

station and the area surrounding Nashville he met many people that he had known before the war. He saw how much they were losing materially and suffering mentally and emotionally due to the war, and he was powerless to do anything about it. The fortune of his parents and relatives, all loyal to the Union, was wrecked beyond hope of salvaging. Their slaves left the plantations. The land, uncultivated, soon became worthless and much of it was lost because of the nonpayment of taxes. Burgess saw many of the once well-to-do people of this region who were now ragged, stricken with disease and famine, and ready to drop down and die. Many of these unfortunates he knew personally. To make matters worse, Burgess was regarded by most of those with whom he had grown up as a traitor to his state and to the Confederacy. To say that he only recognized the United States as his country was no defense at all. Burgess full well knew that he could not afford to be captured because he would be executed. Thus, he felt in constant danger of being abducted, and this caused him to spend many days and sleepless nights reflecting upon his probable fate.⁴⁰

As Sherman began his movement on Atlanta, Confederate cavalry made incessant attacks on his long line of railway communications. They destroyed trestles, bridges, culverts, and tore up the tracks, and burned millions of tons of supplies. Burgess was busy night and day aiding in keeping this supply line open. But after over a year of this work, he was in bad health and became seriously ill. After the Battle of Peachtree Creek, before Atlanta, Burgess, sick and depressed, asked for his discharge and received it.⁴¹

For this young soldier the war was now finished. Burgess had done his duty as his conscience dictated. But there were psychological scars that would remain with him for a long time. He had seen his state torn apart, institutions uprooted, his friends and relatives ruined, and hatred running rampant. His experience was similar to that of other thousands of Tennesseans who remained loyal to and fought for the preservation of the Union. The story of John W. Burgess is important because it sheds light on the individual—the human side—of the Civil War and the trials and tribulations of Unionists in Tennessee.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 366.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 367.

Letters from the AEF

Edited by WILLIAM R. MAJORS

Thomas Carlyle wrote "The history of the world is but the biography of famous men." The greater portion of historical literature does indeed appear to be the record of the activities of famous men, and the events, trends and movements that are set in motion by them. The explanation is simple: statesmen and leaders of society's institutions keep more detailed records and these become the prime resource material used by the historian. Less is known in all generations of the feelings and passions, the whims and fancies, the loves and hates, and the joys and sorrows of the great mass of people. The discovery of a long forgotten diary or packet of old letters from someone less than famous is therefore regarded by the historian as valuable evidence to be used in the continuing effort to more accurately record the story of mankind. Such was the case in the discovery of some letters written by a soldier in the trenches of France during the First World War. These letters reveal better than official documents the attitudes and feelings of men suddenly taken from mundane pursuits and transported thousands of miles to a strange land to fight in a bloody war. The soldier writer of these missives was Cordie Lee Majors who, after the war, became a noted educator and civil servant in McNairy County in West Tennessee. He was for some years, prior to his death in 1971, McNairy County Historian and it was his sense of history that required the presentation of these letters.¹

C. L. Majors was born in the Lawton community near Adamsville, Tennessee, in 1889 and was the eldest of nine children born to Robert B. and Louisa Elizabeth Horner Majors.² His childhood was in most respects typical of children whose parents eked out a meager existence on marginally productive farms at the turn of the century. And by modern standards his life was one of isola-

¹ C. L. Majors amassed a rather large collection of historically valuable papers, now in the possession of this writer, his son.

² At the time of World War I, his parents were living in the Hickory Flat community some four miles from Adamsville. Carl, the second son was also in the army; the eldest sister, Hattie was married; the remaining children at home in 1918 were Vallie, age 21, Leland, 16, Gilcie, 13, Jewell, 10, and Mary Lou, 8; one child died in infancy.

