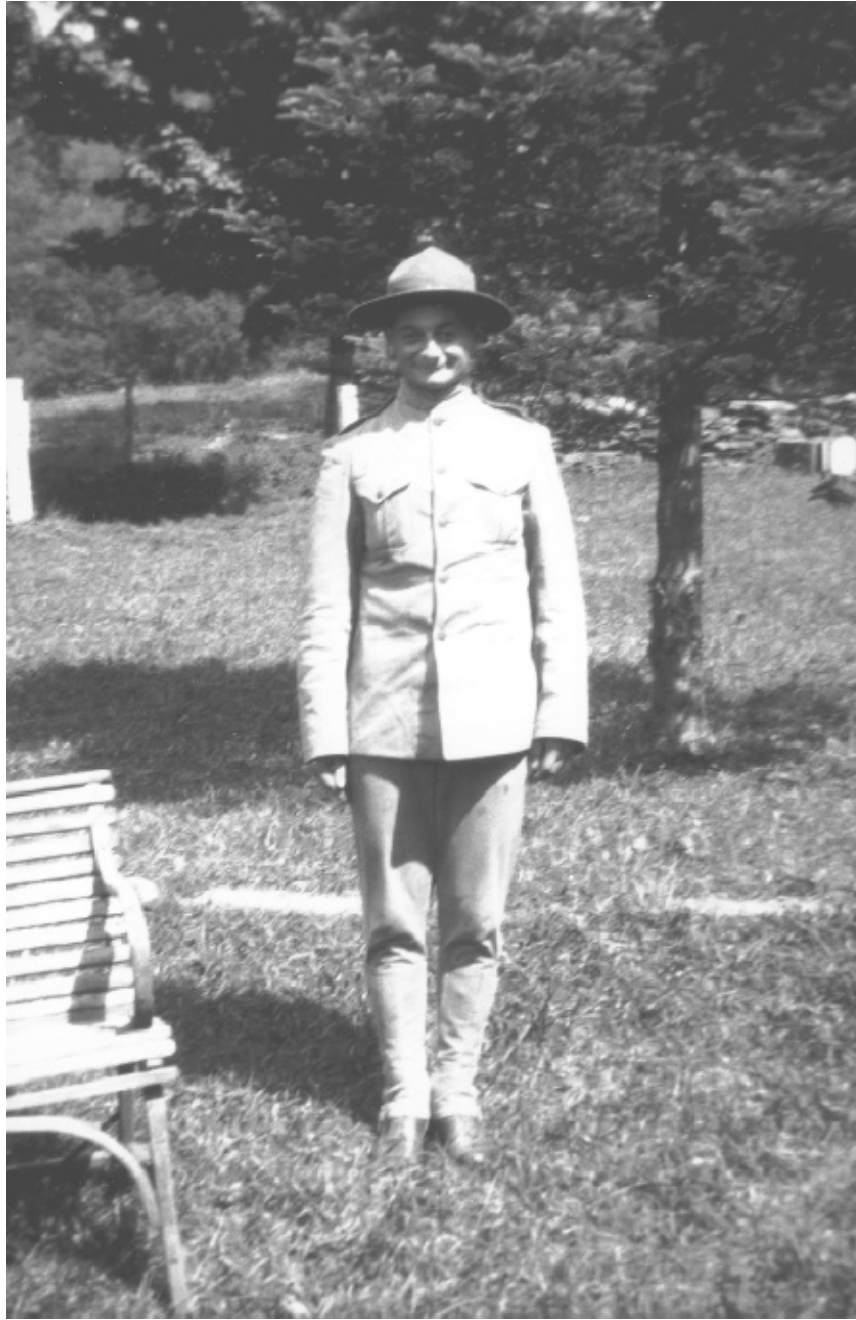


Diary of Howard Fletcher Davidson
(May 20, 1917 - August 13, 1919)

Transcript of the diary
of
Corporal Howard Fletcher Davidson
(April 16, 1895 - August 29, 1987)
#108034
81st Company
6 th Machine Gun Battalion
Fourth Brigade
Second Division
US Marines



Howard Fletcher Davidson
August 1917

[Material enclosed in brackets is added or from an alternate source]

PROLOGUE

H. Fletcher Davidson

[I was born April 16, 1895 on a farm in the town of Bovina, NY. My parents were Douglass Davidson and Margaret Hoy Davidson. I was the youngest of the family of four. Mary, the eldest, died in infancy, Vera Lillian (Mrs Wm J. Storie) died in 1967, John George died of whooping cough before I was two years old.

I attended grade school at District #4 in Bovina Center in the building now converted to the Bovina Public Library. I attended Delaware Academy at Delhi, NY (the old white building recently demolished) for three years graduating with the class of 1913.

After one year in Forestry Course at Cornell University I switched to the study of electricity at The Bliss Electrical School, Takoma Park (now College Park), Maryland, graduating in Class of 1916. Before graduation I was employed by Western Electric Co. to do telephone switchboard installation at Bryant Exchange, 38th St. N.Y.C., John Exchange on Gold St. and a new exchange at Bayonne, NJ where the newly devised message register system was installed.

Coming home to vote in the November election, I was interviewed by Homer Mason, Delhi's electrical contractor, who induced me to go to work for him, wiring the Canon House in Delhi, the Meridith Inn at Meridith Square, installing motors at Andes creamery. Also started the electrical work on the new dairy barn being constructed on the campus of Delhi Ag & Tech, But his work slackened so that it was not a full time job so I secured employment on the testing and inspection floor of the Diehl Electric Motor Co. (now Singer) at Elizabeth, NJ.

While attending Cornell University I received the usual military training, then required at all land grant colleges. Also while I was at Bliss Electrical School I became a member of the American Legion, an organization which sponsored preparedness and where members pledged themselves to volunteer for service if war should erupt. So when war was declared against Germany on April 6th, 1917 I went to the Marine Corps recruiting office in N.Y.C. and was accepted into service. (When the present American Legion was formed in Paris in 1919, the old Legion surrendered its charter to them).

I was sent to boot camp at Paris Island, but due to quarantine, etc was not sworn in until May 20th. After the usual boot training I was sent July 31st to the new training camp being built at Quantico, Virginia. Here I was assigned to the first Machine gun Company ever to be formed, but we drilled as infantry one day then worked on construction the next day, for three weeks before the Lewis machine gun equipment arrived.

After two months of intensive training a proficiency test was held in disassembly and assembly of the guns while totally blindfolded. A man named Williams and I were the two highest scorers so we were removed from field training, both promoted to Corporal and sent to a machine shop for intensive training in overhaul and repair. The upkeep of all equipment of the Company became our responsibility for the duration.]

1917

Sat-May 4th – Worked in Diehl's in AM. Went to N.Y. in PM and enlisted at 23rd St. Station for Marine recruiting. Was examined and told to report again the 10th. Went back to Elizabeth [N.J.] and took in a movie, "Womanhood, the Glory of a Nation".

Sun-May 5th – Packed my trunk and left Elizabeth at noon for home.

Mon-May 6th – Arrived in Delhi on the forenoon train. Rode home on truck with James Hilson. Jane and Kate Reynolds was with him too.

May 7th, 8th, 9th – Spent at home. A surprise party held for me at Vera's [his sister] on evening of 9th. Had a fine time and felt especially good at finding so many friends bidding me a 'bon voyage'.

May 10th – Father took me to 'Flyer' in morning and I arrived in N.Y. too late to take the boat that left in that PM. So was given room and meal tickets at Joe's restaurant and ordered to report again the morning of 12th. Took in a movie that night.

May 11th – Went over to Jersey City and called on the Morgans. Charles Salzman and I went to city that night and took in "The Flame" then playing at the Lyric Theater. Stayed with Salzman that night.

May 12th – Board ship "City of St. Louis" and left dock at 3 PM bound for Paris Island.

May 14th – Docked at Savannah about 7 PM and went out with bunch to see the town.

May 15th – Boarded 'Pilot Boy' and left for Paris Island. Landed about 3 PM and went to quarantine camp.

May 20th – Was sworn into service as a 'U.S. Marine' and issued a uniform.

