

# BLUE RIDGE

The Service Magazine  
Volume 88, Number 353

Spring - 2007  
Issue 1

80th Infantry  
Blue Ridge Division




*Only Moves Forward*

<b>A.E.F.</b>	<b>E.T.O.</b>
1917-1919	1942-1946
Artois-Picardy	Northern France
St. Mihiel	Ardennes
Meuse-Argonne	Rhineland
Battle Deaths 1232	Central Europe
Casualties 5000	Battle Deaths 3,480
	Casualties 12,484

In remembrance of our 80th Division comrades  
who died and served in WWI and WWII

Official Publication of the 80th Division Veterans Association, Inc.  
Deadline for the next issue is September 1, 2007



**Eightieth Division**  
**Veterans Association**

**BLUE RIDGE**  
**The Service Magazine**

The official quarterly publication by the 80th Division Veterans Association.  
 (Incorporated as a not-for-profit organization in the State of Pennsylvania).

**SECRETARY/EDITOR Robert T. Murrell**  
 630 Pennsylvania Ave., Oakmont, PA 15139-1574  
 412-828-7651 Fax: 412-828-7651 e-mail: divinf801@verizon.net

*All communications, including articles, photos, news items for publication, changes of address, dues remittances and death notices should be addressed to the Secretary/Editor.*

**NATIONAL OFFICERS 2005-2006**

**NATIONAL COMMANDER**

**PNC Robert H. Burrows (Hq-317)**  
 P.O. Box 453 Bloomfield, CO 80038-0453 Phone 303-439-2198

**SR. VICE COMMANDER**

**Elmer G. Dorsten (A-318)**  
 208 N. Elm Street Coldwater, OH 45828-1164 Phone 419-678-2618

**2ND VICE COMMANDER**

**Eugene O'Neil (C-319)**  
 4718 Col Darnell Place Upper Maroboro, MD 20772-2801  
 Phone 301-617-1793

**3RD VICE COMMANDER**

**Sheldon M Stanley (L-318)**  
 3905 Arthur Street NE Columbia Hts, MN 55421-4135  
 Phone 763-788-0062

Secretary/Editor	<b>Robert T. Murrell (M-318)</b>
630 Pennsylvania Ave., Oakmont, PA 15139-1574, ph: 412-828-7651	
Chaplain	<b>PNC Angelo J. Barone (L-317)</b>
Judge Advocate	<b>Dempsey J. Prappas (317-AT)</b>
Historian	<b>Robert T. Murrell (M-318)</b>
Service Officer	<b>Felix J. Cistolo (G-317)</b>
Flag Sergeant	
Color Sergeant	
Sergeant-at-Arms	<b>Don Davis (K-319)</b>
Public Affairs Officer	<b>George V. West (C-318)</b>
Division Photographer	<b>Tom Pappas (F-318)</b>

**TRUSTEES**

1 Year; Robert W. Smith (K-317)  
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 3 Years Walter W. Spangler (A-319)

**2 Year**

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 Burt R. Marsh (M-319)  
 PNC Russell P. Sick (305 Eng)

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**3 Year**

Gerald V. Myers (G-317)  
 Laverne J. Schock (F-317)  
 Tom Pappas (F-318)



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## COMMANDER'S REPORT

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It has been an honor to serve this past year as your commander.

At our 88th reunion in Dayton, Ohio 15-18 August 2007 we will be deliberating acceptance of the 80th Division IT into our Association as voting and non-voting members.

We need everyone possible to attend as this meeting is critical in determining whether we terminate our Association in a very short time due to our age and failing health, or have our legacy carried on by the 80th soldiers who are now fighting terrorist around the world.

Elmer has a good program lined up. Naturally the continued good camaraderie will apply!

See you in Ohio,

PNC Robert H. Burrows (Hq-317)

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## IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY

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**PLEASE SEND IN YOUR CHANGE OF ADDRESS WHEN YOU MOVE!**

The Post Office charges \$1.56 per returned newsletter. This past Issue of the Blue Ridge cost \$54.60 in address correction returns.

**PLEASE USE THE MEMBERSHIP FORM ON THE INSIDE BACK COVER TO SEND IN YOUR CHANGE OF ADDRESS.**

As of this issue, I am no longer having undeliverable newsletters returned to me. So don't miss an issue! Send me your address change!

With the Association losing men who have passed on, the number of Life Members now exceeds the number of yearly members. There are quite a few of you who are more than 3 years overdue. Executive Council in 1998 voted to drop all those over three years. I must have something toward your dues or you will be dropped. Look on the BACK cover to see when you last paid dues.

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## LIFE PLUS CLUB 2006-2007

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If you have sent in money and I omitted your name, let me know so I may give you credit. Last date I have entered a name 1 June 2007.

Anon	I-318
Bowman, Mrs. Betty In Memory of her husband Henry	80th QM
Bunn, I.B.	305 Meds
Garnett, Fred T.	80th Signal
Merritt, Kerry G.	F-319
Reber, Sydney A.	Dv Hq SpTr
Shoemaker, Howard	I-317
Smith, Robert W.	K-317
VanCourt, James F.	H-317

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## McBRIDE SCHOLARSHIP FUND

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If you have sent in money and I have omitted your name please let me know so I may give you credit. Last date I have entered a name 1 June 2007.

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## MEMORIAL FUND

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If you have sent in money and I have omitted your name please let me know so I may give you credit. Last date I have entered a name 1 June 2007.

