

The Stars and Stripes

May 24, 1918

TWO BLACK YANKS SMEAR 24 HUNS; BIG SECRET OUT

Station Porter and Elevator
Boy Win Croix de
Guerre

NEGRO UNIT IN TRENCHES

Great Boast Is That They Don't
Need Any Lampblack for
Patrol Work

READY HELPERS IN BILLETTS

Dark Skinned Foes of "Bush Ger-
mans" Have Won Friends in
Many French Towns

Two strapping American negroes have just been awarded the *Croix de Guerre* with palm for valor in France. One of them a porter from the New York Central station in Albany and the other an elevator boy for a New York apartment house, they have been decorated for the fearful damage they did to a startled raiding party of 24 Germans whom they caught in the act and, all unaided, put to flight.

A couple of dozen unexploded German grenades, a half dozen wirecutters, three abandoned automatics, two stretchers, a round cap with blood-clotted hair glued fast to it, a blood-stained duck-board and bits of grey cloth strewn about are the mementos left behind in the panicky retreat towards Germany which was effected before the American patrols came to the rescue.

In a French hospital behind the lines the two dusky heroes of the sector, neither permanently the worse for the fight, are chuckling gleefully over the great adventure and telling great tales to their admiring circle.

Another Secret Disclosed

Their decoration let one of the darkest cats out of the A.E.F. bag. For some time past, a black American unit has been part and parcel of the French Army, eventually taking over front line trenches

The secret has been so well kept that only a few of the all-wise at G.H.Q. had even a suspicion, and the negroes themselves have been so completely absorbed that a German scout would have to come within ear-shot and be something of a linguist to be able to report that the terrifying *soldats noirs* in that sector were not the long familiar French Colonials from down Morocco way.

Now the secret is out and all the testimony from the French commanders and from the French folk of the village where they have been billeted is in praise of the *soldats noirs de l'Am'rique*.

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NEGRO UNIT IN TRENCHES

Made Good With the People

They stand well with the authorities of the French towns because, under orders, they have done an immense amount of cleaning, opening up old sewers, carting dirt and contributing muscle generally to the long accumulated work of the neighborhood. But they have made good with the people of the towns by the little odds and ends of helpfulness they give in their off-hours.

The women, who were panicky at the news that *les noirs Americains* were coming into that area, will miss them when they go. You often see a great grinning American black ambling up an old French street with some French woman's heavy load transferred to his own head. You see them turn in and help with the gardening in the long twilights. They even lend a hand in the housework.

Their commander, an American officer who has two French units under his command as well, is proud of the record his "chillun" have made in the trenches, which they entered with less preparation on French soil than any other American troops. They spent a month there before their first casualty, and they have yet to lose their first prisoner.

They are of all sorts and sizes and from all walks of life.

They boast the tallest doughboy in France in the person of a sergeant whose height is six feet seven and who is the despair of the Q.M. because anything less than 14 double E shoe gives him the misery in his feet.

They boast all previous occupations from Baptist clergymen, who do a little converting on the side at night, down to Corporal Smith of South Carolina, who was gravely recommended for the job of repairing the headquarters safe.

"He's a burglar, suh!" was the sergeant major's report on his qualifications.

As for the Johnson-Roberts scrap, just now the topic of the day in St. Menehould, the French general in command of that sector made this report to his superior:

"The American report is too modest. As a result of oral information furnished me, it appears that the blacks were extremely brave. This little combat does honor to the Americans."