

*Montanans in the Great War: Open Warfare Over There*

By Ken Robison

/www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1

**Augmented Footnotes**

**This section is organized in Footnote order and amplifies the text in *Montanans in the Great War*.**

**Footnotes:**

**13.** *Missoulian*, November 27, 1914. See [www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1](http://www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1) for more of this adventure.

Missoula Girls in European War. Ruth and Edith Greenough and Bess Epperson Escape From Paris as far as Houlgate and Then Enlist as Red Cross Nurses—Have Thrilling Experiences—Interesting Letter.

Miss Bess Epperson and Misses Ruth and Edith Greenough, all well known Missoula girls, are serving France as Red Cross nurses in the great European struggle. A letter from Miss Epperson received by Miss Dorothy Sterling tells the story.

The three Missoula girls were in a private school in France when the war broke out. The storm was so sudden that they had no time to escape. With hundreds of their fellow countrymen stranded in the French capital, wither they had gone to start a northern trip, without money or means of getting any, partners of the French in their disaster.

Although all automobiles were forbidden to leave Paris, the army wishing to keep all carriers within call, the Missoula girls, another American girl and her brother, both fellow students, escaped from the capital and made their way to Houlgate, hoping to be able to secure their passage to America.

Will Help French. This was not immediately available, and the Americans were forced to remain in the frightened town. The horrors of the war, the simple, pathetic tragedies of the daily life of the French people soon affected the young women so much that they took places as workers for relief.

A hospital was arranged in Houlgate to take care of wounded from the approaching line of battle, and the American girls enrolled as Red Cross nurses. Chances to return to America were soon presented, but the women felt that they were too much needed in the stricken country. They have elected to stay in France until they can no longer be of help.

Dramatic Story. Miss Epperson's letter is a terse, dramatic account of adventures more thrilling than most people may expect in a lifetime. It tells in simple, effective fashion of the experience of five young Americans in the greatest crisis the world has yet faced. It follows:

"If I could only describe all the excitement we have been through during the last week. We 'escaped' from Paris yesterday and are now in Houlgate, and find the dead calm after the storms of the last week almost hurts.

"We arrived in Paris Thursday and had a little difficulty in getting the necessary money for our trip, but didn't think much of it. Friday things tightened up much more financially and silver began to disappear. That morning we went to the Hamburg-American office and found our Victoria Louise wasn't sailing and people were in a general panic—no silver money to be had, only bills and they couldn't be taken, all the big stores being closed because employes had to be enlisted.

Pathetic Sight. "We were in one of the big ones as they were leaving. It was pathetic. Some with great tears running down their cheeks as they told their wives, sisters and mothers goodbye in the street.

"Saturday morning Jeffrey and Pat (the fellow students) arrived and how glad we were to have them with us as we had really began to worry a little.

"There were not trains out excepting for troops and people who had passage on boats that were sailing. The trains were crammed and people had to leave every bit of their baggage except a small had satchel. But all seemed so glad to get away at all.

Locked in Hotel. "The social question seems to be causing quite a little fear in Paris. Our last night at the hotel we were locked in. Can you imagine the queer feeling of having the great iron doors closed and locked downstairs?

"People went rushing down the streets singing the Marseillaise.

"We went to the American ambassador's and he advised us to get to Houlgate if we possibly could, which thing we had been trying to do each day.

"Automobiles were forbidden to leave Paris, but Jeffrey finally discovered that the Packard garage, where his car was, was just outside of the city limits, so we decided to try to get out if we could. We had to leave our trunks in Paris, took out suitcases and hastily threw the other real necessities into our laundry bags and finally found a taxi to haul us out to the car. If you could have seen us departing, five cans of gasoline and baggage tied all over the car. Three in the driver's seat, one on the dinky behind and one on the floor in the fore with feet on the funning board. We got out of Paris without a great deal of trouble, but they told Jeffrey that if the army should need the machine along the way he would have to leave us and take whomever wanted to go to their destination. So you can imagine

with what anxiety we received each interruption. We found that the batteries had given out in Rouen, where we stopped for dinner, and so had to stay there all night.

“Things there were intensely exciting and not so stressful and downcast as at Paris.

Excited Populace. “Almost all night people walked down the street singing the Marseillaise and crying, ‘a Berlin’ and ‘Vive la France.’ Sometimes the mobs were five and six blocks long and crowded. I never have been so moved in my life and I am really feeling as if my own country were in peril. The Germans seem so confident and have caused the war with France. How I hope they are put in their place.

“I would love to go to the frontier nursing, but I guess the family wouldn’t want me to. We have all signed the Red Cross aid here and there is to be a hospital in the big Grande hotel, so I guess we will have enough to do.

Provisions Scarce. “The hotel in Paris closed the day we left and all here are closed as provisions are impossible to get.

“Our last dinner in Paris was some cold ham and string beans served at the hotel and we were glad to have that, too.

“We came into Houlgate yesterday. Madame Payen is still here and greeted us with many hysterics, thinking we were long since dead in terrible Paris.

“There is no money here either and believe me, we are practicing economy. Can you imagine us going into the ville to read bulletins instead of spending a few cents on the newspapers. The army had demanded all the horses and has taken every horse out of the stables. But Germany is even taking foreigners’ machines,

‘Vive la France!’

Tragedies Many. “We have seen sad farewells on every side of us and this morning a poor man near here went, leaving as sick wife and nine children. So, you see, we have a lot to do.

“We were pretty disappointed over missing our northern trip at first, but in the face of all the other tragedies we are now very thankful for what we have.

“I wish you could see the meals we are serving. We have meat and eggs once a day and are pretty thankful. Have had no salt for two days, but hope a supply will arrive tomorrow.

“The bathhouses are all closed, sailors gone, no horses to ride and tennis shoes safely packed in our trunks in Paris, which trunks we are not too sure of seeing again.

“We have had no letters or wires for over a week, so I don’t know whether the family has been worried or not. Neither wire nor mail has been coming through, so it’s a chance if you get this.

“Isn’t it funny to think I would ever be a Red Cross nurse for the French army. Did you know we were really in state of siege even here in Houlgate and have to have a special permit even to go a few miles away. No one could come over now if they wanted to. We had one wild idea of trying it for home, but no boats. And it seems so calm and we seem to be so needed here that I think we shall stick it out.” [Missoulain, September 2, 1914, p. 2]

Missoula Girls Home From War Saw Horrors of Great Conflict. Experiences of Three Red Cross Volunteers in France—Miss Epperson and Miss Greenough Were At Front.

The Misses Bess Epperson, Ruth and Edith Greenough returned to Missoula late Wednesday night from a trip abroad which was marked by thrilling experiences, narrow escapes and harrowing scenes. The three girls, all natives of Missoula, were in Paris on August 2, when mobilization of the French army was ordered and for five weeks they were actually within the war zone and served as Red Cross nurses in the French army. Their story of the trip is fascinating and substantiates the trite old saying that truth is stranger than fiction.

Miss Epperson for four weeks was actively a Red Cross nurse in a hospital at Houlgate. To this haven wounded from the battle of Liege were brought by the trainload and in her division of the hospital 143 patients were quartered. Miss Epperson did all the work required of any nurse. She had trained for a time for the work before going into the hospital and hers was the task of assisting the head nurse attending to the dressing of wounds. The suffering, sickness and horrible injuries seen by this young Missoula woman are seldom crowded into the lifetime of one person. The relieving of pain, the joy of serving humanity for love, the pleasure of finding missing sons of old and feeble parents has been Miss Epperson’s privilege.

Ruth and Edith Greenough were actively enlisted in the Red Cross work, but, because of their years, they were not allowed to enter a hospital to active nursing. Their part in assisting the work was great however.

They Made Shirts. These sisters made shirts for the men at the front; did scrubbing and other hard work about the hospitals.

Miss Epperson and the Misses Greenough were in Paris just before the mobilization of the French Troops. They had intended going on a cruise in the North Sea. The declaration of war by France made this impossible, so, in order to get out of Paris, they decided to return to Houlgate, where they had been visiting previously.

They started on their journey in an automobile, which was available because the garage in which it was kept was outside the city limits of Paris. They were taken by Geoffery Patterson of Dayton, Ohio, who was touring the continent with his sister. They went with just the baggage they could carry. In a three-passenger car rode five persons, seven suitcases, and on the outside were tied laundry bags packed with clothes.

**Hotels Closed.** The night before they left Paris practically all the hotels closed and crowds were marching through the streets singing "The Marseillaise" and "On to Berlin." None of the hotel guests was allowed to leave the hotel.

The next morning no waiters or porters were left and the girls breakfasted on three oranges, brought them by a waiter who was all packed and ready to leave for the front. The silverware of the hotel was locked in vaults.

**An Exciting Trip.** The trip to Houlgate was an exciting one. Several times the automobile of Mr. Patterson was commandeered for military service, but each time released when it was learned that four women were depending on the machine to get away from Paris. The first night was spent in Rouen and Houlgate was reached the next day. The roads leading from Paris were packed with men going to report for army service and fleeing tourists who had been in the gay city.

During the two weeks before they actually enlisted in the Red Cross service the three Missoula girls spent their time sewing on garments for soldiers. They each made 100 shirts and assisted in transforming the amusement places and hotels into hospitals. They also took care of many Belgium refugees. There was only one Singer sewing machine in all the town of Houlgate. Miss Epperson finally succeeded in locating a sewing machine which was run by hand power. With this crude arrangement they did their work.

**Wounded Arrive.** When the first carload of wounded soldiers arrived in Houlgate the entire populace of the town was at the station. The wounded heroes were showered with flowers, songs were sung in their honor and every possible tribute was paid.

The men were brought from the front in terrible condition. They were loaded—rather dumped—into cars and hauled to Houlgate like wood. Many of the men had been on the battlefield for hours and their clothing was blood-soaked and ghastly. The injuries, too, were terrible. Some of the soldiers had been shot three or four times.

**Has Head of German.** One man, nearly dead, brought into the hospital with him the head of a German. This was found in a sack he was carrying. In his pocket he had a finger of the same German. He had taken these things as keepsakes as the German soldier lie dead beside him on the field of battle.

Despite their hurts, every soldier who had been brought from the front was in a hurry to get well, so that he would be able to return to the battlefield. Such patriotism, such hatred for the foe and such longing to return to face the whistling bullets was a revelation to the tourists from Missoula.

From Houlgate the young women went back to Paris. This was at the time the Germans were no further from Paris than Clinton is from Missoula, about 15 miles, or a three and one-half hours' march. Their train was often sidetracked to allow a train of wounded to pass. The three hour journey from Houlgate to Paris was made in 12 hours.

In Paris it was midnight before they could get any kind of conveyance to take them to a hotel. They offered as high as \$20 for the ride, but autos were in the army's use. They arrived in the city about 9 p.m. Almost every hostelry was closed and those that were running were very shorthanded.

**Paris Under Siege.** Huge searchlights were played over the city from the Eiffel tower and cannon were placed on the tower to signal when a German aeroplane was seen coming toward the city.

On the street, the day after they arrived, the three girls heard the signal. They saw a huge German aeroplane approaching. It flew over the town and three bombs were dropped less than a block from where the young women were watching. Several buildings were wrecked.

The girls had to secure a document signed by the mayor and other high city officials before they were assured they would be allowed to remain in Paris.

**Leaving Paris.** It was a war all by itself to get out of Paris. For two days the girls stood in line trying to get tickets. They had money; that was provided for previously when they put their account in an American banking institution in Paris. They simply could not get near enough to the windows to make their wants known. Thousands were trying to get out of Paris on each train.

Finally, after a battle, they succeeded in getting into a compartment in a coach. The compartment was built for eight people, but on that journey it held 12 adults, two babies, baggage galore and a dog. They traveled on this train back to Houlgate. The journey consumed 18 hours, during which time the girls had no water to drink and nothing to eat. They traveled all night. Daylight never looked as good as did the sunrise that morning.

There were no baggage cars on the train and the girls carried their clothing in laundry bags, suitcases and handbags. They draped their bundles on and around themselves as best they could. No porters could be hired. ON this trip scores of trains, carrying the class of 1914 of the French reserves, were passed. These troops were made up of boys, none of whom appeared to be more than 17 years of age. The Missoula girls secured many pictures of these men.

Sail from Havre. After a week at Houlgate the girls succeeded in securing transportation on a ship sailing from Havre. They left Europe September 19 and were in the east for several weeks before coming to their home in Missoula. On the way over to New York their boat was many times hailed and inspected by German cruisers.

The experiences of Miss Epperson and the Misses Greenough would fill a book.

The young women have returned to Missoula to remain. [*Missoulian*, November 27, 1914]

14. *Great Falls Tribune*, April 27, 1918. For more of Chaplain Pippy's letter see [www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1](http://www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1).

Headquarters 163<sup>rd</sup> Inf., A. E. F.

Dear Dr. Van: The United States mail brot me three letters today, and one of them from Brother Van. I assure you, my dear brother, that it was a great pleasure for me to read your interesting letter. Nothing clears the atmosphere for a soldier like a letter from home. A boy expressed it correctly a few minutes ago when he said: "Gee! How the sun shines in France when the letters come!" It is a fact, my dear brother—and I wish all the folks at home could realize it—letters from home greatly change the morale of our troops. One cheerful letter is equal to the strength of twenty fighting men.

How are we getting along? Why, fine! How is the spirit of our boys and the morale of our troops? One hundred per cent! Germany is beginning to feel the sands shifting. Her vision of world conquest will never be able to lift itself again.

When I write to you I feel as if it is my report—a quarterly report, if you please! Our army services are a great success. Even in the midst of war, and where the background has its horrors, there is no picture so sublime, so pleasing to heaven or earth, the heavenly parent or earthly, as an army service out in the open. As one stands in the midst of a throng of soldiers on Sunday morning, with God's blue dome above and around, everything to remind him of God's greatness, the glory of it all gets in his soul.

Can one preach under those circumstances? Yes! If he were blind, deaf and dumb to every spiritual sensation, the Son of God would take him by the hand and bid him arise. Yes, Brother Van, God does wonderfully use His servants here in this field. I feel now that the years I have spent with the troops in the different camps of instruction have been my preparation for this work at this time. I have often wondered to myself why I always found myself with the soldiers at their summer camps. I believe now I have the answer. God's purposes are not always hidden to the faithful. The secret of the bloom is told by the flavor of the fruit.

Last Sunday, March 10, 1918, I spoke to a large crowd of soldiers and officers. My theme was taken from the account of Moses and the burning bush. What a service we had! One of our generals came up to me after the service and said: "Chaplain, if we all caught the intensity of your spirit we would do wonders." He added then the finest statement that ever a soldier made, when he said: "The soldier or officer who goes up to the front line trenches without the consciousness of God's mighty presence and of His promised help is not giving to his country the full value of his enlistment." I said: "General, that's the finest statement I ever hear." The condition changed it into gold!

The Y.M.C.A here is doing a magnificent work. Tell those who have put their money into that institution, for me, eternity only will have the opportunity to reward them. They are a noble, sacrificing army of men and women.

