

Kansas Memory



Frank Louise Seifert, World War I soldier

Section 1, Pages 1 - 30

Around 1919, the Kansas State Historical Society and the American Legion solicited biographical information from returning veterans (primarily members of the 35th and 89th infantry divisions) and the families of those who died in service, notably from the Gold Star Mothers. Each veteran or family member was asked to provide letters, photographs, a biography, and military records. This file contains information on Frank Louise Seifert, Battery F, 129th Field Artillery, 35th Division.

Creator: Seifert, Frank Louis

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K. C. Mo. Jan. 6-1919
Mr. Wm E. Connelley
Secy. Kans. Historical Society
Topeka, Kans.

Dear Sir:-

I noticed in K.C. Star Dec. 18 a notice to send letters from members of 35th Div. to you.

Am enclosing a part of one my daughter received one my father & one my mother and one I rec'd from my brother Sgt. F. L. Seifert Battery 7 129th F. G. (35th Div.)

My brothers full name is Frank Louis Seifert. Was born at Howard Iowa March 13th 1892 when home lives with parents Mr. Stephen Seifert & Mrs. Elizabeth C. Seifert 2537 Tracy

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Kansas City, Mo. was educated at Manual Training High Sch.,
Kansas City, Mo. Was with Ingram Lumber Co. before enlisting in the
army. Is a single man.

In regard to photo none of us care to part with ours and we have
not got the groove. If we sent a photo would you have a print made & then
send original one back or if you sent to Lawton, Okla. You could
probably get a copy as that is where they were taken.

yours truly

P.S.

Mrs. Walter Jensen

Just found out there is no 46th & Cleveland,
photographer's name on picture
only know they were taken at Lawton.
Mo.

H. C. Mo.

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H. C. Mo. Feb. 24-1919
Mr. W. B. Connley
Historical Society
Topeka, Kans.

Dear Sir.

Am enclosing copy of letters to
be added to others sent you of Sgt.
F. L. Seifert.

yours truly

Miss C. Seifert

2537 Tracy ave.

K. C. mo.

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French Village 5/5-1918

My Dear Little Niece:-

Eleven of us are billeted in an old French house. We are in the attic and it would make a dandy play house for you. The rafters are made of large oak timbers. There are three small windows in the roof which are made of tile.

Tell your mother I am ~~studying~~ very hard. Go to school every day & study in the evening. It is very interesting though & the time passes very swiftly.

There's an old Chateau in the village. It was built in 1550 & has an old moat running around it. There is also a large lawn with many flowers & trees. It would be a beautiful place for you to play with the little French children. There are three little girls living in the house below us. They have several little rabbits for pets & they also have a garden in the back yard. It makes it very homelike.

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Louie to all
from your loving
Uncle Louis.

Corp. F. L. Seifert
Battery 7. 129 F. G.
A.P.O. 728
American E.F.

P.S.

At the writing of this letter my brother
was still a Corporal which rank was
given him before leaving St. C.

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In Billets 10th-1918

Seignerelles, France.

Dear Father

Have just returned to billets after a "turn" at the front. received twenty-one letters while we were in position on the line and received fifteen more yesterday.

Well, father, it has been seven wks. since we left our training camp in France for more serious work. and take it from me, it has been the most strenuous seven weeks of my life. our brigade was called upon to make a forced march just after coming out of the Vosges mts.. we traveled by rail for a distance of about fifty kilometers and from thence on it was march. Our horses were worn out to begin with & the first couple of days began to drop by the road side. Private mounts were put in draft & every one was compelled not only to walk, but also to carry his roll in order to make the load lighter for the poor, tired horses.

Had the experience of marching for eighteen hrs. at night when you could not see a yd. in front of you when the

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Rain was coming down in sheets. Many times we would have to put our shoulder to the wheel & help push the caisson or wagon to the top of a difficult hill. Sometimes we would rest for ten min. at the end of each hr. Every one would fall out to the right of the road & would stretch out, regardless of mud or rain, & fall asleep. ~~Have~~ even slept standing up. During these naps I would have some of the most peculiar dreams. On one occasion I dreamed I was standing by the stove in our kitchen at home. The oven door was open & inside was a wonderful coconut cake. I was just going to help myself when the command "forward" came down the line & we proceeded on our endless journey. Many times one meal was all we could manage during the day & consequently food was about the most pleasant topic of conversation. Have partaken of many an imaginary meal of mother's cooking.

