



W.W.I 1917 - 1919
Cyrus Carleon Tolman
U.S. Army Corporal
347 Machine Gun Battalion

W.W.I 1917 - 1919
Cyrus Carleon Tolman
U.S. Army Corporal
347th Machine Gun Battalion

Actions engaged in -
St. Mihiel, Meuse Argonne,
Ypres Lys, on the Flanders front -
Defensive Sector - 91st Division



1917



Cy Tolman Cavalry 1st 1917



Army days 1912

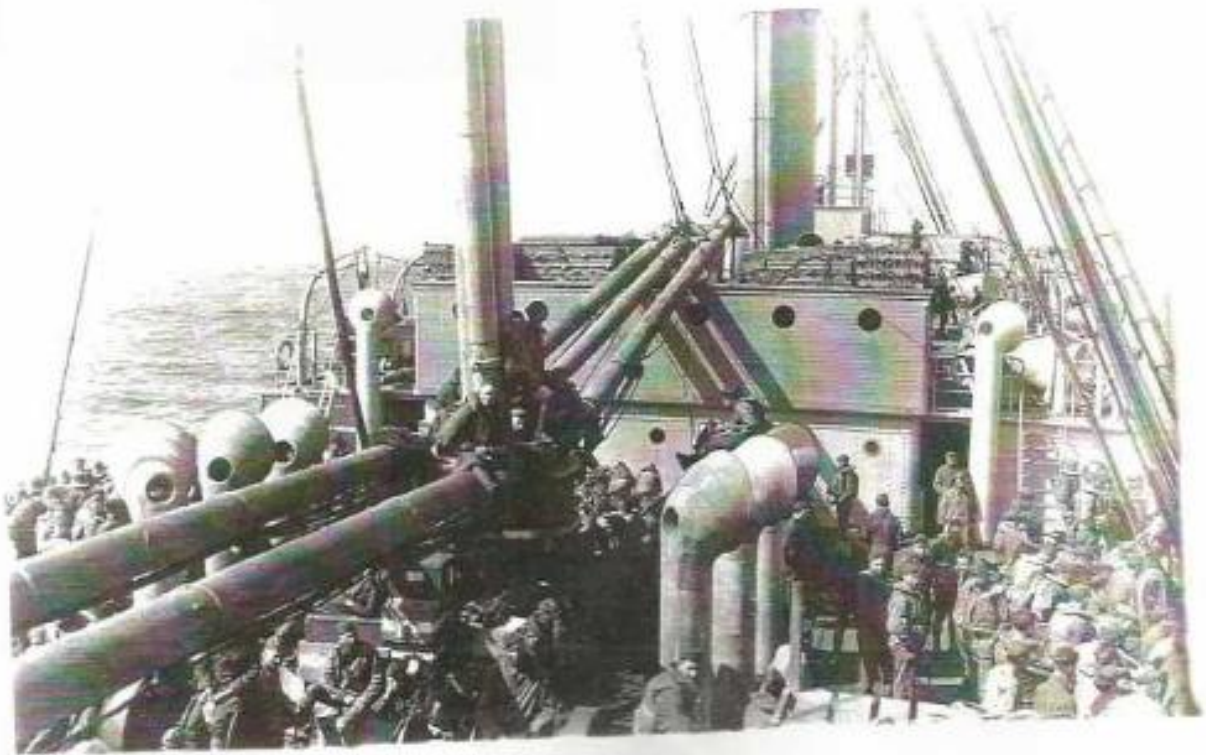


Dec 22 1917

Cy X



Battle field



Transport ship



Dec. 22, 1918 Cy



Transport
Ship

These pages are personal experiences of World War I as recorded by Cyrus Carleon Tolman. Some of the record was taken from the History of the 347th Machine Gun Battalion, compiled from official records, as recorded by C. C. Tolman, some from his own words. These were recopied from his handwriting by his daughter, Theda Killpack. Some of the original pages were not recopied for fear of misspelling the names of the soldiers in his squad. These were left in his handwriting for your understanding to read. The rest of the history he wrote is in possession of Theda Killpack along with the official records of the 347th.

