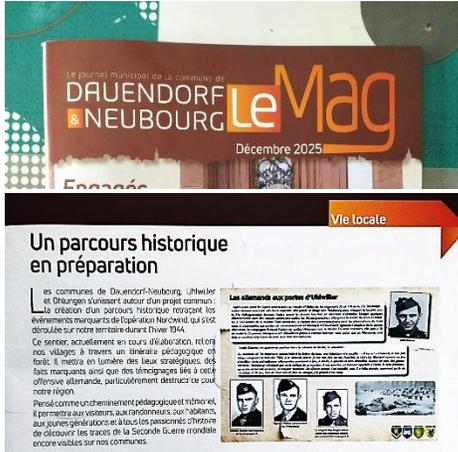


A HISTORIC TRAIL IN THE OHLUNGEN FOREST

From Damien Bauer with his translation of the article below into English

This article which appeared in the Dauendorf-Neubourg municipal newspaper is about the creation of a historic trail in the Ohlungen Forest, which should be inaugurated later this year. I will let you know as soon as I have the official inauguration dates. I spent a long time working on the texts that will appear on about fifteen information panels along the historic trail.



(Translation) An Historic Trail in Preparation

The municipalities of Dauendorf-Neubourg, Uhlwiller and Ohlungen are joining forces around a shared project: the creation of a historical trail retracing the key events of Operation Nordwind, which took place in our area during the winter of 1944.

This path, currently under development, will connect our villages through an educational forest route. It will highlight strategic locations, significant events, as well as testimonies

linked to this German offensive, which was particularly destructive for our region.

Designed as both an educational and memorial journey, it will allow visitors, hikers, residents, younger generations and all history enthusiasts to discover the traces of the Second World War still visible in our municipalities.”

Damien may be reached at naglo67@hotmail.fr

HISTORY OF FORT PÉTAINE & CONNECTIONS WITH THE 222ND INFANTRY REGIMENT, 42ND RAINBOW DIVISION

By Christophe Viller



Following a previous topic (August 2025 RAINBOW TRAIL) on MIA, Lt. Dallas Hartwell, E Co., 222nd Inf. Regt. in France, a recent discovery of GI graffiti in a fort near Strasbourg brought connections with the 222nd Regiment at Christmas time December 1944.

Being a member of a section of the Sport and Art Army Garrison in Strasbourg, I am helping to restore with a group of volunteers an old German fort of 1870-71 and occupation of the region of Alsace by German troops of Kaiser Wilhelm I. This half circle belt of forts was located West of Strasbourg in case the French troops would attack from the Vosges mountains. One of these of quite large size

which could hold a garrison of 950 soldiers was the Fest Gross Herzog Von Baden, named after the Emperor of Germany, located in the west suburbs of Strasbourg, in Oberhausbergen. This territory of France remained occupied by German Troops until November 1918, when Germany capitulated, ending WWI.

In 1919, when Alsace was again French, The Fort Von Baden was renamed by the French Army after the famous General Pétain who won the Battle of Verdun. It remained in French hands until June 1940, when the Germans invaded France and annexed again Alsace and Moselle. During WWII the fort was used as a Prisoner of War

camp, for Serbs and others of Eastern countries. Remains of paintings of a Chapel from French Troops in the '30s still can be seen nowadays, as well as other marks, signals and Soldiers' graffiti at different places of the fort.



Guided tours are possible once a month and for historical events as well. Our remodeling association has been working on restoration of different parts of the fort for the past twenty years. So, even though the whole place cannot be visited, a significant section is part of the visit with various kinds of structures.

Unfortunately, we lost the support of the Army Engineers when the Regiment was deactivated some ten years ago.

With only about ten to fifteen members, some dock wards are long and hard to achieve now. Luckily with the help of both the Army and the town of Oberhausbergen, water and electricity are again connected to the fort.



Back to 1944, in November the Free French troops of General Leclerc, 2nd Armored Division attached to the US XV Corps launched an assault to liberate Strasbourg. In two days, November 22nd and 23rd, the Town was reached from the Vosges. Five armored columns advanced on Strasbourg and some found a stiff resistance from the Germans using their old forts of the 1870s. Fort Pétain and another in the middle of the resistance belt were equipped with artillery. Instead of a frontal fight that would be costly for the French Troops, they detoured to enter the city through other roads. The 2nd Armored Division was supported by infantry units of the 44th Division and 79th Division.

On November 26th, the French 2nd Armored Division was leaving the last French town to be delivered according to the Oath of Koufra, made by Colonel Leclerc when his troops captured the Italian fort in Libya back in 1941. In substance the Oath

proclaimed that his Unit would fight until the French Colors would fly on the Cathedral of Strasbourg. Of course, they still had to help freeing Colmar and in April 1945, Royan in western France. As the French troops left Strasbourg on November 26th, the US Troops of Vth Corps coming from Saint-Dié entered Strasbourg and secured the plain of Alsace.



During the month of December most of the territory of Alsace has been freed but still remained the so-called Colmar Pocket in the southern part. Most units involved in the liberation of Alsace were basically issued from the landing in Provence in August 1944. These troops were from the US Seventh Army and the 1st French Army, so the troops mentioned before were associated to the

Seventh Army only while they arrived in Alsace.

From October to December 1944, a certain number of US divisions or task forces (only infantry regiments) arrived from the States in the Port of Marseilles to be attached to the Seventh Army in the Vosges and Alsace.

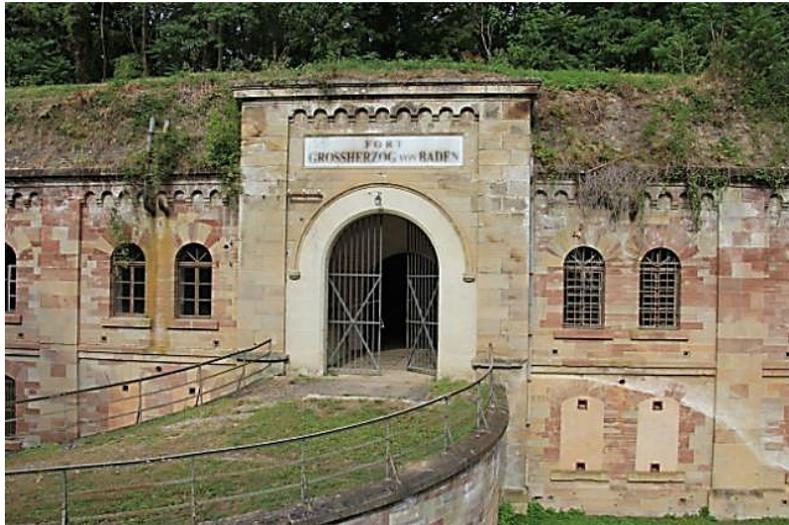
As was the case of the Task Force Linden, disembarking in Marseilles in December and later transported to the largest US Camp in Southern France at Delta Base (near Calas). We know that the three Companies C, E and F of the 222nd Infantry Regiment were transported to Lorraine by train on December 20th and detained at Bennestorf, Moselle



December 23rd, spent Christmas eve in Berganville in the area and trucked to Strasbourg on December 25th, arriving in the middle of the day at Fort Pétain where they were billeted until December 26th. During their billeting some soldiers found time to deliver a message on walls of the fort besides other graffiti made previously by Germans in the 1870s, 1914 and the French in 1938-39 and even in the late 1970s. There might be more to be discovered as the place is wide and we still have a huge amount of work to be done here.

The GIs' graffiti can be observed during the guided tour.

The fort can be visited every 1st Sunday and national days at cost of 5 Euros for a guided tour of 2 ½ hours. Of course, reservations can be done for groups well in advance out of the normal visits.



Among other places of interest around Strasbourg, I would suggest the monument of the 42nd ID in Kilstett close to a Maginot Line bunker that can be visited. In addition, in the next village, Gamsbheim, only 10 minutes away, can be seen the commemorative plaque to Lt. Hartwell, E Company, 222nd Regiment and the troops involved in the combat of January 5-7th 1945. This Memorial was inaugurated under my direction with the Town of Gamsbheim on VE day 2025. Being in touch with the family of Lt. Hartwell, I have good hopes that a representative of their family would join your tour. The mayor of Gamsbheim would be happy to welcome your group if it was planned when your tour is fixed. That would be an occasion to make a ceremony at the place of the monument, the train station of Gamsbheim.

Feel free to contact me if you wish to include these three visits in your Tour:

Ch.viller@gmail.com



Christophe Viller

[photos of Fort Pétain are sent by Christophe Viller for this article; the plaque for Lt. Dallas Hartwell (left) is also from Christophe and was printed with his article in RAINBOW TRAIL August 2025]

“TRAIL OF THE RAINBOW” EUROPEAN TOUR THROUGH THE 42ND DIVISION HISTORY OF WORLD WAR II

The RDVF is hosting a trip to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the Rainbow Division's participation in World War II. The trip will take place from 16 to 27 September 2026 and will essentially mirror the route of the Rainbow Division during World War II.

Participants will travel overnight on 16 September and meet in Zurich on the morning of 17 September. Upon arrival the group will assemble and travel to Strasbourg, which is the location where the Rainbow Division assembled before its attack across the Siegfried Line into Germany on March 15, 1945.



Rainbow Division Veterans
Foundation
80th Anniversary
Commemoration
"The Trail of the Rainbow"
European Tour 2026



- Join the Rainbow Division Veterans Foundation on a 12-day journey that follows the 42nd "Rainbow" Infantry Division's trail to victory in Europe during World War II.
- Our tour will visit Strasbourg, France; Nuremberg and Munich, Germany; and Salzburg, Austria: all places the Rainbow Division helped liberate in 1945!
- This tour is open to friends, family and former members of the Rainbow Division.
- For more information, contact John Andonie at john.andonie@gmail.com

The tour group will spend three days in Strasbourg visiting WW II casements and a museum. They will also receive a briefing on the Battle of Hatten and have dinner at the La Coronne Hotel, which has many photos and stories of the Rainbow Division. The stay in Strasbourg will end with a visit to the Épinal American Cemetery for a wreath-laying ceremony to pay tribute to our fallen Soldiers.

On Sunday, 20 September, the group will travel to Würzburg to tour the bridges crossing the Main (pronounced Mein) River that the Rainbow Division seized on April 6, 1945.

On Monday, 21 September, the tour group will travel to Nuremberg where they will spend two days visiting the sites.

On Wednesday, 23 September, the group will travel to Salzburg, stopping by the famous Eagle's Nest enroute. Salzburg is the site where the Rainbow Division served as a constabulary force after WWII. Stops include the gravesite of MG Harry Collins, the Division Commander who served during WWII. Prior to his death on March 8, 1963, General Collins requested to be buried where he served during the war.

On Friday, 25 September, the group will travel to Munich to visit Dachau, a Nazi concentration camp that was liberated by the Rainbow Division in April 1945. Upon the conclusion of the Dachau visit, the tour group will have the remaining time to visit the city and return home.

The trip is being organized through Fitness Travel France, Inc., a veteran-owned agency with years of experience providing European military history tours. A professional guide will lead you on an unforgettable journey of discovery. You'll enjoy comfortable lodging in scenic, historic European cities, with travel by modern motor coach (bus), and some meals included.

Space limited to the first 48 paying travelers. Approximate cost is \$2,700 to \$3,200 per person, double occupancy, (excluding air travel) depending on the number of travelers and the Euro exchange rate. If you are interested in more information, contact John Andonie at john.andonie@gmail.com.

Received from the COLLECTIF HATTEN DEMAIN An Update on the progress to preserve the Hatten-Rittershoffen battleground

9 February 2026 CONCLUSIONS OF INVESTIGATING COMMISSIONER

Dear American Friends,

The investigating commissioner's report has been published. The conclusions are favorable to the industrial project, subject to reservations (regarding water quality and consumption, road traffic, the landscaping of the Jewish cemetery, and the lack of genuine effort to identify an alternative site). This link will provide access to her extensive report:

<https://www.bas-rhin.gouv.fr/Actions-de-l-Etat/Amenagement-du-territoire-construction-logement/Expropriation-pour-cause-d-utilite-publique/ZA-ZAC-ZAI-Zone-Commerciale>

Below is a translation of her opinion concerning the historical aspects. In essence, she defers to the State's historical services for their expertise and leaves it to the State to determine its priorities.

The Investigating Commissioner considers this issue to be complex and believes that only qualified historians are able to address it with the necessary rigor. Nevertheless, he has taken due note of the conclusions of the archaeological diagnostic study and is awaiting the results of the archaeological

excavations. Consequently, he considers that the State services that have been consulted in parallel with the present project, as well as with the application for inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List, will be best placed to make the appropriate decision on the basis of the results of the archaeological excavations that will be carried out in the near future.

