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# THUNDERBOLT

Volume 70 Issue No. 2

Winter 2016



## ANNUAL REUNION

**83<sup>rd</sup>** Infantry Division  
Association

CLEVELAND OHIO

ST

**AUGUST 2  
AUGUST 6  
2017**



*Full Reunion details  
inside*

## 83rd Infantry Division Association Inc.

### The Thunderbolt

Is the Official Publication of the 83rd ID Ass. Inc. The Thunderbolt is written for all members of the 83rd Infantry Division WWII and is published at 138 East Side Drive, P.O. Box 406, Alton Bay, NH 03810-0406

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Search for:

**United States Army 83rd Infantry Division**

or go to

[www.facebook.com/groups/382509485859](http://www.facebook.com/groups/382509485859)





# President's Corner

By John Markuns, President

---

Where to begin. To say that the 70th Reunion of the 83rd Infantry Division Association was special is such an understatement. Please enjoy Larry Scheerer's recounting. Larry outdid himself as Reunion Chairman. Our deepest condolences go to Larry and all his family on the loss of Larry's father, Richard W. (Dick) Scheerer, at 100 years of age. Dick, wounded on July 4th, served as a Lieutenant and 2nd Platoon leader for H Co., 331st. Larry has honored his father so well.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to Judith, Paula, Rande and all the family of Bill Spriggs, C Co., 329th. The energy, wisdom and good humor that Bill brought to the Association kept so many of us going and smiling all the way. He was so well loved by all who knew him. Godspeed Bill.

We are so fortunate that our valued Historian and long time descendant member, Dave Curry, has stepped up to the plate and has taken on the job of reunion chairman for the Association's 71st Reunion in Cleveland Ohio, where the Association held its first reunion. Dave's father, Thomas Curry, F Co., 331st, was killed in action in Gey Germany.

To make this reunion even more significant we will be commemorating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the 83rd Infantry Division as it was raised in Camp Sherman Ohio on August 5, 1917.

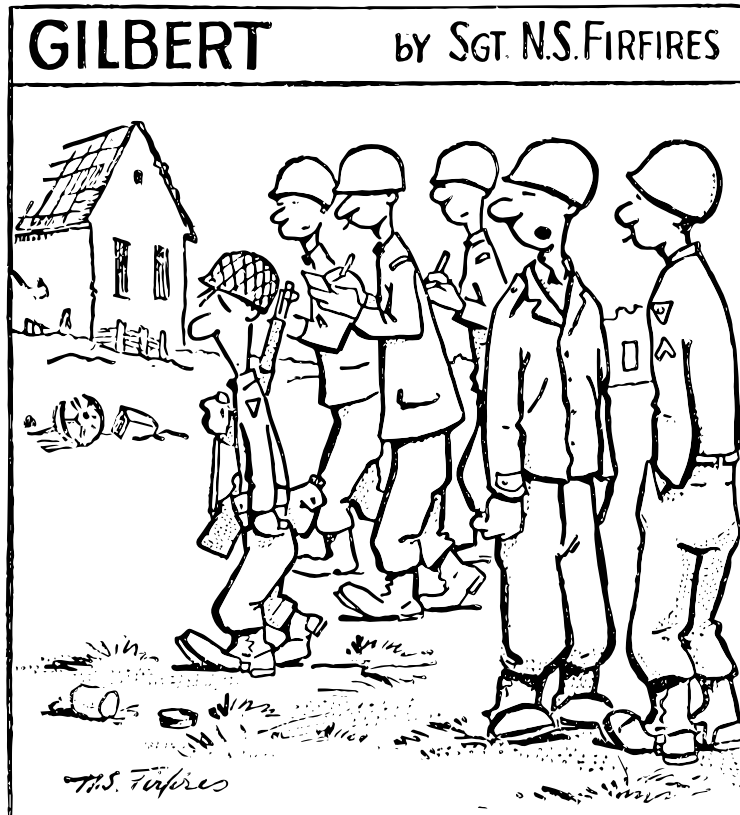
We are pleased to announce that Jelle Thys has moved up to be publisher of the Thunderbolt. We thank Jon Bohy for all the support he provided Cliff Wooldridge and myself in putting out the magazine these past several years. Jon's work in laying out the magazine and ad book each year was superb. You will see some changes in format and layout. Please let us know what you think!

You will also find in this issue of the Thunderbolt ample evidence of what I believe makes this Association unique among so many great military associations. You will see Wilfried Debacker's very personal reflection during the commemorative "MARS of the 83rd" in Bihain. You will see accounts of descendants following in the footsteps of their veterans guided with so much caring by our European friends -- Jean Paul Pitou, Gilles Billion, Antoine Noslier, Glyn Nightingale -- Eric Nelly and Jelle Thys, Eddy Montfort and Willem Doms. So many of us have been graced as they have shared their knowledge and devotion to remembering what happened on their soil over 70 years ago -- and as they have opened their homes and hearts to the veterans of the 83rd and now to their descendants -- who all long to better understand the struggle and journey that shaped their veterans' lives and ultimately their own.



Also in this issue is a recounting of a commemorative celebration of the 83rd's 99th anniversary by the reflagged 83rd Army Reserve Readiness Training Center in Fort Knox. The respect the command of ARRTC has demonstrated for all veterans of the 83rd and their efforts to preserve and promote the history of the 83rd fuels this Association in our own efforts to do the same.

As we go into this new year, let us all be thankful in these turbulent times that we can still look to the example set by all those soldiers who have worn and still wear the patch of the 83rd. In fighting for and alongside their buddies, they have also fought and continue to fight to protect not just American values, but to protect fundamental human rights as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.



**The press expects big things of him.**

**A salute to past presidents who have served us well**

- 1947 James C. Hanrahan \*
- 1948 Jack M. Straus \*
- 1949 Shelly Hughes \*
- 1950 Julius Ansel \*
- 1951 Walter H. Edwards, Jr.
- 1952 Leo Schneider \*
- 1953 Finley Heyl \*
- 1954 Lawrence J. Redmond \*
- 1955 Lawrence J. Redmond \*
- 1956 Lt. Gen. Robert H. York \*
- 1957 Harry W. Lockwood \*
- 1958 Raymond J. Voracek \*
- 1959 Charles Abdinoor \*
- 1960 Joseph F. Minotti \*
- 1961 Frank J. McGrogan \*
- 1962 John W. Robinette \*
- 1963 Manuel C. Martin \*
- 1964 Julius Boyles \*

- 1965 Samuel Klippa \*
- 1966 William M. Doty \*
- 1967 Albert B. Belvedere
- 1968 Vito C. Palazzolo \*
- 1969 Pat DiGiammerino \*
- 1970 Casey Szubski \*
- 1971 Charles Altomari \*
- 1972 Harold H. Dopp \*
- 1973 Louis J. Volpi \*
- 1974 Bernard O. Riddle \*
- 1975 Robert G. Taylor
- 1976 Mike Skovran \*
- 1977 Manlius Goodridge \*
- 1978 Joseph A. Macaluso \*
- 1979 William J. Chavanne \*
- 1980 Samuel Klippa \*
- 1981 Michael Caprio \*
- 1982 Ralph Gunderson \*

- 1983 Arthur Doggett \*
- 1984 Bernie Cove \*
- 1985 Carroll Brown \*
- 1986 John Hobbs \*
- 1987 George Fletcher \*
- 1988 Charles Schmidt \*
- 1989 Edward Reuss \*
- 1990 Charles J. Lussier \*
- 1991 Edgar H. Haynes \*
- 1992 Ned Smith \*
- 1993 Louis Sandini \*
- 1994 William M. Minick \*
- 1995 Casey Szubski \*
- 1996 Floyd Richmond \*
- 1997 Keith Davidson \*
- 1998 R. C. Hamilton \*
- 1999 Pat DiGiammerino \*
- 2000 Salvatore Scicolone

- 2001 Pat DiGiammerino \*
- 2002 Bob Taylor
- 2003 Salvatore Scicolone
- 2004 Allison Shrawder \*
- 2005 Ames H. Miller \*
- 2006 Rudolph Zamula
- 2007 Robert Keck \*
- 2008 Michael Catrambone \*
- 2009 John White \*
- 2010 Carmella Catrambone
- 2011 Carmella Catrambone
- 2012 Carmella Catrambone
- 2013 Carmella Catrambone
- 2014 Kathleen Powers
- 2015 Kathleen Powers
- 2016 John Markuns
- 2017

\* Denotes deceased

# 70th Annual Reunion

## Review of a succesful Reunion in D.C.

Seventy years after the first post-war reunion we were blessed to have fourteen surviving veterans with us in Washington DC. The distinguished program included visits to the White House, the U.S. Capital, Fort Myer, Arlington National Cemetery and the WWII Memorial as well as our annual memorial service and banquet. Many thanks to Ann Tisdell, Kathleen Powers, George Studor and Joe Arsenault for the reunion photos that follow. Enjoy!

Text: Larry Scheerer, photos: Kathleen Powers /// Joe Arsenault

Attendance exceeded the previous year by forty percent, an indication of the vitality of the association now dominated by descendants and representatives from areas in Europe liberated by the Division. Awareness and appreciation of our veterans and their sacrifices and accomplishments seems to have more energy than ever. Special moments and connections were the norm.

At a quiet table in our hospitality suite Sam Tannenbaum shared the difficult personal story his ordeal as an orphan raised with little information about his father, killed in combat in Ottre near Bihain, Belgium. In the mid 90's he attended a meeting of the American WWII Orphans Network in Florida where someone suggested he call a veteran named Tony Vaccaro who might know of his

father. When he called and identified himself Tony quickly asked, "What did you say your name is? Then exclaimed, "I have been looking for you for fifty years!" Tony, then a rifleman with a camera and now famous for his wartime photos, had gone to the site of a massacre on January 11, 1945 of members of the 331st in a snowy field. He took a photo of a rifleman face down. Then he did something he had never done before – he turned the man over and was shocked to see that the soldier was his friend from his own F Company, Pvt. Henry Tannenbaum. That photo was later featured on the cover of Life Magazine and named "White Death". On Monday following Veteran's Day weekend 2016 HBO featured a special about Tony Vaccaro and his photos titled "Underfire".

Lila Smith of Lodi California, one of two surviving daughters of Lt. Col. Faber,





2nd Bn, 331st, attended her first reunion along with her sister Elizabeth Faber. At the final night dinner she was introduced to Aloysius (Al) Klugiewicz, age 100, who was responsible for communications in the 331st. She said “I never thought I would be able to speak with men who knew my father.”

Al was the subject of great attention at Fort Myer where he spoke with command staff after the Twilight Tattoo culminating with the Commanding general of the U.S Army District of Washington DC. He told them of an incident in which he served there before the war in the cavalry when then Colonel Patton took a fall from his horse when attempting a jump in the arena.

Glyn Nightingale received an award and recognition for his tremendous support and efforts to recognize veterans including recovering and returning personal posses-

sions from the battlefield in the backyard of his vacation home in Auxais just south of Sainteny in Normandy. Glynn indicated in the future he hopes to deliver such artifacts to families at the annual reunion to encourage attendance and membership in the association.

Jean- Paul Pitou was honored with the gift of a “Sky Walker” Mont Blanc pen to celebrate his status as an author and historian with the cul-

mination of 20 years of work on his book, “From the Shadow to the Light – Sainteny from 1939 to 1962”. It will be published soon with an English edition expected in 2017. It is an incredibly complete and detailed account of the experiences of the people of Sainteny and the soldiers of the 83rd Infantry Division, many of whom are quoted in the book.

Former 1st Lt. in the 83rd Ned Burr, now a retired Co-





lonel, addressed the audience at dinner and spoke of his admiration for the vitality of our organization, its work in documenting and preserving the history and of the outstanding level of involvement of descendants at a time when most WWII associations have dissolved with the passing of so many veterans.

Cliff Snyder Sr. spoke to the dinner audience of his dedication to the association, its

preservation of the memory of his comrades and their sacrifices and his pride in the current generation of descendants and members in Europe that now carry forward this good work.

John Markuns read the moving words that accompany the custom of the Missing Man table (see page 38).

In our busy life, let us remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice

for the freedoms we enjoy today. They may be gone but let them never be forgotten.

Sergeants at Arms Dave Dimmick, Paul DiGiammerino and Joseph Arsenault, as well as our inimitable June Zenz were also awarded and recognized for their longstanding dedication and service to the veterans, families and descendant members of the 83rd Infantry Division Association.

John marked his first year as president, leading our meetings and delivering the program at our final dinner. Only a few months prior his father Francis passed away and we all remarked at the pride he would have had and that we have in John's dedicated leadership of the association and conducting such a successful 70th anniversary event.





# Some impressions...





This table is set for those who cannot be with us – Those who have given their all for the sake of our country.

It remembers those who are POW, MIA KIA UNKNOWN or simply disappeared and are resting on foreign soil. They may be lost from our fold, but they are not forgotten.

