

Remembering



The first successful use of poison gas in modern warfare occurred here, just north of Ypres, Belgium, on April 22, 1915. The dirt lane marks the precise location of the French front line trench where French troops died en masse.

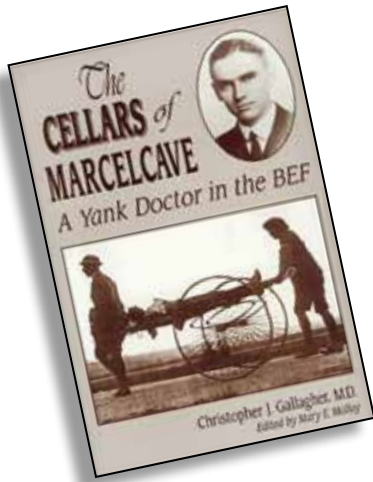
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World War I



An AQA member goes to war—a century later, another reflects

Jeffrey Gusky, MD, and Debbie Lancaster



The Cellars of Marcelcave: A Yank Doctor in the B.E.F.

Christopher J. Gallagher, MD, edited by Mary E. Malloy. (Adapted from *A Yank in the B.E.F.: Battalion Medical Officer in the Great War*, by Bernard J. Gallagher, MD, edited by William B. Gallagher, MD, and Margaret Spoo.)
Burd Street Press, Shippensburg, Pennsylvania, 1962.

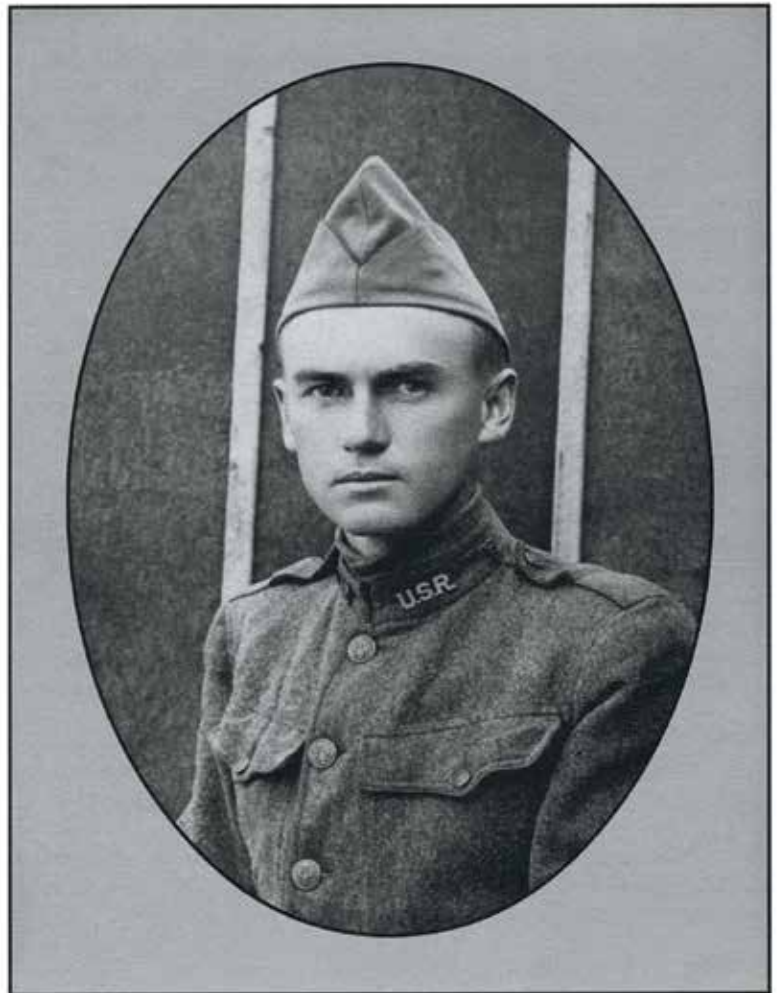
Reviewed by Debbie Lancaster, Managing Editor,
The Pharos

World War I began in July of 1914, when the Austro Hungarians declared war on Serbia. Although the United States government tried to stay out of the war, American news agencies reported on the conflict from the beginning, and the young men of the United States were eager to join by the time America entered the war on April 2, 1917.

