



## **Executive Director's Message:**

Greetings to all of my comrades both here in the United States and abroad who are members and supporters of the 29th Division Association. As I began this column, I looked back at my first message in the Spring 2022 issue of *The Twenty Niner* and am pleased to report that the major issues facing this country and our organization that I cited at that time are in a much better state than they were one year ago.

COVID-19 and the Omicron variant have waned and we have all moved back to a sense of normalcy in our daily interactions. There was the very real possibility that the Russians would overrun and annex Ukraine, but a combination of Ukrainian resistance on the battlefield and Western support for the effort have seen the Russian forces repelled and stalled while absorbing huge losses of personnel and equipment.

Finally, and most importantly to the 29th Division Association, we were uncertain of our future in the spring of

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## **104th Annual Reunion & Convention Delta Hotels - Marriott, in Hunt Valley, MD 19-22 October 2023**



As soon as one convention ends, planning for the next convention begins. This is the cycle that we repeat year in and year out. To prepare for the 2023 Reunion and Convention, our new Commander Dick Snyder established a Convention Planning Committee in November. During the past several months the committee worked diligently to first identify the venue for the 2023 Convention.

In January, I sent out an email to all members to complete a survey on the convention location, format and contents that was posted on the Association website. Over 80 members responded and the results were consolidated into a spreadsheet that the committee is using throughout the planning process. Many thanks to all who completed the survey.

After reviewing potential venues for the 2023 convention, the committee identified two hotels in Maryland as the finalists: the Hampton Inn in Frederick and the Delta Hotel in Hunt Valley. Commander Snyder and I visited both hotels for tours and meetings with their managers. NFO Brian Becker joined us at the Delta Hotel. Each

hotel submitted a detailed proposal that the committee carefully reviewed. Based on our evaluation we decided that we will be returning to Hunt Valley, MD to reunite at the Delta Hotel that hosted our very successful 100th Convention under PNC Bob Wisch in 2017.

The Delta Hotel is conveniently located off of Interstate 83, approximately 18 miles north of Baltimore. Situated on 17-acres, the campus-like environment offers guests a tranquil escape from the tumult of the city. Each of their guestrooms and suites features floor-to-ceiling windows and is luxuriously appointed with elegant decor and smart amenities like complimentary WiFi and plush bedding. Visitors can enjoy casual bites at Cafe 245 with a Starbucks coffee, or savor a signature handcrafted cocktail in the stylish confines of the Polo Lounge & Bar.

We were especially impressed with the Concierge Lounge that will serve as the hospitality suite at the Delta. Arranged with comfortable chairs, couches and coffee tables, the room will be the nexus for the

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## **THE TWENTY-NINER Vol. 67, No. 1 Spring 2023**

*The Twenty-Niner* is published three times a year by the 29th Division Association Inc. The views expressed in this publication are the views of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the 29th Division Association, Inc., its officers or members.

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**A message from our National Commander:****Richard D. "Dick" Snyder**

Hello fellow Twenty-Niners, I am so honored to be your Commander of this Association! Our Association has a historic and proud history. We are blessed to have so many hard-working Posts in the 29th Division Association that are getting the word out how this Division has led the way for our freedom. Our posts in the Association need your help to support these efforts.

Many of the posts are being operated by the same individuals year after year. And, as in most volunteer organizations these days, we, and they, need your help for our Posts to conduct ceremony honors, food drives, and activities that pay tribute to our history. I am not saying you need to run these activities but consider asking if you can help. One of the posts that have an Honor Guard will have to cut back their schedule because, so few members are willing to perform this activity. The Bottom Line is, please consider volunteering and being proactive in your post activities.

Those members not associated with a



post please consider joining a post close to you. You will be rewarded with great comradeship when you join a post. The backbone of our Association is our members and their involvement in supporting association activities.

Our longtime Editor of the *Twenty-Niner*, Will Mund, has announced that he will be stepping away from his duties at the end of 2024. His shoes will be extremely difficult to fill.

His other duties include: Asst. Nat'l Exec. Dir., whose responsibility it is for membership and mailing list accountability. He also prepares the annual Souvenir Program Book for our annual convention. We are searching for replacements for these duties that Will conducted. We would like to separate some of the duties to make the job more manageable if we can get volunteers. If anyone is interested, we would be glad to discuss a job description in detail.

Will plans to remain active but without the many responsibilities he now shoulders. We owe Will a huge Thank You for all his hard work to keep this Association operating and we wish him well. We are hopeful we can still pick his brain for his knowledge of Association Business and past practices.

In closing, Thank You for your membership in the 29th Division Association.

29 Let's Go!!

Richard D. "Dick" Snyder  
National Commander  
29th Division Association, Inc.

**THE TWENTY-NINER**

**Vol. 67 No. 1  
Spring 2023**

The known office of this publication is:

The 29th Division Association, Inc.  
The *Twenty-Niner* is published by:  
The 29th Division Association, Inc.  
PO Box 548

Lutherville -Timonium, MD 21094

Third Class postage paid  
at Baltimore, MD

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**World War II Combat Records**

Our website, 29div.com, has World War II records for our dues-paying members that are available nowhere else.

The Morning Reports are an index to every single 29th Division morning report filed by company clerks from D-Day to V-E Day. They are essentially a daily record of every company within the division.

A World War II 29th Division vet, Ralph Windler, asked the Maryland Museum of Military History to grant him access to every Morning Report so that he could catalog and index them. There are over 122,000 entries!

I was able to find significant events listed, including two wounds in combat,

for my father, D-Day veteran Gen. Alvin David Ungerleider.

We have also obtained from Julie Belanger, Ron Hudnell and Ronan Urvoaz-Sauvage copies of Morning Reports for the 29th Ranger Battalion (Provisional). Its members were almost all volunteers from the 29th Infantry Division.

These records can be accessed with a password. If you are a dues-paying member or a new member who wishes to pay dues, email 29div@29div.com for information.

Neil Ungerleider  
Post 93

**Past editions of *The Twenty-Niner* from 2013 - present, are now available on our website, [29thDivisionAssociation.com](http://29thDivisionAssociation.com), in the "For Members" section.**

## Donations to the *Twenty-Niner*

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our membership for their generosity in contributing to the *Twenty-Niner* for this issue. Note our cut-off date. If your contribution did not reach our National Executive Director by 1 April 2023 then it will not be listed until the next issue. Donation checks must be made payable to the **29th Division Association** and mailed to: **PO Box 548, Lutherville Timonium, MD 21094-0548.**

American Alloy Steel, Houston, TX

***In honor of Arthur J. Moore, F/115, Houston, TX***

Beam, Patrick, Post 94, B/1/175, New Oxford, PA

Brondyke, Russell, Post 94, Associate, Homosassa, FL

***In memory of his brother, Jay E. Brondyke, I/115***

Cundy, Donald C., Post 94, Son, Dearborn, MI

***In memory of Harry Cundy, & Charles Maupin, HHC/3/175***

Fournier, Normand, Post 94, Son, Bonita Springs, FL

***In memory of his father, Jean Paul Fournier, B/116***

Garguilo, Neil, Post 94, Son, Freehold, NJ

Golding, Gordon, Post 94, Son, Paris, France

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

Harper, David & Melinda, Post 94, Bountiful, UT

***In memory of Charles Matter, 104MED/175***

Hediger, Eric, Post 29, 229 Engr Bn, Middleburg, VA

Jones, Helena, Post 88, Widow, Stevensville, MD

***In memory of LTC (Ret) Robert W. Jones***

Keller, Fred C., Post 94, B/629MI, Ellicott City, MD

Langille, Richard, Post 94, C/115, Springfield, VA

Lucas, Elona K., Post 94, Daughter, North Canton, OH

***In memory of her father, Albert J. Lucas***

Mercurio, John, Post 94, Associate, Folsom, CA

Post 93, New England

***In memory of World War II veteran Ralph Serra, C/115***

MJS Court Reprting, PC

Mosca, John, Post 93, Son, Carlisle, MA

***In memory of Evagrio Mosca***

Mund, William, Post 94, B/115, Catonsville, MD

***In memory of Mary Hobbs, Post 64***

Post 78, Cresap's Rifles, Frederick, MD

***In memory of H. Richard Zecher, A/115***

***In memory of Kenneth May***

Praski, Benjamin, Post 94, Associate, Pella, IA

***In memory of John Hooper, 1/115***

Prazenica, W. & K., Post 94, Son & Wife, Elizabethtown, PA

***In honor of our friend, Post 94 Commander, Jay Garrison***

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

***In memory of his father, James Monroe Smith, K/175***

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

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

Zwerin, David, Post 94, St. Petersburg, FL

## TAPS

The following list shows names of known 29ers and their ladies or family members who died and their deaths reported from 24 November 2022 through 1 April 2023. 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

Berch, Virginia, Post 2, Widow, Winchester, CA 7/9/22

Briscoe, Robert J., Post 1-72, H/175, Fallston, MD 9/28/22

Brown, Blaine, Post 48, A/2/110, Westminster, MD 12/5/22

Cook, David, Post 48, HHB/2/110, Westminster, MD 11/20/22

Haney, Leon C., Post 85, 29<sup>th</sup> MP, Havre de Grace, MD 7/28/22

Hobbs, Mary, Post 64. Widow, Cloverdale, VA 3/5/23

Healy, Cornelius, Post 93, Associate, Winchester, MA 2/27/23

May, Charles K., Post 78, Associate, Frederick, MD 1/23/23

Muredda, Joseph, M/115, Girardville, PA 12/24/22

Panno, Joseph C., Post 94, M/115, Streator, IL 11/20/22

Rutherford, Edward, Post 110, HHB/2/110, Parkville, MD 3/15/23

Serra, Ralph, Post 93, C/115, Medford, MA 12/21/22

Tyler, Terry J., Post 5, DIVARTY, Williamsburg, VA 12/22/22

Zecher, H. Richard, Post 78, A/115, Jefferson, MD 1/3/23

## 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 our comrades 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.

Frank Armiger

National Executive Director

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# The Boys of the 29th

An error was made by the Editor on **page 9** of the Autumn/Winter 2022 edition of the *Twenty-Niner* which was published recently

The words and music of the song "Boys of the 29th" are by **Michael Higgins**, not Michael Gibbons.

The copyright should then read: © **Copyright 2022 by Michael Higgins**

The Editor is profoundly sorry and regrets his unfortunate mistake and offers his apology to Mr. Higgins and the readers of the *Twenty-Niner*.