tion, for Adamsville was some fifteen miles from the nearest railroad at Selmer, the County seat. Despite modest circumstances, C. L. Majors had a thirst for knowledge, pursued as best he could an education, and achieved, by the standards of the day, a good education. High school attendance required that he go and take up residence at Bethel Springs, a community four miles north of Selmer. In order to pay for his room and board, he taught in one room country schools during the summer months. Upon graduation from high school in 1913, he became an assistant principal and teacher at his alma mater. As time passed, he improved upon his qualifications by attending summer school at institutions of higher learning and teacher institutes, or what the modern teacher would call a workshop. In September, 1916, he accepted a position to open a new high school at Ramer, a small village about ten miles southwest of Selmer. A few months later, the United States entered the First World War, and that event interrupted his career, for on October 5, 1917, he was inducted into the army as a private and assigned to Company C, 117th Infantry, of the 30th or "Old Hickory" Division. After seven months of training, his Company sailed for France as part of the American Expeditionary Force, arriving there in late May, 1918; then came more training before Company C went to the front lines in July. Made company clerk, Majors remained in relative safety much of the time but his letters and personal journal indicates that he did go into actual combat a few times and was frequently under shell fire. On September 29, he went "over the top" in the attack on the Hindenburg Line. And on one occasion he was trapped in "no man's land" out of reach of rescue for several days. In October, 1918, he was reassigned to officer candidate school at La Valbonne and was there at the time of the Armistice.

The selected letters herein are part of forty-four letters and cards in the collection, all addressed to parents or brothers and sisters. These letters remind us of how the United States developed an army in World War I: existing National Guard units were federalized and brought up to full complement with volunteers and draftees. In contrast to subsequent conflicts, recruits from the same community, and even brothers were often assigned to the same outfit. C. L.'s brother, Carl, was assigned to Company C, but took sick at the port of embarkation, was held there and never sent overseas. There is mention in these letters of Paul Williams,

the brother of the husband of sister Hattie, as well as other boys from McNairy County.

The letters offer little information of Majors' actual combat experiences or the location and movement of his outfit. No doubt he wanted to avoid parental worry but his reluctance to discuss military activities was probably due to the relatively strict censorship imposed on the men of the AEF. The Americans adopted two censorship devices used by their British ally: an honor system envelope and a post card with appropriate messages on it. The envelope required the soldier to sign a pledge that the letter contained only family and personal matters; the post card required the soldier merely to cross out inappropriate phrases. All other letters were read and censored by a company officer. It is interesting to note that censorship continued for many weeks after the Armistice. The reason is not clear; bureaucracy is always slow in reacting to changing situations—perhaps orders calling for the cessation of censorship were slow in reaching the company level or maybe the authorities simply forgot about it.

These letters provide a glimpse of the varieties in human emotion. There is love for home and country and hate for the enemy and what he stood for. There is an intense homesickness and a desire to get the business at hand over and to return home as quickly as possible. There are complaints about slow mail service and sometimes plaintive, sometimes almost angry, demands for letters from home. The life of a combat soldier is portrayed: long periods of boredom and drudgery, punctuated by moments of terror and with the specter of death ever present. Through it all, there is a conviction, undoubtedly held by many if not most of the men of the AEF, that they were making a worthwhile sacrifice. Many must have believed with President Woodrow Wilson, that they were fighting a holy cause, a war to end wars, to make the world safe for democracy. This one soldier appears to have been convinced that the world would be a better place because of his sacrifice.

The following letters are in chronological order, beginning with one written a month after his arrival in France. He had yet to receive mail from home.

Dear Homefolk:

Thursday, June 25, 1918

A few lines again to-night to let you know that I am well and

enjoying myself fine. Hope you are all well. It surely takes a long time to hear from you all. I have written each one of the family a card or letter, an average of almost one each day for some time. Write and let me know just how many of them you are getting. Have been in France over a month, and gee, if I ever get back, I can never regret the trip. If I don't get back, I can die with the satisfaction of my duty well done. Work! The more I work, the more I want to do.

Your son, Cordie

July 12, 1918

Dear Homefolk:

I am wondering how you all are to-day. Fine I hope. It is raining here to-day, and has been raining nearly all the time for two or three days.

Haven't had a letter from the U. S. A. for a long time, but am expecting some this P. M.

When have you heard from Carl? When you write to him tell him to write me. He knows my address but I do not know his.

