

THE ARDENNES \* THE RHINELAND \* CENTRAL EUROPE

# The UB

PUBLISHED BY AND FOR

*The Veterans of the  
106th INFANTRY  
DIVISION*

*of the*  
**GOLDEN LION**

Vol 58 - No. 4

JUL - AUG - SEP 2002



**Parker's Crossroads - Baraque de Fraiture, Belgium**  
**(l/r) John Schaffner and John Gatens 589/A, Associate David Ford**  
**with Andre HUBERT, Past-President C.R.I.B.A.**  
**"Center for Research and Information - Battle of the Ardennes"**  
**known to Americans as "The Battle of the Bulge"**

See Feature Story inside

# The CUB

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## President's View . . .

Time flies by so quickly it is almost time for the Hampton Reunion. Seems like yesterday we left Washington, D.C. We'll never forget that eventful time in September. We left on September 10<sup>th</sup> and you all know what happened on the 11<sup>th</sup>. I won't go into detail about the Hampton reunion except to remind one and all that August 17 is the last day to reserve a room at the reunion rate. We loose any rooms that are not reserved by that date. We'll miss each of you who are not in on the fellowship, comradeship and outright fun of a military reunion. If you haven't taken the application off of the refrigerator do so now.

Things begin to pile up. Got a note from John Kline, Cub Editor, saying that he is putting together the Cub for August and where is your page? John Swett sent me a note wanting the Agenda's for the up coming meetings. His long ride in the open Jeep is over and he is back at working being the Adjutant. Got a note from our Chaplain asking for information and telling me what he is doing for the Memorial service. Marion Ray , past President, wants to be sure I do the

right thing and sends me a list of things I should be doing to make sure every dot is dotted and every "T" crossed. It is certainly great having so many great people on ones side. To have Sherod Collins in there making sure the checks are there to pay the bills. Speaking of pay outs, we supported once more the "Great Race" and helped pay the bills for John Swett and Ken Smith. We also gave money to the 333rd FAB Monument in Wereth, Belgium. See the story inside about what Adda and Willy Rikken, our Belgian friends, have done to see that these men will not be forgotten.

I just finished my two years as Grand Knight of my Knights of Columbus Council. After we finish the Hampton reunion , Viv and I will be adding more years to the 45 years each of us have in the Scouting movement. Scouting will then be our continuing activity along with singing in our church choir and the Resurrection choir where we sing at funerals.

Viv and I have and will continue to do what ever we are asked for the 106 Infantry Division Association, including the Mini-Reunions which we do each December. These meetings in the future will help keep the memory of the 106<sup>th</sup> alive.

Viv and I enjoy going to reunions as I know many of you do also. Who would have thought that we would still be getting together after all these years and what many of you have gone through during the time between Basic at Ft. Jackson or where ever you took it, maneuvers, Atterbury, England, France and the Bulge as well as the Stalags for many of you. I didn't finish my high school year. I am proud to have served with the men of the 106th. God Bless you all and your wonderful help mates, your beautiful ladies, and God Bless the U.S.A.



Joseph P. Maloney, President 2001-2002  
106th Infantry Division Association  
Headquarters Co., 424th Infantry Regiment  
1120 Warren Ave, Arnold, PA 15068-6104  
Phone: 724-335-6104

*Joseph P. Maloney* President 2001-2002  
106th Infantry Division Association



## Chaplain's Message . . .



Chaplain

Dr. Duncan Trueman, 424/AT

29 Overhill Lane, Warwick NY 10990

TEL: 845-986-6376 FAX: 845-986-4121

Email: ddtrueman@yahoo.com

*"My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." (Psalm 73:26)*

On February 12, 1973, Brigadier General Dick Abel was part of a contingent to Vietnam in a joyful mission to repatriate American P.O.W.'s from Vietnamese prison camps. Many of these men had spent years in dirty, hot, bug-infested cells. They had been starved and tortured. Somehow they had survived. On the flight home, Gen. Abel asked how anyone could survive such conditions. One man replied: "If it weren't for the Lord, I would never have made it. I looked up one day and seemed to see a vision of the Lord, and he said to me, "Larry, you'll make it."

When we were young and vigorous we believed that we would live forever, and that anything was possible. As years have passed and we have faced life's disappointments, sorrows and hurts, we have come to learn

that yes, anything is possible as long as the Lord is in it.

We sometimes look back now and see how the hand of God was upon our lives so many times. Unlike Larry, we did not always recognize it. But it should be a strength and a reminder to us in later years. As we face the complex problems that often accompany aging... deteriorating health, diminishing strength and abilities, the loss of old friends and even of life's partners... we need reminders of how God's strong arm supported us all those many years ago - even when we were clinging to life precariously.

At Arlington, speaking of the bond that still unites us after all these years, your chaplain attributed it to the remembrance that there was a time when all we had was one another. The truth is, of course, that there never was such a time. We had far more than just one another. God was there! In life and death, God was there!

It's still true today. But, like that P.O.W. Larry, our lives must be open to His presence. The key is the open heart. Isaiah wrote: *"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near."* And again he wrote: *"When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee."*

In other words, no waters of affliction shall overcome us when we open our lives to the reality of His presence and put our trust in His promises, then He's with us... beside the hospital bed, or the wheelchair, at the graveside, with the lonely, calming the desperate and reassuring us: **"You'll make it! You'll make it!"**

**"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."**



## Front & Center . . .

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Since April - May - June 2002 CUB

Your generosity is appreciated.

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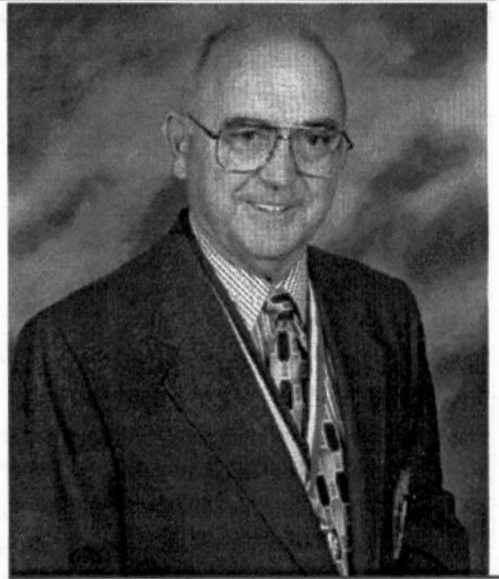
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### Editor's Report

John Kline, 423/M  
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Web site: <http://www.mm.com/user/jpk>  
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### Editor's Note:

There are two stories in this issue which I did not want to hold, or extend in another issue. They are timely.

Schaffner's "*Battle Ground Europe*" is written so that you can place yourself on the trip alongside him and his companions. It would do the story an "injustice" to shorten it, or run it in two issues.

The article "*Wereth, the Murder of the Black Artillerymen*" will tie in with the guest speaker subject at the 56th Annual Reunion The speaker - Adda RIKKEN, Associate member.

Also, I wanted to get back on my time schedule.

I have several "carry over" stories and a lot of "Mail Bag" items. I will be sure to include those in the next CUB.

Hope I see you in Hampton in September. John Kline, editor

BEFORE THE  
VETERANS DIE  
by  
Dale R. Carver



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If wrong I'm proven when comes death to me,  
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a sacrifice worthy of a king, no repentant, sniveling, praying thing.  
One who lived what he was born to be  
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by Dale Carver, Poet Laureate, 106th Inf Div Association

Silver Star recipient, 424/HQ 3rd Battalion (deceased) \$8.00 + \$3.50 S&H

Book, **The Sitting Duck Division**, John Morse 422/C

"Humorous" (Jul-Sep 2001 Cub) pg. 14

On line - <http://www.iUniverse.com> or Barnes & Noble \$9.95



## 106th Infantry Division Association - PX Items . . .

### **LIFE MEMBER**



**106th  
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**Marion Ray  
D/424th Inf. Regt.**

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Arrangements have been made for Members, Associate Members and Families to purchase a beautiful laser engraved walnut plaque showing membership or service in the 106th Infantry Division Association. There are two sizes available, 9" by 12" for \$43.50 and 7" by 9" for \$33.00.

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Email: Aldrich@ocs.net

Daughter of Robert Van Zant 591/HQ  
Robert died May 17, 1993

---

### **BENNETT, DOROTHY - ASSOCIATE**

2716 34<sup>th</sup> Street, Apt 4  
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309-786-1541

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### **BOUMA, WILLIS – 422/D**

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616-463-4174

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### **CAREY, GILBERT J. – 424/K**

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### **FRAMPTON, P. CLINTON – ASSOCIATE**

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### **FRAMPTON, ROBERT W. – ASSOCIATE**

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### **HEIDER, LARRY – ASSOCIATE**

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Calabasas, CA 91302  
818-591-1406  
Email: venace@aol.com

Relative of T/Sgt Richard Maslankoski  
424/E Deceased.

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### **KUTRUFF, GARY R. – ASSOCIATE**

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Board Member

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Widow of Robert 424/D

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### **TERWAGNE, MARC – ASSOCIATE**

Rue de La Victoire 20  
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### **MCCARY, JAMES M. – ASSOCIATE**

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### **REED, MAX – 422/UNIT??**

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815-636-2198

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### **SKOPEK, ROBERT E. – ASSOCIATE**

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Manilus, NY 13104  
315-682-5708

On page 20 of the MAY 2002 Cub, I  
did not separate Robert's name and address  
from the new member report above his.  
(that of Jack Schoelkopf 34<sup>th</sup> Inf Division)

My apologies to you Robert. I hope that all  
noticed the error and you heard from some of your  
buddies.. John Kline, editor

---

### **SUITER, LEO F. – 422/L**

27 Andrews Drive  
Daleville, AL 36322  
334-598-4864

I joined at Camp Atterbury. I'll be at the  
POW National Reunion in Rochester, MN  
in September.