Mansberger, Burl W. B-318

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## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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Clarence E. Brown M-317  
PO Box 911  
Parowan, UT 84761-0911

William R. Davis 3d Bn Hq 319  
881 Mystic Drive  
Jacksonville, FL 32225

Debra Hindlemann Webster  
5330 Jewell Avenue  
Denver, CO 80222-3940  
Associate Dv Hq Art

Joseph G. Morth F-317  
862 Egypt Road  
Franklin, PA 16323-8404

Albert J. Velasquez  
2326 Woodstock Place  
Bloomington, IN 47401-6179  
317 Associate

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## THE 80th IN EUROPE

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The 80th is well represented this year both in the visit of Dr. Anthony to France along with others and the visit of several going to Luxembourg. It is wished all will enjoy the trip and stay healthy all the while.

**Additional copies of the MEMORIAL NEWSLETTER:  
DEDICATION ISSUE are available. Send \$5 to Robert Murrell, Editor,  
630 Pennsylvania Ave., Oakmont, PA 15139-1574**

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# ODDS N' ENDS

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## THE OLD MAN ON AGING

A distraught senior citizen phoned her doctor's office. "Is it true," she wanted to know, "that the medication you prescribed has to be taken for the rest of my life?" "Yes, I'm afraid so," the doctor told her. There was a moment of silence before the senior lady replied, I'm wondering then, just how serious is my condition. The prescription is marked: "NO REFILLS'."

Some people try to turn back their odometers. Not me! I want people to know why I look this way. I've traveled a long way and some of the roads weren't paved. Ask any Veteran.

An older gentleman awaiting surgery insisted that his son, a renowned surgeon, perform the operation. As he was about to get the anesthesia he asked to speak with his son. "Yes, Dad, what is it?' Don't be nervous son. Do your best and remember, if it doesn't go well, if something happens to me, your mother is going to live with you and your wife."

## Can you name...?

- 1-** The only President born on the 4th July.
- 2-** The President who is buried with his head on a copy of the Constitution.
- 3-** The first President to call his Washington, D.C. residence the "White House."
- 4-** The President who is distantly related to Presidents Pierce, Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, and Ford as well as Winston Churchill.
- 5-** The President whose wife started the tradition of playing "Hail to the Chief" whenever a President appeared at a state function.
- 6-** The first President to visit all 50 States.
- 7-** The first President whose voice was heard over the radio.
- 8-** The President who grew up speaking a language other than English.
- 9-** The only President to be married in the White House.
- 10-** The President who is credited with the saying, "I may be President of the United States but my private life is nobody's damn business."

*Answers appear at the bottom of page 23*

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## REUNION 2007

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The reunion for this year, will be held at the Holiday Inn Dayton/Fairborn Hotel located at 2800 Presidential Drive Fairborn, OH 45324. Telephone: 1-937-426-7800 and 1-800-821-4645. Directions: Take Hwy 70 to 675 S, Exit 44 toward Fairborn/Spangler Road. (.26 miles) merge onto I 675 S via the exit on the left toward Cincinnati (9.01 miles) Take the N Fairborn Road exit 17(.027) Turn right onto N Fairborn/Veterans Memory Parkway (9.25) turn left onto Colonel Glenn Hwy. (.32 miles) turn left onto Center Park Blvd. (.08) turn right onto Presidential Drive.

News for the reunion for 2008 hasn't been given to me as of this date, but I know it to be In Carlisle, PA as I sent a check for a deposit to the Hotel.

Speaking of Carlisle, I had the pleasure to be there on Friday May 25 to present the museum four of my 80th Books. One of which is not yet on the market having been sent to my home the day before I left for Carlisle "The Blue Ridge Division Answers the Call in WWII." 140 Pages. Price hasn't been set as of this writing.

You will want to be at the reunion for the vote to accept the 80th IT Division men who are now eligible for membership as they have been in a war both in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Amendment ran in the last issue of the Newsletter.



L-R Mike Perry, Bob Murrell, Dr. Dick Sommers and Mike Knapp. Taken at the Army Heritage Center Foundation at Carlisle, PA

# ARMY HERITAGE CENTER FOUNDATION

May 30, 2007

Mr. Robert T. Murrell

630 Pennsylvania Avenue Oakmont, PA 15139-1574

Dear Mr. Murrell:

Both the staffs of the Army Heritage Center Foundation and the Army Heritage and Education Center were most pleased to visit with you last Friday. We thoroughly enjoyed discussing the history of the Blue Ridge Division and your role in making sure the stories of its soldiers are preserved.

I wanted to let you know that we are giving to the Army Heritage and Education Center for their library collection the following books that you provided:

- The Blue Ridge Division Answers the Call in WWII
- 318th Infantry History
- 319th Infantry History
- 80th Division Operational History

We thank you for these donations and look forward to your Association's reunion in Carlisle in 2008.

