FADE IN-----------------------------------

GERMAN HELMET LYING IN GRASS

RUINED VILLAGE OF MOUNTFAUCON

OVERGROWN TRENCHES

BATTLE SCENES

TROOP TRANSPORT AT SEA

TROOPS DISEMBARKING

TRAINS WITH TROOPS PASSING

NARRATOR:

It all happened a long time ago.

Those who knew it first hand would sometimes rather forget.

But, it is always there, if only on the pages of an unopened history book.

It happened. And, it ended fifty years ago.

The world was never the same again.

URSPRUNG VO:

"...we had the feeling that it was necessary for the United States to enter into this combat,

bring it to a close, fight a war to end all wars of the future.

We were going overseas to defeat the German armies, and, if the German armies were defeated, we could establish peace in the world."
TROOPS MOVING THROUGH
RUINED VILLAGE

SE: MARCHING
I had a mixed feeling at first. It was
a case of leaving home, wife, and mother
and father...my friends. But, it was a
willingness to go there and do a job that
had to be done."

BATTLE SCENES

SE: BATTLE UP FULL FOR :20

CUT:
OVERGROWN TRENCH LINES,

SILENCE
SE: PRESENCE, SLIGHT WIND, A BIRD OR TWO

MATTE:
THE GREAT WAR -
50 YEARS AFTER

MATTE:
MONTAGE

FADE TO BLACK----------------------­
FADE IN-------------------------

MONUMENTS

DISSOLVE-----------------------

GERMAN CAVALRY MOVES BY

FRENCH TROOPS MARCHING THROUGH RUINS OF CITY

GERMAN MACHINE GUNNERS IN TRENCH

RAILROAD ARTILLERY

MUSIC: QUIET AND THOUGHTFUL

NARRATOR:

There have been too many wars since 1918 to keep the memory of World War One sharp and unblurred. The "Great War" has slipped quietly from an actuality of flesh and blood to marble memorials and textbook descriptions. The heritage of 1918, however, gave the world its next war, and shaped today as it is.

The nations of Europe rode off to war in 1914 in the twilight of an age, and gave birth to the real 20th century.

It was to be a short, tidy, European war; a war with limited objectives using a well thought out battle plan that would have ended it all by Christmas, 1914.

But, technology overtook the planners, and the slaughter of an entire generation began.

SE:

and continued for four bloody years.

(3)
Germany, Austria, France and Russia were bled white.

Bright uniforms and charging cavalry disappeared early, and the Western Front degenerated into a static line of trenches scarred across the face of France. Nowhere did the hell that was the first World War manifest itself in greater fury than at Verdun.

Today, Verdun is just another provincial French city, appearing in rather small print on the maps of France. The name is famous only because of the battle fought around it throughout most of 1916.

From February through December of that year, Verdun was a city besieged, almost completely encircled by the mailed fist of the German army.

Those ten months of unrelieved, unceasing battle created nearly one million three-hundred thousand casualties.
Verdun, then and now, epitomizes the savagery and the slaughter that was World War One. Millions of men fought over the same slender strips of ground again and again. Along a twenty-five mile front, the furthest German penetration was only four miles. From February to December of that year, the French and German high commands stocked the artillery and men, as the giant explosive shells tilled the soil, constantly, smashing the earth into a featureless lunar landscape. As and the flamethrower, by the Germans.

Verdun became the stage for the new innovations in modern warfare. Here, gas and the gas barrage, by the French, and poison phosphene bombarded incessantly day and night as more than 60 million rounds of high explosive churned the muddy soil again and again.

Men died in wholesale lots, the artillery verduin was likened to a huge charnel house; it was impossible to bury the bodies as they fell. From February to December of that year, the furthest German penetration was only four miles. From February to December of that year, the furthest German penetration was only four miles.

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The German High Command had designed the Verdun adventure to sap the strength of the French army. The area was to be a giant meatgrinder that would drain French manpower down to the point at which France would have to surrender.

All that it did was decimate both armies. Verdun was a salient bulging into the German lines. Surrounded on three sides, it was tactically a mistake to defend it. Sensible military strategy would have directed the French to straighten the line and let the Germans occupy the area. But, national pride could not permit the sacrifice of a symbol, so more men were sent into the maw every day. And, every day, more died.

Finally, in December, the Germans stopped pressing the senseless slaughter, and Verdun became as it was before, just another sector of the Western Front.

---MUSIC: SLOW, QUIET, REFLECTIVE

But, the tortured land around Verdun would never be as it was before. Ten
months of hell and fury have left a mark on the land that will take centuries to erase.

(PAUSE)

Like the American Gettysburg, the area is covered with monuments to those who died.

To the French, Verdun is a lasting memorial to a high point in national history.

For them, Verdun is Gettysburg, Valley Forge, San Juan Hill, Pearl Harbor...

here is where every square foot of soil was bought with the blood of an entire generation.

Today, more than 50 years later, the scars on the land still show.

Time has rounded the harsh contours of trenches and shell craters, and grass finally grows.