Taken directly from the history of the 347th Machine Gun Battalion

Title page

To the memory of these men of the 347th Machine Gun Battalion who lie forever at rest in France do we dedicate this record; not that we think to add to their honor in the eyes of the world whose supreme honor is won by their sacrifice' but by giving their lives in the cause for which we fought' they died also for us' and become in the manner of their death the very spirit of the battalion.

COMPANY B - 347th MACHINE GUN BATTALION HISTORY OF CYRUS CARLEON TOLMAN WORLD WAR I

Enlisted at Blackfoot, Idaho September 21st, 1917, U.S. Army Corporal Cyrus Carleon Tolman. Actions engaged in - St. Mihiel, Meuse Argonne, Ypres Lys, on the Flanders front - Defensive Sector - 91st division.

General training at Camp Lewis started very easy with the school of the soldier and the school of the squad with light physical exercises and short road marches through adjacent country. In December there began an intensive training program. At first only a limited number of colt machine guns were available for practice. In April a few Vickers guns were issued and in May exhibition practice were given with a battery of five Browning machine guns. We learned to play together, to work together and learned to die together and to bring home victory.

On October 9th, 1917, the division was assembled to listen to an address by Secretary of the Treasury and by Governor Hunt of Washington. Boxes behind the barracks branded with Red, White and Blue took on increased significance. We realized Camp Lewis was not to be out home much longer, and that we would soon be in France. On June 22nd we were pulling out. The days of the 347th Machine Gun Battalion at Camp Lewis were over.

FROM CAMP LEWIS TO THE FRONT

The trip across the continent was decidedly pleasant. Frequent stops for exercise, including a swim served to break the monotony. In the small town women came to their doors to wave an apron or dishtowel and the men in the streets advised the soldiers in no uncertain tones to give them hell. The battalion arrived at Camp Merritt, New Jersey. Here individual equipment of the men was hastily completed. Each man was given the opportunity to visit New York City. The battalion marched to Alpine landing and from there took a ferry to Brooklyn Docks. Here we boarded the British transport "Ulysses." A crazy looking ship distorted by patchwork camouflage. On the morning of July 6th she dropped down to the lower harbor and put to sea. It was a fine day as one could wish, we were a convoy of twelve ships. All barred and patched in paint and dull colors and flying from the mast of the flags of the five allied nations. We were attended by a battle cruiser, several subchasers and a circling group of airplanes. While off to the right a giant observation balloon kept watch on harbor and sea.

The voyage was pleasant in so far as the weather. We were carried on an English ship that had been a freighter carrying cold storage meats from Australia. The cooks apparently had been brought together for the express purpose of making things unpleasant. A complaint was made, for revenge they stripped the hair off a pack of green horse hides, boiled them until like rubber and served it under the name of "Tripe Au Casserole."

In deference to the mentioned submarine no lights showed after six in the evening and cigarette smoking was forbidden. One day about five days out the convoy engaged in target practice. We knew nothing about what was up. We expected to see a flock of Kaiser's subs. We had a real marksman on board and hoped to see something to demonstrate his skill on.

July 17th the vessel landed at Liverpool, England - we disembarked at once and without rations. The applause greeted us everywhere. Women were doing much of the work. They were a brave lot and even their smile sobered the yanks - there were swarms of children. There were some grave moments when a little girl came running out and seized one of the officers sobbing, "please help my daddy win the war." The spirit of most of the crowd was steadfast and strong.

The battalion spent two days at a British rest camp at Southampton, then they marched to the docks and boarded ship to cross the channel to France. We arrived at Harve. We entrained for training era. We were loaded in cars like stock. The cars were lettered "Hommes 40 Chevaux 8" a type of box car, the standard French troup train. We were packed in like sardines. Our meals were corned beef, hard tack and water. We slept standing up.

The trip lasted two days. We hiked with full pack 32 kilometers or 24 miles to Marnay, France under a hot July sun. Here we went intensive training until September 1st. Before leaving for the front we had a barbeque. We bought a large steer for the occasion. Some of the men that had worked at the packing house in Chicago killed the beef and drank the blood.