I receive many letters from the father and mothers of boys serving in our American expeditionary force. I cannot answer them all satisfactorily, and it is difficult to explain why. I am not in a position to companion with all of our Montana boys. The battle line is far-flung, and new troops keep coming and going. It is the way of war, as you yourself know. I remember what I thot of the war before I came over here. To you at home it is like looking at the mountain from a great distance. You see the outline only. Its rugged peaks and deep canyons, and the weariness of the foothills can be seen only at close range. There are a million little experiences that only a soldier himself will ever know. And in those little things, among the unthought-of experiences of a soldier, is fought the soldier's greatest battle.

Believe me, my dear Brother Van, there is more to a campaign than the much-talked-of gas and shrapnel, air raids and mining. One will laugh in the face of danger from cannon and gas; but, like life everywhere, that has much of the matter of fact; the hell on it is in the latter. Oh, but we are all happy! And we are going to keep happy until our glorification. The cause that has won our admiration, even to the sacrifice of life gladly and willingly, must be hastened. We all have the spirit of Saint Paul in his attitude toward his great work, where everything is counted less that does not glorify the objective—that for which he enlisted his strength.

Tell the fathers and mothers for me, as you gather with them around their hearths, and as you talk of the boys over these, that they are all faithful in the cause. And tell fathers and mothers, wives and sweethearts, that we will never suffer from fear of death or hardship; that our thot is not for ourselves, not for our comfort. We are thinking of them, and of the long days they are bravely enduring the pain of our absence. Tell the mother who almost thot her son's love lost that there is a boy over here and a mother at home whose love can never be separated.

Ah, Brother Van, our boys are great boys! Our boys are clean boys! Every one is fighting for home. And every boy wants to tell the same story David must have told his parents when he slew the giant—a story of duty, of praise for the other, a story of manliness and cleanness.

Give my best regards to all the friends in grand old Montana, and may He who keeps us in good cheer keep your hearts also in His great love. [*Great Falls Tribune*, April 27, 1918]

19. Montana Enlistments Cards; *Montana Standard*, March 16, 1918; *Great Falls Tribune*, December 29, 1918; *Anaconda Standard*, March 1, 1918, June 19, 1919; See more details on all casualties at [www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1](http://www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1). [The long list of Montana casualties appears at this website in a separate document, MONTANA CASUALTIES.]

33. *Hardin Tribune*, May 10, 1918; the rest of Lena Roy's story appears at [www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1](http://www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1).

#### MONTANA LASSIE ONE OF 150 VOLUNTEER HELLO GIRLS WHO WILL BRAVE SHELL FIRE

Some weeks ago, General Pershing Issued a call for 150 young American women who could speak, read and write French and English with equal facility to go to France as "Switchboard Soldiers," as he phrased it. There was a rush of applications from girls from every state, and when the government had carefully investigated the applications, one Montana girl found that she had been honored by being selected, and that she had been chosen, too, in spite of the fact that she had never engaged in telephone exchange work. She did, however, possess all the other requirements that the government demanded in successful candidates. The young woman in question is Miss Lena Roy of Bozeman.

When she received her appointment, Miss Roy was employed at the mercantile establishment of Willson & Co. in Bozeman. Her application was sent in through Manager Connelly, of the Bozeman Telephone Company, and with the acceptance of the offer of her services came instructions to report at once at the Helena branch of the Mountain States Telephone Company for intensive training. Her training there is nearly completed, and from Helena Miss Roy will go to New York to secure instructions before taking passage to the scene of the great war.

Miss Roy is most enthusiastic about her chance to take her part in the great adventure of war. "You know, I am going to wear a uniform," she said, "and while the work is going to be hard, just think of the thrills we switchboard soldiers are going to have in active service.

"Our uniforms will be approved by the war college and must be worn at all times. The different ranks are distinguished by the different insignia on the white brassard worn on the left arm. Operators will wear a black transmitter design, supervisors a gilt laurel wreath beneath the transmitter, and chief operators the two symbols mentioned, surmounted by the gilt lightning belts used as insignia by the signal corps. The pay is \$60 per month for operators; \$72 for supervisors and \$125 for chief operators, in addition to which allowances will be made for rations and quarters when these things are not provided by the army.

"Of course we girls who are going understand that this is not intended for a 'joy ride,' and that social opportunities are not included in the program. General Pershing told us in a communication sent out by the war department that this is to be a task of a nature and size that would appeal only to brave and patriotic women, and I am going to try to be brave. I am sure I am patriotic. When we applied we were told that the signal corps wanted only level-headed women who were resourceful, able to exercise good judgment in emergencies and even endure hardships if necessary. I only hope that I shall live up to all these requirements."

Of course, the first young women selected were those already familiar with an operator's duties who spoke both English and French, but there were comparatively few of these. Then the work of picking from the volunteers was begun, and only the best were selected from the thousands who answered the call and said they were willing to go. These were placed in the hands of expert operators and taught the mysteries of the switchboard and made acquainted with certain other important duties, for their services on the other side once they begin their work will include talking with both American and French military officers and French officials. Additional units are to be formed to follow the first, so any young woman who believes that she is qualified for the tasks demanded may apply at the nearest telephone company headquarters.

The details of the work the young women will be called upon to perform once they reach the war-zone have not yet been made public, but this description of the British field - telephone stations, where orders to the various battalion officers are received and dispatched, will give some idea of the hazardous duties of the Switchboard Soldier:

The switchboard is carried on a wagon and can be operated without being unloaded. The cable is unwound as a wire-section goes forward and behind the cable drum is a mounted soldier carrying a lance-like pole, with a hook at the end, who deftly catches the cable as it is un-reeled and thrusts it out of the way of following traffic. If the

system is to be more or less permanent, the engineering section which follows stretches the wires on light poles. When the section is moving rapidly in dangerous country it lays out a heavily insulated ground cable and hides it beside the road—in a ditch, for example.

Even in the early days of the war the British military telephone service system was so comprehensive that it enabled Sir John French to direct the field operations of the British army in Flanders by telephone for three days from his home at Hyde Park, London.

The French system of telephone communication has been successfully used by the French generals, particularly General Joffre, to regulate all troop movements over a 200-mile battle-front. At headquarters wax-headed pins on a huge map indicate the location of troops, ammunition automobiles, etc. This map shows the physical geography of the country and all avenues of transportation. The Chief of Staff keeps the map up to the minute by changing the pins according to information received by telephone. Then, if he is advised that a certain division is being attacked by the Germans in superior numbers, he knows by referring to the map the positions of disengaged troops, telephones an order, and in a few minutes troops are moving forward to reinforce their comrades under fire.

It is in telephone operations of this character that the young women will be called upon to help and possibly to assist in receiving and transmitting information which will direct gun-fire.

*The Hardin Tribune, May 10, 1918.*

36. Enlistment Cards. Details on all casualties appear at [www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1](http://www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1).

39. *Great Falls Tribune*, December 29, 1918; Enlistment Cards. An account of the *Moldavia's* final moments from a history of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division appears at: [www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1](http://www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1).

THE FOURTH DIVISION

BY CHRISTIAN A. BACH AND HENRY NOBLE HALL

Chapter III Crossing the Atlantic page 43

The first casualties in the Division, as the result of an enemy act, occurred at sea when the *Moldavia*, a refitted British liner with Companies "A" and "B" of the 58th Infantry on board, was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine with the loss of 56 men, all but one being Company "B" men. This occurred at 2 ..40 on the morning of May 23, 1918, at a point 89 about midway between Land's End and the Isle of Wight.

The *Moldavia* was armed with six light naval guns and two anti-aircraft guns. She was leading her convoy of five ships, "mothering" them, so to speak, while five British destroyers, which had joined them the previous day, darted around and between them. The sky was overcast with clouds and the night was very dark—ordinarily an ideal condition for outwitting the lurking U-boats. A sudden rift in the clouds permitted the moon to peep out for perhaps five minutes during which short time the invisible periscope enabled the U-boat commander to glimpse his prey and send the fatal torpedo crashing into her.

The explosion tore a gaping hole in the port side of the hull and shattered the compartment where the "B" Company men were sleeping and the ladders leading to the deck above. Nearly all the men in the compartment were killed outright by the explosion. The listing of the ship to port undoubtedly saved those who survived the explosion, enabling them to utilize the uneven surface of the sloping compartment walls in climbing to the next deck above, and from there to the boat deck and rescue.

Fortunately, the engines were not injured by the explosion, and the bursting of a starboard bulkhead caused the ship to resume an even keel. An attempt was made to reach shore, but the water gained rapidly and stilled the ship's throbbing engines within an hour.

The explosion had awakened all on board. Contrary to orders, many of the men had undressed before going to bed in the belief that the submarine danger was practically over, as land had been visible during the entire day. In the darkness and confusion many of them were unable to find their clothes and were forced to go to their boat stations in little more than their underwear—some wore even less.

The dying down of the engines found nearly all the men at their proper boat stations. A decided list to starboard had developed, however, which made the launching of the boats at the port side a very precarious matter. A number of men received a chilly bath during the process, but, eventually, the boats were launched. One of the British destroyers came alongside, and made fast to the starboard side of the *Moldavia*, taking all the men she could find room for direct from one ship to the other. Another destroyer circled around, picking up those who were in boats and hanging to the life-rafts.

Only two men were lost by drowning, although many unwelcome cold baths were taken by those who tried to climb upon the life-rafts only to overbalance the unwieldy affairs and slide, headlong, back into the sea. One soldier performed this stunt three times before he became convinced of the error of his ways.

After dropping depth bombs over the area in which the *Moldavia* was struck, three of the destroyer escort and the other five ships of the convoy had scurried away to avoid possibility of further disaster. This left only the two rescuing destroyers with their shivering but thankful burden, to watch the death throes of the stricken vessel. She had settled forward rapidly, her stern slowly rising higher and higher in the air.

Picture, if you will, a glassy, calm sea in the early dawn of that season of the year; a heavily clouded sky through which the sun had not yet made its way, but light enough to make each detail of the tragedy visible to the spectators aboard the little rescue ships; abandoned life boats and rafts bobbing about; here and there a dead body; on the decks of the two waiting destroyers a motley, shivering, awestruck crowd in various stages of dress and undress; a long minute of breath less silence; a lurch; a gurgle; a ponderous gathering of that immense mass of steel, as if for physical effort, followed by the rearing of the stern high in the air; a sickening dive; a seething cauldron in which are tossed bits of wooden wreckage, and the *Moldavia* was no more. The rescued soldiers, packed on the two destroyers, greeted the final plunge of their ship with a tumult of cheers.

49. Enlistment Cards; *River Press*, June 26, 1918. For details on all casualties, see [www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1](http://www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1). **Montana Casualties in World War I.**

62. *River Press*, February 19, 1919; *Missoulian*, February 9, 1919. See [www.KenRobisonHistory.com/world-war-1](http://www.KenRobisonHistory.com/world-war-1)  
*E. H. Best's complete poem:*

*I enlisted in Missoula,  
'Twas on an autumn day,  
To go to fight the Teutons,  
In the land so far away  
And granting God is willing,  
Before the first of May,  
I will be chasing Germans,  
In the thickest of the fray.*

*So farewell to old Montana,  
And the girl that I adore,  
For I am on my way,  
To a far and distant shore;  
We will hit 'em hot and heavy,  
Break the Hun's defending line,  
Double quick down Wilhelmstrasse,  
And chuck the Kaiser in the Rhine.*

*For I love my native land,  
And I love my liberty,  
So now I cross the pond,  
With the soldiers of the sea,  
With my rifle slung for action,  
And my stomach full of beans;  
We are ready Uncle Sammy,  
Just depend on your Marines.*

*They come from the U.S.A.  
From southern scenes,  
From east and west and north and south,  
And fields so bright and green;  
They showed what they were made of,  
Amid the battle scream,  
For it took the Devil Dogs  
To spoil the Kaiser's dream.*

*We were ordered to the front,*

*On the seventh night of June,  
We were told what was coming  
By the battle's roar and boom,  
Bullets fell like rain drops,  
And men like autumn leaves,  
But they failed to break the line  
Of the United States Marines.*

*The blood it flowed in torrents,  
In the streets of old Borchay,  
And may it be remembered  
That was our Victory day.  
For they chased the Huns across the hills  
And through the bloody streams,  
Today they are in Germany,  
The United States Marines.*

*--Written by E. H. Best, 83<sup>rd</sup> Company, Sixth Marines, wounded at Belleau Wood,  
Fort Benton River Press, February 19, 1919.*

86. Kelton, Col. R. H. C. "The Miracle of Chateau-Thierry, 106-109. *The Century*, May, 1919; Colonel Kelton's complete article is carried in [www.KenRobisonHistory.com/World War I](http://www.KenRobisonHistory.com/World War I) as well as a listing of known Montanans.

#### **THE MIRACLE OF CHATEAU THIERRY**

The best detailed account of the Battle of the Marne appears in Colonel Kelton's article, "The Miracle of Chateau-Thierry" in *The Century* of May, 1919:

*The German plan of attack for July 15, as gathered from the captured maps and orders, contemplated crossing the river by pontoon-bridges and in the pontoons themselves, under cover of darkness and an intense artillery bombardment, then forming along the line of the railroad, which manifestly could be found by their troops under any conditions of darkness or smoke or artificial fog, and from that point making the infantry attack, protected by the artillery barrage shown in the illustration already referred to.*

*Inasmuch as the Germans expected to use the narrow area between the railroad and the river for assembling their infantry attack, they did not want to fill it full of shell-holes and only swept it with machine-gun fire, and bombardment fell altogether south of the railroad line. They apparently had no thought that the Americans would remain steadfastly in their positions in this zone, much less that many of them would be met directly on the river-bank, throwing hand grenades into the boat-loads of Germans as they crossed. Nor is it probable that they expected the intensity and accuracy of the artillery-fire with which the American brigade, assisted by the French foot and corps artillery, covered the north bank of the river as soon as the hour of attack was known.*

*Prisoners admitted that their losses were frightfully heavy even before the crossing, despite the fact that their officers had told them that the Americans had only a weak artillery, and this would be smothered by the German batteries massed to cover the crossing.*

*How well the untried artillery brigade . . . [performed] was shown in a remarkable set of airplane photographs of the whole line of the river . . . taken from low altitudes on the second day after the fight, in which the multitude of shell-holes along the north bank and the wreckage of boats and bridges in the water clearly demonstrated the efficiency of our gunners. In these same photographs there could be seen, even without the use of a reading-glass, the hundreds upon hundreds of German dead that lay near the river on the south bank, waiting burial . . . Without question infantry and the machine-gunners had done their work equally well with their artillery mates.*

*The defense plan adopted in this critical foreground by the 30<sup>th</sup> and 38<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiments and the 9<sup>th</sup> Machine-Gun Battalion consisted of an arrangement of combat groups, presenting no regular alignment, but located with regard to accidents of terrain and availability of concealment; and although in the course of the German attack many of these combat groups were overwhelmed, none of them left their places before the fighting became general in all directions, and then such shifting as took place consisted in concentrating at the stronger positions and at those points where the attacking forces seemed to be arriving in largest numbers.*

