

Apr 2009

NEWS FROM THE CACTUS PATCH

Issue No 22

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2009**REUNION
PREVIEW****103d INF DIV WW II****PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE + NEWS**

103d Association's 2009 Reunion is less than three months away as of the time you receive this issue of the NFTCP #22 providing you with the details for making your reservations for the reunion activities. In accordance with the previous newsletter, you, by now, should have made your hotel reservations @ the **HOLIDAY INN SELECT OPRYLAND/AIRPORT** in Nashville, TN for the period July 15 (Wed) thru July 18, leaving on Sunday the 19th of July. You **must** make your reservations by June 5th to receive the reunion rate of \$99/night single or double occupancy, and that rate is available for 3 nights before and after the reunion dates. If you haven't made your hotel reservations, please do so ASAP and identify yourself as 103d Associates. If you are unsure as to your attendance, make your reservations **NOW**, as you are able to cancel up to June 3 and the available room rate could sell out before the deadline. We have an interesting array of activities for you to enjoy; so please consult the schedule of activities sent in the last newsletter or the reduced version repeated herein on page 3. Please use the "tear out" reservation form (page 4) to register for the reunion events and mail back to the "Military Reunion Planners" by June 15. It should be noted, that individual unit dinners should be scheduled for Thursday night as the scheduled reunion event for Friday is only available on that night, and that is the reason the visit to the "GRAND OLE OPRY" was scheduled for Friday night. While we anticipate that the number of veterans attending this year may be noticeable less than previous years; all indications are for a decided interest in attendance by descendant members and others interested in research of World War II and the experiences of the veterans of that war.

THE RE-PRINT OF THE "TRAIL OF THE CACTUS" has taken on a significant interest by our members. First, the number of orders has increased to well over one hundred, which the publisher has recognized by reducing the cost by five dollars a copy, since your Association has now ordered at least 200 to be printed. We have done this on the basis that the 103d INF DIV WW II ASSOC will order additional books for donation to various libraries and museums around the country. This, in turn, further promotes the legacy of the 103d as an example of outstanding military performance of citizen soldiers, 98% of which had NO military experience prior to their country's call to duty after an attack by a foreign country. My letter of request for response for biographical sketches of surviving veterans for inclusion in the Supplement has been very encouraging, in that we now have over 40 veterans' biographies which include an amazing array of post war accomplishments. Also, we have been able to accumulate biographies and/or pictures of almost 80 of the real heroes of the 103d Infantry Division of WW II: those killed-in-action. This valuable contribution was primarily through the efforts of Zack Sigler and David Gilbert. (Second Generation Cactusmen) The Supplement is a 20 to 24 page (number of pages not yet determined) addition to be bound with the original 2nd Edition of the "Trail of the Cactus". The Supplement will also update the evolution of the 103d INF DIV WW II ASSOC from 1994 to 2009, the implementation and dedication of the 103d's Monument on I - 35 at the Gainesville, TX Welcome Center, and list a number of the publications by veterans of the 103d Division. As the Editor of the NFTCP, I inherited the responsibility as Editor of the Supplement, which, by the way, I have enjoyed tremendously and learned much about the 103d Infantry Division throughout its period of activation. I have also learned a great deal concerning the performance of all echelons and support elements of the division, and it has become a real labor of love to learn more. The Supplement is now 90%+ completed, but I must put it aside for the time being.

I plan on finishing the Supplement by May 15 and send my effort to the publisher to make ready for printing. After the publisher prepares the Supplement, it will take three months to print and bind the book, so copies will not be ready for mailing until September. The copies you have ordered will be shipped to you. Those who have ordered multiple copies, please provide separate addresses, if any, you desire. The book as delivered will contain a statement of cost including shipping and handling (approx \$54.00). Please remit with check to: **103d Inf Div Assoc @ 7618 Twin Hills Drive Houston, TX 77071.**

(The Supplement will be available separately with details later)

News Continued on Page 2...

President's Message + News

Continued.....

