

# ***BEACHBUM***

*Ron Stahl*

During the early months of 1917 war in Europe was going from bad to worse. Most Americans were opposed to getting involved in the blood-letting on battle fields half a world away. Many of the young roosters rushed to enlist; if nothing more than for the adventure and to prove to their buddies, who had answered the call earlier, that they were equally as brave. Besides, young and healthy men not in uniform were often looked upon as being slackers.

After many months of training all it took was a few weeks of hell to wring any thoughts of bravado from their minds. War has a sobering effect even if you aren't in the front-line trenches or even a short distance behind the lines. Watching the mass of haggard and weary men returning to the rear encampments was more



than enough for every man to realize the seriousness of the struggle. Wounded men passing on carts and stretchers with blood oozing from their open wounds, make-shift bandages, and groans of agony put the fear of God into most of them.

Ill-planned assaults by archaic-thinking European Generals trying to overrun the Hun defenses resulted in casualty lists exceeding ONE MILLION MEN.

During the Meuse-Argonne campaign three young men of the 79<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division A.E.F. (American Expeditionary Force) shared a shell crater when the main thrust of the advance ran out of steam and stalled. Bugles and whistles were ordering recall from the rear just as a mortar shell exploded in the crater, killing one soldier outright and seriously wounding the other



two occupants. One had shrapnel wound to the shoulder, the other was bleeding profusely from a wound in his upper leg area.

Retreating men assisted the two wounded men back to the trenches. Stretcher-carriers took the two lads to a rear dressing station and then to a field hospital where they heard one man from their platoon bragging on his wound as being his ticket home.



The man with the severe leg wounds was placed in a temporary body and leg cast. Both men, along with many other wounded, were carried on stretcher-carts aboard a small ferry for the trip to an Army hospital in England.

“Armistice” November 11, 1918: a date that will be forever entrenched in the minds of every person participating

in ‘The War to End All Wars’.

Weeks of recouping in the hospital with little to do but read, play cards or talk of home, made close friends of the shell crater survivors. Unfortunately, they were soon to be parted as Pvt. Leonard Kerry's leg wound became badly infected while Cpl. Thomas Corder's shoulder shrapnel wound was healing. Travel orders for shipment back to the states were expected by those on the mend at any moment.

Tom had family in Boston, but seldom spoke of his home life. He quit school after completing his sophomore year to work as a millwright helper, contributing to the family's sparse finances. His alcoholic and bullying father drove a wedge between the two of them and the thought of having to return to that poor environment was out of the question. After a bitter confrontation with his dad, Tom had run off to enlist in the Navy. They wouldn't take him because of his age, but with the help of an Uncle in New Jersey he was able to enlist in the Army. Tom confided to Leon that he'd never go back to Boston.

Leon suggested, "Why don't you go down to North Carolina and visit with my family for a while...until your wounds heal anyway. Besides, it'll give you some time to decide what you might want to do. I've written to them about you and it'll give 'em someone to fuss over until I can make it home."

Leon was always talking about his family: two brothers and a sister, and many aunts and uncles. To listen to him, the Kerry clan ran half the waterfront near the township of New Bern. The whole family was involved with fishing. Depending on the time of the year, the season or weather, they'd be dragging for oysters, setting crab or lobster pots, trawling with seine-nets, catching, processing, selling or buying. Leon made it sound so interesting and exciting and was so sincere in his invitation that Tom finally agreed. Leon wrote a long letter home to his family telling them to prepare for his best buddy to come on a long visit.

Travel orders came for Tom to take the train to Liverpool then board a ship heading home. Regretfully, Tom said goodbye to his first and only true friend and when the final parting came it was just as the medical personnel were preparing Leon for more surgery.



The ship discharged her troops near Philadelphia. Cheering crowds of relatives and newspapers with blazoned headlines were everywhere, welcoming the returning A.E.F. men as they filed off the ship. Many of the wounded, Tom among them, were placed aboard railroad cars for transportation to a hospital in the rural area of Philadelphia.

"God, it feels good to get off that stinking ship," was just about all Tom could think of for hours after landing. The men had been crowded in small compartments with very little ventilation. The poor guys in body casts were in misery trying to scratch the "so many impossible to get at itches" and the odor of decaying flesh drove most of the walking-wounded topside for fresh air.

The general topic of conversation in most of the groups of men was, "What are you going to do when you get out?" The consensus of the men's responses was, "I'd like to go to California and start a new life." It sounded as if these men felt they were given a new lease on life, spared from death and now allowed to do whatever they felt they were capable of doing. Those were Tom's exact sentiments.

Many months had passed since that October when the mortar shell hit the crater in France, but now it seemed like a lifetime. A medical evaluation of

Tom's wounds indicated about 30% physical impairment of his upper body which "might" improve with time and/or physical therapy. The report also indicated no further surgery was anticipated, the bones and flesh were healing favorably.

With that report in mind and the fact that he was gaining strength in his muscles, Tom decided to venture from the hospital on a long weekend pass. Army trucks were going into Philadelphia to a government-managed hotel which billeted military personnel on active duty or in transit from one assignment to another. As beds came available, men on passes could lodge there overnight.

Tom thought this was a great opportunity to buy some civilian clothes. He had saved his money, knowing that since he was not long for this man's army he should prepare for the future. He spent most of the day shopping and now looked like a new man in the latest fashion togs; suit, shoes, hat and mid-length leather jacket to protect him from the chilly spring weather.

He was on his way back to the hotel, which was located a few blocks from the main downtown area, with his uniform packaged and tucked under his arm. On turning a corner, he came upon a commotion in front of an office building. At first it looked like a picket line beginning to get out of control. They were carrying signs on stakes with the large letters I.W.W. A scuffle broke out and then it turned ugly. Tom turned around and started to walk away from the fracas and ran right into the arms of a policeman who seemed to appear from nowhere. The whole street filled with cops coming from around the corner, as if they had been waiting for things to get out of hand. Several of the pickets tried to break through the police lines only to be clubbed to the ground.

A rendering by Author Peter Cole, describes the IWW, Wobblies.

*"During the 1910s and 1920s, the Philadelphia waterfront was home to the most durable interracial, multiethnic union seen in the United States prior to the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) era. For much of its time, Local 8's majority was African American and included immigrants from Eastern Europe as well as many Irish Americans. In this important study, Peter Cole examines how Local 8, affiliated with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), accomplished what no other did at the time. He also shows how race was*

*central not only to the rise but also to the decline of Local 8, as increasing racial tensions were manipulated by employers and federal agents bent on the union's destruction."*

Tom tried to explain that he was no part of the picket group, but the officer pushed him away and struck him on his injured shoulder with his Billy club, causing him to drop the bundle with his uniform. As he stooped to retrieve the package he was struck again...and that's when the lights went out. The next thing Tom remembered was being dragged to a large motor van, forced through the door and thrown against a crowd of angry people who tried to escape the minute the door had opened.

They were taken to jail and jammed into tiny cells. Tom was shoved against a wall and looked down to see blood all over his new clothes and dripping from his fingers. He opened his leather jacket and saw that his shirt and the whole inside of the jacket was soaked with blood coming from his old shoulder wound. He called for the turnkey to get him help just before he passed out.

Tom was taken to a crowded emergency hospital and as he started to gain his senses he saw police officers and doctors huddled around his bed. As he opened his eyes they started assailing him with a barrage of questions: Someone asked, "What's your name, where are you from?" Another asked, "Who did your surgery?" Another demanded, "Why were you trying to break into that building?"



"Are you still a patient at some hospital?" questioned a doctor in a calmer, more considerate approach.

