



THUNDERBOLT

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WORLD WAR II

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— SHERATON MUSIC CITY HOTEL —
SITE OF THE 66TH REUNION!

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THE THUNDERBOLT

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A SALUTE TO PAST PRESIDENTS WHO HAVE SERVED US WELL

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*Denotes Deceased



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

CARMELLA CATRAMBONE

We celebrated 65 years And our boys came home

by Carmella Catrambone
President

How does a grateful heart pay tribute to those who have given their all? What does it mean to be happy and to celebrate that joy? How does one make more memories when so many have already been made? What do you do when a loved one comes home after many years?

Anyone who attended our 65th reunion at West Point has the answer to the very first question. All those who participated showed their gratitude by pitching in to do whatever was necessary to make the reunion the best that it possibly could have been. The descendants as well as the veterans showed respect for anyone with whom they had contact. There were helping hands and helping hearts the whole time.

As for being happy and celebrating the joy, smiling faces were normal attire for the days spent together. Celebration took place every day and into the evenings in the Hospitality Room, especially on Friday night after the USO show.

So many memories were made that it is difficult to keep track of all of them. Old friends were reunited and new friendships were established—friendships that last forever.

And finally, our boys came home. The touching gift from our dear European friends was

the highlight of our reunion. They presented the veterans and families with a flag that they had made (See pages 28, 29). On the flag were pictures of each grave of the members of the 83rd who are buried in Europe. Presentation of the flag at our 83rd Infantry Reunion was symbolic of bringing them home to US soil. The presentation was made at the opening ceremony service held in the Cadet's Chapel on Thursday morning. The flag was then hung in our meeting room for all to see during the rest of the reunion.

The USO was a real hit. Three very pretty girls, dressed in red, white, and blue, sang those old familiar songs of WWII. I watched the veterans' faces and could see their lips moving as they sang along to songs like Don't Sit Under The Apple Tree, My Buddy, and I'll Be Seeing You.



The trip to the Purple Heart Museum was of interest to many, especially those who had family members who had been awarded the Purple Heart Medal. On Friday, we took a relaxing cruise on the Hudson River.

The reunion was a success because of all of the people who attended and all those who helped to make it a special occasion. The 83rd Infantry Division Association has a unique group of people as members. This is the reason for its great success.

I am happy to report that we are in the process of getting all of the reunion memories together and will make them available to anyone who would be interested. Perhaps by the next mailing, we will have an order form for copies of the European presentation, the USO show, and pictures of the entire reunion. Thanks go to Wilfried DeBacker, Paul DiGiammerino, and Eric Kunkel for working on this for us. ▼

Reunion 2012

Nashville, Tennessee

August 1st to August 4th

By Carmella DiMartino Catrambone

Mark your calendar! The 83rd Infantry Division Association will celebrate its 66th reunion next year at the Sheraton Music City Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee. The reunion will begin on Wednesday, August 1st and end Saturday evening, August 4th.

I was able to visit the hotel and do believe that everyone will be thoroughly satisfied with the facility. It is beautiful with modern, spacious guest rooms. All of the meeting rooms large are very inviting. Bring your bathing suit because there is a pool. The hotel offers free shuttle service to and from the Nashville Airport. I met with the extremely friendly staff and they are looking forward to hosting the 83rd next year. We expect next year to be another great reunion.

Nashville is the home of the Country Music Hall of Fame and the historical Ryman Theater, where the Grand Ole Opry takes place. You might want to extend your stay so that you can take in all of the sites Nashville has to offer.

More information will be forthcoming in future issues of the Thunderbolt. (See cover for a photograph of the facility) ▼

FROM THE CHAPLAIN

ELLSWORTH MASSIE

A word from Chaplain! Let us keep each other in mind and remember in prayer those in good times and especially in the trying times of old age and the increasing inability to do all that we could do when we were younger!

This will give us a strong sense of fellowship until our allotted days on this earthly stay is completed!

Let us remember the purpose of our being together. Is it not to honor and hold close in our hearts the memory and desire of those who have given their all in the cause of Freedom!

We pass this message on to our "Legacy Group" and wish them the best in the years ahead when all of us "The Originals" have passed on to our reward! ▼

FROM THE EDITOR

CLIFF WOOLDRIDGE

"I'm not a mind reader." People write to me asking me questions and do not give me a return telephone number to call them back. Received one the other day and that asked me questions but did not give me his phone number to reply to him. All he said was that he wanted information and signed his name "OT". Nancy said "AT". And we still do not know who he is. "AT - Let me know who you are."

With all that has been going on between doctors' appointments and my health I have not done a good job recently with the getting the "Thunderbolt" out on time. Hopefully, 2012 we will do better.

Looking for anyone who would be interested in helping to keep the "Thunderbolt" going. Please continue to submit ideas and articles to include in the next "Thunderbolt" issues. Nancy and I wish all a Happy Healthy New Year! ▼

COMPANIES

Co. "A"– 330TH

CHARLES ABDINOOR
sgtchuck83rd@comcast.net

A Co. 330th. News

Hi Buddy's;

This is getting to be a habit, but I love it. WELL, they done it again, you say WHO!, Who else but those spoiled brats that we use to bring to our Reunions. The one's that ran the halls at night, and also the one's that were suppose to stay in their rooms, but had the run of the Hotel, while we were enjoying ourselves with our Buddy's reminicing the War in the Hospitality Room. I must say YOU KIDS! I don't know how you do it but, it seems like each year is better than the last. I take off my HELMET to you!

Well we had our Mai-tre d' Ed Brown, and of course Pauline taking care of the banquet seating again this year. It seems so strange that we did not have any complaints from members, the usual request is "I have to sit on (Joes) table, but it is already filled". Some how we are getting better each year. Of course we learned from the BEST, Junior McCouch. We miss him and the Family, especially POP. Stewart and Nellrita could not make it, Health issues, but we have not given up. Earl Dunn and Phyllis, same. Walt Pillion and Pearl, hopefully we see them again, Walt is busy with his garden, and he turned ninety this year. Cookie Senica is still at his retirement home, and he is the oldest one there. Ninety plus. We missed the Prussman's, I had called to remind them, and they said they would be there. Neal, being a POW, had a lot to catch up on the news of A-Company. I am not giving up, they will come again, I am sure.

We lost Shorty Glasser, and Paul Reed, jr. this past year, and we most certainly miss them, as well as ALL our Buddy's. I have to say THANKS! to our European Chapter, nineteen came, and they were the HIT of the Reunion. The FLAG that they made up in

memory of ALL the Deceased that we left behind. Imagine a picture of EVERY STONE MONUMENT

ETCHED IN THE FLAG, was the HIGHLIGHT of the Reunion. I cannot say enough of these Comrades. I would be remiss if I did not mention Jean Paul, and Wilfried. and THANKS TO THE REST. "YOU ARE THE BEST" ▼

DIXIE CHAPTER NEWS

ELLSWORTH MASSIE

Report from Dixie Chapter Meeting! Under the leadership of our new president John Mantooth we met once again in Gatlinburg, Tenn. 83rd real live vets were present. Morris, Duncan, Miller, Massie with them 31 others, descendants, widows and associates had a great time together reliving the past and looking ahead to the future!



My trip was pleasant without trouble except for my wife and my semi-disability. We are still able to be present and enjoy the company of those younger and willing to work, comrades of long steady friendship! Many had to cancel but three widows were present and added much to our get together! McCroy, Jackson, Poole. We are happy to have them and look forward to our next meeting hoping are planning for more to join us!

We join you in prayer and thoughts of those lost to us in the past years! We stand with those loved ones left behind and support them in their lives without their loved ones!

I just received news of our very own Tony Leone's death! He leaves a son and grandson. My relationship goes back a long way. I'd like to share this with you at our next meeting! ▼

MAIL BAG

Dear Cliff,

I'm enclosing an article that was in the Richmond Times Dispatch newspaper. This is an honor that I cherish along with my family but the greatest honor of my life was serving my country in WW II with Co. K 329 the Regiment from June 1944 until January 10, 1945 when I was wounded, for the second time, during the Battle of the Bulge in Petit Langlier, Belgium.

Yours,

Al Rinaldi
Co. K 329th Regiment



UR announces 2011 hall class

**Moates, Wood
among those who
will be inducted**

BY JOHN O'CONNOR
Richmond Times-Dispatch

Former basketball stars Johnny Moates and Kenny Wood headline the 2011 class being inducted to the University of Richmond Athletics Hall of Fame.

Also included are former football and basketball player Al Rinaldi, four-sport standout Patricia Kursch McGehee and Harold Babb, the school's NCAA faculty athletic representative from 1984-2010.

Moates, a 1967 graduate, scored 1,440 points in three varsity seasons, and he ranks No. 11 on the program's scoring list. The guard from Benedictine High averaged 20 points during the 1965-66 season, and 25 points in 1966-67.

Wood, a 6-5 forward from East Hampton, N.Y., scored 1,427 points, and was named all-Colonial Athletic Association as a senior in 1992-93. The four teams on which Wood played went 81-40, including two trips to the NCAA tournament and one to the NIT.

Rinaldi, a 1951 graduate and former football coach at Highland Springs High, played one year of football for the Spiders and was a four-year starter in basketball. Rinaldi was also a member of the UR track team.

Kursch McGehee, a 1967 graduate, excelled in field hockey, basketball, lacrosse and tennis. Babb, a 1972 graduate, was dedicated to maintaining academic and athletic integrity of Spiders sports.

This class will be inducted Saturday, Feb. 12, in a 9 a.m. ceremony at the Jepson Alumni Center. The group will be honored at halftime of the UR-Saint Louis men's basketball game that afternoon. Also recognized at the ceremony and game will be the class inducted last year: Ken Atkinson (basketball), Kate Flavin (basketball), Tim Stauffer (baseball), Aron Stewart (basketball), Winston Whitehead (football), and the 2008 football team that won the FCS national title.

Their induction ceremony was canceled last year due to a winter storm.

joconnor@timesdispatch.com
(804) 649-6233

August Farias
(Maurice)

Dear Clayton W. Oldridge

Just a few lines to let you
know that I lost my lovely
Friends HAZEL Kristofferson
Please put it the next Thunderbolt
May God Bless you all and I will
attend the next Reunion. Hazel didn't
miss any Reunion's till were friends
for 38 yrs and I will miss her

Sincerely

August Maurice Farias



August Farias
P.O. Box 7356
New Bedford, MA 02742



Sept. 1 1945 83rd THUNDERBOLT Division Riflemen In XII Corps Meet

Forty Thunderbolt sharpshooters will face the best marksmen in the XII Corps matches at Regensburg from Monday, September 3rd, to Thursday, September 6th.

Following the try-outs at Pocking last week, the highest scorers were chosen to represent the 83rd at the XII Corps contest. The 331st will have 15 men there; 329th, eight; 330th, seven; Divarty has five contenders; Signal Co. and Ordinance, two each; and the Div. Hqs. Co., and the Engineers are sending one apiece.

The 20 officers and men who will fire the M-1 are: Major William W. Seller, Capt. Daniel O. Gust, S/Sgt. Wallace L. Geyer, Pfc. Otto Hamrick, Sgt. Ivan C. Bodrill, Pfc. Jerrie W. Snead, S/Sgt. Don Wenge, Pfc. Keith A. Barnett, Pfc. Paul Kirchner, S/Sgt. Mario Vallomy, Pfc. Raymond Howerton, Pfc. Albert Snook, S/Sgt. James E. Pixley, Pfc. William M. Trainor, S/Sgt. Farret Hayward, Pfc. Julian Vick, Pfc. Robert Brockoff, T/4 Richard E. Anderson, T/4 Charles J. Haugh and Sgt. William G. Fowler.

Those who will be throwing the Carbine to their shoulders are: Maj. Sellers, Capt. Gust, Pfc. Ward O. Georoe, T/Sgt. Max Holtz, Pfc. Lloyd M. Decker, Pfc. Norman F. Conine, Pfc. Edward W. Beck, S/Sgt. Joseph Lobig, Pfc. Raymond S. Austin, Pfc. Jacob Friedland, Pfc. Harold E. Cooper, Sgt. Harold A. Bachms, S/Sgt. Pixley, Pfc. Andrew Hickerson, T/5 Harold Basham, T/5 Thomas R. Dobbins, Pfc. Vester W. Patterson.

Those who will be shooting them down the line with a 45 are: Capt. Philip E. Shogian, CWO. James W. Carter, CWO. James E. Morrison, T/4 Edward E. Wiese, Pfc. Falen J. Allen, Sgt. Dayton O. Alp, Pfc. James R. Throgmorton, T/5 Donald J. Clark, Pvt. Richard O. Herrick.

