

REVEILLE

VOL. LXXXVI

NOVEMBER 2005

NO 2

Rainbow On-Line: www.rainbowvets.org

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World War I: Lorraine-Champagne- Aisne-Marne- St. Mihiel-Meuse-Argonne. World War II: Central Europe- Rhineland- Alsace-Ardennes. War on Terrorism: Iraq.

RAINBOW

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This Holiday Season let's fill our Treasurer's mailbox with the enclosed envelopes

Happy Holidays

Make checks payable to: Rainbow Division Veterans Memorial Foundation Mail to: Jon Janosek, Treasurer, RDVMF, 3389 Kingston Lane, Youngstown, OH 44511

www.rainbowvets.org

HOLIDAY INN SELECT – SAN ANTONIO, TX 210-349-9900

Holiday Inn Select is located at 77 NE Loop 410, San Antonio, TX 78216, just across from the North Star Mall. If you are driving, please call the hotel directly for accurate driving directions. The hotel offers 397 guest rooms equipped with remote control TVs, irons and ironing boards, hair dryers, and coffee makers. The hotel offers various amenities including an outdoor pool, whirlpool spa, and fitness center. Parking is ample and complimentary. Handicapped-accessible rooms and nonsmoking rooms are also available. Please request these accommodations at the time you make your reservations. Check-in time is 4:00 p.m. and check-out time is 11:00 a.m. The Bravo Bar & Grill serves breakfast, lunch and dinner, featuring a varied menu. Room service is also available.

The Holiday Inn provides complimentary shuttle service to and from the San Antonio International Airport and to attractions within a two-mile radius. Upon your arrival at the airport, call the hotel from the phone in the baggage claim area and the hotel will inform you of the next pick-up time. The hotel van makes regular trips to the airport and is scheduled every 15 minutes.

The hotel does offer parking for RVs. Should you require full hookups, please contact KOA San Antonio, which is approximately 14 miles from the hotel. Reservations are recommended. Please call (210) 224-9296 for rates, reservations and information.

Should you need to rent a wheelchair for the reunion, ScootAround rents both manual and power wheelchairs by the day and week. Please call their toll-free number at (888) 441-7575 for details. All prices quoted include delivery fees.

Vendors, schedules and prices are subject to change.

At this time, we only know that both reunions will be held by Armed Forces Reunion Inc. and that registration for both reunions will be \$40/person. We also have nothing on the tours for the national. Check the Rainbow net for further info.

Chairman's Message

By the time all of you Rainbowers are reading this, the travel and pleasure of meeting with a whole lot of you will be history. The matter that may not be settled as you read this is the date and location of the July 2007 Annual Reunion. A brief explanation of the factors that have delayed the decision and what is being done to reach an acceptable decision is presented here for your edification.

When we were more numerous and many chapters were able to sponsor and run reunions, we had multiple offers for every year. Our declining numbers and advancing age have virtually eliminated the possibility of chapter-managed reunions. Consequently, we now operate with a Reunions Officer who assumes the responsibility for negotiating with professionals who specialize in setting up and managing the activities of organizations like ours.

Our current Reunions Officer, James "Pete" Pettus, has been striving to place our July 2007 reunion on the Eastern Seaboard as directed by the Board of Trustees during the 2005 meeting in Indianapolis. The board gave him this direction for two reasons: First, we have not had an annual reunion in the Eastern part of the country for several years. Second, we hoped to make it convenient for 42nd Rainbow Division personnel deployed in Iraq to join us in our Foundation activities. We selected 2007 to focus on this. Under the terms of their original 18-month "call-up," they would all have returned in 2006, had time to get their lives back in order, and, we hoped, would like to join us and get together with their fellow Iraq veterans.

Pete, as directed by the trustees, has tried to place the reunion in Albany, New York. The enormous amount of work and many problems encountered will not be enumerated here. We can have the reunion in Albany if we are willing to go three

Continued on page 5

THE RAINBOW REVEILLE

Official Publication of the **RAINBOW** Division Veterans Memorial Foundation

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Chaplain's Message

Veterans' Day, 11 November 2005 From the National Hymn "America the Beautiful"

O beautiful for heroes proved in liberating strife,

who more than self their country loved, and mercy more than life!

