

Sooner Doughboys: University of Oklahoma Students Describe Their Experiences in the Great War



*By David W. Levy**

On November 6, 1918, less than a week before World War I came, at last, to its painful conclusion, University of Oklahoma President Stratton D. Brooks sent a letter to every university student or former student who was then serving in the military. He had a request. He asked each of these young men to send him back a letter telling of his personal experiences in the war and his impressions of what he had witnessed.¹ Between mid-November 1918 and April 1919, around seventy of them responded. Their letters, when they arrived at the president's office, were carefully placed in a box and eventually deposited with the rest of President Brooks's papers in the Western History Collections at the university. To the best of my knowledge, no one has looked at these remarkable documents for nearly a century. As it happens, they offer an extraordinary glimpse into the many ways that the Great War was experienced by everyday Oklahomans.

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According to one accounting, 1,139 University of Oklahoma students and former students served in the military during World War I. Of this total 972 were in the army, 147 in the navy, and 20 in the marines. More than three-quarters of them (885) volunteered and 254 were drafted. About half of the total (45 percent) saw duty overseas. Because of an almost universally held belief that “college men” made the best officers, nearly half of these Sooners (43 percent) were commissioned officers, most of them first or second lieutenants in the army—although four others were lieutenant colonels and eleven reached the rank of major. Around forty members of the university’s faculty also saw wartime service in 1917–18.²

Two members of the faculty and nine of the students or former students in military service died of the influenza pandemic or other diseases. One faculty member, English instructor Captain Meade Frierson, and twelve of the students were killed in combat. At least seventeen students or former students were wounded during the war, seven by being exposed to poison gas and eleven by enemy fire. One of them, Gerald S. Tebbe, a 1916 graduate, sustained both kinds of injury on August 8, 1918.³

The writers share some revealing characteristics. They were convinced that America had need of their service and that it was their patriotic duty to answer the nation’s call. They were proud of carrying out their responsibilities faithfully and to the best of their abilities. They were modest about their own exploits and held a low opinion of the German enemy. They all were eager to return home to Oklahoma and to pick up their careers as students or new graduates. Their letters reflect an appealing innocence about the world into which they had been abruptly thrust.

It was a world of dreary inactivity and boredom, interrupted by periods of breathtaking violence and danger. Most of these youngsters had come from farms and small towns; for most of them Norman (with a population of five thousand) or Oklahoma City (with around seventy-five thousand) were the largest places they had ever seen. Suddenly they were herded into trains that took them to immense training camps where they were drilled and hardened and indoctrinated into the ways of the military. Many of them were ordered to East Coast embarkation points and they became acquainted with New York City and Brooklyn, with Hoboken, New Jersey, and Baltimore, Maryland. Not many of them had ever seen an ocean before. Now they joined hundreds of others on huge transports and were shipped across perilous waters infested with terrifying German submarines that were trying to send

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them to the bottom of the sea. They landed in Europe and encountered people who did not speak English. Some of these young Oklahomans experienced Paris or were part of the occupation force that went into Germany after the armistice. Before it was over, many of them knew a lot about artillery bombardments and poison gas and tanks, about life in the trenches, going over the top, and advancing under withering fire. Many had seen their friends killed or horribly wounded. And all of these things and many others they tried to explain to the president of their university.

Here are a few of their letters.⁴



From: Richard Lee Huntington⁵

Chinon France⁶
December 13 1918

President Stratton D. Brooks
University of Oklahoma
Norman, Oklahoma

My dear sir,

I was very glad to receive your letter, last week, asking me to write letters from time to time of my personal experiences of interest during the war. No doubt the accounts from men who have seen service in the front line trenches will be the most thrilling ones, but since I have been in the S. O. S (Service of Supplies area) during my stay in France I shall tell you, in several letters, some of the happenings I underwent as a soldier behind the lines.⁷

The Ocean Voyage

A Water Detail of eight chemists were selected from a casual medical company at Ft Riley Kansas on September 12, 1917, and sent to Camp Dix New Jersey from whence we found five more soon to leave with the 26th Engineers for service in France.⁸ One Saturday, late in October as I lay feverish-like in bed after my sixth shot of typhoid vaccine, of the day before, the half-way expected news came that we were to leave Camp Dix the next evening, just after dark for 'a destination unknown.' I was out of bed in short order, for none of us cared to endure the monotonous [*sic*] cantonment life any longer. Our luggage

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Richard Lee Huntington, pictured in the 1917 Sooner Yearbook (Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma).

and equipment was heavy. Into our barracks bag, which was about the size of an ordinary gunney-sack, we crammed an unnecessarily large supply of clothing and personal property. In our horse-shoe pack we carried over our left shoulder, were three blankets and a compact which the Red Cross had given us. Soon after dark Sunday evening (everything was kept as secret as possible) we 'fell in' and our top sergeant gave us the command 'squads right—March' which started us on our way to our 'unknown destination'. The next morning, I woke up—really I had not slept much due to the cold—and found that the train was standing in the Jersey City terminal which is on the bank of the Hudson River. We were issued a breakfast of hot coffee and sandwiches & then loaded on a ferry boat. Soon we were moving up the noisy Hudson as it always is on such a cold misty morning as it was on that day, for the ferry boats are so thick that they need to let forth a shrill whistle to let the rest of the river know that they are hurrying laborers to and from their work. All of us were wondering as to which would be our transport to carry us across when suddenly the ferry boat pulled up between two gray monsters. The Leviathan and the Agamemnon which previously belonged to Germany under the names of Der Vaterland and Kaiser Wilhelm II respectively.⁹ Soon we were embarking on (much to our disappointment) the Agamemnon.

For a lifetime native of Oklahoma, like myself[,] it was a new experience and a very interesting one, just to roam over the boat the several days we were docked there in Hoboken before setting sail.¹⁰ Our 'state room' consisted of triple deckers on the fourth deck down at the forward end of the ship.¹¹ I called it the 'front end' at the time; and the

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air was very hot & close. However as the French express it—C'est la guerre.¹² October 31st was Hal[lo]ween night but we did not celebrate. Instead of that we slowly slipped out of our dock in the middle of the afternoon and much to our surprize [*sic*] started up the Hudson. But as soon as the fast falling darkness hid our steel gray ship from sight, the Agamemnon turned around and steamed full speed down the river. We were allowed to go on deck & take a last look at the Manhattan shore, but absolute quiet was the order given out so even when our lightless ship passed by a ferry boat whose passengers were noisily yelling good-bye to us, we constrained ourselves so as to not talk above a whisper. Soon after we glided down into the harbor and passed the Statue of Liberty which we watched for an hour or so until it fell from sight beneath the horizon of the dark sea. The next morning was bright and sunshiny & the sea was only slightly choppy. Then the routine daily life of our eleven days of sailing which were to follow, began. Mess was served to the five thousand men in a large hall: Breakfast from 7 to 9 A.M. Dinner from 11 A.M. to 1 P.M. & Supper from 4 P.M. to 6 P.M.

The eats proved to be very good during the whole journey and it's lucky they were for the salty air gave us wonderful appetites. Guard details were assigned. It was my duty to be on submarine watch for an hour at a time three times a day: at 10 A.M. 6 P.M. and 2 A.M. respectively. This was, with the possible exception of an occasional fire drill, the most exciting part of the voyage. To stand and gaze intently over a small sector of the sea was no easy thing to do. I was equipped with a pair of field glasses thru which I looked about one third of the time, and a megaphone thru which to report to the bridge the sighting of any floating object. Everything went nicely for nine days as we took our zig-zag course, on somewhat of a southern route, across the Atlantic viz. the Bermuda Islands & then northward to Brest France.¹³

Our convoy consisted of four large troop ships which sailed abreast the greater part of the time and ahead of us were our trustworthy leaders and guardians, the battleship North Carolina & two speedy destroyers.¹⁴

The greatest task we had was to keep out of the road of the dreaded submarines yet each boat, even amongst the transports, was ready at any moment to give battle to a nest of submarines. But as usual the unexpected happened—no submarines came near us. [N]evertheless, the ninth night out from New York City when our convoy was in the vicinity of the Catalina Islands,¹⁵ came very close to spelling catastrophe for the Van [*sic*] Steuben, an old German ship, which had been sailing to our port side, and our ship, the Agamemnon. November the ninth had been a rainy day and at four o'clock the officer of the day

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had ordered all smoking lamps out, in readiness for our usual nightly plunge through the ghastly darkness which indeed meant uncertainty on this night for we were getting into the 'danger zone'. A Mr. Kanable who stood guard on lookout with me, and I had eaten supper early so as to be ready as usual for the six to seven o'clock watch, but no sooner had we taken our posts on the port side and had just begun to fasten our gaze on our assigned sector of the rapidly darkening sky-line than our attention was drawn away from our gaze forward by the alarmingly shrill cries of the men all along our port side. Kanable & I were at the forward end of the ship. The Van Steuben had been keeping well to the rear of us during the afternoon and just before dark had come up abreast with us. However it was easily three-quarters of a mile, as one would ga[u]ge distances on the sea, to our port side. Suddenly for unseen reason, shortly after six o'clock[,] when our trusty flag-ship the North Carolina was going straight ahead, the Van Steuben turned her course and headed full speed thru the dusk of the evening right toward us (midships). The captain of our boat fortunately had noticed this strange manuvre [*sic*] and had begun to swing our boat around so that when we heard the cries of the men, we turned around & saw the monster ship racing alongsides and towards us. Our men ran toward starboard and no sooner had I gotten away from my post than the Van Steuben's prow crashed into our forward well deck (port side) tearing a small hole above the water level in our strong ship. The two ships then rocked away from each other; then came the second crash as the Van Steuben's star-board [*sic*] side smashed against our boat tearing to splinters all of our life boats on our port side. The men quickly prepared to abandon ship and all were so terror stricken that not a word was said. Then the piercing siren blew and every one [believed?] that it surely meant that it was time to be getting into the sea. The swift destroyers of our convoy were soon around us, throwing search lights against the sides of our ship. Many men were converted in that short time—some men ran around calmly stating that if they ever got to land again they would always be good. In our anxious waiting to find out whether the ships had been seriously damaged the time passed very slowly. Soon our nerves were eased by the lights going out and our ships steaming forward with the assuring news that all was well. Even at that the men slept very little that night.¹⁶ The next day at nine o'clock we caught up with the other ships which had gone ahead according to the rules of the convoy, when we had had the accident the evening before. The Van Steuben had a large hole torn in her prow, thru which much water poured, but by constant pumping she kept going alright. Two long days passed as we sped northward thru the dan-

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ger zone; and then on Monday morning we saw land which all believed to be England. At ten o'clock that morning we found out that our convoy was in Brest harbor. What a good feeling of security it was to step on real old mother earth again two days later and get into a 'Hommes 40 Chevaux 8' stock car for shipment to eastern France.¹⁷

Shall tell of my trip across France in a box car when I write my next letter.