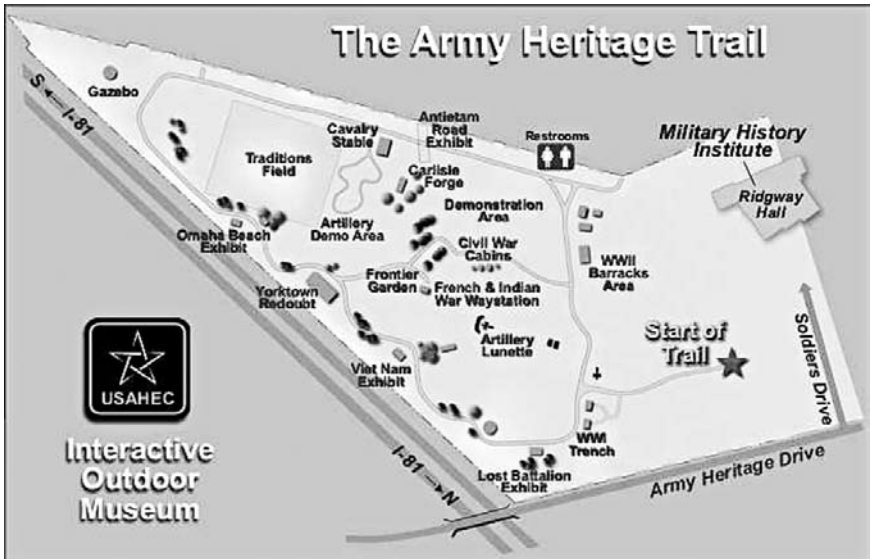
Sincerely,

Mike Perry, Executive Director

PO Box 839 Carlisle, PA 17013

PHONE 717-258-1102 FAX 717-258-1576

[www.armyheritage.org](http://www.armyheritage.org)





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# TAPS

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Anderson, James V.      D-319  
70919 State Road 13  
Ligonier, IN 46767-9417  
5/12/07  
Rptd by son James

Axtell, C. M. Jr.      CIC  
Detachment  
13901 Cheango Street  
Binghamton, NY 13901  
12/24/04  
Rptd by Wife Margaret

Fred Chrisman      Sv-317  
3829 Mossyrock Road  
Greensboro, NC  
1/2006  
Rptd by Dough Flick

Cooper, Walter A.      L-319  
7706 Tahiti Lane Apt 20  
Lake Worth, FL 33467-4914  
Rptd by Kay Rajnicek

D'Amico, Salvatore P.      80th  
41 Francis Ave.      Recon  
Middletown, C T 06457-4309  
?/2006  
Rptd by Daughter Maria

Engstrom, William H.      80th Sig  
1008 Meadowbrook Lane  
Warren, OH 44484-4558  
3/23/07  
Rptyd by son Thomas

Gray, Raymond A. 314th FA Bn  
(No Address given)  
7/23/06  
Rptd by Robert Simpson

Hindlemann, David J. Dv Hq Art  
5330 E. Jewell Ave.  
Denver, CO 80222-3940  
11/6/06  
Rptd by Daughter Debbra

Kotts, Edward F.      A-317  
PO Box 138  
Ashley, IN 46705-0138  
Unknown  
Rptd by Postal Return marked  
Deceased

Krah, Raymond L.      AT-317  
104 Pony Drive  
Freedom, PA 15042-2828  
4/12/07  
Rptd in Newspaper Obit sent by  
Ray Dumrauf

Loughlin, Martin F.      CN-318  
135 Pepperidge Drive  
Manchester, NH 03103-6113  
3/7/07  
Newspaper Obit  
Rptd by Jeff Wignal

Molina, Sebastian A.      G-319  
9416 Haney Street  
Pico Rivera, CA 90660-3621  
Rptd by wife Dora

Morris, Howard D.      B-319  
3830 Hansen Drive  
Dickinson, TX 77539-6114  
8/06  
Rptd by Frank M. Smith



Orr, David F-319  
831 Phillips Street  
Grayville, IL 62844-1711  
4/17/07  
Rptd by George Bell

Spayd, George F. Sv-318  
P.O. Box 318  
Lorman, MS 39096-0318  
3/12/07  
Rptd by Daughter Debora

Sterner, David R. B305 Eng  
2677 Jessamine Way  
York, PA 17404-4073  
4/29/07  
Rptd by Daughter Eileen

Tucker, D. William HQ-305 Med  
115 Longview Terrace  
Greenville, SC 29605-1053  
8/27/06  
Rptd by Wife Marion

Ward, Albert G. AT-318  
1028 S. 21st Street  
Richmond, IN 47374-6630  
3/23/2007  
Rptd by Funeral Home

Wilson, Jack E. Hq Co-318  
12306 -122nd Ave CT E  
Puyallup, WA 98347-5253  
10/13/06  
Rptd by Wife

Zabitchuck, Joseph L-317  
517 Romana Street  
Rochester, NY 14615-3231  
3/2/07  
Rptd by A. Barone

I just received news that my friend Bob Simpson's (I-317) wife of many years, Mable Simpson, passed away on 10 May 2007. My Sympathy to the Family. (Rptd by Howard Shoemaker.)

## **DESCENDANTS OF 80TH DIVISION VETERANS**

**Organized 2003**

**Preserving history and honor of 80th Division.**

**Promoting fellowship among Descendants of 80th Division Veterans.**



**Descendants of 80th Division Veterans**

**PO Box 206**

**Fayetteville, PA 17222**

**[www.80thdescendants.com](http://www.80thdescendants.com)**

**Lee S. Anthony, Ph.D., Commander**

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

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# POST NEWS

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## Co H 319th Inf. Post 33

Sorry I did not have an article in the last Blue Ridger. For some unknown reason I did not receive the elaborate edition. John Beebe still sees Joe Riehle in his garden of veggies. John says Kate has taken a tumble and is nursing the bruises. Kate, hope you are all better by now. Wilma McKinzie has had a knee replacement and the operation was successful. She is getting ready for the other knee. I'm sure Bill was a great help to her. Bill and a friend are great musicians and conduct a music festival weekly at the local Wal-Mart theatre (entrance). Bill is a master with his harmonica and accompanied by a guitar. Keep the old folks happy Bill!!! How about making a CD for all of us.

