

A gathering of heroes

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The 120-foot World War II Memorial Campanile was constructed of native Kansas limestone in 1950 in remembrance of 277 University of Kansas students, faculty and staff who gave their lives in that war. The names of those who died are inscribed on two Virginia Greenstone tablets on the east and west walls inside the campanile.

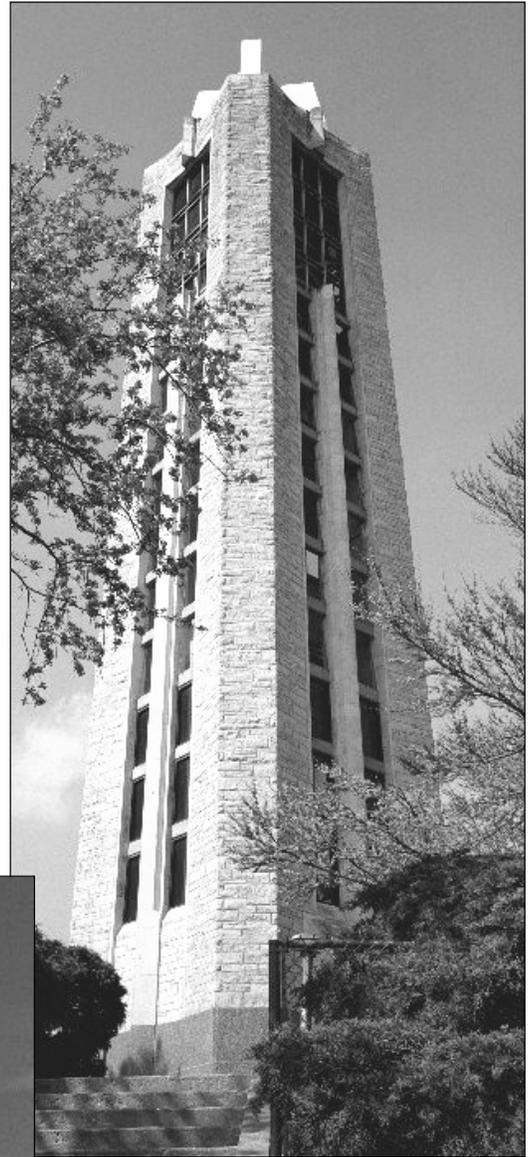
The non-utilitarian memorial was a fitting tribute to those who died, according to Chancellor Deane Mallot, who vetoed proposals ranging from a fieldhouse to international scholarships. He had steadfastly insisted that the idea of a memorial should not be used as “an excuse to fill a need at the university.”

The 53-bell carillon was cast by the John Taylor Bellfoundry, Loughborough, England during 1950-51. The strains of “America” and “Crimson and Blue” – KU’s Alma Mater – rang out when the carillon was played for the first time at the memorial’s dedication on May 27, 1951.

The current carillonneur, Elizabeth Egbert Berghout, will play a special concert of World War II songs for the Rangers after their memorial service.

Traditionally, each graduating class walks through the campanile and down the hill into the stadium, itself a memorial to students, faculty and staff of the university who died in World War I.

Photos courtesy of Office of University Relations/University of Kansas



The Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics on the University of Kansas campus is the perfect setting for the Rangers’ 2006 Memorial Service.

This magnificent structure is a tribute to veterans of World War II whose faces grace the east wall. Its stained glass American flag is the largest in the world. Two twisted beams from the World Trade Center remind visitors of the tragedy of September 11, 2001.

Cover photo: K.C. Correll

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The Ranger Creed

Recognizing that I volunteered as a Ranger, fully knowing the hazards of my chosen profession, I will always endeavor to uphold the prestige, honor, and high esprit de corps of my Ranger Regiment.

Acknowledging the fact that a Ranger is a more elite soldier who arrives at the cutting edge of battle by land, sea, or air, I accept the fact that as a Ranger my country expects me to move farther, faster, and fight harder than any other soldier.

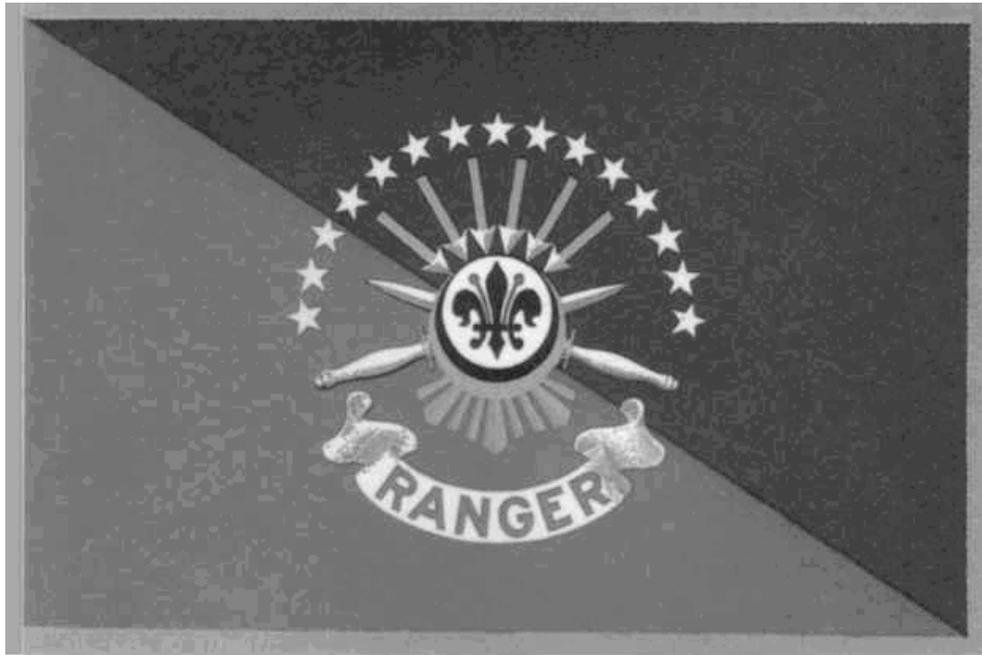
Never shall I fail my comrades. I will always keep myself mentally alert, physically strong, and morally straight and I will shoulder more than my share of the task, whatever it may be. One-hundred-percent and then some.

Gallantly will I show the world that I am a specially selected and well-trained soldier. My courtesy to superior officers, neatness of dress, and care of equipment, shall set the example for others to follow.

Energetically will I meet the enemies of my country. I shall defeat them on the field of battle for I am better trained and will fight with all my might. Surrender is not a Ranger word. I will never leave a fallen comrade to fall into the hands of the enemy and under no circumstances will I ever embarrass my country.

Readily will I display the intestinal fortitude required to fight on to the Ranger objective and complete the mission though I be the lone survivor.

Symbolism of The Ranger Battle Flag World War II Rangers



The dark (blue) area represents the United States.

The light (scarlet) area represents Great Britain where the Ranger organizations were activated and trained.

The combined blue and red thus symbolize the close association in both training and combat of the Rangers and the British Commandos.

The fifteen stars refer to the fifteen campaigns, World War II, in which the Rangers participated.

The six spearheads allude to the six Ranger Battalions and also to the six assault landings (invasions) in which the Rangers took part.

The white disc alludes to Central Europe (Germany)

The black lily to France and the Low Countries

The red seed pods represent Italy

The double crescent refers to Algeria and Tunisia

The three sun rays (similar in design to those depicted on the Philippine flag) allude to the Philippines and New Guinea

The crossed Ranger (Sykes) knives suggest the nature of the Ranger operations.

*Designed by U.S. Army Heraldic Branch
A.G., Department of the Army*

Once an Eagle Ceremony

Realizing that many Rangers have an attendance of Ranger Brothers at their funerals, a ceremony you may wish to consider, if you don't already practice, is the "Once an Eagle" ceremony. For those of you unfamiliar with this, it is briefly described below:

All Rangers (from any era) in attendance sit together for the ceremony. This may be conducted at the actual funeral, or at the gravesite service. If this is conducted during the actual funeral service, coordinate the placement of the "Once an Eagle Ceremony" during the service with the family and those conducting the actual funeral service. If this is conducted at the gravesite service, it should take place just before the rifle salute and Taps.

Actual Once an Eagle Ceremony

One Ranger, designated as the OIC, announces,

OIC: Rangers, post

Upon the detail posting, he then calls out:

OIC: Report for Ranger Roll Call

He then reads a list of the names of all Rangers present at the service.

OIC: Ranger _____

*Ranger in formation replies: **Here***

After each name is read, the Rangers present replies with, "HERE" until a roll has been called for all Rangers in attendance. The last name called, is that of the fallen Ranger.

OIC: Ranger _____ (name of deceased Ranger)

pause for a reply.....when there is none

Ranger _____ (name of deceased Ranger)

pause for a reply.....when there is none

Ranger _____ (name of deceased Ranger)

After the third calling of his name, a Ranger standing in formation announces,

Ranger in formation: Sir, Ranger _____ (name of the deceased Ranger) who was "Once an Eagle" is now reporting as a US Army Ranger to a much higher authority. May God bless him.

OIC orders: Hand Salute

OIC orders: Order Arms

OIC: Yes, may God bless him. Rangers, you are dismissed.

And the ceremony is over.

(Reprinted from the Ranger Family website)

In Memory

First Battalion

Joe Bero 1/B
Robert Bevan 1/E
Gilbert Blum 1/HQ, C
George Brown 1/B
Ken Gummel 1/C
Louis Hunter 1/B
Ray Marty 1/HQ, E
Gino Mercuriali 1/D
William Walker 1/?

Second Battalion

Eugene Elder 2/F
Ivor Jones 2/HQ
Jack Keating 2/D
James Shalala 2/E

Third Battalion

Fred Curvin 3/D
Ben DeFoe 3/B
Ken Gummel 3/A
Jack Lewis 3/D

Fourth Battalion

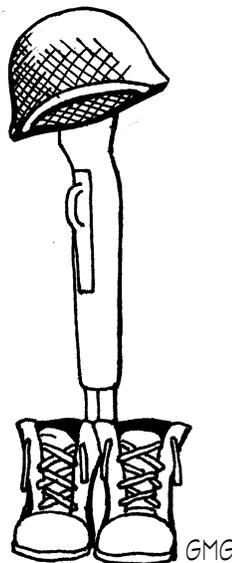
Robert Bevan 4/HQ
Harry Kandziorski 4/C
Ray Marty 4/D
Lloyd Pollard 4/D

Fifth Battalion

Charles Klein 5/F

Sixth Battalion

Edward Ackerman 6/HQ
Willard Eames 6/D
Thomas Lyman 6/D
Joe Malatesta 6/E
Raymond Mendoza 6/B
Ward Nelson 6/D
Ronald Thomas 6/C
Richard Zani 6/B



Frank South, RBA President

by
Frank E. South III



Frank South in Czechoslovakia during WW II

As a medic with the 2nd Ranger Infantry Battalion, Frank South served in the five campaigns the Rangers fought on their way across Europe from the cliffs of Pointe du Hoc to Czechoslovakia and VE Day in May of 1945, earning a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart each with an Oak Leaf Cluster.



He was an 18-year-old kid when he joined the Rangers in March of 1943. Two and a half years later, he was more than an Army veteran of WWII; he was one of the fabled three thousand men who, in Africa, Europe, and the Pacific had made history that would be remembered for generations.

By Christmas in 1945 Frank and a whole lot of other veterans were out of the Army and it was time to get started on the rest of life. By the following spring he was enrolled at the University of California at Berkeley where two important things happened. He began burning through classes on his way to earning an A.B. in Zoology in 1949 and a Ph.D. in Physiology in 1952. And he met Berna Deane Casebolt, a smart and beautiful young writer who became the love of his life, and fortunately for everyone involved, his wife.

In the following years he grew to be a prominent international figure in hibernation research. He became a full Professor at the University of Missouri, College of Medicine in 1963, and Director of Graduate Studies in Animal Physiology in 1965. He moved on to become Director of Life and Health Sciences at the University of Delaware in 1976, where he is now Professor Emeritus.

During these years while Frank researched and taught Physiology, and Berna Deane wrote and taught poetry, they also raised two sons; Frank III, and Robert.

Today Frank and Berna Deane live in Delaware. When they're not being invaded by their four adoring grandchildren, Frank wrangles mountains of Ranger email and Berna Deane puts the finishing touches on a novel.



Frank and Berna Deane South at the NE Chapter Christmas Party

Jerry Styles, S&D President

by
Marsha Henry Goff



Jerry Styles has made it his mission to locate every Ranger listed in his father's address book. S/Sgt Clarence Styles, 5th Ranger Battalion, Company D, survived World War II only to be killed in a car accident three years after the war ended.

Jerry's mother remarried and he grew up with little knowledge of his biological father until his mother handed him his father's little red book listing his Ranger buddies and their long-ago addresses. In what can only be described as a labor of love, Jerry determined to find every Ranger — living or dead — in that book. The first Ranger he located was Morris Doyle. "He was my first Ranger that wrote me back," Jerry says, "and boy did that get my hot button."

It is amazing what Jerry has accomplished in only four years. He has filled notebooks and file folders with letters and photos, historical documents and newspaper articles — anything that relates to his quest to learn as much as he can about the Rangers and his dad's service with them. Of the 23 Rangers in his father's address book, he has located 22 (or their relatives if they were no longer living).

His love for the Rangers, individually and collectively, and his respect for their heroic actions make him the perfect leader for Sons & Daughters.



Atlanta Journal-Constitution photo

Jerry holds his father's address book

Clarence "Lucky" Styles — the man who started it all

The following is a newspaper account of the event that gave Ranger Clarence Styles the nickname of Lucky:

Behind the German lines, but within view of the Ranger outposts, was a German "ammo" dump. It was well dug in and mortar fire couldn't touch it. It was too close to the Ranger line to call for naval artillery.

There was only one way to get it — sneak through the lines, plant a bangalore torpedo and try to get back. A private who had been busted from staff sergeant

two weeks before took the bangalore and blew up the dump. To do it, he had to jump from shell hole to shell hole for the first 100 yards and then run across open ground for 25 yards more. He was under heavy machine-gun fire coming and going, and how they ever missed him will always remain a miracle to those who saw it.

Excerpt from Stars and Stripes

RBA Officers

President: Frank South

Secretary: Carl Lehmann

Treasurer: Ben Temkin

Past President: Bill Reed

S&D Officers and Chapter Liasons

President: Jerry Styles

Vice President/Reunion Chair: Marsha Henry Goff

Vice President/Operations: David Shireman

Secretary: Ann Stockmaster

Treasurer: Julie Rankin Fulmer

Michigan/Ohio Valley: Karen Roush

Midwest: Sherry Klein

Iowa: Laura Musegades

Rudder: Sandy Boyd

Darby (inactive): Terry Toler

West: Kelly Gangnah

Southeast/Alvah Miller: Kim Eskew

Northeast: Jane Schappel

At large: Dallas Pruitt

At large: Karla Merritt

Jim Brothers

Sculptor who created the National D-Day Monument in Bedford, Virginia

by

Marsha Henry Goff

Photos by K.C. Correll

Award-winning Lawrence artist Jim Brothers cannot breathe life into his sculptures, but he comes as close as his exceptional talent and passionate respect for his subjects allow. Celebrated for his ability to freeze a moment in time in bronze, Brothers' work has been exhibited in the United States, Europe and Asia.



Sculptor Jim Brothers works on a clay model in his North Lawrence studio.

A short list of Brothers' sculptures include the *National D-Day Memorial*, Bedford, Virginia; *The Vision*, Kansas City, Missouri; *One with the Earth*, Bad Segeberg, Germany; *Spirit of CCC*, Los Angeles, California; *General Dwight Eisenhower*, US Capitol; *Mark Twain*, Hartford, Connecticut; *General Omar Bradley*, Moberly, Missouri; and *Citizen Soldier*, Kansas City, Missouri.

Scaling the Wall, which depicts Rangers from the 2nd Battalion climbing the cliffs at Pointe du Hoc on D-Day, was truly a labor of love for Brothers because he was able to incorporate his interest in history with his reverence for those who unselfishly risk their lives in the military to protect the lives of others. With that monument, he has created a national treasure.

Brothers says that *Scaling the Wall* was based on Ranger Len Lomell's story. Lomell

is depicted as the first Ranger over the cliff, but his face is on the Ranger to the lower right. To the lower left is a Ranger in the act of being shot. Because he strives for realism in his work and couldn't imagine the facial expression on someone's face at the moment of a bullet's impact, Brothers watched video tape of Lee Harvey Oswald being shot on television by Jack Ruby. The face isn't Oswald's, but the expression is.

Brothers is proud to have held jobs in many fields, ranging from social work to mechanics. But his talents in art and music provide him with a livelihood and creative satisfaction. The phrase "Renaissance Man" is overworked, but in Brothers' case it is an accurate description.



With his D-Day sculpture, Brothers has created a national treasure.

[Jim Brothers is scheduled to give a slideshow presentation of his creation of the D-Day monument for the Rangers on Thursday evening at the Lawrence Holiday Inn Holidome.]

A Message to Rangers from the Book Editor/Reunion Chair

As are all volunteer efforts, this book — A Gathering of Heroes — is a labor of love. Your stories make the book special. Your ads pay for printing, but many of your ads tell stories as well. Please read them.

I have included contemporary articles of World War II. You may catch mistakes by reporters and also perhaps in some of the personal recollections. Recording history is a difficult task even when written at the time it is being made ... and certainly, while some memories remain sharp and clear, others may fade over six decades.

I once read that war is three feet on each side of individual participants, which may account for the fact that combatants in the same battle often see a different war. The big picture of the battle's outcome remains the same; it is the details that frequently differ.

When I invited the Rangers to hold their reunion in Lawrence, I did so in the hope that my mother might meet some of the Rangers with whom my father served. Mother died only two weeks after members of the RBA voted to come to Lawrence, but she knew you were coming and she was very excited about the prospect of meeting you.

This book, as well as all my planning and labor on the reunion, is dedicated to my remarkable parents, Lt. L. Lew Henry (1/F and 4/A) and June Shellhammer Henry. And also to you — heroes all — to whom subsequent generations owe a debt we can never repay.

I hope you enjoy your reunion in Lawrence and that this book will provide a proud record of your service to our country. I know the hardships you endured and the sacrifices you made were the truest labors of love for those you left behind.

God bless you,

Marsha Henry Loff

Special thanks to my husband Ray for proofreading this book, to my son Ray, Jr. for his computer expertise and to my son Greg for his illustrations. Their help and support also have been labors of love and are appreciated more than I can convey.

The one thing that can never be taken from this world, even by death, is the love we have given away before we die.

Forrest Church

Reunion Schedule

Lawrence, Kansas – June 7-11

Wednesday, June 7

Early Registration
Hospitality Room 9:00 am to 10:00 pm

Thursday, June 8

Registration 9:00 am to 4:30 pm
Hospitality Room 8:00 am to 4:30 pm (closes for dinner and slideshow;
reopens 8:00 pm to 10:00 pm)
Ranger Store 10:00 am to 4:00 pm
Guided bus tour of Lawrence following Quantrill's route through Lawrence (buses leave
10:30 am)
Cocktail Hour (cash bar) 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm
Dinner and slideshow by sculptor Jim Brothers 6:30 pm

Friday, June 9th

Registration 9 am to 3 pm
Hospitality Room 8:00 am to 2:00 pm (closes for Memorial Service, dinner and concert;
reopens 8:00 pm to 10:00 pm)
Ranger Store 9 am to 1:30 pm
Memorial Service (buses leave at 3:15 pm)

Saturday, June 10

Hospitality Room 8:00 am to 4:30 pm (closes for banquet and will not reopen)
Ranger Store 10:00 am to 3:00 pm
RBA Past Presidents Meeting 10:00 am
RBA Meeting 11:00 am
S&D Meeting 1:30 pm
Ladies "Somewhere over the Rainbow" Luncheon 11:30 am
Cocktail Hour (cash bar) 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm
Banquet 6:30 pm

Sunday, June 11

Church Service 9:00 am

Reunion Planning Committee

Frank South, RBA President

Ben Temkin, RBA Treasurer

Ann Stockmaster, S&D Secretary/RBA Legal Advisor

Marsha Henry Goff, Chair

Jerry Styles, S&D President

Reunion Chairs

Marsha Henry Goff, Chair

Colleen McDevitt, Registration

Steve Ketzer, Jr., Hospitality Suite

Erin Warfield, Ranger Store

Bette Henry Hulser, Ladies Luncheon favors

Vicki Henry Julian, Sunday Service

Special Thanks

312th Army Band

Alfred Packer Memorial Band

American Legion Color Guard

Katie Armitage, Lawrence historian

Elizabeth Egbert Berghout, Carillonneur, University of Kansas

Judy Billings, Director, Lawrence Convention & Visitors Bureau

Jim Brothers, Sculptor

Paul Carttar, Vice Chancellor for External Affairs, University of Kansas

Warren Corman, Architect, University of Kansas

Bill Crowe, Librarian, Spencer Research Library

Greg M. Goff

Wendy Jacobs, Director of Sales, Holiday Inn Holidome

Bill Lacy, Director, Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics

David Mucci, Director, Student Union

Dolph Simons, Editor & Publisher, Lawrence Journal-World

Historical Perspective
and
Articles of Interest

General Darby's Message

to the officers and men who served with the
First, Third and Fourth Ranger Battalions

The glorious history of the First, Third and Fourth Ranger Battalions came to an end with the official inactivation of those units at Camp Butner, N.C., October 26 1944; disbanded, after a long period of constant and aggressive action against the best military forces the enemy could offer. A period during which, time and again in face of tremendous odds, the superior courage and ability of the Rangers paved the way to crush decisively his resistance in the Mediterranean Theater.

Whether it was in the training or in the battle, your unwavering, indomitable spirit forged by painstaking and diligent zeal has always persevered. Your resourcefulness and initiative have earned for you the respect and esteem of all true fighting men the world over. You have done much to aid the Allied cause in this war.

As your Commanding Officer I am justly proud to have led such an outstanding group of American fighting men. Never was I more sad than on our day of parting. Never was I more content than being with you on our many exciting operations. You trained hard; you fought hard; and always you gave your best regardless of discomfort and danger. From the great Allied raid at Dieppe through the exacting, bitter campaigns culminating with the Anzio Beachhead battles, the First, Third and Fourth Ranger Battalions have performed in a capacity unsurpassed by the highest traditions of the American Army. Your record speaks for itself.

We — the living Rangers — will never forget our fallen comrades. They and the ideals for which they fought will remain ever-present among us. For we fully understand the extent of their heroic sacrifices. We will carry their spirit with us into all walks of life; into all corners of America. Our hearts join together in sorrow for their loss; but also our hearts swell with pride to have fought alongside such valiant men. They will never be considered dead, for they live with us in spirit.

When this war comes to an end, most of you will return to the way of life which you fought so hard to return to — to pick up the threads of your civilian pursuits. You will bring back with you many nostalgic memories of your fighting days — both bitter and pleasant. But above all, you will bring back with you many personal characteristics enriched by your experiences with the Rangers. In whatever field or profession you may follow, I know that you will continue as civilians with the same spirit and qualities you demonstrated as a Ranger. Your aggressiveness and initiative will be tempered to adjust to civilian life with little difficulty. In your hearts as in mine, you will always have that feeling — of being a Ranger always.

No better way can I sum up my feelings of pride for your splendid achievements than to state this: Commanding the Rangers was like driving a team of very high spirited horses. No effort was needed to get them to go forward. The problem was to hold them in check.

“Good Luck, Rangers,” and may your futures be crowned with deserving success.

The Last Days of Col. William O. Darby: An Eye-Witness Account

By Kenneth S. Templeton, Jr.

ARMY HISTORY, PB-20-98-2 (No. 44), Washington, DC, Spring 1998

Brig. Gen. William O. Darby, whose final promotion was approved by President Harry S. Truman fifteen days after Darby's death, led the Army's first special forces units in North Africa and Italy during World War II. The following report describes Darby's last wartime assignment as assistant commander of the 10th Mountain division. Second Lt. Kenneth S. Templeton, Jr., who had served as Darby's senior aide-de-camp, wrote this report in August 1945. In preparing the report for this publication, Mr. Templeton added the words in parentheses; the words in brackets were added by the managing editor.

During the early afternoon of 25 April 1945, I returned to 10th Mountain Division headquarters, which was located on the northern outskirts of San Benedetto [Italy]. For two days I had been to the rear attending Brig. Gen. Robinson E. Duff's baggage and personal belongings and checking on him personally at Castelfranco, where he had been hospitalized following the wounds he incurred in our rapid advance to the Po River on 22 April. As I got out of the 1 1/2-ton truck, Lt. Muldrow Garrison hailed me and, after asking about Duff's condition, said that we had a new boss—Colonel Darby of the Rangers—and that we should be prepared to take off at any moment with him on the mission which had been assigned to Task Force DARBY—the capture of Verona. (Task Force Darby was composed of the 86th Mountain Infantry Regiment, the 13th Tank Battalion, the 1125th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, Company B of the 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion, Company B of the 751st Tank Battalion, and elements of the 126th Engineer Battalion and the 10th Medical Battalion.)

I immediately went to General Duff's van, which Colonel Darby had taken over by that time, and introduced myself. Darby greeted me in what I should call his typically friendly, efficient manner and came straight to the point: "Templeton, there are just two things I want you to be sure to do. First, be able to keep me informed at all times of our position, and secondly, don't let me do anything stupid!" I assured him I would try to do my best in these matters, but at that very moment I had misgivings about the second assignment. Only nine days of staying on the heels of General Duff had been enough to convince me that keeping assistant division commanders out of trouble presented even more difficulties and frustrations than the camel's passing through the eye of the needle. If Colonel Darby were to operate in the same manner as had Duff, I knew that every day we would find ourselves in "hot spots," any one of which might prove disastrous.

Later that afternoon (25 April), about 1800 hours, Task Force Darby started to move across the Po River. This crossing had been delayed for several hours because of last minute bridging difficulties. During the preceding three days, the 85th and 87th Mountain Infantry Regiments had established and expanded our bridgehead on the north bank of the Po. Colonel Darby in his jeep proceeded to the head of his task force column shortly after its leading elements had crossed the Po. He then drove on ahead in order to make certain that the 1st Battalion of the 85th had cleared the route and successfully reached Villafranca, about ten miles southwest of Verona. Darby reached Villafranca shortly after 1900 hours and ascertained from Lt. Col. Donald J. Woolley, commander of the 1st Battalion, that the entire town and neighboring airfield had been secured so that everything was in readiness for Task Force Darby to pass through for its assault on Verona.

Darby then left Villafranca and returned along Highway 72 to the head of his task force, which by this time had moved up to a point within about five miles of Villafranca. Darkness had fallen, but a nearly full moon provided good visibility. A lone German plane made an unsuccessful strafing attack on the road at this time. The task force had been able to move rapidly because almost the entire organic supply of the division's vehicles, unable to cross the Po prior to 1800 hours on the 25th, was available for transporting the 86th Regiment to assembly areas near Villafranca.

About 2200 hours the commanders of the various task force elements conferred with Darby at Colonel Woolley's command post in a small stone house on the northern outskirts of Villafranca. By the "midnight oil" in a crowded room, Darby spelled out with the aid of various maps his plan of attack on Verona and issued his final orders. On this occasion I remember being particularly impressed by Darby's carefully and minutely worked-out tactics, as well as by his lucid and vigorous explanation of the plan of attack to his subordinate commanders. Yet, at the same time, he called for full suggestions from his subordinates and carefully integrated their observations and recommendations into his final plans. The conference broke up about 0100 hours on 26 April.

Throughout the night a number of German vehicles stumbled into the outposts that the 1st Battalion of the 85th had established around Villafranca. The sky to the north was repeatedly lit up with the flashes of what we presumed were German ammunition dumps being blown up, either by partisans or by the Germans themselves. As we discovered the following morning, those flashes may also have marked the German demolition of the old stone bridges in Verona that crossed the Adige River.

At 0400 hours Task Force Darby began the advance on Verona. The main force of one battalion of the 86th Regiment and attached tanks moved down Highway 62 and dispersed small pockets of resistance before reaching the outskirts of the city. A second force composed of another battalion of the 86th and attached tanks closed in on the city along a secondary road which roughly paralleled Highway 62 about one mile to the west. Both of these columns began their penetrations into the city proper about 0530, shortly after dawn. Meeting only scattered and disconnected groups of enemy personnel, the infantry and tanks quickly cleared the entire city south of the Adige. The main body of German troops had apparently already fled north from the city into the Italian Alps. [Elements of the 85th Infantry Division's 351st Infantry, motoring up Highway 12 from Ostiglia, had already entered Verona the previous evening and by dawn had largely silenced German opposition there.] Colonel Darby himself had moved forward to direct these final operations and rode through the streets on a tank. The jubilant welcome of the Italians jamming the streets and leaning out windows was truly heartwarming.

After satisfying himself by means of a personal inspection that the Germans had effectively demolished every bridge across the Adige within the city, Darby ordered his task force to swing northwest along the southern bank of the Adige, with the objectives of capturing Bussolengo about seven miles from Verona and trying to take any Adige bridges that might remain intact between Verona and Bussolengo. One battalion of the 86th was ordered to mop up the Verona area and temporarily police the city.

Darby returned to Villafranca at 1000 hours (on 26 April), where he reported to the division commander, Maj. Gen. George P. Hays, at the advance division command post. Hays called a conference of his staff and organizational commanders, and by noon it was decided that the division would swing westward and continue its advance northward along the eastern shores of Lake Garda, rather than try to cross the Adige and pursue the Germans up Highway 12, the main route to the Brenner Pass.

During the early afternoon Darby returned to Verona and then followed the route of his task force northwest from the city, arriving at Bussolengo about 1600 hours. A wooden bridge crossing the Adige had been found intact in the vicinity of Bussolengo, so that infantry patrols of Task Force Darby had crossed the river and were patrolling the northern bank. A few German vehicles were intercepted trying to flee northward on Highway 12. Darby recalled these patrols to the southern bank of the Adige and, in line with the division's new objective, ordered one battalion of the 86th with supporting tanks to continue the drive westward and by nightfall to seize Lazise on the southeastern shores of Lake Garda, thus sealing off a possible German escape route along the highway running northward on the eastern shores of Lake Garda.

This final mission to capture Lazise was successful in one day of operations. Task Force Darby had not only spearheaded the second longest, 24-hour divisional advance of the campaign (22.5 miles), but also had successfully cleared all enemy personnel from the area of its advance and had physically occupied a thirteen-mile front along the southern bank of the Adige from Verona to Bussolengo [and overland] to Lazise. Thus

ended Task Force Darby.

On 27 April the division's advance up the eastern shores of Lake Garda was continued by means of regimental and battalion leap-frog operations performed by the 85th and 87th with supporting tanks. Darby's mission was to keep in close contact with our leading elements and provide General Hays with on-the-spot information. He succeeded in doing this so well that, on entering a house in the town of Garda, he could have eaten the German officers' luncheon, which was still warm on their plates. Another twenty-mile advance was made on this day to Malcesine, just ten miles short of the northern end of the lake.

On 28 April the 86th Regiment passed through the 85th, but the advance that day was limited to five miles because the Germans had successfully blown the first of six tunnels through which the road passed at this point. The attempts of the partisans, whom we had instructed to try to prevent possible demolition, had failed. The cliffs rose so sharply and so high from the edge of the lake that the advance was continued by means of an amphibious operation (using the DUKWs which had remained with the division since the initial crossing of the Po), supported by tank destroyers and artillery. This operation caught the German paratroops and SS men, who had been fighting us in this region, off balance, so that the remaining tunnels were captured intact on the 28th and 29th.

One incident during the morning of the 29th deserves attention. Colonel Darby went forward by means of a speedboat (to get around the blown-out tunnel) and then by jeep to investigate the progress of the 3rd Battalion of the 86th, which had been held up because of enemy direct fire into the fifth tunnel by SP [self-propelled] guns (88s) at the head of the lake. [Five men had been killed and approximately fifty wounded by a German shell that exploded ten yards into the tunnel.] General Hays joined him a short time later to look over the situation. About noon, both Darby and Hays climbed into a speedboat that had come up to that tunnel and sped out into the lake to return to the division command post. In a matter of seconds, a shell burst in the water about fifty yards to the right rear of the boat. The driver "turned on the gas," going back down the lake as fast as possible. Seven more shells burst about the same distance wide and short as the boat scooted the next half mile before swinging in for cover behind a small promontory of land. No sooner had this maneuver been executed than the engine died—out of gas! Fortunately, the Krauts had not been as accurate in their naval gunnery as they had been in zeroing in on the mouth of tunnel number 5.

All during the 28th and 29th we could observe German vehicles fleeing northward on Highway 45, which ran along the shore on the opposite side of the lake. Our attached British 5.5-inch guns opened up periodically on this traffic. At 2400 hours on 29 April, Darby took charge of an amphibious operation which involved sending Company K of the 85th across the lake in DUKWs to seize Gargnano and thus cut the escape route of Highway 45. This operation was successfully completed by 0200 hours on 30 April. Later in the morning Darby and other division officers crossed the lake to inspect Mussolini's mansion and estate on the outskirts of Gargnano.

Other elements of the 85th were ferried across the lake, so that by noon of 30 April the division had two columns closing in on the town of Riva at the head of the lake. The advance was slow for the 86th on the east side of the lake, however, because the Germans were able to bring accurate fire on our troops and small vehicles as a result of the 88-mm SPs being situated on the roads going up the hills and mountains above the head of the lake. Nevertheless, the 86th had taken Torbole and was pushing on toward Riva, just three miles away. The engineers had not quite finished clearing the blown rock from tunnel number 1, so that 75-mm pack howitzers were the only answer our troops had to the 88s. The British were supposed to be sailing their big guns up to the head of the lake on Italian fishing boats, but they had not yet appeared.

About 1400 hours on 30 April, Darby went forward by DUKW to Torbole. The Germans, on high ground to the north, had almost perfect observation of our supply and troop movements in this area. After landing, Darby walked immediately to the 86th regimental command post, which was located in a two-story stone house close to the waterfront. For about half an hour he conferred with the regimental commander and his staff concerning pushing the attack northward from Torbole and Riva toward Trento and Bolzano. About

three minutes before Darby concluded his conference, a single 88-mm round was heard bursting somewhere nearby in the town. Of course, the Germans, seeing our DUKWs put in and out of Torbole, had periodically shelled the town's waterfront that day but had not inflicted any serious damage on us. Nevertheless, why just one round should come in was a question that should certainly have given pause to any artilleryman and also, perhaps, to any battlewise infantryman.

Darby left the room and walked outside, intending to take a jeep back along the eastern shore to examine the road and tunnels. Since the engineers were supposed to have unblocked tunnel number 1 at any hour now, he wanted to make sure that everything was clear for a rapid movement forward of tanks and heavy artillery to give proper support to the projected infantry attack into the mountains to the north. Darby paused for a few minutes to discuss one or two other matters with the regimental commander and with Brig. Gen. David L. Ruffner, the division artillery commander, who had also come forward to Torbole at this time. The regimental jeep came around the corner and pulled up next to the house near Darby, ready to take him on his mission. I was about to climb into the back seat of the jeep but decided to wait a minute since Darby seemed to be continuing his conversation. I had just begun to feel a little nervous and anxious to be on the move when the barrage struck, the explosion of the 88-mm shells coming apparently at the very moment we heard the whine. Only two or three of the initial shells landed along the waterfront, but just one of those produced the small fragment that killed Darby instantly and yet left General Ruffner and his aide, who were standing right next to Darby, untouched.

Of the dozen men in the immediate area, about half were wounded, but only Darby and one other man [M. Sgt John T. Evans, the regimental sergeant major] were killed. The real tragedy of the incident was that it should never have happened: the Germans had actually tipped us off by firing that single preliminary round. And I had failed to realize in time that this was the moment to prevent Colonel Darby from doing something "stupid." [The German forces in Italy surrendered to the Allies two days later.]

Article by Kenneth S. Templeton, Jr., published in the Army History Bulletin No.49 used with permission.



The Rangers Fought Ahead of Everybody

by

Milton Lehman

(Published in Saturday Evening Post, June 15, 1946)



Returning from one of the war's most dramatic rescues. Many Americans were imprisoned in a camp at Calantuan, on Luzon. The Rangers staged a lightning raid and brought the prisoners to safety.

From the debacle of Dieppe to the triumphs of Luzon, the rarest of military qualities — leadership — enabled these American Spearheaders to make a unique combat record.

A leader, the Army taught its young officers in the training schools, is not a man who gets behind his troops and commands them, "Attack!" Instead, he is a man who goes ahead, faces the enemy and shouts back, "Follow me!" The late William Orlando Darby, chunky, black-haired commander of the American Rangers, was such a leader. The Rangers, as he created them, became a leader outfit of the American Army, a driving spearhead against the Germans from the shores of Africa to the

coast wall of Normandy.

There were few commanders like Colonel Darby in the American Army — none like him, according to the Rangers. An aggressive thirty-one-year-old West Pointer from Fort Smith, Arkansas, Darby organized the 1st Ranger Battalion in the British Isles before the American landing, led them through maneuvers in Scotland side by side with the British Commandos, led them through Tunisia, Sicily and Italy until disaster struck at Cisterna on the Anzio beachhead. The Rangers were his men.

And Darby was their boss, a man they never hesitated to follow. He had no hunger for brass and glory. Three times in Africa, they tell you, he turned down a colonel's eagles and command of a regiment to stay with his men. Later, as a colonel in charge of the three Ranger battalions in Italy, he turned down a general's stars.

"He was tough," says former Ranger Eddie Barberini, who now drives a bakery truck in Brooklyn. "He had a scar over his eye, and when he got mad, the scar turned white. First time I saw him, we were marching. I looked up at him and said, 'Sir, we're all in. How about a ten-minute break?; 'Break?' he said and the scar turned color. 'Rangers don't need breaks!'"

"There was nobody tougher or gentler, all at once," says T/Sgt. Harold Wilson, now an MP in Manhattan. "He made us an outfit that would do what he wanted. We were like sons to him. So he wouldn't leave us."

But Colonel Darby did leave the Rangers in Italy, after the death trap in January, 1944, in the moonlit town of Cisterna. The battle that led to that disaster was launched under higher orders and under higher orders Darby and the remnants of his force were returned to the States. The broken-hearted colonel was given a desk job and told to take it easy.

Darby was restless. Impatient with paper work and official channels, he talked his way overseas again. When the assistant commander of the 10th Mountain Division was wounded in the Po Valley, Darby volunteered to replace him in command of a combat team. One morning he made a routine jeep trip to the front line to see how his infantry was making out. He returned to his forward command post to go over some

maps and battle plans. The Germans began shelling the area. After three years of war, shellfire was no longer unusual. You got used to expecting it. And then, with a fierce crack, a German airburst hit. When the smoke cleared, the colonel was dead. In a few days, the war in Italy was over, but it was already over for one of the great soldiers of the American Army. Darby's luck, at last, had run out.

The Darby Rangers were named for Rogers' Rangers, the rough and crafty Indian fighters of Colonial days. American counterpart of the British Commandos, the Rangers were an elite striking force, volunteers who wanted something special in fighting assignments. They were organized in North Ireland in June, 1942, on the decision of Generals George C. Marshall and Dwight D. Eisenhower. William Darby, then a major, was given the job of recruiting the men, training them and leading them into battle.

Begun as a single battalion, the Rangers never reached division strength. But for pride in themselves, for spectacular success and just as spectacular disaster, no division in the Army could match them. They fought everywhere. Three battalions became famous for spearheading every invasion in the Mediterranean Theatre. Two battalions were formed later for D day at Normandy. One battalion fought in the Philippines. All of them were decorated with the Presidential Unit Citation.

Unlike standard infantry outfits, the Rangers were all volunteers. Although old Army men say, "If you want to live, never volunteer for anything," the Rangers willingly joined their outfit and fought to stay in it. They thought of themselves as the toughest-trained, proudest and most daring combat force in the American Army.

In Ireland, Darby gave the first call for volunteers, stumping the training camps, talking about the new outfit, blithely warning soldiers against joining it. There would be no privileged characters, Darby said; the Rangers would judge men by what they could do, and not by their rank or the shape of their faces or the color of their hair. What they would do would be tough; no outfit would have it tougher. They would spearhead actions; there would be no one ahead of them but the enemy.

To Darby's call, more than 2000 men answered from more than fifty different Army units. The volunteers were promptly given stiff physical and psychological tests, and then they were examined by Darby himself. The men he selected came from all states and professions. The youngest was Pfc. Lemuel Harris, eighteen years old, from Pocahontas, Virginia; the oldest was thirty-five-year-old Sgt. J.B. Coomer, of Amarillo, Texas. There were Sgt. Dave Campbell, cabinetmaker; Capt. Joe Fineberg, treasurer of a burlesque theater; Sgt. George Creed, coal miner from West Virginia, and T/5 Sampson P. Oneskunk, a full-blooded Indian from Cherry Creek, South Dakota. There were photographers and poets and Golden Gloves champions, a bullfighter, a cowboy and a church deacon.

Of the 2000 volunteers, 700 were selected, and training began. Under Darby's direction, they were put through a seven-week Commando course in thirty-one days, with the British Commandos as instructors. "They tried to kill us," observed one Ranger, thinking back to those days. When the training was done, only 520 of the original 700 still wanted to be Rangers and were still acceptable. For a few weeks, the men rested. Then, for the second time, they were asked to challenge luck and volunteer. "It'll be dangerous," Darby told them. "We'd all go, but they won't take us all. All they want is a hundred."

Two hundred volunteered and 50 were chosen, ordered to pack and given a secret briefing. In mid-summer they joined a larger force containing Canadians, Free French, Commandos and British regulars, and were given more training. Then, in August, 1942, as guinea pig for the second front two years later, the force set sail from England and attacked at Dieppe. When the French-coast raid was over and the task force remnants came back to England, the high command studied the assault and counted its losses in plans for future success.

On November 8, 1942, spearheading the Central Task Force, the Rangers waded ashore in Africa at the sleepy Algerian village of Arzew, thirty miles east of Oran. Landing at night, with the mission of knocking out two French-manned coastal guns, the Rangers had little trouble. One of their landing boats, however, grated on a sand bar and the coxswain, thinking he'd hit the beach, threw open the front of the craft. Six

Rangers leaped overboard into thirty feet of water. When they reached the coastal guns, one French crew promptly surrendered, welcoming them as friends. The second, obeying orders, prepared to load their guns. The Rangers cut them down.

With Arzew captured, red success flares went up from the Ranger Command post, and the Central Task Force docked at Oran. Traveling light, the Rangers pushed on to the Oran airport, and later returned to the port with a battalion of prisoners. On the dock, a Ranger lieutenant saw headquarters soldiers busily unloading fresh white bread from one of the ships.

Rangers should eat white bread before headquarters,” the lieutenant observed to his platoon. “Prepare to assault!”

Because they had to operate well ahead of the supply bases, the Rangers became first-rate scavengers. In training, they learned how to kill a sheep with a quick twist of the neck, preventing its bleat from giving them away. On the Tunisian front they learned that local cattle, properly encouraged, would stray among land mines and wander into paths of rifle fire.

“About all you could do with a dead cow was eat it,” one Ranger recalled. “We never ate bad.”

Death in the Dark at Sened Station

In Tunisia, the Rangers were used for quick punches, raids that carried them deep into enemy territory, and succeeded because the enemy never expected them. Most of the Ranger attacks were made at night, with dark skies covering the way past enemy outposts and the dark shapes of hills guiding them into the enemy’s stronghold. The Rangers had learned the tricks of night fighting — how to stick a bayonet in the ground, listening to it magnify sounds; how to press the Adam’s apple to “stop a cough; how to fasten helmets and mess kits to prevent clanking, and blacken faces with soot to blend with the night.

Their first night raid was against Sened Station, a fortified stronghold between the humpbacked Tunisian hills. Defending the position were reluctant Italian troops, stiffened by German noncoms and officers who saw that they held their ground. After a twelve-mile hike through the rock studded mountain passes, the black-faced Rangers struck, looking like men escaped from a minstrel show.

Capt. Roy Murray’s company, leading the attack, got impatient queries from Colonel Darby’s mobile command post. “When are you going to reach your objective?” the colonel rasped.

“Objective reached, sir,” whispered the captain.

“When are you going to knock out those guns?” the colonel insisted.

Two heavy blasts shook the radio receiver.

“Guns reached and destroyed,” the captain reported.

On Murray’s flank, Capt. Max Schneider heard the colonel’s voice. “Have you got any prisoners, Max?” Darby inquired.

“I think two,” said Captain Schneider.

The radio filled with static, then cleared, and the colonel asked him to repeat. Meanwhile the two prisoners tried to sneak away. Two shots rang over the radio and then came the voice of the captain, a sharpshooter from Shenandoah, Iowa.

“Sir,” he apologized, “there were two prisoners.” It was over in twenty minutes — Sened Station was a shambles, a thing to shock the German generals on their next inspection tour. The enemy had lost its complete force, eight-five men killed and thirteen prisoners.

The Rangers had one man killed and eleven wounded.

Their second night raid followed the strong German offensive through Kasserine Gap, which threatened to crack the Allied line in Tunisia. Counter attacking, the Rangers led the Allied force back through Feriana, a small Arab village flanked by olive groves, on to Gafsa.

From Gafsa, the Rangers were called to lead the assault on El Guettar and the narrow funnel-like pass to

the coast of Tunisia. At night they climbed the winding mountain paths, stumbling on stones and cursing under their breath, listening intently for any sounds, starting at the noise of crickets and owls. By dawn, they were perched in the hills above the enemy, looking down on the sheer cliffs. Colonel Darby studied the caves, watched the Italians and Germans come out of their holes at the first streak of dawn. "O.K., men," he signaled: "let's have a shoot!" — and the Ranger force brought down the full strength of their mortars, machine guns and rifles on the surrounded enemy. For the Ranger sharpshooters, El Guettar was a target practice they never forgot. One of them, Cpl. Robert M. Bevan of Estherville, Iowa, knocked out a machine gun with his Springfield rifle and telescopic sight at 1350 yards.

After El Guettar, the Rangers were taken out of the line and rested. Suddenly, orders came down to shave — the men scraped off their beards to take baths — they filled their helmets with water and soaped themselves — and to put on clean uniforms and report for inspection.

"We knew something was up," said Pfc. Carlo Contrera, of Brooklyn. "Even the old man seemed upset."

What was up was Gen. George S. Patton, then commanding the American forces at Gafsa, who came with pistols shining to inspect the Rangers. He passed through the ranks, looked hard at the rugged faces of the men and then studied their uniforms. He was visibly disturbed. Colonel Darby came up to him and saluted briskly.

"Darby, you've got the best damned combat soldiers in Africa," the general said mildly, and then his face turned color. "But they're the worst garrison troops I ever saw in my whole professional military life!"

Shortly after the Patton inspection, the 1st Ranger Battalion, praised by every general from Eisenhower down, was ordered to open ranks and form three battalions. With new volunteers bringing the force up to strength, Darby was promoted to colonel, and training began for the invasion of Sicily.

On the Sicily landing, enemy search lights picked up their landing craft and enemy guns cut through their ranks, but the night-raiding Rangers poured ashore at Gela and Licata, the small coastal fishing towns. On the beaches, they found minefields, barbed wire and concentrated gunfire. A Ranger first sergeant was shot in the stomach in a blast that killed his captain and wounded his lieutenant. Covering his wound with one hand and a belt tightened around his waist, the sergeant led his company over the beaches, into Gela and into a hand-to-hand battle with Italian and German tanks, until the medics ordered him out of action.

Two days later, with Gela secured, the Rangers bivouacked in hillside caves above the town and went hunting for stray chickens, and the rest of the Army caught up. The Rangers made friends in Gela — as they did in other towns — the tough guys, who had just slain Germans, passing out candy and chewing gum to the ragged children of the village.

One of them, Italian-speaking Sgt. Frank Scalafanci, of the Bronx, made a speech in the village square, under the shell-scarred Mussolini slogan: "Believe! Obey! Fight!" Quoting Thomas Paine, Scalafanci thundered, "We fight not to enslave, but to set a country free and make room upon the earth for honest men to live."

The Sicilians cheered wildly and spat on the old Fascist injunction, while the youngsters closed in for caramelli.

Northwest of Gela, ten miles across a flat plain, was the citadel town of Butera, perched 1300 feet up a vertical rock cliff. Using it as an artillery observation post, the enemy could cover the countryside, bringing immediate, deadly fire down on any Allied action. In his hillside command post, shielding his flashlight as he spoke, Colonel Darby outlined the Ranger attack on Butera. He called on his jack-of-all-trades, Capt. Sammy Sams, a short officer with the longest, most straggly handle-bar mustaches in the Ranger force.

"We'll have to clear through the minefield," the colonel said. "Send out some men to do it."

"I'll go myself," said Captain Sams. When Sams returned, a path through the minefield was cleared and Capt. Charles Shunstrom, a twenty-two-year old officer from Radburn, New Jersey, was waiting to lead the attack. Over the churned, shell-chopped fields, the Rangers moved in single file, then began their slow, zigzag ascent to Butera. At midnight they were on the march; at one o'clock they were climbing the hills to

the town; at two o'clock they were outside Butera; a half hour later, under the dark, overcast sky, they were plunging into the fortress.

Butera was garrisoned by approximately 300 Italians, supervised by German officers and noncoms. When it was over, blood ran on the cobbled streets and only 100 men were still alive to be taken prisoner. The Rangers suffered only two casualties — one a platoon leader, who was hospitalized for two weeks; the second, a scout, who was back on duty the next day.

The Rangers fought on through Sicily. When the campaign ended, they were ordered to train and wait. On September 9, 1943, the Allies landed in Italy, and once again the spearheading Rangers were first in action. For twenty-two days, on the beaches north of Salerno, they faced constant counterattacks and, for the first time there were many casualties. When the counterattacks stopped, the Rangers drove on toward Naples, losing more men in the narrow covered pass called Chiunzi than they had in all the battles before. In Italy, where the Allies constantly gambled on victory while underestimating the enemy's strength, the Rangers began to learn that one American cannot always knock out ten Germans.

"Still, there was nobody like them," said Capt. Gordon Keppel, a young medical officer from Montrose, New York. "In medical school we learned about the human body, how much strain it could take," Captain Keppel observed. "There were limitations. Fatigue could make the body stop functioning, like a run-down motor. Fear could make nerves shake and legs wobble like gelatin. The human body, we learned, could stand only so much. But the Rangers seemed to stand more than this. There was no medical explanation for it, but when you came to a Ranger lying in a hospital cot, you often heard him say, 'Send me back to my company. They need me up there and I don't like it back here.' I kept thinking of this when the men were brought back to the hospital after the battle for Naples"

After much thinking, Captain Keppel wrote to Colonel Darby, advising him that Rangers were not quite normal, that they responded to medical treatment much faster than the handbooks said they should, and that he as a medical officer, would like to join the Rangers to continue his study of this phenomenon. Keppel received his orders to report to the Rangers, and was promptly appointed battalion surgeon.

"While the Ranger officers were not unfriendly," said Captain Keppel, "they seemed aloof. One of the sergeants told me that it took a battle to prove a Ranger."

Captain Keppel's first battle was at San Pietro, the mountain fortress on the road to Cassino. The Rangers made it; a sudden night attack planned to rock the Germans on their heels. But the Germans didn't rock; instead, they came back with a pounding counterattack and a violent shelling.

Doctors are often too analytical," Captain Keppel went on. "They are inclined to believe that all that is important is the diagnosis. In this battle the diagnosis was not difficult. The men lay bleeding from wounds, requiring plasma, sulphur and compresses. The big problem was all with the doctor, who was very scared, didn't want to leave his hole, but knew he had to go out to the men.

"I did the obvious thing," the captain continued. "In one hour there were twenty-five wounded, and I went to them with plasma and sulphur and bandages. It's strange, but I didn't notice the shelling at the time, although afterward I remembered it. That night the officers called me by my first name and the men asked me what I thought of the Rangers, now that I was one. It was the most satisfying thing that ever happened to me."

