# TAPS TO BLOW IN NESTING PLACE OF A.E.F. AIR SERVICE

## Battleplanes Limp Home to Romorantin and Fold Wings

## 10 MONTHS' WORK UNDONE

### Nearly 3,000,000 Feet of Buildings, 10 Miles of Rails at Flying Center

Romorantin was the cradle of the American airplane in France. And now it is its grave.

It was at Romorantin ten months ago that three Aero Squadrons, armed with French tools, fed and quartered by the French and commanded by an American major, started the work that developed into Air Service Production Center No. 2, which, up until the signing of the armistice, was the principal building center of the aeronautics branch of the A.E.F. and through which passed Liberty motors and machines to all parts of France and the front.

It is to Romorantin that these machines now come limping home. Those declared unsuitable for service in the States or for sale to the Allied governments are rapidly dismantled, their unsalable parts salvaged, and the rest demolished.

It was a great work—that done at Romorantin, and the tremendous machine so laboriously and patiently built up to help make real America's dream of air supremacy is now adjusting itself to the duties of salvaging with the best grace possible, only once in a while pausing to gaze fondly upon a picture of its old time self.

#### Some Romorantin Figures

Nearly 3,000,000 square feet of buildings—to be exact, 2,811,200—have been constructed. More than 500 acres of flying field has been cleared, leveled, plowed, harrowed, rolled and sown, ten miles of roads have been built, ten miles of railroads are in operation, 12 miles of open drainage ditches have been dug, seven and a half miles of water pipe with pumping and filtering system have been laid, a telephone system of 118 stations and electric light and power lines in all buildings has been installed. And most of this work was essential before the real work of supplying the planes could go forward.

The first airplane arrived at the center May 11, 1918. From that date until the signing of the armistice, 1,213 planes were received and 1,687 dispatched to other parts of France. Three hundred and twenty-nine observation planes, 293 bombing planes and six unequipped planes were sent out to Air Depots in the Z. of A. To schools were sent 356 planes, 41 were disassembled for spare parts and 59 were either salvaged or rendered unserviceable through crashes.

#### All in the Day's Work

The number of planes turned out daily varied with the needs of the Army in the Advance Zone. As many as 60 planes have been sent out in a day. Always the production has kept abreast, and usually ahead of, demands.

Not only were planes assembled here but, when it was seen that changes and improvements were needed both in the motor and the plane before the greatest amount of efficiency could be obtained, it was at Romorantin that these changes were made.

Into the receiving section there came a total tonnage of 100,743,052 pounds, consisting of 4,047 carloads, 2,433 truckloads and 422,243 packages. Out of the center went 34,864,811 pounds, representing 1,425 carloads, 710 truckloads and 76,965 packages. In other words, a daily average of 322 tons of airplane freight was handled. The balance which remains in the depot is being gradually increased, since it has been determined to utilize the facilities for the salvaging and storing of such parts as the Army may choose to keep.

One of the interesting branches of the center is the spare parts department, which carries everything an airplane needs from an engine to a bolt, from a pair of goggles to a seat strap. Twenty-seven hundred and six Liberty motors passed through this department, heading everywhere from the construction shops at Romorantin to the depots of the French and British governments.

Although the undivided efforts of everyone were centered on creating airplanes out of a puzzling mass of boxes, other activities were not neglected. One of the outstanding side lines was the post garden. String beans, 2,991 pounds of them, 4,425 pounds of cabbages, 209 pounds of carrots, 81,439 pounds of potatoes and 3,367 pounds of turnips came out of Romorantin.

# AWOL'S DOING TIME AT MILITARY PRISON

## One Letter a Week Allowed Men Serving Sentences at Gievres

More than 600 general prisoners of the A.E.F. who are serving their sentences in the military prison at Gièvres are at work in the Salvage Department.

