

The BULGE BUGLE

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION • BATTLE OF THE BULGE ASSOCIATION, INC.

VOLUME XXXVI NUMBER 3

THE ARDENNES CAMPAIGN

AUGUST 2017

The Alamo



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Battle of the Bulge Association, Inc.
PO Box 27430, Philadelphia, PA 19118-0430
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ATTENTION: MEMBERSHIP DISCOUNT!

In order to encourage long-term memberships, we are now offering a discounted 4-year membership for \$50 to non-BOB vets. (Save \$10 off the yearly fee of \$15!)

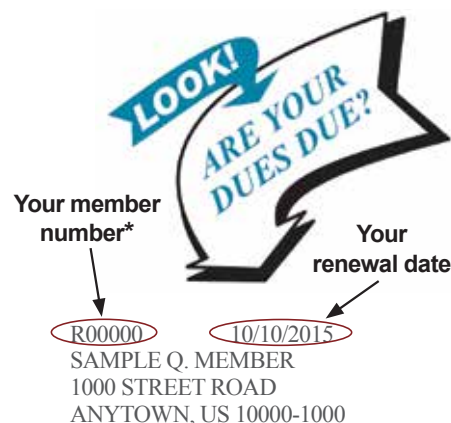
SEE MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION ON THE BACK COVER.

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NOTICE: To cut costs, dues renewal invoices will no longer be mailed.

Check the back cover address label for your membership dues renewal date to keep dues current.



***PLEASE NOTE: If your member number starts with the letter "L," you are a LIFE MEMBER, and therefore do not owe any more dues, ever!**

RENEWAL CARDS WILL NOT BE SENT



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Gary Higgins



SUMMERTIME IS WINDING DOWN, and in no time, our Battle of the Bulge Association reunion will be happening in San Antonio, Texas. Much has gone into the organization and planning of this event. Your Executive Vice President Barbara Mooneyhan is leading the way, with a calendar chock-full of tours and events. Please give her special thanks for her efforts, and get your reservations in. This *Bulge Bugle* has full details to get you on your way [see pages 16-19.] Adventures, fun, friends and our Veterans will be included for all to enjoy, with new members and new faces as well.

I am always open to new ideas to keep BOBA active and moving forward, so don't hesitate to contact any of your elected officers. Remember, we can all have vision. Long ago, I recall chatter of a WWII memorial to be built in our nation's capital, one truly deserved by the men and women who served. Do you remember those days? It happened, through dedication and unending spirit, and we now know the beauty of that memorial that was dedicated in 2004. The fact it was built proves that "better late than never" is monumental.

With this, I ask each of you to talk to our surviving Veterans, get the stories each has to tell, write and record them. Sharing them allows history to be passed on. With each veteran lost, whatever events and tales they haven't told are lost forever. Often a story will inspire others to open up. It works! Be one to do so and enjoy the opportunity.

As BOBA members—many of us are veterans, as well—we know the legacy of VBOB and why now BOBA will strive to maintain what they laid before us. Read your *Bugle* and share it with friends. It may mean getting us a few new members. It all helps to get the word out about who we are and what our mission is.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to more good news, stories, and photos from those who take the time to contribute to producing this publication.

Enjoy the rest of your summer, be safe, and see you in San Antonio.

How to submit stories for "The Bulge Bugle"

Please continue to send us your Battle of the Bulge stories. All members are reminded to submit stories about veterans you know who fought in the battle. Guidelines for submitting stories and photos are:

Stories and letters: Please send typewritten (not handwritten) text whenever possible. We reserve the right to edit for length or clarity. Clippings/articles from recent newspapers or other periodicals must contain the name & date of publication, so we can obtain reprint permission. Original stories will be given preference over reprinted articles. NOTE: We cannot reprint from books or pamphlets, unless you are the author.

Photographs: Please identify the place and/or people in the photograph. Photos copied on a copy machine are not suitable for publication. Scan photographs at high-resolution (300 dpi.)

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

Send material to: (Preferred method) by email: tracey@battleofthebulge.org, or by mail: Battle of the Bulge Association, Inc; PO Box 27430; Philadelphia, PA 19118-0430

NOVEMBER ISSUE DEADLINE: Sept. 24, 2017

QUESTIONS? Please contact Tracey Diehl, 703-528-4058, or by email: tracey@battleofthebulge.org

BOBA BOARD NOMINEES FOR 2018

The following 2018 slate of nominated candidates will be voted upon during the 2017 reunion in San Antonio, Texas. We will be voting on the officers and board members listed below. The Immediate Past President is a Bylaws-required board position and is not part of the voting. The board voted to designate that position as Chairman of the Board. We approved three Board Member positions at the 2016 Annual Meeting and the Board voted to increase that number to a

total of six. Since we have nine nominations for board member, you will be receiving a ballot with your registration packet and you will be asked to vote for six. The six with the highest number of votes will become board members.

Nominations will be accepted from the floor, must be seconded by four additional members, and must agree to serve to be considered for the position.

OFFICERS

President: Gary Higgins*

Executive Vice President:

Barbara Mooneyhan*

Vice President Membership:

Angelo Fazio*

Vice President Chapters:

Sherry Klopp*

Treasurer: Duane R. Bruno*

Recording Secretary:

Tracey Diehl***

BOARD MEMBERS

David Bailey, 106th Inf Div*

Tana Van Nice Black

Tom Burgess, 87th Inf Div*

Doris Davis**

Doug Dillard, 82nd Abn Div*

Ruth Hamilton*

John Mohor*

Greg Penfield

Alfred Shehab, 38th Cavalry*

**Immediate Past President
and Chairman of the Board:**

Alan Cunningham

* Indicates an incumbent.

** Was the Recording Secretary, declined to serve in that capacity again, and is now being nominated as a board member.

*** Was the Recording Secretary in the past and agreed to fill the job again.

—Submitted by Doris Davis, Nominating Committee Chair and modified by Gary Higgins, President

LETTERS TO BOBA

TWO BROTHERS, AND ANOTHER

In the May 2017 issue was a story of 2 brothers, one a veteran of the 84th Division. [See "Two Brothers in the War," page 7, May 2017.]

In February 1945 the 35th Division was transferred out of the 3rd Army to the 9th Army. My Company C, 134th Infantry Regiment, was moved to an area near the Roer River. My squad leader Staff Sgt. Sanborn and me (a BAR man) were the extreme right flank of the 35th. The foxhole next to us was occupied by a couple of GIs of the 84th Division (V. L. Auld's division in the aforementioned article.) From then on, our two divisions fought shoulder to shoulder to the Elbe River.

The 35th ended up in a little German town 47 miles from Berlin. The 9th Army was the closest outfit to Berlin on VE Day.

Sincerely,
Jim Graff, 35th InfD, 134th Reg, Co C

HONOR FLIGHT

On 05/06/17, along with 23 other veterans of WWII and Korea, I flew from Orlando, FL to Washington, DC to visit the WWII Memorial and the other veteran memorials. The trip was sponsored by Honor Flights, a nationwide organization that is trying to get as many WWII veterans to visit Washington, D.C. as soon as possible.

The trip started with a 4:30 a.m. pre-flight gathering at the airport, where breakfast was served. After landing in Washington, D.C., we were greeted by a huge contingent of people clapping and cheering for us vets. It was so welcoming to know that these people who never met us took the time to show their gratitude to us. Both at the airport and at the memorial, people would reach out and shake our hands and wish us well. We were surprised and humbled by how much we were appreciated. Everyone was so respectful to us vets.

During the trip, we visited Arlington and viewed the changing the guard, which was very emotional. At the end of our tour there was a dinner at the airport. You would think after an interesting but long day us "old vets" would be irritable and tired but that was not the case. We were upbeat and excited the whole time!

The driving force for this trip was Ed Riordon, of Winter Springs, FL. He was in charge and kept us on a very tight schedule. I want to take this moment to thank Ed and his lovely wife, Nancy, for their hard work and dedication in making this Honor Flight possible.

The group of volunteers that helped us was fantastic! These "Guardian Angels" were patient, kind, and so respectful of us "old vets," and I hope we repaid them many times over by our appreciation. Thanks to all of the volunteers for making this trip a great experience for me and the other vets.

Most sincerely,
Arnold L. Cascarano
75th INFD, 291st INF REG, 3rd BN

RECOGNIZE ANY OF THESE SOLDIERS?

I am sending a photo of 4 soldiers (*photo, top right*) during the Bulge, with their names written on the back (*photo, above right*)—which we have some difficulty reading, especially the first and last one.

We would be interested to hear if any of your members can help identify these men, as a friend of mine is preparing a book about the



Fondation Emile Mayrisch. We would like to put this picture in the book as being part of the history of the Château in Colpach.

If anyone can identify any of the gentleman in the picture, please contact me at address/email below.

Jacques Reinard

15, Rue Tubis
Luxembourg
L-2629 Luxembourg
email: jacquesreinard@yahoo.fr

A CALL FOR PHOTOS FOR BOOK SERIES!

Member Darren Neely, whose Grandfather served in the 119th of the 30th Infantry from January 1945 to VE Day, is an author based in Annapolis, MD who writes a series called *Forgotten Archives: The Lost Signal Corps Photo*, and also assists in the research and publication of a series called *Panzerwrecks*.

Forgotten Archives is about The US Army Signal Corps photographs, which were the official standard for photo documentation of the American army during World War II. These photos were captured by trained cameramen and in most cases were taken under enemy fire, in a ditch with a rifleman or as enemy shells landed nearby. Signal Corps photos have been used over and over in text books, popular trade books at bookstores in every shopping mall and now on the internet. The photos in this book series are those that have not yet been published or have only appeared in hard to find unit histories and cover events in the ETO, from the Normandy breakout until the end of the war.

The *Panzerwrecks* series are each 96 pages, filled with rare and unseen photographs of wrecked, abandoned and captured German armoured vehicles from 1944-45. The large photos reveal much detail.

Darren is asking for anyone who may have photos that meet any of the above criteria (note that they don't have to be Bulge-related, any ETO pics will do) and is willing to allow their use in a book, to contact him at the email and/or phone below. Each photo can be scanned and sent to him, or mailed and he will scan and return promptly. Each provider of a photo will be recognized in the book, and provided with free copies of the books for them and their family.

If interested, please contact Darren Neely at: darrenrneely@gmail.com; 443-254-1634.

MEMBERS IN MEMORIAM

Please notify us when you hear that any member of our organization has recently passed away, so that we may honor them in a future *Bulge Bugle*. Also, kindly notify us of any errors or omissions.

Please send notices by mail: BOBA, Inc., PO Box 27430, Philadelphia, PA 19118-0430; or by phone: 703-528-4058; or by email: tracey@battleofthebulge.org.

We have been notified, as of June 24, 2017, that these members of the Battle of the Bulge Association, Inc. have also recently passed away:

ALDRICH, FRANK N	8 AF 305 BOMB GP
ARNOLD, ROBERT E	9 INFD 47 REG 2 BN E CO
BALLINGER, SAMUEL W	26 INFD
BARTON, WILBUR M	501 RR QM CO
BELLIS, JEAN W	76 GEN HOSP
BOAS, ROGER	4 ARMDD 94 AFA BN HQ
BOUCK JR, LYLE J	99 INFD 394 INF
BRADFORD, HENRY C	84 INFD 334 INF H CO
BROOKS, JOHN P	1 INFD 16 INF 1 BN HQ CO
CARDIELLO, CONRAD J	406 ENGR CMBT BN
CARROLL, FRANK A	84 INFD 334 INF I CO
CHAMPLAIN, DONALD P	926 SIG BN
CHOVANES, EUGENE	1123 ENGR CMBT BN
CRAIN, CLEMON C	82 ABND 508 PIR 2 BN D CO
CREEKMORE, THOMAS	79 DIV 315 INF REG CO C
DELEON, SILVESTER F	5 INFD 11 INF 3 BN L CO
DIEHL, LLOYD J	106 INFD
DORWART, HENRY W	78 INFD 310 INF 3 BN L CO
EDEN, JOHN A	470 AMBUL CO
ELBRADER, RUTH	47 FLD HOSP
EPPLER, AUGUSTUS	87 INFD 345 INF 3 BN M CO
FIELD, MARIE	MEMBER
FLOYD, HAROLD D	4 ARMDD 10 AIB
FRI, JR., JAMES L	87 INFD 346 INF 2 BN E
FRIEDMAN, NORMAN H	84 INFD 335 INF 3 BN CO L
FULLER, CHARLES R	75 INFD 290 INF 2 BN E
GRABER, JACK	75 INFD 291 INF 3 BN I
GURTH, FRANK	101 ABND 502 PIR HQ CO
HARVEY, CLIFFORD H	16 AFA BN
HOMRIGHAUSEN, J. H.	10 ARMDD 54 AIB A CO
HUBBARD, EMERY M	75 INFD 289 INF AT CO
HUGHES, WALTER	504 PIR 82 ABND 3 BN
IVERSON, ORVILLE B	926 SIG BN
KAHN, WILLIAM J	284 CMBT ENGR BN CO A
KISER, WAYNE E	26 INFD 101 INF H CO
MORRIS, KENNETH	300 ENGR CMBT BN A CO
NELSON, CHARLES R	87 INFD 346 INF 3 BN M CO
POWER, HAROLD	106 INFD 422 REG 1 BN CO C
ROWE, JOHN M	87 INFD 346 INF I CO
SPRIGGS, WILLIAM S	83 INFD 329 INF 1 BN C CO
STAMOS, JOHN J	130 GEN HOSP
WELCH, JOHN M	4 INFD 12 INF 2 BN HQ CO

PROPOSAL FOR WERETH 11 U.S. BRIDGE MEMORIAL PILLARS

We received a proposal for a new Wereth 11 Memorial Project, spearheaded by the VFW, with BOBA members potentially serving as advisors. The proposal reads, in part:

Objective

An effort to memorialize the heroic soldiers of the 333rd Field Artillery Battalion, known as the Wereth Eleven, who were murdered by Nazi SS soldiers after evading capture. The Veterans of Foreign Wars, in partnership with a major US Corporation and the Battle of the Bulge Association, wishes to partner with the Wereth 11 Committee in Belgium to enhance the current Wereth 11 memorial site and bring honor to the individual soldiers in each of their respected hometowns.

While the conceptual idea is have a mirroring effect of memorializing the soldiers here in the United States and in Belgium, it must be noted that final approval for this project will ultimately rest with the Wereth 11 Committee that oversees the memorial site. It should be noted this site is not operated or maintained by the United States Government.

Goals

It is the goal of this project to produce 22 pillars dedicated to the soldiers. Each man will have a pillar dedicated in his hometown, with the "sister pillar" transported to Belgium for dedication at the current Wereth 11 Memorial site.

Each Pillar will be thoughtfully designed and reflect the name and information of each man. A plaque may be attached to each pillar, recognizing the city or county of their hometown and their desire to acknowledge the Wereth 11 memorial site.

Timeline

Depending on the completion of the pillars and the necessary logistics involved with local officials and the Wereth 11 Committee, it is planned to have the pillars dedicated on Memorial Day 2018 or 2019.

