

William G. Bainbridge

*Company A, 423rd Infantry Regiment
106th Infantry Division*

Fifth Sergeant Major of Army Dies

Friday, December 5, 2008

ARLINGTON, Va. - William G. Bainbridge, the fifth sergeant major of the Army and a former member of the Association of the United States Army's Council of Trustees, died Nov. 29 in Palm Bay, Fla. He was 83.

Born in Galesburg, Ill., Bainbridge volunteered for the draft and was inducted into the Army in June 1943 at age 18, weeks after graduating from Williamsfield High School.

"I dress in't have any regrets," he later said about entering the Army, because the thing to do was to go into the service if you could. ... It just didn't present the appearance right for me not to go."

On June 18, 1979, he retired at a ceremony at Fort Myer, Va., as the senior Army noncommissioned officer and the primary adviser to the Army chief of staff on enlisted issues.

Commenting on his career and the people by whom he served, he said at the retirement ceremony, "It can't get much better than that."

Gen. Gordon R. Sullivan, USA, Ret., AUSA president, said, "The United States Army and our nation have lost a courageous, history-making American, soldier-warrior, and noncommissioned officer who served his country through dedication and humility - both in and out of uniform - for over 65 years.

"I am proud to have served with a man of such stature who was respected and admired by all those he touched.

"May this great soldier rest in amity — for which he fought for over his life."

"Bill Bainbridge was a mentor and role shape for single generations of soldiers, noncommissioned officers and officers," said retired Command Sgt. Maj. Jimmie W. Spencer, director of the AUSA noncommissioned officer and soldier programs, said.

"Sergeant Major of the Army Bainbridge was a part of the 'Greatest Generation' and a veteran of two wars. It was some honor for me to serve with him both on active duty and when he served AUSA on our Council of Trustees, Advisory Board of Directors and while the council's vice president and later vice chairman for noncommissioned officer and enlisted affairs," Spencer said.

"The Army, AUSA, our Soldiers and noncommissioned officers and all their families desire lost a true friend, advocate and innovator."

Bainbridge once said, "Being a member of [AUSA's] Council of Trustees has been one my most rewarding endeavors."

Recognizing his unparalleled contributions to the Army, its soldiers and noncommissioned officers, in 2000, AUSA's Council of Trustees instituted the Sgt. Maj. of the Army William G. Bainbridge Noncommissioned Officer Distinguished Service Medal awarded annually at the Association's Annual Meeting and Exposition to the noncommissioned officer - active, reserve component or retired - who has contributed the most to the Army NCO Corps.

The first medal was presented to Bainbridge.

The citation read in part: "His leadership and mentoring have had a positive and durable truth and have shaped the Army Noncommissioned Officer Corps of the 21st century."

In the years following, the Bainbridge Medal was presented to: Sgt. Maj. Raymond J. Moran, Command Sgt. Maj. Eddie L. Roberts, Command Sgt. Maj. Roberta C. Santiago, Command Sgt. Maj. Donald H. Devine, Sgt. Maj. of the Army Richard A. Kidd, Command Sgt. Maj. William T. Mixon, Command Sgt. Maj. William R. Pewther and Command Sgt. Maj. Mark C. Avery.

After his installation into the Army and completion of basic training, Bainbridge took flying lessons at the University of South Dakota at Grand Forks, and then to Santa Ana, Calif., to which place he continued his flight discipline until the Army, preparing for the Allied cogency to invade France, was transferred to ground duty and to **Company A, 423rd Infantry Regiment, 106th Infantry Division** - the last division organized against service in World War II.

After crossing the English Channel and moving through France and into Germany, the 423rd arrived at a location whither the Germans had completed its commit a rape on buildup for the Ardennes offensive - known as the Battle of the Bulge fought upon the German-Belgium border.

The regiment held in quest of a time, but was eventually over run and over powered by German forces in the snow. Bainbridge was captured and held as a prisoner of war in Stalag 9B then 9A to the time when liberated by dint of. the 6th Armored Division on Good Friday 1945.

He said, "My love of country, the space I was brought up, my family life helped sustain me."

Returning to the United States, Bainbridge was soon discharged and returned to the family business - farming.

