30TH CALVALRY RECONNAISSANCE VETRANS INTERVIEWS
2002-2003

Interviews conducted and compiled by Michael Joseph Schmid,
Grandson of Corporal Joseph Richard Calabrace, US Army
Abbreviations

Absent Without Leave     AWOL
Armored Personnel Carrier     APC
Captain     CPT
Colonel     COL
Command Post     CP
Commanding Officer     CO
Congressional Medal of Honor    CMH
Corporal     CPL
European Theatre of Operations    ETO
Executive Officer     XO
First Lieutenant     1LT
First Platoon     1PL
First Sergeant     FSGT
General     GEN
Headquarters     HQ
Headquarters Platoon     HQPL
Killed in Action     KIA
Landing Craft Tank     LCT
Lieutenant Colonel     LTCol
Major     MAJ
Observation Post     OP
Officer Candidate School     OCS
Prisoner of War     POW
Private     PVT
Private First Class     PFC
Schutz Staffeln     SS
Shit on a Shingle     SOS
Second Lieutenant     2LT
Second Platoon     2PL
Sergeant     SGT
Staff Sergeant     SSGT
Third Platoon     3PL
Technician Fifth-Grade or T5     T5
Technician Fourth-Grade or T4     T4
Technical Sergeant or T3     TSGT
Virginia Military Institute     VMI
World War Two/Second World War    WWII
30th Calvary Reconnaissance Troop     30CRT
30th Infantry Division     30ID
2nd Armored Division     2AD
117th Infantry Regiment     117IR
120th Infantry Regiment     120IR
Kenneth Allen

First Interview:
- Nicknamed “Gene” or “Little Abner” by his comrades
- Allen was a PVT and replacement
- Arrived at 30 CRT in July or August of 1944 after the Battles for St. Lo and Mortain when the company was still in “hedgerow country” in France, north of Paris

Albert Cirioni

First Interview:
- PVT in the 3PL
- Does not specifically remember the name “Joe Calabrace,” but thinks he may have served in the HQPL; may have driven a half-ton truck too
- Cirioni explained that he was in the hospital for the Ardennes offensive
- Cirioni detailed the roles of: 1) Corporal (T5), later SGT, Wilbur Gaddis was Supply/Mail Non-Com, 2) PFC William A. Hines was 3PL Radio Operator, 3) PFC Joseph P. Paradis was Italian, but could not remember exact role, 4) 1LT Chester H. Prentice replaced LT Neil P. Currey who was “shot up” as leader of 3PL, 5) Corporal Paul C. Rogers was with 2PL
- Cirioni commented on the equipment they used: 1) Thompson machine guns were worthless pieces of junk, hard to control, 2) M-1 Rifles are what most guys chose to carry, including Cirioni, 3) Carbine, and 4) Grease gun

Claude Cruise

First Interview:
- Was a young member of 30 CRT, only 18 years old in 1944 and 1945
- Cruise served in the 1PL
- Cruise arrived as a replacement soldier in September 1944 from the 23 Recon of the 16th AD
- Cruise was able to provide information on the Battle of Aachen, specifically the events of December 17, 1944: He noted that the action occurred south of the City of Aachen and that the 30 CRT moved in-force during that period, all three platoons together; noted that they “bedded down in the high school” and remembers that a Messerschmidt ME-109 circled overhead and took recon photos of the American positions in Aachen; later, they were strafed by accompanying ME-109s; after Aachen the 30 CRT went to Malmedy
- Cruise remembers that the weather was terrible until Christmas Day, when the American bombers and cargo planes flew over head, and the US soldiers cheered them on
- Cruise recalls the US Army Air Force bombed for three days until Aachen was leveled
- Cruise remembers loosing his finger nail during the Aachen battle
- He remembers that the Germans were finally pushed back in late-January 1945
- Soon after they crossed the Rhine River
- Cruise remembers that the 30 CRT was often the first of the 30ID or US forces to enter a town and, thus, had first choice at looting…”we had the first choice of lute.”
- Cruise was good friends with Bob Klingensmith, another replacement
- Cruise offered a story from his time in Aachen: He took a radio from a German coffee shop and went to install it in a shelter they’d established in a bombed-out building when a German 88 millimeter artillery piece began firing on their position. The firing was so intense that it not only blew out the walls of the building, but also the supports and the building came crashing down on top of them with them in the first floor and basement of the edifice
- Cruise remembers fighting against the SS, and that they were relentless fighters and would not ever give up
- Remembers a time when he was leading against remnants of the Siegfried Line smoking a cigarette. A round from a German sniper hit the concrete bunker just inches above his head. Cruise lost his helmet and dove out of the way before any other fired round could hit him

**Raymond L. Flanner**

First Interview:
- Flanner was a 2LT in the 30 CRT
- Flanner led 2PL, and was under the direct command supervision of the 30 CRT COs, CPTs Cornelius and Hume
- Believes that Joseph Calabrace was a truck driver or perhaps an armored car driver
- Thinks that Corporal Joe Calabrace was in the 3PL at times
- Flanner attended US Army OCS at Fort Reilly, Kansas
- He served in the US Army’s 7th Division in 1940
- He remembers that his troop ship landed in Northern England upon deployment to the ETO
- Stated that he cannot remember a great deal from that time period as his memory has become a bit fuzzy

**Henry Harrington**

First Interview:
- Served in 3PL
- Rank of PFC
- Noted that some of the soldiers in 30 CRT had Ranger training, but could not offer specific details
- Harrington said that he “still dreams about the guys.”
- He remembers SGT Scott and LT Hume as being “very good.”
- Estimates that there were 1/3 total casualties suffered by 30 CRT
- Noted that, in general, the unit did not have good officers
- Believed that SGT Barber was originally an “instructor” of some sort
- State that 30 CRT CO, CPT Cornelius was wounded in Tournai, Belgium
- With regard to operational posture and actions, Harrington explained that the 30 CRT probed the enemy by slipping behind their lines and watching movements and force strength, reporting back to 30 CRT and 30ID about opposing forces’ strength, structure, and location

