

Company B, 1st Infantry Maryland N.G.
Flood Duty, Cumberland and Hancock, MD
March 18–25, 1936

Map of guarded area in Cumberland

Carl H. McCLeary, Captain,
S. D. McKee, 1st Lieut
C. J. Schlottterback, 2nd Lieut

FLOOD DUTY—March 18th. to 25th , 1936

“Captain McCLeary, Company “G” on flood duty in Cumberland needs assistance. Mobilize Company “B” at once and proceed to Cumberland, reporting to Major Flook. Some of the roads are flooded, you will have to select any route that is open. Take no unnecessary risks”

That order from Major General Reckord by telephone at 11.50 A.M. March 18th. launched the first mobilization for duty of Company “B” since reorganization after the World War.

In spite of the fact that mobilizations plans to meet such emergency calls are kept up to-date at all times, Captain McCLeary found many obstacles in the way when he endeavored to start the execution of that plan. In notifying the Officers he was unable to contact Lieut. McKee, who, enroute to his home by trolley car, was marooned when power was turned off account high waters at Williamsport and knew nothing of the call until he finally arrived at home at 1.20 P.M. First Sgt. Minnebraker, delayed by the halted trolley service, knew nothing of the call until about 1.30 P.M. In endeavoring to use the radio facilities, Captain McCLeary found that W. J.E.J.’ s announcer and broadcasting unit was in Williamsport giving first hand information covering conditions there, and was unable to contact them and have the call issued until about 12.30 P.M. A number of the members of the Company were in Williamsport also and could not be contacted by radio or telephone.

In spite of these obstacles, three Officers and fifty one men of the Company were equipped and ready to move before the buses, requested of the Blue Ridge Transportation Co. were available. This company was delayed in furnishing transportation because they had been required to substitute buses for halted trolleys.

The bus drivers reported that Route 40 was closed by high waters in Hancock. They also advised that they understood Penna. State Highway Patrol waft not allowing any vehicles to cross the bridge near Bedford, Pa. and therefore that route was closed. This could not be confirmed as there were no telephone lines open to Bedford. Headquarters of the State Highway Patrol in Harrisburg was contacted but they knew nothing of the condition at Bedford account no communications; they suggested that we start that way and if possible they would get us through.

Accordingly, at 4.07 P.M., he Company in two buses started via Greencastle–Mercersburg–McConnellsburg–Everett– Bedford route. As we traveled over this Penna. Highway through a continual rain, through stretches of road that were completely under water, and through a rather heavy fog on McConnellsburg Mountain, it was to many of us, as if we were in some strange land and we wondered what was around the next curve or even the next hill.

At 5.45 P2M. we arrived in McConnellsburg and sandwiches, coffee and apples were purchased for our first meal. While there, numerous motorists asked us what route we were going to follow as they had been turned back at Everett and wanted to get through.. Although this information

indicated that we would be unable to get through, our orders were to proceed to Cumberland and at 6.05 P.M. we resumed our journey depending on the help of Penna. State Highway Patrol to find us a route that would be open.

At Breezewood, Pa. we were stopped at 6.40 P.M. by a member of the Penna. State Highway Patrol who advised that his Lieutenant has gone forward to determine whether we could get through and that we should wait there as there was a congestion of trucks, buses and cars at Everett. While waiting Captain McCleary endeavored to learn something about Route 40 by telephone but all lines were out of commission. An attempt was then made to learn something by radio but the local light pant caused a disturbance which prevented clear reception from the Cumberland Broadcasting Station. At 7.45 P.M. word was received from the Lieutenant of Penna. State Highway Patrol and also from Messers Hyssong and Winebrenner of the Blue Ridge Transportation Co. who had made a survey of the road ahead, that it would be impossible to get through to Bedford as roads were completely washed out.

At 7.47 P.M. the Company left Breezewood for Hancock, Md. arriving at that place at 9.55 P.M. Here the buses were unable to enter the town because of the high waters. Captain McCleary, Lieut. McKee, Sergts. Conrad, Smith, Schlotterbeck, and Farrie and cook Crum waded through mud via back yards of higher homes into the town to determine what could be done.