One of the first to enlist—too eager to wait for the draft—was Bernard (Ben) Gallagher, MD (AQA, University of Minnesota, 1915), who on August 10, 1917, left Minneapolis with many of his fellow interns at Minneapolis City Hospital to go to war to “make the world safe for democracy.” On reporting for duty in Washington, DC, he learned that he had just joined, not the United States Army, but the British Army Medical Corps!

Drawn from his diaries and edited by his son and grandson, both physicians, *The Cellars of Marcelcave* is an engaging first-person account of Ben Gallagher’s nineteen months at war in France and Germany.

The book follows Gallagher from his third year of medical school in 1915 through his surgical internship and enlistment. He and his fellow newly enlisted doctors board ship in New York for the nerve-racking voyage to England, imagining lurking German submarines all the way. Gallagher is sent for training to Graylingwell War Hospital in Chichester, Sussex, where he slowly gains confidence and learns what kinds of



Lieutenant Bernard J. Gallagher, MD.
From *The Cellars of Marcelcave: A Yank Doctor in the B.E.F.*

care he can give the wounded in the trenches of the war. Of prime importance is tetanus antitoxin, which was first used in 1915. Gallagher learns that he must cherish his supply as if it were gold. The book details his deployment to France and the Front and surviving a gas attack, his division’s retreat from Amiens in March of 1918 after a major German offensive, and his capture by the Germans in the village of Marcelcave, where he was the only doctor left to care for the wounded who could not be evacuated. He is later sent to a prisoner of war camp in the Black Forest, eventually escapes, survives the “Spanish” flu, and returns home in February of 1919.

Two patients begin and end Gallagher’s narrative. The first, during Gallagher’s third year in medical school, is an eighteen-year-old boy admitted to the emergency room with a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. Gallagher is told to keep him breathing and still until he can be treated, but the boy insists on talking, dislodges the clot on his carotid artery, and dies in front of him. Gallagher is shaken:

Someone had walked out on him, someone had broken his heart, and he just couldn’t stand the pain anymore. So he put a rifle in his mouth, somehow stretched his arm down far enough to press the trigger, and ended his life. More ac-

curately, he caused the injury that eventually ended his life. But he wasn't dead when he was entrusted to me. He was alive. Alive enough to talk to me. Hansen had just assured me there was nothing I could have done, but I didn't know if I believed that. Maybe Hansen was just trying to make me feel better. Quieter, I should have kept him quieter, should have insisted he keep still. Maybe Giacomo could see I was just a medical student, not a "real" doctor. Maybe if I had conveyed more "authority," he would have kept still, he would not have talked and coughed loose that clot. But I hadn't conveyed that authority, hadn't conveyed it one bit. I hadn't kept him quiet. Not only that, I had also failed to place the tracheotomy. So I had made two mistakes, and now Mr. Giacomo was dead. I hadn't carried the demeanor of a doctor and hadn't performed like a doctor. And this young man, this handsome curly-haired young man, lay dead in front of me.^{PP4-5}

Giancomo's death continues to haunt Gallagher, but during his internship, his training in England, and work on the Front, he steadily gains the experience and self-confidence he needs to believe that he is a doctor.

The second patient central to Gallagher's narrative is wounded British soldier George Cave, met in the cellar in Marcelcave after Gallagher decides to remain in the village to care for the casualties who cannot be evacuated in the division's retreat from Amiens. George has had his hands and feet blown off and is riddled with shrapnel. Even worse, the local well has been destroyed so that it is impossible to keep the men clean, and Gallagher's supply of tetanus antitoxin is gone.

On April 14, I was making my usual nighttime rounds with morphine. I knew one poor fellow who would need a strong dose of it, my friend George Cave, the man who joked about playing a piano with his blown off fingers.