I here marched usually ended in some woods where we could hide our carriages & horses. Sometimes I would sleep in the

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Wagon on top of a lot of signal equipment and sometimes (usually) each two men would pitch pup tents together. Sometimes we would get four hrs. sleep & sometimes more.

The first time we went up to the front, we were engaged in position warfare. our guns were in pits & the men slept in dugouts. We had an excellant position & after putting over a heavy barrage, which cost the Germans many men & drove them out of their front line, we pulled out with no casualties. Spent five days at that front.

Our last trip to the front was open warfare & brought home to us more forcibly some of the unpleasant conditions of war. We had the honor to participate in one of the largest drives of the war. our division reached their objectives ahead of time & kept on going. altogether driving the enemy back from 12 to 15 Kilometers. We came out with a wonderful record. our brigade was commended for its marching ability & for arriving at the front in the best condition. our battalion was cited for bravery, having gone into position under fire, and putting over a barrage in 4½ min.

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Our doughboys did wonderful work, the only criticism being they were too fast. In several instances they pushed forward until they were cut off from artillery or tank support. & of course they lost more men than they otherwise would.

On Sept. 22^d at 6.6. M. and after an all night march, we arrived at a woods. We had mess at 96. M. It started to rain about 10:30 6. M. So I crawled into the signal wagon for a little sleep. At 3 P.M. the firing battery & detail were ordered to be ready to move up to the front by 5:30 P.M. Our camp was a sea of mud and still the rain came down. It was 8 P.M. When we finally started on our way. We were all mounted but our horses were so tired that we did not make good time. We were cursed with a cold rain all the way. Carriages and wagons were continually falling out but the rest of the column would drive around & continue the march. By the time we reached our position we were soaked to the skin and nearly frozen.

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The detail wagon had been ditched & everything had been emptied out in the mud in order to pull the wagon out of the ditch. You can imagine what a pleasant job we had unloading all the equipment about 26 M. in a driving rain & placing under cover where it would be hidden. We went into position at the edge of a forest, and after the guns had been placed & everything made ready, we turned in for a few hrs. sleep - 6:30 A.M. my blanket roll was sent back to the picket line by mistake so I made my bed on top of the signal box & covered up with the Captain's overcoat.

The enemy put over a light bombardment but we were not disturbed. Next morning we were busy camouflaging our position with trees & shrubs. I placed a large piece of canvas over the equipment & made a very good tent. We had about 3 gas alarms during the night and at 5:30 A.M. the Germans opened up quite a heavy bombardment. I had my gas mask on & could hear the shells

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whistling through the trees & brushing pretty close. We had dug several ditches about 10 ft. long, a foot & a half wide & about 6 ft. deep, which afforded a great deal of protection from shell fragments. Finally one shell exploded about 100 yds. to the rear & the explosion was followed by a big flare. Upon looking out I found that "E" Battery's ammunition dump had been set on fire. The captain & lieutenant were sleeping in a pup tent only 10 ft. from my bunk and when they saw the dump go up, they moved out for a dug-out. Was just putting on my shoes - rather undecided whether to go to the trenches or stay where I was - when an H.E. shell lit right on the top of my tent. The bombardment lasted about 1/2 an hr. & the boches sent over approximately 100 shells. One man in another battery was killed & we had a man injured at another point. The shell which hit the pup tent blew the capt. raincoat to shreds, ruined a pr. of leggings & torn a sleeve out of his blouse. They surely sat out

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just in time.

We sure gave the Heinies a warm reception at 4:20 the next morning - sent over a barrage which lasted for 3 hrs. The whole brigade was firing & our battery alone used several thousand rounds of ammunition. Our dough boys went "over the top" and we had to move forward to a new position. Just before we reached the German front line trenches we encountered small parties of wounded Americans & Germans and some German prisoners on their way to the rear. We stopped for a few hrs. at the enemy positions which our doughboys had captured early in the morning & these trenches were certainly well built. Many of them were built of concrete & had shower baths & sleeping quarters just like a little village. They left quite a bit of ammunition, clothing & other equipment behind.

