

# Four Mentone residents recall WWI

*(Editors note: The Milburn Historical Society is compiling a history book of Mentone for the upcoming Centennial. The following article was contributed by the chairman of that group, Mrs. Eula Smith. Different articles will be appearing periodically in the NEWS regarding this historical endeavor.)*

by Eula Romaine Smith

It was sixty years ago on November 11, 1918, that bells ring out loudly in Mentone to celebrate the end of the war to end all wars, and at least four veterans of World War I still live in this community.

Roy Rush was a member of the 16th Engineering Regiment, whose job in France was to build railroads and bridges. Roy worked in the office paying the troops. The United States government took over the railroads during World War I, and at first Ralph Arnsberger served his country as a fireman on the New York Central from Cleveland to Buffalo. A fireman's job was to scoop the

coal that kept the steam engine running properly. Later he entered the service and was stationed at Camp Beauregard, Louisiana. Earl Shinn was one that was not stricken when the influenza epidemic reached his unit. After he returned to Mentone, he went out with the doctor to help with flu cases here.

W. E. Fowler, a Mentone resident for twenty years, was born in Noble Township, Wabash County. He kept a diary during his service in World War I which began when he enlisted at Indianapolis on December, 1917, and was assigned to the Aviation Section of the Signal Corps.

He spent a few weeks at Fort Thomas, Kentucky; Kelly Field, San Antonio, Texas; and Camp McArthur, Waco, Texas. In March of 1918 he left Newport News, Virginia to go overseas.

For awhile he was in the 648th Aero Squadron, where the company was split into three sections. In France he was in the Headquarters Company of the First Pursuit Group, and later in the 94th Aero Squadron which was commanded

for a time by Captain Eddie Rickenbacker. "He was a splendid fellow!" Mr. Fowler said.

He also remembers Capt. Cook from Anderson - Wier Cook Airport in Indianapolis was named for him - and Lt. Quentin Roosevelt, a member of the 95th who was killed. The First Pursuit Group was made up of the 27th, 94th, 95th, and 147th Aero Squadrons.

After the Armistice was signed, the 94th made their way, step by step, to Fort Alexander at Coblenz, Germany. The progress was slow because of the destroyed roads and bridges. They moved by truck, train, or convoy.

On the 12th of December, Fowler had a 24-hour pass and went to Paris with a truck driver to get supplies. He particularly remembers the two huge captured German guns, Big Berthas, that were on display near the Eiffel Tower. "It seems like they were one-half block long, although actually they weren't," he stated.

When queried about Paris night life, he replied that he didn't know, because this trip was made in daytime to pick up food.

At that time he was a cook and thinks they had proper food, so they "fared very well."

Christmas of 1918 was spent moving. That night they stayed in a private home in Luxembourg.

One day a boy he went to school with dropped in to visit. This young man, Albert Mattem, was a motor cycle dispatch rider. After delivering messages in the vicinity, he located Fowler, who, until that time, had no idea where Mattem was. They were deloused at Coblenz

to get ready to go home. Shortly before Memorial Day, 1919, the 94th Aero Squadron, under the command of Major Reed Chambers, left Brest, France and in about two weeks arrived in Long Island, New York. After a three-week delay, due to measles quarantine, they were divided into groups and sent to the camp nearest home to be discharged. W. E. Fowler was discharged from Camp Sherman, Chillicothe, Ohio with two other Wabash men and one from Indianapolis, On June 27, 1919.

World War I brought back memories to Mrs. Fowler, too. Three of her brothers were in the service. The oldest, a lieutenant, was in Argonne Forest, ready to go over the top when word came about the Armistice. He came home in March, but the next Armistice Day was killed, falling from a frosty roof that he was repairing.

The government sent a message to her family that her second brother was lost and presumed dead. Later they received a letter from him telling that he had become lost, and lived three days on raw red beets before he got back to the company in the 5th Division. He was gassed three times, which left him an invalid and later caused his death. The third brother was injured when his truck hit a mine.



Some say sneezing on Saturday means you'll see your sweetheart on Sunday.

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