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U.S. Combat Morale in the World Wars: The European Theater of Operations

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U.S. COMBAT MORALE IN THE WORLD WARS: THE EUROPEAN
THEATER OF OPERATIONS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in the Lyon G. Tyler Department of History from
The College of William and Mary

By
Monica J. Cronin

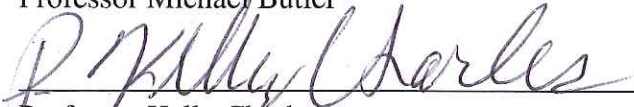
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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the combat factors that impacted the morale of the United States infantrymen in the European Theater of Operations in the world wars, and analyzes the measures taken by the military to maintain the morale of their troops. Morale was a critical, but often misunderstood factor of combat performance on the front line. By parsing the environmental factors in combat that influenced the morale of the infantry and gauging administrative response over time, a clearer understanding of the role of morale in the lives of the troops emerges, as does the importance of military authority in providing a support infrastructure for its men. This support was integral to the efficiency of units in combat – it regulated the powerful psychological undertow that drove the U.S. military’s most powerful weapon – its ground troops. Understanding morale maintenance in the world wars is also key to understanding the conversation on PTSD that developed in later conflicts, and how the military undertook to understand and process psychological combat casualties.

U.S. COMBAT MORALE IN THE WORLD WARS: THE
EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS

MONICA CRONIN

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

This paper is dually anchored within the contexts of U.S. combat infantry involvement in World War I (1914-1918) and World War II (1939-1945), time periods and experiences with which readers may be unfamiliar. Not only was the first half of the twentieth century a vastly different world from the one in which we live today, but the armed forces have always been immersed in their own linguistic world apart from the vocabulary of even their contemporary civilian counterparts. To fully understand the analysis presented in this paper, some background knowledge may be required. For the most part, I have tried to integrate necessary information into the main body of the paper or the footnotes. I have also provided a glossary for quick reference of acronyms or military terms which may not be familiar to the layman reader.

For ease of understanding, I have also provided a short breakdown of the composition of an infantry unit below.¹ As the Marines in World War I were integrated into the American Expeditionary Force (AEF), the general structure of an infantry division in the Army as promulgated by the War Department will suffice to serve as a general template for each war:

World War I

Squads (usually a corporal and seven privates)
Platoon (four or more squads)
Company (four or five platoons)
Battalion (four infantry companies)
Regiment (two to four battalions)
Brigade (two to three regiments)
Division (two to four brigades)

Divisions also contained all support services, including artillery, cavalry, medical, engineer, signal, ordnance, and quartermaster units.²

World War II

Squads (usually nine to twelve men)
Platoons (three to four squads)
Company (three to four platoons)
Battalion (three to four companies)
Division (three to four regiments)

¹ An infantry division ranged anywhere from 15,000 to 17,000 troops at full strength, but it was not uncommon for these numbers to fluctuate with the pressures of combat. It is probably safe to say that after entering combat, a rifle division was rarely at full strength because of the fluidity of casualty evacuations and replacement troops. The above figures are approximations necessitated by the constant supplementation, consolidation, and reorganization of infantry divisions at war.

² Center of Military History, *United States Army in the World War, 1917-1918: Organization of the American Expeditionary Forces*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: United States Army, 1988), 73-75; Office of the Theater Historian, *Order of Battle of the United States Army World War II: European Theater of Operations, Divisions* (Paris, France: United States Army, 1945).

I. INTRODUCTION

“Whether the soldier has physical comforts or suffers physical hardships may be a factor but is seldom the determining factor in making or unmaking his morale. A cause known and believed in; knowledge that substantial justice governs discipline; the individual’s confidence and pride in himself, his comrades, his leaders; the unit’s pride in its own will; these basic things, supplemented by intelligent welfare and recreation measures and brought to life by a spirit of mutual respect and co-operation, combine to weld a seasoned fighting force capable of defending the nation.”³

The United States Armed Forces, even as recently as the mid-twentieth century, were young and unformed, which might explain the widespread lack of coherent policy that existed across multiple facets of service. In 1917 this manifested in the enormous problems inherent in rapidly fielding an immense, well-trained, well-equipped, efficient fighting force. It existed in such fundamentals as how the army should structure itself and train its troops for war; it is no surprise that without some established modus operandi for fulfilling the most basic purposes of a military, no attention was paid to ostensibly secondary or even tertiary concerns such as what entertainment should be available for troops when out of combat. As the United States cut its modern military teeth in the global conflicts of the 1900s it came to understand through experience the critical nature of troop morale in winning prolonged wars and adapted in an attempt to meet the needs of its service members.

World War I was the crucible in which a new military was formed, and its trials brought the first recognition of the neuropsychological impacts of combat on servicemen. The term *esprit de corps*, a forerunner of morale, was still the default vocabulary when addressing the mental and emotional health of soldiers. 1917 saw the creation of the Committee on Problems of Motivation in Connection with Military Service, whose main concern was the need to stimulate

³ James A. Ulio, "Military Morale," *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 47, no. 3 (1941): 321.

civilian morale and promote troop enlistments. The committee was never fully formed, and its purpose was promptly obviated by the creation of the Bureau of Public Information in April of 1917. The proposed marriage of psychology and the military idled until the end of the war, at which point the attention of the Army was forcibly drawn from civilian morale to the failures of troop morale in the Great War.⁴ The fallout of wartime morale failure in soldiers overseas was detailed in combined proposals from the Army's Intelligence Branch, Training Committee of the General Staff, and Office of the Surgeon General, which unanimously called for a comprehensive morale program.⁵ These were the first movements in systematic morale maintenance instituted by the military bureaucracy, and they did not survive the institutional downsizing that came with demobilization through the interwar period. They did indicate a cognizance that military morale both merited and required centralized planning and control. This precept would come to fuller fruition over twenty years later, when United States infantrymen once again toed the front line.

Throughout history, military men and historians have identified the importance of morale in combat performance. From Clausewitz to Patton and beyond, theorists have pointed to the predominance of "moral factors" in making military decisions and driving troop spirit, but there existed, nonetheless, a uniform lack of definition regarding these factors. The ambiguities and complexities of morale in the realm of military psychology certainly did not assist efforts to create, bolster, and maintain healthy levels of morale where it was most critical – in front line troops. Especially after exposure to combat, morale in infantrymen took the place of the waning patriotic fervor that had initially motivated many men to join up. It "became a substitute for all

⁴ Thomas Camfield, "'Will to Win' – The U.S. Army Troop Morale Program of World War I," *Military Affairs*, vol. 41, no. 3 (October 1977), *America: History and Life with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 3, 2017), 125.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 126.

sorts of lost, valuable things ...[even] happiness itself, which had ‘disappeared along with rubber, silk and many other staples, to be replaced by the wartime synthetic, high morale, for the duration.’”⁶

The Oxford English Dictionary defines “morale” as “the confidence, enthusiasm, and discipline,” of an individual or group of people.⁷ The understanding of troop morale held by the Army at the time of the world wars, though, was more complex. It was molded by the experience of war itself and communicated by such historians as Paul Fussell, who benefitted from being an Army infantry officer in World War II. He had first-hand exposure to the conditions of life in the infantry and shared their mentality of war. By the time he entered combat in the 1940s, the definition of morale had swelled to a “virtual treatise;” its content, rhetoric, and purpose revealed that the Army recognized morale as a multifaceted and unsettled concept. It also seems the Army recognized morale as a spirit the military itself had a significant stake in promoting. Fussell defines it as:

Morale: Prevailing mood and spirit, conducive to willing and dependable performance, steady self-control, and courageous, determined conduct despite danger and privations, based upon a conviction of being in the right and on the way to success and upon faith in the cause or program and in the leadership, usually connoting, esp. when qualified by the adjective *high*, a confident, aggressive, resolute, often buoyant, spirit of wholehearted cooperation in a common effort, often attended particularly by zeal, self-sacrifice, or indomitableness.⁸

Considering the innate importance of morale to fighting men, historians have devoted relatively little attention to its detailed study. Its nebulous nature and the lack of an accepted means to quantify or measure morale make it notoriously difficult to link morale with combat

⁶ Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 144.

⁷OED Online. January 2017. Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/122088?redirectedFrom=morale>.

⁸ Fussell, *Wartime*, 144.

performance or military efficiency. Factors like logistics, technology, strategy, and other more concrete and measurable subjects have instead been used to explain the outcomes of battles and wars – consequentially published work on morale has been rather limited. This was the case until the United States became involved in Vietnam. The Army coming out of that conflict was largely demoralized, and it encountered a public that viewed the war as a waste of American lives for no military, political, or economic gain.⁹ The utter breakdown of morale in this war led to a surge of interest on the topic in military and historical circles. Modern scholars such as Maitkus, Griffith, Gal, and Manning focus on the combat rotation schedule for deployed service members, or they look at the modern conflicts in the Middle East and evaluate how morale determinants in modern war are similar across armies.¹⁰ It is after this initial interest that historians began tracking morale back to earlier wars.

In the late 1980s the first substantial piece on morale in World War I was published by John Baynes, examining how men endured years of harrowing life in the trenches.¹¹ Baynes and other historians like Brian Bond and B.H. Liddell Hart, who have written on World War I, focused primarily on the experience of the British and French, informed by the interest of the authors' own nationality and the comparative lack of time Americans spent in the lines during

⁹ Although rates of psychological combat casualties were much lower in Vietnam than in World War I, World War II, or the first year of Korea, there was little psychiatric expertise in the forward operating zones, and those medical professionals who might have been able to diagnose combat stress reactions were still operating in a frame of reference developed in World War II. This reference point was a large-scale war of open, incessant movement against a largely visible and equipotent enemy – the opposite of combat conditions in Vietnam. For more reading on the combat stress environment and diagnosis in Vietnam, see David Marlowe's *Psychological and Psychosocial Consequences of Combat and Deployment*, which is cited elsewhere in this work and can be found in the bibliography.

¹⁰ Mark Vaitkus and James Griffith, "An Evaluation of Unit Replacement on Unit Cohesion and Individual Morale in the U.S. Army All-Volunteer Force," *Military Psychology*, vol. 2, no 4 (1990), http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15327876mp0204_3; Reuven Gal and Frederick J. Manning, "Morale and Its Components: A Cross-National Comparison," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, vol. 17 (1987), doi:10.1111/j.1559-1816.1987.tb00319.x.

¹¹ John Baynes, *Morale: A Study of Men and Courage* (Garden City Park, NY: Avery, 1988).

that war.¹² Furthermore, these writings often referenced morale while failing to examine its structure or causes.

Writings on morale in World War II focus on the eastern and Pacific fronts, where the savagery of combat and the racial dehumanization of the enemy together created theretofore unknown levels of psychological and emotional stress on combatants. Because of the titanic collision of worldviews so inextricably woven into the fabric of World War II, writings on morale tend to focus on the ways ideology in particular builds morale and escalates the barbarization of warfare. Throughout these writings morale still retains its amorphous, indefinable nature – aside from ideology there is only passing mention made of the things that create and strengthen morale, and no examination is made of what a military organization can do outside of a man’s individual nature to influence his morale.

The problem of engaging in a literature review on the particular topic of morale in the ETO is that analyses on the topic do not exist, especially for World War I. When an historian like William Chaikin writes about a military structure that impacts morale, in his case the system of supply in Europe, it is a functional history designed to detail operations as opposed to investigate human impact – for example, the impact of supply on morale.¹³ While historians like Paul Fussell, Michael Stephenson, John McManus, and Stephen Ambrose *have* touched on morale in one way or another in their works, it is a behind-the-scenes actor. It is a brief paragraph here, or a single line in a letter there – a poorly-defined specter implicitly understood by both veterans of the wars and later researchers as important, but moving without much force through written histories. There has not been examination of what *creates* morale, or how its

¹² Brian Bond, *War and Society in Europe, 1870-1970* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998).; B.H. Liddell Hart, *A History of the First World War* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1964).

¹³ William Chaikin, “Quartermaster Supply in the AEF, 1917-1918,” *Quartermaster Review* (May-June 1950), last modified 02 September 2008, http://old.qmfound.com/supply_aef.htm.

presence in the Army of the world wars has any bearing on current study. That is the place of this work.

First and foremost, this paper is designed to assemble the various threads of tangential scholarship on morale. The question of how to measure morale has been historically problematic, both for historians and military commanders. In addition to observing actual combat behavior, a number of other factors contributed to the calculus of morale. These can be broadly classified into three categories, into which this paper is divided: there are first those factors arising naturally and uncontrollably from the very conditions of combat; secondarily there were those aspects of military life that, while not designed for morale maintenance, helped men feel mentally and emotionally prepared for combat and thus boosted their morale once in battle; and lastly there were those programs created, albeit imperfectly, by the military and civilian agencies that were designed intentionally to target the morale of combat troops. Research has been done on many of the subsections addressed in this work, but generally not with reference to their role in troop morale, and they have not been brought together in holistic examination. This paper attempts to do just that, taking a narrow scope to Americans in the European Theater of Operations (ETO), as attempting to address all theaters across two wars would be a substantially larger task than could be completed here.

As a multidimensional contextualization of morale in the ETO, this paper acknowledges and embraces the complexity of the topic by drawing out and examining the differences between the aforementioned categories of morale factors. It first defines morale, as has already been done, in order that structural “influences on morale” might be understood to be impacting a soldier’s performance, courage, discipline, or enthusiasm in performing his task. It takes what is arguably the first modern war, World War I, and draws out the environmental influences on

morale encountered there by American troops. It then looks at the response of the U.S. Army to faltering morale in the AEF, and the structural and programmatic changes made through World War II in an attempt to better serve the needs of combat troops. It closes by setting the stage for the close relationship that would emerge between morale and psychological casualties – a conversation that would not start taking place in earnest until the Vietnam era – and probes the military’s institutional stake in intentional morale maintenance.

II. RESPONSE TO THE COMBAT ENVIRONMENT

“It was terrible, for the Boche dropped shells on the trench all along the entire distance. The men were tired, and their morale extremely low; and of course nervous.”¹⁴

The changes to military institutional policy on morale in World War II began with the observation of men in combat in World War I and the ways in which the United States armed forces grew and established themselves in the first half of the twentieth century. The military bureaucracy was only able to implement mechanisms of morale maintenance after gaining hard won experience on the ground, and it was a process that continued through the end of war in 1945. On Maslow’s hierarchy, physiological needs manifest themselves as the most immediate concern to a human being, the most basic force dictating motivation and behavior. This baseline condition of living was the natural first response point of a military looking to care for the physical and mental health of its soldiers.

