



## Mortain France, August 6 - 12, 1944

At 0520, 04 August, 1944, the 120th RCT was ordered to move from TESSY-SUR-VIRE to the town of MORTAIN. Their mission: Relieve the 18th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division. The 45 mile move to MORTAIN was uneventful and the 120th Regiment got to its assembly area by 1000hrs, 05 August. The 18th Infantry CO said his area had been really quiet and said there was no immediate enemy threat. The 120th front line battalions went into the line with this very sketchy information. The 2nd Battalion 120th Infantry, with K Company attached, plus two platoons of Tank Destroyers and one platoon from the A.T. Company, relieved the 18th Infantry on the high ground – hill 314 east of MORTAIN. The 120th Infantry adopted the exact hasty defense positions left by the 18th Infantry except tanks ...they had no tanks, either attached or in support there were also no reserves. Wire nets were left in place and the 18th Infantry fire plan was adopted. The 2nd Battalion CO would formulate his own later. Battalion Command and Company CO's knew about the hasty defenses and planned to improve them later.



After the Normandy Invasion in June and subsequent breakout at St. Lo in July, the German High Command was directed to prepare a massive counteroffensive in an attempt to throw the Allied Armies back into the sea. The American breakthrough meant that the Germans might have to withdraw from France. There were no prepared positions in France in the rear and the Siegfried Line or Westwall on the western approaches to the Rhine River, had been neglected for four years. With France no longer being a buffer, the Germans would have to fight on their own soil. Hitler was reluctant to withdraw from Normandy and France because it meant the inevitable loss of a great part of his combat trained forces. Troops in withdrawal always abandoned equipment and straggled, and, what was worse, the Germans lacked not only the mobility of the Allied mechanized armies, but also control of the air. To surrender France, to lose the V1 and V2 missile bases along the Channel coast and to withdraw to the homeland, might signify the beginning of the end, defeat and disaster.



The only alternative was to restore the conditions that had made possible the static warfare of June and much of July. If a continuous defensive line could be re-established in Normandy, the shortest conceivable line in western Europe, the Germans might yet hold. To attain this goal, the Germans had to close the breach on their left. They had to recapture Avranches. It was decided that a counterattack was in order so a powerful thrust toward Avranches through Mortain was put into motion. The German field commander, Field Marshall von Kluge, began to assemble an armored force east of Mortain for this purpose. XLVII Panzer Corps, directing the 2nd

SS, 2nd and 116th Panzer Divisions in an initial effort, and the 1st SS Panzer Division in exploitation, was to attack to the west after dark on 6 August, without artillery preparation, and seize and secure Avranches. The Germans moved massive amounts of armor and infantry to the area of Mortain, France, 150 miles (250 kilometers) west of Paris. 7 August, the Germans launched their attack in full force.

At 0100, 07 August 1944 the troops of the XLVII Panzer Corps rolled forward in Operation Luttich with the 2d SS Panzer Division headed directly for Mortain and Hill 314, a key terrain feature in the central sector of the attack. Their armored units hit the Mortain area from the east and southeast, quickly overran the roadblock south of Mortain and in minutes were in the town of Mortain itself. On the 7<sup>th</sup>, the roadblock and Hill 314 were surrounded and bypassed by the main body of the German onslaught. The GI's surrounded on Hill 314 commanded by Captain Reynold Erichson ( about 700 men ), were ultimately protected by a ring of Corps artillery fire.

The Germans realized that they had stumbled into in a flaming inferno and ordered a rapid dispersal and withdrawal. The artillery FO's on Hill 314 built an impressive ring of artillery fire which could be fired on their call. On 8 August there was no serious attempt to take Hill 314 but the enemy continued his attack to get to the port city of AVRANCHES. A captured German Officer of the 10th SS Panzer said "*We cursed the little dark green, high-wing aeroplanes because we knew that when one of them came into the area, we would soon receive a monstrous*

barrage ... we tried our hardest to shoot them down. We dreaded those little observation aeroplanes because they were the angels of death to us."

