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The Rouen Post, October 1944

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THE ROUEN POST

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

WILLIAM STACK

Editor

"DOC" PUCKETT DIES

Rogger (Doc) Puckett has left us. The well-remembered regular army sergeant, who served with Base Hospital 21 and Mobile Hospital 4, died of anemia on Feb. 3 at Natchez, Miss. where he had been superintendent of the National Cemetery for the past 15 years. He had been ill about six weeks.

"Major" Puckett, as he was called in Natchez, was widely known in that city where he made many friends during his long stay in charge of the National Cemetery. According to a story which ran in the Natchez Democrat the day after his death Puckett was responsible for numerous improvements in the Cemetery during his administration.

Surviving are his wife, Mrs. Junie McCord Puckett, one son, Albert C. Puckett, and four sisters: Mrs. C. R. Hagemayer of Meridian, Miss., Mrs. Kate Smith of Alexandria, La., Mrs. Amelia Morrel and Mrs. David Mayers of Waco, Texas.

Buriel was in the National Cemetery at Natchez.

Sergeant Puckett's "fatigue squad" was one of the highlights of Base Hospital 21. Beneath a blustering exterior he was a soft-hearted man who threatened lagging privates with direful punishment and usually ended by patting them on the back. A few days after the hospital unit arrived in Rouen the enlisted personnel, still soft from civil life, were introduced overnight to the manual labor associated with a base hospital on active duty. The beefing was loud and long but it left Puckett untouched. To griping members of his squad the Sergeant's retort has become a classic in the annals of the Unit. "Don't blame me, men! You volunteered to come over here. They SENT me."

My last meeting with Sergeant Puckett was in the early summer of 1919 shortly after the outfit was mustered out at Camp Funston. Clinton Tobias and I ran into him at Sixth and Pine streets one evening. He had been assigned to duty at Jefferson Barracks and talked with us about placing his son in one of the local public schools. Tobias and I were shoving off for the Kansas harvest fields that night but Puckett refused to believe we were going that far in search of manual labor. Later we sent him a card from Emporia to prove we had at least left St. Louis.

50,000TH PATIENT AT OVERSEAS HOSPITAL

The Twenty-first General Hospital sponsored by the Washington University School of Medicine treated its 50,000th patient in France recently when S-Sgt. Ray E. Wimmer of Second Creek, W. Va., came to be treated for a shell fragment wound in his right arm received in battle, it was announced March 22.

Commanded by Col. Lee D. Cady, the hospital staff was activated Jan. 10, 1942, left the United States in October of that year and spent a month in England before embarking for North Africa. The hospital served a year in North Africa and nine months in Italy before arriving in France last September.

In World War I the Twenty-first Base Hospital, also sponsored by Washington University, served for 18 months at Rouen, France, and cared for 63,000 casualties.

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A CHANGE OF SCENERY



Rouen Post No. 242, shifted the February meeting from Garavelli's restaurant to the home of Finance Officer Frank Depke and the change met with unanimous approval. The meeting was originally limited to the auditing committee but after a conference between Depke and Commander Gordon Kimbrell the latter announced that all Post members would be welcome.

The auditing committee was supposed to examine Depke's accounts but most of the evening was spent in loud talk and the consumption of refreshments. Comrade Depke proved a genial host and the tasty dishes prepared and served by Mrs. Depke and daughter Joyce, sent the veterans into the night hoping that Depke would decide to have his books examined weekly.

Only one member missed out on the food. Charley Jablonsky, suffering from an acute attack of bronchitis and a gargantuan meal earlier in the evening, took a run-out powder and headed for home as the call "come and get it" rang through the living room.

The Depke party gave Charles Koch an idea and the March meeting found the South Side baker host to the gang in his attractive shop on Jefferson avenue. Koch took his guests behind the scenes in the baking business, showing them various kinds of flour, vanilla aging in kegs, canned eggs, frozen and dehydrated fruits, cake moulds and other essentials in the job of supplying bread and pastry to a neighborhood where the folks still believe in eating four meals a day.

Koch climaxed the evening by coming through with ample food and the comrades sailed avidly into bowls of spahgetti, rich with meat, great mounds of cole slaw, pastry, ranging from doughnuts to pie, and plenty of steaming coffee. Marvin Hamilton and George Jordan, as usual, emerged as the top feeders of the group but Jordan was far from his usual form. Once rated as the leading gourmand of Rouen Post, George lagged far behind Hamilton whose capacity for victuals seems to increase with the passing years.

The April meeting will find the comrades back at Garavelli's and Commander Kimbrell predicts that at least part of the evening will be devoted to business.

On March 25 the Sunday Post Dispatch ran a page of photographs of St. Louisans, mostly business and professional men, who are devoting their evenings and Saturdays to working in local war plants. Among these patriotic citizens was Clarence W. Schlue-ter, a former member of Unit 21, who is now assistant trust officer of the Mississippi Valley Trust Company. Clarence was shown working as a lead man on a bore lathe.

KIND WORDS FROM ALLAN GILBERT

Fayetteville, Ark.

Dear Bill:

In an hour I shall be on a train enroute to St. Louis but I want to take time to thank you for the lovely tribute you paid to Pat Byrns in the December issue of the Rouen Post. I personally felt that when Pat left St. Louis for Washington, Rouen Post No. 242, lost one of its most enthusiastic and colorful members. Now that he has left us forever I am definitely certain I was right.

How can you associate with such loose characters as Engel and Ernst and at the same time write such worth while things? I only hope that when my summons comes you will be around to say something nice about me.

