

ON THE WIRE

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In this Issue:

- ◆ GWA Fall Event Info
- ◆ The Inferno of Verdun
- ◆ A Guide to Better Reenacting
- ◆ GWA Election Info

On the Wire

Volume 8, #2 Fall 1997

On the Wire, the official newsletter of the Great War Association, is usually published three times a year—in the Spring, Summer and Fall. All contributions are welcomed, but we reserve the right to edit for length, spelling and content. Personal attacks are not allowed in *On the Wire*, and will not be published.

***The views expressed herein are the opinions of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the staff of OnW or the officers and members of the GWA.*

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On the Wire

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1997 GWA Schedule of Events

- ✶ Oct. 31–Nov. 2, 1997
GWA Fall '97 Combat Event,
Newville, PA
- ✶ Saturday, January 3, 1998
9th Annual, "Christmas Truce Dinner"
at the 94th Aero Squadron, College Park, MD
Call Phil Schreier for details: 703.522.1586
Reservations Mandatory!

About this Issue

Behold, the fabled "French" issue of *On the Wire*. I am quite proud of this issue, especially since it was put together *without* the help of the French. I would have liked to had even more French stuff in here, but when I asked them, I met with the usual French malaise (the exception to this was Mark Meader, who was very helpful! Thanks, Mark!). I hope you like it and if you have any articles or info along the same vein, please send it to me.

The next issue (Christmas) will be the "German" issue and in the Spring, we will be doing the "American" issue. I especially need photos of troops—it doesn't matter which side. All photos will, of course, be returned!

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Front cover art: Art from original French poster
for the 2nd War Loan.
Art sent in by Tim Fensch, 3/1983.

Ramblings from Atop the Soapbox

by Marsh Wise
Editor, *On the Wire*

Well, here we are at the Fall event! Nope, there wasn't a Summer issue of *OtW* like I promised—what happened was that I got a call from GWA VP Rick Blair telling me to “put the brakes on it” as they, the G-7, didn't know what was happening with the September event and GWA finances. As we all now know, the September event was cancelled due to a lack of funds and a unit to sponsor said event.

Thoughts about “On the Wire’s” Future

As I worked on this issue, a couple of things hit me. The first is how it feels, by this I mean eyes burning [since we're using a 12 inch monitor, if any of you have an old 15-17 inch SVGA monitor laying around and wish to donate it, we would be gaga with appreciation] and back hurting from sitting here in front of the computer for hours at a time—I also forget though, just how much satisfaction I get when it's done! As I've said before, my goal for *OtW* is to get it to be self-sustaining and to have people other than GWA members getting subscriptions. The first time I thought of this was while perusing old copies of *Der Angriff*, the WWI magazine that was published back in the early 80's by Rick Baumgartner. Although *Der Angriff* started off as a newsletter simply for IR63, it evolved into a generic WWI magazine, which featured articles about all combatants and interviews with the veterans. Since there really is no WWI magazines out there (ones that cover what we do), I really want to make *OtW* into “THE” WWI magazine. Once we get the ball rolling, it will continue by itself. Right now, I have two American articles in the can and some German stuff too. The plan is for a Christmas issue, which will have a German theme, and for the Spring issue to be an American issue. So please, if you have articles send 'em in!

Among the things I'm currently working on is a GWA internet web page (see below). My hope is, that with 'Net exposure, we can draw some outside subscriptions and more importantly, ARTICLES! It's hard when you really don't get submissions to publish. Some people (Deks, Goodwin, Keller, Randy Gaulke, among others) always send stuff in a timely manner—others, well let's just say that if I get something from them, I make a sacrifice in thanks to Bast, the Cat God. Really, the membership needs to be kept informed on what's going on in the organization and *OtW* is your link to the GWA.

GWA Web Page

As I said above, I'm currently working on the GWA Web Page and plan on having a page or link for each unit in the GWA. I need a 1-2 page description and some info

about each unit, along with the unit contacts and 2-3 good photos. If you already have a unit web page, please just send me the URL address for your page and I'll put it there. For anyone who is interested, IR63 has our web page up now and you can visit it at:

<http://www.saturnnet.com/radarrider/>

I hope to have the GWA page finished by Christmas, again like everything else though... we'll see, as it depends on other's participation.

The Spring Issue of “On the Wire”

The Spring *OtW* was handed out at the event, but unfortunately, this didn't work so well—registration was left unmanned for most of the event and some folks helped themselves to more than their fair share [I was told one clown took 100 copies!]. How many members actually got a copy is open to conjecture, but I have part of one case left (out of the original three cases—total 500 copies printed). If you didn't get yours, please send me a self-addressed, 9x12 envelope with \$1.10 postage and I'll send it to you, or... pick one up at the event. Please don't do this if you already received a copy as we just don't have that many left.

The new administration assures me that things will be done in a more timely manner from now on—we can hope!

Problems at the Spring Event

The Spring event was pretty good with only a few incidents marring the good times, the biggest of these being the unsafe Russians. The problem with the Russians was due to their (as usual) total lack of comprehension about safety—among the problems, two members of my own unit were shot in the face by members of the Russian Legion. This and their steadfast refusal to take hits is growing thin! After the G-7 meeting in August, they have now been placed on probation and must go through the process of becoming a GWA unit all over again. Maybe after this, they will finally “get it” about WWI reenacting.

I call on Captain LoCicero (the Allied Combat Commander) to look into this and correct these deficiencies before they become major problems!

Thanks

As this is the last event of his administration, I'd like to thank Marv Chadab for all the help he has given me with *On the Wire*. *Drei Hoch für Marv!!!*

Well that's it, hope you enjoy this issue and as always, I look forward to your comments.

Your comrade in the trenches,

Marsh Wise

Editor, *On the Wire*



Die Feldpost



Copy of letter sent to the G-7

Dear Marvin and G-7 Members,

This letter has been written in response to your decision to outlaw German egg grenades because of the fear of injury from shattered plastic. I ask that you reconsider this position for the following reasons:

- 1) All grenades are potentially dangerous. Even if they do not shatter, considerable damage can be done if a grenade explodes by one's eyes, ears, etc.
- 2) Egg grenades represent the easiest means of providing support for the German infantrymen. True, you can make stick grenades. But they are significantly more difficult to assemble, especially in the numbers necessary for modern warfare.
- 3) I have talked with several reenactors and it appears that grenades have not been responsible for any of the bad accidents that happened in the past. This is a pretty good record, given the number of serious accidents.
- 4) The lethality of all grenades has been reduced over the years by reducing the amount of black powder allowed in a grenade and by prohibiting "packing" of the charge.
- 5) The issue is as much a communication issue as it is a safety issue. The most current version of the GWA's safety regulations should appear in EVERY issue of *On the Wire*. If the concern is that grenades are being taped too tightly, that should be made clear to the membership in the safety regulations.

I am a safety nut. I actually observed at three GWA events before joining the organization in 1992. Reducing the charge, prohibiting the packing of the charge, and the "between-the-legs" test help to ensure safety on the battlefield. However, in my opinion, one must find a balance between safety and the need to have adequate firepower. Quite honestly, the egg grenades represent the German infantry's greatest support weapon because they can be manufactured easily and inexpensively.

Mit freundlichem Gruss

Randy Gaulke

2./IR111



On our Authenticity

The news that the GWA was developing a great new site gave me high hopes for the future of WWI reenacting. Unfortunately these hopes were badly shaken when I actually attended the spring show. The site was not the problem, it is much more authentically laid out than the old Lee Farm site and has tremendous potential. The big problem lay with the profound mediocrity of the GWA membership itself. There appeared to be no authenticity standards for behavior and dress. Some people had clearly put a great deal of effort into their impressions, but reenacting is a group effort and can only be as authentic as its least authentic members.

Here are just a few of the disappointing observations I made regarding the American and Commonwealth troops: very poor American reproduction uniforms; the use of incorrect items such as: cotton WWI American tunics and WWII American equipment; a baffling inability to wrap puttees so they stay around the tops of one's boots [Maybe someone who has great skill in this area should hold a class Friday at the event on how to wrap puttees or... dare I say it: write an article for *OTW!-MW*]; Diet Pepsi cans in the trenches, people wearing modern eyeglasses; and an absurd number of ridiculously overweight soldiers.

Equally disappointing was the inauthentic behavior of large numbers of the attendees. Throughout the day I saw men walking on the parapet, and those that weren't were staring over it. As close as the trenches are at this site, it would be suicidal to expose oneself. Everyone should stay below the parapet! If you want to see, buy a trench periscope.

Another stupid episode I saw during an attack was a reenactor jumping across a trench and hopping into a machine gun bunker shouting, "I'm dead. I just want to party." Ridiculous behavior like this is not consistent with the dignity of the veterans of WWI, it is highly amateurish, childish, and should not be tolerated. The GWA needs to look at its standards for membership if it is to be anything other than a playground for full-grown kids who want to "play army." I would be deeply ashamed if any veterans of WWI were present at the event.

As a replication of the WWI experience these reenactments will not improve until we emphasize trench life. A step into the trench area should be a step back in time. Everything we do in that area should be done as if we were in France more than three-quarters of a century ago. More time should be spent authentically laboring at improving our trenches during the day and repairing the wire at night. WWI soldiers spent more time repairing their trenches than they did in combat and our site needs work.

Also, why are we virtually ignoring gas attacks? Gas is the most distinctive aspect of WWI. Soldiers often had to wear their masks for hours at a time. How can we have a WWI reenactment without spending at least an hour in our gas masks? The GWA leadership should insure that no event is held without a large supply of harmless but

visible gas. I would suggest dry ice and water. An impressive gas shell might be made by a clever person. Imagine the effect on a wet day!

At present, the WWI reenacting hobby is of little educational value and nothing to be proud of. It doesn't have to be this way. Everyone who cares about what they are doing will have to work together to dragoon the farbs into shaping up or dragoon them out of the hobby.

Frank Jardim

27th Division

A Thanks

28 May, 1997

Dear GWA members,

I want to thank reenactors of all nationalities at the April 1997 reenactment for putting up with the desires of the *Arts & Entertainment* film crew.

I had the dubious honor of escorting the film crew through both sides of the lines, and I was extremely pleased that units and individuals alike were willing to follow the film crew's directions. During all this, I witnessed some fine examples of living history and first person impressions on both sides of the lines!

I know that WWI reenactors do not generally enjoy "playing the game" for the press, however, I personally believe that educating the public about one of the forgotten wars should rank high on reenactors' priority list. Also, the increased publicity could generate new blood for the hobby.

For your information, the film crew was shooting scenes for a new series on foot soldiers throughout history. The final film should air in late fall 1997 or early spring 1998. I'm not sure whether it will air on *A&E*, *The History Channel*, or *The Discovery Channel*. I believe that all three are owned by the same enterprise.

Mit freundlichem Gruss,

Rolf Gaulke

2. /IR111

Copy of letter sent to:

Rick Blair, Chairman, Safety Committee
and members of the G-7

6 June 1997

Friends,

I am writing in concern about the new decree to ban German egg grenades (The ones made from commercial plastic Easter eggs). The ban was mentioned in *On the Wire* and at the safety meeting, but I do not believe that this is a decision that can be made unilaterally, without the agreement of the membership.

Firstly, I fail to believe that properly made egg grenades pose any safety threat even if they do fragment; the charge,

after all, was *reduced* to 30 grains of powder.

Secondly, I strongly believe that a decision to ban egg grenades should be put to the vote by the general membership—as *is our policy* and as was done with the powder reduction from 60 to 30 grains. This has already been done twice before with regard to the mortars.

We have been using egg grenades in all sorts of weather/temperature conditions (Big Beaver) for many years without problems. Since we have lowered the powder charge, I do not see how these can be a safety hazard, *provided* the charge is indeed 30 grains and is not tightly wrapped.

