

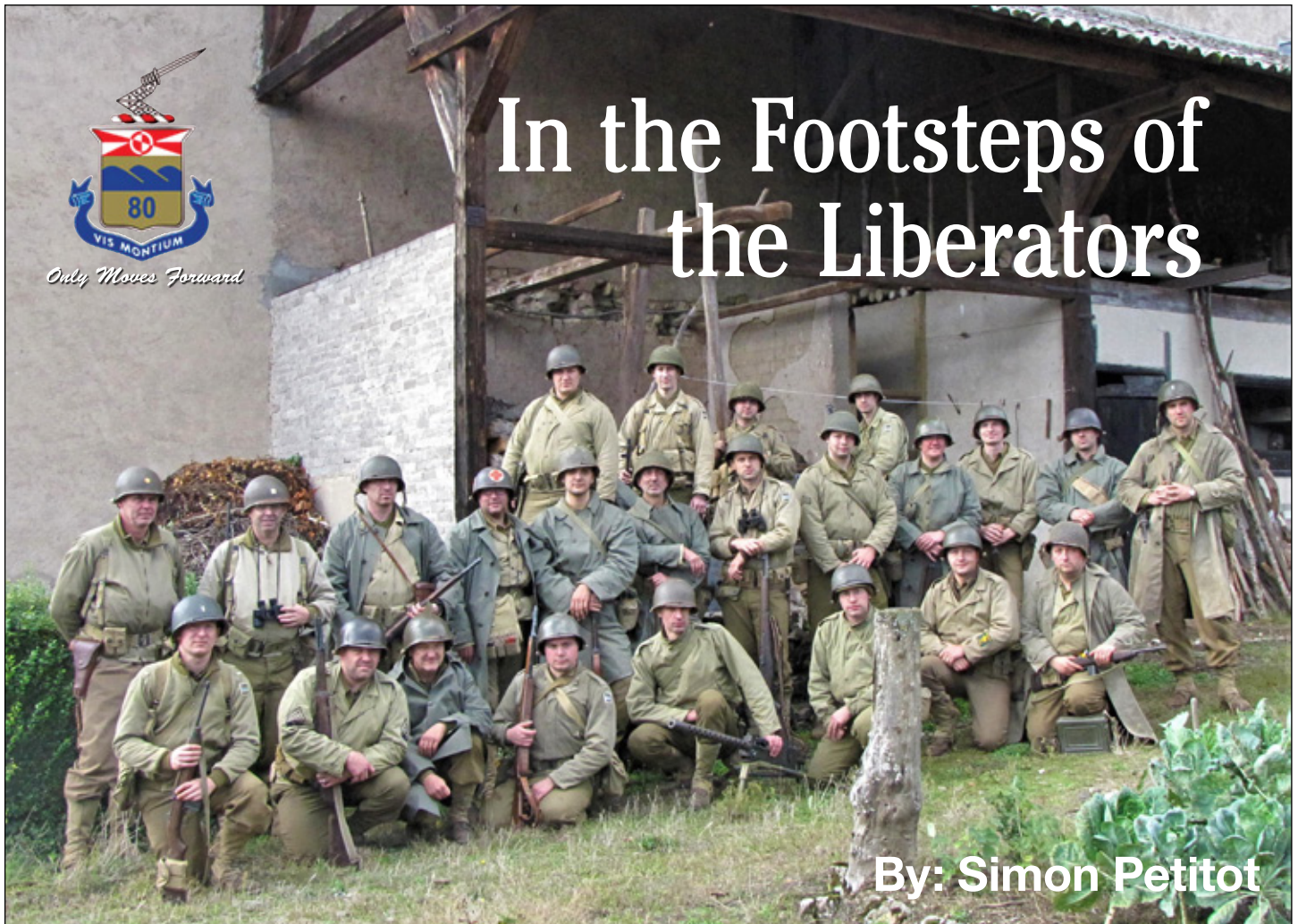
BLUE RIDGE



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In the Footsteps of the Liberators

By: Simon Petitot

LAST OCTOBER, 25 INDIVIDUALS met in Lorraine (France) for three days of total immersion in the shoes of an American soldier belonging to the 80th Infantry Division.

Organized by the Combat Infantry Badge Reenactor Group (CIB), an Association whose purpose is to represent the American soldier during the Second World War, this trip was held from October 2 to 4, 2020, near the villages of Chenicourt, Létrécourt and Abaucourt (11,8 miles East of Pont-à-Mousson).

Its objective was to represent part of the 2nd Battalion of the 319th Infantry Regiment, on the very places where it had established its positions and fought from mid-October 1944 to the beginning of November 1944, while the division waited west of the Seille River.

All the participants were divided into three categories: a rifle squad including a Medic, a BAR team and a .30 caliber machine gun team, the Headquarter Battalion and its Intelligence Section. Furthermore, three original US Army vehicles from WWII – Jeep Willys, Dodge 4x4 and GMC truck – have been grouped together to transport men and equipment. The GMC was generously provided by the Club Lorrain de Véhicules Militaires Alliés (CLVMA).

From October 30, to November 7, 1944, the 2nd Battalion of 319th Infantry Regiment occupied the Bois d'Aulnois, just west of Létrécourt. From that point, the Americans launched numerous reconnaissance patrols to determine enemy positions and strengths.

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It's hard to believe that we are still in the mist of COVID. It certainly has changed our lives and how we go about trying to be a little normal. But you should ask yourself, "What is normal?" We all live a different version of life. I guess for most of us the hardest part is not being able to visit and get together with family and friends. For a lot of us that are "huggers" it is very hard. I pray that all of you are staying well and have stayed away from anyone that you know that may be sick.

Thanksgiving has come and gone. It was celebrated a little different this year but we will have to accept that the new way of visiting is zooming in with family and friends. I hope that you were able to be with someone and enjoy some good cooking.

Christmas will be here soon and with that I ask that you continue to give thanks to our Lord and Savior for coming into our lives. Technology has taken over our way of communication so maybe we can get back to sending cards to let someone know we are thinking of them or give them a call. I'm sure it will be greatly appreciated.

The weather is getting colder so be careful when you go out. Bundle up and warm the car before heading out. Put some extra

items in the car just in case you get stranded. A couple bottles of water and maybe a blanket will help you out and it doesn't take up much space.