We had quite a bit of excitement at one point we were caught out in an open field waiting for a bridge to be repaired. An enemy balloon sighted us & we immediately became

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a fine target for the enemy artillery. We took cover behind a hill & succeeded in going a head with only two men wounded & several of the horses being hit. I saw one of the shells fall & explode directly under a pr. of horses about 10 yds. away. only one man & one horse was injured. Do not see how they escaped alive. We had passed through many villages which had been completely destroyed. Only walls left standing - but a little farther on we had our first sight of a battle field over which infantry had advanced only a few hrs. before. The sight that greeted our eyes was one to spur us to even greater efforts. They were dead of both sides lying along the road & in the fields. The ground at this point had been well protected with machine guns & it had cast the boys in khaki pretty heavy. We saw one fellow lying face downward with his rifle still clutched in his hands. At another place a shell had burst in a group of 12 or more, and I shall never forget the gruesome scene. The bodies were beyond recognition. The darker side of war was

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brought home to us.

Just a few yds. farther however. I met Frank Terrill & just had time to grasp him by the hand, He is in fine health & spirits. Also saw a biplane bring down 2 of our balloons in less than 5 min. He also came down however. I met Frank just outside of the town of Cheppay, which had just been captured & was a mass of ruins both from our fire & from shell fire earlier in the war. We hurried through the town & went into position in a field. The Germans let us have a few but we put over a good stiff barrage & they soon ceased firing. Later in the day we moved back to a better position about 100 yds. to the rear. We maintained this position until we were relieved 5 days later. We had quite a little excitement during the 5 days. Our doughboys went forward until they were worn out & then held the line till relief was sent up. The roads were crowded with every describable vehicle of war. Artillery, tanks, ammunition trains

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Supply trucks & ambulances. It seems the Germans relied mostly upon their machine guns & they certainly had a great many of them.

As soon as I could find a little time, I took a look around the trenches. There was an American soldier lying only a few feet from one of our guns & one of the boys tried to wake him up thinking he was one of our men. This man had paid the price, however, and there were no more calls for him. The trenches were full of souvenirs such as helmets, rifles, hand grenades, blankets, brushes, machine gun & rifle ammunition & in fact, most anything you could think of. I picked up a cap, saber & a couple of post cards. Didn't have room for more. The wounded had all been carried off the field & there were not many dead.

One evening when we were all in the mess lines 3 German machines came over, dropped 5 bombs in the town & opened upon us with machine gun fire. You speak of the crowds going to 8 wks Park to see the airplanes & I will tell you

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of a crowd of soldiers scattering under caissons, wagons & every conceivable means of concealment. The Worst of it was it interrupted our meal. I took my mess kit under a caisson & finished in peace watched the fight far awhile. Our machine gun was answering the one in the airplane & it sounded like a hundred riveting hammers were going at the same time. One of our men was severely wounded in the neck & back, they expect him to recover & we all hope he does. Was a fine fellow from St. Louis. The Worst night of all was next ^{to} the last night. German batteries were sweeping the back areas & we by this time had been left in the rear, our doughboys having advanced again. They dropped quite a few near our position, several more in the town close to our kitchen & 3 or 4 in our picket line. One of these shells struck a caisson loaded with ammunition. The explosion killed 2 men & wounded several others, destroyed the caisson & killed 14 horses. You can imagine we were very glad when a new division came in to relieve us & we were brought back here in a village

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behind the lines where we at least do not have to "dodge 'em":

Talk about airplanes! The allies it seems have the enemy smothered. Have seen as many as 50 planes in the air at one time. Looked like a huge flock of large birds. Have also beheld some flying exhibitions which were not put on for show but included all the dips & spirals on the program & finally ended in one or two coming down in flames.

I think I have told most all of my experiences in our campaign with the first American army.

Love to all

From Louis

Sgt. F. L. Seifert
Battery F 129th F. G. American E. F.

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On the front.

1/26-18

Dear Sis:-

Just finished ready my shirt only found one cootie but if he was the cause of the discomfort I was experiencing, he sure was a healthy specimen and full of pep.

I wrote home a few days ago & we are still in the same sector but have moved up close to our Infantry. Everything is quiet at present, of course there is always some firing but at rather long intervals. Spend most of our time in our dugouts keeping out of sight of enemy aircraft.

This position was occupied at one time not so very long ago by a French battery & judging from the numerous shell holes in the near vicinity & 3 caissons which were destroyed by shell fire not mentioning several graves, it seems, that this French battery might have been shelled out. For that reason we are not advertising our arrival until the proper time comes & I know when that time does

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Come, old Fritz will be so busy moving out, that he wont have much time to devote to shelling us.

