

Diaries of General Joseph W. Stilwell (1900–1939, 1945–1946)

Introduction

These diaries of General Joseph W. Stilwell are those remaining in the Stilwell Papers at the Hoover Archives that had not been placed on the Hoover Archives web site. In addition to chronicling his career and activities up to and following World War II, they offer insights into his developing character, as he matured from a twenty-one-year-old second lieutenant, fresh out of West Point, to a mature four-star general officer. They provide evidence of his early passion for exploring and observing different cultures and people and his innate curiosity, which led to an expanding mind and widespread interests. The entries also reveal his keen sense of humor, his ability to assess the character of others, his command of the English language, his artistic abilities, and his warmth for his family.

The diaries were Stilwell's private writings and notes; he never intended others to see them. Some of the language used in the diaries was commonly accepted during the periods in which they were written; it is not appropriate or valid to apply today's standards to it to draw conclusions about Stilwell's character or views. Writing about some of the language and labels in the diaries, Barbara Tuchman, in her book *Stilwell and the American Experience in China*, makes the following statement, "Lesser vulgarities he used easily and seemingly without pejorative content."

Often the diaries contain short notes and observations made by Stilwell. Some of those entries he incorporated into the daily entries, some he later crossed out, some were simply meant to remind him of something, and some are so cryptic they make no discernible contribution to the diaries' historical significance. In those cases such entries have not been transcribed. When they are of interest or add to the daily entries, however, they have been incorporated into the transcripts.

The diaries were first transcribed several decades ago, when his widow and a daughter-in-law, Bettye Stilwell, manually typed them. The diaries, along with the rest of Stilwell's papers, were deposited at the Hoover Institution in stages from 1951 on. In 1998, my cousin, Deborah Bunce, began entering the manually typed transcriptions into a computer database. When Richard Sousa (senior associate director) and Linda Bernard (deputy archivist) agreed that the diaries should appear on the Hoover Archives web site, I began proofing the computer database text against the original diaries. Lisa Miller (associate archivist) provided the impetus for the project and coordinated formats, scanning of drawings and maps, and integrating the various elements into the final product. Lisa Nguyen (East Asia curator) transcribed and translated the Chinese characters Stilwell used in the diaries. Russell Rader (digital archivist) and Daniel Jarvis (digitization production specialist) did the scanning of the drawings and maps and the integration.

Principles of Transcription

Stilwell's spelling throughout the diaries was remarkably correct. Distinguishing between his handwritten n's and u's, however, was sometimes difficult, and errors in place names or names of people containing those letters could have made their way into the transcripts. Based on Stilwell's superb spelling elsewhere, then, any such errors must be attributed to the transcriber, not to Stilwell.

In some of the diaries Stilwell included drawings of maps, people, places, and things that interested him. Those drawings have been incorporated into the transcripts, with the exception of partially completed drawings or those not germane to the diaries.

Where Stilwell wrote Chinese characters in the diaries, those characters have been translated using the Wade-Giles convention, which was in use at the time he wrote them.

SYMBOLS USED IN THE TEXT

* Indicates Stilwell's use of military unit designations that have been translated into words because the designators are not reproducible online.

*** Indicates words or sentences redacted. Redactions were made where the words or sentences might negatively affect persons still living or where words or sentences are personal and have no impact on the historical content of the diaries. Redactions were made in the 1935, 1938, and 1946 diaries.

Words written in italics are editorial comments for which explanations were warranted.

Select Bibliography

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Tuchman, Barbara. *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911–45*. New York: Macmillan Company, 1970.

-John Easterbrook, 2012

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1915

Tues Apr. 20: Heard about relief order by phone. Wired Wash. ans., at 5 P.M. Temp. duty.

Wed Apr 21: Hoop. 4200 WABASH, K.C., Mo

Thurs Apr 22: Recd. order of relief. Told to wait.

Sat Apr. 24: Tel. from Wash @ temporary duty at Mad bks.

Sun Apr. 25: Rec'd. telegram. Left U.S.M.A. To Yonkers – to N.Y. To Watertown.

Mon Apr. 26: Arr. Mad. Bks. Attached H Co. 3rd. Hartman, Stil. & Hartman. (smell & taste & memory). Chow. Whipple. Call on K.O.

Tues Apr. 27: Drill, call Capt. Upham J.S.

