

AMERICAN



V ON ACTIVE SERVICE  
WITH THE  
AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

January 3 1918

Dear Folks -

While I'm waiting for an automobile I can write you a few lines. I am out at a place called Menaucourt about 15 miles from Gondrecourt. Came out to hear one of my bands and have a talk with the bandmaster. The other day I called him up and told him I was coming out to inspect the band this afternoon at 2 o'clock so he had them line up and play several selections for me. I also talked to him about the men and found out that one of the officers is keeping a very good musician as orderly instead of letting him play in the band. It is up to me (and in my power) to have this man put into the band, and believe me I'll have him transferred immediately. It is interesting work as you see. Tomorrow morning

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January 3, 1918  
1919

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I am going out to another band. You see any man who works at Division Headquarters in an official capacity represents the general so he has full power to do anything for the good of the service. Met Luther Malmberg this afternoon quite by accident. You know he is the minister from South Dakota.

New Year's Day the General had a reception. Everybody dolled up and wished the old boy Happy New Year. He is a great favorite with everybody and very democratic.

In the evening we had a dance. It was a bear - the best dance they have ever had here and the first one given by the officers of the 88th Division. All the other dances have been given by officers of other organizations.

I wonder when we are going to get home? If you knew when you ~~could~~ could expect anything you would be resigned even if it meant a wait of six months. You would be at least certain.

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But not knowing when we shall leave here makes us so restless. Of course we do not say anything because now of all times is not the time to rock the boat. On the contrary, we are going into this entertainment question in order to keep the men's spirits up. Having Stoessel here makes it very agreeable. Last night he gave a beautiful concert and tonight I am going to have him talk to me about bands. He knows all about them.

An hour later. The automobile has not arrived yet. I went down to an officer's mess with a captain from these regimental headquarters (the 350th Infantry). The mess was in a beautiful old chateau with tremendously high ceilings and old carved chairs with high backs. There were only five of them including the Colonel of the regiment. There is a lot of discomfort in these little towers but once in a while they run across a magnificent old historic mansion and some officers rent it for their dining room for their mess.

I have had no mail since before Xmas. That is too long. It is pouring rain as usual. Nothing but rain. If we only would see the sun once in a while it would cheer us up but it rains continually so there is no chance to wander out in the beautiful country. I am lucky to have such a nice room and to be with fine people. It must be hard on the poor fellows who cannot speak French. I think the automobile is coming.

Love Ed.

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AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Gondrecourt France  
ON ACTIVE SERVICE

WITH THE

Jan 6 1918

Dear Folks-

Received a letter from Henry this morning, the first news I have had since before Xmas. That is almost two weeks and much too long. It is not right because it is fearfully lonesome over here; it rains continually and all we do is sit in our dingy little office. Am enclosing our daily bulletin containing the announcement of the entertainment commission. You can see from that that it is quite an 'official' affair. It is, of course, going to be some time before we have things running smoothly but we have made a beginning. Yesterday I had two concerts, one in the afternoon for the officers and the other in the ~~afternoon~~ <sup>evening</sup> for the men.

Am glad to hear that you were so delighted about the commission. It sure is a fine thing and I am appreciating it more

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Am glad to hear that you were so delighted about the commission. It sure is a fine thing and I am appreciating it more

every day. When I think of the soldiers sleeping on their cots and lining up with their mess kits for meals, and then think of my lovely room and my officer's mess with soldiers waiting on us, I see the difference.

The last letter I wrote you was from Menaucourt where I went out to hear a band. You remember I was waiting for an automobile to take me back here. Well instead of an automobile it was a big truck. The damn thing got me home about 9:30

Last Sunday (yesterday) as I said before we had the 350<sup>th</sup> band in for two concerts. This morning the band left for Monte Carlo to be gone two weeks. Imagine the lucky dogs getting a furlough of 14 days in a summer climate with all their expenses paid. I have seven days leave coming to me now. (you are entitled to a furlough every 4 months)

Wanted to go to Nice with Lt. Darrow but he has decided to go to Tours to visit friends there. He is the only officer here with whom I go around much so

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consequently, my interest in my leave has flagged.

