

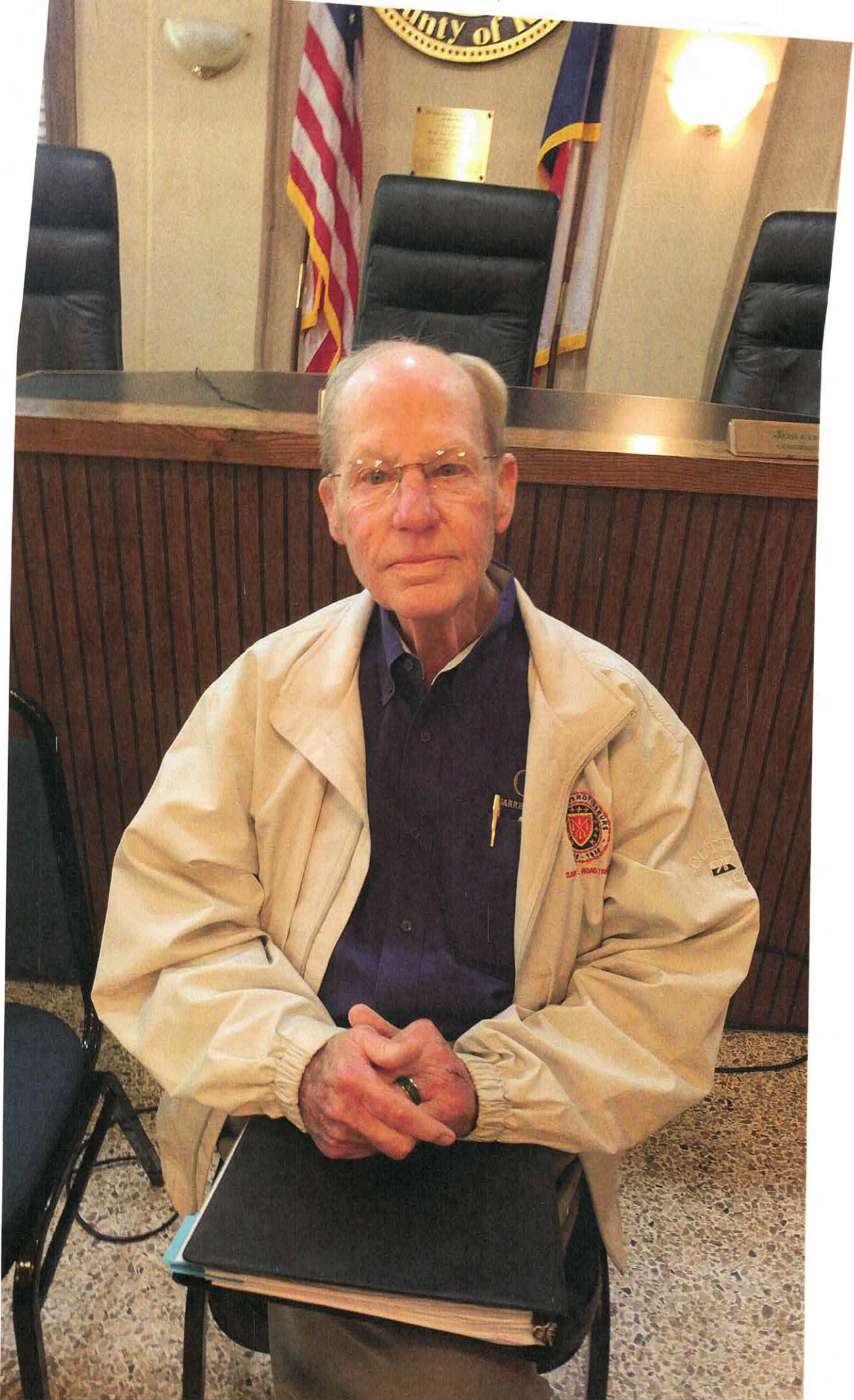
*The
Kerr County Historical Commission
presents*

An ORAL HISTORY

Of

Bob Schmerbeck

Kerrville, Texas 2018



Street to take care of the over 500 members of the church. There are descendants of Mrs. Laura Gill Garrett and Mrs. Whitfield Scott to the sixth generations in Kerrville today who are Presbyterian members.

METHODISTS BUILT FIRST CHURCH IN 1891

There are no records of the Methodists who attended the Union Church building, but this congregation opened their first small wooden structure in 1891 just one block west of the Presbyterian Church on Jefferson Street, southwest cornering with Sidney Baker Street. Knowing they would need a larger church as time went along, Mrs. J.M. Starkey and her sister in law, Miss Alice Starkey, who helped raise funds for the Union Church, headed the group of ladies to again raise funds. They had ice cream socials, watermelon parties, chicken and spaghetti dinners, and rummage sales under a tent on the courthouse lawn to raise funds to erect a new brick building at the same location. This church outgrew the brick building and in the 1980s moved across the river to Thompson Drive where a native stone church was built with a large parking area and room to add more buildings. Today there are about 2000 members and a large gym is used for annual rummage sales which has grown to a big affair each year. There are still descendants of the Starkey family here in Kerrville who have contributed so much to the growth of this community. They are to apply for a Texas Historical Marker soon.

BAPTIST CHURCH LEFT UNION CHURCH IN 1897

Having organized as Kerrville Baptist Church in 1887 with eleven members at the Union Church building, the congregation opened their first wooden building one block east of the Presbyterian Church at Jefferson and Washington in 1897. Jefferson Street by then was known as "the church street", as the Catholics' first church was built in 1881 just east of the Baptist Church. The First Baptist was the first one in town to be built of

brick and had steep steps with an arched entry way going up in front and another going up on the Washington Street side to the same entry. Their wooden building was given to the Mexican Ministry. In 1946 property was bought two blocks north on Washington Street and Barnett and paid for before building the white stone church in 1950 where they are today with 1200 members. A Texas Historical Marker was dedicated in 1988 in honor of their 100 years.

CHRISTIAN CHURCH OBTAINED UNION CHURCH IN 1925

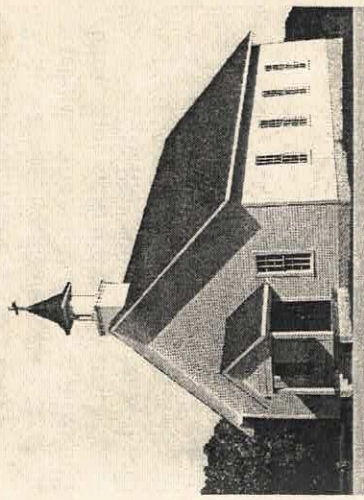
First Christian Church occupied the Union building for 70 years. After the first three other churches left to build their own places by 1897, the Zion Lutheran, Church of Christ and Jehovah's Witnesses shared the building until 1924.

The Christian Church then obtained full ownership and stayed until 1955 when they constructed their brick church on Junction Highway. At that time they were outside the Kerrville city limits. They had 367 members. A large sanctuary, more classrooms, and a recreational center were added by 1965.

A Texas Historical Marker was received for their centennial year in 1985 when Senator Tom Loeffler gave the dedication speech. The membership at present is 477. Plans are being made to build a new church on Goat Creek Road in back of the Fred Tally Elementary School.

Space did not allow the inclusion of names of ministers or members in this brief resume. It is hoped that this information will be beneficial in knowing "a bit more history" of the historical use of the Union Church.

Compiled by Clarabelle Snodgrass
of Friends of the Kerr County Historical
Commission Committee, December 2002.



History of the Union Church

For thirty years, after Kerr County was first organized in 1856, preaching was done by circuit riders. Throughout the state, various congregations united in building one common building.

In the early 1880s, Mrs. Whitfield Scott (Harriett), a Presbyterian lady of action, determined that something must be done. She enlisted the help of her sister, Laura Gill (later Mrs. W.G. Garrett), Mrs. J.M. Starkey, a Methodist, and Mrs. Adeline Coleman, a member of the Christian Church. By horseback or buggy they made house to house visits through Kerr County, giving every family an opportunity to help build a union church.

Among the newspaper clippings in the possession of Mrs. A.C. Schreiner, Sr. (a daughter of Mrs. Harriett Scott), were several showing how and where the money was obtained. Mrs. Scott sent letters to the readers of "The Presbyterian Observer" stating the need for a church in Kerrville where any denomination could worship. It said in part, "We have raised sufficient funds to buy all building materials. Trustees have been elected, a building committee appointed, a lot secured, and all this has been accomplished by a few ladies. We are pledged to raise the balance and work is to begin, but where the remaining four hundred dollars is to be secured, we do not know."

A UNION CHURCH WAS BUILT

When sufficient money was raised, the church was built for one hundred ninety dollars. The building, thirty-eight feet by fifty feet, was constructed on two lots (100 feet by 208 feet) which were given to the Union Church Association of Kerrville by Capt. Charles Schreiner. The handwritten deed for this transaction, dated September 10, 1885, was registered in the Kerr County Courthouse. The building was located at the northeast corner of Main and Clay Streets. It is interesting to note that a cash balance of twenty-nine dollars and fifty cents remained and was used for chairs. The pulpit bible for the new church was given by Nick Tengg, a book store owner in San Antonio, and was used for many years.

A church agreement was reached: one trustee was chosen to represent each participating denomination. "Methodist Episcopal Church South shall have the use of the building on the first Sabbath of each month and the ensuing week. The Cumberland Presbyterian Church shall have the use of the building on the second Sabbath and ensuing week; the Missionary Baptist, the third Sabbath; and the Christian Church the fourth Sabbath and ensuing week." Others were to use the building by permission for religious services.

The first service held in the Union church was on December 24, 1885, with all four denominations taking part. This started a long and congenial relationship between the churches of Kerrville, which exists today through the Church Women United and the Ministerial Alliance.

As each denomination grew and prospered, it built a church of its own. Presbyterian in 1888, Methodist in 1891, and Baptist in 1897. Finally only the Christian Church of the original four remained in the Union building. Later, the building was shared from 1901 to 1914 with the Zion Lutheran Church; from 1918 to 1924 with the Church of Christ; and the Jehovah Witnesses used the building when there was a 5th Sunday in a month.

The town of Kerrville was incorporated in 1889 with a population of about 1,000. Thus the Union

Church was older than the incorporated town.

Throughout the state at that time other Christian churches were being organized. Carter E. Boren in his book, "Religion on the Texas Frontier", states that "the entire decade of the eighties was devoted to the slow pains of establishing churches in Texas."

Little is known about the early years of First Christian Church other than the fact that Mrs. Adeline Coleman and her daughter, Mrs. J.R. Trussel, along with Mr. and Mrs. Green Surber, were actively carrying on the church program. The church register shows that Mrs. Green Surber joined the church in 1893. (Surber Street in Kerrville was named for this family.)

In 1978 Ida Flennikan (1888-1979) was interviewed in the Colonial Nursing Home. Some of the remembrances of her childhood in the Union Church follow: "My parents, Mr. and Mrs. Henry E. Morgan, went to the First Christian Church which was in the old Union building, and I remember going with my mother and grandmother to quilting meetings of the Ladies Aid Society. My father made the quilting frames. Sometimes we children would thread the needles. I learned to play the piano when I was quite young; and since often no one could play at the church, I would play even when I was so small my feet would hardly reach the pedals of the organ. I played for other churches, too. We liked to sing, and I can remember when J.D. Patton held a singing normal once a week. We all attended and had a good time and learned a lot. Later Mr. and Mrs. Osborne joined the church, and they were good singers. She played the organ. I remember kind and gentle Thornton Shirley, who taught the little folks of the church. He lived east of town, and we would have picnics on his place. Some of these were large Union Church gatherings, and everyone would come. We had such good times I was sorry when the Christian Church stopped. There was no baptismistry in the church, and Mr. Shirley cleaned out a section of the creek on his place for baptisms. I was baptized there when I was about ten. I think it was in 1899." Later members recall seeing bap-

tisms in the Guadalupe River at Robb's Crossing near the present State Hospital.

This story has come through the years, but there are no records to verify it. The first communion set was given by two ladies who rode horseback to San Antonio to purchase it. The distance was great so the women spent the night at Boerne each way. Later on another communion tray was purchased from Montgomery Ward that had individual cups, since there was a man at church who had a moustache and beard and others did not want to drink from the cup after that man had been served. One church lady always baked fresh unleavened bread for communion services.

PRESBYTERIANS BUILT IN 1888

There seems to be no records of the three churches besides the Christian Church, of any work or memberships of their own. The Presbyterians stayed at the Union building three years until they left with about a dozen members and established their first building in 1888. The wooden building was placed at the southwest corner of Jefferson Street and Main Street. Later it was moved and now stands on Jefferson Street between Galbraith and Lemos Streets on the south side. It was made into a residence.