THE MEUSE ARGONNE OFFENSIVE

On this front extending seven miles, 1200 canon were used. The shells costing the government \$2,000,000 an hour. The noise of the explosives was like that of a gigantic drum, filling the world with deafening sound. The skyline to the right and left shown bright lightening red from the continual discharge of the guns. We advanced 100 yards every five minutes under cover of the barrage and smoke screen. We fought

our way from wood to wood across swamp and over plain, until we came to Eppinonville. Here we run into strong opposition from well fortified enemy machine fire. Here we sustained heavy casualties. Our first man to fall was Sgt. Wesley Weeks. We had advanced so fast we were twelve miles in advance of the artillery and our supplies. All we had left was a limited amount of ammunition and our reserve rations. This consisted of one can of corned beef and one pkg of hard tack, which was to last three days.

Can you picture yourself advancing under heavy artillery and machine gun fire up a ravine with a machine gun on your back. Sometimes crawling on your hands and knees, then up running. Hyrum Stutznegger falls on my right. We run to our left and my leader and two ammunition carriers are killed. Captain Poshe takes off his hat, runs up and down behind our guns giving the command to hold that line. There is a half dead German on my right laying across his machine gun talking good English. Saying something about his mother and asking for a drink of water. Pvt. Long pulled his automatic you _____ I will give you a drink. The enemy is on our right, in front and on our left, harassing us from three ways. We had advanced too fast. The shells from our own artillery were bursting in our rear. It is getting dark and it is beginning to rain. We retreated under cover of darkness into a wood. Lieutenant Duddleson, Lt. Barnes is wounded, Lt. Hatch is killed. We had lost a large percent of our men. We can hear the men left in the front wounded and dying. We harassed the enemy all night just to let them know we had not gone to sleep and they did likewise. We entrenched during the night to protect ourselves in case of counter attack. The next morning, we routed the enemy and advanced under adverse conditions. (They were later called the lost battalion.)

Our field kitchen came within about two miles of our position. Our Captain commanded, "Tolman, take your mule, machine gun, cart and four men, go to the kitchen for our rations." We made three trips to the kitchen that day. I eat at the kitchen and eat with the men and then I became sick. I had eat too much. I disappointed the cooks, they heard I had been killed.

Another paper found that Dad had written about the Argonne Offensive:

There is so many dead horses lying here and there and in the water holes. The water become contaminated the soldiers all got diarrhea from bad water.

We were in the Argonne 35 days without taking our shoes off - we were wet every day by rain and wading through swamps. Sometimes our horses would mire so

bad we would have to leave them. The next thing we got was lice, which we kept nourished for five months. After serving 35 days in the Argonne forest we were relieved. I had lost one of my horses. I was pulling two machine gun carts with one horse. Anything is fair in war. I stole a fine horse out of a French farmer's field and got away with it. Captain Cooper said it was alright. We had a long hard march to the rear in mud and rain. The first night we pitched our tents with everything wet and went to bed without eating. Next morning we had corn meal mush without sugar or cream, black coffee, bread and beef stew. We were tired and worn from days and weeks with diarrhea and were glad for a rest. We went in the Argonne with 192 men and came out with 32. We got a few days rest and a new suit of clothing and equipment. Of course if your buddy is killed on the field of battle you are allowed to exchange clothing with him if his clothes are more serviceable than your own. I have taken their hard tack and corned beef when they went over the hill. We are all recruited to full strength at this time. Some of the men not being in the service more than sixty days, to of had training for a week. These men had never seen a machine gun before.

All commands given to a machine gun squad have to be given by a signal - the noise is so great one could not hear the man next to you.

On October 18th we were bound for Belgium on the Flanders front to engage in another great offensive - we were brought back to full strength and sent back in - many were still weak from dysentery. A quote from Cy, "I was too weak to whip a cat but I could sure shoot a machine gun." The trenches in Flanders are noted for the mud and water as it is low land and is swampy.

We detrained on the afternoon of October 19th near the edge of no-man's land, north of Ypres, near the site of the obliterated town of Boesinghe and found ourselves in Flanders front. This is different looking country from that of France. They have fine soil in Belgium. It is rolling country with very little timber growing on the hills. The Flanders front is a strip of country 15 miles deep that has been fought over back and forth dozens of times during the war. It is the most damaged section of country I have seen. We marched through Ypres and Passchendaele passing field after field of standing crosses. The final resting place of countless soldiers of all the armies. An impressive memorial service was held for the men who had been lost on the Argonne front. Enemy planes circles above us and the noise of heavy artillery fire in the distance made a fitting background.