***The text is reprinted below with the correction made.***

William Mund  
Editor  
*The Twenty-Niner*

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## The Boys of the 29th

*He was my Grandmama's daddy, he'd just turned 95  
When he showed me his old uniform  
He said, boy, the first good reason this old man's still alive  
Goes back to June of '44  
We were the first to hit the beaches,  
as a fiery rain came down  
The first of so many more to die  
He said, son, you and me wouldn't be here now  
Without the boys of the 29th*

*The flag we all saluted stood for what was right  
And told us we all fought for home  
But it's the patch on that left shoulder,  
just above my sergeant's stripes  
That said we'd never fight alone  
It told the kid beside me, shakin' in his boots'  
That I had his back and he had mine  
Yeah, we were young and we were scared,  
but we were damn proud to be there  
We were the boys of the 29th*

*For you, it's just blue and gray thread,  
faded and frayed by the hands of time  
For me, I'll always see blood red,  
hear the surf and the guns crash in my mind  
It's there for the scars we all brought home  
And for the souls of those we left behind  
It's a part of me, son, that'll always be one  
Of the boys of the 29th*

*There was Jimmy Hayes from Brooklyn,  
I knelt with him and prayed  
On that last mornin' of his life  
And smilin' Charlie Wilson, I never saw a man so brave  
I brought his dogtags to his wife  
Has it really been a lifetime? It feels like yesterday  
And it still sends a chill down my spine  
How those colors always meant we'd be brothers to the end  
The boys of the 29th*

*For you, it's just blue and gray thread,  
faded and frayed by the hands of time  
For me, I'll always see blood red, hear the surf  
and the guns crash in my mind  
It's there for the scars we all brought home  
And for the souls of those we left behind  
It's a part of me, son, that'll always be one  
Of the boys of the 29th  
Yeah, we were brothers and we were friends,...  
and I'd do it all again...  
For the boys of the 29th*

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Words and music by Michael Higgins  
Composer and Lyricist.

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# Normandy Diary

## Part 4

By Colin H. McLaurin, CO, I/115

### No rest for the weary

The battalion commander immediately assigned each company an area in which to take up a defensive position. I was then directed to send out a patrol with the mission of investigating the nearby village of Colombieres. After complying with these orders, I reported back to the Major for further orders dealing with the battalion's next move. After a half hour wait, the patrol returned and reported that the Germans seemed to have evacuated the village. This was indeed welcome news.

We were now ordered to proceed by companies and take up positions around the village. My area of defense lay on the far side of the village; so I moved along a route right through the middle of town.

The town was similar to other communities which I had passed through. The buildings were small and close together and constructed of old, gray stone. There was an atmosphere of age and permanence about the place. A good bit of damage had been done by our bombs and artillery. One demolished building right in the middle of town was still smoking.

As my powers of observation and hearing were absorbed in and devoted to the job of looking for Germans, I did not allow my attention to become distracted by details of a non-military nature. I would have enjoyed rambling around the countryside if my military responsibilities could have been shed and the danger removed.

On the far edge of the village we came onto a rather horrible sight. Standing in the middle of the highway were three German staff cars, two of them occupied and one empty. There were three dead Germans in one and two dead enemy soldiers in the second, all still sitting but slumped in their seats. Ripped clothing and gaping bullet holes was ample evidence of sudden death. Three more corpses lay by the side of the road no doubt killed as they tried to take cover. They were a grisly and gory lot, sitting and lying there cold and silent. The vehicles were filled with military gear of all kinds; so I concluded that they must have been strafed by aircraft or ambushed as they were making a getaway. One of the men lying in the road was an officer, and around his neck I spied a pair of field glasses. Here was a choice souvenir. I inserted the barrel of my carbine underneath the strap and eased them over the corpse's head and lo, I was the proud owner of a pair of glasses. I turned them over to one of the company runners to keep since I already had a pair which had been issued to me.

As we had a job to do, we could not dawdle; so we moved on. Several minutes later we were engaged in an unsuccessful hunt for a sniper which a member of the column's flank of security had reported seeing. Immediately after that, we arrived at our assigned area and my attention was devoted to organizing the position.

My immediate job now was to select a defensive position for each unit of my company and to tie my defense in with the positions of the adjacent companies. To do this, it was necessary for me to reconnoiter the area, and this task entailed considerable walking. The size of the area assigned me made it necessary for me to spread my men out to such an extent that the overall strength of

the position any one point was weaker than I would have liked.

It was at this point that we began receiving fire from snipers again. After being assigned to their positions, the men must have relaxed a bit; they were always prone to do this when the area was quiet. A German sneaked up close to one who was particularly exposed and took a pot shot. As a result, we had a wounded man on our hands. One of the wounded man's buddies had the satisfaction of firing at and wounding the German as he fled. He was not captured however. A few minutes later, another one of my men received a bullet through his hand. I recall telling the wounded man to report back to the battalion aid station, and at the same time sort of envying him. I envied him because he would be evacuated to a hospital in England where he could rest, sleep, eat, and take it easy for a few weeks at least. I found myself experiencing that feeling over and over during the weary weeks which followed.

I could not allow myself to dwell on such thoughts long, however, for I decided that I should draw my defense in a little tighter due to the close proximity of the enemy. To make my position stronger and more secure, I simply reduced the area of my defensive position. By the time I had redeployed the men and checked their positions, it was well into the afternoon.

My command post was located in the back yard of a house occupied by a French family. I recall that the man of the house came out to where a few of us were standing with a bucket of fresh milk and a cup. He offered us the milk, and even though we had instructions not to drink milk, I felt justified in accepting his kind offer. The cup of cool milk which I drank was a delicious draught, for we had not eaten since about 1:00 a.m. and our movement since then had been continuous, tiring and straining.

I took a few minutes off to go over to the spot where the dead Germans lay. The spectacle had aroused my curiosity. Judging from their appearance and smell, the Germans had been dead for a couple of days and yet, nothing seemed to have been touched about the scene. I would have thought that the townspeople would have appropriated the articles of value at least from the vehicles. Perhaps they had been afraid that lurking Germans would observe them in the act and shoot them for looting German property. I walked over to one of the vehicles and cautiously pulled a rifle out from the back seat. German arms had a fascination for me.

Before I could investigate further, my attention was distracted by a column of American Infantry troops marching up the road where I was standing. I do not remember what outfit they belonged to, but when the head of the column drew abreast of me, I warned the officer in charge of the snipers in the vicinity. As if to emphasize the remark, just at that moment a sniper's bullet cracked by right over our heads. For the next few minutes, I, as well as others, was engaged in the futile task of trying to locate the audacious enemy rifleman. I had been trained to estimate approximate range of a rifleman and also his position by the "crack and thump" method. This consisted in noting the position of the "crack" of the bullet, that is, whether the sound is in front, behind, or directly overhead of the observer.

Direction is determined by listening for the "thump" which comes after the "crack" and is the sound of the exploding powder charge of the cartridge. This method was not very successful with me, however, and in this case entirely unsuccessful, for the terrain in which we were operating offered too much concealment to pinpoint the enemy soldier. The incident did not stop the column, and as I saw it advance down the highway, I was relieved to know that friendly troops would be ahead of me in one direction at least.

Feeling that I had organized my position as securely as possible, I took advantage of a quiet moment to try to get a little needed rest. Before settling down, I drank another canteen cup of milk which the supply sergeant had secured from our French friend. Regular rations had not as yet been brought up. Never, I think, had food and drink tasted so good as during those days. Even the C and K rations seemed delicious.

My cat nap was interrupted when a runner came down with instructions for me to report to the battalion CP. As I had suspected when I reached the CP, I found out that the battalion had received orders to move out again. There seemed to be no rest for the weary. Now, whenever I stopped long enough to relax my muscles, I would have to exert all of my willpower to stay awake.

Our movement this time was to be a cross-country affair. As contact with the enemy was considered imminent, the battalion was to advance in deployed formations with two rifle companies abreast and one behind in support. My company was designated as the base company which put the burden of the responsibility for maintaining the proper course of the entire battalion on me.

As I have stated before, this was quite a job which required constant reference to map and compass so as to be able to always know your exact position. It is very easy to get lost in unfamiliar country, and it is especially easy when observation is limited as was the case with us at this time.

At the appointed time, we moved out in good order. Our objective was several miles away, and for all we knew, the Germans could have been emplaced behind every hedgerow. Traveling cross-country in that hedgerow filled countryside is very strenuous. You walk from fifty to two hundred and fifty yards and then scramble over a hedgerow. Most of them had small trees, bushes, briars, and vines growing out of them, and frequently we had to hack, kick, push and squirm our way through. There were many falls when feet slipped or got caught in an overlooked vine.

Due to our deployed formation, the difficult terrain, and the supposed proximity of the enemy, we advanced slowly, and darkness set in just as we approached the general area of our objective. On my map the objective was represented by a group of houses. We knew that we were in the vicinity of the objective, but we must have veered slightly off our course, for the buildings were not in sight. It was decided that we would bivouac where we were and send out a patrol to find the buildings. It was important that we locate the exact spot for our rations were to be there.

Other than those few cups of milk, we had not been issued rations since our midnight repast so we were all naturally ravenous. Our appetites were not to be whetted that night though, for there was still no food to be issued. Understanding the situation, we did not grumble.

Our bodies ached for rest and sleep, but we still had to go through the usual routine of organizing a defensive position

which entailed assigning positions for each company, platoon, squad, and each machine gun and mortar. After that, the men had to dig slit trenches for themselves.

The position was not well suited for defense, but we had to make the best of a bad situation; good positions usually have to be selected during daylight when visibility is good. In spite of the fact that all seemed to be quiet, I felt a little uneasy.

After taking our security precautions, there was little else to be done toward preparing for the night. Our beds would be the hard cold ground and there were no blankets, not even our raincoats. We were so tired, however, that the prospect did not bother us very much. All the men asked at the moment was a chance to rest and sleep. They had learned long ago in maneuvers in the cold, damp, air of England that they could warm each other to some slight degree by lying close together. By that I do not mean that the whole company huddled together but the men paired off and dug double foxholes. I had the good fortune to be asked to share a cellophane gas protection cover designed by the Chemical Warfare Service to cover one soldier in a gas attack with one of the officers of my company. By a series of intricate squirming's, we finally got into it. The lieutenant pulled out a small piece of chocolate which was all that was left of a K ration, a bar about once inch square and three inches long. After an anxious moment or two, he offered me half. Naturally I accepted; so there we were lying in a shallow ditch by the side of a little lane, covered with a cellophane wrapper, and chomping away on our bits of hard bitter chocolate. What a life!

Just as I was feeling settled for the night, a runner came up from the battalion CP and informed me that the Battalion Commander desired to see me. I wearily went through the process of extracting myself from the wrapper, put on my equipment, and, using the runner as a guide, stumbled through the inky darkness to the battalion CP.

Major Gillespie informed me that I must send three men and an officer all the way back to our starting point to contact the regimental CP and arrange to have food sent up to us the next day. I groaned inwardly when I heard this, for it seemed a terrible thing to do to have to rouse those men and give them a mission like that. They were dog tired and it would be very difficult and dangerous to retrace the day's march in the dark. However, there was no choice in the matter for me; it had to be done. It is an everyday occurrence in war for soldiers to be ordered to do things that demand more than could be reasonably expected of them. It is considered reasonable and just in war to demand a soldiers' last reserve of strength, stamina, nerve, courage, and energy, but also, it is considered, by our Army, also reasonable and just that when the utmost has been expended, the Army is honor and duty bound to protect and nurture the one who expended so much, back to health and strength.

While groping my way back to my company, I decided who I would designate for the job. I summoned the selected officer and men, explained the situation to them, and hard-heartedly sent them on their way. Their task was simplified a bit by including a French civilian in the group to act as a guide. I do not know where Major Gillespie had picked him up. I then crawled back into my half of the cellophane sack and prepared to get some sleep, the first in thirty-six hours.