FO's on the Hill 314, having 360 degree observation, continued to blast enemy troop movements, armored columns and any useable road system available to the Germans. The situation for the men on stuck up on Hill 314 was becoming critical. Food, water, medical supplies, batteries and ammunition were becoming dangerously low and all the relief attempts by Regiment and Division failed. During the night some



severely wounded GI's died. KIA's were decaying in the strong August sun, the stench was awful, the situation was grim and morale was declining rapidly. On 09 August, much needed supplies loaded into two Division artillery liaison planes were downed by enemy anti-aircraft fire. Division then urgently requested some C-47's for the resupply mission but many doubted the flights would be successful because past close air support had been less than fruitful.

At 1530 hours on 10 August, allied fighter planes bombed and strafed the enemy positions. At 1600 hours, the fighters returned, escorting a flight of resupply C-47's ... a morale building, beautiful sight for the men on the besieged "Hill." Half of the parachuted supplies were lost but the Battalion did get some food, some much needed ammunition, a few medical supplies but most importantly – they got radio batteries for the FO's! Morale among the 120<sup>th</sup> GI's on the Hill soared! Once communications on the Hill were strengthened and reestablished with Regiment, it allowed the FO's to continue to inflict massive damage on the withdrawing enemy columns. Finally, on 11 August, it became noticeable that the enemy started to move his battered columns eastward. Air strikes added to the pounding of the enemy columns and burning enemy columns could be seen for miles. The enormous slaughter continued all day long. The men on Hill 314 began to believe that relief was now possible and they were encouraged as they rested and listened to the outgoing Corps artillery.



At 1130 hours, 12 August, leading elements of the 320th Infantry, 35th Infantry Division made contact with the 120th G Company. The 35th Infantry slammed into the Germans south of Mortain to finally make contact with G Company. The 320th Infantry Regiment quickly evacuated the wounded and proceeded to distribute much needed food, water and medical supplies. The 1st Battalion, 119th Infantry, 30th Infantry Division fought through the town of Mortain to make contact with K Company. Finally, by 1300 hours 12 August 1944, the 2nd Battalion, 120th Infantry men on Hill 314 were completely relieved! The 2nd Battalion GI's had fulfilled its mission magnificently but at a very high and bloody price. A total of 277 men were killed, captured or missing and of the 700 original men only 376 were able to walk off Hill #314 when relieved on 12 August. It's impossible to cite the many acts of self sacrifice and personal bravery displayed by the men and officers of the 2nd Battalion on Hill 314.



By halting the German advance at Mortain, the men of the 30th Infantry Division foiled Hitler's plan to drive a wedge between the Normandy beachhead and Patton's Third Army which was racing into the south of France. Their gallant stand secured the continent beachhead lodgment, the St. LO breakout and secured Patton's supply line that lead to them being credited with shortening the war by precious months. Hitler's "elite" 1st SS Panzer Division was the main force prior to the breakthrough at St. LO and again at Mortain, where the 30th Infantry Division literally tore them to shreds! Because of the terrific mauling the 30th Infantry Division delivered to the "elite" 1st SS Panzer Division, the German High Command dubbed them "**Roosevelt's SS Troops.**"

Some 2nd Battalion GI's were quickly recognized for their heroic actions, some recommendations were slow to be processed, some men were recognized posthumously, some recognitions dragged on until late November, some recommendations were inexplicably lost and some men never got the recognition they were due. Regardless of all the rear echelon goofs and sanfu's, it was easy to say of the Hill 314 men "They were all magnificent!" In official and unofficial documents the 2nd Battalion was often referred to as the "Lost Battalion of WWII." This is a gross misnomer if ever there was one because the Battalion was isolated but it was "never lost!" **Old Hickory!**