May 21st-26th – Squad drill at the quarantine camp.

May 27th – Packed heavy marching order and marched to maneuvering grounds.

May 30th – Ran a quarter in a mile relay race on the team winning first place.

Jun 3rd – Had trouble with eyes and was on light duty three days.

Jun 4th-11th – Company open and closed order drill every day.

Jun 12th – Marched into old barracks where I encountered my first bedbugs.

Jun 13th - 16th – Was back on sick list.

1917

Jun 16th - 26th – Drill one day and work on new barracks the next.

Jun 27th-Jul 11th – Work on the range where I qualified as marksman.

Jul 12th-29th – Drill every other day and work on the new barracks or hauling materials on the other days.

Jul 30th – Went from Paris Island to Port Royal in barge and there boarded train for Quantico. Stopped for a fine supper at Florence, N.C. and took sleepers from there to Quantico.

[Letter home]

23rd Co H, Marine Barracks
Port Royal, S.C.
(Undated)

Dear Sister and Brother,

Your letter came the day before yesterday and this is the first chance I have had to answer it. I hope you will be able to read it for I am writing on my knee. I guess the best way to answer your questions is to start in and describe a day.

The “get up call” comes at five o’clock, we have to get dressed, washed, our tents ‘policed up’ and fall in line for drill until 6:30. Then we get a breakfast of coffee without sugar but you have a suspicion someone dropped a drop of milk in the washboiler full, a slice of bread and either beans, oatmeal without sugar or milk or rice the same way. In about half an hour we are back in line and drill until 11:15 and rest until 11:30 when we get our dinner of water, beans, beefstew and a slice of bread. The stew usually is about half potatoes and if not we get a potato boiled with the jacket on too. Next we get fixed up for inspection at 1:00. Every other afternoon we have to take a bath and scrub a set of clothes. The other afternoon we are liable to either drill or do some sort of work, one afternoon I was a carpenter and yesterday afternoon I cut brush and weeds. At 4:30 we have supper of sweet tea at about 65° temp, more beans and stew, and another slice of bread. Then drill again until about 7:30 or in other words until dark.

We each have a tin cup, knife, fork, spoon, platter with cover for dishes. We have to line up and march past the kitchen and get served to a mess of everything. They have a kitchen for about each 225, after we are served we set around on the ground and eat. Then all wash our dishes in a pan of water they set out behind by a garbage pail. All wash in about the same pail of water so you can imagine how greasy it is for the last ones.

Our tents are about 7’ x 10’ and have three cots in so there is no room to turn around and we have no place to keep anything and when we move we pack everything on our backs. When we drill we carry a light pack of about 15 or 20 lbs. And on moving or in heavy march order with about 80 lbs. We each have a bucket and stand in line for a bucket of fresh water every day after dinner. We use that to wash ourselves and our clothes and once in awhile on wash days if we are smart enough we can get a second bucket before the time is up and they shut it off. We each have a canteen too which we fill up for drinking. It is all sulphur water so you know it tastes good (NO!)

1917

Sunday Afternoon—

I had to stop yesterday to start on a twelve mile march. I don't think I ever saw such a hot day and it was so dusty one could hardly breathe. Before we had gone very far I had a good coat of mud all over me, then it would run off in streaks.

I got the letter last night that Mother sent Wednesday, but I haven't gotten those back ones yet, but hope to get them before I leave here as they are just beginning to get them straightened out. It is rumored that our company leaves here tomorrow or the next day for – no one knows where. Some of the fellows that came down from New York on the same boat, but were put in a different Co. left yesterday. They are building a heap of wooden barracks here and some say they are going to turn the island over to the training of the conscript army and all the Marines will have to get off. They are as good as prisoners when they get them here for there is no way possible for them to escape save swim.

I must get ready for mess again so will say 'goodbye'.

*Lots of love to all
/s/ Fletcher*

DIARY CONTINUES—

Jul 31st - Arrived in Quantico this morning and spent the day in getting settled.

Aug 1st – Organized 81st Company this morning. Glad to be in a machine gun company. Took a swim and scrubbed clothes in the Potomac.

Aug 2nd – Received pay today and drew some new clothes.

Aug 4th – Have been granted a furlough 4th to 13th inclusive and left Quantico on noon 'special'. Arrived in N. Y. about 5:30 and had to wait till 3 AM train.

Aug 5th – Arrived home at noon before people were home from church. Walked in from Bloomville.

Aug 7th – Went to Delhi on 'bike'. Was up to Harkness' to spend the evening where I met Bill Mable and stayed with him all night in his rooms over the garage.

Aug 8th – Was raining this morning but came home. Homer Burgin took me up from his place in his car.

Aug 10th – Went down to see Florence in evening. Bill, Madge, Floss, and I went to Andes in Ford for a ride. I drove over and Bill drove back.

Aug 11th – Spent evening with Edith Liddle.

1917

Aug 12th – Went to church in AM. Billy Thomson took me to Bloomville for afternoon train. Vera, Father, and Mother went along.

Aug 13th – Arrived back in Quantico in time for supper.

Aug 14th-16th – Infantry drill under Army regulations.

Aug 17th – Liberty – went for a walk in the woods.

Aug 18th-23rd – Drill as infantry. Bomb throwing and bayonet practise.

Aug 26th-Sunday – Went for a walk to Dumphries. Services in Y.M.C.A. at night.

Aug 27th – Received Lewis machine. Spent day in unpacking the guns and carts and setting up carts.

Aug 28th – Started nomenclature on gun under direction of Capt Curtiss.

Aug 29th-30th – Maneuvered with carts in AM. Nomenclature in PM.

Sept 1st-26th – General routine of drill, hikes and nomenclature.

Sept 27th – Was made Corporal with technical warrant and started to work in machine shop.

[10/7/1917 – Drawing clothing and equipment.]

[10/8/1917 – Disassembled carts and crated them.]

[10/11 – Gen. LeJeune presented colors to 6th Reg.]

[10/15 – Went to new rifle range with mach guns, but returned at noon with orders to pack sea bags and load train. While eating chow orders resinded so we had to unpack and reassemble carts.]

[10/29 – Assembled in heavy marching order to pass in review before Sec. Daniels.]

[11/8 – No police or drill all day. Drill call 5:30 PM. Went to trenches with gun carts loaded with concrete boxes and spent night building emplacements. Recall at 4 AM.]

[11/11 – Pete Wood and I took a hike to Dumphries and found an old pyrite mine. Near mine was an old beech tree with J.R. Hoy and J. Murray carved in bark. Pete and I put our names on opposite side of tree. [[John Robertson Hoy was a grandfather of HF Davidson. JR Hoy enlisted for service in the Civil War on 26th day of August 1864 and was discharged on 25th day of June 1865. J. Murray was a Bovina boy who enlisted in 1862 and was killed in 1863.]]

1917

[Letter home]

Sunday night Nov 11, 1917

Dearest All,

I have two letters to answer tonight as I got your Friday's letter this morning. Pete and I have been off for a walk all day, we started right after breakfast and did not get back until suppertime. We went over to the town of Dumphries, six miles from here. It was built the same year as Jamestown, (don't think they have built much since) so is one of the oldest places in the country. From there we went on about three miles farther to a pyrites mine. The mine shaft they told us there goes down 1700 ft. We went through a ploughed field and noticed pieces of different colored flint laying around. I just remarked this would have been a good place for the Indians to get flint when Pete leaned over and picked up an arrowhead. So we started to look around an[d] inside a half hour we each had a pocketful of them apiece. They were nearly all white flint, we each brought about half a dozen in with us. I have one that is pink.

Then we came across an old family graveyard that was kept up in fine shape. The oldest grave was 1686 and the latest 1810.

Next we ran across an old mill with a great big, old fashioned overshot wheel and the gear wheels inside had wooden cogs. It also had the hooper and great big granite millstones.

