

Food, Fun And Games

"Come and Get It!" was a welcome invitation to those first recruits at Camp Dodge. Tons of well-prepared food and rivers of fragrant coffee were rewards after days of strenuous drill and hard work. Meals at the camp were ample and wholesome, and on holidays the kitchen staff really threw the cookbook at the happy troops.

I wore my best Georgette crepe afternoon dress to the Allied Thanksgiving dinner given by the Headquarters Troop of the 88th Division November 29, 1917. What a wonderful party that was! Greenery, autumn leaves, flags, and shields decorated the bare walls and the crude ceiling beams of the mess hall. There were yellow shades over the light bulbs, and the dinner tables were banked with hothouse flowers.

And here was our souvenir menu:

Russet Cocktail Plummer
Eastern Shore Blue Point Cocktail
Heart of Celery Dill Pickles Radishes
Italienne Olives Salted Almonds

Consomme Alphabet
Saltines
Japanese Rice Compote Banana Sauce
Hawaiian Pineapple Sherbet

Rhode Island Roast Turkey with Oyster Dressing
 Roast Prime Rib of Beef with Gravy Natural
 Minnesota Cranberry Sauce Giblet Gravy
 California Asparagus Tips with Drawn Butter
 Irish Steamed Potatoes Dixie Candied Sweets
 French Peas Joffre Belgium Midget Beans

Red Cross Champagne
 Combination Salad Thousand Island Dressing
 Royal Cross of St. George Plum Pudding
 Hard Sauce a la Haig
 Buckeye Pumpkin Pie Allied Mince Pie

Troop Ice Cream, en favor
 Assorted Tropical Fruit Philippine Mixed Nuts
 Cafe Noir Ceylon Tea
 After Dinner Mints
 Cigars Cigaretts

Our host was Captain John H. Quigley, Troop commander, and the mess sergeant was Daniel McDonald. And every other outfit in camp enjoyed a bounteous holiday meal. Camp Dodge cooks were provided with ten tons of turkey, stuffed with two tons of dressing; 10,000 pounds each of white and sweet potatoes; 5,000 pounds of cranberries; 5,000 pounds of celery, and 4,000 apple, mince, and pumpkin pies.

On a bright autumn day it was fun to be invited to eat out-of-doors with a company of engineers. But — O dear! Let us draw a veil over the girl reporter's inept manipulation of her metal mess kit! I did have the good sense to put my

fork and spoon in my pocket. Then, how to maneuver the big coffee cup along with the pan filled with roast beef, baked potato, lima beans, and sweet pickles? And, horrors! What to do with the pan's cover which was to hold the dessert? Advice from mischievous soldiers was of little help, but I did survive this acrobatic adventure with a minimum of spills. And for the budget-minded: Mess Sergeant Lester Langley planned this tasty repast for 230 people for \$24.

Snow and cold ushered in December and the first Christmas at Camp. The plain buildings were gay with holiday decorations. Unpainted rafters were concealed with fir and holly and streamers of bunting. There were decorated Christmas trees in every building, and company cooks again worked magic with Yuletide menus.

Midnight Mass in the Knights of Columbus building was attended by more than 2,000 soldiers. At the big Y.M.C.A. auditorium there were gifts for everyone, and thousands of voices were raised in Christmas carols with dynamic Dean Holmes Cowper leading the singing. On Christmas morning there were special religious services in the Y.M.C.A., Knights of Columbus and Lutheran Brotherhood buildings, and many of the soldiers attended church in Des Moines.

And what fun it was to go with a well-chaperoned group of young people to a Christmas dinner-dance given by Company B of the 313th En-

gineers, with Colonel R. R. Raymond, Engineers' commander, an honored guest. During the dinner an improvised jazz band entertained us with great clashing of dishpans, wash basins, and pie tins, all trying to drown out the violinist and pianist. Climaxing the party, everyone sang:

Where are the Engineers? Ho!
Send up the Engineers.
Blast the bridge, entrench the ridge!
Come on, you pioneers!
The Infantry's the fighting arm,
The Signal Corps the ears —

But

Gee Whiz! Great Guns! Send us the Engineers!

I liked to drop in to visit with the Y.M.C.A. secretaries or chat with the Reverend Patrick McDermott, the Knights of Columbus Post chaplain, Ireland's County Donegal's contribution to the priesthood. There was always a dish of candy on the table in his study. Fellows often stopped by for a game of chess with the Reverend Father, or watched wrestlers or boxers training for downtown bouts in this hospitable building.

The Liberty Theater was a popular entertainment center, too, offering movies, home talent shows, and such gems as *Up in Mabel's Room*, *Mary's Ankle*, or *Getting Gertie's Garter*. And every day, Holmes Cowper, Dean of Music from Drake University, led hundreds of recruits in community singing. It was a treat to watch the Dean

leap and bound about the stage as he encouraged hundreds of singers to whoop it up with *Tipperary*, *Over There*, *K-K-K-Katy*, and other great songs which rocked the building.

