

Letters Home: Navy & Marine Corps

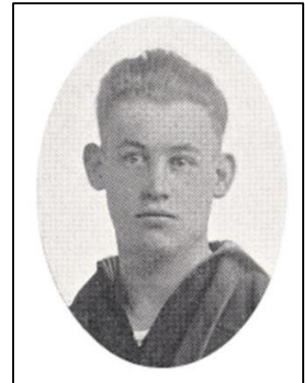
Edited by Trail End State Historic Site Superintendent Cynde Georgen

Between 1917 and 1919, *The Sheridan Post* and *The Sheridan Enterprise* donated considerable space to printing letters home from local soldiers and sailors serving both overseas and stateside. As part of the 2017-2018 *Wake Up America* exhibit, Trail End reprinted dozens of these letters, releasing them weekly via social media. For the most part, we have not changed the spelling of overseas locations, preferring instead to use the sometimes-creative spelling printed in the original articles.

These letters are from men and women who served in the United States Navy, the Navy Air Service, and the U. S. Marine Corps.

DEWEY WILLIAM HUSS – Navy (USS *Galveston*)

Like most of the men from Sheridan who enlisted in the United States Navy, Dewey Huss was just a teenager when he signed his papers on April 17, 1917. He was working as a printer for *The Sheridan Post* at the time and was one of four *Post* employees to join up right after war was declared. After basic training at Mare Island near San Francisco, Huss was stationed on several ships that performed convoy escort duty across the Atlantic. The biggest and newest was the USS *Galveston*, a Denver-class cruiser responsible for several U-boat “kills,” including one just 200 miles off the coast of Norfolk, Virginia. After the war was over, Huss stayed in the Navy for a time. In 1919, he was stationed as a yeoman in Constantinople, Turkey; in 1926, he served as a Navy recruiter in New York City. After leaving the service, he bounced around the country for several years, working as a linoleum layer in Jersey City and Salt Lake City. He finally settled in Las Vegas, where he died in 1969.



We have been here now about four days. We are nicely situated, with everything required for our comfort and health, with plenty to eat. The medical department is looking after the physical condition of the recruits very closely. We were all pretty sound to begin with - or we would not be here - but they are immunizing us from dangers we are likely to run against anytime in the future. Our Uncle Samuel is a regular bear on things sanitary.

We are still in quarantine but will be out by the time you receive this and will then be located in regular barracks. How long we will be there, we don't know. The first bunch of recruits from Sheridan went to sea this afternoon, so you see they are putting us through promptly.

You have heard of fighting cocks, haven't you? Well, that's the way we are all feeling all the time. A cold shower bath at 5 a.m., plenty of exercise and good grub, sunshine and pure sea air - guess we ought to feel fit.

We all had to sacrifice our beautiful pompadour hair. A barber, totally without the higher conception of beauty and art that distinguishes Sheridan barbers, ruthlessly run his lawn mower over the heads of the whole outfit. We looked mighty funny to each other for a day or two.

Another thing has happened to us, too, that would make home folks look twice and take three guesses to name us correctly - that is the nice thick coat of tan we have all acquired so quickly. Some are red, and others are black, while a few are the exact shade of the old copper tea kettle that reposes on the rear end of the kitchen range back "somewhere in Wyoming."

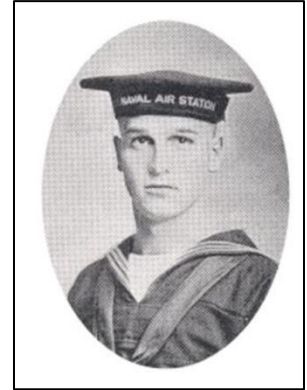
We have all of the comforts and just as many pleasures as we had at home: pool halls, bowling alleys, pictures shows, etc., and we lack nothing we ought to have. If any boy has had a touch of homesickness, like the "old Salt" he is, he has hid it from observation. There is one regulation that I know will meet your instant approval, for I have had many an enjoyable lecture from you on the same subject. When you talked, you lacked the power to enforce what you desired. When Uncle Sam speaks on the same subject, he's got the steam back of it and it goes. That's about cigarettes. They don't go here, and if anybody brought along any of the "makins," he hasn't got them now.

I want to say this much for the benefit of any other boy in Sheridan who contemplates enlistment in the navy: I am more than pleased that I took the step. What I have seen and learned up to this time more than fulfills my fondest dreams. If I were back in Sheridan and asked by any of my friends what to do, I most surely would say: "Join now, while the joining is good and when you have the opportunity to select the branch of service you prefer. It is all and more than you will expect and you are wronging yourself by hesitating. Don't ever allow it to be said of you that when opportunity came to you, you were too lazy or yellow to improve it."

The Sheridan boys all send regards to everybody and we all want it remembered that wherever we are and however placed, when we finally get on our Uncle's battleships, we will remember the old town and do our best to reflect credit upon the good people who have an interest in us.