---

### **SUTTON, PRESTON L. - 423/D**

2307 Oakdale Rd Sp #20  
Modesto, CA 95355  
204-544-2953

I joined the 106<sup>th</sup> at Camp Atterbury, just short of going overseas. Captured on the 19<sup>th</sup> of December 1944 and marched to Gerolstein, Germany, we arrived there the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December. We slept in the snow that night, the next morning we boarded box-cars, 60 men to a car. Arrived at Stalag 9-B, Bad Orb on Christmas Day 1944. As we were stopped at Limburg on the night of the 23<sup>rd</sup> we were bombed by British bombers. I led our box-car in prayer and we were singing Christmas songs. A bomb hit right alongside the box-car. It shook the car, but did not explode. I am sure the prayers saved our lives.

As I said, we arrived at Bad Orb on Christmas Day. We were given some kind of cooked up "Greens." The camp was, as you may know, liberated on 2 April 1945. I re-enlisted in 1947 and retired in 1966 at Fort Carson, Colorado. Sorry but I won't make it to the next reunion.

*(Editor's note: Preston send a business card. He is an exact look alike of Colonel Sanders, dressed in a white hat with can and white suit. It says, "Preston (Tex) Sutton, Colonel Sanders Look Alike. Welcome back to the 106<sup>th</sup> Colonel Sanders. J Kline, editor)*

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### **WILD, ELIZABETH FRAMPTON - ASSOCIATE**

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### **WILLIAMS, TRACY FRAMPTON - ASSOCIATE**

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Alexandria, VA 22304-4462

---

### **WILSON, ALBERT H. 422/CN**

2919 Prince Oak Ct.  
St Cloud, FL 34769  
407-892-4891

---

### **Champ VA FOR LIFE (CFL)**

Please read this:

It is a partial description. **Consult with a VA Benefits Representative for details and forms needed..** A more complete detail appeared in August 2002 AX-POW magazine, page 12. It applies to any **100% Service Connected** veteran.

(Remember this is a partial quote)

**Champ VA FOR LIFE (CFL)** is a free medical benefit signed into law last summer (2001). Those eligible for this new medical benefit are wives and widows of veterans who are (or were) 100% serviced connected (NOT military retired) who are on Medicare. Also, if there is a disabled child who lives with the wife or widow, the child is also eligible for this benefit; also a child who is a full-time student age 18-23 is eligible.

**Consult with a VA Benefits Representative for coverage details and forms needed.**

The benefits of the program are that it is a **FREE Medicare Supplement**, plus it will pay for all prescription drugs if they are ordered through the Champ VA system. (Orders go to Wyoming: Address will be furnished with approval and an ID card.)

If drugs are purchased at a local pharmacy a co-pay of 25% is required.

Any Medicare Supplement that is now in force will be the Primary Medicare Supplement, and ChampVA will only pay what Medicare and the current supplemental policy do not pay.

When the ChampVA coverage is in place, and you are comfortable with its coverage, the policy previously used as a Medicare supplement could (or should) be cancelled, so that the full ChampVA benefits can be received and premiums eliminated. **Consult with a VA Benefits Representative for details and forms needed.**



## Wereth, the Murder of Black Artillerymen



U.S. Army photo: Spring of 1945, showing 11 murdered soldiers of the 333rd Field Artillery who were slaughtered by the SS, December 1944. The 333rd were firing 155mm Howitzers in support of the 106th and other units in our sector. Overrun and trying to escape they found refuge in a home at Wereth, about 5 miles NorthNorthwest of Bleialf. Tipped off by a villager, the SS ran them down the road and slaughtered them.

### ***Mobile Register***

By GENE OWENS

Columnist 07/03/02

*(small italics added by CUB editor)*

You've heard of the Tuskegee Airmen. You may have heard of the Red Ball Express and the 761st Tank Battalion. But have you heard of the ***Wereth II***?

Probably not.

The Tuskegee Airmen were the crack fighter pilots who escorted American bombers during the North Africa and Italian campaigns. The Red Ball Express trucked vital fuel to Gen. George Patton's forces as they raced toward the Rhine. The 761st Tank Battalion gave fierce battle to the Germans during 183 continuous days of combat.

They had one thing in common with the ***Wereth II***: All consisted of black Americans.

The ***Wereth II*** died Dec. 17, 1944, in a brutal massacre in a snowy pasture in the Ardennes Forest of Belgium. Dr. Norman Lichtenfeld, an orthopedic surgeon from Mobile, numbers them among "the invisible soldiers." He has started a fund to help make sure they're remembered.

At least one of them - Pfc. George Davis - was from Alabama. Staff Sgt. Thomas J. Forte was from Mississippi. Both now lie buried in the large American cemetery at Henri-Chapelle, Belgium. Technician 4th Class James A. Stewart of West Virginia, Pfc. Due W. Turner of Arkansas and Pvt. Curtis Adams of South Carolina lie there, too.

The names of the others as they appear on the monument are Nathaniel Moos, George W. Mootton, Bradley Mager, Robert Green, W. M. Pritchett and Jim Leathewood. Another list, provided by Lichtenfeld's guide from Belgium, has slightly different spellings: "Mootton" instead of "Mootton," "Bradley Meagler" instead of "Bradley Mager," "Pucket" instead of

## Wereth, the Murder of Black Artillerymen

"Pritchett," and "Leatherwood" instead of "Leathewood."

The men were part of the 333rd Field Artillery Battalion, servicing the 155 mm howitzers pounding the Nazis from 10 miles behind the front lines in the Ardennes Forest of Belgium.

When the Germans launched the furious counterattack now known as the *Battle of the Bulge*, the men found themselves enveloped by Nazi troops. Unable to move their heavy artillery pieces, they fled through the woods during one of the bitterest winters of the century.

The cold, hungry soldiers sought haven in Wereth, a tiny cluster of farm houses not big enough to be called a village. The family of Matthias Langer gave them shelter for the night, but a German sympathizer (*A woman in the village*) saw them and tipped off the SS. In the corner of a pasture the Nazis brutalized and murdered them. They remained there until Spring.

*(From Army News Service April 1998 - The soldiers helmets and rifles were taken. They were forced to sit on the cold and wet ground until dark and eventually made to run nearly 800 meters out of the village, chased by a vehicle driven by the "SS" Soldiers.) J Kline*

In 1994, Herman Langer and a brother-in-law added a cross, from another cemetery, with the names of the victims on it and an inscription. The English translation:

**"Here were murdered on Dec. 17, 1944, 11 U.S. Soldiers."**

Lichtenfeld learned of the incident when he went to Belgium in 1994 with his father, Sy Lichtenfeld, 422/I, for the 50th anniversary of the *Battle of the Bulge*. The elder Lichtenfeld was captured in the Ardennes Forest on Dec. 19 and remained a prisoner until the following April.

On their anniversary excursion, the Lichtenfelds engaged the services of Adda and Willy Rikken, members of a Belgian organization C.R.I.B.A. The Rikkens took them to the scene of the massacre. The RIKKENs became members of our Association.

The monument erected by the Langer family stands on the site of the massacre. The people of Wereth want to purchase the small piece of land on which the marker stands and to erect a more visible monument.

The *Wereth 11* probably volunteered for combat toward the end of the war, when the Army eased its policy of confining blacks to menial support roles, said Lichtenfeld, who has become a World War II buff. The number of blacks volunteering for combat exceeded the demand, he said.



September 11, 1994 dedication of newly erected memorial to 11 Black soldiers of the 333rd FAB who were captured, bayoneted, clubbed and shot by the SS near Wereth on 17 December 1944.

Dr. Emil Mertes, Veterinarian and Mayor of Amel (holding flowers).

## Wereth, the Murder of Black Artillerymen

**Why did the SS murder the Wereth 11?**

"Maybe it was because they were American or maybe because these men were black or perhaps simply because the SS unit could murder at will," Lichtenfeld said. "We will never know."

He has been back to the Ardennes five times since 1994. The foxholes are still there, now filled in with leaves. Artifacts of war still lie just beneath the soil. Many have found their way into the surgeon's home. An old rifle and an ammunition box containing a belt of .30-caliber machine-gun bullets are among his favorites. He even bought an authentic 1945 Army Jeep, which he has immaculately restored.

Lichtenfeld said Belgian citizens "adopt" graves of individual soldiers and keep them decorated and maintained.

Adda Rikken has adopted several, including the graves of James Stewart and William Robinson — an Alabamian from another unit.



Close up of the Wereth Monument



Inaguration of the Monument in the field where the murders happened. Trumpeter playing "Taps" and Air Force Junior ROTC from Brussels, Belgium, right. Retired Belgian Army Officer Colonel Van Niewenhoven from the Regiment des Chasseurs Ardennais, (same regiment as Adda's father) left center saluting.