For more information, or to volunteer as a BOBA advisor, contact William Vaughan, VFW Member; 336-757-2921; wolfpackpilot@gmail.com

HALL OF VALOR INDUCTION 2001

Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall and Museum Trust Inc. STAFF SERGEANT ROBERT R. JOHNSON UNITED STATES ARMY WESTMORELAND COUNTY

Robert R. Johnson was awarded the Silver Star during WWII for gallantry in action during a night attack, a platoon was given the mission of capturing two pillboxes. Sgt. Johnson encountered an enemy sentry, disarmed him and forced the sentinel to guide him to the pillboxes. Through his efforts, he was able to locate six other wiremen whom he took as prisoners. His gallantry was in accordance with highest military tradition.

The Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall & Museum is a National Register of Historic Places landmark in Pittsburgh, PA. *Pictured above right is a detail of Sgt. Johnson's display there, which reads:*

"AWARDED THE SILVER STAR for gallantry in action February 18, 1945 in the vicinity of Wetterorder, Germany. During a night attack, a platoon was given the mission of capturing two pillboxes. As the platoon searched for enemy fortifications, Sergeant Johnson encountered an



enemy sentry, quickly disarmed him and forced the sentinel to guide him to the pillboxes. His platoon surprised and captured both strongholds and a total of 30 enemy including a regimental command post with all officers and radio equipment. When the positions were secured, Sergeant Johnson noticed two enemy wiremen repairing damaged lines. He quickly captured them and, from the information obtained, was able to locate six other wiremen whom he took as his prisoners. His gallantry was in accordance with highest military tradition."—Submitted by Donna Detore, Member and proud daughter of Robert R. Johnson.

PRESERVING HISTORY THROUGH THE MIND OF A CURIOUS 7-YEAR OLD

Little did I know I was in for a surprise when I left the Battle of the Bulge Commemoration last December (2016). Our organization's President, Gary Higgins, his wife, my wife and I coincidentally met up with each other at the airport after the event, since our departing flights were the same. Due to an ice storm, we were delayed for a few hours. Who did we have the pleasure to meet but Jennifer Griffin and her 7-year old son, Luke!! (Jennifer is currently a National Security Correspondent for FOX News). I was wearing my WWII hat and this caught Jennifer's attention. She quickly went to get her son so he could talk to me. I introduced myself and Luke shook my hand. Jennifer asked me to share any story I could about my WWII experience. I was glad to.

To my surprise, Luke had a very good understanding of WWII. Jennifer let him carry on the conversation, and I was so impressed with what he knew and what he asked. You could tell he was enthralled with the stories. Since then, he and I have stayed in touch, and I've sent him many things to keep his interest alive. One of the books I sent him was one published by the *New York Times* which has all the headlines of the newspapers published every day throughout the war. I also sent him a map of the Invasion of Normandy, showing where the ships departed the UK and arrived to the 5 beaches of Normandy. I also sent him a printed story of what our BN did during the war. My intention is to keep Luke's interest alive, so that he can help his generation and the next generation know the cost of freedom (lest they forget). I encourage all Veterans not to be afraid to talk to anyone who will listen. You'd be surprised to know that you'll have more of a captive audience than you thought.

—Submitted by Irving Locker, 116th AAA Gun BN

EPILOGUE

I received a short message from Irving:

Today, June 6, Luke called me to say he was thinking of me on D-Day. I was really touched.



What a surprise it was for me as well! I was in awe as I watched Irving Locker take time to tell Luke his story. Luke was totally mesmerized and he asked great questions. We were all listening and learning. I think it's great that Irving didn't miss the opportunity to instill in this young man more history than what he'd ever learn in a history class. I can't encourage you enough to help us keep your legend alive. Please let us know if we can be of help to share your story in print. Contact the Battle of the Bulge Association and we will do all we can to help you.

Coincidentally, I had a flag of the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge that I take to meetings in my carry-on. Above is a picture of me, Irving, and Luke (who was thrilled beyond words to see and touch the flag—what a boost for the Battle of the Bulge Association!).

—Submitted by Gary Higgins, President

FROM THE MIDWEST TO MAUTHAUSEN: MY STORY

by Sgt. Harold (Hal) Urban, 11th Armored Division



I was in my last year of high school when I heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor (Dec. 7, 1941). On that day, I made up my mind to enlist in the Army as soon as I turned 18 years old and that was going to be July, 1942.

I was inducted into the Army in Chicago and was sent to Camp Callan, La Jolla, CA for basic training. Within a short period of time, I was promoted to drill sergeant. About a year later, the army needed 2 volunteers for an overseas outfit. My buddy (Corp

Jimmy Mathis) and I decided to sign up. We were sent to Fort Bliss, Texas to join the 575th AAA where we trained for about a year on M15 and M16 half-tracks. We also learned how to use various weapons including anti-aircraft artillery (50 caliber machine guns, 37 mm cannon), and Colt 45 and 30 caliber carbine, M1 Garand, Bazooka, hand grenade and bayonet. I was a Section Sergeant and was responsible for training 9 men on the use of all of these weapons. During that year, we spent a month in Camp Carson, CO performing maneuvers. In Oct 1944, we boarded a troop train to New York and from there we boarded a Victory ship called *Sea Wolf* and crossed Atlantic in a 52-ship convoy. We landed in Liverpool, England, and were told that we would be attached to the 11th Armored Division. We spent about a month and a half preparing new equipment for combat.

We crossed the English Channel on LST's at the beginning of Dec and landed at Cherbourg, France. As Section Sergeant, I led a crew of 9 men and we had 2 M16 half-tracks. We were very 'gung-ho' about fighting the Germans until we saw our first American casualties being transported back from the front line. After that, fear replaced any bravado. On Dec 16th (not long after we arrived) a powerful and unexpected counter-offensive by the Germans occurred in the forest at Ardennes (this was the beginning of the Battle of the Bulge). We (the 11th Armored) joined Patton's 3rd Army and quickly headed toward Bastogne, Belgium and the Ardennes to do our part to help out. Our Division pushed hard and made a record distance in one day, thus earned our nickname "Thunderbolts."

It was the coldest winter on record and when we stopped to rest we could not build a fire to keep warm (this would have given our positions away) so we had to eat K and C rations that were frozen from the sub-zero weather. We had no shelter or blankets, just our wool overcoats to wrap ourselves in, as we tried to sleep on the cold steel of the open half-tracks. Our Division took the town of Chenogne, Belgium where some of the fiercest fighting took place. On Jan 2, just north of this town, I was injured—shrapnel went through my leg. After laying in the snow and bleeding for about an hour, I was finally noticed and picked up by a jeep and taken to the 58th General Hospital in Commercy, France. One thing I will never forget seeing was a ward with rows of cots with men with dark frostbitten feet scheduled to be amputated. After having surgery and spending 5 weeks in the field hospital for rehab, I was then sent back to my outfit on crutches and assigned an M15 and M16 Half-track. I had a new crew of 9 men. Later, I heard that two men from my previous crew, which had to continue on without me, had been severely injured, one of them eventually succumbing to his wounds. We pushed

on through Germany for the next 3 months and my section got credit for shooting down 2 ME 109s.

On 5 May 1945, shortly before the war ended, we were near Linz, Austria and we were shocked and saddened by what we found. We had come upon a concentration camp called Mauthausen. The site had been chosen by the Germans because of the nearby granite quarry, and its proximity to Linz. The regime at Mauthausen was one of the most brutal and severe, and the Germans implemented their extermination through labor. Most of the inmates either died as a result of the hard labor and poor conditions, or were deliberately killed in gas chambers (which was added in 1942) or by other means. The rock quarry in Mauthausen was at the base of the "Stairs of Death." Prisoners were forced to carry roughly-hewn blocks of stone, often weighing as much as 110 lbs, up the 186 concrete steps. The death toll of detainees remains unknown, although most sources place it between 122,766 and 320,000 for the entire prison camp complex. Our 41st Cavalry Squadron had liberated the camp shortly before we arrived by disarming the local policemen who had replaced the SS guards. Most of the guards had fled by the time they got there, but approximately 30 guards had remained. The prisoners wasted no time in taking out their vengeance on those 30 guards, and killed them. The same situation occurred in Gusen, a nearby camp that was part of the same complex—guards were overcome and killed by the prisoners. I'll never forget the sights and smells that assailed us. It was shocking to witness the terrible condition of the detainees, so malnourished, like skeletons, and some without legs or arms as a result of cruel and inhumane "experiments" by the Germans. And yet, they were so happy and grateful to be alive as a result of our efforts and sacrifices to defeat the Germans.

Continuing on our way to Linz, where we met the Russians, we were told that a ME 109 would be flying over us and not to fire at it. Soon after it passed over us, tipping its wings in a friendly gesture. It sure went against all of our training and instincts to hold back from shooting it out of the sky, but we obeyed. And soon after, on May 8th, as my squad was on its way from where we were billeted in Linz to the mess hall, VE Day was declared! We all threw our mess kits in to the air to celebrate. Within a few days, I was ordered to use my M16 as part of a roadblock to prepare for Patton and Eisenhower driving past on their way to Linz. Eisenhower waved and Patton saluted us.

For the next 6 months, my section searched for SS fugitives in the mountains of Bavaria. We billeted at a hunting lodge in Valeppe, near Tegernsee, where Hitler and Himmler had stayed together in the past. Finally we were heading home and it was just before Christmas, while aboard the victory ship, that we were informed that Patton had died (Dec 21, 1945). I arrived home to Chicago on Jan 1, 1946. There was no fanfare, but I was just happy to be back with my family and the life I left behind. I started working for a large utility company 2 weeks after returning home, eventually got married and raised 9 wonderful children.

Sixty years later, in May of 2005, myself, my wife, a few of my children and grandchildren, returned to the countries that I had fought in, ending up at Mauthausen on May 8, for a ceremony arranged by the Austrian government to dedicate a plaque in remembrance of the 11th Armored Division for their role in liberating that concentration camp as well as Gusen, Ebensee and others in upper Austria. The ceremony drew thousands of attendees, including WW11 veterans, government officials and, most importantly, former detainees who were liberated, who would most likely have perished if we had not arrived when we did. To share this with my family meant so much and because, since the camp had remained intact, they could see and experience the awful reality of what took place there....the concrete steps, the ovens, the gas chamber, the



In May 2005, Urban and his family attended the dedication ceremony for this plaque in honor of the 11th Armored Division in Mauthausen.

rugged barracks, many original photographs and displays of deplorable deeds by the Germans. It was a cold, windy, and dreary day, which added to the somber atmosphere, but the warm embraces and smiles of the survivors and their families towards us as liberators overcame the chill, and helped my family to understand the magnitude of what had been accomplished by the bravery and sacrifices of so many. And it also helped me come full circle and realize that my service to my country was not in vain.

(Composed with the assistance of my wife, Peg, who encouraged me to share my story with you.)

A LOVE AFFAIR WITH MA DEUCE

by Mike Quiroz, 134th AAA Gun Bn



The inevitable is about to happen. The trusty M2 .50-caliber machine gun is going to fade away.

My love affair with the watercooled .50-caliber began in 1943.

The year was 1930 and I was six years old, growing up in the town where I was born, Gleason AZ, about 18 miles from Tombstone. There were about six of us kids approximately the same age. A newspaper from Los Angeles was delivered once a week on Sunday and we all scrambled for the comics section.

My favorite comic strip was "Buck Rogers," all about space and spacesuits, ships and ray guns. Reading and looking at the pictures I thought to myself, "This will never happen."

I received my July 21 copy of *Army Times* with the cover story "A sneak peak of your next rifle, plus .50-cal.'s replacement." Lo and behold on page 15, I saw weapon similar to the ones depicted in the comic strip. This was absolutely amazing to me!

Not so amazing though was the article about the 70-year-old .50-caliber machine gun about to be retired.

I was inducted into the Army in 1943 and I was assigned to AAA Gun Training Camp. We trained off the coast of California using water-cooled .50-caliber machine guns to shoot at rafts made to look like sail boats pulled by Navy vessels, so we could learn how to lead a target. Later, in advanced training at Fort Bliss, Texas, we fired at sleeves

pulled by Air Force planes.

Rumor had it that pilots assigned to pull the sleeves would go to Juarez, Mexico the night before training, so the next morning they would feel no pain. In fact, a few planes did get bullet holes in their tails,

Later, in Europe, I was a gunner on a trailer-mounted quad fifty. I also operated the .50-caliber on ring mounts.

I'm over 90 years old and I still remember how to disassemble, assemble and name the parts. The same goes with the M1 Garand. Fortunately for me, I fired the M1 in competition for about 10 years, but that's another story.

OPERATION NORDWIND

by Harold L. Eiserloh, 1st Ptn., Co G,
71st Inf. Regt, 44th Inf. Div.



PFC Eiserloh washing up behind the church in Rimling.

I feel like a lucky bystander; being a target several times but always missed. I thank God for bringing me home safely. The following is an excerpt taken from my WWII Memoirs written in 2004 for the Veterans' History Project at the Library of Congress, Washington DC. Operation Nordwind was the last major German assault; Hitler called it step two of the Huertgen Forest Operation (Battle of the Bulge).

A cold front brought bitter cold and snow to the Vosges Mountains in northern Alsace just after Christmas. The ground was frozen, under about a foot of snow, making it almost impossible to

dig a foxhole with only our entrenching tools. It was well below freezing during the day and near zero during the nights, with a strong North wind.

The 2nd Battalion was spread thin along the border, across what should have been a regimental front, with almost everyone on the line, along a series of ridges overlooking the France-Germany border. Our intelligence warned us that a German attack in force was probable. Unlike the Huertgen Forest assault, where the Germans did not use radio communications when building up their forces, they did use radio while assembling units for Operation Nordwind and we were expecting the assault.

On the morning of Dec. 31st, from Brandenfinghof Farm, 12 men of the First Platoon of Company G were sent as an outpost near Obergailbach across the border in Germany, on the battalion's forward left flank, in existing foxholes about 100 feet apart along a thin hedgerow, with my hole on the open left flank; about 150 feet farther to the left was a reconnaissance jeep with a radio and 50 caliber air-cooled machine gun. We were probably at least 300 yards in front of the nearest U.S. forces. Each foxhole had 2 riflemen and a third with an automatic weapon, either a Browning Automatic Rifle or a submachine gun, referred to as a

(continued on next page)

OPERATION NORDWIND *(continued)*

“grease gun,” because it looked like one.

In the afternoon I was assigned to a 4-man patrol to see if the Germans had evacuated the town of Obergailbach, behind the ridge in front of us. The patrol found no German soldiers in the town, only civilians. Back in our foxhole we ate our dinner K rations, which included a can of beef & pork loaf with carrot and apple flakes, and a bar of dark chocolate. I shaved the chocolate bar into tiny flakes onto a piece of paper to make hot chocolate the next morning. It got dark about 1630 (4:30 pm) and daylight around 7:00 am.

