

Stan Wojtusik

**422nd Regiment
106th Infantry Division**

May 09, 2006 - One Man's Crusade

Stan Wojtusik's tireless effort has paved the way for Battle of the Bulge veterans to be honored.



CLEM MURRAY / Inquirer

Following the dedication ceremony Philadelphia resident Marty Sheeron, takes a close look at the new monument, Marty served with the 53rd Field hospital during the Battle of The Bulge.

ARLINGTON, Va. - As a 19-year-old in World War II, Stan Wojtusik was forced to surrender to the Germans along with his entire regiment.

That might have been the last time he ever gave up in anything.

The former private first class, now 80, has been on a personal mission for years to build monuments - here, there and, it seems, everywhere - to the Battle of the Bulge, the greatest conflict in U.S. military history.

Yesterday, on what he termed the "sacred soil" of Arlington National Cemetery, he joined old soldiers and dignitaries from three countries in dedicating a sculpted piece of granite to the 19,000 Americans who were killed, the 40,000 who were wounded and the 20,000 who, like him, were taken prisoner in the battle.

As the master of ceremonies, Wojtusik (pronounced *woh-TOO-zik*) stood in a spitting rain on a lush plateau above the Potomac River as a chaplain prayed, the speakers droned and, at length, a bugler played Taps. The air was heavy with the odor of wet grass. Fat-bellied planes rumbled overhead from nearby Reagan National Airport.

"This is for the veterans, the veterans," Wojtusik said later.

The Arlington memorial is among at least a half-dozen Wojtusik has played a role in putting up since 1994, from Valley Forge to Cape Cod to coastal Virginia.

Though reflective and well spoken on most topics, the auto club retiree from Northeast Philadelphia expressed only a bare-bones explanation of his drive to memorialize his only battle of the war.

"My wife died [in 1993] and I sort of have time on my hands," said the big man (he's still 6 feet) with a soft voice. "This keeps me busy and out of trouble. I just want to do it for the guys that got killed."

Wojtusik was a member of the [106th Infantry Division](#), an inexperienced outfit that had been on the front lines in the European war for only a few weeks when the Germans launched a surprise offensive in Belgium and Luxembourg on Dec. 16, 1944.

The initial assault pitted 200,000 Germans against only 83,000 Americans.

Wojtusik, who had only an M-1 rifle to fight tanks, scrambled from foxhole to foxhole until Dec. 22, when top officers decided to call it quits. Two whole regiments of the 106th Division - 8,000 men - lay down their arms.

The battle continued for six weeks, but Wojtusik was then a POW. He spent the final winter of the war in [Stalag IV-B](#) near Dresden, Germany. He got frost-bitten feet, but he lived.

John Bowen, 70, of Silver Spring, Md., suggested that Wojtusik's monument-building zeal could come from the the vague guilt that often trails soldiers who have become prisoners of war, typically through no fault of their own.

"For a long time, the guys from Stan's division - I wouldn't say they were shunned, but they always felt guilty. ... I would think that's part of what motivates him," said Bowen, who has known Wojtusik for 15 years.

Wojtusik conceded, "I sort of had that guilt complex."

Wojtusik is the national president of the Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge - *The Vee-Bob*, to men in the ranks - which had 21,000 members when it was founded a generation ago but has only 11,000 today.

The group's Delaware Valley chapter, of which he is president, has built monuments at Valley Forge Military Academy and College in Wayne and at the Army War College in Carlisle, Pa.

Other monuments have been erected by chapters across the country. Wojtusik personally has helped out with three in Massachusetts - in Wooster, Hyannis and Quincy - as well as monuments at Fort Monroe, Va., and Fort Meade, Md.

He is the first to acknowledge the hard work of other veterans in these projects, especially that of a friend from Philadelphia, Charles DiChristopher.

DiChristopher and five of his eight children run a burial-monument business with its main office in the city's Juniata Park section.

Over the years he has designed and donated the costly gray Vermont granite for most of the monuments Wojtusik has had a hand in.

"If it weren't for Charles DiChristopher, the monuments wouldn't be available," Wojtusik said.

His own motives for helping are complex, DiChristopher said.

Now 61, he was draft age during the Vietnam War. He said he was called up in 1965 but was judged physically unfit because of kidney problems. Assisting Wojtusik's WWII efforts "makes me feel good," he said. "I've always had the feeling it is my donation to the cause."

The Arlington monument was paid for by the governments of Belgium and Luxembourg, which were saved from German occupation by the Allies in World War II.

