

1937

Tuesday, January 19, 1937

I bought this notebook on the way home from work today to serve as a journal. My hope is that this experience will be a good one and I'll want to look back on it fondly some day in the future. I tried to write regularly when I was at Camp Sherman, but I had to stop because it all became so awful. I can't imagine ever wanting to remember any of those details. I hope this goes better.

A call came in at 10:30 this morning. Emma handed me the receiver saying it was someone from the Red Cross Regional office. I assumed this was about the request I'd made last August for cots and blankets. I also assumed my request was being denied. It had been a long shot, after all. Since the depression began, every social agency out there's in need of help and our transient men's shelter is just one of many. When I answered the phone I was also a little angry for having to wait until the dead of winter to talk to someone.

Imagine my surprise when the man on the phone introduced himself as the Regional Director of the Red Cross office of emergency services. He quickly said he had a "request of great urgency". Now I was completely confused. This wasn't at all related to the request I made so long ago.

The man was a bit gruff and didn't give many details. He basically said the Red Cross (RC) has an immediate need for social workers because flooding in the Ohio River valley is expected to make up to a million people homeless in January! They need social workers to help with the reconstruction of tens of thousands of homes and businesses in as short a time as possible—probably just a couple of months. He requested a list of volunteers' names by tomorrow morning. Anyone interested in volunteering will need to be interviewed and screened tomorrow afternoon. And anyone who's chosen will have to be in Indianapolis by Sunday morning to begin training—that's only a few days away. SO fast!

The call was no more than two minutes and it felt like a blast of cold air from an open window. What had just happened? As I placed the phone in its cradle my inner voice began to gnaw at me to sign up for this sudden and mostly unknown opportunity. But I also felt some anxiety. Am I just an idiot, or perhaps a glutton for punishment. Volunteering to help during the war had turned out to be a lot more than I had bargained for.

First I ran the idea by Alice and Mr. Walters to see if they thought it was appropriate to ask for volunteers from the dept. They both agreed this could be a great service opportunity and it would benefit both those who signed up and also the dept. Since anyone who volunteers would come back with new training. Then I met Fred for lunch. He encouraged me to go, even offered to take care of the bills and to check in on Mother while I'm gone. How lucky am I to have a little brother like him? Sometimes I think he's trying to revive the big sister he knew back in Pennsylvania before the war who used to race him to the top of the mountain and usually won.

After lunch an announcement was made to everyone in our unit. Almost everyone had read about the flooding in the paper and some seemed interested, at least on the surface. Five people (including me) from our unit were interested enough to step forward and sign their names on a list.

Mother was the next hurdle. We talked at dinner and, while reluctant at first, she warmed up to the idea as we talked about it. She likes the work of the Red Cross and donates to their relief efforts. Fred dropped by the house

after dinner and gave her the last little nudge to push her over the edge. It looks like I'm going to volunteer-or at least raise my hand to see if they'll have me.

I'd be lying if I said I wasn't more than a little concerned about what I'm getting myself into. At 42, I'm not exactly an old lady, but I'm no kid either. I used to be a lot more physically active, but working at the Welfare Dept for so many years behind a desk makes me feel like the middle-aged woman I am. Lately I've been feeling stuck-like I'm in a rut. My work is often routine and sometimes I spend entire days in meetings, or at least it seems like entire days. But even though I'm not completely sure about this volunteer thing, I'm excited by the possibility of something new. Doing something so different for a short time should be good for me-I think. But let's see if I pass the interview first.

Wednesday, January 20

Today was a whirlwind. I called the local RC director and told him both Edith and I want to volunteer. Two of the people who thought they wanted to volunteer yesterday had changed their minds by this morning. Helen was also interested, but her husband nixed the idea. He thought it was going to be too dangerous and convinced her it was. Listening to her reasoning almost made me back out. But I can be somewhat bull-headed after making a decision (or at least Fred says I am), so I'm sticking to it.

We sat in an interview for nearly three hours this morning. The interviewer (Mr. Abbott) was extremely thorough and wanted to know all about our education and length of service with the dept. He also had a lot of questions about our physical health and fitness. He said he wasn't concerned about my age because I don't have any chronic health problems and I regularly go for long walks at lunchtime. He also liked my work experience as both a social worker and as a nurse. He asked a lot of questions about the years I managed the dispensary at Charity Hospital. They'll make their decision by tomorrow and if we're accepted, we'll have to report to Indianapolis by Saturday evening to begin training Sunday. Sunday! This is all happening so fast. I hope I'm making the right decision. I have moments when I stop in my tracks and ask myself why am I doing this. It is a comfort to have Edith walking this path with me-even if she's 10 years my junior.

Thursday, January 21

We found out early this morning-both Edith and I have been accepted ! We've been recruited to volunteer for at least the next two months. Plain and simple, but now what? There's so much to do before Saturday. I spent most of today organizing my work so I can hand my current projects over to Mr. Walters. He's also up to date on the paycheck approval process since he used to have that responsibility. He's being a real gem about taking over my work. Good thing the department's been running smoothly lately. I organized the bills after dinner and will hand them over to Fred tomorrow. I'm going to start packing my things as soon as I finish this entry. Mr. Abbott told us to bring only the basics because volunteers are often moved from one place to another as the relief effort changes over time. We'll get official uniforms when we get to Indianapolis. I'm also bringing a few wool things-socks and such. January weather can be brutal and I hate it when my feet get cold.

Friday, January 22

Finished up as many loose ends at work as I could. It's not ideal, but there's no time for ideal in all of this. I shopped for socks over my lunch hour and bought six pairs of short wool ankle socks (39 cents each), and a three-pack of hose (50% wool) for \$1.45. Last night I found my old red wool sweater in a box in the back of the closet. It's got a couple of small holes, so it's perfect for a trip like this. I won't get upset if it's ruined or lost. All

the bills are with Fred and he's offered to drive us to Indianapolis. His car's gassed up and ready to go. We'll leave before dawn, picking Edith up on our way out of town.

My bag is packed and sitting by the door. I'm as ready as I'm ever going to be.

I'm excited and more than a bit nervous. I had some concerns because this all reminds me of when I left for Camp Sherman in such a hurry after graduation. The urgent appeal, packing so quickly, running off into the unknown. I'm feeling disoriented from the speed with which this is all happening. It was only last week when I first read about the flooding and just a few days ago when we got the call asking for volunteers. Now here we are, leaving before dawn. My mind is racing. Have I made the right decision? Is this going to turn out to be another harrowing experience? Have I packed enough socks? So many questions. What I really need to do is get some sleep while I'm still in my own bed.

Indianapolis

Saturday, January 23

We made it to Indianapolis just after dark. It took all day to get here and rained nearly the entire way. Good thing Kitty sent food along, because we were able to keep moving without too many stops. Fred must be exhausted. He's heading home tomorrow, and has assured me he'll be fine, but I wish he'd take one day to rest. He wants to get home straight away because if the temperature drops just a few degrees, it could turn to snow, or God forbid, ice.

We haven't seen what I would call any real flooding, just standing water in fields and a lot of swollen creeks. However, the closer we got to Indianapolis, the more northbound than southbound traffic there was.

We drove straight to the Red Cross Headquarters (a large high school) where they are processing volunteers and refugees. There must have been several hundred refugees in the gym and at least 30 RC workers, each at a desk with stacked piles of paper. With so many people in the same room you'd have thought it would be more like a beehive, but it was anything but. Eerily silent is how I'd describe it. Everyone was quiet-especially the children. We checked in and then spoke briefly with the supervisor of the southern Indiana region. We've been assigned to a place called Moore's Hill in a large school building of some kind.

We were told there are absolutely no hotel rooms in Indianapolis but that we can stay at the state fairgrounds with everyone else. We're being housed with the "flooders" in an enormous exhibition hall with room for probably 500 people, though at the moment it's about half full. Everyone's been given military fold-out cots and wool blankets. They just dimmed the lights to help people get to sleep. I'm glad I brought along this flashlight so I can write a bit more.

The sight of so many people who have escaped with just the clothes on their backs is really something. Everyone's clutching the hand of a young child or holding a bundle of some kind. Given what I've read about this part of the country, most of these folks didn't have much before it started raining. A lot of them don't own cars, so they've been transporting people here in railroad cars-packed into railroad cars like cattle. Some managed to bring a suitcase or a few household belongings, but many have nothing at all. And they all look so lost. They have this blank stare- a flatness behind the eyes. It's unnerving. It's quiet in here too, odd-given there are so many people. The shock of suddenly losing everything you own and running for your life-I can't imagine how it must feel.

President Roosevelt made a proclamation of some kind on the radio today calling for everyone in the country to support the relief efforts. He's activated the Army, the Coast Guard, the Civilian Conservation Corps, and several other government agencies to respond. The magnitude of the situation is starting to dawn on me.

It's going to be hard to fall asleep tonight, but I have to try.

Sunday, January 24

Long, long day. Up before dawn, had some coffee and said our goodbyes to Fred in the freezing rain. He kept trying to ease my mind about Mother, saying everything would be fine at home, but I could tell he was worried about me. I gave him my handbag, keeping only my wallet. I won't need the bag and it's one less thing to carry. I also asked him to call Red Cross headquarters tomorrow so I'll know if he's made it home safely. It's good we said our goodbyes in a hurry before someone (me) might have changed their mind about this.

We caught a ride to Headquarters with some other volunteers and spent the day learning RC procedures. We're in a group of about 10 women—all nurses and social workers, mostly from Chicago. All of them are younger than yours truly. We're the only Clevelanders and there's one woman from Detroit. We filled out pages and pages of forms including next of kin and emergency contact information. That part really got me—who would they contact in the event of something awful happening to me? Given the many unknowns of the situation we're about to enter, I guess it's a good form to complete.

In this stage of the rescue effort refugees are being housed in a mish-mash of places. The only thing these places have in common is they are higher than the surrounding area and, hopefully, dry. They've already had to relocate a couple of refugee centers because they got flooded. There are people staying in churches, schools, factories, even railroad boxcars. I'm guessing these places are dry but anything but comfortable. People all crammed together with strangers in a place built for a completely different purpose. There's also the danger of an influenza or typhoid epidemic spreading like wildfire under these conditions. We'll be stationed at a center like this once our training is over—probably in a couple of days.

Someone just told me about a big fire they heard about on the radio. They're saying the river rose four feet in Cincinnati in just a few hours. The water dislodged some oil and gas tanks, creating an enormous oil slick that caught fire by a spark from a downed electrical line. They said the fire burned for hours! Tanks exploding and entire city blocks burning. This person claimed there were hundreds of firefighters battling the blaze and more than 1,000 people have been killed. It's hard to imagine any of this is true. I mean, a fire on top of a flood? At the training session today they told us rumors can spread like wildfire in these kinds of situations. But if even a portion of this story is true, it's a nightmare. Good thing Fred left already, or I might have gone home with him. Lots of people coughing in here tonight.