I was about to drift off to sleep when I heard heavy firing break out on our left flank at a distance which I judged to be between three-quarters of a mile away or less. At the time I wondered what was going on over there, but like everyone in combat, I did not worry about what went on in someone else's sector. I figured that a man had his hands full taking care of his own area without worrying about the other units. Sometime later, I faintly heard someone shouting in what sounded like German. This noise made me slightly uneasy, but in spite of it all, I went to sleep. The next thing I knew it was time to get up. I then found out what had been going on.

It seems that another battalion of our regiment had been advancing almost abreast of us, though too far over on our left for us to keep in contact with them. In fact, I had not known that they were within ten miles of us. That is the way we were operating at that time; each battalion was a separate little task force operating on its own. Of course, I presume that the Regimental Commander knew the location of his battalions most of the time. That is beside the point, however. This unlucky battalion had, like ours, prepared to stop and bivouac for the night when darkness set in. As luck would have it, some German unit (I will refer to this enemy unit later) in their vicinity had spotted them and arranged a very explosive and surprising greeting. As the men of the battalion moved into the bivouac area, the Germans moved in on them and opened fire with tank, cannon, machine guns, machine pistols, and rifles. Taken by surprise (an inexcusable tactical mistake) the battalion was routed, and the personnel scattered to the four winds, at least those who were not killed or wounded. Many of them drifted into our area where they spread the report that the whole battalion had been wiped out. Later, when the actual results became known, it was not nearly as bad as that. Of course, the casualties were very heavy, one of whom was the battalion commander, but when those who had run away were reassembled under a new commander, it was found that enough officers and men remained to function as a battalion though a greatly weakened one. This action from then on served as a grim reminder to me the possible price which sometimes is paid for not always being fully alert and for not providing for all-around security at all times. It is extremely easy for tired and weary men to trust to luck. (*Ed: This incident refers to the attack on the 2nd Bn at Le Carrefour.*)

I heard of another incident which had occurred early in the night which had ended tragically. One of the officers of our battalion had taken out a small patrol of three or four men with the objective of locating the exact designated spot which had been our assigned objective that evening, and which undoubtedly was close at hand. They found it quickly enough, and they also found that it was occupied by Germans. The Germans were in the process of moving out, no doubt withdrawing. The members of the patrol were observing from the side of the road, and one of them got an itchy trigger finger and opened fire with his rifle. The nearest Germans naturally returned the fire with the result that two or three of them were killed. The surviving members spent several hours sweating out the situation until the column disappeared down the road. I do not know whether the Battalion Commander was informed or not, but anyway, nothing was done by the battalion as a whole.

Putting two and two together, I deduced that by an odd coincidence our battalion as well as the other one had arrived in the area just as the Germans were withdrawing. It was the other battalion's

misfortune to collide with the German force. Their misfortune was to be observed by the enemy before they observed the Germans.

The position from which the Germans had withdrawn happened to have been the objective assigned to us; so if we had moved into it the previous evening, we would have had quite a fight on our hands. As it turned out, we moved right in after a few minutes march without any opposition whatsoever.

Once in the area, we went through the usual time-consuming process of taking up a defensive position. Our defensive area was centered around a beautiful estate with a big mansion, garden, driveways, and even a little fish pond. It was a nice place to stop, for the grounds were clean, pleasant and peaceful. From a tactical viewpoint the area was well suited for defense, and after looking it over, I thanked my stars that it had not been necessary for us to have fought for it.

While I was out assigning positions to the elements of the company, our vehicles containing food and ammunition drove up. This was a very welcome sight indeed, for we had not eaten a meal in two days. It did not take long to "break them down" and distribute them to the men. Due to the fact that my mind had been continually occupied with other things, I had not as yet felt the pangs of hunger to a point where I suffered, but the sight of the 10 and 1 rations, (the best field ration) made me ravenous. I immediately saw down, dismissed all my troublesome worries and fears and started eating.

Before I was half through eating, I was notified to report to the Battalion Commander. This announcement annoyed me to no end, for now I had to gulp down the remainder of my food thus depriving myself of the enjoyment that food gives to a very hungry soldier.

A few minutes later I was gathered around the CO along with other Company Commanders and their runners and Communication Sergeants. Major Gillespie had been relieved of his command that morning by the regimental or division commander for some reason, probably for failing to negotiate the inundated area during darkness. The battalion executive officer, a young captain, as a result had been given the command. The change over the battalion commanders did not change the type of orders which were issued to us, for we were ordered to move again.

I was happy to find that Captain Spry considered himself well enough to resume his job of Company Commander. No one, I think, can relish the job of Company Commander of the infantry in combat.

Our advance that afternoon was slow with frequent stops. The weather was pleasant and warm. Although it was the middle of June, the air was balmy, and the vegetation had that fresh green color that is characteristic of early spring. Strange as it may seem, there was no opposition, the front was very fluid. Therefore our march was rather pleasant and similar to a maneuver instead of combat operations.

Late in the afternoon, during a halt, a message was passed back to my position in the company formation with instructions for me to report up front. I immediately visualized a situation in which the Company Commander had been wounded or some sort of emergency had arisen which would require action on my part. Puffing from my exertion, I arrived at the head of the column only to find that we had arrived at our objective, and that I was wanted for the purpose of relieving the company commander of the tedious task of disposing the company in their defensive position.



Having had plenty of experience doing just this, I accomplished this mission in a minimum of time.

Our position was along a cement road that ran parallel to our front. To our right about three miles away was the village of Ste. Marguerite-d'Elle, and to our left about the same distance was the village of Cerisy-la-Forêt. The small fields were surrounded by the usual hedgerows, and a few empty houses were dotted alongside the road. There were no other friendly troops within sight, and as far as we knew, there were none within miles of our battalion position.

For once, our position was occupied and slit trenches were dug long before dark. Our organic vehicles (those vehicles permanently assigned to the unit for use in tactical operations), pulled up behind us, and we were notified to send back for rations. As our company kitchens had not caught up with us yet, our food was C and K rations. That evening we all ate double and sometimes triple rations before we considered ourselves satisfied. To a hungry soldier who has not eaten but one meal in over two days, the C or K ration tastes delicious even cold as they were.

### Midnight Patrol

About sundown I was informed that I had been selected to take out about twenty or more men that night on a patrol with the mission of establishing contact with an adjacent battalion which was supposed to be abreast of our position and about two miles away at a little place named Ste. Marguerite-d'Elle. I was ordered to drop off several groups on the way to establish a sort of line of outposts between the two units. This seemed a simple enough task for me; so I did not worry about the mission. In spite of my unconcern, a couple of incidents occurred which probably added a couple of gray hairs to a head that had too many already for a man of my tender age.

At approximately 2300 hours, as I started to form my patrol detail, I heard German automatic weapons open up on the other side of our outposts in front of our position. A few moments later, five or six of our machine guns began to fire rapidly. I was alarmed at this display of fireworks; so I told my detail to return to their positions while I went back to the battalion CP to find out whether the CO still desired me to take out the patrol. After considerable delay, it was decided that the Germans had put on a display as a ruse to get us to disclose the positions of our automatic weapons, and perhaps to see how strong our position was defended. If they had any intention of counterattacking, they had changed their minds, for everything quieted down. I was informed to get along with my mission; so I regathered my men and uneasily moved out.

This was my first taste of anything resembling patrolling in combat; so I proceeded with the utmost caution and reminded everyone to keep quiet and alert. Every six or seven hundred yards I posted four men with instructions to report back to our position at noon the following day if not relieved sooner.

It was with some regret when, after walking for about an hour down that highway with the men in a single file on each side, I posted the last group of men in a clump of bushes on the side of the road. According to my information and calculations, the unit which I was to contact should only have been seven or eight hundred yards away; so with one of my sergeants on the opposite side of the road, I set out. The night was moonless and relatively quiet. Some distance away, but close enough to cause me to feel uneasy, I heard the sound of enemy machine pistols firing spo-

radically. We walked quietly and cautiously and communicated with each other by means of hand signals and low whispers. All at once I saw several shadowy shapes looming up before us on the side of the road. This is the end of my journey, I thought and without hesitation I walked on. As I drew closer I saw that the vague shapes were vehicles of some kind. I drew abreast of the first one and glanced at it. To my horror I realized that the vehicle had a strange and unfamiliar appearance. It was as small as a Jeep, but it did not have the same silhouette as a Jeep. "German vehicles" flashed through my mind, and I stopped in my tracks with every nerve and muscle tensed. Motioning to the sergeant to do likewise, I backed slowly to the rear expecting a shot or challenge every instant.

At a safe distance, we lay down on the road shoulder while I decided what was to be done. First, I waited several minutes in the hope that someone would speak or that some incident would occur by which I could deduce what the situation was. I thought about bypassing the area but decided that it would take too long. Time was rapidly passing, and I still had not accomplished my mission. I finally concluded that nothing could be gained by waiting; so "taking the bull by the horns," I told the sergeant to cover me while I went back up to investigate. I said, "If I run into a German, I will start shooting and fall back. If nothing happens, I'll move on through and you can follow me."

I got up and walked slowly forward, carbine in hand and my finger on the trigger. Just as I got to within a few feet of the first vehicle, I heard a voice say, "Who's there?". I replied, "Lieutenant McLaurin" and at the same time experienced a great feeling of relief. I walked up to where the soldier was and looked over the vehicle which I had thought was German. It proved to be a Jeep, but its silhouette had been completely altered. The occupants had tied big rolls of camouflage netting on the hood and had all sorts of gear attached to the bumpers and other spots.

I realized then that my fright and wasted time had been futile, and I had to chuckle over my false alarm. I did not feel so bad when I remembered the old adage, "Tis better to be safe than sorry."

As I had wasted considerable time and as the group of vehicles was not part of the unit which I had been sent out to contact but a detachment of a reconnaissance unit, I had to start out again. My objective, the second battalion, was supposedly only two miles away, but when I finally reached it, we had walked much closer to four miles. All the staff officers were asleep; so after considerable difficulty I finally aroused the adjutant.

After exchanging information and coordinating a few details, I started on my hike home. I stopped a few minutes at a nearby crossroads to chat with the crew of an anti-tank gun which was set up there. The men were very surprised that we had walked along for so great a distance without being fired on. It seems that they had been harassed all night with snipers.

The sergeant and I rolled back in our battalion defensive area just as the sun was rising, and would have been much later had not one of the officers of the reconnaissance unit taken pity on us by giving us a lift for the last couple of miles in his Jeep. Yes, the one that had scared me. After a K ration breakfast, I caught a few hours of much needed sleep.

*To be continued*

# 116th IBCT HQs recognized for federal active duty in Kosovo

STAUNTON, VA – Maj. Gen. John M. Rhodes, 29th Infantry Division commanding general, presented the Governor's National Service Medal to Virginia National Guard Soldiers assigned to the Staunton-based 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team Headquarters March 5, 2023, in Staunton, Virginia, to recognize their federal active duty in Kosovo. Delegates David Reid and Ellen Campbell were also on hand to thank Soldiers for their service.

