

OUR PRESCOTT EAGLE: Ernest Love, Arizona Aviator in the Great War

Author(s): Alan L. Roesler

Source: *The Journal of Arizona History*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (autumn 2009), pp. 237-268

Published by: Arizona Historical Society

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41697230>

Accessed: 14-08-2018 03:50 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Arizona Historical Society is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Journal of Arizona History*

OUR PRESCOTT EAGLE
Ernest Love, Arizona Aviator
in the Great War

by

Alan L. Roesler

“The U.S. called on men to fight,
On land, on sea, on high,
And a bright young man from our own town
With a proud heart said ‘good-bye.’
O’er seas our gallant eagle went,
To do his bit over there,
And fight the Huns with all his might,
Among the clouds up in the air.
A single victory won to us,
From a bird man far above,
And the victor we are proud to hear,
Is Lieutenant Ernest Love.”

THE POEM, “Our Prescott Eagle,” appeared in the January 23, 1919 edition of the *Prescott Journal-Miner*. It exemplifies the interest the central Arizona community and its newspaper showed in the life and exploits of the only local aviator to see combat during the Great War. Although Ernest Love grew up in Prescott, his short life was defined by his military career. The U.S. Army Signal Corps (later the U.S. Air Service) accepted only the best and brightest young men as aviators. Physically gifted, well educated, and highly motivated, Love died a hero’s death. Today, his legacy lives

Alan Roesler graduated from Central Missouri University and is a registered geologist in Arizona. He is a member of the League of World War I Aviation Historians and former managing editor and issue editor of their quarterly journal, *Over The Front*. He thanks Michael Wurtz, former archivist at Sharlot Hall Museum, for getting him started on this project, and Bob Wittman, historian for American Legion Ernest A. Love Post 6, for access to new information that made this article possible. An expanded edition of Alan’s book, *An Arizona Aviator in France: The Life of Ernest A. Love, 147th Aero Squadron, USAS*, will be released this fall.

[237]

on at Prescott's Ernest A. Love Field and Ernest A. Love American Legion Post 6.¹

Central Arizona Childhood

Ernest Alexander Love was born in Raton, New Mexico, on November 30, 1895, the son of Allan and Louetta Love. His father had emigrated from Scotland in 1888 and lived in Ontario, Canada, before moving to the states and working for the Santa Fe, Prescott & Phoenix Railway (SFP&P), when he met and married Kansas-born Louetta Gregory in Raton in 1892. Two sons—Francis Gilbert (1893-December 15, 1894) and Robert Chester (January 16, 1898-January 12, 1899)—died in infancy.² After the Prescott and Eastern Railroad, a subsidiary of the SFP&P, finished its 26.4-mile line to serve the mines in the Prescott area on September 30, 1898, the family moved to Prescott, where Allan worked as a fireman for the railroad.

Starting in September 1901, Ernest attended "B class" first grade until his teacher, Helen Strange, promoted him to "A class" on June 13, 1902. He also attended second grade, and at least half of third grade, in Prescott. The Prescott Free Academy housed classes until the Washington School opened for first through eighth grades in September 1903. The following September, Ernest started third grade at Washington School, but left sometime after the Phoenix & Eastern Railroad (P&E), another SFP&P subsidiary, began operating a 100-mile freight line from Phoenix to Florence and Winkelman on November 27, 1904, and his father was promoted to an engineer for the P&E. This meant that Allan Love stopped regularly at the Fifth Street depot, just across from the Tempe Normal School of Arizona (TNSA), today's Arizona State University.³

A dormitory facility on a ten-building campus, TNSA was one of Arizona's three institutions of higher learning and included a "Training School" curriculum in which college students conducted their practice teaching under the supervision of Dr. R.H. Blome and a staff of critics. Winter had set in at Prescott's mile-high elevation, but the weather remained mild in Tempe, and the Training School met Louetta's desire to provide Ernest with a quality education. The Loves enrolled their son in the TNSA Training School, probably in the spring semester of 1905. The only hitch in this arrangement occurred from November 27-30, 1905, when a flood damaged the



Eight-year-old Ernest Love is seated in the front row, far left, in this photograph of Prescott's Washington School third-grade class, 1904.

railroad bridge across the Salt River, temporarily cutting off train service from Phoenix.

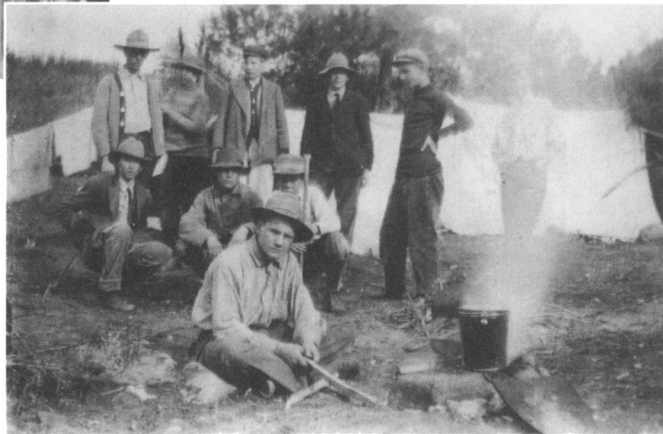
On March 13, 1907, the P&E merged with SFP&P's competitor, the Southern Pacific Railroad, forcing Allan Love to once again weigh his options. Forever a P&E man at heart, Allan elected to remain with its parent company, the SFP&P, which allowed him to work from the Wickenburg depot, sixty-three rail miles northeast of Tempe. The Loves resided on Central Avenue in Wickenburg until Ernest graduated from the eighth grade at the Training School.

By the age of six, Ernest had already taken up acting, beginning with a role as George Washington in a first-grade school play. Birds and a dog were his favorite pets. From the time his parents moved to Wickenburg, Ernest exhibited a keen passion for hunting and camping in the outdoors with the Boy Scouts of America, where he developed friendships that lasted throughout his life. Most of his Boy Scout friends his age lived in Prescott, and later became



Six-year-old Ernest Love dressed as George Washington in a Tempe Normal School of Arizona Training School play, 1902-1903.