Prisoners also operate the blacksmith shop, do the plumbing, unload coal, repair roads and perform general fatigue duties. The prisoners are fed practically the same ration as the rest of the A.E.F. and are regularly issued smoking and chewing tobacco and candy. They are allowed to smoke for 20 minutes after the completion of each meal. They are permitted to write one letter a week. They work six and a half days a week, and Sunday afternoon is devoted to bathing and washing clothes, with a general inspection by the prison officer.

The camp was established January 31, 1918. In April of last year a new stockade was completed, and since that time the camp has been enlarged and new buildings constructed, including bath houses and infirmaries. At present the area comprises seven and a half acres and includes 17 buildings for the housing of the prisoners themselves and the shops in which they work.

At the signing of the armistice there had been received 1,059 prisoners, and to January 31, 396 had been released. Two hundred and twenty-five non-commissioned officers and privates constitute the guard. Only 16 soldiers have escaped, and of this number eight have been apprehended and returned to confinement. Twenty-nine have been paroled because of their honorable conduct and of this number only four have broken parole. The majority of the prisoners are being confined for going AWOL. Others are doing time for disobedience and disrespect, while a goodly number are serving because of "drunkenness and bringing disgrace to the uniform."

# 40 SCHOOLS IN DIVISION

The offer of a 100-franc prize for the best educational work in the 54th Regiment is one feature of the 40 Army schools started in the 6th divisional area. Enlisted men are acting as instructors, under the unit school officers.

All grammar school and some high school subjects are being taught. American and French history and mathematics have been found the most popular studies. A course of special lectures on vocations is to be started.

# 4th, NEW TO WAR GAME, PROVED WORTH IN JULY

Continued from Page 1

the 20th, the regiment was relieved by French troops and withdrawn to Troesnes, having handsomely accomplished the task assigned to it in the initial rush and advanced its front from seven to eight kilometers, and this not without severe fighting, as was proved by its losses of 32 enlisted men killed and 14 officers and 234 enlisted men wounded.

Between the 33rd French Division, with which was the 7th Infantry Brigade, and the 164th, with which General Webster's 8th Infantry Brigade went into the battle, there were two French divisions, while on the other side, between the 164th and the 26th United States, there was one French division.

The 58th and 59th Infantry Regiments had with them a detachment of the 8th Field Signal Battalion, the 1st Battalion of the 4th Engineers, and the 10th Machine Gun Battalion. On the morning of the 18th the 59th Infantry remained to garrison the line of resistance, going forward only on the 19th, while the 58th Infantry attacked by battalions with the French, going over at 4:35 o'clock behind a smoke screen.

Straight away east across the hills and ravines they went, so fast that at 5 a.m. they had carried Hautevesnes, and at 11, in what their division commander, General Gaucher, later described in his report as "a splendid dash," they had captured Courchamps, five kilometers beyond their jumping off trenches and almost due north of the left of the 26th United States Division, near Bussiares.

#### Chevillon and Sept Bois

Further to the left the rest of the Franco-American troops of the division were going at almost as rapid a rate, cleaning up the village of Chevillon and then the Sept Bois, at which point they encountered such violent artillery and machine gun fire that they stopped and held that line for the night. But in the morning they went ahead again and conquered the upland farms of La Grenouillers and La Remise, near which they met a German counter-attack, which was broken up mainly by artillery fire.

On the 20th they took Sommelans and on the 21st and most of the 22nd fought a stubborn battle in the hilly fastnesses of the Bois de Bonnes, the last good position which the Germans had for holding them back from the Soissons-Château-Thierry highway. But the Bois de Bonnes was finally captured and the important road crossed, and before nightfall of the 22nd the Allied troops were in the Bois de Chatelet, well up on the line which, further south, was now before Epieds and Trugny.

That night the elements of the 4th Division which were with the 164th Division were relieved and rejoined their proper organization after having completed a finishing course in combat tactics as brief as it was thorough.