America, America! May God they gold

'til all success be nobleness, and every gain divine.

O beautiful for Patriot dream that sees beyond the years.

Thine alabaster cities gleam, undimmed by human tears.

America, America! God shed His grace on thee.

and crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea.

Norman P. Forde, RDVA Chaplain



Muskogee/Tulsa Chapter members meet for breakfast each month. Around the table from the left: James Durkee 222nd Co. A, Lester Smay 222nd Co. A, William A. Veitch Ha.-542 F.A. Bn., Jeff Bohannon A Brty 402 F.A., Earnie Owen Millennium Chapter, Olin L. Hawkins Co. F 222nd, Bill Butts 42nd Recon. Troop, Charles Russell Service Bty 402, Bob Haggard Co. B 222.

Muskogee Chapter

Several years ago the Tulsa, OK Chapter was combined with the Muskogee Chapter. Ted Johnson kept the Chapter going because of the special significance Muskogee has in its proximity to Camp Gruber and the Honor Heights Park Rainbow Amphitheater. Since Ted is no longer with us, it is necessary for someone else to accept that responsibility. There is a good core group that meets once a month for breakfast and we want to keep the Chapter viable. Anyone can belong to this chapter and, as of this writing, we have 22 members from around the country. So if it holds a special place in your heart as well, please send \$5 chapter dues to:

Robert Haggard, Treasurer 2807 Haddock Dr. Muskogee, OK 74401

When news happens in Muskogee, you'll be informed either through the Reveille or by mailing.

Earnie Owen, Secretary 1201 S. 30th St. Broken Arrow, OK 74014

Tribute to Bill Kenny

Bill joined the regular Army Air Corps in hope of becoming a fighter pilot. He didn't attain that goal and was sent to gunnery school.

You all recall that in the spring of 1944 the Rainbow was stripped of everyone from Corporal down in order to fill up other divisions' complement so they could be shipped overseas. The Rainbow complement was filled by ASTP students, Air Corps gunnery school students, etc. Bill Kenny came to our machine gun section as the last to fill our complement. I took early note of him because of our common background. We were both Irish, Catholic, and high school ROTC trained. He really didn't want to be in the infantry and volunteered for paratrooper but was turned down because of his height.

As the newest member of the machine gun section, he was an ammo bearer (a grunt). When we were shipped overseas, he was still in that position.

As a Sergeant, I had more men than him and he received no less than the others. He did this job well and better than others in our section.

One day in Germany, we were on the on the right flank of Co. G, who were moving through the woods with us using a road on their right as a flank. We ran into the side of a German anti-aircraft unit set up on the road as a roadblock with a 4gun AA as their main firepower. When we ran into the Germans, they were as surprised as we were. Our first gunner dropped into a declivity and started to fire at the Germans, but his barrel was tilted up. I hollered to Kenny to "take the gun," which he did, and holding the gun at his hip, he stopped the Germans and they surrendered. I should have written him up for the Silver Star for that action, and I regret to this day that I didn't. From then on, Bill was our first gunner. When I was wounded on April 19, 1945, he was appointed Sergeant in my place and ultimately became a Staff Sergeant. He also led machine gunners late in the war at Gussenheim with Lt. Charlie Pane (2nd Platoon) to take and hold a bridge. They did! Pane went onto the bridge and neutralized the explosives on the bridge. Charlie was awarded the Silver Star. Bill received the Bronze Star with the "V" attachment for valor for holding off German counterattacks.

So much for my contributions to the story of one of the finest soldiers and RDVA leaders I've ever known.