On the way back we ran across several old beech trees all carved up with names, put on a long while ago. I found one that had J.R. Hoy, W. Murray, and about fifty more names on but those were the only two that was legible. I put HFDavidson right over the Hoy and Pete put P.P.Wood, U.S.M.C. on the other side of the tree. This is just about halfway between Washington and Fredricksburg on ground that was fought over during the Civil War. Was it possible that grandfather was in this section and that might have been his inscription? Was there a W. Murray in his company or regiment? It seems a strange coincidence that I should run across it so many years later if it is his, so far from home, and in uniform too.

The weather has been fine here, warm and clear in the day time but cold at nights. You certainly must have had some rain there to make such a flood at this time of year when the water is usually so low and no snow to melt. We have had no rain now for weeks.

No, I didn't [get] a chance to vote at all, but you know I certainly would have voted for both suffrage and prohibition if I had had the chance.

There is such a hub-dub going on around that I can't think of anything so I may as well stop. I wish father a happy birthday and many returns. I hunted yesterday for a remembrance but couldn't find even a suitable postcard.

*Lots of love
/s/ Fletcher*

[Letter home]

Quantico, Virginia
Nov 18, 1917

Dearest All,

Just a few line to say that all is well here. The weather is certainly something wonderful, just a long stretch of Indian summer.

1917

Yesterday I went out for another hike. Another fellow and I started out about one o'clock and went to Dumphries and then about eight miles farther along the road to Mannassas, then cut across to a little town by the name of Minnieville and then back to Dumphries at seven and took in a church supper. It only cost us fifty cents and they sure did give us all we could eat. There were also two other Marines there, they happened to be fellows from our company so of course we knew them and it made things more pleasant. They entertained us fine and ended up by them asking me to auction off the cakes and coffee that were left over, of course I had to accept. Can you imagine me as an auctioneer. They ought to have no kick coming as I got \$4.45 for four cakes and thirty-five cents for a pound of coffee.

I am enclosing a copy of the marines paper they have just started to print. They call the marines 'Leathernecks' because they used to have leather in the collars of their uniforms. The 'gobs' are the navy or sailors. There is a piece in it that tells a little about Quantico's history. I have heard lots more from the old natives out in the country about the war days. They all like to tell us about it and some are real interesting. Yesterday we met one who as a boy saw Stewart charge Mannassas and lots others of those battles in the Wilderness. He would have talked to us all day if we had had the time. He pointed out the places on the actual ground where this and that happened.

After supper the other fellow and I walked back to camp and got in at just midnight. The other two stayed over there all night. I had to work down at the shop this forenoon.

Don't think of any more news so will close for this time.

Lots of love

/s/ Fletcher

DIARY CONTINUES—

[11/24 – 81st Co gave an exhibition drill at Washington before a football game between Marines and a Fort Lee team.]

Nov 28th – Left Quantico for home on evening train.

Nov 29th – Arrived in Bloomville about 11 AM and walked over the hill to Gladstone's where the community dinner was being held. Went home from there with Father and Mother.

Nov 30th – Father, John Robertson and I went to Delhi in the Ford. Had dinner up at Harkness'. After dinner took Madge downtown. Picked up John and Father and came home. In PM was up and helped prepare for county fair to be held in hall. Went to fair that night with Edith.

Dec 1st – Will [Storie] took me to Delhi to afternoon train. Arrived in N.Y. that night.

Dec 2nd – Left N.Y. this morning and caught noon train down from Washington to Quantico.

Dec 7th – Packed sea bags and all equipment loaded ready to shove off in the morning.

[Packed equipment and loaded it on freight cars.]

1917

Dec 8th – Left Quantico before daylight in snow storm and detrained in Newport News about 4 PM. Spent night in loading ship. [Reveille at 3:45 AM. Train left Quantico at 6:30 for Newport News.]

[12/9 – Coaled ship, the U.S. De Kalb, at the mouth of James River.]

Dec 10th – Left Newport News about 8:30 AM and pulled into lower harbor, N.Y. late that night.

Dec 11th-13th – Lay aboard De Kalb in N.Y. harbor [Tompkinsville] awaiting the formation of the convoy.

Dec 14th – Left N.Y. [8:45 PM] for France. De Kalb, acting cruiser, and North Carolina [battleship] escorting six other transports. De Kalb was the old famous German raider, Prinz Eitel Fredrick.

Dec 15th-20th – Spent on high seas. Have not been seasick at all and have been enjoying trip fine. [Night of 20th saw a rainbow made by moon.]

Dec 21st-22nd – Two days spent in target practise. The gunners on the De Kalb make fine scores, being some of the best gunners in the world.

Dec 24th – North Carolina has disappeared in the night and a fleet of [8] destroyers now accompany us. [Christmas eve had a fake sub alarm.]

Dec 26th – Convoy splits, three transports [the President Lincoln, the Princess Irene and Pocahontas] turn to the north headed for Brest. We head for St. Nazaire.

Dec 27th – Were lined up for belated Xmas dinner when siren blew. Submarine sighted hard on starboard bow. Rushed to my station in time to see periscope bob up under our stern and had a fine post from which to observe the well aimed shots with which De Kalb sank the submarine. The destroyers circled and dropped depth bombs. Later reported finding dead Germans floating on water. Land sighted while eating dinner which proved to be Bell Isle. Mainland sighted soon after. Pulled into harbor at sunset. [De Kalb fired 3 shots from forward guns and 5 shots from the stern guns. Dropped anchor near mouth of Loire River.]

Dec 28th – Sail up river through beautiful scenery and harbor outside of dock locks.

Dec 29th – Go through locks with afternoon tide and dock. Start unload ship immediately.

Dec 31st – Disembark and entrain on III class cars. Leave St. Nazaire in evening.

1918

Jan 1st, 2nd, 3rd – Spent in train crossing France to **Damblain**. Very cold ride. Most of fellows had feet frozen. Allen lost off train.

[1/1/ 1918 – Rode all day on train – iron rations, hot coffee at a French village.]

[1/2/ 1918 — Still riding, rations issued at Is rur Tille ???]

[1/3/ 1918 – [Kenneth] Allen missed train and left behind.]

Jan 4th – Detrained at **Damblain** and marched to **Chaumont la Ville**. Was sick on hike and collapsed as we entered **Chaumont la Ville**. We left Lewis guns and equipment on board train.

[Train arrived at midnight at **Damblain**. At 7 AM started to unload. Left all Lewis guns and equipment aboard train. About 6 to 8 inches snow on ground. Road not wide enough for 4 abreast so #4 man had to break a path. Hiked a mile or so before discovery was made we were on wrong road. So we had to go back and start over.]

[We hiked through **Germain la Ville** where I saw some French farmers threshing grain with an old horse power. We went on to **Chaumont la Ville** where Company was billeted in several houses. My platoon was put in a vacant stone house of two rooms and an attached stable. There was a fireplace in one of the rooms, but no fire and water froze in the rooms that night.]

Jan 6th – Company received Hotchkiss guns and carts. Went to **Damblain** and pulled them in by hand.

[1 / 12 – Co. went to **Damblain** and were issued French Hotchkiss machine guns and carts. Each cannon weighed over half a ton and 4 or 5 men pulled and pushed them.]

[1 / 24 – Our first mail call.]

[1 / 26 – New YMCA opened today. Selling jams, chocolate, tobacco.]

[LETTER HOME]

ON ACTIVE SERVICE WITH THE AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Jan 26, 1918

Dear Sis,

I have been intending to write you for a long time but I don't seem to get many letters written at all. In fact six to Father and Mother are all I have written. The night before last I received a little Xmas card and some stamps from Auntie Hoy which is all the mail I have received. It had been sent down to camp and was forwarded.

It is about the same thing every day here and as we can say nothing of our drills there isn't much of interest to write. I don't think I ever will get so I can understand their jabber here, though I have gotten so I can get a few things I want. I carry a French book around in my jacket with me all the time.

1918

I get a paper here nearly every day so I have some idea of what is going on in the States. We can get the Paris edition of Chicago Tribune or New York Herald a day late for only three sous. (A sou is a little less than a cent)

It is quite springlike here and the weather is very pleasant. The country is beautiful around us.

Try to keep Mother from worrying as much as you can. I am in no danger here.

*Lots of love
/s/ Fletcher
Cpl. H.F. Davidson
81st Co. U.S. Marines
A.E.F.*

DIARY CONTINUES—

Jan 29th – Were issued [French] gas masks and started drill with them.

