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## The Rouen Post, January-February 1943

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# THE ROUEN POST

LT. COL. LEE D. CALF, M. D.  
21st. GENERAL HOSPITAL  
COMMANDING

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

WILLIAM STACK  
Editor

## A VISIT TO THE SHAKESPEARE COUNTRY

By E. E. FROHBIETER,  
2nd Lieut., A.N.C., 21st General Hospital



England, November 12, 1943 — We aren't on duty as yet, and aside from one-hour classes on Monday and Thursday the time is our own. We get up late (8:45) breakfast between 9-9:30, with supper at six. Yesterday morning, right after breakfast, three of us decided to go sight seeing. It was raining, as usual, but we put on our long raincoats, steel helmets and overshoes and started out. We went to town intending to go to Stratford-on-Avon, but as we waited for the Stratford bus one came along enroute to Coventry, so on the spur of the moment we climbed aboard, trusting to luck to make connections to Stratford later in the day. The woman conductor helped us with our change — we still haven't learned to count English money — and civilian passengers, as usual, kindly pointed out places of interest along the way. The countryside is simply beautiful in a compact, cozy sort of way, the fields are small, divided by hedge fences; one never sees a wire, picket or rail fence. The houses are small, very neat, and despite the cold, flowers were still blooming in profusion. We saw gorgeous dahlias, asters, snapdragons, and even a few hollyhocks but the roses were nearly gone. Many hedges are trimmed in fancy shapes: birds, spheres, pyramids and tiers. In the fields we saw only small herds of cattle and sheep and very few horses.

The first thing one sees in Coventry is the ruined St. Michael's Cathedral, blitzed just about two years ago. The walls, porches, and magnificent tower dating back to the 14th century are still intact and the tower clock still chimes out the hours. It was nearly noon when we reached the Cathedral and just outside the door we met an elderly Englishman, short and stocky, with bright blue eyes, and a bristling white moustache. He wore a cap, topcoat, and sturdy shoes but no gloves or raincoat and the rain dripped down on his hands and face as he talked to us and gestured with his hands. All his life he has been a member of St. Michael's and every Sunday morning he winds the clock in the spire and remains for a while. Like most of the men his age he lives in the past; the present and future mean nothing to him, yet he referred to himself as "one of the boys of Coventry." He told us the history of the church and described the night of the blitz.

Inside the church lie the ruined columns, statues, and masonry of all kinds. Parts of the tile floor of the nave remain but the roof is gone. Fire did more damage than the actual explosive force. In the sanctuary an altar has been made of stones picked up inside the walls, and upon it stands a large cross made of the charred remains of beams. The

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black, irregular lines of the cross rising above the altar of broken, charred stones in the sanctuary make one want to help build a better world — a world in which such things will not be repeated.

We climbed up the stairs of the spire from which we got a good view of the city. There were lots of empty spaces, blocks and blocks of them, but most of the debris had been cleared away. Just across the narrow cobblestone street stands St. Mary's Guild Hall, one of the three guilds which still have their guild chests, each with a separate lock and separate key. Each key is in the possession of an alderman, making it impossible to open the chests except in the presence of the three men. This building dates from the 15th century and it was through its gates that Lady Godiva sallied forth on her white horse at the beginning of her famous ride through the streets of Coventry. We saw her statue outside the Cathedral and her grave nearby.

We strolled around town for a short time, saw the town clock tower, bought tea and muffins from a street vender and finally started for the bus terminal to get the bus for Stratford-on-Avon. This was a beautiful ride past long hedges of holly sparkling with berries. On the way we caught a glimpse of the ruins of Kenilworth Castle and later some of Warwick Castle. The little town of Warwick looked as if it would be an interesting place to visit. It is hilly and the streets are narrow and crooked. Three of the castle gates can be seen from the bus.

Stratford is beautiful this time of year. Yew and willow trees are everywhere and the leaves are in full color. The gardens are in bloom; hedges, high and thick, are trimmed to all sorts of shapes; the town is hilly and the quaint, low houses are reminiscent of the setting in a light opera. We visited Shakespeare's birthplace, of course, the Memorial Theatre on the narrow Avon river and Trinity Church. Shakespeare is buried in this church; you can see his tomb and that of his wife Anne, his daughter and her husband and one of his granddaughters. The Vicar took us through the church and told us many interesting things about its history. The building was erected in the 13th century and today the birth, marriage, and burial records of Shakespeare are kept there, though they have been temporarily removed for safekeeping and only photostatic copies are shown to visitors. From the rear of the church we had a lovely view of the Avon with its arched bridges, banks of willow trees, and swans braving the rain.



We had lunch at the Shakespeare Galleries and tea at the Hathaway tearoom, both lovely places but no napkins — in fact I haven't seen a napkin, paper or linen, since my arrival in England. The stores and shops were closed and the streets deserted. Traffic in English towns is limited to busses and street cars — one rarely sees a privately owned automobile.

We followed a narrow path through the fields for about a mile to Anne Hathaway's cottage at Shottery. Cows are just as onery here as at home; one stood in the path as though daring us to pass and we were forced to walk around her. The garden was still in bloom and very lovely. We lingered for a while in the musty rooms of the famous thatched cottage and finally returned to Stratford.

The people in this part of the country speak an Elizabethan English that is difficult to understand. No doubt, they regard us as fairly stupid.

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November 16—Yesterday we went into town to go to church — the bells were to ring again for the first time since the fall of France. It was a gala day and the mellow chimes sounded wonderful. They must have sounded even more stirring to the English people who hadn't heard them for so long. We just bawled — but they didn't. That's the difference between the emotional Americans and the calm English, I suppose.

