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Quentin Roosevelt's Death

Pathfinder's Picture of Hero's Plane and Body Questioned but Authority on War Aviation Says Photo is Genuine

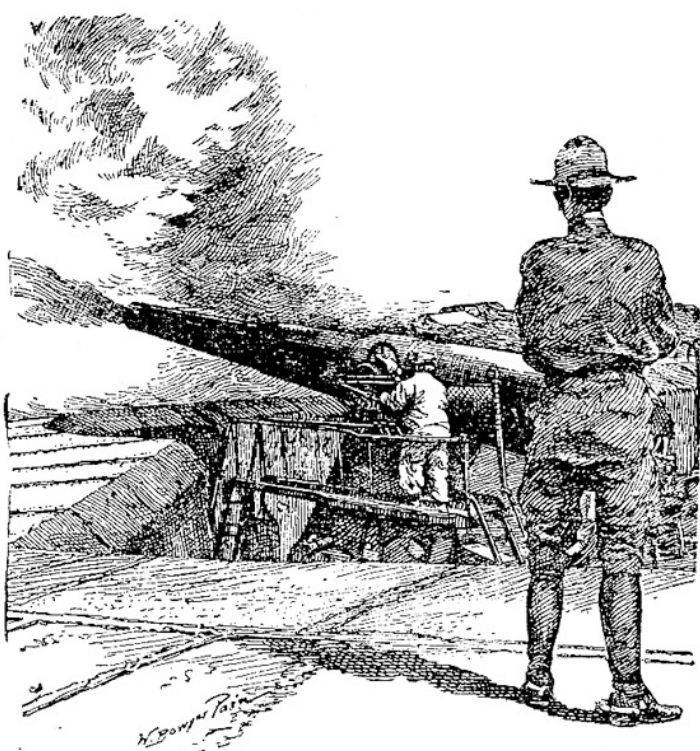
THE fact that many American Gold Star mothers, as part of their European pilgrimage, brave oozy mud common to the French battlefields in order to visit the grave of Quentin Roosevelt focuses attention on the last resting place of this heroic son of an illustrious father and president. Young Roosevelt was shot down in aerial combat during the war. A picture of the dead hero and his wrecked plane which appeared in The Pathfinder elicited the following comment from H. F. Fansler of Farmville, Va., former private of Company C, 331st Infantry, 83rd Division, A. E. F.:

On page 14 of The Pathfinder of May 10th you published a picture of a fallen plane and dead aviator alongside with the statement that it was Quentin Roosevelt's. You probably secured one of the U. S. Signal Corps photographs on which some thrill-seeking photographer took upon himself to caption to that effect. I am inclosing two of the same scene, one captioned "Roosevelt" and changed and the other merely captioned "An American Hero."

I don't think it is a photograph of Quentin or his plane because (first) Quentin was shot down behind the German lines and the photograph is obviously that of the U. S. Signal Corps who could not have secured a photograph of Roosevelt; (second) Captain Edward V. Rickenbacker states (page 193, "Fighting the Flying Circus") that Roosevelt was shot down in flames, whereas it is evident from the plane's fuselage and the aviator's face and clothing that no fire accompanied the destruction of the plane pictured, and (third) the surrounding landscape of pictures Nos. 1 and 2 indicate the place to be a depression while pictures Nos. 3 and 4, which are of Roosevelt's grave on the spot where his plane fell, show very clearly the actual place to be a slight hill.

The markings on the plane in the picture do not correspond with those of the 95th Aero Squadron of which Quentin was a member. The broncho is kicking, not bucking; the number is crude and there is nothing on either wing although both are shown in almost full view. The photograph has the earmarks of being made from a doctored proof or negative, a trick not uncommon in photography.

Two or three years ago a Captain Jack Von Weigand, an ocean flight aspirant, was in the United States claiming to have shot down 22 allied planes during the war, among them Quentin Roosevelt's. This is not true and I doubt if Weigand ever shot anything but "bull" as I am unable to find his name among the list of German aces compiled by Mr. L. L. Driggs, a foremost authority on the war's aces. Lieutenant Karl Thom (then sergeant) shot Quentin down July 14, 1918, at Chamery near the Ourcq river,



Firing a disappearing gun in one of our coast defense forts.

approximately 18 miles northeast of Chateau-Thierry and 10 miles back of the lines in German occupied territory. Thom was a member of the Richthofen Circus, then commanded by Captain Wilhelm Reinhardt, and survived the war with 27 victories in aerial combat.

The Pathfinder made inquiry first at the Office of the Chief Signal Officer, Washington, with the result that the photographic section disclaimed any official knowledge of the picture. But a letter directed to Mr. Laurence LaTourrette Driggs, aviation authority mentioned in the foregoing letter, and Rickenbacker's "ghost writer," brought this reply:

I believe your photograph of the Quentin Roosevelt wreck is authentic. I have another picture of it, taken from the same direction, but perhaps 10 yards farther away. They were taken by the Germans, of course. One of these views was placed on a postcard and had a wide sale in Germany.

Probably the insignia of the kicking mule is faked a bit. This is often done, as you know, to make it more distinct in the reproduction. They whiten the background and thus distort the insignia.

You are not quite correct in stating that the Rickenbacker book says Quentin was brought down in flames. I wrote that book myself. The only American who saw Quentin's machine fall was Ned Buford. He saw a Nieuport spin down from overhead without knowing at the time whose it was. The announcement of Quentin's crash was made by the Germans. Pilot Thom was credited with it. The Americans did not see the wreck until after Quentin was buried.