We are having a great deal of trouble with typhoid. Some of the men are very sick with it; two boys right out of the hospital intelligence department are now in the hospital. So we are all going to have a shot right away.

Most of the officers and men have already had theirs but I have put mine off until the day after tomorrow. We are having a 'hop' tomorrow night and if I get my inoculation tomorrow I shall not be able to go to said hop. You can count on about two days under the weather. I remember that after my second shot at Camp Dodge I went to the infirmary for the day.

I saw in the 'Stars and Stripes' the other day where the 338<sup>th</sup> Field Art. sailed for home Xmas Eve. The lucky dogs are probably at Camp Dodge

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by now. You remember the 338<sup>th</sup> was right next door to us in Camp and most of those boys are from Illinois. I remember when I was in Paris last month we ran across Major Brundred on his way home. He was the adjutant of our regiment and was surprised to see me a lieutenant. Am expecting to run across some of my musical friends in these little companies which are going around entertaining the soldiers. I saw Sara Konus' picture in the paper the other day. She is over here. I am going to write to Henry very soon. Too bad I do not know where Al is. His organization may be right near here and it may be on the other side of France. Hope mother and the kiddies are keeping well. I am feeling great in spite of the bad weather. But in fact, we have had beautiful weather for the last two days. I am afraid to crow for fear it will not last.

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WITH THE  
U. S. A. FORCES

Dear Folks- Have not written for several days simply because I have been in Paris! Was up there on business for two days and, besides getting the things I went after, had a bear of a time. Lt. Kachel and I went up to get stuff for our shows and for our bands and we got loads of stuff. He left here Thursday morning at 8 and rode to Bar-le-Duc (30 miles) in auto and took the train for Paris from there. Arriving near Paris we jumped off the train out in the country, went across a field and around the military police finally getting down town on the street car. Of course we had our order giving us permission to stay in Paris for 48 hours but we had a little scheme which I will elaborate on when I get home. We staid at the Montana Hotel- the same place I staid with Col. Toombs and Maj. Mears. Prices were worse than ever. We paid 50 francs a night for our room.

ECONOMIZE—WRITE ON BOTH SIDES

[The letter was written in January of 1919. ~ JEC]

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Meals were ridiculously expensive. One morning we wanted an omelette and saw that the price was 3 francs. But Lt. Kachel wanted two eggs so the omelettes cost us each six francs. Imagine having an omelette made from one egg and imagine charging 3 francs (60 cents) for each egg. After this I am going to send at least half of my cheque home and you can save it for me if you can get along without it. The first month (Nov.) was only half a month (I accepted my commission on the 15<sup>th</sup>) and most of Dec. was used to pay back the money I borrowed to buy my clothes. Besides, my first Paris trip came during that month. Now comes this second Paris trip and I am set back again. Unless I send the money home promptly something will come up every month. How have you been getting along without my allotment? I kind of feel guilty that I am sending you nothing now when I am getting such a good salary but starting February I am going to send you quite a bit. Put it in the bank for me if you can get along without it for I don't want to be on your hands this

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Summer and I want to practice without any worries about money.

We left <sup>Paris</sup> Sunday noon and arrived at Bar-le-Duc about 5 - just in time to miss the train to Gondrecourt. We telephoned down for an automobile but they didn't have a thing (on Sunday transportation is scarce) so Kachel and I made the best of it and put up at the Y.M.C.A. hotel. By the way, the 'Y' gave me all kinds of valuable stuff for nothing in Paris so I am never going to say another word against them. Well, next morning we caught a Ford that was going down to Gondrecourt and got to the office about 2 P.M. Since then there has been a stream of officers picking out music for their regiments. I set the pile down in front of them and tell them to take their choice of 25 songs, orchestra pieces etc. I found a stack of letters waiting for

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me - among them a number from home. There are not so many rumors about our leaving now; it seems as if we are rooted to the spot for the present. I am hoping that my suit will arrive soon for I need it. I sent the slip at least six weeks ago so the package should be well on its way over here. I do hope you will not take too much stock in rumors and wonder if I have left here and stop writing. Until I am mustered out my address will be the same. Our post office 795 follows us all over so keep writing until I land in Joliet. Even after we leave Gondrecourt we shall probably be in France some time. I hear that the trip from here to Bordeaux takes sixteen weeks. This includes the time in the detention camp and at the delousing station.

