

Walter C. at  
Camp Grant



53586-1111

# Honorable Discharge from The United States Army

A true copy of this document was made for me on the 1st day of February 1923. for the purpose of Illinois bonus. Walter E. Reemer  
Notary Public



TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This is to Certify, That\* Walter E. La Buge 208,3501  
† Pvt. Eng. Unassigned (Last assigned Co. D. 1st Repl. Eng.

THE UNITED STATES ARMY, as a TESTIMONIAL OF HONEST AND FAITHFUL

SERVICE, is hereby HONORABLY DISCHARGED from the military service of the  
convenience of the Government per Pub. L. No. 113, 40 Stat. 1052  
UNITED STATES by reason of † S. O. 61 Camp Grant, Ill. March 2nd, 1919

Said Walter E. La Buge was born  
in Chicago, in the State of Illinois  
When enlisted he was 26 years of age and by occupation a Salesman  
He had Brown eyes, Black hair, Dark complexion, and  
was 5 feet 10 1/2 inches in height.

Given under my hand at Camp Grant, Ill. this  
7th day of March, one thousand nine hundred and Nineteen

W. T. Pugh  
Major of Infantry U. S. A.  
Commanding.  
3rd Bn. Discharge Unit.

LE GÉNÉRAL GOURAUD  
MEMBRE DU CONSEIL SUPÉRIEUR DE LA GUERRE

27 Juillet 1923

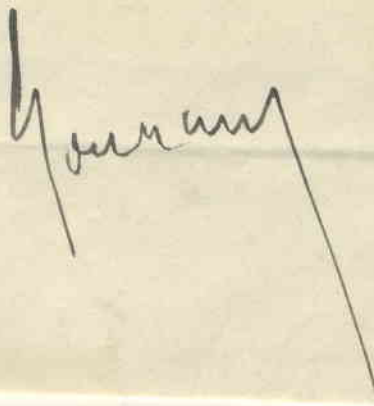
Cher Monsieur,

Je réponds un peu tard à votre aimable lettre du 11 Juillet, mais vous vous doutez bien que mon voyage rapide ne me laisse guère de temps pour écrire.

Les souvenirs que vous évoquez du temps où vous étiez secrétaire du capitaine Mills et du major McGrew, me sont trop chers comme à vous pour que je ne vous en remercie pas, puisque c'est ce temps de guerre où le sang de nos soldats se mélangeait dans la lutte pour la plus juste cause, qui a ravivé pour toujours l'amitié de nos deux nations.

Je regrette fort de n'avoir pas pu séjourner plus longtemps dans votre grande et magnifique ville de Chicago.

Je vous adresse mes vœux sincères et vous prie de croire à mes sentiments les meilleurs.



Monsieur Walter C. La Berge,



## A Visit to Chal~~l~~ons-sur-Marne

My father, Walter Coloney LaBerge, served during World War I in the American Expeditionary Force in France. Because his name was of French origin he was assigned while he was overseas to an American liaison team attached to the staff of General Henri Gouraud, Commanding General of the French Third Army, located at Chalons-sur-Marne.

My father was a Private assigned to a Maj McGrew and a Capt Mills, spending the war in that posting. Gen Gouraud was at that time commanding from a large cement bunker behind a small hill in the North-West section of Chal~~l~~ons-sur-Marne. My father arrived in France just before the German offensive of the Summer of 1918 and was there during the early Fall Allied offensive which ultimately resulted in the Armistice of 1918. He returned to the United States early in 1919, was discharged from the Army and went to work as a salesman of industrial hardware, traveling over a great deal of the Mid-West. Dad married in 1923 and I was born in 1924.

My father talked very little of his experiences during the war, although through all of his life thereafter he would whistle endlessly "Mademoiselle from Armentieres, parlez-vous ?" to playfully annoy my mother. He also kept his army cap in the attic, which at age five I discovered, took outside to show-off, and lost, and experience that still ranks as one of the few things that I have ever done that I truly wish I could take back.

I still retain the letter from General Gouraud to my father in 1923. The General had visited Chicago, my father had written him after the visit and the General replied sometime later with a gracious note recognizing those times together during the war. I also have one letter which noted only that he was at the headquarters at Chalons-sur-Marne of the Third French Army.

Knowing just that much, I had very much wished that on one of my visits to Europe to retrace my father's steps at Chalons and perhaps to find out more of what he might have done. This year along with my wife Bette, I had the chance to do just that. The rest of this is an account of that trip.