From Dr. Tabler and Mr. Resley, of the State Road Commission and the Mayor of Hancock it was learned that there were approximately twenty feet of water over the bridge at west end of Hancock. It was found that there were a number of row boats available for crossing, but as there was no light and large objects were floating as well as wires under the water, it was decided that such a crossing at night would entail too much risk in view of the instructions from Gen. Reckord. Capt McCleary then called Gen. Reckord, advised him of the situation and informed him that the company would remain in Hancock over night, cross the water in the morning, secure trucks and proceed to Cumberland. General Reckord approved this plan. About 11.30 p.m. it was found that the water had receded sufficiently to permit the buses to enter Hancock by a back street. After their arrival arrangements were made to supply sandwiches and coffee. During the remainder of the night the members of the company slept as best they could in the buses. Shortly after midnight it was learned from an official of the Western Maryland Ry. Co. that their tracks were almost completely out of water and that by morning it would be possible to walk the tracks to the high ground west of Hancock thence to Route 40. This plan was immediately adopted and bus drivers asked to arrange for two buses then at Town Hill to meet the Company at Sideling Hill creek bridge about ten miles west of Hancock.

In the morning March 19th. through Private Cohill of Hancock, who had been unable to report at the Armory account flooded roads, Mr. R. S. Dillon was contacted and very gladly consented to furnish three small trucks to transport the Company from Hancock to Sideling Hill Creek bridge, which was closed to trucks account approaches undermined. After breakfast of sandwiches and coffee, the Company removed their equipment from the buses and at 7.15 A.M. crossed the flooded area on the railroad track and loaded into Mr. Dillon's trucks.

At 7.45 A.M. we arrived at Sideling Hill Creek Bridge and found no buses there. Private Cohill, in his car, continued into Town Hill where he found only one bus, which was dispatched to the bridge, and made arrangements for another to come from Cumberland at once. While waiting the Company quickly consumed a box of apples furnished by Private Cohill.

At 9.15 A.M. the first bus arrived and Lieut. McKee with 29 men immediately left for Cumberland. The remainder of the Company under Captain McCleary, tiring of waiting, started to walk and met the second bus 2.05 miles west of the bridge. They immediately loaded and proceeded to Cumberland. The first bus arrived at Cumberland at 10.00 A.M. and the second one at 10.27 A.M.

They were warmly welcomed by the members of Company "G" who had been on duty practically continuously since called out on the 17th.

The Company was immediately fed—sandwiches and coffee again and Captain McCleary, Lieut. McKee, Sergts. Conrad and Schlotterbeck made a tour of the posts with Major Flock and at noon Company "B" took over all posts, relieving all Members off Company "G" until 8.00 P.M. The water was gone from the city but the destruction and mud was left behind—Store fronts were open, all glass having been smashed by large articles like pianos, radios, electric refrigerators, etc which were whirled away by the high waters.

During the afternoon at a conference of the Officers, it was decided to establish reliefs, the Lieutenants being in command of each, Captains Millholland and McCleary to divide day as Officer of the day, and Col, Henderson and Major Flock to take care of the administrative duties. It was found impossible to form three reliefs as there were not sufficient men available. Tours of duty were therefore arranged by roster, it took practically an hour to make a complete relief and as the men had to eat during their time off, not much time was available for sleep.

On Friday, March 20th. Captain McCleary was ordered to return to Hancock and make a survey of the situation there as request had been received for troops at that place. With Sgt. Rogers he made a survey and that evening the thirteen men shown in the roster returned with Captain McCleary to Hancock and established guards at that place.

From that date, the remainder of the Company under Lieut. McKee and Lieut. Schlotterbeck continued the guard duty with Company "G", maintaining posts and patrols through the business section of Cumberland until 6.00 A.M. Monday Morning, March 23rd. when they were relieved from duty and ordered to return to Hagerstown. At 8.20, after eating breakfast, this detachment left Cumberland in four National Guard trucks, stopping at Hancock for change of personnel of detachment at that point; arriving at Hagerstown at 10:00 A.M. and were dismissed.

At Hancock, Captain McCleary housed his detachment in the City Fire Hall, and on authority of the Mayor of Hancock took entire charge of policing the flooded area. Two reliefs, of assigned posts were established and two patrols in cars covered the outlying district. As a result of request from Mayor of Hancock to General Reckord this detachment was retained at Hancock until about noon, Wednesday Morning, March 25th. when they were relieved of duty and returned to Hagerstown,

Throughout the entire tour of duty, in spite of the many very disagreeable features, – the limited time and improper conditions for sleeping, the irregular meals, the unfavorable weather, the deep mud in the protected area, the unfair criticism of local residents who were refused admission to restricted area because of lack of proper passes, the loss of pay while away from regular occupations,—the members of the Company performed their duties in a most creditable manner. Although the area was inspected at different times by Governor Nice, Major General Reckord and Colonel D. John Markey, not a single authentic report of failure of the Military force to properly perform its duty was received.

To those who served – your performance of duty was a credit to the Company—You may well enjoy the satisfaction coming from a duty well done*

To those who were left behind—No failure on your part prevented your going.—The failure of normal communications and transportation facilities due to the flood prevented or delayed your summons resulting in your arrival at the Armory after the Company had departed.