Best to you and all the gang,
Allan Gilbert

A Bientot

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BUSINESS IS BUSINESS IN BLACKPOOL

Blackpool, England, on the Irish Sea in Lancashire, where Unit 21 spent ten memorable days enroute to France is now the most prosperous resort in wartime Britain according to a story in the London Daily Chronicle. The holiday season in peace-time was four months; now it is holiday-time all the year round. The owners of private hotels and boarding houses have been so intent on making money that the Government had to use pressure to find billets for child refugees from flying bombs in London. In contrast, Wigam, a Lancashire resort "that has been rich only in laughter" gave official evacuees a warm welcome.

THE SERGEANT MISSES US

Dear Bill:

I was certainly sorry to read of the death of Pat Byrns. The other evening I was playing "Hills of Old Rouen" on the piano and I found myself pausing and thinking of Pat and "C'est la Guerre" the show in which that song was sung.

I hope to see the old gang again in a few months. Needless to say I look forward to that prospect with pleasure. The folks up here are very nice but I am partial to old friends—especially those in Unit 21.

Minneapolis, Minn.

Sincerely
Toby Dunville

AN ORCHID FROM DENVER

My dear Mr. Stack:

It is grand that you have reconsidered your resignation as Editor of the splendid little paper. It is so well written and interesting that I hope you will continue on the job for a long time to come. I have enjoyed your efforts very much.

Kind regards to you and to any of the St. Louis Unit who remember me.

Margaret B. Otis

4992 Osceola, Denver (zone 12), Colo.

REGRETS FROM COL. MURPHY

Dear Mr. Stack:

I was shocked at the news of the death of Percy H. Byrns in the Rouen Post just opened. Like so many of the old friends of the Unit "Pat" Byrns has always remained a vivid personality to me.

Your comment on his passing deserves every commendation from the friends of the Sergeant. The picture drawn a la Chesterton—to gather together and "drink again from the great flagons in the tavern at the end of the world" is a very beautiful one. I know of, and I can think of nothing better than you have such men as you mention greet one for a reunion. The best any of us can hope for is to "carry on".

Sincerely,
Fred T. Murphy

Col. Bordon S. Veeder has again been elected chairman of the St. Louis Chapter of the American Red Cross. Among the other officers elected was former corporal Harold Jolley, assistant to the president of the Boatmen's Bank.

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21ST GENERAL HOSPITAL IN FRANCE

By Erma Frohbieter, 1st. Lt., A.N.C.

Oct. 24, 1944

Well here we are in France at last. Every one of us is so glad to be thru in Italy. It had its good points, but gosh!

We had our usual staging period in Italy before we left, during which time we went over our equipment, and of course added a lot—personal equipment I mean. The day we got on the boat it rained, and unless you've moved with a big outfit, you just can't imagine the slow motion that that entails, lining up 123 people in roster, waiting until the whole convoy is loaded or unloaded before starting out. Its best that way of course, but we hurry to wait and wait and wait all of the time. This time we travelled in G.I. slacks with the trouser legs in our high top boots, wool shirts, blouse (suit coat) field jacket. The last two we wore because there were no other place to carry them—overcoat with liner and steel helmets. We carried a gas mask, musette, bag and mine was so heavy it nearly broke my neck, pistol belt with canteen, blanket roll, in which we had either our rain coat or overcoat rolled, and a suit case. I haven't any idea how much I weighed with all that stuff.

We got settled on the boat in the P.M. and out the next morning. The boat we were on was fixed up for a certain purpose and up where I was, we couldn't close any doors, including the Johnny and shower, and couldn't turn off the lights—there wasn't a mirror or a nail around anywhere. It was all a little surprising, but we had a lot of fun. We had good food—on our deck we had our own dining room, and since there were only a small number of us then, we never had to wait in line. The boys on the boat were so good to us because we'd "been overseas so long", so they would leave the dining room open in the evening and would have something for us to eat any time we wanted it. Even had fresh milk (frozen from the States) one night. There was a sun deck and we heard the World Series games every evening directly from Sportsman's Park. That was really something, wasn't it? The trip, or at least part of it was quite rough, but I ate more and felt better than usual. The air here is sure agreeing with me too. I weighed 110 again yesterday.

We got to Marseille one Sunday morning, but not off the boat until Tues. A.M. The port is pretty well blasted, but didn't look nearly as bad to me as Naples did when we got in there. That, like so many other places in Italy, was really bombed, and my, how different it looked when we left it, nearly all the debris cleaned up, streets repaired, and many buildings repaired. We stayed for one day near the port and gee, how different France looked to us. We went to a hotel out in the country—now don't get the wrong idea—hotels here are not what we call hotels—no water, no johnnies, that work. The hotel was in a valley that was a vineyard district. The farms apparently are very small—there were many of the little stone houses close together, but there were pastures with honest to goodness green grass and clover and dandelions and cows and horses and chickens in them. A small creek ran thru the valley, there were lots of trees in fall colors—that's the first time I'd seen a sight like this since I'd left England. We went for a walk the afternoon we got there, and everywhere the people, mostly elderly men and women, were in the vineyards, cutting the grapes. Grapes were everywhere, the ground was purple with them. They put them in regular crates and then pile them up on a flat bottomed cart. The cart is long and has only two wheels, but they are huge wheels, and the one horse they use looks as big as an elephant. I've never seen such big horses before, they are bob-tailed and fat, some one said they were Belgians. They can sure pull a big load. The driver seldom rides, usually walks beside the big old horse.