There is beauty in this world. All we have to do is look around. I grumble about all the holly leaves falling but when those cardinals' perch on a limb I am reminded that our loved ones are still watching over us. Take some time and look around and find something that is calming and peaceful. It will make your day.

I really need you to share your stories by sending them to me to put in the magazine. Believe me, we enjoy reading them. Regardless if you are the Veteran or not, send me something. Right an article about your family member or friend. Send a picture along with it.

Check your mailing label on the back of this edition of the magazine. It will tell you the date your dues are paid through. If it is a year other than 2021 or further out than you owe dues. Annual dues are \$20 per year. If your label shows Life, than you are good to go forever.

GOD bless each of you and remember the 80th "Only Moves Forward"!!

A Message from the Chaplain



Doug Knorr PNC

AS WE COME to the end of 2020 all I can say is, "What a year it has been!" The excitement of a new decade kicked off on January 1...However, in less than 60 days the excitement and hope of a new year changed to a year of great concern, national upheaval and a Pandemic... a Pandemic not just in America

but around the world and it changed everything for all of us. And it is my prayer that as you read this that you are doing well and looking forward to a better 2021!

Because of Covid-19, we all missed meeting together last August, for our annual reunion to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the official end of World War II. Like me, I am sure that you were also disappointed that the reunion was cancelled, but it was important to put everyone's safety first. As I write this letter, I have Good News... planning for the 2021 is moving forward and I will give you an initial update in this edition of the Blue Ridge.

With positive steps being made for a coronavirus vaccine and the elections behind us we can now turn our thoughts to two of my favorite times of the year... Thanksgiving and Christmas.

First, we know that being Thankful is the key to Joy and Peace in every person's life. But today, we live in a world where a heart of Thanksgiving has been replaced with expectation and a sense of entitlement; leaving people discontent and without joy or peace.

I would encourage you to consider that Thanksgiving should be celebrated more than just one day a year. God wants each of us to have His Joy, and Thankfulness each day. He tells us in Thessalonians 5:16-17, "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks

in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

As You Look back on the difficulties that our nation and you have experienced in 2020, it will be this "attitude of gratitude" (Thankfulness) that will bring you great joy and peace as we move into the coming year, knowing that God has it all under control.

In December, we celebrate Christmas the birth of Jesus the son of God, the Christ Child. This wonderful promise that God gave to Adam and Even in Genesis 3 and was continually prophesied throughout Gods Word is the greatest blessing of all! God became Man, Immanuel, God with Us.

The beloved scripture of John 3:16-17 says it best, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."

This is what I would like to leave with you today, God is With You... God is With All of Us! For that reason, you can know that He Loves You, He Cares for You and Seeks to have a relationship with You.

May this give us all a true heart of Thankfulness as we Celebrate God's Greatest Gift of Love, His Son Jesus Christ!

Wishing you a Blessed and a very Merry Christmas!

New Version of "God Bless the USA"

Pete Weisenberger

Friends, if you have not seen and listened to this video of Lee Greenwood and US soldiers and others singing "God Bless the USA", please stop what you're doing and listen. It is absolutely awesome and represents the best of America...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Japc8M8RQw>

Commander's Message



Bill Black
National Commander

WHAT A CRAZY YEAR we had in 2020. One for the books, for sure. Tammy and I sure missed seeing everyone this year at the annual reunion, but we're hopeful we'll all be back together in 2021! I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday this year. Regardless of the pandemic, we have much to be thankful for and I'm confident the coming year will bring back some "normalcy" to our lives. Fingers crossed.

I had the honor to make a quick trip to Fort Lee, Virginia back in the fall to attend the retirement celebration of Major General Bruce Hackett and Change of Command ceremony. MG Hackett was (and will continue to be) a tremendous supporter of the 80th Division Veterans Association. He has assured me he will

continue to be active in the Association during retirement. We are excited to build a strong working relationship with the new commanding general of the 80th Training Command, Brig. Gen. Tripp Bowles.

I wanted to give a shout out to Doug and Sally Knorr for the work they're doing on the 2021 reunion. So many plans were already in motion for 2020 when the pandemic hit and it required canceling, postponing and moving a lot of logistics to 2021. Thankfully, the hotel and vendors have been understanding and accommodating with all the changes. We look forward to seeing everyone August of 2021 in Richmond.

Currently, there are no plans to travel internationally to attend ceremonies and commemorations on behalf the 80th Division Veterans Association. We will have to take a wait and see approach this year. I haven't lost the "itch" to get back to the battlefields where my dad fought 76 years ago. Hopefully soon.

My prayer and hope for all of you is that you stay safe and healthy. We will get through all of this craziness very soon. Here's to a fantastic 2021!

Brigadier General Tripp Bowles Commanding General 80th Training Command (The Army School System)

BRIGADIER GENERAL Tripp Bowles serves as the commanding general of the 80th Training Command (The Army School System). His previous assignment was as the deputy commanding general of the 377th Theater Sustainment Command, and before that he served as the commander of the 86th Training Division based at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin.

A native of Richmond, Virginia, Brigadier General Bowles received his Bachelor of Arts degree and commission as an Army Infantry Officer from the Virginia Military Institute in 1987. He also holds a Master of Business Administration degree from Averett University.

He began his career as an infantry officer in 1988 with an assignment to the 2nd Infantry Division at Camp Howze Korea where he served as an assistant brigade operations officer and rifle platoon leader. He was later assigned to Fort Benning, Georgia where he served in various positions with the Infantry Center. In 1994, he transferred to the Virginia Army National Guard where he served in the 29th Infantry Division as a staff officer and rifle company commander before transferring to the Army Reserve four years later.

In the Army Reserve, he initially served as a team leader at Army Material Command's Logistics Civil Augmentation Program Unit. He subsequently worked as an interagency planner, headquarters commandant, and Director of Logistics for the U.S. Special Operations Command, Theater Special Operations Command in Norfolk, Virginia and various other locations.

After 2001, he supported operations in Central Asia as a member of a Special Operations Task Force while assigned as a liaison officer to and mobilized member of Joint Special Operations Command. He deployed to Tallil, Iraq during "the surge" as the commander of the 942nd Quartermaster under the 377th TSC during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Following assignment as a divi-

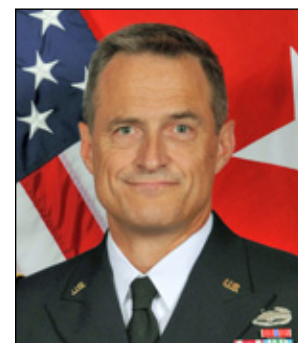
sion G-8 comptroller, Bowles stood up the 518th Sustainment Brigade under the 143d Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) while serving as its first deputy commander. He then was selected to command the Army Reserve Counter Terrorism Unit while serving as a counterterrorism bureau operations officer under the U.S. Department of State. He later assumed command of the 3d Brigade 98th Training Division.

