



THE LIBERATOR™

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14th Armored Division Association*

SPRING 2009

Message from the President...

LET'S ALL MAKE EFFORT TO MEET IN GREEN BAY



RUSSELL BARTON
President, 14th AD Association

It's a little late but still I want to wish everyone a very happy New Year. May we all enjoy health and happiness.

I am still at Hillside Manor, 707 S. University Ave., Beaver Dam, WI 53916. It was two years ago on December 28 that I became a resident here. It is a good place but cannot replace home.

I can walk with a walker. My wife gives me a ride in the wheelchair each day to the big windows so I can see the outside world. I get to go home one day a week if the weather permits. I play a lot of Bingo and take in a lot of other entertainment that we have here.

My thoughts often go back to my days with my buddies of the 14th AD,

and I am reminded of the coming reunion in Green Bay that I still hope to attend, if only for a short time. Green Bay is an interesting and friendly place, offering much more than just football. If you have a little extra time when you attend the reunion, plan to see the beautiful sights of that vicinity and surrounding area.

I want to thank Harold Kiehne for doing so much work for me in making arrangements for the reunion. He is doing a great job with a fine reunion plan. I understand that some of the details of the planned activities cannot be final-

ized at this time but I know all will be in readiness when the reunion begins. Hotel arrangements have all been made and I urge all of you to make your reservations as soon as possible.

Let's all encourage one another to attend the reunion in Green Bay. Our ranks are diminishing but with the help of the younger people, we can keep the old 14th going for a while longer.

I enjoy receiving mail very much, and would love to hear from all of you.

Sincerely,
Russ Barton

UPDATE ON OUR 45TH NATIONAL REUNION AT GREEN BAY, WISCONSIN

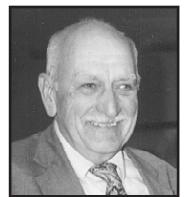
By Harold Kiehne
Reunion Committee Chairman

Plans are coming together for our 45th National Reunion to be held in Green Bay, Wisconsin, but there have been some delays in finalizing these plans because of weather conditions, the schedules of those we are working with, and information not available until after the deadline for submissions of articles for this issue of *The Liberator*.

So at this point we are calling our Green Bay gathering the "Fantasy Mystical Reunion," promising that the details of the program will be disseminated in the summer issue of *The Liberator*. This should give everyone time to get their reservations sent in for the

various events and hotel accommodations.

We have been assured by Regency Suites, our reunion hotel, that the reservations contract negotiated by Horst Froelich and Russ Barton some time ago is still good. We can hope that the hotel rates will change for the better, but if this is not the case, at least they will not go up. Although we do not know the Green Bay Packers 2009 schedule at this time, we have been assured by the hotel that this schedule will have no bearing on availability of rooms for our reunion attendees.



Harold Kiehne

(Continued on page 3)

45th NATIONAL REUNION
Green Bay, Wisconsin • September 9-13, 2009

FROM THE LADIES AUXILIARY PRESIDENT



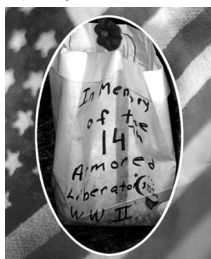
GAYLE SIEWERT

Wishing you all a happy new year that brings good health, much happiness!

Time flies by, just think, a few months ago I became your new Auxiliary President. I'm learning much about the position and have a lot more to learn, but with your help it will be a fun journey.

Our 45th reunion is just six months away, so please start making plans for it. It's going to be a great one. Please remember raffle prizes and any goodies for the hospitality room, this year we can bring in food. Read Russell and Harold's newsletters for more details about the reunion and the events. I can still remember my first reunion in Chicago, in 1969, what an experience that was...

I take part in the annual Mississippi Shuffle for the American Cancer Society, a walking all night charity event which last year raised over \$120,000.00. At 9 o'clock p.m. we light luminaries in honor/memory of our loved ones; we had over 6,000 lit. The attached picture is a luminary I got in honor and in memory of the 14th Armored Division.



Please do not forget your donations to the Postage Fund and changes of address. We all enjoy reading *The Liberator*. Verlyn does a wonderful job putting it all together. I wish to thank him and his helpers for doing such a great job.

Many thanks again to our past president, Edith, for all her faithful help to the organization, and to Red Carlson for his help at the memorial service. Thanks to all who sold tickets for the raffle, and to the ladies who did the drawings, and many others for everything they did to make our reunion a success in Kalamazoo.

Looking forward to seeing you all in Green Bay, September 9 - 13th, 2009.

Yours truly,
Gayle Siewert, Auxiliary President

Honorary National President
MAJOR GEN. A.C. SMITH, USA-Deceased

Honorary National President
LT. COL. ANDREW W. WINIARCZYK, USA-Deceased

★★★ LIBERATOR ★★★

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Enclosed is \$3.00. Please enroll me as a member of the 14th Armored Division Assn., Inc. Auxiliary.

Check One of the following: New Member Renewal Life Membership \$30.00

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Husband's Name _____ Tel. No. _____

Please make checks payable to: National Women's Auxiliary
of the 14th Armored Division Ass'n.

UPDATE ON 45TH REUNION AT GREEN BAY

(Continued from page 1)

We have had a terrible winter, ice and snow from South Dakota to Green Bay, and now snow on top of the ice. It's just too dangerous to travel. But we've used the phones to contact the necessary people to set up the entertainment and possible visits to the Packers facilities, plus other sightseeing events which are many. Right now ice fishing is big in that area. Fortunately the ice will be melted by September with

"global warming(?)" on the way.

As soon as the winter weather breaks and before the summer issue of *The Liberator*, the reunion program schedule will be set. With the politicians telling us we are in a deep recession, we definitely will try to put together a good program that is reasonably priced.

So keep making your plans to attend the reunion in Green Bay. As Russ Barton said, "it's an easy shot off the highway, straight to the hotel," or from the airport. After all, you're coming to one of the best vacation spots

in the four-state area. Lake Michigan and Door County present many vacation opportunities, so plan to spend a couple more days or a week to view the area. September is a good month in Door County where you will find cherries, wines, lots of good food and easy breezes.

One more invitation: Come to La Crosse on April 30-May 4 and attend the Midwest States annual reunion. We will, perhaps, share with you at that time the details of the Fantasy Mystical Reunion in Green Bay. As you can see, this is an all-Wisconsin affair.

One of Those Really Close Calls

The following story was sent to Don Beamgard by Bill Breer a number of years ago, but remains as interesting now as when written.

Dear Don,

In answer to your request in *The Liberator*, I would offer the following. If you are anything like me you probably have many vivid memories of life-threatening incidents that happened in combat and will never forget them until the day you die. There is one that stands out in particular however.

I cannot recall the particular date but on this occasion my 3rd platoon of the 94th Cav Recon was temporarily halted on a large plateau of land facing a long sweep of the Rhine River. The opposite bank was German territory and rose to fairly high hills which were studded with pillboxes comprising the Siegfried Line.

These pillboxes were heavily fortified so our progress was halted until they could be knocked out.

In order to accomplish that, some of our dive bombers were having a go at them, and at the same time our heavy artillery was making a few direct hits. It was quite a show to watch and our vantage point of only a mile or so away gave us a good view.

When we first arrived we dug in and watched the proceedings from the relative safety of our fox holes. After a while it was apparent no one was paying any attention to us so we got out of the holes and were talking to one another in small groups but stayed close to our fox holes.

There was an artillery duel going on between our heavy batteries and those of the Germans located behind their fortifications so we constantly heard shells whistling overhead but after a while paid no attention because we knew they weren't targeted on us. About that time however, I heard one coming in that I knew I should take seriously and made a dive for my fox

hole.

The shell landed about 20 feet to one side and made one hell of a noise, covering me with mud while I was in mid-air headed for my hole. I couldn't believe I was still alive when I ventured out and I saw what happened. A very large shell, much bigger than an 88, was sitting on the ground about 30 feet away, complete with rifling grooves on its ring. When it landed it dug its own slit trench about 10' long and then resurfaced on the ground where it came to a halt. The other fellows nearby came out of their holes, too, and we all thanked God it was a dud.

Then while we were still looking at it someone said "maybe it has a delayed action fuse" and you never saw any GIs move that fast in your life.

Best regards,
Bill Breer

Christmas menu

The following was the 1942 Christmas dinner menu for the men of Co C, Maintenance Battalion, 14th Armored Division. Company Commander was Capt. A.E. Stockton. They did eat well that day.

Assorted Fruit - Celery Hearts - Lettuce and Tomato Salad - Sliced Pickles - Roast Turkey - Virginia Baked Ham - Oyster Dressing - Mashed Potatoes - Candied Sweet Potatoes - String Beans - Cranberry Sauce - Creamed Peas - Giblet Gravy - Ice Cream - Pumpkin Pie - Mince Pie - Cake - Hot Rolls - Butter - Coffee - Cigars - Cigarettes

Memorial Day Thought

Among those who had not come back was a young American stretcher bearer, Caleb Milne, who was killed by a mortar round on May 11, 1943, while giving first aid to a wounded soldier. In a final, prescient letter to his mother, Milne described the Tunisian campaign as "a vivid, wonderful world so full of winter and spring, warm rain and cold snow, adventures and contentments, good things and bad. How often you will have me near you when wood smoke drifts across the wind, or the first tulips arrive, or the sky darkens in the summer storm... Think of me today and in the days to come, as I am thinking of you this minute, not gone or alone or dead, but part of the earth beneath you, part of the air around you, part of the heart that must not be lonely."

Thanks for Donations

The many donations to the Postage/Liberator Fund in recent months are greatly appreciated. Your continued support will help to ensure the continuation of this publication.

Gus Hinrich
Executive Director

Verlyn Hofer
Liberator Editor

NEW MEMBERS ★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Jolene Geurian 125th
 Robert Buhbe
 Samuel Bates 19th B
 Carol Mobley (Bryce) 47th
 Charles McClure 125th C

* Wife of Member **Son or Daughter of Member

NEW LIFE MEMBERS ★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Jolene Geurian
 Charles McClure

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Howard Prentice	Benjamin Flagg
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Carol Mobley	Bob Montgomery, 62nd C
Carol Lucas	Tom Smith
Nunzio Dayostino	

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Jesse Woolard	Bob McClarren
Alan Jania	



TAPS

Charles Gabriel, 19th B
 John McCabe, 19th B
 Betty Wrathel, 500th
 (Wife of Phil)
 Joseph Seper, 68th A
 George Davis, 48th A
 Fred Brown, 19th B
 Davis Grindler, 94th E
 George Henning, 500th SV.
 David Schulfield, 62nd Hq
 Louis Houschield, 136th
 Donald L. Haynie, 68th AIB Co A
 Robert Schoenrock, 47th Tk Co D
 George P. Davis, 48th Tk Co. A
 Marilynn Prince, 25th Tk Co C
 (Widow of John)

NOTE: Information regarding the death of 14th AD comrades should be directed to Gus Hinrich, National Secretary, for listing in the "Taps" column.



★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Meaning of Folding the USA Flag

Have you ever noticed the honor guard pays meticulous attention to correctly folding the American flag 13 times? You probably thought it was to symbolize the original colonies, but we learn something new every day!

- **The 1st fold** of our flag is a symbol of life.
- **The 2nd fold** is a symbol of our belief in eternal life.
- **The 3rd fold** is made in honor and remembrance of the veterans departing our ranks who gave a portion of their lives for the defense of our country to attain peace throughout the world.
- **The 4th fold** represents our weaker nature, for as American citizens trusting in God, it is to Him we turn in times of peace as well as in time of war for His divine guidance.
- **The 5th fold** is a tribute to our country, for in the words of Stephen Decatur, "Our Country, in dealing with other countries, may she always be right; but it is still our country, right or wrong."
- **The 6th fold** is for where our hearts lie.

It is with our heart WE pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all.

- **The 7th fold** is a tribute to our Armed Forces, for it is through the Armed Forces that we protect our country and our flag against all her enemies, whether they be found within or without the boundaries of our republic.
- **The 8th fold** is a tribute to the ones who entered into the valley of the shadow of death, that we might see the light of day.
- **The 9th fold** is a tribute to womanhood, and Mothers. For it has been through their faith, their love, loyalty and devotion that the character of the men and women who have made this country great has been molded.
- **The 10th fold** is a tribute to the father, for he, too, has given his sons and daughters for the defense of our country since they were first born.
- **The 11th fold** represents the lower portion

of the seal of King David and King Solomon and glorifies in the Hebrews' eyes, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

- **The 12th fold** represents an emblem of eternity and glorifies, in the Christian eyes, God the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit.
- **The 13th fold** or when the flag is completely folded, the stars are uppermost reminding us of our nation's motto, "In God We Trust."

After the flag is completely folded and tucked in, it takes on the appearance of a cocked hat, ever reminding us of the soldiers who served under General George Washington, and the Sailors and Marines who served under Captain John Paul Jones, who were followed by their comrades and shipmates in the Armed Forces of the United States, preserving for us the rights, privileges and freedoms we enjoy today.

There are some traditions and ways of doing things that have deep meaning. In the future, you'll see flags folded and now you will know why.



THE CHAPLAIN'S COMMENTS

John A. Burgess

The East is experiencing snow storm after snow storm this winter. I enjoy every season even the difficult aspects of a New England winter. For me it is pleasing to wake up and view the beauty of the earth, ground, trees, houses and bushes clothed by the blanket of snow. The Bible declares that God speaks to us through the world He has created. His image and works are reflected in the mirror of the universe.

"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the end of the world." (Ps. 19:1-3)

"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – His eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse." (Romans 1:20)

As I view the snow I reflect upon the message God wishes to convey to me.

"Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red

like crimson, They shall be as wool." (Isaiah 1:18)

The snow declares the thoroughness of God's forgiveness. Sin confessed to God is completely and thoroughly forgiven.

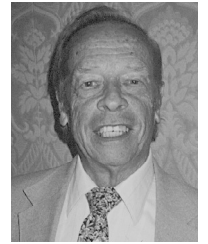
"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

It is the death of Christ that makes the forgiveness of God final. On the cross Jesus declared, "It is finished." God forgives sin on the basis of Jesus' death on the cross.