About 2200 (10:00 pm) we could hear a train enter Obergailbach, behind the ridge in front of us. With the wind blowing from the North, the frigid air carried the sounds of German commands, whistles, etc. as they unloaded troops and marched up into the woods on the ridge about 200 yards in front of us. After all units had reached the ridge, our artillery opened up on the woods with continuous fire for what seemed like about an hour, then, as the Germans advanced out of the woods in the moonlight, at about 2345, the artillery followed them with high explosive and white phosphorus shells, which lit up the hillside, creating quite a fireworks display for a New Years celebration! We could not see the enemy, who were dressed in white against the snow, but their use of tracer ammunition gave their positions away, bringing more U.S. artillery fire. Just as dawn was breaking the reconnaissance jeep fired several machine gun bursts and after a few quick words on their radio, they pulled back. We hadn't seen anything to shoot at. There was frequent U.S. rifle, BAR and machine gun fire over 300 yards to our right-rear, coming from F Company's area, but from our 3-man foxhole we saw no positive enemy target within range to shoot at with our BAR, grenade launcher and M1 rifles, and none of the other members of the outpost had fired their weapons, even as daybreak illuminated the valley before us.

A couple of short bursts from a German machine pistol, or “burp-gun,” several 100 feet behind us, was our first indication the Germans had gotten behind our outpost. About that time Sergeant Gasperino ran up behind our hole yelling to follow him, the outpost had been pulled back over 15 minutes earlier, but the orders hadn't been passed on to us in the last foxhole. I grabbed my M1, with its grenade launcher, and grenades and took off cussing, because some @#\$%&#\$ German soldier was going to get my chocolate bar shavings which were left behind! As we ran in retreat through a wooded area we heard another burst from the machine pistol, but we were not hit, and we returned the thousand yards back to Brandenfinghof Farm.

We later learned that, as part of “Operation Nordwind,” a full regiment of the 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division had attacked our Second Battalion front, attempting to reach Saarbourg and Nancy, the railhead about 50 miles to our rear. I guess that over half of the Germans were killed or wounded by the artillery barrage before they even started the attack on that first night. Our artillery had just been issued proximity fused shells which, instead of hitting the ground before exploding and having little effect on prone soldiers, exploded at about 30 feet above the ground, spraying shrapnel down onto the prone soldiers. The U.S. 44th Division was attacked by the 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Division, 36th Volks Grenadier Division and 19th Volks Grenadier Division. New faster firing machine guns and semiautomatic assault rifles had been issued to the German units. Operation Nordwind, ordered by Hitler as a follow-up of their Heurtgen Forest breakthrough, involved about 15 German divisions against six U. S. divisions and one French division along a front extending along the French-German border from Saarguemines east to the Rhine River and south along the Rhine passed Strasbourg to near Colmar.

We moved to defensive positions, a secondary line of resistance, behind E and F Company and H Company, which caught the main force of the German attack, with E and F Company withdrawing and elements of H Company being surrounded. Other platoons of G Company had been moved up to help F Company during the night. With attacks and counter-attacks, using tanks and other armored vehicles, by both sides, the battle moved back and forth during most of January 1st. U. S. machine guns, mortars and artillery killed and wounded several hundred Germans, with U.S. battalion losses less than two dozen killed or wounded.

We marched back to Moronville Farm. The First Platoon joined a force of at least 100 men of G Company, six 81mm mortars from H Company, with three Sherman tanks and three tank destroyers in support, defending the Moronville Farm compound, consisting of two-story buildings continuous around a square, about 200 feet across, with gates on opposite sides. Many families lived here, with each living quarters next to their barn, with hay stored on the concrete second floor. F Company was driven back to the farm by repeated German attacks. The Germans attacked the farm after midnight, setting the hay in the buildings on fire with their tracers, 20mm cannon and mortars. The second floors of the whole community was on fire when we were ordered to pull out; my squad was assigned to accompany the last two tanks who covered the retreat. We were warned, as we climbed aboard, not to touch the tanks with bare hands, only gloves, because our skin would freeze to the cold metal. We moved back to a new line of resistance about 800 yards south of Moronville Farm.

In the afternoon of Jan. 2nd, the First Platoon, with support from two tanks and a tank destroyer (with 90mm gun), retook a ridge overlooking the town of Gros-Réderching, which the 44th Division had previously taken but was now occupied by the Germans. Several foxholes had been dug along the bare ridge; three German soldiers jumped out of one hole and ran down the other face of the ridge, with about 5 of the nearest GIs firing quickly at them but there were no hits. The other holes were empty. We spread across the top of the ridge, using available holes, but all I could find on the left flank was a shallow shell hole, not more than 8 inches deep in the center. An L-1 artillery spotter plane hovered overhead to direct artillery fire onto resistance from the town. Sporadic rifle fire came from the town, about 200 yards away in the valley. We were ordered to return the fire, without any specific targets. I fired three rounds at various windows, selected at random (the only shots I fired during the war). The Germans ran a rolling mortar barrage from one end of the ridge to the other and back again, with shells hitting about 50 feet apart. They got closer and the next one would be very close; I heard it coming in, but with an unusual fluttering sound. Instead of coming in straight it was spinning end over end. It landed within three feet of my head, kicking dirt and snow over me from the impact, but it did not explode! Every other shell in the barrage had exploded on impact with the ground.. When the barrage ended we pulled back off the ridge, apparently with no one injured. My feet hurt from blisters on my heels as we marched back to our line of resistance.

My squad spent that night in a snow-covered clearing, in deep foxholes which had been dug by a supporting artillery unit; they and their guns had been pulled back to a safer location. The bottoms of the holes had been lined with empty brass 105mm shell casings, which offered a little protection from the icy bottom of the holes—that is, until the ice broke, the shell casings sank and our shoes were 4 inches into the icy water. It was really hard to get to sleep standing up, with cold, wet feet. I could hardly feel the blisters on my heels.

The next morning, Jan. 3rd, I complained to Sergeant Gasperino of the blisters on my heels where all four socks on each foot had worn

through (the seam between the rubber bottom and the leather top of the shoe packs was in a bad location). He sent me to the aid station in Rimling, about a 1/4 mile walk. As they treated my blistered heels, I asked where I could get more socks. The medic answered, "In the hospital; you have trench foot," and put me on a stretcher and into an ambulance with another trench foot and two yellow jaundice cases. During this period the U. S. forces had more casualties from trench foot and yellow jaundice than from enemy action.

During the night of Jan. 3rd, F Co. was moving into Gros-Réderching, then thought to be held by the French, when the Germans in the town opened fire. Before the Americans could withdraw, several GIs were hit and were carried out, but in the confusion in the dark several Germans fell into line with the withdrawing Americans and were captured.

The 71st Infantry Regiment and the 44th Division had stopped the units of Nordwind that hit us, but U.S. divisions to the east and along the Rhine River were pushed back from 10 to 20 miles. Two U.S. Divisions which had just arrived in Europe and had no battle experience were fighting back and forth almost continuously, inside towns [sometimes with U.S. troops and German troops occupying different parts of the same building overnight] and through woods and open fields, with infantry, tanks and artillery, suffering high casualties on both sides, for over three weeks before the Nordwind assault in their areas was finally defeated.

Sometime after the war, the Nordwind offensive and the Seventh Army resistance to it in Alsace, was added to the Huertgen Forest campaign star, to be added to the ETO/ North Africa Theater Medal ribbon.

I spent the next five weeks in the 21st General Hospital in Mirrecourt, France, recovering from trench foot, which is a breakdown of tissue cells from being cold and wet over a period of several days or more. Usually it can be prevented by daily drying and warming the feet and then putting on dry socks. Because my shoe packs were so oversize that I had to wear all four pair of socks there was no way to dry them out when I was wearing them, and during the last several days there was no opportunity to go without my shoe packs on my feet, and certainly nowhere to warm them. In the hospital I got warm, in addition to getting my first shower and haircut since leaving the United States, almost three months earlier.

A NICE WARM BED AND MORE—WELL-EARNED!

by Norman Katz, 80th Infantry Division,
319th Infantry Regiment, Company B



I turned 18 in January 1943. Three months later I got my "Greetings from Uncle Sam." After three months of basic, I was assigned to ASTP (Army Specialized Training Program.) At graduation we become engineers. Lucky for me, I ended up at Yale, and went home to Brooklyn every weekend!

Alas, after five months, they canceled the program. The army needed "cannon fodder." Off to another basic training for five months as a light (30 cal.) machine gunner.

In September 1944, I was on the *Ile de France* for eight days, dodging subs, until we landed at Grenoch, Scotland. By train we arrived a day later in Southampton England, and then

went immediately by ship over the channel to Le Havre. By truck, I arrived at Company B, 319th Infantry Division, 80th Division as a replacement, carrying 2 boxes of ammunition and my M1 rifle. Two days later, I traded my M1 for a carbine and then a 45 pistol, because I was now a second gunner.

We were in a small town near St. Lo and stayed in a large school building. Three days later I read in the "Stars and Stripes" paper that a bomb from German planes had demolished the entire building! Wow!

In the ensuing months, I was now first gunner. We pushed the Krauts back towards Germany, taking many towns and cities along the way. In December 1944, we were in eastern France overlooking the Siegfried line, near Saarbrücken. Advancing through one town and another, encountering little or no resistance. The scuttlebutt had it that we'd be home for Christmas. Yea, sure!

While having our coffee one morning, our lieutenant ran in and said, "The Germans have broken through in the first Army sector, matching us man for man, plane for plane, and tank for tank! We have to go there and stop them!"

After three days in open trucks in 9° weather and plenty of snow, we ended up in Dahl, Luxembourg, just south of Bastogne. Two days later we were up in the attic of a large house. When we looked out the window, we saw several hundred Krauts lined up about 50 yards out. I opened up with my machine gun and my buddies with their M1s. I don't know how many we got, but they retreated quickly. However, I looked to my left, and down the road was a Tiger tank taking aim at us. I told the guys to "get the heck downstairs!" When things quieted down, I went back upstairs and the entire loft was in ruins, including my gun. But the tank was now a shell—some of my company must have knocked it out! Wow!

The next day, we left Dahl and moved into some woods nearby. As we marched through, with a new machine gun on my shoulder, we encountered fierce fire from snipers in the trees. The first gunner "Zel" (Steve Zelnak from the other squad) was shot and killed and our sergeant was wounded in the hip. I opened up on the snipers and got two of them. Then orders came down to go back to Dahl. On the way, my second gunner was shot and he died in my arms. It was a horrible day. Thank God, I was spared!

A few days later, we marched through those same woods with no resistance. A week later the Battle of the Bulge was over! I was very lucky.

* * *

Now, I have a story on the lighter side. About a month and half later, we came to a small town in Germany. Along came our Captain Scott saying, "Boys, do you want to sleep in warm beds tonight?" We all said, "Yes, sir!" So he said, "Let's take that town!" We did, amidst very little resistance. When the town was secure, our captain told me to find a nice place to rest. Me and one of my buddies started looking around town, and in a short time we came across an 8-foot wall. Finding the gate, we wandered in, and found a 40-room mansion! I rapped on the large wooden door with my pistol. After a while, it was opened by a tall gray-haired man, who said "Was ist los?" I put the barrel of my gun to his head and commanded, "Shut up!" He scurried away, and we started looking around from room to room. Finally, we went down to the cellar and there we found, from North, South, East and West, Champagne bottles as far as the eye could see! Needless to say, we ran back to our company and told them, "We have a GREAT place to sleep tonight!" After pouring bubbly for a couple of hours, we all hit the sack in nice warm beds, not feeling any pain.

A month later, our captain Scott was killed as he attacked a German battalion. I will always remember him.



WWII 75TH ANNIVERSARY EVENTS

Many organizations have started their events commemorating the 75th Anniversary of WWII, slated for December 2016 through 2020. Here are just a few to keep in mind.

THE FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL

In 2016 we marked the 75th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, an event which propelled the United States into World War II and changed the course of our nation forever. And, throughout the four years that follow, significant battles and historic moments from World War II will also reach that 75-year milestone.

The Friends of the National World War II Memorial has kicked off an ambitious four-year World War II 75th Anniversary Commemoration from December 7, 2016 to September 2, 2020. The commemoration will be highlighted by reunions, symposiums, museum exhibits, and battle anniversary ceremonies.

As time marches on, and as we lose our treasured heroes of the WWII generation, it is ever more critical that we do everything we can now to remember, recognize, and honor the service and sacrifices of these men and women who advanced the cause of freedom for the world.

And, it is imperative that significant anniversaries of historic importance, like the World War II 75th Anniversary Commemoration, be the catalyst to spark the interest and imagination of America's young people. With support,

Friends is ready to ignite that spark that will demonstrate the potential of the American people when they are united in spirit, purpose, and commitment to a common and noble cause.

As part of the World War II 75th Anniversary Commemoration, the Friends of the National World War II Memorial will host more than 60 ceremonies, commemorations of battle anniversaries, and other special events to mark this historic period in our nation's history and to honor the heroic men and women of the Greatest Generation and thereby help to preserve the national memory of World War II, our veterans and their families, and all those who served on the home front.

Taking part in these ceremonies will be our surviving WWII veterans, representatives of our Allied Nations, members of Congress, military leadership, and many, many more.

Of the more than 16 million Americans who served during WWII, less than one million of these treasured heroes are still with us today.

The World War II 75th Anniversary Commemoration is our last chance to honor, recognize, and thank the WWII generation who

—through sacrifice, valor, dedication, and determination—preserved our freedom, saved our nation, and literally saved the world.

UPCOMING EVENTS INCLUDE:

Monday, August 7: Battle of Guadalcanal 75th Anniversary Commemoration at the WWII Memorial

Saturday, September 2: V-J Day Observance at the WWII Memorial

Wednesday, October 25: Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands 75th Anniversary Commemoration at the WWII Memorial

Wednesday, November 8: Operation Torch 75th Anniversary Commemoration at the WWII Memorial

Saturday, November 11: Veterans Day Observance at the WWII Memorial

Thursday, December 7: Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day Observance at the WWII Memorial

For more information, go to: www.wwii-memorialfriends.org/75th-anniversary-commemoration

Phone: 202-675-2017

Email: hrotondi@wwiimemorialfriends.org

THE VIRGINIA WORLD WAR I AND WORLD WAR II COMMEMORATION COMMISSION

The Virginia World War I and World War II Commemoration Commission was created by the Virginia General Assembly to plan, develop, and carry out programs and activities to commemorate the 100th anniversary of WWI and the 75th anniversary of WWII.

The Virginia World War I and World War II Profiles of Honor Mobile Tour brings an interactive exhibit to museums, libraries, and historic sites throughout Virginia.

Profiles of Honor brings to life the state's integral role in both wars, highlighting stories of Virginians who served in both conflicts. As part of the tour, visitors are invited to bring their own WWI and WWII-related photographs to be scanned for inclusion in the Virginia Profiles of Honor project. This partnership with the Library of Virginia will help preserve the documents and stories of our veterans for generations.