[2 / 1 – Received some Christmas bags from Red Cross. Fired Hotchkiss gun for first time.]

[2 / 4 – Issued Colt 45 today. Also a bunch of mules.]

[2 / 12 – Tried out our new masks by going through a gas chamber.]

[2 / 21 – Reveille at 4 AM. Brigade maneuvers – rain and cold all day.]

[3 / 2 – Battalion hike to **Bassomcourt** for billeting drill. Muddy hike.]

Mar 17th – Left **Chaumont la Ville** [7:30 AM] and hiked to **Breuvannes** where we entrained for front. Two Red Cross workers gave us good send off.

[At **Breuvannes** loaded all equipment on flat cars. All sea bags with personal belongings left behind, with promise we would have them again in about two weeks. <67 years later – 2 weeks not up yet!>] [**First diary lost**]

[DEPT OF THE MEUSE — VERDUN SECTOR]

Mar 18th – Detrained at **Lemmes** and had a long hike [50 Km] to **Camp Massey** on **Verdun** Sector. [Clear, hot day for March. Saw much anti-aircraft fire. Stopped by a small brook for cold chow and most took opportunity to soak feet in the cold water.]

Mar 19th-26th – Lay in reserve at **Camp Massey**, marching up every other day to dig trenches.

1918

Mar 27th – Left **Camp Massey** and hiked into trenches at **Eperon** at night. Stood gas watch (or rather watched the rat army). **No Mans Land** on fire. Set by German flares landing in dead grass.

Mar 28th – Built weather vane for gas purposes. At night [Earl] Worthington and I were sent to P.C. **Brest**, 2nd Battalion, 6th R, as runners to our Company.

Mar 29th-31st – Stationed nights at P.C. **Brest** as runners and in days at P.C. **Eperon** 81st P.C. [Brest P.C. is 20 ft underground with 3 tier chicken bunks, but the roof drips continually.]

Apr 1st – Cpl. [Floyd] Williams came in from **Camp Loggetts** to relieve me and I walked back to **Loggetts** in afternoon.

Apr 6th – Went to **Camp Massey** to guard rations until arrival of Company from trenches that night.

Apr 7th-10th – Spent in **Camp Massey** doing general work on carts and guns. Williams and I made two anti-aircraft mounts for the Hotchkiss tripod. [A very tedious job due to lack of tools having nothing much but a rat tail file with which to drill holes in boiler plate. Rain and shell fire in area, but no damage.]

Apr 11th – Went into trenches at **Menil** at night. Packed mule train with pack saddles up mountain that night.

Apr 12th – Went out with chow runners to Sgt. Burdett's position and made run out at night with evening orders.

Apr 13th – Made two runs to Sgt Burdett's position on right flank.

Apr 14th – Went down to Lt. Stiles position with music and fixed up water pump to pump water out of dugout. Made two runs to get Sgt. Burdett's position. Was sniped at on return and was spattered with mud but not hurt.

Apr 15th – Made three runs to Sgt. Burdett's position. Were relieved by French at night and marched to **Camp Clifford**.

Apr 16th – My birthday! General rest and cleanup day.

Apr 17th – Company went into trenches at **Watronville**. I remained at **Camp Clifford** with the mule skimmers.

Apr 18th-May 10th – Spent in **Camp Clifford** doing general repair work and 'Jack of all trades'. Made three or four trips out to the trenches for Meister or [Sgt Howard] Strain.

1918

May 11th – Drove one of mule carts into Rondean and Company came out of trenches.

May 14th – Left Camp Clifford about 3 AM and hiked 20 miles that forenoon through many small towns. Arrived at Hiippines at noon. Worked on a brake of rolling kitchen in PM. Had a bath and turned in right after supper.

May 15th – Left Hiippines about 8:30 AM and arrived at Hargeville 15 miles distant in afternoon and stopped there for the night.

May 16th – Left Hargeville at 9:30 AM and made 20 kilometers to Rurgny before dinner. Many German prisoners were working in wagon shops there. Took a swim in river before I ate dinner. Resumed the march about 2:30 [PM] and made 22 K more to Venault le Chatel by 10 PM.

May 17th – Took good bath and scrubbed clothes in AM, rested in PM.

May 18th – Worked on repairing kitchen in AM and on shafts for gun carts in PM.

May 19th – Repair work on carts in forenoon. Took swim in PM.

May 20th – Left Venault le Chatel at 7:30, passed through Bessuat 8:30. Stopped for dinner at Vitry le Francois and loaded into boxcars. Made good time all night, passing through the outskirts of Paris early in the morning.

May 21st – Pulled into Isle Adam in morning, detrained there and marched about 35 K to Marines arriving there about 7 PM and put up for night in a barn.

May 22nd – Marched from Marines to Beaugrenier, stopping for dinner under some fine shade trees at a crossroads. Were quartered in a lousy old barn loft so moved out under an apple tree.

May 23rd-30th – Remained in Beaugrenier doing a little general repairing and cleaning up. On the morning of the 26th the Company marched to next town and went through a gas chamber.

May 30th – Stood by to move all night. Left Beaugrenier at 5:30 and hiked in heavy marching order to Paris-Dieppe Road where we embarked in camions. Rode all day and till after midnight in camions [motor truck or bus]. All afternoon we met a continuous stream of civilians flocking to the rear in all sorts of conveyances. Many walking and leading dogs, goats, cows, horses. Some wheeling baby carriages loaded with a few choice articles they saved. Such a scene I never saw before and hope never will happen again.

1918

[DEPT OF THE MARNE — CHATEAU-THIERRY]

Jun 1st – Slept, or tried to sleep rather, in the crowded camion which took up the move again about three this morning. A German aeroplane dropped bombs close to us as we were stopped last night. We continue to meet a few refugees this morning. Stopped in ????? where we did our first salvaging. Everyone salvaged themselves a ‘bon’ dinner. Disembarked from camion about 4:30 at corner of Lucy and Paris-Metz Road and immediately formed a line in valley between Lucy le Bocarge and Bouresches. Was stationed with Mr. Hart’s platoon as section runner. Heines were coming over top then but we stopped their drive. Went out on run at night but section had moved forward and to left so went wandering until I found them. There were no signs of trenches of any sort so went strolling out into No Mans Land before I finally located them. Ran into French patrol on right and came near getting shot up by them.

Jun 2nd – Marines drove Huns back a ways. Made several trips to farm across the ravine on our right after water. Bob Watson and I went out that evening and brought in a milk cow and a fine veal. Put in a very strenuous night as all French infantry retreated and left us with only four machine guns without any support to hold a considerable stretch of front. All gun crews sent out flankers to the left and HDQ stood by most of the night. Germans made raids up the ravine and tried to capture Lucy and got within 500 yards of it but could not break our line. This point was the farthest point the Hun advance; from then on we drove them steadily back.

Jun 3rd – Went salvaging in the morning with Bob Watson and we got twelve rabbits, five hens, and a goat. Also a bag of beans and some eggs. About 10: 30 was ordered to lead Sgt. Sharp’s section over to Lucy. I took them down through where the French had been the day before and the Dutch opened up on us with machine guns but we were in a sort of a draw so we had a place to duck behind. Sharp and I left the section there and went forward to reconnoiter the way. Returned and lead section in by taking them down the draw to below the bridge on Lucy to Paris Metz Road and then up road behind bank. The Germans had gotten artillery up and were beginning to shell Lucy as we entered. Carson was struck in back by some shrapnel that AM, being first in our Company to be hurt. Sharp’s section was sent out about a mile to left of Lucy and I remained in Lucy as runner to them. Five holes were put through roof of building I was in that night. Marines advanced all afternoon with considerable losses. Steady stream of wounded brought into 1st aid station in Lucy. They shelled the square woods where Lt. Hart’s HDQ was that night and killed the milk cow we had brought in. Sgt. [Chris] Bond shot through leg by piece of shrapnel.