When a state or individual takes it upon themselves to raise an armed force, provision for those fighting is a tactical concern second only to identifying the enemy. When speaking of the world wars in particular this was often difficult enough under perfect combat conditions, to say nothing of the complicating weather factors that challenged performance and supply in the ETO. In addition to the Germans, infantrymen in the world wars contended with a landscape that was itself adversarial. The ways in which the U.S. military identified and addressed this were means by which morale could be affected, making the timeline of lessons learned on this front a story of unwitting morale maintenance.

¹⁴ Edward Bates to Parents, September 30, 1918, Letter, "In-my-dugout-on-the-hill," Somewhere-in-France, in the possession of Michael Miller, U.S. Marine Corps University Foundation.

Environment and Warfare

“...*The mud was not just churned up earth, but compounded of organic wastes, empty shells, iron scraps and rotting human flesh.*”¹⁵

The United States, for the most part, does not choose the land on which battle breaks out. Speaking psychologically, however, it was comparatively lucky when sending men to the ETO. For Americans, there were worse places to be than western Europe when embroiled in catastrophic global conflict. For many of the men fighting in the European Theater of Operations, the mental shift occasioned by the move to Europe was not as dramatic as it could have been – as it would be for other American men fighting in the Pacific in World War II, or in later conflicts like Korea and Vietnam. Beyond the shared cultural heritage, the largest percentage of men who volunteered for service in both world wars came from the South and West of the United States; to men from more rural or nonmetropolitan areas, the farmlands of France in summer would have looked and felt familiar.¹⁶

This could be both a blessing and a curse. While men in both wars looked with interest on the local inhabitants, casting a critical eye on their plowing techniques and the design of their farms, they also recognized themselves and their families in the streams of displaced French fleeing from the encroaching Germans.¹⁷ As shocking and pitiable a sight as it was for even the most urban of American soldiers to encounter the plight of the rural French, a high percentage of men serving were particularly moved in their personal identification with the homes and fields through which they marched.

¹⁵ Santanu Das, “Slimescapes,” in *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

¹⁶ David Segal and Mady Segal, “America’s Military Population,” *Population Bulletin*, vol. 59 no. 4 (2002): 6.

¹⁷ James C. Nelson, *I Will Hold: The Story of USMC Legend Clifton B. Cates, From Belleau Wood to Victory in the Great War* (New York: Penguin, 2016), 71.

That is, when they looked at all *like* farmland. The powerful mechanical destruction wreaked across Western Europe in World War I was the inauguration of a new era of warfare. Massive artillery bombardments on an unprecedented scale steadily reduced the fields of France to a blasted hellscape of stunted trees and indistinct horizons blurred by mud and water. The quagmire was a soupy mix of human remains and murdered nature, and men lived in it for months on end. In some more strenuous sectors, it was not uncommon for men to go without a proper wash for over a month; occasionally men could not even unlace their boots for weeks.¹⁸ Smoke and displaced earth obscured the battlefield, and what little air was left was often choked with a deadly new invention, poison gas. Discomfort in war is not the exception but the rule, and especially for the infantry in the AEF the landscape itself was combative in a way that taxed the will of men to fight. As Private Paul Curtis wrote to his brother Mitchell: “I don’t think any man can exactly explain combat. It’s beyond words. Take a combination of fear, anger, hunger, thirst, exhaustion, disgust, loneliness, homesickness, and wrap that all up in one reaction and you might approach the feelings a fellow has. It makes you feel mighty small, helpless and alone.”¹⁹

But the infantryman was not entirely alone. In addition to his fellow combat troops, he was backed by a vast network of behind-the-lines support systems designed to enable him to fight by mitigating the ability of the environment to slow or decommission the troops. This supply was part and parcel of fighting a war – it was not designed especially to cater to the emotional needs of the infantry in World War I. The ability of the military to equip its fighters

¹⁸ J.M. McClellan to Mother, June 29, 1918, Letter, France, in the possession of Michael Miller, U.S. Marine Corps University Foundation.

¹⁹ Private Paul Curtis to brother, in *War Letters: Extraordinary Correspondence From American Wars*, Andrew Carroll, ed. (New York: Scribner, 2001), 223. Curtis would die at Anzio three days after writing this letter. He was one of three Curtis brothers to die during the war.

adequately did, however, make a colossal difference in their feelings of preparedness and comfort. This, in turn, could have serious ramifications for the state of troop morale.

The AEF encountered problems meeting the demands of the environmental conditions in France almost immediately. They were building a new army practically from scratch, and this required enormous logistical coordination and output of materiel. As the first American troops landed in France in 1917, they were supplied by the L.O.C., or Line of Communications, whose problems were legion. It was a vastly inefficient system riddled with redundancies, and on top of its failures to supply American troops it also stopped up French roads, rail yards, storehouses, and ports, resulting in official complaints lodged with the Army's commanders.²⁰ In 1918, General John J. Pershing replaced the L.O.C. with the S.O.S., or Services of Supply.²¹ The S.O.S. took on many tasks, among them: operating water ports; running combat convoys; regulating rail lines; fixing automotive and horse-drawn vehicles; maintaining hospitals; milling lumber to create the transient camps through which soldiers passed on their way to or from the front; and, most importantly to the combat infantryman, feeding and clothing the AEF.²²

The job of providing food, clothing, and personal equipment, as well as providing laundry and bathing services, fell particularly to the Quartermaster Corps. It was this group that most directly impacted the situation of combat troops. They had a monumental task at the outset, and considering the U.S. military was starting from practically nothing, the growth of the S.O.S. and Quartermaster Corps are impressive. The Quartermaster Corps entered active operation in

²⁰ Frank Freidel, *Over There: The American Experience in World War I* (Short Hills, NJ: Burford Books, 2002), 76.

²¹ General John J. Pershing was the commander of the American Expeditionary Forces in the ETO in World War I. He began his military career as a West Point cadet, and is the only commander to be promoted during his lifetime to General of the Armies of the United States, the highest rank that can be attained in the U.S. Army.

²² Alexander F. Barnes, "Over There: Army Expeditionary Forces Logistics in World War I," *Army Logistician*, vol. 41, no. 4 (July 2009), *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 23, 2017), 20.

1917 at a strength of a little over 1,200 men and met the Armistice just over a year later at a strength of around 100,000.²³

The QM Corps aimed to maintain a stock of ninety days' troop supply in France, and pioneered a system of depots that relayed supplies to the front in a timely manner. Still, the system could not keep up with the rate of replenishment required to keep combat troops adequately equipped and fed. From observation of the French and British in battle, the Corps anticipated the rate of destruction and combat losses would be high, but experience exceeded all expectation. Calls from the AEF for increased shipments of clothing and equipment brought in a constant stream of supplies, but the drain was so rapid that stocks rarely reached minimum reserve levels. The same problem would again arise in World War II.²⁴

In 1944 the western Allies again entered France, launching their offensive in the early summer. After an initial push at Normandy that brought Americans once more into the ETO, World War II in some ways resembled its immediate predecessor. The bocage terrain of the northern French countryside brought the hurling force of the Allied advance to a slow, attritional grind. The bocage was pastureland of small fields divided by narrow lanes edged with highly banked hedges, or groves of trees. In effect operating as trenches, the bocage crippled Allied armored units, reduced visibility, funneled troops into narrow fields of action, and allowed the German *Wehrmacht* to challenge every inch of forward momentum and frustrate aspirations of open movement.²⁵

²³ Chaikin, "Quartermaster Supply in the AEF."

²⁴ Colonel Tom F. Wayne, "Clothing and Cold Injury," in *Preventive Medicine in World War II, vol. III, Personal Health Measures and Immunization*, John Coates, Ebbe Hoff, and Phebe Hoff eds. (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, Office of the Surgeon General, 1955), 69.

²⁵ Richard Schimpf, "Fighting of the 3rd Parachute Division During the Invasion of France from June to August, 1944," in FMS 3rd Para Div 19, *Foreign Unit Histories Collection*, The United States Army War College, Carlisle Barracks.

The winter further reflected this inter-war similarity, as the Allies were stalemated along the western frontiers of Nazi Germany. Then, again, they would be pitted against nature itself. A terrible winter had set in across the Ardennes, blanketing the front lines in snow and ice and compounding the misery of the infantry occupying the front line in the Battle of the Bulge. In many respects, they lived akin to their compatriots twenty years earlier – in crude, slushy dugouts that were ill-equipped and ill-protected. Temperatures at their most balmy reached the twenties.

The intervening autumn between the bocage and the Bulge was a fight of rapid advance – an entirely different set of circumstances than those facing troops or supply officers in World War I. For the quartermasters this meant that in addition to problems replenishing material losses on the front line came the difficulties attendant on simply keeping up with the rapid advance of units across the ETO. For men, this meant sheer exhaustion – the origin of the terms “combat exhaustion” and “battle fatigue.”²⁶ When supplies could not keep up with them, it meant that foot gear was inadequate, in some cases literally falling off a man’s feet as he pursued the enemy. It meant that as the year progressed, cold-weather clothing had to be improvised from a mix of long underwear, sweaters, fatigue jackets, and wool gloves. It meant that as men settled into their dugouts without the ability to bathe or warm themselves, trench foot, frozen feet, and frostbite became distressingly common.²⁷

Luckily for the infantry, the lessons learned by the quartermasters in the AEF were largely retained in World War II. For food, the QM Corps learned to save valuable shipping and storage space by experimenting with new types of boneless meat, and the provision of the first

²⁶ Peter Bourne, ed., *The Psychology and Physiology of Stress* (New York: Academic Press, 1969), xviii.

²⁷ John C. McManus, *Grunts: Inside the American Infantry Combat Experience, World War II Through Iraq* (London: Penguin Books, 2010), 129.

dehydrated foods.²⁸ By World War II new methods of production and packaging along with improved transportation led to more diverse and elaborate rations – which in any case did not prevent troops from grumbling about the monotony or quality of food provided. Clothing would remain problematic, especially during the bitter winter of 1944.

Supply was intimately wrapped up with morale in several ways. In the first, most obvious place, it kept men alive. Proper clothing mitigated to some degree the ability of the harsh elements to send a man to a field hospital before the Germans had the chance, and while soldiers are certainly trained to bear many deprivations, there is only so long a man can last without food. This relationship is easily understood. In a less obvious, though still fairly intuitive way, being adequately supplied and possessing the ability to take advantage of these provisions was a psychological and emotional comfort.

Sergeant Gantter, writing during World War II, thought that if he “cracked,” or in other words became a psychological casualty of combat exhaustion, it would “be from sheer physical discomfort, from too much mud and snow and water.”²⁹ The ability of the military to alleviate their situation by providing the necessities of existence was critical to the spirit of the troops. Furthermore, whether it be the rare chance to bathe or even the simple ability to break into ration cans, access to supplies meant a man had survived another day and was, at least for the moment, relatively safe. A common refrain after an attack operation in the ETO in World War II was, “is it safe to burn a box,” or “do we have time to burn a box?”³⁰ The “box” was the packaging in which an assault, or “K,” ration came. The inner cardboard box, coated in paraffin, was hooked over the side of a canteen cup of water and lit. The box would burn hot enough to heat the water

²⁸ Chaikin, “Quartermaster Supply in the AEF.”

²⁹ Raymond Gantter, *Roll Me Over: An Infantryman's World War II* (New York: Ivy Books, 1997), 35.

³⁰ Edward Cope, *I Was an Overseas Replacement Officer: WWI European Theater of Operations (ETO)*, Memoir, in the possession of Ann Cope Mueller, 15.

for coffee, as well as warm whatever can of food was included in the rations – eggs, ham, or bacon being common options. To have a ration was comfort in itself. To have the momentary safety to burn a box was a psychological luxury – a reprieve from fear, be it ever so brief, in the valley of death.

Facing Death and Encountering the Enemy

“We moved on, each of us inching along the brink of his own extinction, never speaking of what we considered unspeakable.”³¹

Death is the central reality of life for an infantryman in a combat zone. As the popular military author Michael Stephenson writes, “War is about many things, but at its core it is about killing others or getting killed.”³² It may come in the form of direct assault from the enemy, or in the invisible chokehold of an insidious gas. It may come raining out of the sky with an artillery barrage or explode from behind in a cloud of piercing shrapnel. Often it comes to the next man over, a threat and a reaffirmation that war is nothing more sophisticated than slaughter politics.

The moment at which a soldier meets his death is the confluence of many factors into a single instance: the weapon that kills him, the enemy wielding the weapon, the tactics that brought them into contact, and the ability of medical services to save his life (or, a regrettable historical reality, to hasten its end) to mention a few.³³ At the moment of his death, a soldier also exists within the web of his own attitudes regarding its justice. He has already formed his own opinion of the cause for which he is dying, the need for his sacrifice, and its impact on those he leaves behind whether they be fellow soldiers or a family at home. The ways these conditions

³¹ William Manchester, *Goodbye, Darkness* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980), 246.

³² Michael Stephenson, *The Last Full Measure: How Soldiers Die in Battle* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2012), xiv.

³³ *Ibid.*, xiv.

and beliefs work upon the psychology of men in combat are fundamental to the way they approach the entire enterprise.

Death was omnipresent for combat troops in the world wars. Not only did a man face the prospect of his own death, but he confronted its reality daily in the loss of his companions and the corporal remnants of combat often left decaying on the battlefield for lack of ability to remove them. As a more general abstract, death as a facet of life had to be met and conquered.³⁴ In World War I particularly, the human waste of war was unsettling in its commonality. Bodies were used to support gun emplacements in the trenches, or as landmarks by which to find the way in their labyrinthine passages.³⁵ Enemy corpses were raided for souvenirs, and fallen Allies were looked to for ammunition or even clothing, especially shoes, that was in better condition. The ability of men to persist in war in the face of these horrors is a testament not only to the strength of the men involved, but also the power and control the military could exert over them.

While fear was acknowledged to be an integral element of combat regardless of how little or how much action a man had seen, soldiers often experienced a subconscious feeling that death might occur to anyone *except* themselves. This is unsurprising. War, after all, is the enterprise of young men, and young men rarely think they may die. Once they have undergone their own “baptism by fire,” however, there is a more general resignation – a fatalism of the front lines reigned by an assumption that if a bullet or a piece of shrapnel from a bomb had a man’s name on it, there was nothing to be done.³⁶ Men became somewhat inured to the constant omnipresence of death and the perpetual threat under which they lived. After returning from a

³⁴ Paul Wible, *The End of the Marching Street, November 30, 1944*, in Collection of the 102nd Infantry Division, 1944-1984, The United States Army War College, Carlisle Barracks.

³⁵ George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 5.

