

S. S. Charles W. Wooster
A Journal

Lurty Preston Hawkins
August 15 - October 15, 1945

I don't remember ever being told that PawPaw went to Greece. If I was told, I wasn't experienced enough to understand the significance of what he did. I remember PawPaw very clearly and never suspected he had stories to tell. Like my father, I'm sure he would look at me today and say, "You didn't ask." I'm sorry I never asked.

I have loved every minute of typing PawPaw's diary. I have tried very, very hard to keep it in the form in which he wrote it. In the beginning he wrote in flowing sentences, but as time passed he evolved into short, clipped phrases that conveyed just as much information. I did my best to graphically represent his phrasing as I typed this, and I changed almost nothing about his book. His knowledge of geography and history amazed me, and with it I did nothing but learn.

Daddy told us PawPaw went on his Greek trip to recover from the untimely death of our grandmother, his wife Kathleen. I regret that I didn't know them both better.
Happy Birthday, Daddy

Alice Elizabeth (Beth) Hawkins Sellers
January 22, 1996.

Reformatted July 2010

Our Staff

Rev. Rusel B. Pritchett
White Pines, Ten.

T. D. Woodson
Franklin Road
Roanoke, Va.

L. P. Hawkins
R.F.D. #1
Churchville, Va.

Wilber Layman
Dale Enterprise, Va.

Ivan Gascho
R.R. #4
Harrisonburg, Va.

Wallace Michael,
Mt. Solon, Va.

Donald Reist
R.R. #1
Mt. Joy, Pa.

Luke Bomburger
Mt. Joy, Pa

Richard Keller
S. Charlotte St.
Manheim, Pa.

Spiro Demoleas
310 East 32 Street
New York, N.Y.

Seven Greeks of Piraeno, Greece and New York, U.S.A.

To New Orleans

9:40am

August 12th

Crowded bus to Roanoke.

Met T. D. Woodson on train. Changed trains at Chattanooga and met Rev. Pritchett
2:00am, 13th. Typical Dunkard preacher. Made acquaintance.

Long hot ride to New Orleans. Arrived 8 o'clock. Had supper and called on Mr.
Woodrum, U.N.R.R.A. representative.

Learned of the emergency call

Greeks eat.

Spent the night at U.S.O.

Other boy sound asleep.

Tues. 14

Busy day in New Orleans

Toured a part of city- Cabildo and cemetery.

Met boys from Va. Later boys from Pa. One disappointed, three never arrived.

Shuffled from place to place all day getting our seaman papers pictures, etc.

Finally got a bite to eat and started to the dock (by street car) just as news of V. J. Day
was declared.

Knew nothing more as the world celebrated.

Got aboard ship 7:30 pm (where is the board)

Mr. Woodrum, Rev. Pritchett and the Skipper hold conference with Greeks and
discharged five of them.

Our duties were on.

Wednesday 15

Sailed 12:00 Noon

All day getting organized, finding the feed, learning the ship, etc.

Regular Routine:

	Up at 6:00am.	Feed oats
		Breakfast at 7:30
8:00		Feed hay and water miscellaneous things
10:30		Coffee time
11:30		Lunch
1:00 pm		Water again Clean barn
3:30		Coffee time again Start feeding hay
4:30		Water again
5:00		Dinner

One person on watch each night.

Description of the Ship. A Liberty Ship.

10,000 ton cargo ship. 481 ft. long, 64 ft. wide consisting of two main decks on which our horses were kept. Under which were four large holds for other cargo which consisted of wheat, barley, oats, rye, and soy bean seed. All for Greek Relief. Also other products such as phosphate, salt, flour, etc.

Our horses (mares) numbered 335 of which we lost four, a very small percentage considering our twenty five days at sea.

Our horse feed consisted of oats and hay of which we fed approximately 1400 lbs. of oats and 4 tons of hay (*unknown word here*) This of course had to be hoisted from the lower holds by means of block and fells. The manure had to be lifted in the same manner and the stalls flushed about every two days with sea water of which we had plenty. The stalls were just large enough for one horse and we tried to keep them standing all the way across.