Guy Verhofstadt, prime minister of Belgium, and Octavie Modert, Luxembourg's secretary of state for culture, were among the dignitaries who sat with several scores of veterans on folding chairs amid scattered oaks, maples and magnolias.

It was Wojtusik, not surprisingly, who had pitched the idea for the Arlington monument to the Belgians and the Luxembourgiens.

He said that, on a visit to the cemetery, he had found only a small marker for the battle that clinched the Allied victory.

"If you didn't look where you were going, you'd trip over it," he said. "I thought we were deserving of something better."

The cemetery said one monument was enough.

But Wojtusik wouldn't take no for an answer. He asked U.S. Rep. Christopher Smith

(R., N.J.) to sponsor a bill to permit the new monument.

That sailed through, but then the Art Commission that must approve all monuments in the Washington area said that DiChristopher's design was too grand. The proposed monument would block the view of other memorials.

That was in January. By February, Wojtusik was back with a design modeled on a Grecian temple 5 3/4 feet high and 7 1/2 feet wide. The commission approved.

Wojtusik, over the months, had put so many miles on the trips to Washington that he had to buy new tires for his Buick LeSabre.

"Stan was the one who did the job," said Morris F. Heydt Jr., 82, of Clifton Heights, treasurer of the Delaware Valley veterans chapter.

Standing at the site yesterday, Wojtusik appeared misty-eyed.

He had always said that his biggest thrill was being part of the 1995 site dedication for the National World War II Memorial in Washington, when he had stood beside actor Tom Hanks and the late U.S. Sen. Strom Thurmond (R., S.C.). He had played a small role in that project.

Yesterday was pretty thrilling, too.

Tom Infield, Philadelphia Inquirer - Philadelphia,PA,USA

November 18, 2004 - [West Point honors Battle of Bulge vets](#)

WEST POINT, N.Y. -- Thirty World War II veterans were honored Nov. 6 at the Army-Air Force game as West Point observed the 60th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge.

During halftime at Michie Stadium, before the Black Knights fell 31-22, the Battle of the Bulge veterans stood out in front of the 40,000-plus applauding spectators.

The veterans were members of the Delaware Valley Chapter of the Battle of the Bulge and the P-47 Thunderbolt Foundation. They listened to radio reports of the day recounting the German onslaught and eventual demise, as well as three musical pieces of the time in a 15-minute halftime presentation.



**Stan Wojtusik
106th Infantry Division**

“At this stage of my life, it gives me an uplifting feeling to be recognized by people and appreciated for what I did,” said Stan Wojtusik, president of the Delaware Valley Chapter of Philadelphia, Pa. “I hope the cadets and the leadership at West Point realize what these men pulled off -- it was nearly impossible.”

Wojtusik was an 18-year-old corporal with the [106th Infantry division, 422nd Regiment](#), which was commanded by West Point graduate, [Col. George Deschneax](#).

The [106th](#) was a new division with many inexperienced Soldiers when the Germans attacked them.

“We held off as many Germans as possible, it wasn’t until three days later (into the battle) that their Tiger tanks blasted their way through to us,” Wojtusik said. “I was wounded in the shoulder and face from a shell shot.

“After that I was captured and spent six months in a German prison camp, that was one of the tough parts of the war,” he added.

The German offensive through the heavily forested Ardennes region on the German-Belgian border turned out to be the largest land battle of World War II. Between the U.S. and Germany, the battle had the equivalent of 60 divisions coming to blows.

The Battle of the Bulge also produced the worst casualty count -- more than 81,000 casualties – that the Americans suffered through any part of the war.

The [106th Infantry Division](#) was credited for holding the action of the Germans so they couldn’t get to the port of Antwerp, which would have devastated the Allied supply lines. The delay allowed the 106th and 101st Airborne Division to receive much-needed supplies once the bad winter weather cleared.

The VII Corps airdrops enlarged the U. S. line and allowed Lt. Gen. George S. Patton’s Third Army to counterattack and break the German encirclement at Bastogne.

Lt. Ken Glemby was part of the 406th Fighter Group that helped support the C-47s supplying those Soldiers on the ground.

“I was a fighter pilot and we flew many missions, I flew the P-47 -- it was a remarkable plane,” said Glemby, whose fighter group protected the C-47s and bombed German supply lines. “When we started our missions after the weather cleared, our infantry units were bottled up by the Germans.

“Along came a line of C-47s about 200 feet off the ground without any armor as they came over Bastogne,” he continued. “They were kicking supplies out the side doors, flying so low they were continually getting shot down.

