



Artillery Scout: The Story of a Forward Observer with the U.S. Field Artillery in World War I

James Bilder

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The American Doughboys of World War I are often referred to as the “Lost Generation”; however, in this book we are able to gain an intimate look at their experiences after being thrust into the center of Europe’s “Great War” and enduring some of the most grueling battles in U.S. history.

Len Fairfield (the author’s grandfather) was an Artillery Scout, or Forward Observer, for the U.S. Army, and was a firsthand witness to the war’s carnage as he endured its countless hardships, all of which are revealed here in vivid detail. His story takes the reader from a hard life in Chicago, through conscription, rigorous training in America and France, and finally to the battles which have become synonymous with the U.S. effort in France—St. Mihiel and the Argonne Forest, the latter claiming 26,000 American lives, more than any other U.S. battle.

Fairfield, with his artillery in support of the 91st (“Wild West”) Division, was on the front lines for it all, amidst a sea of carnage caused by bullets, explosives and gas, with the occasional enemy plane swooping in to add strafing to the chaos. Entire units were decimated before gaining a yard, and then the Doughboys would find German trenches filled with dead to indicate the enemy was suffering equally.

The AEF endured a rare close-quarters visit to hell until it was sensed that the Germans were finally giving way, though fighting tooth-and-nail up to the very minute of the Armistice. This action-filled work brings the reader straight to the center of America’s costly battles in World War I, reminding us once again how great-power status often has to be earned with blood on battlefields.

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