We have celebrated another Christmas. Through the years of my life I have enjoyed the Christmas season. As a child I used to spend some time each evening by the lighted Christmas tree reflecting upon God's Gift of the forgiveness of sin through the death of Christ. There are so many uncertainties in the lives of many. Mortgage failure means the loss of a home. Unemployment leaves many without income. Retirement funds have been lost. However, the assurance of an eternity lived in the presence of God can be sure.

"For God so loved the world (you and I) that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall

THE EARTH SPEAKS



not perish but have eternal life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son." (John 3:16-18)

The new fallen snow, white and beautiful, gives assurance that sin will be forgiven and the sinner will enjoy the presence of God throughout eternity.

– Chaplain Rev. Dr. John Burgess

One of my goals as Chaplain is to contact the widows and families of 14th members who die. Therefore, I would appreciate having each one of you inform me when you know of a death. I would also like to hear of any who are in the hospital, nursing home or confined to their own homes. Some of you are already doing this and I wish to thank you. I can be reached at the following:

MAIL:

TEL:

EMAIL:

or

GEORGE HENNING SUCCUMBS TO EXTENDED ILLNESS

George W. Henning, who served in Service Bty. of the 500th Artillery Bn., died December 11, 2008 after an extended illness. George was well known by many members of the 14th AD Assoc. as he seldom missed a National Reunion.

George was a busy Iowa farmer most of his life but found time to pursue his hobby of flying, and to be active in many community endeavors. His devotion to family and friends was unmistakable. George often declared himself

to be the luckiest man alive to have had three wonderful wives and three wonderful families.

Reunion goers will recall, no doubt, George's first wife, Beatrice, and his second wife, Dodie, who both preceded him in death. He is survived by his widow, Roberta Brown-Henning, as well as his daughters and their families, stepchildren, and many relatives and friends.

A LONG WAY HOME

By Robert W. Buntin

Editor's Note: The following story consists of excerpts from the autobiographical book "A Long Way Home" by Robert W. "Bob" Buntin who served with Company C of the 62nd AIB. In fact, this article consists of chapters 6 and 7 of the book. Those interested in finding out how the story begins and ends, may obtain further information and

wounded in action and taken prisoner by the Germans, Bob did experience "A Long Way Home" and tells his story in an interesting way.

6 Caught with Our Pants Down

It was on New Year's Eve 1944 when our company was caught by surprise and napping literally, in a massive German attack. This was the southern tip of a much larger offensive that had been raging eighty miles due north of us since 16 December. It was the German coded Operation *Wacht am Rhein*, or Watch on the Rhine, commonly referred to by our side as the Battle of the Bulge. What hit us at the stroke of midnight was the German Operation *Nordwind*, or North Wind. We were to be relieved by a regiment of the 75th Infantry Division at the crack of dawn, New Year's Day. That was almost exactly five hours too late, our relief never to take place. Capt. Trammell, Company C's commander had been paid an earlier visit by two officers on arrangement of the relief. Trammell is reported to have remarked at the time, "We don't care a thing about being relieved in this quiet sector." We were right about our small isolated Charlie Company bearing the initial brunt of the attack. Division history records, "the Germans acted as though drunk or drugged, throwing themselves into C Company's defenses, and were mercilessly cut down." Many were wearing white camouflage to match the snow covered terrain, and yelling in English, "Die, Yankee bastards."

Our front line positions up above the small village of Bannstein were near

one of the Vosges' mountain lakes. The large lake was frozen-over solid, covered with several inches of snow; and we had discussed the possibility of the enemy charging right across this white frozen mass. Our company command post was in the village proper at the foot of the mountain about three miles back of these positions. It was another five miles to battalion headquarters in the town of Phillipsbourg, connected by one narrow winding dirt road. Our primary way out was by this road in a jeep or halftrack and the Germans had already cut the road. However, the onslaught was such that this condition became irrelevant as battalion simply wrote us off. They had no choice. The rest of the 62nd AIB at Phillipsbourg had its hands full as it too came under attack, and had no reinforcements to send us.

The weather was so cold and bitter that Captain Trammell had the three platoons alternating out of the weather, two on outpost by the lake and the other taking refuge in the village Bannstein Inn. The third platoon of which I was a member was the lucky one at the stroke of midnight New Year's Eve. It was our turn to be billeted out of the cold when the Germans struck with all their fury. The rest of the company, over a mile away up the frozen snow-white lake would clash with the initial German assault.

We also had a listening post, further out from our out-posted defenses, and the probable route of an enemy attack. I was out there one week earlier, on Christmas Eve, from ten to midnight, pitch black dark but for slight illumination from the snow. That was one lonely post and I wondered why it was not a two man assignment. It may have been that it called for complete silence. Our orders were to fire three times at the sound of any rumbling or sighting of the enemy. We were then to hightail it back as fast as we could to our dug-in defensive positions. What a welcome relief it was when those two long hours were over and the sergeant showed up with your relief. Back at our gun emplacements a little after midnight, Lt.

Kosik and I wished each other a Merry Christmas. It was the frozen in time Christmas of 1944, one that many of us will never forget.

Division history estimates we were outnumbered by more than four to one and, with no tanks to support us, German tanks with the supporting infantry were rapidly outflanking us. They were now in Bannstein proper, their "burp" guns rudely awakening us asleep in the Bannstein Inn.

Corporal Frank VanSomeren¹ pulled his jeep to an abrupt halt, hopped out and moved a short distance away to get a better look. An 88 shell landed squarely in the seat where he had just been sitting, blowing his jeep to smithereens. What he had seen coming down a mountain road was a large group of Germans walking four abreast as though on a parade ground. He was near the company command post there in Bannstein and Captain Trammell, acting as forward observer was on the field telephone. He was already giving coordinates to our 500th Field Artillery Battalion and their response wreaked havoc on the German contingent, inflicting a large number of casualties.

Ted, a new replacement that had just joined us, had been in the ASTP (Army Special Training Program). He had not seen his first action. The two of us upon bedding down on the floor of the Bannstein Inn this New Year's Eve night decided to remove our outer layer, fleece-lined, waterproof trousers. I think it was about 9:00 P.M. when we stretched out on the floor, M-1 rifles, boots, and outer pants, alongside us. We were on the first floor of the two-story inn, and I guess there were fifty to seventy-five of us on each of the two floors.

The German machine-pistols sounded as if they were just outside the front entrance to the building, and soon thereafter an artillery or mortar round exploded on the roof. A number of those on the upper floor were rushing downstairs as Ted and I were scrambling with our pants and recently

(Continued on page 7)

A LONG WAY HOME

(Continued from page 6)

issued snow-pack boots. My first inclination was to go out and around to the back of the inn where we had our half-tracks parked. I think it was because I heard the unmistakable sound of one of the fifties mounted on our half-tracks open fire. Ted did not follow me and this is one of those times when you have regrets that you did not act differently. I never saw him again and had not so much as gotten his last name. He was a good-looking youngster with a ruddy complexion and athletic build, and we hit it off, so to speak. He had just become a member of our squad the previous day and I sought to take him under my wing.

I remember kidding him, "You should be so honored to become a member of the first rifle squad, of the third platoon, of Charlie Company."

"I think I have little choice but accept the dubious honor," I recall him saying.

How callous not to get his last name! Though I had only been in combat about five weeks I knew what it was all about. And to that it can only be said, "What BS!"

When I wheeled around the back corner of the inn, there in his halftrack was Bill Siewert firing the fifty and cursing at Joseph Poneyestewa trying to pass him .30 caliber ammunition. The Chief, as we all called him, was a full-blooded American Indian, old enough to be a father of any of us in the company. Captain Trammell had tried to leave him in the States, tried his best to talk him out of going overseas. The Chief began crying when told he couldn't go and the captain finally relented. He was forty-five, illiterate, and allowed to keep only a few dollars pay each month. Capt. Trammell had provided for a special savings account in his name. He was now caught up in a major battle along with the rest of us and the outcome very uncertain.

I dropped into a large shell crater with two others which was next to Siewert and the Chief, pumping rounds into the adjacent woods from the halftrack. It was now New Year's Day but only a little after midnight, pitch dark, the ground covered in snow. We could hear

firing coming over our heads from the inn behind us and I detected the sound of a light machine gun coming from the second floor. There were fifty yards or more of open ground to the edge of the woods directly in front of us. The fire to our front intensified at about the same time another shell crashed into the Inn. The three of us laid nine hand grenades on the ledge of the five or six foot deep crater, in case of a German charge from the woods.

As previously mentioned, Sgt. Bill Maier was fluent in German. He was to our left and behind us, along with several others, their backs against the stone wall of the inn. When there was a lull in the sound of battle he would call out in German for the attackers to surrender. He became successful as several came over, hands raised, and we made them our prisoners. During another lull when several others started across to us they were cut down by their own guns.

Sgt. Edward Faytak, a squad leader, was up by the mountain lake when the Germans struck and he was seriously wounded. He managed to crawl through the snow over a mile to the Bannstein Inn sometime later after our evacuation. It is said he owes his survival to the sub-freezing temperature which kept him from bleeding to death; the Germans making him their prisoner and giving him medical attention.

Dawn was breaking and the battle raged, and above the din the rumbling sound of tanks could be heard in the distance. Someone there in the crater suggested they could be our own coming to our rescue. Bill Siewert manning the fifty up above us said, "They sound more like German to me." It was an unrealistic kind of hope to think that reinforcements were on the way with the rest of battalion also under attack. A little later that morning we could hear small arms fire coming from some distance to our rear. We realized then that we were being outflanked and could soon become surrounded. To my left, I spotted several Germans in white camouflage, racing across one of the gaps in our positions. We wondered what we should do as the pressure mounted and we were running low on ammunition. I figured Lt. Kosik, our platoon leader, must be around here somewhere, but had not

seen him since earlier in the night. It was then that Cpl. Siewert yelled at us from his halftrack to get ready to pull back to the railroad station directly behind us. He said to pass the order on, and told me to go back in the inn and alert everybody to get out and head for the railroad station. I hopped out of the crater, keeping low to the ground, darted around the corner of the Inn, and began yelling as I entered, "everybody out, we are pulling back to the railroad station and that's an order!" I ran up the stairs of the inn to make sure those firing from windows had heard me. I remembered the machine gun, heard earlier from one of the windows, had long gone silent. Upon entering the room I saw the gunner slumped over it. I shook him but got no response. He was dead. I didn't recognize him and surmised that he must have been from one of our other platoons. There may have been others not from our platoon for whatever reason, fighting with us at the inn.

As I went out the front door, I yelled one more time for everyone to come out. Hearing no movement, and getting no response, I assumed everyone was gone. Sgt. Maier met me as I came out, had five prisoners in tow, told them to go inside, saying we would have to give them up. We didn't have the time—the luxury—to be dealing with prisoners while trying to withdraw under this kind of pressure. We could see some of our number making a run for the railroad station which was about a hundred yards away. We made a bolt in that direction, along with several others of the 3rd Platoon. Small arms fire was coming from all sides now, in addition to our front and rear. Some of us years later would boast the obvious, the familiar, and joke, "yes, they had us surrounded, the poor bastards."

The station and the area around it came under a heavy barrage and some of us veered off to the right away from it. There were a couple of houses to our right front, and several of us headed for one of them. We made our way to this one house where some GIs already there had taken up positions at some of the windows. I went over to what I remember was a front window of the house and there was a GI firing his M-1

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toward a house on fire. I decided to join him at one corner of his window to see what was getting his attention. Looking in the direction of the house fire, I saw a German dart out and topple over at the crack of my buddy's rifle. I guess we were 150-200 yards from our target, and watched again as a German coming around the side of the house meet the same fate. He had his M-1 zeroed in on the burning-now exploding-house, and I never saw him miss a shot as I joined him in the sitting-duck experience. One of our halftracks loaded with ammunition had been parked underneath the carport, and it was on fire, its ammo exploding. My buddy was knocking off Germans two to my one as more of them raced from the burning building. I don't know who he was, but we had no qualms about shooting them, their escaping one kind of fate, only to meet another. War is Hell!

Looking slightly to our left beyond the fire, we could see several German tanks heading towards us, less than a half-mile away. The only weapon we could possibly have used to stop a tank was a hand-held rocket launcher, called the "bazooka." It had proven somewhat ineffective, in that you needed a close up shot at the treads or underside of the tank. A bazooka round would bounce off the armor of a German Tiger tank, but we didn't have one anyway.

I left the window and moved towards the back of the house to report our sightings of the tanks to others. On my way I looked out of a window to my right in the direction of the vacated inn and saw two German soldiers walking towards the house. They were less than fifty yards away and appeared to be holding each other up. Most likely, both of them were wounded. They didn't receive much attention from us. There was gunfire from every side of the house and everybody was too busy dealing with their own distractions. On the way back to my window position I took another look as they got closer, and could see they were just kids, maybe sixteen or younger. We decided to let them continue on their way. We were sure they wanted to surrender and seeking shelter and help. We never got to know the fate of those two very

young wounded Germans.

We could now see our eviction notice in the form of a tiger tank heading straight for us, less than a football field away. I had moved away from the front windows towards the rear of the house. There were about twenty of us in all. The tank opened up at point-blank range, its cannon knocking down part of the house. We literally dove through rear windows as the second round crashed into the house. We made a dash for the nearby woods and reaching them didn't have a clue as what to do next.

It was hastily decided to form a single file, to put out scouts to our front and rear as we sought to find our way out of the trap. I could see several GIs deeper in the woods pouring over what I guessed to be a map of the area. I believed one of these may have been Lt. Kosik, our platoon leader. It was decided to take a direction along a mountain ridge parallel with the road leading to our rear. I believe it valid that one of the things certain about any battle is its mass confusion. This one was now no exception.

Then to the rolling Heav'n itself I cried,

Asking, "What Lamp had Destiny to Guide Her little Children stumbling in the Dark?"

And—"A blind Understanding!" Heav'n replied.

—Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam

We listened to sporadic shelling and small arms fire from behind our retreat, and after a few minutes of marching became hopeful we would escape our predicament. Our column was moving along the ridge closer to the road when our hopes were suddenly dashed. I think there were between thirty and forty of us making up a single file column. I was about in the middle of the group and thought this was likely the remnants of our company. There were several walking wounded and we were all with little or no ammunition. A German contingent of infantry, coming up on our left across the narrow road opened fire. Their machine gun was spraying the column, and I saw several men up front go down. Several in the column took whatever cover they could find and returned fire, some ex-

pending their last rounds. I took cover in a prone position but did not fire, the last clip of eight rounds already in my rifle.