Tom was trying to cooperate and answer their questions, but his replies fell on deaf ears as his answers were evidently not what the law officers wanted to hear. They started to repeat the process again, this time raising their voices above the previous shouts, until one doctor, who seemed to be more rational and in charge, demanded, "Shut up! And get the hell out of here!" Very reluctantly

and grumbling with every step, the police left the room.

Tom felt his sore arm and noticed the new bandages. "Where am I?"

"You're at Philly General. I'm Doctor Neuman. You have quite a bit of damage to your shoulder...how did you originally injure it?"

"I just got back from Europe. I'm a patient at the Army Station Hospital at Bridgetown. A Daisy-cutter caught a bunch of us in a shell crater.

"I had to go in and repair some damage to stop the bleeding; it looks like the Army did a great job of salvaging your shoulder. As soon as the police finish with their reports I'll make arrangements to have you transferred back to your hospital. I'll drop over to see you later." The doctor then went out the door and Tom could overhear him chewing out the two policemen and telling the other doctor not to let them talk too loud or stay longer than five minutes, at most.

A Police Sargent began the questioning again, asking for his name, where he worked and his association with the Wobblies.

"I'm Corporal Thomas Corder, presently a patient at Bridgetown Army Station Hospital. What's a Wobbly?"

"Cut the bull crap, we know all you soldier boys sucked up with the Socialists and Bolsheviks over there in Paris, but we're not going to let you guys spread that crap over here! I'm placing you under arrest for conspiracy and having you transferred to a jail ward." The Sargent looked at him with disgust and the two officers left.

The hospital ward had five other patients and they overheard the entire exchange. As if afraid that Tom might infect them with being a Wobbly, they refused to speak with him.

That afternoon Tom was placed on a gurney and rolled around the hospital, turning into one hallway then another, through several doors and then to a heavily barred sliding gate. The guard looked under Tom's covers, no doubt searching for weapons, then the orderlies pushed him into a ward with two rows of five double-stacked bunks already filled...and there they left him in the middle of the isle before walking out.

At dinner time, all the inmates got a tray, with the exception of Tom; he wasn't even asked if he wanted anything. Not until one of the inmates was moved out did Tom get a bunk. To make things worse, the pain killer he received in the other ward was wearing off and his wound was throbbing. Tom called out for the

orderly but was told to shut up by the inmates, "We don't coddle Wobblies in here."

Tom recalled how much pain his wound gave him overseas and figured he could tolerate it if he had to; but he couldn't understand the hatred toward him and to these "Wobblies"...why was everyone calling him one and what the hell were they?

Late that night Doctor Neuman came in to visit and examine Tom's wound. He explained that he had trouble finding out where the police had taken him and was surprised to find him here amongst a lot of the most hardened felons.

"What's a Wobbly?" Tom asked the Doctor.

The doctor smiled and scratched his chin, "Well...let's see if I can explain it...my knowledge is a little sketchy. A few years ago, a large organization called the I.W.W. (Industrial Workers of the World) made up of working people, joined together to become active in politics here and in Europe. They said they were trying to improve labor conditions world-wide. Unfortunately, there were some radical Socialists among them spouting Socialist ideas, anarchy and slogans very un-American so, of course, patriotic citizens thought the Reds spoke the doctrine of the I.W.W. and the I.W.W. was just a mouth-piece for the Communist Party. The war silenced them temporarily, but they seem recently to be trying to come back. They've caused a lot of problems for the police here in the city with their rallies, parades and such. Just last week a copper was beaten badly and is still in the hospital. So, you can see why they came down so hard on that rally today. Don't know where they picked up the moniker 'Wobblies', but somebody thought it up and it's stuck."

"Why would the police think I was involved?"

The doctor shrugged his shoulders and suggested, "They couldn't tell you apart from the others and since they saw you trying to leave the scene in a hurry, I just guess they took you for one of them. Also, someone said the ring leader wore a leather jacket.

"Anyway," the doctor said in a lighter tone, "I hope you're feeling good enough to make the trip back to the Army hospital in the morning, 'cause all the arrangements have been made. And...despite my efforts, the police aren't dropping the charges but are going to transfer the paper-work on to the

**military.” With that information, the doctor offered a pill so Tom could get some relief from the pain and some much-needed rest.**

**A few days later Tom was brought before the Provost Marshal for a hearing. The attitude was cold, as the Provost Marshal began interrogating him as if he was already guilty and not giving him a chance to explain the circumstances leading up to his arrest.**

**"It's not for me to hear your story or pass judgment. Since civilian authorities have filed a complaint, we must investigate and show proof to the local Police Department that the Military has taken the matter seriously." The Lieutenant continued to ask specific questions. He was interested in the clubbing incident; how many times Tom was struck and where on his body.**

**A couple of days later Tom was brought before a formal court of inquiry. Several officers and non-coms were at a large table. A Captain read off a list of offences.**



**An officer sitting at Toms table huddled with Tom suggesting he plead no contest, explaining that with his war record, the most they would penalize him was one or two month's pay and maybe a short time in the infirmary guard**

**house and the whole incident would be over but if he fought it through a court martial he could be dishonorably discharged and maybe lose his benefits.**

**Tom noticed that the two Philadelphia police officers who had beat him up were sitting at the rear of the room. The more he looked at them the more furious he became. No one wanted to listen to his side of the story. He hadn't done anything. He was the one who was injured. Now all anyone wanted to do is sweep everything under the rug, make him the patsy and soothe the ruffled feathers of those two smug SOB's sitting back there. Well, by God, he wasn't about to give them the satisfaction of watching him take a rap that they hung on him.**

**After listening to statements, by at least a dozen or so witnesses, it sounded as if Tom was the ring leader of a radical group of anarchists set to overthrow**



the government...the list of charges was beyond anything he had imagined. Tom was dumbfounded; his mind was having a hard time absorbing all the lies and innuendo and he couldn't reply with any convincing reasons for being among the group that had been arrested. It looked as if there was no way out for him. Near the end of the hearing he was asked if he was intending to plead guilty or not guilty.

"Not guilty!" He blurted out.

"You are remanded to the security ward of the hospital under full arrest until a court-marshal date and time can be set," intoned a Major who was the senior officer on the board.

On the way out of the court room, Tom insisted he needed to go to the latrine. He was escorted by an armed escort to one of the urinals. "Not here," Tom said, "the stall."

Grumbling, the guard opened the door and shoved him in one of the stalls, "Make it snappy, buster...I don't like to be kept waiting."

Tom heard the guard using the nearby urinal and took a letter out of his pocket that he had received from Leon with the good news of his recovery and that he'd be state-side in a couple of weeks and couldn't wait to get together with Tom down at the family's spread. Leon had also enclosed a very detailed map of directions to his house. Tom studied the map until he had it memorized, then tore up the letter and map and flushed them down the toilet. Going thru his wallet he removed the hundred-dollar bill he had hidden in its lining and slipped it inside his bandages.



Just as Tom thought, when he was returned to the hospital he was ushered to a different ward. His uniform was taken and replaced with a light-weight white suit, cloth slippers and a bathrobe. He was allowed nothing else; towels, washrag, soap and tooth brush were at the foot of the bunk and as the door closed behind him, he was already making plans for his escape, the sooner the better.

## ***ON THE BEACH***



An airplane swooped down in a slow glide...only a few feet above the surf line. Its engine was coughing as if it was on its last breath and searching for a place to land. Suddenly, the deafening roar of the engine shook the airborne monster and it began to climb and circle around, its wings just clearing the crests of the active surf. The pilot appeared to have changed his mind at the last moment.

Tom watched from the makeshift sun and wind shelter that he'd set up between two large sand dunes, smiling at his black Lab-Retriever. The dog was frolicking along the water's edge, barking at the strange bird trying to invade his territory. He returned to his master after he chased the intruder off, wagging his tail, seeking approval as he had done countless times after chasing away the gulls.