Monday, January 25

More training. We received our uniforms this afternoon: two cotton skirts with buttons down the front, several blouses (both long and short sleeves), a dark blue scarf and a small brass Red Cross pin the size of a penny. I'm glad I brought my sweater and those warm stockings. When they issued the quarantine passes all of this suddenly became very real. Martial law has been enacted in the flood zone to keep looting to a minimum, so I'll need to show this pass if I travel anywhere. Apparently they can put you in jail if you don't have one. More importantly, the police have been ordered to shoot, on sight, people they suspect are looters.

It's hard to believe, but the story I heard about the fire in Cincinnati was true, though a little exaggerated. Flood waters did overturn some oil tanks and caused an enormous fire. It's still burning, though they're saying it's under control today. Hundreds of firefighters were called in to battle the fire but, importantly, no one died. Who would have thought a fire would be adding to the misery of all of this flooding? Crazy thing is, the oil slick is traveling downriver, so now every town downstream of Cincinnati has to be careful the same thing doesn't happen to them.

On a lighter note, Fred called headquarters this morning to let me know he got home safely, which was reassuring. I won't be able to call home before we leave tomorrow morning, but I'm going to drop a note in the mail before we leave. Then at least he'll know where I've been assigned.

I have an uneasy feeling in the pit of my stomach and I'm concerned about entering something I couldn't have imagined in my wildest dreams-or would it be nightmares? These apprehensions will NOT be in my note home, however. I'm glad Edith is going along with me. It's going to be a comfort to share these experiences with someone I know and who knows me. Could it really be less than a week ago we signed up for this?

Moore's Hill

Wed, Jan 27-arrive at MH

Yesterday was too much! I was too exhausted to write anything when we got in last night. The only thing coming to mind was HOW DO I GET OUT OF THIS? I never had a day like yesterday in my life- cold, soaked, hungry, disoriented, even fearing for my life at one point. It's early morning, right now, about 5am, and I'm still exhausted. I wasn't able to sleep much last night and I'm up, writing in my notebook because I'm tired of even trying to sleep. I tossed and turned all night but just couldn't get warm enough to fall asleep. It's still fairly quiet in here-except for a baby who's been crying on and off for the last hour. Then there's the regular orchestra of snoring and coughing going on throughout the entire building.

Where do I begin? At the end? Sitting here in a dark room crowded with strangers as I yearn for a warm bed, my flannel bathrobe, and slippers? How I would love those slippers right now. Or perhaps I should start at the beginning, when I thought I knew what I was getting myself into.

Yes, I'll start there, at the point where imagined difficulty became real life disaster.

We met our driver, Joe Davis, in Indianapolis around 10am yesterday morning. Could it really have been only yesterday? Seems like an eternity. We loaded our bags into a homemade compartment in the back of Joe's beat-up old Model A pick-up. He assured us everything would stay dry there. I remember thinking about this more than once as the day wore on because it rained (and "iced") the entire day. We also had no other option. The three of us were crammed into the front seat of his truck with no room for bags. When I saw his truck I expected to be rattled and shaken all day. I wasn't disappointed. Glad I brought my warm hat and gloves, too, because it was cold, even with all three of us sitting so close together. We didn't really speak much once we got on the road.

Going south out of Indianapolis was mostly uneventful, except for a National Guard convoy we passed.. Seeing them was both comforting and disturbing. Nice to know they're here to help people, but not good to know how much their help is needed. We saw cars, trucks and horse-drawn wagons all heading north, all of them were packed to the gills with people and every household item imaginable. Trunks, furniture, pots and pans, rugs,

everything that didn't fit into the vehicle was strapped to the sides, back and roof of trucks, cars, and jalopies. I saw a goat's head sticking out of a narrow wooden box strapped to the running board of a Ford. Edith claimed I made it up, but I swear I saw it.

Joe chose our route based on information he'd gotten from the State Police about how high the bridges sit above the waterways. He's from a small town near Lawrenceburg and knows the area as only a local person can. When we started out yesterday we had no idea how lucky we were to have him.

The countryside started looking more like a disaster once we passed Columbus, the magnitude of it becoming more real with each mile. Ditches and low areas of farmers' fields were all under water, even though we were still a long way from the river. In some places only a little bit of dry land remained in a field or near a farmhouse and the livestock all huddled there in the rain together-horses, cows, pigs, donkeys, and chickens.

There was standing water over the road in a couple of places we had to drive through, hoping not to get stuck. Joe always drove right down the middle of the road in these places. A few times we had to wait our turn as a car heading the opposite direction passed through the water first. This is when I began to appreciate being in Joe's rattletap truck. It rode high above the water so our shoes stayed dry. Some of the passenger cars looked like they were about to get stranded when the water rose above their running boards. Pretty sure their shoes didn't stay dry.

Such a long day. I'm grateful for the sandwiches one of the volunteers had packed and the oatmeal cookies Joe's wife sent along. It would have been nice to stop for a warm meal at a restaurant, but we had no idea how much time there was before our route was completely blocked by water. At one bridge south of Greensburg I thought we might have to turn around. The road was only a foot or two above the water, looking like a chocolate milkshake. I tried hard not to imagine us being swept into the water while still in the truck. Pretty sure it would have been the end of us. But we made it across ok. With the continuous rain and all the rivers in the area still rising, an hour later could have been an entirely different story.

It was late afternoon when we turned onto a gravel road and entered a dense forest. That's when I really started to worry. Joe must've seen my expression because he told us we were very close to our destination-less than 7 or 8 miles. But his words provided little comfort when the truck was sliding around on the muddy road and not a farmhouse in sight. It reminded me of the forested wilds of Pennsylvania, but not in a good way.

After what seemed like an eternity, we arrived at a truss bridge over a creek. It was nearly dark, but there was enough light for me to see impending doom. This "creek" might as well have been the Niagara River. All I could see through the rain was a murky, churning torrent pouring over the flimsy metal structure Joe called a bridge. It looked as though it would wash away at any moment. There was no way to cross this thing. But we had come so far-how could we possibly give up now?

Joe parked the truck and walked toward the bridge in the freezing rain. I prayed he didn't fall in the water, never to be seen again. Edith and I were completely dependent on him out here in the middle of God knows where. He finally came back to the truck and said there was no chance of crossing the bridge under these conditions. Thank God. He then said waiting until tomorrow might be even worse because it was still raining. As he started up the truck he told us he had an idea- a friend who lives nearby might be able to help. Joe wasn't specific about what kind of plan he had. We drove back on the "mudslide" road to the paved highway in complete silence. It felt like this entire trip was going to be in vain.

About a mile further east we stopped at the small white farm house of Joe's friend Sam. Edith and I stayed in the truck while Joe knocked on the door and hurried in once someone answered the door. It was still raining/icing. Joe's friend Sam and his family were just sitting down to dinner and asked us to join them. Very hospitable people and good food too. Sam had been out all day rescuing people who'd gotten stranded by the flood. After a few moments of introduction and some news of the day, Joe revealed his plan to get us to our volunteer location. He seemed to think it was possible for Sam to take us across the flooded stream in his boat. I nearly choked on a piece of bread.

Was he crazy? I wasn't at all sure I thought this was a good idea. An ever-growing part of me was terrified and wanted to get back in the truck and go straight back to Cleveland. The rest of me was stunned, cold, speechless, and exhausted, definitely exhausted.

Both Edith and I raised questions about this plan. Did Sam think this was even possible? How much danger would we be in? Wasn't there another place to cross the stream? Both Sam and Joe were trying to be reassuring. They made it sound like they did this kind of thing every day of the week. Even Sam's wife told us how good he is with his boat. After we'd talked for quite some time, it became clear this was our only option of reaching our volunteer station and these men seemed certain we would arrive safely. Fortunately, the warm soup gave me the comfort I needed to even consider such an option. By the time we'd had some hot coffee I felt (almost) ready to get back in the truck.

We finally got back in Joe's truck and Sam followed us in his, the small motorboat sticking out of the bed. We retraced our route to the mud-slick road and when we finally got to the bridge it was pitch black. The sound of the water rushing by only added to the sick feeling in my stomach. This felt so much more perilous in the dark. The falling rain froze on contact and everything was coated with a thin layer of ice. I had trouble getting out of the truck and nearly fell a couple of times on the icy road. Had I not been so cold and tired, I may have appreciated the beauty of it-all glistening and glass-like, but I was not in an appreciative mood. Refusing to get into the boat crossed my mind, but as it was, Edith and I were so tired at this point we couldn't put up much of a fight. We were more like lambs being led to slaughter than our preconceived notions of what brave Red Cross volunteers looked like.

Sam turned his truck around so the back of it was to the stream. He didn't dare get too close for fear of losing traction on the ice and sliding right into the water. The men pulled the small boat out of the truck and dragged it to the water's edge. Sam situated himself by the small motor and did his best to hold the boat steady with an oar stuck in the muddy bank. Joe tossed our bags in the bottom of the boat and helped us get in. Then, I still can't believe he said this, Joe asked, in all seriousness, if we knew how to swim! I do, but my heart started racing at the thought of having to swim in the churning torrent- wearing my winter coat no less! I've spent a lot of time in small boats, but never in a situation like this. Edith just looked at me in silence and made the sign of the cross (completely serious). Joe pushed the boat into the stream and wished us well. I was never so sorry to say goodbye to a stranger as when I watched his figure fade into the darkness.

At first the aquatic portion of our journey didn't seem too bad. The water was fast-moving, but we had a motor and an able captain. Then I began to notice "things" in the water- lots of branches and something resembling the roof of a shed. At one point I saw the feet of an animal carcass floating downstream, belly up. I think it was a pig. Fortunately we didn't hit the poor thing.

In what seemed like hours (but was really only a few minutes) we approached the far side of the stream where the current was slower. I felt as though we were past the worst of it. I smiled at Edith who looked terrified. Just then, the real trouble started. The boat jerked suddenly and the engine made a sick sound. We spun round in a circle and the boat tipped to one side, causing water to pour in. Apparently some part of the motor had gotten caught up on a submerged fencepost or something. The darn thing could barely be seen below the surface of the water. I had thought we were safe in shallow water but it must have been at least four feet deep where we were stuck. Sam used an oar to push the boat away from the post and nearly capsized us! He struggled to get us free for an eternity (in reality, less than a minute). One of the longest, wettest minutes of my life. Finally, he worked us free, the boat stopped its crazy spin and a few minutes later we were ashore on solid, muddy land. Good thing, too, I was completely rattled by the fencepost incident.