Wed Apr 28: Drill – pyram. tent. Parade – Gallery. Thunderstorm. P.M. Parade, (Reg.) off – rain. Chow at K.O's with Moss & Smith.

Thurs Apr 29: Drill – N.C.O. school. Shelter tents. Gallery etc. Made up some sleep. Got equipment ready. (Baile at Hughes – till 12:15. Endless. Beat it).

Fri Apr. 30: Review. escort color – muster & inspec. Field uns. Inspec. all Bn. qrs. P.M. read. Chaplain Smith called.

Sat May 1: Inspec. qrs at 9 – Payrolls. Read till chow. P.M. to pumping sta. & gym. Wrote & read. Whipple & Hartman called.

Sun May 2: Chow at 8:45. To Co. & wrote reports. Chow at Kimballs'. P.M. wrote & read.

Mon May 3: Co. on guard. Muster rolls. Gym. Looked up Mason's. \$1 a day. Goog boy there.

Tues May 4: Mechanism of tactical handling of co. by signal! Practical training of fire direction, f. control & f. discipline!!! Road sketching. Movies, & Wahl at K.O. Gym.

Wed May 5: More drill by signal. Advance over open ground. Sketching – nap.

Thurs May 6: Parade ground stuff. Tents. Gallery, etc. P.M. Free. Read & wrote. Sweater came. PAYDAY.

Fri May 7: Short hike & outpost. Spiel by Ed. P.M. @ 20 min drill. Rainy.

Sat May 8: Bn. Review & Inspec. (mob at double time). P.M. In to Watertown – movies & walked around.

Sun May 9: Bummed in P.M. Wrote letters all A.M. Got stuff together. "Assignees meet."

Mon May 10: Start of hike. 4 mi. per hour. In at target range at 2 P.M. After usual b.ache, camped. Took co. for ft. wash. Cold night.

Tues May 11: a.m. no drill – Went fishing! But no fish. P.M. maneuvered to old target range & back. Swim in lake – Brrrr!!!

Wed May 12: Slept warm. (Zerauski's sleeping bag). Out all A.M. maneuvering. Fine weather. P.M. more maneuvering (Wooden Hurst) (Back to enemy.) B.ache in front of fire in evening.

Thurs May 13: Slept warm. O.D! Inspected from bed. Rained a little. Co. drill, patrols, etc. – P.M. adv. on range. Night approach of enemy and intrench.

Fri May 14: Cold night. Burnt big hole in tent at breakfast. A.M. Rear guard in retreat. P.M. rest. Walked around with Ed Hindenburg, Hartman.

Sat May 15: Back to Madison. Reveille at 5:15. Left at 7. Henderson's Harbor at 9. Post at 12. P.M. Bath & rest. "Ham Tree" in Watertown in evening.

Sun May 16: Rest, bummed in A.M. P.M. To baseball game in W.town but sheriff had called it off. Movies & to bed.

Mon May 17: A.M. close order, bayonet, patrols. P.M. slept & wrote. Evening – called on Lt. Col. Gordon, Caps. Hurst & Barber.

Tues May 18: Co. on guard. Read all A.M. P.M. Read (studied). Evening movies.

Wed May 19: Outpost & attack exercise. Outpost Hartman, attack JWS. Counsel for Duffy & Sweeney (Drunks). P.M. To Watertown, got key, pd. for books – Fights at night. Fair. Pittsley shaded by Butler. 3 K.O'S. In at 12:30.

Thurs May 20: Regt'l. drill all A.M. P.M. sketching. Movies. To bed.

Fri May 21: Regt. took field at 1 hr's. notice. – P.M. snoozed. Hop at night. Dinner at Hartman's (Gordon, Wahl, Wise, Hartman, Hartshorns).

Sat May 22: Blue inspec. Read A.W. to Co. Phone from HP. Seven calls – on 3rd Bn. people.

Sun May 23: HP arrived at 10:30. O, you booze hoister! Nearly fell off chair at chow. Left at 4:30. Saw Masons about board. Movies. Called on Hartmans.

Mon May 24: Leave request in. J.A. of S.C.M. Co. on guard. 3rd Bn. left for range. P.M. worked at regulations, etc. Evening long b-ache with K.O. (medicos, etc.).