³⁶ Stanley Washburn, "What Makes Morale?" *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 5, no. 4 (1941): 520.

supply run to a foxhole that had been blown apart by enemy bombardment, missing him by moments and destroying all personal property but what he wore on his person, a private would write to his family:

My, it was funny! We think nothing of experiences like these, become so used to death and destruction... just think, it is only a question of a few short years at best, until we will all be up there, so don't grieve, my loved ones, for a minute if I should be killed. I don't feel disheartened at all for I have faith in all our prayers. Just thought I'd write the above to assure you that I had no fear of death whatever.³⁷

When men have reached this point, their motivation in combat, by extension their discipline, and by combination their morale spiral into a tightly bound nucleus of loyalty to their battle buddies and the quest for personal survival. Higher ideals of patriotism or honor tended to melt away in the face of combat, and morale sustained by loyalty to fellow men within individual small units was essential to the continuance of the mission.³⁸ The group ties of the infantry are those of a surrogate family. These bonds of intimacy and strength are perhaps expected, considering that men were thrown into training and war without any means or space for assimilating old relationships into their new life. They turned instinctively inward toward their new companions. One sergeant would write of his fellows, "They were my buddies. That's a word that's only understood by soldiers who have lived under the same blankets, gathered around the same chow can, and looked at death together."³⁹

The inexorable mortality that faced these men entering combat together led to a dramatic disillusionment of war that followed hard on the heels of a man's first combat experience. In World War I, this stemmed partially from the unfamiliarity of American troops with their

³⁷ Reid Cranford to Mother, June 20, 1918, Letter, France, in the possession of Michael Miller, U.S. Marine Corps University Foundation.

³⁸ Wayne Paul to Parents, July 1, 1918, Letter, "At the Front," France, in the possession of Michael Miller, U.S. Marine Corps University Foundation

³⁹Robert Sandels, "The Doughboy: Formation of a Military Folk," *American Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1 (1983): 74.

German counterparts, and vice versa. After several years stalemated in the lines against the British and the French, the Germans were encountering Americans for the first time – a force “they had not reckoned on, a force as steady and confident as themselves.”⁴⁰ German reports in 1918 found the Americans brave, physically fit, willing to take casualties, and reluctant to surrender, though lacking training and in some cases poorly led.⁴¹ Americans were also finding that their enemy was not weak; though most kept up a fair faith in their ability to “lick” the Germans, it was noted that the Boche were capable of “malicious work” and put up a “very stiff resistance.”⁴² This was a hard check for the optimistic young American forces. Following his experience in the June 1918 push in Belleau Woods, Marine Lieutenant Merwin Silverthorn would write:

[June 1918] will always be a month, that tho [sic] I live to be a hundred years old, whenever I recall it, I will have to thank God that I am now writing this to you; and a pang of deep sorrow will always pierce my heart, when I think of some bosom friends, men young in years, but men from the ground up, who have made the supreme sacrifice, and with a smile on their faces, and their eyes lifted to God, but still plunging forward in that seething mass of hell, have met their end like true Americans. It is a sight that will always be vivid; and an experience that has changed me over night, from a youth seeking adventure to a man who has shaken dice with death, who has seen that grim monster reach out his cold, scaly hand and pick out so many brave men...⁴³

Likewise, in World War II, a soldier wrote that “A man can prepare himself for combat but not until he gets there does he really understand what it is like. I was constantly in fear – for my men, not necessarily myself.” This same man would readily describe the *Wehrmacht* as

⁴⁰ Albertus Catlin, *With the Help of God and a Few Marines: The Battles of Chateau Thierry and Belleau Wood* (Garden City: Doubleday, Page, and Co., 1919), 92.

⁴¹ David Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall: Victory and Defeat in 1918* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2011), 254.

⁴² “Boche” was a derogatory slang term for a German soldier, often used contemptuously by American soldiers at the front.; Allan Neil to Mother, October 17, 1918, Letter, in the possession of Michael Miller, U.S. Marine Corps University Foundation.; Julius Turrill to Father, October 13, 1918, Letter, in the possession of Michael Miller, U.S. Marine Corps University Foundation.

⁴³ Merwin Silverthorn to Family, July 1, 1918, Letter, in the possession of Michael Miller, U.S. Marine Corps University Foundation.

“disciplined, tenacious, accurate, and at times ruthless,” but this did not stop his irrepressible American spirit from writing that after meeting Germans in combat he could not help but conclude “they were not so invincible after all.”⁴⁴

The fatalism that developed among men helped, to some extent, in inoculating them against debilitating terror in combat. One man would write to his father, “I know hell and I know death now, Dad, and its [sic] nothing to me except to any that death here is a welcome paradise to the hell that the living and wounded go through.”⁴⁵ The wounded were made to suffer through a field hospital system that was at times ill-equipped to minister to their needs, and the living were made to continue living through the hell of war while carrying the added weight of those who fell before and all around them. An officer in World War II responded tersely to the question of combat’s effect on morale with the word, “adverse,” and when prodded further about what made it so, replied, the “death of friends and comrad[e]s.”⁴⁶

The grind of these continual losses could lead to a barbarization of direct interaction with the enemy on the battlefield. In a shocking letter home, one Marine in 1918 wrote to his family:

[the Germans threw] down their guns and ran or yelled “kamerad.” Here it was that the bayonet came in for a goodly share. You may think it heartless of us, but let me ask you this. If you have had your pals killed alongside of you, and have missed death yourself a number of times, by inches, are you going to have mercy on the coward that shoots wounded men, on the dog that kills women and children, the skunk that sets fire to hospitals, the people who deem themselves ordained by God to rule the world. Would you have mercy?⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Benjamin S. Silver, “WWII Survey,” Box 5, *Benjamin S. Silver Papers*, United States Army War College Archives, Carlisle Barracks.

⁴⁵ Norman Heffron to Father, June 18, 1918, Letter, in the possession of Michael Miller, U.S. Marine Corps University Foundation.

⁴⁶ Silver, “WWII Survey,” USAWC Archives.

⁴⁷ Merwin Silverthorn to Family, July 1, 1918, Letter, in the possession of Michael Miller, U.S. Marine Corps University Foundation.

This behavior was certainly not a norm in the ETO. Many prisoners were taken, and many reports would indicate that these prisoners had not been maltreated. The relentless nature of the wars, however, combined with the lack of control felt by men in combat zones, the rage created by the loss of fellow soldiers, and a ready scapegoat to be found in the Germans occasionally found release in surges of aggression that may not have been strictly necessary.

The military's solution to this challenging situation was the delegation of morale maintenance to small unit leadership throughout World War I and into World War II. The AEF outsourced morale monitoring to the lowest levels of authority, meaning non-commissioned officers (or non-coms) and junior grade officers who maintained the closest contact with infantry in platoons and squads were given the responsibility of identifying potential problems and deciding what their men needed most to remain functional.⁴⁸ This also meant that when aberrant behavior was addressed or any solutions were implemented, it was subjective and inconsistent throughout the force. One of the most conspicuous failings of the military bureaucracy in addressing systemic morale maintenance likely lies in this lack of institutionalized policy or oversight.

On the other hand, this empowerment of small units did boost cohesion at an infantry regiment's foundation. War with the infantry, broken down to its lowest component, is the actions of squads, and the violence described above arose because men were fiercely loyal to those with whom they served most immediately.⁴⁹ Placing the responsibility for a soldier's

⁴⁸ This is more implied by contemporary training manuals than it is written outright. In the 1917 Manual of Military Training, the section on combat contains the following: "Modern combat demands the highest order of training, discipline, and morale on the part of the infantry... [efficient leadership] must be depended upon for success." It further states that individual unit officers "should take an active interest in everything that affects the amusement, recreation, happiness and welfare of their men." [James A. Moss, *Manual of Military Training*, second edition (George Banta and Publishing Co.: Menasha, WA 1917)].

⁴⁹ Jim Garter, "A View From the Rear," Memoir, Box 5, *103rd Infantry Division Papers* (The United States Army War College Archives, Carlisle Barracks).

mental and emotional strength in the hands of his immediate field commanders strengthened the trust that existed between men and their officers, which in turn led to more effective performance in the field. It also helped coalesce unit identity, along with the prevalent opinion in combat units that they had a harder, more dangerous job than any other unit in service. Many units perceived that they had been called in specifically to succeed where another outfit had already failed.⁵⁰ These ideas were usually untrue, created as they generally were out of biases and the pervasiveness of incomplete information, but they did build unit pride and boost unit cohesion – building blocks of morale.

Those who fought in the ETO in the first half of the twentieth century were done a disservice by the military establishment regarding combat loss. Institutional efforts to help soldiers process death in the war zone were incidental or incomplete at best. Infantrymen could only truly pause to deal with grief during the recreation time they received when they were pulled off the lines, or during impromptu memorial services directed by the chaplains with whom they served. These are both addressed in Section III of this paper. While infantry remained in the lines, they relied on the strength of their unit bonds and their own sense of discipline to maintain morale in the face of loss. This discipline was largely dictated by two factors: training and leadership.⁵¹ These are two of the structural morale influencers that were not intended as such, and here the men of the United States military may have been at a slight disadvantage in the ETO.

⁵⁰ McManus, *Grunts*, 156.

⁵¹ John M. Spitzer, "Leadership and Combat Motivation: The Critical Task," *Military Review*, vol. 79, no. 3 (May 1999), *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed February 11, 2017), 67.

III. G.I. LIFE MEETS MORALE

“Before his resignation in 1915 Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan showed his disdain for the concept of military preparedness by maintaining that, should it ever prove necessary, “a million men would spring to arms in a day.” How long a time would be required to train the million men and how the million arms to which they were to spring would be found were among the fundamental questions that Bryan would not be called upon to answer.”⁵²

The environment of war and the ways in which American G.I.s began to encounter the enemy in the European Theater of Operations were factors that impacted the morale of the infantry outside of military control. The Army may have been able to respond with ex post facto attempts to mitigate their effects, but it could not fundamentally alter their existence. The next logical step is to investigate the ways in which the Army proactively moved to create high morale in its troops, but there is first an intermediate category of institutional structures preceding deliberate programmatic change. These are the standard issue aspects of military life that were going to exist regardless, and simply happened to influence morale.

How prepared men feel upon entering combat directly correlates with the discipline and willingness to advance they display. This preparedness is an amalgam of multiple factors, but in two large ways it is driven by the training an infantryman receives and his faith in the men who are leading him. In a paper written for the Army War College’s Military Studies Program, Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth Knight argues that in combat, nothing substitutes for good training and good leadership.⁵³ In this section, the condition of basic infantry and advanced leadership/officer training in World War I and its expression in combat is examined. This are then followed through World War II in order to draw out the lessons learned between the two

⁵² Mary Gillett, *The Army Medical Department, 1917-1941* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 2009), 1.

⁵³ Kenneth Knight, “Similarities/Differences in Combat/Peacetime Leadership,” Master’s Thesis, U.S. Army War College, 1992, 4.

conflicts and how the resulting improvements changed the nature of morale maintenance in the ETO. Beyond training and leadership, the medical and chaplain corps are also looked to as standard military departments that had tremendous power over troop morale on the front lines.

Training

“To meet the increased demand for officers it became necessary for The Infantry School to curtail sharply the length of its courses and to increase the number of classes... The required curtailment of time available made it necessary to make certain [cuts].”⁵⁴

There were a variety of reasons the military training program in 1917 existed in the form it did, but they can largely be boiled down to three main points: the military’s lack of preparedness for and experience in fielding soldiers in a large-scale, modern, twentieth-century conflict; the growing desperation of both the European situation and the other Allied nations that necessitated an accelerated deployment schedule; and disagreements with these same Allied nations over tactics and the autonomy of an American force.

Despite being an increasingly prominent industrial power with the population to support a robust and well-equipped military, the United States military before 1917 was in operation mainly as a constabulary force powered by voluntary service.⁵⁵ While there was a growing “preparedness movement” in the U.S., most people didn’t believe the Allies required increased manpower, agreeing with a statement in the *New York Morning Telegraph* that stated in April 1917: “They [the Allies] don’t need more warriors, they want money and food, and munitions of war.”⁵⁶ When it became clear that America was going to enter World War I, its military leaders were faced with the prospect of growing a force of around 200,000 to the nearly 2,000,000 men

⁵⁴ Leven C. Allen, “The War Effort of the Infantry School,” *United States At War: December 7, 1941 - December 7, 1942* (Washington: Army & Navy Journal, 1942): 128.

⁵⁵ For a more extensive exploration of the American military between the War for Independence and the turn of the twentieth century, see Edward Coffman’s *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898*.

⁵⁶ David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 168.

who would make up the AEF by the signing of the Armistice – a mammoth enterprise that took a mere 18 months to complete.⁵⁷

Already lacking in manpower and facing desperate calls for reinforcements on the part of the Allies in 1917, the U.S. military accelerated American troop deployment through the end of the year and into 1918, a full year before the AEF had predicted it would be prepared to launch autonomously. Training programs were abbreviated in order to get men to France; just prior to the American declaration of war, a standard four-month course had been reduced to around thirty six days, or roughly five weeks.⁵⁸ Once in France, the first units were kept in staging areas behind the lines to continue their training with guidance from French and British liaison officers. They were eventually rushed to the lines at Cantigny in May of 1918 for the first American offensive of the war. While the earliest troops who deployed gained skill through experience, the constant and massive influx of new troops throughout the last year of war as the selective service system and shipping caught up with the mobilization effort meant overall combat performance remained unchanged.

As they trained, American recruits were caught in the middle of a larger dialogue between U.S. and Allied military commanders over how best to fight the war. Pershing, the staunch and unrelenting advocate of an unincorporated American force in Europe, operated under a doctrine of open warfare. He believed in getting out of the static trenches in which the war had been bogged down for three years and pushing rapidly over open country, “carrying enemy trenches en masse, and not looking back until Berlin was in sight.”⁵⁹ The Allies, already three-year veterans of a war that had disabused them of all previously held assumptions about

⁵⁷ Edwin McClellan, *The United States Marine Corps in the World War* (Washington, D.C.: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, 1920), 9-10.

⁵⁸ Freidel, *Over There*, 11.

⁵⁹ Nelson, *I Will Hold*, 38.

combat, had accepted that trench warfare was the status quo on the lines and altered their own training accordingly. As mentioned, Pershing did allow for French and British officers to assist in training new infantrymen. It was his concession to Allies who were not permitted to incorporate these men into their own units and were wary of the American lack of experience. Pershing continued, however, continued to push for purely American training from American instructors on the style of warfare judged best by American leaders.

Recruits in the States trained for insufficient periods of time in close-order drill and bayonet theory while their counterparts across the ocean were being annihilated by rapid-fire machine guns and earth-shattering artillery barrages that made quick work of standard formations, along with the hands, arms, legs, and heads required to execute them.⁶⁰ Not only was encountering warfare on such an unprecedented scale psychologically jarring, but feeling as if basic training had been inadequate preparation for it was disheartening to say the least.