A German across the road called for our surrender; twenty or more in the column, some wounded, slowly laid down their weapons and began walking over, hands raised above their heads. Then I spotted a GI to my right front climbing up the side of the mountain. I thought *this GI has a better idea* and began crawling to my right towards the foot of the mountain, to maybe catch up with him.

In the meantime or at some point, Sgt. Bill Bradley and Sgt. Jack Lillich found themselves surrounded by Germans in a small house. They had no choice but to surrender as they were also out of ammunition. A unique thing happened to them when they were still together in a POW camp deep inside Germany. They were liberated by their own Charlie Company of the 62nd AIB of the 14th Armored Division. We later referred to them as the Sundance Kids at division reunions.

Upon returning to the States, Bradley took an examination to see if he could qualify for admission to West Point. None of us knew at the time that he had all those smarts. He got an endorsement from his former platoon leader, Edwin M. Kosik, later to become a Federal District Judge, and he was admitted. He went on to make the Army his career, and retired a bird Colonel. Bill was from Portland, Maine, but chose to retire to the mountains of North Carolina. Once my wife, June, and I spent the night with him and his wife, Dell, in a beautiful snow-covered setting. We celebrated with a bottle of champagne by a roaring fireplace on a very cold night. Bill lost his wife to cancer several years ago, and in a more recent time he succumbed to a similar malady.

Jack Lillich was not without some smarts himself. He was from Rochester, N.Y., and became a high school teacher. He later got his masters and doctorate, and became a professor at a prominent university in the Midwest, the name of which now escapes my memory. I recall what a good time the two of us had at one of our reunions. He had brought

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a half gallon of the best wine you ever tasted; the two of us, sitting across the table from each other, told many tales and solved all the world's problems.

Years later at one of the Division reunions, I asked Lt. Col. Howard Trammell, retired, how he managed to escape out of Bannstein. Our company commander—back then a captain—answered that he simply walked out, down and along the road leading to the town of Barental. He must have made it out just ahead of our attempt.

¹VanSomeren did an outstanding job during his term as President of the 14th A.D. Association.

7 Just Walking Away

The trouble with just walking away was not knowing how far back we had reestablished our lines, or if in fact this was the case. When the German contingent came up on our left flank and opened fire, I saw our lead scout and two or three others at the head of the column disappear over a ridge. They would escape being caught, at least for now, unlike most of the rest of the column. The machine gun, which had held its fire as those surrendering started over, opened up again just as I reached the foot of the mountain. It was wishful thinking that I would catch up with the GI who had a head start on me.

It is almost dusk this New Year's Day, 1945 and I found myself all alone, scrambling up this snow-covered Vosges Mountain. It was bitterly cold, with a half foot of snow slowing my progress. The machine gun opened up again; its rat-a-tat-tat encouraged the slipping and clawing of my vertical ascent. I could almost feel its sights turning on me, knowing if it did that it would all be over. I saw a large boulder jutting out up in front of me, and headed straight for it. The M-1 now strapped to my back was a hindrance, but even with one last clip, keeping it gave me a feeling of security. If I could make it to that rock, I thought I would be out of the gun's sights. I finally tumbled underneath it into a small depression which fit my small frame perfectly. The machine gun continued to chatter amid the sound of burp guns and other small

arms fire. I felt safe for the moment but tears began to well in my eyes as the face of my mother flashed before me. It struck me that I didn't even have a picture of her in my wallet though I had one of my girlfriend. It was the thought of my mother that got to me, thinking about her receiving the dreaded telegram of regret. How callous of me not to have a snapshot of her. I soon realized that I had to put aside thoughts of home and childhood friends, pull myself together and stop feeling sorry for myself. The cold and numbness of my feet had me removing the snow-packs, changing socks, and doing some massaging.

I knew I couldn't stay in this hole but had to wait for darkness to move out. The machine gun had gone silent with only sporadic gunfire heard as I prepared to leave. I could hear guttural voices and the movement of vehicles on the road right below me. I decided to head farther away from this activity, straight up the mountain, picking out some of the roughest terrain. The mountain was heavily forested with many evergreens and lots of undergrowth. A little way up I came upon a snow-covered path, running horizontal to my vertical travel. As I took it, I stumbled and fell. When I picked myself up my gloved hand scraped the snow off of a frozen uniformed body. I kicked more snow off of my find and could see the uniform was German. Then, there was a second dead German right next to this one. It crossed my mind that disguising in German attire could help get me through German lines. It was a fleeting thought, as it also crossed my mind, if caught I would likely be shot on the spot. I trudged on, following the easy hiking path a short way, before switching off towards the peak.

Nearing the peak, I stopped to listen. There was the sound of artillery in the distance, and it was the unmistakable pounding of our own artillery. It was the sound of hope. I turned in its direction and headed more westward, instead of continuing on toward the peak. I could only estimate the time and distance I had been walking. My slip-on type of wrist watch had been missing since the reconnaissance patrol back in November. I guessed that I had been marching three or more

hours since vacating the cave-like hole under the rock. I pulled out the D-ration chocolate bar, the only food I had, took a bite and washed it down with a little snow. The snow does little to quench the thirst, and the water in my canteen was long gone. It was a clear starlit night, but there was no moon as I trekked on, listening and following the sound of artillery. I soon became fatigued, and felt the urge to rest, so I took a seat on a large rotten log deep in the snow-covered mountain forest. It must have been some time after midnight, now the 2nd day of January. It is eerily quiet but for the distant pounding of artillery. It has got to be our own guns, I tried to convince myself.

I was anxious to press on after a few minutes, and had gone a short way, when there on the ground in front of me was a black wire cable. It was running north and south, not exactly in the direction I was headed. I hardly broke stride as I took out my knife and cut it in two. This was the first use of a nice hunting knife my mother had sent, along with a fruitcake, a little while before Christmas. This could not be one of our telephone wires, and I wondered if I had already slipped by German positions.

I crossed over one mountain, up another, and from the downside looked into the valley at a small village. I could make out smoke curling up from a building and maybe a dim light leaking through the window of another house. I thought this might be my opportunity to seek help from a Frenchman, some relief from the cold, and some food. It even crossed my mind perhaps he would hide me while I waited for our forces to retake the area. How great that would be! I had heard, and read in the *Stars and Stripes* newspaper, about this kind of thing happening to one or more of our airmen who had been shot down. My daydreaming, or rather, night dreaming, was short lived as I saw two Germans, rifles slung over their shoulders; emerge from one of the houses. I turned away and moved on towards the sound of the big guns.

Months later, following my freedom, while being debriefed, I was asked if MIA day, missing-in-action (01-01-45) and date of surrender or cap-

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ture, were one and the same. When I responded in the negative, the debriefing officer then asked for my date of capture. When I told him I was not certain of the date, he pressed for my best estimate, so I gave him 6 January. Years later, upon reflection, I believe it was more like 4 January. It seemed longer than it was, probably because I was so fatigued and miserable in the cold and snow. Inasmuch as I was alone when captured, the army had no choice but to accept the date I gave them. I simply lost track of time, and after all these years, believe the date of record is incorrect.

I pressed on, up another mountain and down the other side. I had this great urge to sleep, and spotting some heavy undergrowth with an overhanging arbor of vines, moved into it. It reminded me of an ideal habitat or refuge for deer. There was little snow underneath it, and I stretched out on some brambles in a semi-exhausted state. I had heard or read about people freezing to death in their sleep under this kind of condition. Looking at the stars through the openings in my roof, I fell asleep. The cold sweat from the exertion of the climb awakened me. I was too uncomfortable, in fact I was miserable, got up and left the deer-like habitat. I found myself wishing, praying, that it would hurry up and become daylight.

It is the same ambiguous dilemma for the infantryman when he is part of a cohesive fighting force. The night generally brings on quieter times for him, and some respite from the tenseness and anxiety of the day's action, so night is his fervent wish. Darkness falls, and he becomes more cold and miserable as he huddles in his foxhole, trying to sleep, trying to rest. But there is something about the dawn of a new day, and he yearns for the light, even when he knows the morning means another attack.

I had that same wish in my bid to survive. I had been confining my movements primarily to night-time and as dawn finally broke found myself plodding carelessly along this mountain plateau. It appeared that the forest along this part of my journey

was less dense. There also seemed to be less snow on the ground, maybe only two or three inches. I looked around, surveying this relatively flat area, and saw two Germans running straight towards me, maybe two football fields away. Instinctively I hit the ground in the prone position, taking dead aim at the moving bodies. The two were holding rifles at their sides and running pretty fast. As they drew closer, a hundred yards or less, they veered off to their left, my right, and didn't see me. I stayed trained on them until they were out of sight. I had taken the safety off, and now wondered if the mechanism might not be frozen. I had not thought to check it for some time.

I continued on my march in the same general direction where I first saw the two Germans running towards me. I stopped and listened to the pounding of artillery and feared the sounds were playing tricks on me. It seemed they were coming from more than one direction and didn't seem to be echoes. I had become less cautious and pressed on in the daylight, uncertain if I was on the right track towards our lines.

It was disheartening to peer from the downside of that mountain and see nothing but one snow-covered mountain peak after another in my line of travel. It is an awesome sight, especially with no signs of civilization in view, though I thought there were villages in the general area. I grew wearier and more fatigued as I headed down into another valley. I was hungry, the D-bar of concentrated protein and vitamins was long gone, and thirsty, the snow doing little to quench my thirst.

I felt desperate in my attempt to survive but nonetheless headed up another mountain, picking some of the roughest terrain I could find. There is a maxim that everyone has a breaking point, and I felt I was close to mine. I don't know how to describe my physical and mental state except numb to the bone from the cold, even my brain seemed numb. I didn't care anymore, to hell with it, though the will to survive remained strong.

My circumstance reminded me of a Pfc. telling me about orders he and another Pfc. received one day. He was trying to explain how he and his buddy felt. Their mission had all the appear-

ances of suicide as the German 88 was zeroed in on where they were ordered to cross. The only hope of making it across the open ground was to go as fast as they could go, to be beyond the gun's sights. I recall his saying, "We started out running, then we jogged, and finally out of breath could only walk. We had all but given up and thought to ourselves, "let the bastards shoot us, they will anyway, to hell with them. We were completely exhausted." The German gun opened up on them but they dived into a nearby canal, and managed to make it.

It turned dark again, and I became conscious of having marched all day. I had skirted around what looked like German dug-in positions on the side of a mountain. Spotting of these positions and the direction they faced gave me an added incentive to hurry in the same general direction. It gave me some assurance I was still headed in the right direction, though the distant artillery sounds also left me with some uncertainty.

It had started to snow again as I left the foot of another mountain. I didn't think I could keep going much longer, and made a pact with myself. The pact, when I made it to daylight again and saw any sign of civilization, I would deal with it, for good or ill. I had now lost all track of time and struck out towards the summit of a taller mountain, having traveled and struck out towards the summit of a taller mountain, having traversed a smaller one since making my decision. It continued to snow as I reached the rounded summit and moved around to see if I could spot anything on the other side. My hopes rose when I saw the outline of a small village in the valley below, several buildings covered with snow. There was no light to be seen anywhere in the village in these wee hours of the morning, and having no watch could only guess how long I would have to wait for dawn. It couldn't be long in coming; that at least is my fervent hope. I contemplated what to do with my M-1, whether to toss it or keep it. I leaned against a large boulder for a few minutes and then walked up and down to keep warm. It seemed dawn would never come, but thought it imperative

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to wait for daylight.

The sky cleared, and the sun is glistening off the snow. I continued studying the village for signs of life, but did not waiver in my decision to risk going in. I knew I must, in order to have a chance at survival. I just wanted to see some sign of life, but there were none, not even movement of a chicken. The place seemed to be totally deserted, and appeared to have been heavily bombed and shelled. I wondered about the name of this town?

Then a thin twirling smoke rose from a chimney about in the middle of the village. I started to stash the M-1 under a nearby rock, changed my mind; the feeling of security is too

great. I headed on down the mountain towards the village and slung the rifle over my shoulder with the barrel pointing to the ground. I couldn't help but reflect upon the fate of the German still holding on to his rifle when Sgt. Maier cut him down. There is a lot of open ground to cross at the base of the mountain towards the village, but I didn't hesitate upon reaching the clearing. No problems appeared as I made my way into the village.

The large masonry building I entered is only half standing, damaged by bombs and shells. The place is devoid of any kind of furniture or anything upon which to lay one's head. I have now come to a small wooden door which is closed, and barely hesitated upon turning the knob to enter. It

is a relatively small inner room with no windows and the only piece of furniture is a large wooden table up against a wall. I closed the door before lifting myself onto the table and removing my snow-packs which had been a life-saver, and would continue to be for things yet to come.

There was no heat in the room, but at least I was out of the snow and bitter cold. I removed wet socks and massaged red numbed feet; then put on clean dry socks I had been carrying next to my body, along with an extra pair of inner soles for the boots. I placed the boots under my head and stretched out on this wonderfully dry, hard table, and in no time I was experiencing "death's second self:" a welcome sound sleep. ■

COLONEL JIRI ZENAHLIK: THE FAKE LIBERATOR

by

Jim Lankford, National Historian

Fair Warning. This is not an uplifting story, but it involves the 14th Armored Division, and as a result, should be reported.

It is a sad fact that from time to time we come across individuals who falsely claim to have served in combat units that fought famous battles or say they committed acts of heroism while facing great odds. It was only a matter of time before we found an individual who picked the 14th Armored Division as the basis for such a false claim. What dumbfounded me was the nationality of the individual, his official military rank, and the level of recognition he received. It is an amazing story, and here is how it all unfolded.

SomemonthsagoIreceivedanemail via the Association's official website (<http://www.14tharmoreddivision.org/>) asking for information about one Col. Jiri Zenahlik, a retired officer of the Czechoslovakian Army. The email went as follows:

Hello,

I am a journalist from largest Czech daily newspaper. We are investigating affair of enormous public importance and I would have a very urgent query for you.

I simply need to verify the presence

of one Czech soldier in the 14th Armored Division (Liberator) in 1944 and 1945.

His name is JIRI ZENAHLIK (first name and surname), born 20th May 1921, Czech citizen. He claims to be a member of the 14th Armored Division (Liberator) of the US Army in 1944 and 1945. At that time, his division was located in England, and subsequently moved to France.

