

ARTHUR HADDEN ALEXANDER

FIRST LIEUTENANT, A.S., U.S.A., NINETY-SIXTH AERO SQUADRON
FIRST DAY BOMBARDMENT GROUP



SON of Arthur Bengough and Stella Hadden Alexander; was born in Decatur, Ill., on Oct. 27, 1892; descendant of Henry Lewis, of the Revolutionary Army. In 1910 he graduated from Phillips Exeter Academy, where he played on the football team; and from the Univ. of Wisconsin, B.S. 1914, where he played on the 'Varsity Football team for three years, on the tennis team, and was captain of the hockey team; of Harvard University, Graduate School of Landscape Architecture, M.L.A. 1917.

He enlisted in the Aviation Section of the Signal Corps on June 13, 1917, and entered the 4th class of the Army Aviation Ground School at M.I.T. on that date. After six weeks' ground-work he was selected among ten from that class to be sent to France for flying training, and sailed on Aug. 22, 1917. He entered the French "École d'aviation militaire" at Tours, Oct. 1, where he received his preliminary flying training under the French; then was sent to the American School at Issoudun for advanced training and was commissioned 1st Lieut. Feb. 20. Upon completion of the course at Issoudun, he was returned to Tours in March as an instructor for two months and a half. On June 1, he went to the Bombing School at Clermont-Ferrand (7th Aviation Instruction Centre) and was ordered to the front, July 14, 1918, where he was detailed to the 96th Squadron, the first American Bombing Squadron to be organized, and participated in daylight bombing raids over enemy territory until wounded. On Sept. 4, while returning from a raid, and still 25 miles beyond the lines, his Squadron of 8 planes was attacked by 15 or more enemy planes and badly shot up. All managed to return safely, however, and two German planes were shot down. Lieut. Alexander was severely wounded, a bullet passing through his abdomen, but he succeeded in landing safely on his own field after fainting several times during the descent. He was awarded the D.S.C. by General Pershing with the following citation:

For extraordinary heroism in action on Sept. 4, 1918. While on a bombing expedition with other planes of his squadron, Lieut. Alexander engaged in a running fight over hostile territory with a superior number of enemy battle planes, from Friaucville to Lamorville, France. He was seriously wounded in the abdomen by a machine-gun bullet and his observer was shot through both legs. Although weak from pain and loss of blood, Lieut. Alexander piloted his plane back to his own airdrome and concealed the fact of his injury until after his observer had been cared for.

After partial recovery from his wound he was called back to duty at General Headquarters to represent the Air Service on the Board of Awards, which was composed of a man from every branch of the Service who had been wounded, decorated, and seen a year's service. This board passed on recommendations for the Congressional Medal and D.S.C. Lieut. Alexander was returned to the U.S. in Feb., 1919, and honorably discharged at Garden City, N.Y., Feb. 7, 1919.

Lieut. Alexander has described the raid of Sept. 4, over Germany, in the following extract:

We had just dropped our bombs on the railroad tracks when Boche machines began to appear from every side. The wind was such that we had to stay over there much longer than usual, which gave them a chance to come up at us. At first it was a fairly even scrap, but more and more of them kept coming on until you saw them wherever you looked. Once I looked down, and there was a gang more on the way up. We were in the back of the formation and things got hotter and hotter. They kept closing in and we gave them all we had, but it finally got to be almost impossible to keep them off because they were so many.

They closed in on us as close as 30 to 50 yards at times, and you have no idea what a sensation it is to hold to your formation and hear the Boche machine guns, from four to five planes, cracking at you, and see their tracer bullets flashing by your head and hear and feel them hitting the wings and fuselage. McLennan, my observer, kept after them all the time, tapping me on the shoulder as he wanted me to tip up to give him shots, until he finally collapsed with two bullets in one leg and one in the other. Almost at the same time a bullet went into my side. From then on the only thought I had was to get back. . . . How I got there I don't know, but we finally got back to our own field and a safe landing before I went completely under, once more proving that the power of God is more powerful than that of evil.