## Wereth, the Murder of Black Artillerymen

*Editor's Note: The Rikkens, Anne-Marie-Noel and Louis Jonckeaue , Belgians (CRIBA members), are LIFE Associate members of our Association. They have spent much of their own money in efforts to preserve and perpetuate the monument on the site of the massacre. Improvements need to be made. Lichtenfeld hopes to raise at least \$1,000 or more to assist our good friends.*

*Adda RIKKEN will be a guest speaker at our 2002 Reunion J. Kline*

**Picture at right (year 2002):  
Willy and Adda RIKKEN at Henri  
Chapelle Memorial Services**

Those of you wishing to contribute to this just cause may send checks to:

**U.S. Wereth Memorial Fund,**  
Bank Trust Inc., P.O. Box 3067,  
Mobile AL 36652

or in care of

Dr. Norman Lichtenfeld's office at 6701 Airport Boulevard, Mobile AL 36608.



Association members Willie R. Alphonse with his wife Leanna. Willie was a member of "C" Battery of the 333rd Field Artillery Battalion. He knew most of the soldiers that were killed at Wereth by the SS. They have been "Associate" members of the 106th Infantry Division since year 2000. We are happy to see Willie and Leanna at the 106th Annual Reunions.



*Story by:*

*John Schaffner, "A" Battery, 589th FAB*

*1st Vice-President, 106th Infantry Division Association*

In 1998 Dave Ford (Associate,) and John Gatens (589/A) and I (589/A) had such a great trip back to the battlegrounds of Europe that we decided to do it again while we still had "wheels." It does take some planning so we started talking several months in advance of our departure date. Dave is our local (avid) historian on the Battle of the Bulge so his guidance throughout the whole adventure made it all work.

This time we wanted to visit some places that we had never been.

### **May 13**

Our journey began when we met at Ford's house for 2:30 PM pickup. The Airport Van was on time and I think the three of us were shocked to see the driver was a rather small woman who grabbed our heavy baggage and heaved it into the van without a whimper. She also kept us entertained during the ride to Dulles Airport with a steady patter of what she did with the rest of her life. In spite of a traffic jam created on I-495 when a semi overturned on the shoulder we made the airport in good time. Departed Dulles 6:45 PM British Air Flt #222, on a Boeing 747-400.

### **May 14**

We arrived at Heathrow 7:15 AM and transferred to Paris Flt #306, this time a Boeing 757. It was a long walk through this huge terminal. I'm glad that we were not dragging our baggage with us. No problem passing through security anywhere yet. I suppose that we look harmless enough. We departed Heathrow at 9:05 AM and arrived 11:30 AM at Charles De Gaulle, Paris, gaining another sleepless hour.

This airport is a rather confusing mess, not many helpful signs. It took a while to find the Hertz counter and secure the car, but the worst part was ejecting our selves

from the airport itself. Once outside and on the street, with Dave driving and me with a map in my lap, it was clear sailing west to Normandy. Lodging at a B&B had been secured by our Belgian friend Rogers Maes (106th Life Associate) at the Ferme des Mouettes in the village of Colleville sur Mer with Mr. & Mrs. Anquetil. Since it was relatively early (2nd day out with no sleep) after we checked in, we drove the few miles to the beach, poked around the shore until dinner time, and ate at The Omaha Beach Restaurant. While exploring the beach we met with two young couples from California and chatted a while about the D-Day Invasion. It is gratifying to see that there is an interest in what happened on "*The Longest Day*" with the younger generation. At this time of day the tide was out (as then) and it is impossible to imagine the chaos that occurred on 6 June 1944 in this place. Remnants of the Mulberry\* and some beach obstacles are still around as reminders. Also there was the beached remains of a small concrete ship. Can't tell if it was from the invasion or later, but it has obviously been there for a long, long time. We were beginning to suffer from the lack of sleep by now so it was off to our rooms and a comfortable bed.

*\*Mulberry was the code name for the floating concrete sections of a harbor facility to be used to off load materials, vehicles and troops. The sections were towed from England, sunk into place, and connected offshore where ships could tie up and discharge their cargo to smaller vessels.*

### **May 15**

Today we drove to the U.S. Military Cemetery at Colleville sur Mer, in sight of the Omaha Beach, where 9,387 American Soldiers, Sailors, Coast Guardsmen, and Marines are interred. There are 307 Unknown, three Medal of Honor recipients, and four women. All died during the invasion. It is indeed a beautiful place, but there is no joy in seeing it, only thoughts of what could have been had these young men been allowed to contribute to society.

While there, Dave Ford placed flowers at the grave of someone he knew of from back home. This was Samuel N. Buccheri of the 83rd Division, the brother of an



John Gatens, 589/A on Omaha Beach.

John, we thought the artillery was always behind the hill, not out in front of the Invasion. Great photo, glad we were not there in 1944.





Cemetery at Colleville Sur Mer

acquaintance of Dave. The bouquet had been picked from her garden and given to us by Madam Anquetil, our hostess at the B&B where we were staying. A young lady from the cemetery staff drove us to the gravesite in a golf cart and highlighted the engraving with sand from Omaha Beach. This is done to make the inscribed data more visible in a photograph. This cooperation is afforded to anyone wishing to do what we did. This Omaha Beach sand is now used at other U. S. Military cemeteries for this same purpose.

Next we visited the Point du Hoc area. There is still mute evidence of the severe bombing that the place was subjected to. Grassy craters and broken reinforced concrete still adorn the defensive bunker area. There is a monument erected there by France to honor elements of the 2nd Ranger Battalion under command of LTC James E. Rudder which scaled the 100 foot high cliff. The 30-acre area remains as it was left on 8 June 1944. This site was featured prominently in the two movies about D-Day, "The Longest Day," and "Private Ryan." Impossible to imagine what happened here. After surveying the beach area as far as we could walk we again got back in the car.

Our next stop was the town of Ste. Mer Eglise, the first town liberated by the invasion. It is a perfect place for the museum of D-day and the town is set up to cater to tourists interested in the battle. While in the big "Airborne" museum we encountered a group of about 130 American students from The International School in Brussels. They were here on a field trip with several of their teachers. On finding out that Gatens and I were veterans of the war, we were pleasantly trapped for an hour or more answering questions, signing autographs, and posing for pictures. It was, of course, very flattering and we enjoyed the experience with these young folks. It is rewarding to see the interest.



**Ste Mer Eglise:**

**Pvt John Steele hangs from the Church**

We then walked the town, bought lunch at a local dining room, and visited the Hotel de Ville (City Hall) to get a picture of the #0 marker of the Route de Liberation.

The church in Ste. Mer Eglise is adorned with a life size paratrooper of the 82nd AB Division hanging from the roof by his parachute. This depicts an actual happening when Pvt. John Steel became ensnared as he was about to land next to the church. Steele hung there through most of the battle, wounded in the foot,

and playing dead, until he was brought down by German soldiers and made a prisoner\*. Inside the church we viewed the two large stained glass windows. One is composed with the various insignia of the US units that eventually took the town, and the other features two US paratroopers descending into the square in front of the church.

*\*In the movie, "The Longest Day," Steele's role was played by actor Red Buttons.*

Later in the day we drove to Utah Beach and explored the shoreline. Again, we encountered the same students near the "Bunker Museum." Utah Beach differs with the shoreline of Omaha Beach in that there is only a relatively shallow embankment at the high tide level where Omaha has decidedly higher and steeper embankments and cliffs that had to be overcome by the attackers. This does not imply that one place was easier than the other to come ashore. Only that the topography at Omaha gave the attackers a high natural obstacle to scale in addition to facing heavy German resis-



**The attack on Ste Mer Eglise**

tance. At low tide there is several hundreds of yards of sandy beach to cross before considering yourself ashore. Today it is very quiet. This is not a commercial place, like our Atlantic seaboard.

Farther along and inland a short distance is the German Cemetery at La Cambe. The remains of more than 20,000 German soldiers are buried here, casualties of the invasion. These German military cemeteries are indeed very somber places. The colors are dark. The stones are square dark brown, about one foot across, containing the name(s) of those under. Many are inscribed as "Unknown" and it is not unusual to see as many as four or five Unknown under one marker. These stones are interspersed with groups of five, very bulky, crosses made of the same dark stone. The cemetery is dominated by a huge mound at the far end, topped by a sculpture of religious figures around which is a small promenade from which one can view the whole cemetery. One has to be very nimble to negotiate the steps leading to the top. This mound is said to be covering the remains of over 700 unknown German bodies. Also buried here is the tank commander, Michael Witteman, and his crew. They were credited with having destroyed more enemy tanks and armored vehicles than any other tank crew in the German Army. The only similarity between the American and the German cemeteries is that they both contain the bodies of the youth of both nations. How sad.

It was getting late when we stopped for supper at an upscale restaurant in Port en Bessin. The restaurant overlooked a small harbor and the local boats were all high and dry. The tide was definitely out. After finishing our meal I think that they locked the door behind us.

### ***May 16***

Today we are up at the usual time (not too early) and after a nice breakfast are ready to go on the road again.

While residing at the Ferme des Mouettes (our B&B) we met a French couple, Nicole and Jean-Claude Poutrel. Before saying good-bye on that morning, we swapped names and addresses and Jean-Claude snapped a couple of photos. Today, (25 June 2002,) I received a large letter in the mail from Jean-Claude containing our photos, newspaper clippings of President Bush's visit to France, and a very nice message. One never knows what can come of what starts out as a friendly, casual meeting.