A few minutes later the plane returned. As it neared the same location as before it cut its power and seemed to hang in the wind like a kite tethered to a string. Of course, Black Jack was already on the beach challenging the big bird, racing back and forth, barking and jumping...trying to snatch it down.

This time the pilot committed himself to land. BJ was running faster than the plane when a gust of wind slammed the plane down very hard in the surf, collapsing one of its wheels from the landing strut. As the pilot climbed out of the cockpit his foot caught on something and he took a nasty spill into the shallow water.

Tom hurried the fifty or so yards to the plane as the sopping wet pilot tried

to stand, only to fall back into the water moaning and grabbing his ankle in obvious pain. Meanwhile, BJ was smothering him with affectionate laps of his tongue where ever he could find a bare spot of skin.

“Here let me help you to higher ground,” said Tom as he pulled BJ away and helped the injured man to stand. Before the pilot could say or do anything Tom heaved him on his good shoulder in a fireman’s hold and carried him to the vegetation line next to a large log that had been driven high during a previous storm, then gently deposited the stranger in the soft sand.

“I knew someone lived out here from the way your dog protected his territory every time I’ve flown by. By the way, my name’s Newt. I fly out of Morehead City.”

Tom reached down and shook Newt’s outstretched hand. “I’m Tom.” He knelt, removed the pilot’s shoe and began flexing his foot from above the ankle, squeezing several areas and asking, “Does this hurt?” As Tom got to the instep area, the pilot let out a sharp scream.

“It seems to be right there! God, it hurts like hell!” Newt said, wincing in pain.

“Just sit tight. You’d better stay off of it ‘til we can determine what you’ve done. Right now I’ve got to see to your Camel before the tide rises or you’ll lose it for sure. I’ll be back in a few minutes.” With that Tom took off, BJ close on his heels.

Tom returned after a while with his arms loaded with block and tackle and a shovel, then took off again and returned with a gnarly crooked log of about five or six feet long and an irregular four to six inches in diameter. He stretched the block and tackle as far as it would reach from the plane towards a low spot between two dunes at the higher ground.

He took the shovel and dug a trench in the sand about four feet deep by six feet long, then dropped in the log, to act as a deadman. He tied a long one-inch diameter line to the middle of the log and then strung the line out towards the plane. He formed and wrapped a sling around the tail of the plane and under the tail skid. After attaching the block and tackle he pulled it all taught, pivoting the plane around so that the tail section was pointed towards the dunes.

To pull the plane across the beach with the strut digging itself in the sand required too much effort and could cause more damage to the assemblage. Tom

tried to lift the plane but couldn't lift and pull on the block and tackle at the same time. Newt crawled to where Tom was hauling on the tackle and tried to help but to no avail.

Tom remembered seeing a barrel stave in his beachcombing wood pile where he'd found the gnarly log. He retrieved it and worked it under the strut to act as a skid. After a long afternoon of hauling on lines and realigning the tackle, the two men were able to inch the airplane up to a temporary safe area, well above the previous night's high tide scum line.

The wind died down as it usually did when the sun started setting beyond Pamlico Sound, just before the mosquitoes began their evening swarm. Tom, acting as Newt's crutch, helped him to his cozy and somewhat crude cabin. He started a fire in a small pot-bellied stove and began to prepare for supper.

"Feel free to make yourself at home while I go to my fish pen and get dinner. I'm about out of fresh water so I'll be gone about a half hour; it's a good hike towards the sound side and I'll be back before it gets too dark. There's a bottle of hooch around here someplace that'll help with your pain...if you can find it...and if the 'skeeters' get too bad while I'm gone, dampen a handful of those leaves from that barrel over there and toss them in the fire. They don't like the smoke," Tom pointed to a small barrel near the wood pile filled with a mixture of bark and leaves, then called, "Come on BJ!"

Hobbling and nosing around the cabin for that bottle of spirits to help relieve the pain, Newt came across many interesting things. There was a newspaper from New Bern only a couple of days old, every tool imaginable: shovels, hoes, axes and saws. He found life preservers and jackets and two Army folding cots. Newt wondered if his rescuer had someone living with him and if maybe that person was nearby.

Nearly a half hour went by before Tom returned with a large basket on his shoulder. He lowered it to the floor and took out a striped sea-bass that was dressed, gutted, no head or tail, and must have weighed three to four pounds. There were two one-gallon crockery brown jugs with fresh water and a net sack of assorted vegetables.

"These are from my garden...what the varmints haven't got to first," Tom said as he tossed the sack of potatoes, onions and turnips to Newt to inspect.

"Where did you catch that fish? She's a beauty. Hey...where's that hooch

you mentioned? My foot's starting to kill me." Newt massaged his injured foot, "It's swelling and turning all black and blue."

"Here let me take another look at it... Yeah, you're right, it doesn't look too good. I think I ought to wrap it up tight; you need to elevate the leg for a while. I've got some pain pills a doctor gave me when my shoulder used to start troubling me. The pills are old but they help when I need 'em." Tom searched in a crudely made cabinet, found the tin of pills and handed them to the pilot with a cup of water.

"Let me get the grub cooking, while the fire's hot, then I'll tend to you." Tom grabbed a cast iron skillet, poured in a dollop of bacon grease from a tin he took from the cabinet and put the skillet on top of the small stove. He gave some of the vegetables a cursory wash from one of the jugs, sliced them and dumped them in the hot pan.

The pilot asked Tom about his large collection of garden and building tools. Tom grabbed a spoon and stirred the vegetables in the sizzling grease. "Several weeks ago I thought I was a goner; we had gale-force winds with heavy rains for three days. Huge waves were churning up the surf, almost lapping at my campsite. I thought the damned sea was about to over-run the island and gobble me up. Then all of a sudden there was a dead calm; no wind, nothing. Thinking the danger was over, I began to relax. While I was surveying damage to my pens, I noticed the tide was rapidly rising. At first, I casually walked to keep ahead of the water. I wound up having to run to stay ahead of the surge. I didn't understand what was happening; it scared the shit out of me.

"When my mainland friends came out to see how I weathered the storm I told them what had happened. They said they also had flooding everywhere...all the marshes and bogs, even the rivers were backed up. New fresh water was trying to drain from upstream. Because the storm created a strong surge on the Sound it pushed all that sea water towards inland waterways. When the push ceased, a reverse surge started as all the pent-up water worked its way back to sea. A tidal wave of sorts developed and just about flooded everybody out. Knowing I was alone out here, they thought I might be in danger and came out to aid, bringing tools in case I needed to rebuild."

Tom gave the vegetables another stir, pushed them to the side of the skillet and placed two large, floured fish fillets in next to them. He kept up a steady

patter as he cooked. He explained that he had many fisherman friends that dropped off their nets or traps for him to repair. They paid him off in groceries or other needed items, such as coal oil for the lanterns, toiletries, books, or newspapers. They also would leave their shorts or unsaleable catch in his holding pens. Tom grinned at Newt, “Should the weather begin to kick-up they can shelter here. They tell me that I bring them good luck.”

“I see that you have two cots set up, do you have someone staying with you?”

“An Army buddy from up-stream near Oriental comes by. He owns a fishing trawler and visits several times a month. He brings me supplies and loans me tools. Sometimes I’ll go out with him and his sister to rebait the pots, clear the gill-nets or bait the long lines. They keep me busy and I enjoy the life here. Sometimes it gets exciting when a blow churns up the surf.”

“What do you do for fresh water?”