Your friend
R. L. Huntington
Chemical Warfare Service Laboratory
A.P.O. 703. A.E.F. in France.



From: Charles Harold McNeese¹⁸

Norman, Okla.
March 29 1919

President Stratton D. Brooks,
University of Oklahoma.

Dear Sir:

Some time ago, I received a letter requesting me to write to the University regarding my military experience. As this letter was sent to the 16th. Infantry, it was forwarded to me only to find me discharged from the army and again enrolled in the University. But even at this late date, my mind is still vivid with the memories of my military career, and I consider it an honor to be able to contribute to such a collection as you intend to compile.

From my date of enlistment to my date of discharge, my service in the army has varied from the border of Mexico to the border of Alsace-Lorraine. When the Mexican situation became intense in June, 1916, I enlisted as a private in the Co. "M" 1st. Okla. Infantry.¹⁹ The middle of July, the same year, found us debarking at San Benito, Texas, about 25 miles from the Mexican Border. In Sept. our company was placed in guard of the Santa Marie and La Faria pump stations on the Rio Grande. In August 1916 I was promoted to Corporal and was mustered out as such on March 1 1917.

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Charles H. McNeese, pictured in the 1920 Sooner Yearbook (Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma).

My civilian life at this time was destined to be short however, and on April 1 1917, [I] was again called into federal service.²⁰ A short time after this second call, I was promoted to the rank of Sergeant, and on May 22, 1917 was sent from my company to the First Reserve Officers Training Camp, located at Leon Springs, Texas.²¹ On August 15 1917, after three months of hard work, I received my commission as First Lieutenant, Infantry Section, U.S.R[eserves]., and on the same date, I also received my orders to report to the Commanding General, Port of Embarkation, Hoboken, N.J. equipped for extended field service.

Of course the officers who received such an assignment were all smiles for it meant that they would be among the first to “get over”, but little did they think of the true meaning of these orders. True it meant that they would get over in good time, but it also meant that there would be many of them, who, sailing out of the harbor, would wave a goodbye to the Statue of Liberty never to see her again, and such was the fate of a great many of these officers who went with this first contingent.

It was about the first of Sept. that we set sail from Hoboken on the USS Dekalb, formerly the famous German raider, Prince Eitle Freidrick [*sic*],²² and about the middle of the month, landed in France at the now famous port of St. Nazaire—known as the first place that the American soldiers set foot on French soil.²³

From this place, the officers were sent to various French and British schools. Our contingent consisting of thirty[-]five officers were sent to the First British Army School, Hardelot, Pas de Calais, France.²⁴ Here

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we were to receive instruction from English and Canadian officers who had spent a considerable time in the front line. With us at this school, were about one hundred English and Canadian officers, and about seventy-five non-commissioned officers, whose divisions were in the line and who had been sent there for a similar course of instruction.

After a course of five weeks in this school, we were allowed to go back with these officers for a week[']s tour of the line as their guests. My lot fell with the 38th. Division, which held a sector in the line in advance of Armentieres. Upon arriving at the divisional Headquarters, near Stenewerk [*sic*],²⁵ I was assigned to visit the 10th. Bat. South Wales Borders. Upon my initial entry into the line, I was given a reception by the Boche that I will never forget.²⁶

Brigade Headquarters was as far as we could ride, and from there, started on foot to the headquarters of the 10th. It was a walk of about five miles, and the way led through the town of Armentieres. At dark, the earliest time we could leave Brigade HQ, I was furnished a guide to take me to Battalion HQ and to vouch for my identity in case we were stopped by any Military Police. Before we started I had adjusted my gas mask in the alert position, put on my "Carnegie Derby", and strapped my pistol to my Sam Browne belt.²⁷ As we walked along I tried to converse with my guide, but being unable to understand his dialect, found it necessary to keep my thoughts to myself. We walked along in silence, a drizzling rain was falling, the night was dark and the silence was so intense that I could almost feel it. The big guns were unusually quiet and only occasionally broke the silence with a dull distant boom that grew more notic[e]able as we approached the line. At a distance we could see the star shells burst over NO-MAN[']S LAND and turn that inky blackness into daylight in hopes of finding some careless patrol that is out after information. Now and then the silence would be broken by the rat-tat-tat of the machine gun as it spread its death dealing shower over some point in the enemy line.

We were well into the town when the first signs of war became apparent. We were walking through the town with intense silence all about us when suddenly we heard the sound of an enemy shell. The boche had begun a bombardment on the artillery and soon the air seemed full of whizzing shells. We kept on, dodging to the side of the road when an occasional shell would come in our vicinity. After what seemed to me to be hours, we reached our destination.

Being tired from the long walk, I decided to retire early. It was then that I missed the soft bunk that I had been used to in camp. My bed consisted of a box frame over which had been stretched some few pieces of chicken wire. My mat[t]ress was made up of a few sand bags placed

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upon the wire to keep it from making an imprint upon my body. My covers consisted of two blankets that had seen better days. I was not permitted to take off any of my clothing except my shoes and coat. That much satisfied me as I was tired and much in need of rest.

As I lay there on my bunk listening to the shells making their mournful sound as they traveled overhead, I noticed that they seemed to have a different sound than the ones I had first heard. My worst fears were soon realized as a head was thrust into the dugout and a cry of "GAS" caused me to jump for my mask and adjust it immediately. After five hours of suffering with that instrument of torture, I was told that the attack was over and the remainder of the night was spent in comfort and sound sleep.²⁸

The next morning, I awoke with a sickening sensation, a head ache and exceedingly sore eyes. Some how or other I had inhaled a little of the gas and its presence in the dugout had burned my eyes. As time went on I seemed to get worse, but would not go to a hospital as there was nothing to do but to let it wear off. In a few days I was ordered to join the 16th. Infantry of the First American Division, where I arrived a few days later but in no condition to do any work. After about three weeks of doctoring, I finally regained my voice which the gas had taken away and was able to assume my new duties as Regimental Signal Officer.

My regiment was at this time stationed at Demange-aux-eau. (Meuse), where we remained in training until January 19 1918. On this date, our regiment started the relief of the French in the Montsec sector about 10 miles east of St. Mihiel. This was what is known as a quiet sector, and there was nothing much of interest connected with it except that it was the first sector in any part of the line to be occupied by Americans under American command.²⁹

The first division occupied this sector until about the middle of April when it was relieved and we were sent in the vicinity of Montdidier in the face of the great German offensive that had reached great proportions.³⁰ Here conditions were very different than in the sector we had been occupying. There were no trenches, the Germans had been stopped there and it was up to us to dig in, consolidate our positions and hold the line. In order to best consolidate, we were forced to capture the town of Cantigny, the story of which has been printed in our papers.³¹ This was the first offensive ever attempted by any American troops. It was entirely successful from every standpoint and helped show the true spirit of the Americans. In this battle, the help of the artillery was invaluable. The machine-guns never worked better. The tanks and the aviation service were borrowed from the French.

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We stayed in this sector seventy-six days and in the second week of July were relieved by the French, and went back of the line a few miles to wait until our entire division was assembled when we were put in trucks and hurried in the direction of Soisson[s] where we went over the top several times and made a touchdown each time.³² We had traveled over night in trucks and by morning found ourselves in in [sic] a huge forest known as the Foret de Compiègne.³³

We stayed in this place under cover that day, and that night started on foot toward the line. We could see the flashes and hear the distant boom of the big guns as we walked single file along the road that was all but blocked with heavy traffic. There were two streams of transportation moving in opposite directions. Going toward the line, were trucks of every description filled with ammunition of all kinds, strings of machine gun carts interrupted these, guns of every description and caliber from a 75mm. to a 320mm., and tanks, which crept along the road like some huge monster of fabled days.

The next day, we stayed in another woods to keep out of sight of the enemy airmen, and that night we went into the line and took up our formation for attack. Not a word was spoken above a whisper. We had laid aside all surplus equipment and were now carrying only guns, ammunition, and two days supply of food. Zero hour was 4:35 A.M. on that morning of July 18, and by a half hour before that time every man was in his place and ready to go. We watched our watches breathlessly, thinking of what was to come and praying, not that we might be spared and allowed to see our loved ones again, but that the Almighty Power might be with us, help us to give the best there was in us, and keep us from showing "yellow".

A few minutes before "zero" hour, the Boche spotted us and opened on us with his artillery. Strange to say, we suffered few casualties, and promptly at 4:35 our protective barrage opened up, and the infantry started to advance. I was just behind the first wave, and the sight I saw made an everlasting impression on my mind. The sun was just peeping over the horizon as the boys started forward toward it. They advanced in perfect line as straight as they ever did on the parade ground, and the sunbeams glancing from their fixed bayonets made them seem like a wall of fire advancing over a pra[i]rie.

All went well for a while, but soon the first wave began to thin out as the Boche machine guns played havoc with the advancing wave. As we approached the bullets began to zip past us with a crack that reminded us of a mule-skinner as he laid the lash to his beasts, and all around me my comrades and friends would give a cry of agony and fall to the ground into eternity. But we kept advancing, little by little until by the

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end of the fifth day we were ten miles beyond our starting place. What was accomplished in tha[t] drive all the world knows, we not only demoralized the enemy but we established a place in armies of humanity for the Americans.³⁴

Upon being relieved from this place by the Royal Scots of the English Army, we went to the town of Danmartin [*sic*] where we entrained for Toul and again went into the line in a quiet sector with a regiment reduced in fighting men from 3000 to about 800.³⁵

It was while we were in this sector that I received the order that sent me back to God[']s country to join a new division with the rank of Captain, train them and go back over with them. I never joined them, for the armistice was signed before we left Camp Dix, where we had been quarantined on account of the flu.³⁶ Feeling that my use to my country was ended in a military way, I applied for discharge and received it a short time before Christmas, and in time to enter tha [*sic*] University from which I had been absent so long.

With the greatest respect and hope of continued peace,

I remain,

Yours sincerely

Chas. H. McNeese
exCapt. Infantry U.S.A.



From: William Miller Vernor³⁷

My Experience in the Service

W. M. Vernor
B.S. in E.E. '16

On June 21st 1918 I was sworn into the Naval Reserve Force as Ensign for engineering duties on submarines. I was told that applicants for this service would be trained eight months on shore at school and then sent out in submarines. One of the Reserve Officer classes had just started at Annapolis[,] however my entrance in the service was too late for me to enter that class so I was to be sent to sea in a submarine till the next class started.