With regard to the safety rules, I think more emphasis should be placed on enforcement of current safety rules rather than constantly issuing new ones. At present, much of our membership routinely ignores most, if not all, of our current combat safety rules. I personally yelled at three Doughboys who went over our barbed wire and then on over our MG position. Had the gun fired, they would have had to be taken to the hospital. Lit grenades are *frequently* picked up and thrown back—despite *constant reminders* against this practice at the safety meetings. Unapproved grenades are often brought out during night combat. I could go on... some of my fellow unit commanders either refuse to enforce the rules or do not make it their business to monitor their men—either way, *safety is ignored*.

The safety meeting nowadays seems to be a long, drawn-out formality, where no one pays much attention to either the safety rules or even the combat rules. The combat commanders frequently attack the flanks, which is against the old combat rules (the "flank" is either the North Sea or Switzerland). Combat is prohibited beyond the two rear roads, yet my camp has been attacked and a combat Post (Werner's tree house) has been placed in this area; i.e. *Out-of-bounds*. Needless to say, this invites attacks into a prohibited area.

The point is that if the G-7 itself disregards rules and procedures, how can it expect anyone else to obey them? If you want to try to ban egg grenades, fine—put it to a *general vote*.

Despite the low Spring turnout, this hobby is growing. I think we need to get back on track to emphasize those things about WWI reenacting that make it better than other reenacting events—taking hits, following combat rules, attention to authenticity, etc.

Lastly, we all know, *and accept*, that this hobby cannot be totally "safe." We all must accept a certain amount of risk, and that is what makes WWI better than other reenactments. Those who are uncomfortable with this risk (which we do try to minimize) should stay home.

Sincerely,

Steve Fisher

2. /IR111

All comments are welcome! Please send in your ideas, criticisms and suggestions for publication.

Words from the GWA President

September 16, 1997

Dear Friends,

In the year 2397, an archeologist digging in a cow pasture near the small Southern Pennsylvania town of Shimpstown will discover that history books were wrong. He will contend, based on his excavations that the Great War of the Twentieth century was also fought in North America as well as in Europe. These were the thoughts that filled my mind when two weeks ago I stood at the edge at was once *Camp Bandholtz*, the camping site of the 116th infantry. All that was left of thousands of hours of sweat and toil and thousands of dollars of expenditures was a pile of scrap lumber and scrub bushes. Our previous site at Shimpstown has been bulldozed to a point where only an archeological dig and our memories can find it. Now as I write my last communiqué as President of GWA we have a secure and improved at Newville. As I think back at the past two years, I am well pleased with the events that we have staged while I have been on watch. Many of the issues that were rancorous and contentious have been resolved. True, there are still issues of safety, site-development, and authenticity which are not resolved, but we as intelligent, well meaning gentleman can handle them.

Now, for some hard news. At a recent meeting of the G-7 at the Newville site, we came to the sad conclusion that the current event fee of \$15 was insufficient to allow us as an organization to continue our activities. The current event fee only allows us to meet our financial obligations to our landlord. We have finally depleted the buffer in our treasury that was accumulated prior to the acquisition of the Caesar Krauss site. This lack of funds has recently inhibited our ability to plan and hold a September event. In order to adhere to our goals of site development

and a third annual event, we are forced to raise more money. Accordingly, the November event fee will rise to \$25 for all members. In the Spring 1998 that fee will rise to \$40—*however*, a \$15 dollar discount will be offered to those members in possession of a *valid* NRA membership card making the fee only \$25 for NRA members.

It is not our goal to increase membership in the NRA, but it IS our goal to maintain *affordable* liability insurance. In spite of efforts to find alternative insurance none has been found. For those of you who do not know, we are required to enroll 51% of our active membership as NRA members in order for our insurance to be valid. Failure to do so invalidates the insurance and places our hobby in jeopardy. I see no recourse but to offer a rebate for those who help us to peruse our hobby. For those of you who object to joining the NRA please, by all means, come forward with alternative suggestions, which will allow us to roll back the differential in event fee. This will only occur if we can find a substitute for our NRA insurance.

I wish to thank those members who have given of themselves in order to allow this organization to continue its activities. I look forward to continuing to be active in the hard work to improve our site and grow our organization. This hobby can only be viable if we unite, roll up our sleeves, and get the work done. Seven active members cannot do it alone. My best wishes to you all in this hobby and also in your future endeavors.

Your ruptured duck President,

Marvin Chadab

The GWA and the NRA

The privileges of membership in both associations.

by Philip Schreier

*past Allied Commander, founder of the A.I.F. and
Manager of NRA's Gun Collector Programs*

When you went to register at the last GWA event, did you notice the often overlooked question box marked "Are you an NRA Member?" Were you able to confidently mark that box with a check in the "yes" column? If you are not a current member of the NRA, were you wondering why the GWA had an interest in whether you were or not?

Maybe I can clear up some of these questions and shed some light on what has become a sometimes maligned and often misrepresented subject.

Five years ago the National Rifle Association of America reversed a decades old policy of not affiliating reenactment clubs as bona-fide NRA Affiliate organizations. This was done to incorporate more people whose interest in firearms was expressed in non-traditional uses. The very act of reenacting breaks a number of NRA gun handling safety rules and creates an atmosphere where the likelihood of accident is very high. That is why NRA refused to "recognize" reenactors with affiliation.

Times have changed and the NRA re-evaluated their position on this issue when it became evident that reenactors have a better and safer track record than most county shooting and hunt clubs. The GWA was one of the first national reenacting organizations to take advantage of the affiliation program when it was opened to re-enactors five years ago.

Affiliation brings with it a number of benefits to the affiliating organization. The GWA affiliated because they wanted to take advantage of the \$1 million dollar insurance policy that was offered to cover our events. At \$7 a person the policy was, and still is, a great bargain. To qualify for the insurance benefit they must maintain a **51% GWA & NRA membership level** and pay the \$7 per person annual insurance premium.

The policy is enforce at the \$7 per person rate as long as the GWA maintains a membership level of at least 75 members, any less than that and they are forced to charge us a minimum premium.

To offset the \$7 per person premium, the GWA became enrolled in the NRA recruiter program. By encouraging GWA members (or non-GWA types) to join the NRA they earn \$10 for every new membership and \$5 for every renewal. With this program, and some motivated recruiters, the GWA can effectively have a \$1 million dollar insurance policy with the NRA for free!

If you are thinking of filling out an NRA membership application please enter the GWA recruiter number—**COO9988D**—on each and every one of the applications. This number can be entered in the box marked "Recruiter Number" or "K&E". If you are currently receiving NRA renewal notices, please make sure you write the GWA number somewhere on the renewal form. At the end of every month that applications are received the GWA will get a *handsome* cash reward from the NRA.

Some people have resisted joining the NRA for one reason or another (and I have yet to hear a valid and reasonable excuse for not joining). The fee is \$35 for a year and comes with a number of benefits (not to mention that 5 GWA members work at NRA) you can call 1-800-672-3888 to find out what the benefit program offers. If you are still unsure about joining the **ONLY** association that fights to maintain the personal liberty that makes our hobby possible, then why not join as an associate member for \$10. The GWA won't get a recruiter bonus for signing you up but your associate membership counts towards maintaining our 51% that we need to keep our insurance valid.

Have you gotten this far and you still have a problem with joining the NRA? I'll bet you're mad because we never sent you that black hat we promised, ... call me and I'll send one out today. Okay, maybe you're mad because your postman hates you because all the mail we send out gave him a bad back??? Call me and we'll do a "promo-kill" and you'll never see mail from us again until it's time to renew.

Don't agree with our politics??? Have you tried reenacting World War One with broom sticks??? Any other problems??? Call me and let's talk, I'll pay for the call, **1-800-672-3888, menu 6 and then 1601#**. I bet dollars to dog tags that you just might hate the NRA because of some leftist, pinko, limp-wristed pap that was accidentally spoon fed to you by those laughing jackals that bring you the evening news nightly. Call and let's examine both sides of the issue, if you can come up with a valid excuse, I'll personally pay your insurance premium! (In other words, do your best, but I don't think your gonna win this argument)

Join for the insurance, join for the GWA, join because you believe in the 2nd Amendment, join because you like the hobby and would find it boring without guns, join because **Teddy, Ike, JFK, Grant, Burnside, Sheridan, Merritt** and **2 Medal of Honor winners (Edison & Foss)** were all *life members*, join because it's just one more thing that really pisses off the wife, but for gosh sakes man **JOIN** and **JOIN NOW**, tomorrow may be too late!

GWA Fall Combat Info

by Rick Blair
GWA Vice President

1. The 1997 GWA Fall Combat Event will be held October 31-November 1-2 at the **Caesar Krauss Great War Memorial Site** near Newville, Pennsylvania. The event will officially begin at Noon on Friday the 31st and end at Noon on Sunday, November 2nd. The site will probably open a few days early for those who want to work on trenches, bunkers, or just do some period camping. If you intend to arrive early though, *remember*, you **must** have your GWA dues paid-up for 1997; the reason for this requirement is for insurance purposes. If for some reason, you haven't paid your 1997 dues yet, send them to the GWA Treasurer:

Mike Moss
456 N New St.
Bethlehem, PA 18018-5814

****NOTES:** The Vice President will not accept dues payments.

To find out just how early in the week the site will open, I recommend you contact **Rick Keller** at (717) 264-6834. Keep in mind that the site is "locked" when not in use.

If you arrive on Friday, you must park in the front lot and register *before* taking your vehicle back to the camping or combat areas. After you have registered, you may take your vehicle to the rear parking lot and park it if you wish. You **are not** permitted to drive your vehicle onto the combat site or use the access roads behind the trenches without **first** obtaining a *Vehicle Pass* from the Registration Tent. If you are arriving early, you **do not** have squatter's rights to the access roads or other areas behind the trenches. Take care of business and get your vehicle out of the way.

3. **Registration**—Registration will be open from 1200 to 1600 on Friday. Registration will re-open Friday evening from 1800 to 2000. Registration will also be open on Saturday from 0700 to 0900. You will need to have paid your *1997 GWA Dues* (\$20—not prorated) to participate in this event. You will also need to pay the *Event Fee* (\$25) which gets you your **Trench Pass** (*important!*). This applies to combatants, auxiliaries, and sutlers. **Pay by CHECK—NOT with cash!** I cannot stress this enough! If you have not previously signed a *Waiver of Liability* and received a copy of the safety guidelines, you will need to do so at Registration. The **Allies** are responsible to staff the Registration Tent at this event [let's hope they do better than the Germans did this Spring—MW].

****Every unit on the Allied side will be expected to provide 2 men (or more, depending on how long you want their shift to**

be) cover their shift. Registration WILL NOT be left unmanned at this event. Unit Commanders ask at registration when you check-in to see when you're scheduled time is. Also, registration will no longer be up at the front of the site but instead will be back near where Combat Caterers used to set up. This will place it closer to the combat area and help to "catch" the scofflaws and cheats.

4. **Camping**—The "non-period" camping areas are for those who are sleeping in their vehicles and in non-authentic tents, etc. Those who have authentic structures and gear may camp in the "period" camping area closest to the Combat Site. Bring trash bags. Please collect all your trash bags at the end of the event and deposit them in the dumpster located in the front parking lot. **Lastly here, please be careful with open fire.**

5. **Local Lodging**—For those who do not wish to camp at the site, the following is a list of area hotels and motels:

♦ Shippensburg Inn	
Shippensburg	(717) 530-1234
♦ University Lodge Motel	
Shippensburg	(717) 532-7311
♦ Theo's Inn	
Shippensburg	(717) 532-5551
♦ Kenmar Motel	
Exit 15—PA Turnpike	(717) 432-5915

These motels are within 20 miles of the site. You may also try motels in Chambersburg or Carlisle which are still within an hour of the site. [If all else fails, you may do like they did "back then" and actually camp-out—MW]

6. **Food**—Right now, your choices are limited to what you or your unit brings. We will be trying to get some kind of food vendor on-site, but as of now we have nothing lined up.

