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Weekly Newsgram - November 14th 2018

[A Chaplain's Diary Sheds Light on Service in World War 1](#)

Arizona Daily Star
Nov 10, 2018 Updated Nov 12, 2018

Just days after a chaplain of infantry arrived on the Western Front on Sept. 21, 1918, he was thrust into the trench warfare of the Meuse-Argonne offensive.

As he shipped out the month before from the United States to France, 1st Lt. Chaplain Elzer DesJardins Tetreau wrote: "Life is simple and clear cut today - my family, my country, my God."

On Thursday, Sept. 26, at 4 a.m., the former Michigan farm boy moved into the thick of the battle with his unit, the 3rd Battalion, 109th Infantry, 28th Division.

In the ensuing hours that day, he consoled a dying man, buried two men, and finally slept in what he called "Jerry's dugout" - Jerry was a nickname Allied soldiers had for the Germans - from 10 p.m. until 1 a.m.

Through diary notes and pen sketches, Tetreau described the actions of his unit, his men and himself during the 47 days of the Battle of the Meuse-Argonne, the deadliest of the war for the Americans, who lost more than 26,000 men there.

"I found that the orderly burial of men in battle was even more important than I anticipated," he wrote. "My ideas took shape after 14 days in action in the Argonne Forest. Always, and I remember no exceptions, one or more of the burial detail came and stood beside me while often a 'buddy' was there, also standing uncovered.

"Once in the orchard at Apremont, 'Jerry' came over by plane and machine-gunned my burial detail while at work. Fortunately, every man obeyed my order to remain perfectly still and not to look up. Not a man was touched. 'Jerry' circled and came back, this time down the street past the first aid station. A lone soldier, standing and gazing upward at the plane 'got his' right in the middle of the forehead.

He wrote this about the final hours of the battle and the war:

"After midnight the 10th, our Battalion was put on alert. Heard there were orders to attack. That



Chaplain Elzer Tetreau with wife Elsie around 1918, the year he went to war.

meant going through the wire. Delay. About nine o'clock saw Captain Noble suddenly throw his arms around shoulders of a runner who had just come up.

"The Armistice has been signed! Firing ceases at 11:00.' Attack called off. Hold steady until 11:00. Just before 11:00, every gun broke loose on both sides. Suddenly, dead calm. Then one shot, a few seconds late, then quiet again.

"No shouting! No laughter! Just tired men eating, drinking coffee, and sleeping if duties permitted."

Full Story - [Chaplain vividly described WWI battle in diary handed down to Tucson grandchildren](#)



In Memoriam

Chaplain Robert A. Brucato

Colonel, United States Air Force, Retired

Born 1931

Deceased November 7, 2018

Roman Catholic Church

New York, New York

Chaplain Timothy Morita

Captain, United States Navy, Retired

Born February 15, 1947

Deceased November 9, 2018

MCA Life Member 2012

Southern Baptist

Honolulu, Hawaii

Chaplain Ronald J. Burke

Commander, United States Navy, Retired

Born February 25, 1945

Deceased October 30, 2018

Roman Catholic

Las Cruces, New Mexico

Chaplain Sam Larsen

Commander, United States Navy, Retired

October 10, 2018

Presbyterian Church in America

Quarryville, Pennsylvania

Chaplain John Piirto

United States Navy

Lutheran

Idaho Falls, Idaho

Sergeant Major John Z. Pettey

United States Army

Executive Director Notes

This is definitely one of the more "energized" columns that I have written for the Newsgram in some time: A recap of our National Institute last Monday thru

Wednesday, a recap of my attendance at the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps Regimental Association's biennial reunion- held at the same hotel as our conference- and a report as your MCA representative at the National Veterans Day Observance at Arlington National Cemetery.



Our MCA meeting kicked off with a very pleasant reception on Monday evening where we were able to catch up with those we had not seen in some time. For me it was an excellent opportunity to see those who I had just met the previous year, and also to meet those with whom I had traded emails and talked with over the phone. The workshops and panels were well attended, with excellent questions and presentations. The award dinner on Tuesday evening was very well attended, with the Chiefs of Chaplains for the Air Force, Navy, Coast Guard, VA and Civil Air Patrol in attendance. Our National Citizen of the Year- who received his award immediately after the services' Distinguished Chaplains- was Sergeant Major Stephen Stott, US Army (Retired), for his numerous contributions to Chaplaincy as a Chaplain's Assistant, culminating with his service as the Sergeant Major for the Army's Chief of Chaplains, CH (MG) Don Rutherford. We finished with a presentation and our annual Memorial Service on Wednesday morning, the second part of our annual business meeting and then capped that off with the Emerson Luncheon, where our colleague, The Rev. Ron Oliver, BCC, President of the Association of Professional Chaplains, talked about what APC is doing with the other major chaplaincy organizations and how we might work together closer in the future.