*The German schedule of attack provided for crossing the river at daylight, launching the infantry attack from the line of the railroad about six o'clock in the morning and attaining the designated position across the Le Rocq Plateau before noon of the fifteenth of July. This operation involved a penetration into the 3d Division area varying from a short distance at the western limit of attack to more than ten kilometers in the neighborhood of Conde.*

*It will suffice to say that at dark that night no German had crossed the Fossoy-Crozancy road except as a prisoner, of which we counted five hundred and ninety-six, and no German except the dead remained in front of the 3d U.S. Division on the south side of the river. Six days later we had buried nearly five thousand of them.*

*The forward companies of the 38<sup>th</sup> Infantry and the machine-gun support from the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion, situated in a triangular position at the mouth of the Surmelin River, with the short side of the triangle along the Marne and the long sides extending toward the Surmelin Valley, never left their positions throughout the whole of that memorable day, and fought for the major part of the time in three different directions. The battalion of the 38<sup>th</sup> Infantry on the extreme right, based on the forward slopes east of Moulins, and which had been disposed to resist an attack from the northwest had to be rearranged during the early morning hours of the fifteen to resist pressure from the east, and fought in that manner, with the Boche on two sides of them, for twelve or fourteen hours.*

*No finer example of control by a regimental commander, or of the confidence of the men in the wisdom of his instructions can be conceived than this performance of the 38<sup>th</sup> U.S. Infantry on July 15, 1918, and it may be very justly said that Colonel U. G. McAlexander was the rock of the Surmelin Valley, just as General George H. Thomas was at Chickamauga; nor is there any finer example of soldierly coolness and courage under fire than the action of Lieutenant-Colonel Frank L. Adams of the 38<sup>th</sup> Infantry, who personally directed the change of front on the extreme right flank, and thereby won his Distinguished Service Cross.*

*But the other regiments were close behind the 38<sup>th</sup> in exhibition of valor. The 30<sup>th</sup> U.S. Infantry held the hill crowned by the Bois d'Argramont, the key to the Le Rocq Plateau. . .*

*The defeat of the German attack on July 15 along the Marne and to the east of Rheims forms the first part of this event, and the magnificent counteroffensive drive initiated on July 18 by those five heroic divisions, two American and three French, may well be called the demonstration of the miracle, for in those three days the morale of all the Allied had been born anew.*

*The defeat of the Germans had been complete. True, they had gained a few kilometers at some points, but though parts of the Allied line had sagged a little it did not break. No troop operations were needed anywhere to stop a gap, and when Marshal Foch was assured of this fact on the night of July 15, the anxiously waited opportunity was at hand.*

*The German high command was bewildered; they had counted it an easy step in their operations toward Paris and ultimate victory. Hertling, the German chancellor, three days before his death stated that he was convinced on July 1, 1918, that the Allies would propose peace before September. He said: "We expected grave events in Paris before the fifteenth of July. But on the eighteenth even the most optimistic among us knew that all was lost. **The history of the world was played out in those three days.**"*

*. . . The French and British both knew that the American program was amply sufficient to help them achieve victory when it should finally reach France and become available for the battle-line, but as the months of 1918 passed by, and only six divisions were in France when the German offensive opened, the opinion was often expressed and repeated, "the Americans are too late," and hope was almost gone.*

*Even when the increased troop movement during May and June landed seventeen divisions in France, the morale did not revive; for what could green, unseasoned troops be expected to accomplish?*

*But when on July 16 the news was spread that green American troops had succeeded in administering a crushing defeat to massed German attack, the Allies suddenly found that instead of merely a promise for the future, they had ready at their side the reality of the American military strength.*

*If unseasoned American troops could fight like that, then twenty-five divisions were available instead of only five, and the hope of victory and the will to conquer burned again with an unquenchable flame, for the war could still be won.*

#### **MONTANANS AT THE MARNE:**

Among the Montanans known serving in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division at the Marne were the following:

##### **—4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment:**

Private Harland Albert Rouse, of Conrad, Company C, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Later Severely Wounded in Action at Meuse Argonne October 4, 1918. Born Tarkio, MO. Age 25 Years.

Sergeant John L. Griffin, of Williams, Teton County, Company L, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Severely Wounded in Action on the Marne about 16 July, 1918.

Sergeant R. L. Griffin, of Williams, Teton County, Company L, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry. After war, during German occupation, drowned in river Marne at Coblenz, Germany.

##### **—30<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment:**

Corporal Matthews Egoroff, of Fort Benton, Company G, 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Later Died of Wounds in Action October 13, 1918 at Meuse Argonne.

—**38<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment:**

Private Harold A. Clark, of Malta, Company I, 38<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Later Killed in Action October 10, 1918 at Meuse Argonne.

—**9<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Battalion:**

Griffin, Daniel J. Williams, Teton County, Company D, 9<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Battalion. Severely Wounded in Action near the Marne about July 18, 1918.

—**6<sup>th</sup> Engineer Regiment:**

Private Harry S. Oldham, of Butte, Company E, 6<sup>th</sup> Engineers. Severely Wounded in Action at the Marne July 15, 1918.

Corporal Royal L. Richards, of Lewistown, Company E, 6<sup>th</sup> Engineers. Gassed at the Marne July 15, 1918.

Private Joe E. Zok, Fallon, Prairie County, Company E, 6<sup>th</sup> Engineers. Killed in Action at the Marne July 15, 1918.

—**5<sup>th</sup> Field Service Battalion:**

Private William Ransom Cornelie, Homestead, Montana, Company C, 5<sup>th</sup> Field Signal. Died of Lobar Pneumonia June 16, 1918. EC.

97. *Billings Gazette*, March 3, 1919. For Private Andrews' complete article see [www.KenRobisonHistory.com/WorldWarI](http://www.KenRobisonHistory.com/WorldWarI).

Private Andrews survived his ordeal and related his story to a *Billings Gazette* reporter after his return to freedom in 1919:

*My regiment was one of those thrown into the breach at Chateau Thierry with orders to halt the Germans at any cost. The world knows what we did there during those eventful days in July, 1918.*

*I fought through three days without receiving a scratch, with a muggy haze stifling the breath and partially obscuring the view. The smoke of battle clung to the blood soaked earth and the nauseating stench of the unburied dead smote our nostrils on every hand.*

*Early in the morning our barrage lifted and at the zero hour we resumed our advance. There was no artificial shelter, excepting scattered entrenchments deserted by the Germans in their slow retreat. The country is dotted with woods and underbrush, which offered a modicum of protection from the devastating machine gun and rifle fire of the foe.*

*I was on scout duty [to gather information], advancing through a field, when I became aware of a machine gun nest not far away. Bullets were whizzing in my direction, I dropped to the ground, too late.*

*I had had a morbid sort of curiosity as to what it feels like to be shot. I learned then. I can remember hearing a wicked, wasp-like whizz-z-z. Then I felt a sting in my right shoulder. That was all. I knew I was hit. There was no particular pain—not at first. I glanced down at my tunic. I had to look carefully before I discerned the bullet hole. I was not bleeding yet. A little later, when I felt of my shoulder over the hole in my tunic I could feel the warm blood soaking my under clothing. I started for a first-aid station in the rear, crawling on my stomach until I thought I was out of range of the machine gun. My right arm was useless.*

**Captured.**

*Whether I lost my direction, or whether the Germans had closed in behind me I am no certain. I was quite a distance in advance of the main body of our troops, and I believe the Germans had outflanked me. A few hundred yards to the rear I ran plump into a company of about seventy Prussian guards. No Americans were near. I realized that to resist was hopeless.*

*The Germans stripped me of all weapons and sent me back toward their lines, heavily guarded. The next day I was placed with other allied prisoners and my wound was dressed hurriedly. We were sent to the rear.*

*I never learned the name of the towns where we stopped before reaching the first German prison camp in Alsace, where we remained only a short time. Then a trainload of prisoners, Russian, British, French and a few Americans were started toward Berlin and Stargard.*

*They were not cattle cars, but the next thing to them. We were locked in the coaches and traveled a day and night before reaching Berlin. We were not permitted to leave the coaches for any purpose. There were no toilet facilities.*

**Jeered at By Mobs**

*Whenever we passed through a town, which was every few minutes our train was met at the depot by a sneering, ribald crowd of women, children and old men. The women shouted at us derisively and made faces at us. They might have spat in our faces, only we were too far away from them. One overgrown lummoX of a German girl singled me*

out in particular. I could not understand what she said, but I imagine it was anything but complimentary. I handed it back to her in good old western slang. We had it back and forth until I observed a guard approaching. Presently the train started.

We spent one night in Berlin housed in a stone barracks that looked like an armory. The stone floor was covered with a thin sprinkling of straw. We had no bedding. But that night we dined in Berlin! How proud we might have been to boast of that fact before the war. But now? And under those circumstances!

### **Wounded Fared Badly**

The fare that night was black bread and water. The bread was soggy and water stagnant. We slept little. The next morning, we were herded back into the reeking coaches and resumed the journey toward Stargard.

The only men employed on the German train crews were the firemen and engineer, The conductors and brakemen were women. On our train these were replaced by armed guards. They handled us none too gently. Some badly wounded men who did not move fast enough were urged on at the bayonet's point.

Every man aboard, I believe, heaved a sigh of relief when our train finally pulled into Stargard, On the way some of the prisoners fainted from weakness or wounds and hunger and the overpowering stench of the filthy coaches.

### **Few Yank Prisoners**

About 3,000 prisoners were confined at Stargard. A majority were Russians. There were only 34 Americans. The balance were mostly English and French. I cannot say for certain, but I believe the Americans were slightly better treated than the others. Out treatment was bad enough.

Breakfast—A hunk of soggy "bread" made from potato peelings, sawdust and straw with a spoonful of sticky jam.

Luncheon—Three or four spoonfuls of barley cooked in water.

Dinner—Ditto.

This sort of fare day in and day out for five weary months. How would you like it?

That's what the Germans gave us to eat at the prison camp at Stargard, somewhere up north of Berlin. Only the Red Cross packages and food sent from home enlivened the deadly monotony of the prison fare. Many of these, we suspected, never reached their destination. Other packages were found to have been tampered with.

### **Our Treatment**

[Our treatment was] Not so bad. I was wounded, so was not compelled to work. All the men who were not wounded were taken into the fields every day to dig potatoes or turnips or to perform other labor. The fare was the worst. All the prisoners, some 3,000 all together lost weight and many became ill. The sick one received indifference care. A considerable number died from one cause or another.

As long as we behaved, we were fairly well treated. Our camp was composed of rough board barracks, surrounded by a high board stockade with several strands of barbed wire at the top. Whether this wire carried an electric current I cannot say. For my part I never attempted to scale the fence to learn. No prisoners ever escaped, so far as I learned. Stargard is situated well to the interior of Germany, and the chances for escape, even should one elude the guards and gain the outside of the enclosure, were remote. It wasn't worth the risk.

We learned little of what was going on on the outside, but a week or so before the signing of the armistice we knew that something was about to break one way or another—we did not know which. Some of the prison guards with whom we were on friendly terms, told us things were going bad for the German Army, and that they believed the jig was up or words to that effect. We feared to place too much reliance in what they told us.

### **Oh For a Feed!**

Finally the day came when we were informed the Germans had signed the armistice and the war was over. A short time later on we were released and placed on trains bound for the Belgian frontier.

The first thought that came to me on hearing the news of the armistice signing was that now I would dine on something except black bread and barley soup. During our stay of five months in German prison camps, the eternal round of bread and jam and soup was varied only occasionally on Sundays and holidays with marmalade in place of jam for breakfast, and a small portion of half-cooked macaroni. My first thought on reaching Belgium was to get a square meal. I got it.

### **Billings Gazette March 3, 1919.**

**118.** Ben Harwood Wiley. *Montana and the Sky*, 97-98; *Butte Miner*, September 9, 1918. During the Battle of Chateau-Thierry, Lieut. Harwood experienced astonishing aerial combat featuring a thrilling escape. His long account of this aerial battle appears at [www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1](http://www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1).

During the Battle of Chateau-Thierry, Lieut. Harwood experienced an astonishing battle featuring a thrilling escape. In his own words:

. . . On July 5 an urgent call came for photographic views of certain terrain across the enemy lines. Our squadron's photographer had to take them from his airplane. He should have been accompanied by a strong air patrol for protection. But we had to have those photographs, and, as circumstances happened, his only protection was an observation airplane manned by Mr. Fred Luhr, as pilot, and myself, who followed the photographer's airplane on his photographing mission.

At 13,000 feet altitude we cross the enemy lines, our plane being 50 meters in the rear of the photographer's. It was a dangerous expedition, in a region where Boche air patrols were numerous, coming through the air like flocks of giant vultures 'to get' observation planes. You may be sure we were aware of our peril, and watched with caution and vigilance appropriate to such circumstances.

All went well for a while. Our photographer had finished 12 plates and was about to begin on a strip of country further within the enemy lines. At this stage of the proceedings. I saw in the path of the sun's rays small dim trails of smoke, such as are thrown out by airplane exhausts. The interesting little sign was a warning of the Boche airmen's favorite trick in his aerial performance. It is to have a bunch of enemy airplanes trail along above and circle about an intended victim, simply to attract and occupy his attention, while their so-called "Ace" companion approaches unobserved from far above in the path of the sun's rays, until favorable position is reached, to dive down and destroy the surprised and unprepared quarry. That method or trick is well known to aviators, and they should be vigilant in detecting and parrying it. In fact it is deemed a disgrace to be caught in a Hun trap. But that danger evidenced by the warning trails of smoke in the sun's glaring rays was not all we had to bear in mind. Enemy anti-aircraft guns now bracketed us with high explosive shells on our right, on our left, above and below, as interesting visitors to excite our *qui vive*.

Very soon after I had observed the smoke trails in the sun's rays, down swooped an airplane directly towards us from its course several hundred meters above, out of what its occupant no doubt supposed was absolute obscurity of the sun's blinding rays, and his surmise was nearly correct. Through the speaking tube, I told my pilot, Fred, of the unidentified bird coming from above on our rear, and that I'd soon learn what species it is; also that others were above that I could not then identify.

No plane, be it friend or foe, has a right, under our air code, to dive on an observer, and I fired six or eight shots alongside him while he was six to eight hundred meters away, as a warning to show his 'cocard' so that I could identify him. Then with field glasses I satisfied myself, and told Fred, "He is a Boche." At that Fred swung into position so that I might operate our fireworks with whatever advantage luck might assure. At my first shots as a signal to show his colors the Boche swung off to our left, and paralleled our course, just as if he were a chum in our procession—another ruse which the Boche practices in his aerial gunning game. And he kept his course above us, between our plane and our lines, so as to land us on enemy ground, if chances favored. Meanwhile, with field glasses I further scanned our visitor as we journeyed along. And I limbered up my machine guns—we carry two mounted, with dual control, so that both can be fired by one movement. Now being fully convinced of our visitor's identity, when the situation seemed fairly favorable for further communication.

I opened up at him with both our guns at once, as a sort of peroration; but at about the twentieth shot both guns "jammed" tight, as if frozen, when they should have been in a raging fever. These were new guns, but that does not account for the dirty trick they played. I had particularly tested them as we crossed the enemy lines, at high altitude. I have, moreover, given much careful attention to the subject of gunnery . . .

