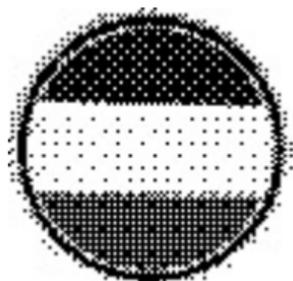


The US Army in World War One



by Joseph K. Leach

a Grunts.net Publication

© Copyright 2001 <http://www.grunts.net>

Contents

[Lafayette, We are Here](#)

[First Combat](#)

[Breaking the Stalemate](#)

[Heroes and The Unkown Soldier](#)

[The Final Resting Place](#)

[The Attempt to Kidnap the Kaiser](#)

"Lafayette, We are Here!"

What became known as the First World War raged on for three years before the

United States became actively involved in it.

It started in the summer of 1914, but its root causes went back for more than a decade. The entire community of European nations had been involved in an arms race for years. There were many protective alliances set up among the various countries. These alliances were put in place to deter war, but in reality it meant when one country was attacked another would come to its defense. This had the inherent danger in it to drag one country after another into a conflict. This is just what happened.

On June 28th, 1914, Archduke Francis

Ferinand of Austria-Hungary and his wife were assassinated in Sarajevo, Bosnia by a Serbian freedom fighter named Gavrilo Princip. Austria-Hungary held the country of Serbia responsible and issued an ultimatum. This was backed by Germany also issuing an ultimatum to Serbia. When Serbia started to mobilize its army, Austria Hungary declared war.

What followed then would be almost funny if it hadn't resulted in so much blood shed. Russia then mobilized (She had her own designs on land in the Balkans) Germany than warned Russia to call off the mobilization and when Russia refused, Germany declared war

on both Russia and France. France was included because they had an alliance with Russia to come to their aid if attacked. France welcomed this declaration of war, because they were itching for revenge against Germany for a defeat in the previous century, when they lost the Provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, and saw this as an opportunity to get the territory back. This meant England would most likely join in due to an alliance She had with France. England did join in, because She was committed also to the neutrality of Belgium, and Germany had attacked the peaceful nation. In early August. As the war went on, other nations joined in. Turkey and Bulgaria joined Germany

and Austria-Hungary. These countries became known as the Central Powers.

Other countries such as Italy, Japan, and Greece joined the allies before the war ended. When America, Montenegro, Portugal, and Romania joined the allies, it was truly a world war.

By 1917 the brunt of the war had been fought by the British and French troops in Europe and they were worn out. The violence of trench warfare had cost both countries horrendous losses in men. In fact many of the French units were near or in open mutiny.

Woodrow Wilson had been elected President in 1916 on the slogan, "He

kept us out of war." Even so there were people in the country that were clamoring for war against Germany (Teddy Roosevelt for one) Americans were upset over the invasion of Belgium, and the horrible way German troops were treating the populace there. Then there was the note from the German Foreign Secretary Zimmerman to the Mexican government that was conveniently intercepted by British intelligence. It was a proposal to Mexico that Germany would help them get back territory taken from them by the Americans in the Mexican War (namely Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico) if Mexico would join with Germany and declare war on the United States. The

final straw was the sinking of four American ships by German submarines in 1917. America severed relations with Germany on February 3rd 1917, and on April 6th declared war in a special sessions of Congress.

General John J. Pershing was picked by Wilson to command the American Expeditionary Force that was to be shipped to Europe. He was 57 years old, and a West Point Graduate (class of 1886) His first taste of combat was in the final days of the Apache wars. He then fought at San Juan Hill in the Spanish American War. He also saw combat against the Moros in the Philippines. His service in the Spanish

American War served him well in later years, because when Teddy Roosevelt became President he promoted Pershing from Captain to Brigadier General over the heads of 862 officers who out ranked him. He also led the expedition in 1916 into Mexico to capture or kill Pancho Villa, the Mexican bandit who raided Columbus, New Mexico and killed 16 American citizens. Villa wasn't captured, but he was wounded, and his band scattered when Pershing was ordered back into the U.S. Mexico was threatening war, and the American Government felt that war with Germany was drawing too close to have an army fighting somewhere else. The venture gave the American troops experience in

tactics while under fire.

