

PRESERVING THE PAST

When I came to camp, the camp was quarantined for overseas. So at midnight, we was chased out and we got up and rolled up our pack and walked from Camp Lee to the Chesapeake Bay to get on that boat. We all sat on the wharf waiting on that boat to go overseas. The camp was quarantined so the soldiers couldn't go home. When it came time for the men to go overseas, a lot of them beat it and went home; not to desert, but to visit. Then they wouldn't be there when the boat came. That was the reason they quarantined them. When we got on the boat in Virginia, it was over 100 degrees. The boat was three days out to sea before we could get a little draft.

The boat was a troop carrier. When we pulled out to sea, we met other boats and we had seven transports. There were about 3,000 men on each transport. We had a battleship, a destroyer, and about ten torpedo boats. This was called a convoy. For 14 days and 14 nights I slept on top of the deck. I didn't want to go downstairs, so I hid upstairs on the deck in a corner and slept. When we got going, the Lieutenant came out and wanted volunteers for guard duty. I was standing along the side of the rail. I wanted to do what everybody else did and watch the water. The Lieutenant came out and asked me if I wanted to volunteer for guard duty. He said I wouldn't get seasick. So, I studied a while and thought maybe he was right. In the afternoon when he hollered for volunteers for guard duty, I stepped out. I done guard duty 14 days and 14 nights, two hours on and four hours off. I done guard duty on the back of the boat and up on top of the crows nest. There was a pole that went way up and they had a round place up there that held six men. We had to crawl up a ladder to get up there. That was for submarines. We didn't spot anything going over. We shot a couple of boxes. They claimed that the Germans put a box on their parachutes and the box would float around in the water. The boxes were full of explosives; so if the boats would hit it, the boat would blow up.

We arrived at France. That night we stayed on the boat and unloaded the next morning. We had tents to sleep in. That was the last I saw of a bed. We were told not to eat certain things or drink certain things. The men just did the opposite. They drank all the liquor they got hold of and they ate everything they got. When they left on the train there, everybody was sick. I wasn't because I listened. I didn't eat anything.

Ten weeks after I went to the army, I was doing guard duty behind the lines. When I went to the army, I made up my mind that I would soldier because you couldn't get out. I wanted to learn everything I could learn. Some of the men were just the opposite. They wanted to have a good time and they didn't want to learn nothing. Everything I learned, I came out ahead.

I was on guard duty after we got back to the lines, that was eight weeks later, midnight in a strange country. There was a YMCA there and I was supposed to guard this building. It was

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dark. France was in a blackout--there wasn't a light around. I was walking my post back and forth and I listened and I heard a little noise and I figured it was a bigger town and I kind of got my bearings. You couldn't get any relief. If you got into trouble, you'd have to yell to the next post and when they would get there, why, it was too late.

We put in some hard times because I was in the infantry. The biggest trouble was getting something to eat. We couldn't find anything and we'd wonder if anybody would bring you anything to eat.

The hardest day I put in was when we got up one morning and I had a slice of bacon and a piece of bread and we put on our heavy packs and we hiked all day long--walking a half hour and resting for ten minutes, etc. We had nothing to eat all day long. I had some hard tack in my pack and at rest time I managed to get a little hard tack out of my pack and chew it along the road. At 9:00 p.m. that night we ended up in the Argonne Forest. All the trees were chopped off and it was like going out into a plowed field. We waded in mud up to our ankles and you had to pull your feet out of the mud. We had no place to sleep. We found a German barracks and I threw my pack down and laid down on top of it. I laid there an hour. I decided they were cookin' soup. So, I went and got a bowl of soup. I came back and told my buddy and we went down and I got my second bowl. The next day I woke up and, boy, was I dry. I could have drunk a mud puddle.

We were in the reserves and they had to replace men in the line and they rushed us there. We were wore out when we got there and the 80th Division beat us to it. They got in line ahead of us and we didn't get in the lines. The 80th Division opened up and that night at 3:00 a.m. we heard artillery fire and the artillery that we had sitting there began to open fire. You don't know if you were drunk or sober. They kept it up for three days and three nights. After the three days and nights, we got orders to leave. It was the same thing--hike an hour and rest 10 minutes, etc. for three days. Then we got a day's rest and then we hiked again.