Ensuring better landscape integration of the Jewish cemetery through a specific form of treatment.

Given that the archaeological diagnostic study concludes that only a very limited number of remains are present on the project site, and that construction work cannot begin before the completion of the archaeological excavation campaign, any potential impacts will be reassessed in light of the excavation results.

Nevertheless, we must wait for the final decision of the Prefect, who usually follows the recommendations of the investigating commissioner but is not required to do so. In light of the reservations that were expressed, the growing awareness among some residents of Hatten and Rittershoffen of the richness of their villages' historical and memorial heritage, and the municipal elections scheduled for next month (with a candidate opposing the current mayor who is sensitive to the historical and memorial significance of the battlefield), we believe we will be able to launch an online fundraising campaign to raise the funds needed to pursue legal action.

We are not defeated yet. *Yannick et Muriel Maniere, representing Collectif Hatten Demain*



4 February 2026

HATTEN-RITTERSHOFFEN: ANOTHER BATTLE

As part of the project to create a 43-hectare industrial park in Hatten, at the eastern entrance to the village, archaeological excavations were scheduled at the request of the Regional Directorate of Cultural Affairs for the Grand Est region (DRAC), prior to the earthworks.

For the record, this area occupies the southeastern part of the Hatten-Rittershoffen battlefield, along the Seltz road, opposite the Esch casemate (Maginot Line), which still bears the scars of the violent fighting of 1945. The project will “encompass” the Jewish cemetery and cut off the path linking the Esch casemate to those in the Rittershoffen forest. The height of the planned industrial buildings (a lithium refinery) will block the view of the forest and, above all, the villages of Hatten and Rittershoffen, making any educational reading of the battlefield and interpretation of the events impossible.

Brief Historical Background of the Area

Hatten and its surroundings were inhabited during the Neolithic period (from around 4000 to 200 BC) by groups who lived from hunting, gathering and animal husbandry.

Around 1500 BC, the so-called “Proto-Celts” left traces of their burials in the forest. A total of 178 burial mounds, several meters high and dozens of meters in circumference, are located between Seltz and Hatten, including a princely tomb discovered in 1859. Funerary ashes were found in urns, along with weapons and jewelry, which are now on display in museums of Haguenau and Strasbourg.

Roman presence has also been identified through milestones and coin finds, as Seltz was a major crossroads of Roman roads and is located along the Rhine.

In AD 253, the Alamanni invaded the region.

During the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), mercenary troops fought on these lands. In 1648, French forces were stationed in Hatten, and the surrounding fields were used as maneuvering grounds.

During the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, as well as during the First World War, Hatten and its immediate surroundings were spared from fighting.

Archaeological Excavations (2000-2001)

Archaeological excavations were previously carried out in 2000 and 2001 on the opposite side of the Seltz road, prior to the construction of the logistics base.

It was noted that no listed or protected sites are located nearby. A listed site is defined as “a natural site or monument whose conservation or preservation is of interest from an artistic, historical, legendary, or picturesque point of view, of general public interest.” Neither the municipality nor any historical associations had initiated procedures for historical or memorial protection.

The excavation report states that no traces of World War II fighting were found, but that “the main interest of the site lies in its proximity to the forest necropolises, and the traces of habitation found (pottery, shards) indicate that this settlement may have been contemporaneous with the necropolises.”

The northern part of the area known as Rothsmatt revealed structures associated with an “indigenous farm” dating from the Late La Tène period (25-52 BC). Hatten is the second site to yield this type of house. It is worth emphasizing the large size of the building, approximately 100m²).

Archaeological Excavations (2026)

Under French law, “When a development project risks destroying archaeological remains, the state requires the developer to carry out an archaeological assessment or a preventive excavation. Archaeological assessments and excavations are conducted by qualified operators.

A preventive excavation is divided into two phases: the excavation phase and the analysis and study phase.

The purpose of a preventive excavation is to study a site by collecting archaeological information as thoroughly as possible and analyzing it to ensure understanding. Sometimes, this is the only way to preserve the memory of a site that will disappear once the development is completed.”

Logically, given both the archaeological discoveries made during previous excavations in the industrial area in the other side of the RD28, the presence of the Esch casemate and the Jewish cemetery, and the fighting that took place there in January 1945, the Regional Directorate of Cultural Affairs of the Grand Est region has mandated excavations. It should also be noted that our request, initiated in 2024, for protection of the Esch casemate and the entire battlefield under the historical monuments designation further justifies these excavations. The excavations therefore focus on two distinct areas.

How Are the Excavations Conducted?

Construction machinery scrapes away the topsoil under the supervision of an archaeologist, then carefully excavates in 5-cm increments. Once the stripping is completed, the precision work begins: potential remains are identified, numbered, and mapped. Each structure is then methodically excavated by hand,

with detailed records and samples taken. These will be analyzed and included in a report, which is scheduled to be published within two years.

And all of this – why?

Even if the results of these excavations are historically very interesting, and even if archaeologists find remains of fallen soldiers, this will not prevent the construction work from beginning.

The decision maker is the Prefect of the Grand Est Region, who represents the state. The conclusions of the investigating commissioner are important, as they will be carefully studied and taken into account (or not!). Industrial pressure, fueled by European decisions to reindustrialize the continent, is very strong. But the opinions of historical and heritage services also matter, especially as we will soon commemorate the centenary of the Maginot Line and begin reflecting on the Second World War.

Public Opinion and the Media

Public opinion and the media play an important role. Unfortunately, local residents and associations struggle to confront the decisions of their mayors or the President of the Community of Communes. Questions of morality and respect for the victims weigh heavily in the debate, as does geopolitics.

This is a large-scale project, whereas our historical and memorial project has an entirely different scope. By sacralizing these lands and enhancing them with memory trails and memorials, along with modern educational mediation to help pass on their story to younger generations, we will finally give them the universal significance they deserve.

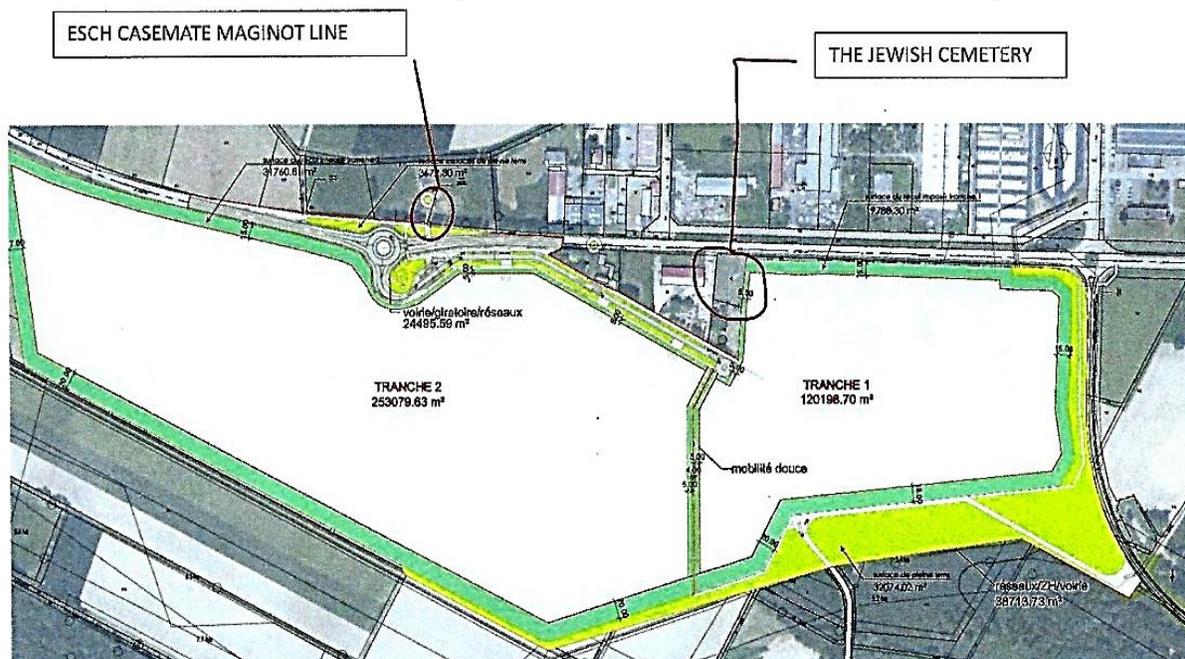
Our collective may seem insignificant. But perhaps that is an advantage, because we risk nothing and fear nothing. Recklessness or boldness? You be the judge!

We will make it happen!

Hatten Industrial Park Map The Jewish Cemetery

From HATTEN DOMAIN 5 February 2026

Regarding the Jewish cemetery, this map helps better visualize the area: the cemetery will be completely surrounded by the industrial zone. Only a small triangular area will be spared; it contains the cemetery and the former Esch forest ranger's house, an important site of combat that we wish to preserve from any impact.



According to the documents we have been able to review, a building approximately 15 meters high could be constructed just 5 meters from the cemetery's perimeter wall.

A GLIMPSE OF LIFE IN FRANCE DURING WORLD WAR II

Shared by the family of Yannick and Muriel Maniere

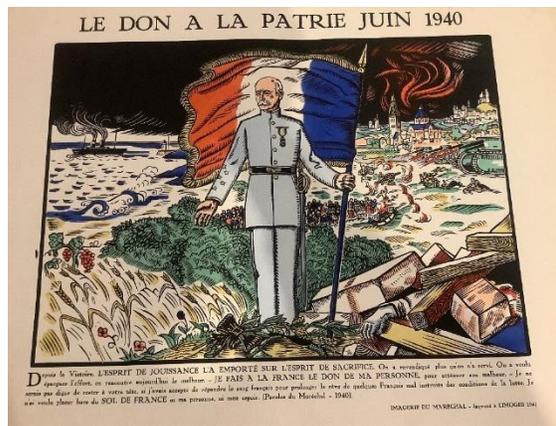
This collection from the family archives of Yannick and Muriel Maniere, of the *Hatten Demain Collectif* shared though impactful images, allow us a powerful, concise look into the life of France during World War II and a personal glimpse into the service of Maréchal Philippe Pétain, who commanded the French Army in WWI and became the Head of the French State in the Vichy Government in the portion of France during the war called the Free Zone 11 July 1940 – 20 August 1944.

The images below were saved by the family Maniere. We can imagine a gifted 15-year-old student, Yannick's father, who received an award for academic excellence from Maréchal Pétain, then the Head of State of the Vichy Government in France (Free Zone) in 1942. The Vichy Government had signed armistice agreements with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. The family lived along the demarcation line separating Occupied France and the Free Zone (not occupied by the Germans) and the young student had to cross this line in order to attend High School.

Translations of captions to these several images provided by Muriel Maniere add to this poignant story of the climate of France following the heroic victories of The Great War when Maréchal Pétain commanded the French army and reveal a far different role as it later entered into the dark days of the early 1940's. The prize itself consisted of propaganda images promoting patriotism and the so-called "values" of the regime then in power.



“These glorious memories fade with the passing years. Misunderstandings arise between peoples who once stood united in life and in death. Pétain remained the living symbol of faithful friendship. One sees him, in 1931, when he visited the United States, at the Centennial of the surrender at Yorktown. The salute of General Pershing to his comrade-in-arms, beneath the folds of the Star-Spangled Banner and the Tricolor, recalled the ideal brotherhood that had led Lafayette to the aid of Washington and had sent Pershing to stand beside Pétain.”(Words of the Marshal – June 1940)



“Since the victory, the spirit of indulgence has triumphed over the spirit of sacrifice. People have demanded more than they have served. They have wanted to spare themselves effort, now they are encountering misfortune. I make to France the gift of my person in order to alleviate her suffering. I would not be worthy of remaining at your head if I had accepted to shed the blood of Frenchmen in order to prolong the dream of a few Frenchmen who misjudged the conditions of the struggle. I no longer have a place outside the soil of France – neither my person, nor my hope.”

“Prize of Excellence awarded to the student Maniere Upper Primary School Saint Pourcain-sur-Sioule By Marshal Pétain Work – Family – Homeland”



“My dear child, Your work places you at the head of your classmates. This creates an obligation for you: your talents and your diligence have earned you a place in the ranks of the Nation that is being reborn.