Jun 4th-13th – Remained in Lucy le Bocarge running to Sgt. Sharp’s section and scouting for food for them and myself as we were without connection with the rest of the company and had no supplies coming in. It was an exciting ten days though. The Germans shelled the town continually; the last two days averaging a big shell into it every five minutes. I moved my quarters the second day to the old café behind the church. There was an old wine cellar in this building which made a good abri (??). We did not use the cellar until a big shell took the roof off our former bedroom. Luckily no one was hurt. There were five of us runners stayed there

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and we had a little club formed. Took turns doing the cooking, etc. One night the Germans made an attack and we stood by with rifles all night. A shell set a house afire and we had a bucket brigade to put it out. Next morning Marines made an attack and there was a stream of prisoners coming in all AM carrying wounded or in bunches under guard. Some of the prisoners we sent back to line carrying ammunition or bring in more wounded. Many machine guns and two minnie werfers were brought in.

Jun 14th – Left **Lucy le Bocarge**. It was a beautiful town with many fine homes when I first entered it. When I left there was nothing but tumbled waste and a smoking mass of ruins. Went to **Paris** form with reg 6th P.C. (???)

Jun 15th –Went on run to 81st Co. and received orders for transfer to Battalion PC in woods by **Triangle Farm**. Made a run into **Bouresches**.

Jun 16th – A very busy day; made one run to 6th RPC, one to **Bouresches**, three to 81st PC and four runs to **Lucy**. The valley between **Lucy** and **Triangle Farm** was full of gas all day so had to wear gas mask every time I went through the valley.

Jun 17th – We moved 6th M.G. PC from **Triangle Farm** to ravine NW of **Lucy**, east of **Champillon**. [Douglas] Milburn and I spent most of the day digging us our dugout home.

Jun 18th-28th – Lived and worked under almost continuous shell fire. Did nothing but runs, water and ration details – digging Officer's dugouts. Made a few trips into **Vois le Chatel** at night after YMCA supplies. Company went out of trenches Jun 28th.

Jun 29th – Moved back to woods N.E. of **Montreuil**. [William] Yarnall taken sick on way out. Drew some new clothes. Found Company had had about 66 casualties including 11 killed in action; some others will probably die of their wounds and some are disabled for the service.

Jun 30th – Went to **Marne** for a bath. Swam across twice, took weak tremblings from swimming and went to **St. Aulde** to the mule camp to remain overnight.

Jul 1st – [John] Chaney and I walked from **St. Aulde** back to camp where we remained until the night of the 4th.

Jul 4th – Everything very quiet today. At night Company hiked back and camped for night near old chateau just below **St. Aulde**.

Jul 5th – Took bath and washed clothes in **Marne**. Did some repair work on the water cart. After supper packed up and marched up along **Marne** until daybreak.

Jul 6th – Encamped this morning in woods on a hill overlooking the **Marne** valley and slept most of the day. In the evening hiked a few miles farther to woods E. of **Nanteuil-sur-Marne**.

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Jul 7th-15th – Remained in woods with guns in reserve positions while Company fixed up reserve machine gun emplacements.

Jul 16th – Packed up right after dinner and hiked from 3 PM until after midnight.

Jul 17th – Lay from midnight until nearly dawn beside the road waiting for the D*#! camions into which we loaded and rode until late afternoon. Then went by hand with packs and machine gun equipment up a long mountain through the woods. Stopped for supper and unrolled our packs for night, but immediately rolled them up again and stacked blanket rolls. Hiked all night with machine guns, equipment and ammunition through rain and stygian darkness along a road congested with all sorts of traffic.

[Aisne Marne Offensive]

(See Citation)

Jul 18th – Stopped for rest a couple of hours at daybreak. Just flopped on wet ground in the rain and was dead to the world. Took up march again with no breakfast and hiked all forenoon. The 6th Marines had started the drive that morning and we met frequent large bunches of prisoners going to the rear. Had a hard time holding our own with the rapidly advancing front. Came to front where drive had started, crossed the old No Mans Land to behind the old German lines where we stopped to rest a few hours in PM.

Saw a sight that afternoon that no civilian ever witnessed and one that could never be painted or described fully in words. Thousands of soldiers of French, French Orientals, and American armies, tanks, cavalry, artillery, armored motor cars, bicycle corps, infantry, in fact, one might say everything used in warfare advancing in a continuous stream toward the receding front. Had an early supper and again took up the advance. Finally stopped for night in an open field by some captured German batteries. Right ahead the tanks were battling for the next ridge.

Jul 19th – Fateful day for the 81st Company. 57 casualties out of 119 men on the line – number of deaths unknown, but many known to have been killed instantly and several others known to have died from their wounds. Capt. Sumner killed leaving Lt. Hart in command of company. Took up march early and made front in time to go over the top. I was detailed as runner for Capt. Sumner. He sent me on run to 3rd Batt PC. When I returned he had started over the top so I start out to find him. Finally found Lt. Schwerins's section and heard of Capt's death at start of drive. Lt. Schwerin gave me a gun and I advanced with his section on right flank of 1st Batt. 6th Reg Marines. Thirty-eight started in section and twelve reached the ditch by the road where we made our stand with 2 out of the four guns and tripods and two boxes of ammunition per gun. The advance was through an open wheat field under the direct fire of German artillery and machine guns. There were only about 200 left out of a 1000 in 1st Battalion The tanks started over about 50 yards in advance of us, but our advance was so rapid they could not hold the lead. Most of them were destroyed by the terrific German artillery fire. The rest turned back. We reached the ditch about noon and lay there all PM in hot sun with no water and short of ammunition praying there would be no counter attack. We had nothing at all to eat that day. The German airplanes came over and fired machine guns into our lines and directed the artillery fire to our ditch. They had control of the air all day, thus our artillery did not know where to fire and

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could not put down a barrage for our advance. Late in PM we got a message through to artillery to blow **Parcy-Tigny** off of map and they soon made it untenable and Germans were seen leaving in heavy marching order. After the barrage the Orientals who had the section on our right advanced into town. We were relieved by the French machine gunners about midnight and marched to rear until next noon when we encountered the mule train. [Second diary lost?????]

Jul 21st – We hiked to rear from afternoon until midnight when we stopped to camp in the **Compengne** woods.

Jul 22nd – Lay in the woods all day. Worked most of day repairing carts.

Jul 23rd – Resumed march to the rear. Hiked all day and stopped for night in a courtyard in a small town.

Jul 24th – Took bath this AM. In afternoon hiked a few kilometers further to **Bregy**.

Jul 25th-31st – Much repair work to be done on carts. Made grate for boilers in kitchen to rest on.

Aug 1st – Left **Bregy** at noon and hiked to **Nanteuil** where we entrained. Passed through **St. Daunis (?)** at dusk. Rode all night making good speed.

Aug 2nd – Made good speed on the train all day. Passed through **Poissons**, **Gondrecourt**, **Toul** to **Nancy** where we detrained and hiked to **Houdimont**.

Aug 3rd – Doc Kirkland and I had a 3 to 11 PM liberty to **Nancy**. Saw Harry Hodges picture in a photographer's window.

Aug 4th – Slept in AM. Was sent to Div PC in **Nancy** in PM to crack safe so got second liberty in **Nancy**.

Aug 5th – Left **Houdimont** and hiked about 15 miles to a camp in the woods. Saw Cliff Franklin in **Nancy** as we marched through.

Aug 6th – Slept in day and that night hiked to **Dieulouard**.

[DEPT OF THE MEURTH ET MOSELLE – MARBACHE SECTOR]

[PONT A MOUSSON]

Aug 7th – Slept in day and at night hiked to **Pont-a-Mousson**. I spent night with Lt. Bower's section.

Aug 8th – Took morning report from Lt. Bower's section into 81st PC in **Pont-a-Mousson**. Had a good bath and scrubbed clothes in AM. In PM did nothing but rummage around and eat plums. Doc Kirkland and I had a private dress parade.

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Aug 9th – Left 81st PC at **Pont-a-Mousson** and went to 6th MG BN PC at **Dieulouard** as runners to 81st. Germans brought balloon down.

Aug 10th-12th –Made one run each day to 81st PC and had a meal there and filled up on plums.

