

World War 1

1918 Diary of John Robbie, Co L, 104th U S Infantry



John Robbie

15/10/1892 – 26/10/1918

John was born the eldest of 8 children to parents John and Mary Anne Robbie and brought up at Manse Cottage, Drumoak, Aberdeenshire. He emigrated to America on his 20th birthday and sailed from Liverpool aboard the Cunard Liner Franconia bound for Boston with the intention of studying to become a lawyer. When America got involved in WW1 in April 1917 he at once enlisted and came to France with one of the first contingents.

John was awarded the “Croix de Guerre” medal in April 1918 for great bravery.



John and 2 brothers, William and Francis, all died in the Great War and are buried in France.

John was killed in action on 26/10/18 aged 26, just 2 weeks before the end of the war and is buried in Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery, France. (Plot F, Row 6, Grave 18)

William (Billy) (7th Battalion Gordon Highlanders, 51st Division) was killed in action on 13/11/16 aged 18 and is buried in Hunter's Cemetery, Beaumont Hamel, France. Epitaph on his gravestone reads “One of the Best, Drumoak”.

Francis (Frank) (RAMC) died in hospital on 26/11/18 aged 22, very shortly after the war ended and is buried in Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery, Fouilly, France. (Plot 13A, Row BB, Grave 3)

I have interpreted John's diary the best I could – some of his writing was very small and feint so not easy to decipher. At times I had a tear in my eye reading about the terrible conditions the men had to live and work under - a lot of the time with not much food to sustain them.

Niece



1918 diary of John Robbie Co L 104th US Infantry

JANUARY

1st - Holiday, ideal weather. Attended banquet in the evening, presided over by Sgt Baker. Good feed and lots to drink!

5th - Walked to Pompierre and had supper with the boys. Bitter cold weather and we are none too comfortable in the barracks.

6th - Party of 12 journeyed to Domremy and visited birth place of Joan of Arc. Had dinner in Hotel "Lange".

7th - Rained in buckets all day and most of the snow disappears. Had school in our barracks in the morning and spent afternoon writing letters.

8th - Welcomed by 4 inches of snow and bitter cold.

9th - Bitter cold – shoes all frozen. No reveille.

10th - Snowed all day – terrible blizzard at night.

11th - Billeted with H.G. Good feeds and excellent billet.

13th - Pete Beck visited me. Received box from Jean – bed socks and candy.

14th - 2nd battn went to trenches. Returned at 7.30pm.

15th - 1st battn went to trenches. Pouring rain all day. Had good food and took things easy.

16th - Our battn (3rd) goes to trenches. **Assigned as telephonist at Co M Hqtr.** Had easy time but nothing to eat from 7am to 7pm. Snow disappears.

17th - No drill. Payday. Rained considerably.

18th - Regt manoeuvres. We are supposed to go with our Companies but failed to find them! Weather much warmer but we have big fire in billet. Hashie sits up all night!?X

19th - Regt goes to trenches. Joined Co L at Pompierre and left 2.15pm prompt. Arrived trenches 5.30pm and left 11pm. Weather good. Stayed at Pompierre overnight.

20th - Had the great luxury of having breakfast at 10am. Big supper at 6pm – 2 pigs etc. Weather excellent and much warmer. “Dunc” returned from hospital.

21st - Weather very mild. Sick all day from the pig. Ducked afternoon drill. Johnston and Hashie “un feu gai”.

22nd - Weather continued good. Had first experience of reading G T instrument.

23rd - Returned to Pompierre. Hiked over mountains like a pack. Make up blankets pack, rifle and box. Big concert in YMCA. Saw Amer girl for first time in 4 months. Had a bath. Manoeuvres all day. Acted as assistant for Major. Weather A I.

25th - In trenches all day. **Detailed to Battn Hqtr as signalman.** Weather foggy.

26th – Company on detail all forenoon. Regt review by Col Shelburn in the afternoon. He congratulated L Co on its showing.

27th - Signed new allotment blank. Went to see Pete and Ed. Murder.

28th - Weather beautiful. Co went to Buchwar to unload barracks. Left behind to do detail work. Am outside with coat off as I write this. Sun is shining down as it would on a June day. Rumour has it that we go to the trenches in 6 days. Some say Flanders some Nancy.

29th - **Had some practice with automatic rifles and bombs. I throw my first one and am just a little nervous!**

30th - **Tried some new formations. Was considerably disgusted to think that on the eve of our departure for the trenches something new was sprung upon us. Large number of new Non-Coms appointed.**

My impression of this date is that we need considerable training before going in the trenches. If not we will be wiped out in our first encounter.

31st - Rifle practice at the range all day. Band concert at YMCA at night. Mustered for pay and signed payroll.

FEBRUARY

1st - Field manoeuvres in morning. Sgt Calvin of M Co stabbed accidentally by bayonet and died in 2 hours. Rifle practice in afternoon.

2nd - Big Regt Parade reviewed by Gen Edwards. He was well pleased with appearance of the men. Received box from Barre Rt.

3rd (Sunday) - For once we had nothing to do! Went up on the hill with Jack and did some pretty fair shooting.

4th - **Put on as 1st Carrier on Automatic Rifle team.** Target practice afternoon.

5th - We receive notice that we go to the trenches. Spent most of the day cleaning up the town.

6th - **Busy all day packing. Everybody is so excited that we haven't time to think of the seriousness of going to the trenches. In fact an outsider would think we were going home instead of probably to our death.**

7th - Left Pompierre at 12.45am. Good weather but roads heavy. Our packs which weighed around 50 pounds seemed to weigh a ton before we had gone a mile. Arrived at Liffol-le-Grand at 5.30am packed in box cars like herrings in a barrel with 2 days rations. The crowding and discomfort was so great that it was comical. A movie of us going to "bed" would bring a full house every time!

8th - Arrived at Soissons and detrained 6am. Hiked until noon when we stopped for lunch. Many fell out and everybody was all in. Had to buy ammunitions etc after we got settled in barracks.

9th - **We are free for the day and looked the town over. Begin to realise the horror of war for here we see buildings, houses, churches etc in ruins and deserted.**

10th - We have it easy as little practice work and gas drill. Are getting swell eats! Everybody happy and contented.

11th - Our signal equipment is issued to us and we go out on the hill and try the lights. Hiked to the French YMCA and saw some movies.

12th - Went out on the hill morning and afterwards signalling. Ball games.

14th - Weather gets colder. Big air raids at 8pm. Everybody ordered out of the barracks but no damage done.

15th - Manoeuvres with signal equipment. Established communications in good shape.

16th - Field inspection 9.30 and "Rotten"! Three fourths of Co had to report again at 1.30pm! I was OK!!

17th (Sunday) - Hiked to aeroplane sheds and inspected French machines. Terrific bombardment at night on the front. We hear we leave tomorrow.

18th - Everybody is excited today. Received definite orders that we leave some time tonight. "Shortie" Southgate caused a little excitement by throwing a bullet (3) in the store as we sit around waiting for the order to go.

19th - Left Laure Sise 2am. Ideal night for hiking – moon and stars out. Hiked steadily until 6am, arrived at Tierney Saurey with only one stop. Pace was so fast that Hqts platoon left balance of Co. Located in giant cave capable of accommodating 700 men. We are free for the rest of the day and after resting for an hour or two we went sightseeing. **Everywhere we see desolation and destruction. Villages razed – fruit trees destroyed.**

20th - Reveille at 4.30am. Leave 6am to put up barbed wire entanglements. Returned at 2pm – tired and awful, awful hungry.

21st - Programme same as previous day only the Boche came uncomfortable near with a few shells. We had the first taste of French batteries firing shells over our heads. Letter No 2 from the Kid. Papers and box from Manse Cottage (mailed Dec 22). Papers especially welcome as we hadn't seen a thing to read for weeks. Frenchman killed by shell he picked up.

22nd – March to ??????. No holiday here. Reveille at 7.30am. Left for the barbed wire 5pm after partaking of a plate of camouflaged food and a slice of bread. 1st platoon absolutely disgraced itself. Lay down on the job and was ordered home in disgrace at 1am, arrived 2.15am and labelled yellow.

23rd - Reveille 6.30am. Enjoyed the luxury of a bath. Off for the barbed wire at 7pm under new platoon. Commander and Sgt did excellent work and regained our prestige. The Boche sent over a few shells uncomfortably close. Reached the cave at 3pm. Read letters from TGA and Gladys D. Advice that we write home twice a week.