Letters From The Front

Dear Mr. Wooldridge,

My name is Eileen Kozuch and the youngest daughter of William Hopf, HQ 331st 3rd BN. For the last 4 years I have been living with and taking care of my parents. My father passed away October 3, 2009. I came across the enclosed letter that my father wrote to my mother in 1945. The letter is written so well, I think it should be shared. You see my mother died May 6, 2009 of Alzheimer's and they were married for 63 years. My dad was 22 years old when he wrote this letter. I have enclosed a typed version of the letter also as parts are hard to read.

If you could take my dad's name off your mailing list please.

Thank You,
Eileen A. Kozuch

February 27, 1945

Dearest Helen,
It's just a matter of a couple hours before we go deeper into Germany, but I noticed something tonight that I've got to tell to someone, so here goes. Everyone is just sitting around waiting for the time we move out, and as a whole all the fellas are in good spirits. Art and I have been sitting here in our shack reading everything we can get our hands on. I just came back from across the street from our battalion office and when I walked in the room here is what I saw and heard. It's just a small room, and there was a radio playing some good popular music, there was still a small fire in the stove, and the room was fairly stuffy. Lt. Divan was sitting in a chair by the fire reading a Readers Digest, and lined along the floor on the right was Al Candito, just looking into space listening to that music. Next to Al was Tony Barkowicz, he to was just day-dreaming while listening to that music. Smetzer was sitting in a chair, and he never does say much, but is a dam good soldier. He's the company runner and use to be a lawyer in civilian life. He is 39 years old and should be back in the states. On the floor next to the door Pappy Roat was sitting. He's always in good spirits except for these last couple of days. He got word that his Mother died & he's been pretty low since then. He

used to be our mess Sgt., but got busted for getting drunk. He's 44 years old & has a son over in Belgium someplace. In the center of the room seated around the table was Lt. Bishop reading a mystery book, but I don't think that any of the fellas reading knew what they are reading because of the music. McCombs was sitting next to Lt. Bishop & he was reading the Army Times. He's from W. V. & got married before coming overseas, he's 30 years old now & one of the most pleasant & best liked fellas in the company.

On the other side of the room was Charlie Varber sitting in the corner, he's carefree & likes to have a good time, but didn't have much to say tonight. Then there was Mike Pippas our mess Sgt., & he to was just sitting and looking into the smoke that now filled the room from the cigarettes everyone was smoking. Mike came to the company a couple of months ago from another company. It seemed that he couldn't get along with some of the officers there so we took him & he's been doing a dam good job ever since. On the other side of the table was Hudson, he's a new fella in the company, & he's got the job of picking up the dead both Americans & Jerries.

In back of Hudson sat Harry Miller. He's a music bug & made several remarks about

how solid the music was. He met his brother the other day & it was the first time they saw each other for seven years. When I made 1st Sgt. Back in Normandy he was one of the nine replacements that I had to go hunt out of different holes in the area. He's a cook now & a good one at that. Next to Harry was Walter Litterall, he's about the only one who wasn't paying much attention to the music because he's mainly interested in the news. He can read a paper through once and tell you about everything that's in it. He spent some time in the pen before coming to the army but you'd never think it by looking at him. I was standing in the doorway when George Klien our mailman came in. He bumped me a little & started apologizing all over hell. Today was the first time I received mail in 12 days he felt worse about it then I did. Everyday he would apologize & say "Gee Sarg. I'm sorry maybe tomorrow I'll have something for you" He knows how much a guy likes to get mail & feels bad if he doesn't bring home the bacon, this just about finishes what I saw on the faces of just a few of the men while we were waiting orders to move out. There was no talking, just blank solemn faces, listening to the music & thinking;

I started to listen & thought what the hell & started to go out when the telephone rang & it was Capt. Smith from Regtl. Hdqs. He said that we would get paid tomorrow. That's when the silence actually broke, everyone piped in "where we going to spend the dough"? I've yet to see a house in Germany that hasn't been hit by bombs, or shrapnel from some sort of weapons. Of course in the spare moments there will be crap games, poker games, & money orders sent home.

March 9, 1945

Sorry this letter was delayed, but up until today I didn't care if I wrote any letters or not. Since I started this letter a lot of ground has been covered, and if the jerries keep fighting they won't have any homes left. All the civilians who are left in these cities live in cellars.

The reason I'm finishing this letter tonight is because Eleanor wrote me an interesting let-

ter today, and in an indirect way she more or less brought out how wrong I've been in as far as writing is concerned.

I'm still waiting for a letter from you in answer to the one I wrote you about some of the contacts I've made over here. I've a feeling one of these days you're going to tell me where to get off, and I can't say that I blame you. Now that were in Germany proper, there isn't any chance for us to do any running around.

March 10, 1945

Well I guess you've been reading about the 83rd being the first outfit to reach the Rhine River., and may be we'll beat the Russians into Berlin. Since we hit this river a week ago, we've been living a pretty nice life in these German homes. To bad the lighting and water facilities are out of order.

It seems that every time I start writing a letter something comes up & disturbs me. Right now there's four officers in the room here with there liquor rations, & every time the bottle comes around I've got to take a time out.

There's some pretty nice Hienny gals walking the streets, but we can't even look at them twice. If you even talk to one of these civilians you get fined \$65 and get slapped in the can for three months, plus getting your rating taken away if you have one.

Incidentally this is the first letter I've written in almost a month, but I'm not a bit proud of it. In fact I'm pretty dam ashamed of it. When I first came overseas it was something of a novelty, you know, something new and different, but it's getting to be that I'm getting pretty well sick and tired of the whole setup. I just can't seem to get in the mood to do anything, just staying in one place for more than a couple days makes a guy restless as hell, and you just want to keep moving ahead, to see whets on the other side of the hill. I never realized a guy could miss so many things just by being away from them for a year, but this last year has gone by very slowly, and it seems like its been a century since I left the states.

continued >

As long as there's something to do it's alright,
but just sitting and waiting is the tough part.
(Cant write on both sides of the paper)

Before I forget it Helen, Eleanor was saying in her letter that you haven't been out to West View for three weeks. They look forward to your visits out there Helen, and they think that something's wrong if you don't come, so do me a favor Helen & pay them a visit now and then even though you may be peeved at me for the way I've been writing to you lately, I guess I'm just not man enough to realize just what you've given up in the way of good times and other social activities ever since I've been in the army. Whenever the day comes when I'll be able to tell right from wrong its going to be one happy day. If its wasn't for you and Mom I'd turn these stripes in tomorrow and go back at my old job as a radio operator where I could have a little more time to myself and start taking orders again instead of giving them. Of course one way to look at it is the money involved. I don't know how much I've got in the

bank, but it sure will come in handy when we start out, and the more I can make while I'm in the army the better off we will be. I've made a lot of new friends at this job, but the old gang isn't all here, and we sort of miss them. By the way Koppie is back from the hospital, and the son of a gun sure had a good time back there with the nurses & Belgium girls.

Well Helen its going on one o'clock so I'd better close with all my Love and Kisses,

Forever yours,

Bill

P.S. Happy Birthday to you Helen, and I hope that we'll be together to celebrate your next one.

March 12, 1945

Still no letter from you. Keep it up Helen you're busting my..... ▼

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



Floyd Shely and Wilder Mathena, Co. K 331st Regiment, of Lawrenceburg, KY and Dublin, Ohio. Two WWII Bombers, B17 and B24 were on tour at Bluegrass Field in Lexington, KY.

“Last Battle” Elbe River Commemoration

Dear veterans, dear families and descendants, as you may have already been told a reunion of former soldiers and inhabitants of Walternienburg takes place every year in April in the small village to commemorate the victims of the “Last battle” which was fought here on the banks of the River Elbe.

Only a few days before the war in Europe ended the 83rd Infantry Division crossed the River Elbe near this small place.

Since 1990 the German veteran Herr Rose who comes from Walternienburg has been organizing the reunion. We—a group of former high school students from Zerbst—support him in his work because the fact that there have been so hard battles in our area sensitized us for this sad chapter of history.

In 2010, the American Robert Keck and his family joined the commemoration which was a great experience for the German veterans as well as for us. This year we were very glad to welcome the veteran William Spriggs and his family. The American participation over the last two years meant really much to us since it is also a great symbol of reconciliation when both nations come together to commemorate.

We invite you cordially to join the next commemoration on **April 14th, 2012**. The commemoration consists of a memorial service

and a commemorative ceremony on the churchyard of Walternienburg. After this official part there will be enough time for exchanging memories.

We will be glad if you come here a few days earlier because this would permit to talk about your memories to students from the Zerbst high school, to visit the historical Zerbst and other sites of our region and to look for places you remember from war, if you wish so. We will take care for everything.

If are interested to come or to get further information, please contact me:

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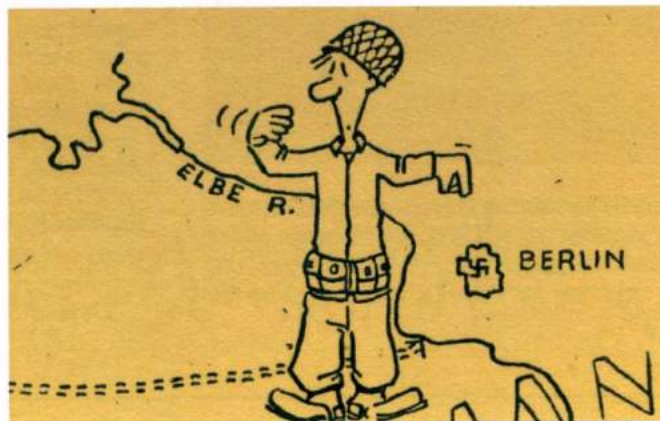
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We would love to welcome you next year in April! ▼



June 15th, 2011
83rd Infantry Division
PO Box 406
Alton Bay NH 03810

Clifton Wooldridge

At the Skyndmoor Memorial Day Parade last week, I was honored to ride in the lead car and raise the flag at the memorial ceremony.

It was a wonderful day to remember our veterans.

Annemarie, Stroud and my two granddaughters, Morgan and Grace joined me for the festivities.

I wanted to share of this special day with my family and friends. Being part of this celebration made me very happy and proud.

God Bless America

Warmest regards,

Bill GEPPERT Jr

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June 3-9, 2011

Celebration keeps focus on the fallen

By Joe Barron
News Editor

William Geppert Jr. was wounded in Saint-Malo, France, on Aug. 14, 1944. He was hit in the shoulder and the hip and spent the next 44 months in a hospital.

"They didn't have the orthopedic surgeons that they have today," his daughter, Annamarie Hellebusch, explained Monday morning, shortly before the start of the annual Wyndmoor Memorial Day Parade.

Geppert ultimately made a full recovery and went on to a long and successful career in the demolition business, retiring only two years ago. Today, at 87, he lives in Wyndmoor, and he recently joined the Arthur V. Savage Post 100 of the American Legion.

On Memorial Day, he rode in a car at the head of the parade and raised the flag at Veterans Park to begin the Legion post's memorial service. With him were his granddaughter, Morgan Hellebusch, who hugged him as he sat in his wheelchair, and Frank Perri, another veteran of the Second World War, who assisted in the flag raising.

The only reminder of the grievous wound Geppert suffered 67 years ago was the Purple Heart he wore modestly on his lapel.

See Parade, Page 3



Photo by BOB RAINES

Morgan Hellebusch hugs her grandfather, World War II veteran William Geppert Jr., before the Memorial Day flag-raising at Veterans Park. American Legion Post 100 Adjutant Ron Stone prepares the U.S. and MIA flags. Assisting with the flag-raising was Frank Perri, rear right.

Travis B. Arnette

179 Waverly Road, Shelton, CT 06484
(203) 513 - 2141 • TBA24@att.net

October 3, 2011

83rd Infantry Division Association
P.O. Box 406
Alton Bay, NH 03810-0406

Dear 83rd Infantry Association,

Please allow me an opportunity to introduce myself. I am the proud grandson of an Army veteran from World War II named Samuel J. Heffner Jr. Mr. Heffner served as a Private First Class in Company A, 330th Infantry Regiment, 83rd infantry division from 1943 until 1947. During his time with the 83rd infantry he was part of the Central Europe, Northern France, and Rhineland Campaigns where he received a Bronze Star Medal and Purple Heart Medal with an Oak leaf cluster.

Originally from Pennsylvania, Mr. Heffner relocated to Connecticut after being honorably discharged from the Army. Although he still has family in Pennsylvania Connecticut is where he currently resides today. On top of being a wonderful person he is a loving father, grandfather, and great grandfather. I am honored to be his grandson.

