Stanislaus County and World War I
Draft, Training, Combat, Casualties, and Letters
Stanislaus County’s Fighting Men

World War I in Stanislaus County Hearts and Minds

Over Here and Over There: Part 3

The San Joaquin Valley Veterans, held their 14th Annual Encampment in Turlock on October 22, 1914. They congregated once more and celebrated their military service. Present were Federal and Confederate Civil War veterans and veterans from the Spanish-American War of 1898. The Civil War had ended 49 years before, with many of those veterans in their 60’s and 70’s. The Turlock Journal commented on the day’s event that began at 8 a.m.: “The day was a perfect one, as though the gods had decided to show their best favors to the men whom we all reverence and to whom we would do honor on this occasion. The air was crisp, and the old veterans stepped gaily, rejoicing in the opportunity to again assemble and live over in memory those stirring times [Civil War] when the nation’s fate was in their hands.” There was music, speeches, and good food.

World War I Begins

At this time, the war in Europe was raging, with the U.S. remaining a neutral nation until April 6, 1917. On that date, it declared war on Germany and its allies. Each generation has its own war it seems, because humankind for whatever reason must experience its great unforgettable crusade. But when a war ends, no one wants another one, hoping that the sharing of grief with subsequent generations will act as a deterrent. But the message normally falls on deaf ears, with the cry for war being heard once more. The cause of war is often territorial, the want of more land or the protection of one’s turf. With democracies, such as the U.S., the protection of freedom from tyranny is the common cause. The autocratic regime of Germany, with its aggressive militant behavior, was a serious threat to democracies. Americans indirectly supported the British and French against Germany, until the U.S. was brought into the fray by Germany’s unbridled sinking of ships in the Atlantic.

Since the U.S. is a country where the people govern, grassroots form the platform of activity. It is therefore the nature and custom of Americans to come together to protect their land and their sacred freedom. Americans are peace-loving, but democracies need militaries for protection, so armed forces are formed. America had a track record of being slow to prepare for war, which was again the case for World War I. When the war had been in progress for over a year, at times the U.S. appeared it would enter the conflict. There was saber-rattling across the nation, including Stanislaus County. Local citizens received war information daily in newspapers, telegrams, letters, and from travelers. From this, county citizens formed opinions, debated options, and became sensitive to war needs.

In December 1915, some Turlockers felt called upon to form a civilian militia to prepare its young men for war. The company was known as the Maccabees Rifles, headed by “Captain” L.M. Farrell. The plan was to drill for 60 days, without rifles, and to have military instruction on combat activity. The company was named for the Maccabees of the Bible, who were Judea rebels that fought against Roman rule and Greek influence for 40 years, 174-134 BC. In London in 1878 and later in Canada and U.S., a fraternal organization was formed known as the Knights of the Maccabees, having connections with insurance companies to provide financial security to its members. The lodge had a military structure, a chain of command, and with it, military discipline and training. Out of this demeanor and in view of the European war, the Turlock chapter of Maccabees, as with other chapters, wanted to prepare its members for war. It was a proactive response to a nation that was slow to militarize for war.

Part of the reason for U.S. slowness was its geographical placement, being protected by two oceans and far away from European squabbles. There was no need for America to be prepared more than defensively to meet any bellicose threat; consequently, the U.S. maintained its normal course of neutrality. After all, Americans freed themselves from European politics with the Revolutionary War and then concentrated only on its hemispheric problems by a policy known as the Monroe Doctrine.

Unfortunately, a complete story of Stanislaus County and World War I will suffer, because of the lack of newspaper files from January 1917 through March 1918. Since this article is on the military aspect of the county’s involvement in the war, there will be a serious gap, especially on America’s military planning, preparation, and early implementation of forces; however, it took nearly a year before U.S. troops were actually in combat. The article begins with April 1918 when Stanislaus County was undergoing its “Second Draft” call.

Boys off to War

A Modesto Morning Herald article of April 4, 1918 noted that 800,000 men had been drafted since the U.S. declared war, and through its Second Draft wanted to add 150,000 more by the end of the month. Stanislaus County began the second round by sending 59 of its “boys” to boot camp.

The Herald described the events surrounding their departure in an article headlined: “Stanislaus Boys Entrain for
Camp.” The drafted men met with the Stanislaus County Exemption Board (Draft Board) in the morning for roll call, with the board appointing one of them to have the responsibility for their safe arrival at Fort Lewis in Tacoma. The new draftees also received words of advice and were provided with information on Army expectations. Then there was lunch provided by the Red Cross, where the draftees sat with local businessmen. Patriotic music was performed by the Modesto Band, and Mrs. W.R. Brace sang solos. At the Southern Pacific Railroad depot, there were tearful goodbyes, with the newspaper characterizing the draftees as “a happy group of Boche Bouncers.” Everyone from the Exemption Board members to the young men themselves were enthusiastic about winning the war and doing their bit for their country.

On April 9, 1918, county draftees sent a letter to the Herald from Fort Lewis exclaiming, “We are enjoying ourselves immensely.” Indeed they were. With the letter they enclosed a chow hall menu, listing roast turkey, gravy, dressing, candied sweet potatoes, peas, salad, and apple pie a la mode. They had been to the Liberty Theater on base and heard music played by the “Headquarters Orchestra.” They were assigned to Company F, 34th Infantry for their training.

Mail service to the Army Expeditionary Forces (A.E.F.) in France was an enormous and complex operation. Overseas postal employee, James E. Brown, wrote a letter to a friend at the Herald, which was published in the newspaper on April 9, 1918. He remarked that there were 120 employees stationed in 30 different facilities in France. It took 21 days for him to receive an issue of the Herald to give a sense of delivery speed. To give an example of logistics, a U.S. ship brought 27,000 sacks of mail, taking 50 hours to unload. Then the sacks were transferred to trucks and taken to the postal distribution center. The mail was sorted by an A.E.F. regiment and loaded into railroad cars, with 20 cars departing each day. The trains delivered the mail to specific depots, where it was dispersed to the regiments.

Draft-eligible men could receive exemptions from military service. In Stanislaus County most exemptions were granted for agriculturally-related occupations. To receive an exemption, the applicant had to appear before the Stanislaus County Exemption Board with witnesses and signed affidavits for proof of his livelihood. A board member remarked to a Herald reporter that there must be no doubt about one’s qualifications to be exempted. He warned that should a neighbor, friend or relative provide false statements to the board, they were subject to arrest and stiff sentencing. The board member stressed that such a crime was a serious one, where “recently several guilty parties had been apprehended and received severe jail sentences.” Should an agricultural worker change occupations, the board needed to be notified immediately.

The Military Bureau at the University of California reminded students in a newspaper article on April 18, 1918 that they did not have to wait for a draft notice to come, but could enter military service by volunteering. It listed a number of occupational areas that needed educated and skilled men. The U.S. War Department called for 12,000 men on April 21st to enlist before receiving their draft notice, because there was a critical need to fill military positions. Desperately wanted were “auto mechanics, boat builders, bricklayers, carpenters, chemists, cobblers, cooks, draftsmen, engineers, electricians, construction foremen, and railroad workers.” The County Exemption Board asked that anyone wanting to enlist to contact it prior to April 29th.

A Riverbank draftee, Rush E. Carlile, arrived at Fort Lewis on October 4, 1917, but disappeared while on a four-day furlough on January 25, 1918. He had been attached to 348th Machine Gun Company at the time. Carlile returned home, telling his parents that he had been discharged. He was arrested by police after receiving word that he was a deserter. He was transported to San Francisco, where he was given a military hearing, telling the court that “he was injured in an accident and was not responsible.” The excuse was unacceptable, with the court sentencing him to 25 years of hard labor.

The local National Guard detachment stationed in Modesto, known as the “Sunshine Unit,” received word in April 1918 from the U.S. War Department ordering all National Guard units to be transferred to federal service. There was a problem though. The National Guard was the responsibility of state government and not subject to federal authority. Telegrams were sent to California Governor Stevens by the many National Guard units in the state, urging him to rescind the War Department’s order.

The Herald published an Associated Press article on April 23, 1918, concerning the bravery of an American soldier recovering from shrapnel wounds in a military hospital in France. The wounded man asked the reporter to tell those at home that American forces were just beginning! It had taken nearly a year to draft, train, and ship A.E.F units to France for combat. The wounded soldier remarked that “It was fine to our men to go to the Huns. All of us thought baseball was the great American game, have changed our minds. There is only one game to keep the American flag flying – that is to kill the Huns. I got several before they got me.”

More Draftees Off to Camp

On April 29, 1918, 16 recruits departed from Modesto’s train depot for Fort McDowell on Angel Island in San Francisco Bay. Another 52 left for Fort Lewis the same day after much hoopla. The Herald described the scene: “With waving flags, waving handkerchiefs, waving hats, waving hands and gallant cheers, the brave lads of Modesto and vicinity were given farewell greetings.
by a surging crowd of men and women, fathers, mothers, sisters, and brothers who filled the platform of the Southern Pacific station.”

Three days later, more draftees left for Fort McDowell and Fort Lewis. The following list contains their last names and draft numbers: Avila (2323), Balbiani (2285), Bradbury (1960), Brown (3847), Bunch (2390), Burwick (2380), Carmichael (2269), Convey (2377), Da Ponta (2385), Houston (2260), Huff (2450), Irwin (2426), Lenzie (2071), Lukins (2341), Mondo (2335), Mooradian (2303), Moore (2445), Owens (2421), Plant (2225), Powell (2342), Russell (2299), Serpa (2442), Shallman (2300), Stribling (2326), Waite (2307), Ward (2399), and Woodworth (3355).

Tragedy struck the Muncy household in Westport on May 1, 1918. Nancy M. Muncy, after months of worrying about her draft-eligible son, took her own life with strychnine. Her husband found her and said that Nancy had been “acting strangely, worrying, and fretting” about what could happen to their son Marion. He was drafted and scheduled to leave for the Army shortly. She had been concerned for months about the war and was unwell because of it.

The U.S. government expected to have 1.5 million soldiers in France by the end of 1918, with 500,000 being added in 1919. On May 22, 1918, 28 Stanislaus County draftees left by train to Fort McDowell. They were part of 1,500 draft in California. Aboard the same train were 76 draftees from Fresno County, six from Madera County, eight from Merced County, ten from San Joaquin County, and 11 from Tuolumne County. Those leaving from Stanislaus County had assembled earlier at the First Methodist Church, where they received instructions and advice on military wages and insurance. Representatives from the Red Cross and Y.M.C.A. addressed the draftees as well and afterwards were served lunch by Spanish-American War veterans.

Nurses Needed

U.S. Army Surgeon General Gorgas asked the American Red Cross to recruit 15,000 additional certified nurses for its Army and Navy Nursing Corps by January 1, 1919. It already had 10,000, but with Americans finally in combat, heavy casualties were mounting. Once they joined the Nursing Corps, they were sent to military nursing schools and specifically trained for service in Army hospitals. The call was directed towards younger nurses, who were recent high school graduates and college students. There were 60,000 eligible nurses in the U.S., with some in retirement or married and not employed. Nursing was considered to be important war service, women doing their duty, being just as important to the country’s war effort as the combat men that they served.

A letter was received by the County Exemption Board from Army recruit Heywood Brooks at Fort Lewis, informing it that many of the county’s recruits were in the 91st Division. It consisted of 30,000 soldiers and was scheduled to depart for overseas service very soon. Brooks was a quartermaster in his company.

National Guard’s Part

Capt. James T. Townson, commanding officer of Modesto’s National Guard unit, announced that Lt. Col. Herbert R. Fay of the California National Guard would be inducting 20 local draftees into the National Guard. These men were among 117 scheduled for Army boot camp on June 24, 1918. They joined the National Guard to receive military training prior to boot camp. Modesto was the first California guard unit to provide such a program. Their National Guard membership expired immediately once they joined the Army.

The U.S. War Department revised its draft classification and announced the new schedule on June 13, 1918. The reclassification was done, because more men were needed in Class One to meet the demands of the war. A large number of married men without dependent responsibility in Stanislaus County were affected by this change. Men with dependent children, siblings, and parents would remain in Classes Two, Three, and Four. Also, an investigation was launched by the Army concerning conscientious objectors and men court martialed for disobeying orders. The purpose was to activate these men to fill non-combat positions.

A member of Modesto’s National Guard, who had been drafted, sent a telegram from the Bakersfield train depot to the County Exemption Board on June 28, 1918. Edmund Beck of Modesto telegraphed: “Arrived in Bakersfield O.K. Boys in good spirits. We wish to thank the Board and all who participated in our farewell, especially the Trade Association for the smokes and fruit they gave, which we all enjoyed very much.” Beck was in charge of a Stanislaus County group on its way to Camp Kearny in San Diego. He was appointed by the Exemption Board to the leadership role, because of his National Guard training.

Draft Lottery and Slackers

In Washington, D.C. on June 28, 1918, draft registration numbers were drawn by War Department representatives from a large glass bowl for the purpose of determining the order in which
800,000 registered men would be drafted. Ranges of registration numbers were typed on 1,200 slips and placed into capsules for the drawing. It took two hours to complete, with these Stanislaus County men drawn to be drafted first: Eric Jurger, Newman; Andrew Crocco, Crows Landing; Louis Mitchell, Modesto; Henry Monroe, Oakdale; George Franklin, Knights Ferry; Hanes Hornbeck, Newman; Clare Shields, Turlock; Marian Mello, Modesto; Jose Benedict, Hughson; Robert Portico, Modesto; Matt Hedman, Turlock; Fred Converse, La Grange; Ladislado Mepandere, Modesto; John Domingos, Modesto; Manuel Cuerreria, Crows Landing; Dwight Bennett, Denair; Charles Worrell, Ceres; Frank Totman, Patterson; Carl Woody, Empire; and Olaf Erickson, Waterford.

There were draft evaders in the county who circulated among isolated ranches to avoid being arrested by federal investigators. They had been given draft exemptions, because they were permanent farm employees, but once they were released from their jobs, they were immediately eligible for the Army. A Herald article remarked that the “slackers” were always found out, and that it was merely a matter of time in each case until the evader was caught.”

A group of 22 county men were sent to Los Angeles in June 1918 to receive polytechnic high school instruction paid by the government. A few that went were: James McCabe, Glenn Redding, Lester Merman, David Erickson, Frank Freitas, Carl Pershing, and Elmer Zilbarth. They were to be trained in industrial skills needed in the military.

More Stanislaus County draftees left Modesto on July 17, 1918, after roll call and short instruction on military drill by Modesto National Guard Capt. A.C. Walsh. George S. Henry, a member of the County Exemption Board, addressed the young inductees on what to expect. There were 31 men in the group, who left by train for Fort McDowell, which included: Ora Oyer, James Stagg, Antonio Gonsalves, Jose Reis, Ted Metveldt, Angelo Basso, Axel Holmberg, Constantine Christordorlis, Fred Terrill, Henry Ginter, and Elvin Griswold.

Killed in Action

On July 16, 1918, word was received that Turlock Marine Rex W. Ish had been killed in action (KIA) in France on July 15th. He was one of the first county men to enlist in the military, joining in April 1917. He was from Palo Alto but had worked at Osborn and Sons store, managing the furniture department. He had been active in civic affairs, being “one of the most popular young men in business and social circles,” according to a Herald article. Turlock officials placed a gold star, representing KIA, on the city’s military service flag. There were over 200 blue stars on the flag for Turlockers then serving in the military. Turlock’s American Legion Post would be named for Ish.

Moving Forward

It was learned on July 18, 1918 that the Army had abandoned trench warfare training, now stressing open field techniques. U.S. forces now engaged in France were on the attack, moving forward quickly, not wanting to become bogged down in trench warfare. Part of the open field training was instruction on pursuing and managing a retreating enemy, another common occurrence on the battlefield in France.

On July 19, 1918, an Army airplane from Mather Field in Sacramento circled Modesto as part of “Instruction Day” for draftees. The aircraft thrilled everyone with its maneuvers, some of which were being used over the battlefields in France. Instruction was given at the Presbyterian Church in Modesto to a group 234 Stanislaus County draftees on military hygiene, war camp activities, being a soldier, and business issues of salary and insurance.

On July 23rd, 68 Stanislaus County draftees left for Fort Lewis, departing by train at 3:15 p.m. They joined 1,200 from California, Utah, and Washington, arriving at the Tacoma camp. California counties of Fresno, Kings, San Joaquin, and Stanislaus alone sent 450 draftees. A week later, Fort Lewis reported that there were 86 cases of illness out of the 28,348 men in training there. Flu accounted for 62 cases, measles 8, mumps 6, pneumonia 9, and scarlet fever 1.