You all must write often for letters from home is the best thing in the world to keep the "Yanks" in good spirits. I haven't had a letter in so long. I am expecting to get about a dozen to-day.

Will write again in a day or two. So write often.

Your son
Cordie

July 13, 1918

Dear Father and Mother and All:

Have just received a letter from Carl and was glad to hear from Him, for it had been a long time since I heard from him. Had begun to believe he was on his way across the pond.

Well I have written so often lately that I cannot think of anything new to write. Am well and enjoying life fine.

The letter from Carl was the only letter I have received in a long time.

Say why don't you send me some papers to read? Bundle up some old Enterprises and mail them to me. Am "hungry" for some good old McNairy County news. Have already written for the Independent to be sent to me.

Don't worry about me for I'm doing fine. Ans soon and write often.

Your son,
Cordie

American E. F.
July 17/18

My dear Mother:

Its a "bang!" left and right.

And a "boom!" in the air;

With the enemy in sight,

And our Allied support in the rear somewhere.

The roar of our gun,

An explosion of the shell,

The soul of some poor Hun

Sent screaming into H-ll.

From whence it came,

No one question's the source,

But in Autocracy's name,

It murdered by the Kaiser's force.

If by killing the enemy,

My own life his comrade may take,

I meet the end in the name of Democracy

And doing my duty for freedom's sake

Momma, there may not be much poetry in the above, but from it you can gather an idea of my surroundings, which are not at all enviable.

I was drafted into the service and answered the call with a heart as willing as the man who enlisted. I have never regretted the act. However you must not take me to mean that I am not anxious to return home, for I *am very* anxious for this war to end in our favor. I would rather be at home the owner of a Ford (or old grey "Kit" and a cart) than to have to stay over here the owner of a rail road, all of which are only "makelikes."

As I write these few lines in my notebook lying on the "front of my back," hugging close to mother earth, shells are bursting in the air. Yes I'd rather be in Tennessee following at the north end of a south bound mule than to be here. I'm almost like the Civil War veteran who upon seeing a rabbit running from the noise of battle remarked, "go you cottontail, if it were not for my reputation I'd go with you." Of course I realize there is a rose for every thorn, a little bit of sweet for every bit of sour, and a little bit of patriotism and love for home and native country in every person. I am getting, it seems, my share of the former (thorns and sour) but all the time looking forward optimistically to the day when the other side presents itself to view; and there is enough patriotism in me and love for home and the U. S. A. that will cause me to stick, unless I get a "flighty," until its over "over here."

There are many funny sayings among the "sammies." When one gets wounded they say, "he got a flighty." When they hear one of our shells going over they remark "I hope that will make some German woman a widow," or the "Kaiser's mother sonless," and many others.

Wish I had time and the privilege of writing in details about all I have seen and heard. But then paper is too scarce in Europe for all that. So will just hold back until I get home and will spend the remainder of my days trying to tell it. Wishing you all health and happiness, I am just the same.

Truly, your son
Cordie

Post mark July 20, 1918

Dear Momma:

Just a few words to let you know that I am well and enjoying myself "Somewhere in France" via N. Y. and hope you are all well and enjoying life. You must never forget that I think of you every day with deeper love than ever and I want you to write me often. My address is given somewhere in the body of this letter, that part of it. The card that no doubt you have already received will give the rest of it.

The leagues of land divide us and oceans lie between [us] my love for my dear parents and brothers and sisters is ever the same.

Answer soon.

Your son,
C. L. Majors

July 26 1918

Dear Momma:

Having done my turn in the front line trenches, am now back in a rest camp enjoying life.

While in the front line I have the pleasure (?) of going on patrol (crawling on the ground on the front of my back, thru grass and weeds) into no man's land in search of German's. I know and fully realize by experience what war is. Don't worry about me because I merely went on the patrol for the experience. I am still company clerk and don't have to do anything of that sort.

I had a card from Chas. Sharp yesterday. Tell him hello for me. Was sure glad to get his card. Also a letter from Carl several days ago and a card from Albert only a few days ago. Give all of them my best regards and tell them to write as often as they can and I'll try to write or ans. them some time, but I cannot answer all at once. Tell Mildred hello for me. Did Mary and Jewell and the rest get the cards I sent?

