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THE ROUEN POST

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

WILLIAM STACK

Editor

THE 25th ANNIVERSARY REUNION



Dr. Edwin C. Ernst

Time, and the smoke of battle rising from the South Pacific, has dimmed the events of World War No. 1 but the long, long trail still winds into the land of memories for the veterans of Base Hospital Unit 21, who met in St. Louis on May 15-16 to observe the 25th anniversary of the Unit's departure for France.

Approximately 85 men and women participated in the two-day reunion which opened late Friday afternoon with a memorial service at Christ Church Cathedral, where 25 years ago to the day a dedication service was held for the Unit before it left St. Louis. Out-of-town visitors who attracted the attention of newspaper camera men at the Cathedral entrance were Dr. Fred T. Murphy of Detroit, commander of the original World War unit, and Lieut. Col. Lee D. Cady, who organized the old unit's counterpart—known as the Twenty-first General Hospital—now in training at Fort Benning, Ga. Other visitors were: May File Harned of Mattoon, Ill., Dolly Belle Schmidt Proctor of Sullivan, Mo.; Louise Hilligas, Columbia, Mo.; Horace Neely, Marion, Ill.; Tom Riste, Salem, Ill.; Ralph Dolby, Baltimore, Md.; Dr. Roland Fisher, Wausau, Wis.;

Dr. Allan Gilbert, Fayetteville, Ark.; Toby Dunville, Minneapolis, Minn.; J. B. Townsend, Lincoln, Neb.; Hugh Bisplinghoff, Hamilton, Ohio; Ruth Page McWilliams, Jackson, Mo.; Cordelia Ranz, Mexico, Mo.; Byrd Boehringer Holmes, Greenville, S. C.; Mrs. Saidee Hausmann, Rosiclare, Ill.; Mrs. Edna Alley Pryke, Minneapolis, Minn. and Zephrin Guilbault, Festus, Mo.

The World War was won by youth, Bishop Scarlett said in his address, "but old men came forward to establish the world as it was and the peace was lost." "Now," he said, "the world struggles again to determine what idea of government shall be taught to our children."

The reunion dinner which followed at Hotel Coronado was opened by Charles Jablonsky, Commander of Rouen Post 242, American Legion. After leading the members in reciting the preamble of the Legion constitution, and expressing appreciation for having been selected to head Rouen Post during the year of the Unit's 25th anniversary, the former top-sergeant withdrew in favor of Dr. Edwin C. Ernst, Chairman of the Reunion Committee.

Speakers of the evening were Dr. Fred T. Murphy, Lieut. Col. Lee D. Cady, Prof. Phillip Shaffer, Dean of the Washington University School of Medicine, and Miss Lucille Knapp, head of the Washington University School of Nursing. Lieut. Col. Cady introduced recorded greetings from Col. Robert E. Thomas and other members

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of 21st General Hospital. Col. Thomas, Commanding Officer of the present unit announced that while the nucleus of 21st General originated in the Washington University School of Medicine, it is now a cosmopolitan organization containing representatives from 37 states.

Miss Knapp outlined the program of the Rachel Watkins Memorial Student Fund to assist student nurses to complete their courses at Washington University School of Nursing. This fund, which was suggested by Miss Watkins in a letter to your Editor shortly before her death in the summer of 1941, has now been established by her comrades in service, friends and relatives.

Louise Hilligas, at the suggestion of Major Julia Stimson, read a letter from the latter in which she expressed regret that with our way of life in desperate danger we personally cannot again be a part of our fighting forces but must be content to do what we can here at home. "I am deeply sorry that I cannot be with you at this time," she added. "The memories of our service together in France, the comradeship shared, the friendships made, the inspirations gained from our leaders, the generous and full cooperation of every member of the unit are a precious heritage which will always make a close bond between us."

Major Stimson's letter also contained greetings from Louise Kieninger who has been helping in the National Nursing Council for War Service and is soon to go to Brazil to do nursing work under the State Department and Office of Coordinator of Inter-American affairs.