As the congregation grew, services were held at Westminister Encampment in the summer months. By 1923 with 160 members and Kerrville at over 5,000 population, plans were made for the new brick building at the same location. Beautiful stained glass and leaded glass arched windows adorn the east and west sides of the sanctuary, the most beautiful of any Kerrville church. Many additional buildings were built with a large recreational auditorium which furnishes space to have musical programs and other functions. In 1987 a recorded Texas Historical Marker was attached on front of the Sanctuary in honor of their 100 years of existence.

In 2002 a new larger sanctuary was built on the eastern end of the block facing on Jefferson

BOB'S GREAT AUNT,
TEACHER AT TIVY

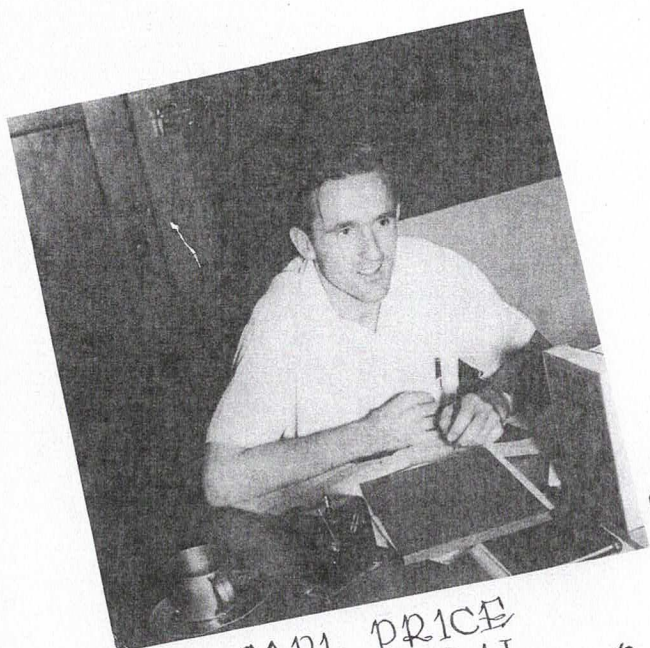


HARRIET GARRETT
TEXAS U. ~ CALIF. U.

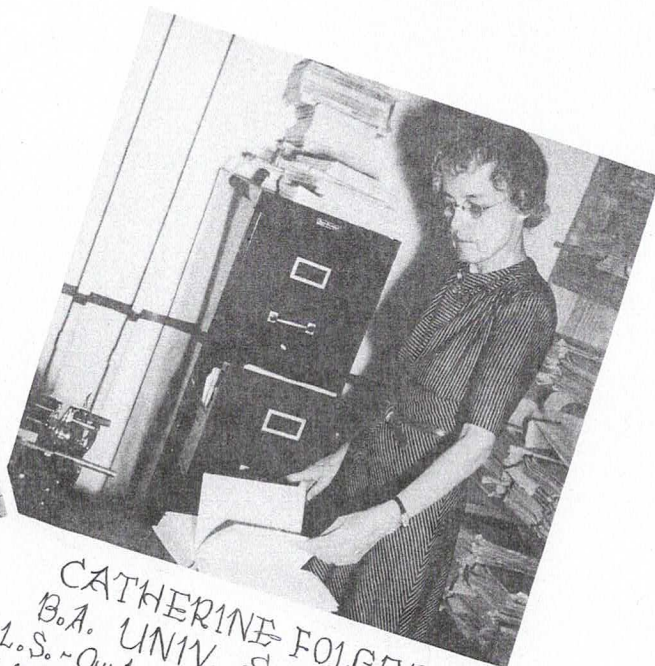


TILLIE REAL
B.A. ~ TEXAS U. GRAD. WORK T. U.
HISTORY...

SOCIAL STUDIES



CARL PRICE
B.B.A. ~ BAYLOR U.
ECONOMICS

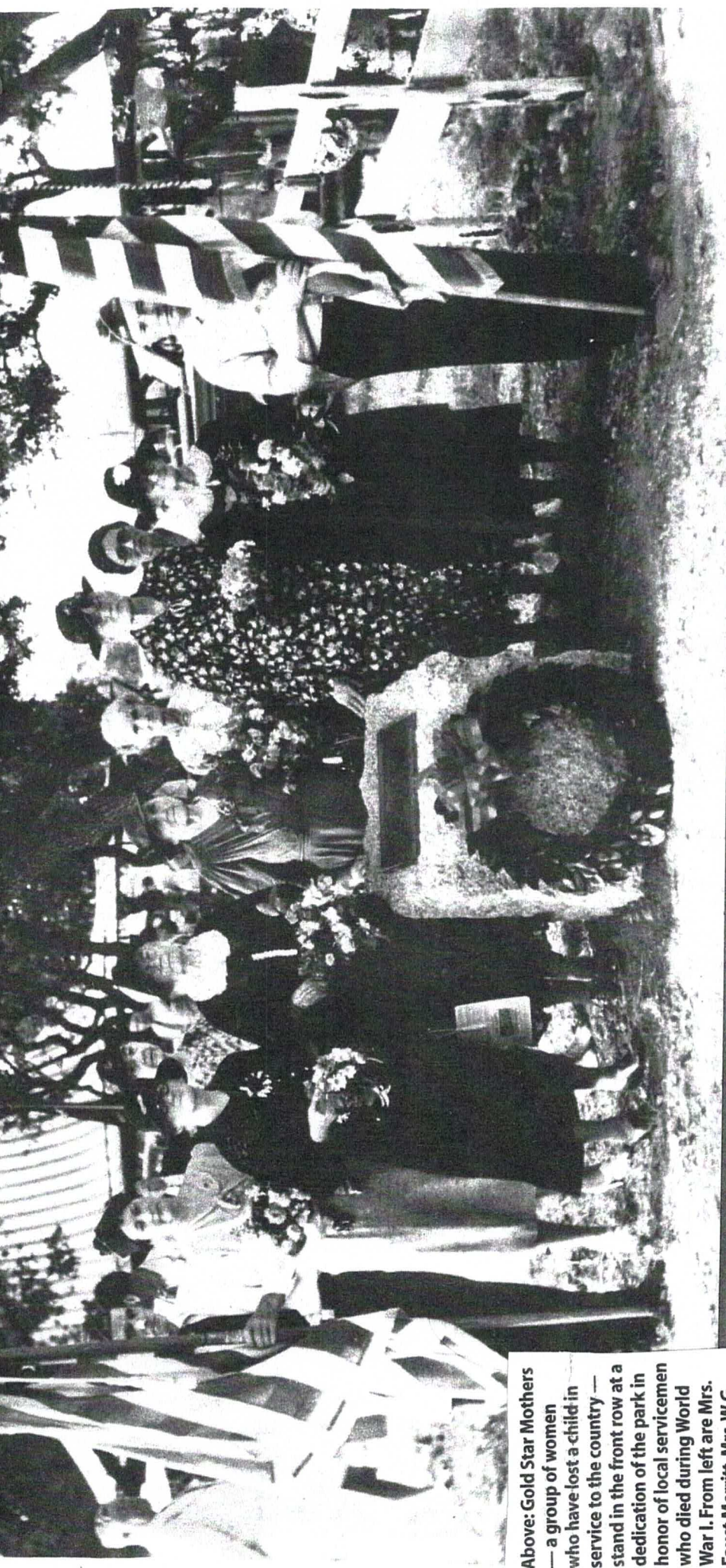


CATHERINE FOLGER
B.A. UNIV. OF TEXAS
B.L.S. ~ Our Lady of the Lake
LIBRARY

UNION CHURCH: BOB'S GREAT GRANDMOTHER WAS
INSTRUMENTAL IN STARTING
ORGANIZED RELIGION HERE IN THE CHURCH



Dedicated to their memory



Above: Gold Star Mothers — a group of women who have lost a child in service to the country — stand in the front row at a dedication of the park in honor of local servicemen who died during World War I. From left are Mrs. Faust Merritt, Mrs. W.G. Garrett, Mrs. W.P. Cowden, Mrs. Eddie Kaiser and Mrs. E.W. Baker. In the back row are Mrs. Mark Mosty, representing her brother, Robert Spicer; Mrs. Della Sommers, representing her brother, Grover Hollimon; and Mrs. Knox, representing her brother, Randolph Davis. The color bearers are George Hauer and E.E. Kalcov.

Tiny park honors local soldiers lost in World War I



BOB AND SHIRLEY SCHMERBECK

Victor Earl Garrett was killed in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive on October 4, 1918 in France. This campaign was the prime component of the final Allied offensive of World War I and was fought from Sept. 26, 1918 until the Armistice of November 11, 1918. During this 47 day battle, It claimed more than 26,000 American lives. Earl was 24 years old. As we celebrated Thanksgiving two weeks ago, I observed that two of my grandsons at the table are Earl's age when he died and that gave me pause to think once again about Earl and his sacrifice.

This tragedy left a lasting impact on his parents and six siblings. When I was growing up in Kerrville, we visited the Garrett home, which was located next door to St Peter's Episcopal Church on East Main. Each time I climbed the stairs to the second floor, I would always see a picture of Earl along with his Distinguished Service Cross Citation signed by President Woodrow Wilson. My quest to learn more about him was always instantly quelled by my grandmother and great aunt, Earl's sisters, as it was simply too raw and sad even forty years after his death.

In 2017, my cousin, Laura Theurer, the daughter of Ruth Garrett Chriesman, Earl's youngest sister, told me that her mother had compiled a collection of papers about Earl's life, death and legacy. She had copies made for me and I received them late last year. The information in those documents was exactly what I had been searching for decades to learn, so the information that I will share with you this morning is from that collection. Scant few people are aware of the existence of this trove of information, but it will give you an intimate portrait of Earl in his own words, reflections from family members and the brothers in arms that he served with prior to his last full measure of devotion.

We sat talking one day, as we so often did - (my little boy and I), and he asked why different things were so - why there was a failure to do certain things that were helpful to others, and when I was not able to tell him why, he said, "Some day, mamma, I am going to try to make ~~things~~ better," what he meant exactly I never guessed, but little dreamed that he would one day give his life that righteousness would prevail.

"He is not dead
Such spirits never die."

One winter when Earl was about five years old, his father - a member of the Legislature at that time - was in Austin. Being anxious to hear from him, of course, as often as possible, I would frequently call to the older boys, as they were going to the post-office, "Bring me a letter," or sometimes would say, "Don't come back without a letter." (All of them understood that the letter was to be from their father.) Earl noticed that they frequently did come back without a letter, he took it very seriously. So one day after he heard the train come in, he slipped off and went to the post-office himself, he asked for "Our mail," and when he was told there were no letters he went to the back of the office, out of the way, and sat down. The Postmaster came in and saw him still there and told him to "run along home, no letters today;" he said (the precious little fellow) "I'll just wait until there are some." He said it so earnestly and positively that the Postmaster thought for a moment what to do, then called to him, "Here, I have found some letters, now go on home and take them to your mother." He came in so pleased with the bundle of mail, though the letter looked for was not there. Yet it gave pleasure and satisfaction. This little incident is so characteristic of him - always a desire to please his mother and father and a determination to do what he believed was right, and this trait developed to a great degree.

Earl

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

I was born April 7th., 1894, at Kerrville, Texas. My father graduated in the Law department of the University of Alabama, and moved to Kerrville about thirty years ago. My mother spent her early life at Tehuacama, which was the educational center of Texas many years ago.

I have but little recollection of my life before my school days. The little that I do remember is typical of a child's life and is, therefore of little significance.

The first few years of my school life were successful. I studied a good deal, as the subjects were interesting. It cannot be said, however, that I worked for the result achieved, for it is typical of my nature that, when any subject ceased to be interesting, I straightway reduced the time spent on those subjects. About four successive years of my school life were unflinchingly bad in one or more subjects. I finally managed, however, in some manner to reach the graduating class without failing. The Superintendent and Principal of the school resigned in the school year to accept another position. A man from Alabama was secured to take his place. The new Superintendent turned out to be an old friend of my father. About a month before the end of the schoolastic year the Superintendent called me into his office. He told me that my grades were below the passing mark and that he could not give me a diploma, as he wanted to keep up the standard of the school. I saw neither pleasure nor profit in telling him that the school had no standard, that heretofore graduating had always been more a matter of perseverance than scholarship. It was a custom strengthened by many years, and looking back at one of the most important events in my life, I wonder at the strange moods of Destiny, which brought to the town of my birth a man who was so imbued with ideals that he would apply a standard which would fail the son of an old-

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time friend. Misery loves company; consequently as several others in my class suffered the result of the actions of a conscientious Superintendent my lot was less miserable than would otherwise have been the case.