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William Miller Vernor, pictured in the 1916 Sooner Yearbook (Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma).



After a two week[']s visit home in Ardmore I was ordered to report to the Commanding Officer of the U.S.S. O-4 in "Boston or wherever she may be".³⁸ I had no idea of the O-4's exact location, however on July 9th I departed from home for Boston according to orders.

Upon arriving I found that the O-4 was not there but the mother-ship or tender was being repaired in the Navy Yard. This flotilla was Division Eight, submarine force, of the Atlantic fleet, and was composed of the "Savannah" as tender and seven submarines, the O-3 to O-9 inclusive. The Savannah was an eight or ten thousand ton ship, formerly the German liner and passenger ship "Saxonia". The submarines were at that time the best, and with the exception of one inferior boat, the largest afloat in our navy. However at that time larger submarines were being built.

The O-8 was alongside of a pier and there I had my first long look at a submarine. My first impression was that it was small and fas[c]inating and I was very anxious to make a trip.

I was ordered, temporarily, to the Savannah till we again fell in with the O-4. All officers and men of submarines have quarters aboard the tender.

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Following a two week[']s stay in Boston we put to sea bound for Delaware Waters.³⁹ At night we travelled with all lights out and in the daytime kept twelve special lookouts over which I stood one watch in three. Standing over these men was not as important as the duty the men themselves were doing. Each man was provided with a field glass and ordered to report everything he saw in the water, giving the bearing of the object. A sixty degree sector was covered by each man and he was relieved every fifteen minutes by a man standing behind him. During this uneventful trip we stopped at Newport and Provincetown and finally anchored or "dropped the hook" behind the breakwater at Lewes, Delaware.⁴⁰

From this place the submarines were to patrol certain parts of the coast. Each submarine was assigned a certain area about one hundred miles out limited, of course, by latitude and longitude, in which they would stay for a week submerged during the day and running on the surface at night charging batteries. This was the most trying experience I had. In a submerged submarine it is excessively hot in summer and cold in the winter, therefore one is forced to live in temperature extremes, in this case a hot humid atmosphere. On these trips we were submerged fourteen hours a day without coming up for air, that is from sunrise to sunset, the idea being not to be seen on the surface. About 4 P.M. daily we would start an air purification system which had little noticeable effect. The system was circulating the air thru cans of soda compound which was intended to remove the carbon content.

After darkness we would come up and run on the surface with one engine and charge batteries with the other. There were three reasons for running submerged all day, namely, to find an enemy, to get in practice for the North Sea[,] and to avoid being sunk by our own surface ships. When the sea was smooth we run at a depth of eighteen feet and stand a periscope watch, revolving the periscope around the horizon about once in two minutes. When the sea was rough we would go down to about sixty feet and listen with our listening devices. We were supposed to be able to hear any ship within ten miles with this device although it was not considered th[oroughly] reliable by our captain. When we heard a ship we would always come up and take a peep with our periscope and usually be disappointed to find a tramp steamer or a merchant vessel. At one time when a ship was going over us everyone heard the swish of the propellers without the use of listening devices.

When submerged all day one becomes very weary, the days seem longer and there is nothing to do but stand watch, eat, sleep[,] and read. Usually about noon I would develop[e] [*sic*] a slight head-ache which would last until we came up into the fresh air at night. Although

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the food served in the wardroom on the tender was of good quality[,] that on the submarine was poor, the same for officers and men, being mostly canned goods in the summertime. Our ice wouldn[']t last over a day or two.

The officers quarters were cramped and we had to accustom ourselves to sleeping in a small space with lots of noise all-around. When submerged everything was usually quite [quiet?], the roughness of the sea being apparent but very little at a depth of sixty feet, however on the surface the ship rolls and pitches and the engines vibrate making noisy [*sic*].

On the surface the ventilation is almost perfect, the engines taking 1300 cu[bic].f[ee]t. of air per minute from the coning tower hatch, drawing it half way thru the boat. When submerged, however, the air circulated thru the boat continually there being no fresh air released. If fresh air were released the pressure would increase too much and the only way of reducing it would be the slow undesirable method of running the compressor. In the summertime after about six or eight hours down the air becomes foul and everything gets damp. Although the hull is corked inside[,] the ribs and other metal parts begin to drip with sweat. Under such circumstances one's garments are quite often damp from perspiration.

One morning about eight o[']clock when we had been down about two hours and a half[,] the captain and I were eating breakfast on our small general-service table in the central operating compartment in which all the gauges and control mechanisms are located. The other two officers were asleep in their bunks which were athwartships.⁴¹ We were moving along slowly at a depth of about sixty feet when the gauges began to show that we were going down deeper. This was no cause for alarm but we usually liked to maintain a certain depth when we wanted to. "Ten degrees rise on the diving rudder" said the captain, but the boat continued to go down slowly. "Twenty degrees rise" and no effect. A little more speed on the motors was ordered by the captain, (this, to make the rudders take effect) but no results. We were then about one hundred feet down and the skipper being a man who didn[']t like to take un[n]ecessary chances ordered "Blow forward main ballast", and immediately following the execution of this order the boat started to the surface at an angle of fifteen degrees. This had blown forty some odd tons of water from the forward tanks. The captain[,] who had arisen [and] placed his arm along the after edge of the table, to keep the remaining dishes from sliding off[,] watched the gauges. A can of tomatoes turned over and ran down his sleeve but he didn't notice this during the boat[']s ascension. Upon arriving on the surface, he swore

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as he laughed and threw the tomatoes out of his sleeve. The second officer came in and said he thought we had been looping the loop as he had been rolled out on the deck.

The O-4 was 173 feet long and the engines developed a total of 880 H[orse]P[ower]. She is capable of making 14 knots (or 16.1 land miles) on the surface and 10 knots submerged. We were rarely in need of more speed submerged than 2 or 3 knots unless in the vicinity of enemy craft in which case underwater maneuvering would be necessary. It should not be thought that the United States could not have built submarines as big and as good as Germany's. This could be more than accomplished if we had the incentive and one half the time Germany had.

One night when it was especially dark we saw a black object, about our size, on our right hand. We were pretty far out to sea to meet one of our own sub-chasers but we were not sure and not desiring to attack without being sure[,] we dived. There was a good chance that it was a German and I think we should have taken some action. This is the only supposed sight of the enemy that we had in the two months and a half that I was attached to the flotilla.

The O-6 came back to the tender one night with four five[-]inch shells thru her superstructure, one being only about six inches about [above?] her hull. This was done by a British Merchantman at about 3000 yards or a mile and a half. The O-6 was in the setting sun and in spite of all her efforts to make signals the Englishman fired about twenty shots, and the sub finally dived in a leaking condition. The Merchantman pursued and in doing so picked up one of the O-6 lifebelts, which came off[f] the bridge as she dived, and seeing then that it was an allied sub, went on about her business. That was a narrow escape. We were more afraid of our own surface craft than we were of the Hun. Nearly all of our subs had been fired at.

Later, in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, the O-5 exploded and killed the captain and the third officer. It was an internal battery gas explosion, not injurious to the hull, but it wrecked one of the compartments.⁴²

The O-3 and O-5 before this had gone out on a three week[']s trip with an old sailing vessel as a decoy for German raiders. They were unfortunate in not finding a Dutchman.⁴³ There were only a few sent over here and the Atlantic coast is quite long.

The questions that have been asked me most frequently, "How deep can a submarine dive?" and "How long can they stay down?" These questions are difficult to answer. They are supposed to be tested for three hundred feet, however they have gone deeper, seldom intentionally. Our submarines can stay down twenty[-]four or thirty[-]six hours or longer, and I can give hearsay from Navy officers that one on a test

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stayed down one hundred hours. Of course the depth reached and time under depend on how long it is necessary to stay under and how deep it is necessary to dive, also upon how much depends on the results. The time of remaining submerged would be limited by the physical condition of the weakest man and the depth reached is limited by the strength of the boat to resist high pressures of the sea. The ordinary submerged operating depth is less than a hundred feet.

The duties and activities of Allied Submarines were not fully appreciated by the public, very little having been published on the subject. The training of our submarines in doing patrol duty on this side was all in preparation for the North Sea or other more hostile waters.

A month or so after I was detached from the submarine force of division eight, they started across and were called back at the Azores, over half way across, due to the signing of the armistice.⁴⁴ Nearly all subs operating on this side were fired on by their own or allied craft, and over there this condition was much worse. On this side we were told not to be seen, over there they were ordered not to be seen. It is true that we had several kinds of recognition signals but the surface craft often didn't wait to see or hear signals. They had the "submarine fever". The Irish third officer of the O-5, who was later killed in the explosion, shouted to the skipper of a fishing vessel, one day as the O-5 was returning to the Savannah. The next day the newspapers reported a fishing vessel's contact with an enemy submarine and [that] one of the enemy officers "spoke English with a strong German accent". This caused much merriment in the ward room of the Savannah.

One of the higher officers from the Navy dept. at Washington, who was doing submarine duty ashore under naval operations, in an address to our class at the Naval Academy, stated that the total allied submarines sank forty[-]four German submarines. This may be taken as an authentic statement.

The latter three months of my time in the service were spent in an intensive training class at the U.S. Navy Academy in Annapolis, Md. Here I studied Navigation, Ordinance[,] and Seamanship with plenty [of] drill not only infantry but all kinds, boat & gun drills, etc.

I lead [*sic*] a quite different life from that on shipboard. The grounds are very beautiful and it is here that the customs, traditions[,] and some of the slang of the Navy originates. When I was there, there were twenty[-]two hundred midshipmen and four hundred in our Reserve Officers class. It is very interesting to observe the regular navy officers and the midshipmen on their home ground.

Following the signing of the armistice our morale dropped about one hundred and one percent and we were soon given a chance to return

SOONER DOUGHBOYS

to civil life. After a two week[']s stay in Philadelphia, to put the papers thru etc, I was disenrolled from the Naval Reserve Force on Jan. 7th 1919.



From: John Ohleyer Moseley⁴⁵

Company "A" 107th. Supply Train,
MARIENHAUSEN, GERMANY.⁴⁶

19 January 1919

President S. D. Brooks,
University of Oklahoma,
Norman, Oklahoma.