Modesto Mayor D.W. Morris wrote a letter to Major Reuben H. Fleet, Officer in Charge of Flying at Mather Field in Sacramento, asking him to consider Modesto as a possible landing field for Army aircraft. The town was so taken by the aerial exhibition of July 19, 1918 that it wanted more contact with the infant airplane industry. Morris received a letter from Major Fleet telling him to prepare a field and his squadron would test it. He requested that a “T” in limestone be drawn on the field and all holes and small depressions be covered with dirt. Two aircraft were sent to Modesto to test the field, but flew by, landing instead on a Turlock field, damaging one airplane. Mistaking Turlock for Modesto was attributed to the fact that all valley towns looked the same from the air.

Modesto Army recruiter Sgt. C.P. Walker was disappointed with the city because it had not met its monthly 12-man quota for volunteer enlistments. He was not the only one disappointed, because Fort Lewis fell 300 men short of its quota. The problem was blamed on local draft boards not having enough Class One men to send. Some boards had taken to sending men to meet their quotas, who were unqualified physically. Once at Fort Lewis, they failed the final physical exams and were sent back. The return rate was over 12 percent. Another reason for the shortfall was draftees took to jumping train on their way to Tacoma. It was reported that 25 draftees from Ukiah City, Mendocino County, systematically jumped from the train, beginning in northern
California through southern Oregon. They were now deserters, a serious military offense.

**Over There**

Reports arrived on August 1, 1918 that the Army’s 42nd Division, known as California’s “Rainbow Division,” composed of numerous National Guardsmen, “had made good their positions against the enemy’s best fighting units. They have met, out-fought and forced backwards by their fierce ardor, picked Prussian and Bavarian divisions.” The Herald article noted that they were ordered to hold the Oureq line at all costs.

Of the 15,000 nurses needed by the American Red Cross, California was responsible for supplying 1,000, ages 19 to 35. A group of more than 50 young women gathered at Modesto’s Presbyterian Church on August 1, 1918 to hear about the Army’s Nursing Corps. Four in attendance registered for the “student nurse reserve program”: Grace Lyman, Alice Lyman, Hazel Campbell, and Blanche Gaberel. They would enroll in a one-year nursing program at one of these campuses: Mills College, Stanford University or University of California, Berkeley.

An editorial in the August 7, 1918 issue of the Herald argued that there was no need to change the current law drafting men from 21 to 31. This was in response to a bill before Congress changing ages to 18 to 45. The editor felt a change wasn’t needed currently, but if the war was prolonged, then it might be necessary. He wrote that the general consensus was to place the draft age at 20 to 40, with 20 years olds not having combat assignments. Certainly, the writer declared, Germany drafted teenagers beginning at 17, but it was desperate, having lost thousands in the war, and besides, Germans were taught military discipline and skills through their school years. The editorial ended with this comment: “Certainly the bill’s sponsors haven’t fully considered the sentiment of the mothers and sisters of the country in regard to drafting boys of 18.”

In fall 1917, the Herald launched a campaign to raise funds to send “tobacco kits” to Stanislaus County military men overseas. As part of the project, steeplejack P.J. Lithicum scaled a Modesto bank building to draw the public’s attention to the project, while T.C. Hocking and his daughter Constance addressed the public. The “tobacco kits” contained cigarettes, cigars, pipes, and pipe tobacco. The boys began receiving their kits in the summer of 1918, sending postcards of appreciation to the newspaper. These are some of the comments from the postcards published in the Herald on August 7, 1918: “Want to express my thanks. We’d had nothing to smoke for two weeks, so you can imagine how we appreciated the tobacco, and Tobacco is the steam that runs things around here and all the boys are puffing now. This is the first we have had for one month.” The next day the Herald printed more. Pvt. H.H. Denning wrote: “If there was a life-saver it sure was one. Why it just put a smile all over my face to see that good American tobacco arrived.” Pvt. J.J. Mussett commented that “We had been without a smoke for a long time. Only a man knows what a smoke means to a fellow several thousand miles from home.” Herbert C. Hutchins exclaimed passionately: “This feast of real American generosity and thoughtfulness came like a bolt out of a clear sky. We are located in a sector where tobacco is as scarce as hen’s teeth and canteens unheard of, so you can see this tobacco was a treat.”

**Draft Continues**

August 8, 1918 was a typical sendoff day in Modesto, with 71 draftees meeting in the courthouse square and hearing speeches and music. This group embarked for three different camps: 30 to Fort Lewis, 35 to Camp Fremont, and six to Fort McDowell. During the week of August 22, 1918, 7,900 draftees arrived at Fort Lewis for training. California sent 2,372, Colorado 800, Idaho 500, Montana 1,000, North Dakota 2,375, Oregon 1,000, Utah 1,125, and Washington 1,400.

A call was issued for all those men who turned 21 years in June through August 1918 to register for the draft on August 24, 1918. On that date the county had four registration centers: Crows Landing, Modesto, Oakdale, and Turlock. Once registered the names were placed in a bowl and drawn to form the order in which they would be drafted. Near the top of the list were: Frad Nishimoto, Turlock; Hans Krogh, Jr., Newman; Paul Walker, Hughson; Albert Furtado, Modesto; and John Light, Knights Ferry.

**Wounded in Action**

Notice arrived on August 17, 1918 that Kahn Dervishian of Turlock had been severely wounded in combat in France. He was on a list of 98 American military men who were recently wounded. There had been a substantial increase in the wounded now that the U.S. was heavily involved in military operations in France. The American Red Cross had 8,000 nurses in France, with another 8,000 desperately needed. In order to meet this emergency, Red Cross called for nurses who had experience but weren’t certified. In July 1918, 2,600 joined.

It was reported in the Herald on August 23, 1918 that Roy I. Parker of Modesto had been wounded in combat in France on August 5, 1918. The severity of the injury was unknown. A newspaper reporter visited Parker’s family, who lived on Rose Avenue, writing: “There were tears in the eyes of the mother, and there was a hitch in her voice; the anxiety that she must necessarily feel when there was an uncertainty about the extent of the injury was to be seen – but above and aside from it all one could not fail to notice the mother’s pride in a son who had risked his life in the
defense of right and humanity.” Parker was among 347 California military personnel listed as casualties by the Army during a week of fierce fighting in France. Of that number “76 were killed in action; 33 missing in action; 108 wounded severely; 24 died from wounds; 24 died from accidents and other causes; 12 died from disease; and 92 were wounded, degree was undetermined.” The following week, word was received that an Oakdale soldier, Louis D. Cutter, had been wounded. His wife was notified that he suffered a knee injury and was able to walk, with full recovery expected.

Some Happiness and Sadness

There was a report from Fort Lewis that a military judge had ruled that a wife could not change her mind when she waved her husband’s draft exemption. A Seattle wife, with three young children, had signed a waver, allowing her husband to be drafted. She did this because she wanted “to frighten her husband in an attempt to make him pay more attention to his home.” She appealed the waver once he had been drafted, but the military judge refused the appeal. She would receive the military’s allotment for wives with children of $52.50 a month, while he served.

Billy Benson of Patterson was serving in France on his birthday. Not wanting others at home to miss out on the occasion, he asked his mother to fix her famous chicken dinner and invite friends and relatives to attend. He wanted ice cream and “sunshine cake” served for dessert. A Herald reporter visited the Las Palmas Avenue residence on August 30, 1918, writing, “It was a jolly little party that gathered around the table, and everyone did full justice to the feast.”

There was joy in Billy Benson’s home, but at Capt. Edgar H. Annear’s home, there was sadness on August 30th. Capt. Annear had finished serving in France and was on his way to Modesto, contracting the flu in New York City, dying there at the age of 33. His wife Margaret Annear was traveling to the East, when she received word of her husband’s death and returned to Modesto. She may have been on her way to see him in New York, but that is not mentioned in the Herald article. Capt. Annear had been Stanislaus County Surveyor, responsible for Modesto’s 7th Street Bridge. The reporter commented, “The news of Captain Annear’s death caused a great wave of sorrow to sweep over the city. No man in public life was more loved in Stanislaus County. Flags in the city were flying at half-mast in memory of the departed hero.” Margaret Annear had just become Deputy County Superintendent of Schools.

Youth and War

There was a new California law that required “military training and physical culture” taught to intermediate and high school boys and girls in public schools. Ceres schools were already prepared to embark on such a program when classes began on September 23, 1918. Spanish-American War veteran and Ceres resident, Capt. Lou L. Clemens, had been given the responsibility for this training. The new law characterized the prevalent American attitude that had arisen from the war, i.e., being prepared to protect the nation. In a sense this direction went counter to American newspaper editorials and news articles that criticized and condemned Prussian-like military training given Germany’s young. A Herald article remarked that military-like instruction “could only produced bellicose attitudes in impressionable youth.”

A train carrying draftees to Camp Kearny in San Diego stopped at Newman on September 6, 1918, where some 50 recruits from Oakland became inebriated at local saloons. They purchased packaged liquor as well but were ordered to dispose of the bottles before boarding the train. Some drunken lads defaced railroad equipment and a few nearly missed the train, boarding it as it was pulling away from the station. Two Newman saloons were singled out as the culprits for selling too much liquor to the young draftees. Local action was taken, closing the town’s saloons temporarily, while waiting the federal government’s intervention in the matter.

Serve, Exempt, Evade

Post cards were received on September 8, 1918 by Modesto Fire Chief George Wallace from two former departmental employees. James Olsen wrote from France, where he was serving as a member of the 5th Trench Mortar Battery, Fourth Division, A.E.F. The other post card was from J.C. Collins, who had been a volunteer fireman and employed as a manager at Borden’s Creamery and now part of the 143rd Field Artillery.

The U.S. War Industries Board announced on September 10, 1918 that local exemption boards could now decide independently what local industry was necessary to the war effort and grant those employees draft exemptions. The practice had been to only exempt those who were employed by industries in the War Industries Board’s list. The board’s directive read that “in granting deferred classifications, they must satisfy that the industry is necessary and the individual registrant is essential to the industry.” Repatriated British P.O.W.’s arriving in The Hague, Belgium were in “extremely serious condition,” according to a Herald article of September 10, 1918. They came from the German P.O.W. camp in Crossen, Germany, where they, along with American prisoners, were brutally treated by the camp’s military personnel. They told of being “compelled to work on the railroad, carrying heavy rails and pushing trucks for twelve hours at a stretch. Their food consisted of German soup and one slice of bread. If they failed to get up in the morning quickly when Germans called them to work, they were prodded with bayonets and hit with rifle butts.” Another camp at Soltau, Germany was singled out as well for its inhumane treatment of P.O.W.’s.
It was reported on September 11, 1918 that the county had registered 5,912 men for the draft on August 24th. Of that number 4,983 were American born, 395 naturalized, 141 naturalized by father’s naturalization, and 393 aliens. Of the alien group, 276 had received citizenship papers to become naturalized American citizens. Of the foreign born there were: 27 Austrians, 1 Bulgarian, 33 Germans, 259 Italians, 133 Mexicans, 388 Portuguese, 60 Swedes, 89 Swiss, and 8 Turks. There were 23 who indicated they were Negro and 13 American Indians. Of the 5,912 registrants, 2,983 were from county towns, with Ceres having 103, Modesto 1,244, Newman 223, Oakdale 390, Patterson 299, Riverbank 132, and Turlock 592.

Rev. David C. Williams, pastor Modesto’s Methodist Episcopal Church, volunteered for the Army’s Chaplaincy Service in September 1918. He had been actively involved in the city’s war work. He received his officer’s commission and was attending officer’s training school at Camp Taylor in Kentucky. His family relocated in Selma, near Fresno, with a substitute minister being assigned to replace him.

An article entitled “Some Mother’s Son,” written by L. Clare Davis, was published in the Herald on September 11, 1918. She spoke of the tragedies of war, with mothers suffering the most, “to bring about the victories that will end the war.” She declared that “if it isn’t your son or mine, it is some other mother’s – God help us all.”

While most mothers sent their sons to war, a few mothers had sons who were “ slackers,” evading the draft. An article published in the Herald on September 11, 1918 described the slacker with unadulterated contempt: “After God made the rattlesnake, the toad and the vampire, he had some awful substance left with which he made the slacker. The slacker is a two-legged animal with corkscrew heart, a water-baked brain and a combination backbone made of jelly and glue. Where other people have hearts he carries a tumor of rotten principles. When the slacker comes down the street, honest men turn their backs and the angels of heaven weep; the devil shuts the gates of hell to keep him out.” The writer ranked a slacker lower than Judas Iscariot and Benedict Arnold.

Draftee R.E. Owen sent a letter to the County Exemption Board telling of the train trip to Camp Kearny in San Diego and boot camp life. He wrote that his 57 fellow Stanislaus County draftees “were full of pep and fun, in fact too much so for our fellows were yelling and cheering through the towns as we traveled along all night.” At every stop, he noted, Red Cross women “met us with smiles, gave us post cards to write home, stamped them and mailed them for us. They also distributed cigarettes, candy and gum.” He thanked Turlocks for the “fruit, candy, melons, cigarettes, and cigars.” He ended his correspondence with “We are all here and feeling fine, located in our tents with our barrack bags, mess kits, cots and bedding.” It was reported in the Herald that new recruits at Camp Kearny had doubled the camp’s record in life insurance purchases, with $10 million’s worth. It was the camp’s practice the first day to have representatives speak about insurance, wages, wage allotments to dependents, and personal financial strategies.

On September 12, 1918, another draft registration was held. This time every male from 18 to 45 was required to register. The congressional legislation in August to extend draft age from 21 to 31, to 18 to 45, was now law. The County Exemption Board provided registrants with 55 enrolling precincts in the county, expecting over 5,200 to register. By noon, 80 percent had completed registration cards, with some precincts having to request additional cards from Stockton. The registrants were to receive a questionnaire by mail to fill out and return to the Exemption Board.

Desire for Duty

It was learned on September 13, 1918 that J.L. Wilkinson of Oakdale, and son of the Judge O.N. Wilkinson, received a lieutenant commission in the Army’s Signal Corps. He had been at Fort Lewis as a recruit, but now was in school at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas and from there to be sent to officer’s training school in Texas. His brother, Cy Wilkinson, was already in the Army, serving in France.

R. St. Hilaire of Turlock had registered for the draft and was in his 30s. He was an Army veteran, having been a member of G Troop, 4th U.S. Calvalry, stationed in the Philippines. He had eight brothers who were in the Army currently serving in France. He didn’t want to be left out, because of being too old, causing him to petition the Army to accept a unit of Philippine veterans, who would fight together in France. This was patterned after Teddy Roosevelt’s Rough Riders during the Spanish-American War in Cuba. He wrote that there were 60 veterans from his old outfit that were willing to fight for their nation once again. St. Hilaire commented that “If the army will accept them in one company, they will pave a road into Berlin.”

L.W. Fulkerth, Chairman of the Advisory Board of the County Exemption Board, announced on September 18, 1918 that questionnaires were being sent out at 250 a day to those who had registered for the draft. Fulkerth declared that because the new questionnaires were more elaborate that earlier ones, it was highly recommended that registrants visit the Advisory Board’s office on 9th St. in Modesto, for assistance. He warned against having others assist them, because it was important to have the questionnaires filled out correctly. Once the questionnaires were approved, then draft classifications would be begin, followed by physical examinations.

War Casualties

Modesto contract painter George Carpenter received a letter from a former employee, T.A. Stanton, who had been shot in
the ankles by a German machine gun and was hospitalized in England. Stanton at the age of 45 decided to enlist in the Army but was rejected because of bad teeth. Unfazed, he joined the Canadian Royal Army in August 1917 and was sent to France as infantryman. Stanton wrote that surgeons had extracted numerous pieces of ankle bone, and he thought he would be “a cripple for life.” He was planning to return to Modesto in the spring. Harold Hyland of Newman was also wounded in action and had written his father stating that he was eager “to get at ‘em again.” His father had been worried that he had been lost at sea when a German torpedo sank the transport he was aboard. But now he was relieved that at least he knew his son was alive and in a hospital recuperating from combat wounds.

It was reported by the Army on September 22, 1918 that 16 Californians were recently killed by the German army in France. It was also reported in the same newspaper article that there was a total of 32,471 American casualties since the U.S. entered the war in April 1917. Of that number 6,038 were killed in action; 1,866 died of wounds; 1,780 died of disease; 852 died from accidents and other causes; 17,453 were wounded in action; and 4,482 were P.O.W.’s or missing in action.

