



Wyndham Virginia Beach Oceanfront is the site of our 101st Reunion/Convention

October 10-13, 2019



Wyndham Virginia Beach Oceanfront

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THE TWENTY-NINER

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Virginia National Guard dedicates new JFHQs to SGT John R. "Bob" Slaughter



Maj. Gen. Timothy P. Williams, the Adjutant General of Virginia, and Bob Slaughter, Jr., unveil a framed display honoring Roanoke native and D-Day veteran Sgt. Bob Slaughter during a ceremony dedicating the newly-built Virginia National Guard Headquarters in Sgt. Slaughter's name Jan. 8, 2019 at Defense Supply Center Richmond, Virginia. (*Virginia National Guard photo by Cotton Puryear*)

RICHMOND, VA — The Virginia National Guard's newly-built Joint Force Headquarters was officially named and dedicated for Roanoke native and D-Day veteran Sgt. John Robert "Bob" Slaughter Jan. 8, 2019, at Defense Supply Center Richmond, Virginia.

Maj. Gen. Timothy P. Williams, the Adjutant General of Virginia, joined members of Slaughter's family and distinguished guests to dedicate the Sergeant Bob Slaughter Headquarters.

"We're thrilled to have this opportunity to pay tribute to the greatest generation and to all other service men and women who have served the cause of freedom," said Williams.

Virginia Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs Carlos Hopkins also attend-

ed the ceremony and reflected on the occasion.

"It's an incredible honor to be here on the day we honor a native Virginian and a true war hero in Sgt. Slaughter," said Hopkins. "What an incredible occasion to dedicate this wonderful facility."

Slaughter, who passed away in 2012 at the age of 87, fought in World War II as a squad leader with the VNG's 1st Battalion, 116th Regiment, 29th Infantry Division at Omaha Beach in Normandy, France, during the D-Day invasion June 6, 1944. Slaughter had enlisted years earlier at age 15.

After his discharge in 1945 and lengthy civilian career in the newspaper industry, Slaughter became the leading force in

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*NATIONAL COMMANDER'S MESSAGE:***J. DAVID LEIGHTON**

I would like to thank everyone for attending the NEC II meeting in Pikesville, Maryland on January 23, 2019. We reviewed and addressed several items during the meeting. The minutes of that meeting are published on page 28 of this edition.

I was also very pleased to announce the relocation of HQ Post 29 to the Richmond, Virginia area.

A lot of ongoing projects are underway. We are working as an organization to make the website easier to use by all.

The Futures Committee is responsible for the Banners, tri-folds and posters that are being worked on to get the 29th Division Association message out to the public.

The NEC III meeting will be at the National Guard Armory (Readiness Center) in Winchester Virginia, on June 13, 2019 at 9:30AM.

We will have lunch catered by Mission BBQ around noon. I hope that everyone will be able to attend the



meeting. I look forward to seeing everyone there. See page 27 for more information on NEC III in Winchester, Virginia.

The Wreath Laying at Arlington National Cemetery will be June 29th at 12:15 p.m. I am going to ask the 29th Division NCO and Soldier of the Year to lay the wreath again this year. We were honored to have them participate with us last year.

Lunch will be at 1:15 p.m. at Spates, with the same menu as last year. We have the Executive Room reserved from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The 29th Division Association Annual Reunion and Convention will be held October 10th-13th in Virginia Beach, VA.

I am working on excursions for everyone to enjoy during your time at the beach. Virginia Beach still has a lot to offer during the winter. Virginia Beach also has a 29th Infantry Division Armory located there.

It has been my pleasure to serve the association in my role so far. I try to be available to each of you as need be. See you at the NEC III meeting June 13th.

*J. DAVID LEIGHTON
National Commander
29th Division Association*

*EDITOR'S SPRING MESSAGE:***Post level crisis**

In the Autumn/Winter 2018 edition, I wrote about a challenge that confronts our association going into the future.

Currently, we have a crisis at the post level concerning continued leadership and administration. Many posts have just 2 or 3 members/officers who are responsible for just about everything that the post does, administratively and socially.

Most of these individuals are not young people and I regret to say that at some point they will be unable to continue with the great work that they are and have been doing for their posts.

When I use the word "administratively", I mean work that involves the collecting of dues from the members; forwarding per Capita payments to National/Region Headquarters; and proper membership accountability.

It is of paramount importance to the association that our younger members step up and volunteer to become active and assume these important positions within the post.

Once a post is unable to function administratively, that post must be disbanded and its members transferred to other posts.

At some point, if members do not step up to help out their posts, the idea of "central billing" becomes a possibility. This would require members to pay their per Capita dues directly to National Headquarters if a large number of posts began to fail and had to be disbanded.

This is a "worst case" scenario and I do truly hope that it would never come to this.

So, for the posts to survive as they are now, we must have members willing to step up and assume these leadership roles within the posts.

Anyone who is reading this and may be interested in getting involved in the leadership and administration of their post is encouraged to contact their post leadership and offer their services.

The future of our association and the well-being of our posts depend on it.

On another subject, we have published a very informative article beginning on page 17 about a D-Day Imposter who

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Donations to the *Twenty-Niner*

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our membership for their generosity in contributing to the *Twenty-Niner* for this Spring issue. From November 1, 2018 through March 5, 2019, through these donations totaled \$1,985.00. Note our cut-off date. If your contributions did not reach our National Executive Director by March 5, 2018 then it will not be listed until the next issue. **Donation checks must be made payable to the 29th Division Association.**

Abschutz, Adrienne, Post 94, Daughter, Sparta, NJ
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In memory of Harry L. Cundy, HHC/3/175

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In memory of his father Cecil Garrison, Sr., 104th Med Bn

Grady, Brian, Cortlandt Manor, NY

In memory of Adam James Damascus, HQ/1/115

Green, Colleen, Post 94, Daughter, Simms, MT

In memory of John O'Neill, A/116

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In memory of Charles V. Matter, 104MED-3/175

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 Jindra, Leonard, Post 94, F/115, Floral Park, NY
 Kern, Matthew, Post 94, Associate, Asheville, NC
 Knight, James S. III, Post 94, Son, Mount Pleasant, SC

In memory of his father 1LT James S. Knight, Jr., E/116

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 Lane, Dale, Post 94, Son, Indianapolis, IN
 Lucas, Elona K., Post 94, Daughter, N. Canton, OH

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 Maupin, Charles A., Post 94, HQ/3/175, Columbus, GA
 Millard, Alfred, Beltsville, MD

In memory of Mrs Francis Soper

Nano, Joan Atkinson, Stamford, CT

In memory of Adam James Damascus, HQ/1/115

O'Rourke, Hugh, Post 94, Grandson, Northport, NY

In memory of his grandfather SGT John J. Dolan, C/1/116

Parnell, George, Post 94, HQ/2/175, Springfield, IL

Peter, George, Post 94, B/115, Rockville, MD

Post 78 - "Cresap;s Rifles", Frederick, MD

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In memory of Kenneth A. Perkins, A/1/115

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Praski, Benjamin, Post 94, Associate, Grapevine, TX

Phillips, J. Michael, Post 94, Associate, Mardella Springs, MD

Roser, Robert H. Jr., Post 78, Son, Stafford, VA

In memory of his father 1LT Robert Roser, B/1/175

Rush, J. Warner, Post 94, Associate, Waretown, NJ

Shaw, Richard, Post 94, C/224FA, Clarksville, MD

Sherburne, Douglas, Post 94, Associate, Fairfax, VA

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Smith, Marsha, Post 94, Associate, Walworth, NY

Smith, Rufus, Post 94, Son, Gulfport, MS

Smolar, Robert, Post 94, HHC/3/116, Mc Lean, VA

Sparks, Gary, Post 94, Son, Hillsborough, NH

Stapleton, Gregory, Post 94, Grandson, Lexington, KY

In memory of his grandfather COL James Morris

Stapleton, Rebecca, Post 94, Daughter, Lexington, KY

In memory of her father, PFC John C. Coulter

Sternberg, Abraham, Post 94, HHC/1/115, Coral Springs, FL

Strizak, Chalres, Post 94, Associate, Mount Pleasant, OH

Taranto, Kevin, Post 94, Associate, Manhasset, NY

Thompson, Ralph, Post 94, Associate, Fairfax, VA

Turner, Colleen C., Post 94, Daughter, Columbia, TN

Ungerleider, Dan, Post 94, Son, Burke, VA

Ungerleider, Ruth, Post 94, Widow, Springfield, VA

In memory of her husband BG Al Ungerleider

Vaynrub, Alla, Old Bethpage, NY

In memory of Adam James Damascus, HQ/1/115

Veterans Corps, 5th Regiment Infantry

In memory of Walter Georg, HHC/175

In memory of Frank Jacobs, HHC/175

In memory of PNC Robert "Bob" Recker, F/2/175

Waitzman, Morton B., Post 94, HQ/115, Atlanta, GA

Walhovd, Gary, Post 94, Associate, Janesville, WI

Wilcox, John E. Jr., Post 78, A/115, Frederick, MD

In memory of Charles Toms, US Navy - D-Day

Zwerin, David, Post 94, Associate, Merrick, NY

In memory of BG Al Ungerleider

TAPS

The following list shows names of known 29ers and their ladies or family members who died and their deaths reported from November 1, 2018 through February 28, 2019. We are indeed saddened and mourn their passing. We extend our deepest sympathy and love to their families and loved ones. We pray that they and all of our earlier deceased 29ers and ladies may rest in peace. Amen.

LAST ROLL CALL

Barber, Carl N., Post 5, B/111, Virginia Beach, VA 12/10/18
 Bretz, Robert L., Post 29, D/116, Fenton, MO 10/1/16
 Campbell, Chester, Post 2, C/175, Memphis, TN 1/16/17
 Campbell, John R., Post 729, Associate, Waynesboro, PA 6/9/18
 Cannon, William, Post 88, B/2/115, Fishing Creek, MD 12/17/18
 Damascus, Adam J., Post 1-72, HQ/1/115, Ardsley, NY 2/6/19
 Day, Maxwell L., Post 78, B/115, Mt. Airy, MD 1/6/19
 Fowler, John H., Post 94, B/104MED, Fallon, MO 12/19/18
 Georg, Walter, Post 1-72, HQ/175, Catonsville, MD 2/10/19
 Gubernot, Joseph, Post 64, K/116, Coal Township, PA 7/13/18
 Jagielski, Richard, Post 29, K/115, Amsterdam, NY 4/22/17
 Joiner, Tommie L., Post 94, HHC/1/175, Batesville, MS 11/25/18
 Jones, James D., Post 64, I/116, El Dorado, AR 2/8/18
 Marsh, John O. Jr., Raphine, VA 2/4/19
 McIntosh, Edwin, A., Post 29, HHC/29, Placenta, CA 5/1/18
 Merkle, Raymond "Skip", Post 110, HQ/110FA, Woodstock, MD 11/17/18
 Perkins, Kenneth L., Post 78, A/115, Frederick, MD 11/27/18
 Recker, PNC Robert "Bob", Post 1-72, F/2/175, Odenton, MD 1/5/19
 Sampieri, Byron, Post 94, B/116, Madison, AL 1/27/17
 Schimmel, Robert L., Post 29, 29MP, Dayton, OH 12/23/17
 Simmons, Wayne D. Sr., Post 88, K/115, Cambridge, MD 12/13/18
 Twining, Everett C., Post 94, A/459AAA, Concord, VA 8/25/16
 Walters, John L., Post 29, Duncansville, PA, A/115, 1/19/19
 Welk, Anne, Post 2, Associate, Port Charlotte, FL 2/9/19

LADIES

Amato, Angeline, Widow, Jersey City, NJ 3/19/18
 Boram, Catherine, Widow, Parkville, MD 11/6/15
 Clemson, Patricia, Widow, Martinsburg, WV 12/13/18
 Coulter, Lorine, Widow, Cary, NC 11/21/18
 Donovan, Claire M., Widow, Arlington, VA 1/2/09
 Dyson, Sophia, Widow, Lusby, MD 8/9/09
 Elmore, Lucille, Widow, Roanoke, VA 6/2/17
 Fitts, Pauline, Widow, Danville, VA 5/8/18
 Gabriel, Mary Grace, Widow, Westlake, OH 10/22/16
 Hall, Evelyn, Widow, Moreland, GA 1/2/06
 Williams, Jean, Widow, Sharpsburg, GA 8/14/18

LEST WE FORGET

It was decided long ago, that as long as two 29ers survive, we shall remember and honor our comrades and ladies who have passed to the great beyond.

You have just read a list of 24 comrades and 11 ladies who have died and whose deaths were reported to us since our last publication.

We ask survivors, friends, Post and Region Officers to forward information, as complete as possible, on the deceased to the National Executive Director, so that we can include them in the next issue of "The Twenty-Niner" and in the National Reunion Memorial Service. This will only be possible with your help.

William S. Mund, Jr.
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 E-mail: duster197329@gmail.com

Attention!

Post Adjutants & Finance Officers

New member information should be forwarded to National Headquarters as soon as possible. Some posts send the information weeks and in some cases months later.

This results in the new member not receiving the latest issues of the *Chin Strap* and *Twenty-Niner* to which they are entitled. Email this information to Will Mund at duster197329@gmail.com or by telephone to 443-529-4233. To delay their addition to the mailing lists is a disservice to our new member.

Email addresses are an important tool in lowering the cost of sending the *Chin Strap*. We will now be mailing over 900 of them. With the increasing prices of printing, envelopes and postage, the costs will continue to rise. We are now emailing the *Chin Strap* to around 800 members. We feel we can increase that number and ask all posts to canvas their members for email addresses.

If any member gets a printed copy and would like to get it electronically, email Executive Director Will Mund at duster197329@gmail.com and you will get it quicker and help us reduce costs.

Remember: Do not delay sending in new member information.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Correction

In several recent editions of the *Twenty-Niner*, it was reported that LeRoy W. Herrick of Chicago, Illinois, was deceased.

His daughter has informed us that this is not the case and that Mr. Herrick is indeed alive and well.

The editor regrets his error.

Out In Front — All The Way

Part 3

an account of James Slade Morris – 115th Infantry

by his Grandson, Gregory L. Stapleton

CHAPTER 11

On to Holland

After only a few short days of rest for the battle weary troops of the 29th Division, they were ordered to board the trucks again and head for the front lines, now well to the East of the point where they left them in August.

General Gerhardt in an interview with Louis Azrael of the Baltimore News-Post described what the 29th had gone through:

"Our division got its elementary education in training. The Normandy Campaign was a college course in warfare, in Brittany we had a post-graduate course, and have come through with honors."

The End of September found the 29th in Holland as part of the Ninth Army. The 116th was initially designated as XIX Corps reserve near the City of Maastricht. However, the next day the 116th was detached to the 30th Division, the former Tennessee National Guard outfit that was preparing to cross the Siegfried line near the German border city of Aachen.

The 29th Division Newspaper "29 - LET'S GO" in September reminded the troops: "Remember that we're entering Germany as conquerors – not liberators. Don't trust these Nazis. Keep your eyes open – ready for anything."

Baltimore Sun reporter Holbrook Bradley in the same day filed this report: "Major James S. Morris is in the forefront of the assault of the important City of Aachen Germany." Bradley reported that a German tank made a sudden attack on a courtyard and he did not need Major Morris's yell to urge him to hug the ground as shells exploded in the area.

The 1-116th established defensive positions on the right flank of the 30th Division troops, a long way from the rest of the division. They did active patrolling but little more for three days. Morris found time for a letter that began: "quite a long distance from where I last wrote you". He was now in Holland, and had last written while in Brittany France. He wrote of two experiences; "I am wearing a gold wedding band that I found on D-Day that I am superstitious about. I have been wearing it ever since and feel it is my good luck charm". And in a complaint about "rear area" types, he disgustedly noted that his bedroll and duffle bag had finally caught up to him, but they had been slashed open and his belongings were missing.

The rest of the regiment moved into the 1st Battalion's area and for the next week they held the line West of Aachen while the 30th Division made a breakthrough north of them attempting to link up with the 1st Division and encircle the garrison in Aachen. During this time the 116th troops made combat patrols into Germany. On the 6th of October, he wrote of his participation in one of these: "I claim the distinction of being the first person in the division to set foot on German soil".

The troops received new regulations on censorship and soldiers were allowed to tell more about where they had been. Morris often commented in letters that the family could keep closer track of where he was just by reading the newspapers. He was prohibited by censorship to tell his location in his letters, but the correspondents would report it, and the next day it would be in the papers. He told her he had been to Isigny, St. Lo, Vire and Brest. "All of which are pretty beat up". He had also been to Paris, Rennes, Le Mans, and Chartres, all of which he had seen from "a speeding jeep". Of Paris he wrote; "I came through Paris so fast that I did not get a chance to see anything, except the top half of the Eiffel Tower from a distance".



To his mother he wrote a few days later from Holland: "We came through Belgium and France so fast" ... "I have been to Germany several times" ... "I am well and comfortable as could be expected in a fox hole" "Sometimes I sleep on top of the ground, but it is not a healthy practice".

Morris is in a gloomy mood as he writes on October 10th. He had received a letter from Clara, and she mentioned all the deferred people at home and all the fun they are having. "I wonder sometimes whether I can feel the same friendship towards (them) as I did before". "In this business one realizes that 'leave it to the other guy' attitude will not get us anywhere".

He then talks about how the boys have changed, how they adapt to the fighting, how they doggedly keep going with hardly a complaint. His admiration for them is apparent.

"These boys don't experience a nauseating sensation anymore when a buddy next to them gets a leg blown off. They walk along, stepping over dead people without looking twice, and when things quiet down they relax, smoke, crack jokes and laugh and think of home".

"It is interesting to study the faces of these men as they lie along the roads and ditches, waiting, they don't know what for, maybe a short rest, a chance to write a letter, or maybe just waiting for a resumption of the attack. But they generally don't show any concern, they just wait and live for the moment. They just wait until the Sgt. or Lt. says 'Lets go'".

"While waiting their expressions vary, some will go to sleep when they stop, some will be wide awake and alert. Watching for the enemy or listening to the shells going over, trying to determine which is ours and which is theirs. They study the whine of each one, so that he might be able to lie a little flatter for the close ones".

"Then there is the guy who crawls over to his buddy to bum a light and share a rag as they clean sand out of their rifles. But the big majority just roll over on their back, lean up against a tree or bank, light a cigarette and wait. While they wait they think, they appear to be miles away, and you can bet your boots they are

thinking of home”.

His depression reaches a point near the end of the letter when he angrily writes; *“If I get a chance to get out of this scramble now I’m taking it, because I believe I have done my job and could sleep soundly if I got an easier job”.*

The 116th finally pushes off to help close the Aachen gap. On the 12th of October, the 1st and 2nd Battalions join the 30th Division and attack near Wurselen. ³ The next day the attack resumes with tank support following a rolling artillery barrage that pushes through the town as they try to close the gap by linking with the “Big Red One”. The narrow penetration made good progress at first, then the attack was slowed and the “going got tough” ⁴ Pillboxes slowed the advance, and little more ground was gained for the next several days. ⁵ Each new day the attack resumed but the depleted regiment was no match for all the strength the defenders of the city could bring to bear against their front.