*As the battle for the town of Mortain and Hill 314 was taking place, about two miles north the 1st Bn, 117th Inf was manning several road blocks at the town of St Barthelemy. In the early fog of Aug 07 the Germans rolled over the road blocks and reduced the defensive positions of A and C companies so severely, 1st Bn Hq personnel had to man the main line of resistance. With the heroic action of a bazooka team from D Company and other fragments of the Bn, the attack was stalled- it should also be noted, later in the day several British planes appeared to strafe and fire antitank rockets into the German rear area. The Regimental CO, Col. Walter Johnson, said there was nothing to the rear of the Battalion that would have stopped them from reaching Avranches and the sea which of course, was their original mission. There were other heroic events in this battle but I couldn't resist inserting my unit history. One of two times that I was a front line Old Hickoryman. This was my 'baptism of fire' where I saw my first wounded GI, my first German prisoner and the first dead German. Hank Stairs*



## Jay Callaham Sounds Taps at General John J. Pershing's Gravesite At Arlington National Cemetery To Commemorate The 150th Anniversary Of Taps.

On May 19, 2012 at Arlington National Cemetery, 200 buglers from around the country collectively sounded America's most recognizable bugle call...Taps. From the Old Amphitheater section to the Kennedy gravesite, the 150th Anniversary of the bugle call "Taps" was commemorated in a morning tribute at the Old Amphitheater location. Together, the 200 buglers became one voice during the first mass sounding of taps and then in a chorus of harmonized instruments during the second mass sounding. The notes soared, strong enough to drown out even the sound of a low - flying jets overhead. Then, the buglers were dismissed and requested to walk to their assigned grave positions so they could get positioned and be ready to sound a mid-day rendition from every corner of the cemetery. Then, just after noon, something remarkable happened. The stillness gave way to the plaintive calls of 200 distinct brass voices, the familiar notes rising from every acre of the sprawling hallowed grounds. The calls came rolling over the hills in gentle rounds, each one slightly different, reflecting the subtle variations of instruments and their owners. For several minutes, the hallowed site was overwhelmed with the haunting sounds. Then the last, faint notes dissolved in the soft afternoon breeze and serene quiet fell over the hallowed grounds. Our own Jay Callaham had been assigned to sound Taps at General John J. Pershing's gravesite. "This is an enormous privilege and I am very honored to be involved in this very special ceremony," Jay stated. To reinforce the solemnity of his assignment, he wore a typical World War I era uniform featuring leggings, campaign hat, and wool blouse and trousers. Many of the buglers took this unique opportunity to also wear period military uniforms while they performed their sounding of Taps. Male and female, young and old, active-duty, veterans, civilians and living history reenactors traveled from as far as California and Washington State to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Taps. It was a truly magnificent commemoration of a call that is only 24 notes long, a simple line of music lasting only seconds but has become one of the most recognized and evocative melodies in American culture.



*Jay Callaham plays taps at the grave of General John J. "Black Jack" Pershing, who commanded the U.S. forces in France during World War I.*



*Henry Irving and Walt Sowinski salute as Jay played taps. Jay and Henry are wearing World War I era uniforms and Walt is wearing a WWII era uniform.*



***"When people hear Taps, they automatically remember a certain person or time, somewhere they've been. That piece of music can really draw us back into our own emotions and memories of something."***

# OHA Unit News

## Here's The OHA 2012 Election Results

The results of the election for the OHA Board of Directors are finally in! The votes have been tallied and produced this result. The new board for the next two years will be: **Charlie Noble - President, Ron Crawley - Vice President, Brian Illner - Secretary, Jay Callaham – Sgt. at Arms, Clint Yarbrough – Director at Large.** Congratulations to the winners and thank you to all those members who took the time from their busy lives to participate in this election. We had a very good response from the membership which gives the Board a sense that the OHA is becoming more active as it used to be. The new Board promises to work tirelessly to provide an active calendar that is engaging and fulfilling.