Our position is a series of communicating trenches & dugouts. The guns are in pits & are camouflaged so that you could not tell they were there if you were outside looking in. We are not allowed to build fires in the day time on account of the smoke, smoke is a dead give away to the enemy. Our breakfast is cooked before day break & sent up to the battery position. We feed by sections & have to feel our way along the trench until we come to the place where mess is being served out. Here we get our mess kit filled & then go back to our dugouts. It reminds me of the dragon at Electric Park & sometimes we manage to return with as much as half of what we started away with.

Our Instrument Sgt. has gone to Officer Tr. Sch. so I have been put in his place. Have a dandy dugout with two of the instrument men. To get to our dugout, you follow along the trench & you finally come to three steps on the right hand side.

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Go down these steps, stoop low so you will not bump your head & open the door & you are in our "little home." Am quite sure you will not be blinded by our home made torch. In fact you may have to strike a match to see it. However as your eyes become accustomed to the semi darkness & your nose to the odor of musty dampness you will next notice that the lamp is setting upon a shelf which serves as a table. Since you are company I will offer you the only chair in our possession a rude bench made of three boards.

Next I will call your attention to old friend stove. The only fault we have to find with Mr. Stove is, the fact that he is a terrible smoker! But if you can live thru the first 15 min. in a cloud of smoke you will be rewarded with a little flame & after it makes the grade you will notice a very comfortable feeling of warmth. It is usually worth waiting for, at the far end of the room you will find two bunks one on top of the other just like a pullman car only different.

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I have an old mattress about a foot thick on my bunk but I have never had the nerve to look at it in the light. Just covered it over with blankets & said "What he doesn't know won't hurt him."

This is certainly a desolate, dreary place especially when it rains. We look out of our trenches across a valley & onto a long crest which is shown on the map as heavily wooded, there are no woods there now. The ground has literally been churned with shells & reminds one of a piece of Swiss cheese or a large sponge. The trees have all been destroyed only here & there a stump or blackened trunk standing out in defiance of the Hun's destruction. But these trunks will never bear leaves again. They are scorched & gassed & shelled beyond redemption & on the whole landscape there is not a living soul to be seen. If you could see behind the lines at night however you would see a very busy Army carrying ammunition, rations etc. to the men at the front.

yours in the best of Health.
Sgt. J. L. Seifert Sonis
Battery 7.129th U.S. American E. F.

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Dec. 6-1918

Dear Mother:-

Don't believe I have told much of my experiences since the first of November. At that time we moved to a new position about a Kilometer to the Northwest of our old position. We were just a few miles outside of Verdun & the scenery certainly presented a desolate & devastated appearance. Here was the famous battlefield over which the Germans & the French had struggled for four years & there were many things that told plainer than words the fierceness with which these battles had been fought. There was not a hundred square feet of ground that had escaped the constant shelling. Only stumps remained where once were stately forests,

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The ground was dotted with graves & up on "Dead man's Hill" that once was no man's land were the bones, skeletons, helmets, bayonets, broken guns, specimens of all the implements of war falling apart rusting & decaying. Happily our infantry lines were entrenched far beyond this particular strip of land & what was no man's land was being occupied by the Yankees. We lived in dugouts here altho Fritz gave us quite a little gas and a regular bombardment of heavy shells (G.I. cans we call them) about 10 in. in diameter landed no direct hits & no one in the battery was hurt. At 4:30 A.M. Nov. 9th we were ordered to roll our rails & be ready to move. needless to say the rails were rolled and about 9 A.M. orders came to move out which we did. We arrived at our new position & placed the guns on the side of a road near Maranville about 5 P.M. about 12 midnight spread my blankets on the grass behind the guns with one of my Corporals. About 5 A.M. we got up to find that there was a heavy layer of frost on the ground & things were pretty crumpled in general.

We started a barrage at 5:30 A.M. & there were several others following during the day. After noon mess I accompanied the Capt. on a reconnoitering trip to locate a new position further up. We found one in a rather swampy field surrounded by a thick hedge. He left me at the new position at 4:30 P.M. & returned to our old position. Our doughboys were still fighting for Maranville & were meeting with strong resistance both machine gun & artillery. The front line was only a few hundred meters

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ahead & the machine guns & rifles were playing a lively time on both sides a few of our wounded were coming back. I say our dough boys but at this time we were not supporting 35th Div. men.

