

John Joseph Brannon, Class of 1916.



MEMPHIANS KILLED TOYING WITH SHELL.

Had Found Unexploded Missile in Field While at Drill

TWO DIED INSTANTLY

Death struck down the Memphis boys killed in France two weeks ago while the young soldiers were enjoying their recreation hour in the afternoon.

An old unexploded shell which they had found in a field near the camp and which they were tossing about brought disaster to them.

Nine Young Men Who Lost Lives In France To Be Remembered Tomorrow

Twenty-four years ago today nine young men at Moyen, France, bored with the war, sought amusement by playing ball. Their "ball" was a dud French 75 shell.

They tossed it back and forth, from one man to another. Then a man missed and the dud hit the ground. It exploded.

Tomorrow at 3 p.m. at the Overton Park Doughboy statue, members of the 42nd (Rainbow) Division and the 166th Ambulance Corps will hold services in honor of those nine men. They were George Sanford, John J. Brannon,

Thomas Bragg, Joe Brakefield, George E. Hovey, Willie Hays, Frank Cockrell and Fred McGill.

Mrs. A. E. Hovey Sr., mother of one of the boys, and Mrs. A. E. Hovey Jr. will place a wreath at the base of the statue. Gold Star Mothers at the ceremony will be presented with flags.

Participating in the ceremony will be Howard M. Carson, master of ceremonies; Judge J. P. M. Hamner, principal speaker; Rev. Mark Fergis, invocation and benediction; Bugler Petroff of Second Army Headquarters, taps.

Details of the accident were acquired by The Commercial Appeal. Sections of the unit had been at drill during the morning of March 7. While in the field one of the boys, though often warned against collecting curios of a dangerous nature picked up an unexploded shell and placed it in one of the conveyances of the organization, in which it was carried back to camp. It lay in the stable, unthought of again until 2 o'clock that afternoon.

The men were in their recreation when one of their number got the shell and began tossing it about. Suddenly a terrific explosion was heard, and the members of the unit rushed up to find their members stricken.

Private Edwin L. Fitch and Private Fred R. McGill were dead. Private Joe D. Brakefield of Collierville died on way to the hospital. Private George Hovey, Private Thomas G. Bragg, and Private Willie Hayes died in the hospital. Corporal George S. Sanford of Crenshaw MS died the following day. Private John J. Brannon was operated on but died on the night of the eighth. Little did the members of the organization think when they left Memphis that they would ever draw on their company fund to bury their comrades. But with money taken from that treasury Captain Perkins bought a lot in the burying ground of the little French village in which the company is billeted.

On the morning of the eighth, services was held for the four Protestants and mass was said for the four Catholics after which the two procession united in the march to the graves, where the southern lads were given the honors of a military burial. The next day the unit followed the body of Private Brannon to the little cemetery.

There they rest, under the lilies of France.

Save for the gloom and sadness at the death of their comrades,
the others are well and content.

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