When the United States once again entered the ETO in 1944, it was through the English Channel. American military commanders knew that existing amphibious assault training was insufficient to prepare soldiers to participate in a drive the size of Operation Overlord in Normandy.⁶¹ Here, too, Americans turned to their allies for assistance. In addition to basic training in the U.S., every man who went ashore on Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944 was trained at the Assault Training Center in Devon, United Kingdom, where they learned the tactics and skills that would keep them alive on their push into Normandy.⁶²

The Army entering World War II did have the training advantage of time – general mobilization of the military had begun in the United States before it declared war, and long

⁶⁰ Private Morton Elevitch to Mother, in *War Letters*, Carroll, ed., 194.

⁶¹ American forces had technically been in Europe since 1943, when the U.S. invaded mainland Italy at Salerno. Italy, however, was considered part of the Mediterranean Theater of Operations, not a part of the ETO.

⁶² S. Sgt. Eugene Lawton letter to parents, in *War Letters*, Carroll, ed., 236.

before Americans entered into hostilities. Traditionally conceived, mobilization begins on some “M-day” that marks the end of a period of peace and the beginning of a period of war. Because American involvement in World War II was so gradual, however, there was no “M-day” as such.⁶³ As discussed by Kreidberg and Merton, some of the challenges and shortcomings in a comprehensive training program were identified and corrected in this prolonged mobilization period.⁶⁴ Protective Mobilization Plans, or PMPs, rolled out throughout the 1930s with provisional designs for a mobilization process tightly centralized under the War Department. These PMPs became the forum for testing and revising ideas about how various aspects of mobilization would play out, including troop and officer training. As Kreidberg and Merton write, the 1939 PMP was sound enough to become a permanent foundation for mobilization, with a plan for training that outlined curriculum, provided for the production of manuals and materials, created guidelines for training camp inspections, and scheduled the order in which units would be trained and shipped. It also created a nucleus of around 80,000 Regular Army troops and 180,000 National Guardsmen “who would be available for useful action on M-day.”⁶⁵ Still, the fixation with a traditional “M-day” kept many military planners from accepting a situation that required mobilization before the official outbreak of war. America was still caught off guard by the logistical intricacies of training a mobilized military when war was declared. Despite PMPs and the comparative abundance of time the Army had to purge their system of inefficiencies, personnel management would remain a persistent problem.

⁶³ For a more complete explication of the “M-Day” theory, Schubert’s pamphlet on Mobilization from the U.S. Army Center for Military History: <http://www.history.army.mil/brochures/Mobilization/mobpam.htm>.

⁶⁴ Marvin A. Kreidberg and Henry G. Merton, *History of Military Mobilization in the United States Army: 1775-1945* (Washington: Department of the Army, 1955).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 486.

“Personnel turbulence” is defined as the movement of men into and out of units.⁶⁶

During the war, of course, unit attrition occurred due to death and injury, but throughout the wartime period, including the mobilization and training periods, competing demands for manpower within the Army caused the most personnel turbulence. Similar to the plundering of small unit leaders for separate officer schools that occurred during World War I, men in World War II faced manpower demands from programs like the Air Corps that were established during the interwar period, as well as officer schools and the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP).⁶⁷ As men entered combat, the need for replacements to cover battle losses skyrocketed, disproportionately impacting the rifle units that composed the infantry and creating an imbalanced state of training and experience within units. When the loss of personnel reached a certain level it was necessary for units to be pulled from the line entirely in order to undergo a new round of training to bring new men up to speed.⁶⁸

This inability to create equal levels of training among men was only one aspect of the creation and destruction of units on the front line that devastated unit cohesion. The replacement system was another that, although necessary, shredded morale as it propelled unprepared men towards combat. In 1917 the War Department was wholly invested in shipping full-strength units overseas, and to do so it was willing to cannibalize established units in order to provide warm bodies in divisions ready to embark for France.⁶⁹ Some units were hit more than once, creating obviously adverse conditions under which an outfit was meant to build morale and

⁶⁶ Lawrence R. Boice and Thomas O. Jacobs, “Toward Meaningful Measures of Personnel Turbulence,” *U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences Research Report 1513* (U.S. Army Research Institute, 1989).

⁶⁷ Kreidberg and Merton, *History of Military Mobilization*, 635.

⁶⁸ John M. Palmer, *America in Arms: The Experience of the United States with Military Organization* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1941), 479.

⁶⁹ Center of Military History, *United States Army in the World War, 1917-1918: Organization of the American Expeditionary Forces. Vol. 1* (Washington, D.C.: United States Army, 1988), 22.

cohesion. Even after they'd shipped, these patchwork units were not guaranteed. Following disembarkation in France, they might once again be plundered to fill gaps in combat divisions. This was done to keep experienced units at fighting strength on the front line, where they were most desperately needed.

Military operations in the mid-1940s would reveal that the Army still lacked a comprehensive master plan for personnel. As the need for men increased through 1944 and training programs Stateside were abbreviated to meet the demand, retraining men upon arrival in theater became the *modus operandi*. This meant men were shipped in groups that would not constitute their eventual units and retrained in groups with whom they may or may not have moved forward into the lines.⁷⁰ Furthermore, resources in theater were limited and often filled to capacity balancing the fresh supply of replacements with the men cycling back into training camps from recuperation in hospitals. This was especially true in World War II, as the flow of these two groups was kept separate because of the negative impact veterans could have on fresh troops.⁷¹ This was barely-controlled logistical chaos.

The only real discussion taking place on training programs specifically in World War II is a one-sided monologue between the Army training manuals and a graduate thesis written by Roger Spickelmier for the Military Arts and Science program at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. While the conclusions Spickelmier expresses do not necessarily represent the opinions of that institution or of the Army in general, he does make solid points regarding the development of individual infantry training as America entered World War II. Spickelmier proposes that the Army recognized and understood the damage caused to units during World

⁷⁰ Leonard Lerwill, *The Personnel Replacement System in the United States Army* (Center of Military History, United States Department of the Army, 1954), 300.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 292.

War I that were constantly plundered for men, and therefore the Army Ground Forces (AGF) placed great importance on unit integrity and training as part of a team, resisting the break up and amalgamation of small units until casualty levels in 1943 and 1944 began to necessitate it.⁷² It was when American troops started drawing heavy casualties following their commitment in the ETO that the Army was forced to fall back to its World War I policies of accelerated training schedules.

This might be true, but these reversions were taking place almost *immediately* following the Normandy invasion in 1944. Replacements moving overseas, even those who were entering the theater mere weeks after D-Day, were doing so with the expectation that after brief training stints they would be cycled through Replacement Depots where they would lose their identity as a ‘Replacement Company’ and become individuals to be requisitioned to various battalions as needed.⁷³ Whatever Spickelmier believed about the Army’s intentions or the training lessons learned in World War I, it is clear the Army had not developed adequate coping strategies for training and replacing men when operational tempo picked up on the front lines. This decreased the quality of the replacement troops being produced and ended up harming unit integrity and morale further down the line.

In both wars, small unit leadership was charged with integrating replacements to the fighting team on the front line, where they trickled in at a constant, but ever-insufficient stream. Replacements kept the infantry in operation, but chronically understrength and handling a challenging mixture of novice and experienced men as mentioned above. Dramatically unprepared for the experience of actual combat, replacements were flushed out of the battlefield

⁷² Roger Spickelmier, “Training of the American Soldier During World War I and World War II,” Master’s Thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1971, 94.

⁷³ Cope Memoir, 7.

at a high rate, meaning their units were in constant need of reinforcement and support, a vicious cycle that lasted through the war.⁷⁴

It was trying for all men involved. Combat veterans often had little time, inclination, or incentive to bring new men into the fold while in a combat situation. They were sick to death of battle, hoping to rotate out of the lines for rest, and suffering the loss of their own comrades. Replacements, on the other hand, were scared to death of battle, entered combat friendless, and were thrown into an environment of mindless destruction with no way of knowing the practical skills of on-the-ground survival and no time to learn them. New men either adapted to their brutal circumstances or they died. “It would take a few days for a new man to get over the shock of being in combat and a lot of times they didn’t last that long,” one rifleman wrote.⁷⁵

The disinclination of combat veterans was not necessarily a uniform lack of willingness to get to know men who had a short life expectancy. A part of their antipathy came from the assessment that replacements lacked the ability to operate competently in a warzone, a perception justified in part by the deficiencies in the training program for replacements. It was the delegated task of small unit leaders to take this situation in hand and create functioning warrior units.⁷⁶

Interim camps were established as a means of quality control in both World War I and World War II. Here the capability of men was evaluated based on the training they had received and any prior service they happened to possess. They were then funneled into units where they could meet a need.⁷⁷ Even in these camps, however, the process bogged down in the administrative burden required for this type of vetting, and men were historically able to lose

⁷⁴ McClellan, *Marine Corps in the World War*, 29.

⁷⁵ McManus, *Grunts*, 120.

⁷⁶ Lerwill, *The Personnel Replacement System*, 207.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 209.

themselves within the system – both intentionally and unintentionally. Lieutenant General Lesley McNair, the commander of the Army Ground Forces, commented during World War II that at one point after the Army in the ETO had reached its full strength of around eight million men, fully two million were between units.⁷⁸ An officer in the ETO who had cycled into a replacement depot – nicknamed “repple depple” – at Le Mans would write of this persistent problem:

At Le Mans I became aware of what some of the troops called the “Repple Depple Dodge,” men who had been in the Repple Depples for weeks on end and bragged that their records were lost or intentionally misplaced, and they would sit out the whole war with no combat assignment. On the other hand there were troops who had been wounded in earlier actions and funneled back into the replacement system after recovery in rear area hospitals. Many of them wanted no part of the replacement roulette game and went A.W.O.L. from the Repple Depples to return to their former units by any means they could find.⁷⁹

No concrete replacement system had been established by the end of World War I, and despite the education provided by that conflict and having the benefit of early mobilization in World War II, there were still many problems in the process of training both recruits and replacements. Because responsibility for men in general and the integration of replacements in particular fell to small unit leadership, the way these leaders were trained to execute their duties was inherently critical to the combat performance of their men. This was, in turn, integrally linked to their morale.

⁷⁸ Russell Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), 440.

⁷⁹ Cope Memoir, pg 7.

Leadership

“I was more interested in doing my job correctly than comparing [officers].”⁸⁰

In the Army’s hierarchical structure, an officer’s word should be law. On a military base, for the most part, it is. Not necessarily in life-or-death combat situations. This is the difference between garrison and combat leadership. In combat, American soldiers follow officers and sergeants as much because of confidence in their leadership as because of their rank. While the infantry might hold in contempt far-away leadership, safe behind the front line and out of touch with the reality of combat, they absolutely had to respect their small-unit leadership, or crises in confidence could derail unit cohesion and morale at a critical moment.⁸¹ This was understandable, as the world of the infantryman was in fact rather small. The attention of a man on the front line was on the immediate tactical situation, as that was where his existence would be decided. In the hierarchy of people about whom he cared, it would be his immediate battle buddies, the non-commissioned officer commanding his squad, the low-ranking officer commanding his platoon, and so forth in decreasing degrees of relevance up through the chain of command.

The non-coms and company grade officers with whom the infantryman interacted daily were the men charged with striking a balance between achieving objectives to fulfill the mission while looking after the welfare of their men. Their efficacy, and thus the willingness of their men to trust and follow them, was gauged by their ability to strike this balance. Men felt they could trust their leader when he did not ask them to do a job he would not do himself, when he was calm in crisis, and when he demonstrated that he held the welfare of his men in his first

⁸⁰ Silver, “WWII Survey,” USAWC Archives.

⁸¹ McManus, *Grunts*, 114.

consideration. In 2013, the Army's Mental Health Advisory Team 9 (MHAT 9) produced a report on the role of small unit leadership as a factor influencing the mental health and well-being of soldiers, finding that it correlated with behavioral health, mental health, and unit effectiveness indices.⁸² The average of all soldier responses in this report found that "maintaining standards" was rated as a leader's most effective quality, though this pattern of responses was inconsistent between focus groups. "Dealing with combat stress and/or other mental health concerns," "dealing with discipline problems," and "demonstrating resilience," were other top-rated qualities in a leader.⁸³

These findings are from Operation Iraqi Freedom and were gathered in 2013. MHAT 9, however, indicates that across the prior five annual MHAT reports the traits desired in effective small unit leadership remained relatively constant. When controlled for combat exposure, levels of training, and non-combat stressors, levels of morale tracked with levels of confidence in small unit leadership. Because this report isolates the variables that would change across wars, it is possible to interpolate these results back to soldiers in the world wars, who would have relied on the same competencies in their leaders to guide them safely through combat.

Putting aside the perennial debate on whether leadership capability is innate or learned, the Army of the early twentieth century recognized the importance of good leadership in making an army functional in the field, and took steps to inculcate this quality in its officers. It was an unlooked-for advantage that strong leadership also buoyed the fighting spirit of men in combat. One replacement officer understood this well when he wrote, "I realized something very, very

⁸² "Mental Health Advisory Team 9 (MHAT 9) Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) 2013 Afghanistan." Office of The Surgeon General United States Army Medical Command and Office of the Command Surgeon Headquarters, US Army Central Command (USCENTCOM), and Office of the Command Surgeon US Forces Afghanistan (USFOR-A).

⁸³ Ibid.

important, and that is that people are really looking for an opportunity to have confidence in others... once [that] happens you have the troops in the palm of your hand.”⁸⁴

During World War I, the AEF expanded its officer corps from the small starting point of fewer than 6,000 in April 1917 to 200,000 by November 1918. Officer training, however, did not match this expansion, and inexperience at the officer level was harder to make up for than among the rank and file. This was one of the original arguments for integrating American men with British and French units – a process called “amalgamation” or “brigading.” Amalgamation proposed an apprentice-like system, relying on more experienced European allies to teach a nascent AEF how to fight well.⁸⁵ Inarguably, many of the platoon leaders drawn upon for small unit leadership in the Army lacked tactical skills, owing partly to problems of training and accountability. Instruction at the provisional Officer Training Camps, from which a majority of small unit leaders were commissioned, had in many cases been inadequate. Logistical and curricular challenges meant OTC too closely resembled basic training without sufficient development of leadership qualities or tactical skills.⁸⁶

Particularly destructive of unit cohesion in the AEF once abroad was the General Headquarters (GHQ)-directed practice of pulling officers from their command in the field and sending them for additional training at army schools behind the lines, occasionally even on the eve of major operations. After the war George C. Marshall, a GHQ-assigned staff officer, criticized the decision just preceding the Meuse-Argonne drive to pull officers from several less experienced assault divisions, saying the units “were absolutely scalped in order that the next

⁸⁴ George S. Blanchard, transcript of an oral history conducted by Lieutenant Colonel James Longhofer for “Senior Officer Oral History Program,” Box 1A of 9, *George S. Blanchard Papers* (The United States Army War College Archives, Carlisle Barracks), 78-79.