After the formal declaration of war, Pershing and his staff were sent to France and arrived on June 13th, 1917. Two weeks later the first American troops landed at St. Lazaire. On the 4th of July, Pershing led a battalion of the 1st Infantry Division in a parade through Paris to the tomb of the Marquis de Lafayette, the man who fought by George Washington's side in the American Revolution. It was reported word wide that Pershing stood in front of the tomb and said, "Lafayette, we are here!" He denied saying the words, crediting his aide, Colonel Charles Stanton with the quote,

but it didn't make a difference. The allies, who were at their lowest point, morale wise, of the war, needed the boost that the words would give if uttered by the leading American, and it was accepted that Pershing had spoken. The words gave hope to the allies. The debt owed LaFayette by America was about to be repaid with the blood of American soldiers.

First Combat

When war was declared in 1917, the regular army of the United States numbered 135,000 men. Pershing eventually came to the conclusion that it

would take 3,000,000 men to get the job done. Even with young men from all walks of life flocking to the colors, it became clear that a draft would be needed to fill the ranks appropriately. On May 18th the Selective Service act was passed and by June 5th, nine and a half million men between the ages of 21 to 31 were registered. The first draft of 7-20-17 called into service 1,374,000 men. Later on more were called up, and the age was changed from 18 to 45.

Pershing saw what a futile waste of lives trench warfare was, and determined that American lives would not be thrown into this cauldron. The French and British were losing 7,000

men a day in the trenches, and this figure would sky rocket when an attack was made by either side. They were stalemated. The lines were almost exactly where they were in 1914. Pershing wanted the American troops trained in offensive tactics. He had a vision that the Americans could fight in the open and break through the trenches with rifle and bayonet. He was also adamant about who the Americans would fight under. He refused to incorporate our troops with the allies. He wanted American commanders leading them.

By the end of the year there were 5 divisions of Americans in France. They

were the 1st "Big Red One", 2nd "Indianhead" (which included a Brigade of Marines), 26th "Yankee", 41st "Sunset" and 42nd "Rainbow" Infantry Divisions. Before the war ended there would be 42 American Divisions in France, of which 30 would see active combat. Each division consisted of 979 officers and 27,082 men.

As each division finished advanced training, they were sent to a quiet sector of the front to receive their baptism of fire gradually. On November 2, 1917 a platoon of the 1st division was hit by a raiding party of 250 German Storm troopers at Bathelemont and suffered the first combat deaths of the war. Others

had been killed in bombings behind the lines but these were the first in actual combat. I think they deserve a mention. They were **Corporal James Gresham, of Evansville Ind. Private Thomas Enright of Pittsburgh, and Private Merle Hay, of Ellston, Iowa.** The first in a long line of heroes.

The first American to engage in an offensive action were the 11th, 12th, and 14th Engineer Regiments. They were working behind the British lines at Cambria in late November and when the British started an attack the engineers were drawn in and finished the battle fighting as infantry.

For the balance of the year our divisions were put into the quiet sectors and got seasoned. The British and French were clamoring to have the Americans incorporated into their lines, but Pershing stood his ground.

Then in the spring of 1918, events transpired that caused him to change his mind. The Germans started a massive attack, that if it succeeded could possibly win the war for them. On March 21 they drove a salient (wedge) between the British at Somme and the French further south. It was aimed right at Amiens. In April they launched another massive attack against the British in Flanders.

Pershing, who still wanted Americans

under their own commanders, now changed his mind for the good of the allied cause. He saw immediately that if these offenses were successful all would be lost. He then went to the Allied Commander, General Foch, and offered his troops to him. Pershing said that America would be honored to join in the effort to throw back the Germans. His words once more inspired our war weary allies. Foch gratefully accepted the offer.

The 26th Division was the first to see action in this campaign. It suffered 600 casualties repelling a German attack at Seicheprey on the 20th of April.

The Germans launched a third major attack at the end of May that reached Chateau Thierry, just 40 miles from Paris. The other two offenses were faltering, thanks to American intervention. At this point, the American soldiers came into their own. The 1st division attacked and captured a German stronghold at Catigny and held it against repeated attacks (seven in all) over a three day period. Even with this victory the Allies were still in bad shape with the Germans at Chateau Thierry on the Marne River. The Germans were starting to cross the river when they were hit by the American 3rd Division and were thrown back earning their nickname "Rock of the Marne". The 3rd

did this after being rushed to the Marne from their training sector, and enduring two days of artillery bombardment when they arrived.