## Report On The OHA Annual Business Meeting

The Annual business meeting of the Old Hickory Association was held at 12 noon on Saturday June 02, 2012, at the Grand Stands of the racetrack of the State Fairgrounds in Raleigh, NC. We had decent turn out consisting of: Neil Trivette, Aaron Clark, Jody McKay, Pat Grogan, Walt Sowinski, Jay Callaham, Ken Hyatt, Chuck Eatmon, Dan Jutson and Brian Illner. It was a great opportunity for you to talk about the future of the OHA and to discuss those topics which the new Board will be dealing with. We were received the current financial report of the association, talked about Camp Bogdan next steps, our increasing close relationship and role with the NCNG and the upcoming Change of Command ceremony for Wes Morrison. Plus, this meeting always allows you to get out of the house, away from your boring domestic duties and provides a great chance to see old buddies and to spend lots of cash at the Raleigh Militaria Show! All in all, Gomer, it was a very pleasant and productive day.



## OK Guys ... It's Time To Pay Your 2013 OHA Dues

Gentlemen: Jim Higgins is standing by to receive your dues check so let's get'er done! If you don't pay your dues you don't get the newsletter, you don't have any OHA participation rights and you'll be branded a loser for life! So get with it and pay up now Gomer. Just in case you don't remember what the dues are, here's the current rates: A Renewal of a Regular Membership is \$20.00 per year...A New Regular Membership is \$30.00 for the first year only and an Associate Membership is always \$30.00 per year. Associate Membership is a non-voting membership but members will also receive the OHA newsletter and all unit information and event updates. If you are unsure which category you fall into, just send Jimbo the highest amount and you'll be OK. The OHA mailing address is: Old Hickory Association P.O.Box 1079 Wake Forest, NC 27588-1079

## The 30th Infantry Division Association Veterans Reunion Is Scheduled For August 15-19, 2012 At The Ramada-Raleigh 1520 Blue Ridge Road, Raleigh, NC ... Make Sure You're There!

Yes, we know times are tough, we know most of you work and given today's economic troubles we all need to keep our jobs. That said, however, the OHA Board believes it's very important to join our WWII and Brigade veterans who will be attending the August reunion. It is very important that we continue to honor the service of and to show our support for our WWII veterans and our Brigade brothers. So, guys, don't even think about skipping out on this one ... you just can't afford to keep missing reunions! So, let's get it in gear and fill out the reunion registration form attached to this newsletter. I guarantee it's gonna' be one of the best you'll ever experience. If you don't attend a reunion, you'll never have that once in a lifetime conversation with a 30th ID veteran or Old Hickory Brigade veteran and have him tell you a story about his time in service. We say this all the time guys but we'll say it again...our WWII veteran buddies are not getting any younger and none of us are either. Maybe it's time you make sure to attend this reunion because time is running out! That is all, carry on, see you at the Hospitality Room bucko!



# OHA Training Weekend at Camp Bogdan Is A Huge Success



The OHA kickoff the first of what is intended to be a regular event at "Camp Bogdan" in Fayetteville, NC over the weekend of 22-Apr-2012. Bogdan and Robin Gieniewski's home is just minutes off I-95 and on a large tract of land adjacent to other vacant property. There are numerous trails, a large cleared field for maneuvers (enough room for a "gauntlet"), and a nice area for a sizable encampment. Of course, the large number of military vehicles and impressive weapons display is another draw. But this weekend, the OHA hosted a Training Weekend, the first that we are aware of since the old Camp Butner days. While I cannot compare the venues, I can say that Bogdan, Robin, and Ben LeFever are generous hosts and went to great lengths to make the group feel welcome.



Accommodations included the shed along side the main barn as well as a M-1934 Pyramid tent. Attendees trickled in on Friday night and the next morning and shortly before we began training on Saturday we had new draftees Jody McKay, Shiloh Brooks, and J. D. Layman, along with private Aaron Clark, Sgt Brian Illner, and brevet drill instructor Ron Crawley on site. Supporting troops included Mess Sgt. Walt Sowinski, Ken Hyatt, and Chuck Eatmon with Hunter Crawley also on hand. Training began late as we ran through manual of arms, basic foot drill, and combat movements/signals.



