

The 25th Aero Sqdn.

(Pursuit - S.E.5a's)

By JAMES J. SLOAN

PART 3

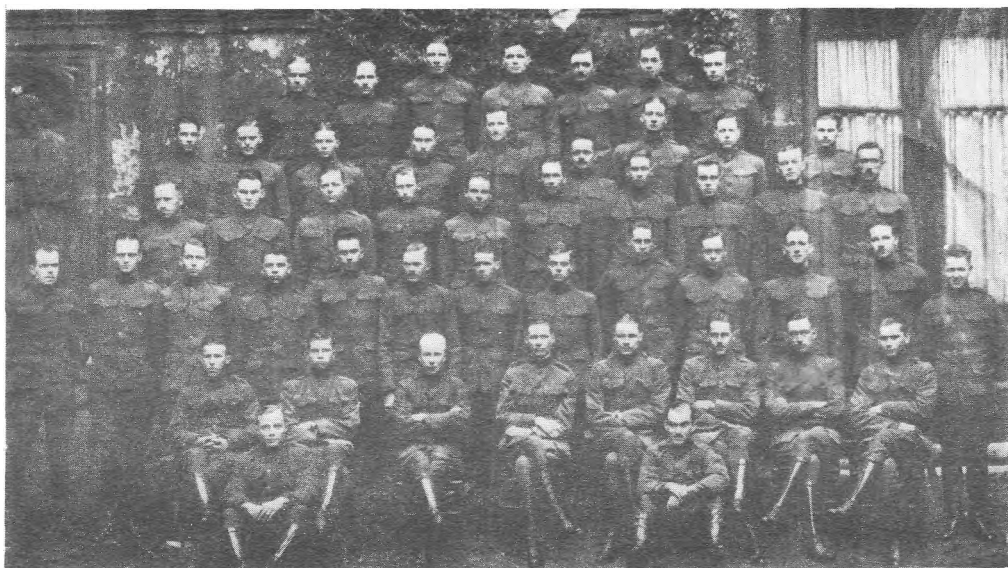
In previous portions of this account it was pointed out that most of the officers of the 25th Aero Squadron were reassigned from Royal Air Force units. One of them became a Flight Commander in the 25th, as was warranted by the experience gained with No. 29 Sqdn., R.A.F. (S.E.5a's).

Lt. Willard W. Lauer was sent overseas to England along with Bachelder, Brown, and Landis, who also later went to the 25th, in the group of 53 cadets as described in War Birds, The Diary of an Unknown Aviator, edited by Elliott White Springs. The group arrived in England in October, 1917 and went through ground school at Oxford University and through flight training in the Spring of 1918.

As flight training was completed these American pilots were assigned to the pilot replacement pool and ferry duties and later to R.A.F. squadrons in the field.

Lt. Lauer went to No. 29 Squadron, wherein he found three other Americans who had enlisted in the R.A.F. through Canada and were officially listed as Canadian. Lt. Aubrey F. "Joe" Diamond, U.S.A.F., went also to No. 29 and, with Lauer, later transferred to 25th Aero. (See Page). Lauer was in the Squadron a little over two months, was credited with two enemy aircraft destroyed, and transferred to the U.S. Air Service for a short period at Issoudon prior to being reassigned to the 25th Aero Sqdn.

Mr. Lauer recently loaned his diary to the Editor and we reproduce here his account of flying with the R.A.F. from 16 July to 19 Sept. 1918. It is typical of the combat airman's life at the time and indicates the great esteem and comradeship shared with our British Allies in WW I. The account begins at the final flight training school at Harling Road.



Top Row - Avery, Landis, F. Whiting, Gile, G. Whiting, Nathan, Lauer.
2nd Row - Hammer, Roth, Dorsey, Waters, Evans, Foy, Koons, Vassar, Hughitt.
3rd Row - Tipton, Clay, Beldon, DeGarmo, Knight, Bonnalie, Bachelder, Belsjoe, Brown, Rothwell.
4th Row - Mason, Patterson, Wilcox, R. Mooney, Bennett, T. Mooney, Fitzsimmons, Jones, Cooper, Ainsworth.
5th Row - (chairs) Cousins, Rogers, Oliver, Lt. Dwyer, C.O., Winslow, Zistel, Davidson, Wheelock.
Seated on ground - Likely, J. Welch.
Missed Picture - Barry, Gregg, Mortimer, Walker, S. Welch.

The above photo, reproduced on Page 27 of the JOURNAL, Spring 1962, was from Leslie's Weekly of 1 Dec. 1917 and shows 48 of the 53 Oxford Cadets who arrived there October 23rd under Sgt. Bennett "Bim" Oliver. From Mr. Willard Lauer's album we obtained the identifications of each of these men as follows, in column at right.



Officers at Barling Road, 1. to r. W. W. Lauer, Lts. McCullough, Wilson, Mitchell and Shepherd of R.A.F., and Lt. Grady Touchstone, U.S.A.S. Wilson went to No. 29 Sqdn. with Lauer. Touchstone was assigned to No. 98, was shot down wounded and taken prisoner. After the war he became a dentist in Southern California.



Officers of the 29th, 1. to r., Lt. Dougan, Capt. Davies, Lts. O'Leary and Rath.

All photographs shown here are from the album of W. W. Lauer.

The Vickers F.B.16 was an interesting airplane in mid-1918, being of latest design, and was frequently photographed by American pilots with the R.A.F.; photos show up in many albums.



Lt. Wilfred R. May, No. 209 Sqdn., R.A.F.



EXCERPTED FROM THE DIARY OF LT. W.W. LAUER, (U.S.A.S.)