Over a year ago my grandfather asked me to assist him in retrieving his military records. As honored as I was we began our journey with the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) in April 2010. In October 2010 I received a letter from the NPRC informing us his entire military record was destroyed in a fire in 1973. As part of my research I contacted David Curry on the 83rd Infantry Division website with a brief synopsis of Mr. Heffner. I was contacted by Chuck Abdinoor who immediately recognized my grandfather. Since then Mr. Abdinoor has provided me with a wealth of information having served in the same company and regiment as my grandfather. I also learned that my grandfather's nickname during the war was "Junior." To this day Mr. Abdinoor and I keep in contact.

It gives me great pleasure to be able to apply for membership in your association. I have sent a picture of "Junior" with this letter for you to use in your next magazine. Any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,


Travis Arnette





From: Wilfried De Backer

To: 'Dave Dimmick'; 'Carmella Dimartino'; macovas@juno.com; BROWARD@aol.com; 'Chuck Abdinoor'; 'CLIFFORD SNYDER'; 'Dave Curry'; gmstudor@juno.com; 'Wooldridge'; Jmarkuns@aol.com; keckgillr1@comcast.net; 'Rachel & Sam Tannenbaum'

Sent: Tuesday, January 17, 2012 12:50 PM

Subject: mars 83rd

Dear Friends,

If you didn't had the picture yet here it is. Thijs and Robert were here too but Robert was too busy and Thijs was already back home because he brought his dog and the animal wanted to go home.

It was wonderful weather. No snow this time. The Sun was shining and the temperature was about 1°C. There were a lot of people from all over Europe joining us again. I had the feeling that there were a lot more people than last year. Large groups of reenactors jumped off in Bihain and marched through the woods of Bihain. Jelle, Antoine and Remy were part of those groups. Eddy took the lead in the vehicle trip (about 14 historical jeeps, dodges and trucks took part)

The reenactors did it quite good. At one moment you saw a soldier making the sign of sit-

ting down and at once you only saw trees in those woods. If the coast was clear he made another sign and GI's were popping up everywhere like a whole army was moving in those woods. Spielberg couldn't do it better. Luxembourg television was there and made some interviews with the participants and Eddy. We panted some flowers at the monument of Ottré and walked through towns like Bihain, Ottré, Petit Sart, Lierneux...

This year I walked the mars myself and with all that gear (backpack filled, gun, helmet, etc...) I was happy to see the finish. Anyway we enjoyed it very much and thought about you all. We hope to do it again next September after the opening of the museum and maybe some of you can join us.

Best to all my friends

Wilfried

Stabe nv
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B-9308 Hofstade (Aalst)
BELGIUM

Tel.: +32 (0)53 72 91 91

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E-mail: widb@stabe.be

Henri Chapelle American Cemetery–Memorial Day Ceremony



Maria Scheitler



*Grave of Thomas D. Curry
Father of Dave Curry*



Memorial Ceremonies



Memorial Day Fly Over

Meet These European Friends of the 83rd

First Sergeant Henry and Maria

The story how I became involved with the 83rd Inf Division,

It was 1986 when I met a veteran at a ceremony in Medernach (Luxembourg). His name was Dominic Demasi from Malden Mass. Russell Str. From that day on we had contact once and a while in writing and by phone. One year later Dominic and his wife Vivian invited us to come to Malden on vacation. I was a little surprised I could go to America the land of my dreams. We stayed 3 weeks in Malden and each day we were with some veteran or family of Dominic. One day Dominic said we had to go to a garden party for his friend Pat Digiammerino and his wife Ginni in East Border Rd Malden. We became friends and although Pat is no longer with us I stayed in contact with his wife Ginni and his son Paul. Pat told me that the father of one of his friends was buried at Henri Chapelle. His name was Thomas D. Curry, the father of Dave Curry. When I came back from the USA the first thing I did was to look for the grave of Thomas D. Curry at Henri Chapelle I found it and I adopted it because it became clear to me that this was something I had to do in my future life. From that day on I donated each year at Memorial Day a wreath for the 83rd at Henri Chapelle. I wanted to do this because I didn't want that all the other 83rd soldiers would be forgotten in time. They came to a far continent to fight for our freedom and paid it with their lives and health. Each time I visit Henri Chapelle I become sad and my will tells me I don't do this just to say thank you but because I want that those guys should be remembered forever. I visit often the Cemeteries in Luxembourg, Belgium, The Netherlands and France. When I pass next time in Ham Luxembourg I will adopt another 4-5 graves of the 83rd if they are still available and I will continue doing this as long as I can. This is my little story

First Sergeant Henry and Maria

zo kwam ik naar de 83rd Inf. Div

Het was in 1986, toen heb ik een Veteran ontmoet in Medernach (luxemb.) bij een ceremonie, deze Veteran was Dominic Demasi uit Malden Mass. Russel Str. van deze Dag hadden wij regelmatige Briefcontact en over teleph..een Jaar later heeft Dominic en zijn Vrouw Vivian onz ontmoet op Vacantie naar Malden te komen, ik was verbaast wij naar America mijn Droomland is niet wahr! wij zijn 3 weken in Malden gebleven idere Dag bij andere Veteranen of Frieden van Dominic op eene Dag zegt Dominic morgen zijn wij op een Garden-Party bij een Friend.dat was Pat Digiammerino en zijn Vrouw Ginni in East Border Rd Malden. Mijn Friend Pat is overleden maar ik heb nog altijd contact met Ginni en Zon Paul. Pat verteltte mij dat de Vader van een Bekende in Henri-Chapelle begraven is zijn Naam Thomas D. Curry de Vader van Dave Curry, terug uit USA was de eerste weg naar Henri-Chapelle op zoek naar het grav van Thomas D Curry toen heb ik dat Grav adopteert en toen was het voor mij klaar dat ik its moet doen van die tijd af leg ik iedere jaar op Memorial-Day een Bloemen Kranz neer voor de 83rd maar ik vergeet og die adere jongens niet die daar begraven zijn zij kwamen in een fremd Land om voor onzere Vrijheid te vechten hebben gezondheid enhun Leve gelaten dat doet nog altijd pein wanheer ik naar de begrafnisplaats gaan het is niet gedaan om gewon Dank-U te sergen zij hebben een recht op dat og naar hun Dod anzij gedacht word. ik bezoe regelmatig Begravnisplaatsen in Luxemburg Belgiëen Holland en Frankrijk wanheer ik dar bent in Ham/Luxemb zijn nog 4-5 Graven van de 83rd in korte zaal ik die adopteren as zij nog vrij zin en so ga ik door tot het gaat. This is my Story.

continued >

This is Wilfried's story in his own words of how he became connected to the 83rd. I first met Wil at the reunion in Washington, DC/ Arlington. That was his first 83rd reunion. It would be appropriate that this would be printed in the Thunderbolt. — D.D.

Wilfried De Backer

My name is Wilfried De Backer, I live in Belgium and got involved with the 83rd after a visit of a far family member of us from the USA back in 2006. He went to see the grave of his brother at Henri Chapelle. When I asked him what happened with his brother he couldn't tell me. The only thing he knew was that he saw him a last time in New York in 1944 when they had lunch together before he was shipped to Europe. After that he got the news that his brother was first MIA for 5 months and that he was KIA somewhere in May 1945. Knowing this little information I started a worldwide search and thanks to Dave Curry's Website and all the wonderful! people of the 83rd and friends here in Belgium and Europe we finally found out what happened and located the place where he was killed (OTTRE Belgium).

The search opened my eyes about the terrible WWII period and the 83rd and today me and all my other friends of the 83rd European Chapter are here for you veterans and family of veterans to help you out in your search (Battle of the Bulge area or towns like OTTRE-BIHAIN-LANGLIRE, ETC but also Huertgenforrest), your visits to the battle fields, to spread the word to the world that there is another incredible Division that we have to remember and say thank you for our freedom and welfare I try to help out when veterans land in Brussels, I try to help during the March of the 83rd that our good friends Robert and Eddy organise. I try to make bridges between all the European countries so that all the different groups think in one way and that is to HONOR and to REMEMBER one of the best Divisions there ever was and that is THE 83 INFANTRY DIVISION.

For me it took some time to get to know JP. I have found that his heart is "strong" toward the 83rd and was responsible for getting the mayor of Sainteny to the 65th reunion at West Point. — D.D.

Jean Paul Pitou

Jean Paul was born in 1964 in Orleans, France. He lived his youth in a small village of 800 people between Orleans and Beaugency.

Jean Paul's parents Philippe and Anic are native to Orleans. They remember the passage of the Americans during the liberation in August of 1944 around Orleans. His father is a veteran of the Algerian War.

Jean Paul currently lives near L'Aigle, Orne and works on the French Motorway managing toll booths. I believe he has since retired from this work. Chrisiane, which many reunion attendees have met is his immediate family and she lives at Sainteny.

Jean Paul has several hobbies, but the most important to him is the study of the Battle of Sainteny. He has collected a great deal of information and hopes one day to write a book. His objective is to keep the 83rd memory current as to never forget what the 83rd did. With the local History committee he organizes the commemoration and the welcome of veterans and families of veterans. He also assists with the Flags for Sainteny ongoing project. Jean Paul has attended several of the recent 83rd reunions.

Jean Paul became interested in the 83rd as they liberated Sainteny. "I discovered an unknown division but a glorious division, persistent, tenacious and brave."

Jean Paul met his first WWII veteran at Utah Beach. A little man as he remembered in a black 83rd jacket with the gold patch of the 83rd on its back. It was George Naylor with the famous accent. :) This was the beginning. Then it was Mr. Johnson. With the 60th D-Day anniversary, the welcoming and meetings speed up with Elizabeth Faber, Mr. Gatten and his family. They were his ambassadors when he arrived at Nashville, IN in 2006. Then he welcomed to the ceremonies Rudy Zamula, Robert Keck and Bill Spriggs. With these ceremonies they had the pleasure to meet children of the public school of Sainteny. The

children could ask questions about the war and the experiences of these veterans. But also throughout the year Jean Paul will take the time to welcome a veteran such as Chester Kochan or family of veterans like George Studor from a few hours to maybe several days. It all depends on what the individuals wish to see he tries to accommodate. If time to prepare the city of Sainteny organizes a reception. At each visit he notifies the mayor of Sainteny or the town around it such as Meautis for Mr. Kunkel or Saint Georges de Bohon for Mrs. Koski, a historian searching for information about the death of Pfc Ludvic Steinberger.

In his words: "I perpetuate the memories of the men who gave their life to my freedom, to our freedom."

Contact info:

pitoujp72@aol.com

Jean Paul Pitou
LeBourg 61230
LeSap ANDRE
France

Prepared for 64th 83rd Reunion
Aug. 11-15, 2010 D. Dimmick

I met him also as Wim (Bill) and I were walking the trail in the Ardennes. — D.D.

Rémy Mortelette

Rémy was born in Northern France but moved to Belgium in March of 2006. He is 25 years old. All of his family lives in France. He currently lives in Verviers, Belgium and is a draftsman in R&D at Browning International. He is currently working on the development team of the Maxus shotgun.

He likes hiking, photography and world history. Especially WWII and the 83rd ID.

Rémy became interested in the 83rd when he visited Henri Chapelle American Military Cemetery in May of 2009. During this visit he saw the grave of Pfc Walter F. French, 330th.

After he got back home he did some research on French and then found that it was possible to adopt the graves of GI's. He decided to adopt Walter French's grave and that was when his interest was born. He has since adopted 3 other graves. Pfc Arturo Garcia, Pfc Walter J. Jawor and SSgt Elmer Cyphers. All four from the 330th and all KIA on Jan. 7, 1945. He works to recall the history of these four soldiers. Thanks to Debbie Holloman he came into contact with Linda Pai, niece of SSgt Cyphers and that lead to finding Cyphers daughter Judy Loughlin. He is especially pleased to be in contact with her. This research led to carry out the same kind of research on all 83rd soldiers dead or missing. To share the results of this work and also to capture additional information he has created a Website: *www.83rd-thunderbolt-division-database.tk*. He also created a Facebook site where families and friends may provide information, pictures and documents. Remy was very instrumental in locating the grave and family of Ray Sanville, Bill Spriggs buddy KIA just out of the hedgerows in France.

Rémy collects various items and documents for the safeguard of the inheritance of Division. He has several books, maps, videos, and pictures in his personal collection. Recently he and his friends created a WWII reenactment group named "Thunderbolt Division Memory" dedicated to A Company, 330th 83rd.