The table is small, set for one. It symbolizes the lone individual against many oppressors

The tablecloth is white -- for the purity of a fighting man's creed in responding to his country's call to arms.

The single red candle stands straight, tall and proud like our soldiers. It is red for the blood they shed and stands alone as they stood, refusing to admit defeat.

A single red rose represents the families who kept and keep the faith waiting their soldiers return.

The red ribbon tied on the vase bears witness to a demand for a proper accounting of our missing

A slice of lemon on the plate reminds us of our soldier's bitter fate

The salt beside it is symbolic of the family's tears as they wait

The napkin is unfolded as though used, as the lives of our soldiers were used up in the service to our country



# 71st Annual Reunion Cleveland

## Introduction to Cleveland by Dave Curry

Well, as some of you may have heard by now, plans for our 71st Annual Reunion and celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the first raising of the 83rd are pretty much firmly in place. Our location will be the Renaissance Hotel right on Public Square in the heart of downtown Cleveland from August 2 through August 6, 2017. In addition, a strategic planning meeting will be held all day Tuesday, August 1.

Text: Dave Curry, photos: creative commons

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Our hotel, which is at the very centre of all the activities in downtown Cleveland, is a classic grand hotel with lots of chandeliers, brass, and carpeting in the main lobby and hallway and the Ambassador Ballroom. All guest rooms have been recently renovated, though, so your stay should be very enjoyable.

Next to the hotel is Tower City Center, with lots of shops, small fast-food style places for lunch, and a movie complex. Connected to this is Jack's Casino where you can have some fun playing the slots or blackjack. The Tower City complex is connected by an indoor walkway to Progressive Stadium, home of the Cleveland Indians. Just a short walk away is East 4th

*Starting on Wednesday night for the early arrivals, we will be going to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, located along the lakefront.*

Street, a mecca for upscale restaurants, including two of Michael Simon's places, Lola and Mabel's BBQ. A short walk in the other direction takes you to the warehouse district with many other restaurants, especially on West 6th Street.

Just about any place you want to visit in downtown Cleveland is within walking distance. But if you prefer to ride there are several trolley lines that loop the downtown

area, and are provided free by Cleveland merchants.

Our activities for the reunion are now pretty much locked in place, as we still work out the final details. Starting on Wednesday night for the early arrivals, we will be going to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, located along the lakefront.

Thursday we will be taking a Lake Erie and Cuyahoga River lunch cruise aboard





*A view of Progressive Field, home of the Cleveland Indians before game 1 of the 2016 World Series.*

the Goodtime III. The menu, provided by Normandy Caterers for the cruise is pretty extensive, and there should be something to satisfy everybody.

Friday morning we will take a Lolly the Trolley tour of Cleveland historic places and sites, which will culminate at the West Side Market, an old Cleveland institution, where you can find lots of produce, meats and poultry, fish, and food vendors offering sandwiches, Polish Pierogis, baked goods, nuts, and a small cafe. You can graze there for lunch, or go to one of the nearby restaurants, including Great Lakes Brewing Company, Market Garden Brewery, Flying Fig, SOHO Chicken + Whiskey, Nano Brew Cleveland. and others.

Friday evening we will all be going to Progressive Field to watch the Indians play the Yankees. It should be quite

a game -- the Yankees look poised to make a run at their division and the Indians are definitely thinking about another visit to the World Series! There will be fireworks after the game.

Finally, Saturday will include the traditional memorial service and banquet on Saturday night in the Ambassador Ballroom of the Renaissance

Hotel. It is a beautiful classic room with lots of carpeting, tall windows with drapes and chandeliers.

These are just the highlights of our reunion, and there are plenty of other things to see and do in downtown Cleveland during free time. I know that you will all have a great time in my hometown. Enjoy!





**We want to See You  
at the  
71st ANNUAL REUNION**



# Langenstein Concentration Camp

## A visit by Wim Doms, European Chapter

Text: Wim Doms, photos: Wim Doms

Dear friends,

Some weeks ago Vera & her 3 boys drove to Berlin. On the way up we deviated to visit the Langenstein Camp. My impressions ...

There are few remains of the camp buildings. Some feet of wire is left, but also in a poor state. The former camp site is well maintained today. They have put information panels which enables the visitor to walk the camp and understand how it looked like, and understand the suffering that took place.

The horror of such a camp is often contained in few words or few remains, although these can be very strong. One old big tree was at the execution site, which was also 'used' to hang victims. One victim had to hang another and refused to do so. He was killed by the SS and buried at the tree. The tree although dead now, is preserved, and still standing.

There are some other commemorative markers, or Monuments, on the sites where the victims of the camp have been buried. Those thousands of people are still there in mass-graves. These mass-graves, in fact the who-

le area, is respectfully maintained today.

If that terrible history had not taken place, you could only enjoy the beauty of the area, the wild flower, green grass field, bordered by forested hills.

We could not visit the tunnel system which has been carved out by the victims. Only opens on certain sundays in the month (not all).

The visitor center was open and I explained Mrs. Daifi why I was there. She directly pointed to the picture of Chuck hanging prominently at a wall of her Office.

The museum room has some personal objects used by victims are on display, not much. There are many pictures and information on the KZ camps in general, and somewhere between these, there may have been something on the Langenstein camp itself. I found the information interesting about the death-march, where 3500 victims were pushed over the countryside, away from the oncoming Americans. Only 500 of them survived, all other died on the road from exhaustion or murdered by the SS guards. The itine-

*Looking in the direction of attack of E Company, 330th on December 14, 1944. Road from Strass to Untermaubach. Picture taken by Wim Doms*



rary is on a large map in the museum. After the war, a lot of the villages where this death-march went by, have erected commemorative stones. I was surprised about that, but appreciated that they did so.

To me, the importance of the 'Gedenkstätte' (remembran-

ce-museum) is what can be visited outside, as I explained above.

It has a good flyer with map and itinerary, but not in English. Though the information panels outside are also in English. Mrs. Daifi - director of the site - forwarded the Prospekt which is

in English, here attached. I have also attached the scans of the Flyer in Dutch.

Should you ever come to the area, make sure the tunnel is open on that day, further, take your time to walk around in- and outside the camp, visit the village too. And Halberstadt.

W. Doms

*Since 2010 Willem Doms of 83rd ID VAEC is doing extensive research in the 83rd ID Hürtgen Forest and Rur river sector (December 1944 / February 1945). Please send email to [willem.doms@telenet.be](mailto:willem.doms@telenet.be) should you have any Veteran-memories, anecdotes, documents or pictures that you can share on this area. Thank you.*



**83rd Infantry Division  
December 1944-2016**

**We will remember them**



Dear Visitors,

We welcome you to the exhibition Am Ende des Tunnels kein Licht (No light at the end of the tunnel) in the Langenstein-Zwieberge Gedenkstätte (memorial). The exhibition recalls the suffering of the prisoners in the KZ (concentration camp) in Langenstein-Zwieberge (also known as B2 or Malachit) between April of 1944 and April of 1945.

It consists of 40 separate plaques. You'll find the locations of the individual themes in the accompanying overview.

Materials for a more intensive examination of individual aspects can be found at the bottom of many displays. They are fixed with magnets and can be taken down to read.

The assorted buildings and places on the grounds connected with the concentration camp have been prepared for you in a virtual model. If you would like to take a look at it, please go to the monitor station located in the middle of the exhibition room.

We invite you to express your thoughts about the place and the exhibition in the form of notes or drawings. There are seats and writing utensils in the back of the room.

The employees of the memorial will gladly answer questions you may have.

After their takeover in January 1933, the National Socialists gave large government orders to aircraft companies. The goal was to build up a powerful air force for a planned war of aggression.

To increase production, the commissioned companies built new plant sections and introduced more effective work routines.

In 1939, National Socialist Germany began the Second World War.

The aircraft industry employed foreign civilian workers, forced laborers and prisoners of war to replace those German workers who had been called up by the armed forces.

Starting in 1941, more and more concentration camp prisoners had to work for the air force. At the beginning of 1944, the number reached 36,000.

From 1940 on, the Allies were able to bomb targets in German territory. From 1943 on, they especially targeted the German aircraft factories.

Soon, these seemed to be at such a great risk that the National Socialist leadership ordered the repositioning of the most important production places to underground sites.

In March of 1944 within the Reich Ministry for Arms and War Production, the first concrete plans for an underground project were produced in the Theken mountains near Halberstadt. The construction of tunnels with an area of 40,000 - 60,000 sq. meters was planned.

The Ministry intended to reposition production plants for aircraft parts there.

The building project was given the code name "Malachit."

The Ministry entrusted the Main Economic Administrative Office of the SS with the supervision of construction for this and other projects. Near the construction site, the Ministry built an external command post for the Buchenwald concentration camp - the KZ in Langenstein-Zwieberge.

In SS documents, it appeared under the name "B2".

In the Hoppel mountains, only a few hundred meters from the large "Malachit" construction site, prisoners of the Langenstein-Zwieberge concentration camp built another underground plant: the "Maifisch"-tunnels.

They were supposed to start the gun barrel production for the Krupp-Gruson factory in Magdeburg.

The supervisors of the construction had a military-structured organization called the Organisation Todt (OT).

In November of 1944, the work on the "Maifisch" project was halted.

The Reich Ministry for Arms and War Production did not count it as one of the essential "minimum building projects" which could be implemented in spite of the general lack of material, equipment, energy and specialists.

Insufficient nutrition and clothing, maltreatment, hard labor, bad hygienic conditions, a shortage of medical treatment and inadequate health and safety standards led to a high number of deaths among the prisoners.

In addition to that, there were frequent executions.

1,875 dead prisoners from the camp are registered in SS documents.

Prisoners' corpses were taken to the town crematory in Quedlinburg where they were cremated.

In the final weeks of the camp's existence, the naked corpses were thrown into mass graves.

There were caves in and around Halberstadt long before the Second World War.

In 1944, building got underway in many of them.

Barracks for a forced labor camp were built in the garden of the former "Neu-Kamerun" restaurant. The "Landhaus" restaurant was converted into a concentration camp in April of 1944. It soon became overcrowded, and a barn was added as a "branch."

In the summer of 1944, the concentration camp moved to barracks near the camp in Zwieberge. It had been built by prisoners.



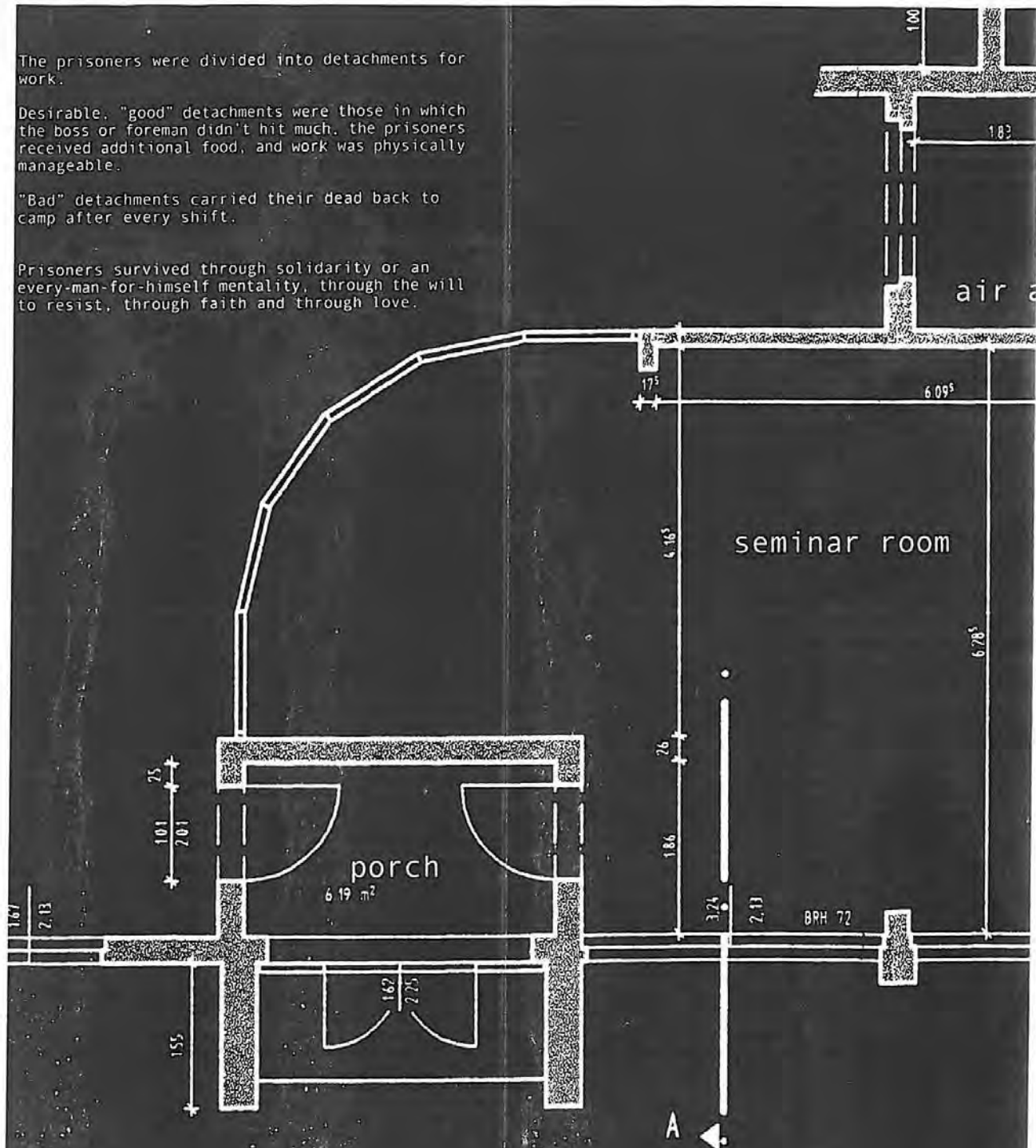


The prisoners were divided into detachments for work.