Thursday, July 11. Just started to eat breakfast at the American Mess with Callahan, Zapf and the gang when a wire came sending Capt. Barclay to Folkestone as an advance party for arranging for our flights to depart for France. This Scotches the Oxford rumor.

All our training or practice S.E.5's immediately turned over to 94 Squadron. Service machines being lined up and shined up by flights. Everyone was elated at the prospect of lining up to go out as a squadron. After dinner something changed all this and away goes the elation. Touchstone and I ordered to proceed immediately to Room 29 Cecil for overseas service orders. So long, Mac, Phinney, Barclay, Speed and Bish and all the rest. The party is broken up as far as we are concerned.

Friday, July 12. Reported to British Air Ministry shortly before noon and received orders to proceed to Folkestone next morning on the 7:35 train and from there overseas. At long last it has happened and we'll be in the middle of things before too long. Made some purchases, visited Bob Kelley in the hospital, said so long to our own Headquarters at 35 Eaton Place, then headed for the R.A.C. for a good night's sleep and perhaps a swim.

Saturday. At 7:35 AM we took off for Folkestone. Sidney Batchelder made the same train. From Folkestone directly to France on a small channel steamer that made me sure that I was glad I wasn't in the Navy to get very much of this sort of bobbing around. Between a two and three hour trip over the channel to Boulogne.

Met Wop May on the dock. He was headed to take this same channel steamer back to England on his first leave. He had six Huns to his credit and had the experience of having Baron von Richtofen shot down off his tail on our side of the lines. He said he had done all he could do to shake von Richtofen, all the time heading for home. Wop looked down and had room between him and the ground for about one more half roll. He did that and, while he was doing it, he saw a plane on von Richtofen's tail, shooting, and down goes the Baron. A Canadian pilot named Brown was credited with the victory (just one bullet hit the Baron), deservedly so, said Wop, and in parting he wished me better luck than he had in having to try to shake one of the best of them first time out. Took the French railway and made twenty-five miles in about three hours to the No. 1 Pilots' Replacement Pool just outside of Lumbres. What a bogus trip!

Sunday. The Huns were over last night on a bombing raid. Archie talked to them quite a lot. The noise was terrible (so they told me this morning) but, having been pretty well tucked out on the trip, I slept like a log through it all and heard none of it! Parade at 8:30 AM. Cleaned some machine guns, then were washed out for the day. Rained on and off all day, just the same as England. Batchelder, Touchstone and I started to walk to St. Omer. Picked up a lorry and rode it for twelve kilos or seven and a half miles.

Monday. July 15. Started in on range work but first, report parades. Touchstone sick. Met Guy Baldwin - back from a turn in the hospital due to flu. Range work o.k. but all results are always o.k. Mostly a time occupying routine while awaiting assignment to a line squadron to replace a casualty (pleasant thought).

Tuesday. After report parade and machine gun routine, Baldwin and I went for a walk. Followed up a creek we found until we came to a clean-looking swimming hole, then went for a swim. On return, found that I had been posted to 29 Squadron. Funny, but that is D'Arcy F. Hilton's old squadron. Reported there at once. Found a young British Major named Dixon as Commanding Officer. Pilots mostly Canadians and South Africans. Edens was killed here a short while ago, and all the old timers remember and have a good word for Hilton.

Wednesday. This is my first day in an O.P. Squadron and flying a beloved S.E.5 for the first time in France. Just took a Cook's tour of the lines, picking up landmarks so as to avoid getting lost in bad weather. Other than saying I've started and looked around the country, it didn't prove much. At night we could hear the guns constantly and see the flashes over the skyline. The mess here is the grandest ever heard of. We have ice cream for tea almost every day, I'm told, laugh off the ice cream if you can. Major Bishop's squadron #85 (later Mickey Mannock) with S.E.5's is on the same aerodrome along with (I think) a one day bombardment squadron of R.E.8's.

Thursday. Squadron on W.E.A. (Wireless Enemy Aircraft Interruption work). I am in B Flight, Captain LaGessee, Flight Commander. All machines were quite busy all day on ready and in the air. Take the air in Vs of three with the next three warmed up and ready, standing on the line. Gives me a chance to get acquainted with the Adjutant and learn who's who. The Adjutant is Francis F.F.B.B. Shand, formerly Artillery, red hair and red mustache, a good, sound-looking Irishman.

Friday. Venter got a Hun two-seater today. Major Mannock of #85 Squadron collected one, too, so the contest between #85 and #29 is even for the day.

I had my second flip today. Again it was a tour to establish landmarks in my mind which means getting

oriented so that our sector offensive patrol territory gets fixed in your mind. In general, our patrol territory for location is east of and extends a little north and a little south of the triangle formed by Ypres. Bethune and Hazebrouk. Strong wind from the east made landing on our field a cross wind job and I made it only after two rotter attempts that each almost tore things. On the third pass I made it without breaking anything but that is about all you could say.

Huns pushing in two directions, French pushing back between them. Posted for a regular job tomorrow - the "Lonesome Show" - patrolling the triangle at 20,000 feet looking for Hun high flying photography machines coming over to photograph the results of their night or day bombing raids.

29 Squadron R.A.F. in the Field
C. O. - Maj. C.J. Dixon, M. C. - (British)
Adjutant - Capt. Francis B. Shand
(Irish - Born in West Indies)
Engineering Officer - Richardson - (Br.)
Gunnery Officer - Poole - (Br.)

A Flight

Flight Commander:

Capt. R.C.H. Holme, M.C.
(British)

Deputy Flight Commander:

Reed - (South African)
Wilson - (Canadian)
Rath - (Canadian)
O'Leary - (Canadian -
New York City)
Diamond - (U.S.A.S. -
Mobile, Ala.)