When the bells rang out at 9:30 we were passing a half-destroyed church but the spire was still standing and those bells were really ringing. They rang them, as you know, in thanksgiving for the favorable war news. We reached the church we were going to at about 10 o'clock. Services were to begin at 11 but the square was packed with people waiting. A few were going in the church but we were told that admission was limited to those who held tickets and advised to get in the queue (get in line). One nice thing — there is never any shoving or pushing when getting on busses or waiting for anything. Everyone queues and waits his turn. We lined up and a few minutes later a bobby came and said to follow him. There were five of us and we trailed him right up to the head usher. The bobby, the usher and several others went into a huddle and a few moments later we were sitting together in the 12th row. It was an impressive service, Low Episcopal, the first we've attended since being here. The organ music was grand and we saw the Lord Mayor in his wig.

After leaving the church we had tea in the lounge of a small hotel and took a bus for a nearby town, to visit the famous cathedral where St. Christopher is buried. It was an impressive place. We ran into a christening. Later we looked all over town for something to eat but we were out of luck. Every place was either closed or had run out of food.

Several of us recently had our shoes resoled. We walk so much and the streets and roads are pretty rough on leather. The English all wear very thick soles with nails along the edge and a steel plate in the northwest corner of the heel, so the cobbler fixed mine the same way. Now I sound like the whole English army coming down the street.

We have grown accustomed to the climate here now, we are much more comfortable, and have a good deal of free time. One of my friends suffered a broken toe when a heavy bench fell on it, one day at a meeting, and of course, she had to stay in. We brought her a bottle of Coco-cola from the Nurses' Club in London and she was so pleased you would have thought we brought her the moon. They don't have coke here and it had been quite a while since we had any. We are getting so much pleasure out of the simpler things of life these days.

So long, everybody. Hope you are having as good a time as I am.



AMY HATHAWAY'S COTTAGE

### PRISON CAMP AT ROUEN

The racetrack in the suburbs of Rouen, that historic field where the gallant members of Base Hospital 21 fought one another and the fourth British Army for over 18 months in 1917-18, has been converted into a British prison camp according to Major Barbara Stimson, an Orthopedic Specialist in the Royal Army Medical Corps, who recently re-

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turned to her post in England after a short leave in the United States. Major Stimson, a sister of Major Julia Stimson of the U. S. Army Nurse Corps, met a British officer several months ago who had escaped from the camp. After Dunkirk, British prisoners were taken to Germany. Later when negotiations for the exchange of prisoners were under way they were confined on the racetrack at Rouen. The negotiations fell through.

### WESCHROB BACK IN SERVICE

Charles A. Weschrob, a former member of Base Hospital Unit 21, is back in the army, Weschrob, a resident of Dedham, Massachusetts, was among the men assigned to the Unit to replace those sent to the A.E.F. with Mobile Hospital No. 4 in the summer of 1918.

Since the beginning of his second hitch in the army Weschrob has kept us informed of his whereabouts through a series of post cards. The first card came from a classification camp at Fort Devons, Massachusetts. A few weeks later he informed us that he was taking basic training with infantry at a camp in Alabama. He wrote: "Fate plays queer tricks. At the age of 18, I was assigned to duty with a base hospital. Now, at 43, I am hiking with the infantry."

His most recent card, dated March 3, came from Fort Benning, Georgia, where he had just arrived for six weeks schooling in postal work. "I am in a postal unit of 11 men," he announced. "Will later be assigned to a division and expect to go for a sail. Best regards to the members of Rouen Post."

Our last meeting with Weschrob was at a reunion dinner held by veterans of Base Hospital 21 during the American Legion National Convention in St. Louis.

### ALLAN GILBERT TO "PAT" BYRNS

Dear Pat:

How are you? Sorry I missed the last party, but war is just what Sherman called it. Bill Stack called me the other afternoon. Said he had just lunched with "Weaving Willie" Engle and, though I couldn't detect the odor of alcohol over 360 miles of wire, I suspected the worst. He wanted some information on (what sounded over the phone) like "bond-dogling," "bin-dogling," "bum-fuddling," or just plain 'bundling." Finally, it dawned on me that he referred to my highly colorful stories of 'noodlin" or hand fishing as practiced by certain citizens of Arkansas. I am enclosing a copy of the Arkansas Game and Fish regulations and request you to pass it on to the worthy Mr. Stack. You might also refer him to the Missouri Game and Fish regulations. There are a lot of Missouri nestors in the Ozarks who are expert "noodlers."

I am certain "Weaving Willie" and "Verbios" Bill would starve to death if they were forced to "noodle" for a living. For the information of this unenlightened pair "noodling" or illegal hand-fishing is done in the nesting season and in the dark of night. In order to sell the fish the "noodler" must cut the head (generally) to resemble the mark of a hook. It is dangerous, unlawful, and not especially profitable.

As ever,

ALLAN GILBERT.

"HOG, NOODLE OR SNARE: Game fish cannot be grabbed or grabbed (with hands or hooks) at any time. Penalty for violation \$10 and up. Act 113, 1933." — Arkansas Game and Fish Regulations.

Bill Engel recently received post card greetings from Ernest McIlvaine, who is employed by the Sunflower Ordnance Plant in Lawrence, Kansas. Before moving to Kansas, McIlvaine worked for the Sangamond Ordnance Plant in Illiopolis, a suburb of Springfield, Illinois.