Equipment

The Charles W. Wooster is one of the many Liberty ships that is credited with winning the war. Their large roomy holds made them very useful in transporting war material, food, and ammunition, as well as troops.

They are driven with oil burner steam engines with an eighteen foot screw or propeller.

It is armed with one 5 inch gun mounted near the stern, one 3 inch gun near the bow and eight 20 millimeter guns which normally employed twenty eight navy men to man them. Now only three.

The ship has one galley or kitchen and three mess halls with most of the sleeping quarters on the main deck.

We are now occupying the navy quarters. The soldiers occupy the third hold which is equipped with galley, mess hall, showers, and plenty of room to accommodate the 100 soldiers aboard ship. Life boats, rafts, etc.

General Outline of Our Route

From New Orleans down the Mississippi across the Gulf of Mexico, around the Keys, off the tip of Florida, and north last along the coast as far as Cape Hatteras or between Hatteras and Norfolk, Va. Then due east across the pond. Reaching Gibraltar the night of the 31st.

With beautiful weather with exception of three days and nights 27, 28, and 29.

Along the North African coast for one day then straight through the Mediterranean, close to Malta, south of Sicily to Crete. Then due north to the port of Piraeus. The port for the city of Athens on southeast side of Greece in the Aegean Sea. Anchored there all day and night.

There received orders from UNRRA to proceed on north about 250 miles to Salonika or (Thessalonica). Arriving at 4 PM Sept. 8th. Leaving there two days later for our return to Piraeus. Arriving there Sept. 11th. Leaving Sept. 18.

Going south through the Ionian Sea, the Messina Strait and north through the Tyrrhenian Sea to Naples, Italy, Sept. 21st.

Leaving two days later going southwest, north of Sicily and across the Mediterranean to Oran (Algeria) to pick up orders. West along the coast of Algeria about 60 mi. to Beni Saf and took on 500 tons of ballast and on to the Straights passing Gibraltar early on the morning of the 29th, and headed through the wide open spaces for Norfolk, Va. U.S.A.

Our Sixteen Days Across the Atlantic

Aug. 15 - 31st

First week very busy.

Weather dreadful hot. Used all leisure time watching the ever endless never ceasing waves of the mighty deep.

Observed the beautiful lights from Miami as the last on our mainland.

Very busy first week getting organized and arranging our men to the different holds or places on the ship where the work was to be done.

Myself and three other Greeks two forward holds. Our first fire and boat drill was called with myself in charge of the two aft holds and report to no. 3 life boat.

Discovered we were feeding seed oats.

Passed a number of ships and saw a few planes. One ship putting up flares but apparently not in distress as we did not change our course.

Everybody becomes better acquainted. Boys find they have a quartet. First rough sea Sunday 26th. Religious service each Sunday.

First lights sighted off coast of Portugal. Then Spain, Africa.

Sept. 1 - 6 Through the Mediterranean

September 1

Well past the Rock. See lots of ships going both ways. In sight of African coast long way. Algeria in sight but hazy weather. Shore looks like mountains of sand. Passed many islands after leaving coast.

South of Sicily and north and close to Pantelleria (former Italian)

September 4th

Passed Malta. Most bomb S. Look through binoculars from B. Owned by British.

September 5

Hit a tough spot. Many mines. Turned north near Crete. Drifted a while.

September 6

Greek happy as they near their home.

Disappointed Anchored outside port all night.

Received orders from UNRRA to go to Salonika.

First Sight of War Destruction Port of Piraeus, Greece

A desolate looking place. Houses with roofs off and windows shattered.
Still anchored.

Could see Athens in the far distance. Everyone anxious to get ashore.

The port we started for when we left U.S.A. Spent the whole day sight seeing from the deck.

Finally got orders Bomb boats all day. Work piling up. No dumping in O.

Greeks lower their baggage at night. Lots of clothes for their families
One Greek went A.W.O.L.

To Salonika

Sept. 7th

Pulled Anchor 6:00am

Busy day. Hay, feed, eat. First British mine sweeper tossing high in heavy sea.
Bad night. No shore lights. Drifted 5 hours.

