



30th IDV of WWII Enjoys Another Successful Reunion



The 30th Infantry Division Veterans of WWII held their annual reunion in Louisville, KY at the Crowne Plaza hotel on April 11-13, 2013. There were only three (3) stalwart Old Hickory men who were able to attend this years reunion but they were reinforced by two (2) 117th Regiment reenactors from the tri-city area of MN and WI. The five (5) did yeoman duty to set up our usual impressive memorabilia display, man the hospitality room bar, deliver good cheer and provide a Color Guard for the veteran's business meeting and their memorial service.

The "Iron Three" OHA Members who were able to attend were: Neil Trivette, Walt Sowinski and Aaron Clark...the

117th reinforcements from up north were: Don Nelson (who also impersonated General Omar Bradley) and Warren Klein. These two guys were able to substantially fill out our weapons display with a Thompson sub-machinegun, flame thrower, Springfield rifle, M3 Grease gun, 30 cal. MG and nicely displayed rifle grenades. Don Nelson, one of the "117th reinforcements became the fourth" for our Color Guard and assisted Neil Trivette, Walt Sowinski and Aaron Clark to perform that solemn duty. Warren Klein, aided by Aaron Clark's iphone, was able to sound Taps for the Memorial Service. The room where most of this year's reunion took place was huge, expansive and a fabulous place for us to erect our militaria display. If you remember the first reunion held at the Holiday Inn in Fayetteville, NC, you'll remember how wonderfully large that space was. Well, the Crowne Plaza space was almost as large and provided plenty of room for everybody to easily meander through our militaria display, plenty of room for casual conversations to be held at the numerous table setups, and more than ample room for the various veteran's business meetings. The hospitality room was conveniently located right off to one side to the basic meeting area so it was never crowded and everyone was easily and promptly served their favorite beverage.

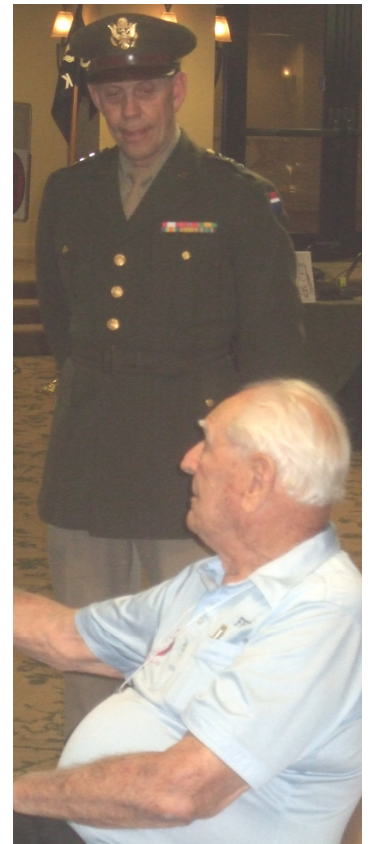
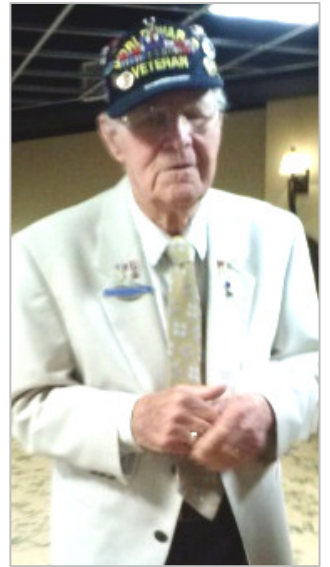


OHA members were able to visit with some old friends like Frank and Mary Towers, Marion and Peggy Sanford, Dick Lacy, John D'Agostino, Roger Casey, Victor Neiland, Matt Rozell, Micha Tomkiewicz. We got to meet some new folks such as Knox Holder, John Kraus, William "Bill" Vaughan and his daughter Velma who was an invaluable and tireless reunion "worker bee." Velma just made things happen and when something was needed, she somehow found it, bought it or invented it but her Dad always took the credit - ha ha! We were also privileged to meet and make friends with the some new Holocaust survivors who attended this year's reunion. The survivors shared their stories and gave thanks to the 30th soldiers for saving their lives and setting them free...they related firsthand how precious life is and they were now ready to enjoy every moment of the reunion with their 30th ID liberators and their families. All in all, I believe this was one of the best reunions I've attended in the past few years.