After San Pietro, the Rangers were taken out of the line again and their ranks were filled.

In January, 1944, came the landing at Anzio, thirty-two miles south of Rome, designed to cut behind the Cassino bottleneck and force the Germans north. The Rangers led the assault, landing at night in their Higgins boats and crashing through the German defenses into the seaside town.

While the Germans were gathering new divisions to seal off the beachhead, the Rangers awaited their next night mission.

No other outfit in the Army knew more about slicing through the enemy's ranks in darkness and overpowering them at dawn. For the beachhead offensive, planned to carry the Allied force out of Anzio

into Rome itself, the Rangers were chosen as the spearhead. The target was Cisterna di Littoria, a small town on the Appian Way where the ground began to rise from the beachhead.

The Rangers rested until nightfall, then began their march under the dark, cloud-choked skies into no man's land. All night they slipped silently past enemy sentries and machine-gun nests. "We could hear the krauts giving orders in German," said Cpl. Ben Mosier, of Ashtabula, Ohio, "and we could have wiped them out. But we had to keep quiet."

The last minutes before dawn brought the Rangers to the edge of Cisterna, where the Germans, in stone farm houses, brought down mortar and sniper fire. It was not according to plan. The German defenses were far stronger than expected and when the sun came up the Rangers were surrounded. Perhaps, some said later, the Germans knew they were coming. Colonel Darby had expressed his doubts of the attack to his senior commander and had been abruptly ordered to carry it out. Perhaps Allied intelligence had been faulty, or, possibly, it went all the way back to those dictating high strategy in Washington or London. Whoever was at fault, the battle and the Rangers were already lost.

"When it got light," said Corporal Mosier, who escaped with barely a squad of Rangers, "we saw a building with trees around it. Behind us was one tank, and when we saw it, we cheered. We thought it was ours. We weren't seeing very well. It opened up on us."

The Rangers attacked the tank, set it afire with a grenade and a bazooka, shot and killed the crew when they tried to climb out of the turret. With one tank gone, ten took its place, followed by German infantry armed with automatic weapons. The Rangers swarmed over the tanks, throwing themselves on the turrets, blasting tanks and crews and themselves apart with grenades. But the tanks kept coming and the German infantry was slowly closing in.

Bitterly, the last orders were given by the company commanders. A tall bespectacled West Pointer told his men, "I hate to do this, but it's too late now. That direction is south. Take off and God bless you."

Over Colonel Darby's receiving set came the last words from the Rangers. The last man to speak was a first sergeant, reporting to his commander, "I'm destroying the radio, sir. They're closing in, but they won't get us cheap."

Three times that morning Colonel Darby had tried to lead a force to crack the German ring. He said he would try again, but the radio was already dead. That night a handful of Rangers, escaped from the German trap, returned to the pine-grove bivouac. Next day, Colonel Darby came to the bivouac, his eyes rimmed with red and a two days' beard on his face. He stood silently looking at the pile of bedrolls and barracks bags, studying the stenciled names and serial numbers of his men. Then he went away.

The Ranger losses were appalling. Of the 1500 men in the three battalions, less than 200 returned to the states. Of these, almost half wore the Purple Heart for wounds. The American spearhead force was gone from the Mediterranean. The battle for Rome and Northern Italy went on without them.

But the Ranger force was still not finished. Back home, some of the veterans listened to a new call for volunteers and again stepped forward. They were sent overseas to join two new Ranger battalions in England, to be specially trained for D day in Normandy. And in the Pacific, a 6th Ranger Battalion was organized, a spearhead shock force for special duty, like the five battalions before it.

Following the tradition of the old Rangers, the new 2nd and 5th Battalions landed in Normandy at H hour on D day, spearheading the second front on the hottest sector of hot OMAHA beach. Both battalions received unit citations for their landings. The 2nd Battalion climbed ashore against terrible enemy fire, assaulting and scaling cliffs 100 feet high, knocking out powerful enemy coastal guns. The 5th Battalion, facing machine guns and rockets, blasted its way inland, and by nightfall had secured a toehold. "We were right back where we started," said one of the veterans who remembered Dieppe. "This was going to be the payoff."

While the Allied armies were smashing the last German defenses in Europe, at the other end of the world the 6th Ranger Battalion went into action. The 6th made several landings in the Philippines, capturing small

islands which opened the sea lanes to Leyte. Then, on Luzon, the 6th got a mission fit for Rangers. They volunteered — 121 of them — to go with Filipino scouts far behind Japanese lines and free American prisoners from notorious Camp Cabanatuan. They carried out their mission in one of the greatest raids of the war. (We Swore We'd Die or Do It, by Lt. Col. Henry A. Mucci, The Saturday Evening Post, April 7, 1945.)

Now at home and out of the Army, four Rangers met by chance recently. They took a table in the back of the room and ordered a round of beers. Around the table were a truck driver and a doctor, a photographer and an inspector of airplane parts, all veterans of the Rangers, all in their new blue suits, all wearing their gold discharge buttons.

“How about Hendrickson - Erickson, ...” “No, that wasn't his name. He was the little guy that cut the barbed wire at Chiunzi.” ... “It was in that wheat field at Dernia — the wheat was all down —” ... “I yelled for Sergeant Teal and he was swinging toward the draw when it hit.”

“No, he ain't around. He got it long ago — after El Guettar, it was. I remember his face afterwards.”

“Old Darby, he was the best. I remember the time at Venafro, we were way up to hell and we got orders if a jeep comes barreling down the road from enemy land, it'll be the old man. They said he went up there to get a look around — he was always trying to get a look around.” ... “C'mon, finish your beers before they get flat. It's time to drink another round to Darby, the best of all.”

You've read a lot about who won the war. The atomic bomb won it, and datole debbil doughfoot with his rifle won it. The daring young men who fly through the air with the greatest of ease won it, and the just as daring young men who slink under the seas in their pig boats won it. MacArthur and Eisenhower won it, and American production and fire power won it. The British won it when they stood alone, and the Russians won it at Stalingrad.

You've read all that and a lot more about who won it, but you've never read about an unorganized and unlabeled group of young West Point colonels who seemed to feel that Uncle Sam had educated them, and trained them, and paid them to fight a winning fight, come a war, and to die leading such a fight, if necessary. There aren't more than around three or four hundred of them, and most of them never will be generals because they are too intelligent, or too impolitically selfless in their devotion to duty, or just too damned brave for their health. But I, who shouldn't, since I was an enlisted man with no love of West Point, say that these colonels, these leaders, these Darbys and Red Reederers — they'd be hard to pick by name because their good deeds didn't usually make the communiques — are the guys who led this man's Army to victory.

The End

[The above article almost didn't make it into this book. The first page was furnished by R. Noel Dye, Pfc 1/4F; however, the remainder of the article was nowhere to be found with no time to order it through inter-library loan. Then, as luck would have it, I was sorting through some documents sent to me several years ago by Gino Mercuriali, Lt 1D and there was a transcription of the entire article. Serendipity! —MHG]

Rangers Come Home

by

Sgt. Mack Morriss

(published in YANK, August 4, 1944)

Article furnished by S&D President Jerry Styles

Camp Butner, N.C. — Frankie was reclining on his bunk.

Another Ranger drifted over rather aimlessly, observed that liquor and women are fine American institutions and then corked Frankie smartly on the arm. The smack of fist against shoulder was sharp in the still barracks.

Frankie lay there and swore long enough to give the guy a head start. Then he casually rolled off his sack, picked up a GI shoe and hurled it the length of the room at the retreating Ranger. The shoe hit a fire extinguisher and dented it.

Frankie settled back on the bunk, grunted, smacked lazily at a fly and went to sleep. His target went down the stairs without looking back. The other Rangers in the squad room, resting or writing, didn't look up. The shoe lay where it fell and the fire extinguisher ceased reverberating.

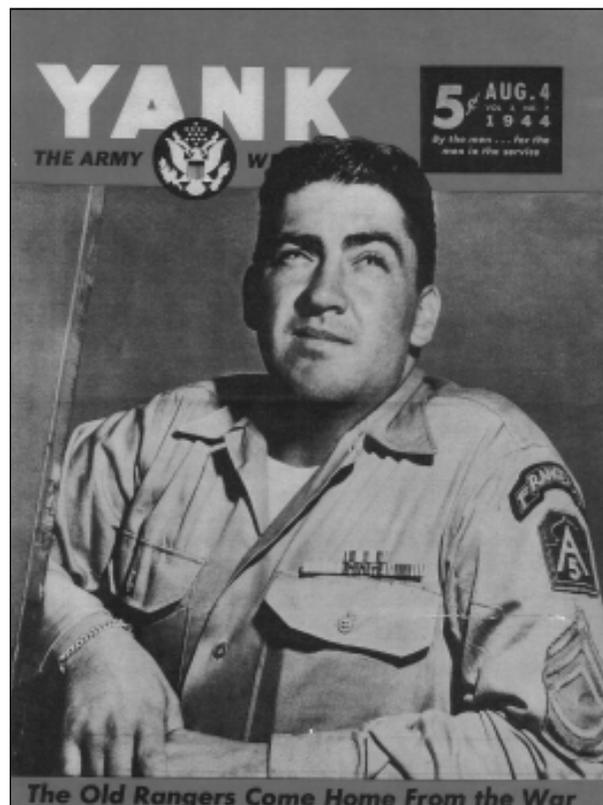
The Rangers, those few who were left of the old 1st and 3rd and 4th Battalions, were back in the States.

Most of them had been overseas two years and more, and all of them saw action enough to add up to eight solid months of continuous fighting. They went home on furlough and talked about the war, then reported in to Camp Butner and talked about it some more. Pretty soon they were weary of hacking their gums. So they answered the questions they were asked in public, and then in the barracks they swore rippling oaths at each other and wrestled and spoke gently to the dice and made themselves at home.

The Rangers are an independent bunch, and it was that yearning for freedom of action that appealed to most of the men who volunteered in June 1942 in North Ireland. The Rangers offered them a rugged future, but at least a man could call his soul his own. "I joined this outfit," said T/5 Clyde Thompson of Ashland, KY., "because they sent out a letter saying they wanted men to work in little groups that would hit and run. Well, we hit more'n we run, but I'm satisfied they kept most of their promises, and we were on our own most of the time."

The Rangers spearheaded every Allied invasion in the Mediterranean. Being shock troops got in their blood. One of them, who will remain anonymous here so that his rough-riding outfit won't ride him for it, let himself go: "There was just one thing about that kind of fighting — by damn, it gave you a thrill. We never had to ask no questions about who was out front; we just started shooting. Hell, nobody wants to get killed and I was plenty scared sometimes — but it gave you a thrill, the way we fought."

Perhaps it was because they found a certain fascination in combat that the Rangers had remarkably few cases of psychoneurosis, although, as an Irish first sergeant put it: "Sometimes when you were under it, that Jerry artillery made you want to cry."



Cover of this YANK article features T/Sgt. Francis P. Padrucco, 1st and 4th Ranger Battalions, from Miami, Florida. All photos by YANK's Sgt. Ben Schnell.

The original outfit, the 1st Ranger Battalion, was activated in North Ireland on June 19, 1942, with 600 men selected from more than 2,000 soldiers who had volunteered. Their training was in Scotland, and they had more casualties there than they had on their first African landing. The British Commandos were their instructors.

“Those bastards tried to kill us, or we thought they did,” said Thompson. “We maneuvered with live ammunition. There were accidents, too, that sort of went with it. They had us out in a place one time that still wasn’t entirely cleared of old land mines they’d put there when invasion was expected. Two of our boys jumped a barbed-wire fence and landed right on top of a mine. We were picking them up two days later. Another guy fell off a cliff and broke practically every bone in his body.”

Then, on Aug. 18, came Dieppe. While it was predominantly a Canadian show, a small party of Rangers were in on the deal. A few of them got into the fight. Others were intercepted by German E-boats and never got ashore.

But less than three months later the long series of combat operations began in which the Rangers as a whole spearheaded drive after drive across Africa through Sicily to Italy. On Nov. 8, 1942, the Rangers landed at Arzew, 30 miles east of Oran. Their mission was to seize four coastal guns overlooking the town and two others guarding the approaches to the harbor.

The attack began at 0130 when four companies landed three miles above the town and came in from the rear to take the French defenders by surprise. Two other companies came through the jetties, where they were met by machine-gun fire, but their element of surprise was so great that a small fort and the two remaining coastal guns were taken with a minimum of casualties.

Three hours after the initial landing, the CO — Col. William O. Darby of Forth Smith, Ark. — fired success flares and the central task force of the African invasion came ashore.

“We went into a garrison and got them Frenchmen out of bed,” grinned one Ranger reflectively. D-plus-two saw a Ranger company lend a hand to the 1st Division at St. Cloud; after eight hours the break-through came, paving the way to Oran.

The Rangers, no longer needed, resumed combat training for three months. Then, on Feb 7, 1943, they were suddenly ordered into transport planes and flown to the Tunisian front, mission unknown. They were landed at a front-line airport and three days later moved into Gafsa, which already had changed hands several times.

Sgt. Sherman Legg of Handy, W. Va., was on the point approximately 1,000 yards ahead of the Ranger advance party. He was riding a motorcycle and was armed with a tommy gun.

“It was my job to find out who was out there and where they were. It could have been Germans in front of us and it could have been Frenchies. I didn’t know what to expect. Anyway, I was moving along and I saw this figure, dark like, over in the ditch, so I jumped over on him and threw my tommy gun into his back. He let out a yell and turned around. You know the first thing he said when he saw I was an American? He said: ‘Cigarette, comrade?’ So I knew it was all right. I knew he was a Frenchman.”

Two days after entering Gafsa, the Rangers pulled what will always be their favorite action. Back in the States now they talk about it fondly, the way advertising men might discuss a beautiful sales-promotion job. This was the Sened Station raid or the “AEF raid” — so-called because those three companies were in on it. It was the kind of thing they



T/Sgt. Robert O. Johnson 1HQ/4HQ Sgt. Sherman Legg 1RFHQ/4

were most schooled in.

Their mission was to destroy a fortified position. They entrucked at night and rode 18 miles to a French outpost and then marched cross country for 12 more miles. By dawn they were holed up in the saddle of a mountain overlooking an enemy position five miles northwest of Sened. All day, covered by shelter halves and natural camouflage, they watched proceedings at the outpost four miles away.

When darkness came, they moved forward. Around midnight, 600 yards away from their objective, they went into a skirmish line on a battalion front. When they were 200 yards away, the outposted enemy, sensing that something was out in front of them, opened fire. The Rangers continued forward without firing a shot. Then, within 50 yards of their objective, they assaulted. For 20 minutes they worked with bayonet and tommy gun and rifle and grenade, and then it was over. By dawn they were back at the French outpost, their starting point.

Almost every Ranger who was there had a favorite tale about the 20 minutes at Sened:

“This was the kind of stuff we loved to do — coming in under their fire which sometimes wasn’t a foot and a half over our heads but knowing damn well those Ities didn’t know where we were. We could watch their gun flashes when we got close enough.” . . . “The Ities called us ‘Black Death’ after that, on account of our work was at night.” . . . “I remember watching a motor pool, and this Itie ran out and tried to get away on a motorcycle. We were laying down a mortar concentration on the motor pool and this guy got the cycle started all right and was about to get out, and just then a 60-mm hit right on top of him and he just disappeared.” . . . “There was some pretty rough in-fighting there.”

When the Germans attacked at Kasserine Pass, threatening Gafsa from the east, U.S. forces withdrew to Feriana and from there to Dernia aimed at Tebessa, the main Allied base. For three weeks the Rangers sat at Dernia waiting for the big drive that never came.

“Our work,” said one Ranger, “was mostly knocking off stray German vehicles that either blundered into the Pass by mistake or were nosing around to find out if we were still there. There wasn’t any real rough stuff. Funny thing about how those people would roam around. We hit a car one day and captured an Italian officer. He was a pilot, and said he was just out sight-seeing.”

After Dernia the outfit drew back for a rest and then went back into action by leading the American drive back through Feriana and into Gafsa again. There wasn’t too much trouble that time either, but then came El Guettar. There they had another job they liked. Beyond El Guettar was a pass leading to Sfax that the Germans and Italians had defended. It was the Rangers’ mission to clean up the defended ridges, which commanded a dominating position over the surrounding terrain.

Cpl. Robert M. Bevan of Estherville, Iowa, a sniper throughout the African campaigns, scored his longest accurate shooting there when he silenced a machine-gun nest at 1,350 yards.

“We came up on them by a circular route of about 10 miles and hit them from behind and above, working our way down to where we could use a bayonet. This set-up was Italian EM with German officers. There was some bayonet fighting.

“As a sniper I picked targets that were out of range for the riflemen, so I started working on this machine-gun nest. I was using our sniper rifle — a plain old ‘03 with telescopic sights. I ranged in with tracers and then put two shots right into the position. The gun was quiet for a couple of minutes, and then a crazy thing happened. Somebody threw a dirty towel over the gun, and then the crew came out and sat down.”

After El Guettar the Rangers pulled back to Nemours, on the coast of Algeria. The 1st Battalion was split into three groups to cadre a reorganized 1st Battalion and the new 3rd and 4th Battalions, which were formed there.

Then, on July 9, 1943, the 1st and 4th landed at Gela and the 3rd at Licata in Sicily. From then on, the war got progressively tougher for the Rangers.

The Gela landings were made at night and searchlights picked up the incoming landing craft when they

were still a mile out. There were pillboxes and land mines ashore, but by 1000 hours the town itself was in Ranger hands. At 1100 the fun began.

It was then that “we thought we’d have to grab the lifeboats.” With only the two battalions of Rangers in Gela, Italian tanks came barreling into town, blasting. “We fought them from the rooftops by dropping TNT and sticky bombs on them. We had a 37-mm that shuttled to its targets, going from one corner to another, taking potshots at them as they came in from different directions. Our bazookas were firing point-blank.”

1st Sgt. David (Soupy) Campbell of Medford, Mass., and 1st Sgt. Vincent Egan of Staten Island, N.Y., both had some hard fighting and some laughs to remember. “We were using bazookas then, and I’ll never forget the trouble one guy had with one,” grinned Soupy. “He was firing from inside a house, and this tank was right up on him, so he hauled down on the thing point-blank — and missed. I don’t see how he did. And the backfire off the thing! The guy did more damage to the wall behind him than he did to the tank in front.

“I remember another thing there. We had this young kid with us who hadn’t been in the outfit so long, and he was really dying to get into a fight. So he was coming along a wall and when he turned a corner he ran smack into a Jerry. The kid was so shocked he didn’t know what to do. So the Jerry shot him, right through the chest.

One of our guys across the street got the Jerry, but it was too late to help the kid.”

“We finally got rid of the Ities,” said Egan, “but the next day came worse trouble — or it might have been. We looked out and saw 18 big Tigers (PzKW VIs) coming in. Between fire from our cruisers offshore and fire from a chemical outfit’s new 4.2 mortars, 12 of the Jerry tanks were knocked out and the others quit. It was the first time those 4.2 mortars were in action, and they did damn well.”

It was on that first day at Gela that Sherman Legg had his troubles, too. He had parked his motorcycle in an alleyway and was leaning against the opposite wall, just waiting for developments. Developments arrived in the form of a shell that blew his motor upside down and blew Legg back through the alley, through an open door and into a building. He was knocked out. After a while he came to, went back to his motor and found it would still run.

“I got on the thing, and this guy across the street stuck his head out. I thought he looked sort of funny. ‘Hey, Legg,’ he yelled, ‘ain’t you hurt?’ I asked him what did he think. He said he didn’t think I was hurt, he thought I was dead. He’d seen me standing there, and then the shell hit and he didn’t see me any more.”

Earlier that same morning Legg accomplished in actual fact what has been done very rarely anywhere except in the movies. He shot down a Messerschmitt 110 with a BAR.

“I was on the beach right near a wall when this bastard came over, strafing. He scared me silly. I ducked behind the wall, and he came back. I let fly at him and missed, but I found out why I missed. So the next time he came in, I put the gun on the wall and held it there and he flew right into my fire. I could see the bullets rake him. He went along a little farther and then I saw flames coming out around the gas tanks where I’d hit. He crashed into the sea.”

The Rangers spearheaded the way across the Plain of Gela toward Butera, a 4,000-foot citadel “that looked like a castle sitting up there.” One Ranger company cleared it.

T/Sgt. Francis P. Padrucco of Miami, Fla., then a buck sergeant acting as platoon sergeant, had 20 men who were part of the outfit that went straight up the long road leading to the citadel itself. It was a brash



1st Sgt. David (Soupy) Campbell 1F/4F

1st Sgt. Vincent Egan 1/4E

maneuver, coming flush up the obvious approach, at 2300 hours.

“We got to a bend in the road and a machine gunner opened up on us at a range of about 20 feet. He wounded my lieutenant and the radio operator. But our scout, with a tommy gun, let go with a whole drum of ammo; he got seven.

“The platoon killed about 15 and took 60 or 70 prisoners. We got a bunch of A-T guns by surprise and flame-threwed some people. The whole thing took about 20 minutes.

“Here again it was German officers and Italian personnel. This time some German, farther back, was giving orders to two Italian officers, a colonel and a lieutenant. The Italians wanted to surrender and the German told them to keep fighting. We told them to give up or we’d kill them. The German told them if they made a move to surrender, *he’d* kill them.

“Poor devils. They got killed. We chased the Jerry, but he got away.”

Paddy, for his work that night after his officer was out of action, got the Silver Star. The Rangers moved by different routes to the northeast side of Sicily. When the campaign ended, they pulled back for training and replacements.

On Sept. 9, they landed in Italy. The landings were above Salerno, and the 4th fanned out in opposite directions toward Salerno to the east and Sorrento to the west. The 1st followed and drove to the high ground overlooking the Plain of Naples. The 3rd fought at Chiunzi Pass. The Rangers held the left hinge of the beachhead against every German attempt to close in and knock U.S. forces back into the sea. For 22 days they had nothing but counterattacks. It was rough work, but the Salerno sector was rough work for everybody.

T/4 Frankie Ziola of South Amboy, N.J. — the man who throws shoes — was one of four cooks in his outfit at Chiunzi Pass who volunteered for duty as litter-bearers. He spent 18 days bringing out the wounded

and was awarded the Silver Star when the fight was over.



Cpl. Robert M. Bevan 1E/4HQ

T/4 Frank Ziola 3HQ/4HQ

“They asked for volunteers for that detail, so we volunteered. I got me an Italian as a helper, and the two of us would go up and pull the guys out when they got hit and take them back to Battalion Aid. I didn’t know anything about medicine or first aid or anything, but I damn sure learned. Funny thing about those Rangers when they were wounded. Almost every time the first thing they wanted was a cigarette.”

Finally, with enemy counterattacks broken, the Rangers spearheaded the way

into the Valley of Naples and relieving forces went on into Naples itself. The Rangers pulled back again to train. Their hardest fighting was still ahead.

On Nov. 1, the Fifth Army encountered strong opposition at Venafro, about 40 miles above Naples. On Nov. 3 the Rangers began a 35-day fight that was to open the way to the valley leading to Cassino. That day they crossed the winding Volturno River with the mission of infiltrating six miles behind enemy lines and taking the heights commanding the road to San Pietro.

They marched all night, passing enemy outposts, and at dawn were still undetected. They attacked, seized the enemy positions and held them for two days. Then, with their supplies gone, they came back through the enemy again to Sesto Campano. Then they moved toward Venafro. When they were through, the Rangers had advanced the lines by 12 miles.

T/Sgt. Robert O. Johnson of Shinnston, W. Va., a battalion communications sergeant, was wounded at Venafro when a shell blasted him down as he and his lieutenant were carrying a wounded man to shelter. It was in that sector that communication maintenance became a matter of survival.

“I had 22 men in my section,” said Johnson, “and before we were through there, the battalion communications was being handled by only the lieutenant, a maintenance man and myself. The other 19 were knocked out by either mortar or artillery fire. I almost got it good there. I had to go two miles up Venafro Mountain checking telephones, and the whole way I had mortar fire right in my hip pocket.”

After Venafro the Rangers were pulled out for a little more than a month and on Jan. 22 they went into Anzio.

“We were 66 days on the beach at Anzio,” said Egan. “It was rough. We attacked a red farm on the left flank at Carroceto. Finally there were only four men left, and they took the place.”

Sherman Legg, still on his motor, had another close one there: “I was going along without paying much attention where I was, and I came over the brow of this hill and a machine gun let loose on me. I guess the Jerries were excited because I don’t see how they missed. Anyway I threw the motor over on the ground, spun it and started the hell out of there. I was afraid even to duck because I might duck right into a bullet. I’m glad they were lousy gunners or I wouldn’t be here. As it was, I made sure not to take any more wrong roads around there.”

Soupy Campbell likes to talk about the Ranger mortar concentrations at Anzio. “There was one time we saw this German come out of his foxhole for a minute, so we gave him concentration No. 3 (we had everything zeroed in). He must have had some ammo in that hole because the next thing we saw of that Jerry he was about 20 feet in the air, turning end over end.”

Soupy grinned. “We had things to laugh at even at Anzio. There was that machine gunner on our flank who’d clear his gun every morning just about dawn. He always did it to start the day off right. ‘Shave ‘n’ a haircut — two bits,’ he’d play on that thing.”

Then, on Jan 29, disaster struck. The 1st and 3rd Battalions were to attack and take the town of Cisterna, while the 4th was to support their assault. But something went wrong: the Germans had reinforced their positions and when the Rangers struck at dawn, they hit a force that overwhelmed them. Two battalions went into Cisterna: 26 Rangers came out.

Sgt Milton Lehman, *Stars and Stripes* correspondent, wrote the story as it was reconstructed for him by survivors:

“When the sun came up, the Rangers were surrounded. Between sunrise and 0700 hours, when radio silence was broken, the Rangers knew that the battle was lost. Sunrise doomed them and marked the beginning of the hopeless, heroic fight. . . . The sand was running out in the hour glass. The Rangers knew it and the Germans knew it. Slowly and bitterly the last orders were given by the company commanders . . . the tall, bespectacled, thin-faced West Pointer telling his men to go. ‘I hate to do this,’ the captain said, ‘but it’s too late now. That direction is south. Take out, and God bless you.’”

The 4th Battalion, also stopped but not decimated, fought on after Cisterna and, with the few survivors of the 1st and 3rd, came back to the States as a unit. They have friends among the newer Ranger outfits now in France.

But the Old Rangers are out of action.

I Climbed the Cliffs with the Rangers

by

Lt. G. K. Hodenfield

An eyewitness account of the toughest action fought by American troops on the Normandy beachhead.

Somewhere in Normandy

“Rangers! Man your craft!” It was five minutes after four on the morning of June sixth, when that command came over the public-address system of a British transport lying off the coast of France. Loudspeakers gave the voice a metallic tone which seemed a little harsh for the occasion, but it didn’t seem to dampen the spirits of the 230 Rangers who were about to embark for assault on Target No. 1 — six 155-mm. guns located on Pointe du Hoc, Normandy.

“All aboard for Hoboken ferry! Leaving in five minutes!” one Ranger called into the darkness, and there was nothing forced about the laughter that followed them out of bed, and as they ate flapjacks there was the expected number of cracks about “the condemned ate a hearty breakfast.”

I had joined the Rangers only three days earlier, as correspondent for Stars and Stripes, and I was not looking forward to the next few hours with such anticipation as these men. Ahead of us was a two-hour trip in an assault landing craft, and then the assault on Hitler’s western wall. Our destination was a tiny bit of land jutting into the English Channel just east of Grandcamp-les-Bains, where the Germans had placed guns which dominated the entire American landing area.

It was a matter of but a few minutes before our craft was lowered into the inky-black English Channel, rightly dubbed by Allied airmen “the longest body of water in the world.” Our flotilla seemed to move aimlessly about, and then suddenly it took definite shape and began the bobbing and tossing trip to France.

“We’re off, boys,” cried the sergeant in front of my craft, “and this time it’s really the forty-nine-cent tour!”

By the time we found fairly comfortable positions in the heavily loaded boats, the first glow of dawn began showing in the east. The laughing and joking was still going on, but it stopped abruptly when we saw another craft overturn in the heavy waves just behind us. There was nothing we could do to help those poor guys; just say a little prayer that they would be picked up before they froze to death. We all wanted to help, but the success of our mission was too vital, and the Rangers knew they were expendable.

As the morning light grew brighter, we could see hundreds of other boats all making for the shores of Normandy. But those boats were landing on beaches, while ahead of us were sheer cliffs that had to be scaled before we could come to grips with the Germans. Personally, I was less scared of the Germans than of those cliffs; I had been shot at before, but I had never had to climb a rope ladder first.

Those rope ladders were the secret weapon of this expedition. Lt. Col. James Rudder, former Texas football coach, and Capt. Harold Slater had worked out a system by which grapnel hooks were shot over the cliffs by rockets, trailing ladders and single lines. The grapnels were to bite into the bomb-blasted earth on Pointe du Hoc, and when the slack was taken up, the ladders would be ready to climb.

The entire success of this operation depended on those ladders. Pointe du Hoc is accessible from the sea only by scaling the cliffs, and the Germans, believing that not even “military idiots” would dare to come from that direction, had placed all their defenses facing inland. They knew that Pointe du Hoc was an extremely important target, but they thought our attack would be made from the flank, so they had placed a ring of defenses around the inner arc of the point.

Soon we were able to see on the horizon the dim outlines of the coast of France, and about that time a terrific naval barrage started. The naval barrage was not primarily intended to destroy the German guns — they were too well casemated for that — but the barrage would drive the Germans into their deep tunnels.

The plan was that the Rangers were to land at exactly six-thirty in the morning, just five minutes after the lifting of the barrage. By the time the Germans would dare to come out of their holes, the Rangers would be over the top of the cliffs, spiking the big guns. And then, after the guns had been spiked, the Rangers would be able to devote their full time to killing Germans.

Gradually we drew nearer, and some of us raised ourselves partially out of the boat to take our first real look at Normandy. It looked very much like England, which we had just left the night before, and for some reason we felt disappointed.

But we weren't disappointed in our Navy. The Texas, bulking heavily against the horizon in the half-light of early morning, was sending shell after shell screaming into Pointe du Hoc, the sound of the firing reaching us long after we could see the blast of flame from the gun muzzles.

As we watched the coast of France draw nearer and nearer, it didn't seem possible that this was really the invasion, the second front for which so many men had trained for so long. It looked too peaceful, too quiet. But suddenly we heard a sharp rat-ta-tat, and we saw machine-gun bullets fall into the water ahead of us.

"Hey, boss!" yelled one man. "Those jerks are trying to hit us!"

They were, too.

The wind was blowing at least fifteen knots, and the heavy seas, with waves reaching four feet, had pushed us off our course. A check with charts and watches showed we were well behind our carefully planned timetable. The naval barrage stopped, as scheduled, five minutes before we were to make our touchdown, but we were far off the course and we had to give up the idea of surprising the Germans. So we kept bucking and bobbing about, getting closer and closer to Pointe du Hoc, but likewise getting closer to the cliff defenders, who had taken positions along the top.

We kept our heads ducked low below the gunwales of the LCA, and we jumped each time a burst of machine-gun fire rattled against our sides. When we dared to look up, we could see men floating around in the water after their boats had been overturned. One man gave us a cheery wave of his hand. It was Captain Slater, who had helped devise the rope-ladder-launching idea. After two hours in the water, he was picked up by the Navy in a fit of high temper at the fate which had robbed him of his chance to see his own weapon in action. He didn't reach France until a week later.

I suppose that we all should have been scared when we finally nosed up to the narrow beach to make our touchdown, but we all were too excited. I was sitting next to Capt. Otto ("Big Stoop") Massney, a company commander. Together, we watched rockets being launched from other craft on our right, and he cursed roundly when he saw that some had been fired too soon and had fallen far short of the cliff top.

"Don't fire those things until I give the word!" he yelled. "We've got plenty of time!"

When the nose of our LCA ground against the sand, we stopped; he gave the word, and, with a loud roar and whooshing sound, our rockets sailed over the top of the cliffs.

I had ducked my head when the first series of rockets exploded, heeding Massney's warning that we could be blinded if we didn't, but then I looked up to see what had happened. I was lost in admiration of the pretty picture the rockets were making, when the second and third series went off. The explosions were so startling that I fell over backward into the bottom of the boat, but as I rose shamefacedly, Massney patted me on the back and said, "If that scared you, whatinell you think it did to the Germans?"

But there was no time for further conversation, for the ramp had been lowered and our men were scrambling ashore with lethal weapons ranging from pistols and knives in small hip cases to big bazookas and trench mortars.

Snipers and machine gunners were on the cliffs all around us, so we scrambled to the base of the cliff for safety. Sgt. Bob Youso and Pvt. Alvin White had already started up the ladders which were hugging the face

of the cliff, and others were lined up, waiting their turn, while Massney stood at the bottom, yelling advice and encouragement.

Those of us not so useful had to wait nearly an hour for our turn to start climbing, so, for lack of anything better to do, I lit a cigarette. Then the thought struck me, *This is a helluva way to invade France, sitting down in the shade with a cigarette.*

I saw Lt. Amost Potts, Army photographer, who was fuming mad because here he was, in the middle of the greatest picture story of his life, and all his equipment had been water-soaked in the landing. He and I were too nervous to sit still, so we started digging some ammunition out of the sand, where it already was being partially buried by the incoming tide. Later, we had reason to be very thankful that we had salvaged that ammunition.

Over on our right, Capt. Walter ("Doc") Block, of Chicago, the medical officer of our battalion, had set up a first-aid post for those men wounded by snipers on the trip in to the beach. He had an impressive number of patients already.

My trip up the ladder was interrupted only by numerous stops to catch my breath. We were able to hear the firing of small arms and occasional loud roars from the top of the cliff, but we had no way of telling what was going on, because Massney had become impatient and had gone up earlier than scheduled, taking the field telephone with him.

Finally I tumbled over the top of the cliff into a shell hole left by a previous bombardment from our air force, and I asked some of the men in the shell hole what the score was. But I could learn only that two of the six guns in Target No. 1 had been destroyed by the air force, prior to D Day, and that the remaining four had been removed.

Raising my head carefully over the edge of the shell hole, I got my first real look at Pointe du Hoc. Just picture it as a huge letter V, jutting into the Channel, with sides formed by cliffs 150 feet high. The Rangers had landed on the left side of the V, with our group at the extreme upper end.

Straight ahead of me for a mile was nothing but shell holes from the air and naval bombardments. At my left was a series of small fields with hedgerows extending to the cliffs. On the far right was the English Channel on the other side of the V, and along the cliff was a concrete observation post which controlled the fire of all six German guns. I moved over to the left-flank troops and stayed there until late that evening.

Meanwhile, other units which were also assaulting the cliffs had been having various sorts of trouble. The Germans had come to the edge of the cliffs and had rolled hand grenades down the ladders. Later, as a sort of afterthought, they started cutting the ropes, but by this time the Rangers had gone up and over and were pushing the jerries back.

According to the initial plan, Colonel Rudder was to have signaled at 7:15 A.M. to our reinforcements, which were lying offshore. If our situation was well in hand, the reinforcements were to land at the base of the cliffs and follow our assault group. If, however, the plan was not succeeding, the reinforcements were to beach themselves five miles to the east and attack from the flank. The idea was that, at whatever cost in time, men and materials, those guns must be spiked.

But because we had been so late in landing, there had been no chance to signal, and our reinforcements, believing that the group which had assaulted the cliffs must have been wiped out, were following the second plan. We knew they would be coming up from the flank, but we didn't know how long it would take them to get there.

Our men fanned out to destroy the guns, and then, learning that four of them had been removed, two companies formed a big patrol and set out to find them. While this patrol was out searching for our target, other Rangers were fighting snipers and seeking out German machine-gun nests.

This was a new type of warfare, a crazy kind. The jerries knew every inch of the terrain; they had the place taped right down to the last little shell hole. They had long deep tunnels, through which they would dash, firing first from one spot and then another. At one place, sixteen Rangers had to hide themselves in a

ditch covered with brush — and there they stayed for fifty-eight hours, sharing three bars of chocolate, while the Germans could be heard talking as they walked down the hedgerow. Once or twice, the Germans even jumped over the ditch itself.

There was one machine gun far to our left, but not so far that it wasn't costing us a number of casualties. Between our line and that machine gun was a field with **Achtung! Minen!** signs hung on a fence around it. We knew that there might be mines there — and again, there might not.

Youso and White, the same two men who had been the first ones up Massney's ropes, decided to get the machine gunner and get him good. They checked their rifles and then started crawling on their stomachs right over that field. Nary a word was said about mines. That was an "occupational hazard" which these men were ready to risk.

They got the machine gunner and they came back, but both had nasty wounds; Youso through the elbow and White through the knee. But neither would leave the line of defense until we all retired at dusk. They both said they could still see Germans and they could still shoot and, anyway, there might be some fun they didn't want to miss.

Between Germans and Deep Sea

As darkness closed in on Pointe du Hoc, our line moved back to form a defensive perimeter around the command post. This post was back of the former German air-raid shelter. Before us, we had a sixteen-foot concrete wall; in back, we had the English Channel.

Doc had found a subterranean chamber near by with sixteen bunks, and here he established a sort of base hospital, where he worked all night with a flickering candle and sometimes a flashlight. At times there were so many patients that men had to lie in the command post until, maybe, one of the other patients would die or could be patched up well enough to go back out — maybe to fight, maybe to help out around the post.

It wasn't until late that night that one man returned and reported to Lt. Robert Armand, of La Fayette, Indiana, that the four missing guns had been found and destroyed.

At one o'clock on the morning of June seventh the Germans launched their first counterattack. By daylight the seriousness of our situation really loomed big. The first jerry attack had been thrown back, but they had regrouped during the night, and this time they penetrated our lines, cutting off a number of our men. Some of them managed to work their way back to our lines, but we lost one officer killed and nineteen enlisted men missing in action.

It was about the time of that second counterattack that I gave up hope of getting off Pointe du Hoc alive. No reinforcements in sight, plenty of Germans in front of us, nothing behind us but sheer cliffs and lots of Channel. It is hard to realize now just how short we really were of supplies. Most of our men, in order to carry more ammunition, had left their canteens and rations in the supply boat which was to have followed us in, but that supply boat, it turned out, was one of the first boats sunk. Without our supply boat, we were up the creek not only for food and water but also for ammunition.

Our meals generally consisted of C-ration chocolate, biscuits and cold chopped meat. Doc was in charge of the water distribution and he gave each of two thirds of a canteen full. He didn't say how long it had to last, because that's all there was.

Everyone around the command post not busy otherwise was wiping sand and dirt off the rifle shells which Potts and I had dug out from the sand on the beach. Every shell was needed and not one was wasted.

To ease the ammunition shortage, the Rangers were grabbing all the captured and abandoned German weapons they could lay their hands on. Pvt. Lester Zages, of Detroit, came running into the command post during the middle of the second afternoon and shouted, "Dammit! I got eight of 'em already, and with one of their own guns too!"

We even had a German machine gun right in front of the command post. Our mortar fire was particularly

effective. One crew came back to the command post, on orders, with all the ammunition they had on hand — two final rounds.

But Colonel Rudder, cool and calm as ever, was still master of the situation — outwardly at least — although he, too, thought we were goners. He maintained contact with patrols through sound-power telephones and he kept constant check on the wounded and on the organization of the defenses.

During the afternoon, Massney reported to Colonel Rudder that he had found a German ammunition dump that would be easy to blow with a four-man patrol and some bangalore torpedoes. While they were discussing this, I mentioned that I would like to see the excitement — meaning I would like a nice, safe vantage point from which to view the spectacle.

First thing I knew, Massney gave me a bangalore and we were off: Massney, who was going to lead the expedition; Lt. Dutch Vermeer, of Pella, Iowa, demolition officer; Pvt. Frank Anderson, who hated Germans; and I, who went along because I didn't know how to back out.

The ammunition dump was behind the German lines, and getting there was a matter of running from shell hole to shell hole. Our men drove the jerries away, and when we got there, Anderson slipped the bangalores inside the doors of a little building, lit the fuse, and we high-tailed it out of there, with me leading. The explosion rained clouds of dirt, rifle shells and hunks of planks around us, but we were too happy to care.

Going back, I used a new system, which I now pass on for whatever it may be worth: Instead of stopping in each shell hole for breath, I ran in one side and out the other — but fast! — figuring that Jerry wouldn't expect me so soon. Apparently he didn't. But that system is very hard on the wind.

The report: "Ammunition dump blown. Some enemy fire. No casualties."

Back at the command post, I learned that Lt. James Eikner, signal officer had established contact with the Navy destroyers just offshore and could call for artillery fire on observed enemy concentrations. His contact was with a signal lamp which he had brought along in spite of protests from his section that their boat already was overloaded. Had he not persisted in bringing that lamp, this story, with a different ending, probably would be written by a German correspondent.

Only that artillery fire poured in by those ships saved our collective necks. Every time the Germans would gather in one spot for the attack, Eikner would signal the destroyers and they would blast them with a rain of fire.

The most inspiring sight of that entire second day came when our Navy scared the jerries out of a house on the road which led down to Grandcamp-les-Bains. I had noticed that house, already partially demolished by previous bombardments, when I first clambered over the top of the cliff. Now I was to see it razed right down to the ground. As the jerries fled out of it, our Rangers picked them off with rifles.

All that second day we waited for supplies from the Navy, while bitter fighting went on all over our little area. We had complete control of that area, probably 250 yards square, with occasional patrols deeper than that.

Early in the morning the Navy sent a motor whaleboat to evacuate prisoners and wounded, but the boat foundered on the narrow beach. Later on, an LCT tried to come in with supplies, but had to turn back because of the strong tide.

The Blue-Plate Special

And then, late in the afternoon — very late, it seemed — two LCVPs made it to the beach, with everything we needed, including one platoon of Rangers for reinforcements.

Doc started making jam sandwiches. Jam sandwiches hereafter will always be sacred with me. They used to be something to eat with a glass of cold milk in the afternoon, but that day they were seven-course dinners, complete with finger bowls. And someday I would like to pay personal thanks to Maj. Jack Street,

who brought them to us. Major Street used to be with the First Rangers, but for this operation he was attached to the naval flagship.

There were no more counterattacks that night, just patrol activity on both sides. Off to the left, we could see a barrage of flak, as Luftwaffe reconnaissance planes scooted over the main beaches, but the planes didn't bother us. It was fairly quiet when I lay down to sleep at two in the morning, and it is a commentary on how tired a person can be that I slept soundly for six hours, with a sharp hunk of rock digging into the center of my spine.

The next day was an anticlimax. I suppose the end of a battle always is. Our reinforcements arrived from the left flank, after a terrific struggle, and Jerry took a powder. By noon we were able to walk upright. But we moved slowly. Two hundred and thirty of us had landed that D Day on Pointe du Hoc. Now there were comparatively few of us able to walk out under our own power. Large numbers of our party were listed as missing in action, wounded or killed.

As we walked along, we talked about the two and a half days we had been penned to Pointe du Hoc. We were proud of the fact that the guns had been destroyed — and in time — but we were humble, too, thinking of the men who weren't with us now, men who would be buried in France.

But good soldiers do not think long about things like that, and the Rangers are the best soldiers in the world. It took Lt. Dick Wintz, platoon leader from Beatrice, Nebraska, to break the spell of melancholy. On our way out, we found a former German canteen, stacked to the roof with knives, razor blades and soap. Around outside was case after case of German beer bottles — all empty.

Now I really hate those Germans!" he screamed. "Oh, how I hate those guys! They didn't even leave us a drink!"

[Editor's Note: In retyping this article for improved legibility, I changed the spelling of Pointe du Hoe, as it was spelled throughout the article, to Pointe du Hoc. Pointe du Hoe is the Parisian French spelling while Pointe du Hoc is the old Norman name. I also corrected the spelling of James Eikner's last name which was spelled Eiker in the article. —MHG]



Lawrence Journal-World

Reunion to bring World War II Rangers to Lawrence

By Marsha Henry Goff

Sunday, February 19, 2006

Sixty-two years ago, with World War II still under way and Allied forces pinned down on Anzio Beachhead, a terse Associated Press story, datelined Naples, Italy, March 8, appeared in newspapers:

A grim secret kept locked in the hearts of allied troops in Italy for over a month now has been placed in the record of heroic but hopeless “last stands.”

This new chapter concerned two lost battalions of Rangers who set out on what for them was a routine assignment to “raise hell” in Cisterna di Littoria at 1 a.m. Jan. 30 and by noon of that day had been swallowed into oblivion.

Historians may argue whether the demise of Darby’s Rangers — named for their founding commander, William Orlando Darby — was the result of faulty intelligence and poor planning on the part of those who sent the Rangers on their mission to capture Cisterna, or was due to the German General Field Marshal Albert Kesselring’s experienced judgment and strategic deployment of forces.

But the fight that ensued that fateful Sunday was the end of three battalions of untested replacements and battle-hardened veterans, most of whom had spearheaded invasions and fought their way through Africa, Sicily and Italy. Only a handful of men from the 1st and 3rd Ranger Battalions escaped Cisterna after an overwhelming force of German soldiers — equipped with mortars and tanks and outnumbering them 10 to one — surrounded them.

As Rangers ran out of ammunition and were captured, the Germans marched their captives toward those Rangers still fighting, demanding their surrender by threatening to kill their fellow Rangers. They followed through on that threat and stories later circulated of other atrocities, including the tale of a medic who was killed for refusing to surrender until he had finished treating a badly wounded Ranger.

‘So long, Colonel’

Rangers of the 4th Battalion threw themselves against German lines in a desperate, but unsuccessful, effort to reach their trapped comrades. The 4th Battalion endured more casualties, including five of six company commanders killed, that day than did the 1st and 3rd combined.

Shortly after noon, Sgt. Major Robert Ehalt, 1st Ranger Battalion, radioed a tearful Darby, telling him that the commander of the 1st was badly wounded and the commander of the 3rd had been killed. The tanks were closing in, Ehalt reported, and he had only five men left.

“So long, Colonel,” he said, “maybe when it’s over, I’ll see you again.”

Darby, who had protested the use of his Rangers as conventional troops in the operation, contending they were trained for a different type of fighting, is said to have gone into a room alone and cried. Within weeks, Darby’s Rangers were disbanded.

Rangers’ reunion

Many Rangers who participated in the battle are making plans to attend the reunion of World War II Rangers in Lawrence this June. Two of them are Frank Mattivi, Excelsior Springs, Mo., and Ben Temkin, Queens Village, New York, N.Y.

Mattivi, a retired autoworker, was a first sergeant in the 1st Battalion who was captured at Cisterna and spent 16 months in a German prison camp. Temkin, a CPA who still maintains a successful accounting practice, was a sergeant with the 4th Battalion.

Mattivi was the subject of an ad in a book published in commemoration of the Rangers' 2005 reunion in Phoenix. Placed by Ray Sadowski, who was a private in Mattivi's company at Cisterna, the ad's message was simple: Thank you, Frank Mattivi, for saving my life!

When questioned about the ad, which referred to an incident at Cisterna, Mattivi is matter-of-fact: "About 10 or 11 that morning, three tanks started moving toward the house that Ray Sadowski was at the top of. I don't know what made me do it — I guess it was just part of the job — anyway, I jumped up on the side of a tank and dropped a phosphorus grenade in it. I didn't know that one of our men on the other side had a bazooka, and he fired and hit it just below the turret, and the concussion knocked me off the tank. We knocked out two tanks. That was what that was all about."

Uncivilized war

Around noon, the Rangers began running out of ammunition. Mattivi, whose F Company of the 1st Battalion was the lead company into the battle zone, explains the critical development: "Intelligence kind of messed up. Well, they had good plans, but it didn't turn out. We were supposed to have backup by the British, half-tracks and tanks, but they got stopped, then we were up there kind of on a limb."

War is not civilized. Mattivi said he saw wounded Rangers shot where they lay and when he and a group of captured Rangers were taken to a ravine, they thought they were going to be executed. "Yep, I sure did. They marched us down there, it was kind of a creek running along there, and some Germans were behind us and some were in front of us. We got down there, and the ones that were behind us started to come around front, and we thought maybe that is what they were going to do."

Mattivi spent the rest of the war in a prisoner-of-war camp until he was liberated by the British. His National Guard unit, which he had joined while employed by the Civilian Conservation Corps, had been one of the first sent overseas when America entered the war. While stationed in Ireland, he learned of a new special forces group and joined the Rangers "mainly to escape the boredom." Mattivi is one of the originals trained in Scotland by British Commandos.

Proud to serve

Ben Temkin's lasting memory of Italy is that he was always cold. A sergeant in D Company of the 4th Ranger Battalion, he slogged his way through the freezing water and mud of the canal his battalion used for cover as they advanced toward Cisterna, a goal they never reached when they were stopped short of Isola Bella by a barrage from German tanks, self-propelled guns, automatic weapons and small arms. Temkin was one of the battle-tested Rangers who had participated in the invasion of Sicily, landing at Gela, where the Germans had illuminated the beach with klieg lights.

"It made you feel vulnerable, like they were all firing at you," he said.

Gela, he said, was typical of the invasions in which he participated. "At first you don't know what to anticipate. You're not scared during the battle, but you are before and after."

Comparing the news coverage of World War II versus today's conflicts, Temkin stated flatly, "If any World War II invasion had been shown on TV, the people would have said, 'Bring the troops home.'" He says he had compelling reasons for volunteering for the army: "I was an American and it was the patriotic thing to do. And I was Jewish."

He volunteered for the Rangers because he "wanted to be at the front of the war."

Temkin is a first-generation American whose father, Joseph, came to America to avoid conscription in Russia. Once in the United States, Joseph volunteered for the Army and fought in France during World War I, gaining citizenship for himself and his wife, Yetta, who had remained in Russia but later immigrated to America.

Ben Temkin loves to tell the story of sporting a new mustache when he returned home at the end of World War II. His mother greeted him joyfully, saying, “Benny, Benny, you look like a movie star.”

“I was thinking Clark Gable at the least, maybe Tyrone Power,” Temkin says, “so I asked her, ‘Who?’”
“Groucho Marx!”

‘A Crazy Plan’

Ben Temkin is gifted with a keen intellect, quick wit and good health — he ran in marathons until six years ago. He and Frank Mattivi are typical of the Rangers who will be meeting here in June. Though both maintain they were just doing their jobs, their heroic actions created a debt impossible for future generations to repay.

The end of Darby’s Rangers as a fighting unit is best expressed by Art Wilson, St. Clair Shores, Mich., formerly a private in Company D, 1st Ranger Battalion. While confined in a German prison camp, Wilson used a tablet provided by the Red Cross to pen a poem, the last four lines of which read:

This is the tale of the Rangers,
And the end of the famous Band,
For they were captured in “Sunny Italy”
Obeying a Crazy Plan.



The Rangers' Artillery

Rounds Away

Two Years of Combat with the 83d Chemical Mortar Battalion

by
Robert Brimm

Dedicated to those who didn't make it

Introduction

The 83d played an important role in the campaigns through the Mediterranean Theater and the mainland of Europe, experiencing more than 500 hard and spectacular days in combat, beginning with the amphibious assault on Sicily and ending with the complete destruction of the German military forces. The 83d was activated at Camp Gordon, GA, on 6-10-42, and after intensive training departed from the U.S. on 4-29-43 for overseas duty. On 5-11-43, the battalion (Bn) debarked at Oran, Algiers, and moved directly to "Goat Hill", a rocky hill infested with flies, mosquitoes, Arabs and cactus. Some days later, the unit began intensive amphibious training and prepared for immediate combat.



The 83d took part in the Sicilian Campaign and remained in continuous combat during the invasion of the Italian mainland and the crossing of the Volturno; followed by the battle for the approaches to San Pietro and Cassino and the Anzio beachhead, with the subsequent fall of Rome. The Bn took part in the amphibious and air assault of the Southern France campaign; and in the historic battle of the Vosges, when the enemy tried his last main efforts in the Colmar pocket and Alsace, the 83d was in the center of action; then, the unit played an important part in the final assault of Germany.