The next year I again entered school and this time graduated with little trouble. The next year I commenced a higher course, which had just been offered in the school. I was fairly successful in this course, but dropped it to accept a position in the County and District Clerk's Office. My work was varied, as there was no one but the Clerk and me in the office. I worked about eighteen months in the capacity of Deputy Clerk. The experience that I gained should prove very helpful in the study of law, which some day I hope to pursue. In July, 1912, I resigned as Deputy Clerk to fill a newly created position in the Post Office. About the last of August I decided to enter the University of Texas.

It is impossible for me to determine the result of my first term's work in the University. I will feel, however, that I have achieved a triumph worthy of note if I pass in all of my courses, especially in view of the fact that the History Department seems to think it is a reflection on its ability for a freshman to pass a history course.

I have always been very fond of reading. This fondness would in most cases finally result in the acquisition of a varied knowledge and would tend toward the building of a cultivated mind, but my reading has not been confined to books of a worthy nature and I have always read solely for pleasure. Therefore I cannot hope to reap the richest benefits of reading until I learn to read in the right channels and to combine thinking with reading. My life has been singularly free from any happenings of an unusual nature. The only reason I can assign for this is that dreaming is more of a fundamental element of my nature than action. It is not dreaming of a constructive type that crystallizes into some

material form, but it is dreaming of a type that is productive of nothing more permanent than a fanciful hope that has its dwelling in my nature.

My ambitions have never soared to an unreasonable height. To be successful in my chosen profession is the substance of my dearest wish. Not the least of the obstacles which have to be overcome in order that I may realize my ambition is the absolving of fine academic courses, which is necessary for entrance in the law department.

I am deeply conscious of the fact that there is nothing in my life to justify an autobiography. But since, for obvious reasons, one must be written, it is entirely fitting that events which are of no significance should be omitted and that a proportionately large amount of space should be devoted to habit, temperament and ambition, which are so powerful in shaping the lives of men.

Earl

SHOULD INSTRUCTORS GIVE "POP QUIZZES"?

My opinion as to "pop quizzes" has been formed in the last few months. In that brief space, however, I have conceived a very strong antipathy to "pop quizzes". It is my most sincere belief that they are derogatory to the welfare of the student.

In the first place, I do not see how anyone could condone an institution which has such an unfortunate effect on the outward appearance of a student. Full many a time have I seen students go to a class smiling gladly with the joy of living and an hour later come out of class with long faces and looking as though their best friend had died. "Pop quizzes" are productive, not of cheerfulness and gladness, but of hopelessness and despair.

In the second place, a surprisingly large number of "F's" are due to "pop quizzes". Students do not study in a haphazard fashion, but to their credit may it be said that they study systematically, never uselessly, and for the aggrandizement of their grades. To study for announced quizzes and for "exams" would seem to indicate that "seriousness of purpose", which seems to be so dear to the hearts of the men who wrote the University Bulletin and should be so prolific of high grades. That such is not the case is entirely due to "pop quizzes", which seem to presuppose a prior knowledge on the part of the student of the subject under examination.

In the third place, "pop quizzes" are productive of rambling and villification. Rare is the student who will admit that he does not know anything on a given subject. He would theorize, extemporize, and philosophize on the realities of life when he was asked to find the value of 'X'. But worse than this, students

when asked to criticize the writings of some poet, for instance, Shakespeare, on finding himself absolutely innocent of any knowledge of the great poet, and consequently being in an unhappy state of mind, would attack the style, and at times even the character of the poet.

The "pop quizz" is an anachronism. It savors of another day when the relations between the teacher and pupil were not so harmonious, and the "pop quiz" was by far the most potent means of embarrassing the pupil. The torture chamber of the middle ages secured certain ends most effectively, yet it has been abolished. The reason is obvious, yet today the like institution of "pop quizzes" is in a flourishing condition.

Earl

Sept. 4, 1918.

My Dearest Mother:

It will probably be only a note, but I wanted to write you to night. It may be some time before I can write you again and I do not want to neglect this opportunity.

Mother, it is a long cry from here to home, but never so close as to night. And never have I been so conscious of what you have done for me or felt so unworthy of your efforts - I could not write a sad letter, even if I wanted to; my

temperamental make-up
would not let me. But
I do want you to know
before anything might
happen that I at least
appreciate my mother and
my father.

I am habitually
optimistic - of the Micawber
type, less a considerable
portion of confidence in
my ability. But the great
possibility can not be
ignored.

with love to all.

Your son
Earl

V. E. Garrett
2nd Lt. M. G.
Co. 2 8th Inf.

Victor Earl Garrett Gives Life for Liberty

Another star of blue has turned to gold, another hero been added to Kerrville's lengthening Roll of Honor.

The entire community was shocked when word came Sunday evening that Lieut. Victor Earl Garrett had been killed in action in France on Oct. 4. Earl was the youngest of Judge and Mrs. W. G. Garrett's four sons, all in the service of their country, and was twenty-four years of age at the time of his death. He entered the law department of the State University at the age of twenty, and during his second year there answered the call for volunteers in the National Guard during the trouble with Mexico. At the end of a year they were mustered out and Earl returned to his home, but had been here only a short time when war was declared with Germany. He enlisted at once in the first officers' training camp at Leon Springs and received his commis-

sion there as Second Lieutenant in September, and was one of the ninety men out of three thousand selected for intensive training in France. He had been in France fifteen months when he was killed in action.

He was promoted to First Lieutenant in August of this year, and was in the 28th Inf. Machine Gun Co. of the First Division of Regulars, which took part in more hard fighting than any other of the American forces, being veteran troops. Among the engagements he took part in were the battles of Chateau-Thierry, the St. Mehiel salient and in the forest of Argonne, where he was killed.

Earl Garrett was universally beloved and his character was an unusual and beautiful one. There was nothing in his life that those who loved him could have wished different. The hearts of all the community go out to his dear ones in their great bereavement. It is especially true of Earl that:

"None knew him but to love him,
None named him but to praise."

PRAISE HIM.

BY PHEBE KINDRICK THOMPSON.

Do the shadows gather thickly
And the clouds hang dark and low,
Shutting out the blessed sunshine
From thy pathway here below?
"In everything give thanks"
And praise Him,
Trusting still whate'er betide,
For the sun still shines above thee,
Only clouds its glories hide.

Is thy soul bowed down with sorrow?
Does thy heart with grief o'erflow?
Hast thou tasted bitter waters,
Weary hours of pain and woe?
"In everything give thanks"
And praise Him,
Trusting still whate'er betide,
For His love, unfailling, sure,
Shines through every cloud of sorrow
And will evermore endure.

Is thy cup o'erfilled with gladness,
Joy and peace thy portion sweet?
Friends and loved gathered 'round thee
Make thy happiness complete?
Still in everything
Oh praise Him!
... the grateful heart above:

"I loved you enough to give you up—
Yet it follows after, this love of mine
Like a convoy ship across the sea,
To keep you safe on the battle line,
Like the trusty rifle in your hand,
To go with you through No Man's
Land."

"And should you join the unseen
band,
My love would stand, in that last
hour,
Myself incarnate to give you power;
For love never faileth, lad, you know,
And I loved you enough to let you
go."

I stand in the dust and my eyes are
dim
With the tears that must fall when I
think of him.
But the eyes of my soul are clearer
far
Than the eyes of this poor, dumb body
are.

God-given, God-driven, he, my son,
Of the immortals a shining one,
Perhaps when I gave him, my best to
give,
Really I died then, that he might live.

If only my loss then, be but his gain
Half of the bitterness gone from the
pain,
Sheath not his sword, Lord, let it not
rust,
His was the burden, yours be the
trust.

Little son, smile on me. Twice have I
given
Once life on earth to you, now life in
Heaven,
Homes you have saved and hearts you
have blessed,
Now you have gone to your glorious
rest.

Hold up my hands lest they falter

To Jimmy

- - Extract of letters received from Dede - -

'You cannot realize how the news of Earl's death affected me- I just couldn't make myself believe that it was true. I was always so proud of Earl and it doesn't seem possible that I will never see him again. Earl was always so noble and his noblest trait - I consider- was always to conform to mamma's wishes. He was easily the pet and pride of the family and I know that the whole town was proud of him.

I wrote to mamma the other night and it might seem an awkward letter yet I would just do anything in the world to help her and papa in their deep grief.

It just happened that Bill was passing through here on Special Duty and he got the news the same time as I. I went to Little Rock that evening and had supper with him. He came out to-day but I happened to be out and didn't see him. He left tonight at 8:30 P.M. for Houston.

* * * * *

Dear Mamma

You cannot realize what a shock to me ~~of~~ the news of Earl's death and mamma I can only think of yours and papa's deep grief and wish that I could be at home in order to do anything in the world I could for you.

I was so proud of Earl and told all the boys here about him every chance I got.

Mamma I would like to write you more but you know that you and papa have my deepest sympathy.

Thursday, November 28th., 1918.

My dearest Aimee:

You have received the sad message that we sent you by cable doubtless before this. It grieved us to send it to you as you were so far away but we knew that you would want to know it at once. So we sent it as early as possible. The operator here had to find out from San Antonio about the rates, etc. There is no need to tell you Aim that we are all simply broken-hearted at the loss of our darling boy. He was so lovable, yet so manly. We think there is none other like him Aim, and you loved him too as the rest of us did. It is so hard to understand why he was taken - so young, and so promising, he would have made such a useful man but we should simply trustfully say "Even so Father for it seemeth good in thy sight". Aimee we missed you, being away from us in this sad trying time; the first great sorrow we ever had. I have had so many trials, and some times they seemed greater than I could bear but to the children of God He has promised to sustain, "As thy days may demand shall thy strength ever be". And I have never been utterly cast down. And you Aimee will find comfort from the same source. No love can be ~~as~~ ^{er} great ~~as~~ the mother's love, yet papa is prostrated with grief. He says he feels as if he could never take any more interest in life that is as far as his work is concerned. He talks of you all, all the time, and when the cable was sent you he came near adding for you all to come ~~if~~ ^{one} if possible, but he decided best not. We have so much to be thankful for, though every thing seemed so dark and gloomy yesterday morning on Thanksgiving Day, but such kind friends as have been our lot to have, have done everything that is possible for them to do, to lighten our grief. All day long people are coming in to see us, some with wonderful flowers, some with something to tempt our appetites. And yesterday Myrta came and brought our dinner and she ate it with us. Aimee had gone hunting, and she would have been alone. She brought her cook along and

she put everything on the table and waited on us. We couldn't have cooked anything but since it was brought and served we enjoyed it as much as possible, "with our sky so gray". It certainly did help to pass the time. She brought a turkey, several other dishes and a dessert. It was certainly sweet of her wasn't it? Myrta can do the kindest things for one that she loves, no one else could think of the things that she does, then at other times she may seem to forget, but always ready when emergencies arise. She will do far more, than you expect of her. I just received a letter to-night from Willie in answer to the telegram about our darling, he will be over here about the third of December. I am so glad that he is coming even if it is only a little while. I have wanted to see him so much all along and since the news came from the Western front, I felt that I must see him. I will mail the letter you enclosed to Hal. It was such a nice letter Aimee. I am glad you wrote it. God bless you my dear sweet Aimee and lots of love to you, Rob and the children from,

Your affectionate mamma.

Papa, Jesmyr, Hattie and Ruth are writing.

P.S.

My Aimee:

I neglected to mention in my letter that it was one month and twenty days after our boy fell, before the cable came reporting his death, and that is all we know so far. We are hoping that other news will come, telling us of his last hours. We may have told you Aimee that he was in the 1st Division, which saw more hard fighting than any other and he lead a Machine Gun Co., the most dangerous of all places because the enemy directed their ~~attacks~~ ^{attacks} the Machine Guns till sometimes every man fell, ~~and they were left their~~ ~~places~~. To think of our baby boy holding this most dangerous place, so willingly and so uncomplainingly. Let's try Aimee to look at it as we should and rejoice that we had such a noble boy to give

for such a noble cause for it was rightenouness against unrighteousness. It was liberty or bondage. Aimee my heart has been so full of our own boy that I haven't told you that Earl Oakley died of pneumonia in Douglass Ariz. He was in the Quartermaster Dept., (I received the news Sunday morning of Earl Oakley's death and intended going right down to be with Kate when the news came the same day about our boy. We are looking for Dede now any night and Willie in a few days, for one day and night.) You don't know how gratifying it is to us that we can see Willie even for a day and to have Dede with us for good. Jesmyr has been a little angel in our home. She as been so helpful I don't know how we could have done without her. And it was so fortunate too that ^{you sister} Hattie could be with us a week. She has been such a comfort. Kiss my dear little boys and girl for me. When you return we will remember you for Christmas. "May the New Year bring new joys",

Mamma.

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.—Jas. 4: 10.

*Dear Father, if thy lifted rod
Resolve to scourge us here below,
Still we must lean upon our God,
Thine arm shall bear us safely through.*

E X T R A C T

of

Letter from Willie.