Cattle now graze where men fought and died. Yet, the grim reminders are not far from the surface:

the remanents of a line of barbed wire, and part of a mess kit.

(PAUSE)
Parts of the battlefield have been planted with pines over the years, but when a stand is harvested, the tortured features of the earth are still evident.

And, beneath the matting of pine needles, the signs of the battle are still here; rifle cartridges, a twisted bayonet scabbard, and human bones.

Mute testimony of this place at another time.

People lived here, once. During the fighting, nine villages in the Verdun area were wiped completely from the face of the earth, leveled to the ground.

They were never rebuilt. To this day, the land they once occupied has been left as it was. Trees have grown up here, too; but, there are still reminders that this was once a village, a village where people lived and worked, and where, later, men died.
The French had always expected that Verdun would be the site of a battle: in the late 19th century they had built a chain of fortresses on the heights surrounding the city.

The key fort was Douamont. This battered hillock was once a stone and concrete fort. It still is, buried under the grassy soil.

Early in the war, the French had abandoned the fortress theory, and had stripped the guns and men from the forts of Verdun for offensive use elsewhere.

As a result, when the German attack was unleashed on Verdun, Douamont, the key to the last line of defense had one gun and fewer than one hundred men in its garrison.

It was easily taken by the Germans.

Too late, the French re-discovered the strategic importance of Douamont. For eight months, it was held by the Germans.

It cost untold thousands of French lives to retake it.

If Verdun is a symbol of national pride to both Germans and French, Fort Douamont symbolized all that was
the battle for Verdun. Practically impregnable, Douamont squats on the heights dominating the sector.

Subjected to the most massive artillery bombardment of history, up to that time, Douamont remained virtually intact, inside.

It was cushioned from the giant 400 millimeter French shells by eight feet of concrete, and up to 18 feet of soil heaped on its roof.

Outside, nearly all exterior evidence of the fort has disappeared. The concrete walls, outbuildings and moat pulverized into rubble.

Today, its unmanned observation ports stare out over a countryside where the guns no longer sound, where men no longer scream and die.

Douamont is now the guardian of the dead.

(10)
FADE IN----------------------------­

LS FRENCH SOLDIERS CROSSING SNOW COVERED BATTLEFIELD

GERMAN FIELD PIECE FIRING

DISSOLVE---------------------------­

MS AMERICAN TROOPS MOVING THROUGH VILLAGE

U.S. FIELD PIECE FIRING

LS BATTLEFIELD: EXPLOSIONS, TROOPS ADVANCING

WHIPPET TANKS MOVING UP ROAD, U S SOLDIERS WATCHING

NARRATOR VO:
The winter of 1916 saw the fruitless battle of Verdun draw to a close, but elsewhere, the war continued as more bloody battles etched their names in the history books.
The German lines held firm.
The Great War was far from being over.

By mid-1918, the impact of the United States' entry into the war was being felt along the Western Front.

July saw American forces hold back the Germans only 40 miles from Paris as U.S. soldiers and marines were blooded at Belleau Wood.

Then under U.S. command for the first time, American soldiers erased the St. Mihiel salient south of Verdun. The time had come for the first truly American offensive.

The site was to be the Muese-Argonne area: Verdun's northern flank.

Among those American troops was a lieutenant in the 37th Division:

(11)
MS LT. RUDOLPH URSPRUNG, 1918

"Rudolph S. Ursprung, serial number 0162588, 1st Lt., Company G, 145th Infantry."

NARRATOR VO:

Today, more than fifty years later, former Lieutenant Ursprung recalls how he felt when called to duty in 1917:

CU URSPRUNG, 1918

"I had a mixed feeling at first. It was a case of leaving home, wife, and mother and father...my friends. But, there was a willingness to go there and do a job that had to be done. There was no skulking. There was a definite eagerness to get over there and get the job done with."

DISSOLVE---------------------------­

MS URSPRUNG, 1968

DISSOLVE---------------------------­

AMERICAN TROOPS MOVING UP TO FRONT

DISSOLVE---------------------------­

MS AVACOURT SIGN

NARRATOR VO:

Rudy Ursprung and the men of the 37th Division were brought up to an area just east of the village of Avacourt. Here, in the early morning hours of September 26th, 1918, they waited for
the attack to begin:

NIGHT BARRAGE: FLARES EXPLODING, ARTILLERY HITTING, 1918

URSPRUNG WILD TRACK:
"...25 per cent of the artillery of the entire Muese-Argonne front opened fire at midnight.

PASTURE LAND, 1968

Another 25 per cent opened fire at three o'clock.

MS SHELL FRAGMENT

Shortly after three A M, the Germans commenced returning fire.

OVER THE TOP, 1918

At five, 100 per cent of the artillery opened fire: a thirty minute barrage, and then we were to go over the top and follow this rolling barrage.

There was both smoke and fog at this time.

SUBJECTIVE WALK THROUGH FIELDS, 1968

We were in an area where you could not see any long distances.

You went through water, and you jumped over shell holes, and went through barbed wire and entanglements here and there.