Hun Attacks. But I will proceed with narrative of events. It seems almost impossible to clear my guns and get them to work again. The charging handles would not respond, nor the magazines move, for all my efforts to set them going. When my guns ceased fire, and while I was attempting to clear their "jam" the Boche of course could discover our predicament. He thereupon sailed close to our rear above us and improved his opportunity. His airplane was somewhat speedier than ours. Like a great winged dragon the Boche plane flew at us with bursts of fire and death-dealing leaden hail from its brazen nostrils. Probably not less than 200 bullets sprayed through and around our plane. The five minutes that followed seemed an aeon. Fred, knowing that my guns had "jammed," maneuvered to shake the Boche, while I sought the best I could to restore our guns to action. Luckily our position was such that our gasoline tanks shielded Fred from the torrent of leaden hail, so I didn't worry much about him while trying to get my guns to work again.

A shot from the enemy, probably a stray accidental one, judging from the general effect of his marksmanship under the most happy conditions for his part of the drama, nicked my chin, jouncing my head a bit; but that was only a trifling incident.

Another stray shot clipped the right goggle from my eyeglasses, cutting a small gash in my eyebrow. That proved a little more inconvenient, for before the trickling blood therefrom froze, it dimmed the vision of that optic. The other

*stray bullet that scratched my throat and spoiled a favorite necktie, or the few steel splinters that hit my right hand, were not noticed at the time.*

*The old Hun dragon buzzed and fired along the way furiously. His speed was very good, but his efficiency rattled and scattered.*

*It was a happy moment for us [Ben and his pilot Fred Kuhn] when by persevering efforts under these rather inconvenient circumstances our left gun jam was cleared ready for action again, and its operator was ready, calm and reliant. This feeling may have come because the Hun had demonstrated his inefficiency, or by becoming somewhat accustomed to the situation or through delight that one of our guns would respond. I could see by its tracer bullets that its shots were going true to the mark.*

*Then, alas! Another uncleared jam stopped the fire of this gun. Whether or not any of its last spurt of less than a dozen shots hit our Boche visitor, probably will never be known. I have never heard anything of him since the scrap.*

*Further effort to make our guns work was fruitless. I had to tell Fred it couldn't be done, and that it was up to him to shake the Boche by maneuvering, and suggested that he "beat it to the right of the sun, and look for the river." The river was our landmark to get out of Hundum and reach our lines, if our plane held up. **And Fred made the masterliest aerial retreat ever executed.***

*What a chance the pursuing Boche "ace" had! His guns splayed up well with successive bursts fired at us. At that time almost a continuous stream of fire [burst] around our plane. Fred "piqued" our plane at an angle of 60 degrees and made great dives and horizontal jumps and twists, and "S-ed," and skillfully executed every maneuver known to pilots, to shake the Hun. But our plane couldn't climb as we would have done had its power been sufficient. Its gasoline tank and one cylinder had been pieced by bullets, and the engine was barely able to keep going. By watching the tracer bullets from the enemy Fred was able to dodge the course of his fire.*

*It was a terrific ride at a speed of about 160 miles per hour, which tore loose everything movable in our fuselage, and gave me such a bouncing that only by means of my stout belt attached to the gun tourelle was I able to stay with our airplane.*

*We were at an altitude of about 1,000 meters, when the enemy Boche gave up the chase; and we continued to lose altitude so far that it was impossible for our plane to reach our hangars. It could not rise to clear the hills on the other side of the river. So our landing must be in the river valley, although aware of the danger of a "crash" we dreaded such a landing place.*

*In a little time we lost so much altitude Fred said we must land immediately, and steered for the nearest field along the river—a small wheat field that didn't look good to us. The real scare for me, on this mission was now rapidly approaching.*

*As we passed over a nearby railroad and saw American troops on a bridge, and some in swimming, I signaled them hoping to get some of them started toward our landing place for assistance in case of the crash that was imminent. They seemed to regard my signals as a salute, for aviators not infrequently come low down and wave to the boys.*

*Fred eased our plane down the best he could, and we braced for the landing. We must have then been moving at the rate of a hundred miles per hour. The tangled wheat stalks caught the wheels and landing gear of our plane as if a giant had grabbed and held its lower structure, stopping it instantly. Thereby its nose was jerked down groundward and over it went somersault fashion—no more perfect "crash" could be executed, the experts told us later.*

*I found myself unhurt by the crash, although hanging head down by my belt attached to the tourelle, and my right foot caught in the frame work of the overturned plane. Gasoline was pouring over me from the tank. I could not free myself to do the thing that was first in my mind, i.e., rush to Fred's assistance if he were injured. I called to him. He did not answer immediately, although only a few feet from me. Then was my real scare—it came with the thought that the life of my comrade, who had exhibited such game spirit, and marvelous resolution and skill, in piloting us through the day's adventures, had been crushed out, and that he was a victim of the crash at our landing.*

*As I yelled at him again, he rolled out on the ground, dazed and limp, but uninjured. My vigorous yell aroused him like a tonic, for he was only depressed by the thought that I had been seriously wounded, while he escaped because of the metal tank shield; and my yell must have given him courage to look for more life in me than his foreboding pictured. It was joy to hear his voice greeting me, as he sprang to my assistance.*

*With my face and clothes stained by rather profuse bleeding from trifling wounds, as sometimes happens, and that diluted and spread and streaked over me by the gasoline bath, and bearing eighteen bullet marks. I looked as though I had been holding single-handed the bloodiest sector of the battle line during this war. As we stood up and realized that no serious injury had befallen either of us and contemplated results, we looked regretfully at our airship, which we regarded as the noblest that ever sailed through azure waves . . .*

*Just then a “man on horseback” arrived, and he and Fred assuming in the goodness of their hearts that I was worse hurt and fitter for hospital attention than I thought warranted, undertook to rush me to a dressing station. Thereupon the question of rank and superiority of command arose, whereby our vocabularies were limbered up and sent forth bursts of verbiage with no sign of a “jam.” We sent the “man on horseback,” to tell our squadron what had happened to us and to find out what had become of our photographer. Then a lot of French and American soldiers came to us in the wheat field, and we got a guard detailed to take care of our airplane.*

*An outfit of engineers of my own division had just pulled in nearby, as I learned to my surprise and enjoyment for I had no thought they were in that region. A medical major and a doctor, formerly of my own regiment, took my case under their special care. [At] a nearby hospital I was given wonderful attention, even to an X-ray examination of my jaw to see if any lead or splinter had lodged therein. A night at the hospital with a much appreciated bath and good sleep put me in condition to join in my squadron’s work the next morning.*

**Butte Miner, September 9, 1918.**

**133.** *Billings Gazette*, August 15, 1918. For more from Capt. Vidal’s letter see [www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1](http://www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1).

#### FATHER AND SON IN THE SERVICE MEET IN FRANCE

Montanans in Thick of the Fighting on the Western Front

How, while serving in the United States army medical corps in France, he met his son, Lieutenant Lawrence Vidal, a battalion adjutant in the tank service of this country, is recounted by Dr., now Captain Vidal, a former member of the [14<sup>th</sup>] Montana legislature, in a letter to friends in Great Falls.

Dr. Vidal enlisted in the medical reserve corps and shortly afterward was sent to France. He was detailed to duty with the heavy artillery and is now sleeping in a dugout with his gas mask always hands. His son, Lieutenant Vidal, has been made battalion adjutant of the tank service and doubtless has been in the battles recently in the Montdidier sector. His father is near Verdun.

In his letter, Captain Vidal tells of meeting his son on the battlefield lines “somewhere in France,” and of himself taking a ride in one of the fighting tanks “over rocks, holes, brush, trees, trenches and nearly everything else,” writes Captain Vidal. “It was certainly a great experience and I am willing to believe most anything I am told of the fighting qualities of the tank service.

“I spent the day with Lawrence. He is battalion adjutant in the tank service and is making good and I am proud of him.

“Talk about luck,” writes Captain Vidal, “here I am transferred to the heavy artillery medical corps on the front line and tomorrow night I will be sleeping with my gas mask on my chest and to the music of the heavy guns—which is some orchestra, believe me.

“I cannot tell where I am transferred, but it will be close to the place famous now in war history were the French made good their assertion that ‘they shall not pass.’”

**Billings Gazette, August 15, 1918.**

**134.** *Great Falls Tribune*, October 13, 1918; Captain Vidal continues his letter with more about how the attack unfolded; the complete letter is at [www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1](http://www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1).

#### OVER THERE—BATTLE OF ST. MIHIEL

In Capt. Vidal’s words:

*Five days ago I was surprised to run across one of the officers of Lawrence’s battalion; and two days after, who comes in as we were finishing dinner but the boy [Lawrence]. Looking well and very busy. For three days he is to be located at this very village. On the way up he stopped at \_\_\_\_\_, and while in the officers’ Y.M.C.A. whom does he run across but Forrest. He says that he is looking very fit and is doing splendidly.*

*The reason that I said early in the letter that [Forrest] might be flying overhead tonight is because he is directly tributary to this front and will almost certainly be used in this push. I see Lawrence about twice a day. Now everything is up and ready and we get out orders. Everyone at his battle station at midnight.*

*Zero hour, 1 a.m. The evening is spent writing and getting the dugout ready. One hospital corps man to every two guns. The sergeant is helping me at the station.*

*12 o’clock. The office force and orderlies report as litter bearers and are assigned to an adjoining dugout.*

*12:30. An engineer doctor, named Kreiger, of the fighting 42<sup>nd</sup> division, comes in and says he has 200 men in a trench in an adjoining field; so he makes good company and a nice addition to the staff.*

*12:45. Outside inky black, and a drizzle of rain.*

12:55-6-7-8-9 and 1 a.m. Wang-Waand. The dugout trembles and the gas doors bulge as old No. 2, fifty yards away, lets go, and now the steady roar sets in. No individual notes except our own guns. Just a deep-throated roar. Outside to look. The night, before so black, is aflame. Within four kilometers we have 400 heavy guns at work—155s up to naval 14-inch. The roar fairly jars you.

2 a.m. Fritz has been surprised. Return fire is feeble. Quite a bit of 77's busting overhead, but nothing to embarrass.

3 a.m. We are shelling villages and cross roads now. Gun crews changed. One man in with shrapnel wound of face.

3:30 Casualty at No. 3. Shell carrier killed. Two French artillerymen in—shrapnel wounds.

4:00 Change gun crews.

4:30-4:45. A suspicion of daylight. Planes are out.

5 a.m. The 75's open fire with a creeping barrage. The tanks are off. The doughboys go over the top. Our fire slackens up.

5:15 Daylight. The air is alive with our planes.

5:30. The fast-moving, low-lying clouds make our planes fly low. There goes one down. The poor fellow flew so low that he was hit by one of our own 75's.

6:00. We are intermittently shelling back areas. A dark, cloudy day.

7:00. Word comes that the tanks are to \_\_\_\_.

8:30 Cease fire. We have fired 1,000 rounds of 8-inch H.E. The 75's have limbered up to follow the advance.

9:00. The advance has extended four kilometers. A French tank lieutenant comes in in an auto. A nasty shrapnel wound of right hip. Weak, but enthusiastic. He tells us "Mont Sec est tombée." [Mont Sec has fallen.] A formidable bochine position dominating the valley.

11:00 I hear that Lawrence was all right at 9:30. The tanks are in \_\_\_\_ at that hour. A new second position barrage opens with the 75's.

12:00. The advance is away beyond range of our guns. Boche prisoners coming back. The entire ridge back of Mont Sec has fallen.

2 p.m. A 10-kilometer advance. I send the boys to bed. Small casualties coming in all morning.

4 o'clock. Lawrence and another lieutenant come in covered with mud, looking for something to eat. They have had four men killed and eight wounded, but only two tanks put out of business. Walked down to see the prisoners go by. The advance has extended to 12 kilometers. If it wasn't for the mud, our boys would go to Metz. Will finish story tomorrow.

Towards evening the rain, which had been intermittent all day, ceased and we got a clear sky. One of the staff in just back from \_\_\_\_, where he was sent for first hand information. He got in just behind the tanks and the first wave of infantry and was lucky enough to get into a Boche officer's Q. M. store where he gathered in beaucoup stuff. It might be interesting to know that this note paper is some of it.

Just down to the main street. The mass of troops and transport would have to be seen to be realized. Big "dog fight" overhead. About 30 planes in a general melee. A Boche comes down like a wounded bird with one of our boys right on his tail all the way to see that it is a good job. There! He finally crashes. The rest have turned tail and gone. The gun fire is getting more and more distant and our balloons are past us and about one mile ahead. Everybody turns in tired out.

This next morning went up in the C. O.'s car to reconnoiter advance gun positions. We drove north to our old front line and had to leave the car in a hopeless tangle of traffic. The rain and the mud have caused the almost inevitable block of traffic.

Here we cross the Boche trenches. Our barrage was perfect. The front line is torn to pieces and here and there are the paths that the tanks had to come thru. Here we pass a half mile of 75's horse drawn. A Ford ambulance comes slithering down the road and skids into a shell hole. Twenty willing pair of hands pick it up and carry it out . . .

They tell us that the woods to the right and left are full of dead Boche and we can see the "moppers up" at work.

Now we reach the first Boche village, winding down a hill and crossing a stone bridge. A shell has made a clean hit, and dragged to the side, to allow a passageway, is a litter of dead horses and wagons. Here is a dead Boche without a head. To the right and left they are lying, scattered about. No time for burial yet. Fairly caught in the barrage as they tried to get out. The houses are in ruins, the dugouts dirty. Their sanitation must be fierce. The ruins are crowded with enthusiastic troops.

We stop at tank headquarters and meet the colonel of the regiment.

"Yes, sir, we took 14 villages, six batteries and 700 prisoners ourselves. Only four men killed. Well, good bye! I have to out and take another village!"

*After bumming a little hardtack, I start for home by another road, as the advance has been so fast we cannot decide on gun positions today. Here we come across the fighting 42<sup>nd</sup> Division coming in. They march on each side of the road with their transport on the road itself. Splendid troops, fresh from their Chateau Thierry campaign. Their bands are going in with them.*

*Here I leave the road and cut across the wood that marked the German line. Dead every few yards.*

*One poor fair-haired boy of 19 with his card in his pocket, Joseph Ernst of Berlin. Joined his depot in May and now the war is over for him.*

*There is much German propaganda scattered about. Their publicity system is good evidently. Their front line trenches are very dirty. And on all the roads, by all the paths and over the forest trails and thru the air surges forward a victorious army.*

***So the first purely American show has been a pronounced success. The St. Mihiel salient has gone.***

*Outside of road congestion due to unavoidable weather conditions the liaison seems to have been good. The medical department worked splendidly. The wounded got prompt attention and early evacuation. The advance proceeded so fast that at the last it was the only possible way to supply the tanks and infantry by airplane.*

*Although it has been a creditable affair, but we must beware of over confidence. From the Boche side it was creditable, too. He got away most of his heavy guns and crawled out of a bad hole in his usual agile manner. He is not by any means beaten. I was not impressed with any lack of physique, morale or equipment among the Boche prisoners. Rather the contrary.*

*We are fighting a brave and determined enemy who has been firmly impressed by his clever rulers with the idea that he is right.*

*There should be no letup on money, equipment and men. Our only danger is the vital danger of overconfidence. If we escape it, we are going to win a hard and creditable fight. If we fall for it, we are going to get some pretty hard lickings, lose a lot of lives needlessly, and finally muddle thru to victory anyway.*

*I will always appreciate your letters. You cannot tell how welcome they all are. Kindest regards to all. Yours very sincerely,*

*C.E.K. VIDAL.*

***Great Falls Tribune, October 13, 1918.***

**135.** *Great Falls Tribune*, October 27, 1918. For Lieut. Vidal's complete letter to Governor Sam Stewart see [www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1](http://www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1).

