



Freedom's Voice

The Monthly Newsletter of the
Military History Center

112 N. Main ST
Broken Arrow, OK 74012
<http://www.okmhc.org/>



“Promoting Patriotism through the Preservation of Military History”

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November 2018

Armistice Day – November 11, 1918

United States Armed Services Days of Observance

The most significant Day of Observance in November is Veterans Day on November 11. The other important Day of Observance is the Marine Corps birthday on November 10.

Armistice

One hundred years ago, the Armistice that ended the orgy of death that was World War I went into effect at 11:00 a.m. on November 11, 1918 – the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. After fifty-one months of unimaginable carnage, it was now “all quiet on the Western Front”.



Arlington National Cemetery

Duty and fidelity at the Tombs of the Unknowns
every minute of every hour of every day
3rd Infantry “Old Guard” Regiment

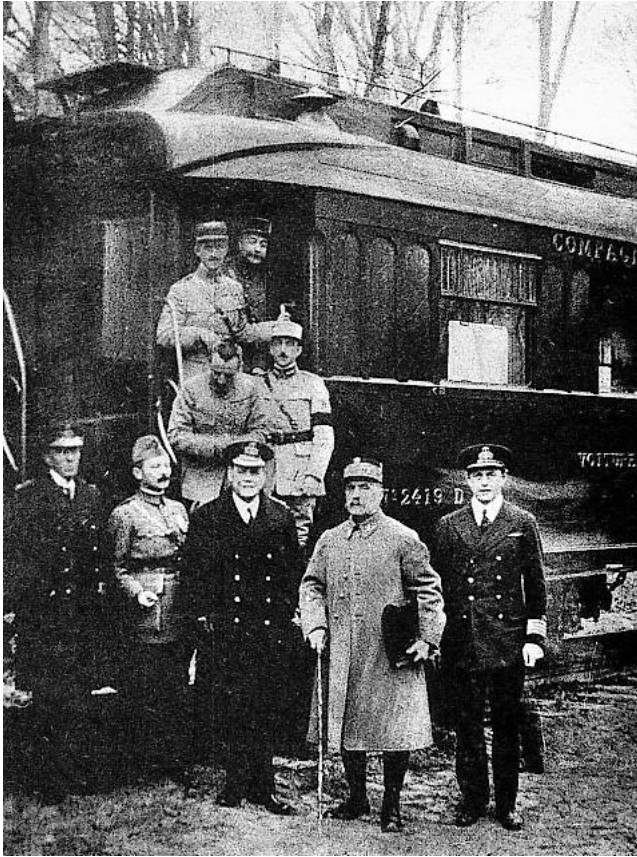


Soldiers of Battery D, 105th Field Artillery Regiment, 27th Infantry Division (New York National Guard) celebrating the news of the Armistice near Etraye, France

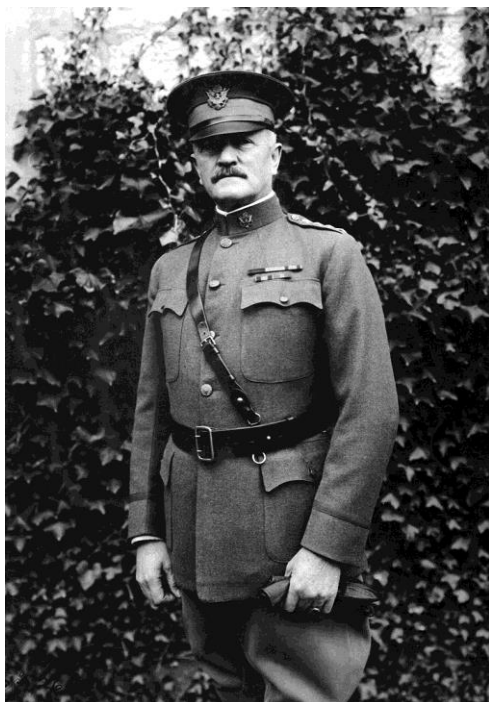
Thanksgiving Holiday

The MHC will be closed for Thanksgiving

November 22 thru 26



Allied Armistice delegation photographed after the Armistice was signed in Marshall Foch's railway car in the *Forêt de Compiègne*. The Marshall is second from the right – November 11, 1918. The officers pictured are British and French. The United States was not involved in the Armistice signing.