This day I was in the company of two avid golfers, so of course, before heading on farther we had to stop and see the classic Omaha Beach Golf Club. It is a beautiful course, in sight of the beach, and the holes are named after military personnel who had distinguished themselves during WWII. (Probably Officer Country, if you know what I mean.)

We traveled easterly along the shore through the area of Gold, Sword, and Juno Beaches. The battered remains of the British built "Mulberries" are still visible a short distance offshore. There is a museum on the beach known as "The Big Bunker Museum." While there we encountered a British gentleman who informed us that he had been a "tanker" in the British Army and was one of those evacuated from Dunkirk. When D-Day came along he again found himself serving in a British tank outfit attacking the beach. Luck was on his side as he survived again.

Our next stop after leaving the beach area was an historical one, written about in all of the D-Day books. It was about lunchtime when we reached The Cafe, Gondree situated at Benouville on the bank of the Caen Canal, where the canal was crossed by



Pegasus Then

the famous "*Pegasus Bridge*." This bridge was captured before dawn on D-Day by a glider borne force commanded by Major John Howard. His three gliders crash landed within hand grenade range of the Germans guarding the bridge and after a brief fight the bridge was in his possession. This event has also been recorded on film in the movie, "*The Longest Day*." There is a new bridge there now of essentially the same design as the original. Much controversy surrounded the problem of how to dispose of the old bridge. The problem was solved by simply moving it to the shore where it sits on dry ground next to the "Pegasus Museum." The cafe, is the original one and has been in the same family since prior to D-Day. We were served lunch by the Proprietaire, Madame Arlette Gondree-Pritchett who (she said,) lived there at the time of the invasion.



Pegasus Now





Rogers Maes' family. Schaffner holding to small child, Ford and Gatens to his left  
Roger's parents, his wife and children. Roger doing the camera work.

Driving on toward Mons we followed some of the same route taken by the 106th Division on the way to the front in 1944, passing Rouen, Amiens, Cambrai. Now we had a nice open road, a fast, comfortable car, and could bypass the many small villages that we encountered then. And, a definite plus is that the weather was beautiful. Life is good.

We had made plans to meet Rogers Maes at a rest stop on the highway just short of the city of Mons. Alas, we missed our appointment with Rogers. So we then decided to find his house on our own. After cruising around the city for a while we used a bit of logic and a lot of luck and spotted the street we were looking for, and then ran down the number. Rogers and his family were quite surprised that we found them, but it was a very warm greeting and a nice visit for what remained of the day. As it was getting late Rogers volunteered to show us the way to Nivelles where he had made reservations for us to stay at a nice hotel. We had a very good dinner with more chatter, after which Rogers bid us good night. He hit the road home, and we hit the sack. In passing, I will say that Rogers is a dyed-in-the-wool Americanophile, if there is such a word. He loves our "wild west" and the U.S. sports. He wears a Super Bowl shirt, has a cowboy belt, holster, & six-shooter hanging on steer horns in his living room. He drives a Chevy pick-up in his Levi's. His e-mail handle is "cowboy." If that ain't American, I don't know what it is!

### **May 17**

We were up and on our feet with the rest of the working people this morning and left the hotel to seek a light breakfast and browse the nearby shopping mall. We had been invited to have dinner with Rogers parents and family for the coming evening and wanted to take along something nice so we bought a couple of bottles of a nice Luxembourg wine.

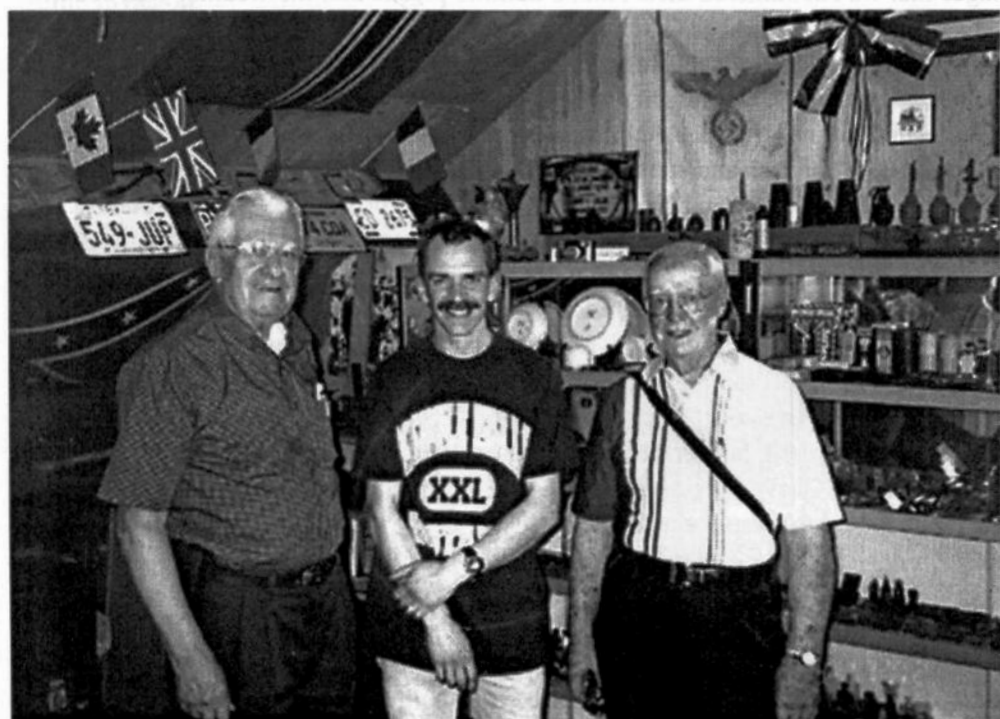
## **Battleground Europe 2002 - by John Schaffner - 589/A**

The hotel we were staying in was on the rural side of the highway and our rooms looked out on a field of grapevines, and grazing sheep & a flock of geese. (Also a swimming pool, too bad it wasn't warmer.)

We visited with Rogers again in the afternoon and he conducted us through his very extensive collection of WW II memorabilia. We were shocked to see all that he had. There are all kinds of weapons in the "small arms" category, uniforms on mannequins, personal equipment, toilet articles, and just about anything else one can think of. My thoughts were that Rogers had enough to supply a respectable museum. A lot was in operable condition, also a lot of items just as they had surfaced from the ground.

Now I will tell you the shocker. He doesn't want anyone (except his family and a few trusted friends) to know about this. There is a lucrative business (black market & flea market) with these items and he is seriously afraid of theft. So the location of this collection is a closely guarded secret.

We spent all afternoon here and when suppertime came Rogers, with his immediate family, conducted us to his parent's home for a visit there. The table was set with a delicate touch. We were seated to an appetizer of a half melon stuck with a skewer holding a very thin slice of the cured Ardennes ham, looking like a sailboat. I knew then that we were there as very special guests. The rest of the meal followed suit and we were stuffed. I thought that if I continue to eat like this I would be fat enough to kill before Thanksgiving. While we were still at the table, and with a couple of neighbors present, I presented Rogers with an *American Flag* and a *Certificate of Appreciation* for his interest in our history and his hospitality for the American veterans. Rogers was visibly shaken and could not hold back his emotion.



Roger Maes collection of war memorabilia, Schaffner on left and Gatens on right.



Schaffner and his good friend Nick Jonckheere from Oostende

All of us were teary-eyed for the moment.

John Gatens also pinned Rogers' six-year old daughter with a miniature American Flag. This certainly made her feel proud. Her smile was from ear to ear.

Of course we were not leaving empty-handed either. Rogers' mother presented each of the three of us with a finely made ceramic statuette of a historical character of Belgian folklore. (*This is now on display with our fine glassware.*)

When we left late that evening for our hotel Rogers insisted on leading in his car to prevent us from getting lost. So, when we finally said good-bye in the parking lot, it was hugs all around, and again no holding back the tears.

There was one final regret, and that was that we could not make the baptismal service for Rogers' 11 month old daughter scheduled for the next day. Our plans had been made ahead and we had to leave.

### **May 18**

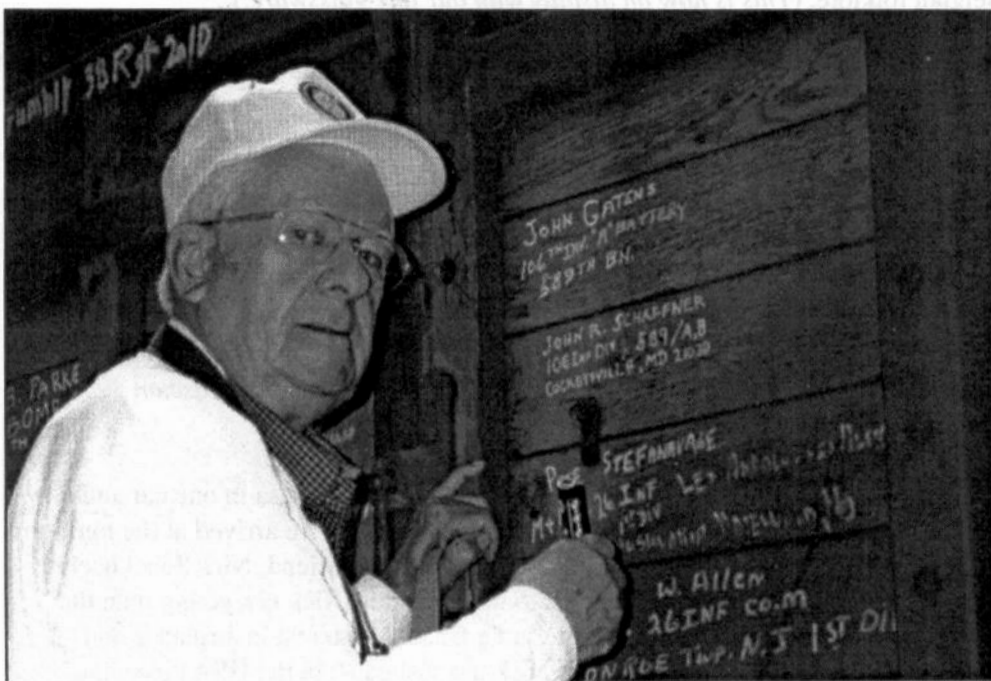
This morning we drove directly to Vince Gerard's home in Somzee, just south of Charleroi. When we arrived there we were met at the door by our good buddy, Hugh Colbert (422/B) from Dallas, Texas, USA. Hugh had been staying with Vince and we discovered that we all had an appointment to visit the "*Remember Museum 39-45*" at Thimister-Clermont. (See next two pages for photos and details)

