



THUNDER MAIL CALL

(John Magill Edition)

Bill Tom, Editor/webmaster
154 Stanford Hts Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94127-2349

Email = kn6qd@arrL.net

This newsletter might be sent from thundermailcall@gmail.com

{Website URL = <<http://groups.google.com/group/17th-airborne-division>>,}

Date: John Magill, November 2008 'til the end of Me-----

----- - --You all have a Happy Thanksgiving Season-----

Professor John Magill, 466-HQ.

From: John Magill, email = drjohnmagill@yahoo.com

Hi Bill, Good to hear from you. Anna and I are leaving for Abington, VA. on Friday to do some taping for a PBS program , scheduled to show sometime around Veterans Day .



I am happy to send a brief but hopefully relevant vita. ;I was born in rural Pennsylvania. I was attending my first year of college in the Fall of 1941, finishing that year. I enlisted in the US paratroops in 1942, completed training in early '43. I served as rigger and instructor in the jump school at Ft. Benning, GA, till early '44 when I applied for overseas duty in the ETO. I joined the 17th A/B in July 44, as they arrived in England. I was serving as a

forward observer for the 466 Parachute Field Artillery, but attached to the 2nd BN of the 513th Parachute Infantry Regiment in combat to call in supporting fire. I was in every action in the Bulge and then in Luxembourg till Feb 15, '45, when the entire 17th was returned to Chalons, France, to prepare for 'Varsity'.



Jumping from the left door of the C-46 at 'Varsity', I served from March 24 till April 3 when I was wounded three times, while supporting Companies E and F of the 513th as

we were quelling a die-hard SS unit that fought till their death. After 2.5 months in the hospital, I returned home on VJ-Day, married my darling Anna, had five great children, and became an educator with a PhD degree. Best wishes to you and yours, John & Anna
P.S.: I believe you have a picture of us,

----- Original Message -----
1Sep 08: From: **Bill Tom, to: Dr. John McGill** <drjohnmagill@yahoo.com>
Dr. John McGill: Would you be so kind as to send me a brief biography of yourself and include a recent portrait photo too? Over 90% of our roster members had never seen you before, but I was there to have listened to your presentations three times at three different reunions. And I treasured all three times with tears in my eyes each time. Thanks, Bill

REPLY from Oliver North's office to John Magill:

Dear Dr. John Magill, Jr:

Thank you so much for your letter and your service to this country. We are currently in production on War Stories episodes until October. At that time, we will revisit your idea regarding the brave men of the 17th Airborne Division and especially their role in Operation Varsity.

To date, we aired episodes dedicated to those who fought in the Battle of the Bulge and also those who proudly served as paratroopers and pilots. Your wartime stories and contribution to this country go without question. Enclosed I have placed the original copy of your article. Please feel free to check back with us in November or December. Again, thank you for your time and your interest in our show. (Colonel Oliver North)

Pamela K. Browne, executive Producer, "War Stories, with Oliver North

NOTE: I have never heard more about Oliver North's Stories, However, Dr. John Magill has been our Memorial Service speaker on three separate reunions. The last one was at our Final Reunion to a full-house audience of over 600 people. At the end of each of his speeches, there was not a dry-eye in those who were there. We shall never forget him or his remarks!.

ATTENTION: Dr. Magill went to Abington, Virginia, to do an interview. Perhaps, it had something to do with the Oliver North's War Stories program series, involving Operation Varsity and the 17th Airborne. His interview is scheduled to be broadcast on Veterans Day, a Tuesday, November 11th. Please check your TV Schedule listing for that day, or the days in that week.

Frederic DeHon, the founder of Golden Talon Belgium Association was also awarded with the acknowledgement of a plaque and a donation of monetary gift for his vital dedication in promoting and perpetuating the role of the 17th Airborne Division which had sacrifice so many young men to regain the freedom so that the Belgian people are now at last free. It appeared that conquering armies had once marched through Belgium every generation or so, **but no more!** So profound was Fred's dedication to the memory of those who had died and buried at Margraten



Cemetery, he had decided to **forego the monetary** award tendered to him. He expressed the desire to have the award go to some other more deserving veteran units in America.

Thusly, his name and award announcement was unfortunately withdrawn from the announcement posted in the last newsletter issue, TMC #7. His decision not to accept the monetary gift on the grounds that the freedom for his people was already a sufficient gift.

By this announcement, all the members of the 17th Airborne Association have been made aware that DeHon is one of the bright stars in the glorious memorial history of our airborne division. In ancient times, trumpets and drums were used to herald the

victors. Today we have Fred and all his associates in their lands to remind all that the 17th Airborne had once shed blood on their soil and bestowed to them peace on earth for all their future generations yet to come!

COMMENT: At our final reunion at Hampton, VA, I, as hospitality chair, was looking for Fred's arrival to personally welcome him. Unfortunately, I had mispronounced his name as De-Hon when his Belgian pronunciation was De-On with a silent "H". My daughter Jackie, who was photographing attendees, told me she had photographed a very handsome young man, much too young to be a veteran (photo attached). To my surprise, I accidentally bumped into Fred at the Reception Room. We finally met informally, but I was so profound to meet such a fine young man who has been dedicating a vital portion of his young life's activities on our behalf. Alas, I was once young like Fred, but not quite so handsomely strong and manly.

9 Oct 08: Valerie Vicari, daughter of Blaine Phillip Davis (717-ORD)

As always, Thank you so very much Mr. Tom for the issues, pictures, etc., they are so very much appreciated by me and my family. It might interest you to know that my oldest daughter named her firstborn son Blaine after my father, and gave him the middle name Thunder. We only found out that the 17th was called Thunder From Heaven this week and my grandson is 11 years old. We all think this is an amazing coincidence. At any rate, we are in your debt. We are enjoying our newsletters very much. I hope that you are in good health and am praying for you. I am glad that you came through your recent illnesses and are on the mend. If I can do anything for you at anytime, please let me know what it is. I would appreciate the opportunity to return the favor. Thanks again, Valerie

REPLY: Valerie, I am coming along fine. As my airborne friend, Bob Greenstrand (now deceased), had always said, "I am upright and taking sustenance". What an honor for grandpa Davis to have a grandson with his name. I have a friend who named his son "Rod", whose nickname is now "lightning"

Marianne and Réal Desmaretz of Belgium, email = <filthy.13@hotmail.com>

Dear Bill and all the BIG Airborne family of the 17th Airborne Division Association

We do not find the right words to express our emotion, Marianne and me,

It is with tears in the eyes that we have discovered the splendid plaque a few days ago, it is marvelous. She will find a good place in our living room, THANK YOU VERY MUCH

But we are confused to put us at honor, It is you Distinguished Veterans, past and present who should be to honour, not us.

It is always with sadness that I learn the loss from one of your valued comrades, for this reason, each time we would like to express to the family our sincere condolences in their very sad loss

I will continue to perpetuate and honour the memory of the Fallen Heroes at the Memorial Day in the Ardennes Cemetery to Noville-en Condroz, Belgium



(EACH YEAR). "THEY GAVE THEIR LIVE FOR OUR FREEDOM. ALL GAVE SOME, SOME GAVE ALL"

Again THANK YOU VERY MUCH for the plaque very appreciated

We are Proud Members of the 17th Airborne Division Association.

COMMENT: Isn't it comforting to know that no invading army had crossed your border in the past 64 years, and know that your future generations of children will live in peace?