24th - (Sunday) - For once we have nothing to do. We take a walk around camp. Attended services at YMCA.

25th - Reveille at 2.30am. Left for the barbed wire at 3.30am. I have again been detailed to search for and read the signal lights from the hill. Returned at 10am. Dinner (turkey) carved at 12.30pm. **We are getting used to these 9 and 10 hour spells without food.** Received box of smokes from NY Army & Navy Fund.

26th - Reveille at 3am again. Dug some trenches and returned to the cave at 9am. Went on detail afternoon to duck gas drill. Scottie stole a loaf of bread! German planes bring down a French plane - the two on board alight safely in parachutes.

27th - Reveille at 2.30am although we had been told the night before it would be at 5.30am. We retake ourselves to a nice little dug-out on the hill, light a fire and have a great old time. Have a hard time ducking back into the cave but make it OK. Free for the rest of the day.

28th - Muster for pay at 10am. Receive orders to pack up and be ready to leave at 7pm. After supper at 5pm we spend the time singing and joking, all as happy as kids. The nearer danger apparently the happier we are. Leave at 7pm on an hour's hike where we are stationed as support to K Co. Signalmen are assigned to a swell little dugout, previously a wine cellar but we

can find no traces of any stimulants although we make a diligent search. We hear a violent bombardment which sounds uncomfortably close. Wentworth is scared.

MARCH

1st - The sun is high in the heavens and the hour is 8.30am before we awake. We thoroughly appreciate of lying in bed till this hour after a few reveilles at 2.30am. The weather is swell and we look around the place in the morning. Looked up a couple of corpses buried in 1836. Spend the afternoon firing up our new home, in the evening we play cards.

2nd - Rudely awakened at 3.30am and ordered out to dig trenches and put up barbed wire. We do not take this in the best possible spirit, especially as we have to go without breakfast. It is snowing which adds to the discomfort of the business. While out working we are entertained to a fist fight between Sergt Chanipoix and Bill Thackeray. Returned at 11am, had dinner at noon. We feel thoroughly disgusted with army life and have an hour's talk over it after dinner. At 4pm we receive orders to report at Hqts at 5pm with full signal equipment for instructions from French Aspirant. Take practice message from Regt Hqts. One man to be on duty at all times. We are highly elated and all the hardships of the barbed wire are forgotten.

3rd - I am free all day and go on duty at 6pm after discovering that some kind person had relieved me of all my tobacco and cigarettes. Judge my delight when a nice box of Edgeworth arrived from Andrew Mack. It could not have come in at a more opportune moment.

4th - I go to the front line to look the place over with Lieut Blauchant. Reported to Captain on my return and he expressed in no uncertain terms his appreciation the work being done by the signalmen. **Informed that there was a Corporal's job on the way for me but I said Nix!** Received box from 146 Marlboro Street – cigarettes, chocolate and sweets. It has rained and snowed at intervals all day.

5th - Got up at 8.30am for breakfast. Weather slightly improved but mud in abundance. On telephone guard room to 6pm. Scottie and I to go on signal post with 4th Platoon which is going to occupy first line trenches. Leave at 4pm to relieve K Co. Mud in abundance. Must admit I was just a wee bit nervous during my first hitch in the front line. Everything quiet.

6th - Ideal spring day. Considerable aeroplane activity. Signalmen are off duty all day. When we hear the amount of work the men of the platoon are doing we decide we are indeed lucky to be "men of the lights". We have two French soldiers in same billet who are mighty good fellows and talk good French. On guard at PC Commander 9-12 and 3-6.30am. We have a few (?) rats around, by their size seem to be well fed and not at all bashful.

7th - We have a patrol go out at 2.30am and they sure showed the Boche what Co L is made of. Shortie, Southgate and Fissett are the heroes. Believed to have killed 5 Germans. Our own MGs got nervous and opened fire spoiling the whole business. Weather ideal. On signal duty as before.

8th - We enjoy spring weather and eat our meals outside in a quaint old summer house. On observations at first line trench. Severe frost and very cold towards morning. We have our first gas alarm at 8.30pm but it proves to be false. Nevertheless Wentworth who was on duty at Co PC fired up 2 Red Rockets which caused gas bombardment from our Artillery and they give the Boche about 1000 gas shells!

9th - Weather still salubrious. We have 2 gas alarms, both false, the gas being thrown in the sector next to us. First, at 9.30pm I am in bed. Got up and put on my mask, very disgusted to find there was no gas. Second alarm as meaning it. Still in bed but have my mask round my neck. This time I put it on and rolled over to go to sleep. However the sleep was of short duration as I was awakened shortly after to go on duty.

10th (Sunday) - Everything goes along exactly as any other day. The weather is simply delightfully hot to go to bed this afternoon however as I only had 2 hours sleep last night it behoves me to take a wee nap after dinner. 2 hour bombardment by our batteries 6-8pm.

11th - Expected Germans to raid our trenches but they disappointed us. Everybody "stands to" all night. Have a few false gas alarms. At 3.30am the Boche throws a large number of shells on road directly behind us. Received lots of mail. Our two French friends leave and we are gutted. Sorry to part with them for throughout their kindness we have been getting absolutely all we can eat which is something new for us over here. We have still a persistent rumour that we go to the States to drill the draft!! 60 planes raid Paris.

12th - On duty with Balfour at front line. Everything quiet except for a few Boche planes overhead.

13th - Scottie and I take the front line post. Nothing exciting except that my watch lost 40 minutes between midnight and 3am and consequently I refuse to get up to do my "truck" when Scott calls me at 3am!

14th - Busy packing preparatory to being relieved by the French. We have a good time all evening with the young French Corporal who takes over our observation post. In civvy life he is a lawyer in Paris. We are relieved at 10.30pm and start to hike for where no one seems to know. Lay out in the cold for one hour and quarter at Battalion Hqts. Expect to stay overnight at Tersy Sory – 2 hours hike but when we get there at 2am we are told we must go to Lafaly? March steadily until 6am and between lack of food and sleep to say nothing of our packs, we are pretty nearly all in. Within 15 minutes all packs are unrolled and we go to sleep. We hope to dream pleasant dreams and so forget the sufferings of the night.

15th - It is 3pm before we are awakened by the call that mess is ready which is the first we have had to eat in 24 hours. After partaking of a good mess kitbag of stew and "making our toilet" we feel as frisky as kittens and the cave rings with the sound of many voices united in singing such good old songs as "Sweet Adeline" etc etc. It doesn't take us long to forget our troubles and discomforts after we are fed. I go to sleep around 9pm and "pound my ear" until 5am when we have to get up for "stand to".

16th - Weather ideal. Most of us are free for the day. We see numerous planes and while I write this (4pm) there is an exciting air fight between 4 Frenchmen and 1 Boche. We are issued each a bar of washing soap and Jack offered to trade ours to a Frog for a loaf of bread. We turn in 1 blanket and an extra pair of shoes so that would seem to indicate that we had a long hike in front of us.

17th (Sunday) - Attended Catholic service in cave at 10.30am. Altar is fitted up like any in a modern church. Weather delightful. Jack J and I have a little rifle practise in the afternoon. A fleet of 19 aeroplanes pass overhead as I write and observations balloons are all around. Visited a military cemetery where 3 Americans were buried, all of 103rd.

18th - Left cave at 4pm and reached Cuffies (near Soissons) at 8pm. Assigned to a good billet but have nothing to eat until 10.30pm when a very sumptuous repart was served – bread and cold coffee!

19th - Breakfast at 6am. Wentworth and I go out in search of a little “vin rouge”. Have to walk almost to Soissons (2½ miles) to get it. Also buy a dozen eggs and some butter. Give 2 Frenchmen a drink of wine for some bread and have an old lady cook our eggs. She tells us the Germans stole all her money and silver spoons etc. She is allowed to buy 1 lb of sugar per month. Entrained at 1pm.

20th - Awoke at 7am after a most comfortable night in the farmer’s old box car labelled “40 hommes – 8 chevaux”. Partake of a hearty breakfast of corn beef hash and plonk? Detrained at 11am in the rain and hiked until 2.30pm. Assigned (20 of us) to a room in an old farmhouse. Linguok near Bar-eux-Arb.

21st - Breakfast at 7.30am. Nothing doing all day. Weather excellent. Lay in the sun all afternoon.

22nd - Another day of rest. Play whist all morning. Bring in the afternoon cleaning rifles for retreat at 6pm.