Desirable, "good" detachments were those in which the boss or foreman didn't hit much, the prisoners received additional food, and work was physically manageable.

"Bad" detachments carried their dead back to camp after every shift.

Prisoners survived through solidarity or an every-man-for-himself mentality, through the will to resist, through faith and through love.



Emaciated, "Gestreifte" (striped, name given to prisoners because of their striped clothing) laid supply lines and tracks, broke rock masses from large rock faces and built up camouflaged piles.

On April 11, 1945, the war was over for Halberstadt and the rubble clean-up was begun.

The railroad tracks gradually disappeared from the landscape. The "Landhaus" was once again a restaurant for day trippers.

The tunnels remained.

And the graves.

During the second half of the war, the number of concentration camps increased rapidly.

Thus, the SS took in "Volksdeutsche" (ethnic Germans) from other countries and, in accelerated courses, trained them to be concentration camp guards.

When they used prisoners for large building projects, they demanded that the future users provide some of the guards.

The "Malachit" project was supposed to help the air force. Therefore, prisoners of the Langenstein-Zwieberge camp were occasionally guarded by members of the air force.



88°  
201

s production

construction site  
"Malachit"

post-war history

every day  
of the pr

repositioning to  
underground sites

guard detachments/  
CIVIL workers

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The guard detachments exhibited a wide range of behavior toward the prisoners that varied from bestial brutality to correctness to cooperation.

The prisoners' work routine was essentially determined by civilian bosses and foremen.

The bosses and foremen exhibited a wide range of behavior toward the prisoners, as well: It varied from bestial brutality to indifference to selfless help.

On April 9, 1945, the SS ordered all prisoners who were able to walk to form marching columns on the inspection grounds.

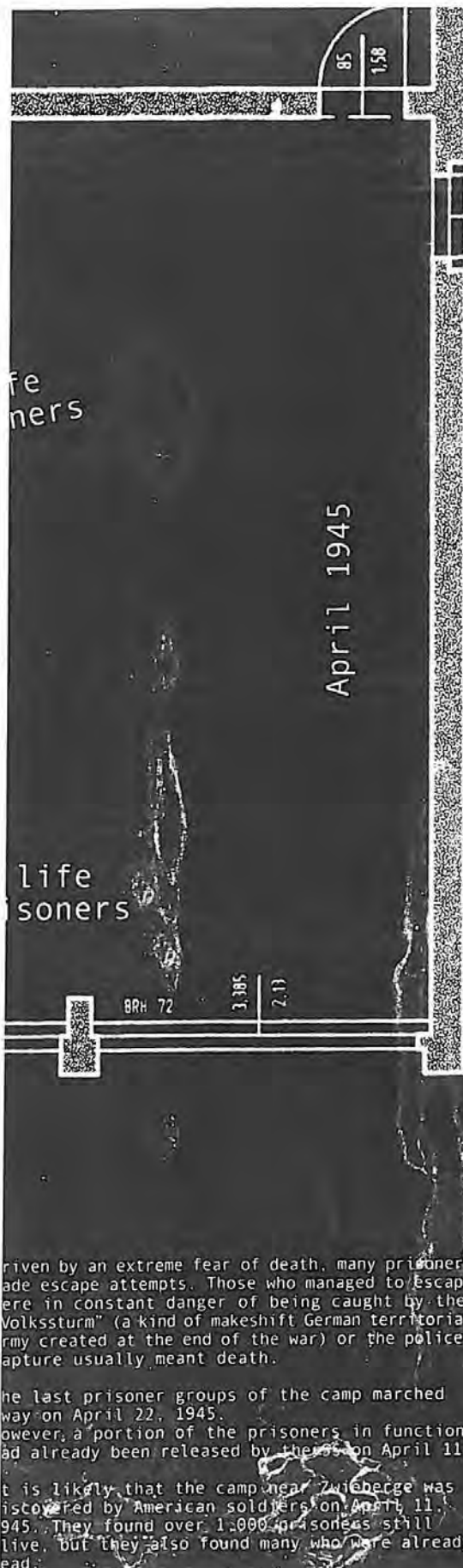
During the course of the day, about 3,000 men left the camp and 1,400 stayed behind.

Fears that those left behind would be liquidated did not come true. However, the food supplies of the camp were cut off completely.

The SS drove the prison columns eastward for days, then to the north and then to the west.

During the march, the weakened prisoners received hardly any nourishment.

Especially outside the towns, the SS shot and killed those who were too weak to continue walking. The columns shrank rapidly.



By 1947, the camp's barracks had been completely demolished. The area of the former inspection grounds was being used for agricultural purposes.

On the initiative of the Organization of the Persecuted Victims of the Nazi Regime (VVN), the districts of Blankenburg, Quedlinburg and Wernigerode had four of the existing mass graves enclosed and covered with plants by 1949. A memorial recalled the suffering of the victims.

Between 1966 and 1968, a fortified assembly place was built on these graves. The reconstructed complex received a large memorial.

Many volunteers took part in the construction and maintenance of the memorials. Inhabitants of Langenstein and Halberstadt kept in touch with former prisoners.

The exhibition building in which you currently stand was built by the SED (Socialist Unity Party of Germany) in 1976.

After the reunification of Germany in 1990, the district of Halberstadt took over responsibility for the memorial. Since 1994, the German state of Saxony-Anhalt has carried the responsibility. A philanthropic organization supports the work at the memorial.

After the reconstruction and renovation of the building, this long-running exhibition was opened to the public in 2001.

You are encouraged to be involved in the development of the memorial.

Directly after the end of the war, the "Malachit" tunnels were plundered and then systematically cleared under the supervision of Soviet armed forces.

Afterward, the Red Army gave the order to blow up the entire tunnel system. However, this was not accomplished.

In the 1960's, the state authorities of the GDR (former East Germany) considered the tunnels to be a "national economic treasure" and examined various possibilities for an economic use - such as a large cold store for food.

The Ministry of State Security viewed the tunnels as a possible hiding place of the National Socialists for stolen art treasures. This led to several unsuccessful excavation attempts.

Starting in 1979, the National People's Army of the GDR built up parts of the underground complex into a military base. Between 1990 and 1994, the base was managed by the German Armed Forces.

In 1994, the tunnel complex became private property. GDR money was stored in some particularly secure sections of the tunnel system for an indefinite period.

The state of Saxony-Anhalt works hard to make a part of the tunnels accessible to visitors of the memorial.

Driven by an extreme fear of death, many prisoners made escape attempts. Those who managed to escape were in constant danger of being caught by the "Volkssturm" (a kind of makeshift German territorial army created at the end of the war) or the police. Capture usually meant death.

The last prisoner groups of the camp marched away on April 22, 1945. However, a portion of the prisoners in function had already been released by the GIs on April 11.

It is likely that the camp near Zülchberge was discovered by American soldiers on April 11, 1945. They found over 1,000 prisoners still alive, but they also found many who had already died.

und-Agentur

# 941st F/Artillery Memorial in memory of J.J.Ricks

A Lost US Canteen returned after 69 years

My name is Glyn Nightingale and in 2009 my family and I purchased a house in Normandy, France, with no knowledge of the fierce fighting that took place in our village during July 1944. Since then we have spent many years researching the footsteps of the 83rd Division in our local area resulting in a passion for information and everything 83rd related.

Text: Glyn Nightingale, photos: Glyn Nightingale

In 2013 whilst exploring a friend's barn at the local Chateau, our eldest son Sam found a dust-covered US canteen. Rubbing away at the years of dirt and dust – a name came into view, scratched deeply into the aluminium – “J. J. Ricks”.

The search then began to try to trace the owner of this canteen, after a couple of weeks of intense researching and with the help of several friends in the US, we finally had a breakthrough! A friend in the US made the initial call to the family explaining the amazing find.

Jesse James Ricks age 93 at the time was living in Florida, he had served with the 941st Field Artillery in WW2, who provided Artillery support for the 83rd Infantry Division during July 1944.

After many months of communicating with the Ricks family we finally flew to Florida and met this amazing man who it turned out actually remembered putting down his canteen. He put it

B Section • Thursday, Feb. 28, 2013

## REGIONAL NEWS

NEWS FROM BRADFORD COUNTY, UNION COUNTY AND THE LAKE REGION

### Lost WWII canteen finds its way back to Starke's Ricks

BY CLIFF SMALLEY  
Regional News/Sports Editor

With the encouragement of the gathering of friends and family at Starke's American Legion Post 58, Jesse Ricks of Starke tipped the canteen to his lap as if to drink—something he has said with that particular canteen more than 60 years ago.

The canteen belonged to Ricks when he served in the Army's 941st Field Artillery Battalion during World War II. He lost it near Sarrebourg, France.

Thanks to the passion of Glyn Nightingale of Stonebridge, England, the 92-year-old Ricks and the canteen were reunited.

"I didn't think I'd ever see it again," Ricks said.

Nightingale, who acquires the land near his vacation home in France for World War II items, said he believed servicemen were supposed to put the first letter of their last name only, accompanied by their first and last names, on their personal belongings. Yet carved into the canteen was "J.J. Ricks." That helped Nightingale discover who the owner was.

Mike Ricks, the son of Jesse, said his father, who was a sergeant, made a habit of carving his name into the tools he owned.

"When (Nightingale) told me it had his name on it, it was no surprise to me because he put his name on everything," Mike Ricks said.

Nightingale traveled more than 4,500 miles with his family—wife, Elaine, and sons Ben and Sam—to give the canteen to Jesse Ricks.

"It means a lot to me," Jesse Ricks said.

Nightingale's vacation home is actually situated on a battlefield on which the 83rd Division fought. He became interested in finding objects specifically belonging to the division and was profiled in the book and subsequent HBO miniseries "Band of Brothers."

The location of every item he finds is mapped, creating a more vivid picture of the battlefield. Nightingale searches each item and tries to determine who the owner was. He keeps the items in a room at his home.

LEFT: Glyn Nightingale presents the canteen to Jesse Ricks at a gathering of friends and family at American Legion Post 58 in Starke. BELOW: Jesse Ricks, his wife, Lucille, and son Mike look at Jesse's pictures from World War II.

Jesse Ricks shows off the side of the canteen with his name carved into it.

"When people visit my house, they can learn there are more divisions of the American Army in World War II than the 101st Airborne," Nightingale said. "Everybody's heard of the 101st Airborne."

"I had never heard of the 83rd, but because my house is there, I wanted people to learn about the infantry foot soldier."

Nightingale has found items such as shell casings, round clips, inert grenades, shaving and other personal-care items and even false teeth. He recalled being in a stream of water in a ditch in sub-zero temperature one time trying to dig up an item buried in mud and muck.

An M1 Grand rifle was found by a family that lives in

See CANTENEN, 2B

Local newspaper detailing the meeting between Glyn Nightingale and J.J. Ricks in 2013.



*(left) the canteen that was found by the Nightingale family showing the name 'JJ Ricks'. (right) Ricks in his army uniform.*



on a wall as they were preparing a meal back in July 1944, not realising he would not lay eyes on it again - until 69 years later!

The story at the time created much media interest with news articles and TV news channels covering the reunion between Jesse and his lost canteen. We became good friends with the Ricks family, returning to Starke Florida the following year to visit Jesse and his family again.

Sadly in December 2014 we received the heart-breaking news that Jesse had passed away. He received full Military Honours with a 21 gun salute at his funeral. Family members were convinced that the reuniting of Jesse with his long lost canteen had given Jesse a new passion for life in those final months, enjoying communications from

all over the US and enjoying talking and reminiscing once more about his days as a soldier in WW2.