Aug 13th – Took swim this morning in the **Moselle River**. Art Band (artillery band ??) gave concert in street tonight.

Aug 14th – Made run out to Co. PC after supper and rode back on cassion. Anti-aircraft guns and searchlights very active. Germans excited sending up many starshells and signal flares.

Aug 15th – Rode out to Company and return on horse. Had my dinner out there.

Aug 16th – Germans brought down observation balloon this morning before breakfast. Made run to Company PC. Company came out of trenches and I helped billet them in **Dieulouard** for the night.

Aug 17th – Went down to corral and had a good swim and clean up this morning. Mended brake on water cart in PM. Left **Dieulouard** at 8:15 PM and hiked to 3:45 that night. Had charge of prisoners on the hike. Stout took D-7's (??) and towed them along behind escort wagon.

Aug 18th – Breakfast at 6:30 and resumed march from **Gondreville** at 7 AM. Passed through **Villery de Sec, Villery de Sec en Hage** crossing river and canal and RR in latter place. Arrived at **Camp Bishops Woods, or in French Bois de Eleveau**. Worked prisoners rest of forenoon.

Aug 19th – Bunch went to river in PM to swim and wash carts and mules. One mule drowned. Put in charge of billet.

Aug 20th – Cpl. [Harry] Cochran made company carpenter. He and I built black board for office. Washed clothes in PM. Had my teeth inspected.

Aug 21st – Fixed up two tripods and took water cart apart to be painted and repaired.

Aug 22nd – Mended water cart and assembled. Fixed two gun carts. Rode mule to river after supper and took swim in canal.

Aug 23rd – Worked on carts in AM. In PM went to repair a Hotchkiss and function fire. Rode a mule to water and took swim after supper.

Aug 24th – Painted some tripods, ammunition boxes, shafts, etc. Company on parade before 2nd Division officers. Rode mule to water and took swim in canal.

Aug 25th-30th – In camp in **Bishops Woods** doing general repair work.

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Aug 31st-Sep 3rd – In camp in **Bishops Woods**. Had clothes ‘decootized’ first and took swim in river. Packed up to leave at 9:15 PM. Shoved off and hiked all night. Stopped in woods.

Sep 4th – Lay in woods all day, hiked all night.

Sep 5th – Camped before daylight in woods. Raining. Stayed in woods all day. [Floyd] Williams returned to Company.

Sep 7th – Still raining. Stayed in camp all day. Made sea horse stencils in PM. Packed up after supper and hiked all night.

Sep 8th – Camped just before daylight in woods and lay there all day. Still rainy.

[DEPT OF MEURTHE ET MOSELLE – St MIHIEL SALIENT]

Sep 9th-11th – Camped in shelter halves with [Floyd] Williams. Paid the 10th and was Cpl. of the Guard night of 10th and 11th. Preparations for big offensive. Company went to front to dig machine gun emplacements night of 10th. Night of 11th and 12th Company marched to trenches. I was detailed to guard ammunition dump. Dark and very rainy. Barrage started at 1 AM to five when machine guns and 75's opened up along whole front. 2nd Division went over top at 8:30 and advance 12 kilometers that day from **Limey** to beyond **Thiaucourt**. I stayed at **Limey** dump until noon of 12th when with 15th Company's carts took train of ammunition to **Thiaucourt** dump and remained there on guard alone until next evening [Charles] Ferguson came to help me.

Sep 14th – Ration dump established by ammunition dump and I was put in charge of it also. Lt. Moriarty, Brownly, Kopp spent night with us waiting for kitchen.

Sep 15th – Lt. Biglow came to take charge of dumps. Made several trips on runs to **Thiaucourt**.

Sep 16th – Made several runs into **Thiaucourt**. Company reported to be surrounded and captured or wiped out. Were nearly surrounded, but fought their way out of the trap and made a two kilometer advance. I returned to our Company galley late that PM and made run from there to **Thiaucourt** to Bn PC and also to hunt [Robert] Diver, [Mike] Winandy, and [William] Bulda. [Ernst] Teuscher went with me. Mr. Ladd started with us, but turned back. We met [Harley] Bourne and [Mike] Winandy on our return. Had my first good meal and sleep for five days.

Sep 17th – Spent most of AM in sleep and in PM salvaging machine guns, spare parts, tools and ammunition. Packed up and moved back to top of hill south of **Thiaucourt**. I was detailed to wait for ration cart and guide it in. Company turned snipers and made it hot for Fritz.

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Sep 18th – Had early dinner and took up march to the rear, stopping at **Bois de Minorville**. Traveled with monkey cart.

Sep 19th – Mended carts in AM. Went to river in PM to take a bath, but were recalled as guns had to be sent to mobile repair shop. [Cecil] Thompson, [Floyd] Williams and I were broken out of bed about 9:30 to mend broken kitchen and worked until stopped by Major Waller.

Sep 20th – [George] Zimmerman and I took the rolling kitchen to the repair shop at **Manorville**, but they did a par bon (?) job as it broke next day on the road again.

Sep 21st – Spent most of the day getting carts into shape and packed up after supper and hiked all night to **Bicqueley**, 5 kilometers from **Toul**.

Sep 22nd – Helped all day making a steel reach and coupling for rolling kitchen — Thompson, Williams and I.

Sep 23rd – Finished mending kitchen and fixed some gun cars, Had my whole toilet kit stolen by French kids, but got most of it back.

Sep 25th-26th – Remained in **Bicqueley** doing general repair work. Drew new clothes on 26th.

[DEPT OF THE ARDENNES — BLANC MONT SECTOR]

Sep 27th – Packed up and hiked to the train. Rode all night on flat car under Dutch wagon.

Sep 28th – Got off car in forenoon at **Vitry la Ville** and hiked to **Sarry**.

Sep 29th – Reveille before daylight. Packed up and hike to woods near **Courtisol** before noon. Lay in woods in PM and started with wagon train at 6 PM and hiked steady till after 3 AM. We camped in pine grove; 65 kilometers in all.

Sep 30th – Up at daylight and went to join Company with wagons. Only a few hundred yards could see battle raging between Germans and French with glasses. Were fighting on ridge a few kilometers ahead. Camped in pine grove.

Oct 1st – Few repair jobs in AM. Watched artillery shelling ridge for a while. Went out with [Joseph] Wholly to kitchen with rations.

Oct 2nd – Slept in forenoon. Made trip with mule and cart with rations to **Somme-Py** at night.

Oct 3rd – Slept in AM. Made trip again to **Somme-Py** to Battalion PC with rations.

1918

Oct 4th-9th – Helped with rations and supplies for Company. Marines took stronghold in three hours that French had failed, with severe losses, five times to capture. The Division advanced so far and fast French could not keep up on the flanks. Relieved by 36th Division, a Texas N.G. outfit. Their first time in the line so we had good salvaging to their loss.

Oct 10th – Rode Fanny in to guide Company out. Company stopped at train camp for dinner and went on to Camp Marchand near Somme-Suippes and Bursy le Chateau. I came later with R.&B. wagon.

Oct 11th – General cleanup day. Helped issue clothes, salvage from 36th Division.

Oct 12th – Company went to ‘cootie machine’ — issue of overcoats and some equipment in PM. Repaired two shafts in AM.

Oct 13th – Made trip with Dutch wagon to DW salvage dump after overcoats.

[DEPT OF THE ARDENNES — CHAMPAGNE SECTOR]

Oct 14th – Left Camp Marchand this morning and hiked to Camp L’Ermitage. [22 kilometers].

Oct 15th – Repaired several shafts this AM. Salvaged casualty packs.

Oct 17th – Went on 20 hour liberty into Chalous, about 13 kilometers away. Had a fine time. Mike Winandy, [Marmaduke] Sharp, [Hawley]”Fat” Waldron and I hung together. Rode back to camp in 703rd Company Dutch Wagon.

Oct 20th – Packed up and hiked all day from Camp L’Ermitage to Camp Rossignol 2/5 on Suippes-Perthes road.

Oct 21st – Reveille before daylight and hiked with train all day through devastated country across old Hindenberg Line to German camp about 16 kilometers N.E. of Somme-Py. [Bayern Lager Nord].