Keep from using them for personal ends; may they never stifle the voice of your heart or prevent you from cultivating team spirit. May this keepsake, which I offer you to reward your efforts, remind you – when you are a man – that at a very young age you chose the path of Duty. Philippe Pétain”

you are a man – that at a very young age you chose the path of Duty. Philippe Pétain”



"I was with you in the glorious days; I remain with you in the dark days.
To Serve
1918 – 1940"

**A Complex life of service to his country worthy of study.
1856 – 1951**

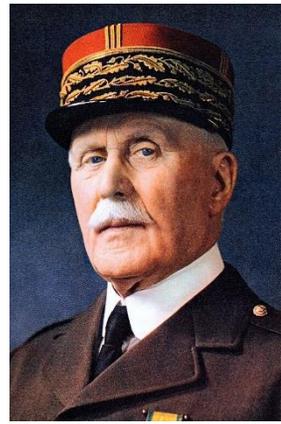


Photo right is found here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philippe_P%C3%A9tain

21 SEPTEMBER 2025 COMMEMORATION Monument to the Dead of the Champagne Armies Photos by French Photographer Béatrice Dahm



Each year the faithful gather at the *Memorial of Navarin Farm*, the year of 2025 especially significant as the 110th anniversary of the battles of the Champagne-Marne in September 1915.



The sculpture of three combatants above the entrance bear the facial features of General Henri Gouraud, (center); Quentin Roosevelt, youngest son of President Theodore Roosevelt killed in aerial combat in France on Bastille Day, July 14, 1918 (right); and on the left, the

sculptor's (Maxime Real del Sartre) own brother, Serge Louis Henry Real del Sartre, killed at Soissons in 1917.

Among the many illustrious attendants and speakers was Admiral (Ret.) Emmanuel Gouraud, a great nephew of General Henri Gouraud, who commanded the French Fourth Army during the battle of Champagne in July 1918 including the 42nd Division under his command at this time.



[For an excellent story of this great Memorial and the men whom it commemorates, please visit <https://rainbowvets.org/wp-content/uploads/Rainbow-Reveille-July-2021-pages-1-8.pdf>

To read the story, "*The Secret of the Statue*" by RDVF Historian, Patrick J. Chaisson.]



How to Tour Europe while on a Secret Mission

Being an Account of a Trip made in Europe in the Spring of 1945

by Major F.G. Hammer

FRED HAMMER, WWI (RSM, HQ, 42nd Division)
and
WWII Veteran

Major, OC-CWS [Chemical Warfare Service], Wash. D.C.
and later, as Lt. Col. Chief, Intelligence Branch CWS
EUROPE IN 1945

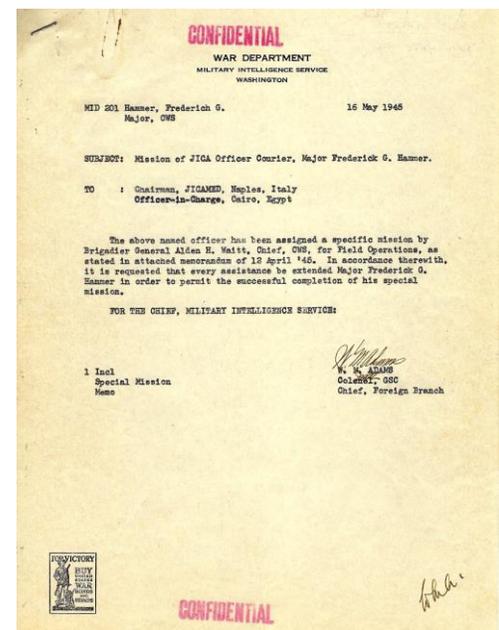
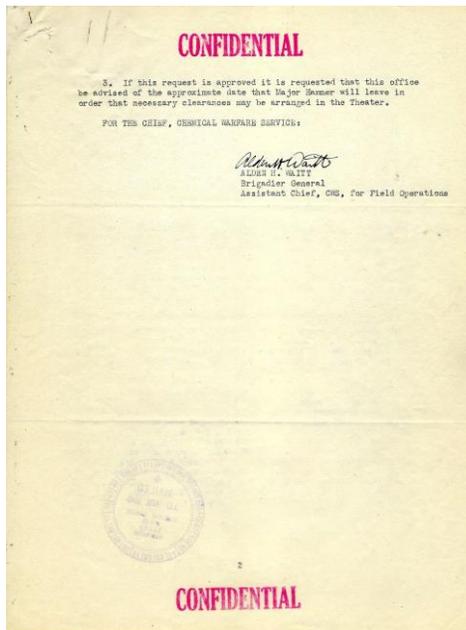
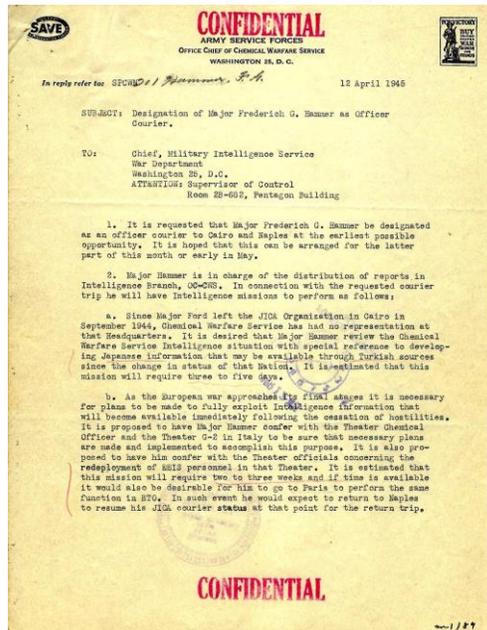


Fred G. Hammer, Battalion Sergeant-Major, Headquarters, Rainbow Division, Was Born and Raised in Washington.



(Orders were issued in May, 1945, by the War Department, sending me to the European, Mediterranean and Middle East theaters of Operation, and following my return an official report was made to

them covering military activities accomplished upon this trip. As this account omits all official aspects, and is merely a narrative of personal experiences, the first person is used rather than the third, because of the impersonality of the latter. The reader is, therefore, requested to pardon the necessary repetition of the "I" letter which may appear quite frequently. F.G.H.)



PART II [Part I was printed in our August 2025 issue]

[Excerpts from "The Persian Gulf Command and the Lend-Lease Mission to the Soviet Union During World War II" by Lieutenant Colonel Danny M. Johnson, AUS-Reg. are inserted in boxes in Major Hammer's narrative as a history connection to this time and place. It is highly recommended: <https://armyhistory.org/the-persian-gulf-command-and-the-lend-lease-mission-to-the-soviet-union-during-world-war-ii/>]

"When the subject of the U.S. Army and the Persian Gulf comes up, the first thing today's Americans often think of is 1990-91, when American and coalition forces deployed to Saudi Arabia as part of Operation DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM to drive the Iraqi Army out of Kuwait, or more recent military operations in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. Many Americans do not realize that during World War II, the Army had 30,000 troops stationed in Iran and Iraq. The Persian Gulf Command (PGC), at times known as the Persian Gulf Service Command (PGSC), was assigned the mission of expediting the shipment of war materials to the Soviet Union as part of the Lend-Lease program."

Monday morning I was called for in a jeep and on the way into town it was evident to see that the Cairo area had been visited by a severe storm quite recently. Upon inquiry, I was told that they had experienced quite a deluge, accompanied by high winds; damage to buildings at the airport had been heavy and the rush

of running water across the roads had been strong enough to wash a jeep right off one of the main roads. This had happened about two days or so before I arrived, and workers were still removing water from some of the flooded areas (by a painfully slow bucket method).

The day was devoted mainly to official business. However, I arranged a billet at the Hotel Moffat-Astoria which is about three blocks west of the famous Shepherds Hotel, and near the beginning of the Heliopolis tram line. I had been warned about the flies in Cairo before leaving home and they came up to all expectations. As I walked about the streets of this ancient town I was aware of the meaning of that expression “the crossroads of the world,” because you see here all types, all colors, and practically all nationalities somewhere within the city limits.

Cairo is an interesting city, despite its dirty streets which are lackadaisically swept occasionally with long handled brooms. A rare sight greets you perchance as you stroll along about the noon hour; the natives will drop down in the shade of any conveniently located tree and enjoy a siesta, oblivious to the passing crowds. And if they have any animals, a camel, donkey, or dog, these too – tethered to the same tree – like as not will be enjoying a snooze at the same time.

Tuesday, in the afternoon, I visited the Egyptian Museum and saw a few of the original objects removed from King Tutankhamen’s tomb, and other archaeological exhibits. King Tut, as you will recall from history, was an Egyptian king of the XVIIIth dynasty who lived about 1358 B.C. and from all indications was a mere boy. His tomb was discovered at Luxor, ancient site of Thebes, on the Upper Nile, but with the weather warming up I decided against a visit to this spot. In the evening a couple of officers and myself went to Shepherd’s for supper, then to a Bing Crosby movie.

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205453346> Lydda Airport. Original wartime caption: Lydda Airport is one of the most up-to-date airports in Palestine. Picture (issued 1944) shows – View of Lydda Airport from the control tower.



Wednesday morning at 11:30, I left Payne Field in a C47 plane and arrived at Lydda Airfield in Palestine at 1:35 p.m. This was a “special flight” for furlough trips to this area. From Lydda we traveled by truck (they called them buses) to Camp Tel-Litwinsky, a short distance from the airfield, thence to Tel-Aviv, the most modern city in Palestine. Tel-Aviv is a typical resort town, located along the shore of the Mediterranean, with a variety of modernistic buildings, paved streets and sidewalks, lovely parks and stores to rival those in New York. It is all so remarkable when one stops to realize that less than a score of years ago this was a barren and sandy wasteland, while now it is a garden spot.

“Recreation for the soldiers of the Persian Gulf Command (PGC) was handled by the Special Forces Branch which showed movies, managed recreation halls, coordinated USO and soldier shows, and ran athletic programs. Organized leagues and tournaments were made available to all soldiers in the main camps and some of the secondary camps of the PGC. Soldiers could take part in baseball, basketball, football, boxing, softball, track, swimming, volleyball, table tennis, checkers, bridge, and fishing. The most elaborate and worthwhile recreational project of the PGC was the 3,000-mile round-trip to Palestine at the Army’s expense. Thousands of officers and enlisted men made this trip from Khorramshahr to Basra by truck, then from Basra to Baghdad by the Iraq State Railway, and from Baghdad to Tel Aviv and Camp Tel Litwinsky, Palestine, by truck. The trip took up to six days each way and included a five-day visit to various Holy Land sites. Most officers and some enlisted men were able to make the trip by air.”

There is no dearth of merchandise in the shops; you can purchase anything you desire here – including electrical appliances so difficult to obtain in America under wartime restrictions. Cameras, film, all makes of watches, novelties, jewelry and other items were available in large quantities. Up-to-date buses provide excellent transportation and there appear to be plenty of good motor cars.

In the afternoon I went sight-seeing, window-shopping, and took a swim in the Mediterranean before supper. In the lobby of the Yarden Hotel where I was staying there was a representative of the Red Cross

and through her I arranged for a series of tours of the Holy Land. After a steak dinner, served in the soothing tones of a loud jazz orchestra (they had music every night except Saturday). I retired early.

Thursday, the 24th of May, we left in a bus (I mean truck) for the New Testament tour. We drove from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem, over roads that were as old as history, even though they had the benefit of modern surfacing. As we sped over the rolling hills with groves of olive, fig and juniper trees spotting the landscape, I closed my eyes partially, and went back in imaginary flight to the times when shepherds tramped over the countryside, tending their flocks.

After checking in at the Y.M.C.A. building at Jerusalem, which is the most modern structure in the town, we started out on the initial part of our tour. Driving up to the Mount of Olives, we dismounted and proceeded on foot to the Garden of Gethsemane. A guide furnished by the Red Cross explained the many places of interest to us and willingly answered all questions. Then we went to the House of Caiaphas, which is now St. Peter's Church – a beautiful edifice with the Lord's Prayer engraved in over 40 languages on stone tablets set in the outside walls along a cloister-like walk. The inside of the church was even more lovely: the sunlight, streaming – (there I go, getting almost poetical) through stained glass windows transformed the room into a mass of deep purples and soft blues. On the walls behind the altar were lovely paintings of large size, not in panels; they depicted the trial, the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ.

After luncheon, served at the Y.M.C.A., we visited the Flagellation Convent, built over the spot reputed to be the one where the Lord was scourged. Then on to the trial place of Christ, where the Sisters of Zion have a convent (most of the sacred spots are covered up by buildings of a religious nature): we then walked slowly up the Via Dolorosa, or "Road of Sorrows," taking note of the fourteen stations of the cross, or spots where the Savior is reputed to have paused under the heavy burden of the cross he was bearing, to rest. The Via Dolorosa is a narrow, stone-paved street, with arches overhead reaching from building to building. By means of these arched passages, one could go from one side of the street to the other and not have to descend to the ground level.

Next we visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which is one of the oldest structures I have seen. In the center of the large, dome-shaped main hall is the purported tomb of Christ, now entirely enclosed in solid masonry, to prevent souvenir-hunters from further damaging the stone by breaking off chips. Running out radially from the central area, were passages that led to rooms where the various denominations hold their services. Thus the Roman Catholics, Syrians, Armenians, Copts, and Greek Orthodox sects have an opportunity to meet in this building on various days and at different hours.