Tues May 25: A.M. Drill. Usual piddle with Ed. P.M. Tried Tieman, & got case fixed up. Called at Kimballs.

Wed May 26: Rain A.M. Expert on Benet Mercier. P.M. Drill – aiming etc. To Sacketts.

Thurs May 27: Patrol stuff in A.M. In P.M. to Watertown with Wilson. Haircut. In at night for train to N.Y.

Fri May 28: At Point at 10 from N.Y. P.M. to parade & G.F.S. sale. To bed early.

Sat May 29: Navy game. HP, Ernest, Miss Knapp, Helen, etc. 6-5 after many tense moments. P.M. packed (Jumbo & Mildred).

Sun May 30: Off on 10:07, Syracuse at 5, all tired. Ric. & I came through. Out with Antcher. J.A.G.C.M!!!

Mon May 31: Muster – got trunks up to Mason's. Win & kids came at 5 (also HP, Ern & Mother Smith).

Tues June 1: Co. on guard. Other cos. at dandelion drill. On guard at noon. Win & kids up to sand pile in P.M.

Wed June 2: Off guard. To gallery in P.M. Then

Thurs June 3: G.C.M. in P.M. Case of COUNAUGHTON, Stenog. Calkins from Watertown.

Fri June 4: Tea at Kimball's, for Win. PM at Mason's.

Sat June 5: Picture of kids – of post. Ricardo's teeth yanked. Dr. Phillips & Phelps. Kids barefoot. No inspec. Co. on guard.

Sun June 6: All day at Masons'.

Mon June 7: Hike to Camp Mills & simulate combat problem.

Tues June 8: Sent to ranges with Kimball & Hartman. No record. In at 2 P.M.

Wed June 9: OD. (Co. on guard in A.M.). Rain. Daughter of Pocahontas. Mother Smith, Agnes & Art here. Notice to go to range.

Thurs June 10: To range at 9 with Art. Got stuff up & tent ready. In pits all P.M.

Fri June 11: Bad day. Rain. Bummed & watched a poker game. No shooting.

Sat June 12: In pits all day. (Good weather) till 6:30 P.M. Bum management. In to post at 7:30. Squabble over who should get the car & go first.

Sun June 13: At Masons'. HP & (Mother Smith) up. Very warm day; around all day with kids. Wrote A.G. about relief & D.S. (out to camp at 10:30, just as big storm broke.

Mon June 14: Heavy rain anoche. Fine day. In pits all day. Fire at 500 R.T. – 42 & 45 with Whipple's gun. (O, you Bn. Comdr.) Movies in P.M.

Tues June 15: Rained all A.M. & all P.M. Bummed around. Slept. Movies.

Wed June 16: Bright A.M. Bass season open. Fired A.M. & P.M. (Willies's joke at 600 5 & a miss). 46 – 48 – 40 R.F. 4's & 5's slow fire.

Thurs June 17: Thunderstorm at reveille. No record in A.M. Phoned Win. – Record all Bn. till 6:30. Aurora borealis. Snake throwing contest.

Fri June 18: Fine day. Shot record. Fine day. Total 268. 42 at 3, 48 at 5, 46 at 600, 45 at 2, 49 at 3, 38 at 500 R.F. Est. dist. Arranged relief. O.D.

Sat. June 19: Up for reveille and packed. In with Baldy at 8:30. Rain – all day at Mason's

Sun June 20: At Mason's all day. Movies at post with Win.

Mon June 21: G.C.M. stuff. Co. on guard.

Tues June 22: Thunderstorm. Lemoned at the movies. "War is hell." (Masons.)

Wed June 23: A.M. drill. P.M. G.C.M. – Case of Marsh – deserter. Pistol practice.

Thurs June 24: Relief! Nix – Estimating distance in A.M.

Fri June 25: Rumors @ range. A.M., G.C.M. etc. P.M. on guard. – doped rifles – called with Win.

Sat June 26: Win left with kids; I went along to Syracuse by auto with Ernest – , 3 ½ hrs. Movies P.M.

Sun June 27: Up at 5. At station, found an 8:15 train available. Autoed to Nwese – 25 mi. up – Back at Sackets at 12 m.

Mon June 28: Hiked out to range. Left 8 A.M. Arr. 1:30.

