

NEAR EAST RELIEF CONFERS DISTINGUISHED HONOR MEDAL UPON MRS. NETTIE HALL AUSTIN

Presentation Is Made by Admiral Robert E. Coontz on Behalf of National Organization—Impressive Ceremonies Held in Connection With Opening Session of American Legion State Convention in Hannibal.

From the Mississippi Valley where the soil is so productive, the climatic conditions so favorable and the people so thrifty and industrious, that section has gained the title "The Bread Basket of the World," to the devastated Near East where for seven years, because of continuous warring, the people have not been able to grow a grain of wheat or corn, was the experience of a Missouri woman, Mrs. Nettie Hall Austin, of Hannibal, Mo. Mrs. Austin for three years has been connected with the Near East Relief work in Southern Russia and Asia Minor, and from the amount of supplies sent from the Mississippi Valley and every section of the United States is directing the feeding and clothing of 110,000 orphans.

For this service Mrs. Austin was decorated at the annual convention of the American Legion Posts of Missouri at Hannibal, Monday, August 21. The presentation of the distinguished service medal, which is the highest honor that can be conferred on a Near East worker, was presented by Admiral R. E. Coontz, Chief of Naval Operations. It was a fitting tribute to Mrs. Austin to have the presentation made by Admiral Coontz, as both claim Hannibal as their native city. Rev. M. Edwin Johnson, State Director for Missouri,

sent you across; I am now with the organization which took charge of the suffering left in the wake of the mon-



Rev. M. Edwin Johnson.

ster which wrecked the lives of many of you and stole the lives of many who should be here today. I am proud to



Admiral R. E. Coontz Presenting Mrs. Nettie Hall Austin With Distinguished Service Medal.

with offices 1406 Chemical Bldg., St. Louis, represented the Near East Relief organization of Missouri. Dr. J. Edward Kirby, who has been identified with the Near East Relief from the beginning, represented the national office of that organization. Dr. Kirby said in part:

"Admiral Coontz, I have the honor, sir, to hand to you on behalf of the National Organization of the Near East Relief this medal which our organization is pleased to have you present to Mrs. Nettie Hall Austin, one of our most faithful and devoted workers. The service which Mrs. Austin has rendered to suffering humanity overseas is the kind above price. The work which she has done has been made possible by her devotion and self-sacrificing spirit, and has required courage and the highest efficiency. In one instance up in the Caucasus she saved the Near East Relief ten thousand dollars a month in one station alone. She brought into the service such high efficiency, loyalty and faithfulness under hard trial that the Administrative Committee of Constantinople conveyed to her the special commendation of that body for her work. This is an honor accorded to few. I consider it a privilege to represent our national office in the presentation of this distinguished service medal to one of our most highly esteemed workers as a recognition of her bravery, efficiency and unselfish devotion."

Mrs. Austin accepted the honor with dignity and feeling and stated that it was quite fitting that it should be presented under the auspices of the Emmett J. Shields Post, American Legion, of which she is a member and which was named after a brave lad who gave his life for his country; and that it was gratifying to her that the honor should be conferred on her by Admiral Coontz, a Hannibal friend, and co-worker in the navy during the war and the man who stands at the helm of the most splendid organization in the world, the United States Navy. "And what could be more fitting than to be surrounded by 'buddies' from all Missouri, said Mrs. Austin. "I was with the organization which

be a Missourian and to have this honor come to me surrounded by Missourians, the best people in the world."

Mrs. Austin is one of the best known women in Missouri. She was born and reared in Hannibal and for the past fifteen years has spent her time in her native town, St. Louis and Jefferson City. Mrs. Austin was prominently connected with politics of the State, being the associate of the late Hon. John A. Knot, editor and owner of the Hannibal Journal. She served in several capacities at a number of the sessions of the legislature and was secretary in a number of political campaigns. Among which she was secretary to Joseph Shannon, James A. Houchin and former Governor Joseph W. Folk. During the war Mrs. Austin was in charge of the stenographic force of the food administration. Resigning that position to go with the publicity department of the United States Navy, which position she resigned three years ago to go overseas with the Near East Relief.

During her leave of absence, Mrs. Austin is telling the story of the Near East, illustrating her talk with slides made from pictures which she took with her kodak.

Mrs. Austin expects to return overseas the latter part of October or the first of November. During her stay in her native state, she will assist the Near East Relief in telling the people of Missouri the story first hand. Mrs. Austin is pointing out the necessity of food supplies and clothing for the Near East Relief work, prior to the first of December, as it is impossible to get supplies in after December, as the snows close all traffic and it remains closed until the first of March. The Near East Relief has 110,000 children under its care who are wholly dependent upon America for food, clothing and shelter.

Rev. M. Edwin Johnson, newly appointed State Director for Eastern Missouri, offices 1406 Chemical Building, St. Louis, reports that the work in Missouri is progressing, and that Mrs. Austin will visit every county in eastern Missouri district before she returns overseas.

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