Orin Ledbetter is still scouting the range for strays to add to his herd. He said he and Debbie hope to see all at the Division reunion. The Robinson's are both still mobile and hope to make the reunion. Nick and Jenny are busy with the grandkids while touring Washington. Lois Kudrna is home canning fresh Iowa grown veggies. I haven't heard that she has a veggie stand on the road in front of her house yet. Good idea Lois? Reggie and Karol are always on the ball, golf that is. Carrol Peterson, another lowan, seems to be lost, as I have not heard any good news from Iowa except the Political Causes?

Penny and John just returned from their favorite spot DISNEY WORLD. Jerry is still flying Delta's paradise trips. Kristine, my middle child, is busy exercising and just finished up another school year of teaching. As for me, I'm getting ready for my 89th Birthday bash! ! Yes more bone and joint failure along with the eyes, but all else is OK!

*God Bless Ohly Barb, we haven't forgotten.*

## 3rd Battalion 317th Post #36

As a reporter for the first time, replacing Bob Nathason, I will do my best; but I can only funnel the news that you send to me. We owe a lot to Bob Nathason, who through his knowledge and hard work did the Association a great service over the years in preparing our financial report to the IRS on a yearly basis.

The news from our friends was a little light this time, however, I talked with Abe Barone recently and he and Kay made the Florida Post get together in February and they will be going up to New York State for the May meeting.

Naomi and Brock were celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary on a cruise taking them through the Panama Canal. On the way home they intend to stop at Fort Benning to see the 80th Monument.

We wish to extend our sympathy to the Zabitchuck family in the

passing of Joe, who was Barone's assistant gunner in L Company.

Bob and Polly Parks have moved to a retirement home in Fayetteville, TN and we hope that they enjoy their new location. Their address is 115 Medical Center Blvd. Apt. 111, Fayetteville, TN 37334-2690.

Also from L Company, Carl and Lillian Giordano send their best regards to their 80th friends. They are not able to travel much these days and will not be able to go to the reunion.

My daughter, Pat, and I went to Florida for the Legion of Valor reunion in Cocoa Beach, Florida. While there we also visited with Harriett Himes, who is the sister of Tom Himes, who was a Lieutenant in Headquarters Company. Recently I talked to one of my old buddies, Bob Pugh, who was in my battery when I was still with my old division (37th) prior to my joining the 80th. We are looking forward to the 80th reunion in Ohio in August and hope to see many of you at that time. If you have any news, please send it to me for the next Blue Ridge. My address is 61 Broad St. #108, San Luis Obispo, CA 93405-1771 or call 805-545-7815.

*Bob Smith*

### **FLORIDA POST #47**

Our February meeting at the Crowne Plaza Oceanfront was another success with a very compatible crowd, even the weather cooperated with plenty of sunshine during the days and pleasant evenings for socializing in and outside the hotel.

Our raffles were fun affairs, with a special raffle for a patriotic hound dog yard ornament covered with one dollar bills, donated by George and Jean Bell. My wife Kay won it and would not share the money with me. The hound dog now stands permanent guard on our patio.

We were saddened by the loss of Walter Cooper, he will be missed by all. We are glad to hear that Laverne Schock, who had surgery right before our meeting, is now home and doing well. We all hope to see him at our next years meeting. I have not received any other news so it appears everybody is in good health. This is the type of news I enjoy reporting.

I will give the details for our Fall meeting in my next communication.

Hoping to see a lot of you at the National Reunion in Dayton, Ohio in August.

*Francis Rajnicek, Sect.*

## Company H 319th

*Members Please note:*

Allen Francis Conway was a member of the 80th and very, very proud to be so. His service in the WWII and his camaraderie with other active members at reunions was very important to him and a source of pride until his death.

Al had purchased a large picture from the War of his company and it was very special to him. When he died, it was removed from the house and sold before we could get it by non-family members (my husband, Tom, is the last remaining member of Al's immediate family.) Al's first grandchild tried to track it down, but to no avail. I was wondering if there is any way I may find out if it is possible to get another one (it was beautifully framed, also) as a surprise for my husband and the grandchildren, as Al's first great-grandchild is to be born soon.

I would be most grateful if there is any way I could find this photograph.

Thank you,

Carol Conway 7705 Pembroke Dr. Reynoldsburg, OH 43068  
derf47@sbcglobal.net

### **313th LANE HALL POST #42**

I have been trying to keep in touch with our members, to find out whether they will be attending the reunion in August. I have heard from a few that will not be going, and it is disappointing to know that we will not be seeing them. I have made up my mind that I will go, if I have to walk there, but I don't think that it will come to that.

Jim and Ruth Phillips have written to me, and later I spoke to Jim, and they will not be attending the reunion Jim also mentioned that Ed Hargraves will not be attending either. I called Ed and he had just gotten home after having dinner with his daughter and liked my checking up on him. When I spoke to Dom Abbruzzesie he was happy to hear that I had talked with John Ingles and to hear that he and his wife were fine. Charlie and Alice will be attending with a member of their family. And Ann Hatcher said they will definitely be there, Hilda Latusek and I will be rooming together and Jack and Patty Flemings, will also be attending.

