



Pvt. Everett "Mac" McKenney (1895-1999)
Father, Soldier, Mainer



In a world where military service is increasingly undervalued, it is important to tell the stories of the heroes that protect our freedom, both past and present.

Pre-War

In a town called Freedom, on April 2, 1895, a baby boy was born. His name, in honor of his mother's father, was already decided: Everett Alton McKenney.

RECORD OF A LIVE BIRTH

Child's Name (Print or type)	Everett McKenney
Place of Birth (Town) (County) (State)	Freedom, Maine
Name, Hospital or Institution (If in neither, give house address)	Freedom, Maine
Residence of Mother (House Address) (P.O.) (State)	Freedom, Maine
Legal Residence (Town) (County) (State)	
Sex of Child	M
Date of Birth	April 2, 1895
Birth was Single () Twin 1st () 2nd () Triplet 1st () 2nd () 3rd ()	
FATHER	Charles A. McKenney
Color	W
Age	
Birthplace (Town) (State or Foreign Country)	Unity, Maine
Occupation	Teamster
(Kind of business or industry)	
MOTHER	Jane Kenney
Color	W
Age	
Birthplace (Town) (State or Foreign Country)	Knox, Maine
Other children, living	Born alive, died, Still-born
Did Mother sign approval of record?	Yes () No ()
Attendant	J. W. Mitchell
Address	
Date signed	
Date record received by clerk at birthplace	1895

Birth certificate of Everett McKenney

The youngest of four children (two sisters, one brother), McKenney did not want the world. A family of his own, a nice house, and a job he enjoyed was all he desired. He left school in the 8th grade, and began working on a farm and other part time time jobs (2). Then his dad, a member of the Teamsters Union and a shipyard worker, pointed him in the direction of Central Maine Power. There, McKenney found work he truly enjoyed. Serving as a power station operator for four years, he would have worked there through his entire life, but in 1917, America entered WWI. It was a call to action that he could not ignore for long. Shortly after, in 1918, Everett McKenney enlisted in the army (1).

The War

“I didn’t enlist to kill anyone. I enlisted to fix the stuff for them to work with,” said Everett McKenney (3). Interested in the emerging field of automotive repair, he was inducted into the army on July 1, 1918, then sent to Boston for two months of training. After his training was complete, he was shipped overseas as part of the American Expeditionary Forces.

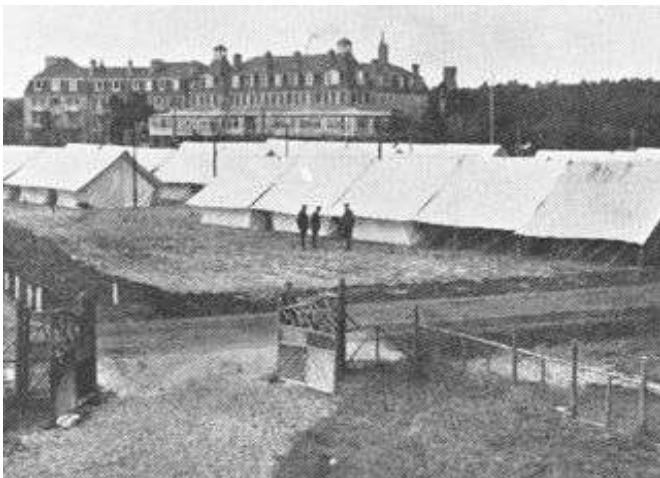
One of 5,200 men packed into the Mongolia, a 400-ft ship destined for France, he survived an influenza epidemic that victimized several on the 12 day journey:

“We lost a lot going over...We had to bury a few at sea.” (3)

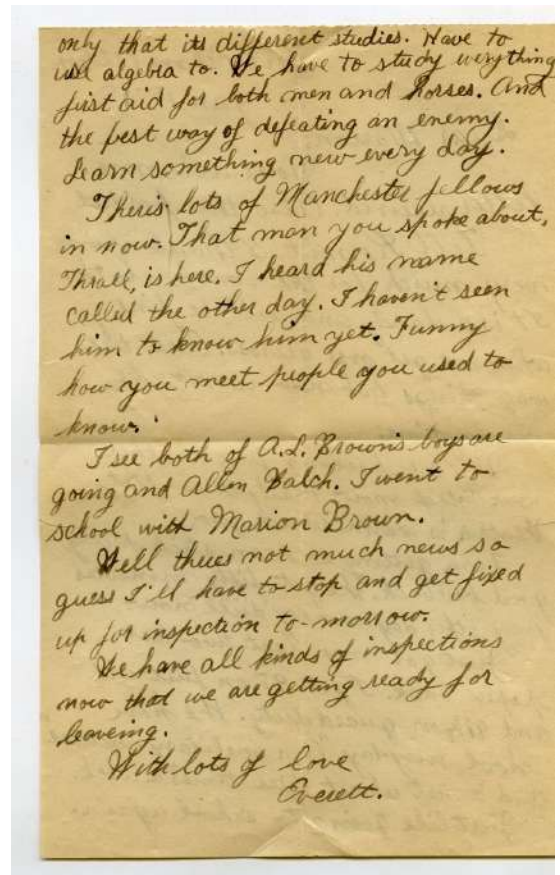
After arriving in St. Nazaire in September 1918, his company was sent to Angers, where he was billeted with 1,400 other men waiting to serve as replacement troops. At an aging French military facility, McKenney would train and serve on guard duty. Periodically, an officer would arrive and pick out a few dozen soldiers. Moved out after midnight to the front lines, McKenney would never see these men again.



