

1970

Attn: 5

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Dear Buddies of the 314th Infantry, A. E. F. :

It has been my privilege to be of service to our 314th as President for 1970. It has been a wonderful experience for me, one that I treasure deeply. The officers, committee members and general membership have been most cooperative throughout the year. My term of office has not been without flaws; but I sincerely hope they will be overlooked, pettiness brushed aside and our efforts combined for the good of the 314th. Thank you for the opportunity of being your president.

Some of the younger generation today might call me an old "fuddy duddy". If so, I don't mind -- I'm almost bursting with pride -- proud to be an "American", proud to be one of a group that was "willing to give all for our Country", proud of the beautiful spot in Valley Forge, the equal of which is no where else in our Country, and even more proud of the wonderful friendships and fellowship that have grown priceless through the years. How can I (we) help but feel proud!

Even after our many years of working together, the 314th still has some important goals to be met. Let us all do our part. For one thing, we should all try our best to renew our Children's interest in the 314th. They are our future-- individually and as the 314th.

Our 52nd Reunion promises to be a good and noteworthy affair. The committee has been working diligently getting things lined up. Registration will begin at noon on Friday and the afternoon will be spent greeting old buddies and friends. At 7 o'clock we will all meet for dinner and entertainment by the Harrisburg Post Office Chorus.

At 1 o'clock on Saturday, the men of the 314th will meet for their annual business meeting, including reports of committees and election of officers. The Ladies will enjoy a special bus tour.

On Saturday Evening, at our Annual Banquet, we will have our Memorial Service and presentation of the newly elected officers. A good evening has been planned for your enjoyment.

Sunday morning will be a time for you to attend the church of your choice, which you will find in the vicinity of the Holiday Inn. After church, all will depart for their various homes - looking forward already to our 53rd Reunion.

On the attached sheet you will find complete details concerning the costs of the Reunion, plus a reservation blank for your convenience. The committee will appreciate the prompt return of your reservation so that they can finalize all plans for the 52nd Reunion.

Say, just a reminder, how about sending your dues (\$3.00) to the "Veterans of the 314th Infantry" James O'Connor, Treasurer, 7328 Ogontz Ave. Philadelphia, Pa. 19138, so that we can count you on our active list for 1970.

Thank you so much and the best of everything to you and yours.

Sincerely,

LEWIS F. ROBINSON, PRESIDENT.

P. S. If you are unable to attend this Reunion, please let us have a reply to this letter. We want to know that you received your letter and how you are faring. We would like to know that you are interested and want to hear from your buddies. Our mailing costs the outfit money and we would like to know that it is welcome and appreciated.

The Secretary.

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April 23, 1971

To: Those Interested In Preserving
the Rich Heritage of our Country

This letter is being written in three parts and I hope you will take the time to read and digest each part. One part covers the background; the second, the group involved; and the third, the future. Each part is terribly important to the whole picture and your advice, help and efforts will be appreciated beyond words.

A group of boys in 1917 were drafted and trained in Camp Meade, Maryland. These fellows were formed into the 314th Infantry A.E.F. of the 79th Division. They took their basic training in Camp Meade, which at that time was rather a desolate place. Out of almost nothing, the 314th built a recreation hut using logs, spikes made from horseshoes and hinges made from wagon tires. The cabin became somewhat of an insignia in Camp Meade because of its uniqueness.

In 1918 the 314th Infantry left Camp Meade, enroute to New York and hence to France. When the Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918, it was found that of the American Army the 314th Infantry had made the farthest advance into the German lines.

About a month after the signing of the Armistice, the 314th sailed for home. While enroute home on the S. S. Princess Matoika, there was plenty of time for talk and memories -- memories of the buddies still in France who would never come home, and talk of some suitable monument to them. Naturally, thoughts turned to the log cabin which had been built at Camp Meade with so much sweat and hard work.

The group appointed some of their members to see if it would be possible to secure the cabin as a memorial. After plenty of discussions and red tape, they were given permission to move the cabin - but what now - they had no appreciable amount of money and very little time to raise it. Being young and undaunted, they started working and within a couple of months had raised \$2,000, which covered only the moving costs. The cabin was taken down log-by-log and stone-by-stone, numbered, transported to Valley Forge and reconstructed. The "boys" did most of the work themselves.