Brigadier General Bowles is a joint qualified officer and graduate of the Army War College where he earned a Master of Strategic Studies degree. His additional military education includes the Infantry Basic and Advanced Officer Courses, the Quartermaster Officer Advanced Course and the Command and General Staff College.

His awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Joint Commendation Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Joint Service Achievement Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Global War on Terror Expeditionary Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Ranger Tab, Combat Action Badge, Expert Infantryman Badge, Parachutist Badge, Pathfinder Badge, Air Assault Badge, British Army Parachutist Wings, and the Department of State Meritorious Honor Award.

As a civilian, Brigadier General Bowles is a partner in the Miller Bowles and Horn Group of Truist Financial, located in Richmond, Virginia. He concentrates his practice on global portfolio strategy, investment management policy, and retirement income planning.

<https://www.usar.army.mil/Leadership/Article-View/Article/1963477/brigadier-general-tripp-bowles/>



Liberators... continued from page 1

Therefore, this wood was the starting point of this experience. The first day, on the edge of the forest, sheltered from the trees, “infantrymen” dug their foxholes while others men set up the two tents for the battalion command post. We spent the rest of the day in our “positions”. During the day, the temperature did not exceed 55,4°F, and fell to 46,4°F or less during the nights. The weather was particularly bad, with a lot of wind and rain, and therefore very similar to the weather the soldiers experienced in October 1944. The evening, we fell asleep fully dressed, in our raincoats, in the back of our foxhole.

Having rained all night, we woke up into deep mud. For breakfast, we had our K or C rations, specially recreated for the event. We then put on all our equipment to carry out a march of several hours across country, respecting as closely as possible the rules of tactics applied in the US Army in 1944. The Intelligence Section and its jeep scouted and then gave us the information on our route allowing us to cross a stream, the River Seille and other obstacles.

During most of the march, it did not stop raining. Fortunately, we had our raincoats which also protected us from the wind. It was without counting on our shoes, entirely wet and weighed down by the soil which stuck to the sole. Once again, we were thinking of the soldiers ...

We reached the village of Abaucourt when it was already dark and a storm was coming. So “our officers” went to ask a farmer in the village if we could use his barn, to shelter us from bad weather and to dry our clothes. He was pleasantly surprised and accepted, much to everyone’s joy! We parked the vehicles in front of the building, and rushed inside. Here, we slept on the straw, wrapped in our sleeping bags, some of which were still soaked from the previous night.

The next day, after very few hours of sleep, we resumed our walk for the rest of the day, crossing the village in which we were under the curious and impressed gaze of the inhabitants who stood behind their window – a bit like in October 1944.

During the last break, we were able to have our rations in the courtyard of a house in Létricourt, under some rays of sun which did us a lot of good! The shoes were finally dry, just in time for the end of this trip.

In any case, it was not about playing at war. This reenactment was carried out with the deepest respect for the men of the 80th Infantry Division and all the Americans soldiers who participated in WWII. This trip was a kind of experience, during which we tried to “get closer” to the reality of an American soldier on the front line even though we only approached 1% of what they got through for months.

It was also to pay tribute to the fighters of the Blue Ridge Division, who came from far away to liberate our French villages and who endured unimaginable to achieve it.

*76 years later, their memory
“Only Moves Forward!”*





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Photo credit: CIB Association. Combat Infantry Badge Reenactor Group Association

Christmas During the Battle of the Bulge

A.Z. Adkins, Jr. & Andy Adkins III

LT. A.Z. ADKINS, JR. was a .81 mortar section leader with Company H, 317th Infantry Regiment. This is his story. *You Can't Get Much Closer Than This – Combat with the 80th 'Blue Ridge' Division WWII Europe*, published by Casemate Publishers (2005).

After I had been back a couple of days [from an injury during the battle for Sivry, France], Field Marshall Karl Gerd von Rundstedt launched his big counteroffensive, now known as the Battle of the Bulge. The weather was bad—snow, freezing cold, and fog. Under this cover, the Germans moved three field armies and surprised the Allies, overran them, and headed for Antwerp to cut off our supply port and supply lines. German infantry and tanks attacked along a ninety-mile front in an effort to split Allied armies on the Western Front. This caused a “bulge” in our lines, and the battle to flatten out this bulge by troops for the next month was to become known as the Battle of the Bulge.

The Ardennes is not a distinctly defined region, more a series of rolling hills and thick patches of fir trees. The typical village in the Ardennes had a number of stone houses and narrow streets, all centered about a large road intersection, with the largest villages numbering between 2,500 and 4,000 people. The winter weather is often raw and cold, with heavy rainfall, deep snows, and biting winds. The days are short with early morning fog and mist that last well into the morning [1].

One of von Rundstedt's spearheads was headed for Luxembourg City with the objective of taking the city and the famous radio station known as Radio Luxembourg. The 80th Infantry Division was given the mission of holding Luxembourg City at all costs. I believe Patton said, “Hold to the last man.”

It had started snowing and was getting colder every day. On the night of December 19 we were loaded on trucks and within twenty-four hours had traveled 150 miles.

We rode in open vehicles. It was freezing cold and there was no way to keep warm. We had a few blankets and huddled close together to try to keep warm. There were no rest stops and no delays of any kind. When men had to relieve themselves, they did so off the back end of the truck, while trying to hang on at the same time.

We had heard rumors that command was going to send us some new-fangled shoe pacs that were supposed to keep our feet really warm. They were one-piece rubberized boots worn over several pairs of socks. But where were they? Why didn't we have them? We needed them now, not next summer.

It seemed as if we were in an endless stream of army vehicles. The 305th Engineers went first, checking the roads and bridges for mines. Division Military Police (MPs) acted as road guides to keep the convoy as closed up as possible so no one would get lost. Next came the trucks carrying the three infantry regiments (317th, 318th, and 319th), followed by the 702d Tank Battalion, the 633d Anti-Aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion, and the field artillery battalions (313th, 314th, 315th, and 905th). Last in the convoy were the service companies, headquarters units, and the division HQ. [2]

It was a good night with a full moon and good visibility. General Patton ordered us there as quickly as possible, so our convoy used full beams instead of just “cat eyes.” Headlights of the various vehicles had a covering over them so that when driving

at night, the lights pointed down at the road just in front of the vehicle, so that they couldn't be seen from above or from a distance. This resembled a “cat's eye.”