Lice and scabies tortured him, but he could not scratch himself, for he had no fingers. He could not roll over when he had to relieve himself, so we were forever trying to clean him off. Through all of this, though, he never complained, and he continued to crack the occasional joke. Tonight, he looked grayer, sicker. . . .

"Here's a little something to take the edge off, George." I injected his thigh with the morphine.

"Thanks, awfully. You know, Dr. Gallagher, the oddest thing 'appened today when I was trying to eat some soup," he said.

"What's that, George?"

"Had a devil of a time getting my mouth open. Seems as stiff as a rusty 'inge, it does," he said.

Lockjaw, the beginnings of tetanus. The thought came so fast and loud, George might have heard me think it. He had been at the back of the cellar in Marcelcave, and had received no tetanus antitoxin. . . .

"Doctor Gallagher, am I going to die?" He asked it as a point of information, as you might ask whether it was raining outside, or whether dinner would be served on time.

"Of course, it's impossible to say for sure, George, but I will say this, you are rather badly wounded." For months now I had been talking to badly wounded men, dying men, and avoiding the statement, "You are going to die." But most men could tell what I was thinking. And George Cave could tell what I was thinking.

"Could you write my Mum?" . . .

"I'll write." . . .

George started to get sleepy from the morphine. I came back an hour later and gave him a second shot. Three more times I came back that night, injecting him each time. The muscular contractures were creeping upon him now, twisting his body, turning his face into an awful leer, his breath-



Private George Cave. From *The Cellars of Marcelcave: A Yank Doctor in the B.E.F.*

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ing labored, but the morphine at least kept him somewhat sleepy and unaware.

The next morning George Cave was buried by the roadside.^{pp202-203}

As the prisoners are marched off the next day, passing the grave site, Gallagher thinks about George Cave.

I knew George Cave. I knew a hundred George Caves, a thousand George Caves. But his name wasn't always George Cave. Sometimes his name was Robson. Sometimes he wasn't buried in this cemetery, he was in a convoy with Ted Sweetser, jumping off a sinking ship into the icy Atlantic, only to be covered with burning oil. Sometimes he wore a German uniform, and laid out in No Man's Land with both legs shot, and put a bandage around a wounded Tommy's jaw. I knew George Cave all right. He disintegrated in front of me during a barrage, fell next to me crossing a field, and died a dozen times in my Aid Post. I saw George Cave sprawled on a road, buried in a trench, and laid up on a parapet. I knew George Cave.^{p206}

Before leaving for home, Gallagher writes to George's family, meets them, and tells them about George's final days. He reflects:

Death in the trenches, in No Man's Land, in the field hospital, was expected. Men assumed they would die there, and they did. The real tragedy was at home. Mrs. Cave did not want a hero for a son, a medal for the mantelpiece, or a footnote in some history book. She sought no fame, no glory, no riches. A crusade meant little to her. New friendships meant little to her. The rise and fall of great empires meant little to her. She wanted to see her son, to hold him. But she could not, for George was dead, and buried on the road to Amiens.

Mrs. Cave would grow old, and die someday, as would I. But not so George Cave. George Cave would not grow old, would not bounce a grandchild on his knee and tell a tale of long ago, for George would be forever young. Nineteen years old forever. And I would never forget him.^{p263}

Ben Gallagher returned to Minnesota, married and had a family, and established a successful practice in his home town of Waseca, where he died in 1962.

A footnote

As he was leaving Washington, DC, in 1917 for New York and then Europe, Ben Gallagher wrote to his cousin, a nun in a Chicago convent, to request prayer and to tell her a bit of news:

Oh, Marie, forgot to tell you. I made A.O.A. (Alpha



Private George Cave's gravestone. © Dr. Jeffrey Gusky.

Omega Alpha) when I graduated from Medical School. It's a national honorary medical fraternity. Some people think it's pretty important, but myself, I think it's just a bunch of baloney.^{p21}

Regardless of how he felt about AΩA, doctors like Ben Gallagher exemplify the qualities that the society has stood for since its founding in 1902, epitomized in its motto: "Be Worthy to Serve the Suffering."