23rd - Played cards all morning. Prepared for inspection at 1.30pm – which as usual was a farce. Hqts Co 103 passed through and had a talk with some of the old boys.

24th (Sunday) - Received orders at 1.30am that we leave at 1pm on a 4 day hike. Started at 1.45pm – roads dry but dirty and sun hot. Hiked till 6pm and camped for the night in a barn. The town had 16 inhabitants.

25th - Reveille 5.30am. Breakfast of 2 potatoes, hard tack and coffee. Started off at 7am under ideal weather conditions arriving at Sexfountains at noon. The sun is not so hot that you can sit and enjoy it, neither does it get chilly after half an hour – really elegant. Jack and I eat 6 eggs apiece.

26th - Reveille 5.30am. Hqts Platoon get in touch and have to do the policing. The whole regiment is on the road in one line. Stop for dinner at 12.30pm, eat, police and start off again at 1.15pm, arrive ?????? 2.15pm. Feel in the pink of condition. We are passing through a beautiful agricultural country where everybody who is left including the women are busy in the fields from daylight to dark. The roads are A1 though dirty. Walked 22K today.

27th - Started off on the last day of the hike arriving at Soissons at 11.30am. Had a cup of coffee at 2.30pm and some supper at 6pm. Met a number of the old K Co boys. Read our bags and some mail. Located in new clean barracks and certainly a luxury to be back again and behaving like civilized human beings. Am looking forward to our long promised bath so that we can say goodbye to the cooties who have kept us alive for many nights.

28th - Reveille 7.30am. We are free all day and sit in the sun. We have a bath in the evening and hope we have said goodbye to the cooties for at least a few days.

29th - We are paid – the first money we have seen since Jan 17. Everybody has been broke for weeks so we have almost forgotten what money looks like. I instantly tie myself to the YM and stock up on cigarettes. Possible we will be able to smoke one in peace now instead of having about a hundred after us for the butt!! Meet Forbes and Keoh from K Co and together with

Jack J we have a little party, eggs, french fried pommes de terre + wine. Everyone around the barracks is happy tonight.

30th - Our rest is short lived for we have Reveille at 3am and are ordered to be ready to leave at 5.45am in trucks. It has rained during the night and the mud is something 'awful'. The Company is not in the best condition for moving but we finally get going at 8am. Rode till 2pm when we got out at some small town, stood in the rain for an hour, only to be told that some mistake had been made and that we must get back on the trucks again. Rode till 7pm and stood in the rain for almost an hour before they start billeting us. We finally get located comfortably in a barn. We have had nothing to eat since 4am so it is lucky we have some money. Go out and buy some goods. Commercy is money too.

31st (Easter Sunday) - Had a swell breakfast at 8am – bread, jam and coffee. However Jack J and I scout up 1 doz eggs and have them cooked up with "French fries". Afternoon 1 box of corned bully and piece of bread is handed out and we are told that is for supper. The Company – or what is left of it – starts out at 1pm. Many of them feeling very, very good. We hike out in the wood about 4K and are left there to sober up. Starting out for the trenches at 9am. We hike till 3.30am and there is a lot of grabbing.

APRIL

1st – Assigned a dugout and have just got to sleep when the Lieut comes around and orders us out. Then you should have heard the swearing. Put in another dugout and sleep most of the day.

2nd – Stand-to at 5am. Raining like the devil. Balfour and I work in the office all day copying Muster Roll. Did 2 hours guard at night. A shell came over within 10 yards from our post.

3rd – Weather improved. Again in office – pretty awful. Everything very quiet.

4th – Weather fair and had nothing to do all day and went on guard for 2 ¼ hours 10.15 to 12.30. We have late supper of fried potatoes and bacon with delicious coffee. Heavy bombardment to our left commenced at 1am and we have to stand-to for an hour, spent the time by playing whist.

5th – Weather ideal. We all sleep most of the day and each do 2 ¼ hours guard duty.

6th – Receive orders to report at office but we hear we leave for the trenches so get busy packing up. Left at 8.30pm and arrived at Co. Commanders PC at 10pm. 2nd Platoon gets lost coming up and didn't get set till 2am after splashing through mud and water for hours.

7th – Relieved off the phone at 9.30am after a hard struggle to keep awake. Slept till noon.

8th – Rained most all day. Trenches were wet and muddy when we came in but they are 10 times worse now. On duty midnight till 8am. Lively bombardment commencing at 2.30am. Mike Nerisky and Guthrie killed, the first of our men lost in action.

9th – Had 4 hours sleep today. Big attack expected. Everybody ordered to stand-to at 11pm. I go to Battn Hqts with Co Clerks - assisted carrying field desk etc. Stay there till morning. Attack didn't come off.

10, 12 and 13 April 1918, the lines being held by the troops of the 104th Infantry Regiment, of the 52d Infantry Brigade, of the 26th "Yankee" Division, in Bois Brule, near Apremont in the Ardennes, were heavily bombarded and attacked by the Germans. At first the Germans secured a foothold in some advanced trenches which were not strongly held but, thereafter, sturdy counterattacks by the 104th Infantry—at the point of the bayonet and in hand-to-hand combat—succeeded in driving the enemy out with serious losses, entirely re-establishing the American line. For its gallantry the 104th Infantry was cited in a general order of the French 32nd Army Corps on 26 April 1918. In an impressive ceremony occurring in a field near Boucq on 28 April 1918, the 104th Infantry's regimental flag was decorated with the Croix de Guerre by French General Fenelon F.G. Passaga. "I am proud to decorate the flag of a regiment which has shown such fortitude and courage," he said. "I am proud to decorate the flag of a nation which has come to aid in the fight for liberty." Thus, the 104th Infantry became the very first American unit to be honored by a foreign country for exceptional bravery in combat. In addition, 117 members of the 104th Infantry received the award, including its commander, Colonel George H. Shelton.



10th – Weather fair. The Boche send over quite a number of shells during the day. We are on the outlook for attack again and everybody stands-to 6pm to 6am.

11th – (Thursday) I shall never forget 5am this morning! We had all been “standing-to” all night (the second night of it and rather disgruntled that our extra vigilance had gone for nothing). Everything was quiet as death all night when without a second’s warning, the Boche commenced a terrific bombardment of our 2nd line trenches. Everybody immediately made for the dugout. Corp. Snyder was caught on the way in and blown to pieces. Fitzie went out after him after the Huns let up a little and he returned with his arm almost blown off and many other wounds. Lieut Day of MG. Co. went out and brought in their guns in the thick of the firing. Scottie and I get worried in case the Germans are coming across and we go up to the door of the dugout to reconnoitre. I looked across but could see nothing. Scottie wants to take a look too and just as he reached the foot of the ladder (observation) a shell bursts directly in front of him and gets him in the back and the head. He fell back on me,

knocking me down, telling me he is killed. We carry him down and fixed him up as best we can. It is only by a miracle that I didn't get it too. The barrage lifts at 6.45am and we get stretchers and carry Fitzie and Scottie to the First Aid station. They didn't have enough men to carry him to the Battn Dressing station so with three others I start off down the Communications trench and believe me! we were all ready to drop by the time we reached there! One I Co. man is on a stretcher dead and 4 more lying wounded.

Later - the known killed so far are Corp Snyder, Pri Guthrie, Lieut Nerisky. About 12 are wounded and many are suffering from shell shock. The hardest blow of all was received at 7pm when the news came in that Lieut Galwin had been killed by a shell on the road near Bn. Hqts. We hope to be relieved early tomorrow am – not before time for most everyone absolutely shot to pieces and nervous wrecks. We hear from a prisoner that we were attacked by 800 picked Germans and commented that we only had 3 Platoons on the line. We did very creditably. Nevertheless we have had enough to satisfy us for a few days. It was our first real baptism of fire and it sure was a chiller. I for one will never forget it.

12th – We hear that we are to be relieved tonight. Relief is supposed to be in shortly after midnight. It is getting daylight and around 4am and we have given up hope when at 5.15am they show up after being heavily shelled on the road and losing 2 men. We leave for Fremreville with no idea where the place was. After enquiring of about three different Frogs, losing our way and being shelled, we finally arrived at noon. I hiked in rubber boots and my feet are covered with blisters.

13th – Stand-to at 5am. Non-Coms meeting and we get a good lecture from the Capt. **Appointed Corporal, assigned to 2nd Platoon.** Platoon reorganised. Weather good.

