

Frank Walter Edwards

Compiled by Judy Hansen
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Frank Walter Edwards was the 8th of eleven children born the 24th of December 1892 in Lamar, Benton County, Mississippi to Charles Manuel and Frances Amanda Mooney Edwards. The family called him Walter. He grew up in Mississippi and then the family moved to Utah. He lived in Milford, Utah and was working in the Railroad shops as a machinist there. He had not lived there long but was liked by everyone during the short time he was there.



Frank enlisted in the Army October 3rd, 1917 in Milford, Utah. He immediately went to Camp Lewis, Washington where the 91st Division was initially formed in September 1917. Frank spent his first nine months at Camp Lewis. It was miserable being in Camp Lewis during the winter months. Many soldiers wrote letters home about the constant snow and rain. The main focus of training at Camp Lewis was marksmanship and weapons proficiency. It was June 19th 1918 that the trained troops started leaving. They traveled across the country by troop trains. Along the way their spirits were lifted as they were able to see Americans waving American Flags and brushing away tears. They traveled to Camp Merritt, New Jersey and was greeted with a lot of enthusiasm. It took six days to make the journey. All the men were given their final physicals and Frank was given a new outfit, steel helmet and two pairs of hobnailed trench shoes. The regulation were that packs were to be 60 pounds per man. On July 6th Frank was up extra early with the rest of the men to catch the ferry which took them to the shipping docks. He boarded the *Empress of Russia* with the rest of Company D 362nd Infantry. He was in a convoy of fourteen ships with an impressive escort of airplanes and dirigibles watching for enemy under-water craft along the American coast. There were also cruisers and torpedo boat destroyers for more security. On each troopship was mounted both American and British medium caliber gunners. They could not travel in a straight course but had to zigzag across the Atlantic to confuse the enemy submarines. The ships were extremely crowded and not comfortable. It was twelve days before Frank and the other men were able to disembark.

Frank and his group went to Liverpool, England. Others in the 91st Division were sent to Glasgow. The Division marched down the narrow streets of Liverpool and had the same welcome as when crossing the United States. Children were yelling, "The Yanks are Coming" while older people were waving their handkerchiefs with 'God Bless You' tears streaming down their cheeks. After staying two nights at the Knotty Ash rest camp Frank was given British supplies and moved onto a troop train with his company where they traveled to Stratford-on-Avon. Here they stayed in another rest camp that was worse than the first one but eventually they marched to the docks where they were boarding for "Somewhere in France." They left after nightfall and there was no sleeping quarters. It was very cold and the men could see partly

destroyed ships along the way which was very discouraging for them. After crossing the English Channel and debarking, they marched to La Harve where they made their way to yet another rest camp.

Around 3:00 pm on July 25th the first trains left La Harve, France with the 362nd Infantry men onboard. Each boxcar could hold 40 men and if they were lucky they had straw on the floor. The first casualties of the 362nd was when a troop train waiting near the station at Bonnières was hit by another incoming French train traveling at 60 m.p.h. If Frank had not already left he may have been called from another car to rescue the injured as was all the men. Twenty-nine were killed. It was a very sobering time for the 362nd Infantry.

Frank then trained near Montigny Le Roi, in Haute Marne. This was farm country and there were no bathtubs or entertainment. Many of them slept in hay lofts which was nice in August. They watched the Red Cross bring in wounded during railroad days which was pretty frightening and they learned what was happening on 'the front' from the wounded. After six weeks the 91st was called to 'the front.'

The first artillery barrage Frank could hear started at 1:00 am on September 12th at St. Mihiel. It kept him and everyone else awake. It was a success for the American's but the 91st was staying in the forest on reserve. They were then taken by French Trucks to the war destroyed town of Remembercourt and it was here that Colonel Parker joined the 362nd. September the 16th they had a long hard march to Jubrecourt and then on the 17th marched again to Parois which was only 2 or 3 miles from the front line. After a short rest they moved into the Parois Woods three kilometers behind the front lines. It was here the German's tried to blow up the ammunition dump. That evening they went into the Foret De Hesse. It was dark and everyone was afraid to whisper because the German's were so close they could be heard. They pitched their pup-tents in the woods and underbrush and fought the knee-deep mud in some places. The rain fell which continued to make the mud problematic. Planes and shells from the Germans and the Americans filled the air. Some of the men who tried to sleep would wear a gas mask because the German's would occasionally drop 'gas.'

It was the afternoon of September 25th they had orders to attack the next morning. This meant they faced the German trenches and defense systems that had resisted the French for four years. The German's had the advantage. They moved over the top into Argonne at 5:30 in the morning. The shells whistled and exploded their targets. The noise was deafening but the power was so overcoming the men forgot to be afraid. Several hours pasted in battle and they cleared the top and crossed No-Mans-Land. Not a shot from the German's came. It wasn't until 1 ½ hours later in the woods that the German's opened fire on them.

The next morning the German's came back to Epinonville and they were forced again to open fire. The bad thing about this whole battle was that somehow the American artillery got confused and started shelling their own men. They cried 'Raise the artillery' but unfortunately there were American casualties.

One of the bloodiest battles the 362nd infantry engaged in was September 29th when the 362nd broke the Kriemhilde German line. This was the first time by any American regiment to break

that German line. When the orders were given, Colonel Parker felt it was a suicide order. The Americans were able to take the Gesnes and pushed to the crest of Hill 255. However it was not without terrible loss of life. It was actually a miracle that any American soldier lived through that day. The morning after Gesnes there were only 200 men from all the combined companies. Frank may have been one of the men who would have been on burial duty or checked the list for dead and wounded.

The following day September 30th the 362nd was assembled in a stone quarry north of Exmorieux Farm between the Bois de Cierges and the Bois de Baulny. As the German's continue with machine gun fire, Frank was wounded by a bullet to his head from a machine gun. It did not kill him but he was taken to an area hospital. This was not a good time to be in the hospital because the deadly Spanish Flu was raging. The hospitals were not sanitary and there were many people going in and out. Frank had recovered after eighteen days and was about to be released when he was taken sick with the flu which developed into bronchopneumonia and he died on the 26th of October 1918 somewhere in France.

His body was escorted back to the United States where a funeral with full military honors were provided in Milford, Utah on January 12, 1921. He was buried in the family plot in Lehi, Utah. His name is on the veterans Wall of Honor in the Lehi City Cemetery.

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