B Flight

Flight Commander:

Capt. LaGessee, D.F.C.
(French, Born West Indies)

Deputy Flight Commander:

Venter - (South African)
Tison - (Fr. Canadian)
Cunningham - (S. African)
Brown - (Canadian - U.S.)
Amm - (South African)
Lauer - (U.S.A.S. -
Pittsburgh, Pa.)

C Flight

Flight Commander:

Capt. Davies (wounded - British)
Capt. Ross - (South African)

Deputy Flight Commander:

Waring - (British)
Harrison - (British)
Rolfe - (British)
Dougan - (Canadian,
Neosha, Mo.)
Robertson - (Canadian,
Minnesota)

Note why the R.A.F. calls 29 Squadron the "Colored Troops". Out of the twenty-four listed above we find: 1 C.O. - British; 1 Adjutant - Irish; 1 E. O. - British; 1 G.O. - British, and of the twenty pilots there are 7 Canadian (4 from U.S.), 5 South African, 5 British, 2 U.S.A.S. and 1 French Canadian.

Saturday. Cloudy and rain. Just ready to take off when the C. O. came dashing out and waved me down. Washed out the patrol due to weather. Certainly no one could take pictures of the ground and it was decided by command that there was no use at the time for carrying

out the "Lonesome Show" patrol. Rained quite hard all afternoon, transforming the tent hole into a small lake. The tent blew over and Tison and I had a bad time holding it up and fixing the drainage around the hole instead of into it. At night the 33rd Battalion entertainment crowd put on a show called "Checkers". Good music and a fair show all the way through. Sort of variety type show and good talent all the way.

Coining out of the show and over to the mess for a nightcap presented quite a contrast. Moon trying to peep through the clouds which seemed to be starting to clear off. The crowd, chatty and cheerful, would make you forget the war until you looked over the trees in another direction and listened to the boom of the guns and saw the gun flashes constantly lighting up the horizon. Pretty stout stuff these Englishmen are made of.

Sunday. Funny thing about the war that we know is on. Here we are in the middle of it and we get the news about what is going on on the Front at least a day or two after they have read all about it in London or Paris. Squadron on W.E.A. standby but rain and clouds made such standby useless. No calls. A rather bad bit of weather but we have the water draining around the tent hole and not into it and Tison and I do not have to sit up nights holding the tent up. Bogus for flying. Not one plane took off today, but the war goes on.

Monday, July 22. Reed got a Hun two-seater today on offensive patrol. Harrison also got one. Bo Wilson drove one down out of control. At night we go across to 85 and drinks are on them.

Tuesday. Major Dixon, Cunningham and I ferried two old 200 H.P. S.E.5's to Marquise to trade them in for two new ones. We got our machines and started back. I had to land at 174 Squadron as one of the landing wires had broken and was flopping around in the breeze between the wings. C. O. landed and then went on, telling me to stay at 174 if it got too late before they had the wire replaced and the rigging properly adjusted.

I decided I could make it from 174 at Alquisine back to the squadron o.k. in spite of weather closing in, so took off at about 8:45 PM and headed for the lines. It suddenly started to rain hard and it seemed to cloud up and get dark all at once. Flares were going up from two airfields ahead of me and I judged the one to the right to be 29 Squadron. It wasn't, however, but I landed just short of the field in wheat, pancaked into it, gave the engine a shot, held her tail down and rolled out onto the airfield safely. Found I was among friends at No. 2 Australian S.E.5 Squadron with many of the Oxford crowd still there as pilots. Armstrong greeted me like a long-lost brother. Found that Heller, Howard and Felstead were away on leave.

A custom of the mess was that you, as a guest, had a fifth of whatever you wanted at your place at the table and drank all you wanted. The C. O. made me welcome, found my choice was Scotch and had the bottle set at my place. I was introduced at bed time to a concoction they called a "Widow's Kiss": tall glass (12 oz.), 1-1/2 to 2 oz. rye, 1-1/2 to 2 oz. rum, some sherry (dry) and the rest of it milk and cream. Had no difficulty going to sleep after such a treatment!

Wednesday. Left Australian No. 2 (Richleberg) early for home base. Weather dud all the way. Flew no higher than from 500 ft. to 1,000 ft., landing again in quite a rain squall. Got there o.k. with nothing hurt in the wheat field pancake other than a slightly bent landing gear axle, easily fixed.

P. M. First trip over the lines with Venter leading, Brown as a rear guard. Hearing about ruined towns and devastated country is one thing, seeing them is another. I would have never believed it could possibly be as bad as it is. Terrible. - Guy Baldwin came over to our field this evening and stayed for dinner.

It was a bright moonlight night. About twelve midnight the Huns started coming over. Three searchlight beams picked up one and Archie started giving to him

properly. He sideslipped down the main searchlight beam quite a distance, got out of the beam and away from Archie. Four other machines came in front of the moon at 8,000 ft. to 10,000 ft. It would seem, all Huns. Baldy and I could see them plainly for about three minutes. Evidently the searchlight people could not see them. It was a most interesting show to see the searchlights pick up the E. A., then see Archie start bursting shells all around him, seeming to fill the air around him, then down the beam and away.

Two night flying "Camels" and a couple of F. E.'s were up in there cruising around looking for the wily Huns when one of the beams picked up one of our "Camels". From his immediate gyrations to get out of the beam, he must have expected to get a full greeting from our own Archie. At least he convinced the searchlight people that he didn't like it by his antics to the point where the light blinked off long enough for him to get out of the beam.

