MEDICAL SOCIETY MEETING

Former officers of Base Hospital Unit 21 held the floor at a discussion of wartime medical problems at the headquarters of the St. Louis Medical Society on April 15. The meeting, which was attended by reserve officers of the new General Hospital 21 of Washington University and members of the original unit, was opened by Dr. Edwin Ernst who showed pictures of the old unit taken in St. Louis, aboard the Steamer St. Paul, in England and Rouen.

Dr. Borden S. Veeder followed with a brief history of Base Hospital 21 and how it functioned in Rouen under the British Royal Army Medical Corps. Dr. Veeder explained that in 1917 the medical men of the country had expressed concern about the need for organizing the medical forces but their appeal to the government was at the time when Woodrow Wilson was running for his second term on the slogan, "He kept us out of war." Consequently the general sentiment at that time was against any expansion of the Army and Navy forces. This resulted in the American Red Cross sponsoring fifty hospital units comprising medical and nursing personnel with entire equipment being purchased from funds raised by the Red Cross organization. When war was declared these units were immediately transferred to the Army.

In describing the British method for the wounded, Dr. Veeder pointed out how patients were routed through casualty clearing stations and then on to the base hospitals. In times of intensive drives—such as the great German drive in March 1918, General Hospital 12 at Rouen served as a clearing station. Dr. Veeder said that 61,000 patients were handled during the time Unit 21 operated General 12.

Dr. Malvern Clopton, who talked on surgical problems, pointed out the distinct advantage of taking over a hospital already organized rather than facing the problem of setting up an entirely new hospital, especially if the medical men lacked army experience. He described the method of transporting cases from the front, saying that the use of extension splints was universally applied and that little blood transfusion was used. He also described the contribution made to cranial surgery by an American doctor who was working in Flanders and the outstanding work on chest surgery done by two Belgian physicians.

Dr. Walter Fischel speaking on the medical aspects of the hospital operations, told how in cases of extreme activity half of the men in the medical section would go over and assist in the surgical department. He paid tribute to Dr. Schwab, for his work with the shell shock patients, and Dr. Opie.

Dr. Ernst closed the meeting with a talk on roentenology illustrated with lantern slides made from wartime X-ray pictures taken in Rouen.

Dr. Fred T. Murphy of Detroit, a former commander of Base Hospital Unit 21, was to have been the principal speaker of the evening, but the death of a cousin prevented him from attending the meeting.

APRIL, 1941
Other former members of the Unit present were: Jeannette Parish, Mary McCrie, Flora Cleland, Mary Stevenson, Ruth Page Vornbrock, William Engel, P. H. Byrns, Willard McQuoid, Forney Dixon, William Stack, Marvin Hamilton, Richard Sabath, Frank Depke, Jules Silberberg, Dr. James Costen, Dr. Arthur Proetz and Dr. Charles Eyerman.

A CONSISTENT BOOSTER

Dear Bill:

Your story "Homeward Bound" in the March issue of the Rouen Post, was well and appealingly done. The atmosphere all charged with the sad sweetness of parting made me feel the occasion as keenly as if I had been a member of your outfit on that memorable night. I am looking forward to sharing a steak with you and "Weaving Willie" before long. Good going, Gunner!

Thomas H. Ryan

Mr. Ryan, assistant purchasing agent of the Wabash Railroad, and a member of the St. Louis Writers' Guild, has long been one of our most enthusiastic subscribers. For five years he has never tired of saying nice things about the stories in the Rouen Post.

Editor Rouen Post:

The paper arrived yesterday, and as usual was read from "cover to cover." Retta's war recollections certainly bring back memories, both sad and happy, and I trust she will continue to send them in. One of my greatest regrets is that I had to come home before the Unit did. I am enclosing a check and do hope it will keep the Rouen Post coming to my door.

Ruby Idle Dearing
Palmyra, Mo.

ME-AN' WAR GOIN' ON!

Me! A-Leadin' a column!
Me! That women have loved!
Me, a-leadin' a column o' Yanks, an tracin' her name in the stars!
Me, that ain't seen the purple hills before, all mixed in the skies
With the gray dawn meltin' to azure there;
Me that aint a poet, growin' poetic;
An' the flash o' the guns on the skyline,
An' red wine-an' France!
An' me laughin' and War!
An' Slim Jim singin' a song;
An' a lop-eared mule a-kickin' a limber
An' axles 'thout no grease hollerin' Maggie at me!
An' me laughin' and War!

Mornin' comin',
An' me a-leadin' a column
Along o' them from the College,
Along o' them from the Streets,
An' them as had mothers that spilled them, and them
as hadn't,—
Lovin' names in the Stars—
An' Slim Jim singin' a song,
And 'Folks to Home watchin' them, too,
An' Maggie that never had loved me, lovin' me now,
An' thinkin' and cryin' for me!
For me that loved Maggie that never loved me
till now——

Mornin' comin',
An' a town in the valley,
Round the bend in the road,
An' Ginger strainin' his neck
An' thinkin' o' Picket Lines—
An' me an' the rest o' them, thinkin' of home and eggs
down there in the village—
An' Coney startin' to close at Home
An' Maggie mashed in the crowd—
An' me a-leadin' a column—

An' War goin' on! * * *

Me—knowin' that some'll be ridin' that's walkin'
tonight—
Knowin' that some'll never see Broadway again—
An' red wine,
An' Little Italy,
And Maggies like mine,—
Mel a-murmurin' a prayer for Maggie
An' stoppin' to laugh at Slim,
An' shoutin' "To the right o' the road for the Swor-zantz-
cane!"
Them babies that raise such Hell up the line,—
An' marchin'
An' marchin' by night,
An' sleepin' by day,
An' France,
An' Red Wine,
An' me thinkin' o' Home—
Me-a-leadin' a column—

An' War goin' on.