Flu Epidemic

The Flu Epidemic was sweeping military camps across the nation. It was reported by U.S. Army Surgeon General on September 24, 1918 that 25 Army camps had been infected with the contagion. There had been a total of 20,211 cases of flu, with 2,225 new ones just occurring. Seven Army camps were struck with the flu for the first time. Camp Devens, Massachusetts, the worst, had been hit with 10,700 cases. In the past four days, Camp Devens developed 424 new cases of pneumonia caused by the flu. Local sailor, Eric W. Ocken, “a submarine listener,” had been admitted to a naval hospital in New London, Connecticut for pneumonia. Fort Lewis announced there were 22 new cases of flu, while Army camps located in Logan, Texas had 175 new cases; Funston, Kansas 181; and Travis, Texas, 37.

On September 27, 1918, Army Provost Marshal General Crowder ordered Army camps not to receive any of the 142,000 draftees expected the second week of October because of the flu epidemic. He reported that there had been a total of 35,146 cases of flu in Army Camps, with 25 percent of those at Camp Devens having the flu, while 10 percent contracted pneumonia. Within 24 hours, the Army had 6,139 new cases of flu, but the West Coast was spared for now, with Camp Kearny in San Diego reporting its first case.

Telegrams of Casualties

Mr. and Mrs. Otto Rodman of Denair learned on September 27, 1918 that their son George Rodman had been killed in combat in France. He had been one of the first in Stanislaus County to be drafted in the Army. J.S. McCuistion of Turlock received a telegram that his son, Thomas H. McCuistion, had died on October 5, 1918 at a military training camp in Sartee, Canada. He had joined the Royal Canadian Army four months earlier, because he lived in Canada. His brother was undergoing training at Fort Lewis. Notice came to Mr. and Mrs. Lars Ecklund of Turlock that their son Herman E. Eckland died from wounds received in France. He enlisted in Minnesota, arrived in France in May 1918, and was attached to the 139th Infantry.

There were 237 Stanislaus County draftees prepared to be sent to training camp the week of November 11, 1918, but the war ended with a truce on November 11, 1918. The U.S. War Department terminated the draft immediately. This wonderful news though did not stop the telegrams being sent to parents that their sons had been killed, wounded or missing in action. A telegram came to Mr. and Mrs. Henry C. Koenig of Modesto that their son Pvt. William H. Koenig had been killed in action. He was drafted in September 1917 and had trained at Fort Lewis, going to France with the California infantry unit, the 363rd. He had served with Major Walter F. Garrison, also of Modesto, who had been wounded during the same drive offensive. Garrison was reportedly on the mend at a military hospital.

Nearly an hour before the cease fire on November 11, 1918 was declared, A.A. Caldwell, President of the Turlock Board of Trade, dispatched a telegram to the U.S. Secretary of War requesting that Turlock be placed on the list of U.S. cities to receive captured German cannons. He made the case that Turlock had “furnished her full quota of soldiers and sailors, and had gone over the top in every drive for Liberty Loan Bonds and War Savings Stamps.” He also remarked that the cannon would be placed in a city park to remind “future generations of the patriotism of America’s sons.”

Telegrams continued to arrive, announcing Stanislaus County war casualties in France. It was learned that Cpl. George W. Merman, 363rd Infantry had been shot in combat on October 2, 1918 and was recuperating in Base Hospital No. 36 in France. In a letter received November 13, 1918, Merman remarked that he had trained for a year and “it was his luck that he was hit his first day” of fighting. As for American military, he declared, “There are no better fighters on the face of the globe, and now Germany realizes it too.”

A Turlock Journal editorial published on November 20, 1918 reminded all slackers and seditionists that they would still be pursued and prosecuted by the federal government. It stated that “ slackers, who may have fondly hoped that with the end of the war
their responsibility would be lifted, will suffer a cruel disillusion, as the government will continue to prosecute them wherever found.” Also that “the espionage order was still in force until a peace treaty was signed,” which meant “that people still don’t have the right to cuss and abuse the President, the government, and the army, and display other pro-German sentiments and proclivity, will be subject to a rude awakening.”

**War Ends**

With the war ended, there was some confusion whether or not draft registrants needed to return the questionnaires to the County Exemption Board. To clarify the problem, Provost Marshal General Crowder issued a public statement on November 20, 1918 that men from ages 19 to 36 must filled out the questionnaires and return them.

A *Modesto News* editorial called for a “fitting memorial to the Stanislaus boys lost in the war.” The writer remarked that they are remembered now, because they are fresh in our minds, but “something more substantial and enduring” must be erected for posterity.

It was reported by General Pershing on November 27, 1918 that at the time of the cease fire Americans war casualties totaled 236,117. Of that number, 36,154 were killed or died of wounds; 14,811 died of disease; 2,204 unclassified deaths; 179,265 wounded; 2,163 taken prisoners; and 1,160 were missing. The report stated that if the statistic for wounded appeared to be high, it was because it included every wound no matter how critical the soldier had.

Mrs. Rosa Schattenberg of Turlock was notified on November 27, 1918 that her son Sgt. George Schattenberg had been taken prisoner by the Germans. He was originally attached to the 301st Engineers in France but later joined the tank corps. It was hoped that he had been released since the war had ended.

On December 3, 1918, Mr. and Mrs. J.E. Weaver received word that their son Lt. William L. Weaver died from the flu in France on November 8, 1918. He enlisted in the Army in December 1917, received the rank of sergeant and then was promoted to lieutenant in the Sanitary Corps. He was a Stanford University graduate in chemistry. His commanding officer wrote to his parents commenting in the Sanitary Corps. He was a Stanford University graduate in chemistry. His commanding officer wrote to his parents commenting in the Sanitary Corps. He was a Stanford University graduate in chemistry. His commanding officer wrote to his parents commenting in the Sanitary Corps. He was a Stanford University graduate in chemistry. His commanding officer wrote to his parents commenting in the Sanitary Corps. He was a Stanford University graduate in chemistry. His commanding officer wrote to his parents commenting in the Sanitary Corps. He was a Stanford University graduate in chemistry. 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County War Statistics

The January 1, 1919 issue of the Turlock Journal listed Stanislaus County casualties. Those killed in action: Herbert H. Adams, infantry, Oakdale; Jacob J. Adams (Canadian Army), Turlock; H. Barker (British Army), Ceres; Gordon Bigelow, infantry, Modesto; Uriah M. Epperson, infantry, Modesto; Elmer Fox, Infantry, Hughson; Paul E. Guylor, infantry, Modesto; Rex A. Havenstrie, infantry, Oakdale; Ervin C. Hurd, infantry, Oakdale; Rex W. Ish, Infantry, Turlock; Edmund T. Kasper, infantry, Montpelier; James A. Kessler, infantry, Modesto; W.H. Koenig, infantry, Modesto; E.H. Lorensen, infantry, Newman; Aaron K. Parkhurst, infantry, Oakdale; Forest K. Parkhurst, infantry, Oakdale; Louis Pedsioli, infantry, Modesto; Peter N. Petersen, infantry, Newman; George A. Rodman, infantry, Turlock; Fred Stover, infantry, Oakdale; Ward C. Tittle, infantry, Modesto; and Charles Watkins, infantry, Crows Landing.

Those who died from wounds: Herman E. Eklund, Turlock and Robert C. McLaughlin, Modesto. Those who died from accidents: Stewart Kinneer, aviation, Newman; Stanley L. Collins, aviation, Knights Ferry; John W. Diekell, Navy, Modesto; Irwin McCormick, Marines, Modesto; Robert S. Plimpton, infantry, Modesto; Frank Smith, Navy, Oakdale; James Stewart, Newman; and Bert O. Weeks, aviation, Modesto.

Those who died from disease: Edgar H. Annear, Modesto; William I. Weaver, Turlock; Lemme E. Bean, Oakdale; William W. Burney, Riverbank; Arthur W. Carlsen, Modesto; Arthur E. Cox, Newman; Frank R. Duncan, Modesto; Kenneth Glidden, Modesto; Harry Hayes, Oakdale; Harold Johnson, Ceres; Leslie J. Johnson, Modesto; Leonard Larsen, Patterson; Carl McClimont, Modesto; Robert C. McLaughlin, Modesto; Thomas H. McGuistion, Turlock; Sterling Pack, Ceres; Freda Russ, nurse, Newman; Daniel D. Savage, Modesto; Romain Schell, Oakdale; Donald Spender, Modesto; Harry S. Thompson, Modesto; Ralph Warugh, Riverbank; William I. Weaver, Turlock; and Ora E. Wimm, Modesto.

Those still missing in action: Joseph R. Pearson, Modesto; Dan A. Honeycutt, Modesto; Lloyd W. Terrill, Denair; and Roy S. Merriam, Navy, Hickman, and in a German P.O.W. camp, George Schattenburg, Turlock.

Those who were wounded in action: Antoine Anderson, infantry, Turlock; Edgar H. Bauman, Ceres; Treve Berlin, infantry, Turlock; Orland Bizzini, infantry, Ceres; Guy W. Boardman, infantry, Hughson; Charles Bone, infantry, Patterson; Vincent Bratton, infantry, Riverbank; Howard Brotherton, infantry, Oakdale; Chester L. Byngton, infantry, Oakdale; Davy C. Cole, infantry, Turlock; Albert Curtis, infantry, Modesto; Louis D. Cutler, infantry, Oakdale; Samuel Coe, Riverbank; Joe Coe, Riverbank; Joe Dalmasso, infantry, Modesto; William E. Degler, infantry, Turlock; Kachacoor Dervishian, infantry, Turlock; Walter J. Eastin, infantry, Newman; John Feeny, infantry, Riverbank; Manuel J. Francisco, infantry, Ceres; Harry Frantz, British Army, Riverbank; Ernest E. Gibbons, infantry, Waterford; Joel O. Gibbons, infantry, Waterford; J.A. Gilman, engineer, Riverbank; Orville F. Henderson, infantry, Turlock; Antone Harvey, infantry, Turlock; William M. Heron, infantry, Modesto; Merle W. Hobron, Modesto; Lloyd Hogan, Oakdale; Charles J. Holland, Ceres; Enoch H. Holmes, infantry, Turlock; Ollie Jameson, infantry, Newman; Arvilla Kruth, infantry, Turlock; Lloyd Kogan, Oakdale; Charles E. Lincoln, Crows Landing; Dewitt T. Marshall, Marines, Modesto; George Merman, Turlock; Charles C. Meyers, Knights Ferry; Carl Muheim, Oakdale; Warren W. McNight, Modesto; Ralph Mathew, Hughson; Lloyd U. Mills, infantry, Turlock; William T. Nappier, infantry, Turlock; John M. Northrup, Newman; Joe Nunes, Modesto; Pat O’Brien, British Army, Riverbank; Roy D. Parker, Modesto; Martin L. Petersen, Escalon; Arthur L. Rice, Marines, Modesto; A.P. Rohde, Ceres; Walter O. Salisbury, Newman; Otto H. Sheldon, Hughson; David F. Sorenson, Patterson; Harold Scott, Modesto; Aram Shaababazian, Turlock; Paul E. Swanson, Turlock; Eugene H. Stockwell, Modesto; Carl V. Strom, Modesto; Lloyd W. Terrill, Denair; Peter H. Tosh, Crows Landing; John K. Tener, Modesto; W.G. Watson, Oakdale; Charles Webster, Oakdale; and Ray Wunderlich, Marines, Riverbank.

The Turlock Journal of January 1, 1919 also listed those from Stanislaus County who served as officers in the military: Army Colonels: Robert U. Patterson, medical, Modesto. Army Majors: Robert E. Childs, engineer, Turlock; George L. Dilliman, engineer, Oakdale; and J.C. Robertson, medical, Modesto. Army Captains: E.H. Annear, engineer, Modesto; N.C. Bissell, medical, Modesto; Warren Day, engineer, Oakdale; Jesse A. Griffin, Oakdale; W.D. Hohenthal, artillery, Turlock; Guy M. Rush, motor corps, Riverbank; F.C. Smith, medical, Oakdale; and J.A. Young, medical, Oakdale. Army First Lieutenants: Ira J. Clark, medical, Modesto; Jack Denair, artillery, Turlock; Dyberg, medical, Turlock; E.V. Falk, medical, Modesto; F.M. Folendorg, dental, Turlock; Walter C. Hixson, medical, Patterson; W.E. Koebig, medical, Riverbank; Stewart Kinneer, aviation, Newman; Arthur Kline, aviation, Riverbank; J.W. Morgan, medical, Oakdale; Leslie A. Nickerson, signal corps, Oakdale; Joseph R. Pearson, infantry, Modesto; Riordan, dental, Turlock; W.W. Sahlberg, infantry, Turlock; F.C. Smith, medical, Oakdale; and Wm. I. Weaver, medical, Turlock.


Word was received on January 8, 1919 that the soldiers from the 91st Infantry Division, known as the “Wild West Division,” had been placed on early return from France. The division consisted of personnel from the Pacific Coast and mountain states. As recruits, they received their training at Fort Lewis and traveled to England for additional schooling. They were shipped to France, where they took part in the fierce fighting in the Argonne Forest, followed by other engagements. Some of the division fought in Ypres, Belgium, with others of the division teaming up with the British Army. The division as a whole suffered heavy casualties, with some officers declaring that only a half of the division remained. It would be demobilized at Fort Lewis.

More War Results

Turlock poet, Davy C. Cole, who penned the poem “Who
in Hell Made the Kaiser?” and received some acclaim for it, was recovering at the Rockefeller Institute from knee wounds received in combat. He was drafted on October 5, 1917, receiving training at Fort Lewis and being shipped to France on January 1, 1918 from Camp Merritt, New Jersey. He was a member of Co. D, 150th Machine Gun Battalion and was wounded on October 31, 1918 at Verdun. He was the son of D.C. Cole of Turlock and was expected to fully recover and to return home soon.

Mr. and Mrs. B.F. Bigelow of Turlock, formerly of Modesto, weren’t so fortunate. They received notification that their son Gordon Bigelow had been killed in action in France on October 19, 1918. He was drafted in fall 1917 when he was studying osteopathy in Los Angeles. He married Orilla M. Evans, a fellow student, and had written home five days before being killed, anticipating a happy home reunion.

Lt. Ora R. McMurry received two highly-esteemed military medals for his courageous service in France. While a member of the ambulance corps, he transported wounded men while under heavy enemy firing. For his gallantry, the French government bestowed upon them the Croix de Guerre (War Cross) in July 1917. McMurry next joined the 40th Aero Squadron, where on October 4, 1918, near Ormage, France, he was a member of a seven-airplane squadron that was attacked by 17 enemy aircraft. He shot down two German Fokkers in the fearsome dog fight. For incurring great risks in assisting his squadron to survive in the overmatched battle, General Pershing, representing President Wilson, awarded him the Distinguished Service Cross.

Boys Coming Home

County towns were making plans to celebrate their heroes return from war. It was anticipated that the soldiers, marines, and sailors would arrive sporadically, which required a grand event once they were all home together. Most concern locally was the job placements for them. It was hoped that many would return to their old jobs but now some of those vacancies were unavailable. The U.S. Employment Service, through its branches, such as Stanislaus County Employment Bureau, with offices throughout the county, issued a public call for all employers to list with the bureau their job openings. Assistance in this matter also came from the Stanislaus County Board of Trade and boards of trade in the various county towns. With a job list in hand, the Employment Bureau could then place returning county military personnel in those positions. There were some veterans who needed to be trained or further schooled in skilled occupations and that was also something in which the Employment Bureau could assist. The employment program had been in place in the county since June 15, 1917 and had met with tremendous success. From that date through December 31, 1918, which was an 18-month period, 5,165 persons had been placed in county jobs, according to a Turlock Journal article of January 15, 1919. This was an average of 286 job placements per month. The Employment Bureau also placed 113 families on ranches.

The parents of Antone Harvey of Turlock received word on January 29, 1918 from the War Department that Antone had experienced a German gas attack in France but was recovering and expected to be home soon. Mrs. Margaret Chitros of Turlock was notified by the Marines that her brother, William T. Nappier, had received wounds in the foot and thigh from machine gun fire on July 19, 1918. He recovered and was again placed on active duty, where he saw further combat in France. The letter from the Marines stated that he had been commended for “the splendid part he played in the glorious achievements of our forces.”