We were then taken to a souvenir shop for some hurried up purchases, and back to the hotel for a late supper. After the meal my roommate (a major in the Engineers) and I went for a walk through the business section of town, in the course of which we stopped for a banana split with ice cream made the American way.

The next day was Friday, and we started out early, leaving the hotel at 7, for Tiberias and Nazareth. We drove over the Plain of Esdraelon, Mount Carmel, Mount Gilboa, Mount Tabor, Mount Morah and the Mount of Precipitation, all familiar to Bible students, finally arriving at the home of Dr. Harte on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. The latter – who was a missionary and Bible student for many years – established his home here some time ago, and loves to regale his listeners with factual stories about this region. After hearing his talk, in which, incidentally, he mentioned his firm belief in Mahatma Ghandi's cause and course of action and a splendid swim in the Sea of Galilee, we had lunch and then proceeded to Nazareth, where Mary's well and the site of Joseph's carpenter shop were pointed out to us. We were late getting back, and tired, what with the traveling around we had done, so it was early to bed again to be ready for the next day.

Saturday was the day for the Old Testament tour, and once more we started out eagerly. We took in Solomon's quarries, where stone for the temple was procured (and it is still in operation) or so it was claimed; we walked over the Temple area; we visited the Jewish portion of the "Wailing Wall;" also the Hurva Synagog, covering all this before luncheon. In the afternoon we went to Bethlehem, where Christ was born and visited the tombs of the kings of Israel as well as the famous Garden Tomb before returning to Tel-Aviv enthusiastic over what we had seen. Saturday being the Jewish sabbath, all the stores were closed all day long, but generally manage to reopen for business on Sunday morning. This particular Saturday evening

I had a slight attack of dysentery, so early Sunday morning I went to the dispensary at Camp Litwinsky for treatment and was soon feeling fine again.

Late Sunday morning I did a bit of shopping, then after dinner our C47 was ready for us. Leaving at 2:47 p.m., we were soon back at Payne Field (4:55 p.m.), to find Cairo sweating in a temperature of 103 in the shade, and typical Washington humidity to go with it.

Monday morning, in company with a non-commissioned officer, I visited the Mousky district where the bazaars are located. Here is the real spirit of Cairo! Narrow (and dirty) streets with shops on each side, greeted the visitor intent on making souvenir purchases. I was warned not to have a fountain pen or pencil exposed lest they be counted as “missing” at the conclusion of this expedition. As we strolled along, so many interesting sights greeted me it was quite a problem to decide on just what to purchase. It was most amazing to note the use to which small boys are put in fashioning a myriad of trinkets to fascinate seekers of the unusual. Some of the most intricate work was being done by the youngsters, under the scrutiny and supervision of their elders, of course.

In one shop where I stopped to examine brass trays, my companion and I were invited to sit down and have a cup of Egyptian coffee with the proprietor while we bargained about the price. And it should be explained that bargaining is part of the shopping idea; a novice will pay the first price asked but a veteran always tries to bring the price down – and usually succeeds. This is just a part of the game that is more or less expected by the merchant, so he is never offended or angry when a customer attempts to bring the price down to a lower level.

By afternoon the temperature had climbed to 103 again, but not daunted I set out to visit the famous pyramids. I picked up an old man for a guide, and we rode part of the way, he on a camel, I on a donkey. Coming back we reversed the process and then when I reached my hotel, I doused my clothes with DDT to get rid of the fleas I had picked up from these animals, and took a hot shower with plenty of soap. From this time on, I stayed off such animals, as I never was sure whether I could obtain DDT or not. But, nevertheless, it was an experience – one I shall not forget for a long time. From this time on, I either traveled in a jeep, bus or truck or by foot when the latter was necessary.

The pyramids fascinated me. To look at the huge stone blocks averaging four or five cubic feet in place without the advantage of modern machinery; to try and picture the sight of many thousands of slave labor required to build these pyramids, not excluding the fact that this stone had to be carried down the Nile by boat, it not being native to this part of the country; all this is enough to stagger anyone whose imagination demands an answer to the question “how?”

The excavations have unearthed – or should I say “unsanded” – the imperial walk which leads from one of the pyramids to the base of the Sphinx, that peculiar creation used by the ancient priests of Egypt as a public address system. The missing nose, as may be seen in all photographs, was not caused by erosion, but by bullets fired by Napoleon in a vain attempt to destroy the figure.

But enough of this, the following day, Tuesday, I went on the Red Cross tour of Memphis and Sakkara where the tombs of the Egyptian kings are located. In the former place, which is no longer a city, but overgrown with vegetation and trees, there is a gigantic carved statue of one of the Ptolemies (I believe) which is kept in perfect condition by a large corrugated iron roof overhead.

At Sakkara, or Saquara as it is sometimes spelled, the tombs were most interesting, and we spent some time walking around. Inside it was much cooler than out in the sunlight, and we were most reluctant to leave. (I went prepared with a flashlight - because the day before at the pyramids there was a constant attempt to try to wheedle money out of tourists by charging for torches.) It was quite apparent that the most important thing in ancient Egypt must have been a bull, because in addition to a royal tomb for a bull – and it was ornate, too – the majority of the hieroglyphics painted on the walls gave much prominence to this animal.

In the evening I had a farewell dinner with one of the officers in his luxurious apartment on Gezira Island, then “jeeped” to Payne Field for the night, having made reservations for a trip the following day. Altogether, my trip to Cairo with the innumerable beggars, had been a source of great pleasure, and provided me with memories which will live for a long time

Wednesday May 30 (Memorial Day), I was up bright and early as the C47 (Flight 266) was scheduled to leave at seven. Actually it departed at 7:23, and I was on my way back to Europe once more.

“The mission of the PGC was declared accomplished by Chief of Staff General of the Army George C. Marshall on 1 June 1945. During the entire period of operation, the PGC delivered over 2.5 million tons of material to the Soviet Union. This figure included assembling nearly 5,000 planes and 200,000 military vehicles. In its single-month peak operation, July 1944, the command delivered nearly one-tenth of its total tonnage despite brutal summer heat. Including the tonnage delivered by the British and Soviet trucking agencies, it was officially estimated in August 1944 that fifty per cent of the total aid to the Soviet Union from the United States, Great Britain and Canada had come through the Persian Corridor.”

On arriving at Eleusis Airfield, I learned that I would have time to get in a quick visit to Athens, so off I went in a jeep to have a look at this beautiful city of Greece. Although Athens was under British rule at this time, I saw quite a few American doughboys roaming about, and they seemed as surprised as I at the well-filled stores and the comfortably dressed inhabitants, as we had a notion that all we would find here was poverty. One store, in particular, was putting up additional shelves for the new bolt goods just received from Britain, I suppose.

Hurrying back to the field, I had a quick lunch, then we took off again for Naples at 1:18 p.m., retracing the route over which we had come on the way to Cairo. However, as we crossed over the “spinal column” of Italy, we ran into heavy weather, with rain and sleet – and when within about twenty minutes of Naples the clouds began to close in, obscuring the sight of the pilot, he turned the big ship around and flew back to Bari, landing there at six o’clock., after a bite to eat at the airport, we climbed into a bus and were taken to the Miramare Hotel for the night.

The next morning we left Bari at 7:37 and arrived without incident at 8:52. The day was spent on official business, in Naples and Caserta, where I met and talked with several officers in this theater of operations. In the evening I took in a movie at the Terminus Hotel before retiring.

[RAINBOW CONNECTIONS WORLD WAR I]



HAROLD B. RODIER

The following day was Friday, June 1st, and after another session of business during which I decided against going up in northern Italy on account of the transportation problems and the matter of confusion in connection with redeployment, I took a walk around the bay front of Naples. At 14 Bis, Via Carraciolo, overlooking a scene of great beauty, including Mt. Vesuvius, Sorrento and Capri, I located Major **Harold B. Rodier**, a Washington man who had been in the same division (42nd “Rainbow”) in the last war as I had. Needless to say, he was astonished to see me (I had previously secured his address but failed to let him know I was on my way to see him) and we had a splendid chat.

[Harold B. Rodier, Med. Det. 168th Infantry Regiment, 42nd Infantry “Rainbow” Division also served in World War II and as the editor of The Rainbow Reveille from 1935 and possibly earlier through 1944.]

Saturday morning after arranging the necessary transportation for a continuation of my travel, I had another surprise! Near the Red Cross building, I ran into Major A.L. Stoner, formerly of my office in Washington, and now with the Allied Military Government. We had luncheon together at his hotel, and then a short evening together, chatting over such things as had happened when we were together before.

Incidentally during my stay in Naples, I made no purchases, as the souvenirs or merchandise seemed to be a lot of junk, but priced SO high!



Rainbow man.

Photo by the U.S. Army Signal Corps; Donovan, Director of the O.S.S. and Colonel William H. Jackson of U.S. Army Intelligence in April 1945. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_J._Donovan
<https://www.cia.gov/stories/story/the-legend-of-wild-bill-how-donovan-got-his-nickname/>

The C47 which was to take me to Paris, was scheduled to leave Sunday morning at 7:23, so in order to leave the Terminus Hotel in ample time I went without my breakfast and was rather hungry when the plane (Flight 202) arrived at Marseille at 10:26. While eating a steak sandwich with vegetables, dessert and beverage I happened to look up and saw **General William J. Donovan** of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and another officer seated at a table not far away. Going over to see and speak with “Wild Bill”, as he was known in the old 69th of New York in the last war, I discovered that his companion was **Colonel Bob Gill**, formerly of the 117th Trench Mortar Battalion (Maryland) – also a former



Robert J. Gill, a former United States Army General, was decorated by three governments in two world wars; with his legal background Gill aided the prosecution of Nazi Germany leaders at the Nuremberg Trials (1945-1946).

<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/translating-and-interpreting-nuremberg-trials>

At 11:49 my plane took off and we followed the regular route to Paris, landing at Orly Airfield at 2:48 p.m. I spent the night at the field and left the next morning for “Paree.” A shuttle bus took me from Orly to the A T C terminal at the Place Vendome where I was met by an officer with whom I had roomed at Edgewood Arsenal – Captain Roy R. Kountz. Following a day devoted to official matters, Roy met me at my hotel (The Rochambeau) and after dinner at the Officers’ Mess on the Place St. Augustine we held a reunion – bringing each other up to date on activities here and at home, and talking over old times.

Tuesday June 5th, I put in another morning at the office and then boarded a plane for Brussels where I spent a night in a hotel, the name of which escapes me now. The following morning, another plane took me to Frankfurt and on the way I was able to get a good look at several German towns which had been completely demolished, and I mean completely. From where I sat, looking down on them, no walls could be seen standing, not even a chimney – just a mass of stone and brick rubble marking the spot where a city had been. It was almost like an imaginative creation, picturing the ruins of an ancient village in another world.

Frankfurt showed evidence of having been “worked over” rather thoroughly by the air forces, and after a hasty look around, I hurriedly arranged a trip back to Paris. The men I had come there to see were not available, and I saw no good reason for staying in this German town. So Wednesday night saw me back in my room where I experienced quite a bit of difficulty in sleeping, due to noises from outside my window. First there were the motor vehicles; cars and jeeps racing up and down the street, trucks rumbling along and brakes squealing. Then the clop-clop of horse-drawn wagons, rolling past over the stone surfaces of the street. Finally, the constant sound of voices from pedestrians, rising and falling as they approached and then withdrew. On top of this, the periodic rumble of the Metro-Paris subway trains as they passed directly under the hotel and these noises seem to keep up all night!

[editor: here ends the pages of this amazing journey as found in the effects of Friederich G. Hammer shared by his family]

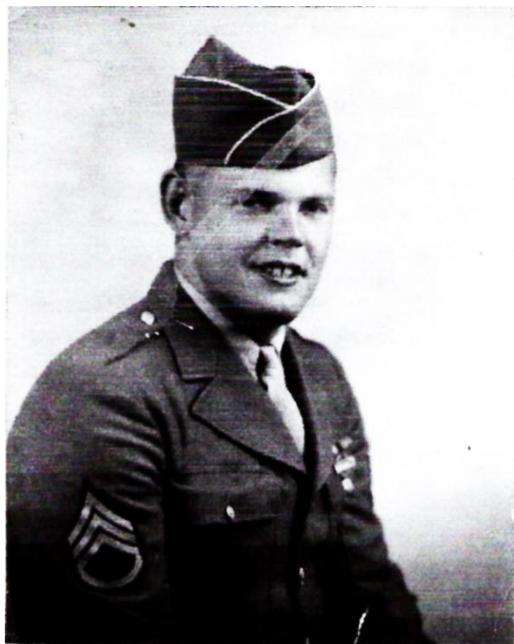
Finally, on 26 December 1945, the last echelon of the command left Khorramshahr for the United States or other theaters. In all, the Persian Corridor was the route for 4, 159, 117 tons of cargo delivered to the Soviet Union during World War II. After Germany was defeated, Iran, under the Shah, remained an ally of the United States and Great Britain for decades, until he was overthrown in the Islamic Revolution in 1979 and replaced by the Avatollah Khomeini...”