When we got to shore, it took some effort to pry my fingers from the boat's gunnels. Between the cold water, ice and paralyzing fear, my hands were locked in a death grip. I worked them open by blowing on them and rubbing them together. We were soaked, and my head and shoulders were covered by a thin layer of ice. Edith had the look of a little puppy shivering after a bath. It was awful to say goodbye to Sam as we stood on the shore in the dark. I was concerned for his safety having to cross the stream again and for ours, since we had no idea of what we were heading into. We were like two little (wet) lambs who had lost our way.

Our journey was nearly over, but we still had to walk a while to reach our destination. To reach the town of Moore's Hill we trudged along a dirt (now mud) road until it ended at a state highway. From there we turned right and found then left on Main Street into town, which really had only a few streets. Fortunately Joe had scribbled out a little map for us at the dinner table. We were exhausted, the road was icy and we had to be careful not to slip and fall, but at least we weren't in that doggone boat. Finally, we saw the object of our desire- lights beaming from a large white building on a hill ahead of us, just where Joe told us to look for it. In the gloomy, cold darkness that building was a beacon of hope if ever I saw one.

The building we're assigned to is solid. It's large, high up on the top of a hill, and sits on dry land. This is the good news. The bad news-there are already several hundred people crammed in here, with more expected to show up. Then there are the animals-dogs, chickens and a couple of cows, even a horse. I think I saw a yellow parakeet in a cage. People of all ages, from newborn babies to the elderly, crammed in without proper bedding, food, provisions, nothing.

I have to admit my first reaction to the conditions here in the building was of shock and disgust. It's filthy beyond belief, from top to bottom. There are jumbled heaps of furniture, pots and pans, and household items all over the place taking up precious space. Lots of folks ran from the rising water with whatever they could save from their homes. There's mud everywhere, people everywhere, filth everywhere. Old folks slumped over in chairs, howling babies and people with blank expressions wandering around just looking for somewhere to sit. A lot of bad smells and a lot of cigarette smoking too, a lot of cigarette smoking. One old woman carries an iron with her anywhere she goes in the building, all the while muttering something about wrinkled clothes.

Edith and I found the RC volunteers and changed into the driest clothes we had, which wasn't saying much. My clothes weren't exactly wet, but I wouldn't call them dry either. Joe's pick-up compartment did well enough keeping our bags dry, but walking the last mile in the rain soaked just about everything in it. The volunteers brought us some hot broth, coffee and saltines, and gave us the low-down on our assignment. Our work is cut out for us, that's for certain. There are barely enough cots for folks who are sick and so far there's been little support from the outside. We were so tired when we got in last night we just wrapped up in some cotton

blankets and slept on the floor with the other volunteers. I put on all the dry clothing I have (I was quite a sight), but couldn't warm up enough to sleep much. My coat might have helped, but it was completely soaked and would not have done any good keeping me warm.

Sophia Foote is the full time Red Cross employee in charge here. She arrived a day or two ago and has already organized a few things. Sophie's a godsend and I'm pleased to work with her. She's a "lifer" who's worked in all types of disasters--earthquakes, hurricanes, wars, floods, you name it, cut her teeth in Italy during the war directing a camp for children with TB. We're also lucky to have been assigned to this particular building. It's on a hill and unlikely to be flooded. Some of the other shelters have flooded, then everyone has to move again. Apparently there's serious flooding happening 30 or 40 miles away from the river in some places. People keep saying this is one for the history books.

Today we'll start registering people. During training they drummed into our heads the importance of registration because sometimes folks (children mostly) get separated, which only multiplies their stress. We also need to establish some cleaning teams. This place is unbelievably filthy. Keeping it clean and having some established routines should help keep folks from getting on each other's nerves. I can already hear some people waking up, so I'd better get up and help get this show on the road. It's going to be another long day. I sure hope there's coffee.

Thursday, January 28

People arrived all day from Lawrenceburg and the surrounding area. They said nearly the entire town is underwater now. Folks told me they're used to flooding because it happens every year, but even the old folks are saying it's never been this bad, not even in 1913. In the past they could just move their belongings to the second floor to wait it out. Because they survived previous floods, they thought it would be ok to stay in their houses. But this time it's different. People moved everything to the second floor and the water just kept on rising. One family talked about having to punch a hole in the roof to escape. And the flood water is anything but clean. It contains raw sewage, dead animals, car parts, oil, you name it.

Some of the men who've gone back to town to evacuate people have shared amazing stories. They have to be careful to avoid hitting submerged cars, downed electrical wires, telephone poles and chimneys as they move around town in boats. Some people have sat on their roofs for days waiting for someone to rescue them! They've seen entire buildings floating downstream. Someone told me they saw a barn floating by on the water-with 50 chickens up on the roof. One family escaped to higher ground and watched their house completely wash away by the current as they waited to be rescued. Hopefully the water will start to recede soon.

Some people who have vehicles have been driving back and forth to town to transport people who are on foot. There's also a city bus picking up people walking along the road and bringing them here. Moore's Hill is something like 15 miles from Lawrenceburg. It's a long walk for able-bodied people in good weather, but for small kids and old people in freezing rain, it's just too much. Needless to say, virtually every person who enters the building is miserable. I know the feeling a little bit after our journey here.

Working on registration is tedious. I repeated the same questions a couple of hundred times. We record everyone's name, age, and address and give them each an identity tag they're supposed to wear. I tried to impress the importance of these tags on them, especially the mothers. It's not hard to be separated when folks have to move quickly. Can you imagine losing your 3-year-old in the midst of all this? Furniture and household items are

all tagged too and put in the basement for storage, though lots of folks have no more than the clothes on their back.

We also register any and all animals. We're trying to keep as many of the animals outside as possible, but some people are adamant about bringing their dogs inside. So long as they are indoor dogs, we allow it, but as soon as their dog leaves a mess on the floor or makes trouble of any kind, out they go! The farm animals (cows, horses, chickens, pigs) absolutely have to stay outside. Sophie's got some of the men building makeshift corrals to contain them. Hopefully having fewer animals in here will help ease the chaos. There's a lot of racket-both inside and outside.

Once people are registered we do a simple health assessment. A lot of them are sick-especially the kids, a lot of whom have a hacking cough. When I ask the mothers when their children started to cough they just look at me as if to say it's normal for a child to always have a cough, isn't it? We segregate the acutely sick ones from those who seem to have a more chronic problem. Fortunately the building is set up with classrooms so we can keep people separate pretty easily. We're trying to keep healthy people on the first floor. Those who need nursing care go to the makeshift hospital up on the third floor and others are sent to various other small classrooms.

After families are registered and checked for illness we get food for the new arrivals. For a lot of them this is their first hot meal in days. Sophie has enlisted a number of women from the area to do the cooking. There's a small kitchen on site which is a real blessing.

There's one Red Cross protocol I disagree with and have trouble following. Segregation by race is very much the custom in southern Indiana and we're supposed to honor local customs, regardless of whether those customs are right or not. By doing this we give honor to a dishonorable system. So—we segregate Negro and white refugees. I'm not a fool, Cleveland is segregated by race, too, but it just seems like we ought to be able to rise above these attitudes given the circumstances. But, there you have it. Because there are a lot of rooms it's not too difficult to separate people by race, but it still feels wrong. I guess there's only so much we can do to affect people's attitudes under these kinds of situations. We offer people the same level of care (food, medicine, etc.), but it doesn't seem enough.

A railroad line on the south end of town dropped off a load of supplies yesterday. One of the refugees told me they saw carloads of Coast Guard boats headed toward the river on the train. Our delivery included blankets, canned food and some cots. The train had already stopped at several other locations, so ours was the last before they dropped the boats at Lawrenceburg. There were enough cots for the patients in the hospital unit, but only about 40 others. These will be given to elderly folks and a couple of pregnant women. We were also given wool blankets for 200 people and enough food for a couple of weeks. Problem is, there are more likely 300 or 400 people here already.

Friday, January 29

We've registered most of the people here, so now Edith and I can finish setting up a dispensary/vaccination center in what looks like it used to be an office. This is in addition to the small dispensary in our little hospital. The hospital dispensary was one of the first things to be operational. There are about 20 people up there now, mostly older folks with pneumonia. Several others have influenza. The hospital was placed on the topmost floor so it's as far from the rest of the refugees as possible. The last thing we need is an outbreak of influenza with everyone crowded so close together. Fortunately all of our patients now have a cot.

The office is set up well to be a vaccination center for a couple of reasons. There are some shelves for medicine and bandages and there's also a large desk where we can work. A smaller office off to the side is where we'll vaccinate people so there's a little privacy. One of our tasks is to get everyone vaccinated for typhoid and smallpox. It's been a while since I was an active-duty nurse, but giving shots is pretty simple and I remembered it like riding a bike. Back at the hospital we used to joke that giving shots was so simple a doctor could do it.

We've assigned able-bodied people to cleaning crews and, for the most part, they keep to the schedule posted on a bulletin board near the front hallway. Most of the mud has been cleaned up, except for the area near the doors which is probably going to be muddy until we vacate this place. There's even a sleeping schedule! Because there's so little room, people arrange for sleeping space in shifts. This way, more people can find a spot to lie down with a blanket than if everyone hoarded their spot and blanket to themselves. Not everyone wants to yield to Sophie's authority, but enough of them do to make the situation a little more reasonable.

The entire building carries the stench of unwashed humanity packed too close together, with many of them smoking cigarettes. I go outside from time to time just to breathe some fresh air, even though it's still freezing cold out there and it's been raining/sleeting on and off for days. Fortunately, my coat finally dried out, but it will never smell the same again. I may just have to burn it once this is all over.

People occupy every square inch of this building. They huddle in family groups with babies, older children, parents, grandparents. They get along-most of the time. There have been some tense moments and arguments, but mostly it's calm. The children make most of the noise. Many of the adults seem to be in a stupor. Everyone is exhausted and emotionally drained.

January 30

Too tired to write. It snowed today but not too much accumulation.

Sunday, January 31

We can't count on any more food deliveries by rail. We just learned there's a railroad bridge less than 10 miles west of here where the water level is so high it's considered unsafe until it goes down. The only other route out of the flood zone is the bridge we chose not to drive over. This is beginning to feel desperate. Between the lack of food and the lack of contact with the outside world, it's hard for even the RC volunteers to maintain hope. Sophie, who is never deterred, enlisted some of the men and teenage boys to go out today to surrounding farms to buy what they can from local farmers. They came back with fresh eggs and some milk. This will help re-supply the kitchen and it also gives folks something to do other than just smoke cigarettes and complain.