EVERETT EDWIN SHORES – Navy Air Service

Born in Missouri in 1896, Everett Shores lived in Sheridan as early as 1910, when the U. S. Census found him on West Whitney Street with his parents and siblings. By 1917, he was working at the U S Shipyards in Portland, Oregon, but still called Sheridan home. Shores enlisted in the U. S. Navy in August 1918; he reached the rank of Carpenters Mate First Class in the Navy Air Service. After the war, he reenlisted, serving for another three years in the Naval Reserve before returning to Sheridan, where he was employed as an architect. He and his family lived on South Thurmond until 1945, when they moved to Cheyenne. Shores' undated letter home was published in *The Sheridan Daily Enterprise* on August 30, 1918. Written from training camp in South Carolina, it gave a good overview of the early days of Navy life to those boys back home who might have been thinking about joining up.



Dear Folks - We got our clothes today and have spent all afternoon stenciling our names on them. We got white trousers and two blue ones and the same number of blouses, four pair of socks and six suits of underwear, two pair of shoes, two white hats, one blue one and a Jersey cap, a Jersey sweater, a mackinaw, shoe brushes, hair brush, comb, clothes brush and leggings. We got our bedding the first day. We have a canvas hammock, two mattress covers and a mattress and a double wool blanket.

Yesterday we got vaccinated and shot in the arm for typhoid fever. I couldn't hardly tell they were doing it. Our arms got sore pretty soon, but they don't hurt so bad that we could not use them. Today they are mostly all right again. They must have "shot" four or five hundred yesterday. Hardly any new recruits have been coming in lately til a bunch of 68 came in today from Boston.

We have very good meals. We had vegetable salad, fried potatoes, ice tea, liver and tapioca for supper and for dinner, tomatoes, spaghetti, boiled potatoes, coffee, roast beef; so you can see we have pretty good grub.

I guess I will begin washing my white clothes pretty soon. They sure don't stay clean very long around here. We run around with our over shirts off, and some of the fellows have the prettiest sunburns I ever saw. We have school, boxing and baseball games at night, and I don't see anybody homesick yet. All the company is from the western states. On Sundays, church is held in the mess hall.

LENA ANNIS STOVER - Navy

Stenographer-for-hire and former high school teacher Lena Stover wanted to do something for the war effort above and beyond knitting sweaters and rolling bandages for the Red Cross. So she enlisted in the United States Navy. Forty-four years old and unmarried, Stover attained the rank of Chief Yeoman and served as private secretary for one of the ranking officers at the Puget Sound navy yards at Bremerton, Washington. In the summer of 1918, Stover obtained a pass to Camp Lewis (the primary army training camp for men from the western states)



in order to visit with her nephew, Private Fay Harper of Banner, Wyoming, who volunteered for the remount service and was stationed at American Lake, Washington. While Stover's letter tells very little about her own experiences in the Navy, it does give a great deal of detail about Camp Lewis, as well as Harper's experiences and attitudes. The undated letter was published in *The Sheridan Post* on August 2, 1918.

A pleasant two-hour ride by boat took me from Seattle to Tacoma. From Tacoma to Camp Lewis, a distance of about eighteen miles, I went by auto. There is a fine paved road all the way, so we were not long going out. A second road, parallel to the first, is being built, which will be a great help in handling the large volume of traffic between the two places. We passed through some good farming country, with beautiful orchards, meadows and fields, and comfortable looking farm houses. In a good many places, however, the timber comes down to the road. As we approached the camp, we passed through some heavy timber where groups of soldiers were at work cleaning out and burning the underbrush.

The entrance [to Camp Lewis] consists of an archway built of stones with a wing on either side, but there is no fence around the camp, at least not at that end. ... I found my way to the hostess house without difficulty, arriving there before eleven o'clock. There were boys on the porch and in the lobby, but Fay was not among them, so I brushed up a bit, and found a seat on the porch where I would be sure to see him when he came. The hostess house is a very comfortable place. The porch has chairs for about a hundred people. The lobby, reading room, and dining room are all large. ... There were people coming and going all the time, some to see relatives and others to see the camp. ... It is a great thing and provides a good meeting place for the men and their relatives.

Twelve o'clock came, but no Fay. I began to think my letter had not reached him, or perhaps he had been sent away, but a few minutes after twelve the bus stopped in front of the house, and here he came, apparently very glad to see me. His pass had been delayed, so he had not been

able to get away until twelve o'clock. We had a good dinner, then sat a while on the porch before starting out to see the camp.

Fay looks fine and seems in the best of spirits. He says he weighs more than he ever did, and that he gets plenty to eat. He told me he had a chance to learn to box, and I said, "That will be fine exercise. He replied: "Exercise! They give us exercise before breakfast and after breakfast." So you see they are kept busy, which, of course, is a good thing.

Fay has learned a great deal about army life and uses army terms quite frequently. He seems to realize that orders must be obeyed promptly and that a clear record will give him greater privileges. He said he had escaped the guardhouse so far, but that he got called down occasionally, and that the captain gave him a week's kitchen police duty because he failed to report for duty on the dentist job. It seems that the captain was going to put him in the infirmary to work for a dentist, but Fay failed to show up. When the captain got hold of him and asked him about it, Fay told him he didn't think it was any use to report as he didn't want that job anyway. The captain let him off, but gave him a good lecture on obeying orders and put him washing dishes for a week. After that they assigned him to one of the barns, which suits him all right.