Will write again shortly. Answer soon.

Lovingly your son
Cordie

July 28 1918

My dear Father and Mother and All:

The mail to-day brought me great joy, a letter stating you all were well. Was sorry however to know you had not received any mail from me. I have written at least two dozen letters and cards. This leaves me well and enjoying a little rest after being in the front line, where I was under both shell and rifle fire for a time.

Your letter was written June 28th one month from to-day. I have received several from you since landing safely on this side and hope you will continue the good work, but increasing as the days pass by. Letters from home worded by Father and Mother are "like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

Carl's Enterprise came to me thru mistake, but I sure was glad to get it. There was a letter in it from Bob Hamilton which I enjoyed very much.

Will now close and write again in a day or two. Hope to hear from you all often.

Your loving son,
Cordie

July 29 1918

Dear Homefolk:

Another letter from you mailed June 18th. Glad you are all well. I am working hard and doing fine.

You probably have received some of the letters I have written. If all of them reach you at once I know there will be all Charlie will want to carry at once.

I also received a letter from an old school mate, formerly Miss Vennie Strawn. She had gotten my name from the Enterprise. All letters are a source of much satisfaction and consolation to the oversea boys in kakhi. Don't forget to send me every Enterprise you get hold of. I wrote some time ago for the Selmer Independent.

Well, the news is very encouraging, everything going our way, and the "Yanks" winning gradually, but finally and inevitably, everything before them, and all along the line. There seems to be good ground for the belief that peace will reign supreme in the land by Xmas.

Give all my best and kindest regards and write me all the news about everything and everybody. You cannot write too often. Will write again to-morrow or next day.

Your loving son,
Cordie

American E. F.
August 2, 1918

My dear Parents and All:

While waiting for the mail to come this P. M. in which I am looking for a letter from you, will let you know that I am well. We are having some rain to-day.

Yesterday I received two copies of the Enterprise dated June 13th and 27th and one copy of the Independent dated June 28th. You don't know how glad I was to get them.

I wrote you some time ago that I was not in France any more. Will now tell you that we are all in Belgium. The day is coming I hope when we will be in Germany (even Berlin) with everything in our favor. Well, wherever we may be things will be in our favor, for the opposite would be contrary to the spirit and determination of the "Old Hickory" Division. You know where there is a will there can be made a way.

From the June news at hand you have good crops. I hope so anyway. This has been a beautiful country, fine farming country. The crops in the back area are fine, wheat, oats, sugar beets, etc. Wheat harvesting is now beginning. The larger part of this country is an area of devastation and ruin. There is also another harvest in progress, we the harvesters. Read the newspapers for the results.

Lovingly your son
Cordie

American E. F.
August 2, 1918

My dear Homefolk:

Since writing you this morning the evening's mail brought me tidings of great joy, 8 letters, 3 of them from home, one from Hattie, one from Selmer and the rest of them from the good little town of Bethel. One was from Mrs. Hester, telling me of her frying size chickens, etc. Well that brought back memories of the long ago, happy memories of the pleasant days spent in the home of A. J. Hester, one of the best families I ever knew.

I was indeed glad to get your sweet letters and to know you were all well, and good crops etc. The 3 letters received from you were written July 3rd, 10th, and 13th. According to that it takes nearly a month for letters to come from you to me.

You spoke of, or rather expressed a desire that I write about all that I have seen. Well that would hardly be possible but if I continue to write so often there will not be much left untold.

This is a busy life for all Sammies. There are many days that requires my entire attention from early morn to late at night with scarcely time to eat. Then a breathing spell will come and you can easily guess how I spend that time. Writing letters of course and if I ever receive an answer to every one of them, I will never be lonesome.

You should see these boys sitting around with smiling faces, the happiest bunch I nearly ever saw, reading their letters, almost all received to-day from 2 to a dozen letters. If you want to see a boy from "Dixie" shout with joy let him get a letter from home. One fellow got 12 letters. He has been out here reading them and acting

the biggest fool you ever saw for about an hour, all with joy of course.

