

*The Stuckarts have been a prominent family in Sublimity and Stayton, Oregon. We were gratified to receive an extensive collection of family history for St. Boniface Archives in 2010 from Bernadine Stuckart Bender. Dr. Stuckart was a physician in Stayton. His story below (all rights reserved) is a fine piece of history from the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as from the World War I era, readable, utterly personal and honest.*

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## **History of Dr. Theodore Stuckart**

By Dr. Theodore Stuckart 1894-1966

### **Paternal Grandparents**

My paternal grandfather came from Germany, Regierungsbezirk Trier, with his family and landed in Baltimore, U.S., 1870. From there he traveled as far as Blackhawk County, Iowa. Every one of his children, two boys and two girls, were born in Germany.

My father was the youngest and about two and a half years old when the family arrived in their new home. My grandfather was a good housekeeper and kept things very neat and clean because he was taught much in the German army. This was his good fortune after grandmother passed away. I do not know whether or not he had learned a trade but I am almost certain that he went to farming. He was very anxious to have offspring to carry on his name.

He had no major vices but had a great taste for rhubarb wine the plants for which he planted in our garden and used them to make his own wine. This he did after my father the youngest in his family got married. He was not an alcoholic but did like his rhubarb wine. He himself took care of the plants. After he and grandmother left our house after my father's death, these rhubarb plants were part of a source of income for my widowed mother and her three boys. Like most immigrants he and grandmother spoke a German dialect endemic in the country around Treves Germany. Because these grandparents stayed with us we learned to speak their dialect fluently.

Grandmothers rocked my grandfather in the cradle when he was an infant and she was thirteen years

old. While grandfather was not obese he was somewhat inclined to be stout. His face was somewhat florid but she was rather thin and a little nervous. My father was her youngest and possible a little heavy at birth for grandmother sustained such severe lacerations through his birth that she was troubled all the rest of her life with troubles traceable to the injury.

Grandmother was a woman of great common sense as witnessed by the anecdotes related by my mother. All German immigrants when a baby boy was born looked at baby's feet to see if he had flat feet because flat feet exempted him from military duty. What bothers me how they could tell because all babies have feet that are more or less flat or low insteps. Perhaps the German army was very careful to eliminate not only broken down arches totally unsuitable for marching but those also who had low or weak insteps. One with weak low insteps must make up for that weakness by stronger knee action.

I can remember my grandmother saying while attending the birth of a boy as a midwife when someone said he hoped that the little boy would become a priest. She said let us not ask too much first let us pray that this little boy will be a good man. Most of these little incidents I have forgotten but this one certainly shows great common sense. I remember my mother telling that grandfather was standing alongside a fence and she saw him emphatically pounding a post with his fist and she was worried that there might be something wrong with him. Mother called grandmother who took one look "Oh he will be all right, he just took one glass of wine too much." If grandfather had been in the

habit of drinking too much my mother would not have called grandmother but recognized it for what it was.

That always reminds me of my college days when one boy asked our Jesuit teacher if it were wrong to drink alcoholic drinks until you get to "feeling good" our teacher said why that is what it is for, so to make life a little more livable, a little easier. My grandmother knew from her common sense that was true, or she would not have said; "Oh, he will be all right," but perhaps scolded according to the habit of some people, and have made him more inclined to drink too much.

My father was six feet and one or two inches tall. He told my mother that she never need to be afraid that he would ever drink enough to become intoxicated. I have absolutely no memory of him because he passed away when I was nine months old. My older brother, myself and father had severe cases of measles. My mother used to say he was very susceptible to any and every childhood disease that showed up. Two or three days after he had the measles, he developed streptococci pneumonia and was dead in a short while. My older brother used to say that he remembered when relatives and friends came to call for a so-called wake, and he was scarcely two years of age.

My father's older brother, Uncle Valentine, was strong, remained a bachelor. He was a charitable man, which I learned not from him but those who knew him. He had sold land and received one thousand dollars as a down payment. After a few years the buyer came to see my uncle and told he wanted to give the land back because he could not pay the rest. My uncle gave the man back the whole down payment. He did not have more than a few years in grade school, the country school. While I was in college I went to a small city to attend my aunt's funeral. One of my cousins was hauling gravel for a contractor but he said I know my truck box holds at least a fourth more than the other trucks but he will not pay me more than any of the rest until I can show him how much more it holds. He brought me the measurements and I worked out

the capacity of the truck box by geometry and algebra. The box had odd and several angular sides and ends. I had it in one hour while my uncle figured it by arithmetic. It took him half an hour longer to get the answer. It was exactly like my figures. In the western part of the state where he was better known he was frequently asked to solve mathematical problems by ordinary folks. In that part of the state he was known as "Big Uncle."

