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GEORGE C. MARSHALL
RESEARCH CENTER

May 21, 1945

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I M M E D I A T E

R E L E A S E

SOLDIER-ARTIST PRESENTS WAR
PAINTING TO GENERAL MARSHALL

A soldier-artist of this war has presented General of the Army George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff, U. S. Army, with an oil painting of one of World War I's great real life scenes, that of a group of American doughboys singing in a little French church during a pause on their way to the final American advance to the heights of Sedan. The incident took place in the village of Vaux, a few kilometers south of Sedan, the day before our troops reached that vicinity.

The artist is Staff Sergeant Wallace E. Brodeur, whose canvasses of Army life have already been exhibited throughout the United States and who is now teaching art to wounded veterans in the Percy Jones Convalescent Hospital at Battle Creek, Michigan.

General Marshall thanked Sergeant Brodeur, praised his work and had the painting hung in his office at the War Department. It was drawn faithfully from a photograph snapped by an Army picture man who happened into the church at Vaux, France, when the troops were there. The photograph is General Marshall's favorite of all the World War I collection. The camera caught in the faces of these American soldiers and in their attitudes the solemn meaning of this moment in their lives.

The day was November 5, 1918, just one week before the Armistice. The men were troops of the 317th and 319th Ambulance Companies, 305th Sanitary Train. They had halted in their march and entered the church for a brief rest before pushing on north toward Sedan. One of their number had seated himself at the organ in front of the altar. He was playing while many of his comrades, standing and flanking him on either side, were singing. Not all were singing. Not all were even standing. Every soldier was serious in mien and the expression on the faces of many was indicative of religious exaltation.

In the painting there are the contrasting colors of the light filtering in through the stained-glass panes, the drab khaki of the soldiers' battle dress, their muddy boots, their worn wrap-around puttees and the steel helmets slung over forearms by the chinstraps. In the foreground several of the men are sitting quietly on piles of yellow straw, wrapped in thought, leaning against the ancient grilled railing before the altar and organ.

Sergeant Brodeur was selected to do the painting of the World War I photograph. A preliminary sketch was approved by General Marshall. Then the soldier-artist searched fruitlessly for proper canvas. Finally he procured a slab of wallboard, applied a special base to it and set about painting.

Sergeant Brodeur is 40 years old. He was born in the town of Waubauskene, Ontario Province, Canada, and his mother still lives at Midland, Ontario. The

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sergeant's wife, Evelyn, and his 11-months-old daughter, Pamela, are living at 4240 West Jackson Boulevard, Chicago. He came to this country in 1926 and was naturalized.

Attending public schools in Canada and art schools in Detroit and Chicago, the sergeant became a commercial artist in Chicago, drawing ads for various advertising firms and large department stores. He describes himself as a "Sunday painter," for it was only on Sunday and over weekends that he had a chance to do the creative work he wanted to do down through the years before the war.

Inducted April 15, 1941, at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, the artist was transferred to Fort Custer, near Battle Creek, and became a member of the 5th Infantry Division. He was later transferred to the station hospital at Fort Custer, which was converted several months ago into a convalescent hospital.

Sergeant Brodeur was one of the founders of the group known as the "Army Illustrators of Fort Custer," whose exhibitions have appeared in 40 cities throughout the country. The group also published a book, "As Soldiers See It," in which a number of the sergeant's works appeared along with those of other soldier-artists.

One of Sergeant Brodeur's best known paintings is the winter scene of an Army chapel, entitled "On The Seventh Day." The picture was widely reproduced, appearing in a national magazine and on Christmas cards.

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