Ernest Love seated in front of Boy Scouts in Copper Basin, 1909. Standing (l.-r.): William Lloyd, unknown, Harold Brisley, Miley Deming, and Homer Clark.



his classmates at Prescott High School (PHS). Eighth-grade graduation from the Training School likely couldn't come soon enough for him. Dr. T. L. Bolton delivered the commencement address on May 27, 1910. Ernest was just fourteen years old and glad to be finally going home.⁴

By Ernest's ninth-grade school year, the Loves had moved back to Prescott and resided at 527 [now 515] East Sheldon Street. Being back in Prescott provided other opportunities for a ninth-grader just entering high school. The Loves were members of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Prescott, where Ernest attended bible school and learned to appreciate music. He owned his own accordion and

a beautifully carved upright piano, and took lessons on both. He also participated more actively in Boy Scout activities, his membership certificate being issued on January 30, 1911.⁵

Ernest enrolled as a freshman at Prescott High School in the fall of 1910. His high-school years were notable in many ways. At PHS he first started showing theatrical ability in the freshmen public speaking exercises, which further developed his love for acting and singing in plays and musicals. During his sophomore year, he played his first dramatic leading role as Sir Bertram DeLacey, the poet laureate, in the pastoral operetta "Sylvia." As a junior, he participated in the old classic "She Stoops to Conquer" ("presented in a novel and original manner," according to the 1914 PHS yearbook), as well as "The Junior Newspaper" ("the first of its kind and a great success"). His final performance, in his junior year, was the part of Miss Grace Cousins' suitor in the comic operetta "Bulbul." The PHS yearbook commented favorably on his acting and "look[ed] forward to the time when . . . [We will see] Ernest, the passionate lover, in a modern domestic drama."

Evidently, Ernest played "the passionate lover" in real life as well. His romance with Martha Cowan, a sophomore when he was a junior, was the most highly publicized student relationship during Ernest's junior and senior years. The "JOSHES" section of the 1913 and 1914 yearbooks offered other glimpses of his childhood not otherwise documented. Ernest's interest in singing and theatrics continued into the summer of 1913, when he was one of the second tenors in The New State Theatre's first concert (honoring Arizona's recent statehood) at the Prescott Apollo Club. During his senior year, he was in the quartette or grand chorus of the operetta "The Drum Major."

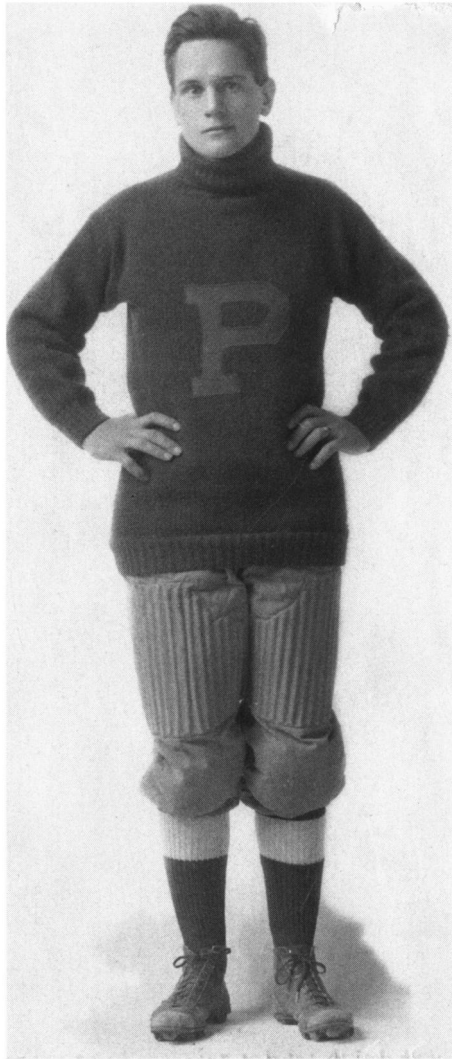
In the classroom Ernest was particularly strong in math and sciences, helping him maintain a B average, with a calculated grade point average of 3.0. But his most widely recognized accomplishments were on the football field. At the close of the 1912 football season, the Phoenix *Arizona Republican* selected him as a "Second Line" guard (second team by today's standards) on its first All-Arizona scholastic football team. The list designated the top twenty-two football players in the state, selected from the five top-ranked high school teams, representing Bisbee, Phoenix Indian School, Phoenix Union, Prescott, and Tucson.



The Prescott High School junior class of 1913, with Ernest Love seated at the far right.

Ernest played right tackle during the 1913 football season, in which Prescott High lost the State Championship game to its arch rival, Phoenix Union. Once the football season ended, Ernest started as a guard on the 1914 basketball team, the first year that boys participated in interscholastic basketball at PHS.

Ernest's senior class was the last to be graduated from the old high school building, and as class president, Ernest himself "dug up the first spade of earth for the excavation work in connection with the new building," according to a June 10, 1914 *Prescott Journal-Miner* article entitled "CLASS OF '14 IS TO REMEMBER ALMA MATER." Commencement week, however, hadn't gone quite as planned Ernest participated in the senior play on Tuesday and Wednesday nights, June 2 and 3. The next evening, Judge Frank



Ernest Love in his Prescott High School football uniform.

O. Smith delivered the commencement address at the Elks Theatre; however, as the article lamented: "Owing to the fact that the publishing house was destroyed by fire, the diplomas could not be presented during the exercises" that evening. On Friday evening, June 5, the junior prom that culminated the week of activities was held at the Odd Fellows Hall, where Ernest provided part of the entertainment for the reception. "The boys' quartet comprised of

THE JOURNAL OF ARIZONA HISTORY

Messrs. Howard Morrow, Ernest Love, Dwight Curtis and Tom Marks also furnished a number of pleasing selections," stated the *Prescott Journal-Miner* of June 7, 1914. "Brief remarks were also delivered by . . . Ernest Love." The graduation ceremony itself was "held Tuesday night [June 9] at the home of Ernest Love, president of the class . . . featured by the presentation of diplomas to 13 of the 16 graduates." Afterwards, Ernest's piano playing inspired much singing by his classmates.

Stanford University and R.O.T.C.

In the fall of 1914, Ernest arrived at Stanford University to pursue a mechanical engineering degree. Once again, he vigorously embraced school activities. Glee Club participation netted him a trip to a music festival in Hawaii. While there, he bought a ukulele that he learned to play with gusto. On October 20, 1916, he was



*Ernest Love, probably at
Stanford University.*

invited to join the Stanford student branch (known as the “Stanford M.E. Society”) of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. He actively participated in the club’s activities during his second semester of his junior year, culminating in the March 24, 1917, meeting of the Stanford and University of California branches of the M.E. Society meeting at the Engineers Club in San Francisco, replete with a five-course meal and wine.