Sicilian Campaign

Following, the Allied Victory in Tunisia, the next step at hitting Axis-held Europe was the capture of Sicily. Mussolini boasted that the island fortress of Sicily could never be successfully invaded because of its highly developed defenses. The entire invasion coast was heavily prepared to repel invasion; 13 divisions, 3 of which were Panzer units, were occupying the island. The plan of attack called for the Americans to land on the south central coast and cut the island in half, at which time the British were to drive up the eastern coast. The most highly defended and most strategic spot on the island was Gela, with its key rail and road network, airport, landing facilities, and naval gun batteries controlling miles of the beaches. The mission of occupying, this critical spot became the job of a special task force of the American Rangers and the 83d, less D company. As the huge armada of ships sailed on to Sicily, a raging storm tossed the LCI's (landing craft infantry) around like corks. In spite of the extremely rough sea, the Rangers and observers from the mortar companies landed at 0245 on 7-10-43. Enemy searchlights picked up the ships and landing craft. Enemy gun batteries, mortars and machine guns opened fire on the beaches. The heavily mined and wired beach and the precipitous cliff all pockmarked with pillboxes were serious obstacles. At H plus 60 minutes, companies A, B, and C of the 83d landed, encountering a false beach. C Co. landed in very deep water but managed to get ashore. It became necessary for B Co. to pull out and try a new landing to the right of the pier. The enemy gun batteries on the cliff overlooking the beach fired heavily on the LCI's. A Co.'s LCI broadsided on a sand bar and became the target for heavy concentrations of fire. It sustained direct hits, but the Bn executed the difficult unloading of the mortars in the heavy surf; and, in the face of vicious cross fire of enemy machine

guns, successfully crossed the mined beach. The heavy gun batteries were silenced. The men of the Bn took many prisoners, and several sharp firefights occurred as the mortars displaced to defend the city against counterattack.

To the right of Gela, Co. D landed with the 16th Inf. Reg. of the 1st Div., at H plus 60 minutes and advanced initially against light opposition. As the infantry advanced 2 miles inland, it encountered heavy enemy resistance. The enemy reacted by attacking Gela with a Co. of light tanks at 0900. Although the 4.2 mortar fire destroyed several tanks, a number broke through the heavy fire and entered the city. The Rangers destroyed 4 tanks and the men of the 83d accounted for 2 with bazooka fire. Minor patrol action occurred during the night. C Co. attached to the 26th Inf. Reg., advanced north and east of Gela, giving close support. The next morning, the enemy launched his main attack with an Italian Inf. Div. and a reinforced Panzer Div., forcing the 26th Inf. to withdraw. C Co. fired heavily, but was forced to displace to the rear again, setting up their mortars in Gela. Although the main part of the attack was to the right of Gela, a regimental attack, supported by a Co. of Mark IV tanks, attacked Gela at 1100 hours. As A and C companies engaged them with their mortar fire, B Co. fired on the attacking infantry. The mortar fire accounted for a number of enemy tanks, and killed hundreds of Italian soldiers as they attempted to drive their attack over the broad, flat plain of Gela. By noon, the Americans stopped the attack on Gela and enemy survivors were rounded up.



To the right, D Co. fired heavily on the attacking enemy, but their advance continued. The enemy penetrated the 16th Inf. positions and tanks overran D Co.'s positions causing considerable damage. The men of D Co. held their position and destroyed the enemy infantry following the tanks. The Co. took over 2 anti-tank guns and reversed them to fire on the enemy tanks. A counter-attack by the 18th Inf. Reg. and heavy naval gunfire finally repulsed the enemy effort.

In the afternoon in Gela, the enemy made an attack of Bn strength from the west along the railroad, being quickly repulsed by the fire of B Co. During the night, A Co. was motorized on Ducks and moved forward to set up in the mountain pass to Butera. Some very bitter fighting took place as the Rangers attacked to gain the commanding ground. A Co. maintained a 16-hour smoke screen during this action in spite of very heavy enemy artillery fire. The Rangers and 83d pressed on to the medieval fortress town of Butera; the heavy mortars were hauled by hand over mined areas and up steep, torturous mountain trails to cover the city during the attack. In a surprise night attack, the Rangers gained the city. The divisions on either flank then pinched out the Ranger force.

The Bn became attached to the 82nd Airborne Div., and advanced rapidly through Agrigento. The men of the Bn hauled the mortars by hand more than 20 miles a day over the mountain trails as the advance continued through Porto Empedocle and Mont Alegro. The enemy action consisted of isolated strong points, which fought strongly until they were surrounded, at which time they usually surrendered. The spotty action continued through Mont Alegro, Ribera, Sciacca and Santa Margherita. The long hot marches carried the companies through Montavago. B Co. worked with the 505th Parachute Reg. during the advance on the important center of Trapini with its large air and naval port. The happy, shouting people showered all American soldiers with fruit and wine. Just short of Trapini, the action began. The enemy held the high ground and was in well-established pillboxes. The 505th pressed directly into the city as B Co. fired counter battery on the enemy artillery. After a brief, but very sharp fight, our troops took the city and captured hundreds of prisoners.

The 83d was next attached to the 45th Div. The advance of the British and American forces pressed the enemy into the northeast corner of Sicily. Very bitter fighting occurred over the heavily mined mountainous terrain. Two amphibious operations, in which landings were made to the enemy rear, aided in cracking the enemy lines. Co.'s B and C, operating with the 179th Inf., executed another amphibious assault around Cape

Orlando. The enemy attacked the convoy heavily by aircraft and considerable damage resulted from several near misses. The force landed north of Messina on a heavily mined beach and advanced rapidly inland. The enemy, however, evacuated many of his troops across the Strait of Messina. The capture of Messina on the 16th of Aug. ended the campaign. The men of the 83d were among the troops first into the city. Army gave the Bn a section of Sicily to occupy and police in the vicinity of Castelvetro.

Invasion of Italian mainland

The Fascist Italian Nation, after the loss of her whole African Empire and Sicily, secretly surrendered unconditionally on 9-3-43. The Allied plans required the entire occupation of Italy. The British 8th Army crossed into the toe of Italy and the main assault was to be the attack of the Fifth Army in the Gulf of Salerno.

A special task force was formed to secure the left flank of the Fifth Army during the invasion. The Ranger Force of the 1st, 3rd, and 4th Bns and Co. C of the 83d landed at Maiori on 9-9-on schedule, while the British 2nd and 41st Commandos and Co. D landed at Vietri-sul-Mare. The force was responsible for the large sector from Salerno to the west. The ground had to be held because of its importance to flank security and its observation and control of the main enemy supply routes and communication lines. Co. D encountered considerable small arms fire and some tank fire, but was able to work their way across the beach. Co. C and the Rangers landed against light opposition and advanced rapidly as they fought their way to the commanding ground at Chiunzi Pass.

The Commando Force had much difficulty and suffered heavy enemy counterattacks. The Commandos and Co. D cut off an enemy armored force. Co. D having practically no anti-tank defenses cut and folded blankets into squares to simulate mines. The combined mortar, and bazooka fire and simulated mines succeeded in repulsing the enemy force and eventually forced their surrender.

Due to the tactical importance of the positions during the succeeding days, the entire sector received incessant enemy attacks. Many attacks, well-coordinated with mortar and artillery fire had numerical superiority of more than 8 to 1. Due to the large sector and the small number of troops the ground was held with strong points with the large gaps controlled by 4.2 mortar fire. As the enemy attacks grew in intensity, mortars were manhandled to the mountain crests to give more advantageous positions and better range. Gun crews were stripped down to one or two men and the remaining men moved forward to stop enemy attacks and to hold parts of the line. Co. D fired to the west, north, east, and southeast. At no time was the main line of resistance more than 1,000 yards from the beach on which the small force landed. One overwhelming enemy attack succeeded in penetrating the Commando lines, and when the aggressive enemy was closer than the minimum range of the mortars, the mortar crews of Co. D advanced to counterattack. With their small arms they drove the enemy back. The mortar men then returned and resumed firing their mortars.

Co. C engaged enemy patrols in fire fights in their mortar positions on several occasions. One enemy attack isolated a portion of the Co. It was only after a very hard fight that contact was regained. Enemy artillery and mortar fire were particularly intense. The main enemy supply route was near the base of the mountain and thus generally in dead space for naval and artillery fire. Although this road was 2,000 yards beyond the authorized range of the mortars, the men of the 83d kept this supply artery under constant effective fire.

On Sept. 17, Co. D supported an attack by the Commandos on the high ground overlooking Salerno. In a little over one hour of preparatory fire, 1,394 rounds of HE (high explosives) were fired on the enemy positions causing hundreds of casualties and permitting the British forces to occupy the important ground almost uncontested.

On Sept. 23, Co. D was relieved from the Commando force and joined Co. C at Chiunzi Pass. The continued close coordination and close support of the 4.2 mortar fire was instrumental in holding the vital

ground. The bitter fighting continued. Supplies became critical, and due to the heavy firing, mortar breakage was excessive. Finally on Sept. 27, the force was reinforced and after heavy mortar preparation, the Ranger Combat Team attacked and overran the enemy positions and entered the Plains of Naples. The force advanced through Castellamare. The men of the 83d were among the first troops in Naples.

As the fighting progressed, the mortars worked closely with the 505th Parachute Reg. The enemy was attempting to hold on the Volturno River and very hard fighting occurred as the American forces pushed onward. In the difficult crossing of the flooded Volturno, many screening missions were fired to cover the work of the Royal Engineers during their bridging operations. In the initial assault over the Volturno, the mortars afforded heavy preparatory fire and smoke for the passing of armor over the river. Shortly after the crossing of the Volturno in the middle of Oct., the 83d was relieved and sent to the Amalfi area. Here the entire Bn assembled for reorganization and training after the difficult combat.

Approaches to San Pietro and Cassino

As the American forces advanced northward in Italy, heavy resistance was met on the approaches to the San Pietro valley and Cassino. In order to secure this valley, it was necessary to get the control of the mountains north and west of Venafro and the mountains above Ceppagna and San Pietro. A Ranger task force, consisting of the 83d (less B Co.), the 1st Ranger Bn, and the 509th Parachute Bn, relieved an Inf. Reg. on 11-9-43, near Venafro with the mission of attacking the firmly dug in enemy infantry on the mountain crests north and west of Venafro. Under the cover of darkness, the mortars of Cos. A and D were moved into position directly at the base of the mountains occupied by the enemy forces.

With heavy massed mortar support, the Rangers attacked mountain 1025. The enemy had prepared positions by blasting passages deeply into the rocks. Direct hits by mortar and artillery fire, in many cases, did no damage to these well-concealed strong points. In very hard fighting the crest was taken. Heavy counter-attacks were beaten off by mortar fire. Heavy enemy fire was received in the mortar positions and the area was strafed and bombed by two flights of Me 109's.

On Nov. 10, the Rangers launched an attack against crest 1053, farther to the south. Again, massed mortar fire was used to blast a path for the Rangers. The Rangers worked their way to the crest where close infighting took place for several days before the final peak was taken. At this time, the sector of several thousand yards between the crests 1025 and 1053 was being maintained by the men of Cos. A and D, in addition to maintaining their heavy supporting fire. Co. C moved into position to add their firepower.

On the 12th the 509th parachute Bn, moved up to occupy the saddle between the two crests. Again heavy massed fire gave support to the attack. The attack of the paratroops was met head on by an attack of over a Bn of enemy. The close in and hand to hand fighting was very hard. The massed mortar fire of Cos. A, C and D was brought to within 100 yards of the paratroops positions as they continued their drive up the saddle. Finally by dusk, the commanding ground was taken, and the inevitable counter-attacks were beaten off by mortar fire. This gave the Ranger task force the commanding ground above Venafro. However, due to the strategic importance of the ground, daily attacks by superior enemy forces were driven into the positions. Great amounts of ammunition were expended as every attack was thrown back. Enemy artillery and mortar fire was very heavy in the mortar positions and enemy planes were very active, bombing and strafing.

Immediately to the left of Venafro in the village of Ceppagna, the 4th Ranger Bn and Co. B had the mission of securing the commanding ground above the village and thus gaining an entrance into San Pietro valley. Co. B moved to the base of the enemy held mountain at dusk, and on Nov. 11, after an extremely heavy mortar preparation, the Rangers attacked to the south. The Rangers advanced almost to the commanding ground when an overwhelming attack on their left flank, drove them back. Co. concentrations of high explosives were fired on the objective, and the Rangers again attacked, gained their objective, and advanced down the ridge to the south. In the course of the next two days, the Rangers received five stiff counter-

attacks, all greater than Bn strength. One overwhelming attack forced the Ranger Bn back to their initial objective and advanced until it surrounded the force on three sides and threatened to isolate the unit. The close mortar support delivered in Co. concentrations finally repulsed the enemy effort. The mortar position received very heavy enemy fire. The force of the 4th Rangers and Co. B was relieved by an Inf. Reg. on 11-14-43.

The force above Venafro continued to repulse enemy efforts. In many places, the enemy was within hand grenade range and exceedingly accurate shooting was essential. Enemy fire continued very heavily in the area and the bitter cold, wet, muddy Italian Winter was in progress. Enemy prisoners of war reported that the mortar fire of Cos. A, C and D had created a serious supply problem as well as severe casualties. The fire control system was so well organized that practically any enemy movement was momentarily met by heavy mortar fire.

Information was required concerning the exact status of enemy forces in San Pietro valley. Co. B and the 3d Rangers were given the mission of reconnaissance in force into the valley. On Nov. 29, the Rangers jumped off, infiltrating and fighting their way through the well-organized enemy positions and mined areas. B Co. supported the operation from positions to the rear of Mt. Rotondo. An hour before dawn, the force was in San Pietro, but there was considerable enemy activity. Information was sent back and the force began to fight its way out. At dawn, an overwhelming enemy attack of regimental strength surrounded the Rangers. Targets were engaged with heavy concentrations of mortar fire. A daylong smoke screen was maintained as the Rangers fought their way out. The force received considerable casualties, but the next day assembled in the vicinity of Ceppagna for the next phase of the operation.

The plan called for the 3d Rangers to gain the commanding ground above San Pietro; then the 35th Inf. Div. was to attack into the valley. B Co. set up their mortars half way up the mountain and gave heavy support as the Rangers attacked crest 950, which controlled the ground above San Pietro. The objective was reached but an intense counter attack forced the Rangers to withdraw. Enemy fire was intense and one platoon of B Co. received over 50% casualties. Concentrated mortar fire was placed on the objective for two days and the Rangers re-attacked and gained the crest. Counter-attacks were beaten off along the entire sector, and also in the sector of the 1st Ranger Force above Venafro. This secured the dominating ground and opened the way for large-scale attacks into San Pietro and on to Casino.

The fighting in this part of Italy was particularly severe, not only due to the heavy enemy action, but also due to the bitter wet and cold of the winter. Proper winter and mountain equipment was not available, resulting in a high incidence of frostbite and trench foot. In the latter part of December, the 83d was relieved and assembled with the Rangers in the vicinity of Pozzuoli. Amphibious training was accomplished for the next operation.

Anzio Beachhead and Fall of Rome

The drive in Italy slowed to a halt as the Allied Forces encountered the formidable Gustav line and Cassino. In an effort to break the stalemate, the invasion of Anzio was planned to outflank both the Gustav and Adolf Hitler lines. The enemy expected such a move, but anticipated a landing much farther to the north. The Anzio landing was almost a complete surprise. A Ranger task force of the 1st, 3d and 4th Rangers, 509th Parachute Bn and Cos. A and B of the 83d landed in the city of Anzio at 0200 on 1-22-44. The mined beach was crossed and only a handful of enemy was encountered. By noon, enemy reconnaissance vehicles were making contact with the Ranger Force. Mortar fire caused them to withdraw. During the next several days, the force advanced rapidly along the main road to Rome. Mortar fire was coordinated with all attacks.

The night of Jan. 26, the follow up LST (landing ship tank or truck) loaded with Headquarters, C and D Cos., was sunk by enemy action. In the rough sea, there were many men lost. The survivors were sent back to Pozzuoli to reorganize, re-equip and train.

On the 27th of Jan., the enemy had moved considerable strength into the area and resistance was stiffening. On the 29th, the force assembled in the right portion of the beachhead in preparation for spearheading an attack on Cisterna. The plans called for the Rangers to infiltrate and fight their way into Cisterna with the 7th Inf. and 504th Parachute regiments attacking on their right, and the 15th Inf. Reg. attacking on the left. At 0100 on the 30th, the 1st and 3d Rangers jumped off with the 4th Bn advancing to their left rear. Although heavy opposition was encountered, the Rangers worked their way into the outskirts of Cisterna by 0700. The infantry on the left and right did not advance according to schedule. The enemy had reinforced this sector heavily with their 1st Parachute Div., supported by tanks.

The Rangers were surrounded and, as they fought, the mortars of the 83d placed heavy concentrations on the enemy. By dusk, it was apparent that most of the Rangers were lost. In order to hold the line, B Co. became the infantry and established a defensive position, while A Co. fired heavily with their mortars. B Co. sent out many patrols as all efforts were made to contact the Rangers. Due to the action of companies A and B, many of the 4th Bn were able to withdraw and reassemble. The following morning, the 4th Rangers again attacked in an effort to reach the 1st and 3d Bns. They gained a key road junction and were unable to advance further. The 15th Inf. Reg. then attacked through the 83d and the Rangers. The infantry attack was halted short of Cisterna, where the 1st and 3d Rangers were surrounded, and the situation stabilized. Two nights later, "Axis Sal" broadcast: "Now that the Rangers are finished, the 83d is next".

The 83d was then attached to the 45th Inf. Div., along the main Anzio-Rome road to prepare for the anticipated enemy effort to destroy the beachhead. Enemy artillery and mortar fire was intense. Aircraft dive-bombed and strafed by day, and by night. They blanketed the front lines with antipersonnel bombs. The enemy tanks and infantry probed the lines. The enemy had massed 5 divisions in the sector of the 45th Div., and on Feb 16, after a tremendous preparation barrage, the enemy drove straight down the Anzio road. The 83d mortars fired continuously on the advancing enemy. Many American infantry positions were overrun.

The mortar positions were dive bombed again and again; mortars were knocked out; direct tank fire was received. Mortar fire was placed on the advancing enemy infantry, and tanks, and produced high casualties, but the enemy advance continued. B Co. lost contact with the American forces as the enemy continued their drive, therefore support was given to a Bn of British reserves who were thrown into the line. Infiltrating enemy were encountered in the mortar position. Co. A fought it out with 6 Mark VI tanks which were firing directly into their position. Massed mortar fire finally drove off 5 of the tanks and left the 6th burning. Every available mortar was kept in action constantly during the day and night. At the critical point of the action, a pick-up unit of British cooks, headquarters personnel and B Co. were the only troops between the enemy and Anzio. At the same time A Co. held their mortar position and continued firing while the infantry withdrew and formed a new line several hundred yards to their rear. By the evening of the 20th of Feb., the enemy attack had been definitely stopped. The 83d had poured out thousands of rounds and caused many casualties and knocked out a number of tanks.

Then began the long siege of Anzio with the enemy constantly looking right down at the Allied Forces. During the entire grind of Anzio, with its heavy artillery fire and every night with its anti personnel bombs, the 83d remained in the line. Cos. C and D went into action with the 88th Inf. Div. near Minturno on the southern front. Mortar fire was used in patrol activity. Enemy mine fields were very heavy in this sector. On Apr. 5, the two companies were relieved and were sent to Anzio where they immediately went into the line. From their advantageous position, the enemy continued to fire at anything that moved and Anzio gained the name of the "Hottest Spot in the World".

In May, the build-up was progressing and the 4.2 mortars were supporting vigorous patrolling and limited objective attacks, which were testing the enemy defenses. Positions were prepared far forward and stocked with ammunition. For the attack, companies A and B worked with the 1st Armored Div., and C and D, with the 45th Inf. Div. On the morning of May 23, after a heavy preparation, the attack was on. The main efforts progressed well and the 1st Armored broke through the enemy lines. A and B companies displaced frequently,

keeping in close range for support of the Armored infantry. C and D fired on heavy counter-attacks.

Mine fields were a very big problem. As the attack continued, A and B were attached to the 36th Div. for the attack on Colli Laziali and Velletri. As the attack progressed, the infantry outflanked Velletri and occupied the mountains. The 45th Div. with Cos. C and D continued to advance in the face of serious resistance. Many screening missions were fired and high expenditures of HE were made in giving close support. The advance continued, and the race to Rome followed. On 4 June 1944, the 83d was in Rome, and the advance continued beyond. Close mortar support was given as the drive progressed approximately 100 miles north of Rome. Here the 83d was relieved and assembled in an area near Tarquinia.

Plans were made to use the 83d with the 509th parachute Bn and the American-Canadian Special Service Force in an airborne operation. As the Allied Forces advanced rapidly northwest in Italy, the air operation was not required. The 83d then moved to the Salerno area for amphibious training with the 45th Inf. Div. Co. D was attached to the 1st Airborne Task Force near Rome and underwent intensive glider training. The Bn, less Co D, then assembled in the vicinity of Qualiano for the next operation.

Invasion of Southern France

With the landing of the Allied Forces on the coast of Normandy and the break-through from the Cherbourg Peninsula, the stage was set for decisive blows against Nazi Germany. The Allied plans called for the invasion of southern France. Although the enemy anticipated such a move, the German 19th Army that held southern France was very weak.

The 83d, less Co. D, was attached to the 45th Inf. Div. for the action, while Co. D operated with the 1st Airborne Task Force.

[This history of the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion continues until the war's end. I have included only that part of the history that covers campaigns shared with the Rangers. After Darby's Rangers were disbanded, my father, Lt L. Lew Henry 1F/4A, badly wounded late in the Anzio action, joined the 83rd Chemical Battalion as commander of Company D, the company that landed in gliders. He served with the 83rd until the end of the war. —MHG]



"HAULING MORTARS UP THE STEEP ITALIAN TRAILS"

Drawing: ROUNDS AWAY! The Combat History of the Eighty-Third Chemical Mortar Battalion

486 Americans Freed From Prison Camp On Luzon

The following two articles are reprinted from

Oklahoma City Times

February 1, 1945

General MacArthur's Headquarters, Luzon, Jan. 31. — (Delayed.) — AP — Men of Bataan, Corregidor and Singapore — 513 of them — were snatched from under the flaming muzzles of Japanese guns last night in an exploit of unmatched daring.

Some 400 picked men of the Sixth Ranger battalion and Filipino guerrillas made a commando raid 25 miles behind Japanese lines to empty a prison camp and partially fulfill one of the Philippines' objectives closest to Gen. Douglas MacArthur's heart.

They took Japanese guards by surprise and rescued 486 Americans, 23 British, three Netherlanders and one Norwegian — all that were left in the prison camp in Nueva Ecija province of eastern Luzon.

Many more hundreds of more able-bodied war prisoners had been sent to work camps in Japan. Hundreds of others had died.

All but two of the men were brought out alive by the 121 men of the Sixth Ranger battalion who stormed into the prison stockade under command of Lt. Col. Henry Mucci of Bridgeport, Conn. Their enfeebled hearts flickered out when they were in sight of American lines.

The Rangers attacked with such merciless precision that not one of the Japanese stockade guards was left alive or able to resist. And they attacked with such care that not one of the prisoners was scratched.

Within a matter of minutes all had been released and were on their 25-mile journey to freedom, walking, carried on backs of husky Rangers or riding in carabao carts.

Nearly 100 were so weak from malnutrition, disease and 3-year-old wounds that they could not walk when they were cut loose from Japanese bondage.

The rescue cost the lives of 27 Rangers and Filipinos in a guerrilla unit led by Maj. Robert Lapham of Davenport, Iowa, who fought off a savage tank-led, Japanese attack along the escape corridor.

The raiders killed 523 Japanese — more than one for every prisoner release — and knocked out 12 enemy tanks.

This first mass liberation of allied prisoners of war in the western Pacific was accomplished by an all-night forced march east of the American lines to Cabu.

The Commando force, made up of the 121 Rangers and 286 Filipinos in the guerrilla unit, left American lines under protection of air cover and reached the prison camp without detection.

Their swift, fierce attack caught the guards completely by surprise. The Japanese struck back violently and persistently as the rescue column headed back toward the Sixth Ranger camp and freedom for the valiant men who had been at the mercy of Japanese guards for nearly three years.

The heavy, disproportionate Japanese losses were inflicted in battering down these tank-led attacks.

The Commando raid, ordered on short notice when intelligence reports disclosed the whereabouts of the camp, was such a success that General MacArthur decorated every man in the force.

The lean and rugged captives received the homage of thousands of American soldiers now fighting to redeem the islands for which the veterans fought so valiantly and hopelessly. The youthful GIs formed an impromptu honor guard, flanking a military highway down which the rescue party passed after it returned to American lines.

It was the last of many marches for the rescued men — marches which began with the brutal "death march of Bataan."

The freed men showed their happiness, despite their sores and ulcers, wasted bodies and ragged clothes.

Some looked helplessly up from litters. Others were proudly erect. There were old men with gray hair

and dazed, sunken eyes. Some were surprisingly young and almost at their normal weight. Others were limp from beri-beri.

Their shirts were tattered. Shorts were patched and repatched. Several officers still proudly wore their emblems of rank. There were battered campaign hats, overseas caps and one-pre-war type helmet.

Their sentiment was expressed by Capt. James B. Prippe, Los Angeles, former provost marshal on Corregidor. He said:

“The thrill of seeing those green clad Rangers storm into the prison camp last night will never quite leave me.”

STATEMENT BY GENERAL MacARTHUR FOR PRESS RELEASE

Recent intelligence reports indicated the Japanese were maintaining a prisoner-of-war camp near Cabu in Nueva Ecija Province in Eastern Luzon. A commando raid was immediately organized for the purpose of rescuing the prisoners. 121 picked men of the Sixth Ranger Battalion and 286 guerrillas were entrusted with the mission which was commanded by Lt. Col. Henry A. Mucci.

Moving from our lines with air cover they penetrated 25 miles into enemy held territory and struck under cover of darkness. The mission was brilliantly successful. The Japanese guards were completely surprised and were annihilated. As the rescue column with the liberated prisoners withdrew, it was continuously attacked by Japanese columns supported by tanks. In the bitter fight which resulted a total of 523 enemy were killed and 12 tanks destroyed. Our own losses were 27 killed and 3 wounded.

The entire group of prisoners numbering approximately 510 were rescued with practically no harm. The great majority are American officers and soldiers with a sprinkling of British, Dutch and other nationalities. The condition of the rescued men is fair. They are receiving every care and attention and their rehabilitation will be rapid.

An almost complete list of names with home addresses is appended hereto and I hope the Press will give it full publicity so that the families of these survivors may be thus immediately informed.

I have awarded the commanding officer of the rescue mission the Distinguished Service Cross, all other officers the Silver Star, and all enlisted men the Bronze Star for his heroic enterprise. No incident of the campaign has given me such personal satisfaction.

We Swore We'd Die or Do It

by

Henry A. Mucci

Lieutenant Colonel, USA

(Saturday Evening Post, April 7, 1945)

The commanding officer's own story of a famous raid to free American prisoners caged thirty miles behind the Japanese lines.

HQ, Lieutenant General Krueger's
6th Army, Luzon.

This is the story of how a small group of American soldiers swore an oath that they would die in battle rather than let any harm befall 512 prisoners of war — almost all sick and undernourished American veterans of Bataan and Corregidor — whom they had been ordered to rescue from a prison camp thirty miles behind Japanese lines. It is, too, the record of how, by luck and God's grace, we were able to fulfill the oath we took. As their commanding officer, I cannot say too much for the courage and skill of the men who did the job against great odds.

The story begins on the morning of January twenty-seventh, when we of General Krueger's forces, on our way to Manila, reached the little town of Guimba, where General Krueger himself, as an enlisted man in the United States Army, was in combat on January 30, 1901, before winning his commission as a second lieutenant. Forty-four years later in the general's life, a Filipino came to his headquarters with the word that the Americans were confined in a camp at Pangatian, near a town called Cabanatuan, directly in the path of our advancing forces. Col. Morton V. White, of San Antonio, Texas, and General Krueger's staff, immediately set in motion a plan for the rescue.

As commander of the 6th Ranger Infantry Battalion, I was called to headquarters, along with Lts. John E. Dove, of Hollywood, California, and William E. Nellist, of Eureka, California, who were to command two teams of five Alamo Scouts each in the operation. The overall plan also involved the use of two groups of guerrillas led by former soldiers in the United States Army.

We were to use 107 of our Rangers. I received some airplane photographs of the prison camp and its surroundings.

I chose C Company, under Capt. Robert W. Prince, of Seattle, Washington, and one platoon from F Company, commanded by Lt. Frank J. Murphy, South Boston, Massachusetts, to do the job.

It was decided to send out the Alamo Scout teams twenty-four hours in advance of the operation to scout the area, and it was planned to attack on the night of the twenty-ninth. The scouts left on their mission. I went back to the Rangers and briefed the men who were going to take part in this action. One of the first things I did then was to tell all the men who were going on this expedition that we would all go to church. When I got there, I made a little speech in which I asked every man to swear he would die fighting rather than let any harm come to the prisoners of war under our care. I did that because I believe in it. Everybody on the mission took that oath. At five o'clock on the morning of the twenty-eighth, I went to Guimba. There I met Major Lapham, the former American Army officer who is now in charge of a group of guerrillas. He told me that the reports that morning showed there were four tanks in the camp and that more Japanese troops had been moving in. The main road of the camp was the main artery for communications and supply for the Japanese troops who were moving in considerable strength toward the mountains in the north.

To deal with those tanks, I got some bazookas and some antitank grenades from the 6th Division. After eating and getting our new weapons, we got our Filipino guide and marched to the headquarters of the guerrilla leader named Captain Joson. This man Joson also once was an American soldier. His headquarters at that moment was in a little barrio — meaning a cluster of Filipino huts — a few miles north of Santo Domingo. Once we left Guimba, we were in Jap-held territory. There were several ravines and rivers to cross before I got into Captain Joson's territory. I asked him to send some men with me, as we had found that the road from Balak to the Talavera River was being used extensively by Japs. There was a battle going on around Baloc, which was pretty near the prison camp, and we had to avoid all that. Captain Joson said he would give me seventy-five men and that he would go with them. We had to cross two main highways, Taboc and Rizal, before we got to the prison camp.

We left Captain Joson's headquarters at six-thirty A.M. under the cover of darkness. We went northeast across country, avoiding all barrios until we got about 500 yards from the first highway. Then I sent out scouting parties to find a suitable crossing. They reported that the Jap column had recently passed down the road to Cabanatuan, but the road was clear at that time. We edged up to the road. While we hid near it in ditches and rice paddies, we saw ten enemy tanks go by, heading north. Then we heard some trucks coming along. When they passed, we got across that highway fast. When about half our men were across, six more Jap trucks came by. Our men took cover

Finally, we all got across without discovery, and double-timed for two miles across pretty open country. There wasn't much cover, and we had to move fast. We skirted a road with a bridge which was guarded by a Jap tank and two Jap sentries. After a few miles, we came to the Rizal road. Our scouts reported that the traffic over it was light. Once again we edged up to the road, crawling, and then ran for another mile on the other side. Finally, we came to another guerrilla stronghold, where we met a force of Filipinos headed by a Captain Pajota. He also had once fought in the United States Army of the Far East. He told us that the Alamo Scouts had been there, but they hadn't sent back word yet from the prison camp.

The light was then coming, and it was forty minutes of marching to Plateros, where we originally had intended to have the rendezvous. Instead of going farther, we all holed in under cover of some busses. Natives brought us rice and water. We didn't carry much food, only K rations. We didn't carry packs. About all we did carry was arms, ammunition and some cigarettes and candy to give to the prisoners when we got to them.

We lay there all day. We were near a little village called Balinkari, where, a few days before, the Japs went in with nine tanks and killed about 100 people in reprisal for guerrilla activities. At four P.M. we split up into two groups and marched to Plateros. An hour later we left. Pajota's seventy-five men came along. They got there about seven o'clock. I put out some scouting parties, and we met a Filipino guerrilla who had been through that camp area disguised as a civilian. He said there were about 1000 Japs at Cabu, which was about half a mile from the prison camp. There were a lot of troops moving past it, and there were probably about 800 Japs in the prison camp itself, just resting. Tanks were moving all day along the road.

The guerrilla believed the Japs were moving up into the mountains, but couldn't be sure. He said he wasn't positive of the exact location of the houses in which our prisoners were kept or where the tanks were. I decided not to attack that night, in view of the lack of complete information and the strength of the Jap forces all around us. I sent out some Filipino scouts with our own Alamo Scouts to get more information about that camp. At three the next morning, they came back and gave me the answers to the seven questions I had asked them.

They told me how many Japs were in the camp and where they were. They told me what buildings held the tanks. They told me how the main gate was locked, and how many gates there were, and where they were, and how they looked. They told me what guard towers were occupied by Japs, and how many Japs there were at Cabu, and what were the best ways of approach to the camp from the north and east sides.

I had the camp mapped and, after drawing up the plan of action, we decided to attack that night. I then

had the No. 1 man at a little Filipino barrio round up some carabao carts in which to bring back our American prisoners, who would be pretty weak — some would be sick and unable to make such a march.

These carts were to be at the Pampanga River at eight P.M. I also asked our Filipino friend to bring along fifty or sixty unarmed men to help carry out our prisoners who were sick. At four P.M. we began creeping or crawling over the two kilometers to the camp. It was pretty open territory, but there were hills and bushes and a few dikes among the rice paddies, and we were pretty well strung out. At one point we had to cross the river, which was about 300 yards wide and waist deep in spots, and had a fair current. I prayed that there wouldn't be any rain before we got back, because it was the kind of river that could rise a couple of feet in a very short time, and on the return we would have to cross it with carabao carts full of our sick men, and maybe wounded.

We traveled in three columns, with Captain Joson's seventy-five guerrillas on our right, Rangers in the middle and Captain Pajota's seventy-five guerrillas on our left. I had Pajota take his men to the south side of the bridge leading toward Cabu, where the main strength of the Japs was, and ordered him to set up a road block there. He agreed not to pull out except under two conditions. He could withdraw if he saw two flares from our Very pistols in the camp. That would mean we had all our prisoners out. If he withdrew, he would leave in a northwesterly direction, pulling the Japs after him and widening the gap through which we'd bring our rescued prisoners.

Captain Joson and his Filipinos were to set up another road block about 800 yards south of the main gate with about the same instructions. They were to stop any Jap reinforcements from coming up on that side and if there was a fight before Joson saw our flares and he had to withdraw, he would pull out in a southwesterly direction to widen the gap through which we would make our return march.

Finally, we were hiding on a little hill about 700 yards from the main gate of the prison, where we could get a pretty good view. We could see there was only one tower with a Jap sentry on it. The other guards probably had gone to supper. Between us and the prison, the ground was pretty flat — rice paddies most of the way. As night came, Lt. William J. O'Connell, of Boston, Massachusetts, began crawling toward that gate with thirty men. Lt. Melville H. Schmidt, from New Orleans, began crawling up with another thirty. Lt. John F. Murphy, from Springfield, Massachusetts, took another thirty and began crawling clear around to the left of the prison camp, all the way to the rear gate. Lieutenant Murphy and his men got into position back of the camp at about 7:30 P.M.

Here is the way our plan of action went: The attack was to begin when Murphy's men opened fire on the guards at the rear gate. Lieutenant O'Connell's men were then to sweep the entire open area on the right side of the camp with fire from their automatic weapons. One squad of five men was to break down the main gate and kill the Jap guards there. Another, going right in with them, was to cut some barbed-wire fencing and set up a cross fire over the right side of the camp. Bazooka and grenade teams were to rush in and knock out those tanks and trucks.

Lieutenant Schmidt's platoon was to enter the main gate and swing to the left, raking the left side of the camp with automatic fire, and one squad of Murphy's men was to swing left, too, to give them cross fire. There was a third squad in reserve under Capt. Robert W. Prince, of Seattle, Washington. They were to get the prisoners out as fast as they could be rounded up. They were told to order all prisoners to dash for the main gate, and they were to help those who couldn't make it on foot on their own. Twenty-five yards in front of the main gate, I stationed some Rangers to round up the rescued in batches of fifty and start them back toward Plateros, where we would meet our carabao carts. I also moved up my sixty unarmed Filipinos to help carry the sick and the wounded. Capt. James C. Fisher, from Arlington, Vermont, was our medical officer, and he came up to the main gate to help the wounded. Captain Fisher, son of the novelist, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, was a fine man, one of the best.

Everything went off exactly as we had planned, by luck and by the grace of God. This prison camp itself was a big one. It was an enclosure about 600 yards long, front to rear, and about 400 yards wide. I hear that

it once had held about 10,000 Americans. There was a barbed-wire fence about ten feet high running around the outside, and two more lines of barbed-wire fences running the length of the camp on the inside. And there were more barbed-wire fences running across it, separating the Jap soldiers from the American prisoners, and the Jap enlisted men from the officers. There certainly was an awful lot of barbed wire.

There were two main guardhouses at the front and rear gates and two pillboxes at the northeast and northwest corners along the main road leading to Cabanatuan on the west and Cabu on the east. There were a whole lot of barracks within the camp — a hundred or more. But we had all the Jap officers' quarters, all the enlisted men's quarters, all the American prisoners' quarters and the buildings housing the tanks spotted, and correctly.

Our attack began exactly at 7:30 P.M., when Lieutenant Murphy's men opened fire at the rear gate. Then everybody rushed forward and began shooting. The next twenty minutes were pandemonium. The fight itself must have been over in about twenty minutes. By this time, we had killed every Jap in the place, and we were herding the American prisoners through the main gate. The element of surprise was complete. We killed about 225 Japs in all.

The minute Murphy's men began firing from the rear, S/Sgt. Theodore Richardson, of Dallas, Texas, rushed across the main highway and battered at the lock of the main gate with the butt of his submachine gun. The clip fell out. Then he pulled out his pistol. A Jap sentry shot it out of his hand. Richardson retrieved his pistol, killed the Jap and opened the gate. Everybody poured through.

Reconstructing it now, I can see how well our squad leaders carried out their assignments. There was one squad under the leadership of S/Sgt. Homer E. Britzius, of Seattle, Washington. That one crossed the main road on the Cabu side and raked all one side of the camp with fire. The squad led by Sgt. Preston W. Jensen, of Lorenzo, Idaho, went through the main gate, cut the wire leading to the Jap enlisted men's quarters and went in, firing all the time. The bazooka and antitank-grenade squads, led by Sgt. Manton P. Stewart, of Goose Creek, Texas, took care of those tanks and all the Jap trucks in a matter of minutes. A squad led by Sgt. Cleatus G. Norton, of Hendersonville, North Carolina, knocked out the sentry tower. There was a whole section led by Sgt. Charles W. Brown, of Chicago Heights, Illinois, which kept up fire on one corner of the camp. Then we had the job of cutting the telephone wires and knocking out the radios, so that no appeal could be made by the Jap garrison for reinforcements from anywhere. Squads led by Sgts. James V. Millican, of Lindale, Georgia, and James O. White, of Sullivan, Indiana, did that job quickly in the darkness.

Lieutenant Schmidt's men directed the actual rounding up of our American prisoners of war in their barracks. The sergeants who went through the barracks, hustling everybody out, were August T. Stern, of Baltimore, Maryland; Clifton R. Harris, of Fairmont, West Virginia; and Lester L. Malone, of Chickasha, Oklahoma.

There were some Englishmen in that prison, too — eighteen of them — a Norwegian and a Canadian. Of the 512 prisoners we freed, 490 were Americans. When Lieutenant Schmidt's men started yelling, "All American prisoners head for the main gate!" one of the Englishmen yelled, "We ain't Americans, but we're coming too!" There was one Englishman of about sixty-five, deaf as a post, and sick, who slept through all the excitement. He wasn't rescued until the morning, when some of the Alamo Scouts who stayed behind went through the place and found that all the Japs were dead — any who weren't had pulled out.

Getting those prisoners out was quite a job. Some were dazed. Some couldn't believe it was true. Some tried to take their belongings, and we had to tell them they had to leave their stuff behind, as there was a tough march ahead. One old United States marine who had been a prisoner all that time wrapped his arms around the neck of one of the Rangers and kissed him. All he could say was, "Oh, boy! Oh, boy! Oh, boy!"

We were just clearing the last of our prisoners through the main gate when we heard a fight begin where Jap reinforcements were being rushed up to Pajota's guerrilla road block, down toward Cabu. The Japs came down that road in a column of trucks, and they were singing some kind of weird song — or perhaps simply howling there in the night. They jumped out of their trucks when they reached the bridge, and Pajota's men

opened up on them. The Japs just rushed into certain death, howling as they came. Pajota's men, shooting at twenty to twenty-five yards range, piled up the Jap dead on that bridge neck high. They must have killed about 400 of them. The Japs brought up eight tanks. Pajota's men stopped them too.

As we were starting our prisoners along the road — mind you, many were barefooted and hardly clothed — shells, mortar and small-arms fire began to drop in our midst. One shell killed Captain Fisher, our doctor, and wounded a couple of our men, one fatally. That was Cpl. Roy F. Sweezy, of Allegan, Michigan. Sweezy's buddy, Corporal Schilli, of Weingarten, Missouri, was holding Sweezy in his arms, trying to lift him up, when he saw he was dying, and Schilli baptized him just before he died. He didn't know what religion his buddy believed in, but he thought that was the right thing to do.

That was a pretty bad march over to our rendezvous with the carabao carts. Some of the Rangers gave their shoes and most of their clothes to the men who needed them. They gave them cigarettes and held them up when they needed it. The spirit of some of the old-timers was wonderful. There was an old man who could hardly hobble, but he insisted on walking alone. He said. "I made the death march from Bataan, and I can certainly make this one."

It took us about a half hour to get to our carts. All that time Pajota's men were fighting around the bridge. Once we got to the carts, there was no time to stop. We had to cross the Pampanga River, and some of the carts tipped over into the water. We had some morphine syrettes, and that helped some of the sick men. We also had some benzedrine for ourselves, just to keep us awake and give us that last needed bit of energy.

After what seemed an age, we got to the little town called Plateros. While we were there, Pajota sent me a runner, asking for instructions. I had him act as a rear guard for us on the right flank, with Captain Prince and our Rangers in the center and Captain Joson's Filipinos as a rear guard on our left. There was one pretty bad stretch on that return march, but we couldn't avoid it. We had to move our slow column down the main Rizal highway for a mile, and that was a main traffic artery for the Japs going north in strength. Lieutenant O'Connell and some of our men went up ahead to set up a road block a half mile ahead of where we could leave the road and swing out into open country. We also sent Rangers, on some ponies we found, two miles up the road and two miles down to warn us if the Japs were coming. Luckily, they didn't come. It still took us a whole hour to cover that mile, and it was the longest hour I've ever sweated out in all my life.

There was a little village called Sibul out across the field when we left the road. There the Filipinos helped us to round up about twenty more carts. We had to have them. All our prisoners were quite exhausted. We got to Sibul about nine o'clock that night, and we heard that the main body of the American forces had come up to the Talavera River. We got in touch with them by radio. I asked for food and ambulances. We pushed on. We reached our junction point with the main forces shortly before midnight, the night of January thirty-first, and that was victory. Not one of the prisoners we had freed was hurt during the operation. Two of our men had been killed and three wounded. There were 107 Rangers, fourteen scouts and 150 armed Filipino guerrillas in the whole action. The Filipinos listed twenty-six of their number as missing.

There were both funny and pathetic incidents during that raid. One was on the night of January thirtieth, the night before the attack, when five little Filipino girls came to the barrio where we were hiding out. They asked permission to sing songs. They brought leis made of freshly picked flowers and hung them around the necks of several of us. I told them they might sing if they would do it very softly. So they sang *The Star-Spangled Banner* and *God Bless America*. Then we all joined in, and there in the semidarkness, singing very low, we sang *God Bless the Philippines*.

Then there was the mayor of Cabanatuan, who came to the barrio. I was pretty suspicious of him, because he had been mayor all through the Jap occupation. He brought us a bottle of prewar whisky. It was Scotch, and it was good. We passed it around, so that a lot of the boys could get just a little sip, just a taste. Then I held the mayor under guard until the operation was ended. He later was released.

There was another thing we worried about — and that was the barking of dogs. I sent two guerrillas to all the near-by barrios to see that every dog was tied up the night of the thirtieth when we were moving forward.

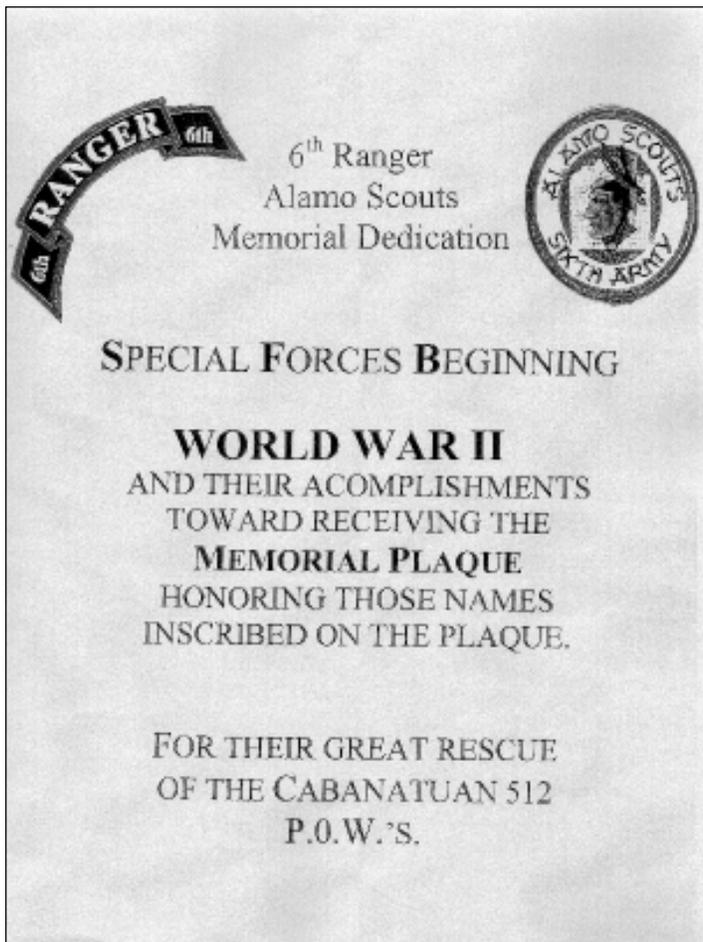
Not a dog barked, by some miracle. Our march out was about twenty-nine miles, and the long march back was about twenty-one.

It should be mentioned that Lieutenants Dove and Nellist, of the Alamo Scouts, spent two days before the attack within a few hundred yards of the prison camp with the other scouts and a Filipino guerrilla named Tobmo, whom they sent back with the information about the prison layout on which I acted. All one day they were in two rocking chairs in a little shack within 200 yards of the prison, directing other scouts who were getting detailed information.

Some of the scouts stayed behind to bring in the last nine of the prisoners who were freed, and the wounded Rangers. They saw the Filipinos bury Captain Fisher. There was a Filipino doctor who stayed with Captain Fisher, trying to help him, and who gave him plasma. But the captain died near Plateros about eleven o'clock on the morning after the attack. His spirit won the admiration of all of us.

Filipino guerrillas with escort scouts took him to a little knoll where there was a palm grove about 100 yards square. There was a Catholic chaplain, 1st Lt. Hugh F. Kennedy, from Scarsdale, New York, who was one of the prisoners set free at that camp. Father Kennedy stayed behind with the scouts and conducted a funeral service for Captain Fisher in the grove. The Filipinos attached his tags to a little cross and put up a sign at the entrance to his grave, naming it Doctor Fisher Memorial.

[The above article was provided by Major Robert W. Prince, 6C, who copied it from the magazine his parents received during the war and saved (for obvious reasons). He also provided a wonderful booklet, pictured below.]



Pictured at left is the cover of a fascinating and informative book written and compiled by the late John M. Cook, one of the prisoners of war rescued from the camp at Cabanatuan. The next page contains a letter explaining why he felt such a book was necessary.

JOHN M. COOK
259 San Luis Avenue, Apt. #1
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A FEW THOUGHTS ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

Last January 31, 2000 it was 55 years ago that some very wonderful men in the strangest looking uniforms came running through our camp, Cabanatuan Prison Camp, shooting and shouting, "Get your asses out the main gate." Yet it was not known who these men were until they were asked. At this time we were told, "we are Yanks." This time I spoke up and said that no Yank would wear anything so ugly. I was told again to get out the main gate along with the rest of the prisoners. I said "Yes Sir."

It was during that night of marching through the Luzon outback, or brush and other terrain, that we found out these men were of the 6th Rangers and the Alamo Scouts, and that were sent to liberate us from one of the HELL HOLES on earth, Camp Cabanatuan No. 1, Luzon, Philippine Islands. We had the 12th Medical Philippine Scouts at Fort Wm. McKinley before the war. I am sure that many thought these were of the Philippine Scouts, as I did, only to find out 45 years later that they were Yanks and it was time for us to say some kind of thanks to all who took part in the Liberation of the camp.

Since 1986, I have tried to say thanks to the 6th Rangers. And, since 1990, when I finally found out that these Scouts were American, I have tried to let them know that all of those on the raid were our saviors and helpers of the Lord.

I have tried to get copies of the stories of the events of that time, and those stories since, about the night of January 30, 1945 and our liberation.

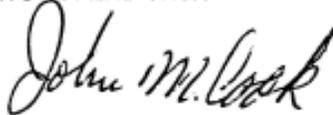
It was after July 1999 that I witnessed the induction into the Ranger Hall of Fame of Major Robert W. Prince, USA, that I asked one of the sergeants about the others on the raid. His reply was "That's something for you to think about."

Think about it. And that is what I did and now it is the time for all of those PROUD AND BRAVE MEN to be honored for a feat that no other group to this date has ever come close to accomplishing and maybe will never do again.

It is a SHAME our government has not really shown their thanks for their accomplishments, and neither have the government officials in charge ever said anything of the group called the "Battling Bastards of Bataan." It is my belief that we did keep the Japs from taking all of the Hawaiian Islands and/or landing on the west coast states of Washington, Oregon, and California and we are never mentioned on any of the holidays.

So this is my way of saying thanks for the job well done and I include all of the 512 prisoners of war liberated for a job well done for all humanity.

MAY THE GOOD LORD BLESS AND KEEP EACH OF THOSE FOR DAYS ON END WITH HIS RICHEST BLESSINGS.


JOHN M. COOK
XPOW Cabanatuan
Philippine Islands

Two Presidential Unit Citations

1st Ranger Battalion of World War II

19 June 1942 – 15 August 1944

Algeria

Tunisia

Sicily

Naples-Foggia

Anzio

Rome

Arno

In his own words

by

Gino Mercuriali Lt 1D

The late Gino Mercuriali joined the National Guard as a 17-year-old on June 4, 1937. During his time in the Guard, an older sergeant told him he should take the Ten Series to become a 2nd Lt. for the National Guard. Mercuriali wrote, "I had no thought that I would be able to do it. NO Guts. That changed during the war." Indeed it did. He received a battlefield commission to 2nd Lt on October 19, 1943. What follows are some of his thoughts (edited for the sake of pertinence and space) regarding his service with the Rangers. —MHG

Note: This was originally the Service Record, but I have decided to tell this as a more personal story. There are plenty of BOOK stories of the action. This is the other side.

