

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Reilly, Garrish, and Campos nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ACSC CONGRESS WEEK

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I would call my colleagues' attention to the recent 229th anniversary of the first quorum of the U.S. Congress.

The House of Representatives achieved a quorum on April 1, 1789. Five days later, on April 6, the Senate marked that milestone.

Each year, the Association of Centers for the Study of Congress, ACSC, commemorates this anniversary by observing Congress Week during the first week of April. Commemorative events around the country encourage students to explore the work of the U.S. Congress and its constitutional role in our government and promote advanced scholarly research.

The ACSC was founded in 2003. It includes more than 40 organizations and institutions that help to preserve and make available the archival records of Members of Congress.

Each year, the annual meeting of the ACSC brings together Members of Congress who create the records, archivists who preserve the records, teachers who incorporate them into their lesson plans, and scholars who study them in order to advance our understanding of congressional history and the evolution of the political process. This year's annual meeting will be hosted by the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics at the University of Kansas.

Thanks to the work of the ACSC and its member organizations, we have substantially improved the number and research value of congressional collections being preserved nationwide, producing an educational resource for legislative branch studies that rivals the presidential library system.

I am happy to report that the McConnell Center at the University of Louisville is one such member organization. Created in 1991, the McConnell Center nurtures "Kentucky's next generation of great leaders" with programs focused on service, leadership, and civic education. Last spring, at the annual meeting of the ACSC, I had the pleasure of participating in a fireside chat with the McConnell Center archivist,

Deborah Skaggs Speth. We discussed the importance of Members preserving their records, which shed important light on what we do on behalf of the American people, and how we do it.

In 2008, Congress unanimously passed H.Con.Res. 307. It recommended that Members' records be properly maintained, that each Member take all necessary measures to manage and preserve their records, that they arrange for the deposit or donation of their records with a research institution that is properly equipped to care for them, and that they make them available for educational purposes at an appropriate time.

Organizations like the McConnell Center and the Dole Institute, in collaboration with the ACSC, are diligently working to ensure the preservation of records for generations of students and scholars.

I encourage my colleagues to preserve the records of their service in a research institution, where they can contribute to this vital, necessary, and growing component of our Nation's documentary heritage.

REMEMBERING SERGEANT WILLIE SANDLIN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to remember a man called Kentucky's greatest hero, who served our Nation in the First World War and later received our highest military recognition, the Medal of Honor. SGT Willie Sandlin, a native of Leslie County, KY, single-handedly attacked and disabled three German machinegun nests during the Battle of the Argonne Forest in 1918. With only a rifle, an automatic pistol, and four hand grenades, Sergeant Sandlin's heroism resulted in the death of 24 German soldiers and the capture of 200 more.

At that time, Sergeant Sandlin was under the command of General John J. "Blackjack" Pershing, the commander of the American Expeditionary Force, who personally recommended him for the Medal of Honor and presented the award to him in February of 1919.

In a recent edition of the Kentucky Humanities Magazine, Dr. James M. Gifford, the CEO and senior editor of the Jesse Stuart Foundation, published a profile on the life of Sergeant Sandlin. Dr. Gifford traced his journey, from his birth in Appalachian poverty, through his remarkable service in the Great War, to his campaign to improve literacy rates in Kentucky. Named for the renowned author and Kentucky Poet Laureate, the Jesse Stuart Foundation publishes important works from Appalachian authors to help the region's unique heritage flourish. I would like to thank Dr. Gifford for his study of this proud son of Kentucky.

I ask unanimous consent that a copy of Dr. Gifford's article on Sergeant Sandlin's life be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Kentucky Humanities Magazine, Fall 2017]

SERGEANT SANDLIN: MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT

(By James M. Gifford)

In 1917, after several years of provocation, America declared war on Germany. By November of the following year, the United States had sent two million men overseas.