“Black Jack went for several days without begging for water. I got curious as to how he could survive without me supplying him from my precious water supply. About the same time every morning he would take off towards the sound’s side of the bar. One morning I decided to follow him. There he was on the next bar, in a green shrubbery patch scratching the ground in several areas until he selected a spot. Then he dug down a few inches and started lapping up water as it refilled the hole. Damned dog found and made his own water hole. Smartest dog I’ve ever seen. I’ve got to rely on my friends for water; they refill my jugs. I keep twelve or so in the pens. But, thanks to BJ, I’ve got emergency back-up if needed. Hey, enough about me...why are you flying around way out here? What are you searching for?”

“I have a contract to take aerial photographs of sections in the Outer Banks of the Cape for a prospective developer. For the last couple of weeks I’ve noticed your encampment as I fly by. I was curious how you and your black lab survive so I thought I’d drop in for a visit. I guess my curiosity got the better of me...sorry.”

“Don’t worry about it; it’s great to have company and someone to talk with. Where did you learn to fly? I noticed the insignia of a big ‘red rooster’ do you own that airship? I remember them circling over us at the Argonne.”

“The plane belongs to a friend of mine. Those planes you saw at the

**Argonne...one of them could have been me. I was a Pursuit Pilot in the Signal Corps. I got transferred to the Army Air Service as an observer/spotter for the Artillery and my first assignment was to take photos of the Hun's forward lines. I lost an airplane from small arms ground fire and got out without a scratch; looks like you weren't as lucky with all those scars."**

**Tom tossed the fish and vegetables out on two tin plates, set them out on a small table and the men hungrily dug in. Under the circumstances...a meal fit for a King.**

**BJ sat on his haunches, licking his chops, staring from one diner to the other, his two front paws shifting from one to the other in eager anticipation and hopes that one of them would take pity and throw him a bite.**

**After finding the liquor they each had a healthy belt then Tom rubbed Newt's swollen instep with the dregs in the bottom of the bottle, telling his patient, "If it works so good on the inside it should work as well on the outside." He tore strips from a tattered canvas tarp and snugly wrapped the pilot's instep.**

**"BJ's a beautiful Lab Retriever...how long have you had him?"**

**"Actually, he adopted me. I was sittin' out on the sand one day just staring at the ocean when he came along and parked his butt on a dune across from me. He just sat and stared as if studying me; then took off. This happened several times when I was out. I'd talk to him. I even tried to coax him with food and water but he'd have none of it. My army buddy warned me about wild animals on these isles and even gave me a shotgun for defense. BJ appeared to be very young and healthy and not at all threatening, so I saw no danger. One day I guess he just decided I was O.K. and followed me home. You can tell he is comes from good stock." Tom chuckled, "I always wondered where he came from and how he got here, but he's not talking. He's been with me four months now. I named him 'Black Jack' for General Pershing."**

**Tom finished off his whiskey and set his glass down, "You know what's strange? We've talked for nearly three hours, know each other's past but don't know each other's last names. My name's Thomas Corder. I only know you as 'Newt'. Is that your first or last name?"**

**"Gerald Newton; some call me Newt or Jerry. I like Newt...that's what they hung on me when I first started flying."**

The pill, healthy slug of whisky and a full belly were starting to show their effects. Newt mentioned he had a bag of goodies and a camera in the compartment behind his seat in the plane. He asked Tom if he would mind fetching them, just in case. By the time Tom returned, Newt was out like a light.

Tom put up the mosquito bar and net, covered Newt with an army blanket and folded another blanket as a pillow and gently slipped it under Newt's head. He doused the lantern, climbed into his own cot and soon dropped off to sleep.

BJ's frantic barking interrupted Tom during his mid-morning ablutions. A strange boat of about 35 feet, towing a bateau, was slowly making its way in the direction of the fish pens. Then, either from touching bottom or a warning from the fore-deck man with a bamboo pole, the boat backed down and they anchored.

Two uniformed men rowed the blunt nosed bateau ashore and strode up the path. BJ, wagging his tail, was off and bouncing towards the two strangers.

Tom called out, "BJ come...NOW!" The dog halted in his tracks, then reversed his course and loped back towards Tom.

"Hello there! Your dog is well trained," said the sailor with a Boatswain Mate rating on his sleeve.

"If I didn't control him he'd have you on the ground, slobbering kisses all over you."

"My Coxswain and I are down from the Cape Hatteras Coast Guard Station. We overnighted at Ocracoke and got word from a passing plane who sighted a plane on the ground in this area. Do you know anything about it?"

"Sure do...the pilot is on a cot in my cabin with an injured foot. Hope you can help him; I've done about all I could do with what's handy. I was expecting some fishermen friends either today or tomorrow. I was hoping they would take him to a doctor and maybe pick up a few parts so I can repair the landing gear on his airplane."

"If you don't mind, I'll go in and take a look at his injury. I'm sure we can get him some help," offered the Bo's'n, and all headed for the cabin. Once inside, the odor of creosote became noticeable as the morning sun's heat was heating up the freshly laid tarpaper on the over-head and cabin-sides. The place was well laid out: about 10 feet by 10 feet, rough planked floor with a large sisal woven mat, small drop-leaf table, two cots, and a small 'Warm Morning' pot-



bellied stove with a tin-tubed flue leading outside.

Newt was lying on a cot with his leg elevated. The Bo's'n pulled up a stool, removed the bandage, exposing a badly swollen, black and blue instep. After studying Newt's ankle, he started asking questions and jotting notes about his accident, his name, where he was from, and why he was in the area.

Tom rummaged up enough mugs and cups and poured coffee from the percolator pot sitting on the still hot stove. From under a net like food cover on the table, he brought out a can of Borden's condensed milk, top removed and the teaspoon standing erect inside.

After a few moments of idle conversation, the Bo's'n asked Tom if he would escort him to the airplane to complete his status report of the incident.

"It's this way, maybe a hundred yards or so," Tom said as he led the way out of the cabin. He picked up a shovel and a bundle of sacks. "I'd planned to go there before the wind started to blow and put some sand-filled gunny-sacks around the plane to anchor it down."

At the plane, the men inspected the damaged wheel and strut and the Bo's'n continued taking notes: the plane's number, make, and visual condition.

Tom asked if he could use the pad to sketch a profile of the strut and wheel so he could order materials to make emergency repairs to get the plane home. They filled the gunny sacks with sand and tied them off in several locations about the plane. A canvas cover, found in the rear of the fuselage and shaped like it was designed to cover the radial engine, was snugly secured.

On their way back to the cabin the Bo's'n said he would take the pilot to Ocracoke for first aid and if necessary on to Hatteras...beyond that he'd only be guessing. "As far as getting parts for the repairs," he said, "that's between you and the pilot. Maybe your fisherman friends could help. The Coast Guard doesn't normally patrol this far south of Portsmouth Island, but since this was a search and rescue incident, we planned to search as far as we had to."

When they returned to the cabin Tom gave Newt the last of his pain pills to comfort him for the one hour or so trip to Ocracoke.

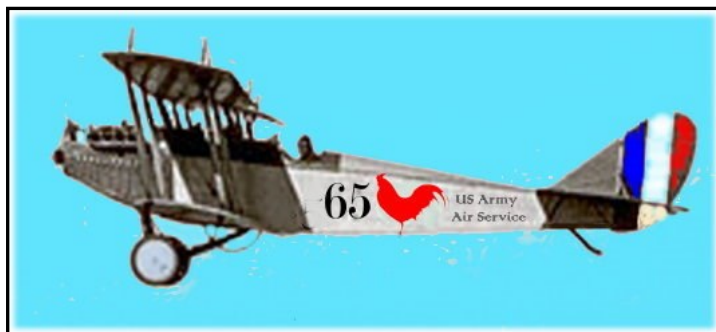
Meanwhile, the Cox's'n had gone to his vessel to fetch a fold-up stretcher. Newt took his camera out of his duffle, "Hey Tom...why don't you take a picture of me and BJ, then I'll take some shots of the camp area and you...just a little memento to remind me of my rescue."