More 30th IDV of WWII Reunion Photos







William Blake Carlton - 113th FA Battalion



William Blake Carlton, Jr., Colonel, USAR (Ret)

August 4, 1914 – August 28, 2008

The following represents memories of World War II events and anecdotes recounted at various times by William Blake (“Bill”) Carlton, Jr., Colonel, U.S. Army, Retired, to his daughter Lane Carlton Zatopek. Col. Carlton served as Commander of Headquarters Battery, 30th Division Field Artillery (Old Hickory), 113th Infantry, European Theater of Action.

In 1945, Captain Carlton was the CO of HQ Battery, responsible for communications for the Battalion. His duties included setting up and operating the Fire Direction Centers for the Field Artillery Batteries. The 113th FA Battalion was a medium, general support battalion armed with 155mm guns.



BUCHENWALD

Note: Lane Carlton Zatopek and husband Ed have a sword, engraved in German script, with the designation of a train battalion. Near Magdeburg, elements of the 30th Division liberated a train full of people destined for Buchenwald. Col. Carlton shipped the sword to the US prior to his return from Europe. Long ago when Lane asked her Dad about the sword, Bill’s first answer related to a boxcar his unit found on a siding track. Years later, he related the following:

This sword was not acquired through any action that I remember. I probably found it in a house or a building we used for a headquarters. Maybe I found it with uniforms and other stuff in a closet, or perhaps in a basement. I don’t remember exactly. Sometimes the 30th Division got ahead of the lines because we advanced so rapidly. By 1945, we encountered pockets of hard resistance from the Youth Movement—Nazi Cadets. We had to send back behind the lines for supplies. It was tough.

My unit was not part of the liberating unit at Buchenwald. In its support role, the artillery often reached a destination well ahead of the rest of the infantry. We reached the Elbe River the day after Buchenwald was liberated, and I came back to see it. My guide was a Belgian man who had been held there as a forced laborer. His eyes were deep pools of nothing, like black holes. No animation in his face and eyes. Even after the end of the tour, when we were saying our farewells, I said, “Now you can go home.” His eyes and face never changed, and he said, “Yes, now I can go home.” He was sucked dry of spirit.

{Following is Col. Carlton’s recounting of what the guide showed and explained to him.} Other than the open trenches with bodies, and the crematoria, there was a 10-12-foot-high sawhorse-looking thing, maybe 8-9 feet wide. The obstreperous types who had given the guards trouble were suspended by ropes from the crossbar, and swung back and forth with guards taking shots at them as they swung across the gun sights. We went into gas “shower” chambers—solid concrete walls and ceiling, metal hooks in walls at intervals where troublemakers were hung by what clothes they had on. I could see the scratching and digging marks in the concrete from hands attempting to escape. {Col. Carlton paused here, and then continued.} You can’t imagine how emaciated the human body can be and still function.

The reception room desk at Buchenwald had a lampshade, maybe 24” round, made from human skin. There was a display of specimens, preserved in liquid solution, of sections of intestine infected from various forms of dysentery, laid open to expose the interior. There were specimens of just about all the human organs, and a human head shrunken to about the size of a coffee mug.

The sleeping quarters were multi-tiered, 3 or 4 high—I forget. There were so many people packed in they had to sleep upright clapping their knees. Bunks were wooden slats, some with burlap or cloth similar to mattress ticking. I forget how many the guide told me slept in each bunk.

There was a little hospital annex at one end of the barracks. Bunks were the same, except that the patients who were really sick were permitted to lie down. One section was marked “Isolation”, but nothing separated the isolation ward from neighboring beds. The operating table in the corner was maybe 30” wide, plain wood. Situated conveniently next to it was a trap door with a chute that dropped the body into the open pit. The crematory was still warm, and there were remains still inside. They had not had a chance to cover things up. As we got farther into Germany, we saw more and more “DP’s” { Displaced Persons } wandering around in striped uniforms. You could tell by their appearance the concentration camps were worse then anyone imagined. The 30th Division position at the Elbe River was at Magdeburg then, not far from Buchenwald.