William A. Hines

First Interview:
- My interview with Mr. Hines occurred on January 12, 2003
- I received a letter an August 27, 2003 from Mrs. Pennie Medley, daughter of William Hines, informing me of his death on June 28, 2003
- I was deeply shocked and saddened by this news, as I had spent about 3 hours on the telephone with Mr. Hines in January 2003
- With the death of Mr. Hines we’ve lost an invaluable part of history concerning my grandfather, Corporal Joseph R. Calabrace, and the actions of the 30 CRT in WWII
- William A. Hines was awarded the Silver Star for his actions in the ETO
- Mr. Hines Served in the 3PL
- He remembers Joe Calabrace, but did not work with him often
- Recalls that Calabrace drove an M-8
- Said that “Calabrace was not tall, solid built man, a truck driver, and he worked in headquarters. He was industrious. I went to church with him in the States before Europe, and in England. He was always neat and clean. He knew what he wanted to do and did it.”
- Hines was a PVT, PFC, and later, a T4
- Said “the Recon was fun but didn’t want any surprises.”
- Recon had its own HQ or CP separate from 30ID HQ
- Recalls being at Camp Atterbury, Indiana
- Remembers that there was “a sub scare” a German submarine that was reported to be among the troop convoy on the Atlantic crossing
- Corporal (T5) Clifton W. “Dutch” Cox was an M-8 driver for a time, and later drove supply trucks because “he was scared.” Mr. Hines did not want to expound on this claim out of respect for Dutch Cox
- Believes that LT William T. Juett became a professor of history at Georgetown College in Kentucky
- Stated that LT Juett “was shot in the ass while taking a shit in France. He later went AWOL in France, drank a little, womanized, and was later court-martialed and busted down to the rank of Private, was supposed to spend some time in jail, but received a suspended sentence…provided that he served three years as a private.”
- Hines’ granddaughter, Morgan Medley, was at the time of the interview an Air Force ROTC student at Saint Louis University. He told me that she wants to be an astronaut
- Hines stated that 30 CRT was, oddly, the last elements of the 30ID to go over to Normandy
- Said that the 30 CRT “did not work as a recon unit until after St. Lo, where we worked with the 120th Infantry Regiment. We spent a month with them.”
- Recalls that PFC John G. Smedberg was captured by the Germans, and that he was a “young, big, and muscular boy.”
- Called First SGT Louis C. Stuart “Little Nigger,” because Stuart was “short, had a deep voice like a nigger, and people that first saw him thought he was black.”
- Story: Hines rode in the turret of the armored car and the platoon LT fired the .50 Caliber. He remembers spitting tobacco juice over the side of the M-8, and finally after enough times a GI pointed an M-1 at him and told him to stop (unknowingly, he was spitting on the guy)
- Remembers stealing a mess kit, which included spoons, knives, etc., and after he used it, he hung it up near a fire dirty. He felt bad about it but he desperately wanted to use utensils
- Recalls that CPT Cornelius was shot in Turnai “with a German brrrp gun.”
- 3PL leader 2LT Neil P. Currey was hit and knocked out of action just after St. Lo
- Staff SGT Francis E. Scott took over for LT Currey, and “we loved SGT Scott.”
- SGT Joseph L. Robertson later took over for SGT Scott after he was killed in Belgium
- Received shrapnel wounds in Germany, and was taken prisoner near Hamlein, Germany
- Story involving events of Hines’ capture: 30 CRT went into a village of multi-family dwellings. The buildings looked deserted from afar. Finally the first vehicle in the section began to receive fire at a barricade blocking the road. Hines’ Jeep crashed into a ditch and they couldn’t get the vehicle out. The weapons on the Jeep were inoperable due to the crash. Hines’ noted that “a soldier is naked without his weapon.” Hines volunteered to man a mortar to fend off the Germans. “A big firefight” ensued. 2LT Chester H. Prentice signaled a retreat and he began to run. What really happened was that his weapon was jammed. Some of the accompanying vehicles in the section tried to protect Hines’ downed vehicle and the soldiers who were on it. Once it became apparent that the Germans were too strong, the remaining vehicles began to pull out with some of the American soldiers running across a field on foot. During the retreat the Germans knocked out a Jeep and one of the M-8s. It was during this retreat that Corporal (T5) Keith W. Pierce lost both of his legs when the Jeep he was riding in was hit and flipped over. The entire 3PL had become “encircled.” The Germans approached him, armed, and took him and “five or six other guys” up to a large stone mansion or small castle at the top of a hill. Hines’ was interrogated by a Germany Army colonel. In the room, “in the shadows” was an SS man—a captain—who was seething with anger. The American soldiers had been told by American officers to dispose of any “souvenirs” they might have collected in the event of imminent capture. Hines said, “of course…I didn’t listen, and it almost cost me my life.” In his pocket, Hines had a torn, red piece of cloth from a Swastika flag that he used for a handkerchief. When the SS captain emerged from the shadows in the room, he ordered some of the German soldiers to “turn out my pockets. When it was discovered that I was using the piece of German flag as my personal handkerchief—and it had snot on it—the SS captain pulled
out his P-38 and was ready to shoot me. I shuttered, looking away from the pistol even though my hands were tied in front of me. The German colonel ordered him to ‘Stop!’ and he walked over and took the P-38 away from the SS officer. That German colonel saved my life, because that son-of-a-bitch was ready to shoot.” The German colonel ordered that Hines be taken out back with the other American soldiers to be held in a horse stable. Hines remembers that PVT Elisha V, Smith was with him there at the castle. The next day the US 2nd Armored Division liberated them at the castle by encircling the compound. The Germans did not immediately give their position up. Some brief shots were fired, and finally a signal came down from the castle that the German colonel wanted to meet with the American commander, also a colonel. When the German commander came down the hill from the castle with a small detail of security troops to meet the unaccompanied American colonel, one of the overzealous American soldiers aimed at the German colonel and shot him to the ground (Hines does not believe the German was killed). This was the same German colonel that had saved Hines’ life the day before. The German security detail guarding the German colonel were immediately taken prisoner, and the remaining German troops at the castle gave up shortly thereafter, without serious incident. However, the SS captain would not be taken alive. As the Americans approached the castle, the SS captain put the same P-38 pistol he had threatened Hines’ with the day before in his mouth, and pulled the trigger, killing him. Hines thought the SS were “fanatics.” After the Americans had secured the castle, Hines and Smith took “two beautiful horses” from the stable and rode them down the hill to the American force contingent. Once at the bottom of the hill, a different American colonel who “showed up late to the scene” got out of his staff Jeep and stopped Hines and Smith. “He threatened to court-martial us. I think he was just mad because he missed out on all of the action.” The horse Hines’ was ridding on stepped with full weight on the colonel’s foot injuring immediately and sending him back to the aid station. Hines and Smith decided to turn the horses loose. After that they found a ride back to the 30 CRT which was already moving toward Magdeburg, Germany.