A story on the AP Wire Service and run in the local paper by Franklin Barker about the battle included:

“We’ve never been subjected to such heavy artillery fire as we are getting here.” Major Jim Morris the commander of a veteran infantry outfit said today as we edged toward the center of town (Wurselen). Enemy shells fell all around in a barrage lasting several hours. It took an hour to pick our way from the message center to a battalion observation post – about a half a dozen city blocks.

“They call the street ‘Purple Heart Lane’.

Major Morris of Delta, Pa., said a few German civilians who were reluctant to leave their homes had adopted a cautious attitude of waiting to see what *“We will do”.*

“They all seem eager to please” Morris related *“They never object to our using their cellar. If there is something in the cellar they want they come and timidly ask if they can have it”.*

Jim Morris wrote on the 14th:

“I think someone has made Hitler mad since this is the noisiest place I’ve struck yet. But we don’t have any ideas of letting him run us out of the fatherland”. Morris reported he saw Baltimore Sun reporter Holbrook Bradley again and remarked *“he certainly takes a lot of chances to get the news”.*

Two days later Morris was sitting with about ten other men in a dugout enjoying a *“just arrived box of candy”* Morris told Clara everyone shared sweets and other edibles when they arrived because they had no way to carry them and keep them clean and dry. However, he acknowledged he always made sure he got a good share of his favorites first. He told of burrowing in a little deeper in this shelter because *“Herman, the vermin is launching some big” freight trains’ from way back”*

The Aachen gap is finally closed on the 18th of October. The 116th alongside troops from “Old Hickory” of the 30th Division are repulsed again from Wurselen, however Aachen falls to the 1st Division. The 116th is withdrawn from the lines around Wurselen and is returned to the 29th Division in its position along the Siegfried Line. He writes; *“I am grateful for a chance to write you whether it be a foxhole, basement, or as in this case a pillbox. This one was taken intact and makes a very good shelter. It has a stove to take the chill off, and is equipped with about 30 bunks. The walls are of steel and concrete so we feel rather safe”.* The 102nd Division relieves them and they move to assembly areas in Holland for training on the 30th of October.

Baltimore Post-news reporter Louis Azrael wrote this of the 29th Division at the end of October:

“In battle at D-Day, St. Lo, at Vire, at Brest and at many other hard-fought battlegrounds, the Twenty-ninth has established a reputation without peer of any division in the U.S. Army. Now on the final battleground in the European war, it is maintaining this reputation”.

Major Morris is given a seven-day leave on the 6th of November, he writes; *“It came as a big surprise to me”.* He was offered the leave be-

cause he was one of only two officers in the battalion who came in on D-Day and served ever since.

He wrote on his return of his journey.

Day 1 – Morris caught a jeep as far as Leige Belgium, then hopped a Truck to an airfield where he caught a plane to Paris. *“I spent the night on a canvas army cot in the airport”.*

Day 2 – He booked passage on a plane for London and arrived at Air Force HQ for lunch with Mitch Hopkins and *“sat and talked about old times”.*

Day 3 – Went to see the Willis family, whom he had spent so much time with during his stay in England. Mrs. Willis who was then pregnant had another son, and the Willis’s had made Jim Morris the Godfather of the boy.

Day 4 & 5 – Still with the Willis’s. *“had my first tub bath in ages”.*

Day 6 - Returned to London for a flight to Paris and spent the night in Paris at the Red Cross.

Day 7 - Rode back to Belgium in a jeep with Captains Holland and Cassapoula of the 29th Division. He did not know either officer, but he wrangled into their billet and transportation.

Reported back on the 14th. And wrote; *“back in the mud hole again after a Seven-day leave”.* The 29th Division book 29 LET’S GO! Reported it was the wettest November in years. Rain fell on 28 out of the 30 days in the month. ⁶

During his leave the 29th Division took up a portion of the line west of Julich Germany. Between the city along the Roer River and the U.S. lines were dozens of small villages and towns and the enemy intended to fight in each.

The Americans had learned from the experiences of St. Lo and Vire that after assaulting and taking a town, the German artillery on the surrounding hills would lay down barrages on the GI’s in the town inflicting severe casualties. ⁷ A new tactic the Americans were trying was to bypass the towns, surround them, clear the high ground and then take the town from the rear.

All the fighting would now be in Germany fighting in the enemy’s homeland. A battle with a determined foe was expected but the 29ers would also be taking the war directly to the German people who had caused this mess.

CHAPTER 12

The Push Into Germany

The 29th Division was already on the move as Morris settled back into his job as XO of the 1-116th. Initially the battalion was in reserve, but as the 115th Infantry Regiment advanced they came under fire from the town of Setterich. The 115th was attempting to maneuver around the town and surround it but the progress was too slow and on November 16th General Gerhardt ordered the 1-116th Infantry out of reserve to take the town of Setterich and eliminate the threat to the flank of the 115th. He placed the 1-116th under the control of the 115th Infantry for the operation and Major James Morris was in operational control of the battalion for the action. Undoubtedly Morris was pleased to lead his troops in direct support of his “old outfit” and his history with the 115th may have influenced the move to place him in command of the detached 1st Battalion.

The attack of the 1st Battalion of the 116th did not get underway until noon of the next day, the 17th of November. The battalion’s Companies B and C moved against the town from the south astride the Setterich-Baesweiller Road, with Company A in reserve. As the attack approached the zigzag trenches, small arms fire forced them to the ground about 400 yards from the town, and kept them pinned down. Despite several attempts to restart forward progress the assault ground to a halt. Employing fire and maneuver tactics some of the troops gained a foothold in the trenches but this was all they could accomplish and the GI’s dug in for the night.

General Gerhardt seemed slow to accept that his infantry needed

tank support, but on the 18th of November he ordered LTC Cassell the CO of the 116th to commit his regiment to take Setterich right away. Cassell sought tank support and received a platoon of M-4 Sherman tanks * from the 747th Tank Battalion to assist the regiment. The 1st Battalion was ordered to continue the attack from the southwest, and Morris planned to renew the attack along the road with three tanks in support. He sent Company A, his battalion reserve to attack the town from the west with support from two more tanks. The regiment sent the 2nd Battalion to further the attack on the town from the northwest.

* The M-4 Sherman tank was considered to be inferior to many German tanks in both firepower and defensive armor, however, mechanically it was extremely reliable, also it was more maneuverable and faster than enemy tanks. It was mass produced in quantities that the Germans could not hope to match. The tank was armed with a 75mm cannon, a .50 caliber machine gun (MG) and two .30 caliber MGs. In the American warfare plan, tanks were designed to exploit the breakthroughs of the foot soldiers and the Sherman tank was well designed for that role, but it did not fare well one-on-one against German "Panther" and "Tiger" tanks.

The attack was launched before dawn on the 18th and the 2nd Battalion with supporting tanks from the 2nd Armored Division was able to push past the trenches and into the northern outskirts of the town. Morris's 1st Battalion continued its assault, but the three tanks supporting his main attack were either quickly knocked out or disabled by mines and anti-tank weapons. However, his supporting attack by Company A from the west worked as intended. The leading platoon was stopped by fire from enemy troops entrenched in a wooded area; the Sherman tanks moved up and provided suppressing fire with their main cannons and machine guns. Another platoon was then able to swing around to the flank of the enemy trench and attack and capture the position. The troops supported by the tanks then moved on Setterich and gained the western part of the town, enabling the rest of the battalion to renew its assault from the southwest and sweep the enemy from its defenses. With the town now cleared the division advanced to the east and the 1st Battalion was returned to the 116th and again removed to regimental reserve.¹

The troops of the 116th were reinserted into the line on the 20th of October. The battalions moved to the left (north) flank of the division and moved out. They quickly overran two small towns including the town of Engelsdorf where they regrouped and prepared for the next assault on the town of Koslar. The 1st Battalion was in reserve as the move on Koslar began on November 21st. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions made some progress before halting for the night. The next several days involved a continuing movement of troops to isolate and probe the defenses of Koslar.

Louis Azrael of the *News-Post* tells how things will change as they move into Germany:

"Friendly contact with civilians was out. In Germany the boys could not stop a civilian and ask directions, or get info on the whereabouts of the enemy." He continued how it had affected the troops. "Consciousness of the surrounding hostility has made war even more drab than the boys already learned it could be. And constant mud, frequent rain, and earlier darkness has added to the unpleasantness."

Jim Morris and the 1st Battalion were still in regimental reserve on Thanksgiving Day, and he used the opportunity to write a quick letter home to his mother. He informed her he was in Germany for Thanksgiving:

"Although I had no turkey, I Can be thankful that I am alive and can write a letter home".

"The going is all rough and muddy, but we are still going".

"Talked to some old friends in the 115th, but no one from around home. I don't know whether anyone from Delta is still with them or not".

"Plenty of rain and mud, but the weather has not been very cold for the past few days. I think the boys would like it better if it got colder, and the ground froze. We can keep warm but it's hard to keep dry".

The commanders decided it was time to take the town of Koslar, and the 2nd Battalion took the town in a bayonet charge, but encountered only light opposition. The enemy had mostly evacuated the town, but they then laid in an artillery barrage, that cut off two companies of the 2nd Battalion. The enemy then counterattacked and pressed the isolated companies in Koslar. The rest of the 116th tried to break into the town for support, but without success. The only assistance that got to them was by airdrop.²

Finally, on the 27th at 0400 hours, the 1st Battalion utilizing the cover of darkness attacked into Koslar and drove the enemy from part of the town and linked up with the two cut-off companies of the 2nd Battalion. The 1st Battalion continued to sweep north into the town and eliminated the last of the enemy resistance.

The next objective was to drive to the Roer River and cross it in the vicinity of Julich. The 29th Division was faced with three strongpoints blocking their route, The Sportplatz, the swimming pool, and the Hasenfeld Gut. U.S. forces would pound away at these positions each day, and every night the Germans would bring reinforcements from across the Roer River and strengthen the positions.³

The 1-116th moved on the Sportplatz during the first hours of December 1944 with Co.'s "A" and "B" attacking from the west, and Co."C" from the south. The attack was begun under the cover of darkness, but moonlight revealed the approaching attackers to the enemy and the assault was broken up. A second night attack the next evening made only slight gains. Major Dallas was injured when he sprains his ankle, and is evacuated the next day. Major Jim Morris again takes over the battalion on the 2nd of December, and the battalion makes small gains around the Sportplatz.

The night of December 2nd the 1st Battalion goes on the attack again. Morris wrote several months later about the battle;

"That night my Bn. got a foothold on the river bank in a stretch of wood just south of the Sportplatz. We were so close to the SP (Sportplatz) you could throw a grenade in it, and the jerries did the same thing. We held our position for six days while the other 2 bn's fought to extend the line to our left. After they had worn themselves out the 115th, which had been in reserve and was rested, came in and took that part of the line after their first attack failed.

My Bn. had the distinction of being the first one on the river line and being able to hold it for 6 days while the others were trying to get there. The whole battle of 6 days got more publicity and attention than our part because we did it so quickly and made it look easy. But it was far from easy. The lead company became disorganized from artillery fire, we had a wide stretch of flat ground to cross, which was swept with MG fire, we fought through concrete pillboxes, waded through a moat filled with water up to our armpits, scaled an old wall, cleaned out an underground tunnel system, and finally wound up on the bank of the Roer River looking into Julich. We started our attack just before dark and continued fighting through the night till we got there. And all that was done in zero weather. If anyone thinks they can take the credit for the battle of the SP away from us, they are full of 'sweet violets'".

Major Jim Morris is recommended for a citation for his actions on the successive night attacks of December 1st and 2nd 1944. He writes the following letter to his wife when she asks what he did to earn the medal he had just received. He includes that Col. (then Major) Dallas recommended him for the Silver Star, and at the same time the Regimental CO put him in for the Bronze Star for the same thing. Only one of which can be awarded for the same act, so the regimental medal went through. He wrote to Clara:

"One afternoon the battalion jumped off for an attack, the Bn. CO was injured and I had taken over. Because of the terrain, etc, we attacked in a column of companies. As the leading company neared the objective they were subjected to very heavy enemy artillery and MG fire. From where I was I could see that things had slowed down considerably.

Soon I got a message from the CO of the leading company that his company had become very much disorganized, that quite a few casualties had been inflicted and the attack had been stopped. I went forward to the area and with the company and platoon leaders we got control of the men, got them started again, and they went on to take the objective.

I was recommended because I am not expected to go down to take a personal hand in such things – but look at all those GI's who were out there taking longer than I was and not getting much pay for it. It is true that a lot of them were scared and would not get up without the proper leadership example from an officer. It took more guts for those guys who were most scared to get up and go again" He goes on to try to describe to her the feeling as you go into a fight;

"when you start out your heart pounds and your bowels seem to tie themselves in a knot and the only thing you can do is draw a deep breath. suck up your guts and start out on a run. Once you get started it is not so bad. I have seen men and officers who were nervous as hell before a battle starts and once the going gets hot they become "killers", apparently fearless. I don't think I have ever seen anyone who was not afraid, but the whole thing is being able to control fear".

The citation for the Bronze Star Medal read:

On the nights of 1 – 2 Dec. 1944, the 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry was engaged in fierce fighting with a stubborn and determined force holding strategic positions in the vicinity of Koslar, Germany. Major Morris displayed outstanding qualities of leadership and sound judgment in successfully directing his battalion in the establishing a line along the west bank of the Roer River in the face of heavy enemy resistance. In so doing Major Morris made a substantial contribution to the successful and continued advance of the 116th Infantry on enemy soil. Such actions reflect credit upon himself and the military service.

A dispatch from Holbrook Bradley in the December 3rd edition of the *Baltimore Post* reported "at dusk last night companies commanded by Major James S. Morris succeeded in penetrating to the north side of the Sportplatz. The Germans were well entrenched and made a desperate and successful fight to keep our men out of the area".

The paper ran a complete story of the battle for the Sportplatz on December 6. The account by Bradley makes reference to Jim Morris as leading the attack near Julich. The story reported the attack began after a finely coordinated air-ground operation involving four P-47 'Thunderbolts' strafed the Sportplatz and dropped 500-pound bombs on target. The 1st Battalion 116th Infantry waited 50 minutes for the air attack to finish, and as the last plane departed "artillery took up the action with smoke and white phosphorous shells".⁴ Bradley wrote;

"As the clouds of smoke rolled over the river, the first squads got under way, moving across the wet terrain toward the objective. Then one began to see black spurts of dirt and powder in the white fog as enemy gunners dropped mortar and high explosive shells trying to find the advancing men.

"When the fog momentarily lifted, one could see the first of the infantrymen moving along the levee toward the strong point."

"From a distance the men looked almost a part of the ground over which they moved. Every once in a while one could pick out a man running from cover to cover and stopping now and then to fire his rifle".

"As night fell, and one wondered if the attackers would get dug in close to the Sportplatz during the night".

"Having gained the ground the job now is to hold it against any efforts which jerry may make to drive us out."

The story in the *Baltimore Sun*, included several paragraphs giving brief biographical information about Jim Morris, including his hometown, names of his wife and children with ages, and his mention of his parents. The story then detailed where he went to school, where he had worked and telling of his National Guard career.

The newspaper attempting to find out more about Major Morris who was being mentioned so often in Bradley's reports had contacted family members in the Delta area who provided his background. This angered Morris and he sternly lectured Clara in his letter. He did not like having his privacy intruded upon at home, was embarrassed with the publicity, and resented that he alone was getting so much attention and not the troops doing the hardest fighting. He was particularly angry about his spotty job history being detailed in the story, and wrote to Clara "at least they did not mention I ran a gas station".

Repeated attacks by the 116th's other battalions to take the Sportplatz result in no gains to exploit the advanced penetration of the 1st Battalion. On the 7th, the 116th is relieved by the 115th and the regiment severely depleted by casualties is withdrawn to the area of Koslar. The west bank of the Roer in the 29th Division sector is finally cleared on the 9th of December.

Morris finds time to write a real letter on the 9th to Clara. He tells her, that her letters to him must be destroyed after he reads them for security reasons, but that he keeps one or two of the most recent ones to re-read over again until more arrive. He tells her that they are now in the Ninth Army and "The fighting has been rough and tough". He informs her that he was recommended for a citation of 'some kind' by the regimental commander (LTC Cassell), but says "The most attractive award to me at the moment would be a discharge" ... "I come from a long line of civilians, and I want to carry on the tradition".

Morris tells her about Major Dallas being injured on Dec. 1, and he took over on that date. "This makes the fourth time I have taken over a Bn. since D-Day." ... "I have every confidence in myself that I can do as good a job as any Damn LTC in the ETO but this is a hell of a business and if anyone else wants the job he can have it, provided he knows what he is doing".

Morris continues to say he is writing on 'liberated jerry paper' and says; "I think the past week has been the toughest we have seen so far. He (jerry) has his back to the wall, his defense lines are much shorter, and the weather does not help since we must go out in the open in order to roust him from his cover".

He fills in Clara about some of the other commanders in the Division. He tells her that LTC Millholland used to have a battalion in the 115th but he does not know what happened to him, but that Fisher has the outfit (3rd Bn) now. The other two Bn's of the 115 are led by (LTC Glover) Johns (1st), and (LTC Anthony) Miller (2nd). The 116th is led by himself, (LTC Lawrence) Meeks (2nd), and (LTC Wm.) Puntenney (3rd). The new CO of the 116th is Col. Sidney Bingham Jr.

The 116th Infantry is given special training on river crossings while positioned west of Julich on the Roer River line. Over the next several days, things are quiet and he writes several letters, in one he comments that Dallas is still in the hospital and he is still CO. Another letter includes the lines that Bill Duncan got the Bronze Star. He adds: "I don't get to see much of the 115th boys anymore".

The Ardennes offensive begins on December 16th, and the 29th Division is mostly inactive along the Roer during this time. The 116th takes over a portion of the front line that was previously held by the 2nd Armored Division as it was sent to the relief of the Bulge. The 29th Division is now assigned to hold a stretch of line that had once been the

zone of the entire XIX Corps. Now only 5 battalions of Infantry were spread across a 12-mile front. 5 The troops built and strengthened their defensive positions in the event of a German attack along their thin line.

The division settled into an unusual time of limited activity, manning outposts, improving defenses, and most importantly making their fox-holes, cellars, dugouts and outposts as comfortable and warm as possible. 6 Jim Morris wrote home on Christmas day to Clara and told her that Col. Dallas has returned from the hospital and taken over and he was back to XO. He was a little miffed that again he was 'bumped' back after being the commander. He wrote that since D-Day (June 6th):

"I have commanded a battalion for a total of 70 days in combat.

A commander must serve 30 days continuously in order to get a battlefield promotion. The closest I got to it was a stretch of 26 days and at that time my papers were being prepared (to make him a LTC) when the old CO came back. This last time he was gone about 23 days. He seems to always come back just in time to keep me from getting a kick up and in time to keep his job. Naturally I would like to get the promotion, but he can keep the job, it's no fun".

