

I count it an honor and a privilege to have in my possession the diary of John E. Kraft (Gertrude Priest's first husband). Upon reading this journal I found myself engrossed in what I felt was a beautiful love story. Gertrude had only been married to John about five months when he shipped out to France to fight in World War I back in 1918. He was not to return from war. He was killed on October 3, 1918 while fighting for his country. There were times I felt as though I was ease dropping and invading the privacy of this young couple but I was caught up in their story and couldn't put the journal down until I read it from cover to cover. I have often thought of Gertrude and how she must have been heart broken over the death of her young husband. He never returned to American soil. His grave is in France. I have a picture of Gertrude as an old woman kneeling at his gravesite in Europe. I can only imagine the thoughts and emotions that raced through her. This is something she wanted to do before her death and by golly she did it. It took courage and stamina for a lady her age to travel to Europe all alone but she did. What is kind'a of sad is Gertrude did remarry. She married John Mason Priest and they had a son named John Edward Priest (my husband). When John was a young child his mother and father divorced. John's dad said "I can't compete with a dead man" and he ended their marriage. John Kraft's middle name started with an "E" and I have often wondered what his middle name was seeing as she named her son John E. The pages that follow is a typewritten copy of John Kraft's Army Diary. It was just a little 5 1/2 by 3 1/2 book.

Army and Navy Diary - the inside page says "Written and dedicated to my wife Gertrude Kraft, and to Mother Kraft."



On second page John had written "To whom it may concern: Should I be mortally wounded or killed, and some one find this little book on my person will you carry out the last wish of a friend and forward this book to my wife with as full account of how I fell as possible. Very truly yours, J.E. Kraft. John was in the Army 1 year and 1 day when he died.

This book is the property of Corp. John E. Kraft  
Residence: Frametown, R.F.D. # 1, Box 16, W. VA.

Date of Enlistment: October 2, 1917

Enlisted at: Sutton, W. Va., Braxton County

Arrived at Training Camp at: Camp Lee, Virginia

Date: October 4, 1917

Left Training Camp: Camp Lee

Date: May 25, 1918

Started for France: 11:10 a.m. 5/16/1918

Arrived in France: June 9, 1918

Enlisted in: Field Artillery Battery "E" 313

In case of accident notify: Mrs. John E. Kraft, Rosedale,  
W. VA. Box #96.

Then the diary had a section entitled English-French Vocabulary. Categories were: To Eat and Drink, Wardrobe, Relatives, Household Articles, About the Town, Time and Seasons, At The Front. He had his father's name and address in his book. (Father) George J. Kraft, Frametown, W. VA. R.D. #1 Box 16.

Section entitled Account of Battles and Engaged in: John had written "Sept. 26<sup>th</sup> I took part in one of the greatest artillery fights the world has every known. It was my first engagement and was in the noted verdun Sector. Our guns fired across "Dead Man's Hill."

Superior Officers: Capt. F.W. Crandall, 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. G.W. Gilliam, 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut. Davidson, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. Burke, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut.



Amberson.

At Camp - Thursday May 23, 1918

Dear Gertrude: This begins on Thurs. after you left on Mon. morning. So you can follow date from that time and know just when the following data occurred. I am not allowed to give any dates that will give any information as to time of leaving or where we are, etc. Today we shipped part of our equipment and are awaiting orders to move to embarkation point.

Old Camp -

Is not the same as when you were here. I forgot to say that I am recopying my dairy up to this point because of information not allowed. Now I'll go on with it.

At camp - Friday

Sweetheart ~ today we finished packing entirely. The day ended with a Field Concert given by the Regiment in honor of our last day in Camp. "Good-by Camp - Hello France."

In Harbor - Saturday

Dear ~ we left camp this morning and are now on board ship for France. Came on board about 1 P.M. It has been an exciting day leaving Camp and all. We are in the same state still.

Going out to Sea - Sunday

Dear ~ we lay in harbor till near noon today then we started on our journey. It is near dark and we will soon lose sight of the States. How I have missed you today. Last Sunday you were with me.

At Sea - Monday

Dear ~ our ship is a new one and substantial. There are a good many boys going over now. There are several ships too. That is all I can tell. The ship is sailing nicely now. Don't



know how long it will last. As I sat on deck today and watched the rolling waves I thought of the Christ who walked the Sea of Galilee and stilled the storm, and I felt a great calm that can come only from His Spirit.