A few days after this the reunited 4th Division was withdrawn to reserve positions, though these were not so far behind the front but that casualties from artillery fire were of frequent occurrence. Subsidiary units were sent here and there as called for, among them being the First and Third Battalions of the 47th Infantry and Companies A and C of the 11th Machine Gun Battalion, which on July 30 saw heavy action with the 42nd Division near Sergy and Seringes.

#### Up to Relieve 42nd

On August 1 the whole division began moving up in the wake of the 42nd, under orders to relieve it. This was accomplished during the 3rd under rather difficult conditions, as the enemy was now in full retreat to the Vesle and the relief had to be made while both divisions were advancing.

It was completed, however, in the neighborhood of Mont St. Martin, and the 7th Infantry Brigade, with the 39th Infantry and Companies A and C, 11th Machine Gun Battalion, were in front line when, having descended the hills into the valley of the Vesle, at 10 p.m. the pursuit was halted by artillery fire at the southern outskirts of St. Thibaut, about five kilometers west of Fismes.

It was at once evident that the enemy had now halted on a line which he intended to hold with all his power. The next day, August 4, Maj. Gen. Robert Lee Bullard, with the staff of the Third United States Army Corps, took over the command of the corps sector from Maj. Gen. Hunter Liggett and the staff of the First Corps.

The 7th Infantry Brigade was put in on the left of the 4th Division sector. The successive obstacles ahead of it to be conquered were the village of St. Thibaut, then the crossing of the Vesle, then the grade of the Soissons-Reims railway, then the village of Bazoches, then the National highway from Reims via Soissons to Rouen, and then the bluffs of the Vesle.

The 8th Infantry Brigade, on the right, had the same river, railway and highway to cross but no villages to take while, on the other hand, the river valley in its sector was somewhat wider and it had, between the railway and the bluffs, an ugly enemy stronghold to deal with in the park and buildings of the Château du Diable, near which its flank connected with the left of the 32nd United States Division.

On the morning of August 5, the 39th Infantry and its supporting machine guns were ordered to take St. Thibaut, which, against fierce opposition, they had done by 11 a.m. Then they were told to push their advance elements on across the river. But this proved a more formidable task. A few men got over but were promptly driven back and lodgment could not be effected that night nor the next day until, after an artillery preparation lasting for four hours, the attack was renewed at 5:30 p. m. August 6, with one battalion of the 58th Infantry also advancing on the right.

Persistently but very slowly the attack progressed until, just before midnight, the battalion of the 58th was over, with some patrols of the 39th, who were digging in along the railroad grade just north of the river. Still full of fight but having suffered, in their four days in front line, the staggering losses of four officers and 69 enlisted men killed, 14 officers and 674 enlisted men wounded, and 67 enlisted men missing, the 39th Infantry was relieved on the morning of the 7th by the 47th Infantry and Companies B and D, 11th Machine Gun Battalion.

#### All-Night Deluge of Fire

The fresh troops at once renewed the attack vigorously. At 8:35 a.m. Company H and parts of Companies E and F, 47th Infantry, were across the river and up to the railroad, led by men like 2nd Lieut. John C. Vang, who, hiding the fact that he was wounded, led his platoon to its objective and commanded it skilfully until wounded a second time. At 4 o'clock in the afternoon, working along behind a barrage laid on the village of Bazoches and Haute Maison, north of it, patrols reached the Rouen-Reims highway, half a kilometer north of the river. Further to the right, the 59th Infantry also progressed from the river to the highway.

Thus at evening the situation seemed a little more hopeful. But a deluge of gas, high explosive and rifle fire smote the front line troops all night and the 59th Infantry was obliged to draw back from the highway to the railroad. In the afternoon of the 9th an attack to take Bazoches was collaborated with the French, but it miscarried, and the few American troops who penetrated the town suffered heavily, especially from a merciless bombing by six German planes which flew over the front line.

They had to withdraw from the village and eventually, in consequence of the terrific fire and evidences that a powerful German counter-attack was preparing, all the troops north the Vesle were ordered, at 7 p.m., to withdraw to the south bank.