"I can't tell you how much I appreciate your service to our nation, to our commonwealth and the 29th Infantry Division along with your families," Rhodes said. "Their service is as honorable as those of us who were the uniform."

Soldiers assigned to the 116th IBCT Headquarters returned to Virginia in November 2022 after serving as the mission command headquarters for NATO Kosovo Force Regional Command-East since March 2022. As the multinational brigade assigned to RC - East, the 116th commanded more than 1,000 personnel from 10

different nations to maintain a safe and secure environment and freedom of movement throughout Kosovo.

"It is really very important when you have done this service for the country and you are coming back that we come here and we actually say thank you in person," Reid said. "Not only are you the public servants here today, it is also the members of your family."

Under the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 of 1999 and the Military Technical Agreement, the focus of RC-East was to provide the opportunity to resolve tensions in the Balkans through political dialogue focused on normalizing relations between Serbia and Kosovo.

"I want to thank you very much for all you have done, for everything you have done for our country and keeping us safe," Campbell said. "Not coming from a military family, it is not lost on me the sacrifices you and your families make for us so we can live here today in this great country. I owe you a debt of gratitude. We all do."

Created in 2005 by then-Governor Mark R. Warner, the Virginia Governor's National Service Medal recognizes the service of the men and women of the Virginia Army and Air National Guard called to active federal duty since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

During the KFOR 30 rotation, the 116th leaders and staff planned and executed three separate named operations to decrease tensions related to Serbian elections, License Plate Reciprocity and securing energy infrastructure. They planned and participated in multinational training events with the German con-

tingencies to earn the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge and Schützenschnur and with the Danish contingencies to participate in the DANCON march. They also hosted the U.S. marksmanship badges for two NATO nations.

The VNG's Sandston-based 2nd Battalion, 224th Aviation Regiment served as the aviation task force for RC-E providing medical casualty transportation and air mobility for all KFOR troops. They

completed their transfer of authority Oct. 11. Read more on [va.ng.mil](https://va.ng.mil) at <https://ngpa.us/22186>.

Mobilized as Task Force Pegasus, they complete more than 1,700 flight hours and 275 aerial missions. Five were multinational multi-ship flights, and they also completed 14 medical evacuation missions, two of which required the use of a hoist. Aviation maintainers achieved an operational readiness rate of 89 percent, exceeding the Army standard of 80 percent.

Other units serving in RC-E included a maneuver battalion capable of rapidly

deploying throughout their area of responsibility to guarantee a safe and secure environment and freedom of movement and an effects battalion maintaining situational awareness with local authorities and non-government organizations for monitoring and early identification of security, socio-economic and political situations.

The maneuver battalion was led by the Kentucky National Guard's 1st Battalion, 149th Infantry Regiment and also included companies from Poland, Turkey and Latvia. The 1-149th also led the effects battalion and also included troops from Switzerland, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Hungary and Slovenia. They officially ended their mission with a transfer of authority ceremony Oct. 29.

From August 2021 to February 2023, more than 2,000 Virginia National Guard personnel mobilized on federal active duty service in the United States and overseas, the most since 2007.

VNG Soldiers provided mission command for multi-national forces in Kuwait, a security response force in the Horn of Africa, air defense site security in Iraq and conducted NATO peace support operations in Kosovo. VNG Airmen supported a short-notice air superiority support in the United Arab Emirates.

Since Sept. 11, 2001, more than 18,500 VNG Soldiers and Airmen have mobilized across the globe and here in the United States for homeland security missions.

*By Cotton Puryear  
Virginia National Guard Public Affairs*



**Maj. Gen. John M. Rhodes, 29th Infantry Division commanding general, presents the Governor's National Service Medal to SGT Warner, and Virginia National Guard Soldiers assigned to the Staunton-based 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team Headquarters March 5, 2023, in Staunton, Virginia, to recognize their federal active duty in Kosovo.**

# Past National Commanders

1919-22 MILTON RECKORD	1959-60 FRANK G. OBERLE	1990-91 ROBERT M. MILLER
1922-30 HAROLD CONTENT	1960-61 JAMES D. SINK	1991-92 BOYD M. COOK
1930-31 J. H. LEPPER	1961-62 LOUIS C. CICCONE	1992-93 PAUL C. WINTERS
1931-32 FAIRFIELD H. HODGES	1962-63 SAMUEL R. KRAUSS	1993-94 DONALD M. McKEE
1932-33 DUDLEY BROWN	1963-64 LEROY J. PENNINGTON	1994-95 WILLIAM F. BRIGGMAN
1933-34 MICHAEL BREITKOPF	1964-65 CLYDE D. WILSON	1995-96 DONALD A. McCARTHY
1934-35 JAMES F. BURNS	1965-66 LOUIS M. GORSOM	1996-97 ALVIN D. UNGERLEIDER
1935-36 WALTER E. BLACK	1966-67 JOHN R. BONNEY	1997-98 JOSEPH J. MOSCATI
1936-37 CHARLES E. BORLAND	1967-68 ALBERT MARKS	1998-99 A. F. "Bud" WILLIS
1937-38 J. FRED CHASE	1968-69 WALTER E. ECKERT	2000-01 DONALD C. VAN ROOSEN
1938-39 JAMES E. BENTLEY	1969-70 JAMES A. McCLELLAN	2001-02 RICHARD L. "Dick" SMITH
1939-40 RICHARD E. O'CONNELL	1970-71 WILLIAM C. MILLER	2002-03 WILLIAM C. McCLEAF
1940-41 J. DENNET JONES	1971-72 JOHN H. WONER	2003-04 GLENWOOD E. HANKINS
1941-42 MILTON E. GROOME	1972-73 HARRY M. RICHARDSON	2004-05 JOHN E. WILCOX, JR.
1942-43 GEORGE A. BROWN	1973-74 ELMER A. WINDSOR	2005-06 GEORGE F. COOK
1943-44 CHARLES F. HOFFMAN	1974-75 JOHN P. BRAUN	2006-07 ROBERT L. RECKER
1944-45 WILLIAM C. NICKLAS	1975-76 ANDREW W. McFADZEAN	2007-08 WILLIAM KING
1945-46 SAMUEL W. BARROW	1976-77 WESTLEY J. LOFTUS	2008-09 ROBERT L. FINN
1946-47 JOHN B. BROWN	1977-78 LESTER E. MEREDITH	2009-10 ROBERT MOSCATI
1947-48 JOHN M. TORZEWSKI	1978-79 FRANK J. PEARSON, JR.	2010-11 CHARLES W. LOCKARD
1948-49 JOHN F. VAN HORN	1979-80 GEORGE G. BORAM	2011-12 IVAN V. DOOLEY
1949-50 JAMES M. STEVENS	1980-81 REGINALD E. GARMAN	2012-13 JOSEPH ZANG
1950-51 CHARLES R. BRYAN	1981-82 HUGH J. GALLAGHER	2013-14 JOHN F. KUTCHER, SR.
1951-52 FRANK A. JOSKEY	1982-83 HARVEY D. FOLKS	2014-15 I. JOHN VACCARINO
1952-53 G. WALTER BROOKS	1983-84 FLOYD E. BALL	2015-16 DAVID GINSBURG
1953-54 DONALD L. SHELDON	1984-85 HENRY M. TOWNSEND	2016-17 ROBERT E. WISCH
1954-55 WILLIAM GUTHRIE	1985-86 JOHN M. MILANOVICH	2017-18 GRANT HAYDEN
1955-56 FRANCIS S. BRIGHAM	1986-87 PAUL R. JEFFERY	2018-19 J. DAVID LEIGHTON
1956-57 ALEX M. SHIELDS	1987-88 MILTON L. ALIFF	2019-21 PETER C. HINZ
1957-58 BENJAMIN F. CASSELL	1988-89 CHARLES A. LUSBY	2021-22 THEODORE G. SHUEY
1958-59 HAROLD P. O'HORA	1989-90 CHARLES J. CUMMINGS	



# VA Nat'l Guard installation officially redesignated Fort Barfoot

FORT BARFOOT, VA – The Virginia National Guard's Fort Pickett was officially redesignated Fort Barfoot in honor of Col. Van T. Barfoot, a World War II Medal of Honor recipient with extensive Virginia ties, during a ceremony March 24, 2023, at the Blackstone Army Airfield near Blackstone, Virginia.

During the ceremony, invited guests heard remarks from Barfoot's daughter Margaret Nicholls, Sen. Tim Kaine, Director of the Army National Guard Lt. Gen. Jon Jensen, and Maj. Gen. Timothy P. Williams, the Adjutant General of Virginia. The speakers also helped unveil the Fort Barfoot sign which will sit at the main entrance to the installation.

"Our family is so proud of the man we called Dad, Granddad, and Great Granddad, for the love he shared, the example he set and his life of service to others," said Nicholls. "As always, he would not have felt deserving of this honor and humbly would have said God had a plan for him and he hoped he lived up to God's plan. Having his service to this nation memorialized by this redesignation is a tribute to a man who epitomized what is great about our American Soldiers."

"The reason naming this base after Col. Barfoot is so important as he had a tie to the National Guard, a deep tie to the Virginia National Guard," said Kaine. "He trained here, said goodbye to his fiancée here. He maintained a tie to the Virginia National Guard during the rest of his military service and after, and received lifetime achievement awards and other recognitions. It would have been a missed opportunity to have named this base for someone, no matter how heroic, who didn't have a tie to a National Guard unit. And to be able to name it for someone whose ties to the Virginia National Guard were life-long and significant, I just say to the Naming Commission - you absolutely knocked it out of the park."

The post is one of nine U.S. Army installations being redesignated based on the Naming Commission's recommendations to remove the names, symbols, displays, monuments, and paraphernalia that honor or commemorate the Confederate States of America. Of the nine, it is the only Army National Guard installation being redesignated.

"Fort Pickett is the first of nine Army installations to be redesignated this year, and I could not think of a more fitting soldier to have the first honor. Thanks to this historic renaming in honor of one of America's great heroes, members of the Army and our country will surely know of the impact Col. Barfoot had on our nation," said Jensen. "May all Soldiers who train and serve here

at Fort Barfoot, both now and for generations to come, do so in the same spirit of leadership, loyalty and selfless service to their fellow Soldiers and their nation. May we all be able to think and execute quickly under that kind of pressure, and find the personal courage when the moment calls us to do so, as Van Barfoot did without hesitation."

"Today we have the distinction of paying tribute to the legacy of a truly great man, a tested combat leader, and a selfless servant," said Williams. "I think I speak for everyone that we're all privi-

leged to be here for this occasion. Col. Van Barfoot is one of those rare individuals whose story gets better the more you hear it. And today is another example as we continue to learn more about and honor this man whose name now adorns our Maneuver Training Center."

Barfoot was awarded the Medal of Honor in 1944 for his actions near Carano, Italy, as a technical sergeant in the 45th Infantry Division, as he battled against German soldiers and tanks. His Medal of



Honor citation can be read at <https://ngpa.us/24014>. He served through the Korean and Vietnam Wars, and eventually became an accomplished aviator, and is a member of the Fort Rucker, soon to be Fort Novosel, Alabama, Aviation Hall of Fame.