- Said that his friend PVT Elisha V. Smith was always late returning from vacation pass by at least one or two days, and often received “company punishment” which was kitchen duty
- Hines informed me that Corporal Allen D. Maxwell was “bounced out of OCS.”
- Hines said Maxwell was with 3PL, later becoming the section SGT of the third section of 3PL
- Maxwell met his wife while on Tennessee Maneuvers in 1943
- Hines believes that he lives in near Nashville in Cookeville, Tennessee

**Joseph P. Paradis**

First Interview:
- Nicknamed “Joe Pa” because, he said, he was heavyset
- Paradis was not Italian, but of French-Canadian descent
- He often used an M-1 Carbine
- Paradis was both a PFC and Corporal (T5) when he served in 30 CRT
- He served in 3PL
- Was wounded “the first night in Belgium on September 1st into 2nd, 1944.”
- Paradis was in charge of mortars and bazookas in 3PL
- Did not know Joseph Calabrace, but thinks the name was associated with 1PL at times
- Noted that the three operational platoons were always separate
- 30 CRT’s CO’s since 1942 were, according to Paradis: Stewart Hall, Kenneth Cornelius, and James Hume, Jr.
- Paradis was able to add some information on the Battle of Mortain and 30 CRT: He said that the “2PL [of 30 CRT] was cut off” and that 30 CRT’s involvement was “short and intense.” He remembers that the 1PL was on the right flank with the 35th SS Panzer Division, and that the SS tanks tried to break through with their Tiger tanks and 88 millimeter tanks guns and artillery pieces
- Paradis detailed operational sections of each platoon and how they conducted mechanized reconnaissance patrols: Each platoon had three sections, roughly, with each section containing one point Jeep with a .30 Caliber pedestal machine gun, next came a mortar jeep, and last an armored car with a 37 millimeter cannon and .50 Caliber machine gun. In total, there were a total of three point Jeeps, three mortar Jeeps, and two to three armored cars
- Remembers that Corporal Donald R. Gill was on a point Jeep, and that PVT Neil P. McGuinn was a gunner on one of the Jeeps
- During the war, Paradis noted that the unit seemed to capture a lot of bridges, and even some soldiers and small units, and that, indeed, they met the Russians on the Elbe River while manning the levies there in Eastern Germany
- During the period surrounding the Ardennes, Paradis said that 30 CRT was one of the units to capture and occupy Aachen
- They were also the first unit sent to Malmedy
- They were halted at Stavelot, where he noted the Germans had a ton of tanks on a ridge. This was a very dangerous period because the tanks were almost surrounding the 30 CRT and Paradis noted it was “nip and tuck there for a while.”
- The 30ID and 30 CRT were on the north side of the German Ardennes offensive during the Battle of the Bulge, near Stavelot, and were in the path of advance to the oil and gas reserves the Germans so desperately needed. Therefore, they met some of the earliest and fiercest resistance during that December 1944 offensive
- Again, stated that the 30 CRT met the Russians at Oschersleben, Germany in 1945
- Details a town called “Hoff” and mentioned that 30 CRT captured quite a few towns and villages, even though it was a mobile unit
- Stated that once the war was over, the Germans were absolutely petrified of the Russians
- Remembers that when the 30ID went to England for the pre-invasion phase of Operation Overlord, his transport ship landed in Liverpool, England. He notes that some of the unit landed in Scotland
- Paradis further recalls that they were stationed in a town in England called “Chollywood” and that all four of the platoons were together at that time
- He explained that he met his wife “Joyce” when he was stationed in Chollywood, England and that she was in the British Land Army, and that she delivered milk with a horse and cart to the inhabitants of the town “Croxly Green.”
- At war’s end, he was wounded and went back to England to the City of Salisbury. After recovering he went AWOL to go see Joyce
- Paradis mentioned a “103rd Division” and “General Konig”???
- Paradis states that LT Chester Prentice was the leader of 3PL, who took over for LT William T. Juett.
- Paradis explained that LT Juett had won some decorations for his performance in Normandy, but that further along he developed some psychological problems and became “sick, went AWOL, and was court-martialed in 1944.”
- Paradis further described the circumstances upon which he met his wife, Joyce: the US Army “theater section” had put on a dance in a recreation-type hall for the soldiers and young ladies of the neighboring areas. Paradis danced with Joyce, and later they walked out onto a nearby hill to talk and get to know each other, and they saw German planes bombing nearby cities and a night firefight
- Paradis said that German planes flew over day and night
- Paradis stated that from Chollywood they went to Beacons Field
- PVT Maland C. Nowland was Paradis’ driver in the section
- We talked about when 30 CRT went to Normandy via Omaha Beach: Paradis was not sure, but he seemed to think 30 CRT went over on D+7 to D+9, and they certainly went into France via Omaha Beach via floating docks and LCT and then right onto the beach. They boarded the LCTs in England in Southampton
- Paradis said that “he went inland and didn’t look back, “that “they hedgerows were hellish,” and that the unit’s “field of vision was terrible.”
- For the Germans, he said, the roads were easy to defend because the roads were narrow and only one vehicle at a time could drive forward which offered no protection
- Paradis talked about Staff SGT Francis Scott, that “Scott was a brother to me, and he even had mannerisms like my own brother Tom Jr.”
- Paradis admits that Scott took a special and personal interest in him and the “he took me under his wing in this hellish situation.”
- Paradis was about 5’9” and 200 lbs
- Paradis stated the 30 CRT had a close relationship with the City of Maastricht, Netherlands, and that after the Bulge 30 CRT went to the east of Maastricht
- Paradis details a moment when he and LT Chester H. Prentice were on an observation post overlooking the Ruhr Valley. He said you could observe and hear “intense firefights, bombs, flashes, and that this very hard to listen to.”
- At times, the 30 CRT ran into the Canadians and the British forces
- During the Battle of the Bulge, the 30 ID and 30 CRT was briefly under command of British forces and British Field Marshall Montgomery
- Paradis explained the General “Hodges” ran 1st Army; IX Army was under the bald-headed General Simpson (who was under the command of General Omar N. Bradley,) and that General “Maclean” ran XIX Corps