I do remember as a young man about twenty I saw him leave with two relatives in the forenoon and come home with the two both singing and unsafe on their feet white he was as sober as if he had no drinks at all. Undoubtedly he brought them home when he saw they had their fill. All in all he was staunch in character, well balanced.

My father's sister (Aunt Helen Shares) thought highly of my father and I am certain that they and my uncle thought of my family's three boys as carrying on their family name. Both of these sisters were good and true and brought up large and good families. While in college I used to visit my aunt living in the western part of the state. I would feel the hard studying get rather monotonous so I would go out in the Friday evening train and get off ninety miles east and come back Sunday evening to the city.

My aunt had a peculiar and rare gift. Her daughter's explained to me that she told them every time early Friday that I would come that same evening. They said that she never missed telling them.

### **Maternal Grandparents**

They stayed with us for some time between ten and twenty years. They came from Baden, Germany and lived in the village of Laug. It was north of Switzerland within walking distance of the capital of their neighbor country where they used to walk to "Market" to sell fruits or possibly a suckling pig for the gourmets. Especially my grandfather was too poor to dine on suckling pig. I am almost certain that three or four children were born in Germany but one passed away before they emigrated to the

U.S.

Grandfather was a cloth weaver over there and knew cloth. He would feel the cloth between his forefinger and thumb when he went along with my mother to buy a suit for one of us boys. Grandmother's family name indicated that she was descended from the petty aristocracy ruined by the one hundred years war and never recouped their fortunes. Nevertheless grandmother's father's pride had remained intact, as the history will show. Grandfather was the youngest of his family while grandmother was the eldest in her family. When her father was informed that she wanted to marry grandfather he commented, "Does one of our social status have to marry a cloth weaver?"

Indeed grandfather had monumental common sense while grandmother had boundless energy. Grandfather brought his family of the children, his wife, and his mother to the U.S. landing in New York. His mother had all their money tucked away in a money belt she wore around her waist under her clothes for safekeeping. All of the family came third class crowded into one large room in 1866. There were no locks on the door so my grandfather put table and chairs against the inside the door during the nights and on top of it all he placed an old time porcelain pot with a cover on it. Grandfather said one night someone must have tried to enter their room but he was scared away by the loud infernal racket the falling pot made. They came as far as Iowa where they had relatives already settled.

One of grandfather's reasons for leaving Germany was that grandmother's family were no longer friendly but no doubt there was some lure of opportunity. He set to work farming and became a fairly prosperous farmer and a respected member of the community. He knew how to do business and make bargains and acquired a reasonable amount of worldly goods, enough to support himself and grandmother and leave some inheritance to his children. People used to come to him with their problems and he would analyze them. I remember a middle-aged couple came to him asking what to

do. It seems that the wife's father was staying with this couple. The old man was making handles for axes carved out of wood and selling them for a modest profit. He was doing his work in a shop outside the house that was not comfortable a good part of the year so he wanted the son-in-law to build him an addition to his house where he would have room and be comfortable. It would be quite an expense compared to the financial income of the in-law. Grandfather asked them "What does the old man do with the profit he makes?" The daughter and son-in-law said he drinks it all up in whiskey. Grandfather told them not to make a good opportunity for the man to get to drinking too much.

I do not know very much about my paternal grandparents but many things about the maternal ones. They were brought in the so-called Victorian age aggravated in this country by the Puritans which made them, especially grandmother, too severe. For example we would at times during hot evenings take off our shirts to milk the cows which was all done manually and can be a very hot piece of work. Grandmother strenuously objected to this every time although we paid little heed but laughed it off.

The old Germans used a lot of crude or uncouth language. If you want examples of this read the English translation of the life of Martin Luther wherein he in many, many places quotes Luther's German. Even though there may have been other reasons why he used so much of these expressions. He always used the street urchin's name when he could easily have used the polite name just as we doctors do. Today if I had a patient that used the expressions he did and the boasting I would surely make a tentative or provisional diagnosis of lues of the brain. I have diagnosed too many not to recognize its symptoms.

My mother told us that the girls in her family weaned their parents away from that kind of language. Grandfather's family consisted of four boys and eight girls. Three girls became school sisters of Notre Dame. The three boys all became small town merchants although I have been told by

people who had work done by my mother's eldest brother that he was an excellent blacksmith and could temper tools like no one they ever saw. One brother died at twenty-one with pulmonary T.B. A daughter died in infancy. The three sisters of Notre Dame all died young with pulmonary T.B. I am sure that they became sensitive to the T.B. germs through my grandfather. At twenty-one grandfathers had a small pulmonary hemorrhage which cannot have been anything but due to T.B. Grandfather lived to be 76 years old and a grand mother died at 83 or 84.