****Mamma I think that the many nice things that have been written and said about Earl are wonderful, and he deserved them all, and more. While any of us would have gladly taken his place if it had been possible, maybe it is best that it was not. I know that none of us with the exception of you were as ready to go as he, and maybe if we will all let his splendid life and death be a model and inspiration for our lives it will be worth all it cost. If he had lived to old age he could have left no sweeter or no more enduring memories.****

Bill Garrett

from Hattie & Aimee

Friday night,

November 29, 1919.

My darling girl:

It seems so hard to write you that our precious boy is gone- I have no heart for anything. I know how sad and lonely you must feel- way off in South America when you would so love to be with us. We could all comfort each other. Papa longs for you and the children so much and so often- we all do, but papa says so often what a comfort you and the children would be.

I feel so sorry for poor old daddy. A man seems so helpless in his grief. He just worshipped Earl as you know, and he breaks down so often and cries- today we have all been calmer. Yesterday, Thanksgiving Day, was so hard- and poor mamma- how her heart must bleed at the loss of her precious baby boy. Earl was such a lovely character- so fine, manly, and so lovable. There was so much of the maternal in my feelings for Earl. I simply adored him. He spent so many hours with me in my room and they are all such happy golden memories. It was such pure joy to be with him. It seems to be that since he left us for Hoboken, fifteen months ago, that I have carried him right with me in my heart. I have prayed for his safety night and day and yearned and longed for his home coming. Oh, Aim darling, I know how heart-broken you must be, I know how you loved him, too. I remember how sweet you always were to help mamma with the boys clothes, etc., and Aim- I think we have all had a special place for our dear little Earl. The whole family were so proud of him. It is awfully hard to give him up. Papa says he feels sure that we shall all be better for Earl's having lived.

I don't think that papa can ever get over Earl's death. His ambitions were so wrapped in Earl's future. His splendid library was to be a gift to Earl, (his law books) and he hoped to see Earl realize the things he had missed- I never saw anything sweeter than the spirit in which papa has borne his great grief. He

says he will meet Earl some day. Isn't that wonderful for him to talk like that? Dr. Dickey came to see us as soon as he heard about our trouble and we were so glad to have him. Papa and mamma had been longing for him. He read the scripture, gave a beautiful talk and prayed such a fine prayer.

The depths of mamma's suffering we cannot know. She has been so brave for papa's sake. I know she is simply crushed. And now darling girl I must write to dear old Harry. How I long for you- I could write pages to you but will not write more this time. Love, love, love for you, dear old Rob, and the darling kiddies from,

Your adoring and heart-broken

Hat.

Caldera, Chile, So. Amer.

12-2-18.

My dearest Mother and Father:

Just the next day after I had written home last week (the 27th) the sad cablegram arrived. When Rob told me, I felt that I couldn't stand it-although he was as considerate of my feelings as could be and told me before he broke the news that he was going to have to tell me something very sad. I said "Oh, it isn't about Earl, is it?" I thought of Earl immediately because I had been so worried about him anyway as I knew he was right in the midst of the fighting, and I've been dreading to open my letters from home lately, for fear something might have happened to the dear boy.

I can't tell you how grieved I was and am. I can't seem to realize that he is dead. He was such a dear sweet boy, and I loved him so much. All of my past associations with him loom up before me very vividly, at all times, and I can only recall pleasant memories. With his strong love of home and family, his craving for knowledge, his highly intellectual and moral tendencies-his life was certainly well-spent. When one is terribly grieved and depressed over such a sad happening as this, it is very hard to become resigned and reconciled; but I am trying oh so hard to be philosophical.

Earl was a Christian soldier, in every sense of the word. He belonged to that band of noble Christian martyrs who unselfishly sacrificed their promising young lives for their country and the saving of the souls of future generations. After all, what nobler mission in life could anyone perform than this? It is following in His steps. For I feel sure that if our boys and the Allies had not been successful over the Germans, that the world most probably would have reverted to heathenism.

So although our grief is almost more than we can bear, still we must

Q
try to be brave. It is so much to be thankful for that he was so good, and that his influence upon others was always for the best. Rob was so sympathetic and sweet with me and thoughtful in every way. He feels this trouble very keenly too, for he was very fond of Earl. He detests the whole German military party with all his heart, and is always saying how much he regrets that he was not able to take an active part in this war. If he had been at home instead of here, I'm sure he would have done so. He is hoping that the Kaiser and all of his party, will be justly dealt with. He says that they should not be permitted to live. Only God knows how much suffering they have caused this world. The children are so concerned and sorry too, over the death of their dear uncle Earl. He never received my last letter and card dear old boy. Please write me the details, if you ever know them.

Now, my dear ones, goodbye for this time. My thoughts fly home constantly and I know how much you both have suffered. I wish I could be there with you, to try and lighten things a little bit; but it won't be so long now before we will be on our way home. Let's try and bear our grief bravely, knowing that all is well with our dear soldier boy; for his soul is with God. God bless all of you.

Much love to every one of you, from all, and write soon tom

Yours devotedly

Aimee.

from Hal to Hattie

-Extract of Letter from Hal to Hattie-

**** An sure that ~~some~~ ^{MAMA} sent you the last letter I wrote her, I had just talked with Lieut. Birmingham and he told me all he could about Earl, and I told her all in that letter, so will not enter into particulars again now, but hope to see you all again some day and can tell you more. But Hattie it is a consolation to us to know that he had always been in good health, always in good spirits, that he was always without fear-regardless of what odds were against him- that he would never ask others to go with ^{out-}him on dangerous missions, and to know that even though he died, he died fighting and with a smile on his face; and that he was respected by all officers and soldiers alike, and that his runner who was with him when he fell (a young fellow) Lieut. Birmingham tells me, cried like a child- this runner must be the same one who mamma is trying to locate and I would certainly love to talk to him.

Earl had a very responsible position, and one that called for good judgement, nerve and leadership, and he made good. Hattie you know when I last saw Earl he was only a boy, all of you saw him just before he went across, so you can understand that it seems strange that this boy brother could be the same man that Lieut. Birmingham tells me about, but of course it was, and how proud I am to have been his brother****

Judge and Mrs. W.G. Garrett,

Kerrville, Texas.

Dear Friends:

I learned with much regret that your son, Victor Earl, was killed while fighting on the battle fields of France.

"Again a prince has fallen in the fight-
A valerous champion of the truth and right;
Determined, courteous, level-headed and just,
Who never broke a promise, nor betrayed a trust!
His genial face with courtly kindness beamed,
By friends loved, by all who knew him esteemed."

By his manly character, sincere and kindly ways, Earl had endeared himself to all who knew him, and I have not known a young man whom I held in higher esteem and whose friendship was more appreciated. I am sure that his presence and life was a great comfort and inspiration to you, and that in his death your loss is irreparable, still there must be great consolation to you in the fact, that he died fighting for a just and righteous cause, that he never shirked his duty, and scorned a slacker.

In all the annals of time, no richer libation was ever offered to God or man, than the blood poured out on the hills and valleys of France by Earl Garrett and his compeers, the flower of American man-hood. I feel impressed with the conviction, that by his ready response to his country's call, by his spotless character, by his splendid record and last, by his death he has bequeathed to you a glorious heritage, one that is high above earthly values and imperishable.

When the roll of America's honored dead is finally made up, the name of Victor Earl Garrett, all down the years to come, will add as much luster and shine with as much splendor as any name that will grace that immortal scroll.

Sincerely your friend,

R.H. Burney.

In Memory of Victor Earl Garrett.

by his pastor.

Earl Garrett was dedicated to God in baptism in the Presbyterian church of Kerrville on October the seventh, 1894 by the Rev. James P. Lyle. He was received into full membership upon a very clear and positive confession of his faith on May fourth, 1913 by Rev. W. P. Dickey, pastor.

He died in the battle of the Argonne leading his men against a German machine gun nest on October fourth, 1918.

This bare statement in itself means little, but it records the significant periods in a rarely fine life.

It is given to some to impress others by some striking gift or to fail through some great weakness or misfortune but rarely does one make a profound impression simply by what he is; that, I think, was the supreme distinction of Earl Garrett.

Quiet, gentle and unassuming as a child, a youth and as a man, yet he was in all crowned with the spontaneous love and respect of all who knew him. In his christian life he was modest and un-pretentious, yet so sincere and constant as to command the admiring comment of fellow students and soldiers.

Loving the life of a student and a dreamer, the call of duty and loyalty to the highest ideals of a citizen and christian proved him a man of the clearest convictions and of a courage which did not falter at any danger or hardship nor hesitate to give life itself that truth might live.

To have known him, to have loved him, to have witnessed his short but splendid life is to have received a new understanding of the meaning and possibilities of christian manhood.

His devotion to the noblest ideals of manhood and his instant, unhesitating response to duty and his tragic yet splendid sacrifice is beautifully represented in these lines:

"Better in one ecstatic day
To strike a blow for Glory and for truth
With ardent singing heart to toss away
In Freedom's holy cause my eager youth
Than bear, as weary years pass, one by one,
The knowledge of a sacred task undone".

Like the Master he followed " He saved others, himself he could not save", but, though his body fell in the far Argonne he lives, not only in the heavenly reality, but in the inspiring and ennobling touch of a soul who has made our highest ideals real to us.

In loving memory,

W. P. Wickey

Pastor Presbyterian Church.

125
Germany,

Jan. 18, 1919.

Mrs. Laura B. Garrett,

Kerrville, Texas.

Dear Mrs. Garrett;

It is with a feeling of regret and sorrow, I am answering your letter of 7th. of Dec. 1918, in reference to your dear son Victor E. Victor E. was killed in action Oct. 4th. 1918, during the Argonne Meuse battle. He was hit by a Machine Gun bullet. I can't express in words how I felt when I heard he was killed. He was a staunch friend of mine and of everybody who knew him. His death was mourned by officers and men alike. He met his death like a true American. For four days previous to his death he suffered from an injury to his feet, but absolutely refused to be evacuated. He kept on with his men greatly encouraging them by his devotion to duty. On the morning of Oct. 4th. he led a patrol into the enemy machine gun nests, advancing through intense enemy shell and M. G. fire. It was while he was exterminating one of those M.G. nests he was killed.

He was buried where he fell owing to the severity of the fighting which prevented the dead from being removed from the battlefields. His grave is near Exermont in the Meuse valley.

Lieut. Garrigan is not with the company at present. He was severely wounded in the same battle. I expect him back to the company soon.

In regard to Victor's personal effects, I am sure they have reached you by this time. I forwarded everything belonging to him to Effects Depot, Base Section # 1, and from that place they were shipped to you.

Any farther information you need or you think I can give you, I

an always ready to let you have. I never will forget your son. He was like a brother to me. I always admired his great courage and above all he was a true American gentleman. It is a pity that a man like him, having been through every engagement in which this regiment participated, should have met his death when the end of the war was so near. Nothing would please me more than to have him with me now. The entire company join with me in extending to you and family our deepest sympathy.

Yours very sincerely,

R.J. Wallace,

1st. Lieut. 28th. Inf.

Com. M.G. Co.

San Antonio, Texas,

Jan. 20, 1919.

Dear Mrs. Garrett:

I first knew your son at the University of Texas, where I was a student for three years. He and I knew each other quite well, and we studied for the same profession- Law. He told me that he always wanted to be a lawyer like his father.

I then left college and began the practice of law, but when the great war started, he and I volunteered and were sent to the first training camp and were in the same training company together. For four months we soldiered in the hot sun of Leon Springs, and your son, who was also in my platoon, frequently made things pleasant by his dry wit. I was a lieutenant having been commissioned, and he was a private. Your son was in the "Peanut" squad- we called them peanuts because they were not very big. In that squad was Frank W. Slaton of Dallas, who went to France with your son, who went to the same machine gun school with your son in France, and who was killed in the Battle of Soissons, July 18th, 1918.

After the training camp your son was ordered for immediate service overseas, and I was not. I was deeply disappointed and went to Washington in an effort to be sent to France. I was told that if I obtained one who decided to stay in the States, that I would be sent.

I telegraphed twice to your son in Kerrville, but did not see him again until a few days before the battle of St. Mihiel.

During all the time your son was soldering in France, I was soldering in America. After a long wait, I was sent to France, with the 40th Division of Camp Kearney, California, and the Division was made a Depot Division- a supply division, never to go to the front, I asked to be sent to the front, and so I was sent to the 3rd Battalion, 28th Infantry, 1st Division.

About Sept. 9th or 10th. I was standing near a tree. for it was raining-

watching the tanks go by that were going to the front ready for the battle, some one said "Hello Ug", and I looked around and said, "Well, if there isn't the pride of Kerr County". We were glad to see each other and talked over old times.

We went through the Battle of St. Mihiel together, he of course supporting with his guns. When the Battle was over, we stayed in billets we had captured from the Germans. As a machine gun company was always attached to the 3rd Battalion he was always near me.