After being joined by SSgt Charlie Noble and venerable old salt Tyler Owens, the group took the field and practice maneuvering somewhat unsuccessfully on a German machine gun position (where was Gill when you needed him?). After debriefing with our opponents, we took another try with more success but amid a short rainfall that was a foreshadowing of the night to come. The action that afternoon was a great exercise and really made us give thought to how we can better function on the field in a more realistic manner. Compliments to our opposition ... and to the kitchen staff for a hearty dinner on Saturday evening and for sweating ... literally ... over the hot stove for us! While a few of us had to leave that evening, most of the remainder of the group weathered the storm that night and awoke to a wet and later muggy Sunday.



This event shows great promise, due to the location, amenities, supporting vehicles, and gracious hosts. Some have already begun to voice ideas for the "fall" so please sound off with your suggestions. It was a



great to see three brand new soldiers in the field and we need to continue events like this in order to recruit and train our members for the events to come. Thanks again to all who participated! Article submitted by Ron Crawley



# OHA Helps LTC Morrison Take Command Of The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 120<sup>th</sup> Infantry



LTC Charles W. Morrison assumed command of the 1st Battalion, 120th Infantry from outgoing Commander LTC Robert L. Ezzell II on 17 June 2012. The Change of Command Ceremony took place at 1400 hours and LTC Morrison had asked the OHA to attend as participating members because he firmly believes the OHA would add a lot to this tradition filled ceremony. He specifically requested that the OHA provide two ( 2 ) Rifle Escorts for the Ceremony's Color Guard and that was request was fulfilled with Mike Owens and Ken Hyatt. Wes said our participation would provide his soldiers, attending family members and special guests with the opportunity to get to see, to know and to appreciate the traditions, heritage and history of the 120th Infantry through our militaria displays as well as the wearing of our period WWI and WWII uniforms. To that degree, I believe the OHA met his expectations and accomplished our stated mission.

The Change of Command Ceremony was attended by a Wes's immediate family, a large group of Guard friends and admirers including COL Randy Powell, CAPT Kevin Hinton, 1SG Russell Prince, SSG Jimmy Nance, OHA members Neil Trivette, Chuck Eatmon, Dan Jutson, Jay Callahan, Ken Hyatt, Walt Sowinski, Mike Owens (accompanied by his wife Holly), Aaron Clark and numerous other NCNG friends and local dignitaries too numerous to mention. Also on site was War Correspondent, Shell Hyatt, who covered the ceremony with her usual outstanding photographic services as evidenced by the excellent photos showcased in this article...many thanks Shell!

COL Powell did a nice job of stating why Wes so deserved being given the command of the 120<sup>th</sup>. Powell's short but "accomplishments loaded" speech served to underscore that this new assignment was in recognition of Wes's outstanding service to date and that it's expected that Wes would continue his excellent contributions to the 120<sup>th</sup> Infantry soldiers and to the service of the NCNG.

When Wes took to the podium, he thanked everyone for their very kind comments but stated with great emotion, that without the support of his wife Xena, this event would never have been possible. Wes also paid a special tribute to his Dad by recognizing his Dad's Vietnam service which he said was "something that should have happened a long time ago for the Nam vets." Wes then went on to pay tribute to the many others who were instrumental in helping him in his career but emphasized that his wife Xena deserved the greatest recognition and his appreciation. At the conclusion of the Change of Command ceremony, the assemblage retired to the 120<sup>th</sup>'s Armory for a food and refreshments gathering. All in all, it was a wonderful day for a really great guy, a dedicated soldier and a true American patriot. **Old Hickory!**