Further at Sea - Tuesday

Little Wife ~ I have thought of you all day, and I dream of you about every night. I've felt a touch of sea-sickness today. It is not pleasant. I'd love to see land. My how much!

At High Sea - Wed.

There is a high wind. I have just had supper and feel better now. I've read all the letters I have from you and they have made me long more intensely for you. Dear, how my heart longs for you!

Further at Sea - Thurs. May 30

One week is gone since I began my diary and oh how far from the place I was then. There has been a storm since I wrote last and I have been very sick. What are you doing today? "Flowers and tears." Know the day?

Further at Sea - Friday

Dear ~ God is on the Ocean the same as on the land and I am not afraid, it is still stormy. I've been in the bed three days and have eaten but little during that time; one meal, I think.

Dears ~ last night I dreamed of home and was so glad about the way every one thought about our marriage, Gertrude, and the way every one loves you. I've been very sick but in mind I've roamed over both our homes with you.

Further at Sea - Saturday

Sweetheart ~ today has been an uneventful one except some target practice by the ship crew. The sea is some smoother now and we are getting a little better. "We" because most of us have been sick

Ditto - Further at Sea - Sunday



Little Wife ~ I've just finished a book, 'Mary Neville.' The story of a girl who married a drunkard who was a peculiar man. I've learned much that will help me avoid making some mistakes at least and to be a better man.

More ditto's Ha! Further at Sea - Monday

Dear ~ I've worked some today in the mess hall. Listened to a lecture by a Lieut. on what we could and could not do in France; pretty strict, but it pays in the end I guess.

Over the half way line - Tuesday

Dear ~ we're not allowed on deck today so I've been scanning thru "Laddie" again. Remember the book? I've laughed and cried over it as usual. Hardly know which I did most.

Still speeding along - Wednesday

Dears ~ I've enjoyed a quiet day, reading and sleeping and feeling almost happy even though we are in right much danger. I always feel His presence and yours with me.

Much nearer land - Thursday

Love ~ this has been an interesting day to me. Have read a book the name of which is "The Adventures of Princess Sylvia." I think we are safer now as boats from shore have met us.

On a beautiful Day - Friday

Dear ~ the day has been so beautiful and the water and the sun so pretty I just had to sing. It is great to watch the sun rise and set from the deck of the ship.

Nearing Land - Saturday

We've been on board a good many days now but I think our journey is about ended on the sea. At any rate we are all eager to see land again believe me! We're tired of sailing. Oh I must say something more today. It is nearly night and we are near land on a large river; a beautiful landscape is in view. My! but we are a glad lot of boys tonight. We are in the Old



World now.

Over Sea Somewhere - Sunday

Dearest ~ we landed this morning and it has been an exciting day for us. We are now in a rest camp for three or four days. I am at the Y.M.C.A. Services are now over and a show is on or about on. A great country here!

At A Rest Camp - Monday

Dears ~, I am feeling fine tonight. Am on guard now. After I wrote last night I attended one of the greatest or best music concerts I ever heard. We are not doing much just now.

At The Rest Camp - Tuesday

Dears ~ I haven't done much today. Put out my wash, slept a little and am at the "Y" tonight listening to music and to see a Negro Minstrel Show. Am longing to hear from you.

At The Rest Camp - Wednesday

Dears ~ we took a long march this morning and drilled this evening. Tonight I attended what is known as "Old Home Night." We all met at the "Y" and sang songs and had some talks.

At Rest Camp - Thursday

Dear ~ I have been studying French today. Can speak a few words now. This is my first trial at it. Hope to learn more. I wrote this after dark.

At Rest Camp # 2 - Friday

Dears ~ Lieut. took nine of us non.com. to town today for a holiday, and some time we had too! We visited some famous buildings several hundred years old. Saw some mummies and famous paintings. They serve wine at dinner here so we had some wine but not enough to hurt us. C?

Waiting At The Station - Saturday

Dears ~ we are now ready to entrain for our regular training camp up north near the firing line at the place where we will



prepare to take active part in the war. Auvoir.

#### Traveling - Sunday

Dear ~ we have traveled all day and come thru some large cities. We are at our journey's end for the day. We are to sleep in our pup tents for the first time. We've traveled since yesterday at 8:00 P.m. I hope you can read this or make it out somehow. I've written under many conditions.

#### At Camp # 3 - Monday

Dear ~ we have a permanent camp for the time being. We like it very well. We went to town at retreat and several got drunk so we had quite a time after our return.

#### At Camp # 3 - Tuesday

Dear ~ we (our Batt.) are divided into three sections and are stationed within  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles of each other. The divisions are in Camps 1, 2, & 3. I am in No. 3 as given above. Some place!

#### At Camp on Billet # 3 - Wednesday

Dears ~ Today we did not do much except march from place to place. We arrived at our quarters about 9:15 P.M. You bet we were tired. The roads are nearly all concrete, so it is hard.

#### At Billet # 1 - Thursday

Dears ~ We moved from Billet No. 3 to # 1 today. I am better satisfied here. Spalding and 8 other men left this morning to go to school for different kinds of work. They will be 25 miles from us.

#### At Billet # 1 - Friday

Dears ~ today was a jolly one for us, especially this afternoon. We all went over to a good sized pond and went in bathing. My! we enjoyed it after several days with no bath.

#### At Billet # 1 - Saturday

Dears ~ today marks the arrival of my first letter in France. Oh how it takes me back home to read letters from home. My letters were from Mother and Aunt Jessie. I am wild to hear



from you Gertrude!

At Billet # 1 - Sunday

My dear Sweetheart ~ I have found nothing in my surroundings to remind me of this day a year ago, except the weather. Do you remember that it was on this day a year ago that you gave me your promise true to become my wife. Oh that I could be with you now as then. I have missed you more today than I can tell you! My heart is almost breaking just to see you.

At Billet # 1 - Monday

Dear ~ we got our cannons today. They are called the "French 750". They are not much like our American 3 inch gun. I hope we'll like them. I worked with the Special Detail today.

At Billet # 1 - Tuesday

Dear ~ I with several other non. com. went to school today. I saw Brook for the first time since we saw him at the "Y". My! I was glad! I worked on our gun this afternoon. I like it fine.

At Billet # 1 - Wednesday

Dear ~ I've drilled on the new guns all day. Have not been well for 3 days. I went to the Dr. after supper and he ordered me to bed. That is where I am now. My pulse and temperature are high but I'll be O.K. by morning. The mail came today but none for me.

Ditto - Thursday

Dear ~ I was at town today to non. coms. school. Worked on the guns this afternoon. Mail came in again but none for me. I am feeling much better this evening to what I did this time last night.

Ditto - Friday

Dear ~ mail came again and I was overjoyed to hear from Gladys. How I am longing to hear from you. Have had gun



drill all day. Am acting Sgt. of the Guard tonight. Love.

Ditto - Saturday

Dear ~ I've read a very good book today and answered Gladys' letter while I was off duty from guard. The book was "The Shadow of Victory". The day ended with a band concert.

Ditto - Sunday

Dear ~ I went to town today, came back, wrote some letters, one to you, read some, went out and listened to the band and heard Rev. Yuell talk. Came back and soon went to bed, this spent the day.

Ditto - Monday

Dears ~ you ought to see us drilling in our gas masks. It is some drill. I and Audry Stalnaker or Sister, as we call him, took a walk and went out to see the French Catholic cemetery. It was pretty.

Ditto - Tuesday

Dear ~ we took a hike in our gas masks this morning. This afternoon we went to town and passed in review. The whole 155 Brigade passed in review. I guess we walked about 15 miles.

Ditto - Wednesday

Dear ~ tomorrow is the "Fourth" and we expect a great time. Today we drilled as usual till 2:30 then went for a swim. It was the first time I ever swam before women when I was naked, but I had to do it. No matter how bad I felt over it.

Ditto - Thursday

Dear ~ We've had a very quiet Fourth. Tho' I am here in France in person I have spent the entire day with you, except about an hour while we had the big review at town. Wish you could have seen us.

Ditto - Friday

Dear ~ I've been on guard today. Am tired tonight. A Sgt.



from the front came over and told us some things about the French 75. I think he is coming next week too.

Ditto - Saturday

Dears, we had inspection today as usual. Then gun drill and this afternoon we just cleaned the guns. We try to take very good care of them because we expect them to care for us later.

C?

Ditto - Sunday

Dears ~ we were gassed this morning just for practice. It did not hurt us for it was tear gas, just hurt the eyes. We got part of our horses today too. They are very nice looking. I am just ready to begin my daily Bible reading.

Ditto - Monday

Dear ~ I've felt fine all day. Everything has gone smoothly. We had the Sgt. with us to tell us about the guns again. I washed some after supper and have studied French and my Bible for quite a while. Now it is bedtime.

Ditto - Tuesday

Dear ~ mail came today but none for me. If it would do any good I'll cry like a child, for I feel like it. I dreamed a beautiful dream about you last night. In my dream I kissed you many times. Oh I was so happy, but now I'm sad!

Ditto - Wednesday

Dear ~ It was showery all day and as we did not work in the rain we did not work so hard. But we have to wear our gas masks from 8 to 11:00 a.m. now instead of from 8 to 9. -  
Pretty tough on us.

Ditto - Thursday

Dear ~ I had a new experience today. I was on guard and had to give one of the prisoners bread and water to eat. Nothing more was allowed. My I hated to do it!



Ditto - Friday

Dear ~ I was up town today for the first time since Sunday. Have quit drinking any kind of drink now even soft drinks such as I wrote about. Am getting ready for inspection.

Ditto - Saturday

Dears ~ this has been a day of inspection. Have done nothing only stood inspections. Got thru with all pretty well. Hope I'll always do as well. We have been having rain for several days.

Ditto - Sunday

Dears ~ I attended church at the Catholic Church today. My first time to be in a Catholic meeting. Then I attended our own service at 7:30, wrote three letters and began to read a book "The Soldier of the Legion"

Ditto - Monday

Dears ~ I am nearly thru my book. It is good. Have had non coms. school nearly all day. Have not worked much. I am on guard again tonight. It keeps us busy doing guard duty.

Ditto - Tuesday

Little Wife ~ This has been the happiest day I've had in France because of the arrival of your first letter to me in France. I answered it this morning. It is sad to know that Father is so very low. Oh that I could be with you all!

Ditto - Wednesday

Dears ~ today was rather an easy one for me. We wore our gas masks till noon and cleaned our guns this afternoon. I washed my bed tick after supper and am just ready to begin my daily Bible reading. I can hardly think of anything but home.

Ditto - Thursday

Dears ~ Today was just a repetition of most other days, that is we had gas mask drill, infantry drill and gun drill. Give



me gun drill for mine.

Somehow I missed this space and the two on the following page and I'll fill it in with a little narration of the first big move we have made since we got our guns and horses. It is as follows: On Saturday we started from right where we were camped in tents. We marched about 16 kilometers and camped for the night. The next day, Sunday we marched about the same distance and camped near M.Z. Yesterday we marched about 15 kilometers and camped at Tx. and today we came on thru 18 K.I. and landed at a fine Artillery Camp. It is the nearest to what our camp in the States was of anything I've seen. Groves and I are rooming together in a little room for non coms. It is pretty nice.

Ditto - Friday

Dears ~ we have been quite busy today. We got some more horses today. That meant extra work. I am acting Sgt. of the Guard tonight. Just stopped a fight between two of the F. Battery boys.

Ditto - Saturday

Dears ~ I was on guard today and was quite busy all day. Then passed a gunners "Zam" at 7 P.M. just after I came off guard. It is raining this evening. Am glad I'm off guard.

Ditto - Sunday

Dears ~ Slept till 7:30, got up and triggged up for Sunday. Did a little washing and wrote some before noon. Took a big walk and passed thru several (towns) small hamlets, came back, wrote more, went to church and began to read a book, thus ended the day.

Ditto - Monday

Dears ~ We sure had some snappy drill today. We drilled on the guns nearly all day. We are having more rain this evening. I am act. Sgt. of the Guard again tonight.



Ditto - Tuesday

Dears ~ I've been quite busy today, drilling on the guns this morning and the horses this evening. Am on guard tonight. I lost about ten dollars worth of clothing in the laundry this week. I learned about it this evening.

Ditto - Friday

Dears ~ I came off guard at 6:50 this evening, then went over and arranged our 3<sup>rd</sup> Sec. horses in teams. We have some fine horses. We sure are some busy lads these days!

Ditto - Saturday

Dears ~ This has been an easy day for me. Went out with the teams this morning and this afternoon. The whole Battery went swimming and then rested after supper. I played with some little children.

Ditto Billet # 1 - Sunday

Dears ~ I did not get out much today as I was in charge of the drivers and had to care for the horses. I went on guard tonight again. Am on every three days.

Ditto - Monday

Dears ~ I've been on guard today. When I was off duty I would crawl in my tent and go to sleep. That way I got quite a bit of sleep and feel fine over it. I think we will move soon.

St. Nicholas' - Tuesday

Dear ~ Today was a surprising one. At one o'clock we received notice to pack by 2:45. By that time nearly everybody was ready to move and by night we were about five miles from Billet #1 and pitched tents for the night.

Ditto - Wednesday

We are camping out in our little tents now along a canal. It is a very nice location for a camp. Don't know how long we'll be here. We arranged to be comfortable and cleaned up our guns and horses. Received two letters today.



Ditto - Thursday

Dearest ~ I was glad to get your letters yesterday. Today we were on a mounted march all day. Went into position for firing but did not fire as it was only practice. We are pretty tired tonight. Am about ready for bed.

Ditto - Friday

Dear ~ We had our regular drill this morning but this afternoon was all spent in getting ready for a new kind of inspection. It is to be a regimental inspection of the drivers and cannoneers mounted.

Ditto - Saturday

Dears ~ I passed the big inspection alright. It was pretty tough too. We went and took a swim this afternoon and that was all for the day. I went to town tonight and got some cards and papers.

Ditto - Sunday

Dear ~ I went to town today. I saw Brook and spent a half day with him. We went up in the highest tower I've ever been in. I could see for miles in every direction. It sure was some scene.

Ditto - Monday

Dears ~ It has rained nearly all day and we had to tear our tents down and make a blanket roll and go out for mounted drill. Now we have wet ground to sleep on. It is nasty work.

Ditto - Tuesday

Dear ~ This morning we had a mounted march and this afternoon we had gun drill. Then after supper I went to town to a band concert. It was fine.

Ditto - Wednesday

Dears ~ We have had gun drill, mounted drill, foot drill, a dismounted march and gas drill, grooming horses and cleaning guns today. We sure have been busy.



Ditto - Thursday

Dear ~ I am on guard tonight. The first time for about two weeks. We are getting ready to move from here to a regular camp where we will get actual firing practice.

Ditto - Friday

Dear ~ We are ready to start on our march tomorrow at 6:30 a.m. We will be on the road about four days. Three of our Lieutenant's started back to U.S.A. today to help train others.

In Camp For Night - Saturday

Dear ~ We are 13 miles from where we were this morning. We had breakfast before daylight and dinner at 3:30 and supper at six. We are beginning to know what war means. Oh these awful marches.

In Camp For Night Near M1 - Sunday

Dears ~ We got an early start and marched till 12:30 and pitched camp till tomorrow. If I did not know for sure I would not have known this was Sunday. I've worked and marched all day. We came quite a distance.

In Camp For The Night - Monday

Dears ~ We are still on our march to our training camp at M. We will arrive tomorrow if we have good luck. Have had a very good day of it today. Wasn't nearly as hard as yesterday.

At Camp M. - Tuesday

Dears ~ Today has been the most interesting one I have spent in France. We arrived at our first regular camp and ended our 4 day march. I saw my first prisoners and saw my first French shell burst same day, same camp. Things will follow.

At Camp M - Wednesday

Dears ~ We worked on our guns all day and cleaned them up getting ready to fire in a day or two. It was a pretty tough job after all the dust we came thru.



At Camp M - Thursday

Dears ~ We have had gun drill all day and I took data for the Lieut. I received a letter from each of you today. How glad I was to get them. I answered both today. By. By.

At Camp M - Friday

Dears ~ We have had gun drill again today and cleaned the guns this evening ready to fire in the morning at seven o'clock. I guess it will be interesting.

At Camp M - Saturday

Dears ~ We were on the range this morning till noon. The Capt. complimented us on our firing and said it was fine. It was exciting to hear so many guns shooting.

At Camp M - Sunday

Dear Gertrude ~ I received two letters from you today. They took me back across the ocean to you. In one of them were the pictures we had made at Camp and those of the girls at home.

At Camp M - Monday

Dears ~ We were on the range again this afternoon and according to reports old "Batt. E" retained her record of being the best ever on this range and there has been hundreds of them. What do you think of that?

At Camp M - Tuesday

Dears ~ Today was an easy one. We drilled on the guns till noon and rested after noon, all but forty five minutes that we cleaned the guns. After supper Bro. Ship, My. No. 1 went to the "Y" to the movies. C?

At Camp M - Wednesday

Dears ~ We had gun drill this morning and this afternoon we cleaned the guns. After supper I went to the "Y" to a French Musical Concert.

At Camp M - Thursday

Dears ~ We cannoneers got up at 4:00 a.m. this morning and



after breakfast we walked four miles and fired all day. We sure had some day of it. It has been our first full day of firing.

#### At Camp M - Friday

Dears ~ I haven't done much today except drill and clean the guns a little. Am going on guard tonight after about three weeks. I don't do guard as often as I did because we have more corporals now.

#### At Camp M - Saturday

Dears ~ I've written to you both today. Have read some and slept a little. Went to the "Y" tonight for a while and listened to the band. It was very good music.

#### At Camp M - Sunday

Dears ~ I've been in camp all day. Did intend to go to the city V. to have some pictures made but missed Reveille a few days ago and they would not sign my pass. C?

#### At Camp M - Monday

Dears ~ We have been on the firing range all day and have done some good firing. We had one problem of 28 shots and had 28 direct hits. Some record! Ha!

#### At Camp M - Tuesday

Dears ~ Today we have had gun drill nearly all day. We had to clean our guns this morning. We also had gas drill 1 hr. but I've worked on the guns two part of the hour.

#### At Camp M - Wednesday

Dears ~ Today we had a mounted march and gun drill. Tonight I went over to the "Y" to the movies but I wrote you and Mother before the pictures.

#### At Camp M - Thursday

Dears ~ Today we had gun drill and went to the range to fire but I only fired one shot. Just now 9:00 p.m. we were searching for German prisoners who escaped.



At Camp M - Friday

Dears ~ We've had gun drill today and also cleaned the guns. Tonight after supper I went to the "Y" where the French women had a kind of show for the benefit of the Red Cross. I bought two little presents for Gertrude.

At Camp M - Saturday

Dears ~ Today we had a weekly gun test in the forenoon and afternoon we cleaned the guns. Ready for Monday's firing - that will be Labor Day.

At Camp M - Sunday

Dear ~ Today I went to the city and had a very good time. Spaulding and I had some pictures made and I bought you a birthday present. Hope it pleases you.

At Camp M - Monday

Dears ~ This is Labor Day and I guess it will be labor for us as we go to the range to fire or rather did go. We fired awhile then had to put out a fire caused by a shell burst. C?

At Camp M - Tuesday

Dears ~ This has been an easy day on the 1<sup>st</sup> firing Batt. We haven't done much all day just cleaned the guns after supper then had a lecture by our first Lieutenant.

On the Range at M - Wed. - noon

Dears ~ We just ate dinner here on the range. We came out and went into position ready to fire right afternoon. The wagon kitchen came along and cooked dinner for us.

At Camp M - Thursday

Dears ~ Today we had our regular drill till noon. Afternoon we packed up and arranged for a night maneuver and at 7:15 we started and came out about five miles and went into position and got into my tent at 11:15 p.m.

At Camp M - Friday

Dears ~ Today has been rather pleasant for us. Haven't done



much but lie in our tents and on the grass and sleep. We had a fine rain this morning. We came back to camp this evening.

#### At Camp M - Saturday

Dears ~ We had a review today and as a result of it we did without dinner till four o'clock. My but we were hungry when we did eat.

#### At Camp M - Sunday

Dears ~ I went to the city v. today and got my pictures and sent them to you all. I hope you will like them. I do.

#### At Camp M - Monday

Dears ~ We are getting ready to move from here. Will go in a day or two. I guess we'll soon be at the front and in the fight.

#### At Camp M - Tuesday

Today Dears, we had gun drill and also cleaned the guns. We are having some very hard rains now and it is about as muddy as it has been dusty.

#### At Camp M - Wednesday

Dears ~ Today we have gun drill part of the day and then we had some instruction as to how to load our guns on the train. We also had gas mask inspection.

#### At Camp M - Thursday

Dears ~ Today we had pistol practice. I beat the Capt., one Lieut., and about thirty other men who were firing. We went thru the gas chamber this evening. That was all I've done.

#### At Camp M - Friday

Dears ~ Today was not very interesting in regard to work. But the day was made very delightful because of the arrival of several letters from you all. They made me happy.