Now we were on the front lines relieving French units along a sector southeast of Wareghem. On this particular morning at 5 a.m. we go over the top, under a French barrage of 75, and 77 mm cannon. There was no breeze to carry away the powder smoke from the artillery. It became so thick we had to wear our gas masks. Powder

smoke is nearly as poisonous as gas. We advanced under cover of the barrage. As we advance, Pvt. Sorg leading one of my mules on a ammunition cart, an enemy shell hit the mule in the neck taking his head off, throwing Pvt. Sorg in a creek of water. We helped him out and found out later that he had 33 shrapnel wounds in his body and still lived. I seen him in Salt Lake City later. We had to pull the cart with one mule. It looked like I would have to steal another horse. As we advanced we cut all wire fences.

Can you picture in your mind a town about the size of Pocatello, Idaho. This city is Audinard Belgium. This is to be our objective. We can see in the distance that the ground on the other side of the city rises until it is higher than the buildings in the city. The enemy had a battery of 75 mm cannon on the hill. They could look over the city and see us advancing. They threw over a barrage and trained the shells so they would fall just in front of us or among us. That barrage became so great we could not see the town for smoke and dust. One of the new men in my squad said, "My God Tolman, they won't lead us through that will they?" I told him they would. Afterwards I found his grave in a church yard in the city.

We advanced into the city and learned Belgium had been under German rule for three and one-half years. This town had been under shell for four days. A number of buildings had been burned. The people had lived in their basements during this time. We advanced under cover of darkness to the heart of the city. Broke down the door of a grocery store. Set up our machine gun in the doorway, so we could cover the street in front. The Lady objected until she found out we were Americans. They were sure glad to see us. This lady made us coffee and gave us cigarettes. We moved up the street - set up our guns in the doorway of a dwelling as we were fighting from house to house. This lady had some bacon that she said came from America. She fried us bacon, and made us coffee. We moved up the street farther, set up our guns in a side street. We talked to a fine looking lady that said she was going to America after the war. As I said we were fighting from house to house - we located a German sniper in a belfry of a church after he had shot Sgt. Lister and a number of others we mounted our machine gun in the third story of a hotel. We made a good fellow out of him!

Refugees were leaving town as fast as we liberated them. Some were driving a horse and a cow together - some were pulling their carts by hand as they didn't have much left to move.

ARGONNE VICTORY RECORDED IN GENERAL ORDERS

The prowess of the American Army in the Meuse Argonne battle is recorded in General Orders 232. Published at G.H.Q. over the signature of the commander in chief.

American Expeditionary Forces - France December 19th 1918

The order follows:

It is with a sense of gratitude for its splendid Accomplishments which will live through all history, that I record in General Orders a tribute to the victory of the first Army in Meuse Argonne battle.

Tested and strengthened by the reduction of the St. Mihiel salient for more than six weeks you battered against the pivot of the enemy line on the western front. It was a position of imposing natural strength on both sides of the Meuse River from the bitterly contested hills of Verdun to the almost impenetrable forest of the Argonne. A position held with the fullest resources of the enemy. That position you broke utterly and thereby hastened the collapse of the enemies military power.

Soldiers of all divisions engaged under the first, third and fifth corps. The 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 7th, 26th, 28th, 29th, 32nd, 33rd, 35th, 37th, 42nd, 77th, 79th, 80th, 89th, 90th, and 91st. You will long be remembered for the stubborn persistence of your progress. Your storming of obstinately defended machine gun nests, your penetration yard by yard of ravines and woods, your resistance in the fall of counter attacks supported by powerhill artillery fire, for more than a month from the initial attack of September 26th, you fought your way very slowly through the Argonne, through the woods and over the hills west of the Meuse. You slowly enlarged your hold on the Cotes de Meuse to the East, and then on the 1st of November your attack forced the enemy into flight. Pressing his retreat you cleared the entire left flank of the Meuse South of Sedan and then stormed the heights on the right bank and drove him into the plain beyond.