Now the 2nd Division (Army and Marines combined) were called upon to stop a German advance coming down the Paris/Metz road. The Americans had to push their way through fleeing French troops and refugees. The French troops were telling them not to go forward, that all was lost because the Germans couldn't be stopped. The Americans went forward anyway. The Americans decided to forego getting into defensive positions and attacked the Germans.

It was here that the Marine Brigade of

the 2nd Division made gallant history in an attack that was one of the bravest of all time, at a place called Belleau Wood. This was a heavily forested area that was fortified by the Germans with wall to wall machine guns. The Marines went forward against this seemingly impregnable fortress without benefit of artillery. They did it with rifle and bayonet. A Marine, Gunnery Sergeant Daniel Daly ensured himself a place in the annals of Marine heroes when he shouted, "Come on, you Leathernecks, do you wanta live forever?" And they came and they came. Their losses were enormous, but yard by yard they took the Wood from the Germans. It took two bloody weeks, but finally Pershing

received the message, "Entire woods captured by United States Marines." The Government of France was so taken by this seemingly impossible feat, that a few days later they officially changed the name of the area to "Bois de la Brigade du Marine" or Woods of the Marine Brigade.

On July 15th the Germans launched yet another large scale attack in what is called the 2nd battle of the Marne. They succeeded in crossing the river, but after suffering heavy losses were thrown back, thanks in a large part to the fighting ability of the American men of the 26th, 28th, and 42nd Division.

The Allies now took the offensive with a

drive on Soissons, spearheaded by the American 1st and 2nd Divisions. Seven other American Divisions took part in this drive, raising the number of Americans in this campaign to several hundred thousand. The campaign ended August 6th with a general German retreat away from the Paris area. It wouldn't be the last time Americans saved this city from the Germans.

Breaking the Stalemate

The success of the American soldiers thus far in the war had been costly. In the 2nd battle of the Marne alone, they suffered 50,000 killed and wounded, and

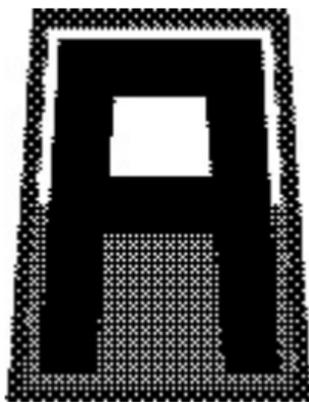
now that more divisions were entering the fray, these numbers would climb dramatically.

In late July, 1918, the 42nd (Rainbow Div.) attacked the Germans on the heights above the Ourcq River Valley. The heights were finally taken and held when they captured the village of Sergy with severe losses. It was on a scouting party after this battle that Joyce Kilmer (the poet who wrote "Trees") was killed.

On August 8th the 33rd and 80th Divisions, along with the British, attacked and crushed all German opposition in the Somme area. The Attack went across the "no-man's" land

behind British tanks. This was the beginning of the end for the German army on the Western front.

Now Pershing demanded that a separate American army be formed. Foch agreed, and on August 10, 1918 the American First Army was officially established. It was headquartered at Neuf-Chateau on the Meuse River, south of St.Mihiel.



US First Army Insignia

At St.Mihiel, the Germans had had a salient deep into the Allied lines since 1914. The first assignment of the newly formed army was to drive the Germans from this salient and straighten out the Allied line. This had to be done before any other offensive could be undertaken on the Western front. This was a hard enough task, but Foch almost made it impossible by ordering the Americans to start another offensive in the Meuse-Argonne area almost simultaneously. This meant two major offensives to be started within three weeks, forty miles apart. Pershing knew the Americans could do it, and the orders were issued.

The St.Mihiel Campaign started on

September 9th, and ended on the 16th with an overwhelming American victory. 16,000 Germans were taken prisoner, and the salient was cleared of all German opposition. The Americans suffered 7,000 casualties. It was in this battle that American tanks were first used in combat. The Air Service was also used extensively here.