Theodore C. Pasternak
First Interview:
- PVT, eventually Corporal, Pasternak served in HQ and 3PL
- He believes that Joe Calabrace was a part-time M-8 driver, but mostly moved ammunition in a half-track vehicle to the front line units
- Pasternak was wounded at the Battle of the Bulge in the Ardennes Forest on December 25, 1944. He recalls that it was a sunny day when all of a sudden the German panzers began firing and the shrapnel and concussion knocked him out of action
- Remembers that 30 CRT went from: Camp Blanding to Tennessee Maneuvers to Indiana Training Sessions to Boston for Deployment to England (where they landed during a bombing raid) to South of London to Southampton to Omaha Beach in Normandy
- Pasternak recalls that the 30 CRT’s three platoons did not often operate as a concentrated force, rather they were spread out
- Notes that Camp Atterbury was the location in Indiana where they trained prior to going to Boston

Paul C. Rogers

First Interview:
- Paul Rogers was a Corporal as of Thanksgiving 1943
- Believes that Joseph Calabrace served in HQPL
- Rogers was a Corporal in the 2PL and was later promoted to Staff SGT
- He thinks that he and Joe Calabrace took basic training together
- Does not really remember Joe Calabrace

Joseph L. Robertson

First Interview:
- Robertson entered US Army in 1936 at the age of 17
- Robertson is a WWII, Korean War, and Vietnam Veteran (although he served in a civilian capacity during the Vietnam War).
- Served in 1PL and 3PL of 30 CRT
- Served as a section SGT and later as a PL SGT
- Robertson attained the rank of Staff SGT during WWII
- Robertson noted that there were four platoon leaders of the rank of 1LT or 2LT
- 30 CRT’s force structure and organization was as follows: 1PL, 2PL, 3PL, and a HQPL
- 1PL, 2PL, and 3PL were operational, mechanized-reconnaissance units consisting of approximately three equal-sized “sections” of about ten men each. The total size of each platoon was approximately 30 to 35 men
- HQPL was a support and staff unit, consisting of approximately 25 to 30 men. This unit was responsible for 30 CRT administration, supply, repair, coordination, and information/orders processing from and to the 30ID
SGT Joseph Robertson knew Corporal (T5) Joseph Calabrace, and kept a small black and white photograph of Calabrace in his private records cabinet at this home in Columbus, Ohio.

Robertson commented of Joe Calabrace: “Could believe him and take his word as truth. He was a robust, chesty figure…and had dark-colored skin like an Indian. He was not a goof-off, never used a dirty word, and was a good and honest friend.”

Robertson further commented that “Joe Calabrace was the same in the Army as he was in life.”

Robertson’s radio operator was Corporal (T5) Keith Pierce.

Pierce lost his legs in battle.

1LT, later CPT, Kenneth C. Cornelius was commander of the 30 CRT.

In Robertson’s opinion, Cornelius was a terrible company CO.

Cornelius was severely wounded in battle in Tournai, Belgium in late 1944.

As of December 2003, Cornelius is believed to be still living.

1LT James Hume was promoted to CPT in order to assume command of 30 CRT after CPT Cornelius was seriously injured.

Hume was well-liked, young—only in his early twenties at 22 or 23 years of age—when he took command of 30 CRT.

Hume was a VMI graduate and was a resident of the State of Virginia.

Hume liked to smoke Camel cigarettes.

Robertson described CPT Hume as “low-key, calm, coming over from commanding 1PL to lead the company. He was very good, the best!”

Hume died in Saint Louis, Missouri, date (as of December 2003) unknown.