****Note: Combat Caterers** will not be at this event to provide food services.

7. **Sutlers**—Sutlers may conduct business during the event. No tables, chairs, shelters, etc. will be provided. The sutlers' area will be located along the rear parking lot. **Sutlers MUST be members of the GWA!**

8. **1998-99 G-7 Elections**—Voting for the 1998-99 G-7 will be conducted by ballot during Registration. This rescinds information printed in the Spring *OtW* which stated that ballots would be available prior to the event. Votes will be counted at the event and the newly elected G-7 will be announced prior to Sunday noon. The following G-7 offices will not be voted on due to the

Vice-President having received only one nomination at the Spring 1997 Event:

- ❖ President—**Mike Moss**
- ❖ Vice President—**Ken Boice**
- ❖ Treasurer—**Randy Gaulke**
- ❖ Allied Combat Commander—**Mike LoCicero**
- ❖ German Combat Commander—**Rob Zienta**

Those nominated for *Allied Representative* are:

- ❖ **Jeff Holder**
- ❖ **Tom Price**
- ❖ **Matt Soocy**

❖ **Only Allies Can Vote for the Allied Representative**

Those nominated for Central Powers Representative are:

- ❖ **Jim Michaud**
- ❖ **Steve Fisher**

❖ **Only Central Powers Can Vote For the Central Powers Representative**

9. **Safety**—A couple of issues here:

First: The ban on "egg" type grenades will be in effect for the Fall Combat Event. After the Spring 1997 Combat Event, I found several unapproved grenades which were not tested at the Safety Meeting. Two of these had been constructed with metal parts. Anyone caught with an unapproved grenade or other pyrotechnic device will be leaving the event and I will see to it that such persons lose their GWA membership until Hell freezes over for the second time. Due to the proliferation of grenades at the last event, I am asking that everyone use discretion and good judgement with these devices. If you are bombing a group of 2 or 3 enemy soldiers in a shell hole it isn't necessary to use 4 or 5 grenades just because you have that many to spare. Remember too that grenades become more of a safety concern when people choose to cheat by not taking hits.

Second issue: The By-Laws are clear in prohibiting minors from participation in combat scenarios. I understand the argument for allowing your 12 year old son to be the official regimental mess kit bearer, but the By-Laws will not support this. No minors will be permitted on the combat site during the combat scenarios.

Third issue: Those units camping directly off the access roads have occasionally come under fire from artillery. The potential for injury is significant. Anyone remaining in those camps after the start of a combat scenario will be required to wear a steel helmet for the duration of combat. The camps themselves are not to be attacked and firing from the camps is prohibited.

Fourth issue: If you are killed after having infiltrated the enemy's trenches, you must return to your own trench. You may then attempt another assault. It is not permissible to simply disappear a few yards down a secondary trench and then return a few minutes later

to ambush the same people that just ambushed you. This is not how the game is to be played.

Fifth issue: There will probably be a volunteer MP unit working at this event. Their duties will be to check participants for trench passes, report safety violations, keep the combat site clear of unauthorized vehicles, and be on watch for trespassers. MP's will display a distinctive ID and will have the authority to act for the G-7. The MP's will be courteous. They will not be authorized to engage in physical confrontations with anyone for any reason, they will not have the authority to eject anyone from the site, nor will they have the authority to detain anyone or seize their personal property. If they ask for your trench pass, **show it to them**. If you do not have a trench pass, the MP will take your name and unit affiliation and a member of the G-7 will ensure your participation at this event has ended. If you are observed violating the Safety Guidelines, an MP will stop the combat and notify you of the violation in the presence of your unit commander. The safety infraction will be reported to the appropriate G-7 Combat Commander who will, in turn, report it to the G-7 Safety Officer. A serious safety infraction could **end your participation**.

****Any unauthorized vehicles found on the combat site or along the access road immediately behind the combat site after the start of a combat scenario will be reported to the G-7 Safety Officer and towed at the owner's expense. The combat scenario will be stopped until the tow truck clears the combat site. Anyone observed trespassing, stealing, or committing other crimes will be prosecuted.**

10. **Third Event**—As you are aware by now, there was no third event. Early into the planning stages of the event it became clear that the treasury would not support a third event and there was no way to guarantee that the event could be self-supporting. You should know that our operating expenses have increased significantly since we came to Newville. We pay roughly \$7,000 a year for insurance. We turn over about \$6,000 a year to our landlord. Each event costs about \$2,000 in sanitation, emergency medical services, barbed wire, sandbags, smoke, flares, printing and copying, etc. It costs well over \$1,000 a year to send out the newsletter. We spend about \$2,000 a year to maintain the site in a playable condition. We have also had to pay some legal fees and other misc. expenditures which add up. Absolutely no one in the G-7 is "nickel and diming" the treasury.

As you can see, it costs us a substantial amount of money to play WWI. Dues are currently \$20.00 a year and an event fee has been running \$15.00 per event. No other revenue is coming into this club except some interest on our account balance. We have about 450 members and attendance at events has averaged about 325. If

GWA VP, continued on page 25

1997 GWA Election Info

For GWA Treasurer:

Kameraden,

Even though I am running unopposed, I wanted to introduce myself to the members.

To many of you, my reputation for letter writing has probably preceded this introduction. After an unhappy event at Fort Pickett some years ago, I wrote a scathing letter to the Allied commanders. (I guess the payback is to elect me as treasurer) I have also written letters to the GWA on other topics, including my opposition to the recent decision to outlaw German egg grenades. The object of the many letters is to let my voice be heard when I disagree with a decision that is being or has been made. As a Gefreiter out in the field I have no problem following the chain of command. However, when it comes down to GWA policy, I believe that each member should have the right to voice his opinion and, just as important, the rationale for that opinion directly to the officers. Under the constitution, the officers of the GWA are clearly elected by the members, not their unit commanders.

I have been a WWI reenactor since early 1993. I do not reenact other periods, because the Great War is my primary interest. However, I have traveled to the battlefields several times. In fact, I will miss the event this November because I will be joining a German and French group on their work weekend near Vauquois, France. (Many of you had the opportunity to meet Thomas Novack of Oberhausen, Germany. He will be taking part in this work weekend)

I do not consider myself an expert in arms and equipment, or in the development of tactics and strategy of the war. I am not a serious collector of militaria. In fact, many of you know much more than I do about identifying farby Feldmützes and incorrect boots. However, I believe that I do have the qualifications necessary for the Treasurer's position. I am currently a high yield bond analyst for Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. In this position, I am responsible for helping to invest over \$500 million of cash in high yield bonds. This involves assessing such factors as a company's financial strength, its market position, the depth of management, and the changes taking place within the industry. I firmly believe that the G-7 officers need to spend more time addressing the risks and administrative details of the hobby than they spend on reenacting. We can never lose sight of the fact that we are "playing" with very dangerous weapons in a very litigious society.

Many of you are aware of the "politics" and animosity between certain individuals and groups within the organization. Although politics are a part of every organiza-

tion, I have always tried to maintain an independent viewpoint. In fact, to the extent possible I strive to understand *both sides* of the story before making a decision.

I also believe that communication from the G-7 must be improved in order to minimize the rumor mill that exists in any organization with 300+ members. Because of the distances involved, and because many members have access to the internet at home or at work, I recommend that the GWA establish its own web site. I believe that a GWA business page discussing the latest administrative items should be *updated monthly*. Additional pages can be set aside for the constitution, the lease agreement (to the extent that it is a publicly-filed legal document), authenticity guidelines, officer addresses and phone numbers, GWA approved units, etc. (It might be too sensitive to put grenade making rules on the internet!?) This should not replace *On the Wire*. It is simply meant to enhance the quality and frequency of communication between the leadership and the members.

By now you're asking yourself what kind of WWI reenactor am I. I am dedicated to the hobby, but I realize that being an officer of this organization involves more than having an authentic kit and staying in first person all weekend. I look forward to serving the GWA members as Treasurer. Feel free to contact me with your concerns, suggestions, etc.

Randy Gaulke

For Allied Representative:

I hope that you have all had a good summer—having not only had some time for relaxation but also time to accomplish your own goals in improving your impressions, as well as putting in some site work if practical.

First, I would like to begin by publicly thanking Ernie Cowan for his assistance and the use of his shop to service several of the parts needed to overhaul my back-hoe engine.

At this Fall event we will be holding elections for the G-7—you may note that I am running for re-election as the Allied Representative. Most of the positions are uncontested, but *not* the Allied Rep position. I humbly ask for your vote this Fall and if re-elected, I vow to continue working hard at improving the site and seeing to the interests of the Allied units.

Some background info on me: I have been reenacting since 1984 (doing Civil War) and I have been reenacting World War I since the Spring of 1986. My normal impression is that of an NCO with the *116th Inf., H.Q. Co., 29th Div. AEF* (the mortar company).

I was appointed to the position of Allied Representative about a year and a half ago to fill the shoes of Pete Tuttle, thereby entering the murky world of GWA politics. And I must tell you, "I hate politics," but I feel so strongly about our hobby and doing it right, that I will do whatever I can to make things better.

Previously, I was the Allied Trench Master, having begged that duty during the last event held at the Shimpstown site. During the search for the new site, I researched the layout of typical Allied trenches and prepared plans for idealized systems that could be modified for any site. When the possibility of acquiring the Newville arose I was one of the first Allied members on the site. After putting out a call for help, I had a small team, consisting of Dan Apple, Todd Galle, and myself. We physically marked the woods for clearing and staked-out the locations of all the Allied trenches that exist there today. At the time of that first construction, I was busily student teaching, yet I managed to venture an hour and a half from my front door to the trenches, nearly every weekend and every Wednesday night to check on the progress. I had to keep tabs on the progress of the back-hoe operators that were hired and, to sketch a fairly accurate map of the Allied trenches for use of our Combat Commander and his staff.

After the back-hoe operators finished the first stages of construction and moved onto other work, I decided the only way to continually improve the Allied trenches towards *total authenticity* would be for a GWA member to buy his *own* back-hoe. Last summer I put my money where my mouth is and became "the" GWA member with a back-hoe. Last summer my machine was used to construct the front-line living/machine-gun bunker in the center of German "Area B." Of course, the day I took it back to the Allied line, my back-hoe immediately turned traitor on me and blew a ten-inch hole in the side of its engine block. This June I installed a completely rebuilt engine and will be working on Allied trench improvements as drafted by the Allied Site Committee and myself. Although it may seem like a conflict of interest to be both on the G-7 and working for the GWA as back-hoe operator, I assure all GWA members that I will *always* use my Eagle Scout honesty and work for less money than the outside contractors. And for practical purposes, larger jobs such as the modification noted in my Allied Rep article, will be hired out to outsiders who can put a full-time effort into the project.

Once again, I humbly ask for your vote this November.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey L. Holder



For Central Powers Representative:

Hi, my name is Jim Michaud. I'm running for the position of Central Powers Representative and I am asking you for your vote this Fall.

I have been a member of the GWA and the unit commander of the 5th Sturmpanziers since 1979.

I have the experience to do this job well, having been the *first elected CP Rep* in the GWA. I held this position from 1991 to 1993, helping to set the foundation for the new GWA. Among the things that we did at this time was to promote a "living History" atmosphere and make WWI more than "just another reenactment." I believe that we need to reemphasize this living history aspect of our hobby.

I feel that since the job of CP Rep is to represent the *entire* Central Powers side, there has to be two-way communication between the unit commanders and the CP Rep. In order to fully represent *your* needs and views to the G-7, this communication is essential.

Among the things I would like to work on, if elected to this position, are:

✱ **Communication**—I would like to see consistent communication between all of the German units. I hope facilitate networking amongst the units and encourage the sharing of historical references and repro sources. Also, I hope to help keep the information flowing between the different units on the projects they have going, so that each may help the other—thereby bringing a united front to all of our efforts in this hobby.

