

S. S. MONGOLIA

May 22 1917

My dear Maitland Family:

In again, out again, experience
unique! We sailed Saturday afternoon
everyone in a happy mood. Sunday
was sunny & beautiful and after dinner
all came up on the boat deck to witness
gun practice. A target was dropped
aboard and at 3000 yards firing
began. We carry 3 six inch guns
2 mounted forward, one aft. I was stand-
ing on the forward boat deck near
the captain's bridge and saw the
first shot at the target. Two more
shots were fired, one from the aft
gun. A commotion arose just be-
hind me some one called to me to
say that 3 nurses had been
killed and I heard the captain
on the bridge above me give an

order to cease firing. I rushed aft
and found that 3 nurses had been
hit while sitting quietly in their
chairs. They were 170 ft from
the gun which was fired off our
beam. Either the shell cap or
something else was not right
& several pieces flew back onto
the deck and caused these in-
juries. The position occupied by
these 3 - there were 40 others just
around them - could in no
way be considered dangerous.

I tried all I could to save the
young girl I worked on but the
missile had pierced her chest
just under the left arm, which
she probably had raised up. Her
heart was penetrated as I discov-
ered when I put my hand in the
wound. We had every assistance
of course - nurses who are used

to working with me & all but she probably died instantly. One other was shot in the brain, the 3rd had flesh wounds of hip & arm.

I was appointed president of the army board to investigate & report and we subpoenaed every one we wished. I did the cross examining and our two stenographers took all down. That took until nearly 2 am of Monday to get it all transcribed etc after the accident we turned back immediately to U.Y. arriving there yesterday am (Monday) late in afternoon we had a brief service & lowered the flag draped caskets over into a truck for shipment. Fortunately we had some embalming fluid on

board - and with me kept things nicely.

We are now awaiting new ammunition, having re-coaled last night and are lying in North River about 50th St. Just how some of us escaped I do not know - one must always take his own chance in war. Probably we shall get away tonight - who knows.

I hope to get this letter off to you but we are under orders still of course & I cannot say for sure. Telegram just came in - thanks. I cannot thank you enough for the sleeping bag - no express package came to me in U.Y. Thanks for all your kindnesses - they will long be remembered. Write to me

Base Hospital #12 U.S. Army
Care Red + headquarters U.Y. City

Must close
Yours truly
Kellogg Speer