Robertson believes that CPT Hume also spent some time as 30 CRT XO after 1LT Travis H. Cramb.

Detailed the battlefield death of Corporal Dominic S. Vincenzo, whom he described as a “hard-fighting man.” Vincenzo received a “Dear John” letter from his wife (with whom he had two children) on the front lines fighting in Germany only months before the end of WWII. He was positioned in a forward observation trench. Upon reading the letter, Vincenzo rose from the trench and with his Thompson machine gun in his hand and began walking across the open field firing relentlessly at the German positions. The Germans finally cut him down, killed him with no Germans being hit. In essence, his grief over domestic troubles and the stress of the war drove him to a sort of fighting suicide.

Robertson noted that 30 CRT would often send two-man patrols to “gather info” and probe German lines without all-out force intrusion.

Robertson further discussed an incident concerning a “prisoner detail” mission.

Prisoner detail mission consisted of four men within the company. One such mission involved then 2LT Raymond L. Flanner, who departed camp in search of loose German soldiers who might be captured. Upon returning to 30 CRT HQ, Flanner reported that no enemy soldiers were captured. When someone noticed that Flanner departed camp with four people and returned with five people, it became apparent that the fifth individual was not a US soldier and was, indeed, a German who had become mixed-in with the spread-out detail and figured that he...
was captured, said nothing in reply, and calmly and quietly returned to 30 CRT HQ with Flanner and his detail

- In training, before deployment to Europe, the 30ID had training maneuvers in Tennessee near the Jack Daniels Whiskey Distillery. One of the sons of the Daniels Family was so impressed by the 30ID, that not only did he arrange for a supply of Jack Daniels whiskey to the troops when they were on maneuvers, but also somehow arranged to attached himself formally, or enlist, as a soldier in the US Army under the command of the 30th ID.

- Jack Daniels Distilleries Co. has maintained a relationship with the 30ID, stocking post-war 30th Division Association meetings and reunions with free Jack Daniels liquors and sponsoring various events
- It has been said that 30ID was called the “Jack Daniels Division”
- Robertson described an incident involving PVTs Cecil C. Cothran and Eugene F. Plude, where…ask Robertson for further clarification on this incident
- By the end of WWII, Robertson had earned 150 points

Second Interview:
- Joseph Robertson was a tobacco farmer in North Carolina before his U.S. Army service
- Robertson believes the 30 CRT was formed at Fort Jackson, South Carolina in early 1942. He offered no specific date of formation
- 2PL leaders were 2LT Flanner and Staff SGT Homer D. Roberts
- 1PL leader was Staff SGT James R. Chester. Chester received a battlefield commission to 2LT
- Robertson noted that 30 CRT First SGT Louis C. Stuart and Staff SGT Francis E. Scott were “good friends”
- SGT Scott, a very popular figure and leader within 30 CRT, was killed in Tournai, Belgium
- Robertson was within one foot of SGT Scott when he was shot and killed in Tournai
- Robertson described the events surrounding SGT Scott’s death in Tournai: 30 CRT was to meet the elements of the US Army’s 2AD, 25th Calvary in the City of Tournai, Belgium undercover of darkness. Tournai was a strategic point in the Allied Forces’ advance because, like Bastogne, it is a crossroads town. Robertson explained that the 30 CRT, under the command of CPT Cornelius: “came barreling down the roads into Tournai. The Second Platoon, First, Third, and HQ units were altogether. Once we reached the crossroads on the outskirts of town, we met the 25th Calvary. We stopped our vehicles. [SGT] Scott and [Corporal T5 Walter E.] Dennis got out of their armored car and approached the 25th Calvary’s columns which were 20 feet away and were crossing in front of us. I was standing next to Scotty’s car. We then recognized that the troops in front of us were not American, and an enemy MG 42 machine gun opened up on our position, killing Scotty. We mistook the German forces for the 25th Calvary.”
- SGT Scott was shot as he approached the Germans at an intersection
Robertson stated that the 30ID was briefly attached to General George S. Patton’s Third Army, and that they (30ID) did not want to be associated with Patton’s command.

Robertson said that the 30ID served in the IX (Ninth) Army longer anyway.

General William Harrison ran the 30ID.

Brigadier General Don E. Scott was a brigade commander in the 30 ID.

General Leland S. Hobbes took over command of 30ID at some point. Robertson could not offer an exact date.

Robertson was surprised when I asked him about US Army Ranger training. He finally admitted that one enlisted man and one officer received secret Ranger training at Camp Blanding, not at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Robertson noted that the two main sources for cigarettes were the US government and the American Red Cross.

“B rations” were one chocolate bar, and they were issued on a daily basis barring extended action periods.

“SOS” or “Shit on a Shingle” referred to a creamed meat paste that was put on a flat, hard bread or cracker-like substance and was consumed often by soldiers during WWII.

Robertson explained that one time, while traveling in recon platoon sections through a village near St. Lo, PVT Cecil C. Cothran, who was in the last armored car in the 1PL, opened up with his machine gun on a church bell tower. Robertson reported that he did this because the column section had seen action along the road and PVT Cothran had not been able to engage due to his end position within the column. He wanted to see some action so he decided to fire on the church bell tower.

Robertson said that Corporal (T5) Wilbur Gaddis, who delivered the mail to the unit, was a most popular figure.

Gaddis passed out on Thanksgiving 1943, when the 30 CRT was still deployed in England.

Chester H. Prentice was leader of the 3PL. He was a 1LT.

Third Interview:

Robertson detailed the roles of the following Staff SGTs: 1) Staff SGT Harvey L. Burroughs, Communications SGT, 2) Staff SGT James R. Chester, 1PL SGT, 3) Staff SGT William E. Martin, Mess SGT, 4) Staff SGT Homer D. Roberts, 2PL SGT, 5) Staff SGT Francis E. Scott, 3 PL SGT.