General John J. Pershing at his headquarters at Chaumont, France, October 1918 – during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive

The Armistice

The beginning of the end of World War I came when the Germans asked for the terms of a ceasefire in October 1918. The Allies made several non-negotiable demands of the Germans. The Germans at first balked, but in the end, they had no choice but to agree to the Allied terms. Revolution was breaking out in Germany as the populace had become disaffected by four years of war and the heavy losses as well as chronic food shortages caused by the British naval blockade causing starvation in some instances. The German representative was ordered to sign whatever the Allies placed in front of him.

The Armistice was signed in the private railway car of Marshall Ferdinand Foch, supreme commander of allied forces on the Western Front in the *Forêt de Compiègne*. The Armistice was signed at 5:10 a.m. on November 11, 1918, to be effective at 11:00 a.m. the same day.

The Germans were to march out of France, Belgium and Luxemburg, leaving behind all their artillery, machine guns, vehicles and aircraft.

Fighting continued along the Western Front until exactly 11:00. Altogether, both sides suffered approximately 2,000 casualties that day. General Pershing received some criticism for what was considered a waste of lives. In defense of Pershing and the other allied commanders, they were suspicious of the Germans and intended to keep up the pressure in the event the armistice was a German ruse. The terms of the Armistice:

1. All occupied lands in Belgium, Luxembourg and France – plus Alsace-Lorraine, held since 1870 by Germany – were to be evacuated within fourteen days;
2. The Allies were to occupy land in Germany to the west of the River Rhine and bridgeheads on the river's east bank up to a depth of thirty kilometers;
3. German forces had to be withdrawn from Austria-Hungary, Romania and Turkey;
4. Germany was to surrender to neutral or Allied ports 10 battle-ships, 6 battle cruisers, 8 cruisers, and 160 submarines;
5. Germany was also to be stripped of heavy armaments, including 5,000 artillery pieces, 25,000 machine guns and 2,000 airplanes;
6. The naval blockade would continue;
7. 5,000 locomotives, 150,000 railway cars and 5,000 trucks would be confiscated from Germany.
8. Germany would be blamed for the war, and reparations would be paid for all damage caused.



German soldiers withdrawing from France after the Armistice

Salute to Veterans Concert

On Sunday, November 4, the MHC presented its third annual Salute to Veterans Concert at Kirkland Auditorium in Broken Arrow. BG Tom Mancino (U.S. Army, Ret.), President of the MHC, served as master of ceremonies. The event was opened by the Broken Arrow High School JROTC Color Guard posting the colors. Maggie Bond, Miss Broken Arrow, sang the "Star Spangled Banner" and Dr. Clarence Oliver offered the invocation. Miss Bond followed with three more patriotic songs.



Broken Arrow High School JROTC Color Guard
presenting the colors

Mr. Henry Primeaux, a Navy Cold War veteran of the submarine service, was guest speaker. He spoke generally about veterans of several wars, including his personal experiences with veterans. Mr. Primeaux was a personal friend of Col. Bob Powell and has been a long-time supporter of the MHC. Primeaux Mitsubishi sponsored the Salute to Veterans Concert.

The concert was presented by Tulsa Community Band under the direction of Principal Conductor Martha Kramer and Assistant Conductor JoAnn Johnson. Tulsa Community Band was organized in 1938 as the American Legion Band. The Band currently has eighty-five members, both professional and amateur. They perform throughout northeast Oklahoma. The Band played numerous patriotic pieces during the concert and was a big hit with the concert attendees.



Miss Maggie bond singing the National Anthem
(Photo by MHC Volunteer, Lindsey Donaldson)



Henry Primeaux and Tom Mancino



World War II veteran, Frank Riesinger, guest conducted the band in playing its finale: "Stars and Stripes Forever"



MHC Executive Assistant, Jean Bailie, and volunteer, Susan Virdell, at the information table

The MHC is grateful for everyone who came out to take part in this special event honoring our veterans and enjoyed a fabulous concert of patriotic music. We also thank all the volunteers who assisted with the event, Mr. Primeaux, whose company sponsored it and the many local businesses who purchased advertisements in the program. We especially acknowledge the extraordinary work of MHC Board member, Keith Browne, who put together the entire event – job well done!

