

Here's How One Woman Keeps In Touch With Her Soldiers

Down in Bat Grove, North Carolina, Mrs. Dorothy Freeman meets many boys from Camp Croft. They are welcome visitors in her home and to them she is always "Aunt Dot." Mrs. Freeman has kept contact with these boys after they have left Camp Croft through the medium of letters. There were forty-eight boys. There are probably more now. One of them is Clifford Fink, son of Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Fink of Shavertown, now stationed in British Columbia, and referred to in the following letter which Mrs. Freeman wrote to "her boys":

The Letter

Late one cool October afternoon, the 11th to be exact, my family and I were returning home from a little visit with my husband's brothers and wife in a South Carolina town, and as was our custom, when coming into the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, we were doubtless saying to ourselves: "The nearer home we get, the more beautiful it is!" and this we can say very truthfully. We never yet have quite decided which is our loveliest season: The spring pageant starts with a great variety of tender green leaves, and then in quick succession come the dogwood blossoms covering the mountainsides, as it were, with drifted snow; the rusy clouds of flowers on the red-bud trees; the orchid and purple colors of the Judas trees; the fairy-like flowers of the vari-colored azaleas, and then the gorgeous rhododendrons that complete the picture.

Is this the most beautiful time or is it the Autumn just after the first frost? Then a wonderful tapestry of crimson, scarlet, red, garnet, purple, beige, orange and mauve, punctuated with the green of lofty pines is flung over every slope, with often a sixfold curtain of blue mountains for a background.

I might go on telling about our Summer season with waving fields of snowy daisies and queen Ann's lace, or stretches of sunny golden-rod, but now I am reminded that I have not been asked to tell about the beauties of the Blue Ridge Mountains, but about a "chain of brave boys," who are responding to our country's call.

To get back to October 11th, as we drove along we came upon two young soldiers plodding up the road. We hoped we could make room in our car for these boys, for we knew that on this little travelled road they would not have many chances to ride, and proudly enough, we were anxious for them to get into the real depths of our mountains before dark fell; and so we stopped and rearranged our accumulated bundles with their help and found we had plenty of room, so eager were they for the ride. Both boys were Philadelphians, "stopping" at Camp Croft, and this was their first week-end away from camp, and also their first trip to the South, so they felt they had lots to see and so little time in which to see it.

By now we had reached Lake Lure, a spot much too beautiful to describe. On account of the lateness of the season, the resorts were not open, which left us to admire nature undisturbed, but with the question of a place for two tired and hungry soldiers to spend the night quite pre-eminent in their minds. I thought of two of our boys being away, one also a soldier, leaving two vacancies in our home and hearts, which two so likeable lads so far from their home could so nicely fill. "Why don't you come home with us," I asked, "we would so love to have you." With one accord they seized even the suggestion of an invitation and we were assured we had two very grateful weekend guests.

Chimney Rock, the busy little village just above Lake Lure, was brightly lit by this time, and I thought the boys might like to ramble around there in search of a bit of amusement perhaps, and suggested they stop for an hour or so, and then come up home. Again with one accord they said: "Oh no, we'll go on 'up home' now, you're 'stuck' with us."—And so Joe and Bud were the first boys in uniform, aside from our own son, of course, to be with us, and we all felt very proud indeed to have two such fine boys of Uncle Sam's, as they had already proven to be, under our roof.

I had heard the problem of entertaining the soldiers discussed at various times, and began to wonder just what steps to take. Having had a house full of boys for a number of years, with three sons of our own and their many friends always in and out, I already knew how true the old saying is, "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach,"—so off to the kitchen I went; but not alone, for Joe and Bud followed me and offered to help, but I assured them I did not need any assistance in preparing the light supper we were to have;—and recalling it now,—the dish of the hour was southern baking powder biscuits, for when Joe saw them he exclaimed: "Oh baby-doll, hot muffins!" No, Joe wasn't from the South.

The boys were thrilled with their many new adventures as soldiers and told us story after story about their camp life, each one more interesting than the last, and each one praising our army, its officers and men, its food and its routine, with not one word of criticism or complaint. And so the hours passed away into the night, and at one-thirty a. m. they realized that for the first time in weeks they failed to hear taps, and I realized that we had failed to entertain the boys, but had so thoroughly enjoyed being entertained by them.

The next day being Sunday they attended the morning service with us at our little church, adding an impressive and military touch to the service and bringing home to all of us the seriousness of world conditions today.

After dinner we took them sight seeing, up and down our lovely streams, back to the lake, to the Bottomless Pools, to the very top of Chimney Rock mountain and to numerous other beauty spots in our section. In passing through the village a regular bevy of youngsters greeted me with "Hello, Aunt Dot," a most familiar occurrence to me, but it somewhat surprised the boys, for they asked me if I were related to all of these, whereupon I explained that I had been in contact with, and worked with, and dearly loved little children all my life, and that all of them everywhere have always called me "Aunt Dot." And so that subject was dropped.