“They were so brave,” added Glemby, whose plane “The Paula” was named after his wife of 60 years. “I was so proud of the ground troops at the battle, it was tremendous.”

One of those Soldiers, Wojtusik, was liberated by the Russians after his six-month captivity, then spent other 10 days as a Russian prisoner because they thought he was a German dressed in an American uniform.

Wojtusik said he tries to get to West Point as often as he can because he loves what the academy stands for.

West Point’s overall record so far this year is 2 - 7 with wins against Cincinnati and the University of South Florida. Army plays the University of Alabama, Birmingham this Saturday. The Army-Navy game is scheduled for Dec. 4 in Philadelphia. *By Spc. Eric S. Bartelt, Army News Service*

August 21, 2006 - 11 forgotten soldiers honored - Memorial recognizes black men

WINCHENDON— Although it took 62 years, America finally stepped forward yesterday in an attempt to right the wrong committed in 1944 when it ignored the service of 11 black men who were killed during the Battle of the Bulge.

The men, who were part of the 81,000 Americans who fought in the Ardennes region of eastern Belgium and northern Luxembourg, were honored with the placement of two memorials at the Massachusetts Veterans Memorial Cemetery on Glenallen Street.

While the first memorial stands for all those who served in the battle, the second one was placed to specifically honor the men who were captured and then murdered by the Nazi SS in Wereth, Belgium, on Dec. 17, 1944.

This second monument is the first known American public recognition of the massacre.



“The people of Belgium are still grateful for what the Americans did.”

**Brig. Gen. Dany Van de Ven,
OF THE BELGIUM EMBASSY**

The facts surrounding the deaths of these soldiers were kept under wraps by the U.S. government until a few years ago, according to historian Christian W. de Marcken, a Paxton resident.

“Until the Freedom of Information Act made the facts public, nobody really knew about it,” Mr. de Marcken said, adding that in the hundreds of books written on the war, he has not found one published account of the events that took place that day.

According to de Marcken, the 11 soldiers from the [333rd Field Artillery Battalion](#) were trying to escape capture when they were found hiding in the house of a farmer who had taken them in and fed them.

The SS soldiers tortured the men and killed them in a nearby pasture. Their bodies were left in the snow, unclaimed for months.

The reason their deaths were ignored was because of the color of their skin, Mr. de Marcken said.

Yesterday’s ceremony finally provided the recognition the soldiers deserved as well as an opportunity for closure for family members, some of whom were in attendance.

Elsie Pritchett, daughter of slain soldier William Pritchett, attended the ceremony with her uncle, McArthur Pritchett, and her children Zena, Quinton, Montrise and Jasmine Williams.

“This day has been a long time in coming,” she said, adding that she had mixed feelings about the memorial ceremony.

Because of the war, Ms. Pritchett said, she grew up never knowing her father. Born in 1943, Ms. Pritchett said that her father only saw her once, when he was on furlough in 1944.

“He never got to come back home again,” she said. “He was only about 21 or 22 when he died.”

Ms. Pritchett and her uncle together unveiled the memorial honoring her father.

[Stanley A. Wojtusik, 106th Infantry Division, and national president of the Veterans of Battle of the Bulge](#), spoke of the hardship all the soldiers suffered in battle. Fear, hunger, death and cold were only some of the daily realities these heroes faced, he said.

“I call them heroes because they kept fighting when all seemed lost,” Mr. Wojtusik said.

“The circumstances are what made their actions so heroic,” agreed John E. McAuliffe, president of the Central Massachusetts Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge.

Made of granite, the two monuments are the first to be placed on the monument path, which was completed just last week. While monuments can’t change the events of time, event organizers agree that it does bring recognition and dignity to those who served.

Brig. Gen. Dany Van de Ven, defense attaché of the Belgium Embassy, traveled from

Washington, D.C., to speak at the ceremony, stated that when he was asked to attend, his response was that when it comes to doing what can be done to help the Americans, the word impossible does not exist for Belgians.

“The people of Belgium are still grateful for what the Americans did,” Mr. Van de Ven said. “We are free because of them, we don’t ever forget that.”

Members of the 333rd Artillery Battalion who were killed in Wereth, Belgium, Dec. 17, 1944:

Staff Sgt. Thomas Forte, Cpl. Mager Bradley, technicians William Pritchett and James Stewart, Privates First Class George Davis, James Leatherwood, George Moten, Due Turner and Privates Curtis Adams, Robert Green and Nathaniel Moss.

Gail Stanton, Worcester Telegram (subscription) - Worcester,MA,USA

Page last revised 11/27/2006

[Print This Article](#)