He says they have a lot of horses, but are not breaking many of them just now, so about all the bronco riding he does is when people come out to visit the remount station, which seems to be a popular place with visitors. One day a bunch came out, and the captain called Fay and another boy to ride for them. That night Fay went to the theater and discovered that the people for whom he had ridden in the afternoon were the entertainers for the evening. His company is made up of cowpunchers, and he says there are a lot of fine riders from Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho among them. At first his company had cavalry drill and were told they would go across as cavalry, but now they are getting infantry drill.

He spent the Fourth at Tacoma and was in several of the riding contests. There was one contest, which, I judge, was something like a relay race. A package had to be passed from one boy to another and then handed to the captain. At the last minute Fay's company decided to put in a team just to give the other teams a run for their money. Roy Barkey, Fay, and two boys from Miles City, Montana, were chosen. The boys agreed among themselves that they would ride hard to win the cup, and succeeded in doing so. Their captain told them their names would be engraved on it, and it will, I presume, be kept as a company trophy. Fay rode in the "Rodeo" at the camp, so he must be considered a good rider.

Fay told me he had asked for a transfer so he could go across as he didn't want to come home after the war and have to say he did all his fighting in a barn at Camp Lewis. I was glad to hear him say that as one doesn't think much of the fellows who are looking for a soft job where they

will be out of danger, but of course, we want him to come back to us safe and sound. It will be a great experience for him, and I feel that death does not touch a man until his work is done, no matter where he may be. When I saw all the boys there going about their work, I was glad we had a boy among them, and I suppose I looked just as proud of Fay as the other people did of their boys, for I know I felt mighty proud of him.

We rode as far as we could in the bus, then walked across the main parade ground toward the remount station. Men were drilling in every direction. After crossing the parade ground, we came to a grove, all around the edge of which are hurdles, vaulting bars and such things, which are used in examining the men for overseas service. Fay says they are put through a stiff examination, but seems to be confident that he can get through.

Beyond the grove was an open space, and here a company was drilling. It was a warm day, and Fay had unbuttoned his coat, but I noticed that he quickly buttoned it up. I also noticed that he was careful to salute all the officers we met and that he salutes well, which is always the mark of a good soldier. In crossing the parade ground, I said: "Fay, isn't it a little hard drilling on this pebbly ground?" He replied: "Oh, you don't have time to think about anything like that. You just keep your head right up in the air, for if you don't they are right after you."

Farther on the wagon train was drilling. There were probably thirty or forty wagons, each drawn by four horses or four mules. This drill is chiefly for the benefit of the drivers. We got in the shade of a tree and watched them for a while. Later on we saw them come in from drill, two wagons abreast with outriders, and they made quite a procession. I was fortunate in visiting the camp on a week day as I got to see the men at work.

Finally, Fay located his company away over so far that I could hardly see them. He said one day they deployed them in skirmish line and ran about a mile, having them lie down every few rods as though they were shooting, then turned them around and ran them right back again. Just imagine a bunch of cowpunchers running two miles on foot and living to tell the tale! Fay said his feet gave him some trouble at first, but that they did not bother him much now.

We got to the remount station in time to see Fay's company come in. He pointed out the lieutenant and the first sergeant, and, as soon as their backs were turned, made strange signs at the boys who answered them with broad grins. Of course, Fay had the laugh on them that day for he didn't have to drill.

It seems that if the boys do not want to drill, they just slip into the brush and stay there until drill is over. Fay said that one day he hit for the tall timber, but so many other fellows came out that he decided there would probably be a roll call, so he went up and drilled. He said he hadn't

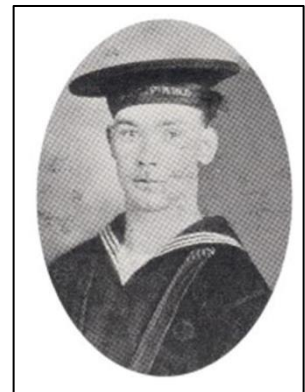
missed drill but a few times, as he figured drilling one hour a day was better than drilling eight or doing kitchen police duty. Fay doesn't seem to be very fond of washing dishes. ...

He gets to hear good entertainments at the camp theater, for the most noted people of the United States appear there. There are ball games, boxing matches, riding contests, and all those things which men enjoy. ... He is having a good time and learning a lot, while the training he is receiving will be valuable to him after the war is over.

We rode back to the hostess house and rested there a while. Then Fay took me to the bus station, where a car was just ready to leave for Tacoma, so I got back to Seattle in good time. I certainly enjoyed the day and have tried to tell you all about it.

HERSHALL DONAHUE – Navy (USS *San Diego* & *Pueblo*)

One of the first of Sheridan's young men to go off to war, Hershall Donahue had just turned seventeen years old when he enlisted in the United States Navy. The son of former Kendrick Cattle Company ranch manager Jack Donahue, Hershall was evidently a fine specimen of manhood, *The Sheridan Post* noting that he "passed the physical examination with an almost perfect showing." After completing basic training, Hershall was assigned to the USS *San Diego*, where he served as a Fireman 1st Class. After the armored cruiser was sunk ten miles off the coast of New York's Fire Island in July 1918, Hershall was transferred to the USS *Pueblo*, an escort ship for convoys crossing the Atlantic. Hershall was honorably discharged from the Navy in March 1919. He returned to Sheridan, where he married, raised a family, and died in 1978. The letter reprinted here, mailed from an "undisclosed location," appeared in *The Sheridan Post* on August 31, 1917.