We decided that a fitting tribute to honour this brave soldier would be to erect a memorial to him, so in June this year after many months of planning the memorial to Jesse James Ricks was unvei-

*Close-up picture of the monument in honor of Jesse J. Ricks showing the chateau d'Auxais, where the canteen was found.*





*(left) Jesse Ricks and Glyn's wife Elaine after receiving his canteen and (right) Ricks at his Florida house in 2013.*



led in our garden in Normandy with many local people attending along with guests from all over the world. The memorial stone tells the story of Jesse in our small hamlet with the Chateau featured in the centre where a solitary light in one of the upstairs windows shines out, representing Jesse. This was to be our everlasting tribute to our good friend Jesse.

Now as we look out from our home we see Jesse's memorial, reminding us always of the brave soldier we had the privilege and honour to call our friend. Sleep well Jesse in the knowledge that you will be remembered always with love and respect.

*The monument in Glyn Nightingale's backyard at his house in Auxais, France. A lasting memory to their friendship*





# Legacy Chapter

An introduction to our activities by George Studor  
*‘Together, we are creating a legacy for future generations’*



## **Thunderbolts on the 83rd Association Website:** <http://www.83rdassociation.com/>

We have organized and protected a collection of original T-bolt magazines that the Association has put out over the years since it was founded after the war. They have been scanned and put on the 83rd Association website. We need a little help still:

- Find the missing TBolts – only a few are missing.
- Double check the existing scanned in documents for quality and completeness.
- We have a spreadsheet of all the Thunderbolt magazines with basic information.

*We would like to develop a method for readers of the TBolts to add comments to the TBolt spreadsheet that help others find items of interest to them.*

## **83rd Info Docs:** <https://83rdinfdivdocs.org/>

Digitize Morning Reports at NARA St. Louis. Myra Miller volunteered to work hard on this very important project, but help is needed this year!

- 100th year of the 83rd. Help to pull documents together from the start of the 83rd. Prepare a display or presentation summary for the Cleveland Reunion.
- 83rd Roster for WWII: Who were the 15, 000 + 15,000 replacements? Glyn Nightingale offered to work on a shared data base from established records, but needs help to work on it.
- 83rd Prep for War: Capture and organize photos, activities, summaries, etc. for at Camp Atterbury, Tennessee Maneuvers, Camp Breckenridge, Camp Shanks, Transport across the Atlantic, and activities/locations in England and Wales
- 83rd Post VE-Day Activities: Capture the information we have on liberated POW camps, responsibilities and activities in various towns and institutions, about the 83rd returning to the states and 83rd de-activation.

## **Individual and Unit Histories of Your Vet:**

Organize and digitally capture the documents and oral/video histories of the vets or their combat units you know so others can benefit. Think about gathering information from vets, widows and descendants of the vets – it will give you more insight into what happened for “your” vet.

## **83rd Maps on-line:**

Organize a way to allow 83rd friends to pin locations, photos and supporting information to a digital map (Google?) so that others can experience the places our 83rd units went during the war. This could be used to tell others about your trip, allow them to study the history or plan their own trip.

## **Past Reunion Videos:**

Coordinate the digitizing and organizing and storing film and video from past reunions - particularly any conversations with buddies about the war. If you have a video recording from a past reunion, let me know and if you can copy it into digital recording great, if not, perhaps you would loan it to be copied.



Dear Mr. Markuns,

Paul Willis has been a friend of mine for more than 15 years, ever since he participated in a documentary that I produced entitled, THANK YOU, EDDIE HART. It's also how I got involved with helping publish his little book of poetry, REFLECTIONS OF A WORLD WAR II VETERAN. To me, he is pretty remarkable and I hope that he was able to give you some information about your dad when you recently met with him.

In telling me about you, Paul mentioned that you might include one of his poems in an upcoming issue of The Thunderbolt. If you do, would it be possible to include my website where people can order REFLECTIONS and/or my email address, [wetbird@bellsouth.net](mailto:wetbird@bellsouth.net), where they can contact me if they don't want to go through Paypal?

I would really appreciate it! (REFLECTIONS is not available on Amazon or Barnes and Noble, where the profit margin is pretty thin.) This was a one-time venture for me because I think SO highly of Paul and simply couldn't say no when he asked if I would help him. But frankly, after going through the publishing process, I've decided to stick with something I'm MUCH more familiar with, like producing documentaries!

Thanks so much! Really appreciate your help.

Brenda Hughes

[wetbird@bellsouth.net](mailto:wetbird@bellsouth.net)

WetBird Productions :: Historical Documentaries on WWII

*Editor's note: You will find two wonderful poems by Paul in this issue. How beauty can arise from the ashes of war. Paul and my dad served together in the same platoon of Company G, 329th*







# Silence at Arlington

Poem by Paul Willis

Surrounded by the graves of Arlington  
The sentry about-faces.  
There before the unknown soldier's tomb he  
Paces: for a moment the music of  
Far off bugles sounds.

A vision of waving flags above  
Each risen mound. Down through  
The corridor of time the ages flow.  
The muted breeze moves across  
Each silent row.

Then the bugle blows, the haunting  
Air above each marble stone.

Still the sentinel walks his twenty-one  
Steps alone;  
As music in the nighttime gives its  
A Last refrains.

Now across this sacred ground  
Stillness reigns.



# Remembering those who passed away

## Deceased members of the Thunderbolt family

Our sympathy goes out to all their families. We will miss all of them.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Reported by</b>
Stanley E. Blanchard	HQ 908 FA	-
James F. Brennan	Signal Co.	Dorothy, Wife
Stanley C. Duff	Co K, 331st	-
Gilbert King, Jr.	Descendant	-
Vernon A. Meyer	Co E, 331st	-
Richard W. Scheerer	Co H, 331st	Larry, Son
Floyd A. Shely, Jr.	Co K, 331st	-
William S. Spriggs	Co C, 329th	Paula Nezezon, Daughter
Frank Wright	Co E, 331st	-

*Memorial Day 2016  
Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery  
Picture by Jelle Thys*

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# James F. Brennan

James was born on July 22, 1920 and passed away on Monday, June 27, 2016. James was a resident of Cumberland, Rhode Island at the time of his passing. He served his country in the United States Army during World War II. He was married to Dorothy.

His funeral will be held Saturday July 2 2016 at 9am from the O'Neill Funeral Home 3102 Mendon Road Cumberland followed by a Mass of Christian Burial at 10am in Saint John Vianney Church 3609 Diamond Hill Road Cumberland. Burial with military Honors will be in Resurrection Cemetery Cumberland. Relatives and friends are invited. Visiting hours Friday from 4-7pm.

In lieu of flowers donations in his name may be made to Hope Hospice Palliative Care of RI 1085 North Main Street Providence RI 02904.

# Stanley C. Duff

Stanley Duff, age 94, of Canton passed away Monday morning Oct. 3, 2016 in his residence surrounded by his family. He was born Feb. 19, 1922 in Canton, the son of the late William C. and Elizabeth (DeHoff) Duff. He was a former member of Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church in Canton. Stanley was a member of Saint Anthony's/All Saints Parish Catholic Church and the FCSLA "Jednota." He was well respected, loved and looked up to by many. His greatest joy was traveling and being the official "Tour Guide." He proudly served his country in the U.S. Army in the 331st Infantry Regiment of the 83rd Division. He always looked forward to and never missed a reunion with his comrades of the 83rd Division.

In addition to his parents, Stanley was preceded in death by a daughter, Betty Lou Dobson and three brothers. He married his childhood sweetheart, Anna Mae (Datko) with whom he celebrated 74 years of marriage; son, William (Sheri) Duff; six grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; and four great-great-grandchildren.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held Wednesday ay 11 a.m. in St. Anthony's/All Saints Parish with Fr. Thomas Kraszewski as celebrant. Burial with Military Honors will follow in Calvary Cemetery. Friends may call Wednesday morning 10 to 11 a.m. at the church. The family requests that in lieu of flowers that donations in Stanley's name be made to a local food bank or to Saint Anthony/All Saints Parish. Those unable to attend may sign the online guestbook at [www.dwilliamsfh.com](http://www.dwilliamsfh.com).

Published in The Repository on Oct. 4, 2016



# Richard W. Scheerer



Richard W. (Dick) Scheerer, age 100, lifelong Kansas City area resident, business owner, and decorated WWII Army veteran passed away September 15, 2016 from complications following surgery.

His business “Scheerer’s Freezer Meats” was located in Kansas City near Lee’s Summit. He was also known for ‘Scheerer’s Famous Chili, and in his early years as a member of the Coca Cola bowling team. He attended almost every Meiners-Hodes family biennial reunion, and bowled in the Meiners-Hodes family bowling league for many years.

He served as a platoon leader in the 83rd Infantry Division. He was wounded July 4, 1944 near the village of Sainteny, Normandy where he was honored as a liberator in 2012. In 2014 he was awarded Knight of the

National Order of the Legion of Honor by the Republic of France. That medal and a Bronze Star were formally presented in Veteran’s Day ceremonies at the Liberty Memorial in 2015.

Dick is survived by his wife, Teresa (Meiners) Scheerer; children, Rich (Marianne) Scheerer of Chesterfield, MO; Larry (Rosaline) Scheerer of Double Oak, TX; Dianne Gibson of Sun City West, AZ; Debbie (C.J.) Arasim of Lee’s Summit, MO; Patty (Doug) Butcher of Overland Park, KS; Phil Scheerer of Overland Park, KS; 18 grandchildren, and 12 great grandchildren. Grandchildren: Chris (Nicki), Brian, Monica, Karla, John (Cara), Jeremy (Kim), James, Lexi, Morgan, and Kylee Scheerer; Janette (Dave) Burlington; Marty (Katie), and Paul Gibson; Chet (Julie) Arasim; Michelle (Josh) Diekmann, Candace (Tyler) Jennings , Brad Heydon; Kelly (Tony) Olson; and 11 great grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Herman and Helene Scheerer, his sister Barbara and his second youngest child, Joe Scheerer.



*Dick Scheerer and wife Teresa with oldest son Richard in 1944*





## Story of a special friendship

Text and photos:  
Jelle Thys, collection Jelle Thys

# A tribute to William Spriggs

I met Bill and his family in 2010 at Sainteny, France. Together with his daughter Paula and son-in-law Rande he had made the journey to Europe to participate in the commemorations for the D-Day landings. At 16 years old I had been going to these ceremonies for the past two years only, I wanted to meet the men that came to Europe during the war to liberate us.

With me I had brought a small gift, a collage, with Bill's World War 2 studio portrait and my words of gratitude to him, a United States WW2 veteran. When handing this over his eyes lit up, not understanding how this Belgian guy got his picture. However it started a conversation and a one of a kind friendship was born there.

A few days later we met up with Bill again in the Ardennes where he was with Eddy Monfort for a tour of the bat-

tlefields. We exchanged stories with Bill and his family and found a connection with them that is only found very few times during a person's life. We did not just become friends, we became family.

After his return to the US we stayed in touch and I started to learn more about his unit, the 83rd 'Thunderbolt' Division. A unit that had fought bravely across France, Belgium and Luxemburg before they made their dash through Germany. When he invited me to the 2011 Reunion, which was to be held at West Point, I was overwhelmed and honored. We took up his invitation, a decision I will never regret as many more friends were found on the other side of the Atlantic!

As I am sitting here writing this, I look up at the picture frame showing the pictures of our first meeting han-

ging over my desk. I realize the world is a worse place without my American granddad. Those of you reading this who know Bill will agree with me on this statement. The shortest man in his division he was a giant in his gestures and character. Rarely did I see him without a smile on his face as he would always smile even through the toughest of times.

My words can't fittingly describe what I want to say. May you rest in peace my friend, I wish you a wonderful reunion with your daughter Pamela, with Ray Sanville, and with all your loved ones that went before you. Heaven has gained another angel, down here you will always live on in the memory of myself and every member of the Thunderbolt family. Until we meet again.

Vaarwel  
Jelle Thys



# GERMANY 1945

83



# Floyd W. Shely Jr.



Floyd William "Bill" Shely Jr., 94, of Lawrenceburg, husband of 70 years to Lorene Knight Shely, died Monday, Aug. 1, 2016 at his residence.

He was born in Anderson County to the late William Floyd and Gippie Shouse Shely, Sr. He was a member of Glensboro Christian Church where he was a Deacon, Treasurer of Salt River Men's Fellowship, and attended Adult Sunday School Class; he was a former employee of Ford Motor Company where he worked in Quality Assurance; and he was a veteran of the U.S. Army, 83rd Infantry Division, serving in WWII during the liberation of Europe.

