

Letters from the Boys

News of Camp and Field from “Those Doing Their Bit”

EPSOM

Recruit in South Carolina Camp

The following letter has been received from Frank E. Ambrose, who recently left for Fort Slocum, N.Y.:

Camp Jackson, S.C. June 9, 1918



Dear Epsom Friends:

I wish to again thank all my friends who were at my home May 27th and made everything so pleasant before I left for Fort Slocum, N.Y., and also for the beautiful gifts presented to me, which it would seem impossible to get along without. I assure you the gifts are more than appreciated.

I left for Fort Slocum, N.Y., June 3 and was there until June 6, when we were sent here to South Carolina after getting our uniforms and taking examinations. It seems a long way from home here, but I cannot forget my home town friends who were so good to me.

About 1,600 boys came down from New York. There are between 40,000 and 50,000 on this camp ground. There are a lot of Y.M.C.A. camps here and the boys enjoy them very much. They have church service and Sunday School. Was at the service this morning and there were about 400 present, just in one branch place.

I hope that you don't feel disappointed if you do not receive an individual letter as it is impossible to write a great deal with so much work and drilling placed before me. This camp is used for training. As

it is nearly time for the roll call, I will now close, trusting that I will hear from some of you soon, I remain,

Respectfully yours,

Frank E. Ambrose

15 Tr, B.M.F.A.R.D.

Camp Jackson, S.C.

Hdqrs. Co. Supply Trench and Mortar Battery

Notification of Private Frank Ambrose's safe arrival in France has just been received by his parents in Epsom. Mr. Ambrose has been in training at Camp Jackson, South Carolina, and the following letter was received by friends shortly before his departure overseas.

Camp Jackson, Columbia, S.C.

Dear Mrs. Lawrence and Mrs. Cox;

I want to write a few lines tonight to let you know that the package arrived in fine condition and I want to thank you ever so much for it. I appreciate it very much and it seemed as if I were eating at home when I ate that nice cake and cookies. I really made a big hole in it that night with my supper.

I also wish to thank you for your kindness in sending the Valley Times to me. I had an idea that it was from you when I got the first paper but as there was no trademark, it puzzled me a little. It seems so nice to read the Epsom news. I am well contented here now. I feel as if I wanted to stay now till the war is over. I cannot complain about the food as I find enough to eat and a good place to sleep. The food is not like the food at

home but it is real nice. They are driving the drilling right into us lately as they are preparing for the next draft. They are building barracks here all the time. It is certainly a busy place. We were aroused out of bed at half-past four Sunday morning by the guard that was on duty. We were all out in about (2) two minutes. You can imagine what a sensation it was to be wakened and a hundred and fifty getting out. They are getting more strict every day. They give us about ten minutes to get dressed and lined up in the morning and we must have everything O.K. We are inspected every night at retreat and must be clean, shoes shined, face shaven and full uniform on fastened in every way. We are called down for the least little thing. I suppose that is the discipline of the army and it is a good thing. The boys really look fine and are picking up every day. Everybody is respected and treated nicely if he obeys his commands. There are some real nice officers here, I think, and I like them very much.

We are drilled six or seven hours a day. There are a few of course that are a little slow about catching on to the drilling, but most of them are doing real well for the time they have been here. I wish you could see the way the boys sweat down here. Anybody could sympathize with them after seeing them but no excuse in the army whatever. We are marked for extra duty if late for roll call and not on hand at drilling period or even for talking, spitting or not at attention in ranks, also for not being in bed at 10 o'clock sharp at night. We have lectures given every night by the Battery Commander in the Mess room, on military courtesy and guard duty. It is interesting to hear him talk about the army in France. They give us examinations every once in a while to see if we can answer questions on military work. We are all given a fair deal in the work by taking turns at kitchen police and fatigue duty around the barracks. Wish you could exchange the weather with you. There is nothing like being in the Northern States. Guess I have written enough for now and I have a little washing to do this evening. Trusting you will please excuse writing with a pencil as it is all I have at present and am even writing on a book. The tables are all taken up most of the time as there are so many boys. We now have a serial number as a few of the fellows have written things they should not and letters are likely to be opened. Hoping this finds everybody well, with best regards to all the folks.

F.E. Ambrose, Serial No. 389598.