Dear Folks - I am glad to say that I am near the dear old States and will have a chance to write you again. We are still at sea, but think we will hit port tonight. We certainly had a fine trip down the coast of California, and it was very nice until we got so far south, then the heat was fierce and it rained every day. It was great sport, however, to sit aloft and watch the flying fish and many other strange things.

We reached port after nine days at sea. I had the four to eight watch and got on deck just in time to see the ship leave the first lock of the Panama Canal. It is sure a great piece of work. In some places it looks like they had blasted away great mountains of rock. I wish I had a camera

and been allowed to use it, for I could have secured some great pictures. We passed through three locks on the Atlantic side.

The next day we coaled ship, or rather the negroes did, for they did most of the work. That night about six o'clock we pulled to sea without getting any liberty ashore for which we all hoped. We are now four days at sea, along the Atlantic coast somewhere.

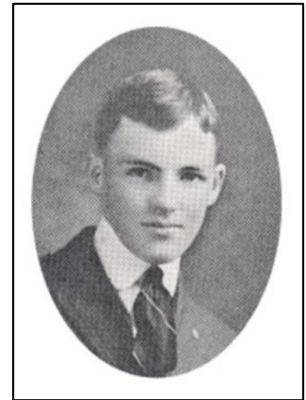
I hope to get to port soon and will write you again.

In December 1917, Hershall sent his parents the menu from the warship's Christmas Feed, saying "They have cooked a big dinner and all we have to do today is to lay around and eat."

Celery, Oyster Stew & Croutons, Prime Roast of Beef, au jus, Roast Turkey & Raisin Stuffing, Cranberry Sauce, Potatoes a la Queen & Glazed Sweet Potatoes, Sauté of Sweet Corn & Asparagus Tips in Mayonnaise, Hot Mince Pie, Fruit Cake, Assorted Fruit, Candy, Coffee, Cigars & Cigarettes

CHARLES AMBROSE COONEY – Navy (USS *Mississippi*)

Sheridan native Charles Cooney was only sixteen years old when he enlisted in the United States Navy on April 14, 1917 - one of the youngest recruits from Sheridan County. Prior to his enlistment, he attended Sheridan High School and worked at both the Sheridan Iron Works and *The Sheridan Post*. After the war, Cooney returned to Sheridan, where he lived with his mother and brother on East Works street. Following a short stint at the University of Wyoming, he got a job as an apprentice printer at *The Laramie Boomerang*. This led to his career as a printer and reporter for a variety of Wyoming newspapers. He eventually wound up in southern California, where he died in 1993. Cooney was stationed aboard the USS *Mississippi*, the biggest battleship in the Navy. In an undated letter printed in *The Post* on May 24, 1918, Cooney provides a few details about life as a sailor on the *Mississippi*.



We left here [Norfolk, Virginia] about the fourteenth or later of March, and from here went to Hampton Roads, where we went out for a few days to give our guns a preliminary test before an official test was made. We came back to Hampton Roads and stayed a few days and then went to Guantanamo, Cuba, where we gave an official gun firing test before government officials and experts. We were there for about 30 days firing all our guns and made tests of our engines.

There is a large detachment and a few sailors at Guantanamo, and we were entertained at smokers the Marines gave us. There are several ballparks there and also several rifle ranges. We went on the range one morning, and the next day we left.

Cerninere and Guantanamo City are where men from the camp go on liberty. We sure had a great time there picking up coral, etc. We had movies every night. The uniform was undershirts and bare feet. I got a good tan there.

The only work I do is to drill and stand watches when we are under way. You must remember the Mississippi was just put in commission the 17th of December [1917]. She is the biggest of our ships afloat. She has the biggest guns of any ship in the navy. Carries about 130 men.

When we came into Hampton Roads from Cuba, we stayed a couple of days and went to Yorktown and joined the fleet under Admiral Mayo. We went out with the fleet Monday, came back yesterday and came in the navy yards at Norfolk today. We had recreation Saturday and Sunday, and there were several baseball games. When we went out with the fleet, I counted twenty-seven battlewagons. Imagine that.

LOREN GEORGE MILLIS – Navy (USS *Calhoun*)

A native of Osceola, Iowa, Loren Millis worked at several businesses in Cedar Rapids, before moving to Sheridan in about 1914. He was a bookkeeper for the Sheridan National Bank in 1915 and 1916, getting a job as an assistant cashier at the First National Bank of Shoshoni in early 1917. At the age of twenty-eight, Millis was possibly the oldest Sheridan area man to join the Navy during the war; most others were in their teens and early twenties. Despite his age, however, Millis made an able seaman, quickly rising to the rank of Electrician 2nd Class/Radioman on the USS *Calhoun*. On New Year's Day 1919, after eighteen months or so of ferrying troop ships back and forth across the Atlantic, the *Calhoun* found herself answering a distress call: the massive passenger-liner-turned-troopship *Northern Pacific* had ran aground near Fire Island with nearly 2,500 men stranded aboard. Millis' description of the evacuation and its aftermath was published in *The Sheridan Daily Enterprise* on January 10, 1919.

