

'Mr. Doughboy' Dies at Ardmore

March 27, 1961

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he was among the first to arrive in France with the U. S. First Division where Leader served with the Second Machine Gun Battalion.

They received their training with the French "Blue Devils" and soon moved into the trenches. The Germans pulled a raid and members of Leader's group were the first American troops to sustain casualties.

With his own machine gun crew killed, Leader grabbed a French rifle and got behind the attacking Germans. He captured 18.

Only later did he discover the rifle had only one bullet and that he did not know how to fire the rifle.

Leader was wounded and gassed two times before the war ended with him in a military hospital on Armis-

tice Day, 1918.

Returning to Oklahoma he took vocational training and worked with the Oklahoma highway department for 25 years before retiring.

In 1922 he had to move to Arizona and the Whipple Barracks while suffering an attack of tuberculosis.

Leader's exploits in the war earned him two individual awards of the Croix de Guerre, France's highest military honor, two silver Stars, the Purple Heart with clusters, and battle stars for Sommerviller, Ansauville, Piardy, Cantigny, Second Marne, St. Mihiel, Meuse-Argonne, Mouson-Sedan, and Coblenz Bridgehead.

In 1955, the Oklahoma House of Representatives passed a resolution calling him the Outstanding Soldier of World War I, and expressed sympathy with his recurring illnesses.

Leader entered the Veterans Hospital at Sulphur on May 9, 1960 suffering from a stroke and was transferred to the Ardmore hospital in November of 1960.

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"MR. AMERICAN DOUGHBOY," Oklahoma's highly decorated World War I soldier, Otis W. Leader, died Sunday in Ardmore Veterans Hospital. Leader is honored in the French and British Halls of Fame as the typical American doughboy. Photo at right shows Leader in WW I uniform. (Story on Page 1.)

seats.

responsibilities.

Monday afternoon.

State's Mr. Doughboy Dies

March 27, 1961

One of the proudest chapters in Oklahoma history came to a close at 9:20 Sunday morning as Otis W. Leader, highly decorated American soldier of World War I, died in the Veterans Hospital at Ardmore.

Leader fought his way to the honorary title of "Mr. American Doughboy" by being one of the first American troops to face enemy fire and three of his comrades were the first American troops killed in combat.

The 79-year-old Choctaw Indian has been honored with his portrait painted by the French artist Raymond Devveraux being hung in the French Hall of Fame, the British Hall of Fame and

the Oklahoma State Historical Society museum.

Funeral will be at 2 p.m. Tuesday in the American Legion Hut, Coalgate. Arrangements are being handled by the Slater Funeral Home of Coalgate.

He is survived by his wife, Myrtle, of Lehigh; two sons,

Picture on Page 4

Paul A., Anchorage, Alaska, and James L., 8805 NE 25; a daughter, Mrs. Charles H. Deweese, 801 NE 32, and three grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

In April of 1917 the legend of Otis Leader began in Fort Worth. He was on a cattle buying trip with a Swiss cattle buyer and re-

ports of German spies were circulating.

Fort Worth officers trailed them until Leader and his friend caught the train back to McAlester as the Texas officers wired ahead.

When they reached McAlester, U. S. Marshal Crockett Lee was waiting for them. But Lee and Leader were old friends and they burst out laughing when they saw each other.

Shortly after that incident, Leader enlisted and after training in Colorado he ended up in Texas on border duty chasing Pancho Villa with General John J. Pershing.

When the war broke out

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America's Typical Soldier Is At Home on Lehigh's Hilltop



By J. H. BILES

IT was in the summer of 1917 at Gondrecourt, France where the first contingent of combat troops bent on saving democracy were in training to take part in the World war under the tutelage of a training corps of French "Blue Devils."

A dapper little Frenchman alighted from an official car in the company street of the machine gun company of the 16th U. S. infantry, A. E. F. After considerable delay and many gestures, he gained entrance to regimental headquarters and was ushered into the presence of an obviously annoyed American colonel. In broken but enthusiastic English, he told the aggravated commandant that he was seeking the "ideal American soldat."

"I want to paint his picture. Eet will be hung in the Sale des Invalides." I have come from the French government, and I have come."

He was bluntly but politely told that newly arrived doughboys had no time to pose for pictures if they were expected to help win a war, and that was what they were in France for; that none of them was ideal, and that there were 2,000,000 more of them on the way, and many other things that popped into the mind of an irritated regimental commander.

Then it was that M. Raymond Devverraux, artist, produced a little paper that got results. It bore the insignia of American G. H. Q. and the signature of Gen. John J. Pershing.

"But why do you come here seeking the model for your picture?" queried the now more interested colonel.

"I saw him in Paris, on parade with the American troops on the 4th July. He was with this regiment, the meecheene gun companee, I think you call it."

And at retreat that afternoon, M. Devverraux found his man; a half blood Choctaw Indian from Oklahoma, straight as an arrow and standing over six feet tall; keen, alert, yet with calmness that betokens strength, and his naturally bronzed face reflecting that spirit that they took across with them, the spirit that eventually turned the tide.

AND so Otis Leader, Oklahoman, was painted by M. Devverraux.



Otis Leader as he is today above, his hilltop home at Lehigh, Okla.

discharge at Camp Funston has been spent helping Oklahoma get out of the mud as an employe of the engineering department of the state highway commission. Immediately after his return, he did special investigation work for the M. K. and Rock Island railroads and also did guard duty for a while at the state penitentiary at McAlester where he was sent to a soldier's hospital in Arizona for suspected tuberculosis caused from the effects of gas inhaled in the trenches of France. He joined the state highway department in 1924 and has been with it continuously since that time working all parts of the state, but most of the time out of Oklahoma City.

He has been in Lehigh, Coal county since March 4, 1935, being transferred there from Hollis. He has bought a home on the tip top of the hill which commands a view of the broad valley in which Lehigh is situated and he is spending his money remodeling and modernizing his home.

OTIS Leader
Choctaw
Roll #
13606