Thursday. Second line patrol Capt. LaGessee leading with Cunningham and me making the V of three. We flew fairly low over Ypres and our own guns gave me frightful wind up. The first one was a lift straight up, the next thing was seeing a projectile at the top of its trajectory come along side, then go on by, turn down and disappear. Made me feel I was "seeing things." Was happy to hear the gang laugh when I hesitatingly told of this. They all have seen them from time to time and the first time always is a scary one. What a relief to know and also to know that the thing to do is go away from such an area, and go fast!

Friday. Lonesome show for me today. Got up to 18,500 feet, but that seemed to be my ceiling. The beat was Aire, Cassell and St. Omer this trip. No E.A. seen. All I found was three friendly S.E.5's and we greeted each other in passing.

Saturday. No flying today - dud weather. French and Americans have taken Chateau Thierry in the south, Shand tells us he has learned from Intelligence, and in general they are giving the Huns merry "L" in that area. Our sector remains fairly quiet.

Sunday. Weather dud for patrol work but took a couple of practice flips, locating two more good land marks in Watten and Audriucq. The other flip was fighting practice with Brown. Brown took off first, hoping to have altitude on me at the start, but I managed to fool him. I got above him and stayed on or under his tail the whose time. C.O. in Ginger was up to watch what went on and, after Brown had gone down and landed, I tried sitting on the C. O.'s tail. Only succeeded in staying there a short while. Believe me, Ginger is full of tricks. His remarks were, "Good show. You put it completely across Brown." Said nothing about his own case. I surely did not "put it across" on him, but I did learn about some new elusive tricks.

Monday, July 29. Visibility rotten. On the high flying "Lonesome Show" at 6:30 AM. Ready to leave when Capt. LaGessee washed it out because of weather. Got a W.E.A. call and Ross and I went up on it. Four Hun two-seaters were supposed to be operating in the Ypres sector. We chased through and over what "Hot Air Holes" we could find in the clouds, but all we found was a welcome from Archie passing over one of the holes. Looked below, in and over the clouds until we had stayed at it as long as the petrol supply would stand it when we headed home. All we could say was no E. A. seen.

One offensive patrol was out and when they came back four of them had been hit by Archie. From all, accounts Archie was sharp and plentiful. LaGessee had it on the rudder bar, propeller and both upper and lower wings. Reed caught it on the dome, Harrison through the fuselage, and O'Leary low down on the undercarriage. - Got a cable from home today - big event. - Brown wrote off I today on the high show. He got lost and made a forced landing near Boulogne. Glad that I investigated

around Audriucq or on my turn I would have been lost today as well, but I picked up Berges then Audriucq.

Tuesday. Weather dud, poor visibility, but had two high-flying turns today. Saw three Hun scouts first trip. Tried to engage them but, as I gained altitude toward them, they turned and headed east, losing me rapidly. Second trip - no E. A. seen.

Wednesday. First scrap while on W.E.A. with Capt. Holme and Rath. We picked up 2 two-seaters and attacked them. One confirmed crash seen on the ground by others. The other Hun down out of control but was not a confirmed crash. I failed to observe too much on the ground. Things happened awfully fast and I fired fewer shots than either of the others so it was officially one crash for Capt. Holme and one out of control for Rath. Might just as well have been my shooting as theirs that brought them down. But who cares? We did as a patrol what we were supposed to do. This show gave me my first real taste of Archie. There were so many black bursts of smoke and so many booms around you that you wondered how you were getting through.

Shand advises to prepare to move tomorrow - forward I take it. Cunningham wrote off Z landing tonight.

Thursday, August 1, 1918. Moved to a field near Hoog Huis. Went over by tender to look at the field, then back to get the aeroplanes to the new field. Just two strips mowed at right angles through a wheat field. The east strip was about thirty feet wide - not too hot!

Late evening patrol, called night offensive patrol, was badly hit by Archie. We had just dropped our 25 lb. Cooper bombs from a fairly low altitude - I guess about 3,000 feet - when Archie started speaking strong and close. They had the whole squadron to hit but had to get me out of the middle V of five. The explosion must have been above and behind me on the left and quite close since the drop of the aeroplane was immediate and carried me down, I would guess, 500 feet. A blow that hit the rudder bar made me stamp my foot as it stung and felt numb but I found no damage to the foot.

I started to climb up to rejoin the flight but had difficulty and, when we were back at the field and I was trying to land, I couldn't get the tail down. I could see a lot of the damage to the wing structure and there was a piece of wing fabric about two feet long and four inches wide at the wing flopping around in the breeze. There was also a gash out of one of the interplane struts left wing that I could have laid my hand in and many small holes were visible, but I didn't know what all else was wrong or I probably never would have landed. I'd have been too scared, I reckon!

Anyway, on the third time around I tried a wheel landing. The minute the wheels touched the ground the undercarriage folded and the aeroplane and I made quite a mess in the middle of the field. Major Dixon came out and started to give me L - after he found out that I wasn't hurt - for making such a landing, when Capt. Holme and Capt. LaGessee called the C.O.'s attention to the damage by Archie. Then everyone got Interested in surveying the damage, which added up for Shand's report as follows: Undercarriage badly damaged by anti-aircraft fire; part of outside left strut shot away; part of rear spar left wing shot away; more than two dozen holes of various sizes through upper and lower wings; part of the rudder and one elevator control gone entirely (which was why I couldn't get the tail down). A big hole diagonally through the fuselage indicated a large piece of shell had missed my head by about eighteen inches, had gone diagonally down through the fuselage from the left and above, and had come out on the right side above the bottom longeron and cleared the wires and struts. The good Lord certainly had me by the hand this time as on many others.