Write often. From your loving son,
Cordie.

American E. F.,
Aug 10/18

Dear Momma:

Just a few words to let you know that I am still living and well. Wonder how you all are this morning.

There has been rain here every day for a long time, but the prospects this morning indicate a beautiful day. The birds are singing their beautiful songs. Reminds me of sunny Tennessee.

Say I had my hair clipped off short yesterday. Bet you can't guess why ha. We all dread the "cooties" more than we do the Germans.

Will not write much this time but will write again in a day or two. Hope you have received several of my letters by now. Ans. soon. Love to all.

Your son
C. L. Majors

Wednesday
Aug. 14/18

Dear Momma:

Will now proceed to answer your letter just received and which was written July 15th.

Everything seems lovely in these parts. Germans reluctantly giving way under the pressure of the Allies. Many thousand prisoners in addition to the dead and hundreds of guns is the booty of the past few days. Germany is doomed to utter defeat. It may be Xmas and it may be in the long spring drive in 1919. It cannot last any longer than that.

Wish I could be at home this summer to help eat fruit and watermelons. Do you have a mellon patch?

Here's what we had for dinner to-day: Green string beans cooked with Irish potatoes, roast beef, and loaf bread. Geel how I would like to have some corn bread, and biscuits.

With love.

Your Son,
C. L. Majors

Monday P. M.
Aug. 19/18

Dear Homefolk:

In the trenches again, doing our bit, thats all. I'm well and enjoying life.

It is now 5 o'clock. Since 8:00 this morning the enemy have dropped 27 of his big shells in our vacinity, and only 6 of them exploded. The rest were "duds." (We call the ones that do not

"go off" duds) That only goes to show how defective his amunition is becoming.

I am beginning to wait with patience (?) for another copy of the Enterprise. Have never received but one copy. Am afraid they get lost unless M. O. W. addresses them with pin and ink. All mail addressed with pencil is liable not to reach the addressee, because it is usually worn to an extent that it can hardly be read.

Write me all the news as often as you can.

With love and best wishes.

Your loving son,
Cordie

Sept. 3, 1918

Dear Homefolk:

Received your letter night before last that you wrote me on July 26. Sorry to hear that Vallie is not well. This leaves me well. Hope by this time Vallie is well of chills.

The weather is not so warm over here now. There is not much difference in it and the weather over there.

This division has recently taken part in a drive, losing a few men and taking several prisoners and gained one of the enemy's important positions. They cannot rush the Hun too fast to suit me.

The sooner the better, if the "sooner" is a complete victory over the barbarian brutes. Nothing short of that will be worth the price already paid; anything less will make us unworthy of our inheritance. God forbid that we should ever fail to live up to the principles set out in the Declaration of Independence and nobly upheld by our grand and good President. "Berlin or Bust," or Heaven and hell will by synonymous terms, No—a thousand times no.

Your loving son,
Cordie.

American E. F.,
Sept. 9, 1918

Dear Father & Mother:

Your letter written Aug 10th just received and mighty proud to hear from you and to know you all are well.

This leaves me well and doing fine.

We certainly are having some rain for the past few days, and mud is everywhere.

Wish I was there to take in the meeting.

We are among some mighty fine French people.

Do you get all of my letters? You only speak of receiving one now and then. I write at least 3 to 5 every week.

It has been 2 or three weeks since I received the Enterprise. Have received 3 copies in all. I don't expect to receive very many unless they are plainly addressed with pen and ink. Pencil

addresses are worn out by the time they are received over here.

Write me often.

Your loving son,
Cordie

Sept. 20, 1918

My dear Mother:

Will write you a few lines as I promised in the letter I wrote yesterday. Received your letter about 2 hours ago, the one you wrote me on Aug. 24th. Was very glad to get it an to know that you were well. This leaves me well and enjoying splendid health.

Wish I was there to help Papa in the sorghum. Here's hoping that things will turn out so that I can get home in time to eat and enjoy some of that good old sorghum molasses, and I believe your prayers and mine and my hopes and highest ambitions will come true. If they do what a happy time I will have relating my experiences. When the roll is called in Berlin I'll be there Johny on the spot "for Dixie and Uncle Sam" and you, and when the roll is called at our own family fireside I want to be there, and then the final roll call when all our work on earth is done "I want to be there, I do."