We dug in near Junglinster, Luxembourg, just north of Luxembourg City, about eight miles from the front line. There we found remnants of every outfit imaginable—a dozen from a rifle company, a few quartermaster trucks with their drivers, kitchen personnel, wiremen, artillerymen—all of them who had been separated from their outfits when the Germans launched their attack.

The next day, December 21, we moved twelve miles to Steinsel, Luxembourg, and into Division Reserve. We moved out at 10:00 A.M. and got to Steinsel about 5:00 that evening as it was getting dark. We needed billets for our men, so Lt. Saul Kadison (“Kad”) and I walked to a house and knocked on the door. A scared little man stuck his head out. Kad spoke, “We're Americans and need shelter for our men.” The man said, “You are Americans?” “Yes.” The man then smiled and said, “Come in, we have been expecting you and have some rooms ready.”

The man had a wife and two young sons. I hung up my dirty, torn field jacket and lay down on the floor for the night. The next morning when I reached for my jacket I noticed the tears had been mended and the dirt scrubbed away. I thanked the family for their hospitality and their kindness and wished them well.

The next day, December 22, we marched nine miles to Beringen. The German spearhead had penetrated quite a distance past our front and we were given the mission of hammering at the shoulder of the spearhead with the intention of cutting off a pocket. It had snowed overnight, and in a way, the fresh snow turned the dreary landscape into a beautiful picture-postcard scene.

At 3:15 P.M. on December 23, we started a cross-country attack on Bourschied, 2d Battalion leading, followed by the 1st and 3d Battalions. There was a foot of snow on the ground. It was still snowing and very cold. We had to cross open, rolling terrain, and the ground was frozen and very slippery.

We attacked with two companies abreast, G and F. It was rough going all afternoon. We had a lot of new men who had not learned the little tricks of warfare. A lot of them still carried their full field packs in addition to their heavy loads of machine guns, tripods, and pieces of mortar. As a result, many fell out or tried to fall out.

The 1st Battalion was attacking on our left. There was a bright moon that night that silhouetted us beautifully against the snow. We met no opposition until about 9:00 P.M. Then word came up from the tail of the column that a Kraut patrol estimated at fifty men was sneaking up on us. That was a combat patrol, most likely with automatic weapons that could cause us a lot of trouble.

Kad and I called Lt Col Boydston, our battalion commander, on our radio. He told us to stop and spread out. Some of our men were on the tail of the column, so Kad and I went back. Luck was with us. The Germans were caught between us and the 1st Battalion, so they decided that the best thing would be to get away. The boys killed five Germans and captured two of them. I got a German Walther P-38 pistol.

The terrain was very rugged, with a series of valleys and ravines running generally northwest by southeast that had to be

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crossed. It was necessary to cross the skyline to attack, and the Germans defended each reverse slope with machine gun fire.

Up ahead of us was a deep wooded gully. The colonel decided to send Company F around its right flank and Company G through it. About five hundred yards on our side of the gully was a little knoll. We had hoped to catch the Krauts off guard, but when we were almost to the gully a Kraut machine gunner opened up on us from the left flank. He fired in bursts of belts. Everybody hit the ground and quickly spread out.

Kad and I had been walking together. About fifty yards to our right flank was a wooded draw. We decided to crawl over there and keep a lookout. While we were in the process of lighting a cigarette beneath our overcoats, another Kraut opened up from across the draw. We decided to postpone our smoke.

Company G was getting ready to go into the wooded draw. The colonel wanted some mortar fire on the draw to clear out any Krauts who might be hiding. I had Sergeant Quinn set up a couple of guns behind the little knoll so that the muzzle blast wouldn't be seen. That's one disadvantage of shooting an 81mm mortar at night: the blast from the muzzle shoots into the air about thirty feet. I crawled up on the knoll and adjusted by turns.

We had a platoon of medium tanks with us. The colonel decided to send five of them into the woods with Company G. The mortars were to follow Company G in. The draw turned out to be much deeper than first anticipated. Captain Frank Caputo, who was now commanding Company G, got most of his company and three of the tanks into the draw before the Krauts opened up on him.

Kad and I were on our way down the steep, slippery banks when the Krauts opened up. Brother, they threw everything in the book at us. Direct-fire weapons opened up on the tanks. That was death, because the tanks were stopped cold. They had no room to maneuver. The slope of the gully was too steep for them to get back up on and the thick, scrubby trees kept them from moving ahead. They were pinned down like ducks in a shooting gallery.

Frank Caputo's boys were closely packed together, catching hell, too. When the situation became hopeless, we pulled back behind the little knoll. The two tanks that went down with Frank were knocked out, but some of the crewmen managed to get out okay.

We formed a perimeter defense around the little knoll. The cold was unbearable. We were in the open and had nothing to break the fierce wind that was blowing. We helped the wounded the best we could and saw to it that they were taken back to the aid station.

We tried to dig in the mortars, but that was impossible. The first foot or so of earth was frozen, and below that was water. The engineers helped us with our holes. We'd shoot a couple of rifle rounds into the frozen ground, then use explosives to get down into the earth. From there we would dig deeper with our shovels and entrenching tools.

Sleep was impossible because of the cold. I lay down beside a tank with Lt Bill Mounts and Kad. Mounts had come overseas as a company H's executive officer. He had been wounded in northern France and had rejoined the company while I took my turn in the hospital. It was about 3:00 A.M., and it was still too cold to sleep. After a while I tried to get up but found that my coat was frozen to the ground, so I had to wake Kad to help me get up.

When daylight came on Christmas Eve Day, the cold was unbearable beyond description. We had no communications with Regiment. We were just outside the town of Welscheid. Our wires were out and none of our radios would work. We knew the Krauts often would cut the wire and wait for someone to come out to fix

it, then either take him prisoner or ambush him. We had no natural cover, so we kept digging in. This helped us keep warm while we were waiting on orders from regiment. We saw a broken down farm house to our left rear, out in the open. Around it were five tank destroyers, and inside the building were the crews and part of our headquarters company. Some of our troops were partially dug in between us and the building.