The C. O. classed the write-off as a Battle Casualty saying this plane was the most badly damaged by anti-aircraft fire he had ever seen brought back to the field. Then, just to be sure that I didn't feel too good about bringing the bus back, he began to give me L

for not landing at once on being hit as close to the spot as I could. His remark was, "How did you know some of this damage did not include engine or oil line damage? If you had been forced to land in Hunland because of engine failure, you'd have been no use to us." Makes sense, but I felt only most thankful. As the C.O. said, "Good show as far as your guts are concerned but bad judgment to stay with the patrol and not land as close as possible to the point where you were hit." I should always remember August 1 thankfully.

Friday. Rained most of the day. One offensive patrol in the morning. Three of us on a line patrol late evening, otherwise we fixed up our new quarters and built a stage. No E. A. seen on the patrol.

Saturday. One flip only today. Weather bad, but rode in the C.O.'s car over to St. Omer, then to Rely to fly back a new "Viper 200" (S.E.5a) to replace the one I wrote off. Rain all day. Show by the "Checkers" outfit at night. Quite good, too.

Sunday. Two offensive patrols today. On the first one flew lower formation with LaGessee and Brown. LaGessee got credit for a crashed Hun. He went down all right - three of us on him. Second patrol - Amm and I flew tail and of top V of five. No enemy aircraft seen.

Monday, August 5. The medical officer discovered that Joe Diamond and I had scabies, so we were shipped immediately to the New Zealand Stationary Hospital. Five of us find ourselves in the isolation marquee - the other three are two camouflaged Canadians, Sweeney and Johnson, and an Australian artillery captain and fine Irishman named Leo Gavan Duffy.

Tuesday, August 13. We journeyed back to the squadron at Hoog Huis and found that during our vacation they had collected many Huns and led a bombing show to Courtrai. All machines returned safely and we collected two balloons on the way back. Congratulatory wires and other messages from all the Army and Air Corps high brass were received.

Wednesday. Squadron on W.E.A. while I was posted for two high flying shows today. It would be better for the S.E.5 if the pilot on these high lonesome shows weighed about one hundred pounds less than I do. Then the machine could make the haul to the top altitude without so much sweat. No enemy aircraft seen at the ceiling, but both patrols saw a few of our own machines crossing the lines. Saw two Scout formations and one formation of big bombers. All were from five to eight thousand feet below me.

Thursday. One offensive patrol towards evening - no E.A. seen. I'm wondering where the deuce the Huns all are. Most conspicuous by their absence are they, and we seem to be twenty-five and thirty miles on the Hun side of the lines before we stir any up.

Friday. On one offensive patrol while on our way over at about eight thousand feet my engine cut out cold. I fired a green light and took a glide for our side the lines. I made it o.k. but crashed in a potato field at Sheet 27L3a36. Capt. Ackerley, attached to the Sixth British Division but serving in the U.S. Army, picked me up and took me to Sixth Division Headquarters. Went through their casualty clearing station and had a quick treatment for a badly bruised eye, nose and lip. Fortunately, a headache and these bruises seemed to be all that happened to me besides being knocked out, for how long I don't know.

Saturday. Tender and Breakdown Party arrived early and we got packed up and left in time to be home for lunch. Drove through Abeele, Steenvorde and Cassel. From the Sixth British Division remember Surft, Williams, Schmidt and our own Capt. Ackerley. They were men to remember for fine help when it was badly needed. It's a howling shame and downright terrible the way these towns and the countryside are beaten to pieces, churned and rechurned by shells and bombs. We had to travel the main Ypres-Cassel road at controlled intervals. The road was camouflaged.

Sunday. Had a note for the C.O. from the M.O. at

the Sixth British Division which I gave Shand yesterday. Partly as a result of this and partly because of my beat-up look and beautiful black eye, I was sent to #62 Casualty Clearing Station at Arneke. Doctor wanted me to stay in the hospital or agree to go back to a base hospital and rest there a spell under observation for concussion. Told him that, if he would give me a bottle of aspirin, I'd be on my way back to the squadron. He agreed but gave me a note for the C.O.

Monday, August 19. Allowed to sleep late, then in the P.M. rode down to Marquise and ferried back an S.E.5 to replace my write-off. That summed up my work for the day and I find I'm a bit shaky with a continuous headache. Guess the doctor at the casualty clearing station knew what he was talking about. His note to the C.O. said rest and light duty, so I'll have to be content. Huns are catching L in the south and now we're nibbling at them up here.

Tuesday. C.O. makes me rest today. Actually, I was glad to comply. While I'm resting, my flight with Venter leading is on a line patrol helping troops advance and the ground strafing that followed the advance cost us our best bet. Venter was shot down from the ground and is listed as missing. No one saw him crash and they think he may have landed safely in Hunland. I hope that is all and that he survives.

Wednesday. C.O. says, "Rest one more day and maybe I'll let you have at them tomorrow." Dud morning, clouds at 800 feet. A push, Shand tells me, is now under way in the Baillieul, Nierville, Bethune and south of Ypres sector. Looks like a push for Kemmel Hill though why anyone wants it is hard to understand. It's nothing but churned rubble now. Managed a trip to the dentist and had my teeth fixed and cleaned.

Thursday. On offensive patrol at 6:30 A.M. Got dud oil pressure and hot motor out over the sea north of Dunkirk. Fired a green light and headed home, gliding throttled back until the temperature would come down, then flying level until we'd get to the high hot and then throttle back and glide to cool. Went over Dunkirk at about 8,000 feet. Brought back my bombs. Evening show at 4:30 P.M. Dud engine again. Green light and return to squadron.

Friday. Line patrol 10 AM with Capt. LaGessee and Wright. I flew W while my machine is being fixed. No trouble, no enemy aircraft seen. Got back my Z in time for the evening offensive patrol. Dropped my four bombs Just east of Baillieul Woods. Good show. Ross and Hoy each credited for a two seater.