May 4/42 to May 18/42 Armaugh, No. Ireland

... The time came that an announcement was made for a unit that was to become the RANGERS. About 5 of us from L-Co. signed up for the chance to get into the unit. I was one. The next morning at orientation, my name was [not] called. I went to the Commander and asked why my name was not called. "Oh, he says, "we are going to send you back to the States to go to Officer's School." I told him that no one asked me about that. I then went to Capt. Murray, Commander of the 3rd Bn. He said, "If you want, be ready to go and I'll have a jeep take you there."



June 6/42 to July 1/42 Charrickfuqus N. Ir (S/Sgt) Co D 1st Ranger Bn: All Volunteer

June 19/42 1st Ranger Battalion officially activated

July 2/42 to Aug 1/42 Achnacarry, Scotland Attached to British Special Service Brigade for commando training as a Ranger unit

Aug 19/1942 Participated in the Dieppe, France Raid with the British No. 3 Commandos. The rest of the Rangers were 6 of those attached to the 2nd Canadian Division.

DIEPPE ATTACK: A few people ask me if I have gone to see "Private Ryan." My reply is that I surely do not want to see that which I have seen 57 years ago. Few people today will say that they have knowledge about the Dieppe Raid. I don't doubt but what the movie is good, but I don't want to see a baptism of fire. I'll stick with that which has to be done, but not to entertain the viewers.

Fifty U.S. Army Rangers took part in the historic raid during World War II. Fifty Rangers, including six officers, out of about 600 men. Most of us were with the British Commandos while six arrived later to be assigned to the Canadians. Our six men, S/Sgt Gino Mercuriali, Sgt. Marvin L. Kavanaugh, T/5 William S. Brickley, T/5 Michael Kerecman, Pfc William S. Girdley and Pvt Jacque M. Nixon were from Co. D and attached to the Commando Company. Only of the six of us, Nixon and I are alive.

We went by train. Had time while waiting a "change" in London. We had the privilege to watch the German air raids. We got hell from the Air Raid guards. Still, we didn't go under ground. The Commandos trained different than we had. In our Army training from the Commandos, we were getting what we had at

Achnacarry, Scotland which helped us to join with the Commandos going down for the Raid. We used more or less the same type weapons and equipment. We were treated as equals.

Not so when it came to chow. We Americans used hot water for utilities, while the Brits did not have hot water for the utilities. Being the platoon Sgt, I went to tell their captain that we Americans have hot water to clean utilities. Also a garbage can.

We were treated as equals. They were very interested in us. Achnacarry had a lake and a river in the area whereas we had evasion training at the Isle of Wight. Quite a training raid. I learned some thing I should have known. We went on that exercise wearing fatigues, not only were the fatigues nearly the same color as the Germans, but I lost some grenades that I had hung on my ammo belt. Never again. We used a pouch on the belt.

The No. 3 Commando Company that we lived with was very good with us. We were living in an empty house. When we had the opportunity to get away, we would go to a restaurant for lunch. Food was better than the Army's. Sure would like to see some of the Brits if they are still around. Three Americans, Kavanaugh, Nixon and myself, decided to take a train and go to the beach. Got the devil from Capt Murray for not being back there for training with the Commandos.

Our target was five miles or so from Dieppe but, as we approached Dieppe, we experienced the first to receive fire from an E-Boat. A flare explodes and illuminates the assault boats. A destroyer and the oil tanker and at least one of the E-boats. During the attack we had to go into evasive action to avoid the E-boat attack. The shells from their guns looked like flaming "onions," it was a sight to behold as they appeared to be aimed to hit between the eyes. Pretty sight except that some of the No. 3 Commandos boats sank in a short time.

We had to evacuate our craft for another one, but this was a blessing as we would otherwise by sitting ducks. Sgt Kavanaugh told me later that the coxswain driving the boat tried to back up and that flooded the engine, but who knows. Before we had time to be very concerned, the British destroyers sank a tanker and their E-boats.

Our evasive action threw our timing off, so we were directed to congregate with the Mother ship in the Dieppe Harbor. We saw a great air battle, but few of the Rangers and Iowans made it to shore. Many of our boats were shot up. This was an experience not unlike WW I, as the dog fights were concerned. Pilots parachuting from planes were observed many times. I could not always determine which were American, British or German. Some of these planes and pilots appeared to be American. Actually, I read that there was a U.S. movie actor that was one of the fighter pilots. I believe it was one of 3 — Robert Young, Robert Montgomery or more likely Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.

Of course, we were within shelling distance from land. We could see the Bofors and POM-POMs being fired from the Mother flagship's deck and the tanks trying to make their landing in the Harbor area. Yet, we were relatively safe and not envious of the Canadian troops trying to get to shore. The Canadian tanks were disabled on the beaches and the men were in a terrible position to survive. It was truly a sad sight. On this occasion, as with later ones, my composure, I would say, was very good. I always seemed to be engaged enough that things weren't so scary when it was happening but at some time later, when recalled to mind, you are scared out of your pants. I had nightmares after returning home. Actually this was not only the Raid, there were enough along with No. Africa, Sicily and Italy.

After returning to our base in England, Sgt Kavanaugh and myself went to a place much like our USO, I guess, and were asked the question, "What do you think of the Raid, Yank?" They didn't realize we were part of it. We never let on that we were there and wouldn't intrude on their elation for anything. I was pretty hard to understand the celebration when approximately of 5,000 Canadians, only 2,200 returned to England. Also there were 3,367 casualties, including 1,946 POWs, and 907 Canadians lost their lives.

In contrast, we later learned of the news about the Raid in the U.S. newspapers, you would think it was a U.S. operation! The British and Canadians didn't much appreciate this. Quite understandable! The fact

that many of us that were assigned to this raid did not have the opportunity to actually land is frustrating for us. In truth, we are fortunate to come out of it unscathed. The Dieppe Raid, organized and planned by the late Lord Louis Mountbatten, became part of the legends of the Canadians, the famed Rangers and their Iowa members and others who participated.

Honored at Dieppe, every Aug 19th will be three of the 50 American Rangers in the Raid: Edward V. Loustalot, Joseph H. Randall and Howard M. Henry, “the first American soldiers to die for the liberation of France” during World War II.

Capt Dirks estimated that if American citizens today (that was in 1975) were asked about Dieppe only about “one of a hundred” would know what it was. “None of the later generations know about Dieppe — only those who were there, especially the Canadians, remember,” Dirks said. [Dirks has died.] Koons agrees with Dirks except that Iowa participants at Dieppe are remembered in their home Iowa by persons of their age. I believe there are 3 living Iowans out of 14 that were in the raid. At a reunion, Koons met a Canadian radar expert whose assignment at Dieppe was to analyze the German radar for the Allies. Two Canadian soldiers were assigned to protect the radar expert, and if he fell into German hands, they were to kill him to make sure he wouldn’t be forced to reveal secret information.

“Dieppe was ‘memorable,’” Nixon said in a phone interview. “The first time you are shot at is always memorable,” Nixon said. “There wasn’t any panic, but to say that we were awed would be putting it mildly. When you see tracers coming at you and you know between those tracers there are five more bullets flying toward you, it’s an extremely eerie experience.” He really was a tough guy.

Nixon said he changed boats five times before he got back to England. Nixon stayed in the Army. He was a good soldier all the way. We are still good friends. Few of us Rangers reached near the shore. “When I look back, even being on the sea 24 hours wasn’t too bad compared with some of the other landings we have made. I was never hurt. Somehow I was very lucky.”

I also think few of the younger generations of Americans know much about World War II, let alone Dieppe. “No, I don’t really think Dieppe was in vain, but nobody’s even given me a real good reason for it. It was supposed to be a morale booster, a reconnaissance in force, but it sure was tough on the Canadians.



Oct 26/42 to Nov 7/42 Enboated to No. Africa for invasion from Port of Glasgow on the ships H.M.S. USLTER MONARCH (D Co.), ROYAL SCOTSMAN and ROYAL ULSTERMAN.

Nov 8/42 Invaded Arzew, No. Africa Amphibian operation (LCAs)-target, Batterie DuNord “Operation Torch.” D Company was to go in with 81mm. mortars. We had a 5-mile trek from a mean high bank on the landing. Days later, C & E Company were assigned to the 16 INF DIV at or near St. Cloud. E Company went to a village called La Macha.

Company D had a completely different landing than the rest of the other companies of the 1st Battalion. D Company had a problem once landed on a short beach with a cliff that caused a problem. Most of the rest of the battalion went to the harbor of Arzew. We also threw our Mae Wests away. We had the 81 meter mortars and ammunition all tied up on machine gun carts. I was the platoon S/Sgt. Our platoon Lt was assigned to D Co. just before we were enboated. During the landing, this Lt took off to supposedly find an easier way to get to the top of that bank, well over our height. I didn’t wait for him, I had the men cut the ropes and we then transferred our equipment and ammunition by hand, man to man. Refilled the carts and started our 5-mile trip to set up the mortar attack.

Our password was “Hi, Ho, Silver-away.” Don’t know of anyone that used it. Had fun from it though. Company C, E and F were to attack after the mortars did their part. It was a short battle and the French were satisfied with that.

The Lt came in riding a motorcycle into our place a couple days later. Darby shipped the Lt out immediately.

Hadn't heard anything about him since. I'm telling this because I don't think many people were aware of it. We had time to rest for a while. Rest? I always was a light sleeper, but we had been given what is now called "No Doz" to have more energy. With me it was a bad 3 days. After the Fort was well taken care of, we found it was a surprise to be able to shoot a bullet through a wine barrel and use a helmet to drink the wine.

During those days, we stayed in petroleum equipment buildings. I looked around the large buildings and found there was a French [Peugeot] auto. It did not have a battery so I looked around and found one. Had no key so had to bypass the ignition wires to get it started. Didn't last long because Darby found out about it and confiscated the car. He appeared to like to run it around with the top down. No thanks to me. Then I went back and did the same with a flatbed truck.



Mar 16-27/43 A major battle at El Guettar

El Guettar! I think it was near Gafsa a short length to El Guettar. It was the 1st Ranger Bn that took Gafsa. The 1st Division was surprised to find we were already there!!! We did some going back and forth in that area. I remember we were very close to German tanks and infantry. Co. D was to have the assignment to attack a tank group but it was scrapped. You know it is hard to remember these things, but one thing that can help could be the sequence. I remember that one time Col Dammer, Capt Miller, Marvin Kavanaugh and myself made a search on the top of a mountain. There were signs that the Germans had been there.

Mar 24/43

One squad and myself of D Company were left on Hill 772 to beat back an assault from German paratroopers. Ended up holding down the right flank of the 1st Inf. Div. on the northern slopes of Djebel Berda, to prevent enemy infiltration from the south and east. **Mar 27/43** we were relieved by elements of the 9th Div. I remember a day that D Company was to climb a very steep trail up the mountainside that looked like goat tracks. At the top, I sent Sgt Yurko and Edgar Rote to a machine gun nest. The rest of my platoon was set up.

Not very long after, we heard the machine guns of ours and thought of the Germans. During this fight, I looked around and there the rest of the company was returning back down the mountain. All the officers and the phone went with them. Our machine guns were out of ammunition and I called in Yurko and Rote. I also started my men to shoot at the Germans that were walking up the slope. These were the real Germans and they continued to progress up the slope. I called Larry Troxell to blast his grenades with his old 1903 rifle. We managed to cause the Germans to return back down the slope.

We learned that Headquarters had us as lost. I went to the Capt to tell him what I felt about their leaving us up there alone. How it come up to it, I don't know, but he said that Darby thinks you need to be a HERO to be an officer. I told him that I promised my MOTHER that I would come home!!!

Our commander would not help me get some citations for at least Yurko, Rote and Troxell. Still, after all the time that our Capt was with us until he changed to the 3rd Bn, we did not have but one man with a citation, except Koons, which he earned during Dieppe. I didn't mean to go this long, but it is O.K. with me.

April 7/43 Ordered to March by truck and train (40 & 8 boxcars) to arrive Apr 17/43 at Nemours for rest and training.

Apr 14/43 to June/43 Nemours, No. Africa (S/Sgt) It was at this time that the 1st, 3rd and 4th Ranger Bns were formed and trained by the original 1st Battalion. Original Rangers provided a cadre to train the new recruits for the 3rd and 4th Bns

June 19/1943 Officially activated the new battalions

For D Company 1st Bn. All officers were NEW. Capt Ralph A. Colby (West Pointer), Lt Tom R. Magee, James E. Price and as an extra officer, Fred J. Von Camp.

June 18 to July 8/43 Zeralda, No. Africa Appointed 1st Sgt. June 19

The 83rd Chemical Bn with their 4.2 mortars were attached to the Rangers.

July 9/43 - Sept 6/43 Boarded ship for Sicilian Invasion at Gela. One landing craft ran onto a sandbar a good distance from the beach and capsized. Lt Price went under the draw plank. He got out of it O.K. Twenty men from the 4th Bn drowned, several others were hit by mortar fire before they could be helped to land. Gunfire from beach was heavy. One thousand prisoners were taken that day. On the 12th we worked toward San Nicola, Niscemi, then on July 13, the Fortress Butera — 4000 feet high — was taken. July 20/43 Assembled at Campobella — 30 miles north of Licata along with the 3rd Bn under Col Dammer.

At Gela, Sicily For D Company, we were fortunate that we didn't have mortars any more. At that time I had just been made 1st Sgt so I figured I would trail along. After all, we had a platoon Sgt and an extra Lt. We made the landing quite a distance from the shoreline. Had to wade in. One Lt dropped off the boat landing gate and somehow went under the boat. He was lucky he made it, but not as any help or direction for us. One Lt wouldn't get off the boat. He was sent back at first opportunity. He was plain scared.

I hit the sand beach near a place where fishing boats were behind wire fencing. I had to pee very bad. I scraped the sand out, leaked and covered it over. The next morning, someone came along to tell us about the land mines near the fencing. I could have easily set off a land mine. Now that was luck!! Not brains? After my little relief by the fence, I saw that the platoon Sgt was useless. He said himself that he did not know what to do. So I had to take over. We had many new recruits and one couldn't clean his BAR (automatic) that was not carried properly on sand, so I had to do the cleaning. Our firing wasn't getting us anywhere. New recruits botch our intention to attack the Eyeties and then move on to our designate.

I had decided that, by going around the Italians on the higher bank, we couldn't make our mission. So I called for the men to follow me down along the beach and then headed up and over the bank. What had then happened was that I was on the way with only half of the men. We were on our way to our mission when one of our best men was hit by a cannon shot from an allied ship at sea. Nothing could help him. He was shot right through the throat. He was done.

I turned them back, mad as hell, and told them this time we would attack. We went straight forward, wiped them out and commanded a large group of prisoners that didn't really want to fight, once we got moving. Before that, they felt they had us. It seemed most of the Italians had changed their ideas and gave up. So we took over. While we assembled the soldiers, their wives, mothers and friends begged us to leave their men go. They were eager to give up. I was sorry but by this time other units came along. We turned them over to the infantry.

A larger fight came upon us at the town of Butera. D Company was lucky to be at the rear of the column. That was until we hit the flat opening at the top of the steep cliff. That didn't last very long. I think the Sicilian occupants had enough. We had seen some of them in caves in the cliff from the road. As it settled down, I walked back on down the roadway for a while. I found an Italian lying that looked in very bad shape. Just about then I saw one of our doctors come by. I showed him the Italian thinking he would look over the soldier. No, the doctor had no pity for the man. The doctor went his way. I looked at the wounds which were right in the gut. I felt the best thing to do is use a shot of a drug into the vein to let him go easily. [I can't remember the drug] but the Sgt's were to carry them in case we might need to ease a man that was wounded.

As far as the 1st Battalion, there was little more to expect. We would not be able to keep up unless we had transportation. The Germans had tried to beat us to Palermo. We did get a short ride to a small city that

was to be taken by C & D Companies. Capt Colby, a sergeant and myself were to take the city's officers. Speaking of Palermo, a small number of our men were able to go there to see Bob Hope. Not having but a few, I stayed to allow them to go. They were late but Bob Hope did some acts over for them.

Then there was a very young new recruit in our company, name of Rod C. Crowlie. A nice boy, he tried to do right and learn. Always wanted to hear about us before he got there. Serrano had made friends with Rod. Serrano would aggravate Rod. He would get angry himself. Rod shot himself while cleaning his automatic gun; he jammed the cocking instrument that had shells in the barrel. He was hit by 5 shots near his neck and around the shoulder.

I was with someone at the time and a good ways from him when I heard that he was hit and on the way out. Serrano came to tell me that Rod wanted him to tell me that I was a good guy. Too bad, but I sometimes think at least he wasn't so likely to be killed later on.

Beginning of Aug 4/43 Relieved and sent back to Casltanissetta to receive training replacements. Later moved to Careleone. Capt Colby killed — Lt Luciano in charge. **Much more activity for Col Dammer's 3rd Bn which went on to Messina.** They DROVE to Palermo. Moved to the Belice River and attacked across it to seize Castelvetro and Marsala. Rest of July was a time of inactivity and uncertainty.

Sept 7/43 to Oct 28/43 Italy — AVALANCHE Boarded Liberty ship for invasion at Maori, Italy (20 miles west of Salerno) [I was 1st Sgt] 1st Lt Tom R. Magee was platoon leader. Col Darby commanded American and British troops for the landing. Headed north toward Chiunzi Pass to Naples. First mission first night up in the high peaks of the mountains after establishing our beachhead and knocking out the coast defenses in area of Capo D'Orso near Maori. First Battalion occupied Monte San Angelo di Cava Mt di Chiunzi (pass) northeast of Vaccaro. For the next 21 days the Rangers had two forward observers able to call on fire support from H.M.S. Howe. The Rangers' cannon company instigated by Capt Shunstrom gave further support by use of half-tracks.

Mid-Oct. [Battlefield Commission to 2nd Lt on Oct 19, 1943] Finally the beachhead south of Salerno began to break out. Ranger forces rushed down the mountains toward Pagani, directly ahead, and to Castellammare, off to the east on the coast, pushed out the Germans and then swung past Pagani and Vesuvius in a fast marching advance. Then on to Naples — no resistance. Short time bivouac, as usual.

Nov 8/43 North to Venafro — east of Casino 1st Bn loaded in trucks for a 30-mile run to Venafro. Back to the hills, relieving various infantry companies of the 45 Div. The 83rd Chemical Mortar Bn fortunately was attached to 1st Ranger Bn. This was the beginning of 35 days of intensive activity with the action confined to the battle area around Mt. Corno. German rifle and machine gun fire wounded one and killed three of our Bn on the 10th of Nov. I was assigned to retrieve the 3 killed from a wooded area. This was accomplished with the help of mule skinner to carry the bodies out. I took over as I wasn't babying those mules at our risk. We were harassed by ME 109s diving bomb attacks and overhead artillery explosions about tree height.

D Company and Germans were facing each other at a distance of about 200 feet at Mt. Corno. The Chemical Mortar Bn was very useful during this 35 days in this sector.

The 1st and 4th Ranger Bns left Venafro on the 14th of Dec to return to the Naples area. The Ranger Force went on to make the Anzio landing at midnight of Jan 22/44. Ended in disaster Jan 29/44.

Dec 10/43 to Feb 17/44 I spent time in hospitals in Italy and No. Africa and recuperation center due to malaria, dysentery [for months] and finally frozen feet. That is painful! You just can't do much on feet that feel like stubs.

Jan 1/44 to Feb 17/44 Lacrino, Italy 2nd Lt Co D 1st Ranger Bn. under Lt Col Dammer

Feb 18 to Apr 14 5th Army School of Scouting & Patrolling using Rangers as instructors while some Rangers were still near Anzio.

April 15 & 16/44 Lacrino, Italy to enboat 7/Apr/44 to the USA with the 4th Ranger Bn under Lt Col Roy Murray.

May 3/44 Arrived in New Port, VA

Apr 28/45 commissioned 1st Lt ASF Liason officer in charge

Terminal leave to Oct 29/45 Discharge from Services



Epilogue

Makes me remember a boss that had 5 degrees. He had been a long time federal government expert on finance and management, had been appointed vice president and general manager of the company., Before that he was a manager of the town of Boulder Dam. I had written a letter concerning a government program that I was going to send out. I thought I should have him look it over. He had a laugh on that one. He said something about, “You sure have your way of writing.” But then he said it was O.K., go on and send it. I tell this so maybe you can understand my writing. Go ahead, have a laugh!

Capt Ralph Colby

My most favored company commander

At the time before Sicily and still in Africa [Nemours] The men of the 1st Ranger Bn were split up to make the cadre for the 1st, 3rd and 4th Bns. I remained in the original D Company, 1st Bn lacking officers and was made 1st Sgt. New recruits were assigned to our company and along with this, we received 2 new Lts. Shortly thereafter came Capt Colby — a West Point man — and his first action was to call together the 2 Lts and myself. He started out by introducing himself and addressing us with the statement, “Sgt Mercuriali, you will run this company and that includes the officers, too. I will let you know if there is anything I want done. This is because you are an original Ranger and know how Darby operates.” I could just see that I was to be in trouble with these officers as they appeared mortified by this decree.

One other time, he caused me some embarrassment when there came a time that we finally received some transportation again along with another company. There was one jeep available between these two companies and while in Sicily, Colby told me to get into the jeep and then he walked away. Dutifully, I hopped in the jeep and here comes Capt ‘A’ from the other company asking me why I was in the jeep. I replied it was an order from Capt Colby and he raged at me, saying that his officers had to ride on the truck and that I could do the same. Just at this time, Capt Colby appeared and he really read off the Capt ‘A’ with the exclamation that he told me to get in the jeep, and that he didn’t give a damn about where Capt ‘A’s men rode and added that I was better than his officers anyway. This made for a bad ride in the jeep for me. But Capt Colby was a man that would stand up for any of his men.

He once told me that Darby was a West Point man and that he, as a West Point man, would be in command of the 1st Bn and that I would be his staff officer. It was not too long after this that he was killed. I sometimes try to speculate on what my life may have been if Capt Colby had not gotten killed. I believe today that he had already put me in for the commission that I received in Italy. So we were given a new company commander. During a rest area, a group of us were sitting around and a Lt says “Merc, you’re a

good man but the trouble with you is, you don't suck." My immediate reply was, "Look Lt, I didn't suck before you came into this outfit and I'm not about to start now."

Thoughts of Italy

I remember when we started our way to the invasion of Italy, we had a new, young boy that was given the task of being along with those that would be the first to hit the shore. The boy cried that he couldn't do it. Being the 1st Sgt, I was going to follow on the way in. That was nearly spoiled for me when I went from the back to the front of the boat. I told him to give me the bangalore tube. The boy came to and said no, he would do it. I'm glad he did that; I know he felt like a good man after that.

Ever been scared? We were traveling up the road when the Germans decided to do some air target at us. We scrambled away into the trees beside the road. I saw someone left a trench hole and I dove for it. I laid with my front body down and my face as deep as I could be. Still, I actually could see a live bullet that hit a little branch on a small tree at about 10 feet above the ground. What a feeling that was.

We did a lot of hiking in Italy, mountains all around. One day we were to climb a trail up the mountainside. One of ours took a shot with his rifle pointed at his foot. Oh, he said it was an accident. Out he went and we never saw him again. Even if he wanted, he could not get back.

While I was walking a lane on the side of the hill, I heard the sound of a rifle shot just in front of me. I pulled out my pistol and there was John Ingram, just a ways above me. I started to ask what the hell he was doing. Then he pointed for me to look down not far ahead of me. A snake! He got it!

When I went to reunions in later years, I would wear my Ranger cap. I also have the Ranger patch that I made to place on the rear of both my cars. I have people blow their horn or see me in a filling station or restaurant. They like to talk about the Rangers, may even talk of someone they know even in a store parking lot. They will tell you about their reading about the Rangers and thank me for what we have done. Makes you feel very good.

Gino's original questionnaire

Name: Gino Mercuriali, joined original RANGERS — 1st Ranger Battalion as a S/Sgt and later was battlefield commissioned and was in Company 'D' from time of Activation (19/June/42) to Deactivation (Sept/44).

List of the battles and engagements you participated in: The first engagement was the DIEPPE RAID in France on Aug 19/42.

Aug/19/1942 Participated in the Dieppe, France Raid with the British No. 3 Commandos

Nov/8/42 Invaded Arzew, Algeria in No. Africa. Amphibian operation (LCAs) — target Batterie DuNord [Operation Torch]

Feb/7/43 to Apr/24 Flew to Tunisia: S/Sgt Co. D 1st Ranger Bn. Platoon Sgt.

Landed at Youks-Les-Bains under German strafing and bombing (near Tebessa)

Tunisian Campaign Gafsa, Feb 4; Sened (station), Feb 10; Dernia Pass, Feb 14; Gafsa to Mar 14; El Guettar, Mar 20 to Mar 22; Feriana; Sbeitla; Sidi Zid.

July/9/43 Boarded ship for Sicilian invasion Gela. Assaulting the beachhead was mostly against the Italians with some German officers in command. Mostly defensive stands were from German soldiers and tanks. Scouting and small brushes on the plains beyond Gela. The Butera campaign, a high mountain force held by Germans and Italians. Not too much then as the armor came in and pushed the Germans to exit to Italy. Some of the Rangers were taken up to that area. Otherwise we couldn't keep up without transportation.

Italy — AVALANCHE

Sept/7 to Oct/28, Boarded Liberty ship for invasion at Maori, Italy (20 mi. west of Salerno) [I was 1st Sgt.] Col. Darby commanded American & British troops for the landing. Headed north toward Chiunzi Pass to Naples. 1st Mission — first night up in the high peaks of the mountains after establishing our beachhead and knocking out the Coast Defenses in Area of Capo D'Orso near Maori. 1st Bn. — occupied Monte San Angelo di Cava Mt di Chiunzi (pass) northeast of Vaccaro. For the next 21 days the Rangers had 2 forward observers able to call on fire support from H.M.S. Howe. The Rangers Cannon Co. instigated by Capt. Shundstrom gave further support by use of half-tracks.

Mid-Oct [Battlefield Commission to 2nd Lt. on Oct. 19th 1943]

Finally the (36 Div.) beachhead south of Salerno began to break out. Ranger forces rushed down the mountains toward Pagani, directly ahead, and to Castellammare, off to the east on the coast. Pushed out the Germans and then swung past Pagani and Vesuvius in a fast-marching advance. Then onto Naples — no resistance. Short time bivouac, as usual.

Moved back south to a campsite overlooking the coast for retraining & rest at San Lazzara

North to Venafro — east of Casino. Nov/8/43 1st Bn. loaded in trucks for a 30 mile run to Venafro. Back to the hills, relieving various infantry companies of the 45th Div. The 83rd Chemical Mortar Bn. fortunately was attached to 1st Ranger Bn. This was the beginning of 35 days of intensive activity with the action confined to the battle area around Mt. Corno. German rifle and machine gun fire wounded one and killed three of our boys. On the 10th of Nov, I was assigned to retrieve the 3 killed from a wooded area. This was accomplished with the help of mule skinnners to carry the bodies out. I took over as I wasn't babying those mules at our risk.

We were harassed by ME 109s diving bomb attacks and overhead artillery explosions about tree height. D Company and Germans were facing each other at a distance of about 200 feet at Mt. Corno. The Chemical Mortar Co. was very useful during this 35 days in this sector. Due to the close positions, we had 60 mm mortars held by hand to project the shell nearly straight up & down. The Germans in time removed from their positions.

The 1st and 4th Ranger Bns. left Venafro on the 14th of Dec. to return to the Naples area. The Ranger Force went on to make the Anzio landing at midnight of Jan/22/44. Ended in disaster Jan/29/44.

Dec/10/43 to Jan/28/44 I spent time in hospitals in Italy and No. Africa at recuperation center due to malaria, dysentary [for months] and finally frozen feet. That is painful! You just can't do much on feet that feel like stubs.

What was your official military position at the time you volunteered?: S/Sgt — Platoon Sergeant

Did you volunteer for military service or were you drafted?: I originally joined the Iowa National Guard June 4 of 1938 at the age of 17, still in high school. In Oct/38 during the Swift Packing Co. strike in Sioux City, IA, I was made a Corporal. Sioux City, Iowa was my home town.

What were you doing at the time war was declared?: I had been a partner with my third oldest brother in a filling station and garage doing auto mechanics. I was the youngest of five boys. My parents were both immigrants from Italy.

Were you married before you began your military service? During your military service?: Remarried to my present wife in 1980; a Godsend, as I had lost my 34-year-old son down in Houston, TX.

Why did you volunteer to be a Ranger?: That is a story in itself. While the few months with our old unit —

Co. L, 133rd Infantry, 34th Div., myself and another Sgt. often talked about wishing we had a unit such as the British Commandoes — to be in an independent elite unit, that mostly made hit and run raids on countries occupied by the Germans. When the call for volunteers was announced at reveille, I raised my hand. The other Sgt. did not. Then they called the names to step aside to go for the interview. My name wasn't called. I went to the company commander to ask WHY. He said that I would be going back to the US to take officer training [must have been why that other sergeant did not volunteer]. I told the CO that I did not want to go back to the US and furthermore that if I were to be an officer, I would make it in the field. I had the opportunity while in Italy to visit my old outfit and the CO. I couldn't help but rub it in to him. I also told him I was going to Bn headquarters. What I didn't know was that Capt. Murray [acting Bn Commander] was going, too. He told me to get my belongings and he would see that I would be interviewed

What questions can you remember being asked during your interview for Ranger duty?: They, too, asked why one wanted to be in this type unit. Do you think you can take the punishment, kill a person, endure the hardships and more, I'm sure I don't remember some more questions.

What characteristics and/or experience did the questions indicate that the army was looking for in prospective Rangers?: Most likely similar to that above, but I think they were looking for more independent types, maybe on the wild side. I really don't recall. I do know that many of these people wanted out of their units.

Did you assume that the interviewers were looking for specific answers?: I'd rather assume that.

Did you answer according to what you thought they wanted you to say? If yes, will you provide me this: My interview was very short. Actually, he was my acting Battalion Commander, Capt. Murray. I doubt many were turned away. They were culled during training with the British Commando instructors.

Was the Ranger training what you expected it to be? Why or why not?: That is an easy one, I had done a lot of reading about the Commandos even before we arrived in Ireland.

Would you like to share any descriptions or incidents of Ranger training?: It was rough. Continued wet weather, nearly every day. Compact tents with wet garments. Spent little time in tents. A bad one was when a soldier drowned in swimming across a small lake or pond with pack. That particular company had to return to go over it again. Another 1st Sgt. was hit by a bullet in the rump. Not that serious, in fact, it was amusing to nearly everyone.

What special skills did the Rangers possess compared to the conventional ground troops of the US Army?: More individual personalities and yet bonded quickly. Speed marches that were not in the regular infantry. The live shooting in practice.

The Rangers were noted to have exhibited self-discipline and aggressiveness. Were they better disciplined than the average infantrymen? Were they more aggressive? Why?: I believe we wanted to be the Commandos equal. Darby was a great example to the men. He believed in their ability to do that which was not the norm.

The Rangers have been viewed as "unflinching and relentless." What do you think attributed to this characterization?: Wanting to be the best. Wanting to be accepted, noticed and effective.

The Rangers are notorious for AWOLs "in reverse." Why did Rangers return to active duty before deemed medically fit to do so?: It must be the bonding. If they stayed too long in a hospital or a recreation area, the

result could be to be reassigned to another unit and that just would not be acceptable.

Were you guilty of AWOL in reverse? Explain: Not really, I did my best through five countries.

Were you a POW?: Thank GOD, no.

Are you familiar with the “Houdini squad”?: Don’t recall.

Were you a member of the Special Task Force after deactivation of the Ranger Force?: What were your missions as part of this force?: I believe you refer to those who were assigned to Canadian/American troops. Some of these people were those who had come into the Rangers from just before Sicily and later. One of my men was assigned to such a unit.

What do you consider to be the primary role played by the Darby Force during the war?: By all means. But be assured, the new breed of Ranger had a much better training that we had in our short training period. And better equipment. I’ll bet they are taken care of better than we were — such as meals and clothing.

A controversial theme among Rangers and other soldiers is an assertion that the Rangers were misused, functioning primarily as conventional troops rather than the army utilizing the special skills of these men in more useful missions. Do you agree or disagree? Explain: We sure didn’t like the change in our usage as what they may call conventional troops. Yes, we stayed on the lines much too long, but in action. We were unconventional — such as using fires openly. The Germans thought we were nuts but they respected us. An incident: I was ordered to take a few men over the crest of the mountain through brush hundreds of feet from our lines. My orders were to fire a berry gun at intervals three times. I left my men a good long way from me while I went through this maneuver. At last shot, I got the hell out of there. Of course, the artillery came battering in near that spot. It wasn’t so bad. We had experienced plenty of that before.

The United States military continues to train and employ Rangers today. What influence do you think the Rangers of World War II had on this continued employment of Ranger battalions today in the modern warfare?: I think it is tremendous. On trips to reunions or Rangers’ meetings such as the two times I have been to Ft. Benning, I’ve been immensely proud when the present Rangers show so much respect. Not only the men, but the officers even of General grade, show they’re envious of us WW II Rangers. Or they’re being darn nice.

What is the basis for this strong sense of camaraderie that continues among the Ranger veterans over fifty years later?: Wanting to be part of this history.

What did you do after being deactivated?: You sure asked for it. I worked as a machinist for a couple years. My wife at that time was from No. Carolina so I packed up and moved. I worked as an automatic transmission mechanic. Didn’t like the south so I went to Kansas City to go to a drafting school evenings. Daytime, I worked for a Cadillac/Oldsmobile dealer. Then as a millwright and set up machines for a small company making wood garage doors. Didn’t get along with that for long, so I went to work with a company that sold and installed warm air furnaces up to 3 million BTU. I made the calculations, layouts and design. After my schooling evenings, I was a drawing checker for a tool design company. But I wanted to go home to Sioux City. We were a huge family, five boys, two girls. A close family. I went to work for a farm machine company. Executed all engineering, tractor cabs, sulky rakes, sprayers, cattle carriers and more. After a large flood, this company went bankrupt. So I’m in Cedar Rapids, Iowa since 1956. I’ve already overdone it

but I did all kinds of designs. This was Cherry Burrell Corp. that made food machinery. I designed in some part with most every product they made from refrigeration farm milk tanks, automatic valves, sanitary fittings, milk carton fillers. My largest responsibility came to me as a project designer of the world's largest, continuous ice cream machines. Up to 4800 gallons per hour of ice cream. Have three patents, one of an ice cream fruit feeder. All this without having been inside of a college. Of course, without a degree, I had to fight to get a raise from time to time. I don't know how many times I had to threaten to leave my job. Had no problems due to former bosses that had left CB, they would call me to work with them. But I just didn't like leaving Iowa.

Did you take advantage of the GI Bill or any other veterans' benefits other than medical after the war?: Technical school, purchase of house but no medical. I refused in spite of my having malaria. Didn't want to be helped.

How did being a Ranger affect you as an individual? Beliefs, expectations, goals, career, etc.?: When first out of service, I rather wanted to be unknown as far as service was concerned. Few people in Cedar Rapids knew of my participation with the Rangers. In 1975, there was an article in the Des Moines Register that reprinted some of the pictures and article from the July 31/44 Life Magazine. Someone in the factory cut out the rather large sheet and pinned it on a bulletin board. That was after I had been with CB for 19 years. Yet a few people commented that they did not know that I was in the Rangers. That was the first year that I ever went to a Ranger reunion. Having gotten together with so many old-timers, I gradually became more interested in these old friends. I'm pretty connected to those left now. I'm proud to be a RANGER. I still do not parade this around except at and among the Rangers.

Do you have any memories or recollections of being a Ranger that you would like to share?: Not that many of my old company are still alive, but I had always tried to keep in connection with them. There are a few that just couldn't make it to reunions so I write and send pictures. My closest buddy, Ranger Mike Yurko and his wife Martha have participated in the reunions for many years with some exceptions in that we didn't attend a few. Especially this last few years as myself and wife had a bad auto accident. More damage to the auto than to us though my wife had back injuries. She is doing well. I have gone through that before the accident but I seem to improve rather than deteriorate except my mind. This loss of memory and trouble to express myself is a worry. Of course that can make it worse, but I find I have in every way increased my health myself rather than the lack of help from doctors. I refused twice to have back surgery and it sure has paid off. I had a good doctor but he once said, "I don't know what you're doing, but keep doing it."

MY TURN: I feel I have crossed the fence but I sure don't feel like improving this even if I had that ability. But what can you lose. Nothing, even if you don't use a bit of this.

Once a Ranger always a Ranger

by

Bill Brackens, Pvt 1E/4B

I was a Farm Boy from Indiana, and I joined up on my 18th birthday. I was sent to Fort Knox, Kentucky for Basic training. I remember training with wooden guns. I had no problem with guns having plenty of experience on the farm. After Basic Training I was shipped to Africa, a Private, unassigned to any specific outfit, but supposed to be assigned to a tank unit. I was very lucky, I was selected for the Rangers.



Like most of the enlisted men, in basic training, I was taught to hate the “Enemy” and I wanted to kill the them and couldn’t wait to get “Over There.” And then ... after shipping out, I couldn’t wait to get off the ship (and I was sure glad I didn’t join the Navy, boy did I ever get sick).

I spent most of the time topside, and half of that time was spent leaning over the rail. I saw my very first “action” while on the ship. We were strafed by planes and everyone was ordered to get below deck. I guess almost everyone else did. I didn’t. I was a good swimmer and if the ship went down I wanted to take my chances in the water not caught up under a deck.

Another ship about 3 or 4 hundred yards away either had been bombed by these planes, or, was hit by a torpedo. we saw lots of black smoke. Never did learn the outcome and if I did, I cannot remember what it was. I’m sure it made the newsreels — “The eyes and ears of the world are on you” — used to see it weekly at the matinee in the town movie hall.

Early January we arrived in Nemours, Algeria, It was after torch, and I volunteered and was chosen to train as a Darby Ranger and assigned to the 1st Battalion. After training and sometime before Spearheading Gela, Sicily, I was transferred to the 4th Ranger Battalion, I can’t remember exactly when, I can’t find the date in my records, except that it was early spring or summer somewhere around May 1943. My records show I contacted Malaria during that time and had recurring attacks even at the winter line, high up in the mountains.

I saw my first real action in North Africa, Then Sicily, after that the names like Chiunzi Pass, Cisterna, Majori, the Mussolini Canal, Monte Cassino, Anzio Beach, The names now blur together in my mind. I have been in many fire fights, and many battles that lasted days, and I know I have killed more men in the war than the total number of animals I had to slaughter for food in all of my life on the farm. And I thank God, I survived because with this enemy it was ... “Get them before they get you” ... Kill or be Killed! ... Not pretty, but realistic.

I have dreams about my friends dying and also about the men I have had to kill. I didn’t enjoy killing, especially those I had to sneak up on and, until they felt the blade, they didn’t know I was even there. And, I don’t enjoy dreaming these dreams. Mostly (thankfully) my wife wakes me up when I start shouting and kicking, it’s like you are there again.

November 1943, was really a tough month. I had recently, along with other Rangers, been transferred from the 1st Ranger Battalion to the 4th Battalion, and also I was nearing my first anniversary in the military, and my 19th birthday. As I said, I joined up on my birthday, getting neither of my parents’ signatures (but that is another story).

As the literature states on November 1st, the 4th Battalion was ordered to the Italian Front. And we went, following a rocky road, not really a road, a steep path, a straight-up mule trail, or a wide “Mouse” trail, it went straight up, I never wanted to climb another mountain again. And then we crossed the Volturno River,

toward Venafro, "The Winter Line," where the Germans were fortified. And, all hell broke loose. A never ending battle.

Less than two weeks later, on November 12, my Army records state "Pvt. William A. Brackens, Co B - 4th - Ranger Bn - Age 19 - source of admission - '120 Med Bn' - W. I. A. - Chest wound - shell fragment - Transfer to 38th Evac Hosp." I was transferred to the Evac, and returned to duty on November 30th. (I still have the metal in my chest "wedged between two ribs, and projecting into the right anterior chest wall.") And of course I had another attack of Malaria while in the hospital.

While in the 38th Evac hospital I was awarded A Purple Heart, The Bronze Star, and the Combat Infantry Badge, but the pride I felt then, and still feel now, on being a Ranger far outshines any medals, ribbons, or badges they could give me. And was I ready for more battles. Shortly after this, the Rangers were disbanded and I was transferred to the First Special Service Force. I stayed in the military until I retired in 1968.

Now I am 81 years old, and use a walker or Power chair to get around, have not driven a car since 1968, have a hearing aid, eye glasses, and store bought teeth, and on top of that have MS also. Got that while in the occupation force in Germany in 1949. I spent 14 years of my Army time in foreign countries including two tours in Korea.

The now picture was Veterans Day 2005 in that parade I was the only W.W.II Veteran that made it to ride on the Veteran's Float in the parade



The above photo was taken on Veterans Day 2005 when Bill Bracken was the only WW II veteran who rode on the Veteran's Float in the parade.

In Your Honor

Unselfishly, you left your fathers and your mothers,
You left behind your sisters and your brothers.
Leaving your beloved children and wives,
You put on hold your dreams, your lives.

On foreign soil, you found yourself planted
To fight for those whose freedom you granted.
Without your sacrifice, their cause would be lost
But you carried onward, no matter the cost.

Many horrors you had endured and seen.
Many faces had haunted your dreams.
You cheered as your enemies littered the ground;
You cried as your brothers fell all around.

When it was over, you all came back home,
Some were left with memories to face all alone;
Some found themselves in the company of friends
As their crosses cast shadows across the land.

Those who survived were forever scarred
Emotionally, physically, permanently marred.
Those who did not, now sleep eternally
Beneath the ground they had given their lives to keep
us free.

With a hand upon my heart, I feel
The pride and respect; my reverence is revealed
In the tears that now stream down my upturned face
As our flag waves above you, in her glory and grace.

Freedom was the gift that you unselfishly gave
Pain and death was the price that you ultimately paid.
Every day, I give my utmost admiration
To those who had fought to defend our nation.

~Author Unknown~

Poem and photo have stories to tell

by
Johanna Wilson
wife of Arthur F. Wilson, Pvt 1D

The poem was written by Art in a log book supplied by the Red Cross. Art lost his somewhere.

We got a copy of it from a fellow prisoner's book last fall in Texas where we went to visit two ex-POWs after the reunion in Phoenix.

Art was in Stalag 2B when he was offered the chance to go into a work camp. He hoped to get more food and exercise. Art had to cut wood and dig up potatoes.

The work camp was in Poland near New Statine and Hammerstein. A Polish girl took this picture for chocolate bars from a Red Cross parcel.

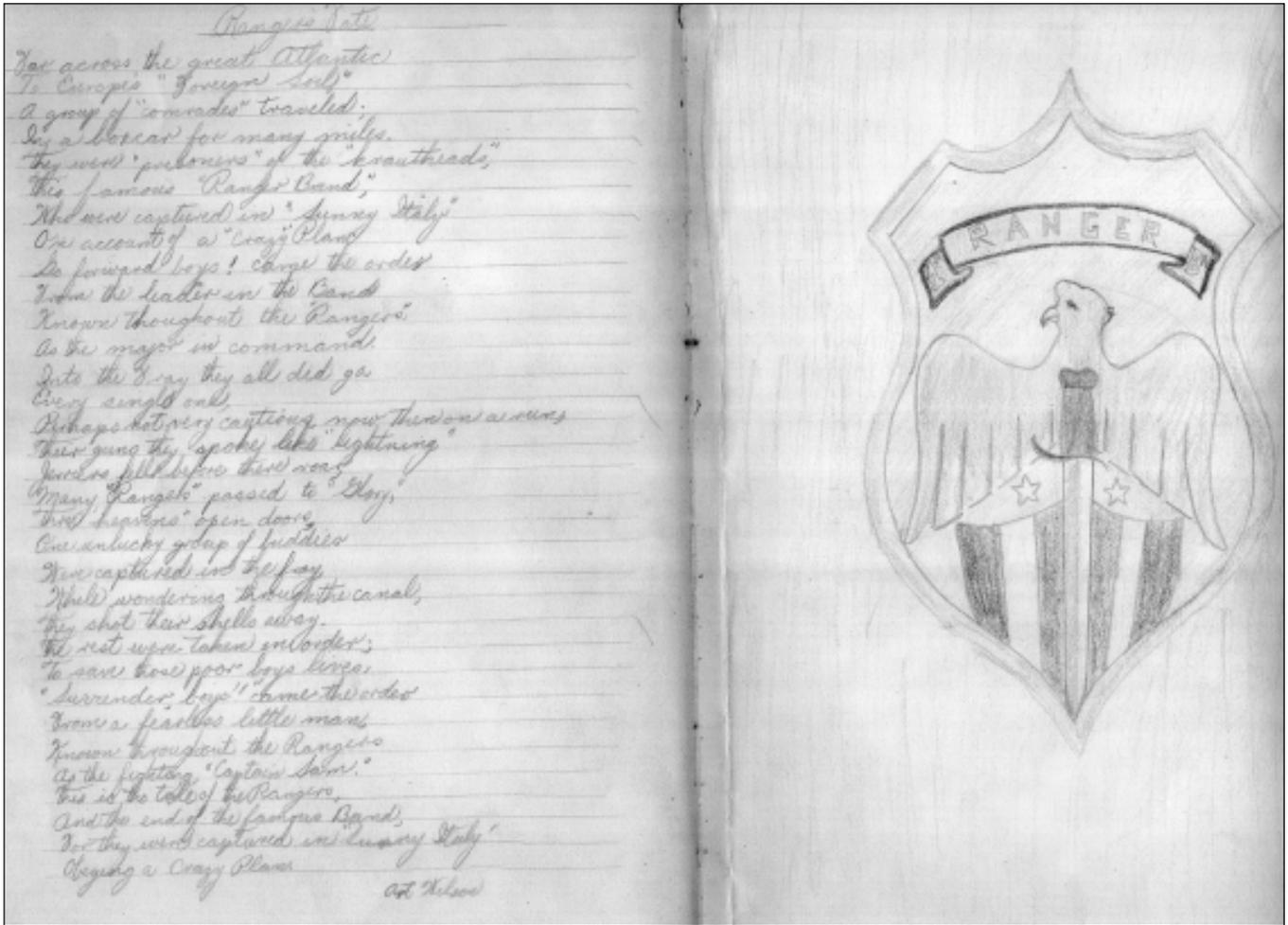
Art is the one in the photo [back left] with the white cloth around his head. Alfonso Kluczynski (1/C) another ranger, is in the back under the trees.

The picture was taken in the summer of 1944.

Rangers Fate

Far across the great Atlantic
To Europe's "Foreign Soil,"
A group of "comrades" traveled;
In a boxcar for many miles.
They were "prisoners" of the "krautheads,"
This famous "Ranger Band,"
Who were captured in "Sunny Italy,"
On account of a "Crazy" Plan.
Go forward boys! came the order
From the leader in the Band
Known throughout the "Rangers,"
As the major in command.
Into the fray they all did go
Every single one,
Perhaps not very cautious, now then on a run,
Their guns they spoke like "lightning"
Jerries fell before their roar,
Many "Rangers" passed to "Glory,"
Thru "heaven's" open doors.
One unlucky group of buddies
Were captured in the fray,
While wondering through the canal,
They shot their shells away.
The rest were taken in order;
To save those poor boys' lives,
"Surrender, boys!" came the order
From a fearless little man,
Known throughout the Rangers
As the fighting, "Captain Sam."
This is the tale of the Rangers,
And the end of the famous Band,
For they were captured in "Sunny Italy"
Obeying a Crazy Plan.

Art Wilson



Art Wilson is at left in the back row wearing a white cloth on his head; Alfonso Kluczynski (1/C) is in the back under the trees.

The Surrender

by

Theodore (Ted) Fleser, T/5 1D
First Special Service Force, Cannon Co.

This is a story about a WW II Army Ranger who had a way with words.

Prior to joining the US Army, Ranger Harold Monash (Cpl. 1E) was a German Jew from Berlin, whose parents sent him to the US in the early to mid-1930s. I first met him in the Cannon Company of Darby's Rangers on the Anzio Beachhead after Cisterna. I missed the fighting at Cisterna due to having been a casualty at Venafro, just prior to the Rangers going into Cisterna. In Cisterna, the Ranger 1st and 3rd Battalions were wiped out on the Anzio Beachhead and the 4th Battalion was decimated. Later, the Ranger Cannon Company was absorbed into the First Special Service Force (FSSF) as a unit.

While in Italy, as part of a Ranger Rifle Co. and before becoming a part of the Ranger Cannon Company, the Rangers detected a German scout patrol. Ranger Monash spoke to them in his native Berlin accent. The distinctive Berlin accent demonstrated that Monash was a native German, not someone just speaking German. After some discussion, he was able to convince the Patrol to surrender without any casualties on either side. The patrol just gave themselves up.

In Southern France, while part of the FSSF Cannon Company, Monash had an opportunity to repeat the performance on a larger scale. A German Company would not surrender to the French Partisans (French Underground). The French Partisans passed word to the FSSF Cannon Co., who went to see what they could do about the Germans. After we had taken up our positions, Monash spoke to the German forces, and again, his Berlin accent facilitated the surrender of the entire company of Germans. Again, no casualties on either side.

After WW II, Harold Monash was active in bringing people into what is now called Israel. When the United Nations created the State of Israel in 1948, he joined the Israeli forces. With his Ranger background, he went into the Palmach (Israeli Commandos).

It was while we were visiting Israel for its 50th anniversary that my wife, Miriam, and I learned more about his postwar activities. We were visiting a fort called Latrun, overlooking a highway near Jerusalem. Latrun had been a British Forces Base when the area was a British Territory from 1917 through 1948, when Israel became a State. When the British left in 1948, Latrun was occupied by the Transjordanian Arab Legion until the 1967 war. In the 1967 war, after severe combat, the Israelis gained territory that included Latrun.

After the 1967 war, the Israelis erected a memorial wall at this site, similar to our Vietnam Wall. I asked the tour guide if he could find the name Monash on the wall. His name was there, and the guide was able to provide me with a printout of Monash's background, where I learned about his activities after WW II. He was killed in the Israeli War of Liberation in 1948 and was posthumously awarded the rank of Lieutenant.

April 23rd 1948. Ex-US Army officer **Harold Monash** of New York suspended his studies at the Haifa Technion to join the Palmach. He was killed in an encounter with Arab irregulars near Jerusalem. Buried Kiryat Anavim.

—*Aliyah Bet & Machael Virtual Museum*

"All those of valor shall pass armed among your brethren, and shall help them."

Joshua 1:14

The Meeting and The Trade Theodore “Ted” and Miriam Fleser

by

Theodore (Ted) Fleser, T/5 1D
First Special Service Force, Cannon Co.

WW II was over, as was my home life, as I had known it. My father had died prior to my entering the Army, and my mother died during my time in service. My 47th St. home in Brooklyn, N.Y. was no longer my home. Home now was in Rego Park, N.Y., (Queens), living with my eldest sister, her husband, and their two children.



Ted Fleser's Army portrait

Naturally, I missed my friends from the old neighborhood, so I organized some beach parties in order to get together like “old times.” We had fun and did crazy things...somewhere there’s a photo of me doing squats with two other guys on my shoulders—one of whom was falling off... One of my friends invited Bernie Morris to join us, and he soon became one of the group. Bernie eventually brought along a girl that he had met at college. She was tall, intelligent, had a disposition that I liked, etc. etc. etc. I wanted to get to know her better, but



Fun at the beach after the war.

how?

Well, Bernie, I, and our dates were to double date. His date, Miriam, was the girl I wanted to get to know better. He was also



Ted and Miriam Fleser 2006

the one with a car for the date, but it wasn't usable without a new tire. Since they didn't seem to have a serious relationship, I had no regrets about my offer: I would obtain a new tire for him in exchange for dating Miriam. Yes, I traded a tire for a date with my future wife.

Pvt. George W. Brown, 1B Destination: Rome



Courtesy of Mary Brown

Pvt. George W. Brown, 1B, holds a rifle aloft. Also identified in the photo are: Gus Schunemann, 1F, standing second from left, and Donald Clark, 1B, seventh from left.