Dear Dr. Brooks:

I am just in receipt of your letter of November 6th, and I appreciate greatly the good wishes and kind thoughts expressed in it. Of course, I comply gladly with your request to write of my "Impressions", over here, although I have not had time yet to work up any good impressions; and I fear that this letter will degenerate into a record of personal experiences common to all of us who have on this business sailed from some well known port in America to an equally well known port in France. After encountering world wonders continually [*sic*] the past twelve months, I am beginning to believe that impressions are better made by getting off somewhere and thinking of things than by seeing them. However, what is written must be written quickly for rumor in what seems to be it's [*sic*] final and authentic form has just been around again, saying that within a very few days, we begin using the return part of our ticket, that event which everyone of us have looked forward to ever since losing [*sic*] sight of the lady in the harbor.

On September 11, 1917, I was sent to the 32d. Division composed of Wisconsin and Michigan Guards at Camp MacArthur, Waco Texas.⁴⁷ I found no troops and only a few Staff Officers there. By the end of the year under the great leadership of Major-General W. G. Haan, the division was adjudged by army inspectors "Ready to Go".⁴⁸ On January 31, 1918, the Division Headquarters sailed on the Adriatic.⁴⁹ We landed at Liverpool, and made the customary trip to Winchester, where we

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John O. Moseley (Stratton D. Brooks Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma).



waited four days until at South Hampton [*sic*] they had unloaded the cattle from the boat which was to take us across the channel.⁵⁰ From the train going to Winchester, I had one glim[p]se of “The Spires of Oxford.[.]” From Harve [*sic*] we took the usual “Forty Hommes, Eight Chevaux”, train⁵¹ to our training area, (No. Ten.) which was between Langres and Dijon, and comprised such towns as Prauthoy, Vaux-sous-Abigny, Montsaugéon and Champlette.⁵² The people in this area had never seen Americans before; and here the boys of our division began a long and exhaustive study and experience of French language and customs. Here they first became acquainted with Vin Blanc and noted the difference in response given by it and it’s [*sic*] sister Champagne [*sic*] or fuzzy water.⁵³ Here they learned to recognize a man’s wealth and social standing by the size of his straw pile at the back door—and all those whose letters I censored wrote this home as an original observation.⁵⁴ Here they discovered that many English words happily expressed the same idea in French[,] among them “Promenade”. And finally but primarily they decided that French Ideals and purposes so similar to their own were worth fighting for—and they learned to do the fighting.

SOONER DOUGHBOYS

In April came orders to move. We entered Alsace near Belfort, and again were the first American Troops ever in that land.⁵⁵ I came over-land with the advance party and never will I forget the amazed looks of the people followed by waving and cheers, as they realized who we were. Many times along that Langres-Lure-Vesoul-Belfort road I saw mothers carry their little children and even babies out of the house and point toward the automobiles, so that they fifty years hence could tell the story to their grand-children.

This sector extended from north of Masevaux to the Swiss Border.⁵⁶ At first we held it with the French, but soon they moved out, and it became one of the first all-American sectors. Nothing transpired here except patrol fights, small raids, and spasmodic artillery exchange. A most interesting point is that just before the Boche shelled a place the inhabitants could be seen leaving. There is, no doubt, that they were in communication with the Germans; and there are stories that the German inclined went thru secret passages with food and news to the German lines.⁵⁷ Certainly it is true that during a bombardment the houses were the safest places to go, for the Germans wished to keep on friendly terms with the people and would not shell the towns. I have heard that this was not the case in the latter days of the war, when the Germans realized that Alsace was lost to them. Boche planes came over frequently in broad day light with no opposition except for a few anti-air craft batteries. No attention was paid to them for they never dropped anything. We were soon to experience a marked change in that respect.

On July 18th. Foch began the offensive which turned the tide.⁵⁸ In preparation for it the 32d. Division having been relieved by another American Division moved by rail just behind Chateau-Thierry. Again I was fortunate enough to be sent over land by way of Langres, Chaumont, Bar-sur-Aube and Senlis. The Division was stationed in Verberie, Pont-St-Maxience and the adjoining towns.⁵⁹ And one morning nearly a thousand French Trucks of every make, size and age, driven by An[n]amites lined up and our boys climbed on.⁶⁰ They went into battle near Mezy just across the Marne from Chateau-Thierry, and drove the enemy in what experts declare the fiercest fighting of the war out of Jaulgonne across Reddy Farm capturing the town of Fismes.⁶¹ For this work the division earned the name of Les-Terribles from the Poilus⁶² and a two page citation from the French Army Headquarters, as well as being included in General Pershing's citation of all American Divisions, participating in the drive.⁶³ Then we settled down for a so-called rest, which will be remembered by me as one of the worst periods

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General John Pershing decorating the colors of the 11th Engineers, AEF, April 9, 1919 (20615.19, Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection, OHS).

of time I ever spent—made so by the flies, to say nothing of air-raids and continuous artillery fire. The weather for the first time was hot and the flies were everywhere in great groups—active contenders for one[']s food. Everyone had the “Hoof and mouth disease”, as we called it. The flies reminded me of King P[h]aroah’s Troubles.⁶⁴

Chateau-Thierry was the sight of the war to me. Never have I seen such wreckage. That at Verdun was more colossal [*sic*] but not as recent.⁶⁵ The houses were literally ripped open and their contents exposed to view. Expensive furniture, clothing, table-ware, books and pictures were piled together and most pathetic [*sic*] of all usually the babies['] play-things would be there all broken and torn as in Field’s “Boy Blue”.⁶⁶ The Germans had stripped the finer houses of their valuables and had stored them in the churches. But they never got to Germany.

At Mezy some of our men who were sleeping on a hill side opened up their rifles on a low flying Boche Plane. They had been accustomed only to the ones in Alsace. But this fellow flew straight at them his machine gun popping like six boys “running a picket fence”. The way those men gained the crest of that hill and then disappeared over the top sans shirt, sans pants, and almost sans everything else was one of the fun-

niest sights I saw over here. After that they swore off even lighting a cigarette at night. It was at Mezy also that a plane dropped a bomb squarely on a Field Hospital erected that day; and then circling back he swooped down and emptied his machine gun into it. Fortunately there were no patients in it and the Doctors and American Girl Nurses got to their dug outs [*sic*] in time. This reminds me of another one that happened in one of our so[-]called rest areas. The Division Q[*quarter*]. M[*aster*]. needed a place to store bread. The only shed suitable had some sixteenth century machinery in it which the owner positively refused to move. Applying Military Law the shed was requisitioned[,] the machinery moved out and the bread moved in. My company was hauling the bread and just before dark the last load was put in. As we were leaving a Boche Plane was seen circileing [*sic*] high in the clouds, evidently looking for the railhead. At random he let down his "Tail gate", and one bomb fell squarely on the shed. Bread flew around there for the next week. The machinery was not touched.

General Mangin to whom had been entrusted the Soissons drive asked for one American division for his spear head, and expressed a preference for the 32d.⁶⁷ Again we travelled in those 'one lung' sight seeing busses driven by the funny Chinaman,⁶⁸ and stopped for a few days around Pierrefonds where is the famous castle of the Duc d'Orleans.⁶⁹ The 32d. with French Divisions on either sides "Went in" just above Vic-sur-Aisne, and "Went out" when Juvigny plateau was captured.⁷⁰ This was a great cave country many of them large enough to accommodate a regiment, some even were electric lighted; and in this one sector dough boy and general eat and slept in the same room. At the mouth of one of these caves one day I saw two hundred prisoners starting out to do some work. A stray Boche shell fell among them killing twenty and wounding many more. The yelling and crying the rest of them put up would have done credit to "Skeery Willyum" in the funny paper.⁷¹ They thought that the American artillery had been turned on them.

The next sector was a "Bon sector"—the beautiful country south of St. Dizier.⁷² Here we rested ten days. This part of France had never been in the hands of the Germans though continually threatened. The people regarded the Americans as their saviors and treated them like Kings. Time was all too short here, and one bright morning the grinning Chinee and his buss [*sic*] appeared. The men mounted them brave and outward[ly] indifferent. We were all praying that this would be the last of such rides—and indeed it was. A picture that will go with me forever is the faces of those men as silently they marched out, and at the word of command entered those trucks, grim and resolute knowing full well by now the nature of this ride, and that a large per cent of them

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would never come back. After a few miles American spirit asserted itself; everything was funny; shouts and laughter were heard; and horse play was seen on all the trucks. In every village men, women, children and dogs ensemble turned out. The people threw flowers to the boys and shouted encouragements at them; and they pinning the flowers to their caps called to them in our new language American-French. Both waved until the last truck had passed from view.

We stopped a few days in the woods near Fluery-sur-Aisne.⁷³ The Americans had here a large evacuation hospital and a railhead. Here we saw one of the wonders of the war. One day there rolled in an American passenger train—real coaches—sleeping car—American engine polished up like a Milwaukee Bar—a man's size whistle on the engine[—]dough boy engineer and fireman, and a sure enough negro waiter in the diner, with a white coat and everything—and the train was full of American Officials, including the Secretary of War!!⁷⁴

After a few days of final preparation we went up into that Hell of all Hells Argonne Forest.⁷⁵ To even mention that place would take a book. The Germans had concentrated everything they had here, and they were making their last stand. Defeat in this sector would mean a collapse of their Army and retreat cut off. It seemed that all their guns and all their planes were called in and put here. But we had a few ourselves. On October 4th the Americans put over the greatest barrage of history called the "Million dollar Barrage". All night there had been the usual exchange. About two hours before day break the American side quieted down. Gradually the Boche batteries slacked up also, throwing over only an occasional "Barrack Bag", or "Ash Can". Just at day break an American Plane sailed over the lines; and after making the circuit opened up his machine gun. We heard the first rata-tat-tat, but the rest were drown[ed] out by what seemed the explosion of everything in the world. Every hill was red, and the earth rocked. And that kept up until we could have sworn that nothing was left of Germany. But a few days later came a sight that easily out-ranks everything in my experience or imagination [*sic*]. Late one afternoon we heard a great buzz of motors and looked up. An enormous fleet of planes larger than we had ever seen before was coming over in beautiful formation. They had a leader, scouts and flew in perfect order. The sky was black with them. And then to our amazement another fleet the same size followed behind them! After the third fleet every body [*sic*] refused to look. Nearly three hundred planes passed over within the half hour. Thank heaven they were Germany bound!