14th – **Detailed as Gas NCO for Platoon.** Went to Tigrot with other Gas NCOs. Visited the graves of our comrades killed - Lieut Galvin, Corp Sugden, Privates Leach, Nerisky, Guthrie. They are all buried in a pretty little French Cemetery with wooden crosses over each grave and they received the same burial services as if they had fallen on N S territory.

15th – Rained at intervals all day. Inspected gas masks of Platoon. Southgate sucked 3 of my eggs!!

16th – We hear whispered rumours that we move today. Nothing definite until 4pm when I receive orders to get ready to leave in 15 minutes with advance billeting party. Arrive in Aulnois at 6.30pm and have an excellent supper 24 eggs, jam, cheese, bread and some Vin Rouge. Our Platoons arrive at 9.30pm. Sgts Jacques and Southgate are very well pleased with the bed I assigned to them.

17th – At last we are in a town where we don't have to stand-to. Reveille at 7.30am and free for the rest of the day.

18th – In order to bring us back into shape we have 2 hours close order drill. This being the first we have had in 6 months, it was more or less enjoyed by all. Excellent address by Father

Duralleon in church at 6pm. Everybody felt better after it and some of us did a lot of hard thinking.

19th – We are addressed by our Colonel at 3pm. He says he is very proud of his regiment and gives us unstinted praise for the work done in the trenches. Intimates that we may be reviewed by French and Amer Division Commanders. At the same time he warns us that our work is not yet done – that in a very few days we may be called upon again to take our place in the front line trenches and he will expect us to maintain the reputation we have gained. The weather gets much colder and we are none too warm in our hotel.

20th – Woke up at 3am and again at 5am and could hear the big guns roaring. As a sequel to this we are ordered to make up our packs, are given reserve rations and told to be in readiness to leave at a moment's notice. We are sorry to leave this town for we have had some wonderful little parties – although the first we could get to eat has been “oeufs” and pommes de terre!

Leave in trucks at 9pm and ride about 20K, arriving in Camp near Menil-la-tour at 1.30am. We hear all kinds of discouraging rumours re the 102nd being wiped out etc. etc.

21st (Sunday) – Got up at 10.30am for breakfast – bread and syrup. It had rained during the night and mud is in abundance. At 12.30pm we receive orders to pack up. Had dinner at 1pm and boarded trucks en route for Aulnois. On the way two snipers fell off a truck but were not badly hurt. Arrived in our old billets at 1.30pm. We immediately scouted out “des oeufs”, had a good supper and congratulated ourselves far behind the lines.

22nd – Drill from 9.30am to 11.30am and 2pm to 4pm. Weather good.

23rd – A working party is picked to go up to the front to dig trenches – 400 men from the Bn. I am one of the lucky ones to stay behind. It is raining in buckets when the boys leave at 6pm and they reach the dangerous nature of their task but not one of them shows any yellow. Them that are left pray that the Boche does not open up on them for it would mean that the whole party would be wiped out.

24th – All the boys returned safely at 9am soaked through and mud to the ears. Those of us who stopped behind hiked to the next town and had a bath. It rained all day so we stayed in the billets. Paid at 9pm but I get nothing.

25th – Weather slightly improved. The brave boys go for a bath, the others go out to drill except me as usual lucky detailed to instruct the two new signalmen.

26th – Nothing of interest happened. Went out with signalmen morning and afternoon.

27th – Drill morning for 2 hours. Have the afternoon off to clean our equipment for the big event tomorrow.

28th (Sunday) – **This is a banner day in the annals of our Regiment. Church services at 9am. At 11am we leave for the parade ground about 8 – 10K distant. 100 men of the Regt, 12 from L Co are decorated by the French General. Also the Regt flag. Gen. Ledwouds spoke personally to each man and congratulated him. Regiment is then reviewed by the Generals and the decorated men arrived back in Aulnois at 5pm. In the evening Sgt. Jacques – who was also decorated and I went out together to celebrate. Nuff said!!**

29th – Rained in the morning. Receive orders that we leave for the trenches tomorrow.

30th – Our Platoon on guard all day. I had none. Relief. Left Aulnois 7pm arriving Breussey about 10pm. Assigned to a good billet. From all reports this is a quiet front. We are on reserve, with M Co.

MAY

1st – Spent the day looking over the town hunting out gas proof dugouts etc etc. This is without a doubt the dirtiest town we have been in. The 101st were here before us which accounts for the disgraceful condition of the billets.

2nd – Got up at 9.30am for breakfast. Beautiful summer day. On detail until 2pm cleaning out 2 stables. At times we thought we would have to wear gas masks! Don't think the place has been cleaned since the commencement of the war. Had supper at 5.30pm. **We do not take this two-meals-a-day very well.**

3rd – **Another beautiful day. We have a shower bath at 9pm and wash off some cooties. Read letter from Mother saying she had received my letter of April 13th. This cheers me up more than anything since I came to France.**

4th – Regular summer weather. Spent the afternoon under the shade of an apple tree writing letters. The boys play quoits.

5th (Sunday) – The only difference from other days is that the Catholics have church services. I am detailed with a squad to clean out another stable behind our billets.

6th – Same as normal.

7th – Rained in afternoon. On guard at 6pm. About 9pm we have a sharp thunderstorm and rain in buckets. Dark as pitch and I fell down in the mud several times while making patrol.

8th – Receive orders at 6pm to get ready to leave for the trenches at 9pm. We have the usual sing song before leaving. It was "some" dark journey up through the woods. Completed, relief about 11pm. Plenty of mud here.

9th – Looked over our postings in daylight getting the numerous holes accurately placed as possible in my mind's eye. I am supposed to be off tonight but didn't get much sleep. About

1.30am we are awakened by terrific gunfire and bursting of grenades. It proves to be the 103rd on our left. Their patrol raised the ire of the Boche and he let go on them.

10th – Lively time at 4.30am. Heavy bombardment on our left and intense gunfire. We learn afterwards that a patrol from 103rd ran into something. Also the Frenchmen on the left of 103rd went over the top. Allan and I had change of sector.

11th – Everything quiet except for slight artillery activity. I am off tonight but of course something had to happen to disturb my peaceful slumbers. It came in the nature of a false gas alarm at 1.30am. We put our masks on for a few minutes but there is no gas. There was an attack however on the 102nd

12th (Sunday) – This is Mother's Day and every boy is supposed to write to his Ma. It rains considerably during the day. Am picked for patrol and when we leave at 9.30pm it is coming down in buckets. 37 of us start off in pitch darkness and it's some job picking our way across No Man's Land and through 3 rows of barked wire. Arrive back at 1.20am without seeing a thing. The mud was awful!

13th – Spent a considerable part of the day cleaning the mud off which I picked up on No Man's Land last evening. It was necessary to give my rifle a bath! I am on patrol in the sector with Sgt Jacques. Everything is quiet.

14th – Weather good. Volunteered for patrol tonight but was not picked. Only 3 of us "came across" until Southgate gave us the devil when 13 more from our Platoon handed in their names.

15th – Everything quiet. I am supposed to be off tonight but at 11.30pm I am pulled out of bed to post gas guards on account of the wind changing. The boys decide that I am to have no more nights off because, every time I do, something happens.

16th – Very hot all day. We have medical inspection this afternoon. On patrol in the sector with Irwin.

17th – We hear the welcome sound that we are to be relieved tonight. Receive orders at 2pm to pack up and leave at once with advance billeting party. Arrive at Raulencourt at 6pm and receive good billet for Platoon. The Company Clerk is there. He tells me that I report at 6am tomorrow to go to gas NCs school. I decide to start off tonight – receive very indefinite instructions as to where to report, get lost and didn't arrive at Jaederes until 2am. All in!

18th – Left by truck with 12 other Non Coms on route for Goudrecont. Had a delightful ride through some delightful county which has not been occupied by the Huns. Arrived at Goudrecont at 1.30pm, tired, hungry and dirty. Had dinner and a bath. We are very much impressed by the cleanliness and order here – very military – so much so that in spite of all our training we feel very much like a pack of rookies. Met Jack Courtney who is here at Officers school and Lieut Haynes of I Co and go down town.

19th (Sunday) – Received a whole new outfit because we told the OM that we had just come from the trenches and were "lousy" which was no lie. Took another bath. It felt good to be

clean again and to know that we can go to bed without the dread of the Cooties! Very hot and I rested all afternoon to get in shape for the arduous duties of the morrow.