Just after the battle was over we began to go on forced marches for the 1st Division was made a part of the portion that was to fight in the Argonne Forest. I saw your son every day and we marched together at night. He and I never talked of war, but of our dear mothers and fathers and relatives and friends. I would joke with him about Kerrville but he always said that when the "old war" was over, he was going back.

I remember seeing your son writing a letter under a little tent in a forest near the village of Eubercourt, which is near Clermont and you can find it on the map. He was sitting there on a log or something. This was Sept. 25th or 26th. Again (we left there and marched 10 kilometers behind Verdun) we were in French Billets and we all slept on the floor. I saw your son and several other lieutenants sitting on the floor writing- I do not remember whether he was or not. But I will always remember when we came in there. We had marched all of the night and reached this place at about 8 in the morning. It was rainy and muddy. The Machine Gun Company was ahead of us, and as we went into our billets, your son had stopped with his platoon and was sitting on the side of the road with his men. I was wet, muddy and tired and all that. He looked the same way, but when he saw me, he must have thought I looked worse, for he burst out laughing and said, "You are sure dragging in the mud".

From there we went to Montfaucon which you will also find on the map. I did not see him there. From there we went to Varemme, arriving there on the night of Sept. 31st. We then marched into the village of Chappy, and through it and stopped. All the officers then left the men, and we went down a hill and found a dugout where we discussed plans for the battle, I remember sitting next to your son in this little cold, cramped German dugout as Capt. Hawkinson told of the plans for the battle. (Capt. Hawkinson was of Syracuse, New York, an only son, with his father dead, and who was killed in the battle with your son)(I can find out his mother's name if you want it). We then left and took up our positions on the night of the 30th of September and the early morning of the 1st of October on scouting expeditions in passing your son, I would stop and talk to him. He also did that when he passed my positions. On the morning of October 4th, 1918, we were preparing to go over the top. I saw your son sometime that morning, I told my mother one hour before, but I am not certain. But just before the battle started I saw him.

At 5:35 we made the assault, I saw Lt. Mershon of your son's company, as the battle started. "Where is Garrett", I said, "Oh, he is over there with his guns", he said, and pointed to some point of the battle.

In three to five minutes I am certain at least half of our men were killed or wounded. It is surprising that any human being could have lived through that. German machine guns and artillery were concentrated on us from every conceivable angle, and I feel that it must have been then that your son fell in battle. I was soon rather seriously wounded, and so I was "out of it".

I was surprised and deeply grieved when I heard your fine son had been killed and did not know of it until my mother telephoned me and told me. I am now certain that there were no unwounded officers left alive in my battalion, and that all the rest are sleeping peacefully under the soil of France.

Mrs. Garrett, I trust and hope that you will not always grieve over your brave son, but will be more proud each day, and think of him as a real American. My mother had a fine son to die and although she loved him dearly, it has not broken her heart, for she knew it was God's will and thinks now of her remaining sons and daughters.

I will soon start the practice of law. Sometimes business takes me away from home and if it takes me to Kerrville, I shall certainly visit you. If Judge Garrett visits San Antonio tell him to be certain to see me.

With best wishes for your happiness in the future, I remain respectfully, the comrade of your son in the great war.

Maury Maverick.

200 Gold Star Mothers Consecrate Graves of Soldier Dead in Prayers And Tears as Sun Shines on Tombs

(By Associated Press)

ROMAGNE - SOUS-MONTFAUCON, France, May 21.—Spring rains mingled with the tears of American mothers today to freshen the graves of the Yankee boys who fell in the great war.

The mothers, more than 200 in number, reached the goal of their voyage from the United States this forenoon and spent a day that was all too short in the six vast military cemeteries wherein their sons lie buried.

With tears and prayers they consecrated the resting places of the heroes they had elected to leave upon the battlefields where they gave their lives.

Over nearly all of the cemeteries the sun broke briskly through a leaden sky for that simple, solemn moment when the mothers, for the first time, knelt beside the bodies of their boys.

Here, where sleep 14,000 of America's war dead, 108 mothers saw the graves which they had longed to see for 12 dreary years. Another 50 went to Seringes-et-Nesles, near Soissons, and a score each went to Thiaccourt, near Nancy and Belleau Wood, a few miles back of the immortal Chateau Thierry.

Touching, welcomes everywhere greeted the saddened pilgrims. French widows and orphans, too, in thousands, were present to show the American mothers how they also had given the supreme gift to the cause of humanity.

The American mothers were taken from their hotels in 19 big motor cars. At Verdun, a vast throng went and speakers choked with emotion as they told of the siege that lasted virtually through-

out the war, in which men died by thousands.

As the mothers gathered at the cemetery entrance, the sun came from behind a cloud and bathed them in its warmth. The raindrops glistened on every grave and cross as the women placed evergreen wreaths, entwined with pansies and carnations upon the green robes. The flowers were prepared and ready for their arrival.

In a brief hour they tried to say all of the prayers that welled in their hearts. Then the rain descended again and they hurried back to shelter in the big cars. Through the windows they watched the cemetery as they ate their lunches. Then again the rain ceased and they resumed their prayers at the marble crosses.

Sixteen gold star mothers made their third pilgrimage to the Mount Waterien Cemetery, overlooking Paris, and there they stood by the graves of their sons at the same hour the others, in five different localities, were making their first pilgrimage.

Kerrville Gold Star Mother at Legion Convention

Mrs. W. G. Garrett, one of Kerrville's Gold Star Mothers, left Sunday for San Antonio to attend the National Convention of the American Legion. While in the city she will be the guest of her daughter, Mrs. R. A. Chrisman, and Mr. Chrisman.

During the convention now in session, Mrs. Garrett will be met by several World War veterans who were friends of her son, Lieut. Victor Earl Garrett, and saw service with him overseas. Among them will be Maury Maverick, San Antonio; Capt. Wallace and Lieut. Merchon of Missouri and Joe H. Garrigan of Beloit, Wis., who was with Lieutenant Garrett from the time of embarkation, through the British and French schools of instruction and a number of major engagements.

Lieut. Earl Garrett was killed in action in the Argonne Forest on October 4, 1918, when he led an attack with four men resulting in the capture of 20 prisoners and several machine guns. He was cited for bravery in action.

The Gold Star Mothers' organization are among the special guests to be honored during the Legion convention.

Mr. and Mrs. James Lawson of Los Angeles, Calif., spent the first of the week in Kerrville with Mr. and Mrs. W. G. Garrett and Miss Harriet Garrett. They were enroute home from visiting relatives in Chicago, Ill., and in Indiana. Mr. Lawson and Lieut. Earl Garrett, who was killed in the Meuse-Argonne Battle during the World War, were buddies in the machine gun company of the 28th Infantry.

* DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS CITATION *
(POSTHUMOUS AWARD)

Victor E. Garrett, first lieutenant, while serving as second lieutenant, 28th Infantry, 1st Division, American Expeditionary Forces. For extraordinary heroism in action near Berzy-le-Sec, France, July 19, 1918, and near Exermont, France, October 4, 1918. Lt. Garrett displayed great courage and self-sacrifice during the four days battle south of Soissons, conducting his platoon with calmness and good judgment, especially on July 19, 1918, when he aided in keeping his company together when large shells struck among the men, personally supervising the care of the wounded and getting them to aid stations, with utter disregard of his own safety, while subjected to heavy enemy artillery and machine-gun fire. Lt. Garrett displayed extraordinary heroism during the three days previous to the attack on Exermont, France, by refusing to be evacuated although suffering from an injury to his foot, remaining at his post until October 4, 1918, when acting as liaison officer he with five men were suddenly confronted by 20 Germans, and while leading the attack he made the supreme sacrifice. His dauntless courage and excellent example enabled his men to take the Germans as prisoners.

Kerr County Historical Commission

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Bob Schmerbeck

Interviewers: Francelle Robison Collins
Bonnie Pipes Flory

Date: December 4, 2018

Place: Kerr County Courthouse
Kerrville, Texas

*The Oral History Project is a project of
The Kerr County Historical Commission,
a volunteer organization. Oral History
Committee chair is Francelle Robison Collins.*

Transcribed and Edited by Rita Edington Odom

Kerr County Historical Commission

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Name: Robert L. Schmerbeck, III
Date of Birth: July 14, 1944
Place of Birth: San Antonio, Texas
Education: Tivy High School
Texas University
Father: Robert L. Schmerbeck, Jr.
Mother: Edith Hauser Schmerbeck
Spouse: Shirley Gann Schmerbeck
Children: Stephen, Nancy, Rob Schmerbeck

SUMMARY

Robert L. Schmerbeck, III was born on July 14, 1944, in San Antonio, Texas. He and his wife, Shirley and son Stephen reside in Kerrville, Texas. Garrett Insurance Company in Kerrville has been in his family for one hundred years this year. His great uncle, Earl Garrett, is the focus of this oral history. Bob has in his possession documents and letters concerning the life and death of Earl Garrett, a decorated war hero, who was killed on the battlefield in World War I at the age of twenty-four. The tributes made in honor of Earl Garrett are numerous and speak to the fine person that he was. One of Kerrville's main streets is named after this fallen hero from Kerrville, Texas.

An Oral History of Bob Schmerbeck

My name is Francelle Robison Collins and I am with the Kerr County Historical Commission, Oral History Project. Today is December 4, 2018, and I am here at the Kerr County Courthouse in Kerrville, Texas, with Bonnie Pipes Floury. We are talking with Bob Schmerbeck, who understands that we are making audio and video recordings of this interview and that a typewritten transcript of this interview will be provided so that changes can be made. The audio and video tapes, however, cannot be edited. This information along with copies of any family pictures and documents provided by you will then be turned over to the Kerr Regional History Center, Schreiner University, and the University of North Texas' Portals to Texas History, where they will be available to the public unless specific restrictions are placed on them by you. These restrictions will be noted in the Release form after you have had a chance to review your manuscript. Are you clear on what we are doing today?

BOB: Yes.

FRANCELLE: What we are going to do today is to talk to Bob who has had 3 ancestors who have been very instrumental in the Kerr County history. Laura Garrett, Bob's great grandmother, who was instrumental in the starting of the first organized religion here in Kerrville at the Union Church. Also, Earl Garrett, who died in World War I, and Harriet Garrett, Bob's great aunt, who was a very renown history teacher at Tivy. We will end up talking about the Garrett Insurance Company which has been in existence in Bob's family for a hundred years this year.
Bob, What is your given name?

BOB: Robert L. Schmerbeck, III

FRANCELLE: When and where were you born?

BOB: July 14, 1944 in San Antonio, Texas.

FRANCELLE: Do you remember which hospital?

BOB: Surgical and Medical, S and M.

FRANCELLE: Do you have any siblings?

BOB: I have a sister, Elizabeth Arp, who lives in Houston.

FRANCELLE: What was your father's name?

Bob Schmerbeck

BOB: Robert L. Schmerbeck, Jr.

FRANCELLE: Where was he born?

BOB: He was born in Kerrville, Texas in 1909.

FRANCELLE: What is your occupation?

BOB: I've been with the Garrett Insurance Agency for fifty-two years and I'm a Business Development Officer.

FRANCELLE: Who started the insurance business?

BOB: It was started by my 2 great uncles, the 2 brothers of Earl Garrett in late 1918 when they mustered out of World War I.

FRANCELLE: What was your mother's name?

BOB: Edith Hauser. She was from San Antonio. She was born in San Antonio.

FRANCELLE: Let's start with Laura Garrett. Would you tell us about her and how she started the religious movement? I think they had a circuit rider.

BOB: Yes, in 1888, Laura Gill Garrett, her sister and 5 other women were the organizers of First Presbyterian Church here. Prior to that there were a number of different denominations in town and they started meeting in the courthouse on alternating Sundays. Then they raised the money to build the Union Church which now sits on the campus of Schreiner University.

FRANCELLE: How many religions were there? Five?

BOB: I believe there were 5.

FRANCELLE: Let's talk more about Earl Garrett. We know there's a street named for him here in Kerrville. I think there were twenty some men killed from Kerrville but there are 3 that streets are named after. So, tell us about Earl.