On the next page is reproduced a letter from Mayor Legge to Colonel D. John Marker which expresses his ideas of the value of the National Guard service during their emergency. The extent

to which the city officials depended on the Military assistance is further shown by the fact that troops at Cumberland were to have been relieved on Saturday, March 21st. but were held until Monday on request of Mayor Legge and troops at Hancock were to have been relieved on Monday, 23rd of March but were held until March 25th in compliance with request from the Mayor.

The Western Maryland Railroad Co, expressed their appreciation of service performed in protecting their property by making a contribution of One Hundred Dollars to the National Guard Organizations on duty in Cumberland. A number of local companies showed their recognition of the importance and need of the National Guard by paying their employees, who are members of the Company, for the full time they were away on duty

(This report of our Flood Duty experiences presented to each member of the Company at our Annual Banquet at Beck's Tavern on May 4th.1936)

ROSTER OF COMPANY PARTICIPATING IN FLOOD DUTY

1st. Lieut.	Guy S. McKee
2nd Lieut.	Carl J. Schlotterbeck
1st.Sgt	Charles B.Minnebraker
Sgt.	Carter, C.R.
Sgt.	Conrad, V.P.—#
Sgt.	Farrie, M.
Sgt.	Metz, J.F.
Sgt.	Rogers, C.B.
Sgt.	Schlotterbeck, E.P.
Sgt.	Smith, E.W.
Corp.	Adams,E.L. Jr.—%
Corp.	Edwards, W.L. —%
Corp.	Grimm, H.R.
Corp.	Keller, S.G.—#
Corp,	Myers,T.R.
Corp.	Palmer, A.C.—#
Corp.	Ward, M.E.—%
Pfc.	Charles, S.H.—#—%
Pfc.	Crowe, C.C.
Pfc.	Crum, G.D.
Pfc	Gilbert, N.K.
Pfc	Hines, J. R.—#
Pfc	Hoover, R.B.
Pfc	O'Brien, H.A.—#
Pfc.	Penner, R.B.—#
Pfc	Raymer, J.A.—#
Pfc.	Rickard, G.F.
Pfc	Schneider,W.F.
Pfc	Wilson, J.F.—#
Pvt	Adams,CA.
Pvt	Ausherman, W. W.
Pvt	Barnhart, E.E.—%
Pvt	Bussard, H.H.
Pvt	Bussard, W.T.
Pvt	Close, R.F.—#
Pvt	Duffey, R.S.
Pvt	Fermes, L.J.—%

Pvt	Funk, D.L.—#
Pvt	Grimm, C.W.—%
Pvt	Heefner, M.C.—%
Pvt	Hildebrand, R.F.— %
Pvt	Hoover, J.H.
Pvt	Hopkins, W.F.—%
Pvt	Jacobs, M.L.—%
Pvt	Kretzer, K.W.
Pvt	Montgomery, V.G#
Pvt	O'Brion, J.L.— #
Pvt	Reece, W.S.
Pvt	Schlotterbeck, W.R.
Pvt	Schneider, H.M.
Pvt	Trumpower, C.O.Jr.
Pvt	Trumpower, H.R.— %
Pvt	Weddle, L.R.—#— %.

Note # Indicates those men who returned to Hancock on March 19th.

% Indicates those men who remained at Hancock from Mar.23rd.to 25th.

ROSTER OF COMPANY NOT PARTICIPATING IN FLOOD DUTY

Corp.	Stains, E.W.
Pfc.	Cooper, H.W.. .
Pfc.	Flurie, A.R.
Pfc.	McNamee, C—.A.
Pfc.	Secrist, D.P.
Pvt.	Baker, W.J.Jr.
Pvt.	Bragunier, L.M.
Pvt.	Cohill, J.A.Jr.
Pvt.	Delaughter, R.H
Pvt.	French, D.J.
Pvt.	Holmes, G.L..
Pvt.	Jordan, W. K
Pvt.	Lehman, J.K.

(The letter written below is a copy received from Regt.Hdqrs.)

City Of Cumberland Maryland

April 2, 1936

Colonel D. John Markey, Military Department, State of Maryland, Frederick, Md.

My dear Colonel Markey;—

Permit me, on behalf of the governing body of this city and its citizens, to thank you for your kindly aid and assistance rendered as a member of the National Guard to this flood—stricken city after the disaster of March 17th.

Without the aid of the National Guard, this city would have no doubt suffered tremendous losses in looting and pilfering and disorder, and it was due to them that those crimes of darkness were kept at a minimum.

Very sincerely yours

George W. Legge , Mayor