All of us, with Vince, Hugh, Vince's Mother, and Aunt Teresa in one car and Dave, John and me in the other car, took off cross-country. When we arrived at the museum I was treated to another grand surprise. My good Belgian friend, Nick Jonckheere, had come all the way from Oostend just to meet with us. Nick is a young man that I met in 1994 as a pen-pal. We shared the same fanatical interest in airplanes and aviation history and that got us started. Nick has visited us in the USA since and Dave. John Gatens and I visited him and his family during our trip in 1998. Nick and I now share a serious friendship.



Guests of the hosts at the "Remembrance Museum 39-45" Thimister-Clermont.  
Hosts Marcel and Mathilda Schmetz are known as "M&M."

Therefore the Museum is known as  
"The M&M Museum."



John Schaffner adds his name to the semi-trailer "Red Ball Express" truck to those of other 106th vets who had visited the "M&M" WWII Museum site



## ***Battleground Europe 2002 - by John Schaffner - 589/A***

This WW II museum is the results of the personal efforts of its owners Marcel and Mathilda Schmetz. Except for a Sherman Tank at the side of the road one could drive on by without recognizing the buildings as a museum. Wait until you get inside!

We were greeted most warmly by M & M, as they have become known. We were ushered into a large building containing a semi-trailer truck once used by the famous "Red Ball Express." The trailer was covered by the names of visiting veterans from all kinds of outfits and John Gatens and I were invited to add ours. I noticed that it already held the names of John Swett (423/H), Ken Smith (423/H), Hugh Colbert (422/B), and other 106er's already. This is not your ordinary everyday graffiti.

Mathilda had set her dining room table for our party and, even before entering the museum area, sat us down to lunch. I don't know where else that one can look for this kind of reception.

We had not met before and I had only heard vague references to "M & M."

After the lunch we all piled into Marcel's GI Dodge 3/4 ton 4X4 and he drove us to the Henri Chapelle Cemetery to meet with the superintendent and learn about the plans for Memorial Day. Oh, I must tell you that it was raining and a chill wind was blowing so, before we left, Mathilda dressed us, those who were lightly clad, in heavy GI field jackets. (I like this kind of treatment!)

While at Henri Chapelle, the superintendent, Mr. Gerald Arseneault, acquainted us with material on our own Eric Fisher Wood, Jr. that he had in his files. It seems that since he has worked here, he has noticed an interest in Eric's grave from a great many visitors. This gave him the initiative to start a file on Wood so that he would be more informed to answer questions.

Mr. Arseneault also drove us (in his "stretch" golf cart) to visit the graves of Eric Wood (589/A), Carl Himberg (592/C), and that of Thomas Rockwell (82nd AB/506) whose sister lives near us in Pennsylvania. We made some photos and learned a lot about the general operation of the cemetery and of the events that occur there.

Upon arriving back at the "*Remember Museum*" Mathilda began conducting us on a tour that would eventually take several hours. Among those items that I noticed was the GI uniform of John Swett (423/H) on a mannequin in a display. Also another mannequin dressed in the fancy Army Air Corps uniform of my pen-pal friend, Col. (Ret) John Hoyer. Not only are there hundreds of military items here, including vehicles, but many full sized dioramas depicting actual historical wartime events that happened locally. This place should be on any BoB veteran's list to see, should he get back to Belgium.

Before leaving, our most gracious hostess, Mathilda, sat us down again to a delicious ice cream dessert. Even before we could get up from her table she gave each of us a bag of very nice (Belgian) chocolate candies. Oh my, what a nice day we had, all, thanks to Vince Gerard and our hosts Marcel and Mathilda Schmetz!! Of course, more tearful goodbyes and a rash of photos and then we returned to our cars and drove off.

We all then returned to the hotel in Charleroi for a light supper after which Dave, John, and I, volunteered to go to bed so our hosts could go home. We made a date to meet with them the next morning for more surprises. What next?

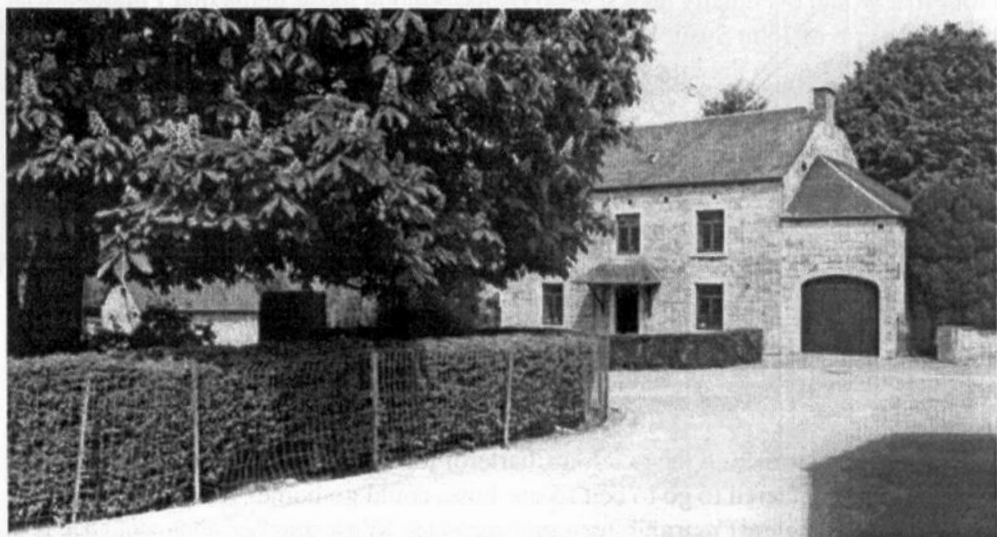


Foy-Notre Dame Panther and German equipment KO'd in "The Bulge."

### **May 19**

In the morning we were met by Vince Gerard at our hotel in Charleroi. Vince, with his passengers of Hugh Colbert, Madam Gerard, and Aunt Teresa led us out of town to places unknown at the time. It was not a long drive to the village of Foy - Notre Dame. This small village was where the German Army had its deepest penetration on its path to Antwerp. They still had a long way to go but the opposition, American and British, were in a position here to stop them. Nearby is the village of Celles, also on the "high-water-mark" line.

While in Foy - Notre Dame one of the residents described to Vince his version of the battle that took place here and then Vince related it to us. We then entered the local restaurant, Au Vieux Marronnier (The Old Tree), for lunch. During our lunch, we were joined by the local priest, who also had HIS version of the battle. We then



Same scene May19. 2002



Panther killed near Celles - 24 December 1944

left the restaurant and were looking around the village when we entered into conversation with another local resident. This man, Marcel Matz, told us that he was 11 years old at the time and witnessed the battle from the cellar of his house. He was showing us a small short handle shovel that he described as a weapon that he struck down a German soldier with. Interesting, because we were standing in front of Marcel's house. Also, he told us that he had taken refuge with about 18 very young German soldiers in this cellar and that all of them had discarded their weapons and were crying in fear of their life. Marcel then invited all of us to come in the house and take a look. He led us to the cellar steps where we all had to crouch down to negotiate the low opening. Once in this small cellar we could not stand because of the low overhead. It was of a size that had to be very cramped if it held 18-19 people. There was barely room enough for eight of us. This was an interesting experience, one that bus tour would not include for sure.

We heard a story about the village church that the priest negotiated with the Allied attackers to spare it from destruction.



Display of above Tiger Tank at Junction of N510 and N48 near Celles May 2002



Ferme de Mahenne near Foy-Notre Dame  
photo 2001

Below US Signal photo  
Scene of tank battle 1944



Below Dave Ford acquaints family  
with what happened in their back yard





We then drove a short distance to the Ferme de Mahenne where on Christmas Day, 1944, a large German force of armor and infantry were subjected to a fierce attack from American P-38s (See photos on page 34). When the planes finished, the place was mostly destroyed and ablaze.

Dave brought out his Jean Paul Pallud book and proceeded to acquaint the current residents of the farm with the story and showed them photos that were made after the battle. They were of a younger generation and seemed to be unaware of what had happen many years ago right where we were standing.

Our next stop was at the cafe, at the road intersection at Celles where we had a bit of refreshment and snapped a photo of the remains of a German Panther tank of the 2nd Panzer Division that met its demise nearby. The tank now sits on a concrete pad as a reminder of the futility of the Nazi cause.