With the assistance of a man from E Battery I managed to run a traverse to their first pieces & locate our new position on the map. Returned to our old position a little after dark, we moved out at 10 P.M. at twelve midnight were in our new position. Got to bed under a pup tent at 26 M. wake up about 10:45 M amidst a pretty lively barrage which our guns had been putting over since 6 A.M. a heavy fog which had been with us since early morning began to lift. A few min. later our capt. read an order which notwithstanding the fact that

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we had heard rumored we could scarcely believe this was the order all hostilities on the entire front will cease at eleven o'clock. no one cheered. we were all too skeptical for we had been disappointed before. But I am sure there was not a man present who did not offer a prayer that the message would be fulfilled. Well we continued our little barrage & at 10:40 Fritz opened up in earnest. For ten min. he had us all guessing & wondering if we could hold out till eleven o'clock.

At 10:50 he dropped two shells, one about ten meters short & one about 75 meters over our first piece. I am here to say the last ten min. of the World War was full of excitement for us.

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How ever good fortune smiled upon us again and exactly at eleven o.m. everything was still as death. Not a shot! We let out a squeaky whoop at two and walked around like men in a trance. Then we got the rumor that it was only a forty eight hour armistice. But at night the whole country was covered with camp fires that a few hours before would have meant sure destruction. The sky was red, green, blue & white with signal rockets & flares.

An armistice was granted. Peace in sight and not far beyond home. Of course the real day will be when that magic word is once more a reality.

At present I am spending seven days furlough at Mont Dore a fashionable summer & health resort of France.

Love to all.

Sgt. F. L. Seifert

Louis

7. Battery 12974.

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Kansas City, Mo.,

March 21, 1919.

Mr. W. B. Connley,
Historical Society,
Topeka, Kans.

My dear Sir:

In compliance with recent request in the Kansas City Star, herewith are copies of letters written by my brother, Sergeant F. L. Seifert, Battery F, 129th Field Artillery, 35th Division, from time of his arrival at Camp Doniphan, Lawton, Oklahoma, to signing of the armistice. He was appointed Corporal on enlisting and later promoted to Sergeant.

His letter of October 7, 1918, telling of the Argonne battle, was printed in full in the Kansas City Post and his picture (copy enclosed) was inserted at that time.

He was born March 13, 1892, in Hawarden, Iowa; has lived in Kansas City since the age of about nine years; his schooling consists of the grade school and 3 years' high-school. At the time of enlisting he was employed by the Ingham Lumber Company of Kansas City. His full name is Frank Louis Seifert. With the exception of a season on a farm in Kansas and about a year in charge of a bath-house near San Antonio, Texas, he has resided with his parents, Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Seifert of 2537 Tracy Avenue, this city. He is single, has two sisters living at the home address, Misses Anna & Clara Seifert, and one married sister, Mrs. Walter Jensen, 46th & Cleveland, this city.

The Historical Society is authorized to retain these copies for their files if desired.

