

Norman Mee
106th Infantry Division
Stalag 8-A

Mee awarded State of Maine Silver Star Honorable Service Medal

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WEST NEWFIELD — Norman Mee, of West Newfield, was honored with a State of Maine Silver Star Honorable Service Medal at the newly-opened Maine Military Museum and Learning Center in South Portland on August 30.

Mee was honored alongside other Maine veterans.

Several community leaders participated in the outdoor ceremony at the museum. Governor John Baldacci awarded the medals to Mee and the other medal recipients who attended.

Norman Mee graduated as valedictorian of the Class of 1941 of Ethan Stone High School in Newfield. He tried to enlist in the Navy at age 17, but the Navy refused to accept him because he was color blind and had a hammer toe. At 18, he was drafted by the Army.

His infantry training took place in South Carolina, Tennessee, and Indiana. In the beginning of November 1944, he and other members of the 106th Infantry Division boarded an ocean liner to England, where they were eventually sent to Ardennes to relieve the Second Division. His 106th Division was spread over a large combat area that exceeded the normal combat zone. In less than a week, he and his comrades found themselves embroiled in the Battle of the Bulge.

He witnessed many deaths and escaped artillery shells and buzz bombs. He, along with many fellow soldiers, were captured by the German troops on December 18, 1944. They were taken by train to a prison camp on the Polish border of Germany.

Because he was a private, Mee was forced to do work for the Germans. He was moved to a primitive barracks with approximately 20 men. They worked on repairing railroad tracks from sunrise to sunset each day. Mee explained that their worst treatment came from the over-zealous SS guards, who were only 14 or 15 years of age. They would appear occasionally after raids and physically abuse the prisoners with their pushing, poking, and hitting.

Mee recalled that the civilian railroad manager of their work detail would point out to Hitler's young soldiers that the prisoners would be of no value to the railroad if they were



Norman Mee, of West Newfield, is seen here with his State of Maine Silver Star Honorable Service Medal, which he received during a ceremony at the Maine Military Museum and Learning Center in South Portland in August.

dead. After several occasions of heated discussions about the youths' desire to bully the prisoners, the older civilian in charge was taken away by the youths and Mee never saw him again.

Life in the prison camp was rough. The men slept on bunks composed of boards with straw. There was no heat or washing facilities. Mee said it was one of the coldest winters in 50 years and the freezing temperatures were difficult to endure. The daily ration was composed of a seventh of a loaf of bread and a bowl of turnip soup. Entertainment revolved around picking lice out of the seams of their clothes. The prisoners would steal coal from the railroad and hide it in their pockets to try and start a fire to keep warm.

When asked if the men were overwhelmed with feelings of depression and hopelessness, Mee surprisingly responded that, on the contrary, they felt lucky to be alive and not to have been tortured. He remained at the prison camp until immediately before the war ended. When the Germans realized that defeat was imminent, the men in charge of the prison camp began marching the prisoners towards the Americans. As they were being marched, several of the men, including Mee, escaped.

Mee returned to the United States in June of 1945, and was honorably discharged from the Army in December of 1945. For 23 years, he worked as a mechanical engineer at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard.

For quite some time, Mee never spoke about the war. He had no contact with any of his war comrades, with the exception of his former squad leader, who once wrote him from Ohio several years ago.

On May 15, 1998, Mee was invited by former Newfield Postmaster Wayne Cadman to participate in a flag-raising ceremony at the West Newfield Post Office when the POW-MIA flag was raised for the first time. He and his sister, Agnes Winn, have participated in wreath-laying observances on Veteran's Day in Newfield.

Mee explained that he has not been interested in watching war movies as they would bring back some graphic memories that would be too difficult to view. He has displayed a keen interest in history and reading throughout his life. People have given and loaned him books about the war and he has enjoyed reading and studying the topic.

Norman Mee is known throughout the Newfield area for his willingness to help others. Quiet and humble by nature, he has earned a reputation for being able to fix anything over the years. He was a recipient of the prestigious Jefferson Award and the Prisoner of War medal from the United States Army in March of 1989. After he received the Jefferson Award, a majority of the townspeople of Newfield rallied to honor him with a pot luck supper at the Line School.

Congratulations are extended to Norman Mee and all of the other recipients of the State of Maine Silver Star Honorable Service Medal.

Other Maine Prisoners of War who received Silver Star medals at the August 30 ceremony for their service in World War II include Sgt. William P. Hancock Jr. of Cape Elizabeth; Sgt. Arthur P. Mills of South Portland; Pvt. Richard R. Repp of Old Orchard; PFC Girard J. Vaillancourt of Berwick; S/Sgt Norman J. St. Pierre of Old Orchard; Sgt. Milton Cram of Kennebunk; Col. Harry B. Winger of Portland; Thomas F. Hannan of Portland; Lionel G. Barbin of Saco, S/Sgt. Chester R. Knowles of Scarborough; Lt. Col. Donald V. McDougall

of Scarborough; T/Sgt Frederick W, Gowan of Westbrook; T/4 William T. Fossett of Gray; Donald H. Bosworth of Gray; PFC Alvin K. Hersey of Kennebunk; and Robert J. MacArthy of Kennebunk; and Colby Davis of Canton.

Prisoners of War who participated in the Vietnam War and received medals included CDR Robert S. Fant of Topsham; SP4 Andrew J. York of Chelsea; CDR Allan Carpenter of Sanford/VA. Prisoners of War in the Korean War who were honored were CT2 John W. Grant in Portland and CTRCS James D. Layton of Cherryfield. PFC Joseph A. Paradis of Lewiston.

The Maine Military Museum and Learning Center is located at 513 Broadway in South Portland. To acquire a background of the history and offerings of this museum, visit online at www.mainemilitarymuseum.org. For more information, call 207-650-8651 or send an email to nampowfriendnetscape.net. (Insert @ after "friend")



Norman Mee returned to the United States in 1945 after serving in the Army during World War II.

By Mary Doyle, Sanford News Guest Writer

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James D. West
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