded.