

*Report of Edga C. Sharp* Patchogue, N.Y.  
*as Commissioner of Knights of Columbus*  
*to Great Britain.*

Dear Doctor Gordon:

As promised I have written below a brief outline of my movements and activities while on the other side, have also enclosed a few pictures which may be of some use to you.

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When America entered the Worlds War and it was decided that Camp Upton, L.I. was to be developed into the most important training camp in the country I was asked by the Supreme Officers of the Knights of Columbus to supervise the erection of three Recreation Buildings in that camp and was also told at the time that the reputation of the Knights of Columbus in connection with the welfare work they were just taking up depended a great deal on our success at Camp Upton. If we didnt have buildings that would do credit to us and if they ~~were not~~ *were not* placed in good locations the work of the K. of C. would get a black eye from which it would be hard to recover and on the other hand if our buildings at this Camp were well constructed and well located we would be able to fall down at other places but still make a reputation due to the fact that Camp Upton was so closely situated to the most critical city in the world ( New York ) and on account of this Camps close proximity which would enable thousands of New Yorkers to visit the Camp we must spare no effort at this point to have three of the best Recreation Huts in the country. Three fine huts were constructed at three of the most popular locations in the Camp and the Supreme Officers of the K. of C. were so pleased that I was given the opportunity to go to France to be engaged in the same sort of work in the different training and rest camps in that country.

I sailed for France in April 1918 and upon my arrival in that country was located in both Paris and Bordeaux. I found it a very difficult matter to purchase lumber and have same transported to the different camps also discovered that labor was very scarce due to the fact that nearly every man was performing some sort of military service. As time was valuable to our cause and to eliminate the difficulties enumerated above I entered into a contract with a number of firms in France whose specialty was building portable huts and these huts were built in sections and shipped to the different camps which procedure worked out very successfully.

Besides performing the duties of my position which was Supt. of Construction I also had charge of the different K. of C. activities in the southern and southwestern part of France and during most of the time I was located in France I made my Headquarters at Bordeaux which city was a very important point *during* those days, more than two hundred thousand American Soldiers ~~were~~ *being* quartered in the different training and rest camps adjacent to Bordeaux.



The latter part of August 1918 after a five months period of service I was promoted to the position of K. of C. Commissioner for the British Isles with Headquarters in London, England from which Headquarters I was to direct our work in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. Soon had in operation three large Clubs in London which places provided sleeping accommodations for hundreds of men daily besides all forms of healthy amusement. Also had places in Southampton, Plymouth, Didoct, Market Drayton, Little Hampton, Winchester, Knotty Ash - Liverpool, England. - Cardiff, Wales - Dublin, Ireland and at Glasgow, Edinburgh, Inverness, Invergorden, Kirkwall and Lerwick Scotland the last two named places being in the Orkney Islands and Shetlands respectively.

The American Mine Sweeping Fleet were working in the North Sea and made their base at different times at Inverness, Invergorden, Kirkwall and Lerwick. These brave American lads that were engaged in this work experienced all the dangers of war for months after the Armistice was signed. The Americans lay most of the mines in the North Sea after it was claimed by nearly all the British and French Naval Commanders that it would not be possible to mine this sea due to its vast expanse but the different American Commanders in the British waters at that time said it could be done and it was done and done successfully. As soon as the Armistice was signed the American started taking up the mines which proved to be quite a difficult matter and their task was not accomplished until the middle of Sept. 1919. Every few days one of the mine sweeping boats would accidentally come in contact with a floating mine which meant a sunken ship and the loss of a number of lives. On account of the extra hazardous work our boys were performing in the North Sea also the fact that at the places <sup>they</sup> were using as Base's not being places where the men could find much recreation I made a specialty of looking after <sup>our</sup> these boys located in the Northern parts of Scotland and always had assigned to the different K. of C. places at those points the best men that came oversea's to perform welfare work. During their sojourn in these northern waters I shipped to them from our Headquarters in London thousands of pounds of candy and great quantities of all kinds of tobacco. When these sailors would obtain shore leave they would find at our different places all forms of clean healthy amusement arranged for their intertainment and I know from experience that our efforts in looking out for their welfare was greatly appreciated.

In the large cities such as London and at all the important centers we provided all sorts of amusement for our men such as dances, sight seeing tours, entertainments and lectures. Also served breakfast and light refreshments in all Clubs providing sleeping accommodations and the K. of C. during the entire period they carried on their War Work adhered to their policy of <sup>Everybody welcome</sup> every thing free and during all their experience in the work they have never sold an article or received one penny from an American Soldier or Sailor in exchange for <sup>articles given</sup> any courtesies extended. We have been criticized by some people on account of our Every thing Free Policy but it was always our idea that we acted only as the agents of the American people - we were as you might say the connecting link between the people back home and the boy on the other side. The mother might give five dollars towards providing her boy with some comforts and we felt when were providing these comforts that we were representing this mother and not our own organization.



Liked my stay in the British Isles very much with the exception of the weather. I think we experienced a period of One hundred and fifty days in London during the fall and winter of 1918 and 1919 without seeing one sunny day. The fogs were so thick in Nov. and Dec. that one had to drive headlights on his car in the middle of the day right in the heart of London. It rained nearly every day and the English people get rather used to it but not so with the Americans. I remember one day when visiting our Club at Cardiff, Wales I happened to be looking over the register which we kept in every Club and I noticed that an American sailor had written some poetry under his name and address and from the tone of the poetry I could easily tell that he wasn't favorably impressed with the English climate, the poetry ran something like this -

Dirty days has Sept. April June and November.  
All the rest have thirty one without a blessed gleam of sun.  
From January till the first of May the rain it raineth every day.  
And if any month had two and thirty, they'd be just as wet and just as dirty.

We closed all our activities in the British Isles the early part of Nov. and in company with my wife who had joined me in London the previous August we visited Paris, all the American battle fronts, the American cemeteries, grave of Quentin Roosevelt, Rheims, Chatteau Thiery, Verdun, - Brussels, Antwerp, Ostend and Zeebruggee in Belgium all the occupied territory along the Rhine Germany - such places in the southern part of France as Lourdes, Nice, Monte Carlo, Monaco and Mentone, over the border into Italy stopping at Genoa, Milano, Venice, Florence, Rome and sailed from Naples on the 20th. of Dec. At Venice we had an opportunity view all parts and sections of that beautiful and historic city, at Rome all the wonderful Cathedrals and ruins and at Naples went to the top of Mount Vesuvius and visited the Ruins of Pompei which is situated about twelve miles from Naples.

After sailing from Naples on the 20th. of Dec. 1919 we landed at Perlermo, Sicily for a day and a night then passed out the Mediterranean Sea which gave me a good opportunity of viewing Gibraltar stopped in the Azores for coal and arrived in New York Jan. 7th. 1920 after a very eventful twenty one months spent in a service that was always interesting as it made one feel that he was doing something that was doing someone some good and I will always consider myself very fortunate that I had the opportunity to do my bit along with the millions of others.

Perp.  
Eugene G. Sharp