After a very delightful afternoon we returned home again for another snack and more "hot muffins," as Joe persisted in calling my biscuits, so I promised Joe I would show him what hot muffins are some day. In the evening we drove the boys part way back to camp, leaving them at a busy intersection where they would not have any trouble catching a ride, and so would arrive back in camp to report on time. We so thoroughly enjoyed their visit that we resolved to keep open house for them and all soldiers, and told them we hoped they would return and bring more of their buddies, especially those who were too far from home to go there on week ends. A few days later I received a lovely note of thanks from both Joe and Bud, and they began it with "Dear Aunt Dot", which proved to me their appreciation of my meager efforts to make them feel entirely at home. This incident gave me the inspiration to be "Aunt Dot" to soldiers also.

The following weekend Joe returned and brought Cliff, another Pennsylvania boy, equally as fine and as loveable as Joe and Bud,—and so my family of boys grew and grew and is still growing. I keep a guest log for "My Boys" and every time one comes he registers and leaves his camp address, and from then on I write to him regularly once a week. Some of these boys we have met through others, some we picked up on the highways, and some I found advertised in the paper as "Lonesome" and asking for mail. By the time my soldier correspondence list included seventeen boys, I thought that surely if I could write to so many boys whom I never knew before, I should be able to write to our own local boys in service. When I made a survey of them and found we had twenty-one, I wondered how I could possibly write thirty-eight letters a week, aside from my already elongated correspondence list and my regular home duties. To solve this problem I got a mimeograph machine, and wrote each of our local boys that I wanted to "adopt" them as "one of my boys, if they would in turn adopt me as their "Aunt Dot"; and so today I have forty-eight boys to whom I write once a week with the assistance of "Minnie O'Graph." Sometimes my letters are in the form of a news sheet, giving them a bit of humor, a religious thought, some home news, a short story, a joke or two and a personal paragraph. My boys are all so rapidly being transferred from place to place, that at present my letters are reaching every coastal state in America, and the Canal Zone and even Alaska and Australia.

This little story is related to show how so small a movement, backed with interest and the desire to fill a need, soon gathers a momentum of its own. My time and efforts are amply repaid, for my boys write beautiful letters of appreciation, send me their snapshots and photographs and even their regimental pins, all of which I most highly prize and treasure. I know that by doing my little bit where there is so much to be done, I am putting a ray of sunshine into the lives of these boys, and in thought

THE LISTENING POST

By THE VETERAN

Bad choice marked the frontal attack made last week by Democratic leaders of Luzerne County against business and industrial interests that lately have sought economic additions that might overcome waning population and earning power. If Wilkes-Barre Record honestly reported the New Deal meeting at Hotel Sterling it was Senator Leo C. Mundy who hurled ridicule at the community boosters.

The Record quote on Mundy was to the effect that two or three hundred persons representing Wyoming Valley had made useless visits to Washington in efforts to have War Production Board approve products for local industrial expansion. Then, according to the Record, Mundy followed with the statement that the interests here should understand that all grants of the kind are made on a political basis and the way to influence them is through those politicians who are the inside of the administration. The senator indicated that one man on the inside could do more than the hundreds appealing from the outside.

Assuming that Senator Mundy told the truth, then the Democrats have failed to recognize one of their own important assets. Among the most interested of the group visiting Washington and vainly appealing for new plants are a group of citizens who long ago indicated their desire to assist the Democratic candidates. They are the same gentlemen who always turned the tide in favor of Congressman Flannery and even supported him when he decided to quit Washington in favor of greater security as a judge.

In the election for a short-term congressman last Spring these loyal advocates of welfare in valley and county went all-out for candidate Dan Flood. They are still for Flood. So, it would follow that if Senator Mundy, who is Flood's sponsor, could actually overcome the disposition of Washington against fulfillment of hard-coal ambitions it would be in the nature of self-help for him to see the proper persons and put forward the proper arguments among the powers controlling the nation's destinies. Several of the independent members of the booster committee were greatly disturbed by the Democratic leader's words. Some of them wondered if they had not better withdraw their support of Dan Flood. It is likely, however, that Senator Mundy will first be given a chance to explain.

Despite rationing and attendant shortages it is a rare day that passes without at least one party being given at the Herman Kern Inn, Harvey's Lake, testimonial to a potential hero off to the war camps. Reflected, of course, is the popularity Mr. Kern has attained from being one of the most popular entertainers in all of northeastern Pennsylvania. He will be remembered here as a perennial star of the community theatricals.