13 Oct 08: Mark Pipkin <bloedman@batnet.com> wrote:

Dear Sir or Madame, My great-uncle, **Henry Young Parker, served in the 466th** and, having read your After Action Report had a couple of small comments to add. Please read a copy of the e-mail that my mother, Uncle Henry's niece, sent to me, as follows:

"Mark, I think I got the correct story. The Lt. and Uncle Henry were going after a German machine gun when a soldier named Peck yelled at Uncle Henry, "Sgt., wait! I'll get them!" Peck took the machine gun and caused the Germans to surrender, In the process, he saved the Lt. and Uncle Henry's lives. The Lt. didn't save their lives.

The other correction was: The Infantrymen who were supposed to be ahead of Uncle Henry's unit dropped down in the wrong place, so Uncle Henry and Sgt. Guy were alone. A German bullet bounced off the machine gun that Uncle Henry and Sgt. Guy were trying to get, and the bullet hit Guy in the lip. Guy yelled, "I've been shot!" Then he yelled, "Hell, I'm not hurt, let's go!" Guy's lip wound came from a bullet that bounced off of the German machine gun. That' the way he was wounded. Uncle Henry wondered if there's any way you can find out if anyone from his unit is still alive: 466 Parachute Field Artillery Battalion. He would LOVE to contact them. Love ya, Mom."

I doubt that he called them 'corrections' but rather would just have wanted to give his inputs while he still can. As it mentions he would really love to contact anyone from this unit if they are out there. I would be happy to facilitate such contact.

REPLY: Mark, I have forwarded to you a list of the 466th guys with addresses for Uncle Henry to make contacts, plus a free subscription to our newsletters. Bill

Follow-up reply From: "Mark Pipkin" <bloedman@batnet.com>

Hi Bill, I am very pleased to make your acquaintance and would definitely like to get the "Thunder Mail Call." I don't think Uncle Henry uses e-mail much but I could print it out and forward them to him. He is going to be delighted to get any such information. Many thanks and best regards, Mark.

12 Oct 08: **Cenda Brzek, Czech Republic 513-F reenactors group,** We are



looking for a photo of Chin T. Tom, Service # 32516813, F Company, 513th Parachute Infantry Regt, 17th Airborne Division. Entered the Service from: New York City, KIA 24-Mar-45. Buried at: Plot O Row 7 Grave 2 Netherlands American Cemetery Margraten, Netherlands. Awards: Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster.

As You can see on our website, we are also presenting the Biographies of the F-Company guys as You in the TMC. And also for other reasons we would like to have a picture of this trooper, but we were not lucky till now. Maybe You can ask thru the TMC magazine ? Thanks a lot in advance. And if You could present the next few words in the next TMC, it would be great.

"We would like to express our gratitude to every member of the Association, who agreed with the monetary gift and the Plaque for our club which we received recently. It made us very proud and very thankful. We appreciate that very much. We all hope our work and efforts will fulfill the expectations of each one of You. Thank You very much Gentleman, Airborne All the way!

From the KVH 17th Airborne Division o.s. Czech Republic, Your friend, *Cenda Brzek*"

Grusse Cenda, Zerstreut vollständig! I have tried for many years to get a photo and history of Chin Tom. I had telephoned his relatives on Mott Street where he had lived in New York City, with no success. .All I learned was that he was a cook in a restaurant on Mott Street. At 30 years old, he volunteered for the paratroops. He was wounded at the Battle of the Bulge when someone in his squad stepped on a Teller mine, which wounded him. He recovered in time to have joined in Operation Varsity. There was an unconfirmed report that he was dead on landing at his drop zone, having been shot eight times while descending in his parachute. He had reportedly told his buddies that if he was shot, the first one to help him can take his diamond ring he was wearing. His ring was gone when the medics got to him. On 24 March 2004, Linda and I visited Mott Street where there were many restaurants. We ate at one, hoping it was the one Chin Tom had worked in, but fame was fleeting. No one has ever heard of him! But our future will remember him by what you are doing. Danke.

12 Oct 08: **Lou Zoghby** writes, Bill, You are doing a tremendous job with the Mail Call letter. This issue had the ASTP members and I noted that at least three were not mentioned. Hawley Smith went to Norwich Univ., Ray Palmer went to MIT and I (Lou Zoghby) went to Harvard U. We all were sent to the 17th AB and we landed in the 194th, F Company. Perhaps you could have our names added to the ASTP Roster. Keep up the good work. Lou Zoghby.

Reply: Lou: I did not know you were at Harvard. I had occasionally walked in the direction from MIT to Harvard for exercise. I had always walked in that direction to buy a pastrami sandwich for my midnight snack. As I recalled, we always had lights out at 10PM, because MIT needed the electricity to do atomic bomb research at night. I usually midnight snack in the bathroom which was always lit, and where the guys did their homeworks.

10 Oct 08: Henri Rogister henri.rogister@skynet.be

Dear friends, I can confirm to you that the parcel including the Plaque arrived in good condition at my home. This Plaque will be shown to the members during our meeting that will take place on Tuesday 14 October.

I am also proud to add a page to my website with your letter of Appreciation and a picture of the plaque. Kind Regards, Henri Rogister, CRIBA Webmaster
Henri REGISTER, 22 Rue du Progres, B-4032 LIEGE, BELGIUM

Website: <http://www.criba.be>

Question: Somewhere in Belgium, I had seen a statue of a little boy, peeing into the water at a fountain. Was it in Liege?

Edski to Billski:

Billski....Received a letter from Betty Scherer, widow of Ben Scherer (513A)....She writes, Dear Ed: Many changes in my life since Ben passed away in August 2005. My move west was wise, moving me closer to my children. I live in a 55+ complex and have a lovely apartment. I am very happy here. I have access to several computers and so I am back on line. <schererbetty333@yahoo.com> Please



Edski

put me on your e-mail list - also Bill Tom's. Also wanted to tell you that Co. A-513th PIR met in Columbus, Georgia for a week - celebrating our 61st consecutive reunion.



1948
FIRST REUNION:

McKirgan, Scorsone,
Alberts, West, Bolick,
Elmore, Graan.
Ballas, Thomasson, Egolf,
Wenzel, Pinder, Scherer.

The first reunion of 513-A in 1948. Ben Scherer lower right.

What a thrill for us "old" ones to pin wings on a trooper graduation company. Our next reunion, the 62nd, is scheduled for Ohio with a back up in Pennsylvania. I really want to stay in touch with my friends in the 17th.

REPLY: To Edski and Betty Scherer: Thanks for forwarding Betty's message. I had to delete her address from my file because my email provider was complaining that too many of my messages were rejected due to changes of addresses, or were on AOL or Earthlink, both of which block all unidentified "unfriendly" senders, since my addresses were not added to their computer address file as a friend.

I will reinstate Betty Scherer's new address and I plan to send her all the back issues of TMCs.

PS: Edski, I have to use two email addresses. I use Thundermailcall@gmail.com to send out 700 high megabyte newsletters free of charge. So as not to overuse this privilege, I use my other address for regular email messages, of which I receive 20-40 emails a day. That address is kn6qd@arrl.net. Both addresses should be added to your computer in order to receive my mailings.

Betty Scherer's new address: 3925 S. Jones Blvd. Apt. 1033, Las Vegas, NV 89103-7102 phone: (702) 227-3429

4 Oct 08: Bart Hagerman, email =<tbhagerman825@insightbb.com> wrote:



Bill.....What a job you have done on the Final Mail Call! I really didn't grasp the importance of it until recently, but now I have awakened! It is probably the last connecting link we have with the 17th Airborne! This important phase in our lives is finally coming to an end! I was too slow to realize it. Awakening to this, I have an unusual request that I hope will not send you into cartiatiac arrest!