Personal note from Rémy:

In January I discovered that the 83rd ID liberated prisoners of the camp Alterngrabow (Stalag XIA) in May 1945. My great Grandfather, Marcel Langlin, French soldier made captive in Dunkirk on June 4, 1940, was interned in this camp and was liberated by you. I didn't know my great Grandfather but thanks for him. Thanks for France, my country of origin and thanks for Belgium, my host country.

Contact info:

83rd.thunderbolt.division@gmail.com

Prepared for 64th 83rd Reunion
Aug. 11-15, 2010 D. Dimmick

I met Thijs and Ingrid on the walk in the Ardennes in 2010 to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge. — D.D.

Thijs Hodiament

Thijs (pronounced as Thai with an s on the end) is from the Netherlands which borders Germany on the east and Belgium on the south. He was born in 1981 and raised with two younger brothers. His parents are Fred and Lucy both from the southern part of the Netherlands. His father worked as an engineer and now does project management. His mother is a part-time nurse/caretaker for mentally challenged children.

He is married to a lovely lady named Ingrid who accompanied him to West Point.

Thijs currently lives near Eindhoven, The Netherlands. He works as an IT security consultant. His daily job is to "hack" into web applications and systems to make sure they have the correct IT security controls in place. With consent of the customer of course. His wife Ingrid is a full-time nurse in an elderly home for people who have Alzheimer's or other disabilities.

His interests include his Irish Setter, Plons and Sprokkel the guinea pig. He loves to hike and mountain bike but doesn't get the time to do it enough. He has a 78 Citroen CX, which is a French brand/model automobile. He says you can always wake him up for any military related history mostly WWII and Indochina.

Thijs's Grandmother adopted a grave in 1946 of a 83rd soldier who is buried at the Margraten American Cemetery in The Netherlands. This adoption has been going on for three generations in his family and a few years ago he wanted to know more about this soldier. His research resulted in getting to know more about the 83rd and in the end he found the daughter of this soldier. She visited her father's grave for the first time during Memorial Day, 2010.

To Thijs the 83rd was and is a sturdy band of brothers and he is honored to help out what he can to keep the memory alive. He is responsible for building the 83rd Infantry Documents website. <http://83rdinfdivdocs.org/>. This website contains after action re-

ports and a database with pictures and information about the soldiers who are buried in Europe. Indirectly this has helped a lot of people to find more information about their loved ones, adoption of graves or historians.

Note from Thijs:

Through this process I have met interesting people who have the same goal, to keep the memory of the 83rd alive, whether it be the units, the veterans or the men who lie in the fields of Europe. I hope to be able to continue this the coming years and to make more information publically available so that other people can use this in their search.

Contact info:

thijs@dbsec.net

Thijs Hodiament
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31 5513BV Wintelre
The Netherlands

Prepared for 64th 83rd Reunion
Aug. 11-15, 2010 D. Dimmick

Wim I gave him a nickname of Bill. He has become a very close friend. We share so many insights to this world it is like I have known him all my life. In fact it is kind of scary. Maybe we met in another life sometime. ;) I consider him my European brother as I do the others. But Bill stands out in my feeling of immediate bonding. The spirits guided us to each other. He has adopted the grave of Albert Duffer at Henri Chapelle who was the assistant bazooka man in my fathers platoon. Albert was KIA at the same time and day in Fraiture Belgium when my father and Luther Strunk were wounded. That's a whole nother story. :) — D.D.

Willem (Wim) Doms

Wim (AKA Bill) Doms was born in Belgium in November of 1968. He is a veteran of the Belgium Air force with a MOS of meteorology. He

has a Masters Degree in computer systems and organization. Since 1992 he has worked in medical diagnostics and is chief customer admin. and logistic officer.

He got started in scouting (Boy Scouts) in 1985. He has served as an instructor and scoutmaster with a full restart of a troop. He continues his community service, outdoor/nature interests, hiking and honing his scouting skills. IE: He is very good at reading and interpreting maps of all types. :)

He has a profound interest in scouting history since 2000. He has researched the graves of 4 Brownsea Boys KIA in WWI and buried in Flanders and northern France. He has also visited Brownsea Island in UK. Brownsea Island is the 1st scout camp organized by Baden-Powell and considered the origin of the worldwide scout movement.

He also has a profound interest in military history since 1984. His focus is on historical events and relics in Belgium, France, and Germany for Roman era, WWI and WWII. He has a private library of historical literature, maps, and documents in Dutch, English, French and German. He speaks all 4 languages. He has visited and hiked many battlefields, military cemeteries, memorials and museums in Western Europe.

IE:

- Roman monuments, Gallo-Roman grave tombs, Roman highways and Roman campsites.
- Trench warfare and forts of WW I
- From D-Day to Berlin WW II

In his own words:

Scouting and historical interests resulted in walking the battlefields, trying to retrace the footprints of soldiers and their armies, in the meantime enjoying the outdoors and wildlife, also maintaining physical fitness.

My interest has no commercial goal, no battlefield digging and detecting; no scientific worth ... it's only an emotional return in time in order to see for myself the events and conditions I read about in historical literature!

My assistance on Mr. Dave Dimmicks research to the I/330th 83rd ID whereabouts

is fundamental due to our friendship and in respect to the efforts and sacrifice of US Troops to liberate Europe.

Wim recorded in detail (after many additional trips into the Ardennes) I Co. "Footprints" in snow at times like Jan. 1945. All is recorded in pictures, maps, documents and involves the time frame of Jan. 1 - Jan. 6 1945 and the liberation of the towns of Malempre and Fraiture, Belgium by American troops. He is currently working with Chuck Abdinoor on a documentary of the 330th.

Contact info:

Willem Doms
Sluislaan 1 SA Bus 10
2500 Lier
Belgium
Wdoms@mdeur.be

I wrote this up 2 years ago as it was one of the bio's that I put together on 6 Europeans when I did a presentation at Williamsburg.
— D.D.

Eddy Monfort

Eddy was born in Bastogne, Belgium in 1970. He lives in a small village of 300 people situated in the Ardennes at Malempre — MANHAY, Belgium. Eddy's parents are Alphonse and Claudette who are native to Malempre and Dochamps of the Manhay district. His father Alphonse was 11 years old during the Battle of the Bulge. He remembers very well the events of German occupation and the atrocity of the occupation. He stayed a week in the cellar before Malempre was liberated by the 83rd on Jan. 3, 1945. His mother was born in 1945. Eddy currently lives in Malempre with his son Raphael who turns 8 years old this year. He travels to Bastogne each day to work at Home Depot. He calls it a shop of materials for buildings. His profession is carpenter, cabinet maker, and wood carver.

Eddy has several hobbies/interests. The most important to him is the study of the Bat-

tle of the Bulge. He has written 2 books on the subject and is currently working on a 3rd. His collection of information is huge. He is Vice President of a Belgium association called "83rd Thunderbolt Division" situated in Bi-hain, Belgium just up the road from Malempre. Their ultimate objective is to never forget and perpetuate the memory of the 83rd ID. They organize several trips across Europe like into Normandy, concentration camps, etc., and put on conferences. The most detailed undertaking is the annual Walk in memory of the 83rd ID. It is held the second weekend of January in the cold and the snow. They are planning other projects for the future of their small non-profit group.

Eddy became interested in the 83rd at a very young age (14 years old) as his home town was liberated by the "Thunderbolt Division". At the 40th anniversary of the battle his school organized a big exposition. He was asked by his teacher to help and as he learned more he became hooked. Hence 3 books later and counting. He calls it a hobby but in truth he is passionately fond of what the American soldier did, especially the 83rd soldier, to give their country back to them. He has made several trips to the US using up all his vacation time closed up in our National Archives.

A few of Eddy's highlights include meeting for the first time two veterans of the 83rd in 1989. John D. Askey and Curtis Myers of the 329th. In 1990 with his community of Malempre they inaugurated a large bronze tablet on the wall of the cemetery next to the church in the center of town. It commemorates all the units who crossed the town during the Battle of the Bulge. The monument was inaugurated by four veterans of the 83rd ID. Robert Parsons, Ivan Bisbee, George Naylor and Alfred Starling. The next day a bus with forty people of the 83rd, guided by Robert Derrickson, changed their itinerary to drop by Malempre. This is still remembered by the town's people as a wonderful surprise. Since then he has hosted the visits several 83rd veterans such as Charles Schmith, Raymond Peloquin, Luther Strunk, Bob Keck, Bill Spriggs and many others.

He doesn't forget the "big pleasure" to participate in the 60th reunion at Nashville, IN in 2006. This was an unforgettable trip for him

and one he will never forget of being welcomed into the 83rd family. In Eddy's words, "So' the 83rd Infantry Division is become important to my eyes, it's also thanks to your unit we found several friends in Europe and in the United States who have the same passion."

Contact info:

e.monfort@belgacom.net

Eddy Monfort

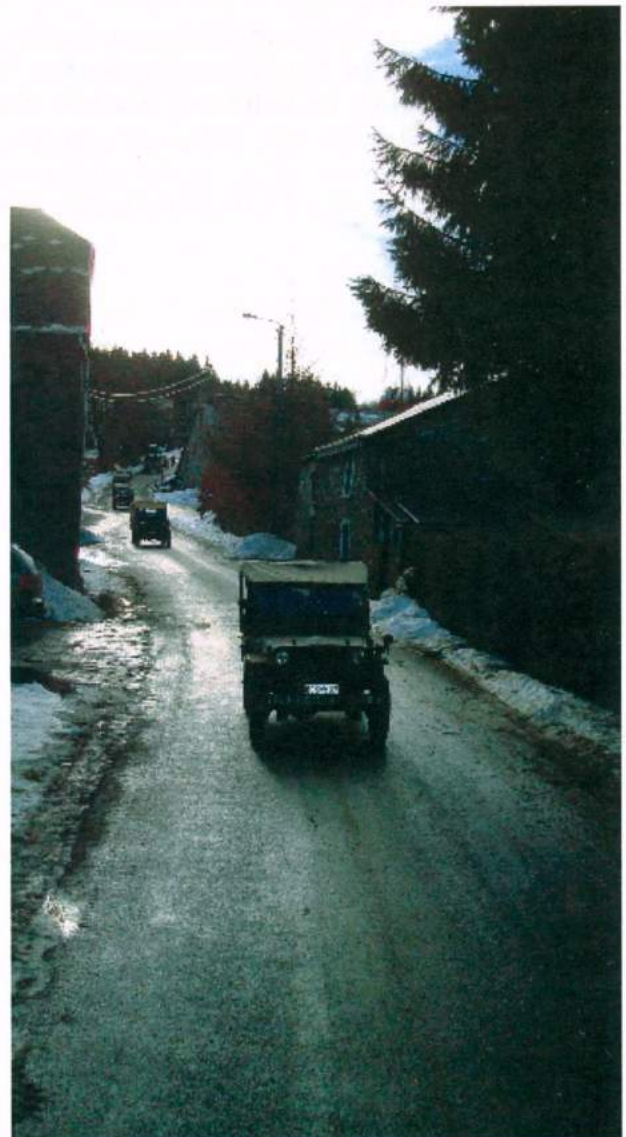
Rue de la Gotte, 15

B-6960 Malempre — Manhay

Belgium B-6960

Prepared for 64th 83rd Reunion

August 11-15, 2010 D. Dimmick ▼



Martin Gedra - Military Archivist

Members of the 83rd Infantry Division including 83rd Historian Lou Gomori had been searching for years without success for a Citation that was issued to the Division at the end of WWII. It was Military Archivist Martin Gedra at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in College Park, MD who suggested that we took at the records at the next higher levels, the XIXth Corps and the 9th Army, to find this document. It was at the Corps level that we found the proposal signed by XIX Corps Commander Major General Raymond S. McLain and endorsed by Ninth Army Commander Lt Gen. W.H. Simpson. The Citation proposal has since been re-filed in Box 10500, 383-1.6, Record Group 407 in the records of the 83rd Infantry Division.

The Citation proposal was not completed until August 1945 and some sections are dated October 1945. General Simpson had been reassigned and was no longer there to advocate the 83rd cause, and it appears that General Macon had also moved on, as shown by the fact that Captain Antonio J. Gaudio signed many of the documents to certify that they were true copies. Entries from the three regiments, specialized units and attached components gave the contributors the well-

earned opportunity to use phrases like: "The spectacular sweep of the 83rd Infantry Division across Germany from the Teutoburger Forest to its bridgehead across the Elbe River — 280 miles in thirteen days" may sound boastful, unless you consider the cost — over one thousand casualties in killed, wounded, injured and missing. The 330th Regiment liberated the "Zwieberge" death camp at Langenstein. Add to this that the 83rd held the only bridge (the "Truman") across the Elbe River and was among the first to meet the Russians at Apollonsdorf. I believe all our members will agree that the 83rd Infantry Division Association is indebted to Martin Gedra for the professionalism and thoughtful advice that led to this discovery.