Erroneous information broadcast on road openings caused many traffic jams and undue convenience last week, all of it affecting the use of the main State artery known as Number 11. Closed between Plymouth and West Nanticoke last Spring to permit relocation and widening the road threw the bulk of remaining traffic in Wilkes-Barre, Hanover and Nanticoke, adding extra miles to a journey along the Susquehanna.

Radio and newspaper announcements at the beginning of October reported completion of two lanes of the new highway. But, when, in response to the information, traffic was again turned into the accustomed route it was only to discover that there was no thoroughfare. General use of the important road will be delayed until about November first. State highway officials ought to adopt a ruling by which only one notice shall be given the public and that one of official status right out of Harrisburg.

Solution of the delayed-mail problem among the service camps and centers all over the world is being attempted by enlistment of trained personnel. The first effect is the offer of one of the rural district's most experienced postmasters to organize a new system.

Washington has made official announcement of the enlistment of Postmaster Stanley Croop of nearby Hunlock Creek. When it was decided to seek trained postal people the limitation on minimum experience was set at five years. Croop, however, has had more than twenty years experience.

There is no indication of when and prayer I am ever at each one's side.

Fighting this fight with all our might, For Christ is our strength, and Christ our right."

My boys are already planning, when they have won this war, as they inevitably will, to have a grand reunion here with us in our lovely Blue Ridge Mountains.

Dorothy M. Freeman, Box 27, Bat Cave, N. Carolina.

final decisions will be made, but it was indicated that the voluntary act of Croop was marked as one that reflected a high degree of patriotism. In the first World War Mr. Croop was a petty officer in the anti-submarine patrols of the United States Navy.

Ouster of John L. Lewis from membership in the Congress of Industrial Relations has long been taken as settled business among followers of Phillip Murray in Washington. As long ago as three weeks before the international convention of the United Mine Workers, under way this moment, trusted agents of Murray informed leaders of diversified union effort that, no matter what might be decided by the mine worker delegates in regard to relationships between Lewis and Murray, and between UMW and CIO, the November convention of the Congress, set for Boston next month, will throw out Lewis.

The action results from the 1940 election campaign when Lewis plumped for Wendell Willkie. Failure of organized labor to generously support Willkie caused Lewis to sacrifice the presidency of CIO. He had organized the Congress and also had financed it. His resignation was followed by rendering a bill to CIO for more than a million dollars in loans. Then Lewis had Murray fired from U.M.W. of A. It is understood the decision to oust Lewis next month from CIO is a matter of vengeance.

Silent for the most part since 1940, Lewis came back to the public eye at the international convention. His resumption of activities was concurrent with belief in Washington that Willkie will be nominated for the Presidency in 1944, not by the Republicans but by the Democrats. There had been a feeling that the Roosevelt blessing to Willkie in the latter's trip to Russia and China was a farewell greeting, an assurance that Willkie would get so badly involved among the United Nations that his star would go into eclipse.

Instead, it appears that numerous factions of national effort finally have decided he is the only possible successor to the present administration. Which was good news for John L. Lewis.

THE OUTPOST

(Continued from Page 2)

California. It is sort of a refresher course in Parasitology, taking up mostly the different kinds of Malaria and Dysenteries that may be found in the Islands of the Pacific. This course will last for two months, by which time we will be ready to leave for our new base somewhere in the Pacific.

Our stay here has been only temporary, but has been spent in preparation for the things that we will have to cope with when we arrive at our new base. We are all spending some time on the range where we learn to fire 30 and 50 caliber machine guns, 20mm. pom poms, 5 inch, 3 inch and the Springfield rifle. There is also instruction in the 45 automatic and various other sub-machine guns. We also have to know how to tear down and assemble all these types of guns. You may wonder why the medical corp has to know about guns so I'll tell you the reason. As you know from the news that you obtain, the Japs and the other Axis powers show know quarter when they run across any part of a medical unit so we are going to be prepared for just that sort of thing. The so-called enemy has so far disobeyed the international law about this sort of thing and so our Government has deemed it necessary that all Medical Units be instructed in the use of fire-arms.

Our organization is fairly well trained now so we are ready to leave at a minute's notice. Will close now as the chow call just blew and I wouldn't want to miss it. Hoping that everything in the Back Mountain district is coming along fine.

Roberts, H. B. Ph. M. 2/c LION ONE Moffett Field, California.

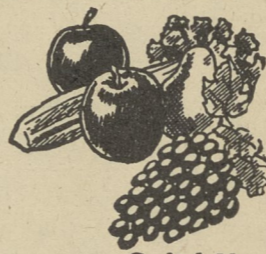
We're beginning to get things straightened out now, but that LION ONE at the bottom of your letters still has us guessing a lot. By a coincidence Mrs. Major dropped in the office with a snapshot of you and Emily the morning your letter arrived. She says your interest in pharmacy started back in the days when you used to run errands for the Doctors Rumbaugh—Editor.

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