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Dr. Jeffrey Gusky on Ben Gallagher, AΩA, and World War I

The Cellars of Marcelcave was brought to our attention by Dr. Jeffrey Gusky (AΩA, University of Washington, 1982). Dr. Gusky is an emergency room physician in Texas. Dr. Gusky's photographs of The Hidden World of World War I were recently featured in *National Geographic*¹ and the *New York Times*.² Craig Allen writes in that article:

The last veterans of World War I died a few years ago. When we think of that war today, we imagine an age of Edwardian sensibilities, rag-time music and people with little connection to our modern world.

But as Jeffrey Gusky, an American emergency room physician, explorer and photographer discovered, the soldiers of that era were more like us than we may think. And they left behind many reminders of their existence, hidden away in places we never knew existed—the underground cities of World War I.

Ancient rock quarries that provided the stone that built the castles, fortresses and cathedrals of France lie beneath many of the trenches dug by the invading armies of Germany and its allies, who faced the French, the British and, later, the Americans. Engineers connected the trenches to these quarries—used by all sides—which became staging areas, hospitals, canteens and shelters from artillery bombardments. Some even have street signs and maps.²

We spoke with Dr. Gusky about Ben Gallagher, George Cave, his photography, and what *he* thinks about AΩA. A transcript of our interview follows.

Dr. Gusky: This morning I reread Dr. Gallagher's narrative about George Cave and am looking at a photograph of Cave's gravestone as we speak.

I first learned about Dr. Gallagher from my friend Iain McHenry, a World War I scholar and author, and one of the most respected battlefield guides on the Western Front. We visited George Cave's grave several years ago.

Dr. Gallagher first met George Cave in a field hospital in a cellar in the French village of Marcelcave on the Somme during the retreat from the fierce fighting in 1918. Both of Cave's hands and feet had been blown off and his torso was peppered with shrapnel, but George Cave still greeted Dr. Gallagher kindly with a smile. Dr. Gallagher and George Cave became friends,

and through Dr. Gallagher's eyes we can see George Cave's indomitable spirit. Cave inspired Gallagher as our patients often inspire us. It's astonishing how often we witness awe-inspiring courage, character, and selflessness in our patients and their families though they're facing unfathomable loss. Where does this strength in the midst of adversity come from?

George Cave's spirit somehow overcame his tragic circumstances. And there's a transcendent hopefulness that infused the friendship between Cave and Dr. Gallagher till the end.

When the early signs of tetanus appeared, Cave joked with Dr. Gallagher about difficulty opening his mouth. But Dr. Gallagher knew exactly what was going on. And all he could do was to ease Cave's death.

Dr. Gallagher was inducted into AΩA a hundred years ago. But his experience of becoming a doctor was so much like our own. He was molded by the same pressure cooker that molded all of us to shape the character, leadership, and judgment that make a doctor a doctor. He went from medical student to intern to resident. He dealt with the same chaos of being a newbie, he learned to bear the same life and death responsibilities, and engaged in the same struggle to save lives.


When Gallagher was a third-year medical student, one of the first patients he was given charge of was an eighteen-year-old boy who had shot himself in the head after his girlfriend left him. One minute the boy was talking and alert. The next minute, he coughed, dislodged a clot from an arterial bleeder, and hemorrhaged to death before Gallagher's eyes. The memory of the boy's death and the self-questioning about what he could have done differently never left him.

Dr. Gallagher was a deeply caring human being and surgeon. The fact that he was an early member of Alpha Omega Alpha gives weight to our tradition. A century ago, he lived the AΩA credo, "Be Worthy to Serve the Suffering," not knowing that his example would set a standard for serving others that would last a hundred years.


The Pharos: What made you want to become a doctor?

Dr. Gusky: When I was six years old, I remember the experience of going to my pediatrician and being drawn to what he did. I had a sense, even then, that this is what I wanted to do. And it has never left me.