✱ **Authenticity Standards**—Authenticity standards have slipped over the last few years—something many members frequently comment on. My goal in this area is to come up with *attainable* standards and a system of enforcing them that everyone can live with. Nobody wants rules rammed down their throat and this is what I wish to prevent. If you elect me, I will be polling each unit as to what they would like to see in the standards and ALL input is solicited!

So once again, I ask for your vote during this election and look forward to serving *your* interests as the Central Powers Representative.

Sincerely,

Jim Michaud



Front and rear view photos of a Corporal of Engineers of the French Army, taken at Vincennes in 1917 when this soldier was decorated with the Croix de Guerre, a medal instituted in April 1915 and awarded to soldiers and sailors mentioned in dispatches. The soldier is wearing the standard Model 1915 horizon-blue field infantry uniform, with a later M1915 capote (greatcoat) and Adrian steel helmet with engineer badge. This *Poilu* carries the 1907/15 Mannlicher-Berthier, 8mm three-shot rifle and wears standard 1888 regular model infantry accoutrements, modified in 1915 from black to brown leather. These consist of three ammunition pouches holding 40 rounds each suspended on a belt with brass frame buckle and Y-straps, and a M1886 cruciform-style epee-bayonet on a branched holder. He also wears a M1915 cloth and gauze-pad filter "Tissot" gas mask in a metal container on his right hip, and a pattern 1861 cloth haversack on his left. Over the right shoulder he carries a one-liter officer's model canteen with two spouts. On his back is a M1893 waterproof cloth pack with wooden frame. Strapped to the pack is a blanket rolled in a cloth groundsheet/tent, with folding tent poles and pegs on the left and shovel handle on the right. On top of the pack is a spare pair of hobnailed ankle boots with rivets reinforcing the strategic points, with an individual mess tin perched on top of the boots. Strapped to the back of the pack is an eight-man squad cooking dish. Much of the equipment he carries had not changed from the original pattern issue, in some cases only in the color of the item. With marching food rations and ammunition issue, sometimes carrying an extra canteen, gas mask and haversack, the load of this typical French *poilu* was as much as 85 pounds. (Photos: Imperial War Museum 050381 and 050382 via Mark Meader and Der Angriff).

Book Review:

With the German Guns: Four Years on the Western Front, 1914-1918



review by Doug Kingdom
3.Komp./R63

Herbert Sulzbach, Hamden Connecticut:
Archon Books, 1981. 250 pages.

The early morning hours of 21 March 1918 ushered in a massive eruption of earth and fire concentrated around the French town of St. Quentin not too far from the Belgian border. With rolling thunder that literally could be heard as far away as London, England, over 10,000 German guns and trench mortars opened up against some 2,700 guns of the Royal Artillery.

In what was to become one of the most fierce and savage artillery battles of the Great War, the Germans fired more than 3.2 million rounds that day, one third of which were gas rounds. If one can imagine, this amounted to an average of about 2,500 rounds per minute fired on allied positions, all day long. It is no wonder the artillery was hated by the Infantryman of both sides.

Guns were massed in such a manner only twice more during the war, at Chemin des Dames and Champagne-Marne. World War II saw the massing of such artillery only a handful of times on the Eastern Front, but without the gas and never with such enormous numbers of Artillery as experienced by the soldiers at St. Quentin. Today, one can only imagine what it must have been like to fight under such conditions. Fortunately for us, there are books that give us a glimpse of what it was like from an Artillerymen's perspective on the Front! One such book is *With the German Guns: Four Years on the Western Front, 1914-1918*.

Herbert Sulzbach, author of *With the German Guns* was the young son of a prominent Frankfurt baking family who enlisted on the first day of the Great War. Assigned to the German Army's 5th Field Artillery, Herbert Sulzbach fought for nearly a staggering 50 consecutive months on the Western Front!

In 1916, he earned a battlefield commission and became a firing battery officer and later on, a battalion adjutant. Sulzbach's battalion fought on the Somme in 1916 and St. Quentin, Chemin des Dames, and Champagne-Marne in 1918. Sulzbach distinguished himself in battle, earning among other decorations, the Iron Cross Second and First Class. Miraculously, Sulzbach survived the war

without injury, while all of his close friends were killed in battle. Between 21 March and 11 November 1918, 90 percent of the regiment's officers became casualties.

Sulzbach's *With the German Guns* was originally published in Germany in 1935 as *Zwei Lebende Mauren* and was based on diaries that he carefully kept during the war. *With the German Guns* is written in diary style and gives a penetrating depiction of a frontline artillerymen's view of the war in the trenches. It also provides the reader a fascinating insight into *Front Kämpfer* (Front Fighter) small-unit social dynamics in the Old German Army.

Firsthand accounts of some of the war's greatest battles as well as the routine daily events in a soldier's life are described in this book. Sulzbach also recounts some truly unique personal experiences, such as discovering the airplane wreckage containing the body of General Ludendorff's stepson while out on reconnaissance.

It is interesting and yet sad to note that when *Zwei Lebende Mauren* was first published in 1935, Sulzbach's book received acclaim in Germany, but then it was banned from the Third Reich once it was learned that Sulzbach was Jewish. Stripped of his German citizenship, Sulzbach fled to England. At the start of World War II in 1939, Sulzbach was interned as an enemy alien. After repeated attempts, Sulzbach was allowed to enlist in the British Army. He was 44. By the time the war ended, Sulzbach was once again an officer, this time a Captain in the British Army! He was placed in charge of reindoctrinating German officer prisoners of war. Sulzbach was probably one of the only officers ever to be commissioned by both the Kaiser and the King of England.

After World War II, Sulzbach's German citizen was restored. He retained his dual British-German citizenship and began a new career in the German foreign service where he received many high awards from the German, British, and French Governments.

The Great War reenactor on either side of the line will enjoy reading this book. *With the German Guns* provides an informative and highly detailed personal account of the reality of the Western Front without dwelling on the horrors of war. So find a good log or chair in the bunker, light a Hindenburg candle, grab your favorite pipe and have a good read. Just be sure to keep your helmet and gas mask handy!

✱



Central Powers Rep Corner

by Ernst Deksheimer
Central Powers Representative

Fabulous event! This is what I heard from almost everyone. I asked many (Germans, that is) why they thought it was so—the almost universal answer... *the Allies were very aggressive. My Stahlhelm is off to Captain LoCicero and all the Allied forces for a game well played.* They got beat of course, but it was nice to see them at least try.

Central Powers Unit Commander's Meeting

During the event, the Central Powers held a Unit Commander's meeting in which some decisions effecting you were made.

1. On the German trenches, the vote was unanimous to begin abandoning the right side front trench and begin revetting the second line (in order to give us more no-man's land). The front line will slowly corrode and as shell craters are dug, the dirt and shale will be pushed into the trench.
2. The trenches on the far left of the German line will be extended to the road and more traverses will be added.
3. An overland trench wall will be added across "death valley" to marry the left and right sides of the line together. (Note: Phil Schreier has asked for a second vote on this. Normally a vote is a vote and we would not, but as Phil had already received permission for a pillbox at the end of "death valley," we will be reviewing this decision.)
4. The decision was made to request of the G-7, funds for pigtales, which, if approved would be divided evenly among the units.
5. The Unit Commanders also decided to press forward on a stronger, more enforceable set of *Authenticity Regulations*.

I will be working with the Unit Commanders over the summer to hopefully have a set of regulations in place by the Fall Event.

Complaints

As CP Rep, prior and during this event, I received several complaints which will be dealt with to the Vice President. They include: combat safety violations, privacy issues, and two matters of violation of the Bylaws. Kameraden, I bring this up (without being specific) as a reminder that the Rep position is **your** channel to getting problems addressed. No one likes problems, but if left alone, they

don't usually go away. We will get matters resolved and the GWA will be strengthened because of it.

The Old House

One last area I must bring up at this time is the decaying house on the left side of the German line. The Site Committee has declared the house off-limits until it can be rendered **safe**. The floor joists are sound, but the floor itself is totally decayed in areas and part of the roof is missing. During this last event, we roped off the bad sections of floor and prevented passage to the roof. Until this house is rendered safer though, **no one may go into it for any purpose**. (Note: The Site Committee has voted to commit German trench funds to repair the main damage.)

Thanks

I would like to thank you for allowing me to be your Central Powers Representative for the past two years. It has been a privilege and a honor. I wish my successor good fortune in this job and in the future.

German Trenchmaster's Notes

by Mark Graef, Central Powers Trenchmaster

It is the responsibility of unit commanders/administrators to review the GWA Site Regulations to ensure conformity of any trenchwork or bunkers built in their unit's sector. Ignorance of the regulations will not be considered grounds for getting away with unsafe, substandard or inauthentic construction at the Caesar Krauss Great War Memorial Site. Central Powers units should contact the CP Rep for a copy of the Site Regulations, if they need an extra one.

The GWA Site Regs state that **all** bunkers and fighting positions must meet certain standards AND be approved by the Trenchmaster BEFORE construction begins. If you have started or recently built a bunker, shell-proof, fighting position or any shelter with overhead cover on the Central Powers' side without getting approval from me, you have an unauthorized structure which is subject to removal.

If you are responsible for any of unauthorized structures that have been built or started on the German side since last fall, you have three options: 1. Take them down before the Fall '97 event and salvage the materials; 2. Submit plans **now** (a simple sketch will do) and get approval before continuing; or 3. Finish and completely bury your structure before the Fall event and take a chance that it will be condemned anyway and removed. (I would highly suggest that you use option 2, less you waste any more effort.) I can give approval by phone within 24 hours of receipt of your plans if necessary. (All phone approvals will be followed up by written confirmation.) I can be contacted at:

Box 3106, Falls Church, VA 22043
Phone: (703) 383-8399



Words from the Central Powers Combat Commander

by Tim Goodwin
Central Powers Combat Commander

Everyone I have spoken with had a great time at the Spring Event and are looking forward to the November event. From the Combat Commander's point-of-view, I was very pleased to see how the various German units are beginning to function as a team. The Chain-of-Command is being used and orders are being executed promptly. All the German units acted very professionally and gave a good account of themselves.

Safety

At the April event, we had **three** minor injuries, none of which involved safety infractions. The most serious injury occurred when one of our comrades tore a ligament in his ankle, as he was jumping into a shell hole. This not only put him out of the battle, but he also incurred subsequent medical expenses. The second was when an Allied soldier took a direct hit in the helmet by one of the 12. MWK's mortar rounds and was momentarily stunned (this is why everyone is required to wear helmets). The third injury involved smoke inhalation; the individual in question was checked out by the EMT's and returned to action.

Safety continues to be an important element in the continuation of our hobby. Most individuals on the field take safety very seriously, and I am glad to report unit leaders are becoming more proactive in the enforcement of the GWA's Safety Guidelines. Should anyone encounter any problems on the battlefield or observe **any** potentially

hazardous situation, immediately report this up your Chain-of-Command so we can get it resolved! I received several complaints following this last event regarding a "specific" Allied unit, which are now being acted upon. Always remember, our primary goal is go to these events, have a GREAT time, and **NOT** have anyone get hurt!

Goals

The Newville site is slowly beginning to improve, as individual units continue working on their assigned sectors. Particular note should be taken of the excellent job the 20th Machine Gun has done in revetting their front-line position and IR63's bunker construction project.

My immediate goals for the next event include:

- 1) Completion of our field telephone network
- 2) Practice the use of authentic small group tactics
- 3) Strict adherence to the Chain-of-Command
- 4) Timeliness (i.e. get troops into position and start the battle on time).

Thanks

Finally, I would like to thank **Werner Gruhl** and **Rob Zienta** for their invaluable support as members of my staff. I *look forward* to leading the Central Powers against the Allied Hordes this Fall! Should anyone need to contact me regarding the combat portion of the event, I can be reached at 614-427-3544! See you in November!