My Reminder for Dues as sent in the March 5 letter, has produced significant results with as many as 200 members beyond our faithful dues payers, plus a significant number who sent in amounts over the requested amount of \$15, by sending 30, 50, or \$100. One of our very loyal members, Mr James (Jim) B. Wolfe (K/410) of Lubbock, TX, sent \$1,000 which was a great boost for a total of roughly \$5,000 total since March 5th and our treasury now holds right at \$30,000. Our routine expenses, for the NFTCP at about \$2500/issue, other postage and miscellaneous expenses, wreaths for Veterans Day Ceremonies, run up to about \$10,000/ year. At the present, we have no major activity requiring funding, however, in the near range there are several programs which will require the Associations' financial support: 1) Donation of the Casualty Report Documents to various WW II Libraries, 2) Donation of the "Trail of the Cactus" to these same WW II Libraries, 3) Expenses necessary to research historical data to determine 103d's WW II activities (the example is the work Zack Sigler is performing, and the financial assistance would be actual costs to acquire the info), and 4) Financial assistance to college and other public libraries to enable provision of adequate storage for individual and unit histories (display cases, storage cabinets, etc). Currently, we have plans in all of the above areas of activity, and the procedure would require the B/D to approve the expenditure of any funds for a specific purpose and subsequently advise the membership. In some situations, the proposal may come before the 103d Association's business meeting at the reunion. It has been recommended that we should evaluate, and potentially, recommend a dues increase, say to 20 or \$25/year.

You may be interested to know, that our mailing list for the NFTCP #22 contains 1425 names, however, roughly 225 are complimentary (widows, officials, friends, libraries) and some are dues paying descendants of veterans; so this leaves approximately 1,000 or so, veterans on our Master Roster. We do send the newsletter to all veterans, who have paid dues at least one time. Descendants must pay dues to receive it, and widows are exempt; however, we do request they advise that they wish to remain on the mailing list. As to reunion attendance, the attendance of veterans is obviously on the decline, however, non-veteran attendance is increasing (people interested in WW II & history buffs). Hopefully, we will have 50 veterans and 150 total attendance at Nashville. Time will tell, however, I hope to see you all there. By the way, has it occurred to you that of the 20,000 (15,000 strength + casualty/injury loss-minimum) or so men serving with the 103d Infantry Division during WW II, less than one-half were ever on the roles of the 103d Association. Even, at this time, we occasionally find veterans of the 103d who had never heard of the Association. (Note: 9,411 have been accounted for over 43 years)

Additionally, my March 5 letter requested biographical sketches of those veterans who did not provide same for the previous issues (First & Second Editions) of the "Trail of the Cactus" and a request also was made for those who knew relatives of Cactusmen killed-in-action, so as to obtain biographical information and/or pictures of those who gave their lives for their country. As to the latter situation, we have at this time, identified close to 80 (a little less than 10%) KIA Cactusmen with pictures and 40 of those with biographical sketches. Virtually, all of these were obtained by Zach Sigler and David Gilbert, second generation Cactusmen. In the case of veterans' biographical sketches, we had 8 before the letter was sent, and now have right at 40 with one or two pending details to be submitted. It is indeed interesting, for me, to learn of the experiences that those in other than infantry units had during the combat phase of the 103d Division in WW II. I plan to provide some of these stories in time: 1) The 103d Air War with our 10 artillery observation planes (Piper Cubs), 2) The medical support that was so essential to the infantryman-how they did it, and 3) The Divisions' reconnaissance elements: 103rd Recon Troop & the Regimental I & R Platoons. All very interesting stories – Beginning Herein!

Send the Editor Your Story, if you haven't already sent it to our Historian, Luke Martin

We Hope You Can Make it to Nashville!

TOUR CANCELLATION INSURANCE

Protect yourself from unforeseen expenses caused by sickness, injury or any other causes that impact your travel plans. This insurance enables a refund of Tour & Banquet expenses up until three (3) days before the start of your reunion. If you need to cancel – please call our office immediately (817-251-3551) for a cancellation number. If you have not purchased cancellation insurance all tour and meal money is non-refundable 6 weeks prior to the reunion.

Important Reunion Notes:

~ Tours may be cancelled if a minimum of 30 people per bus is not met. In this case, full refunds will be given.

~ Please understand that a certain amount of walking is necessary from the bus to attractions and in some instances to also see the attractions. Please consider your abilities before purchasing tours.

~ Be sure to bring photo identification (like a driver's license) on all events.

~ All tour times are subject to change. A final itinerary is available at registration.

~ Exact vessel for the cruise is subject to change based on availability and/or final tour count.

Reservations are due by June 5th, 2009. Late reservations accepted on a space available basis with a \$10 per person, late fee. You should make a copy of this form for your records. For information call weekdays: 817-251-3551 or Email: info@MilitaryReunionPlanners.com. Requests for refunds must be made in writing and postmarked before due date above. No refunds will be made after this date, unless you have purchased *Tour Cancellation Insurance*. There is a \$10 per person refund processing fee. Your cancelled check is your receipt and proof of purchase. There is a \$25 return check fee for NSF. For a written confirmation please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope. MRP will not be held liable for failure of vendors to provide contracted services or any injuries/accidents that may occur during the reunion. Sorry, no refunds will be given starting 3 days before the reunion for any reason. Tours require a minimum of 30 people in order to operate. Full refunds given for any cancelled event.