⁸⁵ Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall*, 248.

⁸⁶ Timothy K. Nenninger, “Tactical Dysfunction in the AEF, 1917-1918,” *Military Affairs*, vol. 51, no. 4 (October 1987), *America: History and Life with Full Text*, EBSCOhost (accessed January 3, 2017): 179.

class at Langres [the AEF-Staff College] might start on scheduled time. The amount of confusion and mismanagement resulting from this was tremendous.”⁸⁷ Because this came from the highest levels of command, the Training Command at GHQ itself, the reality in the AEF was that the people who should have been most cognizant of troop needs and morale were instigating the processes that destroyed them.

Combat officers were the link between infantry and the higher ups behind the lines who decided their fate, and while they bore the brunt of the responsibility for their unit’s morale, they could suffer just as equally for the decisions imposed by their superiors farther afield. Even without any negligence, the normal prosecution of war at times left regimental or division leaders without reliable information upon which to make command decisions. There are rarely clean situations in combat, and with lives on the line, small unit leadership was at times in the position of contradicting direct orders or allowing their men into unnecessarily risky engagements. After World War II, one man would write a combat account that perfectly exemplifies this dynamic. During one particularly strenuous engagement, after encountering tough German resistance, one man’s field commander called for reinforcements and further weapons support from artillery and mortars.

Unquestionably an insulated zealot above was pushing [the C.O.] to get on with the attack. At that time none of us was aware of the German activity in the Ardennes or its consequences for future development. But from our limited view of the war, the insistence from the rear on continuing the attack was criminal stupidity. Crouch, who knew the situation on the ground, went into a screaming rage when he got off the telephone. His staff tried to calm him down or to lead him away for a private discussion. His anger and frustration were beyond control, and he let everyone know his opinion of the rear area command structure. I had always admired Robin Crouch, but that afternoon he went down the line for his battalion and damn the consequences... It is not fruitful to

⁸⁷ Nenner, “Tactical Dysfunction in AEF,” 179.

seek logic in war, but I resent bitterly to this day the wounds suffered and the lives sacrificed to the ego of a faceless major drawing lines on a map.⁸⁸

The way leaders chose to handle these situations spoke volumes to the men they led. The men who were being committed to battle naturally felt more comfortable about the situation if they knew their officers were committed to them.

While meeting “brass” in the field was not necessarily common, it was not unheard of.⁸⁹ It is impossible to universally categorize how the average enlisted man responded to this. Letters indicate that reactions fell anywhere from antipathy to indifference to appreciation that they had even attempted to be visible at the front. Attitudes could even skew towards wry humor when these decorated leaders entered the lines and encountered conditions to which the infantry had become habituated. One infantryman recounted an amusing anecdote relating to General McAuliffe, who appeared with two colonels near the front in 1944:

Captain Hebert met them and was telling them the situation. The fog lifted just then and about 50 yards away was the biggest damn pill box we'd ever seen. There were two Colonels and a General making themselves skinny behind those trees near me, I'll tell ya! Suddenly, a white flag appeared in the gun port of the pill box and in a little while 5 or 6 Germans came out and surrendered. The next week the ‘Stars and Stripes’ came out with the headline, ‘McAuliffe Captures Pill Box.’⁹⁰

Aside from the competency of leaders at all levels of command, from small units to the entirety of the ETO, the men who were in command of the infantry were able in another way to fundamentally influence the morale of their warriors, and that was through praise. Pride played an enormous role in troop morale, and it was both modeled and promoted by leadership. It was a positive feedback loop in which a good officer or non-com led his unit well, which increased unit

⁸⁸ Dan MacMillan, “An Account of a Combat Experience: November 21-22, 1944,” Memoir, Box 1 in *103rd Infantry Division Papers* (United States Army War College Archives, Carlisle Barracks).

⁸⁹ “Brass” was military slang for officers. It comes from the older phrase “brass hats,” which referenced the gold insignia on an officer’s service cap.

⁹⁰ Kenneth Bartley, “I Remember: Introductions and 17 Stories,” Memoir, Box 1, *103rd Infantry Division Papers* (United States Army War College Archives, Carlisle Barracks).

performance, leading in turn to a general feeling of accomplishment and ownership of success. This sustained high performance, leading to commendations and citations by higher ranking officers.⁹¹ This recognition further increased unit pride and boosted morale. The military could not necessarily control this, however, as infantrymen could not simply be instructed to take pride in their outfit. It often took exposure to the most brutal circumstances of combat to forge a unit in which its men took pride. Good leadership could contribute to but not create it.

Medical Corps

“The object of an army, of course, is the defeat of the enemy, and to this everything else must give way... The modern soldier is believed to fight better if he knows that in case of being wounded he will receive prompt attention....”⁹²

Despite the improvements of modern medicine, industrial technology gone savage sent casualty figures for both world wars skyrocketing to an unprecedented level. In World War I, there were 365,489 American combat casualties; these included the wounded or disabled, those killed in action, and those who died of disease.⁹³ In World War II, 419,400 men and women would lose their lives from the same.⁹⁴ These wars were miserable, bloody affairs, both militarily and medically speaking. Soldiers dealt in a currency of death, and the people who helped them barter those wages were the combat medics, who quickly became some of the most popular and well-beloved men in their units.

Dwight Fee, a World War I veteran, wrote the following to his son, William, as the latter headed toward the ETO in 1944:

Well, I figure you're off on the Great Adventure. There will be many disagreeable experiences; soul-shaking experiences; tragic experiences; uplifting experiences. You

⁹¹ Howard Perry to Sister, July 12, 1918, Letter, France, in the possession of Michael Miller, U.S. Marine Corps University Foundation.

⁹² Charles Lynch, Frank Weed, and Loy McAfee, *The Medical Department of the United States Army in the World War. Vol. 1* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1923).

⁹³ Wall text, *Casualties*, National World War I Museum, Kansas City, MI.

⁹⁴ Wall text, *Casualties*, National World War II Museum, New Orleans, LA.

will see examples of selfishness and selflessness that will stir you tremendously. I have no doubt that you will develop the same respect that I have for the Infantry, the God-Darned Infantry, and the same awesome regard for the Medics.⁹⁵

While an infantryman's loyalty was given first to his squad, the man who carried the role of medic was looked to with a very particular, intense reverence and respect. He went by many names – “medic,” “aid man,” “Doc,” and “Corpsman” to name a few – and he carried life with him into a landscape of death. The knowledge that competent medical care would reach them quickly and treat them effectively gave infantrymen the courage necessary to continue in assault – a boon, certainly, to morale.

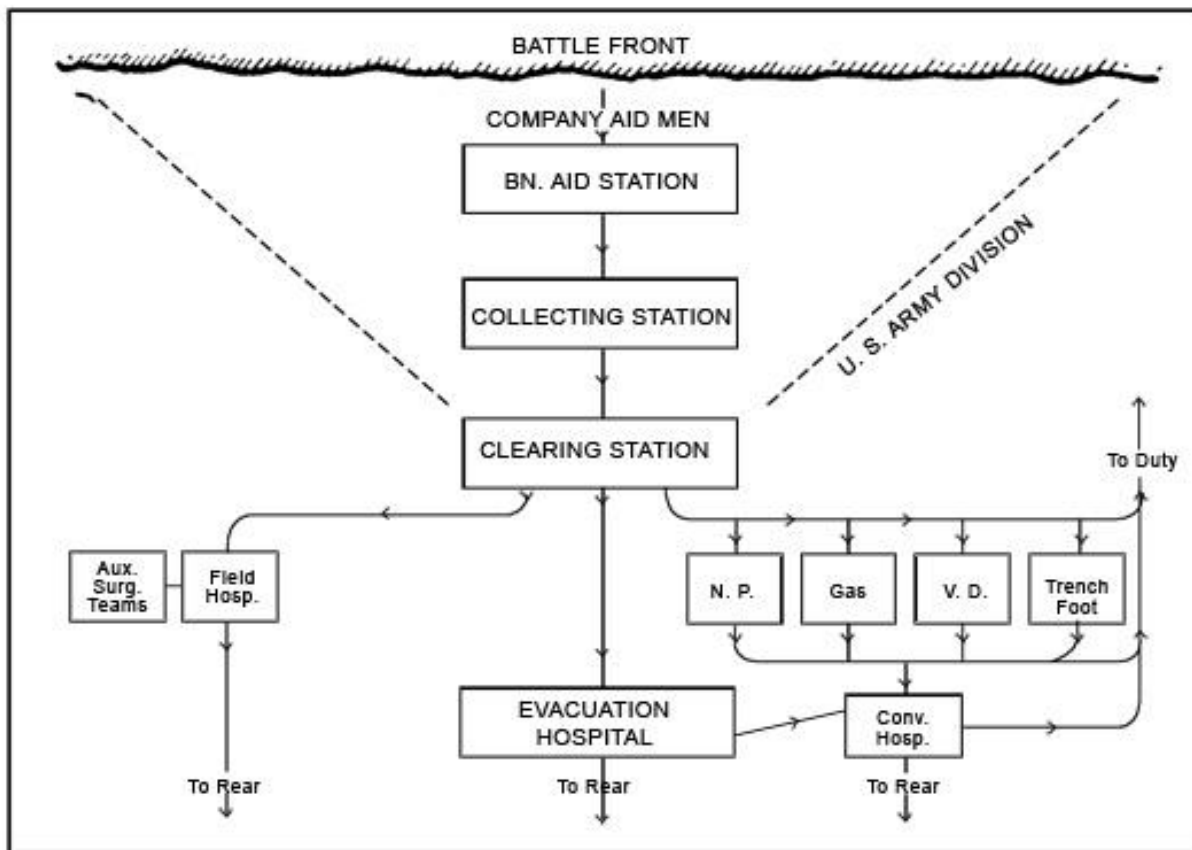
As a wounded soldier in World War II, the chances of survival were greater in Europe than in the Pacific, where it was more difficult to evacuate men to adequate medical facilities. For Americans on average, 1 in 29 wounded men died – a significant improvement on World War I, where 1 in 12 wounded men died.⁹⁶ Medics would go anywhere, anytime to get the wounded, many of whom would have died without quick, expert medical attention. They were part of a clearly defined medical process in both wars. When a soldier got hit, his company medic tried to get to him to administer first aid on the field of battle. When and where possible, stretcher bearers would then put the wounded soldier on a litter and carry him back to transport vehicles. The soldier was then borne to aid stations established in barns, houses, or any sort of shelter available. At this stage, they were still relatively close to the front line. Battalion surgeons then took over, organizing treatment depending upon the severity of wounds and likelihood of survival.⁹⁷ For long term convalescence beyond these field aid and mobile dressing stations, soldiers were moved to evacuation or base hospitals much farther behind the lines,

⁹⁵ Dwight Fee to son William Fee, in *War Letters*, Carroll, ed., 188.

⁹⁶ Stephenson, *The Last Full Measure*, 260.

⁹⁷ McManus, *Grunts*, 120.

where larger staffs and better facilities gave them a comfortable place to recuperate from more serious wounds. From base hospitals, men with less severe wounds could be recuperated and subsequently filtered back through convalescent hospitals on their way back to active duty on the front line. This is displayed more clearly in the graphic below:



The above schematic comes from the history of the Third Auxiliary Surgical Group, which was in operation in the European Theater from December 1943 through the end of the war.⁹⁸ The basic casualty flow remained similar, for the most part, in both World War I and World War II, and any small structural alterations are immaterial to the functionality that would have mattered to the infantry.

⁹⁸ World War II Medical Research Centre, “3d Auxiliary Surgical Group, Unit History,” accessed 13 March, 2017, <https://www.med-dept.com/unit-histories/3d-auxiliary-surgical-group/>.

The wounds suffered by infantrymen were serious. Men did not face mere bullets. One lieutenant, recovering in a hospital behind the lines, wrote of what he witnessed. “Several boys I saw had lost both legs, others had all sorts of compound fractures which caused them to be strapped down, while others had shrapnel wounds as big as a dinner plate. Fragments of shell do make horrid wounds. Bullets are not bad, clean and small, but chunks of iron from high explosives are dreadful.”⁹⁹ The First World War saw the mass production of chemical weapons – the first conflict in which deadly gases were weaponized on the battlefield. This created an entirely new class of devastating injuries like severe blistering, temporary or permanent blindness, burned skin and lungs, or death by slow asphyxiation. Trench foot, mutilation from fragmentation of artillery shells, infection, influenza, and psychoneurotic combat stress responses were all “injuries” funneled through the same system. These and other high trauma wounds followed rapidly on one another on the battlefield, and the entire medical infrastructure of the deployed AEF in World War I and its World War II equivalent ETOUSA (European Theater of Operations, United States Army) had to be equipped to handle it.

The pattern of unpreparedness in the military preceding World War I held true on the medical front. The Army Medical Department was in no way equipped for large-scale engagement in France when the United States declared war in 1917. Despite some provisional attempts to establish staff training and make personnel division more efficient, many of the Medical Department’s preparations for the possibility of war existed on paper only.¹⁰⁰ This military organization did not effectively account for the civilian support already mobilized in Europe, nor did their provisional plan take advantage of the hard-won experience of their Allies.

⁹⁹ 1st Lt. Edward Lukert, in *War Letters*, Carroll, ed., 160.

¹⁰⁰ Gillett, *The Army Medical Department History*, 4.

For example, the American Field Service, or AFS, was a volunteer force composed of Americans that had provided ambulance support for the French Army as early as 1915. When America entered the war, the French feared they would lose their highly efficient ambulance system, and thus the United States Army Ambulance Service, or USAAS, was born. The USAAS took the place of the AFS in assignment to the French army, while the AEF reclaimed the remaining units and embedded them as individual ambulance companies with infantry regiments. These became the conveyor belt upon which the entire medical system in Europe operated, but they did not communicate well amongst themselves.¹⁰¹

The AFS, with their longer exposure to combat in France, had battle-tested efficiency in casualty-evacuation procedures. Their lessons learned, however, were not lessons communicated to the command staff through the U.S. Army Surgeons General. Unlike the as-needed, flexible deployment of the AFS-turned-USAAS, ambulance units in the AEF were permanently assigned to a division. This proved inefficient when some units entered “hotter” combat zones and battlefield casualties overwhelmed ambulance capacity. In many early cases casualty rates in the AEF were unnecessarily high because the system was weighed down by its own operation. Dying soldiers languished on the fields with no more advanced aid than what their own unit medics could provide.¹⁰² Aggravating this situation was the perennial lack of experienced personnel within the Medical Department – a persistent and challenging problem in the ability of the medical corps to minister to deployed troops.