Hauptmann August Hein

(a.k.a. Timothy E. Goodwin)

Central Powers Command Structure

For your information, the following is the current: Central Powers Command Structure

Central Powers Staff

Billet	Name	Command Priority
* CP Combat Commander	Hauptmann Tim Goodwin	#1
* CP XO (2nd-in-Command)	Oberleutnant Rob Zienta	#2
* CP Adjutant	Gefreiter Werner Gruhl	—

Abteilung Commanders

* 1. Abteilung	Vizefeldwebel Jef Fontana	#5
* 2. Abteilung	Vizefeldwebel Craig Nordquist (Deks)	#4
* 3. Abteilung	Leutnant Chuck Lindvig	#3

'We are to march in the direction of Verdun. Faces are grave. The guns are thundering over there. It's a real furnace, everyone realizes that perhaps tomorrow death will come.'

by Henri Desagneaux
edited by Mark Meader

Reprinted with permission from *Der Angriff*, Nr. 18,
May 1982, courtesy of *Blue Acorn Press*.

Suddenly, on 21 February 1916, 1,200 concealed German cannon facing the great French fortress of Verdun drummed out a new and bloody tattoo in the history of warfare. Nothing to equal the weight of the German bombardment had ever been experienced by any fortress or army before.

The ominous German code name for the assault on Verdun was "*Operation Execution Place*." Their massive opening attacks on the frontiers of France in 1914 had bogged down, and the year of 1915 had been a period of sterile victories or bloody defeats for both sides. A stalemate had been reached on the Western Front that had to be broken. To do this the Germans attacked Verdun in early 1916, but with an entirely new idea in mind, drawn out of the coldly-calculating person of the German chief of staff, General Erich von Falkenhayn.

The object of the operation was not to secure a decisive victory, on ground the French considered sacred, but was instead, to draw the French Army and its reserves into the salient, and bleed them white. At a frightful cost the French held, but they finally discarded their doctrines of

INFERNO

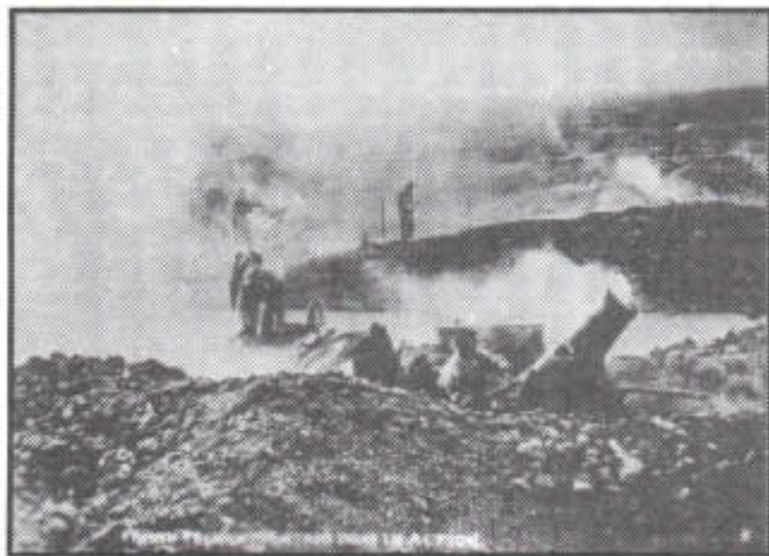
"*l'attaque a outrance*" and "*elan*," and the following year suffered mutinies in the rear. The weight of Allied effort passed to the British who had to advance their autumn 1916 plans for attack on the Somme to July, in order to relieve the hardpressed French at Verdun.

For 10 months, from 21 February to 18 December 1916, in an area of little more than three and one-half miles, **250,000** Frenchmen were killed, more than **100,000** were written off as missing—their remains pulverized by unceasing bombardments—and more than **300,000** wounded or gassed. Into the constant attack and counterattack to capture, recapture and hold the series of fortified ridges around Verdun came most of the regiments of the French Army in their turn, replacing decimated regiments one after the other. One of these was the 359th Regiment of the Line, with the 21st Company of the 6th Battalion commanded by Lieutenant *Henri Desagneaux*.

Mobilized as a reserve lieutenant in the railway transport service of France on 2 August 1914, Desagneaux was involved in various duties supplying French divisions, until December 1914 when he was made assistant railway control officer at Grey, France. He served there through 1915, then was assigned to a training course for company commanders at Remiremont. At this period in the war, almost all of the experienced officers of the French Army had been killed or disabled, so that NCOs and enlisted men were being taken into the officer system in order to lead France's decimated armies.

Lieutenant Desagneaux first was assigned to the 22nd Company, 6th Battalion, 359th Regiment. He saw some combat at Armancourt where he was ordered to take command of the 21st Company. Nothing, however, had prepared him or his men for the horrors in store for them when they were told the 359th was to march to Verdun to take its place in the line.

The following account is from Desagneaux's *A French Soldier's War Diary 1914-1918*, published by Severn House Publishers Ltd. (Elmfield Press) in 1975. The book's original French title was *Journal de Guerre 14-18*, edited by Desagneaux's son, Jean, and was published in 1971 by Les Editions Denoel. The extracts speak for themselves of the terror, anguish and utter futility experienced by French troops in the rat-runs of Verdun.



French trench mortars (220) in action. (R. Weiß collection)

Verdun Sector

31 May to 5 July 1916

10 June, Saturday

At one in the morning, order for departure at 4 a.m. We are to march in the direction of Verdun. That gives us an extra day of life! We are billeted at Rosieres near Bar.

12 June, Monday

Issoncourt, last stage before Verdun. There is not much room as car-load upon car-load of supplies and munitions speed past us.

13 June, Tuesday

Reveille at 2 a.m. At 5, we travel by car and are put down at Nixeville, 6 kilometers from Verdun. We bivouac in a wood in a lake of mud. The guns fire angrily, it's pouring down rain. At 3 p.m. we are ordered to stand by to leave. We don't, however. We spend the night and the day of the 14th waiting in torrential rain with mud up to our ankles. Our teeth chatter with cold, we are very uncomfortable. Although the troops have been stopping here for the last four months to go to and from Verdun, there is not one single hut or shelter. We camp in individual tents in thick mud. You should hear what the men have to say about it!

At 5 p.m., order for departure at 6:30. We are going to be quartered in the Citadel of Verdun. Faces are grave. The guns are thundering over there. It's a real furnace, everyone realizes that perhaps tomorrow death will come. Numerous rumours are circulating; we are going to Mort-Homme which has been captured by the *Boches*, or to the fort at Vaux... What is certain, nothing good lies in store for us.

We arrive at the Citadel at 10 p.m. after a difficult march through the mud.

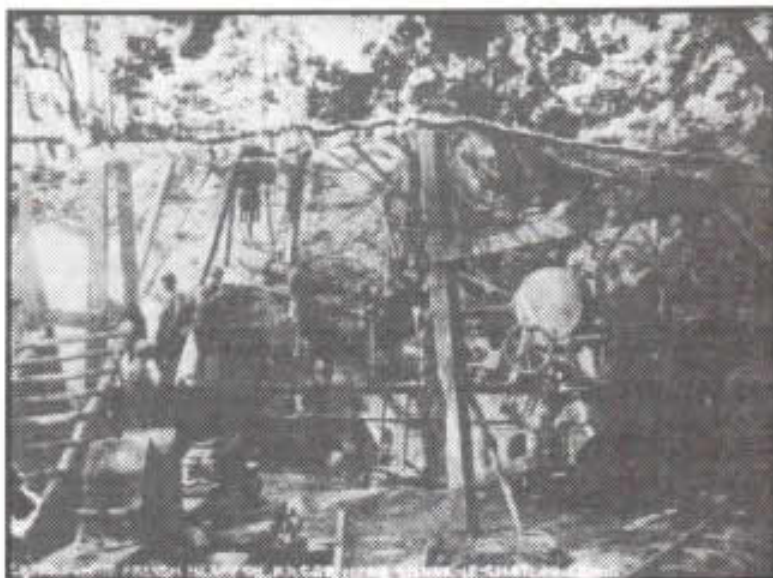
15 June, Thursday

We spend the day in the Citadel waiting. The guns fire ceaselessly. Huge shells (380s-420s) crash down on Verdun causing serious damage. I walk as far down as the town, it's in ruins and deserted. One can't stay outside for long as shells are dropping everywhere.

The Citadel is a real underground town, with narrow-gauge railway, dormitories, and rooms of every type; it's safer here, but very gloomy.

At 9 in the evening, we leave, not knowing our destination. We advance slowly through the night. At every moment huge shells come and explode on Verdun, at the crossroads, and in the direction of our gun-batteries which are stationed on all sides. We march in silence, everyone conscious of the seriousness of the moment.

At 1 a.m. we arrive at the Bras-Ravine Quarries, where we remain in reserve. No shelter, nothing, we are in the open fields at the mercy of the first shell.



Camouflaged French heavy gun on a railroad car near Vienne-le-Chateau (Marne): (R. Weiß collection)

16 June, Friday

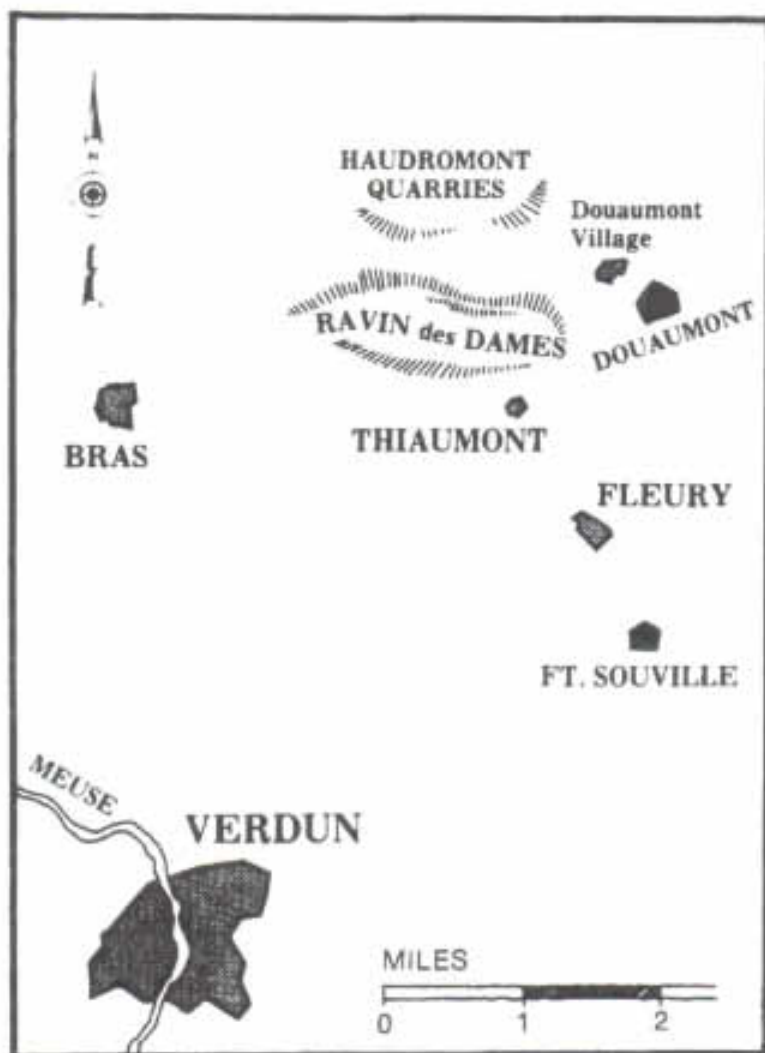
Superb weather, but not far from us, it's a furnace of artillery fire. The *Boches* pump their shells at us, and our guns reply. What a racket! 150s and 210s scour the land on all sides and there is nothing anyone can do but wait. The battalion is massed in the ravine without any shelter, if their shelling was not at random it would be dreadful for us. The German observation balloons scan the horizon. Up in the air, their planes search for us; we curl up in a hole when a shell burts near us and it's like this until evening when orders arrive.