BOB: Victor Earl Garrett was killed in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive on October 4, 1918, just over a hundred years ago, in France. This campaign was the prime component of the final Allied offensive of World War I and was fought from September 26, 1918 until the Armistice of November 11, 1918. During this forty-seven day battle, it claimed more than twenty-six thousand American lives, one of the deadliest

battles in the history of mankind. Earl was twenty-four years old. A funny thing for me, at Thanksgiving a few weeks ago, I noticed that 2 of my grandsons at the table are Earl's age when he died and that gave me pause to think once again about Earl and his sacrifice. This was a tragedy and had a lasting impact on his parents and 6 siblings. When I was growing up in Kerrville, we visited the Garrett home frequently, primarily to pay our respects to Laura, or Don Momma, and their home was located next door to St. Peter's Episcopal Church on East Main. Each time I climbed the stairs to the second floor, I would always see a picture of Earl along with his Distinguished Service Cross Citation signed by President Woodrow Wilson. My quest to learn more about him was always instantly quelled by my grandmother and great aunt, Earl's sisters, as it was simply too raw and sad even forty years after his death. The impact was just too traumatic. In 2017, my cousin, Laura Theurer from San Antonio, the daughter of Ruth Garrett Chriesman, Earl's youngest sister, told me that her mother had compiled a collection of papers about Earl's life, death and legacy. She had copies made for me and I received them late last year. The information in those documents was exactly what I had been searching for decades to learn, so the information that I will share with you this morning is from that collection. Scant few people are aware of the existence of this trove of information, but it will give you an intimate portrait of Earl in his own words, reflections from family members and the brothers in arms that he served with prior to his last full measure of devotion. The first couple are from his mother.

"We sat talking one day, as we so often did – (my little boy and I), and he asked why different things were so – why there was a failure to do certain things that were helpful to others, and when I was not able to tell him why, he said, 'Someday, mama, I am going to try to make things better, - what he meant exactly I never guessed, but little dreamed that he would one day give his life that righteousness would prevail' "He is not dead, such spirits never die."

"One winter when Earl was about 5 years old, his father – a member of the Legislature at that time – was in Austin. Being anxious to hear from him, of course, as often as possible, I would frequently call to the older boys as they were going to the post-office, 'Bring me a letter,' or sometimes would say, 'Don't come back without a letter,' (all of them understood that the letter was to be from their father) Earl noticed that they frequently did come back without a letter, he took it very seriously. So one day after he heard the train come in, he slipped off and went to the post-office himself, he asked for 'Our mail,' and when he was told there were no letters he went to the back of the office, out of the way, and sat down. The Postmaster came in and saw him still there and told him to 'run along home, no letters today'; he said (the precious little fellow) 'I'll just wait until there are some.' He said it so earnestly and positively that the Postmaster thought for a moment what to do, then called to him, 'Here, I have found some letters, not go on home and take them to your mother.' He came in so pleased with the bundle of mail, though the letter looked for was not there. Yet it gave pleasure and satisfaction.

This little incident is so characteristic of him – always a desire to please his mother and father and a determination to do what he believed was right, and this trait developed to a great degree.”

The next one is from Earl, himself, an autobiography. It must have been written when he was a teenager or maybe early college.

“I was born April 7, 1894, at Kerrville, Texas. My father graduated in the Law department of the University of Alabama and moved to Kerrville about thirty years ago. My mother spent her early life at Tehuacana, which was the educational center of Texas many years ago. I have but little recollection of my life before my school days. The little that I do remember is typical of a child’s life and is, therefore of little significance. The first few years of my school life were successful. I studied a good deal, as the subjects were interesting. It cannot be said, however that I worked for the result achieved, for it is typical of my nature that, when any subject ceased to be interesting, I straightway reduced the time spent on those subjects. About four successive years of my school life were unfailingly bad in one or more subjects. I finally managed, however, in some manner to reach the graduating class without failing. The Superintendent and Principal of the school resigned in the school year to accept another position. A man from Alabama was secured to take his place. The new Superintendent turned out to be an old friend of my father. About a month before the end of the scholastic year the Superintendent called me into his office. He told me that my grades were below the passing mark and that he could not give me a diploma, as he wanted to keep up the standard of the school. I saw neither pleasure nor profit in telling him that the school had no standard, that heretofore graduating had always been more a matter of perseverance than scholarship. It was a custom strengthened by many years, and looking back at one of the most important events in my life, I wonder at the strange moods of Destiny, which brought to the town of my birth a man who was so imbued with ideals that he would apply a standard which would fail the son of an old time friend. Misery loves company; consequently, as several others in my class suffered the result of the actions of a conscientious Superintendent my lot was less miserable than would otherwise have been the case. The next year I again entered school and this time graduated with little trouble. The next year I commenced a higher course, which had just been offered in the school. I was fairly successful in this course but dropped it to accept a position in the County and District Clerk’s Office. My work was varied, as there was no one but the Clerk and me in the office. I worked about eighteen months in the capacity of Deputy Clerk. The experience that I gained should prove very helpful in the study of law, which someday I hope to pursue. In July 1912, I resigned as Deputy Clerk to fill a newly created position in the Post Office. About the last of August, I decided to enter the University of Texas. It is impossible for me to determine the result of my first

term's work in the University. I will feel, however, that I have achieved a triumph worthy of note if I pass in all of my courses, especially in view of the fact that the History Department seems to think it is a reflection on its ability for a freshman to pass a history course. I have always been very fond of reading. This fondness would in most cases finally result in the acquisition of a varied knowledge and would tend toward the building of a cultivated mind, but my reading has not been confined to books of a worthy nature and I have always read solely for pleasure. Therefore, I cannot hope to reap the richest benefits of reading until I learn to read in the right channels and to combine thinking with reading. My life has been singularly free from any happenings of an unusual nature. The only reason I can assign for this is that dreaming is more of a fundamental element of my nature than action. It is not dreaming of a constructive type that crystallizes into some material form, but it is dreaming of a type that is productive of nothing more permanent than a fanciful hope that has its dwelling in my nature. My ambitions have never soared to an unreasonable height. To be successful in my chosen profession is the substance of my dearest wish. Not the least of the obstacles which have to be overcome in order that I may realize my ambition is the absolving of fine academic courses, which is necessary for entrance in the law department. I am deeply conscious of the fact that there is nothing in my life to justify an autobiography. But since, for obvious reasons, one must be written, it is entirely fitting that events which are of no significance should be omitted and that a proportionately large amount of space should be devoted to habit, temperament and ambition, which are so powerful in shaping the lives of men."

This next offering from Earl is so clever. I have enjoyed reading and re-reading this. It's titled "Should Professors Give 'Pop' Quizzes?"

"My opinion as to 'pop quizzes' has been formed in the last few months. In that brief space, however, I have conceived a very strong antipathy to 'pop quizzes'. It is my most sincere belief that they are derogatory to the welfare of the student. In the first place, I do not see how anyone could condone an institution which has such an unfortunate effect on the outward appearance of a student. Full many a time have I seen students go to a class smiling gladly with the joy of living and an hour later come out of class with long faces and looking as though their best friend had died. 'Pop quizzes' are productive, not of cheerfulness and gladness, but of hopelessness and despair. In the second place, a surprisingly large number of 'F's' are due to 'pop quizzes'. Students do not study in a haphazard fashion, but to their credit may it be said that they study systematically, never uselessly, and for the aggrandizement of their grades. To study for announced quizzes for 'exams' would seem to indicate that 'seriousness of purpose', which seems to be so dear to the hearts of the men who wrote the University Bulletin and should be so prolific of high grades. That such is not the case is entirely due to 'pop quizzes', which seem to presuppose a prior knowledge on the part of the student of the subject under

examination. In the third place, 'pop quizzes' are productive of rambling and vilification. Rare if the student who will admit that he does not know anything on a given subject. He would theorize, extemporize, and philosophize on the realities of life when he was asked to find the value of 'X'. But worse than this, students when asked to criticize the writing of some poet, for instance, Shakespeare, on finding himself absolutely innocent of any knowledge of the great poet, and consequently being in an unhappy state of mind, would attack the style, and at times even the character of the poet. The 'pop quiz' is an anachronism. It savors of another day when the relations between the teacher and pupil were not so harmonious, and the 'pop quiz' was by far the most potent means of embarrassing the pupil. The torture chamber of the middle ages secured certain ends most effectively, yet it has been abolished. The reason is obvious, yet today the life institution of 'pop quizzes' is a flourishing condition."

FRANCELLE: There's no telling what his IQ was.

BOB: We're going to skip ahead now. Earl was one of the selected troops to go to France. Earl had 3 other brothers, all of whom served in World War I, but he was the only one to go overseas. There's a lot of correspondence between he and his parents and brothers and sisters but the one I'm going to share with you was written exactly 1 month before his death, the last letter that he sent to his mom.

"September 4, 1918

My Dearest Mother,

It will probably be only a note, but I wanted to write you tonight. It may be some time before I can write you again and I do not want to neglect this opportunity. Mother, it is a long cry from here to home, but never so close as tonight. And never have I been so conscious of what you have done for me or felt so unworthy of your efforts. I could not write a sad letter even if I wanted to; my temperamental make-up would not let me. But I do want you to know before anything might happen that I at least appreciate my mother and my father. I am habitually optimistic – of the miraculous type, less a considerable portion of confidence in my ability. But the great possibility cannot be ignored. With love to all. Your son, Earl."

FRANCELLE: He may have had a premonition.

BOB: This is a newspaper clipping; I don't know if it was from The Mountain Sun. It doesn't have a masthead, so I don't know but it announces Earl's death.

"Victor Earl Garrett Gives Life for Liberty

Another star of blue has turned to gold, another hero been added to Kerrville's lengthening Roll of Honor. The entire community was shocked when word came Sunday evening that Lieut. Victor Earl Garrett had been killed in action in France

on Oct. 4. Earl was the youngest of Judge and Mrs. W.G. Garrett's four sons, all in the service of their country, and was twenty-four years during the trouble with Mexico. At the end of a year they were mustered out and Earl returned to his home but had been here only a short time when war was declared with Germany. He enlisted at once in the first officer' training camp at Leon Springs and received his commission there as Second Lieutenant in September and was one of the ninety men out of three thousand selected for intensive training in France. He had been in France fifteen months when he was killed in action. He was promoted to First Lieutenant in August of this year and was in the 28th Inf. Machine Gun Co. of the First Division of Regulars, which took part in more hard fighting than any other of the American forced, being veteran troops. Among the engagements he took part in were the battles of Chateau-Thierry, the St. Mehiel salient and in the forest of Argonne, where he was killed. Earl Garrett was universally beloved, and his character was an unusual and beautiful one. There was nothing in his life that those who loved him could have wished different. The hearts of all the community go out to his dear ones in their great bereavement. It is especially true of Earl that: 'None knew him but to love him. None named him but to praise.'"

FRANCELLE: Were there any comments about how his mother took the news?

BOB: I have some things here that I could probably share with you. This is an extract of a letter from Dede, one of Earl's brothers, that he sent to his wife and then to his mother.

"You cannot realize how the news of Earl's death affected me – I just couldn't make myself believe that it was true. I was always so proud of Earl and it doesn't seem possible that I will never see him again. Earl was always so noble and his noblest trait – I consider – was always to conform to mamma's wishes. He was easily the pet and pride of the family and I know that the whole town was proud of him. I write to mamma the other night and it might seem an awkward letter, yet I would just do anything in the world to help her and papa in their deep grief. It just happened that Bill was passing through here on Special Duty and he got the news that same time as I. I went to Little Rock that evening and had supper with him. He came out today, but I happened to be out and didn't see him. He left tonight at 8:30 p.m. for Houston."

"Dear Mama, You cannot realize what a shock to me of the news of Earl's death and mamma I can only think of yours and papa's deep grief and wish that I could be a home in order to do anything in the world I could for you. I was so proud of Earl and told all the boys here about him every chance I got. Mamma, I would like to write you more, but you know that you and papa have my deepest sympathy."

FRANCELLE: What a close family they were.

BOB: This is from Mrs. Garrett to her eldest daughter, my grandmother, Aimee. At this time my grandparents were living in Mexico where my grandfather was with the American Smelting and Refining Company. So, they were away.

“Thursday, November 28, 1918

My dearest Aimee:

You have received the sad message that we sent you by cable doubtless before this. It grieved us to send it to you as you were so far away, but we knew that you would want to know it at once. So, we sent it as early as possible. The operator here had to find out from San Antonio about the rates, etc. there is no need to tell you Aim that we are all simply broken-hearted at the loss of our darling boy. He was so lovable, yet so manly. We think there is none other like him Aim, and you loved him too as the rest of us did. It is so hard to understand why he was taken – so young, and so promising, he would have made such a useful man, but we should simply trustfully say ‘Even so Father for it seemeth good in thy sight.’ Aimee, we missed you, being away from us in the sad trying time; the first great sorrow we ever had. I have had so many trials, and sometimes they seemed greater than I could bear but to the children of God He has promised to sustain, ‘As thy days may demand shall they strength ever be.’ And I have never been utterly cast down. And you Aimee will find comfort from the same source. No love can be greater as a mother’s love, yet papa is prostrated with grief. He says he feels as if he could never take any more interest in life that is as far as his work is concerned. He talks of you all, all the time, and when the cable was sent you he came near adding for you all to come if possible, but he decided best not. We have so much to be thankful for, though everything seemed so dark and gloomy yesterday morning on Thanksgiving Day, but such kind friends as have been our lot to have, have done everything that is possible for them to do, to lighten our grief. All day long people are coming in to see us, some with wonderful flowers, some with something to tempt our appetites. And yesterday Myrta came and brought our dinner and she ate with us. Aimee had gone hunting, and she would have been alone. She brought her cook along and she put everything on the table and waited on us. We couldn’t have cooked anything but since it was brought and served we enjoyed it as much as possible ‘with our sky so gray’. It certainly did help to pass the time. She brought a turkey, several other dishes and a dessert. It was certainly sweet of her wasn’t it? Myrta can do the kindest things for one that she loves, no one else could think of the things that she does, then at other times she may seem to forget, but always ready when emergencies arise. She will do far more than you expect of her. I just received a letter tonight from Willie in answer to the telegram about our darling, he will be over here about the third of December. I am so glad that he is coming even if it is only a little while. I have wanted to see him so much all along and since the news came from the Western front, I felt that I must see him. I will mail the letter you enclosed to Hal. It was such a nice letter Aimee. I am glad you wrote it. God bless you my dear sweet Aimee and lots of love to you, Rob and the children from, Your affectionate mamma. Papa, Jesmyr, Hattie and Ruth are writing.