What a celebration tonight in the mess! Orders came through with three D.F.C.'s and one bar to D.F.C. for Venter. D.F.C.'s for Capt. LaGessee, Ross and Reed. We should be back on the other field so we could go across the field to #85 and celebrate on their rum rations. Tonight was fine as it was.

Saturday. Rain in the morning. Line patrol in the forenoon. Wilson got a balloon in flames. - Got in to St. Omer for a hair cut. - No enemy aircraft seen but we laid our 25 lb. eggs on Commines Railway siding.

Evening patrol: Line patrol with LaGessee and Wright. We engaged one Hun two seater and I should have had him. Stayed on him, shooting all the way from just over Kimmel to Wysschaete. Why he didn't go down and crash I'll never know.

Sunday. Early morning line patrol, one V of five with LaGessee leading. We attacked two balloons but were chased off. We started to make the run at the balloons five different times. It was my turn at the right moment of the run to leave the other four and stay after the balloons until they burned. The initial dive was never completed due to thirty Hun scouts, high up and to the east of us in the sun, who started down on us every time we started toward the balloons. We got close enough to have them hauled down but did not complete our initial dive, pulling out each time the thirty started down on us. Finally dropped our bombs on Commines siding and came home.

Monday, August 26. No enemy aircraft seen.

Tuesday. Waring, Rolfe and I on a W.E.A. call. Found the two seater all right, drove him off and discontinued his work. We were ourselves driven off the two seater, however, by eight Fokkers diving down at us from the east out of the sun. No luck.

Wednesday. No enemy aircraft seen.

Thursday. One lonesome high flying patrol. No enemy aircraft seen.

Friday. Long offensive patrol trying to engage twelve Hun scouts which all looked like Fokkers. They were above us and in the sun, and the bait to draw us under them was one lone two seater at about the 3,000 ft. level. After much maneuvering we had only enough petrol left to get back to the field, so we headed west for Hoog Huis. All landed o.k.

Saturday, August 31, 1918. Got my first Hun today. Officially, it is a Hun turned in as one sent down out of control by Waring, but it was Waring leading Wright and me on a W.E.A. call. I found that Hun first, pulled out and went after him, following him closely and polishing him off with a drum of flat nosed buck. That should be my Hun.

On the way home Waring and I forced down a balloon. The observer parachuted. Flat nosed buck was all gone or we might have set it afire easily. Wright hung back so far on this show and the balloon that we had to circle back and bluff off five Fokkers coming down on him. We finally herded him to our side of the lines and safely back to the field. Good show, good results, and we still have Wright!

Sunday, September 1, 1918. Line patrol for the morning show. Made our attack on Pons de Nieppe bridge, the entire squadron dropping our 25 lb. Cooper bombs. Bursts observed on the left bank of the River Lys right near the bridge. Afternoon show attacked with bombs the same bridge (it was still there) and shot up all available ground targets.

Monday, September 2. A never-to-be-forgotten day. Special mission called a complete wing show. Our objective - the Linselles Aerodrome, eighteen miles inside Hun lines. Eighty machines took part, each scout machine, with the exception of the five top scouts, carrying four 25 lb. Cooper bombs. R.E.8's, directing artillery fire to silence ground batteries, didn't get them all by a long majority. We rendezvoused at dawn over Clairmaria Forest. Everything worked like clock work. The machines would make the bomb run, then a squadron of scouts would come over behind them, drop their 25 lb. Cooper bombs, shoot up all the ground targets, then head like L for home. Archie got pretty bad before the last bomb run was made. There were two S.E.5 squadrons, one our, shooting up everything in sight on the ground.

After the last bomb run there was one high flying R.E.8. It came over the top to take pictures and five scouts were above it to provide protection and to escort him back to our side of the lines and home base. Several of the hangars were set afire. Bursts were observed on the aerodrome and in buildings surrounding. It was certainly a successful raid and it was quite a sight to see those hangars going up. We must have hit their petrol dump as well for, when we got back to our side of the lines, you could still see flames and black smoke billowing up several hundred feet into the air. Truly a sight to remember. - All machines returned safely.

Tuesday. Bridge over the Lys near and north of west of Armentieres is gone. Tried to get the bridge just north of the town with our bombs. Ground strafed batteries and trains. So much for the morning show. While the evening show was on an offensive patrol, the top formation tangled with five Fokkers and Capt. Hoy crashed one of them.

Wednesday. Weather dud for flying. Managed one line patrol - no enemy aircraft seen.

Thursday. Offensive line patrol. Dropped our bombs near the Frelingham Bridge. Enemy aircraft activity

slight. Trains on Armentieres Railway siding with steam up every day and trains running back from Armentieres generally moving east. Huns must be thinking of giving it up.

Friday. Line patrol. Patrol attack on one Hun two seater. Waring followed it down and crashed the two seater. The rest of us pick on a balloon and out goes the observer in his parachute and down goes the balloon. Though it did not burn, it was reported as collapsed on the ground.

Saturday. Line patrol - one V of five. Waring finally got this one in flames when, as arranged, the rest of us picked out the flaming onion and pom-pom batteries (rapid fire one pounders) on the ground along with the machine gun nests and the Archie batteries, dove at them firing both guns, dropped a 25 lb. bomb here, another there. In plain words, we raised all the fuss we could to give the balloon man (Waring in this case) a reasonably clear shot at the balloon. We did get the ground batteries silenced temporarily and put enough wind up them to made them forget the one going down on the balloon. Boy, did we ever catch it after the balloon caught fire and we all did the scat for home in different directions!