20th-25th – Every day has been the same – work, work, work. Got up at 6am, shaved, had breakfast and ready for drill at 8am. We were going right up till 9pm. Weather quite hot. Late afternoon we had a baseball game between 26th Div and 42nd. First innings played gas masks final score after 10 innings 5 to 4 in favour of 42nd. We were glad when the week was up for we had worked a little more than was comfortable.

26th (Sunday) – Started for home in trucks at 9am arriving in Rouleucourt at 1pm but found the Company had moved to Beauconville – near the line again.

27th – Have it pretty easy all day. Run around shouting gas dope to the boys and looking up dugouts. The rest of the Platoon go out on a working party but get a night in bed.

28th – “Superintended” the fixing of a gas proof dugout when I wasn’t sleeping. Artillery and aeroplanes were active.

29th – Did nothing today. Read lots of mail from the States. Had supper with the MG Co with Forbes and Keoh – and it was some supper.

30th – Went to Xirray about 3 miles guarding a ration cart. Leaving Beauconville 11.30pm and returning 1am. Trip entirely uneventful. Weather excellent. Received some more mail from the States. About 2am there is a terrific bombardment on our right. We understand that we are going over the top.

31st – Again out on No Man’s Land with the Robron Camp. Our patrol brings in 4 prisoners. We hear the Division is to be relieved tomorrow or next day and then someone comes along and spoils it all by saying we have to stay here until the British and French drive the Germans out of Soissons. I would just as soon stay for this is a good sector – so far.

JUNE

1st - Packed up and went on the line. I have a listening post on top of the parapet. We all stand-to all night but it’s only dark from about 10pm to 3.30am. Everything so very quiet. The third night the Boche threw over some shells to our right and some pieces of shell went singing over our heads.

6th – Called back to Beauconville to give gas instruction to Regular Army Sergeants and new men. “Pretty soft”! Work 1 hour per jour for 3 days. Afterwards have nothing to do.

10th – We hear we are to be relieved tonight by D Co. Took the Gas NCO over the sector, rolled my pack but about 8pm we are told the relief is off. Scottie arrives from hospital.

11th – Receive orders to pack up again. Part of the relief (103rd) arrives in and goes out again. We get somewhat discouraged.

12th – Received orders once more that relief is on. This time it proves to be so. Leave Beauconville at 11pm. Arrive in Jouy at 2am.

13th – Scottie woke me up at 6am and we go and hunt up some eggs and wine and have breakfast. During the day we have more eggs and more wine – spend a most enjoyable day. Bombarded by enemy aeroplanes at 3pm. One old woman killed and several civilians wounded.

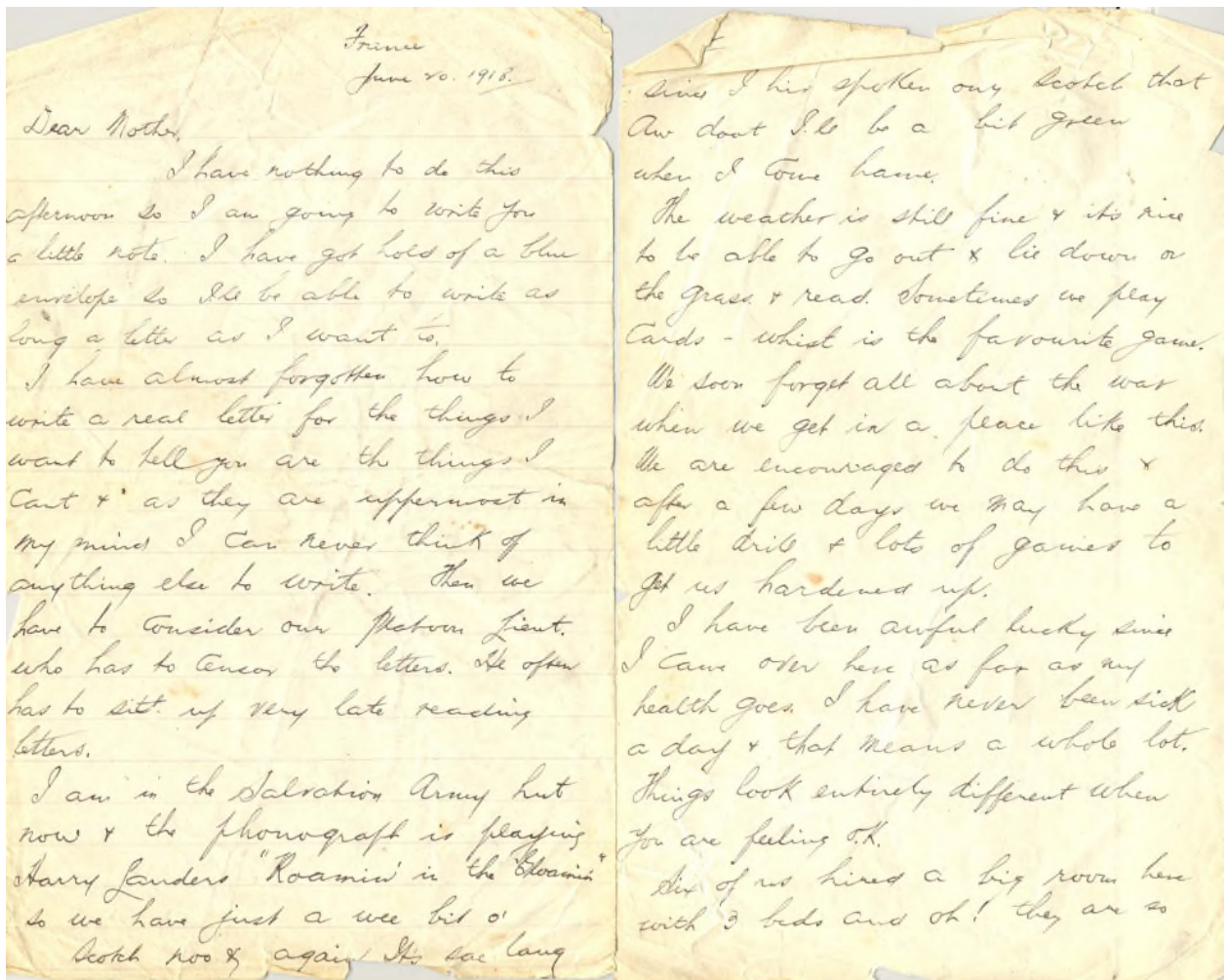
14th – Awakened at 3.30am by the sound of shells. Everybody ordered up on the hill. Town bombarded by enemy artillery. One shell striking the hospital and killing Sgt Spencer. Several men wounded.

15th – Many of the poor civilians go up on the hill with their blankets and sleep, fearing another bombardment. We have a working party out to dig trenches. Luckily I am on guard so escape it.

16th (Sunday) – All quiet. L Co is put under arrest on account of some rabbits being stolen. We hire a room and sleep for once in a regular bed and gee! how good it feels.

17th – **Another working party out tonight. Leaving town at 8pm and arriving back at 4am. It's the worst job I ever tackled. It had rained during the day and we had to use our hands to get the mud out – shovels were no use. I was pretty much disgusted but after a good breakfast and getting into the nice soft bed things looked different.**

18th – We hear the 103rd had a pretty lively time in our old sector so we congratulate ourselves on getting out on time.



Letter from John Robbie to his mother. The last page is missing.

21st – We get paid tonight so there are big doings. All night poker game in our room.

22nd – Nothing doing all day. Lovely time at night. Jacques has a slight mishap early in the morning.

23rd – Scottie and I hike to Aulnois and meet MacGuire and Southgate. The folks are awfully glad to see us. Champagne was the order of the day and we had several bottles. Everybody was fairly happy when we started for home after 9pm. Had supper – des oeufs and frites.

24th – Had 2 teeth treated by dentist. Did not feel very good so didn't get up for breakfast. Receive orders to pack up. Had our farewell dinner in Jouy – McGuire, Tanner, Percival, Vic Reid, Scottie and I.

Left Jouy at 9pm and "entrained" at Corneville. Arrived at Toul at 3am after several stops. Very cold but we had to stand in the street until 5am awaiting the second train which broke down three times. Hiked 5K to Bruly arriving 7am. Breakfast served at 8am and we immediately hit the hay. Had dinner or supper – I don't know which – at 4pm. Movies at the YMCA at night. We saw the first batch of our draft friends leave here to take our place in the line. They look good, only their packs are too big. We decide they will learn by experience! Weather A 1.