The MHC Remembers World War I Veterans



World War I Victory Ribbon

To Remember is to Honor



President Trump at Suresnes American Cemetery and Memorial near Paris – November 11, 2018



Marines carry the wreath placed by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Marine Corps General Joe Dunford, and retired Marine Corps General John Kelly at the Aisne-Marne Cemetery Memorial, where the fallen of the battles of Belleau Wood and Aisne-Marne are interred.



Memorial wreath laid at the Tombs of the Unknowns by Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Robert L. Wilkie

Tulsa Veterans Day Parade Cancelled

The weather defeated us again. This time it was a deep cold front that brought frigid temperatures and strong winds along with rain and snow.

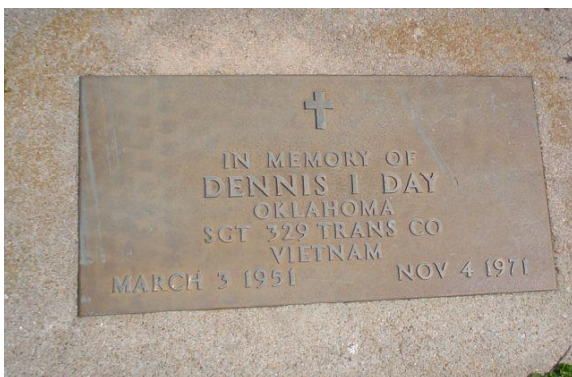


SP4 Dennis Irvin Day – MIA

Dennis Irvin Day was born at Blackwell (Kay County), Oklahoma, on March 3, 1951. Soon after graduation from Blackwell High School, he joined the Army.

On November 2, 1970, Day was a Specialist 4 in the 329th Transportation Company, 5th Transportation Command (Terminal) at Da Nang, South Vietnam. Among the missions of the 5th TC was to support amphibious operations and to supply ammunition to operational units, primarily by heavy boat. On that day, the crew of landing craft LCU #63 departed Da Nang for Tan My on a resupply mission. The LCU was a heavy craft capable of carrying large loads of ammunition. On November 3, the craft capsized about five nautical miles south of Tan My port. In an initial search by air/sea rescue, no sign of the crew of the LCU was observed. There was no apparent hostile action, and the reason for the incident is unknown, although high winds are suspected. During the period of December 4-20, attempts were made to salvage the craft and locate the crew. Divers gained access to all compartments and voids of the craft, but no survivors or evidence of remains were found. A few days after the incident, the body of one crewman was located washed up on a nearby island. In 1977, the Vietnamese returned another body, which had apparently washed ashore. The remaining eight crewmen are presumed to have drowned.

SP4 Day was later promoted to Sergeant. He was just nineteen years old at the time of the incident. SGT Day has a memorial in Blackwell Cemetery. (The death date on his memorial is incorrect. It should be 1970.)



The MHC at Five



On November 9, the MHC celebrated its fifth birthday. The core of the Museum’s collection was assembled over many years by Col. Robert W. Powell (USAF, Ret.). For several years, he displayed his collection at Memorial High School in Tulsa and later in a Tulsa office building. At the June 2013 Flag Day event, he deeded his large collection to the Military History Museum. With the transfer of ownership of the collection and occupancy of the newly rehabilitated building at 112 N. Main Street, the Museum was anxious to get going. The collection was moved into, and setup, at the new location. On November 9, 2013, the Museum was officially opened with a grand open house, attended by an estimated 200 guests.

Since then, the Museum’s name has been changed to Military History Center. In the meantime, the collection has grown tremendously, as veterans or their families have generously donated their personal artifacts or collections. However, our mission – “Promoting Patriotism through the Preservation of Military History” – remains unchanged. The MHC is grateful for everyone who has supported the Museum.