Sept. 8th

Docked at Salonika 4:30pm

All climbed in gun turret while they tied up. Pilot comes out.

Our shore leave already signed by the Captain. Gang plank lowered and we took off.

First to step on Greece.

Walked about the streets until late Saturday night.

Unloaded horses at night which was interesting to see. Especially after having cared for them for three weeks.

Used crates operated by Stevedore or long shoremen. One jumped in water swam ashore 3 hours later.

Branded each one (horse) and held there in corrals.

Returned to ship 11:00 PM Still unloading horses, worked all night.

Didn't sleep much on account of noise.

Sunday, September 9th

Went to service St. Sofia, Greek Orthodox. Great experience was cordially welcomed. Very old cathedral 700 AD

Beautiful mosaics once painted over by the Turks but were unable to destroy the original. Walls and arches five feet thick. Were shown over the church after service.

Memorial Service Cake, etc. Burn incense Front of church destroyed. Had interpreter. Was seated on chairs.

Description- Mary the Mother Most outstanding painting.

Sunday, Sept. 9pm

Went to P. O.

Mailed our first mail home. First experience with Greek money Drachma.

Group split up. Pop goes for antiques. Woodson and I start for the top. See unbelievable living conditions. Narrow streets very steep very old stone huts.

Chickens in street goat tied to walk
sow and pigs

Donkey and family living together, cart, etc. Apparently very little water and no sanitation at all.

Meet Don and George before we reach top. Tired and thirsty.

Finally reached the top. The original walled city of Thessalonica Wall of seven castles. Around 1080.

Ruined walls very thick, church on top. Received drink of water. Prison, etc. 700 prisoners

Returned to better part of city, Woodson tired.

Don and I visit Mr. and Mrs. Zachos

Mr. Basil Zachos
Aristotelos 5
Salonika, Greece

Mr. (*unknown word*) Basil Day
609 Central Ave.
East Orange, N. J.

George Mageau, Jr.
Box 75
Fiskdale, Massachusetts

4:30pm

Visit with the Zachos

Born in Greece. Went to America at age of six. Married and lived in New York. In fur business. Very wealthy, 2 children. Visited all of Europe.

In business in Salonika. Went to Athens in '42 when Italy attacked Salonika.

Stayed with friends two years, very crowded- little to eat. Germans occupied their home- carried off everything. Was later allowed to occupy the attic. Very fine 4 story apartment. Without blankets, etc. Lost all money in banks. No market for their property

Have to return to U.S.A. by Nov. 30,

Served wine.

Furs all stored in vault. Showed us through better part of city
ice cream, etc

Walked about with them until 11pm. Told of the unstable money cond. Very congenial and seemed to appreciate our call.

Back to Piraeus

Monday, Sept. 10

Sailed 6:00am

Busy day Helped crew put out wash, etc. Mine sweepers go before. Explode mine just ahead.

Ate watermelon and talked of our visit at Salonika

Population 800,000. 46,000 Jews were killed in city alone. Only 4,000 Jews escaped. People died at the rate of 4,000 a day. City badly wrecked especially along the docks. Harbor full of sunken ships.

Piraeus and Athens, Greece

Tuesday, Sept. 11th

Docked at 10:30am

Will think of Piraeus and Athens as one. About 1,000,000 population in Athens, 600,000 population in Piraeus. Two days to stay.

Docks completely destroyed. Port full of sunken ships.

Ate dinner and arranged a tour with man who came aboard. Got money exchanged. Took row boat to go ashore.

First sight that added to the pitiful scene was a ship load of Greek P.O.W.'s returning from Germany. Trying to get through the Greek custom house although completely wrecked.

Directly across street St. Micolal church bombed down. Walk about streets of Piraeus.
Blacksmith shop on street.

Pepper trees in bloom. All building same color of stone.

Tiny mules pulling carts. Pieces of ammunition ship that blew up in harbor two miles away, 30' x 1½" x 3' wide.

Small church inside larger one.

Found P.O., mailed letters home. 185 drachmas.