25th – Had my first pass since coming to France. 10 of us immediately hiked to Toul and spent a most enjoyable day. It was a meatless day so eggs was the only item on the bills of fare. We met a few of France's fair damsels but are not especially impressed with them.

26th – Climbed the hill and drilled all morning in a boiling hot sun. We are visited by enemy avions in the evening but no damage is done.

30th – Left Bruly at noon, scorching hot and dusty roads. Hiked 10K and entrained at Touy. All kind of rumours as to where we are going, the best one being that Paris is our destination and that we parade there July.

JULY

According to The New York Times, in July 1918 "it was the lot of the Americans"—which involved the 104th Infantry Regiment—"to drive the Germans back in the region lying north of Chateau-Thierry." "The offensive operations of the U.S. 26th Division and 104th Regiment at Chateau Thierry were complicated—the problem being to transition at once from defensive to offensive warfare. "This involved continuous movement under the most hazardous and confusing conditions and included every unit of the [104th] regiment. In the eight days from July 18 to July 25, 1918, the 104th Infantry was to pass through a crucible of fire and steel. Its men were to write sagas of sacrifice, devotion and heroism. In the stress of one of the great, decisive battles in world history, many of these acts failed of proper recognition. It is safe to say that almost without exception, every man of the [104th] regiment was deserving of mention for meritorious conduct during those terrible July days.

1st – Still on the train. At 4pm we are within 5K of Paris and the welcome we received all along the route certainly made us feel good. We hollered and cheered like madness – for now we

knew that the parade was on when all of a sudden we stopped, switched to another track and started back the other way. Not a sound was to be heard from the Pulmans(!) then. Nobody said a word but we thought a lot. Arrived 5pm at La Ferte Sous Jonarre, 65K from Paris. Walked 4K to some woods and lay there till dark. Started off at 9.30pm, nobody knowing our destination. **We have had no sleep for 2 nights and little to eat while we were on the train so the hike tells on the boys.** After many stops we finally arrive in St Jermain at 3.30am. Many fell out but our Platoon came in intact. Had breakfast and went to bed.

2nd – It was 3pm when I woke up. After washing the feet and “making the toilet” I felt OK. Had something to eat at 4.30pm after which there was an inspection of feet and there were some bad looking “foots”. We are located on a big farm away out in the country with the scent of new mown hay all around. Many of the boys pitch their pup tents and sleep out. I am in a good billet.

3rd – Supposed to have Reveille at 7am but nobody woke up until the cooks called us for breakfast at 8am. Had ball game before dinner. Inspection at 2pm and football game afterwards. Had a good team picked for evening game and were just getting ready to play at 6.30pm when order came in to pack up at once. Everybody was ready to leave in half an hour. Rode on trucks, arriving at 2.30am in a wood where we camped for the night with the sky for a roof. Got up at 10.20am and had coffee and lard pack.

*"By July 4 [1918], the entire [26th] Division moved up to the front in the area also known as the Pas Fini Sector ('Unfinished Sector'), where the 52nd Infantry Brigade * * * relieved the U.S. Marine Brigade from the area of Belleau Wood and Torcy as far to the northwest as Bussiares on the left side of the line. The relief was completed on July 9 [1918] following delays due to defensive preparations for an expected German attack. * * * [The] 52nd Brigade HQ was established at La Loge Farm, and the 26th Division HQ was moved up to Chamigny. There were no trenches in the area of the front, little wire and no shelters (dugouts). Rather, defenses were designed for open warfare and consisted of shallow fox-holes covered with brush, positioned to provide mutually supporting fire along with numerous machine gun positions. The outpost line and principal resistance line were separated by a 1,000 yard artillery barrage zone designed to break up any attack that overran the outposts. Occupants of the outposts had the usual mission of fighting to the last man with no hope of reinforcement. At all hours, troops of the outpost line were fired on by machine guns and artillery of the German 7th Army. Food and water had to be carried to the forward troops by ration details through machine gun fire under cover of darkness. The troops suffered a high number of casualties due to heavy gas exposure. Belleau Wood itself was a forest of horror from the hard fighting earlier in June [1918] involving the Marines; equipment, unburied bodies and severed limbs were found still strewn everywhere and hanging in trees with the smell of death and decay heavy in the air".*

4th – We spend a safe and sane Fourth far from the madding crowd. Everyone is happy in spite of the rather unusual conditions. The favourite topic is how we spent the day last year. Receive orders to be ready to leave at 9pm. Hike 4K and are located in some more woods spending another night in the open.

5th – Breakfast at 10.30am after which we get busy making ourselves a home. Discover a hole in the ground, get some wheat from a nearby field and pitch our pup tents on top. It makes an excellent “dug house”. Non Coms school at 1pm. Had our entertainment in the evening – boxing, wrestling and singing – the latter sounds good in the woods.

We had just got to bed about 10.30pm when the order came to pack up and get out at once. It was some job making up packs in the pitch darkness but everybody was ready in half an hour and we left with our rifle in one hand and a loaf of bread in the other. Hiked 6 or 7K arriving in some more woods at 2.30am, again sleeping in the open. The weather is excellent so this is no hardship.

6th – Got up around 9am and had breakfast – 1 piece of bread and a drink of water. Found a good hole and made ourselves comfortable. We are directly in front of our own artillery and it makes an awful racket. We feel sorry for the poor heads who have to duck all these shells. Dinner and supper the same as breakfast. Sleeping soundly when about midnight the soup gun arrives with a good feed. Nobody has to be told twice to get up. It was some job finding our home in the dark. Our artillery was going like the devil about this time.

7th (Sunday) – Breakfast which was brought up last night served this am at 11. The Boche, while I write, is sending over a few shells which land not a hundred miles from here. About 2.30pm a regular bombardment commenced right in the sector of the woods where we are. Everybody runs for cover and 4 men get wounded – two pretty seriously. After the shelling we move to another part of the wood and pray that we will be left here unmolested. Our own batteries keep up a steady fire at night and I get no sleep until morning. Supper came up at 10.30pm.

8th – Our beans which were for breakfast got sour overnight and all we have for the day is bread and one spoonful of glucose. **We feed only twice a day – 11pm and 11am** – both meals being brought up at night. There are lots of shells flying both ways but none come near us. Our own artillery keeps us awake all night.

*From July 9–14 [1918], 10,350 high explosive shells fell on the 52nd Brigade sector killing 14 and wounding 84 * * *. In rain and fog at midnight on July 14 [1918], the entire 26th Division front was heavily shelled with a combination of high explosive and gas * * *. Another day-long enemy bombardment occurred across the entire Divisional sector on July 15 [1918], drenching it with mustard gas. * * **

9th – We decide we ought to have some shelter in case some shells come over so all hands get to work digging a trench. Everybody’s nerves are getting shot on account of the almost incessant artillery fire.

10th – We hear the good news that we move out of here tonight. We are all glad for this place has been a hell on earth since the bombardment of Sunday.

Leave at 10.30pm with nothing to eat. However we have only a short hike and supper is served immediately on our arrival. We are in the Belleau Woods in support of the 2nd Battn. There are a few dugouts but not enough for all. I sleep outside with Wentworth and champagne.

11th – Rudely awakened about 4am by shell fire, some of them coming pretty close. At 3am we have a second bombardment, this time a small piece gets me in the back. Nickerson, the Med man, got a bad one in the arm and Deisig of our Q had a piece in the stomach. We are all shipped to the hospital. Stopped at the 3rd Field hospital where we got hot chocolate, cigarettes and above all kind words and sympathy. Arrived about 8am at Evac Hospital, Collomiens, 40 miles from Paris. X-rayed, taken into the operating room and put to bed.

12th – Had breakfast in bed but got up for dinner and supper. We consider it a wonderful luxury to have plenty to eat for we have been half starved during the past two weeks. We received chocolates, cigarettes and tobacco from the Red Cross.

14th – Left exactly at 10.30am in US Red Cross train which is fitted out like a regular travelling hospital. Ride all day.

15th – Arrived at Vichy Base Hospital which used to be Hotel “La Havre”. Assigned to Ward 5 with 3 dandy chaps – all strangers to each other but we soon became good friends. Had a bath in a real bathtub, given a nice clean suit of clothes and felt as happy as Kings. This is one of the most fashionable summer resorts in France and all we see around are what appear to us to be millionaires.