REUNION NOTES

One of the most mystifying acts since the days of Thurston was presented by Jim Costen, Arshav Nushan and Bill Stack. Blindfolded, Stack stood on the stage before an easel bearing a large pad of drawing paper. Costen, strolling among the tables would select a diner, identify him through mental telepathy to Stack who, with a few deft strokes, would portray a well-remembered wartime idiosyncrasy of the selectee. The performance ended with heckler Nushan being floored by a baseball bat in the hands of the long suffering artist.

Round trip transportation from the hotel to the Cathedral was provided by the Red Cross Motor Transport Corps, of which Mrs. Edwin Ernst is a member.

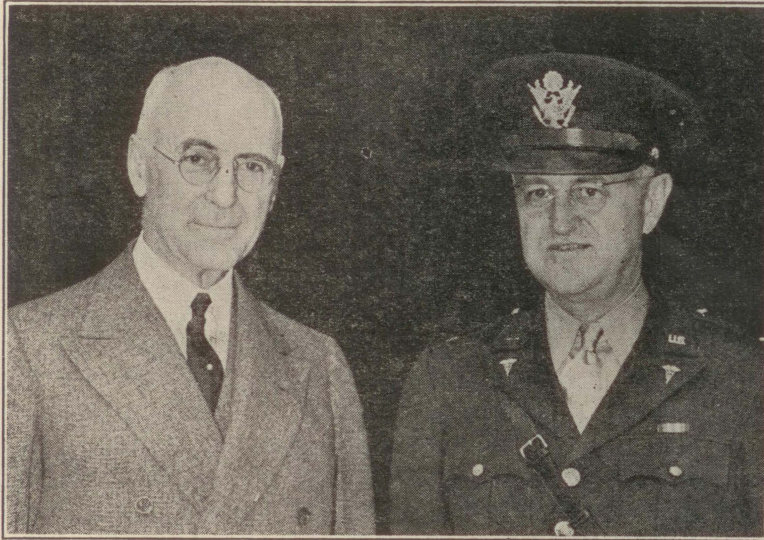
A solemn note during the evening was the unveiling of a memorial plaque bearing the names of departed members of the Unit. The plaque, an impressive and artistic contribution was designed and executed by Gordon (Shorty) Kimbrel . . . A display of X-ray plates made by Dr. Ernst in France during World War 1 attracted an interested crowd in the Cortez Lounge.

A collection of unusually fine photographs of Rouen scenes, taken several years ago by Dr. Arthur Proetz, were projected on a screen during the dinner. Dr. Proetz later conducted a quiz contest on subjects relative to the activities of Unit 21 in France. Joe Meyer's memory for facts and incidents of those days earned him first prize—an enormous bottle of champagne.

Chairman Ernst read numerous greetings from out-of-town members. Among them was an announcement from Melvin Croissant that he has returned to the service as a 1st Lieut. of Engineers . . . Col. Borden Veeder was the principal speaker at a Pan-American dinner in Cleveland on Friday night but returned to St. Louis in time to add a jovial air to the cocktail party Saturday afternoon.

Elmer (Pink) Bowman, East St. Louis ice baron, attended his first Unit reunion in 20 years. Elmer arrived at the hotel with Earl Hursey, who lured Bowman from the East Side by assuring him protection from such rough and tumble characters as Harold (Old Folks) Jolley and P. H. (Beaver) Byrns.

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Dr. Fred T. Murphy

Lieut. Col. Lee D. Cady

We have been informed by Dr. David Brock that Dr. John G. Anderson, a veteran of Base Hospital Unit 21 has been called to the service as a 1st Lieut. and is on duty at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.

* * *

Through error we have probably embarrassed Lieut. Col. Lee Cady by referring to him on several occasions in the **Post** as Commander of 21st General Hospital. Lieut. Col. Cady was the organizer of the reserve unit but on Feb. 15, 1942, Col. Robert E. Thomas, M. C., Regular Army, assumed command of the organization at Fort Ben-

ning, Ga. Cady is Chief of Medical Service.