He also has strong connections to the Virginia National Guard as well as the installation which now bears his name. He served two different times as an advisor to Virginia National Guard units. In the 1950s, he served as an advisor to the 116th Infantry Regiment and later was the Senior Army Advisor to the Virginia National Guard until his retirement in 1974. Those jobs brought him to Fort Pickett for training with VNG units on multiple occasions.

"I served as senior advisor for the state of Virginia National Guard for four years. I love them, they're dedicated people," Barfoot said during an interview, part of the Library of Congress Veterans History Project. "I'll tell you, the greatest asset we have now is our National Guard. They're just complete Soldiers."

According to the same interview, Barfoot briefly trained at what was then Camp Pickett with the 157th Infantry Regiment, 45th Infantry Division, the unit he fought with in Italy, prior to shipping out for Europe during World War II.

After his retirement, Barfoot settled in Amelia County, eventually moving to Henrico County, where he again rose to national prominence when his desire to be able to fly the American flag in front of his home in Henrico County was challenged by the local homeowner's association. Barfoot received support from many national leaders and organizations, eventually prevailing in his efforts.



**Van T. Barfoot, a World War II Medal of Honor recipient.**



**Colonel Van T. Barfoot, circa 1973.**

"Our family is extremely proud of the honor that is being bestowed on our father. He was devoted to serving God, family and this great nation not only during his Army career but until his death in 2012," said Tom Barfoot, Col. Barfoot's son. "He wanted people to know that that his award of 'The Medal of Honor' was not just representative of him, but of all the men and women of this nation who sacrificed to meet our country's call."

Barfoot also has a significant Native American heritage, as his maternal grandmother was a member of the Choctaw Nation. To commemorate this heritage, representatives from Choctaw Nation as well as Virginia-based Native American tribes were in attendance at the ceremony, and performed ceremonial songs and dance for the gathered audience.

Barfoot passed away in 2012 at the age of 92. In addition to being the new namesake of the VNG installation, a portion of a highway near his place of birth in Mississippi is also dedicated in his honor. There is also a Sitter & Barfoot Veterans Care Center in Richmond, Virginia, operated by the Virginia Department of Veterans Services," which Barfoot was incredibly proud of.

"He passionately pursued the creation of a Veterans nursing facility in central Virginia. I remember how he was overcome with emotion when he was told that it would bear his name," said Nicholls.

The 29th Infantry Division Band provided music for the event, and volunteers with the Virginia Defense Force and Virginia Civil Air Patrol provided support for the ceremony. Outside of the World War II hangar where the ceremony was held, the installation's tenants set up static displays showcasing diversity of units and services who train on the post.

Fort Barfoot sits on about 41,000 acres and is operated by the Virginia National Guard, which took control of the post in 1997. Built during World War II and originally named Camp Pickett, It features a combination of open-terrain and wooded maneuver areas, more than 20 ranges capable of training on nearly every Army weapons system, a rail spur and a C-17 capable airfield. It also boasts a forward operating base, multiple training villages and a Combined Arms Collective Training Facility, Fort Barfoot's urban operations training facility.

The installation's primary customer is the Virginia National Guard, but also regularly hosts units from other states and services.

"The name will change, but I guarantee the mission will not," said Williams. "We stand ready to train and prepare our forces for combat in the most realistic and challenging manner possible. The next generation of warriors will be forged right here. And they will continue a long tradition of service and patriotism."

In addition to the installation name change, four buildings, 19 roads and five bridges were also identified by the Naming Commission to be redesignated. Four roads on main post will be changed to A Avenue, B Avenue, C Avenue and D Avenue, which is how they were designated when the installation was established in 1942. Roads and trails in the maneuver area will be named for trees along the routes or tied in with existing geographic features. Fort Barfoot's Directorate of Public Works employees have helped make signs with the post's new name to replace existing ones

*By Mike Vrabel | Virginia National Guard Public Affairs Office*

# 116th IBCT welcomes new command team

STAUNTON, VA – Col. Jared D. Lake and Command Sgt. Maj. Duane D. Wolfe took charge as the new command team for the Staunton-based 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team from Col. Christopher J. Samulski and Command Sgt. Maj. Irving N. Reed Jr. March 5, 2023, in Staunton, Virginia. Maj. Gen. John M. Rhodes, 29th Infantry Division Commanding General, presided over the ceremony where Lake took command of the 116th from Samulski and Wolfe as assumed responsibility from Reed as the brigade's senior enlisted leader.

"This is a historic moment for all of us," Rhodes said. "I want to thank all the Soldiers of the 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team. You are carrying on the proud tradition of those who served before you. Thanks to you and your families for your service to the nation, the Commonwealths of Virginia and Kentucky, the National Guard and the 29th Infantry Division."

Rhodes recognized both Reed and Wolfe for their outstanding duty performance as the senior non-commissioned officers for two recently-completed overseas federal active duty mobilizations in challenging situations where they built partnerships with multi-national forces.

Reed served as the command sergeant major for the 116th IBCT Headquarters mission in Kosovo, and Wolfe was the senior enlisted leader for the Task Force Red Dragon mission in the Horn of Africa.

"It is an honor to continue to serve with both of you," he said. "Thank you very much for your devoted service."

Rhodes said both Samulski and Lake are "not only outstanding officers and Soldiers, but they are quality individuals devoted to their families, communities and the Army values and principles of our nation."

He noted the 116th IBCT is the largest unit in the Virginia Army National Guard and is "comprised of highly-trained Soldiers with various specialty skills who are capable of conducting any assigned mission. They are a proven ready force who can operate both domestically and overseas."

Rhodes talked about how the 116th successfully mobilized to Washington, D.C., in January 2021 on short notice to support Capitol Police and remained on the ground for more than 30 days in support of the presidential inauguration. As soon as they ended the security mission, they immediately began preparations for multiple large-scale overseas deployments.

The 116th IBCT Headquarters served as the mission command headquarters for NATO Kosovo Force Regional Command-East from March to November 2022, at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo. As the multi-national brigade assigned to RC-East, the 116th was responsible for more than 1,000 personnel from 10 different nations to maintain a safe and secure environment and freedom of movement throughout Kosovo.



Staunton, Virginia - Col. Jared D. Lake and Command Sgt. Maj. Duane D. Wolfe take charge as the new command team for the Staunton-based 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team from Col. Christopher J. Samulski and Command Sgt. Maj. Irving N. Reed Jr. March 5, 2023, in Staunton, Virginia. Maj. Gen. John M. Rhodes, 29th Infantry Division commanding general, presided over the ceremony.

More than 1,000 Virginia and Kentucky National Guard Soldiers mobilized as Task Force Red Dragon under the command of the Lynchburg-based 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team to conduct a security mission for Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa from November 2021 through September 2022.

Soldiers assigned to the Norfolk-based 1st Battalion, 11th Field Artillery Regiment, 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team served on federal active duty in Iraq from December 2021 through November 2022 with a short-range air

defense mission for Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve.

The brigade had three different mission sets with three different combatant commands, and at the same time the 116th continued to conduct domestic operations in Virginia, Rhodes said.

"Meeting operational requirements and achieving mission success in all aspects was due to strong leadership and these outstanding Soldiers," he said.

He credited Samulski with "a job well done" and said, "Your service will always have a lasting influence on the 116th and the Army National Guard in both Virginia and Kentucky."

Rhodes said the Normandy Brigade was passing the torch to Lake and described him as a proven leader who is respected by subordinates and peers alike who was no stranger to the 116th or the 29th ID.

"His grand vision and broad experience make him the right person for this command," Rhodes said. "He is more than ready and fully qualified to lead the 116th IBCT in their upcoming challenges."

He told Lake, "I am fully confident in your abilities, and I know you will lead these Soldiers in the right direction. I look forward to our continued service together as we prepare and train our formations for upcoming missions."

Samulski said it has been a privilege to command the brigade,



and he said all the credit for the 116th's success over the last 31 months goes to the Soldiers, the noncommissioned officers, the warrant officers and officers of the brigade.

"Because of their followership, their leadership, hard work and sacrifice, this brigade continues to excel no matter what is asked," he said. "Military service is about people, and I can think of no finer people that I would wish to associate myself than with the Soldiers who have continued to serve in this brigade, this division, the Virginia Army National Guard and United States Army,"

He recognized the battalion-level command teams of the brigade.

"What we accomplished couldn't have been done without their leadership and followership," he said. "It has been an honor to serve with each and every one of you."

Reed said he has spent most of his National Guard career in the brigade and thanked the Soldiers of the 116th for their service, support and everything they do.

"You are the best of the best, and it has been my honor to serve as your CSM," Reed said. "We have an outstanding command team coming in."

Lake thanked Samulski and Reed for leading the brigade through numerous deployments around the globe and yielding a BCT in the state of readiness and experience not seen in quite some time.

"I will endeavor to continue this progression and take the BCT to even greater heights and readiness as we start the next chapter," he said. "I consider this a privilege and an honor to command the legendary 116th. The journey ahead will be rigorous, but the rewards will be great."

Wolfe said he couldn't speak without recognizing those who

"trained me, trusted me, pushed me and motivated me to be where I am today."

He recognized former squad leaders, first sergeants, staffs and commanders at many levels who helped mold this brigade into what it is today.

"I am absolutely humbled to be standing here today," he said. "I can think of no greater honor than to lead the NCOs of this storied unit. I promise I will do my absolute best to be deserving of the trust placed on me, and together the Soldiers, NCOs and officers of this brigade combat team will continue the legacy of service to community, commonwealth and nation."

All of the leaders thanked their families, as well as the families of the brigade's Soldiers, for their sacrifice and service through all the domestic and overseas missions accomplished by the 116th.

The Troutville-based 29th Division Band provided music for the event.

The 116th IBC is authorized approximately 3,500 Soldiers and is the largest major command in the Virginia National Guard. The 116th has units throughout Virginia from Winchester to Pulaski along I-81, from Staunton to Virginia Beach along I-64, from Danville to Lynchburg to Warrenton along Route 29 as well as Fredericksburg, Manassas and Leesburg. An infantry battalion based in Barbourville, Kentucky, is also aligned with the 116th for training and readiness oversight.

A brigade combat team is the basic deployable unit of maneuver in the U.S. Army and carries with it support units necessary to sustain its operations away from its parent division. The 116th consists of three infantry battalions, a cavalry squadron, a field artillery battalion, a brigade support battalion and brigade engineer battalion.

*By Cotton Puryear | Virginia National Guard Public Affairs*

## Convention

*(Continued from page 1)*

convention where we will share stories, enjoy snacks and beverages and reunite with our comrades. The room also has two wide screen televisions for all of our college football fans.

The hotel is situated across the street from the Hunt Valley Town Center that features a large Wegman's grocery store, Mission BBQ, Carraba's Italian Grill, and many shopping locations. There is also a light rail stop that visitors can use for transportation to downtown Baltimore, if they so desire.

The Planning Committee is now addressing the agenda for the weekend. For that purpose, we are also analyzing the results of the survey to plan for the events that best suit our attendees. As soon as we have the details in place we will communicate the weekend events and set up the registration page at the Association website.