On July 16–17 [1918] another 7,000 rounds of high explosive fell in the Divisional sector. Despite the relentless bombardments by German artillery, no major infantry engagements occurred.

16th – We hear of the big drive up front but that is nothing to us, except that it makes me sad to think of all my friends roughing it up there while I am having the time of my life here. We could have got a pass to go out this afternoon but had no clothes. Weather is beautiful and so hot at night that we sleep on top of the bed.

*On 17 July 1918, "the 26th Division was the only thing between the Boches and the open road to Paris. * * * The position of the Twenty-sixth Division was as follows: the extreme right was held by the 101st Infantry, facing north. The 102d Infantry lay along a roll of hills, its line extending a little beyond Bouresches; the regiment facing almost east. The 104th was in the Belleau Wood, facing east and northeast, and the 103d Infantry, north of Lucy de Bocage, faced north and northeast on [the Americans'] extreme left. One battalion of artillery was in position in the fields right and left of the Paris*

*Metz road; another, out on [the Americans'] left flank, was on the line Champillon-Voie du Chatel. * * * [T]he attack was ordered for 4:35 a.m. [of July 18, 1918]. Only six hours was given to make out Division orders, get them to the various regiments, and get the units in position for the jumping-off hour. * * *^[5] Shortly after H-hour sounded, "[a] severe fire dropped by the enemy artillery on the [104th in Belleau Wood]. * * * Nobody dreamed that the encounters [beginning on July 18, 1918] had marked a turning-point of the war—that with the forward rush on that brilliant morning * **

Also known to historians as the Second Battle of the Marne, the Aisne-Marne Offensive began on July 18, 1918, with a combined French and American attack on the German forces (7th Army) inside the St. Mihiel Salient. The 52nd Infantry Brigade [including the 104th Infantry Regiment] attacked along the 26th Division's line from Bouresches to the left of the Division sector. The 52nd Brigade's initial objective was to take the Torcy-Belleau-Givry Railroad from Givry to Bouresches."^[7] " * * * the days succeeding July 18th showed us how deadly our fire had been. Lucy-le-Bocage and Vaux were laid flat by the Boche, Belleau Woods was a shattered, stinking horror, and all the travelled roads were hell. ... "

The advance continued on July 21 [1918] as the German Army fell back across a broad front in a general retreat. [There was] stiff German resistance along the "Berta Line" in the area of Epieds * * *, which included orders for enemy artillery to contaminate the front line with mixed gas of all types."^[9] "Epieds is reached by a valley from the south through which runs the main road. North of Epieds is a wooded hill, and to the west similar hills at the lower end of the Bois de Chatelet, and to the east other hills up to the northern end of the Boise de Trungy." ^[10]

The entire 52nd Brigade, including the 104th Regiment, attacked Epieds twice on 22 July 1918, only to be pushed back both times with heavy casualties from German machine gun fire. "Overnight more than 1,000 artillery shells fell on the 52nd Brigade's Command Post and the next day the 52nd was again repulsed in a third attack against Epieds, the vigorous defense of which proved to be * * * a rear-guard holding action by the enemy while the main German forces withdrew."^[11] During the afternoon of 23 July 1918, the 104th Regiment went up the ravine by the side of the road into the village. "They were swept by fire from more than a hundred machine guns the Germans placed on the hills about the village. [The 104th] got into the village. Soon the Germans got the range and began heavily shelling Epieds and [the 104th] withdrew to the hills, the Germans taking possession of the village under the protection of artillery fire and bringing in more machine guns."^[10]

On the morning of 24 July 1918, the 104th Regiment again faced the task of retaking Epieds. "While a small force stayed in front, drawing the fire of the Germans from the village and hills, [the other troops of the 104th] moved against the machine gunners from the rear. The troops [of the 104th] in front of the village and on both sides attacked together, forcing the Germans to evacuate quickly."^[12] "Of the fighting here the French Communique [of the evening of July 24, 1918] said: 'Fierce combats were fought in the sector of Epieds * * *. Those combats, bloody and severe, were fought by Americans whose indomitable energy the Germans fell back [on the afternoon of July 24, 1918] giving [the Americans] an average advance of three kilometers'. While the actual advance was not marked by such bitter fighting, it was the fierce combats up to [the morning of July 24, 1918] which resulted in the advance * * * ".^[12] The New York Times, in a caption for its related news article, proclaimed that the "Capture of Epieds [was] a Test of Fighting Quality Under the Hardest Conditions."^[12] "In a week of fighting the 26th Division had captured 17 kilometers of ground in the first real advance made by an American division as a unit, but at a cost of 20% casualties (the greatest number of battle casualties it would experience in a single operation). Counted among the Division's casualties were 1,930 gas cases * * *."^[11] "The fight for Epieds was one of the most severe and costly in which the Americans have engaged."^[12]

17th – After some engineering we scout up some clothes, a shirt, vest and pants and go out to see the town. The speed and style here is simply killing. Boston has nothing which can compare to some of the places. At night we sat in the park and listened to the band and watched the pretty girls go by.

18th – Met Sgt Riley of NY Company and he I promenaded a little. In the evening we were entertained by M Leroy. Many new patients arrive.

19th – Went to the Band Concert in the afternoon. Weather delightful.

21st (Sunday) – Church Services 10am. Went swimming in the afternoon and a little promenade afterwards. In the evening we are transferred to Hotel Alexandra. Cassie and I sneak out and promenade around the park till 10pm. Things are just getting lively when we have to come in and we curse our luck that we are not civilians!

22nd – Went swimming – water fine. Left Vichy 7pm for St Aigna replacement camp. Arrived Nereis at midnight and slept in Barracks until 4am. We miss the nice white sheets and soft mattresses.

23rd – Get on train at 6am. Start off at 8am. There are a number of Frenchmen taken prisoners Aug 1914 with us. They have just been released. We go about 5 miles and stop for an hour finally arriving at St Aigna at 7pm. Had our first meal in 24 hours and were assigned to barracks.

24th – Answered about six roll calls and slept. We do not take very kindly being ordered around by those draft privates.

28th – Packed up ready to leave at 9.30pm. Lay about on the ground until 1am when we had breakfast. Arrived at the depot 3am and got our train at 10.30am!! There were several barrels of wine on the platform. The fellows for some unknown reason were extraordinarily happy by the time we entrained.

29th – Detrained at Vares 21K from Paris and hiked to Chelles, 1st Army Corps replacement Battn.

31st – Ready to leave for our Co at 9am. Left at 3pm and entrained 4.45pm arriving at ????? at 7.30pm. We discover that we are at the wrong place, our Division haven't been relieved. Entrain again at 9.30pm arriving at Les Fertle 2am. Sleep on the sidewalk until 5am.

AUGUST

1st – Arrive at Co at 10am. Find the personnel absolutely changed. 102 new men.

3rd – **Appointed Sgt. Acting as Gas NCO.**

6th – Put in charge of 4th Platoon. Sullivan, McTuche and Ficht go to Paris on 48 hour pass.

8th – Howard, Riley and myself go to Paris arriving 7pm. Had dinner in the hotel and proceeded to “take in” the town.

9th – Got up 8am. Visited Eiffel Tower, Napoleon’s tomb, Music, etc etc. In general we had a glorious time.

10th – Did some more sightseeing leaving for home 7pm.

11th (Sunday) – Church services 8am. Ball game afternoon between 2nd and 3rd Battns. We won 17 to 3.

13th – Left 10am for Toulport 20K distant and very hot but everybody finished in good shape. Entrained 9pm. Have charge of 4th Platoon.

15th – Arrived Chartillon 6pm hiking 15K to Massonet. Comfortable, located in barn.

17th – Regular Saturday morning inspection up to 11am. Free for the rest of the day – very hot. Played 2nd Platoon ball and beat them 20 – 14.

18th (Sunday) – Had ball game with 3rd Platoon beating them 11 – 7. Afternoon occupied writing letters.

21st – We have been drilling hard every day 8 – 11.30am and one to 3pm. Tonight we have festivities – banquet and entertainment lasting until 10pm.

24th – Sergeants’ Banquet at 8pm – wonderful time. We have everything from flowers on the table to champagne which was furnished by the Officers. We decided it was the best time we had had in France – in fact I never enjoyed myself better. It was somewhat after tops when we “concheed”.

