

Robert G. "Bob" Miller

*Weapons Platoon
Company G, 423rd Regiment
106th Infantry Division*

Senator Recalls Father's Ultimate Sacrifice Government informs family eight months after his death in Germany.

by Arkansas Senator Paul Miller
Special to the Guard

Melbourne - Robert G. "Bob" Miller was known in IZARD County in the late 1930s and early 1940s as a rising political "star". He had served two terms as IZARD County treasurer and was finishing his second term as IZARD County circuit clerk when he entered the U. S. Army after volunteering at the local draft board in Melbourne.

He entered the Army in April of 1944 and was sent to Camp Robinson in North Little Rock for his basic training as an infantryman. He was there until late summer. He received a 10-day furlough to spend time at home before traveling by troop train to Fort George in Meade, Md.

He left Little Rock at 3 p. m. on August 14 and arrived at 5:30 a. m. on August 15. While there, he visited Washington, D. C., and sent us all postcards showing the historic places. He left Fort George by train on August 30 for [Camp Atterbury](#), Ind., and arrived about 10 a. m. on August 31.

At Camp Atterbury, my father became a part of the 106th Infantry Division. While he was there, Mother and I went by train to visit him. We stayed at a boarding house out of town. I remember it very well. It was only for a few days, but the time was so precious. This was in September of 1944.

He left Camp Atterbury on October 8 or 9 and traveled either by train or truck. It appears to have been more likely by truck. He was already assigned to [Weapons Platoon or Fourth Platoon, Company G, 423rd Regiment, 2nd Battalion, 106th Infantry Division](#). He arrived at Camp Myles Standish on October 19 and was there until October 16. They boarded a ferry at Hoboken, N. J. and arrived at Pier 94 on 47th Street in New York City.

They were greeted there by the American Red Cross and were treated to doughnuts, coffee and candy bars as the band played music for them at the dock. After boarding the Queen Elizabeth, they spent the night at the dock and prepared to sail. They saw the Statue of Liberty as they sailed out on the Hudson River to the Atlantic Ocean on October 17.

On the voyage across, the soldiers alternated shifts with 12 hours on deck and 12 hours in the staterooms below, which were furnished with bunk beds. Baths were taken in salt water, which did not lather well. Paperback books were passed out for those who wanted to read. Dad wrote us that he "fed the fish" only once and did not get seasick

again. They were fed two meals per day, and greasy mutton stew was the main course. A blimp followed them out to sea for two days and then they were alone.

Dad wrote Mother practically every day from the time he was at Camp Robinson in North Little Rock until it became impossible to send out mail. Very often, he would also write each of us three children, (Paul and sisters, Jean and Nora Ann). Mother and Dad worked out a code so that he could send her messages indicating his location. She could pick the first letter of each paragraph and it would spell the name of the town he was in at that particular time. I have every letter that he wrote. One of his letters written in early November 1944, codes out the word "Toddington".

The ship docked on October 23 at Firth of Clyde, Scotland. Dad got off the Queen Elizabeth and boarded a train on October 24. The Red Cross again handed out doughnuts and coffee. The train made two stops enroute to Toddington, England. Coffee and doughnuts were passed out at each of the stops. They were quartered in Quonset huts with bunk beds.

Dad's company was shown a truckload of GI's dressed up in German uniforms during this time. The German weapons were also demonstrated to them. That was when Company G realized the seriousness of the matter at hand. They left Toddington on December 1 by train enroute to Southampton, England and arrived the same day.

At Southampton they set sail on a liberty ship manned by an English crew. Then they crawled down a rope ladder into a landing craft called an LCI. This boat came within about 45 feet of the shore and the front end ramp lowered so that the troops could wade in to shore. This was about December 2 at Le Havre, France, which was a bombed-out, deserted town.

The troops were loaded into trucks and driven across France in one week to Belgium. The weather was such a shock to them. They cut pine branches and piled them on top of the snow so they could lay out their sleeping bags at night. It was so cold that they slept two men to a single sleeping bag to keep warm.