UPCOMING EVENTS INCLUDE:

August 12-13

Profiles of Honor Tour and Scanning Project
Location: Williamsburg Library,
515 Scotland Street, Williamsburg, VA 23185
Hours: Saturday, Aug. 12: 10:00 am - 5:00 pm; Sunday, Aug. 13: 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

August 25 - September 2

Shenandoah Co. Fair
Location: Shenandoah Co. Fairgrounds,
Woodstock, VA
Hours: TBD

September 8

Salute to Veterans
Location: Petersburg Union Station,

103 River Street, Petersburg, VA 23803
Hours: Friday, Sept. 8: 3:00 pm - 8:30 pm

September 16

Centennial Commemoration of 80th Division at Camp Lee
Location: Fort Lee, 500 Lee Avenue,
Fort Lee, VA 23801
Hours: Saturday, Sept. 16, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

September 20

POH Visits Prince George County
Location: Prince George County Heritage Festival
Hours: Wed., Sept. 20: 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

September 21-22

POH Visits Caroline County
Location: TBD

September 23

Americans in Wartime Tank Farm Open House
Location: Nokesville, VA
Hours: TBD

September 24

Swinging to the 40s Big Band Concert
Location: Historic Smithfield Plantation,
1000 Smithfield Plantation Rd,
Blacksburg, VA 24060
Hours: Sunday, Sept. 24: 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

October 6-7

Exhibition Opening, "The Forgotten War: Its Impact at Home"
Location: Manassas Museum, 9101 Prince

William Street, Manassas, VA 20110
Hours: Friday, Oct. 6: 1:00 pm - 8:00 pm;
Saturday, Oct. 7: 10:00 am - 3:00 pm

October 14

World War I and World War II: Conversations and Commemoration
Location: Isle of Wight Museum, 103 Main Street, Smithfield, VA 23430
Hours: Saturday, October 14: 10:00 am - 3:00 pm

October 20-22

37th Annual Poquoson Seafood Festival
Location: 830 Poquoson Avenue,
Poquoson, VA 23662
Hours: Friday, October 20: 5:00 pm - 10:00 pm; Saturday, October 21: 10:00 am - 6:00 pm; Sunday, October 22: 12:30 pm - 6:30 pm

October 28-29

Profiles of Honor Tour and Document Scanning
Location: Roanoke County Library,
1206 Kessler Mill Road, Salem, VA 24153
Hours: TBD

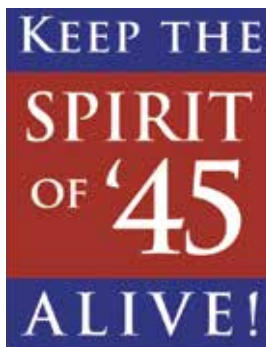
November 11

Spotsylvania Tribute to Veterans
Location: Old Spotsylvania Courthouse,
9019 Old Battefield Blvd,
Spotsylvania, VA 22553
Hours: Saturday, November 11: 10:00 am - 4:00 pm
To learn more about upcoming events, go to:
www.virginiawwiandwwii.org

SPIRIT OF '45

The "Keep the Spirit of '45 Alive!" organization is planning 75th Anniversary events as well, including a swing dance to honor WWII veterans in NYC on August 12 at the historic New Yorker Hotel, kicking off their Spirit of '45 weekend.

Members of the Spirit of '45 coalition are forming an alliance to help raise public awareness about activities that are being organized by various groups to commemorate the 75th anniversary of important events that took place during World War II (1941 - 1945).



The Spirit of '45 coalition helped support the Pearl Harbor 75th Anniversary in December 2016, and is organizing an international commemoration of the WWII 75th anniversary of the end of WWII that will take place around the world on the weekend of August 14 - 16, 2020.

We encourage the public to participate in commemorative events in their local communities, such as having wreath laying ceremonies at memorials and other appropriate venues in parallel with those being held at the National World War II Memorial in Washington, DC.

For more information, go to: www.spiritof45.org

Turn the page for information about BOBA Tour to Europe for the 75th Anniversary!



Participants in our 70th Anniversary Commemoration Tour to Belgium and Luxembourg, Dec. 2014, were greeted with warm gratitude by local families and dignitaries, visited battle sites and memorials, and were cheered by students thankful to hear about our veterans' experiences.

TOURS

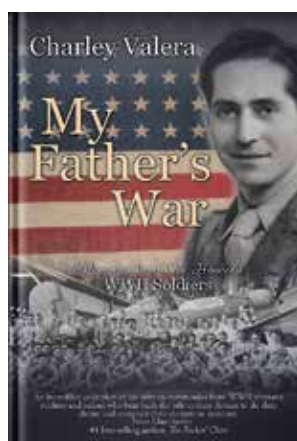
75th Anniversary of World War II in Europe: The 75th Anniversary Years of World War II in Europe have arrived. 2018 will be the 75th Anniversary of 1943, when US forces first went into combat in Europe. This began the steady march of events towards America's greatest ever land battle, the Battle of the Bulge and the final victory in Europe. 2019 will be the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge. BOBA members will be able to commemorate these momentous times with a special BOBA tour. Full details will be available at the 2017 BOBA Annual Reunion in San Antonio, TX September 23-28 and will be published in the November 2017 issue of *The Bulge Bugle*.

Tours are an excellent opportunity to visit the places where your father, grandfather, uncle or family friend served in World War II. See the battlefields where he fought. Meet the people of the local communities which he liberated. Participate in official ceremonies honoring the Veterans. Tours have 'transformed' many 2nd and 3rd generation people, as they stand in the very place where their loved ones fought. Tours are also the very best way for today's and future generations to forever honor, celebrate and memorialize the Veteran's military achievements, history and heritage.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: contact Doris Davis, Member and President of BOBA Golden Gate Chapter.
Email: doris@battleofthebulge.org

BOBA MEMBER BOOKS

My Father's War: Memories From Our Honored WWII Soldiers



A newly released book, "My Father's War: Memories from Our Honored WWII Soldiers," written by Charley Valera, chronicles the lives and first-hand accounts from soldiers across both the European and Pacific theaters of war. The book is available at Amazon, Barnes & Noble and other major booksellers.

George J. Pelletier was born July 18, 1925 in Fitchburg Massachusetts. He was awarded the Combat Infantry Badge, Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Cluster, Good Conduct Medal, American Campaign Medal, European-African Middle-Eastern Campaign Medal, WWII Victory Medal, Army of Occupation Medal, three battle stars, and the Honorable Service Lapel Button WWII. Pelletier was a member of the Acorn unit and continues to be a supporter of BOBA.

An excerpt of the book about George Pelletier:

The Pearl Harbor attack "just shocked the whole nation." He added, "We were just stunned that it had occurred. All the fellows in the area that were eighteen and nineteen enlisted right away. Everyone was responding to the crisis. I also had four brothers-in-law that enlisted immediately." Pelletier nodded. "They all did. Everybody did."

"Two days after my 19th birthday I was joined with the 87th and we were getting ready to go overseas," said Pelletier.

He served in Europe under General George S. Patton's 3rd Army as a machine-gunner in M Company, 345th Infantry, 87th Infantry Division. Pelletier saw action in France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany. He participated in some of the most vicious battles during World War II including Ardennes (Battle of the Bulge), Rhineland, Central Europe, and occupation with Russian forces at the German-Czechoslovakian border.

* * *

There is a letter Pelletier wrote to his wife that he shared with me for this book. A portion from that letter read:

"...Soon we received our first mission. So we boarded aboard cattle cars and took off. Our mission was to take the remaining forts occupied by Germans and Metz, France. We were not there long before they all gave up. In the meantime two other regiments of our division were in action in the Saar, this all happening around 5th of December.

Now we took off for the Saar and were ready for action the next day. However, it wasn't 24 hours before we jumped off. I will never forget it. The [Heinies] spotted us coming around the hill and started picking us off. Shells were landing everywhere as close as 5 yards from me. I was dazed but prayed like mad. I then spotted a hole in the ground, which probably saved my life, as three men behind me were hit. We took a beating that day. We dug in that night under fire. At 4 the next morning we took off or jumped off into the attack once again minus anything to eat or drink and minus sleep. That day we advanced 5 miles into the woods, flanking our objective, while other companies came in on the other sides.

Again we were shelled continuously, one of my buddies was killed, two more wounded, all in my platoon. Soon we ran out of ammunition, had no water or food. There we dug in for two days hoping that Jerry didn't see us, in the meantime one platoon of I Company [to] which we were attached started back for what we needed. We were 3 days without food or water, our squad or rather what was left four out of seven drank water from the water jacket of our gun. Incidentally I'm still a machine gunner. I was assistant gunner at the time. But 18 hours later we heard our platoon coming back with rations and water. Soon after that we were relieved by another battalion. Whew, what a relief. They continued on the attack while we drew back a mile or so, dug in, and rested up for 2 days.

We lost a lot of men here; it was rough. Then we pulled out again to dig in and hold our lines while divisions on our right and left caught up to us. Now the bulge started and we transferred from the Seventh Army to the Third. Then we took off for the bulge, a day later we jumped off into the attack and drove the Jerry back after he had counterattacked on New Year's Eve. We lost more of our buddies here out of my platoon, again



**George J. Pelletier, 87th INF
345th INF REG, M CO**

I escaped. We took a major part in the bulge and were successful. It was rough in the Ardennes Forest attacking in the snow, digging in and sleeping there but we came out OK still pounding the [Heinies'] back.

The bulge being nearly over we took off for Luxembourg. There we felt the Jerry out for a week, trying to find out what he had across the river. Now we were relieved by [a] new division and sent back into what was left of the bulge. We jumped off again to town after town and drove into Germany, being under constant fire of Jerry. Lost a few men.

All through this I've learned to realize a lot of things. I know what war is now. I've seen it, I've seen men die and maimed for life. I've seen homes destroyed, families all separated, poor, unfed little children. Now when I get back home I know what needs to be done and no one is to cross me or any other of these GIs who know all this. We owe a debt to our buddies and we're going to see that what they wanted and dreamed about is accomplished.

Now came the hard part, cracking the Siegfried Line."

—Submitted by Charley Valera, Member

BOBA MEMBER BOOKS

FINDING MY FATHER'S WAR (PART ONE)

In June of 2015, my mother asked me, "Will you take a picture of your Dad's medals and ribbons? They're in the middle lower drawer under the TV."

I went over to the wall of cabinets that my Dad had built. Following Mom's directions, I handed her a well-worn shoebox. She opened it carefully, revealing a swath of crumpled tissue paper. She gently set that aside, then handed a little dark box to me. "Your Dad's Silver Star and his citation."

Against the deep blue velvet, the star was tarnished with age. The document paper was thin, crackling just a bit as I unfolded it cautiously. Reading, I felt a tear poised to roll down my cheek. I turned slightly away from my mother in a pointless effort to hide it.

"Will you publish your Dad's story?" Mom's voice was clear and steady. "That's how you can help me."

"Of course! We've talked about this—it's on my list."

"Well, dear, sooner is better than later."

Startled, I looked up from my notes and caught the look on my Mom's face. She locked eyes with me and continued. "I'm 94 years old. I'd like to see it in print before I leave. Sooner is better."

Behind her steely gaze, I saw that she felt time's cold breath on her neck, despite the warmth of the June day. I gulped.

Part of the Greatest Generation, Mom would always pick herself up, shake off the dust, and get on with things. "Now, let's make this book happen!"

I didn't understand that strength, but followed her lead. "You know, I first read Dad's memoir in 1996, when he got really sick..." Mom nodded, "Because you came and stayed, your Dad was able to live out his last months at home. It meant the world to him, and to us as a family. Everyone had the chance to help care for him and say good-bye. He knew he was loved. A lot! That's why I want you to publish his memoirs!"

I was grateful for her trust in me—I'd shepherd her 2010 debut novel to print with good success—but I cautioned, "You know, I was

kinda scared of Dad when I was little. He was so big and so busy..."

Mom interrupted, "He always said 'I'm not your pal, I'm your father.' He believed his job was to provide for us and keep you safe, not be your friend." I thought back. "Yeah, sometimes he seemed brusque but he did love a good joke and planning pranks, didn't he?"

Mom smiled, then clapped her hands. "Enough reminiscing! 'Let us then be up and doing, with a heart for any fate...' I chimed in, "'Still achieving, still pursuing, Learn to labor and to wait...'"

Mom and Dad both loved poetry and the whole family would burst into verse on cue. A great substitute for our squabbling, they often opined.

"Well, no 'waiting' now! You know," Mom added, "your Dad wrote the WWII part of his memoirs separately—in Czechoslovakia, after the European fighting ended."

"But if the war was over..."

Mom explained that the troops went over in waves, and of course, they couldn't all ship home at once. Those with seniority, or who could pull strings, were the first to leave. Lots of soldiers had to wait for transport. My Dad used that time to translate his maps and notes, as well as the aid station logs and rosters, into a narrative.

"Hey Mom, let's start with that! There seems to be quite a bit of popular interest in WWII—*Unbroken*, *The Book Thief*, *Fury*, *The Monuments Men*—and even a bit earlier, Stephen Ambrose's books, the Navajo code talkers, HBO's *Band of Brothers*..."

Mom beamed. "Good idea! What else do you need now? Pictures, letters, clippings?" I replied, "Let's wait. I'll want them later, but our little Waikiki condo is pretty tight for space."

It's been more than two years since that conversation. Sadly, my mother died in August 2016, but I've been working hard to fulfill my promise. Sometimes the obstacles have felt overwhelming, the hurdles too high, or the problems so daunting that I felt like quitting.

But I'm delighted to finally announce that it will be published later this fall! Look for *Healers and Heroes: WWII Combat Medics from Normandy Beach to the Battle of the Bulge* on Amazon.

—© Thea Marshall, 2017

www.healersandheroes.com; FB: [healersandheroes](https://www.facebook.com/healersandheroes);
email: thea@thea-marshall.com



WELCOME TO SAN ANTONIO, TX

BATTLE OF THE BULGE ASSOCIATION 36th ANNUAL REUNION

September 23 – 28, 2017

HIGHLIGHTS AND SCHEDULE INFORMATION

REGISTRATION FEE

All attendees (except for WWII Vets) must pay the registration fee. The fee covers the expenses of nametags, programs, table decorations, Hospitality Room, etc.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

Registration and complimentary Wine and Cheese Reception in the Hospitality Room.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

Join us for a narrated 1-hour **river barge ride along the famous San Antonio Riverwalk** (each boat holds 35 people). Then tour the **Buckhorn Saloon and Museum**. Established in 1881, it is one of the places Teddy Roosevelt recruited Rough Riders (1st U.S. Volunteer Cavalry) for American involvement in the Cuban War of Independence, and Pancho Villa is rumored to have planned the Mexican Revolution there.

Dinner at **Mi Tierra Mexico Café & Bakery**, serving classic Mexican fare for 75 years, with margaritas and mariachis, located at the “El Mercado” Market Square, a 3-block outdoor plaza lined with shops and restaurants.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

After enjoying breakfast, bus departs for Fredericksburg, Texas, home of the **National Museum of the Pacific War** and tour of the **Nimitz Museum**. After touring the Nimitz Museum, enjoy a box lunch from Clear Pecan Sandwich Shoppe in the restored Hotel ballroom. Continue with a tour of the National Museum of the Pacific War and see the state-of-the-art 33,000 square foot exhibit featuring 40 media installations, approximately 900 artifacts in 97 climate-controlled cases, and hundreds of photographs. Central to the experience is a spectacular artifact: the HA-19, one of five Japanese two-man subs that took part in the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Dinner on your own. For those interested, join Barbara & Everett for a trip by water taxi to the **Pearl Brewery**, an abandoned brewery from 1881 with 15 restaurants and lots of shops. Last water taxi runs at 9:00 PM – after that, use Uber or taxi to return to the hotel.



TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

Fort Sam Houston is a U.S. Army post in San Antonio, Texas opened in 1876. The installation's missions include serving as the command headquarters for the U.S. Army North, U.S. Army South, the Army Medical Command headquarters, the Army Medical Department Center and School, the Fifth Recruiting Brigade, Navy Regional Recruiting, the San Antonio Military Entrance and Processing Station, and the Medical Education and Training Campus. Many of our WWII Nurses trained here.

The Quadrangle is the oldest structure at the Fort. It was originally a supply depot. During that time, it housed the Apache war chief Geronimo and warriors captured with him, while the Federal government decided whether to treat them as prisoners of war or common criminals.

After touring the **Fort Sam Houston Museum**, enjoy **lunch with the troops** in the mess hall.

Rest up in the afternoon for an evening of Texas-style BBQ and dancing at the oldest VFW Post in Texas! **VFW Post 76** was granted its charter in 1917 for veterans of the Spanish American War and is located in a Victorian-style home. Enjoy a world-famous **Rudy's BBQ** dinner, and music and dancing with the band BlackJack, who play a variety of music, including all of the standards you would expect,



Highlights include: an evening of Texas BBQ and dancing at VFW Post 76 (top left), the National Museum of the Pacific War (bottom left), and the Pearl Brewery complex (above).

in the Lee Swain Carriage House. Don't forget to pack your dancing shoes!

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

The day starts with a **tour of San Antonio** with a certified guide on board. We will begin by **laying a wreath at the Battle of the Bulge Monument** located at Veterans Memorial Park. This Monument was placed in the park to commemorate “the 50th anniversary of this ever-famous American Victory.” Continue our tour to the **Mission San Jose** (short 23-minute film), **The Alamo**, **Menger Hotel**, and other world heritage sights in the air-conditioned comfort of our bus.

After lunch on your own, please attend the **Membership Meeting** to discuss important issues and vote on the slate of officers for the next governing year. The President will receive nominations from the floor. (Be sure to have the person's permission and willingness to serve, before nomination.)

All veterans are invited to dress for the **Banquet** and have their picture taken before the **Reception**. Enjoy the music of the 323d Army Band Brass Quintet and vocalists during the reception (with cash bar.) Banquet will follow in the ballroom of the hotel.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28

After breakfast at the hotel, stay for additional sightseeing days or depart for a safe trip home.

BOBA REUNION REGISTRATION FORM

DEADLINE FOR REGISTRATION FOR REUNION: **SEPTEMBER 8, 2017**

ITEMS BELOW
NOW FREE FOR
ALL WWII VETERANS

Due to a very generous donation from the South Carolina Military History Club, all items below are now free of charge for WWII veterans only (additional meals, travel, and hotel expenses are not included). WWII Veterans must register using this form--the online registration does not allow for free pricing. Those who are not WWII veterans can register below OR online at www.battleofthebulge.org (Click on the "Attend Reunion" and complete the Registration Form). Registration for the Reunion must be received no later than **September 8, 2017**. There is no penalty for canceling up to the day of arrival. Go to page 19 for the hotel registration information (**Hotel reservation cut-off is September 1, 2017.**)

BOBA registration desk at the hotel (in the Lone Star Room) will be open on Saturday, September 23 from 12 pm-6:00 pm and on Sunday, September 24 from 8 am-5 pm.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ e-mail _____

Division, Regiments, etc _____

Check box if Associate Member ☐ Signature _____

Guest(s) (please print) _____

Check here if you need a wheelchair ☐ Check here if you will be using your own wheelchair ☐ If so, it motorized? ☐ yes ☐ no

IMPORTANT: Please indicate No. of Persons attending free events as well!

Registration Fee (all attendees must pay the Registration Fee)

No. of Persons (Not WWII Vets)	Cost per Person	No. of WWII Vets FREE!	Total Cost
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Adult (21 and Over)	_____	\$45	_____	_____
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Child (20 and Under)	_____	\$25	_____	_____
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Late registration fee after September 8 - add \$20 per person	_____	\$20	_____	_____
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Saturday, September 23, 2017

Wine and cheese reception in the Hospitality Room	_____	free	_____	_____
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Sunday, September 24, 2017

Riverwalk Barge Rides (leaves from and returns to Wyndham landing)	_____	\$15	_____	_____
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Bus Trip to Buckhorn Saloon & Museum	_____	\$30	_____	_____
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Shopping at "El Mercado" Market Square & Dinner at Mi Tierra Cafe & Bakery	_____	\$15	_____	_____
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(bus fare only, dinner individually paid)

Monday, September 25, 2017

Bus Trip to Museum of the Pacific War (includes bus and lunch only;	_____	\$40	_____	_____
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pay Museum admission fee below if applicable)

Admission to the Museum (WWII veterans at no charge)	_____	\$8	_____	_____
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Tuesday, September 26, 2017

Visit to Fort Sam Houston (includes bus and lunch) Gov't-issued photo ID required*	_____	\$30	_____	_____
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Dinner/dance at VFW Post 76 (includes bus, BBQ dinner & entertainment)	_____	\$30	_____	_____
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Wednesday, September 27, 2017

Stay-on Bus Tour of San Antonio with certified guide & wreathlaying at Bulge Memorial	_____	\$28	_____	_____
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Banquet (choose entrees:)	_____	\$55	_____	_____
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Chicken	_____	\$55	_____	_____
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Salmon	_____	\$55	_____	_____
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TOTAL _____

*** Fort Sam Houston attendees will be contacted by the BOBA office to provide Government-issued photo ID information as needed.**

Mail this form and check (payable to BOBA) to: Battle of the Bulge Association, Inc., PO Box 27430, Philadelphia, PA 19118



2017 BOBA REUNION IN SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

SEPTEMBER 23 - 28, 2017

REUNION PROGRAM

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2017

6:30 AM – 12:00 PM	Complimentary Breakfast at 111 Bar & Grille (<i>Must be registered at hotel for Friday night</i>)
12:00 PM – 6:00 PM	Registration open
12:00 PM – 10:00 PM	Hospitality Room open (Lone Star Room)
6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Wine and Cheese Reception in the Hospitality Room
	Dinner on your own

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2017

6:30 AM – 12:00 PM	Complimentary Breakfast at 111 Bar & Grille
8:00 AM – 5:00 PM	Registration open
8:00 AM – 10:00 PM	Hospitality Room open (Lone Star Room)
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Narrated Riverwalk barge tour (<i>each boat holds 35 people; leaves from & returns to Wyndham landing</i>)
1:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Bus trip to Buckhorn Saloon & Museum
5:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Bus trip for shopping at “El Mercado” Market Square & Mexican Dinner at Mi Tierra Cafe & Bakery

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2017

6:30 AM – 10:30 AM	Complimentary Breakfast at 111 Bar & Grille
8:00 AM – 10:00 PM	Hospitality Room open (Lone Star Room)
9:00 AM	Bus Departs for Fredericksburg, TX, National Museum of the Pacific War
10:30 AM – 12:00 PM	Tour Nimitz Museum
12:00 PM – 1:00 PM	Box Lunch from Clear Pecan Sandwich Shoppe
1:00 PM – 4:00 PM	Tour National Museum of the Pacific War
4:30 PM – 6:00 PM	Bus returns to hotel
6:30 PM	Dinner on your own OR Join Barbara & Everett for a water taxi ride to the Pearl Brewery for dinner (meet in lobby at 6:30 PM – 13 restaurants to choose from) return by Uber or taxi (if enough people are interested, we will rent a small bus)

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2017

6:30 AM – 10:30 AM	Complimentary Breakfast at 111 Bar & Grille
8:00 AM – 10:00 PM	Hospitality Room open (Lone Star Room)
9:00 AM	Bus Departs for Fort Sam Houston
9:30 AM – 1:30 PM	Tour of Fort Quadrangle, Museum and lunch with the troops
2:00 PM	Return to hotel
5:00 PM – 9:00 PM	Bus departs to VFW Post 76 for BBQ Dinner Dance

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2017

6:30 AM – 10:30 AM	Complimentary Breakfast at 111 Bar & Grille
8:00 AM – 10:00 PM	Hospitality Room open (Lone Star Room)
9:00 AM – 1:00 PM	Bus Departs for tour of San Antonio with certified tour guide on board
	Wreath laying at the Battle of the Bulge Monument at Veterans Memorial Park (Mission San Jose, the Alamo, the Menger Hotel, and other World Heritage Sites)
2:30 PM – 4:30 PM	Membership Meeting (Executive Salon 2)
5:30 PM	Photograph of Veterans (outside Executive Salon 5)
6:00 PM – 7:00 PM	Reception (cash bar) - Music by the 323d Army Band Brass Quintet
7:00 PM – 9:00 PM	Banquet at hotel (Executive Salon 5)

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2017

6:30 AM – 10:30 AM	Complimentary Breakfast at 111 Bar & Grille
	Depart or stay longer and enjoy beautiful San Antonio

See Highlights and Schedule Information on page 16 for more details.



WYNDHAM SAN ANTONIO RIVERWALK

111 E. Pecan Street
San Antonio, Texas 78205
Website: www.wyndhamsariverwalk.com
Phone: 1-866-764-8536

GROUP RESERVATION LINK:
<https://aws.passkey.com/go/BBA2017>

Hotel Information

RESERVATION DEADLINE FOR GROUP RATE: Friday, September 1, 2017

Experience the best of South Texas when you attend the Reunion at the Wyndham San Antonio Riverwalk. Conveniently located along San Antonio's spectacular Riverwalk, the Wyndham is within walking distance of the Alamo, Tobin Center for the Performing Arts, The Pearl Brewery Shopping Complex and El Mercado Marketplace. This full-service hotel is just a short drive from the San Antonio Missions, Fort Sam Houston and San Marcos Outlet Center. You will enjoy the variety of services the hotel has to offer. It is located just 8 miles from San Antonio International Airport.

ROOM RATE: \$129 single/double occupancy

Our group rate is available for up to 2 nights prior to our Reunion and 2 nights following, but are subject to availability. If you want to extend your stay in beautiful San Antonio, please book your rooms early.

This hotel has 410 luxurious rooms, but only 14 accessible rooms. If you need an ADA room, please book early. You can cancel without penalty within 72 hours of your scheduled arrival date.

RESERVATIONS

Reunion attendees must make their own hotel reservations by calling: 1-866-764-8536 or online: <https://aws.passkey.com/go/BBA2017> before the designated cut-off date, **Friday September 1**. They must identify themselves as members of the Battle of the Bulge Association and a major credit card must guarantee rooms.

HOTEL AMENITIES

- Complimentary buffet breakfast at 111 Bar & Grill (adjacent to the lobby)
- River Taxi Landing at the Hotel Riverwalk entrance
- 24 hour room service
- Complimentary wireless Internet access in all guest rooms and the hotel lobby area

- 24-hour state of the art fitness facility
- Outdoor pool & whirlpool with views of the San Antonio skyline
- 24-hour business center
- Gift shop/ATM
- Discounted self-parking \$20 per vehicle per day with in and out privileges

DIRECTIONS TO THE HOTEL

No hotel shuttle available. Take a taxi or Uber to hotel from airport.

From the North: Take I-35 into downtown. Exit Main Street and turn left under the highway. Turn left onto Pecan Street. The Hotel is at the corner of Pecan and Soledad, one block off of Main Street.

From the Airport: Take US Hwy 281 South to I-35 South and exit Main Street and turn left under the highway. Turn left onto Pecan Street. The Hotel is at the corner of Pecan and Soledad, one block off of Main Street.

From the South: Take I-35 or I-37 North into Downtown.

Off of I-35, take Durango Street exit and turn left at Santa Rosa to Martin Street. Take a right on Martin. The Hotel is will be on the left hand side.

Off of I-37, take the Commerce Street exit and turn left onto Commerce. Take a Right onto Soledad (7 blocks off Interstate). The Hotel is 3 blocks down Soledad on the right, at the corner of Soledad and Pecan.

From the East: Take I-10 into downtown San Antonio. Take I-37 North and take the Commerce Street exit. Turn left onto Commerce. Take a right onto Soledad (7 blocks off interstate). The Hotel is 2 blocks down Soledad on the right, at the corner of Soledad and Pecan.

From the West: Take I-10 into downtown San Antonio, remaining on the lower level of the freeway. Take the Santa Rosa / Downtown exit. Turn Left at Santa Rosa Street, then a left on Martin Street. The hotel will be on the left hand side.



MARYLAND/DC CHAPTER (3)

The MD/DC Chapter has a newsletter "The Marcher" that keeps us apprised of their activities. They recently held their annual meeting on June 11 at Basta Pasta, Timonium MD. Within "The Marcher" is an interesting section called "WWII Musings," edited by John D. Bowen, where we found the 2 informative bits of history below. Thanks, John!

HAPPY 242nd BIRTHDAY, US ARMY 14 June 1775 - 2017

From the Bridge at Concord/Lexington, on 19 April 1775 the seeds of an American Army were planted such that by June 14, 1775 Congress adopted "the American Continental Army" after reaching a consensus position in The Committee of the Whole. This procedure and the desire for secrecy account for the sparseness of the official journal entries for the day. The record indicates only that Congress undertook to raise ten companies of riflemen, approved an enlistment form for them, and appointed a committee (including Washington and Schuyler) to draft rules and regulations for the government of the army. The delegates' correspondence, diaries, and subsequent actions make it clear that they really did much more. They also accepted responsibility for the existing New England troops and forces requested for the defense of the various points in New York. The former were believed to total 10,000 men; the latter, both New Yorkers and Connecticut men, another 5,000.

We have come a long way since its founding and each in our own time frame can proudly say that "I served" when called.

Please wish yourself a Happy Birthday for your service! —JDB



LEHIGH VALLEY (55) PICNIC

On the 73rd anniversary of the D-Day invasion on the shores of France, the Lehigh Valley Chapter of the Battle of the Bulge Association (#55) held their annual D-Day Remembrance Picnic. Over 30 veterans and guests attended the outdoor event at Nazareth Borough Park on Tuesday, June 6th. In attendance as special guests were three D-Day veterans, Major Nathan Kline USAF, 9th Air Force (left); Robert Gangewere, US Army, 90th Inf. Division (center); and Richard Schermerhorn, US Army, 531st Engineer Reg (right). They all reminded us that we should never forget, that "Freedom is Not Free...and never will be."