Morris tried to downplay his disappointment at another reduction in command, but he may have been doing it for the 'folks at home'. He was very proud of his time in command, and how the troops had performed under his stewardship. No doubt the strain and pressure of command had affected him, the losses experienced by his "boys" deeply affected his view of command. Even as he returned to XO, his role in the leadership of the battalion was changed. He was no longer just a 'beans and bullets' assistant to the commander, but was considered as a reliable aide to the commander, one he could trust, and rely on.

In a change of mood in the letter to the lighter side he related: "I may get Peggy (daughter) to give me music lessons when I get home. Very often we move into a town and some dirty, bearded GI, who looks like a bloodthirsty wild man, knocks a layer of fallen plaster off the keyboard of a piano and bangs out a tune even before the last of the jerries have been cleared out".

He finishes by telling her that he has completed 18 years of service so he would be getting an additional \$12.50 more per month.

Morris spent Christmas of 1944 on the front lines in Germany. The Germans propagandists broadcast a program of Christmas music to the American side of the Roer River over loudspeakers. The program included appeals to the GI's to surrender and tried to lower their spirits by making them think of, and miss home. The troops enjoyed the songs but after too much propaganda, the 29th Division's artillery put an end to the broadcast. Morris wrote:

"The krauts serenaded us on Christmas Eve. They moved a loudspeaker system up to their lines and turned the phones in our direction and they played some music records and put out a lot of propaganda 'hooley'. The music was right pretty and we let them alone as long as they entertained us but when they started their speech we dropped a couple of shells in the area and they shut up quick like and went home".

He writes his mother two days later, and complains about the lack of material for the troops. Shortages of tires and gas have hobbled their progress. He tells her that the German counterattack in the Ardennes, ('Battle of the Bulge') had one good aspect: "Jerry is doing us a big favor by counterattacking. It may wake up some people to the fact that this war is not over".

On the last day of December 1944 just before midnight, a New Years Eve barrage was unleashed on the U.S. positions to help the Americans "Welcome in the New Year". 7 Morris wrote that he suspected this was a little pay back for the Christmas barrage that had been sent by the Americans.

CHAPTER 13 A New Year of the War

"It is hard to believe I have been gone 2 ½ years...." Was the way Jim Morris started a letter home on New Years day 1945. A week later he writes a letter with varied topics. He tells of the differing use of expressions between the English and the Americans and how a British Newspaper columnist poked fun at the 29th Division stating that the 29th never gets a counterattack. It is always spoken of as *"enemy enthusiasm"*. The scribe said that if the 29th got shoved back into the channel, it would be reported as *"undue enthusiasm on the part of the enemy"*.

Conditions of living in a rut of monotony and abundance of mud were the routine, and despite the relative inactivity along their front and the quality of shelters the troops had constructed during the stalemate, the mood was glum. Morris wrote; *"If I live another 6 months I'll be 37 – that's much too old for this kind of business"* He adds tongue in cheek; *"I keep telling them that but no one pays the slightest notice"*.

On January 12th he writes to reply to Clara why they have not heard anything about the 29th in the newspapers during the Battle of the Bulge. He tells her that the front in his sector has been "fairly stable". *"Breakthroughs have been made north and south of us but none here so far"*. *"That doesn't mean that it is quiet here – far from it. There is plenty of action but not much movement"*.

He relates a story about one of the battalion's artillery observers. He was trying to adjust fire on one of the pillboxes facing their lines. After several misses the Germans inside the pillbox waved a "Maggie's Drawers" at the Americans to show that they had missed. Maggie's Drawers is a firing range flag waved by scorers to indicate a miss. Morris wrote their action was; *"damn pert"* and it did not sit well with the GI's on the American side. A self-propelled 155mm gun was brought up and fired on the position until it was destroyed. 1

The 29th Division front was still stabilized along the existing lines, but active patrolling continued. Co."C" of the 1st Battalion is sent across the river on a raid on a suspected German command post in a mansion house north of Julich. The raiders got across safely but near the house a firefight breaks out, and the GI's were forced to withdraw under covering fire.

Jim Morris writes a newsy letter to Clara on the 4th of February. The last month and a half have been mostly inactive as the Army continued to reduce the "Bulge" and begin planning for what they hope to be the final campaign of the war.

Clara asked him in her letter why she doesn't read about him in the papers more. He tells her; *"There are a lot of people in a division and ones you see mentioned most in the paper are those at or near division HQ"*. He mentions some of the names that Clara had asked why they were so often in the news. *"Witte, Porter, Dukehardt, Marr, Hawkins, and a lot of others see the correspondents every day. The correspondents are only human and are not going to spend most of their time up here with the cellar dwellers and ground hogs"*. Interestingly Holbrook Bradley on this very day saw Jim Morris at 116th's headquarters near Herlingen, Holland and reported it in his column.

He tells her that his mother sent the newspaper article on the battle of the Sportplatz by McQuade and comments; *"that was a rough one and we still have it"*.

He goes on to report on some friends they both knew and some he often wrote about. "Gillespie is back with the 'doughfeet' again, he is XO of 2nd Bn.-115th"

"Geo Nabb was wounded a couple of days before I left the old outfit, he returned not so long ago and was wounded again in his first battle after returning".

"Capt Gary – have never heard from him since he left. Think he is an MP (Military Policeman) in Paris. (He) probably hasn't written"

because he doesn't want me to call him a 'blue-star bastard'. This what we call everybody in the SOS (Services of Supply). They wear a shoulder patch insignia with a blue star on it".

"Saw Captain Mentzer today and we had a happy reunion. (he's) still with the 1st Bn- 115th. We find that he and I are the only 2 officers who came in on D-Day with the first Bn. and are still here. There were 35 to 40 of us on D-Day. Some of the others have come back after being evacuated, but we are the only two who have been here straight thru. The same in this outfit (1-116th) Captain Murphy and I are the only ones who have not been evacuated for wounds, etc.. Mentzer says it makes him feel like a fugitive from the law of averages".

"You might think that after 8 months in combat without a scratch that I might develop a contempt for the krauts marksmanship and allow myself to become careless. But it's not that way. Each time we get ready to jump off again, and until the scrap gets good and hot I am just as scared as I was getting off the boat on D-Day".

Morris signs off his letter as he has more and more frequently with "God bless you".

Four days later the 116th is given a much need relief and pulled back to division reserve. Offensive actions for the division begin again on the 21st of February as the attack on Julich commences. The 1st Battalion is added to the attack three days later as they make a wide sweeping maneuver around the city and attack from the northeast. The battalion enters and captures the town. The next day the 116th attacks toward Dusseldorf, the 1st Battalion takes the town of Weldorf. Holbrook Bradley of the *Baltimore Sun News* mentions seeing Jim Morris at the front on the 25th and 28th of February. These reported sightings indicate his role with the battalion is much more active in the actual direction of the troops than a typical XO. His experience and desire have put him out in front again, facing some of the same dangers and hardships of his beloved "boys."

The last day of February 1945 brought news to Jim Morris that was at the same time exciting and bittersweet. Morris was an experienced battalion commander with a very good record in combat and his services were being wasted as an executive officer. According to 29th Division historian Joe Balkoski, General Gerhardt tried to find a spot for him within the division even if it meant switching him to the 175th Infantry Regiment. That would have resulted in him serving with each infantry regiment in the division. Morris was told he was being transferred but in his letter to Clara on this day he said: "After 18 years with the 29th I have been transferred. I don't know where yet" Morris was very sorry to leave his dear "old outfit" but he had always wanted to do everything he could to bring the war to an end. Never one to let others do his fighting for him, his place was leading a battalion in combat, and with no vacancies in the 29th Division he was ready to move on to another assignment. He was apprehensive about the change and what he would be doing, but he was sure he could do whatever was asked of him.

It is important to recognize the toll that had been taken by the 29th Division since it entered combat. The division entered combat on June 6, 1944 and by the end of the war had spent 242 days in combat suffering 3720 men KIA (killed in action), 15,000 wounded and 462 listed as missing in action. The majority of the hardest fighting endured by the division occurred while Jim Morris was still with it. The division suffered a 204% casualty rate, meaning that for every man in the Division, two others were killed, wounded, missing or captured. The rate of battlefield casualties was second only to the 4th Infantry Division, which had also come ashore on D-Day. The rifle companies suffered the greatest losses, the front line foot soldiers were lost at a rate of 400%.²

Notes:

Chapter 11

- ¹ Let's Go—29th Paper
- ² Baltimore Sun Newspaper
- ³ 29 Let's Go
- ⁴ Other Clay
- ⁵ 29 Let's Go
- ⁶ 29 Let's Go
- ⁷ 29 Let's Go

Chapter 12

- ¹ Company Commander
- ² 29 Let's Go!
- ³ 29 Let's Go!
- ⁴ 29 Let's Go!
- ⁵ 29 Let's Go!
- ⁶ 29 Let's Go!
- ⁷ 29 Let's Go!

Chapter 13

- ¹ 29 Let's Go
- ² Closing with the Enemy

This concludes our presentation of "Out In Front—All The Way", an account of James Slade Morris of his time spent serving with the 29th Division in Europe during WWII. We are extremely grateful to his grandson Gregory L. Stapleton for allowing us to publish his work.

William S. Mund, Jr.
Editor

Alumni Network established by Virginia National Guard

The Virginia National Guard has established an Alumni Network comprised of Virginia Army Guard, Virginia Air Guard and the Virginia Defense Force Alumni as well as Associations, family and friends who wish to remain an integral member of The Commonwealth's Guardian.

The mission of the Virginia National Guard Alumni Network is to share news and information across multiple associations and veterans groups in order to leverage the strength of existing organizations to foster a sense of fellowship among currently serving members and alumni.

There is no cost and no money will be solicited from you. If you would like to be added to our Alumni Network for information sharing, please contact **LTC Jennifer Martin at jennifer.r.martin.mil@mail.mil or 804-380-6348** or the Virginia National Guard Public Affairs Office at ngva.pao@mail.mil.

Robert L. "Bob" Recker

Past National Commander – 2006-2007

20 August 1930 – 5 January 2019

Past National Commander Robert L. "Bob" Recker was born August 20, 1930 in Baltimore, Maryland. He graduated from Southern High School, and received an Associates Degree of Science from Mercer Community College in Trenton, New Jersey.

His military education includes the Warrant Officer Basic Course; the Warrant Officer Senior Course; Logistics Officers Course, Fort Lee, VA; Food Service Officers Course, Fort Lee, VA; and Honor Graduate of the Medical Supply Officers Course, Fort Sam Houston, TX.

Mr. Recker enlisted in Company G, 2nd Battalion, 175th Infantry, 29th Infantry Division, Maryland Army National Guard on 29 July 1948.

He was transferred to Company F, 2nd Battalion, 175th Infantry, 29th Division. On 1 March 1959, the 29th Division was reorganized and Mr. Recker was transferred on 16 March 1959 to the 136th Evacuation Hospital, was promoted to Sergeant First Class (E-7), and also to Medical Supply Sergeant.

He was later promoted to First Sergeant (E-8) on 19 February 1962 and subsequently to Command Sergeant Major (E-9) of the 136th Evacuation Hospital on 19 May 1969.

He was recommended by the Senior Army Advisors to compete for the position of Command Sergeant Major of the National Guard Bureau. He became the first Command Sergeant Major of the National Guard Bureau. He served at the Pentagon under BG Francis Greenleaf, Director of the Army National Guard Bureau.

Mr. Recker was appointed Warrant Office, Grade 2 (CW2), AG Detachment Commander of the 3rd Brigade, 28th Infantry Division on 9 April 1973. Upon deactivation of the 3rd Brigade's AG Detachment on 1 April 1975. Mr. Recker was the only Warrant Officer to command a company/detachment in the Maryland Army National Guard.

Mr. Recker was a full-time Civil Service Employee for the Maryland National Guard from 1950 through 1988.

Later, he was employed by the Military Department as a State Employee and served as the State Property Manager for the Military Department State of Maryland.

Mr. Recker retired from the State of Maryland Military Department as the Armory Manager, Fifth Regiment Armory.

Mr. Recker was a member of St. Jerome's Catholic Church, where he served as President of the Parish Council for four years.

He was a member of the American Legion Post 195. He was also a member of the Zebra Club, member of the National Guard Association, member of the 29th Division Association and was a member of the Veterans Corps, Maryland National Guard.

He served on the Board of Directors at St. Agnes Hospital Foundation. He was also a member of the Board of Directors, Lake Shore Democratic Club.

Chief Warrant Officer Recker was married to the former Dolores Matthews of Baltimore, Maryland and they had two children Kathy and Michael Recker. In 1996, Dolores passed away at St. Agnes Hospital.

In October 1998, Mr. Recker married the former Patricia Allen. They resided in Odenton, Maryland and have four children, Kathy, Michael, George and David, 9 grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren. He was a past President of the St. Agnes Hospital Auxiliary.

He was a past Commander of Limestone Post 72, and a past Maryland Region Commander of the 29th Division Association.

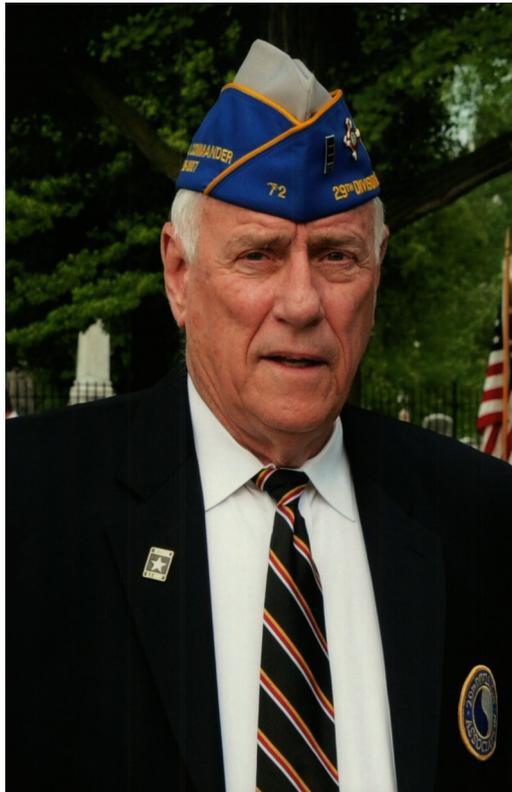
In 2006, PNC Recker was elected National Commander of the 29th Division Association.

Current National Executive Director and Editor of the *Twenty-Niner*, William Mund recalls "PNC Recker was the person solely responsible for getting me to join the 29th Division Association and he was very supportive of me as I began to take on important responsibilities."

PNC Recker continued to support the 29th Division Association and never missed a convention and was always ready to serve the Association in any capacity.

A 29th Division Association Ritual and Final Salute was conducted and attended by 30 members on 10 January 2019. The following day, PNC Recker was interred with full military honors.

The 29th Division Association extends their condolences to his wife and family.



HBB, 29th ID troops take top honors at VNG Best Warrior Competition

FORT PICKETT, VA — Soldiers assigned to the Fort Belvoir-based Headquarters Battalion, 29th Infantry Division took home top honors at the annual Virginia National Guard Best Warrior Competition Feb. 24, 2019, at Fort Pickett, Virginia. Spc. Esther Alger of Front Royal was named Soldier of the Year and Sgt. 1st Class Paul Bosserman of Harrisonburg earned the title of NCO of the Year after three mentally and physically grueling days of competition against Soldiers and NCOs from six different VNG major subordinate commands.

“As far as I’m concerned, all of you are winners,” said Brig. Gen. Lapthe Flora, the Virginia National Guard Assistant Adjutant General – Army. “Just showing up, taking the initiative and having the courage to compete makes you a winner. I can’t tell you how proud we are of you to stand up and want to be the best of the best to represent us in the coming weeks and months.”

Alger and Bosserman will now go on to compete in the regional Best Warrior competition in May against National Guard Soldiers from five other states.

Spc. Austin Turner, assigned to the 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, was the runner up for Soldier of the Year and Sgt. Devin Piotrowski, assigned to the Fort Pickett Maneuver Training Center, was the runner up for NCO of the Year. Both will represent Virginia at the regional competition if the winners are unable to.

“Although we only can crown two Soldiers today as the best warrior and NCO, all of our competitors have exhibited a winning warrior spirit,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Ronald L. Smith, the Virginia Army National Guard command sergeant major. “Today’s warriors must be versed in a variety of warrior tasks outside their primary military occupational specialty and you were tested on that this weekend.”

The 2019 Best Warrior Competition began with a written exam Thursday night. The first full day of competition began before sunrise on Friday with a helicopter air insertion into the land navigation course. After finding their points and completing the land navigation event, the competitors completed an 8-mile ruck march to the M4 rifle and M9 pistol range. After qualifying with both weapons, they spent the evening completing multiple Army Warrior Tasks.

Saturday’s events included the Army Combat Fitness Test, the hand grenade throw and an on-camera media engagement. The evening concluded with a formal dinner with senior NCOs from throughout the state.

On Sunday morning all of the competitors endured an appearance board in front of a panel of sergeants major before the scores were tallied and the winners announced.

A variety of awards for achievement during the competitions were also awarded. Piotrowski received certificates for the highest ACFT score and for scoring 40 out of 40 on the M9 qualification. Staff Sgt. Jimmy Gause, assigned to the 91st Cyber Brigade, was recognized for

completing the ruck march with the fastest time and fewest penalties and for the highest test score on the written exam for an NCO.

Alger scored the highest score on the written exam for a Soldier and Bosserman achieved the highest M4 score with 36 out of 40.

In addition to the titles they earned, Alger and Bosserman both received Army Commendation Medals and hotel rooms and tickets to the Virginia National Guard Management Group Conference in April. “It was tougher than I thought it’d be,” Bosserman said. “The weather was tough. Damp and cold was the theme of the weekend. I think the early morning land nav in the rain and then the ruck march did damage to everyone.”

But according to Bosserman, it helped that the competitors all realized they were on the same team and a sense of togetherness developed.

“We’re all going through it together so even though we’re competing, we all encouraged each other to keep going no matter how bad it was,” Bosserman said.

For Alger, moving on after each event was over was the toughest part.

“Instead of focusing on something I did bad on, I just had to stay focused and move on,” she said. “I couldn’t dwell on things.”

Both Soldiers gave credit to the unit leadership for preparing them for the competition.

“They put forth everything they could,” Bosserman explained. “Whatever we needed was provided. They were there the entire time for us.”

Flora and Smith both made a point to thank the NCOs from throughout the state who helped make the competition happen.

“This was an outstanding event this weekend,” Smith said. “Thank you for your dedication and what you put in as Soldiers and as leaders. None of this would be possible without a lot of great support from the Virginia National Guard team.”

Flora echoed those thoughts.

“This event wouldn’t have happened without your support,” he said to the NCOs in attendance. “But you did it with enthusiasm and dedication. Thank you very much and congratulations on a great event.”

As Alger and Bosserman look to the regional competition they both have an idea of what they need to improve upon and prepare for.

Alger, who has been in the Army less than two years, plans to focus her preparation on physical events such as land navigation, the Army Combat Fitness Test and the ruck march.

Bosserman also plans to work on the ruck march.

“That’s something you have to condition your legs and your feet,” he said. “But I also want to brush up on some of the more basic Soldier skills. As a senior NCO you get caught up in higher level things stuff that you come to something like this where you’re drilling down to Army Warrior Tasks. I need to go back and brush up on them.”