The Cox's'n returned with the stretcher, they loaded Newt and were on their way.

Tom's last remark to Newt, after saying his goodbyes to the Coasties was, "The next time you fly by, be sure to drop off a jug of hooch."

Two days later Leon and his sister Ava showed up in their fish-boat with fresh supplies and a letter from Newt. He wrote that he had received temporary treatment at Ocracoke and the doctor made arrangements with a fish-boat owner to take him to New Bern for X-rays and a cast. He was doing better than expected and that he had arranged for a fellow pilot to fly in and make repairs. "I told him what a good host you were," he wrote. "I really appreciate all your help. The pictures will be ready in a few days. While at New Bern I inquired if anyone knew of a Leonard Kerry from Oriental. It seems as if everyone in the group claimed some form of kinship to your friend. I told them I wanted Leon to deliver a letter to you and they all wanted help. Great bunch of guys, those fishermen. Thanks again for all your help. Hope to see you again."

As Leon and Ava were unloading groceries from their skiff they heard the drone of an airplane engine getting louder as it swooped down overhead. It wiggled its wings; the pilot gave the engine full throttle, climbed higher and momentarily disappeared, only to return as if making a practice landing on the



broad stretch of wet sand where Newt's eventful landing took place. Of course, BJ was there to try and chase the huge bird away, Tom following close behind to control him.

This airplane was different from Newt's; it was larger, had a second cockpit, and had an in-line, not a radial engine like Newt's upgraded Canadian-built "crate". Tom smiled, thinking of how he had referred to Newt's Camel as a "crate" (as he had heard many others do) in an almost derogatory manner, implying it was slapped together sloppily like a crate. Newt took it almost like a personal insult and let Tom know in no uncertain terms that the Camel was called a crate because of the way the planes were shipped world-wide (an entire plane was in the crate) not because of the way they were put together.

The Jenny swooped down then, as if in a glide, landed in the shallow surf area. The pilot revved up, turned around, headed towards the higher ground, spun around and killed the engine. Two men exited the cockpits and once on land they began stomping the ground as if testing to see how solid it was.

Tom called for BJ to come to him as the two men approached, extending their hands in friendship. “We’re Newt’s partners; he asked us to fly up and try to repair the landing gear on his plane. My name’s Red Rooster and my buddy is Jeff Jones...Are you Tom?”

Smiling, Tom extended his hand, “With names like that, sounds like you’re a couple of confidence men. But, if you’re friends of Newt, welcome, and stay awhile.”

Tom introduced Leon and Ava, and they all walked over to Newt’s airplane. Red Rooster and Jeff studied the damaged area, pulling and jerking, hemming and hawing. Then almost in unison said, “Guess we could repair it good enough to take off.”

The one who called himself Red Rooster slapped the other man on the shoulder, “But landing, who knows. We’ll have to flip a coin to see who will fly the crate home.”

“Newt says you serve the best fish dinner for miles...and that bottle of Brandy he had us bring should be a great compliment.”

“Come this way for the freshest sea food dinner on the Banks,” Tom said as he led the way to the cabin.

BJ stopped suddenly, his head cocked as if listening, then took off down the beach, barking. Then they heard the loud sound of an engine backing down on the sound side of the isle. It turned out to be the same Coast Guard boat that had visited the other day. Only this time they had a passenger; an Officer.

Tom, Leon, Ava, Red Rooster and Jeff Jones, were waiting atop the dune as the Coast Guard assemblage made their way up the path. Black Jack led the way, prancing around in joyful greeting of visitors.

The CG Lieutenant halted as if in apparent recognition and gave a nod towards Tom, asking, “Are you Corporal Tom Corder of the 97<sup>th</sup> Infantry?”

“Yes Sir, I am.”

“I am Lieutenant Martin, on temporary assignment out of Cape Hatteras Coast Guard Station. I have the unpleasant duty to place you under arrest on a

charge by the Army for Desertion, and I am ordered to place you in irons.”

As the Bo’s’n was putting on the cuffs he apologized to Tom, saying, “My damned report caused interest in your situation. Someone at headquarters questioned why someone would want to isolate himself in such a primitive location unless he was trying to hide something, got nosy and this is the result.”

Leon became enraged, “Hey! I personally know this man to be the bravest on the battle field in the Argonne Campaign. I was in the same crater with him when we both got wounded by the same mortar shell. He should be receiving a chest full of medals, not being charged with some crime, made up by a bunch of jealous veteran haters.”

“Stand your distance,” commanded the Bo’s’n, putting his hand on his holstered sidearm.

The Lieutenant interjected, “We didn’t come here looking for trouble. I certainly respect Cpl. Corder’s war record. My Bo’s’n briefed me on his exemplary hospitality and the fact that he didn’t try to hide his identity. I had hoped this would be cleared up without any hostility. I’m only doing what I was ordered to do. We were even going to offer to care for his dog until this situation was all cleared up.”

The man who called himself Red Rooster stepped forward. “Where will Cpl. Corder be confined and what service has jurisdiction in this matter?”

“I didn’t catch your name, are you an associate of Cpl. Corder.”

“Fred Wooster, Captain, US Army Air Service, Commissioned October, 1915. My Co-pilot is Lieutenant Jeff Jones. I’ll repeat my question. Who has jurisdiction?”

A quick salute was given by the CG Lieutenant, JG as he snapped to attention. “As I was informed, the Army’s request was to keep Cpl. Corder, under lock and key at our facility until transportation and escort to Philadelphia could be arranged.”

“Does Cape Hatteras have the ability to make radio contact with the Army unit involved?” questioned Captain Wooster.

“We have recently been updated with the latest communication systems. Ship to shore radio, telephone to all Life Saving Stations and to our main center in Washington,” the CG Lt. said with obvious pride.

Turning to Jeff, Wooster suggested they do the repairs on Newt’s crate,

then asked, “Do you mind taking it back to Morehead City while I fly on to Hatteras, talk to the Army, then go and pick up Newt. Looks like our boy here needs a bit of help with a sticky situation.

“Sounds good to me Captain, I’ll start unloading the tools.”

The Captain turned to Leon, “You and your sister seem to be good friends with Corder, would you mind securing and maybe take any of Corporal Corder’s personal property home with you? It would be a shame for some intruder to come in and take over. You might consider keeping the dog; no telling how long this may play out.”

“Thanks for your consideration. Ava and I had just made our plans for BJ and Tom’s property,” Leon responded.

Captain Wooster asked Lieutenant Martin if he could ask Tom a few questions in private, promising it wouldn’t take more than a minute or two.

The Lieutenant agreed to the questioning, but stated that the questioning had to be done in the open,

Wooster’s first question was, “Why did you desert?”

Tom’s answered, “The Philly cops beat me up, put me in the jail ward of the hospital and accused me of being a Wobbly conspirator. I didn’t even know what a Wobbly was. I had just returned from France. No one would let me talk, much less hear my side of the story.”

“Did the Army charge you?”

“The Army said at my hearing that they needed to show the local law enforcement agencies that they were fully cooperating. My appointed representative suggested I plead no contest but when I saw the cop who beat me up at the hearing I got mad. I plead ‘Not Guilty.’ I was sent to a Federal lockup. An opportunity to escape arose and I took it.”

“Can you remember dates, names of people or places, during that period?”

During a pause as Tom was giving thought, Lieutenant Martin asked the Captain why he was so interested in a situation or an individual that he apparently had never met or knew of before today.