Could you please verify this for me today???

Or give me some directions where to find this information???

Thanks so much, it is urgent

Ondrej Stastny, MF DNES reporter, Prague, Czech Rep.

A check of the Division Overseas Roster located in the back of the division history, revealed no soldier named Jiri Zenahlik. I reported this information to Mr. Stastny along with the fact that the 14th Armored Division was never in England. I added that on occasion I have been contacted by people who confused the 4th Armored Division with the 14th, and that the 4th was in England before landing in Normandy. Perhaps, I suggested, Col. Zenahlik had mistaken the 14th for the 4th.

Of course, I also wanted to be certain that Col. Zenahlik was not among

the several hundred Czech soldiers liberated by Col. England's 94th Cavalry Squadron at Creussen, Germany. For this reason I wrote Mr. Stastny a brief description of the events at Creussen with the caution that if Col. Zenahlik was one of the liberated Czech soldiers who fought so bravely alongside the 94th Cavalry at Creussen, he deserved to be honored by his countrymen. As my correspondence with Mr. Stastny continued, I learned this was not the case.

Dear Mr. Lankford,

Thank you very much for your excellent and quick cooperation!

Just to let you know: Mr. Zenahlik was awarded the highest presidential honour for his engagement in the US Army in the WW2. However, as leading Czech military historians say, Mr. Zenahlik had never been in the West. So it is gonna be quite a scandal in the Czech Republic now. Your information was a very valuable source in this respect.

Very best regards,

Ondrej Stastny, reporter,
Prague, Czech Rep.

After reading this I conducted an

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Internet search which revealed the following information about Col. Zenahlik, the award he received, and his claim to have served with the 14th Armored Division.

COPYRIGHT 2008 Financial Times Ltd. (From Czech News Agency)

Prague, Oct 28 (CTK) - This is a list of the personalities whom Czech President Vaclav Klaus awarded on the national holiday today, the anniversary day of establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918: Order of the White Lion, 1st Class ... to: retired colonel Jiri Zenahlik (1921) for contribution to the defence and security of the state and excellent combat activities Colonel Jiri Zenahlik is a hero of the struggle for freedom against the Nazi and communist totalitarian regimes. During World War Two he fled to Britain and as a member of the U.S. Army he took part in the Landing in Normandy, the fighting on the western front and the liberation of Czechoslovakia. http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary_0286-35673562_ITM

And from the transcript of a radio interview on Czechoslovakian radio:

One of those who remembers life in Vojna is Jiri Zenahlik, a lieutenant during the war who was imprisoned by the communists in 1952. He survived to old age in part, he says, in the hopes of teaching young people about the past. It happens, though, that they often refuse to believe the story he has to tell:

"I was sent to Germany during the war as a forced labourer, but I managed to escape to France. I then returned home with the Americans' 14th armored division. For all my service to my country I was labeled a traitor and a spy and received a death sentence in 1952. I was 26 years-old. I spent 23 days on death row, but ultimately my sentence was reduced. I was then sent to various prisons and camps, including this one."

<http://incentraleurope.radio.cz/ice/article/66761>

Amazingly, just this year Col. Zenahlik received The Order of the White Lion, 1st Class, Czechoslovakia's

highest award, from President Vaclav Klaus in recognition of his claim of serving in the 14th Armored Division during WWII. Needless to say, I was shocked, and said as much to Mr. Stastny. Armed with the information I had given him, Mr. Stastny met with Col. Zenahlik, and confronted him with the facts. Here is his response as reported by Mr. Stastny.

Dear Mr. Lankford,

Thanks so much for your emails.

Well, I was talking to Mr. Zenahlik yesterday, his testimony is very confused. He insists that he joined the US Army in England, that means he did not join the 14th division, because it had never been in England. When I raised this argument,

Mr. Zenahlik replied: "Ok, ok. In fact, I am not absolutely sure I joined the 14th division, it probably was some other."

You say that some veterans tend to confuse 14th and 4th divisions. However, Mr. Zenahlik could not serve in the 4th either, because he claims to arrive in England in September 1944. As you say: By that time, the 4th US Division was in France already.

There is another very strong argument against Mr. Zenahlik's testimony. Central Military Archive in Prague have absolutely no records about Zenahlik in the West. "Our records of Czech WW2 soldiers in the West are very precise and complete. I am almost sure Mr. Zenahlik had never been in the West," the chairman said.

The third point: It was a legal duty of every Czechoslovak soldier to contact Czechoslovak command in England as soon as they reached England. According to the historians, it is highly unlikely that Mr. Zenahlik would somewhat dodge this duty and contact US Officers directly.

Thanks for your excellent cooperation.

Very best wishes,

Ondrej Stastny, reporter

Well, that settles it. In my opinion Col. Stastny has been exposed as a charlatan who claimed to be a combat veteran of the 14th Armored Division - A fake Liberator. I have been waiting to hear the end result of all this from

Mr. Stastny, but so far have heard nothing.

I do not know if the Czechoslovakian government will rescind its award of the Order of the White Lion, 1st Class or otherwise punish Col. Zenahlik, but I do know he has ruined himself by falsely claiming to be one of the LIBERATORS of the 14th Armored Division.

I will submit an update to The Liberator on how this all turns out, if and when I hear something.

Jim Lankford

National Historian

They're Back! Church Bulletins:

Thank goodness for church ladies with typewriters. These sentences actually appeared in church bulletins or were announced in church services:

- The Fasting & Prayer Conference includes meals.

- The sermon this morning: "Jesus Walks on the Water." The sermon tonight: "Searching for Jesus."

- Our youth basketball team is back in action Wednesday at 8 p.m. in the recreation hall. Come out and watch us kill Christ the King.

- Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Bring your husbands.

- The peacemaking meeting scheduled for today has been canceled due to a conflict.

- Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our community. Smile at someone who is hard to love. Say "Hell" to someone who doesn't care much about you.

- Don't let worry kill you off - let the Church help.

- Miss Charlene Mason sang "I will not pass this way again," giving obvious pleasure to the congregation.

GENERAL JACOB L. DEVERS and THE AMERICAN THUNDERBOLT

By James Lankford, National Historian - 14th Armored Division Association

Following the Battle of Hatten-Rittershoffen, General Jacob L. Devers, commanding officer of Sixth Army Group said: At Hatten and Ritterssoffen the 14th Armored Division fought one of the greatest defensive battles of the war. This was high praise indeed, especially as it came from the man who knew more about combined arms, armored warfare than anyone else in the US Army. Here is the story of General Devers and the Armored Force.

In May and June of 1940 the German Army overran the Low Countries, Belgium and France in what came to be known as Blitzkrieg or "Lightning War." The German offensive lasted only a few short weeks as powerful, highly mobile German armored formations swept around and through all that stood in their way. The world was stunned by the speed and completeness of the German victory. It was clear that warfare had entered a completely new era in which large armored forces dominated the modern battlefield. By the time the German Army reached the shore of the English Channel, it had ten fully equipped armored divisions, and scores of infantry divisions. In stark contrast, the U.S. Army was, in a word, feeble. Still worse, it possessed only a handful of outdated tanks organized into a single mechanized brigade, and a few infantry-tank units. In the years following the end of the First World War, army and civilian leadership failed to recognize the value of armor, and as a result allocated few resources to the development of armored doctrine, tactics, and equipment.

Army leadership realized that should America be drawn into the fighting, it would need an armored force - Lightning - of its own, to counter the German Blitzkrieg. It was envisioned as a force of strong, well-equipped and well-trained armored units that could meet the veteran German Army on the field of battle, and prevail. With this in mind, the new armored force was nicknamed the "Thunderbolt." It came into being on 10 July 1940 under the command of Major General Adna Chaffee.

In early 1941, with the daunting task of building the Armored Force scarcely underway, Chaffee became critically ill. The timing could not have been worse

since the organization was suffering from serious problems. Personnel issues with certain key staff officers, power struggles among the senior staff, and poor cooperation between the various branches, particularly Cavalry and Infantry, were creating havoc. Chaffee's illness, and the forced absences from his command for treatment exacerbated the problems. As spring turned to summer, the situation became serious, and word of it reached the ever vigilant ears of the Army Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall. Marshall decided to send a proven trouble-shooter to the Armored Force Headquarters at Fort Knox to determine the validity and extent of the problems. Marshall chose Major General Jacob L. Devers for the assignment. Devers, a graduate of West Point (1909), was an artilleryman. Unlike some of his better known contemporaries, "Jakie" as he was called by his friends, was not flamboyant, and did not seek publicity for himself. He was a hard working, dedicated officer who preferred to meet problems head on. An affable fellow by nature, Devers led by example with an ease and confidence that got results, and engendered strong personal loyalties among those who served under him.

In his current assignment as the commanding officer of the 9th Infantry Division and camp commandant of Fort Bragg, Devers successfully met and overcame a daunting series of problems. Foremost of these challenges was getting the badly delayed expansion of Fort Bragg back on schedule so it would be ready to receive the imminent influx of new troops. Under his command, Fort Bragg mushroomed in just nine months into the largest cantonment-style installations in the U.S. Army. The facility had a capacity of over 68,000 troops, and was still growing rapidly when Devers left. Asked how he had accomplished such a feat, Devers replied in words that typified his leadership style: Our policy was a simple one: Recognize the wonderful talents of the men and women at hand, and give them jobs and responsibilities within their capabilities.

After a brief consultation with Marshall, Devers flew to Fort Knox to investigate the reported problems. The

next day he returned to Marshall's office with his findings; it was a mess at Knox. Within hours of returning to Fort Bragg, Devers received orders to report to Fort Knox as the new Chief of the Armored Force. The critically ill Chaffee handed over command from his hospital bed. He died just three weeks later.

Devers assumed command of the Armored Force on 1 August 1941. As its chief he was responsible for the development and implementation of armored doctrine, as well as the training of personnel, and the procurement of equipment for his armored units. Wishing to address the serious problems known to exist within the Armored Force as quickly as possible, Marshall told Devers to report directly to him without bothering to make appointments. He told Devers to walk into his office, regardless of who was there, and sit down. Marshall would talk with him as soon as there was a lull in the existing meeting. This practice effectively by-passed Lieutenant General Leslie J. McNair, Chief of the Army Ground Forces. McNair's authority extended to the armored divisions and independent tank battalions, as well as the Armored Force itself, but shortly after Devers assumed command, McNair adopted a hands off policy regarding the Armored Force. The fact that Devers and McNair served in the same artillery battery as young lieutenants, and were long time friends, undoubtedly made this highly unusual arrangement more acceptable to the authoritarian McNair. As a result, Devers enjoyed unparalleled freedom of action in building the Armored Force.

When Devers arrived at Fort Knox to take command, the Armored Force had four armored divisions, on paper at least, as well as a handful of independent tank battalions. Although trained and equipped, the 1st and 2d Armored Divisions were under strength. The 3d and 4th Armored Divisions had been activated a few months earlier, but did not yet have sufficient personnel or equipment to begin training. The Armored Force staff was in disarray; a condition which adversely affected virtually every aspect of the command.

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Pictures That May Bring Back Memories

It often has been said that a picture is worth a thousand words. We don't know if any of the photographs reproduced here are quite that descriptive, but they will, no doubt, bring back memories for some of you old Liberators. These photos were taken by the U.S. Army Signal Corps. We are grateful to whoever "rescued" the photos and passed them on to us (through channels) for publication. Please let *The Liberator* editor know who that person is or was if you have such information.



Medics of the 47th TK Bn. are pictured here carrying a wounded German prisoner down from hills near Steinbach, Germany where the Germans put up stiff resistance for the town in early April of 1945.



Pictured here making an assault on Gemunden, Germany on April 6, 1945 are members of Co. C, 62nd AIB, Tanks could not be used in the assault because of the blown bridge shown in the background.



Pictured are German prisoners captured north of Steinbach being marched to the rear past a column of the 14th Armored Division.



Above: This is a picture reproduced many times since it was snapped late in the war as the 14th AD raced across Germany. Standing at the left talking to a sergeant is Maj. Gen. A.C. Smith, commander of the 14th Armored Division, as German prisoners of war are rounded up. Legend has it that even the General took a prisoner that day.



Left: This scene testifies to the ferocity of the fighting that took place in Hatten and Rittershoffen in January of 1945. This picture was snapped about two months after the battle as the last big push by American forces to subdue the Nazis got under way.

NOTICE TO ALL THOSE PLANNING TO ATTEND THE REUNION IN GREEN BAY



A finalized schedule of events for the National Reunion in Green Bay is not available at this time, but plans are moving ahead. The schedule, along with the registration form, will appear in the summer issue of *The Liberator*, as will the hotel reservation form. Hotel arrangements have been finalized with Regency Suites in Green Bay, which will be our reunion site September 9-13.

THE AMERICAN THUNDERBOLT

(Continued from page 13)

Training was seriously hampered by the lack of tanks, qualified trainers, and training aids. The challenges facing the new chief were great indeed.

Devers hit the problems head-on. He had no patience with bureaucratic red tape, and his method of handling it was to keep pushing until the tape broke. Devers and his staff also bypassed much of the red tape by establishing direct contacts with the other branches, as well as certain private industries. Although he undoubtedly ruffled a few feathers with this approach, Devers' good nature and preference for compromise, cooperation, and team effort proved to be successful.

The large-scale army maneuvers conducted in the fall of 1941 made it abundantly clear that the traditional cavalry approach to using armored forces would not work on the modern battlefield. Further complicating the situation was the problem of inter-branch rivalries, particularly between the cavalry and infantry officers. The ongoing struggle between members of these two branches created great difficulties in the development of armored doctrine, and adversely affected training. Devers observed that cavalry officers like MG George S. Patton wanted to run around in light tanks like horse cavalry armed only with the little 37mm popguns. Conversely, the infantry officers wanted the tanks to serve solely as infantry support. Neither view was correct, and Devers took quick action. He relieved those officers who would not abandon their branch

loyalties, along with others who were simply not up to the task of handling the complexities posed by combined arms warfare. In Patton's case, Devers decided that a face to face confrontation was the best method to resolve the problem. Devers and Patton had been friends since they were classmates at West Point. Prepared to relieve his old friend of command of the 2nd Armored Division if he could not be brought around, Devers flew to Fort Benning, where Patton's division was training. After finishing dinner with Patton and his wife, Devers got to the reason for his visit. He reminded him that he, not Patton, was the Chief of the Armored Force, and he was going to make the decisions about how things would be done. Devers ended his comments by pointedly asking Patton if he was going to play ball? In response, Patton stood up with a grin on his face, and gave Devers a snappy salute. He then promised to follow Devers' orders. Shortly afterward, on Devers' recommendation, Patton was given command of the 1st Armored Corps, and sent to the Desert Training Center in California to continue training the 1st and 2nd Armored Divisions.