Son of Local Physician Tells Governor Stewart What He's Doing—Meets dad "All Dolled Up" Over There.

Governor Stewart is in receipt of a most interesting and snappy netter from Lawrence E. Vidal, of this city, first lieutenant in the American tank corps now in hot action in France. The lieutenant waited until he actually went thru what he calls a "chase" before writing, Sept. 30.

He tells of an interesting incident when he ran into his father, Dr. C. E. K. Vidal, former member of the legislature and now attached to the artillery service as surgeon, right up where the shells are thick. The son comments humorously on his "dad" who he says still keeps "dolloed up" despite the mud and grime. Dr. Vidal was always a neat dresser, and the quip of his son caused a laugh as the governor read aloud the letter to a number of the state house acquaintances of the doctor.

Why He Left 163<sup>rd</sup>.

"Dear Governor Stewart:

"I have been waiting to get into the scrap before writing to you and as we had a chase the other day I'll call it a scrap.

"It was in February that we began to smell a rat in the air and see that the prospects of getting the 163<sup>rd</sup> into the fight were very slight. I had finished five weeks school at G\_\_\_\_ and was (at least that I was), ready for work. I won't say I was wild to have some Hun make a hero out of me, but I've been hoping to have a chance and we were all ready.

"Instead of starting to Berlin we starting 'hashing' for student officers et al. I'll confess that the lazy life was comfortable but tiresome, so in March I put in an application for transfer to the tank corps, which was promptly turned down because I wasn't a gas engine expert, which caused Swaney Mosby and the rest to give me the merry haha, which made me sore so I made out another application stating I WAS a gas engine expert. Then I started. We went to Montriechard and as you know trained replacements, etc. The 12<sup>th</sup> of April came and with it an order saying I was to report to the chief of the tank corps for trial to test suitability for tank service.

"On the way to L\_\_\_\_ I lost my baggage and spent three week at 163<sup>rd</sup>. Lord but I was homesick. Then I was attached to the tank corps in May and in June I had the choice of accepting a commission in the tank corps or going back to the remnants of the Second Montana.

“Well, I was happy, so stayed. We trained, waited, prayed, etc., and at 1 a.m. September 12 the fireworks started. At 5 a.m. the tanks went rollicking after the fleeing Boche. Once or twice I wished I hadn’t lied about my weight to get in this man’s army. But this vermin ran so fast and surrendered in such mobs that it turned from a battle into a tea party. Naturally those whiz-bangs make you a temporary pacifist, but toward the end of the day you couldn’t tell you were in a battle.

The 327th battalion made its headquarters at P\_\_\_ at a German officers’ club, where we drank German beer, used their dishes, smoked German cigarettes, wore their boots, etc. It was here I saw a French woman of about 40 with her throat cut. Kultur. It was near here we saw the charred homes of human beings in a moldering house.

Dad Still “Dolled Up.”

“The tanks are shock troops, so we do our bit here then ‘partee’ and do our bit there until so many tanks are put out then we go back and get re-equipped and journey forth again until certain race of barbarian is exterminated.

“My dad is at present 1 ½ kilometres from the front line with his battery. Blew into this town before the fight and who did I see but my dad. He seems to be having as much fun as I am. He keeps ‘dolled up’ like he was going to a party, and when I saw him I had been up all night and was mud from head to foot.” “I think the Boche know we are moving during the night for the ‘boxheads’ are at present humming above us showing the artillery where to drop his whiz-bangs.

Huns Still Swelled Up.

“We have had a bunch of prisoners working on our tanks and they pass out the same old line about not hating America, that they are liked, etc., so that the cook will give them another plate of beans, but they nearly all have that superior air. Oh Fritzie isn’t licked yet. But when our Uncle gets going full tilt those Heinies will wish that every congressman was a pacifist or that they had never drowned an American baby.

“If I don’t stop I’ll be forgetting I’m writing to the governor of Montana and start calling the Germans names not fit for print. If you could only see the things they did in this last fight you’d almost lose your faith in everything.

“I know you are very busy, but I just wanted to let you know I haven’t forgotten that I owe you everything for being so luckily situated and to assure you that I won’t do anything to make you regret giving me my appointment. I’ll write from Metz. Respectfully.

“LAWRENCE VIDAL.

327 Battalion, First Brigade, Tank Corps.”

***Great Falls Tribune, October 27, 1918, p. 18.***

**143.** Montana Enlistment Cards; *Treasure State Prepares*, 215. Margaret Gahm, *The Sinking of the Tuscania*. All known Montana Native Warriors are listed in [www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1](http://www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1)  
**See Montana Warriors in World War I.**

**145.** *Great Falls Tribune October 11, 1918; October 31, 1967*; Scott’s Official History states that 198 Montana blacks served in World War I; All known Montana African Americans serving in the war are listed in [www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1](http://www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1)  
**See Montana Black Soldiers World War I.**

**146.** Montanans known serving with the 14<sup>th</sup> Infantry are listed in [www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1](http://www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1).  
**See 14<sup>th</sup> Infantry Montanans.**

**148.** *Missoulian*, May 19, 1919. For the narrative of Sam Caras’ “My Experiences in My Third War.” see [www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1](http://www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1).

**See Sam Caras.**

**157.** *Wikipedia*, “The 372<sup>nd</sup> Division”; Enlistment Card; *Denver Post* (CO), November 27, 1912, June 14, 1916; Charles L. Holmes WWI Draft Registration; *Anaconda Standard* June 8, December 21, 1917, September 15, 1918, July 14, 1919; *Colorado Springs Gazette* (CO), December 8, 1918; *Butte Daily Bulletin*, July 14, 1919; U.S. Census, 1930, 1940. For more on Lieut. Charles L. Holmes see [www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1](http://www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1)

**Lieutenant CHARLES L. HOLMES.**

Holmes, State’s Colored Officer Holds Distinction of Being Only Negro From Montana Commissioned.

Charles L. Holmes, an employe of the Silver Bow club, is the only colored man in Montana to have won for himself a commission while in the service of the army. He recently returned to his old position at the club with the

rank of first lieutenant, which was given him while in action in France.

Holmes is a graduate of Colorado college and when he enlisted in January, 1918, he was able to put his education to its highest advantage. With a knowledge of French he was soon sent to the other side where he saw some of the hardest fighting of the year. He was in command of a company at Hill 304, one of the hottest contested points during the summer campaign. His regiment was brigaded with the French and he was in a position to see most of the hard engagements of the season.

While in the engagement known as the Meuse-Argonne offensive, Holmes was wounded by a high explosive which crushed in his helmet. His regiment was decorated by the French for courageous fighting and the colored troops won international distinction for their fighting qualities. He spoke in complimentary terms of the French soldiers and said that they were among the best fighters in France.

Good Fighters. "Their equipment was not so good as ours," he said, "and they did not know much about marksmanship, but when they were cornered they could fight better than any other soldiers. Their rifles were not made for careful shooting and the French soldier uses it only for the bayonet. But when it comes to close fighting the French are experts. They know more about bombing than we do and they can perform wonders with their bayonets. They showed us their methods of fighting and helped us out immensely because we were not accustomed to their kind of trench warfare."

Holmes speaks in high praise of the work done by the colored troops in France and said that they were among the best fighters there. "They were given certain French sectors to capture and generally made good." He said "Many times they would be sent over the top and if they did not get the trench they would come home back with all the prisoners they could accommodate, and all of them were not alive.

He spoke of the sympathetic nature of the French women and related some interesting experiences in connection with them. One woman remarked while the troops were passing that it was too bad the poor boys were going to their graves. [p. 2] [AS 14 Jul 1919]

Colored Officer Serves Paid Patriots Lieutenant Holmes, employed at the Silver Bow Club, Won Commission for Bravery in World War. Modestly giving the members of his regiment and the French with whom they were billeted their full meed of praise, but saying little about his own accomplishments, Lieut. Charles H. Holmes, the only Montana colored man who rose to the rank of a commissioned officer for bravery in action and ability to command, is back in Butte at his old job—a menial one at the Silver Bow club, where he is called upon to act as servant for some of the country's most notable stay-at-home flag wavers and paid patriots.

Holmes possesses an education above the average and considerably better than that possessed by many of those on whom he waits at the Silver Bow club. He is a graduate of Colorado college and in January, 1918, enlisted. Because of his knowledge of French, he was sent across to France soon after his enlistment and passed through some of the hardest fighting in the war. Holmes soon rose to a commissioned position and was in charge of a company at the battle of Hill 304, one of the most sanguinary engagements of the war. He also participated in the Meuse-Argonne offensive, where he was wounded when a high explosive shell crushed in his helmet. Both Mr. Holmes and the members of his regiment were publicly cited by the French government and were decorated.

During most of his time in France Lieutenant Holmes was brigaded with the French troops and accordingly knows intimately of their abilities as fighters. He asserts that the French excel in bombing and in use of the bayonet. [Butte Daily Bulletin 14 Jul 1919, p. 6]

161. Enlistment Cards; American Red Cross POW File; See [www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1](http://www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1) for additional information on each POW.

#### WWI Montanans Prisoners of War

##### 2,457 American POWs in WWI

##### Montana Soldiers (18)

Andrews, Vester L.  
Colahan, Wayne  
Hollar, Everett E.  
Johnson, John W.  
Jensen, Nels K.  
Larabie, Ned  
McCormick, Everett B.  
Patterson, Lieut. Robert A.

##### 19 Montana POWs in WWI

##### Hometown

Fort Benton  
Highwood  
Ovando  
Hall  
Circle  
Deer Lodge/Bellingham  
Chinook  
Havre

##### County in 1918

Chouteau  
Chouteau  
Powell  
Granite  
Dawson  
Powell  
Blaine  
Hill

<b>Roberts, Edward M.</b>	<b>Miles City</b>	<b>Custer</b>
<b>Rodin, William V.</b>	<b>Conrad</b>	<b>Teton</b>
<b>Schultz, Otto J.</b>	<b>Somers</b>	<b>Flathead</b>
<b>Skarsten, Robert</b>	<b>Turner</b>	<b>Blaine</b>
<b>Sorensen, Christian</b>	<b>Verona</b>	<b>Chouteau</b>
<b>Sorenson, Lauritis P.</b>	<b>Great Falls</b>	<b>Cascade</b>
<b>Stewart, R.</b>	<b>Findon, MT.</b>	<b>Gallatin</b>
<b>Sullivan, Jerry H.</b>	<b>Creston</b>	<b>Flathead</b>
<b>Timmons, Bud</b>	<b>Monida</b>	<b>Beaverhead</b>
<b>Tronson, Melvin</b>	<b>Plentywood</b>	<b>Valley</b>
<b>Weirick, Arthur Murray</b>	<b>Lewistown.</b>	<b>Fergus</b>

#### **International Committee of the Red Cross**

[https://grandeguerre.icrc.org/en/File/Search#/2/2/48/0/American%20\(USA\)/Military/Lara](https://grandeguerre.icrc.org/en/File/Search#/2/2/48/0/American%20(USA)/Military/Lara)

**Andrews, Vester L. Colony Bay/Fort Benton. Army. Severely Wounded and Captured July 21, 1918 at Chateau Thierry. Company B 16<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Private 1<sup>st</sup> Class. Overseas December 18, 1917. Born Piney Creek, NC. Age 25 Years. EC has Severely Wounded July 18<sup>th</sup>.**

[Billings Gazette March 3, 1919, p. 3] **Third Contingent draft from Chouteau County.**

**Colahan, Wayne Highwood** Captured June 6, 1918. Private 304586 Born March 6, 1883. Cassel P.E. 380. P.E. 613 Rastatt. Released ARC File.

**Colahan, Wayne. Highwood. Marine. Wounded and Captured June 6, 1918.**

**83<sup>rd</sup> Company 6<sup>th</sup> Marines. Private 304586 Born March 6, 1883. Cassel P.E. 380. P.E. 613 Rastatt. Released ARC File.**

1480 AEF soldiers prisoners of war in German. In addition 220 civilians interned in Germany as well as 61 sailors held in Constantinople.

[FBRP October 9, 1918, p. 5: Relatives of Wayne Colahan, a Chouteau County soldier boy who formerly lived at Highwood, have received notice from the war department that he is among the American prisoners captured by German troops.

[Butte Miner September 18, 1919, p. 2]: Prisoner of War Is Home From Overseas.

Lewistown, Sept. 17.—Willis, J. Colahan has arrived from overseas, and after a short visit will go on to his home at Highwood, in Cascade county. Colahan served with the marines and was among the first Americans to be captured in Franch by the Germans. He remained a prisoner of war until after the armistice was signed and then returned to his unit and went to Coblenz, Germany, with the army of occupation Colahan's father came on from Highwood to meet the soldier.

[FBRP October 1, 1919, p. 3:

Was In German Prison Camp.

A story of privation and suffering while being held in a German war prison camp was related to a Great Falls *Leader* representative by Wayne J. Colahan, of Highwood, a Chouteau county soldier boy who served with the marines overseas and recently returned from an eastern de- mobilization camp. Mr. Colahan's story includes his training, trip overseas, and his introduction to the trenches and to the boches, where he was a dispatch runner he with a companion were victims of a hand grenade, thrown into a shell crater where the two had gone for a moment's safety. In attempting to leave the shell hole, after having been wounded, an officer wearing the medical corps insignia, proved to be a German hospital man, and the two marines were hustled off to a German base where, as prisoners of war, their wounds were dressed.

As one of the total of 57 marines who were taken prisoner, Colahan tells a frightful story of an operation for his wounds while being held down by two hospital attaches in order that the operation might be performed without anesthetics, according to the Highwood boy, and he said, "I was pretty well fussed about it until I found they were operating upon their own men in the same manner, having no drugs whatsoever to produce sleep. I lost in weight because of lack of food and nourishment, going down to 115 pounds when my normal weight is about 165."

Mr. Colohan was turned over to a U.S. Army base hospital shortly after the armistice was signed. Following his recovery from his wounds he was attached to the army of occupation in Germany where he served until his recent sailing for home. Colahan holds a letter written him by the American Red Cross commission in Berne, giving testimonial to his splendid work in assisting the commission towards relief of his fellow prisoners in Germany while he himself was a hospital patient.

[St. Louis Post-Dispatch February 11, 1919, p. 1:  
St. Louisan Shot while Helpless Affidavits Say. Eugene S. Schrautemier Was Lying Wounded When German Fired on Him With Revolver, Comrades Declare. Joked With Then When He Was Hit. "Uncle Got Me," He Said Referring to Fact That He Had Two Near Relatives in German Army.