Still working with the faith of the young, they were able to rent a small piece of ground from the Valley Forge Memorial Chapel. Rev. Dr. W. H. Burk was very instrumental in their securing a small plot just on the edge of the Church Cemetery.

Here, with all working together, the Cabin was raised again -- not for recreation this time, but as a memorial to the men who gave their lives in France. On September 22, 1922, the 314th Log Cabin Memorial was formally dedicated.

Since that time, each year has seen something else added or improved, each year has seen the Cabin becoming a greater treasure to the men of the Outfit. As time passed it became a memorial to ALL men of the Outfit.

Just to enter the 314th Memorial Cabin at Valley Forge gives one a feeling of reverence -- you first step on a beautifully designed red brick floor, then as you glance to the right you see a "pup" tent, with all the paraphernalia that each man had to carry with him. A little further on to your right is the old pump organ - around which the fellows spent many hours of pleasure, singing all those good old World War I

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songs -- Over There, It's a Long Way to Tipperary, etc. Oh yes, your eyes are not deceiving you - that is a stuffed dog in the glass case. He attached himself to the group in France, came home with them aboard ship and lived his lifetime with one of the men. After he departed this life, his body was stuffed and he too is a memory that has been preserved. He looks so real, you can almost see his tail wag.

Over to the left side of the Cabin is a table holding post cards of the Cabin, as well as views of Valley Forge. Also, souvenir bullet pencils with pictures of the Cabin on them and some note paper, with pictures of the Cabin. The profit from the sale of these things goes into a fund to perpetuate the Cabin. Then, on beyond the souvenirs, is a beautiful fireplace (yes, it was there in Camp Meade), but now it has andirons in the shape of the Lorraine Cross (this was awarded to them for their valor, by the French Government). If you should attend one of the meetings in the early Spring or late Fall, you probably would see a roaring fire in the fireplace and would be tempted to just sit right there and enjoy it.

Over the fireplace is an oil painting of Col. Wm. H. Oury, Commanding Officer of the 314th Infantry. He kept in touch with the fellows right up to the time of his death. His widow (ninety some years old) is still very much interested in her husband's boys.

The center of the Cabin contains World War I machine guns, empty shell cases, and shell carriers. If you look closely at the shades over the side lights you will see scenes that depict battles in which the 314th took part. One of the 314thers hand painted these. Up on the rafters are propellers (American and German), as well as American and German helmets. The center lighting fixture is an old wagon wheel.

All this leads your eyes directly to the front -- there is magnificent simplicity stands a bronze tablet which contains the name of every man in the Outfit. This was unveiled and dedicated on June 1, 1947. Each name of a man who gave his life in France has a gold star in front of it. Each man who has departed from the Outfit since the war, has a silver star. Time is certainly bringing about a larger percentage of silver stars. The tablet is divided into Companies and the name on the tablet are grouped according to the Company in which they served.

In front of the bronze tablet is a perpetual light which burns always in memory and honor of the men.

One can't begin to really mention all the things to be seen in the Cabin. Scattered around are pictures and many miscellaneous items that pertain to the Outfit. Over the doorway, as you turn to leave, is the head of the drum that beat the time for the band.

The outside, as well as the inside, shows the pride these men have in their "314th Log Cabin Memorial". The grounds are always well tended and the trees and shrubs add to the Cabin's beauty. From a tall flag pole proudly flies the flag for which these fellows fought. Two World War I vintage cannons look out over the fields. The brick walkways are outlined, to keep people off the grass, with a chain which is mounted every few feet on a shell case. Any season of the year is a beautiful season here.

Throughout the years various gifts have been given to the Cabin from the various Districts that make up the Outfit - really too many to go into now.

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People who visit the Cabin are amazed that there is such a place, as most of them just accidentally wander in. People who do visit and are fortunate enough to find one of the men there, really enjoy the story in back of it and always leave saying they will be back with other friends.

On weekends, some of the men try to have the Cabin open for the Public. Maybe some one's wife is in back of the souvenir table while her husband is pulling weeds or doing something like that.

That is the background -- now for the news about the Group involved in this memorial.

Every year, since the close of World War I, they have had a reunion -- usually the latter part of September. It is a weekend affair, Friday night, Saturday and Sunday. In 1969 in Philadelphia, they had their 50th Reunion.