Carmella Dimartino
President, 83rd Infantry Division Association

Rudy Zamula
83rd Archivist

Clifford W. Snyder
Vice President

Charles Abdinoor
Member, 83rd Executive Board ▼



Albert A. Belvedere Sr.

AGE: 90 · Southampton

Albert A. Belvedere, Sr., 90, of the Leisuretowne section of Southampton, passed away Saturday, Dec. 3, 2011, at Compassionate Care Hospice, Trenton. Born in Philadelphia, PA, Albert resided in Pennsauken, NJ, for 22 years, before moving to Leisuretowne 28 years ago. He was a decorated U.S. Army veteran who served as a Squad Leader during WWII in Northern France and Germany. He was a P.O.W. before the Americans took back the town he was captured in. Staff SGT. Belvedere received two Purple Hearts, two Bronze Stars, Good Conduct Medal and the Combat Infantryman's Badge. Albert formed the Veterans Association in Leisuretowne in 1983, and served as President for 13 years. He belonged to the 83rd Infantry Division Philadelphia Chapter, and was one of two officers left in that division. He was a Life member of the VFW Post 7677 in Medford, and was a parishioner at the Church of the Holy Eucharist in Tabernacle, where he served as an usher from the beginning.

He is survived by his loving wife of 68 years, Anna (nee Ciallella) Belvedere; his two sons and daughters-in-law, John N. and Suzanne Belvedere of Sparta, NJ, and Albert A., Jr. and Cinda Belvedere of Gibbsboro, NJ; his brother, Alfred "Fred" Belvedere of Media, PA; seven grandchildren, Matthew, Melissa, Lindsay, Robyn, Pamela, Kimberly and Tara; seven great grandchildren, Jeffrey, Jason, Tommy, Sophia, Kathryn, Patrick and Brianna; and several nieces and nephews.

Relatives and friends may call on Thursday, December 8, 2011, from 9:30-11AM, at the Church of the Holy Eucharist, 510 Medford Lakes Rd., Tabernacle. A Funeral Mass will be celebrated at 11AM, at the church. Interment with honors will follow in the Brig. Gen. Wm. C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Wrightstown, NJ. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made in Albert's memory to T.O.U.C.H., 202 N. Plymouth Ct., Southampton, NJ 08088. Arrangements are by the Mathis Funeral Home, Medford, NJ. www.mathisfuneralhome.com

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/courier-postonline/obituary.aspx?n=albert-a-belvedere&pid=154910878>

James Farrow Davis

Mr. James Farrow Davis, 91, Bells, TN, died 09-21-2011.

Published in The Jackson Sun on September 24, 2011

John Hudnall

Passed away during the Reunion. He was scheduled to be in attendance with us. Company - HQ - Regiment 329th.

John Latta DERRY

John Latta, 89, of Derry, passed away Tuesday, June 7, 2011, at his home, surrounded by his loving family. He was born March 28, 1922, in Monessen, a son of the late George and Annastacia Chornak Latta. John was a World War II Army veteran serving as a staff sergeant in Company L 329th Infantry Regiment and the 83rd Infantry Division. He fought in all five major battles including the Battle of the Bulge and the Beaches of Normandy. He received the Purple Heart, Bronze Star among other medals. He retired from Latrobe Die Casting in 1989.

Deceased List

Our sympathy goes out to all the families of these veterans. We will miss all of them.

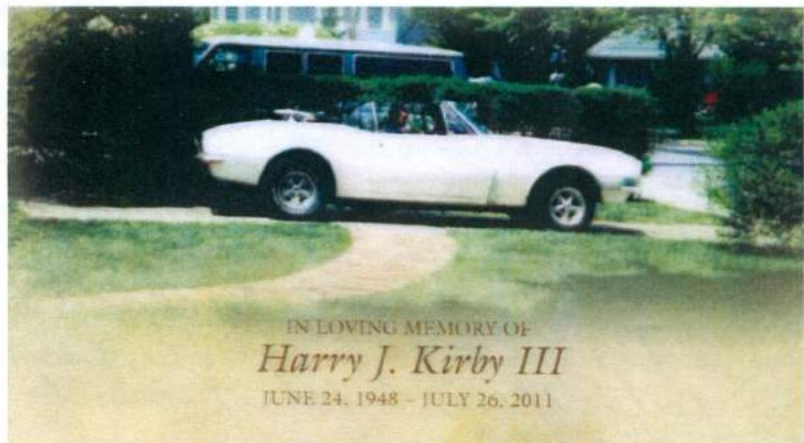
Name	Unit	Reported by
Albert Belvedere	K Co., 331st	Chuck Abdinoor
James Farrow Davis		
John Hudnall	Co. HQ, 329th	
John Latta	Co. L, 329th	
Haran R. Martin, Sr.	C Co., 331st	Wanda Martin (Daughter)
Donald Peak	322nd Bat. FA	Virginia Peak
Don L. Sorg	Co. C, 308th Eng	Pat Sorg (Wife)



Harry J. Kirby III

Harry J. Kirby III, oldest son of longtime 83rd member Harry J. Kirby, Jr., Co. C, 308th Engineers, died on July 26, 2011 after a long illness. He was also a member of the Association and attended many reunions and trips over the years with his wife, Sis, his sisters Marianne and Joan, and his brother Jim.

Harry, a car enthusiast, completely restored a 1968 Camaro convertible in the time before his illness. Originally from Philadelphia, he and Sis lived in West Deptford, New Jersey, for many years. He served in the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam era.



Dear Editor,

06-15-2011

When my sweet wonderful dad, Haran R. Martin, Sr., passed away on February 25, 2011, I intended to send the info to you. But, somehow, in the confusion, I forgot to mail it then.

Dad really loved all his friends in the 83rd and he wrote many poems about them and about their World War II experiences. He looked forward to the reunions and was so disappointed when his body became too weak and he couldn't attend any more. I think Dad had an 83rd emblem on just about every thing he owned. He was so proud of the Thunderbolt.

Diabetes complications, MMS and a urinary tract infection caused Dad much pain and suffering the last weeks of his life. He was a great person who always put others before himself. We miss him so much.

Thanks to Bobbie White for getting Dad's name on the deceased list in your Spring edition.

Sincerely,
Wanda Martin

P.S. Dad wrote his own memorial poem before he left this life. (enclosed)

Tribute to 83rd

I pulled into the shopping center the other day and
I saw this little boy playing with a little pup,
As I got out he said, "Hey, Mister." When I turned
the little boy looked up
And said, "Sir I have a question, What is the 83rd
Thunderbolt I see on your van?"
I said, "Son, I served with this army division in
World War II, when I was just a young man."
Then he said, "Please tell me about it. For we
have always wanted to know
About it. My granddaddy was in World War II. That
was a long, long time ago.
In fact I wasn't even born and my daddy
was just a small kid.
My daddy was never in the war. So he doesn't
know what granddaddy did."
Then I told him some combat stories of some of
the battles that we were in
And I suppose your brave granddaddy would want you
to be proud of him
Because he gave his life in battle, that his
family back home may survive.
He was one of thousands of brave soldiers that
didn't get back to their families alive."
I said, "Son, I am so sorry that you
lost your granddad.
I have some wonderful grandchildren and without
me they would be sad."
Then he said, "I never did see him, but many
times I wish I had.
Just what you told me about the war makes me
feel better about granddad.
They say he died in battle, a hero, what
he went through we never knew.

He was killed in the Battle of the Bulge, fighting
in the war over there with you."
"Son, I never knew your brave granddad, but I
know he was a regular guy,
And you ask why we were fighting, so I'll
tell you the reason why.
We fought for the love of our country and
freedom for little boys like you,
That you could live in this free land to have
and do things you want to.
Now son, something you must remember if you want
to keep your country free
You must fight to protect it the way we did,
your granddad and me.
I hope there will never be another war, but if it
happens then we all must fight
To protect our country, women and children. We must
stand up for what we think is right.
May I say God bless you little one. I hope I've
done you no harm
Fighting for our freedom rights, I don't think
would be wrong."
The little boy turned to walk away and then he said,
"Thanks for what I've heard,
I know you must be very proud to have served
with the Eighty-Third."
This little boy did my heart good. He was sincere and
listened to every word.
I thank God for this little boy, and all the men
who served and fought with the Eighty-Third.

*Written by: Haran Martin
Winston-Salem, N.C.
Chaplain*



Haran Rufus Martin, Sr.

Mr. Haran Rufus Martin, Sr., a kind generous and loving husband, father, great grandfather, and a World War II Veteran, passed away Friday, February 25, 2011, at the Oaks at

Forsyth, where he spent his final three days.

Mr. Martin was born April 18, 1919 in Mayodan, NC to Henry Rufus and Roberta Delia Martin. He spent his early years in Mayodan, NC, moving with his wife Dorothy to Winston-

Salem in 1941. Mr. Martin served his country in World War II from 1944 to 1946. He was decorated with the Silver Star, Bronze Star, European Victory Medal, Purple Heart, Good Conduct Medal, three Battle Stars and Combat Infantry Badge. After the war, he leased and drove trucks for Roadway Express and Hennis Freight Lines. Later, he opened Tire Stores for Hennis. He was General Manager of Piedmont Fleet Tire. He started Honda of Winston-Salem in 1963 and was known as "Mr. Tire" and "Mr. Honda". He opened and operated United Motorcycle Sales in

continued >

Clemmons, NC from 1975 — 1980 when he retired. Mr. Martin was a life member of VFW Post 9010 in Clemmons and DAV Chapter 9 in Winston-Salem. He was also a member of the 83rd Infantry Association, the Dixie Chapter of the 83rd Division, and former Commander of the Honor Guard. He will be remembered by many for the beautiful poems he wrote and recited and for his humor.

He was preceded in death by his parents; three brothers, James, Paul and Butler Martin; and three sisters, Ruth Martin, Edith Rhodes and Mae Fulcher.

He is survived by his wife of 74 years, Dorothy Cook Martin; two sons, Bucky Martin, and Dennis Martin and wife Barbara; and a daughter, Wanda Martin. He is also survived by seven grandchildren, Terrie, Richard, and Kenneth Gilley and wife Kelly, Jason, Tyler, and Marty Martin and Kimberly Slate and husband Marty; six great-grandchildren, Erica

Staley, Dakota Ball, Haran, Dottie and Robbie Gilley and Lyla Martin; two great-great grandchildren, Kinzie and Chloe Staley; many nieces and nephews; and friends who loved him.

A funeral service will be conducted 2:00 pm Monday, February 28, 2011 at Hayworth-Miller Silas Creek Chapel.

Entombment will follow at Westlawn Gardens of Memory with Military Honors provided by the VFW Memorial Honor Guard.

The family will receive friends from 6-8 pm Sunday at the funeral home.

The Martin family would like to send a special thank you to the staff at Mallard Ridge Assisted Living in Clemmons, NC, where he resided for the past 1 1/2 years, as well as the staff of Hospice for their loving care the past few days.

Online condolences may be made at www.hayworth-miller.com. ▼

Don L. Sorg

November 15, 1919 - September 16, 2011

Don L. Sorg, 91, of Oak Harbor, Ohio, died Friday, September 16, 2011 at Riverview Healthcare Campus, Oak Harbor. He was born in Oak Harbor on November 15, 1919, a son of H.A. & Florence (Leaser) Sorg. Don was a graduate of the former Salem-Oak Harbor High School, and attended the University of Toledo, where he studied math and drafting. He was U.S. Army veteran of World War II, serving in Europe, and was a member of the Disabled American Veterans, and Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #8732, Oak Harbor. An accomplished cabinet maker and general contractor, Don built homes in Ottawa County for over 60 years, and also farmed. HE was a member of St. Boniface Catholic Church, Oak Harbor, where he served on the church council. Very active in Scouting, Don was an Eagle Scout and was Scout Master of Troop #316 and #363, and was Pack Leader of Cub Scout Troop #308. He received the Silver Beaver Award for his dedication to Scouting in 1963. Don was an avid reader, and learned to use a computer at age 80, when he wrote reflections from his past which are housed in the local history room of the Oak Harbor Public Library. In the early 1940's, Don received a

life saving award for rescuing a young girl from drowning in a Rocky Ridge quarry.