One day some army mules, tethered near the theater, joined in the singing. "They came to scoff and remained to bray," laughed the exuberant Dean.

Major P. J. Hennesey of the 349th Infantry Regiment declared that "singing men are fighting men," when he organized the Trench and Barracks Glee Club, which entertained many Camp Dodge and Des Moines audiences. Very popular, too, was the chorus of Negro soldiers from the 366th Infantry Brigade.

Lively band music kept the recruits' spirits high. I'll never forget the concert given by the combined bands, that first winter. Bohumir Kryl, the great Chicago bandmaster, came out to lead the massed group in a stirring program of Sousa marches, anthems of the Allied countries, and other rousing numbers. Three field artillery bands, four infantry bands, and one Regular Army unit participated in this memorable event, which was held in the Y.M.C.A. auditorium.

Women visitors to Camp Dodge were not forgotten. General Plummer called the Y.W.C.A. Hostess House "the front parlor of Camp Dodge." What a lovely place this was for visiting wives, mothers, and sweethearts and for chilled girl re-

porters who found a welcome at its hospitable fireside. My good friend, Sue McNamara of the *Des Moines Register and Tribune*, often showed up at Division headquarters, and occasionally we were joined by Ruth Stewart, another Des Moines reporter.

After we had made our rounds, the Hostess House always was our objective. The gracious hostesses whom I remember best were Mrs. Earl Dunshee, the first director; Mrs. Ethel Towne Holmes, now of Grinnell; and Mrs. A. R. Mellor of Des Moines, who often joined us for tea.

Here was a hospitable building where weddings were held; meals were served; children could be tucked away in the pretty nursery; and elusive soldiers located for bewildered visitors. During the influenza epidemic, the big lounge was filled with cots for sorrowing relatives who had been called to the bedsides of sick and dying men.

Flags, palms, and flowers decorated the Hostess House when it was dedicated in February 1918. Soldiers and townspeople were invited to a gala afternoon tea honoring General Plummer, just back from France. In the receiving line with the General and his wife were Brigadier General and Mrs. R. N. Getty, Mrs. Hollis Rawson, Mrs. Gardner Cowles, Mrs. Henry C. Wallace, Mrs. O. F. Schee, Mrs. Harry Taylor, Mrs. Roy Walker, and Miss Harriet Plummer.

We were all on hand at the Hostess House at

Christmas time when mistletoe was especially rampant. Ethel Towne of the Hostess House staff had written to Oklahoma families of men then stationed at Camp Dodge mentioning a shortage of this essential Yuletide symbol. Walter Harrison, editor of the *Daily Oklahoman* and a former Des Moines newspaperman, responded with 20 crates of mistletoe which added much to the red balls, holly, evergreen, and the big Christmas trees throughout the camp.

Mrs. Mellor still recalls sad and happy weddings in the Hostess House; the blinding dust storms; the sleuthing necessary to locate men whose families and sweethearts could furnish only meager clues. There were days, too, when 99 gallons of ice cream were not enough, and when 61 watermelons, each weighing 20 pounds, were consumed by sweltering doughboys. On August 4, 1918, with the thermometer registering 110 degrees, Mrs. Mellor recalls that 2,176 people were served in the Hostess House cafeteria. She loved her job, however, later confessing: "It was all so new and different that I would not even lie down for a rest for fear I would miss something." During the first six months after its opening, the Hostess House furnished lodging for 1,000 women, and in the busy cafeteria, 83,199 persons were served in the month of June.

Camp Dodge had its own lively newspaper, *The Camp Dodger* edited by Lieutenant Laurence

Fairall. It was founded September 21, 1917, and was the oldest newspaper in the National Army. When the Division went to France, *The Camp Dodger* went along and was published in the Gondrecourt area — price, 25 centimes. Laurence Fairall recently retired as head of Fairall and Company, the well-known Des Moines advertising agency.

Colorful highlights of Des Moines social life during the Camp Dodge period were brilliant regimental balls held in hotels and clubs; teas for wives of officers and enlisted men; romantic wartime weddings and many informal gatherings planned to make the visitors feel at home. The Girls' Volunteer Aid, an organization of nearly 2,000 carefully selected young Des Moines women under the leadership of Mrs. W. E. Maulsby, danced happily at well-chaperoned parties in the city and the camp, as well as sewing and knitting articles for the men.

Two companies of Girls' Volunteer Aid were invited to attend the opening of the Army Club in downtown Des Moines. Many dignitaries were on hand to "say a few words." This was followed by dancing to a jazz band with 500 soldiers cutting in on 100 girls.