I will not have much more to say about my father because I never knew him or much about him except what my mother and his sisters told us. There was only one of my grandfather's sons who was an ungrateful son and extraordinarily stubborn. All other children were dutiful children, industrious and brought up good children, I mean those who got married. The sisters all died young in the convent.

My mother was good and faithful as a girl that she was much and often asked to come to help keep house wherever she was needed. It was mostly in the better families. Later on in my teens I worked as a farm hand for some of these families.

She was the best mother and had more common sense than any two people I ever knew. She did much reading even though she had only three years of grade school and lost her husband my father when I was nine months old. She was of fairly short stature but it seemed inherited all of my grandfather's common sense and grandmother's energy. In addition her inheritance included my grandfather's soft heart, which she passed on to me. No one could surpass her submission to the will of God which example finally made her Baptist nurse to decide to join the Catholic Church.

I do remember a few incidents worthy to relate. The first time I went to work for a neighbor only two miles from home I became acutely homesick because I roomed and boarded with these people I worked for. She prevailed on the farmer to let me come home every Saturday.

The only mental anguish that can equal that is love sickness. At the moment when lovesickness comes one is usually more experienced in various kinds of reverses and disappointments, so that one becomes somewhat used to it. Another special thing I can remember is that my grandmother had a sort of dislike for me. I never thought about it very much because my mother usually made up for it in some way or other. One day grandmother with all her excess energy was especially hard on me and I said as much to mother to which she replied in the affirmative. But I understand, how can you protect a teenager or keep him from fighting back? But in all, grandmother made it up to me when she saw me minus my right forearm. She would cry every time she saw me and would not let anyone say one word against me or touch me.

My mother had worked doing a housewife's job for quite a few years as a girl and had only three years grade school. The eighty-acre farm belonged to us but much indebted. She rented the farm for a share of what it produced; she would receive two fifths or one third of the produce. She had always a large garden, fed the chickens, cows and pigs, with her share or the corn, hay and oats. About two years after two of us boys graduated from grade school she had the farm free of debt.

There was no high school nearer than twelve miles and no school bus or busses, consequently boys went to work on the farm after finishing the eight grades. If anyone wanted to continue he usually went to boarding school ninety miles east.

About 1915 my mother started ailing and went to see the family doctor who called it pulmonary T.B. That could be traced from grandfather to his eldest son who naturally was sick at home and died there with T.B. After that my mother regularly visited a second cousin who died with pulmonary T.B. when we were in the eighth grade. That caused the fatal infection since she had been sensitized by her brother's infection. Grandfather passed away in 1911 about March and in April I went to work for a farmer two miles from home.

I was only seventeen years old and did by far most of the farm work. In those days the farmer walked behind the machinery he used to harrow, cultivated and shocked the grain by hand. I was strong but still not developed completely. The next two years I worked for farmers who wanted just a day's work but begrudged not to take a day off. At each place I worked alongside some of their sons and did no less work than the son of the family. To their last days I cherished these men I worked for and keep in touch with parts of the family after fifty years.

I have gotten ahead of myself in the last paragraph and should have begun with eldest of the family. He and my younger brother were at home the three years I worked for neighbors and friends the years or rather the summers I was away working. The end of the last summer I worked for a family whose youngest daughter joined the school sisters of Notre Dame while he went to the seminary near Chicago to study for the priesthood. The same girl above and my brother had been in love. Both persevered in their vocation and I have written Christmas and other occasional letters to her. She was the sweetest girl I have ever known.

My younger brother passed away about one year after ordination and was buried on the first anniversary of his ordination. He had pulmonary T.B., the Bovine type. They had T.B. amongst their milk cows and produced their own dairy products, which they consumed evidently without first pasteurizing. They followed the European way, which they had learned, and as anyone can remember who lives during and after the World War II we learned that Europe had made up their mind that it was impossible to eradicate T.B. among cattle.

My eldest brother passed away November (1964) last after a chronic illness, old age, and the wear and tear of hardships of life. He married the sweetest girl, his first love and after a year she presented him with a baby boy. When the boy was about fourteen months old he became sick almost unto death, the first with the 1918 flu which felled many people. After he was barely able to be up and around his

wife died with the same flu, I was in France at the time on the battlefields, any kind of mail was irregular and far between and I did not hear about her until I was well on the way to recovery. I did have extrasensory perception that something was not right at home but had not heard about the flu except a few newspaper reports vague and indefinite about the existence of the disease but nothing about its severity.