The Meuse-Argonne area was a very difficult one to attack. To the east was the Meuse River and to the west was the Argonne forest. The river was bordered by high, wooded hills and the Argonne was also hilly and forested. This meant any troops going up the valley would be caught in a crossfire, because the

Germans had both areas fortified with machine gun nests. In addition, the Germans had a twelve mile deep area of barbed wire, and concrete bunkers (machine gun emplacements) across the valley. It was impregnable, or so the Germans thought. Right in the middle of this area was a fortified hill called Montfaucon. This was a key fortification. Even Foch made the prediction that this hill wouldn't be taken until 1919.

After super human efforts were made getting all the troops and material into place the attack began on the morning of September 26th. Of the nine American Divisions that started the attack, four had

no combat experience at all. Most of the experienced divisions were still at the St. Mihiel area. Even so, these untried troops took Montfaucon on the second day of the attack. They made slow progress until October 3rd, when the attack bogged down. It was a combination of green troops and bad weather that slowed the attack. (It rained practically every day, turning the area into a quagmire.)

Pershing sent in more experienced units from the St. Mihiel area and the attack went forward again. The Germans put up a fierce resistance and started pulling reserves from other sectors to help hold the area. This slowed the Americans

somewhat, but aided the Allies in the sectors they were pulled from.

In the Argonne Forest section of the battle, it was a fierce struggle for each yard. It was here that the famous "Lost Battalion" made it's heroic stand. It was a mixed battalion of the 77th Division under the command of a Major Charles Whittlesey. The battalion consisted of 550 men from the 308th and 307th Infantry and the 306th Machine Gun Battalion. The battalion had been ordered to advance as rapidly as possible through the forest without regard for any other units on their flanks. On October 2nd they jumped off and proceeded through the forest hitting only

sporadic and light opposition. They bedded down for the night, and when morning dawned they were surrounded by Germans with no allied units in sight.

They fought on for days running out of food and becoming very short of ammunition. At one point, they were even bombarded by friendly artillery. This was stopped when a carrier pigeon got through to the American lines asking for the bombardment to cease. The men were reduced to eating roots and bark, when a Private Krotoshinsky volunteered to try to get through and lead reinforcements back. He made it and on October 7th relief units fought their way to the battalion guided by him. For his

efforts the private received the Distinguished Service Cross. Whittlesey was promoted to Lt.Colonel, and given the Medal of Honor. Of the 550 men that started out on the 2nd, 107 were killed, and only 194 were able to walk out. Most of these men immediately volunteered to continue on the offensive with the rest of the 77th.

In the days following, the drive through the Argonne Forest went on relentlessly. It was in this fighting that two men stood out from all the others. They were Corporal Alvin York(later Sergeant) and Lt.(later Captain) Samuel Woodfill. Pershing called York the outstanding civilian-soldier of the war, and

Woodfill the greatest of all the American heroes of the war.

In mid October a 2nd Army of the United States was created in France. Pershing was now commander of two armies over a hundred mile front. This was about one quarter of the whole Western Front.



US Second Army Insignia

On November 1st the final phase of the Meuse-Argonne campaign began with assaults by the 1st Army on the

Hindenburg line, the last line of the German defense system. The advance went rapidly forward and the heights above Sedan were taken. This cut the main German supply line and on the 6th the German high command asked for terms for an armistice.

On the 11th of November an armistice was signed and the war was over. The fighting ended almost a year to the day after the Americans suffered their first casualties at Bathelmont. Since that day they met the enemy on a dozen fields of battle, and lost to him on none.

The Unknown Soldier

The American fighting man had been sorely tested on the Western Front, and not suprisingly, had not been found wanting. In fact, most historians agree, that the A.E.F. turned the tide of battle from stalemate and possible defeat into Allied victory. In the Meuse-Argonne battle alone (47 days of constant combat) they went against the best German divisions and destroyed them. It was the greatest battle in American history up to that point in time.

1,200,000 Americans participated.

The cost of winning the war was high. The Americans suffered 53,407 dead and 204,002 wounded. The men returning were treated as heroes (as well

they should have been) Two of the most famous heroes were Alvin York, and Samuel Woodfill.