At 6 p.m. my company and another (the 24th) receive the order to advance with a view to reinforcing the 5th Battalion which is to attack on the following day. We leave, not knowing exactly where we are going, and no one has a map. We have a vague idea where the command posts are; guides are rare in this area where death stalks at every step. With difficulty we move along crumbling trenches, cross a ridge to take up our positions in the Ravin des Dames (less than a kilometer due west from Fort Douaumont, which is held by the *Boches*). The shells still rain down, no shelter.

We haven't eaten for twenty-four hours and don't know if supplies can arrive tonight.

17 June, Saturday

The attack is due at 9 a.m. The 106th is in charge with the 5th Battalion of the 359th as support. We have to recapture a trench at the top of the ravine that the *Boches* took from us the day before. We spend the night in the Bras-Ravin; hurriedly we dig a trench to give the men some shelter. Just beside us there is a cemetery where the dead are being brought at every moment. The guns fire furiously, from 3 o'clock it's hell. One cannot imagine what the simple phrase of an official statement like "We have recaptured a trench" really means! The attack is prepared from 4 to 9 o'clock: all guns firing together. The



Map by R.A. Baumgartner

Germans fire non-stop, ammunition dumps blow up, it's deadly. There are so many explosions around us that the air reeks of powder and earth; we can't see clearly anymore. We wait anxiously without knowing whether we shall be alive an hour later.

At 9, the gunners' range lengthens. We can't see anything up in front anymore. The planes fly, low signaling all the time.

At 11, after a relative pause, the cannonade starts up again. At 2 p.m. it's worse still, it's enough to drive you mad; the *Boches* are only firing their 210s and 150s, shrapnel explodes above us. We have no idea of what is happening or the result. We are infested by huge black flies. You don't know where to put yourself.

At 6 p.m. I receive the order to reconnoiter the gun emplacements in the front line, as our battalion is relieving tonight. The shell-bursts are so continuously heavy that we cannot advance before nightfall and it is impossible to cross the ridge.

The wounded from this morning's attack are beginning to arrive we learn what happened; our artillery fired too short and demolished our front line trench (evacuated for the attack), instead of firing on the *Boches*. When we attacked the Germans let us advance to 15 meters and then

caught us in a hail of machinegun fire. We succeeded in capturing several parts of the trench but couldn't hold them; at the moment our troops are scattered here and there in shell-craters. During the attack the German planes bombed our men ceaselessly. Our losses are enormous; the 106th already has 350-400 men out of action, two captains killed and a large number of officers wounded. The 5th Battalion of the 359th, which was advancing in support was caught by gunfire and suffered heavily. The 19th Company hasn't got one officer left; in the 18th, three are missing. We have 32 *Boches* as prisoners. The positions are the same as before the attack—with our troops only being able to maintain the front-line position which they had previously.

At nightfall, the dead arrive on stretchers at the cemetery. In this, the *Ravine of Death*, they lay there, lined up, waiting to be put into the holes that are hastily being dug to receive them: Major Payen, his head red with blood; Major Cormouls, black with smoke still others unrecognizable and often in pieces. A sad spectacle, which is repeated here every day.

18 June, Sunday

We have had to leave to occupy our new positions before our food arrived. It's the second day without food. We eat what little we've got amid huge black flies.

We are stuck at the top of the ridge in a half-collapsed trench, without any shelter. The whole night there is terrible shelling; we lie flat and pray for any hole to shelter in. At every moment we are sprayed with clods of earth and stone splinters. There must be an attack on the right, as one can hear the chatter

of machineguns. How many men are afraid! How many "*Croixes de Guerre*" are weak at the knees!

The 210s make the ground quake, it's hellish, and explains the dazed looks of those who return from such a sector.

It's Sunday! Day breaks amid bursts of gunfire. We await orders. One can't think of washing or sleeping. No news; neither papers, nor letters. It's a void, we are no longer in a civilized world. One suffers, and says nothing; the night has been cold; lying on the damp earth one just shivers, not being able to breathe properly because of the smell [of the dead].

The afternoon does not pass too badly. It's an artillery duel, where the infantry is not spared.

At 8 p.m. I receive the order to relieve in the front line a company of the 106th.

At 9 p.m. this order is countermanded, I am to relieve a company of the 5th Battalion of the 359th in the ravine, at the "*Boisau-Marie*," near "*Trois Cornes*" wood where there are attacks every day...

Orders and counter-orders follow each other; no one has a map or even a sketch. We don't know where the *Boches* are, but there is some fear that they will attack us on the right.



French troops march to the front. Scenes such as this were enacted almost daily on the roads south of Verdun during 1916. (Imperial War Museum photo Q10978).

My company is all in a line in this trench, which collapsed yesterday under the bombardment following our attack. A squad of machine-gunners of the 5th Battalion is buried in it; the following day at dawn we will discover all along the trench, corpses, their legs and arms protruding out of the ground.

Scarcely are we in position when the shelling restarts; the only shelter are small crannies in which one must curl up. We are being shelled from the front and from the flank. What fire! The ground trembles, the air is un-breathable; by midnight I have already eight wounded in my company.

19 June, Monday

We are expecting an attack at any moment. There is talk of recapturing the trenches with grenades. But what are our leaders doing? Ah, we don't see them here. We are left to ourselves, they won't come and bother us.

We try and make ourselves as comfortable as possible but the more we dig the more bodies we find. We give up

and go elsewhere, but we just leave one graveyard for another. At dawn we have to stop as the German planes are up above spying on us. They signal and the guns start up again, more furiously than before.

No sleep, no water, impossible to move out of one's hole to even show your head above the trench. We are filthy dirty and have only cold tinned food to eat. We are not receiving supplies any more and have only been here for four days.

20 June, Tuesday

The food supplies only arrive with great difficulty at 2 this morning. Still no water. When one has exhausted one's ration of coffee and wine, you have to go thirsty. By day, the heat is overpowering, we are surrounded by flies and corpses which give off a nauseating smell.

On the alert the whole night. Our position is critical. The *Boches* harass us. On our right the ravine cannot be occupied because of the shelling. The Thiamont and Vaux works are being bombarded continuously. On the left, too,

Bras and Mort-Homme are being shelled.

Yesterday my company had two men killed and 10 wounded.

10 p.m. Great commotion, red and white flares, chatter of machine-guns, thunder of artillery, 400 meters from us a new attack is unleashed upon our lines. Every man is at his post waiting the whole night through. Will the *Boches* rush us from the top of the ridge? Shells explode only meters from us and all around men fall wounded. We are blinded by the shells and by the earth they throw up, it's an inferno, one could write about such a day minute by minute.

Meanwhile, orders to stand by arrive. Ready we are, but those who are sending these orders, without knowing what is happening, would do better to come here to see the position we are in.

Today, 1 killed and 9 wounded in my company.

21 June, Wednesday

Impossible to sleep, even an hour, the deluge of shells continues and the whole night frantic orders follow each other: you may be attacked, be ready! We have been ready for three days.

The night passes in an inferno of fire. Near Mort-Homme, calm has returned, the *Boches* are concentrating on Hill 321 and Vaux—it's hell out there—you wonder how anyone will come out alive. The shells, the shrapnel, the 210s fall like hail for twenty-four hours nonstop, only to start again; everything trembles, one's nerves as well as the ground. We feel at the end of our tether.

8 p.m. We have been bombarded by 210s for exactly twenty-four hours. The Germans have been attacking on our right since 6 p.m. My company at every moment receives the order to stand by to advance. It's a state of perpetual anguish, not a moment's respite.

We crouch there, our packs on our backs, waiting, scanning the top of the ridge to see what is happening and this lasts until nightfall. We are haggard, dazed, hungry, and feverishly thirsty, but there is no water. In some companies there have been cases of madness. How much longer are we going to stay in this situation?

22 June, Thursday

At last in the evening I receive the order to relieve the 24th Company in the front line. The whole afternoon there has been a deluge of shells on the ravine, perhaps we will be calmer in the front line? But where to go to relieve? A reconnaissance is impossible, no one has an idea where the troops are exactly.

At 9 p.m. an avalanche of fire bursts on the ridge, the relief has to be delayed, it would be impossible to pass. Is it an attack? There is gas as well as shells, we can't breathe and are forced to put on our masks.

At 11 p.m. we leave. What a relief! Not knowing our front line positions we advance haphazardly and over the top we find our men crouching in shell holes.

My company is placed in one line, without any trench, in shell craters.

It's a plateau, swept continuously by machine-gun fire and flares. Every ten steps one has to fall flat on the ground so as to not be seen. The terrain is littered with corpses. What an advance! It's dark, one feels something soft beneath one's feet, *it's a stomach*. One falls down flat and it's a *corpse*. It's awful; we start again with only one desire—to get there.

My company occupies a broken line. Impossible to move around in daylight. To the left, no communication with the neighboring company; just a hole 100 meters long; we don't know if the *Boches* are there. In the center, the same hole—occupied or not? I have a squad which is completely isolated and stay with it.

The captain I am relieving (*Symian*) tries to show me the terrain. He doesn't know it himself, dazed by four days spent up front amid dead and wounded.

In a nightmare advance, we stumble forward falling in shell craters, walking on corpses, flinging ourselves repeatedly on the ground. Ground where there lie forever men of the 106th, of the 359th, still others of regiments which preceded us. It's a graveyard, a glimpse of hell.

23 June, Friday

5 a.m. The bombardment starts up again fiercely. I get a shell splinter in my lip. Nothing serious fortunately, as the wounded have to wait until evening to get their wounds dressed. One cannot leave the shell hole even by crawling on one's stomach.

7 a.m. Alert. Commotion. The *Boches* attack. They are driven back by our return fire. In the direction of Hill 321 huge attack which lasts three hours with wave upon wave of them.

The heat is oppressive. Around us the stench of the corpses is nauseating. We have to live, eat, and wait in it. Do or die! It's six days now since we had a moment's rest of sleep. The attacks follow each other. The *Boches* have succeeded in advancing towards Hill 321 and in occupying a part of the ravine behind us, where our reinforcements are.

The shelling has completely destroyed the trench where we were yesterday; the dead and wounded are too numerous to count.

24 June, Saturday

Big German offensive on the right bank of the Meuse. This news arrived during the night. There is no question of our being relieved. Everything is silent and is behind us; on Fleury Ridge the *Boche* continue infiltrating. We have been turned! There is no longer any doubt, as we can see enemy columns invading the terrain and their machine-guns are attacking us from behind while our artillery has to move back.

Now something worse, my men, who have been suffering all sorts of hardships for the last seven days, are becoming demoralized. The word "prisoner" is being whispered. For many this would seem salvation. We must fight against this notion, raise morale. But how? We can't move around, and only those near us can hear. They are all

good chaps who won't leave us and will form a bodyguard.

What are we waiting for? We don't know. Yet we can only wait for it: perhaps the attack which will kill us, or the bombardment to bury us, or exile even. We spend some anxious hours without knowing how long this will last.

Impossible to eat, our nerves can't stand it. If we have a call of nature to satisfy, we have to do it in a tin or on a shovel and throw it over the top of our shell hole. It's like this every day.

25 June, Sunday

Terrible day and night. At 3 a.m., without warning, our own troops attack us from behind in order to recapture the terrain lost the day before on our right. These troops, without precise orders, without maps, without even knowing where our lines are, ventured off. They fell upon us, believing they had found the *Boches*. But the *Boches* were 100 meters in front, lying in wait, and bursts of machine-gun fire cut them down in our trench. We thus have another heap of corpses and wounded crying out, but whom we are powerless to help. Trench! Well, almost every evening we bury the dead on the spot and it's they who form the parapets!

At 6 a.m. the guns fire furiously and to add to our plight, our 75s fire at us. Terrible panic; six wounded at one go from a shellburst, everyone wants to run for it. Agnel and I have to force these poor devils back by drawing our revolvers.