Tom O'Neill

42nd RAINBOW FOUNDATION ACTIVITY REGISTRATION FORM

Listed below are all registration, tour, and meal costs for the reunion. Please enter how many people will be participating in each event and total the amount. Send that amount payable to ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC. in the form of check or money order (no credit cards or phone reservations accepted). Your cancelled check will serve as your confirmation. All registration forms and payments must be received by mail on or before January 9, 2006. After that date, reservations will be accepted on a space available basis. We suggest you make a copy of this form before mailing.

Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. 322 Madison Mews Norfolk, VA 23510 ATTN: 42nd Rainbow Division

	OFFICE USE ONLY	
Check #	Date Received	
Inputted	Nametag Completed	-

CUT-OFF DATE IS 1/9/06	Price Per	# of People	Total
REGISTRATION FEE Includes Luncheon (Pecan Crusted Chicken) and Banquet (Sliced Roast Sirloin of Beef)	\$ 46		\$
Total Amount Payable to Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.			\$

Please do not staple or tape your payment to this form.

EASE PRINT ME (for nametags)					
IT NAME FOR NAMETAG					
OUSE NAME					
EST NAMES					
REET ADDRESS					
TY, ST, ZIPPH. NUMBER ()					
SABILITY/DIETARY RESTRICTIONS					
MUST YOU BE LIFTED HYDRAULICALLY ONTO THE BUS WHILE SEATED IN YOUR WHEELCHAIR IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN BUS TRIPS? YES NO (PLEASE NOTE THAT WE CANNOT GUARANTEE AVAILABILITY).					
IERGENCY CONTACTPH. NUMBER ()					
RIVAL DATEDEPARTURE DATE					
E YOU STAYING AT THE HOTEL? YESNO ARE YOU FLYING?DRIVING?RV?					

For refunds and cancellations please refer to our policies outlined at the bottom of the reunion program. **CANCELLATIONS WILL ONLY BE TAKEN MONDAY-FRIDAY 9:00am-5:00pm EASTERN TIME (excluding holidays).** Call (757) 625-6401 to cancel reunion activities and obtain your cancellation code.

National Reunion July 11-16, 2006 Hilton Kansas City Airport Hotel Kansas City, Missouri (816) 891-8900

The Hilton Kansas City Airport is located at 8801 NW 112th St., Kansas City, MO 64153, just minutes from the Kansas City International Airport (MCI). The Kansas City Hilton offers spacious guest rooms, each with coffee makers, iron/ironing board, and hair dryers. The hotel has a sundries area, newsstand (USA Today), and an ATM for your convenience. Relax in the hotel's pool or fitness room or play a little tennis on their on-site tennis court. Handicapped-accessible and non-smoking rooms are subject to availability. Please request these special accommodations when making your hotel reservation. Parking for guests staying in the hotel is complimentary. Check-in time is 3 p.m.; check-out is 12 p.m. The Café Weatherby serves American and International cuisine featuring top Kansas City steaks in a casual dining atmosphere. The Café Weatherby is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. Room service is available 24 hours a day.

The hotel provides a complimentary shuttle to and from the Kansas City International Airport (MCI) that runs every 15 minutes. You may want to consider other

transportation, as space is limited on courtesy services.

The nearest RV park with full hook-up is the JJ Campground, about 30 miles from the hotel. JJ Campground is located at 19116 Scott Road, Holt, MO 64048. The park recommends reservations be made immediately due to limited space and availability. For information, directions and reservations, please call (800) 693-6316.

Should you need to rent a wheelchair for the reunion, ScootAround rents both manual and power wheelchairs by the day and week. Please call their toll-free number at (888) 441-7575 for details.

Vendors, schedules, and prices are subject to change.

Blue Light Centers

How many veterans remember their indoctrination to the facts of life by the military? Before I received any military training, I was made aware of the pitfalls in our contacts with the opposite sex. Venereal disease was a real concern, syphilis and gonorrhea being the primary diseases in those days. Sex wasn't discouraged, but rather we were admonished to practice "safe" sex, i.e., use condoms. I recall the first lecturer on the subject saying that if you are walking a lady by a drugstore and you tell her that you have to buy some condoms and she waits until you get back, you know you will need them!

