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MEDAL OF HONOR ROLL CALL: CHARLES W. WHITTLESEY



Rick Schroder played then-Maj. Charles W. Whittlesey, the commander of WWI's "Lost Battalion." (Courtesy)

By: [Robert J. Laplander](#)

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It is a bittersweet task to present to you a son of Wisconsin, Charles W. Whittlesey, who earned his Medal of Honor in World War I as the commander of the "Lost Battalion," and who is the hero of my book "[Finding the Lost Battalion](#)." Whittlesey was ordered to advance "regardless of flanks and

losses” deep inside the Argonne Forest and when he reached his meet up point, he found no one on his left or right.

After the war, Whittlesey returned to New York City, where for the next three years, he practiced law on Wall Street and was a national celebrity. His 1921 suicide came two weeks after he was an honorary pallbearer for the first Unknown Soldier, an event that triggered an emotional trauma that he could not shake.

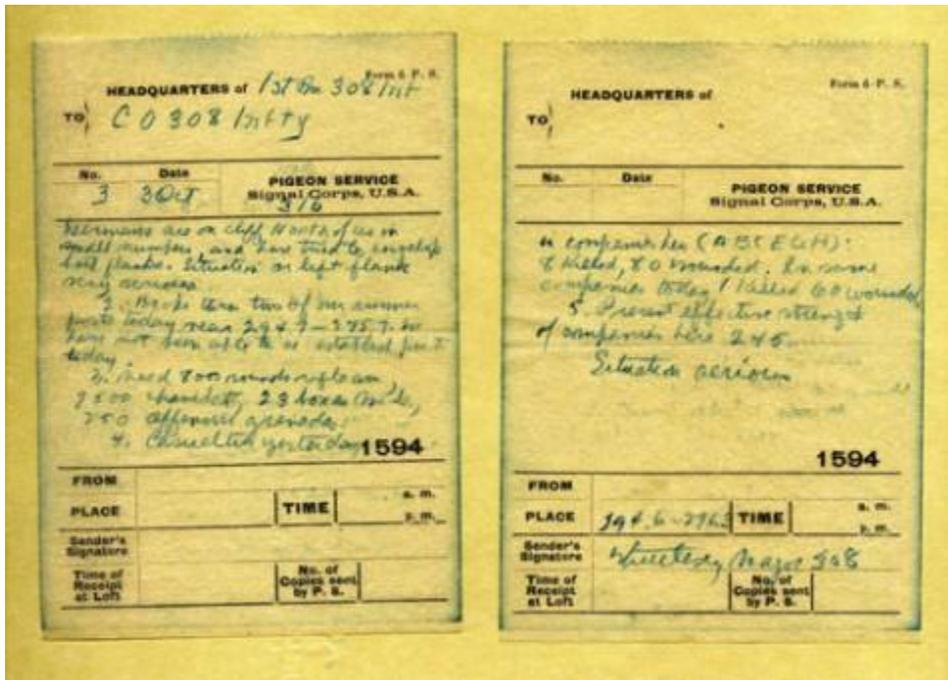


Charles W. Whittlesey

Rank: Major Organization: U.S. Army Company: Division: 308th Infantry, 77th Division Born: Florence, Wis. Departed: Yes Entered Service At: Pittsfield, Mass. G.O. Number: 118 Date of Issue: 12/31/1918 Accredited To: Place / Date: Northeast of Binarville, in the forest of Argonne France, 2-7 October 1918

Citation: Although cut off for 5 days from the remainder of his division, Maj. Whittlesey maintained his position, which he had reached under orders received for an advance, and held his command, consisting originally of 46 officers and men of the 308th Infantry and of Company K of the 307th Infantry, together in the face of superior numbers of the enemy during the 5 days. Maj. Whittlesey and his command were thus cut off, and no rations or other supplies reached him, in spite of determined efforts which were made by his division.

On the 4th day Maj. Whittlesey received from the enemy a written proposition to surrender, which he treated with contempt, although he was at the time out of rations and had suffered a loss of about 50 percent in killed and wounded of his command and was surrounded by the enemy.



Messages sent by Whittlesey by pigeon to his American headquarters as he was surrounded by Germans behind the German lines.