Tues June 29: Police etc. all day. Got a tent & floor etc. Fishing in P.M. with Bubb & Baldy. HP arrived at 5:30.

Wed June 30: Shot all day. Good weather. Movies in P.M.

Thurs July 1: Breadfruit in Sp! Rain till 8 A.M. Busy on G.C.M. stuff – All ready. Wired Dillman, wire in ans. that he had left for N.Y!

Fri July 2: Bright & warm. Shooting in A.M. Sent in with Col. Gordon. Got rid of 3 G.C.M. cases. to Heinenweg. To Watertown, haircut and shave.

Sat July 3: Out on 8 A.M. boat. Breakfast at Whipple's. Landed at pumping station (Hocker out to pay troops) P.M. Shooting. Rain. O.D. for Upham & Hartmann.

Sun July 4: Relief – Not. (Bright and warm.) Usual Wash. D.C. stunt. O.D. HP out fishing. Party got 60. Worked on pistols & automatic machine rifle.

Mon July 5: Heavy rain anoche. Farhead snored me awake n times. Pleasant. Phoned Win. HP left in P.M. Irrigation job back of "H" Co. (Fill)

Tues July 6: Slow fire on D target all day. Wire from A.G. Not approved for Costa Rica. Phoned Win & put in for relief.

Wed July 7: Rapid fire. Relief letter got to post & presumably started for Wash.

Thurs July 8: Rain. No shooting.

Fri July 9: Expecting answer from Washington (Joke). (See date rec'd.)

Sat July 10: To Syracuse. Win came to Watertown & we went down together by train. Mistaken for B & G. Stand up lunch at Richland.

Sun July 11: In Syracuse. Carted out to the "troop farm" & told some funny, funny shooting stories. Back to Watertown by machine with Art. Chow at 12 at Woodruff.

Mon July 12: To Sackets & then camp. Arr. 2 A.M. Art left about 8.

Tues July 13: Won \$2 from Coker. (not 45 R.F. at 500) – Still whistling for it.

Wed, Thurs Fri July 14 – 16: *No entries.*

Sat July 17: Win, Ma Smith, Art came up by machine with the kids. Got to Syracuse by 8 P.M.

Sun July 18: Went in machine to the Barnes & was bored to death with militia stuff. Train at 6:30. Crutcher in Ford at Watertown. Camp at 11:30.

Mon July 19: 1000 yd. & telescopic sights. All day long. O.D.

Tues July 20: First combat firing. Sgts. exercise. Went in pit with Bubb for 2 hrs. or so. Lieuts. prelim in P.M.

Wed July 21: Sergeants record – on old range – all day.

Thurs July 22: Lieuts. in A.M. Co. in P.M. (Hinderberg as Director – Nomoyle as 1st I deadbeat looking on.)

Fri July 23: Proficiency test. Ed pooped as usual. I gave command cease firing with Ed busy as cpl. fixing up Lipman & Co.

Sat July 24: Hiked in, behind Hinderpisspot – Hot. In at 11:20. 5:45 to Watertown – 6:30 to Syracuse arr. 9:45. The “troop” (HOBAR.) just going.

Sun July 25: In Syracuse all day at 1615. Rumpus with Mary & final decision to fire her. Left on 6:30. Bubb on train. At Mad. Bks by 11.

Mon July 26: Rainy. Co. on guard. Order to stay here till Oct!!

Tues July 27: Drill. Hinderberg in orderly room. – Patrol work – reports on adv. force outlined with flags.

Wed July 28: Drill. Hinderberg in orderly room. Patrol pursued by platoon. Siesta. Baldy back.

Thurs July 29: Ed had us repeat(!) yesterday’s ex. so he could poop around and make a critique. He is the LIMIT. Phoned Win. Letter from Dad. Tie-up about O.D.

Fri July 30: Tent pitching all A.M. Bummed in P.M.

Sat July 31: Muster. Preceded by drill etc. P.M. out in rowboat all afternoon. Movies in evening. Chow at Masons’.

Sun Aug. 1: Chowd at Masons’. Wrote home.

Mon Aug. 2: To Syracuse. Arr. 11:40. Win met 12:20! Chow with Win at Shraff. Spent P.M. at 1615. Movie with Win in even. Out at 11:05.