The above picture was extracted from a newsreel and on the back of the 8x10 photo, yellowed with age and nearly illegible, is the information that it is from Acme News Pictures, New York. Captioned “On their way, 5th Army soldiers on a truck that will take them to a point of embarkation for the new push on Rome. They are loaded down with equipment now seeing hard use at Cisterna.”

The date taken is noted as 2/4/44, but that is clearly in error (likely it is the date the newsreel was released) because George W. Brown and others pictured were captured on January 30 during Darby’s Rangers’ heroic last stand at Cisterna.

World War II European Theater

by
Daniel Fields, Pvt 1C

Daniel Fields	
Captured:	January 30, 1944
Liberated:	May, 8, 1945
Interned:	16 months
Camps:	Stalag IIB and two German farms

I entered the service in December 1942. After basic training in Kansas, I went to Camp Forest, Tennessee for maneuvers. I then volunteered for overseas assignment, was on a ship for eight days, and landed at North Africa. I joined the 1st Ranger Battalion at Arzaw, Algeria, then trained for one month.

We went into combat on November 8, 1943 and engaged in battle above Venafro, Italy. We were in holding position, then the three Ranger Battalions pulled out and went to Lucrino, Italy, north of

Naples by sea coast, for more training which consisted of beach landings.

On January 20, 1944, we boarded ship at Lucrino, Italy for invasion at Anzio and made beach landing on January 22. The few Germans there were quickly captured or killed. Then on the morning of January 29 at 0100, the 1st and 3rd Ranger Battalions were assigned to infiltrate through enemy lines into the town of Cisterna to seize the town and to contact infantry regiments which were to attack simultaneously and reach objectives east and west of the town.

But, during the night, Germans had brought in a Panzer Division. We fought all morning and afternoon. No help arrived and the Germans overran our positions. We knocked out fifteen of their tanks with bazookas and grenades. We were out of ammunition and were 20 miles behind their lines.

At 2:00 in the afternoon, I was captured. I tried to hide out by a culvert, but a German found me. Lt. Teel and I were marched to a farmhouse where the rest of the captured Rangers were. On the way, I was hit in the knee with a piece of shrapnel by our own artillery. When we joined the rest of the Rangers at the farmhouse, Lt. Teel bandaged my leg.

The Rangers faced SS Troops and we thought they were going to shoot us, but the SS officers came and we were loaded into trucks and taken to Rome, Italy where the trucks were left at the edge of the city. Germans marched us through. We guessed it was for propaganda purposes.

German guards then loaded us back into the trucks. A few minutes later, two of our P-38 fighter planes strafed the trucks we were in. Everybody jumped out of the trucks and we lost some of our men. The guards loaded us back into the trucks that they had left. We arrived at a cow barn later that evening. We heard planes again. I was in the top by a window when the planes strafed and bombed the cow barn. Several men were hurt.

We arrived in Florence, Italy, where we stayed about a week. We were loaded into boxcars for a trip to Stalag IIB in Hammerstein, Germany. I was there a month, then sent to a farm for a work detail. I stayed there for a couple of months, then was sent to another farm with six other prisoners. We planted potatoes in the spring and, during the winter of 1944, we sawed trees for wood.

On January 27, at 0600, we were marched out of camp as the Russian army was two or three kilometers away. We could hear their artillery. We were close to the Polish border and marched for a month. We slept in barns and had little to eat. It was extremely cold and I had both hands and feet frostbitten. There were lots of other nationals in that march. Russian fighter planes strafed our column. Lots of people were killed and wounded. On March 27, we arrived at another compound with 28 prisoners. We were all in bad shape and stayed there until the end of April when German soldiers threw down their weapons and changed to civilian clothes since we were in the Russian Sector. Germans were deathly afraid of Russian soldiers.

We picked up German weapons and arrived at a small town. We went into the top floor of a barn and waited for Russian troops to arrive. The reason we were cautious is because SS troops were in the area and Hitler had put out orders to shoot all prisoners, but our generals told German high command if any of our prisoners were harmed, they would be rounded up, tried and hung.

The next day, Russian troops arrived. They were driving American trucks. We asked about trucks to take us back to our lines, but they refused. They told us to take any equipment of the Germans but no German equipment was available. We found four horses and wagons. Myself and another prisoner found a couple of saddle horses. We arrived in British lines after a couple of days, we were happy, stayed for a couple of days and received medical treatment from the British

The British troops took us to American lines. "Happy days!" We were processed and given a change of clothes. On May 8, 1945, we were transferred to LeHavre and boarded ship for home. Coming into the harbor, the Statue of Liberty was so beautiful to see. We all kissed the ground, we were so glad to see the good old USA.



Gilbert Blum, 1HQ

contributed by his wife
Betty Blum



Gilbert Blum, on R &R at Lake Placid Club, N.Y. in September, 1945

Today's Success Story:

Has a Stake in Steaks

by Hal Boyle

The dreams of war prisoners are haunting things. Because they can do little but dream and wait, their dreams have an intensity beyond the dreams of ordinary people. They dream of love, and money, and power . . . and food . . . but mostly food.

Many prisoners of war, when their nightmare ordeal is over and they return to peacetime living, forget the dreams they once found refuge in. But not Gil Bloom, who for 15 months as a prisoner of the Germans dreamed constantly of —. But let's tell his story from the beginning.

Gil, a tall, powerfully built private from South Orange, N.J., joined the U.S. Rangers shortly after the abortive raid on Dieppe. He himself fought at Gafsa in Tunisia, Gela in Sicily, Salerno and Cassino in Italy.

A few days after the Anzio landing he was with spearheading elements of rangers when his entire outfit was trapped and captured by a larger German force after seven murderous hours of battle.

While in Prison Camp

Constantly hungry in dreary months that followed in a prison camp near Danzig, Bloom found his dreams came down to a single vision.

“Day and night I dreamed of nothing but steaks . . . the biggest, juiciest steaks a man could think of . . . and mountains of snowy ice cream,” he said. “And I made up my mind that if I ever got out alive, I'd spend the rest of my life surrounded by steaks and ice cream.

To escape the onrushing Russians, his captors started Gil and the other prisoners on a march across Germany in mid-January of 1945. They walked 700 miles before American troops liberated them in April.

“We had to scavenge what we could from the countryside,” he recalled. “There were no meals. We started with 800 men, and there were only 350 to 400 left when we were freed.”

Dropped to 98 Pounds

Gil's weight had dropped from about 175 pounds to 98 pounds. He fainted in the chowline waiting for his first real meal and spent weeks in a hospital.

“When I came home, food was a passion with me,” he said. “I couldn't get enough of it.”

He went back into his old business as an electrical contractor, but Gil couldn't get that wartime dream out of his head. He wanted to be surrounded by steaks.

Today he is. Gil took his capital and, teaming up with a



Ken Markham (left) and Gilbert Blum (center) at Ranger monument dedication at Ft. Benning, GA.

Greenwich Village restaurateur named Johnny Johnston, opened a steak and chop house called “The Charcoal Room” at 45th and Second Avenue, not far from the United Nations.

Now that his dream has come true, Gil is as cheerful as a child with a new tricycle.

“I like to see people happy, and they’re never happier than when they’re eating,” he said. “There’s only one road to happiness — through the stomach. I found that out.”

Gil, surrounded by steaks and ice cream, now weighs 215 pounds — and is considering going on a diet.

Distributed by Associated Press

New York Journal American
Sat., April 21, 1956-9



Liberated Yanks Headed for Home

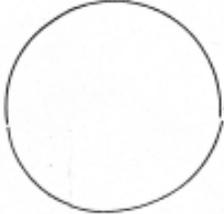
PRISON camp after prison camp, where American soldiers have been held by the Germans after capture on the field of battle, have been reached by our forces in Germany. This means that thousands of former prisoners are now being welcomed back to the Army. But that doesn't mean an immediate dose of KP, drill and fatigue. Far from it. As a matter of fact, these men, who have suffered imprisonment for anything from a few months up to more than two years, are being greeted like long-lost brothers, with a major general detailed by the War Department to see to it that they get the best breaks and—best of all—a quick trip back to the States for a 60-day furlough, which may be extended to 90 days except in unusual cases.

The general is Maj. Gen. S.G. Henry, who is the representative of the Chief of Staff. Through procedure set up under Gen. Henry's supervision, all freed American prisoners are paid, given hot meals, baths, physical examinations, replacements of worn-out clothing and then a quick trip by air to a French port to board a transport for home. They are priority passengers, coming after sick and wounded. After finishing their furloughs the men will be assigned to duty in the United States for at least six months.

Just liberated, Gilbert Blum (without helmet) is standing next to Maj. Gen. S.G. Henry in the photo at left. The picture was taken on April 13, 1945. Photo and article were published in Stars and Stripes.

Print the complete address in plain block letters in the panel below, and your return address in the space provided. Use typewriter, dark ink, or pencil. Write plainly. Very small writing is not suitable.

No. _____



(CENSOR'S STAMP)

Mrs. FAE Rubin
2254- 81- street
Brooklyn, N.Y.
U. S. A.

G.T. Blum # 12066393
(Sender's name)

HQ. Co. - 2nd RANGERS
(Sender's address)

APO # 464- 70 Pm. N.Y.C.

20 Dec. '43
(Date)

FAE, Sam, Herbie, Joan:

"Somewhere in Sicily"

"Merry Xmas and a happy year" 1943

Love:

Gilbert
original colored pencil drawing



As a prisoner of war, Gilbert Blum sent this Christmas card, featuring a fellow POW's original colored pencil drawing of him, to his father and others.

Rangers WW II

by
Donald G. McCollam

They called them Darby's Rangers then
Those volunteers of yore.
A group of well-trained fighting men
And they fought in the second World War.

The man who led these well-trained men
Became a legend in his time.
His Rangers did their utmost when
The fight was on the line.

Yes, William O. Darby loved them all
He believed they were the best.
They were ready at his beck and call
Their fighting did the rest.

And since those days of long ago
The Rangers lead the way,
They were taught to strike the fatal blow
And have the final say.

In all the Wars since World War Two
Their spirit has prevailed.
They have always had that winning view.
Their name has never failed.

Yes, Rangers are the very best.
Their record stands through the years.
They've taken the challenge and passed the test
And are heroes to their peers.

And now they're being honored today
In nineteen ninety-two
May God be with Rangers as they lead the way
They indeed are the chosen few.

I am a Ranger Forever!

[This is one of several poems sent to me by the late Gino Mercuraili who attributed them to Donald G. McCollam, who died in 1998. — MHG]

**Presidential Unit Citation
French Croix de Guerre**

**2nd Ranger Battalion
of World War II**

1 April 1943 – 23 October 1945

**Normandy
Northern France
Rhineland
Ardennes-Alsace
Central Europe**

God Bless America

by
Jack McCulloch (age 8)



Jack McCulloch is proud to be named after two American heroes, his great-grandfather, Jack Anderson, and his great granduncle, William Anderson

I live in the greatest country on earth: America. I am blessed to live in a free country. I think of the soldiers who have fought for our freedom. Because of them, I am free.

I am named after two soldiers who fought in World War II. Jack was my great grandpa. William was my great granduncle. They were brothers. They were army rangers serving together in the same company. They loved our country. They died together. They are buried together. Because of them, I am free.

I think of the brave soldiers who are fighting for our country now. Some of them have died. Some of them will die. They love our country and are not afraid to die. Because of them, I am free.

God will bless America because of those who have fought to make us free.



Jack Anderson
T/5 2F



William Anderson
PFC 2F

Jack and William Anderson were brothers who died together on December 7, 1944 in the battle for Hill 400 near Bergstein, Germany. Jack had transferred to Company F of the 2nd Ranger Battalion only five days earlier so he could be with his brother. William is in the Ranger Hall of Fame. The two brothers are buried together.



Buddies reunite after 60 years

Ike Eikner and Frank Kennard

After a long 60 year delay, Fate intervened to bring two old **S e c o n d B a t t a l i o n** Rangers together last November 4, 2005. On left, Ike Eikner, Hq. Co. C.O., and Frank Kennard, the Battalion



Adjutant. Frank's travel plans allowed a two hour layover in Austin, Texas, permitting a nice visit there with Ike. No doubt ears were burning in various places as the two of them recalled experiences with many a chuckle and a tear or two. With a wink and a nod, they agreed to meet again for the 70th anniversary of D-Day — if Ike will buy the beers!



Photos by Dee dee

Canine Ranger Sgt. Milo, Ike's Charge of Quarters — and yes, he will bite unless he is promptly given the password — “Rangers Lead The Way!”

The Ring

by

Lynn Towne

Daughter of Maurice W. Jackson, 1st Lt 2E

In the Summer of 2000 I started searching for Rangers who served with and might remember my Dad, Lt. Maurice W. Jackson, 2E, 1st Platoon. With the help of Retired M/Sgt Gil Berg and Tom Herring, I was told to call Capt. Richard Merrill, CO, 2E. When I called and told Dick who I was, he replied "I've been looking for you for 56 years."



Shirley and Dick Merrill, 1964

I didn't know then exactly what he meant by that comment, but I would find out later. Our friendship started that night, turning into weekly talks, letter exchanges, stories revealed. During one such conversation, Dick told me a story about asking the officers to "purge" their pockets as he wanted to see what they were carrying before going out on patrol should they be captured. My Dad pulled out a green slip of paper whereupon Dick asked what it was. My Dad told Dick it was his pawn ticket from hocking a ring for cab fare back to Camp Shank having spent all his money drinking from one end of New York City to the next because his Company would soon be departing for England.

My Dad was about to throw out the pawn ticket when Dick said to give him the pawn ticket and the \$35 retrieve fee and he would send it to his Father who lived in New Jersey to pick up the Ring. My Dad gave Dick the pawn ticket but I do not believe he gave him the \$35. Dick promptly sent the pawn ticket to his Father asking him to get the ring from the pawn dealer.

Meanwhile, on December 7, 1944, my Dad was hit during the Battle of Hill 400, Bergstein, Germany, evacuated from the Hill and taken to the Church located at the base of the Hill. From there, my Dad was transported back to Paris, then England, then Scotland, then New York City and finally to Bushnell Hospital, Utah. It was at Bushnell that my Dad had his final amputation just



Maurice and Ginger Jackson

below his left knee and it was here that my Dad received a letter from Dick which he promptly answered it. Dick received my Dad's reply but Dick's reply stating the ring had been retrieved from the pawn dealer was returned to Dick stamped "undeliverable – addressee unknown."

After 56 years, the ring was returned, but not to my Dad as he passed away October 6, 1989, but to me with a note stating the ring had been worn by Dick always and Shirley Merrill had replaced one of the diamonds as an anniversary gift to him. This cherished gift is a symbol to me of the Ranger spirit of brotherhood and the bond created "56" years that never dwindled.



L to R: Shirley Merrill, Ray Towne, Lynn Towne, Dick Merrill

Pfc. Robert P. Gary

by
Kim Eskew



Robert P. Gary
2nd Ranger Battalion, Company A

He landed and was wounded on Dog Green Beach in Normandy on D-Day. My first introduction to the Rangers was visiting Normandy and finding the Ranger museum in Grand Champ-Maisey with the list of A company with my dad's name on the list.

We saw short film upstairs which explained the "elite" group of soldiers and their training and mission. I went back to our hotel in Normandy and called him and said, "Dad, I found your name in a small Ranger museum here and learned about what it took to become a Ranger and what a select group of men you were. Dad, I had no idea you were such a stud!" He laughed and though I couldn't see his face, I believe he blushed a little over the phone.



Ike Eikner's answers to Lynn Towne's questions about D-Day

James W. "Ike" Eikner, Capt. 2Hq and Lynn Towne, former president of S&D

Yes, all the communications fellows went up the cliff to set up in the large cliff-side crater that would serve as our CP for the 2 1/2 days on the Pointe. I sent the first transmissions while down on the beach in the little cave beneath the projecting point of the Pointe. We also had our big set, the SCR 284, set up beneath the cliff within 5 minutes of touchdown, and later moved it up the cliff into the CP. This set was quite heavy and employed a hand cranked generator. For communications within the battalion we used a quite new dandy little set, back carried — that was the SCR 300. Within the company, we employed the SCR 536, hand held for communications between the company commander and his platoon leaders.

Also, you wanted me to say something about our communications with the Navy. Yeah, those boys saved our bottoms with their excellent supporting fire. Here's the way that worked:

Coming in with us during the landing was a NSFPCP (Naval shore fire control party), consisting of spotters, controllers, and the necessary radio equipment to work with the US Destroyer Satterlee with whom they had trained for the operation. On topside, these fellows were set up in a bunker near enemy gun position #2. Wherever the enemy showed himself, or wherever we thought he might be, targeting information was radioed into the Satterlee who lambasted the enemy with her 5 inch guns. This was working very well until about mid-morning D-Day, the British Cruiser Glasgow, cruising around in the area looking for targets of opportunity, spotted all the activity at gun #2, thinking that it was enemy action, then threw in a smoke shell to mark the site. The shell exploded against the side of the bunker killing the officer in charge, wounding several including Lt. Col. Rudder who was up there with them. The radio equipment was destroyed and there we were with the enemy pushing hard to drive us back into the sea and we were without contact with the Navy. The colonel called me on a wire line we had into the location, telling me to come up with some litters to take off the wounded. This we did.

Immediate action was required. I asked my Radio Chief, T/4 Charles Parker whether we brought our signal lamps — we had trained our fellows on these lamps for a "just in case situation." One of our supply craft went down at sea, but a second one made it in with one of the lamps. Sgt. Oarker went back down the cliff, under fire, to bring up the lamp which we immediately erected in a defilade position in the CP. We flagged out to the Satterlee, informing them of our situation and continued to call in firing information using the lamps with Morse Code, sent the message "*Til*" (while still in the cave). It was 7:30 am. Results were excellent, and as far as I am aware, this was the first and only time that an Infantry Force ashore has called down and directed naval gunfire on the enemy with the use of signal lamps. The lamp we used was an old WW I lamp, EE84, tripod mounted and with telescopic sights.

Yes, the Navy and the lamp saved our butts at the time. Later on, we reestablished radio communication but still used the lamp to flag down passing vessels seeking someone to come in and take our wounded and the large number of prisoners. We also asked for supplies — we were running out of everything. As a result of this effort, the Navy sent in an LCT commanded by a Major Jack Street, a veteran of the First Ranger Battalion, and the father of our very own Sandy Boyd of Sons & Daughters. Jack took our wounded and prisoners and then went down to Omaha Beach with my T/4 Charles Parker and picked up badly needed supplies and about 15 or 20 loose Rangers. This was really a turning point in our situation at Point du Hoc.



Signal lamp used in World War II



Photo courtesy of Jerry Styles

Sid Saloman 1913-2004

Lt. Sid Salomon gave his men orders on D-Day as they approached Omaha Beach: under no circumstances was a Ranger to stop to help a wounded comrade. Yet when his sergeant was hit as they were leaving the landing craft, Salomon disobeyed his own order to help the sergeant to the beach and was himself hit by machine gun fire. Of 39 men in Salomon's landing craft, only nine survived the invasion.

Salomon refused medical aid until Pointe du Hoc was secured, an action that won him the Silver Star. As the 2nd Ranger Battalion battled the Nazis across France, he was again wounded and won a second Silver Star during the Battle of the Hurtgen Forest, near the end of the war.

His name is mentioned in many books about World War II and he was a consultant for the movie, "Saving Private Ryan." Tom Hanks' character was said to be a composite of Captain Sid Salomon and other 2nd Ranger Battalion officers.

Salomon had a passion for rowing. He was a member of the Golden Eight — a masters' crew — for 18 years and won over twenty FIZA Veterans Regatta gold medals. His last race was in an 8x (Octopede) in the Navy Day Regatta at Philadelphia only a few short months before his death. The octopede averaged 79 years of age.

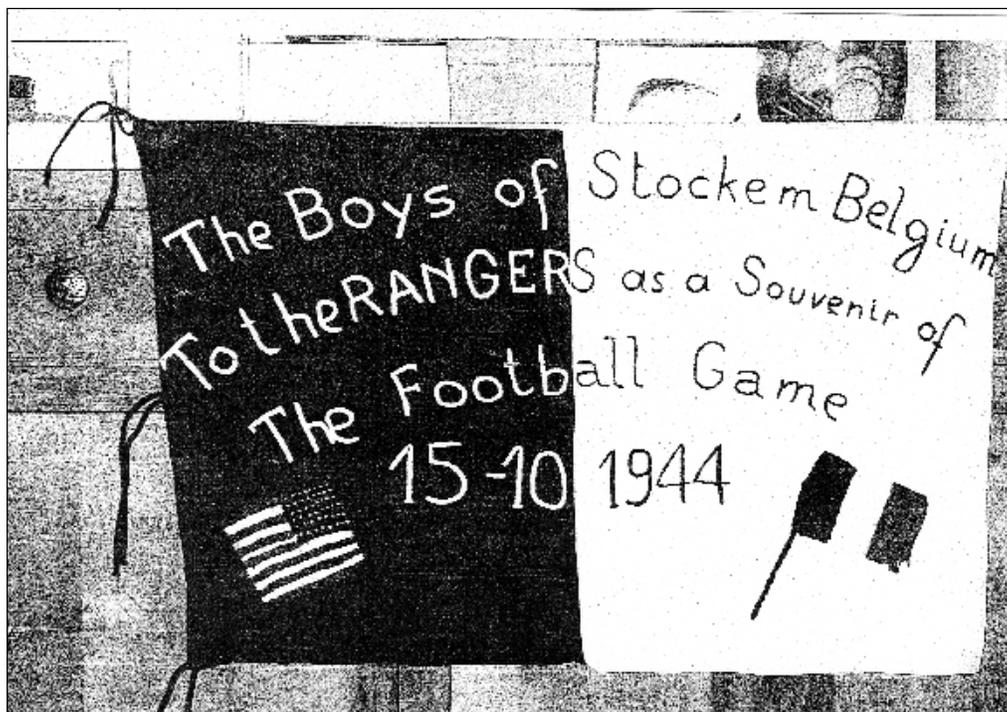
Members of his crew described him as a gentle man, one who refrained from using profanity and who never made disparaging remarks about others. After his death, one of his crew — on behalf of all — wrote:

Our competitive eight-oared rowing crew, Sid's Golden Eight, has a motto, or slogan, "Friends Forever." Sid was immensely proud of the Golden Eight crew and we were even prouder of him. Proud to sit in the same rowing shell with him, proud to pull an oar in the same cause with him, and proud to be called "friend" by him.

Mindful that "forever" transcends life itself, we bid farewell to our dear friend and crewmate, Sid Salomon, simply by saying:

Ranger, fellow oarsman, we are Friends Forever.

A game between friends (and a pleasant diversion)



Lt. Bob Edlin turned down the Medal of Honor rather than leave his Ranger unit

by

Marsha Henry Goff

Few soldiers would turn down the coveted Medal of Honor, our nation's highest military award, but the late Bob Edlin did. To accept the award meant he would have to return to the United States; he preferred to stay with his Ranger unit until the job in Europe was done and the war was won.



A smiling Edlin boards LCA for D-Day invasion.
Photo provided courtesy of Jerry Styles.

His courageous action in capturing the German garrison at Le Conquet with a four-man patrol won him a nickname: The Fool Lieutenant. Edlin and his men were sent on a mission by LTC Rudder to scout enemy locations and strong points for a planned assault by 1,000 soldiers, but when a series of opportunities arose, Edlin secured the garrison's surrender by pulling a pin on a grenade and holding it in the German commander's abdomen, threatening, "Surrender or you're going to die right now."

When the German thought Edlin was bluffing — and pointed out that Edlin would also die — Edlin began to count to three. At the count of two, the commander surrendered the garrison of 850 soldiers, effectively silencing the large caliber guns of the feared Graf Spee battery. When told the garrison had been captured, an

Army observer reportedly said to Rudder, "That Fool Lieutenant is up there already. You might as well go in."

Lt. Edlin was recommended for the Medal of Honor by LTC Rudder, Col. Darby and Gen. Middleton. He turned it down and was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. In recent years a group of Edlin's friends and admirers have worked tirelessly to get Edlin's DSC upgraded to a Medal of Honor. Additionally, Edlin's nurse, Jill Gamewell, contacted Governor Perry and — with the support of S&D President Jerry Styles, Julie Rankin Fulmer, Sherry Klein, Marcia Moen, Lynn Towne and others — succeeded in having Edlin recognized by his home state of Texas with the state's highest honor, the Texas Legislative Medal of Honor. Edlin's friends were pleased that he knew of that award before he died. However, to date, the effort to secure the Medal of Honor for Edlin has been unsuccessful. But Edlin's friends are not giving up; they'll keep at the campaign until the medal that Edlin earned and turned down over six decades ago is finally his.



Liberating the City of Lights



**Presidential Unit Citation
II Corps Commendation**

**3rd Ranger Battalion
of World War II**

25 May 1943 – 15 August 1944

**Sicily
Naples-Foggia
Anzio
Rome
Arno**

Way off Broadway in Stalag VII A

by
Micky Romine, T/5 3HQ

In prison camp, when we would fix our evening meal, we would always invite a guest ... someone who needed it bad. One of those guests was a country singer from Nashville, Tennessee. After he ate his first meal with us, he sang a few songs. We ended up making him a member.



Micky Romine's POW Identity Card

We taught him how to trade with French POWs and while doing that he traded 200 cigarettes for a guitar. After that, we had entertainment every evening. After a few nights, we had a German official come by the listen. Some nights we would have several.

One night the Stalag CO came by and asked if there were more people who could play instruments. We told him if we had a place we could put on a show, but we would need props, lights, etc. He agreed, so we asked for our New Jersey guard to be our go-between and interpreter.

Tilly's (Walter B. Tilford, T/4 3E) dad was a set decorator for Warner Brothers Studio and Tilly was practically raised on a movie set. He automatically became the director. I was the producer because I had to buy what the Germans couldn't come up with. The CO gave us permission to use a small theater building to put on our play.

Tilly had watched the production of "The Man who Came to Dinner" with John Barrymore. His dad had done the set decorations for it and Tilly helped. So that was the show we put on.

We obtained women's clothes and makeup. We found several musicians; it seemed as though the Germans had captured an entire band in Africa. The C.O. kept his promise about the instruments. So Tilly taught them the songs that were in the show.

We had GIs shave their legs and put on female clothes with padding in the correct places. We had built a stage on rollers so we could change scenes without too much of a delay. We practiced for a month. Then came the big night.

There were 200 seats in this little theater. So we had to draw numbers to see who would get to go. Tickets were 10 cigarettes.

The first night we had five guards and one officer. The officer sat in the front row with a guard beside him; the other four guards were on the exits. When the show was ready to start, this beautiful young lady came out to introduce the scene. The German guard placed Tilly and me under guard, called his CO and told him we had smuggled women into camp. The CO came with two more officers. We explained to him that the women were really men but he wasn't satisfied until they dropped their panties. So he told us to go on with the show.

The show was so good that those officers came back the second night and brought some friends.

By the fifth night, there were so many Germans watching the show that I complained to the CO. I explained



Rangers Two: Darby's Ranger Micky Romine with an Airborne Ranger of today

that we needed to get cigarettes so we could trade for more food because the work the actors did was strenuous, so he agreed to give us extra rations.

The show ran for six weeks. The last week we couldn't fill half the seats so they wouldn't let us continue to use the theater. We had made so many cigarettes and the guards all helped us trade so that we were feeding 25 or 30 every night.

A tribute to their fellow Rangers

Micky Romine, Frank Mativi and Burnie Cooper — all former POWs captured at Cisterna — honored Rangers by purchasing a large stone in the Walk of Honor at Kansas City's magnificent Liberty Memorial. The stone commemorates the heroic efforts of Rangers in the winning of World War II.

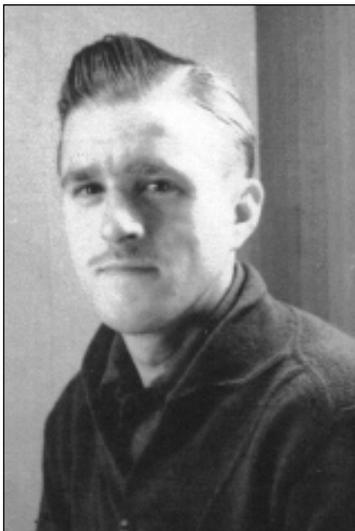
The 217-foot tall Liberty Memorial limestone tower is the only monument and public museum in the nation which is dedicated solely to the history of World War I. Kansas Citians raised more than \$2.5 million after the war and, when the memorial was dedicated on November 11, 1926 — exactly eight years after the end of WW I — President Calvin Coolidge delivered the dedication speech.

Four figures — representing Courage, Honor, Patriotism and Sacrifice — grace the tower's exterior. A restoration project, featuring interactive displays and a new auditorium, is almost completed.

A visit to the Liberty Memorial is a rewarding experience ... especially for Rangers thanks to Micky, Frank and Burnie.

A message from Ranger Edward R. Chase

Pfc 3A



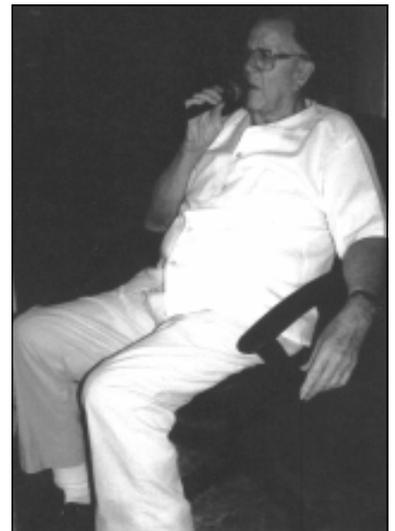
Ranger Ed 1942
21 years old

Just a short note to say hello to all of the great WW II Rangers out there who made it home safe. I would love to hear from anyone who was in the 3rd Ranger Battalion, Company A.

My e-mail address is:
chasedwardr@juno.com

or

2654 60th Avenue North
St. Petersburg, FL 33714



Ranger Ed 2006
84 years old

Preface: The following is an account written by Ranger C. W. Eineichner who was captured at Cisterna, Italy, 30 January 1944, AND an account written by Lt. Gilbert Blackwell, an Army Air Corps A-36A Fighter Bomber pilot, 86th Fighter Bomber Group who flew over the Anzio/Cisterna area on 29 January 1944, the day before the Rangers set out on their mission to capture Cisterna. The purpose of Blackwell's mission was to observe the Anzio beachhead positions for friendly or enemy forces. Ranger Eineichner and Pilot Blackwell met in a German POW Hospital in the weeks that followed. This piece contains 4 parts: **I**: Eineichner account **II**: Blackwell account **III**: Blackwell Flight Log **IV**: Map of Blackwell's findings

Part I: Eineichner/Blackwell

The Highway to Obliteration

by

C. W. Eineichner Sgt 3/Hq

The 1st and 3rd Ranger Battalions attacked a Major Enemy Force at Cisterna, Italy about six miles into enemy territory preparing to attack the Anzio Beachhead. After inflicting many casualties and the destruction of a large number of the enemy vehicles, the 1st and 3rd Battalions ran out of ammunition, received no support, and were either KIA or captured.

Lt. Gil Blackwell, Air Corps Bomber pilot, and I became good friends during my five month stay in a POW hospital. That friendship lasted until he passed away two years ago. Lt. Gil was bed ridden, I was ambulatory, allowing me to help him with his needs.

I purposely left out the blood and guts. I only wanted to tell what could have happened, if someone would have reacted to the information Lt. Blackwell gave them. I am including Lt. Gil's account of his air patrol of the Anzio beachhead from north to south for a period of one hour, his Flight Log from this mission, and map showing the area of Anzio he was patrolling the morning of 29 January 1944. I am also including in this piece, the climax of Lt. Blackwell's last day as a Fighter-Bomber Pilot in his own words. You will find it very interesting.

Over the years since the end of WW II, I have read numerous articles and papers relating to the Ranger's unsuccessful assault on Cisterna, 30 January 1944, stating the problems encountered by the 1st and 3rd Battalions, as to why the assault on Cisterna was a failure. Were inaccurate intelligence reports a contributing factor? Or the large number of Officers and men lacking extensive Ranger training (because of the casualties sustained in previous missions, few experienced Rangers and many less experienced replacements set out on this assignment) which supposedly affected the cohesiveness necessary for night warfare. Did the communication problems experienced by the 3rd Battalion contribute to the failure?

The above reasons may have been a factor in the defeat. In my humble opinion, the prime reason the Rangers were not victorious was that we were outmanned and under equipped to fight against the unanticipated tanks and armored vehicles we encountered. Poor intelligence reporting is documented in the account that follows mine, written by Gil Blackwell. Through this piece I will attempt to bring out information that, if heeded at the time, may have changed the outcome of the raid on Cisterna.

The Rangers may have lost the battle for Cisterna 30 January 1944, but by inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy and destroying numerous military vehicles, may have saved the Anzio Beachhead from becoming another Dunkirk.

The following are personal experiences of two G.I.'s, exempt of any reference to what may have been written or stated previously. Therefore, it is possible that some of the written matter may be contradictory to popular belief.

Resource for this piece was from crude notes made during my incarceration and material received from Fighter Bomber Pilot Gil Blackwell.

Needless to say, I am not an author, or an experienced writer. Nor do I have access to the talents of an English Major, but I have a story to tell, so here goes.

A British Infantry Unit relieved the Rangers of their defensive positions along the perimeter of the Anzio Beachhead, the morning of 29 January 1944. We were sent back to a rear area for rest and briefing, to prepare for an assault on Cisterna, a small village approximately six miles into enemy territory. We didn't get much rest, because the area selected was adjacent to an artillery battery.

Saturday morning, 29 January 1944, at the Pomigliano Air Strip, the Home Base for three Squadrons of A-36A Fighter Bombers, 86th Fighter Bomber Group, a briefing was in progress for an eight aircraft mission (dive bombing) against German positions and communications in the town of Velletri, Italy, south of Rome on Highway 7. Upon completion of the mission, seven aircraft shall return to the Base. The 8th aircraft, that of Lt. Gil Blackwell, shall patrol the Anzio Beachhead from north to south for a period of one hour, considering adequate fuel and ammo to safely return to Base. Purpose, to observe beachhead positions for friendly or enemy forces.

Lt. Gil Blackwell, United States Air Corps

During our briefing, we were told the enemy was dug in behind the Village. All the Rangers had to do was take, then hold the town until the 3rd Division arrived and took over later in the day. A piece of cake, or so it seemed.

Approximately 1:00 a.m., a cold and foggy January 30th, 1944, the 1st and 3rd Battalions set out for Cisterna. Our route was up the Mussolini Canal, and then into a network of drainage ditches, hoping the canal and ditches would provide cover as we moved toward our objective.

Field wire communications were not applicable or functional on this mission. Therefore, I had no particular assignment, so I decided to go along as part of Major Miller's entourage, consisting of 1st Sgt John Rembecki, T Sgt Robert Halliday, and Major Miller's Body Guard. I didn't want to miss out on all the fun.

Stealth, so necessary on our previous successful operations, was not evident as we moved toward Cisterna. Although, with all the chaos, it appeared as if the enemy was not aware of our movements, or was he playing a little cat and mouse game?

Just prior to the break of dawn, Major Miller, 1st Sgt Rembecki, T Sgt Halliday, Major Miller's Body Guard and me, ascended from the drainage ditch onto a farmer access road. That was perpendicular to a Highway, I assumed was Highway 7.

The deadly silence, fog and haze that was affecting our vision, gave us a false impression that the enemy was not in our immediate area. Thereby, caution was not foremost in our minds as we walked five abreast down the access road. As we broke out of the fog, we observed a self propelled artillery vehicle at less than a hundred feet in front of us, at the junction of the highway and the access road. The barrel of the self propelled began to traverse down on us. The mouth of the barrel appeared to be two feet in diameter. Naturally, it wasn't that large, but being that close and pointed at us, it seemed that large.

Major Miller's death was caused by a direct hit. I assumed it was an armor piercing projectile, because it did not explode. Immediately after Major Miller was killed, the self propelled was disabled. It seemed like the shot that killed the Major woke the entire German Army. All hell broke loose. Simultaneously and in unison, weapons all around us began firing. While the men in a large vacant field across the highway from our location were running for cover, the enemy was firing everything they had at them. Tracers were bouncing all over the place.

After checking Major Miller, and realizing we couldn't do anything for him, his body guard removed his map case and some personal items. We moved him to the side of the road to prevent additional future mutilation to his body.

Sgt Rembecki, Sgt Halliday and I saw a beige, two-story building on the other side of the highway. We headed for it, hoping it would provide us some protection, which we didn't have standing in the middle of

the road. When we arrived at the house, we discovered it was occupied by the enemy. They were somewhat reluctant about relinquishing their rights of occupancy. After a successful encounter in the house, and later in the adjacent field a short distance from the house, we had captured six German Soldiers, three in the house and three that were out in the field. We relieved them of their weapons, and some other items we felt they did not need. We then ordered them to lay down in a depression in the yard at the front of the house.

Enemy activity subsided somewhat in our immediate area. Visibility had improved. In a distance to the northwest, I could see silhouettes of building roofs extending above the trees. Assuming the buildings were part of Cisterna under the control of the 1st Ranger Battalion, I left the beige house and headed toward those buildings. Sgts Rembecki and Halliday did not go with me. I entered a water filled ditch paralleling the left side of the highway and slowly proceeded up the ditch. Disabled vehicles, Ranger and enemy casualties were scattered along the highway.

I moved two Rangers from the water filled ditch and placed them on the berm. Struggling for almost an hour in the muck and water, I came to the end of the ditch. To my left was a low white building, appeared to be a barn. It obstructed my vision and any movement to the left. Across the road were five Rangers; lying motionless in a shallow ditch. I decided to join them, and then to continue on toward Cisterna.

Immediately after hitting the dirt, the area was sprayed with machine gun fire. I lay motionless for a few moments, took inventory of my extremities, everything seemed OK. I yelled to the others, "Let's get the hell out of here," then took off for a much larger ditch about fifty feet from our present position. When I reached the ditch, I looked back. The others had not moved. Looking to a ditch adjacent to my new location, I discovered it was occupied by S/Sgt Joe Phillips, an officer and an enlisted man. I did not know either one.

To the West of my location, was an old two story building. Through the opening on the second floor, that once were windows, I could see figures moving about. I asked Joe if he knew if those guys were friend or foe. Before I finished the sentence, machine gun fire convinced me they were not friendly troops. Except for an occasional confrontation with the individuals in that old building, I was restricted to the ditch. Continued movement toward Cisterna was now restricted by enemy action.

About 2:30 p.m., January 30th, off in a distance down the highway, I could see US Troops and armored vehicles coming toward me. At last, the 3rd Division with tanks had arrived to help us! As they come closer, my jubilation changed to despair. What I thought were supporting troops, were captured Rangers being herded up the road by the enemy.

In the soft sand next to a culvert, I immediately started to dig a small excavation, where I buried my commando knife, my 45-caliber pistol, some personal items and some German articles I picked up earlier. It was my intention to come back and retrieve my stuff after the supporting troops freed us. Did I guess wrong! After my stuff was safely buried, I laid face down in the ditch, hopeful the enemy would not see me.

A column of Rangers and a military vehicle loaded with casualties was moving slowly along the highway, as enemy soldiers on both sides of the road were flushing out dug in Rangers. Any hesitation or resistance of capture was met with rifle fire, potato mashers or retaliatory shooting of men already captured.

The column of captured Rangers and the vehicle with the wounded had already passed by me before I heard, "Rouse Rouse!" At about 3:00 p.m., I was ordered out of the ditch and forced out onto the road. Then I was told to place my hands on my head. Standing there with my hands on my head was the pinnacle of the agony of defeat.

Not once did the thought of being captured enter my mind that hectic day. I must admit, there were a number of times that I reviewed my credentials, hoping St. Peter would find them acceptable for passage through the Pearly Gates.

Looking down from my location on the road, I could see previously captured G.I.'s marching in a zig zag manner through a canebrake. I assumed the maneuver was to get the captives disoriented, therefore, making it more difficult to escape.

You may have noticed that I never used the word surrender. I felt the use of the word surrender would be

inappropriate. I did not see anyone waving a white flag, nor did I hear, "Komrad, don't shoot!"

It was my belief that our capture was a temporary condition and we would be liberated by the arrival of our support troops later that afternoon. Escape is foremost in every POW's mind. He is constantly looking for that opportune time to make his break.

The remaining Rangers that were standing on the road were assembled into groups of twenty. We were told if one in our group tried and escaped, the rest of the group would be killed. With that bit of advice, we were escorted to the canebrake.

It was getting dark by the time we left the canebrake. From there we were ushered to a vacant field containing numerous fox holes and trenches. Shortly after our arrival, we became the recipients of a US artillery barrage. A number of us were wounded with varying degree of severity. Immediately, after the conclusion of the barrage, we were whisked off to a big structure that looked a lot like a castle. I kept my wound concealed from my German captors, not wanting to be placed with the wounded. I was still thinking escape.

We were taken to a room on the second floor. The room was completely lacking in furniture, but a satisfactory hostel for the night. This would be the first building we had slept in, since I can't remember when.

31 January 1944: Still in enemy hands. Hope to be liberated by friendly troops is waning. Enemy defensive line appears to be impregnable. As the day gets brighter, we discover a veranda outside our second floor room. On the veranda are three beekeeper's bee hives. The last time we have eaten was the afternoon of January 29th. It didn't take us long to polish off those beehive's honey, honey combs, and most of the dormant bees.

Shortly after our honey bee feast, a German officer in a long black coat entered our room. After a "Good Morning" to all the guys, he remarked it was his opinion that we were some of the most outstanding soldiers he ever encountered. The type of courageous men any Military Leader would like under his command. He also remarked about the marksmanship, stating most of their casualties were hit above the shoulders. Someone blurted out, "That was the only part of your men that was visible."

The German Officer started to leave our room. He hesitated a moment, then turned around and said, "Why aren't you men shaven, look like the soldiers I think you are." To the man in concert we replied, "Your men took our packs which contained our personal items, Sir." He left the room without commenting.

We were told to assemble out in the courtyard for roll call, and then herded back into the building. We had just gotten back into the building, when a fighter-bomber bombed and strafed our building. One bomb dropped in the courtyard we had just left. The other hit a building that housed German soldiers, killing many of them. Fifty caliber slugs were bouncing all around our room. Fortunately, no one in our room was hurt.

Later the morning of 31 January 1944, we were loaded in trucks and transported to Rome. HURRAH! The first American troops in Rome! On arrival in Rome, we were assembled in front of the Coliseum. The German Army plans were to march us through the streets of Rome. While waiting for the march to begin, we were given a small ration of bread. Although we had not eaten, except for the honey, since the afternoon of January 29th, we made sure we were not chomping that hunk of bread while the cameras were rolling. The march was a great propaganda play for the Germans. The area was infected with both movie and still photographers. The story of the Rangers' defeat would be in every paper and movie house in Germany and surrounding Country. Maybe old Adolph will even get to see us. It was the first good news in Germany for quite sometime.

As we were marching through Rome, the thoughts of escape were foremost in our minds. The route was well fortified with guards, tanks, and Rome's Civilian Police. Therefore, a successful escape was impossible. Our parade ended up in the streetcar barns on the outskirts of Rome. Some straw was thrown in the repair pits, and that was our home for the next couple of days.

I was eventually placed in a POW Hospital, because the wound I received while held in the foxhole area prior to our march through Rome, became infected. It was in this POW Hospital that I met my soon to

become lifelong friend, Gil Blackwell. The account of his activities over this same period of time follows mine in this piece, in his own words. We both signed this, because we co-authored our different experiences over the same significant days in history. The annihilation of the 1st and 3rd Battalions, and badly battered 4th Battalion as they fought to reach us at Cisterna, resulted in the deactivation of the 1st-3rd-4th Ranger Battalions, “Darby’s Rangers.”

Part II: Eineichner/Blackwell

Italian Campaign - Velletri – Cisterna, Italy - 29 January 1944

by

Lt. Gilbert Blackwell, United States Army Air Corps, WWII

Saturday, January 29, 1944 at Pomigilliano Air Strip (located at the base of Mount Vesuvius – north side) inland from Naples, Italy. Pomigilliano Air Strip is home base for three squadrons of A-36A Fighter Bombers, 86th Fighter Bomber Groups. There is an early morning briefing for eight aircraft mission (dive bombing) against German positions and communications in the town of Velletri, Italy south of Rome on Highway 7. Upon completion of mission, seven aircraft shall return to base. The 8th aircraft, that of Lt. Gilbert A. Blackwell, shall patrol the Anzio beachhead from north to south for a period of one hour, considering fuel and reserve ammo to safely return to base. Purpose is to observe beachhead positions for friendly or enemy forces and intercept any enemy aircraft over beachhead (after Velletri raid). The Anzio patrol aircraft on the last pass north, with Highway 7 about 5 to 10 miles then turning out to sea over the coastal Pontine Marshes and returning to base

My observations:

From Cisterna south to the westerly turn to the sea, German tanks – 20 plus – including 88mm self propelled guns with support units were hidden from high level sighting by trees, netting, dug in revetments, etc. Only ground level side view sighting would reveal their positions. Some units were still moving. Level side view sighting would reveal their positions. Some units were still moving into positions toward the sea under some tree cover. They seemed as surprised to see my aircraft, as I was to see them.

As I approached from the north before reaching the German positions, a male (not in uniform) was riding a bicycle in the middle of the road. He stopped, looked over his shoulder and began waving his hand. My right wing passed just over his head. He looked Italian by his dress. I did not then, nor after, know if it was a friendly greeting or a warning of peril down the road. The front view of the aircraft at such low altitude could not reveal the I.D. of the aircraft until it had passed for a side view of the white star on the tail fuselage.

I think the same logic would hold true as I passed the German positions. None were on the road and I was not firing the 6 – 0.50 calibers as my ammo was below minimum for a safe return to base. I further observed that they were in a state of flux and would not have fired to reveal their positions and strength unless they were confident they could have brought me down.

So I returned to base over the sea, south to a point below Gaeta (the west end of the Cassino front) turned inland north of Naples and landed at Pomigilliano. I promptly reported all of the above to the Intelligence and Operations officers. I further requested a return mission before the above target could become operational, as I know the Germans were aware their position has been violated. I also suggested that I fly low altitude pathfinder and/or spotter for a high-level dive-bombing mission. The 525th was the only squadron with aircraft prepared for such a mission, so I was ordered to stand down, but not before I was allowed to suggest the need for an emergency landing strip on the Anzio Beachhead with fuel, bombs and ammo to service our aircraft for such targets of prime importance, also a haven for returning damaged aircraft or wounded pilots.

With that as a last word, I was ordered to my tent. I have no knowledge that the follow up mission was carried out; I feel it was not, as implied in my debriefing due to acute shortages of fuel, bombs, ammo and planes. Mission targets must be authorized and verified by the appropriate group C.O. With that, my day was finished.

On 02 February 1944, Wednesday, 2:00 p.m., altitude of 10,000' some four days later as the 6th ship at the 6 o'clock position over the same area enroute to a target along Highway 6 farther inland, I was hit by a burst of 88mm flak high over the right wing of my aircraft, causing wing damage and shrapnel wounds to my head and face. I was bleeding profusely from the head into the eyes. I pulled my goggles over the eyes to block the blood flow. I tried the aircraft, applied full power, then barrel rolled into the bad wing. While inverted, I released the canopy and with great effort, jack-knifed clear of the aircraft with the aid of gravity. For a moment, the cold air cleared my head. Reaching for the ripcord, I looked up and to the east, I saw my aircraft barrel rolling at high speed with two German ME 109 fighters chasing it. The German fighters had been seen stalking us since we made land fall from the sea. It was also obvious they were directing ground flak batteries for our altitude and speed.

The other five A-36's had made their dive and were rising up to meet my aircraft and German fighters. My chute opened with a painful jolt. I blacked out and woke up some three days later in a farmhouse German field hospital in solitary. I smelled like the sinter stall for horses – cold, rancid urine. My head and face wounds had been closed and bandaged, but the fracture of my right ankle had swollen twice its size. They had stolen all my clothes, except long drawer bottom and top. My flight suit was full of blood and was located on the stone floor.

We will let the painful events up to and through the 15th of February at sun down at rest for now, for I have come full circle back to the German's tank and flak guns of 29 January 1944.

GIL BLACKWELL
Charlie Eineichner

Co-authors: Gil Blackwell & Charlie Eineichner

Part III: Eineichner/Blackwell
Blackwell Flight log 29 January 1944

10

DATE	AIRCRAFT IDENT. MARK	MAKE - MODEL and HORSEPOWER OF AIRCRAFT	FROM	TO	CLASS OR TYPE		DURATION OF FLIGHT, Total Time to Date
					Single Engine	Fighter Bomber	
12-17	U.S.A.	A-36 1350 H.P.	Pomigliano				108:40
12-17	"	"	Naples	Civitavecchia			110:10
12-19	"	"	"	Sora			111:15
12-20	"	"	"	Nattuno-North to Rome			112:40
12-27	"	"	"	Ferentino			114:10
12-28	"	"	"	Ferentino			115:35
1-3	"	"	"	Valmontone			116:50
1-7	"	"	"	Cervaro			117:55
1-12	"	"	"	Avezzano			119:45
1-13	"	"	"	Valmontone			121:25
1-18	"	"	"	Avezzano			122:55
1-21	"	"	"	Minturno-Frascati			123:35
1-22	"	"	"	Esperia			125:50
1-23	"	"	"	Avezzano			126:55
1-27	"	"	"	Frascati			128:15
1-29	"	"	"	Velletri			130:30
CARRY TOTALS FORWARD TO TOP OF NEXT PAGE							130:30

SOLO FLIGHT TIME			LINK	DUAL INSTRUCTION as instructor or Student	REMARKS: Each maneuver and the time spent thereon, attested to by the Instructor is to be entered in this column for all instruction received. Any serious damage to the aircraft MUST be entered here also.
Day	Night	Instrument			
1:30					Bombed shipping + warehouses - Heavy, Small arms fire
1:05					Bombed Bridge + barracks - Continuous heavy accurate flak
1:25					Rhubard - 2 Trains - 3 Trucks - 1 Radar Tower - 1 Road Gang + Equip.
1:30					Bombed Rail Yards + Warehouses - Light flak.
1:25					Bombed Rail yards + warehouses - 6 ships hit by flak.
1:15					Bombed Ammo factory + 2 Trains in Station - Direct Hits
1:05					Bombed + strafed front line gun positions - Stopped counter attack
:50					Bombed communications
1:40					Bombed + strafed Train - Rail yard - warehouses, flak heavy + accurate
1:30					Bombed Town forming road block - Small Arms Intense
1:40					Bombed enemy ground positions - 11 th Flieger Corps HQ - Field Marshall's office
1:15					Rhubard - Destroyed 3 Trucks + Troops, Invasion success 15 mi. push
1:05					Failed to reach target because of weather
1:20					Bombed + strafed Truck convoy, very effective
2:15					Bombed Town + Patrolled Beaches + ...
					PILOT'S SIGNATURE: Gilbert A. Blackwell 34
1-28 Lt. Loop missing in action 1-29 Lt. Street failed to return (R.D.W.)					

Part IV: Eineichner/Blackwell

Map of Blackwell's flight and his observations 29 January 1944



September 9, 1943

by

Carl Harrison Lehmann, Sgt 1B/3C

It was never positively ascertained, but the stimulus of la signora who trudged up Monte Chiunzi on this day — to meet- greet- and more — a Ranger patrol, was grounded in business reasons or in gratitude for the promised freedom from Axis' terror. In either event, witnesses affirm that Lehmann, one of them who'd speed-marched up the mountain from the shore at Maiori, was dozing in the morning sun with his back resting against the mountain, when one of a group, attracted by the drama unfolding below, yelled, "Hey, Lehmann, bring them f-----' glasses over here."