In England, the use of condoms was

really pushed by our unit doctor. "V" packets were available at any time three condoms and a tube of germicidal lubricant or ointment. When we went on leave, we took the first aid field dressing from the special pocket in our battle dress and put the package of condoms in it. By the way, we were told that one out of four ladies that we were liable to meet (on the street) would be infected! They were the Piccadilly commandos. Some within the medical field said there were more casualties in Piccadilly than from enemy action on the continent. To overcome this, there were disinfecting centers established in major leave areas. These were distinguished by a blue cross.

These poor souls who had succumbed to the wiles of some maiden without their prophylactic kit with them and who in the cold light of dawn felt they needed first aid, would make haste to the nearest "Blue Light Center." Here they were questioned about the event, primarily as to when it all took place. Then their midsection would be washed and the penis would be syringed out with some chemical solution. Then all the genitals would be smeared with some ointment and finally the penis would be bandaged with wide gauze and the ends tied into a beautiful bow knot! All this done very gently with professional effi-

When you dressed and prepared to leave, you were told not to urinate for eight hours!

42nd RAINBOW FOUNDATION - HOTEL RESERVATION FORM - SAN ANTONIO REUNION DATES: FEBRUARY 8-12, 2006					
NAME		PHONE ()			
ADDRESS		ZIP			
ARRIVAL DATE	APPROX. TIME	DEPATURE DATE			
If room type requested is RATE: \$89 + tax (currer reunion dates upon availa CUT OFF DATE: 1/5/06 F CANCELLATION POLIC reservations must be gua	not available, nearest room type w htly 16.75%) for Double or King. ability Reservations received after this dat	Rate will be honored two days before and after the will be processed on space & rate availability. The ation is cancelled by 6pm on your arrival day. All its deposit, enclosed.			
CARD NUMBER		Exp. Date			
Signature (regardless of p	payment method)				

What's the Point of Contact?

by Staff Sgt. Raymond Drumsta 42nd Infantry Division Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SUM-MERALL, BAYJI, Iraq – In combat, the point of contact is where soldiers encounter the enemy.

Spc. Bryan Walczer, Company A, 111th Infantry, made contact in more ways than one last May 17 – the day he and some Iraqi soldiers joined the ranks of IED survivors.

Company A, a Pennsylvania Army National Guard unit, has been training and performing combat operations with Company C, 201st Iraqi Army Battalion, since last December. Soldiers of both units roll out of the base here daily on counter-insurgency missions, which by now, have become routine like patrols and raids.

"Anything a normal infantry unit would do, we've done," said Walczer. Walczer was driving an open-back humvee with Iraqi soldiers aboard during a patrol on May 17 – coincidentally the anniversary of his enlistment – when an IED made of 155mm rounds detonated next to the vehicle.

Walczer called it a "dark day."

"I said before we left the gate, 'this is a rolling target," he said. "I was being sarcastic. You never expect anything's going to happen, but in this case, it did."

The moments following the explosion are etched in Walczer's memory. He couldn't hear, he said, and was in a dizzy, disconnected, slow-motion state he described as "post-concussion retarded."

"When you have 155mm rounds go off right next to your vehicle, everything slows down," he said.

Walczer was still functioning, however. Guided by survival instincts, fueled by adrenaline, he was aware enough to get out of his vehicle and seek cover. Minutes later he was ordered back to his damaged humvee, where he was the IED's aftermath – wounded Iraqi soldiers.

Walczer, an Allentown, Pa. native, is 20 years old. His lineage reads like a catalog of honor – a line of uncles and grandfathers, who marched through, and survived, Vietnam, Korea, World War II's Normandy beaches and beyond.

Like them, Walczer was a veteran – even before the IED blew up near his vehicle. He had witnessed things like the carnage from a vehicle-borne explosive (VBIED), a ghastly scene he described easily as "flesh all over the road."

May 17 was different.

"I remember looking at the wounded and thinking, 'I've never seen anything like this before,'" he said.