I also had another letter from Carl to-day. He seems to be getting along fine and anxious to come over here. Well he is and feels about like I did about the matter. A great experience it is and all that kind of stuff, but I feel like kicking his "r-p" if he does not look out for no. 1. Money couldn't buy my experiences and what I have learned on the trip but millions, would I spend could I thereby know for sure that I could have the happy privilege of once more coming back home to you, and once more resuming my school work and to some extent satisfying my ambition to do my duty as a citizen of the U. S. Of course I fully realize that I am performing a sacred duty not only to my fellow associates both comrades in arms and those loyal supporters at home, but to generations yet to come who will naturally want to live in a free world. However there will be peace time duties after the war. Those are the duties I crave to perform as do millions of others. But all must pay the price, some in one way and some in other ways. The final outcome will be worth the price whatever it may be. We are bound to win. "Berlin or Bust."

One more copy of the "Enterprise" to-day, the issue of Aug. 1st. My! its welcome, thrice welcome, more so now than ever before.

I haven't seen Paul in a month, seems like, but am sure he's getting along fine.

Will close by this time. Write often

Your son,
Cordie

Sept. 27, 1918

My dear Homefolk:

Will write you a few lines to let you know that I am well. Hope you all are the same.

Well we are on ground now that was occupied by the Germans less than one month ago and facing the noted Hindenburg line, but don't worry, we're doing and sacrificing something that is worth while. Here's hoping and praying that I will make it thru safe and be permitted to return to you. I dreamed two nights in succession this week just as plain as day light of being at home and last night I dreamed of being in Bethel. Some dreams, but they are sweet just the same.

Hope to hear from you often. With love to all, I am

Your son and brother,

Cordie

The following letter was written after the attack on the Hindenburg Line. He had also just been promoted to sergeant but makes no mention of the promotion except to attach his new rank to his signature.

Oct. 7/18

My dear Father and Mother & All:

I now have 3 letters from you to answer, one written Aug. 31, one Sept. 3, and one Sept. 7th.

Haven't written you in several days for it has been almost impossible.

That little piece of prose you sent me is fine. It brought tears to my eyes when I read it. Am keeping it in my little Testament.

I have recently had the experience of going "over the top" and capturing some prisoners. The pencil I am writing is one I took from the pocket of a German I captured. That was an awful experience, one that no one need care to have, when men were falling all around. If you ever did pray now is the time.

Paul Williams and Homer Gray made it thru safe. So did all our McNairy County boys except one in "D" Company. His name is Earl Burks from south part of the County.

Write ever chance you get.

Your son

Sgt. C. L. Majors

Oct. 10, 1918

My dear Sisters, Jewell and Mary Lou:

I received your sweet letter written August 10th and was mighty proud to get it.

This leaves me well and hope you *all* are the same.

Yes I would like to be there to help you pick cotton. But I have a harder job than picking cotton. And that is fighting these dirty Germans. Don't you wish that we could soon get them whipped?

Well no one can wish it any stronger than I do. And if we keep on like we have been whipping them for the last 10 days, it won't last long.

I have some nice souvenirs taken off the Germans. I have one of his leather belts, a bouy knife, a combination knife and chain, and a nice watch and chain. I have also some German money.

I got your picture and was glad to get it. I cut it out just the size of my little testament and am going to keep it.

Write me often.

Your loving brother,

Sgt. C. L. Majors

Oct. 11, 1918

Dear Homefolk:

Will now answer your letter of Sept. 10th. This leaves me well and hope you are the same.

I have so many letters to answer that I have to write in a hurry to get them all answered. And besides haven't had much opportunity for some time. I received 7 letters day before yesterday and was already behind with three letters. So you see I am trying to perform the task to-night of answering 10 letters. What do you think of that?