25th (Sunday) – We are glad we don’t drill today, especially we Sergeants!! Many of our old men return from the hospital, including Southgate. He and I report to the Mayor re Commissions.

27th – Received orders at 3pm that we leave for the front at 5.30pm!! Left Massonet 6pm arriving at Ampety 6K distant after 8pm. Slept all night out in a field.

28th – Entrained 10.30pm at Chatillon given 24 hour rations.

29th – Arrived Ligny 11am. Hiked about 6K and camped on the edge of some woods until dark when we started off again on a 20K hike.

30th – Arrived on outskirts of St Dizier about 1am. There seems to be some misunderstanding – as usual – as to whether we were to stay in town. However about 3am we were assigned to billets and everybody slept until noon when we had breakfast.

31st – Left St Dizier 8.30pm. Hiked 20K and were located in woods.

SEPTEMBER

1st (Sunday) – Located in woods. Had a very impressive Church service by Father Duvalles. Left in rain at dark and it was some job getting the Battalion out of the woods.

8th (Sunday – Still in the woods having moved practically every night. It had rained considerably the past few days. Church Services by both Chaplains – had communion at 9pm. Received orders to report at 1am to Regt Hqts with 19 men from the Battalion to proceed to Aeroplane Signal School. Ploughed through mud up to our knees and in pouring rain. Arrived at Aeroplane sheds at 8am and we were told we should have brought rations with us. Managed to scrape up something and went to sleep.

10th – Had instruction by lecture and problem in pouring rain. **Had our first meal in 36 hours at noon.** Left for the Company in trucks at 9pm arriving at Regt Hqtrs at 2am.

11th – Left woods 8pm arriving in support trenches 1.30am where we were packed like herrings in a barrel with a terrific bombardment going over our heads.

12th-15th September: Battle of Saint-Mihiel

The attack at the St. Mihiel salient was part of a plan by Pershing in which he hoped that the Americans would break through the German lines and capture the fortified city of Metz. It was the first and only offensive launched solely by the United States Army in World War I, and the attack caught the Germans in the process of retreating. This meant that their artillery was out of place and the American attack, coming up against disorganized German forces, proved more successful than expected. The St. Mihiel attack established the stature of the U.S. Army in the eyes of the French and British forces, and again demonstrated the critical role of artillery and the difficulty of supplying such massive armies when they were on the move. The U.S. attack faltered as artillery and food supplies were left behind on the muddy roads.^[2] The attack on Metz was not realized, as the Germans refortified their positions and the Americans then turned their efforts to the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.

12th – Started over the top at 9am but we were held up by MG Fire before we had gone far. Lay out in the field for a couple of hours while the French on our left tried to clean them out. Finally moved forward at 7pm.

13th – Continued our advance at 6am passing through St Remy. Dominant and reach St Maurice at 2.30pm. We stayed here overnight. The French Civilians who have been prisoners since 1914 seem delighted to see us.

14th – Left St Maurice 10am. Took up positions between Herbeville and Cowbries in trenches. At 7pm I watched with the 3 Platoon Lieuts as to whose Platoon would patrol from Souly to Waldounville. I lost out who we are left with half the Platoon making the patrol without mishap.

15th – Leiu Newsan relieved me of my Platoon at noon and I reported to Company to find I was appointed 1st Sergeant in place of R Gulow, returned to US.

16th – Somebody gets the idea the Boche is to counter-attack so we have to stand-to from 1am to 6am.

17th – 1st platoon goes to Sauly to reinforce 4th. Quiet night.

18th – Balance of Company goes to Sauly assigned to a swell dugout with table, chairs and two bunks. It rained like the devil.

19th – We are relieved by 103rd at 9pm. Hiked to woods near Mouilly arriving 3am.

21st – Left woods just in time to escape being bombed by aeroplanes. Located near where we started offensive on Sept 12.

22nd (Sunday) – Is just like any other day except that we have a short service by Chaplain Evans.

24th – We have a working party of 200 men go out. On account of being ‘top kicker’ I stay in.

The Meuse-Argonne Offensive began on September 26, 1918 and lasted to Armistice on 11 November, a total of 47 days. The Meuse-Argonne Offensive was the largest in US military history involving 1.2 million American soldiers. It was one of a series of Allied attacks known as the Hundred Days Offensive, which brought the war to an end. The battle cost 28,000 German lives, 26,277 American lives and an unknown number of French lives. It was the largest and bloodiest operation of World War I for the American Expeditionar Force (AEF) even if, given the scale of other battles on the Western Front, its size was limited and the operation itself secondary as it was far from the main offensive axis. It was the deadliest battle in American history. U.S. losses were exacerbated by the inexperience of many of the troops, the tactics used during the early phases of the operation and the widespread onset of the influenza outbreak called the "Spanish Flu". Meuse-Argonne was the principal engagement of the AEF during World War I.

26th – 1st Sgt Gulow comes back to Company, broken hearted and discouraged on account of not having his long anticipated trip to US. Big attack on our left but everything quiet with us.

28th – Left at 8.30pm in pitch darkness and pouring rain for position in woods 2K distant through mud to our knees, fell in shell holes, arriving about 10.30pm. Watts, Ross and I slept in mud under a tree and by morning we were sleeping in a few inches of water.

29th (Sunday) – Raining but we set to work making homes for ourselves out of sheet iron. Went on barbed wire working party 7.30pm to 3am. A few shells came pretty close. Working parties also left 3am.

OCTOBER

6th (Sunday) – We have services this morning afterwards communion for those who wish to stay. We get orders to be ready to leave and are pulled out at 12.30am standing in the cold, mud and rain with packs on until 3.30am.

7th – Left ????? at 7pm and arrived in ????? at midnight but owing to a mistake in reading the map we stand on a hill in the cold for 2 hours while our Officers search for the Barracks where we are supposed to be located.

9th – Ready to leave at 7pm on 5 minutes notice. After we get out on the road we are told we don't leave till 2am so we unroll packs and sleep by the roadside. Arrive on a hillside at 8am.

13th – Hugh Gulow and McGuire (Earl) leave for Officers school.

14th – Get order to move at 2am. Arrive in ?????? at 6.30am after a forced march. Pitch pup tents in an orchard. Considerable shelling all afternoon – 2 of our men wounded and a few of our horses killed. Leave at 7pm with the understanding that we go over the top in the morning.

15th – We learn to our disappointment that we occupy only reserve position in a trench. Make ourselves as comfortable as possible all night and next day. It rained in torrents from 8pm on and men in holes were flooded.

16th – Scouted up dugouts and finally got all the men under cover. The mud, water and discomfort was the worst we have yet experienced. Blankets are all soaking wet and covered in mud. Still raining, much artillery activity.

17th – Leave at 7pm for front line to relieve 114th Infantry. Fortunately there was no shelling as we came up the valley but before we had been in the line the Boche started, wounding 4 I Co men right at our P C. Snipers are very active all day Oct 18th and men have to keep absolutely under cover. Our front line consists of shell holes where the men stay for 24 hours at a time. Today it has cleaned off and the aeroplanes are busy.

20th – We have a terrific bombardment at noon lasting for an hour. Corp Kemp killed and 3 men wounded. All men are tired and sick on account of lack of sleep and gas. 10 to 12 are evacuated every night.

22nd – We hear we get relieved tomorrow night.

23rd. We are told relief will surely be up tomorrow. We are relieved Oct 25th at 1am by 2nd Battn 103rd and hike to the side of a hill in front of artillery about 6K from front line.

25th – We hope to pull back tonight but instead we get orders to roll packs and be ready to move upfront again at a moment's notice. Slept all night in our overcoats. 12 more men evacuated.

.....last entry.....





Corporal John Robbie of the 104th Massachusetts Infantry—a member of Clan MacKenzie, No. 2, and former bookkeeper in the Royal Secretary's office. Awarded the French Croix de Guerre for gallantry in action.

GAVE HIS LIFE FOR DEMOCRACY



Sergt. John Robbie of Boston who was killed in action Oct. 26.

 "WITH THE COLORS" 

With the finder please forward
this to:
Mr J. Robbie
Nance Cottage
Drumoak, near Aberdeen
Scotland
J. Robbie
Sergt.

Dear Mother,
If you receive this you
will know that it was his will
that I give my life for this worthy cause
& that I did thinking of you.
Read this ^{book} & it will comfort you
as it has me.

Yours loving boy
John

HELP YOUR COUNTRY BY SAVING. WRITE ON BOTH SIDES OF THIS PAPER