THE SAGA OF SIMON DARGOLS

Simon Dargols was born in Paris, Fr. in 1925 of a Russian father and English mother, and in Dec '41 was arrested by Vichy police in Marseille; however, he escaped from the police and found passage to Casablanca. Simon then arranged passage on a Portuguese (neutral) cargo ship bound for Havana and New York, arriving in late Jan of '42. He enlisted in the army in Jan '43, at Camp Upton and basic training at Camp Blanding, Fl and assignment to the 103d Division at Camp Howze, in August of '44 to Co A 411th Inf Regt and back to Marseille in Oct of '44. Simon was transferred to the 103d Reconnaissance Troop, to provide interpreting services and assigned on Nov 8 as the Division entered combat. On his first incursion into enemy territory with a motorized patrol of 2 armored cars and 4 jeeps at Saulcy-

sur-Meurthe, they stopped in front of a large house with all shutters closed. A civilian German spokesman came toward the vehicles and announced to Simon that: "40 or so Germans are in the house and decided to withdraw when they saw you." When Simon translated this message to the Lt in command of the patrol, the Lt indicated skepticism, and demanded that he return and confirm that it was clear of all enemy soldiers. The civilian returned to inform them that the house was now clear, however, the Lt ordered the patrol to return immediately to their headquarters in Rougville, as their mission was only to detect enemy presence, and determine their combat potential. While driving back toward their lines, they came across two lines of GI's moving on each side of the road toward the enemy, and it turned out to

be Co A 411th Inf, Simon's originally assigned unit. Among the men he recognized Robert Bottenfield of Phoenix, AZ, who in turn recognized Simon. Co A's first contact with the enemy was dramatic and tragic due to the loss of eight men killed-in-action. Their names are engraved on a commemorative monument erected at the location of the action, near the Saulcy-sur-Meurthe Cemetery. Simon had several memorable hectic missions with the Recon Troop and several "close shaves". After the war ended, he was transferred to the Seine Claims Section in Paris as an interpreter and eventually sent back to the US for discharge at the Fort Dix, NJ Separation Center on June 26, 1946. He worked in the US for 36 years, and after retirement be relocated to France where he now resides.

HONOR ROLL



103d INF DIV ASSN of WW II
(Deceased reported after NFTP Issue No 20)

Ankenbrandt, Robert L.	103 QM
Box, Myrell G.	411 Co K
Bragagnini, Bruno	409 Co B
Cohen, Morton	409 Hq Co 1Bn
Combs, Estel D	411 Co M
DeFoe, Edward F.	409 Co B
DeMuro, Jerry A.	411 Co B
Galuska, Andrew Joseph	803 Ord
Hanrahan, Thomas	409 AT Co
Hillerman, Anthony G.	410 Co C
Hurwitz, Bernard J.	411 Co A
Karkut, Edward W.	411 Co G
Kilker, Robert L.	103 FA Hq Bty
Kubiak, Robert S.	328 Med Co B
Kyle Jr., Earl R.	411 Co A
Lillico, John W.	409 Co B
Loomis, John F.	410 Sv Co
MacLean, Don E.	411 Co K
Natoli, Rosario R	103 Sig Co
Paetz, George N.	411 Co A
Pohlad, Carl R.	410 Co C
Roettger, Charles M.	103 MP
Schultz, Max L.	410 Co H
Scott Jr., T. Robie.	409 Hq Co 1Bn
Seeburger, Thomas A.	411 Co F
Thiebold, Clifford B.	Hq Btry
Tyner, William W.	928 FA Bty A
Verges, James G.	410 Co B
Weeks, Lexie P	409 Co B
Williams, Roy E.	411 Co B
Wolff, Virgil	409 Co B
Woolman, Herschel	411 Co A
Wunrow, Lester	410 Co I

CASUALTY STATS

10 HEAVIEST CASUALTY DAYS

(As reported in the All Units Casualty Publication Page 380)

	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>BD</u>
<u>A</u>	Line Companies				
<u>B</u>	Hq Companies				
<u>C</u>	Support Units				
<u>TOTAL</u>	A + B + C				
<u>BD</u>	Battle Deaths (Included in Casualties)				
<u>Date</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>BD</u>
15/Mar/45	250	13	20	283	66
16/Nov/44	254	7	2	263	42
21 Mar/45	195	13	8	216	22
1/Dec/45	199	7	7	213	27
16/Mar/45	158	10	6	174	28
25/Jan/45	120	9	8	137	33
15/Dec/44	107	17	6	130	25
19/Jan/45	116	10	5	131	9
19Dec/44	121	7	1	129	31
20/Mar/45	110	14	3	127	14