A banquet was held on February 5, 1919 at Hotel Hughson in Modesto, honoring the Stanislaus County Exemption Board. The event was hosted by the Stanislaus County Defense Council. Addresses were given by former Exemption Board chairmen: Judge N.A. Hawkins, C.R. Tilson, and W.N. Steele. Justice W.H. Langdon of the Appellate Court and also the Chairman of the County Defense Council presided at the banquet, telling those present that “although criticisms of various war organizations have been continuous during the war, the Exemption Board in this county has been the one organization to pass the period without criticism.” E.L. Sherman presented to the Exemption Board a resolution of appreciation from the Defense Council that conveyed the council’s gratitude for the Exemption Board’s “patriotic service to the county and government.” The resolution specifically thanked Judge N.A. Hawkins, S.S. Steward, A.A. Caldwell, E.N. Moulton, George Perley, C.R. Tilson, and W.N. Steele for their unselfish duty. Mrs. Mollie Bloom Flagg of Turlock addressed the banquet reviewing the war work done by Stanislaus County women, honoring their patriotism and caring hearts for their service to the men and women in need during the war.

Reports arrived that a number of former Modesto Her-

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**Allied air support while troops below attack across “no-man’s land.” Similar action to what Lt. McMurry saw**

Web photo

**Devastating casualties were caused by machine gun fire on both sides. Most leg, ankle, and foot wounds were caused by the low fire of a machine gun at the top of trenches. This is a soldier from 115th Machine Gun Battalion fighting at Ypres July 1918**

Web photo

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employees were on their way home. Hugh Walls, who had been the advertising manager and served with the 364th Field Artillery in France, was at Ft. Lewis to be discharged. The newspaper’s pressman Jesse Wallace and shop foreman James S. Winans were both to be discharged in San Francisco. Former city editor Walter Killam had arrived in Boston from France and was on his way to Modesto.

Others were not so fortunate, having to remain overseas, requiring the homecoming celebration for Stanislaus County war veterans to be postponed. Two strictly California units, the 363rd Infantry and the 347th Field Artillery, of which many county men were members, had been given postwar duty. The 363rd distinguished itself in combat in the Argonne Forest, Verdun, and Champagne. The 347th joined British and Belgian units in Flanders, seeing heavy fighting. The 363rd was assigned by General Pershing to escort and protect the king and queen of Belgium. The 347th had been in Luxemburg, with some units moving into Germany. Allyn Britton, who had just finished his gunnery training at Goat Island, was sent to the Atlantic Coast, along with 500 other personnel, for duty aboard transports bringing American troops back home.

The California Readjustment Committee, organized to assist returning veterans, recommended to Governor Stephens on April 2nd a postponement of the statewide “Welcome Home” celebrations. The committee asked to change the event from April 5, 1919 to July 4th or September 9th, State Admissions Day. Modesto newspapers supported July 4th. The Modesto Chamber of Commerce wanted a two-day celebration, July 4th and 5th, which became the choice of the county.

A Turlock Journal article urged all returning military personnel to keep their uniforms, because “the time will come when the boys will have a great deal more reverence for their suits of khaki than they have at present, and they should become heirlooms, inasmuch as they may be representative of the world’s greatest and last war of the magnitude.” The Stanislaus County Defense Council wanted the men to retain their uniforms to wear during homecoming celebrations. A federal public law became effective on February 28, 1919, allowing all discharged military personnel to keep permanently “one complete suit of outer uniform clothing, overcoat, and articles of personal apparel and equipment.”

In April 1919, the federal government was offering a $50 reward for information that would lead to the arrest of draft evaders. Chief Deputy Robert Duncan of the U.S. Attorney General’s Office and U.S. Army General Borree had on hand several hundred indictments and were proceeding with a general roundup of slackers.

Turlock Odd Fellows and Rebekahs held a reception to honor the Turlock area’s 51 returned soldiers and sailors at its Fraternal Hall on April 23, 1919. The men had been asked to wear their uniforms for the occasion. The facility was suitably decorated, a short program was presented, piano and vocal solos were performed, with the Johann Orchestra providing dance music for all to enjoy.

It was announced by the Modesto Red Cross on April 23, 1919 that families had a choice as to where their military sons would be buried. Any who wanted them buried in the U.S. could request that in 1920. If the request was for them to remain in France, they would be buried in special U.S. military cemeteries. Families needed to contact the Cemetery Quartermaster of the War Department in Washington, D.C. to inform it of their decision.

All returned Stanislaus County soldiers and sailors were asked by Mrs. Cora Abbott of the Red Cross on May 7, 1919 to register at their local newspaper offices if they wanted to appear in the Modesto’s Memorial Day parade. Invitations and instructions would then be sent to them. It was requested that uniforms be worn, with light weight ones being preferable because of the warmer weather. High school cadets, Boy Scouts, and local organizations were scheduled to march in a parade with the returning heroes.

A “Victory Train,” also known as the “Trophy Train,” was dispatched from San Francisco on April 12, 1919 to tour California, Arizona, and Nevada as part of the Fifth Liberty Loan Bond Drive. Aboard the special train were German, American, and French military items, such as machine guns, artillery shells, trench periscopes, weapons, and even an observation tower, U.S. tank, and German airplane. There were helmets, uniforms, gas masks, and many other “trophies.” The train arrived in Turlock on April 20, 1919 at 5 p.m. and then stopped next at Modesto. The turnout was enormous in Turlock, with boys whooping it up when a whippet tank was driven around exhibiting its maneuverability. A Marine band played music, and representatives of the military addressed the crowd.

On May 7, 1919, President Wilson pledged to the wounded that “America will not forget.” He declared that “the wounds you bear are the noblest badges of honor any man has ever worn; that they exalt you to a supreme place in the hearts and minds of your countrymen and the world. I assure you that America realizes that she has no more solemn obligation, no more patriotic duty than to express in practical terms the gratitude that every American feels for every one of you.”

Written by Robert LeRoy Santos
Letters from Stanislaus County’s Fighting Men

World War I in Stanislaus County Hearts and Minds

Over Here and Over There: Part 4

A few letters from Stanislaus County military men were published at times in the local newspapers. This article contains excerpts from many of those letters found in the Modesto Morning Herald under “Letters from Camp” and in the Turlock Journal under “With the Colors.” For each excerpted letter, there is a brief heading that provides date, who it was from, and to whom it was written. Information under “From” and “To” varies depending upon what the newspapers furnished. Until the war ended on November 11, 1918, American troops were ordered not to divulge certain information in their letters. Even so, all letters were read and censored by the military before being forwarded to the U.S. Once peace came, censorship was dropped and the letters blossomed with fascinating stories of experiences. The letters in this article are documented reminders of what Stanislaus County soldiers and sailors witnessed in World War I, adding to our heritage.

“Letters from Camp”

Modesto Morning Herald

Herald Date: April 18, 1918
From: Arba Rice, Headquarters Detachment, 1st Battalion, Marines, France
To: His father in Turlock

The grass is green . . . the people are odd . . . paper money looks like coupons . . . people wear wooden shoes and you should hear the kids run down the walks. They sound like a bunch of horses on cobblestones . . . I am quite a ways from the lines . . . I will be located here for some time.

Herald Date: April 18, 1918
From: Pvt. Andrew Rohde, 116 Trench Mortar Battery, American Expeditionary Forces (A.E.F.), France, while in a hospital
To: His mother in Turlock

My knee feels extremely well today and am sure it will not be long before I will be up and walking again some. I have many good words of praise for our good American Red Cross nurses . . . I am getting the very best of eats every day.

Herald Date: April 21, 1918
From: Pvt. Carl D. McIntosh, Regimental Headquarters, Co. 30, Engineers, A.E.F., France; former Herald linotype operator
To: Mr. Hucking at the Herald

Somewhere in France, March 25, 1918. Dear Mr. Hucking: I wrote you some time ago and hope that you received it. I hope that the war will soon be at an end so I can get back to “Sunny Stanislaus,” and, best, see the home folks and friends. I get the Herald occasionally, and I sure appreciate it. It is the only California paper coming to our camp, and as there are quite a number from “dear old Cal,” it nearly causes a riot when it comes to passing it on; all want to see it first. How are the machines running these days? Tell the fellows to take good care of them. Mother told me what you said about me coming back on the Herald, and I sure appreciate it.

Well, I have what I consider the best job here. I am a dispatch rider. I have to go from our headquarters to the front, almost daily; then sometimes I will be sent to some distant point from camp; again I may not make a trip for several days but am subject to call at all times. If it is a night ride, when I get at a certain distance from the line a guard stops me and out go the lights, for “D. R.’s” [dispatch riders] are one of Fritz’s particular “pets” [to shoot at].

Near the line, I have seen the towns in ruins, the dead still in bed, and household goods scattered about by the owners in their flight for safety. The guns are never quiet. One will be riding along, there will be an object whistling through the air, and suddenly an explosion that will jar the earth for miles, occurs. Perhaps it will be close and then perhaps some distance away. They do not always miss; hits come frequently, then there will be large holes in the earth, and the unfortunate is scattered to the four points of the compass.

Then, if the wind is in the right direction we have to look out for gas. So when near the line, all have to have their gas masks at alert, ready to put on instantly the warning is given. The same is true of our iron bonnets – helmets – to protect us from shrapnel. We have the right-of-way at all times, and there is no speed law and no motor cops to say “You are breaking the speed laws.”

The Yanks are keeping up their reputation as fighters and certainly doing themselves proud. At the present time the big show is on. I think it is the Huns’ last great effort, and for miles and miles the big guns are booming, the machine guns are rattling, the planes are fighting each other and between times dropping bombs. At night the sky is lighted up by the bursting shells and in the day the smoke almost hides the sun. I guess though this is all told to you through at A.P. [Associated Press], so I will let up now.

Herald Date: May 15, 1918
From: Pvt. Andrew Rohde, 116th Mortar Battery, A.E.F., France, while in a hospital with knee wound
To: Judge N.A. Hawking, Chairman of the Stanislaus County Exemption Board

We receive the best of medical treatment, and the staff of doctors over here are the best our country can produce. Our American Red Cross Nurses render valuable services, and we are very thankful to know we can have them with us. The Y.M.C.A. opens their doors of welcome to us. We all find here a real good home. I have now seen a great deal of France, and truly it is a very beautiful country. I like the people, as they are such a progressive and polite populace. Some of the cities I have visited are interesting indeed. They are so old and historic.

Herald Date: May 18, 1918
From: Irl Rogers, A.E.F., France, former Herald linotype operator
To: A friend

The natives wear a felt shoe of the Chinese plan and when they go forth along the highways they slip a big wooden barge on
each foot. Some classes wear them at all times. They look clumsy, and on a cobbled street, if you couldn’t see the wearer, you would think that a runaway horse was going by.

[He wrote that a French father will have his wagon drawn by any animal that was the closest thing to being a horse, such as an ox or milk cow. He said he had to laugh at this practice. He saw a horse pulling a load of gravel that could only be pulled by two horses.] In the states the S.P.C.A. would have nabbed the driver before he could travel a block.

[He wrote that French forests are always cleared of brush and fallen limbs, because] when a limb falls from a tree someone is ready to grab it for fuel. Shrapnel is a pretty good pruner though a poor designer. [He ended by declaring that he hadn’t seen] battle yet or even a German, Fritz or Boche.

_Herald Date: May 24, 1918_
From: William E. Dooley, Co. E, 102nd Infantry, 26th Division, A.E.F., France
To: Stanislaus County Y.W.C.A.

[He thanked the ladies at Y.W.C.A. for their packages. He wrote of “no-man’s-land” the neutral area between opposing forces.] Anyone caught on that part of the map after dark is liable to get shot, so we have to watch all night and it is some job. The barbwire in front of your trench is just far enough away to be seen on a foggy day or night. You stand on the firing step looking out there. You can see first one post move and then another, and you almost imagine that a regiment of Germans are cutting your wire, and still there is no one there.

[One morning at the front, the Germans bombarded them with artillery for two hours, and then sent an] big attacking party but we gave them a warm reception. We held our line; the Fritzes went back but not as strong as they came over, and it was some battle. [He wrote of how much the soldiers appreciated the coffee and donuts provided by the Red Cross.]

_Herald Date: June 9, 1918_
From: Pvt. Willis W. Wagner, Co. B, 30th Engineers, A.E.F., France; a former Ceres High School graduate and Stanford University student
To: His Ceres parents

May 9, 1918. Dear Folks: Will just write a little this evening before it gets too dark to tell you that I am now in the expected new billet as billets go. Our loft is quite comfortable but rather shy on windows, and of course, we don’t have electric lights. We won’t be here permanently, and for the present, we can make out very well. The trip from our other station wasn’t so very far, but we made pretty slow time. I saw some more of France that I had not seen before, and moved nearer the front though. We are not close enough to notice it.

[Pvt. Wagner wrote another letter dated May 11, 1918:]
Am billeted again in a place much like the one I described the other day in the first part of my letter. To all intents and purposes, I am permanently settled as far as my organization goes, so you will be safe in sending mail to me here for awhile at least. The fellows I am with now seem to be a mighty fine lot and are all volunteer men. They have had one session at the front, and we expect to leave for there and are all anxious to get back again. Don’t know whether I am going to be crazy about it or not, but I am willing to take a chance anyway.

In the meantime, I started in my life in the new company by acting as K.P. [kitchen patrol] today – nothing very strenuous and no necessity to go around for seconds – are you familiar with what going for seconds is? You see we line up with our mess kits and pass by the serving table where one lot of “chow” is dished out to us. Then if there is still something left after all men have been around once, they dish out some more as “seconds.” When there is fruit you generally find me in the “seconds” line. They have some very good cooks in the company, and the food we put out today couldn’t be complained about for quality or quantity by any reasonable minded person. Tomorrow is payday for B Co. This is strange weather over here. Getting too dark to see now, and I don’t have much of a candle left, so I think I must quit now for this time. Hope things are coming along nicely at home, and that the apricot crop on the ranch is going to be good. Wish I had some over here.
Herald Date: June 26, 1918
From: F.A. Latcham, a Tacoma attorney
To: Mrs. S.E. Stockwell, Modesto, about her son, Sgt. Eugene H. Stockwell

I have a brother who is a member of Co. K, 363rd Infantry, located Fort Lewis near this city, and in visiting my brother, I became acquainted with Sergeant Eugene H. Stockwell, your son, and have had a few very happy conversations with him; and thinking perhaps you might like to hear a word from someone regarding your son, I asked him for your address and am taking the liberty of writing a few lines to you.

The Sergeant is enjoying the very best of health, seems exceedingly rugged and cheerful and is the very type of officer we need to keep up the spirit and morale of the men; and while he is very courageous and is absolutely fearless, he is very mindful of the little comforts of the men of his company and is solicitous as to their welfare.

I have known the Sergeant but a little while and being an attorney and a judge for a number of years and feeling that I am a good judge of human character, I feel certain that the Sergeant has those American characteristics which will cause him to rise among his fellow men in the Army and be a credit to himself, to his family and his country.

You may feel perhaps that I am somewhat presumptuous in writing you, whom I have never met, but there are little incidents which have happened in my relations with the Sergeant which prompted me to pay to him, through you, the respect and courtesy due an American soldier from an American patriot. With the very kindest regards for your future welfare and that of your son.

Herald Date: July 23, 1918
From: Harold (last name not given)
To: His mother (name not given)

June 21, 1918. My dear Mother: Just a few words to let you know I am all right and very much alive, although I have to pinch myself every so often to feel sure about it. Gee, every time I hear a pistol shot it feels like an electric shock going through me, but that’s a reaction gone through by all. When a few high explosives drop near you and cover you with mud and sections of the shell casings go screaming through the air – well it’s great sport. You never hear those coming that drop at your feet, but when you hear a combination sounding like a distant trolley car and the ripping of silk you know they are going over. The steel helmets are thin, and one can hear the ring (as they ring like a bell) all around from flying debris. One poor fellow got his not far from me from a flying piece of shrapnel in his head, sitting with his helmet off. The boys take everything as a joke, and although shaky, they always laugh at a close shave. Like one of the boys said, “I was standing behind a tree when a shell hit and blew up the tree next to mine. I went ha, ha, ha, - but I ran.”

After something like that and when everything is again quiet and we are back to our billets, we stretch a net between two trees and have a game of volleyball and forget everything else. That is the kind of material old Kaiser Bill is up against. Sentimentally speaking, war is hell or worse. You people at home can never know what it is, but a good soldier must be without emotions, he must become indifferent. The Germans are scared to death of Americans and their officers never let them know when they make a charge against Americans. The boys are so quick and stop for nothing. They sure are fine fellows, and I wouldn’t want to be away from them. I get to see lots of the German equipment captured. Will try to send you a few snap shots of the boys some time.