I have printed out Parts 4, 5, and 6. Unfortunately, parts 1,2, and 3 got deleted after I finished reading them. Now, I realize I should have also printed them out! Put in a neat booklet-folder, it would make a fitting final report (or should I say a most unusal type of BOOK) on the most thrilling time in my life!

I Guess you see my point by now.....could you send me those three parts again? I appreciate the trouble this would put you to, but maybe there is a way you can handle it. I bet you will get some more requests like mine!

REPLY: Bart; There was no other request like yours. People are already saving the newsletters into their computer file or into CD-Rs or DVD-Rs for permanent storage.

A hundred years from today, if we are still a free country, your great^{x5} Grandson will asked his daddy (your great^{x4} Grandson), "Who in our family fought in that great war that saved our civilization so that I can now live free, and to speak American English, and to do as I please when I grow up! Our history books are so screwed up with ultra-liberal trash that led us to believe that an old guy by name of Joe Stalin had won that great war." But his dad would jump up and said, "By God, I have a publication passed on to us by our forefather by the name of Bartholomew, who must have been a old wise goat of a man to preserved this booklet for us to know the truth of that era so long ago, all printed in paper.

"But, dad, oh, Yuck! Isn't paper is what they used to wipe their butts with? Yes son, we do not do that anymore. Remember, we are using re-usable "Kling-Off" now. Well, son, a wise old chap of a medic/pharmacist decided to write true stories about a thing known as the 17th Airborne which was some secret weapon they had used to win the great World War II. Let us just sit down and read it together, OK?

That will be the scenario of things to come in year 2108, Bart. Your three copies will be transmitted to you over the next few days to avoid a computer constipation. Bill

7 Oct 08: **Simon Harrold**, at <simon@lerenfort.fsnet.co.uk> wrote: Thanks once again for the latest TFH newsletter, I shall settle down later to read it properly but I did notice your reference to your owning both a .45 service auto and a Luger. I'm curious to hear about these items as I had assumed, as a medic that you would not carry a sidearm. Can you explain to me some more about the history behind these items? Please don't take up valuable space in the next newsletter with your reply, as I wouldn't imagine it is something the whole world needs to know about.

With Best wishes to you and those dear to you, of which I know there are many, Simon.

REPLY: In the winter of 1944, the rumor was that the war in Europe would be over by Christmas because we had driven the Germans back to their original border. There was a chance that I could be reassigned to the **11th Airborne** in the Pacific War. Their medics were armed because the Japanese did not sign the Geneva Convention relative to sparing the medics. Indeed, several medics had earned the Medal of Honor for killing Japanese soldiers who were about to kill American wounded soldiers. But the changing winds of war sent me to England to rejoin the 17th. As for the Luger, I took that off of a wounded German officer. It is a real 1936 pre-war model, a superior weapon than those built of stamped parts during the war..

However, I knew about an American soldier who had tried to steal a .45 by taking the gun apart piece by piece and sent the pieces separately back to his wife. But his wife, thinking his gun was broken, took the pieces to a gun shop and had the entire gun chrome plated. She had it reassembled and sent the completed gun back to him. I felt there might have been a divorce after the war was over.

I did not do that! I bought my .45 from National Rifle Association when I was a member years ago, but the Luger was truly my most memorable war trophy!

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7 Oct 08: **Dick Manning, 513-E**, at <**Rdeym@aol.com**> wrote: Bill Tom: Great job on the current Edition! I wonder if you can tell me where I might get a copy of the document referred to in the answer which was sent to Lt. Puckett, which read as follows:

I refer to the "After Battle Report" that Colonel Coutts submitted to Headquarters." I am looking for the period Jan 3 -5. I am still in fairly good health - usual aches and pains and bad joints. Now 84 - I went in early, enlisted in NCNG (North Carolina National Guard) at age 15, inducted into Fed. Service on Sept. 16, 1942, commissioned 2nd Lt., Nov. 1943, entered jump school May 1943.

Do you still have anyone still around from E Co., 513th? Thanks,

REPLY: Dick: My good buddy Bob Williamson, 513-E, and Bob Patterson, 513-E, are still around in Oregon and Washington. Their addresses attached to this reply. The entire After Battle Report of the Bulge is in my Website, the URL address is printed in the Header of my newsletters.

07 Oct 08: Ray Crisp, 513-HQ1, I really enjoyed reading this latest Newsletter...Always amazing to see photos of Troopers when we were younguns and today's pictures with our cottonheads. The ASTP list was also interesting. I too was a ASTP cast off, but did not go directly to airborne.

After spending some time at Compton and Chaffee Colleges in Southern California as an Engineering student, our ASTP group was scattered to the winds with me ending up with the M.P.s in Fort Ord, CA. The M.P. unit was packing up to be transferred to Mt. Vernon, Illinois where we were to monitor the fly boys from the local airbases near Springfield, Ill. Just think, only 300 miles from home (Chicago), letting the fly boys get the women liquored up till 1:00 a.m (when they had to be back on base) and we were off duty, to take over where they left them at the bars. Terrible duty, but me in my whatever mental condition could not stand telling the fly boys not to do the things we would do. The only way out of the M.P's was (you guessed it) volunteering for airborne. Everyone thought the three of us were nuts, but we went any way, Fortunately (?) I was the only one that made it and got my wings, i.e. after a sprained ankle on my fourth jump and being the last man in the stick for the qualifying 5th (night) jump;"Move it or the last man gets to swim in the Chatahoochie"!!! My proudest day was graduation when the General yelled "you are the best men who ever cr---ed between a pair of G.I.boots"!! So, the rest is history, Varsity, a million \$ wound in Munster and the great Victory Parade down 5th Ave. in NYC. I'll always be proud of the 17th and our part in WWII and the greatest generation. God Bless us all.

.COMMENT: A million dollar wound was a wound to the legs, or arms which was usually not fatal, but you might not be sent back to the firing line again.

TO ALL:

My email service provider, Gmail.com, has "punished" me with a suspension of use due to too many rejected email newsletters. Therefore, I have to delete those email addresses that were persistently not deliverable. These include mostly AOL and Earthlink users. If you have been receiving the newsletter, you are not deleted. I have to sacrifice a few to save the rest. Unfortunately, that was the unspoken of rule of the combat. If you wish to continue receiving TMC, you would have to keep your email address current with me, or change your Internet Service Provider (ISP).

The Editor

Erratum

A correction to the list of ASTP names listed : Robert McGlasson and Phillip Snow attended University of Maine. Also, Elton Long (KIA) attended Maine. Ray Crisp, 513-HQ1 was at Compton & Chaffee College.

NOTE: I have trouble working columns of data because my right eye cannot focus.

4 Oct 08: **Russell Osborn <russema@msn.com>** wrote:

To Nancy Hills Tougas, I visited the Elmira NY Soaring Museum on Aug. 29 with my son Dan. They had a real CG-4A there, and we actually sat in the glider on the same side (the right side) I sat in flying across the Rhine, as a raw replacement, on 3/24/45 in Operation Varsity. A Twilight Zone experience, 63 years later.

I showed my son how the exit door narrowed at the bottom, which had caused me to half fall out of the glider, landing on all fours. Last year I found a college composition I wrote in 1947, describing our landing.

By separate Email I will send you the Museum's link. - Russ Osborn (C Co. 194)

Ms. Tougas, Here is the link for the Elmira NY museum. - Russ Osborn

<http://www.soaringmuseum.org/>

REPLY: Russ, could you also send your composition to JoAnn McDonald at Jmmcdonald28@yahoo.com? She is doing a documentary about Operation Varsity.