We stayed in this region a double shift. When our time came for relief there was no one to relieve us, so we stayed on. After we made

the second advance, I had my company for fifteen days in the woods around Montfaucon.⁷⁶ We hauled food, ammunition, and wounded men. The company was most of the time in advance of the artillery and the shells from both sides passed over head day and night. I hope someone some day will write the truck driver's epic. They are exposed to danger all the time and they suffer every conceivable inconvenience of roads, weather, and machinery. The trains had the first and the last casualties in the Division. Three of my company were drowned with the Tuscania, and one killed by shell fire on November 11th a few minutes before eleven o'clock.⁷⁷

Finally our relief was ordered. I shall never forget the night of the relief which was the last night of the war for me. The 89th Division was to take over the 32d Division position; and they came up over the Epionville [*sic*] road, using in part the wonderful plank highway the Germans had built.⁷⁸ At one hour after dark with the 89th still two hours on the road, and our division worn out and ready to go, the Boche launched one of the fiercest counter-attacks of the Argonne fight. I was with a machine gun battalion that night whose barrage stopped the attack. But it it [*sic*] looked bad for awhile.

We were pulled back for a much needed rest and cleaning up. [E]very man was given a cootie bath;⁷⁹ and some leaves were granted. I received orders to go to school; but I was under the weather a bit and went to the hospital a week at Dijon.⁸⁰ By that time the armistice had been signed. I went on to school at Decize; but that school has no place in this narrative.⁸¹ After my escape from there I had the best time of my army life in rejoining the Division. I visited at Nevers, Gievres, and Tours⁸²—where I saw General Harboard [*sic*],⁸³ commanding general, S[ervice].O[f].S[upplies]., decorated with a Croix-de-Guerre; and arrived in Paris in time to see President Wilson make his triumphal entry into the city.⁸⁴ I stood in the Place de-Concorde. The historic surroundings, the enthusiastic crowd, and the collection of notables gave to me that day another great thrill and a lasting picture. From Paris I went to Toul where pleasantly I was held up a few days before getting a train to Metz. From there I went to Treves and Coblenz and then to my outfit once more.⁸⁵

At the present writing we are comfortably settled in this little Rhine town waiting to go home. I forgot to mention that I came over with Division Headquarters; but when we began active operations I got into Company "F" 107th. Supply Train. Since my return I have been in command of Company "A". Many of the men in the company speak German so we get along well with the people. At first the people were not so cordial and seemed a little afraid; but now they are enthusiastic about

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the Americans and do anything in their power for them. The trouble is to keep the Americans from fraternizing with them.

This section of the country shows the effects of the war not much more I imagine than America does. Certainly they did not feel it a thousand[d]th part of what France did. There is plenty to eat although certain articles are scarce. The people are well dressed and have plenty of money. In Puderbach[,]⁸⁶ a town of five hundred and fifty inhabitants, the municipal store house had eight tons of flour and five tons of shredded oats used for forage which had been stored there two years. It also had five hundred bushels of rye, a quantity of oat-meal to be issued only to the sick, and about one thousand pounds of "Ersatz" coffee and other substitutes for cereals [*sic*].

The people in this region know very little about the politics of the country. Many of them are indifferent and most of them uninformed, because of the scarcity of news-papers. The women now have a vote, but do not know how to use it. One man heard of the death of ex-president Roosevelt and said that Germany had need of a strong man like him, possessing the confidence of the people, to lead them.⁸⁷ In fact they all decry the lack of a strong leader and some wish for the Kaiser to return to tell them what to do. The people are strongly Catholic and fear that the approaching elections will result in a separation of church and state. They are prepared to combat that and hold town meetings—always by permission of the American authorities and a German[-]speaking officer is present. Speakers at these meetings reiterate that Germany had been misled [*sic*] as to the causes of the war, and its entire conduct. Von Tirpitz is blamed for bringing America into the war; and for deceiving the people as to the successes of the U-boat campaign.⁸⁸

A few villages from here is a man who was on the submarine which torpedoed the *Tuscania*.⁸⁹ This interested my company especially for they were on the boat. He has picture[s] of it, also an excellent photo of the first American convoy to reach France. He says that the American convoys watched too closely for the submarine to do any good. The school teacher in this town was an aviator for three years. He doesn't look half as rough as I though[t] they did. Only a few recently demobilized soldiers have returned to this region. We hear that they are causing great trouble in the cities demanding food, refusing to work, saying that now they have earned an easy time.

According to discharged soldiers the morale of the [German] army is gone. The only idea of the soldier now is to get home unless he is a roiter [rioter?]. The fact that officers did not go into battles with men

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is the greatest factor in this loss of morale. One soldier who has just returned said that before the armistice a story went through the army that the Kaiser and Royal Family had food stored up enough for seven years. This caused a great dissatisfaction. Another thing I have just heard[,] although it has possibly been published in America[,] is that our aviators dropped facsimiles of bread and meat tickets in the German towns causing great confusion. The school master at Shelters says that to help win the war school children were used in various ways.⁹⁰ In the last year of the war, the school children of this town gathered eight thousand pounds of leaves and dried them for horse feed, collected pine knots for fuel, nettles for the making of clothes; and were employed in various other ways.

Money as usual is a problem here. Last month we paid off in marks. At some places marks only are accepted and others Francs and at some both. The men in the company had great trouble in figuring out what they owed each other for the month before they had been paid in Francs. The people are compelled to accept Francs at the rate of one hundred sixty-six Marks per one hundred Francs. My company has been paid in dollars, pounds, francs[,] and marks. By now they should be well up on financial matters, but we are all hoping that next time we will be paid off with the only real money there is.

I have visited Coblenz a number of times and it is quite a city.⁹¹ One of the Kaiser's numerous palaces is there. The thing that impresses me most is the great crowds of people in the cafes[,] restaurants[,] and tea rooms eating and drinking. They have ice-cream and all kinds of fancy pastry, things we never saw in France. The people are well dressed and act as if there had never been a war. All railroad, postal[,] and other official employees are required to salute [American] officers, which they readily do. The civilians doff their hats of their own accord to all soldiers. In the little towns where we have had band concerts the children take[]off their hats when the Star Spangle[d] Banner is played.

I fear that I have written far to[o] much now. You must pardon me. If I had more time I could have made it shorter; but I have rambled on jotting down a few of the things I have seen and heard, and I trust they will be of some interest to you. If I have consumed too much space you may abridge this letter as you see fit for better use in your book. I enclose a few snap shots. Those of interest may be used in any way you wish. I am very sorry but most of my pictures of general interest are stored with my other property in France or are not yet developed.

I appreciate greatly the contact which the University has kept with its alumni and have enjoyed and benefit[t]ed by all the news and let-

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ters of encouragement sent out. I am sure that the school can be justly proud of it's [*sic*] part in this great emergency, and will move forward to greater heights of power for good and service to the state.

With kindest personal regards, I am

Sincerely your friend,
John O. Moseley



From: Virgle Glenn Wilhite⁹²

Y.M.C.A.
ON ACTIVE SERVICE
WITH THE
AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCES

Dec. 11, 1918

Stratton D. Brooks
Pres. Okla. Uni.

Your letter of the 6th of November reached me a few days ago. I appreciate very much the invitation to write of my experiences. I have inclination and will find time to write. As to my impressions during the war, I will not have much to say now because I feel that I can discuss them more freely when the censorship is completely removed. If circumstances permit I will try to send letters occasionally on various subjects.

Perhaps an account of a visit to the "front" would be of interest. Early Sunday morning the 17th of November, six days after the cessation of hostilities, Sgt. Leslie E. Salter and I started out to see the last front line.⁹³ Salter is our First Serge[a]nt, and is an exceptionally good one too. All the men have lots of confidence in his ability. Sgt. Salter and myself are the only members of the company from O.U. We derive a great deal of pleasure from talking over "old times" spent in the best institution in the best State of the best Nation on Earth.

Our organization was doing railroad work back of the lines at the time the fighting was discontinued, so we took advantage of the first opportunity to go "see what we could see." This entire country is infested with trenches[,] dug-outs[,] and barbed wire entanglements but



Leslie E. Salter, pictured in the 1922 Sooner Yearbook (Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma).

they become more complex as one approaches the old line—part of the famous system of Hindenburg fortifications.⁹⁴

From our barracks [*sic*] we walked about a mile and a half to a little town called ROYAUMEIX. Here we were fortunate en[o]ugh to catch a truck going our direction. BERNECOURT was the next town, about fifteen kilometers fa[r]ther on. This place was near the front for a long time and is in a state of ruins. A few kilometers beyond BERNECOURT is the village of FLIERY [*sic*].⁹⁵ There is nothing left of it but the name.

The ruins of the buildings are only a heap of powdered limestone. Like many other hamlets FLIERY was subject to cross-fire and from the looks of things both armies were doing a good job. Perhaps the villages in this section will be rebuilt in a more modern style. If so the destruction will prove a blessing. The archecture [*sic*] is very crude and the buildings were absolut[e]ly rotten with age. Many of the churches were constructed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. I remember passing the wreck of one church building that was dated 1627. The enemy seem to have made targets of the churches. The reason they said was that the French and Americans used the steeples for observation purposes.

Beyond FLIERY all the towns have been in the possession of the Germans. All the directions and signs are written in the German language. The names of the streets and even of the towns themselves were changed to German. They are mostly called for the military and political leaders of Germany and her allies. About twelve o[']clock we reached BENNY [*sic*] which is only a little way from the front of November 11, 1918.⁹⁶ From here we proceeded on foot. We were getting hungry by this time and you can imagine how glad we were to come upon a company of American Engineers eating dinner. They gave us a good feed and told their experiences. That morning they had beeb [*sic*] digging up German mines.

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About fifteen minutes walk brought us to the last battle field. On reaching the last American line a guard halted us so we did not get to see the scene of the Germans['] last stand. The guard said no one was allowed to pass until they were through "policing up", this phraze [*sic*] in the army is a very broad term and means any thing from gathering up match steem [sticks?] and cigarett[e]s to buryin[g] the dead. I don[']t know what kind of policing they were doing, but hardly think they were picking up German cigarett[e] snipes.

We were permitted to stroll about the American lines at will. It did not require a close observer to see that things had been rather exciting around there recently. The shell craters were fresh and the trees were newly tord [*sic*] by artillery fire. Fragments of high explosive shells could be gathered by the bushel. The ground w[a]s littered with abandoned equipment; rifles, bayonets, gass [*sic*] masks, tin derbies, raincoats, gloves ect. [*sic*]

On the side of a hill a little distance back of the lines a detachment of men had been encamped over night. Judging from appearances the enemy had got the range and began fireing [*sic*] on them while they were asleep. Everything indicated a hasty departure. Most of their equipment was left on the spot. I noticed a helmet that had been completely crushed by a piece of shell. If the fellow it belonged to had it on when that happened his troubles are all over now.

