



THIS MONTH in MILITARY HISTORY

The Great Flood of 2019

- 1804 ∞ The Lewis & Clarke expedition departs St. Charles, Missouri.
- 1846 ∞ The Battle of Palo Alto concludes with an American victory.
- 1917 ∞ Eugene J. Bullard becomes the first combat aviator.
- 1945 ∞ A Japanese balloon bomb strikes Oregon, killing seven.
- 1951 ∞ The Chinese Spring Offensive in Korea fails to break the Eighth U.S. Army.
- 1960 - Gary Powers' U-2 spy plane is shot down by Soviet air defenses.
- 1980 ∞ The first female cadets graduate from military academies across the U.S.
- 1987 ∞ Iraqi aircraft strike the frigate U.S.S. *Stark*, killing 37 Americans.
- 2003 ∞ Aziz Salih Nuhman, one of Saddam's "dirty dozen", is captured in Baghdad.
- 2011 ∞ Osama bin Laden is tracked down in Pakistan and subsequently killed.

TRIVIA

- 1 You can still visit Cher Ami to this day. What museum is he displayed in?
- 2 During what major WWI battle did the "Lost Battalion" earn its name?
- 3 Speaking of Jeeps what was the average life expectancy of a Jeep in WWII?

ANSWERS FOR APRIL 2022 QUESTIONS

- 1 What was the record for the number of miles driven without incident during the red Ball Express?
➤ **Over 20,000 accident free miles.**
- 2 What was the approximate amount of supplies needed per day for U.S. Field Armies during the Red Ball operations?
➤ **From 5,000 to 6,000 tons per day.**
- 3 What were the origins of the "Red Ball Express" name?
➤ **From railroad slang for "express freight."**

Springtime brings about certain memories for individuals on the Mississippi River. For most it is a time to get out and enjoy the sun after a gloomy and cold winter. However, for businesses and citizens who live near the river, it is a time of concern and worry over what's left of winter: snowmelt up north. Historic floods on the Mississippi are a dime a dozen from its northern-most gauge to the mouth of the Gulf of Mexico.

In the Quad Cities that straddles the river on both sides in Iowa and Illinois where the river runs east and west, a particularly heavy snowpack to the north was the main focus of concern in 2019. Locations such as Minneapolis saw over six feet of snow. Many areas in northern Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin saw snowfall continue well into April as well. Farther south in eastern Iowa, western Illinois, and northeast Missouri, heavy rainfall pounded the region at the same time. This combined with the all too typical seasonal mood swings of nature made a particularly dangerous situation starting from the end of March.¹

At the river gauge at Rock Island's Locks and Dam 15, this was measured by consistent flooding for over two months. In fact, the Corps of Engineers reported a total of three separate crests between 8 APR and 1 JUN. All three of these crests ranked in the top ten all time crests for the river at that location.

The first crest occurred on 8 APR and measured at 20.68 feet followed by a brief receding of the river. The rapid increase was caused by a few heavy rain events and additional snowmelt to the north which occurred rapidly over a couple of weeks. By 30 APR, the river had inched its way to the second highest level ever seen, just shy of the 1993 record of 22.63 feet. That same day, HESCO barriers placed in Davenport suffered a structural failure. At 1554, the National Weather Service and city officials issued an emergency evacuation of the downtown area of Davenport. Six minutes later the barrier burst, flooding two streets worth of businesses and shutting down access to Arsenal Island via the Government Bridge.²

Just days later on 2 MAY, an amended forecast for the river was made which forecast record breaking river levels. The river had reached 22.7 feet early in the morning on Wednesday, and had fallen slightly back to 22.6 feet by 0600.³ This trend continued until the river rose again cresting at 21.68 feet on 1 JUN. A dry spell gripped the area shortly after, allowing the river to finally fall below flood stage in late June.

The impacts on Rock Island Arsenal had largely been mitigated by utilizing the flood prevention plan drafted after the flood of 1993, which had in turn used planning from a flood in 1965. Water had made its way onto the island in a few locations, but caused no major damage. In the neighboring city of Davenport, however, water had destroyed numerous businesses and caused millions of dollars worth of material loss. So great was the destruction, that some buildings were still vacant as of three years later, largely due to the extent of damage coupled with impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic.



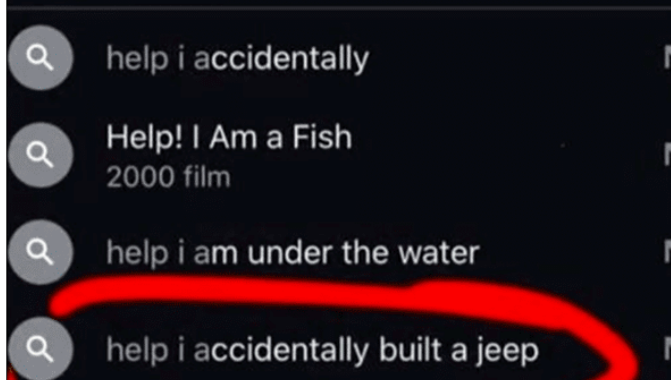
"Cher Ami" - The Bird of Battle

"Cher Ami" was a registered Black Check Cock carrier pigeon, one of 600 birds owned and flown by the U.S. Army Signal Corps in France during World War I.

He delivered 12 important messages within the American sector at Verdun, France. On his last mission, "Cher Ami," shot through the breast by enemy fire, managed to return to his loft. A message capsule was found dangling from the ligaments of one of his legs that also had been shattered by enemy fire. The message he carried was from Major Whittlesey's "Lost Battalion" of the 77th Infantry Division that had been isolated from other American forces. Just a few hours after the message was received, 194 survivors of the battalion were safe behind American lines.



"Cher Ami" was awarded the French "Croix de Guerre" with Palm for his heroic service between the forts of Verdun. He died in 1919 as a result of his battle wounds. "Cher Ami" was later inducted into the Racing Pigeon Hall of Fame in 1931 and received a gold medal from the Organized Bodies of American Racing Pigeon Fanciers in recognition of his extraordinary service during World War I.



Military historians tend to have many hobbies, but some of those hobbies result in strange interests. Aside from the frequent barrage of historical facts that we tend to share at inopportune moments, some of us also build scale models or replica military vehicles. At times the scale is a bit larger than normal... Sometimes 1/1 scale. Evidently according to Google this is not unusual and construction of these models can be accidental.

Trivia answers, digital newsletters, and more history is available on the ASC History website:
<https://aschq.army.mil/About-Us/History>

1. Climate Prediction Center. "2018-2019 Water Season: Snowfall."
2. National Weather Service. "Flash Flood Emergency, FFW.005." NWS Bulletin. Davenport, Iowa. 30 APR 2019.
3. National Weather Service. "Flood Warning, FLW.064." NWS Bulletin. Davenport, Iowa. 3 MAY 2019.

History is being made every day at this command.

Presented to you by your friendly ASC History Office. Feel free to call or stop by our office for any of your history needs.

Kevin Braafladt
Mark Struve

Command Historian
Assistant Historian

kevin.d.braafladt.civ@mail.mil
mark.j.struve.civ@mail.mil