The clubhouse became a popular meeting place as well as a party center. Billiard and pool tables, books and magazines, and writing desks brought many soldiers to this hospitable center. The

planned dances were chaperoned by Des Moines women, and the Women's Clubs planned Sunday afternoon gatherings with special programs. Several of the churches also provided recreation centers for young men and women.

Public dance halls were carefully supervised, and strict rules were posted by the city officials. To test these rules, Mr. H. L. Eddy, head of the welfare department of the Chamber of Commerce, and I made a tour of the downtown dance-halls on the first evening the regulations were in effect. Mr. Eddy was a very good dancer and we meticulously followed the posted rules: "All unnecessary shoulder or body motion shall be forbidden. No undue familiarity or suggestive forms of dancing will be tolerated."

Friendly clubwomen were chaperons in all of the halls, and even Ben Woolgar, the safety commissioner, was there to see that proper etiquette was observed. I'm afraid our proper fox trots and waltzes would seem pretty tame to the frug and watusi set today.

There was no air conditioning, no television or radio broadcasts and the folding chairs were hard, but the sports shows sponsored by Camp Dodge authorities drew thousands of spectators to the old Coliseum in Des Moines nearly a half century ago.

Camp Dodge boasted at least two athletic stars of national note—Sergeant Earl Caddock, world champion heavyweight wrestler, and Mike Gib-

bons, noted middleweight fighter, who was appointed by the War Department to teach boxing to the men of the 88th Division. These two men, along with many lesser lights, appeared in a number of exciting shows to which I usually was sent to record a woman's reaction to the hot matches. So I was on hand when Iowa-born Earl Caddock defended his world title against "Strangler" Lewis and Wladek Zbyszko, the famous Polish wrestler. I joined the crowd in cheering when Mike Gibbons appeared in an exhibition match with "Packey" McFarland, another noted fighter who was boxing instructor at Camp Zachary Taylor.

Heading the sports program at Camp Dodge was Captain John L. Griffith, who left Drake University to become director of the Department of Athletics and Physical Training at the Cantonment. In later years, Major Griffith served as Commissioner of Athletics for the Western Conference — Big Ten Universities. For Camp Dodge he planned a broad program of contests which included track and field meets, baseball, football, basketball, boxing, wrestling—even polo.

Some of the programs were held in Y.M.C.A. and Knights of Columbus buildings, and it was exciting on one occasion to watch sparring matches between Mike Gibbons and his brother, Tommy, in the Knights of Columbus auditorium. Tommy, also a fighter, was training for an important bout, and he and Mike demonstrated rope skipping and

other conditioning techniques for the delighted spectators. Mike's boxing classes prepared recruits for hand-to-hand fighting in battle and were also useful aids for bayonet training. Mike once told me: "After all, bayonet fighting is largely boxing with a gun in your hand."

Earl Caddock, a big, good-looking Iowa fellow and already world champion, reported for service at Camp Dodge in December 1917. He was assigned to the Divisional Headquarters Troop. Caddock's reaction to his new life was typically modest. "I'm just a buck like the rest of these boys," he said, "but I'm going to work hard to deserve this uniform."

His pretty wife, Grace, a former Anita school teacher, kept the home fires burning in their Des Moines apartment and took an active part in the war work of the community. She and I had many chats, and I learned that while she was very proud of Earl's athletic prowess she never attended a wrestling match. She got the returns of each match over the telephone and was always ready to cook up a storm after one of his victories. Steak and eggs were the basis of his pre-match meals, so pies and casseroles looked pretty good to him after he disposed of his challengers.

A gentleman and a scholar was Wladek Zbyszko, Caddock's challenger for the world's wrestling championship in February 1918.

On the day of his match, he told me he was

proud to wrestle Caddock . . . "he is a gentleman" . . . but he was confident of victory. But the Polish wrestler did not win, and Earl Caddock retained his championship. In my story, which appeared on the sports page of the *Capital*, I pulled out all the stops as I described the struggling, "glistening bodies under the arc lights," while thousands cheered Caddock and booed the man from Poland.

On the morning after this victory, the Caddocks chatted happily with me in their Des Moines apartment. I watched hungrily as Grace prepared a prune pie which would be served with plenty of whipped cream.

There were many of those special matches and contests, but day in and day out John L. Griffith and his colleagues planned less glamorous sports and games which built the raw, young recruits into rugged, fighting men.

The admiring opinions of many officials at home and abroad were expressed in remarks of General Beach, as we surveyed a group of 88th Division soldiers, back at Camp Dodge for demobilization in June 1919. "Aren't they a fine looking lot of men?" the officer exclaimed. "When they came from home, many were pale and thin. The war surely did wonders for them!"