Things are shot up much worse on the old line than on the new. The country cover[e]d the last few weeks is not very badly devastated [*sic*]. The Germans were running to[o] fast to do much damage. I will describe one hill on the old front that is typical of the entire line. The trees along the road leading to it are stripped of limbs and even of bark for miles back. They are merily [*sic*] shattered stubs. Of course the roads were special objects of the artillery fire. The hill itself is a perfect chaos of shattered concrete trenches, shell torn earth and birbed [*sic*] wire. It somewhat resembles an orange peel looked at through a high powered magnifying glass. Scarsely [*sic*] a yard of the re-enforced concrete trenches is left entact [*sic*]. On the top of the hill is a groop [*sic*] of American graves. At the head of each is a plain wooden cross to which one of the man[']s identification disks is tacked. Not fifty feet distant is a similar group of German graves marked in like manner.

The roads all along the way were lined with the troops of the army of occupation moving to the German frontier. Another interesting and pathetic sight was the returning prisoners of war. They were poorly clad and thin but seemed to be in good spirits. The ones I saw were not in as bad condition as the news papers indicate.

On our return trip we were not so fortunate catching trucks as we were going, had to walk almost half of the way. About four o[']clock we

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*Lee Goff, pictured in the 1920 Sooner Yearbook
(Western History Collections, University of
Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma).*

got a free lunch at a Red Cross canteen. This was all the food we got until next day as it was to[o] late for supper when we reached camp. The day will always be regarded as one of the great events of my life.

With best wishes to the Faculty ans [sic] students of O.U. I am,

Very truly,
Virgle Glenn Wilhite
Pvt. Co., A, 47 Rgt, T.C.



From: Lee Goff⁹⁷

APO 778
Dec 27, 1918

My dear Dr. Brooks:-

It is certainly a pleasure to answer your thoughtful letter of Christmas, and to thank you for remembering the boys who have gone out from the University.

I have been fortunate in meeting quite a number of Oklahoma University men over here and we all join in the universal wish to return to the University as it was before the war.

Yours sincerely
Lee Goff



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The Chemistry Club photograph in the 1917 Sooner Yearbook. Wakefield Revelle is on the front row, fourth from the left (Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma).

From: Wakefield Revelle⁹⁸

Walters Okla. Feby. 1st, 1919

President Stratton D. Brooks
Norman
Okla.

Dear Sir:

Your letter of the 6th of Nov. last, addressed to my son Wakefield in France was returned to me yesterday unopened with a number of other letters to him.

He was killed by a French machine on the 2nd of December last by being run into while he was carrying supplies to the front.⁹⁹ I note your request of him & I take the liberty of sending you a copy of his last letter to me thinking this may serve your purpose.

It has been the greatest trial of my life to have to give up my boy—just when he was within a few months of graduating and looking forward to the time when he would begin to reap the fruits of 14 years of study & hard work, for he had worked his way partly through school and stood at the head of his class in Chemistry.

Truly yours
J. K. Revelle

Clichy, France¹⁰⁰ Nov. 26, 1918.

Dear Papa

One year ago today I held up my hand and said “I do” and now that the censorship is removed for this particular letter I will tell you briefly where I have been and what I have been doing.



Stratton D. Brooks, who served as the third president of the University of Oklahoma from 1912–23 (2012.201. B0109.0328, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).

We sailed from Hoboken on Jany., 15th last. We went to Halifax and lay in the harbor there a day or two while the Convoy was forming.¹⁰¹ Saw no subs or anything interesting until we left the convoy off the Irish Coast, and morning broke with the hills of Scotland dimly visible through the mist. We landed in Glasgow and went by rail to Winchester. We lived on English rations for three days, and pulled out from South Hampton [*sic*] for La Havre, rested a day & a half and left for Paris. Clichy is a suburb just outside the city walls and about 10 minutes ride on the tram from Paris proper. I have been working here since Feby. 7th. The squadron left here sometime last May, & left about 12 of us on detached service. For the most part I have been jug[g]ling boxes & making shipments for the front. Have been out of Paris only once & that was when I went on my leave to Rouen.¹⁰² I know this city better than lots of the French who have been here all their lives. Right now every one is asking “when are we going home” so I will leave the details until I get home which seems to be not so far distant as usual.

For the last two or three days I have been pushing a typewriter, & from present indications they will have me at it until the depot closes down.

Hero stuff is entirely out of my line. The only chance I have had to show bravery was one night when I was caught down town in an air raid. It was one of the biggest we have had. The Subways were of course out of commission until after it was over so I had to walk home. The cops were asking us to go down in the A[*] but we were brave. A

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little thing like an air raid was nothing to us. All the search lights were up & one of the heaviest barrages that I have ever heard. Shrapnel was an occasional close visitor but somehow we found the camp in the time allotted for that purpose.

This is about the sum of what your hero khaki boy has been up to. Hope you are all well. Write to me often

Affectionately
Wakefield Revelle
A.P.O. 702. A.S.S.D #1. A.E.F.
France

P.S. 11-29—Forgot to mention Big Bertha.¹⁰³ We were under fire from her off & on (mostly off) from March 24th, to sometime in September. We could time her shots & generally tell when the next one would light. Used to go out on the roof of the building & try to see the next one light. I never had that pleasure although some of the others did. King George was in town yesterday.¹⁰⁴ I excused myself from his company because there was an entertainment going on at the Palais DeGlace[,] the Y.M.C.A entertainment center in Paris.¹⁰⁵

If You Don't Go to War

ATTEND

The University of Oklahoma

The college men of the United States are enlisting in large numbers in various forms of military and naval service. This makes it all the more important that young men who do not go to war should enter the University and prepare themselves thoroughly so that when the war is over and the period of readjustment comes they will be able to give valuable service to the country.

Summer Session—June 4 to July 31. Credits earned at this session count toward regular university degrees.

Fall Semester—Opens September 18.

Send for summer bulletin or
general catalog to

ERRETT R. NEWBY, *Secretary-Registrar*

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

Norman, Oklahoma

This advertisement appeared on the last page of the 1917 Sooner Yearbook (Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma).

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Endnotes

* David W. Levy is David Ross Boyd Professor of American History, Emeritus, at the University of Oklahoma.

¹ Apparently, President Brooks wrote only to males—at least there is no response from any woman despite the fact that during the war many university women served as nurses, with the YMCA/YWCA or with the Red Cross.

² These figures were compiled for a 1923 master's thesis (Edwin K. Wood, "The University of Oklahoma in World War"). Another accounting was attempted for the university's 1919 yearbook, called that year *The Victory Sooner*. Roy Gittinger, in *The University of Oklahoma: A History of Fifty Years, 1892–1942* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1942), 106, 214–15, gives the number of faculty in service as thirty-eight and as forty-one.

³ For the details of how these men lost their lives or were wounded, see *The Victory Sooner* yearbook, 9–24.

⁴ In general, I have let the writers speak for themselves, adding bracketed editorial material only to clarify the meaning of a sentence or to indicate that a misspelling was that of the letter-writer.

⁵ Richard Lee Huntington (1896–1972) was born in Blackwell, Oklahoma. In 1917 he graduated from the University of Oklahoma with a bachelor's degree in chemistry. He would go on to earn an MA and a PhD from the University of Michigan in 1933 and 1934. After a decade working for private oil and gas companies in Tulsa, he joined the faculty at the University of Oklahoma, and from 1933 to 1955 he served as chair of the School of Chemical Engineering. He was an expert on the chemistry of oil and gas and published a book and around fifty papers on the subject. He retired from the university in 1966. During the war he began in a Water Supply Regiment, but soon became an expert in chemical warfare research. See Huntington's personnel file, Office of the Provost, Evans Hall, University of Oklahoma, and David W. Levy, *The University of Oklahoma, A History: Volume 2, 1917–1950* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015), 198.

⁶ Chinon is a picturesque medieval village in the Loire Valley, about two hundred miles southwest of Paris. For the geographic locations of this and other places mentioned in these letters, see any of the readily available atlases of France. Moreover, nearly all of these cities, towns, and villages now maintain websites that contain valuable historical information.

⁷ When it became apparent that the French were unable to supply the material needs (including food) of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF), the Service of Supplies (SOS), comprised of tens of thousands of noncombatant army personnel, was given the responsibility for providing everything from food and equipment to clothing and hospitals. Formed in February 1918, the SOS consolidated the responsibilities of various previous agencies. See Michael B. Barrett, "United States Army: Service of Supply," in Anne Cipriano Venzon, ed., *The United States in the First World War: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1995), 721–23.

⁸ Fort Riley, established before the Civil War, was located in north-central Kansas. During World War I, under the command of the famous General Leonard Wood, Fort Riley was greatly expanded and could undertake the training of as many as fifty thousand army recruits. Fort Dix, near Trenton, New Jersey, was brand new. Constructed in 1917, it served as a training and embarkation facility. For Fort Riley, see www.military-bases.com/fort-riley-army-base-in-riley-ks/. For Fort Dix, see www.dix.army.mil/About/History.aspx.

⁹ The German ship *SS Vaterland* was seized by American authorities at the outbreak of the war. It was christened the *Leviathan* in September 1917. A huge vessel of fifty-four thousand tons, it transported military personnel from the United States to Brest, France (see endnote 13), carrying more than ten thousand at a time. By the end of the

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war it had carried nearly 120,000 fighters across the Atlantic. The smaller (nineteen-thousand-ton) *SS Kaiser Wilhelm II* was renamed the *Agamemnon*, also in September 1917. The *Agamemnon* transported around thirty-eight thousand men to Europe during the course of the war. For information about the ships mentioned in these letters, see *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships* (Washington, DC: Naval Historical Center, 1991).

¹⁰ Hoboken, New Jersey, is directly across the Hudson River from New York City and part of the giant metropolitan complex. Hoboken became the chief embarkation point for troops heading to France. By the end of the war, around three million men had passed through the city on their way to the war.

¹¹ Triple deckers were bunk beds, three high.

¹² "That's war!"

¹³ Brest, a city of around seventy thousand, boasted an excellent harbor on the west coast of France. It became one of the main disembarkment sites for American troops landing in Europe. The US Navy established a base there for seaplanes. It was closed after the armistice.

¹⁴ Actually, the *North Carolina* was an armored cruiser.

¹⁵ There are no "Catalina Islands" in the Atlantic. Perhaps Huntington meant the Azores (see endnote 44) or the Canary Islands.

¹⁶ The collision between the *Von Steuben* and the *Agamemnon* occurred around 6 p.m. on November 9, 1917. The *Von Steuben* (formerly the *Kronprinz Wilhelm*), carrying 1,223 men, was on its first voyage under the American flag. The accident was more serious than Huntington indicates. Both ships lost men overboard, and men on both ships sustained injuries.