On November 28, 1946, Don married the former Pat Boomer, and she survives. Also surviving are his sons. Dr. Jim Sorg, Sierra Madre, California, Richard (Sharon) Sorg, Cincinnati, Ohio, Tom (Diana) Sorg, Oak Harbor, Dr. John (Karia) Sorg, Fremont, Ohio; daughters, Ann (Jeff) Chio, Oak Harbor, and Patsy Winklea (Carl) Kaspar, Golden, Colorado; grandchildren, Joy Sorg, Jenny Ramos, Maria Sorg, Jeff Sorg, James McMaken, Nathan Chio, Erin Moss, and Zac Chio; 9 greatgrandchildren; brothers. Bill Sorg, Oak Harbor, David Sorg, Port Clinton, Ohio; sisters, Mary Phillips, Chicago, Illinois, and JoAnne Sandwisch, Oak Harbor. He was preceded in death by his parents; grandson Christopher Sorg, and brothers Lynn Sorg, and Wendell Sorg.

A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Monday, September 19, 2011 at St. Boniface Catholic Church, Oak Harbor. Interment followed in Salem Township Union Cemetery, Oak Harbor. The V.F.W. Post # 8732 and American Legion Post #114 provided graveside rites. Memorial contributions may be made to St. Boniface Church, Stein Hospice, or Riverview Auxiliary. Online condolences may be shared with Don's family at www.crosserfuneralhome.com. ▼



Dear Veteran



Dear Veteran,

I'm writing to say " Thank You ", and, through me, there are thousands of children speaking to thousands of Veterans.

Like us, you were young and carefree, but, when you were only twenty years old, Liberty called - called you, to say :

" I'm dying. Come and save me ! "

And you arose, full of courage and zeal, to answer that call.

You underwent training, day after day, for "D" Day, and, one day in June, you arrived by air and sea.

And you fought with the heart and soul of a free man, so that we, too, might be free.

You saw your fellows fall on our beaches and in our fields and, in spite of your grief and your injuries, you stayed on and fought side-by-side with us.



And so, dear Veteran, I want to tell you, regarding those dear to you who sacrificed their youth and are now resting in peace, the sleep of the just, that,

**WE ARE THE CHILDREN
THEY NEVER HAD.**



And to you, dear Veteran, who offered your bravery and your most promising years for this our land, I say to you,

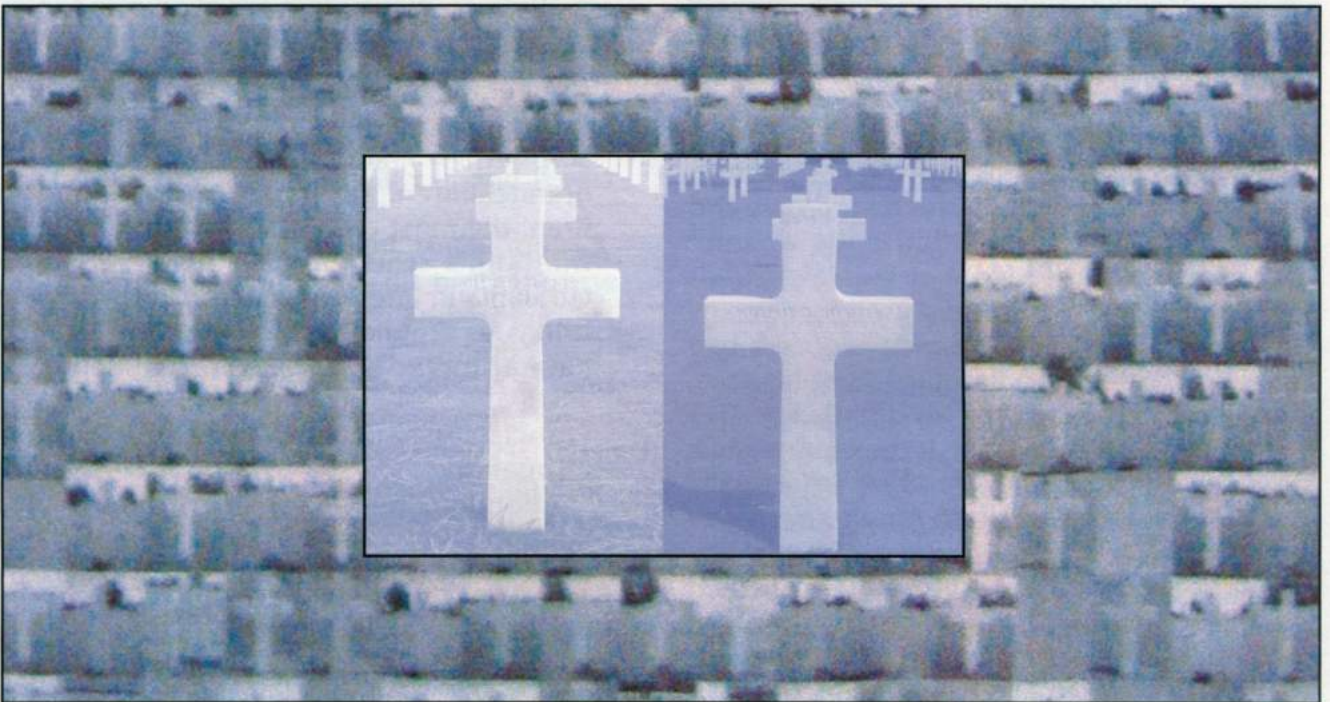
**WE ARE YOUR SONS,
SONS AND DAUGHTERS
OF LIBERTY,**

who want to say to you today, a heartfelt " MERCI ! "

Jean Goujon



Quilt, in the early 1980s. Don received a www.creedsfaithandmore.com



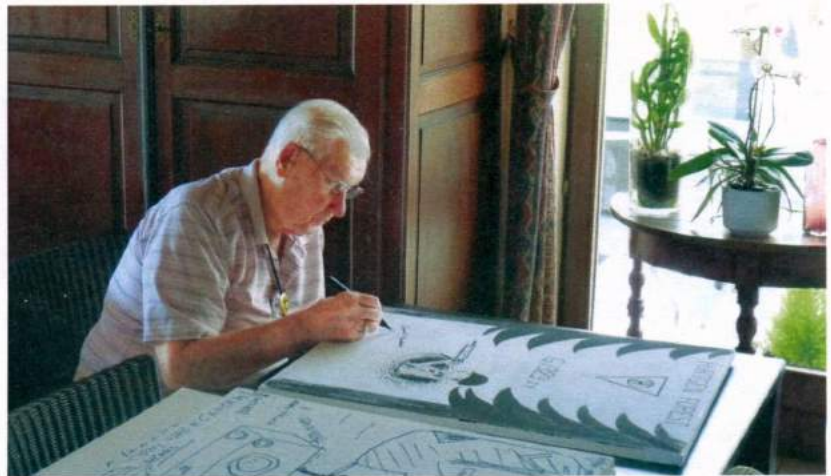
Pictured (left and above) is the flag presented to veterans of the 83rd and their families, hand-made by our European friends. On the flag were pictures of each grave of the members of the 83rd who are buried in Europe. Presentation of the flag at our 83rd Infantry Reunion was symbolic of bringing them home to US soil.

What Goes Around Comes Around

My Father Francis's Service

My dad, Francis Markuns, the son of Lithuanian immigrants and lifelong resident of South Boston, Massachusetts, was called up to the Army in July 1943 at age 18, just after graduating from South Boston High School. Originally assigned to the 63rd Infantry Division, he began his training at Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi, qualifying on the BAR. Midway through training, however, he moved to the 83rd, which, according to my dad, was a "hot outfit ... just coming up to full strength." He joined the 83rd at Camp Breckinridge, Kentucky, became part of G Company, 329th Regiment, and re-qualified on the BAR. From Breckenridge, it was a short stay at Camp Shanks, New York, and then a departure from New York harbor aboard the troop ship HMS Samaria as part of a massive convoy, with a final destination in Wales. Training continued in Wales, and my father was in the middle of a field exercise in early June when they received orders that the 83rd was to join the fight.

He arrived with the 83rd at Omaha. A day after his arrival he moved from assistant to lead BAR. He fought in the hedgerows and was part of the July 4th action in the "swamp" near Sainteny. He fought at St. Malo and at the Citadel and remained with his company until after Angers. He then developed a bad infection that puffed up the side of his face. He was sent back to England for 2-3 weeks. After he recovered, it took him a while to catch up again with the 83rd (essentially he was part of a group who figured out a way to be returned to the 83rd out of a replacement pool outside of Bastogne). He rejoined his company and platoon before the 83rd liberated Echternach, Luxembourg. He fought in the Hurtgen and was wounded on or about December 17 in Duren, Germany. He was evacuated from a field hospital in Liege just after the breakthrough, first to Paris and then on to England and finally stateside.



After multiple operations and several months, he was honorably discharged.

While convalescing before discharge, he met my mother Virginia. My dad attended Wentworth Institute on the GI bill and landed a job with Manton Gaulin Corporation, where he worked as a machine operator for his entire career. Francis and Virginia married in May 1949, and I was born in February 1950, followed over the next 11 years by four more children, two boys and two girls. After Francis's retirement, his family continued to grow, starting with his first grandchild and my first son, Jeffrey Francis. Francis had another 8 grandchildren, and now 8 great grandchildren, the most recent being Jeffrey's and his wife Kim's school age children, adopted in Lithuania in late May of this year Which brings us around to the reason my dad and I have a story to share for the Thunderbolt.

Francis's New Great Grand-children from Lithuania

Adoption, and particularly international adoption, is a grueling process. Jeffrey and Kim waited almost 4 years, and endured several false starts, before receiving an official referral last November for their now adopted beautiful children -- a son and two daughters. They chose to adopt from Lithuania in no small part because Jeff, now a physician specializing in family practice, had lived with his grandparents in South Boston while taking a

year off from St. Louis University Medical School to complete a medical research project he began in Boston before starting school. During that year, he had become familiar and comfortable with the close Lithuanian community in South Boston; so much so, that he returned to South Boston Community Health Center for his Boston Medical Center residency after finishing medical school.

A Trip of a Lifetime

As part of the adoption process, Jeff and Kim were required to stay with their children in Lithuania in a rented apartment in Vilnius (Lithuania's capital) for an indeterminate time, to await a May 20th court hearing and a decision from the court that would grant the adoption and permit them to leave the country with their children. Jeff and Kim, who are very close to Francis, wanted to share their joy (and their grandfather's knowledge of Lithuanian) while they began their new family during their Vilnius stay.

Lots of discussion ensued about how to make that happen. It also slowly dawned on us that perhaps in making this trip, and so close to the D-day anniversary, that Francis might also have the opportunity to make the return journey that so many in the 83rd had been making these past several years. He had wanted very badly to participate in the 60th anniversary ceremonies in Normandy, but my mother was terminally ill and it was not to be.

Jeffrey, a very frequent flier, quickly arranged flights for myself, his brother Chris (another descendant 83rd member) and his grandfather Francis to travel through Frankfurt first to Vilnius for a five-day stay, and then back to Frankfurt where we could rent a car to visit those places that Francis most wanted to again see. Suddenly, reality hit. How were we going to develop an itinerary and plan our trip in so short a time? We had met some of our Association European members at prior reunions, including Jean Paul Pitou, Eddy Monfort, and Wilfried De Backer. But I was not certain how to get in touch with them and wrote to Dave Dimmick for help. Dave had been corresponding regularly with many of our European friends, having taken his own journey with them in exploring his

father's service with the 330th. Dave stepped to the plate, cc'd the members of the European chapter and within a day, Wilfried, Jean Paul, Eddy and Dave were e-mailing, helping to set up an itinerary, providing valuable advice on traveling and driving through Europe and arranging housing.

Wilfried contacted us right away with ideas for our trip. Eddy arranged for us to stay at Robert and Paule Van de Weile's hotel in Bihain, and offered to accompany us to the cemetery at Henri-Chappelle cemetery, the Hurtgen forest, Ehtrenach and back to Bastogne. Jean Paul arranged for us to stay in a home overlooking the town square at Sainteny. He invited my father to participate in previously planned ceremonies in Sainteny and offered to accompany him around the area to revisit places where the 329th fought. We changed our flight arrangements to travel through Toronto and Copenhagen to Vilnius, with a return from Vilnius to Frankfurt where we would rent a car. We then scheduled our departure back to Boston direct from Paris.

On the weekend before our departure we suddenly experienced a roller coaster of emotions. We received the wonderful news that Jeff and Kim's adoption had been approved and that they would be allowed to leave the country with their new family as soon as all of the appropriate paperwork (birth certificates, Lithuanian passports, and American visas) were obtained. However, the following day one of my granddaughters (one of Chris's daughters) was seriously injured when struck by a car, requiring a med flight to Massachusetts General Hospital and a stay in intensive care. Needless to say, Christopher cancelled his plans to stay with his family and daughter. Thankfully, the day before we left, she left intensive care and has since been recovering well.