*By Frank Armiger, National Executive Director*

## Mund to step down as Editor & Publisher of the *Twenty-Niner*

At the NEC II meeting held on 26 January 2023 at Pikesville Military Reservation, Editor William Mund made known his decision to step down as Editor & Publisher of the *Twenty-Niner* at the end of the calendar year of 2024. In his address to the NEC attendees he noted that his mental abilities have declined over the past several years.

Mund was appointed as Editor & Publisher by the late Past National Commander John F. "Jack" Kutcher at the National Executive Committee meeting on 13 October 2013 in Virginia Beach, VA. After serving as Asst. Editor for several years, he replaced the late PNC Donald McKee who did not seek reappointment.

From 2015 to 2019 Mund served as National Executive Director; and National Adjutant 2009-2019. He currently serves the Maryland Region as the Editor/Publisher of the *Chin Strap*, and the Region Adjutant. He is a member and Finance Officer of Silver Spring Post 94.

**Save the date for the 104th Annual Reunion & Convention  
19-22 October 2023 — Delta Hotels - Marriott, in Hunt Valley, MD**

# In Finland, Guard leaders look to enhance already strong ties

HELSINKI, Finland – Maj. Gen. Timothy P. Williams, the Adjutant General of Virginia, joined the National Guard's most senior general to meet with Finland's defense leadership and observe military training during a three-day stop February 14-16, 2023. Virginia Guard Soldiers and Airmen have trained shoulder-to-shoulder with their Finnish counterparts for many years, building deep professional and personal bonds. Finnish troops served with Virginia's 29th Infantry Division in Bosnia in the 1990s, sparking enduring friendships.

"The folks that we worked with in the Finnish Army have grown up along with us, and we've been keeping in contact, and we had an opportunity about six years ago to really strengthen cooperation, now that we're all in senior positions," Williams said.

In recent years, Virginia Guardsmen conducted cyber training with their Finnish counterparts, competed in a Finnish sniper competition, and learned from Finland's expertise operating and thriving in Arctic conditions, among other exchanges. Just this week, a Virginia infantry platoon arrived here for joint training.

During his visit, Hokanson also met with American Ambassador Douglas Hickey; Gen. Timo Kivinen, Finland's chief of defense; Lt. Gen. Esa Pulkkinen, director general of Finland's defense policy; and other senior leaders.

"I was honored to learn more about Finland's defense forces and their concept of comprehensive security," said Army Gen. Daniel Hokanson, chief of the National Guard Bureau. "Finland and the United States have an enduring friendship and shared commitment to peace and stability. Our security cooperation efforts have broadened over almost 30 years, and I believe they will only be strengthened in the years ahead."

At the Guard Jaeger Regiment near Helsinki, Hokanson talked with conscripts and observed training.

With a population of 5.5 million; in a country slightly smaller than Montana; with Europe's longest border with Russia, at 883 miles; and with the Soviet Red Army's 1939 invasion seared in its collective memory, the Nordic (but not Scandinavian) nation embraces a whole-of-society approach to defense.

All adult males are required to perform a year of national military or civilian service, and females can volunteer.

"Finland has had a very strong, capable military operating in a difficult environment for generations," Hokanson said.

In the face of natural or manmade disasters, Finns don't wait on government help – they expect to be self-reliant for



**Gen. Daniel Hokanson, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, and Maj. Gen. Timothy P. Williams, the Adjutant General of Virginia, visit defense leaders and troops Feb. 14, 2023, in Helsinki, Finland.**

at least 72 hours, a lesson learned from World War II, when the Soviets invaded.

Finland's military focuses on territorial defense rather than power projection, and its military policy embraces the whole of government and all sectors of society, including the business sector and non-governmental organizations.

Conscription contributes to all Finns having a familiarity with the military, and – because people from all walks of life have the shared experience of a year in uniform – enhances social cohesion.

In national defense courses run since 1961, union leaders, media representatives, and educators learn about the country's comprehensive security policy right alongside service members. Topics include psychological resilience and media literacy.

"This level of community involvement gives everyone a stake in national success," Hokanson observed.

In short, Finland has made itself a hedgehog unpalatable to the Russian bear.

And the experience of Ukraine, where the Russians have not differentiated between civilian and military targets, makes Finland's strategy of keeping high value targets away from civilian population centers look prescient.

This national comprehensive security strategy – defense in depth – is one of two areas Williams said the Virginia Guard has learned the most from.

"Their whole approach is colored by their hundreds of years of experience, but – more recently – 1939," the adjutant general said. "They're the masters of using an inferior-size force against a larger enemy – and how to stop them. Hedgehog and the bear: that's the perfect analogy."

The other area of greatest learning for Virginia Guardsmen? Arctic operations.

"It's being able to live, survive, operate and thrive in the Arctic during all the seasons, because each Arctic season brings its unique set of challenges – and some are more deadly than others, particularly when you get into the winter," Williams said.

*By Master Sgt. Jim Greenhill | National Guard Bureau*



# 104th Annual Reunion & Convention Hotel Information

## 19-22 October 2023



## HOTEL RESERVATIONS

**Delta Hotels – Marriott – Baltimore Hunt Valley**  
**245 Shawan Road**  
**Hunt Valley, MD 21031**

**For reservations call 844-781-7404. Hotel phone number is: 410-785-7000**

The group room rate is 159.00 plus tax (15.5%) per night for one guest. No charge for additional guest in the room. Reservations must be guaranteed with a credit card for one night. Check in time is 4 PM and check out time is 11 AM.

**BE SURE TO REFERENCE THE 29TH DIVISION ASSOCIATION ROOM BLOCK**

**MAKE YOUR HOTEL RESERVATIONS EARLY. WE ONLY HAVE A LIMITED NUMBER OF ROOMS**  
**CANCELLATION MAY BE MADE UP TO 3PM THE DAY PRIOR TO ARRIVAL WITHOUT CHARGES**

**CUT-OFF DATE FOR GETTING THE DISCOUNTED**  
**ROOM RATE IS SEPTEMBER 18, 2023.**





# Maryland's African-American contribution to the Civil War

The State of Maryland has a long record of African-American history and a long list of famous African-Americans.

In 1863, the Bureau of Colored Troops was formed, leading to the official recruiting of African-Americans in to the United States Colored Troops (U.S.C.T.) and the United States Navy. They formed 13 Artillery units, 7 Cavalry units and 138 Infantry units. Some of those units maintained their State designation, for example, the famed 54th Massachusetts Colored Infantry Regiment and the 5th Massachusetts Cavalry Regiment (Colored), but most units were given the United States Colored Troop designation.

Some notable African-Americans living in Maryland that enlisted in the U.S.C.T. were both of Harriet Tubman's husbands and Frederick Douglas' son.

Another noble Marylander was Medal of Honor recipient Sergeant Major (Sgt. Maj.) Christian A. Fleetwood. He was a free man of color who enlisted as a Sergeant. After the Army found out he had a college degree, he was appointed Sergeant Major. Sgt. Maj. Fleetwood received the Medal of Honor for action on September 29, 1864 at the Battle of New Market Heights (aka Battle of Chapin's Farm), VA. After the war, Sgt. Maj. Fleetwood rose to the rank of Major in the District of Columbia National Guard.

There were approximately 8,718 African-Americans from Maryland who enlisted to serve during the war. The largest percentage served in the Army, and a small percentage joined the Navy. In 1864, a group of United States Colored Troops was transferred to the U.S Navy at Baltimore.

There were six regiments of U.S.C.T.'s formed in Maryland (4th, 7th, 9th, 19th, 30, and 39th Infantry Regiments) during the war. While

these regiments were formed in Maryland, not every Marylander joined one of these six regiments. Marylanders served in U.S.C.T. units from across the country. They served in a variety of units to include Light Artillery, Heavy Artillery, Bands, Cavalry, Infantry, Pioneer (Engineer) and Quartermaster units. Many served as aides to senior officers, ambulance drivers, carpenters, cooks, hospital attendants and Provost Guards at military prisons.

I am in the process of going through the service records from every U.S.C.T., looking for Marylanders, and I am collecting the information with an eye to writing a book once I get through every one of the records. My database is a cradle to grave reference that currently identifies approximately 1,410 men across the U.S.C.T.

I have located men from every county, except Garrett County, that enlisted between 1863 and 1865. As of the writing of this article, here is a roll-up of the Marylanders, by county, that I have identified:

Allegany County – 14  
 Anne Arundel County – 51  
 Baltimore County – 284  
 Calvert County – 17  
 Caroline County – 24  
 Carroll County – 13  
 Cecil County – 23  
 Charles County – 86  
 Dorchester County – 13  
 Frederick County – 73  
 Harford County – 23  
 Howard County – 32  
 Kent County – 21  
 Montgomery County – 56  
 Prince George's County – 118  
 Queen Anne's County – 29  
 Somerset County – 15  
 St. Mary's County – 24  
 Talbot County – 149  
 Washington County – 28  
 Wicomico County – 2  
 Worcester County – 4

Additionally, there are men that were from unidentified counties – 211

There is a cemetery in Westminster, MD, Ellsworth Cemetery, that was formed by six U.S.C.T. Veterans after the war to provide burial places for people of color. I started researching the U.S.C.T. Veterans interred at Ellsworth Cemetery, and as of today have found, identified, and pulled the service records for 13 U.S.C.T. Veterans.

I was asked by a local Knights of Columbus Council 1393 to give them a walking tour of the cemetery as they were looking for a project to take on. They have since taken over the grass mowing and maintenance there. They have also brought in ground penetrating radar to help identify every burial location in the cemetery due to years of abuse and neglect.

By cross referencing the ground penetrating radar portion of the project, and using burial records, with the assistance from the Historical Society of Carroll County, they have placed new Veterans Administration (VA) headstones on the unmarked of nine of the U.S.C.T. Veterans. They hope to mark the remaining eligible U.S.C.T. burials with VA headstones over the next year.

If you know, or know of someone, who had a relative that served in the U.S.C.T., and are interested in receiving copies of their military service records at no cost, send me an email to [gravedigger1388@gmail.com](mailto:gravedigger1388@gmail.com), with their name, and the unit(s) they served in, and I will pull their records and send them back to you electronically. If you aren't sure of the unit(s) they served with, send me any information you have available, and I will try to locate their records for you.

*Submitted by Dan Pyle*

*Post 1-72*

*[gravedigger1388@gmail.com](mailto:gravedigger1388@gmail.com)*

## Executive Director's Message:

(Continued from page 1)

2022. But PNC Ted Shuey led a gallant effort supported across our entire organization, that ended with the retention of the iconic "Blue and Gray" patch that distinguishes our division and veterans both historically and currently. As Steve Melnikoff, WWII veteran, indicated to me when we filmed his portion of our "Save the Patch" video, "there are men in Normandy and across Europe who wore that patch to the grave." We have now assured that their memory and those who followed them will always be in everyone's heart when they see the yin yang patch that symbolizes unity.

However, as we look forward to the upcoming year I am certain that there will be new challenges for our country and organization to face. But in the case of the latter, rest assured that the 29th Division Association under the leadership of National Commander Dick Snyder and his staff officers is in good hands.