There was no transportation for soldiers. They walked. They had horses to pull the artillery but that was back in times. In World War II it was different. Everything was mechanized and the soldiers were transported. We had to carry a 51 pound pack and we were wore out. They broke you gradually so you got used to it. I didn't have a 51 pound pack; I reduced my pack when we stopped to rest. We laid down on our packs; I had an extra pair of shoes; I reached back and pulled the string; and, when I got up, I was minus the shoes and I got rid of a tent pole. Then my buddy played out and I took his overcoat. Then I had to carry his gun. We set down for a little rest and the captain came along and he raised cane. When one sits down, everybody sits down.

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I didn't do no combat duty. On November 11th we was walking through a little town at three in the afternoon and the French was a lined up waving flags. The armistice is signed. Here in the U.S. they knew it in the morning and we never knew it until that afternoon. I was wore out and everybody beat it to town to get drunk. I took my shoes off and went down to the creek. There was ice on the creek and I kicked in the ice and washed my feet in the ice water. I had a pup tent and I pitched it and laid down. I had a rubber canvas and I put it over top. I bought a quart of wine, drank the wine and went to sleep. The next morning I got up and was not feeling too well.

We were hobbling along and were heading towards the Metz sector. They were to take it next because it was the stronghold. However, they didn't take it because the Germans retreated. We went along and had to conduct a drill. For us, the war wasn't over. We had to practice in case it started up again. Of course, I was 25 years old and had a lot of strength, so that made quite a difference.

In 1919 they shipped us to Southern France to get ready to board ship. We were all getting ready to go home and we were all tickled.

One morning I got up and had a pain in my jaw and wondered what was wrong. I went to the woods and walked around for a while but the pain never left. I remember that it was on a Sunday. The next morning I got up at 6:00 a.m. and went down to the first aid man and he said that I had the mumps. He told me to tell the Lieutenant to give me a place to sleep by myself. I slept in a little shanty for three days and nobody brought me anything to eat. I had hard tack with me so I put a piece in my mouth but I couldn't swallow it. It hurt. Three days later the Red Cross man came and I had to go to the hospital. I asked where it was and he said five miles from camp. So I picked up my pack and we started along the road. Do you think that Red Cross man would help me carry my pack? No sir! He just walked along side of me. When we got there, the hospital was a horse stable, no doctors nor nurses! I stayed in this 'hospital' for 20 days and I thought, well, my outfit would be home celebrating and here I am in the horse stable. After 20 days, I got up and decided to go for a walk in the woods. (I was great for walking in the woods.) So I looked around and I found a big tree; I saw a deer, it was getting dark. I then decided to go up and see if I could get something to eat. When I got up to the camp, they called out my name and I had to report to my outfit. I asked them how I was going to get to my outfit and they said "walk." So I got my pack and I had to walk five miles. Those poor fellows hadn't left for home yet. They were still waiting for the ship. The next morning I had to get out to drill. I asked them if I could get off that day and they gave me permission to get off. So that's army life.

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I could never figure out why we had World War I. You wasn't allowed to shoot the Kaiser. He was the head ruler then. That was before Hitler's time--he was World War II.

The ship came along, the U. S. Grant, and we got home on May 25th. I got discharged at Camp Dix in New Jersey. They gave me my pay and \$60 and a ticket to Pittsburgh. They wouldn't give me a ticket to Sarver. I got on the train and came to Pittsburgh. It was pretty close to Decoration. I stayed three days before I went home. I hadn't written home to say I was coming. After Decoration, I got on the train and came home to Sarver.

It was May 28, 1919, when I came home from the army. I loafed around a couple of weeks looking around for a job but all the jobs were taken. I couldn't see anything open so I went back braking on the railroad--freight break man. It was a heavy winter in 1919. In the Spring before it thawed out, there were wrecks and wrecks. One time coming home from Johnstown, I went out of the caboose head first through a window and I got my face cut. A brake rod on a car dropped down and threw the car off track and cut the air hose. See, when an air hose on a 100 car train was cut, why, the slack would come up, ker-sock!

