

# THE WAY THE SIGNAL CORPS DID IT



(U.S. Army Official Photograph)

## 50,000 INQUIRERS GIVEN PROPER STEER

Soldiers' Service Department Averages 1,500 Letters a Week

## ARMY'S WAGERS SETTLED

Poker, Chevrons, Naturalization, Wives and Earthquakes All Asked About

The Soldiers' Service Department of THE STARS AND STRIPES established a record for itself last Saturday when 500 letters from members of the A.E.F. were placed in its hands. And while this brief summary of its work is the first occasion on which even the fact of its existence has been made known to the Army, still the Soldiers' Service Department has been receiving, for the past four months, an average of 1,500 letters every week. It has sent out something over 50,000 letters in eight months, written mostly by a man named Smith.

What are they about? Everything. Can men who came over with General Pershing wear a star in addition to their service stripes? Can anyone in the A.E.F. wear the fourragère? Can an American soldier be discharged in France? When are we going home? How do I get previous enlistment pay? Whereabouts in America will the free farms for soldiers be located? Tell my mother I'm all right. How can I be naturalized? How can I take a course in jurisprudence in a French university after the war? What's all this talk about a new uniform? Must I have a birth certificate to marry a French girl?

Those are just general questions. For every one mentioned above, the Soldiers' Service Department can show dozens, sometimes hundreds of identical queries.

Just as Hard to Look Up Here are a few more specific samples, which are just as hard to look up as are those where one answer will fit a thousand different O.D. inquiries: When did the San Francisco earthquake occur? In a game of blackjack, A is dealing—(no need to go on with that one; the general party in charge of the S.S.D. is of course a card sharp—that's the first qualification for the job.) Did the song, "All we do is sign the payroll" originate on the Mexican border? Will you kindly tell my wife that I am well and send her my address? Please send me the name of a firm which can supply me with a blow torch, a rat tail file, two six inch cold chisels, etc.

What are the expenses of a trip to Cork City, Ireland? How many rounds did the Johnson-Jeffries fight last, and what was the date? (Apparently he knows who won.) Queries like and unlike these have been pouring in in such bulk ever since THE STARS AND STRIPES was unfurled to the breeze last February that a department simply had to be created to attend to them. So it was. It started in a small way and grew with the Army. Word of its existence has not been spread abroad, but everybody in the Army seems to know that the department exists—anyway, they tell it all their troubles. And now that the Army's stay in foreign parts is beginning to show prospects of really terminating sometime, there is no harm in letting the Army know that the S.S.D. has been doing business all along.

## CAMERA MAN KILLED, PLATES GIVE UP TALE

Lieut. Estep Photographs Hill Which Quickly Becomes His Grave

## DIES IN SIGHT OF SEDAN

Pictures Reveal Drama of Bursting Shells and Crawling Men Above Deadly Valley

In the dark room of a photographic laboratory near Paris this week two sensitized gelatine plates gave up the secret of the last minutes of Lieut. Ralph Estep, who was killed within sight of Sedan after he had faced death almost daily for three months so that millions of people could see through the eye of his camera what modern war is like.

Gradually taking on lights and shadows, the two plates showed the crest of a barren hill with shells bursting and casting up great spouts of earth, and just beyond the crest a valley black with the shadows of late afternoon, a valley that holds Lieut. Estep's grave.

Lieut. Estep had snapped the photographs a few moments before another one of those big shells burst and left him lifeless at the side of his camera and plate pack. That was about 5 p.m. of November 7—three days before the last guns of the war were fired.

A dozen penciled lines in his notebook, titles for the dozen pictures he had taken just before he was killed, make complete the story that the last photographs tell. He had written titles for every plate by numbers, and Plates No. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 showed the platoon forming for the reconnaissance. Plate No. 6 pictured a "slight brush," the first sight of the enemy.

Writes: "Men Crawling" The dramatic climax was shown in Plates 11 and 12, his last ones, and in his note book the record stands: 11.—Burst—Killed. 12.—Men crawling. The pictures were all taken on a cloudy day and are full of shadows, with little contrast, and 11 shows only the edge of the hill and the huge funnel-shaped shell burst. The word "killed" probably referred to what he had seen happen to the men just ahead of him. Picture No. 12 shows another huge column of flying earth with a line of doughboys dimly silhouetted against the darkness of the valley.

back wounded. In addition, there are several photographers who can tell you manifold tales of close-up fighting with the enemy and of prisoners taken at the point of a lens.

One thing they'll emphasize, though. That is, it's dangerous to use a movie camera too near the front. It will draw fire. It looks too much like a new-fangled machine gun, and a doughboy can't always stop to inquire delicately who is behind it when he sees a movie machine poked at him from a clump of trees. Many a movie man has faced the danger from doughboy guns which were trained on a supposed machine gun nest which was only a moving picture camera nest.

ON THE RIGHT TRAIL Courier: Where can I find Major Tactics? Third Assistant Adjutant: Never heard of him. What's he in? Courier: Search me. The Army, I suppose.

WILSON The SMALLEST but SMARTEST UMBRELLA SHOP in PARIS 8 RUE DUPHOT Sticks and Riding Whips SPAULDING & CO. JEWELLERS DIAMONDS—WATCHES 23 Rue de la Paix, Paris Michigan Boulevard, Chicago

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## DOUGHBOYS BUILD TRENCHES IN S.O.S.

Infantrymen Set Record for Cable Laying in Four Day Job

The first anniversary of the establishment of the United States Signal Corps office in Base Section No. 2 came this month. The number of messages handled daily has jumped during the year from three to several thousand, making the office second only to that at Tours.

Some Speedy Doughboys To doughboys stationed at a rest camp near by goes the credit for making one of the quickest wire-laying jobs on record. At the time the telephone exchange was moved from its former location to the new headquarters it was necessary to install 100 circuits between the new building and the French exchange, a distance of nearly a mile, through the busiest part of the business district.

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## BORDEAUX RELENTS, AND YANKS GET FED

Rolling Kitchens Finally Allowed to Clutter Classic Streets

All the traditions of the city of Bordeaux, from the time of the Roman conquest down, were broken the other day in order that a detachment of doughboys might be served with hot dinners while they were employed in work on an electric cable in the heart of the city.

HOTEL BRIGHTON, PARIS 218 Rue de Rivoli (Tuileries) MEURICE HOTEL and RESTAURANT 228 Rue de Rivoli (Opposite Tuileries Gardens) Restaurant Open to Non-Residents

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Why we are behind on orders for Indians Indian Motorcycle Since Great Britain sent her first expeditionary force to Belgium, the motorcycle has been gaining in importance as a military necessity. It has been found useful in so many ways that, since 1914, many thousands have been placed in the service of the Allied Armies. The flexibility of the Indian and its unusual freedom from motor ills have made it a necessity to our own army. And our factories are working night and day to supply the needs of Uncle Sam. We feel sure that our civilian customers who have suffered delay by this condition will be patient until such time as we can resume our regular deliveries. HENDEE MANUFACTURING COMPANY SPRINGFIELD, MASS.