I saw, too, where the 163<sup>rd</sup> Artillery Brigade left for home around Xmas but you know they have not belonged to the 88<sup>th</sup> Div. since we landed in France. They staid down in the South of France and became a loose organization. Gen. Foote was the commander and, of course, Maj. Redfield is with them.

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WITH THE  
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I forgot to say that when we were in Paris we drove past the foreign ministry where the peace conference was going on. It was about 4 P.M. and Pres. Wilson was just making his speech about the league of nations. We wanted to get up and look in the window but the guards fired us out. The high moguls' autos were lined up in the yard and there was quite an assembly of rabble out on the sidewalk.

I am enclosing a little picture of myself which Mme. Maillard my landlady took of me and Ninette her daughter. Ninette is a bright kid. I teach her some English and once in a while a little music. I had some post cards taken by a photographer but they were so rotten that I threw them in the fire. There is really no photographer here in Gondrecourt. Must stop now and get this off. I am sure

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especially that Buddie liked the catalogue.  
I must look around and find something  
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THE SALVATION ARMY  
WITH THE  
AMERICAN TROOPS IN FRANCE

Gondrecourt France  
Jan. 16, 1919

Dear Folks-

Have kind of lain down on the job lately as regards writing. I have been very busy and there is so much noise in this office that I am distracted and cannot concentrate long enough to write. I moved down stairs recently into another office which has this tacked up on the door in enormously big type: Athletic Officer, Division Entertainment Officer, Musical Director (x). There are a million people in and out of the office everyday, the telephone is ringing and every body is shouting. You can't do a thing in a noisy place like that. I sometimes regret that I left the little office up stairs where no one did anything and where I wrote letters and studied French all day.

You see the stationery is unusual. The Salvation Army has always been here but their hut burned down last fall and it was only this month that they reopened in a new one. And that brings me to the question of what the different societies

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among the soldiers. The things that people  
are saying about the Y. M. C. A. are frightful.  
I never heard such damning in my life.  
But to my notion the criticism is only  
partly justified. Of course I know the  
Y. M. C. A. sold doughnuts at 60 cents  
a dozen - measly little home made  
doughnuts which the soldier boys bought  
because the doughnuts reminded them  
of home. The Y. M. C. A. also sold a  
little tin cup of cocoa (made with  
water) for 5 cents, the same cup  
cost about 1 cent. That made a 400%  
profit on those two articles. This is  
straight because when I was a  
soldier I bought a doughnut for  
five cents and a little cup of cocoa  
for five cents very often. In the face  
of the big donations the "Y" was getting  
from the families of these boys I  
think the prices were not justified,  
especially when you think of the soldier's  
small pay. The "Y" is a great advertiser.  
The stationery was given free but of  
course, that was the best possible  
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Now about the K.C.s. In some ways they made a better impression than the 'Y' but were on a much smaller scale. To begin with I haven't seen a K.C. hut or a K.C. secretary since I came to France but then they made no such pretensions. They are situated at rare intervals in the larger towns, which is no credit to them, but where they put it over was through their not charging the soldiers for the stuff. Where the Y. charged 5 cents for a doughnut

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they loaded a soldier down with stuff for nothing. Both societies made the mistake of hoarding their stuff in the larger centers instead of raising heaven and earth to get it out to the lonely soldier in the country. Now when one of us goes to Toul, which is the headquarters of the 2nd army, he can go to the K.C. building and get all the candy and cigarettes he can carry home, but that is not the right thing. We at headquarters have never suffered. We have a beautiful time and would never miss either the Y or the K.C.s. To show you how ridiculous they both are: they have wonderful halls in Paris. Now the American soldiers in Paris have plenty of entertainment without either of them. I see their point - that the soldiers of Paris must have some counteracting environment but I see more clearly the plight of the soldier who, after fighting in the trenches, tears a board off a barn to look in at some little minstrel show that his pals are putting on. Of course the barn holds only one tenth of the soldiers around there.