DISSOLVE------------------------

GERMAN TRENCHES

Our heaviest contact was made in a ravine around ten o'clock or ten thirty in the morning.

SLOW MATCHED DISSOLVE----------

FROM TRENCHES, 1918

TO SAME TERRAIN, 1968

There were quite a number of Germans (13)
They had stopped the first battalion completely.

We overcame that resistance by some artillery support and rifle and machine gun fire.

The Germans pulled out.

We could see, from here, an entire battalion of Germans withdrawing into Mountfaucon.

And our 135th Machine Gun Battalion, we had Company A. opened fire on these men as they were marching into Mountfaucon.

It was practically destroyed.

There wasn't much, but a lot of rubble and stone that you could see there.

You could see the ruins of the church....

You could see the ruins of any number of buildings there....

My company was directed to move up into the direction of the Bois de Buege.

Just as I got there, the Germans had dropped a counter-barrage right on the company, and I don't know how we got...
through it; there were some men that were hit.
The shells came in there and they were popping all over. It looked as though they were just as thick as rain drops.
Major Southam was there, and he said, 'Rudy, take the company up to the high ground, overlooking Cierges. There's a possible counter-attack that may develop.'
The trail was not hard to follow, though. It had been used by the Germans right along as an avenue of moving troops back and forth.
The trees were not too badly shot up.
There was a lot of foliage on the trees.... what there was at that time of the year.... And, there was some cover in the woods.
I did place the company astride that road.
And, I even moved up in here where I could look down into the town.
You could see the town very clearly.
You could see all the area, all the way around.
There was constant artillery fire coming from the rear areas controlled from the observation post,
which was in the church steeple.

You could see the church steeple,

and we felt there was somebody in there, observing.

...And, when the first shell hit, it hit so close to where I was lying along side the road, I could reach out and touch the edge of the shell hole.

Every man in the company thought I was killed...."

NARRATOR VO:

Young Lieutenant Ursprung wasn't even wounded by that shell.

As he says today, that one didn't have his number on it.

He and his company held that hill looking into Cierges throughout that entire day until they were relieved that night.

Then, the offensive moved on, and pushed the Germans out of Cierges and punched its way north.

The war had left this part of the Muese-Argonne and Verdun.

Four years of suffering had ended.

Looking at this peaceful farmland today, one would never know that a battle was
fought here 50 years ago.

It's only when a farmer's plow turns over the soil, and occasionally a bit of that engagement is brought to the surface.

DISSOLVE---------------------------
MLS CIERGES CHURCH, 1968

The church tower that served as the artillery spotting post is still there.

DISSOLVE---------------------------
MLS CIERGES CHURCH, AS SEEN FROM SAME ANGLE, 1918

Today it's just another old church, that could be in any one of a hundred French farm villages.

LS DESERTED STREET

PAN MUD

No one would know, but history did pass by here, and

SLOW DISSOLVE------------------------men fought and died on this ground.

SHADOWED GRASS, PATTERNS OF CROSSES

NARRATOR:

Many of those who fought here remain still.

DISSOLVE---------------------------
SLOW ZOOM OUT FROM TRICOLOR TO LS CEMETERY

The heritage of battle is never far away in the World War One war zone of France.

Military cemeteries: French, German, British and American, literally dot the countryside.

DISSOLVE---------------------------
MS ROW OF SHROUDED BODIES AWAITING BURIAL

Eight million died in this, the first international blood bath.

(PAUSE)

(17)
RUDOLPH URSPRUNG, VOICE OVER:

"When I finally realized that the end had come,
I was most happy that I had lived through it.
I was thankful that I was one among the many that were spared.

But, you never forget the boys that you've seen,
friends of yours....

It's pretty hard to see a boy that you'd known for a long time,
a man who had been a soldier,
and see him struck down,
and pass on right in front of you.
And, you've got a job to do.
And, you've got to go on.
And, everybody thought they fought a war to end all wars,
but, it didn't occur that way."
FOR THE NEXT MINUTE, THE FILM
ALTERNATES SCENES OF UNBURIED
BODIES ON THE BATTLEFIELDS
WITH MATCHING SCENES OF MILITARY
CEMETERIES,

FOLLOWED BY:

DISSOLVE----------------------------FADE IN MUSIC: QUIET, SOMBRE
MS STAINED GLASS WINDOW

The heritage of the Meuse Argonne,
Verdun, the Somme, the Marne, Belleau
Wood and Chateau Thierry was to have
been eternal peace for the world.

In the Ossuary at Douamont, France
pays homage to those who died at Verdun;
to those who died, and in death, disappeared.

In the half century since these men died,
the world has known Warsaw, Rotterdam,
London, Normandy, Dachau, Buchenwald,
Stalingrad, Saipan, Iwo Jima, Pork Chop
Hill, Inchon, and now Da Nang, Pleiku
and, it seems, more to come.

DISSOLVE---------------------------
MS BONES IN CRYPTS

Here, in the vaulted quiet rest the
mingled bones of 130,000 unknown dead
of both armies. For them, there is no difference. There is no bitterness after death.