The reference was to field glasses snared from an Italian colonel in Sicily, and Lehmann instantly complied, except that he retained the glasses for his own use. When he focused on the gal and guys below, the heart of the drama had concluded, as evidenced by the hind-parts of the young lady momentarily reflecting sun's rays up to Harp City and Chiunzi Pass, just before she curtained them with her white bloomers.

One of the others said: "Hell, I dint know they still wore them things!"

Another, wondering, added: "Yuh know, Scotty dint even take his pack off!"

Dedicated to the memory of Amelia Bloomer

Food in the Field

by

Carl Harrison Lehmann, Sgt 1B/3C

Bunked with the Battalion in beach houses erected on high stilts in Arzew, Africa. Shortly after the landing, I was befriended by a French kid who took me home for Sunday dinner with his Madre and Padre. The piece de resistance was a rabbit, head and all, which was carved by the Padre. The first severed part was the head, offered to me as guest of honor. I immediately transferred my plate to the kid. It was his first head! He was exceedingly grateful.

During the meal, the Padre warned me that the "Sirrocco," a severe wind from the Libian desert, driving a high wave from the Med, was about to hit our beach, and would affect the mess supplies we had piled there. Dutifully, I passed this to Capt. Saam, the mess officer, who paid no attention to my warning to move the supplies. The very next day the wave hit the beach and the piles of canned British rations, washing off the paper labels. From then on, there was no way of knowing if we were issued, kippers, cheese, hardtack, hash, ox-tail soup or corned beef until the can was opened.

Next day, lined up at "Parade Rest" for inspection, Wayne Ruona, next to me, inquired out of the corner of his mouth as to the name of the wind. I replied the same way, "Sirrocco," then had to repeat it three or four times because he failed to understand. The last time, I sang him a few bars of "Little Sir Echo, Hello, Hello," causing him to hoot with laughter and slap his thigh — neither of which is tolerated during "Parade Rest."

The Men of My Command

by

Major Alvah H. Miller

Commanding officer of the 3rd Ranger Battalion,

who wrote this poem shortly before he was killed in action on January 30, 1944, Cisterna, Italy

'Twas midnight and I stand
Amid the sleeping forms of men—
The men of my command.
And as their troubled murmurs stir the quiet of the night,
I wonder at the subject of their dreams.
What matter if tomorrow I command again;
Tonight they are my sons.

This one—the father lying at my feet
Laughs and plays (in dreams) with the son he's never seen.
(God grant his safe return.)
And over there, a dozen paces to my right,
A boy—a man now, he's just passed twenty-one,
Sobs a name—his brother's.
(Today's long-looked-for mail notified him of his
Brother's death.)

And on the other side—
But what was that? A child's frightened cry?
No! I see whence it came,
That youngster there who's writhing in his sleep.
(He's dreaming of that shelling we received the other day,
And who can blame him, 'twas his first.)

“Marilyn!” Whose voice cried out? Oh, yes!
I know the man and the name he speaks—his wife's,
Spoke in remorse for that last letter, penned in anger's heat.
I censored it, you see, and know its content.
He'll be glad tomorrow when I give it back.

I withheld it from the mail, for I knew his anger'd cool,
And he'd regret the sending of it.

But now my reverie is broken;
Other thoughts and sounds impinge upon my mind
(The distant sentinel's sharp challenge;
The jackal's cry; the scudding clouds that chase the
Moonlight from the sky, to let it reappear again
To form a new kaleidoscope of sight.)
And all my present sons lie quiet in their sleep.

I'm thinking now about an absent son—
My own—who sleeps so far away
Beneath the same deep scintillating canopy
To which I turn my eyes
To ask God's blessing on all my sons,
Both here and there—
Those whose dreams I read, and him whose future dreams I'll share
(God willing)
And pray that I might be a faithful father now—
And then.

Over the decades since World War II, several versions of this poem have been published. This version is deemed by Jim Miller, the son of whom Alvah Miller wrote, to be his father's original version.

Ranger Ben DeFoe's incredible weekend at the Western Chapter Meeting, San Luis Obispo, CA.

by
Lynn Towne

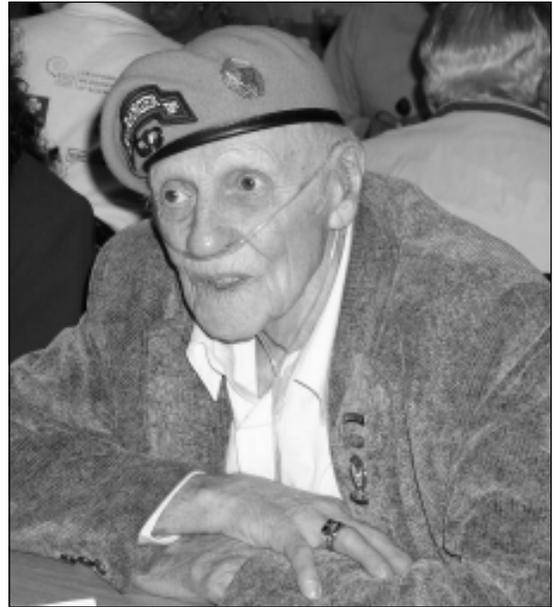
Ray and I picked up Ben DeFoe and Hollis Stabler Thursday, March 23, 2006, from San Francisco International Airport. Hollis arrived first; put him in the car and then left for Terminal 3 to find Ben. He was in the luggage area waiting for his suitcase, telling stories to the wheelchair pusher. He had his tan beret on and commented while he was in the Seattle airport, men were shouting "hooah" and saluting him. He had a smile that could not be wiped off! He kept repeating, "They saw the beret and knew I was a Ranger."

Friday morning, our car full to the brim with wheelchairs and walkers, Ben said he'd ride with the nephew of Col. Darby, "Darby Watkins". I am not sure who was more excited: Ben or Darby. When we finally stopped for breakfast at NOON, Darby was beside himself with bliss — Ben had not stopped talking and Darby was taking in every word. I just laughed knowing the stories and what a great story teller Ben was. Ben hadn't been eating much lately but his appetite returned when he was

with his Ranger family and said to the waitress: "I'll have a large order of biscuits and gravy and sausage. Much to everyone's surprise, including Ben's, a heaping plate of overflowing biscuits and gravy arrived on plate number 1 – plate number 2 had 6 or was it 8 sausages. He didn't finish either plate but sure put a huge dent in them.

Once we arrived at the hotel, Ben continued his story telling, and could be overheard laughing and cussing and making his point. There were stories about his neighbors and the shotgun; his wife, and how much he missed her, and someday would be by her side again. I asked how they stayed married. His reply was stellar Ben, with a gleam in his smile, "I told her when we were in the house, that was her territory and she ruled. And, when we were outside, that was my territory and I ruled." [Later I thought I could picture Ben saying "May, honey, let's go outside and talk" so Ben would have May in his the territory where he ruled!] He talked about his horse, his dog and his daughter Barbie who was coming to take him home and knew Barbie would take such good care of him. He talked about Kevin – the Second Battalion Ranger who saw action during Panama-Grenada. Ranger Kevin, who drove 6 hours just to cut Ben's lawn and made Ben stop cutting the wood pile since that was the reason Ben had asked for Kevin's help! Ben, who wouldn't get off the tractor and kept "showing" Kevin how he wanted Kevin to plow the field. He said he didn't know what he would have done without Kevin. He talked about getting a new van with a lift; and his granddaughter and even said his son-in-law was a great guy. He was prime Ben, so full of life and stories and showed us all that being with your brothers is pretty important!!

Sunday we loaded Hollis and Ben in the car and started on our 6-hour trip home, with a side trip through Presidio Army Base, Monterey, California where Hollis gave us a history lesson of "that's where the barracks were; the parade ground; the waterhole for the horses." Ben and I sat in the back seat and he continued to talk and talk. Once we got to my house, I opened a can of soup and chili for Ben and Hollis. They ate while Ray and I unloaded the car to make room for everyone to "tour the city" that Hollis had not seen since 1943. Ben said he wanted to stay behind and rest; that was 5 PM. When we got home, Ben was still asleep; when



we went to bed, he was still asleep; when we got up at 4 AM, he was still asleep. I woke Ben to get ready to go to the airport and he said he had been awake for an hour during the night with a coughing spell and chills. He was a little tired but got ready to go and put his new tan beret on his head.

We dropped Ben off first. I got his baggage checked; confirmed his seat and ordered a wheelchair. I waited inside the terminal with Ben until the wheelchair arrived. I saw a lady pushing a wheelchair and asked, "Who is that for?" Her sign read "Mr. Ditto." Knowing the heavy accent of the men who ordered his wheelchair, I looked at Ben who basically rolled his eyes, and said, "That's him, Mr. Ditto." I started to laugh and Ben just shook his head. We hugged and I gave him a peck on the cheek and off I went to get Hollis squared away.

Ben touched many lives in many ways; Ray and I are deeply saddened, but take comfort from knowing how happy he was; what a grand weekend he had, and how much fun we just shared. You could not have asked for a better weekend for a Ranger than to spend his last weekend with his brothers.



What better way to spend your last weekend than with your Ranger brothers? Ben DeFoe, front left, with Hollis Stabler, front right, Ted Fleser, back left, and Randall Harris, back right.

**Presidential Unit Citation
Fifth Army Commendation**

**4th Ranger Battalion
of World War II**

8 June 1943 – 24 October 1944

**Sicily
Naples-Foggia
Anzio
Rome-Arno**

Letters were their only link

Lester Lew Henry, Lt. 1F/4A and June Shellhammer Henry

by

Marsha Henry Goff

There were no pre-paid phone cards or e-mail messages in World War II. Letters were the only communication link between men serving in combat units and their loved ones at home. For almost three years, my mother and father relied on the mail — delivery of which was erratic at best — to keep each other informed of their separate and vastly different lives.

In some letters home, Dad complains that he hasn't received mail for weeks. Yet Mom wrote him, Grandma and Grandpa wrote him, even I wrote him in a childish scrawl after he was wounded:

"DEAR HONEY DADDY, HOW IS YOUR GASH COMING ALONG?"

In a two-page letter (pictured below and on the following page), Mom is furious because the draft board

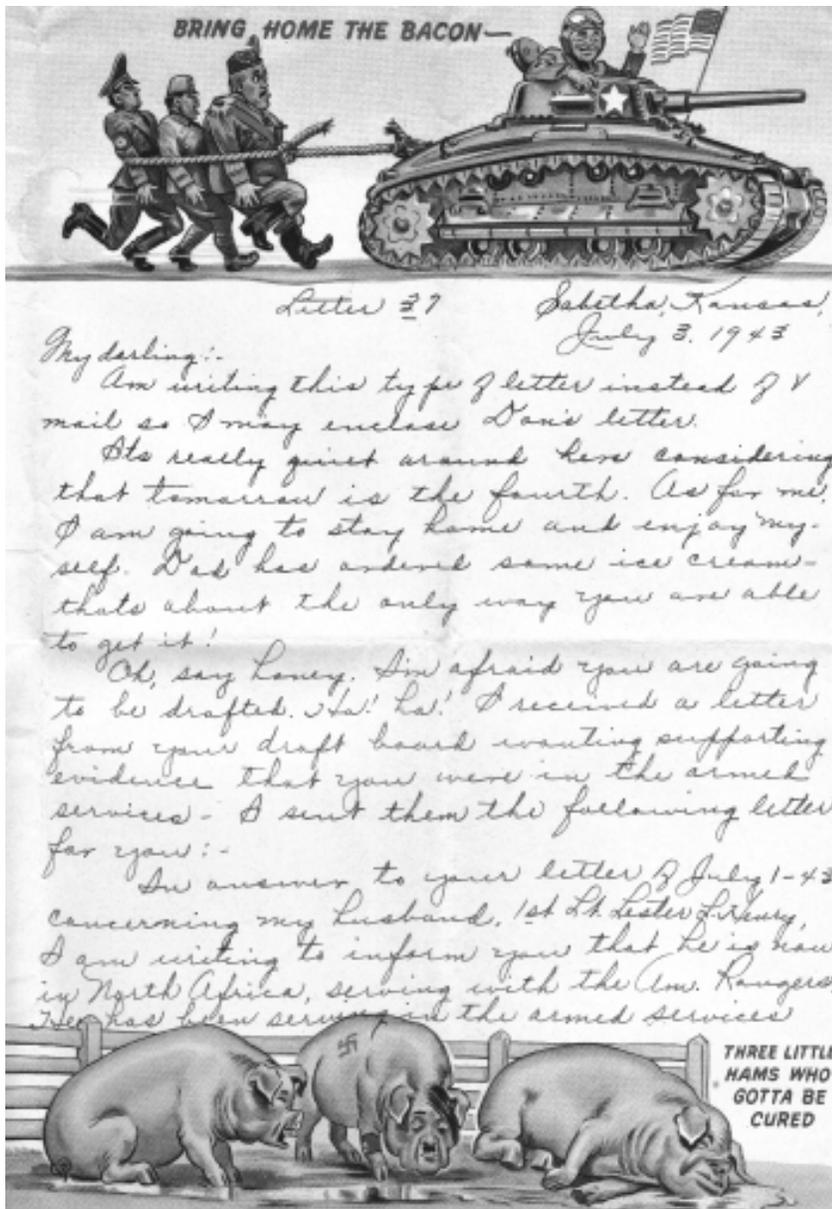
had requested proof that Dad was in the armed services and she reported to him the angry reply she sent in return. Mom had not been at all happy that Dad had joined the Rangers in Africa, because she had talked him out of joining the Air Corps, believing the duty to be too perilous. "Wouldn't you just know," she cried out in disgust, "that he'd find an outfit to join that was more dangerous than the Air Corps?"

And she wasn't the only one who felt serving in the Rangers was risky. In a letter to Mom after the Sicily invasion, Dad wrote that he had met two of his University of Kansas Delta Upsilon fraternity brothers, both of whom were serving with the 1st Division, in Africa. He said they had a big party in Oran before the invasion.

In a postscript at the bottom of the letter, he reported: "They thought I was in a suicide outfit. Now they're both dead and I'm still alive."

His fraternity brothers were killed in Sicily. I discovered those particulars in a draft of a post-war letter Dad had written to another fraternity brother — a German exchange student — whom he had managed to get into his fraternity.

Dad and Claus were the best of friends; they even went to Mexico



together before the war and Dad always credited Claus for helping him become exceptionally fluent in the German tongue, a skill that would serve him well during the war.

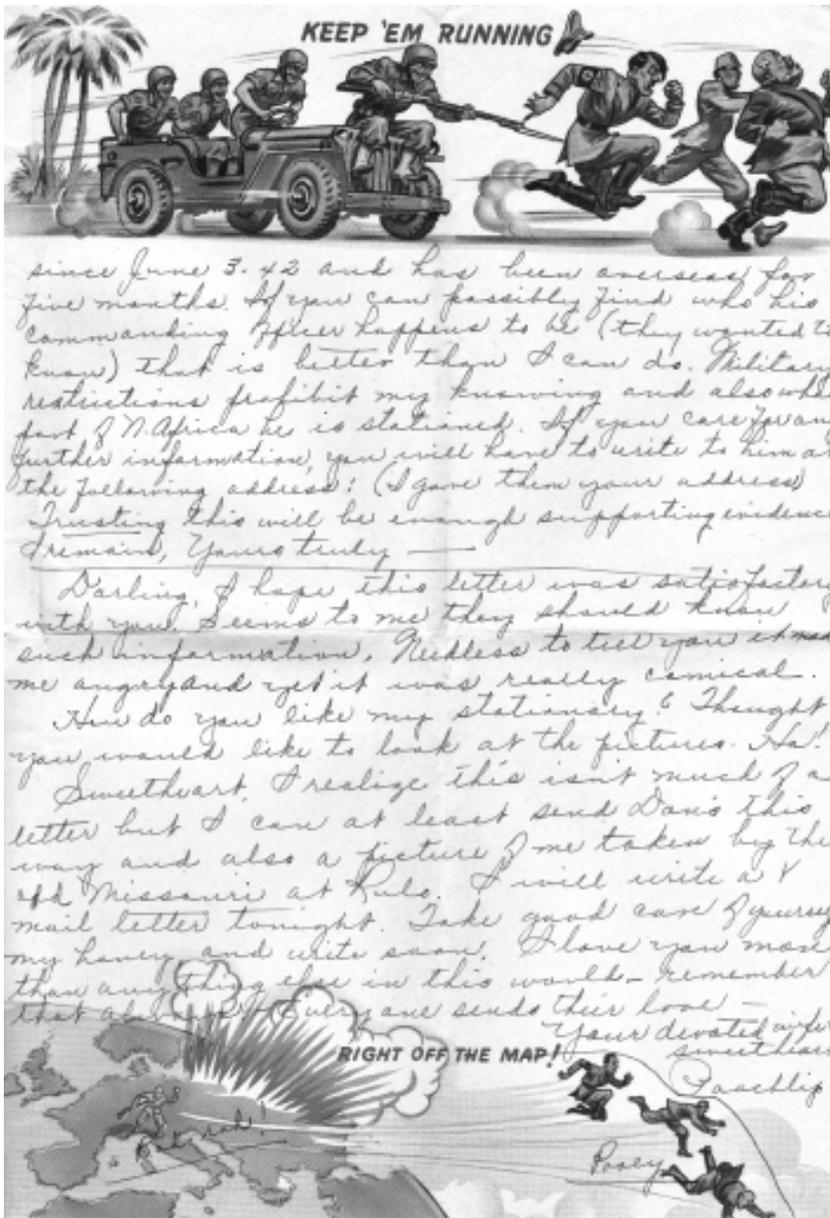
When Hitler called German students home, Claus refused to go until sufficient pressure was exerted upon him by a German diplomat who visited him, reminding him he had family in Germany. After returning home, however, Claus was either afraid his letters were being read (they likely were) or he became caught up in the feeling that pervaded Germany. I suspect it was the latter because in one letter Claus wrote to Dad after returning home, he said that “Danzig is a German city and wants to belong to Germany” and prophetically warned that “if Roosevelt doesn’t change his ways, I believe we are destined to meet on the battlefields of Europe.”

Claus survived the war, much of it as a POW in England, but he lost most of his family. After the war, he contacted Dad, who sent packages and letters to him. In one letter Dad told Claus that “German soldaten have spilled some of my blood and I have spilled much of theirs.”

In November of 1943, Dad — who clearly wasn’t as good at prophesy as Claus — felt optimistic that the war would soon be over when he wrote to Mom: “I feel that the end of the war is in sight; I can’t imagine that Jerry can take it for another six or seven months. However, one must admit that the German soldier is pretty good, and a tough man to crack. I am sure, however, that we are better.”

A letter my grandmother wrote to my father — her only child — amazed me. As the mother of sons, I marveled at the courage it took for her to write a letter full of humor, optimism and medical advice and, at the end, to quote Rudyard Kipling: “If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue, Or walk with kings — nor lose the common touch; If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you; If all men count with you, but none too much; If you can fill the unforgiving minute, With sixty seconds’ worth of distance run — Yours is the Earth and everything that’s in it, And — which is more — you’ll be a Man, my son!”

After Cisterna, Dad fought under the command of the FSSF on the southernmost flank of the Anzio Beachhead. In a letter to his parents during those months on the beachhead, he expressed thoughts that must have been common to many of his fellow soldiers:



. . . War cannot be described; only those who have experienced combat can have any conception of the term; many soldiers who are overseas, many of whom are in jobs in such cities as Algiers, Oran, Naples, or others, do not know what it is; they are only in jobs that have taken them away from home and entail none of conflict's unpleasantness. To the combat soldier who lives in holes like animals, whose existence is characterized only by the barest minimum of the necessities of life, and who has for almost a year and a half suffered day after day from heat or cold, in desert or in icy, muddy mountains, going without sleep, or bathing, or changing clothes for days, weeks and months, life has been crystallized into the expression of one desire — to return home!

Other letters express similar sentiments that must have been felt by all soldiers. In a letter written in a cold, wet foxhole in Italy, he mused: "After my family, it's the small things I miss most. I miss walking into a drug store for a coke; I miss eating a ham sandwich and drinking a glass of milk; I miss my friends and our hunting and fishing trips."

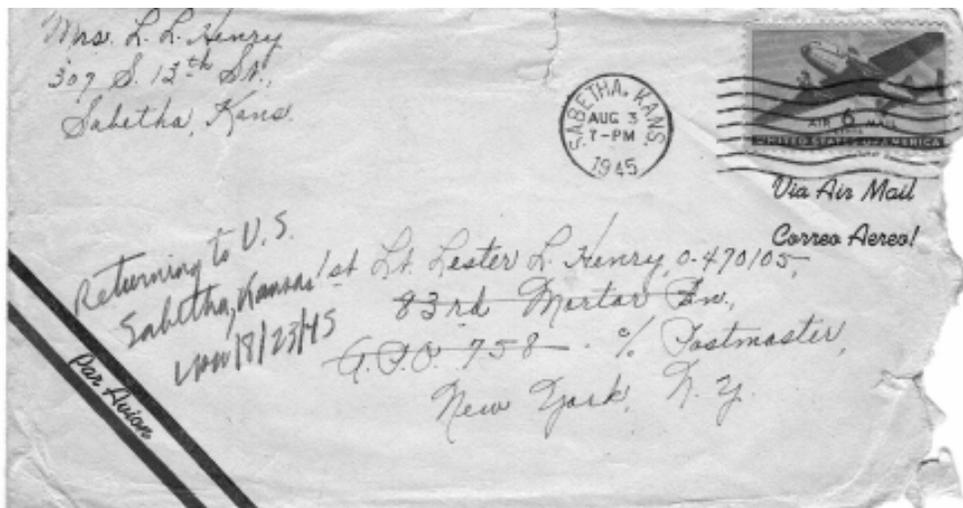
On September 6, 1944, Dad wrote to Mom: "Some of my friends have already returned from France, one of whom is Ace Andreson whose picture was taken with mine by Brown Bolte. Ace was wounded and I drop in the hospital every day to see him. That is the toughest part of war, seeing your friends killed or wounded."

When he wrote that letter, Dad, himself, was recovering from serious injuries he received near the end of the Anzio action and his Ranger unit had been disbanded. He joined the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion, aka "The Rangers' Artillery," as commander of D Company (the company that utilized gliders) and I suspect it is a good thing Mom didn't know about the gliders until after the war.

Mom wrote Dad an emotional letter after receiving a telegram that he had been "seriously wounded in action." A wartime telegram is never good news, but that one was particularly bad because the messenger delivered it to my paternal grandparents' home by mistake. He wouldn't allow Grandma to open it because it was addressed to my mother and, because Mom was speaking to Grandma on the telephone when the messenger rang the doorbell, both women had an agonizing 30-minute wait until the messenger walked across town to our apartment. Before leaving, he told Grandma "it wasn't the worst, but it wasn't good."

The serious head injury Dad sustained in France rendered him unconscious for three days and blind for an additional three. That injury was cited by the Menninger neurosurgeon who removed Dad's large and extremely slow-growing benign brain tumor — the only type of meningioma known to be caused by trauma — as the genesis of the tumor which resulted in his death.

The following letter never reached Dad and I am certain it was one returned letter that Mother was thrilled to receive when she read the message on the envelope:



Ranger WW II Stories

by

John F. Polley, Cpl 4D

While on POW guard detail near Calisibetta, Sicily in August 1943, a young fellow, Mario, came down from the walled city and became our barber. His folks would invite the GI's up for a good Sicilian spaghetti dinner served with red wine (vino) before and with the meal. That meal was worth the climb up the hill.

Mario also introduced the GI's to Sicilian bananas, the fruit of the prickly-pear cactus — lots of spines but edible.

After landing in Maiori, our first break came at the Botanical Gardens in Naples. The gals in the apartments across the Via Foria would hold up cups of coffee and invite the GI's over. They kept their grenade throwing arm in condition by throwing "C" Ration candy to the balconies. A couple went over for some hospitality and when they got to the apartment there were three English Air Officers there. The coffee was thick and black and took the tarnish off the spoons.

Upon leaving the Botanical Gardens in Naples, a Base Camp was set up at Lake Lucrino. Having cooked meals was great. Our cook was one of the best.

Our bivouac was in an orange grove and we ate so many oranges the owner complained. This was solved by taking up a collection and buying the produce.

While training new replacements near Pozzuoli, west of Naples, the bazooka gunner sent a round into a window of a building. All Hades broke loose. The place was stacked with German bombs.

On December 14, 1943, we were relieved and returned to Base Camp at Lake Lucrino after a couple months of mountain action. We got some new replacements and good chow again. Also, Father Basil was there and we had Sunday morning services again.

The boys cleaned up their clothes and their bodies for once without getting shot at. Passes were easy to get and some of the boys went swimming in the sea — cold but refreshing.

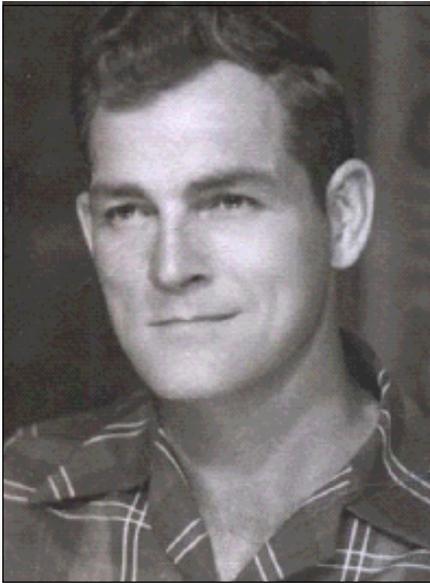
Around the 20th of March 1944, we were relieved by the 504 Parachute Infantry and moved back from the line. About a platoon found refuge in an old farm house. Rations were short and from the basement a hog was spotted in the yard. An old farm boy shot the hog and his buddies shoved him out the basement window. After bleeding and gutting the hog, he pulled it into the basement and went in after it. The delay had been long enough and the Germans started shelling. Nobody wanted the heart and tongue so the farm boy ate them. Splintered wood from the shelled house provided the fire.



Lloyd S. “Little Abner” Pruitt

Taped recollections of Lloyd S. Pruitt, Pvt 4F
(transcribed by his son, Dallas Pruitt)

I worked in Alaska until it became obvious to me that my draft number was coming up and I was about to join the war effort, like it or not. With this in mind, I headed back home to Parsons, Kansas to visit with family and friends and contemplate which branch of the service to join before I was drafted. I decided to try my hand at becoming a pilot, and took the fighter pilot aptitude test at Old Camp Leonard Wood, MO. I missed passing the test by two points. They told me if I'd come back and take the test when they gave it again in few weeks, I'd probably pass and be accepted. On the way back to Parsons, I passed a place recruiting paratroopers, so I stopped in and spoke with them. I was 6-8 pounds too heavy to be accepted as a paratrooper, but I figured I could sweat that off and come back in a few weeks too if I wanted.



In the end however, I wound up traveling to Fort Leavenworth and signing up with the 301st Ordinance Regiment which was recruiting on the radio station in Parsons. I was 25 years old in April 1943 when I was enlisted and sent to Camp Sutton, North Carolina for Basic Training.

I was not pleased or impressed with 301st Ordinance Regiment because their officers turned out to be made up mostly of car dealership owners and their sons, which I thought was a disaster. I did get to box though. I fought in and won the Middleweight Regimental Championship on the 4th of July, 1943, winning 2 of 3 fights by knock out. I got my picture

taken with Colonel Kabble congratulating me in the ring. It even got a write up in the Parsons Sun newspaper. That was certainly the highlight of my time at Camp Sutton.

From there we were shipped to Camp McCoy in Wisconsin for six weeks or so. I boxed in a close fight while there and narrowly lost by decision. From there we were sent to Camp Shanks, New York, to prepare for shipping overseas. On the 10th of December we loaded onto a troop ship, and sailed out of New York. The ship was a converted “Liberty Ship” and had rows and rows of bunks, 5 high. We took a Southern route and had terribly rough water. Every one of those Kansas farm boys got sick. The bunks were mounted to vertical steel pipes, which were held in place by collars mounted on the floor and ceiling. At some point in the pounding the ship was taking, the pipes on one side bent enough to come out of their collars, causing the bunks to fall into the next row of bunks, which brought them down on the next row of bunks until they all came down. Men in the lower bunks were crushed, and two were killed. They had a hasty burial at sea, which was a disturbing thing for a bunch of boys from Kansas to watch. The incident left everyone sleeping on the floor in a mess.

On Christmas Eve, after 16 days on the water, we passed through the Straights of Gibraltar. We landed at Oran, North Africa. After disembarking, we were sent to a large parking garage with a circular driveway inside of it. I was assigned to the 4th floor, D Company Small Arms. Here we worked on all kinds of small arms including M1's, machine guns, submachine guns, and hand guns. We spent the majority of the time cleaning freshly arrived weapons of cosmoline, a greasy substance used to coat metals to prevent rusting. We used steam to heat drums of gasoline to clean the weapons with. I used it once to clean the cosmoline off of my field jacket, but when I hung it out to dry, someone ran off with it. I went to two different fights there near Citidale abbus, and another in Algiers where I fought and lost to an infantry guy named Hinkey.

When most of the fighting was over in North Africa, the 1st Ranger Battalion had done so well that the U.S. Army decided to expand and add three more battalions. They came around looking for volunteers and I was interested, but they were touted as a suicide outfit, so I finally decided not to volunteer. Then three of the younger guys in my company came over and started trying to talk me into joining with them. One of them was a nice kid from Indiana named Carl Beverly who was a nut for gambling. I'd loaned Carl money a few times and the kid had always paid it back. The other two were named Gray and Morrison. A lot of these guys were just out of high school and I had been around a lot more than most of them so I was kind of watching out for them. I tried to talk them out of joining, but it turned out that they'd already signed up, and wanted me to go with them. Well, I had been kind of interested, so I thought, what the hell.

We went to the Company Commander and asked for permission to join the Rangers, but he turned us down, saying he needed us doing what we were doing. However, they had signed up already, and when we went to the replacement depot, the Rangers took us. They must have had more clout than the Ordinance Regiment. We had to wait overnight and then they loaded the volunteers into 6 x 6 trucks in a convoy headed for Nemours. I and the three kids from my company got split up into different trucks. At some point along the narrow road, the truck carrying Beverly, Gray, and Morrison went off the road and rolled, killing Beverly. Gray was injured and sent to the hospital, where he got to talking to some 1st Battalion Rangers who scared him out of returning for Ranger training. I was allowed to go to the funeral service for Carl Beverly with the 301st, but I returned to Nemours for Ranger training. Morrison managed to get in the same section as me, and became our BAR gunner during training. We were arranged into Assault Sections, 10 men to a section. The Section Leaders were buck Sergeants, second in command was a Corporal. Each section had a BAR gunner and an assistant who helped with carrying ammo, a sharpshooter, and a grenade launcher. There was a 1st and 2nd scout who carried submachine guns, and the rest were M1 riflemen. There were two Sections in each Platoon, and two Platoons per Company. There was also a Mortar Section. That was full strength. There were six Companies per Battalion.

The training was tough, very tough. By the time we had finished training, I was probably in the best shape of my life. There were a lot of speed marches with loaded packs, and crawling through live ammo obstacle courses. I had been doing a lot of training on my own for boxing, so I was in better shape even than many of the younger men, so I had an easier time than some. *(Many years later, Ranger Noel Dye sought Lloyd out at a Ranger reunion, shook his hand and thanked him, and reminded him how he had helped Noel make it through a required 10 mile speed march during the training. Noel was a seasoned 1st. Battalion Ranger and had contracted malaria, but knew that Colonel Darby made it a habit to remove any man who was not fit for immediate combat from the Ranger ranks, so he didn't report it. With encouragement and help from several Rangers, including Jim Altieri who started carrying his rifle and some of his equipment, he made it to about the last mile before he finally collapsed and lost consciousness. His pack was passed to a fellow Ranger, and Lloyd shouldered Noel and carried him to within a short distance of the end. All the while, men were splashing water on his face and trying to bring him back around as he was bouncing along on Lloyd's back. He was revived and reunited with his pack and crossed the finish line under the watchful eye of Colonel Darby who suspected nothing.)*

When training at Nemours was completed, we went to the coast and loaded on a ship for Algiers. We spent a couple of weeks in Algiers, training the whole time. We practiced beach landings from Destroyers with rubber boats or Commando Ships for carrying assault boats called LCI's. Normally we used assault boats which were 23 or 24 feet long and 8 ft wide with a bench running along each side and one up the middle. The assault boats held 30 soldiers and the navy man running the boat. With the assault boats, we would get in while the LCI was still sitting on the deck of the commando ship, and the loaded LCI would be set over the side into the water.

We left from Algiers headed for Sicily and we were on the water for ten days. We landed on 10th of July, 1944. Morrison got joint swelling and got sick, so he was in sick bay during landing. So I was the only one

of our initial little group who saw combat with the Rangers. Gela, Sicily was my first action. We got on an assault boat, but there was some mix up and the navy man got lost so our section was late getting in. Spot lights were shining in from shore and we were getting machine gun tracer rounds at us. The destroyers helped to put out the lights. We landed 10 or 15 minutes from where we were supposed to be and wound up almost in the second wave. I saw a kid named Bennet I knew from a different section dead on the boardwalk. We stayed the night in a church and took up position at the edge of Gela. We saw a bunch of tanks next morning coming across the prairie. We had a bazooka team with the company. A guy named Jech was the bazooka gunner. I went with him to meet these tanks. We found a good place under cover a few hundred yards away. You could watch a bazooka shell, you could see it going. I watched them shoot at tanks, a number of them got through, but we got support from the Navy to knock out several tanks. Later when we left Gela, we went up through Butera and saw tanks dead in streets. We also saw dead Italian or German soldiers stacked like wood, but not from the Ranger assault. I don't know what happened to them. Possibly from shelling. We took some prisoners, German pilots that had been shot down in the water. We left Gela in a truck convoy. The 4th and 1st



Kentucky Cornet, LaRue, KY; Lloyd Pruitt, Parsons, KS; Hutch Hutcherson, Uvalde, TX and Lum Thompson, Leaky TX. Naples, Italy 1943

battalions rode across Sicily in trucks, but 3rd battalion had to walk and fight their way across Sicily. On our way across Sicily we entered the town of Caltanissetta where I took a big Nazi flag from an opera house. I donated that flag and a few other things to the Darby Museum in Fort Smith, Arkansas. The curator there asked me if I had liberated the flag. I told him it was more like I just stole it. We were only there in Sicily about a month.

We made the invasion of Italy on 12th of August at Salerno, from a ship. It was a short trip on ship, a day and night maybe. We landed and found a 20 foot wall where models showed a four foot wall. There was a stairway in the middle and everyone had to go up the stairs. Had there been one defender there with a machine gun he could have killed us all. Maiori was the name of the little town. Then we went up Chiunzi Pass. They sent one platoon to a lighthouse on the way up. Tom Johnson, the first scout, it was either him or Lemandre, got hit over the head and an Italian soldier got clean away. Once on the way up, we hit the ditch and there was a motorcycle and rider with two German soldiers coming down the road. They were shot and probably killed. The next day, we came down and relieved the guys who took the lighthouse, several of whom had been wounded or killed, I don't know. The Italian soldiers in the lighthouse used potato masher grenades after they said they would surrender. I remember seeing pieces of Ranger uniform littered with tiny holes from the wire wrapped around the potato masher grenades. The Italians were all killed. It was a grisly mess. Don Earwood, my section leader at the time, thought we ought to get rid of bodies because we didn't know how long we would be staying there. No one else was willing to touch the dead bodies. I was second in command, so he and I carried the bodies to the back railing of the lighthouse and threw them over. It was probably a couple of hundred feet to the ocean below and we couldn't see where they landed. A few hours later, a bunch of civilians showed up looking for the bodies. They had to walk all the way down and pick up the bodies and carry them back up, and I kind of felt bad. Not because they'd been killed, I figured they deserved that, but that we had thrown them off the cliffs. We were relieved and went back up to Chiunzi Pass.

While on the pass, a guy named Lloyd Buff from the other platoon and I got sent down to a well house to get water. He said the company commander said we wouldn't need our rifles, just to take water cans. But I had a personal rule about my rifle and decided to take mine anyway. The well house was stone with a well lip 2.5 to 3 feet high. There were some other Rangers there finishing up bathing when we got there. The well house had a place to bathe and as soon as the other guys left we decided to take advantage of the bath too. I was just finishing my bath when we heard strange voices coming up the road. Buff saw them, and I hollered at them as they were walking up the road toward the well house. It was a German patrol coming up the trail from other side of the mountain. They started hollering and got behind the wall on the side of the road. I swung the door shut and started shooting through the door at these guys and they shot back through the door at Buff and I. Buff got down inside the well lip and would throw me a clip every time I ran out. This alerted E Company and they started shooting at the back side of these guys. F Company got alerted and they started shooting mortar shells down towards the Germans. As soon as the shooting seemed to stop, I got my clothes on. A guy named Stewart from E Company met me at the gate and we went down after the Germans on the trail. We met them 200 or 300 yards down the trail where they were trying to do some first aid. The Germans ran when we started shooting at them again. They left a bunch of stuff behind. We found a big finned shell we decided was a bazooka shell of some sort. That's where I got a pair of German binoculars and Stewart got a machine pistol. I also got a pack with a bunch of cigarettes. I didn't smoke but thought a bunch of the guys would want them but no one wanted to smoke German cigarettes, and I wound up giving them to some civilians. There were also pictures of angels leading German soldiers into battle. When we got back to camp we had to report to the company commander, Walter Nye. They awarded me a bronze star for the action.

While on the pass, we were regularly shelled by 88's from German tanks. One of the guys, Sgt. McKernan was hit by shrapnel and about got his big toe shot off. I and five others volunteered to carry the stretcher several miles down to the highway to meet an ambulance. We got along good for the first half mile along the ridgeline but when the trail started getting narrow and steep there was only room for one in the front and one in the back. The steep angle kept threatening to dump Sgt. McKernan off the front of the stretcher. Finally, I and another big 220 pound guy named Red Mackin (*Robert Mackin 4/F*) from a different platoon carried McKernan down on our backs to the aid station. The other guys were willing, but not able to carry the husky McKernan on their backs down the steep trail. Red and I would switch off every 150 yards or so and we were pretty wiped out by the time we got to the bottom, but we felt we'd done our good deed for the day.

A fellow named Green in my Company, from a different platoon, out of the old 1st Battalion, gave his guards orders to shoot anything that moved. They had two man guard posts; one on guard, one resting. When he went back by one place after placing his last guards, it was getting dark and one of his guards shot and killed him. I don't remember exactly how long we were up there, a week or more anyway. At night on guard duty you could see the line of fire on the Mt. Vesuvius volcano. Later on after we got down from the pass, I got to go up on the volcano and see it spewing fifty or 100 feet in the air. Civilians would take coins and push them into a chunk of hot lava and make souvenirs. We tried our hand at that.

Went from there back to Maiori for a few days. We rode trucks into Naples and saw civilians standing in lines 100 yards long to get drinking water. We set up in the Botanical Gardens and got to rest for a week or so. We got some pictures taken there. Then we went to San Pietro. Now Don Earwood was gone and I was made the section leader. The company commander was Randall Harris. We went on a scouting mission after dark near San Pietro. Our section was in the lead, Harris was in charge. We had two Italian civilians with us as guides. We stopped at a bridge on the trail, paved. We stopped and Harris saw some guys crawling around in the brush. He was carrying an M1 Carbine and he shot at them several times. The civilians went down and got them and killed them. They carried their shoes back.

(Shortly after Lloyd's death in 2005, Randall Harris related a slightly different version of what probably was this event. He says a camouflaged German soldier came at him from the brush on the side of the road. He shot the soldier twice in the abdomen with the M1 Carbine he was carrying but the man kept coming. His

3rd round jammed and he was preparing to defend himself by hand when the enemy soldier was dropped by a shot from behind him. He turned to see Lloyd looking down the barrel of a more potent M1 Garand. He vowed never to carry an M1 Carbine after that experience. Lloyd and Randall were close friends during and after the war.)

We had K Rations for a couple of days. We were gone three days in all. We used up all of our rations by the time we got back to the headquarters set up and there we got C rations which were pretty good. Not much one on one combat but scattered fighting. We lost 3 or 4 men killed, one was Powell I think, or Owens or something like that, an officer that I knew and liked. Altieri and Zazlow got separated somehow but found their way back after a night of eating and sleeping outside. 155 Howitzers would shoot and shake the ground. From there we went on back in trucks to camp, maybe Venifro, and spent a day or night there. I remember seeing German dive bombers in the day time coming in and dumping what looked like tin cans that would roll end over end.

On the 10th of November, we got up at midnight and were told we were going to relieve or assist a company, probably E Company up on a mountain ridge. We might have gone in trucks for a few miles but I remember having to walk up to the mountain ridge. We went up the trail, and when we got up on the ridge we ran into one guy from E Company ... they did not yet have the ridge, and they appeared to be scattered all over hell. This guy was named Yodlie, a tall kid from Iowa. He didn't know where his company was or where the Germans were. The company commander had us deploy. Coming up the hill our BAR gunner, who was a replacement, kept falling behind and I had to chew him out. The kid was afraid of drawing fire with that BAR because they were a primary target. Leroy Buss was his name, I went to see him in Wisconsin in '58. He later lost an arm at Anzio.

They got our men all placed out five steps apart. Tom Johnson was our scout and they went out to find the enemy and they came back and told where they thought the enemy was, but they still didn't really know. There was shooting going on all over the place. When I got my men all down and spaced out there just behind the ridge line, there wasn't a decent place for me next to them so I got behind a bolder 30 or so feet away just over the ridgeline. However the Germans were not where the scouts thought they were, so instead of being "behind" the boulder relative to the Germans, I turned out to be beside it. Bullets were bouncing off this rock, and they got me with rifle fire. I was hit under my left arm. The bullet missed my grenade pouch and took off a piece of my shoulder blade and went pretty close to my backbone. It felt like someone hit me in the back with a sledge hammer, but it didn't knock me down because I was already kneeling down trying to look around this rock down to where the Germans turned out not to be. It did knock the breath and the fight out of me, and I knew I was hit pretty good and that my location was not safe. I pitched down my rifle and zig zagged back over the ridgeline to my section and got someone to help me out of my pack. They sent a guy named Higgins with me and we walked back down the trail to the aid station where we met with the Company Commander and a medic named Hardinbrook. We reported on the situation.

They put me on a stretcher from there and carried me across a ravine and into an ambulance where they took me to a field hospital. Then the next day they put me in an ambulance and I was taken to a bigger hospital. There was a lot of traffic, a lot of our own. I remember one place where the Germans were strafing the highway. Four people in stretchers in the back, I was on top. Once, the ambulance came to a screeching halt and the drivers got out and hit the ditch. I remember waiting for bullets to come through but they didn't. After a while an officer stopped us and took the place of the assistant driver. He had been hit in the arm, and he thought he was going to die. He kept telling the driver to go faster, go faster. Finally he had the driver stop and got out and into a jeep he apparently thought would get him there faster. We got to the hospital alright. It was the 301st general hospital and I stayed there for a day or two, then they flew me back to North Africa. I went to what they called hospital row. First you went to one hospital, then the next, and then the next as you got better. They operated on me, removed the scar tissue and sewed me up. I exercised, and within a week or two I was chinning with it. I had somebody tell me if I had a scar like that, I'd get discharged and sent home.

But I didn't really believe him and besides I wanted to go back to the Rangers.

Something I never told anyone, but while I was in the hospital, one night I had an accident in bed and wet my bed, and I heard a guy make a remark that I was trying to get out of the war. He apparently thought I was there for an incontinence problem. It made me so damned mad I got a hold of him, collared him and I told him I'd whup the hell out of him, told him what I'd been through, and that I planned to get back as soon as possible and he apologized profusely. I looked up a few Rangers, a guy named Wilbur Gallup was one who had been hit about the same time I was. I heard about the assault on Anzio when I was in the hospital and wondered how the Rangers had done, I knew they were involved. They had this deal at Cisterna where they lost two Battalions. I missed that and a lot of rainy and nasty weather.

One of the things I remember about my time in the hospital was visiting with some other Rangers around the time they were supposed to eat lunch. They told me that a Ranger by the name of Frank Mattivi had just been discharged but if I just said I was him, they would give me a meal and I could eat with them. This seemed like a pretty good idea until the hospital staffer asked me to spell my last name for him and I couldn't do it. I felt pretty foolish and to this day I don't bother telling lies...it's not worth it. The other guys there got a pretty good laugh out of it though.

When I got back to Italy, I'm not sure just where it was, to a replacement depot on an Italian cruiser, a nice fast ship to right around Naples. There was a long line of people waiting to get supplies, and it got dark and they had a movie going on out there. I had a duffle bag, so I left my bag sitting there and went and watched this movie. When the movie was over with I got my duffle bag and went down to get the stuff. They gave me a hard time and I got into an argument and I told the corporal he could go to hell. I went with the corporal to his sergeant. The sergeant sent me to a guard house, where I had to spend three or four days until the Ranger truck showed up to get us. The damn guards would steal the good parts of the rations by taking the candy and cigarettes. There were about nine of us in a double pup tent out in the mud. I found out the corporal's name was Reinhart. I layed for him from then on.

I was awful happy to have the Ranger truck come and get me. We went to Lake Lucrino (probably Lago Averno) near the town of Pozzuoli. We spent two or three days and got supplies, rifle, etc. We got on an LST to Anzio. There were ships all around there that had been sunk. We got to our outfit at Anzio. We also rode a "DUCK", an amphibious truck there at Anzio. We were set up at the Mussolini Canal, and I remember I met Avril Tidwell there. My outfit had changed quite a bit. I spent one night there and the second day, I remember talking to the guys about the experiences we'd had. I didn't do any fighting there. We got word that Colonel Murray was going to take us back to the rear echelon and they were going to take us home. But when we got back, only the 1st Rangers got to go home.

The 1st Sgt. there was a guy named Randy Jech. I had outranked him when I got wounded. I think he was in my section and he had been in the company ever since I had, and I knew him well. Anyway, now he was 1st Sgt. When the old 1st Rangers were going to get to go home, they had been running a Scout and Patrol school at a town not far from Pozzuoli. Randy Jech was sent up there to take it over and as soon as he got set up he sent Clarence Thompson in a Jeep down to get me. So I got to spend this time up at Scout and Patrol School. We were up there possibly four or five weeks and we missed some of the worst fighting getting into Rome. I always appreciated that help from Thompson and Jech.



Back: Clarence Thompson, Randolph Jech; Front: Lloyd Pruitt, Averiel Tidwell. Naples, Italy 1943

When the school was over they took us in a truck to Rome. When we got up there, someone decided that we shouldn't be sent in with the First Special Service Force because if they got fresh replacements they might not get relieved, so we spent the night in the truck and the next night they did get relieved and sent back to the rear at Lake Albano. They'd had a hell of a fight. They had a lot of ex-Rangers killed. They had a memorial. There was a kid named Google, from a town near Laredo TX, between there and Wichita and there were several others, and that was the first time I knew they'd been killed. We trained there with the First Special Service Force.

We left Italy around the 5th of June 1944 and went to the south of France invasion. We landed at Port Man or maybe Port Cros, there were a couple of different Islands. We made the invasion off of a similar boat as the British but these weren't assault boats. We went down a rope screen over the side into these small boats. They were something like assault boats but we just jumped down off of that and into ten man rubber rafts. Then these boats would drag 4 or 5 of these rubber boats to within 2 or 3 miles of the island and then we had to paddle from there. When we hit the island, there was no beach, just rocks. Then we climbed up a trail. I remember when it got daylight there was all these rubber boats floating around out there. We holed up and spent part of the day up there and that evening we got our missions laid out for us. We had a blacktop road we walked down. When we were going down this road it was obvious they had bombed it. They had bombed this place and they had some old forts, at least two and one was an old one with a moat that was dry. In order to get in you had to cross a drawbridge and then climb some stairs...it was an old timer. We didn't go up to this fort until after dark. We got in position down below this fort. The Lt. was Branson, and Avril Tidwell was our section leader and I was second in command. There were trenches and such dug in front of the fort that we thought there might be enemy soldiers in. Avril was at one end of the squad and I was at the other. We got the order to charge this fort. The soldiers at the top of the fort threw grenades down on us, but we took a stone house near the drawbridge. During the fighting, someone ran past me away from the Fort. I hollered at him to stop or I'd shoot, but the guy kept running and I decided not to shoot because I wasn't sure. It later turned out that it was one of our guys who had been too close to a grenade going off and lost his hearing and been slightly wounded. I was glad I hadn't shot the guy. Our company commander got hurt awful bad, we used a door as a stretcher and we carried him up out of this moat. We hadn't been in there too long before they came out on the drawbridge and surrendered. They took the prisoners away and we got to go in and occupy this fort. Then we got relieved. Before we left the island we went by another fort and you could see where they had been shooting armor piercing shells in the concrete. I never did understand just why they had us to storm these forts.

The next day they took us to the mainland. Within the next day or two we went through Nice, France, and they were glad to see us. The civilians came out with wine and cognac and girls were kissing us, they were sure glad to see us. That night I went back into the edge of Nice to a bar, and we got free drinks.

Something else I remember, when in Italy, the civilians would come and tell you where the Germans were, and we'd get a section together to get them and they'd already be gone. In France, when the civilians would tell us where the Germans were, and we'd go, by god they'd still be there! I always figured the Italians would curry favor with us by telling us where the Germans HAD been.

I remember we crept up on this house and the Germans were still in it. We got up where we could see down on it and they tried to get them to surrender but they didn't. Several tried to make a run for it and everyone opened up on them. There was one guy, he got hit and went down and everyone stopped shooting at him. Then he'd start to crawl and everyone opened up at him again. This happened a couple of times before he stopped moving for good. Then when we got down there he still wasn't dead, we had to make a stretcher and carry him out. It took him a couple of minutes to learn it was a lot safer just to play dead!

Then one night we were riding in trucks and we came up to the front to a little town and spent the night there. Our section was up on the roof of a big building, office building a few stories high. Some one threw something off the roof and someone down below got pretty bent out of shape about it. I told him if he'd

come up, by golly he'd go back down a lot faster than he came up. By golly he did come up but he got into a shouting match with a guy named Hartley from our section before he got to me.

Shortly after that they took a bunch of us on patrol and we had an interpreter, he wore a free French ribbon. We were on this patrol and I remember seeing these interpreters talking to these other civilians and they sent a jeep up for another guy and me and told us we were scheduled to go home. September of 44. We went back down to the coast and got on a ship for home. It took about 8 or 9 days to get to New York, which was a lot shorter than when we came over, less zig-zagging because of subs. I got a train ticket to Kansas City and my sister Betty and her husband Barry picked me up there.

Note: Material in italics was not included in the audio recording from which this text was transcribed, but was added later after personal conversations with the men involved. These sections are to the best of my recollection of our conversations, but whole situations could only be described by someone who was actually there. In addition, being as this was transcribed from an audio recording, there may be translation and spelling errors, especially of people and place names. There is also minor editing for readability. This transcription was written by Dallas Pruitt, son of Ranger Lloyd Pruitt 4/F, who passed on August 5, 2005. Please feel free to send comments, corrections, or additions to:

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Miner Cloyd had a passion for mining. He hoped to find a vein of gold or silver that would make us all rich, but he was a realist, and mostly I think he just liked the process and possibilities of mining. He had claims in Nevada, Colorado, and Arizona, and he worked all of them. He learned to drill, blast, muck, and lay rail in the snowy mountains around Telluride, Colorado as a young man prior to the war. It was hard work that agreed with him. He would have been happy to spend all of his time mining, but he had responsibilities and mining usually involves more expenses than income. However, we're proud to say that the Pruitt estate includes a pile of high grade antimony ore the size of a Volkswagen Beetle, and a washbasin full of pure silver ore wrestled from the ground with a pick and shovel, the old fashioned way.