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WITH THE  
U. S. A. FORCES

Gondrecourt

Feb. 8, 1919

Dear Folks - Afraid I am a bit late with this one. Have been very busy as usual without however, accomplishing anything. Our office is so small and there is such a mob of people in here all the time that it is a terrific job to concentrate long enough to write a letter or read a paper. The confusion is getting on my nerves. When I was before up-stairs, it was terribly quiet. Once in a while translations came in but generally I studied my French or even wrote a little counterpoint and was never disturbed for the boys were all reading novels or writing letters to their girls.

The other day when I was walking up the street I ran into my old friend Sgt. Jones. It is Lieutenant Jones now though. Do you remember him? He was my first friend at Camp Dodge on account of

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his being so crazy about music. He left Camp Dodge in June and went to an officers training school at Camp Taylor Ky. I hadn't seen him since then. Imagine running into him here in Gondrecourt! I certainly am glad that you received the slip for my clothes and that the latter are on their way. I hope they will not be delayed.

Our Division is at the same old place since the first of Dec. No such luck as being ten miles from Paris. We are at least 200. Just now I have a division review on my mind - that is, the music. They are going to have it Washington's Birthday and among other things, there is to be a band of 75 pieces, picked musicians from the 9 divisional bands. The chief of staff said it was up to me to conduct it so here goes. We are later going to have a competition among the different divisions, the winner to go to Toul to the Hq. of the 2nd Army. It will be great to lead the band. I have to chuckle at the way I get by, I become an officer without going to an officers

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ON ACTIVE  
SERVICE



WITH THE  
U. S. A. FORCES

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As long as I have no news of special interest I shall fill up the pages with a little discourse on a fellow whom I respect very much.

He is the army truck driver and in my estimation is one of the big factors in winning the war. I marvel at these

boys who have come over here from little western towns and who drove our big 'quads' all over France. They don't speak

a word of French but darned if they don't get around some way. They know all the little towns and hamlets and

just where they are. Some times they drive the trucks for hundreds of miles. Even now there are supply trains running

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ECONOMIZE—WRITE ON BOTH SIDES

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never know where they are going to sleep. They drive all day and at night are lucky if they strike a town where there is a Y. M. & C. hut where they can sleep on the floor. They carry their mess kits with them and are privileged to stop wherever there is a field kitchen and demand a meal. Sometimes on a forced march they drive all night through the rain and snow. They are great. I used to admire them even more before the armistice when they had to do all their work at night and lights were forbidden.

I used to hear trains of them at night, rumbling up to the front with ammunition. Our trucks by the way did the business. We had five hundred for each division which was tremendous in comparison to what the other countries had. Why when the Americans threw in reinforcements like at Chateau Thierry they didn't bother about roads - they shot them up to the front in trucks. And the darn things can make 25 miles an hour. They haven't left much of the roads in France though. A loaded truck going at a pretty good rate of speed

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AMERICAN



ON ACTIVE SERVICE  
WITH THE  
AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

191

raises the devil with a road. I have ridden around a great deal in these trucks here in France. Not long ago I rode out to a place 20 miles away and played at a concert. Lt. Darrow and I rode with the little Jazz band. They had a top and benches in the truck. A close second to the truck driver is the motor cycle driver. Colonel Toombs has one whose name is Red O'Connor from Davenport. I often went around for Col. Toombs when I worked for him so I had occasion to ride often with Red. That bird never went less than about 50 miles an hour and when we were up at the front, found his way around in the dark. He knew all the villages and pronounced their names correctly.

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The other day Gen. Bullard  
Commander of the 2nd Army called  
on Gen. Weigel. Next time I'll  
tell you about Gen. Bullard.  
It is getting late now so I'll  
quit Lovingly  
Ed.

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Gondrecourt France  
Feb. 15, 1919.

