

Flu Files Essay

<p><b>HOT COFFEE CHECKS FLU AT ST. NAZAIRE</b></p> <p><b>Colonel, Cooks and K.P.'s Steam Germs Out of Newcomers</b></p> <p>It was hot coffee—thousands of gallons of it—that ended the deadly influenza epidemic in the dark autumn days when that disease was working ravages among American troops en route to France.</p> <p>All summer and fall great hosts of Yanks poured in and out of Camp 1, St. Nazaire. The grippe became noticeable in September.</p> <p>One week a great fleet of transports arrived at St. Nazaire together, bringing 28,000 men, among whom the disease had made alarming inroads. The germ was everywhere. There were many sick. But there were still more just in the receptive stage. And an American colonel saw at once that the camp weather would aid the disease.</p> <p>So, when the camp was filled to capacity, he ordered the large kitchen kept open day and night. For two weeks it operated unceasingly, manned by a staff of 75 cooks and assistants. The troops</p>	<p>were arriving at all hours of the day and night, and during the first two days of the rush full meals were served continually all day and all night.</p> <p>At 2 and 3 in the morning there could often be seen long lines of shivering men waiting for the steaming food. When, at the end of the first two days, the men appeared in better shape, the night service was reduced to hot coffee only. This, however, was obtainable at any hour. Seventy-five cans of coffee, it is estimated, were served every night during these tense two weeks.</p> <p>The men arrived, chilled, damp and slightly coughing. The hot, hearty drink proved the necessary stimulus. It supplied the heat required to offset the flu germs. There was plenty of it. It was served rapidly and generously by willing hands. Thus did St. Nazaire roll back the flu wave.</p>
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I choose to analyze an artifact from the Stars and Stripes newspaper. To give some background, the Stars and Stripes newspaper was intended to provide news and information to the U.S military community and approved news outlets. They started concretely writing during WWI and became available online in 1999. Something interesting about Stars and Stripes comes from a quote on their website that states that they're "editorially independent of interference from

outside its own chain-of-command” (Stars and Stripes 1). I would interpret this to mean that as a news organization they don’t have to follow the same rules as mainstream news organizations.

Now to give some background on the virus, at this point the second wave of the Spanish flu has hit during the fall of 1918, proving to be worse than before especially since soldiers were finally returning home from war. In October alone, over 190,000 Americans died, and the numbers continued to skyrocket (Roos 1). The artifact that I choose was from December 13th, 1918. Right at the height of the second wave of the pandemic and the end of WWI.

My artifact is a short article essentially explaining how soldiers arrived at the ST. Nazaire camp and they seemed very sick and in bad shape, but the hot coffee served at the camp “provided the heat required to offset the flu germs” (Hot Coffee Checks Flu, 7). Even the first line says “It was the hot coffee. That ended the deadly influenza epidemic” (Hot Coffee Checks Flu, 7) with these troops, implying that because of the coffee these soldiers either got rid of or warded off one of the deadliest pandemics in history. I’m not entirely unsure if this was some sort of satire or not. It very well might have been considering that this newspaper was intended for a small community of people.

But assuming that this was a real article and not satire, it was so ridiculous that it reminded me of some of the things that Donald Trump has said about the coronavirus. One of those being that we could radiate light into the body to kill the virus. It’s interesting to think about because it’s more believable that people could believe things like coffee being able to kill the virus in the 1900s, but now in the advanced time we live in, I can’t believe people could believe things like that. I think it also illustrates that we still have a lot of problems with misinformation within our media platforms as well.

Works Cited

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