St. Nazaire (point) and Angers (cross)



Military base at Angers, France



Letter home from Everett McKenney (2)

Just two months into his service, it was during one of his patrol walks, miserably trudging through ankle-deep mud while carrying his .30-06 rifle, that he heard everything go eerily silent:

“Everything got awfully quiet all at once. We knew that something had happened, but we didn’t know just what it was.” (3)

The date was November 11th, 1918. The armistice was signed, the war had ended.

Post-War

It would be April 1919 before Everett McKenney made his way back home to Maine. After being hospitalized with a case of the mumps, he was left in France as his outfit was sent home. When the army lost his records, McKenney was moved from camp to camp until he ultimately shipped out from Brest on a German ship supervised by Americans. It would be a rough journey home, McKenney described one especially bad storm:

“We had a bad storm, 2 1/2 days. The waves lashed the ship so ferociously that both propellers came right up out of the water.” (3)

McKenney was happy however. Five months after the Armistice was signed, he was finally going home.

Worried about a flu sweeping through Waterville at the time, McKenney was relieved to come home to a healthy family. Looking for the right woman to settle down with, it took him 9 years to meet Bernice Collier. One year after that, on July 14, 1929, he married her. McKenney would continue to work at CMP until 1960, when he would finally retire. After, he would focus on spending quality time with his two children, his five grandchildren, and his 1968 Oldsmobile, all of which he loved equally (His granddaughter, Beatrice, told me about his passion for his car, in which he personally installed a Rocket 455 engine, but tragically drove it less and less, because he explained, “All my old friends are gone”)(2).

As time went on and his fellow veterans gradually passed away, McKenney became the last charter member of the largest American Legion post in the state, the 1,100-member Bourque-Lanigan Post No. 5 in Waterville. In July of 1999, McKenney received the Order of the Legion of Honor from the consul general of France, an award that was presented to World War I veterans who served on French soil (4). Two months later, on September 3, 1999, Everett McKenney passed away at 104 years old (1).

McKenney was buried in Mount Hope Cemetery with his wife (5). On his gravestone, a simple inscription; EVERETT ALTON MCKENNEY PVT U S ARMY WORLD WAR 1

Order of the
Legion of
Honor Award



Bernice McKenney

Endnotes

1. "Everett Alton McKenney" *Ancestry.com*. Accessed May 25, 2018.
<<https://search.ancestryclassroom.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll>>
2. Beatrice Pomerleau, granddaughter of Everett McKenney
3. Ward, Kent. "Things Got 'Awfully Quiet' on That Day." *Bangor Daily News*, 8 Nov. 1997. Accessed May 27, 2018.
<archive.bangordailynews.com/1997/11/08/things-got-awfully-quiet-on-that-day>
4. "World War I Resources at the Maine State Archives." *Maine.gov*. Accessed May 30, 2018. <www.maine.gov/sos/arc/research/worldwari.html>
5. "Pvt Everett A McKenney (1895-1999)." *Find A Grave*. Accessed June 2, 2018.
<www.findagrave.com/memorial/84110751>

Images

Everett McKenney- <<http://www.maine.gov/sos/arc/research/worldwari.html>>

Army Seal- <<http://starkindustriesusa.com/our-company/helping-our-veterans/>>

Birth Record- <<https://www.ancestryclassroom.com/interactive/1895/>>

France Map-

<<http://www.worldeasyguides.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Saint-Nazaire-France>>

Military Base- <<https://history.army.mil/html/artphoto/pripos/wwi1.html>>

Letter- Beatrice Pomerleau

Order of the Legion of Honor Award-

<http://lorenlegarda.com.ph/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Legarda_Legion-of-Honor_5>

Bernice McKenney-

<<https://www.geni.com/people/Bernice-McKenney/6000000014651622998>>