Affidavits have been received at Marine Corps headquarters in Washington, telling how Eugene S. Schrautenmeier of the 83<sup>rd</sup> Company 6<sup>th</sup> Marines was shot and presumably killed by a German soldier when he lay wounded and helpless in a shell hole.

Schrautenmeier was the son of Mr. and Mrs. B. H. S. of 1718 Cora Avenue, and formerly a clerk in the Mechanics-American National Bank. The parents have received a telegram from Representative Dyer, telling of the result of the inquiry.

The affidavits, according to a dispatch from Washington to the Post-Dispatch were sworn to by two of S's comrades, Jules Martin of Detroit and Wayne Colahan. The affidavits were made in France, and were cabled to Washington, in response to a request from Gen. Barnett of Marine headquarters, after the parents had begun an inquiry through Congressman Igoe.

Colahan relates that he and S went over the top with their company June 6, having Bouchet as an objective. Both were runners. They dropped down in a shell hole for protection from heavy fire. A Sergeant called out from a clump of trees to them to go to the rear. Colahan heard his companion cry out with pain. "I can't go," he said. "My uncle has got me."

Colahan explains that Schrautemeier had two German uncles, and that had become a subject of jokes in the company.

Colahan, hugging the ground for protection, did not see all that followed, but he heard a pistol shot, followed by the sound of a fall and saw a German standing over the shell hole.

Martin tells how the company ran into a nest of machine guns that opened fire. He was wounded, and when trying to get back to the rear, fell exhausted and was later taken prisoner. He says he saw a German shoot S with a revolver.

Martin, on reaching Switzerland after his release, told of this incident and the substance of his story appeared in the Post-Dispatch Dec. 21.

**Davidson, George. Lee, MT. Army. POW EC.  
Company K 362<sup>nd</sup> Infantry. Sergeant. Overseas July 5, 1918. Born Dalnamien, Scotland. Age 30 11/12 years.**

**Hollar, Everett E. Ovando. Army. Slightly WIA September 29, 1918 POW. EC.  
COMPANY G 139<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Sergeant. Meuse Argonne; Def Sector Gerardmer, Grange-le-Comte. Overseas April 25, 1918-April 24, 1919. Born Bethany, MO. Age 21 3/12 years.**

Everett Hollar of Ovando, held at Camp Giessen POW Camp, Germany  
[Butte Miner February 10, 1919, p. 8.] Out of Prison camp. Deer Lodge, Feb 0.—Among the names of those who were recently released from German prison camps was that of Everett E. Hollar of Ovando.

**Jensen, Nels K. Rose Valley, Dawson Co. Captured in 1918. EC. ARC  
Company B 324<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Private. Overseas October 8, 1918. Born Godvad, Denmark. March 7, 1895  
ARC Recorded same service number but Company B 324<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Battalion.  
Released 6 February 12, 1919**

**Johnson, John William. Hall, MT  
364<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 91<sup>st</sup> Division.**

[Anaconda Standard February 4, 1919, p. 10] Hun Prison gives Up Husky of Hall. Information regarding Americans held prisoner and now reported as having been released was made public tonight by the war department as follows:

**John W. Johnson, Hall, MT.**

[Butte Miner November 16, 1918, p. 3] John William Johnson Is In Hun Prison Camp. He is in a German prison camp at Dilmar. With 364<sup>th</sup> Infantry in the 91<sup>st</sup> Division. His parents reside in Missoula.

**Knarreborg, Carl L. Fairview.**

[Butte Miner November 22, 1918, p. 9] Fairview, Mont., Man in Hun Prison Camp. Washington, Nov. 21.—The war department today announced that Carl L. Knarreborg of Fairview, Mont. was in a German prison camp, the name of which was unknown.

**Larabie, Edward/Ned. Deer Lodge/Bellingham, Powell County. Lieutenant R.A.F. 24<sup>th</sup> Squadron, Missing September 20, 1918. Machine S.E.5.E.4072. Mrs. C. Larrabee, (Mother) South Bellingham WA. Taken September 20, 1918 Cambrai arrived from front at Limburg.**

[Butte Miner November 15, 1918: Ned Larabie Located in Hun Prison Camp. Son of Mrs. C. X. Larabie Reported Missing Two months Ago. Deer Lodge, Nov. 14.—R. D. Larabie has received the welcome news that his cousin, Ned Larabie, of Bellingham, is a prisoner in Karlsruhe in Germany. The young man, who was a member of the English flying corps was reported missing in France two months ago. Since then, although every effort had been made by his mother Mrs. C. X. Larabie, no word had been heard of him. Through the efforts of the Red Cross, it is now learned he is a prisoner and wounded slightly.

[Butte Miner March 15, 1918: Edward Larabie Joins The Royal British Army. Deer Lodge, March 14.—Edward Larabie, cousin of R. D. Larabie of this city and son of the late Charlie Larabie of Bellingham, Wash., who was well known in Montana in early days, passed through Deer lodge this evening on his way east. Young Mr. Larabie is a member of the Royal British army in the aviation department and expects upon his arrival in New York to leave soon for France. Mr. Larabie was too young to join the flying orps of this county and enlisted in Canada. He has been in Texas lately, receiving final training and was met at the train by Deer Lodge relative, who bade him a safe jouney.

**McCormick, Everett B. Chinook, Blaine County. Army. POW  
Company E 362<sup>nd</sup> Infantry. Sergeant. Overseas July 6, 1918. Born Tekomah, Nebraska. Age 24 5/12 Years.**

[FBRP February 5, 1919, p. 8: Montana Boys Released. Washingron. Jan. 29.—the war department tonight made public a list of Americans held in prison in Germany who have been released. Among them were Everett B. McCormick of Chinook, and Nels K. Jensen, of Circle, Montana.

**Patterson, Lieut. Robert A. Havre. Army. MIA/Prisoner of War POW October 29, 1918.  
168<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron. 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant. Meuse Argonne. Overseas July 10, 1918.  
Born Brinkleyville, NC December 30, 1892.**

[GFTD 29 Dec 1918, p. 3] Havre Aviator Is Traced to German Prisoners' Camp. His Pilot Killed When Lieut. Patterson was Wounded and captured by Foe.  
Special to the Daily Tribune.

Havre, Dec. 5.—According to information received by relatives, Lieutenant Robert A. Patterson, a Havre boy, is a prisoner in the German military prison at Karlsruhe, German. This news was first received thru a cablegram to the International Red Cross.

Lieutenant Patterson was in the aviation branch, as an artillery observer, and was thru all of the fighting at St. Mihiel, the Argonne and Sedan, and was probably taken prisoner in the final fighting just before the armistice was signed When he was wounded his pilot was killed.

Lieut. Patterson's wife and baby reside in Havre, as do his parents, Mr and Mrs. R. A. Patterson and a sister, Mrs. H. W. Wheeler.

Relatives here have learned that he is well and receiving good treatment, but they have not learned when he is to be released. [GFTD December 6, 1918]

IRC POW Card RE 85 Patterson, Robert A. 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. 12 Aero Squadron Interned at Karlsruhe Captured October 29, 1918. Campigneulle. Camp Card September 11, 1918 Address: Mrs. Rohita Patterson 429 8<sup>th</sup> St Havre, MT. Cabled: November 25, 1918.

**Roberts, Edward M. "Bob." Miles City, Custer Co. Army. Captured and blinded in captivity. Company A  
16<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Private. Champagne Front.  
Born Huron, SD. Age 18.**

**Rodin, William V. Conrad. Army. POW. EC.  
Replacement Unit 310 MTC. Sergeant. Overseas October 28, 1918. Gorn Buffalo, MN. June 23, 1897.**

[GFT March 21, 1919, p. 3] Released from Hun Prison. Washington, March 20.—Private William V. Rodin, of Conrad, Montana, has been reported by the war department as having been released from German prison camp.

**Schultz, Otto John Somers. Army. Died of WIA & POW November 17, 1918. EC.**

**Company E 308<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Private. Overseas August 8, 1918. Born Plymouth County, Iowa. Age 23 10/12 Years. POW ARC shows name as Adolphe Schultz. LOST BATTALION.  
Schultz, Otto. Somers. Second man from Flathead to Die in German Prison.**

[Conrad Independent February 27, 1919, p. 7] Otto Schultz of Somers is the second Flathead county man to die in a German prison. Jerry Sullivan, who left in the same contingent with Schultz, also died in a Hun prison camp some time ago.

[The Butte Miner February 13, 1919. Flathead Man Dies in Hun Prison Camp. Kalispell, Feb. 12.—word has been received of the death on November 17 of Otto G. Schultz, formerly of Somers, Flathead county in a German prison camp.

He left in July last with a squad which had been called to fill a vacancy in the quota caused by the rejection of some of the men previously sent in a short time he was sent overseas, and was wounded and captured in one of the battles in the Argonne forest. His mother died at Somers a short time ago.

A strange coincidence is that Jerry Sullivan of Creston, who left here in the same squad with Schultz, went over at the same time, but was assigned to a different regiment, was also wounded and captured, and brought up in the same prison camp, where both men died, Sullivan's death occurred in October last.

**Skarsten, Robert. Turner, Blaine County.**

**ARC. Company E 58<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Private. Released December 18, 1918.**

[Anaconda Standard Robert S. Carston of Turner is in the German prison camp at Giessen.

**Sorensen, Christian A. Verona, Chouteau County. Captured February 1918**

[Anaconda Standard January 1, 1919] Christian A. Sorenson, Big Sandy, is reported to have arrived at Leith, Scotland from German Prison Camp end of December, 1918.

**Sorenson, Lourits/Louritz P. Great Falls. Severely Wounded July 21, 1918. Captured July 21, 1918. Company A 16<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Corporal. Overseas December 14, 1917. Born Elyria, Nebraska. Age 30 11/12 Years. RC. EC.**

**Stewart, R.**

**Findon, MT.**

**Gallatin County**

**Anaconda Standard November 29, 1918, p. 12: A Repatriated Montana Boy. Ottawa, Ontario, No. 28.—**

**Prisoner of War repatriated R. Stewart, Findon, Mont.**

**Canadian Casualty.**

**Sullivan, Jerry R. Creston, Flathead Co. Army. Died a POW of Catarrh of both lungs. EC.**

**Company L 160<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Private. Overseas August 8, 1918. Born Creston. Age 22 3/12 Years. Sullivan, Jerry. Creston/Somers. First man from Flathead to Die in German Prison.**

[Conrad Independent February 27, 1919, p. 7] Otto Schultz of Somers is the second Flathead county man to die in a German prison. Jerry Sullivan, who left in the same contingent with Schultz, also died in a Hun prison camp some time ago.

Employed by P & O Ranch as a rider.

**Timmons, Budd. Miles City/Monida, Beaverhead County. Army**

**Private 2,257,446. Company D 102<sup>nd</sup> Regiment. Overseas April 7, 1918. List 12 September 12, 1918. ARC.**

**Born White Owl, SD. Age 21 1/12.**

**Missing 21-24 July, 1918. Prisoner November 9, 1918 held at Rastott. Released**

A Cowboy from centennial Valley.

[Dillon Examiner July 9, 1919, p. 1: Bud Timmons, a Beaverhead county buckaroo, and famed for his sensational bareback riding, carried off the big money in the bareback riding when he rode the outlaw horse, Carrie Nation, before a crowd of 15,000 people that went wild over his stunt.

**Tronson, Melvin. Plentywood. Army. POW. EC. RL. LOST BATTALION.**

**Company E 308<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Private. Born Grand Forks, ND. Age 26 6/12 Years.**

**Weirick, Arthur Murray. Lewistown. Army. Severely Wounded In Action October 31, 1918. 213 Aero Squadron. 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant. St. Mihiel; Mouse Argonne. Overseas January 15, 1918. Born Helena October 16, 1893.**

**162.** Gaff, Alan D. *Blood in the Argonne: The "Lost Battalion" of World War I*; Laplander, Robert J. *Finding the Lost Battalion; Missoulian, October 17, 1937.* Private Marvin B. Long of Glasgow, later recalled his experiences as one of the Americans who went through the hell of starvation and exposure to war's worst elements. Nineteen years later, living in Hamilton, Private Long vividly recalled the horror of the siege. See [www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1](http://www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1) for Pvt. Long's account. Enlistment Cards.

Private Long's account:

*Early in 1918 at his home town, Glasgow, Marvin Long became a member of the 40<sup>th</sup> Division. He sailed for France with the division soon afterward. At St. Mihiel in France, September 23, he was transferred to the 77<sup>th</sup> Division and three months from the time he left Glasgow, Long was in the Argonne forest. He tells how his company went foodless for the first 48 hours in the Argonne wilderness.*

*"We advanced every day and were ahead of our supplies and it was impossible to get anything to us. The first 'grub' that came to us after that two days was fried bacon and bread. I had been out on a scouting trip and when I came in the bacon was about gone. I remember sopping a hunk of bread in the bacon grease left in the container and I never ate anything so good in my life. There was no coffee that day. That was tame, though, compared to what we went through later in the Argonne.*

*"Major Whittlesey was the finest soldier I ever saw. He never said 'Go' to his soldiers. Instead he said 'Come on.' He faced everything for his men that he possibly could. I carried messages for him several times and somehow I came through it all without being wounded. There wasn't a soldier among us who would not have followed Major Whittlesey anywhere, for he was the bravest man of the division.*

*"One thing I know, the 'Lost Battalion' was never lost. We gained our objective, but there were Germans back of us and Germans ahead of us. Our men kept trying always to go ahead. But we lost too many good soldiers. It was awful. No one can visualize what war is unless they've been a part of it like we were there in the Argonne. One of my buddies fighting beside me, fell dead in my lap, shot through the heart.*

*[Private Long] and his company had captured a company of Germans. "It was the capture of these Heinies that saved us from that last trap," Long said. "We took the prisoners back and right here I want to say that we found those German boys just as sick of the war as we were. They were glad to be captured. One of them spoke English very well—he had lived in New York—and he told us the Germans of the Argonne section never even knew that America was in the war, before September 23 of that year (1918). He told us we had killed and wounded 25 of their men that same morning we made capture; that was October 2."*

*[After rescue on October 8] Long went to Base Hospital No. 70 at Allera, France, with pneumonia. He was ill for six weeks and finally, on December 22 left the hospital to rejoin his company. He stayed but a week, for he was then sent to Company F of the 302<sup>nd</sup> Ammunition Train . . .*

*One of Marvin Long's most treasured possessions is a book that contains an account of the 77<sup>th</sup> Division, the first national army division in Europe to be made responsible for a sector of the European battlefield. He bought the book in New York upon his return from France. . .*

*"The spirit of the Argonne was no myth," Long said. "The men followed Major Whittlesey to do or die and many of them died." The book contains a soldier's tribute to that spirit. In part it tells:*

*"And each of them gave the best in him, and some gave a precious life.*

*To a noble and holy cause, for the end of a sinful strife;*

*Inspired by Right and conceived in the might of the Spirit of the Argonne."*

**Missoulian October 17, 1937, p. 6.**

**James G. Irvin.** Billings. Army. EC.

**Company C, 308<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Private. Born Laco, Illinois. Age 24 6/12 Years.**

**[Gaff—Blood p. 310] [Laplander, pp. 692]**

Private. Billings. Lost Battalion Hero Brings Back Remarkable Story

Billings Man Shatters Popular Supposition that "Huns" Didn't Fight Yanks.