Oct 23rd – We were not needed on front as French Division got in so hiked back to Camp Rossignol 2/5.

[DEPT OF THE ARDENNES — MUESE – ARGONNE]

Oct 24th – Hiked to town on Chalons – St. Menehould road. Valmy [22 K]

Oct 25th – Hiked all day to woods on hill near Les Islettes.

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Oct 26th – Hiked from 2 PM until about 4 AM next morning. Crossed old line and camped on hill near **Apermont. (Exermont?)**

Oct 28th – Went over to Company and fixed a broken shaft. Moved HDQ about a kilometer farther east to strip of brush by road.

Oct 29th – Made a few runs from HDQ to Company and back.

Oct 30th – Company moved to **Exermont**. Sgt [Joseph] Wholley and I went over that night.

Oct 31st-Nov 1st – Went out on Prince with R&B wagon to Division ration dump with Capt. Harvis to draw rations. Had to go cross-country. Stayed at galley that night.

Nov 2nd – Went with R&B wagon cross-country to ration dump. Spent night at dump.

Nov 3rd – Left dump early and caught up with galley between **Bayonville** and **Fosse** that PM. Returned to Battery HDQ that night.

Nov 5th – Started for rear, but found wood for cart shafts so returned and fixed two good shafts, Cleaned tools in PM.

Nov 6th – Left Battalion HDQ and went back to Company property dump.

Nov 7th – Sam Roberts brought news that an armistice was on, but it proved to be a false report, but we celebrated that night with flares, etc. anyhow.

Nov 8th-10th – Our little bunch of 10 at Company properties of Battalion had great time doing our own cooking on what we could bum, borrow or steal and scouted around country hunting, salvaging, etc.

Nov 11th – Armistice went into effect. Our bunch had great time celebrating that night. While we were eating supper the Battalion wagons came in after properties and stayed all night.

Nov 12th – Packed up early and loaded wagons. Sgt. Welsh, Bill Love, Williams, Shaw and I walked cross-country to **Sommerance** and caught trucks from there to **Buzancy – Stuary** road and caught truck into **Beaumont** —42 kilometers in all.

Nov 13th-16th – Stayed in **Beaumont**. Company turned in Hotchkiss guns and equipment and drew new Brownings. Issued clothes on 16th. Worked two days mending two broken beams in carts.

1918

[THE MARCH TO THE RHINE]

Nov 17th – 4 AM reveille. Loaded cussions and left **Beaumont** with Battalion train at 9 AM. Arrived in **La Ferte** about two hours after dark and put up for night in a big auto factory. [17K]

Nov 18th – Left early in AM and crossed Belgium line, **Villers** at 11 AM. Arrived in **Bellfontaine** about 6 PM. Carried heavy pack. [20K]

Nov 19th – Worked all day with [Cecil] Thompson making new (????) for rolling kitchen.

Nov 20th – 4 AM reveille and left at 8 AM. Arrived about dark in small Belgium town 2 ½ K west of **Arlon**. 6th Regimental band in lead played in every town as we went through. All towns decorated with flags and evergreens and paper flowers in honor of our troops. Germans are evacuating about a day ahead of our advance. [25K]

Nov 21st – Left **Heinsch** about 8 AM and crossed line into **Luxemburg** at 10:30 AM and hiked to **Everlange** in PM. Flopped on ground as usual. Bitter cold and snow, but slept warm. [19K].

Nov 22nd – Left **Neverlange (Everlange)** early and hiked to an old electric light plant near **Bissen**. [12K]

Nov 23rd – Left **Bissen** and hiked to **Reisdorf**, only two kilometers from the German border. [27K]

Nov 24th – Stayed in **Reisdorf** until PM then packed up and hiked to **Biglebach**. [3K]

Nov 25th – Went out at night with rations to men on patrol.

Nov 26th – Bill and I spent the afternoon visiting with a Luxemburger who had been 17 years in States. Had 4 brothers in Detroit.

Nov 27th – [Cecil] Thompson and I went to Battalion HDQ for tools. Rained all day. Went out with rations for patrol at night.

Nov 28th – Sat in café and wrote letters most of the day. Thanksgiving dinner of steak, mashed spuds, gravy, tomatoes, coffee and bread.

Nov 29th – Wrote some more letters today. Went out to **Walendorf** with rations.

Dec 1st – Packed up and left **Biglebach** in morning. Crossed line into Germany at **Walendorf (Wollendorf)** ? at 9:15. Made 35 kilometers to **Emmelbaum**, a small burg near **Neuerburg**.

[35K]

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Dec 2nd – Left **Emmelbaum** early and hiked all day and stayed in barn by an old mill on river.
[22K]

Dec 3rd – Left next morning and stayed in mill of small town a few kilometers north of **Brium**.
[17K]

Dec 4th – Left in morning and hiked over the hill to **Weisheim**. [10K]

Dec 5th – **Weisheim** to **Hillensheim**. [18K]

Dec 6th – **Hillensheim** to **Dollendorf**. [12k]

Dec 7th – **Dollendorf** to **Fuchshofen**. [20K]. Went to **Schull** after rations.

Dec 8th – **Fuchshofen** to **Neuenahr**. [35K] Stayed in big hotel.

Dec 9th – **Neuenahr** to **Brohl**. [15K]. Helped Thompson make tongue for Dutch wagon.

Dec 10th-14th – Remained in **Brohl**.

[WITH THE ARMY OF OCCUPATION]
[OUTPOST DUTY COBLENZ BRIDGEHEAD AREA]

Dec 15th – Left **Brohl**. Company crossed river (Rhine) on a boat at **Neider-Breisig** and Company train crossed bridge at **Remagen** to **Expel**. Stopped in **Rheinbrohl**. [11K].

Dec 25th – Xmas in **Rheinbrohl**. Had fine Xmas dinner. The Zimmermans gave us a fine Xmas supper. Went to movies in PM.

1919

[Letter home]

*Rheinbrohl, Germany
April 13, 1919*

Dearest All,

There was lots of mail in my box the other night, your letters of Mar. 17th & 23rd, the birthday card and the pictures, a letter from Vera, Mable Fiero, and several bundles of papers and magazines. The first number of Popular Science was among them. I must thank you ever so much for it. They have no sugar maples here in this country so I couldn't very well hang a bucket out, I am glad you hung one out for me. You must have had the spring fever too. Today is just a steady rain but the last week has been just wonderful weather. Some of the apple and peach trees are in blossom now and a few bushes along the brooks are showing green leaves.

1919

I have not seen Wilford Ayers but the one time, so do not know whether he is still here or not.

I have been through Heddesdorf several times since, but have always been on a wagon or truck and so had no chance to look him up as he was living back off the main stem. Yes, I read the letter Millard Gow had written that was in the Express.

I have a diary that I have been keeping for some time that I wouldn't take a good deal for. I haven't written in it this year though. It starts from the time I enlisted until I reached Rheinbrohl. No it is not the same one I have had all the time as the biggest half is written from memory. I had one that I kept until we went to the trenches the first time. We received orders to pack everything we owned in our sea bags except what would be absolutely necessary for a two week trip to trenches and the sea bags would be stored. That is where the marines lost practically everything of their personal property. The bags they say are still in storage, the bags may be I doubt if there is anything in them, for they cut all the locks off them and took out such clothing and blankets as they might contain to reissue. I have heard from men who claimed they knew that everything was dumped out and the clothes separated and the S.O.S. guys that were doing the stunt took anything else they wanted and what no one wanted was put back in. My first diary was left in my bag, after a while a [I] managed to buy a little notebook and wrote up another from memory, only to lose it later with my pack in the field of battle. The one I have now I bought just after the battle of Soissons and by the aid of friends who had managed to hang on to theirs I wrote up another one and kept it always in my pocket and wrote in it at least once a week until we reached Rheinbrohl. It is mostly nothing but mere notes so I think I shall get myself a good notebook and go over it all fill it into a sort of a story of my life as a marine. There are some pretty good stores here in Rheinbrohl considering the circumstances and paper is one of things that Germany seems to have plenty of. So we can get pretty good stationary here for a reasonable price.