The best foxholes are the ones where you dig a shelf on the sides and deep enough so that if it rains, you won't have to sit in the water. The holes were usually rectangular, and under the best conditions four or five feet deep, two or three feet wide by six feet long. Most of the time, however, the foxholes we dug were just holes in the ground because we were so tired.

About mid-morning, the Krauts opened up on the parked tank destroyers with their antitank gun. It was a pitiful, hopeless sight. The Krauts not only pounded the TDs, they also shot up the house where the troops were staying. We sat and watched, unable to do anything.

The crews ran for their TDs and tried to back them up the slope to some cover. While they were in the process, a Kraut tank on the ridge about five hundred yards to our right flank opened up on them, too. The TDs and the farm house were caught in the cross fire of two Kraut direct-fire guns.

Two of the TDs were knocked out as they tried to back over the slope to safety. Some of the crewmen got out, but others didn't. The helpless TDs rolled down the slope in flames. Later, one of the TDs managed to get to cover, poke its gun over the crest of a hill and knock out the Kraut tank to our right flank. The Krauts started pounding the farm house. Some of the men got away, others didn't. Captain Jim Mullins, the battalion executive officer, got hit.

After a little while a Kraut automatic rifleman opened up on the boys who were desperately trying to dig in between us and the farm house. It was suicide for them to move. Some of them tried to come back to where we were behind the little knoll, but only a few of them reached us. Several were killed.

Among them were our artillery liaison captain and a guy named "Froggy" who had come overseas with Company G. The reason for his nickname was because of his deep voice. I remember one day we were sitting on the deck of our ship off the coast of Utah Beach. Company G was having a bull session and Froggy was called upon to make a speech. After shooting the bull for a little while he became serious. He told his buddies that some of them would not see their home again and for those that did get home not to forget their buddies who lay dead on enemy soil. That was a very sobering speech.

The Krauts started throwing mortars at us. That was rough, because we were close together in the open and had little cover. Why didn't Regiment get off their butts and tell us something besides, "Hold what you've got."

We couldn't see who was shooting at us, but we threw lead into the woods to try to keep the Krauts quiet while our boys out in the open worked their way back behind the knoll.

Our rations had run out the day before and we were getting hungry. It was cold and the wind kept blowing snow all over the place, making it hard to see.

I kind of suggested to the colonel that we pull back a little piece so we could spread out. He said "Nothing doing. I'm staying here until Regiment tells me what they want next." Later that afternoon we received orders to pull back about half a mile and dig in on the forward slope of a small hill.

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Max Kelly, who was now commanding Company F, was out ahead of us, and Bill Butz was with them. They were cut off. The colonel sent Lt Michael Damkowitch, Jr., from Company G, out to them several times to tell Max he could sneak back or fight his way back. About 5:00 that evening, Max decided to sneak back. I was glad to see Bill. We found out later from S-2 that there was an estimated five hundred enemy troops on three sides of us. I sure am glad I didn't know that at the time.

We moved out when darkness set in. The moon shone brightly and it was very cold. We had frozen C-rations and frozen blankets waiting for us. Kad and I got the mortars placed and then tried to figure out some way of heating our frozen rations. There was a burning farm house nearby, so we thawed our rations there, then we decided to see if we could get some sleep.

We found 1st Sergeant Bloodworth and Lt Bill Mounts huddled in a chicken coop. It was the only thing left standing on the farm. They had a little fire going, and chickens were roosting. Between the smell, the smoke, and the cramped conditions, it was almost impossible to breathe, so Kad and I moved outside.

It was Christmas Day. At first light, we got orders to saddle up and move back. We were to dig in on the high ground about a mile north of Niederfeulen. We were in regimental reserve while 1st and 3d battalions attacked Kehmen. What a way to start Christmas Day. The head of our column moved slowly and, as a result, the men began to bunch up. The Krauts noticed this opportunity and opened up on us with artillery as we moved up the side of a hill. They were firing screaming meemies—large-caliber rounds fired in clusters. We heard the rockets coming, but there was little we could do other than spread out and run like hell. There was no cover around.

The German Nebelwerfer was equipped with five rockets. Due to its design, the rocket made a screaming sound as it flew through the air. They used high explosives but were not very accurate. They would, however, scare the crap out of you. Hence the name “screaming meemies.”

Several men were hit. Some of the men hit the ground and wanted to stay there. That would have been suicide, but it was tough to get them up and keep them moving. When we got over the top of the hill and out of sight, the Krauts stopped shooting at us.

We were to set up the 81s behind Company G. A small patch of woods was near our proposed position. We had to search and clear that area first. We found two dead frozen Krauts who had been killed during the first part of the breakthrough. About two hundred yards from the guns was a huge house.

It was Christmas Day. Kad and I were determined to get our men warm. We went to investigate the house and found that an antiaircraft outfit had been there before the breakthrough and, from the equipment and supplies left behind, it was easy to see that they had moved out in a hurry.

We left a skeleton crew with the mortars and moved the rest of the men into the house. The company and battalion CPs were in Niederfeulen, so I went to see Bill Mounts to find out what was cooking. Junior, my runner, went with me. The Krauts were shelling the town and it was difficult to get around, but we finally found Bill. He was sitting in the cellar of a house, eating apples.

When you're within range of German artillery, you want to be in the cellar. In many cases, the first and second floors had been blown away, but even if they weren't, they were inviting targets for German artillery. Anyone other than a front-line battle infantryman walking into one of those cellars would immediately consider it uninhabitable. It smelled bad—the air was a mixture of

sweat, brick dust, soot, cigarette smoke, and oftentimes urine. It would not be breathable by a normal human being. But, every infantryman who was lucky enough to find one of those cellars thought it the most desirable place on earth. They were secure from all but a direct artillery hit. Most important, they were dry and out of the direct weather. The exhausted trooper could push some straw into a corner, lie down, and plunge into a deep sleep, completely relaxed. [3]

As we walked up, Bill Mounts said, “Sit down and rest your weary bones. Have an apple.” My feet were swollen and hurt like hell, but so did everybody else's, so I couldn't complain. Bill had talked with the colonel and said that nothing was brewing, that we were to sit tight and wait for orders. He also told me that the kitchen was going to bring us up a real Christmas dinner with all the trimmings.