The war in Europe, meanwhile, had prompted the Friends of France and other grass-roots organizations to organize volunteers from Stanford and the nearby University of California to join the American Ambulance Field Service to assist the French army. As war fervor mounted even before America declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917, at the end of his junior year Ernest Love filed an application to enroll with the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (R.O.T.C.) at the Presidio in San Francisco. He commenced the five-week summer training camp during the second week of May 1917, setting in motion events that would profoundly impact his life.⁶

On May 26, Ernest filled out his draft registration card in accordance with the recently passed Selective Service Act of May 18, 1917, and in advance of the first official registration conducted on June 5. About June 13, the army announced that men at the Presidio training camp could apply for a transfer to other departments in which they desired to serve. Ernest and fifteen others from his company selected the Aviation Section of the U.S. Army Signal Corps.⁷

Ernest easily passed all his tests and examinations, and joined eleven other men from the Presidio training companies at ground school for Signal Corps aviation cadets that had opened on May 17 at the University of California, Berkeley. A headline in the *Prescott Journal-Miner* blared: “ERNEST LOVE, STANFORD STUDENT, IS REWARDED FOR HIS HIGH CLASS ABILITY IN MECHANICAL ENGINEERING.” The accompanying article noted that Love was “rapidly attaining distinction in army life through his engineering ability and his studious application as an officer of the training camp at Presidio.” Given the lack of organization in the Signal Corps at the time—it did not even have a plan in place to train aviators until May 23, 1917—Ernest and the other cadets with R.O.T.C. training were enlisted to help train the new recruits.⁸

Ground School and Primary Flight Training

The University of California, Berkeley, was one of the first six universities at which the government established Schools of Military Aeronautics to provide facilities for ground school training. The prevailing theory was that the best way to teach men to fly was to provide them with a solid grounding in the specific tasks and knowledge that would determine their success or failure as pilots.

The curriculum included seven general topics: engines, theory of flight, cross-country and general flying, aerial observation, gunnery, signaling and wireless, and military studies. Of the 120 hours of hands-on or laboratory training, twenty-six hours were devoted to engines, thirty-one hours to gunnery, and thirty-five hours to signaling and wireless; the remaining twenty-eight hours were spread out amongst cross-country and general flying, aerial observation, and military studies. Although this indoctrination in the basic elements of military aviation was normally a three-month course, it appears that Love was credited for his training course at the Presidio, allowing him to graduate on July 28, 1917. By this time, he had made up his mind not to return to Stanford and finish his engineering degree, even if given the chance to do so. He liked gasoline-engine technology so much that he embraced aviation as his chosen pathway.⁹

Love's next destination was Rockwell Field in San Diego, one of only three airfields suitable for flight training when the United States entered the First World War. The course in primary flying instruction at Rockwell Field averaged about eight weeks, and included a thorough introduction to the skills required of pilots. A November 1917 article in *Yavapai Magazine*, entitled "WINNING HIS SPURS," described how "the boys were given nine hours training with the instructor, 45 minutes each day for a period of 12 days [*i.e.*, 540 minutes of dual instruction] and at the end of that time if the student cannot fly, he is not accepted. The results of this test left Love the only remaining one of the 15 [original applicants from training camp at Presidio] to qualify."¹⁰

The preliminary flying test that Ernest passed consisted of: making three figure 8s around pylons 1,600 feet apart, with turns limited to a radius of 800 feet; accomplishing a dead-engine landing from 300 feet and stopping within 150 feet of a previously designated point; making an altitude flight to at least 1,000 feet; and gliding with



Ernest Love seated in the rear cockpit of a Curtiss JN-4 "Jenny" primary trainer at Rockwell Field, San Diego.

engine throttled, changing direction of 90 degrees to the right and left. Love was then eligible for solo instruction necessary to qualify him as a Reserve Military Aviator (R.M.A.). On October 5, 1917, he completed the final stages of his R.M.A. test requirements—flying forty-five minutes at 4,000 feet; killing the engine at 1,000 feet and landing within 200 feet of a previously designated point; and making a cross-country triangular flight of at least thirty miles, passing over two previously designated points, at an altitude of 2,500 feet. Love exceeded both distance and altitude requirements by a wide margin, and put his wheels down within fifty feet of a strip of canvas set out for him on the ground.¹¹

Destination New York

Two days later, Ernest was ordered to proceed to New York City prior to embarking for Europe. He traveled by rail from San

Diego to Los Angeles on October 14, and the following day boarded train "No. 2" heading east. Ernest asked his mother to meet him in Ashfork, about fifty-six miles north of Prescott on the SFP&P Railway. She contacted Ernest's childhood friend, Ola Henry, who was attending Northern Arizona Normal School in Flagstaff. The pair greeted Ernest at the Flagstaff railroad station on October 16, and rode with him as far as Winslow, sixty miles east. It was the last time Louetta would see her son.

There was much to be done in New York. After reporting to the Aviation Depot at Garden City on Long Island on November 20, Love's first order of business was obtaining his R.M.A. insignia—a shield with the gold-embroidered letters "U.S." set between silver wings on a blue background. The army did not provide all the uniform and bedding items its officers required, but Ernest fortunately received assistance from the National Special Aid Society (NSAS) Aviation Committee's "Treasure and Trinket Fund," established to "provide necessary equipment and comforts not as yet furnished by the Government."¹²

On November 26, 1917, the NSAS furnished Ernest and nineteen other cadets with some of the more expensive items they needed "before they left for 'overseas'." The organization designated Love and his fellow aviators "the 'Armour Unit' because it was just at that time we received a check of \$2500.00 from Mr. Ogden Armour, which we used to equip these boys. Mr. Fitch was so delighted with them that he invited them to lunch and they afterwards had their pictures taken on the roof of his building ('Abercrombie and Fitch Company, New York')." In Ernest's case, the donation included a leather flying coat, a trench overcoat, a pair of heavy dress boots, a bed roll and a heavy wool blanket. As he later stated, "After buying the stuff we all had our pictures taken in the leather coat and then the owner of the store, Mr. Fitch . . . had us all stay to lunch in the log cabin on top of the store."¹³

Because no federal aviation authority existed, and the army had yet to develop its own test for qualifying men as pilots, Love next had to obtain his pilot's license from the Aero Club of America. The club, located at Madison Avenue and 41st Street, issued all pre-war pilot qualification certificates on behalf of the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI), which oversaw all pilot certification programs in the United States. This involved passing yet another



The "Armour Unit" posed on the roof of Abercrombie & Fitch in New York, November 26, 1917. Ernest Love is kneeling, second from left. Other identifiable cadets, kneeling to Love's right, are _____ Carranza, Joe Chamberlain, and Carroll Watson (second from right).

physical examination. Ernest summed up his frustrations in a letter to his parents. "Had to take that physical examination today," he wrote on November 27. "That makes the fifth one I have had in the last six months and this one today was a corker, the regular aviation examination like I took at Presidio. I hope this is the last one as I am getting tired of them. If there ever was any thing the matter with me they should know it by now." That same day, he was issued FAI Certificate No. 978.¹⁴

Thereafter, Love killed time while waiting for orders sending him overseas. On November 30, he celebrated his twenty-second

birthday by strapping on a new wristwatch his parents had sent to commemorate the occasion. But for the most part, he enjoyed sightseeing. Finally, on December 23, he received his commission as a first lieutenant in the Aviation Section of the Signal Reserve Corps. It was followed by a certificate, dated December 26, 1917, honorably discharging him as a private first class and assigning him to active duty as a first lieutenant. This was the army's way of dissolving the enlistment papers he had signed after passing his preliminary flying test on August 15, which would have obligated him to a four-year stint as an enlisted man if he had later failed to pass the R.M.A. exam.