Besides his wife, Mr. Shely is survived by three daughters, Phyllis (Steve) Villines, of Ocean Springs, Missouri, and Lisa (Jim) Shouse and Martie (Bruce) Chittum, both of Lawrenceburg; beloved family friend, Dewey Searcy, of Richmond, Virginia; two sisters, Thelma McGuire, Shelbyville, and Mary Helen (Gene) Welch, Lawrenceburg; three brothers, Ray-

mond (Aileen) Shely, Lexington, Harry (Cora Mae) Shely, Shelbyville, and Donald (Ruby) Shely, Lawrenceburg; nine grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by a son, Kenneth Shely; and two sisters, Nannie Stout and Bonnie Casey. Funeral services were held Thursday, Aug. 4, 2016 at Glensboro Christian Church.





# Frank Wright

Frank Mace Wright, 94, of Cambridge, MD passed away on September 12, 2016 and will be missed by all those whose lives he touched. Born on May 14, 1922 in Cambridge, MD he was the son of the late William Oliver Wright and Mary Louise Higgins Wright.

Mr. Wright was a United States Army Veteran having served during WWII, from October 1942 until January 1946, in the 83rd Infantry, E Company, 331st Division. He was captured after landing on Omaha Beach in France and sent to a POW camp, Stalag IIIIC, until he was liberated on January 1, 1945. On November 14, 1945 he married the former Edith Estelle "Kitten" Groff. Frank and Kitten had 41 wonderful years together before she passed away in 1986.

Frank was certainly well known on the Eastern Shore, for he owned Frank Wright's Clothing Store in Cambridge for thirty years specializing in men's apparel. Frank was a communicant of Christ Episcopal Church, Cambridge, MD.

His hobbies were traveling, camping, hunting, fishing, boating and flying. He held a private pilot's license and flew a Cessna 150. Frank was one of the original participants of the Holly Run, a memorable yearly Christmas time flight bringing fresh holly and pine to Tangier Island. Mr. Wright served as Judge of Orphans' Court for Dorchester County for eight years.

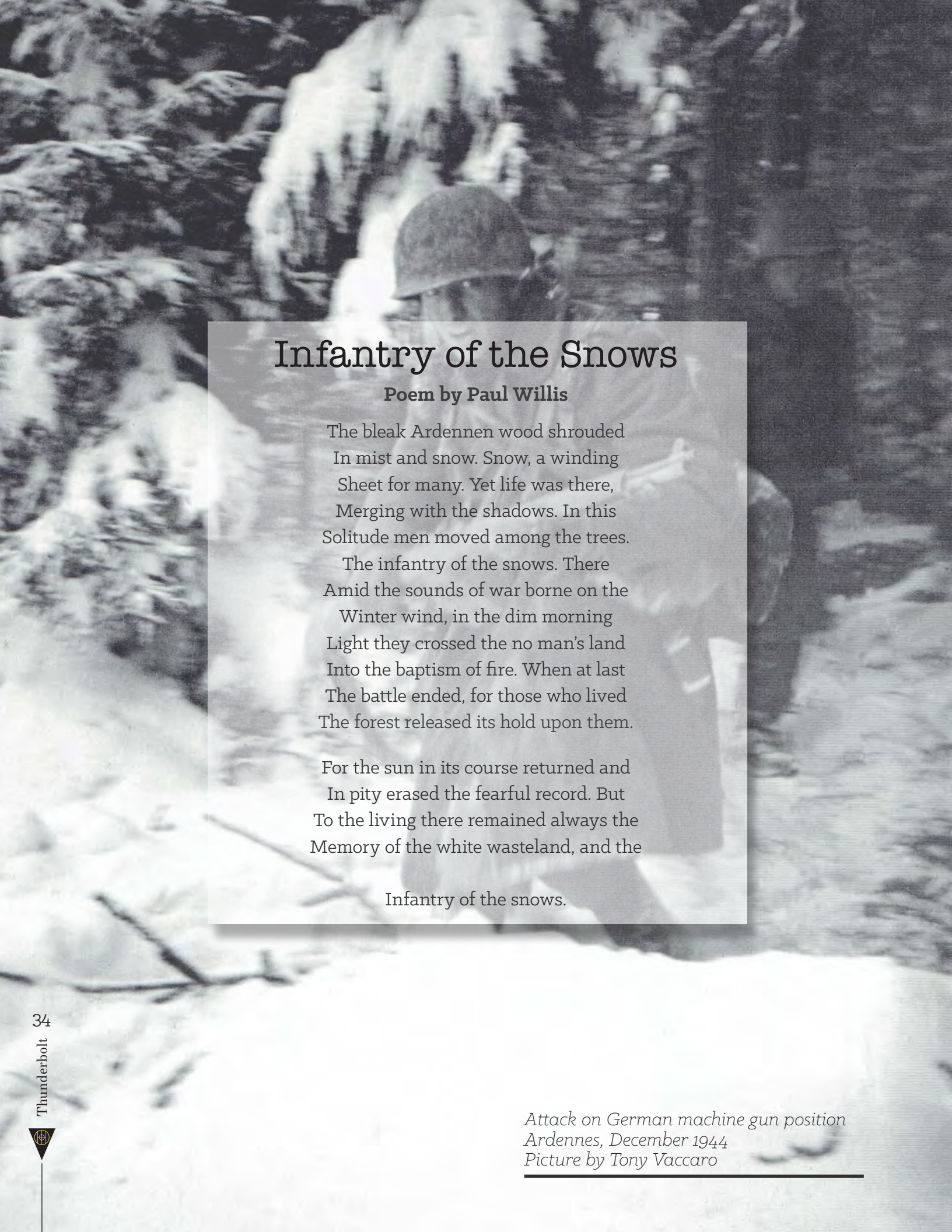
He was a member of the EX-POW Organization (Maryland East Chapter), Life Member of Disabled American Vets, The American Legion Post 91, V.F.W. Cambridge Post 746, a member of the Cambridge Yacht Club and a former Cambridge Rotarian. Of all of Frank's accomplishments most important he was a wonderful and caring husband, father, grandfather, great grandfather and father in law. His family came first.

Surviving are two daughters, Nancy W. McIntee and her husband Mike of Cambridge and Beth W. Reed of Salisbury, five grandchildren, Kelly DeCespedes and her husband Michael from

Parkland, Fl., John Stanley and wife Jennifer, Kathy S. Tran and her husband Vu from Philadelphia, PA, Alan McIntee and Philip McIntee both of Cambridge, Md. Also surviving are Marc Stanley of Prosperity, South Carolina, who was married to his daughter Terry, who passed, a niece Jo Anne Spence of Brooksville, Florida. Also other family and a host of friends, including longtime friend Marge Hull. Besides his daughter Terry W. Stanley preceding Frank in death was his grandson Christopher Reed and his brother Oliver Wright.

Expressions of sympathy may be made by making memorial offerings in Frank's memory to Christ Episcopal Church, 601 Church Street, Cambridge, MD 21613 or American Legion Post 91 601 Radiance Drive, Cambridge, MD. Arrangements are in the care of the Thomas Funeral Home, P.A. in Cambridge.





## Infantry of the Snows

Poem by Paul Willis

The bleak Ardennen wood shrouded  
In mist and snow. Snow, a winding  
Sheet for many. Yet life was there,  
Merging with the shadows. In this  
Solitude men moved among the trees.

The infantry of the snows. There  
Amid the sounds of war borne on the  
Winter wind, in the dim morning  
Light they crossed the no man's land  
Into the baptism of fire. When at last  
The battle ended, for those who lived  
The forest released its hold upon them.

For the sun in its course returned and  
In pity erased the fearful record. But  
To the living there remained always the  
Memory of the white wasteland, and the

Infantry of the snows.

*Attack on German machine gun position  
Ardennes, December 1944  
Picture by Tony Vaccaro*

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# The Huertgen and the Bulge

A story by Jim Townsend // I&R platoon, 329th

What follows is an excerpt from a transcribed series of tapes forwarded to the Thunderbolt by Fred Pearson, 453 AAA. Fred received these tapes from his daughter Mary Townsend Koe-nan. We hope to publish the remainder of these remarkable tapes in upcoming issues of the Thunderbolt.

Text: Jim Townsend, photos: Tony Vaccaro

## Chapter 3: The Huertgen Forest and the Battle of the Bulge

The American Campaign to capture the Huertgen Forest, situated east and south of the city of Aachen in Germany, proved to be one of the most difficult and costly campaigns of World War II for the infantry divisions and the men who fought there. Aachen was the first major German city to be captured in World War II. Historically Charlemagne, as he was called in France, or Karl as he was called in Germany, was crowned King in Aachen. The proximity of Aachen to Germany's western boundary made it particularly vulnerable to hostile attack. Dense forests crowded near to Aachen, offering concealment and inviting use as a base for a German counter-attack to recapture Aachen. American First Army Generals believed that the capture of Aachen would be secured only if the nearby forest also was taken. Du-

ring the fall and early winter of 1944, American efforts to capture the Forest met a very stubborn resistance which decimated several American infantry divisions with little progress in efforts to capture the forests surrounding Aachen. The forests were penetrated only by primitive two-track roads, Unsuitable for tank travel and prone to becoming impassable after prolonged rain, snow, and frequent use by heavy vehicles. Often, the two-tracks degenerated into a quagmire which stalled vehicles and caused jeeps to bottom out.

When our platoon arrived in the Huertgen Forest area, east of Aachen, about December 8, 1944, we found dugouts already constructed on the western slope of a forested hill. The dugouts followed the slope of the hill and were about two feet below the ground level and one and one half feet above the slope. The structures were roofed over by a trimmed tree



Jim Townsend was born in 1925 to Glen and Esther (Angstrom) Townsend in Boyne

City, Michigan. He grew up in Petoskey, graduating 1943 from Petoskey High School. During WWII he served with Sam Magill in the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon of the 329th Infantry Regiment of the 83rd "Thunderbolt" Division. He scouted across France, Luxembourg, Belgium, and Germany to across the Elbe River, earning five campaign stars, a bronze star, and a Presidential Unit Citation. He was in the first boat to cross the Rhine River at Neuss on a reconnaissance mission for the Allied troops.

After the war Jim attended the University of Michigan. He married Corinne Calkins in 1947. After completing his law degree in 1951, Jim joined the firm of TenCate and TenCate in Holland, MI, which in time became TenCate, Townsend, and Cunningham. Jim and Corinne raised four children and were active members of First United Methodist Church where Jim taught Sunday School, served on the board of trustees, and always sang in the church choir. In 1972 Jim was elected Circuit Judge of the 20th Judicial Circuit in Grand Haven Michigan. During his time as Judge Jim was President of the Michigan Judges Association. Jim retired in 1991. Jim died on September 4, 2014)





*GIs of the 83rd Division  
Hurtgen Forest  
November 1944  
Photo by Tony Vaccaro*

trunks approximately twelve to fourteen feet long. The logs which formed the roof were covered with about ten to twelve inches of snow when we arrived. The appearance of the dugout with the snow cover blended nicely into the surrounding forest. The dugout provided considerable protection from shrapnel caused by shells exploding in nearby trees. We moved into the dugouts and spread our blankets as sleeping positions. During the night, the snow melted on the dugout roofs. It rained and as a result the melting snow and

rain dripped down onto our beds. Soon the ice cold water soaked our blankets, sleep became impossible, and we vacated the dugouts to shiver in our wet clothes until we built fires to dry out the wet blankets. This was one of the most miserable nights I spent in the army during World War II

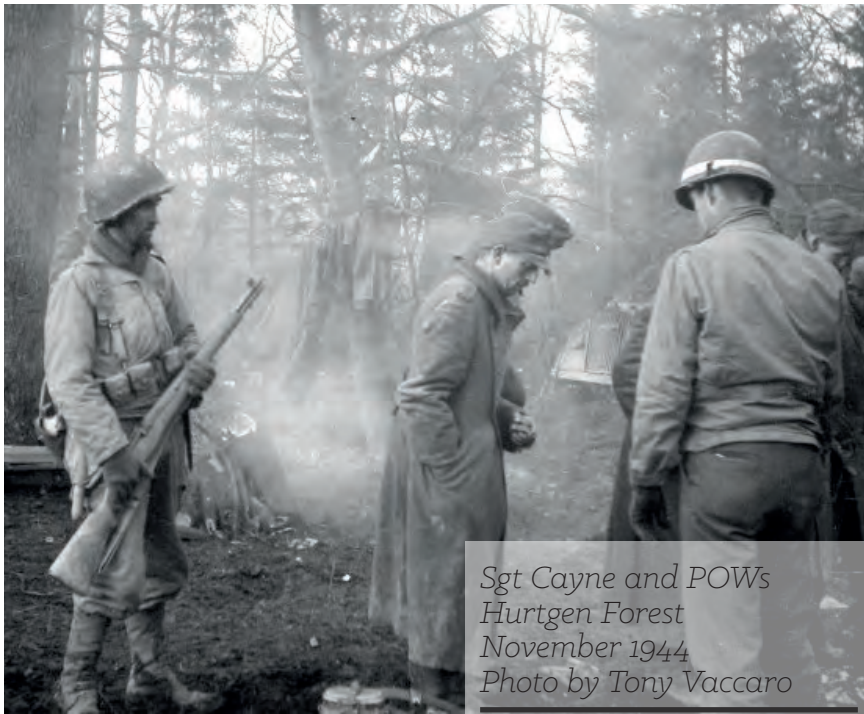
By the time the 83rd Division was committed in the Huertgen Forest, American troops had penetrated to within about ten miles of the eastern edge of the Forest, which opened onto the Sauer River

valley. Several small towns spotted the river valley with the town of Duren situated on the east bank of the Sauer River. Our 329th Regiment advanced to positions overlooking the Sauer River plain and the German entrenchments protecting the village of Guerzenich and nearby villages.