“...The accomplishments of the Persian Gulf Command cannot be overstated. Supporting the Soviet Union’s need for equipment and raw materials made for an interesting story of the allies working together to achieve the common goal of defeating the Axis powers. The PGC delivered tanks, airplanes, vehicles, locomotives and rails, construction materials, entire military production assembly lines, food and clothing, aviation fuel, weapons, ammunition, oil, gasoline, chemicals, aluminum and steel machine tools, field telephones, and telephone wire. The efforts of the soldiers in the PGC thwarted the attempts of Nazi Germany to defeat the Soviet Union, allowing the Red Army to turn the tide on the Eastern Front and eventually overwhelm the *Wehrmacht*...”

RAINBOW RIFLEMEN (PART X)

By Robert “Bob” Spearing

Company G, 242nd Infantry Regiment, 42nd Infantry “Rainbow” Division



Robert Spearing #3
Army - WW II

At 11:15 a.m., we began to disembark and the entire regiment was off the ship by 1:47 p.m. As each company arrived on the beach, it was assembled and marched off to the south, parallel to the pier toward a line of open-backed tractor-trailer trucks parked a quarter of a mile away on a road leading into the lower part of Marseille. It was a difficult hike due to the amount of gear each of us was carrying. Many rest stops had to be called along the way before we reached our transport.

Coming down the gangplank, what we are most aware of is the cold. Out in the open, away from the protective warmth of the ship, cheeks and nose quickly redden under the onslaught of the gray December harbor-front chill. It isn’t a good indication of what is soon to come, and I don’t think any of us ever thought we’d be spending our first night in France in a pup tent!

As we proceeded along the waterfront, we became suddenly aware of several barbed-wire enclosures lining our path on our right side—it was soon apparent by their occupants that they were prisoner of war cages. Of course, we were all extremely curious as to who they might be, so when our next rest period came, our platoon found itself alongside one that was full of field-gray German uniforms. The uniforms were definitely German; however, the soldiers in them were not. They were not, as anyone could see, of the “herrenvolk.” In fact, they all appeared to be relatives of either Mr. Moto or Fu Man Chu. This aroused our curiosity to the point where we could no longer contain ourselves. I asked Lt. Collins if I might send one of my German/American squad members to the cage to get the story and he agreed.

I told Pfc. Hans Meltzer (Meltzer told me on the ship that his Dad was in the German Army during World War I and told him that the one thing to remember about all American soldiers was that they were all nuts!) to see if he could find out anything. We all watched as he approached the cage, gestured, spoke slowly, and got nowhere. He finally threw up his hands and came back to me with the findings that “They don’t understand or speak German. I think they might understand Russian. What should we do now?” Don Parrish had the answer, “Don’t the Polish people understand Ruskie?” I thought they might. Parrish sent his BAR man, Stanley Sokolosky, to the cage.

Sokolosky barely opened his mouth and he got instant recognition. The prisoners crowded to his corner and he had all he could do to keep them under control. They all wanted to speak at the same time. While he was doing this, a small group of actual German prisoners were being marched toward the docks and one of them had the oddest outfit on that I had ever seen. Knowing that I had studied German uniforms from Army brochures, Bill Culp, our First Squad leader, called over to me: “Hey, Spearing, what the hell is that guy, a Hitler boy scout?”

From what Sokolosky told us, they (the Asiatics) were all deserters from the Russian Army who had bought the German program. Now they were prisoners of the French, and didn't know what was going to happen to them. Later on, over the objections of General Patch, these people would be handed back to the Russians who surely liquidated them. I never could understand why General Eisenhower authorized this.

December 8, 1944 – Marseille, France – Delta Base – Septemes

The open air was chilling away from the ship. We loaded up on huge, open-backed tractor-trailers driven by Italian prisoners of war and were taken to a bare, flat, stone-strewn plateau outside of a small village called Septemes; it was known as Delta Base #2. The drive there was very cold and nearly all uphill. We passed villa after villa of pastel-colored houses whose rosy-faced occupants were decent enough to wave to us as we went by. But of all the inhospitable locations for troops just coming off a transport, none could surpass Delta Base. It was flat, barren, stony and windy, and completely exposed to all of the elements from all points of the compass! We might as well have been on the surface of the moon.

Once off the truck, we were ordered to pitch tents. This was a near-futile task since the ground was so frozen that it was barely possible to drive a tent peg. Somehow, though, we managed, and our first night in France began.



To replace Carl McGahen, who was a squad ammunition bearer, Company headquarters sent me a new soldier named, (Pfc.) James M. Casteel, of Kress, Texas [photo left]. He reported to me, and with one blanket each, we prepared to spend our first night in the pup tent. We put one blanket on the ground and one over us and tried to get some sleep. This was hopeless, however, because the cold was so intense. To pass some time, I thought it might be good if I questioned my new ammunition bearer about his family and background, something every alert squad leader should be aware of anyway. When he rather haltingly told me that he had no folks and had been drafted right out of an orphanage, I almost cried. It was too heartbreaking to imagine. I rolled over and thought what a miserable world this was, especially after spending fourteen days on a warm ship with water, food, latrines, and protection from the elements all taken for granted.

Now, here we all were, dumped out of a sheltered existence onto a frozen plateau with nothing but one blanket between us and the atmosphere.

Long before dawn, I was on my feet shivering and looking around for anything that would burn. Maybe I could at least boil up something to drink and get warm. Fortunately, caught in between some rocks, there were some leaf stems that had blown in from the surrounding forests over the passage of time, and I collected these. When I had enough, I placed it all in a small hole that I dug with my bayonet. I put a match to this and it caught fire readily. Soon it glowed into a nice pile of embers, and I put my canteen cup over it and watched as the water first steamed and then boiled. Into this, I poured a full packet of Nescafe and two packets of sugar. The resulting drink was heavenly! A GI on his way to the latrine just gaped at me, "You have hot coffee?" he said. I nodded and said, "You can have it, too, if you can collect enough leaf stems."

Delta Base was a near disaster for all of us because it was so incredibly cold. We were not well-equipped for this weather and the Brass soon realized that in order to save us all from contracting pneumonia, any plans for training and routines would have to be shelved. That way, we could concentrate all of our efforts on just staying warm enough to survive! Until more warm clothing could reach us, all training was suspended.

We built fires with what wood we could find and stayed in our tents with all of our clothes on, venturing out only when there was hot food to be distributed. This was mainly in the form of ten-in-one rations. One night, it was so frigid, that I felt my face would freeze solid and fall off! After a few days of this, each man received a pair of snow pac boots, four additional army blankets, plus one mattress cover to make a homemade sleeping bag. I folded my blankets inside the mattress cover, doubling them up in such a way that once inside, I'd be between eight layers of blanket. After this, no one complained about sleeping in the cold anymore. We also learned that the only way to keep one's boots from freezing stiff was to keep them inside the sleeping bag as well.

Aside from staying warm and dishing out meals, the only extra duty I received was standing guard over the regimental payroll when it was delivered to the camp. This was a piece of cake, mainly because all of the noncoms chosen were ordered to guard the dough inside a sturdy wood shed where it was nice and warm.

I spread my blankets out on top of a huge chest and immediately fell asleep. My guard time would be from 12 midnight to 1 a.m., so I got a good head start on sleep by getting under the blankets at 8 p.m. The actual guard duty itself was uneventful. From time to time, I would peek out of a crack in the front door (we had been locked in for the night), and all I could see was the clear, starry, moonlit sky. At dawn, we were relieved and I reported back to my company.

The regular camp routine was still held in abeyance while we stayed in our tents to keep warm. It was a good time to write letters, except that there were several handicaps: One was that there wasn't enough of the overseas or "V" mail forms available, the other was that, aside from being allowed to say that we were somewhere in France, almost anything else of interest was likely to be censored. Since each platoon's mail was censored by the platoon's own leader (in our case, Lt. Collins) who was familiar with all of our affairs, there was very little that we could get away with. Also, mail is so personal, especially to one's wife, and here was some stranger with his big nose right in the middle of it. Under these circumstances, one had to think twice before committing words to a page. Only once did I attempt to put one over on Collins and it worked, too. But after all my clever deception, my wife was not attuned to the game and it went right by her as she dismissed it as just some fouled up sentence.



My big coup was this: I wanted to let her know that I was in Marseille, France without having to mention the words. At the time I left the States, one of the last Humphrey Bogart pictures that was playing was "Passage to Marseille." Since we were both movie buffs, my wife even more so than me, I thought surely she would get the message when, at the end of the paragraph, I slipped in the sentence, "I have just done a Humphrey Bogart." When I came home six months later, I asked her about it and she said that she really didn't know WHAT I was alluding to ... so much for my activities of intrigue.

A few days later, more clothing was issued, underwear, snow pac boots, and heavy woolen ski socks. Finally, we were able to come out of our tents and engage in a few exercises such as practice patrols into the surrounding area. My squad being the third, were the last to be given such an assignment, but the day we had for it was beautiful. A slight thaw was in the air and the wind had abated, and the sun was out in all of its glory. Lt. Collins briefed me as to route, map, time to leave, and time to return. His only cautionary words were these: "Just keep them all together, Spearing." I knew exactly what he meant since this was our first free jaunt in France. At that moment, our squad was composed of scouts Rex Angeli and Jones; BAR man and assistant, Edward Gall and Paul Pederzani; Ammo Bearer Casteel; Riflemen Veasey, Rothermel and Rothering; and assistant squad leader, Leroy Godwin. The route led north out of the bivouac area to a small village known as Septemes, located in a gentle valley some five miles away. Our path was a dirt road that was hard-packed and bore two even, shallow ruts. No sooner were we out of the camp and headed north on this, when the requests commenced to flow. Oddly enough, not being a drinker, wine had never crossed my mind. To the Squad, however, "en toto," this had immediate and top priority. So, for the next five or ten minutes, as the road wound in and around small lakes and stands of evergreens, I explained to this gang of late teenagers why we, as American soldiers, had to be particularly careful of our actions and conduct. Also, since we were on duty, any type of booze was strictly prohibited by regulation. This did not put an end to the debate, however. Instead of having just a few of them disagree with me, I found myself with a full-fledged mutiny on my hands because my assistant, Godwin, joined them! I put him and the others down with a few select expressions, but in the ensuing, hostile silence. I began to rethink my position. The more I thought about it, the more I became convinced that they were right. After all, here we were about to lay our lives on the line at any moment, and God only knew how many of us would escape death or some type of long-lasting disfiguration. What was the big deal if they all got a little happy today? Away from the camp, none of the Brass would learn of our escapade.



Our first scout, Rex Angelle, [photo left] was a short, thin, wiry, black-haired Louisiana Frenchman with a big, flashing grin. His peppy personality matched his smile and his enthusiasm for conversation knew no bounds. When I announced my change of heart, he was back at my side in an instant telling me just how he would go about making a wine purchase for all of us at the first farmhouse we could find. I had no idea, at that moment, that Rex was so fluent in French (later on in battle, I would regret that he could interpret so well). The battalion learned of this and took him away from me to set him up as THEIR official interpreter.

Things were definitely looking up, now. We all sang a few choruses of “My Girl’s a Corker,” followed by a lusty rendition of “Balls Itch.” Although spread out in combat-ready formation, we all rocked along in perfect step and a few hundred yards later, we found our first farmhouse. It was a one-story affair, not unlike some of our own Ozark cabins in shape and layout. It was close to the road and bordered by a low, picket fence. Rex quickly scrambled up the stairs to the porch and knocked on the door. We stayed put, spread out in the middle of the road with all eyes focused on the front door and Rex . . .

As the door opened, an aged, stout man, wearing a black leather cap came out. In a moment, he and Rex were swaying back and forth, hands and arms flailing in the air in, perhaps, one of the most animated conversations that I have ever observed. “This is great,” I thought, “we will get so much wine, we won’t be able to carry it. Boy, oh boy, isn’t Angelle something, what an operator.”

Then, Angelle came back to me, all smiles, and the farmer was doing the same from the porch. “How much does he want?” I asked him. “Nothing,” says Rex. “You mean, he’s going to give it to us for free?” “No,” said Rex. “He’s not going to sell us any because he says that all we Americans do is get drunk.” “What?” I said. I looked up at the old Gaul and he was smiling and nodding his head at me at the same time. In spite of my feelings, I had to laugh; he must have had some experience with Delta Base soldiers before, so we moved on down the trail.