Monday, February 1

I think a lot of these refugees have never been to a doctor. Many of them are genuinely frightened to let a stranger touch them, especially to give them a shot, especially the older folks and men. It's taken several days and a lot of persuasion to get a couple of them vaccinated, but we keep at it. Edith devised a great way to manage their fears. She starts by asking the youngest girl or the wife to get the shot first. Often they'll take it without complaint. This adds a little pressure on the male members of the household. It usually works, but not always. Edith can be very persuasive when she wants to be. She told me it's because she grew up as one of the older kids of a family with 10 children and she often had to convince the younger children to do things they didn't want to do. The typhoid shot is the hardest one because it does hurt and makes your arm ache for a couple of days. Once everyone here is vaccinated we'll start to vaccinate folks who are still waiting out the flood in their homes.

February 5

Lost a couple of days there. I can't really even tell what day of the week it is anymore. I'm exhausted all the time and the way we mark days and weeks in the world outside of this building just doesn't exist here. I'm going to try to put dates in this journal to help me keep track, but even that might be too much of an effort. Sophie brought a calendar and posted it on the wall. She puts an "X" over each day at the end of the day. It's odd, but really helpful. Kind of like counting off the days of a prison sentence. I've been so tired at the end of each day I just collapse into a heap under my coat, without even noticing we're all still sleeping on the floor. This is made abundantly clear in the morning when there's pain in some new part of my body I wasn't even aware existed. That's why I'm up now before everyone else this morning. Today the pains are in my left hip and shoulder. Hopefully getting up off the floor will help. I wonder if I was overly ambitious thinking I was still young enough to do this kind of work at my advanced age. Oh well, too late now.

The depth of poverty in southern Indiana is quite something. It seems the people who had some money got out of the flood zone by car or train because they could afford to leave. Those who stayed were just too poor to leave. Most of these kids are malnourished-a condition long in the making before the flood. The rotting teeth of so many of the adults tells me they've never once been to a dentist. No doubt some of these folks come from houses without modern plumbing or electricity. Sophie decided to post someone outside the bathrooms to make sure people know to flush the toilet after using it. It's not something I would have ever expected, but there you have it.

Despite the poverty and lack of education, I am beginning to enjoy getting to know some of these people. Joe Bennett is someone who everyone enjoys having around. The only object he managed to save from his house was his banjo, but we are all glad he did. He plays well and gets people singing at night which helps a lot with the boredom and general unhappiness.

There's also this old woman who comes into the building every day and snoops around, asking questions of the volunteers. We've decided she wants to see if we're doing an adequate job. Then she leaves just as mysteriously as she came, only to return the next day. Maybe she'll stay one day? One old man wanders around all day looking for "Martha". His daughter told me Martha was the name of his wife who's been dead for more than 10 years, poor thing.

The stress of the situation is real and there are flares up from time to time. A couple of the volunteers even started arguing with each other yesterday-probably out of sleep deprivation. Sophie took care of them by giving them jobs in opposite parts of the building. At least they won't be making so much noise.

At the end of the day all we have to listen to is a radio station from Louisville (WHAS), Kentucky. They tell me this station used to play all kinds of music, but now it's all weather announcements, information about stranded people, reports of babies and old people who need medical attention, power outages, downed power lines, and calls for typhoid vaccine. All day and night-24 hours, one announcement after another. It's informative, but anything but entertaining-it only adds to the misery.

Last night they reported more than 800,000 people are now being cared for by the Red Cross. It's hard to imagine the real size of this thing. Every day they report a new flood record being broken. How much water can there possibly be? There's got to be a limit.

We've had a couple more cases of pneumonia and an old man collapsed while he waited in line for food-reminds of 1918 all over again. I pray we'll be moved out of this temporary shelter soon. This feels like endless misery. Just to make things feel neverendingly worse, it's snowing again and the wind is blowing snow through some of the cracks around loose-fitting window panes. Maybe that's why I am always cold. I'm glad I brought my wool sweater and socks, but I could sure use a nice warm fireplace. Ok, off to sleep, maybe I can dream one up.

February 6

Today was the most exciting since our arrival. A few days ago Sophie talked to someone in a nearby farmhouse who's a shortwave radio operator. She had them contact the Indianapolis office because we're nearly out of smallpox and typhoid serum. We're also low on insulin. Little did I know our re-supply was coming by air.

A couple of the kids went running through the building yelling about a plane circling the school. Before you know it, every able-bodied person ran outside in the cold to see what was happening. The plane dropped a metal tube in a cornfield with a message from the pilot asking: Is this field solid enough to make a landing?

A group of men and boys hurried to the field and stomped the word "YES" in large letters into the snow. A small plane landed a few minutes later and was quickly surrounded by everyone-the volunteers, inquisitive refugees, and all the children and dogs. The pilot and some of the men pulled a bunch of boxes and duffle bags out of the back of the plane and brought it into the office. It could not have been more exciting if Santa Claus himself had dropped in for a visit. The entire crowd followed along to see what "Santa's presents" contained.

They placed everything right in front of our dispensary's main desk. It was a beautiful sight. One entire box was full of serum, medicine and bandages. Now we would have enough serum to do our job properly. Several of the duffle bags were stuffed full of wool blankets and the remaining boxes contained oatmeal, canned meats, beans and fruit juice. They even included some cases of cigarettes which I was more than happy to give to Sophie to distribute. I'm not one to promote smoking, though I'm grateful we won't be adding the crankiness of nicotine withdrawal to our list of woes. Food was sent directly to the kitchen. Medicines, serums and such were placed behind the desk so we could catalog them in peace and quiet after everyone left the office. Then we distributed the blankets. I was grateful for these blankets, but wished we had more.

The pilot, Captain John Thompson, was about 30 years old and said he had a couple of kids. They had encouraged him to bring peppermint candies for the kids. You'd have thought they were receiving gold coins the way those kids carried on!

Captain Thompson left after sharing a cup of coffee with us. He had one more delivery to make before heading back to Indianapolis. Of course, all of the kids ran after the plane as it taxied across the empty field. While I am pleased our rations are a little more varied now, I am most happy about finally getting to sleep under a wool blanket-even though I have to share it with Edith and Sarah. We all sleep together under it and have to turn at the same time or someone loses out. The best (warmest) position is in the middle so we take turns being "monkey in the middle" like kids on a playground. Today was a good day.

February 7

The number of patients in our hospital continues to grow. We have two mothers of sick babies who look so discouraged. One of these babies is just a couple of months old. These women have lost everything. There's nothing to go back to, nothing to look forward to, only the dreary never-ending present in which they find themselves with a sick child who's trying to hold onto life. My heart aches for them.

Old folks aren't managing these conditions too well either. We lost Mr. Hampton to pneumonia yesterday. It was a mercy though, he was suffering terribly. His daughter said she thought he was 79 years old. Mr. Perkins is having a hard time too. There's also a young man (about 17 years old) who's been out helping to rescue people from their houses. He developed a fever of 103 last night. Despite his protest, we put him in a cot and told him his rescue work could wait a couple of days. With all the coughing going on throughout the building, I wonder whether we're going to be overwhelmed with sick people soon. A couple of the nurses aren't looking too good either. It's hard to tell whether it's fatigue or illness. We've been working so many hours without any relief.

February 8

The volunteers are wonderful and rarely complain, however last night I found Ruth crying while rubbing her feet. She's been on her feet for hours at a time nursing people, all the while wearing bad shoes and now her feet are covered in blisters. Fortunately she and I wear the same shoe size, so now she'll be wearing my shoes when I am resting at night (Ruth's on the night shift). I'm glad I brought my sturdy shoes on this little adventure.

A little baby (about 6 weeks old) arrived yesterday with a family of six. The baby has a high fever and is severely congested. We moved mother and baby to the hospital as soon as they came in. The mother seems to be ok, but it's good to have her in the hospital too, just to keep an eye on her. Things can happen so quickly after giving birth. The rest of the family don't appear to be sick, so we put them in with the general population. They were on the second floor of their flooded house until one of our team convinced them to come here. It's been so cold these last few nights and having water all around and inside the house couldn't have made it any more comfortable.

More problems:

We ran out of coffee (this could be a real problem as we are all existing on coffee to get through the day). The lack of contact with the outside world is also getting to be a problem. We listen to the radio for news (it's always on) but we've had no contact with our families since arriving or anything to distract us from the misery surrounding us. Mrs. Wilson's parakeet in the next room is always singing its heart out. It sounds like he's in competition with everyone who's coughing and sneezing. I guess this isn't really a problem though, is it? It's snowing again, but thankfully it's not windy.

I'm going to be out of the building "making rounds" tomorrow. We'll be vaccinating everyone we can find who'll take a shot, assessing what people's needs for help are, and encouraging those who need shelter to come here for medical care. I'm looking forward to getting out of here and getting some fresh air.

February 9

Edith, Sarah and I went out on rounds with three local men today. We traveled in two trucks and the drivers were great at spotting areas where we'd get stuck in the mud, for the most part. One of the vehicles did get stuck but we managed to get it out (a very messy process). We visited more than 25 homes and vaccinated many of the people we found there who were willing to get the shot. We also checked on several people who were sick. We were told that some people bring their animals into their homes when the water rises and that's what we saw today. We came to a farmhouse surrounded on 3 sides by water. Inside, we found the farmer sitting on the edge of his bed milking a cow! He had chickens in another bedroom and hogs in the living room. We tried to encourage him to leave, but he refused. He told us his neighbors check in on him regularly, and bring him food and feed for his animals so we left without doing anything more than letting him know where we are if he needs our help.

Toward the end of the day we stopped at a one-room schoolhouse where 4 or 5 families were sheltering together, including one young woman who's close to 8 months pregnant. They had little food or bedding so we left a few blankets with them and what food we had brought. We gave her as complete an exam as we could without being midwives or doctors. We did our best to convince her and her husband to come to the shelter where she'd be more comfortable, but they refused. What can we do? We don't have police power. So many things can go awry during childbirth. Maybe she'll change her mind and come here where at least we can provide some nursing care if she needs it.

It felt good to get out today. The sky was mostly clear and, best of all, it wasn't raining or snowing. This building has been a great refuge for us- high on the landscape as it is- but it's also so cramped and dirty and foul-smelling, despite the work of the cleaning crews. Sophie said we're going to be going out on rotation in teams like this for the duration of our stay here- partly because there are people in need and partly for our own sanity. I'm exhausted, but the exhaustion is more physical than the mental and emotional exhaustion I experience here at Moore's Hill. Sophie's right, again.