The unit evacuated wounded Iraqi soldiers. At the base medical facility, Walczer broke down.

"My emotions just came out," he said. "It was almost as if I was hiding them on the battlefield. They couldn't come out. I had to do my job first."

All but one of the wounded Iraqi soldiers survived, Walczer said.

"[The Iraqi soldiers] are always nice to me," he said. "I felt bad because I was driving the vehicle. I thought, 'Maybe if I drove more to the left, they'd still be here."

Despite this and other incidents, Walczer and his fellow soldiers – American and Iraqi – drive on with their mission.

"I guess time heals all wounds," he said. "You realize it's war, and it's not fair. You always try to do better, but you can't do everything perfectly."

A criminal justice student back home, Walczer is considering studying medicine instead – to balance things out, he said.

"You come here, to this place, and see all this violence... maybe healing people will make me a better person," he said.

The point of contact sometimes lies inside the wire, in the minds and hearts of the American and Iraqi soldiers here. In the quiet after battle, it's the connection they make with each other, those they shed sweat, flesh and blood with... when they recognize that they not only share the fight, they share the sacrifice, and a common humanity – even in the worst of circumstances.

In one way or another, Walczer and his fellow soldiers, Iraqi and American – make contact, everyday.

Chairman's Message

Continued from page 1

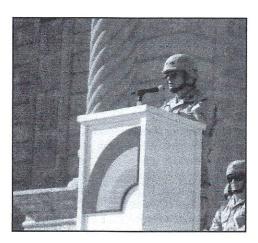
weeks later – August 1-4, 2007. Other factors are: We do not know if our soldiers in Iraq will have returned in large numbers; and we will have to accept one large hospitality room. Finally, if we want to accept this venue, we must make the decision by October 7, 2005 – just four days from when this is being written.

I have written and asked for several votes from all 24 trustees on a variety of issues related to the 2007 reunion – up to and including discarding the plan to meet in Albany and scheduling the reunion elsewhere.

In any case, you will be kept informed in subsequent issues of the Rainbow Reveille. In the meantime, if I haven't seen you in New Jersey or Long Beach, will I have seen you in Birmingham? Don't forget San Antonio in February. I'm going to have a great time there. We can have a super time together only if you all get there too. C'mon, let's "live it up" while we're still young enough to enjoy it!

Ted Simonson, Chairman







Images of the 42nd Infantry Division Remembrance Ceremony in Tikrit, Iraq on 9-11. At left, Maj. Gen. Joseph Taluto addresses the soldiers of Task Force Liberty; at top left, Staff Sgt. Peter Roe of the 42nd Infantry Division Band plays taps in tribute to the lives lost in the terror attacks; at top right, Pvt. 1st Class Michael Colesanti of the 642nd Military Intelligence Battalion reflects on the events and division's role in responding to the terror attacks. Photos by Spc. Adam Phelps, 22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, Task Force Liberty Public Affairs.

Rainbow Division Veterans

WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL FILE — JULY 2004 - JULY 2005