On our way back to our platoon, Junior and I saw the dead bodies of our men who had been killed the day before. They had been retrieved from the battlefield and were laid out in neat rows in the snow. Some of them were covered with blankets, others were not. Those with no cover over them looked to the sky with fixed dead eyes that seemed to ask, “Is this my Christmas present?”

When I got back, Kad had the men and the mortars all straightened out and had set up a roadblock about five hundred yards down the road that ran by our house. The men were tired and gloomy, their spirits were low, and their feet hurt. When I told them about the Christmas dinner with all the trimmings, they all brightened up a little.

About 1:00 P.M. one of our cooks brought us our Christmas dinner. We had turkey and cranberry sauce with all the trimmings, and all you could eat, too. I thought about the 1st and 3d battalions. They had moved out to attack Kehmen at daylight. I hoped they might get some relief and warm food this Christmas Day.

Like most veterans, my father wrote home when he could and never “told it like it was.” In a letter to his parents, dated December 26, 1944, my father wrote:

Tuesday 26 Dec. 44

Luxembourg

Dearest Mom & Dad,

Thought about you yesterday & was in hopes that Hazel & Lois were able to spend Christmas with you. My Christmas was very enjoyable under the circumstances. My men & I spent our time indoors in a nice big Chateau where we had fires. We had turkey with all the trimmings for dinner. Our kitchen fixed it for us. My men got lots of packages & letters. I still haven't received any mail but eventually it will catch up with me.

Am enclosing a few clippings you can put them away for me.

The scenery here is beautiful. Very hilly & the ground covered with snow. I'm taking some pictures. The people are very friendly and do all they can do to help us.

I'm feeling swell & am happy.

Devotedly,

Andy

[1] Doubler, Michael D., *Closing with the Enemy*, (Lawrence, KS, University of Kansas Press, 1994).

[2] Murrell, Robert T., *Stories of the Men of the 80th Infantry Division World War Two: Relief of the Besieged U.S. Troops in Bastogne* by Richard Raddock, 319th Inf Medic Bn Company C 80th Division (Oakmont, PA, 2001).

[3] Ambrose, Stephen E., *Citizen Soldiers* (New York, Touchstone, 1997).

A Combat Engineer With Patton's Army

By: Lois Lembo & Leon Reed

Sgt. (later Lt) Frank Lembo was a squad leader (later platoon commander) in B Company of the 305th Engineers. Like many World War II frontline veterans, Frank was reticent about discussing his experiences, confining his "war stories" to some light-hearted reminiscences like being responsible for the division's July 4, 1945, fireworks show in Kaufbeuren, Bavaria.

But while he was in the army, Frank wrote often to his fiancé, Betty Craig, and Betty kept every one of those letters. A new book by Frank and Betty's daughter, *A Combat Engineer with Patton's Army: The Fight Across Europe With the 80th 'Blue Ridge' Division in World War II*, tells the story of the engineers and the broader story of the 80th Division's advance across Europe in 1944 and 1945. Frank described the joys and frustrations of GI life; the steady drone of mine-clearing and other engineering work; the occasional terror of contested river crossings; the sad loss of buddies; and his hopes for a peaceful future with the woman he loved.



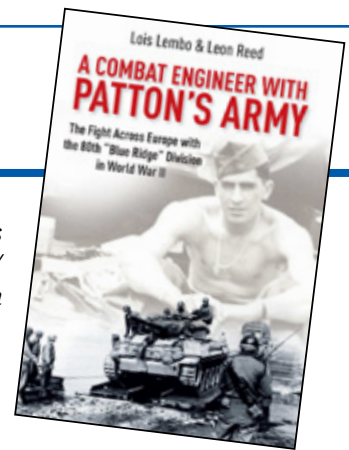
(left)
*Frank and his fiancé,
Betty Craig*

(below)
*Frank's squad in front of
"Lem's Junk,"
his command truck.*



During the weeklong romp across France after German resistance in Normandy collapsed, he described the joy of French citizens as Third Army barreled through: "This march to Berlin has its good moments. The French are as happy as can be, and they keep throwing wine bottles and eggs at us... The other day our platoon was working where a bridge was blown out and we got about 160 eggs. They sure come in handy for breakfast." The mood was contagious and the boys enjoyed this ride: "The boys were in a painting mood yesterday and painted all our names on the trucks, and also since it's about to fall apart they named it 'Lem's Junk.' I imagine I'll catch hell for it all, but I don't care because I like to see and keep them in a good mood."

*New book describes
work of 305th Engineers /
80th Division*



But by mid-October, the weather worsened and combat intensified. Two days after the division's bloodiest day of the war, he wrote, "Things have been pretty rough the past few days and I've lost some very good friends. It hurts deep when your own buddies go. Well it's no sense in keeping thinking about them, may the dead rest in peace and the wounded get well again." He added, "No, I can't say when this will be over with. We fight yard-by-yard now and then fight to hold every yard. Maybe something will break one of these days, but the going is going to be slow."

Mine clearing and scouting were the engineers' most frequent activities, but river crossings were the most stressful periods. He described the early November action at the Seille River. "Things were hot on and off, the night we crossed a river was about the hottest, but Heine threw his shells about 50 yards too far and that saved us. They shelled us out when we put a vehicle bridge in but later on we returned and got it in. If you could see my truck going to the river you'd thought we were going to a picnic, about twenty men hanging on a rubber float hanging on top and rolling merrily along. That night we slept in a barn, and then spent the next day working in a river getting a bridge out from under water and some guns out. I was in the damn water for eight hours and shook about 20 pounds off."

Following the Seille crossing in early November, the 80th struggled through the mud and rains of the Lorraine campaign. This division had orders to attack into Germany when the German Ardennes offensive changed everything. On Christmas Eve, 1944, after Third Army's 150 mile gallop north to close the southern end of the "Bulge," Frank's platoon was assigned to a special task force to relieve the siege of Bastogne. On December 27, he wrote, "We're up here (?) with some infantry and armor ... The battle that was going on Christmas Day is still going on in increasing fury. I guess something has got to give soon, and I doubt it will be us. I guess the damn war will never end and no doubt you people back home got a severe jolt."

After the siege was lifted and he had returned to the 80th, Frank reflected on the situation. The surprise German offensive had rattled the GIs as well as the people on the homefront. Frank wrote, "From the looks of things we'll have to fight our way right to Berlin, and I hope we burn that path soon. We all thought this war was over, and I guess the only way to get it over with is to destroy Germany, her soldiers, her civilians, and the ground they live on."