York was a Tennessee mountain man that fought with the 82nd Division which was called the All-American Division. On October 8th. York, then a corporal was with a platoon of 15 men of the 328th Infantry Regiment attacking a machine gun position in the Argonne. They captured the position but were raked by fire from another position which killed the sergeant and five others. Corporal York then took command. He started shooting at the new German position every time he saw a target and killed a dozen of the enemy.

He was then rushed by seven Germans including a officer, and he shot every one of them, starting with the last, and working his way closer. This way the men in front didn't know their comrades had fallen. The German Major in charge then surrendered his surviving troops. York marched the captured men away and more Germans surrendered as they neared them. By the time York and his troops got to the American lines he had 132 prisoners and had killed 20 German soldiers. Its not known how many American lives he saved because his actions silenced 40 German machine guns.

Four days later, Lt.Samuel Woodfill was

leading his company (he was with the 60th Inf.reg. 5th div) against a highly fortified position near the village of Cunel. A machine gun pinned them down, and Woodfill crawled on alone. He killed 3 of the four men with rifle fire, and the 4th with his pistol as they wrestled. He again waved his company on and again a machine gun pinned them down. This time Woodfill rushed the position by himself, firing from the hip. He killed several and captured several more. When they started forward again a third gun opened up on them. Again he waved his men to cover and attacked alone. He killed the five men in this position with his last five bullets. Noticing one more machine gun operated

by two Germans, he picked up an ax handle and after charging into them, dispatched both.

The patriotic fervor that swept the country in 1917 continued after the war and Congress was moved to create a remembrance monument to those that didn't come home.

On March 4th 1921, four unidentified bodies were taken (one from each of four American cemeteries in France) and were transported to the city hall at Chalons-Sur-Marne in identical caskets. Here Sergeant Edward Younger of the 50th Infantry was chosen to select one to be sent back to the States as the Unknown Soldier. On October 24, 1921

Younger entered the room carrying a bouquet of roses given him by Brasseur Brulfur, a Frenchman that had lost two sons in the war. Younger walked around the caskets and then placed the bouquet on the second one, came to attention, and saluted. The Unknown Soldier was picked.

On October 25th the casket sailed for America on the United States cruiser Olympia and arrived at the Washington DC navy yard November 9th. It was taken to the capital building and rested in the rotunda until Armistice Day (now Veterans Day) November 11, 1921.

The Final Destination

THE FINAL RESTING PLACE

The casket holding the remains of the Unknown Soldier left the Capitol Rotunda and journeyed to its final resting place at Arlington National Cemetery. Though gravely ill ex-President Wilson rode behind the caisson carrying the soldier in a horse drawn carriage. Samuel Woodfill was one of the pallbearers. He had stayed on in the Army after the war, although at the reduced rank of Sergeant. Many other heroes of the war were present, including Sgt. Alvin York (now a civilian), Lt. Col Whittlesey of "the lost battalion" and Medal of Honor winner Captain Nelson Holderman.

There were many other heroes, sung and unsung, that were unable to attend. They were the men in the American cemeteries in France. They were represented by General Pershing who left off all decorations from his uniform save the Victory Medal that all A.E.F. veterans were entitled to wear. He stood to attention next to President Harding and VP Coolidge.

The tomb was completed 10 years later when the 50 ton block of marble was put in place. On one side of the tomb is carved the following words:

**HERE RESTS
IN HONORED GLORY**

AN AMERICAN SOLDIER KNOWN BUT TO GOD

Today, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers is guarded 24 hours a day by the Sentinals of the 3rd United States Infantry. The Soldiers who become Sentinals go through extensive training and testing before they are allowed to guard the Tomb. The Honor Guard Badge, awarded to the Sentinals is one of the least awarded by the US Army. Only the Army Astronaut badge is awarded less.

The Sentinals take their work very seriously. Their pride and

professionalism is expressed perfectly
by their creed:

The Sentinal's Creed

*My dedication to this sacred duty
is total and wholehearted.*

*In the responsibility bestowed on me
never will I falter.*

*And with dignity and perseverance
my standard will remain perfection.*

*Through the years of diligence and
praise*

*and the discomfort of the elements,
I will walk my tour in humble
reverence*

to the best of my ability.