15th Bm. F.A.R.D. Hdqrs. Co.

Camp Jackson

South Carolina

Letter received November 25, from an Epsom Soldier Boy.

Somewhere in France

October 24, 1918,

Mrs. Eva Lawrence Cox and family:

Dear Neighbors,

I am going to write a few lines to let you know I have not forgotten you all. I certainly miss the lovely letters that I used to get when in camp at the States. Have not received mail for over three months but I know everything must be about the same at home. It was a great surprise to me to find I was to come across the Atlantic so soon after being sent to the South for training. Well, I can say I am proud to be here with the boys doing my bit. We certainly would like to get back to the States once more when the horrible war is over, and we all have our minds fixed that we will. I have certainly gotten used to things here now. There is a lot of rumbling in the air all the time and old Fritz, as you might call him, comes overhead quite frequently to see what is going on but we are too much for him and he turns back quite often.

I have been back of the front for a while helping the work along. I have seen a great deal of this country. Have been through the No-Man's land and it is a wonderful sight to see how the land is dug up in trenches and dugouts that the Huns had for three or four years and not even a tree with a branch on is left, just a stump of a tree now and then. The Allies are pushing them back all the time and it looks encouraging every day. I can imagine how the papers in the States look now. We see them occasionally but we don't get the whole paper as you do. I see that the Fourth Liberty Loan is getting up to the high mark. Suppose everything is high and help must be hard to get in the neighborhood. Have not heard from home yet and have written a lot of letters but am now settled for a steady address, being placed in a regiment and of course the mail will reach me quicker. The branch of service I am in is the Artillery. I have got in a division

that is mostly New England boys that were at camp with me. So I am well contented and enjoying the best of health as the days go by and the time passes so quickly that it is almost impossible to keep track of the days of the week which seem all alike in the Army. I often wonder if my brother Forrest is over here or not. Is Watson still at home? Where is Percy Hall now? This is a great country for raising grapes and making wine. The French can't get along without wine with their meals. The women do a great deal of work, working at most anything you can think of. Well, I guess I have written all the news for there is not much to write about when one is far away from home. It is getting along in the evening and I have to go on guard duty for a few hours. The boat that I came over on was sunk on the way back. Wasn't a bit seasick coming over and we certainly had a few rough days. This country is way back for farming and building up cities, no wooden buildings at all. Will have to close for this time, hoping this will find all well at your house and at home. Trusting I will hear from you again, I am sending my regular address. Best regards to all and trusting in the Lord that I will see you all again soon.

From your neighbor,
Frank E. Ambrose
103rd F.A. Supply Co.
Serial No. 389598
American Ex. F.
Via N.Y. France

Camp A.A. Humphreys, July 5, 1918

Dear Mrs. Cox,

Will you kindly have this printed? Tanking you very much, I remain,

Respectfully yours,

Forrest E. Ambrose



Dear Epsom Friends:

As it would be quite an undertaking to write to you all individually, I will send just a few words, so you all will be able to hear from me. I realize that I haven't been in the service long, but long enough to know what army life is, I have got accustomed to it now and am beginning to like it, even if it isn't as easy and pleasant as civilian life.

Nearly all the boys who came from Fort Slocum when I did have been transferred to other Regiments and Companies, so we are scattered all over the camp. I am assigned to Headquarters Co., and my name has been put on the "preferred list" to be held here for a while. As soon as I learned this I applied to be transferred to another Regiment. As I knew the other boys would probably be moving, and perhaps out of camp soon, I wanted to go with them. Out Adjutant told my Lieutenant for whom I am working, that he wouldn't consider my transfer until he first got his permission to let me go. I have tried to persuade him to let me go but without any results. He got another man to help do the work and promoted me to Corporal. It isn't very much but the pay is \$6.00 more a month

and that looks good to any soldier. There are 125 in our Company and five of us were made Corporals and one sergeant.

The work that I am doing is very interesting and I like it very much. There is always something to do but I have had someone to help me, it has been much better. The Lieutenant for whom I work is the Regiment Mess Officer. His duties are to receive orders for food supplies from each Company of the regiment each day and then purchase them, so as to deliver them the following day. A great deal of this is brought from the Camp Quartermaster here. The remainder is bought in Washington and brought each day by truck.