Subj: Re: A THANK YOU MESSAGE FOR THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND ED & MARY SIERGIEJ

9 Oct 08: Keith Williams (Newbury R B L Branch Secretary

Please add our thanks to everyone for the splendid work they have done to facilitate your wind-down. Please make sure that you and your fellow members of the 17th keep in touch with us and remember you are forever in our thoughts.

Thank you for the cheque for the Greenham Common memorial fund which will be used to perpetuate the memory of the people who gave the ultimate sacrifice to enable us to live as we do now.

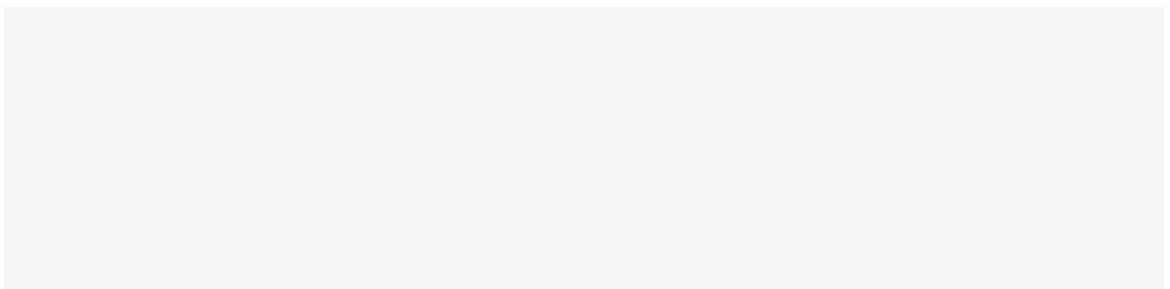
The plaque now hangs in pride of place in Newbury Royal British Legion Club and will serve as a constant reminder of our very close association with you all.

Please pass our thanks to ED and MARY and if any of your members are visiting the

UK please let us know and we will endeavour to meet up with them. Once again thank you and all the very best for the future.

Yours Sincerely,

Comment: Makes me want to jump into a plane and revisit England again. Our most prior post-war visit was two weeks of driving on the wrong side, from Southampton up the West Coast to Edinbrough, down the East Coast back to London. An enjoyable partaking of English hospitality.



Heritage Days in Kansas

Connie Jo Discoe, the McCook Daily Gazette, sent the following photo of the **Heritage Parade** to Del Townsend.



Colonel Del Townsend, Heritage Day Parade Marshal



Sid Laufer, 513-F, said he would send me \$5.00 if I can prove that he held my hand during the Hampton Reunion. My silk necktie, bought in Shanghai, was covered with Chinese stamps. If I were to get lost there, all they had to do was to drop me into a mail box.



President Abraham Lincoln's bathroom
(Springfield, Illinois, 1860).

His and hers convenience commodes

The outhouse bathrooms of that time were also the indicator of their secret life-styles. Archeologists had sifted through the deposits to find medicine bottles, and evidence of their unknown life styles of their past. Findings were that President Lincoln was the most 'common ordinary folk' President we have ever had. Indeed, he is my highest-rated President--ever.



Abraham Lincoln's home
in Springfield in 1860.

Abraham Lincoln's underground
tomb in Springfield, 1865

(The surrounds of Lincoln's home has been restored to the 1860 times as Lincoln would have seen it.)

Norvel and Mrs. Lucas, 513-B.

Luke was President of our Association and host to several reunions in Missouri. We rented a Ford Taurus in St. Louis and drove the eastern border of Missouri before cutting over to Springfield. It was so hot that we parked our car under the shade of a tree and spent several hours visiting a cave to cool off.



When we got back to the car, the shade had moved and I swear the interior car had to have been over 150 degrees hot. The car started, but nothing else worked. We had no air conditioning, radio failed, the entire dashboard was disabled, and the door windows did not come down. Our cell phone was in a dead zone, so we drove with one door ajar. By the time we reached Branson, we were roasted, broasted and toasted. Our clothes were soaked. Next time, we go in the winter, but the car probably would not start at all in the snow..



John and Lou Moore, 513-HQ2, our 2004 Host/Chairman of our reunion in Columbus, Georgia, at which time we dedicated our 17th Airborne Memorial Monument at Fort Benning. John Moore was one of the founding fathers of our Association and continued on as the registered agent of the “17th Airborne Division Association, WWII, Inc”, until our dissolution. He was a practicing attorney in Memphis, Tennessee. John and his wife Lou hosted reunions in Memphis in 1968 and 1983 and Columbus, Georgia in 2004. They were assisted by Jack Macauley in the Columbus reunion.

I believe John Moore helped in drawing up our original Constitution and By-Laws. Lou Moore was Past President of the Ladies Auxiliary and a member of the Executive Board. Lou is also the able assistant to help John do what he does best for our organization.



50th Airborne Anniversary Parade, Washington DC, July 1990. Flag waver is me.

1990 Washington DC Reunion



Robert & Midge Fleming

Stanley Ford

Harry & Genevieve Fox

Harry & Dottie Friend & Grandson
Patrick



Ed & Florence Friday

Tom & Joyce Funk

Curt & Pauline Gadd

Bob & Anna Gallardo



Bill & Colleen Gamble

Jim & Rebekah Gannaway

Bob & Mary Jane Geist

Ernest & Eleanor Gendill



Virgil & Betty Gent &
Grandaughter Sharon

Charles Gerry

Kenneth & Mary Gifford

Sy & Eileen Gitlin



Lewis & Betty Good

Jim & Beverly Goolsbee

Max & Ruth Gray

Harold Green



Young paratrooper Howard Oyler, 194-SR, after landing in his glider, is now a very nice mature friend who is still wondering how he had ever survived doing such a dangerous thing. . Photo by Ed Friday, and Jackie (at the final reunion).

For veterans living in Central California, this new VA cemetery, the 124th such



veterans cemeteries in America, had begun burials in early 2007. It has a capacity to fulfill veterans need for the next 50 years. It is 561 acres of farm land in Dixon, California, about 25 miles south on Highway 80

from Sacramento, or about 70 mile north on Highway 80 from San Francisco.

This will be the nearest cemetery for me. All the Bay Area cemeteries are full. We toured it on November 18th, and Linda has no objection to joining me there when she reaches age 104. I would be 133 by then, but there is no such a thing as time in our future eternal domain. In the mathematics of determining the laws of our universe, scientists have found the possible existence of 11 dimensions, with as many universes. We on earth have already taken four of those dimensions, such as length, depth, width and time. Somewhere, over the rainbow, the dimensions in our eternal life are totally foreign and incomprehensible to us, like 'time' was, before Einstein was able to define it.

It never snows in the Sacramento Valley, The temperature averages 70 degrees all year long, ranging from 40 F to 90 F, no humidity. It was said that a US Marine who survived the Pacific War in WW2, came back home to do farming in Dixon. Upon his death, he willed his farm to the government to create a burial ground for all the veterans.

Bill was born in the Sacramento Valley about 50 miles due east of this cemetery site. He will return home here when he forgets to wake up from his final nap. A valid Discharge Certificate is needed for burial, plus a marriage certificate for your spouse.

If you had lost your discharge papers, go to <http://vetrecs.archives.gov> on the Internet.