Captain Wooster took a leather folder from his flying suit, dug out a business card and presented it to the Lieutenant. On the face of the card was a likeness of a red, barrel-chested cock with the inscription “RED ROOSTER”

above the rooster, and below, “Attorney at Law”. He stated, “I come from a family with a long history in the study of law. Something about Tom’s situation intrigues me.” Turning to Tom he said, “I’ll make a few contacts...someone will be in touch...don’t give up hope.”

To Lieutenant Martin he asked, “Are you going to directly to Hatteras? It shouldn’t take but maybe 3-4 hours, right? We should be finished with the repairs on the other plane by that time. We may meet up at Hatteras.” Then he turned to his fellow pilot, “Come on Jeff; let’s get to work.”

Leon and his sister were loading Tom’s belongings on their boat as the Coasties were preparing to depart. Tom begged Leon forgiveness for any shame he brought to his family. Turning to Ava he said, “Especially to you, I should never have tried to hide my past from you.” He blew her a kiss as the Coast Guard boat slowly backed away.

Several hours later Newt’s Camel was repaired and ready to go. The engine was put through its testing routine. Lieutenant Jones put her through her ground tests; everything seemed OK. The two pilots next brought out the Jenny and put her through her trials. Jones climbed into the Camel and the two men saluted. The Camel was first to get air-bound with the Jenny close behind.

Capt. Wooster buzzed the Coast Guard Station and somewhat barren airfield at Hatteras to display his insignias as a military airplane. But what was really on Capt. Wooster’s mind was that he was hoping to get ground transportation from the field.

A short time after landing, a ‘Tin Lizzy’ approached with a CG Seaman behind the wheel. The driver crawled out of the car and upon seeing the double silver bars on the lapel of the pilot’s leathers came to attention and saluted, announcing, “At your service, Sir.”

“Take me to the Commanding Officer.”

The leather flight suit was not the best choice to wear on this sweltering hot and humid day. Capt. Wooster had been prepared to go to a non-descript Isle, repair a plane and return to his temporary duties at Morehead City. Instead he had involved himself in a possible lawsuit and was totally unprepared with suitable attire to mingle with brass of any kind.

After only a half-mile jaunt the driver stopped in front of a large wooden two-story building, got out, ran around to his passenger’s side, opened his door

and announced, "This way Sir." He led the way up the flight of stairs and through an open door.

Two uniformed yeomen sitting at desks behind the counter were busy typing. A Coast Guard Lieutenant entered the room, noticed the Captain, approached, and asked if he was there regarding the "deserter".

"Not officially at this stage. I met Lieutenant Martin at a plane accident on a deserted Isle where he showed up to arrest Cpl. Corder. I came here hoping to meet with him and the Corporal. They left the island about four hours ago, maybe they stopped at Ocracoke."

"Come to my office and freshen up. You look like you're boiling in all that leather."

"That was going to be my first question. Where can I freshen up before I meet with the Base Commander?"

"Just your luck, you met him first...I'm Lieutenant Jourdan, Annapolis, class of '15. Now you can remove your flight suit and relax."

Wooster came to attention, saluted, "Captain Fred Wooster, Army Air Service, Citadel, and class of '15. I asked Martin if your facility had direct radio or telephonic contact with the Army unit requesting the Corporal's detention. He told me that you've been recently upgraded." He dug in his flight suit for a business card and handed it to the Commandant. "Maybe if I show you my card it will better explain my interest in his problem."

The Coast Guard Commandant smiled as he scrutinized the card with the red rooster, then remarked, "So, a flying lawyer...how interesting."

"I flew before attending Citadel where I studied Military Criminal Justice. I wish that you would talk with Cpl. Corder, without prejudice. I'll wager you'd come to the same conclusion as I have."

Wooster removed his flight suit and spent the next half hour under an electric fan and downing two glasses of ice tea before he felt re-energized. He was somewhat hesitant to broach the use of the Commandant's radio, after his gracious hospitality, but looking at his watch he saw it was getting near time for most offices to close shop for the day. "Lieutenant Jourdan, may I use your radio to call my headquarters at Langley Field, Virginia before they shut down?"

"I take it that it is official business," Jourdan said with a broad smile.

"Yes, it is...Sir," Wooster responded, with a heavy emphasis on "Sir".

Lieut. Jourdan called out to the outer office, "Radio-man Carter, make telephone contact with Langley Field, Virginia." Turning to Wooster he asked, "Who should they ask for?"

"Captain Christy or Major Leeper."

Ten minutes later radio-man Carter announced that Captain Christy was on the line and handed the instrument to Wooster.

"Hi Chris, I'm hung up with Newt's busted Camel at Morehead City. We should be home by the weekend. Have Leeper contact," he turned to radioman Carter, asking for the name on the Corporal Corder's detention order, "Major Cargill at Fort Myers, Arlington Virginia." Wooster then ordered Captain Christy to insist that Corporal Thomas Corder not be delivered anywhere within the state of Pennsylvania. "This is a stat order. Over and out."

"I overheard your conversation. You seem to have a lot of confidence in your position, ordering two Majors to act on your order. That's influence," remarked Lt. Jourdan

"It's called Legal Intimidation," Wooster said, smiling. "Can you point me in the direction of a lodge house or Inn for the night? I need to wash out a few things and take a bath. I was even thinking of going for a swim in the surf. One other thing...is there a pub with dining? If so, I'd like to invite you as my guest."



"Damn, you beat me to it. If you like seafood I know just the place...a local fisherman's shack where we can have dinner and maybe a drink or two. But only if you, in return, would accept my offer to be a guest here. We've plenty of room. This place was originally built to house a large group of survivors

during the Lifesaving Service and Revenue Cutter era, until they were merged together in 1915 when the Coast Guard was formed. Then In 1917 when we all came under the influence of the Navy. Confusing, I know."

"I know just what you're going through," Captain Wooster said. "Hey, I'm in much the same sticky situation. I've been ordered to develop a procedure to merge no less than twelve separate Air Groups into one Corps. My first



assistant is from the Signal Corps, my 2<sup>nd</sup> is an Artillery Spotter. We're having trouble getting the Cavalry to even consider giving up their few Pilots. The Meteorologists are adamant in forming their own separate Air Service. The prospect of getting everyone under the same umbrella seems an impossibility at this time."

Jourdan clapped Wooster on the shoulder, "If we're going to the beach we should head there now before the mosquitoes come out." Then, seeing the work party coming in he called out to his leading petty officer to make sure that an officer's compartment be made presentable for Wooster. "Lieut. Martin should be arriving before dark with a prisoner, make sure he has transportation. When he arrives, make sure he reports to me."

After a wonderful seafood dinner, the two officers retired to the patio with their drinks and smokes to watch the sun set over Pamlico Sound.

Their placid moment was interrupted with what seemed to be a commotion at the boat docks. A vessel showing signs of having been in a fire was slowly making its way to the dock.

"Good God, that's my cutter," Lieutenant Jourdan yelled and was off running hell bent for leather, with Wooster right behind.

"Make way...move...let me through," Jourdan shouted as he pushed and shoved aside the people who were crowding the landing entrance. Seeing that Lieutenant Martin and the crew were safe and OK, he began demanding answers, even before asking questions.

Wooster saw Tom Corder sitting on the gunnel of the charred Coast Guard boat without his shackles and dressed in coveralls that appeared to be much too small...and wondered what in hell had happened.

Lieutenant Martin handed his senior officer a written detailed report of the entire incident. Jourdan read it aloud to Wooster. It was a tale of an exciting rescue of three crewmen off a trawler fully engulfed in a fire. Their gasoline engine had erupted and caused a terrific explosion, setting the entire boat ablaze.