When the village (Septemes) came into view, I could see that it was ancient. From the surrounding wall, I could tell I was looking at something that had existed from Roman times, and, no doubt, was built by them. If we were to get any wine, we would have to get it here, as this was the end of the line for the patrol. From this point, we would double back and retrace our steps. To give us the best advantage, I decided to send only Angelle into the village first. I was sure the farmers wouldn’t hesitate to sell wine to a lone French/American, where they might understandably shy away from dealing with a pack of American ruffians. Once Angelle got his foot in the door, he could call the rest of us in. It worked beautifully. Angelle did such an excellent sales job that this farmer invited all of us into his tile-floored kitchen to show us not only where he stored his table wine, but how he doled it out, too.

There was a metal plug in the floor about six inches in diameter. He unscrewed it and lowered a pint-sized, metal pail on a chain into its depths. When he retrieved it, it was brimming with an aromatic, deep red wine. He filled all of our canteens and then sold several bottles to those who wanted more. Angelle, of course, got several bottles and was not allowed to pay for any. To the farmer, his money was no good.

Back on the trail again, the question was where to stop to sample our nectar. A quarter of the way back, we took a break on a dam near to a reservoir, and each of us polished off at least a pint. Not being too used to alcohol to any great extent, I was feeling rather jolly, so I decided to save my canteenful for a little private guzzling that night. My small experience with wine taught me one thing, it put me to sleep, and so comfortably so.

If I had any apprehension about how the squad members would be affected by the wine before, I soon lost it because all of them were experienced connoisseurs. Angelle knew enough about the subject to have been a restaurant manager. Although all of them, including myself, became delightfully happy for some thirty minutes or so, this was the total extent of our patrol bash. We filed into our bivouac, sober and refreshed with none of the Brass the wiser.

Back from our patrol, there is nothing further to do but eat whatever we can get from the mess distribution. It would soon be completely dark, and there was only one comfortable place to be, that is, if one wasn’t on pass, and

that was, in the sack. I'm going to enjoy the sack tonight because I have a full canteen of wine left, and I'm going to sip the entire contents to the bottom and then bomb out to sleep!

Living in pup tents and out of field pack and duffle bag is a heavy hardship for any American soldier, particularly when the soldier is so used to the orderliness and comfort of barracks life. As bare-looking as one of these buildings is, it has everything any good home has. The only item it lacks is privacy. Aside from that, it is secure, light, warm, clean, dry, and has excellent latrine and bathing facilities. The beds are strong and large enough for almost any good-sized person. The mattresses are hard, but comfortable. Blankets are in good supply and are all wool. The bed cover is just as well constructed and is warm enough for almost any low temperature.

December 1944

Simple hangers at the barrack side of the bed, handle all of the over clothes needed. A strong, padlocked



footlocker, facing the aisle, handles all of the underclothes and toilet articles. Everything has a place, and everything is easily put into and kept in its place. In contrast to this, a tent is pure chaos! It is always too cold, or too hot. Rub a finger over it and it leaks; it is not secure and any good wind will blow it over. It's not dry at any time, and the water can flood it. There is no place to store or hang anything and one sits in the middle of one's belongings like some desert packrat. There are no washing or latrine facilities, it is merely a place to crawl into and sleep.

No man of the Rainbow Division who passed through CP 2 will ever forget it. It was a rude introduction to Europe and an indication of the miserably cold days and nights which lay ahead. It was a far different world than these men had left only 10 days to two weeks before. Here the war seemed very close. At night there was blackout and occasionally a German plane flew over the area and the anti-aircraft guns of the port defense barked at it. Training continued and now, more than ever, there seemed a purpose in it. [Daly p. 13]

Lying on my back in my bedroll, I felt like an Indian baby wrapped up like a papoose. I dreaded the thought of having to get up in the night to relieve myself in the common, open, outdoor latrine about 100 yds. Away at the end of our company street. This was sheer agony. To avoid this ordeal, most of us urinated in our helmets, when we could manage it, and poured the contents out the flap. However, with a bowel movement, the extreme price had to be paid. Leave a cozy, warm sack and stumble through the darkness in unlaced boots to the log contraption, then expose one's butt to the freezing north wind, and try to get it over with as quickly as possible. This was no easy task since most of us were still constipated from the ship's voyage, then tidy oneself up as fast as one could with GI toilet paper. There is no way to wash your hands until you get back to the tent and sacrifice some precious drinking water. I always got back shaking from the cold. What a miserable way to live!

The odor of smoke, mixed with the raw, damp night air is stinging to the nostrils. Tonight we have a visitor from Marseille General Hospital. He was a former member of the 42nd who had been shipped out six months ago from Gruber as a replacement to the 79th Division. He had been wounded in combat about a month ago and was here recuperating. Learning of our arrival, he couldn't wait to renew acquaintances with his old buddies. I didn't know him, but I managed to hear his story from his friends in our company and it wasn't a happy one.

Don Parrish knew him and he filled him in on all the details. He had been wounded along with many of his platoon members while guarding a roadblock. The platoon had orders to the effect that it would remain covered, concealed, and not open-fire on anything unless detected and fired upon first. Shortly after his platoon had taken over the position, a German tank appeared on the scene. When the German tank commander saw that he could not force his way through the heavy logs, which made up the roadblock, he climbed out of the tank's turret and began to survey the obstacle by walking as bold as you please from one side of the tank's foredeck to the other. His strutting arrogance enraged one roadblock guard to the point that he couldn't contain himself – only in the American Army would this happen – and he took a quick shot at the German. Unfortunately for all, he missed. The German quickly dropped into the turret, which swung around its 75mm cannon to zero-in on the poorly protected GIs and wounded or killed almost all of them before it withdrew. He said how any of them lived to tell about it at all, was a miracle. He had other equally gruesome events to relate about near misses and other narrow escapes he had had. One involved himself and another soldier who was stationed on a road to count the passage of any enemy vehicles. An enemy ammunition truck came into view and they put a round into it. As it commenced to pop and whiz before going up, our friend told his buddy that they really ought to be leaving, but his friend said he thought that he would stick around to enjoy the fireworks. It was a fatal mistake ... several hours later, upon returning to the scene, he found his buddy's body torn into a lot of small pieces. He told Parrish that cigarettes had been in short supply and so was any kind of candy – two things absolutely necessary to a front-line soldier. I kept thinking, "Oh boy, this is going to be some cold shower we're going to get into. But into it we're going to go, just the same. My insides were beginning to crawl.

Our tents are still lined up with barely five or six feet between them, just as they were the night we pitched them. Thus, I can clearly hear all the action going on in the first tent. Jones and Angelle are doing the same as I am. All I can hear is a lot of gurgling and low, muffled laughter. We are all making the most of the wine we picked up on our patrol to Septemes.

Sometime near 10 p.m., all is quiet, and I am immersed in a most refreshing, warm wine coma. In this state of ecstasy, I'm out of it all. Then suddenly ... shockingly, I'm jolted out of my lethargy with the hair on the back of my neck standing straight up. Instantly, I'm wide-awake, cringing from the sharp explosive blasts that seem to be reverberating in the air above my tent. I am frozen, paralyzed with fear. I am too scared to even clear out and run for it. Voices ring out in the night asking for an explanation. "Are we being attacked?" If we are, we are certainly caught with our pants down! Then, mercifully, a voice of authority (and I never did learn whose it was) rises above all the commotion and assures us that what we are hearing is the anti-aircraft batteries protecting Marseille twelve miles away! Apparently, some German reconnaissance plane had slipped through our forward air defense and was attempting to get some photos. A few minutes later, all action ceased and everything was quiet once more, but I didn't get back to sleep until just before dawn.

Immediately after roll call, orders were given to disperse the tents. No one complained about this. There was a lot of room on our plateau and we saw to it that there was plenty of it between all tents. We were never given orders to dig holes, though, something I thought would have been even better than moving all of our tents and gear.

All those who were on pass in Marseille at the time of the raid, said that the noise in town was deafening. My BAR team was there, Gall and Pederzani. They said that they thought the world was about to come to an end!

My own pass into Marseille came on, of all days, December 16th. Parrish and I hopped aboard a huge trailer-truck after retreat and, along with thirty others, we sped mostly downhill into town in less than twenty minutes! At the truck stop, we were told to be back by 10:00 sharp for the return trip. Most of the city was blacked out and the dim lighting that was allowed was barely enough to make the stores and shops visible.

The first thing I bought was some postcards at a street corner kiosk. I used my high school Spanish, and the proprietor understood immediately. After this, we walked through a department store, and I bought a penknife, which I never used and eventually lost. Finally, we reached the main thoroughfare and we met up with a Sgt. John J. Frasell of Arlington, Massachusetts. He tagged along with us, and I was happy for his company. Not only for his peppy personality, but because he did have an excellent command of French and made an excellent guide. With him, we moved into the first café, and he ordered wine and food for us. It was quite an experience for me; I began to feel like a bon vivant!

The café was a rectangular room behind a plain glass storefront about 40 x 30. A bar ran along one side to a low, curtained stage, which ran across the rear wall. The floor was covered with picnic-like tables and attached benches with a narrow aisle separating them on each side. The café was filled with sailors and soldiers of all the allied forces. I never saw such an assortment of uniforms in my life! The air was blue with cigarette smoke, and through it, came the strains of accordion music. I looked for the player, and there he was, sitting on a chair in the middle of the dark stage, a young chap, no older than about 20. He had blonde hair, "German blonde hair," I thought. He was of medium build and dressed in light-colored slacks and shirt with an open front sweater. I was thinking of how strange it was that he sure didn't look French to me and why he wasn't, at his age (and in apparent good health), in uniform like the rest of us. Once again, I was irked. When he wasn't playing, there was a three-piece combo to one side, thumping out what I guessed were French popular tunes. We munched our bread and jelly sandwiches (that was the food) and sipped some very sour, red wine. After two rounds, we all had had enough and got ready to leave. At that moment, our German-looking accordion player began to pump out the favorite Kraut tune, "Lili Marlene." I like the tune myself and very soon, all of us were humming it along with the music. I thought, "I'll bet when the Germans were here a few weeks ago, they liked the music as much as we did. I'll bet the blonde-haired kid enjoyed playing it more for them, than he does for us"

Out on the street again, we came to a storefront over which hung a map of Northern France. It was lit up by some bare light bulbs and had lots of words written on it that I could neither make out nor understand. About thirty civilians were standing on the sidewalk looking at it and talking animatedly. I asked Frasell to inquire as to what was going on, and he was back quickly with the news that it was a bulletin from the front stating that the Germans had broken through our lines in the First Army area and had made a deep penetration. I didn't want to hear that at all. I was shook up. "There must be some mistake," I thought. I told John to go back and check again. He did, and came back with the same report except that the French said that it could possibly be a trap set up by the Americans. Somehow, that just didn't sound right to me. My stomach wasn't doing too well after this. It would be just my luck that this would happen just as I arrived on the scene. Little did we three know that the historical German Ardennes Offensive (that would soon be dubbed, "The Battle of the Bulge" by Winston Churchill) had been launched.

The next morning I learned that I was losing Rex Angelle. Major Reynolds had taken him on his staff as official interpreter. In Angelle's place, I got Pfc. Albert Silberman of Bronx, New York.



Angelle was removed from my squad and sent to battalion headquarters where, from this time on, he will be the official interpreter. This is a real loss to me. Rex was everything any squad leader would want, but in his place, I got the direct opposite. Silberman is the saddest-looking little Bronx Jew that I have ever seen. He is short in stature and long of face and nose, upon which rests a rather large pair of horn-rimmed bifocals. From behind these, two sad brown eyes peer out from under two very bushy eyebrows. His uniform hangs on him like a scarecrow and his helmet sits on the back of his head giving him the appearance of having no neck. Just looking at him, I feel depressed. Since he is now a part of my squad, I must get to know him and make him feel like one of our team.

That night, after the usual routine was over, he and I sat by his fire and talked about his training, home, parents, religion, etc. We have a lot in common, since we are both from the Metropolitan area and live just a matter of ten miles from each other. He lives on one side of the Hudson River in the Bronx, and I live on the other side in Union City, New Jersey, but we are worlds apart in other ways. The worst of these is that he really does not belong in a combat unit. But here he is, rifle in hand, about to be sent into action against the world's greatest war lovers (and for my money, soldiers), the German Infantry. If he is captured, and the Germans find out he is Jewish, (which they surely will because it's on his identification tags – dog tags – around his neck)

they WILL use any excuse to shoot him. I came away feeling very apprehensive for him, and wish there was some way that I could have him transferred to some service outfit, but that's out of the question because there just aren't enough foot soldiers to go around. Now I have two people on my hands instead of just one, whom I feel would be criminal to expose to combat.