Passed Railroad station wrecked. Here we crowded into taxies, old Desota and Peerless.
On to Athens, very, very old city, but fairly modern.

First stop the old ruins

Temple of Jupiter

Massive columns of Corinthian design. Built 200 BC with 122 columns of which 15 columns still stand. Consecrated to Olympic Venus Supreme God of Ancient Greece.

Destroyed by the Turks.

Many arches and temples built in memory of some person or happening, including
(...*unfinished*)

Athens Stadium

Which had been there hundreds of years and rebuilt 140 AD
First World Olympic games held 1896.

Acropolis

That portion of the hill or mountain where many of temples were built surrounded by a huge wall and used as fortification for ancient Athens. In 1st century (destroyed by the Persians)

Temple of Athena Nike

Dedicated to Goddess of Athens as a memory of victory (Nike=Victory)
420 BC Ionic style.

The Parthenon (Doric Order)

Building operation 15 years, 447-432 BC. During time of Pericles (Statesman)
Most noted temple Where public money was kept

Different parts of Temple represent or are dedicated to battles. In the conquering of Attica (The peninsula of land on which Athens is built)

Many more

Temple of Thebes

Temple of the Virgins

Day about spent.

Sept. 12-13

Woodson and myself just ramble over city. Visit market place, note the filthy method.
Ride the street cars and subway (free)

Mail more cards- Understand they will not be delivered.

Learned of the war, most damage was civil war- machine gun fire

Grips (*unknown word*) Holm docked near our ship.

Sept. 13

Trip to Country

Don acts as interpreter. Visited olive grove. Gave us branches (friendship). Observed their method of farming- all land used.

Saw German pill boxes and scrubby pines where Greeks were tied and machine gunned.

People hauling their product. Visited little Greek Church, very old.
Inspected their irrigation.

Stopped at little village, ate grapes and talked to the natives. Played with kiddies.
30 miles out.

Friday, Sept. 14

High Spot of Trip

Holy Cross Day

Our first mail received.

Another tour of city. This time finer part of Athens. Constitutional Square, Art Museum,
etc.

Metropolitan Church The governing church of Greece.

Golden Cross Day

High Priest in London, other Priest preside.

Most beautiful paintings and architecture, mosaics. Throngs of people worshipping.
700 AD Talked with the Priest, etc.

Went window shopping. Rode in street car and subway, etc. Picture show.

Sunday, Sept. 16th

Sunday in Piraeus

Pop goes back to big church.

Hoped to get a

Got invitation to wedding, also sees baptism.

Rested until after dinner. Dug out old guns from under the debris along the docks of Piraeus.

Ac guns, rifles, and empty shells by the tons.

After supper:

Woodson and myself take a long walk over the part of city so visible from ship.

One large building standing. Operated by U.N.R.R.A.

After many motions and signs Man in charge was called. Fine young man from London.

Monday, Sept. 17

Back to Mars Hill

Last day in Athens. Did some shopping.

Don, Pop, and I made another trip to Mars Hill. Pop offered prayer.

Room where Paul spent the night.

Old Roman market. Being excavated.

Waterclock

Old well

The part of Athens that flourished under Roman rule.

Hot lunch in Athens. Came back to ship to learn no more shore leave. Hooked with drachmas.

Sept. 18,19,20

Piraeus to Naples

6:00am. Pulled anchor for Naples after one week at Piraeus.

Everyone thinking of going home.

Lay on deck. Quite different from feeding horses.

Skipper makes search of ship. Beautiful clear weather, calm sea. Not a ship sighted.

Mt. Etna on coast of Sicily, 10,741 ft.

Through Messina Strait with towns and villages on either side.

Looks prosperous. Slopes covered with trees and vineyards

Sept. 21, 8:00 am

Arrive at Naples

Isle of Capri and Mt. Vesuvius

Anchored out of harbor all day 4:30

Ate supper. Under strict Marshall law. Only half of crew gets shore leave in afternoon. Take no U. S. money. Boys go first. Others walk about dock inside gate. Use scuttled ships for walks.

Largest supply port in Italy. Was scene of many hard bombings.