507th veterans center of attention as World War II hangar opens. by Gene Rector - grector@macon.com

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE -- More than 300 local dignitaries sat in the presence of history and heroes Friday as the Museum of Aviation officially opened its World War II Exhibit Hangar. Some 40 members of the 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment, steely veterans of the D-Day assault more than 64 years ago, attended a luncheon in their honor and toured an expansive exhibit featuring the Georgia unit. The veterans were visiting from Atlanta, where the regiment was holding its annual reunion. This gathering was attended by **Howard Heubner, Ed Jeziorski, Robert Ochsenbein and Roy Creek of the 17th Airborne.**



(Photo) An open hull of an aircraft showing paratroopers about to jump dominates the section of a museum exhibit devoted to the Army's 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment, which **Howard Huebner of Leesburg, Fla., with his grandson Jeremy Huebner of Deltona, Fla.,** takes in Friday afternoon. Huebner is a veteran of the same unit, which parachuted into Normandy on D-Day.

GALLERY: [WWII Veterans get look at new museum exhibit](#) **LINK:** [WWII veterans on hand for exhibit's opening](#)

Although a number of officials and museum supporters spoke at the Friday luncheon, the 507th - formed in 1942 at Camp Toccoa - was the center of attention. More than 2,000 paratroopers from the unit, flying on 117 C-47s, jumped into the murky blackness of June 5, 1944. Only 700 returned to England after 35 days of combat. The unit assisted the Army's 82nd Airborne Division in taking the La Fiere causeway and cutting off the Cotentin Peninsula, greatly assisting the much larger June 6 assault on the beaches of Normandy, France.

The exhibit features a depiction of the planning room where Supreme Allied Commander Gen. Dwight Eisenhower gave the D-Day launch order. A cutaway view of a C-47 offers a look into the fully manned transport as it flew to its landing area, complete with lighting effects and the noise of grinding engines, flak and tracer shells. A C-47 suspended from the ceiling shows the workhorse transport flying over a replica of the Cauquigny chapel, a rallying point after the 507th took the causeway at great loss of life. The chapel, displaying the shell damage of the original building in the French village, is the host for two films: "Down to Earth" and a movie commissioned by the museum titled "Papa Said: We Should Never Forget." The latter depicts the experiences of two French girls who lived under German occupation and learned the importance of freedom.

The exhibit also displays memorabilia from the war, including uniforms and weapons donated by 507th members. **Howard Huebner** is 85 now, but he has no trouble remembering that June 5 evening, particularly the red and yellow tracer shells meeting the aircraft as it approached the landing area. "That's the quickest I've ever wanted to get out of an airplane in my life," he admitted. "I wanted to get on the ground." The Leesburg, Fla., resident parachuted into a farm field about four miles from the beach. "I could hear the Germans hollering," he said. "They were yelling about the Americans." He survived that day and many more battles that followed. "And I've thanked the Lord every day I've been home," he acknowledged. Huebner said he was overwhelmed by the exhibit: "It's history for generations to come. It's so unusual."

Ed Jeziorski, 87, remembers how overloaded the twin-engined C-47s were that fateful night. The normal maximum weight was 27,900 pounds, but the parachutists - some with packs that weighed as much as they did - pushed some takeoff loads to 34,000 pounds. "When we were taking off, I felt we would never get off the ground," Jeziorski said. "I guarantee the pilot had to

use everything on the runway except maybe for the last 50 feet. Then all of a sudden the tail pushed up and I thought, 'Ah, we're airborne.' "

Gazing at the C-47 suspended from the ceiling with a paratrooper exiting from the side brought back a perilous memory for the Ruckersville, Va., resident. The overloads forced C-47 pilots to fly faster than normal to prevent stalling. "That meant guys would jump out at a high rate of speed," Jeziorski said, "and sometimes the prop blast would drive them into the tail. If they were flying slower, the pilot could raise the tail so that you could get under it without danger."

Robert Ochsenbein was in England on D-Day, but his unit was held in reserve. "We were told that the rest of the outfit was at the staging area ready for a big operation," he remembered, "but they wouldn't tell us what it was. All they said was they'd ship us in if they needed us." He received plenty of feedback following the June 5 assault. "There was fog and a lot of disorientation," he was told. "They had a tough time finding each other and getting folks together. The planes were stretched for miles."

The Germans also had unexpectedly flooded some of the landing zones creating havoc for the heavily loaded paratroopers. "Some of the water was over their heads," Ochsenbein said. "Guys jumping into the water couldn't get out of their equipment and they drowned." **Chesley Crews**, a flight engineer on one of the C-47s carrying the 507th that night, said the cargo workhorse was a great airplane. "It was particularly good because it had a 19-to-one glide ratio," the Greenville, S.C., native said. "That meant if the engines went out, you could glide 19 feet for every foot of altitude you lost. He also remembered the tracer shells and told his pilot how much they upset him. "He said they didn't bother him at all," Crews volunteered with a hearty laugh. "What bothered him were the four shells in the middle he couldn't see."

Retired Army **Col. Roy Creek**, now 90 but then a 26-year-old captain, led the charge on the Merderet River bridge near Chef-du-Pont. "We fought for the bridge all day," the Lawrence, Kan., resident said. "We really didn't have a unit. It was a mixed group of people who showed up. But we won. We captured the bridge." Perhaps the most poignant exhibit is also the simplest. At the end of the retelling of heroic D-Day events is a video screen that flashes youthful pictures and names of 507th veterans, including many who attended the grand opening.

Gone were Friday's wheelchairs, canes, the faltering steps, the gray hair. They were - and will forever be - as they were then: youthful, exuberant, heroic. **Pat Bartness**, the Museum Foundation's president and chief operating officer, watched the aging veterans as they clustered around the video, exchanging quick stories about the faces that appeared. He saw the looks on their faces as they left the display. "It's great to honor these guys while they're still around," he acknowledged, still emotional after the hours-long event. "We wanted to honor them today and I think they feel honored. So it was a success." To contact writer Gene Rector, call 923-3109, extension 239.



Myra and Bill Braeseker (194-B). Myra is the visual image of my mother-in-law. Linda's mother is very good to me and we had always visited her in Connecticut after each reunion. However, we both looked forward to each new reunion with the delights of seeing our "Reunion Mom" again. Unfortunately, Bill Braeseker had passed away and now, without our annual reunions, we will sorely miss seeing our "Reunion-Mommy".

The Change?

The war in Europe was over on May 8, 1945. During that April, I was assigned to Operation Eclipse to take Berlin. President Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945. The new President Truman hesitated, so the Russians got into Berlin first. The Russians used their Siberian (Mongolian) troops to garrison the city and they sealed the city for two months to pillage, plunder and rape as their revenge. Our medics were first to be allowed to enter Berlin, on July 4th, because all their medical facilities were destroyed. My buddy and I were sightseeing, and we came upon the Communist Headquarters building. While we were photographing, a Russian officer came out to see who we were. He was interested in me since I looked a bit like one of his Siberian soldiers. He inspected my Medical ID card, and asked if I would like to become one of them. I said in no way would I become one of his group.

He said, "It matters little since we will take your country without going to war. We plan to fund your young people, to become teachers, politicians, doctors and lawyers to learn socialism. In time, they could change your country to turn it inside out without firing a shot". I was aware that such a scheme was far-fetched, but

"If the American people ever allow private banks to control the issue of their currency, first by inflation, then by deflation, (i.e., the "business cycle") the banks and corporations that will grow up around them will deprive the people of all property until their children wake-up homeless on the continent their fathers conquered." By Thomas Jefferson, President of the United States 1801-1809"



23 Oct 08: Happy Birthday number 91 for **Jack Macauley, 513-HQ2**,

Jack, we wish you the best of health and demeanor as you slowly work your way towards birthday # 104. By then, I would be pushing 97, or someone will be pushing me in a wheelchair, that is. We will each celebrate with a cup of prune juice with a glass of soluble fiber! We both will be members of the proverbial "Well-regulated Militia" of our Second Amendment.