To further instill in his officers what he termed an armored way of thinking, Devers established an Officer Candidate School (OCS) at Fort Knox. Officer candidates from all branches who were to serve in the Armored Force attended OCS there. The candidates nicknamed the school, the "Devers School" because every man who graduated knew without a doubt that he was an armored officer first and foremost, while any loyalty to his particular branch must be subordinated to a secondary

role within the overall framework of combined arms, armored warfare.

Shortly after assuming command of the Armored Force, Devers found that he had inherited a poor medium tank, the M3 Grant. Its replacement, the M4 Sherman, was still in the planning stage, and far from going into production. Understanding the urgent need for a better tank, Devers took immediate action to get the Sherman into production. A few months later, the new tank began rolling off the assembly lines, and into the hands of the troops. As production continued Devers saw to it that the tank received a more powerful engine, a better suspension, and many other improvements.

Devers discovered another glaring deficiency in the equipment of the Armored Force. There were no self-propelled artillery weapons that could keep pace with his tanks and armored infantry. For his armored divisions to truly function as effective, combined arms units Devers understood he must somehow provide them with powerful, armored, self-propelled artillery weapons. The problem was solved when someone on his staff suggested mounting the new 105mm howitzer on a medium tank chassis. Devers quickly recognized the potential in this artillery-tank hybrid, and pushed the development effort forward as quickly as possible. By April 1942, the M7 Priest, a self-propelled, 105mm howitzer was in production. Thanks to Devers American armored divisions went into combat with the "Sunday Punch" of the armored field artillery up close and ready for action at a moments notice.

Another technical innovation De-

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THE AMERICAN THUNDERBOLT

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vers brought to the Armored Force was the use of the small, single-engine Stinson aircraft. Nicknamed "Grasshoppers," these light planes were very successful in a number of roles. Not only were they used as liaison planes to rapidly transport officers between units in the field, they served as air observation posts for directing artillery fire, flew in front of armored columns to warn them of enemy strong points, and scouted ahead for the best routes of travel. Devers brought about many other innovations, but his most important contribution to the growth and development of the Armored Force was the creation of doctrine and tactics that produced a truly formidable combined arms force. Among his achievements in this area was Devers' steadfast adherence to the concept that a tank was the best weapon to fight a tank. Ignoring McNair's unrelenting support of Tank Destroyers as the primary weapon for fighting tanks, Devers developed and

implemented Armored Force doctrine and tactics in which his tanks would fight enemy tanks. Under his direction doctrine for armored divisions grew significantly from the original cavalry-based model he inherited to encompass a variety of missions including breaking through enemy defenses, attacking to seize tactically important ground, attacking on a narrow front, and when necessary, destroying enemy armored formations.

On 22 September 1942 Devers was promoted to Lt. General. The following May, after serving nearly two years as Chief of the Armored Force, Devers was sent to London where he assumed command of the European Theater of Operations. He left behind an Armored Force consisting of 16 armored divisions and sixty-three independent tank battalions. He had inherited a fledgling, struggling nucleus of an Armored Force. He brought it from infancy to maturity, and molded it into a combined arms fighting force second to none. The official history of the Armored Force described Devers' accom-

plishments with certainty: General Jacob L. Devers was the man primarily responsible for developing and expanding the Armored Force.... beyond even the dreams of [MG Chaffee] its first chief.

General Devers forged the American Thunderbolt, and the armored divisions like the 14th Armored that fought their way across western Europe, and overran Germany were his creation. To many of the men who served in those armored divisions Devers was the true father of the Armored Force.

POSTSCRIPT

A longer version of this article is scheduled for publication in *On Point: The Journal of Army History*. *On Point* is published by the Army Historical Foundation.

In closing, here is the quote that all 14th AD Liberators appreciate: "At Hatten and Rittershoffen the 14th Armored Division fought one of the greatest defensive battles of the war." General Jacob L. Devers, U.S.A., 6th Army Group

Battles Fought by B-62nd Vividly Recalled

by Edward Graves, Jr., Rifle Sergeant, United States Army
Company B of the 62nd AIB, 14th Armored Division

INTRODUCTION

My name is Edward "Bud" Graves, Jr. I was born and raised in Lindsay, Oklahoma, and graduated from high school at the age of 18. I attended Oklahoma A&M College for two years before being inducted into the Army.

My dad was a mule dealer and bought, sold and shipped mules to Memphis, Tennessee; Atlanta, Georgia; and Fort Worth, Texas. Dad was born and raised in Arkansas and traded horses all his life, even as a small boy. At the age of 22, he bought a farm and gave it to his mother and dad. In his early days, he ran the livery stable, always dealing with horses. When World War I came along, mules became very high and it was a very lucrative business. I saw my dad, who traded horses all his life, watch horses and mules lose out to tractors. During the depression, dad got caught with a bunch of mules. Bill Hale, the biggest mule man in the State of Oklahoma, called my dad one day and asked him if he got caught with some mules. Dad explained to him that he had. He told dad that he had the

contract to build a road (US 70) from Ringling to Waurika. So during that period, dad built highways for about three years. Then, when Roosevelt was elected president, the mule market came back strong. I had a wonderful life growing up during that period because my dad had a mule barn and we always had a lot going on. Then I saw the horse and mule market collapse due to tractors and we had a new era to live under.

When I graduated from high school, dad had always instilled in me to get an education, I worked on the pipeline before I entered college. I had some cousins who were pipe liners and they took me with them that summer of 1941 and I made enough money to go to college that year. The second year they were not in a position to get me a job. So I made a broom corn crop and made enough money to go to college my second year before I was inducted into the Army. I was baptized in the Baptist Church when I was 12 years old and it was my faith in God and my training that prevailed in me and protected me

during the war experiences that I endured. I learned what hard work was growing up, working the broom corn fields and doing other farm labor. As a kid, I always had a team and I got \$1.50 for my team and \$1.50 for myself, which made \$3.00 a day. I worked with grown men that had families that only made \$1.50 a day and I would wonder how they fed their families.

It was the faith that I had in my Heavenly Father that sustained me during the war. I felt so fortunate that I was able to come home alive and in good health, whereas some of the boys that were with me did not make it. So I will always be indebted to the Lord for giving me that extra life that those others didn't have. I like to tell this story so people will understand how fortunate I was. I recall the first combat I saw and I was praying the prayer... *though I walk through the valley of death, Thou art with me*. The boys with me, when we would have services, would all follow me over to a tree somewhere where a priest would talk with us.

I want to emphasize one story. We

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B-62nd Battles

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had a Catholic priest named Father Casey, who would always come among us and hold a service. During the Battle of the Bulge, we had been pulled back into a town for rest when he came into town. I remember the boys came running to me saying, "Here comes Father Casey, go talk to him." I stopped him, but didn't salute him, and I said, "Father, how's it going up north?" And he stated that the sun had come out that morning and the P-51s and P-47s were really raking those German columns. He looked at me and smiled and said, "Graves, how come your face is so dirty?" And I said, "Father, I haven't had my boots off in 10 days." He kind of petted me and said, "I understand, son."

One other instance that happened that I want to point out was they pulled a task force out to service a link between two different divisions as they attacked. We had ridden about 40 miles in the half-track and I always sat in the middle over the transmission because of the warmth that it put out. We had about 10 tanks and about 3 platoons of infantry soldiers in this task force. I recall we heard a loud knock on the door and they hollered, "Graves, get out of there, we want to talk to you." I recall when I got out, when the wind hit me it really woke me up. There were probably 5 or 6 of the toughest sergeants we had standing around the half-track. They told me they wanted me to go forward and hear a conversation between General Patch, Commander of the 7th Army, General Smith of the 14th Armored Division, and Colonel Myers, Commander of the 62nd Armored Infantry Battalion. I recall just walking off and not saying a word and headed to where a tank was ahead of us about 50 yards, surrounded by these officers. As I approached the tank, a major came out to meet me. I didn't bother to salute him or anything and went on the other side of the tank, dropped to my knees and began to look at the tracks and the boogies. I worked my way around the tank, as I had my rifle on my shoulder where I could get under the tank. When I stopped, these army officers were standing close to me and I heard the conversation. Myers told General Smith that we needed to send the men for a rest period. He, in turn, looked at Patch and asked him what he thought about it and Patch replied, "do what you want to." So I had my answer and I got

up and walked back toward the tanks. The major followed me for a ways and then turned around. I proceeded on to my half-track, and hollered to the boys to get in their tracks and be still and I would pass the word on up that we were going to a rest area.

While I was in college, taking ROTC, I had completed 2 years of ROTC training and had made sergeant in my class. In October, 1942, I enlisted in the reserve corps for college students. So, in May, 1943, I was called to active duty. Myself and all other boys in the reserve corps, after being inducted and completing our basic training, both the sophomores and freshmen were in this class. We were inducted into the army just like regular draftees. They gave us no consideration for ROTC or our college training. I felt that was very unjust to our boys who were training, and later on in combat I realized how the ROTC training we received really helped us and the government should have given consideration for our training and made us more than just privates.

Gertwiller Battle, November 1944

As we were first committed to action, we moved by half-track to the edge of Gertwiller where we dismounted and moved into the town under the cover of darkness. The main part of the company took up positions north of town in a grape vineyard while 19 of us were sent into the middle of town to go to the east of the main part of town and north up a road to join the rest of the company. As we moved up that road, we ran into machine gun fire, as they had made contact with the main body which was north of town. It is very fortunate that it happened that way because they would have killed every one of us coming up that road. In the vineyard, we had Sgt. Curry shot by one of our men. Jerry Fields was with him when it happened and they laid quite a while on the ground before they heard our troops talking and they came out and got them. Charles Kaler jumped up to run and join them and was killed on his feet running. The mortar squad fired a short round that landed and killed the machine gun sergeant, Sheridan, and wounded Louie Phillips. We never knew exactly the extent of his injuries, but do know he was wounded badly.

We pulled back into town, the 19 of us, and took up positions in the center of town. In the meantime, the Germans came into town and got inside a church

and fired down on us from the church tower with bazookas, killing Griffith and wounding Holmes. I remember two tanks pulling up side by side and firing with tank guns into the church tower. As the bricks came tumbling down the Krauts screamed and about two to four hours later, they quit hollering and passed away.

At the break of day, they pulled us back and we attacked and took the French village of St. Pierre. It was during this battle of Gertwiller that Kenneth Gohene earned the Distinguished Service Cross, as he moved throughout the town during the night and captured a German prisoner who they questioned and obtained valuable information.

Before we ever went overseas, Gohene was usually AWOL. He would send telegrams to Captain Moore explaining the good time he was having and inviting him to come see him. Usually the next morning after we heard it, we would be told that they had picked him up and put him in the guard house. Then the next thing you would know, Gohene would be sent back down to the Company and would make a good soldier until he decided to take a leave of absence. We made 4-mile marches and Gohene would go along and pick flowers and go skipping to the front and give them to the Colonel. Everyone would laugh and the Colonel would wave at him to go to the rear and Gohene would just do as he pleased. Sgt. Kline, who used to run a beer truck and roll those big heavy barrels, was the only one that could handle him.

I toured Fort Knox about two months ago and noticed that Gohene had been given the Distinguished Service Cross, the second highest award that can be given to a soldier, and I was very pleased to read that inscription at the park where Patton's group was honored. I wish someone who reads this would know what happened to Gohene. The last time that I saw Gohene, he was the first scout leading Company B in the attack on St. Pierre, when a sniper leaned out a window and shot him. I recall a medic by the name of Allen went forward and knelt down and was doctoring him as we moved on toward the town.

But, as I said, we pulled out of the town to attack St. Pierre the next day and another unit came in and took Gertwiller. We had a boy from South Carolina named Campbell and I recall

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him coming back during the darkness of the night and called out my name as I always kidded him because he was the company runner and he never knew what was going on. As he stated, "you always tell me I don't know anything and I've already seen the Krauts and you're still here in the rear." As he moved north to contact the main body, he was killed on the way. I recall that he was from Greenwood, South Carolina.

The sad part of this story is, as we moved forward to attack Gertwiller that day, we came under artillery fire near a cemetery and took cover in a ditch. A jeep coming from the rear driven by the company jeep driver, and in the back was the company runner. They had three German prisoners on the hood of the jeep as they pulled up on the road where we were. The 1st Sergeant hollered out to them to shoot them. The three German soldier were lined up, as I vividly remember, one boy on the right kind of slumped over, one boy in the middle remained erect, and the boy on the left stood up and threw his chest out. They were hollering to shoot them and the company runner wheeled a 30-caliber machine gun around and shot all three of them. I never knew how cold my blood could feel until I watched something like that done by American troops. About three weeks later, attacking another town, one mortar shell fell among us, killing the company runner instantly. He was the only one killed that day. I recall that someone went that night in the company jeep and picked him up and brought him back.

St. Pierre Battle, November, 1944

After we pulled out of Gertwiller, we were brought to the assembly area where we were sent to take St. Pierre. Our artillery would start firing at 7:50 a.m. and fire for 10 minutes then lift and cease-fire. At 8:00, as we moved forward that morning, we had to cross a creek with a dam across it and a cable attached to both sides. Now this was all of B Company, of all the platoons in B Company. We learned later that Gohene, who was given the Distinguished Service Cross, had tied the cable at both ends so we could hold on to cross that dam. After we crossed the creek and began the attack on St. Pierre, Gohene was the #1 scout leading the company. A Kraut leaned out the window and shot

Gohene. As I said previously, a medic named Allen went forward to attend to Gohene's wounds. We then moved forward toward the building and fired on the building several times, and then moved into the town and took the town as the Krauts had left hurriedly. As we moved into town, the women of the town came out of the cellars to meet us and I had very white teeth and they led me down the street where everyone could see my teeth and they were giving me pears and fruit and that left me obliging to them. The boys in the company got a big kick out of it because I had a jacket full of fruit that we all enjoyed together. I never did learn what happened to Gohene and I still ask that question and hope I get an answer.