Bette and I went to Europe in the fall of 1986 on a combined pleasure and business trip. From Brussels, we had the chance to drive over a weekend to Frankfurt through Northern France. It was a fun trip looking at battlefields, starting at Waterloo, and stopping ever so shortly at Mons, the Canadian Memorial at Vimy Ridge, and the Newfoundland, British and American Monuments on the Somme, and ending up Saturday evening at Chalons-sur-Marne which is about forty miles East of Paris.

That evening we had Pizza, if you can imagine, at a little place in the center of town. It had become so late before we were ready to eat that all of the other places to eat were closed. As it turned out this was providential because the atmosphere there was very informal and we were able to talk to the people at the adjoining table, and to ask them where General Gouraud had been during the war. Though my French was somewhat faulty, everyone was nice and after asking about among the other tables, the people that we first asked were able to point us in the right direction, saying that it was in the vicinity of the military cemetery in the Northern edge of the town.

Next morning we went to Mass at the old Cathedral where we guessed that Dad must have gone during the time that he was there. We then took off to see what we might find. The Military Cemetery was on the map and we found it easily. It was used by both the town and the military, the two parts being separate but next to each other. It most interesting but there were no signs of any American presence. As we were then trying to figure what to do next, I saw an old man, jolly looking, a few teeth missing and scruffily dressed, sitting in the sun on a low wall with his bike propped up next to him. Without expecting too much I walked over and asked him whether he knew where the Americans were during 1917-18, and where General Gouraud's Headquarters had been.

By the vagueries of chance or by the intervention of the Lord, the old man not only knew, was willing to show us and had the time to do so. He offered to lead us on his bike, but it seemed to me a bit inappropriate for the eighty-year old man to lead us by bicycle while we who were twenty years his junior rode behind. So I asked him to join us, though I suspect I made Bette a bit nervous to pick up a perfect stranger in a strange land with a strange language. However, we did and it worked out just great.

The WWI command bunker was only a short way from the cemetery, but we had to take a little roundabout way to get there. Once there we saw the headquarters at the end of a small park named after General Gouraud, carved into the side of a small hill. The concrete facade had been sealed off a long time ago. However, I did get quite a thrill out of leaning against it and knowing that that was where my father had really been almost seventy years before.

Stepping back from the entrance a bit, we were able to see the long row of now no longer used barracks on the top of the hill into which the bunker had been dug. The old man who had brought us said that that was where the soldiers, French and Americans, were quartered in 1917-18. If so, that was where Dad lived at that time.

We then walked across the park and the adjoining street

George) and Princess Marie



**7** A few weeks later King George was welcomed by Gen. Henri Gouraud in Paris on his way to Athens from his exile in England.





Walter B. at  
Chalons-sur-  
marne



to the large home facing the park. On the wall surrounding the home we found a plaque describing the fact that it was the wartime residence of Henri Gouraud. It was odd to feel so close to a time that was so long ago.

We thanked our guide and asked him for his name so that we might send him a copy of the pictures that we had taken. He walked back to his home nearby, returning in a moment with his card. It read; M Henri Machet, 4 rue des Vieilles Postes, 51000 Châlons-sur-Marne. He had done us a superb favor and we thanked him profusely.

So, having spent Sunday morning reliving my father's past, we started off again for Frankfurt. On the way we stopped at the Meuse-Argonne battlefield of WWI, Fort Douaumont at Verdun, at the Lorraine Cemetery of WWII., and somewhat late in the evening we made it to Frankfurt.

It really was a great trip. We hope that some of you who may read this have the opportunity to repeat it. If you do we wish that you enjoy it as much as we did. I also pray that somehow or other my father also enjoyed watching us retrace his steps in France.





Collection "Patrie"

JEAN PETITHUGUENIN

# LA VICTOIRE DE L'ARMÉE GOURAUD

30<sup>c.</sup>

Le récit complet  
illustré.



BOUFFÉ Éditeur 146, rue de Valenciennes, PARIS

# **ASSOCIATION DU SOUVENIR aux Morts des Armées de Champagne et à leur Chef, le Général GOURAUD**

Siège social : 38, rue Boileau, 75016 Paris  
Président : Général Philippe GOURAUD



**Dimanche 15 juillet 1984**  
à NAVARIN (Marne)

**CÉRÉMONIE  
à la mémoire  
des Morts des Combats  
de Champagne**