Among others that I had called were Kay and Angelo Barone, and it was so nice talking with Kay. She mentioned that they are keeping busy and enjoying their retirement.

I don't think I mentioned this before but Sue and Jerry Tristano, celebrated their 10th Anniversary on a trip to Greece. They had a great time.

I have sent in my room reservations, and also the returns to the Reunion Chairman. When Jim Phillips, wrote to me, he enclosed another donation to our groups account. So far we have over \$600.00 and as I mentioned, some of that will go towards our Hospitality Room and the

remainder is for our members, for wellness gifts, etc. So please keep in touch with me when you hear of anything concerning one of our members. If you want to continue and send in a donation toward the unit, I will be giving an accounting for whatever is done with the money.

I thought I would get in touch with some of our other members and see how they are doing. I called Manuel Gonzalez and his wife and was happy to hear that they are both doing fine, and they have been busy cleaning the yard, and taking care of their son. Because of the drastic change in the weather, they more or less stay put, in their home. He does have problems walking, but otherwise they are doing as well as the rest of us who are getting up in age. Called John Ingles, and he sounded great, he did have Arthroscopy surgery on his knee but is doing fine, he wants all to know that he is thinking of them and for me to say Hi for him. They will not be attending the reunion.

Had a nice long talk with Lou Shirey, he said he had talked with Cecilia Smith a descendent of an 80th member. He is so happy at his new home and enjoys being spoiled, because he no longer has to cook for himself, and enjoys every bit of it.

Our good friend Mary Brinker and her son Jim will attend the reunion and they are also doing well. And spoke to Audrey Blocker, she will be going to the reunion this year even though she has been having trouble with a sciatic nerve in her legs and knee bone and is getting therapy for that I just know I spelled (sciatic) incorrectly.

Received mail from Jim Phillips today, May 9, and he has another donation in it, and also a very interesting article referencing a building of a Memorial to Fallen comrades, that may be erected in Carlisle, Pa. Many of the records of the division from WWII are being indexed at the facility, and plans for retiring other 80th records there in the future are in place. I am sure we will hear more about this from our Officers at the reunion.

I did call quite a few others on our listing, but some of them, there was no answer, others the line was busy, so I will try again later on and if I haven't gotten to you, please call me so that I will be able to inform the rest of the group how you are doing and what you have been doing etc. We like to hear from everyone, and our group, getting smaller with time, are concerned about our members.

I hope I have covered everything for you, if not let me know what you would like to hear and I will be happy to look into anything you suggest.

Take care all of you, our best to you and keep in touch.

*Love*

*Frances Poletti,*

28 Arnold Lane, Rowayton, CT. 06853 203-855-1928

## **New York Post 43**

We had a very successful and interesting get together at the Ramada Inn, Lakefront in Geneva, NY on 21 May through 24 May. The weather was just gorgeous and the Seneca Lake scenery was something you had to see. We are returning next year 2008 on 19 May through 22 May at the same location. We would like more association members to come and join our Post 43 meeting.

We had a great turn out of 31 veterans and spouses, two sons and daughter in law those attending were: National Commander Bob Burrows and wife Mabel, PNC Walter and Annabelle Spangler, 2nd Vice Commander Eugene and wife Ivy, PNC Angelo Barone Chaplain and his wife Kay, Robert McDonald and wife Helen, along with son David. Francis and Kay Rajnieck, Frank Waston, Ann Marie Hompson. Milton and Jane McCormick, Jerry and Vera Norry, Harry and Fran Nutting with son and Kan and his wife Susan, Jack and Vivian Wilson, Don and Rose Wilkinson, Rose Palmietto and Rita Midley.

Tuesday we took our trip of wineries and we circled Seneca Lake ending with luncheon at Wagner's Winery. As we passed Sampson State Park we saw an Albino Deer. A rare sighting.

Wednesday we all went to the famous Belhurst Castle for lunch. What a place of interest. The meal was excellent and enjoyed by everyone. Many toured the castle on their own and the cameras were flashing. The location gives you a pretty view of Seneca Lake.

Thursday we had our big dinner at noon in the Geneva Room at the Ramada Inn. What a spread. We didn't need supper that night. Our white elephant raffle was fun with Kay Rajnicek and Mable Burrows winning the 50-50 drawing. Harry Nuttings birdhouses (2) were a big hit.

Everyone enjoyed themselves and are looking forward to the 2008 meeting. Barbara and I are looking forward to seeing you all in Dayton, OH at the reunion in August. So long for now.

Post 43 would like to send our condolences to the Lisko family in the loss of Robert Lisko. He was a very close friend to me.

*Burt R. Marsh Commander*

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## OUT OF THE PAST...

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### **Gottterdaemmerung (Continued from last Issue)**

Although the 83rd Division in its bridgehead over the ELBE readied a task force that included tank destroyers, and a company of infantry to probe eastward to find Russians, the force dutifully awaited approval from higher command before setting out. There were few other units that did not, in the meanwhile, violate the order on depth of patrols. Some patrols of the 2nd Division probed in vain up to seven miles beyond the MULDE. One from the 104th Division's reconnaissance troop, composed of three men under 1st Lt. Harlan W. Shank, roamed more than twenty miles and reached the ELBE at TORGAU late on 23 April, spent the night in the town under occasional Russian artillery fire, and finally departed at noon on the 24th after seeing no Russian troops.