*It is he who commands the respect I
protect.*

*His bravery that made us so proud.
Surrounded by well meaning crowds
by day
alone in the thoughtful peace of night,
this soldier will in honored glory rest
under my eternal vigilance*

The Attempt to Kidnap the Kaiser

By the end of the First World War on November 11, 1918, the Kaiser (Germany's leader) was the most hated man in the world. He was held

responsible in the minds of millions for the death and destruction of this horrible war. They were looking forward for his capture and punishment. Imagine the disappointment when it was discovered he had fled his country on the 10th of November and took refuge in the country of Holland. He was welcomed as the guest of Dutch nobleman, Count Godard Bentinck, and was ensconced at the Count's chateau at Amerongen, Holland. The fortress- like chateau was surrounded by a high brick wall and was double moated. The population of the former Allies were highly indignant, and were clamoring for the capture and hanging of this man. Though nothing official was being planned for the

capture of the Kaiser, some American soldiers had a different idea.

Colonel Luke Lea, commander of the 114th Field Artillery (Tennessee volunteer unit) was highly incensed at the escape of the Kaiser and decided to do something about it. Lea had been a US Senator from Tennessee for four years up until 1916. He was also publisher of Nashville's "Tennessean" newspaper. It had been noted by his fellow officers in Luxembourg, where the unit was stationed after the war, that Lea was obsessed with the idea of bringing the Kaiser to Justice.

On Christmas Eve, 1918, Lea proposed to Captains Leland MacPhail and

Thomas Henderson that they kidnap the Kaiser and present him to President Wilson, in Paris for a conference at the time. He unveiled a plan, and lo and behold, the two captains readily agreed to go along with it. Let it be known that Lea was a well liked man, and had a way about him that few could resist. Macphail took the attitude that, if they failed and were arrested by the Dutch, the worst that would happen would be deportation back to the States. They would get home faster than they would if they stayed in the Army of Occupation. That same night the three men, with four enlisted men set out in the regimental car for Holland. They were stopped at the border the next day, and were refused

permission by the Dutch army to enter the country. The men returned to the regiment highly disappointed until Lea told them he had another plan and to stay ready.

By New Years Day 1919, Lea was ready with a new plan. He had obtained passports for all of the men (there were extra men included now) and they all set out for the border once more. With the original three conspirators there were now, Lt. Elsworth Brown, Sergeants Dan Reilly, Owen Johnston, and Corporal Marmaduke Clokey. The over loaded car, a Winton, broke down at Arlon Belgium, and the plan seemed in jeopardy, until an American Army truck

appeared on the scene. The driver asked Lea if he could help, and another plan popped into the Colonel's head. He had Corporal Cokey return to their base in the truck, and gave him instructions to find a Colonel Gleason, Commander of a sister regiment, and ask him for the loan of Gleason's regimental Cadillac. When Clokey rode off, the remaining men got the Winton to a nearby garage for repairs and awaited the return of Clokey. Lea seemed confident that they'd get the cadillac.

At seven the next day, Clokey arrived with the cadillac and another volunteer. He was Sergeant Egbert Hail, Colonel Gleason's chauffeur, who refused to let

the cadillac go without himself at the wheel. Reilly and Clokey were left with the Winton, and the rest took off in the cadillac. The plan was for them all to meet at Liege when the Winton was repaired. The party first went to the American Legation in Brussels to confer with the American Minister Brant Whitlock. It was Whitlock who supplied the passports for the group. Lea had done favors for Whitlock when Lea was in the Senate, and it was now payback time. Such was Lea's powers of persuasion, he probably would have gotten anything he wanted from Whitlock anyway. In fact Whitlock at first advised against the group going into Holland because relations were strained between

the United States and Holland, but relented and introduced them to the Dutch Minister.

Lea convinced the Dutch Minister that they were on a journalistic mission to study conditions in Holland. He was such a good talker that the Minister issued them a written pass (a Laissez-Passer) which also identified the group as being on official United States business. Unable to read Dutch, Lea knew nothing of this official business part. They then left for Liege and hooked up again with Reilly and Clokey who were waiting for them with the Winton.