Here they secured their positions while patrols continued active north of the river until the night of August 11-12, when the sorely-tried division was relieved by the 77th United States Division, excepting the artillery, which continued in support of the 77th until August 17, when it, too, was relieved.

The 4th retired to the Forest de Fère, where it rested for a few days and then moved to the area of the First American Army, near Reynel and Rimaucourt. Its losses from July 17 to August 13 has been 752 killed, 4,812 wounded and 590 missing; a total of 6,154.

*(The plans for the attack that wiped out the St. Mihiel salient will be presented in detail in the next article in this series.)*

# MISSING MEN MEET MISSING BAGGAGE

## Effects Depot at St. Nazaire Contains Tons of Personal Property

The Effects Depot at St. Nazaire is busy digging up baggage and personal effects belonging to missing men. Soldiers who were reported missing, having either been wounded or taken prisoner, are now beginning to show up at the Effects Depot to claim photographs, souvenirs de France, and, in some cases, money and jewelry tucked away in bedding rolls and kits.

The Effects Depot, established several months ago, is located near the R.T.O.'s office at St. Nazaire, where a large storehouse, formerly used for Q.M. goods, has been turned into a combination bank and check room. Two months ago the capacity of the check room had been completely taken up by thousands of bags and bedding rolls belonging to missing men.

A few weeks ago the first missing man appeared before the officer in charge. He was a colored doughboy.

"Sir, has I got a bag here marked Pvt. Erastus Brown, Co. L, 162nd Infantry."

The sergeant hunted through the files and finally produced the bag from the far end of the building. It was marked, under the name, "Killed in action."

"Pvt. Brown is dead," the sergeant announced.

"He ain't no sech thing," protested the owner of the bag, producing a dog tag to prove his claim. "I nearly was," he admitted, "but they didn't do a good job of it."

Several supposedly dead officers have also called at the Effects Depot. All, or most of them, found their personal effects awaiting them.

There are, of course, thousands of bedding rolls which will never be claimed and will eventually be sent to the next of kin. There are, too, thousands of bundles consisting of personal effects, not valuable, which the owners are not making claims for.

The Depot suggests that every officer and man having property here send his name and address to the Effects Depot, St. Nazaire, so that every bundle may be returned by mail or express to its owner.

# N.C.O. BURNED SELF TO INVENT GAS SALVE

## C.W.S. Sergeant Wins Mention and Commission by Experiments

To test the efficacy of a preventive salve for mustard gas, Louis Weisberg, while a sergeant in the Chemical Warfare Service, repeatedly seared his flesh with the yellow poison and by his self-torture completed experiments that won for himself a commission and honorable mention in orders for "meritorious conduct."

The story of the devotion to duty of Second Lieutenant Weisberg has been revealed with the publication of G.O. 4, in which several officers and enlisted men of the S.O.S. are mentioned for distinguished services, as previously announced here.

The salve with which the American doughboy fighting in the Argonne and in Flanders smeared himself before going into battle, confident that with it and his gas mask he would come safely through any enemy mustard gas attack, was the product of Louis Weisberg's brain.

For months, Lieutenant Weisberg, as a sergeant, worked many hours during each day and each night to develop his preventive for mustard gas burns. He would rub his salve preparation on his own body and then drop mustard gas on the salved portions. Time after time, the yellow poison burned deep into his flesh.

He made use of guinea pigs, rabbits and other animals at the Chemical Warfare Service laboratories just outside Paris, where he worked. But always when he wished to convince himself, he tried his changing preparations on his own body. There came a day last summer when he knew he had the right formula. By July, tubes of the mustard gas salve he had developed were being distributed to the fighting units of the A.E.F. at the front.

Lieutenant Weisberg, who is 28, arrived in France in January, 1918. He was commissioned last December.

# FATAL BOX CAR ROOF INCREASES FUNERALS

## Homeward-Bound Soldiers Killed on Tops of U.S. Troop Trains

Riding on top of trains is one of the most popular ways of becoming a casualty in the A.E.F., now that German machine guns and cannon are silent.