Your achievement, which is scarcely to be equaled in American History, must remain a source of proud satisfaction to the troops who participated in the last campaign of the war. The American people will remember it as the realization of the hitherto potential strength of the American contribution toward the cause to which they had sworn allegiance. There can be no greater reward for a soldier or for a soldier memory.

This order will be read to all organizations at the first assembly formation after its receipt.

John J. Pershing
General Commander-in-Chief
American Expeditionary Forces

Armistice was signed at 11 o'clock on the 11th of November, 1918. The fighting days of the 347th Machine Gun Battalion were ended. The news was received in silence on the front, in contrast to hilarity that took place in Paris and other cities. There were mixed feelings of the soldiers throughout the allied armies. It was of the war being over versus the feeling of not being allowed to finish the work mapped out for them to do and create all German territory some of the scenes of havoc & disorder they had witnessed in Belgium and France.

It was not until on April 8th, 1919, the battalion boarded the U.S.S. Virginian as part of a shipment of some four thousand troops to New York.

Dad was discharged at Cheyenne, Wyoming on May 8th, 1919.

STORIES TOLD BY CY TO HIS FAMILY OF WORLD WAR I

Dad told of a couple of incidents while in France not found in his notes. He was assigned to keep the enemy off a bridge. He was set up with his machine gun in a building overlooking the area. In those days they had runners that conveyed messages back and forth. He had a strong urge to move out of the building - the urge was so strong he didn't know if he could wait for a runner. He finally made contract and moved. When he went back shortly to get the rest of his equipment the building had been destroyed.

Of the packs they carried one of the officers said to him, "Let me carry your pack for awhile to see how heavy it is." He didn't pack it very long. He gave it back and said, "It is too heavy for man or beast."

He told of when the war was over it was celebrated in Paris. The band was playing and he had been given boxes of chocolates to pass out to his men, and that

there was very few men left to give them to. He stated for years after that when the band would play in a parade it would bring memories back of the war and it would make him sick to his stomach.

The ninety-first division belongs to the West - it was made up of intermountain men from Utah, Idaho and Montana. On some papers found on a German officer read: The ninety-first division was opposed to the Huns, and for every man of the ninety-first taken as a prisoner the German capturing him would get eighteen days furlough. So they lived up to the name of the Wild West. The ninety-first was known for their fighting ability - nicknamed the Wild West boys.

This paragraph was taken from a paper, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, dated Dec 22, 1918.

When the Armistice was signed dad was in Flanders Field, on a hill set up with his machine gun against the Germans. They went in with full strength and came out with 28 men in this Flanders offensive.

I know my father had a continual prayer on his lips and in his heart with each offensive to his Heavenly Father for protection, to be kept from harm, as well as to be wise concerning his adversary - to have strength in war. What he went through and survived - his bravery and example - should be a source of strength for all his progenitors whether in war or our trials in life.

I have no doubt in my mind that my father's life was protected throughout this war. Especially when you think back on the kind of life he led and what he accomplished. When you think of this terrible war and the many lives lost on each side of him - it brings it home to you that he was protected to have survived. He had a mission in life yet to achieve.

He set a wonderful example to us all whether it be from bravery in war or a righteous standard for us all to live by as a Father, Grandfather, Bishop or Friend. How proud and privileged we are to have known and loved you.

From his daughter,
Theda Killpack, November 2001

Poem written by a friend of Cy's:

THE GALLANT NINETY FIRST

Leaving a home of happiness, and love beyond compare.
To join a mighty army of men, why do and dare.
Leaving a heart nigh broken, but breathing a prayer to God.
Perchance to return - perchance to lie in a soldiers grave-the sod.

Eastward bound on the railroad, further east by sea.
Then o'er the fields of Europe our eager footsteps flee.
Hark! T'is the roar of cannon, they're shelling thick and fast.
St. Mihiel, we're in reserve, our dreams come true at last.

Only a few days resting, then on to a new affray.
Meuse-Argonne is before us and Hun hoards bar the way.
Dawn is slowly approaching, after an anxious night.
The order is given - forward - and we enter that Hell in fight.

Slowly at first we went forward under our guns barrage fire.
And the rockets revealed to our straining eyes, that hellish device barbed wire.
T'was a night that will ne'er be forgotten, so long as my vision is clear.
But we stuck to our guns and kept going, and never a man showed fear.