Co. I, 232nd Inf. Amilkavich, John Co. G. 242nd Inf. Anderle, Glenn 132nd Signal Co. Anderson, Chet Co. B, 222nd Inf. Baird, James W. H1B, 232nd Inf. Banks, John A. Bellus, Orlyn L. A/T Co., 232nd Inf. Benvenuti, Silvio H2B, 242nd Inf. 132nd Signal Co. Blance, Blane H3B, 242nd Inf. Bode, William T. M.P. Platoon Breazeale, Harry S. Co. C, 222nd Inf. Bridgewater, Lloyd A. Hqs. Co., 242nd Inf. Brink, George R. Cos. E&G, 232nd Inf. Bumm, Edwin A. Co. B, 242nd Inf. Bushee, William C. Busse, Walter H3B, 242nd Inf. 142nd Engr. Bn. Bussell, George Bty. B, 232nd F.A. Bybee, Ferrell W. Co. K, 232nd Inf. Casper, Irwin Co. A, 242nd Inf. Cahoon, Al Bty. A, 232nd F.A. Carlson, Harold Co. B, 232nd Inf. Coffman, James E. Collpriest, Keith B. Co. L, 242nd Inf. Cook, William A. Co. K, 242nd Inf. Co. B, 222nd Inf. Copening, John H. Co. H, 222nd Inf. Dann, Samuel H. Davis, A.W. Has., 402nd F.A. DeCampo, Carmello Co. I, 232nd Inf. Co. D, 232nd Inf. Derise, George Bty. C, 392nd F.A. Donahue, William P. Co. I, 232nd Inf. Duff, Michael Co. D, 232nd Inf. Dustin, Ronald C. Dvorshock, Paul J. Medic, 222nd Inf. Co. F, 242nd Inf. Dvkema, Albert N. Elkins, Walter E. Co. F, 242nd Inf. Friend, Ray A. Co. G. 222nd Inf. Co. I, 232nd Inf. Gardner, Glenn R. M.P. Platoon Gerald, Charles E. Gianopoulos, George J. Bty. B, 542nd F.A. Co. C, 222nd Inf. Goldman, Sherman Co. M, 232nd Inf. Grim, Glenwood R. 132nd Signal Co. Hacke, Charles J. Bty. B, 392nd F.A. Hamilton, James Haney, Ralph J. Co. L. 222nd Inf. Co. H, 232nd Inf. Harris, Earl R. Q.M. Co. Hessman, Max Co. D, 232nd Inf. Hill, Edgar L. Co. M, 232nd Inf. Hoffmeyer, Ray J. H1B, 222nd Inf. Holmes, Leroy Hopwood, Everet T. Co. F. 232nd Inf. Hosch, George E. Co. D, 232nd Inf. Hyde, Robert W. Ca. Co., 232nd Inf. Co. D, 232nd Inf. Jackson, William L. Johnson, Theodore A. (PNP)Co. H, 232nd Inf. Co. I, 242nd Inf. Jones, Calvin E. Jones, Robey L. H1B, 232nd Inf. Kaas, Daniel J. Co. L, 232nd Inf. Co. L, 232nd Inf. Kaiser, Norman 132nd Signal Co. Keller, William N., Jr. Keyser, Jack (PNP) Co. H. 232nd Inf. Hg., 242nd Inf. Krongard, David

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42nd Infantry Division Mech. (K.I.A.)

Sgt. Christopher P. Engeldrum 1st Bn., 69th Inf. Pfc. Wifredo F. Urbina 1st Bn., 69th Inf. Spec. David M. Fisher 1st Bn., 101 Cav. 1st Bn., 69th Inf. S/Sgt. Henry E. Irizarry Cpl. Joseph O. Behnke 1st Bn., 258th F.A. Pfc. Kenneth Vonronn 1st Bn., 69th Inf.

Spec. Alain L. Kamolvathian 1st Bn., 69th Inf. Pfc. Francis C. Obaj 1st Bn., 69th Inf.*

K.I.A. Attached to 42nd (Task Force Liberty) 1st Bn., 128th Inf. Ssq. Todd D. Olson Spec. Mark C. Warren 116th A.B.* 2nd Bn., 7th Inf. Ssg. Steven G. Bayow 2nd Bn., 7th Inf. Sgt. Daniel Torres Sfc. David J. Sallie 2nd Bn., 69th Armd. Sfc. David J. Brangman 2nd Bn., 69th Armd.

1st Bn., 30th Inf.

5/7 Cav.