Through it all, the men along the line of the MULDE still had a war to fight-after a fashion. As late as the 22nd, part of the 69th Division's 271st Infantry was fighting hard to clear the town of EILENBERG, astride the MUDLE, and after night fell had to repulse a determined counterattack by as many as 200 Germans. Company-size counterattacks also hit some units of the 2nd Division. Meanwhile, other German soldiers in small groups and in large poured into American lines, eager to surrender. Every division handled thousands each day, as well as hundreds of American and Allied prisoners released by their captors. At the same time hordes of civilians gathered at bridges over the MUDLE, terrified of the Russians, tearfully hopeful of refuge within the American lines. Although the official word was to turn back German civilians, many an American soldier looked the other way as the refugees tried to pass, or deliberately interpreted the proviso that foreign laborers might cross.

Unwittingly setting the stage for momentous events to follow, the burgomaster of WURZEN, begged permission late on the 23rd to surrender his town to the 69th Division's 273rd Infantry. Since the burgomaster's purpose was to release thousands of American and Allied prisoners and to surrender hundreds of German troops in the town, and since a restraining order on the bridgeheads over the MUDLE was yet to come, commanders up the chain of command sanctioned the move. The bulk of a battalion crossed the MUDLE in early evening into WURZEN to participate in a chaotic night of processing both the liberated and the newly captured.

By the afternoon of 24 April nobody yet had any definite word of the Russians. Nor could anyone know that contrary to the agreement with General Eisenhower, Russian troops approaching that part of the ELBE



which runs some eighteen miles east of the MUDLE were under orders to halt, not at the MUDLE but at the ELBY. Word on the MUDLE as a demarcation line had yet to pass down the Russian chain of command.

Frustrated by the prolonged wait, the commander of the 273rd Infantry, Col. Charles M. Adams, in mid-afternoon of 24 April directed 1st Lt. Albert L. Kotzebue of Company G to lead a jeep mounted patrol of thirty-five men "to contact the Russians." Lt. Kotzebue was to go only as far as KUEHREN, a village four miles beyond the MUDLE; but when he reached KUEHREN after encountering only a few hospitalized Allied prisoners and hundreds of docile Germans anxious to surrender, he gained permission to proceed another three miles, technically two miles beyond the five-mile limit. That Kotzebue did, encountering only the usual German groups trying to escape the Russians, then returned to KUEHREN to bed down for the night. Although he had received two messages ordering his patrol to return before dark, Lt. Kotzebue ignored them because it was already well after dark.

With no further word from Kotzebue, Colonel Adams that night ordered two more patrols to depart the next morning 25 April. The orders were the same "to contact the Russians," again within the five-mile limit. Members of one patrol made up of the regiment's intelligence and reconnaissance platoon apparently accepted the limitation without question. Those of another commanded by a platoon leader of Company E but accompanied by the 2nd Battalion's executive officer, Major Frederick W. Craig, took the restriction less seriously. To a man they entered into a kind of humorous conspiracy to meet the Russians, regardless. As the two patrols left in jeeps mounting machine guns early on the 25th, no one yet had heard anything more from Lt. Kotzebue in KUEHREN.

Later in the morning, at WURZEN, the 1st Battalion's S-2, 2nd Lt. William D. Robertson, awoke from a deep sleep occasioned by staying up the previous night to help process the surrendering Germans and liberated Allied prisoners in the town. With three men, Lt. Robertson left by jeep in mid-morning to scout the neighboring towns and villages for other Germans wanting to surrender. Having no radio with him, Lt. Robertson had no intentions of contacting the Russians as he headed eastward.

In KUEHREN, in the meantime, Lt. Kotzebue and his men had awoken to a breakfast prepared by villagers eager to please in fear that if the Americans left, the Russians would come with the reign of terror that rumor promised would follow. Caught up in the general expectation that the Russians were no reason why he should not be the one to meet them first. His orders, "to contact the Russians," he deemed sufficiently broad to warrant continuing toward the east. Leaving his radio jeep in KUEHREN to serve as a relay point for messages, he headed east with the bulk of his patrol.

Thus, in mid-morning of 25 April, four separate groups of the 69th

Division's 273rd Infantry were moving eastward. Only one, the intelligence and reconnaissance platoon, was concerned enough with the five-mile restriction to comply with it.

Encountering dispirited German soldiers, jubilant American and Allied prisoners, apprehensive German civilians and exuberant, sometimes intoxicated foreign laborers, Lt. Kotzebue and his men advanced almost due east through the town of DAHLEN toward the ELBE in the vicinity of STREHLA a few miles northeast of RIESA, some seventeen miles southeast of TORGAU. It was almost noon as the jeeps slowed to enter the farming village of LECKWITZ, less than two-miles from the ELBE.

Far down the main street, the men spotted a horseman just as he turned his mount into a courtyard and passed from view. At a glance, the man's costume seemed unusual. Could it be? Was this it?

Spinning forward the jeeps came to a halt at the entrance to the courtyard. Inside, among a crowd of foreign laborers, was the horseman. There could be no doubt. He a Russian soldier.

The time was 1130 on 25 April, the setting inauspicious, but the moment historic: the first contact between Allied armies from the west, Soviet armies from the east.

Through Russian-speaking Tech. 5 Stephen A. Kowalski, Lt. Kotzebue asked directions to the soldiers commander; but the Russian was suspicious and reserved. Waving his arm to the east, he suggested that one of the foreign laborers, a Pole, could lead them better than he. With that, he galloped away.