Special to The Daily Tribune. Billings, May 28.—Private James G. Irvin of Billings, member of the famous "Lost Battalion" which spent five days and night in the Argonne forest surrounded on all sides by German infantrymen and a part of the time under the fire of French and American artillery, is home after nearly two years in the service. His first hand account of the experiences of the gallant little detachment of the 77<sup>th</sup> division which included 200 men picked from four companies, reveals some interesting sidelights which have not appeared in print here.

Private Irvin was close to Major Whittlesey, commander of the detachment, when the Americans who had been taken prisoner by the Germans and released to carry the message back to his comrades requesting they surrender,

arrived and delivered the message. The widely heralded reply accredited to Major Whittlesy, in which the major is supposed to have told the Germans in stentorian tones to "Go to hell" never was uttered, Private Irvin says, altho the sentiment therein expressed was carried out.

"What Major Whittlesy did remark," says Private Irvin, "was addressed to the message bearer and uttered in a low voice. It was: "I ought to shoot you for bringing this kind of a message."

As a matter of face, the bearer of the message nearly was shot by mistake by Private Irvin, who was stationed several rods away from where the detachment lay partly concealed, by hastily thrown up breastworks and the rank undergrowth. Private Irvin observed the messenger approaching and waiting for him to announce himself. The guard had his rifle leveled on a patch of moonlight across a path which the messenger was traveling. If the stranger made no sound before reaching the patch of moonlight, Private Irvin intended to fire. He knew better than to make known his own presence for fear the visitor might be a German, and several enemy raiding parties had already tried to storm the position where the Americans lay.

"By the merest chance, the messenger divined the presence not far off of his comrades and hailed them just before he stepped into the patch of moonlight on which I had my rifle leveled. He passed safely through the lines."

"Major Whittlesy appeared highly displeased at the messenger and rebuked him severely. The messenger then took his place among us.

"For some time after arriving at our rendezvous we were under fire of both our own and the enemy artillery. We lost several of our men from this source. Major Whittlesy sent back all the carrier pigeons we had with us with messages to our artillery to cease firing on that point. I was only a few feet away when the major sent back the last pigeon. All the others, apparently, were killed before reaching their destination, for the shells from our guns kept falling in the vicinity. As the major adjusted the message to the leg of the last pigeon, he remarked:

"Now then you little devil, if you don't get through, I don't know what's going to happen to us."

"The bird got through safely, we learned later, and the artillery fire lifted. That last message also resulted in our rescue."

Only 37 of the 200 men who composed the detachment were taken out alive, Private Irvin said. A majority went directly to a hospital and remained there several weeks recuperating. Private Irvin and a half dozen other volunteered for duty the following day and resumed the advance, but the Billings man was forced by weakness to drop out.

Fell From Exhaustion. "I marched until I couldn't stand up any longer, carrying the regulation pack which a soldier takes into the front lines. This pack weights 110 pounds. I stumbled along for a couple of miles and suddenly everything went black. When I woke up I was in a hospital, and I was still there when the armistice was signed."

The Billings lad believes he bears a charmed life. During his long service in the front lines he never received a scratch, although in a single day he was the sole survivor of two separate squads of eight men each. On two occasions the flesh of his "buddies" was splattered in his face, while the worst that fell to his lot was the jar from the concussion of bursting explosives.

Chained to Gun. Private Irvin tells of seeing a dead German machine gunner, a man of about 50 years, with his left wrist chained to his gun and his right hand on the trigger. He had continued firing until death stilled him.

"I've heard a lot about the Germans being cowards," said Private Irvin, "if there were any cowards among the Germans. I didn't see nor hear of them. All the Germans we had anything to do with fought like tigers. There appeared to be no limit to their bravery. All they need is a commander. Put a Hun on his own responsibility and he's lost. He doesn't know what to do. Man for man, the American fighting man outclasses the Germans two to one. The Germans, too, are splendid marksmen. I recall when one of the men in my company got careless and sat up straight in a shallow trench to take a drink from his canteen. A bullet whizzed thru the canteen as he held it up to his lips. The Hun sniper, I am convinced, just wanted to show us what he could do"

Signaled With Guns. The Germans devised a method of signaling with machine guns, Private Irvin says. The gunners would fire a series of shots at intervals to spell out letters by code, known only to the enemy. In this manner messages were relayed back and forth for considerable distance.

At this point where the detachment of the 77<sup>th</sup> was surrounded, called by the soldiers who were there "the pocket," there was a small spring which furnished the only fresh water the Americans could reach. The German artillery had the exact range of the spring and German outposts had a clear view of the spot. Whenever one or more Americans tries to reach the spring, the enemy laid down a barrage. It was here the lost battalion suffered its heavy casualties, Private Irvin said. Machine guns manned by Germans were stationed on three sides of the American position and a constant storm of lead was directed on the spot. The little band was nearly famished when found.

Private Irvin was a member of Company K, 163<sup>rd</sup> Montana, and sailed with the 40<sup>th</sup> division in August, 1918. Later this division was used for replacement, many of the men being transferred to the 77<sup>th</sup>, New York Division.

Private Irvin went into the Argonne as a member of Company C, 308<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 77<sup>th</sup> Division. [GFTD 30 May 1919, p. 5]

164. See [www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1](http://www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1) for all known Montanans serving in the Lost Battalion and in the 77<sup>th</sup> Infantry **Division**.  
See **Lost Battalion and 77<sup>th</sup> Division**.

178. “The Flu in Boston” American Experience <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/influenza-boston/>; See [www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1](http://www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1) for all known Montana influenza casualties; Enlistment Card J. J. Keegan.  
See **Montana Influenza/Pneumonia Casualties**

**188.** *Great Falls Tribune*, January 16, 1919. See *The Treasure State Prepares*, 181-184, for more about Nurse Canon. The rest of Nurse Canon’s remarkable letter appears at [www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1](http://www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1), to include the visit of King George and his family and a naval Thanksgiving onboard the USS Nevada.

In a letter written just before she left Leith, Scotland and printed in the *Great Falls Tribune* of January 16, 1919, Nurse Canon provided insight into her fascinating life overseas with the Navy and highlighted events she experienced as the Great War was ending.

*Leith, Scotland, Dec. 1, 1918.*

*At last the censorship is off our mail and I can tell you where I am and more about what I am doing.*

*As you see by the heading we are at Leith, a suburb of Edinburgh, right on the Firth of Forth. . . . we have a beautiful location . . . The British government took over an old hotel for us which has a history and a past: It is about four miles along the coast from the hospital and we are taken back and forth in a big bus.*

*So many wonderful things have happened lately I hardly know where to begin to tell you about them all, but guess the first one should be “Peace Day,” that wonderful day that came on us so suddenly that we can't even quite realize that it is true yet.*

*I can imagine how people at home took it—the noise, excitement, crowds, etc. But not so here. As you probably know, the people are very undemonstrative here. They took the war as a matter of course, a burden that had to be borne, and there was no grumbling or complaining about it. They paid the price and kept still.*

*So now with peace—they don't take it in a spirit of pride or vainglory in what they have accomplished but rather in a spirit of prayer and thanksgiving that it is finally over and they can have their loved ones, who are left back again. So we find them slipping off to church to pray. Of course, there was a crowd down town that evening—some noise, drunks singing and dancing on the streets, but nothing like you would expect.*

***Describes King’s Visit.***

*The next big event was the arrival of King George, Queen Mary and Albert, Prince of Wales. for a visit to the grand fleet and Edinburgh, of course. We were sent tickets for the hall where he would speak, but they didn't arrive until too late so four of us went down town and thought we would at least see them drive through the streets. We went first to the old cathedral where they were to attend services.*

*Of course, it was all roped off with no one going in without tickets. We asked a policeman if there was any chance for us and he said none whatever. Well, we begged a little and told him how disappointed we were and he said, “Well well,” and “I will see the chief.” He did so and the chief took us right in himself. As soon as the ticket holders were seated we were given splendid seats. Saw everything there was to be seen—the judges in their gowns and wigs came in, then lawyers, councilors, advocates, ministers, teachers, etc., then came the royal party led by the minister of the church.*

*The services were very short, simple and pretty. Going out they passed down our aisle out the king's entrance, and I was so close I could have touched them. Queen Mary is getting quite gray. She wore a tight-fitting royal purple velvet dress. It had a vest and short train; her hat matched and was a close-fitting one with an aigrette of same color. She is a much larger woman than he is a man. The prince is a dear looking kid, but so boyish-looking—would think he was about 19 although he is 23. He is small like his dad and very blond. We saw them again in their coach and six white horses, with grooms in red, then guards in front and back, of course.*

***Saw Naval Surrender.***

*Well, this same day the real big event happened—the surrender of the German navy—right out in front of our hospital. It was foggy or we could have seen the whole thing. As it was the fog lifted for an hour at noon and we did*

see the ships. Four of our doctors had the rare privilege of going out on the USS New York and seeing the whole thing.

They said it was perfectly wonderful. The British fleet led by our five U. S. battleships—the New York (flagship), Texas, Florida, Arkansas and Wyoming, went out to the mouth of the Forth and formed two parallel lines six miles apart, then prepared for action—guns loaded, gas masks on, etc.

At the appointed time the German ships appeared over the horizon, flying the German flag and the white one of surrender. They seemed to be coming from all directions, at once, then formed into four lines and sailed in between our two lines. They were then searched and at sundown their flag was lowered never to be up again unless so ordered. Theirs the humiliation, ours the glory, but who can say they didn't deserve it and more. They never could pay, no, not in centuries for all that they have done.

The first thing a German gob said was, "When does the meat boat come out." The next day they went up to Scapa Flow where they are to be interned, the Germans sent on home and the ships manned [by] English sailors.

#### **Prisoners Returning.**

Prisoners of war are now coming back by the thousands. Just last Sunday 17,000 passed through here on their way to rest camps for a month before being sent on to their homes. Some looked well and say they were well treated, others look thin and pale, still others had in be clothed before they could be seen, and some poor chaps had been tattooed all over their faces and necks with German emblems and mottoes, just disfigured for life.

Thanksgiving Day the American consul had service here and those of us who could attended them. A Scotchman delivered the address and I have never heard a better talk on the same subject by any American. He gave a short history of our first Thanksgiving and then spoke about the Revolution. Said how ashamed they were now of the part they had played then, and how we fought them for the same thing that they and we were fighting together for now. He said that now this was all over we should be bound together by chains of love and brotherhood that nothing could ever put us asunder again. I can't tell you all he said but it was beautiful.

That same morning ten of us were invited out to visit the USS Nevada which had just arrived. We were the first women on board her, and we were treated royally. The captain met us and took us all around our fleet in a motor launch and around the British fleet. Saw the Queen Elizabeth, their flagship, then we went on board the Nevada.

About a dozen officers paired off with us and showed us all over the ship from signal flags to torpedo room, galley, mess halls, laundry, hospital, dental office, etc. It was wonderful. By that time it was noon and we expected to go home; instead, we were taken to the captain's room and told to powder our noses, after which we went to the senior officers' mess hall and had Thanksgiving dinner, and such a good time as we had at that meal!

There were at least four officers to each girl—and the dinner! Imagine this in war time: fruit cup, soup, turkey from Ireland, dressing, peas, mashed potatoes and gravy and such gravy!—white bread and jam, olives, pickles, crab salad, plum pudding and coffee, and believe me, we did justice to it, too. We had a nice dinner here for the patients also.

The British men all said they had never had a meal like it since they had been in service. All the British like to come to our hospital because they get such good food. They are all willing to admit, too, that the situation was pretty serious last March and that our men getting over here in such large numbers, and our food, surely turned the tide in the right direction.

The British want their hospital back now and Admiral Sims just wired us to not take any more patients as the hospital is to be closed. Our C. O. is in London now, so when he returns we will know our fate. We may be right home and we may be stationed some other place.

We also had a terrible epidemic of the flu. At one time had 800 patients. At the time we thought we were losing a lot but our percentage was small, about eight, I understand; while one of the British hospitals lost 60 per cent.

Best Christmas greetings and wishes for a happy New Year.

**Great Falls Tribune, January 16, 1919.**

196. River Press, December 4, 1918. See [www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1](http://www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1) for complete article.

Before leaving Washington, D.C., President Wilson had explained his quest for peace and named his delegation:

*President Tells Congress His Reasons For Going To Peace Conference.*

Washington, Dec. 2.—In an address to congress in joint session today, President Wilson formally announced his intention to go to Paris for the peace conference, saying the allied governments have accepted principles enunciated by him for peace and it is his paramount duty to be present.

The president said he will be in close touch by cable and wireless and that congress will know all that he does on the other side.

*Referring to his announcement that the French and British governments had removed all cable restrictions upon the transmission of news of the conference to America, the president said he had taken over the American cable systems on expert advice so as to make a unified system available.*

*He expressed the hope that he would have the co-operation of the public and of congress, saying through the cables and wireless constant counsel and advice would be possible.*

*Much of the address, was devoted to the railroad problem, for which the president said he now had no solution to offer. He recommended careful study by congress, saying it would be a disservice to the country and to the railroads to permit a return to old conditions under private management without modifications.*

*The president declared he stood ready to release the railroads from government control whenever a satisfactory plan of readjustment could be worked out.*

*The president's annual address was read before a crowd that filled the floors and galleries. He reviewed at length the country's accomplishments in the war, paying tribute to the armed forces and to loyal workers at home. Among other things he disclosed that he thinks the problem of readjustment is taking care of itself without government aid.*

*"It is surprising," he said, "how fast the process of return to a peace footing has moved in the three weeks since the fighting stopped. It promises to outrank any inquiry that may be offered. It will not be easy to direct it any better than it will direct itself. The American businessman is of quick initiative."*

**FBRP December 4, 1918, p. 1.**

**202.** *Great Falls Tribune*, 26 October 1919. See [www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1](http://www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1) for Sgt. Daly's complete letter.