The system of evacuation through progressive steps of care from the battlefield to base hospitals was logical on paper. The rapid expansion of the mobilizing Army, lack of adaptation

¹⁰¹ Jeffrey C. Larrabee, "A Tale of Two Trucks: American Casualty Evacuation in World War I," *Icon*, vol. 14 (2008): 123.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 126.

to changing circumstances, and in many cases lack of proper supplies and response capability resulted in periods of confusion and poor performance. This left a large margin for improvement moving into World War II. The on-the-ground structure remained relatively stable. Medical advances, however, such as the perfection of blood transfusion through World War I and the advent of plasma, sulfa drugs, and penicillin in World War II increased the ability of medics in combat zones to save lives by the time Americans entered the ETO in 1944.

Hans Zinsser was a physician and bacteriologist who served as an officer in the Army Medical Corps in World War I. He also worked for a period of time with the Red Cross. In his work on disease and society, Zinsser remarks with authority on his combat medical experience, “[M]edicine has another indirect influence on war which is not negligible. There seems little doubt that some of the reckless courage of the American troops in [World War I] was stimulated by the knowledge that in front of them were only the Germans, but behind them there were the assembled surgeons of America, with sleeves rolled up.”¹⁰³

This is the perfect articulation of the importance of the medical corps to soldiers, in the words of a lieutenant colonel who witnessed it first-hand. The interest of the military in establishing an infrastructure of combat healthcare was obviously in maintaining their fighting capability; this does not preclude the ability of the medical corps to inflate morale. They increased the performance of combat units by keeping them fit to fight and reassuring soldiers by mere presence that every effort would be made to get them home alive. Medics served a practical purpose, but they provided mental and emotional support by reminding troops that people remained invested in their well-being. They shared this latter duty with chaplains, another special role embedded in combat infantry units that fueled high morale.

¹⁰³ Hans Zinsser, *Rats, Lice, and History* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2008), 132.

Chaplain Corps

“We had religious services... I never saw an atheist in a foxhole.”¹⁰⁴

Chaplains have served with the U.S. Army since 1775, when the Continental Congress authorized the placement of a chaplain with each regiment in the Continental Army. Since the American War of Independence, chaplains have served in every American War, adding Catholic chaplains during the Mexican-American War and Jewish and African American chaplains during the Civil War.¹⁰⁵ In her compilation on the history of the military chaplaincy, Doris Bergen probes the role of a military chaplain. She sets up a chronology of the actions of chaplains across time by collecting essays from historians and retired chaplains who wrote on military chaplains from “Nero to Nato.”¹⁰⁶ By supplementary commentary, Bergen contemplates the question: if chaplains are not around simply to bless weapons and bring the comfort of faith to dying men, for what reason are they serving with men on the front line?¹⁰⁷ Bergen’s commentary on this topic is not a direct overlap with morale analysis. She addresses the social work aspect of chaplains in a Vietnam-era sense, wherein “assistance” from secular counselors gradually secularized the work the chaplains themselves did. This was not the case in the world wars, where many soldiers retained a high sense of cultural religiosity. Bergen’s work, in effect, looks at a chaplain’s welfare work in isolation from his religious function. The ways in which military chaplains factor into morale maintenance in the world wars, however, is in the combination of their calling as ministers of faith *and* the ways in which they acted beyond it.

¹⁰⁴ Silver, “WWII Survey,” USAWC Archives.

¹⁰⁵ United States Army Chaplain Center and School, “U.S. Army Chaplain Center and School History,” last modified 2014, http://usachcs.armylive.dodlive.mil/?page_id=960.

¹⁰⁶ Doris L. Bergen, ed., *The Sword of the Lord: Military Chaplains From the First to the Twenty-First Century* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 1.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

The original function of a chaplain was clearly to minister to the religious needs of service men, but they were relied on nearly from the start to serve as the conscience of the army and to maintain troop morale. This burden largely fell to them because there was no other apparatus that could take this function. There were certainly no psychologists at the front, and the time of military commanders at war was generally taken up by more pressing affairs than counseling their men. It also made sense considering that in the early 1900s, American culture was still predominantly Judeo-Christian. For many men, a crisis of confidence, faith, or morality would be filtered through a worldview that included a higher power, making a chaplain the natural earthly point of contact for those questioning or seeking support.

Commanders understood that in moments of extreme stress, or in the morally ambiguous fog of war, men needed assurance that there was some omnipotent being still in control, and that this being was a good one. Chaplains were this assurance, and they were everywhere they deemed their presence necessary, up to and including the hostile fire of the harshest battles. One commander expressed his admiration for Chaplain Joseph Lacy after coming ashore on Omaha in World War II, saying, “Every time we caught it really bad it was the padre who was in there when the stuff was worst.”¹⁰⁸ The recognized power of chaplains meant officers evaluated their competencies even as they did their other unit leadership. As Martin Blumenson points out, “General George S. Patton, Jr., who attended church – as he informed a group of visiting clergy – “every goddam Sunday,” believed the chaplains’ work to be important. He routinely inspected the work of his chaplains of all faiths... those whose performances he judged less than excellent had immediate word of his dissatisfaction.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Donald F. Crosby, *Battlefield Chaplains: Catholic Priests in World War II* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 129.

¹⁰⁹ Crosby, *Battlefield Chaplains*, xi.

The extra-faith roles of counselor and mentor became so inextricably linked to the position of chaplain that even clergymen on the home front received letters from troops overseas, directly and indirectly seeking support. In World War I, Private Walter Bromwich would write a confused letter home to his pastor:

Don't think I am down-hearted because I am writing you, but it's a queer thing I can't explain, that ever since I volunteered I've felt like a cog in a huge wheel. The cog may get smashed up, but the machine goes on, and I know I share in the progress of that machine whether I live or die, and that seems to make everything all right. Except, perhaps, when I lose a pal, it's generally one of the best but yet it may be one of the worst. And I can't feel God is in it.¹¹⁰

Chaplains also performed memorial services for their soldiers, facilitating the grieving process within the ranks in a way that turned mourning into a military mission with a military purpose. The grief soldiers felt was obviously real, but it needed to be handled in a controlled way that did not derail their ability to fight. After a particularly bloody battle in World War II, one man would write, "We covered the hill and identified each body. It had rained during the night which made the grisly job more pitiful, but we found all five of our friends. As we walked back down the hill I thought the world had come to an end. It was beyond my comprehension that we could be expected to carry on after our loss."¹¹¹ But carry on they must, and in the aftermath of such devastating losses as were faced by men in both wars, their ability to do so was facilitated by chaplains.

On the topic of memorial services it is possible to admit evidence from later wars. Grieving is a part of life for all who serve in a combat, regardless of the conflict. How infantrymen treat their fallen comrades, the process of finding meaning in their death, and the availability of

¹¹⁰ Private Walter Bromwich to Pastor, in *War Letters*, Carroll, ed., 144.

¹¹¹ Walt Clark, "Account of Attack on Sauley-Sur-Meurthe," Memoir, Box 2, *103rd Infantry Division Papers* (United States Army War College Archives, Carlisle Barracks).

memorial services, in this case those offered by chaplains, are all factors that help men integrate their experiences of loss and grief in a combat zone. A veteran of combat in Operation Iraqi Freedom writes, “Rituals tell us who we are, and what we are part of when everything dissolves around us. They tell us we matter. Rituals connect the sacred to the profane, remind us of the divinity in the quotidian, and provide us structure when we are unmoored.”¹¹² The ritual of memorial, in the world wars as now, allowed soldiers to acknowledge death, honor the familial, small-unit bonds they had formed with their fallen brothers in arms, and move forward – oftentimes back into battle.

As has proven to be the pattern with the rapid mobilization effort of the United States in 1917, plans regarding chaplains and their training in the military were pulled together late in the game. It was not until the spring of 1918 that the U.S. Army Chaplain Center and School (USACHCS) was formed, which managed to field over 1,000 trained chaplains before the signing of the Armistice.¹¹³ It was deactivated after the war. The chaplains who trained there had already been formed in their respective faiths through seminary. The purpose of the USACHCS was to turn civilian professionals into Army professionals, and therefore coursework focused on “international and military law, first aid, drill, rules of land warfare and equitation.”¹¹⁴ This five-week course in the United States was supplemented by a one-week course at a subsidiary Chaplain School near Chaumont, the headquarters of the AEF in France. This course taught them how to handle the particularities of trench warfare in France.

As might be glaringly apparent, the cumulative training these men received hit two broad subject areas. In the seminary they learned how to be good clergymen in their faith, and in Army

¹¹² Shannon Huffman Polson, “The Final Roll Call,” in *Patheos*, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/goodletters/2013/11/the-final-roll-call/>.

¹¹³ Chaplain Center and School, “History,” http://usachcs.armylive.dodlive.mil/?page_id=960.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

training they learned how to be effective on the battlefield. Nowhere were they instructed on morale maintenance, the tacit responsibility they bore on the battlefield. This began to change in 1941, when Army Regulation 60-5 was released. In this document, General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff, with Chief of Chaplains William Arnold, describes the conditions under which clergy served in the military and details a chaplain's responsibilities as a commissioned officer. AR 60-5 states "that each chaplain will... serve the moral and religious needs of the entire personnel of the command to which he is assigned, either through his own personal services or through the cooperative efforts of others."¹¹⁵

It continues, stating that chaplains are required to "hold appropriate religious services," which include "Sunday or weekday religious observances, Sunday schools, Bible classes, missions, confessions, and such other religious or patriotic exercises..." Beyond this most basic functionality, however, they were further required to "serve as friends, counselors... [who] strive to promote morality, religion, and good order." Chaplains were a commanding officer's "logical consultant in all matters... involving morale, morality, and character building."¹¹⁶

This is the most explicit language theretofore used by the Army to detail the assorted extra duties taken on by chaplains on the front line. AR 60-5 inescapably defined a chaplain's purview as direct morale work with troops. In promotional materials on chaplain schools created by the Bureau of Personnel of the U.S. Navy, it was said of chaplains across all branches of service that "some [men] will tiptoe nervously into [the chaplain's office] with an embarrassed question or a troubled mind. Lonely men, sick men, discouraged men, fellows who just want to talk, fellows who need a friend... there will be many things to discuss with the commanding

¹¹⁵ War Department, *AR 60-5 Chaplains General Provisions* (Washington, D.C.: United States Army Regulations Series 60, 1946).

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

officer – the times for services, problems of morale, and a lot of little things that get big if timely counsel is ignored.”¹¹⁷ This was standard operating procedure for chaplains in the Army as equally as in other branches.

The office of Chief of Chaplains, which directed the Chaplain Corps, was an agency of the Administrative Service, Services of Supply.¹¹⁸ As discussed earlier in this work, the S.O.S. was designed to mitigate environmental factors that could slow or decommission troops. The logic of a morale-monitoring outfit being regulated by the S.O.S. was indicative of the mentality shift of the military. Chaplains, beyond their role in serving faith needs, were part of a larger culture of service that was developing to keep men at their highest level of combat efficacy. This evolution throughout World War II took its place with other programming to form the body of initiatives deliberately fashioned to raising morale. These were no longer simply environmental factors of war to which the military was responding, nor were they standard aspects of military life that were unintentionally or artificially manipulated to serve as morale boosters. These were the agendas of a military dedicating time and resources to the strategy of building morale.

¹¹⁷ “Navy Chaplain’s School, 1943-1945,” Film, from the University Archives Audiovisual Collection, Special Collections Research Center, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary (UA10. Acc 1982.032).

¹¹⁸ William Arnold, “The Army Chaplain,” *United States At War: December 7, 1941 - December 7, 1942* (Washington: Army & Navy Journal, 1942), 81.

IV. INTENTIONAL MORALE INITIATIVES

“The stress was the stress of fatigue in a 24-hour operation, and of cold, and of miserableness, and never having an opportunity to get a shower... You couldn’t see when the thing was going to be over....”¹¹⁹

As has been discussed thus far, the idea of morale maintenance is more nuanced than a first glance might suggest. Not only is it a factor of response to uncontrollable environmental conditions, but it is also built into traditional military frameworks in subtle, unintentional ways. Where the construction of morale is more traditionally conceived is in the deliberate implementation of military programming geared towards buoying the spirits of soldiers deployed in a combat zone. This has been done in a variety of ways over time, only some of which were pioneered during the world wars. The following section addresses these programs, which had no other function than to enhance the lives of soldiers deployed in the ETO.

Mail

“Well lets [sic] forget the war for the time being – I received ten letters from home while on the line. They surely lifted my morale.”¹²⁰

If an infantryman in the world wars were to point to the single factor that could most make or break his morale, it would undoubtedly be mail from home. Its importance to men on the front line absolutely cannot be overstated. One postmaster general in World War II would go so far as to say mail was “so essential to morale that army and navy officers of the highest rank list mail almost on a level with munitions and food.”¹²¹ Family members on the home front

¹¹⁹ Blanchard, transcript of oral history, USAWC Archives, 71.

¹²⁰ Herbert C. Shough to Mother, October 12, 1918, Letter, in the possession of Michael Miller, U.S. Marine Corps University Foundation.

¹²¹ Frank Walker, “The Postal Service at War,” *United States at War, December 7, 1942 – December 7, 1943* (Washington: Army & Navy Journal, 1943), as reproduced by Kurt Greenbaum in “Wartime Postmaster Details the Work of Mail Delivery in WWII,” accessed March 17, 2017, <http://www.igreenbaum.com/2012/04/02/wartime-postmaster-details-the-work-of-mail-delivery-in-wwii/>.

relied on dispatches from sons abroad for confirmation that all was well and their loved one was still alive. Men in combat relied on mail from home as a distraction from the harsh realities of the lives they led, as a reminder that they were remembered and loved, and as a confirmation that life existed outside of the war zone.

This psychological space, crafted in words and small mementos sent to and from the front lines, was the real pith of this wartime morale-maker. The details of letters could be monotonous; families at home would write of the mundane day-to-day activities with which they kept themselves occupied, and the sensibilities of men writing their mothers or sweethearts were reinforced by censorship regulations to keep any real information on war from being passed back home. The contents of mail were soaked up eagerly, regardless of how little of substance they had to communicate. Underpinning them was the conscientious effort to reassure fighting men that home was waiting for them at the end of the war. As Private First Class Ernest Uno would write to his sister Mae:

I promised you I'd write every chance I had so here I am again. In the lull, between firing, I've found that scribbling off a few lines of a letter was the best way to ease the tension of fighting. Any little thing we do to divert our mind and keep us busy when the fighting comes to a temporary halt, relaxes the nerves and rests our bodies. That's why receiving mail from home is so important. I've got a bunch of letters in my pocket that are dirty and falling apart. They are the letters I have received from you, and the rest of the family. I almost know each one, word for word, 'cause I've read and re-read them so often. They are the ones that have kept me going until new ones come.¹²²

Some historians have criticized the value of these letters, identifying them as overly sanitized and ineffective in communicating to civilians the true extent of what men were experiencing on the front lines.¹²³ There is some merit to this argument, but not nearly enough to

¹²² PFC Ernest Uno to sister Mae, in *War Letters*, Carroll, ed., 225.