Dear Folks -

The principal news is that the suit arrived - Jan. 11<sup>th</sup> and the package in perfect condition. It was certainly a pleasant surprise and I chuckled when I saw the fine suit and the colored shirts. I have not been able to get a suit here in this wild country as we have never been in any large centers. Besides, they cost a fortune and I did not want to make the sacrifice seeing I had a nice suit at home. I do not remember the date I sent the little slip but it seems to me I got the suit within two months after sending the request. I brought it to the tailor's immediately to have it cleaned and pressed so that I can appear all dressed up Sunday. Maybe I'll put it on this (Sat.) afternoon as there is a big football game on between our division and the 5<sup>th</sup> which has come down from Luxembourg with 500 rooters for the event.

The rooters arrived in trucks last night and terrified the inhabitants with their noise.

The other day I was in Toul and ran into Mary Cameron the pianist. She was quite well known in Chicago and had been a very good friend of mine since our student days in Berlin. I walked into a restaurant with Lt. Kachel and she was sitting at a table with a woman, a singer, with whom she is touring the A. E. F. They are making quite a hit and we tried to get them but they were too popular. When we were asking for the Cameron-Adams combination I never suspected that Cameron was Mary. The place was crowded in Toul that day and when she spied me across the room she shouted 'Edward Collins' at the top of her voice. I shouted 'Mary Cameron' and we staged a little scene for the benefit of the soldiers and the Red Cross workers.

They had their weekly dance last night i.e. the officers

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They had their weekly dance last night i.e. the officers of Hq. 88th Div. I got the orchestra and fixed the program but did not go. I like to watch dancing but cannot get up much enthusiasm about doing it myself. I went to the

first few dances but then lost interest. Instead I staid home and studied French. Yesterday morning I had such a nice experience. Went out to a little town (in a side car) where one of our artillery regiments is billeted and conducted the band for about two hours. It was a magnificent band and I was holding a rehearsal for the horse show which is to take place Feb 26. We are going to have a band of ~~English~~ and I am going to direct that is at the beginning. The band is expected to play all day so I am going to let some of the leaders direct when I get tired (ahem).

Now for the dark side of things. What do you think of the enclosed order from G.H.Q.? It certainly shocked me when it came through yesterday. This is a copy of it. But plans are often changed and this may be changed too before the division is ordered home. In the meantime we are stuck here at Gondrecourt indefinitely due I suppose to the fact that the peace conference instead of demobilizing Germany's army and telling her to "sign here," is arranging for an elaborate meeting with the Bolcheviki to talk things over. Much time is also being taken up listening to the Khedive of Afghanistan or hearing the claims of the Shah of Siam.

We had a week of clear cold weather with beautiful moonlight but yesterday it broke and rained. Awfully bad for the football game.

Must run to dinner. Next time I'll tell you about the fine mess we have.

Love Ed.

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Gondrecourt France

Feb. 23, 1918

My Dears-

I swiped a piece of Lt. Kachel's fine stationery. of course I never possessed such fine stuff. Don't remember when I wrote last. Have heard several times from you this week. I suppose the mail is bound to come irregularly and in bunches both ways. Sometimes I too do not hear for a week or ten days.

The principal news is that we are not going home for a while. I am enclosing yesterday's bulletin containing the telegram from G. H. Q. It is quite a blow and rather discouraging to look forward to spending the Spring and probably most of the Summer in this place. Of course we might go to Germany before we get home. However I am going to be resigned and stick it out like a man.

[This is a letter written in 1919. ~ JEC]

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1919

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But if mother should get much worse I shall apply for a discharge. Of course if she is not dangerously sick it would not be possible for me to claim this privilege.

When I suspected that we were <sup>to be</sup> here for a while I put in an application to attend a French University for 3 months (you will see the particulars in the Camp Dodger I am sending). I had a fine chance to get a course in French literature but Maj. Wood, who is my superior as director of the intelligence bureau, knocked it on the head by telling the chief of staff that my services as an interpreter could not be spared.

Now we are joking each other about what we are going to do the 4th of July at this town! You see I wanted to go to the Sorbonne in Paris because out of school hours I could practice and hear some good music.

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We all have the horse show on mind. I am worrying about the band which is to be 75 players recruited from the different bands. The transportation problem is a big thing in itself. We have to send out of in the county for them and bring them into Gondrecourt for a rehearsal tomorrow afternoon then bring them in again for the show on Wednesday. I am going to direct the band for the first couple of hours then I'll let the other band leaders have a chance.