The long-awaited order finally arrived on January 10, 1918, assigning Love to the 141st Aero Squadron, which had been organized at Rockwell Field on October 8, 1917, and was then attempting to fill its ranks to "war strength" before crossing the Atlantic. At 2:00 A.M. on January 15, the 141st formed with four other squadrons and marched to the railroad. A short train and ferry ride brought them to Pier 45 at Hoboken, New Jersey, where they boarded the Cunard Liner *Carpathia*, famous for having rescued survivors of the 1912 *Titanic* disaster.¹⁵

The *Carpathia* traveled unescorted to Halifax, Nova Scotia, where it arrived on January 19. After a thirty-six-hour wait, the *Carpathia* joined a convoy of seven other vessels, escorted by the cruiser *San Diego*, for the dash through the dangerous North Atlantic. During the night of the twenty-ninth, the convoy split up, with the *Victoria* and the *Carpathia* plotting a more northerly course under the care of three British destroyers. The next morning, the small squadron sighted land and disembarked that afternoon at Glasgow, Scotland. The trip from Halifax had taken ten days, by which time Ernest had been on water for fifteen days. The American aviators immediately entrained for England, arriving at Winchester in the morning of January 31, after an all-night ride, and then marched to their camp at Morn Hill.¹⁶

Unfortunately, Ernest had scant opportunity to enjoy sight-seeing among Winchester's museum and ancient cathedrals. On February 8, he and ten other 141st Aero Squadron officers were detached, while the squadron's enlisted personnel completed their training in the various trade classifications necessary to make the squadron fully operational, and ordered to France for active

service. Shortly after arriving in Le Havre, Ernest contracted a virus and high fever that confined him to a hospital. From there he proceeded to a rest camp in Blois, about 100 miles southwest of the center of Paris.

Training in France and Italy

On March 2, 1918, Love arrived at Issoudun, the popular name for the Third Aviation Instruction Center (Third AIC), an enormous complex constructed in a crash program on normally arid plains that turned into a sea of mud during the rainy season. Located some 130 miles south of Paris and about seven and one-half miles northwest of Issoudun (population 10,000), it was the largest flying training facility for American students anywhere. The Third AIC encompassed eight American flying fields within fifty square miles. Although Ernest had finally reached his "flying camp," his class in secondary flight instruction would not commence until March 20. He used the spare time studying aeroplane motors and doing some trapshooting.¹⁷

American Expeditionary Force commander Gen. John J. Pershing and Secretary of War Newton D. Baker visited Issoudun on the day Love began flight instruction. Among Signal Corps photographs taken that day is an image of Ernest and his classmates standing in front of their "Penguin," a clipped-wing (which prevented it from flying more than six feet off the ground) monoplane used as a trainer. Steering the Penguin with foot pedals connected to its rudder simulated the control of the various Nieuport-type trainers used at the Third AIC. The Nieuports were classified by their wing area in meters (*i.e.*, the wingspan times the chord of wing surface), and whether they were dual-control or single-control. As students advanced through their training, they progressed from dual-control twenty-three-meter Nieuport trainers, to single-control (two-seater) twenty-three-meter trainers; then to eighteen-meter single control (two-seater) trainers; and finally to fifteen-meter single-seaters, with greater horsepower for aerobatics and formation flying.

All in all, it was a pleasant experience for the young Arizonan. Love spent some of his evening hours practicing in a minstrel show that the airmen staged on April 3, and playing music with a Jazz band. His most memorable flying moments came when he lost his bearings on a cross-country flight, landed to ask for directions,



Ernest Love is standing, second from left, in his leather flying coat, in this group of ten students at Field One, Issoudun, March 20, 1918. Their two French instructors (in light colored uniforms) and USAS officer/interpreter (with Sam Browne belt) gather in front of a MoS.21 "Penguin." Gorrell's History—AEF Air Service, Series M, vol. 5, pp. 92 and 135.



encountered villagers, and then enjoyed the hospitality of a local chateau owner. Ernest was one of the top students in each of his classes, and graduated on May 7, 1918.

From Issoudun, Love was ordered to Furbara, Italy, for aerial gunnery training. Back in Paris on May 8, he spent the remainder of that day, and the entire next day, sightseeing. He continued his adventures all the way to Italy, enjoying music at the Albergi, exploring the king's palace in Turin, visiting St. Peter's Cathedral and riding around Rome, before going out the Appian Way on May 13.

The Royal Italian Gunnery School at Furbara was located along the seacoast near Civitavecchia, about forty-two kilometers west of Rome. The flying field was a rectangular piece of ground with a useable surface of about 600 x 1,000 meters, sloping slightly toward the sea. Instruction in aerial gunnery and aerobatics for American pilots had only begun on April 24, 1918. A few changes and amplifications still needed to be made before the course was deemed adequate.

American pilots received an approximately sixteen-day course of instruction. The first six days included a technical course in the nomenclature of Lewis, Fiat, and Vickers machine guns. The remaining ten days were devoted to flight practice that called for firing machine guns at target balloons, camera-gun practice with parachutes, and combat formation flying. Students also received instruction in combat aerobatics, and were required to pass an aerobatics examination in order to complete the course.

Ernest Love spent much of his free time at Furbara playing bridge, laying on the beach, and swimming in the Mediterranean. His most memorable experience was meeting Princess Rospigliosi. The princess, who was originally Marie Jennings Reid from Kentucky and a Standard Oil Company heir, invited Ernest to her castle for dinner and drinks on June 4. But such occasions were rare. One of Love's buddies, Harry S. Manchester, summed up the flyers' frustrations with the training at Furbara. "Here the Italians attempted to send officers who had been in England or knew some English but it was not too successful," Manchester explained. "The school ended up with the Italian officer teaching the American officers about machine guns in French of which most of our boys, either from school or travel, had a smattering." The scarcity of aircraft



"The Garden of the Princess Rospigliosa in Italy," taken at Castel San Giorgio, near Maccarese, June 4, 1918. From left: Harry L. "Tiny" Wingate, unknown, Prince Jerome, Princess Rospigliosi, Harry S. Manchester, Ernest Love, Carroll F. "Watty" Watson, and unknown.

and distance from other American training activities added to the difficulties. Consequently, the U.S. Army abandoned the Furbara training project in August 1918, after graduating only two classes. Ernest Love was one of only fifty-two American pilots who completed instruction at the aerial gunnery school.¹⁸

By June 7, Ernest had finished his course and was back sight-seeing again, this time in Naples, where he explored the Pompeii ruins and climbed Mt. Vesuvius, before returning to dine at the Café Gambrinus. Back in Rome the next day, he visited the Colosseum and the Forum. On June 9, he left for the American Aviation Acceptance Park No. 1 at Orly, eight miles south of Paris. Like most American pilots waiting to be posted to an aero squadron, Ernest ended up ferrying one type of aircraft to the Royal Air Force aerodromes at Norwich or Lympne, England, and then returning in another one destined for an American squadron, via Orly or one of the American aviation depots closer to the front lines. This was during the period when German bombers were conducting nightly raids on Paris and the Germans' famed "Paris Gun" was occasionally shelling the city. Ernest noted the bombing and defensive firing of French anti-aircraft guns several times in letters home.