In the bloody fighting that took place in the Meuse-Argonne Forest in the fall of 1918, thousands of Americans distinguished themselves, including two young men from central Appalachia who received the Medal of Honor. On September 26, 1918, Sergeant Willie Sandlin, acting alone, attacked and disabled three German machine gun nests. During his heroic assaults, Sandlin killed 24 German soldiers and assisted in the capture of 200 more. Less than two weeks later, Corporal Alvin York led an attack on a German machine gun nest, taking 35 machine guns, killing at least 25 enemy soldiers, and capturing 132. Sandlin was from Hyden in Leslie County, Kentucky, and York was from Pall Mall, Tennessee, a community just across the Kentucky line. Although York and Sandlin shared the same military distinctions and emerged from similar Appalachian communities, their lives after World War I were remarkably different. York acquired money and fame and became a national icon and an international celebrity. Sandlin lived in modest circumstances, ill-health, and purposeful obscurity until he died of war-inflicted gas poisoning at age 59.

If war is a rich man's war and a poor man's fight, then Willie Sandlin represented millions of poor men who became soldiers during World War I. Born into Appalachian poverty, on January 1, 1890 on Long's Creek in Breathitt County, Kentucky, Sandlin's parents were John "Dirty Face" Sandlin (born March 17, 1867) and Lucinda Abner Sandlin (born December 1870). John and Lucinda had five sons: Willie, Charlie, John, Elihue (Sonny), and Mathew (Mathy). When Willie was a boy, his father was imprisoned for murder, and Willie's mother and father divorced in 1900. Lucinda, who was half Native American, died in childbirth in 1900, so Willie and his motherless siblings were divided among relatives, as was the custom of the day. Willie and his brothers Charles and John were raised by his father's relatives in Leslie County.

Sandlin enlisted in the Army on April 16, 1913, and served under John J. Pershing on the Mexican border. He re-enlisted in 1917 and was soon on his way to Europe as part of the American Expeditionary Force. Sandlin arrived on France's bloody Western Front in time to take part in the Battle of the Argonne Forest, the massive Allied offensive that finally defeated Kaiser Wilhelm's war-weary German army. The Meuse-Argonne Offensive, also known as the Battle of the Argonne Forest, was a major part of the final Allied offensive of World War I that stretched along the entire Western Front. It was fought from September 26, 1918, until the Armistice of November 11, 1918, a total of 47 days. The Meuse-Argonne Offensive was the largest in United States military history, involving 1.2 million American soldiers.

Sandlin and his men were in several battles during the summer of 1918. Then at Bois de Forges, France, on September 26, 1918, Sandlin emerged as one of the greatest heroes of World War I. He was in charge of a platoon of 59 men when the day began. Following an all-night artillery barrage, Sandlin's platoon was ordered to advance that day toward a specific, important military objective. The line had been fighting for hours, advancing slowly, when the doughboys were stopped by withering fire from

carefully placed machine gun nests, two guns to each nest. At 7 a.m., orders were given to "halt and lie down." While others were trying to stay below the hail of deadly gunfire, Willie Sandlin had a rendezvous with destiny that changed his life forever. Sandlin observed a narrow lane between the firing line of the two guns. Arming himself with four hand grenades, an automatic pistol, and a rifle, he charged the nests alone. Advancing within 75 yards of the guns, he threw his first grenade, which fell short and exploded without effect. He raced forward while the enemy emptied two automatic revolvers at him. When he was less than 50 yards away from the intense machine gun fire, he threw his second grenade, which struck the nest. He then threw two more grenades, charged the nest, and killed three more German soldiers with his bayonet, making a total of eight enemy combatants that he killed there.

Sandlin's platoon advanced and he again took command of his men. The Americans moved forward and flanked another machine gun nest and Sandlin dispatched it in the same way, utilizing grenades. When his grenades were spent, four men still defended the nest. Sandlin had killed them all with his bayonet by the time his platoon arrived. The line continued to advance and at 2 p.m. Sandlin destroyed a third German machine gun nest and its occupants in similar fashion. His heroic assaults resulted in the death of 24 German soldiers and the capture of 200 more German soldiers. Sandlin's commander, General John J. "Blackjack" Pershing, praised him for "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty" and recommended him for the Medal of Honor, detailing his heroic actions and praising the 28-year-old Sandlin's "splendid example of bravery and coolness to his men." Pershing personally presented the Medal of Honor to Sandlin in February of 1919 at Chaumont, the general headquarters of the AEF. Pershing would later describe Sandlin as the outstanding regular army soldier of World War I.