My dad and I departed Boston as scheduled, and after a delayed flight in Toronto and a missed connection in Copenhagen, arrived in Vilnius some 23 hours later. For four days we had a special time with Jeff and Kim getting to know their new family. We also enjoyed a tremendous folk festival in the heart of old Vilnius, near our apartment. We left Vilnius on Memorial Day to begin my father's trip back to many of the places he fought over 67 years ago.

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Bihain

With the help of our GPS (highly recommended), we arrived at Bihain just before nightfall. After a few false turns and with the help of a neighbor, we found Robert and Paule's hotel. Upon entering the hotel, we knew we had arrived in the right place. Blown up photos taken by Tony Vacarro and 83rd memorabilia were prominent throughout. Robert and Paule were waiting our arrival, along with Eddy and Remy Mortelette. Paule was kind enough to prepare a meal for us, and with Eddy translating, they talked with my father for some time about his experiences and to get a sense of where he might like to visit. Together, they settled on an ambitious itinerary that began with a visit to Henri Chappelle American cemetery, followed by a visit to the Hurtgen forest, and after a break for lunch, a trip to Echtrenach, Duren and a possible stop in Bastogne on the return trip to Bihain.

The next morning, after a very pleasant breakfast at the hotel, we left with Eddy, Robert and a friend, Jerome Choffray, stopping to pick up Remy at a train station before our first stop at Henri Chappelle. Remy is a very talented photographer who took loads of pictures throughout our travel.

Henri Chappelle

Henri Chappelle is impressive, offering a sobering reminder of the enormity of the battles fought and the ultimate sacrifices made for our freedom. We were greeted by the manager in charge, who presented my father with small American and Belgian flags that

were in the process of being removed from the graves after Memorial Day ceremonies. The map room documents the European campaign including the role of the 83rd. We shared a mobile tour of the cemetery with a United Airlines pilot who had taken time during a long layover to travel to the cemetery from Brussels by train and bus, so that he might locate the grave of his uncle, who died while serving in the 473rd Antiaircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion. His father was a P47 fighter

pilot who was MIA. The tour included stops at the graves of three Medal of Honor recipients.

The Hurtgen and Duren

After some photos, we headed on to the Hurtgen forest to a spot that Eddie and Remy were confident the 83rd passed through. Eddy mentioned they had taken Chuck Abdnor to the location and that Chuck had recognized a place his regiment had been through. My father certainly recognized the Hurtgen. We stopped at a location with some undisturbed "foxholes." Looking at some artifacts that were easily found, my dad identified them as German, leading to the conclusion that the immediate area was one where the Germans were dug in. My dad recalled that most of the foxholes dug by his company were either slit trenches or a double man foxhole. Eddy recounted that about 5 years ago that both American and German remains were still being uncovered in the Hurtgen. My father definitely had memories of the fighting there, and his recollection was that they had relieved the 4th Division, which had taken very heavy casualties.

We then briefly drove through Duren hoping that my father might recognize some landmark (he knows he was wounded in a Firestone factory that had not been touched by allied bombing, similar to a Ford factory across the street). Ninety percent of Duren, however, was destroyed by allied bombing and the city now seemed to be totally rebuilt. Our search was unsuccessful.

Echtrenach

We continued on to Echtrenach, a Luxemburg resort town. The 83rd pushed the Germans out of Echtrenach and across the River Sure. My father had some pretty good memories of this town. He talked about how the Germans were across the river but would not shoot (probably because the town had been a resort for wealthy Germans). His company thought they were going to have to push across the river, but instead were told to hold up. They stayed over a week in the town, spending a lot of time enjoying champagne from a warehouse in town. It was by far the longest time he spent in a bed during his time with the 83rd in Europe.

When we arrived in the town, my Dad did not recognize anything in the center of the town (which looked like a combination of newer construction and some restored buildings). But as we walked towards the river, he started to walk much more quickly and to get to the river bank. He seemed sure that if he looked at the town from the river, he would recognize where he had been. Sure enough, we got to the river and he was able to point to a row of buildings that he and his company lived in while holding the town. He also was able to point to at least a couple buildings across the river that may have been there and occupied by Germans. This was definitely a high point for him on the trip.

We then started to drive back to Bihain though Bastogne and by the business where Eddy worked. It was getting late and we talked about whether we would go back to Bastogne tomorrow before leaving for Normandy. As we approached the town, we decided that it would be better to stop tonight. He really wanted to try and find the spot where he stayed in the replacement center, before he caught up to the 83rd. He told the story of how he and six other guys, when they heard the 83rd was within 20 miles, took off to catch up to them (without orders). He related how Colonel Sharpe (who had been my father's company commander before he was made battalion commander) recognized my father, questioned them, told them they



could be considered AWOL and ordered them back to camp with the promise he would requisition them the following morning. When they returned to the 83rd, Colonel Sharpe asked my father where he wanted to go, and my father told him that he wanted to return to his squad. The Colonel kept his promise and he returned to his squad the next day.

Bastogne

We parked in the center of the town for photographs with the Sherman tank in the middle of Bastogne. Eddy then drove us to several likely spots where the replacement center might have been. In particular my father was trying to spot a tavern where the replacements were allowed to go, which he figured out was outside of Bastogne proper (he originally thought that the tavern was in Bastogne but after seeing the town and talking to Eddy realized that he had not been in Bastogne proper). Anyway, it was frustrating for Dad because although there were some small remnants of the villages outside Bastogne proper, my father could not identify the tavern or the site where they encamped. We finally returned to Bihain at dusk (it was now after 9:30).

The next day we were scheduled to leave for Normandy and to follow Eddy and Remy to Brussels where we would meet up with Wilfried; all of them usually attend the annual D-day weekend ceremonies at Sainteny. Before leaving Bihain, Robert asked my father to contribute a sketch commemorating his time in the 83rd on a poster board, which he did with a big assist from Eddy. Robert also

asked my father to contribute a page to his hotel's special memory book. It was very moving to see so many names from the 83rd, including descendants, who have enjoyed Robert and Paule's hospitality.

The Museum Project

Robert next took us on a tour of his museum project. Robert has been working for years to convert a large barn next to his hotel into a museum dedicated to the efforts to free Belgium with particular emphasis on the 83rd, while using many photos to be contributed by Tony Vaccaro. From the plaque already dedicated to the 83rd, to the boxcar used to transport holocaust victims, to the outlines of the various scenes to be depicted already appearing amidst the construction (much of which is being done by Robert himself with the assistance of many others, some of whom also belong to the European Chapter), evidence of their enthusiasm and fortitude are everywhere. Robert was also quite proud to show us the commitment letter he had recently received from the Belgian government to assist in funding this project.

After completing our tour, it was time to say our goodbyes. We were sad to be leaving Bihain so soon, but were excited to learn that Paule and Robert would be visiting America in August with plans to attend the West Point reunion.

Sainteny

It was a full day's drive to Normandy. We stopped to pick up Remy on the way to Brussels. Next was a stop in Brussels to meet up

with Wilfried and a visit with his wonderful family, including Wilfried's parents. My dad and Winfried's father seemed to "hit it off" really well.

We arrived in Sainteny about 9:00 p.m. expecting to join Jean Paul for dinner. We pulled into the town square, and a few minutes later, Jean Paul appeared with instructions to follow him. We travelled down a country road for a bit and soon pulled into the yard of a 300-year-old farmhouse. And as we got out of our car, right behind us came several carloads of people, including many reenactors in uniform, most with 83rd patches.

Next thing we know, we are guests at a banquet that including many if not most of the re-enactors who were to participate in the next day's ceremonies, but also the long-time Lord Mayor of Sainteny, Michel Lepourrey. It was an experience we will never forget. We dined in a main room that included a large map of every home in Sainteny. Jean Paul, a passionate historical researcher, explained he was trying to trace every family in every home in the town. He told us how Sainteny had been occupied by the Germans for over 4 years before its liberation. In addition, because of its strategic importance, the Germans placed at least one soldier in every home in the village.

We then sat down to eat an astonishing and awesome meal -- appetizers, salad, meat and cheese plates and an entrée with pork contributed from the Mayor's farm. Home-made cognac made for a wedding a few years earlier, other local wine, and to finish it all off, deserts from heaven. All mixed with much laughter, good companionship and many new friends. My father never expected such a reception -- the party continued until 1 a.m., my father leaving with a new "borrowed" black beret and a half full bottle of the most wonderful cognac he had ever tasted.

The surprises continued. Our accommodations were in a home on the town square (a home owned by a British couple who were putting it up for sale, but were willing to rent for special Town occasions). It



turned out, my dad and I were sharing a bedroom that overlooked the square, and was the same bedroom used by the officers commanding the German force that occupied the town. As we awoke the next morning, my dad and I wondered aloud whether those officers ever could have imagined that some 67 years later, a buck private from an American liberating army and his son would awake in this same room, in a France thriving and freed from occupation.

This day was a day of ceremony and commemoration from beginning to end. The day began with a gathering in the town square and the Mayor welcoming the citizenry into the hall of flags -- flags of the some 39 states of the union (thus far), all donated by the 83rd Infantry Division Association. The mayor spoke as did the American consul to Rennes, with my father and Jack Port, a veteran of the 4th Infantry Division at their side. After leaving the hall, my dad had the opportunity to meet with some of the re-enactors. He was also afforded the opportunity to once again carry a BAR. He also swapped his WWII veterans cap, keeping his black beret.

Next came a very moving and special ceremony -- the inauguration of a commemorative plaque paying tribute to Major Richard O'Malley, 4th Infantry Division, who was killed by a sniper while leading his men. Jack Port was there when the Major died. Also commemorated at the ceremony was a 4-year-old girl from Sainteny who was killed on the same day, July 16, 1944. The ceremony included several flag bearers, a large contingent of re-enactors, including vehicles, a choir of school children, Major O'Malley's niece, Sally Weiner, representatives of the United States counsel as well as dignitaries including the Mayors of Sainteny and Carantan, and Helen Patton, granddaughter to General George S. Patton Jr.

Upon leaving the plaque dedication, still another memorial ceremony took place, this near the center of town at a monument dedicated to the 83rd and 4th infantry divisions. My dad placed a wreath on the memorial together with Mayor Lepourrey. As part of this



ceremony, my father also pinned a medal on one of Sainteny's citizens, Marcel Lesage, to honor him for ten years of service bearing the American flag at Sainteny official ceremonies.

Following this ceremony, still more surprises. The Lord Mayor of Carentan, Jean-Pierre Lhonneur, with the assistance of Jean Paul as interpreter, invited my father to another set of ceremonies in Carentan later that afternoon and an evening banquet. Jelle Thys, a 16-year old boy who had travelled to the Sainteny ceremonies from Belgium with his parents, presented my dad with a commemorative placard prepared just for him. Jelle has also adopted two graves of 83rd members who are buried in Belgium. Another and greater surprise. School children, re-enactors, town citizens, all approached my father seeking his autograph -- on books, programs, journals and photographs.

We then were invited to a luncheon buffet banquet at a nearby town building. Well over 100 people attended. Again, the meal was superb -- a buffet table at least 20 feet long -- with course after course of wonderful dishes prepared in honor of the day. The guest speakers included Helen Patton and Jeff Lowdermilk, whose grandfather was a World War I infantryman. Their joint presentation, "Honoring America's Heroes: Normandy, France, D-Day Week 2011" included a series of reminiscences about their grandfathers. Jack Port, who was traveling with them, also contributed some of his recollections about the Normandy campaign. A highlight of the presentation was Helen Patton's rendition of "(There'll be Bluebirds Over) the White Cliffs

of Dover." You can see her performance (and my dad quietly singing along) on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a5CSSnzXNzI&NR=1>.

My dad also has an opportunity to spend some time with Ms. Patton at the luncheon and did not miss the opportunity to let her know that the "General had almost got him killed." He related his encounter with General Patton in the hedgerows. He was dug in with other members of his company. No one was firing because the Germans had zeroed in their positions. The General grabbed a machine gun set up at the end of a row and started firing, telling the surprised soldier, "This is how you fire a gun." The General then immediately moved on. Very shortly thereafter, the dug-in soldiers left as well, just before the Germans opened up on their positions. Ms. Patton assured my father that she had heard many similar stories about her grandfather and offered a wry smile.

Following the luncheon, which went late into the afternoon, we said our good-byes to Eddy, Remy and Wilfried who had to depart for Belgium. Did I mention what an outstanding photographer Remy is? He has displayed his photos of my father's visit and the Sainteny ceremonies at <https://picasa-web.google.com/115163367352607771130/VisitOfFrancisPMarkunsAndCeremoniesOfSainteny>.