My pediatrician, Dr. Bud Tanis, was a deeply compassionate human being. He had this ebullient smile and a way of making children feel safe in his presence. He clearly made a



"It's astonishing how often we witness awe-inspiring courage, character, and selflessness in our patients and their families though they're facing unfathomable loss."





Mobile poison gas canisters. Courtesy National Library of Medicine.

difference in people's lives that even a six year old could appreciate. I felt drawn to these characteristics.

Once I began medical training, Dr. Tanis' capacity for caring remained an important influence. I'm sure that many of us are drawn to the practice of medicine for similar reasons. Medicine is and always will be a calling.

Dr. Gallagher's practice of medicine while a German prisoner of war touches a place so deep inside me, it almost brings tears. In the past six months I've been working on several photographic projects near places where Dr. Gallagher was held prisoner. But the meaning of his story to my life goes far beyond that. Dr. Gallagher's example touches the core of what a career in medicine has meant to me. To know that he was an early member of AΩA who volunteered to serve on the Western Front, putting his own life at risk and never knowing what tomorrow would bring is profoundly moving. He saved lives and gave comfort. What an amazing role model he is for us all.

The Pharos: How did you feel when *you* got into AΩA?

We see in the book that Dr. Gallagher didn't think it was such a big deal, but clearly he epitomized everything that AΩA stands for.

Dr. Gusky: I was thrilled. At that time I was dating a brilliant female medical student who was inducted into AΩA in our junior year. She bested me, since *my* induction didn't take place until the fall of our senior year. I smile when thinking back to those times and that relationship. I'm honored to be a member of AΩA.

I'm often asked in interviews about the intersection between my career in medicine and my career as an artist and explorer. Dr. Gallagher's story sheds light on this intersection. We all have a chance to make a difference in a way that goes beyond our routine practice of medicine. To me this is what AΩA is about: striving to leave a legacy and give something back that goes beyond our day-to-day lives. For me, AΩA is less about class ranking and more about striving to lead, unselfishness, and working hard, hard, hard to leave a legacy.

This is a special interview for me. I've done quite a few



Unidentified World War I aid post. Courtesy National Library of Medicine.

interviews since July of last year when the news of the Hidden World of World War I broke in *National Geographic*, but with this interview, there are no talking points, it's from the heart, and touches on our responsibility to make a difference, and to live on the front lines of life. To touch people.

The Pharos: It's clear in Dr. Gallagher's book, that sometimes all you could do for somebody was just touch him.

Dr. Gusky: When you think about the role of the physician in modern society, there's hardly another profession where human touch is so important. With a gentle touch we convey heartfelt concern. In a split second, we form a bond that makes the doctor-patient encounter deeply human and real . . . there is a sacred quality to this part of what we do as physicians.

Dr. Gallagher practiced medicine with almost nothing but his reassuring touch. Bandages, medications, and even water

were in short supply. But he gave his patients something of great value. He gave his patients comfort, and inspired a relentless will to survive. He made their world, as prisoners, a less chaotic, less toxic and more hopeful place.

The Pharos: So is that what you're trying to do with your photography?

Dr. Gusky: Yes. This is exactly what I'm striving to do. At its core, my photography is about hope. Photography can break through the thick walls around our emotions. It can engage conscience and inspire hope.

The people on both sides of World War I were like us in many ways. We can see it in Dr. Gallagher's story. They were modern people. They had electricity, telecommunications, trains, and subways. Like us, they lived in modern cities and experienced the same problems of dehumanization, anonymity, and numbness from being immersed in environments of

inhuman scale.

Just before World War I, no one on either side foresaw what was about to happen. Citizens were unaware of the modern high-tech weapons that were quietly being developed at the same time as all the technological marvels of the modern city. People had no idea that there was a dark side of modern progress that was as terrible as the miracles of modern progress were good. There was a fatalism about progress that blinded people to its dangers.