"We were maybe one mile away," the report read, "We felt the concussion and saw the smoke. We sped directly to the vessel and pulled alongside to offer aid. Two men were running frantically amid the rubble on deck, which was by now fully engulfed in fire. Bo's'n Randel leaped across from our vessel to theirs and physically picked up one man and passed him across the gunwales to the

Coxswain, then went back to help the other man.

“Meanwhile Corder, our prisoner, dove in the water. Luckily we had shackled him with his hands in front. He swam to a man thrashing in the water twenty to thirty feet from the boat. I backed our boat away from the blazing hulk and headed for the two men in the water. As we drew near we saw that our prisoner was having difficulty assisting the burn victim keep his head above water, let alone keeping himself afloat. Bo’s’n Randel and his Coxswain were busy helping the other two survivors. I tossed a life ring and preserver to Corporal Corder and he tied the cork vest to the injured man, then shimmied his way up through the ring and grabbed the other man.

“I bent a bowline-bight at the end of a line and snubbed it to a cleat so it could be used as a step-up. Corder got his foot in the loop, but all he could do was hang on and keep his survivor from slipping away in the choppy waters. I got the key for the handcuffs from ‘Boats’ and removed the handcuffs from Corder, who was then able to attach a hastily crafted sling, much like a bo’s’n’s chair, under the man’s rump. With everyone’s assistance we were then able to bring the man on board.

“The three crewmen suffered considerable burns about their bodies. They received emergency treatment at Ocracoke then a companion trawler took them to New Bern’s St. Luke’s Hospital for further treatment. Unfortunately, because of the close proximity of the vessels, we did sustain some fire damage.”

After reading the neatly written and detailed log of events Lieutenant Jourdan complimented his junior officer. “Mister Martin, this is an excellent report. I’ll see that it is attached to your personal file. It should garner a few letters of merit for you and your men.”

Turning to Captain Wooster he said, “If I leave Cpl. Corder in your care will you take full responsibility for him while you question him? I’m sorry, but protocol says that he must continue to be cuffed.”

“Thank you, I agree,” said the Captain.

The boat was secured at the dock. The crew, officers and Cpl. Corder headed up towards the Fisherman’s Shack for a late meal and refreshments. As the men relaxed, many events of the accident were revealed that weren’t mentioned in the report. Things were hashed and rehashed until the night had slipped away...then they all headed to the Coast Guard quarters for the night.

Coast Guard, as with every military establishment, begins the day at an early hour. Rituals are completed before mess; after which, reveille, honors to the flag, and the work day begins.

Lieutenant Jourdan had loaned Wooster a set of tans yesterday while an extra-duty seaman, who earned an appreciative tip, washed and ironed his undressed uniform.

During a morning coffee break Captain Wooster offered to take Lieutenant Jourdan up for a fly-over tour of his domain. The Lieutenant readily accepted, with the provision that he supply all fuel as an expense item, for the record.

A discussion of Corporal Corder's situation came up, with a question as to his future. Captain Wooster was firm in his opinion. "I think that if a copy of Lieutenant Jg. Martin's detailed report were made available at a hearing it would be a great help towards Corder's case being reviewed. After questioning him last night, I have the feeling that he was railroaded by both the Civilian and Military Justice systems. Not only should his record be cleared but he should receive the honors he so richly deserves."

After a flight of nearly one hour, which included a landing at Ocracoke, flying over Cpl. Corder's beach camp south of Portsmouth Island, and flying to the North end of Hatteras Island, Wooster had expended almost every drop of fuel. On their return approach to land at their strip they saw another aircraft on the ground with US Air Service markings the same as on Wooster's Jenny. He taxied alongside the other plane, spun around as if ready to take flight again, killed the engine and both men climbed out then trekked the half mile to headquarters.

They were met at the top of the stairs by a Captain in the full spit and polish uniform attire of the US Army Air Service; alongside him stood Lieutenant Jg. Martin.

Captain Wooster began introductions. Facing the newcomers, he said, "Captain Lamb, allow me to introduce Cape Hatteras Coast Guard Station Commandant, Lieutenant Jourdan."

The nattily dressed pilot came to attention and saluted. The station Commander returned the salute and extended his hand with a, "Good to have you aboard, Mister Lamb."

Wooster continued, “Mister Lamb was also known as ‘the wayward lamb’ when he flew with us in the ‘Lafayette Flying Corps’ over in France. What the hell are you doing so far from home...lost again?” Everyone chuckled at his expense.

“It’s good to see you again Fred, I needed to log some flying hours to stay current. I was ordered to pick up a deserter and fly him back to Fort Myers, Virginia. Last time I heard, you were involved in some plan to locate and build an airstrip out here on the Banks for that new bomber group.”

“That was supposed to be a secret.” Wooster shrugged, “But I guess with all our activities in the area, it’s obvious that we have an interest in something out here.”

Lieutenant Jourdan, looked at Wooster as if to ask a question, but didn’t say a word.

Captain Wooster noticed the hesitancy in the Lieutenant’s demeanor and wondered if the mention of the airstrip had hit a sore spot.

It was common knowledge that a serious friction had developed over the Navy’s demand for more defense spending to build Battleships, against the Army Air Services argument that they could bomb and sink the enemy for one-tenth the cost of one Battleship. The Air Service was asking for Aircraft Carriers.

Sensing a cooling of relationships, Captain Wooster decided it was time to depart. He had to fly to New Bern, pickup Lt. Newton, fly him to Morehead City then fly back to Langley Field in Virginia.

Before Capt. Wooster departed, he had a long conversation with Capt. Lamb, with reasons to keep his prisoner from having to go to Pennsylvania...and if by chance he couldn’t, to contact him at Langley, immediately.

Then, complimenting Lieutenant Jourdan on his gracious hospitality and saying good-byes, all around, he accepted the ride offered in the tin-lizzy out to his Jenny, then flew off.

Landing at New Bern’s field was not a problem nor did it take much effort in locating Newt, as he was in an out-patient cottage next to St. Luke’s Hospital playing cards, taking all the injured and wounded patient’s money. Thank God, they had a nickel/dime limit. The losers were ready to chase him out, lower leg cast and all.

Getting Newt in the cockpit was a problem as he couldn't climb the ladder and at the same time lift his leg and cast over the cockpit's rim. The field had a boom truck with a crank-winch. Newt sat in the eye of the rope's bite and they cranked him up and nestled him into the cockpit, much like putting a baby in its crib.

Landing at Morehead City's airfield they reversed the procedure. With crutches he could maneuver around and get into a staff car for a trip to the Army's medical center near town.

Seeing that Newt was comfortably settled in, Capt. Wooster headed for his bachelor officer quarters to catch up on his reports. After perusing the paperwork, it appeared that the prospect of merging unrelated air groups into a unified Corps was unlikely at this time.

His selection for suitable Air fields on the Outer Banks had narrowed down to Ocracoke and Hatteras because of their rapid access to the ocean for supply and shelter for service vessels. Plus they would have established communities to draw from as a supporting worker pool.

Completing his official reports, his mind drifted to Corporal Thomas Joseph Corder's situation. He would need the official notification of all charges against the man, the arresting police officer's profiles and service records, along with any records of hearings, trials or decisions (both military and City of Philadelphia) concerning the incident. Acquiring this information would require the services of a local investigator. Wooster had just the man in mind; a Private Investigator who operated an agency his dad often used. Wooster wrote him, describing all the details and enclosed a healthy deposit check to start the procedure.

Within two days of returning to Langley, Wooster started to receive dribblets of information on the Corder file. Major Cargill (the Charging Officer) was a graduate of a most prestigious School of Law in Pennsylvania (strike one), a native Philadelphian (strike two) and he was familiar with the charges against Corder, hated Wobblies ('socialists') and deserters (strike three). Little chance of working with him, he'd be too confrontational. A further set-back, the arresting officer retired from the force and had later passed on. His service record was sealed.