NOTE: We do not have a photograph of Loren George Millis in our files. If you know of one and you'd like to share it with us, please contact us at trailend@wyo.gov.

Dear Mother: We came up the North River and anchored with the fleet on New Year's Eve about 11:30 p.m. About 4:00 o'clock in the morning we heard the Northern Pacific sending out S. O. S. and a short while later we were making 34 knots an hour at the head of a bunch of destroyers. When we reached the Northern Pacific, we found her high up on the beach with waves

splashing up high as her stacks. The sea was very rough and was pounding her unmercifully. It was so rough that we could not come very close, and all we could do was spread thousands of gallons of oil. The sea calmed down last night so that the small boats took off nearly all the passengers today, and we brought in 200 this afternoon. It is about 60 or 70 miles, I think,

They landed some on Fire Island yesterday by breeches buoy and lifeboats. There are still over 100 stretcher cases (badly wounded) on board, but they will soon be off. There were something like eighteen or nineteen hundred wounded soldiers on board and several hundred able-bodied men just being brought back from France. There were a lot that were in straight jackets and in pitiful condition, and they had to be handled with great care.

Many of those we brought in this afternoon had been wounded, but were convalescent. Several of them had the Croix de Guerre which they had received for bravery on the battlefield. I enjoyed the trip in with them. They were a good bunch of fellows and were happy to be back where they could see "The Old Lady" (Statue of Liberty).

The Liboney (a big transport) came in just as we did, and there were whistles blowing and a big tug came out with a band which played "The Star Spangled Banner" and "Home Sweet Home." Another band was at the pier to meet us. It was great to see the people waving and cheering those fellows. You see, people were quite anxious about all those men on board the N. P. and were tickled to death to see them coming in. Believe me, it was a happy bunch of men too. The Liboney is a whopper and was brown with soldiers whom she brought direct from France. We convoyed her across several times during the war.

You remember the Northern Pacific is the big liner which I rode from Portland to Frisco during the fair in 1915. She is the fastest transport we have and made many trips across during the war, carrying thousands and thousands of soldiers. I sure hope they can get her off the beach soon [she was refloated on January 18].

We landed the troops on the pier next to the Leviathan today over in Hoboken. You know she used to be the Vaterland. The fleet is anchored in a line reaching as far up the river as I can see.

I must close now. Love to you and the folks.

P.S.—We will leave New York Jan. 2 for Cuba where we will spend the winter with the fleet. Guantamala [Guantanamo] is the fleet winter drill grounds where we will hold torpedo and gun practice, as well as drills of all kinds.

CARL THOMAS SMITHA – Navy (USS Arizona, Alabama, Mt Vernon)

A twenty-four year old from Ranchester, Carl Smitha enlisted on April 17, 1917 - just days after war was declared. He served as a Chief Machinist's Mate aboard the USS *Arizona*, the USS *Alabama* and the USS *Mt Vernon*, ferrying soldiers back and forth between America and Europe. One of the biggest dangers facing soldiers and sailors making this long journey was the German U-boat attack. Some 5,000 ships were sunk by submarines during the course of the war, taking with them almost 13 million tons of cargo and nearly 15,000 lives. In what was no doubt the most terrifying time of his life, Carl Smitha was aboard the USS *Mt Vernon* when it was torpedoed by a U-boat in September 1918. His actions that day earned him the Navy Cross. Ten days after the attack, Smitha finally got a chance to write home; this letter to his mother, written on September 16, 1918, was published in *The Sheridan Daily Enterprise* on November fourth.

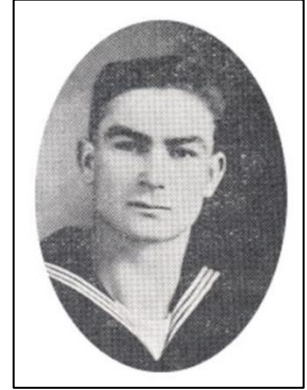


Dear Mother - You have been wondering and a little worried I guess because I haven't written a letter before this and you have read in the papers before this that the Mt. Vernon was torpedoed while homeward bound on September 5. We have been a busy crew, cleaning up the wreck caused by the torpedo and all the ships do not carry mail so I didn't write before.

We were struck at 7:30 a.m., September 5th, killing 35 and burning eight men. Some of my best shipmates were among them. In five minutes more I would have been on watch, but as it happened, I was in the mess hall just through [with] breakfast, when the tables started to walk and the dishes flew around, but I didn't get a mark so I am all right. Then we started for the nearest port in France. The ship sank two inches every hour after she filled with water, but we saved the ship. I was on duty eleven hours. All concerned say it was the engineers' force that saved the ship.

Now we are in France and no one knows when we will get back to the States.