¹⁷ Many young Americans were struck and amused by the French boxcars that carried them to and from the front lines. They carried signs reading "Hommes 40, chevaux 8" (forty men or eight horses). In fact, in 1920 a group within the American Legion formed a club "La société des Quarante Hommes et Huit Chevaux," sometimes known as "the Forty and Eight."

¹⁸ Charles Harold McNeese of Oklahoma City first entered the University of Oklahoma in September 1913. His career as a student was interrupted when he enlisted for military service on the Mexican-Texas border (see endnote 19) and by subsequent service in World War I. McNeese returned to Norman in January 1919 and received his bachelor's degree in geology from the College of Arts and Sciences on June 8, 1920. McNeese's career at the university can be traced through the annual *University Catalogue* student listings during these years. He also appears in various *Sooner Yearbook* entries.

¹⁹ A series of incidents on the border between the United States and Mexico (including a raid into New Mexico by Pancho Villa in March 1916) led to ever-worsening relations and troop build-ups on both sides. McNeese refers to a major skirmish at Carrizal on June 21, 1916. It was only the dangerous situation in Europe that prevented President Wilson from asking for a declaration of war against Mexico. See Friedrich Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, the United States, and the Mexican Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

²⁰ This was five days before the formal declaration of war by the US Congress.

²¹ The seventeen-thousand-acre training camp at Leon Springs, Texas, had been in operation for about a decade. The Reserve Officers Training Corp (ROTC) program, designed to produce officers in ninety days (so-called ninety-day wonders), was begun in May 1917, and McNeese was a member of the first graduating class in August.

²² The *Prinz Eitel Friedrich*, originally a German mail carrier, was converted by Germany to military purposes at the outset of World War I. It was interned by the United States in 1917 and renamed the *USS DeKalb* (like the *Von Steuben*, named for a foreign-born hero of the American Revolution). The ship became a transport and was to convey more than eleven thousand fighting men across the Atlantic Ocean.

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²³ Like Brest to its north, Saint-Nazaire is a major harbor on France's west coast. During the war, the town and harbor's facilities were expanded and the port became an important disembarkation point for US troops.

²⁴ The British army established its headquarters in France in the Calais region, directly across the English Channel from Dover. As part of the sprawling complex, a military school was established at Neutchatel-Hardelot, southwest of the village of Calais and on the shore of the channel.

²⁵ Steenwerck, where the British had set up a divisional headquarters, is a small village a few miles to the west of the battlefield at Armentières. That town, located on the Belgian border, had experienced a notable battle back in 1914 as, early in the war, British and German forces "raced to the sea." But four years later, in April 1918, the Germans launched a notorious mustard gas attack on Armentières forcing the British to withdraw. The town was probably as well known because of the popular and bawdy British song, "Mademoiselle from Armentières."

²⁶ "Boche" was a derogatory name applied to German soldiers in World War I, like "Kraut" or "Hun."

²⁷ A Sam Browne belt consists of a wide belt at the waist, attached to a narrower strap that goes over the right shoulder. There were attempts to confine its use to commissioned officers, but others adopted the design.

²⁸ The gas attack that temporarily disabled McNeese occurred on November 5, 1917.

²⁹ Although the area along the Meuse River in northeastern France was relatively "quiet" when McNeese was stationed there, it had been the scene of fierce fighting at the start of the war and would soon become the scene of a great Allied offensive. In 1916, before American entry, the battle at nearby Verdun, between the German and French forces, resulted in hundreds of thousands of casualties on both sides. Then, two years later, in September 1918, combined French and American units launched an attack at Saint-Mihiel that forced a German retreat and was a prelude to the armistice in early November. McNeese's base at the village of Demange-aux-Eaux was about fifty-five miles from Verdun and thirty-three from Saint-Mihiel. For the principal military operations by American forces during the war, see Edward M. Coffman, *The War to End All Wars: The American Military Experience in World War I* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968); for particular battles and campaigns, see Venzon, ed., *The United States in the First World War*.

³⁰ The German offensive had begun a month earlier, on March 21. The attack reached "great proportions" partly because the surrender of Russia enabled Germany to move thousands of troops to the French front. The Allies, bolstered by increasing American arrivals and by transferring British troops from the Middle East, were able to stop the attack and launch a major counterattack of their own by the beginning of August.

³¹ Cantigny is a small village about five miles northwest of Montdidier. It is situated on a rise and was occupied by German soldiers. On the morning of May 28, 1918, 3,500 Americans of McNeese's First Division charged across "no man's land" in the face of machine gun fire and, in hand-to-hand combat, wrested the village from the enemy. The action, which was ordered by General John Pershing and planned by the young Lieutenant Colonel George C. Marshall, was the first test of American doughboys in the war.

³² The Battle of Soissons, July 18–22, 1918, was another tremendously costly operation. The town of about fourteen thousand lay about sixty miles north and east of Paris. Hoping to blunt the German offensive heading toward Paris, the Allied Supreme Commander, Ferdinand Foch, ordered French, British, and American troops into a counteroffensive. The operation cost the Allies 125,000 casualties, the Americans sustaining 12,000 of them. The German casualties numbered 168,000. The Allies succeeded in regaining most of the territory that had been lost in the German offensive in May.

³³ Forêt de Compiègne, located about thirty miles due west of Soissons, consisted of more than thirty-five thousand acres and is the third largest national forest in France.

It was the staging area for Americans preparing for the Battle of Soissons (see endnote 32). The place was to achieve a special importance because the armistice that eventually brought the fighting to an end in November 1918 was negotiated and signed in General Foch's railway car there.

³⁴ McNeese suffered a slight wound during this attack.

³⁵ There are several places called Dammartin and one called Dommartin in France, and it is hard to know to which McNeese is referring. Toul, on the outskirts of Nancy, is located due east of Paris and about 110 miles from the Rhine River.

³⁶ The flu pandemic of 1918 spread across the globe, killing many millions of men, women, and children. Estimates of the death toll vary, but probably somewhere between thirty and fifty million people succumbed to the disease. See Alfred Crosby, *America's Forgotten Pandemic: The Influenza of 1918* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), and John M. Barry, *The Great Influenza: The Epic Story of the Deadliest Plague in History* (New York: Viking Press, 2004). Jennifer D. Keene reports that "between September 1, 1918 and the Armistice on November 11, 1918, approximately 9,000 AEF soldiers and 23,000 stateside soldiers died of influenza" in *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 54–55. This nearly equaled the number of combat deaths (thirty-five thousand) suffered during the same period.

³⁷ William Miller Vernor, from Ardmore, entered the University of Oklahoma as an unclassified student in September 1912. He graduated with a degree in electrical engineering on June 8, 1916. While on the campus he was active in various professional organizations. A description of him in the *Sooner Yearbook* states: "Might have been a farmer, but he left the A and M: Variety's his spice of life—has twenty girls per sem[ester]." Vernor's history at the university can be reconstructed by using *University Catalogues* and entries in various *Sooner Yearbooks*.

³⁸ When the war began for America in April 1917, the US Navy had forty-two submarines, the most modern of them in the smaller K and L classes. These were 165 feet long and could carry barely enough fuel to cross the Atlantic—hence the need for a "tender" ship to accompany them. But submarines in the N and O classes, which still required tenders, were soon being built. The O class boats on which Vernor served cost \$550,000 each and had diesel engines. They were 172.3 feet long and had a crew of twenty-nine men, each with his own berth. These, in turn, were eventually surpassed by P and R class submarines. At the end of World War I, the United States was operating seventy-four submarines and had another fifty-nine under construction. Gary E. Weir, *Building American Submarines, 1914–1940* (Washington, DC: Naval Historical Center, 1991); and Edwin P. Hoyt, *Submarines at War: The History of American Silent Service* (New York: Stein and Day, 1983).

³⁹ Up the Delaware River, the boundary between Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

⁴⁰ Lewes, Delaware, is located at the southernmost part of Delaware Bay, directly across the water from Cape May, New Jersey.

⁴¹ Athwartship is from side-to-side of the vessel (i.e. at right angles from the line from front to rear of the ship).

⁴² The explosion on the O-5 occurred on October 6, 1918.

⁴³ "Dutchman" in this context means a German.

⁴⁴ The Azores are a group of nine islands about 850 miles to the west of Portugal.

⁴⁵ John Ohleyer Moseley (1893–1955), the son of an Oklahoma Presbyterian minister, had earned a BA from Austin College in Sherman, Texas (1912). After teaching high school Latin in Durant, Oklahoma, he undertook graduate work at the University of Oklahoma, receiving an MA in English in 1916. Moseley was a Rhodes Scholar, earning two degrees in Oxford. He graduated from the University of Oklahoma's Law School and had a distinguished career after the war. He taught Latin at the university for fifteen years. He later rose to the presidency of Central State College in Edmond (1935–39) and

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ended his career as president of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He was extremely active in his fraternity, Sigma Alpha Epsilon, and became its executive secretary after retirement. See Joseph A. Brandt, "John O. Moseley," *Sooner Magazine* 7 (February 1935): 102–03; and George C. McGhee, "John Ohleyer Moseley (1893–1955)," *American Oxonian*, 27–29.

⁴⁶ Moseley's Thirty-Second Division was part of the Army of Occupation that was stationed in Germany after the war. Marienhausen is located about forty-five miles across the Rhine and forty miles southeast of Bonn. See endnote 85.

⁴⁷ Camp MacArthur was only a few weeks old when Moseley (and eighteen thousand men from Wisconsin and Michigan) arrived. Located within the city of Waco, it accommodated forty-five thousand men during the war. In March 1919 the installation was closed and the land returned to the city of Waco.

⁴⁸ William George Haan (1863–1924) was a West Point graduate who had seen service in Cuba and the Philippines. When the war broke out, he was promoted to brigadier general and assigned to Camp MacArthur. By December he was a major general and in command of the Thirty-Second Division when it landed in France in February 1918. See Richard Kehrberg, "Haan, William George (1863–1924)," in Venzon, ed., *The United States in the First World War*, 267–68.

⁴⁹ The British ship *RMS Adriatic* had been, since 1907, a luxury passenger ship that sailed between Southampton or Liverpool and New York City. During the war it was converted into a troop transport. Once the war was over, it resumed its normal route until 1928.

⁵⁰ Liverpool, the great port of northern England, is around 225 miles north of the cathedral town of Winchester, which is just 25 miles from the embarkation port of Southampton on the English Channel.

⁵¹ See endnote 17.

⁵² This area in central and eastern France is about 330 miles southeast of Paris.