SICK CALL

Harold Greenwald, 680-HQ, our airborne troubadour, reports that he has no recall of **Randolph G. Greco**, whose gravesite was adopted by Ralph Peeters of Belgium. Hal and his wife wish to thank Ralph Peeters and all the others who have adopted our KIA graves.

In addition to his memory problem, Hal now is having macular degeneration that affects his ability to read. He is in contact with the low-vision center for a device to help him read. He also had a basal cell carcinoma removed from his nose, but plastic surgery had rendered him all handsome again. He remains upbeat and thankful for all his blessings. They both love to read and re-read Thunder Mail Call. He continues his bike riding and his 70 push ups every morning without fail.

From VernaDean.

COMMENT: Macular degeneration is the breakdown of the supportive tissues that keeps the retina in place in the seeing portion of the eye. The most devastating form is the wet-type in which the blood vessels break down to leak blood into the eye to occlude vision.

Colonel Townsend does all of our obituary notices. If you have knowledge of the passing of one of our troopers, please advise Del Townsend or the editor. Always leave your phone number, email or postal address for confirmation.

OBITUARY

Joseph M. Poplawski, Hq 3, 507th PIR, passed away on 29 July 2008

Following his service in World War II, **Mr. Poplawski** was employed by **AT& T** for over 25 years. Following his retirement he enjoyed "Gardening" and he and his Wife, Ann, spent most of their spare time visiting various Veteran Groups with emphasis on the World War II Veterans. He joined our Association in 1985 and became a Life Member in 1991. The cause of death was Natural Causes at the age of 88.

His wife of 61 years is the former Ann J. Sencoski. They were married in 1946. He was a graduate of Minooka High School, class of 1938, and attended machine-shop school at Scranton Technical High School. After his schooling, he was sent to a defense factory in Torrington, Conn. After enlistment in the Army in February 1942, Joseph was a staff sergeant with the 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment. He was in campaigns in Normandy, Rhineland, Ardennes in Central Europe, at the Battle of the Bulge and other battles. He received numerous decorations and citations, including four Bronze Stars.

Mr. Poplawski is survived by his Wife of nearly 62 years, Ann, two Sons, three Daughters, five Grandchildren and two Great Grandchildren. Correspondence and messages of Condolence may be addressed to the Poplawski Family as follows: Mrs Ann Poplawski, 3317 Greenwood Avenue, Moosic, PA 18507

Cyrus M. Martin, Co H, 507th PIR, who joined our Association in 1986 and he passed away at age 85 on Saturday, July 19, 2008. He was born in Elizabeth, IN, on January 4, 1923.

He was a production worker at Hearts Fire Place. He was an Army veteran of World War II and served as a paratrooper in the 507th (Company H) Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 17th Airborne Division. He was a lifetime member of the VFW Post 1693 in New Albany, IN. He was preceded in death by his wife, Agnes O. Martin. He is survived by one daughter, Marlana Skaggs (Billy), of Georgetown, IN.

Andrew Bokrosh, Co A, 507th PIR, passed away on 31 July 2008. He was employed by Grumman Aircraft where he retired. He was a Member of the Bethpage Fire Department for over 55 years. He joined our Association in 1982 and became a Life member in 1993.

Andrew, a longtime resident of Bethpage passed away peacefully surrounded by his loving family. A WW II Veteran, 82nd Airborne (507A), Bronze Star and Purple Heart Recipient. Beloved husband of Josephine.

He was Honorary Deputy Chief, Company #4. WW II Veteran, 82nd Airborne (507A), Bronze Star and Purple Heart Recipient. Beloved husband of Josephine. Loving father of Frank (Eileen) and Mary Foster (James McGoldrick).

Cherished grandfather of Frank, Jr., Lauryn, Dawn, Brenden and Adam. Josephine Bokrosh, 24 Devon Road, Bethpage, NY 11714

Robert L. Ashworth, Brig Gen (Ret), Hq 1, 193rd GIR, passed away on 28 December 2007. Lt Col Ashworth was in the 193rd GIR, and Col Ashworth commanded the 504th PIR in the 82nd Airborne Division, replacing Col Westmoreland who moved up to Division Chief of Staff. Following his retirement from the US Army, General Ashworth enjoyed hunting and fishing and playing golf. He spent the last year or so of his life with Robert Jr in Boise, ID. The cause of death was Natural Causes at the age of 93.

Brig Gen Ashworth is survived by two sons, five grand children and one great grandchild. Correspondence and messages of Condolence may be addressed to the Ashworth Family as follows: Mr Robert L. Ashworth Jr., 4516 Shasta Street, Boise, ID 83703.
Email bob.ashworth@boiseschools.org

Cyrus M. Martin, Co H, 507th PIR passed away on 19 July 2008. Ed Siergiej's records indicated that Mr Martin "Retired from farming and public jobs". He joined our Association in 1986 and continued as a Member in good standing. He was born in Elizabeth, IN on January 4, 1923, the son of George W. and Susie Pellman Martin. He was a production worker at Hearts Fire Place. He was an Army veteran of World War II. He was a member of the Hornickle Post 379 American Legion in Elizabeth. He was a lifetime member of the VFW Post 1693 in New Albany, IN. He was preceded in death by his wife, Agnes O. Martin. He is survived by one daughter, Marlana Skaggs (Billy), of Georgetown, IN; one brother, David Martin, of New Albany; two sisters, Grace Wilson, of Elizabeth and Roberta Woertz, of Linton, IN; and one granddaughter, Marla Tomes.
Contact: Marlina Skaggs, 511 park Ridge Road, Georgetown, IN

Mr. Manley I Gray, Hq 1, 193rd GIR passed away on 31 March 2008
Following his service in World War II, **Mr. Gray** was employed by the **Safeway Stores** for over 33 years. During his career he was elected to the Arvada City Council in 1962 and was a pillar of strength in Arvada Community affairs for many years. He was named "Man of the Year" for the City of Arvada in 2001. He joined our Association in 1990 and became a Life Member in 1998. Manley was our Reunion Chairman for the Reunion in Denver in 1995 and was the Association President 1997 - 1998.

In his retirement years Mr Gray remained very active in the Community Affairs. The cause of death was a heart attack as he passed away peacefully and quite rapidly at the age of 84. He was born January 5, 1924 in Denver, CO.. He earned many medals in WWII while serving in 193-Hq1 of the 17TH Airborne Division.

Mr. Gray is survived by his Wife of 62 years, Eula, two Sons, two Daughters, nine grandchildren and five great grandchildren. Correspondence and messages of Condolence may be addressed to the Gray Family as follows: Mr. Steve Gray, 8518 Bohleen Road, Peyton, CO 80831. E-mail steve.gray@norandex.com

William Mihelich, Co B, 513th PIR, passed away on 6 October 2008 at age 83.. Through an assist from Ed Siergiej I was able to contact the Family this morning to obtain the essential information for this message.

Following his service in World War II, he worked as a crushing plant officer for the Oliver Iron Mining Company before being hired as a Conservation Officer for the State of Minnesota. He was in charge of Carver County and stationed in Waconia from 1962 until his retirement on 1 May 1994. Following his retirement Mr. Mihelich was an avid "fisherman and a hunter" with his major effort devoted to "gardening" on their large family acreage. He built a beautiful family home that was the talk of the town. One of his major projects was building a scale model of his home out of cardboard. He joined our Association in 1983 and became a Life Member in 1987. Starting around 2002 Mr Mihelich suffered a series of strokes and major heart problems. The cause of death was heart problems at the age of 83.