CLAUDE ELMER ELLIOTT – Navy (USS *Nanshan*)



Seventeen-year old Claude Elmer Elliott enlisted in the United States Navy in March 1918. After training camp, he was assigned to the USS *Nanshan* - a transport ship traveling the south seas - where he gained enough experience as a fireman to gain his first class rating in only a few months. A true native son, Claude was born in Dietz, Wyoming, in May 1900. He moved to Ranchester when still a boy, and returned there after the war to ranch. In the mid-1930s he and his family moved to southern California, and by 1940, he worked as a gold miner in Plumas County California (in the northern Sierra Nevada Mountains). While he lived with his mother in California, his wife and children were living in Sheridan. Claude died in Stillwater County, Montana, in 1949; he is buried in the Sheridan Municipal Cemetery. The following undated letter was printed in *The Sheridan Daily Enterprise* on November 4, 1918. He wrote it while sailing "Somewhere at Sea."

Dear Mother and All: I suppose you are worried about me, not hearing from me for so long. I wrote you two letters and mailed them on passing mail boats. I hope you got them all right. I bought a parrot as a souvenir. It can't talk yet, but if you will have it, I will send it home. We sure had a fine trip. I expect to get back to the States soon. They sure will look good to me, and I will get to go to a good show once in a while.

Well, mother, they asked for volunteers for firemen, and I went down and worked a couple of shifts and I liked it, so I transferred. We work four hours and then we are off twelve. We are our own boss while we are off. That is what I like about it. The executive officers gave me and another fellow who transferred with me second class. It made the other fireman sore, but I should worry. They told us they would make us first-class when we got to dry dock at Mare Island, and I don't think it will be but a short time until we get there. I might get a furlough, but you know how it is for me to save money.

Some of the fellows on board have got the seven-year itch, you remember in Dietz. It is started on me, but not so bad. It is the warm climate we have been in. I am tanned as black as old Sam that used to be at Ranchester. I think the itch will leave us when we hit the north and it gets a little cooler. I haven't had a pair of shoes on since I left San Diego, only when I am working. I sure am getting some hoofs. Cactus won't start to faze me.

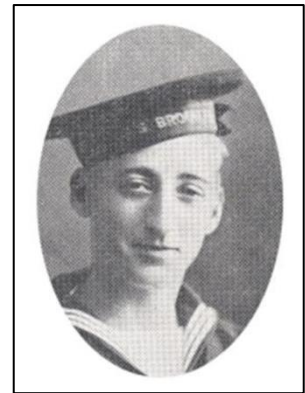
I will give you a list of wild animals we have got on board: About twenty parrots, a little buck deer, four monkeys, six or seven anteaters, some Mexican rats, and talk about bananas - everyone on board bought two or three big bunches. We bought them for 25 cents per bunch. I

eat pineapples, bananas, cocoanuts, mangoes, grapes and watermelon till I am pot-gutted. You can imagine how many I can eat, I think.

I am pretty sure of a furlough. Don't think I have forgotten you. I couldn't write for there was no place to mail it at.

GEORGE FREDERICK ENGLISH – Navy (USS Brooklyn)

After basic training, Sheridan's "blue-jackets" (U. S. Navy sailors) were (as *The Sheridan Post* noted) "scattered as by the four winds of heaven." Because the censor would not allow most locations to be identified, some residents didn't know if their sailor boys were guarding the coast of France, sailing the peaceful Pacific, or floating on the balmy waters off South America. Even if their letters did say where they were, it could take weeks for a sailor's letters to get from ship to Sheridan, by which time they might have relocated. In January 1918, *The Post* printed a letter written the previous month by Sheridan-based railroad machinist George English, Jr. A machinist aboard the USS *Brooklyn*, the twenty year old was based at Cavite in The Philippines, where things were not "half as bad" as he had previously feared. English spent two years serving in The Philippines and other Pacific locations. Prior to his discharge in December 1919, he contracted an unspecified tropical fever, possibly malaria or typhus transmitted by mosquitoes or lice.



This is sure a fine country. It is not so warm nor half as bad a place as we have been led to believe. I am well but am in quarantine as two of the fellows in our bunch were so unfortunate as to catch the mumps.

We are not supposed to drink water here unless it has been boiled and not to eat much fruit. Mangoes cause many boils and too many bananas or pineapples are unhealthy. I wish you could see the palms, cocoanuts and cocconut palms; also the million different kinds of bugs and ants and the large assortment of mosquitoes.

Manila is just across the bay about eleven miles away and there are still volcanos that are not still or dead by a long ways. The biggest wireless [radio] station in the world is here, as are some of the finest government hospitals.

We left San Francisco over a month ago and were just thirty days en route. We had a fine trip and stopped only 24 hours in Honolulu and the same length of time in Guam.

The first three days out we had the most beautiful storm you could ever wish to see. We had to stand up to eat and hang on to a stanchion at the same time. At night we could hardly stay in the bunks, but the only thing that bothered me was that we had to hang on while we slept. The storm finally subsided and the remainder of the way the water was as smooth as glass.

The feed on the transport was punk and I was glad to get here and eat a good old navy square. And let me tell you a navy square does not mean beans and hardtack - it means fried eggs, boiled eggs, pancakes, apple butter, good bread and clean cooking. It is more like home than in any other branch of the service.