Phillipsburg, November, 1944

In December in Phillipsburg, we had moved further into the French country and took the attack at Phillipsburg. We left our half-tracks near Phillipsburg and went by foot to take the country just east of Phillipsburg and we had gone about two miles passing several pill boxes. After we had passed two or three pill boxes, we were stopped at about the 4th pillbox and had to take cover. We took up positions about the second pill box where the 3rd platoon was on the left side of the road all dug in in fox holes. On the right side of the road, the second platoon dug in and formed an arc covering the south side of the road. In the pill box right behind us was company headquarters with the first platoon joining the arc on the north to cover the northwest corner protecting the road. But the captain's headquarters was in the pill box. As we dug our fox holes, we sawed logs and put them over our fox holes. As we prepared for a fixed position, all was quiet for 3 or 4 days. On New Year's Eve night, the Krauts, as we were told later, consisted of thirty thousand soldiers, moved down that road toward us. In the meantime, we had moved in several companies of 4.2 mortars. As a task force moved forward to meet us, they came under fire from the mortars. I have never seen the ground shake so much as it did when those mortars fired on that task force. They fired volley after volley. We were told later that it broke up the task force and they pulled back for the night. On January 1st, they attacked us again during the day time. This time they brought the heavy artillery on our positions.

About the middle of the afternoon,

we were told to pull back. My sergeant, Neil Harrington, had been promoted to platoon sergeant and when the order came down to pull back, we had barbed wire all around our positions. And as we started to pull back, Neil came to me and told me, "Graves, you be the last man out and be sure all the forces go through the wire and then be the last man to leave." He said he was going back up to the pill box and ride that tank destroyer to our new position. We pulled back down the road and occupied the next pill box and went to digging in when dark came on us. It was at that time that Neil went missing in action. I recall a Sgt. Stigler stepping up and volunteering to go back and hunt for Neil and I volunteered to go with him. We were told we could not go back up there because those positions were occupied by German troops.

Later that night, about 2:00 a.m., they told us that we could take our squad and back it down into town and have some warm food. We went back into town, ate, and slept about three hours and then we were ordered to go back to the front. As we came out of the house, we were fired on by the Germans that had gotten behind us and were on the mountain looking down at us. These German troops were full of dope and drunk and were hollering at us and shooting at us and I recall very vividly that we had a soldier in the 2nd platoon who was with us and this Kraut would holler "Roosevelt's a lying blankity blank." This boy was from Iowa and he was called Rattler and I never knew his real name. He got the nickname because he had some teeth missing in front and he had traveled the country in freight cars and when he would talk he would move his tongue and it would rattle. He would holler back at the Krauts that Roosevelt was a great man and Hitler was a blankity blank. I later went down the road to where Rattler was and told him to be quiet because he was giving up our position and if they came down that road there was no way we could stop them.

We did not return their fire, we just lay quiet and waited. I recall going back to the line where there was a half-track and it had a 50-cal machine gun mounted on it. I got in but someone hadn't oiled it and another boy and I took hold of the operating lever and we could not move it to shoot. I've often wondered why I didn't take the gun off and take it by the fire and warm it

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MAIL CALL

ENJOYS LIBERATOR, CONTACT WITH 14TH AD VETS

Dear Mr. Hinrich,

Thank you so much for having sent to me the winter issue of *The Liberator*. I am always reading it with great pleasure because it is so well done and every time very interesting. It's a wonderful publication and all the more so since I can remember so many names of those who have become dear to my heart.

My best wishes to all who care for this publication; that God renew for many years their strength and good health, and their marvelous abilities. My best wishes also for you and the new Association President, Russell Barton, and all the members.

We had the pleasure of having at the beginning of October the visit of a former President, Robert McClarren, with relatives of his. He was engaged in the whole campaign in Northern Alsace in 1944-45. He visited Hatten and Rittershoffen on October 3rd.

A blessed Christmas and Happy New Year I wish for you all.

Rev. Georges Pfalzgraf

RECOGNIZED, UNDERSTOOD FATHER'S SERVICE

Dear Mr. Hinrich:

It is my sad duty to make known the death of my father, Donald L. Haynie, a member of the 14th Armored Division during WWII and, in recent years, a member of the 14th Armored Division Association. During the war, he served in the 68th AIB, Company A. Perhaps you would be kind enough to include him in "Taps." My father died on 5 June 2008.

It has been clear to me since childhood, that my father's character was permanently affected by his wartime

service. I think he would agree that the apotheosis of his military service (and perhaps of his life) came at Rittershoffen. Only in my maturity did I come to understand that he was affected only to a limited degree by cold, hunger, and dirt; more so by the loss of friends; but most indelibly by the lethal tasks he was required by duty to perform. Nothing in this should be construed to imply that his conduct was not honorable, simply that it was unpleasant in ways that words cannot express. He led a life of integrity and compassion. To my knowledge he had been a very good soldier.

My father was proud of his military service. It was my privilege to travel with him twice to Rittershoffen (and once without him). He and I attended at least one convention of the 14th Armored Division Association together. (I am an association member.) We enjoyed keeping in touch with the Association through *The Liberator*. Please allow me to express my gratitude to you and the other Association officers for your work on behalf of my father and his former colleagues in arms.

Sincerely,
Garv D. Havnie

LIFE MEMBER SEND POSTAGE

Hi Gus,

Bob McClarren reminded us that some "Life Members" forget to send contributions to the postage fund! Don and I enjoyed going with the 14th Armored group to France, Germany, etc. in 1984. Also looked forward to annual reunions, but we have to face our limitations now. So look forward to reading *The Liberator*.

James D. (Don) & Grace Fraser

THANKS FOR THE LIBERATOR

Dear Gus,

I just made a "Big Transaction" with Harold Kiehne on a green hat with that distinguished 14th emblem. So... he gave me orders to forward to you the "sum" so it is enclosed. Any questions, call Harold.

I was in HQ CCA with Gen. Karlstad and Archie Shaffer, McAllister, and Dan Gentry. Prior to Camp Campbell, it was Hdq. Co. 47th TK Bn. As Recon Platoon. Karlstad wanted an aide, but I turned him down until Dec. 25, '44 when I got a direct order to be his "gopher" maintenance officer. We ended up in Mettenheim, near Muhldorf, Germany.

I wish to thank you and Verlyn Hofer for such a grand publication, with photos! Should you have a list of "live" members of CCA with addresses, it will be greatly appreciated. Thanks again for all you do for us vets of the old 14th AD.

Best wishes,
James S. Russell

KEEP LIBERATOR GOING

Dear Gus,

Sending a check. I am a life member & want to help keep *The Liberator* going.

Thomas G. Smith, A-48

GRATEFUL FOR SERVICE

Dear Gus,

Keep up the good work. All of your devotion and dedication keeps the rest of us moving.

Sincerely,
Bill Fleming, B-19



MAIL CALL... Continued

KEEP ORGANIZATION GOING

Dear Gus,

I'm not able to attend the reunions anymore, but I have signed up my son Robert as a member.

I enjoy reading "*The Liberator*" and I am enclosing my check to help keep the organization going. Use this whenever you need it. Thank you for taking care of things.

Sincerely,
Jesse Woolard

WANTS WINDOW STICKER

Dear Gus:

Enclosed check to be used as needed, wish it were more. Gus, much thanks for all you do for us who are limited, and would like to help if it were possible. Gus, may I ask a favor of you, I need a 14th AD window sticker for my car window. Advise if I may purchase this anywhere.

I remain,
Joseph C. Morreale
136 Ord C. Co.

NEW LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Dear Mr. Hinrich:

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$100.00. I am requesting a life membership for myself as the daughter of the late Elmer Ray Cox. My dad was a truck driver (half-track) in the 125th Engineering Bn. I'm sorry, I don't remember the Company. My mother is also deceased, so my sister and I are all the family that's left.

Daddy and Mother joined the Association about 20 years ago and traveled to the reunions several times until their health no longer permitted such travel. I have read *The Liberator* faithfully ever since they first started receiving the magazine. I applaud the excellent work your group does in continuing

to provide interesting, heartwarming information about the valiant soldiers who served in Europe during WWII.

Daddy didn't talk a lot about the War until many years later. The stories he told were amazing. I would love to hear from anyone who might remember my dad. He was just a young red haired farm boy, from Hunt County, Texas. He trained at Camp Chaffee, Arkansas and went to Germany before returning to the States in 1945. He said everyone called him "Red."

If I have not provided enough information for you to sign me up as a member by being the daughter of a *Liberator*, please contact me and I will try to provide anything additional you may need. My email address is jgeurian@tx.rr.com.

Sincerely,
Iolene Geurian

CONTRIBUTION TO POSTAGE/ LIBERATOR FUND

Dear Mr. Gus Hinrich,

My late Dad, Walter E. Jania, served with the 14th Armored Division in World War II and he loved reading *The Liberator*.

Enclosed you will find my check in the amount of \$100.00 to defray some of the postal or print cost of *The Liberator* and in memory of my Dad. This is a publication that should never cease.

Sincerely yours,
Alan Jania

SUPPORTS LIBERATOR

Dear Sir:

The enclosed check is a donation to the 14th Armored Division Association.

You may use these funds in any way which will benefit the veterans of the Division.

I enjoy getting and reading *The Liberator*. Perhaps you would like to use the money for its publication and distribution.

Yours truly,
Richard L. Marriott
A-125th Eng.

SERVED WITH 499TH, A BTY.

Hi Verlyn,

Harold Kiehne said you are the one to send information that I might have on the 14th Armored. I was a member of the 499th Field Artillery, Bty. A, F.O. section.

Lt. Huston was our leader. I was at Philippsbourg when the break through came Jan. 1, 1945. On Jan. 3, I was hit with shrapnel in my right hand. On Jan. 4 I was sent to the rear and spent time in a hospital in France. Came back to the outfit and crossed the Rhine on April 3, 1945. Was with the 14th all the way to Frising, Germany where we were until the war ended.

If I can help you with any more information please let me know.

Sorry I cannot be with you at the reunion.

William E. Munson



F.O. Section- Back row, L to R: Munson, Huston, Martin, Sanders; Front, L to R: Wolf, Graham, Bevin.



MORE MAIL CALL

RIFLEMAN - BUGLER - PLATOON LEADER

Liberators:

In WWII I had 3 MOS designations as shown in heading above. I did not become a battalion bugler until I had finished infantry basic training. As battalion bugler I would play the following calls in this order: Reveille, Soupie, Assembly. At retreat I would play "To The Colors" as the American flag was lowered. The men in the battalion were at Present Arms and the Battalion Commander would shout Order and the Company Commanders would shout Order and the Platoon Leaders would shout Order and then the Battalion Commander would shout Arms and 800 soldiers would smack the wooden hand guard on their M-1 rifles in unison and that sound would reverberate throughout the Battalion quadrangle. At 2100 I would play "Call to Quarters" and at 2300 I would play "Taps."

Harry Kemp

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Gentlemen:

My current address is 400 West Raymond Avenue, Danville, Illinois, 61832. I will not be at this address subsequent to December 30, 2008.

Please send any communications, bills, or correspondence to me at 1239 Hillsboro Mile, (AIA), Building A-2, Unit 507, Hillsboro Beach, FL 33062 until May 28, 2009, at which time I will return to my current address as noted above.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this matter.

Very truly yours,

John P. Meyer

P.S. See you in Green Bay. Have a wonderful holiday season.

RAISES MONEY FOR POSTAGE FUND

Dear Verlyn,

My name is B. J. Nash (Barbara Jean) and my grandfather was **William L. Schork** (Louisville, KY) who served

in the United State Army from December 1942 - January 1946. He was in the 14th Armored Division - 48th Tank Battalion.

Unfortunately my grandpa passed away 12 years ago and didn't talk much about his service in the war. My grandma (Dorothy Schork) still gets *The Liberator* and I also subscribed a few months ago. She gave me some old issues to read and I treasure them dearly. I'm both proud and honored for what my grandfather and all you guys did for us and feel even closer to my grandpa just by reading your stories.

I've been doing some research on my grandpa's service during the war and if anybody has any pictures or stories they could share, I would greatly appreciate it if they contacted me.



William L. Schork
48 Hq Co

Enclosed

is a check for \$70.00 for *The Liberator* postage fund. I volunteer with Shamrock Greyhound Placement in Louisville, KY, where we find homes for retired racing greyhounds. At our Christmas party this year, I had a special raffle where half of the money went to Shamrock Greyhound Placement and the other half goes to you guys for *The Liberator* postage fund. Several people were grateful that I was doing this and mentioned that either their fathers or grandfathers had served our country in the war. We are having a three day festival in June (Greyhounds of the Bluegrass) and I will be doing the same thing there. Hopefully, I will raise more money next time.

Thank you again, for your dedication and service to our country and for putting together such a fine publication. Again, if anyone remembers my grandpa or has any pictures of him, it would mean so much to me and my family to share copies with us.

Sincerely,
B.J. Nash

APPRECIATES GETTING GUIDON

Dear Harold, (Kiehne)

Regarding the 154th Signal Company Guidon and our conversation of November 8th.

Please send above to:

John E. Hennen

Find enclosed \$6.25 plus amount for your postage, handling and storage. I was a member of the 154th from December 3, 1942 until the end of the war. I was a T/4 radio operator in a 399. My "action" consisted of returning fire to a strafing ME 109 and listening to the shells from that 360MM German gun - going overhead. Strangely enough I bounced some 50 cal tracers off the cowl of the ME 109 plus whatever hit. Not sure but I think the pilot gave me a one finger salute!! I have a letter from my driver that verified said "action." I looked around to see if Patton was perhaps watching my heroics - but alas he was hiding between two buildings polishing his pearl handled revolver. Of course I was disappointed knowing that "THERE GOES MY BRONZE STAR."

BUT - thanks to you, Harold, I will at least get the GUIDON to show my son - who will probably say - WHAT'S A GUIDON?? I happen to know what a guidon is - having been a member of a semi-military boys' group when I was a teenager. Naturally - I can't remember that far back - but again I have letters to prove it.

Enjoyed talking to you by phone - and thanks again for your kind act - and all your work for the 14th Armored Division. You must be a very special person.

Yours truly,

Jack Hennen

(T/4 - my wife calls me)



A PHONE CALL THAT MATTERED

My name is 1st Lt Harry Talton Kemp, Sr.