Photo and article by A.J. Coyne



Spc. Esther Alger and Sgt. 1st Class Paul Bosserman, both assigned to the Fort Belvoir-based Headquarters Battalion, 29th Infantry Division, are announced as winners of the 2019 Virginia National Guard Best Warrior Competition Feb. 24, 2019, at Fort Pickett, Virginia. Alger was named Soldier of the Year and Bosserman was named NCO of the Year after three mentally and physically grueling days of competition against Soldiers and NCOs from six different VNG major subordinate commands. (U.S. National Guard photo and article by A.J. Coyne).

“Keep Faith with Your Helpless Brother”

Maryland in the Meuse-Argonne Part I

By Alexander A. Falbo-Wild

Peering across an ochre October twilight through slashing rain and a biting breeze, medics from Ambulance Company 113 caught sight of the mouth of hell. Miles beyond, star-shells leapt from the earth stalking no-mans-land. And sporadic flashes accompanied by the rhythmic thunder of a distant cannonade beckoned them. Shattered city outskirts lay directly ahead. The anxiety about their day of battle mirrored that of many American soldiers that autumn of 1918.

These Baltimore doughboys of the U.S. 29th (*Blue & Gray*) Division were completing the final leg of an arduous 150-mile (242 km) journey to the epicenter of the American military effort in the Great War: the Meuse-Argonne. Here, they would soon join the U.S. First Army in continuing the final Allied campaign of the war. It remains the single largest *offensive* operation in American history.

But the men of the 29th were green. Although their experience in the trenches of Alsace along the Swiss border in July-August 1918 did feature some action in the form of company level trench raids, nothing in this ‘quiet’ sector could prepare them for the ordeal ahead. In late August, orders from American Expeditionary Forces General Headquarters (A.E.F. G.H.Q.) instructed the 29th’s commander, Major General Charles G. Morton, to relocate the division north towards the Meuse River for the great American offensive. After a much-delayed relief in place, the 29th was on its way.

For days, the division marched under the cover of night to avoid German spotter planes. Clipping through muddy roads packed with French supply trucks driven by Indochinese colonial troops and horse-pulled artillery, the 113th’s exhaustion was only equaled by the excitement upon the realization of where they were.

Noticing the road signage, Wagoner Ralph Robinson recalled... “Who could resist! Verdun! Verdun the historic Verdun, the glorious, and just one kilometer away! What an opportunity! Here was the Verdun we had heard so much about; here was the Verdun that had withstood the repeated attacks of the flower of the German Army! Here was that city of cities that, pounded and swept by a rain of shells for months, still stood inviolate for France, unconquered and free!”¹ The great battle against the

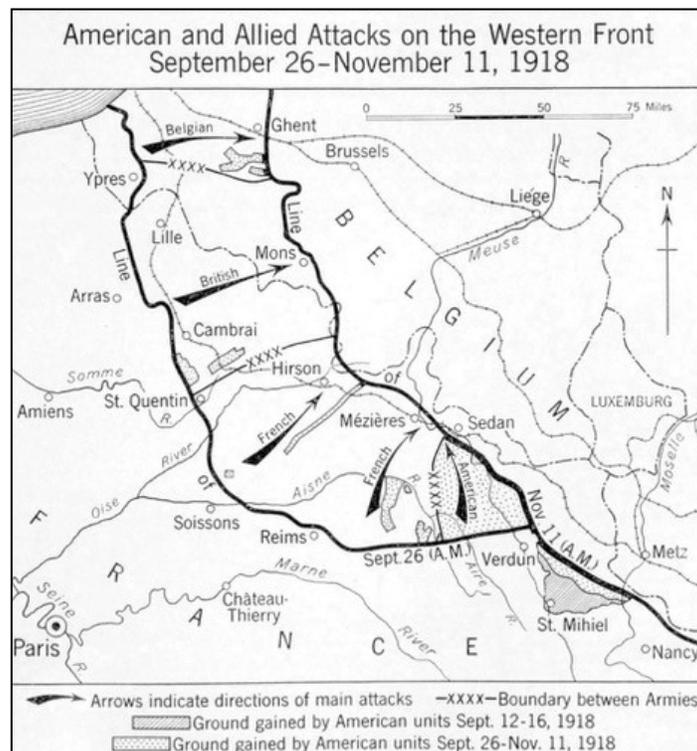
German offensive that raged there two years before represented French resistance and their hope in ultimate victory. The young Yanks filing through the famed citadel that evening renewed that hope.

Eventually, the rain let up. The jutting ruins of Glorieux reached for the canopy of stars as the 113th silently worked their way through the eastern fringes of Verdun. Glorieux would be the medical hub of the 29th during the operation. Within three days, the 113th along with the bulk of the 104th Sanitary Train (the 29th’s medical component) would be busily shunting the wounded in some of the most gruesome fighting of the war. But why the Argonne?

In mid-summer 1918, the tide of the war decidedly changed in the Allies’ favor. Earlier, a desperate final series of German offensives was launched to break apart the Entente before America’s declaration of war in April 1917, could be felt on the battlefield. From March through July, five massive attacks drove a bulge forty miles-deep into Allied lines, broke the infamous trench stalemate which began in the winter of 1914-15, and effectively shot the bolt of the German Army. The British ultimately held the line and the French maintained contact with them. Meanwhile, A.E.F. soldiers arrived in France to the tune of 5,000 men per day in the spring. By the summer this figured doubled.² Many were already in combat.

Once the last German assault was repulsed at the Marne River near Paris by American and French soldiers in July, the momentum passed over to the Allies. Throughout August, several significant counter-attacks won back the lost ground and by mid-September, the Allies were poised to begin their final campaign to liberate France and Belgium.

Under the direction and vision of French Generalissimo Ferdinand Foch, who coordinated the strategic military objectives of the Allied Powers, a series of operations were set for late September which targeted key points all along the main German defensive network on the Western Front, known as the Hindenburg Line. The Meuse-Argonne offensive marked the initial phase. General John J. Pershing, commander in chief of the A.E.F., would also lead the U.S. First Army in this action. Within



the same week there followed three sequential drives by British, French and Belgian forces at Cambrai, in Flanders, and on the Somme.

The major geographical objective for the U.S. First and French Fourth armies operating in the south-central portion of the Western Front, was the city of Sedan with its lateral railway arteries. This rail network essentially allowed the German Army to shift troops from Verdun all the way northwest to Cambrai, adjacent to the front. If captured, the German foothold in France would become untenable. The operational objective for the U.S. First Army was to clear the defenses in and around the Argonne Forest that anchored the southern portion of the Hindenburg Line system. Z-Day (operation initiation) was set for 26 September 1918.

Despite the daunting wooded and hilly terrain and the mass of tangled belts of wire and shell holes over a landscape intensely contested for four years, the six German divisions manning these positions were "by no means fresh or complete. In many cases they possessed scarcely half of their former fighting strength."³ Fatigue from continuous combat since March 1918, poor diet, manpower problems, and influenza all conspired to weaken the state of the defenders. However, the ground's critical nature inspired a stout defense when First Army troops went over the top on September 26.

Over the next three days, the Meuse-Argonne erupted in fury as nine American divisions fiercely fought for their objectives. The first day saw an advance of three miles. But there were significant swathes of territory remaining in enemy hands, including the Argonne forest itself on the far-left flank and the indomitable fortress of Montfaucon in the center. However, by September 29, many of these objectives were taken. By October 3, the battle paused as fresh American divisions were brought up to resume the offensive. When the 29th Division arrived on the scene the next day in the rear right flank of the American zone, First Army troops were once more entering the breach. This picture greeted the incoming Ambulance Company 113 when they endeavored to establish their aid station for the 29th Division's entrance into the campaign on October 8.

The 113th was originally called the 1st Maryland Ambulance before it was re-designated in 1917 during the creation of the 29th Division. Most of these men called Baltimore home with residents on E. Colgate St., Mondawmin Ave., York Rd., Charles St., and so on. Their training at Camp McClellan AL, with the rest of the 29th was typical of an American division's stateside education, which little reflected the combat realities of France. And although later on some individuals witnessed the sight of blood in action in the trenches of Alsace, they were in the minority. Appreciating the situation, the 113th's commander, Captain Franklin B. Anderson gathered his company on the eve of battle and spoke.

As Wagoner Robinson remembered, Anderson's words were simple, calmly allaying the fears of death or wounds that poten-

tially awaited any one of them. Anderson emphasized the importance of their mission, as "it was not in their peculiar sphere to take life, but to save it."⁴ Stilling their hearts for a new day, Anderson did perhaps the best thing any officer can do to ready his men for battle; he exuded a quiet confidence that expressed confidence in them. "Quit yourselves like men" he said, "fight the good fight, but above all, keep faith in your helpless brother."⁵ The 113th then slept. The dawn of the 8th saw them ready their packs and trucks to head 'up the line' to the Meuse-Argonne heights.

Editors Note: Part 2 of this article will appear in the Summer issue.

Notes:

¹ Ralph J. Robinson, *Ambulance Company 113, 29th Division* (Baltimore: The Lord Baltimore Press, 1919), 102.

² Leonard Porter Ayres, *The War with Germany: A Statistical Overview* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1919), 37.

³ Herman von Giehl, "Battle of the Meuse-Argonne," *Infantry Journal* XIX, no. 2 (August 1921): 132.

⁴ Robinson, *Ambulance Company 113*, 102.

⁵ Robinson, *Ambulance Company 113*, 102.

Crisis at our Post level

(Continued from page 2)

wrote a book claiming that he landed on D-Day with the 175th Infantry. Everyone should know that the 175th did not land until 7 June (D+1) because of the congestion on Omaha Beach. This man also states that he fought in the hedgerows of France and was wounded in action in the fall of 1944.

Official U.S. Army documents indicate that this imposter did not land on D-Day with the 29th Infantry Division or fight in the hedgerows of Normandy, and he was not wounded in action in the fall of 1944. In fact, his Army discharge shows that he did not even arrive in the European Theater of Operations (ETO) until September 24, 1944, almost four months after the D-Day landings.

Over the past 5 years, we have discovered two of our members who were lying about their wartime experiences with the 29th. Both of them never even served in the 29th. One of them, we just found out about recently and I reported on him in the Summer 2018 edition of the *Twenty-Niner*, on page 3.

I know that we have more D-Day Imposters and deceivers out there, so it would behoove all of our members to read Mr. Kelly's article on page 17. He has done a wonderful job with his research and documentation.

WILLIAM S. MUND, JR.
Editor/Executive Director

**Be sure to check out our
new and improved website at:
www.29thdivisionassociation.com**

Futures Committee Report:

“Soldiers, Veterans, Descendants, and Friends of the 29th – Join Now!”

This is a slogan you are going to hear as a theme throughout 2019. For the past 30 years, since membership of the Association expanded past World War I and World War II veterans, it has been confusing to the outside world who is eligible for membership in the Association. More importantly, it has been unclear to them that they were even wanted in the Association.

For the Association to survive and thrive in the future, we need everyone who is dedicated to the history of the 29th Division to become a member.

Those future members fall into 4 main groups – currently serving members of the 29th Division and its lineage units (Soldiers), those that ever served in those same units (Veterans), the family members of those that ever served (Descendants) and those that feel strongly about the 29th without the traditional links (Friends).

Many of our most valuable members fall into that last category include historians (including our own Joseph Balkoski), and many members in Europe that tend graves of fallen 29ers from World War II.

The Future's Committee is dedicated to creating ways to find the people that are eligible to join and get them in as members. More importantly, our job is to create tools that the posts can use to recruit and grow their posts.

The Committee consists of PNC David Ginsburg (Chairperson) and National Historian Joseph Balkoski, PNC Grant Hayden, Southern Region Commander Jimmy Kilbourne, and National Service Officer (and Webmaster) Neil Ungerleider.

The January National Executive Committee (NEC) Meeting funded a number of these initiatives for the upcoming year.

Recruiting Tools

Trifold - The first step was updating and improving the Trifold. This is often the first thing that people see at our events, such as Pass and Reviews, visits to the Museums, and at post events. The new trifold features the new slogan to clearly educate everyone they are invited to join. It has updated the history to include the latest 29th Division deployments, and clearly illustrate both ways to join the Association – by email or electronically.

Recruiting Table - One of the glaring things that needed to be leveraged was the ability to recruit during major events, whether hosted by the Association or not. For instance, during the 116th Muster, or the 175th Pass and Review, there are hundreds of

currently serving soldiers that should be joining the Association, but nothing to catch their attention to come over and learn more. We are creating a recruiting table that can be used by the posts at these events. It will have a banner on the table, a banner that can hang over the table, and plexiglass holders that can hold trifolds and recruiting posters. The goal is to have this ready for the Association Convention in the Fall.

Brochure Holders - Many of the posts meet at restaurants on a regular basis. Post 64 has met at the same restaurant since World War II. Post 729 has met at the same restaurant in PA for years. From an idea created by Post 1-72 Commander Lee Hoffman at the Post Commander's Workshop, we will be creating small displays for recruiting that can be placed at restaurants usually associated with Association posts.

Facebook and the Website - The Association will continue to run Facebook ads through out the year. In 2018, we added over 120 members, many of which were recruited directly from the campaigns. Furthermore, through the efforts of Neil Ungerleider and Jimmy Kilbourne, our website will be great improved. It is going through the rebuild efforts as we speak and looks incredible. It should be launching by the time this issue hits the street. It will look better, be easier to navigate, look fantastic on a tablet or mobile phone, and the merchandise section, our most popular section, will have the look and feel of a real e-commerce site.

Armory Campaign – The brainchild of PNC Grant Hayden, this campaign

has been mentioned in the past but never actual funded by the NEC. Now that it is funded, we will be sending posters to armories across Maryland and Virginia to urge currently serving soldiers to join the Association. The first step will be those armories we can hand carry the posters (and letters) because we know those will actually be posted. Assuming that is successful, the next and future stage will be to mail them to the armories we cannot cover personally but no poster will be mailed without a commitment from that unit that it will be posted in a prominent place.

In summary, first we need to get the world to understand they are eligible and welcome to join the Association. They will hear that slogan until their eyes bleed blue and gray.



PNC David Ginsburg
Chairperson – Futures Committee

1944  2019

**NORMANDY HEROES
75TH ANNIVERSARY
D-DAY TOUR**

- | | | | |
|------------------|---|------------------|--|
| W 29 May | Depart USA to Paris, France (Overnight) | TH 06 Jun | Saint-Lô, Normandy
Omaha Beach: Sunrise Prayer Service / Ceremony at 29th Division Monument and National Guard Monument, First Cemetery Marker Attend the International Ceremony at Normandy Military Cemetery in Colleville sur Mer
Overnight Hotel Mercure, Breakfast, Box Lunch |
| TH 30 May | Arrive in Paris, France! Meet at airport and take coach into Paris to our hotel.
Overnight Paris Mariott Opera Hotel | F 07 Jun | Saint-Lô, Normandy
Saint-Lô: Normand sunken roads / hedge-rows, foxholes, Chapel Madeleine, Ceremony at site of French Resistance execution. Lunch with Mayor and local Citizens. Ceremonies at Major Howie monument and Church St Croix.
Dinner at Chateau Canisy
Overnight Hotel Mercure, Breakfast |
| F 31 May | Paris, France, Arc de Triomphe: Ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.
Half-day city tour and lunch.
Hotel: Paris Marriott Opera, Breakfast at Hotel | S 08 Jun | Saint-Lô, Normandy
Visit American Military Cemetery at St James. Lay flowers at MOH Sgt Sherwood Hallman grave. Visit Vire, ceremony at Hill 203 and ceremony to honor the 116th Infantry Regiment. Lunch in Vire
Overnight Hotel Mercure, Breakfast |
| SA 01 Jun | En route north, from Paris to Saint-Lô, Normandy Stop at Giverny to see Monet's gardens. Check into Hotel Mercure for 9 nights.
Dinner at Hotel, St Lo | S 09 Jun | Saint-Lô, Normandy
Visit Bayeaux. 11th century Tapestry depicting William, Duke of Normandy's conquest of England and 11th century Cathedral.
Overnight Hotel Mercure, Breakfast |
| SU 02 Jun | Saint-Lô, Normandy
Tour of Pont du Hoc,
Omaha Beach, Normandy American Cemetery at Colleville, (private wreath laying ceremony) Catered lunch at Omaha Beach
Overnight Hotel Mercure, Breakfast | M 10 Jun | En route south, from Saint-Lô, Normandy to Paris, France: Airport Hotel
Deauville: last minute shopping and lunch
Overnight CDG airport Hotel |
| M 03 Jun | Saint-Lô, Normandy
Visits to Utah Beach, and Mont St Michel
Overnight Hotel Mercure, Breakfast | T 11 Jun | Fly home from Charles de Gaulle Airport to Your Town, USA |
| T 04 Jun | Saint-Lô, Normandy
Ceremony in Saint Clair sur Elle. Lunch with Local townspeople and students.
Ceremony in St Jean de Savigny: Wall of Remembrance
Dinner at Chateau d'Agneaux
Overnight Hotel Mercure, Breakfast | | |
| W 05 Jun | Saint-Lô, Normandy
Ceremony at Le Carrefour, LTC Warfield Memorial, Ceremony at War Memorial in Isigny with the Town's Citizens and children. Lunch in Isigny
Lay wreath at La Cambe,
Overnight Hotel Mercure, Breakfast | | |

For more information contact: Frances Sherr-Davino, Director, 774.266.3472
or Michael Yannaghas, Liaison +33.2.33.56.14.08

Etched in Purple: Separating Fact from Fiction

Research shows that a Popular World War II Memoir is Largely Fictionalized

By: Thomas Harper Kelly

Frank Irgang's book *Etched in Purple* has been acclaimed as a "brutally honest memoir written by a young infantryman who landed on Normandy Beach on D-Day and fought his way across Europe" and "perhaps the finest work to come out of World War II."¹ However, a thorough review of Irgang's military service records demonstrates clearly that he never took part in the D-Day landings and the majority of his "memoir" is fiction.

The Story

Etched in Purple begins with Irgang and his comrades loading onto assault ships destined for Normandy. The only reference Irgang provides for his unit is "Company D" but in a postwar interview he identified his regiment as the 175th Infantry Regiment of the 29th Infantry Division.^{2,3} Irgang then chronicles his combat in Normandy and across France, serving as a medic in "Company D" until he is lightly wounded in October 1944.⁴ After a brief period of hospitalization in Cherbourg, France he returns to the frontline in November, this time as a rifleman, having been reclassified in order to provide replacements for hard-pressed infantry divisions.⁵ Again Irgang does not provide details on which unit he joins, and does not say it is his former "Company D", only that he is assigned to an infantry company fighting in Germany near the Hurtgen Forest.⁶ Irgang then recalls being caught up in the first days of the Battle of the Bulge, describing in detail the suddenness of the German attack, the confused retreat, and his adventures slipping through enemy lines.⁷ Irgang continues to fight throughout the winter, crosses the Rhine with his unit in the spring of 1945, and is wounded in April 1945 attacking an enemy held town.⁸ After hostilities end, Irgang claims that he was transferred to the military police in Berlin because he, "was no longer fit for combat, either mentally or physically."⁹

The Facts

At a glance, Irgang's story does not seem overtly problematic, and his engaging writing style make *Etched in Purple* a quick and compelling read. However, the officially documented details of Irgang's wartime service call the validity of his account into question, and show *Etched in Purple* to be a work of fiction, rather than fact.