The baby who came in yesterday is doing better already. The fever's down, so let's hope it stays that way.

February 15

Lost a couple of days here- time flies when you're completely exhausted at the end of every day. There I go, writing about exhaustion again. We were out on rotation again today to visit folks in the area. Edith and I spent a long time at the school house with the pregnant woman and her husband, trying to convince them to come to the shelter. Edith's powers of persuasion triumphed again! She worked primarily on the husband's lack of knowledge of what could go wrong in childbirth and convinced him to bring her here in a couple of days. I sensed relief on the face of the older woman in the group when they announced they'd be coming here to the shelter. I hope he keeps to his word.

Our new home-a tent city- is nearly ready!! It's about 10 miles south of where we are now. Hard to believe it's gone up so quickly, but I guess the government really can move quickly when it needs to. Having the military involved sure helps, they know how to get things done. I'll be going there tomorrow with several of the volunteers to begin planning how we're going to move all these people. Just the thought of having a little privacy makes me happy.

February 16

An Army Specialist drove six of us to where we'll be moving in a few days. It's outside this tiny town of Dillsboro. I think there are 4 or 5 streets in Dillsboro. The WPA built this thing out of nothing in the middle of a farmer's cornfield in just a week and I'm glad to report it's on high ground, far from any streams. The Army supplied the tents, stoves and building supplies, and the WPA workers are doing the construction under military supervision. Men were all over the place today putting the finishing touches on structures and supplying each tent with cots, chairs, tables, kitchenware and blankets. It's not quite finished yet, but it's beautiful, heaven-sent.

The "city" is composed of about 75 large, square khaki tents lined up in neat rows, almost like streets. They're tall enough for me to stand up straight in the middle with room above me, are built over wooden floors, there's a stove in the center, and each one has electrical power. A large pipe sticks out the top of the roof to vent smoke from the stove. For some folks this will be an improvement over their home because they never had electric power. Many of them used kerosene lamps for light.

They've built wooden buildings for Red Cross operations: a hospital, commissary, an office, and, of course, latrines at the far end of "town". Wooden walkways have been built around all the tents and buildings so we won't be walking in mud all the time. That, alone, is a blessing and cause for celebration.

The best part is that each family will have their own space. Edith and I will be sharing one with Sarah, Grace and Ruth, right next to the office. We were so happy to see our new home! You would have thought we were moving to a fancy mansion or something, not an army tent. Ordinarily I wouldn't romanticize living under these conditions, but from my current location, I can't wait! I can't remember ever being so excited about moving someplace new! The girls at the Welfare Dept would get a kick out of all this.

When we got back to the school we told some of the refugees what we had seen and the change in their affect was almost instantaneous. It was as if you could see the light of hope coming back into their eyes. Just a couple more days. I can't wait to leave this place behind. It's only been a couple of weeks, but I feel like it's an eternity of suffering we're leaving behind.

February 17

We received some alarming news today. It seems meningitis is sweeping through a Red Cross refugee camp in Arkansas. It's a terrifying thought, given the crowded conditions we're living in. It would be horrible to have an outbreak like that. Our nursing staff could be overwhelmed by patients and their care so quickly. This is just one more reason I can't wait until we move out of this building and someplace where people will be more spread out. It can't come soon enough as far as I'm concerned. It's one thing to have a few cases of pneumonia, but meningitis is another thing altogether. Tomorrow is moving day, so we've told people to pack up their belongings after breakfast and we'll begin the moving process around 10am. It's going to take most of the day, so I'd better try to get some sleep now while I can.

Some good news today too! The young pregnant woman from the schoolhouse came in today with her husband and an older couple. The conversation we had the other day with her husband clued him into the potential for problems with childbirth and the older woman in the group nudged him along with some accounts of trouble in childbirth that she knew first hand. Good thing they showed up when they did since we're leaving here tomorrow. More good news-all of the babies who were in the hospital ward have now moved back with their families. The last one left today. The nurses were all so happy to give the little one her goodbye kisses.

Dillsboro

February 18

Almost everyone moved to Dillsboro today. It was a lot of work, but by the grace of God, we're leaving Moore's Hill for good. Between transportation, checking registration, and getting people into their new "homes", the move took a lot longer than I had expected. We had to make more than 10 trips in a Lawrenceburg city bus. First things first, we got them moved in. Later on some of the men will move the furniture out of storage. Crazy, but it seems like a lifetime ago when we dealt with all that furniture. Fortunately, I won't be moving any of the heavy objects-I'm definitely too old. We moved only able-bodied people today. Hospital patients will be moved tomorrow. It's pretty quiet in here tonight because most of the people (and nearly all of the dogs) are now in the tent city. I may even get a good night's sleep. I found a cot to sleep on and I have my OWN blanket-sheer luxury!

February 19

Edith and I packed up what remained of the dispensaries this morning. The good news (and bad news) is the same-our supplies are low. It made the job of packing easier, but we don't have everything we need. There's supposed to be a re-supply coming later in the week. Louise and a couple of other volunteers set up the new hospital yesterday afternoon and we moved the last 10 patients from the third floor to Dillsboro this afternoon. The Army supplied a couple of wheelchairs, so we made good use of them, taking a few patients at a time. Mr. Johnson was the last person taken to Dillsboro. He's holding on by a thread now. He's only conscious part of the time but tries to rally when his wife brings their grandkids to visit-especially when the baby coos. He smiles when he knows she's in the room.

My new "home" is just spectacular. We have a wood stove, everyone has their own cot and, most importantly, our own blanket! Never in my life could I have thought a simple blanket all to myself would be such a prized possession. I may never think of blankets the same way again. I will never, ever, think of a blanket as "just" a blanket. Any blanket is so, so much more.

The gloom of the experience at Moore's Hill already seems to be lifting somewhat. People are smiling more. Sarah's got a lot of skills, but who knew being great at telling jokes and funny stories could be so valuable. She had us all laughing so hard tonight my sides hurt, but it was a good hurt. I haven't laughed so much in ages. I think the story she told about her dog was the funniest.

February 20

Floodlights were installed today. Policemen are assigned to our camp and there's always someone on duty, so I feel safe but having the route to the latrines well-lit should help after dark. Reminds me of the old days back in Pennsylvania. I hated having to use the outhouse at night in the winter. Sitting on a cold seat in the dark-just like old times.

I finally feel connected to the rest of humanity-my first letter from home arrived today! It included a page each from Mother and Fred and a drawing of a cat by Joanie. It took nearly a week for this letter to reach me. I guess the RC in Indianapolis has a few more things to attend to than mail for volunteers. I sure was happy to read some news from home, though. Fred included details about Kitty and the kids, and Mother wrote mostly about the weather. She's always worried about my health and whether I'm staying warm at night. I am now that I have my own blanket and a bed near a wood stove. I'm pretty sure I'm not going to be able to share all of the details about this trip with her when I get home, especially the part about having to share a blanket with other volunteers. At least I won't share these details at first. I hung Joanie's drawing next to my bed. It reminds me that normal life still continues somewhere, maybe not here, but somewhere out there. I really need to find some time to write a short letter home.

Sophie told me they're going to install a field telephone system soon. We won't be allowed to use it for social calls, but each of the Red Cross volunteers will get one personal call. We were told that the system should be operational in a week or so.

February 22

Yesterday we put the office together and reacquainted ourselves with all of the official multi-colored forms we need to use. There are so many it makes my head swim! And I thought the first phase of this assignment was tough. Keeping people alive and healthy at the school was exhausting. This part is going to be exhausting too,

but in a different way. There will be a lot of conversation, investigation, and calculation. And lots and lots and lots of paperwork-and then more paperwork. We didn't even get to catch our breath with any time off before starting this new phase (ha!), but given the situation these people are in, I guess my desire for rest and relaxation isn't so important.

Residents are "on their own" here with no requirements on their comings and goings. Some families have radios, a few have some furniture they saved from the flood waters, and others have only what the Red Cross and the Army have given them, but it's amazing to see how quickly everyone is settling in and making these simple tents into homes. Folks also now have some privacy and autonomy-a place to call their own. They can even prepare their own meals with food from the commissary. Men who are lucky enough to still have jobs can leave the camp to go to work. Others leave to look for work in the reconstruction effort.

We started visiting families today. We accompanied Sophie for the first couple of visits, to get the idea of how they want us to proceed. It's a lot easier talking to people in the privacy of a tent than it was in the middle of the chaos at Moores Hill. Trust and openness can develop in private. We're asking these people all sorts of personal questions about their families and financial situation so we can figure out what their needs are. How many people live in the house, how many children, how many are extended family members? We ask what their furnishings were like, what kind of work they are engaged in, how much money they earned, how much do they have in a bank (if any) and a ton of other personal questions.

Then there has to be an assessment of how much of their home is salvageable. This can only be done by building inspectors who figure out those details onsite. Once we have a clear picture of what their situation is, then we do a lot of calculating to determine how much money it will take to rebuild their lives. Building inspectors have the final say about the dollar amounts we calculate, which buildings can be saved, and which ones have to be completely demolished. They also monitor the rebuilding as it proceeds. Good thing too, because I don't know a thing about the building trade.

One of the inspectors said a lot of the homes in Lawrenceburg have been completely demolished and some of them are just plain missing! Completely missing-empty space where all your belongings, photos and memories used to be.

February 23

I'm sad to say Mr. Johnson died of pneumonia last night. It's not a surprise, but it is sad. He was well-loved by so many people here and the news of his death hit a lot of folks hard. One little girl (about 10 years old) burst into tears when she heard he'd died. Mr. Johnson owned a small grocery in town and he'd helped a lot of people who couldn't afford to eat when they fell on hard times. Everyone in the area knew his generosity. Cal Wilson thought a great way to honor him would be to name the camp after him so he started circulating a petition around camp tonight to do that. One of the residents who's a carpenter has volunteered to create the sign. This is starting to feel like a real community.

February 24

We got word today the Ohio River is within its banks in Cincinnati for the first time in many weeks. It will still take a while for the standing water to drain, but it's definitely a sign of hope for the future.

A group of about 8 of the boys chased some wild turkeys all around camp this afternoon. The kids had a blast and it was fun to watch, though the turkeys were probably terrified. The boys chased them all over-through the

snow and mud, down the wooden walkways, between tents. Some of the men were encouraging the kids. It was loud and exciting and most everyone had a great time watching. Two of the Wilson boys even caught a turkey-for a moment or two, but then the turkey got away and ran faster than I ever thought one of those birds could run. It was so funny to watch! It's long legs were really working overtime. Mrs. Wilson didn't seem to enjoy the spectacle, based on her facial expression. The boys were completely covered in mud and soaked to the bone by the time all was said and done. I'm pretty sure I heard the Wilson boys got a firm talking to once they were inside the family tent.