When the war ended, Sandlin returned home to Leslie County for six months. In December, 1919, because of his exemplary military record, he was appointed special escort for the bodies of soldiers who had died overseas. Sandlin left for France in January 1920. Later that year, Sandlin returned home and married the former Belvia Roberts, a woman he began courting at a box dinner social after he first returned from Europe. Their happy marriage produced one son and four daughters who reached adulthood: Vorres, born in 1921, followed by Leona, Nancy Ruth, Florence, and Robert E. Lee Sandlin. Cora and Rose died of childhood diseases before their fourth birthdays.

Like his more famous counterpart, Tennessee's Alvin York, Sandlin returned home with a heightened commitment to education and community service. In the years following WWI, eastern Kentuckians were working to improve the quality of life in their mountain homeland. Two of the region's greatest leaders were Mary Breckinridge, founder of the Frontier Nursing Service at Hyden in 1925, and Cora Wilson Stewart, founder of the "Moonlight School" program to promote literacy. Newspapers reported that Willie Sandlin, "Kentucky's greatest hero" had joined the crusade "to help stamp out illiteracy in Kentucky." Sandlin toured the state with Stewart and spoke in hundreds of towns and villages. He was so devoted to Mrs. Stewart and her campaign that he and Belvia named their second child after her—Cora Wilson Stewart Sandlin.

Willie Sandlin never presented himself as a celebrity. He was too modest to seek public adoration and too shy to enjoy the attention

of the media, but he did, on several occasions, attend local and national meetings where he was recognized as a Medal of Honor recipient. Throughout the 1920s, Sandlin continued to attend Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) meetings in the hope that the VFW could help him receive additional benefits as a wounded, injured, and disabled veteran.

Like many wounded veterans, Sandlin wasted no time in pursuing benefits. In 1921, government physicians at a Veterans Center in Richmond, Kentucky, examined Sandlin and reported that he was "suffering a serious lung infection as a result of gas inhaled" in the Battle of the Argonne Forest. To make a claim for increased compensation, in 1925 Sandlin appeared before the United States Veterans' Bureau in Lexington. Sandlin was only receiving \$10 a month compensation for being a Medal of Honor recipient, a reduction from the \$40 a month he was receiving when he was "invalided home." In 1928, at age 38, Sandlin should have been in his physical prime when he moved back to a house on his father-in-law's property. Instead, according to some newspaper accounts, he was very ill. Sandlin "coughed and wheezed a great deal," especially in the winter. By 1928, Sandlin had spent time in hospitals in Chillicothe and Cincinnati, Ohio, and "other places." An old army buddy encouraged Willie to move to Colorado because he thought "the dry air and high altitude" would help him. But Willie would not leave his eastern Kentucky homeland, and he didn't have enough money to travel if he had wanted to. "I'm not one-third the man I used to be before the war," he observed without complaint. "If I take 25 steps up the hill, I'm done for. My wind's gone." In 1928, Indiana Senator Arthur R. Robinson and others presented a bill to Congress which "would enlist and retire as a captain Willie Sandlin, Kentucky hero of the world war, who is now destitute." The whole unproductive process of seeking the benefits he deserved became exhausting and demoralizing to Willie Sandlin, yet he had no choice but to continue.