After a few years he remarried he thought to make a home for the little boy. He raised six boys and five girls of whom he could be justly proud. They are all dutiful fathers and mothers, that is those who married and as the pastor said at his funeral their conduct proves that he was an excellent Catholic father.

He first learned dairying and raised purebred Holstein cattle when a large family plus the depression and the very much inadequate prices that was paid the farmers and dairymen for their bountiful produce, he had to sell farm and cows, very valuable stock. He moved to Minnesota when the depression again made him sell out and he salvaged a used automobile and a couple of hundred dollars so that he could go to Oregon. He worked with and taught those old enough to work picking beans and berries, etc., bought and paid for a farm and built it up, house and barn and dairy herd. When the boys were of age none were interested in farming so again he sold out.

He went to building, which he had learned, from books on his own. He built thirty or thirty-nine houses here and near here. Among that number there was an eighty thousand dollar house. Although he had no more than a thorough education in the first eight grades he had a love for books of good solid reading, books of real worth. For instance he read the History of the German people by a very excellent author. This kind of reading he did during the stormy winter days and evenings. The sisters at the nursing home where he spent the last three months before his death told us no patient they ever had at the home had as much attention from his children as he had.

There is another anecdote worth remembering. When he was about eleven or twelve years old we were left home alone with our maternal grandparents. They grew up in Germany and with those people it was the Victorian standard when dealing with children. Children were supposed to be seen but not heard. With them it was spare the rod and spoil the child. A child was often punished mistakenly for things he did not do. Then the excuse was "Their a lot of times you should have been whipped and you did not get it." We heard that excuse quite often when grandmother was scolding.

Grandfather spanked my brother for some reason or other. My older brother instinctively considered himself the spokesman and defender of us; he answered back to grandfather. After the situation quieted down my brother without any prompting from anyone as grandfather, "Grandpa, please forgive me." I know that was a heartfelt apology and out of his own will. It could not have been easy at all and it made grandfather cry for five or more minutes. That is a rare thing for a boy to do at that age without any prompting.

I must mention it here that my mother lost her husband after about three years of marriage. My older brother lost his first wife after two years. He often said that his heart was buried with her. My younger brother lost the girl he loved when she became a school sister of Notre Dame and he studied and finally became a priest. I lost the first girl I ever loved when I was twenty-five years old and in college. After various hardships and the severe wounding in war one loves deeper than the very young and inexperienced. I do not know to this day the reason why we had to separate but I am almost certain that there was a third party who mixed in and pulled away. She never married and neither did I until she had passed away quite young.

It has always, always puzzled me very much why my mother and every one of her three boys had to lose the greatest love one can have of any other human being. Even from a human standpoint it looks to be more than simple coincidence. More about this later.

## Army

After President Wilson declared, war upon Germany things started moving first by requiring every one of a certain age to register for the draft. There were several postponements of calling draftees into the service so that we could not go ahead and begin anything. I had always wanted to study medicine and had earned almost half of my high school credits and was notified that we would be called into the service so I was afraid to start another year in school. The call was postponed again and again until most of us were disgusted. I finally went back to school and after two weeks at boarding school I received a call to report at camp.

The local draft board was generally courteous but slipshod but the chairman showed his importance, that is, in his own estimation by bullying, etc. He was locally probably the most hated man around. I happened to be in the room when the chairman was questioning a young man from home with whom I had attended school. All of us recognized the chairman for what he was. He asked the young man "Now Mr. ———, do you have something on the grounds you wish to claim exemption from the draft?" The young man answered a big "Yes." Well what is it asked the chairman? The answer was "CORNS." The questioner deserved that answer; it even made the official questioning me smile. Nobody, none of the boys liked him because he tried by words and actions to impress everyone of his importance.

The same evening it was I telephoned a favorite girl friend and asked to go to a movie. The next morning we were routed on a train to camp and late that evening pulled into camp and we got off in a very busy camp.

We were looked over like one looks over a bunch of wild horses to see what quality we were. There was no consideration of intelligence or any testing to see what aptness or fitness any particular man might have. To use human beings almost like cattle without any consideration of individual useful abilities which is the curse of the day ruins people.

This same attitude of officers toward the men was probable present all through the American army; much worse in the divisions recruited in the hills of the southern states. We shall see more of that later. With a mysterious, knowing face the officers drilled us and were quite courteous, that is the noncommissioned officers. There were a few exceptions among them, one in particular used to curse and swear without reason as though he were trying to impress the men.

The commissioned officers were of a different breed or acted as if they were. Only once do I remember a colonel personally inspecting our platoon. He talking from one side of his mouth and had his hat, army regulation wide brimmed hat tilted to the side almost touching the ear stood in front of me and in no uncertain terms told me to put my hat on straight and not to tilt it to one side.

