

LAST FOOTBALL TEAM



Contributed photo/Grant County Historical Museum

The last Canyon City High School football team, 1920. Back row, Jim Jones, David Mason, Deldon Carlin, Claude DeWolf, Jess Duncan and Al Dee Sollinter. Front row, Eugene Mulcare, Leo Gunther, Sherman Maple, Bob Officer, Orrin Ward and Lionel Hankins.

DRAFT

Continued from Page B1

hearing, defective teeth, heart conditions "and two of them had the itch."

By mid-April, Sheriff Howell was directed to round up "slackers," deserters or other delinquents. The Eagle printed the names of four men who failed to show up for their physicals and the names of 10 men sought by the sheriff. Two women from Canyon City were called to Portland as witnesses in a case brought against a man who failed to register.

As the war dragged on and complaints were made that the system was unfair, the government made changes to the Class 2 requirements. The Eagle ran the names of 33 men who were called to war. Two weeks later, the Eagle reported that Class 1 men have been exhausted in Grant County, but reclassification will add 25 more to the rolls.

"Youngsters will be called into service in August," a front-page headline read in

mid-July. By early August, Sheriff Howell was gearing up for a big draft for men up to 45 years old. War marshals and assistants were named for every precinct in Grant County to assist in registering the men. The government expected to call up more than 13 million men across the U.S.

The Eagle reminded its readers in September that every man is supposed to know how to register for the draft, but it provided instructions just in case. Being sick or pre-occupied with family matters or ignorant — those were not excuses. Sheriff Howell notified all men in Grant County between 18 and 45 that they must show up to register Sept. 12. The names of 851 men were printed in the Oct. 25 Eagle, each assigned a draft number for the order in which they would be called.

But the war appeared to be winding down by early November, as signals from a weary Germany made their way to the Allies. The armistice was signed Nov. 11, ending the Great War and the draft.

LETTERS

Continued from Page B1

shaky at first, but we soon got used to it... We got off pretty lucky until the last day they shelled our battery and killed two and wounded five... We sure swore revenge on the Germans that night and nothing would have pleased us more than to have been turned loose on them, but we get another chance at them."

Harper ended the letter with a note about living conditions.

"We are in winter quarters now," he wrote. "It snowed an inch here last night, and it is cold."

A letter from John Low, Canyon City, in the Feb. 1 paper described his voyage to Europe.

"There is one good thing about sea sickness: It just lasts while the storm lasts, and when the sea is rough a sailor feels like the devil, and when the sea gets calm the sailor feels fine again," he wrote. "But I have seen the time when I thought the storm lasted a mighty long time. A fellow thinks he is going to die, but he won't."

Low arrived in Europe just in time for winter.

"It has been very cold here for the last two or three weeks," he wrote. "Colder than it has been for several years."

A letter from Harry Watkins, Canyon City, in the Feb. 8 paper came from a hospital. He was the first soldier from Oregon to be injured in the war. His leg and arm were shattered when an artillery shell hit his trench, but he was upbeat about the situation.

"In spite of the Hun's trick, I am feeling first rate and expect to be out in a few

days," he wrote.

He was being optimistic — Watkins was still in the hospital months later.

A letter from Alice J. Knight, Canyon City, appeared Feb. 15. She was working for the YMCA in France setting up canteens where soldiers could buy tobacco, soap, dental cream, toothbrushes, razors, towels, crackers, cookies and jam. Some workers met troops in the trenches.

"Our young men are coming here in numbers that will bye and bye amount into the millions," she wrote. "They are young, untried and thrust at once into a foreign land where they are among people who speak another language and have other customs than ours."

She was concerned about lasting effects on the soldiers.

"Temptations are about them on every side, and away from the restraints of home, homesick as they often are, they need help to keep them straight, and send them back when this awful war is over the kind of men you want them to be," she wrote.

H.G. VanBibber, Monument, described the countryside in a letter that appeared Feb. 22.