Support the Military History Center

There are number of ways to support the MHC. One that is simple and easy for everyone is the **AmazonSmile** program.

AmazonSmile enables shoppers to select a charity to which Amazon will contribute a small percentage of a shopper’s purchase. To take advantage of the program, sign on to **AmazonSmile** and select “Military History Center Broken Arrow” as the charity you want to support.

When you shop, you **MUST** log onto **AmazonSmile** to receive the benefits of the program. If you logon and shop at regular Amazon, no money will be paid to your charity.

To date, Amazon has contributed almost \$100 million to the program. So, if you haven’t already done so, go to **AmazonSmile** now, designate MHC as your favorite charity and begin shopping.

Meuse-Argonne Offensive

The final battle of World War I for most of the AEF was the Battle of Meuse-Argonne, more commonly called the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. It was a huge operation involving more than one million American servicemen. The American phase of the battle opened on September 26, 1918, with 225,000 soldiers in nine divisions along a twenty-five-mile front extending from the middle of the Argonne Forest east to the Meuse River. The First Army's area was roughly the shape of a right triangle with the eastern side of the triangle extending north along the east bank of the Meuse for about forty miles to just south of the French town of Sedan. The battle lasted forty-seven days until the Armistice on November 11.

At 0230 on September 26, First Army opened a three-hour artillery barrage with 3,980 guns of all calibers. After the barrage lifted, the infantry moved out in what was described as a "dripping blanket" of heavy fog behind a rolling barrage onto a battlefield strewn with barbed wire entanglements, abandoned German trenches and heavily pockmarked with shell craters from the 1916 Battle of Verdun. The American sector was the most rugged area of the combat zone in northeast France. Besides the man-made obstacles, it contained the dense Argonne Forest, several smaller patches of thick woods, rock outcropping, steep-sided streams and steep hills. All of this made excellent defensive positions of which the Germans took full advantage.

The first day's objective called for an advancement of ten miles. Before the end of the day, it became apparent that this was way over optimistic. The entire operation ground to a halt by the end of the fourth day with the objective not attained. The difficult terrain and stiff German resistance had worn the men down, heavily decimated most units with higher than expected casualties and temporarily destroyed the 35th Infantry Division as an effective fighting force.

On October 10, Pershing concluded that First Army had grown too large for one man to command. He announced that a second army would be created. MG Hunter Liggett would now take command of First Army, and MG Robert Lee Bullard would command Second Army. Both men were promoted to LT General. Pershing would command the army group, but he made it clear to his army commanders that he would continue to direct the overall operations of the offensive.

The second phase of the battle opened on October 11 with First Army launching a series of costly frontal assaults that finally broke through the main German defense line, the Kriemhilde Stellung of the Hindenburg Line,¹ between October 14–17 – the Battle of Montfaucon. Once again, Pershing had to bring in fresh, or nearly fresh, divisions to relieve the exhausted ones.

The 90th Infantry Division had been relieved from its position in the old St. Mihiel Salient for what proved to be an interrupted period of rest and recuperation. The division was or-

dered to relieve the 5th ID, whose exhausted men had broken the Kriemhilde Stellung. On October 20, the 180th "Texas" Brigade took up positions in reserve in the Bois de Bantheville, and the following night, the 179th "Oklahoma" Brigade took positions in the Bois des Rappes. The Germans held a pocket between the two woods, and it was the mission of the Oklahoma Brigade to eliminate it and straighten the line. The heaviest fighting fell to the 357th Regiment largely of western Oklahomans. By the 24th, they had straightened the line but had been unable to dislodge the Germans occupying the high ground in their front. The Germans launched several counterattacks against 179th positions in the Bantheville area, but the Oklahomans held. Over the next several days the men of the brigade endured constant artillery bombardment, including gas shells, machine gun and sniper fire. At the same time, other First Army units had cleared the third and final Stellung in the German defensive system. The doughboys had proven themselves, had the Germans on the run, were filled with confidence and were now anxious to finish the war.