NEWS FROM THE BIG APPLE (CHAPTER 52)

On May 31, 2017, the North Central Kiwanis Club held a wonderful dinner on Staten Island, N.Y. honoring WWII Veterans. It was a great success and what an inspiring evening everyone had at the LiGreci Staaten. The turnout of supporters was tremendous. Chapter #52 was represented and those veterans that attended were cheered on by officers, family and friends. Our Bulge veterans there were: R.E. Acker, B. Burzumato, R. Ferlazzo, E. Gagliardi, E. Petrazollo, J. Reilly.

On June 14, 2017, Wounded Warriors Project also held a dinner again at the Staaten, and the guest speaker was Roger E. Acker, a member of Chapter #52. After his speech telling the assembled about his time in WWII and his escape as a prisoner of war, Roger received oh such a well-deserved standing ovation! He so proudly and rightfully represents our Greatest Generation.

I attended a New York Mets baseball game on Father's Day at CitiField. Pointed out to me was a long-time Mets employee, Luke Gasparre, an usher at the Stadium. Luke is a veteran of the Battle of the Bulge and a Purple Heart recipient. This sprightly gent was even wearing his medals as he showed people to their seats – Wow! It was an honor for me to meet him. And the Mets won that day, too!

—Submitted by Angela M. Fazio, VP Membership-National,
and Chapter #52 Secretary



Sketch of D-Day dress—Platoon Leader, 1944. Source: Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 94; National Archives and Records Administration, College Park MD.

FL SOUTHEAST CHAPTER (62) SPRING MEETING

The Battle of the Bulge Association FL Southeast Chapter had their semi-annual meeting on Sunday, April 23, 2017. The key speaker was Maj. Gen. (ret.) John Van Blois, USAF. Attendees included veterans and their spouses and family members, members of the Military Order of the Purple Heart #717, members of the Combat Infantryman's Assn., Navy League Palm Beach Consul and the Young Marines. Also in attendance was Doris Davis, member of the BOBA Board.

George Fisher started the chapter 19 years ago, and has been President ever since. Prior to being involved in Chapter #62, he was a member of the Long Island Chapter (#63), which became an official chapter at his urging. George has served our organization in a huge way for many years. Thank you, George, for those many years of service and for your leadership in holding together Chapter #62.

The youngsters in the picture are Young Marines. The Young Marines is a youth education and service program for boys and girls, age 8 until completion of high school. The Young Marines promotes the mental, moral, and physical development of its members. The program focuses on character building, leadership, and promotes a healthy drug-free lifestyle. The Young Marines is the focal point for the US Marine Corps' Youth Drug Demand Reduction efforts. The organization began in 1959 and since then has grown to 300 units with 10,000 youth, and 3,000 volunteers in 46 states, the District of Columbia, Germany, Japan, and affiliates in a host of other countries. *For more information about Young Marines: www.youngmarines.com, 1-800-717-0060.*



Members and guests at the SE FL Chapter semi-annual meeting. Chapter President George Fisher is the 4th person from the right (front row).

WE NEED YOUR CHAPTER NEWS!

Send to: tracey@battleofthebulge.org

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL CHAPTER!

Go to pages 2-3 for the list of active chapters.



NEW MEMBERS

We salute these folks who became new members of BOBA between March 25-June 24, 2017:

Auld, Mrs. V. L.	Member
Baraona, Dolores	Member
Bennett, Karen M.	Member
Black, David	Member
Dooley, Robert (Tony)	Member
Greaves, Sue	Member
Guptill, Scott	Member
Hendriks, Wim	Member
Hoffard, Vincent H	Member
Hubbard, Alice	Member
Kwortnik, Stephanie	Member
Lambert, Gary	Member
Martin, Dan	Member
Mellon, Lawrence	Member
Mellon, Michael	Member
Miller, Harold D	106 InfD 422 Reg
Moline, Curtiss	3185 Sig Serv Bn
Mountz, Tom	Member
Pavkov, Ann M	Member
Peifer, Dave	Member
Penfield, Greg	Member
Phillips, William A	Member
Stinchcomb, Patti	Member
Tedeschi, Jerald H	Member
Valera, Charley	Member
Willis, Paul J	83 InfD 329 Reg

We certainly are pleased to have you with us and look forward to your participation in helping to perpetuate the legacy of all who served in that epic battle. You can help immediately by:

- Talking to people about BOBA and suggesting that they also join
- Promoting our website:
www.battleofthebulge.org
- Sending us articles to be included in *The Bulge Bugle*
- Plan to attend our 2017 annual reunion in San Antonio, TX.
(See p. 16-19 for full details and registration information.)

DOUG DILLARD MEETS GERMAN WWII FALLSCHIRMJAEGER

Past President (VBOB) Doug Dillard visited Germany 30 April to 6 May 2017 with Monika and Tim Stoy to participate in WWII commemorative activities in Salzburg, Austria and on the Obersalzberg/Berchtesgaden, Germany on 4 and 5 May. As part of the trip, Monika arranged for a visit to the German Airborne School in Altenstadt/Schongau and for Doug to meet a WWII Fallschirmjaeger, Monsignore Voelk, who survived the grueling Crete operation and the bombing and fighting for the famed monastery of Monte Casino.

We met Monsignore Voelk at a restaurant on beautiful lake outside of Fussen to celebrate his 98th birthday, along with several members of the German Federal Union of Parachutists (BDF) chapter from Augsburg. It was a beautiful, sunny day and both Doug and the Monsignore enjoyed meeting and getting to know one another. Doug was the first American WWII paratrooper the Monsignore had met and they instantly bonded.

The following day we toured the German Airborne School. The Kaserne had been an air defense training center in WWII and was taken over by the Bundeswehr in 1957 to serve as the Airborne training center. Generations of American Special Forces soldiers from Bad Toelz and Airborne soldiers from units in Germany and Italy attended training there to get their German airborne wings.

On 2 May the group visited the unit museum for the 232nd Mountain Infantry Battalion in Strub-Bischofswiesen, nearby Berchtesgaden. The kaserne in Strub was specially built for mountain troops who trained in the mountains around Berchtesgaden. It was a very nice museum, with pre-history from the Mountain troops of the Wehrmacht included and extending to the battalion's UN and NATO missions overseas today.

On 4 May Doug, the Stoy's, and fellow Americans Mr. Paul McIlvaine and Dr. (COL) McHale were received by Mayor Heinz Schaden, the Mayor of Salzburg, in his representational hall in the Mirabel Palace. 4 May is the anniversary date of the city's peaceful surrender to the 3d Infantry Division in 1945. Mayor Schaden, a proud member of the Society of the 3d Infantry Division, has hosted a reception for WWII veterans and representatives of the Society each year since 2010, when the city dedicated its own commemorative plaque honoring the 3d Infantry Division's liberation of Salzburg. The reception was warm and sincere, and the venue, the Marble Hall of the Mirabel Palace, is magnificent. Mayor Schaden's cousin lives in America and is a great Airborne Soldier, COL Bill Weber!

After the reception with Mayor and Mrs. Schaden, the group traveled to the Austrian Army Schwarzenberg Kaserne on the outskirts of the city near the airport to visit the Salzburg Military History Museum. We escorted by Mr. Gemod Fuchs, a longtime friend of the Society in Salzburg, and Colonel (Dr.) Kurt Mitterer, the director of the museum. Along with an excellent collection of armored vehicles outside the museum itself, the museum has an extensive collection of artifacts and documents on Salzburg's military history, stretching back to Roman times. Among the many highlights is a nice collection of Napoleonic era items and documents. Dr. Mitterer took us on an abbreviated 1-hour tour (we could easily have spent a full day) through the museum and, in effect, Austrian military history! The museum has hosted 3ID veterans and Society members annually since the inauguration of the 3ID plaque in Salzburg in 2010.

On 5 May 2017 Doug participated in the Stoy's Outpost International



Salzburg Mayor Heinz Schaden's reception (Doug Dillard is pictured 3rd from right, Monika Stoy is center to left of Doug, and Tim Stoy far right.)

of the 3d ID Society's 10th annual commemoration of the liberation of the Obersalzberg/Berchtesgaden, Germany and the raising of the Stars and Stripes over Hitler's residential compound by the 7th Infantry Regiment the morning of 5 May 1945. 2017 is the 72nd anniversary year of the end of WWII. The 3d Infantry Division tablet was dedicated on 5 May 2008 with the permission of the Bavarian State Government to honor the Division and correct the misinformation spread by author Stephen Ambrose in his book *Band of Brothers* and the subsequent drama series of the same name.

For the first time in 10 years, it actually rained during the ceremony, but the rain and cool weather did not dampen the spirits of the ceremony participants as they honored the Division's great achievement and celebrated the strong German-American friendship and partnership, which developed in the years after the end of WWII. As no 3d Infantry Division WWII veteran was able to travel to Germany for the commemoration, Doug represented the WWII generation and raised the 48-star flag as the highlight of the ceremony.

It was a great trip full of unique experiences and meeting wonderful people.

—Submitted by Doug Dillard, Past President



DONATIONS

Thank you to the following members
who made donations between March 25-June 24, 2017:

Auld, Mrs. V. L.	Member
Bailey, J David	106 INFD 422 INF 3 BN F
Cooksey, Dale	28 INFD 110 INF A
Custard, Raymond	87 INFD 347 INF C
Kizina, Charles	135 AAA GUN BN B
Kramer, Carolyn	Member
Liskiewicz, Michael	106 INFD 106 RECON TP
Maskell, Richard	2 INFD 23 INF 2 BN F
McGee, George	109 EVAC HOSP
O'Malley, Harold	87 INFD 335 FA BN A
Sexton, J D	84INFD 132 ORD MAINT CO



THE LIBERATION OF LUXEMBOURG MEDAL

by John McAuliffe, 87 INFD, 347 INF REG, CO M



John McAuliffe proudly wearing his Liberation of Luxembourg medal.

In the February 2017 *Bulge Bugle*, was an article by VBOB Past President Doug Dillard, with regard to new rules for the reception of the French Legion of Honor Award. I wanted to add a bit of history about the award: The National Order of the Legion of Honor was established in 1802. The award was created by Napoleon Bonaparte as France's most distinguished decoration for civil or military conduct.

A US Veteran must have fought in at least one of the four major campaigns of the liberation of France: Normandy, Provence, Ardennes of Northern France. Only veterans whose D-21 4 Army Separation Forms have been screened and are accurate are considered for the honor.

The Legion of Honor Committee in Paris approves or rejects candidates. Those selected are appointed to the rank of Knight of the Legion of Honor.

Well known civilian recipients are: inventor Alexander Graham Bell, Director Steven Spielberg, chef Julia Childs, author Jules Verne, and singer Barbara Streisand.

Little known is the honor which the Duchy of Luxembourg bestowed upon American soldiers who liberated their country during WWII, 1944-45, such as those who liberated France.

On the 60th Anniversary of the liberation, the Duchy of Luxembourg created the medal, which reads: "LIBERATION OF LUXEMBOURG, A TRIBUTE TO VETERANS, 60th ANNIVERSARY, 1944-45 2004-05." The obverse side depicts the seal of the Duchy of

Luxembourg. [Both sides shown at top left & right.]

The medal was bestowed on Veterans who returned to Luxembourg for the anniversary at the Clervaux Soldiers Monument and Castle, where they were presented with the medal of the Liberation Of Luxembourg and a Certificate of Appreciation By Jean Milmeister, author of the book *Le vois au victoire*, about the US Divisions, Liberators in Luxembourg.

* * *

On September 10, 1944, Tilly Kimmes, a young school girl from Stein-sel, heard the church bells ringing, got on her bicycle and cycled to Luxembourg City, climbed on a 5th Amoured Div. tank and celebrated the first days of liberation of her country with her friends and US soldiers.

Over the many years since the end of the war in Europe, Tilly has made 17 trips to the States; mostly combined with CEBA as the guest of the Division Associations. Known as the "Sweetheart of the Liberator," she is always ready to greet the Veterans return to Luxembourg.

Men of the 80th Division Association have honored Tilly with a portrait painting with the fleur de lis; and "Surrounded by Her Boy Friends." The insignia of the 19 Divisions and the 1st and 3rd Army patches which served in Luxembourg are also pictured.

The May 1999 issue of *The Bulge Bugle* pictured her face on the cover. My interview with Tilly is published on pages 9-11 of that issue.

Her last visit to the states was to the VBOB Reunion at Hyannis Cape Cod, MA where 400 veterans and friends attended.

It was Tilly who, along with others, arranged for The Luxembourg Liberation Medal.

Like the Veteran soldier who was awarded the Napoleon French Legion of Honor award, the Veteran soldier of "little" Luxembourg received this gracious honor as they say, for "putting boots on the ground."

HOPE KIRKENDALL RECEIVES THE FRENCH LÉGION D'HONNEUR AWARD



On Feb 15, 2017, Hope Kirkendall was awarded the French Légion d'Honneur by Gen. Thierry Ducret, Chief of the French detachment at Centcom at McDill Air Force Base. As a US Army Nurse, then 1st Lt. Hope Rogers landed in Normandy shortly after the June 1944 D-Day invasion and helped treat the wounded at various field hospitals for the following year—including those wounded in the Battle of Brest, France and in the Battle of the Bulge in Dec 1944 - Jan 1945. She was part of a surgical team that worked 12- 16 hour days. Field Hospitals she served in included 29th Field Hospital and the 108th Evacuation Hospital (near Brest, France) and the 16th General Hospital (near Paris). She said that the 29th and 108th hospitals were 9 miles from Brest, France and just 3 miles from the howitzers that were fired 24 hours a

day. The thunderous sounds of the howitzers made it nearly impossible to catch any sleep between shifts. The Legion of Honor Award, France's highest distinction, was created by Napoleon in 1802 to acknowledge services rendered to France by persons of exceptional merit.

—Kevin Bouffard, The Ledger
(Kate's local newspaper) and Doris Davis,
BOBA Board Member.

...AND THROWS OUT THE FIRST PITCH!

Hope Kirkendall had the opportunity to throw out the 1st pitch at the opening game of Spring Training at the Marcus 'Joker' Marchant Baseball Stadium in Lakeland, FL on March 10, 2017. The Detroit Tigers hosted the Toronto Blue Jays. This was the first time she had done this and she said she really enjoyed it. (Note: Blue Jays won 6 - 2).

—Submitted by Doris Davis



THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE ASSOCIATION, INC.
Invites You to Join Your Friends for the
“EVENTS OF REMEMBRANCE AND COMMEMORATION”
OF THE 73rd ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE
December 13, 14, and 15, 2017 Metropolitan Washington, DC

We have been invited to a co-hosted reception by the Belgium Ambassador Dirk Wouters and Luxembourg Ambassador, Ms. Sylvie Lucas, at the Luxembourg Embassy, on Wednesday, December 13, from 6:30 - 8:30 PM. See below for the schedule.

December 16 is Saturday and this happens to be the same day as the Wreaths Across America (WAA) Day. Since this event started in 1992, it has never occurred on December 16. Because no vehicles will be permitted in Arlington National Cemetery on December 16, we will be holding our wreath laying ceremonies on Friday, December 15.

