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## **Theodore E. Boyd World War I Collection - Memoirs and Correspondence Sent to Family, numbered 1-31**

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February 6, 1973

Dear Wanda and Ted:

Our officers training camp was part of a national effort being made in 1917 to raise, train, and equip a big army in a hurry. The British had been through a much similar experience three years earlier, after the war had broken out. But the British had a somewhat larger and better equipped army to start with than we had. The Germans and the French had been much better prepared at the outset of the war. Both had had universal military service for years, with large standing armies, up-to-date equipment, and millions of trained reserves.

So we took more than a year to get ready before we could take any significant part in the fighting. Even then there were serious deficiencies in our training. You might think for example that to be an artilleryman, especially an officer, you would need a bit of shooting practice. We had none at Fort Oglethorpe. That would have required a firing range, and we had none. Our army had until then made out with a few firing ranges elsewhere. Once during the summer our Battery 8 had been scheduled to be shipped out to a field in Texas for a day or two of intensive shooting, but for some reason the order was cancelled. When I received my commission I had actually heard cannonfire only once in my life. A Russian general had visited Fort Oglethorpe that summer. We had paraded in his honor, and our guns had fired a salute. That could safely be done, since salutes are fired with blank ammunition.

We did have guns, but not the kind the American army was to use in France. Ours were 3-inch guns, standard equipment in our army at the time, but long obsolete by European standards. We also had horses. The importance of horses in warfare had diminished since the beginning of World War I. Trenches, barbed wire and machine guns had rendered cavalry quite useless after the first few weeks, at least on the western front where the main action was taking place. Trucks gradually took over the work of horse-drawn wagons in transport. Only the field artillery continued until the end of the war to depend on horses. On the move, horses pulled the guns and caissons. Enlisted artillerymen might ride on limbers or supply wagons. The officers had to ride horseback.



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