¹²³ David Taylor, *Memory, Narrative and The Great War: Rifleman Patrick Macgill and the Construction of Wartime Experience* (Liverpool, England: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 72.

dismiss wartime correspondence as historically insignificant. Censorship was severe, to be sure. References to unit designations, operations, troop movements, geographical locations, or any minutia that might indicate to the enemy the placement or condition of American troops was forbidden.¹²⁴ For reference purposes, or for those who sought to follow the progress of individual battles via letters, mail from infantrymen was practically worthless. For relatives simply interested in whether or not their loved one was alive, however, it got the job done. Taken in aggregate, mail reveals how men stayed psychologically and emotionally connected to their families and how they expressed their hopes and anxieties about the war, even if moderated by official or self-censorship.

Parcels were a special treat for men in combat. These packages contained candies or assorted sweets, a preferred brand of cigarettes, warm socks, and other little things that had the power to make a man's life something other than complete misery. This was not only a means of boosting the joyful recipient's morale, but often that of the men in his platoon as well, as these items were sometimes shared with immediate friends.¹²⁵ When a parcel mentioned in a letter had yet to arrive, dark thoughts of opportunistic mail clerks farther behind the lines entered the thoughts of men at the front. Men would grumble ominously about whatever unfortunate could be caught and proved to be stealing from the men doing the "real work."¹²⁶ As coveted as parcels were, however, they were no substitute for a handwritten letter – the real bread and butter of a man's morale.

¹²⁴ Cope Memoir, 10.

¹²⁵ Harold Layton to Brother, September 22, 1918, Letter, in the possession of Michael Miller, U.S. Marine Corps University Foundation.

¹²⁶ John McHenry Jr. to Parents, June 13, 1918 – September 29, 1918, Letters, in the possession of Michael Miller, U.S. Marine Corps University Foundation.

The institution of mail delivery to the front lines was neither pioneered nor perfected in World War I, but there is a clear development in how the Army handled military correspondence between World War I and World War II. The methods of delivery were streamlined, timetables were slashed in half, and the entire system was made more efficient by Army planners looking to decrease the logistical burden of this critical program.

World War I prompted many firsts for the United States military, and one of these firsts was figuring out how to support a comprehensive postal service for an expeditionary force operating in colossal numbers on another continent. Mail service to troops began by capitalizing on the system already in place in the civilian Post Office Department. It took little time for this system to begin breaking down. Despite some initial successes, tensions grew over the unwillingness of the Army to share troop locations and the difficulty of the Post Office Department in securing transportation. In his general history of the AEF Postal Service, Joseph Buck would write of these “many difficulties, including the frequent transfer of individuals, especially during the hurried skeletonizing of certain combat divisions; huge scale movements, when whole divisions were put in sudden motion; the secrecy attached to location of units ‘Somewhere in France’ or Belgium or elsewhere; illegibility and numerous errors in addresses.”¹²⁷ Letters routinely took more than a month to make their way from United States to the front lines in the ETO, and lack of secure shipping meant countless letters were lost to ships sunk on the crossing to France. By 1918, the War Department chose to militarize the postal system, creating the Military Postal Express Service – it would operate nearly identically to its civilian predecessor, but was entirely created and controlled by the military.

¹²⁷ Joseph F. Buck, “The Yanks Are Writing: A General History of the A.E.F Postal Service,” *The American Philatelist*, vol. 48 (1935): 454.

Logistically, these two organizations were responsible for processing an unprecedented number of pieces of mail. In the twelve months between July 1917 and June 1918, the Post Office Department and Military Postal Express Service delivered 35,455,986 letters and 15,122,810 parcels to the American Expeditionary Forces. They also ferried 15,940,310 letters from France to loved ones back home.¹²⁸ At one point the volume of traffic became so large that it threatened the efficient functioning of the entire system. Families were restricted from sending parcels without the express consent of an infantryman's regimental commander, in order that the torrent of packages descending on the strained transportation system might be stemmed.¹²⁹

The Military Postal Express Service continued past occupation into the post-war period, posting its last output on 31 January 1924. It then idled for nearly two decades until World War II once again yanked the Yankees overseas. It did not take long for the Army to realize the level of infrastructure required to satisfy the postal demands of its men was insupportable. World War II was an industrial war, and with their shipping already eaten up by Lend-Lease programming and the beginnings of mobilization, the United States simply didn't have the leftover tonnage required to ferry millions of letters across the Atlantic.

In late spring 1942, the entire mail delivery game changed. The military began encouraging Americans to use V-mail, or Victory Mail. V-mail was patterned off the earlier British "airgraph," which was designed as a space-saving measure for carrying mail by air. Adapted to the needs and capabilities of American military shipping, letters were addressed and written on a special one-sided form and sent to the Postmaster in Washington, where they were opened and read by Army censors. As usual, these censors redacted any information that could

¹²⁸ Buck, "The Yanks Are Writing," 445.

¹²⁹ Clarence Hathaway to Father, April 26, 1918, Letter, France in the possession of Michael Miller, U.S. Marine Corps University Foundation.

potentially be of use to the enemy. The letters were then photographed onto a reel of 16 mm microfilm. These reels, each containing some 18,000 letters, were flown to receiving stations in overseas theaters, most often located around headquarters units. There each letter was printed onto a sheet of photographic paper, slipped into an envelope, and bagged for delivery to the front. When delivery had been confirmed, the original written copies were destroyed. This process dramatically reduced the weight and space required to ship hard copies of letters overseas and happily expedited the process for the men who waited eagerly for their name to be shouted at mail call every morning.

Auxiliary Troop Services

“...after one [soldier] came in to pour out the fact that his wife was seeing another man, selling their house, etc. and there wasn’t anything he could do about it – I came to know that under every one of those fatigue hats was a separate human being with fears and joys and all.”¹³⁰

One of the greatest successes of the United States military on the morale front between World War I and World War II was the development of a culture of troop service, which took its start in the recreation programs provided by the Army in World War I. The scholarship on pre-USO troop entertainment is sparse, and comes from surprising quarters. Historians like Kara Dixon Vuic, who specialize on the intersection of gender and the military, are the predominating voices in this literature. Before the United Service Organizations (USO) came into being, civilian agencies were tasked with keeping men occupied when they were not fighting. As Vuic describes, they were given this task because of Progressive era fears that all-male camps and a wartime environment would corrupt the morals of young men. The remedy was the provision of middle- and upper-class women who could supply a religiosity and morality that would keep

¹³⁰ Violet Kochendoerfer, “The American Red Cross,” in *Women at War Digital Collection* (National World War II Museum, New Orleans, LA).

soldiers in check.¹³¹ The purpose of this line of research is to acknowledge the gendered reality of morale maintenance, but not its structure or evolution along anything *other* than gendered lines. Vuic and her associates provide some of the only secondary literature on World War I morale programming, but they can still be useful in conjunction with the written histories of the civilian agencies themselves to provide a better foundation from which to explore the evolution of military morale initiatives.

If one looks to the military first, it is clear that the AEF took political education more seriously in 1918 than it had in prior American conflicts, and what fell under this political education overlaps in many respects with what modern observers would call morale programming. The War Department established a Morale Division near the end of the war, and organized films, lectures, newspapers, and religious services in the training camps. *Stars & Stripes* was produced by AEF GHQ and brought news to soldiers packaged with affirming messages from American leaders and news stories designed to highlight the U.S. role in saving its Allies.¹³² The conclusion of the war, however, and the lack of financial support available after the armistice spelled the end of the program's existence. This was the extent of the military's infrastructure for morale.

As alluded to, the role of morale maintenance during the Great War fell primarily to civilian agencies – the primary conduit of American goodwill for its men abroad, provided through such ancillary support systems as the Young Men's Christian Association (Y.M.C.A.), the Red Cross, and the Salvation Army. These major players formed a loose coalition with smaller organizations such as the Knights of Columbus, Jewish Welfare Board, American

¹³¹ Kara Vuic, "A Touch of Home: Entertaining America's Soldiers," Research paper submitted to Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, NY, 2013, 1.

¹³² Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall*, 253.

Library Association, and National Catholic War Council to field a body of recreational personnel numbering near six thousand by the fall of 1918.¹³³ Families on the home front donated money and goods to these services, which funneled them towards the front and established service locations accessible to troops coming off the lines for a rest. These organizations, especially the Y.M.C.A., were designed to meet the spiritual and temporal needs of troops that were not being met by the military command structure. Considering the handicaps of time, distance, facilities, and lack of integration of these civilian agencies with the military, they did a remarkable job.

Major General Frederick Osborn, one of the few to write about troop entertainment without the cross-section of gender studies, wrote about these services in his work on the recreation and welfare of American soldiers. He concluded that they were serviceable to a point. There was, he writes, “some little confusion, some considerable duplication of effort, some added burden to the military in handling civilians and adjusting disputes between civilian organizations...” and it was this that led Raymond Fosdick to recommend to Secretary of War Newton Baker that many of these private initiatives be transferred to government control.¹³⁴ Fosdick was a public administrator serving as the chairman for the Commission on Training Camp Activities (CTCA) for the Army during World War I, and as such it was his responsibility to monitor soldier morale and devise programs that saw to its maintenance. He practically embodied the transition from moral to morale that typified the use of the civilian agencies operating during World War I.

¹³³ Frederick H. Osborn, "Recreation, Welfare, and Morale of the American Soldier," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 220 (1942): 50.

¹³⁴ Osborn, "Recreation, Welfare, and Morale," 50.

The Y.M.C.A. in particular, as one of the oldest of these organizations, devoted “specific and emphatic attention” to those moral issues which faced men in combat.¹³⁵ Termed broadly as “welfare workers,” those men and women serving in civilian “morale agencies” – predominately women, in service of the Y.M.C.A. and Red Cross – were not meant to be outright keepers of conscience for soldiers. They were, however, designed to offer alternatives to the “three age-old passions of mankind [that] have appeared with white-hot intensity in the fighting forces of the nations down through history – gambling, alcoholic intoxication, and sex license.”¹³⁶ The concern was with maintaining the moral fiber of young men deploying into war, not necessarily in maintaining their *morale* – an important distinction. If they could be prevented from soliciting prostitutes overseas, the overseers of these programs did not much care about the soldiers’ military discipline or willingness to do their job.

Transitioning into a post-war after-action-review of work done in his field, Fosdick exemplifies the altered thinking that created the Morale Division in 1918. Throughout the AEF Fosdick was witnessing poor officer-enlisted relations in the form of intelligent soldiers who were willing to challenge the authority of sometimes incompetent officers. He believed this breach in morale to be a bigger threat than failing morals.¹³⁷ Even as he was working with the Y.M.C.A., Red Cross, and Salvation Army, Fosdick was lobbying for the consolidation of their duties with military mobilization, and was rewarded with Secretary Baker’s agreement and confirmation of his proposals. In addition to revised officer training, all future plans for Army

¹³⁵ William Taft et al, eds., *Service With Fighting Men: An Account of the Work of the American Young Men's Christian Associations in the World War* (New York: Association Press, 1922), 103.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹³⁷ Joseph W. Ryan, “Fosdick, Raymond B.,” in “1914-1918 Online International Encyclopedia of the First World War,” ed. by Ute Daniel et al, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2014-10-08. DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.10133.

mobilization included recreation buildings for camps and military personnel to run the facilities.¹³⁸

By America's 1941 entrance into World War II, the military had established that morale was of critical importance and had begun taking steps toward its maintenance. Because of the lack of financial resources that sank the 1918 Morale Division, however, a new Morale Branch within the War Department was required. It was created as an amalgam of the CTCA's in-camp recreation function as envisioned by Fosdick and the 1918 Morale Division's morale research and process improvement function. The military's hand in morale provided organized sporting events like baseball, boxing, and even horse racing during the Occupation period. It oversaw the production of the *Stars and Stripes* and ran canteens that provided special treats like chocolates and doughnuts. It did not, however, control the civilian agencies that were still contracted in as part of the soldiers' morale landscape.

Just before American entry into World War II, many of the civilian agencies that had independently taken part in the war effort in 1917-1918 were amalgamated by presidential order. The services of the Salvation Army, Young Men's Christian Association, Young Women's Christian Association, National Catholic Community Services, National Travelers Aid Association, and the National Jewish Welfare Board were combined to create the United Services Organization, or USO.¹³⁹ The face of this organization to men serving stateside was a feminine one, as Vuic writes:

¹³⁸ Osborn, "Recreation and Welfare," 50.

¹³⁹ The USO was and is a federally sanctioned, private organization. It was staffed and managed by civilians, which was an important part of its morale function in the world wars. Here, men could forget for a time the military environment in which they lived and operated. It was always under close supervision, however, and the Army established liaisons with the USO to maintain a coordinated effort on the morale and recreation front. Facilities and resources were shared between the military and the USO. It was also created by presidential order. For these reasons, it can be included in a section detailing military morale initiatives.

Although by World War II military officials had abandoned their hope that American women would deter soldiers from soliciting foreign prostitutes, they maintained their insistence that women were essential to soldiers' morale and the overall war effort. No longer employed as guardians of soldiers' morality, women served as physical reminders of the home for which men fought and the civilian life to which they would return.¹⁴⁰

The primary contribution of the USO to morale overseas was through entertainment shows.

Over 7,000 entertainers would be sent abroad throughout the course of the war to perform for troops in an estimated 253,410 performances.¹⁴¹

Where the USO shows left off, Red Cross girls picked up. These women ran clubs and canteens abroad that serviced men needing recreation or quiet after combat. These facilities were "always filled to capacity."¹⁴² One of the most thorough overviews of the work done by the Red Cross in terms of recreation comes from Jesse Thomas, who wrote in 1945 of the work done by that organization for the Armed Forces in World War II.

[At the Red Cross] the soldier on leave will find a comfortable bed with clean white sheets. Showers, a barber shop with a shoe-shine stand and a tailor shop are parts of the club. An attractive dining room and a snack bar with American-style food are sights for sore eyes to the men who are weary of "K" rations and mess kits. If the soldier wants amusement he can find it to suit his taste. There are game rooms, a library, music room and lounge... Then there are the sports events, musical and dramatic presentations, dances and parties arranged by [the] Red Cross. Sometimes considerable ingenuity is required to make a "party" out of the little equipment available, particularly on the far front installations, but the Red Cross workers somehow manage to enliven the GI routine."¹⁴³

These clubs also provided the writing paper and facilities that enabled soldiers to communicate with loved ones at home. Millions of sheets of paper and millions of envelopes were processed every day across the ETO, made available through the efforts of welfare workers. Furthermore,

¹⁴⁰ Vuic, "A Touch of Home," 2.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁴² Jesse Thomas, "American Red Cross Services to the Armed Forces," *Phylon*, vol. 6, no. 3 (1945): 275, doi:10.2307/272497.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 275-276.

the Red Cross carried their morale work over into the hospitals in which they operated, creating hospital recreation programs for recuperating soldiers as an adjunct to medical care.