Ernest was in Paris on June 26 to celebrate the first anniversary of American troop arrival in France. While there he enjoyed a show at the Government Palace, where an orchestra played American military music and a filmed message from President Wilson was presented on a wide screen to the people of France. Ernest also witnessed the wild Fourth of July celebration as many Parisians caught their first glimpse of American "doughboys." "We had some parade here the morning of the fourth," he wrote his parents. "The



*"Taken in the old Forum Rome,
June 8, 1918, 'Tiny' Wingate and
yours truly" (Ernest Love, on right).*

streets were lined with people and most of them carried flowers to throw at the Americans. I wasn't in the parade, of course, but I got plenty of flowers just the same." Love continued shuttling back and forth as a ferry pilot until July 23. By then, the French Sixth Army was engaged in the Second Battle of the Marne, the third and last phase of which had begun with the opening of the Allied counter-offensive between Soissons and Château-Thierry on July 18. The British Ninth Air Brigade departed the Marne sector on July 23, leaving the remaining Allied pursuit planes greatly outnumbered.

Twenty-Two Combat Missions in Seven Weeks

On July 24, 1918, Ernest Love was assigned to First Lieut. Joseph Raible's "A" Flight of the 147th Aero Squadron of the First Pursuit Group, a squadron that three days earlier had mustered

only fourteen available pilots. The critical shortage of veteran pilots meant that inexperienced replacement pilots were rushed into combat soon after their arrival (only four days in Ernest's case), rather than gradually broken in. First Lieut. James Meissner, the 147th's commanding officer, was the youngest squadron commander in the U.S. Air Service, having been promoted the same day Love arrived at his new post. From Saints Aerodrome, Ernest flew twelve combat missions during the Second Battle of the Marne, America's first air-land battle.¹⁹

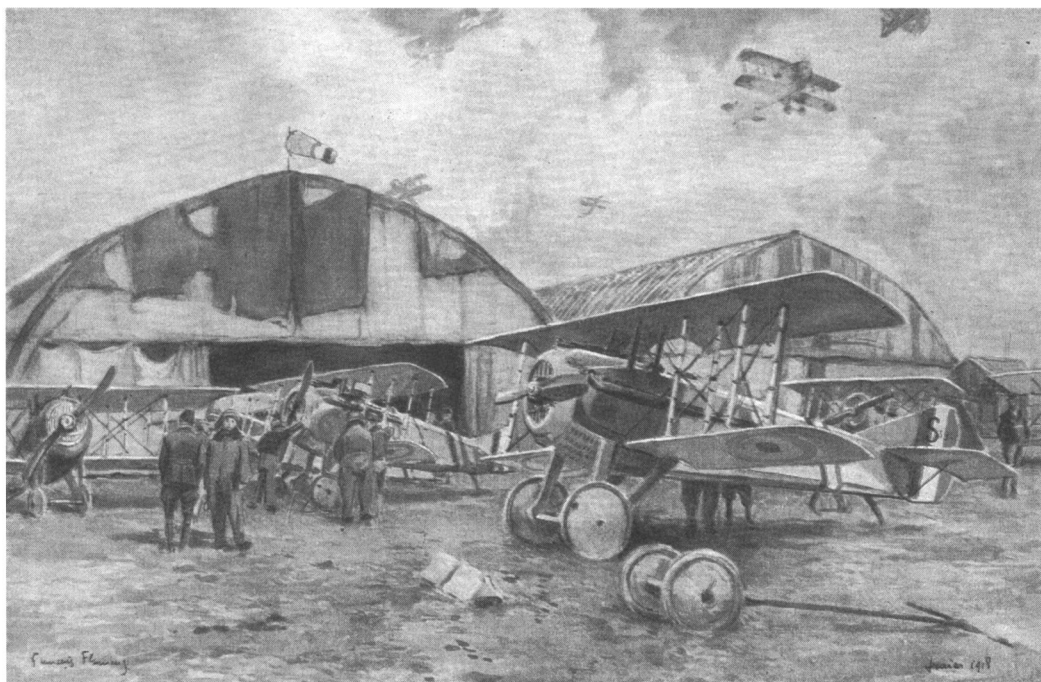
On July 26, the army authorized Love to wear one gold war service chevron on his left sleeve, signifying that he had entered the theater of operations on January 15, 1918. His aeroplane was Nieuport 28 No. 7 (fuselage sides), No. 6299 (rudder), with a red cowling and red wheels. On July 28, he participated in his first combat patrol over the front lines. Subsequent patrols were routine until a dawn flight on August 4 when, Ernest wrote his parents, "I was under fire for my first time. It wasn't so worse; I was so darned busy diving around that I didn't have time to worry about archies." His was the last American pursuit squadron to fly Nieuport 28 fighters; and, on August 13, 1918, Ernest participated in the last Nieuport 28 combat patrol.²⁰

The 147th Aero Squadron returned from patrol that morning to find that their new SPAD XIII fighters had arrived. The Château-Thierry campaign was winding down, and Love's squadron spent the rest of the month working on their SPADs and taking them out on trial flights. On August 25, Ernest flew his first patrol across the front lines in a SPAD and his twelfth combat mission. His squadron had survived the Château-Thierry campaign with the fewest pilot losses in their group, for the number of aircraft downed, even while flying the Nieuport 28—an aircraft maligned for its Gnome engine and a tendency to shed its upper wing fabric during an extended dive—throughout most of the campaign. Its ten victories at the cost of only three pilots reflected the 147th's commitment to minimizing losses, a commitment reflected in the squadron's high morale.²¹

At the end of August, the 147th Aero Squadron anticipated transferring to a new aerodrome at Rembercourt. The big move occurred on September 1, 1918, in preparation for the St. Mihiel Offensive—the first operation in which an American army fought



Ernest Love wearing the basic Air Service officer's uniform, including a gold war service chevron on his left sleeve, awarded on July 26, 1918, denoting six-months service in the zone of operations.