Taking the Pole as a guide the patrol continued to the ELBE, a few hundred yards north off STREHLA. Seeing uniformed figures on the east bank milling about the wreckage of a column of vehicles close to the remains of a tactical bridge, Lt. Kotzebue raised his binoculars. Again there was no doubt. They were Russians. The rays of the sun reflecting off medals on their chests convinced him.

At the Lt. direction, his driver fired two green signal flares. Although the figures on the far bank gave no answering signal, they began to walk toward the edge of the river. As Kotzebue's driver fired another flare for good measure, the Polish laborer shouted identity across the water.

Using a hand grenade, LT. Kotzebue blasted the moorings of a sailboat and five of his men rowed across the ELBE. A major and two other Russians, one a photographer, met them. The meeting was first restrained, but as Kotzebue explained who he was, the Russians relaxed.

Minutes later, Lt. Col. Alexander T. Gardiev, commander of the 175th Rifle Regiment, arrived. Making clear that he intended to take the Americans to meet his division commander, he suggested that the men return to the west bank of the ELBE and proceed northward to a hand-operated cable ferry opposite the village of KREINITZ. There the Russians would meet them again, presumably at the pleasure of two motion-picture cameramen who by that time also had arrived on the scene.

Returning to the west bank, Kotezbue sent one of his jeeps accompanied by his second-in-command back to KUEHREN with a message to be transmitted by radio to headquarters of the 273rd Infantry. Making a mistake he would come to rue, the Lt. gave the wrong map coordinates for his location.

Lt. Kotezbue signed his message at 1330. His regimental commander, Col. Adams received it not quite two hours later. "Mission accomplished. Making arrangements for meeting between CO's. Present location (8717). No casualties.

Hardly had Col. Adams telephoned that information to the division commander, General Reinhardt, picked up the phone. Reinhardt was irate. As late as that morning he had been at Adams's command post where he had reiterated the order that patrols were to go more than five-miles beyond the MUDLE. If Kotezbue was where the map coordinates indicated, he was far beyond the MUDLE at the ELBE itself on the fringe of the town of RIESA.

General Reinhardt's first reaction was to clamp a blackout on the news until Col. Adams could verify it by a meeting with the Russians himself. On second thought he telephoned the V Corps commander, General Huebner, who reacted much as had Reinhardt but passed the word to General Hodges at first Army. Hodges passed it on to General Bradley at 12th Army Group, who took it calmly.

Mollified by this reaction near the top and rationalizing that LT. Kotezbue might not have known of the five-mile restriction, General Reinhardt still was reluctant to publicize the contact without some confirmation. Time for proof was short, for despite all efforts to contain the news, rumors of a meeting with the Russians were rife throughout the division, and correspondents already were deserting neighboring divisions to rush to the 69th's command post. To speed confirmation, Reinhardt directed Adams to cancel arrangements for a personal meeting with the Russians pending a flight by the division G-3 in an artillery spotter plane to the site Lt. Kotezbue had specified.

The results of the flight further confused the issue. Taking along an interpreter in a second plane, the G-3 flew to RIESA, which marked the coordinates Kotezbue had mistakenly given. Antiaircraft fire at RIESA turned both planes back.

On two occasions, in late morning and early afternoon of 25 April, Col. Adams ordered Major Craig and the 47-man patrol from the 273rd Infantry's 2nd Battalion to advance no farther. Both times he qualified the order with authority "to scout out the area" near where the patrol was located. Both times Major Craig used this authority to justify continuing toward the east.

Craig and the men with him were caught up in the elation of the moment. Abroad in what was technically enemy territory, they were welcomed by jubilant foreign laborers and Allied prisoners as liberators,

by the German populace and soldiers as saviors from some ephemeral dread called “the Russians are coming.” Only occasionally did a German soldier display any inclination to fight.

One word and white flags appeared in the villages as if by magic.

Craig had another incentive to continue. With him was a historian, Captain William J. Fox, operating out of headquarters of the V Corps. Rationalizing that he was not subject to the five-mile restriction, Fox insisted that if Craig felt obligated to turn back, he personally would continue to contact the Russians.

Two hours after the second stop order from Col. Adams, Major Craig and his patrol still were traveling eastward. The patrol’s radio was delightfully void of any more orders, and Craig sent no further reports on his position lest they generate a new directive to halt.

By mid-afternoon the patrol had reached a point less than three miles from the ELBE when two jeeps overtook the column. They carried men from Lt. Kotezbue’s patrol on their way from KUEHREN after having relayed the message telling of Kotzebue’s meeting with the Russians.

All doubts about continuing to the ELBE erased by this news, Craig’s patrol was heading for LECKWITZ, the village where Kotzebue had first encountered the lone Russian, when a cloud of dust revealed the approach of horsemen. Craig halted his jeeps and the men piled out, eager and excited at the prospect of meeting what was Russian cavalry interspersed with a few men on motorcycles and bicycles.

“I thought the first guy would never get there,” one soldier recalled. “My eyes were glued on his bicycle, and he seemed to get bigger and bigger as he came slower and slower towards us. He reached a point a few yards away, tumbled off his bike, saluted, grinned, and struck out his hand.”