Frank Irgang did not land on D-Day with the 29th Infantry Division or fight in the hedgerows of Normandy, and he was not wounded in action in the fall of 1944. In fact, his Army discharge shows that he did not even arrive in the European Theater of Operations (ETO) until September 24, 1944, almost four months after the D-Day landings.¹⁰

After arriving in the ETO Irgang's travels become harder to discern, however it appears that he became part of the Army Ground Forces replacement system and likely moved between replacement camps during the fall and winter of 1944, before arriving as a replacement in F Company, 309th Infantry Regiment, 78th Infantry Division on March 15, 1945.^{11,12} Irgang appears to have been in combat with F Company until he was wounded in the thigh almost a month later in the vicinity of Weiershagen, Germany on April 12, 1945.^{13,14} He returned to F Company on April 27, 1945 and then was transferred to the 78th Division's military police unit, the 78th Military Police Platoon, on June 20, 1945.^{15,16} On November 19, 1945 he was transferred to the 29th Military Police Platoon of the 29th Infantry Division, and finally left Europe to return to the United States on January 3, 1946.^{17,18}

To be clear, there is absolutely no evidence Irgang ever landed on D-Day, or for that matter, served in combat with the 29th Infantry Division.

The compendium of 29th Infantry Division morning reports (*i.e.* the daily report of personnel changes in a unit) from June 1, 1944 to May 31, 1945, created by the 29th Division Association does not contain a single entry for a soldier with the last name Irgang.¹⁹ This alone is damning evidence. According to Joseph Balkoski, author of the definitive history of the 29th Infantry Division in World War II and National Historian for the 29th Division Association, "Had [Irgang] been a member of the [29th Infantry Division] for as long as he claims to have been, the odds are overwhelming that he would have been mentioned, at least once, in the 175th [Infantry Regiment's] morning reports."²⁰ Based on the available records, namely Irgang's discharge, the morning reports of the units he served in, and the records of the Surgeon General of the Army, Irgang served honorably and was a bona fide combat infantryman who was wounded in action. But he did not land on D-Day with the 29th Infantry Division nor was he wounded in the fall of 1944 as he describes in *Etched in Purple*.

There are elements of *Etched in Purple* that do mirror Irgang's service with the 78th Infantry Division. For example, when Irgang was assigned to the 78th Infantry Division his Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) was 409, or Medical Technician, and he became a rifleman with the MOS 745.²¹ Also, Irgang states that his company was reinforced by a "platoon of negroes", a so-called "5th Platoon" of African American soldiers who volunteered to serve in white combat units after the Battle of the Bulge.²² The morning reports for Irgang's company show that on the day Irgang was wounded, an African American soldier in Irgang's unit was wounded as well.²³ Also, Irgang's claim that he was transferred to a military police unit after the war is verified by the morning reports of the 78th Military Police Platoon. Finally, Irgang did serve in the 29th Infantry Division, however not until months after the war ended and not as combat medic, but as a military policeman.

Creating a Fiction

Why would Irgang, a combat veteran of the 78th Infantry Division, feel compelled to lie about his wartime experiences? And where did he find the inspiration for the chapters of *Etched in Purple* that could not be based on his own experience?

According to interviews conducted by Rob Morris, author of several histories of Army Air Corps units in the Second World War and webmaster of the "Remembering World War II Air Men" blog, Irgang had taken some notes during combat, but did not begin writing *Etched in Purple* after his boss, a World War I veteran, suggested that writing would help him deal with his persistent nightmares.²⁴ Irgang described the process of writing *Etched in Purple* as "a catharsis."²⁵ It is hard to comprehend why and, indeed, Irgang gives no indications, he embellished his service when writing *Etched in Purple*, but there are several possibilities. Irgang may have wanted to add length to his work, or his publisher, Frank Gibson, may have pressured him to provide additional pages. In any case, the basis for his tales about landing on D-Day and the events before *Etched in Purple* resembles his experiences with the 78th Infantry Division in the spring of 1945 may have come from stories he heard in replacement depots in the months before joining the 78th Division or from veterans of the D-Day landings in the 29th Infantry Division that he returned to the United States with in 1946.²⁶ 29th Infantry Division historian, Joseph Balkoski, believes that it is unlikely that Irgang would have taken his stories from D-Day veterans in the 29th Division because

even in the waning months of the war very few D-Day veterans remained with the unit, and that by the time Irgang joined the 29th Division the number would have been "infinitesimal." ²⁷ Balkoski believes that Irgang may have chosen the 29th Division instead of the 1st Infantry Division, the other infantry division that landed on Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944, because his lies may have been more likely to be discovered by members of a regular Army unit with such a long and distinguished history. Another possibility is that Irgang was experimenting with writing fiction. After *Etched in Purple* Irgang published two more books, both works of historical fiction, titled *Beneath the Snows of Stalingrad* and *The Wyandotte*, neither were as widely acclaimed as *Etched in Purple*.

Selling a Lie

Etched in Purple was first published in 1949 and the 3,000 copies printed quickly sold out. ²⁸ At the time, *Etched in Purple* was praised as "a taste of the brutal truth." ²⁹ In later years, first editions of *Etched in Purple* commanded high prices on the secondary market when they could be found. ³⁰ Irgang would go on to become the chairman of the Industrial Arts department at San Diego State University and author several historical fiction novels. ³¹

For over 50 years, *Etched in Purple* was a little-known work, until Rob Morris, an author of several histories of the Second World War purchased a copy at a thrift store, found Frank Irgang, and helped convince Morris's publisher Potomac Books to reprint *Etched in Purple* for the first time since 1949. ³² In May 2008, Potomac released their edition of *Etched in Purple* and exposed it to generations of new readers. ³³ On February 1, 2011 Frank Irgang died, and his obituary referenced how he landed at Normandy, served as a combat medic, and fought in the Battle of the Bulge. ³⁴

During 2007 and 2008, in his discussions with Morris, Irgang freely

ENLISTED RECORD AND REPORT OF SEPARATION
HONORABLE DISCHARGE

1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL IRGANG FRANK J	2. ARMY SERIAL NO. 36 550 806	3. GRADE PFC	4. ARM OR SERVICE MP	5. COMPONENT AUS
6. ORGANIZATION 78TH DIVISION MILITARY POLICE	7. DATE OF SEPARATION 23 JAN 46	8. PLACE OF SEPARATION SEP CEN FT MACARTHUR CALIF		
9. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES RFD 4 LAPEER MICH	10. DATE OF BIRTH 19 AUG 22	11. PLACE OF BIRTH DETROIT MICH		
12. ADDRESS FROM WHICH EMPLOYMENT WILL BE SOUGHT SEE 9	13. COLOR EYES (14. COLOR HAIR) BROWN BROWN	15. HEIGHT 6' 2"	16. WEIGHT 180	17. NO. DEPEND. 0
18. RACE WHITE	19. MARRIAGE STATUS MARRIED	20. U.S. CITIZEN YES	21. CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND NO. TEACHER GRADE SCHOOL 0-30.11	
MILITARY HISTORY				
22. DATE OF INDUCTION 8 DEC 42	23. DATE OF ENLISTMENT 17 DEC 42	24. DATE OF EXPIRATION ACTIVE SERVICE 17 DEC 42		25. PLACE OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE FT CUSTER MICH
SELECTIVE SERVICE DATA YES	26. LOCAL A. NUMBER 1	27. COUNTY AND STATE LAPEER MICH	28. HOME ADDRESS AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE SEE 9	
30. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY AND NO. MILITARY POLICEMAN 677		31. MILITARY QUALIFICATION AND DATE (i.e., infantry, aviation and marksmanship badges, etc.) COMBAT INFANTRYMAN BADGE		
32. BATTLES AND CAMPAIGNS RHINELAND CENTRAL EUROPE				
33. DECORATIONS AND CITATIONS EUROPEAN AFRICAN MIDDLE EASTERN CAMPAIGN MEDAL GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL PURPLE HEART MEDAL GO 42 HQ 91ST BN APR 45 AMERICAN CAMPAIGN MEDAL WORLD WAR II VICTORY MEDAL				
34. WOUNDS RECEIVED IN ACTION WEIERSHAGER GERMANY 12 APR 45				
35A. SMALLPOX DEC 43	35B. TYPHOID JUL 45	35C. TETANUS FEB 45	35D. OTHER (Specify) TYPHUS OCT 45	36. DATE OF DEPARTURE 12 SEP 44
37. TOTAL LENGTH OF SERVICE PFC				38. HIGHEST GRADE HELD PFC
39. CONTINENTAL SERVICE 1 10 2 1 3 5		40. FOREIGN SERVICE 1 3 5		41. SERVICE OUTSIDE CONTINENTAL U. S. AND RETURN EUROPEAN THEATER 24 SEP 44 UNITED STATES 16 JAN 46
42. REASON AND AUTHORITY FOR SEPARATION CONVENIENCE OF THE GOVERNMENT AR 615-365 15 DEC 44 DEMOBILIZATION				
43. SERVICE SCHOOLS ATTENDED AAP COLLEGE TRAINING DETACHMENT AIR CREW ASTP MECH ENGINEERING 5 MONTHS PAY FLIGHT 5 MONTHS				
44. LENGTHY PAY PAID FORFEITED 3 MONTHS \$76		45. UNPAID PAY \$300	46. UNPAID PAY \$100	47. TOTAL AMOUNT \$41.97
48. KIND OF INSURANCE U.S. Govt. None				
49. REMARKS (This space for completion of above items or entry of other items specified in W. D. Discharge) ASR SCORE (2 SEP 45) 60 LAPEL BUTTON ISSUED INACTIVE SERVICE ERC FROM 8 DEC 42 TO 16 DEC 45				
56. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING SEPARATED <i>Frank J. Irgang</i>		57. PERSONNEL OFFICER (Type name, grade and organization - signature) G W MOTTER WOJIG USA		

ENLISTED RECORD AND REPORT OF SEPARATION
HONORABLE DISCHARGE

1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL IRGANG FRANK J	2. ARMY SERIAL NO. 36 550 806	3. GRADE PFC	4. ARM OR SERVICE MP	5. COMPONENT AUS
6. ORGANIZATION 78TH DIVISION MILITARY POLICE	7. DATE OF SEPARATION 23 JAN 46	8. PLACE OF SEPARATION SEP CEN FT MACARTHUR CALIF		
9. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES RFD 4 LAPEER MICH	10. DATE OF BIRTH 19 AUG 22	11. PLACE OF BIRTH DETROIT MICH		
12. ADDRESS FROM WHICH EMPLOYMENT WILL BE SOUGHT SEE 9	13. COLOR EYES (14. COLOR HAIR) BROWN BROWN	15. HEIGHT 6' 2"	16. WEIGHT 180	17. NO. DEPEND. 0
18. RACE WHITE	19. MARRIAGE STATUS MARRIED	20. U.S. CITIZEN YES	21. CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND NO. TEACHER GRADE SCHOOL 0-30.11	
MILITARY HISTORY				
22. DATE OF INDUCTION 8 DEC 42	23. DATE OF ENLISTMENT 17 DEC 42	24. DATE OF EXPIRATION ACTIVE SERVICE 17 DEC 42		25. PLACE OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE FT CUSTER MICH
SELECTIVE SERVICE DATA YES	26. LOCAL A. NUMBER 1	27. COUNTY AND STATE LAPEER MICH	28. HOME ADDRESS AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE SEE 9	
30. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY AND NO. MILITARY POLICEMAN 677		31. MILITARY QUALIFICATION AND DATE (i.e., infantry, aviation and marksmanship badges, etc.) COMBAT INFANTRYMAN BADGE		
32. BATTLES AND CAMPAIGNS RHINELAND CENTRAL EUROPE				
33. DECORATIONS AND CITATIONS EUROPEAN AFRICAN MIDDLE EASTERN CAMPAIGN MEDAL GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL PURPLE HEART MEDAL GO 42 HQ 91ST BN APR 45 AMERICAN CAMPAIGN MEDAL WORLD WAR II VICTORY MEDAL				
34. WOUNDS RECEIVED IN ACTION WEIERSHAGER GERMANY 12 APR 45				
35A. SMALLPOX DEC 43	35B. TYPHOID JUL 45	35C. TETANUS FEB 45	35D. OTHER (Specify) TYPHUS OCT 45	36. DATE OF DEPARTURE 12 SEP 44
37. TOTAL LENGTH OF SERVICE PFC				38. HIGHEST GRADE HELD PFC
39. CONTINENTAL SERVICE 1 10 2 1 3 5		40. FOREIGN SERVICE 1 3 5		41. SERVICE OUTSIDE CONTINENTAL U. S. AND RETURN EUROPEAN THEATER 24 SEP 44 UNITED STATES 16 JAN 46
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43. SERVICE SCHOOLS ATTENDED AAP COLLEGE TRAINING DETACHMENT AIR CREW ASTP MECH ENGINEER 5 MONTHS PAY FLIGHT 5 MONTHS				
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56. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING SEPARATED <i>Frank J. Irgang</i>		57. PERSONNEL OFFICER (Type name, grade and organization - signature) G W MOTTER WOJIG USA		

discussed his fictional combat experiences with the 29th Infantry Division in Normandy, but never mentioned his service with the 78th Infantry Division. ³⁵ ³⁶ There are subtle indications that Irgang was lying to Morris. At one point he told Morris "The 29th Division landed on Omaha Beach on D-Day. The 175th landed about noon. The others had come in at around five or six a.m., and many of these men were dead and floating in the water." ³⁷ This of course is not true. The 175th Infantry Regiment was in reserve on D-Day and did not land until the next day, June 7, 1944. ³⁸

Irgang's perpetuation of the lie that he had landed in Normandy was likely motivated by the possibility that his book would be republished. What is curious is that in official correspondence with the Army after the war, Irgang seems to have been able to distinguish between his actual service, and the version he describes in *Etched in Purple*.

For example, in a 1977 letter to the Army seeking an award of the bronze star based on his having earned the combat infantryman's badge, he only refers to his service "as an infantry rifleman with Company F, 309th Infantry Regiment, 78th Infantry Division." ³⁹ There is no mention of his service as a combat medic or the 29th Infantry Division. Irgang attached his discharge to his letter which similarly contains no references to the 29th Infantry Division or the first wound he claims to have received in *Etched in Purple*. ⁴⁰

In a later request for a replacement Purple Heart medal, which asks that the requester identify their "last organization, if known" Irgang correctly identified the last unit he served with as the "29th Infantry Division." Even still, the request undermines the claims made in *Etched in Purple* and contradicts, albeit in a minor respect, his own service history because Irgang claims he "was issued the purple heart at a field hospital in Germany (1945) but it was lost when I returned to the front." ⁴¹

This request cannot pertain to the first wound that he claims to have received in *Etched in Purple* because according to Irgang that supposedly happened in "mid-October" 1944.⁴² Irgang must be referring to the wound he received on April 12, 1945, however, when Irgang returned to F Company on April 27, 1945, it had not been involved in combat for nine days and did not see further action before V-E Day.⁴³

In the jacket of the first edition of *Etched in Purple* there is no indication that *Etched in Purple* is anything but an honest account of Irgang's war experiences. In fact, it says the book is "Frank Irgang's personal record of his experiences as a combat infantryman in World War II", "a well-timed revelation of one infantryman's experiences . . . revealed truthfully and with a freshness of reality" and Irgang is quoted as saying it is a "report of my experiences".⁴⁴ Potomac Books, the current publisher echoes that language, and describes *Etched in Purple* as Irgang's "personal record of his unforgettable experiences as a combat infantryman during World War II."⁴⁵ What is interesting is that in later years, before Rob Morris contacted him and helped get *Etched in Purple* reprinted, Irgang may have begun signaling that *Etched in Purple* was fictionalized. An archived version of his San Diego State University webpage describes *Etched in Purple* as "based on his war-time experiences."⁴⁶ This is the only reference the author has found that portrays *Etched in Purple* as anything other than Irgang's "personal record."

The author contacted Rob Morris, who interviewed Irgang before his death and helped get *Etched in Purple* reprinted. When the author presented Morris with Irgang's service records and the falsehoods in *Etched in Purple* Morris was shocked because, "[Irgang] seemed like such a standup person." Irgang told Morris that he was intentionally vague with the units in which he served, and the dates and locations of events because that information "was still classified," which was not true. Morris believes that vagueness helped Irgang's lies avoid detection for decades. Morris is certain that if Irgang fictionalized *Etched in Purple* that, "the book should be listed as fiction and Potomac [Books] should change it from non-fiction to historical fiction" because, "the truth is the most important thing."⁴⁷

The University of Nebraska Press, the successor to Potomac Books and current publisher of *Etched in Purple*, was presented with the author's research and has declined to comment.

Conclusion

Frank Irgang was a hero, from what we can definitively establish, he fought honorably in a rifle company for almost a month and was wounded in action. Frank Irgang was also a liar. Perhaps that makes exposing his lies more uncomfortable, but nonetheless necessary. The concern is not over Frank Irgang's legacy as a combat infantryman with the 78th Infantry Division, which is unquestionable, but instead that future generations will mistakenly read *Etched in Purple* and believe that it is fact – when it is not. *Etched in Purple* may be the finest piece of historical fiction to come out of the Second World War, but it can no longer be categorized as a memoir or relied upon by historians.

* The author thanks Matt LeMasters, a history major at the University of Illinois Springfield, for obtaining copies of Frank Irgang's service records and morning reports of the units he served in from the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, Missouri, Joseph Balkoski for providing his analysis and commentary on the 29th Infantry Division in World War II, Rob Morris for discussing his relationship with Frank Irgang, and Marty K.A. Morgan, Julian Chalifoux, Joshua Kerner, and Charles McFarlane for providing commentary during the drafting of this article.

NOTES:

¹ Irgang, Frank J. *Etched in Purple: One Man's War in Europe*. Washington, DC: Potomac, 2008. Back cover.

² *Ibid.*, 1.

³ Morris, Robert. "Remembering D-Day: Frank Irgang's Etched in Purple." *Remembering World War II Airmen*. May 31, 2008. Accessed December 21, 2018. <https://untoldvalor.blogspot.com/2008/05/remembering-d-day-frank-irgangs-etched.html>.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 163-64, 169.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 181-87.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 231-27.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 239.

¹⁰ Honorable Discharge of Frank J. Irgang, Serial No. 36550806, dated January 23, 1946.

¹¹ A possible, and likely, reason for Irgang's lengthy stay in the Army's replacement system may have been his Military Occupation Specialty, which was 409 or medical technician. During this period, the Army's investigation of the replacement system revealed that while riflemen progressed quickly through replacement depots to combat units, soldiers with specialties like Irgang "remained in the system a long time." Goodfriend, Lt. Col. Arthur. "Replacement Rifleman." *Infantry Journal*, March 1946, 8-16. P. 15.