What is the general opinion with everybody and the newspapers over there as to the extent of the war? We don't think it will last much longer. If we continue successful, the Germans will be back wholly on their own soil within one month and they will have to make peace by Xmas. That is my view of it.

Oscar Hurst got killed day before yesterday.

Written often, Your loving son,

Sgt. C. L. Majors

In mid-October Majors was transferred to officer candidate school at La Valbonne. The following was the first from his new assignment and indicates relief at being away from the front.

Oct. 24/18

Dear Momma:

Am answering your letter written Sept. 26th.

Since writing you last I have had the opportunity of traveling some 5 or 6 hundred miles over France. Am now in the Alps Mountains, over 150 miles from the front line going to an Infantry School. Gee, it some relief to be out from under shell fire. Guess I will be here for a few weeks.

Am inclosing another letter written several days ago, but haven't had the opportunity to mail until now.

Write me often. My address is changed to the one given below.

Your loving son,

Sgt. Cordie L. Majors

Nov. 10, 1918

My dear Parents:

A few days ago I received 15 letters, 4 of them from you dated Sept. 21st, 24th, 26th and 30th. They were all full of news and very interesting.

This leaves me in the best of health and enjoying life to the fullest.

You asked me if I had a good place to stay. Will say at present I have big stone and concrete buildings. Understand I said "at present." There have been times when a shell hole looked good, a hole in the ground, a ditch, anywhere for a little protection. But that day I hope is close to an end for the war is nearly "finis."

I don't understand why you have not received my bonds and allotment. Write me in every letter or two whether or not you receive it and if you do not I'll have it duplicated. There should be \$170 allotment coming to you now and \$100 Bonds.

No I haven't seen Emery yet. You must remember there are over two million men over here now and scattered over 4 or 5 hundred miles of territory. So you see it will be an accident if I ever see him. Write and give me his address.

I have not received any paper from the U. S. in over a month. In fact I have received no more than 4 copies of the Enterprise in all. Some from Ramer sent me the Commercial Appeal.

Will close for this time. With love and best wishes for all.

Your son,

Cand. Cordie L. Majors

Although there are others written subsequent to the following letter, it is deemed fitting to conclude with "Dad's Xmas Letter" for it appropriately summarizes his experiences in the war zone.

"DAD'S XMAS LETTER"

A.E.F., Nov. 24, 1918

My dear Father:

Sunday, it is, and a happy day. Happy because of the fact that I am living and appreciative enough to write you this letter. Thankful, I am, to the good God above for this happiness; appreciative because of the many things you have done for me, and your good advices of days that are numbered with the past. I would not take anything on earth for the privilege I am enjoying this minute. Some one has been wise enough, and with foresight, to give impetus to the movement which on this day every boy in France is requested to write "Dad's Xmas Letter," and you are probably writing me one too.

Six months ago last night I spent the night in Dover, England, having crossed the country from Liverpool that day. Six months ago this morning I crossed the Strait of Dover and landed at Calais,

France, where we spent only a few days resting, seeing some of the city and surrounding country, and exchanging clothing. It was here that we drew our gas masks, the one I got serving me thru thick and thin, and the one that I still have. There are a number of favorite expressions that the boys write on the outside of their masks. Here are the one's I have written on mine: "Let me hide my face in thee," "In thee I trust," "Smine, snot yourn." It was very common to hear the "dough boys" refer to gas masks and steel helmets as their best friends, this of course after they got under shell fire or were anticipating the move. During our stay at Calais we were huddled together in round tents. At night we slept on the floor, heads around close to the outer edge and feet toward the center. Long "guys" were not allowed to extend their feet beyond the center pole, because he would then interfere with the comfortable position of the man opposite him. Sand bags were piled around each tent to a height of about three feet, this for protection in case of an enemy air raid. At that time the Germans were trying to break the morale of the French people by continually bombing their sea ports and inland towns and rail roads.

From Calais we rode in a second class passenger train southward about forty miles. Leaving the station we hiked with packs on our backs about seven or eight miles to a little town in the country by the name of Mentque. Here we spent a little over four weeks very pleasantly, sleeping in the barns of French farmers, using hay for beds, and during the daytime training in the tactics of actual defensive and offensive warfare, the bitter dregs of which we had a taste later on.