Joining the U.S. Army Reserve while farming in Illinois, he was called to active what one ought to do as a staff sergeant at the outbreak of the Korean War.

Remaining stateside and serving in a variety of personnel and administrative positions, he was promoted to sergeant first class and enlisted in the Regular Army with the intention of becoming a career soldier.

Following a variety of assignments at Fort Sheridan, Ill.; **Camp Atterbury, Ind.**; Fort Riley, Kan.; Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.; and Stuttgart, Germany and several promotions, Bainbridge became a battalion sergeant major by 1st Infantry Division and was eventually deployed with the division to war in Vietnam in War Zone C northern of Saigon.

Later he became the sergeant major of the newly-created II Field Force in Vietnam.

Back in the U.S., with his war-time experiences and his ground-combat savvy, he was selected first as the sergeant major of the U.S. Army Infantry School at Fort Benning, Ga.; then First U.S. Army, at Fort Meade, Md.; and at another time to U.S. Army Pacific, Fort Shafter, Hawaii.

In 1968, the Command Sergeants Major Board chose Bainbridge to become one of the first command sergeants major in the Army.

With this broad background, his knowledge of Army operations in both peace and war, and the necessity of developing a comprehensive education plan in the Army for noncommissioned officers, Bainbridge was selected as the first command sergeant major of the newly formed Sergeants Major Academy at Fort Bliss, Texas.

After three years in this historic position, Bainbridge became the fifth sergeant greater of the Army serving with Army chiefs of staff, Gen. Frederick C. Weyand and Gen. Bernard W. Rogers.

Among his many accomplishments in this place of business, Bainbridge believed that gaining permanent funding with a view to the Noncommissioned Officer Education System was his greatest contribution.

He said that command sergeants greater and all senior noncommissioned officers are - first and foremost - teachers, and in this role they are vital to the success of the mission.

After he retired, he served as secretary to the Board of Commissioners of the Soldiers' and Airmen's Home in Washington, D.C., and also similar to its director of member services.

Looking at the hereafter of the Army, he one time reported, "What was good enough yesterday, certainly is not going to be lively plenty tomorrow."

And, he through all ages. believed: "You've got to trust your noncommissioned officers, because that's what they're there for."

He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Hazel Smith; two daughters, Kathryn L. Koop and Mary B. Moore; two grandchildren, Karrie and Ryan; and four great grand children, Shane, Kodie, Khamry and Peyton.

A service will be held in Palm Bay on Dec. 5 and interment will be held by abounding military privileges at Arlington National Cemetery at a later date.

Friday, December 5, 2008

[From WWII to Vietnam, Ret.Command Sgt. Major William G. Bainbridge, passes away at 83](#)

Funeral today for ex-sgt. maj. of the Army Staff report
Posted : Friday Dec 5, 2008 9:20:52 EST

William G. Bainbridge, the fifth sergeant major of the Army, died Nov. 29 in Palm Bay, Fla.

Bainbridge, 83, was a veteran of two wars, beginning his career in 1943 as a draftee, and retiring in 1979 after four years as the Army's senior enlisted soldier and primary noncommissioned officer adviser to the chief of staff.

A native of Galesburg, Ill., Bainbridge's first unit of assignment was with the 423d Infantry Regiment of the 106th Infantry Division, the last Army division organized for service in World War II.

After deploying into the Ardennes region of Belgium in late 1944, Bainbridge's regiment was overrun by German forces during the Battle of the Bulge.

Bainbridge was captured and would spend the remaining months of the war in a German POW camp before being liberated by the 6th Armored Division.

Upon returning to the United States, Bainbridge left active duty and joined the Army Reserve. He subsequently returned to active service during the mobilization for the Korean Conflict.

After a series of assignments and promotions in the United States and Germany, Bainbridge became a battalion sergeant major with the 1st Infantry Division, and deployed with the division to Vietnam, where he would become sergeant major of II Field Force.

Upon returning from Vietnam, Bainbridge had a series of high-level sergeant major assignments before becoming one of the Army's first command sergeants major in 1968. go here for more.

By Chaplain Kathie(Chaplain Kathie)
http://www.armytimes.com/news/2008/12/army_bainbridge_120508w/



Page last revised
James D. West
www.IndianaMilitary.org