I boarded in Freeport and they called me and I would walk up to Butler junction and get a train out. We'd go up to Johnstown and I'd get back 16-20 hours later maybe twice a week. In the meantime, I'd have to be on the shifter. It was only eight hours. That was the shifter in the yard that was used to sort out the freight cars.

In 1921 I got tired braking and they came out on strike. I got up one morning and went uptown in Freeport. They were all out on strike. One fellow wanted to go back to work and didn't know when he could go back. I never believed in strikes. I walked home after they had the strike and I never did go back. I started up home here. I was tired of public works. There's always a boss around. And one fellow would tell me this and another tell me that.

So I decided to start out on my own to fix water pumps. At that time they would have old pumps and they would play out. I got to repairing porches. For two years I painted all the little school houses in Buffalo Township on the inside. I painted my own school, Kelly School, also. I go to doing repair work. And first thing you know, I got started into carpenter work.

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Well, I bought a 1919 Ford, the first car I had in my life. I bought it to go riding around. I got married in 1922 to Margaret Phillips. We raised two children--Duella, up here at Saxonburg who is married to John Thompson; and, my other daughter who is married and has three children and lives in Las Vegas. She got multiple sclerosis and was bedfast for years--can't walk.

But then, anyhow, after I got married, I joined St. Paul's Church at Sarverville when Rev. Fetterly was preacher, or, before him. Well, anyway, the basement wasn't dug out. I helped to dig the basement out, cemented the floor and fixed it the way it is now. Charlie Sauter was the head man and he had charge of it. Then later on I planned the bathroom in the basement. Harold Falkner put the tower up in front--I helped a couple of days. It just had a vestibule.

In 1949 I put the ceiling tile on in the church. There were two ceilings above that and we stripped it and used 16 penny spikes to nail the stripping on and then we put this tile on--which makes three ceilings! Our Rev. Hardy was here the other day and he said he got a man to check on the heat in the church and when he told him we had three ceilings, he said that was enough for insulation!

I helped Matt Montgomery build a couple of houses and Sam Falkner. Then I helped Charlie Sauter build some houses. He had a big house up at Butler he built for Rev. Collarwood, a great big fancy house up on the hill.

One time I was over home and a fellow came up from Laneville. He said he had a ready-cut house and the carpenter he had couldn't set it up. He wanted to know if I could go down and set it up. I never set one up in my life. So, I went down and said we'd have to tear it down first and start over. So we did. We set it up. It was a Sears-Roebuck ready cut. They used to sell ready-cut houses. And then the Sears-Roebuck man, every time he sold a house, would tell them to go and get me to build it. So I built ready-cut houses. Ruth Garbrick's house, too. I lived at Sarver's Station (now called Sarver) then.

When I first decided to go into carpenter work, I decided to build a house in Sarver, sell it, and make a little extra money. Well then, after I had it built, I couldn't sell it. When I got married, I moved into the house but there was no furnace. I went down to the store there where Charlie Sauter was working. I said, "How about borrowing (I think I wanted) 27 dollars. He gave it to me and I put a coal furnace in.

I got started on my feet pretty well and then 1929 come along. In January 1929, I built a house for Harry Montgomery. In February, for Lawrence Smail, and a barn for Caplow. And after that no work. I loafed for three years. I went berry picking. I made a big garden. I had

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two children to feed and my wife at home. One day my wife said, "No milk for the kids!" I said, "I can't help it. Can't get any." Then I took a big chance and I went and borrowed money and built the store at Sarversville--two houses past Risch's. I had a little store there. When I had the store built, we had 37 dollars to buy stock. I went to Butler to the wholesale house. I brought it home, put it on the shelf and opened up the store.

We got going. I run the store for eight years. When we finished up we had probably \$3,000 of stock. I paid off the money I borrowed.