Ernest Love sent this painting by François Flaming, depicting a French SPAD squadron, from the French journal L'Illustration, to his parents. It depicts typical operations at his aerodrome then located at Saints, France.

under the American flag on French soil, supported by the largest air force committed to battle during the war. But things were still quiet in the St. Mihiel sector when Ernest Love took off on September 4 for his first patrol from Rembercourt. The offensive commenced when American doughboys went “over the top” at 5:00 A.M. on September 12, following a four-hour bombardment of enemy positions from 2,800 Allied guns. Things heated up for Ernest on September 14, when he engaged in three aerial combats with German two-seaters during an early morning patrol. Neither Ernest nor his squadron filed a victory claim.²²

The Victory Myth

If Ernest Love himself did not file a victory claim, one may wonder whether or not there is any basis in fact for the lines of the

poem that later appeared in the *Prescott Journal-Miner*. "A single victory won to us/From a bird man far above/And the victor we are proud to hear/Is Lieutenant Ernest Love." Where or from whom could this information have emanated? The myth apparently originated in a letter written after the war by Love's former First Pursuit Group commander, Lieut. Col. Harold L. Hartney. On August 10, 1919, Hartney responded to a letter Louetta Love had written on June 17 to the director of the War Department, U.S. Air Service, which was later published in the *Prescott Courier* under the heading "THE LATE ERNEST LOVE, HERO AVIATOR." The *Courier* indicated it was a "very interesting letter" and one "which . . . pays a high tribute to the worth, efficiency and bravery of [the] deceased."

Referring to Love's actions during the St. Mihiel Offensive, Hartney commented that "he had many successful encounters with the enemy, on one occasion his squadron commander cited him in orders for having fearlessly and vigorously attacked six Germans single handed and shooting one down." Although the number of aircraft Hartney cites is inaccurate, he clearly refers to Love's September 14 pursuit of a German Rumpler two-seat observation aircraft deep into German-held territory, and his encounter with five German Halberstadt two-seat fighters during his return to Allied lines. After reviewing Love's reconnaissance report, Hartney filed a claim for downing the Rumpler, even though neither Love nor the 147th Aero Squadron had requested confirmation of a kill. In any event, the First U.S. Army Air Service Headquarters, the next higher reviewing authority, disallowed the claim. Not a single U.S. Air Service victory over a German two-seater was confirmed for September 14, 1918, nor did the Germans report corresponding casualties.

Things began to go awry for Ernest the next morning, September 15, as he prepared to take off with seven other planes on his twenty-second combat mission. First, he was unable to start his engine, and the rest of the patrol departed without him. He finally got airborne three or four minutes later and flew toward a rendezvous point, not knowing that the patrol had diverged from the normal patrol route. Arriving alone at Lachaussée Pond, he encountered a crack German fighter squadron and its twenty-seven-victory ace, *Leutnant* Franz Büchner. After a swirling dogfight that drifted northeast behind German lines, Ernest landed his plane

near the church in the French village of Tronville, with a mangled left hand, forearm, and knee.²³

A Missing Son's Long Journey Home

A French priest carried the badly wounded American aviator to the Tronville church, which the Germans were using as a field dressing station. Hemorrhaging and lacking proper care, Love died the following day, September 16, and was buried in the church cemetery. The U.S. Army initially declared Ernest missing in action, and only notified his parents of his status on October 6. Finally locating his grave in February of 1919, in May the army disinterred Love's remains and reburied them at the St. Mihiel American Cemetery, west of the village of Thiaucourt.²⁴

At about this time, Prescott veterans embarked on organizing an American Legion post. A June 26, 1919 *Prescott Journal-Miner* article described the meeting to charter the new organization that had taken place the previous evening. Ironically, former Sergeant-Major George W. Nilsson of the Judge Advocate's Office, who four months earlier had been corresponding with Louetta Love, from Chaumont, France, regarding her fallen son, chaired the meeting and became the post's first adjutant. Even more startling, Lorian Reif, Ernest Love's former PHS teammate and fellow All-Arizona Second Team football player, served on the executive committee. It is hardly surprising to learn that the group moved quickly when faced with the question of coming up with a name. "Ernest A. Love Post Arizona No. 2 [soon changed to No. 6], of the American Legion was organized and chartered at a meeting of former service men here last night," the *Prescott Journal-Miner* reported. "So rapidly was the work pushed that a second meeting for the purpose of passing upon a post constitution, by-laws and the election of officers has been called for Saturday night at 8 o'clock at the Chamber of Commerce rooms."²⁵

A Hero's Final Resting Place

Allan and Louetta Love launched a campaign to have the army remove their son's remains from France and move them, one last time, to Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C. It wasn't an easy decision. The form the Army Quartermaster Corps sent the Loves on March 29, 1921, evidently sparked a disagreement



The church in Tronville, France, where the wounded Ernest Love was taken on September 15, 1918. Courtesy of Steve Ruffin.

between the couple about how to proceed. The government offered a choice of leaving Ernest's remains at the permanent American Cemetery in France or having them returned to the United States, where they could either be reburied at Arlington National Cemetery or shipped home. Allan wanted the body returned and reburied at Arlington, while Louetta preferred to leave Ernest in France, provided she could visit the grave. The couple reached a compromise of sorts. On April 5, Louetta informed the army: "We have requested his body brought back and interred in Arlington, Va. National Cemetery," but also requested information that would help her determine the feasibility of visiting Ernest's gravesite in France in the immediate future; the following day Allan signed the Army Quartermaster Corps' form, requesting that the body be returned to the States.

The fact that Allan and Louetta would disagree over whether to leave Ernest's body in France or move him to Arlington was not



Louetta Love.



Allan Love.

unique. The United States was still debating the issue of returning the bodies of all its fallen soldiers to America or creating cemeteries in Europe. Congress had already started holding hearings on the issue by the time Louetta wrote her letter, and bereaved mothers made impassioned pleas for a final chance to see their sons' graves. In the meantime, private groups were already addressing the need for officially organized pilgrimages.

As a "Gold Star Mother" who had lost a son in battle, Louetta became active in the Ernest A. Love Post No. 6 women's auxiliary. Already by June of 1919, the Prescott American Legion Post had attained a membership of 455. Gold Star Mothers' chapters had sprouted up around the country during and after the war, and the American Legion was among those private groups who raised funds and accepted donations to fund trips to visit their sons' final resting places overseas.

On April 27, 1921, the Army Quartermaster Corps completed its disinterment and reburial report on Ernest Love. There were



Ernest Love was reburied under this cross at St. Mihiel American Cemetery, near Thiaucourt, France, Grave No. 32, Sec. 7, Plot 1, on May 9, 1919.

no identification tags buried with the body, only a plaque on a cross in the wooden box that read: "Ernest A. Love. 1st Lt. A.S. Pilot 147 A.Sq. Died Sept. 15, 1918. Grave #4." This was the plaque that marked the original gravesite in Tronville. The body was badly decomposed, making physical examination "impossible to determine," except for the observation: "Both legs shattered." After disinterment and examination, the body was removed from the original wooden box and placed in a casket, which was then sealed and shipped on April 29 from the St. Mihiel American Cemetery to Antwerp, Belgium, where it arrived on May 4. The following day, it was transferred to the port for loading on the transport ship *S.S. Cambrai*, which left Antwerp on May 23 and arrived at Hoboken, New Jersey, Pier 2 on June 6.