During WW2 I served in the U.S. Army in France and Germany. On March 15, 1945, I was promoted from Private First Class to 2nd Lt. in Hochfelden, France. (Please visit 14tharmored.com and key on Lt. Harry Kemp).

While leading my platoon through the Siegfried Line on March 21, 1945, I was wounded by enemy machine gun fire. Subsequently I was returned to Paris and Cherbourg, France. I was loaded on board U.S. Hospital Ship Ernestine Keranda at Cherbourg and returned to Charleston, S.C. June 15, 1945. I was then sent to Oliver General Hospital in Augusta, Georgia on a troop train loaded with wounded soldiers.

When I arrived at Oliver General Hospital I went to the telephone center and placed a call to my mother to let her know I was back in the United States. The switchboard operator placing my call for me was Mary Alice Bailey. She told me she would call me when my call went through. I sat down

and watched Miss Bailey as she placed my call. I thought to myself: "Miss Bailey is the most beautiful girl in the whole world."

Miss Bailey looked at me and said: "Lt. Kemp, take booth three."

The rest is history. After talking with my mother I returned to Miss Bailey to pay for the call. She told me that my call had been paid for by the American Legion (40 and 8). I asked Miss Bailey if I could take her out for dinner and go the Miller Theater for a movie that evening. She thanked me and said, "I don't date strangers."

Today Miss Bailey is Mrs. Mary

Come by and see us or give us a call.

Harry and Mary Alice

To Our Veterans,

I recently received a request from a young man who wants to know more about the JagdTiger in the photo. His request is below. Can anyone tell me about this JagdTiger tank destroyer? According to the author of the book, this JagdTiger was knocked out near Munich in late April or early May 1945 by five Sherman tanks from the 14th Armored Division.

Please reply to:

Jim Lankford

Dear Sirs:

I have found this photograph in the book "US TANK BATTLES IN GERMANY 1944-45" by Steven Zagola, published by CONCORD PUBLICATIONS.

The caption says that this self propelled gun was knocked out by the 14th Armored Division. I have been searching in books dedicated to the unit of the tank (s.p.z.jg.Abt 653), about the war in Germany and in the web, but in vain. There is some wrong information in Zagola's book so I wonder if this fact is one of them. May be you know something about this history. Can you help me?

Thank you for your web, and thank you for winning the war!

Javier Tome



B-62nd BATTLES

(Continued from page 18)

up so I could fire it, but I didn't think of it till years later. The Krauts pulled back and our whole company came across an open field and we were reassembled and pulled back to the rear. We prepared to move out in a different direction. I never did know what outfits came into Phillipsburg and cleared it out and took it. However, C company was attacked that same night and were wiped out, losing all their half-tracks.

We had a soldier in our outfit named Baker from Utah who was raised in southeastern Oklahoma but who had moved to Utah during the depression. I never will forget when we were in Camp Shanks, New York, preparing to go overseas, Neil Harrington came to me one night and said, "Graves, we've got to go pick up a boy that's nothing but an outlaw - he's been AWOL for two years." We were to shoot him if

he made any effort to escape. It was a beautiful night and it weighed heavily on my mind this assignment they had given us. I went over to the barracks where he was being held prisoner and asked for permission to talk to him. I never will forget when I walked in and looked through the barracks and saw a soldier with a rifle. I asked him if he had a soldier and he said yes, he's sitting over on that bed. I walked over to where he was and you could tell he was real distressed by the way he held his head looking down. I introduced myself and recall shaking hands with him and asked if we could sit on his bed and talk. We visited at length and he told me about his background and where he grew up and I told him I was from Oklahoma, too. He'd been raised southeast of Durant. Within a few minutes, we were laughing and talking and I recall telling him, "Baker, if you

will come to our platoon and make a good soldier then no one will ever give you any grief about your past." He told me at the time, "Bud, I haven't had a check in 2 years - I've been in the shack or AWOL."

He joined us and turned out to be the best soldier in the whole company and became one of the best friends I ever had. He watched over me just like a brother and saw that nobody gave me any static. He became the #1 scout for the whole company and the captain used him as a guinea pig. He would go forward into any town we would take. A message would come to the rear to send Baker to the front. He left the company and the captain used him that same way throughout the war. I'll tell another experience when we attacked Hatten and Rittershoffen and the captain used him as a guinea pig again.

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B-62nd BATTLES

(Continued from page 18)

I used to laugh because he would get half drunk and he would tell everyone how nice I'd been to him and I'd tell him, "Baker, you'd better hush or I'll shoot you cause the Krauts can't."

Years later, I had the occasion to come through the state of Iowa and I visited Neil Harrington's mother in Centerville, Iowa. I told her of Neil's death. As we sat out on the front porch in a swing, she stopped me and asked me if I thought that was Neil's body out there in the cemetery. I remember telling her it would have to be because we only had four men killed up by that pill box and I was sure that body had to be his. Years later, at a reunion, I ran into a soldier named Bob Biel, who the captain had sent back up that morning to the pill boxes where we had lost those men. He told me that he saw Neil laying there by that tank destroyer with part of his head blown off. I asked him how he knew it was Neil, and he told me that they had the best softball team in the divisions and that Neil was the pitcher and he was the catcher and that's how he recognized him. He said

they spotted a jeep there and he and this boy jumped in it and they drove back down the road to our company. So that's why I am certain today that it was Neil's body that was sent home. It was nice to know that I had set his mother's mind at ease.

I later learned at one of our reunions that not all of C company was wiped out. I recall being sent over there the second day of patrol to this resort around the lake as the captain called me to the pill box and told me that I was to lead a squad over to that resort and make contact with C company. I never will forget that when I came back to my foxhole Baker was standing there, leaning up against a tree. He asked me where I was going and I explained to him that the captain had called me to take a patrol over there. He told me he had been sent over the day before himself and he was going with me. I told him that I didn't have the nerve to ask him since he had been the day before. He told me that I didn't have to have nerve because he was going. He and I and another soldier named Watkins made the patrol and Baker insisted he go first. So he led the patrol over there through this area. We were told

at this hotel where the Germans were starying, that a soldier had come out of the woods with a burp gun and ran toward the house shooting at them. He said they all ran and got in the cellar but the last soldier that came down the hole kept his rifle above his head and when the Kraut came through the door firing he shot three or four times and killed him. I remember that was the most poorly arranged defense I had ever seen. Years later, as I stated, they claimed all of C Company was wiped out and I met a soldier at a reunion that was in C Company. I asked him how he got out alive and he explained that his sergeant gathered them up and told them to scatter and try to make it through the woods back to our lines. That was how they escaped from being taken prisoners. I had a friend in C Company named Frank Evans and he was made a prisoner of war for several months. Again they pulled up back from Phillipsburg and we reorganized again and that was the end of it. ■

NOTE: The second installment will appear in the next issue of *The Liberator*.

Captured in Hatten... Captain William Corson's Speech

(Note from Glenn Schmidt: This remarkable man became my company commander going over on the boat. Previous articles of mine tell of his courage under fire. I talked to him 6-24-95. He was doing well. He lost the sight of his right eye in combat action at Hatten 1-9-45.)

June 17, 1995. Dear World War II Comrades:

I trust you will excuse this joint letter rather than an individual message which I would have preferred.

I will start at the right place – the beginning. Two months ago the program chairman of our local Kiwanis club asked me to give the talk at our meeting to commemorate the end of World War II. I soon realized this was quite a task. First, the talk had to be 30 minutes with very little plus or minus variation. As I started to work I soon had enough for over two hours and the pruning was started. Next was the need to fit the audience, business and professional men, many of whom were under 50 years of age, and a sizeable group of retired members, about half of them too young for WWII service. Added to this was my determination to

tell them something they had not read in history books, and there was the need to hold their interest.

I was rather pleased with the finished product and hope you will each enjoy reading it. None of the facts will be new, and I hope you agree with my selection – even the necessity of making many quotations shorter than I preferred. I took a bit of liberty here and there but tried to hold very close to the actual events.

My major disappointment was in having to leave out a very critical episode, one of great importance to me. At dusk on Jan. 8 I sent a patrol, led by Lt. Heavey, to check the open area immediately east of Hatten. In a short time he was on the phone, describing in detail what they had observed as they lay buried in the heavily falling snow. There were two German vehicles just across the little stream, with five officers, evidently of considerable rank, looking at maps and studying the eastern side of Hatten. I immediately passed this information to Battalion, later adding more detail after the patrol returned. A little before midnight I had a call from the Battalion com-

manding officer informing me that he had sent a patrol to that area. They could find no vehicle tracks. Furthermore, he was tired of getting false patrol reports and wanted me and the patrol leader to report to him at 9:00 the next morning. As you all know I was a little too busy on Jan. 9 to carry out that order. Later there were many sleepless hours in Leipzig as I pondered what might have happened if some tank destroyer and artillery support had been alerted at the time this patrol did such a magnificent job.

Now I have to bother you with another interesting episode – my talk was scheduled for June 8. I awoke that morning with considerable pain, and found I was unable to stand. Tibby immediately called one of my very close friends, a veteran of the 87th Division, who came over to get a copy of the speech and delivered it in my place. He did an excellent job as you can tell from the enclosed Kiwanis bulletin.

I spent one week at the VA Medical Center in Asheville and am now home getting my strength back to normal. There were the usual tests but no

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CAPTURED IN HATTEN

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definite conclusions.

I trust you will find this interesting – Tibby joins me in greetings to your families. - Yours in The Rainbow, Bill Corson

Thank you for the opportunity to speak as we pay our respect to those who fought for our country in many parts of the world.

My talk today is based on information from those who participated in a small but very important part of World War II, and from publications dealing with this subject. By far the most valuable has been this book: "Winter Storm – War in northern Alsace, November 1944 to March 1945." The author, Lise Pommois, was a 7-year-old girl in southern France in 1945, and now teaches English in a French school. She has devoted all her spare time and resources to research this subject, including War Department records, attending veterans' reunions and hundreds of personal contacts. I had the pleasure of a visit with her in Milwaukee in 1993.

It is good to have a day of recognition for those who served in World War II, and to honor those who made the supreme sacrifice. As time passes it is unfortunate that many details fade from memory and only the big picture remains. We recall Pearl Harbor, Corregidor and Bataan, D-Day, Iwo Jima, Guadalcanal and Hiroshima. Names like Eisenhower, MacArthur, Nimitz, Patch and Patton are given proper places of honor in our history books. But the important names were generally unknown 50 years ago and are forgotten today.

I refer to the foot soldier, the artilleryman, the mine layer, the mechanic, the first aid man, the MP, the gunner aboard ship, those in the assault waves and many others. This list includes those from the lowest ranking enlisted man to the officers leading in combat. One writer has expressed it this way: "A battle is fought, and won or lost, by a team of men. Official records give the broader picture only; they do not keep the memory of all those individual acts of heroism which contribute to the final victory. The man who carries the ammunition is as important as the man who fires the gun."

Today I want to tell you what one team of young men accomplished. Let me emphasize that this World War II story could be told dozens of times, but

with different actors and scenery. Similar acts of heroism, valor, courage and devotion to country were repeated too many times.

In 1943 the last three American Army Divisions, about 13,000 men in each, were activated and started training. One of these was the 42nd, the Rainbow Division which had gained fame in World War I when commanded by a young general named Douglas MacArthur. Training proceeded quite well from July until the following February. Suddenly, a large number of men were transferred to replacement units, needed to support the planned invasion of Europe. Training was interrupted as new men were added to the skeleton forces, delaying advanced exercises. Then came another interruption. Following D-Day there was an urgent need for front-line troops and the process was repeated, except a larger percentage of the soldiers were taken away. And the replacements were different, generally quite capable young men who had been working in Army offices or going to school.

An interesting group came from the ASTP, or Army Specialized Training Program. In theory this was an excellent idea, giving the young soldiers an education and following with a commission as an officer. At one time over 133,000 were enrolled. However, in 1944 it was decided that the books should be replaced with rifles.

Here is how one soldier described his experience: "After graduating from high school, just before my 18th birthday I became Army serial No. 13201259. I had it made ... the program would graduate me in engineering with a commission in the Army engineers ... I was assigned to Carnegie Tech ... soon the word was passed around that the ASTP was to be discontinued ... most of us were ordered to Infantry Basic Training in Tennessee. Then we were sent to the Rainbow Division at Camp Gruber, Oklahoma. What we walked into was a review of the entire division and a pep talk by the Division Commander. That same evening we were issued our rifles. Mine was fairly worn out, and actually failed to operate when I was called upon to use it in combat. We never had a chance to function fire these rifles before going to the front lines."

Now to return to my story – about the middle of September an order was issued in Washington, alerting the last three divisions in the U.S. to prepare for overseas duty. Due to the urgent need for front line troops, only the infantry

regiments from each division would embark from Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, in early December. The Division Commander and staff, Artillery, Engineers and Ordnance would follow when ships were available.

During the next few weeks battle training was forgotten as weapons had to be dismantled, packed for shipment and endless paperwork details handled.

Following a train ride from Oklahoma to New Jersey, a few hours' shopping in New York, and a Thanksgiving dinner, 9,000 apprehensive young men were loaded into a black sardine can named the SS General Black. The ocean trip was generally uneventful except for seasick soldiers in cramped quarters. However, one incident must be mentioned. A company commander was relieved of his command and replaced by a captain who had not trained one day with the men while in Oklahoma. This captain had spent 16 months on the division staff or attending schools for staff training. In no way could it be said that he was qualified to lead 180 young men into combat. I can make that statement very definitely since I was that captain.

The first picture of the effects of war was when we sailed into the harbor at Marseilles, France, dodging sunken ships and looking at a scene of ruin. The men were given a taste of what was to come as they marched in a cold December rain to a muddy hilltop, our temporary home. Our ingenious soldiers learned rapidly – by the second night in France they knew that a package of cigarettes or some candy bars, placed under an overturned pail near a fence, would turn into a bottle of wine by morning. The fact that the bottle contained about half water did not bother them.

What was ahead for these young men, anxious to get an unwelcome assignment completed? It was generally thought we would be in reserve, in a quiet area, waiting for the balance of our division to arrive. Then there might be a bit of excitement, the war would soon be over and we would go home. Unfortunately, in the Army, events do not always materialize as expected.