After we got away from the ground iron, we ground strafed the Hun trenches back of Ploegsteert Wood. Left the patrol to chase one Fokker home who was high above us and pot shooting at us from a long way off. Soon as he saw me climbing up to waltz with him a while, he turned east and headed home. Waring is reported to have shot a Hun officer on the ground.

Sunday, September 8 to September 13. Nothing to report but lack of activity due mostly to dud weather. Played bridge. On the thirteenth managed to get in one line patrol but it was useless and no enemy aircraft were seen.

Sunday, September 14. Weather is still pretty rotten but B Flight took off at 9:35 AM, laid our eggs on Passchendale Railroad siding. On the way back found one Hun balloon up which we attacked as a unit. Balloon in flames finally. Credit LaGessee one burned balloon.

Monday, September 15. Bombed Commines siding while on a flight line patrol. LaGessee leading, Waring deputy leader, and Wright, Amm and I in a V of five. After laying the eggs, climbed to 17,000 feet and attacked three Fokkers. After the first dive and all had fired their first burst, LaGessee pulled out and sat above for protection, letting the rest of us scrap it out. One Hun half rolled and went down with Wright and Waring on his tail. A second one I attacked. Where the third one went I didn't see but he must have gone down on Wright's tail for Wright never came back. Waring got his Hun in flames. I thought mine had me once but Amm chased him off my tail and I got back on him, firing in bursts of about twenty-five from both guns at once. Finally got him on my fourth burst at about 14,000 feet. Capt. LaGessee saw him crash between Roulers and Moorslede. Second Hun alone but first one officially credited to me.

Tuesday. Well, the "Hun Circus" has come to town - von Richtofen's "Circus", no less, but without the Baron who was killed not too long ago. Still as rough as ever, we are told, and last night some R.E.8 squadrons had reported through to Shand that this "Circus" was moving up to our front for a rest. We, of course, didn't get the report, but after this morning we didn't need it.

Conditions were Just right for the Huns, high above us and east of us in the sun. LaGessee was leading. Made two attempts to make our run with the bombs, each time turning back as these Huns started down for us. Finally, on the third pass at it, dropped the bombs on Warenton and Commines siding, and then it started to rain Huns. Best part of thirty of them dropped on us out of the sun.

Most of these Huns were in Fokkers but there were a few in Triplanes. I picked on a Triplane, then had to

shake a Fokker off my tail and get on his. Then had to shake a second Fokker off my tail and get on his. It ceased to be a joke when the third Fokker got on my tail and tracer started going by my ears. I shook the Hun off, got on his tail and was chasing him down when more tracer started by my nose and I couldn't locate the Hun. It was a Fokker right under my tail, but I didn't know that and was still trying to find him and watching the sun when AMM in "L" dropped by my tail going straight down and shot down the Fokker. He was standing on his tail right under my tail and letting me have it every chance he got.

It was a great scrap while it lasted (not over twelve to fifteen minutes). I helped crash one definitely and indirectly four more. Amm got one crashed Hun. We both went down and I saw it on the ground. All told, I saw four crashed machines lying on the floor and, when I found myself with no Huns around me, I was circling over Menin. The only other S.E. around was Amm. He and I in L and Z played around until we picked up Dougan who had on deputy leader markings. There were still five Fokkers up at the ceiling and the three of us tried to climb up to engage them. We almost made it once, but each time we were getting into a favorable position to attack, they would buzz off to the east while we would try to gain more altitude. This cat and mouse game went on until we had to break it off and head for home for fear of running out of petrol.

The result of the scrap as it ended up was all in our favor. There were seven crashed Huns, one balloon in flames, while our losses were one missing - Fleming. During this action, one of the Tripes led three of our boys right past a balloon. Diamond pulled out and got the balloon. Bo Wilson got the Hun. Some rest for the "Circus"! Guess we'll get the rest of them tomorrow.

Wednesday. Dud weather for our patrol plus the fact that the C.O. wants to give the whole squadron, about five or six at a time, a washout day because of the good show yesterday. Accordingly, Capt. LaGessee, Capt. Hoy, Amm, Dave O'Leary and I in the C.O.'s car get today off. We went to Calais. Were wining and dining and headed into an officers' club to eat when who jumps up and yells at us but Art McSorley who is a U. S. Marine pilot or second pilot or observer. Had a big time. Headed back feeling no pain and thinking it's a small world. Art McSorley and I played football together in 1915 the last time I saw him was at Tech in 1915.

Thursday. Morning show - line patrol. Dud weather. I stayed at it two hours and ten minutes, then came back to the field. Air pressure went bad. In the P.M. Capt. Hoy and some more of us flew over to McSorley's Field where we found the start of what is known as the Northern Bombing Group in which there were one lame Liberty D.H.4 and 108 pilots. They would wear this machine out flying it to maintain flying status. Looks like they are way behind on their aeroplane requirements and long on manpower.

Friday. Sad news. Joe Diamond and I receive orders to report at once to Issoudon, the Third U.S. Aviation Instruction Center, just when we're both getting nicely started with the 29th R.A.F. Sure hate to leave here. It's the best in the business, this 29th Squadron.

Had to go to the hospital to bid the C.O. goodbye. He was in there because of a broken leg acquired in a soccer game. It was Officers vs. Enlisted Men and he was doing a good Job like he did everything he did. A fine C.O. and a go-getter. His last words to me were these: "Well, Curley, we surely hate to see you leave us. You were Just getting to be a bloody useful pilot." I'm glad he feels that way for I'm surely hating to leave and what he says about sums it up. Cheerio, gang, good luck to you all. Capt. LaGessee called E. O. Amm and me his "heavenly twins". He said they are together all the time and even look alike and you can't separate

them in the air. This was a good fault we both had. He's tops in my book.