As our conference ended, I then attended the US Army Chaplain Corps Regimental Association's biennial reunion dinner that evening, along with our Vice President, Chaplain Dave DeDonato, and one of our heavy lifting members of the Columbia Chapter, Chaplain Sam Boone. I met a number of chaplains with dual membership, and all were asking how might we work together closer in the future. That event ended with a very moving memorial service as well, with remarks by Chaplain Doug Lee, CH (BG), US Army (Retired).

On Sunday morning, November 11, I represented MCA as a part of The National Veteran's Day Committee annual observance at the amphitheater by the Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery. This was a very moving service, and it was another opportunity to mix with our colleagues from other Military and Veteran Support organizations, and be able to talk about who we are and what we do.

Finally, for those who were present for the two sessions of the Annual Meeting at the conference, we had a frank and candid discussion about our fiscal health, and what we need to do to insure that we are able to continue into the future, as in the next year or two. I would welcome any emails or phone calls from you for further discussion, however we are at an inflection point where we need to create and build a base of sustaining members over and above annual and life members, and a

number of you- as well as our senior leadership- have made that commitment. That said, we need more support for the future than those at the conference will be able to provide if we are going to have a viable future. Again, feel free to email or call me should you have any questions about this.

And as I look at my calendar, we are now headed into Thanksgiving very shortly, and my prayer is that each of you will have a joyous and safe Thanksgiving with family and friends. And for those of us fortunate to do that, we should never forget those who are deployed away from their loved ones and in harm's way.

Fr. Razz Waff, DMin, BCC

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Chaplain Captures 47 Soldiers and other stories of Canadian Chaplains in World War 1



from the [Catholic Register October 31, 2018](#)

Remembrance Day took on an extra special aura this year in Canada. Nov. 11 marked the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War. Close to 61,000 Canadians lost their lives in the conflict and another 172,000 were wounded. The Canadian Chaplaincy Service was a vital part of the war effort, with close to 450 clergy serving overseas. Among them were 90 Catholic priests who were never far from the front lines.

It was Captain (Rev.) J.F. Nicholson of Kingston, Ont., who captured the 47 Germans. Advancing with his unit, a CMR Battalion, he walked alone, armed only with a walking stick, to a German dugout. A German officer came out and said that he and his men would surrender if their lives were spared.

This was, of course, agreed to and total of four officers and 43 men came out of the dugout. At this stage the senior Germany officer said to Capt. Nicholson, "You are unarmed." Fr. Nicholson, who as a chaplain carried no arms, answered by putting his hand to his hip and saying, "Am I?"

At this critical moment the medical officer arrived and as he had a revolver, Fr. Nicholson told him to disarm the 47 Germans. Two Canadian runners came up, armed also with revolvers, and this slender escort conducted the prisoners to the collecting post.

A week later, Fr. Nicholson was gassed, but he has now returned to duty.

An equally romantic episode was the capture of a field gun by some soldiers of the second Division unit led by Major (Rev.) R.C. McGillivray of Antigonish, N.S. Fr. McGillivray went over the top with his battalion and got caught with another officer and some men by gunfire.

The officer was killed and the party took refuge in a shell hole. Here they were still under fire. So McGillivray, taking command of the party, decided that they might as well die fighting. So with a blood-curdling yell, he led the men against the German gun, which was firing point blank. The Germans, hearing this yell and seeing soldiers coming, ran, and the words "Captured by the - Battalion" were at once written on the gun.

These warlike episodes did not interfere with the religious work of the chaplains. As a result of the secrecy shrouding intended operations, and the frequent moves of all units of the Canadian corps, it was impossible to make any definite plans or give instructions to chaplains for these two battles.

This circumstance demonstrated the splendid initiative of the individual chaplains. Before going into action all chaplains worked zealously with their various units and felt their men were prepared

for the trials ahead. The chaplains of the various infantry units went with their men into the attack and worked with Battalion medical officers and stretcher bearers. While their first aim was the administering of the sacraments, yet they also profited by every opportunity to minister to the wounded, and after the heavy actions they assisted in burying the dead.

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If you missed the November 7th edition of the Newsgram [click here](#)

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