February 25

We had an unexpected treat today with the arrival of a truck loaded with bags of donated clothes collected by volunteer groups from around the country. This could not have come at a better time. Mr. Johnson's death and the cloudy skies and cold winds of February have been hard on a lot of people. We asked some of the young women to take on the task of sorting the clothes so we'll know what we have, then a couple of the social workers can distribute them according to who's got the greatest need.

Our delivery from "Santa" included a couple of large duffle bags stuffed with toys, balls and games. It was like Christmas for these kids. We'll have to keep everything in the recreation tent for now, but if we get another delivery we may have enough to let the kids take ownership of some things. I know this would really benefit some of the smallest kids who would be truly comforted by having a doll or stuffed animal to call their own.

February 26

We had a small naming ceremony for the camp today. A sign was erected along the paved road in honor of Mr. Johnson. It was cold and windy so only about 20 adults and a handful of kids were present, but it felt significant. Dr. Patterson and Mr. Johnson's son-in-law both said a few words about him and then a sheet was taken off the sign, a wooden slat suspended between two posts. "Camp Johnson"-simple, just like he was. It's a lovely tribute, fitting both him and the circumstances.

I was sad after the little ceremony but my spirits were lifted when I learned that it was my turn to use the new phone this evening. Sophie gave me an egg timer so I'd know when my 20 minutes was up. I called Mother because I knew she'd be home and I know she worries about me so much. She'll be sure to tell Fred all the details (at least the details that I shared). She was finishing the dinner dishes and was completely surprised to hear from me. It was really nice to hear her voice at the other end. We talked mostly about what it's like in the tent city. She had so many questions. Besides, describing Moores Hill would have only increased her concern and since we're here now, why bother her with any of those details? I think she may drive down here with Fred to pick me once this is all over.

Have I mentioned how well I've been sleeping since we moved here? Like a baby. I have my own cot and MY OWN BLANKET!! Not to mention the toasty stove in the middle of our square little home. Compared to Moores Hill, this place is a palace. I don't think I'll ever take comfort or warmth for granted ever again. Grace is fond of doing shadow puppets at night on the canvas walls by the light of a flashlight. I love it and may elect to stay here forever! Probably not, to be honest, but this is a vast improvement over where we came from. I just may dream of blankets tonight.

The turkeys are pretty sure this area belongs to them. A couple of them like to wander by the commissary early in the morning, probably looking for food scraps. They probably live in the woodlot on the south end of the

camp. I have noticed that the kids leave them alone now. I think that's the influence of the mothers who have to do the laundry.

February 27

We had a visit from the Red Cross Eastern Indiana Director and his team today. Mr. Brooks arrived early in the day and toured every inch of Camp Johnson to make sure everything was up to snuff. He was very official, but also kind with the refugees, especially the kids. Then the Case Supervisor, Besse Kinsey, spent the rest of the afternoon going over official policy with us again. It was a long session, but helpful because the initial training seems like a lifetime ago now. She'll be visiting us from time to time to help out with questions that will surely come up. It's amazing there's so much structure given the chaos and magnitude of this flood.

Besse must have told us 50 times-the Red Cross policy is based on need, not loss. I've already seen how this can make more well-off people unhappy. The assessments we make are of people's capacity to recover, but not to replace what they've lost. We also can't offer relief to organizations, only families or individuals. This means we won't fund rebuilding churches or social organizations. This hasn't gone over very well either. Pastor Jones gave me an earful the other day when I told him about this policy. His church was demolished and will need to be completely rebuilt. He said it took years for the congregation to get it built in the first place. As much as I'd like to help him, there's nothing I'm able to do.

Some families need a completely new start: Household goods, furnishings, repairs or rebuilding of their home, replacement of livestock, farm tools, etc. If there are two families with exactly the same amount of damage done to their house, but one had \$500 in the bank, they would receive different amounts of relief. We are advised not to speak about the amount awarded with anyone but the family involved and request they do the same. If we don't have some sort of confidentiality there would definitely be fights and arguments, which could happen anyway, given the situation.

February 28

Edith, Ruth and I were included on a tour of Lawrenceburg today, or should I say, what's left of Lawrenceburg. This is the town where most of the people in Camp Johnson are from. Mr. Edwards, the lead building inspector, was our guide. It was hard to take in. Never in my life have I seen anything like this, and I hope never to see anything like it again. The level of destruction sits heavy on my heart and I am humbled by the work of nature to destroy what people have built. Seeing the destruction firsthand helps me understand the magnitude of the trauma experienced by our refugee families.

There were houses lifted off their foundations and jammed together in the middle of intersections. One house had been pushed up against a large tree with the entire side of it missing, ripped off by the force of the water. We saw abandoned vehicles of all kinds and sizes (buses, trucks, cars, wagons) piled up, upended and covered in mud. Roads have been washed out, and large utility poles with attached electric wires were tangled up in tree branches like a ball of yarn. Mr. Edwards told us he saw the carcass of a dead horse in a tree the other day! Everything, simply everything was covered in a layer of fine mud. I'm sure the contents of every single house is all covered in mud too. Rugs, furniture, clothing, cookware, pianos-everything covered in mud. It's hard to drive down the street because there are piles of debris blocking the way. Telephone lines, electric wires, overturned vehicles and piles of sand, all randomly deposited by the water.

Some people will have no home to return to. There's no way of knowing yet, but a lot of houses are missing-completely washed away. Mr. Edwards said he thought it could be a couple of hundred houses

completely missing from this town alone, and there's one entire neighborhood in Lawrenceburg where all of the houses were swept away and completely new ones will need to be built. Red Cross will provide basic homes with running water, sanitary toilets and all houses will be wired for electricity. For some of these folks having electricity and plumbing will be a new thing, so this is an improvement. Apparently these houses will also be built according to new building standards to keep houses from washing downstream should the river flood like this again-something to do with anchoring the structure to the foundation.

We talked about all of this at length tonight after we got home. None of us has ever seen this kind of devastation before-and on such a large area-it's overwhelming. Seeing this has given me a deeper understanding of the suffering of the people I'm here to serve. It's provided some motivation to fill out all of those darn forms. If this is how we rebuild their lives, then we'll do it. Today's fatigue is definitely emotional, not physical. Fortunately Sarah's "end of the day" jokes lifted the mood again tonight. Laughter is so important, especially in a situation like this.

It snowed again today-a couple of inches. Not the bitter, sideways snow of late February in Cleveland, but snow nonetheless. I'm ready for warmer weather like never before. Bring on the Sun!

March 4

More training today on disbursement of awards-this one included price lists of materials and household goods. The goal of all this training is so the awards made by one social worker are similar to those of another. I try to remember this goal as my mind goes numb from all of the repetition, lists, and forms.

Several more families joined us today at Camp Johnson. They had evacuated somewhere further north and only came back to the area recently. We could have crossed paths with them the day we drove from Indianapolis to Moore's Hill. Boy, that seems so very long ago. These folks returned to find very little left of their homes. One family found nothing on the ground where their house should have been. Fortunately we had enough extra tents and beds for everyone.

March 6

The last couple of days have been mostly family visits. Life has settled into patterns, there are even schedules. The man who made the sign in honor of Mr. Johnson has made a couple of street signs. Some have common names-Main Street and the like, but because the Red Cross staff are "fancy" people our cross streets are named Park Avenue and Madison Avenue. Now if only I had a mink coat to go along with my address.

School-age children have started classes, mostly to keep them out of mischief. They've already missed nearly a month of school and who knows when the schools in Lawrenceburg will reopen. Most of the schools in town were completely under water. All the kids will be expected to take cod liver oil as part of the daily school schedule. I'm glad Ruth is the one with the spoon.

After school, most of the kids go to the recreation tent where Mary Louise leads the Junior RC volunteers in art activities and games. Adults use the recreation tent at night for card games, programs, singing, music, whatever they want. There will also be classes there for women on Home Hygiene and Care of the sick. I think those start next week. These classes help keep people from going stir-crazy while they wait for the long rebuilding process, but RC also aims to improve the lives of people who may never have gone to school.

Our neighborhood raccoons have been leaving a mess each night as they visit the trash bins throughout camp. People don't always secure the lids on the bins and the raccoons get in there and have a great feast. I went to put the lid on one of the cans this morning and just about jumped out of my skin when I saw the beady eyes of a raccoon rascal looking up at me. I yelped, dropped the lid, and jumped back. Edith was walking with me and howled in laughter at my response. Then she kicked the bin over on its side and knocked on it with her knuckles. The rascal walked right out and ran toward the woods. So practical, that Edith.

March 7

More family visits today. One family I visited went to Lawrenceburg yesterday to see their home. Apparently it was still standing, but heavily damaged. Seeing its destruction and the loss of everything in it seemed to fill them with despair. The amount of work it will take to rebuild and the money to do this must feel overwhelming. The mother had tears in her eyes as they described the condition of their house. The floors are buckled, plastering will need to be replaced, and all of those repairs can only be done after all the mud is cleaned out. Furniture and all their home furnishings will need to be replaced. They told me they had to break a window to get inside the house because the doors were all swollen shut. Part of my job is to convince them rebuilding is possible-no small task.

We've also had some trouble clearing titles on some of the properties-particularly when the houses are no longer there or if they were completely demolished. Some folks have bad credit and the financial information all has to be verified by the banks. Of course, with so many people trying to get this information at the same time, the bank representatives are completely overwhelmed. I'm not sure whether any RC people are working with the banks or not.

Tough day.

March 13

I received another letter today from Mother. She got the letter I sent her a couple of weeks ago and had many more questions about life here in the land of tents. Sounds like she's definitely going to make the trip down here. When she asked when this would all be over I realized I have no idea when this will be over. The reconstruction effort seems like it's starting to roll along, but I'm not clear on how long they'll need our assistance. Mother told me she attended a choral performance Mary was in. I wish I could have been there too. You miss a lot when you're not home.

Had a conversation with a young man named John who's been taking a lot of photos with a camera he bought just before the flood. He told me he'd like to be a professional photographer one day and, by the number of photos he's already taken, I think it may just happen. He wants all the volunteers to pose for some photos one of these days. Should be fun.

March 14

We were visited by a group of musicians today, a church choir from Indianapolis. It was great to hear their voices and they had everyone clapping and singing (turns out Ruth has a strong, beautiful voice). So grateful for this kind of support. It really helps to lift the drudgery of rebuilding lives and makes everything a little less overwhelming-if just for the moment. There have been visits from preachers on Sundays (and sometimes Wednesdays); a WPA band is supposed to visit in a week or two, and the Junior RC volunteers have been great. They brought another load of toys and games this afternoon and the kids were so happy. Now there are enough

toys to go around and some of the youngest ones were given a stuffed animal to take home. We even saw some blue sky today!