In fact, NC Snyder recently addressed the open position of National Finance Officer by nominating Richard Carr, Post 64 Commander, who stepped up to stand for the position. Former NFO Tom Knight announced his resignation at the 2022 Convention and fortunately, for the Association former NFO Brian Becker volunteered to serve as interim NFO until we were able to fill the position. On 27 March, the National Executive Committee unanimously approved the nomination of Richard Carr.

Richard, Brian and Assistant NFO Tom Knight will begin the transition immediately to assure that the new NFO is fully prepared to perform the tasks associated with his office. On behalf of the Association I would like to express our heartfelt thanks to Brian and Tom for their outstanding service.

As we look forward to the upcoming months, our focus will be in three areas: (1) planning for the 2023 Convention (See the Convention article), (2) recruiting of new members and increasing their participation in the Association at the National, Region and Post levels and (3) finalizing our new procedures manual based on the By-Laws adopted at the 2022 Convention. To assure that these goals are met this year NC Snyder assigned responsibilities to the Futures Committee under the able leadership of PNC David Ginsburg, the Convention Planning Committee and the By-Laws/Procedures Committee. We will report on their progress in the summer issue of the *Twenty-Niner*.

### Highlights of the Zoom NEC II Meeting on 26 January

National Commander Dick Snyder called the National Executive Committee meeting to order at 1100 hours. This was our first hybrid meeting with in person as well as Zoom attendees and it went very well.

NC Snyder reported that he attended the 116th Muster and was very impressed with the ceremony where the band played the song that honored the 29th Division during the "Save the Patch" campaign. (The song is available to hear on the video page of the Association website.) He also attended the dedication on Liberty Road in Maryland sponsored by the American Legion Post and Post 48 to honor Joseph A. Farinholt, 175th Infantry, for his heroic actions in WWII where he was awarded four Silver Stars.

Will Mund reviewed the letter he sent to the NEC indicating that he will be withdrawing from his duties as Membership Chairman and *Twenty-Niner* Editor at the end of 2024. Mund also edits the *Chin Strap* and the Convention Souvenir Book. He provided sufficient lead time to allow the Association an opportunity for a comprehensive search to find the appropriate replacements for him. If you are interested in any of these positions please notify me at [natexecdir@29div.com](mailto:natexecdir@29div.com).

The restoration of the 115th Regimental flag has been delayed due to COVID. The restoration company evolved into two companies during the pandemic. The Association approved the revised bids and the flag should be in the hands of the restoration company by 1 April.

Houston Matney and Buddy Faulconer are working on the procedures manual that will document the SOPs for the Association. The manual will also contain a calendar that will delineate when reports and forms must be filed.

PNC Hinz agreed to prepare a procedure for when and where it is appropriate to wear the dress hat versus the baseball cap.

NED Armiger is evaluating the use of Mailchimp for blast emails and other Association marketing activities that will facilitate communications with members, as well as the public. We are also planning to obtain a license for Zoom which we used extensively during the COVID pandemic and continue to use.

Will Mund reiterated that the *Chin Strap* is now a bimonthly publication starting in 2023. He also indicated that we now have 2,377 members of whom 636 are free members.

Futures Committee, under PNC Ginsburg, will be focusing on membership and trying to ascertain why individuals are not joining the Association and how to address the issue. The committee wants to provide incentives to encourage members to participate in "brick and mortar" posts, increase social media usage and provide new members with a Welcome Package that contains material that was made for the "Save the Patch" campaign.

The Association is planning to send a representative to Normandy for the 80th Anniversary of D-Day in 2024.

The next NEC meeting will be held on 22 June at the 29th Division Museum in Verona, VA. This will also be a hybrid in person/Zoom meeting.

Frank Armiger  
National Executive Director

## Recent donations to the National D-Day Memorial, in Bedford, VA

Two recent donations to the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford, VA help to preserve the legacy of the 29th Division on D-Day, and the storied 116th Regiment in particular.

Edwin Everett Hill of Roanoke, VA served in the Virginia National Guard prior to the war, in Company D of the 116th (the same unit as National D-Day Memorial founder Bob Slaughter). Stationed in England to train for the invasion of France, Hill wrote home extensively and gladly received photographs of his wife and baby daughter at home. That daughter, Virginia Hill Clinebell, donated her father's artifacts in November.

Sadly, Edwin Hill would never return home to see his family. He died on Omaha Beach on D-Day, one of many 116th heroes to perish in the chaos of that day. He lies today in the Normandy-American Cemetery above the beach where he died.

Included in the collection are many of the letters and photographs that Hill cherished, his Purple Heart for D-Day service, certificates recognizing his service and sacrifice, the camera he took

with him to England, and the burial flag, with Gold Stars on it, which adorned his casket in 1944. Edwin Hill's name appears on Plaque W-11 at the National D-Day Memorial.

Philmore Minter of Martinsville, VA served with Company H of the 116th; like Hill he was a prewar National Guardsman. In England he trained with the short-lived 29th Ranger unit and may have participated in a pre-war raid on the German held island of Ushant.

On D-Day he landed with the 116th on Omaha Beach, and served throughout the campaign



**Edwin Everett Hill**



**The Purple Heart awarded posthumously to Edwin Hill for his D-Day sacrifice; a New Testament he carried across Omaha Beach, and his 1944 burial flag with Gold Stars.**



**Philmore Minter's WWII uniform, sporting a rare 29th Rangers tab.**

in France. While he survived the war, we can see evidence afterwards of what today would be called PTSD; sadly Minter died early, in 1963. His son David donated the priceless artifacts to the National D-Day Memorial this past January.

The unique collection includes several uniform pieces, including an "Ike Jacket" with a rare 29th Rangers patch. Also preserved are Minter's dog tags, and other items he carried across Omaha Beach, including a 1921 silver dollar, cherished as a good luck charm throughout the months of the 29th's campaign in France. Philmore Minter's medals from the war, including his Bronze Star awarded for service on D-Day, were also included—even his 1946 membership card to the 29th Division Association.

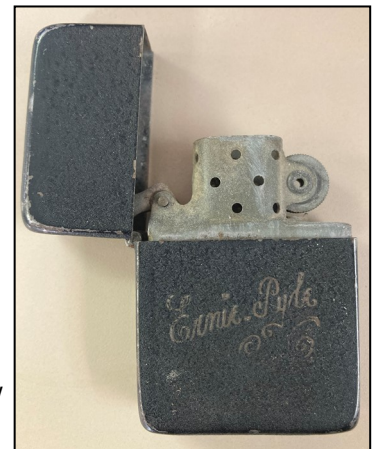
One of Minter's more interesting pieces is a black Zippo lighter, the iconic device favored by millions of Americans in WWII. This particular one has an interesting story linked to famous and beloved war correspondent Ernie Pyle. Pyle was known to present Zippos to men he interviewed, and Minter was apparently one beneficiary of this largesse. He carried it with him for the rest of the war, and afterwards, Minter had his name printed on one side of the lighter, and Pyle's on the other. Pyle, revered by millions of the "dogface" soldiers whose stories he told, was killed in combat in 1945 in the Pacific.

Minter's son David presented the collection to the National D-Day Memorial to be sure his father's service with the 29th would not be forgotten. David himself had an interesting military history, and included some documentation of the part he played in a little-known conflict in the Demilitarized Zone of Korea during the Vietnam War.

Edwin Hill and Philmore Minter were only two out of sixteen million Americans who wore the uniform in World War II. Some, like Hill, made the ultimate sacrifice; others, like Minter, came home victorious but greatly changed by their service. By diligently preserving their legacies, we help to tell the stories of many others, and pay tribute to the valor, fidelity, and sacrifice that marked their generation.



**1921 Silver Dollar carried by Philmore Minter as a good luck charm on D-Day.**



**The Zippo lighter given by Ernie Pyle to Philmore Minter, 1944.**

*By John D. Long, Director of Education, D-Day Memorial*



# Alpha Company Soldiers honored at Bedford Welcome Home Parade

BEDFORD, VA – Virginia National Guard Soldiers assigned to the Bedford-based Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team were honored for their federal active duty service in Africa at a welcome home parade hosted by the Bedford Boys Tribute Center Feb. 11, 2023, in Bedford, Virginia.

Alpha Company mobilized as part of Task Force Red Dragon to conduct a security mission for Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa from November 2021 through September 2022.

Mayor of Bedford Tim Black, National D-Day Memorial President April Cheek-Messier and Major General John M. Rhodes, 29th Infantry Division commanding general, all delivered remarks thanking the Soldiers for their service and their families and the Bedford community for their support. MG Rhodes presented 29th ID certificates of appreciation to Mayor Black, April Cheek-Messier and Ken and Linda Parker, founders of the Bedford Boys Tribute Center. The Troutville-based 29th Infantry Division Band provided ceremonial music for the event.

"This is what the National Guard is all about," Rhodes said. "The National Guard is a community-based organization."

Rhodes explained how National Guard troops are part of their communities, and it is often where they work, shop and send their kids to school.

"That is what makes the National Guard a unique organization," he said. "When we deploy, the community as a whole deploys. To see this community come out to welcome these Soldiers home is so emotional to me. I can't tell you how much I appreciate it."

Rhodes said it was also very important to recognize the Soldiers' families.

"I can tell you the families' service is as honorable as those of us who wear the uniform," he said.

"Thank you for your service," Rhodes told the Soldiers of Alpha Company. "You are carrying on the proud tradition of what Bedford is all about. I am proud of you and what you have accomplished."

When the 116th Infantry Infantry was activated for World War II service Feb. 3, 1941, Virginia communities provided Soldiers to serve in the unit, and Bedford provided Soldiers to serve in Company A, 116th Infantry Regiment, 29th Infantry Division. During the assault on Omaha Beach during the June 6, 1944, D-Day invasion, 19 of the "Bedford Boys" of Company A died.

Bedford's population in 1944 was about 3,200, and proportionally the Bedford community suffered the nation's most severe D-Day losses. Recognizing Bedford represented both large and small communities whose citizen-Soldiers served on D-Day, Congress warranted the establishment of the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford.

"As we harken back to an even earlier time, we remember the unshakeable devotion of Company A," Cheek-Messier said. "That devotion, as we can all see, has not gone away."

She shared stories of several of the Bedford Boys, including Capt. Taylor Fellers, the commander of Company A on D-Day, and how he stressed to the pilot of his landing craft the importance of getting to the beach at their appointed time. Some of Bedford Boys could have followed a path allowing them to miss the D-Day landings, but she explained how they simply wanted to be with their comrades, their friends, doing a job they had trained together for so long.

"That same devotion is apparent today," she said. "Your camaraderie, your commitment to country, to one another, echoing the resolve of



**Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team were honored for their federal active duty service in Africa at a welcome home pa-**

Taylor Fellers and his men. You all had a job to do, and you did it, and you did it extraordinarily well. This community could not be more proud."

Cheek-Messier said less than 170,000 WWII veterans are still living, there were more than 60 million who served, and it is important to remember to share their legacy.

"You are already doing that by continuing to be the torchbearers of freedom with your service to the country," she said to the Soldiers of Alpha Company. "You took an oath of service to our nation at whatever the cost. You have dedicated yourself to that duty. You, like those who came before you, followed a simple patriotic call to civic duty. You were, and still are, prepared to defend the ideals of peace, freedom and democracy."

