

Veteran Chronicles: Carroll's *War Letters: Selections from Some of America's Wars: World War I: Hugh A. Leslie, John J. Pershing, & Theodore Roosevelt; World War II: Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.*

## VETERAN CHRONICLES

### Veterans Day Special

Sunday, 14 November 2010

Throughout the history of our country there have been numerous occasions when her citizens have taken up arms. The War for Independence was a successful effort to separate from Great Britain, the War of 1812 prevented a take back, The Mexican-American War certified the victory of Sam Houston over Santa Anna at San Jacinto and established the Texas border at the Rio Grande, the War Between the States saw fellow citizens draw the sword against one another, World War I was touted by President Woodrow Wilson as the war to end all wars but it only served to percolate until the second act began as World War II. Following these engagements there have been "police actions," "conflicts," and "operations," but no officially "declared" wars; they include Korea, Vietnam, Desert Shield (Kuwait), Desert Storm (Iraq), Deliberate Force (Bosnia), Allied Force (Kosovo), Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan), and Iraqi Freedom (Iraq), just to name a few.

American soldiers, airmen, sailors, and Marines were engaged in most of these engagements which found them fighting the enemy within the borders of the United States or on foreign battlefields.

Our understanding of what these veterans encountered during their deployments is predominantly dependent upon reports done by war correspondents and historians. But the real eyewitnesses to the scrum of battle were those who wore the uniform of the nations' armed forces:

Soldiers who made the slog through desert, marsh, mountain, and river;

Airmen whose assignments to eliminate selected targets were met by antiaircraft fire, dog fights, and missiles;

Sailors faced battles at sea, kamikaze attacks, depth charges, bombs, and torpedoes;

Marines engage in amphibious operations that place their troops in harm's way in all the areas mentioned above.

Many veterans have provided a written history of these wars by providing their eyewitness accounts of battle and campaigns in which they were engaged. In letters home, they have provided a chronicle of personal experiences in the battles in which they fought. Today we will salute our veterans by noting a selection taken from a few of our nation's wars.

The primary source is from Andrew Carroll's *War Letters: Extraordinary Correspondence from American Wars* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2001).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.amazon.com/War-Letters-Extraordinary-Correspondence-American/dp/0743410068/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1289691326&sr=1-1](http://www.amazon.com/War-Letters-Extraordinary-Correspondence-American/dp/0743410068/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1289691326&sr=1-1)

### WORLD WAR I:

**Ship's Cook 3/C Hugh Alexander Leslie** aboard the troop transport vessel USS President Lincoln writes home giving details on the torpedo attack on the ship by German U-Boats on 31 May 1918. Of the 715 people on board, 26 men were lost with the ship.

See page 131-32.

**Gen. John J. Pershing** was born September 13, 1860 in Laclede, Missouri. He was graduated from Kirksville Missouri Normal School with a BA degree in 1880 and from West Point in 1886 as senior cadet captain, the highest honor at West Point. In our next letter he writes to his son Warren, on October 10, 1918.

See pages 140-42.

**Theodore Roosevelt** was a former president during America's engagement in World War I. He did not serve but he had four sons who served admirably:

**Brig. Gen. Theodore (Ted), Jr.**

**Capt. Kermit**

**Capt. Archibald Bulloch (Archie)**

**Lt. Quentin**

See pages 145-47.

In addition, at the beginning of the United States' involvement in the First World War, Roosevelt selected his close friend Seth Bullock, the famous sheriff of Deadwood, South Dakota, as one of 18 officers to raise a volunteer infantry division, Roosevelt's World War I Volunteers, for service in France in 1917. Congress gave Roosevelt the authority to raise up to four divisions similar to the Rough Riders; however, as commander-in-chief, President Woodrow Wilson refused to make use of the volunteers and the unit was disbanded.

### WORLD WAR II:

**Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.**, the son of movie icon Douglas Fairbanks became a very popular actor, but he also was among several Hollywood names who distinguished themselves in combat before or during their screen careers:

**Charles Durning** was among the first American troops to land on Omaha Beach at Normandy and later fought with Patton's 3d Army during the Battle of the Bulge. He was awarded three Purple Hearts and a Silver Star.

**Audie Murphy** is the most decorated soldier of World War II. His awards include the Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star with oak leaf cluster, the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star with oak leaf cluster and Valor device, Purple Heart with two oak leaf clusters, the French Legion of Honor, the French Croix de Guerre with Palm, the French Croix de Guerre with Silver Star, the Belgian Croix de Guerre with Palm, and Combat Infantry Badge.

**James Stewart** retired in 1968 as a major general having served in World War II and Vietnam. His awards include the Distinguished Service Medal, 2 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 4 Air Medals, and the French Croix de Guerre with Palm.

**Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.**, was awarded the Navy's Legion of Merit with the bronze V for valor, the Silver Star, the Italian War Cross for Military Valor, the French Legion of Honor and Croix de Guerre with Palm, and the British Distinguished Service Cross.

Pages 262-63.