* * *

P. H. (Pat) Byrns led the diners back across the years with an intermittent resume of highlight events since 1917. Ralph Stien, pianist and Allan Gilbert, the "Hill-billy baritone" furnished a musical backdrop of song hits prevalent during the periods recalled. Their repertoire included practically every outstanding number from "Me and My Gal" to "The White Cliffs of Dover."

Dr. Allan Gilbert, former St. Louisian, who has been lending a mellow glow to Fayetteville, Ark. for the past 20 years, played the leading role in a session lasting until dawn in the room of Bill Engel who had naively hoped to get a good night's rest in preparation for the cocktail party. Gilbert's phantastic tales of mud bank "noodlin"* proved too much for such stalwart veterans as "Judge" Neely, Bill Reeves, George Jordan, Hugh Bisplinghoff and Tom Riste. One by one they crept silently from the room leaving Engel and the writer as the only listeners. "Gilbert kept me awake all night and then ate his breakfast and my sausage cakes while I was in the shower," lamented Engel. "I always seem to attract the wrong people."

Ralph Dolby journeyed from Baltimore to exchange reminiscences with his former comrades. Dolby, one of six regular army sergeants assigned to Unit 21 in 1917, was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in October, 1918 and left the service the following August. Reenlisting a year later he was appointed a 2nd Lieutenant in the Medical Administrative Corps. In Dec. 1922, he again resigned from the army and entered the employe of the William Cook Funeral Home in Baltimore where he has held the position of executive secretary for the past 20 years.

Of the six regular army sergeants Thomas Hester and Ralph Dolby were the only ones to receive commissions. Hester remained in the service and is now a major on duty at Walter Reed Hospital.

* * *

Among the souvenirs of World War 1 on display in the Cortez Lounge was a venerable wooden shield bearing the coat of arms of Rouen, where it once graced a grandstand on the Champs du Courses.

*Illegal practice of catching fish by hand during nesting season.

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To the evident enjoyment of everyone but the Finance Committee the cocktail party, scheduled from 4 to 7, rolled merrily on until 11 o'clock. "Judge" Neely sang "Danny Boy" and the "Ballad of the Farmer's Son," Alonzo Kelly knocked over four potted palms, and Mary Kathryn Silberberg, daughter of Jules, alternated with Gloria Clauser at the piano. Neely, "Doc" Gay and Art Melville left under protest as the waiters began stacking up the chairs. "We were just getting started," they complained. Gay will soon return to the army as a Major in the Medical Corps . . . Toby Dunville, now a resident of Minneapolis, found that absence has not dimmed his popularity with the members of Rouen Post. "Their quips still drip with the same old venom," beamed the roly-poly piano sergeant.

Dr. Malvern Clopton journeyed from his home in Clarksville, Mo. to attend the cathedral service.

"ON THE IDLE HILL OF SUMMER"

On the idle hill of summer,
Sleepy with the flow of streams,
Far I hear the steady drummer
Drumming like a noise in dreams.

Far and near and low and louder
On the roads of earth go by,
Dear to friends and food for powder,
Soldiers marching all to die.

* * *

Far the calling bugles hollo,
High the screaming fife replies,
Gay the files of scarlet follow:
Woman bore me, I will rise.

—A. E. Housman

SCRAP DRIVE

Dear Engel:

I am shy one shirt, which you may or may not recall, is in the possession of Bill Stack. Remind him of it if you will. I am also missing one dark red bedroom slipper, one box containing about 20 Gillette blue blades, various and sundry assorted socks, ties, handkerchiefs, etc. Will you look through your effects for my shoe, talk to Bill about my shirt and try to locate the razor blades.

As regards certain items of underwear that belong to you, will advise, that if they arrived here in my possession, are now in the process of being laundered and, if identifiable, will be returned to you in good season.

Best regards to the gang.

As ever,

Allan Gilbert