There is no need for you to worry about me if you do not hear frequently for in the navy it is a gamble as to where you are going and when you will start. However, I expect to get back sometime all O. K. and not come in a box with a hide full of salt water.

I am not especially stuck on the natives here and it is about as safe to be around them as it is to be around a snake. They love a sailor and are perfectly willing to shake hands with one with one hand and cut his throat with the other.

Will close now, hoping that we will be here when your answer arrives on the next transport. If you write at once your letter will come on the next boat.

JOHN LEWIS SEAMSTER – Navy (USS *Cincinnati*)

John Seamster was not quite twenty years old when he enlisted in the U. S. Navy on April 9, 1917. War had been declared only three days earlier. A clerk at Star Grocery, Seamster was a single man living with his parents on North Custer Street when he enlisted. Nothing in his experience to date had prepared him for life aboard the USS *Cincinnati*, sailing around the Pacific Ocean! Two of Seamster's letters home were published; the first, mailed from Japan, appeared in *The Sheridan Daily Enterprise* on October 5, 1917. The second, mailed from Alongapo in The Philippines, was printed in the same newspaper on November 21, 1917. After being honorably discharged from the Navy in April 1919, Seamster returned to Sheridan. He spent a short time farming in Powder River County, Montana, and later went to work for the railroad. He died in 1938.

NOTE: We do not have a photograph of Loren George Millis in our files. If you know of one and you'd like to share it with us, please contact us at trailend@wyo.gov.

Undated letter from Japan; published 5 October 1917

We arrived here last night about 8 o'clock from Kobe. I don't know whether I will spell the name correctly or not, but it is something like Nanifama.

The scenery on the way up here was grand. We came through the Inland Seas, and they are more like a river than a sea. The islands were beautiful, too. Most of them were covered with pines, which sure made me think of home. Another thing rather odd to see was the farms on these islands.

These people cultivate clear to the top of some of them and almost half the way up on all of them. There was only one island I noticed that showed no signs of habitation, and that was a small one about the shape of half a huge ball. This one was rather odd, too, for all the way around it there was no sign of shrubbery for about ten feet from the water. Then from there on over the whole island there was nothing but pine trees.

Maybe you think I am not seeing some sights, eh? They are the most wonderful I ever beheld.

Another thing funny to see is two tides bucking each other. One tide leaving and the other trying to come in. They would remind you of an old Wyoming stream. There are ripples at one place and then in another part it seems quiet like some deep place.

11 October 1917, Alongapo, Philippines; published 21 November 1917

Dear Sirs - We the undersigned are four well-known boys from Sheridan and vicinity. At present serving in the United States Navy on board the U. S. S. Cincinnati, on the Asiatic Station, which means any place between Australia and Japan, Honolulu and China.

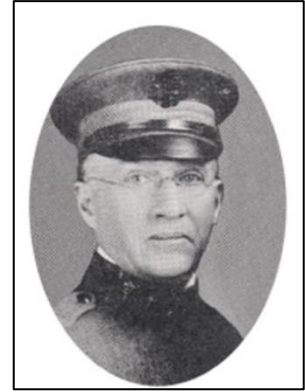
There is something we would like to suggest to the people of Sheridan and vicinity, and especially The Enterprise, in fact, all patriotic citizens who wish to help us sailors in this cause. As you very likely understand, we are ten thousand miles from home and sometimes it is months that we don't hear from our loved ones, and even then we don't get much local news. So we would be very glad to get an occasional copy of The Enterprise or hear from anyone who wishes to write.

Meanwhile, we will anxiously await our chance to trim the whiskers off the Kaiser and return to the good old U. S. A. and Sheridan.

Yours very respectfully, Wilson R. Stevens, W. H. Schmitt, J. L. Seamster, B. E. Tardner

MARCUS ARTHUR NEWELL – Marine Corps

An 1890 Graduate of Columbia University, Marcus Newell was working in Sheridan as a physician and surgeon as early as 1892. Though much older than those required to serve in the military during the war (he was forty-nine), Newell volunteered his services to the Marine Corps in August 1918. His career as a Marine captain was short-lived; he was honorably discharged in December 1918, and all his service was stateside. After the war, Newell returned to Sheridan where he continued his medical work until 1923, when he moved to New York City. In 1928, he was admitted to the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers in Leavenworth, Kansas, where he died in 1931 from complications of heart disease. The only letter from Newell published in *The Sheridan Daily Enterprise* was written from Fort Riley, Kansas, in September 1918. In it, he describes basic training at the Marine Officers Training Camp.



This is a strenuous life, but it was agreeing with me fine until Saturday, when I got my shot of vaccine, and it put us all on the blink for two or three days. Down here they shoot all three doses at one time, and say, boy, there is some reaction. I understand there were two deaths from it a short time ago. It has put me on the bum for a while, as it stiffened my knee, and today I am officer of the day, with no special duties except lie around the barracks and take it easy.

We are up at 5:30 every morning but Sunday, then we have an extra hour. We dress in ten minutes and MUST be in the line for roll call and ten minutes of exercise, then breakfast at six. We straighten up our beds after breakfast and then at seven lined up and marched up a hill about one and a half miles, then drill for about a half to three-quarters of an hour; then return to barracks and get ready to go to lectures in the different theatres, and then we get lectures on military affairs and the different matters connected with the army in the field, as sanitation, etc.