Carentan

We next were transported to Carentan for memorial ceremonies preceding a parade through the town celebrating its liberation by

the 101st Airborne. We arrived too late for the introductions, but my father was escorted to a "front row seat" for the commemoration preceding the parade. He was then taken to the parade reviewing stand where he had another "front row seat." We then moved on to a cocktail hour and then still another banquet attended by both units from the 101st and a German paratroop unit who would be participating in a joint jump to commemorate D-day (our third banquet in less than 24 hours!) We were privileged to meet Maj. Gen. David N. Blackledge U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) as well as several current members of the 101st. During the banquet, my dad was approached by a historian who had many questions and maps to show him about the July 4 action in the "swamp." My father was the only World War II veteran present at this banquet, and Mayor Lhonneur afforded him a special acknowledgement and an invitation to return with his family for next year's ceremonies, resulting in a long and prolonged standing ovation. It is fair to say, my dad was overwhelmed. Even more overwhelming is what occurred at the end of the evening. A lovely woman named Geneviève sang the theme with French lyrics from the movie the "Longest Day" and dedicated it to my father. My father broke into tears and he and Geneviève went to each other and hugged as she finished.

Retracing the 83rd's Early Days in Normandy

Our last day in Normandy was no less memorable. Jean Paul took the day and accompanied my father on a trip beginning at Omaha Beach where the 83rd assembled to retrace his steps inland and ending in the "swamp." We first stopped next the National Guard Memorial at the beach and my dad immediately pointed up the hill to where he remembered the 83rd assembling. Another remarkable incident then took place. A Belgian gentleman and his wife came running down to my father and began to thank him for his freedom, telling him that he would be speaking Ger-

man today if not for the actions of the Americans. He was also very upset that my father had not been introduced at the Carantan ceremonies, and Jean Paul calmed him by explaining how he had arrived late from Sainteny. He and his wife then returned to their car and came back with two large bottles of Belgian beer and two boxes of Belgian chocolates for my father. My dad then gave them an autograph and we had our picture taken with them.

Jean Paul drove down the same roads that he was fairly certain that the 83rd travelled so many years ago. My father could not have been more impressed with Jean Paul's historical knowledge of the events of those early days following the D-day landing. As we drove down a narrow road bordered by hedgerows, my father commented that this looked too familiar. He also lamented the fact that the apple orchards that he remembered were no longer there. He told us that one of his strongest memories was of all the apple blossoms in Normandy when he first arrived.

As we further traveled down the road, by father asked us to stop because he recognized a Chateau, Château de Colombières, which he remembered marching by. He remembered seeing two women in riding dress exercising their horses in the courtyard. Jean Paul suggested that we stop in and visit with the proprietor. We talked to the groundskeeper who let us enter the gate. We knocked on the door and spoke with Charles and his daughter, who could not have been more hospitable. The chateau is now a wonderful and unique guest house. Charles took us into a private museum that he had established that tells the story of the chateau during the days after the invasion. Within a few days after D-day, and before the 83rd passed by, the chateau was taken over by Allied intelligence and served as a headquarters for army war correspondents and as a print shop for propaganda leaflets that were shot from artillery shells and dropped on French villages to warn French citizens that the allies had arrived and to urge German troops to surren-

der. Charles could not offer an explanation for what my dad remembered seeing in the courtyard.



The Fourth of July

The final stop of the day on the tour with Jean Paul was the infamous 'swamp' where so many members of the 83rd were wounded or killed (approximately 1500 men) on July 4th. Jean Paul drove us into that field, along a raised road (my father immediately commented that he would never have taken his own vehicle into that field). He stood with Jean Paul, very quietly, I thought, and tried to answer Jean Paul's questions about what he remembered of that day and where his company (G Company, 329th) was located. My dad was able to point to a rise from where he believed the company approached. His recollection was that they were unable to get off a shot during that action as they were being pummeled not only by German shelling and machine gun fire but by their own artillery, who were firing short due to a lack of communication. He remembered their goal that day was simply to stay alive. As I stood there, it struck me that I was standing where so many from the 83rd lost their lives, on land little changed from 67 years ago – yet, not a plaque or any sign commemorating this event.

The American Cemetery at Omaha Beach and the Return to Paris

After our tour, we return once more to Jean Paul and Christianne's farm house, where Christianne again put out a wonderful lunch.

It was also a chance to begin to digest all that we had just experienced. We talked about how we hoped to see each other again at West Point and said our good-byes and thanks to Christianne. Jean Paul then accompanied us back to the town square, where we departed for the American Cemetery at Omaha Beach.

My father had never been to the cemetery. We spent much of the time looking at the maps of the European campaign. I (but not my father) had been to the cemetery 11 years earlier. I looked at those maps so differently this time, thinking about how valuable freedom is and what freedom truly means.

Our final stop, after a leisurely drive back from Normandy, was Paris. My dad had only been to Paris one other time — when he was transported to a hospital before being transported again to England. Over the years, he would comment how he had missed the opportunity see Paris except the Arc de Triomphe through the window of the ambu-

lance bus transporting him to the hospital. We only had one full day, but my father this time was able to view Paris from a boat ride down the Seine and from another bus — this time an open air tour bus on a beautiful June day.

As we flew home, many thoughts were racing through my mind. What a gift my father gave to our family. First, he survived to marry my mother and to make his family while doing his part to ensure that we grew up in a free world. He and my mother raised five of us. He allowed me to marry and raise my own family, including a son who grew to love his grandfather so much that he wanted him to share in the start of his and his wife's own new family. He also loved him enough to share him with our European friends. His European friends loved him enough to give of their time, to open their homes and hearts, and to give my dad a return to those battlefields like no other. What goes around truly comes around. ▼



HIGHLANDS TODAY

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MONDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2011 • HIGHLANDSTODAY.COM • INFORMING TODAY. SHAPING TOMORROW

83rd Division Association holds an historic meeting

They were back at a favorite hotel, Inn on the Lakes

By GARY PINNELL
Highlands Today

SEBRING » The 83rd Infantry Division Association was here Saturday for two reasons: to thank Inn on the Lakes for going beyond the call of duty in providing a good meeting place, and to acknowledge that it was time pass the torch to younger leaders.

First, Bob Taylor, the 2011 president, gave plaques to innkeeper Christine Hatfield and Rick Cruickshank.

"We fight to get table reservations because we'd rather eat here than anywhere else," Taylor, a World War II PFC, told Cruickshank.

And then, Taylor brought tears to the eyes of Hatfield, Cruickshank and even the dozen hardened veterans in the room.

"Today, we're not just a bunch of old warriors reliving our past," Taylor said. The men of the 83rd, the survivors, began meeting three times a year. But that was 25 years ago, when they were in their 60s. Later, they met twice a year. Now, they're in the 80s, some are in their 90s. They meet once a year.

"We can't hear you!" one of the women called out to John Prinzi, a tallish corporal who led the prayer. He wasn't speaking into the microphone and apologized, but said one prayer was all they'd get on this day.

At this meeting, 55 years after VE-Day, the women in the room outnumbered the men.

"We're here facing the inevitable," said Taylor, who asked several times for volunteers to lead the pledge of allegiance and the prayer before drafting Prinzi. "Now it's time to pass the flag."

The banner would be picked up by — of all people — to a Marine captain whose connection with the 83rd barely existed when the infantry division was formed. In fact, Mary Jean Houlahan hadn't been born when her father, Staff Sgt. Walter Knapp, then 35, departed. Four months later, he died on the French battlefield.

Houlahan, now a West Palm Beach cancer nurse, showed up a few years ago looking for anyone who knew her father, whom she had never met.

"They allowed me to place a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier," Capt. Houlahan said. She started a marine tradition: her son and daughter are in the Corps too.

"Old soldiers don't fade from my memory," she said. "These are my family now."

Manny Epstein was a Brooklyn, N.Y., boy when he joined the army. The 83rd was formed from elements of the 63rd, he recalled. An information sheet disseminated by Taylor says the 83rd was one of the premier combat units in Europe, landing in Normandy 12 days after D-Day in relief of the 101st Air



Highlands Today photo by GARY PINNELL

Manny Epstein of Brooklyn, N.Y., now lives in St. Petersburg Beach. He is the 83rd Infantry Division Association national executive board chairman. About a dozen of his comrades came to Inn on the Lakes on Saturday to give the hotel an award.

borne.

The Thunderbolts, as they called themselves, fought in Brittany and the Battle of the Bulge, across Germany, and claimed to be the only American force to fight east of the Elbe River. It came at a price, of course: 3,600 soldiers killed in action, and 800 injured.

Both Bill McKee of Massachusetts and Jim Brennan of Rhode Island, members of the New England chapter of the 83rd Association, were wounded in the head by exploding German 88mm Howitzer shells.

McKee, a tech sergeant, led a platoon; Brennan was a three-stripe buck sergeant. They recalled the capture of 22,000 German soldiers in France.

The website 83rdthunderbolt.org/vehicles.php tells an even bigger story: "The 83rd ... liberated over 75,000 Allied prisoners-of-war, took some 34,000 Germans captive in the 14-day assault that carried them

across four rivers into the very heart of Germany and gave the Allies the only permanent bridgehead across the Elbe."

Allen Fisher, who arrived at the meeting 30 minutes late, was required to lead the Florida chapter in the Five Star Salute, a ritual devised by Paul Buchman, a Plant City attorney, and Lou Kanes, who put words to the memorial:

"We landed in Normandy," Fisher read, and they saw the bodies in the hedgerows. They drank a glass of calvados.

For comrades in Brittany, they drank cognac, and started a drive to Paris. For the Battle of Ardennes, they drank schnapps, and were given credit for stopping the enemy offensive at the Battle of the Bulge. In the Rhineland, they drank schnapps again, and rested in the Netherlands before capturing the city of Neuss, on the Rhine River.

continued >

Finally, they drank brandy to recall the bridge crossing assault of the Elbe River.

But that's history, and Saturday was reality: "Attrition, due to age, is now our primary concern," said Taylor's handout. "We must transition from a veteran organization to a descendant organization."

Highlands Today reporter Gary Pinnell can be reached at 386-5828 or gpinnell@highlandstoday.com



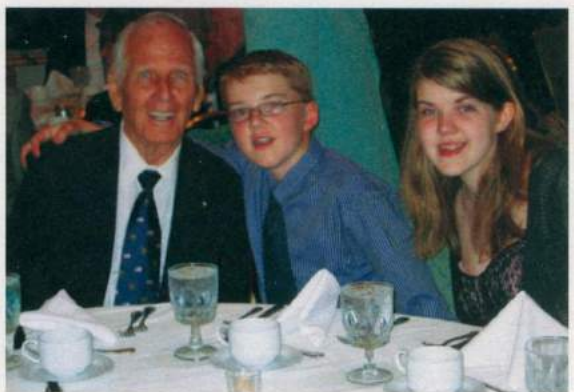
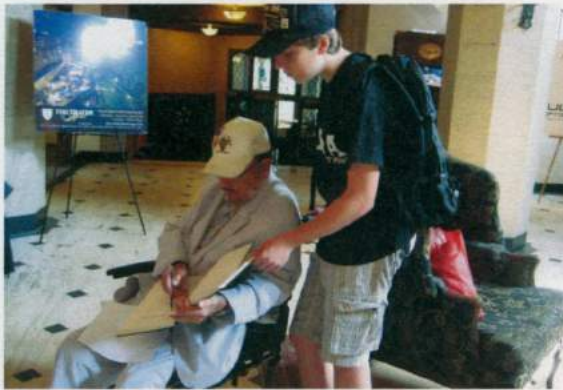
Highlands Today photo by GARY PINNELL

John Prinzi and Allen Fisher join hands and sing "God Bless America" to close Saturday's meeting of the 83rd Infantry Division Association. The World War II veterans have been meeting at Inn on the Lakes for more than a quarter-century.

— 65TH ANNUAL REUNION, WEST POINT, NY —



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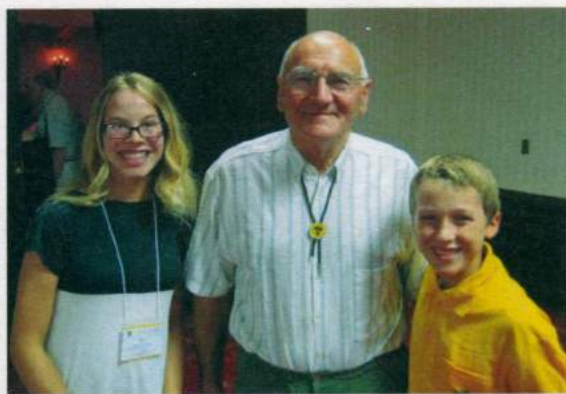
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