At times we are on the job day and night, so don’t get much sleep but get so that I can lay down and sleep anywhere, wet ground, hard boards, its all the same when you are real sleepy. I received the helmet and wristlets (six months ago) from the Y.M.C.A. in Paris, as I wrote to them. They are very nice and will be handy next winter. At no time worry over me. Am comparatively safe. Am sending you a splinter of an aeroplane propeller in which two French aviators were killed. It fell within a few yards of where my gun post once was.

Herald Date: July 28, 1918
From: Sgt. J.E. Gillman from Riverbank, at Walter Reed Hospital, recovering from a German gas attack in France; he was a former Santa Fe Railroad employee
To: Charles Dodge

Walter Reed Hospital, Washington, D.C. Dear Friend: You no doubt will be surprised to hear I am back in the states. I am at the above address, taking treatment for a combination of ailments. I had scarlet fever, then got gassed, also got sciatica. Went “over the top” to meet attack and got gassed on way back and fell in a shell hole. There were two dead Germans in the hole, also two Americans, both wounded. One of them died that afternoon. We were in there from 5 a.m. until 7 p.m., when we heard a noise and thought it was a German patrol. But the Lord was with us – it was the American patrol.

It had been raining all day, and the night was terribly dark – we got out of the shell hole only to step into a river of mud. We started back to our lines and got almost to the barb wire when we discovered we had lost our sense of direction – the barb wire was the German wire. They kept shooting star shells, and we had to bury ourselves in mud to keep from being seen, and finally we reached our lines. I fell on my back in such a way that I cause pressure on the sciatic nerve, but I am feeling all right now. The doctors held a consultation – they said I should be kept in the states and could drill recruits or go on recruiting service. They asked my opinion, and I told them to keep me in the states would be unfair as I had enlisted to go to the front. Do not know what I will have to do – will be here two months anyway.

Herald Date: August 3, 1918
From: Frank Haldeman, from Hickman, Transport Service, U.S.S. Matoika
To: His father, F.C. Haldeman

[Haldeman was in the Navy transport service and had made several trips to France and back, carrying motor trucks, motorcycles, and caterpillar tractors. The Matoika left Norfolk, Virginia, heading for Brest, France]. Dear Father: We ran into three subs. The first report was about 5 a.m. One of the lookouts reported a stick with a looking glass on it some ways off. We were off the Virginia Capes, going north. I was eating a piece of bread, butter and jam when the alarm went off. There were California Sunkist oranges for dessert, so I grabbed my life preserver in one hand and
my orange in the other. If we had have gotten torpedoed that orange would not have gone down with the ship, for I had made up my mind to eat it, sub or no sub. When I got to the deck, I had my life suit fixed, my orange safely in my pocket. I saw the officers looking at the sub, and I spotted it from my station point. By this time our aft port gun had turned loose, firing after a big torpedo that had been turned loose at us, and how they missed us nobody but God knows, as they [submarine] were not over 300 feet away in full view. Our second shot settled them. It blew up and tore them all to pieces; not a man in there knew what hit them. They went to the bottom fast.

The cruiser Frederic saw another sub, chased it, and then it went under. The cruiser then let six “depth bombs” go to sink it. After the depth bombs went off, oil came to the surface in one place, showing they destroyed the sub. The third one got away. I was a little shaky, but not afraid. [There was no further submarine encounters until the convoy, having eight transports carrying equipment, was one night from Brest. Around midnight, one of the sailors said:] “This is a good night for the subs to get busy.” Nobody said a word. All at once a wild distress signal came from the Covington [another transport on the port side to the rear]. Depth bombs were exploding and guns were turned loose. It was a battle, but we could not see any subs as there were too many ships between us. We had on full speed ahead and soon left the Covington out of sight. She sank at 8:30 the next day. The Covington always carried large cargo. There is too much money lost when they go down.

**Herald Date:** August 7, 1918

From: **Justis Kirkman,** from Turlock, a Navy engineer aboard a submarine chaser in European waters

To: His parents Mr. and Mrs. W.C. Kirkman

The Herald summarized the letter rather than publishing its text. Kirkman tells of firing a shot that sank a U-boat off the English coast the night of July 9, 1918. He was asleep when the warning was sounded that a U-boat had been sighted. Kirkman rushed to the deck and took charge of the “Y” gun crew. In a moment, the gun was ready, and the U-boat’s range secured. Kirkman pulled the lanyard on the gun, with the shell striking the submarine, and a moment later, it upended and sank.

**Herald Date:** August 9, 1918

From: **Irl Rogers,** from Base Hospital No. 23, France, recuperating from a German gas attack; former Herald linotype operator

To: Al Steinman, Herald’s advertising manager

June 25, 1918. Heinie sent over gas shells and high explosives mixed. The high explosive is to scatter the gas. The bombardment lasted two hours, and I was in my mask during that time. At the end of the two hours, the mask becomes so uncomfortable that a fellow debates with himself whether he will take it off and die at once or keep it on and die by degrees. I waited too long for the former but thought I was due for the latter. The wind was blowing in a circle and kept us bathed in gas for about ten hours. Two-thirds of my discomfort vanished when I heard our artillery open up with a dose of gas for Fritz and joy was unconfined when we learned the next day that some high explosive sent along with the gas lifted three Hun batteries out of their pits. I kept the breathing apparatus on but removed the face piece and allowed it to reach my eyes. The eyes were pretty sore for a couple of days but are O.K. now. I needed a rest anyhow though. I am getting tired of holding down a mattress. Eighty days I lived in a hole like a rat, and seven days I’ve been in bed. It’s hard to tell which time is the longest.

**Herald Date:** August 16, 1918

From: **Sgt. Harry P. Duncan,** 133rd Aero Pursuit Squadron, Lafayette Escadrilla, A.E.F.

To: His parents Mr. and Mrs. L.A. Duncan of Salida

Dear Mother: I have seen a lot of France alright, and I guess I am not thru yet. But I am ready to come home, believe me. I am in charge of quarters. I haven’t any machine [airplane] now but expect a new one in a few days. My old one got broken up when we moved here to our new camp. It is a little rest for me. It was a propeller of that machine that hit me on the knee when I had to go to the hospital.

What do people over there think of the war? It seems they are beginning to realize there is a war on now. There is a lot going on, on the front now. Well, that is what I like to see. Believe me that is the only way the war will ever stop – just kill them. But it seems to look more in our favor all the time. If the war hangs on very much longer, there will be a lot of boys dragged into it that never expected it. Some that laughed at me when I enlisted.

Of course, I am used to the ways of the war more or less now. Can sleep while they are dropping bombs and the anti-aircraft is going on all around. The Huns are over us now [in airplanes] getting a few pictures. Now the anti-aircraft is shooting away at them. The reason I am not worried [about being killed] is because I feel, and have felt all the time, that if I am to be killed in this war, I am going to be. So you see I am not getting gray from worrying.”

**Herald Date:** August 24, 1918

From: **Frances E. Heple,** Base Spare Depot, Unit 3, A.E.F., France

To: Z.A. Moody and his family, a former partner of Heple’s at Heple-Stevens Auto Supply

“Over Here,” August 1, 1918. Dear Folks: I have enjoyed wonderful health since my arrival over here. The climate is very much like yours except that it rains very often here. No doubt the cannonading at the line brings on many of our storms. Am now running into my fifth month over here, I can say that time has never before passed so rapidly. To me it has been one big experience that I shall always remember and never regret. Conditions of living are good considering the circumstances, so I have no complaint to register.

The Boches are at last realizing that we are here for business. You no doubt have read recent newspaper accounts of
the wonderful drive now on. The wonderful spirit of the boys is doing wonders toward encouraging the tired-out French and English. No matter how hot the going is, the Yankees are full of fight and pep. Habits and general condition of the people here are very odd to us, but we are gradually becoming used to it all. By the time we leave France, we will have Americanized it somewhat.

_Herald Date: August 31, 1918_

From: Walter Reid, from Ceres, Navy Machinist Mate on _Sub Chaser No. 3_, off East Coast
To: Ceres Courier newspaper

[His ship patrolled the coast from New York to Virginia looking for German submarines. He knew of three submarines that had been sank, including the one in his letter.]

On the morning of June 5th, at 11:30, just off Delaware Inlet three miles, we saw a periscope pop up about 75 or a 100 feet off our starboard bow, and as soon as they turned the glass around, they pulled it down and in a wild rush started out to sea; and at the same time, we had general quarters, and at our stations, we were standing. When they raised the periscope again, they were just off the stern about a hundred feet. Our captain gave orders to the two men attending the depth bombs at the chute on the stern of our boat and rolled overboard a small can of T.N.T., weighing 300 pounds, set at a depth of 30 feet, which gave us just nine-and-one-half seconds to get out of the range of the explosion.

Talk about excitement! When the bomb exploded, it raised our little100-foot boat out of the water one-half length. The next thing we were looking for the sub to come up as a heavy stream of oil came up right where the bomb had exploded, and continued to do so for some time, covering an area about a half mile across, but no sub ever showed up. We wired in and an investigation was made. We were told a diver would be sent down, but for some reason, none was ever sent. We are quite sure of the sea wolf though, as indications showed that it is still there. Two mine sweeps have been hung up on something pretty solid at that very spot, and we (_Sub Chaser No. 73_) bumped into it with the keel about 75 or a 100 feet off the stern of our boat and rolled overboard a small can of T.N.T., which we saw here was a Ford. All the machines [autos] which we have seen so far are United States make. The trains are the most humorous things one sees here – the cars carrying heavy loads and doing heavy work – likewise young boys. The hilly region is carefully and neatly tilled. Everything is spic and span. The queer dress of the people and the odd stone buildings make interesting observations possible.

Today is like a spring day; the sun is “just right.” Everybody is busy getting things settled. Everybody is happy and full of “pep” though if we had the same living conditions in the United States we would kick like everything. As usual there is a Y.M.C.A. building here. I was just down there last night for a while and enjoyed a concert in French.

I received my first government ration of tobacco this morning – a package of Bull Durham. Tobacco is cheaper here at the canteen than in America – Camels are 8 cents, for instance. On our way over we were extremely well-convoyed.

One thing that everybody has noticed is the lack of able-bodied men in this city. Very few men between 20 and 50 are seen – they are all at the front. All the work is being done by old men, boys, and women. It is pathetic to see old women carrying heavy loads and doing heavy work – likewise young boys. The trains are the most humorous things one sees here – the cars are about one-third the size of United States cars. The first auto which we saw here was a Ford. All the machines [autos] which we have seen so far are United States make.

I imagine that our company will soon be broken up, for our work will be such that we cannot work very well as a company. I certainly hate to see that come about. Twenty of the original University of California bunch and about one-half of Company C, Supply School, are here. We have formed friends in a day, which are as strong as friendships of years in civilian life. I shall also make every effort to learn this French language. I imagine it will be fairly easy, for there are number of textbooks in the company, and one can easily apply the theory. Likewise my knowledge of Spanish and Latin will help a lot.

_Herald Date: September 22, 1918_

From: John “Jack” Lyon, from Modesto, Transportation Unit, A.E.F., France
To: Henry Kopf of Modesto

[Lyon took part in the offensive maneuver to push the Germans out of Chateau Thierry in July.] The last drive we made here sure kept us busy. We were out with our trucks four days and nights and on the move all the time. We were hauling ammunition in for the troops and hauling wounded out. We drove in the afternoon about four miles past where the German front line trenches had been. There were sure some awful sights. But that can be expected.

We sure took many [German] prisoners, too. There were
some officers with them. It is hard to believe the number of prisoners who are able to speak English. Many of the prisoners appear to be very young. Yet they all claim to be 19 or 20. I believe they are trained to say it. It was sure hard to haul the wounded from the front in big trucks. It was so rough for them. Then the roads had been shot to pieces and were awful rough.

We got back to camp about 5 a.m. and left again for the lines before dark. Things along the lines were sure lively. Our big guns were shooting over us and into the German lines. Those shells that passed over us sure had a deadly hum. They all were doing their part. One of our big guns is named “Peace Talk.” It is talking most of the time, too. This same night a Boche plane sure had our address, but not our street number. We moved on him and in the right time, too. He flew over us and dropped a big illumination bomb. It sure lit things up for about five minutes. Then he sailed over and dropped a bunch of bombs. Luckily, he missed our trucks, but only by a few feet. Dirt was sure flying. Then he came back, but we had moved the trucks. His shells again went wild. He flew over several times, but did nothing. He was so low he was easily seen. Then he had his tail light lit. We sure watched him. No one cared to be under him, when he passed over. But such things as that is what makes it good.

Then a couple of days later we went to the battlefield to pick up salvage and whatever had been scattered about. Dead were everywhere. They sure looked bad too. Some had been dead nearly a week and had not yet been buried. The towns that had been shelled were sure hard looking sights. They were beginning to smell bad. There was dead stock everywhere, too. Just imagine, Henry, a place as large as Stockton all shelled to hell. Other places just as large have no one living in them. The people had all moved out.

We have been here a few days resting. I can’t say just when our next move will be, but we are sure up and at them all the time. So there are only a few of the young fellows left [at home]. Those who are left behind [in Modesto] must think that they’d rather be a live coward than a dead hero. Over here that old saying is a thing of the past. It is either a live hero or a dead one. In going over the battlefield you see where many a brave lad had fought to death with only a bayonet. There is one or two Boche also to show that he did not die in vain.

_Herald Date: November 6, 1918_
From: Pvt. 1st Class William W. Leoni, Ft. McDowell, Angel Island, California
To: Turlock Journal, with money for a six-month subscription

We are in quarantine now. An Army quarantine is rather interesting. We are not allowed to congregate any. No movies, no Y.M.C.A., in fact everything is shut up. There is only one thing to do and that is to be contented and cheerful, knowing all could be much worse.

We became friends with a young German fellow, who was there because he lacked citizen papers. He was born and raised in Berlin. He talked about the two classes in Germany, the red or socialistic class that is against the Kaiser, and the blue or bigoted class that is for the Kaiser. It is his opinion that the red class will start a desperate revolution which will wipe Kaiser Bill and his whole rotten bunch off the map. We have to give the Kaiser credit for waking up our great nation. We can also credit ourselves for waking so much quicker than old Bill calculated.

_With the Colors_
_Turlock Journal_
_Journal Date: November 6, 1918_
From: Lt. Ora R. McMurry, 49th Aero Squadron, 2nd Pursuit Group, A.E.F., France
To: His father, while recuperating from a leg wound. He had two siblings in the Army: Lt. Morland McMurray in Russia and Matthew McMurry in France

September 16, 1918 “Dear Father: Your letter received with its usual heartiness and good nature for it sure braces a fellow up when he knows “Dad” is strictly behind him. Well, how do you like the hell we are giving the Kaiser now. I got to the front just in time to get into the first big counter-attack in July and have been going strong ever since. We are flying two and three times a day and having plenty of fun. I haven’t “officially” killed any Huns as yet, but when I get under way, they want to steer clear for I’m going after them. For when one has been here as long as I have, one sees the German’s contemptible mode of warfare, cruelty, etc., nothing but [German] scalps will really fill the bill. It’s not so bad though in my branch. The danger is much greater, but we live well and keep happy. Most of the deaths are due to inability, poor judgment, over confidence, and carelessness. I hope I’m not afflicted seriously with any of these maladies, as it is agreed among the aviators that any of the above is enough to convict a man. Our game is entirely different from any other. It’s like playing hide-and-seek, tag, and a few other games all at once. One never knows when he will be assailed in his unprotected rear by superior numbers. When I get a
few more Huns I am going to apply for a leave and come home for a short rest, or I may get wounded and have to take it.

Journal Date: November 6, 1918

To: His mother and other family members

[He was undergoing training, was busy studying, and listening to lectures.]

It isn’t hard work, but there is lots of it. You have got to have everything on the tip of your tongue. Don’t think that I don’t get seaman drill, because I do. Infantry, battalion drill, boxing, and Swedish washing. Have to learn to steer a ship by compass. Have to carry out orders in a sailing ship or yacht. Last Saturday, I was out on the [San Francisco] bay in one of the island sailing cutters. There were 16 of us in the crew. That is the first time I have ever sailed before the wind, and I thought it a real novel experience. Sailing and its principles come easy to me as it just suits me. And the farther I can get over the water the better. I can’t give you any descriptions of the school other than to say it covers everything in explosives, operation of minelayers, torpedoes, ordnance, and gunnery in general. We have a big parade ground here and believe me we use it in infantry movements. [They lifted weights, so their arms were prepared for sending semaphore codes with flags.] I am feeling fine, Mother. I don’t know whether we have any influenza on the island or not. I am not worrying over it, and I am glad you are not, but do be careful. I have received three shots to counteract it, and if anything come up in Turlock don’t be afraid to take them, too.