She said nothing they say could possibly do justice to the sacrifices of the Soldiers or the sacrifices made by their families.

"We will not forget what you have done and continue to do with your service," Cheek-Messier said. "We can never repay that debt, but we can remember and say thank you. We are so happy you are home."

The turnout of the Bedford community and their support throughout the entire deployment made a lasting impact on Alpha Company Soldiers.

"Speaking on behalf of Alpha Company, I have to say that was one of the greatest events I have taken part in," said Capt. Jonathan Moak, commander of Alpha Company. "The town really showed up and showed us what we mean to them. The National Guard is a unique organization that is woven into the fabric of the community. and that was proven here today."

Moak also recognized the importance of The Operation Bedford Remembers program where citizens wrote letters and sent care packages to the unit while they were in Africa. Many of those citizens came out and had a special lunch with at the Bedford armory.

"I can't say enough about how that makes us feel," Moak said. "We're proud to be the 'modern' Bedford Boys."

More than 1,000 Virginia and Kentucky National Guard Soldiers mobilized as Task Force Red Dragon under the command of the Lynchburg-based 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry Regiment, 116th Infantry Brigade Combat Team to conduct a security mission for Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa. They returned to Virginia and reunited with loved ones in late September and early October 2022.

*By Cotton Puryear | Virginia National Guard Public Affairs Office*



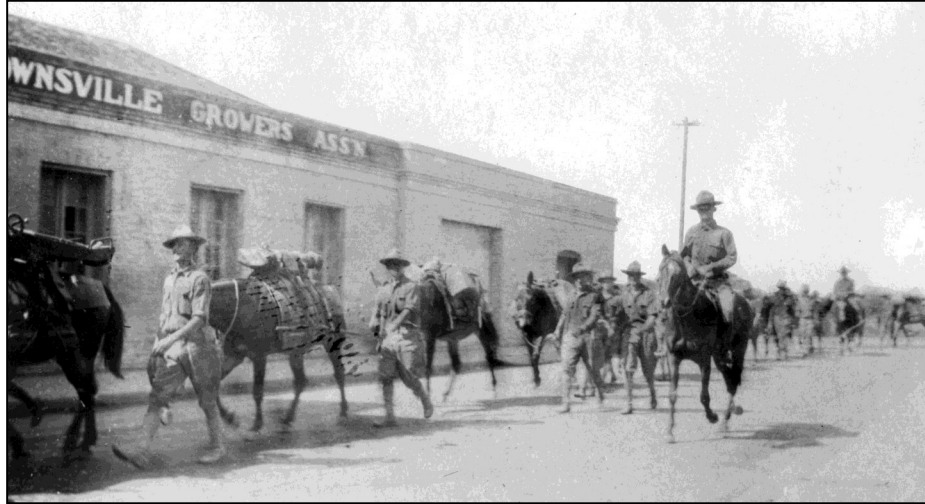
# Tales from the Border – Brownsville, Texas, 1916

It seems a day does not go by that there is news from the US/Mexican border. The same was true 108 years ago. The Virginia Guard's Border Service owes its origins to Woodrow Wilson's meddling in Mexican politics. The US had long supported General Pancho Villa, but at the end of 1915, the President decided to support Carranza in his attempt to bring the Mexican Revolution to an end. On March 9, 1916, Villa, running short on supplies, attacked the town of Columbus, New Mexico. Five days later, Wilson ordered a force of 5,000 Regular troop to enter the Mexican State of Chihuahua and apprehend Villa.

Historians regularly speak of the experience gained by the Regular Army in the Punitive Expedition, but little time is devoted to the role the National Guard performed. The modern Guard had been born out of the Efficiency in Militia Act of 1903. Now, Congress passed the National Defense Act of 1916, which gave Wilson the power to mobilize state militias. He signed the bill on June 3rd and called up 140,000 troops sixteen days later. Virginia had three regiments, which would go on to become part of the 29th Division a year later. On June 28, 1916, the 1st and 2nd Virginia Regiments were ordered to assemble in Richmond. Eight days later, they boarded trains for the six-day journey to Brownville, Texas.

Fort Brown was garrisoned by the 4th Infantry, a Regular Army regiment. The Virginians were joined by the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Iowa National Guard. All were under the command of Major General James Parker. General Frederick Funston was Parker's superior, and he ordered an inspection of all 25,000

troops under his command at the Resaca Dela Palmer Battlefield, outside of Brownsville. Not to be outdone, General Parker created a drill and ceremony competition, which was won by Company L, from Lynchburg, of the 1st Virginia on September 20, 1916.



Troops passing the Brownsville Growers Association, Brownsville, Texas.

For Regular Army officers, drill seemed like the best way to keep the Virginians out of trouble. The Guard was stationed at the site of the Palo Alto Battlefield from the Mexican American War of 1848. "Camp Cactus" was eleven miles outside of Brownsville, but the soldiers soon discovered there was a railway, which ran 25 miles to Port

Isabel on the Gulf Coast. The community had a wireless station, which had to be manned by a company of Guardsmen. The relief traveled on the train whose engine still is on display at the Historic Brownsville Museum. On Christmas Day, soldiers of Company L had earned a pass to the beach when someone discovered on route that some of the freight cars were carrying beer. With no MPs present, they liberated most of it.

Forward thinking officers recognized that this was an excellent opportunity to do more than just drill. They wanted to train these citizen soldiers for the battle they knew was coming in France. In late September, the 1st Virginia had its first war games exercise. The enemy was attacking the Port Isabel Station. For the first time, the men were rushed to the battlefield via "motor vans." On the return trip from the exercise, those who rode the train arrived back to Camp Cactus on time, while many of the Guardsmen and Lt. Opie got caught in a rainstorm which resulted in them getting stuck in the mud.



Here are Guardsmen from Staunton, Virginia waiting in the hot sun for their turn in the review. The officer closest to the camera is E.W. Opie. He would go on to command the 116th during their initial Stateside training for D-Day.



Stuck in the mud.



Troops in trenches.

Capt. John Scott of the Regular Army tried to make border training as practical as possible. He focused on entrenching techniques. In November, the two Virginia Regiments marched 13 miles north through pouring rain to face the Guard from Iowa in the Brown V Blue Maneuvers at San Benito, Texas.

January brought a return to Richmond in pullman cars. Both regiments were reviewed by the Governor Henry Carter Stuart and excused from Federal Service on January 17, 1917. That same day Arthur Zimmerman, from the German Foreign Office,



Troops in tents.

sent his now infamous telegram to his embassy in Mexico City. It was intercepted by the British, who quickly shared it with President Wilson. Nineteen days later, the Regular Army crossed back into US territory. General Pershing's force had defeated Villa's troops, but they never caught the Mexican General. The day before, February 4, 1917, Germany had declared unrestricted submarine warfare around the islands of Great Britain. The war that Capt. Scott had trained the Virginia Guard for was about to take place.

In 1931, Edley Craighill stated, "Before the Mexican border situation arose the Guard had been held up before the eyes of the country as the State Militia, which might do very well for strike or riot duty, but would be of little value in case the nation should be faced with an emergency that called for trained soldiers. The

### Meet the National Chaplain:

## CH (COL) (R) Joel Jenkins

This being my first column, I feel it is important to offer a brief introduction. It is a personal privilege for me to serve as chaplain for the 29th Division Association.

A large part of my 27 years as an Army chaplain included my wearing the 29th Infantry Division patch. Eventually, I had the honor of serving as Division chaplain.



In addition to my time in the 29th, my service included time at the Pentagon during 9/11, serving for a year on the staff of General Martin Dempsey in Iraq, and serving my last three years with the 82nd Airborne Division.

I have walked the beaches of Normandy, and I am honored to help ensure the legacy of the 29th Division. An important part of our Association's work is to honor the service of every generation of 29ers, from 18 July 1917 until the present. In future columns I will share a brief inspirational word.

For this column, let me simply state that American citizens are free to profess a faith in God, or certainly to choose not to believe in God. That's part of America's greatness. However, for those of us who do profess such faith, we are aligned with our forefathers, who as early as 1864, put on our coinage the phrase, "In God We Trust."

Of course, in 1956 President Eisenhower signed the law that made that phrase the motto of our nation. For me, and I'm sure for many 29ers of all generations, we do stand upon that motto, and can still say, "In God We Trust."

In conclusion, as I receive notice of the passing of our fellow 29ers, we will pass on that information.

It is with sadness we relate the passing of BG (Ret) Joseph A Goode, Jr. along with Mrs. Frances Anne Thackston, widow of the late Adjutant General of Virginia, MG (R) Carroll Thackston.

*Chaplain Joel Jenkins*

eyes and minds of the Regular Army were opened to some extent during the service along the Border by the capable efficiency and devotion to duty of the citizen soldiers." Like many enlisted men with Border Service, Craighill went on to become an officer in World War I. After the conflict, he returned to the 29th Division and served as Executive Officer of the 115th in World War II.

*By Edmund Potter, National Historian*



# The FoG — Friends of the Guard

*Time for another update on the FoG's support of the Virginia National Guard Historical Foundation: since our last report most of the effort has been focused on the volunteers restoring our UH-1 Huey, beginning the work on the 105mm cannon in front of the JFHQ, and starting the massive job of removing the rust and restoring the damaged areas on the M7B2 Priest. The cold and rain in December through February was pretty daunting but the group persevered and continued to work.*



The M7B2 Priest, a 105mm mounted on the body of a Sherman tank, arrives at its display pad on the parade deck of the Joint Force Headquarters.



On a cold and dreary day, 5 members of the FoG begin to remove the rust and dirt from the Priest. From left: Forest Malcomb, John Bleattler, Tom Michels, Brian Wood and Steve Bourgeois.

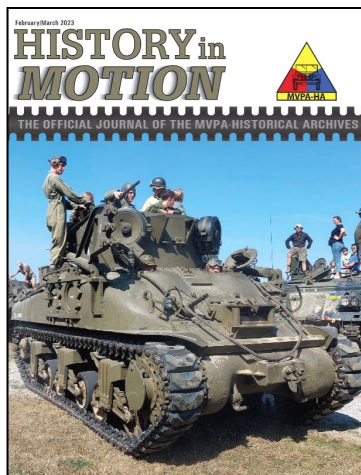


The Priest adds a level of complexity because not only does the exterior require a lot of work, the open crew area will require significant work to preserve and protect it.



The Huey is ready at last to be mounted on a display stand at the front of the JFHQ. The silver circles seen on the painted areas are areas where we found repaired battle damage.

The Feb-March 2023 copy of the Military Vehicle Preservation Association (MVPA) magazine; "History in Motion" features the story of the VANG Historical Foundation volunteer's work in 2022 to preserve the M84 Mortar Track that is dedicated to the "Monticello Guards."



Seen from the front, the Huey has been re-marked with its original tail number: 821.

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**SAVING OUR PATCH!**



**Our most urgent cause in 2022 was to defend our famous and iconic Blue & Gray shoulder patch from the work of the DOD's Naming Commission to have the patch retired. We were successful in that effort.**