Later in the day. Sitting in our new little office which is comfy and bright. I guess I told you about the other office - how overcrowded it was. Well we made a kick and the engineers got on the job. One morning they drove up with the necessary material and in two hours had built us the cutest little shed. The signal battalion was wiring it at the same time that the carpenters were

hammering. Soon a couple of huskies appeared on the scene with a little stove and so the whole thing was ready at once. We have theatrical pictures, posters etc. all over the walls so it doesn't look much like the army. Col. O'Loughlin, Lt. Colgan, Lt. Rachel and myself have our desks <sup>here</sup> and we have a sergeant-major (stenographer) and a sergeant clerk as well as an orderly who tends to the fire and runs errands. (Hot Dog) This afternoon I attended a band concert by a band not belonging to our division. There was a man by the name of Freund in it who claims to have known me in Chicago. At the end I couldn't resist asking the director to let me take a trial at the Stars and Stripes Forever. It is great to get back into it once in a while. It is time to get home so I shall have to quit. Love Ed.

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ON ACTIVE SERVICE  
WITH THE  
AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Gondrecourt 1919  
March 25 1919

Dear Folks-

Inasmuch as you had received no letter from me in three weeks I intended you should receive three in one week to equalize things, but I laid down on the job again. Frieda started in to give me a fierce raking for I had given her the same kind of treatment. She gave it to me for fair so I started out this week to write her darn near every day. I also made the resolution to write three times a week home and this is the beginning of it.

First about the show; I am into it again up to my neck. Mc Donald and I cannot see each other so I made up my mind to pull out after I had written the music. I even went to Col. O'Loughlin and asked him to get me back to the intelligence section. I told him I did not wish

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First about the show; I am into it again up to my neck. McDonald and I cannot see each other so I made up my mind to pull out after I had written the music. I even went to Col. O'Loughlin and asked him to get me back to the intelligence section. I told him I did not wish

to be out with the general and asked him (the Col.) to inquire discreetly if it would be possible for me to withdraw. He inquired and told me that the Gen. would be very angry if I did not see the thing through. The next day the Gen. was at rehearsal and made a speech complimenting the men on their work and me especially on the music. He said the musical side was a 'world beater' and shook hands with me etc. He has one of these good natured magnetic temperaments and you know human nature. I made up my mind to go through with it just because the Gen. wants it. I don't know whether I told you about the financial side of it or not. Lt. Kachel and McDonald went to Paris and asked the Y.M.C.A. for a contribution. They had just put on a big show for some other division and were disgusted at the extravagance of this other organization. So they were in no frame of mind to help us. They came across, however, with \$1500 which just about buys the shoes. Then

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The Jewish Welfare Society was approached and came across with \$11,000. We collected an additional \$2000 in the division making a total of about \$15000 to start with. We can spend that all on costumes for nothing else is costing us any money. The theatre is two aeroplane hangars placed back to back and the signal battalion is taking care of all the wiring. The show is going to be great and from present indications you will see it in New York and Chicago.

Today I was out on a problem as interpreter. In the course of the 'battle' they captured a large number of German prisoners and I had to get the information from them which determined our actions. I got a bit rattled with the umpires (all senior officers from the Army corps) looking on. The prisoners had all been coached and we had to get out of them what they knew. Some of the valuable dope I didn't get, for which I was balled out at the 'critique' in front of all the assembled generals, Colonels etc. These problems had all the thrill of actual warfare and are held every month to test your efficiency. They had sausage balloons up, aeroplanes flying low over headquarters, rockets, mounted orderlies, telephone wires strung along the ground and all that stuff. In the course of the engagement Gen. Beach was 'killed'. That was just to see how the next highest in command would handle the situation. I remember at the problem they had last month one of the umpires suddenly yelled 'gas' and everyone who didn't have his gas mask was thrown out of the thing as dead. I arrived late just after the gas attack was over so I was O.K. It is getting very late and I must go to bed. From now on I shall write oftener.

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