With the New Year, Frank's thoughts increasingly turned toward home: "New Years evening ... and my fondest hope now is this coming year we will be able to get back together again. Today was a simple GI day for us here, we finished a bridge we started yesterday and late in the afternoon we had a turkey dinner."



(above) Bridge built on New Year's Day 1945 by B Company
(Frank Lembo)

Perhaps it was the New Year that led Frank to reflect on his experiences since leaving the States. On January 2nd, he wrote,

"I was just thinking about that last day together that we had, and how perfect it was, and how long a way I've come since then. I can remember that boat ride to England, our trip across the Channel, going into action and suffering a thousand deaths when we heard our first artillery shell, the mad dash across France—a ride with its wine, flowers, ripe tomatoes and eggs—the storming of our first river and the fighting beyond, Christmas in Belgium, New Year in Luxembourg. . . . Yes we've come a long way. We're a little tired, a little older, and a little bitter. We fight hoping each battle is the last one with thoughts of going home and enjoying a peaceful life. Our thoughts run to our sweethearts who we long for, each letter being a five-minute furlough with the one you love—yes darling just thinking—"

At this point, the war in Europe still had five months to go. Frank led his men through the Spring 1945 offensives and the hazards of occupation duty, returning home and marrying his sweetheart.

WWI Historians Report

by Lee S. Anthony, PNC & Historian

There is a lot of activity in the History area at this time. Every week, there are requests for information and/or pictures relating to family WWI history. I am assisting one friend with a shadow box, and obtaining materials to be displayed therein.

Our inventory of collection items is still ongoing. (Will it ever be complete?) There are interesting and conflicting theories regarding helmet logos. We have completed the display of unit pictures in the barn. However, we still need to obtain more unit photos, and rosters of the individuals in the pictures.

We are looking forward to working with the 80th HQ to build up a museum in their HQ building. It should be a great project.

Locally, we are in contact with the "Old Southwest" organization in Roanoke to enhance the Argonne Circle by replacing a vandalized display, and increasing the public awareness of the facility. We need to arrange for school children to see this display, and to hear the story behind the Meuse-Argonne battle.

Several people have now visited the collection in the barn; we are still working to better organize and display the artifacts.

Frank and Betty had three children and their love story continued until Frank's passing in January 2006, a few weeks short of their 60th anniversary.

George Patton is renowned for his daring tank thrusts and rapid movement, but the many rivers and obstacles his Third Army encountered crossing Europe required engineers spearheading his advance. A Combat Engineer with Patton's Army is the untold story of Frank Lembo, one of Patton's men who helped move the American command in the battle of Argentan in the Normandy Campaign, in the high-speed pursuit of the German Wehrmacht eastward across France, and in the brutal battles waged during the Battle of the Bulge and during the final combats along the borders of the collapsing Reich.

Throughout his time in Europe Lembo maintained a running commentary of his experiences with Betty Craig, his fiancé and future wife. This extensive correspondence provides a unique eyewitness view of the life and work of a combat engineer under wartime conditions. As a squad (and later platoon) leader, Frank and his comrades cleared mines, conducted reconnaissance behind enemy lines, built bridges, and performed other tasks necessary to support the movement of the 317th, 318th, and 319th Infantry Regiments of the Blue Ridge Division—Patton's workhorses, if not his glamour boys.

About the Authors: Lois Lembo is the daughter of 80th division veteran Frank Lembo and a retired defense consultant who specialized in wargames and technology analysis. Leon Reed was a congressional aide and U.S. History teacher. They live in Gettysburg and have three children and four grandchildren.

WWII Historians Report

by Andy Adkins

Over the past few months, I continue to receive research requests from both family members of 80th Division veterans (WWII) as well as overseas researchers and collectors. It's amazing to me that both historians and re-enactors look for information about our courageous veterans. I've personally worked with researchers from Belgium, France, Germany, and most recently, Czechoslovakia. Fortunately, with the help of other 80th DVA historians, we've been able to find information for them.

Perhaps the most exciting news I have to share is that we now have a "searchable" document (PDF spreadsheet) to assist with locating 80th Division veterans who received awards, including Silver Stars, Bronze Stars, and Purple Hearts. This downloadable document is found on the "General Orders" page of the 80th Division website: www.80thdivision.com. Note that we do not have ALL General Orders for the 80th Division soldiers, but last I checked, I have listing for over 17,300.

With the help of John Luthman, we spent hours transcribing the Soldier's name, Rank, General Order # & Date, and the date of the event. In many cases, we've been able to identify the unit of the soldier. We still have a ways to go, but in this current COVID quarantine environment, I'm slowly but steadily working my way through Morning Reports trying to identify each soldier's unit. I update the online spreadsheet every month or so.

The 2021 Reunion of the 80th Division Veterans Association

August 5-8 In Richmond, Va. • Douglas Knorr, PNC, Chaplain and 2021 Reunion Chairman

The 80th Division Veterans Association reunion is being planned for August 5-8, 2021 in Richmond VA. Our host hotel for the reunion is the DoubleTree by Hilton Richmond Midlothian. We are looking forward to a great time of reuniting with friends, sharing memories, making new friends as well as taking care of the business of the association.

Since we were unable to meet in 2020 we look forward to an evening of celebration for the 75th Year Anniversary of the End of WWII. As part of this celebration we are putting together, a “commemorative” edition of the reunion program filled with photos of our 80th Division WWII veterans. IN order to accomplish this tribute, we need your help in collecting photos. Please send your photos (300 dpi minimum) with name and unit affiliation no later than June 1, 2021 to my email at dougk@knorrmktg.com or send a copy of the photo to my home address listed below. (Let us know if you need your photo returned and we will be happy to do so.)

We will be pre-selling Commemorative programs for \$7.50 each for those wanting extra copies and especially those who are unable to attend. When you register in the coming months, please mark how many you want when you send in your registration.

More detailed information regarding the reunion and speakers will be announced along with reservation information in the next edition of the Blue Ridge. We are also working to hold a host of breakouts that will speak to all 80th Division encounters from World War I, World War II, Post WWII, to the Global War on Terror.

Again, don't forget to send your WWII veterans picture to be included in the special commemorative reunion program.

May God Bless You and May God Bless America!