By this stage of the War, we had learned two things which made living conditions somewhat more tolerable. First, we learned we could heat a K-ration can of eggs and ham bits by passing a blow torch over the can for several seconds as long as we inserted holes \_ in the can to avoid it blowing up. This made for a very welcome hot meal. Second, we learned that we could warm ourselves by pouring a little gasoline in a can into which dirt had been put to act as a wick. The can provided an immediate stove which heated a person standing over it.

Our platoon had located a great position from which to observe the Second Battalion's attack on Guerzenich. Considerable open ground had to be crossed to reach German entrenchments and positions. It appeared as though our 2nd Battalion was in for severe losses by crossing the open area. Fortunately, division artillery laid down a smoke screen on top of the German positions. With the cover provided by the smoke screen, the assault troops crossed the critical open area to arrive on top of the Germans before they re-





*Sgt Cayne and POWs  
Hurtgen Forest  
November 1944  
Photo by Tony Vaccaro*

alized what was happening. The assault succeeded in capturing part of the town, but the American troops initially had no armor with them to counteract German tanks. The 2nd Battalion was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation for their hard-fought success in breaking German defenses west of the Sauer River.

The 3rd Battalion of our regiment used marching fire to cross open areas south of Guerzenich to reach the town of Birgel. They held it against German counter-attacks with tanks and infantry. Sergeant Neppel was awarded the only Congressional Medal of Honor received by any 83rd Division soldier during the war for his heroism during the battle for Birgel. Our platoon located a church tower in Rollsdorf near the Roer River which gave us excellent observation across the river into Duren. Two of

us climbed into the top floor of the tower and monitored German activity in Duren. While we were on the top floor observing Duren, a German tank fired several shells that hit the tower immediately below our position, knocking off bricks and supports and shaking the tower severely. When the shelling stopped and the dust settled, the two of us came down past the damaged area to the main floor of the church. Our men who had remained below in the church were surprised to see that we emerged unharmed from the dust and debris caused by shelling.

Our platoon was scheduled to mount a night patrol across the river but at the last minute, the mission was canceled because of information that the Germans had started a heavy assault in the Luxembourg area and in Belgium. Just before Christmas, our division was relieved by

another unit so that we could be moved first to Aachen and then on west to the tip of what is now called the Battle of the Bulge. On Christmas Day, 1944, our division moved from Aachen into Belgium with our platoon acting as road guides for the 329th Regiment in its move to the Bulge.

During the fall of 1944, Hitler focused his attention on the objective of reversing the defeats suffered by the German army at the hands of the Western Allies in France, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. He was looking for a weak area in the Allied front which would be vulnerable to a sudden powerful thrust. More and more, his attention was drawn to the Ardennes area of Luxembourg and Belgium. That area was sparsely held by American troops to provide the extra forces necessary to carry out Allied attacks in the Aachen area and the Allied attack at Arnhem toward the plains of northern Germany.

A successful German attack through the Ardennes to Antwerp would split the Allied Armies in two, separating the northern segments of the armies from the main supply route from the Port of Cherbourg, Caen, and the Normandy beaches. Hitler's plan was an adaptation of the very successful thrust made by the German Army in May of 1940, which forced the surrender of France and the evacuation of the British



Army at Dunkirk. To neutralize the impact of Allied air support, Hitler tried to select a time of bad winter weather.

Hitler went to great lengths to conceal his plans and troop movements from the Allies. He avoided all radio communications and premature artillery barrage in the areas

of attack. He trained special units of German soldiers under the leadership of Commando Chief Otto Skorzeny, who were dressed in American uniforms and who spoke English and used American equipment for this mission. Their mission was to deceive and disrupt American defenders. Overwhelming German forces broke through the greatly outnumbered American defenders in the Luxembourg-Belghun area and within two days cut off two regiments of the green 106th Infantry Division. By

December 18, 1944, General Eisenhower committed the 101st Airbom Division to Bastogne and the 82nd Airbom Division to St Vith, both strategic road junctions in Belgium. Eisenhower also ordered General George S. Patton to move his 3rd Army to stop the southern German penetration.

'Determined resistance by isolated American units disrupted the German timetable and provided the necessary time for Allied reinforcements to enter the battle. Movement of the 83rd Division from the Aachen area in Germany to the western tip of the Gantzen penetration in Belgium near Ciney and the Meuse River occurred on or about December 25, 1944. Members of our I&R Platoon were spotted at strategic points along the route to guide the 329th Regiment in its journey.

I was placed at a street intersection in the city of Liege, Belgium. While there, I had one of the nicest experiences of my war service. A young Belgian girl approached me and gave me an ice cream cone. Belgian ice cream is like our sherbet. It was delicious and the Christmas spirit behind the gift was very touching. I happened to have a "D" ration chocolate bar in my pocket which I gave to the little girl. She thanked me nicely and left. A few minutes later she returned with a second ice cream cone. Sadly, I had no more chocolate to give her.

As the supper hour approached, a Belgian man who lived in an apartment at the intersection where I was stationed invited me to join him in his home for supper. I regretfully declined, explaining that I was required to stay at my post directing



*GIs of the 83rd Division  
Battle of the Bulge  
Belgium, Winter 1944-1945  
Photo by Tony Vaccaro*



traffic. He left and returned in a few minutes with a plate of hot food. Both the little girl and the man illustrated well the friendship commonly expressed by the Belgian people for our American troops.

Later in the evening, while the Belgian man was still talking to me, a German V1 “buzz bomb” flew toward us. The Belgian man suggested taking cover. I explained to him that as long as the engine of the buzz bomb continued to operate, the bomb would continue to fly. But, if the engine stopped, it was time to seek shelter. Finally, the last regimental truck stopped to pick me up and we drove on to our destination. During our travel the temperature dropped to below 5 degrees Fahrenheit. When we arrived at the drop-off point at about 2 o’clock a.m., Stanley Pope and I didn’t know where to find the I&R platoon. We looked for shelter in a couple of buildings and found a single officer’s down sleeping bad large enough to accommodate both Pope and myself. Despite the extremely cold temperature of zero degrees, we both slept soundly and well. When we woke up we located and rejoined our platoon.

Our regiment was committed next to the 2nd Armored Division to stop and drive back the German spearhead. On December 29, 1944, the 2nd Squad scouted toward a woods on foot with jeeps in support. Their scouts were pinned down by German

machine gun fire and Wilkenson was severely wounded. A bullet went through his cheek and his neck and entered his shoulder. Our 50 caliber machine gun provided covering fire to permit the evacuation of Wilkenson to the aid station and hospital.

Within a couple of days our regiment drove the Germans back some eight miles and captured the town of Roquefort. The forward company was cut off by a German counter attack and surrounded for several days, but emerged intact with a large number of German prisoners. At that point, we were relieved by British troops to allow our regiment to move east several miles to participate in a drive to the south, to meet 3rd Army troops at or near the town of Houffalize.

During our early days in the Bulge, radio man Jones (T/4 Sgt. Phillip D. Jones) attached to our platoon froze his feet and had to be evacuated for hospital treatment.

Just before the Bulge started we received the Army version of GI sleeping bags. A common name for the sleeping bags adopted by the troops was “mummy bags.” A wool blanket-like material was cut to size so as to cover a person’s front, back and head with an opening for the face. A poplin cover was cut to the same pattern. Both the liner and the cover had zippers from top to bottom. When a person got into the

bag and zipped it up, it really looked like a mummy ready for insertion into a box and placement in a tomb.

Mummy bags worked well for temperatures above 30 degrees, but were not adequate for temperatures in the zero to twenty-five or thirty degree range. We solved the problem by inserting two wool liners into a single cover. This allowed us to sleep comfortably in the very frigid weather of the Bulge.

On one occasion we were inserted into a gap in the front line. The area was heavily wooded with both deciduous and evergreen trees. Soon after we arrived we were subjected to an intensive, prolonged artillery barrage with frequent “tree-bursts.” (When shells explode in trees, the shrapnel spreads down as well as up and out.) Pope and I spotted and took cover in a narrow, shallow slit trench about eight-feet long. One exploding tree burst sent shrapnel into our slit trench, hitting the side of the trench in line with our bodies but, fortunately, between the two of us.

From the intensity and extended time of the barrage, it fit the pattern of either a barrage preliminary to a German attack, or to cover a German withdrawal. To prepare for the first possibility, I put my bayonet on my rifle for one of the few times of the War and put two spare cartridge clips for my rifle on the ground in front of the trench. The heavy



woods limited our visibility in the front and our unit was too few in number to resist any determined charge. Fortunately, the passage of time without a German attack led us to conclude that the barrage covered a German withdrawal.

During our advance to the south, our platoon entered a small village just captured by our regiment. We observed a number of frozen bodies, both German and American. The Germans pounded the village with artillery and mortars. While Pope, Longmire and I were walking down a village street, a mortar shell exploded approximately five to ten feet in front of us. Longmire was severely wounded in the arm and

shoulder. Pope received a shallow cut on his hand and my overshoe was mangled. Pope and I transported Longmire to the aid station for treatment and evacuation to a hospital. Longmire had come to us from the 82nd Airborne Division and had proved to be a very good soldier.

One of our tasks was to maintain contact with units on our northern flank. A few of us headed out across an open area to reach the known position of our flanking unit. We made contact and started back across the open field. We became the target of German "Nebelwerfer," which we called "screaming meetnies," because of their high-pitched undulating sound that seemed to come from all over

without any observable point of origin or predictable point of impact.

Upon hearing the noise of the screaming meemies, we hit the ground and awaited their explosions. I miscounted the number of explosions. I thought I heard six when in fact there had been five. As I started to rise to run on across the open area, a sixth explosion came. Fortunately, we were not hit by any of the shrapnel and finished crossing the open area.

OUT last patrol during the Battle of the Bulge before being relieved by another unit was an extended patrol covering several miles on foot over hilly terrain to a village occupied by German troops. Initially, we crossed a small stream and a bridge, then ascended a long slope. Upon arriving at the town, we surprised and captured a number of German soldiers, including an SS soldier. While we were there in the village we received extensive German mortar and artillery fire as well as American artillery fire. We were used to German artillery and mortars but we thought that receiving fire from our own artillery added insult to injury. We wondered why American artillery units had not been alerted to our planned patrol route. While standing in the doorway of a stone farm shed, a mortar shell hit just a few feet away. Fortunately, the mortar shell hit just on the other side of a manure pile which absorbed shrapnel



*GIs of the 83rd Division  
Vicinity of Petit-Langlire  
Belgium, Winter 1944-1945  
Photo by Tony Vaccaro*





headed our way. A Belgian civilian standing near me in the shed exclaimed, "Mon Dieu!", and ran for better cover. Each of us took charge of one German prisoner to escort them through the artillery and mortar impact area back to our original positions. I drew a prisoner considerably larger than I so I again attached a bayonet to my rifle as a persuader. Each man and his prisoner would run for fifty to seventy-five yards, then hit the ground for a minute to see if the mortar and mortar artillery shells were coming into the immediate area. By spreading out and moving by leaps and bounds, we passed through the danger zone with only Pope suffering a minor injury. As we reached the stream

and bridge near our point of beginning, we saw members of our mines platoon removing "bouncing Betties," antipersonnel mines, from the bridge approaches we had crossed only a couple of hours before. Once again we had escaped death or serious injury.

That ended our part in the Battle of the Bulge. The town we scouted on the last day was the following day's objective for the unit that relieved us.

Hitler had gambled on a major thrust through the Ardennes Forest to end the war in the west. Despite early successes, the Germans fell short of their objective to take Antwerp and split the

Allied Armies. Heavy German losses in men and material cost them dearly in later campaigns and hastened the end of the War.

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send Koenen 23095 Prospect  
St. Grand Rapids MI.49505  
U.S.A.*



*Elements of the 3rd Armored and 83rd Infantry Division drive through the streets of Lierneux, Belgium. Signal Corps photo*



# Then and Now

## In the footsteps of 1st Lt George Studor

Text and photos: George Studor, Amanda Studor

In September 2016, George Studor, together with his daughter Amanda, retraced the footsteps of his father who served with AT Company, 329th Infantry Regiment. The following account was put together by George to illustrate his journey through Europe.