As a result of frequent casualties the word has been passed out from Transportation Corps headquarters that court-martial trials will be given commanding officers of troop trains when men are killed while riding on tops of cars in violation of regulations. Pointing to embarkation center funerals, officials say the rule against roof-riding is going to be strictly enforced.

Last week the possible death of 40 men en route to an embarkation camp was averted only by chance. A roof-loaded train—men on every car top—pulled into a station in front of an inspection party of railroad officers. It happened that the train had been diverted to arrive on a sidetrack, instead of the main track, which had a low-hanging obstruction that would have swept the tops of the cars clean. In one recent accident 20 soldiers were sheared off the tops of a train entering a tunnel.

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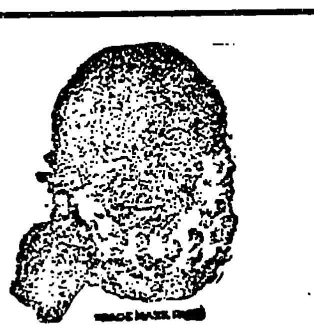

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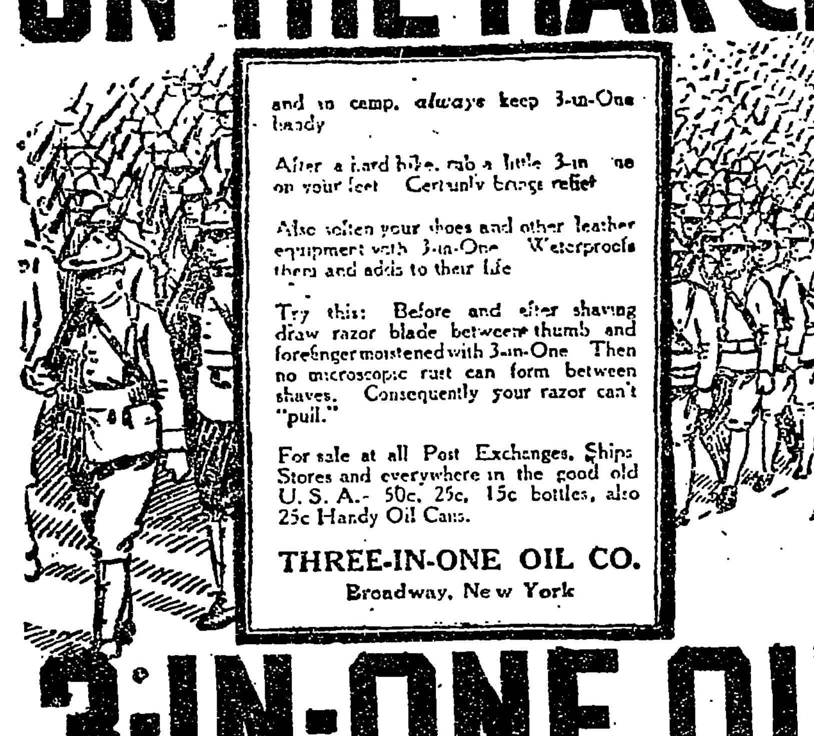

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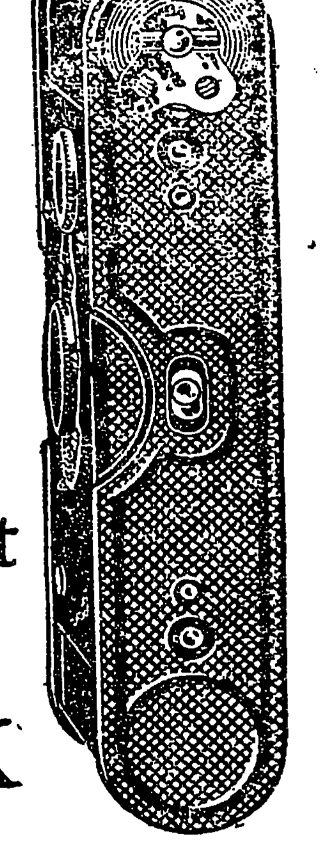

