

2d Lt. George E. Hammond

*Company H, 422nd Regiment
106th Infantry Division*



A small suitcase has now become symbolic of man's indomitable spirit across international boundaries. We owe Hans Wijers in the Netherlands for his thoughtfulness.

It all began almost 62 years ago in the freezing cold of the Ardennes. A young lieutenant with [H Company of the 422nd Regiment, 106th Infantry Division](#) was covering the withdrawal of his platoon somewhere near Schonberg.

He was facing superior forces of the German onslaught on December 19, 1944 in the famed "Battle of the Bulge". Many Americans were captured - many died, including our lieutenant. To the everlasting glory of the Infantry goes the name of 2d Lt. George E. Hammond. He was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star and Purple Heart for his final effort for his men and country.

Who was the 23 year old lieutenant - where did he come from ? We now know that he was born in Texas to Molly and Stephen Hammond. They brought him from the dust bowl of Texas to San Diego, California in search of a better life. He graduated from the local high school and enlisted in the Army in 1940. Two siblings were born in 1924 (Helen) and Stephen Jr. in 1927.

Flash forward to 2006: Han Wijers came into possession of this suitcase -notified John Kline with a picture of the same. John dutifully notified all members of the 106th ID of WW2 fame. Doug Rubnitz, (422/H) replied to Kline that he remembered Lt. Hammond in his company and knew that he was killed.

Doug Rubnitz went to Stalag 4B Muhlberg Sachsen until liberated in 1945. Other members of H/422 may remember him as a POW survivor.

I shared with John Ebbinghaus what I knew about the lieutenant's burial site at Ft. Rosecrans in San Diego. He found the obituary dated 1949 for the funeral for 2d Lt. George E. Hammond. John is a former member of the 11th Airborne, Scout Platoon. He missed the great war by a matter of months.

Through his dogged persistence in search of next of kin, he found both younger siblings in Southern California. He called Helen and almost brought her to tears. John said he will never forget her elation and joy over the remembrance of her older brother - and that old suitcase. Hans Wijers was notified and is beside himself with disbelief at the successful closure of this episode.



Arrangement for shipment of "the symbolic suitcase" are in process. I hope that we can get a picture of Helen and Stephen Jr. standing beside the suitcase. Most of the players here are in their 80's - a few in their late 70's. What does that tell you about courage, fortitude, stamina - and especially - man's indomitable spirit across International borders ???

Love, friendship and hope still prevails in this world - our beautiful blue planet.

Teamwork and cooperation DOES have a payoff,

Chuck Wilkinson
2d Armored Cav

PS: Here is the latest email from Hans Wijers - dated 5 November 2006:

John!

This is wonderful news! I'm speechless, and your hard work did come up with results! When you wrote me I will do anything I can, you really did all you could! I will write also a personal mail to George Hammond his sister Helen. Another circle is closed!

--

Hans J. Wijers

Home page:

Battle of the Ardennes "North Shoulder" 1944-45

<http://home.planet.nl/~wijer037/Bulge/default.htm>

It took teamwork and dogged determination by members of the 106th and support from John Ebbinghaus, veteran of the 11th Airborne, Scout Platoon, to pull off closure of the mission. Much credit goes to Doug Rubnitz who remembered the Lieutenant with H Company of the 422nd Regt. We owe our international brother, Han Wijers of the Netherlands, our sincerest gratitude.

But the final chapter will be written when we have sister and brother pictured standing beside the lost suitcase. They lost their older brother at age 23 but didn't forget what he did for country and his fellow soldiers. It's natural for all Americans to feel proud and join us in a sense of accomplishment after 62 years. The Lieutenant's spirit is with us., we "Band of Brothers".



Information courtesy of Chuck Wilkinson, Hans J. Wijers and John Kline

INDIANA
MILITARY
Organization

Page last revised
James D. West
www.IndianaMilitary.org
jimdwest@centurylink.net