On Friday morning we are marched to the athletic field and put through a most rigid set of exercises by a professional athletic director. They are very strenuous, and it is a wonder they don't knock some of us out, as professional men rarely take regular exercise. Some do succumb, and one of our company nearly died the other day, and he is now on the sick list. It is their hurry-up system for getting the army into shape, and believe me, if they live through this, they can stand anything.

If you see any of the doctors who are planning on going into the service, tell them that it is no snap, and it is work every moment. For the first four or six weeks, you almost forget you are a doctor, as they give you everything but that. I lost six pounds since I came. I expect to lose

twenty more before I am through training. We polish our own puttees and shoes, make our own beds and do chamber work - about the only thing we don't do is to cook and wash dishes. It may all be necessary in getting us fit for service, and I do not complain.

After I get through training here, I am apt to be sent on duty, but I want to be sent [overseas]. I was certainly treated nicely in getting a captaincy, as most of the men in my company are lieutenants.

BRUCE DOUGLAS BROCKETT – Marine Corps

For some reason, not many men from Sheridan County enlisted in the Marine Corps. One notable exception was twenty-one year old Nebraska-born cowboy Bruce Brockett, who joined the Corps on June 1, 1918, in Billings, Montana. He was then sent to Mare Island, California, for basic training. In November 1918, just as Brockett was preparing to go to France, the armistice was signed and his dreams of battlefield glory ended. How do we know all this? Because Brockett was a poet who set his experiences down in verse. Two of the three Brockett poems published in *The Sheridan Daily Enterprise* (reprinted here) pretty much sum up his career with the Marines: enlistment, basic training, stateside duty, discharge. After the war, Brockett returned to the Sheridan area for a while; he worked as a cowboy for the Kendrick Cattle Company. By 1930, he was operating a dude ranch in Yavapai County, Arizona, where he lived until his death in 1971. He released at least two collections of his “cowboy” poetry, one in 1930 and another in 1948.



Published in *The Sheridan Daily Enterprise* on September 9, 1918

*I left my home in the month of May, when the grass was getting green;
And enlisted down in Billings with the United States Marines.
They put me on a train and handed me my fare;
Then said, "Down in Missoula, a man will meet you there."*

*They weighed me and they tried my wind, then measured up my height;
They tested eyes, and ears and nose and said I was all right.
Then I caught the train again and headed for the coast;
In just six days I landed on Mare Island at the coast.*

*There were lots of men in khaki, in blue and white and green;
It was the biggest bunch of men that I had ever seen.
They put me in some barracks with lots of men like me;
Still in civilian clothing, but anxious not to be.*

*And finally in about five days, they up and swore me in;
And dressed me up in khaki and my soldier life began.
Then they taught me how to march squads right and to the rear;
And said I'd make a good soldier if they trained me for a year.*

*In about five days I got my belt, my bayonet and guns;
Then learned to do the manual and how to slaughter Huns.
They're still a-learnin' things to me, I learn more every day;
But soon I'll be a soldier for the good old U. S. A.*

*And of all the men that scare the Dutch, the dirty German hogs;
The ones they are afraid of most are the U. S. Devil Dogs.
They want no trouble with 'em, 'cause they know they'll all be wrecked,
If they dare to stand and battle with Uncle Sammy's leathernecks.*

Published in *The Sheridan Daily Enterprise* on February 7, 1919

*When I enlisted with the leathernecks just one year ago,
I thought by now I'd surely be in Europe on the go.
I had my own idea that I'd get there on the run;
And be among the heroes that wiped away the Hun.*

*So I learned to use the bayonet, hand grenades and all;
And dreamed about the days to come when I could watch the Germans fall.
But when my company shoved across the deep and rolling sea,
Someone of the higher-ups made a home-guard out of me.*

*Months and months I stood it, but I always asked to go;
Til finally one day the major said, "You're bound for Quantico."
I jumped and hollered like a kid, I thought it all so great,
But when I got to Quantico, I found I was too late.*

*The Kaiser had already quit, the Marines had got his goat.
His royal banner crumpled, never more on high to float.
I felt pretty bad for quite a while, with my dreams of war all crushed,
But when I thought it over, my discontentment hushed.*

*'Cause now I'm going back to the best place on earth,
Where the law's kept in a scabbard and you don't tell what you're worth.
Where a good hoss is a common thing; they're not all stiff and lame;
And a man's a man because he's there, and things are not so tame.*

*Where the air is pure as a mountain stream, and a herd of beef means work,
And not a member of the crew knows what it is to shirk.
Where you go on guard at night time, on the hoss you like the most,
And you'll never get court-martialed for sleeping at the post.*

*Yes, I'm going back to that old state, Montana is the name,
It's the home of men and real men, and the one from which I came.
I'm going back and settle down with ten head in my string,
And once I get located, I won't move for anything.*

*Unless of course the Kaiser should decide he wants some more.
Then I'd come a runnin' back to Uncle Sam's Marine Corps.*