The final phase of the offensive began on November 1. The 90th ID was turned slightly northeast for a push to the Meuse. They were to clear their front west of the river and cross the Meuse. Once the Meuse was crossed and cleared of Germans, First and Second Army would advance on the fortress city of Metz. That turned out to be unnecessary. The 179th crossed the Meuse, and on November 10, captured the town of Stenay on the east bank. The next day, the Armistice was announced and fighting ceased at 1100 hours. The war was over.



American soldiers in Stenay on the day after it was taken by the 358th Infantry Regiment – November 11, 1918



Members of 2nd BN, 358th Infantry Regiment, 90th Infantry Division

¹ Hindenburg Line is a misnomer. The German defenses were more like a web of defensive positions rather than a line. Over the four years the Germans had occupied the area, they had constructed three lines of in-depth, reinforced defensive trenches called *stellungs* (fortresses) interconnected by numerous transverse trenches. The Kriemhilde Stellung was the second, and main, trench system within the so-called Hindenburg Line.

One of the doughboys of 90th Division's 358th Infantry Regiment of the Oklahoma Brigade was PVT Allen Owens Bryan "Des" Bryan, who became a gas casualty on October 29, 1918, during the fighting near Bantheville.



PVT Allen Owens Bryan – ca. 1917

Bryan was born at Briartown, an unincorporated community in southern Muskogee County. We have no information about Bryan's life after the war, except that at some point between 1930 and 1940, as many Oklahomans did, he moved to California probably in search of work during the Dust Bowl and Great Depression. Allen Owens Bryan died at Tulare, California, on September 23, 1992.

PVT Bryan's photograph is courtesy of Dr. George Dennis Andrews of Stroud, Oklahoma, Bryan's grand-nephew.

This Month's Featured Artifacts



Who Are You? by Thomas Hart Benton

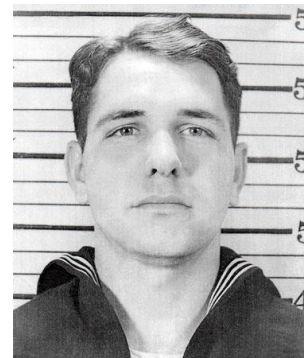
The sailor on the light is Signalman 1st Class Richard Holbrook Becker, born at Winchester, Kentucky, on December 4, 1919. By 1930, his family was living in Tulsa. He enlisted in the Navy at Tulsa on July 5, 1940. After basic training and submarine school, he was posted to the newly commissioned submarine, USS *Dorado*, as a signalman.

Dorado's keel was laid down in Electric Boat Company's yard at Groton, Connecticut, on August 28, 1942. She was launched on May 23, 1943, and commissioned on August 18. *Dorado* sailed from New London, Connecticut, on October 6, 1943, for Panama, but never made it. The exact cause of her loss remains unknown. It is highly suspected that she was sunk by friendly fire, when a Navy anti-submarine plane operating out of Guantanamo, Cuba, dropped depth charges on an unidentified submarine south of Haiti. There were also German submarines operating in the area, although there is no record of a U-boat attacking an American submarine at the general time and place, where *Dorado* is believed to have been lost. A Board of Inquiry investigated the loss and determined there was insufficient evidence to establish a cause.

Artists Thomas Hart Benton and Georges Schreiber were given unprecedented access to *Dorado* during her shakedown cruise and created a series of paintings of the submarine, including *Who are You?* by Benton. Schreiber later used the painting to create a poster, entitled *Fire Away*, for the Fifth War Bond drive. The MHC displays copies of both works.



The names of Signalman Becker and the entire crew of *Dorado* are inscribed on the Tablets of the Missing at the East Coast Memorial in New York City.