Carpenter work picked up. *I worked on the parsonage for St. Paul's and the parsonage for the Methodist Church in Cabot and one for the church at Sarver at the ball field.* I built wooden silos, barns, coal tipples, and a piece on Saxonburg Fire Hall. Between here and Sarverville, along Rt. 356, there are seven houses I built. Also, some at Pittsburgh, Butler, Freeport, Slate Lick, Leechburg and other places. One day I had three or four houses going. A lady called, "Are you doing anything now? I'd like to get my front porch fixed." I said, "O.K., I'll fix it as soon as I get time." At one time I had eight men working. One summer we built 36 houses and did repair work. Once in a while I go to Senior Citizens and someone will say, "You remember me?" You built my house for me."

For a while we laid the foundations. Then I had to cut that out because I didn't have time to do all the carpenter work. That was before government control. Government control at the last practically ran me out of business. Today, if I was working at carpenter work, I wouldn't be able to find a job. Where would I find a job? They're not building houses. They can't build any because it costs too much. Everything is wrong.

At that time carpenter work was seasonal, see. Some winters we worked all winter and other winters we had no work. So I traveled a good bit. I traveled to Florida. I went out West three times on Greyhound. I went out West on the train one time. One time I went to Pittsburgh, got a jet at 11 o'clock and at 1:00 p.m. I was walking up street in Las Vegas.

There's a lot of interesting places when you travel--the Alligator Farm in Florida, Hialeah Race Track and dog races. I saw one woman crying and one laughing. One lost all the money she had and she was crying. In California I went up City Hall 24 stories in an elevator and changed elevators the next four stories. When I got up there, they had a balcony. The building sways. I didn't have enough nerve to go out on the balcony. Then I finally did. Looked down at wee little cars on the street.

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A few interesting points: One is the Knotts Berry Farm and the other was Clifton's Restaurant with high ceilings, palm trees growing and a creek running around the walls.

One time I was out there on the train and Truman was feeding the cattle--dropping bales of hay to the cattle because they had a heavy snow there and they were starving. When I left Los Angeles, it was summer there, and I jumped on the train, took the northern route home to see where he was feeding the cattle. I got to Salt Lake City. The train stopped, and I jumped off, and said to a man standing there, "How cold is it?" He answered, "Below zero." Each farmer had a big haystack with a fence around and they didn't open the fence to let the cattle to the haystack. And there was Truman, feeding! Politics!

I went through Death Valley. I thought it was a little valley--like you'd maybe go down to Sandy Lick. When I got to Death Valley there was one way in from the top end; it was a mile wide and 170 miles long, no shrubbery, bad weather, all sand; on each side big rocky mountains--red, blue, gray, and white. When the sun shines in these rocks, it's the prettiest sight you've ever seen. At the lower end of Death Valley there's the Scottish Castle. I had to take off my shoes and they gave you slippers to put on, so you don't carry sand in. The doors in the castle are about eight inches thick. They imported all the materials from Italy, shipped it to Los Angeles, and hauled it in by mule train.

I traveled all over France on foot from one town to another. Now, I don't feel like going anyplace. Of course, if I was young, I would probably enjoy it.

Let's see, what did I forget?

At one time this road (Rt. 356) was mud. The stagecoach didn't run then. You had to take a train. At one time, the Butler Branch from Freeport to Butler had a passenger train every hour! They had a siding in at Sarver. You would order a car, boxcar, or whatever kind you wanted, and the train would push that car in there. You had so many days to load this car. After that you had to pay, I think, a dollar a day for keeping it overtime. But in those days the biggest part of farmers butchered their own cattle. We used to butcher all our cattle at home, cut the meat up, and take it to market.

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I had two brothers and three sisters. Bertha was the oldest and Ott was the second one. I was the third; Emma, the fourth; Anne, the fifth; and Freddy, the youngest. My dad died in 1928 and my mother in 1933. Bertha left home first and then Ott. I guess I was the black sheep, I stayed till the last one. Then my brother Ott died in 1942, my wife in 1960, Bertha in 1966, Emma in 1970, Anne in 1973 and Freddy in 1980. So they're all dead. I'm the only one left.