William Mihelich



He was born in Victoria in March 5, 192 and died Oct. 6, 2008. He served with the 17th Airborne Division as a paratrooper during WWII. Captured during the Battle of the Bulge, he spent the last four months of the war at Stalag 4-B prison camp near the Elbe River in Germany. Liberated by the

Russians, Corporal Mihelich was discharged from service, married his high school sweetheart, Josephine (Jo) Radosevich in 1945 and worked as a crushing plant operator for the Oliver Iron Mining Company before being hired as a Conservation Officer for the State of Minnesota. In charge of Carver County, he was stationed in Waconia from 1962 until his retirement on May 1,1994. His parents and siblings preceded him in death while his survivors include his wife, Jo, Victoria, MN; daughter, Susan Krech, Waconia, MN; granddaughters, Amy Krech, Madison, SD & Holly Krech Thomas, NY, NY; also great-grandchildren, Nathaniel & Hannah Thomas; nieces and nephews. Mr. Mihelich is survived by his wife of 63 years, Josephine "Jo", one Daughter and two grandchildren. Correspondence and messages of Condolence may be addressed to the Mihelich Family as follows:

Mrs Josephine "Jo" Mihelich, 1776 Stieger Lake LN, Apt # 209, Victoria, MN 55386. E-Mail stiegerlake1776@yahoo.com

Harold E Butler, Hq 680th GFA, passed away on 10 October 2008

Following his service in World War II, Mr. Butler worked for the Honeywell Station for over 41 years with the last half of his employment in the Computer Field. In retirement he spent many an hour on his motorcycle and his love for "boating". His priority was spending time with his "family". In his later years he was a victim of dementia. The cause of death was Natural Causes at the age of 85.



Harold was born on December 12, 1922, in the family farm in Motley, MN, the son of Ira and Emma Butler. Harold was a World War II Paratrooper, shot down over the Rhine River. He received the Purple Heart returned to active duty till the end of the war in Berlin. Harold worked for 41 years and four months at Honeywell Station 7 guru. He is preceded in death by his parents, brothers, Morris and Earl, sisters, Ruth and Marion.

Survived by his loving wife of 61 years, Geraldine; sons, Craig (Vicki), Robert (Camille); daughter, Kimberly (Steve) Klucas and their children, Nikki and Jake; brother, Roger (Ruby) Butler and sister, Bernice Deglman.

Mr. Butler is survived by his wife of 61 years, Geraldine, two Sons, one Daughter and two grandchildren. Correspondence and messages of Condolence may be addressed to the Butler Family as follows:

Mrs. Geraldine Butler, 1415 Nevada Avenue South, St Louis Park, MN 55426.
E-mail = rbutler@rei.com (A Son's address)

Andrew Giambroni, Btry E, 155th Abn AA, passed away in April 2007. My attempts to reach a Family Member through the AOL White Pages, www.Legacy.com and our Association records were not successful. Our records indicate that Mr. Giambroni was a retired steel worker. He is survived by his wife, Phoebe, and six children. Correspondence and messages of Condolence may be addressed to the Giambroni Family at the following address: Mrs. Phoebe S. Giambroni, 49189 Eagle Drive

East Liverpool, OH 43920

Lillian Helfrich Oswald, 85, died Sunday, Oct. 19, 2008, in her residence. Born Nov. 8, 1922. Her Husband was **Paul F. Oswald (680-HQ)**, a graduate of the US Military Academy, and had a 30 year career in the US Army. He was the Battalion Commander, 680th GFA. Following his military career Mr. Oswald spent 15 years with the Civil Service in the Jobs Corps. The Oswald's joined our Association in 1977 and were very active in the Association. They made several trips overseas with the Quades and were loyal contributors to the Memorial Fund. Lillian was a member of the Ladies Auxiliary. After Paul Oswald passed away on 20 December 2002, Lillian's life revolved around music, her church and her family. The cause of death was Lung Cancer (she never smoked a day in her life) at the age of 85.

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Lillian Oswald 2004

was the Battalion Commander, 680th GFA. Following his military career Mr. Oswald spent 15 years with the Civil Service in the Jobs Corps. The Oswald's joined our Association in 1977 and were very active in the Association. They made several trips overseas with the Quades and were loyal contributors to the Memorial Fund. Lillian was a member of the Ladies Auxiliary. After Paul Oswald passed away on 20 December 2002, Lillian's life revolved around music, her church and her family. The cause of death was Lung Cancer (she never smoked a day in her life) at the age of 85.

Cheerfully, she had offered her abilities to the community, whether promoting and teaching swimming programs for Kitty Hawk children or serving on her neighborhood board. During both government and extensive community service, Lillian's outstanding administrative skills were prized. Longstanding friendships were cherished, some spanning 80 years from childhood days in Titusville, Pa. Her children, Michael Williams and Margo VanDiver; stepchildren, Harriet O'Connor and John Oswald; six grandchildren, Craig and Steven Baker, Lisa and Heather O'Connor, and Nicole and Jason Oswald; and four great-grandchildren will greatly miss this family matriarch who so effortlessly set a fine example of living a meaningful life. Heartfelt thanks and gratitude are extended to Jeanne Drylie and Miss Boo who dedicated many months to her care and comfort, Dr. Kennan and Laurie who were always available for aid and reassurance, Joyce Twiddy who was her treasure, and Tux, her faithful companion. Lillian's pastors, the Revs. Tom Wilson and Ted Bishop, and their wives provided her spiritual comfort. Steve Blackstock and the choir of All Saint's Episcopal Church were among her dear friends on the Outer Banks where Lillian resided for 40 years. Lillian and her family appreciated the services of Community Hospice and caregivers. Their comfort, solace and laughter aided Lillian as did the hundreds of well-wishers from throughout her life. A celebration of life was held in All Saint's Episcopal Church Saturday, followed by burial in the Southern Shores Cemetery. Mrs Oswald is survived by two children, two step-children, six grand children and four great grand children. Correspondence and messages of Condolence may be addressed to the Oswald Family as follows: Mr. Michael Williams, 5 Mallard Cove, Kitty Hawk, NC 27949. E-mail = mhwilliams252@yahoo.com (A Son's address)

NOTE: I met Lillian Oswald in 2004 after the Fort Benning dedication of our Memorial Monument. We talked at length about her husband, Colonel Oswald, and had exchanged mails a few times.

Then, our contact ended. I now presumed she had become ill and I am very sorry about her ailment and of her demise. I send condolences to her family for the loss of such a lovely lady.

Germain Fox (194-D) –Deceased October 9, 2008



(With Privacy as per family request)

In the eternity, Germain will find everlasting life.

We thank him for his service to our country.

COMMENT: I met Germain and his wife, Genevieve, at our Final Reunion in October 2007, only a year ago. Life has an indeterminate span of time in our biologic clock, set at that instant of conception, but life goes on.

Memories of my Paratrooper Father

I am writing this small piece based upon my memories and the memories of my brothers, John and Patrick, and my sisters, Kathleen and Marion. Our father, SGT Francis C. Cassidy Jr. (Frank), was a trooper in the 139th Airborne Engineers, Co B and C. I don't remember him talking a great deal about his combat experiences when I was young. I wish now that I had taken the opportunity to ask him more questions about his experiences. My brother, COL Pat Cassidy, did sit down with him at some time before my father passed away in 1980 and gave me some of his recollections of his conversations with my father. These recollections, his discharge papers, and the few letters we found in the attic are our only source of information about his time in the Army.