Sqt. Chad Lake Sgt. Rene Knox Jr. Spec. Dakotah L. Gooding

Spc. Jacob Palmatier

Deaths Since July Reunion

132nd Signal Co. Anderson, Chet H1B, 232nd Inf. Andrew, Hoyt Co. B, 242nd Inf. Bachenberg, Paul D. Co. D, 232nd Inf. Ball, Francis T. Binau, Robert J. Hqs. Co., 232nd Inf. 242nd Inf. Bradford, Edwin E. Clodfelter, William C. Co. D, 242nd Inf. Cunningham, Donald J. 392nd F.A. Co. C. 242nd Inf. Desroches, Ernest R. Co. B, 232nd Inf. Douglas, David R. H1B, 242nd Inf. Dunn, Harold F. Co. M. 232nd Inf. Dutton, Frederick G. Co. I, 232nd Inf. Gardner, Glenn R. Gessler, Norman Can. Co., 242nd Inf. 132nd Signal Co. Griffith, Philip Division Band Hauk, Milton F. H1B, 222nd Inf. Ianuccelli, Anthony Serv. Co., 222nd Inf. Janda, Georg Co. C, 232nd Inf. Johnson, Charles 132nd Signal Co. Keller, William N. Jr. Kenny, William T. (PNP) Co. G, 242nd Inf. Co. E, 232nd Inf. Kercelius, Karl Kovacevic, Donald 132nd Signal Co. Co. I, 222nd Inf. Krawcvkowski, Chester J. Can. Co., 232nd Inf. Krupa, Maynard Lopez, Joseph E. Co. L, 242nd Inf. Unknown McCormick, Harold E. Co. I, 242nd Inf. Morrill, Robert J. Co. M, 232nd Inf. Moser, Lawrence Co. D, 222nd Inf. Nagle, John W. H2B, 232nd Inf. Robinson, M.B. 132nd Signal Co. Russo, Sam Shaneyfelt, Donald L. Hqs. Co., 242nd Inf. Slocum, Philip 132nd Signal Co. 132nd Signal Co. Vaughan, Charles Co. C, 242nd Inf. Woodman, Wayne H. Co. A, 142nd Engrs. Wright, Samuel J. Co. E, 222nd Inf. Zgoda, Arthur S.

* Non-Battle Deaths

Over & Back

by John McGovern Company B – 232nd Infantry

Continued from June Issue

The next day was Christmas, and three of us, including Harry Bleil, went to Mass at the local church. Since we were carrying weapons, we wanted to stand at the back of the church, but the members, mostly women, insisted that we sit up near the middle of the church. Since the Mass was still in Latin at that time, things were similar to Mass at home until the sermon. The pastor was talking a couple of minutes before I realized that he was speaking fairly accented English, just for our benefit. By the time I began to understand him pretty well, he switched to French, and I could understand nearly as many words as I could when he spoke English. However, he was just getting warmed up, and spoke German for the bulk of the sermon.

While in Offendorf, we had a number of FFI helping with the perimeter defense. There was a lot of firing during the nights, most of the machine gun fire coming from the captured German weapons that were easy to distinguish because of their higher rate of fire. We did not see any targets at our position.

On the 27th we moved back to Strasbourg, and after dark, crossed a bridge to an island on the Rhine River. The bridge had a dead horse on it, which the guards said had failed to respond to the password the previous night. entered a hotel on the island which appeared to be recently vacated, since the closets were filled with clothes and the wine cellar was well stocked. We spent the 28th sampling the wine and trying on clothes. When daybreak came, we tried to observe the Germans across the river without showing ourselves at the windows. On the 28th we left the island at dusk and were taken by truck to Gambsheim. We were in reserve for a few days except for patrols and stayed in the same house for several days.

The house had a wall around it and a gate with the owner's name, which I believe was Frederick Kaltenbach or something similar, and the few days we were there was a very pleasant interlude in our otherwise unpleasant visit to Europe. Mr. Kaltenbach was a former member of the French Foreign Legion and was about 60 years old. His wife was about 20 years younger, and their daughter, Marlene, was 10. They treated us as honored guests and did everything they could to make us welcome. Mrs. Kaltenbach made a cake for New Year's Eve and her husband brought out a bottle of Schnapps that he had been saving. Even Marlene was allowed a small glass of the Schnapps because of the occasion. During the evening I opened a bottle of beer that had been shaken too much and sprayed everyone.