While in the first camp we drilled no end until everyone was so tired of it that he did not want to see a rifle ever again. During our six weeks stay there two men in our company had epileptic convulsions falling to the ground with a twitching of all extremities for a few minutes. In a few days both men were assigned again to full duty. These men should have been discharged because one might have such a major convulsion while on guard duty and be unable to see an approaching enemy consequently endangering a large number of men. That is just one example of sloppy medical examinations that I witnessed myself.

After about six weeks drilling suddenly all this stopped and we were put to work as a road gang with picks and shovels until they finally put about five hundred of us on the train where we ate slept and sat around. Only once were we taken off the train and the organization went on a hike for a mile or two with so much of a hurry that most of the men were wet with sweat. Everyone was stiff from several days of nothing but sitting. Some official who ordered that exercise did not know what he was doing taking men used to a lot of activity, then sitting for days with no exercise and then try to crowd as much marching or as much distance into

the short time allotted for the exercise as possible.

I was just a boy raised on the farm but I recognized immediately that some ninety-day officer did not know what he was doing. We had work hard at the last camp but we were mixed up with average boys aged twenty or a very little more. They were used to work and willing but few of us were used to being cursed and sworn at. A man of intelligence could reasonably hope to win a promotion with diligence and using common sense and applying it to his work. There were a few noncommissioned officers who did not act as gentlemen but we had one in our company who would curse and swear without any apparent reason except to make an impression. He was also very arbitrary in his decisions.

We rode the army train through St. Louis, Louisville, and the city of Chattanooga, Tennessee, along to a great echo through the great Smoky Mountains where the "hillbillies" saw their first train in their life. We ended up in Camp Sevier, South Carolina. After passing on a rainy day through Atlanta, Georgia a sergeant from a southern division took charge of us to teach us drilling and discipline. After having charge of us for four or six weeks he sat down with us and told us that he would put his "outfit" up against any company in the division and that he knew that we would win. The division had been in camp drilling and maneuvering from six months to one year.

He told us he was from the south but of course we knew that by his peculiar accent while most of us were raised in or near the crossroads of the U.S. where the best American English is spoken. He was honest enough to tell us that the boys from the south will not really give you their best work unless you curse and damn them. He said you men are just the opposite, when I cuss you, you slow up but when I am good and decent with you, you try your best. He was exactly right. A captain, I think from the intelligence lined the entire company up in formation, then he would call certain of us by name, come up front and center, double time. Every one of us trotted double time but as soon as the captain started cursing and trying to hurry us we slowed

down. The cursing made me so angry that I slowed down to a walk. I kept the rule in my mind that any officer commissioned or noncommissioned is not allowed to curse any man.

We were quarantined but could see the stockade where the division's prisoners were kept. Periodically these prisoners were taken outside the stockade in plain sight for us to see, they were drilled with a ring of guards surrounding them carrying loaded rifles at port arms ready to shoot if anyone made a break. I heard guards make the plain statement that if any prisoner tried run through his guard line he would shoot, and shoot to kill.

The more or less tractable prisoners were taken out to work every weekday. A guard had usually two prisoners and he carried a loaded gun. The prisoners had to trot with the guard following them. The camp in Iowa where we came from the guards transporting a prisoner walked easy, the rifle empty and slung over the shoulder. There were no stockades.

Guards walked posts all around Camp Sevier which was hewed out of woods, and I heard men whom one would judge to be fairly decent say, If I am ever on guard and someone tries to run through my guard I'll shoot and shoot to kill. On the contrary I heard several of them say "If I knew I could get away with it I would run into the woods where no one could find me until the war was over."

In our camp in Iowa no one dared hint at something like that because it was considered treasonable. We considered any remark like that dishonorable, yet some of the "hillbillies" were overheard discussing reasons why northern men were sent and mixed in with the southern divisions. Of course they sent us down there to fill the men the south did not have to fill out their companies, etc. The other men argued they sent the men from the north to mix with the boys from the south because the northern boys would not fight if left all by themselves.

I have often said that the "hillbillies" in reality are more ignorant and unreliable than the movies

picture them. They are not only much more ignorant but immoral, degenerates who care little about a human life and will kill on little provocation.

Many other instances come to mind now and then which the degeneracy of the people who have been neglected in the line of education and religion. Many of them said they never had seen a railroad much less a city or a streetcar. I would judge that sixty to seventy of them could not even sign their own name to the payroll; they simply learned to draw their name for official purposes. When and if they received a letter from anyone they had to have someone read it to them. I know that a second or third grade school child could write a better and more correct letter than seventy-five or eighty percent of them ever got from anyone.