Major David is killed in turn by our 75s. Our green flares ask for the range to be lengthened, but with all the dust our artillery can't see a thing. We don't know where to put ourselves, we are powerless. Isolated from everything with no means of communication. There's blood everywhere; the wounded have sought refuge with us, thinking that we could help them; the blood flows, the heat is atrocious, the corpses stink, the flies buzz—it's enough to drive one mad. Two men of the 24th Company commit suicide.

At 2 p.m. our 75s start firing on us again. Our situation is critical. It is only improved when I send a loyal man at full speed with a report to the Colonel. Luckily he gets through.

26 June, Monday

Our 220 mortars bombard Thiaumont; we must recapture some terrain to give ourselves some room and to drive the enemy back in its advance on Fleury. We attack incessantly. It's four days since we

have been in the front line and the relieving troops have been annihilated this morning during the attacks.

Rain replaces the sun; filthy mud. We can't sit down anymore. We are covered in slime and yet have to lie flat. I haven't washed for ten days, my beard is growing. I am unrecognizable, frightening dirty.

27 June, Tuesday

The guns thunder the whole night: the men who left to fetch the food at 10 last night haven't come back. Still longer without food or drink.

4:30 a.m., first attack on Thiaumont and Hill 321.

9 a.m., second attack. All around us men are falling; there are some only 5 meters from us in shell holes, yet we can't help them. If you show your head, you get a burst of machine-gun fire.

The whole day, incessant firing: the *Boches* counter-attack; we drive them back by our rifle fire and with grenades.

My company is rapidly diminishing, we are about sixty left now, with this small number we still have to hold our position. In the evening, when the men go to fetch supplies we are really at the mercy of an attack. Still no relief.

28 June, Wednesday

Hardest day to endure. The *Boches* begin to pound our



The Poilu as envisioned in popular art of the time—fighting at the front with a quiet determination and self-confidence to see the job done; a far cry from the reality of the trenches.

positions, we take cover; some try to flee, we have to get our revolvers out again and stand in their way. It's hard, our nerves are frayed and it's difficult to make them see reason.

At midday, while we are trying to eat a bit of chocolate, Agnel's orderly has his back broken beside us; the poor chap is groaning, there is nothing we can do except to wait for nightfall, and then, take him to the first-aid post, and will we be able to? The wounded are so numerous and we have so few men left that those who can't walk sometimes have to wait for 48 hours before being taken away. The stretcher-bearers are frightened and don't like coming to us. Furthermore, the nights are so short that they can only make one trip. One trip: four men to take one on a stretcher!

1 p.m. it's an inferno: the *Boches* undoubtedly are preparing to attack us. Shells scream down on every side: a new panic to be checked. At 6 p.m. when we are dazed and numb, the firing range lengthens and suddenly everyone is on his feet, shouting, the *Boches* are coming. They attack in massed formation, in columns of eight!

These troops who moments ago were in despair, are at their posts in a twinkling: we hold our grenades until the *Boches* are at 15 meters, then let them have it. Guns bark, and a machine-gun which survived the avalanche of shells is wreaking havoc. The *Boches* are cut down; amid the smoke we see dozens of dead and wounded, and the rest retreating back to their trenches. Our commanding officer, thinking that we are hard-pressed, sends us welcome reinforcements. They will be useful for supplies and taking the wounded away.

Only around 9 p.m. is it quieter. We help the wounded who are waiting to be taken away. Our shell holes are lakes of mud. It is raining and we don't know where to put ourselves; our rifles don't work anymore, and we can only rely upon our grenades which are in short supply.

This evening, still no relief; another twenty-four hours to get through. It gets colder at night, we lie down in the mud and wait.

29 June, Thursday

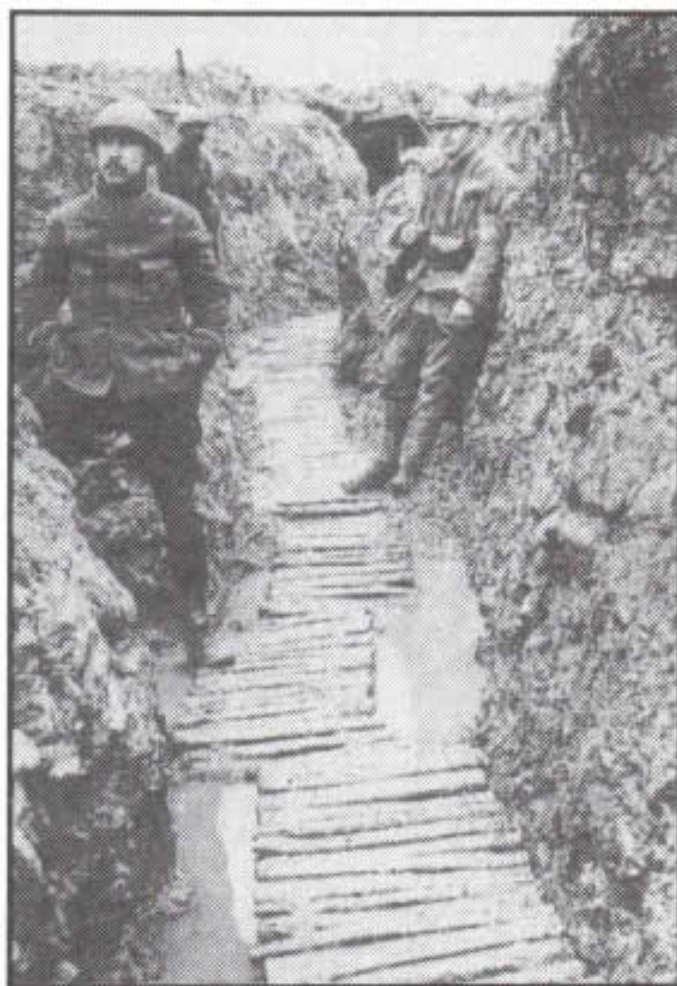
Our fourteenth day in this sector. The bombardment continues, our nerves make us tremble, we can't eat any more, we are exhausted.

Still no relief.

30 June, Friday

Attacks and counter-attacks. Frightful day—the shelling and the fatigue are becoming harder to bear. At 10 a.m., French attack on Thiaumont; the artillery fires 12,000 rounds of 255s, 550 of 220s and the 75s fire at will.

The din began at 6 this morning; the *Boche* reply furiously. It's hell, we are getting hit more and more often as our position is the favourite enemy target. The majority of the shells fall on or around us. The shelling will last ten hours! And during this time we expect an attack at any moment. To make it worse, my own company is hard hit. A 210 falls directly on a group of men sheltering in a



A good view of a French trench line—most were not even in this good of shape at Verdun due to the constant shelling. The officer on the left is a *chasseur à pied* (Alpine Troops), considered one of the elite units of the French Army.

hole: 3 killed and 2 seriously wounded who drag themselves up to me to plead for help. A minute later a second shell sends a machine-gun flying, killing two more men and wounding a third. It's panic stations—the men run, and under a hail of gunfire, I have to force them back again with a revolver in my hand. Everyone goes back to his post. We set up another machine-gun and keep watch.

At 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. first and second French attacks on Thiaumont. The *Boches* harass us with their fire. Our heads are buzzing we have had enough. Myself, Agnel, and my orderly are squashed in a hole, protecting ourselves from splinters with our packs. Numb and dazed, without saying a word, and with our hearts pounding, we await the shell that will destroy us. The wounded are increasing in numbers around us. The poor devils not knowing where to come to us, believing that they will be helped. What can we do? There are clouds of smoke, the air is unbreathable. There's death everywhere. At our feet the wounded groan in a pool of blood; two of them, more seriously hit, are breathing their last. One, a machine-gunner, has been blinded, with one eye hanging out of its

socket and the other torn out; in addition he has lost a leg. The second has no face, an arm blown off and a horrible wound in the stomach. Moaning and suffering atrociously one begs me, "Lieutenant, don't let me die, Lieutenant I'm suffering, help me!" The other, perhaps more gravely wounded and near to death, implores me to kill him with these words, "Lieutenant if you don't want to, give me your revolver!" Frightful, terrible moments, while the cannons harry us and we are spattered with mud and earth by the shells. For hours these groans and supplications continue until, at 6 p.m., they die before our eyes without anyone being able to help them.

At this moment the hurricane of fire ceases, we prepare to receive an attack, but fortunately nothing happens.

We look at one another, our eyes haggard, trembling all over, half-crazy. Is it going to start all over again?

At last, at 8 p.m., an order: we are to be relieved. What a cry of joy from those of us left. We wait anxiously and it's 2 a.m. before the replacements arrive. Our information is quickly passed on. Soon it will be dawn and we have to cross the zone before sunrise.

Tiredness disappears, and our limbs regain enough strength to escape from these plains where at every step the guns have done their work; corpses of men, carcasses of horses, overturned vehicles, it's a horrific graveyard all the way to Verdun. We halt, the guns are rumbling in the distance, we can breathe at last; we call the roll, how many men are missing when their names are called!

Our time at Verdun has been awful. Our faces have nothing human about them. For sixteen days we have neither washed nor slept. Life has been amongst the dead and dying, hardships of every sort and incessant anguish. Our cheeks are hollow, beards are long and our clothes thick with mud. And above all, we have a vision of these horrific days, the memory of a comrade fallen in action; each one of us thinks of those who have not returned. Despite our joy at being alive, our eyes reveal the crazy horror of it all.

During the struggle whole regiments have melted away. The 129th Division doesn't exist any more. The 359th has lost 33 officers and 1,100 men. My company (the 21st), with the 22nd, had the heaviest pressure to bear. Both resisted all German attacks. They prevented their descent into the ravine and therefore the complete encirclement of the area.

1 July, Saturday

After being relieved, we are quartered at Bois-la-Ville, in the same camp where we stopped on the way here. We arrive at 2 a.m., exhausted. We fall into bed and sleep like brutes.

2 July, Sunday

At 8 a.m. we pile into cars, glad to leave this ill-fated region far behind. We get out at Ligny-en-Barrois at 2 p.m. We spend the evening at ablutions.

5 July, Wednesday: Promoted Captain.

Captain Henri Desagneaux was given leave for a week and rejoined his regiment at Liverdun. He served with his regiment on the Somme and later on the Aisne, Mount Kemmel, Guiscard and at Montdidier, finally being discharged in January 1919.

Desagneaux and his men had served their time at the Golgatha that was Verdun, but the constant attack and counterattack to hold the ground around the city went on for six more months, with no significant gains being made by either side. For both sides the carnage of Verdun became a symbol: for the Germans, "*Schicksal*," or national destiny; for the French, "*l'honneur de France*." In every sense of the word however, Verdun was a catastrophe—a distillation of the heroism, stupidities, tactical bankruptcies and all the horrors of the First World War.

A French Soldier's War Diary 1914-1918, published by Severn House Publishers Ltd. (Elmfield Press) ©1975—All rights reserved. Originally published in French as *Journal de Guerre 14-18*, and edited by Desagneaux's son, Jean, and was published in 1971 by Les Editions Denoel.



Lieutenant Henri Desagneaux

A Guide to Better Reenacting

by Ernst Deksheimer
3/1963

Dying! It happens to us all at some point in our existence here on earth. It seemed to happen all too frequently to the boys in the trenches, on both sides, during the First World War. Anyone with any longevity in this hobby remembers the "*everyone dies!*" call of Chris Aleo. This edition of "*A Guide to Better Reenacting*" will accentuate the need for us to get back to some of the old methods of attack /defense and dying. First a few statistics to show you that Chris was not wrong. Here are the numbers for some of the nations involved in participants and casualties:

Germany

11,000,000 soldiers mobilized/6,019,758 casualties

Austro-Hungary

7,800,000 soldiers mobilized/4,820,000 casualties

Turkey

2,850,000 soldiers mobilized/725,000 casualties

France

8,410,000 soldiers mobilized/5,641,800 casualties

Great Britain

8,904,467 soldiers mobilized/2,998,583 casualties

Russia

12,000,000 soldiers mobilized/6,650,000 casualties

Italy

5,615,000 soldiers mobilized/1,597,000 casualties

United States

4,355,000 soldiers mobilized/360,300 casualties

Staggering Gentlemen, isn't it?... *Everyone dies!!*

Reenacting of the Battle

Now we come to the reenacting of the battle. Obviously, we don't have the same numbers available to waste in frontal assaults against a determined, dug in foe, who is strafing the field with small arms and MG fire, mortar shells, artillery and grenades. Should we truly be facing our attackers, the numbers reaching mid-field would be minimal. In the same way, the defenders would be dying in droves from artillery bursts and continual rifle and MG fire to the point that when attackers did arrive they might not find too many even alive to shoot. We want

realism, but must provide for some modicum of success for attackers to succeed and defenders to defend. So how do we do it???