OUR FLAG IS AT HALF STAFF IN THEIR HONOR

(Flag photo courtesy of our deceased comrade Pierce Evans)
His website PAPAS WEB remains as a legacy

Report known deaths to your Secretary Treasurer
Gloria McLeod
7618 Twin Hills Dr
Houston, TX 77071
gmacl@swbell.net
for recording into our Historical Records

CONTACT BY 7TH & 5TH ARMIES – MAY 5, 1945

by Nicholas J. Melas, I & R Platoon, Hq Co 411th Inf Regiment

On 4 May, 1945, four days before V-E Day, units of the 411th Infantry Regiment arrived at Innsbruck, Austria. The I & R Platoon established quarters in the tiny hamlet of Fulpmes, located in a valley off of Brenner Pass, just about half way to the Austrian-Italian border from Innsbruck. The next day, 5 May, the platoon was ordered to provide an escort for Col. Donovan Yeull, commander of the 411th Regiment, who planned to proceed through Brenner Pass, down into Italy in order to establish contact with units of the 5th Army coming North. Led by our Lieutenant, a Jeep, with a 50 caliber machine gun and three pfc's met up with the Colonel's vehicle, a Mercedes sedan painted OD with our regimental insignia inscribed on both side doors. As our little 2 vehicle (jeep + 4 dr Mercedes) convoy proceeded south through the pass, hundreds of German soldiers were coming down from the mountainside with their arms upraised. As we passed them, we just gestured back towards Innsbruck for them to continue their march towards surrender. We drove on through the pass, crossed the border and proceeded south into Italy. After about 40 or so kilometers, we approached the town of Bolzano. I remember vividly how absolutely deserted the town was, not a soul in the streets. It was a weird feeling. After a few minutes of driving, we could

hear rumbling noises that were getting louder and louder, as we proceeded. With some apprehension, we realized the sounds as coming from tanks. Suddenly, as we turned a corner, we saw a column of tanks, and immediately recognized them as our own and knew they were units of the 5th Army coming up from the Italian South. Words can not describe our feelings at that sight. As Col. Yeull exited from his sedan and went into their headquarters to go through the formal procedure of establishing contact with their commanding officer, we jumped out of our Jeep and excitedly greeted our fellow soldiers, who had also exited their tanks. It was a moment that is indelibly inscribed in my memory, and the most unforgettable moment of my whole tour since landing at Marseilles, almost a year earlier.

After the formalities were over we returned back to Austria. Those of us in the I & R Platoon spent the next few months in Fulpmes with an occasional R & R visit into the city of Innsbruck. What a delightful time, to spend spring and early summer in the Austrian Alps. Finally in July we, with the rest of the Regiment, were transferred to the 45th Division and prepared for the trip back to France and then England to await the ship which took us back to New York. *(End of Nick Melas Story)*

We now fast forward to today, and we find our former Cactusman, Nick Melas to be a great civic hero in his hometown of Chicago. After discharge and return to Chicago, he completed his Chemistry Degree at the University of Chicago, and a few years later he received an MBA, from the University's Graduate School of Business. Later, he was elected to the Board of Commissioners of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, re-elected five times, served 30 years, the last 18 as President of the Board. During his tenure as leader, the Agency undertook and completed a 3.5 billion dollar engineering program that protects the region's drinking water, and at the same time, renders a great assist in cleaning up Lake Michigan. The project was named the Outstanding Civil Engineering Project of 1986 by ASCE, and the Chicago Sun-Times saluted Nicholas J. Melas "for transformation of the performance and the reputation of the former Sanitary District in the 30 years Nick has been there.....". In 2006, the University of Chicago's Alumni Association presented Nick with their Public Service Award during the annual Alumni Conference. *(A monumental contribution to the preservation of our Environment. Note: ASCE= American Society of Civil Engineers)*



7th ARMY ATTACK TO CLOSE TO THE RHINE 15 MARCH 1945



**The Lull Before the Storm - 3rd Squad
2nd Platoon Co K 410th Inf Reg
14 March 1945 in Obermodern,
France.**

(front row seated l to r) John LeLeaux of Lake Charles, LA; Joaquin Acosta of Los Angeles, CA; James Amarindo of Brooklyn, NY; George Suazo of Denver, CO; (middle standing) Frank Russell of Pittsburg, PA; (rear row standing) Les Potter of ? PA; SSgt (Sq Ldr) William McGregor of Abilene, TX; B. M. Alexander of Tyler, TX; Teddy G. Davis of Marshall, TX.