They all left Liege at dawn the next day, January 5th, on the mission that would

make headlines in the papers of the world, and provide one of the few lighter moments reported on since before the war started. Lea, MacPhail, Reilly, and Clokey lead the way in the Winton, and the rest followed in the Caddy. They entered Holland, the pass got them past the border guards, and made good time until a wheel fell off the Caddy at Nijmegen. It was while the car was getting repaired that they picked up an interpreter and guide in the person of Constant Botter. He was 15 years old. He promised to guide them to Amrongen and they all took off again after repairs were made to the Caddy.

The boy, whom they dubbed "Hans" had

no inkling of the kidnap plot. They reached the Eem River after dark, and took a ferry across. Lea asked the ferryman to wait there and they would return in two hours or less. He didn't want to be caught with the Kaiser tied up in the car while they waited for the ferry to come back. The man refused. This put the plan of forcible kidnap out of the question. Lea's next plan was to go to the castle and persuade the Kaiser to come with them voluntarily to Paris and face justice. (he could make up plans on the spur of the moment it seemed) He gave all the Tennesseans a chance to back out, but to a man they volunteered to finish what they started.

They reached the castle at 9PM and knocked on the wooden door in the outer wall. Their weapons were hidden under the auto seats. They asked the guard, who answered the door, if they could see the count, and he escorted them onto the grounds and into the house of the estate manager. Here they were interviewed by the Count, and requested from him an audience with the Kaiser. It turned out the "Count" was actually the son of the count and he told them he would have to confer with his father and the Kaiser before he could give them an answer.

The young "Count" got confused when Lea told him they were just on an

unofficial journalistic mission, and he saw the Official United States business on the pass. Seeing the young Hans acting very nervous when the "count" left, Brown took him outside to wait in the car. He returned and informed Lea that the area around the cars was flood lit and surrounded by armed soldiers. Then they heard voices from the other room and someone addressed as "Your excellency". The voices seemed highly agitated.

The count returned and stated that the Kaiser would not grant an interview unless they showed proof they were sent by President Wilson or Pershing. He admitted that the Kaiser was in the next

room. Another man joined them and was introduced as the Burgomaster of the castle. Lea argued with the count and the burgomaster, but they would not budge. They haughtily said the Kaiser does not grant interviews to commoners. MacPhail, seeing the writing on the wall, and knowing they were about to be tossed out, did not want to leave empty handed. He looked around for something and decided to take an ash tray he spotted, and slipped it into his pocket. This led to the mistaken legend that he had stolen the Kaiser's ashtray.

The Americans then left, unknowing that the Dutch Government was making complaints to the U.S government. The

lights at the American Embassy lit up when the complaints started pouring in. The two cars sped through Holland sure they were to be pursued by the Dutch authorities. They dropped the youngster, Hans, off after rewarding him generously and sped for the border. There was no pursuit. The American authorities persuaded the Dutch authorities to let the adventurers go, and the Army would deal with them. When they got back all hell was about to break out. The newspapers were having a field day. All eight men were ordered to report to A.E.F. Headquarters at Chaumont. On the 15th of January, Pershing had ordered a full investigation. The men were questioned for days and all told the

same story, they entered Holland to study the conditions there. They knew nothing of a plot to kidnap the Kaiser. The non-coms stated they were only following orders, to act as drivers and keep the vehicles in running condition.

Charges were dropped against all but Lea and MacPhail. Lea was charged with obtaining passports under false conditions, using U.S. vehicles without authorization, conferring with the enemy, entering neutral Holland without permission, and conduct prejudicial to good order. MacPhail was charged with stealing the ashtray with intent to keep it.

Finally, over the objections of the Inspector General (he wanted a court

martial) the Judge Advocate recommended to Pershing that Lea be given a letter of reprimand only. All charges should be dropped. MacPhail was to be cleared of his charge. Pershing agreed and all parties were satisfied. Both men returned to civilian life. Lea into newspapers and finance in the South, MacPhail to become owner of the New York Yankees. Lea died in 1945 and Mac Phail (known in later years as Larry)died in 1975.

When Pershing came to Nashville in 1921 for a reunion of the 30th Division, he was asked for an opinion on the kidnap attempt. His reply was, "I'd have given a years pay to have been with

those boys in Holland."

If you would like more information on the history of the United States Military, please visit Grunts.net - Home of Military History on the web at <http://www.grunts.net>

This article written by Joseph Leach and edited by John Silva. © 2001 <http://www.grunts.net>. E-mail webmaster@grunts.net