#### At Camp M - Saturday

Dear ~ I've done nothing today but stood inspection and took a good bath and fixed my equipment ready to leave tomorrow.



Am not very well.

At City V. and on Train - Sunday

Dears ~ We moved from Camp M. today and came to V. and entrained for the front. We are now far from Camp M. Will go by way of the capitol of France.

On the Train - Monday

Dear ~ We passed thru P. and are still speeding toward the front. I have been very sick since Sunday morning and have been under the Dr's care. Hope to be better soon.

At the Above Camp - Tuesday

Dearest ~ We have at last landed at our destination. As it happens it is on your birthday. Sweetheart I am so nervous from my spell of sickness that I can hardly write. I very well remember this day Dearest. Wish I could be with you on your birthday.

In Hearing of the Front - Wednesday

Dear ~ We traveled 7 miles after I wrote yesterday. It was three this a.m. before I got to be down. Just layed by a tree and fell asleep in the rain. I've had grippe and this trip has nearly put me out, but am better this evening. Am lying under our gun now.

In a Big Wood - Thursday

Dears ~ We are just ready to move forward again. We have been here two days now but all is a hum and stir. Getting in order to move again.

In Camp for the Day - Friday

Dears ~ We traveled all night last night and are resting now. I am lying in my little tent now just awake. We are going forward at night C? Don't know what day we'll do any shooting. 3:00 p.m.

At a More Advanced Camp - Saturday

Dears ~ We are nearer the front than before. We came forward



last night and are now in a kind of getting ready camp. I am fine.

#### At Camp C - Sunday

Dears ~ Today has been one of sunshine and rain. We had gun drill this morning. This afternoon I've written to you and the folks at home and read some.

#### In a Dug Out - Monday

Dears ~ We are now at the front in our first position against the foe. The enemy shells are flying over us. We left Sunday evening at 7:15.

#### In a Dug Out - Tuesday

Dears ~ We passed the night alright. The shells went high but today at 3:30 shells are hitting our position and we have no ammunition. Our combat train turned back.

#### At The Front - Wednesday

Dears ~ Tonight there is the biggest artillery drive going on that has ever been known and we are in the midst. We are just waiting to begin a barrage. The big guns are firing now.

#### At The Front - Thursday

Dears ~ It is 2:30 a.m. In two hours we will open fire in the great drive. God be with us thru the days to come. If I fall it will be facing the enemy. Goodbye 'till I get to write again.

#### After The Back - Thursday Night

Dear ~ We have fired at and chased the Huns all day and we are nearly worn out, but many prisoners have been taken and we have driven them back many miles.

#### On The Front - Friday

Dears ~ I am standing by my gun writing this. Just waiting on firing data. We have been sending shells over on the Huns. Canons are firing on every side (Today is my birthday, September 27<sup>th</sup>).



On The Front - Saturday

Dears ~ We have been shelling the enemy today. Have done a good deal of work about the guns, but we don't mind that. We are firing tonight too. I stayed up and fired my gun myself 'till 3:30 a.m.

On The V. Front - Sunday

Dears ~ One would hardly think this to be Sunday. There is so much firing going on. We are still after the enemy. They got some of our Regiment this morning by killing several.

On The V. Front - Monday - September 30

Dears ~ We are still firing at the enemy and making it as hot for them as we can. We have been lucky so far and have not been shelled by them very much.

On the V. Front - Tuesday - October 1<sup>st</sup>

Dears ~ We are still shelling the enemy and they are sending a few our way now, but so far no one in our Batt. has been hurt. I hope our luck continues.

On The V. Front - Tuesday - October 2<sup>nd</sup>

Dears ~ There has been some excitement in our Batt. since I wrote yesterday. Two or three have been wounded and others narrowly escaped. The enemy have been shelling us and we them.

*This is the last entry in John E. Kraft's journal as he died on Wednesday, October 3, 1918 in battle at the Front. Somehow his little diary found it's way home to his dear loved ones he wrote to every day. My mother-in-law, Gertrude Kraft-Priest had possession of this diary until her death and it was then passed on to her son (my husband) John E. Priest. I did not know John Kraft (I wish I could have had the opportunity) but I wanted his story (as he wrote it) to be remembered so I have made this hard copy of his diary to be kept with our*



family records. We are proud of him. As he said in his own words "If I fall it will be facing the enemy."