March 18

Looks like I missed a few days in here. It's so easy to fall out of the habit of writing, particularly because life in Camp Johnson seems to have its own routine now. Conversations, paperwork, visits, paperwork, paperwork and more paperwork. A new baby was born last night to Mrs. Wilson, her fifth. The announcement (the newborn's cry) rang throughout the camp. Mrs. Wilson didn't think it necessary to go to the infirmary since all of her other children were born at home. Fortunately everything went well and Mama and baby are healthy. I think she named the baby Patricia.

I stood outside the school/recreation tent tonight after dinner to peek in on the men who gathered there. Most of them were playing cards and smoking cigarettes, but several were singing. One man who's got a lovely tenor voice began singing as Joe Bennett played his banjo. Everyone was smiling and tapping their toes. I would have liked to go in to listen too, but it didn't seem like I should. It's somewhat strange being a social worker and asking people all manner of very personal questions about their finances and then living here right with them. It feels a little awkward at times, so I just stood outside and listened.

I think the weather is beginning to shift in a positive direction. We've not had snow in a while and I'm beginning to see green shoots poking up out of the ground here and there. What a relief it will be when it's predictably warm again. The first day of Spring is coming up soon (on the calendar at least) and I'll be truly grateful for it this year.

March 22

Some of the people we're working with have not only lost their homes, but also their means of livelihood. One fellow, about 30 years old with a young wife, made his living as a frog farmer. I'm not certain how one makes a living this way, but he said he was a frog farmer, so I wrote it on his form. We've given him some help thinking through what he'll need to get started up again and the Red Cross will cover all of those expenses. This is the same as the woman who's a piano teacher. Her instrument was completely destroyed by the flood waters. Since this was her major form of earning money, the RC will purchase her another piano. Not your usual form of disaster relief, but since it was her sole source of income, there you go.

Other folks whose pianos were destroyed won't get their instruments replaced because those instruments weren't related to their livelihood. This doesn't sit well with some of the more well-off refugees and I got an ear-full of it yesterday from someone who learned about the piano teacher's situation. His family also lost a piano and he wanted it replaced too. He spent about 30 minutes telling me his opinions about all the reconstruction efforts by me, my co-workers, the government, and anyone else you can think of. You name it, and he had a complaint about them.

March 25

I had a long conversation with a woman from Aurora who described the harrowing experience of watching the water rise as she waited to be rescued. She said the roar of the water is something she'll never forget-a constant roar of water passing the house and hitting it with all kinds of debris. She watched from a second floor window as telephone poles fell over, dragging wires with them. Houses and furniture and everything imaginable drifted

by her window. She was alone in the house with just her cat and waited for days in fear that her house would wash away with her in it.

March 28

A teenage boy ran all around the camp today looking for his father, telling everyone he had big news. When he finally found his father we learned that he had located their house! It had been completely washed off its foundation and wound up two miles downstream-upended on the bank of the river. There's probably not much left in there worth salvaging, but they'll be going back tomorrow to check it out anyway. Sometimes just finding a family photo or memento helps ease the pain of losing the rest.

Then there's Mrs. Washington, a woman in her late 60's, who told me she was content with the plans for her house, except she doesn't want to have it wired for electricity. Apparently she's never had electric lights and she doesn't want to start now. She's afraid of her house catching fire. Her son and his family live with her in the house, but because she's the homeowner, we have to honor her request. We have no choice but to do this, over the strong objections of everyone else in the family, especially her daughter-in-law. She looked furious during this entire conversation, her arms were crossed and she glared at her mother in law-even rolled her eyes a couple of times. Unfortunately, we'll have to give them all kerosene lamps. It's her home, after all.

April 8

It's getting warmer each day and several families told me they have already planted gardens on their home plots, even before their houses have been completed. Being from Cleveland it seems much too early to plant anything, but Mrs. Johnson assured me this was the right time to plant cabbage and carrots here in southern Indiana. Who am I to argue with the locals? I'm certain that getting reconnected to their own land is healthy and a sign of optimism.

We had the chance to help a blind woman and her adult daughter today who were in a real predicament. Before the flood, the blind woman was alone in the house most days while her daughter worked. This had been ok for them previously, even though their house flooded regularly because they lived in a low-lying part of town. But this year, the house was completely demolished, and they were understandably reluctant to rebuild in the same location. The mother didn't want to be traumatized again by another flood.

Many people don't want to relocate, but this family definitely did. I made some calls to headquarters first, to be sure the award can be used to purchase land on higher ground. I didn't want to get their hopes up for nothing. HQ approved the idea and there should also be enough money to furnish the house. When I told them about all of this the young woman began crying and laughing and hugging her mom all at the same time. This was a good day.

April 12

Some families have started to move out of the camp. Either their houses have been completely cleaned out or at least some portion of it has been made liveable. A few people have requested the tent they've been in here at the camp so they can live in while their home is under construction. I'm not sure whether this will be permitted, since it's not my decision. I hope so. The closer they are to being in their homes, the better they will feel-even if there's still a lot of work to do.

April 18

It's starting to feel a little deserted around here. Probably half of the families have left. The goodbyes are always hard and lots of tears are shed. I've become close to some of these families, so of course we write down addresses and promise to write. Who knows, maybe we will see one another some day in the future. But those kids won't be the same-they grow up much too quickly.

As the people move out, the wildlife is moving back in. We're seeing turkeys all the time now and the deer that used to graze far from the camp have been coming in closer. Of course the raccoons are still raiding the trash barrels whenever someone leaves a lid off. They'll have full ownership of this field back before long.

April 24

The young photographer finally made good on his promise to take pictures of all of the volunteers. He's been after us for weeks to have our photo taken. Most of us like to put more into our appearance than we've been able to here. There's not much time or energy to put into looking good, so we've all been somewhat reluctant to cooperate. But he assured us the photos will be flattering-even promised to make the whole experience fun. How could we refuse the request of this young photo-journalist, particularly when he's so persistent?

He rounded us all up this afternoon and he was right about the fun part. He took silly photos of some of the girls near the outhouses and tents. Then he took a bunch of photos near the office with all of the nursing and social work staff. He said he would print extra copies of the big group photo and send it to us. That one's going to be framed.

Grace, Helen and Ruth will all be heading back to Chicago tomorrow, so the timing of our photographer was perfect. I compiled the addresses of everyone on staff here last week and I hope we'll all stay in touch. These are some wonderful people. We congregated in Sophie's tent after dinner to tell stories and say our goodbyes.

We laughed a lot tonight and Sophie had made awards for everyone. Sarah won for "Best Jokester", Grace won for "Best hand shadows on a tent ceiling", Mary Louise won "Most creative use of yarn" for her many art projects with the children, Edith took the "Most Persuasive" award, and my shoes won the "Hardest working shoes in a refugee camp" for doing double duty at Moores Hill. Sophie's leadership has been a real asset throughout this experience and Mary Louise created a special award for her from all of us for being such a great boss (of course yarn was involved). I've learned so much from her leadership and I'm going to miss her.

Sophie thought we should have a ritual of some kind to signify the end of our time together and encouraged us to contribute some to a bonfire that was no longer of use or needed to be let go of. I made good use of my winter coat through this experience, but it suffered greatly since I used it as an umbrella, blanket, coat, mop, you name it. I also can't see myself wearing it anywhere in the condition it is now. And, it gets quite warm during the day now and I haven't worn it in a couple of weeks (I've only been wearing my ratty old sweater). So I cut up my coat and burned it in the fire. It's kind of funny, I appreciated that coat more than ever during this time, but was relieved to let it go just the same. Some of the other things that made it to the fire included Edith's sweater, Mary Louise's torn socks and Sophie's gloves. All of these things served their purpose and helped us to help others, but it was time to let them rest and leave them behind. A strange ceremony, perhaps, but helpful. We've come to the end of this. I think I would have benefitted from something like this after Camp Sherman. We ran out of there like we were running from a house afire-which we were.

While it hasn't been the most comfortable experience of my life, there have been some funny moments-like the time when an old woman who was smoking a clay pipe looked me dead in the eye on one of the first days at Moores Hill and said, "Young lady, you'll never amount to much 'til you take up pipe smoking!" First of all, she called me "young lady" (I'm 42)! Can't you just see me smoking a clay pipe while I read the newspaper?

We even cried a bit tonight. The nurses probably had it the hardest because they spent so much time caring for just a few people who they got to know quite well. And all of them didn't make it. This has been quite the emotional journey.

Mary Louise, Edith and I have decided to stay on a few days longer to finish up with the last of the reconstruction paperwork (to finalize financial records, close accounts, etc.).

April 29

It feels completely different here now since most folks have left. I have nothing to report except paperwork, paperwork and more paperwork! For several days now we've been doing nothing but get all this paperwork sorted and filed, but the work has been made lighter by having the company of good friends and the radio. Thank God the radio station plays music again! Not like at the beginning of the flood when the only thing on there were reports of flooding and loss. I think when all is said and done we will have completed case files for nearly 200 families here at Camp Johnson. We have boxes and boxes of forms of all the colors of the rainbow to prove it too.

May 1

We got a call today from the Red Cross office in Louisville. They want to host some of the flood volunteers for the Kentucky Derby next week. They're offering lodging, meals and free tickets to the Derby-all as a sign of appreciation for the work we've been doing. Both Edith and I jumped at the opportunity and gave our enthusiastic response without hesitation. Mary Louise had to pass on this opportunity since her family had already planned to pick her up on Tuesday.

Neither Edith nor I have ever been to anything like the Derby and it will be welcome relief from the drudgery of these last few months. It should also be a nice send-off before we head home. We'll have to arrange our own transportation, but it shouldn't be too hard. It's only a couple of hours by car, and we know a lot of local people now. I can't wait! This will be something to tell the folks back home-the day Mary Fisher went to the most famous horse race in the country.

May 3

We found a lift to Louisville with one of the farmers who lives near the school where this "grand adventure" first began. We became friends with Mr. Jennings when we bought eggs from him during those first couple of weeks we were all stranded by the high water. Turns out his sister is married to a man from the nearby town of Friendship, Indiana (!), so he's stopped by a couple of times just to say hello. The second time he even brought a couple of pies for all of us volunteers as a sign of his gratitude for helping to take care of his mother-in-law. She was sick with a bad case of pneumonia and stayed in our little hospital for about a week. He dropped by today to say hello after dropping some furniture off at his sister's house. Edith just asked him-point blank-if we could hitch a ride with him to Louisville. He is such a gracious man-he agreed! Easy. He'll return for us late Thursday and offered to let us stay at his home Thursday night and then drive us to Louisville on Friday. We're off to the races!