Aware of Sandlin's financial difficulties, Senator Hiram Brock, who represented Leslie County in the state legislature, continued his efforts to get funds from the state government to purchase a farm for Sandlin. Senator Brock's efforts had been inspired by the American Legion's efforts to raise money to provide a home for Sandlin and his family so they could "live with the common comfort of life." During the 1920s, the VFW had established a "Hero Fund" and called upon "all patriotic citizens, along with members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars" and "others throughout the country to mail in their contributions to the VFW, McClelland Building, Lexington, Kentucky." VFW leaders said there would have been no need to raise funds to buy a home for the Sandlins if Willie had been willing to "sell his birthright for a mess of pottage." According to VFW leaders, a "celebrated moving picture concern" had offered Willie \$500 a week to re-enact his heroic deeds, but "Sandlin refused to capitalize on his war records" and turned down "other offers to profit from his patriotism."

Life after the war was just one medical examination after another for Willie. He was examined at Cincinnati in 1928 and given a 69 percent disability rating, which would have entitled him to a fair compensation. But the Louisville Veterans' Bureau, which had jurisdiction over Sandlin, appealed that rating to the Bureau of Appeals at Chicago and the bureau then placed the case before the Veterans' Bureau in Washington. Bureaucracies do not always yield justice, and technicalities blocked compensation for him, making a special action by Congress necessary. Despite his continuing efforts, Sandlin, who had been wounded twice and gassed twice,

never received any disability compensation from the Veterans Bureau, and he never received a penny of the money that was donated by private citizens to purchase a farm for him and his family.

By the beginning of the Great Depression, Willie Sandlin realized that he would probably not receive any money from the Veterans Administration Bureau to compensate him for his warsustained injuries. So the Sandlins did what tens of thousands of Appalachian families did: "they hunkered down" and "did the best they could with what they had." They became subsistence farmers. Drawing on practices that were more than a century old, subsistence farmers, like the Sandlins, produced almost everything they needed from their farms and nearby fields and forests. They raised cows, hogs, and chickens for meat, which was supplemented by food from vegetable gardens and orchards. During the Depression, Willie and Belvia both worked extremely hard to make a good life and a good home for their children. During those years, Willie also worked as a supervisor on a WPA road project.

Although Sandlin's health continued to worsen, he still had a large family to support. So, in 1941, for the first time in his life, Willie sought political office and ran unsuccessfully as an Independent for Leslie County jailer.

In December 1941, a journalist called on the Sandlins at their home. Willie, Belvia, and their guest sat comfortably in "a long living room" and talked about "a number of things," but soon the conversation turned to Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor and America's entrance into another world war. Willie refused to talk about his heroics in World War I, but he told his visitor that if his health were better and if "the navy would take [me, I would] join tomorrow." In the early spring of 1942, the old warrior, who was 52 years old and in very bad health, went to Hyden and registered for the draft.

Early in May 1949, Willie's breathing problems grew much worse. Belvia took him to the hospital in Hyden; two days later he was transported by ambulance to the Veteran's Hospital in Louisville. Belvia went with him and stayed in the hospital room for the next three weeks, along with her daughters, Florence and Vorres. One of them was always in Willie's room.

In the early morning hours of May 29, Belvia and Vorres had gone to the lobby to rest while Florence remained in the room with her father, sitting next to Willie's bed and holding his hand. Doctors had advised Willie to move to Phoenix. They thought the climate and environment there might improve his health. He squeezed his daughter's hand and said, "We missed the train [to Phoenix]." And then he was dead. He went easy, with a smile and a sigh. He was originally buried in the Hurricane Cemetery in Hyden; however, in September 1990, Sandlin's widow had his remains re-interred in the Zachary Taylor National Cemetery in Louisville. When Belvia died in 1999, at age 98, she was buried next to her husband.

Now he belongs to the ages. He had been raised in poverty and had grown into a quiet, resolute man of courage and honor. Willie Sandlin spent a lifetime accepting adversity and inequity and meeting life's challenges with a smile and a "can do" attitude. All he wanted from life was to serve his country, build a home, and enjoy his loving family, and he achieved his goals through hard work. Only death can stop men like Willie Sandlin.

REMEMBERING ROBERT MADON

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, today I would like to join the citizens