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The story of a Soldier in World
War I, November 2, 1917 until
September, 1919

John William Walston, son of Benjamin Thomas Walston and Nannie Cornelia Yelverton Walston, who was born November 30, 1896 and died December 25, 1978. He married Mary L. Lemmon of Saratoga, North Carol. October 2, 1917, thirty days later to report to Camp Jackson, Columbia, South Carolina to become a soldier of The Army of The United States.

Private Walston was assigned to the 324th Infan. Company L at Camp Jackson. Private Walston was transferred to Camp Forest, Tennessee, assigned to Company F, 6th Infantry Regiment, 5th Division of the United States Army, a regular army division. He was trained here for combat duty in France against the German Army. His new wife, Mary visited him here, she found lodging in Chattanooga, visiting Lookout Mountain among other places of interest. He was transported to a camp in New Jersey about March 1, 1918 to embark by ship to Brest, France, to become part of the American Expeditionary Forces to engage in combat against the German Army.

The 6th Infantry Regiment was first assigned to the eastern side of France in the area from Toul, Nancy Southeast to St. Die. The Regiment stayed here from the late spring an early summer of 1918. My father said it was the first and only place in which he saw it snow in July 1918. The commander of company F was Captain Paul Garrison, Goldsboro, North Carolina and the company clerk was Corporal Will Young of Wilson, North Carolina, the latter, father of a well known MD in Wilson, Dr. William Young.

My father told me an account of transporting supplies by mule train up a mountainside in the Vosges Mountains. Corporal Youngs mule had a stubborn personality and Corporal Young being a city boy, did not know how to deal with a balky mule. My father helped him to overcome this problem. They were in the quiet sector until the summer of 1918, when they were moved to the northwest in the Argonne Forest, St Mihiel, Moselle River area. He was with the 64th Infantry Regiment, ordered to go over the top, or to advance against the German Army by leaving the trenches to advance across no-mans-land and engage the enemy. The advance occurred around the middle of September, 1918.

My father said as he and the other soldiers were crossing no-mans-land, a shell exploded close to him. He sensed a stinging feeling on his neck, but he kept going until he began to weaken. He put his hand up to his neck and took it down to discover a very bloody hand. He knew of a first-aid station to his rear, turned around and proceeded in that direction. He was growing weaker, so he discarded all equipment except his rifle, and he was compelled to rid himself of the rifle before he got to the first-aid station. A medic noticed his arrival, and informed the doctor who was treating a soldier with a severe head injury that this was probably fatal, that here was a soldier who was bleeding profusely, and would bleed to death if not treated, the doctor responded, checked, or stopped the flow of blood. He informed my father of a field hospital about a mile further back, and asked if he could walk, my father said yes, got up, and passed out, upon coming to, he was on

Litter carried by two soldiers headed to the field hospital, they were encountered by an American soldier with four German prisoners, who were ordered to man the litter in the place of the American soldiers, my father said that the ride improved. He reached the hospital, where a surgeon administered local anesthesia, removed a small fragment of shrapnel from his neck. He eventually reached a base hospital in Paris, France, from which he was discharged November 11, 1918.

I neglected to mention that the Commander of the 6th Infantry Regiment was a full Colonel, whose name was Courtney Hodges. General Court. Hodges, World War II, was named Commander of the 1st Army USA, replacing General Omar Bradley when he was named Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and was now a five-star General.

Private Walston was called into a group of soldiers and when he reported, it was revealed that the purpose was to procure replacements for a Military Police Battalion, he did not wish to become an MP, therefore he became A.W.O.L. He later was informed that a place existed in Paris to help soldiers separated from their units. He found this place, gave them the information they sought, and was informed that Divisions one through six, regular army divisions, were designated as the Army of Occupation forces, assigned to Germany as such. He learned that the 6th Infantry Regiment, 5th Division, had been assigned to Coblenz and he would be reunited with the unit there. He reported to the orderly room of Company F, to Captain Garrison, who was shocked to see him, having been reported missing in action and presumed dead. The same time that the news that he was missing

and presumed dead, his wife received a letter from him, written in the Paris hospital informing her of his wound and that he was recovering on schedule, thus turning sorrow into joy.

The Army of Occupation, as far as Private Walston was concerned, was fulfilled by late summer 1919. A directive was received by the commander of the troops at Coblenz, to select individual soldiers according to their height, weight, physical build to join a new regiment composed of such men, to be transferred to Paris, the unit to be known as The Composite Regiment, later to become known as "Pershing's Regiment."

The men selected were housed at a location near Paris, France, at a site constructed for the ~~Paris~~ Olympic Games. The regiment was trained in precision close order drill and marching, and were told that they should be as precise in this as West Pointers. The object was to become the marching troops for four victory parades, London, Paris, New York and Washington DC. The regiment was to be led by General John J. Pershing, hence the title, "Pershing's Own Regiment." Private Walston was selected to be a member of this regiment. The parades were held, first in London where the march was through the grounds of Buckingham Palace, where from a balcony of the Palace, King George and Queen Mary reviewed the marchers, next in Paris, along Champs Elysees. The regiment was transported to Brest, France, boarded The Leviathan along with General Pershing, for the trip home to New York, where the parade was along Fifth Avenue.

They were transported by train to Washington DC, there the parade route was to proceed from the Capitol Building along Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House.

The time came in late September, 1919, to deactivate the Composite Regiment. Private Walston was directed to proceed to Camp Lee, Virginia for the receipt of an Honorable Discharge from the United States Army. He came home to his wife and mother, his father being deceased since 1911, he was an only son.

The story of John William Walston's service in the army during World War I, is written by his only son, William B. Walston, ~~also~~ a veteran of service in the Army of the United States during World War II. The son and the father were for a time located in Toul and Nancy, France during the respective wars.