P.S. My Aimee: I neglected to mention in my letter that it was one month and twenty days after our boy fell, before the cable came reporting his death, and that is all we know so far. We are hoping that other news will come, telling us of his last hours. We may have told you Aimee that he was in the 1st Division, which saw more hard fighting than any other and he led a Machine Gun Co., the most dangerous of all places because the enemy directed their attack on the machine guns till sometimes every man fell. To think of our baby boy holding this most dangerous place, so willingly and so uncomplainingly. Let's try Aimee to look at it as we should and rejoice that we had such a noble boy to give for such a noble cause for it was righteousness against unrighteousness. It was liberty or bondage. Aimee my heart has been so full of our own boy that I haven't told you the Earl Oakley died of pneumonia in Douglass, Arizona. He was in the Quartermaster Dept. You don't know how gratifying it is to us that we can see Willie even for a day and to have Dede with us for good. Jesmyr has been a little angel in our home. She has been so helpful I don't know how we could have done without her. And it was so fortunate too that your sister Hattie could be with us a week. She has been such a comfort. Kiss my dear little boys and girl for me. When you return we will remember you for Christmas. May the New Year bring new joys. Mamma"

FRANCELLE: What a strong woman. Strong in her Christian faith too.

BOB: This is an extract of a letter from Bill, they called Willie.

"Mamma, I think that the many nice things that have been written and said about Earl are wonderful, and he deserved them all, and more. While any of us would have gladly taken his place if it had been possible, maybe it is best that it was not. I know that none of us with the exception of you were as ready to go as he, and maybe if we will all let his splendid life and death be a model and inspiration for our lives it will be worth all it cost. If he had lived to old age he could have left no sweeter or no more enduring memories."

This is a letter from my great aunt, Harriet Garrett to my grandmother, Aimee. They were sisters, the 2 eldest of the Garrett children.

"Friday night, November 29, 1918

My darling girl,

It seems so hard to write you that our precious boy is gone – I have no heart for anything. I know how sad and lonely you must feel – way off in South America when you would so love to be with us. We could all comfort each other. Papa longs for you and the children so much and so often – we all do, but papa says so often what a comfort you and the children would be. I feel so sorry for poor old daddy. A man seems so helpless in his grief. He just worshipped Earl as you know, and he

breaks down so often and cries – today we have all been calmer. Yesterday, Thanksgiving Day, was so hard – and poor mamma – how her heart must bleed at the loss of her precious baby boy. Earl was such a lovely character – so find, manly, and so lovable. There was so much of the maternal in my feelings for Earl. I simply adored him. He spent so many hours with me in my room and they are all such happy golden memories. It was such pure joy to be with him. It seems to be that since he left us for Hoboken, fifteen months ago, that I have carried him right with me in my heart. I have prayed for his safety night and day and yearned and longed for his home coming. Oh, Aim darling, I know how heart-broken you much be, I know how you loved him, too. I remember how sweet you always were to help mamma with the boy's clothes, etc. and Aim – I think we have all had a special place for our dear little Earl. The whole family were so proud of him. It is awfully hard to give him up. Papa says he feels sure that we shall all be better for earl's having lived. I don't think that papa can ever get over Earl's death. His ambitions were so wrapped in Earl's future. His splendid library was to be a gift to Earl (his law books), and he hoped to see Earl realize the things he had missed. I never saw anything sweeter than the spirit in which papa has borne his great grief. He says he will meet Earl someday. Isn't that wonderful for him to talk like that? Dr. Dickey came to see us as soon as he heard about our trouble and we were so glad to have him papa and mamma had been longing for him. He read the scripture, gave a beautiful talk and prayed such a fine prayer. The depths of mamma's suffering we cannot know. She has been so brave for papa's sake. I know she is simply crushed. And now darling girl I must write to dear old Harry. How I long for you – I could write pages to you but will not write more this time. Love, love, love for you, dear old Rob, and the darling kiddies from Your adoring and heart-broken, Hat.”

FRANCELLE: I wonder if that was an extra-long time for them to find out, after a month.

BOB: Hattie offered several books of poetry and one of them authorized a member of the commission to have put on the University Press of North Texas. But so many of Hattie's poems were about Earl's death. She was quite a published poet and at one time was in line to become Poet Laureate of the State of Texas. That never happened but she was published and really enjoyed her poetry.

FRANCELLE: Everybody in that family were wonderful writers and it is wonderful that it was all kept. That speaks volumes for the family.

BOB: This is a letter written in early December of 1918 and it's from my grandmother (Aimee) to her parents.

“Caldera, Chile, So. America, 12-2-18
My dearest Mother and Father:

Just the next day after I had written home last week (the 27th) the sad cablegram arrived. When Rob told me, I felt that I couldn't stand it – although he was as considerate of my feeling as could be and told me before he broke the news that he was going to have to tell me something very sad. I said, 'oh, it isn't about Earl, is it?' I thought of Earl immediately because I had been so worried about him anyway as I knew he was right in the midst of the fighting, and I've been dreading to open my letters from home lately, for fear something might have happened to the dear boy. I can't tell you how grieved I was and am. I can't seem to realize that he is dead. He was such a dear sweet boy, and I loved him so much. All of my past associations with him loom up before me very vividly, at all times, and I can only recall pleasant memories. With his strong love of home and family, his craving for knowledge, his highly intellectual and moral tendencies – his life was certainly well-spent. When one is terribly grieved and depressed over such a sad happening as this, it is very hard to become resigned and reconciled; but I am trying oh so hard to be philosophical. Earl was a Christian soldier, in every sense of the word. He belonged to that band of noble Christian martyrs who unselfishly sacrificed their promising young lives for their country and the saving of the souls of future generation. After all, what nobler mission in life could anyone perform than this? It is following in His steps. So, although our grief is almost more than we can bear, still we must try to be brave. It is so much to be thankful for that he was so good, and that his influence upon others was always for the best. Rob was so sympathetic and sweet with me and thoughtful in every way. Now, my dear ones, goodbye for this time. My thoughts fly home constantly and I know how much you both have suffered. I wish I could be there with you, to try and lighten things a little bit; but it won't be so long now before we will be on our way home. Let's try and bear our grief bravely, knowing that all is well with our dear soldier boy; for his soul is with God. God bless all of you. Much love to every one of you, from all, and write soon tom. Yours devotedly, Aimee.”

This is a letter to Judge and Mrs. Garrett from an R.H. Burney and that Burney name is very prominent in Kerr County history so apparently he was a close family friend. It doesn't say where Mr. Burney was when this letter was written but the letter itself is so eloquent that I decided to include it in this collection.

“Judge and Mrs. W.G. Garrett
Kerrville, Texas

Dear Friends,

I learned with much regret that your son, Victor Earl, was killed while fighting on the battle fields of France.

‘Again, a prince has fallen in the fight –
A valorous champion of the truth and right;
Determined, courteous, level-headed and just,

Who never broke a promise, nor betrayer a trust;
His genial face with courtly kindness beamed,
By friends loved, by all who knew him esteemed.'

By his manly character, sincere and kindly ways, Earl had endeared himself to all who knew him, and I have not known a young man whom I held in higher esteem and whose friendship was more appreciated. I am sure that his presence and life was a great comfort and inspiration to you, and that in his death your loss is irreparable, still there must be great consolation to you in the fact, that he died fighting for a just and righteous cause, that he never shirked his duty, and scorned a slacker. In all the annals of time, no richer libation was ever offered to God or man, that the blood poured out on the hills and valleys of France by Earl Garrett and his compeers, the flower of American manhood. I feel impressed with the conviction, that by his ready response to his country's call, by his spotless character, by his splendid record and last, by his death he has bequeathed to you a glorious heritage, one that is high above earthly values and imperishable. When the roll of America's honored dead is finally made up, the name of Victor Earl Garrett, all down the years to come, will add as much luster and shine with as much splendor as any name that will grace that immortal scroll. Sincerely your friend, R.H. Burney."

FRANCELLE: That is eloquent.

BOB: Isn't that beautiful? This next one is the eulogy that was delivered at First Presbyterian Church by Rev. William P. Dickey.

"Earl Garrett was dedicated to God in baptism in the Presbyterian church of Kerrville on October the seventh, 1894 by the Rev. James P. Lyle. He was received into full membership upon a very clear and positive confession of his faith on May fourth, 1913 by Rev. W. O. Dickey, pastor. He died in the battle of the Argonne leading his men against a German machine gun nest on October fourth, 1918. This bare statement in itself means little, but it records the significant periods in a rarely fine life. It is given to some to impress others by some striking gift or to fail through some great weakness or misfortune but rarely does one make a profound impression simply by what he is; that, I think, was the supreme distinction of Earl Garrett. Quiet, gentle and unassuming as a child, a youth and as a man, yet he was in all crowned with the spontaneous love and respect of all who knew him. In his Christian life he was modest and unpretentious, yet so sincere and constant as to command the admiring comment of fellow students and soldiers. Loving the life of a student and a dreamer, the call of duty and loyalty to the highest ideals of a citizen and Christian proved him a man of the clearest convictions and of a courage which did not falter at any danger or hardship nor hesitate to give life itself that truth might live. To have known him, to have loved him, to have witnessed his short but splendid life is to have received a new understanding of the meaning and

possibilities of Christian manhood. His devotion to the noblest ideals of manhood and his instant, unhesitating response to duty and his tragic yet splendid sacrifice is beautifully represented in these lines:

'Better in one ecstatic day
To strike a blow for Glory and for truth
With ardent singing heart to toss away
In Freedom's holy cause my eager youth
That bear, as weary years pass, one by one,
The knowledge of a sacred task undone'.

Like the Master he followed, he saved others, himself he could not save, but, though his body fell in the far Argonne he lives, not only in the heavenly reality, but in the inspiring and ennobling tough of a soul who has made our highest ideals real to us. In loving memory, W.P. Dickey, Pastor, Presbyterian Church.

FRANCELLE: Beautiful.

BOB: These next few are from men that Earl served with who contacted Judge and Mrs. Garrett in the months and even years after the war. Every one of them is special in its own way but I have selected a few that folks would glean something from those that Earl served with. This was written in January of 1919.

"Mrs. Laura B. Garrett, Kerrville, Texas.

Dear Mrs. Garrett;

It is with a feeling of regret and sorrow, I am answering your letter of 7th of December 1918, in reference to your dear son Victor E. Victor E. was killed in action October 4th, 1918, during the Argonne Meuse battle. He was hit by a Machine Gun bullet. I can't express in words how I felt when I heard he was killed. He was a staunch friend of mine and of everybody who knew him. His death was mourned by officers and men alike. He met his death like a true American. For four days previous to his death he suffered from an injury to his foot, but absolutely refused to be evacuated. He kept on with his men greatly encouraging them by his devotion to duty. On the morning of October 4th he led a patrol into the enemy machine gun nests, advancing through intense enemy shell and M.G. fire. It was while he was exterminating one of those M.G. nests he was killed. He was buried where he fell owing to the severity of the fighting which prevented the dead from being removed from the battlefields. His grave is near Exermont in the Meuse valley. Lieut. Gerrigan is not with the company at present. He was severely wounded in the same battle. I expect him back to the company soon. In regard to Victor's personal effects, I am sure they have reached you by this time. I forwarded everything belonging to him to Effects Depot, Base Section 1, and from that place they were shipped to you. Any further information you need, or you think I can give you; I am always ready to let you have. I never will forget your son. He was like a brother to me. I always admired his great courage and above all he was a true

American gentleman. It is a pity that a man like him, having been through every engagement in which this regiment participated, should have met his death when the end of the war was so near. Nothing would please me more than to have him with me now. The entire company join with me in extending to you and family our deepest sympathy. Yours very sincerely, R.J. Wallace, 1st Lieut. 28th Inf. Com. M.G. Co.”