Lt. James R. Collins, our platoon leader, likes being an officer and does all that he can to uphold his position. Since it is the platoon leader's job to know everything he can about the 38 noncommissioned officers and men in his command, from time to time, the platoon leader will query his noncoms about their men. For some reason, Lt. Collins particularly liked to ask me about my squad. This was probably because we were both just about the same age while the other squad leaders were several years younger. Our conversation was less formal. I told him how everyone was physically, and what I thought of each one in regard to fighting. I told him what my feelings were about Silberman and Casteel, and he said he would try to get the captain's attention of this when the best opportunity presented itself. Maybe I could get some other replacements and have those two transferred to a safer company. Collins was all for this.

[To be Continued]

JANUARY 9 – 11 1945
From the FORWARD to the booklet,
THE BATTLES OF HATTEN AND HAGUENAU
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Dee R. Eberhart, Company I, 3rd Battalion, 242nd Infantry Regiment

PREFACE In the historical sweep of World War II the last German offensive in the West – in Alsace during January 1945 - received scarcely footnote attention. However, for the men engaged in these battles at Hatten, Gambsheim, Sessenheim and Haguenau, they were not only life and death affairs but they also demonstrated the resiliency of American infantry and armored forces in breaking the enemy attacks where air support was lacking and artillery support was limited.

The Germans had caught the American armies by surprise with the mid-December Ardennes attack and after it had ground to a halt, the Germans smashed into the Alsatian Plain with armor and infantry assaults designed to relieve the mounting pressure against German forces in the Ardennes. In these battles in the Seventh Army Sector north of Strasbourg, the principal fighting units were Task Force Linden, composed of the 222nd, 232nd, and 242nd regiments of the 42nd Infantry Division, the 79th Division and the 14th Armored Division. The major German units were the 25th Panzer Grenadier Division, 21st Panzer Division, the 10th SS Panzer Division (Fruntsberg), the 7th Parachute Infantry Division and the 47th Volksgrenadier Division.



FORWARD The forest was still and waiting. Snow covered the ground and was layered on the fir boughs. Old battles had been fought there and dry branches hung at crooked angles toward the ground.

Then it came, instantly and unexpectedly, the smashing artillery barrage, shells screaming and exploding into the muffled silence. From on high, from the tops of the trees, fire, smoke, and searing metal erupted downwards tearing at the limbs of trees, snowy ground, and flattened men. That was the way it began, furious and impersonally personal.

The notable assaults on the senses during that long Hatten fortnight seemed endless. Among the most memorable were: the roar of diesel engines and the grinding, creaking approach of

squat, colorless, wide-tracked, muzzle-braked, flame belching, shell hurling, Krupp-forged machines.

Multi-hued flares of foreign origin, popping in the night sky, hanging bright, slowly settling until they sizzled out bringing back the winter darkness again.

The ripping sound of the MG42 with its 1200 individual explosions per minute running together from endless belts feeding those light weight, air cooled, recoil operated, mass produced instruments of death, whose barrels could be changed in seconds without adjusting for head space.

For punctuation, the slower, a mere 540 rounds per minute, 32 bullet burp of the Schmeisser 9mm machine pistol.

Separate and distinct rifle shots; fire, eject, chamber a round, fire again, etc., five times; replace, clip and repeat – Mauser K98. In comparison with the other sounds these shots seemed almost benign.

Nebelwerfers – screaming meemies – which threw not fog but fire, fury, smoke and steel.

Was it a shriek, a scream or a shrill whine which came forth from its six-barreled throat?

Haguenau Hattie, the railroad gun of indeterminate, enormous size which periodically hurled a huge projectile into the woods.

Fifty mm mortars, a pop in the distance, a local burst and a call for the medic.

Thin skinned percussion grenades, about the size of a healthy Jonathan apple but with their own distinct color and texture.

The potato masher – unscrew the cap and pull the cord; they say it is an awkward object for baseball trained people to throw, but not many got the chance.

Tracers at night – always spectacular – an arcing line of fire producing its own artistry of sight and sound, especially when striking a hard-solid object and careening off in some new dramatic direction.

Frontline searchlight beams banking off the low winter overcast to brighten up the nightscape.

Mines – Teller mines, Schuh Mines, glass mines and Bouncing Betties, to name a few, each with its own personality – trip wires, anti-personnel rigged to anti-tank, electrically detonated, placed on the road, off the road, at the base of trees, any attractive place. Have they all been located yet, even with thorough Teutonic records to go by?

A screaming jet – a falling bomb

The scraping sound of nitro starch being stuffed down the ventilating shaft of your Maginot Line blockhouse.

The crack of a sniper's rifle.

The groan of a hit buddy; the human scream of a wounded enemy. Did you ever notice how seldom Americans screamed when wounded and how often the enemy screamed? Why was that?

The click of hobnails on the hard surface road behind you and guttural voices in the forest all around you. White shrouded figures in the early morning mist.

Not all sights and sounds were bad. 105's whispering and rustling overhead; methodical hammering of heavy machine guns; the spang of 60 and 81 mm mortars; full-throttle Shermans moving forward; rapid fire BAR's and the authoritative semi-automatic spaced fire of numerous M-1's.

Those January sights and sounds which began at Hatten and ended at Haguenau lasted only a few weeks. Natural sounds and silence have now returned to the Haguenau forests, fields, villages and towns. Debris and marks of battle can still be discovered, but as with our memories, they, too, will disappear in time.

On January 9, 1945 another deadly combat unfolds close by -

***The Memories of a Dogface Soldier: or
The Day Anti-Tank Company Died***

Herb Altneu, Anti-Tank Company, 242nd Infantry Regiment, 42nd "Rainbow" Infantry Division

To read the origin and history of the World War II term, "DogFace Soldier" created by the 3rd Infantry Division and adopted as the division's song, visit <http://www.dogfacesoldier.org/info/dogface.htm>; for a spirited version of this U.S. Army Marching song, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e9TZQ1jVKtQ>



On January 2, 1945, 3rd platoon of the 242nd regimental anti-tank company took up positions from the 314th Infantry Regiment of the 79th Division on the Northly side of the town of Hatten, Alsace, France. I was a PFC and a bazooka man in the 3rd squad of the 3rd platoon. Our platoon had three squads of 10 men each, and the main weapon of each squad was a high velocity automatic breech block 57mm anti-tank gun. The gun was towed by a one and one-half ton, 6x6 truck. Each squad also had a bazooka and a .50 caliber machine gun in addition to personal weapons. We placed our anti-tank gun in a position off the main road, covering the road and a large plain open field and were billeted in a house about 200 yards from our gun position. We dug our anti-tank gun in, built and improved our positions, and just about the time when we were thinking of relaxing with some vino we had acquired, orders came to rotate our positions with another gun platoon of our company that had spent their time in the woods, about 3 miles to our right front. The general situation was that we had left Strasbourg, about December 30, 1944. The French army took over its defense. The Battle of the Bulge, which was taking place to the Northwest, had closed the rearrangement on our 7th Army front and had also resulted in sharply reduced supplies of ammunition. For instance, we had 32 rounds of anti-tank shells per gun, versus a normal 84 and two bazooka rounds per bazooka. At the time of this description, we were a part of Task Force Linden, which comprised three infantry regiments of the 42nd Division. We had additional support from the 14th Armored Division, and a tank destroyer battalion, which used and maintained tank destroyers, mounting 76mm guns. The front was relatively quiet with occasional artillery, rifle and machine gun fire. An MLR which is the main line of resistance was established on the Task Force Linden front.

The weather varied from cold to colder, and snowy. In the position in the woods, we improved the gun and foxhole positions near a large Maginot fort which was in our area and used it for ammunition storage and sleeping. We had two tank destroyers and troops from the 3rd battalion of the 242nd, including two heavy .30 caliber machine guns which were part of the MLR. Our three anti-tank guns of our platoon were sighted to cover this large field and the road that came into our area from the big Maginot fort in the center of the field. The far border of the field was about 3,000 yards to the forest of the forest side. The border curved to our far right. The Germans occupied those woods on the other side. Something was happening in our area, but we couldn't tell what, beside from the fact there was no news of activity, patrols and machine gun fire by Germans or Americans.

About 9 o'clock on the evening of January 7, our platoon lieutenant, Keplinger, told us that we were to move our anti-tank gun to a new position, about two miles away through the forest. He said he would lead us with our truck, with his Jeep, and being that he had studied map reading, we figured he knew where he was going, and knew how to get there. About one o'clock in the morning, we considered ourselves as lost; and in 10 degree below zero weather, stopped at a crossroads, set up a perimeter defense and waited until morning, at which time a recon car, fortunately American, stopped and showed us where we were and where we were going. Our new location was on top of a road block overlooking the sort of a river area which didn't look like tank country. We had a small Maginot fort next to which we emplaced our anti-tank gun and dug a bazooka pit at the base of the bluff where a road led up to the fort. We had no telephone or radio, and the lieutenant had gone back to the other two squads in the forest. On the morning of January 9, I had guard duty with another dogface, from 4AM to 8 AM. We couldn't light a fire until after dawn, and I was looking forward to our hot, K-ration breakfast. About 6 o'clock things started to become more active. Sounds of automatic fire, artillery and tanks could be heard. As dawn broke, we threw some gasoline on the burner and lit our fire and prepared to cook. Just about that time, a Jeep came barreling down the road and stopped at our challenge. It turned out to be Lieutenant Wells, commander of the platoon that took over our position in Hatten. He was wounded in the shoulder. He said the Germans had

launched an armored infantry attack into Hatten, knocked out his guns and the remaining men were trapped in buildings, and said he came to look for help and that he has to go back to his men. Our squad leader, Sgt. Joe Mastel, told him he couldn't leave our assigned station, and told him where our platoon CP was. He left and went back to Hatten.

About ten minutes later our platoon lieutenant drove up and told us to pack up our gear and return to our previous position in the forest. An hour later we arrived on the road near our gun positions in the throes of a full grown battle.

The anti-tank guns were firing; German tanks and half-tracks were burning, firing and crossing the field across our front. Artillery and mortars were raking our woods, machine guns blazing away. The German jets were strafing our area. As we stopped our truck, someone ran up and yelled that the anti-tank guns were about out of ammunition. Mastel ordered everyone to carry a case of our ammunition to the guns. There were 4 shells to a case, and a case weighed about 70 pounds. Two guys on the truck passed the shell cases down. Mastel grabbed the first one, shouldered it and headed down to the guns about 100 yards away. I carried the second case right behind him. A shell exploded right behind Mastel ripping into his back and hip. He dropped but tried to get up to continue to carry the ammunition. I tried to help him but he yelled to me to get down to the guns with the ammunition, which I did. Mastel died of his wounds. I dropped the ammunition case near the gun furthest to the right, opened the case and removed the rounds from their tubes. The German armor was crossing our front at about 800 yards attacking Hatten to our left. Our smaller 57mm guns usually would have to hit a tank several times before we could disable or destroy it. Our supporting tank destroyer battalion had abandoned their positions at the beginning of the German attack and their commanding officer was later court-martialed. A German tank was disabled in front of our position and the crew got out and there were other German troops on the field in the same vicinity. To the left of the anti-tank gun was an unmanned .50 caliber machine gun position. I ran to it with a guy from my squad, checked it to make sure it had ammunition and opened fire on the German troops. The targets were about 800 yards away and I couldn't see the tracers to the end but I must have gotten some of them and immobilized them: then someone called a cease fire on the machine gun because apparently the Germans hadn't detected our anti-tank guns on a review of our positions. Our anti-tank guns were about set back from the edge of the forest firing on the vehicles perpendicular to our line of fire. During the lull in the activities, I saw Long, who was my assistant bazooka man and told him to get the bazooka from the truck. He ran back, got the bazooka, loaded it and was returning just as a shelling in our area began. He ran towards our position, but unfortunately, banged the bazooka against a tree and dented the tube making it unusable. The Germans, knowing that they suffered armored losses as they crossed the field attempted to discover where the anti-tanks were, in the following manner: about 10 German tanks charged out of their forest at high speed through the field towards Hatten and then left the road, fanned out, facing in the direction of our forest. The tanks stopped and the turret hatches popped open, and tank commanders appeared, each with binoculars, scanning the woods. We held our fire. Again at a signal, they all went back into their tanks, fired a few rounds and started to retreat backwards towards their woods. Our anti-tank guns commenced firing. One tank was destroyed. The gunner of the anti-tank gun on the right was killed by a shell fragment in his head. He was Corporal Otis Milam. They pulled his body away from the gun and the gun commander told Smith to take over as gunner. He said he couldn't do it because he couldn't use his right eye which was necessary for the gun sight. I went in as gunner, fired two shots at the retreating tanks, one of the shells hitting but not disabling the tank. After a short lull a runner came into our area stating that a large German combat patrol had broken through the line of I Company, 242nd which held the woods to our right. The lieutenant of the rifle company who was in our position while our anti-tank lieutenant was off trying to scam some more anti-tank ammunition, organized a group of about 15 men, including myself, to establish a defense line to our right rear. We had a light .30 caliber machine gun and our rifles, carbines and grenades. He ordered us to be still, hold our fire until he signaled and to make positive identification before firing. We lay there for about one half hour, when it seemed that there was activity in the woods that we were facing. Suddenly, several shots were fired and a grenade went off to the far right of our line. About ten minutes later the lieutenant told us he got word that Germans retired, and for us to return to our duties and positions. Shortly after my return to the area of our guns, a group of German tanks came onto the field, faced towards us and commenced firing with their cannons and machine guns. Then, simultaneously to the far right, two German flame-throwing tanks were proceeding in our direction along the edge of the woods firing flames into the woods. We had little to stop them. As the flame-throwers approached our position, someone called for us to retreat from our position at the edge of the woods, which I thought was a darn good idea. A dogface set thermalite grenades on the breech blocks of the two anti-tank guns, which couldn't be pulled back, and we retreated to the