On both sides of the conflict people marched enthusiastically into a meatgrinder. They thought they would be home by Christmas. But by Christmas, a million were dead and there was no end in sight. They were stuck in a 450-mile trench war that devoured on average 6,000 soldiers' lives a day for four and a half years. World War I was the first modern mass destruction and the world's first confrontation with the dark side of modern progress.

The Pharos: Dr. Gallagher writes about the disconnect in behavior between men during battle, where they will kill without thought or conscience, and men dealing with prisoners of war, in which they feel an almost paternal need to care for their prisoners.

Dr. Gusky: World War I was the first time the new technologies of mass media were used to manipulate millions to go to war against people who, only months before, had been neighbors. Each side used media as a weapon to transfigure neighbors into demons. But in field hospitals, the enemy was not an abstraction. The enemy was a human being with a face and a name.

With all its wonders, modern life can profoundly diminish conscience. World War I began with massive self destructive mania on both sides of the conflict, in which blind faith in modern progress overwhelmed conscience and blinded people to extreme danger . . . danger that was right in front of them but that they couldn't see or even imagine.

Look at Germany. It was the most technologically advanced nation in Western Europe before World War I. Who could have predicted that a genocidal monster would seduce the German people to turn their backs on conscience and the rule of law, and murder millions of innocent people in the name of a utopian fantasy about racial purity in World War II?

After doing a major project on the Holocaust and this project on World War I, I've come to believe that civil society is more fragile than we think. History can turn on a dime, even in advanced Western countries. Civility that takes generations and even centuries to build can disintegrate before our eyes.

In 1919, at the end of the war, leaders sat around a table at Versailles and redrew the map of the world. Several years later, they created the Kellogg-Briand Pact, a treaty signed by all the leading nations of the world that outlawed war. Since that treaty, we've experienced the bloodiest century in human history.

My mission as a doctor, artist and explorer is to help people liberate themselves from the shadow of World War I by seeing

through the illusions about the perfectibility of human nature that blind us to danger.

Only the individual consciences of ordinary people can protect us from the dark side of human nature, while allowing the noble aspects of human nature to flourish. But it requires effort, commitment, and clarity about human nature. The unspoken bonds between people that keep our society civilized, decent and free don't survive on autopilot.

Doctors must always be at the vanguard of this struggle. Doctors must act. Doctors must lead. Doctors must inspire others to cherish a human scale in modern life that preserves conscience, decency, and sobriety about human nature.

The Pharos: When did you become interested in photography?

Dr. Gusky: In 1995 I went on a trip to Poland in the dead of winter. I was at a concentration camp called Plazów, which is the actual place where the story of *Schindler's List* took place. I found a part of the camp that was all but unknown, even to locals, where people were tortured and then murdered. This very sad place was where my abilities as a photographer first surfaced. To this day, when I create a photograph, what's guiding me is that intuitive sensibility first awakened on a cold December day at Plazów.

The Pharos: Do you photograph people?

Dr. Gusky: Almost never. I know where my strengths are in photography and photographing people is not it.

I tend to photograph haunted places, if you will, places where there is something in the air, something unexplained, some residue from the past that you can feel.

* * *

Each day through the end of the World War I Centenary in 2019, a new photograph from Dr. Gusky's Hidden World of WWI will be published on Instagram: <https://instagram.com/hiddenwwi/> and Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/HiddenWWI>. More of Dr. Gusky's photographs of the Hidden World of World War I can be seen at his web site: <http://jeffgusky.com> and on Lensculture: https://www.lensculture.com/most_viewed?modal=true&modal_type=project&modal_project_id=60393.

Information about Iain McHenry's battlefield tours may be found here: <http://www.trenchmaptours.com>.

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Remembering World War I

All photographs © Jeffrey Gusky



Iron domed observation post atop Fort Douaumont, the largest of the French Army forts encircling Verdun.



A German communications trench leading directly to the front line in the Bois d'Ailly, a portion of the Apremont Forest near St. Mihiel, France. This was the front page photograph of the *New York Times* Travel section on Sunday, December 28, 2014.