Becoming frustrated with the flood of negative bits of information,

**Wooster contacted his father, who was still active and managed a group of legal partnerships, seeking direction in his expanding dilemma. He knew his dad would probably tell him as he always did, “You lose by not paying attention to the facts. You win by concentrating and illuminating what facts you do have.” That was not what Fred wanted to hear.**

**Another dribble, the arresting officer’s partner was also forced into retirement and was still alive. He had carried his forced retirement up through the many stages of appeals without satisfaction. At last, the first bit of good news.**

**Giving considerable thought to that last bit of information, Wooster called his investigator and told him to research all the newspaper ‘morgues’ for any news or information on the officer’s appeals. He added that he might also try inquiring at the I.W.W. offices to see if they had any information and especially at the Policeman’s Union or their representatives.**

**Meanwhile Major Cargill, through his political ties and without advanced notice to anyone, had Corporal Corder transported to Philadelphia to stand trial on the ‘conspiracies’ charge. Wooster considered that to be Major Cargill’s first mistake.**

**Wooster’s investigator had gathered many documented facts on the arresting officer’s previous criminal behavior and intimidation of innocent victims. Many had filed complaints against the police department and these complaints were the primary reasons for the forced retirement of the two officers.**

**Wooster’s investigator got lucky and he was now in possession of a list of Cargill’s political cohorts which, he noticed, were absent among the present leaders of “The City of Brotherly Love”. As Major Cargill had rejected a meeting with him, Wooster decided to contact the present leaders of the city.**

**Contacting the Mayor and the Lead District Attorney, who would have to prosecute Corder’s charges, Wooster asked if they really wanted to have their dirty laundry made public. Their response, after reviewing all the facts, was to drop all charges against Corporal Corder and remand him to the Military Authorities.**

**After his success with the civilian authorities, Wooster made one last attempt to meet with Major Cargill, but was met with great hostility by Cargill’s**

subordinates. Any question from Wooster was countered with, “Corder had his hearing and pretrial before he ‘deserted’. He will go to trial.”

Two weeks before trial, Wooster met with Corder frequently, if nothing more than to keep his spirits up.

An odd situation developed just before the trial was scheduled to start. Major Cargill personally asked Wooster for a conference, suggesting that if Corder were to accept a reduced charge of AWOL, with a reduction of rank, loss of pay, and time already served, he would withdraw the serious charge of desertion.

Wooster was obligated to present Major’s Cargill’s offer to Cpl. Corder without comment.

Corder took a few moments to mull over the offer and then asked Captain Wooster for his recommendation. He knew that Wooster had a lot of time invested, without even considering his outlay of expenses.

“Tom, in just the short time after we met I saw what I judged to be a good man in trouble. I knew you would need help so I jumped in. As for my investment in the case, money couldn’t buy the satisfaction I get from defeating the elitists hierarchy who believe that justice flows in only one direction...theirs.”

He paused just long enough to let his remark take hold and then added, “If I were in law just to make money I would encourage you to pursue your rightful claims in every venue available to seek both satisfaction and monetary rewards, so I could get my 30% share.”

“I may have become embittered because of my scars,” Tom said, “or because of the treatment I’ve received, or my time in confinement. What I would like, more than anything else, is to come out of this so that I can hold my head high and be proud of my service.”

“Then, if I were in your shoes, I would decline the Major’s offer and let the General Court Marshal render its decision. I will stand with you.”

Returning to Major Cargill, Wooster announced that his client had politely but firmly refused his offer.

The first order of note, after all preliminaries at the start of the trial were completed, was an appeal by Captain Wooster to excuse the jury and have the court render its decision by the sitting Judge. The request was granted.

Major Cargill stood in the splendor of his tailored Class A uniform with a

**breast full of medals and garnishes and read off a long list of charges against the Corporal. Corporal Corder also stood at attention in his Class A uniform with a shoulder Patch Cross of Lorraine and several medals: Citation Star (forerunner to Silver Star), Soldiers Medal, Bronze Star, Badge of Merit, later replaced by Purple Heart, for wounds received in combat. The Croix de Guerre plus Fourragere, (an epaulet rope as a result of being individually cited in Regimental dispatches, all awards earned for Valor.**

**The presiding Judge asked if he pled guilty or not guilty.**

**Corporal Thomas J. Corder replied, “Of all charges, Not Guilty...Sir.”**

**“Captain Wooster, you may start.”**

**“Your Honor, the list of charges as presented by the military have been refuted by the civilian authorities and are not an issue the Military should be a party to, unless...” looking at his adversary, “Major Cargill wishes to pursue them.”**

**Not waiting for a reply, Wooster pressed on “How can a man be guilty, while forced to look down the barrel of a gun. The civilian authorities had already convicted Corporal Corder of a crime, without due process, and then colluded with the Army to add other charges. Had he not been incarcerated and stripped of all privileges and had been allowed to reason with his apprehenders, it would not have led to this unjust folly of denying the honor and respect that Corporal Corder so richly deserves.”**

**There was a momentary pause as Wooster gathered several photographic copies of evidence already entered to the court. He announced that he had new articles of fact that he wished to enter as evidence. He then presented the Judge with all the evidence that his investigators had gathered which convinced the civilian authorities to dismiss their charges, including the report on Major Cargill which proved his prejudice. The Judge ordered a recess, gathered up the evidence package and vacated the bench.**

**After an extended time, both Councilors were ordered to the Judges chamber for a very brief session. When court resumed the Judge brought everyone to attention and announced his decision, “Corporal...now Sargent Thomas Joseph Corder, will be returned to active duty, with all honors, pay and accumulated leave time restored. So be it. Court adjourned.”**



**EPILOGUE:** After nearly two years of uncertainty, Tom entered civilian life with the respect he was due. Ava and Tom were married and settled in Oriental, operating a boat repair yard. They, along with BJ, occasionally spent weekends camping out on Portsmouth Island...allowing BJ to explore his old haunts and chase the gulls...always returning to Tom to seek his approval.

|                              |                                       |                     |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Lieutenant Jg. Martin        | US Coast Guard                        |                     |
| Bosun 1 <sup>st</sup> Class, | US Coast Guard                        |                     |
| Coxswain                     | US Coast Guard                        |                     |
| Jeff Jones                   | Lieut. United States Army Air Service |                     |
| Red Rooster                  | Capt. Fred Wooster.                   | USAAS               |
| ‘Tom’ Thomas J. Corder       | Shoulder wound                        | Boston & Philly     |
| ‘Leon’ Leonard Kerry         | Leg wound                             | New Bern & Oriental |
| Ava Kerry                    | Leon’s sister                         | Oriental            |
| ‘Newt’ Gerald Newton         | 1 <sup>st</sup> Plane Pilot           | Morehead City       |
| Portsmouth, Isl.             | Cpl. Corder’s                         | Beach Camp          |
| ‘BJ’ Black Jack Pershing     | Black Lab                             | Beach Camp          |
| Cape Hatteras, Ocracoke,     | Portsmouth Isle.                      | Outer Banks.        |
| Morehead City, New Bern      | Newt’s Base                           | St. Luke’s Hospital |
| Oriental,                    | Leon’s home                           |                     |
| Major Cargill                | Charging Officer                      | Fort Myers,         |
| Capt. Christy                | Capt. Wooster’s Base                  | Langley Field,      |

#### TIME LINE

|              |      |                        |
|--------------|------|------------------------|
| April 2,     | 1917 | Declaration of War     |
| October      | 1918 | Wounded in crater      |
| November 11, | 1918 | Armistice World War    |
| March        | 1919 | Philadelphia, Wobbly’s |
| August       | 1919 | Outer Banks, NC.       |
| May          | 1920 | Trial                  |