Tues Aug. 3. Yonkers at 6. W.P. with Mom on day boat. Took a wop to Alice. Came down by Ford. Rain. With Jumbo at Clark’s overnight.

Wed Aug. 4: Over to Bub’s in A.M. P.M. in to N.Y. Chow & theater with HP. Saw Abner Howard.

Thurs Aug. 5: Saw Yanks beat St. Louis twice. Jumbo & HP there. Spent night at Clark’s with Jumbo.

Fri Aug. 6: To Albany in the Ford. 9:15 to 6:00. Good roads. Stopped at Ten Eyck. Sent spoon to Mom. 150 miles.

Sat Aug. 7: To Utica, 94 mi. by 12:30 – from 8:15. – To Sackets by 6:00 from 1:30 – 94 mi. Total 340 miles 17.4 per gal.

Sun Aug. 8. Chowd at Baldy's break. dinner, & supper. Wrote W.A.S. & home.

Mon Aug. 9: A.M. Test drill for K.O. To Watertown in Ford. Ordered mattress. P.M. to Masons, talked with Ric. Hour nap. Bed at 9.

Tues Aug. 10: O.K. for Slivocka as chauffeur. Outpost attack by G. Co. Captured ½ of them. To town for new mattress.

Wed Aug. 11: No drill, Co. on guard. B-ache by K.O.

Thurs Aug 12: 2 hr. hike.– P.M. to Watertown. – Got a Firestone nonskid – \$12.88.

Fri Aug. 13: Start of hike. To Watertown 14½ mi. Hot. Murray drunk.

Sat Aug. 14. To Wilna, 12½ mi. (Crouners Farm) (Our tent on the hill.) Hard hike again.

Sun Aug. 15: To Lake Bonaparte 15 mi. Hard hot hike. K.O. commandeered machine to buscar booze. Baldy & I swam in the lake. Murray broke arrest.

Mon Aug. 16: To Finc. Not so bad to-day. Rained like hell. O.D. Zeranski had a hard time getting me up at 3! (Goldstein & Martin soaked.)

Tues Aug. 17: To Newton Falls. Fine hike thro. the hills. In early. Colder. To Sheeny hotel at Star Lake for a coal-oil bath.

Wed Aug. 18: To Grass River. Coldest place on earth. Did not materialize. Mild night. O.D. again. Caught whisky bootleggers. Ice-cream cones!

Thurs Aug. 19: To Gale. O.D. & guard with wagons building roads. In at 12 with 4 stragglers.

Fri Aug. 20: To Tupper Lake. Slivocka ran machine in ditch. \$20, repairs, reward, etc. & \$1000 worry. Got camera etc. in farmhouse 3 m. from Gale's. Murder.

Sat Aug 21: To Saranac Inn. 17 mi. Rain all P.M. Baldy & I to Hotel for bath. Rain all night.

Sun Aug. 22: Paul Smith's. Rained all the way. Camp on lakeside. Very pretty lake. Naked swim. Baldy got cheers.

Mon Aug 23: Goldsmith's. Little rain. To Loon Lake – very pretty. No Swim. Rowed around. Shave. Dickinson & his fool performances.

Tues Aug. 24: To Saranac. Good swim in swift creek. Ice-cream brought by kid on bike. Last camp.

Wed Aug. 25: To Plattsburg. Long weary hike. Camped on parade ground. Saw Bonesteel. Chowed there. B-ached all P.M.

Thurs Aug. 26: At reveille informed we were to stay behind as guard. Whoop to dewey. Back & forth all day for orders. Adj. after adj. none knew a thing. Down at 5:30.

Fri Aug. 27: To business men's camp. Men out at 7:30. Policed all day. Ludicrous sights as the men collected stuff.

Sat Aug. 28: In camp. Cleaned louse in A.M. Dubbed around. Got chain for Green in P.M. Sgt. Owens deserted guard. Drunk.

Sun Aug. 29: P.Q.M. Sgt. McElroy off since Friday. Back Sun. or Mon. A.M. Signal Corps as K.P.! General police of camp.

Mon Aug 30: *No entry*

Tues Aug. 31: Mustered dets. H. C., Sig., Engrs. 3 Inf., H Co., QMC, NCS, Pay Sig., Engrs., NCS. Busy bee.

Wed Sep. 1: Policed. Tried to sleep in P.M. Walked to Hotel Champlain in even.