The entire 7th Army attacked the German defensive line on March the 15th with the mission of closing to and breaching the Siegfried Line, crossing the Rhine, and driving into Germany to end the war in Europe. The men of Co K had been occupying this house for two weeks, however, the line the 103d held throughout this sector had not changed since the end of January at the time "Nordwind" had been stopped in the vicinity of Riepertswiller (15

km NW). While it took the Allied Armies near seven weeks for re-supply (especially gasoline & ammunition) after the "Bulge" & "Nordwind"; it unfortunately gave the Germans that length of time to strengthen the defensive positions. All the attacking 103d units suffered severe casualties on the 15th of March and it well may have been the most costly day of the war for the 103d Division with 283 casualties reported and 174 on the next day. Two of the nine men

pictured above were killed-in-action on the 15th: Joaquin Acosta and B. M. Alexander. Co K had 5 KIA's and the 3rd Bn of the 410th had a total of 9 KIA's during the attack on Nieffern, which as mentioned, the Germans had time to well prepare their defenses. It is interesting to learn that B. M. Alexander owned the camera that took the above picture, and it was retrieved from his body by S/Sgt McGregor, knowing he had the camera.

HOW MANY SAW AN OPERATIONAL GERMAN JET IN FLIGHT

T3 George A. Kraussman, Crew Chief of the 103d Division Artillery Air Section, who prior to the military service, was employed by the Chance Vought Co (WW II Aircraft Manufacturer) of Stamford, CT, and knew that jet aircraft were a possibility, but was totally off-guard when confronted with an operational German jet aircraft in the sky with him. The time is late April 1945, and the location is southern Bavaria at the time the 103d was in a top priority move to Austria and link-up with the 5th Army in Italy. (Note: Enlisted ground crew personnel occasionally flew as observers in the two seater liaison planes to assist the pilot for artillery fire missions where direct fire on observed targets is employed. George was on such a mission) George: "I do not

remember which pilot I was with, when we were looking for targets of opportunity and approaching the line, and I looked to my left, and observed a German fighter a distance away, going in the opposite direction. He was descending in a shallow dive, and I tapped the pilot on the shoulder to call his attention, when I noticed it had NO propellers. I actually told the pilot, I thought his propellers were shot off, and he was "going down"! The pilot shouted back that was one of their new jet fighters, and that he was "glad" he had another target and continued "going away". That was my introduction to German jet fighters, and I did not see any others until we found two operational twin engine models at the Innsbruck airfield along with several flyable

training gliders. I never thought when I learned of the developing technology of jet aircraft while at Chance Vought four years earlier, that I would ever observe them as "enemy aircraft".

George A. Kraussman has been a longtime member of the 103d Association and lives in Wallingford, CT. He spent over 30 years in the management of furniture & appliance stores and then made a significant career change and is now a deacon in the Catholic Church where he continues today to serve his parish in their daily needs.

THE COMBAT MEDICAL SYSTEM IN WW II

The combat infantryman owes much to the combat medic during WW II because the system employed on the battlefield to treat the wounded is credited with saving a tremendous number of lives that otherwise would have been lost by inability to provide the necessary life-saving actions. It is believed, that the WW II killed might have reached one million, had a less efficient system or less dedicated system had been employed. (That actual number was 405,000-including all branches of services) The system employed was based on ASAP medical first aid, stabilize the patient, and get them to the field hospital ASAP.

The system begins with the *attachment* of a well trained combat medic to each line infantry platoon of each infantry regiments' line (letter) company. That medic's parent unit was the Regimental Medical Detachment, a section of the Regimental Headquarters Company. He stays right with the line infantry elements during combat so as to be right where he is needed when something bad happens to an infantryman in combat. The next step is the battalion aid station, which is a section commanded by an Army Doctor with title of "Surgeon" and either a 1st Lt or CPT. The Battalion Aid Station is hopefully less than a mile from the combat activity. The aid station section included a 16 man litter-bearer squad and two jeeps (type) to transfer wounded from the battlefield to the aid station; and, typically, also there were ad hoc volunteers to assist in this move. Up to this point, it was the responsibility of the line infantry unit personnel to get the wounded to the aid station. Once