The depot quartermaster unloaded the casket on June 7, typed up the burial permit, and notified the Loves by telegram on June 10 that Ernest's remains would be shipped by train to Arlington National Cemetery about June 15. Following a series of back-and-forth telegrams, Allan and Louetta left Prescott on June 20 to attend Ernest's funeral service. On June 22, the Quartermaster General's

Our Prescott Eagle

Office set the funeral date as "Thursday June thirtieth two thirty PM." The next day, the casket containing Ernest's body made its final journey, via the Pennsylvania Railroad, from Hoboken to Arlington. Another telegram on June 23 informed the Loves, who were staying in Bethel, Connecticut, of the move. On June 27 the Quartermaster General alerted them that Ernest's remains would be interred in "the eastern half of lot #4371, officers' section, southern division of the Arlington National Cemetery." Finally, at 2:30 P.M. on Thursday, June 30, 1921, First Lieut. Ernest Love was buried with full military honors, and in the presence of his parents, at Arlington National Cemetery.

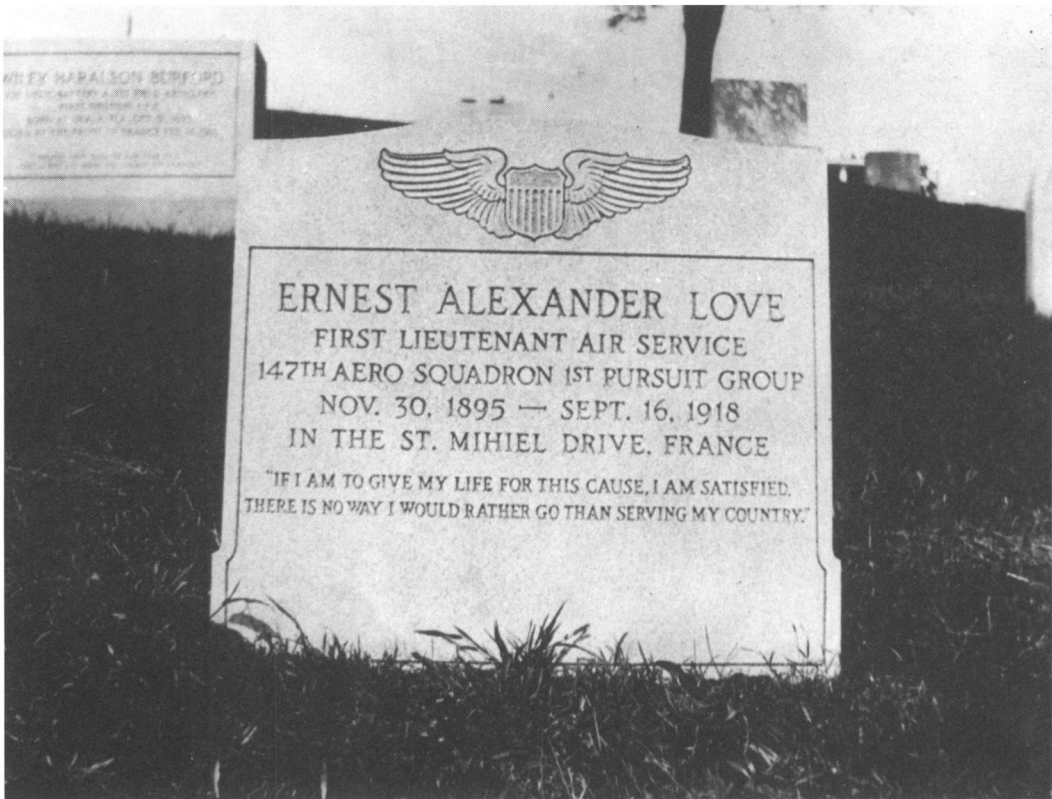
Unfortunately, there was still another chapter to be written in the Loves' efforts to put their son's remains to rest. Allan and Louetta found another telegram from the U.S. Army waiting for them when they belatedly returned to Prescott on August 1. Allan didn't care for the government-provided grave marker, described as "a marble headstone with the name of the soldier inscribed thereon, and will be perpetually cared for by the Government, viz.:

Date of interment: June 30, 1921

Lot number: 4371 E. Half"

He preferred a larger marker resembling others he had seen at Arlington. His request for a headstone "about three feet high by about two wide and some six or eight inches thick," complete with "'Wings' of the Aviation [Service] carved on it," prompted an immediate response. "Replying to your letter of the 2nd instant on the subject mentioned above," the army notified the Loves, "you are informed that Government headstones are only 18 inches in height from the ground and the monument described by you as 3 feet in height is evidently a private monument. There is no money allowance given by the Government in lieu of furnishing a government headstone. . . . If a private monument is desired for your son's grave, it will be necessary to furnish this office a copy of the design and inscription for the proposed monument as required by paragraph 5 of the enclosed copy of circular letter of this office dated August 5, 1916. The dimensions of the monument should conform to the requirements of paragraph 7 of this circular."

The Loves negotiated with the government for another five years. Finally, on April 30, 1926, the army replaced the original grave



Ernest Love's gravestone at Arlington National Cemetery.

marker with a magnificent headstone emblazoned with aviator wings and the following inscription: "IF I AM TO GIVE MY LIFE FOR THIS CAUSE, I AM SATISFIED. THERE IS NO WAY I WOULD RATHER GO THAN SERVING MY COUNTRY." Years earlier, Prescott High School had paid its own tribute by dedicating its 1920 yearbook, *The Hassayamper*, to Ernest Love and two other alumni "who in the late world war made the supreme sacrifice."²⁶