—Dallas Pruitt



**Two Presidential Unit Citations
French Croix de Guerre**

**5th Ranger Battalion
of World War II**

21 July 1943 – 22 October 1945

**Normandy
Northern France
Rhineland
Ardennes-Alsace
Central Europe**

A Medal delayed

for
Calvin O. Templeton, Pvt 5Hq

The following transcript is from a November 28, 2000 article in the Stanwood/Camano News, by Kelly Ruhoff, entitled:

BRONZE STAR Decorated WW II vet recalls horrors of war

Fifty-six years after Allied Forces invaded Omaha Beach on D-Day, Cal Templeton of Stanwood is being honored with a bronze-star medal for his combat service with the U.S. Army during World War II.



Cal Templeton after receiving bronze star medal from General Votel at New Orleans Ranger Reunion.

Templeton was a member of the Rangers, an elite assault force with the U.S. Army that spearheaded the invasion of Normandy, France on June 6, 1944, the largest, seaborne invasion in history.

He questioned the timing of the award.

“What are they doing, giving it out 50 years later?” Templeton shrugs his shoulders. “But if I have it coming, I should have it then,” he said.

Templeton, 78, made it a point to brush aside details of the four major battles he fought and survived during the war by not sharing them with family and friends.

He said veterans don’t usually speak about their experiences during war, it brings back too many dark memories.

“There’s no glory in war,” he said. “Only death and loneliness.”

Templeton was a newlywed when he was drafted into the Army in April of 1943. The United States was in the throes of World War II.

He shipped out reluctantly, knowing he many not see his young wife again. The prospect of active combat held no allure for him.

“The circumstances put you there and you just had to do it,” said Templeton.

“To leave your wife is a really bad thing. The loneliness in unbearable,” he added.

Along with thousands of other G.I.s, Templeton was shipped to England amidst tumultuous storms at sea.

“We had the whole war ahead of us,” said Templeton. “I prayed a lot.”

Templeton was a member of the Fifth Ranger Battalion that was ordered by General Dwight D. Eisenhower to attack the northern coast of France.

Their mission was to secure the beachhead as the leading assault unit and gain control of the harbor.

Templeton’s battalion came ashore in amphibious landing crafts on a strip of beach designated as Omaha Dog White Beach.

It was dawn on that chilly morning in 1944 when his battalion was dropped off in sea water up to the waists.

“There was only one place to go,” said Templeton, “that was to shore.”

While enemy gunfire rang from the cliffs above, U.S. battle ships sprayed automatic gunfire over the heads of Allied soldiers advancing, offering “some” protection, said Templeton.



Soldier Cal Templeton on duty during WW II

“Or else we would have been sitting ducks,” he said.

The experience was surreal, he explained, knowing he had no other option than to fight to stay alive, while witnessing many of his comrades being killed.

“Sometimes they would be blown to smithereens,” said a solemn Templeton.

They dug slit trenches in the sand for protection at night and survived on sea rations.

The battle lasted eight days before the Allied Forces and Rangers were successful in taking control.

From Templeton’s battalion alone, 60 Rangers were killed or wounded and 100 were taken by the Germans as prisoners of war.

Following the invasion of Normandy, there were periods of respite, although the Rangers suffered many more casualties that resulted from the liberal planting of enemy land mines. And some lost their lives due to accidents. Like one of Templeton’s buddies who had a grenade blow up in

his pocket.

“There were a lot of sad times,” he recalled.

The next battle took the Fifth Ranger Battalion to Brest, France where it was one of the longest and most difficult battles of the war.

Soon after, the Rangers and other U.S. troops were celebrating the liberation of France and Belgium. The French opened up their homes to the troops, offering them homemade meals and comfortable beds. They were able to receive mail from home during the temporary reprieve.

“I’d get eight to 10 packages from home,” said Templeton. “It was great.”

After leaving France, Templeton’s battalion became part of General Patton’s Third U.S. Army.

It was the first of December and the conditions were cold and muddy. The ensuing battle lasted until Christmas Eve, resulting in 129 Rangers being killed and 106 Rangers taken as prisoners of war.

In the early spring of 1945, and in one of the final onslaughts of the war, the Fifth Ranger Battalion along with other Allied Forces, were ordered to free 25,000 mostly Jewish prisoners from a concentration camp hidden in the German countryside called Buchenwald.

Templeton was a lead commander for the Rangers and when they entered the camp they were horrified by what they saw.

Buchenwald was a Nazi work camp, divided into two sections. The little camp was where weak and sick prisoners were taken to die.

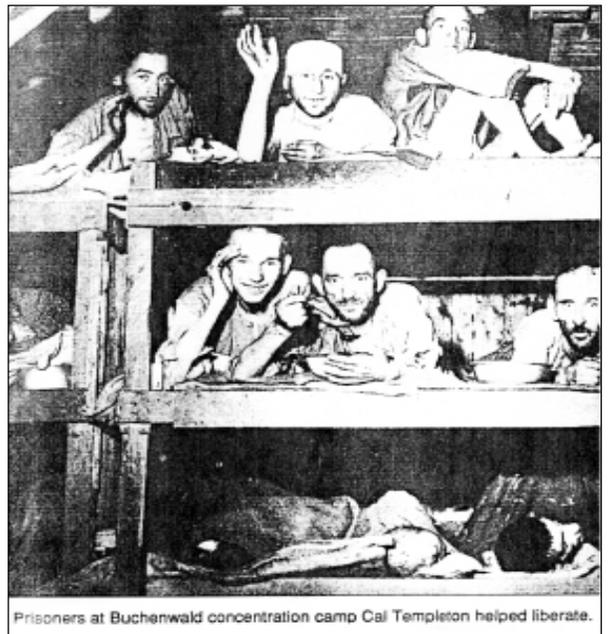
The sick prisoners were found naked laying on cold, makeshift wood-shelved beds with only one blanket to share between them. Templeton told his interpreter to tell the people they were free.

“They hugged the feet of the men,” said Templeton.

His comrades responded to the prisoners’ gratitude with emotion.

“These guys were hard as nails and they just wept,” recalled Templeton.

He remembers the sobering details of the concentration camp, the torture chamber, the crematorium



Prisoners at Buchenwald concentration camp Cal Templeton helped liberate.

where bodies were stacked up like cord wood, the filth and the cold.

“People don’t believe it,” said Templeton. “I only want to talk about it because it was a fact. It’s a terrible thing to see people dead and dying.”

Templeton doesn’t know why his life was spared or why he didn’t even suffer an injury during the two and half years he fought in the war, but he has a good idea.

“I know I had a guardian angel,” he said.

Two years, six months and eight days later Templeton was finally reunited with his wife, Peggy, and just last week celebrated 58 years of marriage together.

“It wasn’t like you were a great hero,” he said. “You were just there — and you just did it.”

After returning from the war, the Templetons had three children.

Templeton owned and operated the Union Oil gas station before it closed across from Wolfkill Feed Store in Stanwood; was a Stanwood School District board member for eight years; and was a former commander for the VFW.

These days he keeps in touch with other surviving Rangers via e-mail.

“I’ve had an active civilian life,” said Templeton. “I’m getting too old for that kind of stuff now.”

About Buchenwald

When Buchenwald was liberated, American military personnel found a truckload stacked with bodies of inmates that the Nazis were preparing to burn. A center for slave labor, Buchenwald was established in July 1937. Up to 250,000 slave laborers were confined there in the camp’s almost eight year existence. An estimated 56,000 died there from brutality, starvation and medical experiments.

During 1942-43, in a test of vaccinations for epidemic typhus involving 729 inmates, 280 died. One research team executed prisoners through intravenous injections of cyanide and phenol gasoline. Others were deliberately burned with phosphorous to test the efficacy of pharmaceutical preparations on the burns.

One of those liberated from Buchenwald was Elie Wiesel, who became an American citizen and was awarded the Congressional Medal of Freedom in 1985. Wiesel won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986 for speaking out against violence, repression and racism.

For many years after his liberation from Buchenwald, Wiesel, a journalist, refused to write about his experiences, but in 1955, he published *Un die welt hot geshvign (And the world kept silent)*. The book has been published in several languages.

He is credited by some historians with giving the term “Holocaust” its present meaning.

The Almost Naked Hero

by
Lewis J. Haight, Pvt 5E



It was quite an interesting experience, this Brest campaign because when we first went there [August 1944], the Germans felt that they *were* well prepared, and as far as I'm concerned, they were pretty well prepared. We were told it would be like a "cake walk" because the occupation troops had been in there and there wasn't too much artillery. They forgot to tell us we did have 27 heavily-fortified areas plus four forts! Cake walk! Of course, E Company didn't take them all but this is what we were against, anyhow.

We again had plenty of night patrols and day patrols and usually our day patrols or reconnaissance patrols would just be 3 men, sometimes maybe I'd just go out by myself. Lt. Richard Aust would say, "Lew, go out and see what you can see." I might go as far as a hedgerow, maybe two hedgerows if I felt lucky, and see what I could see. Then I'd come back and tell them what I did see. We'd act from there.

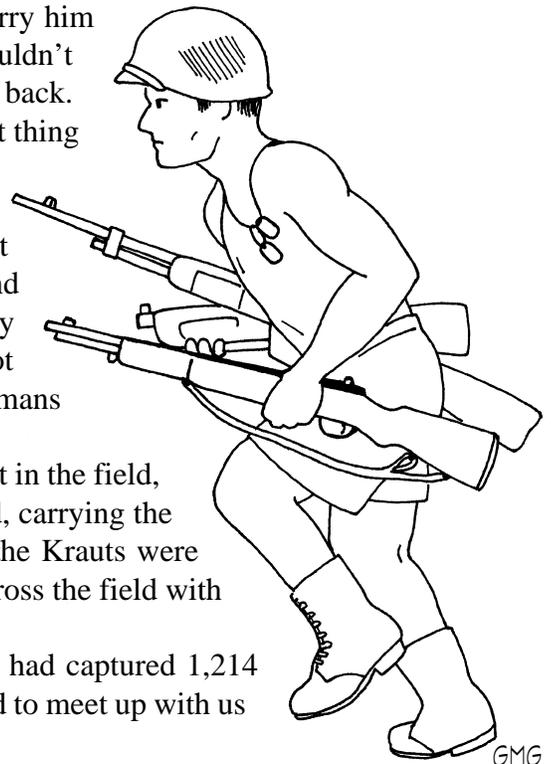
This one particular patrol, we went out there and I noticed this cut between these hedgerows. A shell had previously hit the side of the hedgerow, leaving an impression in the side. I figured I'd lay down there and scan with my binoculars to the front and side and see if I could pick up anything. All of a sudden, I heard a "crack." The dirt flew up in front of my face, and, needless

to say, I got out of there real fast. Before I got back to where the others were, "Pop" Zimma started to walk over to where I was. I told him, "Pop, look out for that hole."

And with that, he took one in the belly. He was hurt bad. We tried to patch him up the best we could and tried to make a sling to carry him back. He couldn't walk. There was no way he could walk, you couldn't throw him over your shoulder the way it was, and we sent Davis back. He left his automatic rifle there and he ran back to get help. First thing you know, Lt. Aust and Davis came back with a door. In the interim, shock kind of set in there so I took off my field jacket and wrapped him in my field jacket. I took my shirt off and put it around him and then I took my pants off and rolled them up and put them under his head and with that I took Sgt. Zimma's tommy gun and Davis's BAR and my rifle. I told them to wait until I got in position and when they got ready to go back I kept the Germans pretty busy and tried to take their minds off of them going back.

After they got him back, it dawned on me that here I was, out in the field, with just my skivvies on. With that I got up, ran the best I could, carrying the BAR, the Thompson submachine gun and my rifle. Probably the Krauts were back there laughing at me, saying, "Look at that guy running across the field with just his skivvies on."

The statistics show that in the Battle of Brest, the Rangers had captured 1,214 Germans and killed 624 and suffered 137 casualties, some joined to meet up with us at a later time. Then there were those who would never return.



... We boarded a train and we shot across France. It took us seven days or so. It took us quite a while to get across Belgium. First we were near Poneventer and Landerneau, France. The Rangers climbed aboard the old 40 and 8 boxcars for a 4-day trip — hobo style — and we wound up in Belgium and the French border town of Longuyon and we were there for a security mission outside of Arlon. After ten days they moved us to Differt, six km outside of Arlon, into a seminary. It can be generally said that it was some of the happiest days that the Rangers spent there. The people of Arlon, they treated us royally and the young lads learning to become priests in the seminary, they treated us good and like one Red Cross girl whom we knew as “Kay” put it, “Rangers, in a Seminary — Imagine!”

We behaved ourselves. The advanced detail had to check out, you know, to make sure that no enemy were hiding in the cellars or anything. They found a whole bunch of wine and they had a pretty good party. It cost them because they found out later that they had been into the altar wine. There was a little stink about that but it wound up that where we were staying inside, the poor advanced detail had to sleep in tents the rest of the time we were there.

...The remaining days of November we spent in Toul and Nancy, France, where training continued and new men were taught to be Rangers for the next battle....

Anyway, the next mission for the Rangers was Dresden and Ludwiger. We were assigned to be a part of General Patton’s 3rd Army and we were further attached to the 6th Calvary group. They had these armored vehicles, mounted with 37 mm cannon which wasn’t too powerful of a cannon either. It was more or less a 6th Calvary group and I understand they hadn’t been in any combat up until then. They had followed Patton across France....

We left there about December 1st and we went up there near the area of St. Abold and the remainder of the battalion moved as far as Porcelette by trucks and then they marched to Grunhoff. A 5-man patrol was

sent out to reconnoiter the town of Dresden. That night the Battalion moved up and set up a command post in Dresden. The next morning E Company along with B Company attacked across the Dresden/Carling Road and into a wooded area. We came to a large embankment. We stopped and went up to the top to see what was up there.

On the other side there were railroad tracks running along the top there, and then down the other side. It was not as steep as on the first side. We started taking in some more heavy artillery fire and you could hear the shells coming in, “click, click, click, click” going through the smaller branches until they hit a solid part of the trees,

before they went off and what we got was air burst effect and we couldn’t stay there.

...From there, we crossed the railroad tracks and into the woods. We were getting sporadic artillery fire coming in, but not as much as we were getting when we were down in that one area. We moved in to the outskirts of the woods, just before we left the woods, there was a pretty good-sized field. There was a road across the way. Then there was another steep wooded area on the other side of the road. Captain Greene, who relieved Captain Luther after Brest, stopped us there until we could get situated on how he was going to work it. He had us all issued two extra bandoleers of ammunition besides what we had on our belts. He said when we get ready, we’re going to form a skirmish line, similar to what we did when we took that one fort.

This time he said, “Form a skirmish line.” We moved out, we worked it back and forth, firing as we walked, and as one clip ran out, we’d put another clip in and we’d keep firing back across and keep on going until we crossed over the road into the wooded area again. We didn’t have any incoming fire while we were



doing this. There were several Germans later found in that area where they had been hit by that walking fire. I think that was used several times after this occasion where we used walking fire.

For me, it was the first time ever I encountered it and unfortunately, prior to jumping off, Raymond Norman, he was right next to me. He was the 2nd Scout, I was the 1st Scout, but it must have been too long for him because all of a sudden he said, "Lew, we've got to get the hell out of here."

As he started forward, I got up and started after him and said, "Norm, hold up, hold up, we're going to be moving out, we're going to be moving out."

With that, I don't know where he came from, but a Jerry stood right up and got Norm right in the chest with one round. He must not have known I was so close, or whatever, but he didn't have a chance to reload. As soon as he saw me he had that kind of startled look in his eyes and, needless to say, I put him down. Then I saw Norm was really hit bad. Being that we were in a line, I knew I wasn't going to leave him behind. I went across to see if I could get some help to get him back. He didn't look like he was in a position to do any walking. I don't know, I just couldn't pick him up and throw him over my shoulder.

I went back and I told Klett we were going to get someone to help me, Norm got hit bad. He told me we were moving out. I said, "I'll go back."

He said, "No, you can't. We're moving out."

With that we started moving. He said, "Don't worry. Someone will get him. Someone will find him."

We had it good going up into the other wooded area. We, with the 1st platoon, started taking some heavy fire from a machine gun that was to our right. Lt. Aust said, "Lew, see if you can get a couple of guys and work around in back and take care of it."

We always carried one or two fragmentation grenades or anti-tank grenades in our pack. We decided —I can remember who I picked to go with me — we put on our grenade launchers and we started out, went up the hill and started cutting back around, pretty much we were abreast but in back of him. We got as close as we could go and we fired our fragmentation grenades down into the machine gun nest. It was taken care of. I've kind of forgotten just what happened after that.

Then it was a couple of more times after we cleaned up that section, we moved up into another area, we dug in for the night. Bill Boyd had me dig the holes for them. We hunkered down for the night. He said, "Nobody fire any ammunition." From what I understand, we were cut off and F Company was going to try to get through to us. All night long, they had these 255 mm railroad guns. You couldn't hear them go off. All you could hear was this kind of roar going through the trees and when they hit something solid, there would be a horrific explosion. They kept that up all night long. One area, then they'd move to another area. Then they'd move back. Things started to get a little rough.

We got out of that area, though, and that night I couldn't get Norman out of my mind. I couldn't get Norman out of my mind at all. I kept thinking, "I left him there. Why did I leave him there? I shouldn't have done that."

Anyway, he was dead. He didn't live too long. They did get him. They told me that. It was on my mind that I had left him.

It seemed like no matter where we'd go in the battle, we'd be going forward and taking ground and lose



Lew Haight and Raymond Norman
photo taken in Arlon, Belgium shortly before
Norman was KIA.

a little ground, and taking ground, and digging in again, taking this town and that town. The first thing you know, this one night I guess Bill Boyd must have told Capt. Greene, “Something’s wrong with Lew. All he talks about is Norman.” They figured they’d get me the heck off the line. That was my last combat.

[Call it what you will — psycho neurosis, shell shock or battle fatigue — Lew Haight later wound up in a hospital where the Silver Star he was awarded for his above heroic action finally caught up with him.]

One day the nurse came in and she said, “Well, we’ve got a hero here. She walked over to me. “You know what, you’ve been awarded the Silver Star.”

“Huh, I was?”

The thought that came in my mind, relating back, as to when I could have possibly won a Silver Star, was maybe when I jumped out of the trench there

and ran to the machine gun and started firing at the Germans and cut the German fire down so that we could get reorganized again. It turned out it was the incident with “Pop” Zimma when I used my own clothes to keep him warm and things like that. I think when I ran across the field in my skivvies in front of the German positions and drew the fire onto me instead of the guys evacuating “Pop.” Anyway, that was a big deal when I got the Silver Star.

CITATION FOR THE SILVER STAR

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS LEWIS J. HAIGHT, (12158541). On 31 August 1944, a patrol from Company “E”, 5th Ranger Battalion, while returning from an important reconnaissance mission was attacked by hostile enemy fire. One man was seriously wounded. Private HAIGHT though exposed to heavy small arms fire, without hesitating, unclothed himself and used his own garments to bandage the wound of his injured comrade. Then this soldier, with complete disregard for personal safety, seized an automatic rifle and fired into the hostile machine gun nest, drawing fire upon himself thus diverting enemy fire from the other men in the patrol evacuating the casualty. The gallantry, disregard for personal safety and unswerving loyalty to comrades-in-arms displayed by this enlisted man is in keeping with the highest traditions of the service.

The hospital was better than combat, but still no picnic

I was getting a ride back to England aboard a plane and I remember being pushed into an ambulance, I think they were British nurses. They took me to the hospital and I can’t remember the name of it. I was there about two days and they said, “You’re going to start a treatment program.”

And I didn’t know what this was. This was something they were trying out. I checked with our VA hospital and I don’t think they ever heard of it. What they did to us, after about three days, they started injecting us, they started out with 1 cc of insulin shots. 1 cc a day about 6 o’clock in the morning, then we wouldn’t eat until nine. The next day 2 ccs, the next day 3 ccs, up to 10 ccs of insulin. I guess maybe around the eighth day, this guy next to me, he started going into convulsions. They came running in like a bunch of banshees and they got him and gave him a shot of glucose, it quieted him down a little bit.

Every night they’d give us some orange juice and some cookies and so forth. After I saw what they guy went through, I said, “Hell on this, I ain’t eating for the next two nights.”

I put the cookies under my mattress. I put the cookies under my mattress until the next day. I never did eat them so I didn’t cheat any.

Across the way from us they had another group of beds and they were behind curtains. You’d see these nurses and ward boys go in there and the first thing you’d know, a guy would get up and they’d be walking them up and down the hall or whatever, and bring them back. Every day they’d do that. After our 10 shots we were to have that treatment. The guys who were all done, they said, “Boy, when you start that you can figure you’re going to lose three days.”

“Huh, three days?”

“yeah, they give you these sodium pentothal shots and they give them to you every day for three days. They keep you knocked out.”

Well what they did that for, I didn't know. When they took you back, it was my understanding this was used for truth serum. Anyway they gave us that for three days and I don't remember anything about those three days.

It was during that time that made you kind of sit up and think what war can do to people because this poor guy, he was in grave registration. During the daytimes we'd talk, sitting around, horsing around, and then it gets nighttime and you start dozing off and you've got your own thoughts. This poor kid he'd just start saying, "I'm not going to bury no more. They can't make me bury no more. I'm not going to let them make me bury no more."

Each time he said it he would get louder and louder and more excited. Here come the nurse running in and she'd give him a shot to quiet him down. That was one thing.

I had some pretty weird dreams about leaving Norman and a couple of other things that happened in the past and things I'd seen. Sometimes I'd wake up hollering and sometimes I'd wake up crying.

At the very end of the ward, all locked in by himself, they had this full Colonel. He was in the mental ward and he had lost his whole battalion. I think it could have been down in Sicily 'cause I think General Clark ordered this assault across the Po River. They just annihilated them. He was there. He didn't yell, he was quiet, whether they kept him sedated or not I don't know.

...While I was there at the hospital, I got a pass to go to Bristol. There was a bus that took us there. I got the pass and went in on the bus, went to this place like a USO or something. There was this gal, in there singing, and she sang this song that touched me. I went over and got to talking to her. She said, "What are you doing for Christmas?"

I said, "I don't know. I don't know if I'll even be here."

She said, "If you're here, I'd like you to come in and have Christmas with my family."

She gave me an address in Bristol. Well, Christmas was only two days down the line. I went back to camp and I told them I was invited to this family's house to spend the night. They gave me a pass but I didn't have any money. I went to the Red Cross and I wanted to borrow a pound so I could get transportation into Bristol. They said, "No problem."

I had to fill out these forms, and they asked: your name, is your mother and father still alive, is your father working yet? And all this and that and all of a sudden, I said, "Hey, all I want is a pound. I'm not asking for the mint."

They said, "Well, we have to do this."

I said, "Just forget it."

I went in and I hocked my watch. I got the money but I missed the bus. I did pretty good. I hitchhiked. I got into Bristol pretty quick and I found their house and had a nice meal. It wasn't spectacular, but it was a nice meal. They had a daughter, Gwenna. She wrote to me quite a bit during the war and after the war for a little bit. It got time to hit the sack and she came over and said, "Lew, would you like a bed warmer?"

"Yeah, yeah, I'd like a bed warmer."

With that she came in with a pretty good-sized brick that had been sitting near the fireplace. Well, the German bombs had blown a hole in the roof. They just had a tarpaulin over it. It was kind of cool at night. Anyway she brought this big brick in there, a hot brick wrapped in a towel so I had my bed warmer for the night.

[After his hospitalization, Lew Haight was reclassified, no more combat, and wound up in the MPs, Because he could type, he found himself behind a typewriter — much to his chagrin. Captain Faust began telling Lew and his friends Philby, who flew airborne gliders, and Hayes what was expected of them.]

He said, "You're in the MPs now. I see you got your little piping around your hat. That's Infantry. You have to take that off and put gold and green piping on your hat. The is the 65th MP Company. We are not

authorized to have any insignias so you're going to have to take those insignias off."

I know of lost my cool there. I put my hand on my shoulder and said, "Ain't no SOB going to take this Ranger patch off MY shoulder."

With that, Philby said, "That goes for me, too, with my Airborne patch."

Captain Faust put both hands in front of him with his palms up, "Now, now, now, now, now, now settle down. I'm sure we can make some kind of arrangements for you to keep those patches on, your insignias on."

Then he said to me, "I see you do have some medals there."

I said, "Yeah, I have the Silver Star and the Purple Heart."

He said, "I wish you'd wear those while you're here."

I said, "No sweat."

So we started MP-ing.

[It didn't take long for Haight to become fed up with his MP duties. One day, deciding that he was able to return to combat, he set out to try to find his old outfit.]

The guy behind the desk said, "Whatcha doing, Lew?"

"I'm looking for a way to get the heck out of here and see if I can find my old outfit."

With that, he said, "What?"

I said, "Yeah, I want to get the heck out of here. This ain't for me."

So I went up, I kept a demolition kit for a pack and I packed my drawers in it, some socks and some candy bars and the next day, I started on down the steps, walking out the door and they had two guards there. One of them said, "Where you going, Haight?"

I said, "I'm going to see if I can find my old outfit."

He said, "You can't do that!"

I replied, "I'm doing it."

[Haight wound up in Stuttgart, Germany where he was picked up by MPs who warned him he was close to the lines and might get picked up for desertion (he was still wearing his Ranger patch). In a chow line he learned not to joke about "making a break" after he was "cold-cocked" by the sergeant. The next morning Haight was escorted to breakfast by guards who had orders to "shoot to kill" if he made a false move. He was finally shipped to a prison camp Paris, France.]

Anyway I was there a little bit longer and we went out for reveille, and all of a sudden I heard, "Ranger, what the HELL are you doing here?"

He comes walking over to me as he said it. It was a Colonel from the 4th Ranger Battalion. The 1st, 3rd and 4th Ranger Battalions were annihilated in Italy in Cisterna. Out of 1800 men, 199 went home as a unit. Now they all didn't get killed. A great many of them were taken prisoners, some of them escaped and things like that. He evidently survived because they shipped him back home and they made him a commandant of this prison camp.

Anyway, he said to me (well, at that time, the war did end in Europe) he said, "If I give you a provisional MP pass, you promise you'll go back to MP Headquarters in Marseille?"

I said, "Yessir, I will The State of War is over. What have I got now?"

So I got back to the barracks and they said, "What was that all about? What was that all about?"

I said, "The Colonel's going to give me an MP pass to go back to Marseille on my own."

They said, "yeah, yeah, yeah."

Well, anyway, next thing I reported to him and he had the pass ready and he told the Sergeant, "Take him

to the station. Make sure he gets on the train.” then he looked at me and said, “you get on that train and make sure you keep your ass on that train until you get to Marseille.”

“Yessir, I assure you I will.”

So I did and I got back to Marseille.

I reported in and the snot-nosed Sergeant said, “Well, how many Germans did you kill this time?”

I told him, “None of your damned business,” or something to that effect. Down on the board they still had my “Wanted” poster with my picture on it. It said, “Approach with caution — may be armed and dangerous.” I wish I had kept that damned thing.

[Lew Haight returned home, married Sue Farley, a girl he met before he joined the Rangers and started a family — two sons and two daughters. He now makes North Carolina his home.]



I bought a lemon and got a peach

by
James Gabaree, Sgt 5A

At the end of World War II, it was difficult to buy a new car. I needed a set of wheels. A three hundred dollar bribe, plus knowing the right people, was needed to purchase a new Kaiser. The vehicle looked like an upside down bathtub. Being a new brand on the market, it attracted a lot of attention. It turned out to be a lemon and the company went out of business.



A wartime buddy of mine said he knew a girl who wanted to see my new gig. A double date was arranged. We went to a cocktail lounge. When I first met my date, I was struck as if by lightning. It was love at first sight. At least on my part...She was beautiful, with a great smile, warm personality, kind and compassionate.

There was a problem. She didn't drink and wasn't too impressed with our going to a cocktail lounge. To remedy the situation, the next day I filled my car with balloons and took her ice-skating out in the country. She was impressed.

Another problem, she was dating a blond, blue-eyed Adonis. He was an MIT Graduate Engineer ... a bit of competition. I was a High School drop out, a tradesman, and more that a bit wild.



After a few dates, I had to go out of town on a construction job. When I returned, I discovered that she had had a date with Adonis while I was away. I was furious; didn't she know I was going to marry her?

I persisted and stole her heart. We became engaged. However, at one point, she wanted to return the ring.

As I write this, we have been married for fifty-eight years. The flame is still burning. I adore the woman, she is a peach. As the old saying goes, "It was the best day of my life!"



Book opens the way to romance

by

Richard N. Hathaway, Jr., T/Sgt 5HQ

When I returned from WW II to my home, I did not want to become seriously involved with any of the opposite sex. What I had seen in England and in the rest of Europe had turned me off on all females. Through work I met an older woman and her husband, Mable and Carl Swartz, and they introduced me to Bud and Flo Clark. As a result, I went out with this foursome. I was always the fifth wheel. Mable was trying to get me to date a young lady that she knew and I always rejected the idea until one day I was so embarrassed that I agreed to let Mable arrange a blind date.



Unknown to me, she had frequently called this lady but she had refused any arrangement. One day she called and the lady's younger sister answered the phone. Mable then asked the younger sister, Phillis, what Elizabeth was doing that evening. She answered that she wasn't doing anything. Mable then asked to speak to Elizabeth. Previously, Elizabeth had always had an excuse. This time she had none so she agreed to a blind date.

Bud had a car and Carl had his. Carl and Mable picked me up and we all went to Elizabeth's home at 16 First Avenue in the south end of Albany. Mable took me into the home where I met all of the family and Elizabeth. She was dressed to go out and was sitting in their parlor reading a book. Thank God for that book. I had just finished reading the same book. The title was "The Black Rose." We have both books in our library today. That's over 60 years ago. That book gave me an opening conversation and it did the same for Elizabeth. We spoke of Oxford, England and I had been there and knew a little of its history.

We had a wonderful date at a nearby bar and restaurant called Altiers. They had a small dance band and both Elizabeth and I liked to dance. The result of this date was that I made one for the next day, Sunday. We dated a lot and I didn't have a car so we frequently traveled by taxi. One evening we were returning from a date and we were seated in the back of the cab. The driver asked us if we were cold. It was very cold out. Elizabeth replied, "I'm warm, I've got a very good Armstrong heater back here."

That did it. Back at her house I asked her to marry me. She said yes and I said I thought that I'd better ask her father. I did and he said, "Sure, go ahead."

I always kid her about this. I said, "Your father went into the bathroom and was looking in the looking glass and rubbing his hands together and said, 'Ha! Ha! We've landed another sucker.'"

An older sister was married. Her family was a large one: three girls and three boys. One of the boys had died before I met her.

Our religion was a bit of a stumbling block. She was a Roman Catholic and I was a member of the Episcopal Church and also a Mason. We could not be married in the Roman Catholic Church. We discussed this and decided that we would be one family with one religion. We started looking and finally decided on the Methodist religion. We did not join the order but went to several services. It was not what we wanted. We were still going on dates with Mable and Carl and Bud and Flo Clark. We happened to be discussing our problem with Mable and she suggested that we go to her church with her and her husband. It was a Lutheran Church. We were welcomed. It was very close to our own services and we have been Lutherans ever since. When we moved to our home, we



transferred to the First Lutheran Church. This is the oldest Lutheran Church in America. We recently celebrated our three hundred and fiftieth anniversary.

We are happily married and have raised four boys. All of them married and we have six grand children and one great-grandchild. We are unable to attend any Ranger reunions. I am unable to travel and miss visiting our Ranger friends. I have COPD and also a bad heart. At my age, I cannot be operated on. I am also an arthritic and diabetic. It is just a matter of time. I have no regrets. I have lived a wonderful life and my wife and I have seen a lot of this world. We lived in Japan with our two oldest boys for over a year. We have traveled through England, Scotland, France, Belgium, Germany and Hawaii. We have friends in all those places and one family in Finland. My best wishes to all the Rangers and the sons and daughters. Rangers Lead The Way.



Dick and Betty Hathaway



LLH

**Presidential Unit Citation
Philippine Presidential Citation**

**6th Ranger Battalion
of World War II**

26 September 1944 – 30 December 1945

New Guinea

Leyte

Luzon

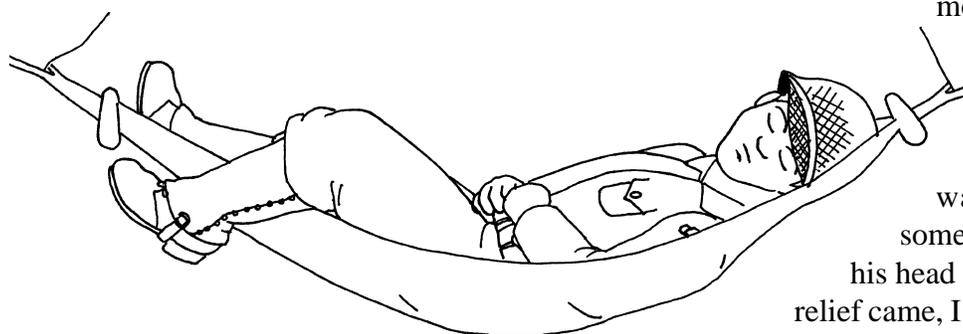
Pacific Memories

by
Austin Bagby S/Sgt 6D

Some of us 6th Battalion Rangers took our training at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, then we went to California where we shipped out for Brisbane, Australia. After two months, we were sent to Port Moresby, New Guinea, where we joined with the 98th Field Artillery. About all we did there was exercise the mules. The 75 howitzer broke down into six loads which we put on the mules.

Col. Mucci was sent down in 1945 to train us for the Rangers. We trained in 95 to 100 degree heat. But while I was in the 98th, we slept in jungle hammocks in the field hung about two feet off the ground. I had been on guard that night and when I was waking up, the cook said, "Don't get out of there just yet."

A snake seven feet long was going under my hammock. Then in the Philippines, I was on guard at the old bank, the doors were heavy and around 11 p.m., the door started to swing inward. I thought one of the men was playing a prank on me.



When it opened all the way, a big snake had pushed the door open and came into the bank.

I got behind the teller's cage and watched him. He went behind some safes and coiled himself so that

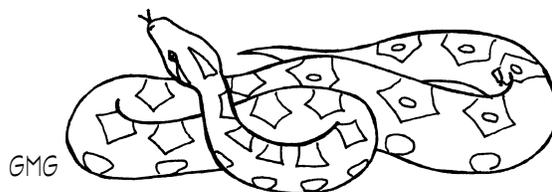
his head was on top watching. When my relief came, I told the sergeant. He said, "You been drinking?"

I said, "You know I don't drink."

We got an old Jap rifle with a bayonet on it and killed the snake.

It measured seven feet, six inches.

They told me it was a Boa constrictor. Gen. Kruger's quarters was



up the street from there. He asked Col. Mucci, "Why didn't the guard shoot it?"

He replied that I didn't want to spend time in the jail because I had woke him up. The general got a little smile on his face.

I wasn't on the Raid, but company D was up behind enemy lines for three weeks running night patrols to get the guns out of the mountains so they couldn't see them from the air. We would send carrier pigeons back to 6th Army headquarters and they relayed the positions to the airfield to bomb them.

I went from the Philippines to Japan, left there in October and got my discharge at 12:30 on New Year's Day. I was home by 7 p.m. that night. I met the woman who would become my wife and we got married in July of 1946. This July, we will celebrate 60 years of marriage and are doing well for our age. We have one boy and three girls, eight grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Good Soldiers Make Good Athletes

by

Glenn Matthews, 1st Lt 6Hq

When the war was about over in the Philippines, we were preparing to go to Japan, but had a little time to play. In order to provide a little well-deserved recreation, we got some sports equipment and organized some teams. We found that the Rangers were also good athletes. This was the basketball team and they beat every team in the area. We found that good soldiers make good athletes.

When Col. Mucci formed the 6th Rangers, he announced that, to stay in the Rangers, each soldier was expected to be an expert on his own weapon, and each officer would be an expert on all of our weapons. To that end he gave us ammo to practice with and time to do so. I saw the value of that practice many times with tales of extremely good marksmanship in combat. One example comes to mind.

A Ranger patrol on a re-con mission, somewhere east of Manila, came upon an open spot on the trail and saw a lone Jap on the next rise. Sgt. Hill (see picture) said, "I'll get him" and dropped to one knee. He fired one shot and the Jap disappeared in the vegetation at the side of the trail. It seemed prudent to avoid that spot for awhile so they detoured around it and finished their patrol. On the way back, they realized they were on that same trail when they came upon the dead Jap soldier by the side of the trail. Recognizing that it had been an extremely good shot, some of the men counted the paces to the point where the shot was fired and calculated 600 yards.

Sgt. Hill wasn't done yet. When he got back to San Fernando, he helped us beat the 6th Army Headquarters team. We had beaten them previously, by a couple of points, but they complained that their best man was sick and wanted a re-match. This time we shellacked them. I think the picture was taken at that time. Sorry I can't give credit to the one who told me this story. It was one of the other Rangers on that patrol and I can't remember his name.



Left to right—Rear: S/Sgt Thomas Gaylord 6D, 1st/Sgt Steven Francek 6D, S/Sgt Wendal Foss 6D, Pfc William Childs 6A; Center: 1st Lt John Murphy 6F, LTC Robert Garrett HQ, 1st Lt Glenn Matthews HQ; Front: S/Sgt Harold Bergum 6D, T-5 Chester Lopata 6 HQ/B, S/Sgt Charley Hill 6A, Pfc Frank McBride 6D, Faust 6? (not listed in roster). Note: Murphy, Garrett and Matthews were sponsors, not players.

Letting my men decide my future

by

Leo Strausbaugh, Capt 6B

In June 1944, I was a platoon leader in B Company of the 6th Ranger Battalion. I was an artillery officer having gone overseas a year and a half prior as a lieutenant with the 98th Field Artillery Mule Pack Battalion and volunteered to serve with the 6th battalion when it was converted to Rangers. I knew my platoon members well and most of them knew me and how I performed.

One day I took my platoon out into the boondocks away from everyone else for a private conversation. The men were aware that I was trained as an artillery officer. I had the men sit down and I told them that we were about to finish our Ranger training and would be going into combat and I wanted to know if they had confidence in me or if they preferred I leave and let an infantry officer replace me.

I told the men that I would be gone for a good 30 minutes and my platoon sergeant would be in charge. I asked that they discuss me, then vote on the question that they preferred I stay or leave. I told them I could transfer by merely telling Lt. Col. Mucci I wanted to leave the Rangers. I asked that I be discussed freely and when I returned that Sgt. Dixon would give me the decision. I promised I would not ask any questions as to who said what, so they had no worry about speaking freely about me. I then left and returned as planned. Sgt. Dixon then saluted me and said, "Sir, every man in the platoon wants you to stay."

That ended the conversation and I never since asked a question about the meeting. I was thrilled and I can say to this day that if the answer was for me to go, it would have destroyed me emotionally and ruined my future as a Ranger. I went on as their platoon leader until I was promoted to captain and became the company commander. It was a risk that I felt I had to take and I came out on top. I have been told by some people that it took a lot of guts to do it. How glad I am that I did. No guts, no glory.



Return to the Philippines

by
Austin Bagby, S/Sgt 6D

The 6th Ranger Battalion led the return of the US Army to the Philippines. Company D was assigned to land on Suluan Island and knock out the radio tower and return to the ship. A typhoon was starting to hit as we were to land. The waves were 20 to 30 feet high. As we were climbing down the rope ladders we were told that when the landing craft comes up on a wave jump into it or it will crush your legs between the ships hull and landing craft. We did as ordered and on one got injured.

We were on Suluan Island about ten minutes after landing when we heard gunfire at the head of our column. Orders came back for two more scouts which was Pfc Jennicke and me. As I was first scout, I led the way. When we got to the head of the column there lay Pfc Zufall and Pfc Cannon. Zufall was dead and Cannon had a leg wound. They were taken care of by the Rangers behind us so we proceeded to the base of the cliff where there was a narrow and slick path. You could not see three feet on either side of the path. There was a stairway up the cliff and we were in the open with no cover. The Navy had fired three air burst rounds close to the tower to help us. When I got to the top I found that the Japs must have jumped out of their bunks so fast from the air bursts that they left their shoes under the bunks.

When we returned to our landing craft to go back to the ship the landing craft had been washed ashore by the typhoon and there was no way for us to get back to the ship that day. We dug in under the shacks for the night. Our clothes were wet and we had no dry clothes so it made for a cold night. Next morning a patrol was sent out and had a fire fight with some Japs. That was when Pfc. Dick was wounded and died that night onboard the ship. The ship didn't have medical facilities nor a doctor who could operate on him. A Navy landing craft came in the next morning and picked us off Suluan Island.

From there we went to Dinaget Island to help the rest of the battalion. We were guarding the signal light when the convoy for the invasion of Leyte came through the strait that night. There were 87 ships in the convoy and they looked like dark shadows on the water. This was three days after the 6th Rangers landed on Suluan, Dinaget and Homohom Islands. We were on our own as we had no air cover for these three days. God was with us on this landing.

"The President of the United States ordered me to break through the Japanese lines and proceed from Corregidor to Australia for the purpose, as I understand it, of organizing the American offensive against Japan, a primary objective of which is the relief of the Philippines. I came through and I shall return."

Gen. Douglas MacArthur in a statement to reporters after arriving in Australia following his escape from Corregidor

Leyte action

by

Glenn Matthews, 1st Lt 6Hq

When the Rangers moved from Dinagat to Leyte, they put us a little south of Tacloban and near 6th Army headquarters. A little later they moved a hospital into the same area. The Rangers, being the gentlemen that they were, volunteered to help put up tents, dig foxholes, etc. for the nurses. That seemed the right thing to do and everybody appeared to be happy with the arrangement. After all, some of these men hadn't seen a white woman for about two years.

Coincidentally, at this time we were finding a lot of intoxication in some of the men. The source of the alcohol was unknown and nobody talked. We supposed it was from the natives until the commander of the hospital announced that a 55-gallon drum of medical alcohol was missing. Simple logic indicated the barrel was somewhere in the 6th Ranger area.

I was assigned the job of finding that barrel of high powered hooch and searched every inch of our area. I looked down every trail into our position and the jungle areas nearby and found nothing.

After awhile the problem seemed to go away by itself. I supposed they had consumed the entire lot and probably the hospital had better security by then.

We left Leyte and invaded Luzon and I forgot all about it until about fifty years later when we were having a reunion and I brought it up at one of the many "bull sessions".

"I've always wondered where you guys hid that barrel."

Somebody laughed and said, "Lieutenant, we didn't hide that barrel, we just changed the label."

Case solved!

It makes me wonder if we are, some day, going to find a barrel of Anthrax in Iraq — maybe labeled "OIL" or perhaps "ALCOHOL"?



GMG

Behind enemy lines

by
Austin Bagby, S/Sgt 6D

We were pulling guard duty and doing normal routine at our camp at San Fernando in Pampanga Province when orders came down for Company D to go up behind enemy lines and run night patrols for two weeks to locate Japanese gun positions. This was in the mountains near Bagio and Trinidad. Air reconnaissance couldn't locate them from the air. We loaded up in trucks but usually we had to walk to a location on this type of mission. We rode down to San Fernando, La Union (which is like another state in the USA). We were met there by a Philippine guerrilla who then lead us behind the enemy lines after it got dark. When we stopped to rest he told us not to lean against any trees as there were ticks in this area. We then continued on for the night. We slept out in the open in a dry rice paddy which was the hardest ground that I ever laid on.

The guerrilla said the Japs would not expect us to be out in the open. The next morning we went on to where we would have our base camp which was 8000 feet up the mountain. It was very cold that night. We wore fatigue caps as we didn't want helmets to make a noise scrapping against the tree branches. We sent the gun position location information back to 6th Army headquarters by carrier pigeons. Headquarters would then notify the air force to bomb and strafe the positions. We were so close to the Japanese lines that they shot down our first carrier pigeon.

When the air force dropped our rations to us they missed our location and dropped them to close to the Japanese so we couldn't get to the rations. So they made another drop. When the two weeks were up they ordered us to stay another week. We moved our CP (command post) closer so we didn't have so far to walk. We had just arrived at a location where we were going to set up when the Japanese started coming up the dry riverbed on each side of us. I told the sergeant and they burned our maps and we made a forced march to get away from them. We climbed over rocks as big as a house and finally stopped for the night. It was raining so Pfc. George Gibson and I ran some hogs out from under a shack and we slept there for the night. Next morning the location we had left the night before was swarming with Japs. We got away by the skin of our teeth. God was with us again on this mission.



Richard F. Zani

*Private, 6th Ranger Battalion, B Company
800th Military Police Battalion
Machine gun/squad sergeant – Philippines
Occupying Forces: Military Police - Japan*

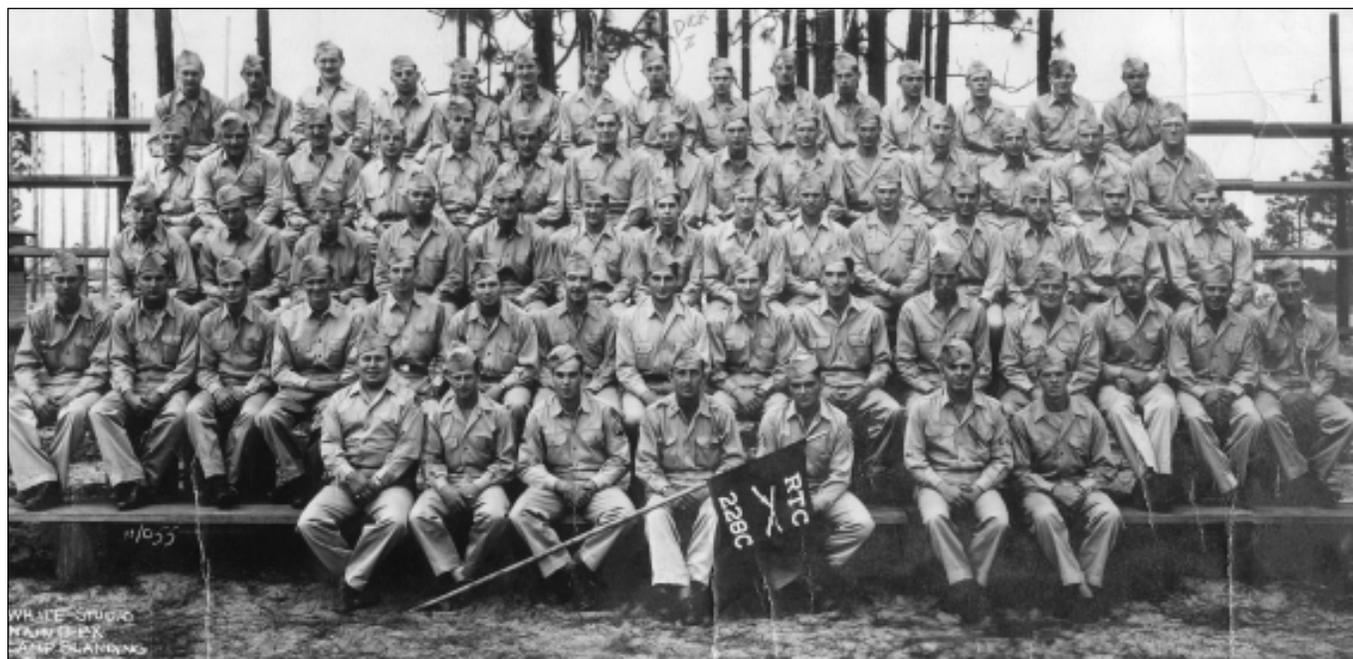
Richard F. Zani was born in Medford, MA, on July 11, 1926, the son of John and Katherine (Volluletti) Zani.

Upon graduation from the Medford MA Public Schools, he entered the military and served as an N.C.O. with the U.S. Army Rangers in the Pacific Theater during WW II. He graduated from Salem Teachers College (MA) and received a master's degree from Boston State College. He met and married his wife of 45 years, Elaine, in 1956. He began his career as an elementary school teacher at various New England schools, and became principal for the Pine Grove School in Rowley, MA. In 1966, he became the regional superintendent of schools located in the Brattleboro, VT area for three years. In 1970, he became superintendent of Rutland Central Supervisory District (West Rutland, Rutland Town and Proctor elementary and high schools), a position he held for nearly 20 years.

After retirement in 1988, he served as interim principal of Bethel and Ludlow Elementary Schools, and Ludlow High School; he later served as interim superintendent of Ludlow schools. In 2004, he was honored by Salem State College, receiving the Outstanding Educator Award. Throughout his career, what was best for each child was his main concern.

He lived in Proctor for 31 years, was a member of St. Dominic's Catholic Church, the West Rutland Rotary and was on Proctor Library board of trustees. He enjoyed traveling and especially enjoyed trips to Italy to visit family. He was a people person who loved to laugh and enjoyed telling jokes; he taught many of his favorites to his grandchildren. He also loved spending time at the family cottage in New Hampshire and helped found the Jolly Roger Scholarship Fund which aids local high school students.

Richard Zani was buried with military honors in the Vermont Veterans Cemetery in Randolph Center, VT.



The Surrender and Occupation of Japan

by

Ernst J. (Ernie) Behnisch, Cpl 6D

As the war in the Philippines was winding down, we maintained our Ranger activities which at the time consisted of guard duty at 6th Army Headquarters, water towers, gasoline dumps and other military installations in the San Fernando area. Some nights guard duty was difficult as there was a heavy overcast and no light from the moon or stars. Guarding these facilities under those conditions required that I stay in one place and not move as I could not see where I was stepping. I would listen for any noises indicating personnel movement.

On August 6, 1945 one atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. We heard the news but could not contemplate how such a bomb could level a city as big as Hiroshima and kill hundreds of thousands of people. Then we heard that another atomic bomb was dropped several days later on August 9 on Nagasaki with utter devastation of property and lives. It took several days for us to get information from the army Stars and Stripes newspaper as to what the atomic bomb was made of for us to understand its power. VJ Day followed on August 15 with the formal Japanese surrender on September 2.

Had the war with Japan not ended, our 6th Ranger Battalion would have been one of the first of the US Army forces in the invasion of Japan. The 6th Rangers were used to clear out Japanese communications for the invasion of the Philippines in October 1944. The Rangers cleared the islands of Homonhon, Dinagat and Suluan knocking out coastal communications and light houses in the advance of the major invasion forces so the major Japanese forces could not be informed of the US invasion force entering the seas around Letye. This resulted in the 6th Ranger Battalion being the first American troops to return to the Philippine Islands in WW II. We assumed this would also be our major operation in the invasion of Japan.

The planning for the invasion of Japan had reached an advanced stage, it was to be known as Operation "DOWNFALL" with the first phase to be Operation "OLYMPIC" with the landing on southern Kyushu on November 1, 1945. The 6th Army, of which the 6th Ranger Battalion was a unit, was chosen for the initial assault. Preliminary operations to be carried out were to occupy the islands lying to the west and south of Kyushu. The military expected extremely high casualties. The invasion of Honshu was scheduled for March 1, 1946 and was to be known as Operation "CORONET." Thanks to President Truman for his decision to drop the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Near the end of our stay in the Philippines, we were encamped for about a week in the hills north of Clark Air Field. Word was received that we were to leave for the occupation of Japan. Our company commander Captain Thomas Lyman gave orders to destroy all munitions and other explosives that we had with us at the time. Every Ranger had an opportunity to fire all the different weapons including mortars, rocket launchers, etc. until all munitions were used or destroyed. It sounded like a major battle was commencing. The Filipinos in the nearby villages were terrified that the Japanese were attacking us. Word was sent out to them as to what we were doing.

The 6th Rangers left the Philippines for Japan on September 15, 1945 and were among the first occupation forces to enter Japan. We landed at Wakayama beach on the main island of Honshu on September 25. There were heavy artillery emplacements and trenches all along the beach. That night it was cold, rainy and miserable. We ate "C" rations in an open air crematory while they were cremating a body. Our medical team brought in



some Coca Cola syrup and mixed it with some 180 proof medical alcohol. There were a few Rangers that didn't know the strength of the alcohol and drank too much and passed out.