Dinner at the Thys family home. Eric, Nelly & Jelle lead us to the American cemetery by **Liege and Sy**.



Sy, Belgium: the 329<sup>th</sup> ATCO stayed at the DeHepcee home Feb '45 – Marc DeHepcee (orange) met us - toured the house!



Across the street was a chapel with an outdoor worship area – the cross was stolen, but the Mary shrine remains intact.



We found the site near Sy where the ATCO trained new recruits in 57mm and Bazookas – after the Bulge.



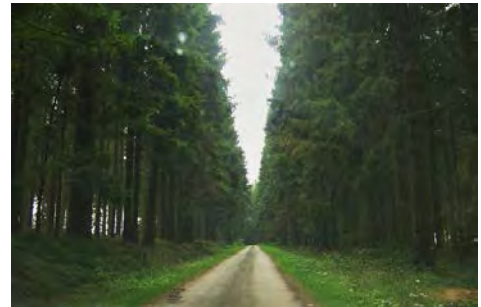
Thys Family took us to Rochefort(Dad's map below): The bridge there & rock marking Nazi's western push in the bulge.



Eddy Monfort, our guide for the day, 83<sup>rd</sup> HQ at a mental hospital, Ottre Museum & 329<sup>th</sup> ATCO route to Petite Langlir.



Petite Langlir - Dad's map of his approach to it: The road through the woods (upper red arrow) looks much the same.



Foxholes Too! Eddie stops us(bottom red arrow) where we could see the farmhouse where Nazis held allied prisoners.



Bovigny: Dad's 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon 57mm gun positions (red arrows), photo of concealed enemy position near Bovigny.



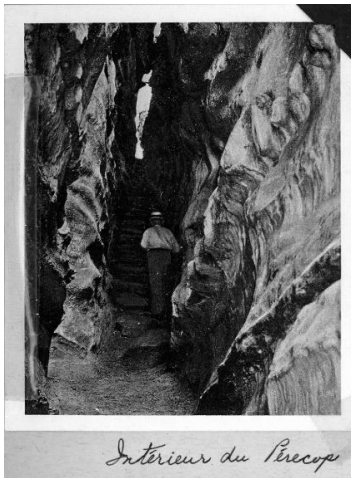
Bastogne Museum and lunch with Eddie in town not far from the Patton memorial there.



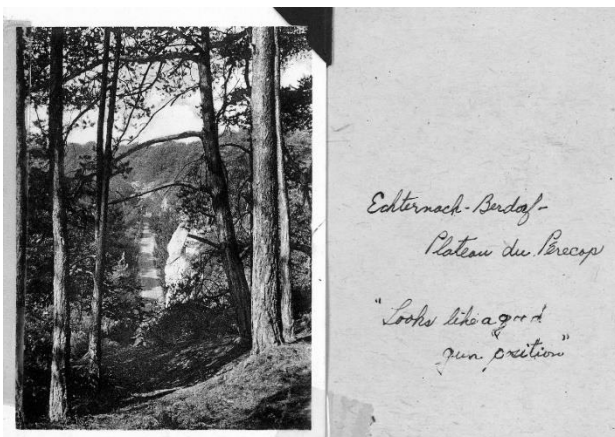
On to the National Military History Museum in Diekirch, Luxembourg – that’s me by an Anti-tank truck & gun.



Echternach: Perecop cliffs that overlook it – dad was here as the 83<sup>rd</sup> fought for that city, losing a best friend.



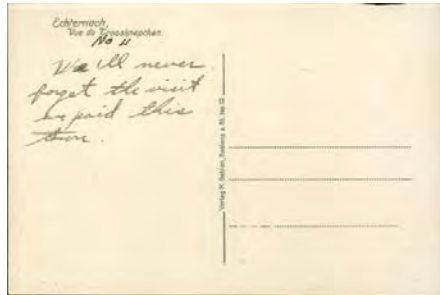
After the climb, the overlook must have caught dad’s attention too...



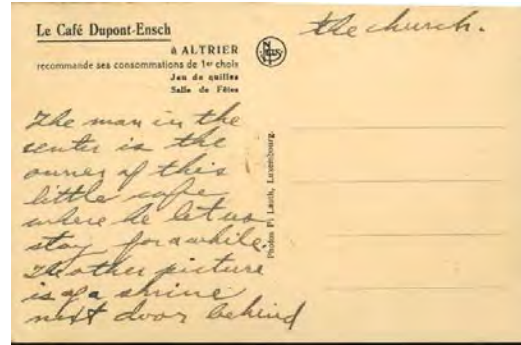
Echternach, Luxembourg – Beautiful ! Our cheap hotel room had toilet problems, so they put us up in a luxury hotel owned by the manager’s cousin, on the hillside overlooking the town, not far from the “x” in dad’s postcard photo!!



Echternach was a strong memory for dad – lost a good (Lt.) friend there. The monument in town in appreciation for 83<sup>rd</sup>



In Altrier, on the way to Luxembourg City, we re-discover the “barracks” of dad’s platoon.



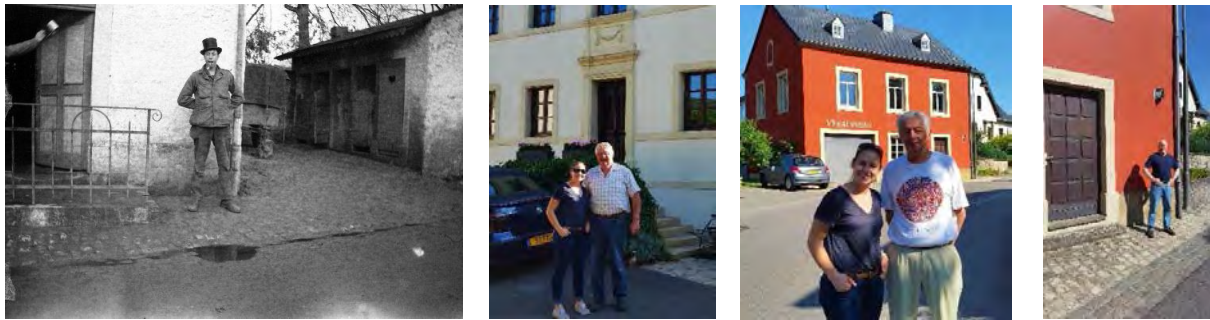
The doorbell for Dupont home and church with the tree shrine behind at Altrier, Luxembourg.



Down the hill from Altrier, the café hang out for the 329<sup>th</sup> ATCO officers – Lt George Studor is second from the right.



We got local help finding this one! One of dad's guys, with a chimney sweep hat on, by what is now a school.



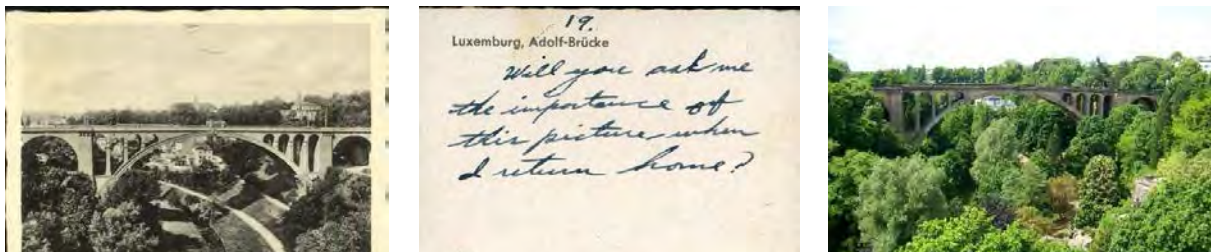
We solicited help from many of the townspeople to find this one... but no luck this time...need to go back to find it!



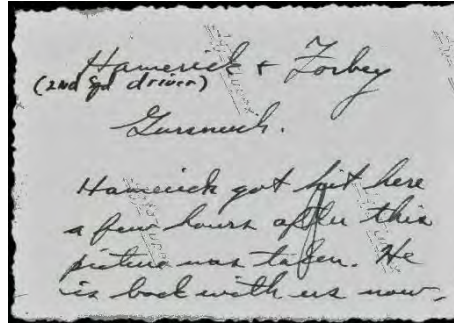
Luxembourg City – the train station where the German soldiers were departing after the city was taken.



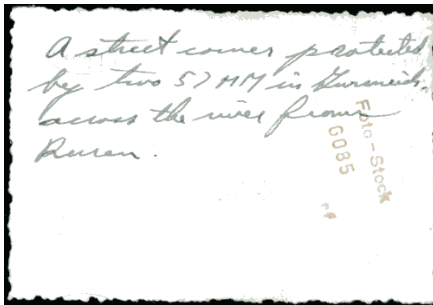
Luxembourg City - Turns out that the Adolphe Bridge was the only intact bridge for crossing the Petrusse river.



Gurzenich(Duren): Wim Doms found 329<sup>th</sup> Cannon Co HQ was at this estate, matched this door & arranged our visit!



Gurzenich, Germany – Dad’s guns were positioned on this corner,



Same corner as above, different view. Napoleon stayed in the white building where Amanda and I ate dinner.



Born, Holland – we started out with only dad’s photo and the town’s name. Various town’s people helped us locate the exact location(the one with the stone cross monument on the corner). A few steps over you can see the church steeple.





# Ninety-Nine Years Thunderbolt!

## Happy birthday from the 83rd ARRTC

Text: 83rd ARRTC, photos: Ft. Knox Visual Information - Charlie Leffler

The 83d Infantry Division celebrated 99 years of history at Fort Knox, Kentucky on 5 August 2016 at the General George Patton Museum of Leadership. COL Nelson Irizarry, Commander of the 83rd United States Army Reserve Readiness Training Center hosted a celebration of the rich history and lineage of the “Thunderbolt!” Division that spans from WWI to present.

The celebration included Guest Speaker Dr. Leo J. Daugherty III, Senior Command Historian, U.S. Army Cadet Command with a presentation: “Leadership from Below: the 83rd Division’s Race to the Elbe, March-April 1945”.

Mr. Dave Dimmick presented a Luftwaffe dagger belonging to 83rd Veteran Mr. George

Bourget to the 83rd ARRTC for display at Fort Knox, KY.

The celebration also included the 83rd ID Reenactors, a reading of the history of the 83rd Infantry Division from World War I to present, a cake-cutting ceremony and reception.

Happy 99th Birthday Thunderbolt Division!





*Clockwise: Guest Speaker Dr. Leo J. Daugherty III, Senior Command Historian, U.S. Army Cadet Command with a presentation: "Leadership from Below: the 83rd Division's Race to the Elbe, March-April 1945" // CSM Robert Swift, COL Nelson Irizarry and Mr. Dave Dimmick (83d ID WWII Veteran Descendant) cut the birthday cake to celebrate 99 years of Thunderbolt! // The dagger that was presented by Mr. Dave Dimmick // Mr. Dave Dimmick, CSM Robert Swift (holding the dagger) and Mr. Thomas Thomason  
Bottom: The birthdaycake for the 83rd Infantry Division.*



# Brittany Bound

## Looking back on a journey to Europe

Text: Judy Mills Self photos: Judy Mills Self



### Confusion

PFC Frank C. Mills of Claudville, Virginia found himself in the 53rd Replacement Battalion in April 1944. Shipped from Boston to Northern Ireland to England, the 53rd Replacement Battalion landed on Utah Beach in July 29, 1944 bivouac in Isigny, Manche, Normandy with the 3rd Replacement Depot. When the 17th Replacement Depot was created to support General Patton's Third Army, the 53rd Replacement Battalion was transferred out of the 3rd Replacement Depot to the 17th Replacement Depot who moved from Normandy to Brittany following the 3rd Army. Confused yet?

Such was the life of the "Replacement". Shuffled to hurriedly replenish the devastating heavy casualties of the fighting in Normandy, they often walked to their next destination waiting to see their eventual "permanent" assignment.

Untangling this confusing web of military movement and piecing together the puzzle of my Uncle Frank were Jean Paul Pitou, Gilles Billion, and Antoine Noslier, members of the 83rd European Chapter. This trio of incredible military historians sifted through hundreds of pages of documents to trace the footsteps of one lone man who eventually was assigned to the 83rd, 329th, 3rd Battalion, Company K. They led his family along with two other descendants through Brittany in September 2016 in an unforgettable, emotional day bringing to life men who had almost been forgotten.

### Early To Rise

With a 6:45 AM departure time and joining this adventure, were fellow descendants, Myra Miller and Bob McNabb. Myra's Father, Staff Sergeant Myron Miller, was also a replacement joining the 331st in Normandy at Auxais. Bob McNabb's Father, Sergeant McNabb, amazingly fought with the 331st from





its initial landing in Normandy throughout the entire war.