Our Prescott Eagle

NOTES

1. This poem was written by sixteen-year-old Prescott High School student Fannie Jacoby. Love's fellow Prescottonian, Lieut. Herbert J. Simon was assigned to the 13th Aero Squadron in France on November 9, 1918, two days before the Armistice and too late to see any combat. He died tragically in the crash of his aeroplane five days later.
2. Sharlot Hall Museum, obituary records, p. 252, state that Robert was "aged 11 months and 26 days" at the time of his death. The 1900 census indicates that Louetta Love had three children, but only Ernest was still living.
3. Allan Love's obituary in the *Prescott Courier*, May 1, 1937, states that "he began work on the then Prescott, Phoenix and Eastern Railroad and was with this railroad all through its various changes from that line until he was retired. . . ." However, he actually started work for the Prescott and Eastern Railroad in 1898, and then transferred to the Phoenix and Eastern Railroad, probably in late-1904. The two railroads (both using the acronym P&E) were subsidiaries of the SFP&P Railway, but never merged as the obituary suggests.
4. Ernest may have later benefited from attending the TNSA Training School. In 1902, Stanford University notified President Arthur J. Mathews that TNSA graduates could enter Stanford without examination and would receive full credit for courses they had taken at TNSA. Ernest J. Hopkins and Alfred Thomas, Jr., *The Arizona State University Story* (Phoenix: Southwest Publishing Co., Inc., 1960) p. 165.
5. The property is presently in the Whipple Heights Historic District and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. State Historic Preservation Office, Arizona Historic Property Inventory Form, Survey Site No. 89, Yavapai County, Allan Love House (Ernest A. Love's parents), Parcel No. 114-05-069.
6. At the time Love attended Stanford University, the closest military installation was the R.O.T.C. camp at the Presidio in San Francisco. R.O.T.C. had recently been established when President Woodrow Wilson signed the National Defense Act on June 3, 1916. Although the law intended to bring all military training then taking place at colleges and universities under one umbrella, due to a lack of officers and material, Stanford only formed a Student Army Training Corps in July 1917 and still lacked an R.O.T.C. program when America entered WWI. Nevertheless, 722 Stanford University men and women (about 10 percent of the student body) ultimately served their country during the Great War, with seventy-seven paying the ultimate sacrifice.
7. The Aviation Section had been created by an Act of the 63rd Congress (H.R. 5304) on July 18, 1914, for the purpose of operating all military aircraft, and for training officers and enlisted men in military aviation. Juliette A. Hennessy, *The United States Army Air Arm, April 1861 to April 1917* (Washington, D.C.: USAF Historical Division, 1958), pp. 110 and 233. On May 27, 1918, the Aviation Section was formally transferred from the Signal Corps and became the U.S. Air Service, an independent agency. Sam H. Frank, "Organizing the U.S. Air Service, Part I, Developments in the United States," *Cross & Cockade*, vol. 6, no. 2 (1965), pp. 135-47.
8. *Yavapai Magazine*, Prescott, Arizona, November 1917, p. 13; *Prescott Journal-Miner* [June 1917], American Legion Post 6, Prescott, Arizona.
9. James H. Federici, "Progressive Pilot Training: Part I, American Pilot Selection & Ground School in the Great War," *Over The Front*, vol. 22, no. 2 (2007), pp. 106-109. Aerial observation was conducted in a simulation room with a high level of sophistication, where observation trainees sat in a wooden gallery, looking down at a scale map mounted on the floor below them; according to a set program, an instructor would switch on various small colored lights that resembled the firing of various caliber enemy field artillery; the observers then had to determine the type of gun firing and its location and send that information via wireless to their artillery spotting partners seated around the perimeter of the structure; these receivers then translated the information to provide fire coordinates for counter-battery strikes and relay that via telegraph to those men seated at the tables; the instructors could thus evaluate the accuracy of the initial observations as well as the quality of the subsequent information stream from all of the participants in a single exercise. General flying exercises used mock-ups

THE JOURNAL OF ARIZONA HISTORY

and parts of actual aircraft as accurate, affordable, and efficient tools for teaching aviation cadets; this included the use of flight simulators to give the cadets a “feel” for flying. Military studies covered U.S. Army paperwork, Army regulations, and military law. Ernest Love to his parents, July 26, 1917, Sharlot Hall Museum [SHM], Prescott.

10. Sam H. Frank, “Organizing the U.S. Air Service, Part III, Training Activities in the United States,” *Cross & Cockade*, vol. 6, no. 4 (1965), pp. 362-72.

11. Hennessy, *The United States Army Air Arm*, p. 162.

12. Fredrica F. Winfield to Mrs. Allen Love, April 6, 1918, NSAS letterhead, explained that the “Treasure and Trinket Fund” had “been established to meet the needs of the Air Service, the welfare of dependents in the case of disaster, and the long list of the flyer’s wants in so far as we are able. We provide necessary equipment and comforts not as yet furnished by the Government.”

13. Ernest Love to his parents, November 27, 1917, SHM.

14. William F. Broussard, “Thomas DeWitt Milling – U.S. Army Aviator Number One,” *Over The Front*, vol. 13, no. 2 (1998), p. 103.

15. *Gorrell’s History of the U.S. Army Air Service, Series E, Vol. 17: History of the 141st Squadron*, pp. 106-107, National Archives Microfilm Publications, Washington, D.C.

16. The *Carpathia* and *San Diego* were sunk on July 17 and 19, 1918, respectively. The *Carpathia* took three torpedoes from the German submarine U.55 while on convoy, killing five crewmen; two days later, the *San Diego* mysteriously exploded and sank in twenty-eight minutes, killing six crewmen, the only major U.S. warship lost in WWI. *History of the 141st Squadron*, pp. 106-107.

17. Marvin L. Skelton, “Photos From The Archives,” *Over The Front*, vol. 3, no. 2 (1988), p. 165. Ernest Love to his parents, March 6, 1918, SHM.

18. Harry S. Manchester, “Manchester of the Foggiani,” Jim Steckfuss, ed., *Over The Front*, vol. 23, no. 4 (2008), p. 321; Sam H. Frank, “Air Service Combat Operations. Part 4: Training Activities in Europe,” *Cross & Cockade*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1966), p. 67.

19. Sam H. Frank, “Air Service Combat Operations. Part 7: Operations on the Marne Salient –Château Thierry,” *Cross & Cockade*, vol. 7, no. 4 (1966), pp. 370-74.

20. Ernest Love to his parents, August 4, 1918, SHM. “Archies” is slang for enemy antiaircraft shells bursting near an aircraft. It is derived from the remark, “not today Archibald,” in a popular comedy.

21. Peter M. Bowers, *The Nieuport N.28C-1* (London: Hills & Lacey Ltd., PROFILE Publications, Number 79 (1966), p. 10; Bert Frandsen, *Hat In The Ring* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2003), p. 196.

22. *The Americans in the Great War. Vol. 1, The Second Battle of the Marne* (Clermont-Ferrand, France: Michelin & Cie., 1919), p. 111.

23. American Red Cross report, February 17, 1919, described the injuries upon examination after the body was disinterred from the grave at the church in Tronville.

24. From a written statement of Amelia Henry Oldershaw, age 88 or 89, on October 29, 1991, relative to a letter she said the Loves received from this French priest after the Armistice. Love’s missing-in-action status was delivered in an undated telegram, 9 A.M. on October 6 being a possibility, although Allan Love may have received the news in Prescott the previous day. “He was known to be one of the bravest birdmen in the service, and his friends in Prescott are of the belief that he may have penetrated the enemy line too great for his own safety,” the *Prescott Journal-Miner* reported on October 6, 1918. The reburial was reported in a June 24, 1919, letter to Louetta Love from Second Lieut. Thomas Butcher, Quartermaster General, AEF Graves Registration Service, Unit #301, SHM.

25. Although originally designated Prescott American Legion Post No. 2, it was officially Post No. 6 by 1920.

26. The other two PHS casualties were Howard Morrow and Ralph Thomas.

CREDITS: Unless otherwise noted, all photographs are courtesy of Sharlot Hall Museum, Prescott.