The worst part of it was that several of us Catholics if we did not happen to succeed to sneak through the guard line to go to mass in a French church we were compelled by the guards to stay and listen to the utter illiteracy of some of their preachers. However I am getting ahead of my story.

After about six or eight weeks of quarantine of our unit we were assigned to the squads, which lacked one or two men. That mixed us as well with them as if one could mix a quart of peas with a sack of corn. I was brought up in a settlement which had Belgians, French, Irish, English, German, Luxemburger, Danish and even occasional Swedes and Norwegians but mostly ambitious people who worked together no matter what religion or nationality. Even the strangest and most shiftless "hobo" or tramp was so far above the lot of the "hillbillies" that no comparison can be attempted.

I was taken to the tent with which I was to live, work and eat. After the last one left the tent I laid myself face down on the bed and cried. Even an inexperienced farmer boy could recognize what I had been forced to live with, it was only worse than I could ever have dreamed it could be. The Germans have a saying, "Whatever fills the heart will run out through the mouth." Anyone living with these people would become thoroughly

disgusted with obscene language. In an average crowd of workmen anyone will hear offbeat and occasionally an obscene word but none ever comparable to what these degenerates can spit out in a short time both in quantity and in quality. I am not exaggerating but I heard expressions from the “hillbillies” that I had never heard before or since I was separated from them.

We were put on the train and landed on Long Island from where we finally embarked somewhere in a New York Harbor for Liverpool, England. We were routed on a freight boat. We were under a crisscross top built of two by three inch dimension lumber so that one could walk over it yet there was plenty of air for everyone below. At night a heavy canvas was spread over it to keep the waves, which were lapping over the ship from soaking us with salt water. After seven at night everyone had to be down below and no one out from below before seven in the morning. You can image the staleness of the air under the canvas but after two to four days about half the boys were vomiting all over. Can anyone imagine the terrible stench and the condition of the entire place? It was never cleaned or scrubbed except once two or three days from Liverpool. No one could walk along without holding himself to keep from slipping on the floors covered by vomitus.

I considered myself very lucky because I did not get seasick. Possibly it was due to the fresh lemon a friend Nick Reeder from home gave me. I made it out as soon as we were permitted to go out on top and never went under the canvas until the guard chased us down.

We did not get enough edible food during the thirteen days crossing from New York to Liverpool, and if it had been edible the stench would have spoiled it for us.

### **An Overseas Adventure**

We embarked in New York harbor May 1918. The first few days were uneventful and boring. We were on a freighter accompanied by a large

convoy. Nights we were crowded below and slept in hammocks hung from above. Every access of fresh air was shut off because a storm was lashing all the way, driving the salty waves across the ship so that the entire deck was wet every morning. Because of the high waves, a canvass was stretched over our hold.

After a few days of tossing by the waves most of us were sick and feeding the fish if we made it in time to the rails. Few could retain the so-called stew and some of us rather than have an upset stomach ate only the slice of bread that came with it.

Some of us lucky ones never got seasick and were on deck from reveille until taps, at seven p.m. All had to retire below into the air befouled by the vomitus all over the floor and the lack of circulation of fresh air. The floor was as slippery as a greased pig from vomitus mixed with overlapping salty waves.

The only flurry of excitement came when a submarine chaser rammed a gaping hole into the bow of our freighter above the water line, large enough to accommodate an automobile. Everyone was startled and waited for the explosion of a torpedo, which never came.

After thirteen dreary days we were happy to see the green shores where the strait separates the Emerald Isle from England and couldn't take in enough fresh air and the green. It was a great relief to get away from living for thirteen days and nights in too close proximity to every comparatively strange neighbor.

A day's train ride under lock and key brought us to Dover and a very meager meal or rather lunch and sleep on a hard but clean floor and fresh air. Once locked into our train compartments they must have lost the key for we could not get out until we reached our destination. It would not do to tell how we had to relieve nature's demands when locked up. Someone has said, “Necessity knows no law.”

To dampen our enthusiasm as if it had not been low enough already some fifty American boys came

ashore the next morning, the survivors of a ship torpedoed while crossing the channel. They were dressed in underwear, pants, fatigues and no more than blankets. My courage sank as low as it had ever been. Courage means doing your duty in spite of fear and not in being without fear.

We crossed the channel without any adverse occurrence, but not without some apprehension. We stayed in the slummy part of town for a day or two and moved on by what seemed to be forced marches. I and the detachment that had been sent in as replacements for a southern so-called National Guard division had never been taught how to make our packs the correct way. If it is not made right it is all but impossible to carry, or “tote” it. It bends or breaks in the middle, hangs too low and causes you to bend your back and misplace the center of gravity so instead of helping you walk erect you must bend over and bring the wrong set of muscles into use. It wears you out.