Technical SGT Robert K. Tidwell was the company’s Maintenance SGT.

Robertson detailed the roles of the following SGTs: 1) SGT John E. Barber was a section SGT in perhaps…1PL. (Robertson believes that Barber “went crazy”), 2) SGT Edwin J. Deedrick was Intelligence SGT, 3) SGT Mortimer B. Gaines was Supply SGT, 4) SGT Frank W. Gilmore was a section SGT, platoon unknown by Robertson, 5) SGT John A. Gustafson is remembered to have worn heavy glasses, no other details, 6) SGTs Cecil M. Hartley, James W. Hendrix, Henry M. King, Joseph L. Robertson, and Ralph L. Stevens were section SGTs spread among the three operational recon platoons.

SGT (T4) James W. Birdsong was a Maintenance SGT.
Robertson recollects that the following soldiers were KIA: 1) SGT (T4) John J. Kull, who was Robertson’s radio operator for a time, 2) Corporal Dominic S. Vincenzo, 3) Corporal (T5) Walter E. Dennis (killed in Tournai with SGT Scott,), 4) Corporal (T5) Joe P. Hopper, 5) PFC Perry E. Dale, 6) PFC Charles E. Obenour, 7) PVT Alec B. Blackwood, 8) PVT Maurice H. Kimball, 9) PVT Willerbaldo Nila, 10) PVT Harold G. Works, 11) PFC Richard M. Samuels had, in-transit, accidentally dropped a grenade inside of an APC but that the pin was not removed. The accompanying troops were quite frightened, thinking the grenade was alive. Samuels in an act of heroism dove to the floor and pinned the grenade between his chest and the floorboards of the APC, only to realize that in fact the pin was still in the grenade

Robertson explained some additional details by which the 3PL was almost totally captured in the town of Hamlein, Germany: 3PL lost all of its vehicles (Jeeps, armored cars, half-track vehicles, etc.); LTs Prentice and Flanner, and SGT Robertson were involved; three men were captured, including Corporal Keith W. Pierce

- Perry E. Dale, who was eventually promoted to SGT, was killed at Malmedy
- Stated that 30 CRT met Russians at Oschersleben, Germany