The time was 1645, 25 April 1945. After a few self-conscious speeches from both sides extolling the historic moment, the Russians went on their way south toward DRESDEN, while Craig and his patrol hurried on to the ELBE to join Lt. Kotezbue on the east bank. There the commander of the 58th Guards Infantry Division, Major General Vladimir Rusakov, whose 175th regiment had made the first contact with Kotzebue, saw it his duty for the second time in the same afternoon to welcome an American force with toasts in Vodka to Roosevelt, Truman, Churchill, Stalin, the Red Army, the American Army, and, it seemed to some Americans present, to every commander and private soldier in each army.

Back at headquarters of the 273rd Infantry on the MUDLE, a radio message from Major Craig arrived shortly before 1800: “I have contacted Lt. Kotezbue who is in contact with Russians.” To Col. Adams, that confused the issue more than ever.

Having left WURZEN in mid-morning of 25 April in a jeep with three men in search of Allied prisoners and surrendering Germans, Lt. Robertson. The 1st Battalion S-2 experienced much the same reactions to the

arrival Americans in the German towns and villages, as did the patrols of Kotzebue and Craig. Although Robertson had no intention at first of trying to find the Russians, he kept moving from one town to the next until at SITZENRODA, a little past the midpoint between MUDLE and ELBE, a group of released British prisoners told him there were many Americans prisoners, some of them wounded, in TORGAU on the ELBE. Already exhilarated by the case with which he was moving across the no man's land between the two rivers, Robertson used the information to justify his continuing to TORGAU, rescuing the prisoners, and if possible, meeting the Russians.

Entering TORGAN in mid-afternoon, Lt. Robertson searched the reported American prisoners to no avail, thought he did find a group of released prisoners of various nationalities that included two Americans, a naval ensign and a soldier. The two joined Robertson's little band. The few German troops encountered appeared to be preparing to leave the town and readily gave up their weapons.

Hearing small arms fire from the direction of the ELBE, Robertson and his men headed through the center of the town toward a castle on the river's west bank. Assuming that the fire came from Russians east of the ELBE. Robertson yearned for an American flag to establish his identity. As he passed an apothecary shop, the idea came to him that he could make a flag. Inside the shop, he found red and blue water paint with which he and his men fashioned a crude flag from a white sheet.

With the flag in hand, Robertson climbed into the tower of the castle. Although the firing had stopped, he could see figures moving about on the east bank of the ELBE. Displaying the flag outside the tower produced no fire, but when one of Robertson's men showed himself, the figures on the east bank began to shoot.

At long last the firing stopped, and a green signal flare went up from the other side of the river. Robertson was elated. That, as he remembered it, was the agreed recognition signal to be fired by the Russians. (The Russians should have fired a red signal.) Certain that the figures on the east bank were Russians and not having a flare with which to answer, Robertson sent his jeep back to the Allied prisoners found earlier to bring up a Russian who had been among the lot.

Climbing the tower, the Russians shouted across to the east bank. Almost immediately the figures beyond the ELBE began to mill about. They understood, the freed prisoner shouted from the tower, that Robertson and his men were Americans.

With that, Robertson and his little group rushed to a destroyed highway bridge and slowly began to climb across the river on twisted girders. A Russian soldier from the far bank began to climb toward them. The soldier and the released prisoner met first, then Robertson reached the soldier. The Lieutenant could think of nothing to say. He merely grinned and pounded the Russian exuberantly.

The time was 1600. Although word of Major Craigs contact reached the 273rd Infantry command post before that of Robertson's the meet on girder above the swirling waters of the ELBE was by some forty-five minutes the second contact between the two armies from the east and west.

Once on the east bank, Americans and Russians pounded each other on the back, everybody wearing a perpetual grin then drank a series of toasts in wine and brandy provided by the Russians. They had fired on Robertson's flag, the Russian explained, because a few days earlier a group of Germans had displayed an American flag to halt Russian fire and make good their escape. The impromptu celebration went on for an hour. When Robertson at last announced a return to his own headquarters, a Russian major, two lesser officers, and a sergeant volunteered to go with him. They were from the 173rd Rifle Regiment shortly after 1800, Lt. Robertson and his overloaded jeep arrived at the 1st Battalion command post in WURZEN. As soon as he could convince his battalion commander that the Russians were genuine soldiers, not released prisoners, word passed up the line to regiment.

To Col. Adams this development was more startling than the others. He had ordered no patrols from the 1st Battalion, yet the battalion had four Russians as living proof of contact. He ordered them brought them brought to headquarters, where they successfully ran a gantlet of war correspondents and photographers who had almost inundated the 273rd command post.

When the division commander, General Reinhardt, learned of the new development, he was more irate than ever. The corps commander obviously was getting the impression that nobody in the 69th Division followed orders, and Reinhardt could hardly blame him. Reinhardt even toyed briefly with the idea of a court-martial for Robertson. (Someone noted in the 273rd Infantry journal: "Something wrong with an officer who cannot tell 5 miles from 25 miles.")

The fact that Robertson's exploit had produced tangible evidence entitling the 69th Division to acclaim of first contact with the Russians apparently had something to do with Reinhardt's decision to play it straight. Once he himself had talked to the Russians at his command post, he interrupted the inevitable toasts and photographs to report the news to V Corps commander. General Huebner in turn told Reinhardt to proceed with the arrangements for a formal meeting of division commanders the next day, 26 April, and of corps commanders on the 27th. Since nobody yet had any specific information on the site of Lt. Kotzebue's meeting, the formal linkup celebrations would be held at TORGAU.

**Continued in next issue**





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