Pop, Woodson, Don and myself go ashore Saturday afternoon.

Sept. 22. Visit Arcadia and Pompeii

Glass (*unknown word*) all out-time limited

Go to Pompeii ride train stand all the way. 17 miles around base of Vesuvius. Very fertile land. Lots of fruit.

Almost destroyed by earthquake 63 AD

Pompeii and Herculaneum destroyed 79 AD. Pompeii on higher ground. 24 feet of ash and cinders. Apparently very wealthy city.

Streets narrow but substantial. Stepping stones. Water flushed streets.

Many temples. Government building.

Wine stores

Baths and Pools

Stadium, wild beasts, etc.

Water supply, stones worn away. Perfect paintings.

Vesuvius erupted April, 1944. Ash on ground. Excavation was discontinued when war was declared.

Many things of ancient culture were revealed. Lots of the most valuable removed to Naples Museum.

Amphitheater seated 20,000. Gladiators fought. Wild beasts were turned on prisoners. Worshiped idols, very immoral.

New Pompeii just outside wall. Fine Catholic Church.

Dirty little Guineas trying to sell everything. Lost 10 bucks.

Saturday Night

Return to Naples

Went to American Red Cross. Got first Cocoa Cola. Talked to lots of boys waiting to get home.

Received a bad impression of the Italian people. Morals of Naples unbelievable.

Returned to ship 11:00 pm Me broke. Woodson more money than he could spend. Leaving next morning.

Sunday, Sept. 23rd

Leaving Naples

Sundown

Soldiers came aboard 9:00am. 103 officers and enlisted men. Very few young men. Mostly 30 or older. All weary and tired of war.

Said their accommodations were much better than the crowded transport ships.
Trucks leaving Naples every day.
Most soldiers from New York or California.

Sept. 24, 25, 26

To Oran

First cigar.

Fire and boat drill. Sea became suddenly rough. Half of men aboard are sick,
buckets in partnership.

No land in sight. Still rough and stormy.

Called me an old seaman.

Sept. 27

Oran and Beni Saf

Arrived at daybreak, dropped anchor. Captain and Colonel go ashore to get orders
Go to Norfolk. No shore leave.

Four hours later-

Oran a large port and important city of Algeria, North Africa.

4:00 pm arrive at Beni Saf. to take on ballast

Sea too rough for pilot to come out Too rough to tie up Too deep to anchor.
Cruised all night.

Friday, Sept. 28th

Beni Saf

6:00am

Sea calm, tie up. Take 500 tons iron ore and leave 12:30
No shore leave.

Beni Saf a mining town operated by the French. Many Arabs walking about the town.
Nude kids swim about the ship. Women walk, men ride. Two donkeys to a cart. Land
bleak and dry. Huts built in cliffs. Boys swap cigarettes. Police take them in.

Sat. Sept. 29

Gibraltar

6:00am

Up early to see the old fortification. Passed not too close. Straits 14 miles wide.
Could see fortifications at different elevations on the rock.

Sturdy looking old rock.

Weather rather hazy. Sun not up.

From Gibraltar to USA

All goes well. Make good time first two days. Rev. Pritchett holds service each Sunday in stable. Men show lots of interest. Major's first sermon at sea.

Arguing which day we would land. Enjoy talking to soldiers and hear them talking to each other of their experiences.

Sea gradually gets rougher and rougher
and rougher

Food becomes old.

Got some sweets from the BX. Eat fruit cocktail at night.

North Atlantic

Major conducted open forum each day at 10:30. Discuss the condition of the Balkan States. Before and after the war always a sore spot in world affairs.

Saw fewer ships. One British flat top.

Play games

Tell lies, etc.

Two boys Mike and Luke work.

Oct. 5

Last kitten jumps overboard. Help Navy boys to dump ammunition. Get orders to go to New York.

Spent next few days planning what we would do in New York. Cleaned and painted our quarters. Repacked our bags.

Boys sing in quartet, play french harps. Sea still rougher. Old Wooster really bucks up.

Oct. 9th Get orders to go to Norfolk.