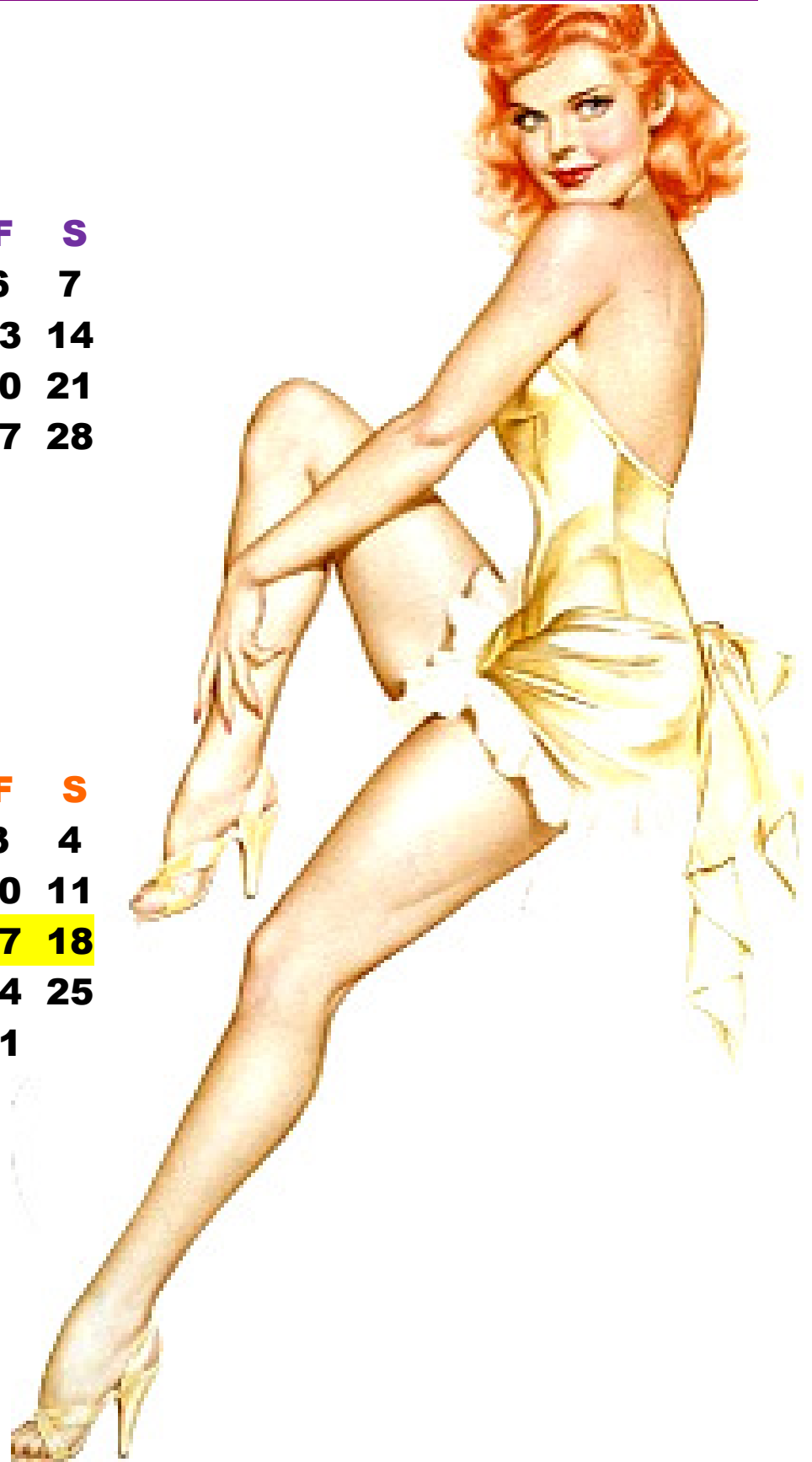
# Old Hickory Pin - Ups

## July

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

## August

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	





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## Items For Sale

### OHA Items:

Grey T-shirt w/OHA logo, S-XL \$10., XXL \$12.50 Golf Shirt, White or Grey, w/ OHA logo, S-XL \$22.50 XXL \$25.00 Grey Sweatshirt w/ OHA logo, S-XL \$18.00, XXL \$20.00 Ball Cap, Grey body w/ blue bill w/ OHA logo \$11.00 Prices do NOT include shipping. Brett says to "Order directly" from: Custom Embroidery Company 123 Wooding Ave. Danville, VA 24541 ph. 434-799-3153 ..... Tell them you are an OHA Member.