The USO and the Red Cross may have been dominated by women because of the perceived need to keep men socialized and out of trouble, as Vuic suggests. More to the point, however, they served the critical function of morale-raising in the combat zone, and they served it well. These organizations, along with the War Department's newly minted Morale Branch worked in concert to provide all the leisure activities of a soldier deployed in the ETO. Their services were carried off with greater efficiency over a vastly expanded territory and marked the completion of trends in morale maintenance that had begun to take shape in World War I. The seventy years of military development following Nazi Germany's surrender in 1945 would expand and improve upon the ideas that took their first root in the global wars of the twentieth century.

V. SUCCESS AND FAILURE OF MORALE

“Morale is born of loyalty, patriotism, discipline, efficiency, all of which breed confidence in self and in comrades... It withstands shocks, even disasters of the battlefield...”¹⁴⁴

The history of morale maintenance in the European Theater of Operations in the world wars was the composite of many programs, both intentional and unintentional, that evolved as awareness of morale’s importance to troop performance grew. Its genesis came from the eye-opening upheaval of World War I, and the realization that combat performance mirrored troop morale levels. We have seen that the harsh environmental conditions in both wars complicated supply; that the infrastructure for handling training and leadership development in many ways did not adequately prepare units for combat; that certain sectors of service like the medics and chaplains could influence morale, either by doing their job effectively or by transcending the boundaries of their given positions to serve the emotional and psychological needs of soldiers; and that over time the United States military better identified and directly addressed the needs of morale by increasing the efficiency of existing communication systems and streamlining the inclusion of civilian agencies in war zones whose sole purpose was boosting morale. What was it, then, that this focus on morale was intended to combat?

There is, of course, the desire to boost combat performance, and on this count the literature is abundant – for later wars. Recent scholarship from Anthony King joins the empirical, psychosocial work of Fred Mael and Cathie Alderks to paint a picture of unit cohesion’s role in combat efficacy, both works taking part in the surge of historical interest in morale following its spectacular collapse in Vietnam.¹⁴⁵ Unit cohesion in both of these studies is

¹⁴⁴ Eric Sixsmith, *Eisenhower As Military Commander* (Boston, MA: Da Capo, 1972).

¹⁴⁵ Fred Mael and Cathie Alderks, “Leadership Team Cohesion and Subordinate Work Unit Morale and Performance,” *Military Psychology*, vol. 5, no. 3 (1993).

taken as the most significant ingredient in morale. Despite their focus on later wars, the work these historians have done can be retroactively applied to the global conflicts that came earlier in the twentieth century, wherein unit cohesion and morale also closely mirrored one another. If allowances are made for the other situational factors that influenced levels of morale in soldiers – those factors addressed extensively in this work – the levels of combat performance are clear correlates with the levels of morale in small units.¹⁴⁶ Considering the Army’s first and foremost consideration was winning a war, they had an obvious stake in ensuring its men fought well. The military saw this could be wrought from high levels of morale, and consequently turned their attention to the development of morale programming.

Beyond combat performance, however, the military was in the process of defining a new type of wound that significantly overlapped with morale: the combat exhaustion casualty. World War I was a watershed in the identification of the psychological links between combat stressors and the performance of men. At the time it was called “shell shock,” and was ascribed to the percussive shock wave of exploding ordnance physically impacting the head, jarring the brain. The symptoms, though – blindness, paralyses, amnesia, hysterics, non-responsiveness, and a host of other physical maladies – appeared in those who had suffered no direct trauma, convincing medical professionals by the end of the war that they were dealing with a psychological, or at least physico-psychological problem. Men were treated as close to the front as possible, as it was believed that proximity to a man’s unit and the promise that a little rest would set him right were the most effective means of returning a psychological casualty to combat.

By World War II, the Army’s Medical Department had codified the symptoms and expression of psychological combat casualties:

¹⁴⁶ Mael and Alderks, “Leadership Team Cohesion,” 153-154.

The army's chief neuropsychiatrist graphically described the distinctive symptoms of a combat exhaustion casualty: "Typically he appeared as a dejected, dirty, weary man. His facial expression was one of depression sometimes of tearfulness. Frequently his hands were trembling or jerky. Occasionally he would display varying degrees of confusion, perhaps to the extent of being mute or staring into space. Very occasionally he might present classically hysterical symptoms."¹⁴⁷

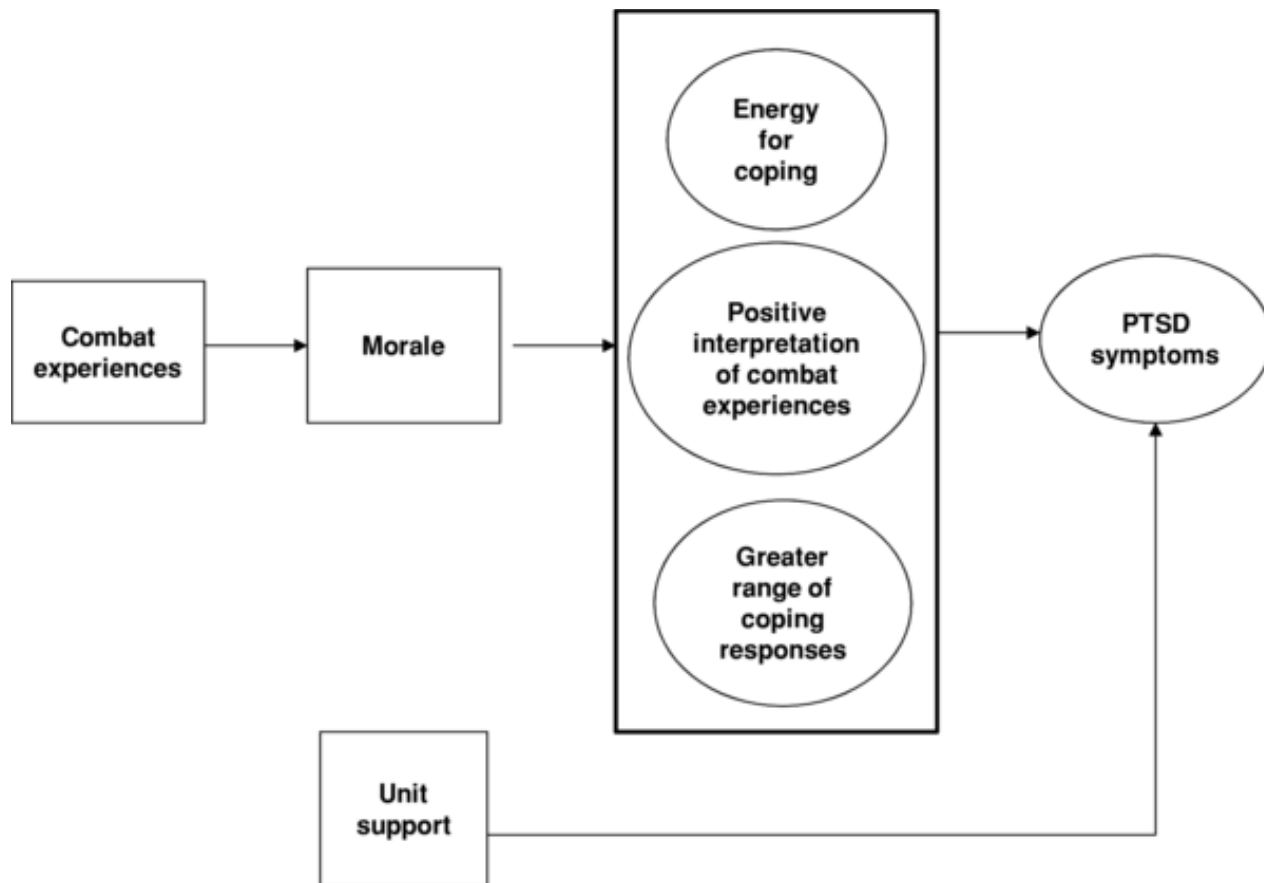
World War II also brought a major emphasis in screening, as the Army attempted to preclude men who might be prone to psychological problems from enlisting in the first place. It failed abysmally. As David Marlowe would write, "the United States suffered one diagnosed psychological casualty for every four wounded."¹⁴⁸ Faith in the screening process failed as huge numbers of psychological casualties came out of the North African and Pacific theaters throughout the war. The lessons of World War I were already being revisited in the search for solutions by the time Americans entered the ETO. The critical role of the small unit community in maintaining a soldier's morale, and therefore his mental health, as well as the ability of that group to mitigate the effects of combat stress was rediscovered.

In 2013, Britt, Adler, Bliese, and Moore conducted research on combat veterans that sought to define the role of morale as a moderator in the relationship between combat exposure and later PTSD symptom expression. PTSD is the term given to the persistent mental and emotional stress that occurs as a result of injury or severe psychological shock. Combat PTSD is the specific type of PTSD caused by combat experiences, and is the official medical diagnosis given to the family of symptoms proceeding from a combat stress reaction. This is the modern conclusion to a long history of "soldier's heart," "shell shock," "combat fatigue," "combat exhaustion," and a constellation of alternate terms for the same class of psychological casualty.

¹⁴⁷ Michael D. Doubler, *Closing with the Enemy: How GIs Fought the War in Europe, 1944-1945* (Lawrence, KS.: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 242.

¹⁴⁸ David Marlowe, *Psychological and Psychosocial Consequences of Combat and Deployment, with Special Emphasis on the Gulf War* (National Defense Research Institute: Santa Monica, CA, 2001), xxii.

The research performed by Britt et al was done on soldiers who had deployed in Iraq, but the study drilled down to the core of both morale and combat stress reactions, and therefore its results can be extrapolated with care to the time period dealt with in this work. The team began with a theoretical model that illustrated how morale might be related to fewer PTSD symptoms:¹⁴⁹



After running multivariate regressions on such variables as morale, unit support, and combat exposure stressfulness, the results indicated “individuals reporting high levels of morale were less likely to report PTSD symptoms under high combat exposure breadth and perceived

¹⁴⁹ T.W. Britt et al, “Morale as a Moderator of the Combat Exposure-PTSD Symptom Relationship,” *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, vol. 26 (2013), doi:10.1002/jts.21775.

stressfulness... Importantly, the moderating effects of morale were obtained even after controlling for unit support, a variable that has been found to be related to indices of strain in combat veterans in prior research.”¹⁵⁰

How does this relate to the men who served in the world wars? For one thing, the human element of the battlefield has not changed. The soldiers who fought in 1918 are physically the same as those who fought in 1944, who are the same as those who fought in Vietnam, who are the same as those who fight today. Tactics change and weaponry advances, but the limiting factor on the battlefield as always been and will always be humanity itself. Combat psychologically affects men in the same ways, and morale held the same power to mitigate these effects across the last century. Neither commanders in World War I nor World War II had this data in front of them, but observationally and anecdotally they could see that psychological combat casualties were highly visible and destructive of unit cohesion, which was a significant underpinning of morale. As one junior officer would write of his fellow small unit leader, “Mac had suffered numerous episodes of battle fatigue, but each time he was returned, because there was a policy that non coms were immune to this particular malady.”¹⁵¹ One private would write in a later memoir of “D. Sullivan going literally “nuts” with crying when [the shells] came over....”¹⁵² As the rate of diagnosis and evacuation for psychological combat casualties skyrocketed, the military became more invested in meeting the emotional and psychological needs of its troops in ways that might prevent losing them as casualties in this manner.

The efficacy of the Army’s methods at addressing morale can be debated. While it is true that across both world wars there was a significant and increasing attention paid to the morale of

¹⁵⁰ T.W. Britt et al, “Morale as a Moderator.”

¹⁵¹ MacMillan, “Account of a Combat Experience,” USAWC Archives.

¹⁵² Garter, “A View From the Rear,” USAWC Archives.

troops, especially on the front lines, these were the first movements toward coherent morale maintenance policies and they were not always well executed. It was increasingly clear that attention must be paid to morale in order to maintain the fighting capabilities of soldiers, but the multiplicity of variables involved in the problem, lack of funding and attention, and the length of time required for the learning process meant that the system had still not been perfected by the end of war in 1945. The state of morale maintenance at the end of World War II set the stage for developments in what became known as resilience training as well as a better understanding of combat stress. Literature on morale has only recently begun to turn back to the world wars, but the value of doing so in understanding the modern Army is enormous. The imperfect, formative years of American military morale took place in the early twentieth century, and to understand them is to understand the evolution of psychological training and treatment in today's Army.

It is clear that the military possesses an organizational stake in both creating and sustaining high morale in its troops, and the lessons learned in the process of fighting the world wars in the first half of the twentieth century illustrated this. By acknowledging the environmental factors that adversely impact morale, understanding the unintended effects existing programs have on the same, and intentionally designing programmatic solutions to meet the needs of its men, the Army could have been in a good position to prepare for future conflicts. As it was, the military would need to continue learning and re-learning the lessons of previous conflicts as it became engaged in later wars that would tax the discipline, self-control, enthusiasm, and will of its men.

GLOSSARY

AEF: American Expeditionary Force, by 1918 composed of four divisions of Army, National Guard, and Marine units.

ASTP: Army Specialized Training Program; implemented on college campuses in December 1942 and designed to provide technical and professional training to men who were also receiving college educations in scientific, engineering, medical, and language programs. This was done in order that the Army would have well-educated officers and that the nation would retain a body of technically trained professionals despite the manpower needs of the military.

A.W.O.L.: Absent With-Out Leave

Boche: A derogatory slang term for a German soldier; other commonly used terms include “Heinie,” “Jerry,” and “Fritz.”

C.O.: Commanding Officer

CTCA: Commission on Training Camps and Activities

ETO: European Theater of Operations, comprising France, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Austria. Although technically part of Europe, Italy was considered a part of the Mediterranean Theater of Operations.

ETOUSA: European Theater of Operations, United States Army; this was the World War II equivalent of the AEF designation.

GHQ: General Headquarters, first designated to the command of Major General John J. Pershing in May of 1917. The Headquarters unit in World War II was termed the ‘Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force,’ with the acronym SHAEF, and was under the command of General Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Kamerad: German translation of “comrade,” used when German troops wanted to indicate their surrender.

USACHCS: U.S. Army Chaplain Center and School

V-Mail: Victory Mail; the hybrid letter-writing system implemented in World War II that took handwritten letters, photocopied them onto microfilm, and shipped hundreds of thousands of reels containing some 18,000 letters each to the ETO over the course of the war.

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