As President Wilson was to speak at Mt. Vernon yesterday, tow other fellows and I hiked out to hear him. We thought we could get there quicker by cutting across and going through the woods but as we lost the trail, it took much longer. The President went from Washington to Mt. Vernon on his yacht the Mayflower, and was met by the marine Guard and the marine Band. Both sides of the walk from the dock to Washington's new Tomb were lined with soldiers and behind them thousands of other people, waiting anxiously to see him and hear his speech. It was made from a large stump directly in front and only a few feet from the tomb. I was fortunate to get within about fifty feet of him, being near enough to see him very plainly but not near enough to hear much of his speech. He spoke very low and in such a crowd as was there, it was impossible to hear very much. His many friends who were with him carried wreaths of handsome flowers. After the speech the "Star Spangled Banner" was sung my McCormack, a great singer, and other patriotic music given by the band.

I will have to close for this time as it is nearly time for "Taps." We are called to Quarters at 9:45 and taps are sounded at 10 o'clock sharp. We must be in bed at that time or we may get some extra duties the next day if the sergeant finds that we are out when he comes around to inspect the barracks to see that everything is quiet and peaceful. Of course we Corporals get by with some of that work because we get in with the sergeant. (I wonder why?) This is leaving me well and happy and hope it will find you the same. I will be pleased to hear from all of you but please don't be disappointed if you shouldn't get an answer.

Yours very truly,

Corporal Forrest E. Ambrose
Headquarters Co. 5th Engineers
Training Regiment
Cap. A.A. Humphreys, VA.

France, December 7, 1918

Dear Mr. Lawrence,

I will write this evening to let you know that I haven't forgotten you all. Since I left the States, have done very little writing, as most of my time has been taken with my work. It makes no difference where a Company is, whether located in a Camp or traveling, the Mess Sergeant has plenty of work to see that the men get fed. While we were on the boat coming over, our Company was obliged to furnish a detail of men to work in the kitchen so I was put in charge of this detail. There were about ten thousand men on the ship and as they all had to eat in the one large kitchen, we got only two meals a day. We got fine feed and plenty of it and were thankful for that. The British food is some different from ours, as I found out when we were in Winchester, England; while we were there we were fed with English rations and they were poor. We left the States Sunday afternoon, October 27, and landed at Liverpool on the following Sunday noon. Seven days is good time for a transport to cross the ocean but we would have landed twelve hours sooner if he had met our destroyer on this side when we should have. We were supposed to have met it Friday night, when we reached the danger zone, but we didn't meet it until Saturday night, so lost a little time as we had to pass through the danger zone one whole day without any convoy. Just before going into the harbor the ship struck a sand bar and we were obliged to disembark onto small boats to go ashore. We didn't see much of Liverpool because it was night when we got ashore; we went direct to the station and got onto the train and rode all night, passed thru Leicester, where we stopped to get coffee and a bite to eat, got off the train at Winchester about seven o'clock in the morning and hiked to camp. After staying there one week we went to Southampton and crossed the English Channel to Cherbourg, France. We stopped there only one day and then went to St. Aignon. We were in billets there for five days and then left to come here. For a while it looked as if we would go to Metz, but I don't think we shall now; we arrived at this Camp on the 21st day of November and have been fixing up a Camp of our own. We are in tents and have got pretty well settled now so we are quite comfortable. Other Companies of white boy, who are operating a large saw mill, have been here many months. The men in our Company are working at the mill now. The mill has been in operation for quite awhile and has been sawing lumber to be sent to the front.

I suppose there were great times in the States when the news of the Armistice arrived. The papers here state that some of the boys have arrived back to the States already. This sounds good to us and we are all waiting for our turn to come back.

How is everything in Epsom? Imagine I have some mail on the way but it seems a good while since I received any. It has been nearly two months since I received my mail and I sure will be pleased to get some.

I have written quite often to the folks but do not know whether they have received my letters or not.

Well, I must close. I didn't intend to write so much when I started. Am well and trying to enjoy myself as much as possible while I am here. I hope this will find you all well. I wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Will be very glad to hear from you if you have time to write.

Sincerely,

Sergeant Forrest E. Ambrose

Co. "A" 547th Engrs. Troops

Eclaron, Haute Marne

A.P.O. 706 France