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Theodore E. Boyd World War I Collection - Memoirs and Correspondence Sent to Family, unnumbered

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May 11, 1973

Dear Wanda, Jessica and Ted:

I think it was on January 9, 1918, that I stood all day in the rain on a hillside near Gondrecourt. The ground had been covered with snow since our arrival in the area on January 3, but the snow had become slush. Most of the day it just drizzled, but now and then the rain came down hard for a while. The only comfort I had was to reflect how smart I had been to buy that trench coat in Paris.

I was there playing a small part in a war game. If the ground had been drier and firmer, my stage props would have included two 75 guns and their caissons. But that morning the generals who were running the show wisely decided not to risk getting the guns mired up in the muddy fields. So our guns remained parked at Houdelaincourt. On the hill I commanded only imaginary guns. I did have real live guns crews. They aimed those guns and loaded them with imaginary shells. When I commanded "Fire!" they pulled imaginary lanyards. No doubt our shelling gave the imaginary enemy a bad time.

War games will be necessary as long as we have wars. I would not ridicule them. But my part in that one had some comic aspects. For the rank and file of the First Division, that day was, as the French might have expressed it, *un peu de trop*. They had already been driven hard through a week or so of war games in freezing weather. They had been told on the previous day that it was finished. They had gone to bed the previous night with the rare and blissful prospect of sleeping until 8 A. M. This was to have been a day if not of rest, at least of relaxation. Instead, they had been roused as usual at daybreak and marched out once more, this time into the rain.

All this had come about because General Pershing had arrived at Gondrecourt late the previous night. He had intended to witness the war exercises on the final day, but he had somehow been detained and got there too late. Now the final day was being played all over again for the general's benefit. Orders had gone out around midnight. I suppose the various company and battery commanders had been awakened and told to pass the orders down through their units, not forgetting the buglers who had to advance the scheduled time for reveille.

Somehow everyone in Battery C of the 7th F. A. was alerted except



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