road behind our position. Fortunately, the thermalite grenades were not used as the tanks and flame-throwers retreated, and we returned to our positions. Hicks had been shot in the stomach and died the next day. It was



about 5 o'clock by now, getting dark, and I suddenly realized I was starved. All I had to eat was a dried fruit bar at breakfast, about five o'clock in the morning, that is, and a couple of canteens or cupfuls of coffee. I ended up and ate some K-ration dinner, crawled into my covered foxhole and went to sleep. Anti-tank company lost in this battle two gun platoons, its mine platoon and its command post at Niederbetschdorf received a direct hit from a bomb from a German jet bomber. Third platoon, my platoon was the only surviving combat unit left in our company.

POSTSCRIPT from Herb Altneu:

About two weeks after the battle began, we were notified one day, about 5 PM, that Task Force Linden and associated troops were pulling out. Our position was to be held by us in a rearguard action. The bridges and trees had been mined and prepared by the engineers to be blown as a blocking action about 7 PM, and we were on notice to pull out when authorized at seven o'clock. Notification finally came about 1 AM, and we had to leave immediately. Most of the men were asleep in their foxholes and we never knew if we got everyone up and out because of the mixed force. We set some booby traps, dismantled our machine guns, hooked up our anti-tank guns and loaded our men on our jeeps and trucks, which led the convoy. Bringing up the rear of the convoy were the two tank destroyers. As we proceeded down the mined road which was high-crowned and glazed with ice, the anti-tank gun of my squad came off the crown of the road and slid into the ditch, pulling our truck with it. Both the truck and the gun lay in the ditch at about a 45-degree angle, and we were unable to drive or ride it. Fortunately, a tank destroyer stopped, hooked up a chain to the front of our truck and pulled our truck and gun along the ditch until we finally came to a side road, which enabled us to ride it

The bombing of the 242nd Regimental command post at Niederbetschdorf on 13 January 1945 wounded Lt. Col. Edwin Rusteberg, CO of Headquarters Company First Battalion, 242nd Infantry Regiment, 42nd Division from shell fragments, in his own words, "from a low-flying German jet." Lt. Col. Rusteberg returned to duty. The second casualty, KIA, was Pfc. Billy R. Bollinger, M/242 of North Carolina. His gravestone inscription also reads, "To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die." It is our mission to "Never Forget!"

Photo caption: Air raids were infrequent, but at Niederbetschdorf, France, a plane scored a hit on the command post of the 242nd Infantry. [p. 20, 42nd "Rainbow" Infantry Division History World War II, ed. Lt. Hugh C. Daly

HATTEN-RITTERSHOFFEN September 23, 1990
By Donald L. Segel, Rainbow Division Veterans Historian
And President of the Rainbow Division Veterans Association
Company B, 242nd Infantry Regiment
Taken prisoner by the Germans at Hatten, FR 9 January 1945

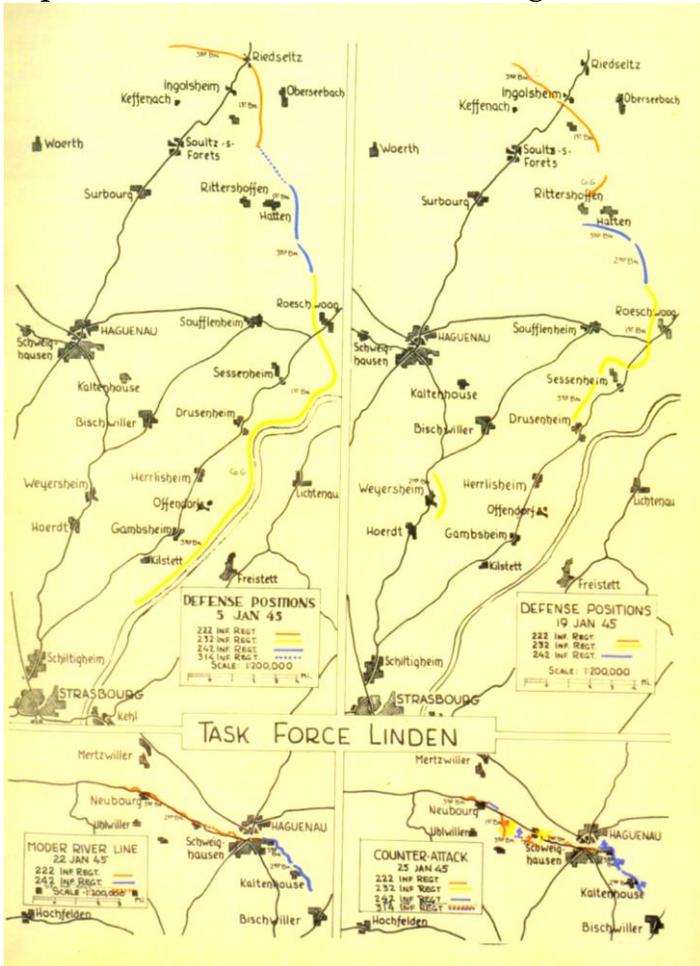
Your honors, Mayors Fenninger and Roth, citizens of Hatten and Rittershoffen and the people of Alsace.

It is a great pleasure for myself and many others to return here as guests five years after the dedication of this impressive memorial. I am privileged to be the Seventy-second President of the 42nd Rainbow Division Veterans Association following in the footsteps of General MacArthur, our founder and leader of the Rainbow while it served so well under the great French General Henri Gouraud in the Battle of Champagne on July 14, 1918. General Gouraud is a Permanent Honorary President of this Association and has been welcomed to the United States on more than one occasion.

We have returned today to honor those Americans and French who gave their lives in the name of freedom in this area. We come as we did in 1944 basically as civilians. America has a tradition of the citizen-soldier

organized under professional leaders who will gladly fight to preserve freedom, liberty and equality. A tradition dating back to the Marquis de Lafayette, a name revered in America equal to Washington and Lincoln.

In 1944 we were chosen and enthusiastically supported by the men of the 42nd Rainbow to return to the same area of France as in 1917 and to reestablish the special relationship between the Rainbow and France due to the fact that we were the only American division to serve under French leadership in the Battle of Champagne. Thus we came willingly in 1944 to help our friends – to end a reign of brutality and slavery that attempted to destroy Western civilization itself and return not only Europe but the entire World to the dark ages.



We stand ready and our citizens stand ready to come to the defense of freedom wherever it is threatened.

“Freedom is assured, mankind’s cause is won and liberty is no longer homeless on earth.” These words of the Marquis de Lafayette in 1781 during the American Revolution are as true today as they were then and as they were in 1945. We come today to meet with our French friends and to honor those who died for freedom and that friendship. May that friendship increase even more.

Thank you for your hospitality and the warm welcome to Alsace and this spot where we and our descendants will always feel at home and often visit this monument and this bench united in a French-American commitment to freedom. Vive la France. [map: Lt. Hugh C. Daly, Ibid.]

SEVENTH ARMY REPORT AS PRINTED IN “THE BATTLES OF HATTEN AND HAGUENAU”

by The Regimental Colors publication January 1978/a 242nd Special Report]

What transpired during the period 8-25 January 1945 can best be told chronologically. The bitter fighting that saved Strasbourg does not fit into a neat picture. To emphasize the Gamsheim action at the expense of that at Hatten would be distortion. Nor should it be forgotten that enemy threats from the Bitche salient and on the VI Corps front continued to be very real long after the Rhine flank claimed first priority.

As expected, the Germans drove viciously into the VI Corps Maginot position in the vicinity of Aschbach on 8 January. Shortly thereafter, 25th Panzer Grenadier Division made its appearance in the Hatten area, apparently operating under command of 21st Panzer Division in an attack called “*Operation Feuchtinger*”, after the Commanding General of the 21st Panzer Division. It was apparent that the enemy was attempting a quick breakthrough to Haguenau, vital communication center, perhaps with the attention of effecting a junction there with enemy troops crossing the Rhine and with forces emerging from the Hardt Mountain salient.

Through January 20, when the VI Corps executed a planned withdrawal, the fighting in the Hatten-Rittershoffen area continued to be extremely fierce. Both 21st Panzer and 25th Panzer Grenadier Divisions suffered heavy losses in armor and infantry. The enemy reinforced his troops in the Rittershoffen area on 13 January with elements of the 20th Parachute Regiment, a recent arrival from Holland. The 10th SS Panzer Division, “*Fruntsberg*” was reliably reported in the Kaiserslautern area. Meanwhile, considerable reshuffling of enemy units was on in the Hardt Forest area.

RDVF SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM 2026

<https://rainbowvets.org/scholarships/>

Application submissions March 1, 2026 – July 15, 2026

Tammy Moss-Hicks, RDVF Scholarship Chair

Over the years, we have had numerous requests to support not only undergraduate studies but also vocational schools. Education is the cornerstone of a soldier's employment within the ranks and often hinges on their civilian education and / or occupation. The RDVF strongly encourages education and proudly partners with students to achieve their goals. It is in this spirit that the RDVF Scholarship committee continues to offer Undergraduate Scholarships annually. These are one-time scholarships offered to legacy family members, current Soldier's family members, and Soldiers. If a student is a Gold family member, they are eligible to apply each year of their undergraduate college program. These scholarships are for anyone who has served with a 42nd ID unit or an aligned unit. All applications are due by July 15th.

In addition to undergraduate college funds, the RDVF Scholarship Committee is excited to offer a new initiative dedicated to serving soldiers. This new program is the Rainbow Assistance for Vocational Education (RAVE). The Rainbow Division Veterans Foundation will award up to \$2,000 to currently- serving soldiers assigned to the 42nd Infantry Division units (to include "Division Aligned Units"). The applications will be accepted twice a year; December 15th and July 15th each year.

This scholarship is only available to enlisted soldiers and warrant officers in the grade of WO1 or CW2 who are pursuing a vocational program degree or certification. It is a one-time award; soldiers may only receive one RAVE scholarship. Courses or classes should be directly related to acquiring necessary skills to advance your civilian career in the related industry. These courses could include mechanics, welding, bookkeeping, CDL driver school, HVAC, or crane operator certification, for example.

If you know a soldier or warrant officer who is trying to become certified in a vocation, reach out to the RDVF Scholarship committee chair, Tammy Moss-Hicks at 42idscholars@gmail.com Don't wait! Contact us today with any questions and let RDVF help you achieve your educational goals!

**FOR DETAILED DESCRIPTION AND INSTRUCTIONS AND TO DOWNLOAD A 2026 SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION
PLEASE GO TO <https://rainbowvets.org/scholarships/>**



Happy 102nd Birthday, Hilbert!!

**WWII Rainbow Division Veteran of Btry B,
392nd Field Artillery Battalion Hilbert
Margol, 101 years old, soon to be 102 years on
22 February 2026, speaking to Scout Troop 550
of Atlanta Georgia on December 12, 2025.**

“Troop 550 emphasizes the development of strong leadership skills in our Scouts. As a Scout-led Troop, we are dedicated to shaping tomorrow’s leaders by empowering our Scouts today by following the Scout Oath and the Scout Law. Scout Troop 550 in Atlanta, Georgia has a strong focus on outdoor activities like camping, hiking, fishing, and wilderness skills.”

<https://troop550atl.com/>

**RAINBOW TRAIL Editor contact information:
Suellen R. McDaniel (828)464-1466; JMAC1400@aol.com
1400 Knolls Drive Newton, NC 28658-9452**