Journal Date: November 6, 1918

To: His sister Vera. He had just written to his mother and sisters Ethel and Emma

September 27, 1918. I am stationed at a good camp now, but how long it will last I don’t know. We have a barracks to sleep in and mess-huts to eat in. I am sure glad I got this far and like it fine. It is fine country and a good climate. I get more money per month now than ever before. I got about 150 francs and about a million centimes – you can figure it out – it’s a good riddle. I had one heck of a time to count it first. But getting so I can talk French, Algerian and everything else. I don’t have time to do anything more than work. I get up when it is dark, and when I get home and eat and take off my fatigue clothes, it is almost dark. It is now dark, can’t see what I write and haven’t any light. Will close.

Journal Date: November 20, 1918

From: Dr. D.H. Dyberg, from Turlock, Medical Detachment, No. 316th, A.E.F., France
To: Frank Harder at the Turlock Journal

October 23, 1918. Mr. Frank Harder, Dear Sir: Received your [news] paper sometime ago. It was glad to see the same as it took me back to those carefree days back in old California. Since writing last, I have traveled many miles and am at present somewhere in France. This part of the country is in the best part of France for climate, etc. We have quite a time getting along with these people as they are very quaint. Old-fashioned methods prevail. They are a great deal like our neighbors in Mexico and South America – never in a hurry. So far, we are not very tired of this country. Of course, it cannot compare in any way with dear old California. But as we have plenty of eats, exercise and sleep, most of the soldiers maintain good health.

Nothing is too good for a soldier of Uncle Sam. The military life has many drawbacks, but we are reconciled to the fact that the war is a necessity and so we manage to stand many hardships. It certainly is a far cry from the easy life of a civilian to a military life, but when all is done and those of us lucky enough to come back alive to U.S.A., will appreciate our country more than ever.

The medical core is a very busy branch as many of the boys in various companies are in need of medical attention. I am in the dental corps and manage to spend a great deal of time operating. The army recognizes that the teeth are very necessary, and therefore the soldiers are compelled to have them attended to. One result of this war will be that the returning soldiers will take better care of their bodies, than they did before entering the service.

The hospitals of France are wonderful. They have the best equipment possible and the most skilled medical service. I have visited one several times, because a number of boys from San Joaquin Valley are located there. We are billeted in typical French houses of old and quaint construction. They are comfortable, more so than the trenches where the dough boys are so we are satisfied. Well, I hope all is O.K. at Turlock, and send my regards to the boys at the K. of P. [Knights of Pythias].

Journal Date: December 11, 1918

From: Pvt. Ernest L. Carson, Co. A, 364th Infantry, A.E.F., France
To: His sister [no name given]

October 21, 1918. We came back from the front a few days ago, and I know I sure need a good rest. I don’t know how long it will last, but I am looking for at least a week, so I get a chance to feed up and try to regain part of the 20 pounds I have lost in weight.

We were up in the front line for eight days, and we sure raised cane with the Huns. We drove them back about 12 km and were fighting the best troops the Germans have, called the Prussian Guards. It surprised the French, and they could not figure out how we made it, as this was one of the hardest sectors on the line, and had been standing still in one place for four years. The Germans were all dug in for the winter, and it made them rather sore that we came along and made them move.

We certainly had some hard scraps, and I did not figure at times that I would be sitting here writing now. How it happened I don’t know. Pershing said, “Hell, Heaven or Hoboken” by Christmas. We went through hell; if we can make the other places by Christmas it sure would suit me, and home will be a real Heaven to me and to any other soldier who has been at the front.

The machine gun bullets and gas didn’t faze me much, but
oh the high explosives and shrapnel when they are dropping all around you some of them within 15 or 20 feet and keep it up that way all night, boy, that turns your nerves a thousand times a minute; and that little hole you dug yourself, you wish it was twenty feet deep instead of only one foot, but saves your life from shrapnel which is falling thick; not falling but with the speed of bullets. I met Walford the second day I was out. Was glad to see him alive and in good health.

**Journal Date: December 11, 1918**

From: Pvt. Amos Gilliland, Base Hospital No. 96, A.E.F., France

To: His mother

Dear Mother: Well, I have arrived in France at last, we just got here today. When we had been here about two hours we got official news of the surrender of Germany. The whistles blew for about an hour, beginning at 11 o’clock. We landed in England first and traveled from one end of it to almost the other on a train, where we stayed at the rest camp for a day then we took a boat for France, and we just got into this rest camp today. I do not know how long we will stay in this camp, but I do not think it will be over a couple of days.

Our trip from the U.S. over was very eventful and very monotonous. I did not get seasick, but I was about half groggy from the time I got on till I got off. One of our captains died on board ship with the flu. They are going to ship him to the U.S. Albert Gustafson did not get to come over as he got sick the day before we left and had to go to the hospital at Upton. He sure hated it and so did I.

The English people as a whole I do not like. They are way behind the times in their building, etc. The trains consist of little engines and little cars that go bumping along the track and almost jolt the liver out of you. The coaches are divided up into compartments where eight people ride in a compartment. The trains run only about six inches apart, so it isn’t safe to stick your head out of the window.

We stopped twice along the way in England, and the American Red Cross gave us coffee and cakes, and of course, we had our rations with us. It sure seemed good to see the American Red Cross. They were the only ones to give us anything. The English girls are very pretty. You seldom see a homely one. The English children stood out in the streets by the dozens and shook hands with us as we marched. There are an awful lot of poor people there and houses are all bunched up together.

I don’t know how long we will stay in France, but it will probably be six months or a year. I do not care, though, as everything is interesting and am not homesick. If you send me an Xmas box make it mostly candy, as I crave sweet stuff here. Must close now.

**Journal Date: December 11, 1918**

From: Cpl. E.A. Gilliland, Co. B, 363rd Infantry, A.E.F., France

To: His parents

October 6, 1919. Dear Folks: Well, this is the first time I have had a chance to write a letter for two weeks, but I have been so busy chasing the Huns over the hills that I did not even have a chance to wash for nine days. What do you think about me going for nine days without washing or shaving? We have come back a ways for a rest and a chance to clean up a little.

We were in one of the largest drives of the war, and I came out without a scratch, and I can assure you that I was in the game all the time and did my part. None of the Turlock boys were killed, and the ones that did, got just flesh wounds, and they will be well soon. It sure was a fierce old battle, and the shells sure did burst all around me but none of them seemed to have my name on them. It sure was a wonderful experience, and we saw some awful nights, but they do not bother a person on the battlefield. We slept out in all kinds of weather, and I did not even take a cold. I have gotten 15 letters since we came back, so I will have some letters to answer now, but I got several from each person, so I can answer them in one letter.

I had several pieces of shrapnel come and light on me, but it was clear to the end of its journey and did not even scratch me. The shells broke all around me, and I came back alive and am feeling fine and considered myself pretty lucky too. We are now camped on the ground that we took away from the Huns, but we expect to move further back behind the lines and get into shape again soon. Y.M.C.A. gave us all a package of cookies, a package of gum, and a box of candy, and also some tobacco.

The country where we are now is slightly wooded, and the soil is very fertile here. It is a shame to let this good land lay idle for four years. The towns around here are nothing but ruins. Going over the top is just about like you read in the papers, and if you could only see the barbed wire, they have in No Man’s Land – hundreds of miles of it.

**Journal Date: December 25, 1918**

From: Pvt. Thomas M. Green, Co. B, 503rd Engineers, A.E.F., France

To: His mother

Dear Mother: I just received your letter and was glad to get the five dollars. I am doing the same work that brother Charley used to do every winter, and I like it O.K. The Allies are still advancing, and the Kaiser is yelling for peace, so we will be home in a year, or two, and when we come home there will be no Kaiser Bill. We are now in tents. We have our beds and stove and plenty of wood so we can keep warm. There are plenty of wild hogs where we are now, so we will not go hungry if we cannot get our supplies. Well, as it is getting close to dark I will close.

[Another letter by Pvt. Green to his mother, published in the Journal the same day.] Dear Mother: I received your letter today and was glad to hear from you. I am fine and hope you are the same. Yes, I get my pay once a month, but it don’t go very far. We pay five francs for a dozen of eggs, which is about one dollar, and $33 a month don’t go very far. I have $3.35 per month taken out for insurance and five taken out for a liberty bond. Would like to tell you all kinds of weather, and I did not even take a cold. I have gotten 15 letters since we came back, so I will have some letters to answer now, but I got several from each person, so I can answer them in one letter.

I had several pieces of shrapnel come and light on me, but it was clear to the end of its journey and did not even scratch me. The shells broke all around me, and I came back alive and am feeling fine and considered myself pretty lucky too. We are now camped on the ground that we took away from the Huns, but we expect to move further back behind the lines and get into shape again soon. Y.M.C.A. gave us all a package of cookies, a package of gum, and a box of candy, and also some tobacco.

The country where we are now is slightly wooded, and the soil is very fertile here. It is a shame to let this good land lay idle for four years. The towns around here are nothing but ruins. Going over the top is just about like you read in the papers, and if you could only see the barbed wire, they have in No Man’s Land – hundreds of miles of it.

**Journal Date: January 1, 1919**

From: Pvt. Benjamin H. Binford, Co. C, 310th Field Signal Battalion, A.E.F., France

To: His father

Somewhere in the State of Luxemborg, November 24, 1918.

Dear Father: The last few days we have been continually on the
move and have kept going from one town to another as fast as we could be accommodated. We have seen some of the most wonderful country and have a chance to see it better when we travel by trucks as we have been doing. Since writing my last letter home, have made two jumps on this trip and the first place we stayed it was a village where the people had four years of German rule, and they tell lots of things about the conditions that existed during their reign in the town. All along the way the people had a big smile for us, and they can hardly imagine the generosity of the American soldiers. At this town, we had good bunks to sleep in, and the people treated us the same as if we were their own people.

On the next leg of our journey, we came to Luxemburg, as you see by the heading of this letter. The scenery along the way was simply grand. We are located in a very nice town, and the people go wild over the American soldiers. They see to it that all of us have good places to stay, and I have a room with a private family. The room has all the conveniences that you could ask for, and it sure seems good to get a taste of home life again. The people here talk a lingo of their own and most of them mix up each language into their conversation, and the boys have good laughs at hearing the mixture. We have been very fortunate with our eats since being with this outfit. They sweeten things up with sugar so it tastes good. We don't get any fresh fruit here now as the season is so late. They raise lots of cabbage around here in this part of the country, and we get plenty of that to eat. The weather is pretty cold here now, but we are fixed well for clothing, which makes it so we do not mind it much. Every morning there is ice on the water, but otherwise it is not so bad. I have not had a taste of summer weather over here, so don’t know how things go here during the summer months.

Journal Date: January 1, 1919
From: Benjamin Binford [Nothing further was provided]
To: His parents

Somewhere in France. November 14, 1918. Dear Parents: Will write you a few lines to let you know that I am getting along fine. The days are getting cooler here now. The mornings are so cold I have to wear my overcoat. Have not had any rain the last few days. I see by the [news] papers that the people of the United States celebrated when they heard of the armistice with Germany. So did we here in France. We heard about it early that morning, and at the town where our barracks are, they began ringing the church bells long before the time. At 11 o’clock all the towns around began celebrating by ringing all those fine tone chime bells of the churches, and it certainly sounded pretty. We all listened to hear the shot fired by the big guns, and they were going at an awful rate until the time for them to stop. I never heard such a heavy barrage in my life as was going on at that time, and it seemed strange to have it stop all at once.

We were a good many miles from the front at the time when it stopped, but we could hear it all the time at the church in a town where I worked. The boys would line up and each one tap the bells. That evening the people of this town had things going all evening. Had the church bells going and fireworks. Some had found a lot of signal rockets, and they fixed them up for fireworks. It was cloudy enough so it would give the best effect, and when one of the rockets was shot up, it would color the sky whatever the color the rocket was.

Journal Date: January 1, 1919
From: Carl G Tell, 304th, A.E.F., France
To: His father

November 24, 1918. Dear Father: I wish you and all the rest of the family a Merry Xmas and a Very Happy New Year. This day had been designated as Dad’s Xmas letter day. Everyone is expected to write a letter to our Dad over there so you will receive it on Christmas Day, and we in turn hope to hear from you on the same day. I understand that the censor is not so strict now and that we are allowed to tell where we have been and where we are now.

You will probably be interested to hear a little about my experience since leaving the States, because I have never said very much in any of my letters. We left Philadelphia July 14th, and sailed from there to Halifax, where we lay in the harbor for several days waiting for our convoy. Saw the result of the explosion there last December. Left Halifax the 20th and arrived at Liverpool the 31st of July. We had a pretty good trip over as the sea was pretty smooth except one or two days. Saw some icebergs in the distance one day.

We encountered three submarines when we were about a day off the Irish coast. We sunk two of them, but one got away. One of them passed right in front of our ship and was hit when it was just off our starboard side. We docked at Liverpool and marched to a rest camp where we remained for a day or two. Then we took a trip across England on a train. Stopped at several rest camps and finally left Southampton for Havre, France. The English Channel was very rough. Arrived at Havre August 6th and marched to a camp where we rested for several days. Left there to Is aur Tille where we all went to school as I have told in my letters. We had a nice trip there riding in first class coaches.

We finally left for the front September 25th and arrived at Ramport. The big drive was on, and we certainly had plenty of excitement. We went pretty well up to front line, and at one time were in front of the artillery. The Americans were capturing thousands of Germans, and there was a steady stream of prisoners coming back. The first day we saw our first Boche planes and also saw them shoot down some observation balloons. Also saw some Boche planes shot down. There was something doing nearly all the time until the armistice was signed, and we seemed to think that something was missing, if there wasn’t a barrage on.

We moved to Brabant, Thellombeau, and Ambly where we did repair work on artillery and small arms. Came to Verdun October 4th and are still here. That is we are billeted a short ways from Verdun and have been there several times. There were quite a few shells hitting around here when we arrived. But it is quiet now. Well, we don’t know just when we leave for home, but I hope they send us back soon. Hoping that we will all spend next Xmas together.

Journal Date: January 15, 1919
From: Lt. F.L.Gibson, Headquarters, 1st Army Corps, A.E.F., France
To: Charles and Clara Lundahl

Yonne, France, Friday, December 13, 1918. Dear Charles and Clara: To show you that my heart is right, I am going to answer your letter at once for I know I do put it off that means indefinitely. During the war, it was hard to write letters on account of censorship regulations. Now it is hard, because there is too much to tell and I don’t know where to start, so I’m not going to tell you much of
anything in this letter but am going to wait until I get to Turlock then gossip you all to sleep.

This is my lucky day, Friday, the 13th, so I feel like doing almost anything. You can’t beat Friday or the 13th for lucky days any way you try. Well, I suppose you folks are all anxiously awaiting the return of the American Expeditionary Forces, just to get a look at the boys, and I’m sure most of the boys are just as anxious to get to their homes, although for my part I’m willing to stay awhile and help clean up.

My billet is a beautiful room furnished in mahogany, heavy plush carpets and draperies, a fireplace, electric lights, electric heaters, beaucoup writing tables and books till you can’t see. But the bed, it makes me sleepy to look at it. After sleeping for months on straw between two or three army blankets that bed goes good. At night, I just float away into the most peaceful dreams and don’t have to get to the office until 9 a.m.

I can’t get used to being in town where the M.P.’s watch your every step, keep your coat buttoned and your shoes shined. It was not like that up at the front – rubber coats, tin hat and any old thing handy, but you couldn’t light your cigarette if the Boche were over at night, that was about the only orders.

I sure did see a lot of the front and believe me it was worth while. I have been from the Swiss border to the other side of the American line and have been all over France, outside of the extreme southern part, on freight trains and in a limousine – mostly limousine. Pretty hard to take isn’t it? But the real battle ground is Verdun. No one should ever miss seeing it. Now that the war is over I’d like to go back and give it a real look over. Verdun itself is quite badly busted up, but the surrounding country out around the forts is churned over and over again by shells of all sizes. The day the armistice was signed two 42 cm Boche shells fell on Fort Duamont, no damage, however, except digging two big holes.