On July 2nd, two months from the day we left Camp Sevier, we began a three days hike of about thirty-five miles, arriving in the "danger zone," shell fire and bombs, in the vicinity of Popperinghe, Belgium. From July 19th to 25th we had our first experience in holding the front line trenches at Ypres, a full account of which I cannot give just now. It was here on the night of the 21st that I had my first experience on a patrol into "no man's land." My position of being in charge of the party going after rations each night was no less interesting and exciting. An account of it would be too much here. In this sector we played in and out for two months.

In September we moved farther south to the position of the line between St Quintin and Cambrai, both in France and facing the noted Hindenburgh line. It would take a book and tax the patience of all the censors in the A.E.F. to give a complete description of all I saw in the offensive in which the 30th Division played such an important part. Company "C" was in the fray which broke thru that strong German line at Bellicourt. I captured a German and with others helped to get many more. That was on September 29th. We were glad to take shelter in the concrete doughouts which we

took from the Germans on that day. But that day was not the finish. When I left the Company and the Division on October 14th we had driven the enemy back a distance of more than twenty miles.

I am now at LaValbonne, France in an Officers' Training School.

The end has finally come and the "Hun's" hellacious warfare of wanton destruction and barbarity on land and sea is finished. The Kaiser has abdicated and the death knell of his autocratic regime has been sounded. I hope that the declaration of peace terms will end his breed of autocracy for all ages to come.

There are many, many more things I might write about but it would be impossible to write it all. I hope to be at home in a few weeks.

With best wishes for a joyful Xmas, a happy new year, and love to all, I am

Your loving son,
Cordie

George Fort Milton and the New Deal

By JAMES A. HODGES

Jonathan Daniels went on the road in 1937 to discover the South and the young liberal North Carolinian came across the mountains to the Tennessee River Valley to make his way down river observing the Tennessee Valley Authority in action. In Chattanooga he interviewed George Fort Milton, publisher and editor of the *Chattanooga News*, in Milton's "grand working-writing man's library." "Milton," he wrote, "is not a pretty man." Daniels found Milton a heavy man with nervous agility: "Not seldom he looks like the cat that has eaten the canary." But Milton, Daniels wrote, "with his big words and his casual familiarity with the most abstruse ideas" had shown Chattanooga that he could talk and write and fight for the New Deal. Milton, wrote Daniels, was representative of "an awakening South."¹ Milton, in short, was a New Dealer liberal and proud of it.

Milton, as well as being publisher and an ever-present editor who ran the *News*, actually wrote many of the editorials. He wrote almost daily a full column editorial, one of the two columns that the *News* ran. He dictated his editorials in midmorning without notes and without pause or false starts and took only a few minutes to do so. He then extensively edited the copy with pencil.² He did co-ordinate *News* editorial policy with two other writers that did other editorials. Milton had few illusions that his editorials were widely read. He once said that his own survey showed only a twenty per cent readership.³ Nevertheless, he viewed the editorial page as the heart of a newspaper. Undoubtedly, the *News* editorials represented his unvarnished opinion. As he wrote Professor Lindsay Rogers of Columbia University, he

¹ Jonathan Daniels, *A Southerner Discovers the South* (New York, 1938), 92. For other engaging personal portraits of Milton see Francis Biddle, *In Brief Authority* (New York, 1962), 64; "Dixie Editor," in *Newsweek*, 10 (Oct. 11, 1937), 16-17; "Chattanooga's Milton," *Time*, 35 (April 8, 1940), 65-67.

² Interview with Ellen Pennington, formerly Milton's secretary, Chattanooga, April 30, 1971; interview with Nellie Kenyon, formerly a *Chattanooga News* reporter; interview with Mrs. Alice W. Milton, May 1, 1971; see also George Fort Milton to Allen Haden, January 30, 1937, describing his column-a-day workload, *George Fort Milton Papers*, Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress (hereafter cited as *Milton Papers*). Milton also dictated his history books.

³ Milton to C. P. Ives, May 6, 1936, *Milton Papers*.