Thurs Sep. 2: By car to 8 mi. S. Got papers finished up.

Fri Sep 3: Read. Up to post to witness pay for 1 man. Trash soldiers in 30th.

Sat Sep 4: Armed Citizenry coming back. Traded sweaters.

Sun Sep. 5: M.G. squad in. Got box of pistol am. from Smedberg. Moved camp. Up to camp & saw K.O. P.M. shot the atmosphere with blanks. "Robbers". Ran out all the cav. etc.

Mon Sep. 6: Kept on running out interlopers. Not much loot. Attached sgts. got most of it. Fine swim in P.M.

Tues Sep. 7: Moved up at noon & damn glad of it. Letter from Win. Fixed up new camp.

Wednesday: Drill – Scared major. Serpentine movement. – Swim – P.M. thunderstorms. Parade scheduled.

Thursday: Drill, drill, drill. – Swim. Movie

Friday: Drill, drill, drill. Swim. Pistol practice.

Sat.: Field inspection of regt. To Montreal. Ducked customs at Rouse's Point. Arr. Montreal 4 P.M. Rode around city. Orpheum in P.M. 96 miles – on 7 gallons. (Hotel Windsor)

Sunday: 10 A.M. to Burlington 4 P.M. 5 P.M. ferry to Port Kent. To Ausable Chasm to Platt. 120 miles 7 gals. (11 mi – 19 min.) Chow at Arcade.

Monday: Maneuver – form outpost all day. Wet. Movies.

Tuesday: Hot. Hell of a hot manure. Van Fleet, Meridat, Murphy, & Eberts reported. Bum movies. P. “war” badge came.

Wed Sep. 15: Hot. Deadbeat A.M. P.M. at 5 (umpire) night manuev. Attack by 2 Bn on 1. Intrenched, with searchlights & m.g. In at 11. Swim.

Thurs Sep. 16: Hot. A.M. Out Pern. rd. with Rees. Went over maneuver ground for attack of R.R. – Stuck in machine at Bus. men's camp. Carburetor off & apart. Went all right after putting it together.

Fri Sep. 17: Attack of R.R. embank. from So. Platts. B-ache, b-ache, b-ache. (K.O.) Out & back by machine. (Ump) Swim. Bed at 9. Cold night. Pd. Truesdell \$20 last night. “H” & “F” Cos.

Sat Sep. 18: War strength bn. drill till 10:30 – Comded by Von Hinderpispot. Turned in to Maj. Clark \$43. (23 Bolger, “A” Co. & 20 Kranich, “L” Co.)

Sun Sep. 19: To Keene & Hurricane Lodge (45 miles). Chow. P.M. to Placid & back. J. Brown's grave. Supper at Hurricane & back by moonlight. 28 mi. in 1st hour.

Mon Sep. 20: Trench-digging by Brigade. Saw J. Kingman, Cronkhite, etc. Wrestling bout with Frink. Swim in P.M. O.D. K.O. walked me till 11:30 P.M. b-aching.

Tues Sep. 21: Rain, but troops went out at 8. O.D. Cold.

Wed Sep. 22: Worked on trenches all day. Mother Smith, Ern & Hod up in P.M. with Win & Gen. Jake Smith. Cold.

Thurs Sep. 23: Worked on trenches all day. Regt. goes home on Wednesday next.

Fri Sep. 24: Brig. manure. Flank guard with Capt. Hughes. Footless affair. Baldy detailed on mapping. Wire from Win about coming Sat. or Sun.

Sat Sep. 25: Farcial maneuver down Peru road. Called off at 2 P.M. No bivook. Thank God. Very chill & raw. Bn Adj. Movies. Met train – no Win.

Sun Sep. 26. Rain, rain, rain.

Mon Sep. 27: Left camp.

Record of duty

Att & on duty with "H" since Apr. 26, 1915

3 days leave. Left post May 27 rejoined May 30

Rel. June 10, '15 & att. "L" Co

Rel. "L", & att. "H", June 19

On duty till Aug 2

5 days leave – left post Aug 2, rejoined Aug 7

On duty till Sept 19 – left Co. Sept. 19. (Same as record in "H" Co.)

On duty with "K" Co. till Sept 27. Left Co. on Sept 27 en route to W.P.