there, it became the Division's medical battalion (328th Med Bn for the 103d) personnel to kick-in and take over the treatment and evacuation to hospitalization. That effort begins with the personnel of the "Collecting" company (either A, B, or C as assigned to each regiment of the division). The collecting company has a platoon each of litter-bearers and ambulances (10) and a medical section which operates a regimental collecting station, managed by a medical doctor, staffed with three doctors and medical technicians for intermediate care of patients for continued processing to hospitalization. The litter bearers are, in theory, supposed to work between the battalion aid station and the collection station. In actual practice, they are frequently "shanghaied" for service to move patients TO the aid station from the battlefield as the aid station personnel were known "to commandeer" anyone available for that significant role of getting patients "to the aid station"! The ambulances are "in theory" for the purpose of moving patients from the collection station (of each regiment) to the division's clearing station. The Medical Bn's fourth company, Co D, was the "Clearing Company" with a greatly expanded medical section capability with doctors and medical technicians to operate at a greater sophistication in the process of "preparing" patients for the hospital. (Reviewing their condition & providing timely medical attention) Ambulances from a higher echelon of the medical system were tasked to deliver the patients from the clearing station to the nearest Army Field Hospital serving that sector.

It should be noted that from the time the wounded soldier reaches the aid station and throughout the time until released from medical care, the Army's medical doctors were in command and control of all patients and all personnel responsible for administering their care. This gives primary interest in the wounded soldier's condition to a doctor throughout his recovery process. It is also of interest to know that ALL medical personnel, including ambulance drivers and litter-bearers were fully trained as combat medics, so that those roles could be interchanged, without loss of attention to the patient's care.

The system functioned well until the line units became intensely engaged and the casualties became heavy, as in the two Siegfried Line encounters and the March 15th jump-off attack when over 100 casualties/24 hours were experienced, and then, the medical evacuation system became somewhat overburdened, but without sacrifice of medical attention.

A very compelling statistic in the 103d Division in WW II indicates that the casualty rate for combat medics was much higher for the medics serving the infantrymen than was the rate of casualties for the infantryman. As for KIAs, the rate for medics was 50% greater than for the infantryman - Compelling proof of the dedication of their Service.

It should be noted that, at the instigation of Ernie Pyle, the Combat Medic Badge was adopted.

103d DIVISION'S LITTLE KNOWN "AIR-WAR"

The 103d Division's Artillery had 10 single engine aircraft primarily for observation and fire-control of artillery fire missions, as well as liaison and intelligence missions. These two seat 65 hp Piper Cubs, while heavily dependant on weather, were otherwise extremely effective as presented in this narrative authored by 1Lt Larry Genebach, one of the 10 liaison pilots (two each artillery battalion), who also performed as forward observers.

The weather finally cleared up enough for the 103d doughboys to find out that they had brought their Artillery Air Sections with them from the States. On the 26th of November '44, we moved to a little strip just outside St. Die, France. On the 27th of Nov '44 we fired on an enemy battery, my first big fire mission. From St. Die we moved to Ville where records show that the 383d Field Artillery Bn. fired some beautiful concentration on enemy trucks and another enemy battery. Oh, how those Germans hated to see that little plane up there in the air hanging over their heads all day. To an air observer, the flash of an artillery piece is like the flash of a match in a dark room. An airfield for us can be anything from a road, a grassy field, the side of a gentle hill, a cow pasture, to anything that is wide enough for us to get our two wings through and long enough for us to get a running start. When the war moved, we had to go with it, so our next stop was S¹ stat, then to Strasbourg, to Bouxwiller, and then to a strip on the side of a hill near Pfaffenhofen. We stayed here from the 8th to the 12th of December, 1944, rocking back and forth with the Germans. Our strip was on the side of a hill, and only allowed us to take off one-way and land one-way. We would taxi to the top of the hill, hold our brakes and rev up the engine. To take off, we would release the brakes and start down hill. Every time I made this running start, I could see them pinning the Purple Heart on my sister here at home. Luck seemed to be with us because we didn't have a single mishap. To land, we would approach from the opposite direction and land going up hill. This wasn't so bad because there were always the trees at the top of the hill to stop us if we misjudged our speed. Then one night, just after getting in from a mission, this damn roar kept getting louder and louder and then suddenly there