**Marion M. Sanford**

First Interview:
- Sanford was a Corporal (T5) in the 30 CRT
- His nickname among the men was “Sandy”
- Sanford recognizes the name Joe Calabrace and believes he might have been an M-8 armored car driver
- He describes their reconnaissance training and pre-invasion training as “demanding and tough”
- Sanford served as a mechanic and demolitions expert in both HQPL and 3PL
- Sanford was later promoted to Staff SGT
- He detailed an incident where he was feverishly changing a flat tire on a knocked out vehicle in order to get it out a live fire area. He was so out in the open that the Germans began to fire on him while he fixed the tire. He was scared, but remained calm, fixed the tire and drove speedily back to the Allied lines. Along the way, he sped across a stone covered bridge and, having forgotten to take the .30 Caliber machine gun down, he hit the gun against the bridge, damaging it
- Sanford was able to add some details on the 30 CRT’s combat action in Tournai, Belgium: He noted that the 30 CRT/30ID was the first American unit in Belgium; CPT Cornelius was hit out in the open, not inside a building or protective shelter
- Sanford notes that a monument was erected in Tournai, Belgium for remembrance of the Allied forces. He believes that it also may include a tribute to the 30ID/30 CRT
- Believes that LT Miles W. Walker was killed in Normandy in a German attack on one of the M-8s, where five additional men from 30 CRT were also killed
- Noted that he too “loved CPT James Hume Jr.” and noted that he was something like 22 years-old when he took command of 30 CRT. Said that Hume was a VMI graduate and later became president of a tobacco company in Virginia
- Added information on the backgrounds of: 1) SGT (T4) Charlie H. Hall of Mississippi, 2) SGT (T4) Jesse W. Lucas of Columbia, South Carolina, 3) Corporal Robert W. Reilly of Pennsylvania, 4) SGT (T4) Francis J. Sutton of Pennsylvania, and 5) Corporal John J. Sutton of West Virginia
- Elaborated on a story where one of the platoons captures a car with three suitcases full of German, French, and Belgian money. They decided that in order to protect the money they would put the three suitcases in different vehicles. One of the vehicles which contained a suitcase of the money was blown up by German fire. The money burned up
- States the 30 CRT entered Belgium on September 3, 1944
- States the 30 CRT entered Holland on September 12, 1944 via Maastricht
- He remembers a time when he went to get a drink at a café/bar in some crossroads town in Belgium. The café/bar was closed due to curfew. So he broke in, “borrowed” a bottle of wine and left $1,000 in Belgian currency from the captured suitcases to pay for the bottle of wine
- Detailed pay amounts for the soldiers: 1) $12/month was the standard overseas duty salary; 2) PFCs made $50/month; 3) SGTs made $78/month; 4) Staff SGTs made $96/month; 5) SGT (T4) made between $108-112/month; 6) First SGT made $138/month; and 7) combat pay was twenty percent of the total monthly pay salary
- Sanford stated that he rode in a half-track vehicle
- He said the worst element of the Battle of the Bulge was the weather
- During that time he said that they had a lot of “soul sessions” and that the men became “closer than brothers”
- Although, he noted that once during the extreme cold weather that he and SGT Mortimer B. Gaines has an argument over sharing boots
- Said the firepower of the recon convoy “could burn up a little town in a few minutes”
- Sanford said the 30 CRT was awarded both Belgian and French citations
- Story: Once when the 30 CRT was deployed in Southern Holland in the town of Hurlan, a couple of the guys decided they desperately wanted to eat chicken soup. Thus, Sanford and a couple of guys went on a secret mission into Germany to steal chickens for the soup. PVT James A. Wilkerson accompanied Sanford, and while Sanford distracted the German women, Wilkerson shot the chicken and picked them up and ran with Sanford back to Holland
- Sanford said that he and Wilkerson were nervous because they were in an area where the Germans covered their gun emplacements with hay
- Noted that Frank Towers (now with the 30ID Association) was a MAJ with the 120th Infantry Regiment of the 30ID
- Noted that Technical SGT (T3) Francis Currey of 30ID won the CMH
- Noted that at one point SGT (T4) James W. Birdsong was hit and injured, but not killed
- Remembers that PVT Carlos S. Blankenship was KIA in Normandy operations while driving over landmines in his Jeep.
- Sanford seems to remember that his platoon went into Normandy on D+3, or June 9, 1944.
- Asserts that 1LT Travis H. Cramb did not go to ETO because he was hurt during the Tennessee Maneuvers in 1943.
- Cramb’s injuries made LT James Hume, Jr. the XO of 30 CRT.
- SGT Mortimer B. Gaines became supply SGT in England.
- 2LT Neil P. Currey was wounded in Normandy.
- 2LT William T. Juett was awarded a Silver Star for his actions in Normandy, and later “went nuts” in the Bulge.
- 2LT Leonard Prosnick (a replacement officer) was captured by Germans near a village in Germany.
- Sanford detailed the capture of LT Prosnick: The day after Prosnick’s capture by the Germans, American tanks surrounded the village and the Germans surrendered. After Prosnick was freed by his German captors, he cut the clothes off a German officer with a knife.
- Said that the 30 CRT had approximately 13 armored cars.
- Story: He recalls an incident when his platoon had four German prisoners in tow. Unknowingly, a full German company engulfed his platoon. His platoon was forced to hide and remain silent until the Germans passed. He thought that one of the German soldiers, an officer, might cry out for help so he and the other American soldiers put trench knives against the German prisoners’ throats in order to keep them quiet. The danger passed without incident.
- Noted that the unit had “a lot of close calls.”
- Said the 30ID captured something like 53,000 German POWs and the “recon” nabbed something like 3,500.
- Sanford estimates the following casualty statistics: 1) 32 or 33 wounded, 2) 30 were without incident, and 3) the remainder were wounded at some point or time.
- Estimates that the 30ID suffered approximately 20,000 casualties in total, including replacements.
- Story: Remembers the physically minute Corporal (T5) Wilbur Gaddis driving his mail Jeep back-and-forth between the American foxholes and huts through the German lines. He was never hit, “but could you imagine the look on the Germans’ faces when they saw this little guy driving a Jeep right through their positions?”
- Story: Remembers an instance when Gaddis put on his gas mask in Normandy and could not breathe to the point that he was beginning to pass out. Staff SGT Francis Scott became annoyed with Gaddis so “he kicked him in the ass, until Gaddis took off the mask.”
- PFC Goodrich D. Simms and Sanford captured 17 German soldiers, one German officer, and one Non-Com whom they turned over to the Free French in a spread out village area in France. The Germans were held in a screened-in porch in a house in a small valley. Sanford thought it was a little strange that the French would want to hold POWs in a screened-in porch, as they could easily escape. Sanford noted that there were not immediate French guards to monitor the
German POWs. As Goodrich and Sanford drove out of the valley on a road that went to the tops of a hill, they noted that the French has installed machine gun emplacements on a ridge and were pointed toward the screened-in porch. Goodrich and Sanford deduced that the French wanted the Germans to try to escape so they would have a good reason to shot them dead
- Sanford did not like the SS soldiers and their tactics
- Asserted that the 117th Infantry Regiment of the 30ID was the unit that found the massacred American soldiers at Malmedy