BATTLE OF THE BULGE

Friendly Fire: We were near Malmedy before Christmas. Charles Cawthon's¹ 29th Division was on our left. We were already in houses around Malmedy, and all my men were under cover. It was a good thing, because every day we were bombed by our own planes. Every day I'd go out and throw the colored panels of the day² in the snow, and every day we'd get bombed and strafed. Those kids flying those planes just didn't know, I guess. We finally shot down a US aircraft on one of those bombing runs. We just kept losing men and equipment, and finally decided we'd had enough. Col. Carlton's earlier telling of this episode included the observation that all the crew parachuted to safety.



Axis Sally's Christmas Prediction: We had put up primitive Christmas trees with decorations of some sort—the HQ tree had actual baubles on it. It was right then we got the panic pull-up-and-move-right-now order. 1st Sgt. Rose was so upset, he went upstairs and I heard “thump, thump” from upstairs. Sgt. Rose was stomping the Christmas tree ornaments so no other SOB could enjoy them. As we were on the move toward Spa³, we learned our destination by tuning in to Axis Sally, whom we knew as “the Berlin Bitch.” She was telling us how we were going to be decimated, and she taunted the 29th Division. She said, “Oh, yes, the 30th Division has pulled out and left you, and we're going to come and get you.” The 29th had to spread out all along the line to take up the positions we had abandoned. We were just outside the Siegfried Line.



As we got into an area where the breakthrough was being exploited by the Germans, we began to see more and more signs of trucks and artillery pieces and all sorts of abandoned US equipment. Small US units and segments of units were in full retreat. Before we went into our assigned position, we picked up a couple of extra Jeeps, a long-wheel-base wire truck, and a “Limey” trailer that had metal doors around the top and sides. The firing batteries picked up ammunition and a few extra howitzers.

No one could tell us where the line was—there was no line! There were numerous breakthroughs. The Germans were infiltrating our units using captured US vehicles and uniforms from US POWs and KIAs. They had some special patrols in captured Jeeps with soldiers who were fluent in English. GIs soon figured out a way to identify an imposter by asking questions about the team winning the World Series, using names of athletes, or slogans having to do with cities (like Windy City). You didn't trust anyone, but you didn't fire indiscriminately. That's why we were always a little skittish when new troops were scooped up in the back and sent up to stop the gap. They got trigger-happy.

When snow and sub-freezing weather set in, we had a problem moving artillery pieces. Movers were tracked vehicles that would slide off icy roads. The Battalion Maintenance Section finally cut chunks of metal out of German armored vehicles and welded them into the tracks to make extra cleats. That helped.



Proximity Fuses for Christmas: We went into position not far from Malmedy, near the north end of the breakthrough. We occupied part of the territory lost by the 101st Airborne near Stavelot. We took it back from the Germans, and waited in place until a re-grouped 101st could come back in *and re-take the whole area*. During this period, we first learned about and were issued proximity fuses, which exploded at a pre-set distance from any mass. Early on, even a cloud mass would set them off.

Artillery fire was much more destructive of ground troops and armor because trees would cause air bursts that showered everything beneath. I had to sign for every proximity fuse; they were “classified” at the time. That's where we spent Christmas ... sitting on stumps and logs to eat our meals. We later found out the “stumps and logs” were actually frozen German troops!



PFC David Lester, 105th Engineers, Remembers



Editor's Note: The following are two WWII remembrances sent to me by Mr. David W. Lester who served 105th Engineer Combat Battalion, "3rd Squad, 3rd Platoon, Company 'A', 30th Infantry Division. I have made no substantial changes to his submitted copy.

THE HOLOCAUST-GOOD GERMANS?