Add to that, we did not learn till later what was essential, and what was a luxury to carry. For instance we found out that keeping to the spoon and losing the knife and fork and a few whatnots lightened the pack. In short, our packs were impossible and over loaded where a correctly made and loaded one is hard enough to carry.

We arrived late at evening in our training camp in the corner of some woods where the monotonous drumming of cannon was incessant day and night. We bedded down in the sparse grass with a bare bite of supper and heavily chlorinated water to drink and wash and shave. No baths at all. For several weeks we drilled and maneuvered in sham battles on all but empty bellies because the empty belly felt much better than a sick stomach. An empty or sick stomach will not feed the system or contribute the necessary energy to drill and be on your feet all day. After an hour our bones felt like lead and only by great efforts on the mind could we do what we were told.

July 4 we moved out with full packs, glad to leave behind the dreariest of places imaginable; looking

for new scenery and excitement. We were all on foot and somewhat elated to see different places. Our enthusiasm was soon to be dampened because we marched too fast and soon got where roads walled on both sides with high hedges keeping in the heat and shutting out any breeze. The air was soon full of dust, which didn't move so that we could breathe clean air. Unwittingly we started to breathe shorter and faster to avoid getting too much dust. We didn't exhale enough hot air from our lungs. I got a severe headache, migraine, and overheated, as did several around us. Our supply of water, one quart, had to last us for a whole day of marching. Many of us dropped by the way for there was no way to get relief but by rest.

In spite of us, the stragglers, we arrived just behind the main body at camp. Our sore heads and feet were healed the next morning ready for more punishment. We were edging nearer and nearer to the battle areas. We were so disgusted by generally intolerable conditions of everyday living that we assumed that it were as well to get clear up to the front and fighting so as to help put an end to the war. And still we marked time. It was well nigh impossible to get up any enthusiasm for fighting, and if it ever broke to the surface there was sure something to kill it.

We moved into a relatively quiet sector through the shambles of a city once very famous for its laces. We raided the enemy lines to the delight of the “Tommys,” tired of years of fighting, and pulled back and waited in our trenches long enough for the Germans to lob over enough shells to put fear of the Lord into us. No casualties but a rather grim experience to stand your ground at a machine gun post, one of my close friends and I in a lonely hole while the unseen enemy threw shells at us. You can do nothing, cannot move, take cover, or defend yourself, all you can do is watch shells explode and pray. Only an atheist could refuse to pray in the circumstances. I had noticed that some physical activity always eased the tension in a comparable situation.

Back again to the real tired, grimy, lousy and an empty stomach except for eating a little meat, the

kind a dog digs up after he remembers where he buried the bone. My system, like everyone's, craved nourishment so much that the stomach no longer ejected anything like food. How we escaped food poisoning had always puzzled me. Could be that we were tougher than the germs that tried to poison us. We got back to a rest camp and slept a very few days whenever no one was irritating us to keep us in perpetual motion trying to get us into the swing of it.

After waiting only a short time we were within the reach of shot and shell again, and required to sleep in underground shelters. The shelters were made for Europeans who are smaller, shorter, and thinner. We were packed like sardines in a can. There was little room to scratch when the "cooties" were biting and sucking blood.

Why couldn't some researcher track down some kind of an insect or a louse that would eat the dirt, and grime and sweat off soldiers instead of sucking their blood and disturbing their sleep. It was during this respite that I saw cartridges marked captain, lieutenant so-and-so. At this same place the smoke from our kitchen evidently attracted the enemy's fire. One morning we woke up to see several shell holes around the farmyard where our cook was presiding. One room of the house was a shambles but the family of two old men, a woman and child stayed on. One old man tied that family milk goat to a post near the shell hole where it trampled down the dirt the farmer had filled in the hole with. Then the two old men hitched the big Belgian stud to a wagon and drove out into the hayfield and brought a load of hay back to the barn.

We used to send boys to the potato patch in the same direction to get a supply for making Dutch fried potatoes. The farmer soon got wise and put up a small shelter in which he kept a very large dog on a leash, the kind large enough to hitch to a cart to take two people for a ride to town or the neighbors. From then on we paid about ten centimes (less than a dime) for a peck of potatoes.

The lard was "borrowed" from the kitchen, the

stove was a hole in the ground, with a hole on one side for the draft, covered with an old piece of tin, a pan of the same material bent up on each of four sides for frying what we had. We lived like kings for a few days but it was good while it lasted.