The Argonne Woods is quite a battleground and represents some terrific fighting by our boys. It also would make a wonderful place for a tourist, and there’s no doubt but many of them will come over later on. I’m wishing you all the happiest of New Year’s and hope to see you all in 1919.

**Journal Date: January 15, 1919**

From: Cpl. George S. Hall, Company A, No. 302nd Field Signal Battalion, A.E.F., France

To: His brother [no name given]

Chateau Villain, France, December 9, 1918. Dear Sir: Your many letters were received also the Turlock [news] papers and was glad to get both to be sure. This is practically my real first opportunity to write you since the cessation of hostilities as we have been continually on the march ever since. I am able to tell you that I am in pretty good condition, and I think that Harry is the same. I have not seen him for some time but expect to look him up soon and see him in person.

We are now stationed at Chateau Villain, about 12 miles from Gen. Pershing’s headquarters, located at Chaumont, and as far as we can see, we will be here for some time to come. As the censorship has been lifted to a great extent, I will now give you a short account of my doings and wanderings since embarking on board a British ship at Hoboken, N.J. for a British port.

We left N.Y. Harbor towards evening on the 29th of March and put into Halifax on Easter Sunday. There we viewed the ruins of the great Halifax explosions, and it was some ruins, but since that time I have had the opportunity to see a good many worse. From Halifax we put out to sea, and after ten more days upon the ocean, we made port at Dover, passing through London enroute. The only thing of interest about Dover were the famous white chalk cliffs that it possesses, otherwise it was about as dreary as a hole as I was ever in.

Our trip across the channel was a disastrous one for me, and I will remember it to my dying day. We had a hard time making port at Calais, but finally after circling around the mouth of the harbor a few times, we finally were able to land. By that time I was in a state of semi consciousness, was drenched to the skin by the sea spray, it was all I could do to get up and shoulder my pack and stagger down the gang plank, so you can imagine what a sorry spectacle I presented when I first set foot on French soil.

We stayed at Calais a few days, and we all had an opportunity to see a typical French city for the first time. Calais is a city of about seventy thousand and is traversed by several trolley lines, which are but toy cars compared to our own American street cars.

We journeyed to Zutkerque in Flanders, and when there but a day, I was sent on a detail, which proved to be the most pleasant trip I have had up to date. We were sent to Sangres to bring back some Indian motorcycles, and our route brought us through Paris, where we stopped over for a few days. Our trip back was pleasant. I was astride of a solo Indian, and I sure did burn up the roads, doing as high as 65 miles for many a mile in a stretch. We were touring France by motorcycle in the early spring of the year, and we enjoyed it to the fullest. Our return trip brought us through Chaumont, Troyes, Paris, and Beauvais, finally winding up in the town of Fruges. Troyes is a city of about sixty thousand and is very pretty city, too, while of course Paris is well-known to you through books that you must have read.

I joined my company three weeks later at Eperlicques in Flanders, and a few weeks or less after my return, I was sent on a detail to Calais where I received my Harley-Davidson motorcycle. I still have the same steed, and though it is rather feeble and old, it still does my bidding and never fails to respond to the throttle.

Soon after we entrained for Baccarat on the Alsace and Lorraine sector, we saw our first real action under fire. It was tame though, compared to what we were destined to meet with before the war was over. While in this sector, my duties necessitated my visiting many cities in this section of France; the most interesting

***A fellow Army courier of George Hall's astride his motorcycle***

Web photo

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and largest of these were Nancy, Lunéville, Epinal, Toul, and Vittel. The last named town was used as a location for several American base hospitals and in times of peace was the most popular and beautiful of all the natural health resorts in France. Bruce Merman was stationed there, but at that time, I was not aware of the fact.

Nancy was a very beautiful city of about a little over a hundred thousand people and was commonly known by the French as “Nancy the beautiful.” I had the pleasure of revisiting Nancy, and it appeared much better with all of its stores and streets illuminated by electric lights. During my former visits, no lights were allowed to be displayed after nightfall.

From Baccarat sector, we shifted to Chateau Thierry front and fought on the Vesle and Aisne Rivers. I was very anxious to see Chateau Thierry, as I had read so much about it in the [news] papers. On this front we were introduced to German shells, bombs, and gas in no gentle manner. It was a sight of but passing interest to see airplanes and observation balloons shot down daily. The balloons always caught on fire and came down in a mass of flames; the observers nearly always managed to escape in their parachutes. It was at the front when we suffered a good many casualties in our battalion and that I had a few close calls but luckily was never harmed in the least.

Our next jump was to the Argonne sector, and we were in the drive from its beginning until the Hun threw up the sponge at the Meuse River. We fared very nicely during this drive, by we, I mean our company, for we had nearly every convenience, by no effort of ours either. You see we captured everything imaginable from the retreatin Huns, including the most comfortable of living quarters. During this drive I made a trip to Verdun and saw what was left of that wonderful brave city of France. Even in its state of ruin, it was very beautiful. I wish you all a Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year and hope to be with you in person in a few months from now.

Journal Date: January 22, 1919
From: A.E.F., letter published in the Army’s Stars and Stripes
To: All Americans

[This was a Christmas letter written to all Americans from A.E.F.]
The Rhineländ, Christmas, 1918. Dear America: Your sons are coming home. The task you set before them is nearly done, and now, day by day, week by week, month by month, your ships are bringing them home. If we have done well, it was for love of you. Dimly we understand that we had been sent forth to slay something which, if it thrice unchecked would one day reach out across the seas and destroy you. Very clearly we understand that by ourselves would you be judged among the free peoples; that the hour had struck for us to show mankind the mettle of our pasture. And believe this – there was not one of us who did not walk a little straighter, live a little cleaner, work a little better, fight a little harder on that account. We wanted all the world to see your raising in us.

And this is written just to tell you that those ships will bring back more than 2,000,000 men, every one a better citizen than when we sailed away. Better citizens, because we know each other better. Rich and poor, high and low, rough and polished, East and West, North and South – the war has mixed us all together. Alabama and Iowa have joined to form a single brigade and what a brigade! Oregon has fought shoulder to shoulder with New York, which means more to New York than ever. Better citizens because many of us – almost a million of us – have, for a time, dwelt in that community spirit which nowhere in the workaday world is quite so animate as it was in that strange, simple country which was called the front.

Above all, better citizens, because you America mean more to us than ever before. For one thing, we have had to learn what it is to do without you. Some for a little while, others for interminable months, we have been obliged to do without you. Of course, the whole A.E.F. – though we have tried to hide it in our letters – has been as abysmally homesick as the most jealous mother could have wished. But surely that was no bad thing.

Then, too, we have seen much shining things done in your name. We who were at Chateau-Thierry and northwest of Verdun have seen men in olive drab and forest green beside us show themselves made of such stuff as taught us a new wonder for the land that could breed them. There were some of us who had to set forth from our own front gate and journey all the way to the Marne to discover America.

We of this generation had come to take our country for granted. We had come to take our liberty as a matter of course, like the air we breathed and the unfailing sun. It was not so with the generation that conceived the nation in liberty and dedicated it to the proposition that all men are created equal. It was not so with the generation that fought a civil war to prove whether that nation or any nation, so conceived and so dedicated, could long endure. But we – we of the early spring of 1917 – were like the idle sons of some rich man, inheritors of a fortune, which only he could value who had by toil and sacrifice amassed it. Now we have done more than inherit the treasure. We have earned it. We were children of a great estate. We have added to it.

And so, dear America, we write you from the Rhine. In the name of those who cannot return, in the name of the best of all, those who lie beside the Marne and the Ourcq and the Vesle and the Aire and the Meuse, we wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. The American soldier sends you his love. A.E.F.

Journal Date: January 29, 1919
From: Pvt. C.E. Cook, 13th Field Artillery, Battery F, A.E.F., France
To: His parents

Lorraine, France. November 28, 1919. Dear Folks: I haven’t had a chance to write to anyone for over a month, but I will try to write often after this hike is over. I think we will be settled some where after this. We are billeted now in some small place in Lorraine, headed for Germany, I guess. We start hiking again right after Thanksgiving.

I guess we all have a lot to be thankful for this year, but I would be a lot more so if I was only there sitting down to a nice big dinner. We had beans, bread, and butter today for dinner, but some of us boys, ten of us, are having a lady fix up a couple of big goose. They cost us 120 marks, that is about $28 in “real” money, quite a price, but we sure weren’t going without a Thanksgiving dinner.

Well, the censor is off the mail now. I can tell you the fronts I was on in this war. When we first went to the front on the 31st of July, we went to Chateau Thierry. We were there until August 18th and moved to the Toul sector and started the St. Mihiel drive.
That is where we had so much mud and rain to contend with. We were up there about ten days and then went up for the start of the Argonne-Muese drive, September 26th. That is where I spent my birthday. The next day after the big barrage, we started advancing. We were in position for the Argonne Forest for 18 days and – Whoa! Dinner is ready. Just finished dinner, and it sure was good. We had two big roast geese, lots of stuffing, boiled potatoes, and gravy, so we sure had a Thanksgiving dinner after all. Now I will try and finish my letter, but I’m so full I can hardly move.

We went from the Argonne Forest up on the Meuse River. We crossed the river at Dun and were in position about ten miles north of there when they quit. We got the orders at 11 o’clock on the 11th and at 2 o’clock we were pulling back off the lines. They gave us all new equipment, and we started on this march and have been hiking every day since. You asked me several times how far back were the doughboys from the artillery. Well, it all depends on how fast the enemy is running, and how big the artillery is. Our six-inch were generally six miles away. Sometimes, we were closer and sometimes they were so fast we couldn’t get that close.

And you asked how I felt the first time I was under shell fire. Well, I tell you, I wasn’t actually scared, but it’s an awful funny sensation and hard to get used to, but you get so you don’t mind it much. You get so you can tell by the sound of them coming about where they are going to hit. It seems funny now not to hear that continual roar of the guns all the time. For the last two months up on the front, it was steady all the time. I pulled the string on over two thousand rounds all together, so I think I must have done my bit. I don’t know how long we will be up in this country, but I hope they send us home by spring.

**Journal Date: February 5, 1919**

From: Pvt. Homer Mead at Fort Lewis

To: His sister Hazel Mead, with their parents being Mr. and Mrs. George Mead

January 28, 1919. Dear Sis: I have had several letters from you so I guess I must surely owe you one by this time. Well, I have finally got back to the old camp [Fort Lewis], and it sure looks good to me. We are getting so many receptions and eats that I almost get tired of it. Part of the boys in my battery left for California this morning. I think the rest of us will get to go tomorrow. We will be put in camp down there and discharged, so you see I may be home in about one week.

Did I ever tell you that the 346th Regiment was the luckiest regiment that ever went to France. Well figure up 3 + 4 + 6 = 13, the number of our regiment, and our regimental commander has 13 letters in his name, so why shouldn’t we be lucky. When we sailed for France, we had thirteen ships in our convoy. The ship we were on was making her 13 trip, and it took just 13 days to cross. We got to our training camp in Camp De Souze, France, on the 13th of September. After training there for six weeks, we went to the front, and when we left it was on the 13th of December. We came home on the St. Louis that was built in 1906, which makes her 13 years-old, and it took her 13 days to cross. One of our men got sick in Camp Merritt, N.J., and was taken to the hospital the next day. I carried his pack over to the hospital for him, and when I got to his room, I told him he would get along all right because the number of his room was 13. He told me he was feeling better. The New York Herald has a write-up about our lucky number, the picture of our boat and all. Well I will close.

**Journal Date: February 19, 1919**

From: Sgt. E.R. “Ray” Hultman, 4th Engineers, A.E.F.

To: His brother and family

Dungenheim, Germany. December 29, 1918. Dear Brother and Family:

Now that the war is “fini,” the boys over here are wondering about their future in civilian life. Personally, I am not certain whether I will finish my course at college or go to farming, and if I go to farming, it may be around Turlock and possibly not. I look forward to the opening of reserve lands, but probably that idea will fizzle out. I wish I could get home in time to help put in the crops and put in some corn of my own, but no chance this year.

Foodstuffs are going to be high the next few years, because of the lack over here. You can’t realize what it means to be short in things to eat and wear. These poor beggars over here know it though. They have bread that looks more like a lump of coal than bread, weighs about the same – made of barley, sawdust, and potatoes. Spuds are the only things they have plenty of and some turnips and carrots. These people have no lights in their houses as they can’t get any oil. Kerosene is imported from the U.S., so you can imagine how much they can get. Germany did have a supply from Austria and Romania but that is cut off now. Clothing material is scarce and high-priced beyond imagination, so these folks spin their own yarn from the wool itself by means of spinning wheels, which have been in the family for many a generation. Very much out of date, these methods.

The farmer’s chief draft or work stock are cows, heifers or oxen. I have often seen them driving two milk cows before a plow. Horses are scarce. I have seen only two or three horses here in Germany. The army has them all I suppose, and the German army is on the north side of the Rhine at present writing.

One chief difference between the German home life and the French seems to be that the German women cook all their food while the French fry nearly all theirs, though neither of the two set a very good table at this day and year, though I have seen some wonderful tasty dishes prepared by French cooks. The American army feeds better than middle classes of either country. In France you must drink wine and coffee. Germany drinks great quantities of beer and has its coffee too. Coffee here in Germany is made from toasted grains of barley, etc.; doesn’t taste half bad at that. Both
the people are good farmers and very industrious. Neither of them live on their farms. Everybody lives in a small village, or a city, and farms his land while he’s outside the city limits. So you can imagine that this country is well covered with small villages, and consequently, but a short distance between any two villages. Each village is generally situated in a gully, draw or depression so as to have the benefit of running water. All this country that is south of the Rhine River is hilly or might say mountainous, though they are small mountains compared with those we call mountains in America.

Another interesting thing which the farmers in the U.S. might copy with good advantage is their very careful saving of manure. Every farmer over here saves all of it and makes a pile right in his front yard. They say that a German’s (or French) wealth is measured by the size of the manure pile in his yard, which is about true when one stops to think about it.

The first cream separator that I have seen belongs to the owner of the house that I am staying in at the present time. A very small built separator about the same as our DeLavals. It is a German make, however. The houses in France are built mostly of cement or stone with red tile roofs. German houses are also built of stone or cement or both and have slate roofs. The interiors are built with more or less disregard for beauty and are more or less comfortable. The German believes in more room or space per person than does the Frenchman, due possibly to the fact that the average “squarehead” is better off financially. He is no doubt the more methodical and industrious of the two.

The poor beggars over here smoke leaves from peach and other trees, having no real tobacco because of the neglect of tobacco raising and the stoppage of importation. War has done things to these people, believe me. Serves these squared domes right, though. It will, no doubt, be some time (if ever) before they make another attempt to conquer the world.

I suppose you wonder what I have been doing over here and what battles I have been in. Well, we have been in battles practically all the time since the beginning of the big offensive in July. We were in Marne battle, St. Mihiel, Vesle River, and Argonne Forest. So you know that we had our share of gas and shell fire. I never got a scratch though I had enough close calls to last me for the rest of my life, and there was times, days and weeks, that I wouldn’t bet a cent that I would live through the war. My only misfortune was that I was burnt with mustard gas, but after a couple of weeks I didn’t even have a scar left from that.

As for excitement we have had quite a bit, the many air battles and burning of observation balloons and coming and going of shells kept one quite interested, believe me, and when “Heinie” would try to bomb us at night with aeroplanes, we were in hot water. Anything that will put fear into a soldier can’t compare with a bunch of bombers. A fellow gets used to rifle and shell fire but night hawks, never! A shell comes z-z-z-z-bang! But an aeroplane keeps circling around and around, trying to locate you, (Those German planes have two engines and sound like a bunch of droning bees,) and then drop a flare to see by and all of a sudden swish, bang, etc., many of them in rapid succession. In the meantime you are lying down gazing up wondering where it is going to land. It is fun, though, to watch the searchlights playing on the sky and hear the anti-aircraft zoom! And see a bright flash as the shell burst in dark night. More fun still is to see one come down like a crumpled duck in flames.

Everything is going along smoothly and quietly over here now. I have a nice warm room to sit in when the weather is cold and have a fairly soft bed to sleep in – my first bed in Europe, too, by the way. There are four of us here. My bunkie (Sgt. Floyd Working) and I sleep in one bedroom and in the same bed and two other sergeants have the other bedroom. Floyd and I have been together and, slept together ever since we left the U.S., and we have had some peculiar beds at times. We slept in horse mangers in old French stables, hay lofts, but mostly out on old Mother Earth’s damp and hard and many times soft breast.