May 7

We arrived at the Red Cross office in Louisville around noon and a young man named Edward volunteered to show us around. He's from a small town about 30 miles south of Louisville that didn't flood. He's been a RC volunteer for a few years so he was hired early on to help build camps for refugees. He was in charge of getting lumber and other supplies to build several refugee camps and, more recently, he's been helping organize the clean-up here in town.

We first drove around the parts of town that were submerged by the flood, what they call the East and West Ends. This area was under water for a long time and most of the buildings were badly damaged. Edward was driving us around in an official Red Cross vehicle and we still all had to show our ID cards at a checkpoint before we could enter the flood zone. The size of the devastated area was astonishing-so much bigger than the flooded part of Lawrenceburg. Block after block after block of people's homes, businesses, churches, public buildings, schools, telephone poles, everything had been damaged. Many of the buildings were completely destroyed. I thought I had seen a lot of destruction in Lawrenceburg, but the area underwater here was so much larger.

There were still abandoned vehicles and debris piles in the middle of the road, not to mention those places where the road buckled or had been completely washed out. Edward told us the clean-up work had come a long way since the water first receded when mud and muck had covered everything. Something like three quarters of the homes in town were flooded-some with upwards of 20 feet of water.

It's going to take a very long time for Louisville to return to what it used to be, if it ever does. The devastation of this part of town was nearly complete and it'll take months before people get back into their homes. Entire blocks will need to be rebuilt and thousands of people are still without homes. It makes me wonder whether they should build back in the same area. Certainly this flood was an out of the ordinary event, but I think if it were me, I'd want to re-build on much higher ground, a long way from this beast of a river.

The business district is only a couple of blocks away from the real story of devastation, but the contrast between the two couldn't be more clear. City officials have put a lot of effort into getting the business district spruced up for all the visitors who have come to town for the Derby. And there are a lot of them. People everywhere you look. I linked elbows with Edith to keep from losing her. I was ready to leave after only a few minutes because the street was so full of people. I guess it will take a little bit for me to get used to crowds again too.

We walked along 4th Street near the Rialto Theater and spent some time in a few of shops where we both bought hats for the Derby. Edward suggested this purchase-apparently it's a Derby tradition of some kind for ladies to have fancy Derby hats. It felt odd to be in a clothing store-or any kind of store for that matter. We had become content if our clothes were dry-forget fashionable. As we headed back to the car Edith swore she saw Babe Ruth in a car driving past. Her whole family are big baseball fans, so I'll have to trust her. I wouldn't know Babe Ruth from Gary Cooper.

The local RC chapter arranged for us to spend the weekend at the home of John and Mary Washington, a wonderful couple who are about my age. Mr. Washington owns several grocery stores and worked during the flood to get food and supplies to folks in refugee camps. They are very gracious hosts and the dinner we had tonight gave me a more complete understanding of the term "Southern hospitality". Mrs. Washington is an amazing cook. We had fried chicken, cornbread and something called burgoo, which is a stew, something like Mulligan stew. We're sharing their guest room and I feel I'm in the lap of luxury. The bed is soft, the sheets are

clean, and there's warm water to wash my face. I think I was in Camp Johnson far too long! I'm so excited about the races tomorrow and need to turn off the light, but with my mind racing the way it does sometimes, sleep may be elusive.

May 8

Derby Day! We woke up early and did our best to dress nicely. We couldn't bring anything fancy with us in January, and what we did bring is now pretty much worn-out from tent city life. About the best we could do was to put on the hats we bought yesterday and pretend we were part of the "fancy crowd". The race was at 12:30, so we got an early start. Edward picked us up and we made it to Churchill Downs by 10am. It was already crowded. They say the area around the track (6 miles from the river!) was covered by 6 feet of water with the flood, but you'd never know it by what we saw today. The grandstands and track were freshly painted and looked wonderful.

I'd never been to a racetrack before, so it's a good thing we had Edward along or I wouldn't have known what to do. Tickets were less expensive for general admission, but we opted for the grandstand. He told us it can get pretty unruly on the infield with people drinking and carousing. He was right, too. People were already pretty rowdy when we arrived and it wasn't even noon! It was also very extremely muddy, so I, for one, was glad to have a seat in the bleachers. I've had enough mud in the last couple of months to last me for a very, very long time.

I don't usually spend money frivolously, but we haven't bought a thing (not even food) for months, so we both decided to splurge a little. Each grandstand ticket was \$5.35 and a souvenir magazine about the race was 25 cents. We even decided to gamble-just a little.

Edward explained how to bet on the races. There were eight races in total, but the sixth race was the main attraction. The winner of the sixth race is then qualified for the Triple Crown. I don't really understand all the details but nodded my head so it would look like I did.

The horses all have such crazy sounding names: Court Scandal, Miss Twinkle and Lane Duck. These names gave us a laugh all day. Can you imagine ever betting on a horse named Lane Duck? We put down small bets (\$2) on a couple of horses. Based on Edward's advice, We both chose the front runner, War Admiral, for our first bet. Then I chose one I liked solely because of its name (Billionaire). I crossed my fingers, wondering what I would do with a billion dollars. Edith opted for Miss Twinkle.

It was exciting to be in such a big crowd after having been isolated for so long where so many serious things were happening all the time. Everyone seemed to be having a great time. Many of the women were wearing white elbow-length gloves, slip dresses and cloche hats adorned with flowers. I even saw a few women with fur stoles, though it was surely not because of the weather. It was a beautiful day, nice and warm, probably close to 70 degrees. Some of the men had walking sticks (again, for show) and everyone wore a hat-women and men alike. And there were so many people! I felt like a country girl in the big city all over again.

The newspaper estimated there would be more than 50,000 people at the Derby today, a bigger crowd than in past years. There's been a lot of promotion to get people here because Louisville really needs the money and because a lot of people want to see whether Louisville has recovered from the flood. From what we saw yesterday, it seems as though the crowds were mostly directed to the downtown area.

I had no idea there were so many traditions surrounding this event. First, there was a lot of drinking and general drunkenness. Of course we had to sample the mint julep (part of the tradition of the event), but we didn't have

nearly as much alcohol as the folks sitting near us. Then there was the singing. We all sang “My Old Kentucky Home” when the horses came on the field. I knew the melody somewhat, but had to fake my way through the words by trying to watch Edward’s mouth carefully. I also did what my old high school music teacher told us-when you don’t know the words, sing “watermelon, watermelon, watermelon”.

The actual races were much shorter than I thought they’d be-only a couple of minutes. But they really were thrilling. A lot of people in the area inside the track ran from one side to the other to cheer for their horse. Had we sat down there we would surely have been trampled, so I was glad we shelled out the money to sit in the grandstands. We yelled and screamed right along with everyone else. I don’t think I’ve yelled so much since I was a kid. Few things are as beautiful as a horse running at full speed.

You could almost feel the tension build until the big race. War Admiral dominated the main race from start to finish, so I’m glad I put at least a little money on him. I made \$23 when all was said and done! Pompoon pulled in second and Billionaire came in dead last, so much money down the drain. Guess I’ll never have to work out the problems of being a billionaire myself.

Edward stayed with us for another delicious meal. He knows Mr. Washington from their Red Cross work. The Washingtons didn’t attend the Derby this year, but we had a nice time sharing stories with them after dinner about the many times they had gone. Then I had another night of sound sleep in “my” luxurious bed. What more could I ask for? All in all, this was a remarkable day and welcome relief from the last couple of months.

May 9

Mr. Jennings picked us up around 10am and, once we described the great time we’d had at the Derby, the ride back to Dillsboro was pretty quiet. Edith dozed off and I felt very reflective. The landscape looks so different to me now. It’s astounding what water is capable of. There’s still a lot of rebuilding to be done, but given the amount of damage that’s occurred, it’s amazing anything is still standing. Starting over again from nothing and putting your life together again is an enormous task on every level.

I felt a bit melancholy as we approached Camp Johnson, knowing we’re leaving in a few days. Even though this was truly a disaster I wouldn’t wish on anyone, I’m going to miss many of the people I’ve encountered-both the staff I’ve worked with and the people from this area. Knowing I won’t see them again makes me sad. Working under conditions like this creates strong bonds and I will miss them. Their capacity to get things done has made a profound impression on me. I’m glad Edith and I have been able to share this experience together.

May 10

Edith and I spent the day packing boxes and boxes of files. Hardly anyone’s here and it feels lonely. There are still a few families whose houses are not ready for them to move into yet, but it’s pretty much deserted. There’s nothing like being in a place where a lot of people used to be to make you feel lonely. Just 6 months ago this was a cornfield with a couple of cows. Then hundreds of people invaded and gave it life. I’ll bet in another year or two it’ll be back to being a cornfield and people will just forget all about it.

May 11

This adventure is officially over. Fred, Mother and little Freddie drove down yesterday to pick me up and take me home to my luxurious bed. It was great to see them and we all spent the night together in my tent. Edith’s family came in yesterday too, and stayed in the tent next door. I guess everyone wanted to see what Camp Johnson looks like and what we’ve been up to these last couple of months.

John, our self-described camp photographer, was still hanging around, so he took a couple of last photos before we left. I think he may fancy himself a fashion photographer or something because he actually had me pose for one photo. He took off his leather jacket and asked me to put it on. Then he positioned me in front of our car and asked me to put a foot up on the bumper-like a mob doll or something! I kept laughing and ruining the shot. He took a bunch of photos before I looked serious enough for him. I did my best, but I'm no mobster, or fashion model, but it was fun. Both Mother and Fred got a good laugh at my expense. John took one last photo of me, again near the car, but dressed and acting more like myself. I hope he does send copies of the photos, otherwise how will I explain this experience to anyone at the office? I'm afraid no one will believe me, except Edith, of course. I'm glad we went through this together so we'll be able to share memories of this experience.

We got back to the house late -around 10pm.

I can't get over all the simple pleasures here in the house: a warm, soft bed, heat, a hot shower. It's amazing what modern conveniences we take for granted every day of the week. I won't go back to the office until Monday of next week, which is good because I need a few days to rest. I feel I'm a different person than the one who left Cleveland just a few short months ago. So much took place in such a short time, yet my family and home remain completely unchanged. It's a comfort to be home with all its familiarity, but strange at the very same time.

Mother's calling, I'd better go find out what she needs. I'll write more later.