¹² Morning Report of F Company, 309th Infantry Regiment, dated March 15, 1945.

¹³ Morning Report of F Company, 309th Infantry Regiment, dated April 12, 1945.

¹⁴ Information from the Hospital Admission Cards created November 27, 2018, by the Office of the Surgeon General, Department of the Army (1942-1945) and (1950-1954), Service Number 36550806.

¹⁵ Morning Report of F Company, 309th Infantry Regiment, dated April 27, 1945.

¹⁶ Morning Report of F Company, 309th Infantry Regiment, dated June 21, 1945.

¹⁷ Morning Report of the 29th Military Police Platoon, dated November 23, 1945

¹⁸ Irgang Discharge.

¹⁹ "29th Division Morning Reports Company Morning Reports: June 1, 1944 to May 31, 1945."

The 29th Division Association. Accessed December 21, 2018. <http://www.29thdivisionassociation.com/MorningReports.html>.

²⁰ Email from Joseph Balkoski to the author dated December 8, 2018.

²¹ Morning Report of F Company, 309th Infantry Regiment, dated March 15, 1945.

²² *Etched in Purple*, P. 220

²³ Morning Report of F Company, 309th Infantry Regiment, dated April 12, 1945; The 78th Infantry was one of the few divisions that utilized 5th Platoons in 1945. Lee, Ulysses. *The Employment of Negro Troops*. Honolulu, HI: University Press of the Pacific, 2004. P. 695.

²⁴ Morris. "Remembering D-Day: Frank Irgang's Etched in Purple."

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Because replacements newly arrived on the Continent were kept in the same camps as soldiers who had recovered from wounds or sickness and were to be "Returned to Unit" or "RTU", untested soldiers quizzed the veterans on what they could expect at the front and the veterans sometimes exaggerated the dangers. Goodfriend, Lt. Col. Arthur. "Replacement Rifleman." *Infantry Journal*, March 1946, 8-16. P. 10, 14; Jordan, Chester H. *Bull Sessions World War II: Company K, 47th Inf., 9th Div. from Normandy to Remagen*. Privately Printed, 1991. P. 35.

²⁷ Phone call with Joseph Balkoski, December 13, 2018.

²⁸ Morris. "Remembering D-Day: Frank Irgang's Etched in Purple."

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ San Diego Union-Tribune. "War Veteran, Author, Professor Frank Irgang Dies at 88." *Sandiegouniontribune.com*. September 02, 2016. Accessed December 21, 2018. <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/sdut-wwii-veteran-author-professor-frank-irgang-dies-2011mar07-story.html>.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ "War Veteran, Author, Professor Frank Irgang Dies at 88." <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/sdut-wwii-veteran-author-professor-frank-irgang-dies-2011mar07-story.html>.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Phone call with Rob Morris, December 26, 2018; Irgang did reveal his service with F Company, 309th Infantry Regiment, 78th Infantry Division with another author, Tracy Shilcutt, Ph.D. Shilcutt's book *Infantry Combat Medics in Europe, 1944-45*, opens with a description from Irgang of an F Company engagement in the spring of 1945, however later in the book Irgang also gives a fictional account of his participation in the D-Day landings. The author's attempts to solicit comments from Shilcutt were unsuccessful. Irgang provided Shilcutt with a copy of the January 2001 issue of the 78th Infantry Division newsletter "The Flash" in which Irgang claimed to have joined the 78th Infantry Division in December 1944. Shilcutt, T. *Infantry Combat Medics in Europe 1944-45*. Place of Publication Not Identified: Palgrave Pivot, 2014. Pp. 1; 33-34; "A Bit on Frank Irgang." *The Flash*, January 2001, 95.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ "175th Infantry (5th Maryland)." The 29th Division Association. Accessed December 21, 38 2018. [http://www.29thdivisionassociation.com/175th Infantry history.html](http://www.29thdivisionassociation.com/175th%20Infantry%20history.html).

³⁹ Frank Irgang letter dated September 28, 1977, from Frank Irgang's personnel file at the 40 National Personnel Records Center.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Request Pertaining to Military Records, undated, From Frank Irgang's personnel file at the National Personnel Records Center.

⁴² *Etched in Purple*, 101.

⁴³ *Lightning: The Story of the 78th Infantry Division*. Washington, D.C.: Infantry Journal Press, 1945. P. 233.

⁴⁴ Irgang, Frank J. *Etched in Purple*. 1st ed. Caldwell, ID: Caxton Printers, 1949. Inside cover and back cover.

⁴⁵ "Etched in Purple - University of Nebraska Press." Nebraska Press. Accessed December 21, 2018. <https://www.nebraskapress.unl.edu/potomac-books/9781597972048/>.

⁴⁶ "WELCOME" to the Homepages of Frank J. Irgang Ph.D. Accessed December 21, 2018. <https://web.archive.org/web/20070824174902/http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/faculty/irgang/index.html>.

⁴⁷ Phone call with Rob Morris, December 26, 2018.

75th Anniversary at D-Day Memorial in Bedford, VA



It was 75 years ago this June when Allied forces stormed the beaches of Normandy in the most intricately planned—and riskiest—amphibious assaults of WWII. D-Day—June 6, 1944—was a pivotal moment in the war and in all of American history, and we represent the last generation of people who will be able to talk to the participants of that epic event.

This June, the National D-Day Memorial will commemorate the 75th Anniversary of D-Day with a series of events designed to pay tribute to the valor, fidelity and sacrifice of the forces of Operation Overlord.

The commemorative events begin on Memorial Day weekend. On May 24, the annual “Stars and Stripes Forever” Concert will have the audience on its feet celebrating the freedoms so many have laid down their lives to protect. Then on Monday the 27th, historian and best-selling author Alex Kershaw returns to Bedford as keynote speaker for Memorial Day observances, to unveil his new D-Day book “The First Wave.”

The following week will present multiple opportunities to mark the 75th Anniversary of D-Day. On Wednesday June 5, alumni of the US Naval Academy will gather to dedicate a new plaque at the National D-Day Memorial, marking the role of Annapolis graduates in the Normandy Invasion.

On the actual anniversary, June 6, a crowd of thousands is expected to arrive in Bedford to mark the occasion. At 10:00 AM,

an “Aerial Tribute to the Veterans of WWII” will showcase impressive examples of warplanes, Allied and Axis. Starting at 11:00 will be “The Final Salute,” a commemorative observance in which every veteran of Normandy will be duly recognized and honored. In addition, WWII reenactors, Virginia’s “Profiles of Honor” mobile museum, the Enduring Freedom band and USO show, food vendors, and much more will be on site for the anniversary.

The commemoration continues throughout the week. On the evening of June 7th, a special outdoor concert will be held, featuring stirring music of the 29th Division Band; plus an exhibition by the US Coast Guard Silent Drill Team. On June 8th in Center Town Bedford will be the “Parade of the Greatest Generation” in honor of WWII vets, starting at 11 AM. And on Sunday, June 9th, a reenactment of a WWII Field Chapel Service will be held at the Memorial.

Please note that access to the site on June 6th will be by shuttle bus from satellite parking lots. Go to www.dday.org to register for events and keep up with any changes to the schedule for June 6th. Guests are also encouraged to download the new D-Day Memorial visitor’s app to receive updates.

There will only ever be one 75th Anniversary of D-Day. Don’t miss your opportunity to pay tribute to the heroes who saved the world.

By John Long, Director of Education, The D-Day Memorial

**Be sure to check out our
new and improved website at:
www.29thdivisionassociation.com**

A Thirty Year Journey

1994

This is the third installment of a THIRTY YEAR JOURNEY. Much of it dwells on personal accounts from the WWII veterans and places associated with the division. There are so many stories, and we write with trepidation in fear of omitting some accounts of those from the "Greatest Generation." Their stories could fill a book. Hopefully, the accounts are representative of the men who stormed the beaches of Normandy. Hopefully the commentary will evoke memories of our honored WWII veterans and their families and make those of us who served after WWII even prouder of having the honor and the privilege of wearing the "Blue and Gray."

John W. Schildt

July 2018

Pack your bags! All flights lead to Normandy, May 31, 1994.

Whereas future generations will hopefully remember Robert Miller and the Memorial Monument Committee, we owe an eternal debt of gratitude to Don McKee for the planning and organizing of the 1994 trip to Normandy. He wore so many hats working for months and coordinating events with the French and American authorities. He was travel agent, registrar, negotiator, you name it. Don was the man who made the trip flow smoothly and assisting Don working behind the scenes handling all the nitty, gritty details were Don McCarthy and Al Ungerleider.

Waiting for us as we left the confines of Charles De Gaulle airport in Paris were ten buses, under the direction of our transportation director, Boyd Cook. Our driver was from the Netherlands and referred to Boyd as General Kook. Boyd smiled broadly.

It was at this time that I met Sally Howie McDevitt. We had corresponded, but never actually met. Her husband John had deep roots in the Culpeper area. The McDevitt homestead was Cloverhill, a bivouac area for hundreds of Union troops during the winter of 1863-1864. Fences were taken for campfires and the forest denuded for log huts. Among those who stayed at Cloverhill, the family home, was a 24-year-old BG and his new bride. This was none other than BG George A. Custer and his wife, Elizabeth Bacon Custer.

We arrived in St. Lo, late afternoon.

There was a reception for us at our hotel. I ate a pate, and found out later it was goose liver. After that I was very careful as to what I ate. Our group, large as it was, was scattered all around with many quartered in Vire. Don Miller F/175 being in charge of that group.

Thursday morning, June 2, was a typical Norman day, cool and cloudy. We made an early departure to the quaint town of St. James for ceremonies. The cemetery was immaculate. French children had placed the flags of their homeland and the U.S. flag on every grave. Most of those buried at St. James had fallen in Normandy or Brittany. The opening ceremony was held near the main entrance. I had the honor of giving the address.

We thank our distinguished French hosts for their most kind and inspiring remarks. We are glad you have adopted our comrades as your sons, Merci. We thank the boys and girls of St. James for placing the flags. You said you'd never forget us. We shall never forget you. Merci.

And God said to Moses, "Take off your shoes for you are standing on holy ground." (Exodus) And so we are. In front of us and around us, we see the cost, the price of freedom. Many of the graves are listed as "Unknown." But they are known. They are known to God. These men are not statistics, they are human beings. Many of them comrades in the crusade in Europe.

We have heard the roll call, and once again their names have rung out across the fields of France. Who are they?" They were young men with hopes, dreams, and desires. They came from the north and the south. They came from the east and the west, Americans all. Who

were they?" They were of English, French, Italian, Polish, Germanic, Scandinavian and other national origins. But they were Americans, Americans all. When their country called, they answered the call. When duty called, they did not waiver, but said "yes." And across the Atlantic they came. And when the fighting became hot and heavy, they did not flinch. To French soil they came. And in the springtime of life, far from home and loved ones, perhaps near places they could not pronounce, they gave "Their last full measure of devotion." Many of them were your friends. Lads who had trained on the moors, and at Slapton Sands, men with whom you shared the bivouac and the fox-hole.

And one-day back home, the dreaded moment arrived, the telegram "We regret to inform you..." Families explained, "Oh, No." They embraced. Tears flowed. Life would

never be the same. A husband, a father, a son, a friend, a neighbor, was gone. And in the future when the clan gathered, there would be the broken family circle, the vacant chair, and often cries in the night. A soldier, a relative was gone, killed on the field of battle, dead in France. The French and American flags still decorate their graves. It has been said, that the red represents the blood they shed. The white crosses and Stars of David speak to us of life cut short, and remind us that our freedom had been bought with a great price.

The Bible says that "greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." That's what these men did. They gave their lives that freedom might live. "They gave their tomorrows for our todays." "Thank you" is not enough. We have come to remember them and to pledge that they who gave their lives on the altar of freedom will not be forgotten. On this sacred ground, that which is called "the bivouac of the dead," let us be here dedicated to the unfinished work which



they who fought here have no nobly advanced. And from our honored dead may be taken increased devotion to the cause of freedom.

Until we meet again, may the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the God and Father of our Lord, bless and keep us and let his perpetual light shine upon us and our comrades.

Sherwood Hallman

Upon the conclusion of the event there was a ceremony for Sherwood Hallman. His widow, son and family were present. Don Miller who knew "Sherry" and was in the same company presided. The large American contingent proceeded to Section M, Grave 511. This was the resting place of Sergeant Sherwood Hallman, a member of Company F, 175th Infantry. Hallman, was one of two men in the 29th Division to receive American's highest military award, the Congressional Medal of Honor.

We have remembered the fallen, asking who they were. Now we look at one of the fallen-- history is people and places, flesh and blood characters. His name was Sherwood Henry Hallman, born October 29, 1913. Sherry, as his friends knew him, had been forced by the great depression to leave school early. He loved horses, and joined the harness racing circuit. Had scholarships been available, he might have gone on to college, and fulfilled a dream, that of practicing veterinary medicine.

Sherry worked for a man by the name of Harvey Stauffer, who also owned a butcher shop in Spring City, Pennsylvania. Young Hallman became an apprentice and soon learned the trade. In March 1938, at the ripe age of 24, he began his own business. It was a home delivery grocery business. His delivery truck carried the advertising, Sherry's Modern Market, meat, provisions, poultry, eggs. And one day while Sherry went to the local meat packing plant to pick up an order, he met one of the part-time clerks. That clerk was a pretty 17-year-old high school senior by the name of Virginia Dieter. Soon a spark was struck. But Sherry had questions about dating a high school student. That changed though when Virginia graduated. Soon the two were traveling to midget auto races.

On a December Sunday, Sherry and Virginia were having dinner at the Dieter home. They were discussing wedding plans. Then came the radio announcement that at 7:55 a.m. Japanese planes had bombed Pearl Harbor. Life was changed for everybody. In January 1942, Sherwood Henry Hallman and Virginia were married. The new Mrs. Hallman helped her husband with the grocery business. They took care of the elder Mrs. Hallman, who was a widow. Then there came a moment of great joy. On October 25, 1942, Sherwood Henry Hallman II was born in Spring City.

A few days later Sherry was ordered to appear for a physical. He was 29 years old. But his country was calling. After given time to take care of the family business, he was inducted into the U.S. Army, and sent to Ft. McClellan, Alabama. Soon after basic training, Sherwood was ordered to Camp Kilmer, port of embarkation. There he spent some last precious moments with Virginia.

Sherwood arrived in England as an infantry replacement, and became a member of a great unit, the 29th Division. He was assigned to Company F, 175th Infantry, commanded by Captain Robert Miller. Sherry became good friends with a Sergeant by the name of Donald Miller.

Then came May of 1944, and the 29th was trucked to camps near the British ports. Security was right. Then they boarded the boats for the biggest moment in history. Operation Overlord, D Day.

And at 0630, the ramps of the boats carrying the 116th Infantry were dropped, and the men of the Stonewall Brigade leaped into the surf and splashed ashore. There was death and destruction everywhere. In mid-morning, the 115th Infantry followed the 116th onto the sand of Omaha Beach. The next day, the 175th came

ashore. Captain Miller, Sherwood's commander said, "It looked like Dante's inferno."

Sgt. Hallman's first stay in Normandy was brief. On June 8, a British fighter plane mistook some of the 29'ers for enemy troops and opened with 20mm fire. Sherwood was among those who were wounded, He was shipped back to England for treatment.

Recovering from his wounds, Sgt. Hallman rejoined F Company in early July. By that time, the ranks had been decimated by constant fighting in the hedgerows and in front of St. Lo.

After the breakout in Normandy, the Americans needed another port, and they wanted to destroy the German submarine pens at Brest in Brittany. So the 29'ers went by truck convoy to begin a new campaign.

The enemy fought with great vigor. By September 13, only 56 men were present for duty in the ranks of Company F. They had begun the campaign with 187 men. It was at this time, on September 13, 1944, that Sgt. Sherwood Hallman took matters in his own hands. At the risk of his own life, with valor above and beyond the call of duty, he advanced. For his gallantry on that September day, Sgt. Hallman was recommended for the nation's highest award, the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Sadly, he did not live to learn of the respect and admiration of the nation. There was more action the next day. In combat, death takes no holidays, it is ever present. And on the 14th of September, Sgt. Sherwood Hallman, the grocery man from Spring City, gave his "last full measure of devotion," while leading his men in another assault on an enemy position.

Donald Miller helped Don McKee plan and make the arrangements at St. James and read the MOH citation. We then proceeded to lunch. Among our guests were the superintendent of St James Cemetery, as well as the mayor of St. James along with their wives.

Then it was on to Mont. St. Michel our only tourist event of the Normandy trip. The flat land near the Abbey is often flooded by the incoming tide. The sheep of the area have good pasture and are in demand for food.

Friday, June 3 we traveled to the American Military Cemetery at Colleville-sur-Mer. There on 174 acres there are nearly 10,000 white crosses and Stars of David, and some say "known but to God." Almost 1,000 of those were 29'ers.

Three of our members were not with us on the morning of June 3. Don McKee, Bob Slaughter, and Al Ungerleider were taken to a meeting with those in charge of the D Day events. There was also a "dry run." As our three veterans were chosen to be a part of the 50th anniversary commemoration.

I walked with Felix Branham to the grave of his comrade and buddy, Frank Peregory. They were both members of the "Monticello Guards." or K Company 116th. Felix and Frank had fished and hunted together as well as served in the NG. Thus it was an emotional moment when Felix touched Frank's white cross and said, "Frankie, I'll never forget you. I think of you every day."

Full Circle

In August 1944, I went to the village barbershop. There were several men ahead of me, so I began leafing through a copy of LIFE magazine. In the center of the publication, there was a large photo of a bombed out city, with a flag draped casket, and the caption "The Major of St. Lo." The city was St. Lo, the Major, Thomas D. Howie of the 116th Infantry, 29th Division. Tears came to my eyes, and began to trickle down my cheek. I raised the book so the men would not see that I was crying.

I shall never forget Friday morning, June 3. We were in the American cemetery on the bluff overlooking Omaha Beach. There were several of us. The paratroopers were placing flags on the graves of the young Americans who had fallen fifty years ago. Quietly and reverently they

asked, "Would you like to place the flags on the grave?" I placed the French flag on the grave, and a lady and her husband, placed the American flag. It was one of those moments I will visualize as long as I live. It was the grave of the lady's father. She, as I, had been a child in 1944. You see the grave was that of Tom Howie, the Major of St. Lo, and the lady was Sally Howie McDevitt, his daughter. The moment experienced in the barbershop fifty years earlier, had indeed come FULL CIRCLE.

The 50th Anniversary of D Day would not be complete without more about Major Howie. Just prior to his death he had asked Bill Punteeny to get him a pair of new combat boots. This was done. Afterward, the staff noted that the major had not gotten much use of the new boots. Tom's last words were "See you in St. Lo." General Gerhardt had heard about this.

As 29'ers were entering the city, the General asked "Where's Major Howie's body? He's going to St. Lo." The major was placed in an ambulance for the entrance into the city. Then as the ambulance was needed for casualties, switched to a jeep. You know the story of how his body was placed on a pile of rubble by the side of St. Croix.