Richard Holbrook Becker

Oklahoma World War II MIA Identified



Technical Sergeant Robert J. Fitzgerald with his wife, Anne – 1944

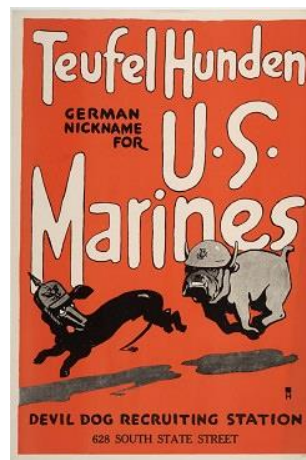
On January 30, 1945, TSGT Robert Johnson Fitzgerald was serving in Co. I, 3rd Battalion, 311th Infantry Regiment, 78th Infantry "Lightning" Division near Huppenbroich in the Hürtgen Forest of Germany. On that day, he was killed, when he stepped on a land mine. His body was buried in a shallow grave on the battlefield, unidentifiable at the time. He was posthumously awarded a Bronze Star and Purple Heart.

The unknown remains were recovered and buried in the Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery near Liège, Belgium, as unknown number X-6998. Fitzgerald's name was engraved on the cemetery's Tablets of the Missing. In 2016, a Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency historian analyzed the documentation of X-6998, and based on the original recovery location and evidence from the personal effects associated with X-6998, he determined that there was a possible association between the remains and Fitzgerald. The historian asked that unknown X-6998 be disinterred for forensic analysis. The remains were confirmed as TSGT Fitzgerald's on September 4, 2018.

Robert Johnson Fitzgerald was born at Benton, Illinois, on May 2, 1912. By 1926, his family had moved to Tulsa, where he graduated from Central High School. He registered for the draft on October 16, 1940. Fitzgerald was working at Acme Fast Freight when he registered for the draft. He was also a musician – a drummer – and apparently played in local bands when not working at his regular job. He was so good that in 1941, Bob Wills hired him as the drummer for his band, The Texas Playboys. Later in the year, on December 14, he married Anne Douglas Williams. He was inducted on September 15, 1942.

A rosette will be placed next to TSGT Fitzgerald's name at the Henri-Chapelle Memorial indicating his recovery.

U.S. Marine Corp in World War I



World War I Marine Corps recruiting poster

When the United States entered World War I, the Marine Corps' existence as an independent fighting force was a bit precarious. The Corps had been created, as marines everywhere were, as naval infantry. They were positioned high in a ship's rigging to fire down on enemy ship decks, used in boarding parties or assisted sailors on the gun decks, from which the rank, gunnery sergeant, is derived. With the development of steam engines and long range naval artillery, the marines original reason for being no longer existed. Twice in American history there was serious presidential consideration for folding the Marine Corps into the Army – first by Andrew Jackson and more recently by Theodore Roosevelt.

When the United States entered World War I, Marine Corps Commandant, Major General George Barnett, was determined that the Corps would have a significant role in the war. But, there was a problem. The Marine Corps is part of the Navy, and General John J. Pershing had no intention of allowing the Navy to have a role in the ground war in France. A compromise was reached; whereby, a brigade of marines was attached to the 2nd Infantry Division.

The marines' performance at Belleau Wood solidified their continued existence as an independent fighting force. It was also there that they earned their nickname, "Devil Dogs" (*Teufel Hunden*), from the Germans. The marines went on to serve with the 2nd ID in the battles of Soissons (Aisne-Marne), St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne. A second brigade of marines sent to France served in rear areas.

On November 10, the United States Marine Corps celebrated its 243rd birthday. During that time, the Corps evolved from shipboard naval infantry to a premiere land fighting force and gained an air arm – the few, the proud.



Bloody Beaches



BG Gordon D. Gayle – USMC

Gordon Donald Gayle was born in Tulsa on September 13, 1917. His father worked in oil fields, so the family moved around some. In 1920, they were living in Lincoln County, Oklahoma. They later returned to Tulsa, where Gayle graduated from Woodrow Wilson Junior High School. In 1931, the family was living in Dallas, where in 1934, he graduated with honors from Sunset High School. He enrolled at Southern Methodist University, but soon transferred to the Naval Academy. Gayle graduated in 1939 and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the Marine Corps.

After completing Basic School at Philadelphia Navy Yard in 1940, he was assigned to the 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine "Old Breed" Division with which he served in three Pacific battles: Guadalcanal, Cape Gloucester (on New Britain Island) and Peleliu. Major Gayle was awarded a Navy Cross for extraordinary heroism while commanding 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines on Peleliu.