wasn't just one, but two. My foxhole was some-odd eight hundred yards away so I headed into the woods followed by Rusty Glover (my mechanic). We knew we were being bombed and that this was the finish. It would have been hard to tell where the ground ended and I began, I was sprawled so flat. They had always said that when the shells start falling, a soldier can get his whole body underneath his steel helmet. Had I had one at this time, I'm sure I could have proved that to be fact! The roar got louder and louder and I can remember very plainly thinking about why the damn fool flying, didn't pull out before he hit me. Everything ended as suddenly and with as much surprise, as it had all begun. Just across from our field there was a sickening crash and then further on, another crash and then silence. Like a bunch of bees, we took off for the downed plane. To cut the story short, two of our own planes had crashed into each other someplace up in the clouds and both planes and crews had crashed. That evening, no one had much to say. The next day some more excitement came our way. Our aircraft warning system started bellowing, "*Red Alert - Enemy Aircraft - - Enemy Aircraft - -*" and all we could see in the sky, flying low, were two American P-47s. The old circle and star were there just as big as life on the side of the plane. They went out of sight towards the front lines, but in the distance we could hear them. Then, *Bang*, our ack-ack up at the front opens up and cuts loose with everything. We see these two planes shoot up into the air, turn and dive down amidst more ack-ack. All this was well and good, but then, we see these planes headed in our direction again. So again, I'm making for the holes in the ground. This time it is my own little pre-dug foxhole with helmet and all. One of the planes passed right across our field, but he had too much to worry about to waste time with us. Our two multiple fifties at each end of the strip opened up on this one plane. As he went by, I noticed the beautiful big white star in the blue background on the side of the plane, but also this time I noticed something else. Underneath the wings, right at the tips, were two big black German crosses. We later found out that there had been two German pilots flying captured American P-47's. They had bombed and strafed our troops. From Pfaffenhofen, we moved to

Eberbach for two days, and then to a field outside a small town named Merkwiller. Here again, I spent a couple of humorous days and nights. We set up at Merkwiller on the 15th of December, early in the morning. Our strip was a cow pasture that lay on a very gentle hill running toward a woods in one direction and toward a valley in the other. Off to our left, facing the valley, was a grape vineyard and to the right, our front. The Division was stuck a little out ahead of the rest of the 7th Army, leaving our flanks just a bit exposed. The next couple of days moved along without excitement. We did a lot of firing, most of it in and around Climbach. While at Merkwiller, we fired on two enemy artillery positions on the 18th and on 3 batteries on the 19th. From Merkwiller we moved to Saverne and then to Morhange. On Christmas Day we moved into Puttelange. To celebrate Christmas we fired on two trains and a factory; our Xmas present to the Krauts. I guess I'll never forget this Christmas. Our strip lay in sort of a valley along side a stream. On this strip, we could only land and take-off in one direction, under some telephone wires. We had to come in over some trees and then slip down onto the strip. One good thing, we had plenty of strip to land on. Puttelange held quite a bit of interest for us. I had just landed on the strip on Christmas morning, and we were engaged in watching flight after flight of American bombers go over, coming back from bombing Germany. One of the planes fell out of the formation and started losing altitude. As it got lower we could see that there was only one engine still working out of the four. Since my plane was still warm, I took my mechanic and we got ready to go in the same direction of the B-17. We circled around in the air until the plane made its crash landing in a big open field near a highway. Like a shot (as fast as one of those 'orange crates' will go), we headed for the field and landed there also. The crew members from the B-17 were piling out and much to our surprise, not any of them were hurt. The pilot had made a wonderful crash landing. We asked the boys if we could do anything for them, and then we went to work on the plane, "cannibalizing" the plane for needed equipment.

Lt Genebach's Account of the 103d's "Air War" Continues.....

The Battle of the Bulge was going on about this time so our Division was spread thin over a long front, just holding and waiting. Activity on both sides, ours and the enemy, was at a stand still. On New Year's Eve, I flew a "Special Mission" with General Wicks, Division Artillery Commander, to check the Division camouflage. Then on New Year's Day, I flew the Div Arty S-2 to check bridges along the division line beyond the front lines. We were flying approx 4300 ft, when I saw this German ME-109 coming up underneath us from our right. I thought that this time I was going to get my one-way ticket, but Thank God, I was wrong. Right on the tail of this German plane were two of our P-47s, and they were really giving him a hard time. I'll never know what happened to the guy, but for one time in my life, I was happy we had an Air Corps. Of course the S-2 was excited, and I guess he figured he'd get a couple more Bronze Stars for having come so close to the enemy. For the next few days, we varied from ceiling zero to ceiling 700 ft, visibility - Zero. Flying was at a stand still. Then on the 9th of January, I had another big thrill and a lesson taught me. The Division G-3 came out and wanted to check the flanks to see what the terrain was, and just how much artillery support could be concentrated to aid either flank. The ceiling was just a hair over 1000 ft, but we decided to risk it anyway (1000 ft is just three good football fields plus a three lane highway). A nice rifle or machine gun shot could bring us down from that altitude, but everything went fine over our own section. However, we did receive a little ground fire, but only from small arms, and none even close. From our front, we moved over to the left flank of the Division, where the unit on our left was dug in. Since we were fairly well out over enemy territory, I was flying mostly in the haze (clouds), and coming down at intervals to see where we were, and to let the Major observe. Up & down and back & forth, we went, until I had no idea where we were. To make things worse, we received a 'Red Alert' in our square, so I had to go down and start some hedge hopping. The only thing I was sure of, was the direction of the front. I flew 180 degrees in the opposite direction, just skimming over the ground. When "All