For sixteen days we went forward, into that bloody zone.
Comrades were falling around us, with only a curse or a moan.
But the souls of those hero's who vanquished, have flown to the realms above.
And they died - as a soldier dieth - for country, Home and Love.

Pens more able may tell you some scenes of German lust.
But none can picture more vividly, our gallant ninety first.
As they swept from brush more into open, in face of machine gun fire.
With their war cry - Powder River - from threats that never tire.

Relief came at last and t'was welcome, so we marched away to the rear.
Thinking perhaps we would have a good rest, and never a shrappel hear.
But the word comes along, up to Belgium, so we sling on our packs with a smile.
We are veteran's now, and ready to clash, with a foe so cruel and vile.

You have read of the Ypres-Lys offensive, as one that was daring and hard.
But that's where we increased our laurels, taking the town Audenarde.
The women and children received us, with smiles gleaming forth mid their tears.
We released them from German oppression, which had bound them for nearly four years.

T'is over, thank God, and we're waiting, and longing for home once more.
And our thoughts will ever be roving till we stand on America's shore.
Then we'll clasp to our breasts our loved ones, see friends smile and applaud.
Some will say - you were lucky. Luck Hell - I call it God.

Corp. John H. Clark, Co.B, 347th, M.G.BN.

THE LOST BATTALION

Cyrus C. Tolman, son of Mr. and Mrs. Lamoni Tolman, arrived in Blackfoot, Friday evening. He was a machine gunner in the 91st division, trained at Camp Lewis. He was a little over a year in the service; he went over the top five times and came home without a scratch.

More than that, Tolman was one of the famous Lost Battalion, whose exploit is one of the most romantic bits of the great war history. That Battalion of Americans pushed too far into German lines, became cut off and in a ravine open to enemy fire they kept off the enemy until after about three days they were rescued. The Germans, seeing that the Americans were among them, a poor position and inferior in numbers, politely asked for their surrender. The major commanding the Lost Battalion told the Germans to go way down to Hades; He wasn't listening to any such proposals. And so the Germans tried to drown them in shot and shell, but did not rush the position. Finally an airplane found that plucky battalion fighting for its existence, without food and water and well nigh without hope. And the airplane brought news of help coming. This is something of the story of the Lost Battalion, as picked up from newspapers and hearsay. Tolman could possibly make a real story of it.

Belgian villagers still remember

By HENRY GOTTLIEB
of The Associated Press

YPRES, Belgium (AP) — In the quiet market town of Ypres and the Flanders fields around it, where a quarter of a million men perished, remembering World War I and its dead is unavoidable — not just on Armistice Day but all year round.

From the British cemeteries on the outskirts to the town center, restored brick by brick from a wasteland left by four years of shelling, Ypres is a live-in monument.

Every night at sundown, traffic on the busy Menin Road halts under a Roman-style memorial gateway, and two buglers from the fire brigade play "The Last Post" — the British equivalent of taps.

Friday was the 65th anniversary of the end of the "war to end all wars," and as always on Armistice Day, there was a ceremony here sponsored by the British Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

On Menin Gate are chiseled the names of 54,896 British soldiers who died near Ypres from 1914 to 1917, but

whose bodies were never identified. People have been traveling to it since 1927 to find names and grieve for those they knew who died near Ypres.

The war here began about four miles outside town in the autumn of 1914, when the Germans tried to take the city, a strategic roadblock in their drive to outflank allied armies. Four years and 250,000 deaths later, they had gained two miles.

"Everybody thought it would be over in a couple of weeks," said Johan Martin, a local historian. "You can see how wrong they were." He points to a 1919 picture of rubble that was once the city center.

Outside the town, there are more than 60 British cemeteries, with names like "Hospital Farm" and "Railway Dugouts," where soldiers are buried near where they fell.

Farmers still reap a harvest of old rifles, metal, spent shells and enough unexploded bombs to keep half the Belgian Army demolition squad on permanent duty in the region.

A 33-year-old farmer was killed by shrapnel near Ypres last year when his tractor churned up a live artillery shell.

*This is where I was when the
war ended 1918*