Notwithstanding his exemplary performance as a battalion commander on Peleliu, Gayle always believed his most important contribution to the war effort was made during an incident on Guadalcanal in which he disobeyed an order. On August 8, 1942, the day after landing, the Marines captured an airfield and discovered a powerful radio the retreating Japanese had left behind. Captain Gayle was ordered to destroy it, but he didn't. Later, when the Navy withdrew from around Guadalcanal, the radio was the marine's only means of communication for several days until the Navy returned.

After Peleliu, Gayle returned to the United States in November 1944. He was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and taught at the Command and Staff School, Marine Corps School at Quantico, Virginia.

At the onset of the Korean War, Gayle returned to the 1st Marine Division as executive officer of the 7th Marine Regiment, landing at Inchon. He was later promoted to the Division G-3 staff. After the Inchon operation was wrapped-up, the "Old Breed" were transferred to northeast Korea, where they took up positions on the west and south of Chosin Reservoir. After the Chinese entered the war in overwhelming numbers and quickly surrounded 1st Division, the marines fought their way to

safety by a remarkable feat of courage, discipline and determination.



1st Marine Division passing through Chinese lines during the breakout from Chosin Reservoir – December 1950

In 1950, Gayle's book, *Bloody Beaches: The Marines at Peleliu*, was published. He had written it while he was Assistant Director of Marine Corps History. It was part of a series of monographs of Marine Corps operations during World War II.

In 1963-65, Colonel Gayle chaired the Long-Range Study Panel at Quantico, Virginia, developing concepts for the Corps' operational, organizational, logistical and R&D needs for the 1985 period. He was promoted to Brigadier General in 1964. After BG Gayle retired in 1968, he joined Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies.

BG Gordon Donald Gayle died at age ninety-five in an assisted living center at Farnham, Virginia, on April 21, 2013. He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Besides the Navy Cross, BG Gayle's other decorations include two Legions of Merit, one with Valor Device, a Bronze Star with Valor Device, Purple Heart and several other decorations from both World War II and Korea.

Museum Hours and Admission Fee

Tuesday – Friday: 10:00 – 4:00; Saturday: 10:00 – 2:00
Closed Sunday and Monday and major Federal holidays

Adults – \$5.00

Members and Children under 18 – Free

For more information, call (918) 794-2712

www.okmhc.org

World War I's Forgotten Soldiers



Officers of the 367th Infantry Regiment, 92nd Infantry Division posing with a little French girl who presented them with a bouquet of flowers – 1918

In 1917, the United States Army was strictly racially segregated. At the time, there were four combat regiments of black soldiers in the U.S. Army – 9th and 10th Cavalry and 24th and 25th Infantry. These were the renowned Buffalo Soldiers, who were organized shortly after the Civil War to serve on the western frontier. (Except for the 25th Infantry, these regiments still exist.) Other black soldiers within the Army were relegated to labor and service units.

As a 1st lieutenant, John J. Pershing had commanded a troop of the 10th Cavalry on the frontier. In Cuba during the Spanish-American War, he was regimental quartermaster. His nickname – Black Jack – derives from his service commanding black troops. He was one of the few officers who generally held a favorable opinion of the fighting ability of black soldiers. Nevertheless, as commanding general of the AEF, he was subject to Army regulations, regardless of his personal feelings. Like all white officers, he steadfastly refused to put white soldiers in the position of having to serve under, or take orders from, black officers.

Approximately 375,000 black men served during World War I. The Buffalo Soldier regiments remained in the United States to patrol the southern border during the Mexican Revolution. Meanwhile, the army created two divisions of black soldiers from National Guard units and draftees. The 92nd Infantry Division was a draftee division activated on October 27, 1917, at Camp Funston, Kansas. It arrived in France on July 18, 1918. The Division's only combat was in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. The 92nd initially made a poor showing because it was poorly trained and had not been allowed to train as a division. It was also poorly armed and equipped, and more seriously, indifferent white officers commanded the division and its subordinate units. White officers generally had no interest in commanding black units, usually because they believed they were inferior soldiers, and thus, they would accrue no glory unto themselves by commanding them. The poor showing of the 92nd was attributed to the near universal belief in the inherent inferiority of black soldiers, rather than the real causes.

