

PRIMARY SOURCE PACKET (DOCUMENT ONE)

NURSE ALICE S. KELLEY, APPENDIX TO SURGEON GENERAL OFFICE: PERSONAL ACCOUNTS OF CONDITIONS, 1918 (EXCERPT)
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION (RECORD GROUP 112, BOX 42)

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2. "We left Paris for Chateau Thierry about noon. Chateau Thierry is a name that the American boys will never forget, and a name that will bring a shudder to the nurses who were there in the awful days of July. We reached Chateau Thierry about five o'clock and waited at the station an hour until the R.T.O. found the Evacuation Hospital to which we were assigned, and then we waited until the ambulances came for us. Finally we reached our destination and found a camp of yellow tents, pitched on a recent battle field in 'No Man's Land,' near what was left of a railroad station. Behind the station lay a town, in ruins. This was our first glimpse of war. Here we became acquainted with 'bully beef,' 'goldfish,' moldy black bread and black coffee. The discomforts of ordinary camp life most people are familiar with, but try and imagine tents pitched on ground that an army has left, the dead not all buried, shell holes and trenches; then add rain and more rain. Imagine always the sound of artillery, air machines and no sounds or signs of normal life. Our initiation into the advanced zone was made in fly-time. A good proportion of the nurses were Public Health Nurses. Hadn't we fought flies in the alleys of our cities, begged window screens, netting for covering the babies? We had seen too, with satisfaction, less food sitting on kitchen tables, fewer flies in the homes; but here we were, in an army proud of its sanitary record, and the flies eating the food out of our hands, dropping into our coffee. Butter, there was none for them to struggle with. It really seemed as if we could stand anything if the flies could be lessened. Night in these places is the time for thrill. Oh, the moon that shone in Chateau Thierry those August and September nights! The search-lights that swept across the skies outvied any Northern Lights that ever shot across the sky. 'Jerry' came over every night. Before we heard the burr of his machine, we heard, 'All lights out.' We sat in darkness until the bombing ceased. Night in these tents is unlike any other experience. The cots were low, so low that the blankets always drabbled in the mud. Down the center of the tent were loose boards. They never seemed so narrow as when a stretcher-bearer carried in his burden by the light of a smoky lantern. Poor as the accommodation was, the boys were always glad to get under shelter and in a bed. The nurses had no time off, but stayed on duty working early and late. The devotion of the doughboys to each other is one of the most beautiful things in this world of war. The first thing they would ask coming out of ether was were their 'buddies' safe. If they had seen them fall, they would weep for them; if they were uncertain as to their fate, they worried and fretted.

"How cold it was those September nights! There were no fires in the damp tents, but there were plenty of blankets for the patients and the alcohol stoves kept water hot, so there were always hot water bottles. When the railroad track was put into commission and the first hospital train came in, we had more thrills, for 'Jerry' kept watch for that train and we were always anxious until it got away. Evacuation usually took place at night, quietly, with very little light, the patients sometimes lying on the ground on stretchers, waiting to be put on board. While

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they waited, they would have cocoa and sandwiches from the Red Cross tent, chocolate and cigarettes. The nurses who were able to do so would leave their posts and come down to say goodby and good luck. Very often the train would leave about three in the morning. It was always a thrill to watch the three red 'eyes' at the end of the train slowly and silently disappear in the darkness. It always seemed strange that the boys never wanted to go. They were always satisfied to stay where they were, as they were in their first bed for some time, and were with the first American women they had seen for as long.

"As the troops advanced, the Evacuation and Mobile Hospitals followed. Nurses and teams would be evacuated to one of the bases and from there sent forward when the outfit was set up. One dark and rainy night in October two surgical teams were sent out from Chaumont to the Argonne front. They had to change trains en route. They waited for the second train from eleven o'clock until five in the morning. The waiting room was locked. The only shelter was a shed between the tracks. There they sat in the darkness and rain, watching trains come and go, troops getting off, others getting on, in silence. One could distinguish neither color nor rank. It was a weird night. The mobile hospital was reached just after breakfast. The nurses had something to eat, got into uniform, and worked all day and all night. Those who have never seen an operating room at the front cannot imagine how unreal it is. The tables are placed as close together as possible, down the center, each team having two tables. The tables are never empty, one patient waiting until the surgeon has finished with the other. The wounded man lies on the table never saying a word. The nurses are too busy to do more than give him a smile or an encouraging pat as they pass by. The nurse who gives the anaesthetic has a better chance to say a word.

"I remember one night at midnight lunch, beyond St. Mihiel. The kitchen was situated in the woods, well out of sight. It had been part of a German camp. The night was cold; it was raining and the mud was the best of its kind. There were no lights to show us the way, and it was slightly up hill. When we had pulled our feet through the stickiness, and reached the cabin, it looked as if we had reached the lower regions. The oil lanterns were tied to the tent stakes, casting a lurid light on the scene, dark figures flitted about with cups and plates in their hands, helping themselves to the bully beef and the awful coffee. It was a strange cafeteria. Officers and nurses sat around laughing away the discomfort and the wretched food."

"Maude Crawford,
"U.S.A. Base Hospital No. 7."