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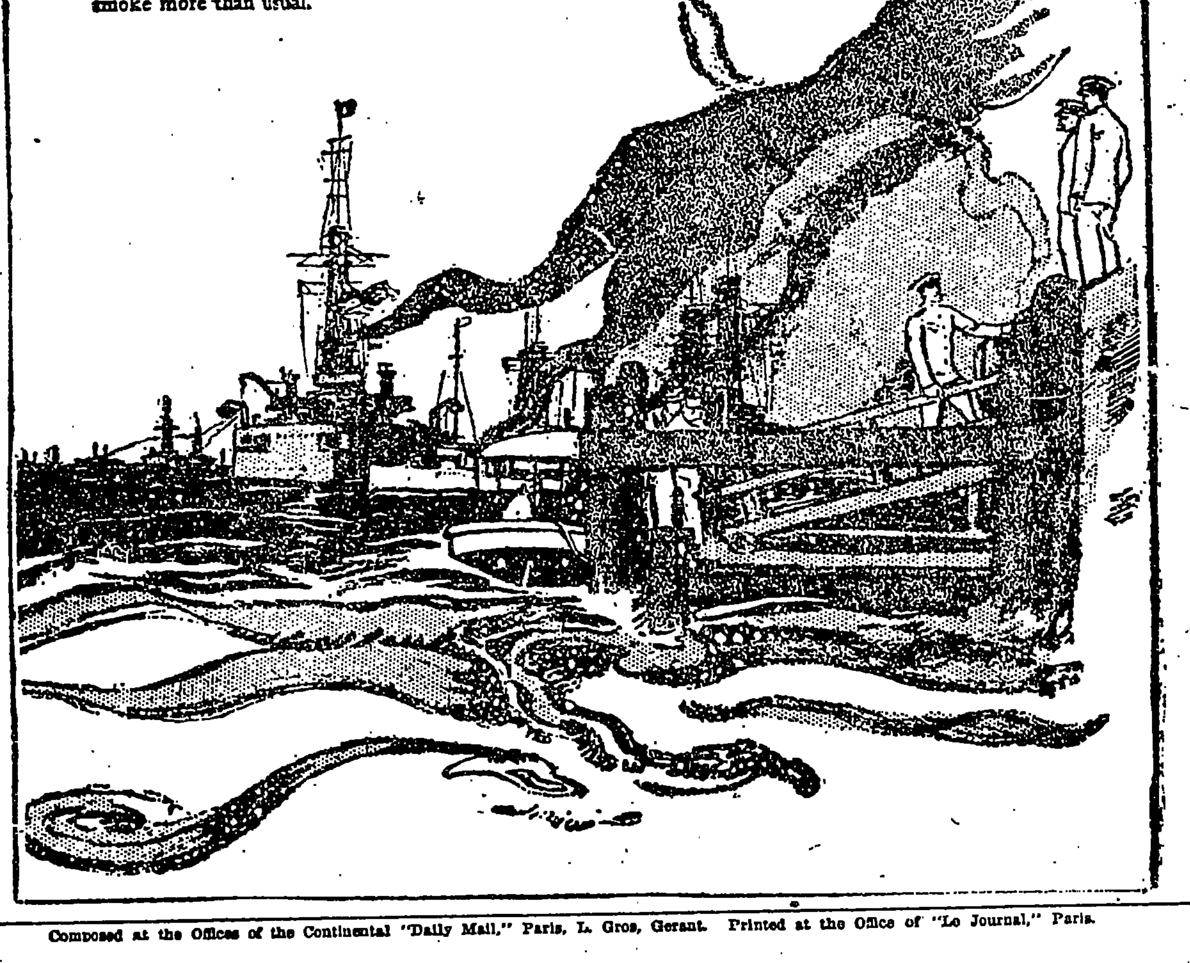


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