Leaving Celles, Vince led us into the village of Villers Poterie to a most unique event. (See photo below) There was an organization of Napoleon era military re-enactors that was rehearsing for a much larger turnout for the next day. There must have been at least seventy men and boys dressed in uniforms of sparkling white pants and dark blue tunics with bright red trim. They also had plumed hats to match and were armed with ancient rifles and short "blunderbusses." When given the command to fire, all went off with a deafening blast flooding the area with a dense white smoke. Several of the "officers" were mounted on sturdy looking horses and rode back and forth along the column giving orders. When the demonstration had ended we were invited to join the group. We were given the ceremonial hats to wear and handed the weapons for a photo session. Then the real fun began. Beer was on tap and there was not a dry mouth in the crowd. We had a great social time and met several of the fellows including their "commander" who insisted that we help them drink the beer. We gave it our best.



Villers Poterie May 19, 2002 "Compagne" Privates Gatien, Schaffner and Colbert

Oh, I almost forgot, there was a reason for all this. It seems that in ancient times there was a need to remove the bones of Sainte Rolende from one village to another. Since the roads were known to be dangerous, a company of soldiers was sent to perform escort duty. The mission was accomplished successfully, so every year there is a re-enactment.

This is undoubtedly one of the most colorful and exciting events that I have ever witnessed in Europe. Everybody joined in for a joyous celebration when it is over. There were two American fellows in this group and we had great fun with them. They insisted on swapping hats and aiming at us with their blunderbusses for a photo.

There was still daylight left so Vince led us out into the country to a large grassy field that was in use by a radio-control model airplane club that he is a member of. He somehow discovered that I was into the same hobby. Little did I know what he had in store for me. After we watched these fellows fly their planes for a while, I suggested that we move on. I was told that nobody moves until I get to fly one of the planes. I had no intention of doing that. The controls that are used there are directly opposite what I am used to. No way was I going to do that. (Photo below)

Well, I was given an ultimatum, I fly or we stay there. O.K. It wasn't my airplane, right? So, I made a deal that the owner take off and get to altitude and then I would take it. He did, and I did, but I was all over the place with that critter and before I lost it completely I handed the transmitter off to the owner for the landing. Before we could finally leave I was presented with a small trophy from the club president. (No doubt for NOT crashing. Whew!)

It had been a really full day so we headed back to Charleroi for dinner in a real nice place a few blocks down the boulevard from our hotel. As we were finishing our meal I presented Vince Gerard with the American flag and certificate (similar to what I had given Rogers Maes.) Again the reaction was very emotional and we all succumbed to tears for a brief moment. We said our goodbyes at the car. Vince, Hugh, Mom, and Aunt Teresa went on to Somzee and we settled in our hotel for a well deserved night's sleep. I turned and tossed only once before falling asleep.



The Albatros Club - awards Schaffner for NOT crashing their radio controlled plane



Liberation Museum May 20 2002 - l/r Frank van DeBergh, John Gatens  
Hans Wijers and wife Sandra and John Schaffner

### **May 20**

We had a lengthy drive on this day from Charleroi, past Liege, Maastricht, Roermond, Venlo, Groesbeek to Arnhem in The Netherlands. It was good road all the way and we made it to the Hotel Groot Warnsborn with no problem. The highways are well marked and we carried excellent maps. Our arrangement was to meet with Hans Wijers at the Liberation Museum at noon. Hans is a researcher and writer who has many literary credits concerning the WW II battles. He has been available and helpful to many visiting American and German veterans when they return to the battlefields of Europe.

The first person that we met at the museum was an English-speaking fellow, Frank van deBergh who had been alerted about our arrival by Hans. The museum is located in the area where the airborne attack known as "Operation Market Garden" took place. Frank acquainted us with the situation of that battle as we stood there and looked out on what must have been another chaotic scene. Whenever I visit these places it is a reminder of how lucky I was. The operation was a monumental task involving 5,000 aircraft and 2,500 gliders. General Bernard Montgomery was in command. His goal was to get his forces around the northern end of the Siegfried Line

Hans came in with his lovely wife, Sandra, and with Frank, toured us all through the museum. Later Hans had to leave for another appointment and Frank took charge of us. We got in the car and Frank directed us all around the Arnhem area, pointing out various places where the airborne troops were in combat with the German defenders. This was another good battle for me to have missed. The attackers had one "bridge too far" and the operation failed. For more on this read, "*A Bridge Too Far*," by Cornelius Ryan.

Before heading back to the hotel we cruised around until we located the British Airborne Museum located in what had been the Hartenstein Hotel in the Oosterbeek area. This place had served as headquarters for the Germans before the battle and for the British during the battle. More than 10,000 British and Polish Airborne troops fought in and around Arnhem. Failing to hold their objectives, only 2,293 made it back to England. The old hotel is now a museum of the highest British quality. Now, this museum closes at 5PM. The time then was 4:58 PM The gentleman at the counter said that he would not charge us, but then said, "You have 10 minutes, no more!" So we did a lick and a miss until the man announced, "Your ten minutes are up!"

We then started back to the Groot Warningsboren Hotel with one stop on the way. It was the British Military Cemetery. These cemeteries are different in that the graves are marked with conventional tombstones. They are all the same size and shape, but with different inscriptions on individual stones. Two stones, side by side were those of "T. Gronert" and C. Gronert." These soldiers were twins, and died on the same day, 17 September 1944, age 21. That was enough for one day so we headed on back to the hotel. We again had a real nice supper and marched off to bed.

### **May 21**

This morning found us on the road again. After a nice breakfast we headed off toward the area of the Hürtgen Forest. It was a long way from Arnhem and our goal was to rendezvous with an acquaintance of Dave, Ron van Rijt. Ron is an English speaking Dutchman, and apparently well versed in the history surrounding the battle that took place in the Hürtgen Forest. He was to be our unofficial guide and we were looking forward to meeting Ron in the village of Schmidt about noon. There was a mix up in communications and when we arrived at the meeting place Ron was not there.

We proceeded on to our hotel, The Talschenke, for a light lunch of excellent soup before exploring the area on our own. No worry as Dave had been here before and was able to act as our guide. This Hürtgen Forest impressed me as the most unlikely place for two armies ever to come together to do battle. However, it did happen. The topography is of steep hillsides covered with a dense growth of evergreen trees, ravines, and rocky outcrops. The roads, like the one to our hotel, are narrow switchback trails that descend to the river bottom and then climb back up to the next hill. There are some places a large truck would have trouble negotiating the turns. Add this place to the list of other places where I was glad I was not during the *Battle of the Bulge*.

However rugged the country, it is now a beautiful place for a restful vacation. The Talschenke Hotel is at the bottom level on a clear stream of water that looks like it is drinkable, surrounded by the steep wooded hills. This is a great "get-a-way" spot.

Our next stop was to see one of the several German Military cemeteries that are at the higher elevations there. One is the Windhund Cemetery. As in Normandy, these cemeteries have a very somber atmosphere. The flat grave markers on the ground and the groups of coarse crosses, all of the same dark brown stone, are very depressing to view. I was not impressed that this was a place where I would like to be laid to rest. No matter how brave or courageous these men were, they have not been given a place of honor, as I see it. Field Marshal Walter Model is buried here, near Wuppertal, after committing suicide on April 21, 1945 upon the defeat of his army. He was of the belief that "a Field Marshal is never taken prisoner." The marker bears only his name, date of birth, and date of death.



## **Battleground Europe 2002 - by John Schaffner - 589/A**

At another German cemetery nearby, known by the name "Wilde Sau," we viewed a memorial to a Lt. Friedrich Lengfeld. This is most unusual because it is dedicated to a German officer who gave his life to save a severely wounded American soldier. The memorial was erected by the 22nd Infantry Regiment Association of the 4th Infantry Division, U. S. Army. This site is near the village of Hürtgen.

Also on this day Dave drove us to the village of Hürtgenwald-Kleinhau. Here we drove into the driveway of what appeared to be a very nice home. John Gatens and I were puzzled by what our buddy was up to. We soon discovered that in addition to being a very comfortable home, this was also the sales shop and manufacturing facility of a very talented ceramics artist. While there he showed us many of the items that he was working on, and items that he had for sale. Also, and this was the big surprise, all of this was built on what had been a German bunker! There was no indication on the outside but it was situated with a commanding view of the terrain to say the least. It seems that the government sold off some of these facilities after the war when they could be put to good use. Why not, the below-ground part of the bunker afforded this gentleman much storage space for his materials.

That evening, back at The Talschenke Hotel, we had a great supper. My pals had the ordinary things but I ordered a "Poached Trout." When the fish arrived, he was whole, curled around on the plate like he was trying to shake the hook, and looking at me like I was going to eat him. I did.

### **May 22**

The sky was overcast and threatening rain for the first time. Our drive from here in the western most Germany, south to Luxembourg is not too far in this day and age. We stopped at various sites of WW II action with Dave conducting the tour.

We pulled off the road at the entrance to a trail that ran along with the famous "Dragon's Teeth" of the Siegfried Line. It was in this area the 99th Division was in action during the Battle of the Bulge. We walked into the woods where Dave pointed out a boundary marker that separated Germany from Belgium. While walking back to the car we could hear the sounds of a group of people coming along behind us.



