

## SCHUMANN-HEINK ADOPTS KNOX BOY

Robert Midkiff, '19, Finds New "Mother" Who Gives Him Victrola, Two Watches and a Cross of St. Benedict Blessed by the Pope

ROBERT MIDKIFF, '19, has a new mother. Guess who it is? No, that is hardly fair since the headline has already given you the hint.

Mr. Midkiff's real mother is dead but he has an adopted mother now in the person of

tham and the other a wrist watch; a Victrola and some records; several autographed photos; boxes of candy; and a Cross of St. Benedict, which the Pope blessed especially for the opera star.

Bob Midkiff left Knox shortly after the Christmas holidays to enter the ground school of aviation at Rantoul, Ill. Another Knox man, William Bardens, '18, left at the same time. They were soon flying at Camp Dick, Dallas, Texas. Now both are doing advanced "solo" work at Kelly Field No. 3, San Antonio, Texas.

"Camp Dick is nothing more than a waiting place," Midkiff writes. "Graduates of ground schools, those stationed at Princeton, Cornell, the Universities of Ohio, California, and Illinois, are sent there and held until some flying field is ready to receive them. My squadron was there for three weeks, the most pleasant and gloomy weeks I ever spent—pleasant, because the people of Dallas were so hospitable, and our privileges were many, and gloomy because we thought we were to be kept there for the remainder of the war. There was a general competition in all lines, drill, inspections, appearance and manners at mess and a thousand other things that some special inspector would think of. Our squadron won every regimental parade and drill, but somehow we were down in the list most of the time. But when we did find that we had won the contest, even though by one lone point, holy cow, you ought to have seen us raise the roof off the old automobile shed of the Texas State Fair grounds in which we were quartered! Many of us had been waiting since last July to get a shot at one of these ships, and we were getting a bit discouraged. It was about the end of the first week in March when we arrived here, and we started flying at once, and since that time we have been in the air almost daily for from one to three hours of flying. This is the best training field in the United States, I believe, for we have twice established records in the number of hours of actual flying. Our coming seemed to be coincident with a number of



FLYING CADET MIDKIFF

Madame Schumann-Heink, the famous singer. She took a great fancy to the young flying cadet when she met him on a soldier train and since "adopting" him, she has presented him with two watches—one a 15-jewel Wal-

fatal accidents, although none of our men were in the accidents which ended fatally. A Colchester boy was one of the men who fell. By the way, have you heard how that little town is furnishing aviators? Six boys from that one town are flying. That is a good record.

"I won't attempt to describe a flying field to you. The sight of over thirty planes in the air at once is mighty thrilling when first seen, and you owe it to yourself to see a good flying field.

"I had a bit of good luck on the way to Camp Dick. It is one of the big events in my life. Our train was nearing Oklahoma City when the conductor told us that Schumann-Heink was to get on the train at that place. We were all eager to see her, for we knew that 'Moter Schumann' is a friend of all soldiers. Shortly after we left Oklahoma City, we were told that she would see some of us in her drawing-room. This is one occasion when I remembered that the blushing violet never won any gold medals, and I did not wait for the crowd to form before I followed the leader. Eight of us were permitted to enter the compartment, and for an hour Mother Schumann, as she is known to all soldiers, told us of her past life and her friends and likes and dislikes, and of her splendid sons, one a lieutenant on a German submarine, and three in our army and navy. She is proud of them all, and she may well be proud.

'At the end of the hour, we saw that she must be growing tired and we moved to leave. As we started out the door, that fine motherly woman turned to me and asked:

"Where is your mother?"

"I told her that my mother was not living and that I did not remember her.

"Take me for your mother," she said as she took my hand. 'Of course you do have a mother; she is up there and she is watching you all the time. But if you will let me, I will be your mother here on earth. Will you let me?'

"Would I? That car started traveling in every direction. Believe me, I did.

"She sang in Dallas the following week, and while there, she showed me what a real mother was. She presented me with a Victrola and a fine selection of records, and her accompanist, Miss Evans, added more. She has also given me some other reminders which

mean much to me, a couple of different photographs, autographed, a wrist watch, and a Cross of St. Benedict which was blessed for her by the Pope.

"'It has brought good luck to me', she said, 'it will bring good luck to you.' She wore it when she was stranded in Germany at the beginning of the war. I am sure that it will bring me good luck too. She is bearing up wonderfully under the strain of having sons in opposing armies, and she writes mighty cheerful letters in spite of the fact that she is afraid for her sons."

Mr. Midkiff's Cross of St. Benedict brought him good fortune a few days ago when the motor of his airplane died a thousand or so feet above the earth. A mechanic had neglected to fill the radiator. Swooping to earth, Midkiff found himself unable to see just where he was lighting—due to darkness which was just coming on—and his machine struck some telephone wires, pulled up a post or two and smashed into the ground. The plane was wrecked but Bob came up smiling. He had scarcely a scratch.

## Los Angeles Club Banquets

Los Angeles celebrated Founders' Day, February 15th, with 90 Knox people assembled at the home of George W. Prince, Sr., '78.

It was a princely affair, all right, for Henry Prince, '11, was elected president and all the many Princes able to come were present. They all voted for Henry and so did everyone else. The destinies of the thriving Los Angeles Knox Club will be in his hands until February 15th, 1919.

After old acquaintances had been renewed and handshakes and greetings exchanged all around, a program was given. Interesting letters were read from Dean Simonds and Director Bentley.

Dr. Walter Edwards, '83, was toastmaster and a fine job he made of it. Toasts were given by Arthur Hurd, '80, Dr. L. R. Ryan, '86, and Jessie VanClute Johnson, '02. Letitia Rhodes, '09 and Mrs. Harry Palmer (Mr. Harry is a 1910-er) furnished music.

"With the field song, yells and things, we kept things lively," Mrs. Grace Widney Mabee, '96, retiring president of the club, writes.

The Knox people in Los Angeles are planning for a picnic in June.