⁵³ *Vin blanc* is white wine.

⁵⁴ All letters written by soldiers were read by officers before being sent home. The censorship was justified by the desire to keep tactical and strategic information from falling into the hands of the enemy, although on occasion, some of the censors removed materials they regarded as bawdy or inappropriate. The censorship extended beyond the armistice and for some of the time while the peace treaty was under negotiation.

⁵⁵ Belfort, about 250 miles east of Paris, is located near the Swiss and German borders at the southern edge of the disputed territory of Alsace.

⁵⁶ Masevaux, a few miles north of Belfort, is in the heart of Alsace and about forty miles from Basel, Switzerland.

⁵⁷ Historically a part of France, Alsace was taken by Germany in 1870, and between then and 1918 the great majority of the population spoke High German.

⁵⁸ In response to a German attack (July 15, 1918), Ferdinand Foch (1851–1929), an experienced French soldier and now commander-in-chief of the Allied forces, ordered a counterattack on July 18 at Château Thierry. That battle, which was part of the Second Battle of the Marne, marked the start of advances that ended with the German surrender in November. Château Thierry, with a population of around 7,500, is located about sixty miles east of Paris and on the Marne River.

⁵⁹ Moseley's approach to the battlefield was from the southeast. Verberie and Pont-Sainte-Maxence are located about forty-five miles to the west of Château Thierry.

⁶⁰ "Annamites" was the name given by the French to the Vietnamese. Vietnam was a French possession until 1954, and numerous Vietnamese resided in France for economic and educational reasons.

⁶¹ The fiercely contested advance from Mezy-Moulins, across the Marne, and to the village of Fismes was about twenty-five miles.

⁶² *Poilus* is a common term for a French infantryman.

⁶³ John J. Pershing (1860–1948), after service in the Philippines and on the Mexican border, was named by President Wilson the commanding general of the AEF. He held that position throughout the course of the war. See Richard O'Connor, *Black Jack Pershing* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961); and Frank E. Vandiver, *Black Jack—The Life and Times of John J. Pershing*, 2 vols. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1977).

⁶⁴ Exodus 8:20–24.

⁶⁵ The epic Battle of Verdun had been fought between the French and the Germans throughout most of 1916. It resulted in nearly a million casualties, including around three hundred thousand deaths.

⁶⁶ Eugene Field's poem "Little Boy Blue" (1888) tells of the death of a young boy through the eyes of his abandoned toys.

⁶⁷ Charles Mangin (1866–1925) was the unpopular French general in command at the Soissons advance. That battle (July 18–22) was another at the start of the Second Battle of the Marne. See endnote 32.

⁶⁸ Moseley apparently confuses the Vietnamese with the Chinese.

⁶⁹ The medieval castle at Pierrefonds, about fifty-five miles northeast of Paris, had been built at the end of the fourteenth century by Louis, duc d'Orleans. It underwent an extensive restoration in the mid-nineteenth century.

⁷⁰ Vic-sur-Aisne is about eleven miles from Soissons, and about sixty miles from Juvisy.

⁷¹ *Scary William* was a cartoon strip, published from 1906 to 1914 by H. H. Knerr (better known for his *Katzenjammer Kids*) and continued by Joe Doyle until June 1918.

⁷² Saint-Dizier is about 130 miles east of Paris.

⁷³ Brienne-sur-Aisne in Fleurey-les-Lavoncourt is a few miles north of the city of Reims and about a hundred miles northeast of Paris.

⁷⁴ Newton D. Baker (1871–1937) had been the reforming mayor of Cleveland from 1911 to 1916. In March 1916 his longtime friend and fellow-progressive Woodrow Wilson named him secretary of war, a position he occupied until 1921. It was Baker who selected John J. Pershing to command the AEF. Baker was often mentioned as a presidential possibility, but never gained the nomination of the Democratic Party. See Daniel R. Beaver, *Newton D. Baker and the American War Effort, 1917–1919* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1966).

⁷⁵ About sixty miles east of Brienne-sur-Aisne, the Argonne Forest was the scene of the largest American effort in World War I. The offensive began on September 26, 1918, and lasted until the armistice on November 11. Around 1.2 million American men participated in the Meuse-Argonne campaign, and around 380 tanks and 840 planes were employed by the Americans during the offensive. The cost was heavy: more than twenty-seven thousand Americans died and more than ninety-five thousand were wounded before it was over.

⁷⁶ The Battle of Montfaucon (October 14–17) was one of the most significant of the Meuse-Argonne offensive. By the end of October, the Allies had gained ten miles and controlled the Argonne Forest.

⁷⁷ The *Tuscania* was another ocean liner that was converted to troop transport during the war. On February 5, 1918, the ship was attacked by a German submarine, and it sank four hours later. Although many of the 2,400 aboard were rescued by other ships of the convoy, around two hundred soldiers and thirty crew members were drowned.

⁷⁸ Epinonville is a small village two or three miles west of Montfaucon.

⁷⁹ "Cootie bath" refers to the use of insecticides to combat biting insects, principally lice. The term "cootie" seems to have originated in World War I.

⁸⁰ Dijon, a picturesque city of around seventy-six thousand during the war, is located in northeastern France in the Burgundy region.

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⁸¹ Decize, on the Loire River, is about 170 miles south of Paris.

⁸² The three cities are in central France along a route of around 150 miles.

⁸³ James Guthrie Harbord (1866–1947) had been in the army since 1889, and had served with Pershing during the Mexican campaign. During the European war, he served as Pershing's chief of staff, and was given command of troops at several crucial battles in mid-1918. In August he was placed in charge of the SOS (see endnote 7). After the war, Harbord became the head of the Radio Corporation of America (RCA). See Charles A. Endress, "Harbord, James Guthrie (1866–1947)," in Venzon, ed., *The United States in the First World War*, 272–75.

⁸⁴ Wilson arrived in Paris to a hero's welcome on December 13, a month after the cessation of hostilities. He came to negotiate the peace treaty with other Allied leaders. Wilson remained until mid-February 1919, but returned three weeks later and stayed until the Treaty of Versailles was completed in June. See Richard Stirner, *Woodrow Wilson and World War I: A Burden Too Great to Bear* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), chs. 5–6.

⁸⁵ Moseley's Thirty-Second Division was part of the newly created Third Army sent to occupy Germany after the war. To recognize its extraordinary role in the battles leading to the German surrender, the Thirty-Second Division was chosen to head the march into the Rhineland. Pausing at Treves (Trier, Germany), the Army of Occupation (250,000 men) took control of the territory around Coblenz, remaining until April 1919. Marienhausen, where Moseley was stationed, is about twenty-five miles north of Coblenz. For the Thirty-Second Division in World War I, see Richard Kehrberg, "United States Army: 32d Division," in Venzon, ed., *The United States in the First World War*, 643–46.

⁸⁶ Puderbach is a village about six miles from Marienhausen.

⁸⁷ Former President Theodore Roosevelt died two weeks earlier, on January 5, at Sagamore Hill, his home.

⁸⁸ After a long career in the German navy, Alfred von Tirpitz (1849–1930) was named Grand Admiral in 1911. He is generally credited with both the build-up of the German fleet, which alarmed the British, and the policy of unrestricted submarine warfare, which caused the United States to enter the war. See Patrick J. Kelly, *Tirpitz and the Imperial German Navy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011).

⁸⁹ See endnote 77.

⁹⁰ Moseley probably means Selter, a small village forty miles east of Coblenz.

⁹¹ The historic city of Coblenz, with a population of fewer than sixty thousand at the time, is located at the confluence of the Rhine and the Moselle Rivers.

⁹² Virgle Glenn Wilhite (whose name occasionally appears as Glenn V. Wilhite) was from Altus. He enlisted on February 25, 1918, and was first in the Engineers, but later transferred to the Transportation Corps. After the armistice, Wilhite studied for a short while at the University of Toulouse in France. He returned to Norman and finished his BA in the College of Arts and Sciences, graduating on June 7, 1921.

⁹³ Leslie Ernest Salter (1896–1964) was from Alva. He served in both the navy and the army during the Great War. He was part of the Army of Occupation (serving in the regimental band) before being discharged March 30, 1919. Salter graduated from law school at the university. While still a student he was elected to the state legislature in 1920, and he played an active part in the impeachment of Governor John Walton in 1923. Salter went on to a notable career as a lawyer, a government prosecutor, and then as a judge. After moving to the Chicago area in the late 1930s, he tried a number of important and well-publicized cases. For a brief summary of his career, see *Who Was Who in America, Volume 4 (1961–1968)* (Chicago: Marquis Who's Who, 1968).

⁹⁴ Called the Siegfried Line by the Germans and the Hindenburg Line by the Allies (after Paul von Hindenburg, the leading German general), the line was a string of defensive trenches and fortifications begun in late September 1916 as a precaution for

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the possibility of the need to retreat. The line stretched from the North Sea near the Belgian border southward through eastern France. The Allies were finally able to break through the line in late September 1918.

⁹⁵ Located along the same road, the distance between northernmost Flirey and southernmost Royaumeix is less than eight miles. The villages are about forty miles south of Metz and about seventy miles west of the closest German border.

⁹⁶ Benney is about forty miles south of Flirey.

⁹⁷ Lee B. Goff was from Oklahoma City. He enrolled at the university in the fall of 1915, and enlisted a week after America entered the war. He was commissioned a second lieutenant in August 1918, fought at Château Thierry, and was part of the Army of Occupation after the armistice.

⁹⁸ Wakefield Revelle of Walters, Oklahoma, first enrolled at the university in the fall of 1916. On December 1, 1918, three weeks after the end of the war, he was stationed in Paris when a vehicle in which he and several other men were riding in order to deliver supplies to the front lines was struck by another car. He died seventeen hours later in a French hospital.

⁹⁹ "Machine" in this case means "automobile."

¹⁰⁰ Clichy is a suburb northwest of Paris and on the Seine River.

¹⁰¹ Halifax, on the east coast of Nova Scotia, is the capital of the province.

¹⁰² Rouen is the famous cathedral city on the Seine in Normandy, about halfway between Le Havre and Paris.

¹⁰³ Big Bertha was the name given to a class of huge Krupp-designed howitzers. They could fire immense shells (420 mm) as far as nine miles and were used to destroy Allied towns and emplacements.

¹⁰⁴ King George V (1865–1936), grandfather of Queen Elizabeth II, ruled England from 1910 until his death.

¹⁰⁵ Built in 1876 as a grand concert and entertainment center on the Rue du Faubourg du Temple in the heart of Paris, the Palais des Glaces still exists.