He joined the Army on 14 April 1942 and spent part of 1942 with the 331st Engineers CO D at Camp Claiborne, LA. He was in Canada and Alaska from August 1942 to December 1943. Apparently tired of building runways in Alaska and Canada (I remember seeing blueprints of a portion of the ALCAN Highway in the attic when I was young), he and several of his friends volunteered for Airborne training. He was in Co I of the 1st Parachute Training Regiment at Fort Benning, GA, graduating 5 February 1944. He must have really wanted to be a Paratrooper because I remember he always had a problem with heights. He spent some time in the 597th Parachute Engineers before being assigned to the 659th Airborne Engineers Co C at Camp Pickett, VA. The Regiment he was assigned to was broken up and he was reassigned to the 17th Airborne and the 139th Engineers. His friends were sent to the 82nd and the 101st.

He crossed the Atlantic to England on the Queen Elizabeth where he made a few training jumps. He was in the hospital with Jaundice when the 17th deployed to France and thus missed the Battle of the Bulge. This was probably a stroke of luck for him as well as my Mother, brothers, and sisters. He was released from the hospital and re-joined his unit after the battle.

His experiences in Operation Varsity are sketchy. We believe he crossed the Rhine River in the vicinity of Wesel in a rubber raft during Operation Varsity, but have never found anyone familiar with that part of the crossing.

We think he was part of a group of NCOs assigned to reconnaissance work. The History of the 139th Airborne Engineers has the following on page 33:

“Often patrols on engineer reconnaissance penetrated deep into German territory. There was an organized reconnaissance section by this time under Captain Ray MacMullen. Their aggressiveness on patrol won each of the eight a Bronze Star Award. On 9 April, 1945 four men of this group entered the city of Essen while it was still in enemy hands. They found no trace of any German soldiers. And based on the information they turned into their commanding officer, Essen the largest town of the Ruhr group was occupied by the 17th Division troops the next day.”

My Father mentioned many times how he and several other troopers were the first to enter Essen, though his account is different from the 139th History. He said they did see some German soldiers, though neither side made an aggressive move. They reported back that they met no resistance and the 17th then entered the city the next day. The 139th Unit History said all members of his group won the Bronze Star, but we never saw anything that indicated he was awarded the medal. He was told he was going to be put in for it, but he never received one. There's no record in his discharge papers of a Bronze Star, though we do not have his service records. There's no telling what really happened with the medal.

When asked about shooting at anyone or getting shot at, he was usually evasive. He said he was in group actions where who was responsible for hitting the

enemy soldiers being shot at was not clear. He did say he was never pinned down by fire where he could not move. He did mention heavy losses from German snipers. He also mentioned the importance of firing from a supported position, telling how many replacements would not last long because they would fire and miss and then were hit by return fire.

He never told us the “There I was, me and my guys, facing the Germans” type of stories. He only told us of the odd or funny things he saw, such as:

Eating lunch with a trooper who was sitting on a dead, frozen German soldier. Driving into a roadblock at night, at which point the young Lieutenant jumped out of the Jeep, put a map on the hood and turned his flashlight on to read the map. My Father said he saw German soldiers and never understood why they did not fire.

Getting orders to blow up a bridge just built by another army engineer unit.

Blowing a building down by using too much C2, while trying to blow a bank vault. Having a wheel-barrel full of Reichs Marks (RM) and giving it away to an elderly German woman, only to get paid in RM the next month. (I heard from a German friend a few years ago of the story of an elderly woman called the Angel of Essen who came up with a large amount of money near the end of the war and helped take care of the locals with her newly found wealth. I’ll always wonder if it was the same woman.)

Sleeping in a cellar only to find German soldiers in the attic the next morning. A trooper going crazy and shooting flies off the ceiling, with other troopers upstairs. Two troopers having a duel with 45 caliber pistols. One was shot in the hip and the other was court-martialed. Using the Krupp estates for the Division HQ. Going swimming and having someone swipe his duffel bag full of souvenirs (fortunately they did not take his clothes).

Being on the French Riviera for VE day. Returning to the US in a very slow, small ship, during which he won, and then lost, a lot of money playing poker.

We’ll probably never find out the experiences our Father went through in 139B and C. Based upon his frequent use of the German words *essen* (eat) and *verboten* (forbidden) at the dinner table when we were young, we know he did pick up a few phrases during his time in Germany. My brother Pat still has his jump uniform and a pair of ugly green and black Army sneakers that my Father wore to the beach until 1980. We don’t have any photos of him in his jump uniform. The few he had were lost over the years.

I regret missing the opportunity to sit down with him more about his time in the 17th Airborne Division. I thank all the troopers I talked with at the Hampton reunion who freely shared their experiences with me, a newcomer to the group. I will always treasure the memories of that reunion and my association with the troopers of the 17th. If anyone wishes to add to any of these stories or if anyone knew my Father, I’d be grateful for a letter, phone call, or email. I can be

reached at 6 Ruth Drive, Poquoson, VA 23662, (757) 868-8723, casacassidy@earthlink.net. Thanks for reading. *Joe Cassidy*

A Hateful Crime

Most of you know this monument dedicated to the Native Americans who fought during the Battle of the Bulge and located near the Buffalos Farm in Recogne, Bastogne, Belgium.

Recently, this memorial was damaged. The circle plaquelet with the engraved Indian



Face was stolen either by any vandal or racist (could be bad inspired by the next American voting) or any simple robbery for the money value of the bronze metal (ridiculous !). Nobody knows. But we all, the Battle of the Bulge Historian buffs, can only say our contempt and our angriness about this kind of robbery. Nothing could justify such a gesture.

We hope the conscientious-stricken thief would have the good idea to give the robbed plaquelet back. Even namelessly by laying it in a place where it could be easily found back. We will try to make publish several articles in the newspapers to stigmatize the thief. If you still have the opportunity to insert any article in your newsletters, newspapers, email letters, local newsletters, networks or else please don't hesitate to use these informations to do it. Probably the giving back of the plaquelet is only a vain wish ? Yes, probably, but who knows ?

Even if I have nothing to do with this robbery and even if I'm not responsible at all, I would like to apology on behalf the honest Belgian citizens - ans especially those of Bastogne - to all of you my American friends for this bad gesture against one part of your community and above all against the memory of "our" boys fallen during the Bulge; Native Americans and else. I wish this will not remain unpunished (I hope so).

Best regards from your Belgian Friend,

Roger Marquet, Battle of the Bulge - Dec.44-Jan.45, Historian - Writer - Official Guide
Chenogne, 1d, B-6640 SIBRET, TEL. + 32 (0) 61.21.91.51. rogermarquet@skynet.be

REPLY: 29 Oct 08: Dear Roger.

I remember this memorial. On the day of the dedication of the memorial at the temporary cemetery near Foy, I walked past this memorial near the end of our fourteen mile hike from Noville. I know you and the people of Bastogne are all very troubled about this theft. But there is also something I and all of the others to whom you addressed your email knows. We ALL know the hearts of those honest Belgian citizens you mentioned. We ALL know the place that my father and all the other men of the 11th Armored Division hold in there hearts. And you and they hold a special place in our hearts too. Those fine Belgian men, women, and children owe no apology for they are not responsible for this act of one. Carry on my friend., Marty

Cacioppo, 11th Armor Division, email = martyc919@hotmail.com>