Lots of people said I should have gotten married again. Well, that's another story.

In my time I was in the hospital seven times and had five operations. The last time I was in the hospital, the attack was so funny. I was making garden and I got the garden made and spaded some and did some planting. I came in here to cook my supper and I couldn't eat my supper. I sat down to read the paper and I got the hiccups. I thought I'm going to get up and get a drink of water. So, I just sat there and first thing you know, I got a little sick. I got up and I was walking around and all at once I got so sick. I couldn't make it to bed. My family took me to the Butler Hospital Emergency Room. The outlet to my stomach plugged up. They put a tube down my nose. My bed was in intensive care. They had two nurses working there at the desk. The phlegm would get caught in this tube. The nurse would try and help me get it loose.

When I was there three days, the heart doctor came around and he said, "Your heart is not good. It beats too slow." "Well," I said, "What can I do about it. I can't go out and pick one off the trees." Then a medical doctor came in to ask, "Do you want an operation?" "I'm too old," I said, "I might as well die first." He looked at me so funny! So after the doctors give me up, I give up myself. That's the end of me. There was a little nurse there and she didn't give up. She worked and worked and worked so. When she went home in the evening, I said to her, "Pray for me tonight." She said, "I sure will." And the other nurse, when she went home, I told her that and she said "Aw"--she didn't. The next morning I was better. This one nurse come in. She said, "I prayed for you last night." She brought a prayer on a piece of paper. The doctor came in to examine me and he said, "What happened here?" I said,, "That nurse there fixed me up." And the doctor went over and gave her a big hug. The Rev. Hardy said, "The nurse prayed for you. You got a healing." I figured maybe I did. But, anyhow, I wasn't altogether well. They took me to the Veteran's Hospital. They kept me on a diet there and I gradually got better. Before I left, they had to check my heart.

Now I'm 92 years old. I live by myself and my family is sure a big help to me.

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My Life in Church **By K. Eleanora (Haas) Fry** Recorded April, 2000

I lived on the Haas Farm in Sarver located on Rt. 228.

I went to St. Matthew's church, Cabot, PA. I was 12 years old. From Church I went to Confirmation at Emily Sauter's. We met there for classes from September to April. Then I was confirmed on April 19, 1927. There were ten in the class.

Then I came to St. Paul's Church where Rev. Elmer Ortner was the preacher. Clara Falkner and K. Eleanora Fry stayed at St. Paul's while the others from our class went to other churches.

At St. Paul's, I was a Sunday School Teacher for 25 years and taught two classes. I was also Sunday School Superintendent for 25 years. In time, I was Treasurer for 50 years.

I belonged to the Busy Bee Group which had twenty members and the Willing Worker's Class which had 12 members. There are two members from the Busy Bee Class living today—Jeannette Frederick and K. Eleanora Fry. All the other Busy Bee Class members have passed away with the most recent being Ruth Preto.

Then time came and I joined the Sarver Community Choir. I was their Treasurer/Secretary for 50 years. The Choir came to St. Paul's to practice. We traveled by bus to sing at various churches in the community.

I belonged to the Esther Program and was their Treasurer/Secretary for 50 years. I also was the Secretary/Treasurer of the 7th District for 35 years. The District presented special programs to the churches. These were very enjoyable programs to have.

I was also a member of the Ladies Aid. We held monthly meetings, lunches, and did a lot of quilting. Over the years, the membership in this group dwindled.

For years, I was a member of St. Paul's Choir. I was also Janitor for St. Paul's for 50 years and just recently retired. I hope someone takes the job and that they can serve for 50 years.

In the past I was always busy helping with various duties, programs, and organizations of the church. Now I just help with the Ladies Guild.

I bless God for what he has given me throughout my life.

This is a summary of what I did in helping our church; and I still go to church each Sunday.

As for Meals on Wheels, I had worked for that group for 27 years before retiring.

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“Jesus Said, Knock and the door shall be opened unto to you.”

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