Charles Cawthon/116 noted in his excellent book, OTHER CLAY, "This act signified that the capture of St. Lo belonged to the living and the dead." Or to those who gave their "last full measure of devotion" to the capture of the important road and rail center. The picture of "The Major of St. Lo," appeared on a full page in LIFE magazine and is one of the epic stories of WWII, perhaps matching of that of the Marines raising "Old Glory on Iwo Jima."

Following the events on the beach, we proceeded to our monument. I met David Silva D/116th. Cornelius Ryan had written about him in his great book THE LONGEST DAY. Like many other groups, Silva's platoon was decimated as the ramps were lowered. David found himself in waist deep water. Machine gun bullets shredded his pack. Reaching the sea wall, the young soldier found he had been wounded in the leg and in the back. Following the war, David entered the priesthood and served churches in Ohio including St. John's Cathedral in Cleveland. Two days later we shared in the services at Eglise Notre Dame.

Friday noon there was another reception in a tent at Vierville. Then it was off to Grand Camp and ceremonies at the National Guard memorial to Frank Peregory. This time Felix Branham shared in the event. While we were there, we heard a roar and looked skyward. Flying low overhead were WWII vintage aircraft, fighter planes and bombers. The sky was bright and blue and cameras were pointed upwards.

Saturday, June 5 brought a windy, dark cloudy day. It rained as they say, "cats and dogs." Mid morning after David Silva, Father Gillooly and I were summoned to Eglise Notre Dame, the ancient French cathedral. As we gathered with the priest and those in charge, we were told that we are to have part in the 50th Anniversary Ecumenical Service. We knew that might be a possibility. Our two priests were assigned to read the scriptures and offer prayer. In less than twenty-two hours prior to the event, I was given the task of delivering the homily or message. Three thousand supposedly would be in attendance, and I was supposed to capture the events of 1944. It was an anxiety producing moment that was in my mind the entire day. And there was no opportunity to work on the message because the day was full.

At noon there was a huge reception at what we would call the Civic Center of St. Lo. After the reception we followed the route of the 116th from the Martinville Ridge into St. Lo. Our leader was Col. Bill Punteney. Several members of General Gerhardt's family were with us.

There were showers and a chilly wind during the ceremonies. Then the wind abated and the sun shone forth. At the conclusion of the ceremonies at the Howie Memorial, there was a parade. The "Vixen Tor" led the way.

General Gerhardt's WWII jeep had been flown to Paris by Continental



Father David Silva (left), and John Schildt.

Airlines. While driving to Paris it overheated. Thus it was placed on a trailer and brought the rest of the way to St. Lo. Maryland's Governor, a WWII medic William Donald Schaeffer and some generals climbed aboard the jeep. Then through the streets of cheering crowds went the color guard, the bands, and many, many WWII veterans. Keep in mind that in 1994 many who were in the late teens in 1944 were now in their seventies.

As the veterans entered the street, French school children came out to greet them. A little boy took one hand, a girl the other. There was no language barrier, just love, gratitude and admiration.

Veterans kept pushing me to get in the march. I said, "No. I was not here. This is your day." Then someone pushed me into the line of march. To this day, I do not know who it was. Soon my hands were placed in the hands of French children.

When the parade concluded, I gave the boy and girl my name and address. They gave me theirs. I never heard from the boy. However, Lucie and her family soon became good friends. Her mother, Jocelyn had been an au par in Syracuse. Later, she and Ruth Ungerleider who had roots in Syracuse met and talked. Lucie's family had a furniture store in St. Lo. They assisted with all my tours and hosted a group picnic. The parents, along with Lucie and her sister, spent a week with us in Maryland.

The parade was followed by a gala dinner at the Civic Center. Various speeches were presented and gifts given. Don McKee gave the speech for the Association. I sat with Felix Branham. We were sort of like grandfather and grandson.

At last I was able to get to the hotel to work on the homily for the service at Eglise Notre Dame. We also had to make a copy for the French Interpreter.

More than 3,000 were in attendance at the International Ecumenical Service. Fathers David Silva and Patrick Gillooly read the scripture and offered the morning prayer. Fifty years had passed since they had landed on Omaha Beach. Then it was time to deliver the sermon. It was the honor of a lifetime.

The Blouet's had a furniture store in St. Lo. They are retired now and the girls are grown and married. The family had a yearly picnic for my groups at their home.

On Sunday afternoon, we traveled to the Hamlet of LeCarrefour on the road to St. Lo. At 1:30 a.m. on June 9-10, the Germans launched a surprise attack on the Second Battalion of the 115th. There were heavy losses and some Americans were captured. Some were able to escape under cover of darkness. Colonel Warfield of the 115th was killed.

On a lovely day in Normandy, a monument was dedicated to remem-

ber the event and American sacrifices. Some nearby residents attended and even their chickens watched from their enclosed yards.

Once again, I shared in the event with a Catholic Priest. He gave me a canter with incense. I was completely unaware of how it worked. The priest and the locals called me "padre," I liked that.

Joe Balkoski has written about this tragic night attack on the 115th in his excellent book, *Beyond The Beachhead*. This was a terrible event for the 115th as well as the division. 176 men of the 2nd Battalion were listed as killed, wounded or missing. That was 22% of the battalion strength. Five officers were killed, five wounded, and five listed as missing. This engagement remains a topic of discussion and debate. PNC Donald Van Roosen was there and wrote extensively about the situation in an earlier 29'er.

Twilight on Sunday, June 5, brought a close to a lovely day. Early in the evening we gathered at Omaha Beach. A tourist from Switzerland pointed to a ship and said, "Clinton, Clinton." The President was on board that ship waiting to come ashore in a helicopter the next morning. We walked with Felix Branham. We traversed the sands of Omaha in silence. Felix pondered that day fifty years earlier.

Then it was up the beach to the National Guard Memorial. Services were conducted. French school children had been practicing a song for several months and in "the evening dews and damps" they presented their song. Fittingly it was "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean," complete with motions. It was sung in English. Another unforgettable moment of an event written in the annals of courage and history.

Then Lt. General Gordon Sullivan spoke. His words were also unforgettable. "Listen. Listen. Listen as the waves lap the shore. The voices of those who fought and died here are calling out remember us. Remember us."

Several years ago General Sullivan spoke on Memorial Day at Sharpsburg. I had the honor to sit next to him and walk with him to lay a wreath at the forty-three foot statue of the Private Soldier. I shared with him my memories of the remarks he made on the evening of June 5, 1994 at Omaha Beach.

On Monday, we obtained an early breakfast because we knew the buses were leaving early. Don McKee, Bob Slaughter, and Al Ungerleider were whisked away early because they were among the veterans participating in the ceremony at our Military Cemetery. Even so, Don had to tell the driver to take a side road to arrive on time. We were told to leave coins, pocket knives, etc behind as they would lengthen the time going through the tight security with the many heads of state.

Upon arriving at Colleville, we saw hundreds of buses. We hoped we would be able to find ours upon the conclusion of the ceremonies.

Being there hours in advance of the ceremonies, we wondered through the cemetery and visited the grave of BG Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., MOH recipient. We also watched the American and foreign TV stations interviewing the veterans of D Day. I particularly recall Tom Brokaw, the man who coined "the greatest generation." Finally, we took our seats. They were far from the front.

Upon arrival Veterans of the First and 29th Divisions were selected to meet the president, lay a wreath, and walk from the cemetery to the beach with him. Thus when the presidential helicopter landed. Don McKee met and greeted President and Mrs. Clinton. Al Ungerleider assisted in laying a wreath, while Bob Slaughter, a member of the 116th walked with the president to the beach. Old Stonewall would have loved that. Bob tripped going down the bluff. The president grabbed his arm. Bob was there when President Clinton posed for the photo on the beach.

Tuesday, June 7 was a beautiful day both weather and experience wise. We traveled to the city of Vire. Prior to WWII, Vire was a city of approximately 5,000. Today there are about 15,000 inhabitants. Vire, like St. Lo was devastated by allied bombing on June 6. Warning leaf-

lets had been dropped on both cities urging the residents to flee to the hills. On the first bombing run over Vire, bombs were mistakenly dropped on the residential section resulting in heavy loss of life.

There were daylong events. The first was on the hill captured after heavy fighting by the 1st battalion 116. For this action the Battalion was awarded another Distinguished Unit Citation. During the engagement Bob Slaughter was severely wounded in the stomach. We visited a school and were wined and dined at a luncheon. The event featured speeches and presentations.

In early afternoon, there was a big parade. Cheering men, women and children lined the parade route. Many flashed the "V" for Victory sign. A modern tank was also in the parade. The march concluded near the city center. The young mayor said, "We will teach our children, and our children's children about you the liberators. What happened in the 1940's must never happen again". Current 1994 soldiers of the 29th stood with each 1944 soldier as the liberators each received a medalion.

Just when we thought we had seen and experienced everything, we were surprised again. Words cannot describe the evening of June 7, 1994 in Vire. There was another gala banquet. This was followed by local citizens doing Norman dances and sharing their way of life and traditions. A band had been formed comprised with ages ranging from youth to seniors. First, they played the Big Band music of the 1940's, then Dixie Land music. The handsome, young mayor, Jean Yves Counsins joined in playing a "hot trumpet."

About 11:00 p.m. the lights were dimmed, and the locals began singing in French the lovely, haunting "My Normandie." Then we heard the sound of a tank. The Normans brought a huge tank made with éclairs into the hall. It was carried on a big board by four men. As the old song says, "O what a night." Once again we had been overwhelmed by the reception of the French people. We hated to see the evening end. However, about midnight we boarded our buses for the return to St. Lo. A quarter of a century has passed, but the afterglow of June 7 in Vire lingers still. Our newly found friends in Vire waved and cheered until we vanished from sight. No one who was in Vire that night will ever forget those "moments in time."

Wednesday, June 8, was our last day in Normandy, a week filled with experiences of a lifetime. Our first stop was in Isigny with a parade and a service at a church. We were told that Walt Disney's family came from this area, rich in the production of chocolate items. We visited St. Clair sur l'Elle, Ste Marguerite D'Elle. These were hamlets along the Elle River where there was heavy fighting. We also went to Couvains and Felix Branham showed us the area where Frank Peregory was killed. We also passed St. Jean de Savingny where later farmers and villagers erected a Wall of Honor

At one spot, there was a large open field. French reenactors had obtained a tank and they advanced as 29'ers moved on an objective in 1944. Nearby was a large tract of woodland. Col. Alvin Ungerleider, a Lt with L Company 115 in 1944, thought the place looked familiar. Indeed, it was. He asked one of the Frenchmen for his entrenching tool and stated to dig. In a matter of moments, Al uncovered ration tins, ammo items, and other artifacts. Among them was a raincoat which was in decent shape. It is now among my possessions, someone's coat in 1944. We hope the owner survived.

The evening meal was served in St. Marguerite. It was late evening but there was still a lot of light. The wooden shutters as well as the windows were wide open, catching the fresh breeze of Normandy.

I was so glad to meet so many veterans of the 29th. On the return to St. Lo I sat with Robert "Bob" Garcia, living at the time in California. In 1944, he was a young lieutenant in Company E 116th.

On D Day, Bob was Company XO. He noted that one minute the landing craft was on top a swell with great visibility. The next minute the

men and boat were swamped with waves. The noise was deafening as the Navy blasted away at the German bunkers. Captain Lawrence Medill, the company commander was killed and Bob assumed command. Eventually, Bob was able to assemble thirteen men near a church. Captain Medill and thirty other men of Company E made the supreme sacrifice. It was an inspiration to be with Bob.

Slowing darkness descended. The sun was setting. And it was setting on an unforgettable ten days in Normandy associating with men

who were complimented by General Bradley as he said, "Every man who landed on the beach was a hero." The next day it was on to the great Battle of Normandy Museum in Caen and thence to Paris.

In August 1944, the 28th Division paraded through the streets of Paris. In 1994, it was the turn of the members and veterans of the 29th and other WWII units to march down on the Champs Elysees to the Arche de Triomphe.

WWII members of the 29th encouraged those of us who served in the post war years to march with them. And so we did. I was honored to march beside my friend Col Bill Punttenney. It was one of the proudest moments of my life.

The banner year concluded at the Sheraton National Hotel in Arlington over the Labor Day weekend. At this reunion I had the privilege of meeting Colonel Charles Cawthon, one of the war time commanders of the 116th.

As a young man, he had visited the National Cemetery at Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and thought about the tremendous loss. In a few years, he would be in combat and daily experience the loss of men in combat.

As a former newspaper man, Colonel Cawthon wrote *Other Clay*. It remains one of the finest covering of the first month in Normandy.

On Sunday morning we traveled to Arlington National Cemetery and held our Memorial Service in the historic amphitheater. The leaders of the association stood where presidents, generals and others have stood to remember "our honored dead." Once again, it was my honor to deliver the message.

Arlington — "Duty, Honor, Country"

We could talk about a lot of things. But we shall dwell on the 29th Division, for this has been your year. In May, the 29th Division highway was dedicated, and Memorial Day services and wreath laying were held here in Arlington. Then came June, and the return to Normandy. In 1944, General Eisenhower said, "The eyes of the world are upon you as you embark on a great crusade. The prayers of free men everywhere march with you." The eyes of the world were upon you in 1944, and perhaps to an even greater extent, the eyes of the world watched in June and saw the cannon fire a salute in honor of the 29th Division. Our members participated in the official ceremonies in the Normandy cemetery. A member of the Stonewall Brigade, Bob Slaughter, escorted the President to the beach. Old Stonewall would have loved that. Our

National Commander, Don McKee, met the President and First Lady as they debarked from their helicopter and our National editor, Al Ungerleider escorted the President during the wreath laying, Taps and the 21-gun salute. In 1944 there were tears of anguish as you saw comrades died, and as you felt the pain of shot and shell.

In 1994, there were also tears, tears of joy and great emotion. Grateful people at home and abroad reached out to thank you and to recognize the contributions of gallant men, soldiers of the 29th Division. In



Sally Howie Jebson placing a wreath at the memorial to her father, Major Thomas Howie.

1994, there are those with hands outstretched, seeking gifts from the Federal and State government. But Father Gillooly was correct when he said the key question in life is the willingness to serve, and you chose that course. I had breakfast with a good friend from Texas. He went to the recruiting office to volunteer, even over parental objection. You reached out in service and in commitment. There was probably greater sacrifice in the 1940's than any other time since the American Revolution.

You brought a proud record to the 1940's. Your ancestors had fought on the frontier in the Colonial wars. During the Revolu-

tionary Wars, they tramped from the Shenandoah Valley and Western Maryland to join the Continental Army in Boston. They helped to save Washington's army at Long Island, and they were present when the British surrendered at Yorktown.

They served in the War of 1812, and rallied around their respective flags, the Blue and the Gray, during the Civil War and in 1918, they went to France. But this has been your year. It was said of the Royal Air Force that the Battle of Britain was their finest hour. D Day, 6 June, was your finest hour. The nation and the world remembered and commemorated your finest hour, June 6, 1944. That was the day when General Bradley said, "Every man who set foot on Omaha Beach was a hero." It was he who said, "We must remember the fallen, and those who survived and what they did." These words comprise the motto of the U.S. Military Academy: DUTY, HONOR, COUNTRY.

That's what Arlington, Normandy, St. James, and the other national military cemeteries are all about. Patriotism, and hopefully, being an American involved duty, honor, country. Those who are buried here and elsewhere, reached out and touched lives, causes, and events. You were a part of that, and you also reached out with your comrades and changed the course of history.

Scholars are now saying that D Day ranks among the four great military events of our world -- Hastings, Waterloo, Battle of Britain. You and your comrades deserve every bit of recognition you received in 1994. At Saint James in Brittany, French school children placed flags and flowers on the graves of all GI's including Sgt. Sherwood Hallman. And they released 4,000 homing pigeons! The major said, "We have adopted your comrades as our sons. We shall never forget them. They gave their all for duty, honor and county."

To be continued next edition.

Normandy Allies International Experience

July 12-25, 2020

Join us as we continue to honor and remember!

Registration period: begins October 1, 2019

Space is limited and subject to availability.

Phase I: British and Canadian Sectors

We explore the World War II British and Canadian sectors. Our visits include: Caen Peace Memorial, Juno Beach, Canada House, Abbaye d'Ardenne, Pegasus Bridge and glider landing area, Arromanches Circular Theater and Mulberry Museum, Longues s/mer German Battery, Bayeux British Cemetery, and more...

Phase II: American Sector

Our journey takes us from Omaha Beach and Utah Beach through the hedgerow country to Saint-Lô where we will be part of the commemorations on July 18th.

Historians and Normans who lived through the landings and the liberation share their experiences with us.

Our visits include: Omaha Beach and the Normandy American Military Cemetery at Colleville s/mer,

Brittany American Cemetery at St. James, Pointe du Hoc, Utah Beach and Museum, Graignes, La Fièvre,

Sainte-Mère-Eglise and the Airborne Museum, Saint-Lô and bocage areas, Lebec Cider Farm,

LaCambe Cemetery, Chateau Colombières and the marshes, rue Captain Carter, Wall of Remembrance, Trevières... and more....

*Throughout our time in Normandy, we lodge in the charming town of Bayeux at the Hotel Churchill
Immersing ourselves in French heritage— visits to the Bayeux Tapestry and Cathedral, Mont St. Michel...
...evenings open to enjoy the culture and cuisine...*

Students and Teachers: Travel Grants are available.

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Contact Marsha Smith, Program Director

normandyallies@verizon.net

PO Box 1332 Pittsford NY 14534 585-748-2357

Or visit our website after October 1st :

normandyallies.org/our-next-trip/ to download registration form.

29th Infantry Division at Camp Blanding, Florida

Prepared by George E. Cressman Jr.

Of the nine infantry divisions that trained at Camp Blanding, Florida, the 29th Infantry Division had the shortest tenure. The Division arrived 15 August 1942 and departed 20 September 1942.

By the time of its being stationed at Camp Blanding, the 29th Infantry Division had already been training intensively. Mobilized for Federal duty on 3 February 1941, the Division trained at Ft. Meade and the A. P. Hill Reservation. The 29th participated in the Fall 1941 Maneuvers, and the VI Corps Carolina Maneuvers.

As the VI Corps Maneuvers were completed many of the Division were aware their next station would be Camp Blanding, and they were not happy. Others who had been stationed there described Camp Blanding as difficult duty.

The 29th had been "triangularized" in March 1942, so the Division that moved to Camp Blanding included:

- 115th/116th/175th Infantry Regiments
- 110th/111th/224th Field Artillery Battalions firing 105mm Howitzers.
- 227th Field Artillery Battalion firing 155mm Howitzers.
- 29th Reconnaissance Troop along with Signal, Ordnance, Engineer, Military Police, Medical and Quartermaster troops.

Movement to Camp Blanding was conducted on three trains and two road march teams. The trains, operated by the Winston-Salem Southbound Railroad company, departed Ansonville, North Carolina on Sunday 16 August 1942.

Ansonville was primarily a freight station, handling mostly cotton, with no passenger traffic in 1942. Departure from Ansonville was tortuous: the railroad company had trouble finding enough cars to make up the three trains. And, baggage cars, which were used for field kitchens, arrived late and had to be switched into cars already loaded with soldiers. But eventually the trains departed on their 30 hour journey to Camp Blanding. General Leonard T. Gerow, Division Commander and his Chief of Staff Col. Louis M. Gosorn joined the troops on the rail march.