To me, meeting every year for a Reunion is remarkable, but there is still something else. The fellows have divided the regiment into districts -- Sunbury, Philadelphia, New England, plus about ten others, and every month (altho it is getting harder for them to meet now) they meet for a business meeting and a time of comradeship. In the beginning it was an evening affair, but since most of them are now retired, it is an afternoon affair.

One of the babies of the outfit is in his seventies, so you can judge the ages for yourself.

Have you fully comprehended what I have said -- after fifty years, plus some, these men still get together as an Infantry once a year and as Districts, several times a year. The Executive Board meets four times a year.

In the Spring of the year and again in the Fall of the year, they have a 'work day'. Those who can meet at the Cabin and work all day -- raking, cutting grass, painting and general clean-up. Lunch is provided for them, but it is entirely a labor of love. Imagine, men between seventy and eighty working like this!

On Memorial Day, a Memorial Service is held at the Cabin, honoring those who have passed on and also reading the list of the ones who passed away from the ranks during the year. Members attend from far and near. It gives one rather an odd feeling to realize how much longer that list grows each year. At this service, widows of the members are remembered with a rose bud.

On Armistic Day (still November 11th to them) they pay their rent - one red rose to the Rector of the Valley Forge Chapel. Usually the Salvation Army Canteen comes and serves coffee and donuts, thus bringing back more memories.

The Philadelphia District holds their monthly meetings in the 314th Cabin during the Spring, Summer and Fall seasons.

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Now to the third and last portion of this letter - the future - and my reason for writing this.

As I mentioned already, these men are Veterans of World War I and are all in their seventies at least.

They have a big and difficult problem for them -- what is to happen to the Cabin and the Memorial Tablet? They have worked hard over these fifty years and have a sum put aside in a perpetual fund - but more than money is needed! A very few feel a home should be found for the memorial tablet, others say no, we need a place for the cabin itself.

Now, I'm going to speak as an interested by-stander. There is not another Memorial of this type, anywhere in our Country. No where is there a Memorial like this one, with such a background. These men have spent a life time of effort on this. They have put a lifetime of memories, work and love into it.

Can the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, or the United States, let such a memorial as this pass by the wayside? Isn't there some group in the Government that could help these men?

These "young" World War I Veterans have one desire now -- to see the Memorial Cabin situated and to know that it will be cared for. They don't have much time, they need help!

I'm not a Pennsylvanian - but I feel that your State cannot afford to let this World War I Pennsylvania Outfit down?

This group has had much discussion, but they just can't seem to find the right person to talk to. This memorial is too great a part of our past to just let it disappear.

I'm sorry I've written such a book, but I still feel that I have not conveyed the feelings of the men or myself. There is a committee that has been appointed to work something out and I wish we could all sit down and talk -- maybe then you would realize just what this means to several hundred "young" men now and what, over the past years, it has meant to several hundred more who have silver stars beside their names now. If some one could just meet with the Cabin Committee, I feel they too might appreciate the feelings of the 314thers.

My Father, Lewis F. Robinson, is a past President of the Regiment and of the Philadelphia District. As a child, the 314th Cabin used to be MY Cabin. I have seen this Memorial grow in material ways and in the hearts of the 314thers, and their families.

My Father or I will be glad to give you the names of the current officers, as well as several dozen more names of members who would appreciate talking this over with the proper parties.

Can you help them? us? May we please hear from you?

Mary E. Robinson

May 13, 1971

Mr. Frank Coffee of the Philadelphia Inquirer Action Line, called me today in the office, in reference to my letter to Action Line.

He told me that he had been in touch with Rev. Sheldon Smith of the Valley Forge Memorial Chapel and that Rev. Smith Stated that they (the Church) was willing to preserve the 314th Cabin in its present setting.. I mentioned that it seemed the Chapel had not been interested in preserving the cabin as a whole. Mr. Coffee said that it had gone through the church organization and now it seems they were very much interested. Rev. Smith stated that they (the Parish) had very closely associated with the group and wanted to maintain the relationship.

Mr. Coffee also told me that he had been in touch with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and if for any reason the Valley Forge Chapel would not want to continue caring for the 314th Memorial, they would be interested in assuming responsibility for it. If this Commission assumed responsibility for the Cabin, it would then have to be moved to another site.

Mary Robinson

The above was read to Mr. Coffee on the phone and he stated that the statements made are correct.