We have our new mess hall and barracks completed now and moved in this last week. I however am still in the same house. There was not room enough in the barracks built for a hundred men so we still have many living around in the houses. Another fellow and I have a room to ourselves now that there were four in before. We always had our field kitchen (mounted on wheels) that did our cooking and we line up with our mess gears and got our chow and stood around in the weather any place that was handy and ate it. But now we have enamel ware dishes and do not have to wash them ourselves when we get through. We march in and seat ourselves on benches, twelve men to a table and have the food brought to us by the mess men.

And we certainly have no cause to kick either concerning the quality or quantity, though of course it is nothing like sitting down to a table at home.

The time that some of the letters have been going through in lately this ought to reach home just about in time to wish you a happy birthday. I certainly wish you a very happy one and lots more happy ones to follow it.

I think we will have things much better now as there is more room for everyone and there won't be so much work to do either. We are supposed to devote the afternoons to athletics now and are organizing a ball team in the company and have several games scheduled with other companies so we may have a little fun. We have reveille in the morning twilight and a long forenoon full of work or drill so there is not much danger of growing stale.

1919

We have regular army canteens now instead of the Y.M.C.A. canteens so we are able to get considerable candy, toilet necessities, canned fruits, etc. We have a good bathhouse for the use of our company, where there is always plenty of hot or cold water. And I think every man has someone who does his washing for him regularly. So you see we are pretty well fixed. A fellow by the name of Black ate with our company for about two months this spring and I got pretty well acquainted with him. He said that and Millard Blair had palled together for over a year.

Don't think of any more news at present so will say good-bye for present.

Lots of love.

/s/ Fletcher

Cpl Howard F. Davidson

81st Co 6th M.G. Bn

U.S.M.C.

A.P.O. 710

DIARY CONTINUES—

Jun 16th – Left Rheinbrohl and hiked 32 kilometers to Gierend and billeted for the night.

Jun 17th – Hiked from Gierend to Schenkleberg and camped awaiting signing of the peace.

Jun 29th – Hiked from Schenkleberg to Oberbieber, 36 kilometers in 7 hours.

[Letter home]

Oberbieber, Germany

July 3, 1919

Dearest All,

It is over two weeks since I have gotten a letter written. We have been doing some maneuvering around and were out on the occupied zone limit ready to go over the top again if Fritz didn't come across and sign the peace treaty. It seemed quite like war times in a way, the orders came in the night and we left Rheinbrohl next morning with our worldly goods on our backs. We had a few days of pretty stiff hiking and stood by on the line about a week while the Peace delegation was arguing over the last extension. Then when they signed we came back here. We are not going back to Rheinbrohl again but remain here until we start for home which we are expecting to do inside of two weeks now and maybe sooner. So I may not write again before I get home.

The reason that we did not go back to Rheinbrohl was that the whole battalion must remain together to facilitate the turning in of ordinance and quarter-master stock. It is only about five miles from here to Neuwied and a electric car line runs to there from here and the railroad from Neuwied to Rheionbrohl so I may get to go back to get some personal stuff I had to leave there when we left. But the best news of all I am expecting to get my discharge within two or three days after I reach the States, so when I come home it will be to stay.

1919

I have a fine place to stay here, in fact, the best accommodations I have had since I have been a Marine and we are feeding fine so I ought to be able to worry along in great shape what little time we have left to stay here.

The last two weeks has been mostly rainy with some pretty hard showers so it was a little disagreeable on our maneuver. It is raining now just a slow steady drizzle.

Our battalion had our colors decorated again this morning. That adds another palm to our Croix-de-Guerre.

Hoping that everything is going fine at home and that I will see you all soon.

*With heaps of love
/s/ Fletcher*

DIARY CONTINUES—

Jul 15th – Left **Oberbieber** at noon and hiked to **Engus** and entrained.

Jul 16th – Train started at 3:28 AM. Went by northern route through **Koln, Belgium, Northern France** to **Brest**, arriving at 6 PM on July 18th.

Jul 24th – Left **Brest** at 5:30 PM on USS Santa Paula.

Aug 4th – Landed at Hoboken about ?? PM. Went to Camp Mills, Long Island.

Aug 8th – 2nd Division parade in New York. Marines then entrained for Quantico.

Aug 9th – Arrived in Quantico at noon.

[END of DIARY]

[August 13, 1919 – Honorably discharged at Quantico, Virginia]

Enlisted 20th May 1917

Honorable Discharge 13th

August 1919

Military efficiency-Excellent

Obedience-Excellent
Good Conduct Medal

Sobriety-Excellent

Battles, engagements, skirmishes, expeditions:

TOULON TEYON, VERDUN

from March 28th to May 12th, 1918

CHATEAU THIERRY

from June 1st to July 9th, 1918

AISNE MARNE OFFENSIVE

from July 18th to July 19th, 1918

MARBACHE SECTOR

from August 9th to August 16th, 1918

ST. MIHIEL OFFENSIVE

from September 12th to September 16th,

1918

MEUSE-ARGONNE OFFENSIVE

from October 2nd to October 10th, 1918

(Champagne)

MEUSE-ARGONNE OFFENSIVE

from November 1st to November 11th, 1918

Participated in the March to the Rhine

from November 17th to December 13th, 1918

Served in Army of Occupation

from December 13th, 1918 to July 19th, 1919

Reg. No. 2107

HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS

April 30, 1920

HOWARD F. DAVIDSON

Having been a member of the 81st Company, 6th Brigade, during the period in which his organization was twice cited in the French Orders of the Army, is hereby authorized to wear the Fourragere, of the colors of the French Croix-de-Guerre. (green and red)

CITATION

Cpl. Howard F. Davidson, Sixth M.G.Bn., For distinguished and exceptional gallantry at **Vierzy, France** on July 18, 1918 in the operations of the American Expeditionary Forces in testimony thereof and as an expression of appreciation of his valor I award him this CITATION

awarded on June 25TH 1919.

/s/ JOHN A LYUINE, Major General, U.S.M.C.

HDQ U.S. MARINE CORPS

June 25, 1925

My dear Mr. Davidson:

Receipt is acknowledged of your letter of June 16, together with a copy of your discharge certificate which is returned, relative to securing certain insignia.

Accordingly there are enclosed one Aisne battle clasp, one Aisne Marne battle clasp, one St. Mihiel battle clasp, one Meuse Argonne battle clasp, one Defensive Sector clasp, five bronze stars, one Victory Medal, and one bronze Victory button to which you are entitled for your service in the U.S. Marine Corps.

Very sincerely yours,

/s/ C.E. Nutting, Major, Asst. Adjutant and Inspector, U.S. Marine Corps

Postscript

(July 4th, 1000)

Prepared by Ed Davidson

To the best of my ability I have accurately transcribed my father's diary. Since starting this project I have discovered that the diary in my possession is actually his third diary, mostly written from memory, as the other two diaries were lost during battles in France.

After returning home my father married Lois Jane Ormiston on October 5th, 1921 at his home town of Bovina and raised a family of one daughter and three sons. My brother Allan and I both served in the Army Air Corps during WW2 and were recalled to active duty for Korea. My brother Richard served on active duty with the United States Air Force for twenty-six years.

My father had a great interest in genealogy and was Town of Bovina historian as well as Delaware County historian. In fact, the Delaware County Historical Museum locted in Delhi, NY is named:

“The H. Fletcher Davidson Museum”

My brothers, Allan Davidson and Richard Davidson, join me in my desire to have this information made available to any and all who have an interest in these matters.

Ed Davidson
4767 Ocean Blvd #801
San Diego, CA 92109

Other References:

The United States Marine Corps in the World War
Historical Branch, G-3 Division
Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps
Washington, D.C. 20380
First Printed 1920 (1968 Reprint)
Author - Major Edwin N. McClellan, USMC

Muster Roll of Officers and Enlisted Men of the U.S. Marine Corps
Attached to the 81st Company, 6th Machine Gun Battalion
From: May 1st to May 31st 1918
Certified True Copy /s/ D.M. Randall, Lt. Col, A.A. & I., U.S.M.C.