—J. Palmer Cushing
DAYLIGHT ROBBERY IN ROUEN

There are strange tales told by men who served with Base Hospital 21—but Justin Jackson recently recalled an experience that will hold its own with the hyperbolic narratives of Marvin Hamilton at his best. And that, gentle reader, means that Justin is in big league company.

Jackson believes that he is the only member of the A. E. F. to have been strong-armed and robbed by a gang of girls. It happened in Rouen one afternoon during the late autumn of 1918. Jackson, then chauffeur for Colonel Veeder, was sitting at the wheel of a car in the driveway of the English Officers Hospital. Across the road was the camp of an ambulance unit operated by the Womens’ Auxiliary Corps. Two uniformed young women carrying swagger sticks, came tripping through the drive and as they approached the car Jackson made his first and last bid for popularity with girls attached to the British Expeditionary Forces. He produced a pound can of chocolates and invited the rosy-cheeked drivers to help themselves. They accepted his offer with alacrity, then called to a group of W. A. A. C.’s idling near the entrance to the ambulance unit, “I say old dears—CHOCOLATES!”

It was over in a moment. A wave of khaki surged through the driveway, two young Amazons pinioned the arms of the startled chauffeur, and their companions made off with three tins of candy purchased by Jackson, a short time before, at the American “Y” canteen.

Lady Luck apparently regretting her momentary desertion of Jackson, gave him a better break the following spring. Late in March, Unit 21 arrived at the port of Brest enroute to the United States. Jackson loaned his watch to “Flight Sergeant” Omar Warren who promptly lost it in a muddy company street in Camp Pontanezen. One month later, in Camp Merritt, New Jersey, Jackson met a soldier who was sporting three watches, one of which Jackson recognized by the fob as his lost timepiece. The man admitted finding the watch in Camp Pontanezen and readily returned it to Justin after the latter described the initials engraved inside the lid and identified himself by his paybook. He refused to accept a reward but the grateful Jackson purchased a pair of cuff links in New York and presented them to him the following day. “I returned to camp and found him lining up with his outfit about to depart from Camp Merritt,” recalled Jackson recently. “So I slipped the links into a pocket in his tunic and bade him farewell. I wish I could remember his name. He was a nice chap.”

Arthur Melville genial owner of the Southwest Printery, has turned his thoughts to horticulture since moving into his new home adjoining Carondelet Park. Toby Dunville, Mart auditor and self-styled iris expert has offered to help Art get started with his latest hobby. “I understand Art has been seeking advice from Bill Engel,” said Toby “And I hate to see him get off on the wrong foot.” If he listens to “Weaving Willie,” he’ll end up with a yard like the Gobi desert.
I am delighted with all my prospective Christmas boxes though I have not received any as yet—nor a single letter for two weeks. I suppose the mail is so huge that some people had to be left out and we were the unlucky ones. A mere smattering has arrived every few days but not the volume we expected. But at least we had a beautiful Christmas and I'm sure the patients enjoyed it. None of us were homesick—we were so busy and anxious that no one else should feel lonesome.

Our carol singing was simply heavenly. About fifty or sixty nurses started out from the quarters with lanterns; little tin lanterns with candles in them. We walked across the snow under a clear starry sky, the air just crisp enough to quicken our footsteps, the candles flickering like myriads of fireflies. A number of the officers joined us at the gate and we went down to the first line of tents where the up-patients stay. We sang two carols, Miss Stimson playing the violin, then continued on our way. At our invitation some of the up-patients joined us and the crowd increased as we moved along. We sang at eight points and at the end there must have been two hundred and fifty in the procession. It was a picture I shall never forget; the nurses with their blue capes thrown back revealing the red linings, the lantern lights twinkling on the snow, the sparkling air, the stars, and the voices of men and women rising above the dimly lighted tents.

We had a busy week with the stockings. By Christmas Eve we had enough for all the patients and fifty over and then word came that two hundred would come in at midnight. Fortunately only one hundred arrived on schedule, the others came in at noon. We all donated every thing we could—soap, nuts, candy—anything that could be spared. The officers sent over all they could gather together and one Sister went to Rouen in the morning to buy more presents. We had many extra stockings unfilled but even those were not enough so we pieced out with boxes, treasure bags and what-not. We had holly on the poles in the tents and Christmas trees on the big tables where food is served. Every one received something and during the night several patients told me the Sisters had done too much.

I went on night duty Christmas night and was assigned to one of the hardest lines in camp—but I like it. My time is well filled. Night duty consists principally of temperatures, convoys in and out, and hemorrhages. I have had no hemorrhages yet but you never know when one will occur. At first I worried about them but now I know that it is no use. If a man has one he can tell someone, if he knows it, if not we'll find it out in time. This morning I had fourteen patients come in at three-fifteen and nine out at four-fifteen. The nine had to be rebandaged, dressed and fed; the new ones put to bed, undressed, temperatures taken and so on. Of course I have two wardmasters who do the dressing and undressing and wait on the men. I could never do it alone and watch a hundred patients. This morning there is a convoy in at one and another out at six. Six is an inconvenient time for you are always busy taking a hundred and more temperatures and each out-going patient must be speeded away cheerfully like any guest.

(To be continued)