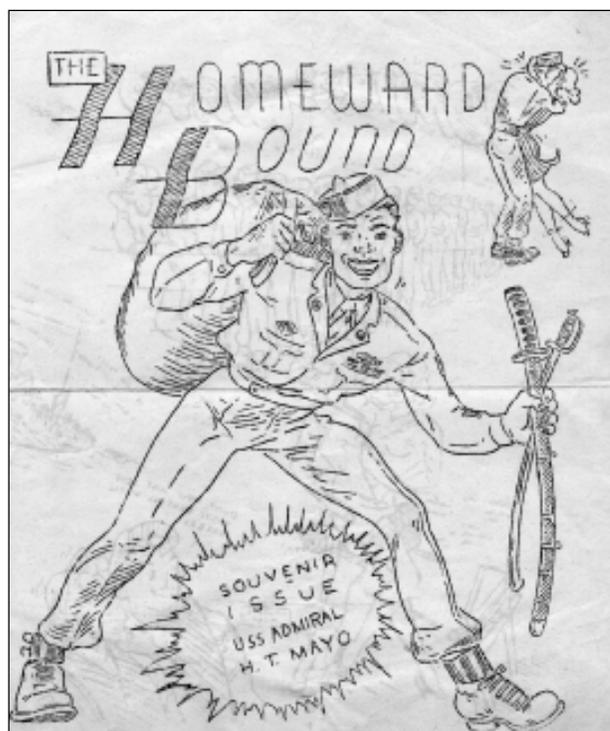
From there we were transported by train a distance of 65 miles and then 2 miles by truck. The train was equipped only with boxcars. We were so tired that we didn't care where we slept. My location was in one of the boxcars on the top of cases of white phosphorous mortar rounds. The next morning we arrived at our destination which was the former Fujinimori Military Barracks at Fushimi, just outside Kyoto. The Camp was renamed Camp Fisher in honor of Ranger Captain Fisher who died of wounds received in the Cabanatuan Raid. While in Japan, the Rangers had very limited duties such as guarding 6th Army Headquarters, mail trains and military buildings. With the end of the war, garrison duties began and lots of close order drills kept us busy. Because Kyoto was not an industrial city, but a very religious city in Japan with a great number of Buddha and Shinto temples, it was never bombed. It was a pleasure to visit these temples and see the ancient history and relics that they possessed.

While at Camp Fisher, we were permitted to go into the villages and cities but were not allowed to carry any weapons outside the camp. At first we were concerned that the Japanese citizens would attack us so we traveled in groups of three or more. We could see the elders peeking from their windows. The children started to come out of the houses into the streets where we were walking and we would give them chocolate bars. Because of the way we treated the children, the elders started to come out and were extremely courteous to us. We would give them cigarettes and they were pleased. Later, we would sell them cigarettes for about 300 Japanese yen per carton which was at that time equivalent to about \$20 US. This gave us money to buy beer and saki.

On November 5, 1945, the company clerk was being rotated back to the United States as he had served his time. I was promoted to Company Clerk and the rank of Corporal. I was responsible for maintaining all company "D" records and issue morning reports to be given to Ranger headquarter.

When we were deactivated, I was ordered to destroy all company records. As I was doing this, I came across records of the Cabanatuan Raid in the Philippines marked "CONFIDENTIAL" which I personally kept. In 1957, I joined the World War II Ranger Battalions Association. It was in April 1981 that I sent the records to Ralph Sharp which he acknowledged that he would give them to the Darby Foundation Museum in my name.

I recently looked back in the high school Senior Year Book and it showed the various sports I engaged in while in high school. I had two years of football, basketball and "Ranger Training," I remember we climbed ropes, had obstacles to endure and did various Ranger exercises to enhance body building. It's ironic that I did that while in school never dreaming I would one day become an Army Ranger.



My final mission

by

Leo Strausbaugh, Capt 6B

I was in my orderly room in San Fernando, Luzon, Philippines. It was May 30, 1945 when the phone rang and my Battalion Commander LTC Garrett called for me to report to his office. When I did, he told me to be prepared for my company to leave by convoy the next morning. We were to go on route three north to the northern tip of Luzon then east to within a few miles from Aparri. Our mission would be to capture the town of Aparri.

We would meet up with Major Connely who was in command of a task force who would be involved in the overall operation. It was about 435 miles to our destination and we arrived there several days later with an uneventful trip. I met Major Connely and he told me that we should go to the mouth of the Tuggero River which flowed into the China Sea. We should dig in and wait for the time in which we would be told to make the river crossing and capture the town of Aparri.

On the 9th of June, I got word that we were to cross the river the next morning by navy landing craft at 2 a.m. to capture and secure the town and the next day a battalion of paratroopers for the 11th airborne division would drop in and take the airfield just south of Aparri. In the past days the PT boats came in at night and shelled the city while some support artillery was shelling during the day. We got into our landing craft the next morning as scheduled and were able to take the town and by daylight my company was joined back together.

I decided we should go ahead and take the airfield as I felt the opposition would be light. We took the airport with no problem and when the paratroopers landed they were not very happy with us. They had 85 men injured in the jump and one KIA. I then met up with LTC Butgess who was the battalion commander of the paratroop battalion who told me I was now under his command and we should proceed south down the highway as the 37th division was moving north and when we met, that would cut off the Japanese. We did as ordered with no opposition. I was then told that we were being relieved and were to go back north to the mouth of the river and would be picked up by the navy and taken to Subic Bay for a 60 mile trip back to San Fernando.

I spotted an airfield where C47 cargo planes were coming in and unloading supplies for the 37th Division. I talked to a pilot who told me they were coming from Clark Center airbase. So I made an unauthorized decision that we would fly back the next morning. I told my company to be prepared to fly out the next morning and to shave and look respectable. So we went to the airfield and I was able to get the men loaded on four different planes and it was only 45 minutes back home. It was a rough flight going over the mountains and I feared if one went down I would be court marshaled, but we made it.

When I returned I reported to LTC Garrett. He asked how we got back and I said we flew. He already knew it as Sixth Army headquarters had called him and General Krueger did not approve of my not following orders. Garrett said he should punish me and asked what I felt he should do. I said, "Send me home."

He said, "You're not that lucky."

He then said that he was proud of the job we had done and said he was glad to have an officer who had the guts to make a decision. Would you believe I received a letter of commendation from General Walter Krueger who was the 6th Army Commander?

I am proud of that to this day.

A moment of satisfaction

by

Ernie Behnisch, Cpl 6D

I was Director of Service for Mercury Marine from 1973 until I retired in 1987. I was responsible for maintaining adequate service throughout the world for all the products manufactured by Mercury Marine. I traveled the USA, Canada, Europe, Australia and other major Pacific Rim countries holding technical meetings. An interesting event occurred during one of these trips.

In January 1977, on one of my trips to the Pacific Rim countries, our vice-president of engineering told me that he had a request from the Japanese government entity equivalent to the U.S. Coast Guard for a representative of Mercury Marine to meet with them in Tokyo. He requested that since I was going to Tokyo to meet with our Japanese Mercury outboard distributor that I also arrange to meet with the Japanese Coast Guard. I arranged the meeting. There were six Japanese officials in the meeting plus my Japanese interpreter who was an employee of our distributor. They asked me technical service and engineering questions about Mercury products that they wanted to know so they would know the product and to adequately service the products they were intending to purchase. I knew by looking at their eye and head nodding actions that they understood me and what I said but they wanted translations by my interpreter.

At the end of the meeting, which lasted about one hour, one of the Japanese made a mistake, he asked me (in good English) if I had ever been in Japan before. I thought for a moment and said, **“Yes in September 1945 with the United States Army 6th Rangers.”** I could see that they all were uncomfortable with my reply and the meeting was immediately adjourned. I didn’t tell them I had been in Japan previously on business. This gave me a little satisfaction as my brother Lester, a Marine, was KIA in landing at Bougainville in New Guinea in November 1943.

He laughs best . . .

Who laughs last.

Sir J. Vanbrugh

Runner at My Side

by
Joseph Auslander

There was a Ranger,
Half friend, half stranger,
Running at my side
All that night
With steady heartbreak pace.
Still, though I tried
To see his face,
I could see nothing but a kind of light;
I heard no beathing from his place.

It gave me a queer feeling
Not to see, not to hear,
Yet know him near.
It was queer,
That sense of fear
And healing . . .
I could not understand;
His face, daubed black like mine,
Seemed somehow to shine,
And I could almost touch his hand.

All that night, in a forced march
Twenty-five miles behind the enemy,
Your throat begins to parch,
Your leg muscles stiffen like starch.
Striking stealthily
Through the Nueve Ecija hills, you see
Nothing but the night, the nervous trees,
Your eyeballs peeled for the Japanese,
Your fist slipping round the hilt of the knife
Naked in its sheath . . .
The March of Life
Stalking the March of Death.

Through jungle green our green-clad
Commandos flitted.
The Filipino guerrillas sliced and slitted
The night in two.
We crossed the Pampanga River; we
threw
Ourselves flat on our bellies;
Our shirts stuck to our backs like glue;
We wriggled through
Like slow jellies;
We drew

Toward the road, inch by inch, in a
sweaty queue;
We crawled to shelter
Along the northern bank of the Cabu.
Then, letting out a cockeyed Commando
yell,
We scramble to our feet, we plug a
Jap sentinel.
(He fell
Without a sound.)

And then our special brand of hell
Breaks loose all around
In a wild welter
Of blood and cordite smell
And smoke;
The tommyguns chatter,
They spit, they spatter
Death;
You cough, you choke
With each sharp lungful of breath;
The rats run helter-skelter,
Squealing as they run;
We give them the gun,
We give the bastards everything
we've got.
It's short and sweet and hot . . .
They break, they scurry for cover.
And it's all over.

Our Rangers burst into the barbed wire
of Cabanatuan,
Into the prison
(He is risen);
Into the compound
(Step soft: this is holy ground);
Into the grave
Of the living dead;
(He shall save:
O lift up your head).
Some topkick bellows:
"Take it easy, fellows!
The Yanks
Are here!
We got this place!"

The living dead men gaze
At us, at each other,
In a dull-eyed daze;
They smother
In a fog of doubt and fear;
Not a word of thanks,
Not a single cheer,
Not one tear
At first . . .
Then the whole crazy truth burst
In their brains, three years
Of hell exploded in their ears . . .
Then the feeble cheers,
The terrible flood of tears . . .

All of a sudden, as I ran,
I remembered where I had seen
The face
Of that man
Who ran
All night beside me to this place:
A hundred times before —
At Bataan,
At Corregidor,
At Mindanao,
At O'Donnell, at Davao —
Always defiant, always tender,
Even the shock of our last-ditch surrender
Of the Rock.

No matter where it had been,
His face was always certain and serene,
And there was a funny far-away look
 in his eyes
That nothing could quite erase;
Not even the cloud of flies
Where he lay sprawled flat in some
 foul latrine,
Or swollen blue with the wet beri-beri,
Or fetid with dysentery
From one wild drink
At the scummed brink
Of the muddy carabao wallows . . .

So, all at once, I recalled the face
Of that Ranger,
Half-friend, half stranger,
Who had run with me in the night,
His face blazing white
With some fierce inner light.

I turned — and there he stood, shaky
 and gaunt and pale;
I saw the familiar hollows
Fever-bright
Beneath the cheekbones, and that place
In his forehead where a nail
Or spike or something had been
 hammered through,
A livid blue,
And those scars in the back of both
 Hands, puckered blue-white,
Plumb through the middle.
And suddenly that solved the riddle,
And suddenly I knew,
And I said, "So it's YOU!"
And He smiled, and that sufficed;
And I saluted in silence that
 gallant Commando, Captain Christ.

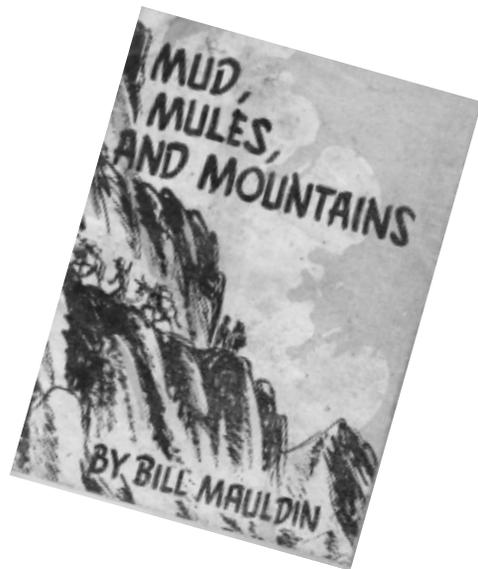
This poignant poem was included in the booklet written and produced by John M. Cook, a POW held at Cabanatuan, who was freed in the raid launched by the 6th Rangers, Alamo Scouts and Filipino guerrillas.

The author, Joseph Auslander (1897-1965) was a poet and novelist who held the position of Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress from 1937-1941.



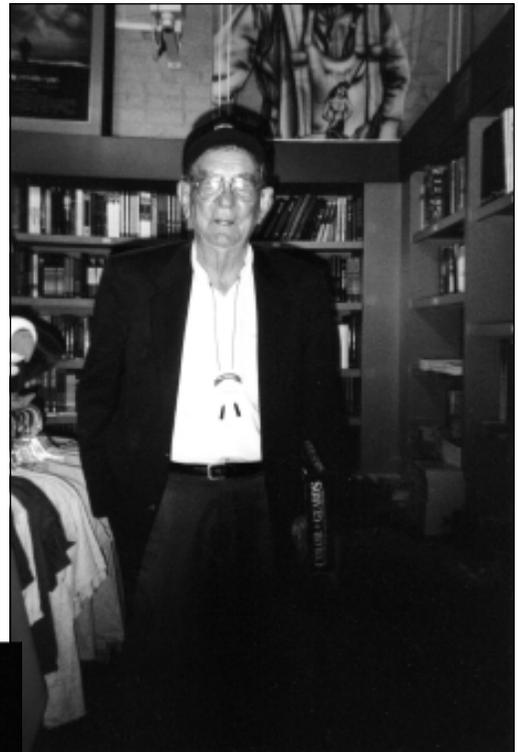
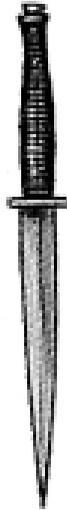
WW II and Later PHOTO GALLERY

(Many of the later photos are courtesy of Lynn Towne and Steve Ketzner, Jr.)

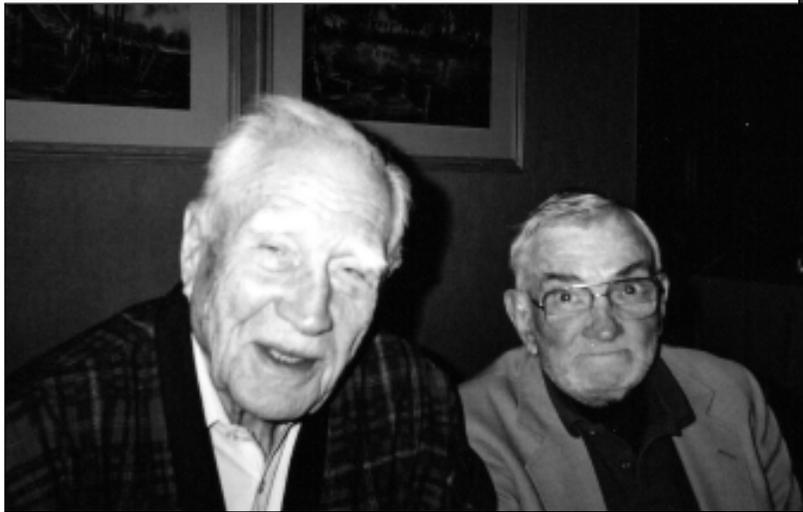




Eddie Coyle



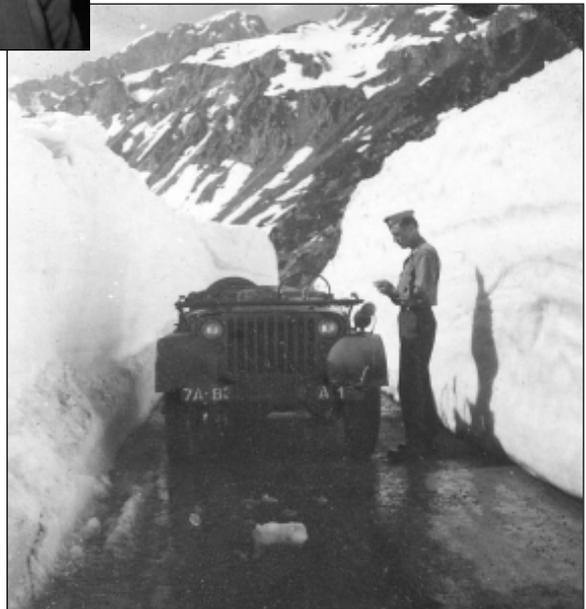
Ken Markham



Bing Evans and Tom Herring



Clarence Bachman and Nic Aguzzi



Lt. L. Lew Henry
"Making snowballs in June"



Bob Reed and George Hawkins



Vic Aguzzi and Jack Thomas



Lynn Towne and Sid Soloman



Lt. Maurice Jackson (center) and friends



Lt. L. Lew Henry, unidentified officer, Lt. Bill (Ace) Andreson

A
RANGER
Forever!



Lts. L. Lew Henry and Bill (Ace) Anderson



Bob Edlin and Mrs. Rudder



Len Lomell



Bill Pyrtle



Tom Herring



The Cal Templeton Family



Randall Harris



Col Chinn and Herb Appell



Herb Appell with active duty Rangers



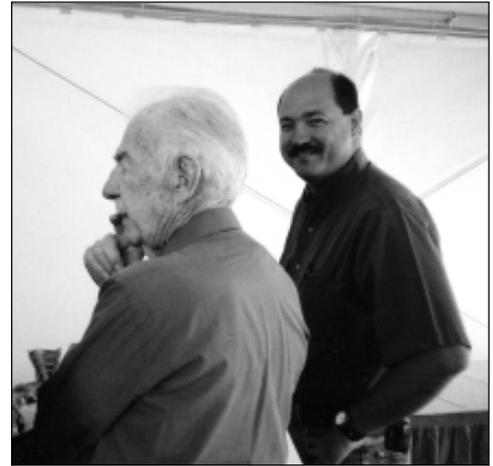
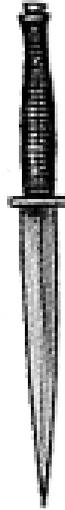
Cal Templeton, Keith Templeton

A

Forever!



Bob and Wilma Battice



Duke Slater and Dallas Pruitt



Hollis Stabler



Ben DeFoe, Sherry Kline, Jacob Klein



John Perry and Steve Ketzer, Jr.

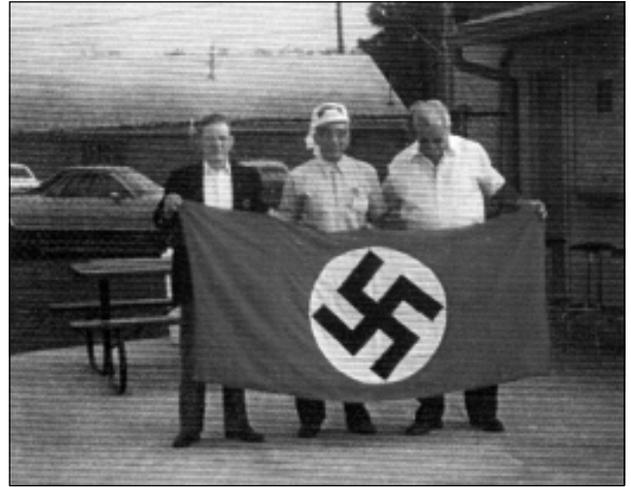


Eric Ketzer and Leo Strausbaugh



Nazi flag captured in France 1944

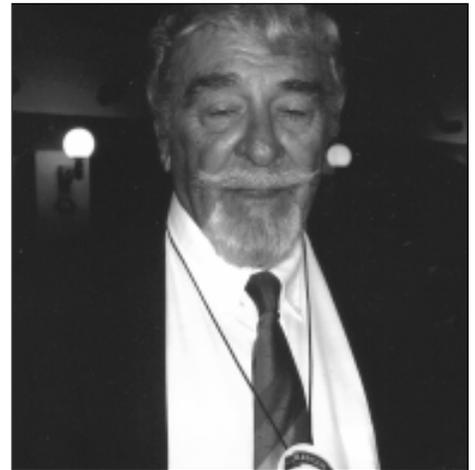
Center back: Bateman, Beccue, Lockwood; right side: top, Pollier, bottom, Norman; front: Doc Kearnan, Campose



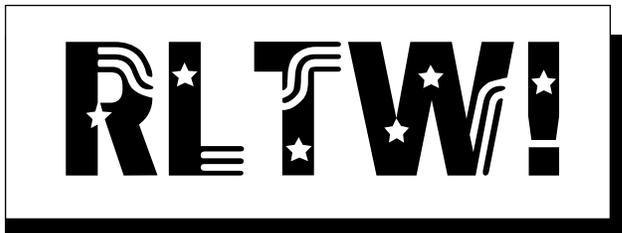
Same flag pictures with survivors at the 1986 5th Ranger Bn, Co. E Reunion in Hopkinsville, KY. left: Doc; center: Beccue



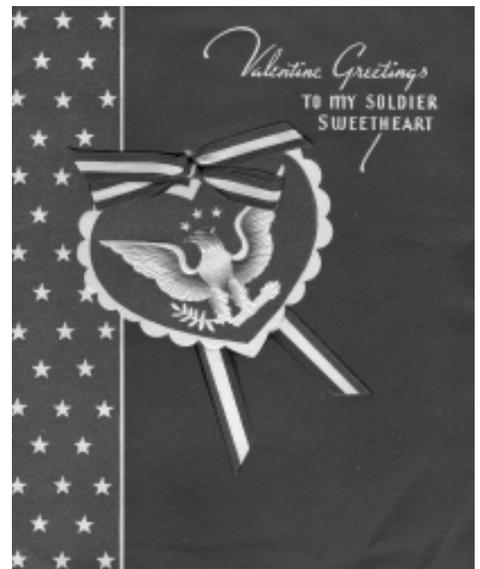
Left to right (top): Rangers Harms, Nelson and Shaw; (bottom): Huergue and Masters



Don Harms



1943 valentine to LLH from JSH





Beats walking!



Ric Zbin and Ann Stockmaster
at Lawrence, KS planning meeting



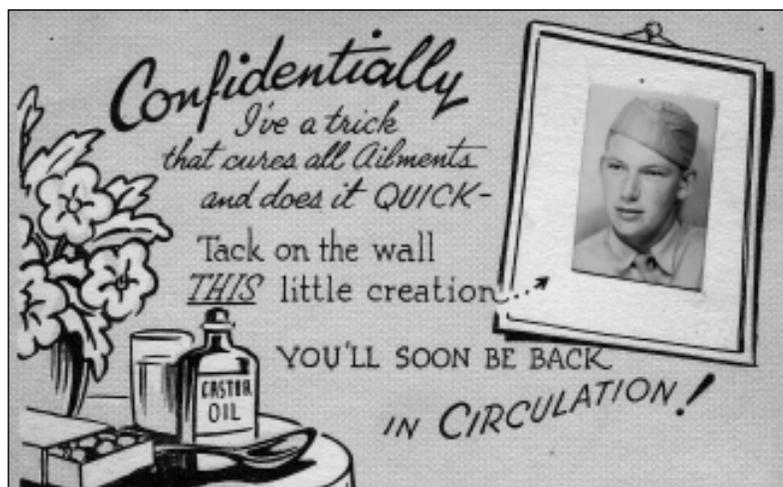
1st Sgt. Kenneth Hunter, 5C



Frank South, 1943



Combat Medic Badge



Lew Haight



I WANT YOU
to know I appreciate
your ads!

**Without your contributions,
there would be no book.**



*The Rangers of
The Alvah Miller Chapter
wish you a successful
2006 Reunion*



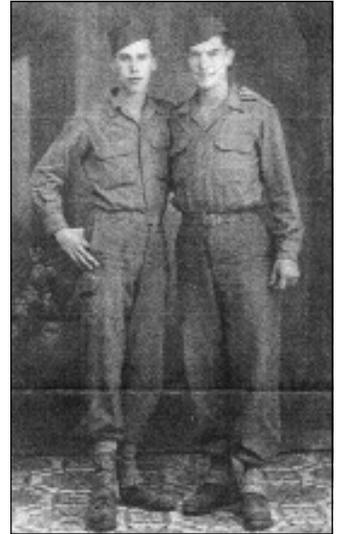
Rangers of the Alvah Miller Chapter at their 2005 Christmas Party in Orlando, Florida

Left to right. Back: Bob Battice, Lawrence "Red" Gilbert, Bill Boyd, George Sabine, Robert Gary, Noel Dye; Front: Elwood "Woody" Dorman, Jim Brennan, Fran Coughlin, Lewis Haight

*The Ranger
Battalions
Association of
World War II
thanks the Lawrence
Convention and
Visitors Bureau
for its assistance
in providing
transportation for
Rangers and
their guests.*

In Loving Memory of my Ranger Buddy
Charles D. Roby
F Co. 4th Ranger Bn.
KIA 04 Nov. 1943

R. Noel Dye
F Co. 4th Ranger Bn.
WIA 9 Nov. 1943



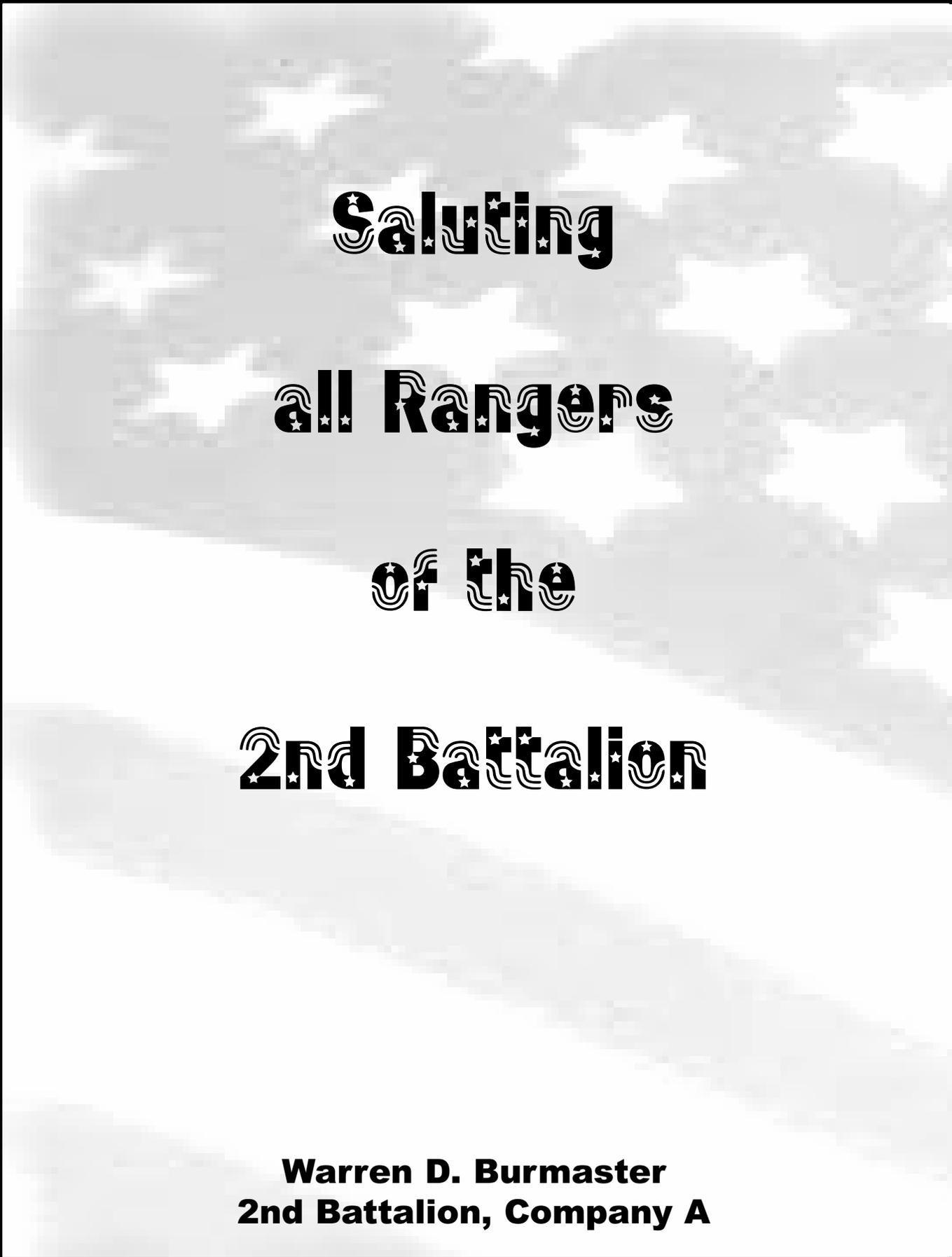
R. Noel Dye and Charles D. Roby

Ranger Raymond Noel Dye



Remembering Ray Norman

Lew Haight



**Saluting
all Rangers
of the
2nd Battalion**

**Warren D. Burmaster
2nd Battalion, Company A**



*Best wishes!
Stay well!*

Frank and Berna Deane South



Service first, quality always

Serving Kansas since 1881



*In loving memory of
Gilbert T. Blum, our Hero
1922-2005*

*and
George J. Himsl, Jr., his Buddy
KIA, Cisterna, Italy
January 30, 1944*

Missing in Action — but not forgotten

*Wife, Betty. Children, Henry and Raya and Sam
Grandchildren and Great-grandchildren*



In Memory of all A Company Members from Camp Forrest to the Present.

A special salute to a man who has experienced the complete journey.

A leader, a gentleman, who has led by example.

Quiet, kind, sincere, dedicated to fellow Rangers and his country.

We Salute You, Bill Klaus!

**Ray Tollefson
Co. A., 2nd Bn.**

*Congratulations and best wishes
for a successful reunion*

*Fran & Theresa Coughlin
Kathy Siller, Daughter
Meghan & Mark Siller, Grandchildren*



“In memory of all the medics
of the
5th Ranger Battalion.”

J. H. Hilsman

IOWA CHAPTER Five:

Heart of the Okoboji Reunion



In loving memory of
all Rangers lost

Most recently:
Gino Mercuriali
Lloyd Pruitt



In Memory of S/Sgt TED M. WALTERS

**5th Ranger Infantry Battalion — “A” Company
Killed in action February 27, 1945 during the Battle of Irsch-Zerf**



Ted at boot camp



Ted M. Walters



Ted and wife Kathleen



Stan Bojara, Ted Walters



**John Jogosh, Jack Burke
Ted Walters**



Ted Walters, Jack Burke

We love you Ted and still miss you so much.

Your loving family:

Hazel (Walters) Paterson
Fern (Walters) Elliott
Roy and Marlene Walters

June (Walters) and George Putnick
Fay (Walters) and L.H. Sandberg
And your nieces and nephews

Honoring Ranger Andy Stockmaster 5B/Hq

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

You led the way for all of us! Thanks Dad and Grandpa!

Kathryn A. Stockmaster Steidel
(Dec'd)
Richard Steidel
Marian F. Stockmaster Getzelman (Col.,
USAF (Ret.))
Harold Getzelman (Lt. Col. USAF (Ret.))
Ellen Getzelman
Joyce E. Stockmaster Bowser
Philip Bowser
Eric Bowser
Brandy Bowser
Christopher Bowser
Stephen Bowser
Brian Bowser

Paul A. Stockmaster
Lauretta Stockmaster
Mark Stockmaster
Greg Stockmaster
Ann M. Stockmaster
Richard Zbin
Andrew Schwenzer
Joan M. Stockmaster (former Captain,
USAF)
Susan M. Stockmaster Kemp
Paul Kemp
Stephanie Kemp
Juliana Kemp
Michael Kemp



Photo of Ranger South taken on D-Day
by Sid Salomon

**The South sons and their families
are forever grateful to
Ranger Frank E. South and his fellow
WW II Rangers for their
inspirational and profound
service to the country.**

We Love You, Dad.

Frank and Robert South



In Loving Memoriam

*John Patrick 'Jack' McDevitt, Jr.
February 11, 1924 - May 19, 1992
Mansfield, Ohio*

**4th Battalion Company D and First Special Service Force
RBA WW II National President
Ohio Valley Chapter President 12 yrs**

**True to his fellow comrades in arms he believed in and upheld the Ranger motto "Lead the Way"
On the battlefield or standing at attention at the gravesite of a forgotten veteran
His work completed on this earth, the way is now clear to be rewarded in God's heaven
Rest in Peace John P.**

Written by Judy's brother Larry Moore

**Sadly missed by his wife of 32 years, Judy
Daughters Colleen McDevitt, Erin Bogner, Kathleen Webster and Maureen Browning,
grandchildren, his brother, sisters, in-laws and countless friends.**

*Rangers
Lead The
Way!*

*Best Wishes for a
Successful Reunion.*

Fan and Patricia Hood



Dedicated to
the Loving Memory of
George W. Brown
1st Bn, Co B

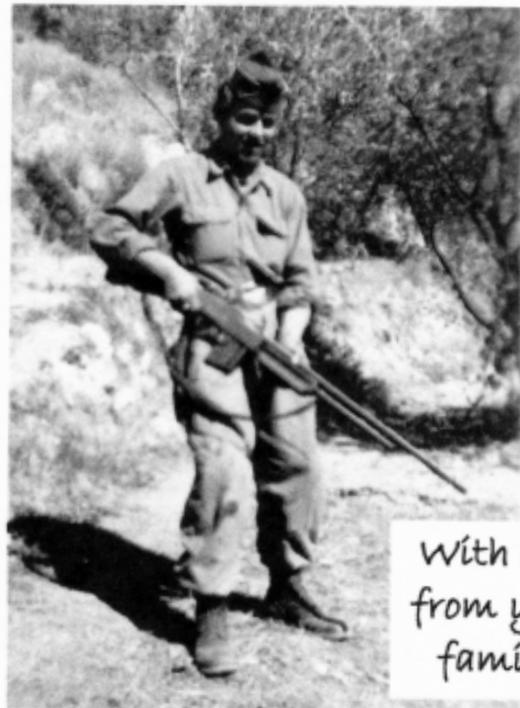
Wife Mary F. Brown



**In honor of all Members
Living and Dead
of
Company "B"
"4th Ranger Battalion"**

Ranger James O. McVay

**In memory of Paul F. Arbogast, 1920-1960
4th Ranger Battalion and First Special Service Force**



*With love
from your
family*



Honoring
all
Rangers
of the
6th Ranger
Battalion

*We welcome
Rangers to
Lawrence,*

*a great place to
visit ...
a wonderful place
to live.*

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Members of the NE Chapter #1 of the Ranger Battalion Association of WW II, send all Rangers, sons and daughters and other 'helpers' of our wonderful organization their best wishes for continued success, good health and happiness. Our Rangers that are still living are in their 80s now. They and those who have passed on served as excellent role models for the young Rangers that have followed in our footsteps and for their 'sons and daughters' too. Thank you all from the bottom of our hearts. May God continue to bless you.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Lt. Leonard G. Lomell, D Co 2nd Bn
President — NE Chapter #1*



In loving memory
of our
father/grandfather,
Ranger William H. Douglas
5th Battalion, Company B



Headquarters and
Headquarters Company

“Old soldiers never die,
they just slowly
fade away.”

Hang in there, Fellows.

Ike Eikner

HONORING THE MEMORY OF MY DAD RANGER MAURICE JACKSON, 2E



WAL MART BOOKS ON LINE IS TAKING ADVANCE ORDERS.... 38 PERCENT OFF RETAIL. *THE BATTALION* authored by Col. Robert W. Black. The Dramatic Story of the Second Ranger Battalion during WWII, will be released August, 2006.

Lt. Maurice Jackson wrote a letter to his CO, Capt. Dick Merrill, from Bushnell Hospital where he had his third and final amputation of his left leg and rehabilitation. He wrote: “I miss the gang more than the leg. I can always get a substitute for the leg, but I’ll never find a substitute for any Ranger.” Pretty much sums up my Dad. During my teen years, with my Mom working at night, Dad and I hung out. He vowed he would always be with me. My Dad left this world October 6, 1989, while I held him in my arms,

at Washoe Medical Center, Reno, Nevada. True to his word, as a Ranger’s vow, he left me with an entire family of Rangers.

Lynn Towne



*Remembering
deceased
Rangers of
Company "A"
5th Ranger
Battalion*

Past President
Dick Hathaway and wife Betty



*In behalf of
the honor
and
memory of
Captain
Francis Murphy
6th Bn, Co F*

William Speight



**WESTERN CHAPTER
EXTENDS BEST WISHES FOR A GREAT REUNION!
Enjoy Yourselfs and Have a Good Time!**

IN MEMORIAM

**“In the going down of the Sun and in the Morning
We shall remember Them.”**

TO ALL DEPARTED RANGERS SINCE WORLD WAR II

These valiant Rangers who gave their best to “Lead the Way” in World War II campaigns, invasions, battles and raids in: Algeria, Tunisia, Sicily, Italy, France, Germany and the Philippines. After the Anzio Beachhead, some Rangers also fought with the First Special Service Force in Southern France and later with the 474th Infantry Regiment (separate) throughout Europe, including Norway.

These Rangers continued to give their best as dedicated and highly esteemed members of our Western Chapter and the RBA WWII, working hard to organize outstanding reunions and chapter meetings with great support from the ladies. We will always remember Julia Stahl for all her contributions to the Ranger Battalion Association World War II.

As General Lucien Truscott, who was responsible in organizing Rangers in WW II, said about all Ranger Battalions:

“I have intense interest in the Rangers and high regard for them. No finer soldiers ever wore the uniform in any army at any time. The gallant exploits of these Rangers will always be an inspiration for all Americans and all fighting men.”

Thomas Ambruster
Corwin Beaver
Robert M. Bevan
Ralph Bickford
Robert Brewer
Anthony Brindis
Peer Buck
Ted Butts
William (Bill)
Campbell
Walter Concannon
Dan Chapman
William Cool
Grant Constable

Henry Corven
Arnold E. Davis
Joe Devoli
Richard Fields
Clifford Fohse
Howard Goldberg
Craig Gorden
Jim Graves
Richard
Hardenbrook
George Hawkins
Richard Honig
Preston Hogue
Stan Jakubowski

William James
Tom Johnston
Joe Larkin
Jerry Madden
C.R. Meltensen
Mike Minella
Roy A. Murray
Richard Moore
Walter Nye
Walter O'Reilly
Gerald Peters
Al Plecas
John Popovich
Richard Porter

Lloyd Pruitt
Joseph Rivas
Robert Reed
Joseph Schrufer
Walter Sieg
Fred Springer
Kenneth Tongate
Bud Volkman
William Walker
William Wood

Comando:
George F. Hutton
Frank Searles

Best Wishes
and
Lots of Fun & Success

To our
Ranger Buddies & Friends
In

D Company
2nd Ranger
Battalion!

James Hugh Hudnell
PFC 34761449



J. Ronald Hudnell
Abn, Rngr, Spec Forces





26 September 1944

30 December 1945

1944 proposed emblem/pin
(not authorized)

Decorations:

Presidential Unit Citation—Philippine Liberation Medal— Philippine Independence Medal

Campaigns

New Guinea
Leyte, Philippines
Luzon, Philippines

Invasions

Dinagat
Suluan
Homohon
Lingayen Gulf

Raids

Cabanatuan
Appari
Carbruan Hill

O beautiful for heroes proved
In liberating strife,
Who more than self their country loved,
And mercy more than life!
America! America!
May God thy gold refine,
Till all success be nobleness,
And every gain divine.



In loving memory of all 6th Battalion Rangers lost since the last Reunion:

*Edward Ackerman-Hq Willard Earnes-D Thomas Lyman-D
Raymond Mendoza-B Ward Nelson-D Norton S. Most-Hq
Ronald Thomas-C Richard Zani-B Joseph Malatesta-E*

RANGERS LEAD THE WAY!

Financial contributors for this dedication page: Robert Prince, Leo Strausbaugh, Austin Bagby, Ernst Behnisch, J.D. Westmoreland, Martin Engelhardt, Robert Sauer, Glen Matthews, Lawrence Reidinger, Norman Lever



T/SGT John "Bill" White (left); T/5 Dick Rankin (right)
2nd Ranger Battalion, "A" Co.; Arlon, Belgium—Oct. 1944

IN MEMORY AND HONOR OF MY FATHER
RANGER DICK RANKIN
2ND RANGER BATTALION—A COMPANY

I MISS YOU, DAD!

JULIE



**In honor of all Members
Living and Dead
of
Company "B"
"4th Ranger Battalion"**

Ranger James O. McVay

In Honor of my Dad

*Robert P. Gary
2nd Ranger Battalion A Company*



Dad,

I am proud of your 32-year military service to our country as a veteran of WWII, Korean War and Vietnam War. I am most proud to honor you as one among the finest, a Ranger. You are my hero among heroes. I thank you and all the WWII Rangers, past and present for your commitment and sacrifice.

Your daughter,
Kim



Welcome to the Hospitality Suite

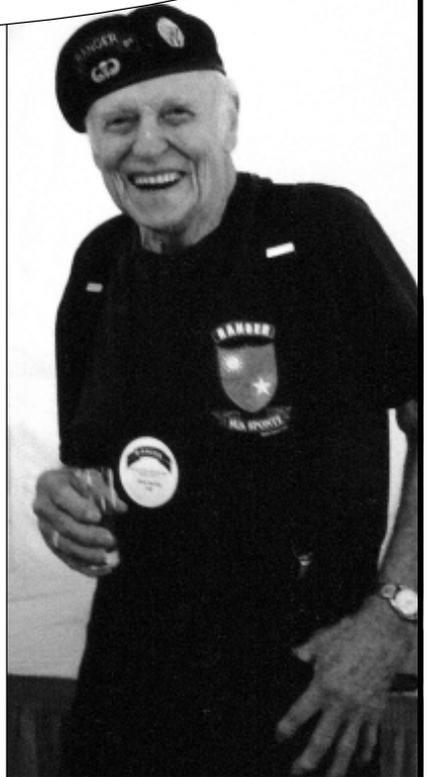


June 7th, Wednesday
 Open 9:00 AM Close 10:00 PM

June 8th, Thursday
 Open 8:00 AM Close 4:30 PM
 (closes for dinner and slideshow)
 Re-Open 8:00 PM Close 10:00 PM

June 9th, Friday
 Open 8:00 AM Close 2:00 PM
 (closes for Memorial Service,
 dinner and concert)
 Re-Open 8:00 PM Close 10:00PM

June 10th, Saturday
 Open 8:00 AM Close 4:30 PM
 (Suite closes for banquet and
 will not re-open)



*Have a great reunion!
 See you in the Hospitality Suite!
 Your Sons & Daughters*



Best Wishes from the Midwest Chapter

Home of the D-Day Picnic

*Remembering those members lost this year:
Ivar Jones, Lloyd Pollard, Commando William Pitcher*



Photo courtesy Zeke Zyrkowski from D-Day picnics past

“ALWAYS” “Rangers Lead the Way”

**Franklin W. Simon — 2nd Battalion Headquarters
241 Old Farm Road
Milton, MA 02186**

James “Red” O’Hare, Sergeant, Co “A” 5th Ranger Battalion

In memory of my fallen comrades – Lewis J. Haight, E Company, 5th Ranger Bn

Lead the Way, Rangers. Herman F. Sack, HQ 5th Ranger Bn.

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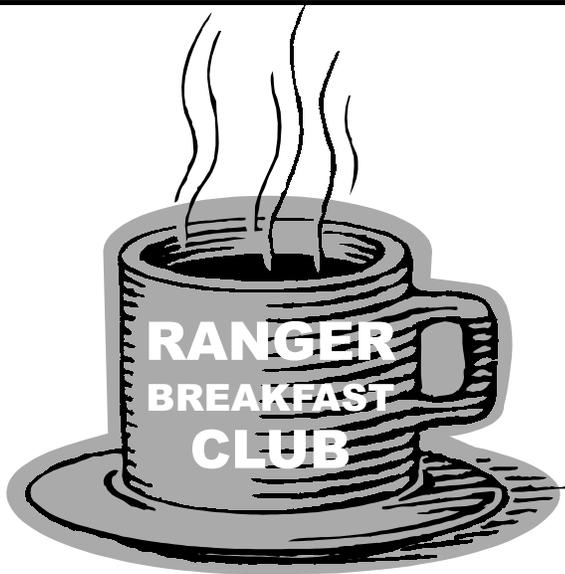
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In Memory of
T/Sgt. Thomas H. Connor
6th Ranger Bn., E Co.
KIA — 1945
Luzon Island, P.I.



Best Wishes from the Chicago Breakfast Club

In memory of Lloyd Pollard 4/D



Left to right:(next to flag) Don McCormick 3/D, Bob Vorphal, Lou Schwenk, John Klemundt, Hank Zyrkowski 2/D, Jerry Tourville, Wil Harot, Frank Schuch, Phil Stebbins (behind Frank) Bill Stefanu and Bob Scanlan
Bottom Row: Mary Stefanu (behind Marianne) Marianne Roenna, Bob Roenna 3/HQ, Ben Edelman, Andy Stojak 1/E 4/C, Tom Gener 4/B, Steve Zaher 5/HQ; In front kneeling Sandy Mandre (daughter of Bob Scanlan)
Not pictured: Honorary Rangers Harold Lacasse, Maj. Joe Mazzarella and Leslie McKie, Jack and Marilyn Summer, Frank Capobianco, Marge Bailey and Ranger widows: Kay Pollard and May Zanta



In Memory
Alfred Christensen
Earl Card

Remembered by
George Nelsen
Original Rangers
E Co.



In Loving Memory of
Kenneth M. Markham, Sr.
1922-2004
"F" Company, 1st Ranger Battalion

I love and miss you, Daddy
Your Daughter

In Memory of Col. Roy A. Murray

**by his cousin
Jim Philbin, Co. D, 405th Reg.
102 Inf. Div. The Ozarks**



In loving memory of
William C. Pyrtle, Jr.
Company "A"
5th Ranger Battalion

*Out of our lives
You may have gone,
But in our hearts
You still live on.*

Sadly missed by family
Fawntreba, Patricia,
Amanda and Richard

*Wishing
a speedy recovery
for
Nick, Frances
and Mary.*

Ben Temkin

**Saluting the Rangers of
E Company, 5th Battalion**

William E. Boyd

Marsha Henry Goff
MHG Ink Communications 

1877 N 1000 Road
Lawrence, Kansas 66046

785-843-2577
mhgink@netscape.net



*In Memory of
the deceased Rangers of
2nd Battalion, F Company
and in Honor of
William J. Stivison*



*The sons and daughter of William J. Stivison
Garness, Cork and Connie*

In Loving Memory

L. Lew Henry (1917-1973) and June Shellhammer Henry (1917-2004)

In the beginning, there was love ...

Although Lew and June grew up 400 miles apart, they met at 17 and, from then on, only had eyes for each other.

*There's nothing half so sweet in life
As love's young dream.*

—Thomas Moore



Then came duty ...



While Lew was fighting in Africa and Italy with the Rangers and later in France and Germany with the 83rd Chemical Mortar Battalion, June was waging her own battles on the Homefront against loneliness, worry and the burden of being a single parent to three small daughters.

They also serve who only sit and wait.

—John Milton

And, at the end, all there was ... was love.

June waited almost three years for her Ranger to return from World War II. He waited almost 31 years for her to join him.

*And, if God choose, I shall but love thee
better after death.*

—Elizabeth Barrett Browning



Somewhere ... their love endures.

Sadly missed by Marsha, Lesta, Bette and Vicki

The Loving are the Daring

We honor our Ranger fathers
not only for their
daring deeds
during World War II,
but for their
loving deeds
after.

Thank you.
You have always made us proud.

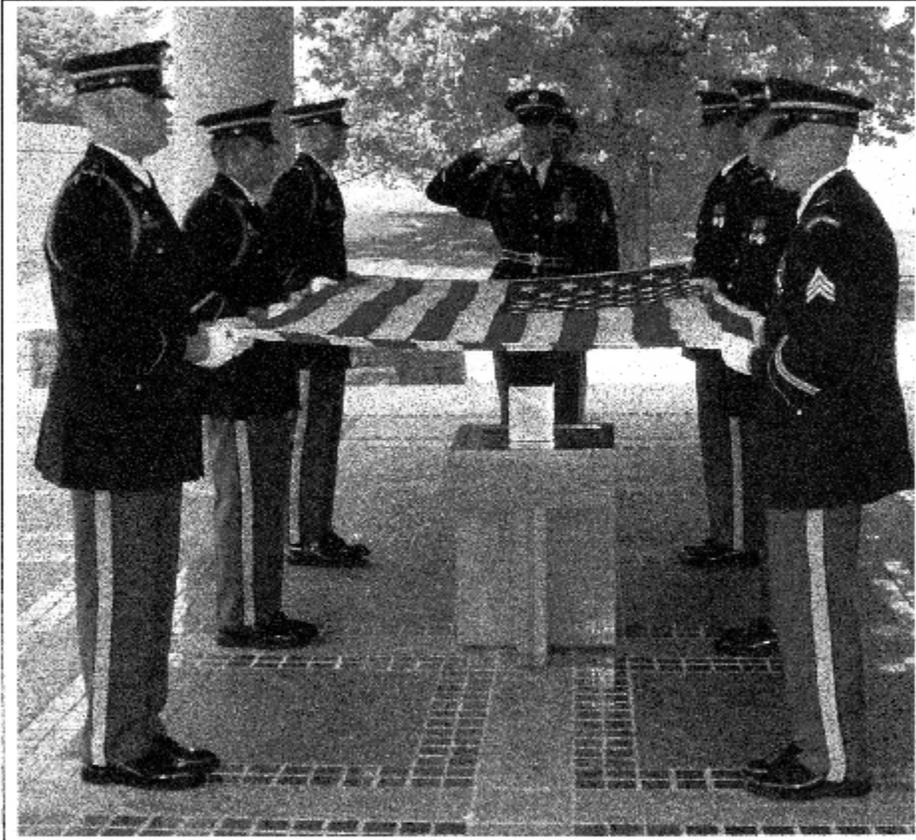
Sons & Daughters

Tom Herring A Ranger's Ranger



RANGER REGISTER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY
RANGER ASSOCIATION, INC. DEDICATED TO THE IDEALS
AND PRINCIPLES OF THE AMERICAN MILITARY RANGER.



RANGER THOMAS E. HERRING 30 MAY 2005

Ranger Herring was inurned at Arlington National Cemetery on 2 August 2005. He was appointed an Honorary Member of the 75th Ranger Regiment for his outstanding service during World War II as an original member of the 5th Ranger Battalion and for his dedicated service as National and Chapter Secretary, Ranger Battalions Association, WWII; and President emeritus and long-time Treasurer, U.S. Army Ranger Association. May God grant you peace, Ranger Herring. You will be missed.

We miss you.

A Gathering of Heroes

Copies of the 2006 Ranger Battalions Association reunion book are available by completing this form and mailing a check made out to RBA to:

Marsha Henry Goff
1877 N 1000 Road
Lawrence, KS 66046

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail address _____

Cost: \$15 per book plus \$3.00 for postage and mailer

Rangers and widows have the postage waived:

Number of books _____ X \$15.00 =

All other orders:

Number of books _____ X \$18.00 = _____

Please enclose your mailing address and a check written to the Ranger Battalions Association. Allow about 3 weeks for delivery.

Feel free to call (785-843-2577) or e-mail (mhgink@sbcglobal.net) Marsha with any questions.

Notes/Addresses