The road march teams began their journey to Camp Blanding on Monday, 17 August 1942. The first team was commanded by Brigadier General George M. Alexander, Assistant Division Commander. This team took a coastal route. The other team was commanded by Brigadier General William H. Sands, Division Artillery officer. This team took a route further inland.

During the three day road marches, reveille sounded at 0330 or 0400 hours. The road teams were broken into march groups and strictly regulated to avoid hindering traffic along the march route. Staff officers served as "military police;" it took one convoy four hours to pass one of these staff officers.

The troops making up the rail march turned out to greet the arriving road march teams. One of the regimental bands joined the welcoming troops.

As they arrived at Camp Blanding, the 29th occupied areas that had been used by a division which had already departed the Post. The 29th officers and men found decorated and equipped officers' club, mess halls and company rooms. Division headquarters occupied two story buildings facing Stewart Field, the Divisional Parade Ground. Cottages on the west side of Stewart Field were assigned to General Gerow, General Alexander and General Sands.

In spite of their earlier misgivings, the men of the 29th found life at

Camp Blanding much more agreeable than life in the field during the Carolina maneuvers. Day-time temperatures were just as high as they had been in the field, but, unlike the Maneuvers, there was plenty of water to drink. And, the cool waters of Kingsley Lake made an early evening swim most enjoyable. Some men described the trip to Camp Blanding as a "return to civilization." Others noted that after five weeks in the latest Carolina Maneuvers, Camp Blanding "beats Fort Meade."

Upon arriving at Camp Blanding, the first duty after establishing headquarters was to clean equipment. Both Divisional and personal equipment needed cleaning and repair after the extended maneuvers. Following arrival of the two road march convoys, vehicle maintenance was facilitated by Camp Blanding's motor pool garages.

Regular training resumed on Monday, 24 August 1942. Training included physical training, range work, field marches, and individual and unit training in military specialties. A fully equipped Post made replacing damaged and lost equipment much easier. Regular hot meals in mess halls contributed to improving morale. Camp Blanding's chapels and recreational facilities also made a significant contribution to higher morale.

While at Camp Blanding, Col. E. W. Opie, Commanding 116th Infantry Regiment, set out to rival the marching records reportedly set by German soldiers. The 116th Infantry and the 111th Field Artillery formed the "Gray" Element of the Division – and became known as the "marchingest outfit in the 29th."

The 29th did not have a long training period at Camp Blanding; they were destined for overseas duty. In mid-September, the 29th received orders to move to Camp Kilmer to stage for deployment overseas.

NEC III

Thursday, 13 June 2019

at 0930 hours (9:30 AM)

will be held at the

VAARNG Readiness Center

181 Pendleton Drive

Winchester, VA 22602-4685

Cost is \$15.00

Checks must be made payable to the

29th Division Association

and mailed to:

William Mund

441 Chalfonte Drive

Baltimore, MD 21228-4017

Checks must be received no later than

6 June 2019

Minutes

of the NEC II meeting
held on 24 January 2019 at the
Pikesville Military Reservation, Pikesville, Maryland

National Commander David Leighton called the National Executive Committee (NEC II) Meeting to order at 0930 hours. Commander Leighton led the attendees in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by the opening prayer that was offered by PNC Wilcox. The group then recited the 29th Division Association Preamble.

Commander Leighton began by welcoming all to the NEC. Commander Leighton then asked for the roll call by Adjutant Valerie Simmers. It was noted that a quorum was present.

The Minutes of the previous meetings (Business Meeting, 13 October 2018 and NEC I, on 14 October 2018) had been published and were distributed in the Autumn/Winter 2018 edition of the *Twenty-Niner*. As there were no corrections or amendments, these minutes were approved as published.

Officer's Report

National Commander – David Leighton noted that the National Convention will be held at the Wyndham Virginia Beach Oceanfront 10 – 13 October 2019 and the Wreath Laying will be 29 June 2019 at 12:15pm. Information on both can be found on the 29th website.

National Senior Vice Commander – Pete Hinz is planning the 2020 National Convention to be somewhere between Carlise, PA and Frederick, MD US 15 corridor.

National Junior Vice Commander – Not present.

Southern Region National Vice Commander – Jimmy Kilbourne reported he has been working with Dave Ginsburg on relocating a post to the Richmond, VA area.

Maryland Region National Vice Commander – Bill Bullock was not in attendance at this meeting.

At Large Region National Vice Commander – Edward Tolzman had no report.

Finance & Budget – J. Brian Becker read the Finance Report for NFO Tom Knight.

National Executive Director – William Mund went over some of the duties of NED.

Membership – Membership report printed with agenda. Most units above 90% for 2018. Shout out to the Facebook Campaign. There have been about 152 new members. Many from the Facebook Campaign. Recommendation to continue the Facebook Campaigns. There were 70 deaths last year. PNC Ginsburg discussed the relocated Post in VA. It is the updated HQs Post 29. Virginia only has posts in southern Virginia and Norfolk. There were no posts in central Virginia.

Editor 29er – Bill Held has volunteered to be the POC to start getting the 29er by e-mail. There are currently 153 that have signed up. There are Flash Drives available with the last 6 years of the 29er available for \$20.

Chaplain – Vacant

Service – Neil Ungerleider gave an introduction.

Surgeon – Howard Bond had no report.

Welfare – National Welfare J. Brian Becker discussed the passing of PNC Bob Recker and his memorial service.

Historian – Joe Balkoski was not present.

Sergeant at Arms – Randall Beamer had no report.

Property Officer – Franklin Shilow showed new merchandise of long sleeve oxford shirts and sweatshirts. Contact him to place an order.

Parliamentarian – Thomas Insley was not present.

Judge Advocate – Houston Matney had no report.

Futures Committee – PNC Dave Ginsburg deferred his report until Committee Reports.

Committee Reports

2019 National Convention – Commander Leighton already discussed.

Wreath Laying Ceremony – Commander Leighton already discussed.

Futures Committee – PNC Ginsburg gave presentation on accomplishments of Futures Committee to include new pamphlets, DVDs, traveling display, & website. Neil Ungerleider updated everyone on his work with the website. He suggested that the website be completely redesigned so as to be more user friendly with our younger viewers. Motion made by SRVC Hinz to set up committee to update/redesign website. Motion seconded by NWO Becker and motion passed. Discussion of the various campaigns to include Facebook Campaign, Legacy Program, Armory/Readiness Center Campaign. Motion made to fund Futures Committee \$4000 to continue campaigns by NWO Becker, seconded by SRVC Hinz & motion passed.

Awards and Grants Committee – NWO Becker gave the report of 2 requests that total \$18,000; \$3,000 already allocated \$5,000 requested for additional to give each part of their request. SRVC Hinz made motion and PNC Hayden seconded. Motion passed.

Old Business

75th D-Day Normandy Representation – SRVC Pete Hinz looking forward to representing the 29th Division Association.

2019 Trip to France – NSO Ungerleider read request from Fran Sherr-Davino requesting donation for flowers and gifts for Mayors during her trip to the 75th Anniversary of D-Day in Normandy France. NED Mund read 2 memos already sent to Fran to let her know those requests in conjunction with a private tour group are not able to be granted.

Other Old Business - None

New Business

Resignation of National Chaplain – Reverend John Schildt has submitted his resignation effective 1 January 2019. Chaplain Schildt had recommended an individual, but he declined. We are looking at possible people to nominate. COL (R) Chaplain Sean Lee was mentioned as a possible candidate.

Other New Business – Next meeting is attempting to be held at Winchester, Virginia, time and place to be determined.

Deaths, Sick & Distressed

Mention of Bill King and Chaplain Bennett illness. Update on Buck Lockard, Bob Moscati, John Kessler, and Chuck Neighbor. PNC Ginsburg recommended adding a Final Salute during the Memorial Service at the National Convention.

Good of the Association

PNC Robert Wisch made motion for 50 lapel pins to be given to Steve Melnikoff so he can continue to hand them out. Motion was seconded and passed.

Closing

With no further business, Commander Leighton began the closing ceremonies. A closing prayer was offered by PNC Wilcox along with a final salute to the colors.

Meeting was adjourned at 1135 hours.

Respectfully submitted,

VALERIE E. SIMMERS
Adjutant

NEC Members please note:

These minutes are not distributed individually.

This is your copy.

Mobilization roster, circa 1940, is jewel of Virginia National Guard's historic archives

RICHMOND, VA — When he's asked what is the Virginia National Guard's most prized historic artifact, command historian Al Barnes' answer may illicit some surprise. It's not a weapon or a uniform, and it's not patch or a photo.

Instead, Barnes calls a 1940 Virginia National Guard mobilization roster a "pearl without price."

The hefty, green manifest contains the name and service number of every Guard soldier activated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1940. Barnes calls the historic resource invaluable, and rare to boot.

He gestured at the other historic documents surrounding his desk at the Virginia National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters.

"If this building ever catches on fire, I'm leaving this stuff and I'm taking this roster, because nothing else we have, that I know of, has the same value," said Barnes. "This is the only copy I've ever seen anywhere."

The time-worn rosters contained inside are organized unit by unit, and include every Soldier mobilized from the Virginia National Guard's 116th Infantry Regiment, 111th Field Artillery Regiment and 176th Infantry Regiment.

"Every guy is in here, plus his service number, which is important because with that, we can look them up in the National Archives," said Barnes.

Today, the roster serves one main purpose: It provides historians the opportunity to verify or disprove service for anyone who was purportedly in the Virginia National Guard during World War II.

"Because they're stamped with a true date and time we can say if your grandfather isn't in here, he didn't get mobilized in 1940, no matter what he told you," said Barnes.

There are some historic military figures included on the roster, including a PFC John R. Slaughter. He's better known as Sgt. Bob Slaughter, a soldier with the 116th who fought at Omaha Beach in Normandy, France, and later led the charge to bring the National D-Day Memorial to Bedford, VA.

Also included is the 116th's Tech. Sgt. Frank Peregory, the Virginia National Guard's only Medal of Honor recipient during World War II.

"We used this to validate the spelling of his name, because there was a controversy. Was it Peregory or Perego?" explained Barnes.

Barnes hopes to eventually be able to make the records contained in the roster even more valuable. "We've been trying to get it digitized. Our goal is to put all of this online," said Barnes.

The idea is for anyone who wants to verify a family member's service to be able to look it up themselves via the internet. Until then, Barnes is encouraging families to come to him with their inquiries, and he can use the mobilization roster to help them.

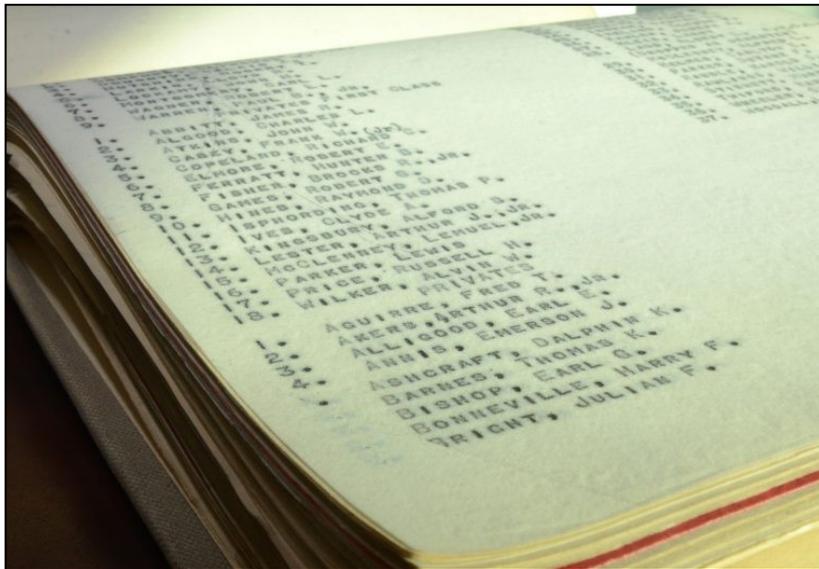
He also hopes to get something from them in return.

"If you think your grandfather or great-uncle was mobilized, let us know," said Barnes. "We'll check it out for you, and in return, can you share a picture? What can you tell us, so we can add on to this?"

"It's so sad, we have better records for World War I guys than we do for these guys. Then we've got nothing for guys who served in the '60s and '70s. Nobody thought it was important to keep."

Anyone with questions about their family member's Virginia National Guard service in World War II can email Barnes directly at: Alexander.F.Barnes.NFG@mail.mil.

Article and photo by Mr. Mike Vrabel



A rare 1940 Virginia National Guard mobilization roster sits at the Guard's Joint Force Headquarters Dec. 6, 2018, at Defense Supply Center Richmond in Chesterfield County, Virginia. The roster contains the names and service numbers of every VNG Soldier mobilized ahead of World War II. (U.S. National Guard photo by Mike Vrabel)

Virginia National Guard dedicates new JFHQs to Bob Slaughter

(Continued from page 1)

bringing the National D-Day Memorial to Bedford, Virginia, in an effort to honor the 19 Bedford residents who lost their lives during the D-Day invasion, and four more who died later in the Normandy campaign.

"Here in Virginia, there's no more meaningful date than the 6th of June, 1944," said VNG Command Historian Al Barnes. "Frankly, it's a great honor for us here to serve in the building named after the guy who made that date so meaningful."

Several members of Sgt. Slaughter's family attended the ceremony, including his sister, Mary Henderson, and his son, Bob Slaughter Jr., who spoke about what it meant to see his dad honored in such grand fashion.

"To dedicate something like this to a sergeant is amazing," said Slaughter Jr. "You would think this would be a general of some sort. I think it tells people about the citizen soldier. He would be very proud of this. I wish he could be here to see it."

"With this event, Sgt. Bob Slaughter, the 29th Division and the Virginia National Guard are now synonymous."

Henderson spoke about how her brother got his start in the Guard at such a young age.

"Bob was 15 years old. We were sitting at the dining room table and he approached our father about joining the National Guard," said his sister. "They had a big argument, and Bob won. Right after that, Pearl Harbor was bombed."

"He had just really made up his mind. There was no talking him out of it."

The ribbon was cut for the building that now bears Slaughter's name in May of 2018. The VNG Joint Force Headquar-

ters building is a 102,000 square foot facility which sits on 13.6-acre site in the northern part of Defense Supply Center Richmond. It cost about \$30 million and took nearly two years to build.

The headquarters building provides workspace for the Adjutant General of Virginia, the Virginia National Guard Joint Staff and Air National Guard Staff formerly located at Mullins Readiness Center in Sandston, Virginia.

There are future plans to further honor Slaughter with a display of personal items provided by his family inside the headquarters building.

"This is just an unbelievable honor," said Slaughter Jr. "My father would be very proud of this."

"He'd just be smiling from ear to ear," agreed Henderson. "He would be very, very happy."

Mr. Bob Slaughter



Article by Mr. Mike Vrabel

Photo of Mr. Slaughter by Carl Yusna, Post 93

Annual Wreath Laying

Arlington National Cemetery

Saturday, 29 June 2019, 1215pm

A bus leaving from Park & Ride Beltway Exit 8 will be provided by the MD Region for \$10 per person.

Luncheon at Spates Community Center

Luncheon is \$30

Total cost including bus is **\$40**

Checks must be made payable to the
29th Division Association
and mailed to:

William Mund

441 Chalfonte Drive

Baltimore, MD 21228-4017

Checks must be received no later than
22 June 2019



Photo by Jay Kincannon of Post 64

Heather Chocklett, (left) manager of Mission Barbeque in Roanoke, VA, being presented with a plaque by PNC Bill King of Post 64 in appreciation for their support in providing a free lunch to our members during our convention in Roanoke in October of 2018.

29th Division Association Supplies Available

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>COST</u>	<u>POSTAGE & HANDLING</u>	<u>MAILED</u>
Book—Ever Forward 116th Inf. History (soft cover)	\$17.90	\$5.75	\$23.65
Book—29 Let's Go—29th Division History	\$29.00	FREE	\$29.00
Book—Beyond the Beachhead (Joseph Balkoski)	\$19.90	\$5.75	\$25.65
Book—115th Infantry in WWII	\$25.00	\$5.75	\$30.75
Book—Omaha Beach and Beyond (The Long March of Sgt. Slaughter)	\$25.00	\$5.75	\$30.75
Book—From Beachhead to Brittany (Joseph Balkoski)	\$28.00	\$5.75	\$33.75
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Book—Fields of War, Battle of Normandy (Robert Mueller)	\$19.95	\$5.75	\$25.70
Book—Drawing D-Day (Ugo & Maxine Giannini) (soft cover)	\$43.00	\$5.95	\$48.95
29th Division Association Note Pads (5 1/2 x 8 1/2)	\$1.00	\$1.30	\$2.30
Crests—115th, 116th, & 175th Infantry Regiments	\$5.50	\$1.10	\$6.60
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Decal (specify inside or outside)	\$0.50	\$0.50	\$1.00
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Clear Plastic key ring w/29th Association logo	\$1.50	\$1.00	\$2.50
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Shoulder patch, 29th ID	\$3.50	\$0.50	\$4.00
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29th Division Cemetery flags on wooden staff 12" X 19"	\$5.00	\$3.00	\$8.00
DVD — 29 Let's Go! - A video history of the 29th Infantry Division	\$10.00	\$3.00	\$13.00
Flash Drive — Past editions of <i>Twenty-Niner</i> (2013-2018) in 'pdf' format	\$20.00	\$1.10	\$21.10

Checks should be made payable to the **29th Division Association** & mailed with orders to: **National Property Officer, 29th Division Association, 403 Caledonia Avenue Baltimore, MD 21227- 4707**, Phone — 410-242-1820. You can now buy 29th merchandise using a credit card, debit card, or "PayPal". **Minimum order on credit, debit & "PayPal" is \$15.00.** Just go to the new updated website at www.29thdivisionassociation.com and click on "Merchandise" and it will walk you through how to order merchandise using electronic payment. **Merchandise will not be mailed unless you have included the Postage and Handling fee. This includes merchandise paid by credit card off of the website.**

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The Association is open to anyone who wants to keep the history and spirit of the 29th alive - soldiers who served in the 29th, currently serving soldiers, families of those who served, and anyone who wants to keep the 29th alive.

Full Name: _____
(Last) (First) (Middle)

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Did you Serve? Please indicate what unit you served in: _____

Post (optional) – please indicate if you have a preference on what Post you are assigned to: _____

I want to join the 29th Division Association and help keep the history of the 29th Division alive. The \$12 dues includes the National Membership, the monthly *Chin Strap* and the *Twenty-Niner* newsletter three times a year.

29th Division Association Membership

Applications and payments can be completed online or mailed to our National Headquarters address below. If you do not choose a post, one will be assigned for you based on your current or former unit or your home address. Dues vary from post to post but a check for \$12.00 made payable to the 29th Division Association will suffice. You may also make application and pay dues at our National web site: www.29thdivisionassociation.com.

National Headquarters, 29th Division Association, P.O. Box 47634, Windsor Mill, MD 21244-0634

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