Douglas Knorr, PNC, Chaplain & 2021 Reunion Chairman

Address: Mr. Doug Knorr / 1609 Dracka Rd. / Traverse City, MI 49685

Mobile 231.218.1747 / Dougk@KnorrMarketing.Com

From Out of the Past...

Exerpts from WWII histories by Robert T. Murrell (Last published in the Winter 2001 issue.)

The Myth of the Redoubt

Under General Eisenhower's plan to break out of the Rhine bridgeheads and encircle the Ruhr—the plan that had served as a blueprint for the spectacular dash to the ELBE—the role assigned General Dever's 6th Army Group was to protect the 12th Army Group's right flank. With the Third Army swinging almost due north toward Kassel, General Patch's Seventh Army from its RHINE bridgehead near Worms would have to drive northeast with a left boundary anchored on the Hohe Rhone, the wooded hills forming the southeastern wall of the Fulda Gap.

Despite the northeastern orientation, General Devers was aware that as the southernmost Allied Forces, his 6th Army Group also would be responsible eventually for clearing southern Germany and dealing with an alleged last-ditch hold-out position the Nazis might be planning in the Alpine region of southern Germany and western Austria. It was called variously the Alpine Redoubt or National Redoubt.

Most Allied intelligence officers discounted the likelihood of any formidable, self-contained fortress in the Alps, mainly because of limited agricultural and industrial resources in the region. Yet they did see the possibility of remnants of the German Army retiring to the Alps for a final suicidal stand. Future generations then might claim, noted General Eisenhower's chief of intelligence, Major General Kenneth W. D. Strong that National Socialism and the German nation had never surrendered.

In late March the Seventh Army G-2 Colonel William W. Quinn, gave some substance to various reports of German defense preparations in the Alps. Although Colonel Quinn thought many of

the reports fanciful and exaggerated, enough hard evidence existed, he concluded, to indicate that Hitler was consciously planning a final stand there.

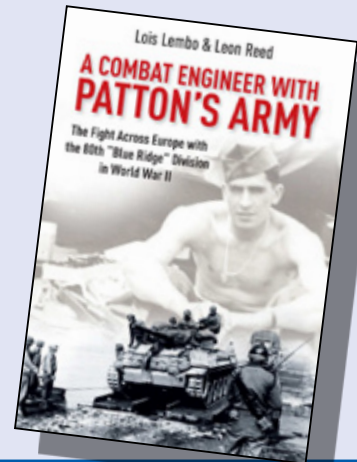
Only six days, later on the last day of March, so rapidly did the Western Front crumble that the 6th Army Group G-2, Brig. General Eugene L. Harrison, foresaw an end to any German hopes of a genuine redoubt. Denied any respite after falling back behind the Rhine in the wake of the staggering defeat in the Saar-Palatinate, General Hausser's Army Group G had proved incapable of containing any Allied bridgehead and had failed to close the corridor leading northeast to Kassel, thereby sealing the fate of neighboring Army Group B in the Ruhr. Since the greatest threat to German integrity was the thrust to encircle the Ruhr, Army Group G could count on no priority for reinforcement.

Army Group G's foundering Seventh Army, General Harrison noted, had not enough strength to re-establish contact with Army Group B. In dire need of a through rebuilding, a First Army already threatened by Rhine crossings of the Seventh U.S. Army and First French Army has to take on the job of preventing further expansion of the Oppenheim bridgehead. Reduced almost to a training command after withdrawing from the Colmar pocket, the Nineteenth Army (responsible directly to Ob West rather than to Army Group G) was holding some 100 miles of front along the Rhine covering the Black Forest and could only withdraw or await envelopment from flank or rear. The present commander of the Nineteenth Army was a former hear of the Seventh Army, General Brandenberger, who had been summarily relieved in February for failing to hold in the Eifel.

AVAILABLE FROM:

Lois Lembo and Leon Reed
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Gettysburg, PA 17325

Special 80th Division price: \$25, FREE shipping
(SEE ARTICLE ON PAGES 10 & 11)



History of the 80th Division Books by MAJ(R) Gary Schreckengost

STILL THINKING THAT the division hasn't gotten its due for its exploits during the Great War (1917-18), I have endeavored to convert my historical fiction of the 80th Division in WWI into a scholarly three-volume non-fiction, drawing from all known sources, including the articles in The Service Magazine, the new photos provided to the Association, diaries, official records, the Stultz book, etc. These volumes, entitled *Always Move Forward! The 80th Division in WWI*, should be ready for publication next year, all proceeds, as usual, going to the Association. That said, I've converted three rare, out-of-print books that may be of interest:

- ▶ *The History of the 315th Artillery (Heavy)* / \$9.99
- ▶ *World War I Diary of Lt. John McElroy, 315th Artillery (Heavy), 80th Division, A.E.F.* / \$6.99
- ▶ *The Memoirs of Hunter Liggett* / \$9.99

The 313th Arty (L) has been re-published by Forgotten Books and it's fantastic and the 314th Arty has also been reprinted, although its only strength is its daily "Combat Diary."



Good War, Great Men.

The 313th Machine Gun Battalion of World War I

Available on Amazon.com. Paperback: 336 pages. Price \$16.95
ISBN-10:0692951024 ISBN-13:978-0692951026

80th Division in Iraq:

Iraqi Army Advisors in Action, 2005-06

by Gary Schreckengost and John McLaren
ISBN-10: 1523733640 / Available on Amazon.com hard copy or e-book.

ONE HELL of a WAR

by MAJ Dean Dominique, USA (Ret) and COL James Hayes, USA (Ret)
From Amazon: www.tinyurl.com/317WWII / More information: www.WoundedWarriorPublications.com
30% discount for 80th Division Veterans Association members at www.createspace.com/4789517
apply Discount Code XPC47KYZ.



The last date I have entered a name is October 31, 2020

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Lucie Eicher

Lucie Eicher passed away Mar 8, 2020. If you had the pleasure of attending American Luxembourg Friendship Week you probably remember going to Mitchi's Tavern where she and her family prepared a delicious meal for all of us. Also, that is the site where the US Flag is raised daily in memory of Day Turner.

TAPS

Atkinson, MSG(R) Gene 80th Div Band Dinwiddie, VA DOD: Apr 26, 2020 Rptd by: Richmond Times Dispatch	Lane, SSG(R) Kenneth 2-319 3737 Hughes Drive Kingsport, TN 37660 DOD: Jun 12, 2020 Rptd by: MSG(R) Terry Moore
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