The other all-black division was the 93rd Infantry Division (Provisional), made up of black National Guard units from New York, Illinois, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, Ohio and

the District of Columbia and draftees from the National Army. The division was organized into four regiments in two brigades. The 93rd was never filled out with artillery and support units and never fought as a division. Within two months of their arrival in France in 1917, the 93rd's regiments were detailed to the French army. The remainder of the 200,000 or so black soldiers in France served in labor and service battalions.

The French were glad to have the 93rd regiments and integrated them into their divisions. The National Guard units fought under their own officers, most of whom were black. They were better trained, equipped and led than the men of the 92nd. The 369th Infantry was originally the 15th Infantry of the New York National Guard, the "Black Rattlers". After the Germans tangled with them a few times, they began calling them *hölle kämpfer* – "hell fighters". The men liked the name and began calling themselves "Harlem Hell Fighters". (Their armory was located in Harlem, and seventy per cent of the men resided in Harlem.) The other unit that distinguished itself was the 370th Infantry Regiment, formerly the 8th Infantry Regiment of the Illinois National Guard, based in Chicago. Their fierce fighting style earned them the sobriquet – *schwarzen teufel* (black devils) – from the Germans. The other two regiments, the 371st and 372nd, were made up of mixed National Guard units and draftees. The regiments of the 93rd ID fought in several battles alongside French troops, who were accustomed to fighting with black units from their African colonies. All regiments acquitted themselves well and received unit citations from the French.

Numerous individual black soldiers exhibited extraordinary heroism and were highly decorated. CPL Freddie Stowers, a draftee from South Carolina, was a squad leader in Co. C., 1st BN, 371st Infantry. On September 28, 1918, his company was ordered to take Côte (hill) 188 in the Champagne-Marne sector. Stowers was killed in the attack and was recommended for the Medal of Honor for his exceptional heroism, but black soldiers were not awarded the Medal of Honor during World War I. On April 24, 1991, President George H. W. Bush presented Stowers' belated Medal of Honor to his sisters. CPL Stowers is buried in Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery.

When properly trained, equipped and led, black soldiers of World War I proved themselves as good as any other soldiers.



A group of "Harlem Hell Fighters" pose on a troop ship on their way back to the United States wearing their French Croix de Guerre (War Crosses). The 369th also received the Croix de Guerre as a unit award.

“Lest We Forget”



Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery and Memorial – Romagne-sous-Montfaucon, France

Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery and Memorial is located between the villages of Cunel and Romagne, Département de la Meuse, France, on a small portion of the ground on which occurred some of the heaviest fighting of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. Burials began at the cemetery immediately after the Armistice. Initially, there were approximately 22,000 burials in the cemetery, but several thousand remains were later disinterred and returned to families at their request. The cemetery was dedicated in 1937 with General Pershing in attendance. It contains the largest number of American military dead of any cemetery in Europe. Its 130.5 acres contain the bodies of 14,249 Americans, most of whom lost their lives in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. Among the Oklahomans killed in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive and buried in the cemetery are PVT William G. Armstrong, 2nd Machine Gun Battalion, 1st Infantry “Big Red One” Division (KIA October 4, 1918) and PVT LeRoy Craig 168th Infantry Regiment (Iowa National Guard), 42nd Infantry “Rainbow” Division (KIA October 16, 1918), both of Woods County. Inscribed on the Tablets of the Missing on the chapel walls are 954 names, including those from the U.S. expedition to northern Russia in 1918-19. Rosettes mark the names of those recovered and identified since the establishment of the cemetery.

The Great War cost an estimated nine million military deaths from all causes, including 116,708 Americans, of whom an estimated 726 were Oklahomans. American combat deaths were 53,402. Most of the non-combat deaths were caused by the world-wide influenza pandemic of 1918-19.

Freedom is not free.

Happy Thanksgiving!

We are thankful for all our many loyal friends and supporters, whose generosity over the years has made possible the success of the Military History Center.

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