We had a fairly good Xmas – had a company smoker [boxing match]. Xmas day was an ideal Xmas day as we had a snowfall during Xmas eve., so that Xmas was like a picture from some book. The kids were out on their sleds and skates. People here went to an early mass on Xmas morning. We had quite a hike up from France to this place, in the neighborhood of 200 miles. We are now a short distance below Coblenz. We hiked through Luxemburg where the chief thing of interest was the big grape vineyards, which covered the valleys and mountains. The general formation of the ground is about the same – many rivers, small or rather narrow valleys and many hills. We noticed the hills as we had to hike over so many. Well this ends my letter.

Journal Date: March 12, 1919
From: Pvt. Glenn O. Ross, Co. E, 7th Infantry, A.E.F.
To: His grandfather, J.G. Ross of Modesto
Evacuation Hospital No. 27, January 22, 1919. Dear old Grandpa: Mother just wrote me telling me of grandmother’s death. I was very sorry to learn that she was gone, but there is one thing that always makes one feel better when a good Christian passes away and that is that they are at rest in a far better world than a world where all trouble was, strife and pain is ended and where peace lasts forever.

I have thought of you many times since I came to France and also of the many [Civil] war tales you used to tell me. The war you were in was bad enough, but now with all the modern implements of warfare, it is much worse than one can conceive of. I have seen the time when the machine gun bullets, gas, and high explosive shells were drenching the air so thoroughly that it seemed impossible for human life to stand under it, but many of us did and went forward over the top in the good old American way with Old Glory tied to our rifles and everybody shouting “come on boys, let’s go get the square heads.” And we did show Germany and all the world that the good old American fighting spirit could not be put down.

I had a German prisoner of war tell me that he had been opposite every army in the field and had seen seven years of active service, but he never saw any spirit like the Americans. He also said that there was nothing more fierce or more complete than an American barrage fire.

I went to Fort Riley, Kansas in October 1917, and trained there for six months taking day and night training, and then was put on the “overseas list.” We were sent to Camp Merritt, N.J., from there to Hoboken, N.J., and were loaded on a transport. We had an American crew and the ship was an interned German liner. We landed in Brest, France and were put in box cars with seats along the sides
and through the middle. The box cars of France are only about two-
fifth the size of those of America. We received our usual allowance
of corned beef and bread and were on our way four cold days and
nights.

We unloaded near, Chaumont, France, and from there, we
hiked to our billets in the training area. I was company clerk and did
not have to drill. We were billeted in barns and sheds. They gave us
trench warfare training and plenty on night patrol work. After we
had trained about six weeks, we moved out for Chateau Thierry
front, and it was not many days until we were in action. I went in the
bombing squad of the automatic riflemen and had the ordinary rifle
to carry and also the hand grenades. The first time in, we were
guarding the Marne River and the railway.

I was caught on outpost duty one day and only had a
small place to hide myself. It was about 18 inches deep and nine
feet long. A German aeroplane gunner tried to get us out several
times but could not make it. We got used to shell fire and machine
gun fire and get what “yellow” we had, which was very small driven
out of us, and we were eager to see what some real warm stuff was
like.

We underwent some hardships but that is expected in
army life. Then we came out and went into another sector on Chateau
Thierry front and relieved the 5th Marines in the Belleau Woods,
and there we found it plenty warm. We were shelled all the way into
our position, and they sure had the range on our holes in the woods.
It was on the sixth day in this sector that I got mine. I was in a small
hole about three-and-one-half feet deep with a comrade and another
hole close to us had four in it.

This 9-inch shell hit just between us, and I was the only
one to live through it. We were all thrown in the air and then covered
up with earth, stone, pieces of trees and other rubbish. Three of my
pals were killed from the concussion of the explosion. I was
unconscious from 12:15 a.m. until 5:30 a.m. and was gassed all the
time. A large stone broke two of my ribs and pushed in on my right
lung. After this, I got a machine gun bullet in my left elbow. My ear
drums had burst, and upon arriving in the hospital, I found that 36
pieces of the shell and stone had lodged in various parts of my
body. I was numb all over for three weeks, and my heart was in a
bad shape. I was unconscious in the base hospital for three days
and can’t tell you much that happened.

A buddy that was in the same bunch said that the first
ambulance we were put into was hit by a big shell, so you can see
how hard they tried to put me out. America’s best physicians are in
the service now, and they pulled me through in good shape. I got
out of the hospital, and the gas started to eat on my throat again.
This caused me to return to the hospital for another operation, but
I am feeling fine now.

France is far behind U.S. in many ways. All of the buildings
are built of stone and every bit of improvement is put up to stay. I
can speak enough French to get along and have had many
good times since peace came. We are formed into a casual company
now and hope we are on our way home but do not know. My
company is on the Rhine.

Journal Date: March 19, 1919
From: Pvt. A.B. Chelgren, Co. F, 319th Engineers, A.E.F., France
To: His sister Alice

Brest, France. February 7, 1919. My Dear Sister Alice: I will
take time to answer your most welcome letters, which I received last
night. I received letters you wrote Dec. 4, Dec. 17, and Jan. 4, also a
letter from Leedy written on Jan. 15, so our mail finally got through.
I got seventeen letters altogether. There surely was a bunch of
letters that came in. One soldier got eighty-eight and another eighty-
two and several others got over fifty, so there surely was a happy
bunch around the barracks last night.

We didn’t get them until after the show was over. We were
some busy bunch. Lights go out here at ten o’clock, but they left
them on last night until about 11 to give the boys a chance to read
some of their letters. A lot of them didn’t finish until noon today. I
did not have been working for the last four days as I have not been
feeling very good, so I have had a chance to read my letters. I was
in bed for three days but have been up today and am feeling pretty
good now, and am going back to work tomorrow. I have had a cold
ever since I came over here. In fact nearly everybody has a cold.
You asked if there were many cases of flu over here. I have heard of
only a few cases around, and there has not been any deaths in our
outfit that I know of, but I heard of several cases in other outfits.

A great many of the boys are busy tonight writing letters.
We were going to leave for home before Xmas. We started to get
things ready. We got our passenger list ready, and then orders were
changed. They ordered our mail held at New York for us. After
orders were changed, they still held our mail. They got tired of
waiting for it to get here, so they finally sent a wire to Washington
and they got it started. I hope they keep it coming while they keep
us over here. I hope we get some newspapers, too. Did Emin have
the Turlock Journal sent to me or did he get the letter I wrote
asking him to send it?

I had a letter from Arthur Johnson. He has been discharged
and is at home. He said he had laid away his uniform he hoped
forever. I suppose he is a happy nut. He said he liked it fine in
England, though he didn’t come to France at all. He said that Harry
Swanson was in Paris doing M.P. [military patrol] duty.

Everybody asked me how soon I was coming back. I wish
I knew and so does the rest of the boys. There is some talk around
camp of us being sent to Turkey. I would rather go there than stay
here if I thought we had a better chance of going home. It may be
only talk as we hear all kinds of rumors floating around. A captain of
one of the 319th companies said that we would be lucky to get home by the 4th of July. I hope we get out of here as everybody is tired of this place.

Journal Date: March 19, 1919
From: Treve Berlin, U.S. Army Hospital No. 35, West Baden, Indiana
To: S.T. Webber, Turlock Board of Trade

My dear Mr. Webber: I received the letter you sent for the Board of Trade offering to assist me in getting a position when discharged. While I am not in any need of assistance, I think the idea a fine one, and that it will be fully appreciated by the boys who have been in the service. The action of the Board of Trade in taking the matter up is timely as it is going to be a big problem all through the country. I am still in West Baden, Indiana, but am looking forward to the time when I will be again among relatives and friends of Turlock. The Chief Surgeon took a notion that he wanted to work on me himself, so I thought it best to let him have his way.

We have a very swell hospital here. It is formerly a fashionable hotel and was visited by millionaires from Europe and the United States before being thrown open to the Army. There are about 600 patients here, and we have everything we need to bring about recovery. We are taken care of by our expert surgeons and beautiful nurses. The Indiana people, or “Hoosiers,” as they call themselves, are as good people as you will find anywhere, and they spare no pains to entertain the boys who are away from home. We have movies, boxing, and other entertainment every night, and many people visit the hospital every day.

I have had quite an amount of experience since leaving Turlock on that September day. We landed in Glasgow, Scotland and paraded through that town. The people all turned out and met us with a roar. We found the town to be quite different from San Francisco. After a short stay here, we boarded a train and made a trip. We lost no time here, but proceeded at once across the Channel to France, arriving in a small town, we at once began our training. We worked very hard everyday and were ready to hit the hay at 9 o’clock. That is the right expression as we had nice barns to sleep in. Our life was not all hard graft though, as the people were very friendly and showed us a good time. It was rather a novel experience to be living in a strange country, far as it is behind the United States.

The latter part of September found us trained and ready for a crack at the Hun. We moved up to the lines and on the morning of the 26th, went over. We were at once met with a fierce bombardment of big shells and machine gun bullets. Our company lost heavily during the first few hours, my closest friend in the company was killed shortly after we started, his body being riddled with machine gun bullets.

I saw George Mermann a few hours after we started. He yelled at me, and I noticed he had a cheerful grin on his face, though in the midst of a considerable din. He was shot I heard afterwards. I had many close calls and was near to death several times. I finally did get it, being struck by two chunks of shrapnel. One of the wounds healed up in about six weeks, but the other in my foot is still giving me a little trouble. I can’t walk without crutches, but hope to be better soon. Well, I will close now.

Journal Date: March 19, 1919
From: Three military men

To: Turlock Board of Trade

[Turlock Board of Trade sent letters to Turlock military men, informing them of their program to place returned veterans in local jobs. Many responded with correspondence of their own, of which three are below.]

From: Frank Stierlen. Letterman Hospital, San Francisco. March 6, 1919. Dear Sirs: I was glad to get your letter a few days ago. I am hardly in a position to answer your questions at present, so I will just drop you a line to say that although I have seen quite a bit of the world in the past few months, I have not forgotten God’s country as you put it, and Turlock still looks good to me. I was taken sick on the train coming from the East and have been in the hospital here about two weeks, but am getting along as well as I could expect, and hope to be out and discharged before long. I would like to make Turlock my home again, if there is an opening there, but I have not made any definite plans for the future, and will not until I regained my health. As soon as I am able, I will be down that way, only for a visit, and hope to find Turlock and my many friends there well and prosperous as when I left.

From: Roy V. Rude. Medical Department, Mather Field, Sacramento. I expect to be discharged in about three months. I worked for the Standard Oil Company prior to my enlistment, and would return to Turlock if I could be placed with them at the Turlock Station. If I cannot secure a position with the Standard Oil Company, would be glad to return to Turlock as I have relatives there and am very well acquainted.

From: Benjamin W. Piggott. Corning, California. March 6, 1919. Gentlemen: Your letter received and wish to thank you for your offer of assistance. I was discharged January 30, 1919, but circumstances make it impossible for me to return to Turlock at present; however, I hope in a year or two to return to Turlock. I am working in a garage at present, and if I return to Turlock, I shall expect to follow that line of work.

Journal Date: April 16, 1919
To: His parents

Mayes, Germany. March 22, 1919. Dear Parents: I hope it will not be very long before we go back. Since being here in this town, I have not done any washing. The lady of the house does it for us. I get the soap for her, and with what soap is left, she thinks more than pays the bill and will not accept any money for the work. I expect you have heard about how soap will buy anything around here. The soap the Germans were using when we came here was made out of dirt. The soap we gave the lady to use is mostly lye soap.

I suppose you will be getting the German Iron Crosses I sent by the time you get this letter. I have another package ready to go as soon as I can get it to the post office. There are some rules about what we shall not take with us when we go to the United States, and I am glad that I heard of them and will not get disappointed at the last minute when I go on the boat. At the port, they search every man to may sure he doesn’t have silver, foreign money or maps with him. They take your supply of soap and talcum powder away from you for fear that diamonds might be smuggled to the United States in this manner.
Now if Bruce Merman should get home before I do and should come around to the house, he can explain lots about the different souvenirs I have sent you. In the package I have ready to send you, you will notice that I have a covering sewed on it that looks like burlap, but it is not the case. It is a paper cloth made by the Germans on account of not having the material to make good cloth.

In the paper I am enclosing in this letter, I noticed that the Red Cross ladies who had just arrived here in town were from Base Hospital No. 30, which was the place where Bruce Merman and Will Weaver were, and I went around there to the Red Cross hut and talked to one of them and she told me a lot about the boys. She was telling me about Will Weaver being sick for about five weeks before he died and that he was one of the best like men around the place. She said that when he died that the nurses at the hospital gave a fine floral piece in the form of a crown and the officers and men also gave a beautiful floral offering. She says that the place where he was buried was a beautiful place and that about every morning they would see Bruce going out to the grave. She states that a short time ago they took the body up and put it in a new casket to have it sent to the United States. This lady told me she would be glad to tell me anything I wanted to know about his sickness and death.

The Y.M.C.A. has been putting on quite a number of good shows lately. I was to one Thursday evening, and it was the biggest thing that has come to this town. It was given by the Knights of Columbus and had a troupe of 56 men. Will close for this time.

Journal Date: April 30, 1919
From: Sgt. Bruce Merman, Base Hospital No. 30, Clissen, France
To: Turlock Board of Trade
I was much impressed by your inquiry as to my future welfare upon returning to civilian life. I highly sanction the steps you are taking to reach the boys before they depart for God’s county. To have a position awaiting is a great satisfaction.

The word “wait” is the longest word Webster worked on. It has been terribly abused and decidedly misused in this section for upon our arrival here for embarkation we were told to wait a few days, and the wait seemed to gradually take on size until it was transformed into weeks. Now the weeks are slowly transforming days, and the wait seemed to gradually take on size until it was.

I don’t want to talk about it [the war], he declared angrily. What’s more, I’ll not. I want to forget all about it. It’s a hellish, gruesome, nerve-racking memory that I want to efface, utterly. Do you mean to tell me that it’s necessary to have someone get up before you people and satisfy a morbid curiosity by describing how you save your best friends shot down, blown up, gasping their lives out in a mud hole reeking with poison gas, scores and scores of them, before you will lend your money to Uncle Sam? Is that what we’re coming back here to face?

Why man, even to think of it is liking taking a pair of pinchers and pulling every individual nerve in my body. Can you imagine crawling out into No Man’s Land in the dark and searching for the bodies of your buddies after a day of attacks and counter attacks? Dragging them back riddled with machine gun bullets, torn, shattered, dead? Or gasping out their lives by candlelight before your eyes? You want me to speak in public about it for your loan drive. Not in a thousand years! I left my peace of mind over yonder. I spilt a pint or two of my blood on a little more than one lung. And somewhere I lost a lot of my nerve. But I’m hoping to God I won’t have to lose my respect for my fellow men now that I’m back. You just tell them that I’m back. You just tell them down at the meeting that’s all I have to say!

Journal Date: May 14, 1919
From: Cpl. Lewis H. Blakely, 2nd Air Park, A.E.F.
To: His sister, Mrs. Malcolm Webber
Tries, Germany. April 7, 1919. Dear Sister: [He told his sister that he filled out discharge papers, applied for a Red Cross chauffeur’s job earning $100 a month, and wouldn’t be home for some time.]

I don’t know if you people in the States know it, but we are not allowed to speak to the Germans except when buying something in the stores. Am billeted with a German family now, and they do all they can to make me comfortable even to shining my shoes in the morning and giving me wine in the afternoon and milk before I go to bed. They wash my clothes and will not take any money for it. This is about all the news, except that my arm is just getting over the effects of the inoculation for grippe, pneumonia and influenza.

Written by Robert LeRoy Santos
Major World War I battles fought by American forces, all in 1918: (1) Cantigny (May), (2) Chateaudun-Thierry (May), (3) Belleau Wood (May), (4) Soissons (July), (5) Amiens (August), (6) St. Quentin (August), (7) Saint Mihiel (September), (8) Argonne Forest (September), (9) Marne (September), (10) Meuse-Argonne (September - November), (11) Mt. Blanc (October), and (12) Sedan (October). The numbers in the list correspond to the numbers in the above map that are next to the battle’s triangle symbol.

Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery and Memorial - More than 1.2 million U.S. troops fought during the 47 days of the Meuse-Argonne offensive. There were 26,277 killed and 96,786 wounded. The “Wild West Division,” 91st Division, trained at Fort Lewis, consisting of numerous Californians, fought at Meuse-Argonne, taking 5,838 casualties. Pvt. C.E. Cook and Sgt. E.R. Hultman note the battle in their letters in this issue of SHQ

Web photo