The DoubleTree Hotel Crystal City by Hilton, 300 Army-Navy Drive, in Arlington VA 22202 has been selected again for this event. We have been able to secure a rate of \$119/night for Wed/Thurs/Fri. The rates for Mon/Tues are \$139/night and for Sat/Sun are \$99/night. Parking is \$12 a night for Monday through Sunday (It is usually \$30/night). **Please make your reservations early to secure a room.** Please mention the **Battle of the Bulge** to obtain the special rate. If you need a handicap accessible room, please request this early. To make a Reservation: call **800-Hiltons (800-445-8667)** or 703-416-4100 by **December 1, 2017**. Check-in time is 4:00 PM. Any guest checking in after 12 noon will be able to do so for no additional charge, based on the availability of rooms.

This year, we will offer a tour of the Pentagon (<https://pentagontours.osd.mil/Tours/>). This is the headquarters of the Department of Defense, the Pentagon and is one of the world's largest office buildings. Built in just 16 months, the Pentagon is the world's largest low-rise office building. It is twice the size of the Merchandise Mart in Chicago, has more than twice the floor space of the Empire State Building, and the U.S. Capitol could fit into any one of its five wedge-shaped sections. The tour will accommodate wheelchairs and powered scooters.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2017

2:00 - 5:30 PM	Registration & Hospitality Room open - Lincoln Hall Ballroom - Pick up Registration Packets with name badges, Banquet/bus tickets. Sign Attendance Books
2:00 - 11:00 PM	Hospitality Room/Exhibits, Books, scrapbooks, memorabilia, snacks & beverages open every day
3:30 - 4:30 PM	Our traditional Tree Trimming “Salute to Bulge Veterans” If you are a Bulge Veteran and haven’t submitted a picture of yourself to add to the Christmas tree, please contact me (see below for contact info.)
5:30 PM	Depart for the Luxembourg Embassy Reception from 6:30-8:30 PM. Return to hotel around 9:30 PM.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2017

9:00 AM	Depart for a tour of the Pentagon
11:30 - 11:45 AM	Bus pick-up from the Pentagon and travels to Pentagon City (Fashion Centre)
12:00 N	Arrive at Fashion Centre to have lunch (on your own). Many options of restaurants and places to shop.
2:30 PM	Depart for DoubleTree Hotel to rest and prepare for our visit to the Luxembourg Embassy (Should you wish to stay at Fashion Centre longer, the hotel shuttle will do a ‘pick-up’ at 3:30 PM and 4:30 PM).
6:00 PM	Hospitality room closes at 6:00 PM for Banquet
6:00 – 10:00 PM	BANQUET AT THE DOUBLETREE HILTON HOTEL, COMMONWEALTH ROOM, (Lower Lobby, South Tower). A limited number of parking passes are available for banquet only attendees.
10:00 PM	Hospitality Room re-opens after the banquet

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2017

8:45 AM-12:30 PM	Bus departs promptly at 9:00 AM for wreath layings at World War II Memorial, VBOB Memorial, and Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington Cemetery
12:30 PM	Return to DoubleTree Hotel for annual BOBA Luncheon in the Capital View Room of Washington
1:00 PM	Lunch 14th Floor North Tower of hot soup and sandwich, beverage and dessert. Please indicate on Registration form if you have any dietary restrictions of if you prefer vegetarian. We will have the Swearing-in of the new National Battle of the Bulge Association officers for 2018 .
2:00 - 6:00 PM	Hospitality Room open

Depart or stay an extra day and take part in the Wreaths Across America Day and lay wreaths on all gravesites at Arlington Cemetery. Contact Doris Davis for details. Email address: doris@battleofthebulge.com

Notes:

- ❑ **Free Airport shuttle provided by the DoubleTree Hotel every half hour, 3 miles from Reagan Washington National Airport.**
- ❑ **Free shuttle from the Hotel every hour on the half hour to the METRO: Pentagon City (Blue/Yellow Line) and to Pentagon City Mall.**
- ❑ **Early departure: If your reservation plans change, please advise hotel at or before check-in of any change in your reserved planned length of stay to avoid an early departure fee (currently \$75.00) for checking out before your agreed upon reserved length. Any special circumstances of Early Departure Waivers will be on a case by case basis and depending on the severity of the situation.**

RESERVATION FORM
“REMEMBRANCE AND COMMEMORATION”
OF THE 73rd ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE
December 13, 14, and 15, 2017 Metropolitan Washington, DC

Return form and check by **December 6, 2017** to:

Battle of the Bulge Association, Inc.
PO Box 27430
Philadelphia PA 19118-0430

Questions:

Doris Davis, Chairperson
doris@battleofthebulge.org

or Tracey Diehl
tracey@battleofthebulge.org
703-528-4058

Name: _____ Telephone: _____ Cell: _____

Name of Spouse/Guests: _____; _____; _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Battle of Bulge Unit you (or family member) served with: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Vets: do you have a WWII picture to send us? (If you haven't sent it before?)

RESERVATIONS:

	<u>Number Attending</u>	<u>Cost/Person</u>	<u>Total</u>
Registration Fee: Provides for Badges, Programs, Hospitality, Toasts, etc _____	X	\$40.00	\$ _____

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2017

3:30 PM Tree Trimming Lincoln Hall, North Tower _____	X	FREE	\$ _____
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5:30 PM Bus to Luxembourg Embassy Reception _____	X	\$25.00	\$ _____
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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2017:

9:30 AM Bus to Pentagon and Fashion Centre _____	X	\$30.00	\$ _____
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Commemorative Banquet: DoubleTree Hotel Commonwealth Room _____	X	\$60.00	\$ _____
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6:00 PM - 10:00 PM Please make your Main Course selection(s):

- ☐ **Salmon** (Names) _____
- ☐ **Chicken Piccata** (Names) _____
- ☐ **Diabetic Meal** (Names) _____

Seating is open except for Head Tables. Plan ahead with your friends to be seated at the same table. Tables are Rounds of 8.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2017:

9:00 AM Departure - Bus for Wreath Laying ceremonies: WWII Memorial, _____	X	\$25.00	\$ _____
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VBOB Memorial and the Tomb of the Unknowns

9:30 – 12:00 Noon Wreath Laying Ceremonies _____	X	\$30.00	\$ _____
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1:00 PM BOBA Luncheon at DoubleTree Hotel _____	X	\$30.00	\$ _____
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(Lunch will include soup and a choice of Turkey or Chicken Sandwiches and desert. If a diabetic or vegetarian meal is preferred, please indicate on this form.)

(Enclose check made out to Battle of the Bulge Association, Inc.):

GRAND TOTAL \$ _____

NOTE: Register online at: battleofthebulge.org, click on “Dec Event”.

Permission granted for Hotel to notify Battle of the Bulge Association, Inc. that room reservation has been made.

Signature: _____

NOTES & REMINDERS: Banquet Dress: Business suit/black tie optional (miniature medals encouraged) or military dress uniform
Room reservations must be made for the DoubleTree Crystal City directly, by **December 1, 2017** Telephone 800-Hiltons (800-445-8667).
Return completed Reservation Form for events to Battle of the Bulge Association but no later than **6 December 2017**.

No cancellation refunds after December 6, 2017.

Hotel Reservations based on Availability. Please do not delay.

Please indicate in all places the number & names attending so that we can be advised of the proper number to plan. Thanks!

****PLEASE BRING A PICTURE ID (Drivers License, Passport, or Mil ID) for the Washington area****

AN UNEXPECTED REUNION

By Luigi Marcheschi, 423rd Med Collect Co

Life in the war was full of the unexpected. We never knew what danger awaited us around the corner, or in this case of this particular story, what good we might find as well.

As combat medics during the Battle of the Bulge, we worked day and night trying to keep the wounded alive. It was the first or second week of January 1945 and a lieutenant from the 7th Armored Division took notice of all we had done and came into the aid station and said “Guys, I’m going to recommend you for a silver star. Also, you guys look like hell.” Then he got on his walkie-talkie, made a call, and a couple of hours later we were replaced by new medics.

We got into a jeep and we ended up in a town called Chevreumont. It’s a small farming community near Liege, Belgium. As soon as we got there, we took a shower, changed into clean clothes, shaved, and enjoyed a hot meal. It was the first hot meal that we had in a long time. Then we moved in with a Belgian family. The family consisted of father and mother, and a 21-year-old daughter, Mariette. Every morning Mariette’s father, would milk the family’s cows, and Mariette would take a couple of containers of milk to the quartermaster’s kitchen. One day I volunteered to give Mariette a hand. On the way back, she took my arm and rested her gaze on me for some time. Finally we reached the house and we went in, but she was always close to me. In the evenings, we all sat around a fireplace to keep warm. Mariette, always sat next to me, and she would grab my arm and look at me.

After everything I had seen in the war and, with a pregnant wife at home, I was not in the mood for any romance. I often wonder if that’s why Mariette fell for me, because I was not like all the other GIs who wanted something more from her.

Thinking back on it, I think that Mariette’s family saved our lives. Mentally and physically, we were exhausted, and they took us in and treated us like family. When we left there, we were human again. Finally the night before we left, Mariette and I had a talk. She didn’t speak any English and I spoke very little French, but between Italian, English and French, we somehow communicated enough to make ourselves understood. We exchanged addresses and then the next morning we had to leave.

My brother and the other medics were already on the jeep waiting for me when Mariette and I walked out of the house holding hands. She was looking at me and she was crying. She grabbed me and she didn’t want me to go. Finally I got in the jeep and that was it. It was the last time I thought I’d ever see her. When I returned from the war, I told my wife about Mariette and everything her family had done for us and then put that chapter of my life to rest.

That was until December of 1996 when I was looking through my army scrapbook and I found Mariette’s address. At the time we had a family friend, Rachel, who had been transferred to Belgium for work and my wife said to me, “Why don’t you talk to Rachel and give her all the information and see if she can find Mariette.” So I did, and Rachel agreed to help. Several months passed, and Rachel said, “I’ve tried everything — the phone book, addresses, and I can’t find her.” I told her not to worry about it and put it out of my mind again. After all, I always knew finding her would be a long shot.

A few years later, my wife got very sick with cancer, and on May 29th 1998, she passed away. At the same time, Rachel was on a flight from San Francisco to Belgium. She was sitting next to this young Belgian man whom she spoke with at length. And it turned out he was from



Mariette and Luigi reunited in Italy in 2002.

Liege. Rachel told him the story about Mariette and trying to find her. This kind young man said to Rachel, “Give me all the information and I’ll see what I can do,” and when he got home, he began his search. He got on his bike and cycled to the house where Mariette used to live—the one where I stayed with her family. There was an older man sitting outside the house, and the man asked if Mariette lived there. The older man responded that she had lived there, but had married and moved a couple of kilometers up the road a long time ago. He rode his bike to her new address.

He rang the doorbell, and a lady in her late 70s answered the door. He asked, “Mariette?” And she responded, “Yes.” And he asked, “Do you know Luigi Marcheschi?” She looked at him and then began crying. The first words out of Mariette’s mouth were, “Are you from the TV?” He explained, “No, Luigi Marcheschi has been looking for you.” This very helpful young man took all of her information and when he got home he faxed it over to Rachel.

When I received the news, I was so surprised and happy. I immediately wrote her a letter. Because we didn’t speak the same language, I had to have my son in law, Giovanni, translate my letters into French so she could read them. And then he would translate her letters into English for me. A wonderful relationship began through these letters.

In her first letter she filled me in on her life—that she had a daughter and two granddaughters, and that her husband had died in 1989. She also told me that she kept my picture under her pillow for nine years, until she got married. In the second letter she said, “I still remember the day when you came into my house. I looked at you, and it was like a bolt of lightning hit me. I’ve never forgotten you.” When Giovanni would translate these letters, he’d say to me, “Luigi, what Mariette says in these letters—it’s like it’s still 1945. That’s how much she still remembers you.”

So we kept on writing back and forth. Then in March of 2002, I received a very short letter saying, “If I had one wish before I die, it would be to see you one more time.” In the meantime, my friends the Venturellis had booked a tour to Italy with my son in law, and they convinced me to join them.

At that point, my head started spinning and I went back to what Mariette said in the last letters. And I said to myself, “Why not?” I sent Mariette our itinerary. A couple of weeks later, I got a reply and she said she would meet me in Tuscany.

We arrived in Florence in the early afternoon of June 21st 2002. I went to the front desk and asked if two Belgian ladies had shown up yet, and they said “Yes, they are here. They went for a walk.”

Me and my friends were sitting in the lobby chatting when all of a sudden I saw two well dressed, older women coming in and I recognized Mariette immediately, because she had sent me a picture. She was on her way to the front desk to ask about me, but before she did that, I went behind and grabbed her and said, “Mariette?” She turned around, and

when she looked at me, she started crying. And from that moment on, she didn't let me go for three days. I was with her all the time.

We managed to understand each other once again, despite our language differences, and she told me about her husband, her family, and the farm in Belgium. I told her about my wife and children, and life since the war. It was such an honor to reconnect after all of this time. But before we knew it, the time was up and we had to say goodbye. Once again we parted ways and went back to having an ocean between us. A couple of weeks later I got my final letter from her. She thanked me for this very special visit.

It seems almost impossible that 57 years after meeting in Belgium, we somehow found a way to reconnect and to each have our wish come true—to see each other one more time.

“BOYS, WE’VE JUST BEEN CAPTURED!”

by William “Bill” Armstrong, Service Battery, 263rd Field Artillery Battalion, 26th “Yankee” Division



It was a cold and drizzly night in France and we drivers of the three Ammunition, trucks positioned at the three firing batteries, were huddled in our cabs. None of us had eaten a hot meal in a couple of weeks and were living on K rations and cold water. So, it was a pleasant surprise when I heard a tap on the window and found Lt. Allen, Ammunition Officer of Service Battery, beckoning me and my

co-driver Bob Zellmer, to get into the back of his Weapons Carrier, telling us he was taking us back for a hot meal. We quickly obeyed orders and found the four other drivers already there.

We hadn't gone very far when the truck stopped and I heard voices speaking German! Our driver, Melgar, spoke fluent German and I heard him reply to something said by the other person. It was then that Lt. Allen raised the flap between the cab and us and said, “Boys, We’ve just been captured! I don’t want anyone hurt. Get out of the truck holding your carbines by the barrel, eject the clip and round in the chamber and lay the weapon down. Then raise your arms!”

When I lifted the rear flap, the unpleasant sight of seven dark bodies, highlighted by the wet sheen on their helmets and the seven rifles pointed at me, caused me to remark, “I think we are going to be eating a lot of cabbage soup!” Lt. Allen, who had come from the cab to lay his pistol down said, “Armstrong, you’ll joke when you meet the Devil!”

When we all were out of the truck and standing with our arms raised, the Germans reversed their rifles, held them out to us, removed their helmets and threw them into the roadside ditch, put on their soft caps and one of them asked, “Kamerad, Bitte, haben sie Zigaretten?”

The shock of being handed their weapons and then a friendly request for smokes was followed by a moment of silence and then we broke up with laughter! Shaking hands as we passed out our cigarettes and what hard candies we had from the K rations made me realize that they were kids like us and didn't want to die for a lost cause.