After devious routes we were again in a position to move up come dawn. We were lying in wait in a sunken road, sleeping dog tired while shells screeched over, in front and back, right and left. The only consolation was that the one that hits you, you will never hear and, that if it propels you into eternity a merciful Creator will pardon you like the robber on the cross two thousand years ago.

Dawn started creeping up over the horizon to show desolate open land, damp and chilly covered with shell holes. Suddenly we were ordered into this chaos that looked as if a thunder and lightning storm had come down to meet and engulf us. Excitement had to be worked off so we raced on and on through shell holes stepping over two and three or four dead bodies at a time the cold sweat running down our faces until we came to the enemy's trenches and German soldiers holding hands high we had made our objective and waited some time. Because I spoke their language I was told to lead on with the prisoners and take them to our headquarters. The prisoners were told to take along all the wounded they could carry and load. The officer of the prisoners told me their lines were under such heavy pounding of our artillery that no one dared to leave their dugouts for anything whatever. It was stay under cover or be killed.

We didn't get back to our companies till the next day. Clothes were torn to shreds so that a supply sergeant gave me a new pair of pants for fear I would lose what I had on.

We assumed we would go for a rest period. We got back and ready for a good night's sleep but midnight we were roused. I didn't have the heart to get out my squad but my closest friend helped me clean the equipment because it had to be done sleep or no. We moved around a little again out at midnight for a breakfast getting ready to move out.

While eating with my friend I told him, "I know something is going to happen to me today, I am so happy it is going to be good." I was as positive of that as if I had seen it with my own eyes, how I do not know. I was not worried about the outcome now although still scared.

To understand you must realize that anyone being in constant danger for so long and what he has to go through will be sure that he is going to get killed when all Hades breaks loose. I know a boy from home who told me in all sincerity "I am not going home." He was killed in one of the battles referred to above.

We moved up after our midnight breakfast over a hard road. The thunder and lightening had come clear down to earth to surround us, I led my squad following the top sergeant to where there was room to deploy the platoon, squads in single file, a few rods between us we gradually moved up and ran into severe fire before we had gained any momentum. We had to wait sitting on our heels and could see very little ahead or in any direction because of the flying dirt, smoke and morning fog. The lightning and thunder was upon us. I thought to myself, this is coming close; I saw a shell explode to my right. It could not have been more than a very few minutes later when I found myself trying to get to my feet, my legs didn't work, I tried helping with my right hand but it pained me and didn't want to work. I looked at it and I saw it was cut almost off through the palm. Finally with the help of my left hand I got to my feet and turned around, and looking back I saw my buddy, his face bleeding and tears mixing with his blood when he saw me and he tied a tourniquet around my right wrist. My left arm around his shoulder he got to the road the same we came in on over which we had to go back. Four men with a stretcher came along and I got weak and almost collapsed. I thought this will never do and pulled myself together. The officer told the stretcher-bearers to put me on the stretcher and carry me back. They all laid themselves alongside of me and waited in spite of the order to get me back. My buddy wanted them to get me back. They waited some more when about a half dozen enemy

shells hit the road. Had they obeyed the order promptly we would all have been cut to pieces.

After this barrage had died down we moved back to the first aid station set up under a small concrete bridge. The surgeon asked how I felt, I told him fine, and he wanted to know if I could stand a twenty-five-mile ride. I told him anything to get out of here.

Upon arrival my clothes, every last stitch, were removed with a pair of scissors and after some waiting I was put on a warm operating table and put to sleep before I knew it. It was so good to get a respite from pain. The next morning I woke up moaning. I immediately clamped my teeth shut and was quiet; I couldn't move any part but my head and the left arm. After an hour or so the pain eased. As a boy my mother had taught me how to ease the pain of a migraine headache by lying still.

After waking thoroughly I was put on a freight car in the tiers stacked up on the closed side of the car, the opposite side being left open. There was no heat, it was a cold rainy October day, and I was on the same bloody wet stretcher that brought me in from the battlefield. In a few hours I was so cold from my hips down that my wounded legs began to give convulsive jerks every few minutes. We had the kindest attendants out they were afraid to raise or lift me up to put a dry warm blanket under me for fear of hurting me. At last they consented to do what I asked when I promised not to say a word. It helped a lot.

When I got to the hospital I asked the nurse to feel my feet and she said your feet are cold as ice. They soon got warm on a hot water bottle and I slept. When I woke up I asked her if there were any "cooties" left on me. I stayed at the South African Hospital about a month and was shipped to an American base in London. In another six weeks we went home to New York.

What a lot of great and personal events were packed into the past twelve months so that in retrospect it looked more as if five or ten years had gone by.