They arrived at a small village called Born, Belgium, about December 9. We received our mail from my father for the last time while he was billeted in a home at Born with three other men. The people who lived there owned nine cows, four pigs, and had a barn attached to the house.

Dad wrote mother and each of us three children a short letter dated December 12. Again, the secret code worked, and the first letter of each paragraph spelled Born, so we knew where he was.

About one mile from where Dad was staying was a town named Malmedy where the Germans had murdered more than 100 American prisoners. After about two or three days in Born, Dad's company moved to the front, known as the Siegfried line, on December 15 at night. His unit relieved other soldiers. Things were quiet and nothing unusual was expected from the opposition. What a shock !

On the morning of December 16, the panzers attacked. Company G was right in the onslaught. The troops brought up three Sherman tanks, and they were all knocked out by the superior German tanks. They tried again with another Sherman tank, but it too,

was knocked out. Two ammunition trucks were blown up, and artillery shells were exploding all around our troops. Shells sometimes would explode in midair. Our troops fought back gallantly, but the Germans had them outnumbered. By December 17, our troops were completely surrounded.

Dad was a machine gunner. Their position was a hot spot because the machine guns were the main targets. On the morning of December 18, Dad's division, the 423rd, was ordered to attack the little village of Schonburg, Belgium. It was just like a suicide mission. Our troops were trying to blast out tanks with 30-caliber shells.

There was no chance. During the day, the machine gunners were trying to hold off the Germans while Dad's unit tried to retreat. A mortar shell exploded near my father, and the concussion killed him. A medic was called for and arrived shortly in a jeep with a red cross on it. Dad's body was picked up then, but had no visible marks at all.

The next day, the remainder of the entire regiment of the 423rd and 422nd surrendered. More than 7,000 men surrendered that day.

The following are quotes from some of my father's comrades:

"Bob Miller was always writing letters back home to his family,. He would lay pictures of his family out on the table while he wrote his letters. We called him 'the old man' because he was 34 years old, and most of us were about 21 or so," said Sgt. Norman J. Kolbaba.

"He was very strong and a leader. He was a very gung-ho soldier and patriotic. He never shirked his duty. He might have chosen a softer job had he so desired," Kolbaba said. "When I saw the medic Jeep coming after he was hit, and he was lying on a stretcher on the hood, I asked the medic how he was and he told me that Bob was dead. I do not know where he was buried."

George Edward Guth said, "We were on line in position with Bob as ammunition carrier and myself as messenger. One day a shell burst too close and the concussion caused Bob to lose consciousness and a short while later to pass away in a manner so frequently denied most soldier - peacefully, quietly, and without pain. I held him in my arms and, please believe me, he did not suffer. Bob was more to me than a friend; he was an ideal to admire. He had such a calm acceptance of life and was the kindest, most generous and thoughtful person I have ever known."

From Janice Fox Mitchell, community news editor: Pvt. Bob Miller had six brothers and a brother-in-law serving at the same time: Lowell Miller, J. C. Miller and G. H. Miller, Jr. were in the U. S. Navy. Robert Miller, Thomas Miller, Charles Miller and Melvin Womack were in the U.S. Army.

Senator Miller was 7 when his mother made him a miniature uniform so he could have his photograph taken standing by his father. Six months and one week later they received the Western Union telegram, on January 5, 1945. The telegram stated that Pvt. Robert G. "Bob" Miller had been missing in action since December 21, 1944. His mother didn't hear a single word from anyone about him until August of 1945, at which time she was

informed by the government that he had been killed in action on December 18, 1944, near Radscheid, Germany. The time lapse puzzled the Miller family.

They had wanted to know the details of what happened, so decades later, Senator Miller contacted his father's comrades to find out what really happened to his father and how he died.



PHOTO SUBMITTED

ROBERT G. "BOB" MILLER in the early 1940s was finishing his second term as Iazard County treasurer when he entered the U.S. Army after volunteering at the local draft board.