Another day, I tried to ask Mrs. Kaltenbach where the local priest was, as Christy and I had decided to go to confession. I tried all the related English words with a French pronunciation without her understanding me. Finally, her eyes lit up and she went and whispered into the corner and turned, saying "Absolution." We found the priest, who did not speak any English, and he understood enough to give us "General Absolution," which is used when confession is not very convenient. Mrs. Kaltenbach referred to me as "stille wasser flut tief" because I was not as talkative as the others.

On the second of January, the Company was moved to Souffelweyersheim in battalion reserve. While the Company was changing towns, Clyde Lee and I were assigned to do guard duty in Strasbourg. We spent a day and two nights there in order to man a 12-hour shift guarding a rail switch. We stopped in a bar after our guard shift that was filled, mostly with civilians, and met a man who said he was in the German army the previous week. He spoke both French and German, and we had a fairly good exchange in French. He tried to introduce us to some of the girls he knew in the bar, but we dutifully returned to our house to catch up on our rest, which was usually only three or four hours a night because of foxhole duty and patrols.

Early in the morning of January 3, the Company moved to the Stattmatten area. Part of the Company was in Kilstett during this period, apparently to support "A" Company. Bill Reeder, who was squad leader for the other machine gun, returned on January 5 to report that he had received a cable that his wife had given birth to a son. He was slightly upset because the cable did not report the birth weight. He also reported that they had a scary encounter with a tank in Kilstett.

Just before dark on the 5th, most of the weapons platoon were placed near a house on the north end of Stattmatten. Our machine guns were side by side about 50 yards into the open field in front of the house, and we started to dig in. After an hour, using our picks and shovels on the frozen ground, it was dark and we had barely scratched the surface. Also, the sound of the digging could be heard for a long distance in the cold night air. As a result, we moved back closer to the house and lay on top of the ground. Our gun was about 20 yards from the house, and Lou Redmond and I lay there and arranged to alternate watch every two hours. The other gun moved back farther near a fence that enclosed the back yard of the house, where they were about 10 yards from the house.

I took the first shift and was just about to wake Lou at 11 p.m. when I heard the Germans approaching. As they got closer, we could see a skirmish line against the moonlit sky. They were about six feet apart and extended as far

as I could see in both directions. This was probably about 40 men. The Germans were chatting rather loudly and seemed on the way to a party rather than a skirmish. Since we were the closest to them and had the machine gun, I expected to be the first to fire, but someone by the house fired a rifle (he may have thought we were asleep or maybe he just fired accidentally) and the Germans hit the ground before I could fire. I was delayed because, in loading the gun, I tried to be quiet and didn't slam the bolt hard enough. This only took a half-second to correct and then everyone started firing as fast as they could in the general direction of the Germans.

A few days earlier we had received orders to pull our tracers so the machine gun "could not be located at night." I had probably fired 50,000 to 100,000 rounds previously, but had never fired at night, so this made sense to me. A major benefit of removing the tracers was that we discovered that most of our ammunition reserve was so corroded that it was not likely to work in the machine guns. So we cleaned the rounds and flexed the belts until the rounds would slide in and out easily.

Anyway, when we started firing we found out two things quickly. Our muzzle blast could probably have been seen for 10 miles, and I had only a faint idea where I was shooting. I was firing the A6 light 30 Cal. from the bipod, which meant I had to aim it. Having been in heavy weapons, I should have known enough to use the tripod and sight the weapon in, counting the adjustment "clicks" for night firing.

I fired several belts (250 rounds each) with only a pause to reload, and then everyone tapered off their firing since no Germans were visible and they didn't want to use all their ammunition. As soon as the firing died off, our executive officer, Lt. Clark, began urging me to keep firing. He was at the second floor window of the house just behind me and, from his vantage point, could easily see the Germans moving in the grass about 100 yards to our front.

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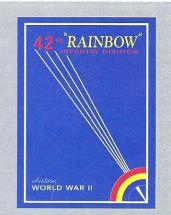
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