This next letter is so interesting. It is from Maury Maverick from San Antonio. They were in the service together and of course; Maury went on to be a state legislator as did his son. I found it interesting to run across someone who has ties so closely to Kerrville.

“San Antonio, Texas, January 20, 1919

Dear Mrs. Garrett:

I first knew your son at the University of Texas, where I was a student for three years. He and I knew each other quite well, and we studied for same profession – law. He told me that he always wanted to be a lawyer like his father. I then left college and began the practice of law, but when the great war started, he and I volunteered and were sent to the first training camp and were in the same training company together. For four months we soldiered in the hot sun of Leon Springs, and your son, who was also in my platoon, frequently made things pleasant by his dry wit. I was a lieutenant having been commissioned, and he was a private. Your son was in the ‘Peanut’ squad – we called them peanuts because they were not very big. In that squad was Frank W. Slaton of Dallas, who went to France with your son, who went to the same machine gun school with your son in France, and who was killed in the Battle of Soissons, July 18th, 1918. After the training camp your son was ordered for immediate service overseas, and I was not. I was deeply disappointed and went to Washington in an effort to be sent to France. I was told that if I obtained one who decided to stay in the States, that I would be sent. I telegraphed twice to your son in Kerrville but did not see him again until a few days before the battle of St. Mihiel. During all the time your son was soldering in France, I was soldering in America. After a long wait, I was sent to France, with the 40th Division of Camp Kearney, California, and the Division was made a Depot Division – a supply division, never to go to the front, I asked to be sent to the front, and so I was sent to the 3rd Battalion, 28th Infantry, 1st Division. About September 9th or 10th I was standing near a tree, for it was raining, watching the tanks go by that were going to the front ready for the battle, someone said, ‘Hello Ug’, and I looked around and said, ‘Well, if there isn’t the pride of Kerr County’. We were glad to see each other and talked over old times. We went through the Battle of St. Mihiel together, he of course supporting with his guns. When the Battle was over, we stayed in billets we had captured from the Germans. As a machine gun company was always attached to the 3rd Battalion he was always near me. Just after the battle was over we began to go on forced marches for the 1st Division was made

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a part of the portion that was to fight in the Argonne Forest. I saw your son every day and we marched together at night. He and I never talked of war, but of our dear mothers and fathers and relatives and friends. I would joke with him about Kerrville, but he always said that when the 'old war' was over, he was going back. I remember seeing your son writing a letter under a little tent in a forest near the village of Nubercourt, which is near Clermont and you can find it on the map. He was sitting there on a log or something. This was September 25th or 26th. Again (we left there and marched 10 kilometers behind Verdun) we were in French Billets and we all slept on the floor. I saw your son and several other lieutenants sitting on the floor writing – I do not remember whether he was or not. But I will always remember when we came in there. We had marched all of the night and reached this place at about 8 in the morning. It was rainy and muddy. The Machine Gun Company was ahead of us, and as we went into our billets, your son had stopped with his platoon and was sitting on the side of the road with his men. I was wet, muddy and tired and all that. He looked the same way, but when he saw me, he must have thought I looked worse, for he burst out laughing and said, 'You are sure dragging in the mud.' From there we went to Montfaucon which you will also find on the map. I did not see him there. From there we went to Varennes, arriving there on the night of September 31st. we then marched into the village of Chappy, and through it and stopped. All the officers then left the man, and we went down a hill and found a dugout where we discussed plans for the battle. I remember sitting next to your son in this little cold, cramped German dugout as Capt. Hawkinson told of the plans for the battle. (Capt. Hawkinson was of Syracuse, New York, an only son, with his father dead, and who was killed in the battle with your son (I can find out his mother's name if you want it). We then left and took up our positions on the night of the 30th of September and the early morning of the 1st of October on scouting expeditions in passing your son, I would stop and talk to him he also did that when he passed my positions. On the morning of October 4th, 1918, we were preparing to go over the top. I saw your son sometime that morning, I told my mother one hour before, but I am not certain. But just before the battle started I saw him. At 5:35 we made the assault, I saw Lt. Mershon of your son's company, as the battle started. 'Where is Garrett', I said, 'Oh, he is over there with his guns', he said, and pointed to some point of the battle. In three to five minutes I am certain at least half of our men were killed or wounded. It is surprising that any human being could have lived through that. German machine guns and artillery were concentrated on us from every conceivable angle, and I feel that it must have been more than that your son fell in battle. I was soon rather seriously wounded, and so I was 'out of it'. I was surprised and deeply grieved when I heard your fine son had been killed and did not know of it until my mother telephoned me and told me. I am now certain that there were no unwounded officers left alive in my battalion, and that all the rest are sleeping peacefully under the soil of France. Mrs. Garrett, I trust and hope that you will not always grieve over your brave son, but will be more proud each day, and think of him as a real American. My mother had a fine son to die and

although she loved him dearly, it has not broken her heart, for she knew it was God's will and thinks now of her remaining sons and daughters. I will soon start the practice of law. Sometimes business takes me away from home and if it takes me to Kerrville, I shall certainly visit you. If Judge Garrett visits San Antonio tell him to be certain to see me. With best wishes for your happiness in the future. I remain respectfully, the comrade of your son in the great war. Maury Maverick."

FRANCELLE: Wow.

BOB: About twelve years after the end of the war, a lot of Gold Star Mothers, who were mothers of men killed in the war, sailed for Europe to visit the graves of their sons. That would be 1930 and I think about my great grandmother, who must have been elderly at the time, and what a trip that must have been for her. And how difficult that must have been, and exhausting and I marvel at her bravery and her stamina to make that trip. But it was so important to her to see where Earl was buried. This is a newspaper clipping that is very typical of the trip that those Gold Star Mothers made.

"200 Gold Star Mothers consecrate Graves of Soldier Dead in Prayers and Tears as Sun Shines on Tombs. By Associated Press. Romagne – Sous-Montfaucon, France. May 21 – Spring rains mingled with the tears of American mothers today to freshen the graves of the Yankee boys who fell in the great war. The mothers, more than 200 in their number, reached the goal of their voyage from the United States this forenoon and spent a day that was all too short in the six vast military cemeteries wherein their sons lie buried. With tears and prayers they consecrated the resting places of the heroes they had elected to leave upon the battlefields where they gave their lives. Over nearly all of the cemeteries the sun broke briskly through a leaden sky for that simple, solemn moment when the mothers for the first time knelt beside the bodies of their boys. Here, where sleep 14,000 of American war dead, 108 mothers saw the graves which they had longed to see for 12 dreary years. Another 50 went to Seringes-et-Nesles, near Soissons and a score each went to Thiaccourt, near Nancy and Belleau Wood, a few miles back of the immortal Chateau Thierry. Touching welcomes everywhere greeted the saddened pilgrims. French widows and orphans, too, in thousands were present to show the American mothers how they also had given the supreme gift to the cause of humanity. The American mothers were taken from their hotels in 10 big motor cars. At Verdun, a vast throng went and speakers choked with emotion as they told of the siege that lasted virtually throughout the war, in which men died by thousands. As the mothers gathered at the cemetery entrance, the sun came from behind a cloud and bathed the in its warmth. The raindrops glistened on every grave and cross as the women placed evergreen wreaths entwined with pansies and carnations upon the green robes. The flowers were prepared and ready for their arrival. In a brief hour they tried to say all of the prayers that welled in their hearts. Then the rain

descended again and they hurried back to shelter in the big cars. Through the windows they watched the cemetery as they ate their lunches. Then, again, the rain ceases and they resumed their prayers at the marble crosses. Sixteen gold star mothers made their third pilgrimage to the Mount Walerjen Cemetery, overlooking Paris, and there they stood by the graves of their sons at the same hour the others, in five different localities were making their first pilgrimage.

FRANCELLE: If he had made it through that battle, would he have come home?

BOB: Yes. He was killed 5 weeks before the Armistice. After going through all those battles.

FRANCELLE: Did they ever consider bringing his body back home?

BOB: Of the 3 Kerrville boys that died over there, the only one that came home was Lemos. Earl and Baker are still buried in France. Following the war, Earl was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross posthumously. At that time, that particular award was second only to the Congressional Medal of Honor. This is the citation.

“DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS CITATION (POSTHUMOUS AWARD)
Victor E. Garrett, first lieutenant, while serving as second lieutenant, 28th Infantry, 1st Division, American Expeditionary Forces. For extraordinary heroism in action near Berzy-le-Sec, France, July 19, 1918, and near Exermont, France, October 4, 1918. Lt. Garrett displayed great courage and self-sacrifice during the four days battle south of Soissons, conducting his platoon with calmness and good judgment, especially on July 19, 1918, when he aided in keeping his company together when large shells struck among the men, personally supervising the care of the wounded and getting them to aid stations, with utter disregard of his own safety, while subjected to heavy enemy artillery and machine-gun fire. Lt. Garrett displayed extraordinary heroism during the three days previous to the attack on Exermont, France, by remaining at his post until October 4, 1918, when acting as liaison officer he with five men were suddenly confronted by 20 Germans, and while leading the attack he made the supreme sacrifice. His dauntless courage and excellent example enabled his men to take the Germans as prisoners.”

This is from the War Department, dated September 1929, eleven years after he was killed.

“My dear Mr. Garrett,

I read with extreme pleasure the citation of the posthumous award of the Distinguished Service Cross as published in General Orders number twelve, War Department, for extraordinary heroism and action of your son near Berzy-le-Sec,

France, July 1918 and near Exermont, France, October 4, 1918. Although suffering from an injury previously received, he remained at his post until finally leading an attack against a superior force, he made the supreme sacrifice. Such an act of gallantry and self-sacrifice on his part is worthy of the great traditions of our arm of the service. To have the deeds of an infantry officer thus recognized is indeed gratifying and I wish to extend to you, his father, my hearty congratulation on this merited, although delayed, distinction. Stephen Fuqua, Major General, Chief of the Infantry.”

That kind of wraps up what I wanted to share with you. It is my hope that you will have gleaned something from this about Earl’s life and about his character that you didn’t know before and that it comes to mean more to you than just a name on a street sign.

FRANCELLE: To Kerr County. And to this wonderful lady to have kept all of that. And it means a lot to you and your children. In the few minutes that we have left, tell us a little more about Garrett Insurance, one hundred years old.

BOB: When Earl’s brothers, L.D. Garrett and W.D. Garrett, Jr. were in the service in World War I, somebody they were stationed with told them that when they got back to Texas they needed to get into the insurance business. It’s going to be the next big industry in our country. Well, before they volunteered for the service, both of them worked at Schreiner’s Department Store. And, of course, Captain Schreiner was proud to let them go serve the country for the noble cause of the great war. But when they came back, Captain Schreiner allowed them to continue working there. Course, they were young, and they went to Captain Schreiner and asked if they could come back and sell insurance at night. And Captain Schreiner told them as long as they gave him 7 to 7 every day, he didn’t care what they did with their spare time. So, that’s what they did. They would work at Schreiner’s Department Store all day, they would go home and have dinner, come back to the store and write insurance. And so, for them, it was always part time. As years went by, they became secretary and treasurer of Charles Schreiner Company and, of course, had great discretionary authority with Scott Schreiner and prior to that, A.C. Schreiner, Jr. My dad was in law school after he graduated from Tivy and from Schreiner and the Depression came and the electric company turned off my grandparent’s electricity. So, my father and my uncle both had to drop out of college and come home to work simply to get the lights back on and put food on the table. My dad had a job with The First State Bank. Well, when Roosevelt declared the Bank Holiday day in 1933, my dad lost his job. So, the 2 uncles asked if he would like to go into the insurance business and my dad said, “I’ll do anything.” So, sure enough, he became the first employee of Garrett Insurance Agency in 1933 and was with them for fifty-three years until his death in 1988. I joined the agency in 1966 after college and my dad and

Bob Schmerbeck

I eventually bought the ownership interest of the Garretts and we formed a partnership and then I have been with the agency for fifty-two years. In 1986, my wife, Shirley, and my son Stephen, came to work at the agency. So, Stephen is now the President of Garrett Insurance Agency, and his son and my grandson, Caleb, joined the agency after he graduated from Schreiner University. So, Caleb is the 5th generation to be associated with the agency. And we are celebrating our one hundredth anniversary this year. It's something that we certainly don't take for granted. We've been very blessed. We've been very fortunate and a little bit lucky.

FRANCELLE: Thank you. We've really enjoyed this. I know you were happy to get this information.

BOB: I am hopeful that you good ladies will enjoy it. And I'm hopeful that other people will too. I'm grateful for everything you do on behalf of the Historical Commission.

FRANCELLE: Thank you. We find it very important to pass history down.

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