Rules of Combat Assault

The rules of combat assault from earlier days of WWI provide us with a reasonable solution. Here they are:

Attack:

- ✦ Take a number of casualties, based on the opposition faced. If the opposition is too great for the number of attackers, the assault fails. While they may not get back up to join in the assault, if the assault succeeds, those casualties in the field may join their comrades in the enemy trench.
- ✦ If the assault fails, the soldiers must return to their own trench.
- ✦ The prolific use of smoke, gas and grenades will aid the attackers in reasonably reaching their objective.
(Note: The GWA defines a gas attack as colored smoke and smoke as white smoke)
- ✦ Those not wearing a gas mask during a gas attack are considered *casualties* and are to be *ignored*.
- ✦ Bayonets may be fixed for an assault, provided no one reaches the enemy trench line.

In the Trenches:

- ✦ If a soldier becomes a casualty in the enemy's trench, he must leave it and go back to his own.
- ✦ To avoid an unending supply of ammo, don't go "**BANG!**" Instead, fire straight up and **only** if further than 8-10 feet from the enemy.
- ✦ Grenades kill or disable if exploded within 5 feet of the soldier.
- ✦ There is no jumping "over the top of the trench" to get around an enemy position.
- ✦ No fixing bayonets, using real knives or shovels in the trench.

It has been my recent experience that some soldiers simply cannot be removed from the enemy trench. They are killed but quickly come back to life and fight on. Friends, as in real life, there are absolutes. **Dead is dead!** This is the biggest rule in the combat we do... It simply is not fair if through a brilliant attack, we cannot win, nor through a brilliant defense, stave off utter defeat!!! Remember... **EVERYONE DIES!!!** Let's be fair and have a great time.

Next time—*The use of grenades.*

you do the math, you can see we're losing ground. Remember, we have only begun to develop the site and that is going to require significantly more money than we presently have or anticipate having. I'm afraid the plain fact is, we can pay a higher event fee or have fewer of the things that make for a good reenactment. Marv has already covered the new fee schedule in his article, but here they are again: the November event fee will rise to \$25 for all members. In the Spring 1998 that fee will rise to \$40—*however*, a \$15 discount will

be offered to those members in possession of a *valid NRA membership card* making the fee only \$25 for NRA members.

12. **Clean-up—ALL UNITS MUST PARTICIPATE IN THE SITE CLEAN-UP ON SUNDAY.** Clean-up will begin at 0800 on the Combat Site. You are not just responsible for your own little hole. You are also responsible to help clean-up No-Man's Land and the rear areas as well. **Do not** throw live pyro into the trash—it should be gathered into a designated area and then detonated. Trash bags for clean-up will be issued.

1997 Fall Combat Event Schedule

Friday

1200 to 1600	Open Registration
1200 to 1800	work parties
1700	Unit Commanders meeting
.....	combat site on road at Death "Valley"
1600 to 1800	Dinner
1730 to 1830	G-7 meeting—registration Area
1800 to 2000	Open registration
1830 to 1845	Safety Meeting at the combat site
.....	on road at Death "Valley"
1845 to Stand-down	Late War Combat

Saturday

0700 to 0900	Open Registration
0700 to 0830	Breakfast
0900 to 0930	Safety Meeting at the Memorial Area
0930 to 1200	Unit training/site construction
1200 to 1630	Late War Combat
1630 to 1800	Stand-down for Dinner
1830 to Stand-Down (or 2400)	Late War Combat

Sunday

0700 to 0830	Breakfast
0800 to 1200	All-Hands Site clean-up



Allied Rep's Corner

by Jeff Holder
Allied Representative

Dear Allied Members,

Greetings, by now all of you have wound-down from your summer activities and may even be thinking about gearing up for the Fall Event.

For those of you that were at the Spring Event, I must say "good job!" Everyone that I have talked with about it have said that it was a great event.

I would like to commend the AEF 1st Division (a fairly new unit to the GWA, I must add) for having done an outstanding job filling not just one, but two, fighting bays with men and properly constructed revetments. "Looking good 1st Division." I would also like to compliment the French 151 Rgt. on their efforts to authentically improve their previously revetted position, and the completing of a second revetted bay. "Outstanding work to the 151 on completing these improvements!"

The 5th Bn ANZAC have been sandbagging the heck out of their position. And not to leave anyone else out Kudos to all Allied members to who have made improvements to the lines this season. Keep up the good work! Also, remember to check your site guidelines and contact Todd or I before starting any work, so that we are all working towards the same goal

New Business

Todd Galle our trench master and myself have recently finalized the plans for modifications to the trench lines in the BEF sector. As requested by many of the BEF members, the lines in the new section, to the left of lands end, will be further back from the enemy lines that the existing trenches in the BEF Sector. (see your unit leader for a map) To make this addition properly flow into the existing trench line some major changes will occur to the front line. The revetted trenches of the Buffs and the 5th BN ANZAC will be cut off from the main front line and serve as "Advanced Post" All other front line trenches from the left of the AEF 28th Div. Co. M. will be abandoned. Shell holes will be dug near these existing trenches about every 15 yards or so and the dirt removed to create these shell holes will be used to make permanent trench blocks to disconnect the exiting front line in most of the BEF sector. These disconnected and abandoned trenches will not be officially occupied by any unit, but they will serve as play area for out-going and incoming assaults.

The existing second line of the AEF sector will be continued left to serve as the official front line of the BEF. A second line will begin behind the Buffs and continue all the way to the new left flank. As the new front line bays are dug I will be notify the units assigned to these bays of

their completion so that these units may begin revetment as soon as physically possible.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey L Holder

Allied Representative

****P.S.**—For all units that camp in the "authentic camp," I have acquired several loads of *free* fire wood and have delivered them along Allied Road. Keep warm and Enjoy!

Words from the Allied Combat Commander

by Mike LoCicero
Allied Combat Commander

Men, I have been your Commander since the Spring of 1995, I am honored that you have unanimously decided to have me stay on as your Allied Combat Commander.

I believe that this event will be better than the last—as each event here at Newville has been. I will be working with the Unit Commanders to improve communication between all of the Allied units.

I want to thank Tim Goodwin, the outgoing Central Powers Combat Commander for helping to make each of these events a success. I look forward to working with Tim's successor, Rob Zienta.

Be there and be ready to push the Huns back!

Mike LoCicero





Buddies! A.E.F. Signal Corps photo taken 3 Nov 1918 in the vicinity of Bault aux Boris, France. Our corporal here may not meet the GWA uniform regs (?). He is armed with a pistol, but obviously has picked up a rifle as being more effective. Notice the mud on the rifle butt. Also, quite an interesting way to carry ammo clips! (photo courtesy of Al Fuerst)

Units of the Great War Association

Allied Forces

British Expeditionary Force

Commander

Lt. Chris Alko
5410 Jamie Ct
Fredericksburg, VA 22407-1618
(703) 898-0370

5th Bn. ANZAC

Guy Gormley
2109 Oak Hampton Pl
Richmond, VA 23233-3564
(804) 743-1445

8th Bn. Black Watch

Bob Baker
RR1/Box 893/Cillon Rd.
Harrison, ME 04040-9801
(207) 583-2658

8th Bn. Winnipeg Rifles C.E.F.

Paul Shipper
317 West Dr
Connersville, IN 47331-1208
(317) 825-7657

17th Lancers

Dennis McGinnis
10609 Hickberry Way
Beltsville, MD 20705-2054
(301) 595-2450

27th Bn. C.E.F.

Todd Galle
2727 Butler St
Pottstown, PA 17103-2032
(717) 236-6035

The Buffs

Scott Rall
RR1 #201
White Plains, MD 20695-9801
(301) 843-0591

American Expeditionary Force

33rd Division

Pete Tuttle
5005 17th St N
Arlington, VA 22207-2064

372nd Inf. Regt./93rd Div.

Rick Ford
1109 Clark Ave
Waldorf, MD 20602-2969
(301) 645-7859

29th Division

116th Inf. Regt./Hdqtrs Co.
Al Fuerst
8086 Powder Brook Ln
Springfield, VA 22153-2526
(703) 866-6179

27th Division

Scott Farb
226 Brookside Ave
Cresskill, NJ 07626-1133
(201) 569-6820

28th Division, 109th Inf. Regt./L. Co.

Tony Salliano
216 Henry St
South Amboy, NJ 08879-1717
(908) 721-6257

109th Inf. Regt./M Co.

Kenneth Bennett
1193 East Schuylkill Rd.
Pottstown, PA 19464-7003
(215) 327-1259

30th Division/AEF

Richard Avery
4512 Ivanhoe Pl
Charlotte, NC 28205-4641

5th Marines, 49th Company

Richard Smallwood-Roberts
1208 South Fourth St
Stoughton, WI 53589-2519
(508) 873-1799

French Army

151st Régiment d'Infanterie

Armée de France
Brett V. Johnson
1500 N Rhodes St Apt 5
Arlington, VA 22209-2919
(703) 516-9656

Probationary Allied Units

1st Division

Keith Schabacker
433 S Cass Ave
Westmont, IL 60559-2315
(630) 663-1654

Русский Легион

Legion Russe (the Russian Legion)

Eugene K. Poplowsky
614 Second St
Ann Arbor, MI 48103-4979
H: (313) 662-6861
Fax: (313) 662-5997
E-Mail: Begemot@aol.com



Units of the Great War Association

Central Powers Units

German Army

**Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 63
(4. Oberschlesisches)**
Mark Graef
PO Box 3106
Falls Church, VA 22043-0106
(703) 448-0631

5. Sturm-Pionier Battalion (Rohr)
Jim Michaud
18 Walnut Ave
Rockville Centre, NY 11570-2911
(516) 678-5156

**Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 129
(2. Württembergisches)**
Marc Benedict
207 Spring Ln
Enola, PA 17025-2122
(717) 732-1161

20. MG Scharfschützen Kompanie
Don Horgell
25801 Prescott Rd
Clarksburg, MD 20871-9159
(301) 253-4533

Königlich Bayerische Leib Regiment
Keith Allen
PO Box 117
Haw River, NC 27258-0117
(910) 578-2701

**Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 111
(3. Badisches)**
Steve Fischer
5002 Audrey Cir #203
Indianapolis, IN 46254-1738
(317) 328-7851

**Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 92
(1. Braunschweigisches)**
Bob Brown
20611 Emerald Drive
Hagerstown, MD 21742
301-733-3464

**Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 23
(2. Oberschlesisches)**
Jef Fontana
3104 NW 22nd St
Oklahoma, OK 73107-3018
(405) 948-1362

12. Minenwerfer Kompanie(R23)
Ernie Cowan
PO Box 552
Chambersburg, PA 17201-0552
(717) 264-0665

**Landwehr Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 25
(1. Rheinisch)**
James Miller
410 N Granada St
Arlington, VA 22203-1229
(703) 522-1586

Austro-Hungarian Army

63. K.u.K. Infanterie-Regiment
Les Peters
RD1/Box 322
Jeanette, PA 15644-9748
(412) 523-3618

Probationary Central Powers Units

13. Landsturm Battalion
Fred Klotz
12623 Queensgate Rd
Midlothian, VA 23113-3338
(804) 379-0977



Soldiers from both armies pose together after the Armistice between Germany and Russia, December 1917. (photo from the R. Weiß collection)

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