Lt. Allen detailed one of us to escort the Germans to the holding area about a mile down the road and the rest of us loaded up in the Weapons carrier only to run into the rear of a large truck a short time later. The sudden stop threw us in the rear into a pile. Something sharp gashed my chin and Bob had a broken finger, while the others had similar wounds.

We arrived at Service Battery only to find the Kitchen Truck shut down and C ration cans in a tub of lukewarm water, our “hot” meal!

Those of us with wounds woke up the Medic and were bandaged. We were informed that we qualified for a Purple Heart but Bob and I refused to consider it. Guys in actual combat, getting shot at, deserved the medal—not the victims of a fender bender!

116TH AAA GUN BATTALION

Subject: Activities of 116th AAA Gun Bn (Mbl.)
6 Jun 1944 to 31 December 1944

To: Commanding Officer, 109th AAA Group, APO 307, US Army

Definitions

AAA – anti-aircraft artillery; AA - anti-aircraft; AF - Air Force; Bn - Battalion;

FA - Field Artillery; GAF - German Air Force

The 116th AAA Gun Bn was assigned the mission of defending the beach installations, beached craft and shipping of the assault forces on Utah Beach from medium and high level bombing, in the Allied invasion of France 6 June 1944. Scheduled to disembark on the second tide on D-Day, the Bn began unloading during the evening and night of D-Day. Disregarding artillery fire, small arms fire, and extensive mine fields, the Bn brought ashore and put into pre-designated firing positions bulky fire control equipment, including radar, by the night of D+1. The first heavy AA fire on the continent by American forces was fired by “B” Battery of the Bn during the evening of D+1. Fighting alone against the Luftwaffe’s night raiders until D+6, the Bn defended the vital area of Utah Beach without loss to the Allied assault forces due to enemy air action. Notwithstanding the fact that the GAF failed to make the anticipated show of strength against the invading forces. The Bn had been credited with the destruction of 16 enemy aircraft and the probable destruction of 2 more enemy aircraft when relieved of its mission in the beach area.

On 12 July, the 116th AAA Gun Bn was called upon to abandon its primary mission of AA and to assume a tank destroyer role, reinforcing the defensive position of the First US Army in the Chaumont area. During the weeks following the assignment to tank destroyer role, the Bn served with various units of the First Army in the front line positions. During this period, the radar equipment and personnel participated in various experiments with the radar performed in the rear areas as well as performing missions for the USA AF and AA units. The Bn assumed a third role when it participated in the artillery preparation for the St. Lo breakthrough. On the 24 & 25 of July, Battery “B” of the Bn shelled an important village, St. Jean de Baissant, and rode center in the direct line of attack of our breakthrough forces and the Bn Batteries “A” and “B” advanced with the assault forces in the St. Lo breakthrough until it was recalled to assume its primary mission of anti-aircraft on 4 Aug.

On 6th August, the 116th AAA Gun Bn was in AA position in the St. Lo area and received orders to proceed to Mayenne (approximately 100 miles away) to set up an AA defense in that area. The Bn accomplished the move from St. Lo to Mayenne through the Avranches funnel during the most concentrated enemy air attack made on the continent up until that time without the loss of personnel or equipment. The Bn set up an AA defense of the bridge in the Mayenne area on 7 August, approximately

(continued on next page)

116TH AAA GUN BATTALION *(continued)*

5 - 6 miles behind the front lines. While in the AA position in Mayenne area, the Bn received an emergency request from the 16th Infantry Division, who were holding the front line in that area to fire a FA mission on an enemy armored column which was bearing down on a patrol of our own infantry advancing along a road into enemy territory. Batter "B" of the Bn delivered the requested FA support and the infantry later reported that the rounds landed squarely on the approaching enemy armor, thereby destroying vehicles and saving the patrol from annihilation and the entire regiment from a serious counter attack. While in the Mayenne area from 7 - 25 August, the Bn was credited with the destruction of 4 enemy aircraft, bringing their total to 20 enemy aircraft destroyed.

Departing from the Mayenne area on the evening of 25 August, the 116th AAA Gun Bn traveling during the hours of darkness arrived in the Paris area (200 miles away) on the morning of 27 August. That evening, they moved into the southern suburbs of the city of Paris and set up AAA defense of the city of Paris and the bridges over the Seine and occupied this position on 8 September. During this period, the Bn destroyed one aircraft bringing the total to 21 enemy aircraft destroyed and 2 more were probably destroyed.

On 8 September, the 116th AAA Gun Bn moved from the Paris area to Sedan, France (100 miles away) where they set up AA defense of the bridges over the Meuse River in that area 20 hours later. GAF did not make an appearance in the Sedan area during the 21 days the 116th was there.

The 116th AAA Gun Bn, was ordered from Sedan to Maastricht, Holland, to reinforce the AA defenses of the locks of the Albert Canal and the bridges over the Maas River. They occupied positions in Maastricht from 29 September - 12 October.

On 12 October, the 116th AAA Gun Bn was ordered forward to protect the VII Corps Artillery, which was laying siege to Aachen. Thus, entering Germany on 12 October, the Bn became the first Gun Bn to enter Germany and the first unit of its kind to fire on German soil.

When the city of Aachen was surrounded by our own ground forces, the enemy attempted to supply his forces within the city by air during the hours of darkness. The 116th AAA Gun Bn engaged and destroyed or drove off the planes attempting to supply the city of Aachen, thereby materially shortening the siege of the city. In addition to engaging hostile aircraft attacking the VII Corps Artillery and Corps ground installations, the Bn fired 4,032 rounds of FA in support of the VII Corps Artillery between 23 October and 15 December.

Field Artillery target included enemy artillery positions and armor and infantry concentrations. The 116th AAA Gun Bn was credited with the destruction of 11 enemy aircraft in the Aachen area between 12 October and 15 December.

On 16 December, the 116th AAA Gun Bn was deployed in AA positions protecting and supporting the VII Corps Artillery between Stolberg, Germany and the front lines near the Roer River. The batteries of the Bn were approximately 5,000 to 8,000 yards behind the front line. All during the day of 16 December, the Bn fired FA missions in support of the VII Corps forces advancing on the city of Duren, expending 228 rounds of 90mm ammunition.

On 16 December, the enemy launched its greatest counter attack of the war. One of the most important phases of the operation was the dropping of parachutists behind the American line in the Eupen-Malmedy area of Belgium where they were cutting communications and to secure crossroads preventing reinforcement and supplies from reaching the breakthrough area west of Prum. The path of the planes carrying these important parachutists from Paderborn in the Roer to the

Eupen-Malmedy area passed over the Stolberg-Duren area occupied by the 116th AAA Gun Bn (the parachutists' drop area). The parachutists were assisted and protected by other enemy planes which were to bomb and strike American forces in the path of the transport planes and in the parachutists' drop area. The first enemy plane of this attack entered the Duren-Stolberg area at 20:00 on 16 December and was engaged by "B" Battery of the Bn. Followed by other enemy fighters and bombers and transport planes, the attack lasted continuously until 07:09 on 17 December. Although not knowing the scope and nature of the attack when it began, the Bn destroyed and dispersed the attacking enemy planes to such an extent that their parachutists' attack failed. Few parachutists reached their destination and many others were dropped far from their drop area - sometimes, behind their own lines. Many other parachutists were destroyed in the air, due to the fire of the Bn. During the night of 16-17 December, a total of 80 raids (consisting of principally single planes and small formations) were encountered in the Bn area. The Bn fired 1,482 rounds of 90mm ammunition, claiming 16 planes destroyed and 4 more that were probably destroyed.

During 17 December, the 116th AAA Gun Bn engaged enemy planes over their area with machine fire and a small amount of 90mm fire. At dark on 17 December, the enemy renewed their attack over the area occupied by the Bn on an even greater scale than that of the 16-17 December. The Bn again went into action and engaged the enemy when he came into range. An estimated 100 enemy planes flew over the area on bombing and strafing missions as well as transporting paratroopers. During the attacks on 16-17 December, the enemy attempted to knock out the Bn's AA positions by both bombing and strafing. Each time the enemy attempted to knock out an AA position, our battery machine guns or the 90mm guns of an adjacent battery of the 116th would drive off the attacking planes. The Bn fired 1,326 rounds of 90mm ammunition from 17-18 December. They fired their ammunition at aircraft on 18 December when they participated again in daylight action against the enemy. On the night of 18 December, the Bn had another opportunity to engage in action - the enemy renewed its air offensive but with much less fury than before.

An estimated 25 aircraft were over the Stolberg-Duren area and the Bn claimed 2 enemy aircraft destroyed. During the 3 nights of action from 16-19 December, the Bn expended 3,577 rounds of 90mm ammunition claiming 36 planes destroyed and 8 probably destroyed. The Bn destroyed and so dispersed the enemy paratroopers attack during the period of 16-19 December such that the enemy was unable to secure its objective in the Eupen-Malmedy area. Only 7 men were wounded and none were killed. This allowed the Bn's reinforcements to proceed to the enemy breakthrough area and to stem the enemy attack.

After the night of 19 December, the enemy air activity became negligible and the Bn departed from the Stolberg-Duren area for the Maffie, Belgium area arriving 22 December and continuing its mission to protect the VII Corp Artillery. On the night of 26 December, an estimated 16 enemy aircraft attacked the VII Corp area. The Bn engaged the enemy aircraft with 72 rounds of 90mm and 199 rounds of ammunition. The Bn claimed they destroyed 6 enemy aircraft that night.

In total, the 116th AAA Gun Bn destroyed 32 enemy aircraft and the probable destruction of 2 enemy aircraft with claims now pending that there were 41 enemy aircraft destroyed and the probable destruction of 8 additional planes. On the last report of the Bn of the Twelfth Army Group, they were leading the First Army in the number of planes destroyed.

James D. Shearouse, Lt. Col, CAC

—Submitted by Irving Locker, B Battery, 116th AAA Gun Bn, Headquarters

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HONORING THE HEROES OF THE 517TH PIR



Everyone knows “Band of Brothers,” the famous 2001 television mini-series about the 506th PIR (Parachute Infantry Regiment) ‘Easy Company’ of 101st Airborne Division, the “Screaming Eagles.” Heroes all, but in no way unique. BOBA President Gary Higgins emphasizes that there were many other units whose military achievements contributed just as much, or even more, to final victory in World War II. But they are little known

because they were simply not lucky enough to be later given the Hollywood treatment. However, they certainly deserve to be honored and commemorated just as much.

The elite 517th PIR was one of these little-known units. When BOBA President Gary Higgins read about the death of 92-year old 517th PIR vet Michael Henry Schlachter of Chesaning, MI on May 18, 2017, he decided to honor him by attending his funeral as BOBA President, to draw attention to the greatness of these little-known, but equally important and equally deserving, soldiers and units.

517th PIR was an elite unit very much like the “Band of Brothers” 506th PIR. Originally part of 17th Airborne Division, 517th PIR was then combined in March 1943 with the 460th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion and the 596th Parachute Combat Engineer Company to form the independent elite 517th PRCT (Parachute Regimental Combat Team). Just like the 506th PIR, the 517th PIR had a very tough selection process and training at Camp Toccoa in the backwoods of Georgia. Moreover, 517th PIR were Army sports champions too. They were trained to be part of an independent, airborne rapid reaction force to be thrown in wherever needed. Many US divisions were grateful recipients of their combat support, among them the 30th, 106th and 75th Infantry Divisions and 3rd and 7th Armored Divisions. The 517th PIR saw combat in Italy, the south of France and above all the Battle of the Bulge. At the end of World War II, it became part of 13th Airborne Division.

517th PIR’s baptism of fire came in Italy in June, 1944 when it successfully helped 36th Infantry Division of General Mark Clark’s Fifth US Army drive back German Nineteenth Army units northwards up the west coast of Italy from Rome. Then in early August 1944, 517th PIR

was taken out of the Italian campaign and took part in a massive airborne operation behind the Mediterranean coast of France, preparing the way for Seventh US Army’s Anvil-Dragoon beachhead landings on the French Riviera. 517th PIR then protected Seventh US Army’s eastern flank in the foothills of the Alps as it advanced northwards up the Rhône valley in France, to join up with General Patton’s Third US Army coming from Normandy. General Eisenhower said, “There was no development of that period which added more decisively to our advantages or aided us more in accomplishing the final and complete defeat of German forces than did this attack coming up the Rhône Valley from the Riviera.”

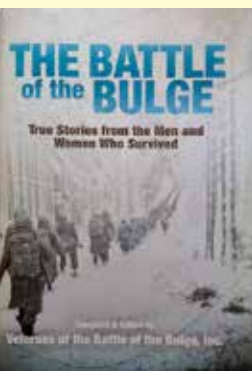
But 517th PIR’s finest hour came in December 1944/January 1945. In early December, it became part of General Matthew Ridgway’s XVIII Airborne Corps which included 82nd, 101st and later 17th Airborne, 517th PIR’s original unit. On December 21, 1944, it was rushed from France into Belgium for the greatest ever American land battle, the Battle of the Bulge. Hitler’s massive December 16 1944 offensive with three German armies westwards into the Belgium and Luxembourg Ardennes caught the Americans by surprise. Although Hitler’s lead Sixth Panzer Army was stopped with great difficulty on the northern flank of the Bulge, Fifth Panzer Army, commanded by the highly regarded General Manteuffel, had immediately taken over the German spearhead role from Sixth Panzer Army and was threatening to break through to the River Meuse between Liège and Namur on the way to the vital supply port of Antwerp, just as Hitler had planned. If successful, Hitler would have been able to cut off Montgomery’s 21st Army Group.

General Hodges’s First US Army, holding the northern flank of the Bulge, was stretched dangerously thin. Would First US Army be able to resist Manteuffel’s Fifth Panzer Army onslaught? On December 21, 517th PIR units were thrown in to plug a gap around Soy, Hotton and Marche blocking Fifth Panzer Army’s way to the River Meuse. Their action was awarded the Presidential Distinguished Unit Citation.

But another serious emergency immediately followed on Christmas Day 1944 when the elite German 2nd SS Panzer Division captured Manhay and thus controlled the main highway to Liège, the main city on the River Meuse. To make it worse, from Manhay the Germans could also easily attack the flanks of 3rd Armored and 82nd Airborne divisions. But 517th PIR units successfully saved the day, recapturing Manhay. From then on until the end of the Battle of the Bulge on January 25, 1945, 517th PIR was like a rapid “fire brigade” unit, helping to shore up and strengthen the northern flank of the Bulge wherever needed. As a result, the German Fifth and Sixth Panzer Armies never succeeded in achieving their objective of breaking through to the River Meuse and reaching Antwerp. Michael Henry Schlachter was a courageous soldier of an outstanding unit, 517th PIR. BOBA President Gary Higgins was proud to be there at his funeral in May 2017 in order to honor and salute his passing on behalf of BOBA.

—Submitted by Patrick Hinchey, Military Historian and Tour Director

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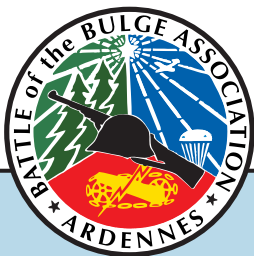
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