"U.S. Forever" carved by an American soldier on the wall of this farmhouse cellar staircase. The farmhouse was destroyed, but the cellar is intact.



German soldiers' mess located in an extensive tunnel system at the former village of Vauquois, a strategically important vantage point located on a butte overlooking French supply lines to Verdun. The village was destroyed by the opposing armies, but the German and French tunnels remain. The site is open to the public on a limited basis.



In this rural ossuary, the remains of more than 7,000 American, German, French, Italian, and Czech soldiers lie in state.



Inscriptions and works of art by hundreds of American WWI soldiers from New England, part of the famed Yankee Division, now exist in total darkness beneath a rural farm field in Picardy, France.



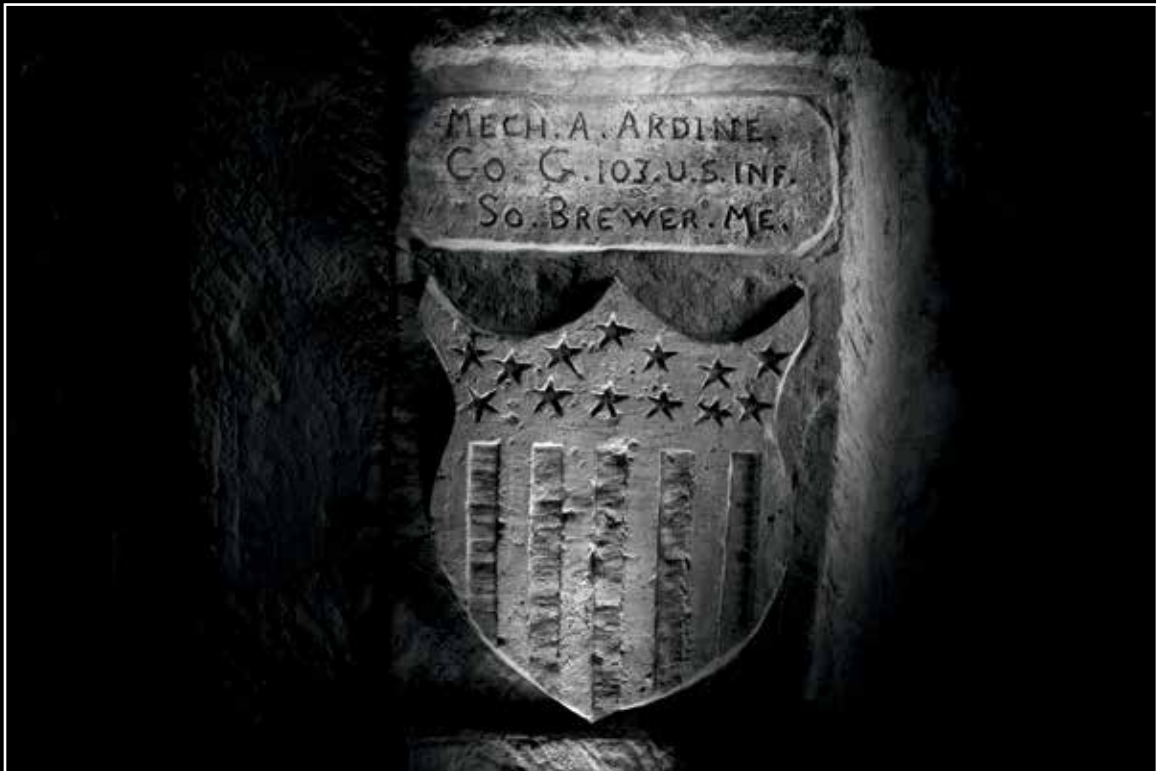
This drawing, found in another underground city inhabited by American soldiers, now exists in complete darkness. Hundreds of American soldiers lived here during 1918.



A mountainside WWI German bunker on the Hartmannswillerkopf battlefield.



A nurse drawn by an American soldier.



A large carving by Mechanic A. Ardine from South Brewer, Maine, near Bangor.



American soldier Dr. Leo Gagnon left his mark on the wall.