



Dad pointing to shrapnel holes in the wall which occurred while he and his buddies were taking cover on the other side of the wall.

While we were examining the wall another well dressed Frenchman drove up and started to converse with the three grave diggers. They apparently told him of our mission and he promptly came over to greet us. It turned out that he was only seven years old in July of 1918, but he vividly remembered the battle of July 19th.

He spoke more English than I did French, so we had quite a conversation. His name was Moquet. Dad told him he and four other ammunition carriers, two loaders and a machine gunner set out at 07:00, on the morning of the 19th, across a wheat field, toward the village of Lechelle.



This is that same wheat field 53 years later. Farmer Moquet had harvested it about a week before our arrival.

Dad said the wheat was about six feet high, but the Germans were "threshing" it with machine gun fire. In addition the artillery was still zeroed in on the cemetery and then it was being strafed by planes from above.

By 11:00 all that was left of the squad of eight Marines was Dad and the machine gun!

Dad told farmer Moquet that by 11:00 he had reached a small depressed road across the wheat field. Since it was depressed, he

ducked down in the road and it afforded some cover from the merciless German fire power. Dad said he remained down in the sunken road until dark that night when he brought the machine gun back.



Monsieur Moquet pointing toward the village of Lechelle located in the distant trees just to the right of Dad's head in this view. It was right here that Dad shed some more tears while talking of the seven buddies lost that 19th of July.

We learned that Monsieur Moquet owned 565 acres, including the above wheat field. After viewing the wheat he took us for a ride in his van. He said that since Dad didn't make it to Lechelle in 1918 he would make it today as he drove us over to and through the little village and then back to the cemetery where we had left the BMW.

On our way back he told us that his main crops were small grains and sugar beets. There was a beet processing plant in Vierzy. He had recently retired and turned the day to day farming chores over to his son.

Dad recalled that during the Battle of Belleau Wood, Colonel John Hughes, of the 6th Marine Regiment, had been gassed and evacuated to a hospital in a rear area. Just six weeks later Col. Hughes rejoined the outfit and led his men toward that village of Lachelle. This was another reason he earned his nickname of "Johnny The Hard," which, incidentally was never said to his face. He was another "Devil Dog.!"

Another recollection of Dad's was that after spending his "closest day to hell," in that sunken road across the wheat field he was searching for a drink of water. He said, on the way into Vierzy the road branches off in two direction. There was a house between the two lanes and right next to the house was a well where he was able to fill his canteen and quench his thirst.

After bidding Monsieur Moquet good