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Account
of a
Shock
Team

2. "I left the Base on September 8, 1918, on a 'Shock Team' which consisted of a Captain, M.C., a nurse and an orderly. We had orders to report to General Headquarters, Chaumont, at which place we were joined by another Shock Team from a Georgia Unit. From Chaumont the two teams travelled together, reporting to the Chief Surgeon in Toul. The other nurse, Miss X, and I encountered many difficulties travelling in the congested trains and doing without our meals, but it was all part of the game, so we did not mind it much.

"In Toul we were given an ambulance and told to find the 'trriage' of the 89th Division. As you know, the St. Mihiel Drive started September 12th, and in the early morning of September 13th we were riding over territory which our forces had left the day before! I shall never forget that ride. Our driver lost his way, and at one time we were riding ahead of the artillery of one of the divisions on its way to the fast advancing front line. We saw everything, from dead horses up, camouflaged guns beside the road, guns which had been used in the offensive, etc., everything bearing the look of a hasty departure. Several times we were obliged to stop and inquire the location of this 'trriage,' and whenever the boys saw us two girls, they just stared. I heard one man say, 'My God, it's a woman!'

"We stopped in a very much ruined little village, Flirey, where parts of one division were having a hasty breakfast before they pushed on. Excitement was everywhere. Of course the boys cheered when they saw Miss X and me. We were told that we were the only two girls up around that section, and it did please them so to see some really and truly American women. While we were there, a captured German team was brought in and several prisoners. A watch was taken from one of these and given to me for a 'souvenire.'

"Finally, we located the 'trriage,' which was a short distance from Flirey. It consisted of about ten canvas tents, one extremely large one used as a receiving ward. The boys were often evacuated almost as soon as they came in, remaining only to be redressed. Our Shock Team was not called upon to do very much work there - there were many cases that needed transfusion, but we did not have the supplies. To apply heat, we improvised a hood to be placed over the stretcher and used lanterns. I can gladly say, however, that each boy got all the attention that could possibly be given him under the circumstances. Miss X and I were greatly amused at our mode of living. We ate in the officers' mess and had bully beef daily. We could have no light at night (in our little tent), unless securely hidden from view, because the enemy aeroplanes were often flying over us and only a week before a huge ammunition plant, five minutes' walk

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from the 'triage' was blown up. Really our one and only trouble was the mice. Often I woke up with them running over my cot. At first we could not sleep on account of the barrages put over at night, but finally got accustomed to it.

"I remember late one evening hearing this steady beat, beat, beat. Out of curiosity I got up and peeked out of the tent, and was rewarded with a most impressive sight - a steady line of soldiers marching to the front in a most gorgeous moonlight. As these boys marched on, not a sound was heard except the tread of their feet. I watched them pass for ten full minutes.

"On September 14th, there was an air barrage. This was some distance away, but we could easily see the smoke, etc. Each day there was something interesting.

"At the end of two weeks, we received orders to report to an Evacuation Hospital in Souilly, which is in the Verdun sector. We arrived in time for the Argonne Drive, September 26th. We were immediately put in charge of a regular Shock Ward, the two teams relieving each other on the day and night work. And there the real work began. Our treatment was heat, transfusion and stimulation. Our chief duty was to get the patients in a condition to be operated upon. Very often the men came into the ward straight from the First Aid Stations, their conditions such that they could not be stopped in the receiving ward to have clothing removed. And at times they would be dead when they did reach us. We got everything, but had more shrapnel wounds than fractures. Those were busy times. I often forgot to eat, for some days stretcher after stretcher would file in, several requiring transfusion at the same time, etc. There are two cases I shall always remember particularly. One man came to us in a bad state of shock, having lost his right leg, his right arm, left leg injured, left arm broken and minus his left eye. It may be interesting to know that this man responded to treatment and was evacuated.

"Another case was a lad of twenty-one. He was a true soldier in every sense of the word. He suffered everything, yet he never complained once. He came in with a badly infected right leg which he was obliged to lose nearly to the hip. It was only his fighting spirit to get well that enabled us to keep him as long as we did. When he died, I wrote his mother telling her what a brave lad he had been, etc. Several weeks after I heard from her, and she was ^{so} grateful, I felt sorry I hadn't written to more mothers. But we had so little time.

"On the whole our Shock Team work was successful, though it was often discouraging to bring back some of those frightful cases only

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to have them die later on with gas bacillus infections.

"I am happy to say that the Evacuation Hospital where we were received a citation for its excellent work.

"The surroundings were exciting and immensely interesting. I was often in Verdun, even when the enemy were shelling the place. Also there was the constant hum of aeroplanes, the sound of the guns, the rumbling of trucks on their way to the front, etc. Everything suggested war - and our intention to get it over quickly.

"We nurses lived quite comfortably, though we slept in damp tents, wallowed in mud, and ate things we never ate before or intended to eat again. As for cooties, we still have the scars! We were often in great danger, but very few, if any, had any thought of fear for herself. Up at the front, I found the atmosphere more congenial among the nurses than back at the Base. It was quite evident that each nurse was bound to do her bit in the efforts to get her American brother well and safely home.

"I returned to my Base November 23, 1918.

"Alice S. Kelley, ANC.,
"Evacuation Hospital 49."