We were following 743rd tanks when our squad sergeant, Scott, saw a tall wooden fence surrounding what appeared to be another POW compound. Our truck driver, "Pappy" Morgan, left the main road to drive off through some trees to check it out. We were about five hundred (500) yards away when the gates swung open and two burly guards ran out and then continued to run toward a nearby village. Four bedraggled victims came out through the open gates and started staggering toward us. Seeing this, the deserting guards stopped running, turned and shot all four in the back, then continued running toward the nearby village. Unfortunately, the deserting guards were beyond the range of our M1 rifles so there was nothing we could do to change the consequences of that day. We entered a compound of about 600 square feet where we found another fifteen (15) victims lying on a cold dirt floor. They were covered in their own urine and fecal matter and were in a very sorry state. They appeared to be skin covered skeletons unable to stand. Nevertheless, one did try to stand but as he did, there was a slimy, bloody mucous running down the back of his legs. Mortarano, being multi-lingual, learned that these people had been "good Germans" who had opposed Nazi policies and were quickly confined to suffer the same mistreatments as their holocaust brothers and sisters whom we later found at Buchenwald.

"WE CROSS THE THOUSAND YARD RHINE! Earlier surveillance had revealed hundreds of unoccupied foxholes on the east embankment of the Rhine. Two other combat engineers and I stood apprehensively before boarding the storm boat of a wild eyed Texan using a small compass to navigate through chemical smoke screens, at night, against a six knot river current of "The Thousand Yard Rhine." It was dark. We would be the first GI's in the Battalion to cross at Dinslaken (upstream from Wessel). Our job was to clear enemy mines and barricades from our beach landing site. In spite of the variables involved; currents, deviation, dead reckoning and human error, that "wild eyed Texan" was awesome. He hit the beach site dead on!

We checked upstream and down but found nothing to hamper our crossing. Almost immediately, the first alligator touched the beach and a rifleman stepped ashore. Although the alligator driver seemed confused and quickly back off to land elsewhere leaving that lone rifleman marooned. When a second alligator arrived, they perhaps thought him to be an often (typical?) Wehrmacht soldaten in a GI uniform. They snatched his M1 rifle and captured him!



He had a devil of a time convincing them that he was really and truly a genuine US GI before they cleared the air and moved out together. There's very little humor in combat and it wasn't funny then but today we can remember and we can now chuckle about it.

Shown in the photo are (left to right) T/5 Kittle driving the tractor, Pfc. David Lester and Pfc. Davis of the 105th Engineer Combat Battalion, Company 'A', 3rd Platoon, clearing a roadblock in Magdeburg. The "3rd Squad, 3rd Platoon, Company 'A', 105th Engineer Combat Battalion, 30th Infantry 'Old Hickory' Division, was in the First Army for the Bulge and in the Ninth Army for the Roer to the Elbe River campaigns, European Theater of Operations, 1944-1945."

Articles written by David W. Lester

Old Hickory Pin Up

MAY

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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:

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HEY GOMER...

Y'all have

an incredible opportunity to attend the 30th Infantry Division's monument dedication ceremony to be held at Ft. Benning on June 1st and 2nd. So, what's it gonna' be mister? Email Ron Crawley pronto and sign up to attend this historic 30th ID event.

Time To Pay Your OHA Dues

June is the time to pay your OHA dues guys. So let's get with it pronto. Jim Higgins says we need the cash. 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. An Associate Membership is always \$30.00 per year, is a non-voting membership but its members will receive the OHA newsletter. Make your checks payable to OHA and send to:

The Old Hickory Association
P.O. Box 1079
Wake Forest, NC 27588 - 1079

Upcoming Events

May 25, 2013

Thomasville
Memorial Day Parade
Thomasville, NC.
Contact: Jay Callahm

May 25-26, 2013

Kings Mtn. Military Timeline
Kings Mtn. National Park
Kings Mountain, SC.
Contact: Ron Crawley

June 1 - 2, 2013

30th ID Monument
Dedication Ceremony
Fort Benning, GA
Contact: Ron Crawley

June 8 - 9, 2013

USS North Carolina
Commemoration Ceremony
Wilmington, NC
Contact: Jay Callaham

July 4, 2013

Faith Fourth (?)
Parade
Faith, NC,
Contact: Don Shupe

Aug.21 - 24, 2013

30th IDA Reunion
Ramada Inn
Raleigh, NC
Contact: Ron Crawley