Joe and I left Hoog Huis for Issoudon via tender and Boulogne. At Boulogne met Conrad Mathiessen and Freddy Luff with the same kind of orders as ours. They were with the 74th Squadron, R.A.F., flying S.E.5's, Freddy with D.F.C. My war flying so far adds up to about ninety hours.

For the month of August, 1918, No. 29 Squadron had confirmed 51 crashed Huns with losses of 4. This is the best record of any squadron in the business in the R.A.F. to date and it brought telegrams of congratulations from General Plummer and General Salmond. Good results due to good leadership, meaning good C.O. (Major Dixon), good flight commanders and deputy leaders, good aeroplanes well maintained (the beloved S.E.5) and good, stout pilots who stuck it out, good cooperation among them and, perhaps equally important, good shooting.

During my short period with the 29 Squadron R.A.F. from July 16, 1918 until September 19, 1918, the squadron was credited with 87 crashed Huns and suffered the loss of four pilots: Venter, Tison, Wright and Fleming.

Total crashed Huns for squadron - 87

Total credited to pilots 39

Pilot	Confirmed Crashes Credited	Information Added at a Later Date
Rath - Canadian	4	Killed
Tison - Fr. Canadian	0	Missing - Prisoner
O'Leary - Canadian (U.S.A.)	1	Prisoner
Dougan - Canadian (U.S.A.)	4	Wounded
Brown - Canadian (U.S.A.)	3	
Cunningham - V.C.; S. A.	0	Washed Out
Harrison - D.F.C.; Br.	5	
Osbourne - British	0	Home Est.
Reed - D.F.C. and Bar; Br.	9	Home Est.
Diamond - U.S.A.S.	2	25 U.S.A.S.
Lauer - U.S.A.S.	2	25 U.S.A.S.
Waring - D.F.C.; British	5	Killed
Rolfe - British	2	Missing - Prisoner
Davies - B. Br.	0	Killed stunt landing
		squadron air field
Wolfendale - Br.	0	Washed Out
Robertson - Canadian	2	Heme Est.
Total	39	

The balance of 48 enemy aircraft were divided among the eight flight commanders and deputies, each having at least five E.A. credited, or an average of six. These were Captains LaGesse, Amm, Venter, Wilson, Hoy, Davies, Holme and Ross.

S.E.5a TESTED IN THE U.S.A.

By BERGEN HARDESTY

EDITOR'S NOTE: In the Spring 1962 issue of the JOURNAL we presented Bergen Hardesty's drawings and photographs of the S.E.5a (Vol. 7, No. 1, pp 32-35) and in the Summer issue was printed his description of the S.E.5a colors and markings as used by the 25th Aero Sqdn. Herewith is Bergen's report on the S.E.5a in the U.S.

The S.E.5a was one of the Allied designs selected for production in the U.S. The Curtiss Aeroplane and Motor Corp., Buffalo, N.Y., was awarded a contract for 1000 S.E.5a's to be fitted with the Wright-Martin 180 h.p. model E Hispano-Suiza. In addition to the original contract, Curtiss was also selected to assemble, and repair as necessary, some 56 British built S.E.5a's. These examples, mostly built by Vickers and Austin, were received by Curtiss in crates from the General Supply Depot, Fairfield, Ohio.

Initial production on the 1,000 unit contract, in the form of a small sample run of parts and spares, was started in the summer of 1918. The first and only U.S. built S.E.5a, designated as No. S.C.43153, was received at the Dept. of Military Aeronautics, Technical Section, Wilbur Wright Field, Fairfield, Ohio. The airplane arrived in mid August of 1918 and was assembled and readied for testing, which began on Aug. 20, 1918. The initial testing revealed that the engine over-heated very badly and testing was terminated for that day. The airplane was checked and trials were again resumed on Aug. 21. On this occasion it was found that the water in the radiator boiled at altitudes above 1,000 feet and water was also exhausted continuously from the overflow tube during the test. Testing was again stopped and the machine was sent to the Motor Repair Shop where an auxiliary radiator of about 175 square inches of area was fitted to improve cooling. The additional radiator was mounted between the two main radiator cores directly below the propeller. With this arrangement it was necessary to remove the adjustable louver assembly.

At this time modifications for more efficient cooling were made by adding louvers to the upper cowlings and to the side cowlings directly below the exhaust ports. The existing louvers in the lower cowling were reversed to an exit flow type in place of the original intake type.

The airplane was again flown on Aug. 26th over a three mile speed course to calibrate the Airspeed Recorder. On Aug. 28th trials consisted of climbs and speed tests at high altitude. These results were deemed unsatisfactory, because it was thought that the climb tests were adversely affected by vertical currents in the air. The speed course was again flown on Aug. 29th to calibrate the Airspeed Recorder for slow speeds and on Aug. 30th altitude climb tests and speeds at high altitudes were tried once more. At high altitudes a failure was encountered with the air pressure to the fuel tank and it was necessary to use the hand pump to supply sufficient air pressure to fuel system at altitudes above 18,000 feet.

On the last day of testing, Aug. 30th, one of the front center section brace wires failed, during flight or on landing. Examinations revealed that the wire terminals had an insufficient amount of metal remaining around the eye of the fitting. Three other wire terminals were discovered at the point of failure in this Investigation. The tests were then discontinued on the Curtiss built S.E.5a.

Trial results, though not spectacular, did reveal that the Curtiss S.E.5a was a capable machine. With the 180 h.p. motor it could climb to 6,000 feet in 7'-16"; 10,000 feet in 13'-0"; 16,000 feet in 25'-33";