"We are in a farming country which is very old," he wrote. "Instead of fences, everything is enclosed with hedges and stone fences."

The wine industry was something different, VanBibber noted.

"There are a good many vineyards here, wine is very cheap and very plentiful, and everyone drinks it like it were water," he wrote. "You can see children going after the wine."

VanBibber had a few requests.

FLU

Continued from Page B1

four years of the Black Death Bubonic Plague, which took place from 1347 to 1351. But its timing was ironic — the 1918 flu became headline news just as World War I was winding down to a general armistice, and the mutated virus in the second wave was more deadly than the first.

Grant County residents were probably not surprised to see the headline "Spanish influenza invades Grant County" in the Oct. 18 Blue Mountain Eagle. Schools across the county were immediately closed, public meetings were canceled and the order for men called to register for the war draft was rescinded.

Several cases were reported near Austin and one in Prairie City, but the public was urged to remain calm.

"There is no reason at all for any alarm, and it is not likely that the epidemic will get any foothold in the county, and the steps that have been taken are merely a wise precaution," the Eagle said.

The next week's headline announced Grant County's first fatality. Five hundred illnesses were reported in Baker County, a number of cases were known in Prairie City and Canyon City, and the hotel had been closed in John Day. The Eagle described the symptoms and continued to urge calm.

"Just take good care of yourself and do not take exposures unnecessarily," the paper said.

Oddly, a "mass meeting" scheduled for nominating candidates for the upcoming Canyon City election was promoted on the front page. One week later, the Eagle reported that John A. Muldrick, 29, Canyon City, had died af-

"I wish that you would have the Eagle sent to me for three months. Also send me a cake of Lava soap," he wrote. "I will write as much as the censor will pass."

A letter that ran March 29 from James B. McGirr, Mt. Vernon, came from a hospital where he had the mumps.

"I have seen lots of country but haven't seen anything that looks as good as the old John Day valley, and when we get through here I am coming back to the old place and there to stay," he wrote.

McGirr wasn't impressed by what he'd seen.

"France is a hundred years behind the times compared with the good old U.S.A.," he wrote. "The railroads are something similar to the Sumpter Valley, and the street cars look like a soap box on four wheels, the people hang on all sides."

A letter Harper wrote to May Valade ran April 12.

"We sure will have some time when we get back, but I am afraid that you will have some job in teaching me to dance again as I am getting so stiff in the joints," he wrote.

Harper said his unit had been moved.

"We are back up to the front again, and I guess that we will stay at the front this time, and I don't mind it at all now since I am used to it," he wrote.

Weather conditions had deteriorated, however.

"We were having lovely weather here until the other day, and it has been raining for the last day or two. It is trying to snow tonight," he wrote. "It is frightfully muddy here now, and it makes it very bad on us

as our dugouts are full of water and it is some job bailing them out."

A letter from Frank Baier, Canyon City, appeared May 3.

"France isn't the country I thought it was," he wrote. "It rains here two thirds of the time, and the aeroplanes are as thick and as common as birds. We can hear it thunder all the time. You know what kind of thunder I mean."

Baier also had a request.

"Can you send me a pair of overalls," he wrote. "I can get the suspenders here but not the overalls."

Another letter from Harper ran May 17.

"We had a gas attack, at least we got the alarm, and you should have seen the boys scramble for their masks," he wrote. "They are awful things to wear, but we have to do it."

He described his work in the artillery.

"We are supposed to fire three a minute, and it sure makes us jump to do it," he wrote.

He noted that the Germans were shelling a small town about a mile away.

"They have sure got that one torn to pieces," he wrote. "We sent them over a bunch of gas not very long ago for a change. I'll bet they didn't relish the change."

The Eagle continued to run letters through September and October, but there were signs the Germans were ready to surrender. "Peace is at hand," a headline announced Nov. 8, three days before the armistice was signed.

The war was over. It was a complete surrender, and the Allies' terms were met.

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