Very truly yours,

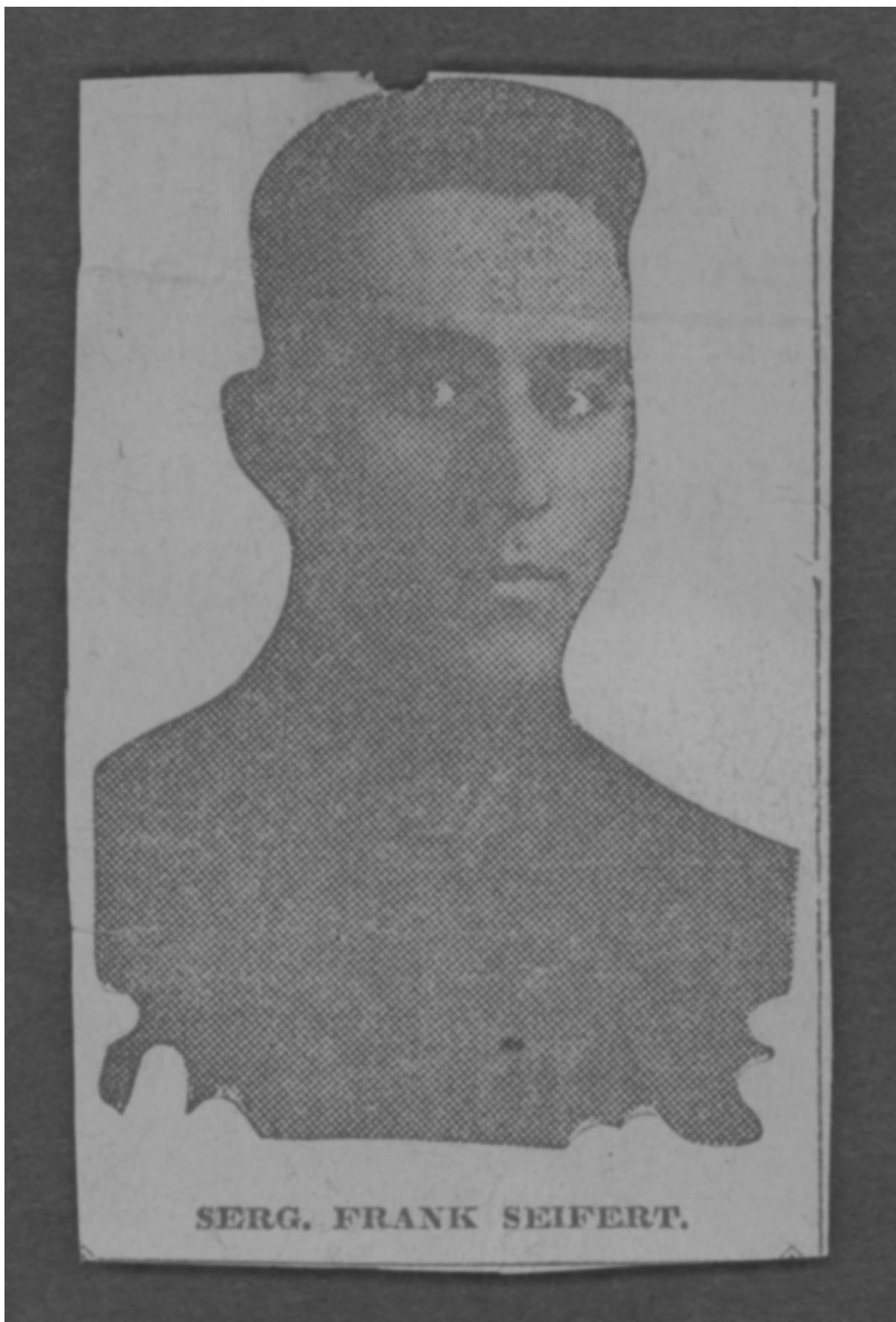
(Miss) Clara Seifert

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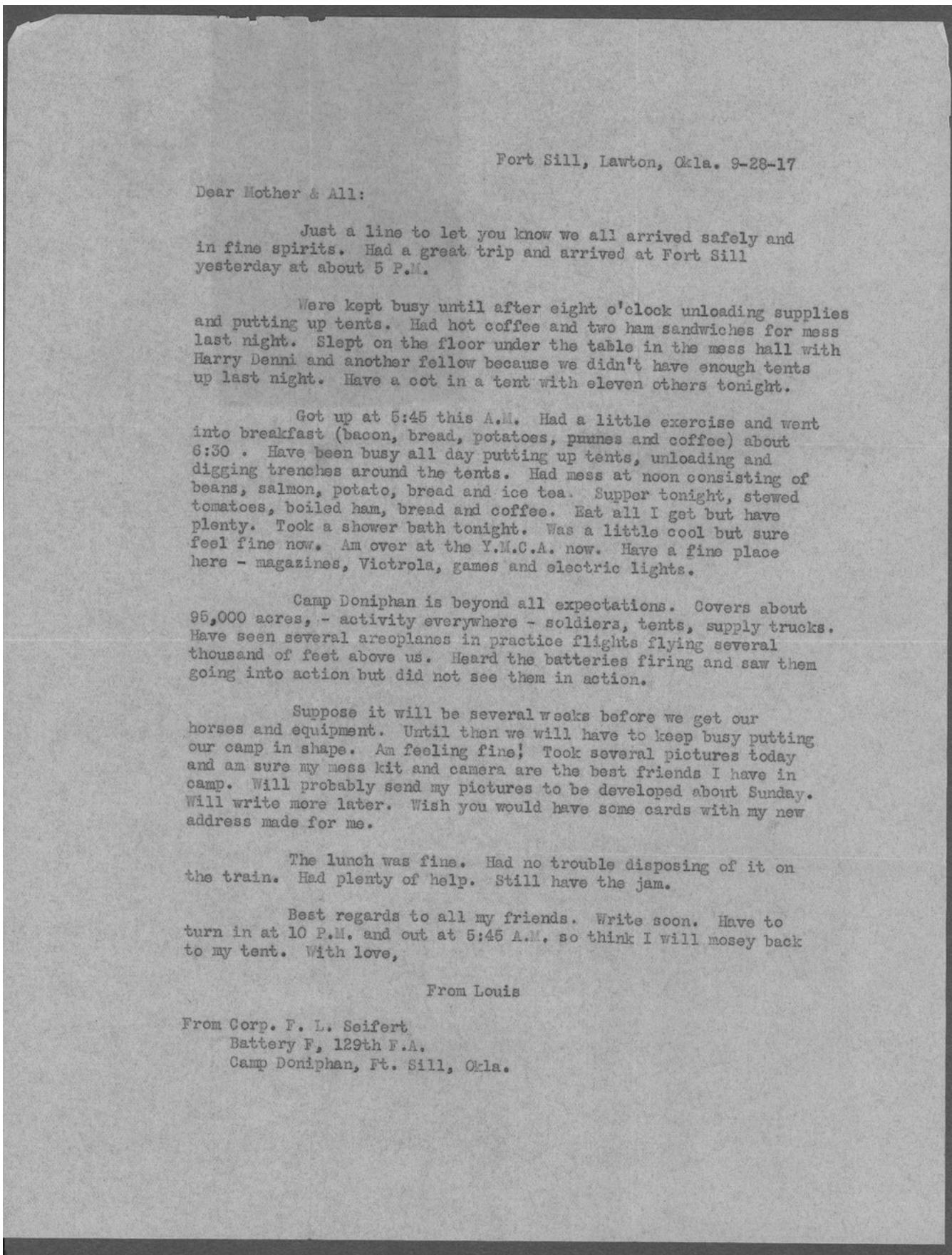


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Fort Sill, Lawton, Okla. 9-28-17

Dear Mother & All:

Just a line to let you know we all arrived safely and in fine spirits. Had a great trip and arrived at Fort Sill yesterday at about 5 P.M.

Were kept busy until after eight o'clock unloading supplies and putting up tents. Had hot coffee and two ham sandwiches for mess last night. Slept on the floor under the table in the mess hall with Harry Denni and another fellow because we didn't have enough tents up last night. Have a cot in a tent with eleven others tonight.

Got up at 5:45 this A.M. Had a little exercise and went into breakfast (bacon, bread, potatoes, prunes and coffee) about 6:30. Have been busy all day putting up tents, unloading and digging trenches around the tents. Had mess at noon consisting of beans, salmon, potato, bread and ice tea. Supper tonight, stewed tomatoes, boiled ham, bread and coffee. Eat all I get but have plenty. Took a shower bath tonight. Was a little cool but sure feel fine now. Am over at the Y.M.C.A. now. Have a fine place here - magazines, Victrola, games and electric lights.

Camp Doniphan is beyond all expectations. Covers about 95,000 acres, - activity everywhere - soldiers, tents, supply trucks. Have seen several aeroplanes in practice flights flying several thousand of feet above us. Heard the batteries firing and saw them going into action but did not see them in action.

Suppose it will be several weeks before we get our horses and equipment. Until then we will have to keep busy putting our camp in shape. Am feeling fine! Took several pictures today and am sure my mess kit and camera are the best friends I have in camp. Will probably send my pictures to be developed about Sunday. Will write more later. Wish you would have some cards with my new address made for me.

The lunch was fine. Had no trouble disposing of it on the train. Had plenty of help. Still have the jam.

Best regards to all my friends. Write soon. Have to turn in at 10 P.M. and out at 5:45 A.M. so think I will mosey back to my tent. With love,

From Louis

From Corp. F. L. Seifert
Battery F, 129th F.A.
Camp Doniphan, Ft. Sill, Okla.

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