Clear" sounded, I started worrying about where we were. I told the Major we were lost; but, we found a railroad track and followed it to the first town we came to, to find its name. With the name of the town, and the railroad track as guides, the Major started hunting around the map to spot our location. After about fifteen minutes searching, he finally found the town, and then from there, on back to the strip. Our only worry was the gas. Everything turned out alright, but never again, did he come out to fly with us.

On the 10th of Jan, the 409th Regt sent out a strong daylight patrol on the left of the division sector. I was flying air support for them, and had Lt. Lloyd Huskins, as observer. We flew around watching the doughboys move slowly forward and keeping a steady eye for signs of enemy movement. Just after we gassed up the second time, and about an hour before dusk, all 'Hell' broke loose on the German side. Artillery shells started falling in the vicinity of our patrol, and it was pinned down good. We could see the flashes from these German guns all over the front. There were three separate batteries of four guns each firing, all at our boys on the ground. Lt. Huskins was frantically plotting in positions and coordinates, while I was yelling fire missions over the radio and relaying information as fast as possible. My entry in my Log Book reads, "Saw so much, so fast that it was almost impossible to call it all in." We started two separate adjustments on two of the enemy positions, and managed to stop fire from them. Our situation was getting desperate though, because it was getting steadily darker. To add to our trouble, the BA-40 battery went dead on the radio. We were able to transmit, but we couldn't receive a thing. We continued fire on the two battery positions, and plotted in the remaining one as close as we could by coordinates. These coordinates we called into fire direction, but told them we wouldn't be able to adjust. Our radio receiver was dead, our gas was low, it was dark, and the strip had no lights. I didn't cherish the idea of coming in over those trees in the dark, but there wasn't any choice left. We called the radio at the strip, and told them to be ready to turn on jeep lights when we came into the vicinity of the field. Security was being sacrificed

for safety of a plane and two persons. The only way we knew that our message had been received, was the flash of two jeep lights marking both ends of the strip, as we came into the area. The rest of our stay at Puttelange was uneventful.

However, it was at this place that we first experimented with dropping 60mm mortar shells from our planes. We had marked out a spot on a frozen lake just to the rear of our strip, and we would fly over at 1500 ft and drop the mortar shells out onto the ice. Some exploded, and some didn't, in any case, we gave this up as too risky for the effort.

From Puttelange, we moved to Hattmatt, France where we stayed from Jan 23 to Mar 15, 1945. The most vivid thing in my mind, and the first to happen at this new field, occurred on the 30th of Jan. I was adjusting a 928th FA Bn fire mission on some German troops we had seen go into a house in one of the villages across the lines. They had previously fired three rounds; the first was over, the next two short, when I noticed two Germans come running from the house, and spread this big Red Cross flag in the road. Of course, the only thing to do was to cease fire and call in Division Fire Control for instructions. I explained what had happened, and waited while the G-3 figured out what we should do. In a few minutes, I received orders to continue the adjustment. I proceeded to direct the 928th to blow the "Hell" out of the building, the road, and **The Red Cross flag**. I later received word that adjustments were continued, because it was believed that the Germans were using Red Cross flags and vehicles for bluffing purposes. German ambulances were observed carrying troops to the front under protection of the Red Cross symbol.

(More next issue - however, after 64 years, it is truly GREAT to learn of the help you were giving us GRUNTS!

Larry Genebach is a very new member of the 103d Association, who after his stint during combat as a liaison pilot, transferred to the MP's and then after discharge had a long career as a policeman/detective. He is now retired and living in Washington, VA.



These Cactusmen are with the 103d Reconnaissance Troop near Innsbruck, Austria with their M8 Armored Car about May 4, 1945. Simon Dargols, our native French American now living in Paris, is at left-most on-top kneeling over the wheels and the only other soldier identified is T5 Wayne N Karrow, kneeling in the front row. If anyone can identify any others—please advise. Simon grew-up in France, escaped in '41 to arrive in New York via Marseille and Cuba to enlist in the US Army, became a US citizen, and returned to Marseille with 103d. He was transferred to 103d Recon as an interpreter on Nov 8. He plans to attend our Nashville Reunion. (See more on Simon on Page 5)

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