Will Cavanaugh, with a bus-load of U. S. Army non-coms from the 69th Air Defense Artillery Brigade, 5th U. S. Corps. The 106th guys are in the center, second row.  
Schaffner in the white sweater Ford and Gatens beside him.

## ***Battleground Europe 2002 - by John Schaffner - 589/A***

They were English speaking so we waited for them to catch up. It turned out to be the tour guide Will Cavanagh, with a bus-load of U. S. Army non-coms from the 69th Air Defense Artillery Brigade, 5th U. S. Corps. The group was being given an orientation on what happened here during the Battle of the Bulge.

Dave was acquainted with Cavanagh so we all stopped to chat for a few minutes. When the group found out that Gatens and I were veterans of the battle we were bombarded with questions (once again) to reveal our personal experiences. We were there quite a long time and before departing many of the group asked for our autographs on their tour books and then it was time to pose with various individuals and for a group photo. The Brigade CSM then presented us with a medal of appreciation that depicts their insignia. I can't say that John Gatens and I are really used to this attention, but it surely is nice to be recognized. We are still aware that we are representing the many participants of the *Battle of the Bulge* to the younger generation. It was not a one-man army.

The next place to explore was along the line held by the 106th in December 1944. In particular we spent some time where the 589th was in place at Herzfenn and actually drove the "Engineer's Cutoff" again. This trail is still in use by the local farmers. It is a short-cut for them, although they need not fear driving around the (formerly dangerous 88-corners) intersection a little farther down the road.

From there we went on to St. Vith, as I had an American flag to present to the caretakers of the memorial to the 106th Division. In May 2001, John Kline and Dr. Richard Peterson had visited the Head master of the school where our 106th Infantry Division Memorial is located. They were in need of a new flag. I volunteered to furnish a new one and took this opportunity to do so.



John Schaffner presenting Herr Englebert Cremer, St Vith School Master, with American flag to fly over the 106th Memorial. John Gatens and Madame Nathalie Mertes lookin on.

This memorial is a stela mounted bronze plaque, backed by three flagpoles that fly the American, Belgian, and European Community flags. This site is under the control of the school and is tended by the officials at the adjacent school, so we sought out the Headmaster, Mr. Englebert Cremer. This is German-speaking territory so it was not quite that easy. First we had to find someone who spoke English, or, at least, a little "pigeon-French." A young lady, Nathalie Mertes, came to our aid with her knowledge of English. Thank goodness, it would have been very awkward without her.

We were invited into Mr. Cremer's office and made our presentation. Since there was a language barrier, we made the presentation to Mr. Cremer through the translator. Mr. Cremer then made his thanks, and told us that the flag was such a nice one that he would have it flown, "on special occasions." The three of us then made a gracious exit.

Our next appointment was with our old friend and curator of the WW II Museum in Clervaux, Luxembourg, Frank Kieffer. When we arrived at Frank's home we found that he could not be there to entertain us that day because he had to be at the hospital with his wife's sister who was seriously ill. Realizing that Frank's family responsibilities had higher priorities than us, we made plans to meet him the next day.

We spent some time in Clervaux in the shops and then went on to our hotel, "*The Vieux Moulin*" (The Old Mill) in Asselborn.

The evening weather had turned cool and wet so we had a nice dinner at the hotel and spent some time talking with a Dutch couple before retiring. If you ever wonder, these small, old country hotels in the out of the way places have been very nice and not too expensive, and they know how to present a meal. They may not have an elevator, a bell hop, or room service, but they do have advantages.

### **May 23**

We met with Frank Kieffer again today at his home and from there he drove us into Clervaux and to the old castle that houses his museum. Frank has been a collector for many years and he has stocked this museum with memorabilia of WW II of all descriptions. His collection of scale models includes some items that I made and sent to him. It is very gratifying to see them on display.

The museum was not officially open on this day but there were tourists in the town that just happened to notice that the door was open. When they came in Frank told them that they were welcome as long as we stayed. In situations like this Frank has never turned anyone away. A couple of these visitors were British re-enactors, counterparts of our own homegrown American GI re-enactors. It was fun to talk with them. We spent a lot of time in the museum, but when we were ready to leave he shushed the rest of the visitors out with us and locked the door behind.

Frank then drove us back to his home for lunch. His wife, Maria, had prepared a nice table for us that included that delicacy known as Jambon des Ardennes. We have come to expect this kind of hospitality from the people that we know in the Ardennes. Before leaving Frank pressed two bottles each of that nice Luxembourg wine on us, plus a CD stored with photos of the displays in his museum. It was something to remember him by.



Gatens presents  
Frank Kieffer  
Certificate of  
Appreciation  
Maria and Frank  
in their home.  
John Schaffner  
back-Left



Memorial Day 2002  
Henri Chapelle  
Cemetery  
Belgium

Procession through  
cemetery

Flower presentation  
below







Claude LeJuene with daughter  
Esmeralda and  
Wife Bernadette our hosts at  
Baraque de Fraiture  
(Parker's CrossRoads)

Above: Robert Noir Homme presents  
Belgian Waffles.  
Vet Eddy Assilen back of Robert.  
Mrs. Noir Homme in the back.



Dave Ford with Albert Fosty, CRIBA  
on his left.



Mayor Gennen, Vielsalm (center) and group after a reception in City Hall May 23, 2002



At Rolley Chateau, May 23. Madame Maus de Rolley shows us around, Andre HUBERT (left)

We departed Clervaux about 3 PM for Baraque de Fraiture. When we arrived at the Auberge du Carrefour we found that they had started the party without us. Our old friends of CRIBA were there; Maria, Bernadette, Esmeralda, Claude, Henri, Albert, Andre, Jacques, Joseph, Eddy, and some that I have not included here. Of course we had to catch up so after the hugs and kisses we tried to do just that. Also there were two younger gentlemen, Paul Brennan and Jack Rosen, who were escorting Eddy Asselin, another WW II Vet. The three of them had traveled from Boston to the Ardennes and Eddy Monfort had charge of them for the moment.

About 7 PM we left the crossroads and went to the hotel at Hebronval where Bernadette had secured lodging for us for three nights. After checking in, we went on to Eddy Monfort's home at Malempre'. Eddy and his wife, Marie-France had set the table for us for supper, yes, all of us. The party went on until after 11 PM. When we broke up Dave, John, and I went on "home" to the Hebronval Hotel.

### **May 24**

This morning we met with Henri Rogister and Andre Hubert at the Hebronval along with Jack, Paul, and Eddy Asselin. Henri and Andre had volunteered to be our guides today.

We drove to the home (and studio) of Robert Noirhomme at the village of Rocourt. Robert has what we would call a "cottage industry." He is quite an artist and does paintings, small figurines, and wall plaques, among other things. Many of these he freely gives to visiting veterans. He, with his son, Jean-Francois, also collect memorabilia of WW II and have a display that uses several floors of an old mill building that stands next to their home. They have a store of most kinds of small arms weapons, ammo, soldier's personal gear, and uniformed mannequins.

After the tour of the museum, Robert invited us into his home. The home was once the mill itself and is still adorned with its water wheel. The interior has been remodeled into a most comfortable home. Upon arriving into the kitchen area we were greeted by Mrs. Noirhomme and a double stack of apple filled Belgian Waffles.

**Fantastically Delicious!**

Robert then took us into his office where he treated us to a look at his cigar band collection. This hobby is very much in vogue in Belgium and Robert's collection is quite extensive. Robert then gave John Gatens and me water-color paintings that

## ***Battleground Europe 2002 - by John Schaffner - 589/A***

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depicted each of us in action at Baraque de Fraiture. The paintings were done on paper that we had autographed for him in 1998 during our last visit. This was so touching and nice of him to do. Mine is now framed and on the wall.

We departed Rocourt about 3 PM and headed for Bastogne in the company of Andre Hubert, where we expected to get into the Museum Historique. Alas, it was not open. We then drove on to Bizory and the Bois de la Paix (Peace Woods) where the individual trees are dedicated to veterans who have returned to visit. It was a cool and windy day so after making a few photos of our trees, we drove on to Recogne to see the monument dedicated to the American Indians and the pasture holding a herd of American Bison. I made a few photos to send on to Jim West, our (American Indian) friend at the indianamilitary.org website.

Next, we drove to the Rolley (Rolle) Chateau, where the German advance took a real beating at the hands of the 502nd Parachute Regiment and the 327th Glider Regiment supported by several artillery and TD units. Dave simply knocked on the door (he had been there before) of the chateau and was warmly greeted by Madam Jacques Maus de Rolley herself. I will not state her age but she was already a young woman and present here at the time of the battle. Regardless of that, Madam Rolley invited us in and conducted us on a tour of the chateau, explaining not only the history of the place that dated to the 11th century, but also details of the battle that raged around her home on Christmas 1944. This grand lady defies her age and operates this estate very capably, no doubts.

Late in the afternoon we all assembled at Vielsalm at the Hotel de Ville (City Hall.) Besides us there was Henri and his group of three Americans and quite a few people that we did not know. We were all invited to the Mayor's office and introduced to Mayor Jacques Gennen, Deputy Mayor Dominique Offergeld, and other city officials. The Mayor then proceeded to make a short speech, introducing us to the group, and then declared a toast, and the corks were popped on the champagne. Some of the guests were English speaking but after a couple of glasses it didn't really matter. Cameras were flashing and people were talking, and the glasses were being refilled all around. When the party was declared over we all formed up on the steps of the City Hall for a group photo. The local papers carried the story but, alas, they are in French so I don't know what they said about us.