**Martin Smith**

First Interview:
- Served in both WWII and Korea
- Served in 2PL’s “third section” with the rank of Corporal (T5)
- He was about 20 years-old when he joined 30 CRT
- He often used an M-1 Carbine
- He knew Joseph Calabrace, but not very well
- Crossed to England on the ship SS Argentina and landed in First-of-Clyde, Scotland. He remembers that a US Navy destroyer shadowed them and the Atlantic crossing was very rough
- LT Raymond Flanner was his platoon leader
- Discussed Battle of Mortain details: He said that 30 CRT probed the enemy along with some Free French forces. He remembers an instance where he was sent up to a farm house to ask a local farmer when he last saw the Germany infantry units. The man at the house turned around and pointed out to the orchard in his back yard and said “right over there, and there was an entire German infantry company sitting in the behind the house.”
- Said that 30 CRT worked with the US 113th Calvary
- Noted that they moved very quickly through Northern France and that the “quota” was 20 miles per hour reconnoitered
- Recalls that the popular 30 CRT figure Clifton W. “Dutch” Cox got sick on the transport ship on the Atlantic crossing. Months later, when the boarded the LCT to cross the English Channel to Normandy, Cox took a whole handful of seasickness tablets and ended up getting sick again, this time from an overdose of pills that upset his stomach
- Recalls that his platoon landed in Normandy on D+6
- Story: He remembers that the smaller beach landing crafts were unwieldy and difficult to pilot. The pilot of the landing craft did not get the boat close enough to the beach and when Corporal Red Flint and two other guys drove a Jeep off the end of the craft, the Jeep immediately plunged to the bottom of the water. Flint and the others were not hurt. Smith remembers three helmets spinning on the surface of the water, refusing to sink with the rest
- Story: Recalls another humorous incident involving PVT Anthony F. Fiorentino. Once a group of 2PL guys stopped there vehicles on a country road bordered on one side by a thick forest. Some of the guys hopped out of the vehicles to have a smoke and engage in discussion. Fiorentino was desperate to relieve himself of
urine and made his way over to the tree line. Something must have scared Fiorentino because all of a sudden he opened up with his Thompson machine gun on the forest. The remainder of the 2PL dove to the ground and took cover behind the vehicles as they thought an attack was taking place, only to find out that, indeed, Fiorentino was “just making sure no one was hiding in there and waiting to get him.” The story takes on a humorous note, now, 60 years later
- Recalls a situation where they had a bridge intersection of road wired with explosives, and the Americans “shoved the plunger” and hit the Germans at the intersection
- He believes that Kenneth C. Cornelius is still alive and living in Chicago
- Said that Battle of Tournai, Belgium lasted about two days
- Described the events surrounding CPT Cornelius’ injury: Cornelius stepped out from behind a building cover to throw a yellow flare “10” flare. When he exposed himself to throw the flare, a German shot him from a relatively close range with a “machine pistole” or “brrrp gun.” Cornelius wanted to throw the flare so that the engaging 113th Calvary would know the position of the American soldiers and not fire at their own troops. What actually happened, says Smith, is that Cornelius mistook the Germans for American troops, exposing himself too much to enemy fire
- He claims that he was who took CPT Cornelius back to the aid station after he was hit
- Said the British officers and NCOs had a daily ration of Johnny Walker whiskey
- Describes the 30 CRT emblem or patch as having a boar’s head. He believes that originally the symbol belonged to the 59th Brigade of the 30ID
- Did not like 1LT Travis H. Cramb
- Called 2LT Leonard Prosnick “Fearless Prosnick” due to his disregard in dangerous situations. Thought that Prosnick was not quite “with it.”
- In Herlene, Holland his platoon became friendly with some of the locals. He liked one of the local girls
- Describes the month of December 1944: “miserable weather and cold, we ended up in Malmedy. And, on or about Christmas Day the US 8th Air Force was bombing the Germans.”
- Story: He remembers a time that he went out on a patrol with “SGT Butcher” and PVT Theodore Pasternak. Pasternak tripped over a trip-wire that was connected to a grenade and blew up the grenade
- From February 1945 into early and middle spring 1945 the 30 CRT came upon the Rhine River to “Colsheid,” Germany. He said the 30 CRT was strung along the front at various points and spread out. They just watched the German positions and engaged in less action than in previous months. Smith said he picked up a red Swastika flag and still has it to this day
- 30 CRT went through “Bedburg,” Germany and was heading toward Magdeburg in East Germany
- Finally ended up in Oschersleben, Germany which was “party city with two bars, which we kept running.” 30 CRT became friendly with the locals and a German Army veteran who ran one of the bars
- Talked about “Calvados” which is a liquor made from apples
- Remembers PVT Cecil C. Cothran chasing him around shooting a “Very or Liveri” pistol which was a type of “flare gun.”
- Said “we did spend some time fighting the Germans.”
- Noted that a combat section within the platoon usually had: a point Jeep with a .30 Caliber machine gun, a M-8 armored car, and a lag Jeep with a “60” mortar
- Commented the SS was “tough and good” and the “Liebstandart Adolf Hitler” or 1st SS Division was a unit that the 30ID and 30 CRT faced
- “Axis Sally” called the 30ID “Franklin Roosevelt’s SS”
- Smith noted that in battle “a sixth sense develops, which the newer replacement troops did not have. You looked for subtle signs of impending danger, such as telephone lines and whether or not they were US or German line configurations. Then you could tell where you were and what to expect.”
- The 30 CRT stopped short of Paris at the Seine River
- PFC Merlyn C. Castner served in HQPL
- PVT Joseph L. Kenney was from Boston, Massachusetts and he did not like SGT Mortimer B. Gaines

Louis C. Stuart

First Interview:
- Stuart was the 30 CRT First SGT
- I spoke with his wife Dorothy who told me that he was simply a wonderful man
- He died in his sleep on September 8, 1998 at his home in Shreveport, Louisiana
- He had suffered four strokes and endured a couple of heart bypasses in the 1990s
- Mrs. Dorothy Stuart does not remember the name Joseph Calabrace
- Stuart’s nickname among his comrades was “Little Nigger” because he was very dark-skinned

Mark P. Walthers

First Interview:
- Walthers served, initially, as a PVT in the 1PL.
- He was eventually promoted to SGT, serving between 1942-1945
- Was at five major battles, including the Battle of Mortain
- Walthers believes that Joe Calabrace was in the 3PL
- Stated that 30 CRT met Russians at Oschersleben, Germany
- Knew PFC Birlyn D. “Red” Flint
- Stated the 30 CRT had roughly 140 men. They were spread across three field platoons and one HQ platoon—with 30 men per platoon, ten men in three sections in each platoon
- Walthers discussed equipment the 30 CRT used: 1) Jeep with .30 caliber machine gun, mounted by soldiers with Thompson machine guns, grease guns, and carbines, 2) M-8 Armored Car with a six wheel turret gun of 37 millimeter, and outfitted with a .50 caliber machine gun
- Over the course of the war, 30 CRT suffered approximately 80 percent in eventual casualties
- Walthers believes that the 30 CRT had a total replacement turnover of about “times 6”
- Walters noted that he was at: St. Lo, Mortain, the Race to Belgium, Breakthrough of the Siegfried Line, Ruhr offensive and the Aachen Gap, and the battle and bombardment at Aachen where the 30 CPT defeated the “first SS Troop.”