

BASE HOSPITAL NUMBER 26

The Minnesota Base Hospital or, according to its official designation, Base Hospital No. 26 was mobilized on December 10, 1917, per telegraphic instructions of the War Department. The organization was initiated and carried to completion through the enthusiastic efforts of Major Arthur A. Law, who was made its commanding officer. The hospital was reported completely mobilized on December 15 and on December 28 it was ordered to entrain for Fort McPherson, Georgia, per S. O. #297, Hqrs., Central Dept. It arrived at its destination on the morning of December 13, 1917.

At Fort McPherson the hospital was joined by Colonel Joseph H. Ford who was then made Commanding Officer, and Captain John Bentler, Q.M., and Thos. G. Williams, 1st Lieut., S. C., Adjutant.

The organization trained at this post in drill and hospital functions. On March 30, 1918, unit "V" of Dallas, Texas, under command of Major Mark E. Lott, was attached to Base Hospital No. 26. The personnel was thus increased to a number sufficient for taking care of a hospital of 1000 beds.

On May 19, 1918, per confidential orders #52, Hqrs., Southeastern Dept., May 13, 1918, the organization entrained and arrived at Camp Merritt, New Jersey, May 21, 1918. After a ten day stop there the organization went on shipboard on June 3, 1918, the officers and enlisted men on the Adriatic, and the nurses, who had

joined the unit at New York City, going in the same convoy on the Baltic.

After an uneventful trip on a northerly course, the convoy arrived in Liverpool, England, on June 15, 1918, disembarking on June 16. From Liverpool they entrained to Southampton, crossing England on a beautiful sunshiny summer day, and reaching Southampton towards evening. After 24 hours spent in a "rest" camp, they embarked on a small steamer arriving in the port of Le Havre on the morning of June 18. Here they marched up the long winding hill to Rest Camp No. 1, leaving there late that night. They arrived in Allerey on June 20, late in the evening.

The Minnesota hospital unit was the first organization to arrive at Hospital Center, Allerey. It consisted at the time of its arrival of 36 officers and 207 enlisted personnel. Colonel J. H. Ford, M.C., was Commanding Officer. The center was only partially completed. Section #2, one of the ten base hospital units contemplated to be established, was the most complete and therefore chosen to house this organization.

Three days after the arrival at Allerey, Colonel Ford was detached from Base Hospital No. 26 and was made Commanding Officer of the center. He took with him for his headquarters staff a large number of officers and personnel of Base Hospital No. 26. Indeed almost his entire staff was composed of members chosen from the Minnesota unit, although the center was composed of six hospitals and a convalescent camp during the latter part of the summer. Among those detached were Captain Thomas G. Williams, who was made camp adjutant, Captain John Bentler, who was made group Quartermaster, Captain Gilbert J. Thomas, sanitary officer and

fire marshal, Major E. C. Moore, evacuating and receiving officer for the center, Captain Moses Barron, laboratory officer for the center. Colonel Ford also took a number of sergeants and privates with him. These detachments involved changes in the positions of the personnel at Base Hospital #26. Major Law was again made commanding officer.

When the officers and personnel moved into the barracks the buildings were still incomplete. Little had been done to provide for sanitation. Grading, ditching, water supplies, disposal of sewerage, waste and garbage had not at all been attacked except that a small amount of ditching had been done and the terrain fairly well drained. Water was at first procured from wells in the little town of Allerey which was situated about a quarter of a mile from camp. This town had a population of about 250 inhabitants. Later the water supply was furnished from three wells in the immediate vicinity dug for the purpose. However this water had to be chlorinated for drinking purposes since it was only surface water. Bathing facilities, at first a problem, were gradually worked out. The French portable shower outfits proved satisfactory. Later a number of American showers were also installed.

From a sanitary standpoint two diseases proved a source of special concern during the period of greatest activity at the hospital. These were influenza and diphtheria. Influenza became of very frequent occurrence. Different members of the Command were affected with some respiratory complaint. The establishing of special wards for pneumonia and other infectious diseases did a great deal to lessen the spread of the infection. Pneumonias

following influenza were quite common and had a high mortality. These diseases proved most troublesome during September and October.

The bed capacity of the hospital was repeatedly taxed to the utmost, so that even the Red Cross recreation hut had to be requisitioned for use as a ward, all wards and tents having been filled to capacity. The patients beds were placed very close together. At times they were scarcely more than 12 or 16 inches apart.

Practically all of the German prisoners coming to the Center, wounded or sick, were admitted to Base Hospital No. 26. There were 322 admitted to this hospital, of which 90% were surgical cases. At one time there were 202 in the hospital. Six of these patients died. When the remainder were well enough to travel, they were evacuated to Central Prison War Enclosure No. 1 at St. Pierre de Corps, near Tours, France. When the hospital was evacuated in the early part of January, 1919, the remaining 16 bed patients, orthopedic cases, were evacuated to Base Hospital No. 49. Needless to say, all these men received the same attention and care as was given to our own men.

On the arrival of the unit at Allerey the Medical Supply Department took up its quarters in the building it occupied during the entire period. From the first great need of medical supplies became evident. The slowness in filling our first requisitions was remedied to a great extent by the American Red Cross together with the articles bought from the Contingent Fund. Even afterward, all the ready-made dressings were furnished at all times by the Red Cross, the Government furnishing only the guaze bandages in bulk. The Red Cross furnished also a great many special instruments and other supplies which could not be obtained quickly in any other way, and gave besides generous quantities of such

articles as bath robes, pajamas, bed socks, etc., which were invaluable to patients who were able to move about the wards. In the latter part of August, the original articles purchased with the money donated for the Unit arrived in good condition and were a great help at the time when medical supplies were difficult to obtain. At first the system of obtaining supplies was rather slow and inefficient, inasmuch as the needs were great, but later it was improved and only occasionally was there a direct shortage of medical supplies.

The surgical service, the dental service, the medical service, and special services would each make an interesting chapter, especially to those in the medical profession, but the limits of this paper preclude a just discussion of any one of them. The work of the laboratory, of the surgeons, of the medical students, of the nurses, and of the enlisted personnel each deserves special attention. The mess and entertainments furnished more problems and their history is full of interest.

Colonel ~~and~~ Law and Major White left for the United States on December 26, 1918. Base Hospital No. 26 left Allerey March 4, 1919, arrived at Nantes March 7. The officers sailed from St. Nazaire on the Zeelander, ^{April 4,} arrived at Charleston April 18. The enlisted personnel and four officers sailed one week later and arrived at Newport News.