Now, to wind up the day, we headed back to Baraque de Fraiture for dinner. When we arrive the table has been set in Maria's dining room for about twenty of us, including the CRIBA folks. This celebration has now become a traditional thing with us and we surely do appreciate it. Again I have to say that it is received in the spirit of the memory of all those who will never be able to receive it themselves. It was certainly a fine dinner served with grace and attention.

As the meal was winding down I brought out the American flag (that had been flown over the U. S. Capitol) and with the translating help of Andre Hubert, presented it to Maria Le Haire on behalf of the 106th Infantry Division Association for the gracious welcome that she has extended to the U. S. Veterans over the years.

### ***May 25***

This day was the last day, essentially, of a very wonderful experience. It was a very full day starting with a tour that included a stop at Chateau Xhos, a place where part of the 589th FAB took refuge after the action at Parker's Crossroads. While they

were there men of the 589th became involved in the recovery of the wreckage of a B-17. This particular aircraft was doubly significant since it was carrying General Frederick Castle and leading a raid on Germany. Both the pilot and General Castle died in the crash of the plane. We were not the first 589th veterans to return here. Several others have done so and kept a contact with Madam Marie Collange who is still living there and managing the farm operation.

We then drove on to Albert & Annie Fosty's home in Fleron where Annie had set the table for lunch for us. It is no wonder that Albert is such a big fellow, Annie feeds him well, and us too!

We left Fleron early enough to arrive at Henri Chapelle well before the time for the Memorial Day Ceremony so that we could visit the graves of those we knew. This was a most impressive sight. The day could not have been more perfect. The chairs were set up for the guests, the podium for the speakers, and every one of the 7,989 marble markers was enhanced by the two flags, American and Belgian. There was the Military Band, the Color Guard, the Firing Squad, the Belgian Veterans Color Guard, representative units from all of the U.S. Military services, and more people present than I had imagined. It was such an honor for us just to be present.

This day was also the occasion of the dedication of the AMVETS Memorial Carillon installed by the AMVETS in association with the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.

After all of the addresses by the dignitaries the laying of the wreaths commenced. When our names were called, John Gatens and I accompanied the military persons carrying the wreaths and participated with the salute.

There were a great many wreaths to be presented including another one in the name of the 106th Division. This was a surprise to us.

When the ceremony ended we returned to the cars and drove to Liege to the home of Henri & Rene Rogister, where once again, we were treated to a wonderful supper by Renee. We spent the rest of the evening here with Henri and Albert and their wives in friendly conversation until it was time to return to Hebronval.

### ***May 26***

We had been invited to breakfast at the Auberge du Carrefour for our last day in Belgium. I am sad just thinking about saying good-bye to our friends.

The table was set for us when we arrived, and in addition to Maria, Bernadette, and Esmeralda, our good friend, Eddy Monfort was there. As we were ready to leave, a (younger) couple arrived to meet us. It was Nicole and Robert Doudelet of Vielsalm. Robert had been involved with the erection of the monument at Parker's Crossroads in 1994 and his wife, Nicole, is an artist and has done landscape art of the area. Nicole had brought an item to show us. It was a PW dress that had been her mother's as a German prisoner. It was the only clothes that her mother had when she was released and she wore it coming back home. What a bitter reminder this is of what had happened there. They will never forget.

Time was running out for us so we went outside to the old 105mm howitzer and used the rest of our film making last minute photos of everyone.

We had to make our goodbyes eventually and it is never easy, so we just say au revoir, until next time. Before we make it to the door, Bernadette is there to press a



## ***Battleground Europe 2002 - by John Schaffner - 589/A***

package into our hands saying, "It is for your wife." Though our wives were not with us they are also remembered.

We hit the road to Paris. It was about a five hour drive to the Charles de Gaulle Airport. We successfully negotiated the confusion of the airport signs and found the Hertz turn in location. Then we had another problem, finding the Raddison Hotel shuttle bus. Of course, after asking about we did find the shuttle, bussed on to the hotel and registered. It had been a long day so we were in bed at a reasonable hour.

### ***May 27***

Hotel shuttle to Charles de Gaulle, Fly home Depart Paris Flt 309 to Heathrow Arrive 12:24 PM - Depart Heathrow Flt 223 1:50 PM Arrive Dulles 4:55 PM Limo home.

It was a "L o n g D a y."

The two friends, John Gatens and Dave Ford, that I traveled with made this trip most enjoyable. We planned the itinerary together and were agreeable with all aspects from the very start. Special thanks to Dave Ford for sharing his intimate knowledge of the places we visited, and very special thanks to our friends in Belgium, The Netherlands, and Luxembourg who make sure that we are welcome and always have special treats in store for us.

It is a good life.

A TOAST TO ALL

See you in Hampton, VA in September.

*John Schaffner 589/A*



l/r: Mayor Gennen, Vielsalm; John Schaffner; John Gatens; Maria LeHaire and Andre HUBERT

## ***In Memoriam . . .***

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### **Bailly, Randolph M. 424/B**

**90 Horseneck Pt Road, Oceanport, NJ 07757**

Died 16 June 2002. Grandson, James Gibson, Captain USMC informs us that his Grandfather Captain Randolph M. Bailly 424/B passed away in his sleep 16 June. His Grandfather was especially proud of his time with the 106<sup>th</sup> and with the men that he served. Randolph Bailly is survived by his wife, Louise and his daughters Carol, Sandy and Linda.

A Memorial Service was held 20 June at Tower Hill Church, Red Bank, NJ and Captain Bailly was laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery on 26 July 2002

### **Colarusso, John F 423/HQ 3Bn**

**PO Box 1385 Bowling Green, VA 22427**

Died 29 June 2002. Son Joseph called informing us of his father's death. Association records show wife's name as Phyllis.

### **Cottingham, Ray E. 424/K**

**9991 So. Muffin Lane, Hereford, AZ 85615**

Died 13 July 2002. Son Ed, an Associate member, reported that his father passed away peacefully. He also said that he, Ed, will try to make the Hampton Reunion this year, along with his eldest son. Ed's email address is Edward@C212.com.

### **Dahlen, William S. 591/SV**

**1062 In a Circle, Franklin, IN 46131-9192**

Died 11 July 2002. Wife Barbara called informing us of his death. Barbara is an Associate member. William S. Dahlen Sr. was a retired building engineer for the former United States Fidelity & Guaranty Insurance Co in downtown Baltimore. He died of cancer at a hospital in Beech Grove, Indiana at the age of 80. Married to Barbara L. Swiggett in 1947 the couple settled in Linthicum.

A metal worker by trade, he worked for Lloyd E. Mitchell Co. and Riggs Distler before being named building engineer for USF&G's building, now the Legg Marson Building. A member of the Linthicum United Methodist Church, he also had been a district commissioner in Maryland for the Boy Scouts of America.

An avid woodworker who enjoyed building dollhouses in his basement workshop. Interested in genealogy and an avid Orioles and Colts fan. He is survived by wife Barbara, two sons William and David, a sister Dorothy and five grandchildren.

### **Lorah, Elwood 592/C**

**607 Holtzman Road, Reinholds, PA 17659**

Elwood's death 18 April 2002, was reported in the last CUB. He was a cook in "C" Battery with the rank of Sergeant. But no detail was given. Debbie Lorah, Elwood's daughter-in-law, reported in after the May CUB was mailed. She stated that Elwood, age 79, died in a Reading hospital following outpatients surgery. He survived the surgery, but died of a heart attack as he was dressing to go home. He had been in

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***Rest In Peace***

## ***In Memoriam . . .***

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apparent good health with regular walks with a nearby neighbor.

His wife died in May 1996. He was employed 28 years as by Textile Machine Works, Wyomissing, he retired as a supervisor in 1977. He worked part time as a handy man until he was 75 years old. A member of the Allegheny Lutheran Church, Knaveis (?) he was on the Church Council as financial secretary for 13 years. Survived by two sons Leslie and Terry (Debbie's husband).

### **Merz, O. Paul 422 Service Company**

**1344 Norfolk Circle, Indianapolis, IN 46224**

Died 15 June 2002 at the age of 86. He was a cobbler 46 years for Shoe Corporation, Cincinnati, retiring in 1980. Paul was the 106<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Association's representative to Camp Atterbury and attended every meeting of the Memorial committee.

He was a member of Speedway Christian Church; American Legion Post 500; Veterans of Foreign Wars, Vevay Post; Vevay, Indiana; Masonic Lodge. A POW in WWII and Purple Heart recipient.

Survivors: wife Carlene R. Garman Merz; sisters Bertha M. McCullough, Virginia Bell; brother Donald M. Merz; two grandchildren and a great grandchild.

### **Smith, Howard G. 423/f**

**PO Box 516, Forestdale, MA 02644**

Died 16 May 2002. Wife Virginia (Ginny) emailed: I am sorry to report that my husband Howard passed away. He has been ill for some time and gradually deteriorated for the last six months. He was too weak to withstand the 5<sup>th</sup> heart attack. A wonderful man, husband and father to our four sons. I have nearly 55 years of memories and fell so blessed to have had him in my life for so long. He was buried in our National Cemetery here in Cape Code.

We all have our  
Suitcases packed.

## See You at the 56th Annual Reunion

106th Inf. Div. Association  
September 18-22, 2002  
Holiday Inn - Hampton, Virginia

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