I will try to give you a brief picture of the Allied military situation in Europe in December 1944. Only one word is needed: confusion. One soldier has written his evaluation of the situation: "Within a period of six or seven days, we moved six times, and we couldn't see any sense in it. The whole deal looked like a waste of gasoline and a successful effort to keep

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CAPTURED IN HATTEN

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us from having a night's sleep. We had heard rumors that our lines were thin and this jockeying was being done by the Seventh Army in an attempt to confuse the Germans. If the enemy was as much confused as we were, we thought, it was a thoroughly successful maneuver."

I might add that the officers knew little more than the GI. One morning my company moved to a barren, frozen hillside with orders to dig defensive positions covering an area about three times larger than we were capable of adequately defending. After four hours of chipping away at the frozen ground, we were told that this position would not be defended, so we moved to another frozen spot about ten miles away and started digging again.

This was during the Battle of the Bulge, when Patton moved his army north to stop the Germans, leaving some big holes which had to be filled, or at least partially filled. All problems were not on the front lines. It has been said that Jan. 1, 1945 was perhaps the worst single day in General Eisenhower's career in Europe. A surprise German air attack had destroyed over 200 planes on the ground; Field Marshal Montgomery was demanding that he be given complete command of Allied ground forces; an important battle was lost when a general ignored an order, and the arrogant French General De Gaulle was causing trouble and demanding an audience with Churchill, Roosevelt and Eisenhower.

To add to the problems, Hitler was planning a new attack. After several meetings with his generals, a plan for an attack was formulated on December 28. Hitler closed the last conference with this statement: "The task set for the new offensive does not go beyond what is possible and can be achieved with our available forces. ... We are committing eight divisions."

An article titled "War's Last Eruption" has been written by a scholar who devoted his life to an in-depth study of World War II. He summarizes this offensive in these words: "This German attack would result in terrible fighting during the worst winter in Europe in 20 years. A total of 295,000 French and 125,000 American troops were involved in the German operation Nordwind (North Wind) and the related battle in the Colmar Pocket. Losses were heavy. The battle cost the Americans alone more than 29,000 casu-

alties, including 7,000 dead."

Now we will take a look at how our young, poorly trained soldiers fought. One of the first battles was an attempt to drive the enemy out of a small town. After three days of fighting and taking heavy losses, the Americans had to withdraw. Here is part of an official after-action report: "So ended a tragic battle, one which unfortunately saw the participants come under their first baptism of fire. Despite the outcome, no discredit can be brought upon them, for they fought bravely against insurmountable obstacles. ... The final result was undoubtedly due to the apparent lack of intelligence on the part of the Task Force as to the proper enemy strength and disposition. ... The officers and men were given the impression they would encounter small enemy patrols. ... They had absolutely no idea of the trouble they would run into. The obvious lack of sorely needed vital support to accompany the infantrymen, in the form of tanks, large guns and bazooka ammunition to counter the German armor, stemmed from erroneous G-2 information on the enemy situation." Please note, this is not an opinion written at a later date, but an official report made immediately after the battle.

However, I would like to quote a statement by one of the participants: "It was a strikingly different 2nd Battalion from the one that had entered the Alsatian village a little more than three days before. Tattered uniforms, stained by mud and blood, covered the exhausted bodies of men who had lived a thousand lives – and deaths – in that short time. It was still impossible for them to believe the horrors they had witnessed – the men who had so recently walked beside them now among the missing and dead. ... Their overwhelming confidence had been abruptly jolted, and they began to wonder and to question. The morale of the troops was at the lowest level. ..."

This battalion was one of many small units into which the Rainbow Division was divided in January, small elements attached to or in support of various commands over about 90 miles of France, north of Strasbourg. On January 5, my battalion, the 1st Battalion, 242nd Infantry Regiment, relieved an experienced unit needed elsewhere, where the enemy was likely to attack. The green, inexperienced troops would occupy a small town named Hatten since the Germans had nothing more than small patrols in the area. At least that was the information given at a briefing, but someone forgot to tell the enemy.

The scene changed rapidly – as one writer has expressed it: "All hell broke loose in Hatten at 5 a.m. on January 9." This proved to be the focal point of the attack Hitler had planned on December 28 – the capture of Hatten and the nearby village of Rittershoffen would enable the Germans to move west and control all of northern Alsace. This area had been under German control most of the time since the War of 1870.

I will try to give you a picture of what happened with quotations from some of our soldiers:

"The misery of the snow, mud, water, cold nights and frozen food will never be forgotten."

"The snow had been falling all night and had obscured the advance until they were almost upon us. Shells screamed overhead and burst to the rear of us. The roar was deafening. Fire was coming from the tanks at very close range. Soon the snow churned, like sand in a box, by the shells landing all around us."

"The enemy overran our positions, and we were forced to fight in small, dispersed groups in defense of the town. Our men fought from house to house, in spite of the fact that they had missed six straight meals, had little or no sleep, and were constantly afflicted by the severe cold."

"There was not one round of artillery or tank destroyer ammunition fired in our support during the first 12 hours of fighting."

"Even now a snowy day in January can trigger a flush of remembered sights, sounds and smells that I will carry with me forever, for on January 9, 1945, I lost most of my best friends – friendships that can only be forged in the crucible of war. ... Yes, I left Hatten wounded and a prisoner – but a part of me was forever left behind on those snow-covered streets – streets covered with the bodies of my "amis." I was only 19 years old and did survive the stalag, wounds and horror. ..."

A report written by a Sergeant: "The captain arrived at our position in the afternoon, with orders to hold at all costs. We had little ammunition. While observing the front line the captain was seriously wounded by a direct artillery hit, Bill Smith standing next to him in the turret was blown to bits. ... Then the ammunition was exhausted so I brought the men from the foxholes into the bunker. ... Soon I heard men packing nitro starch into the vents, and the captain agreed that we should surrender. ... Relieved of

(Continued on page 26)

CAPTURED IN HATTEN

(Continued from page 25)

command, I experienced great fear, more so than at any time during combat."

I might add that several of the men in the group which surrendered have been in close touch over the years, and all credit the sergeant with having saved their lives. Seven of us were together at a reunion in 1993, but the sergeant was not able to travel due to ill health. You may have gathered that I was the captain mentioned by the sergeant.

Let me return for a moment to our first days in France. My only disciplinary problem was with a cook who could not get along with the mess sergeant. The solution came quickly when an order was issued by battalion for a detail of three men from each company to serve as a battalion command post guard. I told the first sergeant that the cook, Vito Bertoldo, was No. 1 on that detail. Good riddance, I thought.

Imagine my surprise in August 1945 when at Camp Atterbury, Indiana, I picked up a copy of *The Chicago Tribune* and saw on the front page a picture of President Truman pinning the Congressional Medal of Honor on the former cook. Here is a short description of what he accomplished:

"Bertoldo fired a machine gun, his rifle and threw hand grenades at the enemy, was a one man task force they could not defeat. When enemy elements broke through the front lines he secured a machine gun, set it up in the doorway of the command post, stopping one assault. Later he carried his gun into the street and forced the enemy to withdraw. A short time later the enemy launched a tank and infantry assault on his position. With the machine guns of the tanks blazing at him, Bertoldo opened fire on the infantrymen who were attempting to remove mines from the street and forced them to withdraw. A tank then came within 75 yards of the CP, fired into the building knocking Bertoldo across the room. Unhurt, he crawled back to his machine gun. The tank commander stood up in the turret of his tank to survey the damage and was promptly killed by Bertoldo. When it was decided to evacuate the headquarters, Bertoldo remained behind to cover the withdrawal.

So much for the fighting. I will close with some general comments. A first lieutenant serving in the battalion headquarters, who later became a general in

the Army, wrote: "It was the hottest place I have ever been in, and I hope I'll never see another like it. We learned a lot from the experience which went a long way toward making our future operations a success."

A German NCO who was captured praised the soldiers for their gallant stand: "We were amazed at the way your men fought. We always considered you could defeat us only if you had a tremendous amount of tanks and armor. We believed that if we met you on equal terms we would have no difficulty. At Hatten we had the armor and the artillery and the experienced men. Your men were inexperienced and lacked tanks and artillery support. Our officers said it was the best infantry defense they ever saw."

One interesting comment is by a very experienced German officer, Col. Hans Von Luck, who fought with the German army on every front from Poland in 1939 to the Russian victory over the Germans in 1945. Von Luck commanded one of the tank units attacking Hatten and the nearby village of Rittershoffen. In a book describing his World War II experiences he writes: "In those two villages, Hatten and Rittershoffen, there now developed one of the hardest and most costly battles that ever raged on the Western front."

The 1st Battalion was relieved on January 11, having staged a magnificent defense, but it had cost them dearly. At the beginning of the battle there were 33 officers and 748 enlisted men. Fifty-two hours later there were 11 officers and 253 enlisted men, the others having been killed, wounded or missing in action. It is interesting to note that exactly two-thirds of both officers and enlisted men were gone.

In addition to the Congressional Medal of Honor for Bertoldo, there were many individual and unit awards. In my estimation the most important is the Distinguished Unit Citation awarded to our battalion. The following is a good summary of what happened when those poorly trained 19- and 20-year-old boys suddenly became men. The official citation reads: "On the morning of 9 January, the 1st Battalion was occupying a front of 4,000 yards when it was attacked by three regiments from the 21st and 25th German Panzer divisions, supported by heavy armor and artillery. Ordered to hold its position at all costs, the battalion withstood repeated onslaughts of enemy flame-throwing tanks, self-propelled guns and infantry. Time after time small detachments of the Battalion remained steadfast after their position had

been overrun by hostile armor, in order to stop the foot soldiers that followed. Cooks, clerks and mail orderlies fought side by side, completely disregarding their personal safety. In spite of the loss of over 500 officers and men, the Battalion tenaciously held its position in the face of overwhelming odds for more than 52 hours until relieved, exacting a heavy toll of men and equipment from the enemy. The courage and devotion shown by the members of the 1st Battalion, 242nd Infantry Regiment, are worthy of emulation and exemplify the highest tradition of the Army of the United States."

This battle proves a statement in one of my early quotations: "A battle is fought and won or lost by a team of men." I have told this story because I recall some of the details, and have learned of many incidents from other participants. And I repeat, similar battles, with different soldiers, took place all too often.

A short epilogue – both armies fought until they were exhausted. On January 21 the Americans withdrew from the two villages with practically all units well under strength. The Germans were in the same condition and pulled back to the Rhine on January 25. No winner – no loser. The destroyed villages were turned over to the very few remaining civilians.

If we are to properly commemorate the end of World War II we must dedicate ourselves to important admonitions in the Bible – "Love thy neighbor as thyself," and "He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

William Corson, June 1995. Company Commander, A Company, 242nd Regiment, 42nd Division.

**On May 24, 1995, Glenn Schmidt wrote: "My wife and I recently returned from a reunion of former prisoners of war who were sent to Stalags IX A, IX B and Berga. This was their eighth reunion, although the first we were able to attend. It was there I met Morton Brooks, a C Company, 242nd Infantry man. ... Morton was one of 350 men selected one Sunday night by the guards at Stalag IX B to be sent to Berga am Elster, a subcamp of Buchenwald. All Jewish men and those of Hebrew faith who could be identified were so starved, beaten and mistreated that only 86 of the total survived that I am aware of. Their story is well documented in Mitchell G. Bard's book "Forgotten Victims."*

How D-Day Would Be Reported Today

This is how the Normandy invasion might be reported today. Sounds familiar.

June 6, 1944 - NORMANDY - Three hundred French civilians were killed and thousands more wounded today in the first hours of America's unilateral invasion of continental Europe. Casualties were heaviest among women and children. Most of the French casualties were the result of artillery fire from American ships attempting to knock out German fortifications prior to the landing of hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops.

Reports from a makeshift hospital in the French town of St. Mere Eglise said the carnage was far worse than the French had anticipated and reaction against the American invasion was running high. "We are dying for no reason," said a Frenchman speaking on condition of anonymity. "Americans can't even shoot straight. I never thought I'd say this, but life was better under Hitler."

The invasion also caused severe environmental damage. American troops, tanks, trucks and machinery destroyed miles of pristine shoreline and thousands of acres of ecologically sensitive wetlands. It was believed that the habitat of the spineless French crab was completely wiped out, threatening the species with extinction.

A representative of Greenpeace said his organization, which had tried to stall the invasion for over a year, was appalled at the destruction, but not surprised. "This is just another example of how the military destroys the environment without a second thought," said Christine Moanmore. "And

it's all about corporate greed."

Contacted at his Manhattan condo, a member of the French government-in-exile who abandoned Paris when Hitler invaded said the invasion was based solely on American financial interests. "Everyone knows that President Roosevelt has ties to big beer," said Pierre LeWimp. "Once the German beer industry is conquered, Roosevelt's beer cronies will control the world market and make a fortune."

Protestors said America's aggressive actions were based in part on the assertions of controversial scientist Albert Einstein, who sent a letter to Roosevelt speculating that the Germans were allegedly developing a secret weapon, a so-called 'atomic bomb.' Such a weapon could produce casualties on a scale never seen before and cause environmental damage that could last for thousands of years. Hitler has denied having such a weapon and international inspectors were unable to locate such weapons even after spending two long weekends in Germany.

Shortly after the invasion began reports surfaced that German prisoners had been abused by Americans. Mistreatment of Jews by Germans at so-called 'concentration camps' has been rumored but so far remains unproven.

Several thousand Americans died during the first hours of the invasion and French officials are concerned that uncollected corpses pose a public health risk. "The Americans should have planned for this in advance," they said. "It's their mess and we don't intend to clean it up."

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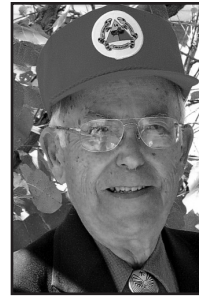
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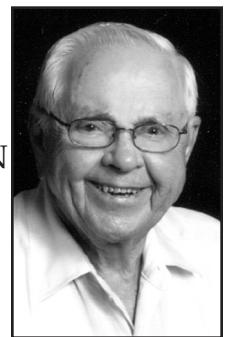
**James Craigmile
2010**

Kansas City, KS
Dates pending

Note: Due to health issues, James Craigmile has resigned his office. Reunion arrangements for 2010 are pending.

**Chuck Hurl
2011**

Indianapolis, IN
Dates pending



**Check out the website:
www.14tharmoreddivision.org**

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