On December 20, 1918, he wrote to friends at Mutual Oil from Dernback, Germany about his experiences during the war and the German Occupation:

*Hello everybody.*

*Just a line from Germany. We arrived here a couple of days ago as we are now troops of occupation and this little village of Dernback is where we are going to do guard duty for a while. It has been such a long time since I have had the opportunity to write to any of you, but I sincerely hope you will forgive me for the 1<sup>st</sup> Division has been very busy. We have been what they call "shock troops." The German called us "The Black Snake Division" because we struck so often and unexpected and they evidently knew the fighting ability of the 1<sup>st</sup>, as well as French and Americans.*

*We returned from the front about October 15<sup>th</sup> for a rest and went back in France to real rest billets and expected to remain there for sometime but was called back again after about ten days and hiked full pack back to the front thru mud and rain, sleeping in tents and barns. We went in and experienced a few days hard fighting along the Meuse river and were relieved and started back. We arrived in a large woods about 50 kilometers from Sedan, the big railroad center we captured on Nov. 11<sup>th</sup>, and it was there we heard the good news of the armistice. We surely were a happy bunch and celebrated the occasion by building large bonfires and getting warm and dry for the first time in over two weeks.*

*The next day we started on our way to Germany as troops of occupation via Verdun thru Alsace Lorraine, Luxemburg and on up the Moselle river to the Rhine. It was a long hard hike (full packs) but never the less it was a great change from continuous fighting.*

*Alsace Lorraine was much the same as France but Luxemburg seemed to us a kind of a fairyland as we stopped in some of the largest cities where they had almost anything to sell one wanted to buy. Of course we were certainly hungry after living on field rations (mostly beans) and hiking so far. The first large place we stopped was in the city of Ish which is about the size of Great Falls and of course the people were all out to welcome us as they were overjoyed to see the Americans coming and the Germans going. The whole city turned out and celebrated, parades, music, etc. Big time, and then of course the Americans were more or less of a curiosity.*

*But the most important part of it all (at least to us) was the fact that the hotels were putting out real honest to goodness meals and it only cost about \$3 or \$4 a plate. Well, I was fortunate enough to have two months' salary with me, consequently I had three good square meals between 2 p.m. and 10 p.m. besides being invited out to a private family in the evening where we enjoyed a nice lunch. This probably won't sound as tho I have been Hooverizing very much but after a fellow lives on corn beef, hard tack and beans for three weeks and hikes every day, three square meals is only a trifle.*

*If I had had the price I might of bought out the hotel! Ha, ha. We left there the following morning and on our way thru Luxembourg stopped in more of the large towns and enjoyed ourselves very much, and the welcome and*

reception we received was the same. We stopped in Grenenmacher, a large town and also spent Thanksgiving there and then on across the border and into Germany and up the Moselle River.

The receptions were much different from there on, although we have had no trouble and have gotten along very nicely so far with the German people. We stopped in many of the towns along the river. The scenery was great, it consisted of vineyards, mountains, old castles, etc. We finally arrived in Coblenz which is another very interesting little city; we stopped there over night. From there we came up the Rhine a few miles to this quiet little village and are living in hopes that our stay here will be short as I am curious to get started for the good old U.S.A. now that it is all over with. So you see how it goes, no chance to write nor receive any mail. I was fortunate enough to have three letters overtake me the other day, all from home. These being the first in a long time. I must close now but if we stay here very long I shall write often. My best regards to all, and a very Merry Xmas. JOE.

**Great Falls Tribune, 26 October 1919.**

**205.** *Billings Weekly Gazette*, September 2, 1920. Read the full story at [www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1](http://www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1). The *Billings Weekly Gazette* carried the story of their long, complicated, and sad search:

*Billings Father Goes Abroad to Clear Up Mystery.*

*A four months' search in four countries, including the battlefields of France, and ultimate success in finding the body of his son, an officer casualty of the great war, was the summer's work of D. E. Saunders, of the Saunders Brothers Lumber company, who has just returned to Billings from abroad.*

*Beyond the brief report received from the war department during the war to the effect that their son was missing in action, the Saunders family could gain no information as to the manner of his death or the disposition of the body. So last April Mr. and Mrs. Saunders accompanied by their daughter, Miss Helena Saunders, left Billings with the purpose of finding their son.*

*Raymond J Saunders was a first lieutenant in Eddie Rickenbacker's command, the First Pursuit Squadron of the American Aviation Corps. How his father found his wrecked Spad plane near Fontains, France, over a year after the boy was shot down, and identified it from the number on the motor which protruded above the slime of an old shell-hole is only part of the story of the search.*

*On leaving Billings the family went first to Battle Creek, Mich., where they interviewed Capt. F. W. Zinn, formerly of the 94<sup>th</sup> Aerial Squadron, and who since the war has carried on a work of locating the graves of fallen members of the organization. With some information concerning their son's unit, they proceeded to Washington where they obtained maps and such records as they thought would be of assistance to them in their search. In New York they visited Lieut. Wiley S. Sparks, formerly a flying-mate of Raymond Saunders. Sparks told Mr. Saunders of the fight in which his companion's machine had gone down, and marked the spot as nearly as possible on the map. Then the party sailed for England.*

*In London Mr. Saunders searched records and through the English Military hospitals on the chance that his boy might be a mental patient in one of these institutions. Satisfying themselves that he was not in England, they proceeded to Paris and thence to Romagne, on the former Meuse-Argonne front, near which place the young officer's last battle had taken place.*

*Mr. Saunders went into the fields and swamps and in a few days found the fallen Spad. The motor number by which he identified it was 19491. He searched about the wreck, digging away earth and dragging swamps, for two weeks. Then he went to Berlin and spent many days searching through German war records. He engaged the assistance of a German family, recommended by Captain Zinn at Battle Creek, and a systematic search for clues was begun.*

*Through his German assistant, Mr. Saunders got in touch with Lieut. George von Hintlemann and it was established that the latter, known as the best fighting pilot in the German army at that time, had been the opponent who had shot down Lieutenant Saunders. The German pilot described the fight, saying that he was attacked by an American Spad in a most persistent manner, and had been forced to turn and fight. He said that the American's plane had finally come for an instant before his gun, and he saw the Spad go down. As near as Mr. Saunders could learn, his son had been the German's twenty-third or twenty-sixth victim. He never learned his own boy's record of victories, and has no way of learning.*

*Mr. Saunders finally decided to give up the search, leaving his German assistants to continue their inquiries, and returned to Paris with the intention of sailing for home. But there he received word from Lieut. George Derrick, an American officer stationed at Romagne, with whom he had become acquainted and who had assisted him in his search. The lieutenant had been in charge of bringing in bodies of American dead from isolated graves, and the officer had stumbled onto a clue. He had found a blue print made long before by the American engineers who had gone through the territory surveying and charting isolated graves. The blueprint bore the wrong name, Charles*

Saunders, and it showed the grave to be at Fontains, about three and one-half miles from the wrecked airplane. Mr. Saunders retraced his steps, and at Fontains they found the grave, unmarked, in a small German cemetery, where formerly there had been a German dressing station.

During the excavation in exhuming the body, a brass plate bearing the name, Charles Saunders, first lieutenant aviation, A.E.F., was found, and it was seen that the American engineers had formerly marked the grave with a cross and name plate. These, it is presumed, were removed by German prisoners, who had been sent through the district to clean up their own cemeteries. So, Mr. Saunders had the body removed to Romagne and placed in the Remagne-Argonne cemetery, the largest American burying ground in France.

Mr. Saunders found the wrecked Spad plane on June 2, and the body was found at Fontains on July 19. It now lies in Romagne cemetery, where the grave, No. 103, is located in section 56, plot 2. [The American Battle Monuments Commission records 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Raymond J. Saunders interred at the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery.]

There are nearly 24,000 American soldiers buried in this cemetery, said Mr. Saunders, who remarked that the grounds are beautiful and are the object of the greatest care on the part of both the French and American governments. He expressed the opinion that Americans who bring home the bodies of fallen sons and relatives make a mistake.

*"It is not right to remove the boys to some isolated place half a world away from the scene of their glory. They bring back only a few bones, and perhaps not the right bones then, and if they leave them there, all that is left, their names and their memories will be forever kept green in those beautiful shrines."*

Upon reaching the United States again, the Saunders returned to Washington, where they made an investigation which resulted in reassurance that Charles Saunders in reality was Raymond J. Saunders. The war department records showed that there was a Charles Saunders in the American army in France, but that he was in the artillery, and was not a casualty. The exhumed body had borne the insignia of Lieutenant Saunders' aerial unit.

Raymond Saunders was 23 years old at the time of his death. He was in his senior year at the University of Nebraska when the call to war took him to the colors. His family is proud of his record. Mr. Saunders was told by a member of the 94<sup>th</sup> Squadron whom he met in France that the man who earned a place in the First Pursuit Squadron of the American aviation corps had set as high a mark as was possible for anyone who went to war.

**Billings Weekly Gazette September 2, 1920, p. 1,**

**209.** Fletcher Letters, March 31, 1919. For Corp. Fletcher's complete letters see [www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1](http://www.kenrobisonhistory.com/world-war-1).

### **SGT. FLETCHER'S OCCUPATION VIEWS**

The Great War began for Chicago-born, 23-year-old, Arthur E. Fletcher of Stevensville in the Bitterroot Valley when he sailed for France on November 26, 1917. Assigned to Company C, 2<sup>nd</sup> Field Signal Battalion, his war ended in September 1919, just short of two years since his induction. Corporal Fletcher often wrote home to his parents during the long period of occupation. His letters provide excellent insight into the environment during this post-war period and reflected the views of many young Yanks, impatient to leave Europe and the war behind to rebuild their lives at home.

In his letter of March 31, 1919 from Montabaur, Corporal Fletcher wrote:

*Dear Folks . . . We crushed the Kaiser and Militarism and should have sailed home. I don't believe in Wilson's policy of joining the League of Nations and making every war our war. The time for such a league is not here yet.*

*Some time ago when [General] Pershing reviewed the 1<sup>st</sup> Division he made a speech. A mighty warm reception he received. From all over the field one could hear the boys saying, "I want to go home." There was so much whimpering he could not be heard. Of course this is not military but what did the boys care.*

*United States is going on the bum because of the love for France. Could they see how dirty the French are they might change. England is showing much more sense than our country. She is providing better for her soldiers and also getting them home quicker. Those in her Army of Occupation have the privilege of going home often.*

*. . . There was a dandy write-up in the Stars & Stripes of this division in the Argonne. It stated we struck the strongest section of the Enemy's front between the Meuse-Argonne and that we captured 1,407 prisoners and had lost a total of 9,387 officers and men, the greatest casualties suffered by any American division in the Meuse-Argonne offensive. During its seven days in the line the 1<sup>st</sup> had advanced seven kilometers against the German 1<sup>st</sup> and V<sup>th</sup> Guard Divisions and the XXXVII<sup>st</sup>, XLI<sup>st</sup>, XLIII<sup>rd</sup>, LII<sup>nd</sup> and XXVIII<sup>st</sup> Divisions and the 11<sup>th</sup> Landwehr Division.*

*. . . I don't understand why the drafted man in the Regular Army must wait until all the others who came over later, go home.*

. . . *With love and best wishes. Arthur  
Fletcher Letter, March 31, 1919.*

Three weeks later, Corporal Fletcher wrote home on April 22:

*Dear Folks Was very much pleased at noon when I received your letter of Mar. 24<sup>th</sup>. I am glad you wrote when you did instead of waiting for my letters.*

*Last Sunday was Easter and do you know it was the first time since I left home that I heard a Robin. I woke at 4.30 am Sunday and listened to the Robins for about an hour. It sure sounded good to hear them. You see last year we were at the front and you can bet the birds knew it is not a pleasant place.*

*I went to church Easter morning, in fact I go most every Sunday.*

*Lately some pretty strong rumors have been going the rounds. They are such as that this division's sailing date is on July 7<sup>th</sup>, and that the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Divisions would parade in Washington, D.C. on July 4<sup>th</sup> which would mean that we would leave here in June. Sounds pretty good don't it? . . .*

*One month and four days and I will have three service stripes [for 18-months service]. When I first came to France I believed it would be only a matter of a few months and we would be returning to U.S.A. But now I have a right to believe it will only be a matter of a few months.*

*The people with whom I used to stay invited me to come to their home last Saturday as they would have some wine and cake for me. I was in the show when I remembered of the invitation but remained until it was over. I suppose I will have to explain to them the next time I see them. They were very good to me and hated to see me go. Don't think that the people I stay with are different. Yesterday the woman brought in some coffee and cake and insisted on my taking it.*

*Recently an order came out that if there were anyone who had a complaint to make about the Y. [Y.M.C.A] they should send it in to their commanding officer. We would rather wait though and be sure that it reached the people without any part cut out. There is much that concerns the officers when telling of the Y.M.C.A. Something should have happened long ago when the Y. was appealing to the people, "How much will your mother-love give to your boy who is in the battle"; and at the same time enjoying themselves with the money which the givers honestly believed was for a good cause. The man in the S.O.S. got more than he whom they were speaking for. There is an investigation being made but you can bet nothing will come from it as there would be some big men exposed who are wound up in it.*

*With love and best wishes. Arthur  
Fletcher Letter, April 22, 1919.*

Corporal Fletcher wrote home again on July 10, with little news except that his division was receiving a large number of replacement soldiers to fill the ranks. He makes note also of a 1<sup>st</sup> Division Circus to entertain the troops:

*Dear Folks . . . The 1<sup>st</sup> Division will soon receive 5708 replacements. I do hope I am lucky enough to go home. Tomorrow and the next day the 1<sup>st</sup> is to hold a circus at Montabaur.*

*All welfare workers are to leave here soon. This is a good sign that we will start for home soon.*

*. . . I wish I could write a long letter but don't know of anything to write about. The papers I am mailing you will give you all the news.*

*Best wishes and lots of love to all. Arthur  
Fletcher Letter, July 10, 1919.*

The return to the U.S. did not develop for the 1<sup>st</sup> Division, and on July 24 Corporal Fletcher wrote home:

*Dear Folks I moved to Neuwied Monday July 21<sup>st</sup>. I have a very nice room and bed at 66 Schloss Strasse. On one end of the same street is our telephone central while on the other end is a castle or mansion in which 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade Headquarters have their offices. This mansion belongs to the Prince of Wied. [Many generations earlier, in the 1830s Prince Maximilian of Wied brought artist Karl Bodmer with him on an expedition to the Upper Missouri and Fort Mackenzie, precursor trading post to Fort Benton.] Neuwied is much larger and better located than Montabaur.*

*. . . Our switch-board is in the same room with the division board. Across the hall is a German Telegraph Office and next to it a German Telephone Central.*

*Tuesday I went through the old mansion belonging to the Prince of Wied. It certainly is nicely furnished and in the rear is a private theatre which will seat about two hundred people. I also went through his stables where he has*

*some thorough breed horses. He has more harness and saddles than most harness shops. He has a park, a riding barn and everything one cares for.*

*. . . Best wishes and love to all. Arthur*

**Fletcher Letter, July 24, 1919.**

#### **WELCOME HOME SERGEANT FLETCHER**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Field Signal Battalion finally returned to the US in August 1919, and on September 6, Corporal Fletcher wrote home from Camp Mills on Long Island, New York.

*Dear Folks, Wednesday night I went to New York with a friend. They are building stands on Fifth Avenue and are getting ready for the parade. I believe it will be the biggest parade ever held. From New York we go to Washington, D. C. where we will parade on the 17<sup>th</sup>. There are rumors of our parading in Philadelphia and Chicago, but I hope we will not have to do so.*

*Last night I brought a uniform to Hempstead to have it tailored. This is the first new uniform I received for a long time.*

*Camp Mills has changed a great deal since 1917. I am staying in a barrack about 300 yards from the spot where our tent stood in 1917. The sanitary conditions are much better although the camp gets pretty muddy when it rains.*

*Am in good health and hope you are all well. Lots of love to all.*

*Arthur*

**Fletcher Letter, September 6, 1919.**