At Avranches, the “bottleneck” pass from Normandy into Brittany, we veered-off onto the back roads leading towards St. Malo following the path of the 83rd. This path curved through the hedgerows and farmland even dodging a tractor to point out the pasture that once hosted the 83rd as they advanced upon the fortress of St. Malo

### **329th “Buckshot” Regiment**

Assigned to capture the Cite D’Alet or the Citadel, which guards not only the port entrance, but the walled city itself, the Germans had fortified this concrete bunker into an underground city five-stories deep. Even after repeated pounding of bombs (napalm included) as well as artillery, the Cite D’Alet appeared impenetrable. The 329th, Third Battalion, K Company was assigned to capture the Cite



*Frank Mills, K-Company,  
329th Infantry Regiment*



or Citadel. Frank Mills first battle action was to join K Company in the attack on Cite D'Alet.

With this background information, Jean Paul led his van of explorers to the Cite. Met by Antoine and Gilles as well as Glyn Nightingale, the vastness and power of remains of the bunker still overpowers the casual observer. Sitting on a cliff overlooking the port of St. Malo, the approach even today is a tactical challenge. Climbing the hill to the location the 25 foot high wall enclosure, the walls are at least one – car length thick. My God, I thought examining the walls, if the walls are this substantial after 72 years what must the underground facility contain?

Inside the Fort's courtyard, more artillery emplacements reinforced the German position from every approach and angle.

Normally closed this day, Gilles, Antoine, and Jean Paul arranged a special personal tour of the underground facility by the Museum's Director, Eric Peyle. Five stories deep, the labyrinth is a study in engineering as well as in military tactics. Immediately, it became obvious that only after relentless attacks by K Company, did the German commander surrender. K Company losses were substantial, almost one quarter of the company in one day alone. Frank Mills was no longer a replacement after the Battle of Cite D'Alet.



(Top) Memorial Plaque honoring the sacrifice of the 329th, especially K Company (Bottom) Our further tracing of the 329th footsteps in St. Malo led us to the Headquarters location.



**We honor the actions of the 329th Regiment's  
Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon,  
and its leader, Lt. Samuel W. Magill, who  
precipitated the surrender of 20,000 German  
soldiers at Beaugency, France along the  
Loire River on Sep 12, 1944. This freed the  
83rd Division from protecting the 9th Army's  
flank to move on to  
battle in Luxembourg.**

- Legion of Merit, with 1 Oak Leaf Cluster -**
- Bronze Star, with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters -**
- Presidential Unit Citation -**
- Croix de Guerre -**
- Combat Infantry Badge -**

**Dedicated by the 83rd Infantry Division  
Association  
May 24, 2014**



## Sam Magill Plaque

The Association is happy to report that the Challenge for the Sam Magill Plaque has been met.  
We would like to acknowledge the final people that pushed us over the top.

Paul Penfield

Keven Smith

The Wooldridge Family



# Voices of the past

## Recounting of the 2014 83rd Walk in Bihain

It is January 11 2014, 6 in the morning and I'm just wake up to get ready for the MARS of THE 83RD. Although I have a 2 hour drive coming up in the rain to get to Bihain I look forward to it.

Text: Wilfried De Backer

I check my gear : CD with war music for car is ready, camera ready, backpack ready, war costume ready and off we go. This year It will be all different because there is no snow on the high ground of the area. Instead we had rain for a couple of weeks and I fear that the woods will be hard to walk through.

As I drive in the Ardennes towards my destination I admire the views and nature and it flips to my mind that it is hard to believe that this wonderful scenery was once hell for so many.

My first stop before I drive to Bihain is always Ottré. I then drive very slow and watch the buildings. You first pass the Headquartersbuilding of the 83rd and when looking at the plate for the 83rd that is marked at the entrance I always think of Tony Vacarro. Tony was guarding the farm building the evening of January 10 1945 moments before the 83rd would experience one of their most difficult moments. Continuing my way I drive through the center of Ottré and I imagine myself all the pictures and stories I

saw and heard throughout the years and it feels like you are in the middle of it

We are January 9 1945. It is cold and snow is covering everything. Some exhausted soldiers are trying to sleep a little in the warm houses, cellars and stables. Others are writing a small letter home. Some try to warm their frozen feet and hands, others are trying to find some protecting coats and overshoes what buddies left when they were taken away from the battle area. Some are laughing and smoke a cigarette while they talk about some funny story but most of them are yearning for home. Some faces have hope that it will soon end but others are wondering if they will still be alive tomorrow. In all of this civilians are being taken away to more safe places way behind the battlefields and officers go through the last details. The last important details because tomorrow the whole front is coming into action and they just received a message from some squads who captured German prisoners that about 61 tanks are in the area of Langlir-Ottré-Bihain.

A car is reminding me that I better look at the road instead of dreaming what once was and I speed up a little to drive to the high ground of Ottré. There I park the car and take my camera. I take pictures of the monument and the field. And then for a second I talk to Raymond Kirkpatrick, to Henry Tannenbaum and to all the others that left us on that terrible day in 1945. I thank them for what they did, for the liberty and the beauty of life today.

When I return to the car my watch got my attention. It is almost 9:30 and I better hurry up a little if I want to see the reenactors start at the mars. When entering Bihain, cars are parked everywhere. I have the impression that more people attend the mars than last year. When entering the "Bois de Roches" bed and breakfast, Robert, his family and all the others of the 83rd organization of Bihain are smiling at my direction and say "Le voila le petit Flamend" (There he is the little Flemish). We salute like we always do and that is throwing some bad words to each other and when hug-



# Disclaimer

This article talks about the 2014 edition of the Bihain Walk. Since then more editions have taken place. The article should have been published in an earlier edition of the Thunderbolt for which we apologize to the author. This is also the reason we do not have pictures to accompany this article.

ging each other one tall Patton costumed figure is coming to my attention. It is Henry Scheitler with Maria all dressed up and ready to conquer the world. Henry looks very good this year. His health problems seems to have disappeared. He is not ready to walk long but I have the impression that he is back in business for some many years to come.

Tv Luxembourg is covering the event and several reenactorgroups are ready to walk. They will walk like they never walked before. They will walk like veterans walked. Through mud, water and in bitter cold. If I want to follow them I better hurry up so I run to my car, look at my 83rd costume, think I will never make it when I have to dress up first and just take my camera, my video, some water and my 83rd cap. I quickly close my car and follow a last group of beautiful dressed soldiers.

When entering the woods, mud, puddles and little pools are everywhere, sometimes more than one foot deep. I'm glad I took some reserve

clothes and shoes with me this morning because I will need them badly tonight. Foxholes are everywhere at the entrance of the woods in Bihain and even today some metal fragments of shrapnel are coming to surface when rain washes the dirt.

The group I'm following (about 30 soldiers) have the marking of the 83rd on their left shoulder. They are walking in 2 lines, each at a side of the road when suddenly the scout makes a signal to hold. They all sit down and when a next signal is made by the scout they all vanish in the forest. Their movements are spectacular to follow and it gives me a very good idea of what the real veterans experienced when they were searching the area for German SS troops.

After a while I decide to walk ahead of this group and try to find another group that started some time earlier than I did. The mars of this year is 15 km long and went from Bihain-Petit Langlir-Otré back to Bihain. I noticed that small little rivers that you normally see when walking

through the area are now 4 to 6 meters wide rivers due to the heavy rainfall of the last couple of weeks. Luckily for us it isn't raining today so that wet and cold feet are the only problem we experience.

Walking about 1 mile on my own, enjoying the nature I suddenly hear a voice that is shouting to me.

I see a US soldier with machinegun at some brick stone wall in the middle of the forest. He want me to say the password of today. I didn't know anything about a password and the first thing that comes to my mind is 83rd. I shout this word to him and he makes a signal that I can walk through. When passing this soldier at the brick wall I see that several others are spread out and lay in ambush. Probably 2 groups are trying to bring history back alive.

When passing through the town of Langlir-Bihain and Otré you sometimes see a US flag hanging out of a window. That means that even today the people of these villages haven't forgotten what



has happened so many years ago.

After some good walks I stop in Ottré for a little soup and some delicious tripe around 12:30. There are about 60 people in that little community center when Robert tries to make a practical joke with Henry. Very carefully and without a noise he tries to take the gun from Henry out of his pocket. Henry feels that something is going on and calmly indicate to the person who tries to steal his gun that he better be careful with it because he is loaded. Robert starts to laugh, points the gun to the ground and pulls the trigger. BANG....

The entire room is looking in the direction of Robert. It is quiet, VERY quiet. Robert stays transfixed and his head turns into a red tomato. And then, at the moment when you can hear a mouse walking through the room, that same very very quiet moment Henry again calmly says : "I told you he is loaded".

I never saw somebody returning an object so quickly after he had taken it. Luckily for Robert and Henry it was a blank.....

After a good laugh and a good drink it is time to continue. This time it goes to the monument in Ottré. After some time I noticed that some old local people are walking a little behind me. I stop and wait till they come up to me. We start talking and the older man wants to know why I'm taking pictures of the field where the massacre of Ottré took place. I tell him the story of Raymond Kirkpatrick and what happened with the others when he smiles and say. You are very good informed my friend and you know I was here about a mile down the road as a young (13 year) refuge together with my sister when we were evacuated by the Americans. We were hungry his says and were going from one house to another. It was cold and we were lucky he said because when we returned to the area ( after the fighting ) several of the houses where we stayed were completely destroyed.

The man told me several things about the area, the war and the nature and soon we entered Bihain again. The end of our journey and beautiful day. He was still talking when I looked at the sign BI-HAIN. I started daydreaming

again and saw the faces of Soldiers. I saw Chuck coming down the road. I saw Cliff Woolridge driving his Willy Jeep, I saw Mike Catrambone putting out his radio in Bihain for the Colonel, I saw Cliff Snyder fighting with his squads at the little river bridge, I saw Bill Spriggs finding his way out of the Forrest in Petit Langlir and I saw many others doing what they were doing in 1945.

I was like I heard their voices from the past and they were telling me

*"KEEP REMEMBERING THIS"*

I have one answer to it:

*WE WILL GUYS*

And for all of you out there over that big ocean Thank you for what you did for us and may 2014 bring you lots of wonderful moments, a good health and lots of friendship from all over the world.

Wilfried De Backer  
12/01/2014



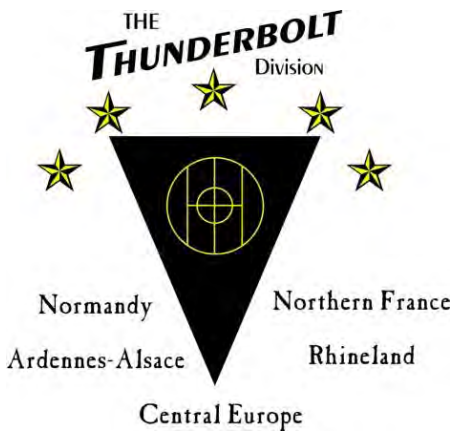


# Pin-up of this issue

Cindy Garner, Yank Magazine, April 1945



Cindy Garner  
**YANK**  
*Pin-up Girl*



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# Submit your story for the Thunderbolt

**From the Publisher Jelle Thys**

As was put forward in the beginning of this Thunderbolt by our President John Markuns I was recently appointed as the publisher for the magazine replacing Jon Bohy. I am honored to take this task upon me and hope I can continue the proud tradition of our Thunderbolt magazine. 2017 also marks the final months of my Journalism studies and I am hoping to put the skills I acquired over the past three years to good use!

However, the Thunderbolt is still yours so please send us your ideas and other content. More of all, send us news of yourself and your family. We want to know what is happening with our members.

Sadly, this issue of the Thunderbolt was greatly delayed. I have put together a new schedule and it is one of my main goals for the future to keep to this so everyone will receive four issues throughout the year and one special Reunion edition.

A big “Thank You” to those who have submitted stories and photos for inclusion in The Thunderbolt. Please continue to send us your 83rd stories, because we are always in danger of running out of stories to print. Associate members are reminded to submit stories about veterans you know who fought in WWI and WWII.

## **Guidelines for submitting stories, letters and photos to be published in The Thunderbolt**

### **Stories and letters:**

Please send typewritten (not handwritten) text whenever possible. We reserve the right to edit for length or clarity. Clippings/articles from newspapers or other periodicals must contain the name & date of publication so we can obtain reprint permission.

### **Photographs:**

Please identify the place and/or people in the photograph. Photos will not be returned. Photos copied on a copy machine are not suitable for publication. If providing scanned images, please scan at high-resolution of at least 300 dpi.

Please also include your e-mail address or telephone number, in case we need to contact you.

**Important Note:** Respect the Deadline for submitting your material!

**Deadline** for the next Thunderbolt, is **March 24, 2017**

Don't wait until March 24, please send your material to be published in the Thunderbolt to:

*By email*

[thunderbolt@83rdassociation.com](mailto:thunderbolt@83rdassociation.com)

*By mail*

to 83rd Infantry Division Association Inc. 138 East Side Drive, P.O. Box 406  
Alton Bay, NH 03810-0406



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