### Reproduction Items:

**WWII Reproduction Rations** - Complete reproduction of WW2 K ration, C ration and D bars, as well as other such accessories as Foot Powder, Charms, PK Gum, fuel tablets, batteries and much more. Catalog available. [www.angelfire.com/nc/stug](http://www.angelfire.com/nc/stug) or mail to:

Todd Hogan, 225 S. Melville Street, Graham, NC 27253 or you can e-mail me at [-thogan@triad.rr.com](mailto:-thogan@triad.rr.com)

**World War II Impressions** - U.S. Army uniforms and accessories. Catalog available.

7165 Adwen Street, Downey, CA 90241 Fax and Phone - (562) 927-6922

Email at - [www.wwiiimpressions.com/contact.htm](http://www.wwiiimpressions.com/contact.htm)

**What Price Glory** - Reproduction uniforms and accessories. No Catalog available.

238-A Commission Street, Salinas, CA 93901 Toll Free Order Line) - (888) 431-2351

Inquiry Line (831) 754-2351 <http://www.whatpriceglory.com/usunif.htm>

## Upcoming Events

### July 04, 2012

4th Parade  
Faith, NC  
Contact: None

### August 15-19, 2012

30th IDA Reunion  
Ramada Inn- Blue Ridge  
Raleigh, NC  
Contact: TBD

### Sept. 01, 2012

Matthews Alive Parade  
Matthews, NC  
Contact: TBD

### Oct. / Nov. ?? 2012

Camp Bogdan  
OHA Training Weekend  
Contact: TBD

### Nov. 02 - 04, 2012

Great War Event  
Newville, PA  
Contact: Jay Callaham

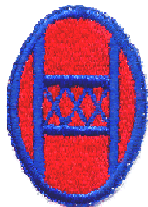
### Nov. 10, 2012

The Guilford Courthouse  
"History of the American  
Soldier" Timeline Event  
Greensboro, NC  
Contact: TBD

### Nov. 31- Dec 02, 2012

Hurtgenwald & Ostfront,  
Enfield, NC  
Contact: TBD





# 30th Infantry Division Association Reunion Registration Form - 15-19, August 2012 Ramada Inn Blue Ridge, Raleigh, NC

<b>Registration Package</b>	<b>Cost per person</b>	<b>Number Attending</b>	<b>Total</b>
Reunion Registration Fee	\$35.00	_____	\$ _____
<b>Wednesday:</b> Reception Dinner	\$20.00	_____	\$ _____
<b>Thursday:</b> Thursday Dinner	\$24.00	_____	\$ _____
<i>*Choices- Meatloaf or Grilled Chicken Breast</i>			
<b>Friday:</b> Friday- Light Lunch Buffett	\$19.00	_____	\$ _____
Friday NC Style Pig Pickin' Dinner	\$22.00	_____	\$ _____
<b>Saturday:</b> Banquet Dinner	\$25.00	_____	\$ _____
<i>*Choices- Roast Beef or Grilled Chicken</i>			

**Breakfast is included with your room cost  
All prices listed above include tax & gratuity**

**If attending all events the cost is: \$145.00 per person**  
**Make checks payable to 30<sup>th</sup> IDA** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Pls. return completed form to Kevin Hinton by 01, August 2012**

**Mail to: Kevin Hinton  
1244 Magnolia Hill Rd.  
Garner, NC 27529**

**Please print name**

First \_\_\_\_\_ Last \_\_\_\_\_

Regiment \_\_\_\_\_ Company \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse (if attending) \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone Number (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

**For room registrations contact Ramada Inn directly @ 919-832-4100. Room rate: \$62.00 per night plus tax.  
Ramada Inn Blue Ridge, 1520 Blue Ridge Road, Raleigh, NC 27607**